

# Reaching out to undocumented migrants: a guide

*From experience towards a method*



## Introduction

This 'outreach' guide is an outcome of the **pilot project Reach Out**, an initiative of **Fedasil**<sup>1</sup> in collaboration with **OFII**<sup>2</sup> and with the support of **ERRIN**<sup>3</sup>. The content has been derived from multiple workshops and intervision based on the experiences of a **Franco-Belgian outreach team** in northern France and Brussels.

The Reach Out project looks at ways of improving **outreach** to **undocumented migrants** living in urban settings outside official reception structures. The challenge is to establish contact with these **hard-to-reach groups** of migrants and initiate primary basic counselling on the spot. The objective is double: by referring them to services that can attend to their pressing basic needs, the necessary space is created to have a dialogue and to inform them about their future oriented **legal options, including the possibility of an Assisted Voluntary Return (AVR)**. The aim is to invite them to reflect and to assist them in making a well-informed decision on their options by **providing correct information**.

Outreach to this **target group** is particularly challenging, given the **harsh conditions** they live in and the **low trust levels** they have towards governments and (their) field workers. In addition, it is **challenging to create a solid dialogue** given the existing time limitations, unpredictable weather conditions, individual stress levels, the lack of privacy and other **contextual factors**. Field workers have to pay extra attention to these factors and to the specificities of the target group. A consideration is that this target group, whose basic needs are not fulfilled, are often mentally not ready to receive and process detailed information, let alone to have a comprehensive dialogue on legal options or a potential voluntary return. As we will discuss further in this guide, an outreach field worker can often only focus on making contact, in order to orient them to existing services before having a more qualitative dialogue in which in-depth information can be shared.

Dealing with this 'new' **challenging reality** motivated us to start the project and to write this guide, noticing that there is little experience in this domain so far. This guide is simply a description of our experiences in the field and a first attempt to summarise the dynamics of outreach activities to this target group in the form of an **outreach model**.

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1 Fedasil: Federal Agency for the Reception of Asylum Seekers

2 OFII: Office Français de l'Immigration et de l'Intégration

3 ERRIN: European Return and Reintegration Network. The ERRIN facility is a reserved budget that can be allocated to innovative activities/projects addressing return-related challenges in a short timeframe.



Our special thanks go to the multinational outreach team and all the colleagues within both OFII and Fedasil who supported us in writing this document and in developing our outreach model.

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## 1. The project

### 1.1. Multinational outreach team

Fedasil (BE) and OFII (FR) have jointly deployed a multinational team reaching out to undocumented migrants. The aim is to **invite undocumented migrants into a dialogue to reflect** on their current situation and potential legal options, including assisted voluntary return (AVR). While doing so the team wishes to **assist** them in **making a well-informed decision** on their options by providing correct information.

The team is currently operating in **Brussels, Calais and Grande-Synthe** (suburb of Dunkirk) and was set up from the beginning of January 2020 until the end of April 2021. The team consists of one coordinator (Fedasil), two Belgian and two French outreach field workers (who, in this document, will be referred to as 'outreach workers').

The team was set up in the context of the Reach Out pilot project involving a **cross-border multinational approach to address the phenomenon of undocumented migrants on the move** (in this context often on the route to the UK) that emanates from beyond the borders of individual member states.

### 1.2. Outreach activities

The outreach activities in **Belgium (Brussels)** take place both indoors and outdoors. Conducting **outdoor** (=outside) outreach activities in an urban setting in a European capital city poses specific challenges. The outdoor place of action is the **broader area around the Maximilian Park**, a stone's throw away from the **Brussels North train station**, the busiest train station in Belgium. In that area, undocumented migrants come together. Note: the Belgian immigration office used to be located in front of the park (until they moved to another location in December 2018) and the Humanitarian HUB<sup>4</sup> is nearby.

The **indoor** (=inside) sessions take place during weekly presences providing information sessions in various emergency (day and night) **shelters for homeless persons**. As we can read in the 2019 annual report of New Samu Social<sup>5</sup>, which is the main actor for homelessness in

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4 Humanitarian HUB: a grouping of (civil society) organisations offering help and support for refugees and other migrants.

5 <https://rapportannuel2019.samusocial.be/observations-sur-le-public-accueilli/>



Brussels, 70% to 80% of their residents do not have a legal residence permit. Most of them are non-EU citizens, often in transit in Brussels.

In northern **France** the **outdoor** outreach activities take place in various locations in the **outskirts of the city of Calais** and the municipality of **Grande-Synthe**. It goes without saying that the ferry terminals and ports of Calais and Dunkirk, which are located nearby, attract the migrants to come together and camp there. The UK is so close (at 33km) that the white cliffs of Dover can literally be seen from the French shore at Calais' Cap Gris-Nez. The location of Calais/Dunkirk has been attracting migrants for many years, though their presence only obtained wider public attention in the last 10 to 20 years. Most of the **undocumented migrants sleep in these areas in improvised camps**. Even though the bigger 'jungle of Calais' was dismantled at the end of 2016, small camps are being built on an ongoing basis and dismantled regularly by French police forces.

**Indoor** outreach activities take place once or twice a month (depending on the number of newcomers) in two **CAES<sup>6</sup> shelters**. These shelters are located in Croisilles and Nédonchel, respectively at 125km and 70km from Calais. The CAES are **open first reception centres** where undocumented migrants can stay up to one month and where a first assessment of their situation is done. These places are offered when police forces dismantle camps and when field workers assess a need, for as long as there are places available. Stay is on a voluntary basis.

### 1.3. Joint outreach activities

Whereas the French outreach workers stay predominantly in northern France and the Belgians in Brussels, **joint (outdoor) outreach activities take place once a week alternately in Brussels and Calais/Grande-Synthe**. During these joint outreach activities, the team acts as **one multinational team**, resulting in some interesting first insights. By regularly bumping into the same faces again and again, the team felt the need to **speak with one voice** and to **harmonise their approach**, while respecting the different realities in both countries at all times.

Unfortunately, this innovative approach had to stop due to the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic in mid-March 2020.

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6 CAES: Centres d'Accueil et d'Examen des Situations.



## 1.4. Outreach consultations

To strengthen the cooperation between Belgian and French outreach workers, the team started in January 2020 with **bimonthly operational meetings** in Brussels. At each of those meetings, (1) **debriefings** of outreach activities in both countries took place, (2) the joint outreach sessions were **evaluated**, (3) a **common approach** and (4) **ways of reporting** were discussed. As for Fedasil, 'outreach' was something completely new. The Fedasil team was able to benefit from the many years of experience of the OFII, as they had field workers working as outreach workers in Calais since 2014.

From **mid-March** (the start of the **COVID-19 pandemic**), the cooperation had to be reorganised and the frequency of the meetings was increased to cope with the changed reality. **Bi-weekly online sessions** were organised from April 2020 onwards and this was maintained for three months, until regular outreach activities started again at the end of June. During that period, the first steps were taken in order to develop this outreach guide. Most of the elements in the following chapters formed the subject of discussions during these sessions online. **The content of this guide was created as a result of online meetings, workshops and intervision sessions with the first (mutual) experiences in the field as a starting point.** The online meetings and workshops continued, once regular outreach sessions started up again, although less frequently (once a week).

