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Integration of refugees in times of critical pressure: learning from recent experience and examples of best practice

Summary of replies to the questionnaires sent to member and observer states on migration policies

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Introduction

1. In order to prepare the report on “Integration of refugees in times of critical pressure: learning from recent experience and examples of best practice” and at the suggestion of the rapporteur Ms Susanna Huovinen (Finland, SOC), a series of questions was sent to Council of Europe member states and observer states, requesting information on integration policy for refugees and migrants. Five questions were circulated via the network of the European Centre for Parliamentary Research and Documentation (ECPRD). A further six questions were circulated to the various national delegations to the Parliamentary Assembly.

2. Thirty-six states replied to one or both of the questionnaires. The compendium of replies thus provides a fairly comprehensive and up-to-date picture of national policies for integrating refugees. Not all of the states answered all of the questions, however.¹ This document contains a brief summary of the replies to the questionnaire sent by the ECPRD, for ease of reference and comprehension, and provides more examples, in addition to those already included in the report’s explanatory memorandum. It highlights common practices across states regarding the integration of refugees and the main differences, together with good practices that ought to be encouraged.

1. Public authorities which play a role in the integration of refugees [at national or local level, in a co-ordinating or supervisory capacity]

3. It appears from the replies that at national level, responsibility for refugee reception and integration at this particular time is almost always assigned to at least one ministry. As stated in the report,² success in this area requires that politicians show the feasibility and desirability of integrating refugees, not least in order to persuade the general population, who have a role to play here. In some states, a single ministry is involved, such as the Ministry of Interior in **Albania**,³ or the Ministry of Employment in **Sweden**.⁴ Other respondents mention several

¹ States which answered all the questions: Greece, Hungary, Lithuania, “the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia”. States which answered the first 5 questions: Albania, Austria, Azerbaijan, Canada (observer), Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Georgia, Germany, Ireland, Latvia, Republic of Moldova, Montenegro, Norway, Portugal, Romania, Serbia, Slovakia, Sweden, Switzerland.

States which answered the last 7 questions: Belgium, Liechtenstein, Slovenia, United Kingdom.

States which did not reply: Andorra, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Iceland, Italy, Luxembourg, Malta, Monaco, Netherlands, Russian Federation, San Marino, Turkey, Ukraine.

Specific cases: Armenia: question 6 only / Poland: question 5 only / Spain: questions 1 to 6.

² See the report, paragraph 7.

³ See document AS/Mig/Inf (2017) 15, page 3.

⁴ Ibid., page 104.

ministries, as in **Croatia** (Ministry of Interior, Ministry of Health, Ministry of Labour)⁵ or the **Czech Republic** (Finance, Culture, Social Affairs).⁶ A few states have specialised ministries. **Denmark**, for example, has a Ministry of Immigration and Integration,⁷ while **Greece** has a Ministry of Migration Policy.⁸ A few other countries have specialised national bodies, as in the case of **Hungary** with its Immigration and Asylum Office,⁹ or **Germany** with its Federal Office for Migration and Refugees.¹⁰

4. At local level, many states seem to have handed some of the responsibility for integrating refugees to the municipalities. Others delegate this task to more specialised agencies. The advantages of such an approach include greater responsiveness to the actual conditions on the ground, greater flexibility and more efficient allocation of tasks and responsibilities. In **France**, for example, *l'Office français de l'immigration et de l'intégration (OFII)*¹¹ has been operating since 2009. Under the supervision of the Interior Ministry, OFII conducts an initial assessment of applications for asylum and family reunification, and can also confer temporary status, enabling individuals to receive certain basic services such as free medical treatment. Similarly, **Portugal**, according to the report, has set up 49 local immigrant support centres,¹² attached to national centres. It should also be noted that while many states do not have specialised government agencies of this kind, often civil society, including NGOs, performs a similar role.

5. In many cases, then, the activities of national and local authorities are supplemented by those of civil society. The report¹³ points out that "One drawback to the spontaneity and independence of civil society projects can be a lack of co-ordination, with the risk of duplication and missed synergies". In some states, therefore, the authorities are tasked with overall co-ordination and supervision. In **Romania**, for example, the Ministry of Interior performs this function via its Inspectorate General for Immigration and its regional subdivisions,¹⁴ while in **Estonia** a Co-ordination Council of Refugee Policy¹⁵ was set up in 2015, bringing together officials from most of the ministries involved, the police, including the border police, and the Office of the President of the Republic. In **Finland**, the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment is responsible for co-ordinating immigrant integration policy and the relevant legislation, as well as promoting the employment of immigrants.

