



The reception of asylum seekers organised in Hungary

An ENARO report of Linda Rijpstra

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History of Hungary and migrants

“I was born under the monarchy, I went to school in Czechoslovakia, I got married in Hungary, worked in the Soviet Union, and I am a Ukrainian citizen”. One listener remarks: “You are a much travelled person”. Uncle Jozsi answers: “I never left my hometown...”

This is a popular anecdote, which illustrates migration to and from Hungary. It can only be understood in the context of frequent changes to the political map of central and Eastern Europe. Nowadays, about three million ethnic Hungarians live in nearby countries. Hungary is also called a transit country for migration.

Foreword

From 2-13 October, I stayed in Hungary at two different reception centers: Bicske, close to Budapest and Bekecsaba, close to the border of Romania.

I was interested in Hungary, because it's an east European country: how many people would ask for asylum, which nationalities would ask for asylum and what kind of circumstances would the centres be like. How will the integration be like and do people have to repatriate? As a special task I had to survey the case management at the centers. I hoped these questions could get answered during my stay at the reception centres.

And of course, I got a lot of information!

Even though at first glance, the staff didn't really know what to expect by this exchange, they were really willing to show me everything about the centre and to give me as much information as possible. I spoke with the asylum seekers, the lawyers, the decision makers, UNHCR and of course got guided by the social workers and watched their counselling. Besides that I visited a NGO in Budapest and visited some other reception centers in Hungary.

My task was to get information about the case management. As though there was barely no case management organised at the centres, I made a report with general information about the reception centres at Hungary. What I know about the case management is written at 'Integration and participation' (chapter 4) and 'Menedek Association' (5.1).

I start this report with general information about the reception of asylum seekers and the procedure in Hungary. In chapter 2, I write about the Organisation of Immigration and Nationality. The structure has changed in September 2006, as a result of the new developments in the politics. I have chosen just to write down the information how it used to be, simply because everyone knew how it was, and did not know how it should develop in future.

In chapter 3, I write down my experiences at the reception centres I visited and give general information how things are organised at the reception centres.

Chapter 4 informs you about the possibilities for integration and chapter 5 informs you about the different NGO's who have a main duty in Hungary. My personal experiences are written in cursive letter type.

As I stayed at a room at the reception centre, I lived among the asylum seekers. This was a very special experience: I could imagine how an asylum seeker should feel: I was far away from my family and little children; I stayed in a country where I couldn't understand the language, in a small village with nothing to do (even though I had a full programme, I sometimes felt so, especially at evening time).

And I felt how privileged I am, by knowing that I have this opportunity of exchange, and can return to a safe country, to family who are waiting for me.

Linda Rijpstra,
Casemanager cluster Groningen,
The Netherlands, November 2006

1. Asylum and immigration in Hungary

1.1. Asylum, Facts and figures

Hungary is a country in the east of Europe. It's borders crossing Austria, The Slovak Republic, Ukraine, Romania, Serbia-Montenegro, Croatia and Slovenia. It's 93.032 m2, and has 10 million citizens. 1600 asylum seekers lived in Hungary at 2006.

Hungary is called a *transit* country: People use it to start their procedure in Europe. Not only after having a residence permit, they travel to West Europe. Also during their procedure, people travel to Germany, The Netherlands or Great Britain. Because of the Dublin covenant they are sent back to Hungary.

1.2 Where to start the asylum procedure

1.2.1. At the border

Most of the times, people illegally cross the border, and get caught by the border guard. This person will be sent in custody for refusal of entry. The border guard may order detention for the maximum of 5 days. Within those days, the person will be sent to court. Another 30 days can be given by court. After these days, it is possible that the person gets placed in pre-expulsion detention for 5-30 days. A foreigner who is illegal in Hungary officially will get expelled. He can't get expelled when he would be threatened by death penalty, torture or inhuman or degrading treatment in his country of origin. So he can ask for asylum. Only if the procedure is finally rejected, the person officially can get expelled.

