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**The UN Refugee Agency**

Policy Development and Evaluation Service

# **Evaluation of Emergency Transit Centres in Romania and the Slovak Republic**

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## **Policy Development and Evaluation Service**

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## Acronyms

AWR	Women and Girls at Risk
CHL	Children and Adolescents at Risk
COA	Centraal Orgaan Asielzoekers (Central Organ Asylum Seekers)
CoA	Country of Asylum
CoO	Country of Origin
COP	Country Operations Plan
CoR	Country of Resettlement
DHS	Department of Homeland Security (US government)
EC	European Commission
ETC	Emergency Transit Centre
ETF	Evacuation Transit Facility
ETM	Emergency Transit Mechanism
ETP	Centre for Sustainable Development (The Slovak Republic implementing partner)
EU	European Union
FAM	Family Reunification
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
GTR	Generati Tanara Romania
IOM	International Organization for Migration
IP	Implementing Partner
LAS	Lack of Foreseeable Alternative Durable Solutions
LGBTI	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Intersex
LLIP	Lack of Local Integration Prospects
LPN	Legal and/or Physical Protection Needs
MED	Medical Needs
MIAR	Ministry of Interior and Administrative Reform (Romania)
MoU	Memorandum of Understanding
RRCE	Regional Representation Central Europe
RRF	Resettlement Registration Form
RSC	Resettlement Service Centre (US)
SOP	Standard Operating Procedure
SVT	Survivors of Violence and/or Torture
UNOPS	United Nations Office for Project Services

## Map, Tables, Graphs, Box

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# Slovakia and Romania

## Emergency transit centres for resettlement

as of 06 Apr 2016



The boundaries and names shown and the designations used on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the United Nations.

## Executive summary

1. The Emergency Transit Centres were established to provide emergency protection and the possibility to evacuate refugees who could not be protected in their countries of asylum. Temporary relocation of refugees who required resettlement on an urgent or emergency basis to an Evacuation Transit Facility (ETF) was expected to serve five objectives, namely:

Provide timely and effective protection to an individual or group of individuals of concern to UNHCR;

  - Demonstrate a tangible form of burden- and responsibility-sharing, enabling States not otherwise involved in emergency resettlement to accept cases from an ETF;
  - Enable officials from UNHCR and resettlement countries to undertake interviews in a stable, safe and secure environment;
  - Promote the subsequent realization of the durable solution of permanent resettlement; and
  - Encourage States hosting ETFs to become involved in resettlement.
2. To date, three ETFs have become operational, namely the Emergency Transit Centres (ETCs) in Romania in 2008 and the Slovak Republic in 2011(although the Tri-Partite Agreement was signed in 2010), and the Emergency Transit Mechanism (ETM) in the Philippines in 2009. The ETCs are managed on the basis of Tri-Partite Agreements signed by their hosting governments, UNHCR and IOM. The ETC in Timisoara, Romania, can accommodate a maximum of 200 refugees, whereas the one in Humenné, Slovak Republic, a total of 150 refugees (from mid-2012 onwards). As of 30 September 2015, 1,717 refugees had departed from the ETC in Timisoara, and 797 refugees from Humenné to resettlement countries. Since 2012, the main resettlement countries using the two centres are the USA, the UK, the Netherlands, Canada and Finland, with the USA the sole resettlement country using Humenné since 2013.
3. At the request of UNHCR's Resettlement Service in the Division of International Protection UNHCR's Policy Development and Evaluation Service commissioned an evaluation of the ETCs in Romania and the Slovak Republic. As the ETCs have been in place for seven (Timisoara) and four years (Humenné) respectively, the evaluation presented UNHCR with an opportunity to assess whether the objectives set out at their establishment have been met. A comparative approach was used to assess the functioning of the two ETCs. The evaluation's main findings should inform the development of strategies to meet emergency resettlement needs. Additionally, the results of the evaluation contribute to reflections on minimum standards and on whether the ETCs should continue with the same or similar objectives, or if there are other objectives that could lead to enhanced protection dividends for refugees.
4. The evaluation team was composed of one PDES staff member and one external evaluation consultant.
5. The ETCs in Timisoara, Romania, and in Humenné, Slovak Republic, have been relevant and appropriate for UNHCR, IOM, the ETC-hosting governments, resettlement countries and refugees. The ETCs offer a mechanism to UNHCR to provide a safe environment for refugees pending resettlement processing, including those classified under emergency or urgent priority, and to realize the durable solution of resettlement. While the number of refugees with emergency prioritization is small relative to the total number of refugees transferred to the centres, interlocutors described the ETCs as "life-saving" and "indispensable" for those few high-profile or high-risk refugees. This function for the most compelling protection cases is seen as core to UNHCR's protection mandate.
6. The centres also have an advocacy function. This is of pivotal importance to UNHCR and the hosting countries, as the agency must be seen to be able to respond immediately to life-threatening situations to provide immediate protection. Although the overall contribution to global resettlement figures is small, the positive change brought about by the immediate safety and security (and access to basic services) and the overall realization of resettlement for hundreds of refugees has considerable value. In the evaluation period from the beginning of 2012 until 30 September, 2015 a total of 1,568 refugees were resettled through the two ETCs. The life-saving

dimension in compelling protection cases is seen as vital even if there are very few emergency cases.

7. Moreover, ETCs provided resettlement countries (and the IOM as part of its Resettlement Service Centre function for the US-government) access to refugees to undertake activities necessary to complete the resettlement process, including the selection of municipalities in resettlement countries. Some countries, in particular the US, are unable to process emergency cases due to long and complicated state procedures. The existence of the ETCs allows the US to process resettlement cases of persons who have been evacuated, and thereby increase accessibility of resettlement to some refugees, even if not on an emergency basis. The centre in Humenné has gradually expanded into one which solely caters to US-government processing, while only Timisoara has received emergency cases due to the shorter Romanian government clearance, and the absence of visa requirements. For the ETC-hosting governments, Romania and the Slovak Republic, the centres provided an opportunity to show their solidarity with countries hosting large refugee case-loads, while neither providing a permanent home to larger groups of refugees nor carrying all the operational costs of these centres.
8. While the coverage of the ETCs is in principle global, only refugees of some nationalities and countries of first asylum have been accommodated in the centres. *Ad hoc* planning and the obstacles experienced by some resettlement countries in the process of adjudication or completion of resettlement procedures, including selecting municipalities, has generally driven the use of ETCs. Most of the refugees transferred to the ETCs were resettled to the USA or the UK.
9. Male and female refugees of all age groups have been transferred to the ETCs, although some restrictions have been imposed with respect to refugees with high medical needs, including serious mental health needs due to limitations of the ETCs with respect to providing services to persons with high medical needs. There have also been challenges in providing accommodation to Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Intersex (LGBTI) refugees. Since 2014, Iraqi refugees from Syria for resettlement to the USA are no longer transferred due to the refusal of already pre-vetted cases during the period 2012 - 2014. This has resulted in traumatic experiences for the concerned refugees, as three of them have remained in Timisoara since 2012 without a durable solution. Although alternative resettlement countries have been found for most of the rejected cases, this created an extra burden for UNHCR as well as delays for the concerned refugees.
10. The efficiency of the ETC operations in Timisoara and Humenné was assessed from different angles, namely UNHCR and IP staffing, budgets, and utilization of capacity including the "pipeline".
11. The centres are respectively under the supervision of the UNHCR Country Representative in Bucharest, and the UNHCR Deputy Regional Representative of the Regional Representative Office for Central Europe (RRCE) in Budapest. The resulting reporting lines and management of the budgets has led to limited coordination to ensure commonalities in approach in terms of staffing and assistance provided. Thus, in Timisoara, three UNHCR staff (with UNHCR or UNOPS contracts) work in the centre. In the Slovak Republic, the only UNHCR staff member manages the centre on a UNOPS contract. The difference in ETC-level staffing cannot be fully justified on the basis of their capacity. The above has also led to different budgets and variations in IP capacity, responsibilities and assistance, with the division of responsibilities between the different actors in Timisoara resulting in an overstretched IP with reduced capacity for counseling and other refugee-oriented activities.
12. As the host countries' contributions are different in each of the ETCs, the contribution of UNHCR also differs, the biggest difference being that UNHCR pays the food costs in Timisoara, which amounted to between 40-49% of total expenditures in the period 2012-2014. The overall expenditures for Timisoara, excluding food costs ranged from USD 621,700 in 2012, USD 654,900 in 2013 to USD 657,000 in 2014. If food costs are included, the annual costs are USD 1,031,000 in 2012, USD 1,278,100 in 2013, USD 1,195,800 in 2014 and USD 1,157,000 in 2015. The ETC requires 51% (2015) to 60% (2012, 2013) of the total budget for the Romania operation. The overall expenditure for Humenné was USD 406,700 in 2012, USD 747,800 in 2013, USD 979,900 in 2014, and USD 666,700 in 2015 (first 11 months).

13. The underutilization of the ETCs was regularly raised as a concern by interlocutors. Their occupancy rate has historically been relatively low. The average daily occupancy rate for Timisoara is between one third to one half, and for Humenné approximately half of its capacity. Considering the nature of emergency case handling, and the flexibility this requires, the ETCs must always have space available to receive cases with serious protection needs. However, the planning documents for the ETCs do not allocate a specific number of spaces for emergency evacuations. In addition, the turnover of refugees has been slower than envisaged, with some refugees submitted to the US overstaying the maximum period of six months. The overwhelming majority of refugees stay an average of four to five months. Capacity has generally been viewed in terms of the available number of beds instead of in relation to site and shelter space available.
14. Minimum standards for ETCs have not been developed. The application of minimum humanitarian standards in the areas of shelter confirms that the centres would not fully comply with these criteria if used to capacity. As the ETCs have become a semi-permanent response mechanism in the resettlement process, it is necessary to consider developing minimum standards for ETCs to guarantee the well-being of refugees. These standards should be based for example on the Sphere minimum humanitarian standards for shelter and non-food items.<sup>1</sup> The standards should also take into account the objectives of preparing refugees for life in a resettlement country.
15. The Romanian government has received funds from the EU to upgrade an existing facility to house the ETC. Work is expected to begin in 2016 so that refugees could be accommodated in 2017. It is imperative that UNHCR seize the opportunity to be involved at the planning stage of this process in order to ensure that the physical set-up is conducive to providing adequate assistance and protection, and to preparing refugees for resettlement. Some input into planning would also allow cost-savings if, for example, kitchens were included so that refugees could cook for themselves.
16. The utilization of the ETCs has also been viewed in connection with the selection of refugees, and the process of obtaining clearances and organizing the transfer to one of the centres. The ETCs are directly linked to UNHCR's global resettlement operation through the ETC focal point in the Resettlement Service, UNHCR headquarters. UNHCR Field Offices and Regional Resettlement Hubs are vital in identifying refugees for whom transfer to the ETC is an appropriate solution. Yet not all resettlement staff are aware of the existence of these facilities or know how to use these centres. This can be partially attributed to outdated guidance notes and a gap between vision and practice, which has led to different views on the usage of these centres.
17. The underutilization of the ETCs is also a consequence of the use of emergency priority quota and/or a direct transfer to the resettlement country, which is the preferred option for all parties. Other obstacles include lengthy exit procedures of some countries of asylum, and a bureaucratic and lengthy process to organize the transfer of cases. Additionally, the part-time nature of the ETC focal point at headquarters does not encourage a more pro-active advocacy role.
18. There are some differences in the provision of protection and assistance in the two ETCs. The major protection deficit noted by the evaluation team was the application of "limited freedom of movement" in Romania. Article 2 (2) of the Tri-Partite Agreement states that refugees "shall be required to reside in the ETC facility designated by the Romanian government." This provision has been implemented in a manner that restricts freedom of movement of refugees as they are not permitted to leave the centre unless escorted by the implementing partner. This limitation is extremely frustrating for refugees and leads to a degree of institutionalization.
19. While most of the refugees interviewed during the mission were satisfied with the standards of assistance offered, they felt that their lives in the ETC were on hold and many expressed a desire to have a "normal" life and to move on quickly from the ETC. Especially in Timisoara, concerns were expressed regarding the difficulties arising from living with many other refugees in a relatively small area, including sharing rooms with other families and/or individuals, the limited to

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<sup>1</sup> Minimum Standards in Shelter, Settlement and Non-Food Items,  
[http://www.ifrc.org/PageFiles/95884/D.01.02.a.%20SPHERE%20Chap.%204-%20shelter%20and%20NFIs\\_%20English.pdf](http://www.ifrc.org/PageFiles/95884/D.01.02.a.%20SPHERE%20Chap.%204-%20shelter%20and%20NFIs_%20English.pdf)

no freedom of movement, few opportunities for leisure and language training for adults, and a general sense of boredom. This has produced a living environment in which stress and tensions between individuals can more easily build up. Overall, the services provided in Humenné were more comprehensive than in Timisoara. This was reflected in the level of satisfaction expressed by refugees during the focus group discussions.

20. Resettlement is by definition a partnership activity. Cooperation with external stakeholders was generally viewed as efficient and effective by all respondents. Cooperation between UNHCR and the Government of Romania was regarded in a positive light, especially with respect to the limited time needed to process clearance requests, and the provision of identification documentation and security in the premises. However, the “limited freedom of movement” for refugees in the town, the lack of maintenance of the premises, and the regular provision of basic household items has led to some concern.
21. Cooperation between UNHCR and the Government of the Slovak Republic was generally considered efficient and effective by all interlocutors, despite some challenges in obtaining visas from embassies in countries of asylum or neighboring countries. The third partner to the agreements, IOM, has taken effective care of travel logistics, medical assessments and cultural orientation training. Possible challenges were ironed out in the beginning of these local partnerships. Some communication challenges were however noted at the field level in countries of asylum between UNHCR and IOM (and some ICRC delegations) due to staff turnover.
22. A similar positive note can be recorded with regard to the cooperation between UNHCR and the nine resettlement countries that used the ETCs in the 2012-2015 period. However, concern was expressed about referring an adequate number of refugees for the US “pipeline” on the one hand, and the US speed of processing, both during the pre-vetting stage and the stay of refugees in the ETCs, on the other hand. The first issue was resolved in 2015 with stronger coordination taking place between the three partners: UNHCR, the US and IOM.
23. The two ETCs have been effective to some degree considering the initial objectives established especially considering that a transfer can only be approved if a resettlement country is already identified. Only the centre in Timisoara was used for emergency priority cases in 2013 and 2014. An overall reduction of this function is visible during the period 2012-2015. However, for refugees classified under normal priority, the transfer to an ETC was still viewed as life-saving if evacuated from an unsafe situation.
24. The majority of refugees were transferred to the ETCs to support either the processing of resettlement cases by means of interviews, biometrics or to find municipalities in the resettlement country. Providing opportunities for recovery and preparing for the integration process has only been achieved to some degree, depending on the situation in countries of asylum and the protection and assistance provided in the two centres. The centres have however supported the objective “potential for resettlement realized”. The overwhelming majority of refugees arriving in the ETCs actually departed for resettlement. The ETCs have therefore contributed to facilitating the resettlement process of some refugees that otherwise could not have been resettled.
25. The main impact of the ETCs has been the provision of immediate and effective protection to refugees. Moreover, as a tangible form of responsibility-sharing, the centres have given Romania and the Slovak Republic the opportunity to present their contribution to the international protection regime in international fora. Romania established a resettlement programme with a quota of 40 refugees per year, with the first group of 38 refugees arriving in 2010, and the second group in 2014. The Slovak Republic also pledged, on a voluntary basis, 100 resettlement places in the period 2015-2017 towards the Council of the European Conclusions on Resettlement of 20 July 2015. However, arrivals under this programme are still pending.
26. Given the current situation in Europe it could be argued that more responsibility-sharing could be expected, and the existence of the ETCs should not absolve these governments of the obligation to provide durable solutions to a greater number of refugees. The host governments might also be persuaded to contribute more resources to the running of the ETCs.
27. The ETCs have contributed modestly to global resettlement figures and to reducing protracted

refugee case-loads in countries of first asylum. But they have provided a safe alternative for cases that could not be transferred directly to resettlement countries, thereby offering the only available durable solution to these refugees. For some refugees, without the ETCs, there would simply be no possibility of resettlement.

28. In conclusion, the evolution in the operation of the ETCs shows a move away from their original vision. In the words of one interlocutor “there is nothing emergency about this process.” This has resulted in a situation whereby the policies and practices of resettlement countries to a large extent actually determine the use of the ETCs. Internal factors further impact upon the efficiency and effectiveness of the centres. Thus, replacing the first word of the acronym “ETC” with resettlement (“Resettlement Transit Centres”) would actually give a clearer indication of the main purpose of these centres, namely to support the realization of this durable solution. This could then also cover possible shifts or changes in their functions as RTCs continue to respond to the needs of different stakeholders. The sustainability of these centres must also be viewed in relation to UNHCR’s responsibility to manage the “pipeline” in cooperation with resettlement states.

29. The key recommendations of this evaluation are directed to DIP's Resettlement Service, the RRCE and CO Romania.

## Recommendations

### To UNHCR – Resettlement Service/DIP

#### Standard-setting/Guidance notes

- ✓ (Together with RRCE/CO Romania and relevant HQ sections) Formulate a more considered annual planning process for the ETFs including protection and programming perspectives, and including clear objectives and measurable indicators.
- ✓ Prepare a concept note on minimum standards for the ETCs, which includes measurable indicators in the fields of shelter, nutrition, non-food items and the provision of assistance.
- ✓ Prepare a comprehensive updated guidance note on the ETCs, including the profiles of refugees eligible for evacuation.
- ✓ Considering the success of UNHCR in finding resettlement countries to take almost all of the cases rejected by resettlement countries after transfer, consider in certain circumstances the inclusion of emergency priority cases for transfer to ETCs without the prior identification of a resettlement country in the list of eligible refugee profiles.

#### Planning

- ✓ Prepare annual planning figures for the ETCs for different priority classifications/refugee profiles/resettlement countries, including time-frames for monitoring and revision purposes.
- ✓ Consolidate coordination efforts to strengthen the US pipeline for the ETCs.

#### Coordination

- ✓ Review existing procedures related to coordination, approval and cross-checking, including templates used for information-sharing purposes, to develop and agree on more efficient procedures.
- ✓ Clarify and provide further information about the responsibilities of UNHCR and IOM in relation to the logistical arrangements for transfer to ETCs to field staff of both agencies and to field staff of ICRC for the issuance of ICRC travel documents.
- ✓ Develop comprehensive guidelines that clearly delineate the roles and responsibilities of all stakeholders at the different stages of the identification and transfer process, including country-specific annexes.

#### Advocacy and Communication

- ✓ Develop and implement an advocacy strategy on the different functions, potential use and responsibilities of different stakeholders of the ETCs for UNHCR staff and partners.
- ✓ Share regular updates about the ETCs with field resettlement and protection staff.

#### Assessment and Review

- ✓ Undertake a review of the profile of emergency priority resettlement referrals and current practices in their selection, management and resettlement processing.
- ✓ Conduct a review of the ETM in Philippines to ensure that lessons learned and good practices can be fed into policy and programming activities related to other ETFs.

#### Human Resources

- ✓ Review the part-time nature and responsibilities of the ETC focal point function.
- ✓ (Together with RRCE) examine management and coordination needs at the regional level vis-à-vis the ETCs to ensure a coherent approach.
- ✓ Consider options whereby one international position with sufficient seniority to liaise with States and donors combines these two dossiers, possible based regionally.

## **To UNHCR – RRCE (in close consultation with CO Romania and ETC Humenné staff)**

### **Human Resources**

- ✓ In consultation with the Resettlement Service, consider creating an international position tasked with coordinating transfers to the ETCs, including coordination with resettlement countries.
- ✓ Review UNHCR/UNOPS staffing in the ETCs to harmonize ETC-based positions, and ensure a greater coherence in approach.
- ✓ Review staffing and services provided by NGOs in ETCs in order to harmonize capacity and services to ensure a coherent approach, while taking into account needs of the different and diverse refugee populations, and the different operating environments. This should also take into account adherence to minimum standards and the increased capacity of the ETC in Humenné.

### **Standard Setting**

- ✓ Review the current capacity in Humenné in light of the discussion on minimum standards to decide on maximum operational figures with respect to the number of refugees accommodated in the centre at any point in time.
- ✓ Support the implementation of a strengthened community development approach by involving refugees more in the day-to-day running of the ETCs.
- ✓ Examine options to use external school rooms to give children a sense of normalcy and possibly alleviate the burden posed by an increased capacity in the ETC in Humenné.

### **Assessment and Review**

- ✓ Request a technical expert mission to review the educational and life-skills activities and vocational training offered by the NGOs in the ETCs (taking into consideration the content of cultural orientation training) and provide recommendations to strengthen these in light of integration needs. This should include a review to examine (a) if and to what extent CrossRoads training duplicates some of the components of existing cultural orientation courses; b) explore the more systematic use of this training package on life skills to all refugees, and; c) explore the willingness of donors to support such training as well as other training activities to prepare refugees for integration.

### **Advocacy and Communication material (for refugees)**

- ✓ (Together with UNHCR staff in ETCs) Review information needs of refugees departing to the ETCs and UNHCR country offices in countries of asylum and update videos on the ETCs, updated PowerPoint presentations and briefing notes.
- ✓ (together with field staff in countries of asylum) Ensure refugees receive necessary information about the ETCs before departure from country of first asylum.
- ✓ (together with field staff in countries of asylum) Provide more up-to-date information about countries of resettlement to manage expectations at an early stage.

### **Data management & monitoring**

- ✓ Install ProGres in the ETCs in cooperation with DPSM.
- ✓ (Together with CO Romania) Review and strengthen the design of the ETCs-based data management systems to correspond with data needs for planning, monitoring and evaluation purposes, with input from DPSM if necessary.

## **To UNHCR - CO Romania**

\*See also the recommendations under To UNHCR – RRCE (in close consultation with CO Romania and ETC Humenné staff)

- ✓ Advocate with the Government of Romania to provide more freedom of movement in Timisoara to refugees under agreed conditions, while still respecting the provisions of the Tri-Partite Agreement.
- ✓ Review existing arrangements with respect to ensuring accountability and controlling the movements of the refugee population to alleviate, at a minimum, the responsibilities of the

implementing partner in these areas, and consider inviting the General Inspectorate for Immigration to take on such responsibilities at the ETC entrance gate.

- ✓ Consider a more flexible use of budget lines, to the extent possible, to enable the implementing partner to respond to unforeseen needs of the refugees, considering fluctuations in population numbers, profiles and corresponding needs.
- ✓ Undertake regular consultations with the Government of Romania to ensure due consideration to UNHCR's (still to be developed) minimum standards for ETCs when renovating the identified building for the new ETC.
- ✓ Continue to invite the implementing partner to provide inputs into the design of the building based on their experience in the ETC.

