



# **NGO involvement in resettlement**

## **Good practices**

**ECRE**

EUROPEAN COUNCIL ON  
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## Contents

<b>INTRODUCTION.....</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>I. PRE-DEPARTURE: IDENTIFICATION, COUNSELLING AND ACTIVITIES IN PREPARATION FOR DEPARTURE.....</b>	<b>3</b>
1) Identification and selection process .....	3
a. Participation in the identification process with UNHCR .....	3
b. Counselling and assistance to refugees during the processing stage: Preparation of dossiers and interviews.....	3
c. Assistance during the decision-making process: pre-screening of refugees, participation in identification missions .....	4
d. External referrals .....	5
2) After the eligibility decision.....	5
a. Pre-Departure Cultural Orientation .....	5
b. Travel arrangements .....	6
<b>II. POST-ARRIVAL: RECEPTION AND INTEGRATION ACTIVITIES .....</b>	<b>7</b>
1) Reception.....	7
a. The very first steps in the new country .....	7
b. A welcoming local community .....	8
2) Integration in the new country .....	9
a. Integration programmes .....	9
b. Language training.....	11
c. Vocational training .....	11
d. Counselling and legal services .....	12
e. Family reunification.....	12
f. Refugees' contribution to integration .....	14

## INTRODUCTION

Resettlement is an important international protection tool and a durable solution for refugees, as well as an important way for States to show solidarity with the mostly poor countries which host the majority of the world's refugees. Worldwide, 21 countries have resettlement programmes. At present, 11 EU Member States have regular resettlement programmes (Czech Republic, Denmark, Finland, France, Ireland, the Netherlands, Portugal, Romania (pilot), Spain, Sweden and the UK) as well as two non-EU Member States (Norway and Iceland). In 2009, Belgium, Germany, Italy and Luxembourg implemented *ad hoc* resettlement programmes, which may develop into fully established resettlement programmes in the near future.

A Joint European Resettlement Programme (JERP) will hopefully result in more EU Member States establishing resettlement programmes and thus increasing the number of resettlement places in the EU. The majority of the world's refugees are hosted by the poorest countries, and as a sign of international solidarity, the EU can and should do more than resettle only 6,7% of the world's total number of resettled refugees per year.<sup>1</sup>

Resettlement requires effective and dynamic partnerships between States, UNHCR and Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs).<sup>2</sup> NGOs play an important role in the resettlement process because they are involved in its different stages, in regions of origin, countries of first asylum and also in resettlement countries.<sup>3</sup> The consistent use of partnerships with NGOs by resettlement countries around the world demonstrates that the expertise and experience of NGOs (international as well as European) in all different stages of the resettlement process is invaluable. With regard to the JERP, NGOs should be involved in its functioning as well as in the functioning of the EASO, which will be tasked with resettlement.

UNHCR plays a key role in resettlement, and effective partnerships between NGOs and UNHCR are therefore essential for strengthening cooperation in this field.<sup>4</sup>

This paper focuses on the involvement of NGOs in resettlement and follows up on a survey undertaken by ECRE in June 2007 on the actual and potential role of NGOs in resettlement by Europe.<sup>5</sup> The paper aims at highlighting good practices with respect to the involvement of several European NGOs<sup>6</sup> in different stages of the resettlement process, and provides concrete examples of where and how resettlement States can usefully involve NGOs in the resettlement process.

ECRE hopes that this paper serves as an inspiration for involving more NGOs in all stages of the resettlement process, in resettlement countries with annual quotas as well as in new or emerging resettlement countries, in order to maintain or set up good-quality, sustainable resettlement programmes. Of course, NGOs must be adequately funded to be able to start or continue their important work in the area of resettlement.

<sup>1</sup> See UNHCR, Comments on the European Commission Communication on the establishment of a Joint EU Resettlement Programme and the European Commission Proposal for the amendment of Decision No 573/2007/EC establishing the European Refugee Fund for the period 2008 to 2013, November 2009: [www.unhcr.org/refworld/pdfid/4b0a75e92.pdf](http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/pdfid/4b0a75e92.pdf).

<sup>2</sup> See UNHCR-NGO Joint European Advocacy Statement on resettlement, 25 June 2008, Geneva: [www.ecre.org/resources/ECRE\\_actions/1162](http://www.ecre.org/resources/ECRE_actions/1162).

<sup>3</sup> See ECRE, The Way Forward – Europe's role in the global protection system, Towards a European Resettlement Programme, 2005: [www.ecre.org/resources/Policy\\_papers/225](http://www.ecre.org/resources/Policy_papers/225).

<sup>4</sup> UNHCR is developing a 'UNHCR-NGO Toolkit for Practical Cooperation on Resettlement', to be published soon.

<sup>5</sup> See ECRE, Resettlement by Europe, the Actual and Potential Role of European NGOs, summary results, June 2007: [www.ecre.org/resources/Policy\\_papers/897](http://www.ecre.org/resources/Policy_papers/897).