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## 2. Definitions

### 2.1. Outreach, information provision and return counselling

A distinction is made between 'outreach' and 'information provision' on the one hand, and 'return counselling' on the other hand. The three are **closely interlinked**, but in the scope of the Reach Out project, **information provision and outreach are rather to be seen as preliminary steps that precede return counselling.** Outreach and information provision can take place in different contexts and target a broad audience (including the most 'hard-to-reach'), while return counselling is related to a personal interview, in which an AVR and eventually a tailor-made reintegration plan is discussed.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> EMN inform. *Policies and practices on outreach and information provision for the return of migrants in EU member states and Norway. P2., 2020.*



The term 'outreach' is widely used in different settings but lacks definition. It refers literally to the 'act of reaching out'. It is the activity of **stepping towards someone**: *"Any attempt to **take the service to people** who need it and who would otherwise probably not use the service"* (Thomas & Pierson, 1995, p.371).

Outreach to this particular group of interest, undocumented migrants, happens **'on location'** where they are. Undocumented migrants in the Franco-Belgian context are not stationary but permanently moving.

## 2.2. Transit migrants and stranded migrants

The activities of the multinational outreach team target both undocumented 'transit migrants' and 'stranded migrants'. In this guide, the **general term 'undocumented migrants'** is used when speaking about the target group. It is hard to find an unambiguous definition of the different groups that can be identified amongst the undocumented migrants, so it was agreed to define the target group as follows:

### 2.2.1. Transit migrants

'Transit migrants' are migrants **temporarily staying in Belgium (mainly in Brussels) or France (Calais and Dunkirk)** and whose **purpose is to travel further** to other destinations, of which the route to the UK is only the most visible example.

### 2.2.2. Stranded migrants

'Stranded migrants' are individuals who have either never tried to obtain a legal residence permit, or who have exhausted all procedures and are **desperate when it comes to getting documents**. They live often hidden in urban settings, fearing deportation and avoiding any contact with state authorities. At the same time, they usually have a **bigger network, living in the country for a longer time**.

Some stranded migrants are 'in transit', trying to reach another country or on their way towards it, while transit migrants can become 'stranded' at any moment they so decide.



### 3. First experiences

From our experience with outreach activities to the target group, it became clear that the **context**, the **profile of the migrant** and the **interventions of the outreach worker** can have an impact on the outreach activity.

The objective of this chapter is simply to describe the potential influence these elements could have on the outreach activity, drawn from our experience. **While conducting outreach activities**, one should **take these influential factors into account**.

#### 3.1. Contextual factors

The context is determined by physical and non-physical factors. It is **constantly changing**. We can distinguish between five contextual factors that can influence the outreach activity.

- **Indoor vs. outdoor**: Reaching out to people outside in the streets, in parks, in industrial or urban areas (outdoor) is different than reaching out inside an emergency shelter. Outdoor you are more often limited to ad hoc meetings and exposed to the weather. Indoor meetings offer the possibility to talk in a separate (warm) private room, facilitating the making of follow-up appointments.
- **Brussels (in the city) vs. North of France (outside the city)**: In the urban setting of Brussels outreach activities take place downtown in public parks, next to apartment blocks and at places where daily commuters pass by on their way to the office. In Calais or Grande-Synthe, sessions take place in a natural setting (dunes, forest), near highways or industry, just outside the city. While encampments are omnipresent in northern France, they are rather scarce in the city of Brussels, where transit migrants tend to shelter with the help of volunteers or NGOs. The dynamics are different in these circumstances.
- **Weather**: Rain, wind and extremely high/low temperatures make it harder to reach out to people living in precarious places and the comfort of the surroundings in which conversations take place varies accordingly.
- **Presence of potential people smugglers**: Smugglers, often invisible, can have an impact on the dynamics of a group of people when present. It can affect the willingness of the undocumented migrants to talk (openly) to the outreach worker.



- **Presence of other stakeholders (NGOs, civil society, state-run organisations, etc.):** These stakeholders often have more tangible things to offer (food, clothing, shelter, medical care, etc.) and are attractive because of their help. More stakeholders means more sources of information. The information provided by outreach workers can be questioned and migrants will unavoidably be influenced by other sources.

### 3.2. Profile of the undocumented migrants

It is possible to make a distinction between **different profiles of migrants based on common characteristics**. This is essential to develop your outreach strategy. We can identify various profiles and will describe a few of them below:

- **Transit migrants vs. stranded migrants (see above 2.2.):** Transit migrants have a very strong conviction to reach the UK (at least the ones in Brussels and northern France). They aim to stay for a short period and are constantly trying to travel to the UK. While stranded migrants are often desperate when it comes to getting documents, they are generally at the same time more settled and have been living in the country for a long time. They usually have a bigger network (e.g. to get a job) and have better access to information and other services.
- **Dublin<sup>8</sup> cases and/or a history in another EU Member State:** Most of the transit migrants in the Franco-Belgian context are Dublin cases (as they declare to the team, often anonymously). Migrants for which Belgium nor France is the responsible Member State in the event that they were to opt to lodge an application for international protection.  
The team meets people with rejected (or open) claims for international protection in other EU Member States and others who obtained refugee status in other EU Member States (often frontline states with a high influx of migrants). Both groups travel through Belgium or France with the ultimate objective of reaching the UK.
- **The nationality of the migrant:** Some nationalities have a high protection rate in the event that they lodge an application for international protection, others have a lower rate. Nationality can also play a role in cases of voluntary return, which is easier to achieve for some nationalities than for others.

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<sup>8</sup> [https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/e-library/glossary/dublin-convention\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/e-library/glossary/dublin-convention_en)



- **Psychological status/well-being**: Undocumented migrants living outside official reception structures live in highly precarious conditions, lacking basic needs. They may have been abused by local citizens, by smugglers, their peers, or by people they met during their journey to and through Europe. They may have lost contact with their home network and are often in 'survival-mode'. For those reasons they often have little confidence in the system (or in people working for it).
- **Family composition also plays a role**: Among the target group there are single men or women, families with or without the presence of children and unaccompanied minors.
- **Smartphone generation**: Migrants (especially those between 12 and 50 years old) very often possess a smartphone. They use internet not only to have access to information, but also to be in touch with family or friends back home. Even though very few have a constant connection, most of the undocumented migrants have the facility to be 'connected' regularly and have access to all kind of information online.

### 3.3. Interventions of the outreach worker

The interventions of the outreach worker have an influence on the outreach activity: how easy it is to initiate (and renew) contact with a migrant, to enter into dialogue, to meet expectations and to guarantee that the person concerned will be satisfied with the outcome?