## **1. Introduction and Rationale for the Evaluation**

30. At the request of UNHCR's Resettlement Service in the Division of International Protection, UNHCR's Policy Development and Evaluation Service commissioned an evaluation of the ETCs in Romania and the Slovak Republic. As the ETCs have been in place for seven (Timisoara) and four years (Humenné) respectively, the evaluation is timely, and presents the agency with an opportunity to assess whether the objectives set out at their establishment, and the recommendations of the 2010 review, have been met. A comparative approach was used to assess the functioning of the two ETCs, and the evaluation's main findings should inform the development of strategies to meet emergency resettlement needs. Additionally, in the light of ongoing discussions about setting up ETFs in other regions, the results of the evaluation will be important in reflecting on minimum standards and assessing whether the ETCs should continue with the same or similar objectives, or if there are other objectives that could lead to enhanced protection dividends for persons of concern. The evaluation team comprised one PDES staff member and one external evaluation consultant.
31. The evaluation was undertaken against the backdrop of the continued consequences of the Arab Spring, which began in late 2010 in Tunisia and spread across North Africa and the Middle East in 2011, thereby leading to massive displacement within and beyond the region. In 2015 the European migration crisis introduced another dimension with the European Union (EU) adopting two Decisions (the first Decision for 40,000 persons on a voluntary basis, and the second for 120,000 persons on a mandatory basis) for the relocation of 160,000 asylum seekers within the EU, with the two ETC-hosting States of Romania and the Slovak Republic voting against the mandatory quota system together with two other EU Member States. On December 2, 2015, the Slovak Republic filed a lawsuit challenging the mandatory nature of the relocation quotas.

### **1.1 Subject of the Evaluation**

32. The subject of the evaluation is UNHCR's use of the ETCs in Timisoara and Humenné. The ETCs became operational in Romania in 2008 and the Slovak Republic in 2011 (although the Tri-Partite Agreement was signed in 2010). The ETCs are managed on the basis of Tri-Partite Agreements signed by their hosting governments, UNHCR and IOM. The ETC in Timisoara, Romania, can accommodate a maximum of 200 refugees, whereas the one in Humenné, Slovak Republic, a total of 150 refugees (from mid-2012 onwards) (see table 2 for an overview of the different stipulations per period). As of 30 September 2015, 1,717 refugees had departed from the ETC in Timisoara, and 797 refugees from Humenné to resettlement countries. Since 2012, the main resettlement countries using the two centres are the USA, the UK, the Netherlands, Canada and Finland, with the USA the sole resettlement country using Humenné since 2013.
33. The ETCs are both located on the compounds of the national immigration services. The Timisoara ETC is housed in two pavilion-style barracks (of which one half is for asylum-seekers), and in Humenné, in a three storey building. Timisoara has a small airport, while Humenné is a 1.5 hours drive from Košice, which also has an airport.

### **1.2 Scope and Approach to the Evaluation**

34. The evaluation covers the ETCs in Timisoara, Romania, and Humenné, the Slovak Republic. The ETCs were established in 2008 (Timisoara) and 2011 (Humenné), although the evaluation scope is from 1 January 2012 to 30 September 2015 (three years and nine months) to focus on more recent practice. Although the evaluation is global in nature, attention has specifically been given to countries of asylum in the Middle East and North Africa, Central Asia, South Asia and Eastern Africa, from where refugees were submitted for resettlement. The evaluation took place from October 2015 to May 2016, with missions to Geneva (13-14 October, 2015), Romania (26-30 October, 2015) and the Slovak Republic (2-5 November, 2015). The key respondents were UNHCR staff, including resettlement staff, IOM staff, and representatives of resettlement countries (USA Canada, the UK and the Netherlands), government and IP staff in Romania and the Slovak Republic, and refugees staying in the ETCs. The criteria covered by this evaluation are relevance, efficiency, coverage, coordination, effectiveness and impact.

35. The evaluation methodology utilized a mixed-method approach, including qualitative and quantitative data collection and analysis methods. In addition to a desk review, semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions were conducted by phone and in person with relevant stakeholders. Observation was used on-site in the ETCs, and an online survey was conducted among selected UNHCR resettlement staff. Data triangulation and analysis were the main methods for data analysis. The evaluation used a Theory of Change (ToC) approach, which identified and tested the assumptions and strategies of the planning for and use of the ETCs, and whether these have achieved their intended impact.

### 1.3 Reconstruction of Expected Outcomes and the Theory of Change

36. The objectives of the ETCs were specified in foundation documents but a hierarchy of objectives had never been developed in relation to the ETCs. Therefore, the Theory of Change was constructed *post facto* as one had not been explicitly spelled out when the ETCs were established. The use of Theory of Change approach can be applied at different levels, namely the strategic, sectoral/thematic, project and activity level.<sup>2</sup> Woodrow et al (2013: 11) notes that “[i]n essence, the various theories of change explain how lower level results contribute to higher level objectives, often referred to as the “hierarchy of results” in results-based management.”
37. Objectives and expected results have been given in policy papers of UNHCR’s Resettlement Service and the Country Operation Plans (COPs) prepared by the RRCE. It is therefore **recommended** to formulate a more considered annual planning process for the ETFs to include protection and programming perspectives, and this process should include clear objectives and measurable indicators.
38. The 2007 and 2010 Information Notes prepared by the Resettlement Service shares a list of five objectives of the ETFs. A distinction is made between results at the output and outcome/objective level and direct and indirect results. Thus, the result, “Enable officials from UNHCR and resettlement countries to undertake interviews in a stable, safe and secure environment” can be categorized as an “output”, as it is one of the factors contributing to the realization of resettlement. The objective “Invitation to become a resettlement country” can, arguably, be viewed as an “indirect” result under the evaluation criteria “impact”. The other three objectives are more directly linked to the direct functions of the ETCs and will be further tested in the section on effectiveness (and in more detail in the section on efficiency). The objective “Promote the subsequent realization of the durable solution of permanent resettlement” has been changed into the objective “Potential for resettlement realized” given in the COP of 2015 because of the stronger results-oriented wording of this objective, and the first objective has been interpreted as focusing in particular on cases with serious protection needs, and physical protection.
39. A second group of documents which give further insights about objectives and expected results are the COPs. As noted, the RRCE develops annual COPs, which are regional overviews of key activities. The information for the ETCs in Romania and the Slovak Republic is collated into combined planning figures for the two ETCs. The information in these COPs greatly varies, with some years showing an overview per assistance sector and other years, such as 2015, only referring to one objective “Potential for resettlement realized” and one output “Emergency resettlement organized”. The following sentence arguably encapsulates the meaning of these results: “500 vulnerable refugees will find protection through resettlement owing to the use of the two emergency evacuation centres in the Central Europe region”.<sup>3</sup>
40. The 2015 COP also provides another expected result, namely “UNHCR emergency transit centres offer an environment where the refugees can recover and get ready for their new life through specialized services including psycho-social support, medical support, vocational and educational activities, and cultural orientation and adaptation activities”.<sup>4</sup> This provides the

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<sup>2</sup> See for instance, Woodrow Peter with N. Oatley (2013) ‘Practical Approaches to Theories of Change in Conflict, Security & Justice Programmes.

<sup>3</sup> RRCE COP 2015: 40

<sup>4</sup> RRCE COP 2015: 39

missing link with the objectives and expected results of services and assistance provided in the ETCs, and also connects the resettlement process to integration in the resettlement country

41. The table below gives an overview of the different objectives, the expected changes and the ToC in relation to effectiveness. The latter is based on the desk review and interviews held in Geneva and via skype at the beginning of the evaluation. .

Table 1: Objectives, expected change and assumptions in relation to effectiveness based on stated objectives in policy and programme documents

<b>Objectives</b>	<b>Expected Change</b>	<b>Logic of Theory of Change</b>
Provide timely and effective protection to an individual or group of individuals of concern to UNHCR;	The immediate transfer of an individual or group of individuals of concern to UNHCR provides timely and effective protection to refugees with serious protection concerns.	<b>If</b> an individual or group of individuals of concern to UNHCR is at risk <b>then</b> the transfer to an ETC can provide timely and effective protection <b>because</b> the ETC is in a safe country and secure, protected environment.
[...] enabling States not otherwise involved in emergency resettlement to accept cases from an ETC.	The use of ETCs enables States otherwise not involved in emergency resettlement to accept cases from an ETC	<b>If</b> the ETC is used for “emergency cases” categorized as normal but taken out of the country of asylum as normal cases in “emergency mode”, <b>then</b> more emergency cases can be resettled <b>because</b> States without emergency quota can use their regular procedures for processing such cases.
Potential for resettlement realized;	The use of the ETCs supports the resettlement process, and ultimately results in the resettlement of concerned refugee(s)	<b>If</b> the ETCs are used, <b>then</b> the durable solution of permanent resettlement can be realized <b>because</b> the ETCs provide support in different ways to resettlement countries (and UNHCR) to complete the resettlement process.
Offer an environment where the refugees can recover, and get ready for their new life through specialized services including psycho-social support, medical support, vocational and educational activities, and cultural orientation and adaptation activities.	The ETCs support refugees in their recovery from past experiences, and prepares them for the next stage in their lives, namely integration.	<b>If</b> the ETCs offer an environment, services and assistance, including specialized services, are given to refugees accommodated by the ETCs, <b>then</b> they can recover and get ready for their new life <b>because</b> this package of protection and assistance given to them is well-targeted to support recovery and strengthen existing capabilities.

#### 1.4 Methodology

42. The evaluation team sought to test the validity of the theory of change described above. UNHCR programme/activity documents and correspondence on the ETCs were analysed during the desk review. The desk review included the following sources: UNHCR projected resettlement needs annual reports, relevant SOP and guidelines regarding the usage of the ETCs, UNHCR reporting

for the European Commission project 2013-2014, RRCE COPs 2012-2015, sitreps of the ETCs, budgetary information, the Tri-Partite Agreements and related correspondence regarding the earlier agreements (2008 and 2009/2010), and data-sets provided by UNHCR with respect to the two ETCs.

43. A total of 67 respondents were interviewed, with forty percent being UNHCR staff. Respondents included UNHCR staff, IOM staff, representatives of the ETC-hosting governments and IPs, and representatives of different resettlement countries (see annex V). Semi-structured interviews were guided by the evaluation criteria, and questions were tailored to the function, responsibilities and experiences of each respondent. In Bratislava, the evaluation team was assisted by an independent interpreter. In other locations either IP staff or colleagues of respondents offered translation support where necessary.
44. Focus group discussions (FGDs) were held with staff of IPs and refugees in the ETCs to get their feedback on the preparatory stage of the transfer to the ETC, the services provided, and the extent to which their stay prepares them for their new lives in resettlement countries. Separate male and female FGDs with teenagers and adults of Somali, Afghan and Iraqi origin were held in both ETCs, with a total of nine focus group discussions. Interpreters working with the IPs translated the discussions. Their affiliation with IPs may have compromised the independence of these FGDs (see annex VII).
45. Observation was also used during the missions to Timisoara and Humenné. The evaluation team travelled with a group of Iraqi refugees from Bucharest to Timisoara, which allowed the team to observe first-hand the transfer and receipt of refugees at the airport and the ETC in Timisoara. Additionally, the team toured the ETC rooms and facilities in both locations, the building which will be used for the new ETC in Timisoara, and the two town centres.
46. An online survey was designed and sent to resettlement staff to collect information about their knowledge of the ETCs, the extent to which they used ETCs, and reasons for their use. A short questionnaire with thirteen questions was sent to a total of 33 resettlement officers working with UNHCR by the evaluation team leader (see annex VI). The questionnaire could be accessed online at survey monkey and, if preferred, answered anonymously. A total of fourteen responses were received, which is a response rate of 42 percent. The survey statistics have been provided in annex VIII.
47. Qualitative and quantitative analysis was undertaken to formulate key findings and recommendations. Data/source triangulations determined the robustness of the findings and an analysis of budgets was undertaken. In addition, the evaluation team reviewed available statistics regarding the profiles of refugees transferred to the ETCs since 2012, resettlement profiles, countries of origin and of asylum, length of stay, and resettlement countries concerned. Quantitative data taken from the data-sets provided by UNHCR staff working in the two ETCs covered the period 1 January 2012 until 30 September 2015. The evaluation used a gender, age and diversity perspective during data collection and analysis phases, including by providing sex and age-group disaggregated statistics and analysis.
48. The evaluation process was participatory in nature. Preliminary evaluation findings were shared during a teleconference with the representative of UNHCR Romania. Because of the ongoing emergency due to the European refugee crisis, relevant staff of the sub-regional office in Budapest were not available for a debriefing. The draft report was circulated among key UNHCR staff for comments and a presentation of key findings and recommendations was held in Geneva to enhance ownership among relevant staff and other stakeholders.
49. The evaluation was conducted in conformity with UNEG Ethical Guidelines for Evaluation and the UNEG Code of Conduct for Evaluation in the UN System.

## 1.5 Limitations

50. There are several limitations to this evaluation, including the following:

- This evaluation focused on the relevance, efficiency and effectiveness of the ETCs. As the ETCs are one link in the resettlement process, the pre-transfer and post-ETC phase would ideally be considered as well in order to get a better understanding of the efficiency and effectiveness of the ETC operation. This includes the extent to which the ETCs actually support and contribute to further integration in resettlement countries. Due to the time-frame of this evaluation and the capacity of the evaluation team, data collection focused predominantly on the ETC pre-arrival, arrival, stay and departure phases of the refugees, although some effort was also made to get data of the pre-transfer phase, including with respect to emergency submissions. However, neither the arrival and integration of refugees in resettlement countries, the extent to which the ETCs hinder or support this process, nor the effect of resettlement on countries of asylum have been extensively considered.<sup>5</sup>
- During the field research, despite efforts to get a clearer picture of the exact timeline of the pre-transfer period of refugees selected for resettlement, respondents found it difficult to be specific regarding the length of the different phases of the pre-ETC period. This impacted on the available information for analysis. The usage of unofficial interpreters may have led to some misinterpretations of the information shared with the evaluation team. Additionally, socially acceptable answers may have been the consequence of using staff and volunteers of the IPs in Timisoara and Humenné during the FGDs with refugees.
- UNHCR's refugee registration software, ProGres, which is also used for resettlement processing has not yet been installed in the ETCs. UNHCR staff managing the ETCs therefore maintain their own data-sets. These have only to some degree been aligned with each other. Thus, sometimes information appeared not to be available (e.g. average length of stay and number of over-stayers could not be given for Timisoara because of a mis-match between the refugee-based database and the cumulative statistics) or the required detail (e.g. number of refugees per day in the ETC, or the resettlement submission categories for all refugees) was not collected to support more accurate analysis.
- As the cumulative data sets are used operationally to provide information on current and departed cases, relevant information for analyzing trends, such as the date of receipt of the government clearance, number of over-stayers per year, was not at all times available. This led sometimes to less accurate or missing figures in the analysis. Furthermore, no data were collected at the ETC-level of the different profiles of refugees at risk given in the 2007 and 2010 Information Notes. Therefore, the extent to which these profiles surfaced among the population in the two ETCs cannot be assessed, and reference has therefore predominantly been made to the three resettlement priority categories, and gender, age, nationality and country of first asylum/transfer. Furthermore, it was not possible to examine if normal priority cases were transferred under emergency conditions on the basis of available data-sets. Furthermore, data were not collected at the ETC-level on the reasons for transfer to one of the centres from a resettlement country perspective, nor about their activities in the ETCs in order to be able to undertake a comprehensive analysis of these stakeholders.
- The survey was sent to select resettlement staff in larger resettlement operations, in total 33 staff, in addition to those who were interviewed in depth. While the response rate of 42% is reasonable for an internal survey, the actual number who responded was small in relation to the total number of staff involved in resettlement.

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<sup>5</sup> One research study undertaken in the Netherlands highlighted the view of two refugees of their stay in the ETC in Timisoara. Centraal Orgaan Asielzoekers (COA) (2014) 'Meedoen: Onderzoek naar participatie, welbevinden en begeleiding van hervestigde vluchtelingen' [Taking Part: Research of Participation, Well-being and Support of Resettled Refugees]. COA, The Hague.

## 2. Background to the use of ETCs in Resettlement

51. Resettlement is a protection tool and one of the three durable solutions promoted by UNHCR. The Resettlement Handbook gives the following definition of resettlement:
- “Resettlement involves the selection and transfer of refugees from a State in which they have sought protection to a third State which has agreed to admit them – as refugees – with permanent residence status. The status provided ensures protection against refoulement and provides a resettled refugee and his/her family or dependents with access to rights similar to those enjoyed by nationals. Resettlement also carries with it the opportunity to eventually become a naturalized citizen of the resettlement country.”*<sup>6</sup>
52. UNHCR uses three priority levels in order to adequately respond to different levels of protection risks or vulnerabilities, namely emergency, urgent and normal.<sup>7</sup> The Resettlement Handbook stipulates that the emergency level *“applies to cases in which the immediacy of security and/or medical condition necessitates removal from the threatening conditions within a few days, if not within hours. Emergency resettlement may be necessary to ensure the security of refugees who are threatened with refoulement to their country of origin or who face serious or life-threatening threats to their physical safety in the country where they have sought refuge. Ideally, there is a seven-day maximum time period between the submission of an emergency case for acceptance by the resettlement country, and the refugee’s departure.”*<sup>8</sup> The urgent priority level is used for refugees with serious medical risks or other vulnerabilities requiring expedited resettlement. The maximum time period between submission and departure is six weeks. However, the majority of resettlement cases are categorized as normal, which concern those with no immediate medical, social, or security concerns. A twelve months period from submission to resettlement countries to actual departure is expected by UNHCR.<sup>9</sup>
53. UNHCR experiences many challenges related to the resettlement of emergency cases. The agency has, on the one hand, limited capacity to make emergency resettlement submissions, and in many operational contexts, staff has restricted access to refugees to obtain accurate information on serious protection risks. On the other hand, resettlement countries have only limited capacity to examine and accept emergency submissions on a dossier basis, and only a relatively small number provide a specific emergency quota. Resettlement countries have uneven rates of approval for emergency cases, which is especially the case with respect to dossier decisions. Additionally, procedural constraints, such as security screening regulations, can form another obstacle to expediently process resettlement cases.<sup>10</sup>

### 2.1 Evolution of the ETCs

54. As early as 2006, UNHCR explored the establishment of Evacuation Transfer Facilities with States Parties participating in the Working Group on Resettlement. At the 2007 Annual Tri-partite Consultations on Resettlement, UNHCR presented an Information Note to States and the International Organization for Migration (IOM) on Establishing Temporary Evacuation Facilities for Onward Resettlement. A second information note was presented in 2010, which offered a review of the initial rationale and assumptions of the ETC operation. The ETFs are expected to serve the following five objectives<sup>11</sup>:
- Provide timely and effective protection to an individual or group of individuals of concern to UNHCR;
  - Demonstrate a tangible form of burden- and responsibility-sharing, enabling States not otherwise involved in emergency resettlement to accept cases from an ETC;

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<sup>6</sup> UNHCR, 2011a: 3

<sup>7</sup> UNHCR, 2011a: 246-247

<sup>8</sup> UNHCR, 2011a: 246

<sup>9</sup> UNHCR, 2011a: 246-7

<sup>10</sup> UNHCR, 2010a: 1-2, 6

<sup>11</sup> UNHCR, 2007:2; 2010a: 2

- Enable officials from UNHCR and resettlement countries to undertake interviews in a stable, safe and secure environment;
- Promote the subsequent realization of the durable solution of permanent resettlement; and
- Encourage States hosting ETC to become involved in resettlement.

55. The 2007 Information Note also states that “[t]he evacuation of some refugees to countries providing ETFs would enable the Office to submit these cases for resettlement under “normal” conditions and not in the acute context caused by threats of refoulement and other serious protection problems. Allowing for the temporary relocation / transit of refugees requiring emergency resettlement would secure immediate and temporary protection, pending onward resettlement to a third country.”<sup>12</sup> The 2010 Information Note further specifies that “[t]he evacuation itself would have to be carried out under emergency conditions and out-processing from the ETF would need to be expeditious to allow space for other cases.”<sup>13</sup>
56. Profiles of the following refugees at risk, and in need of an evacuation to an ETF, included refugees at immediate risk of refoulement or other acute, life threatening situations; refugees in prolonged detention (although not for the commission of a crime/offence) who can only be released if resettled; sensitive/high profile refugees at risk, such as political and human rights activists, journalists and individuals of certain nationalities; refugees in need of resettlement for whom a resettlement country and/or UNHCR requires that their final destination for permanent resettlement not be disclosed to the country of first asylum; refugees who might be victims or witnesses of concern to the International Criminal Court or other international tribunal.<sup>14</sup>
57. Since 1999, *ad hoc* temporary relocation programmes were made available to refugees in urgent need of international protection in different regions, such as Eastern Europe (Romania, Slovak Republic and Czech Republic), Africa (Burkina Faso) and Latin America (Colombia).<sup>15</sup> These included the humanitarian evacuation of approximately 4,000 Kosovar refugees of Albanian origin from FYROM to Romania (1999), the relocation of Serb refugees to Romania pending resettlement to the US and Sweden (1999-2001), and the evacuation of 439 Uzbek refugees at risk of refoulement from Kyrgyzstan to Romania (2005). The Slovak Republic contributed to the humanitarian evacuation of refugees fleeing the Balkan wars in the early 1990s, and the evacuation of 98 Palestinian refugees in 2009 from Al-Waleed camp in Iraq by providing temporary protection and assistance. The latter evacuation was governed by a Tri-Partite Agreement signed by the Government, UNHCR and IOM on 20 July, 2009. Based on these experiences, the Governments of Romania and the Slovak Republic expressed interest in the establishment of temporary re-location facilities to provide security, cover basic needs, and support the overall resettlement process.
58. To date, three ETFs have become operational, namely in Romania, the Philippines and the Slovak Republic. Opportunities to set up ETFs in Africa and Latin America are also being explored by UNHCR. The ETFs have been governed on the basis of Tri-Partite Agreements signed by the ETF-hosting governments, UNHCR and IOM (see table Annex III).<sup>16</sup> A distinction has been made between two models of ETFs: the Emergency Transit Centres in Romania and the Slovak Republic, and the Emergency Transit Mechanism (ETM) in the Philippines.<sup>17</sup> The ETM is different in size and set up as it is not a central facility but spread over several apartments, and can accommodate a maximum of twenty persons.<sup>18</sup>

<sup>12</sup> UNHCR, 2007: 1-2

<sup>13</sup> UNHCR, 2010a: 1

<sup>14</sup> UNHCR, 2007: 2; 2010a: 2-3

<sup>15</sup> UNHCR, 2010a: 4

<sup>16</sup> The Slovak Republic became party to the Schengen Agreement on 16 April, 2003, with implementation starting on 21 December, 2007. Abolition of land control at borders with the Slovak Republic took place in December 2007, and border controls at airports in March 2008 (EC, 2014: 15).

<sup>17</sup> UNHCR, 2011a: 64

<sup>18</sup> In 2009-2010, at least seventeen refugees from four nationalities were evacuated to the Philippines. UNHCR, through its NGO partner Community and Family Services International, cooperates with the government in providing services to the refugees. The USA provided financial support to this project in 2009 (UNHCR, 2010a: 4). Since 2009, 316 at-risk refugees have benefited from the ETM in the Philippines (UNHCR, 2015e).

59. The Tri-Partite Agreements (“Agreement between the Government of Romania, the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees and the International Organization for Migration Regarding Temporary Evacuation to Romania of Persons in International Need of International Protection and their Onward Resettlement” and “Agreement between the Government of the Slovak Republic, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and the International Organization for Migration concerning Humanitarian Transfer of Refugees in Need of International Protection through the Slovak Republic”) delineate the main roles and responsibilities of the three stakeholders, namely UNHCR, IOM and the ETC-hosting governments.

