



EMN FOCUSED STUDY 2012

Establishing Identity for International Protection: Challenges and Practices

National Contribution from Latvia

Disclaimer: The following responses have been provided primarily for the purpose of completing a Synthesis Report for the above-titled EMN Focused Study. The contributing EMN NCPs have provided information that is, to the best of their knowledge, up-to-date, objective and reliable within the context and confines of this study. The information may thus not provide a complete description and may not represent the entirety of the official policy of an EMN NCPs' Member State.

The aim of the study is to provide an overview of important challenges facing national authorities in their efforts to establish, in the absence of credible documentation, the identity of applicants for international protection (i.e. asylum and subsidiary protection) and for the return of rejected applicants. It also aims to draw together an overview of national practices in handling these challenges. This Study would hence inform the EU Member States, Norway and the Commission about the nature of these challenges and about the extent to which, and how, (Member) States respond to them, while allowing for the identification of possible steps towards further (joint) actions.

Top-line 'Factsheet'

Despite the low numbers of the applications for international protection in comparison with other EU Member States, significant proportion of applicants for whom identity was not documented at the time of application has been stated. At the same time numbers of these applicants have increased since 2007 from 13 to 50 in 2011, thus proving that establishing identity is a relevant issue. Most of these applicants are nationals of Afghanistan, Kongo, Iran, Lybia and Bangladesh. Until now the identity has been fully established to all applicants for whom it was not documented at the time of application.

As regards forced return of the rejected applicants, it should be mentioned that such cases are comparatively rare (in 2011 – 9), because the voluntary return principle was adopted and rejected applicants in most cases choose to return through the assisted voluntary return programmes.

The State Border Guard has the operational responsibility for establishing identity, as well as is the central institution for issues related to determination of identity and/or verification of documents for both procedures.

The official documents (passport, ID card) are accepted as identity establishing documents for applicants of international protection (in practice they have primary meaning), other documents are also accepted, but only as supporting documents which could contain useful

information to identify person and are assessed on case by case basis.

The scope of rights and obligations to identify applicant are stipulated in the national legislation within both procedures (international protection and return). The use of methodology for identification is not covered by legislation and is adopted on flexible manner based on overall experience.

In cases when no documentation is available, prior tools includes interviews, fingerprints, consultations of relevant databases, other methods are used depending on each case.

The fact that identity is not established does not mean that the international protection can not be granted and does not influence the decision making process on return of the rejected applicant.

Section 1

The National Framework

1.1 The Challenges and Scope of the issue

Is the issue of establishing identity in the absence of credible documentation considered an issue within the framework of the procedure for:

a) international protection?; and

b) the forced return of a rejected applicant to their (presumed) country of origin?

If Yes, briefly outline for either or both of the two cases above, the main issues, challenges and difficulties within your (Member) State (e.g. no identification documents, false documents, multiple identities, applicants from certain third countries)

In both cases – within the framework of the procedure for international protection and the forced return of a rejected applicant to their (presumed) country of origin, the issue of establishing identity is relevant.

In Latvia number of those persons for whom identity is not established at the time of application increases each year. Mostly these persons do not have any identification documents or they present false documents (when trying to cross the border and then applying for asylum). The procedure of establishing identity is a challenge by itself.

Main difficulties:

- applicants do not wish to cooperate with officials in order to establish identity;
- during the procedure for international protection it is not possible to request information from (presumed) country of origin without permission of the applicant;
- cooperation with third-countries (mostly – Africa and Middle East region) in return of rejected applicants – the (presumed) countries of origin can not effectively establish if the particular person is or is not the national of the country due to the lack of population registers or similar systems; not always officials from (presumed) countries of origin want to cooperate on these matters;
- limited resources (both – financial and human) – a lot depends on the staff, how qualified it is and how it is motivated to achieve the results (after the 2008 economic crisis there were changes in the staff which directly relates to identification issues);

- some methods e.g. language analysis, age assessment do not provide exact results and are expensive.

If Yes, please also indicate which of the following factors listed below contribute to the issues. Please support your answers with reference to statistics (e.g. those presented under Question 1.2 below), research or any other sources of information (e.g. media debates, case-law, policy documents, practitioners' views).

