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Refugee Resettlement Capacity Building visit to Finland: Networking among stakeholders key for successful integration of resettled refugees

A study visit in the framework of the project "Understanding resettlement in practice: capacity building for action!", was undertaken from 6-11 March 2006 to Finland by a delegation from seven European countries: Austria, Belgium, Czech Republic, Finland, Italy and the Netherlands. They travelled to Jyväskylä, Tampere, Lahti and Helsinki and met with refugees, local authorities, NGOs, and churches as well as representatives of the Ministries of Employment and Social Affairs, Interior, the Immigration Directorate and the International Organisation on Migration to discuss the stages of refugee resettlement in Finland and particularly the process of integration.

Marja-Liisa Laihia, coordinator of the work with migrants and refugees in the Church of Finland (Lutheran) concluded that "networking among the stakeholders and sharing but also more evaluation of good practices are key for successful resettlement and integration of refugees to Finland".

The delegation looked at the steps a refugee has to undertake in order to consider herself or himself – or to be considered - a part of the Finnish society. The delegation also heard testimonies of Sudanese refugees living in different parts of Finland on how they organize and support themselves.

The delegation recognized the high quality of some of the projects for resettling refugees nevertheless, difficulties encountered by the refugees in finding access to and space in the Finnish society were also pointed out. Discussions with refugees underlined the important role the Churches and religious organisations play in the integration process.

Doris Peschke, General Secretary of the Churches' Commission for Migrants in Europe CCME, stated: "The visit underlined the importance of resettlement as a tool of international protection for people in need. Despite the fact that Finland does not have long experience with immigration, the country serves as a good example, and we would hope that more EU member states will follow to take more responsibility in this field." She also launched a message to the Finnish authorities: "In view of the Finnish EU Presidency in the second half of 2006 and considering the good practices in resettlement, we believe that Finland will be in a privileged position to encourage other European countries in starting resettlement programmes".

The project will undertake further delegation visits, to North America and Kenya in April and June 2006 respectively. The project also provides information on refugee resettlement through a Resettlement Newsletter.

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The newsletter can be found <http://www.cec-kek.org/content/ccme.shtml>



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The Churches' Commission for Migrants in Europe (CCME) is the ecumenical agency on migration and integration, asylum and refugees, and against racism and discrimination in Europe. Members are Anglican, Orthodox and Protestant Churches and Councils of Churches as well as church-related agencies across Europe. CCME formally cooperates with the Conference of European Churches and the World Council of Churches.