



Project Outline :

The creation of a transnational network of advice and assistance for asylum seekers in a Dublin procedure. (European Refugee Fund [ERF] – Community Action, 2008)

Because the best way to improve the Dublin system is to provide asylum seekers with better protection...

This project aims to provide better information about, and closer monitoring of, asylum seekers in a Dublin Procedure.¹ In order to do this, a network of specialist European associations and information tools will be put in place. The project will start in December 2009 and will last for 18 months. The objective is to guarantee continuity in the legal, social and medical support provided to asylum seekers transferred under the Dublin Regulation. In addition to Forum réfugiés, who is coordinating the project, 11 other European associations will be participating.

This introduction to the project will answer several key questions: why such a project? What are its objectives? How will it be financed? Who is involved? What is the timetable? How is it going to work? And finally, what will be the results?

1. Why such a project?

The idea and the need for such a project stem from several simple facts:

- **Due to the lack of information about, and monitoring of, asylum seekers who are in Dublin Procedures**, these individuals do not receive continuous legal and practical support and often have their social and medical support interrupted.
- **The lack of general information or transparency** in the Dublin System makes the work of associations which help asylum seekers in Dublin Procedures extremely difficult on a daily basis. Indeed, they are presently unable to systematically deliver reliable and complete information to either asylum seekers or the authorities.

¹ Adopted on 18th February 2003, the Dublin Regulation (called Dublin II Regulation) is designed to identify as quickly as possible the Member State responsible for examining an asylum application on the basis of objective and hierarchical criteria. Where another Member State is designated responsible under the criteria in the Regulation, that State is approached to take charge of the asylum seeker and consequently to examine his/her application. If the Member State thus approached accepts its responsibility, the first Member State must transfer the asylum seeker to that Member State.



- In general, there are **very few exhaustive texts on the Dublin System** which are both up-to-date and accessible in several languages. There is also a lack of documentation on the different procedures of Member States for the taking in charge, or the taking back, of asylum seekers under the Dublin regulation.
- The Dublin System has **significant consequences for a high number of asylum seekers** (in terms of procedural guarantees and reception conditions in particular), even though, in the end, very few of them are actually transferred. This low proportion of successful transfers can be partially explained by the lack of information given to asylum seekers on the Dublin System and the lack of access to the procedure and to reception in the State to which they are transferred.
- The specific **needs of vulnerable asylum seekers** are not taken into account during the process of taking in charge, or taking back, an asylum seeker.

2. What are its objectives?

On the basis of the issues previously raised, the project's general objective is to **develop the system of information in order to improve the way in which the Dublin regulation works**. To do this, the project will consist of two clearly defined missions, which are specific and interdependent:

- The first mission is to strengthen the ability of associations to inform asylum seekers on the process of being taken in charge, or taken back by Member States under the Dublin Regulation. This project aims to make information booklets on national asylum systems available to asylum seekers, as well as to provide an individual analysis of an asylum seeker's situation in the State to which they are transferred.
- The second objective is to assure continuity in the legal, social and practical support provided to the asylum seeker. Dublin Transfers often result in an interruption in the legal, social and medical support to which an asylum seeker is entitled. For vulnerable asylum seekers, this interruption can have serious consequences. The project aims to reduce the length of this interruption by creating a network of associations providing support and assistance to asylum seekers.

3. How will it be financed ?

The project is funded as one of the European Refugee Fund's Community Actions.

4. Who is involved?

In addition to Forum réfugiés, 9 European associations are involved in the project as partners, including:

- Comisión Española de Ayuda al Refugiado (Spain)
- Italian Refugee Council (Italy)
- France Terre d'Asile (France)
- Helsińska Fundacja Praw Człowieka (Poland)
- Hungarian Helsinki Committee (Hungary)
- Irish Refugee Council (Ireland)
- Jesuit Refugee Service Romania (Romania)
- Verein Asyl in Not (Austria)
- Vluchtelingenwerk Vlaanderen (Belgium)

Three associations who will not be receiving co-funding from the ERF are also participating in the project, including the Swiss charity, *l'Organisation Suisse d'aide aux réfugiés*, the Danish Refugee Council and the Dutch Refugee Council.

Therefore, the total number of Member States involved in the project is 12.

5. What is the timetable?

The project will be carried out over an 18 month period: it will start on 1st December 2009 and will end on 31 May 2011.

6. How is it going to work?

Establishing a network

Each association taking part in the project will designate one member of staff who will participate in the elaboration, the usage and the diffusion of different information and monitoring tools, and who will produce a monthly information report.

Forum réfugiés will designate a project coordinator whose basic role will be to assure the coordination of the network, as well as the piloting, monitoring and evaluation of the actions carried out.

In addition to sharing information and knowledge, members of the network will also strive to critically evaluate the project throughout its duration, in order to improve its performance and the way it works, as well as to assure its implementation at European level once it is completed.

Developing tools:

- For better information and follow-up :

In order to guarantee the coherence of the documents produced and to facilitate their diffusion, the information and monitoring tools will all adhere to a common model which will be developed by the project coordinator and agreed by the different partners.

Information booklets:

The booklet will set out the asylum systems of the Member States in which the project's members operate, in particular the procedure of claiming asylum and the rights of asylum seekers in terms of legal and practical assistance. It will also include information on the national players in the asylum field (associations, government departments etc.). These booklets will be available in English, French, Arabic and Russian (and if possible, in the languages of the countries in which the project's members operate) and will be distributed at European level so that as many asylum agencies and associations as possible receive them and pass them on to asylum seekers.