- ***The volume of cases where no credible documentation is available to substantiate an applicant's identity is considered to be large and/or growing.***

Yes, since 2007 numbers have gradually increased, but due to the absence of systematic data collection, it is not possible to fully evaluate the scope of the issue. (See Section 1.2.)

- ***The measures used to establish an applicant's identity in the absence of credible documentation are resource-intensive.***

Yes, cases usually are complex and provide detailed examination of the initial information – additional interviews, database searches, different analysis, cooperation with involved institutions and third countries etc. Also some of the expertises (e.g. language analysis) used are expensive, even considering that all costs are covered from the European Refugee Fund. (Practitioners' view)

- ***The measures used to establish identity are not always successful.***

No, even if the different methods do not lead to exact results, the additional information could significantly facilitate identification. (Practitioners' view)

- ***Decision-making on applications for international protection is difficult due to the fact that measures used to establish identity are not always successful.***

No, decision-making on applications for international protection are based on the information provided by the applicant and it does not matter if his/her identity is fully established. (Practitioners' view).

- ***A significant proportion of rejected applicants for international protection cannot be returned to their country of origin due to the fact that measures used to establish identity are not always successful.***

No, there are no evidences (statistics or practical issues) on this.

List the countries of (claimed) origin for which establishing identity is particularly difficult, (i) when considering asylum applications; (ii) for implementing return

In both cases – all regions of Africa and Middle East (e.g. Cameroon, Congo, Egypt, Cote d'Ivoire, Bangladesh, Lybia etc.).

- ***Other (Member) State specific factors***

Nothing to report.

1.2 Statistics on the Scale of the Issue

NB! As statistics from Eurostat on asylum are rounded to the nearest 5 and the numbers in Latvia are small, in order to characterize trends the national statistics are used.

	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	Additional Information (e.g. Source, caveats, reasons for trends, top five nationalities, with numbers for total applicants – see below Table also)
<u>Total Number</u> of applicants for international protection	34	51	52	61	335	Source: The Office of Citizenship and Migration Affairs. Top 5 nationalities: Georgia, Kongo, Afghanistan, Russia and Syria.
Number of applicants for whom <u>identity</u> was not documented at the time of application	13	18	10	42	50	Source: The State Border Guard. Top 5 nationalities: Afghanistan, Kongo, Iran, Lybia and Bangladesh.
Number of applicants for whom <u>identity was wholly or partially established</u> during the asylum process thereby allowing the relevant authorities to reach a particular decision on international application (e.g. grant, refuse, defer)	13	18	10	42	50	Source: The State Border Guard. The identity was wholly established to all applicants for whom it was not documented at the time of application.
<u>Total Number of Positive Decisions</u>	8	3	11	25	27	Source: The Office of Citizenship and Migration Affairs.
Total Number of Positive Decisions for applicants whose identity was not documented at the time of application	3	2	5	14	16	Source: The Office of Citizenship and Migration Affairs.
Total Number of Positive Decisions for applicants whose identity was considered sufficiently established by the decision-making authorities	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	

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Total Number of <u>Negative Decisions</u>	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	
Total Number of Negative Decisions for applicants whose identity was not documented at the time of application	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	
Total Number of Negative Decisions for applicants whose identity was not considered by sufficiently established by the decision-making authorities	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	
Total number of (Forced) <u>Returns undertaken</u> of all rejected applicants	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	9	Source: The State Border Guard. Before 2011 this kind of statistics was not collected.
Number of (Forced) Returns of rejected applicants whose identity had to be established at the time of return	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	
Number of (Forced) Returns of rejected applicants whose return could not be executed as their identity was not considered to be sufficiently established by the authorities of the (presumed) country of origin	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	

If desired, and it cannot be fitted in the Table, add further details concerning particular trends and/or notable aspects of the statistics provided.

1.3 Relevant EU and National Legislation

Is the process to be used to determine identity within the procedure for international protection laid down in legislation?

If Yes, briefly specify which legislative documents, including their link to relevant EU acquis, regulate the process of identity determination in relation to the procedure for international protection.

Where possible, please refer to your National Contribution to the Organisation of Asylum and Migration Policies in the EU, rather than repeating the information here.