<sup>6</sup> Examples provided are from NGOs in the UK, Ireland, Netherlands, Belgium, France, Portugal, Germany, Norway, Denmark, Finland, Sweden, Iceland as well as INGO's International Rescue Committee (IRC), International Catholic Migration Commission (ICMC), HIAS Kenya and Refugees United.

## I. PRE-DEPARTURE: IDENTIFICATION, COUNSELLING AND ACTIVITIES IN PREPARATION FOR DEPARTURE

The pre-departure phase in regions of origin is increasingly attracting the interest of non-governmental actors, where they see they can play a useful role. Some NGOs (e.g., International Rescue Committee (IRC), International Catholic Migration Commission (ICMC), Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC) and Danish Refugee Council) are present in many countries worldwide and have uniquely suited, cost efficient and locally based networks. They are thus perfectly situated to carry out field and pre-departure activities.

### 1) Identification and selection process

#### a. Participation in the identification process with UNHCR

NGO involvement in the identification of refugees in need of resettlement is becoming an increasingly common practice. Given their close connections with the refugees in the camps, NGOs are particularly well placed to support UNHCR in the process of identifying refugees in need of resettlement for protection reasons or because of certain vulnerabilities.

#### Good practice:

- **International Catholic Migration Commission (ICMC):** *ICMC* and UNHCR cooperate to provide durable solutions for refugees in the form of resettlement. Through the ICMC-UNHCR Deployment Scheme, ICMC deploys experts to work directly with refugee protection operations in the field, providing support to UNHCR offices in their efforts to identify and refer refugees for resettlement. In 2008, ICMC and UNHCR submitted 34,419 individual cases for resettlement through this scheme.<sup>7</sup>

#### b. Counselling and assistance to refugees during the processing stage: Preparation of dossiers and interviews

NGOs working in countries of first asylum usually have daily contact with refugees through their protection work and social services programmes. According to UNHCR, "refugees may harbour unrealistic expectations in terms of both the ease of obtaining a resettlement place and the opportunities awaiting them in the country of resettlement".<sup>8</sup> Due to their daily contact with refugees, NGOs are well placed to provide (additional) information on resettlement options and procedures to refugees.

Once refugees have accepted the UNHCR proposal to undergo the resettlement procedure, NGOs can accompany them during the process. NGOs can play a supportive role in the processing stage, for example by preparing refugees for interviews and preparing their resettlement dossiers.



Kenya, Dadaab camp © ECRE

#### Good practice:

- **Norway:** the *Norwegian Refugee Council* is present in refugee camps where they implement Information, Counselling and Legal Assistance (ICLA) Programmes. The objective of ICLA programmes is to enable displaced persons, who often lack basic information, to make informed decisions on whether to return, stay in their place of refuge, or find a third place to resettle. ICLA programmes provide them with accurate and credible information to make such a decision, such as information on conditions in their areas of origin, resettlement or integration possibilities, and legal or other obstacles they might face.

<sup>7</sup> See ICMC, ICMC Annual Report 2008: [www.icmc.net/pubs/icmc-annual-reports](http://www.icmc.net/pubs/icmc-annual-reports).

<sup>8</sup> See UNHCR, Resettlement Handbook (2004), Chapter 6, p. VI/38: [www.unhcr.org/3d464e842.html](http://www.unhcr.org/3d464e842.html).



### c. Assistance during the decision-making process: pre-screening of refugees, participation in identification missions

Most European resettling countries prefer to send selection missions or implement in-country selection processes to identify and interview refugees for resettlement. Selection carried out on a dossier basis<sup>9</sup> is important as well, and is particularly useful in emergency situations or situations where refugees are not easily accessible for interviews. Out of a yearly European total of over 5,500 resettlement places for refugees, less than 1,500 places are usually reserved for dossier selection.<sup>10</sup>

An NGO can perform pre-screening interviews after the registration of the refugee by UNHCR. This would happen if a resettlement country has special selection criteria. An NGO would be in a good position to carry out fast and efficient pre-screening due to its presence in the field and its contacts with refugees. This will also reduce the costs of the selection mission, because refugees will have already been pre-selected and prepared.

#### Good practice:

- **Thailand:** the *International Rescue Committee* (IRC) pre-screens refugees in camps near the Thailand-Myanmar border. In the fall of 2007, the IRC's OPE (Overseas Processing Entity) in Bangkok pre-screened over 7,000 persons from the Mae La and Tham Hin camps. The OPE assists refugees throughout Southeast Asia and has fielded pre-screening missions to Malaysia, Cambodia, Hong Kong and the Philippines since October 2006.

Furthermore, NGO staff can be sub-contracted by governments to support them during the submission stage of the resettlement process.<sup>11</sup> Although the selection of refugees is usually limited to government delegations, involvement of NGOs can be beneficial for two reasons:



Kenya, Dadaab camp © ECRE

Firstly, it will allow NGOs to streamline the transfer of information and thus to prepare for integration during the selection process. Indeed, information often gets lost between the selection process and the arrival of the resettled refugees to their new country, partly due to the confidential nature of the Resettlement Registration Form (RRF). A “streamlined system for information-transfer regarding resettlement cases prevents loss of information, facilitates better preparation, and avoids subjecting refugees to repetitive interviews recounting case histories (including past traumas)”.<sup>12</sup> This transfer of information could be effective if representatives of NGOs responsible for the reception and integration of resettled refugees were included in the selection missions. In the Netherlands, representatives of the

Dutch Reception Agency COA take part in selection missions. This model could usefully be transposed to NGO representatives.