6. In **Cyprus**, a multifunctional task force in charge of integration has been set up to jointly examine various aspects of migration and asylum while in the **Czech Republic**, the authority in charge of refugee facilities performs a similar role. In **Portugal**, the ethnic diversity of Portuguese residents and a real awareness of the need to counter demographic decline have helped to temper hostility and mistrust of new arrivals. Government-led voluntary mentoring schemes also encourage individual citizens to take on an active role in helping refugees to integrate and thereby feel some responsibility for their well-being.

2. Specific legal basis for integration policy [national, local]

7. **Nearly all states (except for Ireland, it appears) have at least one law on the reception and integration of migrants**, which deals with reception conditions and procedure, and the rights and obligations of migrants. Various situations are worth noting: in the current context of "critical pressure", some states have kept the same legal framework as before. Consider, for example, the "**Cyprus Refugee Law**"¹⁶ of 2000, which sets out the rights of beneficiaries of international protection (refugee status, subsidiary protection or temporary protection), or **Denmark's** "Integration Act"¹⁷ of 1999, as revised in 2013, which sets out the process to be followed regarding refugee reception and family reunification.

⁵ *ibid.*, page 25.

⁶ *ibid.*, page 28.

⁷ *ibid.*, page 32.

⁸ *ibid.*, page 49.

⁹ *ibid.*, page 54.

¹⁰ *ibid.*, page 45.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, pages 40 and 41.

¹² See the report, paragraph 20.

¹³ *Ibid.*, paragraph 23.

¹⁴ See document AS/Mig/Inf (2017) 15, page 91.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, pages 34 and 35.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, page 27.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, page 32.

8. Other states have introduced new instruments as and when necessary. In November 2015, for example, the **Czech Republic** adopted a new “State Integration Programme”,¹⁸ as amended in January 2017, which involves creating opportunities for new arrivals to learn the language and obtain housing. To give another example, **Montenegro** enacted a new law in December 2016 on the granting of international and temporary protection to refugees,¹⁹ which will supersede the 2006 “Law on Asylum” when it enters into force in January 2018.

9. It is interesting to note that some states have gone beyond the ordinary legislation in their integration policies, drawing, in these times of large-scale migration, on other kinds of instruments such as temporary national action plans. “**The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia**”, for instance, explains that its 2013 national action plan²⁰ specifies the content and procedure for implementing various integration measures in key areas for refugees in precarious circumstances, such as housing or employment. In **Latvia**, the Ministry of Culture is currently preparing an action plan on social integration which will provide guidelines for the next seven years.

3. Access to integration measures for asylum seekers

3.1. *At what stage in the process of status determination [before or after]? Under what conditions? Are exceptions made when the asylum process takes a particularly long time?*

10. The rules on integration and access to integration for refugees vary significantly. **Many states make basic provision available as soon as the application for asylum is made**,²¹ which is to be welcomed because, as the report explains,²² “failure to meet these needs may put the authorities in breach of their legal obligations”.²³ The measures involve mainly health and welfare provision, decent housing, schooling and family reunification.²⁴ **Portugal**, for example, offers asylum seekers who do not have economic and social resources²⁵ support for accommodation and food, and access to the National Health Service and the education system on the same terms as Portuguese nationals and other nationals for whom Portuguese is not their mother tongue.²⁶ France provides financial support, access to medical treatment and access to education for family members under the age of 16.²⁷

11. *Some states have gone further, already offering at this stage other equally important integration measures which in many countries are not accessible until later.* For example, language learning and learning about the culture of the country are essential for anyone wishing to integrate into a new society so **Slovakia** asks refugees to attend language and culture classes twice a week,²⁸ while the United Kingdom provides courses on British culture, local life, and the relevant rights and duties.²⁹ It is important to note that few states mention psychological support for refugees, most of whom have nevertheless suffered traumatic experiences. **Greece** is an exception in this respect,³⁰ as is **Belgium** where psychological and social support is available through the “Centres for General Welfare”.³¹ A handful of states offer measures at this stage to facilitate the integration of vulnerable persons such as unaccompanied minors. **Belgium** provides specialist supervised accommodation, separating children from adults, and has introduced a system of host families.³² **Hungary** explains that, among

¹⁸ Ibid., pages 28 and 29.

