

THE EUROPEAN RESETTLEMENT
NETWORK IS AN INCLUSIVE
NETWORK THAT SUPPORTS THE
DEVELOPMENT OF RESETTLEMENT
IN EUROPE BY CONNECTING A
VARIETY OF ACTORS INVOLVED IN
REFUGEE RESETTLEMENT.

Network members have a shared commitment to refugee resettlement and protection, to the provision of durable solutions for refugees, and to ensuring refugees resettled to Europe receive integration support that provides them with the necessary tools to become fully participating citizens.

The membership comprises both organisations and individuals working in resettlement and integration policy and practice at different levels, in a variety of sectors, and at all stages of the resettlement process.

For more information about the European Resettlement Network, please contact the coordination team at info@resettlement.eu or visit us at www.resettlement.eu and become a member of the European Resettlement Network.







Pre-Departure Assistance Phase

In anticipation of a refugee moving to a resettlement country, basic information and advice on the journey and life ahead is of paramount importance. Predeparture cultural orientation programmes prepare refugees by providing practical information on the country of resettlement, and assist refugees in setting realistic goals and developing the skills and attitudes needed to succeed in their new environment. Answering the questions that refugees may have before entering this new stage of their life helps to reduce anxiety and to avoid disappointment. Cultural orientation programmes therefore benefit both the refugees as well as the receiving communities and authorities. International NGOs and IOM work closely together with governments, local authorities and reception and integration actors from resettlement countries to identify the key priority messages and values that are critical for the refugees' successful resettlement.

Anyone moving to a country where cultures, traditions and practices are different from one's own can be expected to undergo an adjustment period of variable duration and difficulty. Refugees often come with unrealistic and sometimes inaccurate expectations of their future life. During pre-departure cultural orientation such expectations are discussed and debated using role plays and with the help of pictures, case studies and the experiences of other refugees in the resettlement country.

Topics addressed during cultural orientation include, but are not limited to, housing, health, money management, the role of the settlement service

providers, education, cultural adaptation, rights and responsibilities and laws amongst other pertinent topics. IOM often uses bi-cultural or cross-cultural trainers in the pre-departure cultural orientation. Working with multilingual, multi-ethnic trainers increases the ability of IOM to help refugees anticipate



integration challenges and facilitate their transition into the receiving society.

Depending on the country to which refugees will be resettled language and literacy training will also be part of the pre-departure phase. This training equips refugees with basic language and communication skills in order to facilitate the adjustment process and to help them become more independent. IOM has also provided survival literacy and numeracy classes for preliterate refugees. While similar to language training, literacy training is much more basic and targets those individuals with little if any formal educational experience. Persons in need of literacy training are at a distinct disadvantage in society, as they lack even the basic skills of reading and writing. Literacy training teaches pre-literate participants how to do various tasks including: how to hold a pen or pencil, how to write their names, how to fill in forms, how to read basic signs and interpret symbols, to tell the time, and how to use a calendar, amongst other tasks. The



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training typically lasts from one week up to several months, and can be extended depending upon the needs of the refugee themselves. It is especially useful for refugees who are living in camps.

Pre-departure cultural orientation activities are also important for gathering information about the background and specific needs of individual refugees and refugee groups, which can then be shared to best inform and prepare receiving communities and support organizations in the country of resettlement. IOM and UNHCR have assisted in compiling cultural profiles on refugee populations for a number of receiving countries. These profiles include additional background information on the refugee' country of origin, history of persecution, education, religion, cultural practices and employment and skills' background as well as their level of exposure to Western amenities and facilities.



In the pre-departure assistance phase predeparture refugee health assessments will also be carried out to ensure that people travel in a safe and dignified manner, are fit to travel, that they receive appropriate assistance when required; and that they do not pose a risk towards other travellers or the receiving communities. Refugees are a particularly vulnerable population, with health profiles that vary according to their displacement experience, pre-existing health conditions and epidemiologic profiles. Health assessments of refugees admitted for resettlement are carried out and funded at the request of resettlement countries.

IOM has long-standing experience in carrying out health assessments in the context of refugee resettlement. It includes an assessment of conditions of public health significance, pre-departure treatments (for example TB) and referrals (including pre-travel hospital stabilization), pre-and post-test counselling, fit to travel assessments and medical escorts when required (please see the Travel phase for further details).

Some resettlement countries (for example the Netherlands and Sweden) use their own medical personnel to carry out pre-departure health assessments, which are typically conducted in conjunction with pre-departure cultural orientation sessions or selection missions.

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