1.2.2. at the reception centre

It rarely happens that a person enters a reception centre to ask for asylum. At the reception centre, a photograph and fingerprints will be taken. The asylum seeker has to pass a medical test (HIV and TB). Until this test is completed, the people have to stay in quarantine (2 or 3 weeks). These are special rooms, separated from the other people. They are not allowed to leave the centre during this time.

1.3 The procedure

According to the law, the first decision has to be taken within 60 days, with the possibility to prolong the procedure with another 30 days. If the court has to take the decision, it can take 4-6 months. The asylum seeker can get free legal aid by lawyers from the Hungary Helsinki Committee during their procedure.

At the first interview, they are be given a photo identify card.

If it is found when examining the fingerprints, that they either submitted an asylum application in another country of the EU, or have been fingerprinted because of illegal crossing the border or staying in another country, the Hungarian authorities may send them back to that country and the applications will be examined there (Dublin).

In Bekescsaba, the Immigration Office is located at the reception centre. In this centre, the interviews are held at this office. The decision maker is content with this system, because it is

more personal. The chairman at the head office in Budapest has to give a second opinion about a decision, so this covers the responsibility of the decision maker.

The decision maker will interview an asylum seeker at least twice. After the first negative decision, the applicant can make appeal. After a second negative decision, the court has to make the final decision. If the procedure is rejected, people have the possibility to open a new procedure, even though they don't have new facts. They can do this as much as they want to. For this new procedure, The Immigration and Nationalisation Office has to give a decision within 2 weeks (accelerated procedure).

After appeal, the decision has to be given by the court, which can take several months. During this new procedure they can stay at the reception centers. During the procedure, they can't get expelled. Because this possibility, there is no active policy for repatriation.

At the centre in Bekescsaba, I saw a leaflet from the International Organisation for Migration with information about repatriation hanging on a memo board. This is only based on a voluntary repatriation programme and is not actively mentioned: there is not an information hour and not a repatriation programme. If asylum seekers mention the wish of repatriation, the social workers will try to organise this together with the IOM.

For me, this is a big difference with the policy of the Netherlands: The Netherlands is focused on repatriation, and Hungary is focused on the reception of asylum seekers.

In my presentations, I mentioned the Dutch repatriation programme. The social workers were interested in this, but also felt uncomfortable by this as though they are not used to this way of working.

About 10% of the asylum seekers in Hungary receive a residence permit. In this report I will call them refugees. There are two different types of refugees:

- Authorised to stay
- Recognised refugee

In chapter 4. 'Integration and participation', I write about these two different titles.

2. Office of Immigration and Nationality (OIN)

As part of the inception phase of developing an integrated migration organization, the government of Hungary established the Office of Immigration and Nationality (OIN) on the first of January 2000. This is an independent central authority. Legal harmonisation and institutional development were part of Hungary's preparing for EU accession. In order to achieve these goals, the Hungarian parliament adopted a new Act regulating the entry and stay for foreigners in Hungary. Together with another new act, this removed the legislative barriers from the way of developing a unified migration organisation.

By this, the government set up 7 regional branches, which are called, the Regional Directorates. The OIN acts under the direction of the Ministry of Justice and Law Enforcement.

Responsibilities (national)

- In accordance with the provisions of law on nationality discharging all the duties related to nationality falling in the line of duty of the Minister of Justice and Law Enforcement;

- Carrying out all the aliens policing tasks in the capacity of a central aliens policing authority;
- Executing all the tasks related to the administration of refugees in the capacity of a refugee authority.

Responsibilities

- Supporting the decision-making process of the government concerning migration and drafting legal provisions falling within its competence
- Executing tasks related to migration arising from international conventions
- Co-operating with international organisations, Hungarian governmental and non-governmental organisations (NGO's)
- Managing and operating the reception centres, temporary accommodations and community shelters.

The OIN is an independent budgetary organisation. Its budget is shown separated within the budget of the Ministry of Justice and Law Enforcement. The Director General, supervised by the Minister of Justice and Law Enforcement, directs the Office.

3. The reception centers

There are three reception centres maintained by the Office of Immigration and Nationality of the Interior: one in Bicske (close to Budapest), one in Bekescsaba (South East) and one in Debrecen (North East).