Text Box 1: Responsibilities of Governments of Romania and Slovak Republic, UNHCR and IOM  
Source: Tri-Partite Agreements

<u>Responsibilities of the Governments of Romania and Slovak Republic</u>	
▪	Process the list of persons submitted by UNHCR within a specified number of days.
▪	Issue temporary identity documents and, in the case of the Slovak Republic, visas for legal stay.
▪	Provide, free of charge, the necessary premises for accommodation of persons and office space for UNHCR, its partners and IOM.
▪	Maintain public order inside the premises made available.
▪	Provide food and basic hygienic items for refugees not exceeding 100 persons (Slovak Republic).
▪	Provide the necessary support and assistance to expedite the arrival to and departure from the ETCs of persons in need of international protection.
<u>Responsibilities of UNHCR</u>	
▪	Communicate the list of persons in need of international protection and supporting information to the authorities of Romania/Slovak Republic.
▪	Issue refugee certificates and obtain travel documents (e.g. ICRC travel documents).
▪	Cover all expenses related to the presence on the territory (excluding the cost of the premises and, in the Slovak Republic, the cost of food and hygienic items exceeding 100 refugees).
▪	Make best efforts to expedite onward resettlement.
<u>Responsibilities of IOM</u>	
▪	Organize the international transport to Romania/Slovak Republic, as well as transport for onward resettlement.
▪	Provide health assessments for persons upon arrival and prior to resettlement.

60. The main differences between the two host countries are with respect to the number of working or calendar days required to obtain clearance, visa requirements, maximum capacity, the provision of basic assistance and rules related to the number of refugees staying longer than six months.

Table 2: Overview of main areas covered by the Tri-Partite Agreements with the Governments of Romania and the Slovak Republic, UNHCR and IOM

	Romania	Slovak Republic
Clearance period	7 working days	7 days (Dec 2010-Jul 2014) 30 days (Jul 2014-Nov 2015) 20 days (Nov 2015-2017)
Visa requirement	No	Yes
Max. capacity	200 persons	100 persons (Dec 2010-Jun 2012) 150 persons (Jun 2012-Nov 2015) 250 persons (Nov 2015-2017)
Food assistance/hygienic items	No	Up to a 100 persons (Dec 2010-Nov 2015) Up to a max. of 250 persons (Nov 2015-2017)

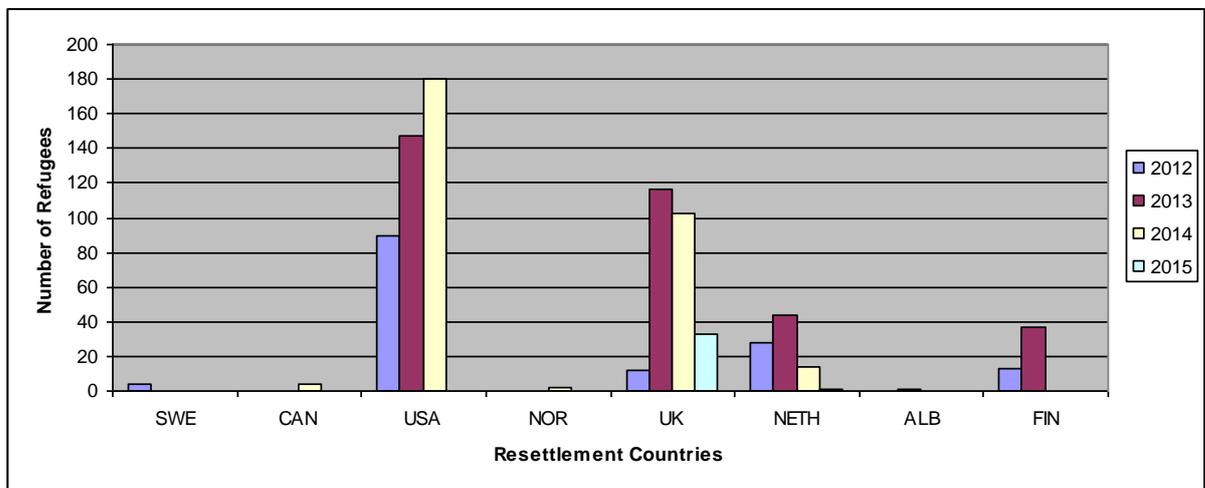
	Romania	Slovak Republic
Max. duration stay	Six months	Six months
Max. number of over-stayers	Twenty refugees	Not mentioned in the agreement

61. Romania and the Slovak Republic acceded to the EU in 2007 and 2004 respectively, and the ETCs provided them with an opportunity to show their solidarity with other countries hosting large refugee populations. Moreover, the ETCs became a symbol of their independence, and their contribution was often highlighted in international fora. In light of the ongoing refugee crisis in Europe, and global responsibility-sharing, the ETCs may also have given these two governments some bargaining power with respect to more permanently accommodating refugees in their countries. Romania has already twice accepted groups of resettled refugees in 2010 and 2014. The ETC in Timisoara has largely been supported by UNHCR, while the Government of the Slovak Republic has gradually taken on a larger portion of the costs of running the Humenné ETC, although UNHCR still covers staff salaries and IP costs.
62. The UNHCR Information Note of 2010 reviewed the use of the ETFs in the context of emergency resettlement, and provided recommendations to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the resettlement process in relation to their use. The note presents the following conclusion:
- “UNHCR has tried to strictly adhere to the criteria for evacuation. At times some States have requested UNHCR to use the evacuation mechanism for cases not considered to be in urgent need of resettlement. UNHCR resorted to using the transit evacuation mechanism for refugees to whom resettlement countries had difficulties in having access; e.g. situations where staff of resettlement countries are unable to obtain a visa to enter the host country to interview refugees for resettlement or are barred access to refugees in detention. Those cases may not have all been emergency cases, but all were in need of this durable solution and protection measure. UNHCR intends to continue using the transit evacuation mechanism essentially for emergency and urgent cases, but may on a case by case basis also use the evacuation option for refugees in need of resettlement who are living in places not accessible by resettlement countries”.*<sup>19</sup>
63. Ten recommendations were given to improve emergency resettlement and the evacuation of refugees to transit facilities. Five were directed to resettlement countries only, and two concerned UNHCR, IOM and States (resettlement countries/States providing ETFs). The different parties were recommended to reduce the processing time between the approval decision and the departure of emergency cases, and to establish or review procedures to ensure the departure of refugees within five working days. Additionally, UNHCR and IOM, in cooperation with States providing evacuation transit facilities, were recommended to explore practical ways to decrease the average processing time for evacuations to fourteen days. The two recommendations given to UNHCR only concerned the systematic usage of evacuation transit facilities as an interim protection measure for emergency cases provisionally approved for resettlement, and the establishment of video-conference facilities at ETFs to enable resettlement countries to undertake interviews with the evacuated refugees.
64. As of 30 September, 2015, the ETC in Timisoara had seen 1,778 new arrivals of eighteen different nationalities. The largest groups were Iraqis, Somalis, Eritreans, Palestinians and Sudanese refugees, mainly arriving in the ETC from Syria, Libya and Yemen. Of these refugees, 1,717 refugees departed from the ETC to a resettlement country.
65. The resettlement countries receiving the largest populations from Timisoara are the USA, the UK, the Netherlands, Canada and Finland. The ETC in Humenné received 853 refugees of predominantly Somali and Afghan origin, and smaller groups of Eritrean, Ethiopian, Iraqi, Palestinian and Sudanese refugees. Refugees were evacuated from Iran, Eritrea, Yemen, Egypt and Iraq since its inception in 2011.

<sup>19</sup> UNHCR, 2010a: 8

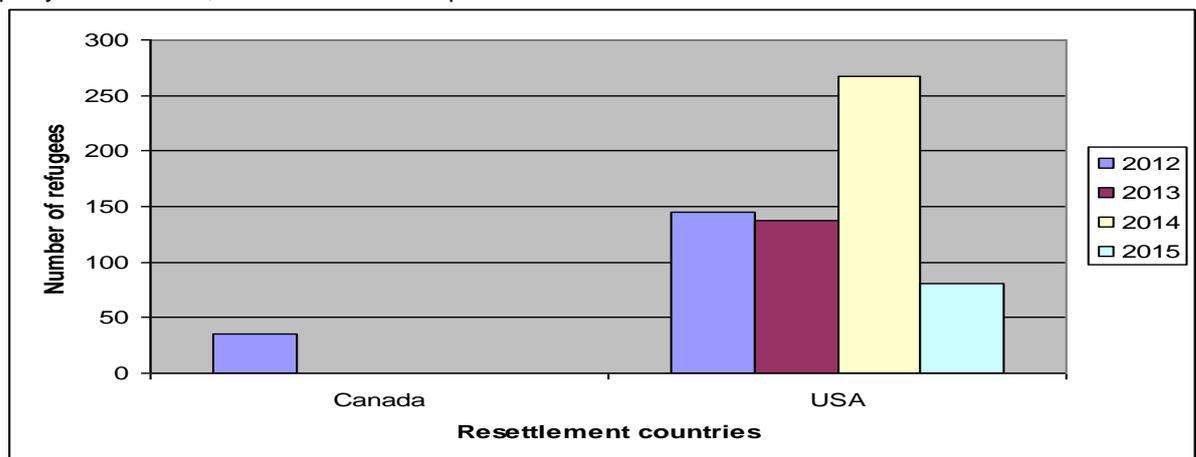
66. To date, 797 refugees departed for resettlement from the ETC in Humenné. Ninety-five per cent of these refugees were resettled to the USA, while the remaining five per cent went to Canada and Norway.
67. The ETCs have taken on different roles for resettlement countries. Out of a total of almost 30 resettlement countries, nine countries actually took refugees from one of the ETCs in the 2012-2015 period. Their functions differed in relation to actual needs of resettlement countries, with the ETC in Timisoara taking on a more hybrid function. This ETC provided access to refugees to complete the resettlement process (the USA for different nationalities, and the UK for Iraqi refugees from Syria due to reduced capacity in Beirut), or to offer temporary protection to already accepted refugees for which municipalities still had to be found (the Netherlands and Finland). The example of the UK also shows that resettlement countries may appreciate the availability of such a facility if resettlement processing can no longer be undertaken owing to changes in the country of asylum.

Graph 1: Number of resettled refugees from Timisoara per resettlement country per year of arrival, 01 Jan 2012-30 Sep 2015



Source: Data provided by ETC staff

Graph 2: Annual number of resettled refugees from Humenné, per resettlement country per year of arrival, 01 Jan 2012-30 Sep 2015



Source: Data provided by ETC staff

### 3. Main Findings and Analysis

#### 3.1 Relevance

- **Evaluation Question:** Are the objectives of the ETCs appropriate and relevant in the light of UNHCR's resettlement strategies and the global strategic priority of expanding opportunities for durable solutions?

68. **Key Finding:** The ETCs in Timisoara and Humenné, have been relevant and appropriate for different stakeholders: UNHCR; IOM; the ETC-hosting governments; resettlement countries and refugees. The centres offered a mechanism for UNHCR to implement its protection mandate. The centres provided immediate security and safety to refugees who otherwise would have had to remain in an unsafe, possibly life-threatening, situation, including in areas affected by conflict, or in protracted refugee situations in sometimes resource-scarce environments.
69. The ETC function to provide security and temporary accommodation to emergency priority cases has taken on a less prominent role than originally envisaged. Only Timisoara was able to receive such cases because of the time necessary to get Slovak government clearance and visas before transfer to Humenné. Moreover, only refugees with an already identified resettlement country were transferred to the ETCs. The UNHCR Resettlement Handbook points out that “[b]efore an evacuation takes place, there usually must be agreement from a resettlement State to interview the refugees concerned, or to consider the case through a dossier review. This mitigates both the risk of refusal, and the danger that refugees may be stranded at the ETF, which could potentially jeopardize the entire process. In exceptional circumstances refugees may be evacuated before a resettlement country has been identified.”<sup>20</sup> In practice, 28 refugees, or 1.7% of those evacuated were rejected during their stay in one of the ETCs after having been pre-cleared by the USA, and UNHCR was successful in finding alternative resettlement countries for the majority of these cases.
70. The continued use of emergency language originates from the perceived emergency response function of the ETCs. However, refugees from relatively safe countries of first asylum were also transferred to the ETCs in 2012-2015. The availability of such an emergency response mechanism in the field of resettlement has also been seen as a useful advocacy tool by UNHCR staff, giving visibility to the agencies' protection mandate, and thereby strengthening the image of UNHCR. For several UNHCR staff, these centres are “life-saving” for the most compelling protection cases.
71. At the same time, UNHCR seized the opportunity to use the ETCs to offer access to resettlement countries (and IOM as part of its Resettlement Service Centre function for the US-government) to undertake (pre-) screening interviews of refugees, or to perform other activities necessary to complete the resettlement process (e.g. biometrics, cultural orientation training, medical assessments, and/or selecting a municipality to receive the refugee in the country of resettlement). Whereas the ETC in Humenné started out as a short-term project to add to the overall ETC capacity, the centre has gradually expanded into one which predominantly, and since 2013 only, caters to the resettlement needs of the US government.
72. Overall, the ETCs have supported the capacity, and goal, of UNHCR to realize the durable solution of resettlement, including for highly vulnerable refugees and/or those particularly at risk. Additionally, the ETCs have allowed the agency to enhance its effectiveness by continuing with the resettlement of refugees that had been selected several years ago. This concerns for instance Somali refugees from Eritrea, where a large-scale registration exercise had been

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<sup>20</sup> UNHCR, 2011a: 65. See also UNHCR, 2011a: 360 and UNHCR, 2010a. In the Information Note of 2010 a link is made with the provision in the 2008 Tri-Partite Agreement that if more than twenty refugees stay more than six months, then the arrival of new cases will be suspended. Although refugees have overstayed these six months in both ETCs, these were in almost all cases linked to delays for resettlement to the USA due to delays in the security clearances process, rejections of cases with the consequence that UNHCR had to find other resettlement countries, a change in case-related information, such as the birth of a child, or the diagnosis of TB.

conducted in 2008/2009. Due to UNHCR's limited capacity, and the unavailability of access by the USA, the resettlement process came to a halt for many refugees identified as being in need of resettlement.

73. Although the overall contribution to global resettlement figures is small, from a humanitarian perspective the positive change brought about for hundreds of refugees is considerable. From the beginning of 2012 until 30 September 2015, a total of 1,568 refugees initially transferred to one of the ETCs were resettled. The ETCs provided refugees with immediate security and access to basic services, and to the majority of refugees, the two centres also offered the continuation of their resettlement process. In short, if the ETCs had not been available, then refugees living in countries such as Eritrea, Iran, Libya, Syria and Yemen would not have been resettled.
74. Additionally, Iraqi refugees from Damascus, Syria, selected by the UK would not have been able to depart the region and move onward to their resettlement country. This would either have resulted in a prolonged stay in an insecure environment, or have prompted them to depart Syria to move elsewhere, possibly risking their lives to do so. The extent and ways in which the ETCs also – positively and/or negatively - contribute to the well-being of refugees during their stay, and their integration into their future home countries, will be further discussed in the section on efficiency.

Table 3: Overview arriving/departing refugees per year in the ETCs <sup>21</sup>

	Timisoara					Humenné				
	Arrivals	Births	Deaths	Departed Resettlement Country	Departed Other	Arrivals	Births	Deaths	Departed Resettlement Country	Departed Other
2012	146	0	0	174	0	180	8	0	166	0
2013	343	1	0	297	1	138	4	0	180	5
2014	312	2	0	282	1	267	3	0	162	0
2015	111	1	0	161	1	81	2	0	146	0
Total	912	4	0	914	3	666	17	0	654	5

Source: Data provided by ETC staff, RRCE

### 3.1.1 ETC Capacity and Minimum Standards

▪ **Evaluation Question:** Are the conditions and services at the ETCs appropriate and sufficient for the needs of the refugees arriving at these temporary facilities?

75. **Key Finding:** Basis needs are satisfied, but minimum standards should be formally developed
76. The available capacity of the two ETCs must be considered in light of the setting, their functions, and the actual length of stay of refugees. If the centre were fully utilized, then only sex-disaggregated sleeping accommodation would be available (whereby children stay with their mothers). This would also imply that each room accommodates eight persons in Timisoara, and that ten refugees would share a room in Humenné, where some community rooms would be required as sleeping accommodation, thus impacting on services offered to refugees.
77. There are no minimum standards available for ETCs. The only UNHCR minimum standards for site and shelter space and transit centres are for emergency settings. Considering that the ETCs cannot be categorized as emergency settings, different minimum standards should in principle be applied to such facilities. Standard setting for ETCs seems to have been given limited attention, although this issue warrants further discussion, especially in light of ongoing initiatives in relation

<sup>21</sup> As refugees can arrive one year and depart the following year, the number of departures in a particular year can be higher than the number of arrivals.

to ETFs in other regions, the increase in capacity in Humenné, and the new physical infrastructure for the ETC in Timisoara.

78. Minimum standards have been established for emergency settings, and in the setting up of transit centres for emergency or repatriation operations, which could be used as a benchmark to guide promulgation of standards for the ETCs. The UNHCR Handbook on Emergencies provides the following minimum standards:
- Site space < 45 sq. metres per person (acceptable range 35-44 sq. metres per person);
  - Shelter space < 3.5 sq. metres per person (minimum)
  - Shelter space in cold climates and urban areas must be more than 3.5 sq. metres per person (4.5 to 5.5 sq. metres is more appropriate).
79. The above-mentioned standards are minimum standards. The Emergency Handbook also points out that “[w]hat may be deemed adequate during an emergency in terms of shelter (for example plastic sheeting, tents) and average camp area per person cannot be regarded as adequate in a protracted displacement situation”, and emphasizes that “[i]ndividual family shelter should always be preferred to communal accommodation as it provides the necessary privacy, psychological comfort, and emotional safety”. Moreover, the handbook mentioned that “Regardless of the type of emergency shelter used the following principle[...] generally appl[ies]: Shelters must provide protection from: the elements, space to live and store belongings, privacy and emotional security.”
80. In relation to transit centres, the handbook further offers the following information: “Transit centres are used as temporary shelters for new arrivals and to provide short-term temporary accommodation for displaced populations pending transfer to a more suitable, safe and longer term settlement. They provide a habitable covered living space, a secure and healthy living environment with privacy and dignity to people of concern for a short period (2-5 days) while they wait for new settlements to be constructed or until shelter can be found in other accommodation or host villages. These facilities can be used at the very onset of an emergency or within the context of a repatriation operation, as a staging point for return.” The handbook emphasizes that “[t]ransit centres should not be considered for accommodation longer than 5 days unless they offer appropriate support, including privacy, independence, and adequate accommodation.”
81. The ETCs are neither emergency camps nor transit centres as defined in the UNHCR Emergency Handbook but semi-permanent structures in a safe country, providing accommodation to refugees for several months in the majority of cases.
82. The minimum standards could not be applied to the ETC in Timisoara, as the room size(s) were not made available to the evaluation team. However, based on observation, it is estimated that the available space per person if the centre is used to maximum capacity is below the minimum humanitarian standards for cold climates.
83. The calculations for Humenné, based on an occupancy rate of 84 refugees in December, 2015, showed the average aligned with and above minimum standards, ranging from 4.8 sq. metres to up to 9.8 sq. metres per person. The recent increase to a maximum of 250 refugees, as stipulated in the latest Tri-Partite Agreement, may result in less space per person.
84. The minimum standards for emergency settings must be increased in order to cover the more permanent nature of the ETCs. It is therefore recommended that UNHCR a) consider setting up a multi-disciplinary working group with representatives from protection, programming and sectoral assistance and relevant regional/country offices to provide advice on the policy paper and minimum standards paper, and; b) develop a guidance note on minimum standards for ETCs, which includes measurable indicators. It is also recommended to review the current capacity in Humenné in light of the discussion on minimum standards to decide on maximum operational figures with respect to the number of refugees accommodated in the centre at any given point in time.
85. The space and the state of the actual pavilions used for accommodation has led to the allocation of another building for the ETC in Timisoara. Renovation of this new building could result in an

increase in capacity and upgraded facilities for refugees. An earlier attempt to begin the renovation failed as the Romanian government was unable to allocate EUR 400,000 towards an EC-funded project under the Emergency Refugee Fund. In 2015 the government received approval for the same activity, again through EC funds, with support of UNHCR. Although there was a (perceived) minor administrative hurdle to allocate the building to the national immigration service, the initial design phase has already started. While UNHCR has provided some verbal and written inputs into expected changes to the ETC it is recommended that UNHCR continue to undertake regular consultations with the Government of Romania to ensure due consideration is given to UNHCR's (still to be developed) minimum standards for ETCs when renovating the identified building for the ETC.

### 3.2 Coverage

▪ **Evaluation Question:** Is the capacity of the ETCs being maximised to ensure the protection of persons of concern, in particular those with emergency or urgent resettlement needs?

86. **Key Finding:** The ETCs have received refugees from mainly the Middle East, North Africa, Iran and Eritrea. More considered planning processes would lead to increased coverage
87. The coverage of the ETCs is in principle global, but in practice only refugees of some nationalities and countries of first asylum have been transferred to the ETCs. This is a consequence of global and regional politics. The number of resettlement countries using the ETCs is limited as a result of political and policy decisions in the field of resettlement, bilateral relations, national security risk assessments and the on “the ground” capacity of these countries. Male and female refugees of all age groups, can, in principle, be transferred to the ETCs, although some restrictions have been imposed with respect to refugees with serious medical needs, refugees who are seriously mentally ill, and LGBTI refugees for protection and/or assistance reasons. In addition, only a limited number of emergency and urgent priority cases have been transferred to Timisoara.

#### 3.2.1 Target Figures/Planning

88. UNHCR annual resettlement planning is documented in the projected global resettlement needs publications. Planning is largely based on expected resettlement staff capacity to identify refugees eligible for resettlement, conduct resettlement interviews, process and submit claims, and, to a lesser degree, on available quotas. Projections are made at the global and at regional levels. Annual planning figures are not prepared for ETCs, nor is an analysis provided on the use of these centres in relation to UNHCR's protection mandate. Even though the proportion of refugees departing from the ETCs is very small from a global perspective: less than one percent, the positive change resettlement may bring about to hundreds of refugees cannot be underestimated. At the same time, the ETCs were given as one of the reasons for an increase in annual departures to resettlement countries in 2013.<sup>22</sup>

Table 4: Comparison global and ETCs resettlement figures 2012-2014<sup>23</sup>

	Global <sup>24</sup>				ETCs			
	Departures	CoAs	CoOs	CoRs	Departures	CoAs	CoOs	CoRs
2012	69,252	80	79	26	340	7	6	8
2013	71,411	80	69	25	477	11	11	4
2014	73,008	> 90	64	30	444	11	9	7
Total	213,671				1,261			

CoA = country of asylum; CoO = country of origin; CoR = country of resettlement

<sup>22</sup> UNHCR, 2014c: 1

<sup>23</sup> The CoA and CoO of the global figures refer to submissions. The CoA and CoO statistics given for the ETCs are based on year of arrival in the ETC, as data on the dates of submission (which is prior to arrival in the ETC) are not available for these cases.

