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WEBINAR

# Reception, Integration and Asylum policies and strategies in Portugal

12<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> of January 2021 - Online

*In collaboration with the Conselho Português para os Refugiados*



**CPR**  
CONSELHO PORTUGUÊS  
PARA OS REFUGIADOS

Progetto cofinanziato da



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MINISTERO DELL'INTERNO

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## INTRODUCTION

Continuing with the study and research of good practices linked to the policies and strategies for migrants' and asylum seekers' integration in the European partner countries of the **COM.&IN. – Competenze per l'integrazione in Europa** project, the last webinar organized in collaboration with the Portuguese Refugee Council (CPR<sup>1</sup>) was held on the 12<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> of January 2021.

The choice of having Portugal among the project's partner countries is linked to the innovative aspects and good practices it implements to foster integration, despite being a smaller country dealing with a small-scale migration phenomenon. Still, with due and inevitable changes, the Portuguese practices could be transferred -even partially- to the Southern Regions of the COM.&IN. partnership.

## MIGRATION IN PORTUGAL

In 2018, Portugal received 64,000 new long-term or permanent immigrants (including cases of change of status and free mobility among EU countries), with a 61,6% increase compared to 2017. Specifically, 26% of these immigrants benefited from the freedom of movement, while 31,2% moved for work purposes, 32,8% for family reunification, and 1% for humanitarian grounds.

The Immigration Law (n. 23/2007), revised in 2019 (Law n. 28/2019), establishes a path to integration for third-country nationals not holding the required documents but employed, thus facilitating the regularization of migrant workers who paid contributions to the Portuguese Social Security system for at least one year.

The Portuguese Law on Citizenship (n. 37/81) grants access to citizenship to children if at least one of the parents has legally resided in Portugal for two years before the child's birth.

### Refugees and asylum-seekers

The number of citizens of Portugal is approximately 10 million. The Portuguese Government promotes reception and integration policies in favour of refugees, which has led in the past years to a significant increase in arrivals despite the low migratory flows if compared to other countries, such as Italy, Greece, or Spain.

Today, Portugal receives about 1,000 spontaneous asylum applicants (1,190 in 2018), a yearly average increase of 100-300 units from 2000 to 2012, which together with the arrivals through relocation, put the processing of refugees' asylum applications and the reception system under pressure. Portugal is also actively engaged in the EU relocation

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<sup>1</sup> See [www.cpr.pt](http://www.cpr.pt)

programme and, since its launch, the country welcomed approximately 1,550 asylum seekers from Greece and Italy. Moreover, Portugal respects the relocation agreements signed with Italy and Malta, involving migrants and refugees rescued from the Mediterranean Sea. In 2018, Portugal welcomed 86 people, and since 2019, it signed an agreement with Greece for the relocation of up to 1,000 asylum seekers and refugees per year.

## THE WEBINAR – Summary of the interventions

The Webinar was an occasion for the COM.&IN. partnership to dig into the programmes and plans fostering integration in Portugal, as well as to gain knowledge of certainly different but also complementary institutions: the **Portuguese Refugee Council (CPR)** and the **High Commission for Migration<sup>2</sup> (ACM)**. The Portuguese Refugee Council is a non-governmental organization that, since December 1998, became the **UNHCR official representative in Portugal**. The High Commission for Migration is the State agency responsible for managing the migration flows in the country. It also promotes migrants' integration and the return of Portuguese emigrants.

The online meeting started with the presentation of the two main plans shaping the Portuguese migration policies, i.e., the **Strategic Plan for Migration<sup>3</sup> (PEM)** and the **Portuguese National Plan for the implementation of the Global Compact on Migration<sup>4</sup> (PNIPGM)**. The discussion moved on to a careful analysis of the mission, objectives, and values of the CPR and ACM, and the activities and services they respectively offer for migrants and asylum seekers. The three thematic sessions ended with an articulated introduction to the **National Resettlement Programme**, its Operational Group, and the CPR activities to ensure its successful implementation.

### The Strategic Plan for Migration and the National Plan for the implementation of the Global Compact

Summary of the presentation held by **Margarita Caseiro** - *ACM Communication Manager*

#### **The Strategic Plan for Migration (PEM)**

In line with the two previous Plans, the **Strategic Plan for Migration 2015-2020 (PEM)** acknowledges that, in the past thirty years, the country has become a popular destination for migrants from all over the world.

