



Refugee Resettlement Newsletter Churches' Commission for Migrants in Europe

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*For I was a stranger,
and you welcomed me.*

Matthew 25:35

EU resettlement scheme: time for a courageous, imaginative proposal!

Welcome the new volume of CCME's Resettlement Newsletter!!!

...once again we will keep you updated on news regarding resettlement towards the member states of the European Union. Our edition comes shortly after Sweden, the EU Member State with most extensive resettlement experience, has assumed the EU presidency. The Swedish government has already highlighted that it will treat the issue of resettlement as a priority and will proactively lead negotiations on the Commission's upcoming proposal on an EU resettlement Scheme. The Swedish Minister for Migration and Asylum Policy, Tobias Billström, has personally engaged in efforts to draw attention of colleagues across Europe to the resettlement issue.

CCME and its project partners have been active during this key period by realising debate-events in Brussels and Bucharest and a Regional Expert Seminar in Riga, in order to mobilise political support and encourage resettlement initiatives. Furthermore, CCME is organising an EU-wide conference on resettlement in August bringing together various governmental and non-governmental actors in order to provide input for the policy debate on an EU resettlement scheme.

With the resettlement of 10.000 Iraqi refugees well underway and Belgium being the next country to accept in August 50 Iraqi refugees from Syria and Jordan, CCME hopes that the EU will affirm its position on international solidarity regarding refugee protection. Various Member States have signaled their willingness to participate in joint EU resettlement activities.

What is now needed is political courage and imagination on the side of the European Commission for its proposal on an EU resettlement scheme - in order to take the debate forward and give resettlement a prominent role in the EU area of freedom, security and justice.

Enjoy the reading!

Best regards,

Torsten Moritz & Lilian Tsourdi

Resettlement in Belgium, a new effort for international solidarity?

13 February 2009: the Belgian government decides to resettle 50 refugees from Iraq. The newspapers present this breaking news as a fresh and new endeavor for a small country in the heart of Europe.

Is resettlement really new to the land that is home to Rubens and Brussels waffles? Once again it appears that history is all too easily forgotten. Since World War II Belgium has engaged in several resettlement operations: 35000 displaced persons following WW II, 4000 Hungarian refugees in 1956, 400 Asians from Uganda in 1972, 1100 Chileans in 1973, 2500 Vietnamese boat-people in 1975, 200 Bosnians in 1992 and 1200 refugees from Kosovo in 1999. All in all this accounts for more than 45000 refugees. Since 1999 however resettlement has only taken place on an ad hoc basis.



Image taken during the Belgian mission to the Al-Tanf refugee camp (Photo: Christophe Jansen)

Resettlement in Belgium, a new effort for international solidarity?

Over the last few years resettlement has been on and off the political agenda. In a newspaper article entitled "Belgium has to take in refugees" from August 2007 Mr. Dirk Van den Bulck, commissioner general for refugees and stateless persons, put in a strong plea for the introduction of a resettlement programme in Belgium. In order to properly prepare for this Belgium has recently participated in two resettlement Twinning projects, one with the Netherlands and another with the United Kingdom and Ireland.

But it is not until the Justice and Home Affairs Council of 26-27 November 2008 that things actually started moving on a political level as well. At this EU summit the member states committed themselves to resettling up to 10000 refugees from Iraq to the European Union. Following these Council Conclusions several countries started setting up a resettlement operation for this specific group: Germany promised to take in 2500, Italy 150 and Luxembourg 25. These dynamics at the EU level provided a real impetus for the political debate on resettlement in Belgium. Unfortunately with the fall of the Leterme I government mid December 2008 the momentum was temporarily lost.

In February 2009 the Belgian Minister for Migration and Asylum, Mrs. Annie Turtelboom, was invited by her Dutch colleague, Mr. Ernst Hirsch Ballin, to take part in a Dutch resettlement selection mission to Kenya. The Netherlands planned to select Congolese and Somali refugees there. A visit to the famous Kakuma refugee camp clearly made a strong impression. Although two Belgian journalists had joined the Minister during this mission, media coverage remained rather limited. Politicians on the other hand picked up on Minister Turtelboom's message that she wanted to start a resettlement project in Belgium as well. Several questions were put to the Minister in parliament, mainly focusing on the reception and housing conditions for resettled refugees, the criteria for resettlement and the possibility of resettling other groups to Belgium. The Flemish Refugee Council that had long been advocating for a resettlement programme in Belgium took the opportunity to reaffirm their position in a newspaper article entitled "Resettlement, an intelligent form of migration".