Bicske and Bekescsaba are established at 1989, to give accommodation to the Romanian applications at that time. During the war in Yugoslavia which started at 1992, a lot Yugoslavians got accommodation by this centres. At 1998, the UNHCR decided that the reception centres had to give accommodation for asylum seekers not only from Europe, but also worldwide.

People can submit their application at these centres. It is also possible to request for asylum when crossing the border, at the Regional Directorates of the Office, or when interrogated by the police of border guards.

As an applicant, a person authorised to stay or a recognized refugee, people can stay at a reception centre or at private accommodation (accommodation provided by a friend or relative, a rented room). People who choose for this possibility mostly live at Budapest. Most of them are Chinese or Vietnamese.

Bicske

Bicske is a village, located 30 kilometres west from Budapest. The reception centre has got the capacity of 400 people. It's a laid back centre, with house blocks at a wide area. Each house block has six 4-personsrooms, a general kitchen and a general bathroom. During my stay, there were only 80 people staying there; asylum seekers and refugees (people with a residence permit). Most of the people came from Serbia/Montenegro and Nigeria. Other nationalities were: Georgia, Ukraine, Iran. And even local Hungarian people are allowed to live at this centre! They can rent a house block at the same terrain, as the reception centre is located.

The centre is focused on the activities of Budapest: the NGO ‘the Menedek Association’ is located at this city, as also other supporting facilities like the lawyers (Cordelia Foundation) and medical services.

One social worker financed by government works here, and one integration/social worker financed by Menedek Association. He works 2 or 3 times a week at Bicske. As it is located close to Budapest, the focus of this centre is integration.

During my stay at Bicske, I spent most of the time with ‘working’ together with the social worker. When I watched/listened to the talks he had with the asylum seekers, I noticed that the questions were more diverse than in the Netherlands: how to get in contact with family living abroad, how to get the right documents for returning to the country of origin, administrative problems with newborn children, a need for social talk, etc. I think this happens because only one social worker works here and no other organisations are involved, like a refugee council or IOM.

I also noticed that the employees are very concerned with the asylum seekers. All the organisations come to Bicske, instead that the asylum seekers visit the organisations like in the Netherlands: The lawyers visit their clients once a week, the psychiatrists visit their clients once a week, the integration manager works at the centre, even though his office is located at Budapest. The main reason, as they told me, is that this seems to be most convenient: it is cheaper and people won’t lose their way down to Budapest.

Bekescsaba

Bekescsaba is a town located close to the border with Romania. It’s situated in the Bekes County, South East in Hungary.

The reception centre is a two-level building with the capacity of 200 persons. During my stay, 156 people lived at the centre. It has the possibility for a protected area for vulnerable groups.^{see 3.2.6.} It has four-persons bed/living rooms. Each level has a general kitchen and a general use of bathroom.

Nowadays, most of the asylum seekers come from Yugoslavia and Georgia. During my visit, a group of Somali asylum seekers arrived at the centre, who supposed to need special treatment since they were very traumatised. All organisations were very concerned of this group.

Four social workers financed by Menedek Association, work at this centre, mostly two a day, in two different shifts (7.30-16.00 and 13.00-21.30). They all have the same tasks ^{see 3.1.}

Debrecen

I haven’t visited Debrecen, so I just have little information about this centre. This reception centre is located 30 kilometres to the Romanian border at the North East of Hungary. It used to be a military camp, so the asylum seekers live in military barracks. This centre has a capacity of 1.000 people. Nowadays, only 200 asylum seekers live here. Four social workers work at this centre.

Nagykanizsa

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This town is located 30 kilometres from the Slovenian border, in the South West of Hungary. It lies at the terrain of the border guards. This reception centre had been established for 3 years to provide accommodation for unaccompanied minors. It is been funded for 3 years. During my visit, only 5 unaccompanied minors stayed at this centre, all of them were guys. At November 2005, they started with 43 Yuma's (42 boys, 1 girl).

It has one corridor on which the 4-persons bed/living rooms are located, together with the offices of the director, medical service and administration. It has a general use of kitchen and bathroom. The policy is focused on the reception of the Yuma's. During my visit, they had a basic programme, which included sport and education. As soon as they receive money from the EU, they will organise more programmes which are also focused on the development of the children.

