

**ANNUAL TRIPARTITE CONSULTATIONS ON RESETTLEMENT**  
**Geneva, 20-21 June 2001**

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**Discussion Note**  
**EMERGING RESETTLEMENT COUNTRIES OF EUROPE**  
**(IRELAND, ICELAND, SPAIN)**

**IRELAND**

**Structure of the Programme and Selection Process**

1. Ireland agreed, in 1999, to accept an annual resettlement quota of 10 cases, as part of the UNHCR resettlement programme. The first resettled refugees arrived in Ireland in June 2000. Since then, 40 refugees of Rwandan, Sudanese, Afghan, Cameroonian and Liberian nationality have been admitted. Recently, Ireland has approved some 27 refugees under the 2000 quota. This second group includes refugees of Congolese, Sudanese, Somali, Tunisian and Iranian nationality. Another 60 refugees, submitted under the 2001 quota, are pending with the Irish authorities.
2. Some structural changes have recently taken place in the ministerial bodies responsible for resettlement. The Refugee Agency, previously under the auspices of the Department of Foreign Affairs, and the Directorate for Asylum Support Services under the Department of Justice Equality and Law Reform, have recently merged to form a new organisation called the *Reception and Integration Agency* (RIA) under the auspices of the Department of Justice Equality and Law Reform. The RIA will have the responsibility for the reception and integration of all asylum seekers and refugees.
3. Under the new structure, the Human Rights Division in the Department of Foreign Affairs will process applications for resettlement under the Irish quota. Selection is made from cases submitted by the Resettlement Section at Headquarters through the Liaison Office in Ireland. The selection process has been a positive experience in that the Irish authorities have focused their decision-making process on the criteria of refugee protection and durable solutions needs in accordance with UNHCR's standards and policy.
4. Refugees have been accepted for resettlement in Ireland based on their legal and physical protection needs as well as the lack of local integration prospects in their country of refuge. In view of the positive results achieved by the Irish Programme, there is an opportunity for an overall expansion and diversification of the Irish quota, which might also include urgent and emergency submissions.

**Reception and Integration of Resettled Refugees**

5. A representative of the RIA meets newly arrived resettled refugees at the airport. Initially, refugees are placed in temporary accommodation in the Dublin area pending identification of more suitable accommodation. During this initial period, refugees are

provided with clothes and food and some supplementary welfare contributions. Limited interpretation/translation services are also provided, as required, free of charge.

6. In the long-term, refugees are entitled to the same services as Irish citizens, including free health care, social welfare payments and access to education. The resettlement officer assigned to each case provides assistance with accessing these services. In addition, refugees have access to language training provided by the Government-funded Refugee Language Support Unit. They also have access to psychological services as well as to cultural mediators, as needed.

7. Refugees are both permitted and encouraged to work in Ireland. The Government-funded employment training scheme (FAS) has a unit dedicated to refugees, which can provide assistance in this area.

8. Newly arrived refugees follow an eighteen-month reception and integration programme at the end of which their potential for leading normal and independent lives has been maximised. The first stage of the programme (3-4 months) involves intense work with the refugee to ensure that all the necessary services are put in place. During this time the Resettlement Team visits the refugee regularly, providing direct assistance as well as cultural orientation.

9. The second Stage of the programme is aimed at promoting independence by encouraging refugees to undertake tasks and to engage in problem solving, themselves, under the guidance of the Resettlement Team. In addition, a Resettlement Officer is available to refugees for consultation every morning.

10. At the third stage, the case is reviewed and the refugee is visited at home for the purposes of addressing any outstanding problems. By this time it is expected that refugees will be largely self-sufficient, although ongoing support can be provided when required.

11. The continued involvement of the Refugee Agency, albeit under the newly constituted Reception and Integration Agency, is a positive aspect of the Resettlement Programme in Ireland. The Agency has developed strong links with non-governmental agencies through its work with other refugee groups over the past few years. Their experience with previous quota refugees makes them well placed to provide resettlement and integration assistance. The Irish Government should be commended for their commitment to the resettlement of refugees and ability to build upon prior experience in the reception and integration of resettled refugees.

