

HOW DO EU MEMBER STATES, NORWAY AND SWITZERLAND ASSESS THE TRAVEL OF BENEFICIARIES OF INTERNATIONAL PROTECTION TO THEIR COUNTRY OF ORIGIN?

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Introduction to the EMN Study on Beneficiaries of international protection travelling to and contacting authorities of their country of origin

Beneficiaries of international protection (BIPs) in EU Member States, Norway and Switzerland sometimes travel back to their countries of origin or enter into contact with the national authorities of these countries. Whilst BIPs are free to move to other countries, including to and from their country of origin, such circumstances are not without consequences for their protection status.

What knowledge do the Member States, Norway and Switzerland have about the reasons why beneficiaries of international protection travel to their country of origin, or contact the national authorities of those countries?

What challenges do the EU Member States, Norway and Switzerland face when assessing cases of beneficiaries travelling

to their country of origin and its impact on their protection status, considering that at all stages, fundamental rights must be respected?

How many protection statuses have been effectively withdrawn following travel to the country of origin?

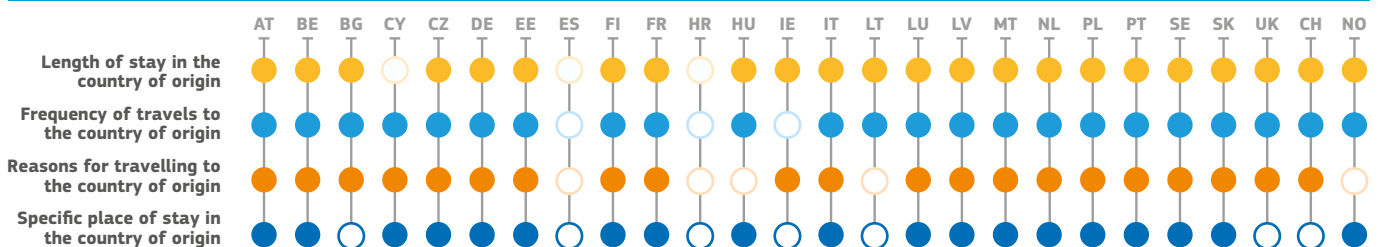
What are the consequences of withdrawal of the protection status on the residence rights of the beneficiary concerned and on his / her family?

By exploring the policies and practices that apply to assess travel of BIPs to their country of origin, or their contact with authorities from these countries, this EMN Study provides an overview of recent trends and challenges in 24 Member States, Norway and Switzerland.

Key findings

- The increased attention** in the media and at the political level given to the phenomenon of beneficiaries of international protection travelling to their country of origin, has led some States to introduce legal and practice changes (centralising information, enhanced cooperation mechanisms, establishing dedicated units).
- The scale of beneficiaries travelling to their country of origin remains difficult to estimate**, but where data is available the numbers overall seem low. Likewise, little public information is available at EU or national level on the number of protection statuses which were withdrawn because a beneficiary travelled to his/her country of origin.
- There are numerous reasons why BIPs travel to their country of origin.** The most commonly invoked motives for travel related to visiting family members, illness of close family members, and attending weddings or funerals. Generally, beneficiaries of international protection contacting authorities of their country of origin in the State of protection was not contentious, except in cases whereby the contact led to the allocation or renewal of a passport.
- BIPs are in most States about the potential consequences of travelling to their country of origin as travel limitations may feature on the refugee travel document**, indicating that it is not valid for travel to the country of origin.
- Most States consider travel to the country of origin as an indication that international protection may no longer be needed** While it could result in the start of a cessation procedure, the act alone was rarely enough to end international protection.
- Most States face challenges in assessing the travel to the country of origin and its impact on the international protection status** due to the complexity in obtaining evidence that a beneficiary de facto travelled to his/her country of origin and to verify the reasons for such travel.
- In all States, the withdrawal of protection status also can have consequences for the right of residence of a (former) BIP on the territory of the State concerned** and may also affect the international protection status and right of residence of his/her family members and/or dependants.

Circumstances considered by national authorities when assessing the end of protection following travels to the country of origin



Source: EMN NCP reports

Note: Fully coloured circles indicate States which consider the above mentioned circumstances when assessing cessation of protection

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