3.1. Staff at the centre

At the centre work different disciplines: Director, administrative office, social workers, medical service, and technical service. Normally, the Immigration Office is also represented at the centre, with the exception of Bicske, which has the contact with the Immigration Office in Győr. At Bekescsaba, the social workers are employees of the Menedek Association. They had the same tasks at their colleagues from the government.

Social workers

The social workers have quite a lot of responsibilities. They have main basic tasks like to organise the arrival and departure of the asylum seekers, look after their inhabitants in their daily live, create a safe and open livelihood for the asylum seekers, organising activities etc. Besides this, I noticed that, as they don't have a chairman, and no other organisations are represented, the social workers have a lot of extra responsibilities. For example, they have to decide if they want to have an interpreter service or not. And have to make an annual budget to check if they can afford this. Another example is, that it wasn't clear what they had to do with an UMA who received a resident permit. The social workers themselves have to find this out.

3.2. Staying at the centre

3.2.1. Quarantine

During the first 3 weeks of the staying at the centre, the asylum seekers have to live in quarantine. The medical service checks them on TB and HIV. Until they have the results, the people are not allowed to leave the centre. After the results are negative, they can live in a common room at the centre.

3.2.2. Introduction

The centres have a brochure with information about the centre. Besides that, Bicske has a nice introduction film, funded by ERF. This film "first tea", gives all the necessary information about staying at the centre. It is in different languages: English, Arabic, Farsi, Russian, Serbo Croatian. It is meant to let new people feel comfortable and get them the first basic information about their staying. At the room are some toys for children, chairs, a couch, coffee and tea.

House rules are mentioned at this film, people don't have to sign a form.

3.2.3. Registration

The asylum seekers get a magnetic card, which can be used as a key. By using this card, people are registered in a computer system. By this, it can be checked wherever they are. Officially, the asylum seekers have to register themselves each 24 hours. If they don't do this, they won't be given pocket money for the next 3 months. People can report beforehand if they want to leave the centre for longer than 24 hours. Not all the centres use this registration rule this strict. At Bicske, the social worker knows generally if people have really disappeared. If so, their names are put out of the computer system. They are not allowed to enter the reception centre again.

3.2.4. Allowances

At the centre is a general kitchen, which provides 3 meals a day; breakfast, lunch and dinner ('full board'). They respect the different cultures by offering no pig meat for Muslim people. Each 2 weeks people get clean sheets.

After 3 months staying, people get each month 2500 ft (€10, -) pocket money.

3.2.5. Sanctions

The centers have the possibility to expel an asylum seeker or to send him to another centre. This happens very rare. At Bekescsaba they keep the pocket money when the inhabitant does not register himself each 24 hours. They know and agree by this system.

The social worker at Bicske is very concerned by their inhabitants. He always tries to solve the problem together with the asylum seeker(s). As he told me: "As I work here alone, I need the people as well as they need me".

3.2.6. Vulnerable groups

Bekescsaba has a protected area, especially for vulnerable groups. It is financed by ERF. This area

is located at the same terrain as the reception centre, but has extra security. It is a 2 level building with apartments for families (4-8 persons). These rooms have a shared kitchen and bathroom, but an own living room and bedroom. People can live there during their procedure. It's a lot cleaner, more quiet and has more privacy than the common, shared living/bedrooms.

The staff wants to treat the vulnerable groups as much the same as they do with the other asylum seekers. They agree, that these people do need a protected area due to their problems, but don't want to isolate them from the other inhabitants. Of course, most of them have problems or are traumatized, so it wouldn't be fair to make much difference between this.

Because of this, they have closed the special nursery at the protected area, as the children can use The nursery at the town. Now, it is used as a general playground for children. When activities are organised, it's mostly for all the people living at the centre. It rarely happens that the staff goes to the cinema with (single) mothers and their children. After the movie they talk about it. They use this activity to improve the contact between mother and child.