- **Appearance and visibility**: Clothing, the way of approaching migrants, manner of speaking, etc. can be important. Recognisable clothing (e.g. a vest with the logo of the agency or organisation) helps people to find the outreach worker and can enhance a sense of familiarity. But at the same time it can generate too much attention, while some people prefer to talk low-profile, without everybody around noticing. That might endanger him/her.  
Being present and visible at the same hours at the same days at the same spot makes it easier for people to find the outreach worker when they need him/her.
- **Correct information**: As representatives of a national authority, the goal is to give correct information. Be sure that the information you provide is: neutral, correct, and verified. Other stakeholders, peers of migrants, smugglers, sources on the internet, etc., all have information that might sometimes differ. It is possible that the migrant initially does not believe the information provided by the outreach worker.



- **Approach an individual or a group:** Providing information to a (small) group can be useful as a means of passing on a general message, to introduce yourself and explain what you have to offer. However, a personal encounter could be better for the purpose of providing more detailed information and to answer personal questions about the status of an individual. Group dynamics and peer pressure could have an influence. Some groups do not like it when a member engages in a long private conversation, without the others knowing what is said.
- **Ownership of the decision with the migrant:** The outreach activity to the target group seems most successful when the decision taken by the migrant is an autonomous decision, taken by a self-confident and well-informed person. Migrants that go into dialogue openly, often become reluctant from the moment they are recommended or forced to take a certain decision. Trying too hard to push a migrant towards a voluntary return or another legal option could be counterproductive.
- **Outreach workers as representatives of a national authority:** This 'label' can be an advantage (could increase credibility, state approved information) or a disadvantage (low trust levels in state authority within communities of undocumented migrants) depending on the situation/context and the ideas or experiences of the migrant.
- **Personal communication skills:** The style of communication can determine a lot. There are certain communication principles to enhance the conversation:
  - Active listening
  - Non-violent and open communication
  - Transparency
  - Attention to intercultural differences
  - Show interest to continue the conversation
  - Understanding: does the migrant understand or is a translator needed
  - Adapted language



## 4. Reaching out

### 4.1. Activity

In this section, we will elaborate upon **reaching out as an activity**. We will define three main activities: contacting, informing and referring.

#### 4.1.1. Contacting

A conversation, a dialogue and making a connection with the migrant are only possible when contact has been made. **The hardest and one of the most critical aspects** in reaching out to our target group is the **first contact**. Once the first contact has been made, the more likely it is to proceed into a dialogue and/or the more likely it is that follow-up contacts will take place.

Principles: we can distinguish between **two ways in which contact can be made**: proactive and reactive.

- A **proactive contact** is established by and on the initiative of the outreach worker. You approach the migrant and you try to make the first contact. Proactive contacts are the most common during outreach. Five steps in such a 'contact strategy' could be:
  - Observe from a distance if the person is available. Avoid conflicts, people that are under influence, people sleeping or tense discussions/situations, etc.
  - Approach the person physically so (s)he notices you are there. Approach to a safe distance without entering the personal space. We believe approx. 2m is an ideal and safe distance.
  - Greet politely. Shake hands if you feel comfortable with it (not recommended in COVID-19 times), say 'hi' from a polite distance or say 'hi' by nodding your head. Keep it neutral and do something you feel comfortable with. Ask if you are not interrupting and be aware of cultural differences, including language.
  - Present yourself and come to the point. If comfortable for you, introduce yourself (and a translator or cultural mediator, if present) by giving your name and that of the organisation you work for. Then, explain the reason why you are seeking contact and what you have to offer (information).
  - Initiate a dialogue if the migrant responds to you. Listen carefully to what (s)he says (try not to interrupt him/her while talking) and try to use elements (s)he brings up to continue the conversation. An example hereunder:



### Example

**Migrant:** *Oh, thanks. It is nice you come to us to give information. I had to give my fingerprints when entering the EU in Italy, so you can't help me I'm sure. If I apply for asylum here, I would be transferred back to Italy under the Dublin Regulation. I want to reach the UK and start a new life there. Going back to my country (Eritrea) isn't an option, I would be immediately locked up.*

**Outreach worker:** *When entering in Italy, did you only give your fingerprints or did you apply for asylum as well? How long did you stay in Italy?*

If the migrant does not immediately respond when you introduce yourself and come to the point, all kinds of opening questions/remarks could be used to initiate a dialogue. Do not be afraid of small talk, to talk about something completely different or the use of humour. You will notice quickly if the migrant is open to talk or not. Topics we noticed that are easy to talk about:

- Europe and its different countries/languages
  - Weather
  - Cuisine in their country of origin compared to cuisine in France/Belgium
  - Religion
  - News facts or ongoing events
- A **reactive contact** is established when the migrant him/herself comes to you and initiates the first contact, e.g. with a question. Some example questions below:
    - Who are you?
    - Can you provide me a place to sleep?
    - Can you help me to reach the UK?
    - Can you help me to get a residency permit in France/Belgium? What is International Protection?
    - Can you help me to return back to my country of origin?

The challenge for you is to keep the conversation going after you have potentially answered the question in order to maintain and strengthen the freshly established dialogue. You could ask more questions and use elements from the first question.



When the question is related to get help to reach the UK, some example questions for you to respond might be:

- Why would you like to go to the UK?
- Do you have family in the UK since you want to go there?
- Have you already been trying to reach the UK for a long time?

In this way, a dialogue could be created about the UK as a destination. A dialogue that ideally makes the migrant reflect and question his/her migration project (UK). More on this later.

Whether if it is a proactive or a reactive contact, **the main idea is to try not to lose the contact, to proceed to a durable dialogue and to try to make a 'connection' with the migrant.** If the contact can facilitate a dialogue, you are in communication and that makes **making and keeping contact an essential activity in reaching out to the target group.**

#### 4.1.2. Informing

Once you are in communication or while making contact, **information provision is a key activity** during outreach to this target group. Information in this context **comes in two ways.** In order to provide the right information to the migrant, you get preferably some information from him/her as well.

Principles:

- **Focus on correct information.** As you can read in 3.3, as state officials, we focus on detailed, accurate and verified information. It would be preferable if you have the support of a legal department (internal or external) that can assist you once the topics get complex.
- Limit your information to a **few well defined topics.** In the context of this project, we concentrate on the following topics:
  - The programme of Assisted Voluntary Return
  - The procedure for international protection in France/Belgium (including material aid and the right to accommodation)
  - The Dublin Regulation



It is the **migrant that determines what kind of information you focus on**. If (s)he shows interest in a certain topic or once you know more about his/her migration project or administrative status (e.g. a pending procedure for legal stay), you can adapt your type of information to his/her current situation.

- Be sure that the information you provide is not only correct, but above all **clear, objective and neutral**.
- It is your job to give information, not to push or convince the migrant to enter one or another procedure. The **ownership of the decision lies with the migrant**. The migrant is in the best position to take his/her own decision when (s)he is well informed (see 3.3.).
- The use of an **interpreter or cultural mediator** is recommended to be sure the detailed and often complex information is understood correctly.

Once you are into a dialogue you could discuss about the migrant's migration project, his/her current situation or eligible legal options. A dialogue that ultimately evolves into one that makes the migrant reflect and question these elements.