Following this mission Minister Turtelboom, together with the Minister for Social Integration, Mrs. Marie Arena, submitted a proposal for a pilot project on resettlement to the Council of Ministers. And then, on Friday the 13th, the government decided to go ahead with the resettlement of 50

refugees from Iraq. This project focuses on women at risk because of their extremely vulnerable situation. In communicating with the media it was stressed that resettlement is to be seen as one of three durable solutions, next to return and local integration. In that regard the importance of a global approach to the asylum and migration phenomenon was emphasized.

In a truly European effort Belgium organized a joint resettlement mission to Syria, Jordan and Al Tanf in May 2009, together with the Netherlands. During this mission experts from the Office of the Commissioner General for Refugees and Stateless Persons have conducted asylum interviews with the refugees, whereas experts from Fedasil have also heard these women at risk to gather all information that is relevant for their reception and integration in Belgium. Somewhere in August or September 2009 the 50 refugees that have been selected for resettlement will be transported from the region to Belgium. Upon arrival they will be transferred to a reception centre where they will stay for a few weeks. During this initial reception special integration courses for the resettled refugees will be organized. After this they will move on to private housing in selected communities where they will follow the ordinary integration programme with extra assistance by several NGO's.

This resettlement pilot project is an obvious sign of international solidarity. Given the clear history of resettlement in Belgium a renewed effort in this field comes highly recommended.

Christophe Jansen, (*Office of the Commissioner General for Refugees and Stateless Persons*)

Image from the UNHCR Damascus Resettlement Office (photo: Cristophe Jansen)



Resettled refugees: newcomers in the municipality



Coordinator of the Swedish Migration Board, Denise Thomsson, providing her insight on refugee integration during the Roundtable

Round table in Brussels discusses local involvement in reception and integration of resettled refugees.

A debate on refugee resettlement to Belgium, organised by the Flemish Refugee Action and CCME, on 18th May brought together some 30 representatives of municipalities, political parties, the UN refugee agency UNHCR and civil society organisations from different parts of Belgium.

The round table took place in anticipation of the arrival of a group of 50 resettled Iraqi refugees from Jordan and Syria in August this year (the so called 'pilot project') and of the establishment of more structured resettlement operations in the following years.

The aim was to investigate the possible role of local actors in the reception and integration of these refugees and to examine whether the needs of resettled refugees and other (classical Convention) refugees and asylum seekers are the same.

Pieter De Gryse, director of the Flemish Refugee Action, started the day by stressing that in order to make the pilot project successful for the refugees, and not only for the authorities, it is very important that different actors of different levels are prepared to work together with a positive spirit.

Kathelijne Houben, collaborator of the Flemish Refugee Action, gave a short introduction to the functions and the procedures of the resettlement. She focused in particular on the different models of reception and integration in Europe, with at one hand countries as the Netherlands and Ireland with a centralised reception and at the other hand countries as Denmark, Finland, Sweden and the United Kingdom, with a strong involvement from the municipalities, starting from the moment the refugees arrive. The situation in the United Kingdom is also characterized by a strong involvement of local organisations and volunteers. She also stressed that while resettlement might seem something totally new and revolutionary in Belgian politics, this is actually not the

case. Since World War II Belgium invited at several occasions different groups of people in need of protection (e.g. Vietnamese boat people, Bosnian refugees).

Denise Thomsson, collaborator of the Swedish Migration Board and coordinator of the Swedish Resettlement Network, tried to give an insight in the different needs and expectations of resettled and other refugees and asylum seekers. She participated in the Most-project, "Promoting independence in resettlement", and as such she conducted a consultation process to investigate and analyse how resettled refugees may experience their resettlement and introduction in Sweden. The result of this consultation was somehow paradoxical, as at one hand it has been stressed that no distinction should be made and has been made between refugees and other refugees and immigrants, but on the other hand aspects have been identified that do distinguish them as a particular target group. They stayed for example for several years in refugee camps totally dependent from aid, they didn't choose their destination themselves. Jon Lord, Chief Officer for Community and Private Sector Housing in Bolton (UK), stressed at his turn that also the media tends to perceive the group of resettled refugees differently, in a more positive way. Moreover, because local authorities can anticipate on their arrival, the housing and integration of resettled refugees can be organised in advance. With as a result that almost all resettled refugees stay in the municipality of Bolton, also after the finalisation of the special guidance offered through the resettlement programme.

