



European Asylum Support Office
Bureau Européen d'Appui pour l'Asile

EASO

fact finding report on intra-EU relocation activities from Malta

July 2012

INDEX

1. Background	2
2. Scope of the fact finding exercise.....	2
3. Methodology	3
3.1. Sources of information	3
3.2 Issues that have been evaluated	3
3.3. Replies and categories	4
4. Key Figures	5
5. The Relocation Process	7
5.1. Actions carried out by the Maltese Ministry of Home Affairs	7
5.2. Actions carried out by the International Organization for Migration	7
5.3. Actions carried out by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees	7
5.4. Actions carried out by EU Member States and Associated Countries.....	8
5.5. Actions carried out by other organisations	8
6. Findings of the fact finding exercise.....	9
6.1. Scope of participation	9
6.2. Choice of relocation measure	9
6.3. The selection process	9
6.3.1. Selection criteria	11
6.3.2. Role of UNHCR and IOM in relocation activities	12
6.4. Information sharing	12
6.5. Choice of receiving country	13
6.6. Reception conditions	14
6.7. Integration	14
6.8. Funding	15
7. Key Challenges and Proposals for Improvements	15
8. Final Remarks	17

1 – BACKGROUND

Since 2009, measures have been undertaken to assist Malta to cope with the pressures of hosting a relatively large number of recognised beneficiaries of international protection. A number of relocation measures have been implemented, both through the Pilot Project for intra-EU Relocation from Malta (EUREMA¹ - phase I and II) and bilateral arrangements between EU Member States, Associated Countries and Malta.

Since 2009, twelve EU Member States decided to participate in EUREMA pilot project (phase I and II) and eight EU Member States and Associated Countries decided to make bilateral arrangements with Malta. Ten EU Member States did not participate in any relocation arrangements.

EUREMA provided an organised framework for preparing and implementing relocation. The projects also provided funding for participating countries. EUREMA phase I was the first such project involving several Member States for the relocation of protected persons from Malta. In that respect it required a substantial learning curve for all partners involved to manage and participate in the project. EUREMA phase I also involved several EU Member States relocating a good number of migrants with, for example, Germany relocating some 102 persons and France relocating some 95 persons.

EUREMA phase II is mostly made up of Member States relocating substantially lower numbers, with the only major commitment within the EUREMA phase II project being Poland; which committed to relocating 50 persons. On an operational level, for EUREMA phase II there is more emphasis on getting the correct information to the potential beneficiaries and addressing lessons learned from phase I.

2 - SCOPE OF THE FACT FINDING EXERCISE

The March 2012 Justice and Home Affairs Council² invited the European Commission to undertake a full evaluation of the Pilot Project for intra-EU Relocation from Malta (EUREMA), together with the European Asylum Support Office (EASO) and participating Member States. The Commission intends to present this fact finding report as part of the Impact Assessment for a future permanent voluntary relocation scheme.

Taking into account EASO's mandated role to support relocation activities and the task attributed to it by the JHA Council, in collaboration with the European Commission, EASO carried out a fact finding exercise and gather all relevant information about intra-EU relocation activities with Malta. All EU Member States and Associated Countries together with other relevant stakeholders were invited to participate in the evaluation.

¹ EUREMA is a EU Pilot Project for the relocation of beneficiaries of international protection from Malta, endorsed in the European Council Conclusions of 18-19 June 2009 (doc. 11225/2/09 CONCL 2)

² See Council Conclusions on a common framework for genuine and practical solidarity towards Member States facing particular pressures on their asylum systems including through mixed migration flows (doc. 7485/12 ASIM 28 FRONT 42)

3 – METHODOLOGY

In line with the JHA Council Conclusions of March 2012, EASO supported the European Commission in conducting a full evaluation of EUREMA. EASO's role in this fact finding process was to look into the strengths and weaknesses of the relocation activities carried out with Malta and identify opportunities and threats for future relocation activities. Specifically, EASO has:

- compiled a list of facts and figures;
- drawn a comparison between the different approaches to relocation;
- compiled a list of lessons learned.

EASO screened all available information from relevant sources. This was complemented by questionnaires addressed to participating states, non-participating states and project leaders as well as a number of interviews³. All EU Member States and Associated Countries that have been asked to participate in this evaluation exercise have responded positively. All the information was documented and synthesised. The findings were delivered to the European Commission, DG Home Affairs. The fact finding and information gathering process lasted three months.

