



Welcome to Europe!

A Comparative Guide to Resettlement



International Catholic
Migration Commission
Europe

Endurbúsara áttleipfrés Resettlement Réinstallation Hervestiging Reasenfamílió Reinsedliameto
Umsiedlung Reinstalagáó Undheensjöftamínen Gjenbøseffing Genbøseffing Vidarebøsáttíng
Přesídlování Genbøsættíng Hervestíggíng Endurbúsara Resettlement Vidarebøsáttíng Áttleipfrés

Part II—Resettlement in Europe—the Road Ahead

Introduction

The European share of global resettlement of refugees remains modest, with 5,610 places available in 2007. At present, nine European countries have active resettlement programmes, providing protection to refugees and offering them the chance to rebuild their lives in safety. In July 2007, Portugal announced the establishment of a resettlement programme, with a quota of 30 persons. As of this year, there are thus seven resettlement countries inside the European Union—Denmark, Finland, Ireland, The Netherlands, Portugal, Sweden and the United Kingdom—while two, Norway and Iceland, are outside the EU.

Among the European programmes, the programmes in Iceland (1996), Ireland (1999) and the United Kingdom (2003) are relatively recent and have now become fully established. Looking at the European resettlement efforts for 2007, an analysis of results at the mid-year point suggests that most country quotas (except for Portugal, which is still unknown) would be filled by the end of the year.

European Resettlement Programmes—Resettlement Quotas 2007

Country	DK	FIN	GB	IRL	NL	P*	S	Total EU	IS	N	Total Europe
Quota	500	750	500	200	500	30	1900	4,380	30	1200	5,610

Source: Government Departments and Portuguese Refugee Council
 (*The Programme in Portugal was announced in July 2007)

The Search for Durable Solutions:

Making the case for why Europe should resettle more

As the European Union continues to advance its efforts to establish a Common European Asylum System (CEAS), its relations with countries outside the Union (**the External Dimension**) are becoming increasingly important. The internal EU asylum system should not be seen to operate in a vacuum; an **external component of solidarity**, i.e. sharing the responsibility for refugee protection with third countries, needs to be seen as complementary to the CEAS. The expansion of resettlement thus *adds* to the existing European and/or national systems that deal with the asylum seekers who have arrived and are making their protection claims within Europe. Resettlement must then never be seen in the context of negating the right to seek/enjoy asylum in Europe, or be considered as a potential substitute for States' obligations under international and European law. At the same time, resettlement is only one way of addressing the protection needs of refugees in regions of refugee origin. Comprehensive approaches towards the range of durable solutions (of which resettlement is only one) are required, which implies long-term development assistance inputs.

The European Commission, UNHCR, the European Council for Refugees and Exiles (ECRE) and a growing number of NGO organisations and other stakeholders are actively advocating for a **renewed EU commitment to resettlement**. Present refugee crises and an increased number of protracted refugee situations have resulted in UNHCR's identified resettlement needs currently outstripping the global number of available resettlement places. A tangible gesture of European responsibility-sharing, by means of an offer of additional resettlement places, is increasingly needed to respond to the protection needs of refugees in the world. In summary, the following key reasons demonstrate why Europe should become **more actively engaged in resettlement**:

- Through resettlement, Member States can offer **safe access to protection for those refugees most in need**: the most vulnerable, those who are at risk in the first country of asylum and those in protracted refugee situations.
- 6.5 million of the 9.9 million refugees of concern to UNHCR are estimated to live in developing countries. The EU Member States can **express their solidarity and take their share of responsibility**, in particular sharing the responsibility

with the countries of first asylum which host the vast majority of refugees in the regions of origin.