The process as itself is not laid down in the legislation. The legislation provides the rights and obligations to identify the applicant. It is stipulated in the Asylum Law (adopted on 30 June, 2009), where provisions of Council Directive 2004/83/EC of 29 April 2004 on minimum standards for the qualification and status of third country nationals or stateless persons as refugees or as persons who otherwise need international protection and the content of the protection granted and Council Regulation 2725/2000 of 11 December 2000 concerning the establishment of “Eurodac” for the comparison of fingerprints for the effective application of the Dublin Convention were transposed.

The Asylum Law stipulates responsible institution for the identification of applicant (the State Border Guard), its’ rights – to perform inspection of an asylum seeker and possessions thereof, to specify and organise expert-examinations and inspections of documents, objects or language or medical and other expert-examinations and inspections, to take the fingerprints of an asylum seeker and photograph him/her, and obligation – to conduct the interview with applicant in order to identify applicant for international protection.

Is the process to be used to determine identity within the procedure for the forced return of rejected applicants laid down in legislation?

If Yes, briefly specify which legislative documents, including their link to relevant EU acquis, regulate the process of identity determination in relation to the forced return of rejected applicants.

Where possible, please refer to your National Contribution to the Organisation of Asylum and Migration Policies in the EU, rather than repeating the information here.

The process as itself is not laid down in the legislation. The legislation provides the rights and obligations to identify the applicant. It is stipulated in the Immigration Law (adopted on 31 October, 2003). After rejection of the application, applicants’ stay in the country is illegal and return procedures are performed according to the provisions of the Immigration Law, where provisions of Council Directive 2008/115/EC of 16 December 2008 on common standards and procedures in Member States for returning illegally staying third-country nationals were transposed.

The Immigration Law stipulates responsible institution for the identification of applicant (the State Border Guard), its’ obligations – to take rejected applicants’ fingerprints, conduct an inspection of a rejected applicant and his/her property, as well as, if necessary, ensure a medical examination, and rights – to specify and organise expert-examinations and inspections of documents, objects or language or medical and other expert-examinations and inspections in order to identify rejected applicant for international

protection and his/her country of nationality.

The procedures for forced return of the rejected applicants (as well as foreigner in general) are determined in the respective Cabinet of Ministers Regulations.

1.4 The institutional framework at national level

Which national authorities have the operational responsibility for establishing the identity of applicants for international protection?

The State Border Guard.

Which national authorities have the operational responsibility for establishing the identity of applicants for international protection who have to (be) forcibly return(ed) to their (presumed) country of origin?

The State Border Guard.

Does your (Member) State have a central competence centre for issues related to the determination of identity and/or verification of documents?

Yes.

If Yes, what issues does the centre cover:

-issues relating to the determination of identity in respect of the procedure for granting international protection OR in respect of the procedure for executing the return of rejected applicants) OR in respect of both of these procedures

-issues relating to the verification of documents in respect of the procedure for granting international protection OR in respect of the procedure for executing the return of rejected applicants OR in respect of both of these procedures

The central competence centre (the State Border Guard) covers issues related to the determination of identity and the verification of documents in respect of both of these procedures.

If Yes:

- *Has the centre developed its own database / reference base for*
 - *genuine documents?* Yes, the Register of Document Specimens.
 - *false documents?* Yes, the Register of Document Specimens.
- *Does it make use of the database iFADO (iPRADO)¹ for checking false ID documents?* Yes.
- *Does it make use of the EDISON² system?* No.

There is no direct access to EDISON system, but information system Edison DISCS version 2.2.4. is in use.

¹ [PRADO](#) Public register of authentic identity and travel documents online

² EDISON Travel Documents System

- *Does its tasks involve:*
 - *Advisory services?* Yes.
 - *Development of Methods?* Yes.
 - *Training of frontline officers?* Yes.
 - *Support with difficult cases?* Yes.
- *Does it have a forensic document unit?* Yes.

Are the officials responsible for determining the identity of applicants for international protection authorised to access EU databases holding identity information about third-country nationals (e.g. EURODAC, SIS II, VIS, etc.)?

Yes.

Section 2

Methods for Establishing Identity

2.1 Definition and Documents required for establishing identity

What definition (if any) of identity is used with regard to (a) applicants for international protection and (b) for the return process.

The legislation does not provide specific definition of “identity” for applicants of international protection or for the return process.

At the same time in the legislation definition of “identity” in general is clearly prescribed – totality of natural persons’ data, physical characteristics and parameters which allows to detach this person precisely from the another natural person (Biometric data processing systems law, Art.1, Par.3).