¹⁹ Ibid., page 81.

²⁰ Ibid., pages 115 and 116, in reply to question 6.

²¹ A few states, such as Slovakia (ibid., page 96), report that such provision is available from the reception phase. The process of applying for asylum, however, is initiated shortly after reception, usually in special centres.

²² See the report, paragraph 31.

²³ Under, *inter alia*, the European Convention on Human Rights, decisions of the European Court of Human Rights, Council resolutions or the European Social Charter (http://www.coe.int/en/web/conventions/full-list/-/conventions/treaty/035/signatures?p_auth=w6HzKHoS).

²⁴ For more on this subject, see paragraphs 18 to 22 below.

²⁵ This is often one of the criteria used to distinguish refugees from economic migrants.

²⁶ See document AS/Mig/Inf (2017) 15, page 90.

²⁷ Ibid., page 42.

²⁸ Ibid., page 96.

²⁹ Ibid., page 118.

³⁰ Ibid., page 49.

³¹ Ibid., page 12, in reply to question 6.

³² Ibid., page 12, in reply to question 8.

other things, unaccompanied minors are entitled to be provided with meals, clothing, health care, education and respect for their culture and traditions, including religious ones.³³

12. Access to the labour market is instrumental in the integration of refugees. Whereas in the past, the right to work was very often conditional on obtaining refugee status, which could take a long time, nowadays ***the tendency is to grant asylum seekers increasingly rapid access to employment***. It is stated in the report³⁴ that such measures are nearly always subject to conditions. Yet while there is a potential risk of abuse of the asylum system and imbalance in relation to national workers, such measures can be of major benefit both to the host country, economically and socially speaking, and to the refugees in need, whose motivation is still very high at this point. The most common practice is to stipulate a minimum waiting period for access to the labour market. In the **Czech Republic**, for example, refugees have to wait six months before they can apply for a work permit.³⁵ In **Portugal**, access to employment is conditional on obtaining a provisional residence permit.³⁶ This waiting period also affords an opportunity to ensure that the refugee is properly prepared for working in a new country. That can include teaching them the language, evaluating their skills and qualifications, or providing pre-job training. In Portugal, once the application for asylum has been made, refugees can sign up for schemes providing professional training and help with job-seeking.³⁷ **Slovakia** collects details of the level of education, career to date, language skills and interests for the purposes of integration while the refugees are still in the reception centres.³⁸

13. ***Applicants who have been granted refugee status then have access to the full range of integration measures offered by the government***, with most states offering a number of measures in addition to those available to non-refugees. In **France**, migrants who hold a residence permit, in their new capacity as refugees, are now covered by the same rules as those applicable to aliens and even, in some cases, by more generous arrangements, regarding family reunification for example.³⁹ The **Czech Republic** offers extra provision in the form of one year's accommodation in a separate unit in a centre (such stays are not obligatory), language, civic education, culture and democracy classes, advice on housing and employment, opportunities to retrain and full health insurance.⁴⁰ Individuals are also offered an individual integration plan.⁴¹

14. As regards those few states which do not offer any provision before status determination and those which do but subject to conditions,⁴² we have to wonder about the quality of life of asylum seekers in these countries. **Norway**, for example, makes it very clear that, save in the case of language and culture classes which only very recently became available to individuals whose status has not yet been determined, entitlement to integration measures is conditional on determination of status and that, to its knowledge, there are no exceptions.⁴³ **Serbia**, in its reply, mentions only integration measures aimed at migrants whose status has already been determined, whether as regards obtaining identity papers, equal status, or respect for various civic and civil rights.⁴⁴ This is less of an issue if the time required for status determination is short but in **France**, for example, the process takes on average between 6 and 21 months,⁴⁵ so some basic measures to promote integration during this waiting period would seem to be essential. Judging by the replies, this is not the case in Hungary, Switzerland, Spain, Croatia and Montenegro.

15. One increasingly common practice is to ***target certain integration measures at applicants who have a good chance of being granted refugee status***. To determine whether that is the case, governments look first at the recognition rate among applicants from the same country. **Austria**, for instance, which used not to offer any provision in the pre-status determination phase, now allows people in this position to attend German and

³³ Ibid., page 63, in reply to question 8.

³⁴ See the report, paragraph 42.

³⁵ See document AS/Mig/Inf (2017) 15, page 29.