- **Resettlement forms part of the European humanitarian tradition.** European resettlement efforts have been undertaken by many European countries in the past, including countries like Belgium, France and Germany, and have addressed the urgent protection needs of refugees—for example, the 1956 Hungarian Crisis, the Chilean dissidents and the Comprehensive Plan of Action for Indochinese refugees.
- **Europe's contribution to providing international protection to refugees has diminished.** Asylum applications in the EU have fallen considerably over the last five years, while at the same time the overall number of refugees worldwide is increasing. Europe has the absorption capacity and the proven capability to resettle refugees. Europe can do it, and should do much more.
- Through resettlement and international responsibility-sharing, Member States can prove to those countries that are receiving refugees that there exists a political will to assist third countries in their efforts. As such, the EU can promote **a strategic use of resettlement** which benefits all refugees, not just those eligible for resettlement. In this manner, resettlement can create **protection benefits** for the remaining refugees who are not going to be resettled..
- Resettlement has proved to be an important means of promoting **public understanding of refugees in general** and the **benefits** they bring to host countries. A deeper understanding of refugee realities globally, especially at local levels, can lead to increased civil society involvement and a more welcoming society (*see examples in Chapter 8*).

The European Refugee Fund III:

A new regime for the financing of resettlement activities

The European Refugee Fund (ERF) for the period 2008-2013 (also called ERF III), established by Decision No 573/ 2007/EC, will come into effect in January 2008 as part of the general programme “Solidarity and Management of Migration Flows”. The ERF III will be an important tool to support the expansion of resettlement in the European Union (EU). The European Commission has **defined resettlement** within the context of the new ERF. This provides helpful clarity to States and other actors engaged with the EU in resettlement, since in several Member States there is still a lack of understanding—if not outright misunderstanding—about the exact meaning of resettlement. (See *UNHCR Resettlement Handbook definition, Chapter 1.*)

Special Definition of Resettlement for the Purposes of EU Funding

The ERF III supports actions in Member States relating to the resettlement of persons ‘resettled or being resettled’. Actions can thus benefit 1) refugees who are in the process of being resettled and are still in the country of first asylum and 2) resettled refugees in Europe.

Article 3 (1) (d) of Decision No 573/ 2007/EC defines resettlement as: *the process whereby, on a request from UNHCR based on a person’s need for international protection, third-country nationals or stateless persons are transferred from a third country to a Member State where they are permitted to reside with refugee status (within the meaning of Article 2(d) of the European Union “Qualification Directive” 2004/83/EC) or a status which offers the same rights and benefits under national and Community law as refugee status.*

The definition stipulates two conditions which must be satisfied before an action can be classified as resettlement, and thus **eligible for financing under the ERF III**.

1. An eligibility assessment by UNHCR. Only actions undertaken by Member States for the resettlement of persons who have been **identified as eligible for resettlement by UNHCR, according to the criteria developed in the UNHCR Resettlement Handbook**, can be financed under the ERF III.
2. In addition, and in order to be considered as resettlement, Member States must grant persons resettled on their territory either **refugee status or an equivalent status offering the same rights and benefits**, so as to guarantee the

effectiveness and the durability of the protection solution.

The rights of refugees specified in the **European Union Qualification Directive**—such as social welfare and benefits, health treatment, education, etc.—are thus equally applied to resettled refugees.

It is clear that actions carried out as **intra-European Union burden-sharing** (for example with respect to the transfer of recognised refugees from Malta to another EU country) are **not** considered by the EU to be resettlement under this particular definition. These actions can, however, be financed under article 3 (e).

The ERF will be able to **support the whole range of activities** integral to resettlement, both in the third country and in the EU Member State. Articles 3(5) and (7) establish a range of actions that can be financed, such as:

- a) **The establishment of national resettlement programmes.** This can include actions such as the training of selecting officers, the development of specific integration programmes and private sponsorship programmes, training and capacity-building actions, as well as actions raising awareness among receiving communities and the general public;
- b) **The selection and transfer** of refugees to the Member States' territories. This can include actions such as conducting missions to the host country, interviews, medical and security screening, pre-departure orientation programmes, transportation of the resettled persons and their belongings;
- c) The provision to resettled persons of **appropriate reception conditions and integration measures**, including actions such as information and assistance immediately upon arrival, interpretation services, information packages and comprehensive cultural and civic orientation courses.