<sup>24</sup> UNHCR, 2014c: 1; UNHCR, 2015a

89. At headquarters level, no annual planning or target figures are developed to guide planning of the “pipeline” for the two ETCs, including with respect to the rather predictable groups of refugees selected for resettlement to the USA and the UK. Approximately fifty percent of all refugees transferred to Timisoara, and 100 percent of those transferred to Humenné since 2013 are resettled to the USA, and one-third of all refugees in Timisoara are resettled to the UK. Although recent experience continues to show different time-frames for the USA pre-vetting component as well as for the pre-screening/interviewing/receiving clearances components, planning figures can be developed together with UNHCR’s partners. Recently, coordination with IOM and the US government has been strengthened to select more refugees for the pre-vetting “pipeline”, and **it is recommended** that these efforts are further consolidated. Furthermore, information about the refugees transferred to the ETC for the UK is available at least three months before their departure, and their approximate length of stay in the ETC is also known.
90. Although the nature of emergency and urgent priority cases poses challenges to planning, in particular as only a small proportion may be transferred to the ETC, an informed estimate can be given based on the practice of earlier years. No slots are reserved for emergency priority cases in the ETC in Timisoara. **It is therefore recommended** to develop annual planning figures per ETC for the different referral priorities, and if applicable, per expected resettlement country, which are regularly revised in accordance with ongoing developments. This would offer more clarity at the global level, and support planning at the field level in countries of first asylum and ETC-hosting countries.
91. UNHCR programmatic planning is a separate exercise, and reflected in COPs. Some target figures in relation to the ETCs can be found in the COPs of the RRCE in Budapest, although these are either minimal or only given with respect to assistance needs, such as education, food and health.<sup>25</sup> These COPs cover Central Europe, and the target figures are for the two ETCs together, thereby ignoring their different capacities. There were no separate country-level COPs available for Romania, nor for the Slovak Republic during the period covered under this evaluation. Budget planning figures were shared during interviews, and sometimes based on the use of maximum capacity throughout the year.
92. The global refugee registration system, ProGres, is a system to register refugees and also makes it easier to document refugee status determination, provide assistance and process resettlement cases. ProGres has not yet been introduced to the two ETCs, although ETC staff received training in 2012. The consequence is that parallel data management systems have been used in the ETCs. These are sometimes dissimilar in terms of data collected, and tend to focus on actual information needs instead of also saving data for monitoring and evaluation purposes. The running of parallel systems is not an efficient way of data-management. Thus, **it is recommended** to introduce ProGres in the two ETCs. **It is also recommended** to review the design of existing data management systems in relation to monitoring needs to introduce a comprehensive monitoring system for the ETCs.

### 3.2.2 Selection Practices

93. The ETCs are part of the overall effort of UNHCR to promote resettlement. The agencies’ resettlement capacity has been one of the factors contributing to selection practices, as well as the composition of potential resettlement case-loads and practices of resettlement countries. The classification of refugees into the resettlement prioritization categories of emergency and urgent has, to some degree, impacted on the usage of Timisoara, although the majority of refugees transferred to these centres were categorized as “normal”.
94. Challenges or obstacles experienced by different resettlement countries have been decisive in opting to transfer refugees to one of the ETCs. Only eight resettlement countries agreed to transfer refugees to Timisoara (with four of them only one to four refugees), and two resettlement countries used Humenné. In the end, refugees were resettled to nine countries from Timisoara, and to three countries from Humenné.
95. Refugees with emergency priority classification have been resettled to Canada (2014), Finland

<sup>25</sup> UNHCR RRCE, 2012; 2013; 2014; 2015.

(2013), the Netherlands (2013, 2014), the USA (2013) and other (2013).<sup>26</sup> In 2013, 57 out of a total of 63 refugees were resettled to Finland, and six out of ten cases were resettled to the Netherlands in 2014. The governments of Finland and the Netherlands used the ETC in Timisoara primarily to provide temporary security and accommodation while municipalities were identified as final destinations.

96. The USA, the UK and Canada used the ETCs to access refugees that otherwise could not complete resettlement procedures. Although in recent years, video-conferencing has been used in situations with limited to no access to refugees, for the USA, face-to-face interviews remain the only permitted mode of completing interviews. Thus, the ETCs offered a solution for refugees staying in countries that could not be visited by the USA for political and/or security reasons. Countries of asylum were Egypt (Salloum camp, which is next to the Libyan border, where the resettlement programme ended in 2011),<sup>27</sup> Eritrea, Iran, Libya, Syria and Yemen. The UK used Timisoara to complete biometrics assessments and provide cultural orientation training to Iraqi refugees from Syria, as their Embassy in Beirut had been operating at reduced capacity since 2012. These refugees could thus receive UK identity cards prior to their departure to the UK.

### **3.2.3 Refugee Profiles: resettlement category, nationality, gender and age**

97. The refugees in the two ETCs have been from countries of origin spanning different regions. They were transferred from either countries in conflict or situations without alternative durable solutions. All age-groups, both genders, and all resettlement categories were represented among the refugees transferred to the ETCs. Families, often with children in different age groups, refugee groups with the same profile (e.g. two football teams from Eritrea) and individuals stayed in these centres. No particular strategy underpinned the selection of particular profiles, except with respect to medical cases and, to some extent, LGBTI cases. More recently, based on a technical assessment report, the decision was made to exclude cases with serious mental health needs because of the lack of appropriate facilities to cater to the needs of such cases in the ETCs. Although the partners in both locations offer medical services, including counselling and refugees have access to local hospitals, the facilities are not geared to provide the services necessary for those with serious mental health needs.
98. From 1 January 2012 to 30 September 2015, the ETCs received refugees from the following countries of origin: Afghanistan, Armenia, Azerbaijan, DRC, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Iran, Iraq, Palestine, Russia, Sri Lanka, Syria, Sudan, Senegal and Somalia. The ETC in Humenné received only six nationalities, while the centre in Timisoara hosted a greater variety of refugees.<sup>28</sup>
99. Countries of first asylum are located in the Middle East (Iran, Iraq, Lebanon, Syria, Yemen, Saudi Arabia and the UAE), North Africa (Egypt, Libya and Morocco), East Africa (Eritrea, Ethiopia, Kenya and Uganda) and Central Asia and the Caucasus (Kazakhstan and Georgia). Countries of first asylum covered by the ETC in Humenné are either in the Middle East (Egypt, Iran, Yemen) or East Africa (Eritrea). The largest groups came from emergency settings with refugees having fled conflict to neighboring countries. Other relatively large groups were from protracted refugee situations in Iran and Eritrea.

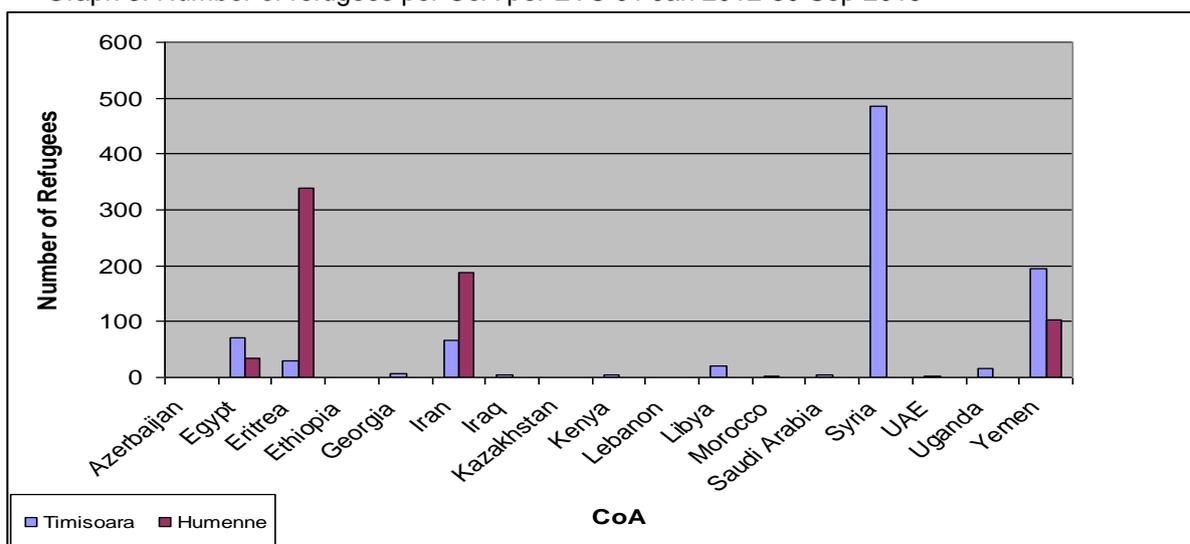
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<sup>26</sup> For further details, see Graph 1 in Annex IX

<sup>27</sup> UNHCR, 2011f

<sup>28</sup> For further details, refer to Graphs 2 and 3 in Annex IX

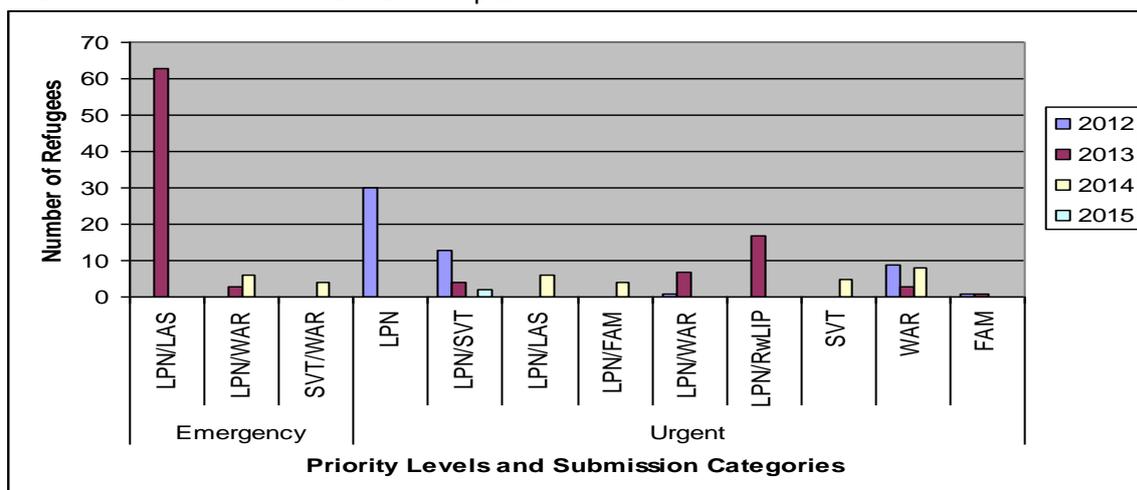
Graph 3: Number of refugees per CoA per ETC 01 Jan 2012-30 Sep 2015



Source: Data provided by ETC staff

100. The selection of refugees for transfer is based on the political and security situation in the country of asylum and, in some instances, immigration regulations, resettlement and security policies of resettlement countries, available case-loads, and options to use alternative resettlement channels. Iraqi refugees from Syria, initially selected for the USA, have been excluded from transfer to the ETCs since 2014 because of the refusal of some refugees for resettlement to the USA despite initial clearance. Thus, in the period 2012-2014, a total of twenty-eight refugees were rejected. Eighteen were finally resettled to other countries, two repatriated voluntarily, five left the ETC in Humenné and three persons are still in the ETC in Timisoara, and 1 person is still in Humenné.
  
101. The different situations are to some extent reflected in the resettlement submission categories. Refugees evacuated to the ETCs were submitted under all seven resettlement submission categories. These are Legal and/or Physical Protection Needs (LPN), Lack of Foreseeable Alternative Durable Solutions (LAS), Survivors of Violence and/or Torture (SVT), Women and Girls at Risk (AWR), Family Reunification (FAM), Children and Adolescents at Risk (CHL) and Medical Needs (MED). For Timisoara, more detailed information has been shared with respect to emergency and urgent cases. Only cases with medical needs and children and adolescents at risk cannot be found among these two resettlement priority categories, In Humenné, all submission categories, including a small number of medical cases, can be found since early 2012. Generally, refugees with such needs are resettled directly, as available medical services are not sufficiently specialized and/or ETC infrastructure and services do not adequately correspond with the needs of such cases.

Graph 4: Annual number of refugees per priority level (emergency and urgent) and submission category for the ETC in Timisoara 01 Jan 2012-30 Sep 2015<sup>29</sup>



Source: Data provided by ETC staff

102. The ETCs hosted male and female refugees of all age groups. Generally, the proportion of male and female refugees was almost equal in both ETCs. In Humenné, an average of 63 percent female and 37 percent male refugees were hosted by the ETC in 2012 due to some large groups of female-headed households.
103. Refugees of all age groups have been transferred to the ETCs. Adults comprise the largest group of residents in Timisoara, whereas children almost equal or outnumber the adult population in Humenné. In Timisoara, based on annual figures, adults comprise between 50 to 74 percent, and children between 20 to 48 percent of the total refugee population in the period 2012-2015.<sup>30</sup> The largest groups of children tend to be those of 5-11 and 12-17 years of age.
104. In Humenné, adults comprised between 41 and 59 percent of the total refugee population in the period 2012-2015. As in Timisoara, children are most often in the 5-11 and the 12-17 age groups.
105. Only a few refugees of sixty years of age and older were accommodated in the ETCs. The variations in age groups over time demonstrate the need for a flexible approach to the delivery of services and assistance in the ETCs.
106. Some LGBTI refugees have been transferred to the ETC in Timisoara. Different views were expressed regarding the effect a stay in the ETC had on their well-being, and the extent to which UNHCR could guarantee their safety in the centre. Whereas LGBTI refugees continued to be sent to the ETC in Timisoara, some interlocutors considered the environment not always secure and appropriate for such cases. The tight living quarters where refugees share rooms coupled with the lack of free movement can contribute to tension within the community..
107. Thus, as these cases are in the ETC for resettlement to the USA, the concerned UNHCR field office(s) should receive clear instructions about the selection of resettlement countries for LGBTI refugees.

<sup>29</sup> Of nine SVT/LPN cases resettled to Finland in 2012, three were also categorized as WAR cases.

<sup>30</sup> The figure for 2012 is from April onwards.

### 3.3 Effectiveness

- **Evaluation Question:** To what extent are the ETCs achieving their objectives, in particular of providing immediate and effective protection to individuals of concern to UNHCR, enabling officials from UNHCR and resettlement countries to undertake interviews in a stable and secure environment, and promoting onward resettlement?
- **Evaluation Question:** Are the administrative and standard operating procedures in place for evacuation and onward resettlement appropriate and effective for achieving the objectives of the ETCs?
- **Evaluation Question:** Do the ETCs respond effectively to global demand for emergency resettlement?
- **Evaluation Question:** Can the overall objectives of the ETCs be achieved by using resources in a different manner in the future?

108. **Key Finding:** Overall, the ETCs have been partially effective with respect to these four objectives, although the ones related to emergency resettlement received less prominence than originally envisaged. Arguably, the objective of involving States not otherwise involved in emergency resettlement is met by providing access to the US to process resettlement cases that otherwise would not be possible, even if that resettlement is not on an emergency basis. In fact, the ETCs have predominantly gained in importance by supporting some resettlement countries in administering the resettlement process.
109. **Key Finding:** The ETCs have offered immediate protection to refugees at risk, and provided protection and assistance to refugees during their stay in the centres. However, a limited “care and maintenance” approach cannot adequately meet the needs of refugees who stay for a prolonged period in the ETCs, as it potentially hinders their eventual integration into their new home country. An increased sense of normalcy could be achieved by involving the refugees more in the day-to-day running of the centres, by removing the restrictions on freedom of movement in Timisoara, and by carrying out an expert assessment of the educational and life-skills activities available in the ETCs.
110. The effectiveness of the two ETCs can be assessed by examining the extent to which the main expected results have been achieved. Thus, the four expected results, as given in table 1, have been re-formulated as follows:
- **Timely and effective protection** to an individual or group of individuals of concern to UNHCR provided;
  - States otherwise not involved in emergency resettlement enabled to accept cases from an ETC, or, in other words, **expanding emergency priority resettlement opportunities**
  - Environment, services and assistance offered in ETCs to refugees for **recovery, and preparation for [a] new life;**
  - **Potential for resettlement realized.**

#### 3.3.1 Timely and effective protection

111. The ETCs are seen as the last resort for emergency and urgent priority cases. The preferred option is to use emergency quotas for emergency and/or urgent resettlement offered by eight countries, which provide approximately 900 to 1,000 places per year. Although the actual size of this group is relatively small in comparison to the total number of resettlement submissions by UNHCR, only a limited number of emergency and urgent priority cases can actually be resettled by means of these quotas.<sup>31</sup> Other cases of these categories are therefore reportedly processed

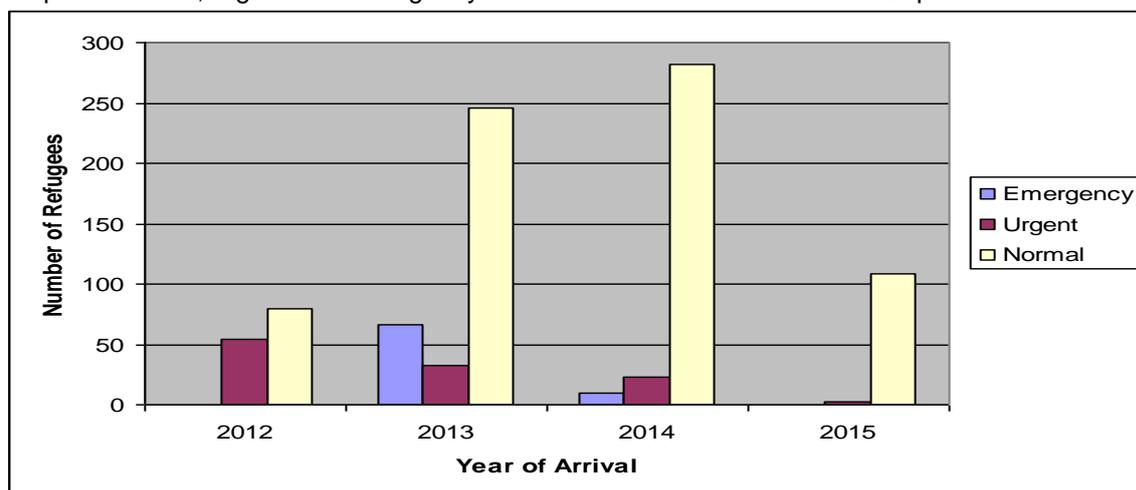
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<sup>31</sup> In 2010, 2011, 2012, 2013 and 2014 respectively 0.7, 0.8, 1.4, 1.2 and 0.8 percent of all resettlement submissions by UNHCR were emergency cases (UNHCR 2015c, 58). For instance, in 2014, 11,028 refugees were submitted by UNHCR for resettlement under emergency or urgent priority. The remaining 10,028 refugees with emergency and urgent resettlement needs in 2014 had to be submitted under regular resettlement programmes. In 2009, the emergency quota was approximately 700 places. Countries with emergency quota included: Brazil (limited number but no specific quota), Denmark (75 persons), Finland (100 persons), the Netherlands (95 persons), Norway (75 persons), New Zealand (limited number but no specific quota) and Sweden (350 persons).

as normal resettlement cases. For instance, in 2012, approximately 7,800 refugees were submitted by UNHCR for resettlement under emergency or urgent priority, of which 6,900 refugees had to be submitted under regular resettlement programmes considering the limited emergency quota available.<sup>32</sup> Relevant statistics to support this claim are not available for other years.

112. Despite the lack of quotas for emergency cases and the apparent need for protection, submissions of emergency and urgent cases for transfer to Timisoara have been minimal. The centre has only been used for emergency priority cases in 2013 and 2014. There were no emergency cases in 2012 and, thus far, none in 2015. In 2013, 66 out of a total of 344 refugees arriving in the ETC were emergency priority cases. In 2014, only ten out of a total of 315 refugees arriving in the centre were submitted as emergency cases.
113. From 2008 to 30 September 2015, the total number of refugees submitted under the emergency priority categories is 196, approximately eleven percent of the ETC population.<sup>33</sup> For the period covered under the evaluation only 76 refugees, namely eight percent, concerned emergency cases. This shows a decrease in use of the ETC for emergency cases, although arguably even eleven percent is not as high as expected considering the assumed needs in the field. The group or “case” size of emergency cases varied from one to up to 25 refugees, which shows that the processing of larger groups with emergency priority has been possible in relation.
114. Both ETCs hosted urgent priority cases in the four years covered under this evaluation. In Timisoara, from 1 January 2012 to up to 30 September 2015, out of a total of 903 refugees, 109 were submitted as urgent cases. Case-size ranged from one to 27 refugees. This is twelve percent of the entire refugee population arriving at the ETC. However, a different picture emerged for each year, with respectively 41, 9, 7 and 2 percent of the total number of refugees arriving in 2012, 2013, 2014 and up to 30 September 2015 in Timisoara.
115. The Netherlands, Finland, Norway, Sweden, the UK and the USA agreed to take urgent cases from Timisoara. The gradual reduction in number of emergency and urgent cases since 2012 may be consistent with a decrease in emergency cases also since 2012.<sup>34</sup>

Graph 5: Normal, urgent and emergency cases Timisoara 01 Jan 2012-30 Sep 2015



Other countries (e.g. Australia and Canada) may exceptionally consider emergency cases for resettlement on a dossier basis (UNHCR, 2010a: 1).

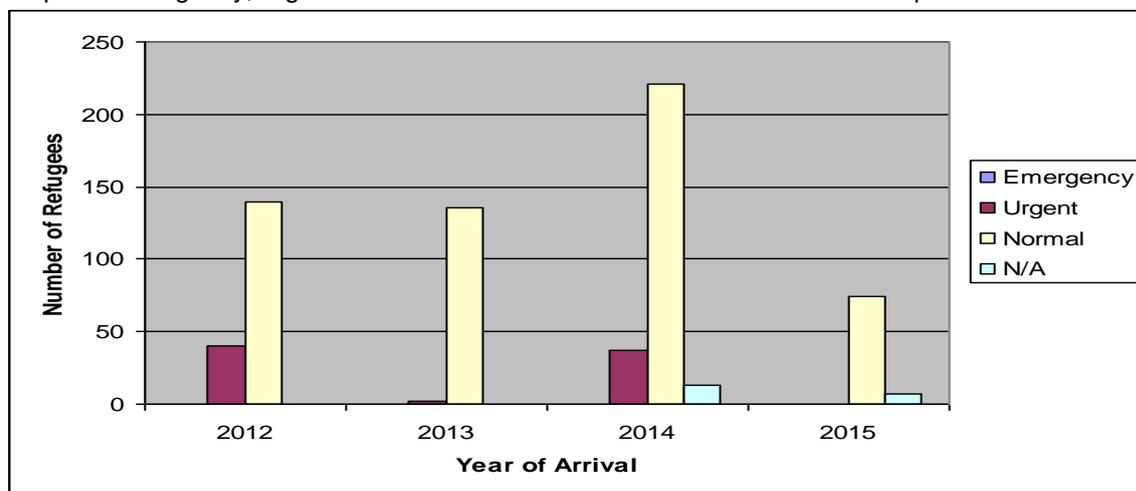
<sup>32</sup> UNHCR, 2015d: 1

<sup>33</sup> Figure provided by UNHCR ETC management, Timisoara.

<sup>34</sup> With respect to dossier case submissions made by UNHCR to resettlement countries, under emergency priority in 2014 and 2015, the following information was given: In 2015 (up to November) a total of 83 cases comprising 207 persons were submitted under emergency priority, while in 2014 emergency dossier case submissions concerned 165 cases/354 persons. The figures are approximate only (email correspondence UNHCR staff). In addition, from 2012 to 2014 emergency submissions were made in 0.8 to 1.4% of resettlement cases. Acceptance rates were 74.4, 68.4 and 76.6 percent in those years.

116. The priority category overview for Humenné shows a different picture. Of the total number of arriving refugees since the beginning of 2012, eleven percent is categorized as urgent. There are strong annual fluctuations, with a stark decrease from 22 percent in 2012 to 1 percent in 2013, a rise to 14 percent in 2014 and then another drop to no urgent cases in 2015.

Graph 6: Emergency, urgent and normal cases Humenné 01 Jan 2012-30 Sep 2015<sup>35</sup>



117. Several reasons explain the limited use of the ETC in Timisoara for emergency and also urgent priority cases. Some of these are efficiency-related such as the limited knowledge of resettlement staff in the field about the ETCs, the limited coordination capacity at UNHCR headquarters, and the time-consuming and bureaucratic procedures. Additionally, the time-frame between submission of the case to the Romanian authorities and actual arrival in Timisoara shows that there is no major difference between emergency and urgent cases. This can, to some degree, be explained by the difficult circumstances that hinder the organization of the departure from conflict settings. The fact that a transfer can only be made if a resettlement country is already identified also restricts the use of the centre.
118. A comprehensive picture of the decrease in emergency priority cases transferred to Timisoara could not be obtained during this evaluation. An in-depth review of emergency and urgent priority resettlement cases **is therefore recommended** to be undertaken by the Resettlement Service, as well as current practices in their selection, management and resettlement processing.
119. Nevertheless, over time, the availability of this ETC has been life-saving, and of utmost importance to refugees in the absence of readily available protection alternatives. This also included refugees submitted under the “normal” priority who were transferred from situations of conflict, such as Syria and Yemen.

### 3.3.2 Protection and Assistance: the two ETCs compared

120. According to the objectives established, the two ETCs offer in principle the same protection and assistance to refugees. Yet, in practice different approaches are implemented in several areas that have either been agreed on in the Tri-Partite Agreements or emerged as standard procedures and activities by the different partners. A comparison below of the provision of protection and assistance in the two centres indicates the differing levels of satisfaction and well-being of refugees in relation to, and as a consequence of these services. This in turn must be considered in the discussion on minimum standards, as well as in relation to the next stages in the resettlement process, namely departure from the ETC and refugees’ integration in their new home countries.

<sup>35</sup> The category N/A stands for no answer, which means that this information was not provided on the RRFs of the concerned refugees.

121. The ETC-hosting governments provide security within the compound and take care of the overall maintenance of the building, laundry and, in the case of Humenné, the provision of food (up to 100 persons until November 2015, and the entire population thereafter). UNHCR liaises with local government representatives and is responsible for the provision of protection and assistance, which is largely provided by the two IPs. The organization of work between UNHCR and the IP is organized differently in the two centres.
122. In addition to the provision of assistance and services, the IP in Timisoara is also responsible for checking the presence of all refugees in the morning, providing lists of refugees joining an activity outside of the centre for signature to UNHCR and then to the General Inspectorate for Immigration, and accompanying refugees not only to school or hospital, but also during regular walks to the town centre (to buy cigarettes etc.), to the gym (which is in the town as there is no space in the ETC) and so on. Much of the capacity of GTR is used for monitoring the presence and movements of refugees: in other words “policing” the refugees, instead of supporting them in other relevant activities. A review of these, and possibly also other administrative rules and regulations that have crept into the governance of the ETC in Timisoara, could be undertaken to organize management more efficiently.
123. This could also lead to the transfer of some of these responsibilities to the General Inspectorate for Immigration Service, as is the case in Humenné (e.g. registering refugees leaving/returning to the compound). A more flexible use of budget lines to give the IP the ability to respond to unforeseen needs of refugees can contribute to more efficiency, and a better targeting of services of the IP. Additionally, in order to promote a more participatory approach to planning, it is recommended to invite the IP to provide inputs into the design of the new ETC-building based on their vast experience in the centre.

#### **a. Sectors compared**

##### **Security**

124. The ETCs are located on the compounds of the General Inspectorate for Immigration of the Government of Romania in Timisoara and Migration Office of the Ministry of the Interior of the Slovak Republic. The compounds are fenced and/or closed off from the main road. A guard is at the main entrance to the compound, and in the case of Timisoara, a gendarme is present 24/7 in front of the UNHCR office. This is a consequence of regular tensions and frustrations by residents, and a stronger security regime was deemed necessary in relation to access to the UNHCR office and to the compound in general. Furthermore, immigration service officials patrol the two compounds on a regular basis.
125. Additionally, in Humenné, the IP is present 24/7. Their presence at night has been activated to offer a direct point of contact in case of conflicts or tensions, medical emergencies, or when refugees are scared of being “alone” in the building. In Timisoara, neither the IP nor UNHCR is present at night although they can be called if necessary by the refugees, the gendarme, or the General Inspectorate for Immigration. It is unclear if the absence of UNHCR/IP at night in Timisoara is because of security reasons, or for other reasons.
126. Because of the more diverse population, the limited space and lack of family rooms, and the prolonged stay of refugees, with some traumatized and coming directly from a conflict setting, tensions may erupt faster in Timisoara. Tensions have arisen in the past between refugees and asylum seekers accommodated in the same compound because of the difference in services provided to the two groups. During the FGDs female refugees noted that they were apprehensive about their children playing near the asylum seekers section because of the presence of “strange” men. Domestic violence occurred in the past,<sup>36</sup> and a possible incident took place when the

<sup>36</sup> At the ETC in Timisoara there were no reported SGBV incidents, although several refugees were SGBV survivors. An SGBV response and prevention workshop was conducted by UNHCR RRCE and Bucharest to refresh SGBV related knowledge of the entire field. The arrival of an Arabic-speaking Community Services Assistant was extremely useful as a confidence-building measure. In Humenné, there were several instances of domestic violence, which required counselling as well as police intervention. These conflicts were eventually resolved, and the involved refugees were resettled. SGBV survivors received medical and psycho-social support in both centres. Preventive activities were undertaken through FGDs on SGBV, including domestic violence, and all these actions were seen to result in a reduction of protection risks (UNHCR RRCE, 2014).

evaluation team was in Timisoara.<sup>37</sup> Prevention activities in this field are undertaken by the IPs in both ETCs.

### **Temporary ID-cards**

127. In Romania, refugees receive temporary identity documents from the authorities, while in the Slovak Republic refugees receive a photo ID/health care entitlement card from UNHCR. Refugees evacuated to Romania do not require a visa and they are allowed to remain for a period of six months which may be extended. Refugees travelling to the Slovak Republic require a visa. Visas are valid only for the duration of the validity of the travel document and the Government issues “tolerated stay” permits upon expiry of their visa if they are still awaiting resettlement. Children born to refugees accommodated in the ETCs receive birth certificates in a timely manner.

### **Freedom of movement**

128. One of the most profound differences between the two ETCs is freedom of movement. Following a three-week quarantine period, refugees staying in Humenné can leave the ETC unaccompanied during the day (until 22:00). Children can only leave with one of their parents.
129. In Timisoara, which was systematically referred to as a “camp” by UNHCR staff, IP staff and refugees, the refugees can only leave if escorted by one of the IP staff. Permission must be obtained from the ETC centre director on the previous day. This restricts the refugees’ freedom of movement, and additionally puts a substantial burden on available staff capacity of the IP, which as a consequence has less time for other activities, such as counselling. Movement outside the ETC can in principle only take place during week days, as IP staff are not present at weekends. In the FGDs, this was raised as the major concern, despite the efforts of the IP to accommodate the requests for movement to the greatest degree possible (including to the church on Sundays). The ETC was described as a prison in these discussions and in secondary sources. In particular, refugees considered this a major disadvantage, even more so in light of the limited living space and the absence of family rooms in Timisoara.<sup>38</sup> Some refugees linked the lack of freedom to depression and a feeling of not having control of their own lives. They wished to have a “normal” life and for their children to go to a “normal” school.
130. The Humenné experience shows that refugees comply with the requirement of residing in the ETC and with the 22:00 curfew. Considering that no tensions have been observed between the local population and refugees in Timisoara, it is recommended to review the implementation of this rule. The Tri-Partite Agreement with the Government of Romania requires only that the refugees reside in the ETC, so additional restrictions such as the requirement of an escort are outside this framework. Building the confidence of the local authorities to allow freedom of movement along the lines of the arrangement in Humenné would not require renegotiation of the Tri-Partite Agreement. Moreover, some local officials conveyed to the evaluation team that the refugees could leave the centre whenever they wished as long as they returned each night. Therefore there would appear to be political space to implement “limited freedom of movement” in a much less restricted manner.

### **Accommodation, infrastructure and water and sanitation**

131. Shelter and infrastructure are the responsibility of the respective governments. UNHCR complemented the government’s efforts by providing internet access and replacing ten old stoves and five washing machines in Timisoara. The limited average living space per refugee, and the absence of standards in a non-emergency context has been discussed earlier. Often, male and female refugees have separate rooms in Timisoara because of the limited space available. Each room has eight beds. Children stay with their mothers, and boys of twelve years and above sleep in one of the male rooms. There is no separate access to bathrooms and kitchens. Only the long-stayers (one single man and one couple) have their own rooms to ease some of the tensions resulting from their stay of several years in the ETC.

<sup>37</sup> As a result of several accounts of domestic violence, all partners working at the ETC have committed themselves to work on customized solutions (UNHCR, 2011e: 49)

<sup>38</sup> ‘Two resettled refugees participated in the cultural orientation training in a special refugee camp in Romania (ETC) [...]. The reception in Romania was not considered as pleasant by the refugees. One of them mentioned that the reception in the camp was both mentally and physically demanding. She described the months of her stay as ‘just like a prison’ (unofficial translation) (Schol et al, 2013: 39). Also, during the UNHCR participatory assessment undertaken in 2010, refugees ‘voiced their wish to be able to go out more often and to have some pocket money to buy sweets for their children’ (UNHCR, 2011e: 49).

132. In Humenné, at the time of the evaluation mission, there was still sufficient space to give family rooms to all families. Only single refugees shared rooms with same sex roommates. Separate bathrooms for male and female refugees can be found in both ETCs, and access to water is not restricted. The Slovak Government refurbished three kitchens and a bathroom, and upgraded the kitchen equipment with new stoves, ovens and kitchen utensils. The three storey building has no elevator for refugees with mobility challenges.

#### **Food/cooking facilities**

133. The provision of food is organized differently in the two centres. In Timisoara, no canteen is available and refugees are given the option to cook for themselves (ingredients are then provided) or receive ready-made meals from an external catering service. There are not enough utensils or cutlery, and cooking facilities are not available for the entire group. Some refugees stated that there were not enough vegetables. In the design of the new facility in Timisoara, some thought could be given to allowing refugees to cook for themselves, and this issue could be addressed in the development of minimum standards for ETCs. Not only would this establish a degree of normalcy into their day-to-day lives, it would also be more cost-efficient for UNHCR.
134. In Humenné, a catering service that provides both to the ETC and the asylum seekers centre takes care of the three main meals each day. These are served in a canteen. Supplementary feeding is distributed by the IP for children and refugees with special needs. Small kitchens are available on the three main floors where refugees can cook for themselves. They may, however, not have the financial means to buy food beyond the 10 Euro pocket money per month. Traditional food is not always available.

#### **Clothes**

135. In both ETCs, refugees receive second-hand clothes that are either bought or provided through voluntary donations. In Humenné, the refugees also get 45 Euro per person to buy clothes upon arrival in the centre.

#### **Hygienic items**

136. Refugees receive hygienic items in both ETCs.

#### **Health care services**

137. Refugees are screened medically upon arrival and departure. The IPs operate health care units in the ETCs, which facilitates access to health care. Additionally, refugees can get medical care in the hospitals in the two towns. The medical needs and condition of the evacuated refugees were often not known in advance (except for severe cases) due to poor health and medical services in countries of origin, asylum or transfer. Strengthened coordination between UNHCR offices ensured that the updated information on the vulnerabilities of refugees was received prior to their arrival to the ETCs so that refugees with severe medical conditions can be treated appropriately. In Timisoara, on request of resettlement countries, all refugees from Syria were vaccinated against polio. Refugees were grateful for the medical attention they received in the ETCs, although male refugees expressed some concern regarding the availability of glasses and dental care.
138. In both ETCs, social workers, and psychologists provide counselling services. This includes trauma counseling, as some of the refugees are survivors of torture or SGBV.<sup>39</sup> Their presence also allows for a direct response mechanism to domestic violence in the centres. Sometimes the lack or unavailability of interpreters can complicate the provision of such assistance. An assessment undertaken earlier in 2015 in Timisoara pointed out that the physical lay-out and the available capacity and services provided in the ETCs are not adequate for refugees with serious psychiatric disorders.

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<sup>39</sup> In both ETCs an external consultant delivered a workshop on "Working with refugee survivors of trauma". The Regional Office and the office in Bucharest conducted a SGBV response and prevention workshop for all the field staff.

### Education for children

139. IPs operate kindergartens in both centres, and classes are further provided to children up to the age of eighteen years. In Timisoara, since July 2013, children are brought to a school outside the ETC where they can attend classes four hours per day, four days a week. Refugee children may be able to join regular school classes, but in practice this has not happened due to language gaps. An interpreter assists the teacher in school. Boys and girls are taught in the same class, and school certificates are given before their departure. An Arabic teacher was hired enabling children to study in their native language and prepare for future enrollment in school in Timisoara.
140. In Humenné, classes for children aged eight to sixteen years are held in the ETC. They are divided into three groups based on performance and age. School is five hours per day, five days per week. There are three fully-equipped classrooms with a PC and internet connection. The students are provided with certificates of school attendance, cultural orientation and personal skills development training courses. The model of using school facilities in town was considered by refugees to be preferable to give children a sense of normalcy during their stay in the centre.

### Vocational/language training

141. In both ETCs vocational and language training is offered four days a week, although the frequency and intensity is different in the two centres. In Timisoara, adults may attend two-hour English classes twice a week. In Humenné, one-hour English classes are offered five days a week. Vocational training is also offered to children and adults, including computer classes, handicrafts, and driving lessons (only in Timisoara),

### Leisure

142. The ETCs provide space for outdoors sports, such as football and basket-ball, a computer room, a leisure room (with a television), and several classrooms. In Humenné, there is also a gym, and a mother/infant play room. Activities are offered five days a week and an activity schedule facilitates male-only and female-only access to the computer room in both ETCs and to the gym in Humenné. In Timisoara, IP staff take interested refugees to the mosque on Friday or to the church on Sunday and to the gym (men twice a week, and women once a week). Computer rooms are open until 17:00 in Timisoara, and until 21:00 in Humenné. Refugees have access to wifi in the ETCs (in Timisoara, this is shared with the asylum-seekers). In Timisoara, there is no access to Farsi television, which could be of interest to Afghan refugees. In Humenné, Somali girls can watch their favorite Indian soap in their own language.

### Financial means/pocket money

143. In Humenné only, refugees receive pocket-money of 10 Euro per person per month. This gives some financial means to refugees to buy cigarettes, telephone credit or an ice-cream for their children. No obvious reason could be found for the difference in approach between the two ETCs.
144. In conclusion, a key difference between the protection and assistance provided in Timisoara and Humenné is that refugees have no freedom of movement in Timisoara. This situation along with a more heterogeneous population, limited living space with no family rooms and less opportunities for leisure and language training for adults, leads to a living environment in which stress can more easily build up.
145. Overall, the services provided in Humenné were more comprehensive than those provided in Timisoara, although the choice given to refugees to prepare meals themselves in Timisoara was regarded as a positive option. **It is recommended** to review IP staffing and services provided in the two ETCs to promote a more coherent approach to protection and assistance in the two centres based on adopted minimum standards, and taking into account the diverse refugee populations and different operating environments as well as the views of the beneficiaries. **It is further recommended** to examine options to use school facilities to give children a sense of normalcy and possibly alleviate the burden posed by an increased capacity in the ETC in Humenné.

## **b. Refugees' Well-being and Satisfaction**

146. The services provided in the ETCs contribute to the well-being of refugees. Most refugees expressed their overall satisfaction with available assistance and services in the centres. Expectations and the situation that they had left behind also shaped their views on the assistance and services provided in the centres. For instance, the Somali refugees who had lived in a camp for over twenty years in Eritrea with limited access to water and other resources had a very different background from Afghan refugee families who had lived in urban environments in Iran.
147. The management of expectations begins in the country of asylum. Prior to departure, refugees must receive information about the facilities before they sign a consent form to approve their transfer to an ETC. Refugees in the FGDs had different experiences in different countries as well as within one country with different field offices. In one scenario, a refugee family had not been given any information about the ETC (and did not seem to be aware of the fact that they were in the process of being resettled to the USA), whereas in another one all necessary information (including about no freedom of movement, no family rooms, basic needs covered, classes, etc., as well as a short introductory movie about the ETC) was given to prepare the adults of the family. Not all refugees were informed about the absence of family rooms in Timisoara and the situation of limited freedom of movement. Teenagers were not always aware of the conditions in the ETC. More effort should be made to ensure that refugees receive necessary information about the ETC before their transfer. Although a UNHCR information bulletin has been prepared and shared with UNHCR field offices with information about the ETCs, some more detailed ETC-specific information can be provided by means of an additional note and an introductory video and/or photos (including photos of bedrooms, kitchens, bathrooms etc.) of the ETCs.<sup>40</sup>
148. While most of the refugees interviewed during the mission were satisfied with the standards of assistance offered, they felt that their lives in the ETC were on hold and many expressed a desire to have a "normal" life and to move on quickly from the ETC, some saying "this is not our home."
149. Especially during the FGDs in Timisoara, concerns were expressed regarding the difficulties arising from living with many refugees in a relatively small area, the limited to no freedom of movement, and a general sense of boredom in the ETC. Several teenage and adult men voiced concerns that the ETC felt like a prison in the context of a situation of "not knowing" if and when they would depart to the USA. Because of these conditions, some female refugees felt depressed, although they (as well as a Somali teenager) also noted that they preferred the IP to accompany them to town as they did not know the environment. In Timisoara, male refugees noted that they had no money to buy anything for their children. Also, the availability of only second-hand clothes and the fact that at least the teenagers still had plastic slippers and not shoes at the end of October was raised during the FGDs.
150. The driving (only in Timisoara) and the English classes (in both centres) were particularly appreciated, although – again in Timisoara – several male adults noted that it would be good to have a gym in the ETC, and more intensive language training (English) was deemed necessary. In Humenné, male refugees also expressed the wish to have driving lessons, as they had learned during their cultural orientation training that for transportation a car is necessary in the USA. Not all children seemed to be attending preparatory classes, and some of the Afghan teenage boys did not seem to appreciate their classes in Timisoara. They pointed to the voluntary nature of these classes, and only a few seemed eager to learn English. The refugees felt generally safe in the two ETCs.
151. Appreciation with respect to the assistance and services to cover basic needs were also raised several years earlier during a participatory assessment undertaken by UNHCR in 2010.<sup>41</sup> This

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<sup>40</sup> One video is available on the ETC in Romania ('Documentary on ETC, Romania), but this seems to be more a PR tool for donors than an appropriate tool to inform refugees about the conditions and services provided in the ETC. It contains some disturbing images. See <https://vimeo.com/72811023>

<sup>41</sup> UNHCR, 2011e: 49

assessment also noted the main concerns of refugees at that time, namely the uncertainty of their situation/lack of clarity about their status, the absence of pocket money, the desire to have more intensive English classes, and the lack of freedom of movement, family rooms and privacy. Although some of the conditions cannot be changed in the current ETC facilities, it is recommended to the RRCE and Country Office Romania to undertake a review of some of the rules and procedures operated in Timisoara to give more liberty to refugees, and free IP staff time to concentrate more on supporting and preparing refugees for the next stage in their lives. Additionally, **it is recommended** to consider an expert assessment with respect to the education and training offered by the IPs in both centres to offer advice on strengthening the services provided in this field.

### 3.3.3 Expanding Emergency Priority Resettlement

152. One of the assumptions of the ETCs was that emergency priority cases could be categorized as “normal” and then under “emergency mode” be transferred to an ETC. The concerned refugee would receive immediate protection, UNHCR would have time to identify a resettlement country, and the concerned resettlement country could process the case under regular procedures. Data are not available to undertake an analysis of such cases. However, information shared during interviews pointed out that the ETCs have not been used for such processing to expand emergency resettlement opportunities. The general rule is that a transfer to an ETC can only be approved following the identification of a resettlement country. Considering that the number of cases rejected after transfer to the ETC is small (28 of 1,568 persons, or 1.7%) and that UNHCR was able to find solutions for 18 of the 28 persons rejected by resettlement countries after transfer, **it is recommended** to consider revising this policy to broaden the basis for utilizing this protection tool in appropriate circumstances.

### 3.3.4 Recovery and Preparation for a New Life

153. Refugees are provided with protection and assistance in the ETCs, and the opportunity to participate in different types of educational and training activities. The Tri-Partite Agreements emphasize the need for immediate security and coverage of basic needs (shelter, food and access to health care). The original vision underlying the ETCs was that these centres would function as temporary transit or evacuation centres, and that refugees would be resettled relatively quickly. Thus, the provision of protection and assistance was premised on the idea that refugees would spend a matter of weeks in the ETCs.
154. With respect to some groups, such as the Iraqi refugees from Syria who will be resettled to the UK, this approach to facilitate a short-term stay seems to be the right one. Yet, the majority of refugees stay several months. This not only implies that actual assistance and services provided must not be based on minimum emergency standards and short-term responses, but also that a community development approach can be more comprehensively implemented in the ETCs, including by providing ample opportunities to improve language and other skills to support integration at a later stage. The more restrictive environment in particular in Timisoara does not support the development of a general sense of well-being, self-esteem, confidence and assertiveness of refugees that may be necessary to integrate effectively in their new home country.
156. The ETC operations are characterized by a “care and maintenance” approach, in which some elements of the community development approach have been incorporated. This rights-based approach *“is founded on the principles of participation and empowering individuals and communities to promote change and enable them to exercise their rights and comply with their duties. [...] persons of concern [...] are no longer viewed as beneficiaries of aid, but as rights-holders with legal entitlements.”*<sup>42</sup> Participation, and taking on certain responsibilities, may come with benefits. Participation promotes protection, rebuilds or strengthens self-esteem and confidence and further helps refugees cope with trauma by reducing feelings of helplessness.<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> UNHCR, 2008b: 16

<sup>43</sup> UNHCR, 2008b: 17

157. The community development approach has in particular been used in efforts to appoint and use refugee representatives to promote a more inclusive form of governance in the ETCs. In Humenné, two male and two female refugees represent the refugees living in the centre during the Friday afternoon information-sharing meetings. This has been seen as successful, and is probably a consequence of the rather homogeneous groups.<sup>44</sup> In Timisoara, the refugee population is more diverse with several nationalities living together. Developing a sense of community within a couple of months is less likely to be successful in this set-up. Information-sharing meetings are organized bi-weekly to discuss daily activities and other issues of relevance to the refugees and the ETC management.
158. Moreover, refugees participate in some of the daily activities in the centres. Male and female refugees assist with cleaning of rooms and public spaces in the ETCs, and refugees can choose to prepare their own meals in Timisoara with food items provided by the catering service. Refugees expected to stay for several months could be invited to become more involved in some of the day-to-day running of the ETCs, such as in doing laundry (a laundry service for bed linen is managed by the government, whereas refugees could in principle also be tasked to do the laundry as large washing machines are available), maintenance of the grass/grounds (especially in Timisoara), the distribution of items and the supervision of the usage of – for instance – the computer room. This would necessitate consultation with the host Governments and IPs. This would give long-stayers some responsibilities, use their capacities and get them more actively involved in the running of the centres. Additionally, this may also support UNHCR and the IP in managing the ETCs. **It is therefore recommended** to strengthen the implementation of a community development approach by involving refugees more in the day-to-day running of the ETCs.
159. The relatively long stay in the ETCs of in particular the US-bound case-load also invites more emphasis on transferring language and other practical skills to refugees that they can capitalize on after resettlement. UNHCR provides policy advice on ensuring the effective integration of refugees after resettlement, but activities to actually prepare refugees for their integration, e.g. cultural orientation courses, are usually considered to fall under the responsibility of resettlement countries. In addition, efforts have been made to impart English language skills to refugees of different age groups, and although some have certainly benefited from these opportunities, the limited hours in Timisoara for adults and the level of absenteeism and disinterest by refugees warrant a further assessment of education provided in the ETCs. This could then also cover the different types of vocational training offered to refugees.
160. Cultural orientation training facilitated by IOM or resettlement country representatives is usually conducted prior to refugees' departure. These courses vary in intensity. Some refugees, such as for those travelling to the Netherlands, only receive an information package if their number is too small for a training on location. Although considerable efforts are made to build and strengthen relevant skills by the IPs, a stay of an average of four to five months in the ETCs could be better used to involve refugees in the day-to-day activities at the ETCs, and support the development of relevant language, practical and life-skills.
161. For example, the more systematic use of the life skills training of an American organization (referred to as "Cross roads"), which is currently regularly conducted in Humenné, could be further explored for refugees travelling to the USA. It is therefore recommended to: a) undertake a review to examine if and to what extent this training duplicates some of the components of existing cultural orientation courses; b) explore the more systematic use of the above-mentioned training package on life skills to all refugees, and; c) explore the willingness of donors to support such training as well as other training activities to prepare refugees for integration.
162. Refugees can further be prepared by providing more communication material about their expected resettlement country at an early stage. The link between countries of asylum and resettlement can also be further strengthened by providing information about the resettlement country to refugees prior to their transfer to the ETC. This is particularly relevant in those situations when refugees have limited access to correct information through national media or

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<sup>44</sup> UNHCR, 2008: 14

internet about their future home-country due to particular political and/or security dimensions. This concerns, for instance, Afghan refugees in Iran. It is recommended to provide more up to date information about resettlement countries, in which, for example integrated refugees of the same nationalities provide further insights into their experiences, including the need for language skills as a first step for integration, opportunities and challenges.

### 3.3.5 Potential for Resettlement Realized

163. The ETCs have facilitated the resettlement process for resettlement countries, UNHCR and refugees, and thus realized the resettlement potential of these refugees. The majority of refugees transferred to the centres have actually departed for resettlement within the designated period of six months. Thus, up to 30 September, 2015, 2,514 refugees departed to their resettlement countries from the ETC in Timisoara and the ETC Humenné. In the period covered under this evaluation, the percentage is close to 100 percent.
164. The ETCs address particular needs of resettlement countries, which differed per country and at times with respect to the particular situation of countries of asylum. The centres offered the USA (and IOM) the opportunity to conduct pre-screening and screening interviews that could otherwise not have been conducted in person for groups staying in areas close to conflict zones (Egypt) or countries not accessible for political and/or security reasons. Additionally, cultural orientation training sessions were provided to refugees expected to be resettled to the USA. The ETC in Timisoara provided the UK with access and space to conduct biometrics, and cultural orientation training for Iraqi refugees from Syria because of the lack of capacity of the UK embassy in Beirut. If the ETCs had not been available, then it is highly likely that refugees would otherwise not have had the opportunity to be resettled to these countries.
165. The ETCs also functioned as secure “waiting rooms” for the USA and some other resettlement countries. Whereas refugees pending resettlement to the UK or the Netherlands stayed generally less or just over a month in the ETC, refugees submitted for resettlement to the USA remained on average close to five months in the centres. The Netherlands and Finland supported transfers to Timisoara because of the time required to find municipalities for refugees accepted for resettlement.<sup>45</sup> Thus, in the case of the Netherlands, under a change in policy after 1 July 2011, resettled refugees should move directly to the selected municipalities upon arrival in their new home country. Earlier, resettled refugees would have stayed at an asylum-seekers reception centre for six months in the Netherlands while the government identified a municipality for the final transfer. The implication is that refugees have to remain longer in the country of asylum, or the ETC in Timisoara, and, as a result, need to be supported by UNHCR for a longer period of time.
166. The ETCs have also facilitated the resettlement process of initially rejected refugees already residing in the centres, either by the expected resettlement country or a new one which accepted the refugee on the basis of UNHCR referrals. A total of 28 refugees were rejected in the period 2012-2015. For eighteen refugees new resettlement countries were found, two voluntarily repatriated, three refugees are still in the ETC in Timisoara, and one was still in Humenné in October 2015.

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<sup>45</sup> One of the following challenges has been given regarding the resettlement system in Finland: 'Insufficient places offered by municipalities for resettlement, resulting in an under-utilisation of the resettlement quota and increased waiting times in countries of asylum for refugees accepted for resettlement to Finland. These delays impact significantly on the capacity of the Finnish programme to offer protection to urgent and emergency cases.' <http://www.resettlement.eu/country/finland> (consulted 28/11/2015)

### 3.4 Efficiency

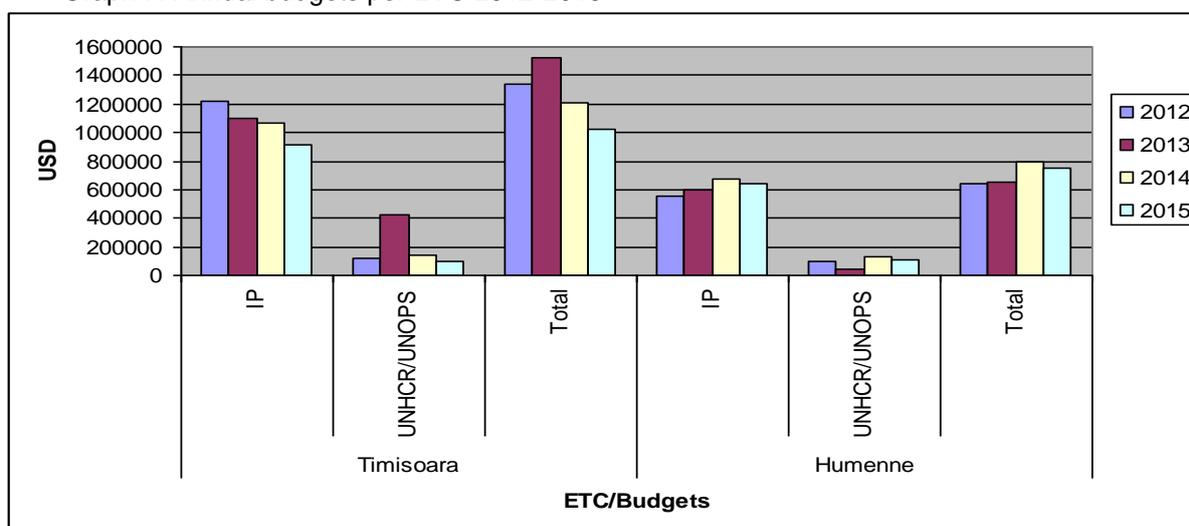
▪ **Evaluation Question** Are the inputs (staff and resources) efficient in achieving the objectives of the ETCs and in meeting the needs of the refugees during their stay at these facilities?

167. **Key Finding:** Most of the costs to UNHCR are fixed as the main costs are UNHCR staff and partner staff. Thus the per capita (refugee) cost would be lower if the centres were used to maximum capacity. Food costs are up to 49% of the budget in Timisoara, and could possibly be lowered if food assistance mechanisms were changed. Different human resource allocations in the two centres should be reviewed and harmonized to the extent possible.
168. The efficiency of the ETCs in Timisoara and Humenné was viewed from different angles, including in relation to the budget and staff capacity in UNHCR headquarters and at the field level. Additionally, coordination of the “pipeline” will be further examined, in relation to procedures and responsibilities at the field level, the regional hubs, headquarters and at the ETC level. The perceived underutilization of the ETCs will be further analyzed with respect to available capacity, and taking into account the need for minimum standards as discussed in the section on effectiveness.

#### 3.4.1 The Financial Picture: a comparison of the two ETCs

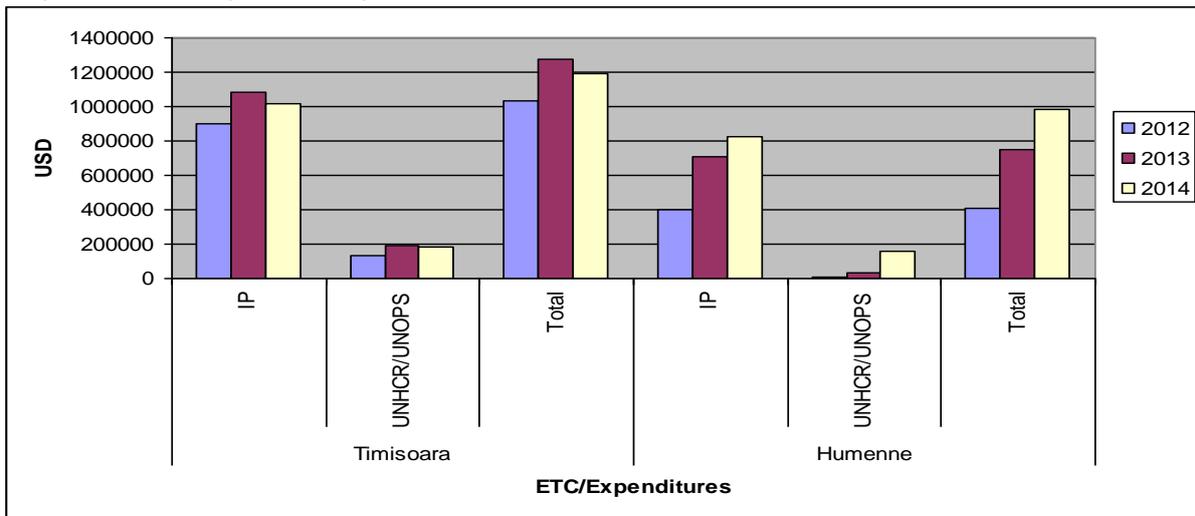
169. The ETCs were initially covered by earmarked funding from the USA until the end of 2013 and have subsequently been mainstreamed in UNHCR’s regular budget. The ETC in the Slovak Republic also received some budgetary support from the EC from 2012 until the end of 2014. This covered basic needs, such as food assistance. Although no comparative data are available on, for instance, a more extended stay of refugees in countries of first asylum before they can be resettled, the ETCs are assumed to be relatively expensive compared to, for example, the costs of assistance in camps in Yemen or Eritrea.
170. A comparison of the annual budgets and expenditures of the two ETCs sheds further light on some of the main differences in operations. The annual budgets of the centre in Timisoara are much higher than the budgets for Humenné, with variations between 58 to 70 percent of the combined budgets. The annual expenditures of Timisoara are 72, 63 and 55 percent of the combined expenditures for the two ETCs for 2012, 2013 and 2014.
171. Overall, the IP budgets for Timisoara show a steady decrease, whereas the IP budget for Humenné is more subject to fluctuation. Annual expenditures are different as those for the IP(s) fluctuate for Timisoara and steadily increase for Humenné. The same picture exists with respect to UNHCR/UNOPS expenditures and total expenditures for the two centres.

Graph 7: Annual budgets per ETC 2012-2015



Source: FOCUS

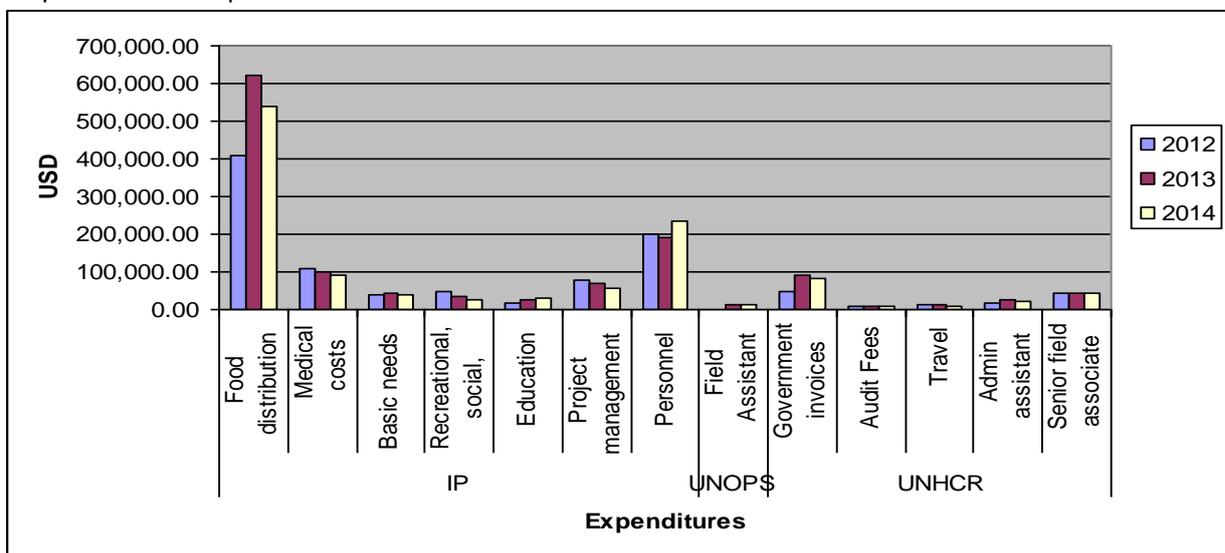
Graph 8: Annual expenditures per ETC 2012-2014



Source: FOCUS

172. Annual expenditures for Timisoara in the years 2012, 2013 and 2014 show an increase in 2013 and a decrease in 2014 compared to the previous year. 2013 was relatively high because of several renovation activities, and there were still two IPs at that time (2013 was the last year that Save the Children was contracted for educational activities). Food assistance comprises respectively 40 (2012), 49 (2013) and 45 (2014) percent of annual expenditures. IP staff costs are respectively 20 (2012), 15 (2013) and 20 (2014) percent of all expenditures related to Timisoara. IP expenditures are respectively 85, 87 and 85 percent of the total annual expenditures for 2012, 2013, 2014.

Graph 9: Annual expenditure Timisoara 2012-2014

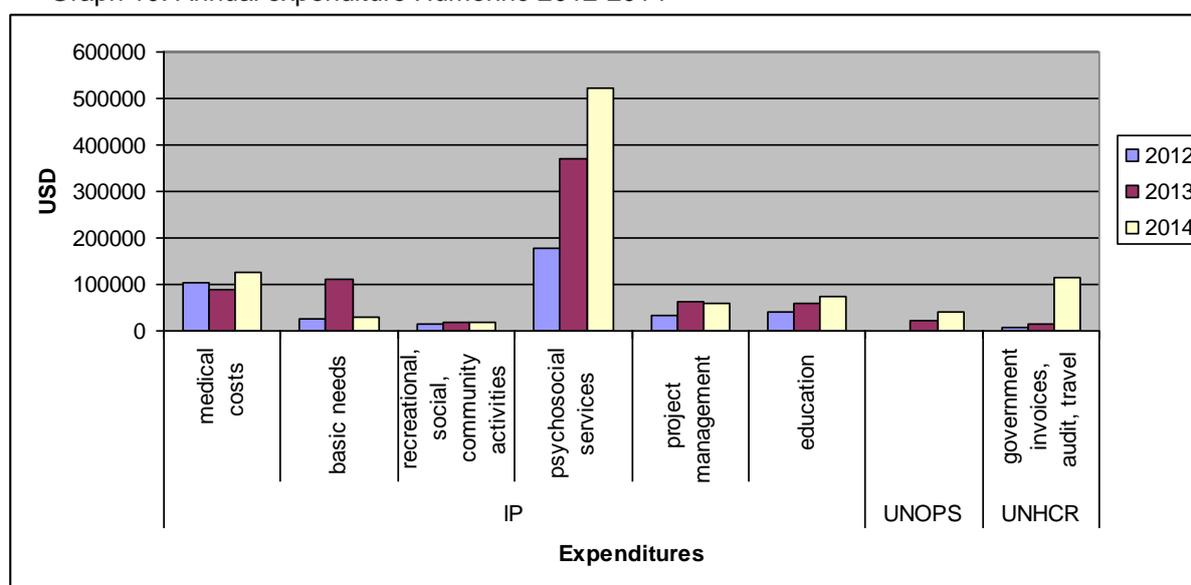


Source: MSRP

173. In Humenné, annual expenditures steadily increased in the period 2012-2014. This is a consequence of an increase in almost all expenditures except those related to recreational/social/community activities, which remain the same. Medical costs and basic needs show fluctuations. The most drastic increase has, however, been in the field of psychosocial services, which includes the salaries of social workers and teachers. The proportion spent on psycho-social services also steadily increased from 44 (2012), 49 (2013) and 53 (2014) percent of the total annual expenditures.

174. A comparison of the budgets and expenditures of the IPs in Timisoara and Humenné shows that the annual expenditures are much higher for Timisoara if food assistance is included. This is a key difference in the costs to UNHCR, as the government of the Slovak Republic pays for the food assistance in Humenné. Otherwise, expenditures of the IP in Humenné are lower in 2012 (with a difference of USD 93,688), and higher in 2013 and 2014 (with differences of respectively USD 250,631 and USD 347,164). These differences can partially be explained by the higher salaries in the Slovak Republic, but also because of a difference in standards in the two ETCs with respect to protection and assistance provided by IPs.

Graph 10: Annual expenditure Humenné 2012-2014



Source: MSRP

175. Some possibilities to decrease the cost of food assistance, which is 12 Euro per person per day in Timisoara for the food delivery, would be to move towards allowing the refugees to cook for themselves. This would also have the benefit of giving more sense of normalcy for those who remain for months in the ETCs. As the ETC in Timisoara will move to new premises, consideration should be given to including more kitchen space to allow refugees to cook for themselves. Another option to decrease the cost for UNHCR would be to discuss with the Romanian government the possibility of covering the food costs as is done by the Slovak government. This option would however, require re-discussion on the contents of the Tri-Partite Agreement, which may have political risks.

### 3.4.2 Human Resources

176. The ETCs are managed under the supervision of the UNHCR country representative in Bucharest (for Timisoara), and the Deputy Regional Representative in Budapest (for Humenné). The ETCs are linked to UNHCR's global operation through the ETC focal point, a P4 staff member working in the Resettlement Service. Thirty percent of the available time of the focal point can be dedicated towards coordinating the ETC. This involves communication with UNHCR resettlement staff in country offices, regional resettlement hubs in Amman, Nairobi and Dakar as well as regional bureaux. It also concerns coordinating submissions to resettlement countries, the submission of clearance requests through ETC management (and related UNHCR supervisors) to the governments of Romania and the Slovak Republic, and coordination with IOM on upcoming transfers. The allocated time for this function is minimal considering the time-consuming nature of this work.
177. Some interlocutors questioned whether coordination must be undertaken at the P4 level in UNHCR headquarters. Some argued that liaison activities with resettlement countries had to be undertaken at that level, and although technical staff had to be part of the Resettlement

Service to coordinate the “pipeline”, the actual duty station could in principle also be somewhere else in Europe, e.g. in Budapest. Consideration should be given to reviewing the duty station, responsibilities, amount of time and level of seniority needed to efficiently coordinate with all internal and external partners regarding evacuations as well as to ensure a coherent approach to standards and services provided in the two ETCs.

178. The local management arrangements of the ETCs have profoundly changed in the period covered under this evaluation. In 2012, UNHCR still had a field office in Bratislava, Slovak Republic, and the national staff member in charge of the day-to-day management of the ETC in Humenné was a UNHCR staff member. With the closure of the UNHCR office in Bratislava in December 2012, this position was discontinued and the incumbent Senior Field Associate in Humenné was offered a UNOPS contract. The reporting line was moved from Bratislava to the Deputy Regional Representative in the RRCE in Budapest. The Senior Field Associate is the only person working for UNHCR in the Slovak Republic.
179. Although this arrangement seems to work well, in consideration of the workload of the Deputy Regional Representative, if the duty station of the staff member charged with ETC coordination is moved to the region, that staff member could also oversee the ETCs on an operational basis. It is also recommended to create a UNHCR position for the day-to-day management of the ETC in Humenné.
180. Staffing in Romania has witnessed several changes. Initially an international position at the P3 level was established to manage the ETC in Timisoara under the supervision of UNHCR's country representative. This line of command has remained the same ever since, although the P3 position was discontinued. Currently, there are two national UNHCR positions, namely one senior field associate, one administrative/programme assistant, and one affiliate staff (UNOPS) community services assistant with Arabic language skills.
181. The main differences between the two ETCs are the number of staff (with UNHCR/UNOPS contracts), and the fact that the only UNHCR staff in the Slovak Republic is working on a UNOPS contract. The arguments for a larger UNHCR team in the ETC in Timisoara is based on the capacity of this ETC (200 refugees in comparison to 150 in Humenné), and considerations for the welfare of long-term UNHCR staff working in offices on the ETC compound, with a demanding clientele in transit. The national programme assistant in Timisoara also acts as a back-up in case of leave of the senior field associate.
182. Although Humenné is similar in terms of the nature of the work, there is no such back-up system and the senior field associate takes leave when it is quiet in the ETC. Moreover, reporting lines and the coordination of the two budgets is differently organized for the two ETCs. This may have contributed to a difference in approach towards the provision of services in the two ETCs although the two senior field associates have tried to compensate for this situation by means of regular communication. **It is therefore recommended** to review the current ETC staffing to harmonize ETC-based positions, in order to ensure a greater coherence in approach.
183. One IP is working in each ETC. In Timisoara, this is Generatie Tanara Romani (GTR), and in Humenné, this is the Centre of Sustainable Development (ETP). Save the Children provided educational services in Timisoara until the end of 2013. Since 2014, GTR is the only IP operating in this ETC.

Table 5: Number of positions per profession per IP in 2015

Profession	GTR (Timisoara)	ETP (Humenné)
Coordinator	1	0
Coordinator Social Workers	1	1
Social Workers	5	10
Kindergarten teacher	0	1+ 1 part-time
Teachers	1 (part-time English)	2
Teacher/admin	0	1

<b>Profession</b>	<b>GTR (Timisoara)</b>	<b>ETP (Humenné)</b>
Physician <sup>46</sup>	2 (part-time)	2 (part-time)
Nurse	0	2
Psychologist	1	3 (part-time)
Interpreter <sup>47</sup>	3	6
Administrators/drivers	2	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>29</b>

184. The main differences between the two IPs are in the number of social workers and teachers. This is a consequence of a) the available budget for GTR; and b) the use of social workers by ETP, with a working schedule that is based on rotation, thus allowing the presence of social workers in the evenings, at night and during weekends. GTR sometimes has volunteer teachers to help out in the ETC, although getting permission from the Immigration Office can be time-consuming and bureaucratic. Both IPs have male and female staff, including male and female interpreters, social workers and teachers.

### **3.4.3 Utilization of ETC Capacity**

185. Since the beginning of 2012, and as of September 2015, the ETCs in Timisoara and Humenné have facilitated the transfer of 1,568 refugees for onward resettlement. Several respondents pointed out that the ETCs were under-utilized due to low occupancy rates in comparison to capacity. Capacity can be viewed in different ways: namely in relation to a political decision made by the hosting government: the number of beds/rooms: the duration of stay of refugees/the turnover of refugees, and criteria and standards used to determine available capacity.

#### **a. Occupancy Rates**

186. The ETC in Timisoara has a capacity of 200 persons, and the ETC in Humenné of 150 persons as stipulated in the Tri-Partite Agreements. Based on end-of-month statistics for the period 31 January 2012 - 30 September 2015, the occupancy rate in Timisoara varied from a minimum of fourteen refugees in February, 2013, to 159 refugees in July 2014. In Humenné the occupancy rate varied from a minimum of zero (8 days February 2014) to a maximum of 147 refugees (31 May 2015).
187. The average daily occupancy rate for Timisoara has been between approximately one-third to one-half of its capacity, and in Humenné approximately half of its capacity. The average annual occupancy rate in Timisoara was 33 (2012), 51 (2013), 41(2014) and 30 (2015) percent of the actual capacity (based on end-of-the-month occupancy statistics). Based on daily occupancy rates, the average occupancy rate per year is 56 (2012), 44 (2013), 54 (2014) and 38 (2015) for Humenné.
188. The fluctuations in occupancy rate makes it difficult to calculate a meaningful per capita cost for the transit centres, as much of the costs (excluding food costs in Timisoara) are staff costs and therefore fixed.

<sup>46</sup> In ETC Timisoara: 2 fulltime/3 volunteers, including a pediatrician and obstetrician. (including one Arabic speaking physician). In the ETC in Humenné there are two physicians, part-time and three volunteer doctors. The psychologists work part-time in both ETCs.

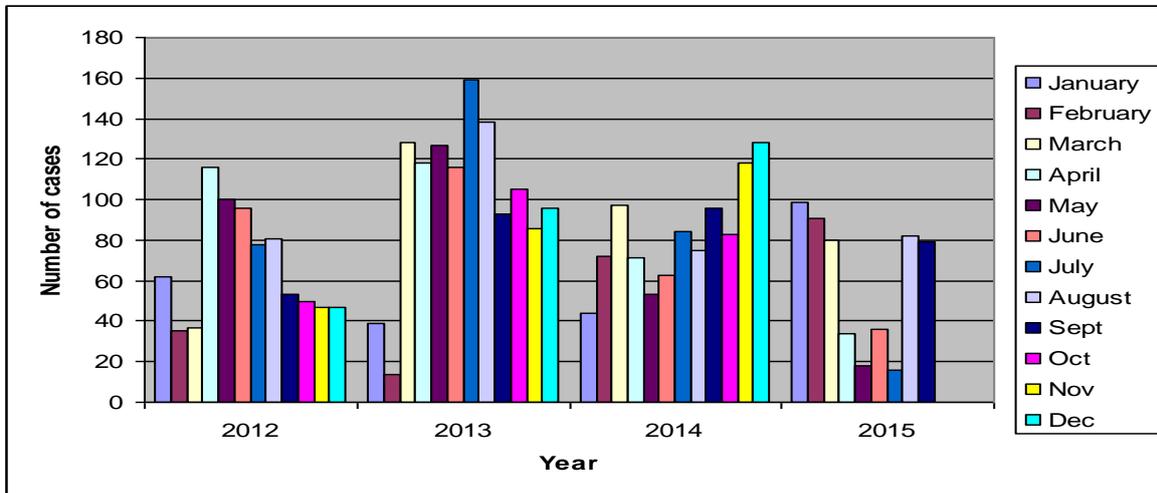
<sup>47</sup> In the ETC in Timisoara there are one Arabic and two Farsi interpreters, one female and two male. In Humenné, there are six Somali interpreters.

Table 6: Average daily occupancy rates of the ETCs 01 Jan 2012-30 Sep 2015 (in persons)

	<b>Timisoara</b> (based on end-of-the-month occupancy rates) (persons)	<b>Humenné</b> (based on daily occupancy rates) (persons)
2012 average daily occupancy	67	84
2013 average daily occupancy	102	66
2014 average daily occupancy	82	81
2015 average daily occupancy	59	58

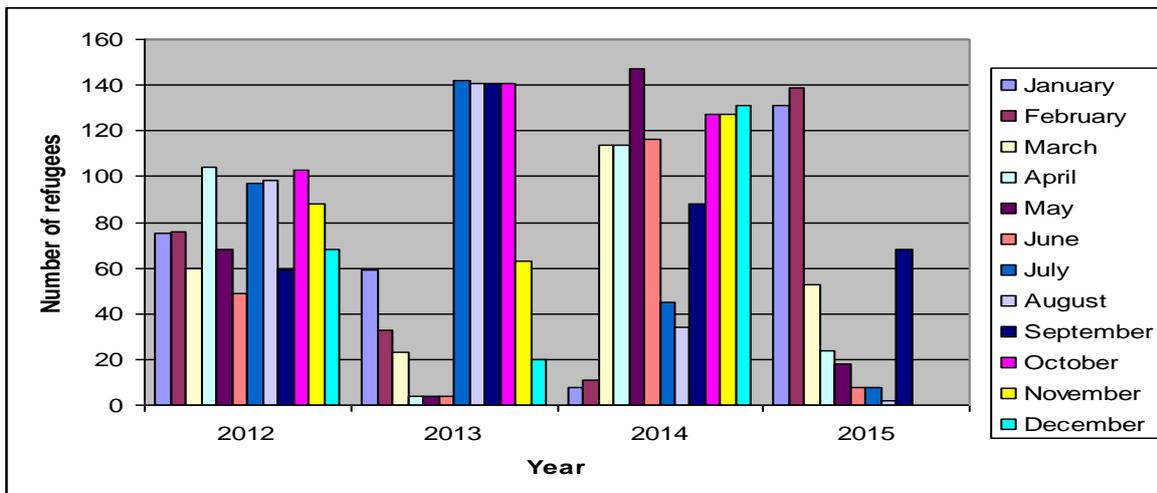
Source: data provided by ETC staff

Graph 11: Occupancy rate ETC Timisoara on the last day of each month 01 Jan 2012-30 Sep 2015



Source: Data provided by ETC staff

Graph 12: Occupancy rate ETC Humenné on the last day of each month 01 Jan 2012- 30 Sep 2015



Source: Data provided by ETC staff

189. Different arguments were shared regarding the rationale to promote full occupancy of the ETCs. An important reason underpinning the desire to fill the centres to capacity is to lower per capita costs. Another argument is that UNHCR is not using the available emergency capacity optimally. Yet considering the nature of emergency case handling, the ETCs cannot be entirely full as space must in principle always be available for emergency evacuations.
190. As of November 2015, the Government of the Slovak Republic increased the capacity of the ETC in Humenné to 250 places. This increase signals a willingness of the government to accommodate and issue visas for 250 persons, although there is no increase in buildings allocated to this function. Not all rooms in the current building were used during the time period of this evaluation. At the time of the evaluation mission, there were 68 residents in the ETC in Humenné, and there was ample room for these refugees.
191. However, if UNHCR takes advantage of the increased capacity, it may be difficult to accommodate all refugees in family rooms, and/or some of the community rooms may be allocated to refugees' sleeping accommodation. As the provision of family rooms and ample community space were factors that appeared to contribute to the well-being of refugees and lead to more community cohesion in Humenné, the cost of an increase in capacity may be in this domain. These considerations, as well as challenges in term of staffing for UNHCR and the IP, should be taken into account when more refugees are accommodated in the centre in Humenné.

#### **b. Duration of Residence**

192. The use of capacity is also determined by the number of arrivals and departures on an annual basis. This has been lower than originally envisaged, although there were no clear views on the average length of stay in relation to expected arrivals/departures other than the maximum of six months as per the Tri-Partite Agreements. In the 2010 UNHCR Information Note, the following figures on the average length of stay in days per resettlement country in 2008-2009 in Timisoara were shared: 142 (Canada), 26 (Sweden), 62 (United Kingdom), and 161 (USA).<sup>48</sup>
193. The following recommendation was consequently made to resettlement countries: "to afford a high level of priority to individuals in transit under the evacuation mechanism and to take measures to start the resettlement processing of such cases strictly within the two weeks following evacuation to ensure timely finalization and departure for resettlement, *thereby opening space for other refugees in need of evacuation*" (italics authors).<sup>49</sup>
194. The average length of stay of refugees in the two centres varies as a result of policies and practice of resettlement countries. Timisoara demonstrates a more diverse picture than Humenné. Whereas the average stay of refugees resettled to the UK is only 21 days, the average stay of those resettled to the Netherlands, Norway or Canada is 41, 42 and 133 days. The average stay of refugees to the USA is 139 days, (excluding the over-stayers).<sup>50</sup> The average residence period of refugees in Humenné is between a minimum of 101 days for different nationalities from Egypt in 2011 and 211 days for Afghan refugees from Iran in 2012. A decrease in waiting period can be observed for the first nine months in 2015, with an average stay of almost four months, a decrease from five months in 2013-14.

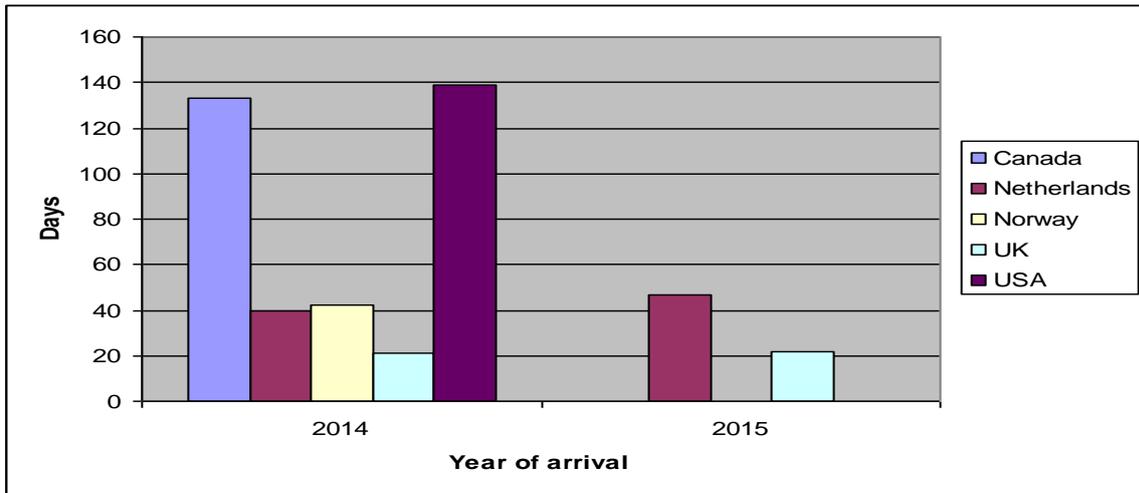
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<sup>48</sup> UNHCR, 2010a: 8

<sup>49</sup> UNHCR, 2010a: 9

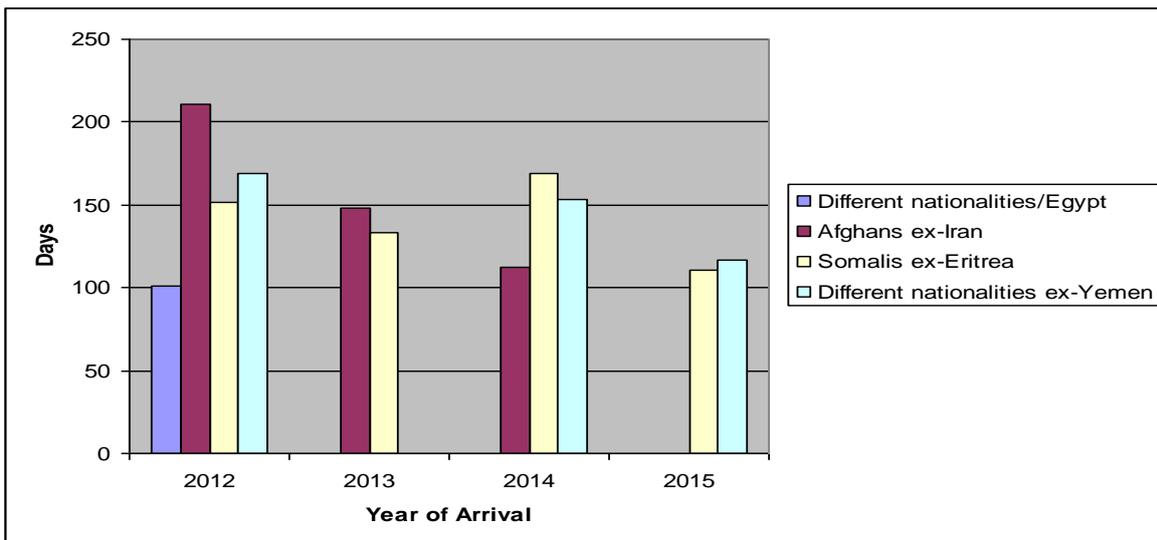
<sup>50</sup> If adding the ten refugees with arrival dates in 2014 staying more than six months in the ETC, then the average length of stay for refugees expected to be resettled to the USA is 153 days.

Graph 13: Average stay (in days) per resettlement country (expected) for the ETC Timisoara, 01 Jan 2014-30 Sep 2015 (excluding babies and otherwise departed)



Source: Data provided by ETC staff

Graph 14: Average stay (in days) per year per CoO/country of asylum for the ETC Humenné, 01 Jan 2012-30 Sep 2015 (excl. babies and otherwise departed)



Source: Data provided by ETC staff

195. A relatively high number of refugees had their stay in the ETCs extended. For instance, in Timisoara, in 2014, ten refugees arriving in the ETC for resettlement to the USA had to be extended after six months, with seven actually needing two extensions. As of 30 September 2015, the Timisoara ETC hosted thirteen long-stayers, with twelve originally selected for the USA (with arrival year 2012, 2013 and 2014) and one for the Netherlands (with arrival year 2015). The three refugees arriving in 2012 has not affected new arrivals in the ETC. However, their long stay in a transit centre, and the continuous uncertainty resulting from the search to find other resettlement countries, has been a devastating experience for these refugees. Their rejection by the USA, and the resulting necessity to find alternative resettlement options, has also posed a profound challenge to UNHCR.
196. The Tri-Partite Agreement governing the use of the ETC in Timisoara allows the host country to suspend the arrival of new cases if more than twenty refugees overstay the permitted six-month

period. The suspension clause was activated twice. However, this lasted for a very short period of time as the USA expedited these cases.

197. In Humenné, the proportion of long-stayers has been considerable since 2012. The predominant reason has been the slow processing by the US government. Thus, the residence of respectively 69, 18 and 47 percent of refugees arriving in 2012, 2013 and 2014 had to be extended after six months.

Table 7: Number and proportion of long-stayers Humenné, 01 Jan 2012-30 Sep 2015

	Year of arrival/number of refugees			
	2012	2013	2014	2015
Less than 90 days	8 pp/3 cases	0	0	0
A max of 90 days	65 pp/28 cases	0	0	0
A max of 180 days	52 pp/24 cases	42/12 cases	125 pp/34 cases	0
Extensions to the above	180 day extension for 4 pp/3 cases	0	0	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>125 pp/55 cases*</b>	<b>42 pp/12 cases</b>	<b>125 pp/34 cases</b>	<b>0</b>

\*Excluding the “extensions to the above” figure - Arrivals Humenné: 180, 238, 267 and 81

#### 3.4.4 The “Pipeline” and Role of Field Offices

198. UNHCR Field Offices and Regional Resettlement Hubs are vital in the selection of refugees for resettlement and the identification of those that could potentially benefit from a transfer to one of the ETCs. This not only requires that resettlement staff has knowledge of the functions of the ETCs, but also of the limitations of these ETCs, including with respect to profiles and the time-frame and conditions necessary for organizing the transfer. The reasons for using the centres are to provide immediate protection to emergency and urgent priority cases, and/or to give access to resettlement countries to facilitate further resettlement processing. Refugees participating in the focus group discussions stated that it took as long as three years between the first resettlement interview with UNHCR and their arrival in one of the centres. While these were not emergency referrals, and although such an extensive period is not applicable to all beneficiaries, this gives some indication of the bureaucratic hurdles in the resettlement process before the actual transfer of refugees to one of the ETCs.
199. Several respondents noted that only some UNHCR resettlement staff are fully knowledgeable of the opportunities and procedures related to the ETCs. Others may be aware of the existence of these facilities, but may only know some details about the different ways of using the ETCs. This is possibly partially the consequence of different interpretations of the word “emergency” in relation to the ETCs. The survey held among UNHCR resettlement staff confirms this finding, with some respondents indicating that they did not know that such facilities actually existed in UNHCR. Others indicated that they were aware of the centres, but found that the reasons and procedures related to the usage of ETCs are not clear. Thus, it is recommended to share regular updates about the ETCs with field resettlement and protection staff.
200. The absence of up-to date information about the ETCs has likely contributed to a lack of clarity on the functions of the ETCs. Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) for the ETFs in Romania and the Philippines were distributed in 2008. A guidance note for the three ETFs was consequently completed on 4 May 2011, which provides further information about the different stages of transfer, such as identification, obtaining UNHCR and government clearance, pre-departure and arrival procedures. The 2011 edition of the UNHCR Resettlement Handbook refers to this guidance note, and to ETCs in Chapter Two “The Evolution of Resettlement” and Chapter Seven “Basic Procedures to Follow in Processing Resettlement Cases”. The flow chart about the resettlement process available on the UNHCR website however makes no reference to the ETFs.<sup>51</sup>

<sup>51</sup> <http://www.unhcr.org/3bd58ce9a.html> (consulted 6 January, 2016)

201. Several survey participants requested more information about procedures at the different stages of the transfer process, and the profile of refugees eligible for evacuation. It is therefore recommended to DIP to prepare an updated comprehensive guidance note on the ETCs. The guidance note should include country-specific information such as the order of actions to obtain travel documents and/or visas, information about which embassies/consulates to contact in case there are none in the country of first asylum, and communication channels with IOM. In addition, the note would need regular updating, and subsequent dissemination among all resettlement officers in UNHCR. Field offices also requested regular updates about the ETCs to support information-sharing with refugees expected to be transferred to one of the centres.
202. UNHCR internal cooperation for an evacuation involves the field and/or country office, regional hubs, the focal point in headquarters, the Europe Bureau, the RRCE, the UNHCR office in Romania, including the ETC staff, and the UNHCR staff member in the Slovak Republic. Overall coordination was seen to be efficient, although the role of the hub was not always clear to all respondents, and sometimes seen as adding another layer of checking information, thereby hindering efficient processing. The role of the focal point at HQs was also critically reviewed, as the part-time nature of this role was seen as too limited to take on a more pro-active role in coordination.
203. Moreover, as the use of the ETCs is considered to be a time and capacity-consuming process, it is recommended to review existing procedures related to coordination, approval and cross-checking to develop more efficient ones. This is partially because of the extra administration necessary to arrange for the transfer, and the involvement of ETC-host countries and UNHCR staff managing the ETCs, which has led to a more bureaucratic process than otherwise is the case to resettle refugees. A request for transfer must be communicated to the regional hub and UNHCR headquarters. Thereafter, clearance from the ETC-host government must be obtained on the basis of this documentation.
204. The current procedure is that the field office prepares the list of cases for transfer. The regional hub, the focal point in UNHCR headquarters and ETC staff check the list against available identity documents before it is submitted to the host government. Only after clearance, if need be, ICRC travel documents are requested and, in the case of the Slovak Republic, visas are issued by the relevant embassy.<sup>52</sup> The templates used for case information sharing and the numerous layers involved in decision-making and checking case information, as well as the sequencing of actions, can be reviewed to cut back on bottlenecks, and to agree on more parallel sequencing, if possible, to enhance efficiency. Arguably, the lengthy administrative procedures described above is another reason for the perceived under-utilization of the ETCs, as resettlement staff may prefer to avoid using this option if alternatives are available.
205. The discussion of the under-utilization of ETCs must be grounded in an assessment of needs related to protection risks and the promotion of durable solutions, including resettlement instead of “filling the pipeline”. The US resettlement “pipeline”, of which the pre-vetting component must be completed first before the transfer to an ETC can be arranged, has recently been fed with a higher number of cases from countries of asylum that are not accessible for the US. Thus, enhanced coordination between UNHCR, the USA and IOM can potentially avoid lean periods in the ETC in Humenné, such as the three consecutive months with fewer than twenty refugees in 2013, 2014 and 2015. This must be linked to multi-year country-level strategies on the promotion of durable solutions in countries of asylum, resettlement staff capacity to process cases, and challenges experienced by resettlement countries.
206. Even if UNHCR staff is knowledgeable about the use of ETCs then cases may not necessarily require transfer because of alternative arrangements, or because of obstacles in arranging for a fast departure from the country of asylum. Generally, emergency priority cases are directly resettled to resettlement countries if possible, as a direct transfer is beneficial for the concerned refugee(s), more efficient, and most logical as a resettlement country must anyway already be identified before an ETC transfer. Moreover, not all asylum countries provide the necessary conditions for emergency or urgent priority processing, as in some countries of asylum, it takes several weeks or months to obtain an exit visa.

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<sup>52</sup> The ICRC travel document is valid for three months. As the Government of Romania only needs the letter confirming acceptance to the ETC for entry to the country, there is no need for visa issuance for Timisoara evacuations.

### 3.5 Coordination

▪ **Evaluation Question** To what extent is UNHCR engaging successfully with key stakeholders, including the Romanian and Slovak Republic authorities, resettlement countries and IOM? Are effective coordination and review mechanisms in place?

207. **Key Finding:** All interlocutors found the coordination mechanisms with respect to day to day running useful. Better coordination with resettlement countries could enhance efficiency of the centres.
208. According to the Tri-Partite Agreements, both governments are responsible for processing the lists of persons submitted by UNHCR within the agreed time-frame, issuing temporary identity documents and, in the case of the Slovak Republic, visas. The same concerns the provision of the necessary premises for accommodation and office space for UNHCR, IOM and the IPs, and the maintenance of public order inside the premises. Furthermore, the Government of the Slovak Republic covers the running costs of the ETC, including all accommodation and food and hygienic items for up to 100 persons. As of November 2015, food and hygienic items will be covered for all ETC residents. UNHCR is responsible for food and utility costs of the ETC in Timisoara.
209. Cooperation between UNHCR and the Government of Romania has been viewed in a positive light by interlocutors at all levels. The Government has in particular been able to process the clearance requests within a maximum of seven working days, and cleared almost all persons. The Government has also, upon request, granted clearance within three or four days for emergency or urgent priority cases.<sup>53</sup> Additionally, temporary identity documents are issued on arrival and six months extensions are provided if requested. The maintenance of the premises has however led to some tensions at the local level as, on a regular basis, some items, such as cutlery, go missing or are broken, and it takes time to get these replaced or fittings and fixtures repaired. In the summer of 2015, the accommodation was repainted by the government.
210. Although regular coordination meetings took place in the earlier days of the ETC, during the past couple of years, very few coordination meetings have been held by the three partners in Romania. The predominant reason appears to be an absence of interest on the part of the Government. As it is the eighth year of operation, responsibilities and related expectations have been clarified over time, and the operation is seen to be running smoothly by the three stakeholders. The project proposal submitted by the Government of Romania to the EC to obtain funding for the renovation of a new ETC has been supported by UNHCR. Following the approval of the donor, UNHCR discussed some areas of attention for the new design, such as the necessity for family rooms. As the funding came through with UNHCR support it is advised to seize the momentum to promote the inclusion of minimum standards for such facilities from the design stage onwards.
211. Cooperation between UNHCR and the Government of the Slovak Republic has generally been considered efficient and effective by all interlocutors and by the evaluation team. Although in 2013 there were some instances reported in which the Government needed more time than reflected in the Tri-Partite Agreement to provide clearance, in general, the maximum time period was adhered to.<sup>54</sup> All refugees on the submitted lists were cleared. The issuance of visas by embassies and consulates was done in accordance with the agreement, although embassy staff were not always well-informed about the Tri-Partite Agreement, which led to some delays.
212. The security, maintenance of the premises and the provision of food, hygienic items and identity cards are all carried out as agreed, and minor issues are solved cordially. The latest Tri-Partite Agreement signed in November 2015 confirms an increase in capacity by 100 persons up to a

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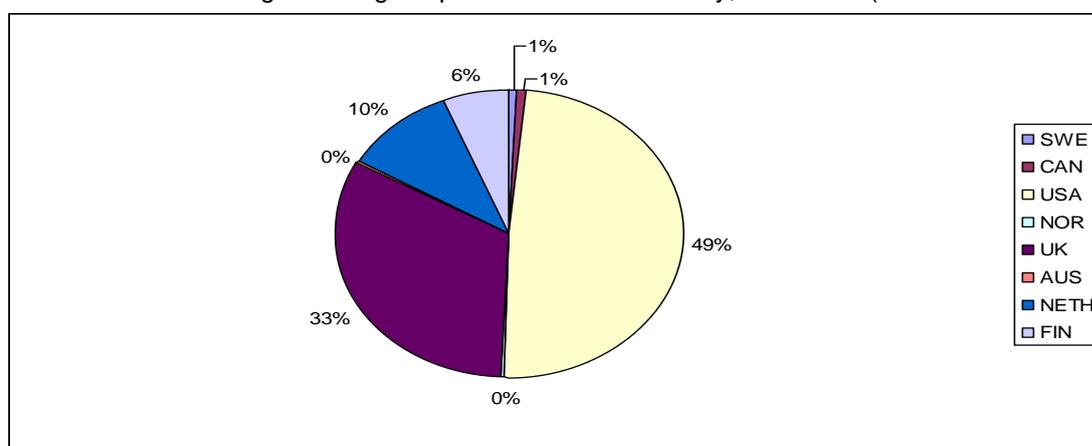
<sup>53</sup> Five refugees were not cleared by the Romanian government to travel to the ETC – two Rwandese in 2009, one Iraqi in 2010 and two Iranians in 2014.

<sup>54</sup> The processing time by the Slovak Migration Office was a constraint in 2013. It sometimes took three months to process and finalize the transfer of refugees to Humenné (UNHCR RRCE, 2013)

maximum of 250 persons, with food and hygienic items to be provided by the Government of the Slovak Republic for all residents of the ETC. The new agreement also reduces the maximum clearance period from thirty to twenty days.

213. The third partner to the agreements, IOM, takes care of the logistical arrangements for international transport to and from Romania and the Slovak Republic. In addition, the organization provides health assessments for persons upon arrival and prior to departure, and conducts cultural orientation training as agreed with some resettlement countries (e.g. the USA). MoUs between UNHCR and IOM govern these relationships globally.<sup>55</sup> The working relationship between the three entities in both countries was viewed as positive.
214. Possible challenges were ironed out in the beginning of the local partnerships, and activities undertaken by IOM were organized and implemented efficiently and effectively. At the regional level, occasional challenges continue to be faced in communication between UNHCR and IOM staff related to the organization of international travel to the ETC because of staff rotation, and levels of capacity. **It is recommended** to clarify and provide further information about the responsibilities of UNHCR and IOM in relation to the logistical arrangements for transfer to ETCs to field staff of both agencies and to field staff of the ICRC for the issuance of ICRC travel documents.
215. Cooperation between UNHCR and resettlement countries has in general been viewed in a positive light. Interviews undertaken with representatives of the three main resettlement countries confirmed that they valued cooperation in relation to the use of the ETCs. The centres addressed particular needs of concerned countries, and facilitated the completion of the resettlement process of selected refugees. Coordination with the UK and the Netherlands is considered smooth, with the UK always providing sufficient advance notice (approximately three months) before an expected transfer to Timisoara.

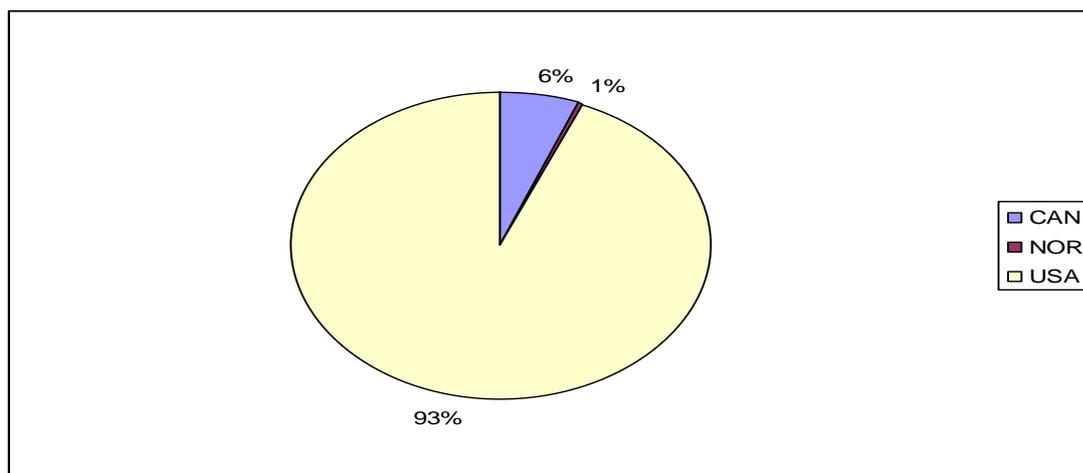
Pie chart 1: Percentage of refugees per resettlement country, Timisoara (01 Jan 2012-30 Sep 2015)



Source: ETC staff

<sup>55</sup> The Framework Agreement on Standard Operation Procedures for Resettlement Operations in the Field signed by UNHCR and the International Organization for Migration (IOM) in 2014 clarifies roles and responsibilities in this long-standing partnership.

Pie chart 2: Percentage of refugees per resettlement country, Humenné (01 Jan 2012-30 Sep 2015)



Source: ETC staff

216. Concern was expressed about the duration of the different stages of the US resettlement process. The pre-vetting process of the US-government, which refugees must complete before they can actually be transferred to an ETC, takes months or, in some cases, years. The unpredictability of the time-frame needed to complete the pre-vetting process led to challenges to plan the “pipeline” for the ETCs. Additionally, the long duration from the pre-screening/screening interviews until receipt of all the clearances regularly led to a situation in which UNHCR had to request extensions of the six-month period in the two ETCs.
217. More recently, coordination between the USA, UNHCR and IOM has been strengthened in an effort to offer constructive ways forward for a more efficient processing of cases for the USA. This strengthened coordination mechanism should continue in order to support more long-term planning on the basis of actual resettlement needs and opportunities. Lessons learned were to provide more refugees for the pre-vetting “pipeline” (e.g. 400 cases) in order to have a larger group of already pre-vetted refugees ready for transfer to the ETCs, and to share extensive lists of cases at an earlier stage in the resettlement process in countries in conflict.

### 3.6 Impact

▪ **Evaluation Question:** What results, intended and unintended, have been achieved by the ETCs?

218. **Key Finding:** The ETCs have provided effective protection and opened the doors to resettlement to some refugees who otherwise would not have had this opportunity
219. The ETCs have provided immediate and effective protection to refugees, and although limited in numbers in comparison with global resettlement figures, this function was seen as pivotal and legitimized the centres’ existence. The centres have been lifesaving and/or reduced the risk of further violence or harm. This not only affected refugees prioritized as emergency or urgent in the resettlement process, but also those living in countries affected by civil conflict, such as Syria and Yemen.
220. The ETCs enabled IOM and officials from resettlement countries to undertake interviews, biometrics and other activities in order to complete necessary steps in the resettlement process in a stable and secure environment. In the 2012-2015 period, the majority of cases transferred to the centres were solely for this purpose. These cases would otherwise not have had the opportunity to be resettled at all or would have had to wait for many more months or years before being resettled. Thus, the ETCs enhanced access to resettlement opportunities to refugees of some nationalities residing in specific countries of asylum.

221. Although the majority of refugees transferred to the ETCs have been resettled as envisaged, some exceptional cases remain in Timisoara. The responsibility of UNHCR is to continue exploring resettlement options for these refugees. The profound consequences this has on the morale of the affected refugees cannot be underestimated. Such a situation must therefore be avoided in the future and a durable solution be found for these refugees so that they can finally begin their new lives instead of continuing to live in limbo.
222. As a tangible form of responsibility-sharing, the ETCs have given the opportunity to Romania and the Slovak Republic to become more involved in refugee protection. The capacity of the centre in Timisoara remained the same, whereas Humenné's has increased twice, namely from 100 persons in 2009 to 150 by mid-2012 and 250 at the end of 2015. The Slovak Republic also took on more financial responsibility and concluded in the Tri-Partite Agreement signed in November 2015, that all food (for a maximum of 250 refugees) would be covered.
223. In addition to providing employment to one or two NGOs, and utility costs to the Government of Romania, the ETCs cannot be seen as providing a major income to the concerned governments. The agreement to allow refugees on their territories on a temporary basis, and the provision of facilities in that respect, has been seen as their contribution to the protection of refugees. The Government of Romania in particular appeared to be proud of its ETC, and has regularly shared information about the facility in international fora.
224. At the same time, the ETCs do not seem to have had a significant impact on Romania and the Slovak Republic accepting refugees through resettlement themselves.<sup>56</sup> For example, the Government of Romania received 38 Burmese refugees of Kachin origin from Malaysia in 2010. Due to some challenges faced with this group, it was not until 2014 that a second group of 44 Iraqi refugees was received.<sup>57</sup> However, there appears to be little appetite with respect to Romania accepting the resettlement of refugees who get "stuck" in the ETC Timisoara due to the refusal of other resettlement countries. As noted previously, the Slovak Republic has pledged to receive 100 persons for resettlement from 2015-17, arrivals through this programme are still pending. The increase in ETC capacity and a reduction in the length of clearance procedures by the Slovak Republic cannot alone be considered a suitable response to the challenges currently faced in Europe.
225. The ETCs, and the transfer of refugees for resettlement purposes, has also had implications for first countries of asylum, as this is potentially one of the means to attain solutions in emergency settings and protracted refugee situations. For instance, refugees stranded in camps close to the Libyan border in Egypt and Tunisia were transferred pending resettlement, thus reducing camp size in Saloum camp in western Egypt.<sup>58</sup> One author notes in this regard the following: "*One lesson for UNHCR is therefore that while it can undertake resettlement in emergencies, it cannot achieve emergency resettlement since it is inevitably a lengthy process*", thus validating the existence of ETCs.<sup>59</sup>
226. The ETCs operate in a highly complex arena in which global and regional developments directly impact upon the local environment. The local population living near the ETCs has generally been tolerant with respect to the wide variety of temporary residents. This situation continues in Timisoara, which has a more international outlook due to its central location in Western Romania, the fact that many nationalities live in this town and, reportedly extremely low unemployment levels. The environment in Humenné has more recently become less tolerant because of the ongoing refugee crisis in Europe, and the position of the Government of the Slovak Republic therein. It may be useful to undertake advocacy activities for the local population to maintain a positive environment vis-à-vis refugees in Humenné.

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<sup>56</sup> The Slovak Republic has a resettlement quota of 200 persons over two years (UNHCR, 2011: 5). As per the Conclusions on resettlement adopted by the EU's Justice and Home Affairs Committee, The Slovak Republic has pledged to resettle 100 persons over the next 2 years (July 2015-July 2017).

<sup>57</sup> See for instance UNHCR, 2011e

<sup>58</sup> UNHCR, 2011f

<sup>59</sup> Ambroso, 2012

#### 4. Conclusion

227. The history of the ETCs shows a gradual move away from the original vision of these centres: namely, to provide a temporary home to refugees with serious protection needs pending resettlement and to create more internal capacity to adequately respond to emergency cases. The ETC in Humenné has predominantly been seen as a short-term solution for addressing the needs of the US to access refugees for screening purposes, thereby also offering emergency capacity in case of larger groups of refugees with emergency priority. This latter option has not been used in practice.
228. The emergency function of the ETC in Timisoara appears to have decreased in importance. However, it is still seen as relevant with the usage of the centre by resettlement countries to process cases, and to function as “waiting room” until all formalities have been dealt with. The efficiency and effectiveness of policies and practice of resettlement countries determine partly the efficiency of the ETCs.
229. Although a more comprehensive analysis of emergency and urgent priority case processing for resettlement was outside the scope of this evaluation, UNHCR’s limited capacity on the ground, security-related obstacles to access refugees to conduct interviews, restrictions for rapid departure imposed by some asylum countries, the lengthy administrative hurdles to use this facility, and the availability of emergency resettlement quota from a limited number of resettlement countries are some of the reasons offering an explanation for the limited emergency use of the ETC.
230. Other contributing factors are also internal to UNHCR, and strengthening outreach and advocacy on the use of the ETC, dedicating more coordinating capacity to support this function, and enhancing the efficiency of existing procedures may lead to a turning point in utilizing available capacity to provide more immediate safety for serious protection cases. Additionally, with the aim of saving lives and providing that alternative local solutions are not available, expanding the rules of admission to also include refugees with serious protection needs without an already identified resettlement country can be considered to strengthen the implementation of UNHCR’s protection mandate.
231. The coordination of the “pipeline” on the one hand, and the day-to-day management of the ETCs as transit facilities where refugees receive protection and assistance on a temporary basis on the other, are separated from a management perspective. A more integrated approach to targeting, planning and monitoring could increase the efficiency and effectiveness of the resettlement process vis-a-vis the ETCs. This would not only enhance transparency and accountability with respect to the role and functions of the ETC but also, if underpinned by a comprehensive data management system, allow management decisions to be built on past and expected trends, which has been lacking so far.
232. It would also require more transparency and efficiency of partners involved in the resettlement process, and a shift in approach whereby the substance of the protection and assistance provided in the ETCs moves beyond a care and maintenance approach to not only support the short-term well-being of refugees in the centres, but also to support the long-term goal of integration in resettlement countries, something that is the primary responsibility of resettlement countries.
233. The issue of future integration also requires a reflection on minimum standards for the ETCs. The sustainability of these two ETCs has not been formally considered during this evaluation. The ETCs are important aspects of the country operations in Romania and the Slovak Republic from both an operational and budgetary perspective. The ETC in Timisoara requires 51 to 59 percent of the total budget for the Romania country office, and the ETC in Humenné is the only operation in the Slovak Republic. Meaningful costs per capita for the refugees could not be calculated as much of the costs, such as staff costs and IP costs, are fixed. Therefore if the ETC is not used to full capacity, the per capita costs are higher. As noted in the discussion on efficiency, 40 percent of the expenditure in Timisoara is for food assistance, and is paid for by UNHCR. Some further discussion to reflect on cost-sharing modalities with the concerned host governments as well as the resettlement country governments may be warranted in order to achieve the stated objectives of the Tri-Partite Agreements.

234. Is it necessary to have two ETCs in Europe? The only resettlement country with a clear interest in maintaining two ETCs is the USA, as their availability gives some leeway to move groups to one or the other if processing takes longer than anticipated, especially considering some restrictions imposed by Romania in terms of maximum period of stay and maximum number of persons overstaying this period.
235. Arguably, the two ETCs give UNHCR more capacity in two different countries, thereby also spreading the political risk associated with hosting them. Practice has shown that sometimes the two ETCs host more than 200 refugees together at one point in time, although there have also been lean periods, such as the summer in 2015, during which one ETC would have been sufficient. More efficient planning of the “pipeline” could offer a solution towards a more optimal use of the capacity of one ETC, while managing just one ETC would also be more cost-efficient.
236. If this would be the argument, then the decision would likely be in favour of the ETC in the Slovak Republic as it is less expensive for the agency. At the same time, this would then mean that the “emergency response” function gets further sidelined, as the clearance and visa rules of the Slovak Republic leave no space for emergency priority resettlement cases, and little flexibility for urgent priority resettlement cases. However, to close the centre in Humenné would have implications for cases that are otherwise not able to proceed with resettlement to the US for access-related reasons, especially if no other resettlement country can be found to take the concerned cases.
237. The term “Emergency Transit Centre”, or “Evacuation Transit Facility”, can be viewed as a contradiction in terms, as the words “emergency” or “evacuation” assume a rapid response mechanism, whereas the lengthy processes resulting in the transfer, and the actual duration of the transit, are time-consuming. Moreover, the ETC in Humenné has become a facility to support the processing of resettlement cases, whereas the nature of the centre in Timisoara has become more hybrid than originally anticipated. It serves resettlement processing, and acts as an available emergency response mechanism – despite the limitations posed by selection criteria.
238. Replacing the word “Emergency” of ETC with “Resettlement” in the framing of these centres would actually give a clearer indication of the main purpose of these centres: namely to support the realization of this durable solution. This could then also cover possible shifts or changes in their functions, as ETCs continue to respond to the needs of different stakeholders that operate in an ever-changing world. A flexible approach is therefore needed to continue to provide protection and support the option of resettlement as one of the durable solutions for refugees.

## Recommendations

### **To UNHCR – Resettlement Service/DIP**

#### **Standard-setting/Guidance notes**

- ✓ (Together with RRCE/CO Romania and relevant HQ sections) Formulate a more considered annual planning process for the ETFs including protection and programming perspectives, and including clear objectives and measurable indicators.
- ✓ Prepare a concept note on minimum standards for the ETCs, which includes measurable indicators in the fields of shelter, nutrition, non-food items and the provision of assistance.
- ✓ Prepare a comprehensive updated guidance note on the ETCs, including the profiles of refugees eligible for evacuation.
- ✓ Considering the success of UNHCR in finding resettlement countries to take almost all of the cases rejected by resettlement countries after transfer, consider in certain circumstances the inclusion of emergency priority cases for transfer to ETCs without the prior identification of a resettlement country in the list of eligible refugee profiles.

#### **Planning**

- ✓ Prepare annual planning figures for the ETCs for different priority classifications/refugee profiles/resettlement countries, including time-frames for monitoring and revision purposes.
- ✓ Consolidate coordination efforts to strengthen the US pipeline for the ETCs.

#### **Coordination**

- ✓ Review existing procedures related to coordination, approval and cross-checking, including templates used for information-sharing purposes, to develop and agree on more efficient procedures.
- ✓ Clarify and provide further information about the responsibilities of UNHCR and IOM in relation to the logistical arrangements for transfer to ETCs to field staff of both agencies and to field staff of ICRC for the issuance of ICRC travel documents.
- ✓ Develop comprehensive guidelines that clearly delineate the roles and responsibilities of all stakeholders at the different stages of the identification and transfer process, including country-specific annexes.

#### **Advocacy and Communication**

- ✓ Develop and implement an advocacy strategy on the different functions, potential use and responsibilities of different stakeholders of the ETCs for UNHCR staff and partners.
- ✓ Share regular updates about the ETCs with field resettlement and protection staff.

#### **Assessment and Review**

- ✓ Undertake a review of the profile of emergency priority resettlement referrals and current practices in their selection, management and resettlement processing.
- ✓ Conduct a review of the ETM in Philippines to ensure that lessons learned and good practices can be fed into policy and programming activities related to other ETFs.

#### **Human Resources**

- ✓ Review the part-time nature and responsibilities of the ETC focal point function.
- ✓ (Together with RRCE) examine management and coordination needs at the regional level vis-à-vis the ETCs to ensure a coherent approach.
- ✓ Consider options whereby one international position with sufficient seniority to liaise with States and donors combines these two dossiers, possible based regionally.

### **To UNHCR – RRCE (in close consultation with CO Romania and ETC Humenné staff)**

#### **Human Resources**

- ✓ In consultation with the Resettlement Service, consider creating an international position tasked with coordinating transfers to the ETCs, including coordination with resettlement countries.
- ✓ Review UNHCR/UNOPS staffing in the ETCs to harmonize ETC-based positions, and ensure a greater coherence in approach.

- ✓ Review staffing and services provided by NGOs in ETCs in order to harmonize capacity and services to ensure a coherent approach, while taking into account needs of the different and diverse refugee populations, and the different operating environments. This should also take into account adherence to minimum standards and the increased capacity of the ETC in Humenné.

#### **Standard Setting**

- ✓ Review the current capacity in Humenné in light of the discussion on minimum standards to decide on maximum operational figures with respect to the number of refugees accommodated in the centre at any point in time.
- ✓ Support the implementation of a strengthened community development approach by involving refugees more in the day-to-day running of the ETCs.
- ✓ Examine options to use external school rooms to give children a sense of normalcy and possibly alleviate the burden posed by an increased capacity in the ETC in Humenné.

#### **Assessment and Review**

- ✓ Request a technical expert mission to review the educational and life-skills activities and vocational training offered by the NGOs in the ETCs (taking into consideration the content of cultural orientation training) and provide recommendations to strengthen these in light of integration needs. This should include a review to examine (a) if and to what extent CrossRoads training duplicates some of the components of existing cultural orientation courses; b) explore the more systematic use of this training package on life skills to all refugees, and; c) explore the willingness of donors to support such training as well as other training activities to prepare refugees for integration.

#### **Advocacy and Communication material (for refugees)**

- ✓ (Together with UNHCR staff in ETCs) Review information needs of refugees departing to the ETCs and UNHCR country offices in countries of asylum and update videos on the ETCs, updated PowerPoint presentations and briefing notes.
- ✓ (together with field staff in countries of asylum) Ensure refugees receive necessary information about the ETCs before departure from country of first asylum.
- ✓ (together with field staff in countries of asylum) Provide more up-to-date information about countries of resettlement to manage expectations at an early stage.

#### **Data Management & Monitoring**

- ✓ Install ProGres in the ETCs in cooperation with DPSM.
- ✓ (Together with CO Romania) Review and strengthen the design of the ETCs-based data management systems to correspond with data needs for planning, monitoring and evaluation purposes, with input from DPSM if necessary.

#### **To UNHCR - CO Romania**

\*See also the recommendations under To UNHCR – RRCE (in close consultation with CO Romania and ETC Humenné staff)

- ✓ Advocate with the Government of Romania to provide more freedom of movement in Timisoara to refugees under agreed conditions, while still respecting the provisions of the Tri-Partite Agreement.
- ✓ Review existing arrangements with respect to ensuring accountability and controlling the movements of the refugee population to alleviate, at a minimum, the responsibilities of the implementing partner in these areas, and consider inviting the General Inspectorate for Immigration to take on such responsibilities at the ETC entrance gate.
- ✓ Consider a more flexible use of budget lines, to the extent possible, to enable the implementing partner to respond to unforeseen needs of the refugees, considering fluctuations in population numbers, profiles and corresponding needs.
- ✓ Undertake regular consultations with the Government of Romania to ensure due consideration to UNHCR's (still to be developed) minimum standards for ETCs when renovating the identified building for the new ETC.
- ