

SAFE PASSAGE

Considerable Increase of Places for Resettlement of Refugees from Different Crisis Regions to European States

What is resettlement?

Resettlement means the safe and legal travel of refugees from a country where they have sought asylum to a third country which has agreed to accept them. Upon arrival, they are admitted as refugees and provided with a legal status, which is usually a permanent residence with the possibility to acquire citizenship in the future.

Resettlement is one of the durable solutions envisaged by UNHCR, the UN Refugee Agency. When neither voluntary repatriation (going back to the home country once the situation improves) nor local integration (settling and starting a new life in the country of asylum) are viable options, resettlement becomes a very important tool to access protection.

However, only a very limited number of refugees worldwide can benefit from resettlement: every year, less than 1% of the global refugee population is resettled. There are only around 30 countries in the world which are currently accepting refugee resettlement.

Every year, UNHCR prepares a projection of global resettlement needs; for 2017, it is estimated that over 1 million people will be in need of resettlement.

Why is it important?

Resettlement is a universally recognised form of solidarity sharing among countries; one of the ways in which countries unaffected by crises can assist countries neighbouring crises' regions, where the overwhelming majority of refugees stays. 86% of the global refugee population lives in fact in the global South.

Resettlement is particularly useful for protracted displacement situations, when people have been outside their home country for a long time and there are no solutions in sight to the reasons that made them flee, as well as no meaningful prospective to integrate legally, socially and economically in their current host country.

Who is resettled?

Generally, UNHCR refers people for resettlement and submits specific cases to States. A series of criteria are used to assess resettlement needs, for example particular vulnerabilities (survivors of torture or gender-based violence), medical conditions which cannot be treated in the country of asylum, and other legal and physical protection needs which cannot adequately be met in the current country.

What is the current status in Europe?

Not all European countries offer resettlement places, and the combined contribution of the ones participating in the scheme, though slightly increased over the years, amounts to less than 10% of the global resettlement efforts.

Since 2009, the European Commission started to work on a European Resettlement Programme, with the intention of achieving common standards for selection procedure, length of process and integration tools available upon arrival.

In July 2015, EU Member States agreed to resettle 22,504 persons in clear need of international protection through multilateral and national schemes as a first pilot project for a European Resettlement Programme. 21 Member States (plus Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway) have so far participated in this scheme.

The latest proposal for a Union Resettlement Framework, published in July 2016, was met with a high degree of concern from NGOs working on refugees' rights, including CCME. The voluntary participation in the scheme does not in fact imply an increase of resettlement places, which has for a long time being one of the most important demands of civil society. Furthermore, the proposal would allow States to use resettlement places even when the use of family reunification channels is possible, leading to an actual decrease in the number of resettlement places available. For a more detailed critique of the proposal, read [here](#).