The Regime for Financial Support

The upcoming ERF III considerably expands financial support measures for resettlement, either to initiate new programmes or to expand or improve existing ones. Additional financial support is provided for in Article 13 (3). Member States which resettle persons under the following categories will receive a one-off additional fixed amount of EUR 4,000 for each resettled person:

- a) Refugees from a country or region designated under the **Regional Protection Programmes (RPP)**

- b) For the resettlement of **certain vulnerable categories of persons**, in particular:
- Women at risk
 - Unaccompanied minors and other minors at risk for whom resettlement is determined to be in their best interest
 - Persons with serious medical needs that can only be addressed through resettlement.

A Member State agreeing to resettle 20 refugees under one of these categories would thus receive a contribution of EUR 80,000. This funding must be used for resettlement in general but can be allocated to a range of activities. Funding is a **fixed amount**, regardless of whether a refugee falls under more than one category—a woman at risk with serious medical needs, for example. The additional support offered is an incentive to increase Member States' willingness to resettle vulnerable individuals. The ERF amount is, however, relatively modest. For example, the budget allocated by the UK Home Office per refugee is around EUR 15,000.

The Fund finances up to 50% of the supported projects, the remainder to be co-financed by public or private sources. The Fund's contribution may be increased to 75% for addressing specific priorities. The European Commission has defined three priorities for interventions under the ERF. **Priority 3** relates to **'actions which enhance responsibility-sharing between Member States and with third countries'**, thus intra-European burden-sharing and resettlement. Priority 3 is optional and Member States can indicate whether they wish to present programmes under this priority. For 2008, Finland, Ireland, the Netherlands, Sweden and the United Kingdom have indicated that they will include resettlement in their multi-annual programme. Of the new resettlement countries, Portugal and Romania have indicated that they will request support to establish a resettlement programme.

Multi-annual programmes are approved by the European Commission and managed at national level by the **designated national authority**. According to articles 11 and 27, the national authority must **establish and consult with a 'partnership'**, including authorities and bodies involved in the implementation of the multi-annual programme. The partnership may include regional, local, urban and other public authorities, UNHCR and bodies representing civil society, such as NGOs or social partners.

Regardless of the importance of financial incentives given by the ERF III, the continued engagement and leadership of the European Commission will be essential to encouraging Member States to offer (or increase) resettlement places, as will

coordinated actions and initiatives by EU Member States to further define and implement joint programmes.

The Regional Protection Programmes:

First steps towards a European Resettlement Programme?

As part of the Programme for Freedom, Security and Justice for the years 2005-2010, to be known as the 'Hague Programme', the European Council called in 2004 for the development, in partnership and in close cooperation with UNHCR, of so-called *Regional Protection Programmes (RPPs)*. These programmes aim to strengthen the asylum systems in third countries and include a joint resettlement programme for EU Member States willing to participate in such a programme. RPPs focus on priority regions identified by the Member States. In September 2005, the European Commission issued a detailed proposal for *pilot* RPPs in identified priority regions, namely *Tanzania* (Great Lakes region), targeted both as a region of origin and a region of transit, and the *Western Newly Independent States (WNIS)*—Ukraine, Moldova and Belarus—and after considerable delays the two RPP pilot projects eventually started in January 2007.

Although projects have only recently started, the Commission is requested to evaluate the (preliminary) project results in 2008. Based on these, the Commission may develop a proposal for a more structured approach to resettlement activities. From January 2008 onwards, ERF III offers additional funding possibilities for EU Member States that pledge resettlement places in the context of RPPs (*see p.24 above*). In the WNIS countries as well as in Tanzania, UNHCR has already demonstrated its capacity to submit resettlement cases for 2007 and 2008. In 2008, UNHCR has an estimated capacity of around 1,500 persons from Tanzania and 425 from WNIS (mostly from Ukraine). Caseloads include vulnerable groups such as women at risk, children, people with special medical needs, and the elderly. It is strongly hoped that European governments will respond to the calls made by UNHCR and the European Commission to offer resettlement to a number of the cases identified. The RPP concept has been called for by the EU Member States, which now have the responsibility to make this still largely theoretical concept work in practice.

