

Establishment of a joint EU resettlement programme

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The European Parliament adopted a resolution on the establishment of a joint EU resettlement programme.

A real and effective EU Resettlement Programme: Parliament welcomes the initiative of the Commission to propose a change to the European Refugee Fund in order to incorporate the impact of the EU Resettlement Programme. Appreciating the general objectives set out in the Communication on the EU Resettlement Programme, as well as the growing attention devoted to resettlement in the overall EU asylum policy, Parliament, nevertheless, calls for a more ambitious programme which ensures the quality and effectiveness of the resettlement. Parliament cites, in particular, incentives to attract more Member States to resettle refugees, **consistency of resettlement with other EU asylum policies** and standards of reception conditions and follow-up measures.

Parliament recalls, however, that a budget line and financial support are not sufficient to establish a real EU-wide resettlement programme. This is why it urges the Member States to promote the creation of private funding mechanisms and **more widespread public-private initiatives** so as to underpin the European Resettlement Programme. It considers that, under the new financial perspectives (2013–2017), a specific envelope for resettlement should be established. Such an envelope could take the form of a **dedicated resettlement fund**.

Parliament welcomes the opening of the new Emergency Transit Centre (ETC) in Romania offering temporary accommodation for refugees in urgent need of resettlement and call on the Commission to make use of this structure. They also welcome the *ad hoc* initiatives taken by a number of Member States in accommodating refugees in urgent need of resettlement while recognising the need for such initiatives to take a more structured form.

Requirements for efficiency and responsiveness of resettlement measures: Parliament underlines that an effective EU Resettlement Programme should provide **protection and durable solutions** both for long-term, protracted refugee situations and for rapid and adequate responses in case of emergency or unforeseen urgency. In its view, the setting of annual priorities should be such as to enable a prompt reaction to sudden humanitarian crises which might occur throughout the year. Parliament favours a private-public partnership with NGOs and further social partners, such as religious and ethnic organisations. It believes that municipalities already involved, or becoming involved, in resettlement should create partnerships and twinnings with other municipalities in their home country and in the EU Member States in order to exchange their experiences.

Parliament stresses the need to:

- establish a structured cooperation framework through measures to gather expertise and enable information collecting and sharing;
- access to human resources, expert advice and shared information that may be useful in any phase of the resettlement initiative for the Member States involved;
- exchange of best practices which foster efficiency between Member States (e.g. the promotion of joint programmes, peer evaluation, the setting-up of joint missions, the use of common infrastructures);
- set in place follow-up measures on the quality of reception and integration.

A permanent Resettlement Unit: Parliament believes that the absence of mechanisms of cooperation and coordination between Member States raises the costs of the operations related to resettlement, makes them less attractive and reduces their strategic impact. It therefore recommends the **creation of a specific unit** with proper staff allocated to carry out the necessary coordination between all the ongoing resettlement activities in the Member States and believes that the most appropriate institutional framework for this Resettlement Unit would be within the (European Asylum Support Office - EASO). Parliament believes that the most appropriate institutional framework for this Resettlement Unit would be within the EASO, where it could cooperate in the ambit of EU policies in the area of asylum and migration. The unit could establish close contact with the UNHCR and local NGOs, in order to obtain important information to forward to the Member States and EU institutions regarding, for instance, urgent priorities, integration techniques, etc. It could play an important role in the monitoring and evaluation of the effectiveness and quality of the Resettlement Programme at EU level and contribute very usefully to the consistency and complementarity between the Resettlement Programme and the Union's other asylum policies.

Flexible priority-setting: Parliament recognises that an adequate resettlement programme requires a regular update of the nationalities and categories of refugees that should be prioritised in the resettlement process, with special regard to geographical emergencies and particularly vulnerable persons who are most in need of protection. It considers, however, that there should **be categories which remain stable every year**, so that Member States can resettle particularly vulnerable persons at any time of the year. It considers that the EU annual priorities should be established with strong and effective involvement of the European Parliament at all stages of the identification and assessment of candidates for resettlement. A procedure **associating the European Parliament** is thus proposed;

Parliament suggests that individual Member States may be enabled to prepare for emergency procedures in cases of unforeseen humanitarian circumstances – for instance, when refugees are under armed attack or when natural accidents or catastrophes seriously affect refugee camps. These procedures would allow resettlement to take place in a short period of time, with the administrative steps being accelerated.

Ensuring that more Member States participate in resettlement: to date, only 10 Member States currently have resettlement programmes, established without coordination among themselves. Recognising that certain Member States, particularly in southern Europe, face special challenges because of their location at the external border of the Union, Parliament calls for greater incentives to encourage more Member States to participate in the EU Resettlement Programme. It suggests that more substantial financial assistance is given to Member States wishing to start participating in the EU Resettlement Programme, in order to help them create a sustainable resettlement programme and to alleviate the initial burden of setting up such an initiative. In order to avoid an excessive impact on the European Refugee Fund, the value of the financial assistance should be equalised to the other Member States after the first years of participation to the programme. Parliament recognises that the **participation of Member States remains voluntary**.

Parliament stresses that it will **not be possible to increase the number of refugees resettled** in the EU without an administrative and expert framework to underpin the programme and the **creation of permanent structures to prepare for resettlement** and follow-up on the integration process.

Follow-up measures: Parliament considers that an effective EU Resettlement Programme must include provisions on follow-up measures. It calls on the EASO to establish clear criteria for quality resettlement in close cooperation with the UNHCR, NGOs and local authorities and follow the resettlement of the refugees, in order to contribute to the evaluation and further improvement of the resettlement activities in the Member States. Lastly, it calls for the organisation of a joint annual debate of its Committees on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs and on Foreign Affairs in order to contribute to the development of the programme.