³⁶ Ibid., page 90.

³⁷ Ibid., page 90.

³⁸ Ibid., page 96.

³⁹ Ibid., page 42.

⁴⁰ Ibid., pages 30 and 31.

⁴¹ For more on this subject, see paragraph 25 below.

⁴² This is often the case with access to the labour market, for example.

⁴³ See document AS/Mig/Inf (2017) 15, page 87.

⁴⁴ Ibid., page 94.

⁴⁵ Ibid., page 42, footnote.

civic education classes, and to be employed as seasonal workers in agriculture, forestry, fishing and tourism.⁴⁶ Such practices are not confined to countries where long processing times pose a problem in integration. They are growing in popularity because they make it possible to better identify the refugees who need to be integrated. **Germany**, for example, in addition to the usual provision, allows people in this category to attend up to 600 hours of language and civic education classes and grants them access to employment after only a 3-month waiting period.⁴⁷

16. Another (less common) practice is to stipulate **a maximum period beyond which applicants are entitled to predefined measures whatever stage their application is at**. Estonia, for example, allows applicants to enter the labour market if, 6 months after the start of the procedure, their status has still not been determined.⁴⁸ In **Slovakia**, the maximum period is 9 months.⁴⁹ The issue of time-frames is still not really recognised, with Austria, for example, clearly stating that the duration of asylum procedures is not taken into account in the integration process.⁵⁰

17. Lastly there is the issue of integrating migrants who do not qualify for official refugee status. Many governments confer the subsidiary protection status provided for by the European Union. In **France**, this is granted to applicants who can show that if they returned to their country of origin, they would be at risk of the death penalty or execution, torture, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment or would face a serious and individual threat to their life or person.⁵¹ Persons who hold this status, therefore, are generally entitled to virtually all the integration measures available to refugees. **Hungary** explains that beneficiaries of subsidiary protection must have the same rights and responsibilities as refugees, with two exceptions: they do not have the right to vote⁵² and they do not qualify for the preferential conditions applicable to refugees with regard to naturalisation.⁵³

18. Secondly, under Article 33 of the Geneva Convention, governments cannot return a migrant to a country where their life or freedom would be threatened. **Switzerland**⁵⁴ and **Denmark**⁵⁵ accordingly indicate that failed asylum seekers will nevertheless be granted temporary protection, which in turn entitles them to certain minimum integration measures, including a temporary residence permit. In Europe, this arrangement is partly implemented through an EU Council directive⁵⁶ of 2001, according to which temporary protection in EU member states may be granted for one year, and extended by up to two years, in cases of armed conflict or violence, or serious and repeated human rights violations. The scheme is not widely used, especially in countries that offer subsidiary protection. In France, for example, there have been no cases to date of individuals being granted temporary protection. **We note that, in practice, civil society is always on hand to provide support and even compensate for the shortcomings of governments where the integration of refugees is concerned.**⁵⁷ As has already been pointed out, however, integration can only really succeed if policy makers themselves are willing to guide it.

19. One last issue concerns the integration of migrants who are in the country unlawfully. Although it was not included in the questionnaire, a few countries did nevertheless touch on this subject in their replies. **Greece**, for example, does not allow people in this category access to basic measures such as education, health care or employment, except in the case of children who “are not excluded from schooling until the return of their families to their country of origin.”⁵⁸ Individuals in this situation thus have to make the difficult choice between remaining in the country unlawfully, without access to basic provision, and returning to the country they left, and then trying to come back, this time by legal means. Conversely, the United Kingdom, which is in a minority here, says that it accords to people in this category the same treatment as is accorded to those who are in the country lawfully.⁵⁹

⁴⁶ Ibid., page 7.

⁴⁷ Cited in the report, paragraphs 41 and 42.

⁴⁸ See document AS/Mig/Inf (2017) 15, page 36.

⁴⁹ Ibid., page 96.

⁵⁰ Ibid., page 7.

⁵¹ <https://www.service-public.fr/particuliers/vosdroits/F299>

⁵² In Hungary, refugees have the right to vote in municipal elections, “majors” and local referenda.

⁵³ See document AS/Mig/Inf (2017) 15, page 55, in reply to question 6.

⁵⁴ Ibid., page 110.

⁵⁵ Ibid., page 33.

⁵⁶ Directive 2001/55/CE : <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/HTML/?uri=LEGISSUM:I33124&from=FR>

⁵⁷ See the report, paragraph 22.

