



REPORT

Symposium: Partnerships in the Resettlement Procedure

15th - 16th November 2012

Haus Eckstein, Nuremberg, Germany



The event is organised within the Linking In EU Resettlement and SHARE projects and co-funded by the European Refugee Fund 2010



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A. Introduction

In 2009 and 2010, Germany accepted 2,501 Iraqi refugees as part of an ad-hoc resettlement programme. In 2011 Germany committed to a regular resettlement programme suggesting to permanently accommodate 300 refugees per year for a three-year period (2012- 2013- 2014).

The country is therefore still in the early stages of its resettlement programme, leading to a need for an exchange of first practical experiences among different stakeholders involved and to discuss future cooperation in the German resettlement procedure.

From 15th to 16th of November, more than 50 participants and facilitators from state as well as non-state actors from different countries gathered in Nuremberg, Germany, to attend in the symposium “Partnerships in the Resettlement Procedure”, organized by ICMC Europe in cooperation with UNHCR, ProAsyl, and the German Red Cross.

B. Participants

The workshop was intended to foster the creation of partnerships among actors that are or could be involved in receiving resettled refugees in their regional or local contexts. Following targeted invitations 52 participants registered for the event, including representatives of national (4), regional (Bundesland) (3) and local authorities (11), representatives of national and international non-governmental and inter-governmental organizations (26), stakeholders in the field of refugee reception (4) and integration and resettled refugees themselves (4). For further details please see participants list attached.

C. Financing under the “Linking-in EU Resettlement Project” and the “Cities that care, cities that SHARE” - Projects:

The workshop was organized by ICMC in the framework of two European resettlement cooperation projects: being the ‘Linking In’ project and the ‘SHARE’ projects. The combined use of funding for the projects, in addition to a UNHCR contribution, permitted to organize an event for 1.5 days and with over 50 participants.

The IOM-UNHCR-ICMC ‘Linking-In EU Resettlement Project’ (September 2011 - January 2013) aims at strengthening resettlement in Europe by expanding the expertise of European practitioners in all stages of the resettlement and integration process. Building towards a European network of resettlement practitioners and actors, the project focuses on the reception and integration of refugees at the local level and linking the pre-departure and post-arrival phases in order to make resettlement more successful and better co-ordinated. Within the partnership, ICMC is responsible for capacity building activities for new resettlement countries, e.g. the “Resettlement Symposium – Partnerships in the Resettlement Process” in Nuremberg.

The **SHARE project** (‘Cities that Care, Cities that Share - A European Resettlement Network Engaging Cities and Regions’) is led by ICMC, in partnership with UNHCR, the city of Sheffield, EURO CITIES, Horton Housing Association (UK) and the NGOs ACCEM, France Terre d’Asile, ProAsyl Germany and others as well as associate partners, such as the cities of Munich and Aachen. The project builds towards a European resettlement network of cities and regions



offering structured dialogue, exchange of practice and networking between cities and regional actors and between experienced and emerging resettlement countries planning or considering resettlement. To strengthen the role of cities and regions in resettlement at a national level, SHARE facilitates additional city and regional attendance at Linking In training and capacity-building events and initiatives for cities, e.g. the “Resettlement Symposium – Partnerships in the Resettlement Process” in Nuremberg, sponsoring participation of representatives from German cities with the successful ‘Save Me’ campaigns.

D. Objectives of the Symposium

The Symposium’s Objectives were to strengthen the resettlement stakeholder cooperation engagement and capacity to improve resettlement planning and response to reception and integration through, i.a.:

- Updates and exchange about recent refugee arrivals (who, when, where) in different parts of Germany;
- Structured exchange about the legal framework in Germany under which resettlement is taking place;
- Discussion about roles and interplay of different actors involved in the resettlement process and the coordination between both pre-departure and post-arrival actors;
- Presentation and discussion about models and partnerships to facilitate the reception, initial and longer term integration of resettled refugees in the new localities;
- Presentation of good practices and models from within and outside Europe that can be duplicated in the future.

E. Content of the presentations

During the 1,5 days of the symposium, participants took part in an intensive schedule of presentations, panel discussions and workshops, covering a variety of topics to assess the current state of the resettlement procedure in Germany and to develop approaches for the future. A detailed account of the programme and of participants’ main contributions is described below.