Even if you cannot immediately provide the right answers to potential questions, entering into a dialogue provides opportunities to organise a follow-up appointment. First, you might need to check with a legal department or a colleague, for example. Later on, you could try to meet the migrant again.

#### 4.1.3. Referring

Outreach is much easier if your activities are well embedded within a broader **network of stakeholders**. Direct contacts with undocumented migrants are not the only way you will be able to provide them with information. A network **can help you to reach the target group or for the target group to reach you**. A network can also help you as **you can refer to it when needed**.

Principles: Outreach mainly happens informally through word-of-mouth channels within the network of migrants, and through contacts with local partners providing services. It is essential for outreach workers to build networks that connect with the target group.



We can distinguish between three types of networks:

- **Institutional (governmental) organisations** on a national or local level. This can be from your own institution, other state-run institutions or local authorities. For example: the Immigration office, AVR desk, the local police, social services in homeless shelters (run by the city authority), public hospitals and city services.
- **Civil society** organisations include NGOs, international humanitarian organisations, volunteer movements and civil associations.
- **Migrant communities** themselves that are formally or informally organised, such as diaspora organisations.

A **well-balanced network** based on mutual trust gives you access to the target group and is important for two reasons: **It allows you to refer people to other stakeholders** when needed (e.g. AVR desk, for urgent medical care, for legal, administrative or other reasons) and **it allows stakeholders to refer undocumented migrants to you** when they are in need of correct and verified information about the topics we already mentioned before.

## 4.2. Content

Outreach is conducting one or more of the activities as described above. Which 'domain of activity' you find yourself in depends mainly on the migrant.

Sometimes, there is only a short anonymous contact, some small talk or the person refuses to have any contact at all. Then again, you give general information to answer a question. Often, you can only refer the migrants to existing services in your network (e.g. to a place for urgent medical care or a place for shelter). These (often) **casual, anonymous, frequent and general contacts could eventually contribute to or facilitate a deeper more personal contact with the migrant**. This does not happen systematically. Most of the time, contact must first take place on several occasions. There must be a minimum of trust, but **once you reach that stage, you get to a more qualitative dialogue where in-depth information can be exchanged safely**.

You go a step further here. Once the '**connection**' has been made and you are into a **durable dialogue**, you **invite the migrant to reflect** on and question his/her **current situation, migration project** and the legal options for which he/she may be eligible. In the context of transit migration, we notice that the initial migration project and the current situation are



often in conflict. We try to address these issues by asking personal questions and confronting the migrant with existing eligible legal options.

#### 4.2.1. Migration project

You want to know the objective of the person you are talking with. The migrant is on the move, but where to exactly? And why? What is his/her ultimate destination? Why is or isn't he/she trying to settle in France/Belgium? You want to know his/her future plans and dreams. Are all the transit migrants in the French-Belgian context planning to go to the UK? **You need to find out their migration project that has not yet been achieved.**

Some example questions are:

- What do you want?
- Where are you heading to? Where do you want to go to?
- Why do you want to go there?
- Was this already your destination when you left your home country?
- Why are you here in Belgium/France?
- How are you trying to reach your destination?
- Do you have family in the European Union (EU)? Or in the UK?

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#### 4.2.2. Current situation

The current situation is mainly about the **administrative status the migrant is in**. Is (s)he in a pending procedure for legal stay (or not) and where was this procedure started? But also about the **psycho-social situation or well-being** (s)he is in. Does he/she have a network, a place to stay, a job, is (s)he ill... ?

Some example questions could be:

- How long have you been in France/Belgium?
- How long have you been in the EU? How long ago did you leave your home country?
- You entered the EU by which country? Did you give your fingerprints when entering the EU? If yes, did you apply for international protection as well in that country?
- Did you apply for international protection in another EU Member State?
- Did you already start a procedure for legal stay in France/Belgium? Or never?
- How long have you been trying to reach the UK (if that is the migration project)?



- How long have you been camping here in Calais? Where do you sleep? How is it for you to sleep in a tent outside? Is this what you expected when you got here?
- Do you have health problems? How do you feel? Do you feel sick?
- Do you have family or good friends here?
- Have you lived in a reception structure before in France/Belgium?

### 4.2.3. Legal options

While in 4.2.1. and 4.2.2. you are trying to get information from the migrant, here the information is given by you, the outreach worker. What could be a possible procedure for the migrant given his/her migration project and current situation? Are there any legal options available? The aim is to **raise awareness of eligible legal options, as a potential alternative for the existing migration project and current situation.**

Roughly speaking, **two main categories of legal options** are to be considered. A procedure (1) to apply in the country where the migrant actually is or (2) to return back to the country of origin. The Dublin procedure is included in the first category.

However, before deciding to this dual option, you will have to provide sufficient information on the different procedures and rights (the procedure for international protection, an appeal, the Dublin Regulation, assisted voluntary return, the right to material aid including shelter). You will need to **explain which procedures exist and if they could comply with for example migration project (X) and the current situation of the migrant.** Often, you will have to explain why a certain migration project (X) is not possible, like in the example in Calais here below.

#### Example

***Migrant:** I would love to apply for international protection (IP) in France but I still have an ongoing application in Germany. Can I do it? I left Germany because I had to wait more than one year and I still didn't receive any answer. I didn't start any procedure yet in France. I don't really know what to do, maybe the UK is an option as well.*

***Outreach worker:** You could apply for international protection in France, but if you apply for IP in France while you still have an ongoing procedure for IP in Germany, your file will be a Dublin case. In this case Germany is the responsible member state for your application and you should continue your procedure there.*



While explaining procedures or the reasons why a migration project (X) is not possible, it can be interesting to keep an eye on the first reactions of the migrant when receiving this information. These first reactions may show the presence of some elements that have not been shared yet. Elements that could potentially explain the (hidden) reasons for the existing migration project and/or could play an important and decisive role at a later stage (see 4.3.). **Be receptive!**

### 4.3. Process

As mentioned in the introduction, **a migrant's informed decision is the goal to be achieved during outreach**, but it is a goal that **can only be achieved if a migrant engages in a reflection process**. This requires a minimum of trust, time and space, as information has to be exchanged and processed.

The method is presented by the **metaphor of rotating gears** (figure 1). Two gears represent the interplay between migration project (4.2.1.) and current situation (4.2.2.). The third and bigger gear represents the migrant's eligibility for legal options (4.2.3.).

**The rotating aspect represents the process of reflection towards decision-making. Outreach work means guiding the migrant in (re)activating this process by providing meaningful information and insights.** We define three **types of guidance**: reflection – advising – decision-making.



Figure 1: The process of reflection towards decision-making



## Note

Outreach can be a successful activity in many ways and does not depend solely on its end result. Often you will not even know how it turns out, because you lose contact. Giving information, listening to a migrant's story, referring someone to urgent medical care or a shelter, having a conversation about his/her migration project and assisting in questioning this project, inviting a migrant to reflect about his current situation, etc. are valuable outcomes as well.

