

# Report of exchange programme in Czech Republic



**June 2007**

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## Statistical data and general reception conditions:

**1st visit:** Vysni Lhoty, [Reception Centre]

**2nd visit:** Fridek Mistek [Detention Centre]

**3rd visit:** Zastavka u Brna, [Residential and Integration Centre]

**4th visit:** Kostelec nad Orlici [Residential Centre]

**5th visit:** Prague international airport, [Reception Centre]

### 1. Number of countries of origin of asylum seekers 2006 [whole country]

1	Ukraine	571 [19%]
2	Egypt	422 [14%]
3	Kazakhstan	236 [ 8%]
4	Belarus	174 [ 6%]
5	Russian Fed	168 [ 6%]
6	Vietnam	124 [ 4%]
7	China	114 [ 4%]
8	Stateless	100 [ 3%]
9	Nigeria	96 [ 3%]
10	Others	1011[33%]

**1b.** No precise numbers available from Reception Centre. But the majority of people came from:

- Ukraine
- Kazakhstan
- Belarus
- Mongolia
- Vietnam
- Others

**2.** There were no precise numbers available from countries of origin from the whole country who are specified in single women, UMA's, pregnant women.

**2b.** In Vysni Lothy and Zastavka and Kostelec stayed:

- women
- single mothers with minor children
- families
- single mails

In Kostelec was one elderly mail, unknown age.

In the Detention centre were only 8 mails registered.

In the Reception Centre in Prague were only 16 mail asylum seekers registered.

**In Kostelec Nad Orloci** we received the following list from nationalities:

Kazakhstan	102
Ukraine	96
Russia	59
Belarus	58
Kyrgyz Stan	46

Nigeria	32
Congo	7
Pakistan	7
Sierra Leone	5
Sudan	5
Ghana	4
India	4
Morocco	4
Mali	3
Nepal	3
Angola	2
Azerbeidzan	2
Cuba	2
Afghanistan	2
Thailand	2
Egypt	1
Gambia	1
Iran	1
Romania	1
Serbia	1
Sri Lanka	1
Syria	1
Togo	1
Zambia	1

We don't know the exact numbers of victims of trauma. Each person gets an invitation from a social worker. Contents of these conversations were not revealed to us.

We received this information during the visit, parts were given to us by power point presentation.

## **General Reception Conditions**

### **1. Initial reception:**

Reception Centre at Visni Lhoty and Reception Centre at Prague airport.

### **2. Medical screening:**

In the Reception Centres medical service is available for 24 hours.

Further more a general examination by a doctor takes place. Children are vaccinated if necessary. And a tuberculosis screening takes place [mantoux injection]

Mental health: everybody gets an invitation and an interview with a social worker. He refers people to the psychologist or psychiatrist.

The psychologist does consultations in every centre. It's usually a NGO. Asylum seekers can visit the NGO during the consultation hours.

In the Residential Centres asylum seekers have the same health care as Czech people. They receive a letter, which makes them a member of a medical insurance company.

In Kostelec they had a choice where to go, since there were still two doctors available for consultation in the centre. One was specialized in care for children.

In the Detention Centre, there was a doctor available for 24 hours. If they needed other care beyond that, they were sent to a hospital.

In all centres a so called 'non stop service' is established. All staff work from 7 am to 3 pm. After that the person[s] in the office of non stop service take care. They have limited knowledge of medicines, but they can always call a doctor or hospital if needed.

### **3. Information:**

It is not clear to us how an asylum seeker receives information about his asylum procedure. We were not present during interviews. In the Reception Centre he will be provided with an official interpreter.

In the Reception Centre asylum seekers receive the first information about daily routine usually in small groups with other asylum seekers who speak the same language.

They receive information about daily things. Also a lot of information is given on paper in different languages. [accommodation rules]

In every centre an information service is also provided by large information boards outside and inside the accommodation buildings. On these boards, pictures are printed, [for example a washing machine or cutlery, to show where one can wash his/her clothes and knows where to go for meals]

In this way, information is also distributed in the Residential Centres and the Detention Centre.

The quality of the information or if it is adequate for an asylum seeker, can not be judged by us, we were never present at an interview.

Non stop service is available after 3 pm.

### **4. Legal services:**

Lawyers, mostly NGO's are working in all kind of centres, several hours each week.

Asylum seekers are supported in making their application by an interpreter. After the interview he can see a lawyer, who helps him with writing an appeal.

