

Tuesday 18 May 2010

## I

*(Resolutions, recommendations and opinions)*

## RESOLUTIONS

## EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

**The establishment of a joint EU resettlement programme**

P7\_TA(2010)0163

**European Parliament resolution of 18 May 2010 on the establishment of a joint EU resettlement programme (2009/2240(INI))**

(2011/C 161 E/01)

*The European Parliament,*

- having regard to Articles 78 and 80 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union,
- having regard to international and European human rights instruments, in particular to the United Nations Convention relating to the Status of Refugees, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms (ECHR), the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union (the Charter), and the rights and guarantees which they confer upon refugees and persons seeking international protection,
- having regard to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child and the primary concern of the Member States to protect the best interests of the child,
- having regard to the Commission Green Paper on the future Common European Asylum System (COM(2007)0301) of 6 June 2007,
- having regard to the Commission Policy Plan on Asylum: An integrated approach to protection across the EU (COM(2008)0360) of 17 June 2008,
- having regard to the Conclusions of the 2908th meeting of the Justice and Home Affairs Council on 28 November 2008 ((16325/1/08 REV 1 (Presse 344)) with special regard to the reception of Iraqi refugees,
- having regard to the Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament and the Council on the Establishment of a Joint EU Resettlement Programme (COM(2009)0447),
- having regard to the Proposal for a Decision of the European Parliament and of the Council amending Decision No 573/2007/EC establishing the European Refugee Fund for the period 2008 to 2013 (COM(2009)0456),
- having regard to its resolution of 25 November 2009 on the Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament and the Council – An area of freedom, security and justice serving the citizen – Stockholm programme <sup>(1)</sup>,

<sup>(1)</sup> Texts adopted, P7\_TA(2009)0090.

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- having regard to the comments of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) on the Commission Communication on the Establishment of a Joint EU Resettlement Programme and the Proposal for the amendment of Decision 573/2007/EC establishing the European Refugee Fund for the period 2008 to 2013,
  - having regard to its position of 7 May 2009 on the proposal for a regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council establishing the criteria and mechanisms for determining the Member State responsible for examining an application for international protection lodged in one of the Member States by a third-country national or a stateless person <sup>(1)</sup>,
  - having regard to Rule 48 of its Rules of Procedure,
  - having regard to the report of the Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs (A7-0131/2010),
- A. whereas a fair and realistic migration policy in the European Union, entailing the establishment of a Common European Asylum System (CEAS), must comprise an effective, sound and sustainable resettlement programme, providing a durable solution for refugees who cannot return to their country of origin and whose protection or livelihood cannot be assured in first countries of asylum,
- B. whereas resettlement serves not only a humanitarian purpose towards persons resettled, but also to relieve third countries of the burden associated with hosting large numbers of refugees and is a very useful instrument for apportioning responsibility,
- C. whereas currently only 10 Member States resettle refugees on a yearly basis, with little coordination among themselves on the resettlement priorities, causing a lack of strategic use of resettlement as an EU external policy instrument,
- D. whereas strategic use of the resettlement programme could have direct and indirect benefits not only for refugees being resettled but also for other refugees remaining in the first country of asylum, for the host country and for other countries and also with regard to all international arrangements for their protection,
- E. whereas the resettlement programme may help to make illegal immigration less attractive to refugees seeking to enter the European Union,
- F. whereas the need to show solidarity to third countries sheltering large numbers of refugees in need of international protection is a major factor and reflects the need to show solidarity within the EU also,
- G. whereas the EU share of the global resettlement of refugees remains quite modest; whereas this impacts negatively on the ambition of the EU to play a prominent role in global humanitarian affairs and in the international scene,
- H. whereas effective solidarity must be at the centre of common immigration and asylum policies among Member States, which should allow a fair share of responsibility for compliance with international obligations concerning the protection of refugees, as well as towards third countries which are heavily burdened with hosting large numbers of refugees,
- I. whereas in its 7 May 2009 Resolution, the European Parliament also called for mandatory solidarity in the resettlement of refugees within the EU in cases where, inter alia, the reception capacities of one Member State are insufficient, in order to facilitate the resettlement of beneficiaries of international protection in other Member States, providing that those concerned consent and that their fundamental rights are respected,

<sup>(1)</sup> OJ C 212 E, 5.8.2010, p. 348.