Day 1 - Thursday 15th November 2012

Objective: The presentations of the first day aimed at providing an overview and reflection on the current state of the resettlement process in Germany.

- The first panel clarified the process of identification, selection, and pre-departure cultural orientation *inter alia* at the example of refugee resettlement from Tunisia and Turkey to Germany.
- The second panel discussed general conditions for resettlement as a durable solution focusing on key issues such as legal status and family reunification.

At the end of the day, a presentation on the Canadian resettlement programme was offered as a source of inspiration for the future development of the German quota programme.

Panel 1: 2012 Resettlement of Refugees from Tunisia and Turkey to Germany

Carolyn Spannuth-Verma, UNHCR's Senior Resettlement Officer, presented the process of identification of refugees with resettlement needs, discussing how resettlement files are submitted for consideration to resettlement countries such as Germany.

- Even though identification of refugees for resettlement might appear simple in theory, the concrete implementation is rather complex since the total number of refugees (10 million) largely exceeds the 81,000 places available for resettlement worldwide.
- Refugees eligible for resettlement have to be recognized as refugees according to the 1951 Geneva Convention. Additionally, they must meet the requirements for submission under one or more of the seven resettlement submission categories, which define particular vulnerability (legal and/or physical protection needs, survivors of torture and/or violence, medical needs, women and girls at risk, family reunification, children and adolescents at risk, lack of foreseeable alternative durable solutions). Subsequently they are selected by taking into account supplementary criteria, such as their date of arrival and their membership of a minority group. The whole process of pre-selection aims to be as objective as possible and to avoid arbitrariness.
- UNHCR is responsible for status determination and the assessment of individual resettlement needs according to the criteria mentioned above. Out of the pre-selected files that UNHCR submits for resettlement (in 2012 some 860,000 refugees), resettlement countries choose a group of refugees they intend to admit. Spannuth-Verma stressed that in their selection procedures resettlement countries should take into consideration the thoroughness of the UNHCR assessment. In addition, Resettlement countries should not further limit Resettlement to certain groups of refugees by introducing their own criteria including potential integration prospects in their selection procedure.

Thomas Langwald, Desk Officer at the Department for Resettlement, Assisted Voluntary Return, and Reintegration, BAMF, elaborated on the selection process of resettlement refugees. Germany currently receives 300 resettled refugees per year. Contrary to UNHCR's position, BAMF regards the prospects for integration (determined, e.g. on the basis of indicators such as level of education, language skills or religious affiliation) of these refugees as another important selection criterion, in addition to considerations of vulnerability (especially unaccompanied minors and single heads of household) and other criteria such as existing family



ties in Germany.

- After the initial pre-selection by UNHCR, the standardized selection process conducted by BAMF can be subdivided into three phases. First, BAMF examines the dossiers submitted by UNHCR and preselects among those dossiers of individuals with whom, in a second phase, interviews are conducted on the ground. Following the selection interviews in the country of first asylum, a medical check-up is also carried out. Finally, as a result of the interviews and the examination, a resettlement decision is made.

Mike Gray, Chief of the Resettlement and Movement Management Division, IOM, discussed the role of IOM in the resettlement process, which comprises case processing, health assessments, travel assistance, pre-departure cultural orientation, and organised transportation.

- IOM regards resettlement as an essential protection tool and supports UNHCR's call for greater engagement in the field of resettlement. Resettlement as a collective obligation is to be understood as a process from protection and preparation towards sustainable integration. IOM's role lies most often in the field of preparation.
- The example of practical challenges in the resettlement processes out of Tunisia and Turkey (e.g. luggage issues or logistical restrictions in organizing interviews and trainings) illustrates the need to factor in human dynamics. Therefore, it is indispensable to maintain flexibility and to involve refugees in the resettlement process in order to manage expectations.

Manfred Asel and Salwa Ehrhardt, Diakonisches Werk, elaborated on the pre- departure phase of the resettlement process. They presented their programme „Vorbereitet ankommen in der neuen Heimat“ (“Prepared Arrival in the new Home Country”), an ERF-funded pre-departure integration programme for resettlement refugees – especially, but not exclusively, from Turkey.