<sup>9</sup> Dossier selection is defined as reviewing paper and files by government authorities, usually outside the country of first asylum. These files typically include a completed and signed UNHCR Resettlement Registration Form (RRF), an explanation as to why the resettlement candidate was recognized as a refugee and should be resettled, and any other relevant documents or documents required by the specific country of resettlement. No interview with the refugee is required. See Ibid.

<sup>10</sup> Denmark, Finland, Ireland, the Netherlands, and Norway all have a relatively small number of places reserved for dossier cases. Sweden is the exception in that it fills more than half of its resettlement quota through dossier selections.

<sup>11</sup> The submission stage is the moment when cases are presented to potential resettlement countries. These countries have then to decide whether or not the presented refugees are eligible in the framework of their own resettlement programme.

<sup>12</sup> See ICMC, *Welcome to Europe! A Guide to resettlement: a comparative review of resettlement in Europe*, 2009, Part III, p. 106: [www.icmc.net/system/files/publication/welcome\\_to\\_europe\\_a\\_guide\\_to\\_resettlement\\_a\\_comp\\_64641.pdf](http://www.icmc.net/system/files/publication/welcome_to_europe_a_guide_to_resettlement_a_comp_64641.pdf) ('Welcome to Europe!').

Secondly, NGOs would be able to monitor, and in certain cases, to participate in the decision-making.<sup>13</sup>

#### Good practices:

- **Denmark:** the *Danish Refugee Council* participates in selection missions with the government based on a written agreement (no participation in dossier selection process). They hold interviews together but DRC is only considered as a hearing partner when it comes to making the decision. However, the DRC does have the ability to publicly contest decisions it believes are based on faulty reasoning.
- **Iceland:** the *Icelandic Red Cross* is an equal partner of the government in decision-making (in-country selection).

#### d. External referrals

UNHCR is responsible for internal referrals, but a number NGOs have the possibility to make external referrals for resettlement. NGOs making external referrals usually are UNHCR implementing partners or are otherwise involved in refugee work. External referrals can be made to UNHCR or, in some cases, directly to resettlement states. NGOs can play an instrumental role in ensuring that the most at-risk populations are effectively identified, including in urban areas.

#### Good practice:

- **Kenya:** *HIAS Kenya* identifies refugees in need of resettlement in Nairobi and can externally refer those refugees to Canada. HIAS Kenya has a very good track record: almost all refugees referred to Canada for resettlement are accepted.

## 2) After the eligibility decision

### a. Pre-Departure Cultural Orientation

After a refugee has been interviewed and is initially accepted for resettlement, he or she typically must undergo procedures prior to final clearance for departure to the country of resettlement. Generally, this means the refugee must submit to a background security check, as well as to a medical examination. The purpose of the medical exam is to screen for communicable diseases such as tuberculosis, hepatitis and HIV/AIDS, prescribe treatment regimens for identified conditions, and make medical referrals for follow-up in the country of resettlement.



Syria, Al Hol camp © Dutch Council for Refugees

The majority of resettlement countries organise pre-departure cultural orientation programmes, directly or through the International Organization for Migration (IOM), to prepare the refugees who will be resettled for their new life. The duration and content of those programmes differ from country to country. NGOs are experts in refugee issues and can therefore play a useful, complementary role in these cultural orientation programmes. NGOs also represent the community that will host the refugee once resettled, so involvement of NGOs is also important for continuity: refugees see the same people after arrival in the resettlement country and there is a possibility for better streamlining of information on these refugees. Refugees who have been resettled can also play a significant role in cultural orientation, as they know from their own experiences what kind of information refugees who will be resettled need.

Another important role of NGOs is to identify possibilities for another durable solution in case a refugee is not selected for resettlement.

<sup>13</sup> See Ibid., p. 95.

### Good practices:

- **Denmark:** the **Danish Red Cross** is responsible for the accommodation of asylum seekers in Denmark and offers classes and activities for asylum seekers while the authorities are processing their asylum case. Language teachers from the Danish Red Cross also often participate in pre-departure cultural orientation courses.
- **France:** **Forum Réfugiés** provides a pre-departure information booklet for refugees selected for resettlement to France.<sup>14</sup> The booklet gives information on the different entry procedures, the trip to France, administrative procedures, reception conditions, integration and life in France.
- **Iceland:** the **Icelandic Red Cross** is involved in cultural orientation activities which take place before the actual selection, meaning that the Icelandic Red Cross provides information that refugees can use to inform their decision on resettling in Iceland.
- **The UK:** the **Resettlement Inter-Agency Partnership**, funded by the Home Office and coordinated by the Refugee Council, consists of 7 NGOS (Refugee Council, the British Red Cross, Refugee Action, the Scottish Refugee Council, Migrant Helpline, Refugee Arrivals Project (RAP) and the Refugee Housing Association) involved in resettlement activities. The RIAP produces information materials, such as the guide “Welcome to the UK – A first step.”<sup>15</sup> These materials are provided to refugees while still in the country of first asylum before leaving for the UK.

