



# EU countries to take up more refugees under new resettlement programme

Committees: Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs

**European countries will receive more support from the EU to take up refugees under a new joint resettlement programme endorsed by the Civil Liberties Committee on Wednesday. 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 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 the US (near 54,000 refugees) and Canada (around 6,700).

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, at Parliament's request, 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 cover, among others, Iraqi refugees in Turkey, Syria, Lebanon and Jordan; Afghan refugees in Turkey, Pakistan and Iran; Congolese refugees in Burundi, Malawi, Rwanda and Zambia or Somali refugees in Ethiopia.

## More EU funding for resettlement

In line with MEPs' proposals, 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 and €5,000 per person for the second year. For the rest the sum received will stay at €4,000.

To date, 13 Member States have set up annual resettlement programmes: Sweden, Denmark, Finland, the Netherlands, the UK, Ireland, Portugal, France, Romania, the Czech Republic, Spain, Hungary and Bulgaria.

Following the Civil Liberties Committee vote, rapporteur Rui Tavares (Greens/EFA, PT) commented: "The inertia regarding the creation of a EU resettlement programme and the changes to the European Refugee Fund made us lose two years of resettlement of refugees in the EU. Although frustrated by the procedural delays in an issue that deals with the life of the most vulnerable people in the world, I am now hopeful that Member States will use the extra money and will start resettlement programmes as well as increase their pledge. This

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new programme will allow resettlement for the year 2013. Parliament, Commission, Council, UNHCR and NGOs will now have to work together to have more than a European Refugee Fund: a EU Refugee Programme".

## Next steps

The Joint EU Resettlement Programme has been agreed by Parliament and Council representatives. The European Parliament as a whole will vote on it on 29 March. If adopted, 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 programme will apply in 2013. The future of the EU resettlement policy will be negotiated in the context of the next financial perspectives 2014-2020.

*Committee vote: 44 votes in favour and 3 against*

*Rapporteur: Rui Tavares (Greens/EFA, PT)*

*In the chair: Juan Fernando López Aguilar (S&D, ES)*

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