



Resolution 2025 (2014)¹

Final version

Resettlement of refugees: promoting greater solidarity

Parliamentary Assembly

1. The Parliamentary Assembly notes that, in certain circumstances, it is necessary to resettle refugees from their country of asylum to a receiving State.
2. There are many reasons for this, including limitations on the capacity of the country of first asylum to provide a durable solution or concerns that the refugees may still be in an unsafe situation and threatened with *refoulement*, or that they may have particular vulnerabilities or humanitarian needs.
3. The Assembly considers that resettlement has three main objectives, namely to provide access to protection, to ensure lasting solutions and to strengthen solidarity and responsibility sharing between States.
4. Resettlement is conducted according to categories that have been established by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). It is organised, in co-operation with the receiving countries, primarily by the UNHCR, with the support of the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and often in partnership with non-governmental organisations (NGOs) such as the International Catholic Migration Commission (ICMC).
5. Resettlement is not a new process, as it was used extensively after the Second World War, for example in the case of Hungarian refugees who had fled to Austria and Yugoslavia following the Soviet invasion of Hungary. It was also used for the large-scale resettlement of boat people who fled Vietnam in the 1980s, and now continues to be used around the world in a range of situations for individuals, families and groups with particular vulnerabilities.
6. For 2014, the UNHCR has estimated that over 958 429 people around the world are in need of resettlement, although only 80 000 resettlement places are currently available. This does not include the additional call for 30 000 places needed in 2014 following the massive outflow of refugees from Syria into neighbouring countries and the deteriorating situation both in Syria and its neighbouring countries.
7. The Assembly is concerned to note that out of 47 member States of the Council of Europe, only 20 engaged in resettlement programmes in 2013. They supply in total only around 7 000 out of the nearly 80 000 resettlement places available globally. It is clear that Europe can and should do more.
8. Concerning Syria, there have been some commendable efforts by member States in providing asylum or humanitarian protection for Syrian asylum seekers and also admitting Syrian refugees under resettlement, humanitarian admission and other programmes. Some 17 member States have responded to the UNHCR's call for the admission of 30 000 Syrian refugees in 2014. Yet, the UNHCR has called on member States to commit towards providing urgently an additional 100 000 places for Syrian refugees in 2015 and 2016.
9. The Assembly notes that, despite the support of the pilot project funded by the European Union (EUREMA), which is designed to relocate, with the support of the IOM, beneficiaries of international protection from Malta to other European Union member States, Malta is still straining to cope with the number of asylum seekers, refugees and beneficiaries of international protection that it receives.

1. *Text adopted by the Standing Committee*, acting on behalf of the Assembly, on 18 November 2014 (see [Doc. 13460](#), report of the Committee on Migration, Refugees and Displaced Persons, rapporteur: Mr Eric Voruz).

See also [Recommendation 2059 \(2014\)](#).



10. Malta is not the only country affected and the Assembly remains concerned about the significant pressure on certain member States, especially on the borders of the European Union, in terms of receiving many people with international protection needs.
11. The Assembly highlights that resettlement is not a migration management issue but is a humanitarian decision deriving from member States' international responsibility to protect any individual who satisfies the UNHCR's definitions of persons of concern.
12. The Parliamentary Assembly therefore invites Council of Europe member States to:
 - 12.1. increase substantially the number of places available for the resettlement and relocation of beneficiaries of international protection;
 - 12.2. increase the speed and flexibility of resettlement and relocation programmes by:
 - 12.2.1. refraining from implementing cumbersome procedures and criteria that would delay the resettlement process for people in need of urgent protection and solutions;
 - 12.2.2. adopting simplified procedures and innovative measures to provide more immediate protection to the most vulnerable in times of large-scale forced displacement;
 - 12.2.3. adopting an inclusive and flexible approach in the consideration of resettlement cases;
 - 12.3. improve co-ordination and the allocation of funds when carrying out resettlement and relocation programmes by:
 - 12.3.1. enhancing the co-ordination of participants in the process, at international, national, regional and local levels;
 - 12.3.2. providing sufficient funds and human resources to carry out the programmes effectively;
 - 12.3.3. supporting and working with civil society and local authorities;
 - 12.3.4. supporting the exchange of best practices in the various existing forums;
 - 12.4. ensure the sustainability of any resettlement and relocation programmes by enhancing the national capacity to integrate resettled/relocated persons by:
 - 12.4.1. carrying out pre-departure orientation and health-assessment programmes;
 - 12.4.2. providing the resettled/relocated persons and their families or dependants with access to rights similar to those enjoyed by nationals of the receiving State, including integration services, information on their rights and obligations relating to their protection status in a language they understand, adequate housing, access to work and training opportunities, social welfare and health care;
 - 12.4.3. raising public awareness of resettlement processes, and creating a dialogue between the welcoming society and the resettled/relocated refugees;
 - 12.4.4. enhancing co-operation with civil society and the media;
 - 12.5. implement anti-fraud measures to ensure that only those with the most genuine needs benefit from the standard operating procedures for all resettlement operations.
13. In relation to the emergency humanitarian situation created by the Syrian crisis, the Assembly urges member States to:
 - 13.1. increase their pledges to welcome Syrian refugees and other people who seek refuge elsewhere due to the Syrian crisis, on the basis of resettlement, humanitarian admission and other forms of admission, in order to guarantee the 100 000 places needed for 2015 and 2016;
 - 13.2. explore innovative solutions such as simplified and expedited family reunion for both refugees and subsidiary protection holders, and the extension of student or employment-related visas.
14. The Assembly encourages member States to continue supporting Malta to enable it to cope with significant mixed migration flows, and to extend their support to other countries in difficulty in Europe.
15. The Assembly invites member States to make full use of the loans available from the Council of Europe Development Bank (CEB) and encourages the CEB to look favourably on any such requests.

16. The Assembly invites member States of the European Union to apply to the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF) for support of their resettlement programmes.