



Financial incentives for EU countries to take up more refugees

Plenary sessions

European countries will receive more support from the EU to take up refugees under a new joint resettlement programme endorsed by the European Parliament on Thursday. The programme aims to step up the EU's role in providing international protection, especially for vulnerable groups such as women at risk and unaccompanied minors, in cooperation with the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR).

The programme, which Member States may apply on a voluntary basis, is to resettle in the EU people who have been granted refugee status in third countries (for example, Libyan refugees in Tunisia). As the host countries are often developing ones, with limited resources, they cannot integrate and protect large numbers of refugees.

According to the UNHCR, over 172,000 people will need to be resettled in 2012, whereas the global number of resettlement places is only about 80,000. In 2010, the EU resettled around 4,700 people, representing only 4.4% of those resettled worldwide that year, far behind countries such as the US, which resettles nearly 80,000 people every year, and Canada.

"Every year 200,000 people have to leave their homelands, but they end up in countries which are not necessarily signatories of the Geneva Convention, so we have to let them stay in an area at peace. Countries in Europe should make their contribution, especially taking into account our History, and we have a duty to support them", said rapporteur Rui Tavares (Greens/EFA, PT) in a debate preceding the vote.

The programme's main aim is to encourage EU Member States to take up refugees by enlarging the list of those whose resettlement will be financed by the European Refugee Fund, such as vulnerable persons (children and women at risk, unaccompanied minors, persons with serious medical needs and refugees in need of urgent resettlement for legal or physical reasons).

Furthermore, the programme will set a series of geographical priorities on a yearly basis. In 2013, these will be: Iraqi refugees in Turkey, Syria, Lebanon and Jordan; Afghan refugees in Turkey, Pakistan and Iran; Congolese refugees in Burundi, Malawi, Rwanda and Zambia, Somali refugees in Ethiopia, Burmese refugees in Bangladesh, Malaysia and Thailand and Eritrean refugees in Eastern Sudan.

Persons coming from countries or regions designated for regional protection programmes, such as Eastern Europe (Belarus, Republic of Moldova and Ukraine), the Horn of Africa (Djibouti, Kenya and Yemen) and North Africa (Egypt, Libya and Tunisia), will also be included in the programme.

More EU funding for resettlement

EU financial support for resettling refugees in the above groups will be increased. Member States currently receive €4,000 per person resettled on their territory. To encourage more EU countries to help in resettlement, Member States resettling refugees for the first time will get €6,000 per person for the first year, €5,000 per person for the second year and €4,000 in subsequent years.

Press release

To date, 13 Member States have set up annual resettlement programmes: Sweden, Denmark, Finland, the Netherlands, Germany, the UK, Ireland, Portugal, France, Romania, the Czech Republic, Spain and Hungary. Bulgaria has also pledged to take up refugees from 2013.

Next steps

The programme will apply in 2013. Member States will have until 1 May 2012 to send the Commission an estimate of the number of persons they will resettle next year. The future of the EU resettlement policy will be negotiated in the context of the next financial framework 2014-2020.

Procedure: Co-decision, 2nd reading (2nd reading agreement)

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