The PEM implements policies for immigrants' social and labour integration, focusing on culture, language, education, work, and professional training as priority areas of

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<sup>2</sup> See [www.acm.gov.pt](http://www.acm.gov.pt)

<sup>3</sup> See <https://www.iom.int/global-compact-migration>

<sup>4</sup> See <https://www.portugal.gov.pt/pt/gc21/comunicacao/noticia?i=aprovado-plano-nacional-para-implementar-pacto-global-das-migracoes>

intervention, also fostering activities to strengthen the link between Portugal and its citizens living abroad.

The PEM foresees two external and independent evaluation levels: ad-interim (2017) and final (ongoing).

The Plan, whose realization involved 12 Ministries, was managed by a **Technical Monitoring Group** (unpaid) in collaboration with the **High Commission for Migration, the Immigration and Borders Service, and the Directorate-General for Consular Affairs and Portuguese Communities**.

The Plan comprises 106 measures and 201 indicators, divided by **5 policy priority axes**:

- (1) **Immigrant integration policies** to consolidate the integration process, combat discrimination, and recognize migrants' abilities and culture to improve coordination between employment policies and access to a common citizenship.
- (2) **Policies to promote the integration of new nationals** aimed at fostering the integration and inclusion of immigrants' descendants and all those who obtained Portuguese nationality through actions in the fields of education, professional training, transition into the labour market, civic and political participation, digital inclusion, entrepreneurship, and qualification.
- (3) **Coordination policies of migration flow** to promote Portugal as a migration destination, through national and international activities useful to identify, attract, and support the permanent resettlement of migrants, thus reinforcing the circulation of talent and human capital.
- (4) **Policies strengthening the legal migration and the quality of migration services** aimed at reinforcing their capacity for transversal intervention in the execution of migration policies, strengthening private-public partnership networks, and ensuring the correct functioning of migration services established within a common framework.
- (5) **Policies to foster the monitoring and support the return of national emigrant citizens**, including actions and programmes designed in collaboration with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to promote, accompany, and support the return of emigrated Portuguese citizens, or the reinforcement of their ties to Portugal.

### ***The National Plan for the implementation of the Global Compact (PNIPGM)***

The **Global Compact for Migration** has been approved by the General Assembly of the United Nations in December 2018. Portugal was **the first UN country to develop a National Plan for its implementation**.

The Global Compact, which comprises 23 objectives and 10 guidelines, promotes the identification of procedures and definition of shared commitments within the international

community aimed at improving the management of the global migration flows and giving value to human mobility as an engine of sustainable development processes. Specifically, the Global Compact is geared to:

- Establish the principles, commitments, and agreements in the field of international migration, in all its dimensions.
- Give support to the global governance and strengthen intergovernmental coordination of the migration phenomenon.
- Develop shared policies of international cooperation on human mobility.
- Jointly address the multiple dimensions of international migration.

Accordingly, the adherent countries define the concrete and feasible commitments, the means of implementation, a reference framework for the follow-up, and the revision of the implementation procedures.

### **The High Commission for Migration and its services**

Summary of the interventions held by:

**Ana Couteiro**, *Coordinator of the Support Centre for Migrant Integration*

**Vera Eloi de Fonseca**, *Coordinator of the “Desigualdade Intercseccionalis” project team*

**Péricles Pina**, *Coordinator of the Commission for Equality and Racial Anti-discrimination*

The **High Commission for Migration (ACM)**, directly dependent of the Presidency of the Council of Ministers, is the institution responsible for managing migratory flows, it promotes migrants’ integration and the return of Portuguese emigrants. It guarantees collaboration between the various Ministries that deal with policies, strategies and actions aimed at migrants, including refugees, and Roma Communities.

Following to the organic law of 2014, this Institute has seen its mission and responsibilities expand, and it is now committed to ensuring an integrated response to all immigrants (including refugees).

Specifically, the objectives of the High Commissioner can be summarized as follows:

- Promote Portugal as a migration destination.
- Welcome and integrate migrants.
- Collaborate, in articulation with other competent public entities, in the conception and development of migration policy priorities.
- Combat all forms of discrimination based on skin colour, nationality, ethnic origin, or religion.
- Develop social inclusion programmes for the descendants of immigrants.

In order to achieve these objectives, the High Commissioner is divided into a series of specific services, which follow the concept of the Single Access Point, otherwise known

as One-Stop-Shop, where the migrant visits a single facility and finds all the information and support he or she needs. Among these, the National and Local Centers to support migrants' integration stand out. Their respective acronyms are CNAIM for nationals and CLAIM for locals.

The ***National Migrant Integration Support Centres (CNAIM)*** were established in 2004 to respond to the various difficulties encountered by migrants in their integration process. Cultural, organizational, and legislative differences, together with the number of different services that migrants must turn to, led the High Commissioner to create a place that brought together different services, institutions, and offices to facilitate the process of integration and inclusion. These Centres, 3 of which are national, are managed in close collaboration with the Authority for Working Conditions, the National Registry Service, the Ministries of Education and Health, the Foreign and Border Service, the National Institute of Social Security and a special Citizen's Space for information. The Centres include the following services:

- GAT – Reception and Screening Office
- GAJ – Legal Support Office
- GAIPESQ – Support Office for Professional Insertion, Higher Education and Qualification | Entrepreneurship
- GASI – Social Affairs and Inclusion Office
- GAV - Victim Support Office

The Centres also offer a guardian service for children.

Promoted by Municipalities, NGO's and Higher Education Institutions, the **114 local Centres** are decentralized offices or spaces to support migrants' integration. They offer a wide range of services such as information and mediation between migrants and local services, ensuring a rapid and adequate response to migrants' need.

The use of new technologies is very interesting. In fact, the ACM has developed an APP (MY CNAIM), available in Portuguese, English and Arabic, giving information about the labour market, the procedures for regularization, subsidies, contact lists, etc. Furthermore, two dedicated telephone lines are available: the first gives information on the issues that are most frequently of interest to migrants and puts them in direct contact with the services for which an appointment is required. The second is a telephone translation service, free of charge, which in real time or by appointment, can translate up to 60 different languages.

Finally, the Centres offer two other services:

- In partnership with the Institute of Employment and Professional Training and 19 specialized Centres, it offers support for job inclusion, training and mediates the relation between the migrant and the competent office.

- In collaboration with schools and training centres, the ACM organizes certificated courses in Portuguese and manages a platform in English, Spanish, and Arabic to study Portuguese.

### **The “DESIGUALDADES INTERSECCIONAIS” project**

Applying a gender dimension (gender mainstreaming) within all activities and policies for migrants' inclusion, the project aims to fight those multiple discriminations that occur for personal reasons or for specific characteristics/identities and that, interacting with each other, make the path of social inclusion of migrants, including refugees, asylum seekers, and Roma communities, particularly difficult.

*Desigualdades Interseccionais* organizes and participates in European and international campaigns against female genital mutilation and women's health, for gender equality applied to all sectors of society, from work to family, interreligious dialogue from a gender equality point of view, female migrations in the world, female entrepreneurship.

### **The Portuguese Refugee Council (CPR)**

**Filipa Silvestre**, *Director of the Reception Centre for Asylum Seekers, Member of the General Assembly of CPR*

**Bàrbara Oliveira**, *Director of the Reception Centre for Asylum Seeker*

**Marta Costa**, *Legal Officer*

Established in September 1991, the CPR has been the official representative of the UNHCR in the country since 1998. In compliance with the asylum law n. 27/2008 and the amendments made by law 26/2014, the CPR plays a key role in the asylum sector and, representing human rights associations, is a member of the Commission for Equality and Racial Discrimination established by law no. 134/99<sup>5</sup>.

In Europe, the CPR is a member of the European Council for Refugees and Exiles (ECRE), the European Legal Network on Asylum (ELENA) and the European Program for Unaccompanied Minors (SCEP).

In addition to developing projects for the reception of asylum seekers and for refugees' integration, the CPR is committed to training technicians, lawyers, students, journalists, volunteers with the aim of raising awareness and bringing public opinion closer to the issues of asylum and refugees.

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<sup>5</sup> Please, see [www.cpr.pt/legislacao](http://www.cpr.pt/legislacao)

### **The CPR reception system**

The Portuguese Refugee Council manages two reception centres for refugees, a home for unaccompanied minors and a “children's area”, an educational and recreational project for families and children.