In the debate that followed these introductions, both Denise Thomsson and Jon Lord stressed that in order to create a durable solution, it is essential to receive the resettled refugees from day one in their assigned mu-

Resettled refugees: newcomers in the municipality

nicipality. For both speakers, it is also very important to manage the expectations of the refugees, which are rather determined by their individual history than by their status of a resettled refugee. Both speakers also agreed that the involvement of volunteers and local organisations is very important, an issue Sweden is nowadays working on, with eg. the installation of the Swedish Resettlement Network.

After lunch, Jon Lord gave an insight on the working of the Gateway Protection Programme in Bolton, the resettlement programme in the United Kingdom. The programme is characterised by a strong collaboration between the ngo Refugee Action and the municipality of Bolton, Bolton offering housing during 12 months and Refugee Action offering individual guidance. Jon Lord stressed that while Refugee Action offers a special guidance for resettled refugees, it is important that the municipality itself doesn't make any difference with other migrants.

Denise Thomsson explained that in Sweden, each municipality is free to receive or not resettled refugees. Each municipality also has its own model of organising this reception and integration. However, while in principle no distinction should be made between resettled and other refu-

gees, this is not always the case in practice. At the moment one is considering in Sweden whether the role of municipalities in the resettlement process shouldn't be diminished and whether municipalities shouldn't be obliged to participate in the process

During the debate the participants discussed a possible Belgian model of the reception and integration of resettled refugees. Participants stressed the need of sufficient government financing and the need of adequate housing. Proper financing was perceived especially as a need in housing, not so much for integration, since at least in the northern part of Belgium (Flanders) the integration of migrants is rather well organised and financed. All participants agreed that the reception and integration of the 50 Iraqi refugees should be of a high quality and not organised last minute. In no case, these people can be considered as test cases.

At the end of the day, Pieter De Gryse concluded that it is obvious that local authorities have a key role for the success of resettlement to Belgium. The debate showed that they have the potential and the will to make it happen. However, there is still a clear need for a coherent policy in Belgium, that can empower the resettled refugees for a new start.

Kathelijne Houben (*Flemish Refugee Action*)

CCME resettlement factsheets

As a response to the need to explain resettlement in an easily digestible format, CCME has produced a series of „resettlement factsheets“:

The factsheets contain concise information on various aspects of resettlement :

- what is resettlement
- what is Europe's role in resettlement
- who are the actors in resettlement
- what are the different steps of resettlement
- the personal story behind resettlement

Printed copies are still available in English, French and German,(5 A4 pages per language, each printed on both sides).

Pdf.-files with the Czech, Dutch, Italian and Spanish translations are also available. (see:

Representatives of both civil society and municipalities at the Roundtable



Annual tri-partite consultation: increased resettlement needs, integration and expectations key issues.

The annual tri-partite consultation on resettlement, this year from 30th June to 2nd July, brought together resettlement states, civil society actors and UNHCR officials from around the globe for discussions in Geneva.

Based on the latest regional analysis, UNHCR presented its global resettlement needs assessment. It anticipates the resettlement need to be about 747.000 persons in 2010, acknowledging at the same time that it can probably only process some 120.000 cases for submission to resettling states. At the same time there is concern, that there will even not be enough places available for these referred cases. Discussions on how to increase both capacity to process cases and the number of places available and /or how to prioritise these cases were therefore of crucial importance at the ATCR.

The incoming Swedish presidency of the ATC underlined its priority to increase the number of countries involved in resettlement as well as the number of resettlement places available. Being both ATC and EU presidency, high hopes in this context rested on the EU resettlement scheme.

The (anticipated) effects of the economic crisis on resettlement also played an important role in these discussions. At the same time, the role of resettlement in overcoming protracted refugee situations was highlighted.