### 4.3.1. Reflection – *Are the gears rotating?*

Firstly, you try to **inform and help the migrant to question his/her project and situation**. Not only by explaining into detail potential eligible legal options, but also by countering false narratives and asking questions. This **can entail a work of conviction in which you are trying to provoke reflection**.

- Is the migrant questioning his/her migration project (e.g. the UK as destination) after you mentioned eligible legal options as an alternative to his/her project?
- Is (s)he even more convinced of his/her destination?
- How long will (s)he still bear this uncertain situation?
- Is (s)he ready for a potential decision or not at all?
- Maybe (s)he needs more detailed information on some aspects of an eligible legal option?
- Maybe the migrant was questioning his/her migration project already long before?

Sometimes reflection takes place automatically after the exchange of information. Often reflection is already present before your first contact but needs to be triggered again. **If the migrant does not seem to be in a reflection process** (the gears are not rotating), you need to be **flexible**. Flexible in the sense of trying to continue and/or repeat the work of conviction by providing information and asking questions. You need to be able to start from zero if needed. As long as it may be useful, until the moment you notice that the migrant clearly shows that (s)he isn't ready (yet) to question his/her situation and project. The ownership of the decision is and will remain with the migrant (3.3. & 4.1.2.), so also at this stage, the migrant will be the one who 'decides' to reflect, or not.

It is crucial here to guarantee a follow-up of the migrant and to **be 'available' when needed** so the relationship of trust is maintained and can be even strengthened. Be sure you are



regularly on the same locations and that you are reachable. But give him/her the necessary time and space.

The rotating gears in figure 2 below represent the process of reflection of the migrant. You can see the **gears rotate to both sides**, which shows that **there is reflection, but we do not know the outcome (the direction) of the reflection yet**. Further guidance may be needed.

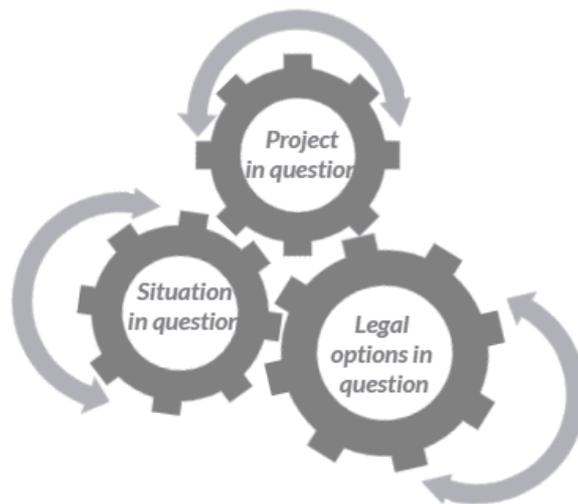


Figure 2: The reflection process of the migrant.

#### 4.3.2. Advising – Are the gears rotating together?

Discussing and questioning options while the gears are rotating in both directions, may cause hidden elements to come to the surface. These are elements, often related to the migration project or the migrant's current situation, that have not been mentioned yet during previous contact opportunities. As a consequence, the legal options for which the migrant is eligible may be different and should take into account these new elements. **Flexibility is key**, once again.

- What if the person in question turns out to be seriously ill and cannot be helped in his country of origin?
- What if there is a minor child living in another EU Member State and legally residing there?



- Or what if the person has a sick mother in the country of origin and wants to go back there urgently?
- What if it turns out his family is in debt because of his migration project (UK) and that this is putting an enormous financial pressure on him/her?
- Maybe he/she just wants to reach the UK because of the enormous peer pressure that exists within his community.

Try to **guide the migrant through the reflection process** by helping him/her **keep it comprehensible**. Questioning a migration project that has been an objective for a long time could be a hard reality to face. Suddenly, all certainties are gone. It is your job to help the migrant by proposing one (or more) eligible option(s) in a clear and well explained way so (s)he considers it as **a realistic alternative to the migration project** that has been called into question and to his/her current situation. **You advise the migrant to consider selecting a legal option for which (s)he is eligible**. If you succeed, the gears are not only rotating, but are starting to rotate together. A potential option or a potential decision is taken into consideration.

#### Note

In this case, advising is not a matter of giving your opinion or providing compelling advice, but rather a proposal, i.e. a proposed option. What you are actually doing is offering the migrant a different interpretation of his/her (blocked) situation. While doing so, the objective is to assist the migrant in simplifying his/her vision of his/her own situation while respecting the fact (s)he has got the ownership of whatever decision will be made, or not. It is important to give the migrant as much time as (s)he needs to process the information.

#### 4.3.3. Decision-making – *Are the gears rotating towards a decision?*

If the gears are rotating together towards a decision and the migrant is ready to take one, **you need to be ready to act**. You need to be able to **refer the person to the right place** immediately (hence the importance of your network):

- A legal service where information can be given about other procedures (e.g. humanitarian/medical regularisation procedures).
- An AVR desk for tailor-made information on voluntary return.
- The immigration office where (s)he can apply for international protection.



Figure 3 below shows **the gears rotating together when a decision is made**. The migration project has changed and the current situation has evolved because a legal option has been selected. The migrant has taken an informed decision by going through a process of reflection.



Figure 3 From information to decision

### Note

In the context of the Reach Out project, we often apply a **speech on self-decision** to counter family- and/or peer pressure. For example: *'So many people told you what to do. But you live this life on the street in Brussels and have already been doing so for many months. Would you like to continue living like this? It's your life and you are entitled to make your own decisions. You can make the decision to stop living in these difficult living conditions.'*

However, even if the gears are rotating together (4.3.2.), it is realistic to say that often no decision is made. This means the migrant is not ready (yet) to change his/her migration project or some other elements made him/her not make a decision. It is possible that the migrant may drop out at the last minute, disappears or even reappears after some time.

What can you do here? You should try to analyse and figure out what went wrong or **what could have potentially blocked the decision-making**.



### Tip

**Ask the migrant.** Let the person express him/herself. Maybe there is a logical explanation and the migrant is able to and wants to communicate openly about it. Together you could try to find a solution, if desired. Be sure you give the migrant the necessary time and space.

If asking the migrant does not give you a satisfactory outcome, it is advisable to **review the first insights** (influential factors) as described above (3.3.). Could it be that the reason for the blockage is to be found in a factor in the context, the individual profile of the migrant or the intervention being made by yourself as an outreach worker? This is a likely track.

### Context factors

- Did the weather change and because of that (s)he wants to undertake a few last attempts to reach the UK?
- Are there new peers present in his/her network that put a pressure on him/her to not change his/her migration project?
- Does a smuggler maybe know about his/her plans and/or is (s)he still in debt to a smuggler?
- Are there other stakeholders that are still supporting his/her initial migration project, causing him/her to be in doubt?
- Are the living conditions (e.g. rough sleeping) having an influence on the reflection process of the migrant? Uncertainties of a place to sleep causes stress which hampers clear reflection towards decision-making. Maybe you have possibilities in your internal or external network to offer a place to stay? A more stable place to stay increases the quality of the contact moments between you and the migrant. And even more important a place where food and sanitation needs are covered facilitates the reflection process of the migrant. Space is created both physically and mentally to reflect more easily. Furthermore, in a more stable shelter, it is possible that the migrant will meet other aid workers or counsellors that would formulate the same advice as you...