3.2.7. *Activities*

The centers have an internet room, which can be used for free. In Bekescsaba it is financed by ERF. Eventhough all rooms have a television, the centers also have a TV-room for general use. Each week, a professional teacher teaches Hungarian lessons. Cordelia Foundation funds these. Following these lessons is not obligated, people can join it voluntarily. In Bicske, only 4 people follow the lessons, but in Bekescsaba joined about 30 people these lessons. The asylum seekers would like to be taught more than the 4 hours a week, since they cant more quickly. All the centres have a classroom for the lessons.

In Bicske, American volunteers teach English. It's not officially facilitated; as there is a need among the asylum seekers, they teach it, when there is none, they stop for a while with the lessons.

Bicske has a sport hall, which belongs to the town. It's open 2 times a week. People from town can use it as well, but don't do this very often. An asylum seeker has the job to look after the people who use the hall.

3.2.8. *Work*

It is not allowed to have a paid job during the procedure.

Since September 2006, asylum seekers can get some work at the centre. Jobs are: cleaning, working at the laundry, looking after the Internet room, looking after the sport shall. They don't get paid by money, but the staff buys products for them at the supermarket.

When having a residence permit, people get guided by applying for a job by a social worker from the NGO Menedek Association. (*see: integration and participation*). There is a difference in possibilities for work between authorised to stay and recognised refugees.

4. Integration and participation

4.1. Authorised to stay

The OIN will grant authorised to stay status to those asylum seekers who cannot be repatriated because at home they would face the death penalty, torture, inhuman or humiliating treatment, and there is no other safe country that would accept them.

In practice it means that people get this status if they fled from war or civil war, or from a country where supposedly mass violations of human rights occur. So no personal persecutions, but by country circumstances.

This type of status is temporary: each 2 years the circumstances of the country will be checked.

4.1.1. Social benefits

This status provides accommodation and full board at the centre, support in seeking employment and the schooling of the children for 18 months. After leaving the centre, people get a relocation grant and a regular housing benefit from the government. Also a one-time school enrolment grant can be given, and even costs for meals at the school can get reimbursed!

Refugees and people authorised to stay are legally allowed to work. For this, they need a work permit.

4.2. Recognised refugee

The OIN will grant recognised refugees to those asylum seekers who are actually persecuted in their country of origin for their race, confession, nationality, political opinion, or simply because they belong to a certain social group. Or, whose fears of being persecuted are justified. Legal status of these people is equal with the Hungarian citizens.

If people get a residence permit, they are allowed to stay at the centre for free during 12 months. Only when they don't have a job. During this time, they can get full board at the centre. The OIN helps to cover different expenses needed to translate documents, to get medical assistance. Besides that, the refugees can take part to free language courses.

If refugees earn a salary, they can rent a house at the centre for about 13000ft (€50) a month. Hungarian people can also rent these houses. After 12 months they are obliged to rent a house of the centre, or to get an own house. There is no possibility to force the people to leave the centre. Recognised refugees have the same rights as the Hungarian citizens and therefore are allowed to work. There is a need for recognised professional certificates. They don't need a work permit.

4.2.1. Social benefits

If the refugees move out from the centre, they can apply for regular accommodation benefits and are entitled to regular sustenance benefits for up to two years after being recognised as a refugee. For the maximum of another two years, this benefit is renewable on a discretionary basis, according to the level of the income and the co-operation with the OIN. People looking for a house can ask for government assistance and for special housing benefits.

Once living in a house, there are a lot of aids and benefits for refugees, since their rights are equal to the Hungarian citizens. These includes for example, different child-care benefits and maternity leave payment, pension and unemployment benefits. Also nursing benefits can be given in special circumstances.

4.3. Integration programme

After getting a residence permit, refugees get guided by the social worker of the NGO Menedek Association. This NGO is located in Budapest, with employees located all over Hungary. In Bicske, one employee works 2 a 3 days a week at the centre for this integration programme / social work. He gives personal guiding to refugees by entering the language course, by finding a job, and helps with applying for a job. At the first contact he makes a personal file, together with the refugee. In this file they make a target for the personal programme (*see enclosed*).