### b. Travel arrangements

Travel arrangements are usually made by the IOM. NGOs can also be involved in (part of) the travel arrangements, with a view to accompanying refugees. NGOs can work together with IOM and other organisations involved as well as with government authorities in obtaining exit permits, refugee identification documents, travel documents, and flight plans.

#### Experiences during travel:

- Most refugees who are to be resettled have never been in an airplane and are not familiar with modern technology. NGOs that accompany refugees can, for example, explain things like the sounds and the functioning of the airplane, explain the use of the toilet, and be in charge of communicating with the immigration services.
- *Example:* a very common problem is the use of the escalator. Most refugees do not know how to walk on it and panic, which often leads to falls on the escalator.



Queuing at an airport in Turkey © British Refugee Council

### Good practice:

- **Iceland:** according to an agreement with the Icelandic Ministry of Social Affairs and Social Security, the **Icelandic Red Cross** supervises the travel of resettled refugees to Iceland in cooperation with IOM, UNHCR and the Icelandic Refugee Committee.

<sup>14</sup> See Forum Réfugiés, Information guide for persons being resettled to France: [www.forumrefugies.org/fr/content/download/2620/21980/Livret%20d%5C%27info%20EN%20version%20d%C3%A9finitive.pdf](http://www.forumrefugies.org/fr/content/download/2620/21980/Livret%20d%5C%27info%20EN%20version%20d%C3%A9finitive.pdf).

<sup>15</sup> See Refugee Council, Welcome to the UK – A first step: [http://languages.refugeecouncil.org.uk/pdf/English/Welcome\\_to\\_the\\_UK-English.pdf](http://languages.refugeecouncil.org.uk/pdf/English/Welcome_to_the_UK-English.pdf).

## **II. POST-ARRIVAL: RECEPTION AND INTEGRATION ACTIVITIES**

Arrival in a new country and culture is challenging, and the first steps are not always easy. To make this process as easy as possible, services are provided to support the resettled refugees upon their arrival and during the integration process. Of course, integration is equally important for non-resettled refugees, and the good practices mentioned here are either with regard to resettled refugees or with regard to both resettled and non-resettled refugees.

In EU Member States, national governments usually play a central role in providing services and welfare to resettled refugees. Municipalities and/or local government entities carry most of the responsibility in programme implementation and in monitoring of services provided to resettled refugees.

In general, the social assistance programmes carried out by the authorities are comprehensive and function well. Nevertheless, NGO participation remains necessary since the social services that a resettled refugee needs to successfully integrate differ from person to person. NGOs are the most appropriate entities to assist resettled refugees and help them with queries and problems on an individual basis. NGOs are very well placed to guide a resettled refugee in receiving the necessary services tailored to that particular refugee's needs.

Equally important, thanks to the connections with refugee communities, an NGO can provide information on and orient the refugee to the community into which he or she will integrate.

### **1) Reception**

#### **a. The very first steps in the new country**

NGOs can welcome refugees at the airport, which helps them feel welcome as soon as they set foot on the ground in their new country. Most ideally, refugees will be welcomed by a familiar face, by someone who they have seen before in their country of first asylum, for example someone who conducted the pre-departure cultural orientation. NGOs are well placed to start building the trust of refugees with their new country through their knowledge, awareness of refugee issues and connection with the host community.



© Panos Pictures. Tim A. Hetherington

#### **Good practices:**

- **Finland:** a delegation from the *Finnish Red Cross* welcomes refugees at the airport.
- **France:** resettled refugees are welcomed upon arrival by a member of the French immigration and integration office, and are brought to transit centres where they are welcomed by staff of *France Terre d'Asile* and *Forum Réfugiés*, which both manage reception centres.
- **Iceland:** a delegation from the *Icelandic Red Cross*, together with people from the municipality, welcomes the refugees at the airport.
- **The UK:** *Migrant Helpline* welcomes refugees at the airport and provides 2-3 day orientation sessions.<sup>16</sup>

<sup>16</sup> See Migrant Helpline website: [www.migranthepline.org.uk](http://www.migranthepline.org.uk).



## b. A welcoming local community

Local communities should be prepared to receive and welcome refugees. The main 'targets' are the local population and the local public authorities. It is essential to inform the local population about the arrival of refugees and refugees' issues, and to promote a positive image of refugee resettlement. The involvement of NGOs is particularly important in order to gain public support for resettlement. NGOs often use their media networks, but do also organise public meetings and awareness-raising sessions.

Additionally, NGOs can play an active role in preparing public authorities for the arrival of resettled refugees, by providing advice and support to those authorities working in resettlement.



