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# 10 000 REFUGEES FROM IRAQ

## A Report on Joint Resettlement in the European Union



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With a worldwide membership and staff working with migrants and refugees in more than 40 countries around the world, the **International Catholic Migration Commission (ICMC)** serves and protects uprooted people: refugees, internally displaced persons and migrants regardless of faith, race, ethnicity or nationality. Since 1951, ICMC has identified and accompanied over one million refugees for resettlement. In Turkey, the ICMC Overseas Processing Entity (OPE) identifies and processes refugees for resettlement to the United States, providing assistance with security clearances, cultural orientation, medical examinations and follow-up.

In the twelve months through September 2009, ICMC's OPE assisted some 7 000 refugees to resettle in the U.S., 5 730 of them Iraqis. Additionally, ICMC provides expert resettlement personnel through the ICMC-UNHCR Resettlement Deployment Scheme to support UNHCR resettlement activities in field offices. These expert deployees submitted more than 34 000 individual cases for resettlement in 2008 alone. The ICMC Brussels office has been active in promoting European resettlement through advocacy, capacity building and training and has published "Welcome to Europe: A comparative guide to resettlement in Europe". ICMC Europe is currently implementing an ERF funded resettlement practical cooperation project led by IOM and in partnership with UNHCR.

Founded in 1933 at the request of Albert Einstein, the **International Rescue Committee (IRC)** is a global humanitarian organisation present in 42 countries worldwide, providing emergency relief and post-conflict development, helping refugees and people uprooted by conflict and disaster to rebuild their lives. Since its inception, IRC has been involved in virtually every major refugee crisis and resettlement initiative around the globe. Through 22 offices in cities across the United States, IRC helps refugees resettle and become self-sufficient in their adopted country. In the last 10 years, IRC has provided resettlement support to over 77 000 refugees and asylees in the U.S., including 11 500 in 2009 alone. IRC assists refugees as they integrate in their new communities, focusing on housing, job placement, and employment skills and facilitating access to healthcare, education, English-language classes, and community orientation. In addition, the IRC resettlement network provides comprehensive immigration services to assist refugees and asylees on their path to becoming permanent residents and U.S. citizens. Since 2005, IRC has also managed the Overseas Processing Entity (OPE) in Thailand that has processed over 50 000 refugees from Asia for resettlement in the United States. Additionally, IRC has formed a Commission on Iraqi Refugees that has published three reports on the plight of the millions of Iraqi civilians uprooted by ongoing strife and persecution. The latest report, entitled "A Tough Road Home: Uprooted Iraqis in Jordan, Syria and Iraq," was released in February 2010. It calls for increased and improved assistance for Iraqis who are refugees or internally displaced.

# 10 000 REFUGEES FROM IRAQ

A Report on Joint Resettlement  
in the European Union

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# 10 000 REFUGEES FROM IRAQ

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Violence has forced millions of Iraqi children, women and men to flee their homes and seek refuge both inside and beyond their country's borders. In light of the challenges preventing refugees from returning to Iraq and of the obstacles to local integration in host countries like Jordan and Syria, for many of the most vulnerable refugees, resettlement in a new country is the only durable solution.

With this report, the International Catholic Migration Commission (ICMC) and the International Rescue Committee (IRC) want to find out how far EU Member States have come to meet the pledge of resettling up to **10 000 refugees from Iraq**, as expressed in the joint EU call of November 2008, and to document what can be considered as a first experience of joint resettlement in the European Union.

After the Iraqi refugee crisis erupted in 2006, a coordinated EU response was slow to build up and initially relied on the generosity of eight countries with established resettlement programmes. These countries offered some 3 300 places for Iraqi refugees between 2007 and 2008. Under the leadership of Member States like France, Germany, the Netherlands and Sweden, and with the support of the European Commission, the EU response was energised by the November 2008 Council Conclusions and by the decision of a number of countries to establish ad hoc resettlement quotas.

As a result, in 2009 alone, twelve EU countries were able to offer over 5 100 resettlement places, thereby bringing the number of resettled refugees from Iraq since 2007 to just over 8 400, and showing that EU countries are able to make a difference by acting together. At the same time, although the joint effort for Iraqi refugees clearly contributed to an increase in resettlement places available for refugees in the EU, with the global increase in resettlement between 2007 and 2009, the relative contribution of the EU has remained unchanged.

The report also describes how resettlement of Iraqis has been carried out in each of the countries involved and makes recommendations to guide further steps by both the EU, as it develops its first Joint EU Resettlement Programme, and the Member States.

The November 2008 pledge to resettle up to 10 000 refugees from Iraq has not yet been met and it is not clear how and when this will happen. The question is how much more are the EU and its Member States prepared to do to address the continuing needs of Iraqi and other refugees in need of durable solutions.

## Recommendations

1. Fewer than half of the 27 EU Member States have participated in the joint effort to resettle refugees from Iraq. More countries should consider resettling refugees to increase the overall EU contribution to specific refugee crises as well as to global resettlement efforts.
2. The Joint EU Resettlement Programme will be an opportunity to define common EU priorities. A significant number of resettlement places should be made available in the EU for refugees from Iraq who should become part of the common EU priorities. The use of multi-year quotas should be expanded, to allow appropriate planning by receiving countries and all the actors involved.
3. Resettlement, humanitarian aid and other relevant EU policies and funding instruments should be better coordinated to make strategic use of resettlement and increase the protection of refugees.
4. EU attention should continue to focus on the humanitarian situation inside Iraq and in the region to ensure that the needs of vulnerable uprooted people, including refugees, are properly addressed. Appropriate funding should be provided to UNHCR and NGOs to protect and assist Iraqis and support the Iraq Humanitarian Action Plan (IHAP).
5. Member States should not deport Iraqis and other failed asylum seekers as long as security conditions are not conducive to return in their country of origin.

**Resettlement is an opportunity for European people and their governments to make a lasting difference in the lives of thousands of vulnerable children, women and men who will never be able to go home. Europe can offer them protection and a better future.**

# INTRODUCTION

## About the report

The 2003 invasion of Iraq was initially expected by the international humanitarian community to trigger a large exodus. Massive population displacement only occurred after the February 2006 bombing of the Shia mosque in Samarra sparked off sectarian violence. As a result, in the following months and years, millions of people fled their homes to safer locations inside Iraq as well as outside of the country.

Despite the very different views and levels of engagement of European countries in the Iraq war, the European Union was able to respond to the ensuing crisis, through its external action, by providing humanitarian assistance and supporting reconstruction efforts.

In November 2008, through Conclusions of the Justice and Home Affairs (JHA) Council, the EU committed to resettle up to 10 000 Iraqi refugees. The level of commitment was unprecedented and represented the first significant joint effort of the EU Member States to offer international protection to a specific refugee population through resettlement.

In this report, ICMC and IRC seek to acknowledge this EU commitment and document this joint effort toward the Iraqi refugee crisis to find out how far has the EU come to resettling “10 000 refugees from Iraq”?

The report also intends to draw the attention of European Member States and of the European institutions to the still dire situation of vulnerable Iraqi refugees in countries of asylum and their continued need for assistance, including resettlement.

As the EU is designing its first ever joint resettlement programme, it is our hope that this report will prompt other government and institutional actors to build on the lessons learned from the resettlement of Iraqi refugees for future joint resettlement efforts and that resettlement will become an integral part of EU joint strategies for countries and regions affected by conflict and displacement.

## Method and material

Our research was guided by two overriding questions:

1. *How many refugees from Iraq have been resettled in the EU?*
2. *How has resettlement of refugees from Iraq been carried out in Member States?*

To answer the first question, background statistical research was conducted. Researchers consulted with Ministries responsible for the oversight of resettlement programmes in Member States and with Permanent Representations in Brussels. Where appropriate, data was cross-checked and/or supplemented by data from the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). The base of statistics used was provided by sources listed in References. For the second question, background research was conducted on the Member States’ decision to accept refugees from Iraq and on reception and integration practices. Interviews and consultations took place with government and voluntary sector resettlement actors working at the service provision level. They responded to questions about procedures and experiences with the Iraqi and ex-Iraq Palestinian populations.

### **Clarifications and limitations**

Figures, dates and descriptions are essential for measuring the impact of initiatives such as those outlined in the November 2008 Council Conclusions. Statistics used in this report were difficult to obtain for two reasons:

- First, there is neither regular and uniform data collection nor a database in place to track EU resettlement activities. Moreover, there was no follow-up planned for the Conclusions at the time of their release.
- Second, resettlement is a process that involves several actors from selection to arrival, each with a different system of record-keeping. The organisation of data collection is notably different between Member States rendering the creation of a comparison table a lengthy and complicated process.

Despite these limitations, our preference was to use figures provided by government ministries responsible for resettlement in each country. References are provided for data from other sources. Considering that a timetable was not established as part of the Conclusions, figures used in this report correspond to resettlement activities in 2007, 2008 and 2009. This period begins with the start of UNHCR Iraqi resettlement operations in 2007 and ends on 31 December 2009, approximately one year after the release of the November 2008 Conclusions.

Finally, it will be noted that where this report refers to 'refugees from Iraq' or 'Iraqi refugees', this includes Palestinians who were living in Iraq and fled as of 2003 (also further referred to as 'ex-Iraq Palestinians' or 'Palestinians'). This group was specifically mentioned in the November 2008 Council Conclusions and therefore falls within the scope of our research.

### **Report outline**

Section II provides a background on the circumstances that incited the Iraqi refugee crisis. This section includes an update on the situation and an overview of the various steps taken to address the protection needs of refugees, in particular, UNHCR resettlement operations.

Section III discusses resettlement in the EU in greater detail: Part A goes back to the origins and significance of the November 2008 Council Conclusions. Part B of this section provides a summary of the statistics on the number of Iraqis and Palestinians selected for resettlement by EU Member States, followed by a brief examination of EU contributions to resettlement efforts and prospects for 2010. Parts C and D give more detailed descriptions of how resettlement of Iraqis has been carried out in each EU country featured in this report, in countries that have established annual resettlement quotas and in countries that implemented special ad hoc resettlement programmes. A brief description of related initiatives developed to support resettlement practices is laid out in Part E.

Finally, section IV concludes with lessons learned from resettlement experiences and recommendations for a continued and comprehensive EU response to global refugee crises.

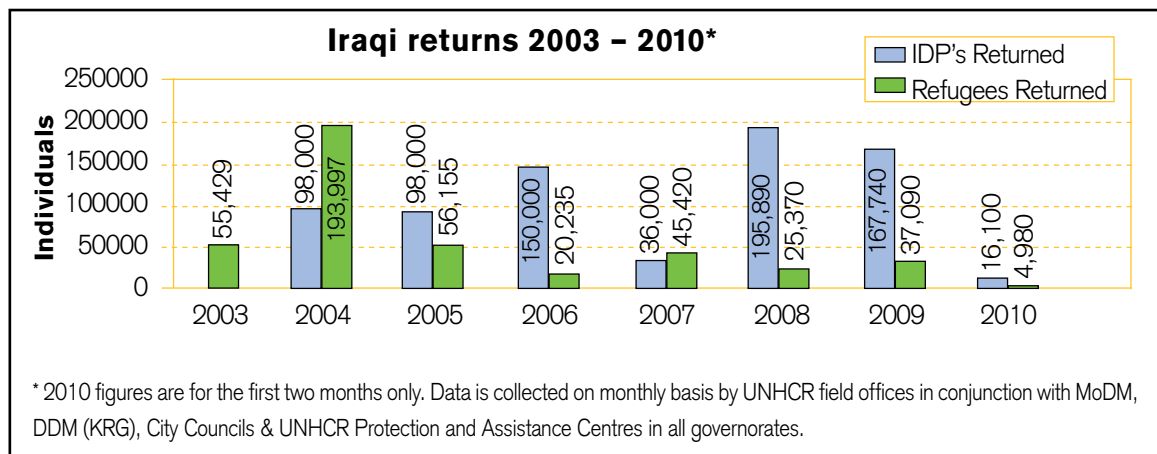
# REFUGEES FROM IRAQ - SITUATION AND PROSPECTS

The war in Iraq has uprooted millions of children, women and men. It is estimated that 4.7 million<sup>1</sup> have fled their homes to safer locations inside and beyond Iraq's borders. Most refugees from Iraq have sought refuge in urban centres of Syria (around 1.2 million) and Jordan (around 450 000); approximately 350 000 fled to other Middle Eastern countries – mainly Lebanon, Turkey, Egypt and Iran, and some have made their way with their own means and methods to Europe and to industrialised countries elsewhere. Between January 2007 and June 2009, over 38 000 Iraqi citizens accounted for 17% of all asylum applications in the European Union, thereby representing the single largest group of applicants.<sup>2</sup>

## Return and repatriation

When large numbers of Iraqis started fleeing the country in the first months of 2006, the humanitarian community initially expected that the situation in Iraq would stabilise and that refugees and the internally displaced would eventually be able to return home. However, since then, violence in Iraq has remained visible on many levels. Sectarian violence, targeted and indiscriminate attacks on civilians, suicide bombs and extra judicial killings still continue. Though the level of sectarian violence has declined in Baghdad and the north of Iraq, civilian casualties as a result of violence remain unacceptably high. Today, refugees and internally displaced persons are still afraid to return home due to insecurity, ongoing criminality and persecution compounded by the lack of access to housing and services, scarce economic opportunities and mistrust of local government.

