Bangladesh

EU engagement to date

The EU-Bangladesh Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) for the Identification and Return of Persons without an Authorisation to Stay were signed on 20 September 2017. In 2018, Bangladesh concluded identical SOPs with Norway and in April 2019 agreed to extend the application of the EU SOPs to Switzerland. The EU-Bangladesh Joint Working Group on SOPs has been meeting regularly since to advance the implementation of the SOPs. A consular workshop took place in November 2018. To support implementation of the SOPs, the Commission financed a EUR 4.8 million project which developed a RCMS in Bangladesh. The project, entering the testing phase and foreseen to be concluded in 2020, also includes a substantial capacity building component to allow relevant authorities to access and use the existing identity records for identification. Furthermore, the follow-up to identification requests and operational cooperation with the authorities on the spot is ensured by the EURLO, deployed in Dhaka since January 2017.

Cooperation on readmission

In 2019, 9 595 Bangladeshi nationals staying illegally in the Member States were issued return decisions and 820 effectively returned to Bangladesh resulting in a **return rate** of 9%. Member States submitted 603 readmission requests to Bangladesh authorities, who issued 298 travel documents resulting in an **issuance rate** of 49%.

A total of 19 Member States reported having approached the authorities of Bangladesh for readmission matters related to its nationals in 2019.

According to ten Member States – accounting for over 60% of of all Bangladeshi nationals ordered to leave the EU – the relevant provisions of the **Standard Operating Procedures** are rarely or almost never respected by Bangladesh. This can be largely attributed to the fact that Bangladesh does not respect the timelines agreed in the SOPs and frequently does not communicate identification results at all. At the same time, four Member States, in which approximately 27% Bangladeshi nationals ordered to leave can be found, reported that the relevant provisions are always or very often respected by Bangladesh.

An equal number of responding Member States assess the overall cooperation with Bangladesh in the **identification procedure** as good or very good, as the number of Member States who assess the cooperation as poor or very poor, with the remaining five assessing it as average. Respectively around 30%, 14% and 47% Bangladeshi nationals ordered to leave can be found in those Member States. At the same time, 16 Member States report having an established routine with diplomatic missions, which in 13 cases is effective.

For more than half of responding Member States consular interviews are often or always performed upon their request with, on average, acceptable (46% of Member States) or very satisfactory (23%) outcomes.

However, interviews are often or always requested by Bangladeshi authorities even in cases where sufficient evidence to establish nationality is provided (e.g. valid or expired travel

documents) in the case of seven Member States effectively delaying the issue of travel documents.

According to six responding Member States, once the person has been positively identified by Bangladeshi authorities**,** the **issuance of travel documents** always or almost always takes place in a timely manner, however in the view of seven Member States travel documents are rarely or almost never issued in a timely manner. Those Member States account for respectively around 63% and 23% of Bangladeshi nationals ordered to leave the EU. Two Member States have not received a single travel document.

Returns by **charters flights** are accepted by Bangladesh*,* but subject to the issuance of permission to land, restriction on the number of returnees on board and a visa requirement for escorts (although these can be obtained on arrival).

In general, 57.9% of the responding Member States assessed the **overall cooperation on return and readmission** as improved since 2015, while 21% as stable.

With a total of 9 595 Bangladeshi nationals ordered to leave in 2019, Bangladesh ranks 11th amongst visa-bound third countries whose nationals have been issued return decisions in the Member States. Overall, two-thirds of the Member States interact with Bangladesh on readmission. Practices are gradually being established however for the moment they remain unpredictable. The provisions of the SOPs are not closely respected by the Bangladeshi authorities. Identification processes are conducted successfully, including through interviews, and travel documents are issued timely in about half of the cases concerned, across all interacting Member States. For the other half these processes are delayed, discontinued or not performed. Cooperation could be improved by extending the good practices to Bangladesh diplomatic missions in all Member States. This would require respecting the deadlines foreseen in the SOPs, improving its performance in the area of identification, organising interviews when requested by Member States, expediting the process by issuing travel documents without interviews for documented cases, not restricting the number of returnees per flight and accepting charter flights from all Member States that may request it. This, facilitated also by a functional RCMS and increased capacity to use biometric data for identification, should result in a better rate of issuance of travel documents and a higher return rate.