## **5. Interpreters:**

In the **Reception Centres** are professional interpreters working. Whether they are culturally sensitive, or gender-matched: we don't know.

As far as we know, staff received no complains from asylum seekers about interpreters.

Accessibility for all asylum seekers, as far as there are interpreters available. For some languages it's very difficult to get interpreters. [China, Vietnam, Somalia]

Staff asks asylum seekers if they know an interpreter themselves to help. [mostly by phone]

Also for help from the psychologist and social workers, people are asked to bring their own interpreter.

In other Centres were no interpreters working.

## **6. Waiting times:**

Within 3 months the Foreign Police and Asylum and Migration Policy Department have to make a decision when the asylum seeker is aloud to be transferred to a Residential Centre.

Usually it takes about 3 or 4 weeks before all identifications, interviews, medical checks and administration is completed. After that they are transferred to a Residential Centre.

In the Residential Centres, people can wait upon 2 to 3 before they receive an answer on their asylum application.

In the Detention Centre people can wait until maximum 180 days. Usually it takes shorter to establish their identity and check the papers that are found on them. People have to stay in a Detention Centre because they have entered the country illegally. On arrival in a Detention Centre they can apply for asylum within 7 days. Most of them do.

## **7. Detention:**

In the Reception Centre people are not in detention. However this is a closed centre and people can not leave the premises. After they receive their first interview, people are held in a room with basic furniture, tea, sandwiches and TV, this could take several hours. Also a guard from a private security is present for 24 hours. After the authorities have decided the person can stay in the Reception Centre he is referred to the normal accommodation in the centre. The asylum seeker has to stay in this closed Reception Centre until he is transferred to a Residential Centre.

In a Residential Centre, people are not detained but, they need to fill in a form if they want to leave the centre for more than 24 hours. They can fill in this form at the office of the social worker. The foreign police must give consent to this. It means that thy have to stay for 10 days out of the camp. If they want to stay out longer, they must write a to the Refugee Facilities Administration of the Ministry of Interior. In both cases they have to leave their room, hand in their key and take all things with them.

The forms are given to the private security guards at the gate, they register all names from people who are coming and going.

In the Detention Centre people can not leave the premises.

## **8. Dispersal:**

Dispersal is only prepared by the head office in Prague. They decide, with help from computer software, to which centre asylum seekers are send.

All asylum seekers prefer to go to the capital, Prague, which is not possible. However, they are always very glad to leave the Reception Centre, because they have more freedom in a Residential Centre.

### **9. Staff:**

Staff is trained and educated professionally. They are conscious not to take their work with them into their private life. Staff is very conscious of the well being of the asylum seeker. They watch carefully if people are feeling not well. Each social worker makes sure he knows how his/her clients are feeling.

For example: During lunch, each asylum seeker has to order his lunch and diner for the next day. If he doesn't do that, the kitchen staff notifies the social workers and they check why this asylum seeker has not come to lunch or diner.

Also a personal file from each asylum seeker is kept.

In the Residential Centre Kostelec, are three social workers. They haven't divided clients among them. They take turns in the daily [5 days a week] consultation hours. They write specific information from the client in the personal file of the client. Every morning they have a short assembly to inform each other.

Since there is a downsizing of asylum seekers, different centres have been closed already and it is expected there are more to be closed. Staff is expected to lose their job. At the moment most of them hang on to their present jobs.

This situation goes for all Centres.

### **10. Client information:**

Social workers have a lot of information about the personal life of the asylum seekers, for instance: they know he has a drink or drug problem. This information is obtained by the client, but also medical service. The information from the social workers is recorded in a paper file and sent to the next centre.

When the asylum seeker leaves, he gets his own *medical* file to take with him. Each staff member uses a computer file, but these are not combined into one computer system. Only the paper file is a combined one.

Information is shared with other staff at the start of every working day, during a short assembly.

Each department writes his own report. When the asylum seeker goes to another Centre this information is made into a paper file and sent to the next centre.

### **11. Schooling and education:**

During their stay in the Reception Centre, schooling is only available for primary education. The lessons consist mainly of lessons in Czech language.

In the Residential Centres, there are schools for children to prepare them for the local primary or secondary school.

There are voluntary classes in Czech language for adults available.

Education is free in the Czech Republic. If an asylum seeker wishes, with the right grades, he could go to university.

In the Detention Centres, there are no education facilities available.

## **12. Health care:**

In Reception Centre Vysni Lhoty and Residential Centre Kostelec is a medical department with a doctor most days. The nurse is 24 hours on duty. If necessary asylum seekers are sent to the nearest hospital for specialist care.