Large-scale return has not taken place, but some refugees have undertaken the journey home. According to the UNHCR, nearly 80 000 refugees are reported to have returned to Iraq in 2008 and 2009. The majority have returned to Baghdad and Diyala province.<sup>3</sup>



Source: UNHCR Donor Update: Iraq Situational Response, 22 April 2010.

- 1 According to governments in the region, there are an estimated 2 million Iraqi refugees, the majority living in Syria and Jordan. The authorities in Baghdad estimate an additional 2.7 million Iraqis are internally displaced. UNHCR, Iraqi Resettlement Update, October 2009.
- 2 UNHCR Asylum Levels and Trends in Industrialized Countries First Half 2009: Statistical overview of asylum applications lodged in Europe and selected non-European countries, 21 October 2009.
- 3 UNHCR, Facilitating the Transition from Asylum to Return and Reintegration in Iraq 2009 – 2010.

Returnees face many problems and there are occasional reports of new displacements. Because of these conditions, UNHCR does not promote return to Iraq and is providing return assistance on a case-by-case basis.

In view of the tenuous security situation in Iraq, religious, social and other minorities, like the Palestinians, who fled sectarian violence, may never go home. Targeted violence against them is continuing and the Iraqi government has so far been unable to provide adequate protection.

*For many refugees, return is not a realistic option in the near future or in the long run. They fear continuing violence but also know that their identity, vulnerability or personal situation exposes them to serious risks, including persecution, inside Iraq.*

### **Conditions in Jordan and Syria**

Since 2003, close to 400 000 refugees from Iraq have registered with the UNHCR in the region. Around 230 000 refugees are currently registered, of which 170 000 are located in Syria and 34 000 in Jordan; with another 26 000 in Lebanon, Turkey, Egypt and Iran. In Syria, more than 40% of the registered refugees have specific needs and belong to a vulnerable category, including 20 000 survivors of torture. In Jordan, 30% of refugees have been registered for more than five years, a further indication of the protracted nature of the crisis. Overall some 2 500 Iraqi refugees continue to register each month with an increasing proportion of them belonging to minorities<sup>4</sup>.

Refugees from Iraq largely belong to the middle class, have benefited from higher education and used to have stable employment in Iraq. Mostly originating from urban areas, many Iraqi refugees have taken up residence in cities like Amman (Jordan) and Damascus (Syria) where they live among host country populations.<sup>5</sup> While urban contexts generally offer 'urban refugees' certain advantages and even opportunities that are not available in camps or rural settings, they also pose a number of difficulties in the identification of needs and provision of assistance linked to their dispersal among the host population, and create a specific set of protection challenges<sup>6</sup>.

As the UNHCR Director for the Middle East, Radhouane Nouicer, makes clear:

*'The difficulties of dealing with huge populations of urban refugees are immense... You can't pay all their rents, you can't feed everybody, you can't even keep track of how many people there are. But you can help around the edges – provide safety nets for the most vulnerable, help the governments out with infrastructure and personnel, try to get other countries to share the responsibilities and the costs....'*<sup>7</sup>

4 UNHCR, Donor Update, Iraq Situational Response, 22 April 2010 and UNHCR, Displacement and Return in Iraq, April 2010.

5 UNHCR Policy Development and Evaluation Service (PDES), Surviving in the city, A review of UNHCR's operation for Iraqi refugees in urban areas of Jordan, Lebanon and Syria, July 2009.

6 Protection, mobility and livelihood challenges of displaced Iraqis in urban settings in Jordan. ICMC, 2009.

7 Iraq Bleeds: Millions displaced by conflict, persecution and violence, UNHCR Refugees Magazine, Issue 146, April 2007.

In Jordan and Syria, Iraqi refugees are considered as “guests” and have no recognized legal status. In both countries, they are unable to work in the official labour market since there is no possibility for them to receive the proper documentation to do so. They have access to schools and hospitals but many lack money to pay for medical costs. Most refugees are living in rented accommodation, often paying inflated rates, and take up jobs in the informal sector to survive. Increasing numbers of refugees are starting to fall short of funds after living off their savings for several years and, sometimes after having had to sell their property and belongings. Under these circumstances, women and girls are exposed to prostitution as a way of survival. Moreover, the lack of perspectives for the future deepens the psychological trauma that so many refugees have already experienced.

*In light of the challenges and obstacles preventing both safe return and local integration in the host countries, resettlement is the only option for the most vulnerable among refugees from Iraq, especially those facing persecution.*

### **UNHCR and Resettlement**

UNHCR has the leading role in providing assistance and protection to refugees from Iraq and, where possible, presenting three durable solutions: voluntary repatriation (return to Iraq), local integration (in the country of first asylum) or resettlement (to a third country). Given the limitations of the first two durable solutions, in 2007 UNHCR started the Iraqi resettlement process and encouraged countries to resettle refugees fleeing Iraq.

**When the first two durable solutions of local integration and return are unviable, a third durable solution remains:**

#### **RESETTLEMENT**

“The selection and transfer of refugees from a State in which they have sought protection to a third State which has agreed to admit them - as refugees - with permanent residence status. The status provided should ensure protection against refoulement and provide a resettled refugee and his/her family or dependants with access to civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights similar to those enjoyed by nationals. It should also carry with it the opportunity to eventually become a naturalized citizen of the resettlement country.”

*(UNHCR Resettlement Handbook, 2006)*

## II - REFUGEES FROM IRAQ - SITUATION AND PROSPECTS UNHCR AND RESETTLEMENT

In March 2007, UNHCR declared that Iraqis fleeing their country from five central governorates are entitled to prima facie<sup>8</sup> refugee status. In addition, it established 11 priority resettlement profiles to help assess their vulnerability. Refugees belonging to one of these 11 categories are prioritised for resettlement, in line with the 8 globally defined resettlement criteria, as shown in the following table.

Iraqi Refugees: priority profiles vs. UNHCR resettlement criteria<sup>9</sup>

Priority Profiles	UNHCR Resettlement Handbook – Applicable Resettlement Criteria
1. Persons who have been the victims of severe trauma (including SGBV), detention, abduction or torture by State or non-State entities in COO	Survivors of violence and torture
2. Members of minority groups and/or individuals which are/ have been targeted in COO owing to their religious/ethnic background	Legal and physical protection needs / Women-At-Risk
3. Women-At-Risk in COA	Women-At-Risk (This includes women at risk of “honor killing”)
4. Unaccompanied or separated children & children as principal applicants	Children and adolescent
5. Dependants of refugees living in resettlement countries	Family reunification [The concept of dependency is outlined and defined in the Resettlement Handbook (chapter 4)]
6. Older Persons-At-Risk	Older refugees
7. Medical cases and refugees with disabilities with no effective treatment available in COA	Medical needs
8. High profile cases and/or their family members	Legal and physical protection needs
9. Iraqis who fled as a result of their association in COO with the MNF, CPA, UN, foreign countries, international and foreign institutions or companies and members of the press	Legal and physical protection needs
10. Stateless persons from Iraq	Legal and physical protection needs / WAR/ SVT / medical needs / CHL
11. Iraqis at immediate risk of refoulement	Legal and physical protection needs (This may include refugees in detention, but not necessarily all of them)

SGBV = sexual and gender-based violence; COO = country of origin; COA = country of asylum; MNF = Multi National Force; CPA = Coalition Provisional Authority; WAR = Women-At-Risk ; SVT = Survivors of Violence and Torture; CHL= Children and Adolescents.

<sup>8</sup> Refugee status is determined on an individual basis except where large groups of people are displaced under circumstances indicating that most members of the group could be considered individually as refugees. In such situations, the need to provide protection and assistance is often extremely urgent and it may not be possible, for purely practical reasons, to determine refugee status individually. In this case, group determination of refugee status is practised, whereby each member of the population in question is regarded prima facie as a refugee (in the absence of evidence to the contrary). The presumption is that individual members of the population concerned would be considered as refugees in need of protection. UNHCR, Resettlement Handbook, Chapter 3

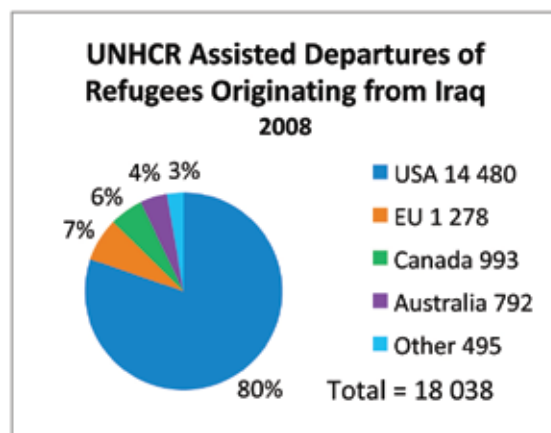
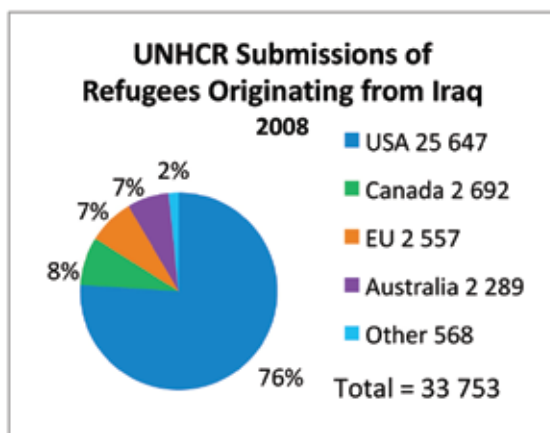
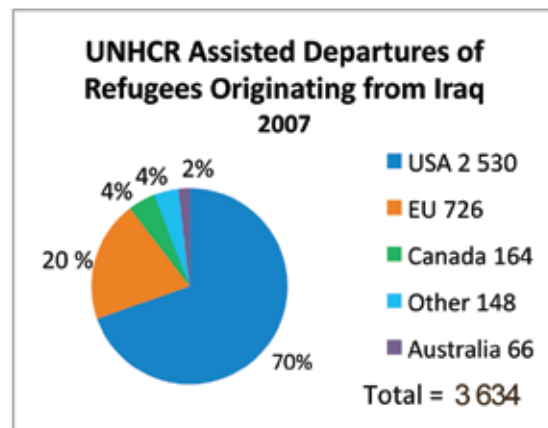
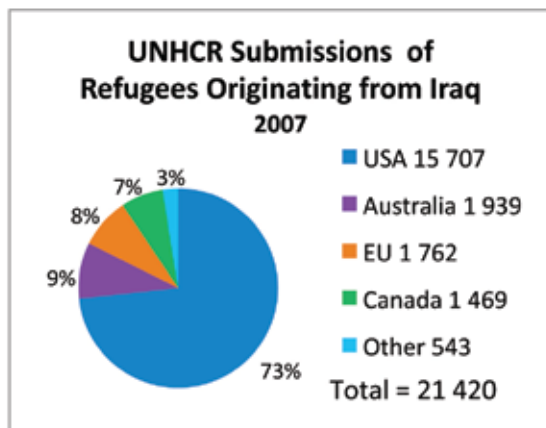
<sup>9</sup> UNHCR, Resettlement of Iraqi Refugees, p.4-5, 12 March 2007.

II - REFUGEES FROM IRAQ - SITUATION AND PROSPECTS  
UNHCR AND RESETTLEMENT

From early 2007 to April 2010, the UNHCR has referred some 99 000 Iraqis in need of resettlement – of which close to 40 000 in 2009 alone - with a total of 48 000 departures.<sup>10</sup> This is the largest caseload the UNHCR is dealing with when compared with other groups, followed by refugees from Myanmar and Bhutan.<sup>11</sup>

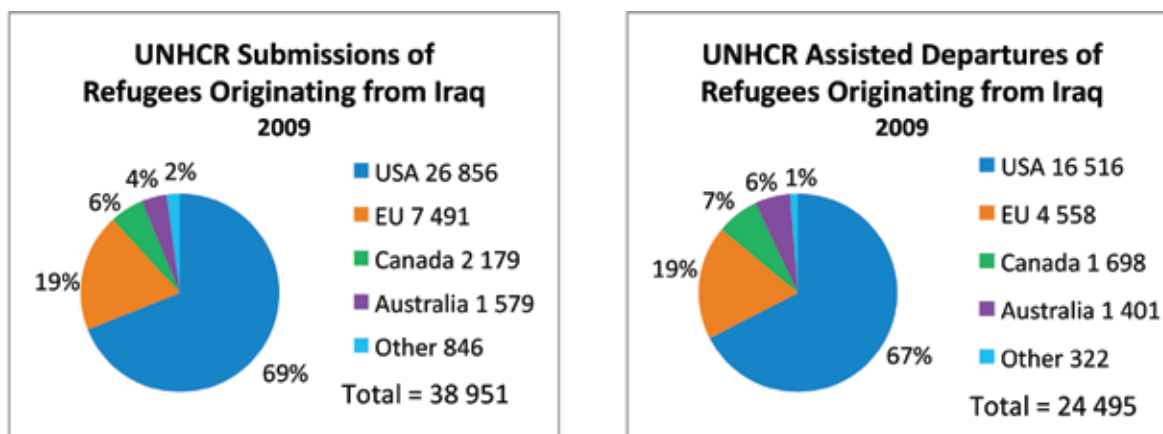
The tables below illustrate the proportions of UNHCR submissions and assisted departures of Iraqis and Palestinians (ex-Iraq) to different countries: USA, Canada, Australia, EU Member States and ‘Other’ countries, representing Brazil, Chile, Iceland, Liechtenstein, New Zealand, Norway and Switzerland. Submissions were made from UNHCR field offices in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) and Turkey. Graphs below compare the numbers of refugees each year that were referred for resettlement (submissions) to those accepted and able to travel to the resettlement country (departures).