The legislation also prescribes definition of “travel document” – a personal identification document which, in accordance with international agreements binding upon the Republic of Latvia, this Law and other regulatory enactments, grants the right to its holder to cross the State border of the Republic of Latvia. (Immigration Law, Sec.1, Par.3).

The main purpose of the identification document is to prove the identity of the holder.

What types of documents and other information do authorities in your (Member) State accept as (contributing to) establishing the identity for applicants of international protection? For example:

- *Official travel documents: Passports, ID cards;*
- *Other documents: birth certificates, divorce certificates, marriage licences, qualification certificates, etc.*

Where possible, please indicate whether copies are accepted by relevant authority(ies) and which type of documents are considered by the national authorities as core or supporting documents. Also indicate the major issues faced concerning determining the veracity (or genuineness) of documents.

In practice all official documents (that have been issued by a state institution authorised

by law) have core meaning – passports, ID cards. Documents, which give the rights to entry into one or more countries – visa or residence permit, are accepted as well (possible to contact the country, which issued particular document and verify the authenticity).

Other documents as birth certificates, marriage licences, qualification certificates, court decisions, party cards etc. are also accepted, but only as supporting documents which could contain useful information to identify person and are assessed on case by case basis.

The copies are accepted, but they are not considered as sufficient information source for establishing identity, are also assessed on case by case basis.

The main problem concerning determining the veracity of documents is the lack of appropriate specimens, especially from the countries where registration of population is not put in order (region of Africa, Middle East).

What types of documents are accepted by national authorities in the (presumed) countries of origin if those applicants for international protection have to be returned, because they have received a negative decision, exhausted or abandoned the procedure? Please illustrate any differences between the documents accepted by the authorities of the (presumed) countries of origin and the documents accepted by the relevant authorities of your (Member) State.

The documents which are accepted by national authorities in the (presumed) countries of origin vary from case to case and depend on requirements of particular country.

Usually, if the rejected applicant has valid travel document of the (presumed) country of origin, than he/she returns using that document, but if the rejected applicant does not have any valid travel document, the (presumed) country of origin usually issues a return certificate after the identity of the applicant is established.

In order to the (presumed) country of origin could identify the rejected applicant and take him/her back, the officials of the State Border Guard get in contact with the nearest diplomatic or consular mission of the (presumed) country of origin and hand over all available documentation (passport, ID card (could be invalid or damaged), birth certificate, marriage licence etc. – all that can fully or partially proof the belonging of the person to particular country), as well as fingerprints and photos, which are taken manually, taking into account that many third countries does not have electronic data base.

In practice there have been some cases when in order to identify the rejected applicant it was necessary to present him/her to the officials of the diplomatic or consular mission of the (presumed) country of origin and some cases when the officials of the diplomatic or consular mission of the (presumed) country of origin were invited to Latvia for identification.

It is difficult to illustrate the differences between the documents accepted by the authorities of the (presumed) countries of origin and the documents accepted by the relevant authorities of Latvia due to the fact that documents which could be accepted may differ from case to case.

2.2 Methods used in the absence of documentary evidence of identity

The aim of this section is to investigate, for cases where aspects of the applicant's statements regarding his/her identity are not supported by documentary evidence, which methods are used by the competent authorities in the (Member) State to check the

credibility of the applicant's statements. In the boxes below, a list of methods is provided. For each method listed, please indicate

- (a) *whether it is used within the framework of the procedure for international protection and/or the procedure to forcibly return rejected applicants, or have exhausted or abandoned the procedure for international protection;*
- (b) *whether the method is obligatory (i.e. enshrined in law), whether it is part of standard practice (i.e. used in most cases but not enshrined in law) or whether it is optional (i.e. not enshrined in law and used in some cases only). The rationale for selecting some methods as obligatory or optional may relate to national legislation, outlined in Section 1.2 (which the (Member) State can refer to in their replies);*

Do national authorities make use of:

i) Language analysis to determine probable country and/or region of origin?

➤ Applicants for international protection:

Yes, is enshrined in law, used on optional basis. In practice this method is used very rarely.

