Report of the Expert Meeting on Resettlement and Other Forms of Admission of Persons in Need of International Protection

2-3 June 2016

Stockholm, Sweden

The Project is funded by the
European Union

The Project is implemented by
International Organization for Migration

Migrationsverket
The Swedish Migration Agency
is a partner of the Project

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

On 2-3 June 2016, professionals working in the area of international protection from the Eastern Partnership (EaP) countries and the European Union Member States (EU MS) gathered in Stockholm to discuss resettlement and other forms of admission of persons in need of international protection. Sweden and Armenia hosted the meeting. Sweden has long traditions of resettlement of refugees dating back to the 1950s. For Armenia, who has substantial experience in providing international protection to refugees as well as other EaP countries, the preparation of the meeting became an opportunity to get a closer look at resettlement, often not envisaged in the national legislation.

In the course of the meeting sessions, countries and organizations experienced in various forms of humanitarian admission for many years shared their insight to the process. They shared best practices and lessons learnt as well as the procedure. Those with less experience had a chance to focus on legal challenges, deterrents and practical solutions that are linked to the resettlement. The representatives of academic institutions and international organizations provided structured theoretical background as well as the global outlook to humanitarian admission.

A personal story narrated by a refugee previously resettled to Sweden offered first-hand experience of the beneficiaries of resettlement and brought the human touch to the discussion that followed. UNHCR and the European Commission (EC) presented resettlement in the global and European contexts, including it being a critical component of the response to the current migration crisis in the EU. Ms. Naoko Hashimoto from the University of Sussex offered her analysis of resettlement from historical, political and conceptual perspective. IOM Ukraine presented the discussion document compiled for the meeting based on written responses provided by the participating countries to the thematic questionnaires.

Presentations delivered by representatives of Canada, Finland, Germany and the United Kingdom on their national humanitarian admission programmes – including resettlement – provided fairly deep overview of how such programmes are designed and implemented. The representative of the European Asylum Support Office (EASO) informed on how intra-EU relocation mechanisms can be executed in practice. Further on, UNHCR, IOM, and the Netherlands provided a closer look at individual stages of resettlement programmes: identification, examination, pre-departure arrangements, transfer, reception, and integration. Sweden introduced to the participants the "EU-FRANK" project, supported by the EC and led by Sweden. The project aims to provide operational support to the EU MS to facilitate the management of increased resettlement.

The final session was conducted with a panel discussion format, where the representatives of all the EaP countries – among which only Belarus has experience in resettlement – had an opportunity to discuss their countries' needs, priorities and available options for resettling refugees.

2 June 2016 – Day 1

Welcome and opening

Mr. Robert Rybicki, DG Migration and Home Affairs (DG HOME) of the European Commission, welcomed the meeting participants in Stockholm, a particularly relevant location since Sweden was at the origin of the consultative process. Sweden's policy proves that Europe has the capacity to handle the migration crisis and can remain open and efficient in solving it. Mr. Rybicki also thanked Armenia for co-organizing the event and praised the high level of expertise of the speakers attending the meeting.

Ms. Sophie Dernelid, Ministry of Justice of Sweden, thanked the Swedish Migration Agency (SMA), the European Commission (EC), and IOM for organizing the meeting and developing its content. She highlighted that in the situation when the number of displaced persons in the world is exceptionally high, Sweden will gradually enlarge its resettlement quota from today's 1,900 places to 5,000 places by the end of 2018. Ms. Dernelid expressed hope that the mutual exchange of knowledge during the meeting will further expand resettlement towards the Eastern Partnership.

Mr. Artak Apitonyan, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of Armenia to Sweden, emphasised Sweden's history of openness and tolerance which gave hope for a better future to hundreds of thousands of refugees. The expert meeting is a forum for studying possibilities of creating a legal basis for humanitarian assistance across international borders. Mr. Apitonyan noted Armenia's support to the Panel's work and the honour from co-organising the meeting. The country is also willing to host one of the future meetings in Yerevan.

Session I. Global overview

Moderator: Mr. Oskar Ekblad, Swedish Migration Agency

A refugee previously resettled to Sweden narrated his story, from his background and the circumstances which made him flee his country of origin seeking refuge in a neighbouring country; although the latter appeared unable to provide physical safety and social security for him. The speaker described how he established contact with UNHCR and the Swedish officials in the country of asylum, as well as how he underwent the selection procedure and the cultural orientation programme before departing to Sweden. He also told how the reception in Sweden was and, in particular, he referred to a three-year integration process which included, among other components, a language course and resulted into his admission in one of the Swedish universities.