ECRE' at Brussels festival Couleur Café © ECRE

### Good practices:

- The **Dutch Council for Refugees**, the **Refugee Council** (UK) and the **Danish Refugee Council** offer advisory services to municipalities in order to facilitate the integration of refugees.
- **Germany**: in several German cities, NGOs and local associations are working together to welcome resettled refugees. A good example is the successful **Save Me – Eine Stadt sagt JA Campaign**,<sup>17</sup> which helps engage cities in resettlement. Several websites have been set up where individuals can learn about resettlement and refugee issues and then register as a 'support person' in order to help a resettled refugee.
- **Iceland**: The **Icelandic Red Cross** holds informational sessions on the background of resettled refugees for the public at the beginning of the cultural orientation programme. In larger communities, the transmission of background information about the resettled refugees takes the form of newspaper articles. This contributes to the development of a good understanding between the refugees and the local community.<sup>18</sup>
- **The Netherlands**: the **Dutch Council for Refugees** organises informational meetings for relevant actors in the communities. A brochure with information and portraits of resettled refugees has been created to demonstrate the positive aspects of resettlement and encourage understanding of refugees and their backgrounds. There are also small, positive articles published by the local press.
- **The UK: Resettlement Inter-Agency Partnership**<sup>19</sup> published the guide "Understanding Resettlement to the UK"<sup>20</sup> for anyone wishing to gain a better understanding of resettlement.
- **The UK**: the **Refugee Council** publishes guides on social and cultural norms of certain groups resettled to the UK (from Sudan, Liberia and Congo). It is designed to prepare staff working directly with the refugees for the arrival of refugees from those specific cultures. This frontline staff can then better adapt their services to the particular needs and cultural characteristics of those specific groups.<sup>21</sup> The Refugee Council also uses the media in the UK to ensure that the coverage of asylum-related stories does not give a "distorted, misleading and inaccurate picture of what it is to be an asylum seeker or refugee". Additionally, the Refugee Council helps asylum seekers and refugees get their voices heard in the media.<sup>22</sup>

<sup>17</sup> E.g. Save me München: [www.save-me-muenchen.de/kampagne.html](http://www.save-me-muenchen.de/kampagne.html).

<sup>18</sup> See UNHCR, Resettlement Handbook, Country Chapter, Iceland', 2004 (updated 2007), p. 386: [www.unhcr.org/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/search?page=search&docid=46f7c0ee2&query=resettlement](http://www.unhcr.org/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/search?page=search&docid=46f7c0ee2&query=resettlement). See also Welcome to Europe!, p. 16.

<sup>19</sup> For details, See Good practices in section I.2.a

<sup>20</sup> See Refugee Council, Understanding Resettlement to the UK: [www.refugeecouncil.org.uk/Resources/RefugeeCouncil/downloads/howwehelp/UnderstandingGPPJune2004.pdf](http://www.refugeecouncil.org.uk/Resources/RefugeeCouncil/downloads/howwehelp/UnderstandingGPPJune2004.pdf).

<sup>21</sup> See Refugee Council, Guides to cultural norms: [www.refugeecouncil.org.uk/practice/asylum/cultural\\_norms](http://www.refugeecouncil.org.uk/practice/asylum/cultural_norms).

<sup>22</sup> See Refugee Council, Working with the media: [www.refugeecouncil.org.uk/howwehelp/lobbying/media](http://www.refugeecouncil.org.uk/howwehelp/lobbying/media).

## 2) Integration in the new country

In all resettlement countries, integration programmes are organised and offered to refugees. Similarly to pre-departure cultural orientation programmes, these integration programmes differ from country to country in both duration (generally between one and three years) and content.

### Experiences during the integration process:

- Cultural habits can lead to misunderstandings between resettled refugees and the host society. NGOs know the cultural habits of the resettled refugees and can aid the resettled refugees in their integration process by adapting to their specific needs.
- *Example:* a family of resettled refugees was standing at a pedestrian crossing. When a car stopped to let them cross, the refugees thought the driver was giving them a lift, as this is the habit in their country of origin, and got in the car. Result: the driver did not understand why people tried to enter his car and the refugees did not understand why they were not given a lift.
- *Example:* some refugees who do not receive proper explanations as to the use of kitchen utensils cook on a wooden fire in the middle of their living room.
- *Example:* it is necessary to accompany resettled refugees to the supermarket and explain the use of every object. Otherwise, for example, a resettled family might put a tampon box on display on their kitchen table, because they thought it was a beautiful object, to realise only months later what it really is for.



Proiect Bonaó © Diakonie Austria

### **a. Integration programmes**

The role NGOs play in the integration process is highly important and their programmes for resettled refugees often fill in the gaps in national official programmes and measures. Countries that resettle refugees generally guarantee food, shelter, access to medical care, employment, education and a certain amount of financial and social support to refugees during the first few weeks or months after their arrival. However, these services are provided by multiple agencies and refugees may not always find it easy to access these programmes.

NGOs can work in many different integration areas, for example: housing, public assistance, legal issues, employment and education, child welfare, mental health and medical assistance, financial assistance, and social integration. NGOs are often best placed to guide and inform the refugee in these matters.