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- J. whereas cooperation with third countries which have already carried out several programmes of resettlement should be fostered, in order to benefit, through exchange of best practices, from their experience of reception and integration measures and the general quality of resettlement initiatives,
- K. whereas both local and international, governmental and nongovernmental organisations, especially the UNHCR, should be involved in all stages of the EU Resettlement Programme, contributing with their specific information, technical expertise, logistic forecasting and experience,
- L. whereas the European Resettlement Programme must not make the process of resettlement more complicated,
- M. whereas the European Asylum Support Office (EASO) is expected to become operational in 2010; whereas it will be able to offer support to the Member States in carrying out resettlement initiatives, while ensuring coordination of policies within the EU; whereas the European Asylum Support Office must actively participate in deliberations between the Member States, the Commission and the UNHCR,
- N. whereas attention should be drawn not only to the need to involve more Member States in resettling refugees but also to the quality, sustainability and effectiveness of the resettlement, focusing on integration measures,
- O. whereas refugees should be promptly granted access to language and cultural courses and, where necessary, to medical and psychological care,
- P. whereas access to job opportunities for adults and immediate integration of minors in schools constitute an essential step with a view to the success of an effective resettlement initiative and that they should for this reason have access to educational and professional guidance services,
- Q. whereas there are several entities, in public administration (such as municipalities) as well as in civil society, varying from NGOs to charities and from schools to social services, that have the experience and expertise necessary to carry out follow-up measures,
- R. whereas cooperation with the above-mentioned entities – especially the municipalities – has been of great value in the reception and integration of refugees in countries with a consolidated practice of resettlement,
- S. whereas the priority-setting should become as flexible as possible, without ever disregarding the effective priority which must be given to the categories of most vulnerable people as indicated by the UNHCR,
- T. whereas resettlement is to be implemented as a complement to and without disregard for the other durable solutions provided for people seeking international protection in the EU, and whereas the efforts in refugee resettlement should not lessen the endeavour to guarantee fair and effective access to asylum inside the EU,
- U. whereas internal relocation programmes also play an important role and should be supported in addition to the resettlement activities dealt with by this report,
- V. whereas in its 7 May 2009 Resolution, the European Parliament also called for a scheme to reallocate beneficiaries of international protection from Member States which are faced with specific and disproportionate pressures to others, in consultation with the office of the United High Commissioner for Refugees, while ensuring that the reallocation follows non-discretionary, transparent and unequivocal rules, which must also be implemented further Parliament's request,

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W. whereas without access to information, human resources, expert advice and permanent follow-up on the resettlement efforts, Member States which have never participated in resettlement programmes will face great difficulties in joining and it will be difficult to achieve the objective of involving more Member States,

***A real and effective EU Resettlement Programme***

1. Welcomes the initiative of the Commission to propose a change to the European Refugee Fund in order to incorporate the impact of the EU Resettlement Programme;

2. Appreciates the general objectives set out in the Communication on the EU Resettlement Programme as mentioned above and the growing attention devoted to resettlement in the overall EU asylum policy;

3. Calls for measures to inform the Member States and local authorities of the benefits accruing from the resettlement of refugees;

4. Recalls, however, that a budget line and financial support are not sufficient to establish a real EU-wide resettlement programme;

5. Urges the Member States to promote the creation of private funding mechanisms and more widespread public-private initiatives so as to underpin the European Resettlement Programme;

6. Calls for a more ambitious programme which ensures the quality and effectiveness of the resettlement, containing specific guidelines on a new model of priority-setting, incentives to attract more Member States to resettle refugees, consistency of resettlement with other EU asylum policies and standards of reception conditions and follow-up measures to be taken in each resettlement initiative;

7. Considers that under the new financial perspectives (2013–2017) a specific envelope for resettlement should be established. Such an envelope could take the form of a dedicated resettlement fund and should provide financial support for a more ambitious resettlement programme;

8. Welcomes the opening of the new Emergency Transit Centre (ETC) in Romania offering temporary accommodation for refugees in urgent need of resettlement and/or refugees unable to remain in their countries of first asylum; calls on the Commission to make use of this and also to promote resettlement through the Emergency Transit Centre;

