

# 10<sup>th</sup> European Conference on the Reception of Asylum Seekers

*'Building a reception knowledge centre' · MALTA 5 - 7 March 2008*

## Opening speech by Karen Goodman

Head of Operation for Asylum, Kent County Council, UK  
(host of 2005 conference)

Thank you very much for inviting me to follow the ENARO tradition and formally hand over the hosting of the 10<sup>th</sup> ENARO conference to my colleague in Malta.

The previous conference was held in Kent at Canterbury in 2005, and hosted by Peter Gilroy the Chief Executive of KCC. Peter very much wanted to be here today but unfortunately is unable to join us, but he sends the conference his best wishes, and wanted me to convey the message that he is sure that the conference will be a wonderful success and progress cooperation and the sharing of best practice across the European network.

A significant point that Peter made three years ago was that if we could take just one idea for practical co-operation forward and turn it into reality then "Canterbury 2005" will have achieved a significant step forward. The "Hub" is a very significant outcome that has been taken forward from "Canterbury 2005", and this is clearly illustrated in today's programme, and I am sure it is an outcome that will continue to develop.

Naturally I do not want to steal Charles Watters thunder so I won't say too much about the Hub, but I must just mention the work of the exchange visits between staff and how valuable this is felt to be. In Kent we are now working on promoting this in other parts of the country and we hope very much to network other UK local authority asylum services into ENARO, and in particular help and encourage them to benefit from the exchange programme and information sharing.

The key themes of these next two days can be summarised as developing and sharing best practice on asylum reception and support, and in 2008 this continues to be necessary and highly relevant. Tragically, war, turmoil, poverty, and displacement are as prevalent as ever, and with the ongoing rise in the numbers of people moving around the globe, our European reception services continue to be an essential provision. For example in my own authority the numbers of unaccompanied asylum seeking children and young people entering at the Port of Dover, and in particular from Afghanistan and Iraq continue to rise; posing many challenges for our reception services.

In Kent we continue to work in partnership with Charles Watters and his colleagues from MASC and highly value and welcome the research and development of the HUB and the opportunity to build on the cooperation between the reception services in Europe

In this world of increasing temporary and permanent displacement and movement of people, improving and developing our reception arrangements knowledge and skill base are in crucial, and sharing and communicating this between services and countries in the spirit of true and real cooperation, assists us all in developing best practice to support asylum seekers, and places our work at the heart of EU policy development.

It gives me great pleasure to formally hand over to my colleague in Malta.