



Evaluation of Emergency Transit Centres Romania and Slovak Republic

Background to the Evaluation

The Emergency Transit Centres received refugees in Timisoara, Romania since 2007 and in Humenné, Slovakia since 2011 after several ad hoc evacuations since 1999. The centres were established to enable UNHCR to evacuate refugees with emergency or urgent resettlement needs to a place of safety where the resettlement process could continue. At establishment, the stated objectives of the ETCs were:

- To provide immediate and effective protection to an individual or group of individuals of concern to UNHCR
- Demonstrate a tangible form of burden and responsibility sharing
- Enable officials from UNHCR and resettlement countries to undertake interviews in a stable and secure environment
- Promote the realization of the durable solution of resettlement
- Encourage States of temporary relocation to become involved in resettlement

Since the initial evacuations, the ETCs have been used primarily as alternative processing centre to enable resettlement countries to access refugees from countries of asylum that were otherwise inaccessible. This is a move away from the original vision of the centres as primarily receiving emergency cases, but has ensured that they are more widely used. Refugees can currently only be evacuated if a resettlement country has already been identified and agreed to the evacuation.

Objective and Scope of the Evaluation

The evaluation has the dual objectives of learning and accountability. The results of the evaluation will be important in assessing whether the ETCs should continue with the same or similar objectives. The evaluation was participatory and interviews were held with staff from UNHCR, partners, host and resettlement government, and refugees. The scope of the evaluation is January 2012 to September 2015.

Key Evaluation Questions

- Are the objectives of the ETCs appropriate and relevant in the light of UNHCR's resettlement strategies and the global strategic priority of expanding opportunities for durable solutions?
- To what extent are the ETCs achieving their objectives, in particular providing immediate and effective protection to individuals of concern to UNHCR, enabling officials from UNHCR and resettlement countries to undertake interviews in a stable and secure environment, and promoting onward resettlement?
- Are the administrative and standard operating procedures in place for evacuation and onward resettlement appropriate and effective for achieving the objectives of the ETCs?
- Is the capacity of the ETCs being maximized to ensure the protection of persons of concern, in particular those with emergency or urgent resettlement needs?
- To what extent is UNHCR engaging successfully with key stakeholders, including the Romanian and Slovak Republic authorities, resettlement countries and IOM? Are effective coordination and review mechanisms in place? Are the conditions and services at the ETCs appropriate and sufficient for the needs of the refugees arriving at these temporary facilities?
- Can the objectives of the ETCs be achieved by using resources in a different manner in the future?
- What results, intended and unintended, have been achieved by the ETCs?

Key Findings and Conclusions

The full evaluation report is available on the UNHCR-PDES website at:

<http://www.unhcr.org/research/evalreports/575935d17/evaluation-emergency-transit-centres-romania-slovak-republic.html>

Relevance

The ETCs are relevant for UNHCR, IOM, the ETC hosting governments, resettlement countries and refugees.

The assistance and protection provided meets basic needs of refugees. However, for planning and programming purposes, it would be useful to formulate minimum standards with measurable indicators.

The availability of some emergency/urgent evacuation is valuable for compelling protection cases, but these are few.

Coverage

In principle the coverage is global. In practice only refugees from some countries of asylum – mainly Iran, Eritrea, Syria, Yemen - have been evacuated. Only 9 resettlement countries have used the ETCs. Humenne has been used almost exclusively by the USA.

Effectiveness

The ETCs have achieved the objectives of providing effective protection to refugees, although the percentage of emergency cases is only 8% and urgent cases only 12% of the refugees evacuated. However, for the refugees evacuated even under normal processing the evacuation can be life-saving. The ETCs have also facilitated resettlement processing of several countries.

The time spent by refugees in the ETCs could be better used to prepare them for a life in a resettlement country by expanding the educational and vocational opportunities available, and by utilizing a community-based protection approach.

It is important to develop standards for the provision of protection and assistance, for example in the areas of shelter, nutrition, non-food items, etc.

Efficiency

The main costs are partner staff and in the case of Timisoara more than 40% is the cost of food. Keeping the ETC closer to full capacity would lower per capita costs.

The ETCs have been one third to one half full on average.

Refugees in general stay longer than originally envisaged.

Better planning and coordination should lead to fuller utilization.

Impact

The impact on refugees who can continue the resettlement process is profound. However, the impact on those very few refugees who are refused by resettlement countries after evacuation is also profound, as some have lingered in the ETC for years.

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Key Recommendations to UNHCR HQs

- ✓ Formulate a more considered annual planning process for the ETCs including protection and programming perspectives, and including clear objectives and measurable indicators.
- ✓ Prepare a concept note on minimum standards for the ETCs, which includes measurable indicators in the fields of shelter, nutrition, non-food items, etc.
- ✓ Link protection and assistance to the ultimate goal of integration in a resettlement country.
- ✓ Prepare a comprehensive updated guidance note on the ETCs, including the profiles of refugees eligible for evacuation.
- ✓ UNHCR has been successful in finding resettlement countries to take almost all of the cases rejected by resettlement countries after transfer. Therefore consider in certain circumstances the inclusion of emergency priority cases for transfer to ETCs without the prior identification of a resettlement country.
- ✓ Prepare annual planning figures for the ETCs for different priority classifications/refugee profiles/resettlement countries, including time-frames for monitoring and revision purposes.
- ✓ Increase coordination with resettlement countries to more fully utilize the ETCs.
- ✓ Raise awareness about the ETCs with field staff.

Key Recommendations to Regional Representation Central Europe

- ✓ In coordination with the Resettlement Service, develop minimum standards for provision of protection and assistance.
- ✓ Review UNHCR/UNOPS and partner staffing in the ETCs to harmonize ETC-based positions, while taking into account needs of the different and diverse refugee populations, and the different operating environments. This should also take into account adherence to minimum standards and the increased capacity of the ETC in Humenné.
- ✓ Review information needs of refugees departing to the ETCs and UNHCR country offices in countries of asylum and develop videos on the ETCs, updated PowerPoint presentations and briefing notes.
- ✓ Move to more community-based protection approach in the provision of services.
- ✓ Engage an expert technical mission to assess educational and vocational skills training needs of refugees in both ETC.

Key Recommendations to UNHCR Romania

- ✓ Advocate with the Government of Romania to provide more freedom of movement in Timisoara to refugees under agreed conditions, while still respecting the provisions of the Tri-Partite Agreement.
- ✓ Review existing arrangements with respect to ensuring accountability and controlling the movements of the refugee population to alleviate, at a minimum, the responsibilities of the partner in these areas, and consider inviting the General Inspectorate for Immigration to take on such responsibilities at the ETC entrance gate.
- ✓ Undertake regular consultations with the Government of Romania to ensure due consideration to UNHCR's (still to be developed) minimum standards for ETCs when renovating the identified building for the new ETC.

Key information at a glance about the evaluation

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Evaluators:

Elca Stigter, Independent Consultant

Helen Morris, UNHCR

Evaluation management: Helen Morris, PDES morris@unhcr.org

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