- The aim of the programme is to reduce fears and to manage expectations prior to arrival in Germany. Moreover, the programme provides important pre-departure information on issues pertaining to legal status, housing, health, education, employment, availability of follow-up integration courses and relevant counseling and information services in Germany. The programme also includes a limited amount of German language lessons. The experience so far has shown a need to further extend this language learning component. One of the well-received features of the programme is a Facebook-group for resettled refugees, where former participants of the programme have the opportunity to exchange their experiences of settling into a new life in Germany.

Panel 2: General Conditions for Resettlement as a Durable Solution

As a starting impulse for Panel 2, **Mohammed Eisa and Emmanuel Sebatutsi Gatoni, two refugees resettled from Choucha camp to Berlin**, shared their experiences of the resettlement process to Germany. They described resettlement as a long process with many challenges that persist beyond arrival in Germany. They made a plea to strengthen efforts to speed up and facilitate the resettlement process and integration into German society. In addition, they lobbied for more transparent and participatory resettlement procedures. They also stressed the importance of better conditions for family reunification as a key factor for integration.



The panelists in this session, moderated by Andrea Kothen (**Pro Asyl**¹), were **Evelyn Jäger (Ministry of the Interior, Schleswig Holstein)**, **Thomas Langwald (BAMF)**, **Sarah Hergenröther (Save me München)** and **Norbert Trosien (UNHCR Germany)**.

- At the outset, the panelists were asked to evaluate the current state of the German resettlement programme:
- **UNHCR** welcomed the 2011 decision for a regular resettlement quota of 300 refugees over the next three years offering the basis for a structured and predictable form of cooperation. Besides ensuring the continuation of the programme beyond 2014, potentially with a larger quota, UNHCR considers the further development of the national resettlement procedure a main priority.
- **UNHCR** identified a number of areas in the current German resettlement procedure where adjustments appear desirable. These are mainly related to the legal framework under which resettlement takes place, resulting in differences in legal status and entitlements, compared to the rights of regular refugees. One consequence is, for example, that greater burdens are placed on resettled refugees who apply for family reunification. German authorities seem to have recognized this problem and are working on a solution, at the administrative level. Further issues that UNHCR has identified relate to the distribution of resettled refugees, exchange of information related to the refugees as well as structural and comprehensive cooperation between authorities and NGOs.
- The fact that resettled refugees are not entitled to a Convention travel document often leads to a variety of bureaucratic obstacles. Further, if individuals are not granted formal refugee status according to the 1951 Convention, they are not visible (e.g. to the authorities) as individuals with a refugee background/with protection needs.
- With regard to these aspects, Mrs. **Hergenröther** noted that less bureaucratic solutions also need to be found in order to tackle issues in terms of accommodation and financial subsistence allowances. The other panelists remarked that there are talks between federal authorities and *Länder* authorities with the aim of preventing delays of payments in absence of legal status and registration. However, legal problems persist in terms of practical implementation.
- Moreover, resettled refugees are only granted permanent residency after seven years (upon fulfillment of certain conditions) as opposed to three years for regular refugees. **UNHCR** argued that resettled refugees should in this respect benefit from the same rules as refugees. The fact that resettlement is one of the three durable solutions for refugees further supports this argument.
- All panelists agreed that the cooperation and communication between the different actors in the resettlement process has considerably been improved since 2009. Resettlement is now dealt with on a broader political level, with greater involvement of the *Länder* (e.g. the *Länder* were asked to contribute their experiences to the resettlement evaluation process) and a number of different departments (e.g., interior, integration, social affairs). Resettlement was also discussed at the conferences of both the regular meetings of the integration and employment secretaries of the German individual states.
- Yet, despite these positive developments all panelists agreed that there was still room for improvement. The lack of a regular resettlement procedure in Germany until very recently (and thus the absence of e.g. SOPs including in the area of a structured exchange

¹ Mrs Kerstin Becker (Red Cross) was sick and could not attend the conference and moderate the session as was foreseen



of information) was seen as an obstacle for better preparation and cooperation. Additionally, a closer and timelier cooperation and information exchange with the authorities at the Friedland reception facilities, who offer reception upon arrival of refugees, was identified as a goal for the future. Lastly, it was recognized that there is also a need for better coordination between different NGOs and charity organisations in order to link the pre- and post-arrival phases of the resettlement process.