3.1. Sources of information

- All EU Member States/Permanent Representations to the EU
- Participating States
- Handbook on lessons learned from EUREMA published by IOM
- Questionnaires sent to relevant stakeholders;
- Interviews (face-to-face, phone) with certain stakeholders;
- Facts and figures presented by relevant stakeholders (Maltese Government and other States, IOM and UNHCR)

3.2. Issues that have been evaluated:

Participating States and project leaders were asked to reply to a number of questions under the following eight headings:

- Scope of participation
- Choice of relocation measure
- The selection process
- Information sharing

³ DE, FR, PT, MT, UNHCR, IOM. EASO also tried to hold some interviews with relocated beneficiaries. However, this was not always possible and only two persons were interviewed.

- Choice of receiving country
- Reception conditions
- Integration
- Funding

Non-participating States were asked the following questions:

- *What is your government's general view and position on EUREMA and other intra-EU relocation activities related to Malta?*
- *Why did your government opt not to participate in EUREMA and other intra-EU relocation activities related to Malta? Please highlight the main reasons.*
- *What conditions would prompt your government to participate in similar future projects?*

3.3. Replies and categories

Who was part of the evaluation?	Role in the relocation process	Method of evaluation
16 EU Member States (responsible JHA ministers)	Participating countries	- questionnaire - interviews
NO, CH and LI	Participating countries	- questionnaire
10 EU Member States (responsible JHA ministers)	Non-participating countries	- questionnaire
Government of Malta (including Ministry of Home and Parliamentary Affairs)	Beneficiary country and leader of the EUREMA pilot project	- questionnaire - interviews
UNHCR, IOM	Project implementing partners	- questionnaire - interviews
2 relocated beneficiaries	Relocated beneficiaries to Portugal	- interviews

4 – KEY FIGURES

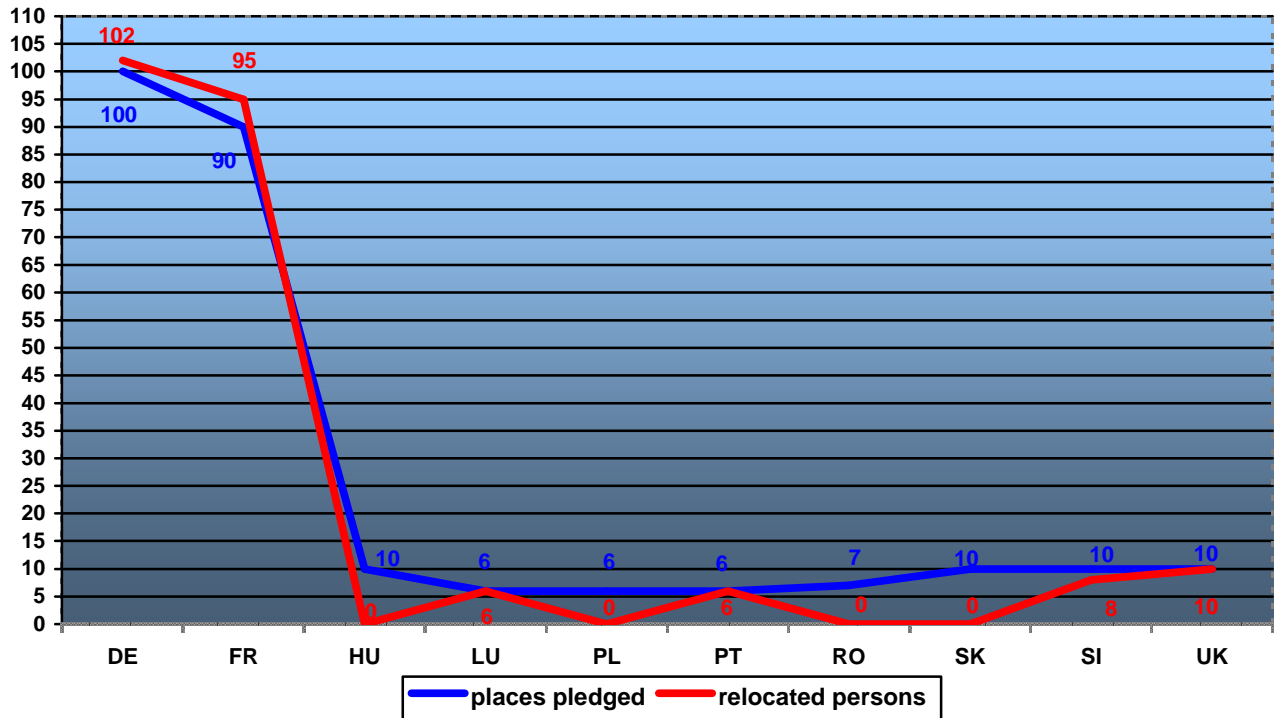
EUREMA – phase 1 (2011)