Mr. Peter O'Sullivan, UNHCR, referred to the rise of resettlement in Europe: thirty two countries on the continent committed to accepting refugees through resettlement and eleven EU MS will resettle for the first time within the next two years. In his presentation Mr. O'Sullivan described the functions of resettlement (e.g. to be a durable solution); the scope of UNHCR's mandate for durable solutions; UNHCR preconditions for resettlement consideration; receiving country selection criteria; components and characteristics of national resettlement programmes which should include legal and policy framework, stakeholder consultation and collaboration, established processing procedures, and integration measures. The global resettlement process was illustrated by the relevant statistics: submitted cases, acceptance rate, and departures. The challenges, possible solutions, and needs for 2017 were also explained. *See the presentation "Protracted Migration Crises – The Need for Effective Resettlement"*.

Mr. Robert Rybicki, DG HOME of the European Commission, depicted resettlement as a critically important element of the multifaceted response to the migration crisis in Europe. The gravity of the

crisis was summarized through figures such as illicit border crossings, asylum applications lodged, returned decisions issued and enforced. Mr. Rybicki described the comprehensive strategic approach taken by the EU in response to this phenomenon. Resettlement is being seen as its element, although divergences in the MS's rules on resettlement – regarding selection criteria, the length of procedures, orientation programmes, integration tools, resettled persons' status, and number of available places – pose certain challenges. To address these challenges the EC is contemplating to table a proposal to frame the EU policy on resettlement. *See the presentation "EU Response to Migration Crisis"*.

Ms. Laura Scorretti, Mission of IOM in Ukraine, presented *the discussion paper* summarizing countries' vision, experiences, and practices related to humanitarian admission. The document was developed by IOM based on the answers of twelve countries to a questionnaire disseminated prior to the meeting, and on information from other relevant sources. The document covered aspects encompassing the characteristics and types of humanitarian admission programmes; countries' motivation behind a decision to implement or not humanitarian admission programmes; approaches to determination of quotas; and a detailed description of resettlement, humanitarian admission, and intra-EU relocation. *See the presentation "Resettlement and Other Forms of Admission of Persons in Need of International Protection: Overview of National Experiences and Practices in the EU and EaP States"*.

Ms. Naoko Hashimoto, School of Law, Politics and Sociology of the University of Sussex, UK, provided an outlook of the resettlement concept from an academic analysis perspective, including legal basis in international law for the three main durable solutions (voluntary return, local integration, and resettlement); classification of the countries' motives for resettling according to the international relations theories (constructivism, utilitarianism, realism, rationalist theory); historical examples of the resettlement waves; the current state of global resettlement in terms of approaches (humanitarian selection vs. utilitarian selection); comparison between resettlement and the traditional asylum concept from the point of view of a receiving state and of a refugee respectively.

Discussion

Sweden encouraged all the speakers to express their opinion on whether increased resettlement can change the situation in the Mediterranean. The resettled refugee made a point that with the view to stimulating people to wait for resettlement instead of opting for precarious boat journey resettlement should be accompanied by strengthened security in the countries of asylum, and particularly in refugee camps. The EC referred to a position of the EC President Mr. Jean-Claude Juncker who believes that more should be done by the EU in terms of regular migration (including resettlement) to prevent people from undertaking dangerous journeys by sea. UNHCR noted that, rather than resettlement, relocation would be more effective in changing the situation in the Mediterranean region, especially if complemented by other pathways, e.g. humanitarian visas, medical evacuation, labour mobility. IOM Ukraine commented that while considering the effectiveness of resettlement it should be kept in mind that any humanitarian programme is limited not only by capacities of the receiving country but also by the situation in the country of temporary protection. Ms. Naoko Hashimoto, University of Sussex, suggested that since resettlement is not mandatory, applying the distribution key in the global perspective, as an indicative desirable number of refugees that an individual country could accept through resettlement, would be potentially able to increase the effectiveness of this tool.

Session II. Resettlement and relocation: understanding the concepts

Moderator: Mr. Ara Margaryan, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Armenia

Ms. Sharon Chomyn, High Commission of Canada in the United Kingdom, gave an overview of the resettlement programme in Canada. The country accepts refugees based on the principles of fulfilling its international obligations and protection commitments, supporting successful settlement and integration, as well as reuniting refugee families. Canada's refugee intake constitutes at least 10% of total global resettlement. There are three streams within the programme: government-assisted refugees, privately sponsored refugees, and blended-sponsored refugees. For more details about these streams please see *the presentation "Refugee Resettlement in Canada"*.

Ms. Corinna Wicher, Federal Ministry of the Interior of Germany, provided a review of the range of admission programmes implemented by Germany, among them resettlement (including national scheme, EU scheme, and 1:1 mechanism with Turkey), humanitarian admission and relocation. For a comparative description of the resettlement and humanitarian admission programmes in Germany, including procedures and legal status of the admitted persons, please see *the presentation "Admission Programmes in Germany – And Overview"*.