Analysis of EU resettlement activities over three years reveals a significant increase in submissions to EU Member States. There is a corresponding increase in departures - from 7% in 2008 to 19% in 2009.



10 UNHCR Donor Update, Iraq Situational Response, 22 April 2010.

11 UNHCR, Global Statistical Report 2009.



Tables compiled by ICMC and IRC and based on resettlement activity data from the UNHCR Beirut Regional Hub.<sup>12</sup>

## Palestinians from Iraq

Palestinians who fled to Iraq in the past were given asylum by the Saddam Hussein regime. Before 2003, there were an estimated 34 000 Palestinians living in Iraq who enjoyed a relatively high level of protection. After the fall of Saddam Hussein, however, this group was targeted by a variety of armed groups who threatened, abducted, detained, maimed, killed, and tortured many of them. It is estimated that 21 000 have left the country.

In 2008, more than 3 000 Palestinians from Iraq (837 families, with around 1 347 children under 18 years of age) were living in three makeshift camps<sup>13</sup>: Al-Waleed camp just inside Iraq along the border with Syria; Al-Hol refugee camp, in a desert region of Syria and Al-Tanf, in the no-man's land between Iraq and Syria.

UNHCR has made efforts to improve the refugees' living conditions but the difficulty of accessing the camps and their entirely unsuitable location meant that they were not a viable place to live for any length of time. UNHCR actively sought resettlement places to other countries. The first to offer a safe haven to these refugees in 2007 were Brazil, Chile, Canada, Iceland and Sweden. Denmark, the Netherlands and Norway took urgent medical cases, as part of their resettlement medical programmes.

Al-Tanf camp was officially closed at the end of January 2010 after more than 1 000 refugees were resettled to countries in Europe and South America. The UNHCR intends to close the two remaining border camps - Al-Waleed and Al-Hol, where approximately 2 000 Palestinians ex-Iraq are still in need of a durable solution - by 2011.<sup>14</sup>

<sup>12</sup> UNHCR Beirut Regional Hub, 'Iraqi Refugees Resettlement Activities 2007-2010' and 'Palestinian ex-Iraq Refugees: Resettlement Activities, 2007-2010'.

<sup>13</sup> Urgent Need for Resettlement of Stranded Palestinian Refugees from Iraq, in Letter of 14 NGOs to the French Minister of Immigration, Integration, National Identity and Co-Development, EU Presidency, 28 July 2008.

<sup>14</sup> UNHCR, 'End of Long Ordeal for Palestinian Refugees as Desert Camp Closes', News Stories, 1 February 2010, <http://www.unhcr.org/4b67064c6.html>.

### **Resettlement Procedures: A Snapshot (may vary according to country)**

- 1. Identification and Selection** is based on profiles of refugees compiled by the UNHCR and on criteria for selection. UNHCR uses the Refugee Registration Form (RRF) to recommend refugees for resettlement. Countries then select refugees based on the dossiers they receive from the UNHCR and/or by arranging their own selection missions to refugee sites to conduct personal interviews.
- 2. (Pre) Departure** arrangements are normally handled by the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and/or by NGOs and include medical exams and issuing documentation to permit travel and entry in the receiving country. A pre-departure cultural orientation course to prepare refugees for their new life in the resettlement country and to manage their expectations may be provided.
- 3. Reception and Integration:** Refugees are received by responsible institutions or organisations and are accompanied to temporary or permanent housing. Refugees will be given appropriate residency status (see UNHCR Resettlement Handbook). They will access main stream or targeted integration programmes, including welfare assistance, education, health and employment services, in addition to courses on the culture and language of the resettlement country. Programmes vary in formality, structure and length and amount of financial resources provided. Additional support systems and extended case management is offered for those resettled refugees with particular vulnerabilities.

*Based on ICMC, 'Welcome to Europe: A Guide to Resettlement', Part III, 2007 & 2009, [www.icmc.net/publications-and-research](http://www.icmc.net/publications-and-research)*

# III EU MEMBER STATES AND THE 10 000 REFUGEES FROM IRAQ

Resettlement is not new to Europe. In the past, European countries have promptly and generously responded to refugee crises and helped the boat people from Vietnam or refugees from the Balkans. In contrast, a coordinated EU resettlement response to the Iraqi refugee crisis was slow to take off and moderate in ambition. The response initially relied on the willingness of the Member States that had established resettlement programmes. These have a combined overall annual quota of around 5 000 places for resettled refugees. All this changed in November 2008, when the EU response was energised by unprecedented Council Conclusions encouraging member states to voluntarily respond to the refugee crisis in Jordan and Syria through resettlement.

## A. The November 2008 Justice and Home Affairs Council Conclusions

### Background

The Council Conclusions<sup>15</sup> came about under the French presidency of the European Union and under the leadership of some Member States that had already been involved in the resettlement of Iraqi refugees since 2007. The Netherlands and Sweden in particular urged other Member States to respond to the Iraqi refugee crisis. “Sweden has done very much the job and less has been done by others”, stated Swedish Prime Minister Frederik Reinfeldt, in May 2008<sup>16</sup>.

The adoption of the Council Conclusions as such was primarily promoted by Germany early in 2008. At the time, Germany was considering helping Iraqi refugees suffering religious persecution and sought specific measures to help Christian Iraqis. Then, in June 2008, France signed an ad hoc agreement with UNHCR (the ‘IRAK 500’ programme) embarking on a two-year programme for the resettlement of vulnerable Iraqi refugees belonging to minority groups.

After much internal and external debate and negotiation, involving UNHCR and the EU, Germany agreed to admit not only refugees from persecuted minorities but also vulnerable refugees with specific medical needs and female headed-households. On 20-21st November 2008, in anticipation of the EU Justice and Home Affairs Council meeting, Germany adopted a key decision to accept 2 500 Iraqi refugees from Jordan and Syria<sup>17</sup> as part of Europe’s response to the refugee crisis<sup>18</sup>. The fact that Germany decided to make a significant contribution and accept a large number of Iraqi refugees greatly influenced the adoption of the Council Conclusions.

15 Prior to the November 2008 Conclusions, the crisis in Iraq and the related asylum and refugee protection issues that EU Member States were dealing with, had been on the agenda of the Council of the European Union since April 2007 and had led to several discussions and conclusions. For example, see footnote 20

16 Spiegel Online, 28 May 2008, quoting AP article.

17 See section of this report on Germany, describing the specific admission conditions of resettled refugees in the country.

18 “The situation of the people who fled Iraq in Jordan and Syria has deteriorated recently, and demands a joint action of all powers on the international, European and national levels. Taking action in this field belongs to the particular German interests. (...) The regional Ministers of Interior and Senators of the Lands decided with the Federal Minister of Interior during the Ministry of Interior Conference on November, 20 – 21 2008 in anticipation of Council of the European Union meeting on 27.11.2008, that Germany will participate in an European admission action and admit a total of 2500 refugees in a particular need of protection from the above mentioned group.” See ‘Anordnung des Bundesministeriums des Innern gemäß § 23 Absatz 2 Aufenthaltsgesetz zur Aufnahme bestimmter Flüchtlinge aus dem Irak’, [http://www.migrationsrecht.net/doc\\_details/520-bmi-aufnahmevereinbarung-fuer-irakischer-fluechtlinge.html](http://www.migrationsrecht.net/doc_details/520-bmi-aufnahmevereinbarung-fuer-irakischer-fluechtlinge.html).

The European Commission also significantly contributed to an awareness and understanding of the situation of Iraqi refugees in Syria and Jordan. Ahead of the Council Conclusions, it conducted a fact finding mission with the UNHCR and with ten Member States, in early November 2008<sup>19</sup>. The mission met with a large number of stakeholders, including Jordanian and Syrian authorities, the International Organization for Migration (IOM), international and local NGOs and also visited Al-Tanf camp.

### **JHA Council Conclusions, 27-28 November 2008**

The Council notes in particular (...) the fact that a greater effort towards resettlement in the countries of the European Union would send a positive signal of solidarity to all Iraqis and of cooperation with Syria and Jordan for the maintenance of their area of protection. (...)

(...), as a signal of solidarity, the Council invites Member States to take in Iraqi refugees in a particularly vulnerable situation such as those with particular medical needs, trauma or torture victims, members of religious minorities or women on their own with family responsibilities.

This has to be done on a voluntary basis and in the light of the reception capacities of Member States and the overall effort they have already made as regards reception of refugees.

In the light of the resettlement objective established by UNHCR and taking into account the number of persons already taken in or planned to be taken in by Member States, in particular under their national resettlement programmes, the objective could be to receive up to approximately 10 000 refugees, on a voluntary basis."

"(...) The Council also notes the particular situation of the Palestinians who have left Iraq for Syria, for whom no solution other than resettlement appears to be feasible."

"The Council also reaffirms its conclusions of 23 April 2007\* on Iraq, which called for a comprehensive approach on Iraq."

\* *General Affairs and External Relations Council (GAERC) Conclusions, 23 April 2007*<sup>20</sup>

19 EU Fact Finding Mission to Jordan and Syria on Resettlement of Refugees from Iraq, Brussels, 17 November 2008, JLS/B2/AM/gl D(2008)18542. The ten participating Member States were: Cyprus, Finland, France, Germany, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Poland, Sweden and the United Kingdom.

20 "The Council acknowledges the need to address the humanitarian needs of internally displaced people in Iraq and refugees in the region. (...) The Council recognises the solidarity shown by Iraq's neighbouring countries, in particular Jordan and Syria, towards the plight of Iraqi refugees and stresses the importance of furthering the dialogue with countries in the region to create conditions for an appropriate assistance strategy.

The Council calls for a comprehensive approach towards the dire situation of refugees in Iraq and in the neighbouring countries. The Council also underlines the importance of ensuring that those seeking safety do not fall into the hands of traffickers and smugglers.", *General Affairs and External Relations Council (GAERC) Conclusions, 23 April 2007.*

### Importance of the Council Conclusions

With these conclusions, for the first time, the 27 Member States jointly called for an EU response to a refugee crisis, jointly expressed commitment to engage in resettlement and defined a significant joint quota of up to 10 000 refugees.

Although resettlement would be voluntary for each Member State, the Conclusions aimed at involving as many EU countries as possible, including countries that would engage for the first time. Moreover, underlining the importance of dialogue with the countries hosting refugees and the need for an appropriate overall assistance strategy, the conclusions called for a comprehensive approach toward the situation of refugees.

Notwithstanding the positive aspects and momentum built by the Conclusions, it is worth noting the lack of a start date, of an established or indicative timeline, the lack of reporting mechanisms, the optional character of the pledge and the indicative nature of the quota.

### B. At a Glance: Refugees from Iraq Resettled in the EU 2007-2009<sup>21</sup>

The table below reflects the efforts made on behalf of Member States to select Iraqi and Palestinian refugees for resettlement between 2007 and 2009.

Refugees from Iraq Selected for Resettlement by EU Member States 2007-2009																
Member States	Member States with established resettlement programmes									Member States with ad hoc quota for Iraqi refugees					Sub-total	TOTAL EU
	DK	FI	FR**	IE	NL	PT	SE	UK	Sub-total	BE	FR**	DE	IT	LU		
Quota*	500	750	100	200	500	30	1900	750	4730	50	1200	2500	180	30	3960	/
2007	23	164	0	5	148	0	735	69	1144	0	0	0	0	0	0	1144
2008	72	294	58	14	137	5	635	355	1570	0	608	0	0	0	608	2178
2009	31	380	84	1	149	4	681	432	1762	47	609	2500	176	28	3360	5122
TOTAL MS	126	838	142	20	434	9	2051	856	4476	47	1217	2500	176	28	3968	8444

Compiled by ICMC and IRC, April 2010. Sources: see References, p. 42.

DK=Denmark, FI=Finland, FR=France, IE=Ireland, NL=the Netherlands, PT=Portugal, SE=Sweden, UK=United Kingdom; BE=Belgium, DE=Germany, IT=Italy, LU=Luxembourg.