Member State	Places pledged	Number relocated
France	90	95
Germany	100	102
Hungary	8-10	0
Luxembourg	6	6
Poland	6	0
Portugal	6	6
Romania	7	0
Slovakia	10	0
Slovenia	10	8
United Kingdom	10	10
Total	253-5	227

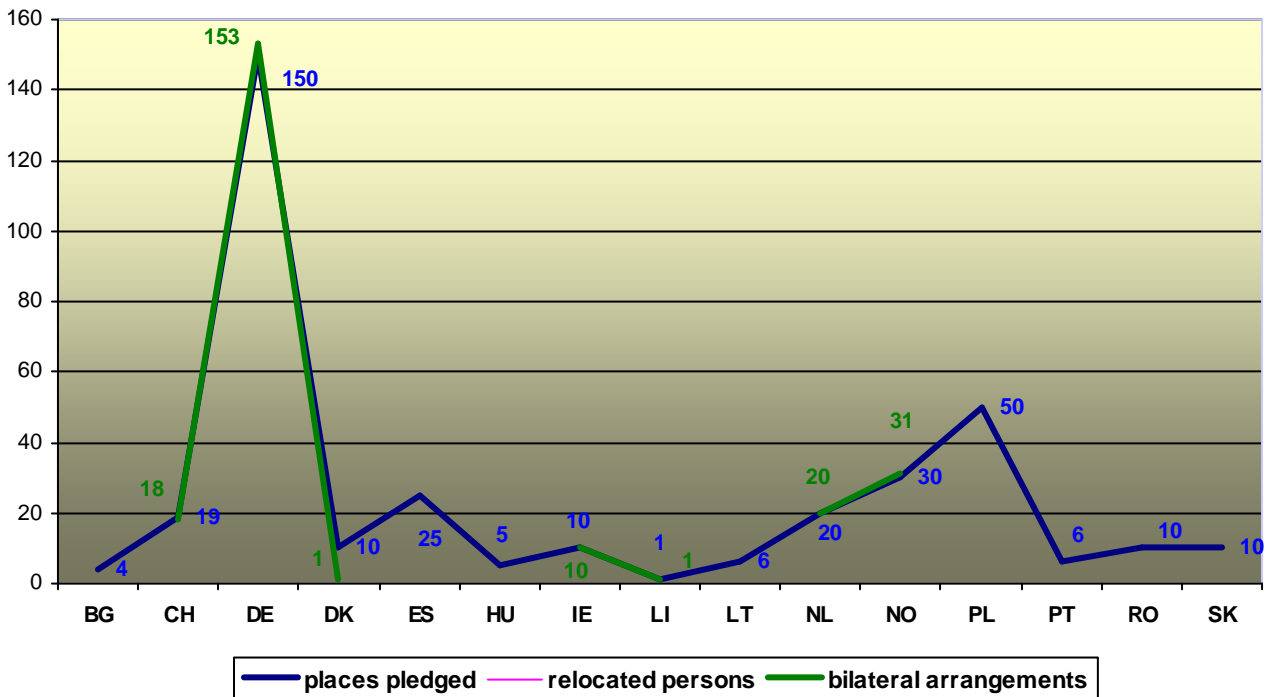
EUREMA – phase 2 (2012)

Member State	Places pledged	Places filled	Bilateral/Co-funded project
Germany	150	153	Bilateral
Poland	50	Process ongoing	EUREMA 2
Spain	25	Process rescinded	Bilateral
The Netherlands	20	20	Bilateral
Denmark	10	1 (process ongoing)	Bilateral
Romania	10	Process ongoing	EUREMA 2
Slovakia	10	Process ongoing	EUREMA 2
Hungary	5	Process ongoing	EUREMA 2
Ireland	10	10	Bilateral
Lithuania	6	Process ongoing	EUREMA 2
Portugal	6	Process ongoing	EUREMA 2
Bulgaria	4	Process ongoing	EUREMA 2
Norway	30	31	Bilateral
Switzerland	19	18	Bilateral
Liechtenstein	1	1	Bilateral
Total	356		

EUREMA Phase 1 (2011)



EUREMA Phase 2 (2012)



5 – THE RELOCATION PROCESS

5.1. Actions carried out by the Maltese Ministry of Home Affairs:

The Maltese Ministry for Home and Parliamentary Affairs (MHPA) played a leading and coordinating role in relocation exercises. This included pre-project stages of consultations with a number of Member States and international organisations that have shown an interest in participating. This process enabled participants to be informed of the requirements for formulating a Project Proposal of this nature. Detailed discussions are held to draw up actions and related cost elements for each partner and these are subsequently collated by the Ministry into one holistic Project Proposal.

