

Portuguese Secretary of State : Civil Society Essential Partner in Refugee Protection

CCME workshop strengthens partnerships in refugee resettlement

Some 50 representatives of National NGOs, churches and government from 15 countries as well as the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) met in Lisbon from 21st to 23rd November for an international workshop to discuss future areas of cooperation in refugee resettlement. The meeting took place a few months after Portugal, which currently holds the EU Council Presidency, had committed to a annual resettlement quota. The Portuguese Council for Refugees CPR helped to host the event which concluded a series of events organised by the project "Refugee resettlement – broadening the basis in Europe", which is coordinated by the Churches' Commission for Migrants in Europe (CCME).

During his opening address at the workshop José Magalhaes, Secretary of State and Assistant to the Ministry for Internal Administration underlined that Portugal considers civil society involvement as an essential part of its commitment to refugee The well-established protection. cooperation between the state and civil society partners in the integration of refugees would therefore be continued in the area of refugee resettlement as Portugal is preparing for the arrival of the first resettled refugees.



During the two-day workshop, representatives of NGOs, churches and UNHCR discussed how to strengthen partnerships in a variety of different areas, such as advocacy, refugee integration and identification of refugees in need of resettlement. Cases of existing cooperation between UNHCR and civil society organisations in different EU member states as well as in countries outside the EU were presented and discussed in view of lessons to be learnt.

Torsten Moritz who has coordinated the CCME project on resettlement commented: "As more and more EU member states start programmes on refugee resettlement it is essential to understand that civil society involvement is key to the success of such programmes. This workshop highlighted areas, in which such cooperation can be developed – particularly in cooperation with UNHCR."

Note to editors:

Refugee resettlement is the process by which refugees who have to flee their home country and find initial, but insufficient or temporary protection in another country, are resettled into a third country and find permanent protection and a durable, sustainable solution there. While around one hundred thousand refugees are annually resettled to the US, Canada and Australia, resettlement is since the 1960ies scarcely used in Europe: currently only six EU member states carry out resettlement, resettling around 3.500 refugees annually. The Churches' Commission for Migrants in Europe (CCME) is since 2004 actively promoting resettlement as an additional tool for refugee protection in Europe.

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The views expressed and information provided by the project and the partners involved do not necessarily reflect the point of view of the European Commission and do in no way fall under the responsibility of the European Commission.

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.