9. Welcomes the ad hoc initiatives taken by a number of Member States in accommodating refugees in urgent need of resettlement while recognising the need for such initiatives to take a more structured form;

***Requirements for efficiency and responsiveness of resettlement measures***

10. Underlines that an effective EU Resettlement Programme should provide protection and durable solutions both for long-term, protracted refugee situations and for rapid and adequate responses in case of emergency or unforeseen urgency, and that the setting of annual priorities should be such as to enable a prompt reaction to sudden humanitarian crises which might occur throughout the year;

11. Insists on the importance of allowing the execution of fieldwork in order to prepare the resettlement of refugees, to evaluate their needs and to permit adequate planning of the future phases of resettlement, apart from the information that might be provided by the UNHCR and by NGOs and other organisations;

12. Encourages a private-public partnership with NGOs and further social partners such as religious and ethnical organisations to contribute to the implementation of the resettlement and the promotion of voluntary work in this field;

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13. Believes that municipalities already involved, or becoming involved, in resettlement should create partnerships and twinnings with other municipalities in their home country and in the EU Member States in order to exchange their experiences in this field and strengthen cooperation across the EU;

14. Stresses the need to establish a structured cooperation framework through measures to gather expertise and enable information collecting and sharing; stresses also that an effective EU Resettlement Programme must provide the Member States (those already participating in the programme and those that wish to participate) with access to human resources, expert advice and shared information that may be useful in any phase of the resettlement initiative; recognises that all those involved in resettlement, and especially resettled refugees, are a valuable source of information for the evaluation of resettlement initiatives;

15. Calls for the consideration and exchange of best practices which foster efficiency between Member States, which may include the promotion of joint programmes, peer evaluation, the setting-up of joint missions, the use of common infrastructures (such as transit centres) and organisation of missions to Member States to evaluate the ongoing resettlement;

16. Calls for the relevance of follow-up measures on the quality of reception and integration in the host Member States not to be disregarded; considers that the success of resettlement must be defined not only in terms of the physical displacement of refugees from a third country to a Member State but also in terms of the implementation of measures that allow the integration of refugees in the host country;

17. Calls for special attention to be given to the human resources involved in any present or future EU Resettlement Programme in order to ensure a procedure which allows good practices of adaptation and integration of refugees in the host society, as experience shows that resettlement efforts need to be conducted with monitoring by appropriate officers and experts;

#### ***A permanent Resettlement Unit, cornerstone of an effective EU Joint Resettlement Programme***

18. Acknowledges the lack of structured cooperation regarding resettlement activities within the EU, which require considerable logistical preparation, such as selection and orientation missions, medical and security screenings, arrangements for travel and visas and reception and integration programmes, as mentioned in Communication COM(2009)0447;

19. Confirms, moreover, the view that the absence of mechanisms of cooperation and coordination between Member States raises the costs of the operations related to resettlement, makes them less attractive and reduces their strategic impact;

20. Recommends, therefore, the creation of a specific unit with proper staff allocated to carry out the necessary coordination between all the ongoing resettlement activities in the Member States;

21. Believes that the most appropriate institutional framework for this Resettlement Unit would be within the EASO, where it could cooperate in the ambit of EU policies in the area of asylum and migration;

22. Considers that this unit could establish close contact with the UNHCR and local NGOs, in order to obtain important information to forward to the Member States and EU institutions regarding, for instance, urgent priorities, integration techniques, etc.;

23. Insists also that the Resettlement Unit could play an important role in the monitoring and evaluation of the effectiveness and quality of the Resettlement Programme at EU level by issuing annual reports on all the activities, based on information gathered by the institutions/authorities involved in the resettlement initiatives in the Member States;

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24. Wishes to emphasise that the Resettlement Unit should keep track of the NGOs, charities and other entities which are able to cooperate with public authorities in the process of resettlement of refugees; notes, moreover, that the above-mentioned Unit should regularly issue documents indicating the standards and criteria that these entities must comply with in order to be eligible to participate in EU resettlement schemes;

25. Stresses that the EASO can make a very useful contribution to ensuring consistency and complementarity between the EU Resettlement Programme and other EU asylum policies;

