

CCME Press Release of 11th February 2010

Refugee resettlement to Germany: maintaining the dynamic between European and national engagement

Round table in Berlin looks at recent national experiences and EU-wide plans

A debate on refugee resettlement to Germany on 10th February 2010 brought together representatives of the German federal and regional governments, the German parliament, the UN refugee agency UNHCR and civil society organisations.

The debate was the sixth of a series of debates on refugee resettlement, which the Churches' Commission for Migrants in Europe (CCME) organises in 2009-10 with partners across the EU. The debate, which was co-organised by the Office of the Plenipotentiary of the Protestant Church in Germany (EKD), took place in a setting largely influenced by the arrival of some 2500 Iraqi refugees from Jordan and Syria throughout the last year and this year. This resettlement operation was the German contribution to the implementation of the Conclusions of the EU's Council of Justice & Home Affairs Ministers of November 2008, which had called for the resettlement of 10.000 Iraqis throughout the EU.

The round table debate in particular looked at the role of national policies on the one hand and European efforts to develop a common EU resettlement scheme on the other hand. Representatives of CCME and UNHCR expressed hopes that a common EU programme could increase both the volume and impact of resettlement operations undertaken by EU member states. The representative of the German Ministry of Interior highlighted the commitment of Germany to humanitarian resettlement operations, both in the past and present. He also underlined the need to carefully evaluate the comparative advantages and disadvantages of ad hoc resettlement operations and a fixed annual resettlement quota. The evaluation of the recent experiences on resettlement would be crucial for any further decisions on a potential German resettlement programme.

Churches, NGOs and welfare organisations used the debate as an occasion to informally discuss their initial evaluations of the resettlement of the Iraqis. While the general mood was one of satisfaction and appreciation of examples of best practice (e.g. a regional multi-stakeholder coordination in Bavaria) some areas of potential improvement were identified. Both best practice and suggestions for improvement will in the next months be collected into a presentation of best practice guidelines and fed into the evaluation between Federal and regional authorities in Germany.

CCME's Executive secretary Torsten Moritz summarised "the debate has shown the commitment of all relevant actors in Germany to humanitarian resettlement. The experiences of the recent resettlement show that Germany can - and in our view should - commit to resettlement in a more permanent form and set up an annual resettlement programme."

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 eleven EU member states regularly carry out resettlement, resettling around 4,500 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.