Ms. Laura Hustler-Wraight and Mr. Robin Dowse-Willoughby, Home Office of the United Kingdom, emphasized that the provision of aid and essential support to Syria and the neighbouring region remains a top priority for the UK. Resettlement is viewed as one of the assistance instruments and therefore the Government introduced the Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme (VPRS) for selected vulnerable Syrian refugees (initially for several hundred persons) to the UK. This became the first UK resettlement programme focused on supporting those in the greatest need based on their vulnerability, particularly people requiring urgent medical treatment, survivors of violence and torture, as well as women and children at risk. At present, the number of persons the UK is ready to accept and the list of categories eligible for resettlement were significantly expanded.

Mr. Mark Camilleri, EASO, made a presentation on the intra-EU relocation process and EASO's role in its implementation. The speaker noted that even though relocation is not resettlement as such, there are still many similarities and links between the two instruments. As for EASO's involvement, it is based on the *EASO Regulation* containing a specific provision on the promotion and support of relocation. The efforts currently made by the Agency in Greece and Italy are addressing the following challenges: low intake of persons by the receiving countries; not envisaged preferences set up by the receiving countries applied to the candidates for relocation; insufficient infrastructure in the host countries (asylum services, and in particular reception capacities); secondary movements of the relocated persons that are addressed by conducting a matching exercise and taking into consideration persons' preferences. For more information on the activities and responsibilities of EASO in the relocation process please visit *the Agency's website*.

Ms. Kukka Krüger, Immigration Service of Finland, delivered a presentation on how Finland is implementing the intra-EU relocation, including its management, national procedures and progress in terms of the numbers of relocated persons. The speaker noted that even though the numbers are currently low (not only in Finland, but throughout the EU), the mechanism will work more effectively if certain adjustments are made, i.e. increase in the number of pledges, reduction of processing time and streamlining of the administrative process. *See the presentation "EU Experience from Relocation: Success or Failure? Experience of Finland"*.

Discussion

Moldova asked whether a risk analysis was conducted in the countries implementing humanitarian admission programmes. Canada responded that each candidate for resettlement (about 40,000 persons

*so far) undergoes screening for criminal records and health conditions. **Germany** flagged that their visa procedure includes security checks, and this is considered to be proportionate since the idea behind the humanitarian admission programme was to resettle people as speedily as possible concurrently accepting potential risks. No security threats were recorded till now. **The UK** informed that before launching the resettlement programme and before further expanding it, the British authorities assessed the measures applied by UNHCR in relation to security and were satisfied with how UNHCR "locks-in" the identity of a candidate for resettlement (for example using biometrics such as iris scanning of the person to be resettled). Resettlement is however not a traditional tool utilized by persons posing a threat, since there is no guarantee for such individuals to be selected, and the procedure is comparatively lengthy for the malign purposes. **Belarus** raised a question regarding measures being taken to foster a positive public opinion about the admitted persons. **Germany** pointed that people admitted from outside the EU, in general, receive a welcoming reception in Germany. Smaller groups are more favoured than larger groups. The authorities keep the public as extensively informed as possible regarding their activities and decisions. **Finland** added that it uses a similar approach to the one of Germany: informing the public, including by distributing awareness-raising materials, explaining why relocation of applicants from Italy and Greece is necessary. **The Netherlands** commented that there is a strong relation between the number of Syrian refugees arriving in the country spontaneously and public perception of Syrians accepted through admission programmes (smaller scale of spontaneous arrivals leads to a more favouring public opinion regarding persons who were resettled or relocated).*

3 June 2016 – Day 2

Session III. Procedural aspects of resettlement, creating national resettlement programmes

Moderator: Mr. Ara Margaryan, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Armenia

Mr. Darryl Huard, UNHCR, in his presentation described the initial stages of the resettlement process and the role of UNHCR. The resettlement process begins with the following steps: registration of persons of concern, identification of vulnerable individuals, eligibility assessment, refugee status determination and exclusion assessment, resettlement assessment and case submission, pre-departure arrangements. More information regarding the most vulnerable persons and tools available for their identification and resettlement submission categories are contained in *the presentation "Resettlement Process. Role of UNHCR: From Identification to Departure"*.

Mr. Michael Gray, IOM Headquarters, referred to IOM's Constitution according to which arranging safe and orderly movements of refugees and other vulnerable migrants is at the core of the Organization's mandate. Upon request of governments, IOM provides resettlement services in the areas of case processing, health assessments and assistance, pre-departure orientation/integration and movement operations. The work-flow chart showing the pre-departure processes from selection to reception and services IOM provides at each stage can be found in *the presentation "Pre-departure Processes and Movement"*.

Mr. Andre Baas, Central Agency for the Reception of Asylum Seekers of the Netherlands (COA), briefly outlined the Dutch resettlement policy in general and subsequently focused on the reception and integration phases of the resettlement process. Mr. Baas showed a *video*, prepared by the COA, explaining what refugees resettled to the Netherlands can expect in terms of reception and integration. For additional information about the COA's responsibilities, the Dutch resettlement time frame, details of the cultural orientation programme, including its goals, tools applied, challenges encountered, and results achieved please see *the presentation "Preparation for Resettlement: The Dutch Program"*.

