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PRESS RELEASE

Dublin mechanism: obstacle to future European asylum system

Today in Slovenia a group of interior ministers of the European Union ('Future Group') will be discussing plans for a Common European Asylum System (CEAS). ***“The Dublin system is inhumane, expensive, and does nothing to advance the harmonisation of EU asylum practices. Designed nearly twenty years ago, it is simply obsolete,”*** remarked ECRE Secretary General Bjarte Vandvik following the release of a new ECRE report on the Dublin system that seeks to inform the discussions of the Future Group.

The new report entitled *Sharing Responsibility for Refugee Protection in Europe: Dublin Reconsidered* highlights the inherent limitations and injustices of the Dublin system which transfers asylum seekers between EU Member States, and outlines alternative proposals for a fairer and more efficient system.

ECRE's report reveals that the current regime fails to respect refugees' rights, and is fundamentally flawed because it assumes that every EU state provides an equivalent level of protection, which is far from reality. While states try to assign responsibility, asylum seekers wait for many months with their claims unheard, and some claims are never heard. Vastly differing refugee recognition rates create an 'asylum lottery': for example, over 80% of Iraqi asylum claims succeed at first instance in some Member States, versus literally none in some others.

Under the Dublin system, as a general rule, the first EU Member State that an asylum seeker enters should be the one to examine the application. ECRE proposes identifying the Member State responsible for an asylum claim considering real connections between the individual and the Member State. Factors indicating such connections could include extended family ties, language skills, or education in a system similar to that of the proposed host state. This approach would facilitate greater integration, a top priority area for the Future Group.

As well as being unfair, the Dublin system is also inefficient, resource-intensive and an obstacle to genuine sharing of responsibility between Member States, thus undermining progress towards a Common European Asylum System.

The system costs millions of Euros to operate, and most agreed transfers are never carried out. The Dublin system places a much greater strain on the Member States near the EU's external borders, which often have less capacity to handle asylum claims, and therefore cannot

guarantee adequate reception conditions for refugees. While in 2005 Germany had a net outflow of 32 asylum cases, Poland saw its 2005 case load increase by 19% and Slovakia by 12%.

“Europe must act now to devise an efficient responsibility-sharing regime that serves European solidarity and promotes the integration of people who seek, and deserve, international protection. As long as the Dublin system continues in operation, Europe can never build a true Common Asylum System”, said Bjarte Vandvik.

Notes to Editors:

1. The European Council on Refugees & Exiles (ECRE) represents 63 refugee-assisting organisations throughout 28 European countries
2. *Sharing Responsibility for Refugee Protection in Europe: Dublin Reconsidered* will soon be available at www.ecre.org
3. In February 2007, the interior ministers of the European Union Member States set up a High-Level Advisory Group on the Future of European Home Affairs Policy (also known as the **Future Group**), which consists of the interior ministers of the current trio presidency (Germany, Portugal and Slovenia), the interior ministers of the upcoming trio presidency (France, Czech Republic and Sweden) and one minister of the subsequent trio presidency from early 2010 to June 2011 (Spain, Belgium and Hungary). The group also includes representatives from the European Commission and the EU Council General Secretariat.
4. **The Dublin system** is a mechanism for allocating responsibility to a Single Member State for processing an asylum claim. It establishes a hierarchy of criteria for identifying the responsible Member States and aims at ensuring that every asylum claim within the EU is examined by a Member state as well as preventing multiple asylum claims.
5. UNHCR, *Asylum in the European Union: A Study in the Implementation of the Qualification Directive*, November 2007, <http://www.unhcr.org/protect/PROTECTION/47302b6c2.pdf>

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