Integration programmes allow refugees to receive instruction on the laws, customs and practices of the receiving countries. NGOs provide those programmes and adapt them to the needs of resettled refugees. This is essential for the empowerment of refugees and their integration process.

### Good practices:

- **Denmark:** the *Danish Refugee Council* coordinates the work of 240 voluntary organisations with almost 4,000 volunteers all over the country. The volunteers are engaged in helping refugees and other immigrants, among other things, learn the language, do homework, and enter the job market. Volunteers use their networks, resources and experiences to help refugees and immigrants be included in the local community.
- **Finland:** the *Finnish Red Cross* trains volunteers to become support persons who befriend refugees and assist them in building social networks.
- **Germany:** the *Save-Me – Eine Stadt sagt JA Campaign* encourages individuals to support a resettled refugee.<sup>23</sup>
- **Iceland:** the Ministry of Social Affairs has agreements with local authorities of the receiving communities and the *Icelandic Red Cross*, which mandate their involvement in the integration of resettled refugees. These agreements also specify the financial resources that municipalities and the Icelandic Red Cross will receive from the Government for the settlement of refugees. In addition, the Icelandic Red Cross trains volunteers to become Support Families, with usually 3-5 local families assisting one refugee family.
- **The Netherlands:** the *Dutch Council for Refugees* takes part in coaching refugees, which is an official part of the integration programme (getting around, creating a social network, recreational activities, bridge local communities). Their work mainly consists of housing visits, consulting hours and informational meetings about different aspects of Dutch society. There are also particular projects for specific groups like women or the elderly. Additionally, the large network of volunteers of the Dutch Refugee Council (approximately 7,000 volunteers, present in almost all Dutch municipalities), assist resettled refugees with integration through individual and social coaching at settlement. The volunteer mentor acts as a link to the community.<sup>24</sup>
- **Norway:** the *Norwegian Red Cross*, in cooperation with municipalities, implements the “Refugee Guide Project”, through which Norwegian volunteers serve as guides in the community. They encourage refugees’ increased participation in the local community by providing opportunities for refugees to make contacts with Norwegians. Refugees respond positively to this project as they have been able to make friends and contacts more easily, and it has also increased their chances to get a job or study.<sup>25</sup>
- **Sweden:** in some municipalities, local NGOs assist the authorities with the integration process. They organize activities for refugees that complement the services provided by the municipalities, such as language training, computer classes and recreational and social activities.<sup>26</sup>
- **The UK:** resettled refugees are supported by NGOs for long-term resettlement (housing, benefits, gaining independence). An experimental programme has been set up in Yorkshire: whereby the *Refugee Council* and local authorities cooperate with each other to implement a reception and integration programme at the local level.<sup>27</sup>
- **The UK:** a team of resettlement workers from *Refugee Action* in Bolton (Greater Manchester) supports resettled refugees during their first year in the, giving support and assistance with everything from learning about their new community to accessing training, employment and education. The team works in partnership with local statutory and voluntary organizations to provide access to existing services.<sup>28</sup>

<sup>23</sup> See above note 17.

<sup>24</sup> See Dutch Refugee Council, *Uitgenodigde vluchtelingen in Nederland: opvang en integratie* ([www.vluchtelingenwerk.nl/pdf-bibliotheek/Brochure%20Uitgenodigde%20Vluchtelingen%202008.pdf](http://www.vluchtelingenwerk.nl/pdf-bibliotheek/Brochure%20Uitgenodigde%20Vluchtelingen%202008.pdf)) and *Integration of resettled refugees in the Netherlands*, ([www.metropolis2008.org/pdf/20081028/workshops/w028-28\\_weiler-roswitha.pdf](http://www.metropolis2008.org/pdf/20081028/workshops/w028-28_weiler-roswitha.pdf)).

<sup>25</sup> See Norwegian Red Cross, *This is the Red Cross*, p. 10: [www.rodekors.no/upload/dokumenter/This\\_is\\_RC\\_2007eng.pdf](http://www.rodekors.no/upload/dokumenter/This_is_RC_2007eng.pdf).

<sup>26</sup> See *Welcome to Europe!*, p. 27.

<sup>27</sup> See *Welcome to Europe!*, p. 114.

<sup>28</sup> See *Refugee Action, Gateway Protection Programme*: [www.refugee-action.org.uk/ourwork/projects/Gateway.aspx](http://www.refugee-action.org.uk/ourwork/projects/Gateway.aspx).

#### **Good practices regarding particularly vulnerable refugees:**

- **Denmark:** the Centre for Vulnerable Refugees under the **Danish Refugee Council** operates as a knowledge centre with a special focus on knowledge collection and sharing, through their website ([www.traume.dk](http://www.traume.dk)), describing the status and development trends in this area, and also by managing projects aimed at method development of practice in relation to the target group. There are also courses and counselling of practitioners.
- **Denmark:** the **Danish Refugee Council** offers integration programmes in municipalities on a non-profit basis, including interpretation services, activities aimed at facilitating access to the labour market, and activities geared toward traumatised and vulnerable refugees and immigrants. In all these areas, the DRC continues to develop its special competencies to generally improve its contributions to integration activities.