### *Profile of the migrant*

- Are there any hidden elements when it comes to his/her administrative situation? In Belgium/France and/or in another EU Member State?
- Maybe his/her nationality is different to the one that (s)he has been declaring since the first contact?
- Did his/her well-being or psychological states change? Maybe (s)he is not doing well at all and (s)he needs urgent psychological support before (s)he would be even able to make a well informed decision?
- Maybe a family member arrived and his/her situation has changed completely?

### *Your own interventions*

- Are you available and/or reachable enough at fixed moments and locations? If someone is close to a decision, you should try to be even more available. Less contact could decrease the level of trust.
- Was the information you gave not always trustworthy? Be sure you always double check. Remember information is your only weapon!
- Did you spend enough time with him/her in an individual contact moment? Maybe the contact took place too frequently in small groups with his/her peers?
- Did you spend enough attention on the fact that whatever decision will be made, the ownership is with the migrant? Be sure your work of conviction is not too directive so the migrant feels 'obligated' to make a decision.
- Did you provide the migrant the necessary time to process the information given?
- Maybe the distrust towards a state official will never disappear and you would be better transferring his/her 'case' to another aid worker from your network who could continue the follow-up of the migrant?
- Continually evaluate your personal communication skills.



A lot of (hidden) reasons for the blockage could come to the surface, at any moment, including during the final step before a potential decision-making. In this regard, it is also important to be flexible, to keep on being available and to constantly evaluate your own interventions. Reasons that could block reflection or decision-making are often not easy to find. The connection with the migrant and the level of trust you have with him/her is of great importance.

Once you might have found the reason(s) blocking deeper reflection or a decision, you could adapt your outreach strategy accordingly and try to neutralise the elements that are blocking the process. Is the initial advice you gave still valid in the light of the new information available? Could the migrant unblock the situation by him- or herself? Could you offer new advice? Maybe the migrant needs some time and space? You will need to be flexible and be able to shift between the types of guidance described above at any moment.



## 5. Outreach Model

We can summarise the method of reaching out in an **Outreach Model**. Due to the fact that the resources, the place and the time are limited, we will introduce the idea of "**micro**"-counselling.

The model has four layers. The **influential factors**, the **activities**, the **method** and the **goal**

The **key feature** of the model is the **migrant's process from reflection to a decision** on legal options, including the possibility of voluntary return.

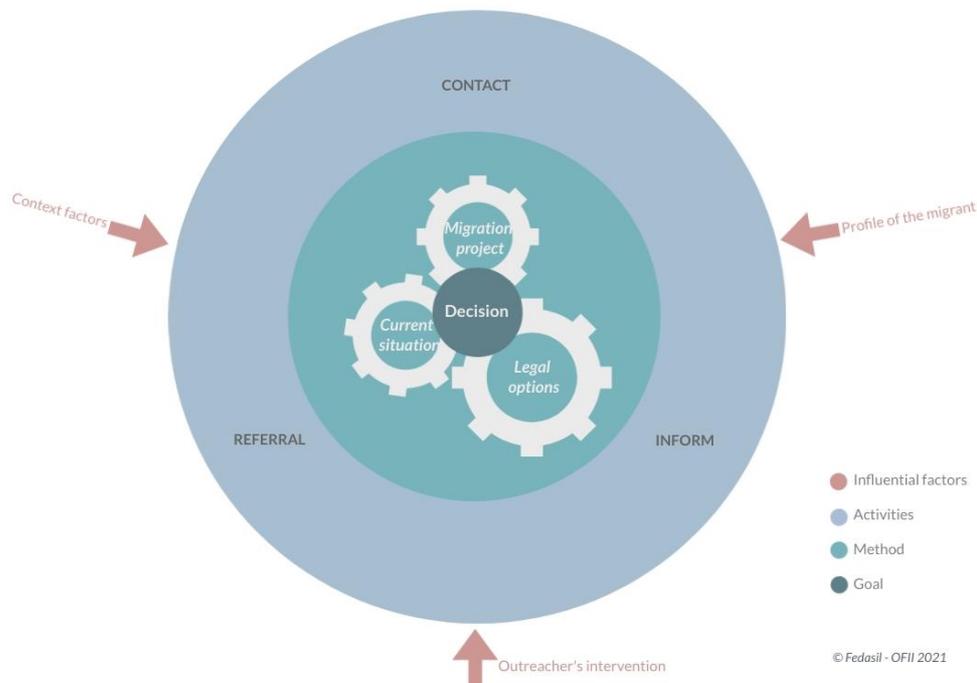


Figure 4: The out-reach model.



## 6. Challenges

The challenging nature of outreach to this specific target group has already been highlighted several times throughout this guide. In this chapter, you find a list of another six main challenges that the multinational outreach team encountered during outreach activities in the Franco-Belgian context.

### *Measuring the impact of outreach activities*

The nature of the job in a **constantly changing context**, together with the **particularities of the target group**, makes it hard to measure the impact of outreach activities. Indicators that could precisely quantify and monitor the impact of outreach sessions would be a great thing to have. Measuring the impact would be possible if we know exactly what migrants do with the information provided by our teams and which person eventually takes a decision as a consequence of our interventions. It is an almost impossible task.

The 'hard-to-reach' migrants usually do not have a fixed address and move regularly, so keeping in touch is challenging. Moreover, during the first contact opportunities, the contact tends to happen anonymously, as trust levels are low. A first name only, or a nickname is given in we were to ask. Often only once we get to a deeper personal contact, can information be exchanged more securely, including the personal data of the migrant.

### Tip

A good institutional network (both inside your organisation as outside) with other services and offices could help you keep track and verify the potential decision-making. If migrants are referred to the immigration office for an application for international protection or to an AVR desk to sign in for a potential voluntary return, a system could be set up to verify if the decision-making took place or not. Be sure you respect the national GDPR regulation.

But what if a migrant only makes a decision many months after he/she got the information about AVR from our outreach team and for various reasons the contact faded away? And if we guide a migrant in the process of reflection towards decision-making, could we be sure that only our interventions made him/her take a decision?

### Note

Collecting information about the target group to increase the knowledge of transit migration as a phenomenon could be considered as a way of measuring the impact of outreach activities as well. Mapping this target group living a hidden life could in itself actually be useful for both local and national authorities.