➤ Return of rejected applicants for international protection:

Yes, is enshrined in law. As language analysis is performed during asylum procedure, there is no need to perform it again.

ii) Age assessment to determine probable age

➤ Applicants for international protection:

Yes, is enshrined in law, used on optional basis when applicant declares that he/she is a minor and there are reasonable doubts on it. No concrete age is mentioned in the age expertise statement, just interval which usually is +/- 3 years from the genuine age. For younger persons determination of age is more precise. In all cases the results of the expertise are interpreted in favour of applicant. In practice this method is used very rarely and rather in order to determine if within the international protection procedure the minor rights should be taken into account.

➤ Return of rejected applicants for international protection:

Yes, is enshrined in law. As age assessment was performed during asylum procedure, there is no need to perform it again.

iii) Fingerprints for comparison with National and European databases

National Database

➤ Applicants for international protection:

Yes, obligatory.

➤ Return of rejected applicants for international protection:

Yes, obligatory.

European databases

- Applicants for international protection:

Yes, obligatory.

- Return of rejected applicants for international protection:

Yes, obligatory.

iv) Photograph for comparison with National and European databases

National Database

- Applicants for international protection:

Yes, obligatory.

- Return of rejected applicants for international protection:

Yes, obligatory.

European databases

- Applicants for international protection:

No.

- Return of rejected applicants for international protection:

No.

v) Iris scans for comparison with National and European databases

National Database

- Applicants for international protection:

No.

- Return of rejected applicants for international protection:

No.

European databases

- Applicants for international protection:

No.

- Return of rejected applicants for international protection:

No.

vi) DNA analysis

- Applicants for international protection:

Yes, is enshrined in law, used on optional basis when it is necessary to prove that applicants are members of one family. This method is used very rarely due to the

high costs.

➤ Return of rejected applicants for international protection:

Yes, is enshrined in law. As DNA analysis was performed during asylum procedure, there is no need to perform it again.

vii) Interviews to determine probable country and or region of origin (or other elements of identity, such as faith and ethnicity)

➤ Applicants for international protection:

Yes, obligatory.

➤ Return of rejected applicants for international protection:

Yes, obligatory.

viii) Other (please describe, e.g. type of co-operation with or contacts in third countries), related to

➤ Applicants for international protection:

Yes, optional. It should be noted that during asylum procedure involved institutions in order to establish applicants' identity are not able to address institutions in (presumed) country of origin without applicants' written permission.

In particular cases assistance from the UNHCR or IOM on country of origin information can be used.

➤ Return of rejected applicants for international protection:

Yes, as a part of standard practice. The cooperation with consular authorities and different migration missions of the (presumed) country of origin, the use of liaison officers stationed in particular country, contacts with relevant NGO's, is important in identification process. Necessary information can also be requested from the FRONTEX, Interpol or the particular EU Member State, which has maintained large databases of specimens and forged documents.

If possible, outline briefly the rationale behind the method(s) indicated above used in your (Member) State, e.g. why some method(s) been used in preference to others, is there a hierarchy or order of methods followed, any research conducted providing evidence of the method's reliability.

The hierarchy or order of methods used is not established in the legislation, also there is no research conducted providing evidence of the method's reliability.

The preference of the methods is established on flexible manner based on overall experience.

Identification process is started with the interview in order to obtain initial information. Sometimes during the repeated interviews and if there are doubts on the genuineness of the information, it is possible to convince the applicant to provide truthful information and

reveal the identity.

Fingerprints are used obligatory, first of all in order to compare the information in databases or in the documents. If the applicant before the submission of application for international protection has requested international protection in another Member State of the EU, it is very easy to establish identity.

If the applicant has official document, during the document expertise it is possible to establish if the document is authentic and not forged and thus, establish identity.

Other methods are used depending on the case circumstances. Age assessment can be used, if there are doubts on declared age of the applicant, language analysis also is used, if necessary, to determine the approximate region of origin.

Section 3

Decision-making Process

3.1 Status and weight of different methods to determine identity

On the basis of the information gathered by the methods outlined in Section 2, how then is a decision on identification made, e.g. are some methods given more weight on their reliability than others; does there need to be consistency between the results from some of the methods used? Briefly outline whether the results from the different methods will have different status and/or will be given different weights, and whether this is laid down in legislation, policy or practice guidelines.

A separate decision on identification is not made, as well as there is no legislation, policy or guidelines which stipulate different status and/or give different weights for the methods used. There is no distinction between international protection and the return process.