Following the submission of the project proposal, various coordination meetings and discussions were held to prepare for the roll-out of various actions; including agreement on the timeframes for the relocation to each participating State. The execution of the project entailed different phases, including the identification of potential candidates for relocation, counselling, referral, selection by host country, pre-departure preparations, and departure and integration in the host country.

As Project Leader, the MHPA was responsible for the final reporting stage of all partners, final submission of project closing report, and financial reporting and disbursement of funds.

5.2. Actions carried out by the International Organization for Migration (IOM):

The International Organization for Migration (IOM) was in charge of the overall management of EUREMA project phases I and II, and in particular it carried out the following activities:

- Organising the selection missions for participating States;
- Informing potential beneficiaries on the result of their interviews;
- Organising sessions of cultural orientation to prepare the persons selected by MS for their arrival in the Host Member State;
- Undertaking necessary medical examinations to ascertain readiness to travel;
- Undertaking travel arrangements;
- Preparing of the Handbook on lesson learned (phase I);
- Preparing four country profiles (for Eritrea, Ethiopia, Somalia and Sudan) for the service providers in the host countries (EUREMA II).

5.3. Actions carried out by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR):

UNHCR's involvement in relocation activities has primarily been focused on the initial phase to identify potential beneficiaries. UNHCR led the pre-selection screening process, which included establishment of a database of persons containing preliminary information on suitable

candidates, initial pre-selection, counselling of potential candidates and submission of files 'referral' for consideration of participating states. UNHCR also communicated the outcome of the selection process to participants and handled the post selection process.

The identification and selection process was organised in two phases: pre-selection led by UNHCR and final selection by each participating state. UNHCR led the pre-selection process to identify potential cases for the consideration of participating states. This included the following activities:

- Establishment of a database of potential beneficiaries in Malta who expressed their interest in relocation;
- Establishment of main criteria and priority considerations relating to the selection of cases for each participating State;
- Initial selection of potential candidates to be considered by each relocation country;
- Individual assessment and pre-screening of all selected candidates to finalise cases to be presented for the consideration of each participating State (involves individual counselling, checking of family links, verification of data, confirmation of interest in relocation). Screening and final selection is done by the participating states, both in terms of review of files as well as through separate selection missions to Malta;
- Research was carried out by UNHCR (Malta/Brussels) to clarify in more detail the reception arrangements in all the participating countries. This included collecting information from participating states as well as UNHCR offices in the same countries.

UNHCR also provided further individual counselling to those candidates who were considered but in the end not selected by any participating State, with a focus on providing information and support as regards their future prospects in Malta. This approach was applied both in relation to EUREMA I and EUREMA II, as well as for several bilateral relocation arrangements.

5.4. Actions carried out by EU Member States and Associated Countries:

EU Member States and Associated Countries participating in the intra-EU relocation process provided the Maltese Government a list of requirements in view of relocation, called selection criteria. UNHCR provided participating States with a list of candidates, in some cases amounting to double the number that would be finally selected. The participating States were then provided with the details of each case. Final screening and selection was done by the participating States, both in terms of review of files as well as through separate selection missions to Malta. In certain cases where the number of candidates was not considered sufficient, UNHCR was asked to submit additional cases during the final selection process.

5.5. Actions carried out by other organisations:

The Agency for the Welfare of Asylum Seekers (AWAS) and the Malta Emigrants Commission (MEC) were mainly involved in the informing potential beneficiaries of the possibility of relocation and in the coordination of the registration exercise.

6 – FINDINGS OF THE FACT FINDING EXERCISE

The questionnaires were divided into 8 sections. Below is a synthesis of the replies:

6.1. Scope of participation

The majority of EU Member States and Associated Countries stated that their decision to participate in relocation activities was a political decision of solidarity towards Malta, in line with the EU spirit of solidarity and burden sharing enshrined in the Stockholm programme and the European Pact for Immigration and Asylum.

Respondents also mentioned that the EU Home Affairs Commissioner's appeal to solidarity was another triggering factor for EU Member States and Associated Countries to get involved in intra-EU relocation efforts.

6.2. Choice of relocation measure

Eight EU Member States and Associated Countries (DE, DK, ES⁴, IE, NL, NO, CH, LI) have chosen bilateral arrangements, which were considered as the fastest and most efficient way to provide solidarity in an emergency situation, and which shared similarities with resettlement exercises. NO, CH and LI (as EEA States) did not have the possibility to formally participate in the EUREMA pilot project and so they had to engage in bi-lateral activities with Malta.

Twelve Member States preferred to relocate via the EUREMA pilot project phases 1 & 2 (BG, DE, FR, HU, LU, LT, PL, PT, RO, SK, SI, UK). Cited reasons for this were: willingness to support and participate in the pilot project, the possibility to use ERF funding, and gaining experience with relocation.