Thematically, the issues of integration and expectations were highlighted. Presentations did on the one hand, look at ways to improve the integration capacity of resettlement states through partnership between government and civil society and, on the other hand, further developed discussions on measuring resettlement outcomes by looking at integration inputs and indicators. Presentations on the issue of "managing expectations" adressed both the expectations of refugees as well as the expectations which resettlement states, NGOs and receiving civil society might have.

The ATCR participants had a number of joint sessions with delegates of UNHCR' s consultation with NGOs, which takes place in Geneva at the same time. In his closing word High Commissioner Guterres emphasised the central role of resettlement in UNHCR' s strategy to protect the most vulnerable.

Torsten Moritz (CCME)

The UN's „Palais des Nations“ in Geneva -venue of the ATC 2009



Why should Europe resettle more refugees?

- 1) Resettlement can provide protection to those in greatest need: the most vulnerable and those in protracted refugee situations.
- 2) Resettlement is a way for Europe to demonstrate its solidarity and take its share of its responsibility in the provision of this durable solution to the world's refugees.
- 3) Resettlement provides access to Europe for refugees.
- 4) Resettlement provides the opportunity for good, co-ordinated and quality reception and integration programmes to be developed.
- 5) Resettlement is an important means of facilitating public understanding of all refugees, their plight and the situations they flee.

(CCME, based on ECRE's "Way forward")

Towards the Common EU Resettlement Scheme-the road ahead



View of the Sigtuna Foundation, where the conference will be held

CCME is organising an EU-wide conference on resettlement entitled "Towards the Common EU Resettlement Scheme - the road ahead", as part of the current project ASPIRE ("Assessing and Strengthening Participation In refugee Resettlement to Europe", co-funded by the European Refugee Fund, Centralised Actions 2007). The conference will take place from the 25th to the 28th of August, during one of the first working weeks of the Swedish EU Council Presidency, at the Sigtuna Foundation, outside Stockholm.

The conference is set to take place at a time when discussions on common resettlement efforts of the EU are entering a decisive phase. The European Commission will translate the findings of the consultations on a Common European Asylum System into more precise plans for a common EU resettlement scheme. At the same time, a new multi-annual programme for the area of Freedom, Security and Justice, including the area of refugee protection, will be developed (the so-called "Stockholm Programme"). Both discussions are expected to enter a decisive phase in the early months of the Swedish EU Presidency.

Against this background the conference aims at achieving five objectives:

- 1.To create a space for reflection on the current state of play regarding an EU resettlement scheme, in particular in view of the discussions on the "Stockholm programme"
- 2.To identify the areas of added value of such an EU resettlement scheme
- 3.To highlight the benefits of existing bi- or multilateral cooperation between Member States and civil society organizations in the

EU and lessons learnt

4.To reflect on ways of improved multi-actor cooperation on resettlement in the EU, recognising the specific competences of International organisations, governmental bodies and civil society actors

5.To provide input for the policy debate on the EU resettlement scheme, including details of such a scheme.

The conference will bring together some 50-60 participants, who are experts from relevant governmental departments, members of parliament and other political decision-makers, UNHCR offices, human rights organisations, NGOs, churches and other relevant civil society organisations in EU member states. Participants are expected to input actively into the debate by sharing their expertise, experience and best practice. An interactive dialogue between participants that will help to bring the debate on an EU resettlement scheme forward is envisaged. Participants are encouraged to give input to and lead, upon prior agreement, working groups that are relevant to their working field.

For more information on the detailed programme and practicalities (participation fee, reimbursement, registration) please contact: lilian.tsourdi@ccme.be

Images from the Sigtuna Foundation, (photos: Lena Hellström)



CCME-UNHCR Expert Seminar, A Baltic Approach to Resettlement?



Representatives of the Lutheran Church of Latvia with Ms. Jenifer Ashton, UNHCR Senior Resettlement Coordinator and Dr. Torsten Moritz, CCME Executive Secretary at the opening panel of the Expert Seminar

On the 11th and 12th of May CCME and UNHCR organised an Expert Seminar in Riga with the topic "A Baltic approach to refugee resettlement?: Preparing for the challenges and opportunities of an emerging tool of refugee protection in the EU". The seminar, which was conducted in English, brought together some 30 governmental representatives, MPs, representatives of the UN refugee agency UNHCR, NGO's and civil society organisations from Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania.

