

CCME Press release of 1st May 2009

Commitment of Romania to refugee resettlement “encouragement for other EU member states”

Debate in Bucharest applauds new Romanian involvement in global refugee protection

A debate on refugee resettlement to Romania on 30th April 2009 brought together some 25 governmental representatives, embassies, MEPs, representatives of the UN refugee agency UNHCR and civil society organisations in Bucharest.

The debate was the first of a series of debates on refugee resettlement, which the Churches' Commission for Migrants in Europe (CCME) is organising in 2009 with partners across the EU. The debates are taking place in anticipation of a common EU resettlement scheme which the European Commission is expected to propose in July this year.

The debate in Bucharest took stock of the preparations of Romanian governmental agencies as well as civil society for the arrival of the first 40 resettled refugees expected to take place later this year. Representatives of the Romanian Migration Office and Romanian NGOs underlined the intention to cooperate closely on the emerging resettlement programme. In a case study, representatives of Czech governmental and non-governmental organisations reported about their respective experiences as the first post-communist country to establish a resettlement programme.

The European dimension of the Romanian resettlement programme was underlined by the contribution of Daciana Sarbu, Romanian member of the European Parliament's Committee on Justice and Home Affairs. Ms Sarbu in her contribution also underlined the need for more informed debate: “so far there is only little expertise on resettlement. This debate could not be more timely”.

Torsten Moritz, Executive Secretary of CCME expressed appreciation for the steps towards a Romanian resettlement programme: “It is encouraging to see how Romania is willing to extend solidarity to some of the world's most vulnerable refugees. The commitment of Romania to resettlement should be encouragement to other EU member states to do more to protect refugees globally”.

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 eight EU member states carry out resettlement, resettling around 4.000 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.