The possibility of benefiting from the available expertise of UNHCR and IOM within the EUREMA pilot project encouraged Member States to participate in this exercise. The EUREMA project was broadly seen as a tool to facilitate the relocation process and share experience and best practice between project partners.

6.3. The selection process

Protected persons satisfying the selection criteria (potential beneficiaries) were counselled by UNHCR on the basis of information supplied during a registration exercise that took place in 2009. They were then referred to the participating States, which in turn conducted selection missions to Malta to interview referrals indicated. The final selection by the participating State was then made following the selection mission. Participating States generally assessed the process positively.

⁴ ES pledged 25 places under EUREMA II but eventually withdrew from the process

Respondents stated that there was a gap between the selection criteria put forward by some participating States and the profile of the community of beneficiaries of international protection in Malta. This seemingly led to delays and challenges in the selection process.

Challenges identified by respondents to the questionnaire were the following:

- Time constraints relating to identification of candidates, in particular as some required several rounds of counselling before confirming their interest in relocation;
- Limitations and constraints of the participating States' selection criteria, in order to match the profile of beneficiaries of international protection in Malta;
- In some cases, late submission of referral dossiers to participating States;
- Some dossiers did not contain sufficient information allowing detailed pre-selection;
- Limited involvement of participating States in the selection process;
- In some cases, limited number of dossiers submitted to participating States for screening;
- Assessing the willingness and suitability of potential beneficiaries to being relocated;
- Transferring protection within a reasonable timeframe;
- Target group composition (refugees, subsidiary protection, asylum seekers⁵);
- Lack of educational and vocational background of potential beneficiaries;
- Identifying personal profiles and preferred countries of origin;
- Setting up a clear criteria concerning relatives, especially considering family reunification;
- Avoiding any risk to present selection as a “à la carte” chance among EU countries;
- Distinction between relocation and resettlement;
- Lack of will by some candidates to commit to relocation offers by 'new' EU Member States where there are few African communities.

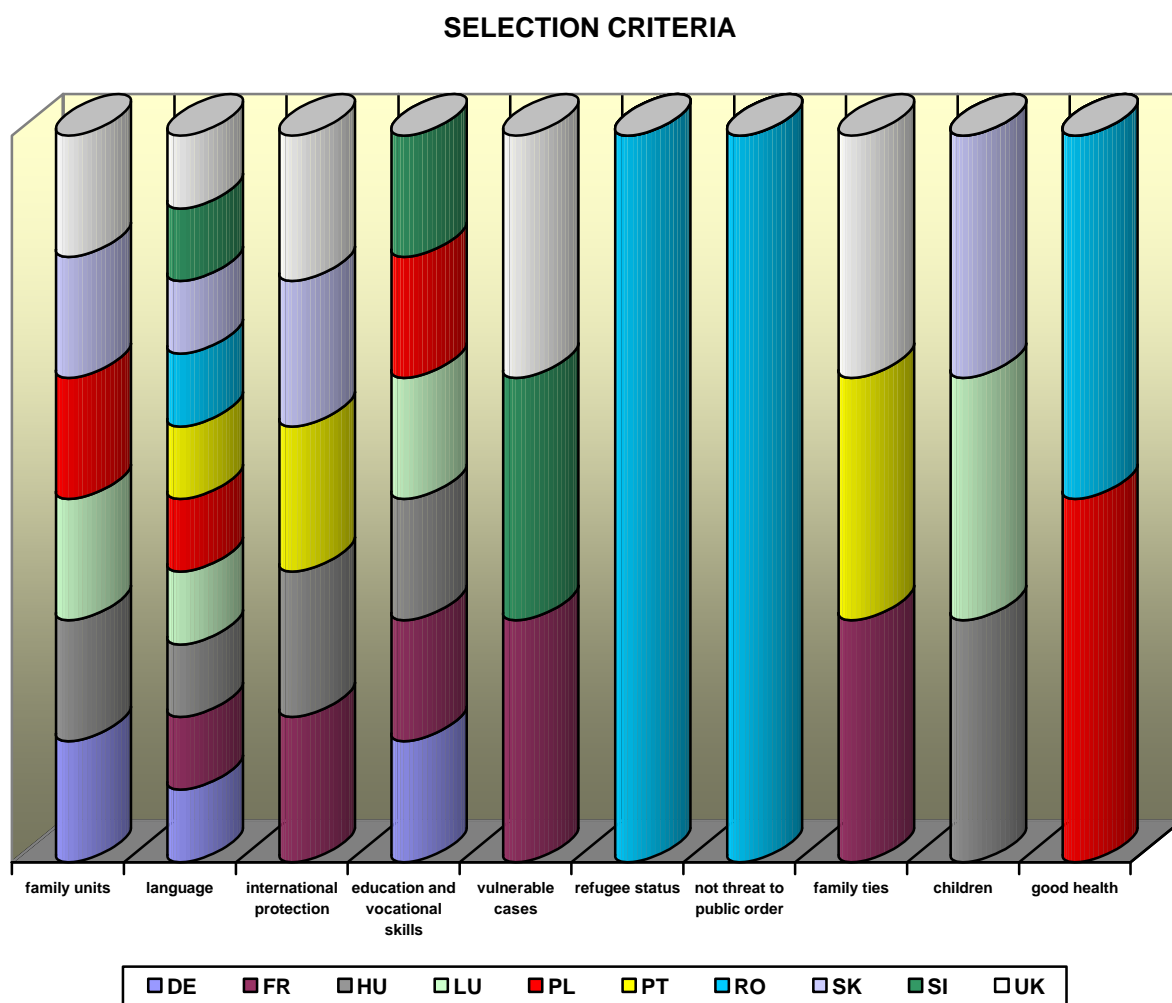
Some respondents have made the following suggestions:

- To streamline communication amongst the project partners;
- Wider choice of candidates for participating States and more information about candidates;
- More time should be dedicated to the pre-selection process;
- Family links in relocating countries, education and vocational skills and language skills as advantageous criteria;
- More frequent and accurate cultural orientation sessions;
- Stricter deadlines for submission and acceptance of dossiers.

⁵ Some participating States requested that applicants be asylum seekers

6.3.1. Selection criteria

The selection process was characterised by selection criteria set by the participating States (see below). Some criteria were easier to satisfy with regard to the population in Malta.



In some cases, participating States have used criteria from national resettlement schemes. In general, participating States favoured persons with refugee status or subsidiary protection with integration potential. Other criteria were: family units, family ties in relocating countries, language skills, vulnerable cases, education and vocational skills, work experience and readiness for employment, members of the same minorities/ethnic groups present in relocating countries, willingness to relocate, as well as those persons who do not pose a danger to public order.

Some of the selection criteria did not match the characteristics of the beneficiaries of international protection in Malta, making it difficult to carry out the relocation to some of the participating States. It clearly emerged that several countries had a strong focus on what they considered important for integration potential (language, education, work experience).

Some participating States would accept only families, while only a few States accepted single men/individuals with a spouse or family in their country of origin. This sometimes led to a

mismatch between the criteria and the pool of candidates, since the large majority of beneficiaries of protection in Malta were single men, and not families.

Other participating States requested that the beneficiaries be refugees, therefore excluding the large majority of beneficiaries of protection in Malta, who are granted subsidiary protection. Other criteria difficult to meet were strict language preferences and/or strict faith/nationality/minority criteria.

At the opening conferences of EUREMA phases 1 and 2, UNHCR provided basic information about the caseload in Malta. UNHCR stated that in certain cases, discussions with relevant participating States led to some flexibility in the selection criteria.

6.3.2. Role of UNHCR and IOM in relocation activities

The role of UNHCR and IOM in the process, where applicable, was generally praised and considered as beneficial.

UNHCR's involvement in the EUREMA pilot projects has primarily been focused on the initial phase to identify potential beneficiaries. UNHCR led the pre-selection screening process, which included establishment of a database, initial pre-selection, counselling of potential candidates and submission of files for consideration of participating states.

IOM was responsible for organising selection missions, holding cultural orientation sessions, undertaking necessary medical examinations to ascertain readiness to travel, and arranging travel to relocating countries.

The vast majority of respondents considered that UNHCR and IOM remain important partners in the relocation process and their future involvement was recommended. Nevertheless, some participating States argued that UNHCR could have presented more detailed dossiers, whereas others stated that IOM could have provided more thorough and accurate information about relocating countries.

6.4. Information sharing

Information about possible relocation to participating States was provided to potential beneficiaries by UNHCR, IOM and the Maltese authorities. Information about participating countries was given during the pre-selection phase, by UNHCR, when counselling potential beneficiaries, and during the pre-departure phase by IOM, during the cultural orientation. Within the EUREMA pilot project, IOM disseminated country information provided by participating states to potential beneficiaries.

All candidates were approached individually on the basis of a database review. This was found to be quite effective. This approach was possible as UNHCR had given some emphasis to inform the refugee communities in Malta that the information they had provided in the general UNHCR registration exercise would be considered as an expression of interest in relocation.

Respondents stated that from the experience obtained during the EUREMA project, it must be ensured that the information provided is accurate and clear, in order for candidates to be well prepared for their new host country.