Panel 3: Inspiration for Germany – The Canadian Resettlement Programme

Fariborz Birjandian, Executive Director of the Calgary Catholic Immigration Center, Canada, presented the Canadian resettlement procedure and his experiences with selection, distribution and integration of resettled refugees in Canada. **Fariborz Birjandian** fled from Iran to Pakistan and was resettled to Canada. He first showed a short introductory film on the work of the Calgary Catholic Immigration Center (CCIC).

- For the purposes of resettlement there are two categories: government-assisted refugees (GAR) and privately sponsored refugees (e.g. by local churches or other private entities). CCIC also offers services to migrants and asylum-seekers. Political opinion in Calgary is less favourable towards the last category. There is a distribution key for resettled refugees within Canada, but resettled refugees enjoy freedom of movement.
- According to Birjandian, a key condition for successful resettlement is to make resettlement a community issue and a positive experience (keyword “celebration”) for both, resettled refugees and the local community. Building on hopes while eliminating fears, integration should start from day one. To this aim, it is indispensable to build on volunteers from the local community and to actively involve (previously) resettled refugees themselves. Moreover, in Canada particular emphasis is placed on language as integration factor with 70 cents of each dollar spent on resettlement going to language training.
- Birjandian also stressed the importance of leadership and commitment by all levels and the need for collaborative planning and information sharing. In Canada, every six months actors on all levels meet together to discuss the resettlement arrivals and the resettlement process. A result-oriented client-centred approach is adopted which focuses on needs assessments, evaluations and outcome measurements.



Day 2 – Friday 16th November 2012

The second day of the symposium started with a panel on the topic of reception and integration of refugees on the local level, where a variety of practical issues, such as planning structures, coordination of cooperation, as well as different support programmes, were discussed.

Subsequently, participants were divided into different workshops to work out and develop concrete models of cooperation and integration at the local, federal and national level. At the end of the symposium, the three workshops reported their results and presented different solution strategies.

Panel 4: Reception and Integration of Refugees on the Local Level

The goal of the third panel was to share examples and best practices of reception and integration of resettlement refugees on the local level, including experiences from other European countries. Standards of refugee reception that are or should be met were discussed.

The panelists in this session, moderated by **Torsten Moritz (CCME)**, were **Hilde Scheidt (Mayor of the City of Aachen)**, **Abdulkareem Hamid (resettled refugee)**, **Anders Heimer (Swedish Public Employment Service)**, and **Rachel Westerby (SHARE City Network Coordinator, ICMC Europe)**.

- **Abdulkareem Hamid**, an Iraqi refugee resettled from Syria to Germany in 2009, initiated the discussion by presenting his personal experiences. He was resettled to Munich with his handicapped daughter. He pointed out some experienced difficulties, especially the lack of appropriate information that would have facilitated the arrival in Germany and the missing consideration of and response to the medical needs of his daughter (apartment on 4th floor, no special bed and elevator etc.). The other panelists agreed that the federal authorities should provide the actors on the local level with more information in advance about the individual cases so that their specific needs can be taken into account upon arrival and without significant delay.
- Another problem mentioned by **Hamid** pertained to the coordination on the local level which is not sufficiently conducted centrally by official authorities. Therefore, and due to a lack of official staff and a dedicated focal point, a major part of the support and services in Munich were provided by welfare organisations such as Caritas or by members of the Save Me group (mostly volunteers). This observation was also shared by other panelists who positively highlighted the degree of voluntary contribution of civil society but pointed out that this should not substitute official structures. Another general problem mentioned in this context is the insufficient financial resources that local authorities are provided with by the federal government and the *Länder* governments for the reception of resettled refugees.
- Referring to the Swedish situation, **Anders Heimer** gave an example of local integration measures for resettled refugees, with a focus on labour market integration. The Swedish Public Employment Service has initiated a special 24-month labour market training programme in two counties with special activities that comprise Swedish language courses and courses about life and employment in Sweden. The objective is to increase inclusion in the labour market, which was originally 7 to 3 years. Information about employment is also available in various languages through special leaflets for newcomers,



a telephone service and personal advice. Special efforts are also made to facilitate access for persons with specific needs. To implement these programmes and to coordinate the reception of resettled refugees, the Immigration Agency is constantly in exchange with different actors on the local level.