The Pilot Regional Protection Programme in Tanzania

The pilot RPP in Tanzania was defined on the basis of the study *‘Identifying gaps in protection capacity in Tanzania’*, by UNHCR. The RPP programme, which started in 2007, aims to support a **comprehensive approach to ensure durable solutions** and includes the following actions:

Strengthening the protection capacity of the Tanzanian authorities

Improving security in refugee camps/host communities

Promoting the voluntary repatriation of Burundian refugees by providing information through radio and other means of mass communication

Enhancing access to resettlement

Facilitating the registration of all refugees in Tanzania

Increasing engagement from Tanzanian civil society

The **Netherlands** and **Denmark** both completed missions to Tanzania during 2007 and selected Congolese and Burundian refugees to be admitted through their respective programmes. The Netherlands is expected to conduct further selection missions to Tanzania in 2008, under its regular quota programme.

At the same time, the **United States** is resettling **13,000 of the so-called ‘1972 Burundians’** (those who have suffered multiple displacements during the past 35 years), within a **‘group resettlement’** plan for the period 2006-2009. After more than 30 years of exile, these refugees will be accepted for resettlement and will be able to rebuild their lives in the US. It is hoped that the Member States can learn from this ‘group resettlement’ experience in the context of a joint resettlement programme for Europe. (See *Chapter 1 on group resettlement and Chapter 5 on the experience of an ICMC Deployee working with the ‘1972 Burundians’ in Tanzania.*)

Joint EU Resettlement Schemes—how will they function?

Both UNHCR and NGOs have flagged up the importance of joint programmes as a tool for responding to **emergency refugee situations** as well, recognising that this falls outside the framework of the RPPs. It is envisioned that joint resettlement programmes could be used to cover situations such as those in **Syria and Jordan**, where the presence of large numbers of Iraqis has recently placed a heavy burden on the host country. Syria, for example, is reported to be the largest recipient of Iraqi refugees, with an estimated 1.2 million refugees, followed by Jordan with some

750,000. There would be considerable potential for **strategic use of resettlement** in these situations. A significant European engagement in resettlement would provide a tangible expression of international solidarity and burden-sharing with the countries in the Middle East region, encouraging these countries to continue to give access to refugees seeking protection, to respect the principle of *non-refoulement* and to guarantee access to fundamental rights for the large majority of refugees that would not be resettled.

Still, it is unclear how such joint resettlement programmes would function, either within or outside the Regional Protection Programme context. Several suggestions have been put forward in this respect. The European Commission examined this issue in a comprehensive report in 2003 entitled *Feasibility of Resettlement in the European Union*, conducted by the Migration Policy Institute (MPI). Other publications looking at this issue include ECRE's '**The Way Forward: Towards a European Resettlement Programme**', outlining how a European Scheme could function. The ECRE report includes suggestions on the identification of refugees, processing, decision-making and pre-departure activities and stresses the roles that UNHCR, NGOs and refugees could play as stakeholders in such a programme. There are significant efficiency benefits that could accrue from the application of joint EU resettlement criteria. If several Member States offer resettlement places for a particular refugee caseload, the time and resources required for UNHCR to identify and prepare resettlement submissions could be significantly less than if a single set of EU resettlement criteria were applied. When verifying the selection missions carried out and programmed for 2007, one notices that EU countries are indeed offering resettlement places for the same caseloads. All of the EU resettlement countries, for example, select Burmese refugees (excluding Portugal, which has only recently declared its programme).

If Member States would commit to jointly resettling a certain number of refugees, there could be different options to pursue. In the case of somewhat larger quotas, the coordination of selection missions on a European level would seem a logical first step. Currently, several countries may arrive one after the other to undertake selection interviews, completely unaware of the visits of other EU Member States. In the longer term, consideration could be given to 'joint EU resettlement selection missions', enabling direct involvement with fewer resources. New resettlement countries could benefit considerably from cooperation in joint missions (starting with maybe only two countries). In this scenario, new resettlement countries could benefit