Ms. Leila Nielsen, Swedish Migration Agency, presented a project led by Sweden titled "Facilitating Resettlement and Refugee Admission through New Knowledge". The four-year project starting in 2016, supported by the EC, provides operational support to the EU MS so that they could increase or start

resettlement or similar programmes, as well as efficiently manage increased resettlement. This will be done through a combination of theoretical elements (seminars and trainings) and practical exchange and cooperation between the participating states. *See the presentation "EU-FRANK. European Union Action on Facilitating Resettlement and Refugee Admission through New Knowledge, 2016-2020"*.

Discussion

Armenia inquired from UNHCR how identity is confirmed in the resettlement process especially in a situation when no information can be collected in the country of origin (for example, Syria). UNHCR clarified that the Organization relies on its knowledge of the country's context. Even though a complete certainty regarding identity cannot be achieved, UNHCR "locks in" applicant's identity and ensures its consistency throughout the process by using biometrics (iris scanning in particular). The UK asked the Netherlands and IOM Headquarters to share any innovative ideas they observed in the area of integration. The Netherlands gave an example of several countries of origin where the Dutch nationals voluntarily organized unofficial language classes for persons waiting to be resettled. Such practice proved to be beneficial. Sharing information related to resettlement through social networks also has great potential. IOM added that since resettlement models differ, there is always room for innovation. One of such innovative solutions can be using video-conferences to conduct pre-departure interviews for the purpose of planning reception and integration. The connection between refugees and people in the receiving countries is important and technology can facilitate the process. Ms. Kateryna Kulchytska, think tank "Europe without Barriers", Ukraine, asked the Netherlands more details regarding the level of employment among resettled refugees. The Netherlands answered that even though the exact figures are not available, it is known that it takes resettled refugees several years to enter the labour market and that a level of unemployment among refugees is higher compared to other groups. At the same time, while numbers of resettled refugees are increasing, more companies and other actors are prepared to create and offer opportunities for refugees.

Session IV. Eastern Partnership perspective/regional context

Moderator: Ms. Denise Thomsson, Swedish Migration Agency

Session IV was held in a form of a panel discussion with participation of representatives from each EaP country. The panellists – **Mr. Petros Aghababyan**, State Migration Service of the Ministry of Territorial Administration of Armenia, **Mr. Namik Jafarov**, State Migration Service of Azerbaijan, **Mr. Aleksandr Tatura**, Ministry of Internal Affairs of Belarus, **Ms. Ana Nakashidze**, Ministry of IPDs, Accommodation and Refugees of Georgia, **Mr. Petro Syniavskyi**, State Migration Service of Ukraine, and **Ms. Tatiana Ciumas**, Bureau for Migration and Asylum of the Ministry of Interior of Moldova – discussed their countries' intentions and prospects to initiate/pursue resettlement or other forms of refugee admission programmes, as well as conditions and circumstances specific to the EaP countries that should be taken into account when contemplating or designing refugee admission programmes.

General Panel Business

Mr. Erik Rehó, Swedish Migration Agency, announced that in the framework of the Panels' work plan for 2016 two more meetings will be held before the end of the year – one on information technologies in migration management in Riga, Latvia, and one on migration strategies in Minsk, Belarus. Mr. Rehó also informed that the meetings' evaluation forms will be distributed via email and that the meeting materials can be found on the Panel website http://eapmigrationpanel.org/en.

Summary and closure

Mr. Robert Rybicki, DG HOME of the European Commission, invited the participants to attend future meetings of the Panel, especially when the meeting topic is in line with their respective professional interests. He complimented the environment of a true partnership created within the Panel and encouraged participants to actively exchange contacts and develop networking.

Ms. Sofia Stridh, Swedish Migration Agency, summed up the content of the meeting ranging from the academic perspective to practical advice on how to design a resettlement programme. She expressed pleasure from organizing the event together with Armenia with whom Sweden has long-standing relations. She also assured that even if the SMA will not further support the Panel at the operational level, Sweden will continue offering its expertise to the EaP countries.

Mr. Ara Margaryan, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Armenia, thanked all those who contributed to the meeting and particularly the EU for supporting the Panel and for the possibility to meet peers from neighbouring countries and to learn from each other. The speaker also expressed his gratitude to Sweden for providing an opportunity to observe how to organize events of such scale and format. He reiterated the Armenian Ambassador's statement that Armenia stands ready to host the Panel meetings in the future.

All the presentations mentioned in this report as well as all the materials related to the meeting can be found on the Panel website. The presentations are accessible to logged-in users only.