#### **b. Language training**

Learning the language of a new country is a key step towards successful integration. Resettlement countries usually offer language courses, but NGOs can play an indispensable role in offering (additional) language courses. These courses can take the form of, for instance, complementary language classes, discussion groups and practice through conversation.

#### **Good practices:**

- **Denmark:** "Lærdansk", Denmark's largest network of language centers, is part of the **Danish Refugee Council**. In 2009, the number of language centres was expanded to 17. Lærdansk also offers Danish language instruction over the Internet. "Netdansk" is a virtual school facilitated by Lærdansk with a virtual classroom where refugees and other migrants can take part in virtual lessons.
- **Finland:** Informal conversation classes are organized by local charities (complementary to the language classes organised by the municipalities).

#### **c. Vocational training**

Regarding vocational training, NGOs can play a useful role in helping a resettled refugee acquire skills that will help him or her enter the labour market. Also, previously obtained skills can be refreshed and adapted to the practices in the new country.

#### **Good practices:**

- **France:** managed by **Forum Réfugiés**, the social-professional integration programme 'Accelair', set up in 2007, is a very successful programme helping refugees gain access to employment and housing. In this programme, refugees learn how to make a CV, look for a job, and find a house. Meetings with potential employers are also organized and some specific trainings, which are not covered by employment services, are financed by 'Accelair'.<sup>29</sup>
- **Ireland:** **Spirasi** manages a project called "Jobs club" – The Training and Education Assistance and Mentoring (TEAM). The key aim of this project is to assist resettled refugees in finding sustainable employment.<sup>30</sup>
- **The Netherlands:** the **Dutch Council for Refugees** in cooperation with Emplooi and Job support (University Assistance Fund) have set up a very successful programme that helps refugees find employment. Although only started in 2005, more than 2,000 refugees were matched with an employer by the end of 2008.
- **Sweden:** the NGO **Linköping City mission** provides language classes with a labour-market orientation, and also help refugees in getting internships. They have very good results: about

<sup>29</sup> See Forum Réfugiés, Le Programme Accelair : [www.forumrefugies.org/fr/Integration-des-refugies/Le-programme-Accelair](http://www.forumrefugies.org/fr/Integration-des-refugies/Le-programme-Accelair).

<sup>30</sup> See Spirasi, Annual Report 2005, p.24: [www.spirasi.ie/downloads/annual-report-05.pdf](http://www.spirasi.ie/downloads/annual-report-05.pdf).



half of their refugee internships placements have led to actual employment, the other half to further education.<sup>31</sup>

- **The UK:** under the *Refugee Council's* and *Refugee Action's* 'Gateway Protection Programme', refugees are encouraged to volunteer. There are many benefits for refugees who volunteer. It provides essential work experience and helps to build social bridges. Other benefits include meeting people from their local communities; gaining an understanding of the work environment in the UK; using their skills to help others; and building confidence. It allows them to contribute, to gain skills (including English language skills) and naturally it helps them to integrate.<sup>32</sup>

#### Good practice regarding particularly vulnerable refugees:

- **Denmark:** the *Danish Refugee Council* has developed successful methods that combine vocational and rehabilitation activities for particularly vulnerable and traumatized refugees and immigrants in order to improve the occupational activities for this target group. These activities, among others, take place in Danish Refugee Council's Rehabilitation centres in the cities of Herlev and Horsens.

#### d. Counselling and legal services



It is important that a resettled refugee receives adequate counselling and has access to legal services. NGOs are well placed to provide continuing immigration legal services to recently resettled refugees, as they usually work on a day-to-day basis with refugees and have acquired great expertise in counselling them. Continuing immigration legal services are fundamental for a resettled refugee, with a view to attaining complete civic integration by obtaining citizenship, thereby becoming a contributing member of the host state. Such services are also a cornerstone of 'holistic resettlement' as they encourage legal permanent status, family reunification, and civic participation, as well as provide emotional and physical stability.

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as well as provide emotional and physical stability.

#### Good practices:

- **Denmark:** the *Danish Refugee Council* carries out asylum counselling with assistance from interpreters in the form of general counselling at asylum centres, followed by individual counselling. The DRC is also involved in repatriation counselling, as established through a contract with the Danish Ministry of Refugee, Immigration and Integration Affairs.
- **Portugal:** the *Portuguese Refugee Council-CPR* offers free legal counselling on day-to-day matters like renewal of documentation, equivalence of diplomas, family reunification, registries, labour problems, and analysis of contracts.

#### e. Family reunification

Family reunification is an important part of integration and of major importance for many resettled refugees. For this reason, a sound integration programme should help resettled refugees apply to have family members join them.<sup>33</sup> Thus, information on family reunion provisions must be included in orientation materials, and resettled refugees may need assistance with application procedures. In this regard, NGOs can play an important role in assisting resettled refugees in the family reunification process.

<sup>31</sup> See Linköping Stadsmission (City mission): [www.linkopingsstadsmission.se](http://www.linkopingsstadsmission.se).