**In the reception centres, refugees have access to:**



**While staying in the CPR centres, refugees search for:**



In the reception centres of the CPR, the process of integration is based on three cornerstones:



**Particular attention is given to age, gender and diversity policies respecting the guidelines of:**

- UNHCR (2011); Approach to age, gender and diversity<sup>6</sup>.
- UNHCR (2011); Working with lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and intersex people in the context of forced displacement<sup>7</sup>.
- **Yogyakarta Principles** - *The principles for the application of international human rights law in relation to sexual orientation and gender identity* (2007/2017)<sup>8</sup>.

**The main services offered are:**

- **Social/professional support:** individual and confidential services with each adult member of the family unit; mediation within the family; health-care team for women's health; access to mental health services also through therapeutic groups in collaboration with the psychiatric hospital of Lisbon.
- **Financial support:** assigned individually to every person, even if they compose a family unit. In the case of minors, the financial support is always given to the mothers. Distribution of items for intimate hygiene, especially for women, to reduce healthcare costs.
- **Safe spaces:** assigning lockable rooms to single women and LGBTI refugees; gender neutral bathrooms; spaces for children to use during training or individual care activities; information on common spaces through posters and communications.
- **Training:** organization of groups for learning Portuguese and for cultural orientation with constant attention to both mutual respect and diversity.

**The major critical issues are found in the following are:**

- **Housing:** rents in Lisbon are very high, a problem aggravated by the lack of social or public housing.
- **Job opportunities:** the job market is in crisis, a crisis made dramatic by the Covid-19 pandemic which has further reduced the opportunities for the most disadvantaged sections of the population, including indigenous ones.

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<sup>6</sup> Please, see <https://www.unhcr.org/5aa13c0c7.pdf>

<sup>7</sup> Please, see <https://www.unhcr.it/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/UNHCR-Need-to-Know-Lavorare-con-Persone-LGBTI-in-contesto-sfollamento-forzato.pdf>

<sup>8</sup> Please, see <https://yogyakartaprinciples.org/>

## The European Resettlement Program in Portugal

Summary of the interventions held by:

**Miriam Gonzaga**, *Coordinator of the Support Centre for Refugees' Integration - NAIR (ACM service)*

**Felipa Silvestre** *Director of the Reception Centre for Asylum Seekers, Member of the General Assembly of CPR*

**Bàrbara Oliveira**, *Director of the Reception Centre for Asylum Seekers*

Introduced by the 2015 European Agenda on Immigration, the European Resettlement Program provides for the transfer from third countries, such as Turkey, Lebanon, Jordan, to EU member states of people in clear need of international protection. The programme provides for the resettlement of 20,000 people over two years in all EU Member States according to distribution criteria such as GDP, population, unemployment rate and number of asylum seekers and resettled refugees and is based on voluntary participation.

In addition to being one of the few countries to have accepted an annual relocation quota and always respected it, Portugal continues to host refugees and is engaged in various solidarity measures.