Updated and detailed information about the receiving countries was considered to be crucial to the process. In EUREMA II all the countries were requested to fill in a questionnaire from the very beginning in view of the information sessions with potential beneficiaries. Some Member States gave an information sheet about the beneficiaries' rights and duties, country profile, cultural information, basic information on living conditions, reception conditions, procedural aspects, legal protection status and integration opportunities.

Some participating states preferred to give information about the country during relocation interviews, in particular those countries that engaged in bilateral arrangements with Malta.

Cultural orientation sessions were also organised by IOM for countries participating in EUREMA. These sessions ensured that the selected beneficiaries are well prepared and informed before travelling, as this facilitates the transition from the sending and the receiving countries.

6.5. Choice of receiving country

In general, participating states mentioned that potential beneficiaries were attracted by:

- family links
- presence of communities of the same origin
- labour market
- favourable reception conditions
- general living conditions, social benefits/welfare guarantees
- language
- asylum status (refugee, subsidiary)
- family reunification prospects
- prospects for citizenship

Some candidates chose to not confirm or withdraw their candidacy, mainly for the following reasons:

- lack of a community of the same origin (hence a perceived lack of social safety net)
- perception that living conditions in the proposed relocating country are difficult and prospects for regular work limited
- poor social welfare systems (in some cases no guaranteed support after initial phase)
- less favourable integration prospects;
- language barriers,
- the perception that there are other options (US, onward movement in Europe, settlement in Malta)

Most candidates were approached about only one country, and they were given a choice whether or not to accept the offer of relocation.

In general, respondents asserted that relocation should always be a voluntary decision both on the side of the beneficiary and that of the receiving country. If the voluntary aspect is removed, integration difficulties might arise, which could lead to secondary movements or return to the country where protection was initially granted, in this case Malta.

6.6. Reception conditions

Participating countries granted different conditions in terms of reception upon arrival. In general, relocated beneficiaries received the same reception conditions as similar beneficiaries of international protection in that particular country.

It clearly emerged that there is a lack of harmonization as regards the status granted by the respective participating states. The relocation has been offered on different terms (e.g. resident status in Germany, refugee status in Romania). Some participating states asked beneficiaries to sign a reception and integration contract taking due regard of their legal rights and obligations.

Information about reception conditions was given to the selected candidates through cultural orientation sessions organised by IOM. This complemented the information provided during the pre-selection screening regarding living standards, reception arrangements, status and rights etc.

Some participating states argued that relocated beneficiaries had too high expectations of the living conditions in relocating countries. It was therefore deemed crucial that information provided portrays a realistic description of the country concerned so that expectations are not raised unnecessarily. Much emphasis has been given to this aspect by IOM during the cultural orientation sessions. However, the Maltese authorities have reported that six candidates⁶ found themselves in a frustrating situation during the initial period after relocation and returned to Malta.

In at least one case cultural mediators from the relocation states travelled to Malta to provide information to the selected candidates. This allowed for very effective communication and may be considered a best practice.

6.7. Integration

Participating states had varying degrees of measures in place to facilitate integration. In general, participating states claimed that beneficiaries were integrated under the same conditions as persons granted refugee status (making use of national/municipal integration programmes). Providing information on these measures was considered a key part of the counselling stage. There was a strong interest among candidates to know about the longer term support prospects, and not only the arrangements during the reception stage.

⁶ DE (1), FR (2), SI (1) and HU (2).

It was noted that beneficiaries who decided to be relocated generally expected higher standards of living and integration than in Malta.

Cited integration measures offered by participating States were the following:

- Initial accommodation in reception centres varying from 8 weeks to 6 months;
- Language classes, which in some states, was a requirement for citizenship application and employment;
- Integration courses;
- Schooling for children;
- Free access to health services;
- Social benefits and financial allowances before finding employment;
- Temporary residence permits;

In a number of participating States, social workers, local NGOs, private and church-based organisations were actively involved in the integration process.

6.8. Funding

The majority of States that participated in the EUREMA pilot project considered that the European Refugee Fund (ERF) financing was adequate. However, it was highlighted that the most costly element of the exercise was the integration aspect and some States had to amend the national budget to accommodate the costs.

Participating States claimed that the late approval of the EUREMA project (Phases 1 and 2) created various complications for smooth roll-out of the relocation process.

7 – KEY CHALLENGES AND PROPOSALS FOR IMPROVEMENTS

Participating States highlighted a number of challenges related to relocation activities and proposed a number of improvements in the following areas:

- **Funding and administrative requirements in the EUREMA pilot project**

The administrative requirements related to accessing EU funds in this area, as well as the delay for a call for proposals to be launched, and the length of time for the determination of eligibility and approval of the project proposal, may partly explain several Member States' preference to conduct bilateral exercises.

As at end April 2012, no EU funds had been forthcoming to cover expenses relating to the implementation of the extension of the EUREMA Pilot Project, despite the fact that the extension was agreed to in April 2011 and the Ministerial pledging conference was held in May 2011. During this period, the selection missions for the selection of beneficiaries of protection

to be relocated to DE, IE, NL and ES, have been carried out and 163 beneficiaries have actually been relocated to DE and IE, all of which would have been eligible for EU funding.

- **Legislative obstacles to relocation**

Some participating States' legislation clearly excludes the transfer of persons not recognised as Geneva Convention refugees, or the transfer of persons who have already been granted some form of protection. Since most of the beneficiaries of international protection in Malta enjoy subsidiary protection, accepting only the relocation of refugees severely restricted the possible candidates for relocation to that participating State.

Nevertheless, some participating States that originally had legislative problems were able to find solutions and still relocate from Malta.

- **Lack of migrants' knowledge of 'new' participating States**

Potential candidates were hesitant in confirming their interest in being relocated to 'new' participating States. Reasons cited included: lack of knowledge about the situation for beneficiaries of protection in these countries, awareness of the relatively small size of existing African communities, and doubts about whether relocating would imply the maintenance of their status quo rather than a significant improvement in their situation, in particular regarding family reunification prospects.

This was further exacerbated when persons relocated to other States, found out that, in their opinion, the information received during cultural orientation sessions was not complete or incorrect, thus undermining their trust in the process. Trust was considered essential for such a mechanism, since relocation is a voluntary process for the beneficiaries of international protection and therefore it requires their agreement to relocate to a particular participating State.

- **Gearing national administrative systems to the relocation of beneficiaries of international protection from Malta**

Administrative procedures for the transfer of protection have caused additional problems and delays. For instance, both FR and LU have noted that in spite of the fast-track procedures they envisaged it took some time before their authorities could accomplish all the administrative steps required for the beneficiaries to access their entitlements. Besides the difficulties this may create for the beneficiaries of international protection who are directly affected, it could also discourage other beneficiaries of international protection from relocating from Malta to another Member State.

- **More time for project implementation**

The process could be improved by having sufficient time to undertake repeated counselling for some candidates. Also the database could be improved through ensuring that sufficient resources are available to maintain updated information on all potential candidates. More time

could also have been allocated under the project to complete the pre-screening and selection process.

- **Lack of central coordinating entity**

Various players were involved in the different relocation activities, all of whom played specific roles. However, the coordination role seemed to have shifted at different stages of the process, in particular during bilateral relocation arrangements. A central coordination body could improve the implementation of relocation measures.

- **Selection criteria**

Further coordination and flexibility among all participating states as regards selection criteria and priorities regarding candidate profiles would have improved the process.

8 - Final remarks

Respondents expressed mixed views about the use of relocation for EU Member States which are faced with specific and disproportionate pressures on their asylum and reception systems, due in particular to their geographical or demographic situation.

While a number of participating States maintained that voluntary ad hoc relocation measures with Malta were a concrete tool for demonstrating intra-EU solidarity, and generally assessed them positively, other States feared that regular and protracted use of stand-alone relocation in situations of disproportionate pressure could act as a pull factor for irregular migration and thus exacerbating the pressure rather than reducing it.

Some respondents have expressed doubts as to whether such a solution – intra-EU relocation – could be transferable to other Member States. Moreover, concerns were expressed about the possible implication of relocation on the resettlement quotas in the EU. It was stressed that intra-EU relocation should not be confused with resettlement of refugees from third countries.

Harmonisation of the different aspects of intra-EU relocation among the different participating States, such as differences in the asylum procedures, entitlements and rights, and integration, was considered as crucial for ensuring that participating States receive beneficiaries. Furthermore, several States have mentioned that relocation implies complex financial, legal and political implications that deserve further study.

Besides the challenges and areas of improvement mentioned in section 7 above, prompt and flexible EU financing mechanisms were considered as a way to assist participating States in the actual relocation as well as the integration aspect. The latter must be adequate to ensure that such exercises are of benefit to all the parties involved. Malta suggested that EASO could be given the financial resources to execute such relocation exercise and to reimburse participating states directly and in a timely manner.

Some respondents argued that intra-EU relocation should be part of a range of intra-EU solidarity measures, including capacity building, other forms of practical cooperation and flexible financial support, with EASO playing a key role in line with its founding Regulation.

Finally, most respondents maintained that participation in relocation should remain voluntary, based on a political decision.
