

**[ POEA ADVISORY NO. 04, April 11, 2014 ]**

**BELGIUM'S ASSISTED VOLUNTARY RETURN PROGRAM (AVRP)**

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The Philippine Embassy in Brussels has reported that the Belgian Federal Agency for the Reception of Asylum Seekers (FEDASIL) and the International Office of Migration (IOM) in Brussels have provide the following information regarding FEDASIL's Assisted Voluntary Return Program (AVRP):

- a. The Belgian government, through FEDASIL, will organized returns on a voluntary basis for people living in Belgium without a permanent/valid residence permit and those who have decided to return to live in their home country. The AVRP also covers irregular migrants who have decided to return to their home country but cannot return due to lack of financial means.
- b. The IOM in Brussels is in charge of the practical organization of the return journeys. The journey is generally made by plane, but returns by bus are organized to some destinations, for instance the Balkan countries.
- c. FEDASIL stressed that returns are voluntary. After applying, the person concerned may change his decision and stay. In this respect, voluntary returns are fundamentally different from forced returns, which are the responsibility of the Belgian Immigration Office.
- d. Asylum applicants automatically receive information about possible voluntary return. Migrants interested in the AVRP may call a toll-free number (FEDASIL Tel.No. 0032-02-213-4378) or approach a Fedasil Return Desk (there is one located at the Zavantern Airport and Brussels Central Station). They may also contact non-governmental partner organization in Belgium such as CARITAS (CARITAS Tel.No. 0032-02-229-3611).

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