The event was the second of a series of debates in the context of the ASPIRE project (Assessing and Strengthening Participation In refugee Resettlement to Europe). The aim of this particular event was to look at the distinct pattern in which resettlement could become an option for refugee protection in Lithuania, Latvia or Estonia. It clearly focused on identifying communalities of an approach for all three countries and potential for cooperation, while at the same time devoting time and space to discussing specific national issues.

The seminar included presentations on recent developments on resettlement at the global and European level by UNHCR and CCME. Evzen Divis of the Czech Refugee Facilities Administration gave insights into setting up a resettlement programme in a post-communist country. Boriss Cilevics (MP Latvia) and Mart Nutt (MP Estonia) offered reflections on mobilising political support for resettlement at a national level, while NGO representatives of all three states looked into possibilities of making integration work in practice. Furthermore, space was provided for separate meetings of each group; Estonian, Latvian and Lithuanian, in order to agree on future actions that will bring matters forward.

The debate took stock of the current involvement of all three Baltic States in refugee protection through asylum. At the same time, it provided space for reflection as to how and when the three Baltic States could become involved in refugee resettlement. Representatives of the Latvian Citizenship and Immigration Office underlined that their country could, in the future, partici-

pate in a joint EU resettlement effort. For the time being, however, the background of the economic crisis provided an inopportune moment for starting such an involvement. Members of the Estonian and Latvian parliament as well as NGOs from all three countries highlighted the need of better informing the general public in the Baltic on refugee issues in order to build support for an involvement in refugee resettlement. In a case study, a representative of the Czech Refugee Facilities Administration reported about the process which had enabled the Czech Republic to become the first post-communist country to establish a resettlement programme.

In order to prepare the ground for a future involvement of the Baltic countries in resettlement, participants agreed on follow-up activities on a national level. These included plans for awareness-raising activities on global refugee issues among Estonian decision-makers and the general public, the re-establishment of a coordination meeting on refugee issues in Latvia with the participation of government officials and the convocation of an NGO-government round table on resettlement in Lithuania.

The debate revealed that there are still great efforts that need to be undertaken, in order to raise the awareness on the issue of resettlement and to make it a viable possibility for the Baltic States. The importance of the regional approach to the issue and of the coordination between national NGO's was also stressed during discussions. Despite the various difficulties on the financial and political level, all participants expressed their personal dedication to making resettlement a reality for the Baltic States.

Lilian Tsourdi (CCME)

Church World Service: recession has significant impact on US resettlement programme



At the New Horizons Summer School Buffalo, Buffalo, N. York (photo: Liz Garofano, JERS)

The US Church World Service, the global ecumenical relief, development and refugee protection agency and US partner agency of CCME, is one of the nine actors entrusted by the US government to implement its resettlement programme, issued a report in May on the impact of the recession on refugee resettlement. The report interprets the results of a survey, conducted in March 2009 through both on-line questionnaires and telephone interviews, with 27 of the 33 CWS's local refugee resettlement affiliates, which are located throughout the USA. The survey captured data from the last half of 2008, offering a "snapshot in time" of the impact of a recession that subsequently has worsened.

According to the survey, the recession has had a significant impact on the US resettlement programme, which relies heavily on private funding and aims at an early self-sufficiency of the resettled refugees (employment within the first 180 days). More specifically, 80% of the respondents agreed that finding jobs for refugees that were newly resettled was more challenging during the

last half of 2008 than in July-December 2005-2007. According to the practitioners, employers are being more selective in their hiring, and refugee applicants have more competition from laid-off Americans with work experience and fluent English. Therefore, the present economic downturn makes the 180-day goal of employment, set by the US government, unrealistic.

This extended job search leads to the inability of the newly arrived refugees to achieve early self-sufficiency and they turn to their local resettlement agencies for extra help with such essentials as rent, utilities and food. In this area too, the recession has had its toll. Concerning rent, nearly 70 percent of respondents said it is getting more difficult for their affiliates to cover clients' rent during the extended job search, with 50 percent reporting pressure from rising rents. Moreover, over half of the respondents stated that private cash funding to support local resettlement had decreased, while about 4 in 10 respondents indicated that mobilising donated goods has become more challenging. Finally, about half of the respon-

dents agreed that recruiting congregational cosponsors, which are local congregations that are asked to make a three-month commitment to assist refugees with core services, became more challenging during the period of July-December 2008.