### **Ireland's Participation in ICRIRR**

12. Ireland played an active role in the lead-up and implementation of the *International Conference on the Reception and Integration of Resettled Refugees (ICRIRR)*, in Norrköping, Sweden 25-27 April 2001. Just prior to the *Refugee Agency's* transition from the Department of Foreign Affairs to the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform as the newly constituted *Reception and Integration Agency (RIA)*, they hosted the Executive Committee of the ICRIRR Steering Group for their 23 February 2001 meeting in Dublin. This meeting provided Ireland the opportunity to receive a more in-depth briefing on the conference and the broader objectives of the *Integration Initiative*, as well as allowing the opportunity for colleagues from the other resettlement countries present at the meeting to liaise with their counterparts in Ireland. As a result of this exchange of information on models and methods of approaching reception and

integration, the RIA made a commitment to participate in a more significant way at ICRIRR.

13. Subsequently, Ireland sent five representatives to participate in the conference, with one participant serving as facilitator for the *Women At Risk* session, and another as rapporteur for the *Survivors of Torture and Trauma* breakout session under Track 3, *Special Needs of Resettled Refugees*. The broader exposure to the other resettlement countries has enabled staff of the RIA to feel better connected with their counterparts, and to compare approaches developed for enhancing reception and integration prospects with colleagues in both the traditional and emerging resettlement countries.

## **ICELAND**

### **Structure of the Programme and Selection Process**

14. Iceland agreed, in 1996, to establish an annual resettlement quota as part of the UNHCR Resettlement Programme. The Ministry of Social Affairs, through the Icelandic Red Cross, is responsible for the selection, admission and integration of refugees in Iceland while working in close co-operation with the concerned ministries. In 1999, Iceland admitted 75 Kosovo Albanian refugees and conferred refugee status on them. In 2000, 24 Serb refugees from Kraijna were admitted, while in 2001, 23 Croat refugees from the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia were accepted during an Icelandic selection mission. This last group of refugees arrived in Iceland on 9 June 2001.

15. The selection process in Iceland is implemented through participation in selection missions to the countries of refuge by an Icelandic delegation. This delegation enjoys a considerable amount of flexibility and discretion in the selection of cases submitted by UNHCR. In general, Iceland has demonstrated a high level of commitment to accepting refugees with protection and durable solution needs consistent with UNHCR criteria. Their process has also proved smooth and satisfactory with regard to the time frames for decision-making.

16. Considering the positive results achieved by the Icelandic Resettlement Programme thus far, there is potential for a progressive diversification of the Icelandic quota to also include refugees with special needs. In this context, the Icelandic Red Cross and the Governmental Agency for the Protection of Children are currently drafting rules providing a legislative framework for Unaccompanied Minors, which will soon be introduced in the Ministry of Social Affairs and the Ministry of Justice.

### **Reception and Integration of Resettled Refugees**

17. The reception and integration of refugees is co-ordinated by the Ministry of Social Affairs through the Icelandic Red Cross. A Steering Group, chaired by the Red Cross, is established in each of the local communities and is responsible, at a local level, for the assistance provided under the Icelandic Programme.

18. Newly arrived refugees are met by the local authorities, Red Cross representatives, and support families. They are provided with an apartment for one year including heat, electricity and the basic costs for telephone service. In addition, refugees are offered an allowance for health services and for their living expenses according to an agreed upon standard determined by Social Services in the local receiving community. Refugees are

also provided with second-hand furniture, a television, radio, vacuum cleaner, refrigerator and washing machine, as well as with clothing.

19. Psychological assistance, language instruction and cultural orientation are provided to refugees throughout their integration process. At the end of the one-year support programme, refugees are expected to become self-sufficient and eligible to receive the same level of social assistance as Icelandic citizens.

20. Support families are an essential feature of Iceland's integration programme for resettled refugees. The Support Families Scheme is based on the initiative of individual citizens who volunteer with the Icelandic Red Cross to assist refugees to integrate in their respective local communities. Support families undergo specific training before being formally assigned to a refugee, including a psychological aid course and a full briefing on the refugee's cultural background. At the beginning of the programme, support families participate in open information meetings in which the entire receiving community participates.

### **Iceland's Participation in ICRIRR**

21. Iceland played a key role as Co-chair, together with Australia, of Track 2, *Common Needs of Refugees* at the recently convened *International Conference on the Reception and Integration of Resettled Refugees, (ICRIRR)*, held in Norrköping, Sweden, 25-27 April 2001. The Icelandic Red Cross representative on the Steering Group of ICRIRR actively participated in planning meetings, attended the study visits in New York and Washington, DC in conjunction with the 17 November 2000 Steering Group Meeting and served as a panellist for the Track 2 Plenary Session on *Common Needs*.

