

**Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC)**

**EU engagement to date**

The Commission has not engaged so far with the Democratic Republic of the Congo to formalise cooperation on readmission practices. However, the EURLO deployed in the country supports operational cooperation in identification and returns. Article 13 of the ACP-EU Cotonou Agreement, to which DRC is party, prescribes the commitment of the partner countries to cooperate with the EU in readmitting its own nationals.

**Cooperation on readmission:**

In 2019, 6 540 Congolese nationals staying illegally in the Member States were issued return decisions and 160 effectively returned to the Democratic Republic of Congo resulting in a **return rate** of 2%. Member States submitted 313 readmission requests to DRC authorities, who issued 200 travel documents resulting in an **issuance rate** of 64%.

A total of 16 Member States reported having approached the authorities of DRC for readmission matters related to its nationals in 2019. Two Member States reported having **bilateral agreements/arrangements** in place with DRC, whose relevant provisions are always respected.

More than half of the responding Member States representing 57% of return decisions issued to Congolese citizens, assess the overall cooperation with DRC in the **identification procedure** as average to very good. Seven Member States have an established routine either with the diplomatic representation or with the central authorities via the EURLO, which is effectively implemented for five Member States. Six Member States representing 42% of return decisions, indicated that the overall cooperation with DRC in the identification procedure is poor or very poor, however for most of the potential caseload without indicating whether identification has been requested. Cooperation via the EURLO is assessed as effective by all the Member States who reported having attempted this channel.

Evidence accepted includes not only valid or expired passports, but also in most cases information extracted from the VIS and other identity documents.

Half of the responding Member States reported information on consular interviews: in five cases interviews are organised upon request as necessary while in three cases they are never or rarely organised.

Five Member States reported interviews being often to always requested by DRC authorities in cases where sufficient evidences to establish nationality are provided (e.g. valid or expired travel documents).

According to more than half of the responding Member States, representing half of the return decisions issued, the **issuance of travel documents** always or almost always takes place in a timely manner.

DRC accepts returns by **charters flights**.

## RESTREINT UE/EU RESTRICTED

Certain restrictions are applied in case of returns by scheduled flights, namely visa are required for escorts

In general, Member States have assessed the **overall cooperation on return and readmission** as stable or improving.

*With a total of 6 540 Congolese nationals ordered to leave in 2019, the Democratic Republic of Congo ranks 18<sup>th</sup> amongst visa-bound third countries whose nationals have been issued return decisions in the Member States. Overall, half of the Member States engage on readmission with DRC. No jointly agreed procedures are in place at EU level, however the EURLO deployed to DRC was able to successfully support any requesting Member States in identification and issuance of travel documents. Two Member States have bilateral agreements. With Member States representing half of the return decisions issued to Congolese nationals, identification processes are conducted in a satisfactory manner, including through interviews, however the other Member States encounter difficulties. Once identification is performed issuance of travel documents is timely in half the cases. For a more effective and predictable readmission cooperation, the better cooperation practices would need to be extended to all Member States, by expediting identification processes and issuing travel documents without interviews for documented cases. This, together with Member States increasing the number of readmission requests channeled through the EURLO, should eventually result in a higher return rate.*