On the other hand, the recession has not had an impact on local community attitudes. Most affiliates said that their communities remain welcoming of refugees, with none reporting violence against refugees at home, work or school. Moreover, overall, the respondents to the survey affirmed their optimism that their clients will find jobs and become self-sufficient, but stated that it will take a few months longer than in the past years. Further, the report repeatedly acknowledges the private sector's commitment and constant will to continue to bring its passion, creativity, resources and voice to the work of refugee resettlement.

The US resettlement programme, which has since its inception saved millions of lives, is recognised as one of the government's best endeavours. However, it is stressed that the U.S. government's once-adequate contribution to this life-saving program has declined over the years and now covers less than half of the cost of resettlement, even in good economic times. In the present economic climate, federal funding does not meet the goals of the U.S. resettlement programme. CWS strongly opposes a reduction in refugee admissions, especially now that admissions have returned to pre-9/11 levels. The U.S. refugee program is a rescue operation and the commitment towards refugees should stand, also during the recession. What is needed, parallel to the unflagging commitment of the private sector, is the increase of government resources in support of the resettlement of refugees.

(Source: Church World Service)

Interview with the Swedish Minister for Migration and Asylum Policy, Mr. Tobias Billström

You have in a recent letter to your EU colleagues called for a stronger involvement of EU Member States in resettlement. How much will this initiative be taken up under your EU Presidency in the 2nd half of 2009?

The visit to Jordan was very informative and fruitful and has made me even more convinced that resettlement is a good and effective way to offer protection to people in great need and a tool to assist the countries who take the biggest responsibility for these refugees. We are now looking forward to the European Commission's proposal for an EU resettlement scheme, which is to be presented in July 2009. The Swedish presidency will lead the negotiations on the proposal, which for me this is a prioritized question.

What will be, in this context, the role of an EU resettlement scheme, which the European Commission will propose in July?

The EU resettlement scheme will form the basis for the discussions between the member states. As incoming presidency, we hope for an ambitious proposal and will do what we can to bring the negotiations forward.

What are the expected outcomes of the visit to the resettlement mission that you will undertake to Jordan?

My purpose with the visit to Jordan was to study the Swedish Migration Board's resettlement mission in Amman. I wanted to get a first hand view of how the work is carried out, how the co-operation with the UNHCR works and listen to the views of the staff carrying out interviews and assessing the cases. Another purpose was to

keep focus on the issue of resettlement at EU level and to encourage other member states to start resettlement schemes. I think these goals were very well met during the visit.

What has been the response of your fellow ministerial colleagues to your invitation, during the Justice and Home Affairs Council of April 2009, to participate in the visit?

The responses have been positive from several Member States. The Minister of Interior of Cyprus and a delegation from the Czech Ministry of Interior joined me during the visit.

How do you evaluate the response of EU Member States to the conclusions of the Justice and Home Affairs Council of November 2008 calling for the resettlement of Iraqi refugees from Syria and Jordan? What can be done to ensure that this initiative will not remain a single incident?

It is important that the Commission presents its proposal for an EU Resettlement scheme in July 2009 as promised and which was also established by the heads of State and Government in the European Pact on migration and asylum. It is important that we use the political momentum that we now have with regard to the interest in resettlement among the Member States.

What will be, in your opinion, the major advances concerning resettlement in the so-called "Stockholm programme"?

I hope that we can set the direction for the work to take place the next five years and that resettlement will be included as a component in the future asylum and migration policy of the EU.

Refugee resettlement to Romania - getting ready for the first arrivals

Resettlement to Romania is so far little known: While the establishment of an Emergency Transit facility in the Western Romanian city of Timisoara has received some publicity, few people will immediately think of Romania as a new home for refugees wanting to rebuild their lives. However Romanian governmental and non-governmental actors are indeed getting ready for receiving the first resettled refugees later this year, as a debate co-organised by CCME and the Romanian Forum for refugees and Migrants ARCA in Bucharest on 30th April has shown.