## **SPAIN**

### **Structure of the Programme and Selection Process**

22. While Spain has no formal agreement to resettle refugees on the basis of a fixed quota, the Government, in the past few years, has responded positively to UNHCR's urgent appeals to accept refugees for resettlement, as well as honouring other international commitments. Between April and June 1999, 1,426 Kosovo Albanians were transferred to Spain under UNHCR's Humanitarian Evacuation Programme. In February 2000, a group of 17 Afghans from Uzbekistan were resettled in Spain and granted refugee status by the Spanish authorities. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of the Interior, and the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs are sharing responsibilities for the definition of the overall policy on resettlement, which includes the approval process, as well as the reception and integration of refugees. Local, non-governmental organisations serve as implementing partners.

23. The Spanish Government has also been accepting *ad hoc* cases in urgent need of resettlement, referred by UNHCR Headquarters or UNHCR Field Offices through UNHCR Madrid. Although Spanish legislation has no specific regulations on resettlement, the Law on Asylum foresees the possibility of authorising the urgent transfer to Spain of those refugees under UNHCR mandate who are found to be at risk in their country of asylum (as specified in Article 4.2 of the Implementing Decree to the Asylum Law). This provision has been implemented on behalf of a number of cases, one of which is still pending with the Spanish authorities.

24. The Spanish Commission for Refugee Aid (CEAR) is one of the primary NGO implementing partners working with UNHCR in Spain. CEAR has been advocating with the Spanish Government for a stronger commitment to resettlement and the establishment of annual resettlement quotas.

25. By resettling refugees on its territory, the Government of Spain has provided a clear manifestation of its commitment to refugee protection and demonstrated its support for UNHCR's mandate.

### **Reception and Integration of Resettled Refugees**

26. The Spanish Red Cross meets refugees upon their arrival and provides them with transportation, interpreters and medical assistance, if required. For an initial six-month period, refugees are generally placed in reception centres where they receive meals, pocket money, clothes, medical assistance and transportation. Under specific circumstances, some further assistance is also provided.

27. In the longer term, refugees receive a limited allowance for renting a flat as well as medical, food and school allowances. Schooling is free of charge and compulsory for children under 16 years of age, regardless of their legal status. Spanish language courses are also offered, as well as compensatory education. Refugees may also benefit from scholarships and grants for higher education on the same terms as Spaniards. In addition, refugees are assisted to find employment through professional training and job search support services. Transportation is provided for those refugees who have found a job. Other long-term services include psychological care, legal assistance, leisure activities and vocational training.

28. The Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, through its Institute for Migration and Social Services, (IMSERSO), is in charge of social welfare for refugees at the national level. IMSERSO funds and establishes annual refugee programmes with NGOs and signs agreements with them specifying the benefits which refugees are entitled to receive.

29. Newly arriving refugees are generally expected to become self-sufficient within a 6-month to 1-year period. To strengthen their integration process in Spain, some cultural orientation briefings are provided to refugees at different stages of the process. In addition, NGO personnel work closely in assisting refugees to integrate through their "social mediators for integration" programme, which usually recruits foreigners of the same nationality to serve as mediators.

30. Spanish NGOs have been actively involved in advocating for initiating a quota and have progressively improved their capacity to provide adequate assistance to refugees, acquiring more specific skills with which to effectively promote integration.

### **Spanish Participation at ICRIRR**

31. The NGO community in Spain played a very active role in the planning process for the *International Conference on the Reception and Integration of Resettled Refugees (ICRIRR)* which took place in Norrköping, Sweden 25-27 April 2001. Specific mention should be made of the leadership provided by Ms. Martha Arroyo of the Spanish Commission for Refugee Assistance (CEAR) who not only served as the Chair of the Working Group on the *Common Needs of Resettled Refugees* which was instrumental in designing the Track 2 sessions at the conference, but also provided tremendous support

to counterpart NGO implementing partners in Chile. In addition, Ms. Arroyo served as a panellist for the Track 1 session, entitled *Economics and Integration*. The nine participants attending the conference from Spain included three Government representatives from the *Institute of Migration and Social Services (IMSERO)*, four NGO representatives, a former refugee, and the Community Services Assistant from the UNHCR Regional Office in Madrid, Ms. Maria Jesus Vega, who co-facilitated the special, pre-ICRIRR orientation meeting for emerging resettlement countries. Special collaborative efforts between the ICRIRR participants from Spain and Chile enabled the agendas and key conference documents to be translated into Spanish.