\* For countries with established resettlement programmes, the number indicates the annual quota for all refugees; for the other countries, it refers to the ad hoc quota established for refugees from Iraq.

\*\* France selected Iraqi refugees under two separate programmes: under their annual quota as well as under the two-year 'Iraq 500' ad hoc programme. For the latter, only the combined 2008 and 2009 figures (1 217) for selection were available, which were split over the two years.

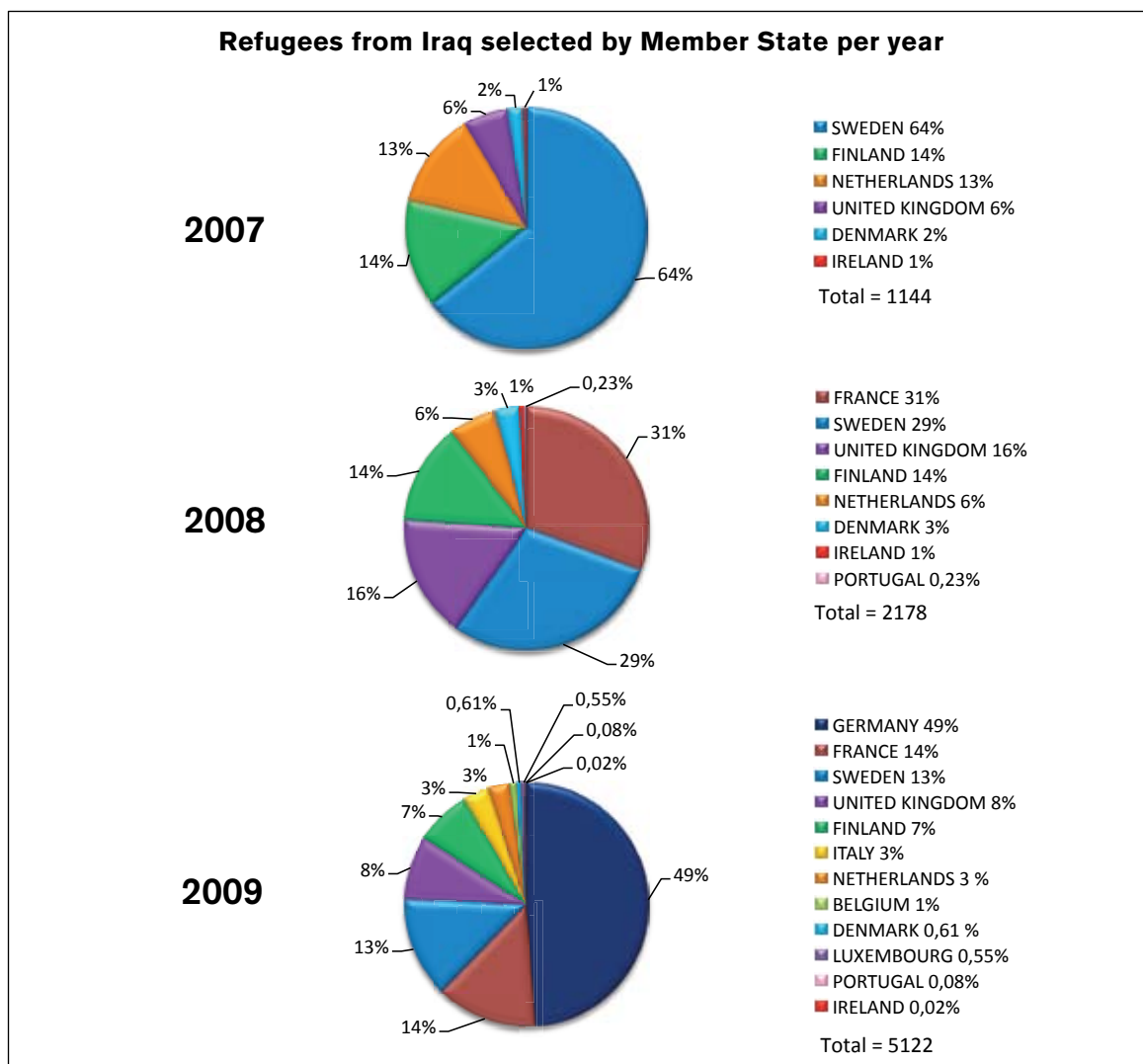
<sup>21</sup> Unless otherwise indicated, data presented in this sub-section was obtained from all sources indicated in References, p. 42.

**Refugee selection and Member State commitments**

Between 2007 and 2009, more than 8 400 refugees from Iraq were selected for resettlement in twelve EU Member States. Of these, 3 300 were selected by eight EU countries in 2007 and 2008, prior to the Council Conclusions. Following the Conclusions, five countries contributed with ad hoc quotas, allowing the selection of more than 5 100 Iraqi refugees for resettlement in the EU in 2009.

Of the nine EU countries with an established resettlement programme, most already included Iraqi refugees in their annual quota in 2007 <sup>22</sup>. These increased their contribution by 50% from about 1 100 in 2007 to almost 1 800 places in 2009. Countries that established an ad hoc quota contributed another 4 000 places, including Germany, which took 2 500 in 2009.

The commitments to resettle and the respective contributions of the EU Member States are further illustrated in the following charts:



22 The Czech Republic is conducting a pilot programme and so far has not taken any refugees from Iraq.

The number of countries involved and the size of resettlement commitments doubled from six countries in 2007 - with some 700 places as the largest contribution - to twelve countries in 2009, with 2 500 places as the highest single contribution.

In **2007** only six of the 27 Member States selected Iraqi refugees. Sweden took the largest caseload representing 64% of the EU commitments. French and Portuguese contributions in **2008** brought the number of Member States involved to eight, with Sweden and France representing 60% (around 30% each) of the overall EU contribution. In **2009**, the number of countries rose to twelve including new countries like Belgium, Germany, Italy and Luxembourg: Germany took the largest caseload with close to 50% of all Iraqi refugees selected in 2009.

### Selection method 2009

#### Selection method: Missions vs. Dossiers

Each resettlement country decides upon submissions on the basis of its own regulations and procedures. Resettlement countries consider cases submitted by UNHCR on a dossier basis and/or on the basis of in-country selection missions, usually carried out by officials from the ministry for the interior. Each case includes information about a household, which may be an individual or an entire family. Some countries prefer to select all cases during missions, some countries only review cases based on materials in the dossier. Most countries use a combination of both. Dossier submissions are files transmitted by UNHCR outlining the refugee claim and the reasons resettlement is proposed for that particular case. This procedure is often used for urgent or emergency cases, including medical cases; it is more cost efficient and allows UNHCR to submit cases when or where access for selection missions is difficult or even dangerous. It has been observed, however, that the refusal rate for dossier cases is normally higher than for cases examined during selection missions. Many countries prefer to select during missions, so that they can have an eyewitness understanding the refugees' protection claim and of the way the case matches the aims of their national legislation. Some countries like Denmark use selection missions to assess integration potential, and the selected refugees are required to sign an Integration Declaration as a condition for resettlement.

*Based on ICMC, 'Welcome to Europe: A Guide to Resettlement', Part III, 2007 & 2009, [www.icmc.net/publications-and-research](http://www.icmc.net/publications-and-research)*

Around 80% of all refugees from Iraq selected were accepted through selection missions, and 20% were selected based on dossiers provided by the UNHCR<sup>23</sup>. Only one country, the UK, used the Emergency Transit Centre (ETC) in Romania to select 81 Palestinians from Iraq.

<sup>23</sup> These calculations exclude Denmark where the information was not available at the time of writing.

### Iraqi Refugee Arrivals 2007-2009

Out of the 8 444 refugees selected for resettlement between 2007 and 2009, 7 237 (86%) arrived during the same period: 907 (80%) in 2007, 1 890 (87%) in 2008 and 4 440 (87%) in 2009. In 2009, arrivals were over two times higher than in 2008 and almost five times higher than in 2007.

A comparison of selection and arrival numbers shows that Belgium, Luxembourg, Portugal and Sweden received 100% of refugees selected in the same period. Italy also had a high percentage of arrivals, reaching 100% in mid-January 2010. In Germany, of the 2 500 refugees selected in 2009, 2 069 had arrived by December 2009.

### Selection and arrivals of Palestinians from Iraq

Refugees from Iraq Selected for Resettlement by EU Member States 2007-2009																
Member States	Member States with established resettlement programmes									Member States with ad hoc quota for Iraqi refugees					Sub-total	TOTAL EU
	DK	FI	FR**	IE	NL	PT	SE	UK	Sub-total	BE	FR**	DE	IT	LU		
Quota*	500	750	100	200	500	30	1900	750	4730	50	1200	2500	180	30	3960	/
2007	0	0	0	0	29	0	4	0	33	0	0	0	0	0	0	33
2008	38	3	40	7	1	0	426	81	515	0	0	0	0	0	0	515
2009	8	35	76	0	13	0	337	81	550	11	0	0	176	0	187	737
TOTAL MS	46	38	116	7	43	0	767	81	98	11	0	0	176	0	187	1285

Compiled by ICMC and IRC, April 2010. Sources: see References, p. 42.

DK=Denmark, FI=Finland, FR=France, IE=Ireland, NL=the Netherlands, PT=Portugal, SE=Sweden, UK=United Kingdom; BE=Belgium, DE=Germany, IT=Italy, LU=Luxembourg. \* For countries with established resettlement programmes, the number indicates the annual quota for all refugees; for the other countries, it refers to the ad hoc quota established for refugees from Iraq. \*\* France selected Iraqi refugees under two separate programmes: under their annual quota as well as under the two-year 'Irak 500' ad hoc programme. For the latter, only the combined 2008 and 2009 figures (1 217) for selection were available, which were split over the two years.

The number of Palestinians selected for resettlement increased significantly between 2007 (33 selected persons) and 2009 (737 selected persons), with a total of 1 285 over the three years. These refugees represent about 15% of the Iraqi caseload selected by European Member States. Countries with annual quotas contributed to 85% of the Palestinians selected in three years and 75% of the ones selected in 2009.

Because of the difficult conditions for conducting interviews, including restricted access due to remoteness of the sites and security constraints, close to 40% of all Palestinians were selected through dossier referral in 2009, compared to 20% of all refugees from Iraq selected in the same year.

Of those selected in 2009, around 90% had arrived by end of December 2009. Similarly, for the period 2007-2009, 91% of the selected Palestinian refugees arrived in the resettlement country, demonstrating a higher rate of arrival than the overall Iraqi caseloads. This is explained by the urgent need to remove the refugees from harsh living conditions. Their clear need for immediate protection led to the speedy processing of cases. Use of the Emergency Transit Centre in Romania also helped expedite their processing.

The number of countries involved was multiplied by four, from two in 2007 to eight in 2009, with 2 500 places as the highest single contribution. Sweden has accepted the highest number of Palestinian refugees from Iraq with 767 between 2007 and 2009 - of which 337 in 2009, which represents 60% of all Palestinians from Iraq selected by the EU over the three years. The UK and Italy made Palestinians a resettlement priority in 2009, with 81 and 176 persons selected, respectively. Germany, Luxembourg and Portugal have not integrated Palestinians into their ad hoc or quota resettlement programmes for Iraqi refugees.

### Use of funds from the European Refugee Fund (ERF), 2007-2009

Help to vulnerable refugees was specifically mentioned in the November 2008 Conclusions. Under the ERF Art. 13, Member States can apply for funding to help implement resettlement programs, and can seek 4 000 Euro per resettled person provided the refugee belongs to one of the four vulnerable categories eligible<sup>24</sup>.

Only three Member States were able to report in detail the use of ERF funding: Finland (124 cases for 2008 and 2009), France (33 cases for the same years) and Belgium (47 cases in 2009). For most countries the information was not available. Some may have applied for ERF funding but were not able to provide accurate information.

### EU contribution to global resettlement

The table below shows that the resettlement departures to the EU increased by 60% between 2007 and 2009. This increase is on par with a 60% increase in global resettlement over the same period. Thus, the joint effort of EU countries following the Council Conclusions has contributed to a laudable increase in the absolute number of resettlement places available between 2007 and 2009. The relative EU contribution to global resettlement, however, stayed roughly the same (from 7,9% of global totals to 8,2%).

UNHCR Resettlement Departures 2007 - 2009 <sup>25</sup>							
	EU Member States	% of global	United States	% of global	Others	% of global	Global
2007	3 934	7,9	32 007	64,2	13 927	27,9	49 868
2008	4 375	6,7	48 828	74,1	12 656	19,2	65 859
2009	6 896	8,2	61 825	73,5	15 343	18,3	84 064

24 (a) Persons from a country or region designated for the implementation of a Regional Protection Programme; (b) Unaccompanied minors; (c) Children and women-at-risk, particularly from psychological, physical or sexual violence or exploitation; (d) Persons with serious medical needs that can only be addressed through resettlement.

25 UNHCR, Global Resettlement Statistical Report 2009, Resettlement Service Division of International Protection, Provisional version.

### **2010 EU prospectives for refugees from Iraq**

Four Member States involved in the resettlement of refugees from Iraq indicated their intention to resettle an estimated 775 refugees from this group in 2010: Finland (200), the Netherlands (150), Sweden (225, including 100 Palestinians) and the UK (200). At the time of writing, Denmark and Portugal had not defined the make-up of their annual quota. Countries that implemented ad hoc programmes did not have plans for renewing efforts to select and resettle Iraqi refugees.

## **C. Resettlement of Iraqis to Countries with (Multi-) Annual Quotas**

Resettlement procedures (selection, reception and integration) in Member States with (multi-)annual quotas are briefly described below. Most of these countries treat refugees coming from Iraq the same as other resettled refugee populations, but some differences were found and are noted below. This sub-section emphasizes the challenges faced and strategies for improving resettlement procedures for Iraqi refugees.

**Denmark** is considered a traditional resettlement country with a quota of 500 resettled refugees per year since 1983. For the past several years, a flexible quota has been managed where 1 500 refugees are resettled over three years, allowing more time to utilise funding and fill quotas. Refugees are accepted on selection missions and on a dossier basis for emergency, urgent and medical cases, through the special programme for medical cases 'Thirty Or More' (TOM), a sub-quota for thirty cases.

Denmark agreed in 2007 to resettle Iraqis from the current conflict, following the initiative of Danish soldiers in Iraq. Like the UK, Denmark decided to resettle Iraqis who formerly worked for the Danish Coalition forces in response to reports that the safety of a number of employees and their families was threatened because of their association with the troops. The decision to resettle preceded the withdrawal of Danish troops by approximately one month. International media sources report that two hundred Iraqi aides and translators were secretly airlifted out of the southern region of Basra in July 2007<sup>26</sup>.

In addition to the resettlement of former employees of the Danish Coalition Forces in 2007, Denmark has resettled 126 Iraqis (including 46 Palestinians) between 2007 and 2009 through its annual quota programme, according to UNHCR statistics. There are no expectations that Denmark will resettle refugees from Iraq in 2010.

Denmark is not eligible for ERF funds for its resettlement programme, due to its opt-out of the ERF<sup>27</sup>.

<sup>26</sup> BBC, 'Danish Army Evacuates 200 Iraqis', <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/europe/6907754.stm>, 20 July 2007. Due to the fact that refugees were transferred directly from Iraq, and not from a country of asylum, there is some question about whether this operation should be defined as resettlement. Nevertheless, it was referred to as such in the media as well as by Danish authorities. Hence the operation is mentioned here.

<sup>27</sup> After the 'no' vote on the Maatsrict Treaty referendum, Denmark was granted four opt-outs from European co-operation: defense policy, justice and home affairs, the euro and union citizenship, to pave the way for the Danish yes-vote in 1993.

**Finland**, in the vein of other Nordic countries, has been practicing resettlement for many years. Managing an annual programme since 1979, Finland's yearly quota of 750 persons has remained stable since 2001. Selection of refugees has focused on the most vulnerable, especially persons with medical needs, survivors and victims of torture, women-at-risk and the elderly. In order to support the resettlement of these particularly vulnerable groups, Finland draws on the European Refugee Fund (ERF) Art. 13.

Once refugees arrive in Finland, they are welcomed at the airport and accompanied directly to the receiving municipality that has accepted their resettlement case and provided appropriate housing possibilities. The integration programme lasts for three years and follows an individual integration plan. All resettled refugees in Finland follow the same course for reception and integration though considerations vary depending on individual profiles. Finland has resettled Iraqi refugees from Jordan, Saudi Arabia, Syria and Turkey, yearly since the late 1980s. Consequently, resettled Iraqis have played an important role in developing the Finnish reception system. Between 2007 and 2009, Finland carried out missions to Syria each year to select Iraqi and ex-Iraq Palestinian refugees for resettlement, in addition to one mission to Jordan in 2009. Finland accepts around 100 emergency cases a year on a dossier basis; between 2007 and 2009, 36 Palestinian and Iraqi refugees were accepted on a dossier basis.

Information gathered for this report showed that in Finland in 2007, the number of accepted refugees was far greater than the number of arrivals; the difference was less significant in 2008 and 2009. In some cases, the gap between acceptance and arrival can be up to six months or more. Part of the time-lapse is logical as Finland's selection missions take place at the end of each year making it foreseeable that refugees would arrive the following year. Another reason for delay is that accepting refugees is voluntary for municipalities in Finland and securing a place for resettled refugees in municipalities can be difficult. Funding provided by the ERF Art. 13 can help municipalities prepare to receive vulnerable cases, making the financial burden lighter. For 2010, Finland has decided to allocate 200 places for Iraqi refugees in Syria and possibly including a number of Palestinian refugees from Iraq.

## **RECEPTION AND INTEGRATION OF VULNERABLE REFUGEES IN FINLAND**

Making use of the ERF Article 13:

2008: 49 women-at-risk and medical cases from Iraq

2009: 75 women-at-risk and medical cases from Iraq

### **February 2010: Finland launched a new ERF project, HAAPA, (Supporting the Resettlement of Vulnerable Refugees in Municipalities)**

The project is designed to support the reception of vulnerable groups in municipalities by modelling reception activities, sharing best practices and offering financial support and know-how. HAAPA will work to develop and improve social services including: general and mental healthcare, rehabilitation programmes for trauma and torture victims and services for handicapped persons.

**Ireland** became involved in the UNHCR Resettlement Quota Programme in 1998. Initially, the Irish government agreed to accept an annual quota of 10 cases plus immediate family members. An average of 37 refugees per year was admitted under the programme between 1999 and 2004. In 2005, the annual quota was increased to resettle 200 persons per year. During the same year, responsibility for maintaining the register of programme refugees was transferred from the Minister of Foreign Affairs to the Office of the Minister for Integration. The Refugee Act 1996 (as amended) provides that a person admitted as a programme refugee has in general the same rights and entitlements as a person granted refugee status.

Overall, Ireland reserves 20% of the quota for dossier-based referrals that can include medical cases or women and children-at-risk; the remaining 80% is fulfilled during selection missions. Individual dossiers, generally submitted by the UNHCR, are examined in the Office of the Minister for Integration by the resettlement team. Medical or special needs cases are referred to the relevant Government Departments (Ministries) or to a service provider such as the Health Service Executive to ensure that the needs of the applicant are met. All final decisions are made by the Ministry usually within two months of receiving the dossier. In 2007 and 2008, Ireland selected 19 Iraqi refugees for resettlement; and only one in 2009, when a temporary hold was put on resettlement selection activities as the Irish resettlement quota programme underwent a general review.

**The Netherlands** was one of the first countries to operate a resettlement programme, starting officially in 1977. Ten years later, the annual quota was raised from 250 to 500 persons. Most recently, the Dutch government decided to adjust the quota period, so that 2 000 refugees are resettled in the span of four years.

Not unlike other countries featured in this sub-section, the Netherlands has resettled Iraqis for many years with an overall total of 2 683 (early 1990s -2009). A sub-quota (currently 35 persons) is established each year for medical cases considered for resettlement during selection missions and through dossier submissions. Vulnerable cases such as women-at-risk and survivors of torture are given special consideration for resettlement. Twenty-nine Palestinians from Iraq were accepted for resettlement from Syria in 2007; however in the two years that followed, numbers decreased. In 2010, the Netherlands' quota foresees to allocate 150 places for Iraqi refugees.

All refugees receive the same integration support and participate in a 3-month integration programme, facilitated by the Central Agency for the Reception of Asylum Seekers (COA – Centraal Orgaan opvang asielzoekers), an institution overseen by the Ministry of Justice. The COA participates in the selection missions and conducts a pre-departure cultural orientation programme for all refugees. For Iraqi refugees, the programme was adapted to better respond to their higher level of education and better manage their expectations. In delivering adequate services and preparing the introduction programme for groups, the COA is aided by the social files which are compiled through interviews with refugees during selection missions to Jordan and Syria. Refugees will stay in a centralised reception centre – exclusively for resettled refugees - for 3 to 6 months; subsequently they will be accompanied to a municipality where independent housing is provided. The Dutch Refugee Council usually offers continued integration support and volunteer services.

Like Sweden, the Netherlands has been very active in engaging other EU Member States in resettlement. As will be discussed in sub-section D. below, Belgium and Luxembourg's 2009 pilot resettlement schemes responded to the November 2008 Conclusions, with their engagement preceded by guidance from the Dutch. At the end of 2007, delegations from Belgium and the Czech Republic observed the Dutch resettlement process in Thailand under a twinning project entitled 'Durable solutions in practice'. Under the same project a Romanian delegation took part in a selection mission to Jordan in February 2008. The Dutch State Secretary invited her colleagues from Belgium and Luxemburg to a selection mission in Thailand in 2008 to promote resettlement. As part of the Temporary Desk for Iraq (TDI)<sup>28</sup> project, Belgium and the Netherlands went on a joint mission to Syria in May 2009. Furthermore, Bulgaria and Slovakia participated as observers in the Dutch mission to Syria in October/November 2009.

**Portugal** is a recent country of resettlement. The Portuguese government officially established an annual quota of approximately 30 persons in 2007 following an ad hoc resettlement scheme the previous year. In 2009, Portugal filled its quota for the first time. As for other countries in the beginning stages of managing a resettlement programme, coordination between actors has been a challenge. One factor may be that refugees are accepted only on a dossier basis, therefore the programme relies exclusively on the files transferred by the UNHCR. Though Portugal never formally responded to the November 2008 Conclusions, it accepted an urgent case of one Iraqi family of five who arrived in September 2008 and another Iraqi family was resettled from Syria in 2009. In comparison to the other countries featured in this sub-section, Portugal's response appears to be nominal. Still, the initiative to implement an annual quota is encouraging and can set an example for other Mediterranean countries like Spain and Italy.

**Sweden** has the largest resettlement quota of 1 900 refugees per year and has been the leading country of resettlement and asylum for Iraqis in the EU since the early 1990s. In 2009 over one third of the annual quota was allotted to Iraqi refugees. Between 2007-2009, 2 051 refugees from Iraq were resettled among many other nationalities resettled each year. Emergency and urgent cases (up to 350 each year) are usually accepted on a dossier basis and quickly processed, offering immediate protection to those most in need. The remaining quota is accepted through selection missions. Refugees selected for resettlement are given permanent residence status prior to their departure for Sweden. Integration programmes are delivered by municipalities, with occasional services provided by NGOs.

Sweden has been the most active EU member state promoting resettlement both within the EU and globally. In 2009, the Swedish EU Presidency promoted an increase in places and in 2010, Sweden is chairing the Annual Tripartite Consultations on Resettlement. While there was a sharp decline in acceptance of asylum seekers from Iraq in 2009, Sweden has continued to be exceptionally responsive to offering asylum to the resettlement of Iraqi refugees within its large resettlement programme.

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<sup>28</sup> For more on the TDI, see sub-section E. of this report.

One of the major challenges of the programme has been the lack of sufficient housing in the biggest cities (Stockholm, Goteborg and Malmö) where most refugees prefer to live and where 75% of the Iraqi population lives. A lot of effort has been made to better assist and treat refugees experiencing post traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) or other illnesses common among refugees. Due to illness, many miss out on introduction programmes, especially important for Iraqi and Palestinian women who are generally more isolated than men and may have fewer opportunities to be introduced to the society, language and culture. Managing expectations of the Iraqis about their future life and the Swedish system is a third challenge. Non-discriminatory and consistent services, in addition to information campaigns have proved to be good approaches to managing expectations (see box with the Ljusdal information pamphlet).

**The United Kingdom** officially began its resettlement programme, the Gateway Protection Programme (GPP), in 2003. The annual quota was increased coinciding with the November 2008 Conclusions in 2008/2009 which brought the annual total from 500 to 750 refugees. In most cases, refugees are selected for GPP resettlement during selection missions.<sup>29</sup>

In 2007, the government began to resettle Iraqis that were formally locally employed (LE) with the British Armed Forces or civilian missions, 69 in total. In 2008, the UK pledged that two-thirds of the 750 annual places would be reserved for Iraqis; in the same year 307 Iraqis arrived. In 2009, 81 Palestinians (ex-Iraq) coming from Syrian/Iraqi border camps were selected from the Emergency Transit Centre (ETC) in Romania.

It is important to note that there were two separate LE groups selected and resettled: Iraqis who were employed before August 2007 who received specialist support through the GPP and Iraqis employed after August 2007. The latter group was not resettled under the GPP and it is unclear how many Iraqis have arrived from this group.

### **Managing Expectations in Sweden, Informing Refugees**

1. Swedish tax-payers provide for resettlement funding in Sweden, not the UNHCR.
2. Learning Swedish is the KEY to integration
3. Learn your obligations and rights. Your contributions help preserve Swedish democracy and society.
4. Laws and benefits are the same for everyone in Sweden and you will get what you are entitled to; there is no need to negotiate for favours or special treatment.
5. Be patient, don't try to rush things, we will handle them in proper order, an order that allows us to function efficiently for everyone.
6. Refugees who arrived before you do not necessarily know everything about Sweden and sometimes, their information is incorrect. If you have a question, the best thing to do is to ask the municipal refugee office.

*Based on information pamphlet provided to Iraqi refugees resettled to the Municipality of Ljusdal, 'General Advice for you who have been resettled in Ljusdal'.*

<sup>29</sup> The "Mandate" programme is a separate resettlement programme for refugees who have close family ties in the UK. A condition of the programme is that families in the UK must be willing and prepared to accommodate and support the new refugees. The mandate programme does not set an annual quota.

The UK government selected LE and UNHCR referred Iraqis from Jordan, in addition to a few dossier cases from Syria. Most refugees arriving in the UK through the GPP were families, in addition to some cases of women-at-risk. There were some differences in the GPP programme applied to Iraqi refugees, mainly a cultural orientation programme shortened from three days to one, no cash payments on arrival for LE refugees and no funds for NGOs to purchase necessities, like warm clothes.

These differences may have been due to the fact that former LEs were receiving a salary prior to their arrival in the UK. Another reason may be their backgrounds, which differ from the majority of refugee groups resettled to the UK. Most former Iraqi LE staff members already speak English and possess a high level of formal education; several have previously studied in the UK. Conversely, their dependent family members may not have the same level of education or experience, making them more vulnerable to isolation in the UK.

All refugees coming to the UK through the GPP are housed directly by municipalities and receive social and administrative support from various NGOs for up to 12 months after arriving.

Managing expectations among the former Iraqi LE staff group has proved to be a challenge, as some felt that their service to the UK should entitle them to citizenship not refugee status (the latter can have negative connotations for Iraqis). Disappointment regarding the prospects for work in the UK is common because this group held relatively high status positions in Iraq. The size and quality of available housing has been another issue of complaint, in addition to the way the national health system functions. However, it is important to note that this does not represent the whole group.

A growing number of Iraqis are beginning to integrate into the labour market, education system and local community. Though accessing higher education can be a lengthy and costly process, a few have already managed to enrol in university. Several Iraqis have been employed as British Refugee Council interpreters and a few individuals are completing the final steps for diploma recognition in order to work as doctors, dentists or engineers in the UK. In some areas they have successfully established Iraqi community organisations

### **Facilitating Integration and Fostering Independence in 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
- Reoccurring briefings and information sessions on employment, health and education help to increase awareness and reduce unrealistic expectations
- Consultations with resettled refugees on their impressions of the services and new life in the UK have helped NGOs to provide improved assistance
- Improving pre-departure information is made possible by establishing contact between voluntary sector and refugees via email prior to their arrival in the UK
- Two voluntary sector organisations, the British Refugee Council and Refugee Action, are currently working together to develop a forum for refugees that is accessible online. Prior to their departure and after arrival, refugees will be able to communicate with others who have been resettled to increase understanding, share knowledge and build relationships.
- Refugee Action provides similar services including: group work activities, employment information sessions, English classes and peer networks.

*Provided by the British Refugee Council<sup>30</sup>.*

and hope to assist the community and raise awareness about refugee issues. Many of the Iraqis are active volunteers in the local community and some have taken work placements to revive their skills from Iraq and increase their employability.

Within this group, ensuring the women are engaged in activities and are able to access support has been a challenge for NGOs, primarily in families where the man is the head of the household, and often has excellent English, with the women speaking none. NGOs have provided a variety of solutions to promote engagement, including the establishment of women's groups, women-only briefings with crèche provision, women only computer classes, insistence on using independent interpreters for home visits and female be-frienders/volunteers from the local community who visit the women and teach English.

Due to logistical problems, the Palestinian groups did not have the possibility of attending a pre-departure cultural orientation programme although they benefit from all other GPP assistance and services. Integration for vulnerable cases of Palestinians (mostly women-at-risk) has been more complicated due to high levels of trauma and mental illness. The level of English is generally lower and there is a lack of self-confidence, a consequence of spending several years in harsh camp conditions that engenders a sense of statelessness. However, through the support of dedicated and expert NGOs in the sector, many of the Palestinians are settling into life in the UK, learning the language and getting used to accessing public services while their children are receiving a mainstream education.

The UK government stopped accepting LE Iraqi applications for resettlement in May 2009; although not all of those who were accepted have arrived. A smaller number of Iraqis, who were not former employees of the British Forces in Iraq, have been accepted for resettlement based on referrals from the UNHCR. The UK will continue to resettle refugees from Iraq in 2010 and 2011 with a selection mission planned to Syria to interview 200 Iraqis. There is no expectation that the UK will resettle Palestinians in the same period.

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30 See the Gateway Good Practice Guide elaborated by the Refugee Council and Refugee Action at : <http://www.refugeecouncil.org.uk/howwehelp/directly/resettlement>

## D. Ad hoc Resettlement Programmes for Iraqi Refugees

The five ad hoc programmes that were launched in response to the call for resettling refugees from Iraq are described here. Managing and coordinating a resettlement programme is new to most of these countries. Given that less information is available about the way resettlement works in these countries, this subsection focuses not only on the decision to resettle, but also on procedures as well as on service provision for Iraqis and Palestinians, in addition to making note of the challenging aspects encountered.

**Belgium** has in the past carried out several ad hoc resettlement schemes, but no official resettlement of refugees has taken place since 1999. Renewed efforts began in 2007 and 2008 when representatives from the Commissioner General for Refugees and Stateless Persons (CGRA - Commissariat général aux réfugiés et aux apatrides) and the Federal Agency for the Reception of Asylum Seekers (Fedasil - Agence fédérale pour l'accueil des demandeurs d'asile) participated as observers on selection missions organised by British and Dutch resettlement programmes to Thailand (CGRA & Fedasil) and Tanzania (CGRA). Following the November 2008 Council Conclusions, in February 2009 Belgium decided to resettle 50 Iraqis. The CGRA, Fedasil as well as the Office for Foreigners (OE - Office des étrangers), Belgian embassies in Jordan and Syria, UNHCR and IOM have been the main actors in this pilot resettlement programme; national NGOs assist with integration.

Selection of refugees is made following the general criteria outlined in the 1951 Refugee Convention, with a focus on vulnerable groups. Belgium reserved places for women-at-risk (with or without children) from Syria and Jordan and for 10 ex-Iraq Palestinians from the Syrian border. Dossiers were referred to the CGRA by the UNHCR for consideration and pre-selection. Once the Belgian government examined the dossiers and ran a security check on each individual, it decided which refugees would be interviewed for resettlement. The CGRA and Fedasil conducted selection missions to Syria and Jordan to interview pre-selected refugees. Selection missions were sponsored by the Temporary Desk for Iraq (TDI) under the European Refugee Fund. At the end of this mission, 47 persons - all them vulnerable cases - were selected for resettlement. Belgium followed the recommendations of the November 2008 Conclusions for selection criteria and by making use of the ERF Art. 13, which was applied to all cases.

IOM organised travel arrangements for the first group of 36 Iraqis who arrived in September 2009, and for 11 Palestinians arriving in Belgium later the same month. On arrival, each refugee was required to apply to the OE for asylum in Belgium. Refugee status was awarded to all refugees arriving through this programme within one month of application. Throughout the initial reception and orientation period (1-3 months) refugees resided in two different reception centres, where a communal living space separate from groups of asylum seekers is provided. In the centre, refugees begin language and social orientation classes to learn French or Dutch and to acquire practical information about life in Belgium. A social worker is assigned to each refugee to assist them throughout their stay in the centre. Once refugee status is granted, a permanent residence card is issued and all social programmes/assistance may be accessed.

On leaving the reception centres, refugees are resettled in different municipalities and regions depending on their preference and the availability of housing. The housing and integration support are arranged by regional NGOs<sup>31</sup>.

Each NGO is responsible for a certain number of refugees and assists them individually for the first 18 months. Social workers identify refugees' needs and assist them through the administrative processes of registering for schools, obtaining healthcare coverage, accessing employment and applying for social aid programmes, including monthly financial assistance. Coordination of services and funding arrangements were addressed at a late stage in the resettlement process, making matters more difficult for NGOs and for refugees.

Though future resettlement schemes could be feasible, this pilot programme has highlighted several areas which need improvement, namely: managing expectations by establishing clear policies and providing consistent information, improving coordination between actors in resettlement, defining programmes and agreements with municipalities hosting refugees and improving management of funding for reception and integration processes. Belgium is also facing many difficulties with the system of asylum, as its capacity has not grown in line with demand. An annual resettlement programme may not be foreseeable until Belgium is better equipped to meet the current demands of asylum-seekers, especially in regards to reception centre capacity.

**France** recently put two separate resettlement initiatives in place. In February 2008, the French government signed a framework agreement with the UNHCR for the submission of up to 100 dossiers of refugees each year from all parts of the world. Then, in June 2008, France signed an ad hoc agreement, also known as the 'IRAK 500', with UNHCR embarking on a two-year programme for the resettlement of vulnerable Iraqi refugees belonging to minority groups. Although the latter agreement is the primary focus of our research on France, it is important to emphasize that, in addition to refugees selected under the 'Irak 500' programme, France accepted 142 refugees from Iraq, including 116 Palestinians, under the annual resettlement programme, as part of the 100 submissions accepted annually from the UNHCR.

Under the 'Irak 500' ad hoc agreement, dossier cases are submitted for resettlement either by the Association of Mutual Aid for Eastern Minorities (AEMO) or UNHCR from Iraq<sup>32</sup>, Syria, Jordan and Lebanon. Though the majority (approximately 70 %) of Iraqis accepted for resettlement in France are Chaldean Christians, more recently the programme began selecting Shiite and Sunni Muslims (approximately 15%) as well. The IRAK 500 agreement set a baseline quota of 500 refugees in both 2008 and 2009 however the quota was later adjusted to a total of 1 200 persons in the two years.

31 Vluchtelingenwerk Vlaanderen, Caritas International, le Service Social de Solidarité Socialiste and CAW De Terp Protestants Sociaal Centrum Vluchtelingenwerk.

32 As noted earlier, refugees are generally resettled from the country of asylum. Iraqis who are resettled directly from Iraq are therefore, not resettled refugees according to the strict meaning of the term. It should be noted that the French resettlement agreement does not make this distinction and considers persons coming from Baghdad as part of the resettlement agreement with the UNHCR and the AEMO.

All Iraqi refugees are required to apply for asylum upon arrival in France. Due to the conditions of this agreement, applications for asylum are expedited and normally processed in less than three months (no refusals of status had been reported at time of writing). When their refugee status is recognised, they will be provided a long term residency permit valid for ten years with the option of applying for citizenship after five years of residency in France.

Refugees coming to France under IRAK 500 are accompanied to transit centres (Créteil/Paris region and Villeurbanne/Lyon region) for the first 2-7 days after which they are moved to an asylum seekers centre or Centre d'Accueil de Demandeurs d'Asile CADA (there are 268 centres throughout France) as they wait for the decision on their asylum application. Whilst in the centres they receive social and administrative support from NGOs (France Terre d'Asile and Forum Réfugiés). Once refugee status is granted, Iraqis will be moved to temporary independent housing or a refugee reception centre, depending on availability.

The French Office of Immigration and Integration (OFII – Office Français de l'Immigration et de l'Intégration) and the reception centres' social workers assist refugees in administrative processes. All refugees in France have access to free and full medical coverage, a subsistence allowance and enrolment of their children in free public schools. An integration contract is signed upon receiving refugee status. The contract outlines the responsibilities of French residents and citizens and lists the refugee's rights in his or her new country of residence. The integration contract includes an agreement to learn the French language and participate in a one-day course in civic education including information on French institutions and values of the Republic. Refugees are entitled to 200 hours of language instruction.

### Refugees' Voices in France\*

#### Positive aspects of resettlement in France:

- Refugees are reassured; they finally feel secure, that they can live inside and outside of their homes without fear. All refugees interviewed were happy to be out of the dangers present in Iraq and the majority did not foresee a return to Iraq.
- Refugees were very satisfied with the education system, feeling that their children received appropriate attention, assistance and instruction.
- Refugees expressed high satisfaction with the healthcare system

#### Challenges faced by Iraqi refugees in France:

- Pre-departure misunderstandings regarding the conditions of resettlement in France (especially regarding the process of finding independent housing).
- Difficulties finding housing (esp. in Paris) and lack of temporary housing structures.
- Language: not enough access to language classes. Those provided as part of the Integration Contract may not be up to standards in length and quality. Many refugees are concerned about learning the language; very few have any knowledge of French and there is a lack of interpreters.
- Disappointment regarding employment, especially for those who have completed a university education and held high-status careers in Iraq. It is difficult to have one's training and experience recognised when one lacks fluency in French the demand for professionals is low.

\* Based on refugee interviews conducted by the Refugee Integration Observatory (l'Observatoire de l'Intégration des Réfugiés), France Terre D'Asile for the recent publication, 'Quel avenir pour les réfugiés irakiens en France? Une analyse des perspectives d'intégration des bénéficiaires de l'opération spéciale d'accueil', FTDA, December 2009.

Most resettled refugees arriving in France come as families, including a few women heads of household. A large majority prefer to live in the Parisian metropolitan area (notably in Sarcelles) where there is a significant Chaldean Christian community. Due to the limited capacity of reception centres some persons have been moved to centres in other regions of the country. The Lyon area hosts the second largest community of Iraqi refugees.

Placement in reception centres (located in every region of the country) is decided based on availability and specific needs. Iraqis can stay up to six months in the asylum seekers centre as they wait for the decision on their application for asylum. Upon receiving refugee status, they have six months (renewable once) in provisional refugee housing or continued stay in the asylum seekers' centre. The national employment agency can be consulted for assistance in finding work opportunities.

Of the 1 217 Iraqi refugees selected for resettlement under the ad hoc programme, arrival arrangements are still being organised for a final group of 325 individuals<sup>33</sup>. There are no current plans to extend the two-year resettlement agreement and the annual programme has not specified plans for resettling refugees originating from Iraq. At present, much of the focus is on finding solutions for housing due to the limited capacity of reception centres and the challenges in finding affordable independent housing. Another concern related to housing is that Iraqis arriving through the resettlement programme are granted refugee status very quickly therefore they do not spend as much time in the asylum-seekers centre. Social workers have observed that the rapidity of the process leaves less time for refugees to get used to their new environment and find independent housing.

Stakeholder meetings are headed by the Ministry of Immigration with the participation of the OFII, IOM, France Terre d'Asile, Forum Réfugiés, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the French Office for the Protection of Refugees and Stateless Persons (OFPRA). These meetings are held each trimester to evaluate and discuss the progress of all resettlement activities in France.

**Germany** has practiced ad hoc resettlement for many years, but has never launched a formal annual quota for resettlement. Germany was the only country that formally responded to the call for EU Member States to resettle Iraqis, committing to resettle 2 500 Iraqis (2 000 from Syria and 500 from Jordan) in 2009. Diverging from the traditional definition of resettlement, this ad hoc programme gives refugees a temporary residence permit with the option of renewal after three years versus a permanent residency permit that is typically given to refugees resettled in other countries.

The first Iraqi refugees resettled to Germany arrived in March 2009. Priority was given to persecuted minorities (mostly Christians), vulnerable cases with specific medical needs (including traumatized victims of persecution) and female-headed households. Additionally, integration capacity is considered; specifically such as the individual's level of education, work experience, language skills and family ties.

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<sup>33</sup> According to ICMC and IRC communications with the French Ministry in April 2010.

Refugees were accepted for resettlement during selection missions. UNHCR submitted dossiers to the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees (BAMF - Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge) under the Ministry of Interior in Nuremberg. On the basis of the UNHCR dossiers, refugees were invited for interviews which were conducted by two teams of BAMF staff in Jordan and Syria.

As stated earlier, Iraqi refugees receive a temporary status for three years which allows them to legally work. After eight years refugees may apply for German citizenship upon passing a citizenship test and providing proof of employment. Iraqis spend the first two weeks following their arrival in a reception centre located in Friedland, Niedersachsen. During this period, they are referred to one of the states (Länder) according to the same quota system which is used to allocate asylum seekers in Germany, based on the size of the Länder and the number of refugees already living there. Post-arrival cultural orientation is given at the reception centre, including a presentation of NGOs and other services that will assist refugees after they leave the centre.

All Länder have a different integration programme; however, all refugees can attend integration and language courses, in addition to receiving an allowance and housing assistance for a period defined by individual need. There is a strong level of NGO involvement to implement these programmes<sup>34</sup>.

Germany has been very careful to avoid building up large communities of refugees from the same country or situation. This may be due to the notion that opportunities for finding housing and receiving adequate services are higher when refugees are dispersed or that refugees are not as inclined to integrate in their new country when they are surrounded by their compatriots. Intentions to disperse refugees may not be completely unfounded. As a result of receiving a considerable number of asylum seekers from Iraq (over 6 800 applications in 2008), Germany already hosts an established Iraqi refugee community. Nevertheless, the lack of flexibility in this policy has been problematic for persons who wish to live near family members or friends and for others who are sent to small towns or rural locations where transport is less reliable and where the possibility for finding work may be significantly reduced. The resettlement scheme is too new to be able to determine whether this policy will be effective; however, it could be assessed in the future for its impact on the integration levels of Iraqi refugees.

So far, Germany has admitted all 2 500 Iraqi refugees, the last group having arrived on 27th April 2010. Over 82% of them were selected in Syria; the remaining 18% came from Jordan. Germany committed to admission of refugees from three main groups: persecuted minorities, vulnerable cases with specific medical needs (including traumatized victims of persecution) and female-headed households. At the end of the operation the number of persons with particular medical needs and female-headed households did not exceed 5% each, whereas the members of religious minorities amounted to 68%, including over 48% of Christians.

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<sup>34</sup> Including Caritas Germany, the German Red Cross, Diakonisches Werk, Arbeiterwohlfahrt, Jüdische Wohlfahrt and Paritätischer Wohlfahrtsverband.

**Italy** began resettling refugees from Iraq after participating in the EU fact-finding Mission to Syria and Jordan that preceded the November 2008 Conclusions. The Italian government accepted an ad hoc agreement to resettle approximately 180 Palestinians from the Al-Tanf border camp in Syria in 2009. The Italian Ministry of Interior later returned to Syria to conduct personal interviews with refugees referred for resettlement by the UNHCR. Under this special resettlement programme, by the end of December 2009, 124 refugees had arrived and the final group of 55 arrived in mid-January 2010. Travel to Rome is organised by IOM. Groups are greeted at the airport by government representatives, IOM and UNHCR. Refugees immediately apply for asylum with the Commission for the Recognition of Refugee Status which, upon acceptance of their application, will grant refugee status. For beneficiaries of this programme, the recognition of refugee status takes approximately one or two months. Once status is granted, a renewable five-year residence permit is issued. After ten years of residency in Italy, refugees may apply for citizenship.

Following the application for asylum, refugees are taken to the Calabria region the same day. They are accompanied to independent housing in one of two towns, Riace or Caulonia. Calabria has a regional repopulation law which permits resettlement of refugees in towns which have experienced significant losses in population. Integration is funded and coordinated by the Ministry of Interior, though projects are implemented by local municipalities. At the time of writing, no NGOs were involved; however, a local union has been involved in defending the cause of refugees.

Italy's ad hoc resettlement scheme followed the guidelines for selection criteria outlined in the November 2008 Conclusions. As explained earlier in this report, Al-Tanf is considered one of the most untenable camps for Palestinians from Iraq, where resettlement has been deemed an appropriate and necessary solution. Palestinian refugees accepted for resettlement to Italy are not just in need of protection because of the situation in camps; they also represent particularly vulnerable groups including elderly, women-at-risk and medical cases.

Calabria has voluntarily chosen to resettle refugees but the prospects for integration are not clear. Close monitoring will be required to determine the structures required to facilitate the long-term integration of refugees in this rural region of Italy, which experiences economic difficulties and high unemployment. Resettlement of these groups is still in the early stages; therefore no conclusions can be made about the level of integration or the possibility of engagement in future resettlement schemes.

**Luxembourg** has no official resettlement programme, but it has occasionally carried out ad hoc resettlement. The decision by the Luxembourg government in June 2009 to resettle 28 Iraqi refugees, made following the November Council Conclusions, demonstrated the country's interest in taking part in the EU effort to find a durable solution for Iraqi refugees. In mid-October 2009, the first seven arrivals were met at the airport by members of Luxembourg's Red Cross, the organisation responsible for reception and integration procedures for the Sunni Muslims accepted for resettlement. Caritas is responsible for the other 21 persons, who are Christians and arrived in November 2009. Luxembourg did not specify criteria for cases but rather agreed to consider the dossiers referred by UNHCR.

All Iraqis arriving through this agreement must apply for refugee status in Luxembourg, a process which is expedited, lasting less than a week for the first arrivals. Refugee status allows one to register at the municipal town hall and receive a permanent residence permit with the possibility of applying for citizenship after seven years of residency. Refugees assisted by the Red Cross are immediately taken to independent housing, which is provided for by the Luxembourg Office of Reception and Integration (OLAI - Office Luxembourgeois de l'Accueil et de l'Intégration) until tenants have the means to pay for their housing expenses. Those whom Caritas assists stay initially with a family sponsor for two months, during which time the OLAI administration finds appropriate independent housing. Social workers from both Caritas and the Red Cross assist refugees in finding schools for their children, applying for financial assistance and arranging healthcare coverage. The OLAI covers 100% of medical expenses upon arrival. Eventually, refugees will need to choose a health insurance provider; however, the government will continue to reimburse the majority of healthcare costs. Iraqis are placed in housing generally close to or in the largest cities, Luxembourg City and Esch-sur-Alzette. At the time of writing, there are no future plans to resettle Iraqis or any other group in 2010.

## **E. Related initiatives**

This sub-section provides an overview of two initiatives relating to refugees from Iraq: the Emergency Transit Centres (ETC) in Romania and Slovakia and the Temporary Desk for Iraq (TDI). In addition, it briefly describes the Joint EU Resettlement Programme and the European Refugee Fund (ERF).

### **Emergency Transit Centres (ETC)**

Emergency Transit Centres in Slovakia and Romania were the result of governmental agreements with UNHCR and IOM. Both centres provide temporary protection and transfer for at-risk refugees in emergency and urgent protection situations from all origins. Though Romania has not resettled Iraqi refugees<sup>35</sup>, it has assisted and transferred Palestinian ex-Iraq refugees to resettlement countries through its Emergency Transit Centre in Timisoara<sup>36</sup>, which provides a safe haven. In 2009, the UK selected 81 Palestinian refugees from Iraq by conducting interviews at the centre. The Emergency Transit Centre facility in Slovakia opened in 2009 and received 98 Palestinians from Iraq, who were all accepted for resettlement by the US.

### **Temporary Desk on Iraq (TDI)**

The Temporary Desk on Iraq (TDI) is an 18-month ERF-funded intergovernmental project to determine how asylum and immigration services can improve their practical cooperation on protection/asylum, resettlement and return with regard to the Iraqi caseload and develop generic tools and mechanisms for dealing with other caseloads. The TDI was established in Brussels in March 2009, following a proposal by the Dutch government in collaboration with interested Member States. In relation to resettlement, the TDI co-facilitates selection missions initiated by Member States. At the time of writing, two missions had taken place to Syria. In May 2009, the Belgian government participated in a selection mission with the Netherlands in order to interview refugees eligible for resettlement and in October 2009 the Slovak and Bulgarian government participated in another mission with the Netherlands. The next four missions are in planning stages. In the coming months, a workshop will be held for government officials working on resettlement.

At the end of the project in October 2010, the TDI is expected to transfer its tools and acquired knowledge to the European Asylum Support Office (EASO).

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<sup>35</sup> Romania recently initiated a pilot resettlement programme.

<sup>36</sup> See: UNHCR, the Government of Romania & IOM, Bringing Refugees to Safety, European Commission Representation in Romania, September 2009.

### **The Joint EU Resettlement Programme**

The European Commission has been supporting resettlement for a long time and has contributed greatly to the assessment of the situation of Iraqi refugees in Syria and Jordan. In September 2009, the Commission issued a Communication on the establishment of a Joint EU Resettlement Programme<sup>37</sup> along with a proposal to the European Parliament and the Council amending the European Refugee Fund<sup>38</sup>.

As stated in the Communication:

#### **The goals of the Joint EU Resettlement Programme are:**

1. to increase the humanitarian impact of the EU by ensuring that it gives greater and better targeted support to the international protection of refugees through resettlement,
2. to enhance the strategic use of resettlement by ensuring that it is properly integrated into the Union's external and humanitarian policies generally,
3. to better streamline the EU's resettlement efforts so as to ensure that the benefits are delivered in the most cost-effective manner."

The proposed voluntary resettlement programme foresees the creation of a Resettlement Expert Group - consisting of all EU Member States (resettling and non-resettling), IOM, UNHCR and NGOs - tasked with preparing the identification of common annual EU priorities, which will then form the basis for a draft decision by the Commission. This Expert Group would further allow exchange of information among Member States on resettlement activities and plans. Through the proposed amendment to the ERF,, financial support would be provided to Member States resettling refugees according to the common EU annual priorities and specific vulnerability criteria.

The European Asylum Support Office (EASO), expected to become operational in 2010, will provide a structural framework for carrying out practical cooperation activities in the field of asylum, including activities with respect to resettlement. The Resettlement Expert Group and EASO will be responsible for EU resettlement. The Resettlement Expert Group will be responsible for setting annual priorities and the EASO for coordinating practical cooperation.

<sup>37</sup> Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament and the Council on the Establishment of a Joint EU Resettlement Programme, Brussels, 2 September 2009, COM(2009) 447.

<sup>38</sup> 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 as part of the General programme "Solidarity and Management of Migration Flows" and repealing Council Decision 2004/904/EC, Brussels, 2 September 2009, COM(2009) 456.

### **European Refugee Fund (ERF)**

Currently under Article 13, Member States resettling refugees can receive 4 000 Euros for refugees belonging to four vulnerable categories<sup>39</sup>. Under the new amendment proposed by the Commission these categories will be replaced by the annually defined priorities that may relate to geographic regions, nationalities or specific categories of refugees to be resettled. UNHCR's point of view is that all categories of refugees defined under UNHCR's global resettlement criteria as vulnerable should be included as a fixed priority each year<sup>40</sup>.

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39 The four categories of vulnerable refugees are: (a) Persons from a country or region designated for the implementation of a Regional Protection Programme; (b) Unaccompanied minors; (c) Children and women-at-risk, particularly from psychological, physical or sexual violence or exploitation; (d) Persons with serious medical needs that can only be addressed through resettlement.

40 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. Also available at <http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/pdfid/4b0a75e92.pdf>.

# IV CONCLUSION: LESSONS LEARNED AND RECOMMENDATIONS

## At the level of the European Union

### **1. Member States respond positively to an established common priority for resettlement.**

The EU resettlement efforts for refugees from Iraq have proved that joint action can engage new member states in resettlement though with varied commitments and on an ad hoc basis. This further enhances existing efforts.

**Recommendation:** To improve the effectiveness of future EU responses to refugees in need of resettlement, whether in emergency or in protracted situations, increased resettlement coordination at the EU level is required both at the strategic and at the operational level.

### **2. Appropriate monitoring systems of resettlement activities are currently not in place.**

Joint resettlement efforts are difficult to assess without a level of comparable record-keeping and monitoring systems in place in Member States.

**Recommendation:** More consistent record-keeping systems, monitoring tools and mechanisms must be set up to enable measurement of progress against established targets and timelines.

### **3. ERF funding has only been modestly tested as a tool to support resettlement.**

There is little indication of the incentive role of ERF funding for Member States to engage in resettling vulnerable Iraqi refugees from eligible categories. Moreover, neither Member States nor the European Commission currently seem to collect information on the use of ERF funds according to country of origin, country of asylum or selection criteria.

**Recommendation:** The ERF should encourage Member States to further engage in resettlement and support the overall increase and predictability of resettlement places available in the EU.

**Recommendation:** The ERF should provide support to well-planned reception and integration programmes and should include the engagement of local actors like NGOs and local authorities.

### **4. Insufficient use has been made to date of the Emergency Transit Centre in Romania (ETC).**

The ETC provides an efficient way for Member States to interview and select refugees who are in great and immediate need of protection. Conducting selection missions at the ETC is geographically convenient to arrange speedy departures, in addition to being cost-effective and secure for Member States. In addition, the ETC provides an opportunity for practical cooperation in resettlement between Member States.

**Recommendation:** Steps should be taken, in particular by the EU and UNHCR, to re-emphasize the role and value of the Emergency Transit Centre (ETC) in Romania to other Member States, especially as several other ETCs are opening, creating the potential to further share this resource with Member States.

### **At the level of Member States**

#### **1. Resettled refugees sometimes receive different legal status and different levels of support upon arrival when comparing Member States.**

Under the ad hoc programmes differences in the status upon arrival have appeared, leading to differences in benefits and entitlements. In countries with resettlement quota's permanent status and citizenship is granted under different conditions.

**Recommendation:** Member States should provide all resettled refugees with refugee status in accordance with the definition of article 2 (d) of the European Union Qualification Directive, or a status which offers the same rights and benefits. Refugees should have possibilities for family reunification and have immediate access to the labour market.

#### **2. The lack of coordination among resettlement actors can make the resettlement process unnecessarily long and complex, creating or further exacerbating delays for refugees, in reaching their final destination.**

Periods between selection and arrival in the new country can be as long as one year. Delays due to long administrative procedures delay the organisation of reception and integration services and create mistrust and disappointment amongst refugees awaiting departure. Member States can improve coordination by organising regular stakeholder meetings to identify roles, responsibilities and procedures, and synchronize service provision at each stage of the resettlement process.

**Recommendation:** The upcoming launch of the new European Asylum Support Office (EASO), will be an opportunity for resettlement actors at the international, national and municipal levels, including civil society, to re-examine how better coordination and cooperation among them could more efficiently speed up procedures between selection and arrivals.

### **3. Managing expectations of refugees from Iraq poses some challenges.**

With a majority originating from cities and having high levels of formal education, refugees from Iraq usually have high expectations. Pre-departure and post-arrival cultural orientation emphasizing the non-discriminatory and consistent availability of services as well as information campaigns, have proved to be good approaches to managing expectations. In cooperation with refugee networks, NGOs have piloted innovative programmes involving already-resettled refugees.

**Recommendation:** Innovative approaches to managing expectations, especially orientation and information programmes tailored to distinct characteristics or backgrounds of refugees being resettled should be further explored by actors at the local level, including local authorities.

### **4. Member States express preference for certain groups over others.**

Most of the twelve countries that selected Iraqi refugees, responded to UNHCR resettlement criteria and prioritisation of caseloads. In a number of cases, governments added their own integration criteria.

**Recommendation:** Resettlement authorities should respond to UNHCR submissions as much as possible and recognise UNHCR resettlement criteria and prioritisation. Protection needs and vulnerability should be the first criteria for selection, instead of integration potential.

### **5. Reception and integration is not always properly prepared and managed.**

Particularly in the ad hoc resettlement countries, there have been instances where refugees arrived without proper housing and integration support in place. Local actors were not properly informed on the arrival of refugee groups, leading to improvisation between actors and distress for the refugees.

**Recommendation:** Governments should inform reception and integration actors, as early as possible, on the arrival of refugee groups, to allow for proper reception and integration arrangements.

**Recommendation:** Governments must allocate sufficient funding for reception and integration and not solely rely on ERF funding.

## **Conclusion**

Following the November 2008 joint EU pledge, in one year, EU Member States were able to offer over 5 100 resettlement places in response to the Iraqi refugee crisis. This brought the number of resettled refugees from Iraq selected since 2007 to just over 8 400 and demonstrated that EU countries are able to make a difference by acting together. By December 2009, about 85% of the refugees had effectively arrived in the European Union.

The pledge to resettle up to 10 000 refugees from Iraq has not yet been met. The question is how much more the EU and the EU Member States are prepared to do to address the continuing needs of Iraqi and other refugees in search of durable solutions.

*Brussels, May 2010*

# REFERENCES

The following governmental ministries, organisations and international institutions graciously responded to our inquiries and participated in interviews. Information provided by the following sources, was used to create the base of statistics used in this report and to write the sub-sections focusing on countries. Other sources of statistics are referenced inside the report.

## **Belgium**

Commisariat Général aux Réfugiés et aux Apatrides, (Commissioner General for Refugees and Stateless Persons), [www.cgra.be](http://www.cgra.be)

Caritas Belgium, Brussels, [www.caritas-int.be](http://www.caritas-int.be)

## **Denmark**

UNHCR Representation in Brussels

Danish Immigration Service, 2100 Copenhagen, [www.nyidanmark.dk](http://www.nyidanmark.dk)

## **Finland**

Maahanmuuttovirasto Migrationsverket (Finnish Immigration Service), Panimokatu 2 A, Helsinki, [www.migri.fi](http://www.migri.fi)

## **France**

UNHCR France

Ministère de l'Immigration, de l'Intégration, de l'Identité Nationale et du Développement Solidaire (Ministry of Immigration, Integration, National Identity and Unified Development),

France Terre d'Asile, l'Observatoire de l'intégration des réfugiés statutaires, 75018 Paris, [www.france-terre-asile.org](http://www.france-terre-asile.org)

Forum Réfugiés, 75014 Paris, [www.forumrefugies.org](http://www.forumrefugies.org)

## **Germany**

Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge (Federal Office for Migration and Refugees), 90461 Nuremberg, [www.bamf.de](http://www.bamf.de)

Deutsches Rotes Kreuz (German Red Cross), 12205 Berlin, [www.drk.de](http://www.drk.de)

## **Italy**

UNHCR Italy

Ministero dell'Interno (Ministry of the Interior), 00184 Rome, [www.interno.it](http://www.interno.it)

Luxembourg

Office Luxembourgeois de l'Accueil et de l'Intégration (Luxembourg Office of Reception and Integration), L-1750 Luxembourg, [www.olai.public.lu](http://www.olai.public.lu)

## **The Netherlands**

Immigratie en Naturalisatiedienst, Ministerie van Justitie (Immigration and Naturalisation Service, Ministry of Justice), 2511 EX Den Haag, [www.ind.nl](http://www.ind.nl)

## **Portugal**

Conselho Português para os Refugiados (Portuguese Refugee Council), 1950-339 Lisbon, [www.cpr.pt](http://www.cpr.pt)

## **Sweden**

Migrationsverket, (Swedish Migration Board), Stockholm, [www.migrationsverket.se](http://www.migrationsverket.se)

Hallsberg Municipality, Hallsberg, Sweden

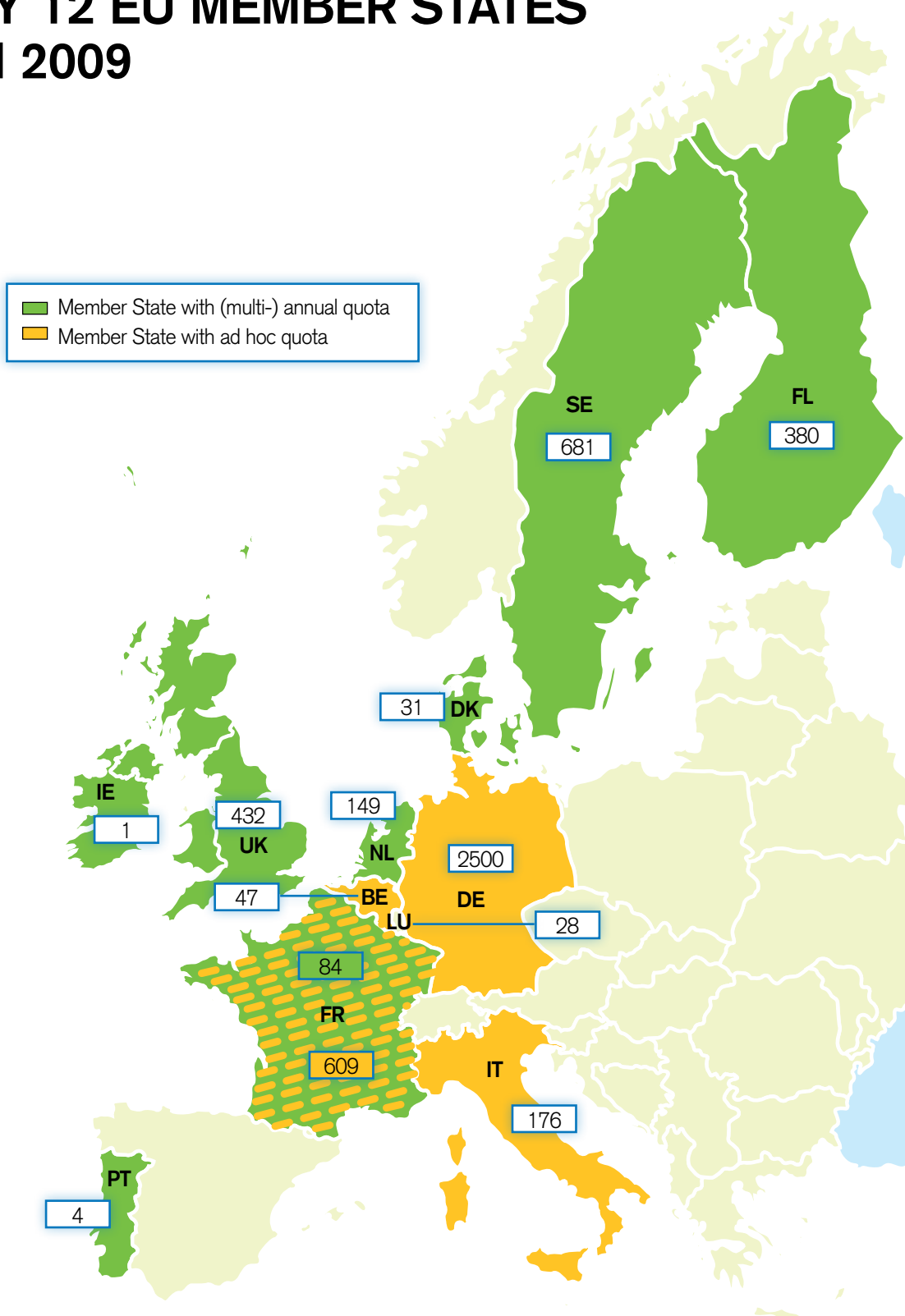
## **United Kingdom**

Refugee Resettlement Programmes Unit, UK Border Agency, Surrey CR9 2BY, [www.ukba.homeoffice.gov.uk](http://www.ukba.homeoffice.gov.uk)

British Refugee Council, London SW9 8BB, [www.refugeecouncil.org.uk](http://www.refugeecouncil.org.uk)

Refugee Action, London SE1 8SB, [www.refugee-action.org.uk](http://www.refugee-action.org.uk)

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