

## **Iran**

### **EU engagement to date**

There is no EU readmission agreement or arrangement with Iran. However, Terms of References (ToRs) for a Comprehensive Dialogue between Iran and the EU on Migration and Refugee issues have been agreed and are supposed to be signed by the two sides at the earliest occasion. The ToRs include the topic of non-voluntary returns, which Iran previously always refused to consider invoking ‘constitutional constraints’.

### **Cooperation on readmission**

In 2019, 9 835 Iranian nationals staying illegally in the Member States were issued return decisions and 1 665 effectively returned to Iran resulting in a **return rate** of 17%. Member States submitted 428 readmission requests to Iranian authorities, who issued 93 travel documents resulting in an **issuance rate** of 22%.

A total of 20 Member States reported having approached the authorities of Iran for readmission matters related to its nationals in 2019.

No Member State reported having a **bilateral agreement or arrangement** in place with Iran.

Two thirds of the responding Member States, accounting for 80% of all Iranian nationals ordered to leave, assess the overall cooperation with Iran in the **identification procedure** as poor or very poor. Since Iran only accepts voluntary returns, identification takes place to ascertain that the returnee voluntarily returns (if at all, as two Member States report that their requests remain unanswered). Travel documents are therefore issued only in such cases.

In that context, a third of the responding Member States have an established routine for cooperation on identification, which is for most of them often to always effectively implemented with Iran’s diplomatic missions.

While for two-thirds of the responding Member States consular interviews are often to always performed upon their request as necessary (a rule to secure that return is voluntary), outcomes are, on average, unsatisfactory. Interviews are therefore often or always requested by Iranian authorities in cases where sufficient evidences to establish nationality was already provided (e.g. valid or expired travel documents), in the case of 12 Member States.

According to more than half of the responding Member States, the **issuance of travel documents** rarely or never takes place in a timely manner. Additional elements other than nationality are always taken into account by Iran when deciding whether to issue travel documents or not in the case of 11 Member States.

With Iran only accepting voluntary returnees, **charter flights** are not allowed.

In general, Member States have assessed the **overall limited cooperation on return and readmission** with Iran as poor or stable, rather stagnating, since 2015

*With a total of 9 835 Iranian nationals ordered to leave in 2019, Iran ranks ninth amongst visa-bound third countries whose nationals have been issued return decisions in the Member States. Overall, two-thirds of Member States interact with Iran on readmission matters on a significant number of cases, even though only a fraction of the high number of return decisions issued to Iranian nationals are followed up with requests for readmission. No jointly agreed procedures are in place at EU level and there are no bilateral arrangements however a third of the Member States have an established routine for readmission. Identification processes deliver unsatisfactory results or no results for Member States representing three quarters of return decisions issued and are rarely followed up with issuance of travel document, as Iran only cooperates on voluntary returns. Cooperation could be improved by agreeing on ways to cooperate on forced return along a clear and predictable procedure, and swift issuance of travel documents. This, potentially facilitated by capacity building projects, should result in a better issuance rate of travel documents and a higher return rate.*