



Churches' Commission for Migrants in Europe

Commission des Eglises auprès des Migrants en Europe

Kommission der Kirchen für Migranten in Europa

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Churches initiate discussion on resettlement as additional instrument for refugee protection in EU

Consultation in Brussels aims at “Making Resettlement Work!”

Some 50 participants from 20 countries in Europe, the Middle East and North America will meet in Brussels 19th-20th April to discuss how refugee resettlement can be an additional instrument for effective refugee protection in the EU. The conference, which is organised by the Churches' Commission for Migrants in Europe (CCME) brings together representative of Churches, governments, academia, NGOs, UN and EU institutions. It is cofinanced by the European Refugee Fund of the European Commission.

Refugee resettlement is an instrument by which refugees, who had to flee from their home country and found initial, temporary protection in another country are resettled onwards to find permanent protection as recognised refugees in a third country. Resettlement is an additional element of refugee protection, in particular in situations where refugees can neither be permanently hosted in the country of first refuge nor return to their country of origin. While EU member states currently only have very small-scale resettlement programmes in place, resettlement is a major element of refugee protection for regions like North America. In 2002, the USA and Canada accepted 37.000 refugees through resettlement programmes. In North America, Churches play an important role in the reception and integration of resettled refugees.

In current discussions on a harmonised asylum system of EU member states, new attention has been given to refugee resettlement. So far however, there are very different, sometimes contradictory, understandings and expectations connected with this instrument of refugee protection.

The consultation will examine how resettlement works in practice in other world regions, review the experience of European countries with large resettlement programmes in the 1970ies/80ies and look at resettlement projects in place in some European states. Prominent researchers will offer an academic perspective on resettlement, while representatives of the EU Commission and the UN High Commissioner for Refugees will

give an overview on current policy developments. The contribution of Churches and NGOs to resettlement programmes will be examined and concrete suggestions for further work will be formulated.

Doris Peschke, CCME General Secretary, explained: “Refugee resettlement can be an important tool for refugee protection in the EU. In order to make resettlement work we must however understand its necessary preconditions but also limitations. Resettlement can for example not replace existing asylum systems in the EU. In the political debate, we see some confusion about refugee resettlement. We hope that our consultation will help to outline more precisely what resettlement can achieve in the EU context”

For additional information, please contact Ms Doris Peschke, CCME,
Telephone: +32 2 234 68 00
e-mail: doris.peschke@ccme.be



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