from the logistical arrangements, infrastructure and expertise of another Member State during the set-up phase of a programme or through long-standing arrangements. It should be noted that in 2007 Belgium, the Czech Republic and Romania (with the Netherlands, as part of the project 'Durable Solutions in Practice') and Spain (with Finland, as part of the MOST ('Modelling of Orientation, Services and Training Related to the Resettlement and Reception of Refugees') project) have been involved in such 'twinning programmes' on selection missions. This could possibly lead to further cooperation in any resulting resettlement programmes and to the identification of caseloads for which joint missions could be undertaken. When engaging in emergency resettlement, selection of candidates is almost invariably done 'on paper', as time constraints and safety reasons may not allow for a selection mission. The Swedish resettlement programme (branded SQSQ: Swedish Quota, Speed and Quality) demonstrates the best practice in handling such emergency cases, which could easily be shared with other EU countries. For new countries with very small resettlement targets and caseloads, selections on a dossier basis represent an efficient model for case review.

Setting up a Resettlement Programme:

The experience of the UK Home Office

Resettlement countries are increasingly offering other EU Member States practical cooperation to engage in resettlement. The UK Home Office recently shared its experience of planning and establishing a resettlement programme with Germany, at a seminar for German politicians organised by the Churches Commission on Migrants in Europe (CCME). The presentation was part of CCME's ERF-funded programme 'Resettlement in Europe: Broadening the Basis', which seeks to engage new EU countries in resettlement. The United Kingdom announced its intention to start the Gateway Resettlement Programme in 2002 and in March 2004 the first refugees from Liberia arrived. ICMC interviewed Kevin Finch from the UK Home Office, who managed the overseas side of the resettlement programme from its first arrivals, about his experience with establishing the programme. The box shows the key ingredients that the UK Government feel made the successful establishment of the Gateway Programme possible.

Setting up the Gateway Programme: the recipe that worked for the UK

- *Consider if resettlement relates to your overall migration strategy*
- *Carefully plan a resettlement programme in advance*
- *Focus on a few different ethnic groups/nationalities when ensuring a minimum number to establish a group*
- *Where possible, settle such groups in the same city or close by, to allow communities and support structures to “take root”*
- *Keep firm control of the selection process but allow for flexibility*
- *Ensure the engagement, from the conception of the programme, of local authorities who will receive refugees*
- *Ensure before selection that local capacity exists to receive refugees*
- *Ensure the engagement of NGOs in the planning and implementation of reception*
- *Mobilise public opinion and involve the media from the conception phase onwards*
- *Engage the accommodation sector in the planning process and consider partnerships with private contractors*

The Experience of the UK in establishing a Resettlement Programme

What were the considerations which led the UK to establish a quota programme?

The introduction of the resettlement programme was not considered in isolation but was introduced as part of a balanced immigration strategy, which the UK is promoting. This strategy:

- tackles abuse of the asylum system by those not in need of protection;
- promotes better integration programmes for those with the right to settle; and
- introduces resettlement as a new legal route, a Gateway, to the UK for those in need of protection without forcing them into the hands of people traffickers.

How does the UK Home Office refugee selection process work?

On the basis of the annual UNHCR Global Resettlement Needs document, the UK Government decides which nationalities it will take up for the coming budgetary year. UNHCR then refers cases of this nationality to the UK Home Office, where the caseworkers conduct a sift, taking out cases with identified serious issues relating to security, housing capacity and medical issues. Thereafter, the Home Office sends out a team to interview the cases; the files are then brought back to the UK where a decision is made. Each selection mission team consists of 3-4 officials and costs on average between £11,000 and £15,000 (EUR 16–20,000).

Does the UK take dossier and medical cases?

From the beginning, the UK decided not to accept UNHCR dossier referrals. The reasons for this were twofold: firstly, the UK realised they would probably face a very critical press when introducing the programme. The UK Government therefore wanted to keep strict and full control of the selection process, maximising government responsibility and integrity in the process. This could only be guaranteed if the UK Home Office selected all candidates personally. Another reason for this decision was that individual interviews were considered the best and most efficient method of selecting the large number of cases needed to fulfil its quota of 500 individuals. Dossier cases afford less opportunity for having a claim examined by a government official in greater detail. Medical cases, including HIV/AIDS, can be admitted to the UK after referral to Ministers. However, the UK is concerned about conditions that raise serious cost and public health issues.