<sup>32</sup> See Refugee Council, Gateway Protection Programme, Good Practice Guide, p.42: [www.refugeecouncil.org.uk/OneStopCMS/Core/CrawlerResourceServer.aspx?resource=33FC4537-4482-4322-9309-582C42BC70BB&mode=link&guid=eca93211dd1d4c9585770f026739c401](http://www.refugeecouncil.org.uk/OneStopCMS/Core/CrawlerResourceServer.aspx?resource=33FC4537-4482-4322-9309-582C42BC70BB&mode=link&guid=eca93211dd1d4c9585770f026739c401).

<sup>33</sup> See UNHCR, 'Resettlement Handbook', Chapter 2.3, 2002, p. 98 : [www.unhcr.org/3d985f464.html](http://www.unhcr.org/3d985f464.html).

NGOs can also take part in tracing activities, since they can have access information more easily to, due to their presence in many countries and their non-governmental status.

**Good practices:**

- **International:** NGO **Refugees United** is an online user friendly forum 'to re-unite loved ones', where refugees can create a profile and get in touch with their family and loved ones in an anonymous, safe and secure way, without costs.<sup>34</sup> Currently the website has registered refugees of 82 nationalities.
- **International:** the **International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC)** and **National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies**, present in 176 countries worldwide, provide a range of services to assist in tracing individuals and reuniting families. They use a variety of means for reuniting families. These can include tracing services – efforts to locate missing relatives when contact has been lost, message services – facilitating communication of personal or family news to relatives in a conflict zone, services to unaccompanied children – including registration, identification and tracing, advice and certification of captivity and/or death of a family member. The National Red Cross or Red Crescent Society in each country is often the first point of contact.<sup>35</sup>
- **The Netherlands:** the **Dutch Council for Refugees** trains volunteers who support refugees in their family reunion applications and procedures. They work together with the Dutch Immigration service (IND), UNHCR and embassies.
- **The UK:** the **British Red Cross** provides basic advice on family reunification and travel assistance procedures to resettled refugees.



<sup>34</sup> See Refugees United website: <https://www.refunite.org>.

<sup>35</sup> See UNHCR, Resettlement Handbook, p. 87: [www.unhcr.org/3d985f464.html](http://www.unhcr.org/3d985f464.html).

#### f. Refugees' contribution to integration

The oft-neglected partner in the resettlement process is the refugees themselves.<sup>36</sup>

Refugees and refugee community organisations can play a key role in the integration of resettled refugees: their experience makes them very well placed to support certain stages of the resettlement process.<sup>37</sup> They could, for instance, contribute to managing refugee expectations and ensure that more credible information on possibilities -for instance with regard to employment and housing- is transmitted within the refugee population. Refugees and refugee community organisations could also take part in pre-departure cultural orientation courses, counselling on their form and contents, and playing a role in their delivery. Furthermore, integrated refugees can serve as volunteers in 'befriending' programmes, as mentors, or in 'refugee guide' programmes.<sup>38</sup> The fact that they share a similar background with newly resettled refugees can help the latter express their doubts and concerns and become more quickly integrated. NGOs can play a key role in facilitating such contribution by refugees to integration programmes.



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#### Good practices:

- **Finland:** the **Finnish Red Cross** ran the "Kotopolku project" from 2001-2007. The project aimed at developing integration models for newcomers and promoting cooperation between NGOs and local authorities. The large majority of the project's employees were former refugees or migrants, all from different backgrounds.<sup>39</sup>
- **The Netherlands:** the **Dutch Council for Refugees** has a diversity recruitment policy, aimed at creating a balanced staff.
- **The UK:** **Refugee Action** was created to support, promote and work in partnership with refugee communities by, among other things, employing refugees and sharing methods, skills and insights.
- **The UK:** the creation of the **Gateway Refugee Forum**, made up of formerly resettled refugees who meet monthly) has helped to support new refugees as well as raise funds and organise events.

<sup>36</sup> See ECRE, The Way Forward – Europe's role in the global protection system, Towards a European Resettlement Programme, 2005, p 29: [www.ecre.org/resources/Policy\\_papers/225](http://www.ecre.org/resources/Policy_papers/225).

<sup>37</sup> See ECRE, Resettlement Core Group joint recommendations and guidelines for the shape and functions of a European Resettlement Programme: [www.ecre.org/files/ECRE\\_Recommendations\\_EU\\_Resettlement\\_Programme.pdf](http://www.ecre.org/files/ECRE_Recommendations_EU_Resettlement_Programme.pdf).

<sup>38</sup> See Welcome to Europe!, p. 114.

<sup>39</sup> See The Finnish Red Cross in refugee settlement: Developing the integration time line as a tool for integration in the Kotopolku project, Journal of International Migration and Integration Volume 4, No. 2, December 2003, accessible (only if registered) at [www.springerlink.com/content/75327461mm880303/?p=a3ec978f85144d2993ede24b5942a8e3&pi=7](http://www.springerlink.com/content/75327461mm880303/?p=a3ec978f85144d2993ede24b5942a8e3&pi=7).