- In her contribution about the ICMC-programme SHARE, **Rachel Westerby** stressed the importance of exchange between local actors on the European level: Cities need a platform to discuss their experiences, to learn mutually from the each others' practices, and to find joint durable solutions for refugees. The project SHARE intends to offer cities this platform, including the perspective of relevant actors from different fields (e.g. housing, education, work, health). Besides national and local authorities, actors from NGOs and refugees themselves should be included in the exchange and the process of working out targeted programmes. Cities can also learn a lot by sending delegations to other cities that already have experiences and expertise in the reception and integration of (resettlement) refugees.
- Mrs Hilde Scheidt, mayor of the City of Aachen presented the practice in Aachen, being a German best-practice example in terms of reception and integration of resettlement refugees. The local authorities try to facilitate the refugees' start in the new country by adapting to their specific needs concerning housing, education (special courses for children to prepare for the German educational system; adapted language classes for women) and health. To this end, Aachen also hired interpreters who support the resettlement refugees free of charge.
- A topic of general concern for all panelists was the state of health of resettlement refugees and the consideration of specific medical needs. Cases in which information about medical needs is not communicated should be avoided. Furthermore, the processes in the health system must be accelerated offering easy access, preferably with specialized doctors and interpreters' services. It was also stressed that resettlement refugees in Germany generally enjoy good access to public health care since they are beneficiaries of public health insurance (in contrast to asylum seekers e.g.). On a practical level, Hamid's case showed that more flexibility concerning residential obligations could facilitate the search for appropriate accommodation for persons with specific medical needs.

Workshop 1: Planning of Resettlement – From Selection to Reception of Refugees in the Context of Resettlement

- The participants of the workshop discussed the planning of the selection and reception in the resettlement process and identified the federal structure of Germany as a major problematic issue. Accordingly, it is a challenge to develop a common reception concept given the different levels of responsibility and restrictions arising from diverging political agendas. Therefore, an enhanced exchange of information and experiences is crucial in order to strengthen cooperation between different actors and the coherent planning of the resettlement reception process as a whole. The participants of the workshop concluded that an informal, possibly lower-level working group on a voluntary basis could be established with the aim of increasing exchange and cooperation in the future.
- The participants of the workshop further discussed the current reception and integration offers (i.e. pre-departure classes, language & integration courses), which play an important role in managing refugees' expectations and providing key information about Germany. In this respect, the workshop considered that current reception and integration offers should be expanded and improved, potentially by taking more account of good-practice examples in other countries. Consequently, more exchange and



cooperation with practitioners from other resettlement states would be desirable.

Workshop 2: Reception and First Steps towards Integration – The First Year after Arrival

- The participants of the workshop first discussed the timing of the information flow in the resettlement procedure. Specific information and case details about resettled refugees should be transmitted to the local community level preferably six to eight weeks in advance in order to grant sufficient time to prepare for the arrival and adequate reception of the refugees.
- The participants of the workshop concluded that the local reception should be dealt with at community level, not only by volunteers, but essentially official staff. Yet, for local authorities to take more responsibility it is necessary to establish a better flow of communication between all decision-making levels. Direct contact and communication between the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees and local communities would be desirable.
- The participants of the workshop also discussed the benefits of the central reception of resettled refugees in Friedland. It was concluded that this centralized reception can be useful if it leads to a better and more transparent flow of information. Yet, it was highlighted that the stay in Friedland should be needs-specific and flexible according to the personal requirements of the refugee. As a wish for the future, it would be desirable to have an inclusive personalized resettlement file for each resettled refugee, which contains all relevant information and specific integration goals.

Workshop 3: Sustainable Integration – Inclusion of Resettled Refugees in Basic Support and Integration Programmes

- The participants of the workshop stressed the importance – in terms of coherence across the resettlement process – for all actors involved to know more about the resettlement procedure as a whole. Support and integration programmes need to be devised with the knowledge of the specific background of resettled refugees.
- In light of the small numbers of resettlement refugees it is difficult at this point in time to offer specialized programs for resettled refugees. There are adequate integration programmes in places in which resettled refugees can be mainstreamed. However, there is a need of better communication among stakeholders to ensure that special needs are addressed. In this respect, a good-practice solution could be the city of Aachen's personalised integration approach. An individualised programme is devised for each resettled refugee in terms of education and job placements.
- It was agreed that better cooperation is needed in order to improve the inclusion of resettled refugees in basic support and integration programmes. Local practitioners' networks and regular evaluations are also seen as key factors for success.