In Kostelec people have a choice to see a doctor on the premises or go to the local doctor.

In Residential Centre Zastavka is no medical service available. People have to make use of the local facilities.

Asylum seekers receive the same health insurance as Czech people.

## **13. Mental health care:**

Every asylum seeker is invited by a social worker. When he reaches his limits for helping the asylum seeker, he sends them to the psychologist who comes in several times a week or, if necessary to a psychiatrist.

This is the same in the Reception Centres as in the Residential Centres and the Detention Centre.

## **14. Food:**

In the Reception Centres and Detention Centres, the asylum seekers receive full board [breakfast, lunch, dinner] There is a choice of food for Muslims, [no pork] and vegetarian food.

Additional food for children up to 18 years is provided [mid-morning and afternoon snacks]

There's also special baby and toddlers food available.

The same food is available in the Detention Centre.

In Kostelec people prepare their own meals.

In Zastavka there is still a canteen, but staff is very soon expecting to get permission, to alter the facilities so that asylum seekers are able to prepare their own meals.

In the Detention Centre people have to pay for their own food, if the police finds more than a certain amount of money on them. They can not buy extra things, like cigarettes, but can give money to the social workers so they can buy this for them. They don't receive an allowance.

## **15. Accommodation:**

Accommodation is according to the minimum standards for the reception of asylum seekers.

For example: 5 square meter per person is available.

Asylum seekers in Vysni Lhoty and Kostelec are housed in a former army camp.

Asylum seekers are not allowed to choose their own accommodation.

The camp is divided into 2 zones:

- **A green zone**, for women and single mothers with children. Also families with children, unaccompanied minors, seniors, people with physical and mental handicaps, weak individuals. In some centres a guard from a private security company is watching this zone 24 hours.

- **A grey zone** for other asylum seekers, as single man, addicted persons, seniors – community leaders.

Women have a choice to stay in that zone, but if they don't want to stay in the green zone, it is on their own responsibility.

The two division into 2 zones, is practiced in every asylum centre in the country.

In the Detention Centre is also a separate zone for woman with Children and other vulnerable groups.

When they are transferred to a Residential Centre, the administration office in Prague decides, with help from a computer program, where they are send to. With this computer software the organization can distribute the different nationalities equally over the different Residential Centres.

Asylum seekers in Residential Centres are aloud to live elsewhere. They receive only 3 months allowance after they have left. And after that they have to provide for themselves. Mostly people decide to do this after one year of their asylum application, because according to Czech law they are then aloud to work.

However to find work is not very easy, as the Alien Police only gives permits for 3 months. And many employers don't want to take somebody on when they're not certain if he or she is going to stay longer than 3 months.

### **16. Financial support:**

In the Reception Centres asylum seekers receive 0.3 euro per day per person [16 CK] pocked money.

They have to pay for certain medications themselves. If they lack funds, they can get financial help from a church organization, who also does voluntary work in the centres.

In the Residential Centres they receive more money, because they have to by their own food.

In the Detention Centres they don't receive pocket money.

### **17. Clothing:**

Asylum seekers can, if they want, buy second hand clothes from a 'shop' situated in the centres. Social workers or volunteers take care that each garment is paid for. Payment is regarded necessary otherwise people take not only what they need, but much more.

### **18. Freedom of Movement:**

Asylum seekers have to stay in the Reception Centres until the authorities have decided they can be transferred to a Residential Centre.

In the Detention Centre is no freedom of movement.

When asylum seekers stay in a Residential Centre, they have freedom of movement in the country, however they have to apply if they want to leave the centre for more than 24 hours, or more than 10 days.

### **19. Recreation:**

There are opportunities for sports [fitness] reading, games, music, being outdoors, and arts in the Reception Centre, Residential Centres and the Detention Centre.

### **20. Religious practice:**

In the Reception Centre and Residential Centres is a room for Muslims, which they can use for praying. This is done because there are only mosques in Prague .

Other religions have no specific facility and have to make use of local facilities.

In the Detention Centre is no separate room for praying for any religion.

### **21. Host community:**

In every centre, once a year, they have a so called 'open house', and people from the local community can come to visit the centre. Also once a year, work of art made by asylum seekers, is shown at an exhibition in the vicinity.

Also special events for children are organized together with children of the local community.

### **22. Communication and media:**

In the Reception Centre asylum seekers can buy phone cards, in the shop on the premises.