#### ***Flexible priority-setting***

26. Recognises that an adequate resettlement programme requires a regular update of the nationalities and categories of refugees that should be prioritised in the resettlement process, with special regard to geographical emergencies and particularly vulnerable persons who are most in need of protection;

27. Believes that the EU annual priorities should be established by the Commission, as proposed, with strong and effective involvement of the UNHCR and the European Parliament at all stages of the identification and assessment of candidates for resettlement;

28. Suggests that a delegation of Members from its Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs (LIBE), Foreign Affairs (AFET) and Development (DEVE) committees participate in the yearly meeting of the resettlement expert group;

29. Considers that an EU Resettlement Programme should include specific procedures to involve the European Parliament in the elaboration of the EU annual priorities;

30. Encourages the EASO to assume an important role in the definition of the resettlement agenda within the EU;

31. Defends the principle that, in line with the need for adaptability in the EU annual priorities, there should be categories which remain stable every year, so that Member States can resettle particularly vulnerable persons at any time of the year;

32. Suggests that individual Member States may be enabled to prepare for emergency procedures in cases of unforeseen humanitarian circumstances – for instance, when refugees are under armed attack or when natural accidents or catastrophes seriously affect refugee camps; considers that these procedures would allow resettlement to take place in a short period of time, with the administrative steps being carried out either with a compressed timetable or, in certain cases, after the displacement of the refugees; recommends that this effort should be considered among the aims of the EU Resettlement Programme;

#### ***Ensuring that more Member States participate in resettlement***

33. Regrets that only 10 Member States currently have resettlement programmes, established without coordination among themselves;

34. Recognises that the participation of Member States remains voluntary, given the divergences in reception conditions, collaborating partners and legal criteria that are used to decide who to resettle;

35. Recognises that certain Member States, particularly in southern Europe, face special challenges because of their location at the external border of the Union;

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36. Calls, nevertheless, for greater incentives to encourage more Member States to participate in the EU Resettlement Programme; acknowledges that, while greater financial assistance is important, one should not undermine the contribution that the EASO can provide with regard to this aspect by helping to equalise the situation through raising the quality of services offered to refugees in Member States and offering assistance with the most efficient practices for hosting and integration;

37. Suggests more substantial financial assistance to Member States wishing to start participating in the EU Resettlement Programme, in order to help them create a sustainable resettlement programme and to alleviate the initial burden of setting up such an initiative; suggests that, in order to avoid an excessive impact on the European Refugee Fund, the value of the financial assistance should be equalised to the other Member States after the first years of participation to the programme;

38. Believes that it will not be possible to increase the number of refugees resettled in the EU without an administrative and expert framework to underpin the programme and the creation of permanent structures to prepare for resettlement and follow-up on the integration process;

#### ***Follow-up measures***

39. Considers that an effective EU Resettlement Programme must include provisions on follow-up measures, insisting on the quality of the resettlement in each Member State, good standards at every stage from recognition to reception and integration of the refugees;

40. Calls on the Member States involved in the resettlement programme to evaluate their measures taken in the resettlement procedure so as to secure and improve the refugees' integration. Member States should also follow up regularly on the refugees' integration;

41. Is of the opinion that governmental authorities should foster maximum cooperation with non-governmental entities (international and local NGOs, for instance) and benefit from the expertise and proximity of the latter in providing the best and most efficient initiatives for resettlement of refugees; participation by civil society in the European Resettlement Programme will underpin support and reception initiatives by the Member States and local authorities;

42. Advocates intensive efforts on the part of all the entities involved to grant the refugees, especially the most vulnerable, access to adequate housing, health care, education, language courses and psychological assistance, as well as access to the labour market, so as to ensure successful integration;

43. Calls on the EASO, in particular through its proposed resettlement Unit, to establish clear criteria for quality resettlement in close cooperation with the UNHCR, NGOs and local authorities and follow the resettlement of the refugees, in order to contribute to the evaluation and further improvement of the resettlement activities in the Member States;

44. Underlines once again the role of the EASO as an entity which could raise awareness of certain shortcomings in the resettlement initiatives, assisting the Member States in finding specific solutions, and encourage better practices if provided with a permanent Resettlement Unit;

45. Calls for the organisation of a joint annual debate of its Committees on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs and on Foreign Affairs in order to contribute to the development of the programme;

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46. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council and the Commission.

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