### *The United Kingdom as the 'promised land'*

Migrants in transit in northern France and Brussels often mention the United Kingdom as their ultimate destination. A significant proportion of these migrants are reluctant to engage in a procedure in France/Belgium or to return voluntarily to their home country, as **the 'English dream' seems to be a stronger conviction**. The reasons why the UK is considered the **El Dorado** are various. Elements the migrants bring up themselves are: the English language, the presence of family or compatriots in the UK, easy access to the labour market, shorter legal procedures, higher protection rate of certain nationalities, easier to start a family reunification procedure, no Dublin transfers anymore since Brexit (as from 01/01/2021), etc. Some people speak the language and have a close family member in the UK, whilst others seem to just follow the **narrative of their peers** and are **strongly convinced** – without hard proof – **they will have a better chance of international protection being granted in the UK than in Belgium or France**. The **UK** is also considered by some as a **last resort** when other applications for **legal options in other EU Member States have failed**. A last resort to escape from transfers under Dublin Regulation. This was the case before Brexit and this still applies after Brexit.

As state officials, **we discourage illegal channel crossing attempts and point out the dangers to life**. We dissuade the migrants from putting their fate in the hands of smugglers and try to tackle false narratives. We try to harmonise our message in northern France and Belgium when it comes to this topic. Since the beginning of 2021, we have been in contact with the UK Home Office to verify information concerning the UK, with the aim of being able to tackle false narratives with correct information. This cooperation with UK Home Office needs to be explored more in the near future.

#### **Tip**

Create a FAQ (Frequently Asked Questions). It not only brings together the most common questions asked, in this case about the UK, but it also allows you to standardise some answers and to speak out with one clear voice.

#### **Role stress**

Outreach workers have to **conduct different jobs in one**. They are social workers, mediators, state officials, legal specialists, etc., at the same time. This **multiplicity of roles could cause role stress** and/or role dilemmas that could come to surface when the outreach worker experiences a **conflict between what (s)he can do administratively and what (s)he would like to do**. One example that could be given of stress of that type would involve stress with regard to the concept of 'responsibility'. Whenever a migrant is guided for a long time in a



reflection process towards decision-making, the decision is and will always be the decision of the migrant (see 3.3 & 4.1.2.). The outreach worker will never be held responsible for the decision taken (or not taken) by the migrant, even though outreach workers are sometimes very much involved.

### Tip

It is important to be transparent and set limits from the start. Communicate openly about what is within your competences and what is not.

### *Credibility vs. trust?*

During the migration journey, the target group could consider state officials as the enemy as they see the state as decisive when it comes to detention and/or the granting a residency permit. A **feeling of mistrust towards state officials may be present**. However, the **credibility of state officials may be, on the contrary, rather high**. Legal information received from a government official is hard to refute. The internal dilemma of the migrants could be summarised by the following reflection: *'What are they going to do with the information I give?'* (lack of trust) versus *'They are probably able to give me the information I need.'* (high credibility).

The Reach Out project can be considered as a unique opportunity, knowing that outreach often falls under the range of tasks and purview of NGOs and volunteers.

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### Tip

Within the scope of this project, as a state official, information is the only thing that can be offered to the target group. It is better not to give information if you are not 100% sure about the information. Be sure there are colleagues (e.g. return counsellors or legal specialists) in your network with whom you could double check and verify complex issues.

### *Managing conflicts*

**Hard living conditions, uncertainties about the future, frustrations related to Dublin or other regulation and a potentially failed migration project.** These are just some of the elements that the target group has to cope with. The need to vent their feelings, complain and express dissatisfaction is often very high, especially against state officials. **Physical or verbal aggression can take place or conflicts can arise.**



### Tip

Inform local authorities where and when you operate, do not give false hope about procedures, read the place and the environment well so you do not bother people who do not want to be bothered, follow training courses about conflict management and how to deal with aggression, etc.

### Speaking about Assisted Voluntary Return

While raising awareness about legal options including the possibility of assisted voluntary return, it quickly became clear to us that speaking about voluntary return as a legal option with our target group is a challenge. Even though the **necessity of creating awareness is high** (the AVR programme is little known among migrants), **it cannot be considered as a miracle solution either with regards to the phenomenon of transit migration**. It is a personal and voluntary solution for individuals in (il)legal stay.

Voluntary return is still very much a **taboo topic and associated with forced returns**. Not only among the target group, but also within the network of stakeholders (both governmental as non-governmental). **Bringing the topic to the discussion needs to be done in a way that is well thought out**. Below, we have included ten tips:

### Tips

- 1 Introduce the possibility of voluntary return already in your general introduction when introducing yourself, as one of the topics on which you provide information. That way, it has already been mentioned and you can refer to it later. For example: *'I am here to give you information about the procedure of international protection, the Dublin Regulation and the possibility of returning back to your country on a voluntary basis.'*
- 2 Pay attention that your activities are not seen as mere attempts to return people to their countries of origin. You could repel the target group and organisations in your network with this. Embed the option voluntary return in a broader perspective. Voluntary return could be a realistic option when presented within a set of other legal options.



- 3 Bring up voluntary return progressively once you feel it is possible to do so, after having evaluated a (failed?) migration project and the current administrative situation. You could use your credibility as a state official and address the topic as part of your mission. You could formulate it as follows: *'In your current administrative situation the state considers two options: a claim for a legal status in Belgium/France or a voluntary return.'* If the migrant is open to a discussion about AVR and trust levels are high enough, you could gradually integrate AVR into your advice (4.3.2.).
- 4 Once you notice that there is an interest in the topic (or at least no rejection), try to keep in touch, stay available and organise follow-up contact moments to verify if the interest is serious.
- 5 During outreach to the target group we experience that a voluntary return is considered to be the opposite of the desired 'transit migration' project. Try to communicate about voluntary return as a potential solution rather than a failure of the migration project. The way you talk about it could make a difference in how voluntary return is perceived.
- 6 Keep in mind the profile of the migrant when talking about return. Organising a voluntary return is hard for some nationalities. More specifically, during the pandemic some countries are not an option due to the lack of flights or closed airports. Newcomers (those recently arrived in northern France and Brussels with a strong and fresh conviction to reach the UK) seem to be less receptive to voluntary return as an option.
- 7 Invest time in promoting and presenting voluntary return, as a realistic option alongside other legal options, in your network of stakeholders. Well informed partners will not hesitate to refer people to your team that are potentially interested in a voluntary return. For example you could organise information sessions about voluntary return, whether or not embedded within an information session that also deals with other topics (e.g. the Dublin Regulation and the procedure for international protection).



- 8 Be transparent about the fact that a voluntary return is a serious option and that it can be stopped at any time. It is important to stress the voluntary nature of it.
- 9 If possible, try to have some points of contact in the most common countries of origin with organisations in charge of reintegration. This may help and reassure candidates interested in a voluntary return.
- 10 When talking about voluntary return, be clear but brief. If the migrant seriously considers return as an option, be ready to refer him/her to the nearest AVR desk where tailor-made return counselling can be conducted. Even vulnerabilities of the migrant can be taken into account when organising an AVR. Outreach is the preliminary step before the pre-departure counselling, preferably done by specialists at the AVR desk.



## 7. Communication and reporting tools

The previous chapters focussed mainly on the verbal aspect of outreach. This chapter briefly describes some of the material **tools developed by the project to support outreach workers in carrying out their work**. Below, you will find some communication tools (7.1.) and our initial findings on how and why to report outreach activities (7.2.).