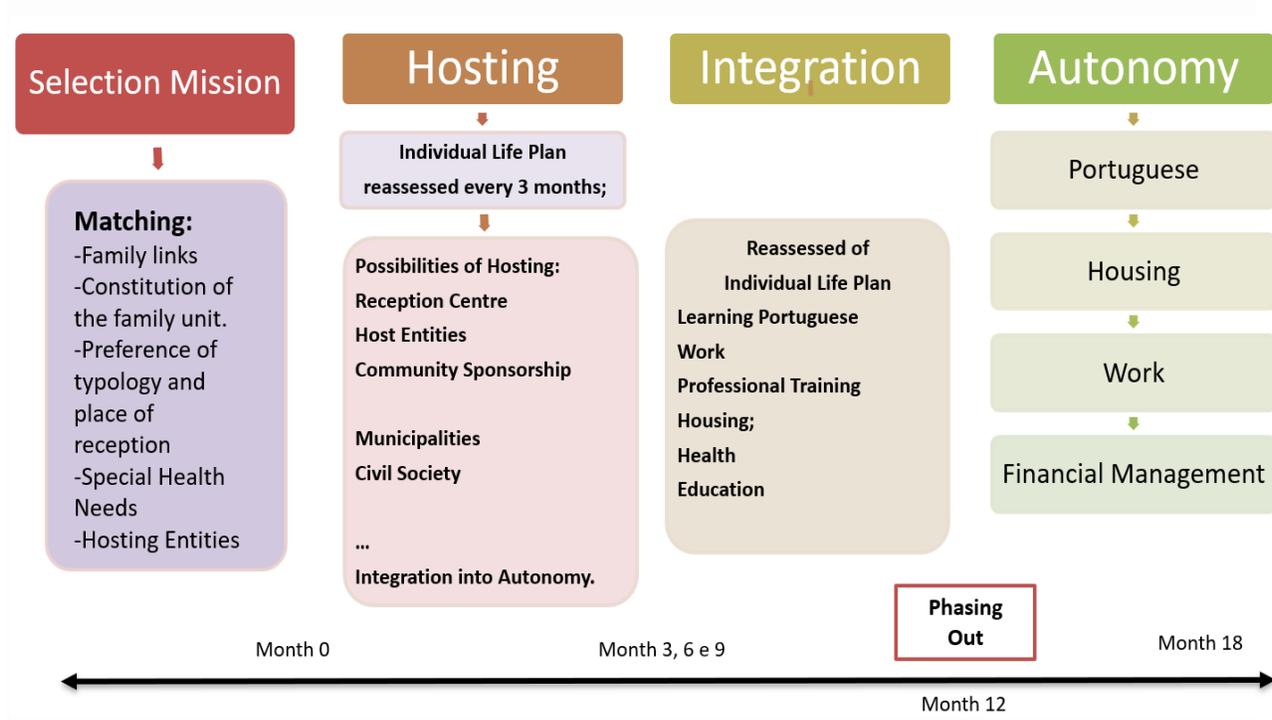
The number of asylum applications that the country receives each year is undoubtedly limited, even though it has increased significantly recently. In 2019, the number of asylum seekers in Portugal increased by 39.9%, reaching a total of around 1,700. The countries of origin of the largest number of asylum seekers were Angola, with 300 applicants, Gambia and Guinea-Bissau with 200 applicants each.

The increase of refugees, spontaneous asylum seekers and relocated asylum seekers, as well as new bilateral relocation initiatives, especially with Italy and Greece, have prompted Portugal to multiply its efforts to strengthen reception measures and integration. Within the ACM, an Operating Group is working on the creation of an ad hoc structure capable of guaranteeing the cooperation and coordination of all the components which deal with the reception and integration of asylum seekers and beneficiaries of international protection by defining a single model that contains shared principles and guidelines.

Coordination and partnership are an essential part of the success of the Portuguese resettlement program. In fact, the Portuguese Refugee Council, operational arm of UNHCR in Portugal, the UNHCR head of resettlement and a wide range of government actors work closely together. Other key players include the Social Security Institute, the Ministry of Health and Education, the Office of Ombudsmen and the Municipalities.

The ACM Refugee Integration Support Unit (NAIR) has primary responsibility for initial reception. In fact, the NAIR, in collaboration with the host communities, evaluates the capacities and methods of reception in the various municipalities.

**The Program includes four steps:**



## Hosting Model

### HOSTING ENTITIES:

- Civil society organizations:
  - Social organizations
  - Parishes
  - Schools
  - Etc.
- Municipalities

### HOUSING:

- Centers
- Houses



# Cooperating Entities

100 Municipalities welcome or have already welcomed refugees

**4 major groups of hosting entities:** Portuguese Refugee Council (CPR), Portuguese Red Cross (CVP), Refugee Support Platform (PAR) and "União das Misericórdias Portuguesas" (UMP)

Other non-consortium NGO's and Private Institutions of Social Solidarity

## The host organizations are responsible for:

- ✓ Ensure suitable accommodation, the payment of gas and electricity bills and the provision of a pocket-money for small expenses.
- ✓ Promote integration by ensuring access to Portuguese classes and the labour market.
- ✓ Ensure enrolment and access to public services such as school, health, social assistance, transport.

## First inputs of the Italian Regional Representatives

From what we learned during the Webinar, a practice emerges that may be of interest to the partner regions of the project and that is worth exploring.

The ACM One-Stop-Shop concept, a single office that facilitates contact between all offices and services capable of providing support, information, referrals, consultation and mediation to foreign users. A single point of access that undoubtedly facilitates relations with migrants and makes adaptation to procedures and operating methods faster.

Finally, the Relocation Program, as applied in Portugal, is certainly very interesting and worth studying and analysing it in depth. Hence the need for a unique model that "creates a more complete protection system that includes all refugees and asylum seekers, creating a structure capable of ensuring cooperation and coordination between all the parties involved".