As Machiel Salomons, UNHCR representative in Romania, underlined that the country's involvement in resettlement had so far been that of a country of transit:

In 1999-2000, Romania had, on request of UNHCR, temporarily accommodated some 8.000 refugees from countries of the Former Yugoslavia. Their cases were submitted for resettlement to the USA and processed in Timisoara, on the North-western border of Romania. In an emergency situation which arose in 2005, the Romanian Government agreed to temporarily receive on its territory 439 Uzbek nationals, pending their resettlement to third countries.

Based on these experiences, the asylum legislation of 2006 provided the basis for a genuine Romanian resettlement programme, which was later supplemented by the government decision 1596/2008, identifying the practical aspects of such a programme. According to Radu Mircea of the Asylum and Integration Directorate in the Romanian Immigration Office ORI, the political will, went hand in hand with experiences of the Dutch-Belgian-Czech twinning programme "durable solutions in practice", which Romania was invited to join. Based on the practical experiences, which Romania had gathered during this project, preparations were now underway for the arrival of the first group of 40 refugees expected later in 2009. A national Resettlement Committee has been established between the Ministry of Interior and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and is currently in the process of establishing the countries of asylum and origin of refugees who will be resettled in Romania this year.

During the meeting, an NGO roundtable identified that a good coordination and distribution of tasks between the relevant Romanian Refugee Support Organisations (National Refugee Council CNRR, the Jesuit Refugee Service and ARCA) was already under way, but should be strengthened in view of the resettlement programme.

Torsten Moritz, (CCME)



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CCME office (red building on the left) in front of the European Commission Headquarters (Berlaymont)

FAQ—frequently asked questions....

1) What is CCME?

CCME, the Churches' Commission for Migrants in Europe, is the ecumenical agency on migration and integration, refugees and asylum, and against racism and discrimination in Europe. CCME members are Anglican, Orthodox and Protestant Churches, diaconal agencies and Councils of Churches in presently 19 European countries. CCME is in the process of becoming a commission of the Conference of European Churches and cooperates with the World Council of Churches.

2) What is ASPIRE ?

The ASPIRE project ("Assessing and Strengthening Participation In refugee Resettlement to Europe") enhances knowledge and political debate in EU member states to engage in refugee resettlement - as an additional instrument of refugee protection.

It includes activities to

- Analyse in which member states debates suggest an openness towards resettlement
- Promote existing policies and best practice in these member states (through sharing of materials and knowledge)
- Bring governmental and non-governmental actors in member

states with a recent interest in resettlement into debate with one another on selected issues on resettlement

- Provide continued updated information on resettlement to non-specialised public which is generally interested in refugee protection
- Provide a forum of discussion and exchange for governmental actors, civil society actors and UNHCR to explore the role, structure and added value of a European resettlement scheme

3) What is Refugee Resettlement?

It's one of the 3 traditional durable solutions for refugees, along with the local integration in the country of asylum and repatriation. Basically, it's a transfer of refugees from their country of first asylum to a third country that has agreed to admit them with a long term or permanent resident status. Resettlement provides protection for refugees whose safety is immediately at risk and it is a tool of international protection in a context of burden sharing among states.

4) What Resettlement is not...

Resettlement is not the same as seeking refugee status through the asylum system, nor is it a more le-

gal process for accessing asylum rights and can never substitute a spontaneous request of asylum.. Resettlement is not synonymous with "Temporary protection" classifications.

Resettlement cannot become a system of profiling refugees in accordance to their nationality or religion in order to create more or less valuable categories of refugees. Resettlement is based exclusively on the protection needs of the refugees.

5) Which are the Resettlement countries?

The countries that traditionally host resettlement programs are : Australia, Canada, Denmark, Finland, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Sweden, and USA. Those countries are called the "traditional ones". Countries such as Argentina, Benin, Brazil, Burkina Faso, Chile, Iceland, Ireland, Portugal and UK have in recent years started programmes. Others, among them several EU member states, are currently considering or starting them...

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

General info on resettlement

<http://www.unhcr.org/protect/3bb2eadd6.html>

On the CCME project

<http://www.ccme.be/secretary/NEWS>



ERF-CA 2007

The ASPIRE project "Assessing and Strengthening Participation In refugee Resettlement to Europe" project is co-financed by the European Refugee Fund -Centralised Actions 2007 of the European Commission . The views expressed and information provided does not necessarily reflect the position of the European Commission.