### 7.1. Communication tools

We distinguish between three types of communication tools. **Tools that can be used to support and enhance the main activities (4.1.)** conducted during outreach.

#### *Business cards as a contact tool*

As previously stated above, (4.1.1.), the hardest and one of the most critical aspects in reaching out to our target group is the first contact with the migrant and the ability to keep the contact so a potential follow-up can be done. Both in Belgium and in France, outreach workers use a business card. It is **small, easy to use and contains important contact information** such as: telephone number(s) of the outreach team, the address of a desk/office where appointments can be made (if existing), the email address and a link to an information website. A business card **can be easily shared within migrant communities**. The card is only given to those migrants who show a particular interest in the information provided and to those with whom a follow-up appointment is made, and not just to everyone at every contact point.

#### **Tip**

In Belgium, a double-folded business card is used with extra space on the inside to write useful information such as an address, date and time of a potential follow-up appointment. That way, the card is not only a card with contact information, but also a reminder of a follow-up appointment.

#### *Leaflets as an information tool*

Providing correct information is essential (4.1.2.). As the information is often complex, and the contact opportunities are sometimes short, it may be useful – **in addition to verbal information** – to provide a leaflet. A leaflet with information **in the migrant's language**, which can further explain the information given. Although not an obligation, it can be useful to offer when you think it is needed. In France, leaflets are used in several contact languages and explain in bullet points the **procedure for international protection, the AVR program and/or**



**the Dublin Regulation.** A leaflet allows the migrant as well to read it at his/her leisure at a later moment.

Another leaflet or information tool often used in Belgium and France is a **map of Europe**. A map of Europe, which clearly show the EU Member States in one colour and the countries participating in the Dublin Regulation in another colour. **Talking about the Dublin Regulation using a (visually attractive) map of Europe makes abstract EU regulations more tangible.**

### Tip

Avoid just giving leaflets without going into a dialogue. We believe that a leaflet could only be useful when used as an extra, next to a dialogue.

### Note

The use of digital information tools (e.g. games, apps, a quiz and testimonial videos of fellow countrymen) still need to be explored further and it goes without saying that this has huge potential. The Franco-Belgian team has some ideas for the development of a multimedia tool that can be considered as an information tool and hopes to develop it in a next phase of the project.

### Referral documents

When referring (4.1.3.) someone to an organisation or institution in your network, referral documents can be of great use. Ideally, a referral document should include your own organisation or project (in this case, Reach Out) and the name and contact details of the organisation/institution to which you are referring. An itinerary, included in the document, can help and direct the migrant if he/she does not know exactly where the place is.

### Tip

Make proper arrangements with the organisations/institutions you refer people to, so that they are aware of the fact that you can refer people to them and on the basis of what criteria.



## 7.2. Reporting

As mentioned in chapter six, measuring the impact is not easy. **Monitoring individual counselling contacts** and a potential follow-up over time is also **far from evident**, given the target group and the ever-changing context. Both in France and in Belgium, we use an **Excel monitoring table** in which we keep track of the data of the migrants with whom we speak.

Roughly speaking, we can distinguish **two reasons for reporting**: a practical reason to be able to follow up on the target group and an analytical reason to map and better understand the phenomenon of transit migration.

### *Practical follow-up over time*

The biggest challenge is to **follow the individual transit migration situation of a unique person** over time and to assist him/her in the process of making a decision. First of all, we **need to have a minimum of information**, which is often not the case with a first contact. First contact opportunities (either individually or in small groups) are usually anonymous. Often, we do not get further than sex, nationality and possibly family composition (e.g. family, man/woman alone, unaccompanied minor (UAM)).

Once the contact becomes more personal and the migrant shows interest in the information provided, it is advisable to try to collect more individual data. **The collected data gives us an overview and a history for when follow-up contact opportunities take place.** Some of the indicators we try to monitor are: date of meeting, place of meeting, name, nationality, family composition, administrative status (e.g. no status, Dublin case, multiple claims for international protection), migration project (e.g. UK), main object of exchange (e.g. AVR, international protection, Dublin), action by outreach worker (e.g. referral), the outcome (e.g. claim for international protection, AVR) and extra information. Some of the indicators have a **direct link to the method of our outreach model** (chapters 4 & 5) and therefore form the basis for any potential individual guidance on decision-making. Of course, everything depends on the degree of 'connection' and whether it is possible to stay in contact.

### **Tip**

You could separate the anonymous contacts and the individual in-depth counselling contacts into two separate lists (or filters).



### *Analysis of the target group*

The data collected for practical reasons (see above) already provide useful information about the target group and the **phenomenon of transit migration** on the territory. What are the most common nationalities? How many of them are part of a family or are they rather single men/women? What is the share of unaccompanied minors among them? What is the most common migration project?

Other useful info that could be collected is: administrative history in other EU Member States (including information about the possibility of being a 'Dublin case'), first country of arrival in the EU, date of arrival in Belgium/France and since when has the migrant actively been undertaking attempts to reach the UK from France/Belgium (if the migration project = UK).

During the first year of the Reach Out pilot project, the focus was mainly on the practical monitoring of information and harmonising the collection of information in France and Belgium, knowing that the realities are slightly different in both countries. The way referrals are carried out and the outcomes are measured differently because of differences in regional structures in both countries. While in Belgium it is a bit easier to measure results (small country, most of the immigration services centralised in Brussels), in France they went a bit further in collecting data for analytical reasons. In general, the harmonisation of indicators was easy as the profile of migrants and the transit migration phenomenon is very similar in northern France and Belgium. The data collection needs to be further optimised in the next phase of the Reach Out project.

### **Note**

Nearly all personal data concerning the target group is collected on 'declaration' – it is not official and verified data. Most of the migrants do not have identity documents and verifying data in official databases or registers is almost never an option. Be aware that data is collected only when approved by the migrant and in compliance with national (or internal) GDPR legislation.



## Conclusion

This guide for *reaching out to undocumented migrants* has been drafted within the scope of the Reach Out project and brings together insights, experiences and best practices from the project's Franco-Belgian outreach team. Despite the challenging nature of outreach the team has conceptualised their experiences and summarised the dynamics of its outreach activities into an innovative **outreach model**, while introducing the idea of '**micro-counselling**'. This model can offer structure and guidance to field workers reaching out to the target group.

Even though the model has been developed by a team of state officials and hence relates to options and choices linked to their mission (e.g. AVR, international protection), it shows potential to be tested outside this context and outside Belgium and France. The model should be considered as a solid base, but it is also an invitation to other outreach workers working with a similar target group to share new insights and experiences in different contexts so the model becomes subject of continuous updates. After all, undocumented migrants on the move are an everyday reality. It is a contemporary phenomenon in many urban areas of several EU Member States and is not limited only to the Franco-Belgian context. The method of outreach, which in this guide centred around key concepts as **dialogue, guidance, trust, correct information, building a network and reflection towards decision**, can be of great help in the search for pragmatic and durable solutions.