How do you plan which resettlement groups will be resettled to the UK?

The nationalities selected are influenced by domestic and foreign considerations, safety of interviewers and language abilities. The planning of which resettlement groups to take is very important, since this has consequences for the reception and integration phase. For example, resettling Burmese refugees initially posed a serious challenge, since translation services for this group were not readily available. Selecting two different ethnic Burmese groups further complicated matters. In our planning of resettlement groups we therefore selected more Burmese groups over several years, resettling them to the same area. In this way community leadership and refugee community support could be built up and NGOs and local authorities could gain and transfer knowledge on special needs.

Does the UK verify refugee status as part of the procedure?

One issue for the UK was whether to apply its own assessment of Convention status to cases submitted. The UK did this at first but found that the grant rate was not particularly high, owing to issues such as the length of time that a refugee can spend in a protracted refugee situation. In such situations the UK would find it difficult in a lot of cases to grant Convention status because of political opinion. Our original policy led to a two-tier grant of status, as those who did not qualify for Convention status were granted a form of subsidiary protection. This raised significant post-arrival problems in terms of granting benefits, access to further education and family reunion entitlement. The policy was later changed so that the recommendation of UNHCR to grant refugee status was accepted in most circumstances, which solved the problem.

How was support from local authorities and NGOs built up?

Something the UK probably started on a bit too late was the planning process of our resettlement programme, to engage local authorities in participating in the programme. In the UK it was considered important to count on the voluntary participation of local authorities; however, it turned out initially to be a major challenge to acquire their support in this largely unknown endeavour. We also decided not to settle refugees in London or the South East, which historically have received most refugees and where the housing pressure is considerable. A strength of our programme is that NGOs run most of the integration support programmes in conjunction with local authorities. Sheffield was the first city to pick up on the programme, offering to receive the first group of Liberians. From that time coordination with the local authorities became an integrated part of the planning

process. Each local authority in the programme typically accepts 60-80 refugees per year. Since the programme places the refugees upon arrival in the cities/towns of destination and does not have an intermediate reception phase in centres, the availability of housing must be immediate. Housing is an important issue for the UK owing to a lack of readily available large properties. Therefore, private contractors were used in a number of cases.

EU Member States Engaging in Resettlement:

Latest developments

In recent years a number of European countries have expressed interest in establishing national resettlement schemes and receiving refugees through resettlement on an ad hoc basis. Portugal has been the latest country to establish a resettlement programme, bringing the total number of EU Member States offering a resettlement programme to seven. This section looks at where European countries stand now with respect to resettlement.

Portugal: a new country programme in the making

The Portuguese Asylum Law 15/98, article 27, provides the legal basis for a resettlement procedure on a dossier basis. All refugees under the UNHCR mandate are admissible according to the law. Resettlement requests are submitted by UNHCR to, and decided upon by, the Minister of Internal Administration. In 2006, the Government accepted 33 refugees on an ad hoc basis, providing for the resettlement of refugees from the DRC, Liberia, Ivory Coast, Eritrea, Ethiopia and India. These cases were based on the UNHCR Handbook criteria of legal or physical protection needs and lack of local integration prospects in the first country of asylum. Then in July 2007, the Government adopted Resolution No 110/2007, which allows for **the resettlement of a minimum of 30 persons on an annual basis**, under the Portuguese Asylum Law.

The Ministries responsible for the coordination and financing of the reception and integration of resettled refugees in Portugal are the Ministry of Internal Administration, the Ministry of Employment and Social Security and the Ministry of Health. The Portuguese Refugee Council (CPR) is mandated to implement initial reception services at the Refugee Reception Centre of CPR over a period of six months and to provide an integration programme for newly arrived refugees, in cooperation with local social security services, among others. Resettled refugees are issued a residence permit upon arrival, offering refugee status or temporary humanitarian protection ranging from one to five years, and is renewable. After six years of continued residence in Portugal, refugees are entitled to Portuguese nationality. During the first six months in Portugal, CPR support includes financial assistance, legal and social advice, Portuguese language classes, computer training and cultural activities. After six months refugees are placed in private housing with financial

support from the local social security services. CPR supports refugees in their efforts to secure appropriate housing. The CPR's employment service in the Refugee Reception Centre offers job counselling and mediation. Refugees are expected to become self-sufficient by the end of the first year and are then mainstreamed into the general Social Security regime.