What's in the form:

- Personal information (date of birth, nationality etc)
- Background study, job
- Knowledge of the Hungarian language
- Willing to follow the language course
- Target

The refugees have to follow a Hungarian language course. The course takes 360 hours. Only after completing the course and having a certificate, they will get a social support from the government. The employee has to see at least 80 refugees a year.

In Bekescsaba, the employees don't really use an integration programme, since it is very difficult to find a job in this area. They advise the refugees to move to Budapest where the Menedek Association guides them. In Budapest are better possibilities to get a job.

The report "Listening to the refugee" (UNHCR 2005, also see 5.4: UNHCR) mentioned in 2005 about integration: *"For all recognised refugees in Central Europe the primary problem is the lack of integration programmes (...) With integration, race and colour of skin have a significant impact. The more different the looks, the less easily refugees are accepted by their host societies. Besides this, there is one large obstacle to integration, which can't get easily solved by a policy: the general economic situation bringing about high unemployment rates and fierce competition in the labour market"*.

4.4. Job hunting

At the Menedek Association, refugees check on newspapers for work. The social worker himself also checks advertisements for jobs for his clients. It's quite difficult for the refugees to get a job as they have to speak Hungarian and agencies rather have Hungarian employees.

It's an individual way of working, and not really authorised by government.

Job agencies exist but rather prefer not to register refugees, as it's difficult for them to get a job.

In that way, the open cases increase, and the unemployment number decreases as well.

5. Non Governmental Organisations (NGO's)

A NGO is a non-governmental organisation.

The NGO's in Hungary have a major task:

- They have social workers working at Bekescsaba (Menedek Association)
- Organise the integration programme (Menedek association)
- Give medical support: psychiatrists (Cordelia Foundation)
- Give free legal aid during the procedure (Hungary Helsinki committee)

5.1. Menedek Association (MA)

Menedek Association deals with migrants holding different status. Clients can contact them in the reception centres, in the opened community shelters and in the office in Budapest.

Their objectives are:

- To represent international migrants (asylum seekers as well as refugees, foreign employees etc) towards the society;
- To promote the legal, social and cultural integration of those refugees and migrants who are planning to stay in Hungary by means of targeted programmes and projects;
- To represent the interests and rights of migrants towards the political, administrative, governmental and municipal bodies and in the media
- Elaboration of sustainable partnerships with other civil societies pursuing similar goals.

Main activities:

- **Social Work**

Counselling in social matters and casework.

At Bekescsaba work 4 social workers of MA.

At Bicske, 1 social worker/case manager is concerned with the integration programme.

- **Integration of refugees staying in Hungary**

By writing brochures (how to find a job, "You are here", women's topics), organising social and mental health programmes.

- **Integration of Migrant Children to schools in Hungary**

- **Community Room programme**

Two community Rooms are run in Debrecen and in Bicske. People can talk with each other, play games, listen to music, meeting each other.

- **Regional Competence Development Network**

Menedek Association is responsible for the co-ordination of a regional network of refugee assisting organisations. The aim of the project is to develop, and provide regional support and learning opportunities for professionals in the 11 countries of central Europe, the Baltic States and Cyprus, providing social/integration services in need of international protection.

5.2. Cordelia Foundation

The Cordelia Foundation was founded in 1996, to rehabilitate torture survivors as the member of a network of about 70 countries in the chain of the rehabilitation centres, with the assistance of the Danish International Rehabilitation and Research Centre for Torture Victims, Copenhagen. It's got psychiatrists, psychologists in their staff. Each week the psychiatrists come to visit their clients at the reception centres.

5.3. Hungarian Helsinki Committee

The Hungarian Helsinki Committee was founded in 1989 to monitor and report on the Hungarian human rights situation and to provide free legal aid to victims of human rights violations. It gives the asylum seeker the possibility to get free legal aid by lawyers during the procedure, or in the

case of a rejected application, to facilitate an appeal. This organisation used to be financed by the UNHCR, but now it is financed by the European Refugee Fund (ERF).