Is a “grading” structure or spectrum used to denote the degree of identity determination (e.g. from “undocumented,” over “sufficiently substantiated” or “has the benefit of doubt” to “fully documented and verified”)? If Yes, outline what this is.

No.

Are any future measures considered with regard to setting up or further elaborating a “grading” structure? If Yes, outline what these are.

No.

3.2 Decisions taken by competent authorities on basis of outcomes of identity establishment

3.2.1 For the consideration of the application for international protection

What are the potential decisions that can be taken by the competent authorities where identity has been established (even partially) to inform the overall decision taken? For example, does the outcome of identity establishment influence a recommendation to “grant international protection,” “refuse international protection,” “defer decision”?

The competent authority for identification (the State Border Guard) does not provide any

recommendations to the decision making authority on international protection (the Office of Citizenship and Migration Affairs).

How important is establishing identity relative to other factors used in making an overall decision? For example, if identity cannot be established, does this de facto lead to a rejected decision? Are other factors such as gender, suspected country of origin, given more weighting than identity determination in some cases?

If the identity is established (even partially), it significantly facilitates the decision making process to grant or to refuse international protection. Also it influences the terms in which the application will be evaluated and decision will be made. The fact that identity is not established does not mean that the international protection can not be granted.

There is no evidence that such factors as gender and suspected country of origin give more weighting than identity determination.

3.2.2 For the return to country of origin

What are the potential decisions that can be taken by the competent authorities where identity has been established (even partially) to inform the overall decision taken? For example, does the outcome of identity establishment influence a recommendation to “defer return”?

The competent authority for identification (the State Border Guard) does not provide any recommendations (also as regards to defer return) to the decision making authority on return (the Office of Citizenship and Migration Affairs, it could also be the State Border Guard).

The fact that identity is not established does not influence the decision making process on return of the rejected applicant.

Are the results of the work to establish identity during the international protection process available for work to prepare for forced return?

Yes.

If ‘yes’: please describe the type of supplementary steps that may be needed with respect to identity documentation before the authorities in the receiving country are prepared to accept the return.

Please see Section 2.1.

Section 4

Conclusions

With regard to the aims of this Focussed Study, what conclusions would you draw from your findings? What is the relevance of your findings to (national and/or EU level) policymakers?

- Establishing identity is a relevant issue in Latvia with regards to the international protection. The numbers have a tendency to increase and they should be evaluated keeping in mind the total number of applicants for international protection.
- At this time the available resources allow to cope with the gradually increasing cases on identity establishment, but in case of significant increase of those applicants for whom identity is not documented on the time of application, the system will not be able to cope with it.
- The cooperation between the EU Member States on verification and determination of identification documents, on different documents specimens, as well as information exchange has very important role and, thus must be developed.
- Readmission and cooperation agreements, which facilitate the return of the rejected applicant for international protection to the third country providing clear provisions for return procedure and information exchange, play an important role at the EU level. The most challenging task is to get the necessary information and to return the applicant to the country of origin from region of Africa and Middle East (Kongo, Afghanistan, Lybia etc.). The common staff trainings are also useful and must be developed.
- In order to examine the tendencies at the EU level on the applicant's identification process for both procedures there is need for detailed statistics provided on regular basis.
- At national level identification process for both – international protection and return procedures depends a lot on staff experience and qualification level, thus, it is important to motivate such staff to continue their work, as well as to stipulate such procedures that will facilitate their work.
- The fact that one institution (the State Border Guard) is responsible for identification process for both procedures significantly facilitates reviewing of the cases, cuts down the costs, and allows using available resources efficiently.
- Establishing identity using different tools and methods in accordance with the particular circumstances of the specific case in a flexible manner is more successful.

The European Migration Network was established by the European Union Council Decision 2008/381/EC of 14 May 2008. The objective of the European Migration Network is to meet the information needs of Community institutions and of Member States' authorities and institutions by providing up-to-date, objective, reliable and, comparable information on migration and asylum, thus supporting policy-making in the European Union in these areas. The European Migration Network shall also serve to provide general public with information on these subjects.

The Network consists of the European Commission and the designated contact points of the Member States. Each contact point forms a national migration network.

Each national contact point prepares studies, the topics of which are determined by the work programme of the respective year. The topics of the studies are related to the subject of migration of third-country nationals.

The Latvian Contact Point of the European Migration Network is the Office of Citizenship and Migration Affairs.

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