The Czech Republic: continue ad hoc or establish a country programme?

Of the new EU Member States, the Czech Republic is the first to have resettled refugees on an ad hoc basis. Responding to an urgent appeal from UNHCR in 2005, the Czech Republic resettled a group of fifteen recognised refugees from Uzbekistan. The group consisted of three married couples and nine single men. The Czech Republic developed a tailor-made integration programme for this group, which was credited as having been the key to the success of the resettlement exercise. Constraints, however, included the lack of prospects for family reunification from Uzbekistan. Nonetheless, in March 2006 two families were reunified. In June 2007, the Czech Republic resettled another group of ten recognised refugees from Cuba, from the US Naval Base in Guantanamo Bay.

The main state agencies involved in resettlement are the Asylum and Migration Policies Department of the Ministry of Interior (AMPD) and The Refugee Facilities Administration of the Ministry of Interior (RFA). With decreasing asylum figures as a result of its altered position in the European Union (i.e. no longer having any “external” EU borders) the Government of the Czech Republic is considering expanding resettlement in the future. Government representatives have also underlined the importance of resettlement as a tool of foreign policy and international human rights policy. A complex national plan for future resettlement activity is now in preparation by AMPD. To prepare for resettlement, the Czech Republic participates in a twinning programme with the Dutch Reception Agency COA, in order to become acquainted with all the phases of the Dutch resettlement process. Finally, both NGO and government representatives from the Czech Republic participated in the ICMC–UNHCR training in El Escorial, Spain in June 2007, and it was one of the countries targeted by the Churches Commission for Migrants in Europe (CCME) project ‘*Broadening the Basis*’, together with participants from Hungary and Romania.

Italy: Piano Dante—Slowly Forward

Italy has a history of resettling refugees on an ad hoc basis, in particular after the coup in Chile in 1973, when 609 people asked for protection from the Italian embassy

in Santiago. In 1979 a group of about 900 Vietnamese “boat people” were saved by the Italian forces in the Chinese Sea and transferred to Italy for resettlement. In 1986 and 1986-87, Vietnamese and Chaldean Iraqis were transferred to Italy for resettlement. The Italian Refugee Council (CIR) has taken a leading role in advocating for resettlement in Italy. In cooperation with the Department for Civil Liberties and Immigration of the Ministry of Interior, CIR conducted a feasibility study on resettlement in Italy, outlining a potential Italian programme with the working title “Piano Dante”. In the summer of 2007, a draft law on asylum, which includes an Article on resettlement, was under discussion in the Italian Parliament. The Government expressed interest and a desire to start implementing resettlement in Italy, to offer an alternative, secure and protected way of arrival to asylum seekers. Hundreds of people deemed in need of international protection put their lives at risk in their attempt to reach Italian coasts each year and resettlement is being considered in that context. It must be noted that some Italian NGOs continue to express hesitancy regarding resettlement, expressing concern that the measure could serve as a means to “externalise” the response to asylum seekers.

Spain: waiting until the elections

For some time now, Spain has been looked upon as one of the countries ready to engage in a formal resettlement programme. While a Spanish resettlement programme has not been established to date, Spain has responded favourably to recent UNHCR appeals: 1,426 Kosovo Albanians arrived in 1999 under UNHCR’s Humanitarian Evacuation Programme, and in February 2000 a group of 17 Afghans from Uzbekistan were resettled. The legal basis to provide protection to certain cases (being labelled as resettlement) is the Spanish Asylum Law (Art. 4.2 of the Royal Decree 203/1995), which allows responses to urgent requests from the UNHCR representative to the Spanish Government for the admission of a refugee under his mandate.