⁵⁸ See document AS/Mig/Inf (2017) 15, page 49.

⁵⁹ Ibid., page 117.

3.2. Access to family reunification

20. ***It appears from the replies that the vast majority of states allow family reunification***, with only a handful failing to address the subject in the questionnaire. Of the former, however, not all are equally effective at implementing the arrangement, despite the fact that, as explained in the report,⁶⁰ family reunification is an essential prerequisite for successful integration without which refugees will not be mentally and emotionally committed to the process. Generally speaking, family reunification is intended primarily for nuclear families. According to **Slovakia**,⁶¹ reunification is first and foremost for spouses who were already married in the country of origin and who are still married, and for their children, in particular those under the age of 18 years at the time of the application, adopted or other, whether the intention is to bring them to Slovakia or to join them there. A few states have gone further: **Austria** allows reunification in the case of civil partners;⁶² **Slovakia** specifically refers to new-borns,⁶³ and **Canada** also allows family reunification in the case of unmarried partners and grandparents.⁶⁴ In some countries, reunification is subject to certain conditions such as proof of adequate housing and health insurance whereas in other countries, such as **France**,⁶⁵ no such tests apply.

21. Some conditions are common to many countries. ***Foremost of these is the requirement that the person in question must not present a threat to the country.*** **Albania** insists that the person must never have endangered public safety, national security or public health or submitted false documents or information.⁶⁶ **Georgia** extends the list to include never having committed a crime against humanity, a war crime, a crime against peace or an offence against the aims and principles of the United Nations.⁶⁷ Some states, such as **Germany**,⁶⁸ require in certain cases that refugees applying for family reunification possess housing, income and even health insurance sufficient to ensure that the family does not become a burden on the state.

22. Despite being of crucial importance, family reunification is seldom available immediately upon applying for asylum. **Greece**⁶⁹ is one of the few countries where that is the case. ***The vast majority of states, including Romania⁷⁰ and Ireland,⁷¹ do not allow family reunification until after the person has obtained international protection status***, whether refugee status or subsidiary protection. In some countries such as **Sweden** (as of July 2016) and **Denmark**, individuals cannot apply for family reunification unless they hold a residence permit.⁷² The risk then is that, as mentioned early, the waiting times can be very long. And it seems there are few measures in place that might mitigate the harmful effects of family reunification being delayed, or not occurring at all.

23. Unusually, **Lithuania** allows family reunification before status is determined, although onerous conditions apply: the migrant must have resided in Lithuania for the last two years, hold a temporary residence permit valid for at least one year and have reasonable prospects of obtaining a permanent residence permit.⁷³ Next, in terms of special arrangements to facilitate the procedure, a few states such as **Norway** allow individuals to apply for reunification before their status is determined,⁷⁴ to save time, and the final decision is made later, after status determination. **Georgia** reports that, once international protection status has been granted, family reunification will take place no later than in the year following the one in which the application was made,⁷⁵ whereas **Latvia** directly stipulates a maximum period for status determination, namely 10 months, including the appeal period,⁷⁶ and often family reunification cannot begin until that procedure has been completed.

⁶⁰ See the report, paragraphs 34 and 35.

⁶¹ See document AS/Mig/Inf (2017) 15, page 96.

⁶² *Ibid.*, page 7.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, page 96.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, page 19.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, page 42.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, page 3.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, page 43.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, page 47.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, page 49.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, page 92.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, page 67.

⁷² *Ibid.*, page 32.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, page 74.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, page 87.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, page 43.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, page 68.

24. It will also be observed that in the many countries which allow subsidiary protection status to be granted if the person does not qualify as a refugee, eligibility for family reunification is subject to more conditions. In **Latvia**, persons who have been granted subsidiary protection must reside in the country for at least two years before they are eligible for family reunification,⁷⁷ while in **Austria** the qualifying period is three years.⁷⁸ In **Sweden**, under the terms of an act which came into force in July 2016 and will apply for three years,⁷⁹ migrants who have subsidiary protection status and who did not apply for reunification by 24 November 2015 can no longer do so.⁸⁰ In the other states where subsidiary protection status is available, the conditions and rights are the same as for refugees, including where family reunification is concerned (in **Slovakia**, for example).⁸¹ Very few states mention temporary protection status, which was introduced recently. **Denmark**⁸² and **Switzerland**⁸³ are exceptions in this regard, with both reporting that persons in this category can apply for family reunification after 3 years' residence in the country.