Main activities:

- Regular fact-finding and monitoring visits to closed institutions and reception centres.
The lawyer visits his clients at the centre: this is the most efficient and cheapest way of having contact with their clients. If the client doesn't show up, the lawyer visit him at home.
- Publications and reports on human rights in Hungary
- Free legal aid in human rights violation cases and representation before domestic and international authorities and courts

5.4. United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

The UNHCR is mandated by the United Nations to lead and co-ordinate international action for the world-wide protection of refugees and the resolution of the refugee problems. Its primary purpose is to safeguard the rights and well being of the refugees. The UNHCR strives to ensure that everyone can exercise the right to seek asylum and find safe refuge in another state, and to return home voluntarily, integrate locally or to resettle in a third country.

The UNHCR used to support and monitor the Hungarian asylum system, but this has changed when Hungary became a member of the EU at 2004. Nowadays, the UNHCR give financial support to NGO's to access the ERF fund. Besides this, they each year check the circumstances of the reception enters in Hungary.

During my visit, I met the Multi Functional team of the UNHCR. They just visited all the reception centres in Hungary for the annual check. They do this by talking with different groups of asylum seekers (gender, age and cultural background, asylum seeker and refugee) about the life and circumstances at the reception centre. Subjects to be spoken were: right to education, right to information, right to liberty and security of a person, and so on. It's not only about Hungary, but also about Poland, Slovak Republic and Slovenia. Generally, it says that in these countries, there is a need for access to legal aid and information, satisfactory conditions in reception centres and possibilities for integration.

List of used information

I got information from the next books/brochures/leaflets/websites:

- "Listening to the refugees"; report on the gender, age and diversity roll-out in Hungary, Poland, the Slovak republic and Slovenia (2005, UNHCR)
- Seeking Asylum in Hungary (2005, Hungarian Helsinki Committee)
- "You are here", practical information on refugee affairs in Hungary (2002, Menedek Association)
- Website of the OIN (www.bmah.hu)
- Website of Menedek Association (www.menedek.hu)
- Who's who in Hungary's asylum system (2003, supported by the Royal Embassy of the Netherlands)

I also got a lot of information from talks/interviews with people:

- Interview with UNHCR

- Interview with the decision makers
- Interview with lawyers
- Talks with the staff of the Menedek Association in Budapest
- Talks with staff members of the reception enters

Epilogue

I have tried to write down all my information about the reception of the asylum seekers in Hungary. I spoke with a lot of people: social workers, directors, decision makers of the Immigration Office, lawyers, UNHCR and asylum seekers. Most of the time, I had to arrange my appointments myself, and had to create my own programme. Sometimes it was difficult to find my way in this, as though I didn't want to disturb people in doing their job, but they were always willing to help me. And of course, they were also interested in how COA has organised the reception of asylum seekers!

Of course, this is only official information about the reception centres in Hungary. The experience of this exchange information is more than only this report. The ENARO-experience is about finding your way abroad; represent your organisation, being open-minded, connect with people and get inspired by each other: as with asylum seekers as with lawyers.

For me, it was an experience to live among the asylum seekers, as though my room was at the reception centre. I did not always like it, because it wasn't always comfortable. At Bicker, I stayed at a room in the hospital wing, and at Bekescsaba, I stayed at the reception centre at a room separated by a locked door, but at the same corridor as the men rooms were. But I felt safe because of the contact I had with the people.

Besides this, it was very interesting to share experiences with my international colleagues. By accident, I met some decision makers in Budapest and spent a day with them sightseeing. It was funny to realise that we shared the same experiences, were interested in the same issues, even though we lived in complete different countries and didn't know each other before.

Once back home and working as a case manager, I realised how organised we work at COA. All the tasks and duties are written in the New Reception Model book, which we can check daily. It gives more structure, things are more clear, but it also gives a lot of discussion: different expectations to each other, sometimes being more busy with using the rules than working with the asylum seekers.

In Hungary, the social workers have to find out things themselves, which takes a lot of time and a lot of responsibilities. Of course they have basic rules what to do and how to handle, but their work has to do more than this basics. Besides that, it gives they have independency in their work to find out things.

We have to find a balance between working with people in which we have to be flexible, and following up the rules in which we have to be straight. The contact with the people gives us inspiration and the rules give us the information how to handle.