The two leading Spanish ministries involved in resettlement matters are the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs and the Ministry of Interior. NGOs involved in resettlement efforts include the Spanish Red Cross, Rescate, CEAR and ACCEM, all of which have advocated for the establishment of a national resettlement programme. Both the Government and NGOs have participated in twinning projects (MOST) and advocacy and capacity-building programmes (with CCME and ICMC). Ministerial officials have indicated that Spain would be—based on their experience with ad hoc settlement—in a position to start a resettlement programme at very short notice. It is

expected that the next Spanish Asylum Law will contain a special provision for resettlement. In its absence, the Ministry of Interior as well as the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs currently lack a political mandate to establish a programme. Due to a heated political debate on all questions related to immigration, the resettlement discussion is not expected to move before the national elections in Spring 2008.

Belgium, France and Germany: *entering the debate*

Belgium has a history of resettling refugees on an ad hoc basis, receiving Hungarian refugees in 1956, Asians fleeing Uganda, Chileans following the Pinochet Coup, 25,000 boat people from Vietnam in 1975 and 1,200 Kosovans in 1999. Recently the Belgian Government and NGOs have engaged in discussion of further involvement in resettlement, through debates and seminars and the participation in a Belgian-Dutch government resettlement twinning project. In the 2007 national election campaign, most political parties signalled support for starting a resettlement programme. The Belgian Director General for Refugees indicated that Belgium could easily manage a resettlement quota. However, an unprecedented political-institutional deadlock on the formation of a new government following the 2007 election has blocked any further developments until at least late 2007.

France has a history of resettling refugees on an ad hoc basis, beginning with the Hungarian crisis in 1957, when France welcomed 12,700 Hungarian refugees. In 1975, France resettled over 15,000 refugees from Vietnam, and in 1999 it welcomed 6,300 refugees from Kosovo. At an international conference in Geneva, in April 2007, the French Government announced that France would be willing to resettle some Iraqi refugees, *provided* the EU would take the initiative and coordinate the operation. In the months following the May 2007 presidential elections, however, there were no further commitments to resettlement. The NGO ‘Forum Réfugié’ will be actively advocating

for resettlement in the period leading up to the French EU Presidency (July-December 2008), during which migration and asylum will be prioritised. As is the case in Italy, some French NGOs remain hesitant about resettlement and have taken strong positions against a *European* resettlement programme, which they consider a new tool of “externalisation”.

Germany has responded on an ad hoc basis to UNHCR requests for resettlement of individual refugees and groups, offering protection, for example, to refugees evacuated from Kosovo in 1999. However, in recent years Germany has been

reluctant to offer more than *temporary* protection status to these refugees. The German debate on refugee protection has for a very long time been dominated by the comparatively high figures of asylum seekers in the 1990s and the discussion on its new immigration law, which came into force in 2005. The coalition agreement between the Social Democratic and Green parties in 2002 had foreseen that Germany would establish an annual resettlement quota of up to 500 places. However, this was never enacted. Recent expert discussions between civil society actors, UNHCR, political parties and German Government officials have indicated that the German Government might be willing to re-examine the issue of resettlement and take a more positive approach to it.

The Eastern European States (Bulgaria, Hungary, Poland, Romania, Slovakia & Slovenia) UNHCR is currently engaged in active efforts to establish resettlement programmes in Hungary, Bulgaria and Poland. Such efforts involve capacity-building activities and encouragement of established resettlement countries to twin with emerging resettlement countries.

Romania has already indicated that it is a resettlement country. A general legal basis for resettlement has been put in place, but further legislation on implementation was still being developed in mid 2007. In addition, Romania is contributing to resettlement efforts through establishment, within the EU, of an Evacuation Transit Facility for resettlement processing of refugees in need of resettlement who cannot safely remain in their country of first asylum. This facility will be based on Romania's experience acting as a transit country for the evacuation of Uzbek refugees in 2005.

In mid-2007, **Hungary** passed new asylum legislation which provides a legislative base for resettlement. Further, in August 2007 Hungary was engaged in efforts to grant asylum to Cubans from the US Naval Base in Guantanamo Bay.

To date, neither **Slovenia** nor **Slovakia** has undertaken resettlement activities. However, Slovenia is very shortly expected to pass draft legislation which includes provision for resettlement. In addition, Slovenia is participating in twinning arrangements with Denmark.