4. Particular actions which refugees are expected or required to undertake as part of the integration process

25. It appears from the answers to the questionnaire that many governments require refugees to meet some general conditions which in fact apply to anyone living in the country. **Croatia**, for example, requires compliance with the country's Constitution and laws.⁸⁴ **Estonia** further requires an understanding of certain values and principles such as freedom, justice and the law, and the country's history and culture.⁸⁵ Some countries impose more specific criteria: **Ireland** requires refugees to attend a language training and orientation programme,⁸⁶ while **Austria** further requires them to enter the labour market and to be generally "responsible".⁸⁷

26. A few states also mention procedural requirements. **Spain** expects refugees to co-operate fully with the authorities, to submit any documents that could provide evidence of age, identity, nationality, places of former residence, previous applications for international protection, journey itineraries, travel documents and reasons for applying for international protection. They must provide fingerprints, agree to be photographed and give their address in Spain.⁸⁸ **Canada** requires refugees to undergo a medical examination, enrol for a course of studies or register as a job-seeker, or apply for coverage under the "Interim Federal Health Program".⁸⁹

27. *It is interesting to note that a few states, like Greece,⁹⁰ do not seem to require anything of refugees, with everything being done on an own-volition basis.* Some countries, however, such as **France**⁹¹ and the **Czech Republic**,⁹² which are similar to Greece in this respect, ask refugees to participate voluntarily in the preparation and implementation of an integration "contract" or "plan". This seems to be an increasingly common procedure in member states, and involves agreeing on a number of steps to be followed, with the aim of helping the refugee to integrate on a practical level in the local area. **Finland**, for example, explains that this generally means acquiring the knowledge and skills required to live in the community and to work.⁹³ **Denmark** reports that the contract contains a description of the educational and labour-oriented targets and the necessary activities to ensure that the objectives are met, such as job training or subsidised employment or any other initiative designed to improve the person's skills.⁹⁴

⁷⁷ Ibid., pages 68 and 69.

⁷⁸ Ibid., page 7.

⁷⁹ "The purpose of the act is that Swedish asylum regulations be temporarily brought into line with the minimum level in EU law and international conventions".

⁸⁰ Ibid., page 106.

⁸¹ Ibid., page 96.

⁸² Ibid., page 33.

⁸³ Ibid., page 110.

⁸⁴ Ibid., page 26.

⁸⁵ Ibid., pages 36 and 37.

⁸⁶ Ibid., page 67.

⁸⁷ Ibid., page 7.

⁸⁸ Ibid., page 101.

⁸⁹ Ibid., pages 21 and 22.

⁹⁰ Ibid., page 49.

⁹¹ Ibid., page 42.

⁹² Ibid., page 31.

⁹³ Ibid., page 39.

⁹⁴ Ibid., pages 33 and 34.

5. The conditions under which refugees may apply for and be granted citizenship

28. ***It appears that none of the countries which answered this question prevent refugees from applying for citizenship on the sole ground of their status.*** So refugees are almost always subject to the ordinary rules on naturalisation, which apply to all foreigners.

29. There are, however, a few notable differences. Firstly, as regards the number of years of residence in the country, in **Lithuania** the qualifying period is 10 years⁹⁵ whereas the average is around 5 years, and **Hungary** requires only three years.⁹⁶ Secondly, depending on the country's laws concerning dual nationality, some states such as **Austria**⁹⁷ and **Georgia**⁹⁸ require refugees to renounce their other nationality. Depending on the rules in the country of origin, that might mean giving up the possibility of one day returning there to live.

30. ***Lastly, it is interesting to note that a few states have chosen to relax their rules depending on what steps are taken by the applicants, and their circumstances.*** **Germany**, for example, reports that applicants who take part in integration schemes have a greater chance of being granted German citizenship. The 8-year qualifying period may be reduced to 7 or even, if the person makes outstanding efforts at integration, especially in terms of language proficiency, 6 years.⁹⁹ In **Latvia**, refugees can apply for naturalisation after residing in the country with a residence permit for five years, whereas the qualifying period for other persons is 10 years.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁵ Ibid., page 74.

⁹⁶ Ibid., page 56.

⁹⁷ Ibid., page 7.

⁹⁸ Ibid., page 44.

⁹⁹ Ibid., page 48.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., page 69.