They don't have access to internet. They do have access to TV and radio.

In the Residential Centre of Kostelec asylum seekers can buy anything they need in the local supermarkets. In the centre is also an opportunity to go on the internet. At the moment there are 3 computers available, donated by a charity organization. In the near future, more are to be expected. There's also a TV room.

In Zastavka Residential Centre is a television room.

In the Detention Centre is a television room.

### **23. Withdrawal of benefits:**

If an asylum seeker owns more than a certain amount of money, he has to pay for his own meals. Accommodation is always free of charge.

If an asylum seeker doesn't follow the accommodation rules, a fine can be awarded up to CZK 2000.

### **24. Complaints and participation:**

Asylum seekers have the opportunity to make official and/or informal complaints against practices in the residence facilities. These complaints must be written by hand, in Czech language. Mostly asylum seekers are helped by charity workers. The complaints can be delivered by the social worker, but can also be send directly to Prague head office.

The asylum seeker receives a personal answer on their letter.

If a certain problem happens, meetings are held with the asylum seekers and social workers, to sort things out.

### **25. Good practice:**

Examples of good practices are:

- principle of protection of vulnerable groups
- opportunities for recreation
- more staff available

## **Children, including Unaccompanied Minors:**

We have not visited a centre where UAMs are living, as they do not come under the responsibility of the ministry of Interior.

This information is what we know about this subject, because staff in other centres told us.

We were told that until 15 years of age, UMA's, are directly send to Prague, where there is a special facility for UMA's, including a special school.

From 15 until 18 years they, stay in the Reception Centre, in the protected zone. Also a social worker takes special care of them. After their period in the Reception Centre, they are transferred to the special Centre in Prague, where they have to stay until their 18<sup>th</sup> birthday. From then on they have to stay in a Residential Centre.

By law a procedure for age determination is not aloud.

## **Older People and Disabled People:**

Older people are supported in the same way as other asylum seekers. They can go to social workers and if necessary can go to a psychologist.

They can also go to the available lawyers, to seek help with their asylum procedure.

If necessary people can get financial support from charity organizations, for dietary needs.

There are voluntary language courses in Czech language for all adults.

In some centres is a special room available for Muslims, to pray. Other religions have to practice their faith in local facilities. Including elderly people.

In every centre is an art class, daily opened. Also a tearoom, mostly run by asylum seekers themselves. Furthermore there are sport facilities, like sport school bicycles.

Transport during dispersal is mainly done by transportation from the centre [bus]

There is no training or education special for elderly people. If they want, they can make use of the facilities for adults [Czech language and art classes]

## **Disabled People:**

In all centres we visited, including the Detention Centre, were no disabled people staying.

However in all these centres, were special facilities available for disabled people, like bigger rooms, wheelchairs, adjustments in the bathrooms.

## **Victims of torture, rape and physical or psychological violence, victims of trauma and other people with mental health problems:**

The health screening takes place in the Reception Centre. This is mostly focused on physical health.

After this, every asylum seeker receives an invitation from the social worker in the first application centre. [Reception Centre] This social worker also explains that he can see a psychologist, who comes in several times a week. If necessary the asylum seeker is referred to a mental hospital. There is no special program available for victims of trauma and other people with mental health problems. However, in every asylum seekers centre, an art centre, music room, library, tearoom is available.

Staff who work there are focused on possible mental health problems and stimulate people to participate.

Furthermore people are prepared for and supported throughout the various stages of the asylum process by lawyers, interpreters and social workers, like other asylum seekers. There is no special program to support them.

## **Pregnant women, single parents with minor children, women and families:**

In every centre we visited we noticed that a green and grey zone existed.

This green zone is created specially for this group.

Single men are not allowed to go there and have to stay in the grey zone.

If they even try to enter the green zone, they can not enter the building, because this is guarded 24 hours.

Sometimes other people who are considered vulnerable are housed in the green zone, like UMA's from 16 or 17, or elderly people [also men]

Women have a choice if they want to stay in this area or not. Most of them do.

In every centre people receive a 'centre pass', this is no legal document, just to use in the asylum seekers centre. On this card it is also stated clearly in which zone one is staying.

For this group also separate hours are created to take breakfast, lunch, dinner and to take their pocket money.

There's also a possibility to learn to sew, a room with sewing machines is available. Mostly occupied by a volunteer who gives training to these ladies.

Other than this, pregnant women, single parents with minor children, women and families receive and make use of the same facilities than other groups.