

Refugee Resettlement: Europe could learn from Canada and USA

Visit of CCME delegation underlines importance of civic participation for refugees protection

A delegation of six representatives from five countries (Austria, Belgium, Finland, Italy and Spain) visited the US and Canada from the 22nd to the 30th of April. The visit was part of the project: "Understanding resettlement in practice: capacity building for action!". The project is coordinated by the Churches' Commission for Migrants in Europe (CCME). During the visit, one delegation went to visit and study the US Resettlement system while another delegation was in charge of studying the Canadian system. The two delegations discovered two completely different realities, which could inspire resettlement efforts in the EU.

The US delegation, whose visit was supported by the Church World Service (CWS), had several meetings in Washington with the Department of State, the Department of Health and Human Services and the Refugee Council. The focus was on studying the programme from a "political" perspective and from the NGOs point of view. The visit to Washington was complemented by visits to Atlanta (Georgia) and Columbus (Ohio), two different locations where resettlement programmes are in place. The possibility of seeing how the programme actually works on the field underlined that the US programme is putting a strong focus on one main aim; refugees' self sufficiency. The immediate access to the labour market, according to this system, will automatically lead to integration. While CWS underlined their concern on the limit of this philosophy, they highlighted the potential of strong community involvement in supporting refugees to achieve self-sufficiency. The good experience of NGOs in supporting refugees on their way to self-sufficiency was repeatedly underlined. The ongoing and productive networking among the NGOs active in resettlement is a major asset for refugees' integration in this context.

The second delegation, assisted by Citizenship and Immigration Canada, in Ottawa and Toronto met representatives of government, private sponsors, service provider organisations, churches and municipalities. The Canadian programme is known for its "Sponsorship" system, details of which were discussed in depth during these meetings.

In the Canadian welfare system, social organisation plays a major role in resettlement and the government plays a crucial role in supporting integration. While the Canadian government resettles 9.000 refugees through governmental programmes an additional 3000 are resettled under private sponsorships, i.e. supported by group of committed individual or churches or other civil society actors.

Based on the Canadian visit Torsten Moritz, from CCME, stated that: "Protecting refugees is seen as part of the Canadian identity. The government takes up its responsibility and civil society offers additional places for protection. We can learn a lot from this example."

Conclusions from these visits along with the results from the previous visit to Finland and the upcoming one to Kenya will inform recommendations, which will be developed at the final conference in July. The ongoing Resettlement Newsletter provides additional information on resettlement.

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The newsletter can be found <http://www.cec-kek.org/content/ccme.shtml>



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The Churches' Commission for Migrants in Europe (CCME) is the ecumenical agency on migration and integration, asylum and refugees, and against racism and discrimination in Europe. Members are Anglican, Orthodox and Protestant Churches and Councils of Churches as well as church-related agencies across Europe. CCME formally cooperates with the Conference of European Churches and the World Council of Churches.