

OSCE Human Dimension Implementation Meeting 2014

Statement by the Republic of Bulgaria on Rights of migrants

Working Session 17: Refugees and displaced persons

Mr. Moderator,

Bulgarian delegation fully subscribes to the statement made by Italy on behalf of the European Union and would like to make some comments on national capacity.

In the last twelve months the Bulgarian system for providing protection faced a number of serious challenges that raised urgent need for major administrative and structural changes, increased human resources and reception capacity, accelerating and improving the quality of the procedure for granting protection.

We were able to significantly stem the crisis situation with the financial, operational and material support of the EU, EASO, UNHRC and other organizations and also with the aids of the Czech Republic, the Netherlands and Croatia.

Following the active work of the Bulgarian institutions in cooperation with the international partners, the asylum granting capacity of our country is gradually increasing. As a result, reception centers of the State Agency for Refugees increased from 3 to 7. For two months and a half 20 000 sq. meters buildings were renovated. The capacity for refugees' reception increased from 1230 to 6000 people. In extreme situation this capacity can reach up to 8000-8500 people.

Along with addressing the urgent needs in the context of the complex migration situation in Bulgaria, we also pay attention to the long-term aspects of the problem – the integration of asylum-seekers in the country.

A National Integration Strategy for Individuals Granted International Protection in Bulgaria (2014-2020) was adopted on 4 July 2014, based on the experience and good practices of other countries. Special attention is focused on the refugees from vulnerable groups – unaccompanied minors and women refugees.

The national integration policy envisages a clear distinction of the functions between the different stakeholders, establishing a working coordination mechanism, provision of the necessary financial recourses, communication campaigns on supporting the integration.

Bulgarian authorities are also making full use of the experience of the refugees graduated in Bulgaria, in order to support and facilitate the integration of the others. Being familiar with the Bulgarian language and culture they are playing the role as social mediators.

At the same time, it should be noted that the situation in the country, as a result of the refugee pressure, remains serious. According to the statistics, for the last five months the refugee flow to Bulgaria is considerably higher, compared to the same period of 2013, when we had a record number of applications – 7 144. Now, just in August we have 1104 applications and it is possible that in September their number will reach 1800.

For the reasons mentioned above, the Republic of Bulgaria stands ready to continue working with all international organizations with the aim of ensuring effective management of migration processes. The increase of the refugee flow and the number of internally displaced persons pose an unprecedented challenge to all of us. It is the international community that has the overall responsibility for coping with this difficult humanitarian situation.

Thank you.