Individual monitoring files:

The objective of the individual monitoring file is to evaluate the legal, social and medical situation of an individual asylum seeker and their family. With the agreement of the asylum seeker, this file will be passed on to the member of the network in the country to which the individual is transferred. Using the information provided, the network member will be able to evaluate the asylum seeker's situation and produce an analysis (essentially on the issues of access to the procedure and to practical assistance) in preparation for the individual's arrival in the country, thus avoiding any break in their legal, medical and social care.

Evaluation and orientation interviews:

As well as their individual file and analysis, the asylum seeker will be provided with the contact details of the network association in the country they are transferred to. After their transfer, the asylum seeker will be able to have an evaluation and orientation meeting with the association, which will have already received his/her personal file. This interview will enable the association to confirm the information held in the monitoring file, to evaluate the asylum seeker's situation, and to provide the necessary information on the steps that must be taken to restart the asylum procedure and to receive legal and practical assistance as quickly as possible.

- For an effective coordination and a continuous evaluation:

Monthly information report:

Members of the network will give the coordinator a monthly observation report in order to take stock of their activities and the tools that have been put in place.

Final report:

On the basis of these monthly reports, a full project report will be produced: it will present the different information booklets, the information and monitoring tools and the project's results.

- An internal and external communication support:

The project coordinator will develop a website for the project. This will enable all the information and monitoring tools to be put online, as well as the final project report, presenting all the project's results. Network members will each have specific pages, to which documents on the Dublin Regulation and testimonials will be added.

A four-part schedule

The project will have four distinct phases: a preliminary phase, a test phase, an implementation phase and a diffusion phase.

- Preliminary phase (December 2009- March 2010):

This will involve:

- Setting up the network (exchanging information, developing the strategy and timetable for the rest of the project)
- Creating the models that will be used for the information booklets, the individual files and the monitoring reports
- Developing the booklets and information tools and transnational monitoring (also including their translation into French, English, Arabic and Russian, and if possible, into the languages of network members).

This first phase will conclude with the organization, in March 2010 in Lyon, of a first full meeting, uniting all the participants. This will provide members with the occasion to confirm the different tools and their translations, and to put in place a common distribution strategy.

- Test phase (March 2010 – June 2010):

This experimental phase will include:

- The diffusion of the information booklets to national and European associations and government agencies.
- The use and diffusion of individual monitoring files
- The conducting of evaluation and orientation interviews
- The production of monthly monitoring reports
- The development of the website

To enable these objectives to be carried out, several meetings and excursions will be organized at national level, and also more widely, at the level of the network:

- Information and coordination meetings organized at national level (5 meetings per partner);
- National trips for the Romanian, Austrian, Hungarian and Polish partners to detention and reception centres far from urban centres;
- A second full meeting in Vienna (Austria) in June 2010, bringing together all the partners, the purpose of which will be to assess the project's progress thus far (the presentation of an intermediary report) and, on the basis of each partner's experience,

to amend, if necessary, the information and monitoring tools, as well as the procedures for using them.

- **Implementation phase (June 2010 – April 2011):**
Once the tools have been tested and revised, they will be systematically implemented during this period. The procedure includes: the use and diffusion of the information booklets; the creation and communication of individual files; and the conducting of information and evaluation interviews. The project will be monitored by the monthly reports produced by each partner and distributed by the coordinator. The coordinator will also develop the website during the implementation phase.
- **Diffusion phase (May 2011):**
A final conference will be organized in Brussels in May 2011. Beyond those taking part in the project, this conference will also bring together other parties who play essential roles in the support and defense of asylum seekers at national and European level. The objective will be to assess the project, particularly the information and monitoring tools, and the procedures for using them. On the basis of the monthly reports provided by the network members, a final report will present the different tools developed and used during the project and the results obtained in comparison with the initial objectives. The conference will also be the occasion to put together recommendations for the implementation of a systematic transnational monitoring of asylum seekers in the Dublin Procedure.

The website will assure communication on all the tools put in place during the project. In addition, all documents relative to the project will be passed on to the relevant European institutions and national administrations, as well as to the European Council on Refugees and Exiles (ECRE) and national networks of specialist associations.

7. What will be the results?

Daily needs will be met: the monitoring and support of asylum seekers in the Dublin Procedure will be improved

This project is being developed to respond to problems related to the Dublin Procedure encountered by asylum seekers and the associations who support them on a daily basis. The project will provide the associations with a real network of expertise and savoir-faire at European level, enabling them to put in place information and monitoring tools and to establish effective monitoring procedures.

In this way, the project intends to assure continuity in the legal, social and medical support given to asylum seekers in the Dublin Procedure. Providing asylum seekers with reliable and complete information on the asylum system of the country to which they are being transferred will help reduce the incertitude and anxiety which Dublin

Transfers generally cause. Better information and better monitoring will reduce the number of abandoned procedures which push asylum seekers to go underground.

For the mid-to-long term, a method to be implemented at European level

In the mid and long term, the aim of this project is to become part of policy developed at European level on the support and monitoring of asylum seekers, particularly the most vulnerable, within the framework of the Dublin Regulation. On 3rd December 2008, the European Commission presented its proposed recast of the Dublin Regulation. One of the main amendments involves a better exchange of information between Member States and with asylum seekers. Other changes include a common information brochure to be given to asylum seekers (article 4) and a personal interview with asylum seekers (article 5) on the Dublin Regulation. In this context, it seems clear that the procedures and tools developed and implemented during the project will constitute an interesting and useful precedent for the European Commission, the Member States, and even the future European Asylum Support Office.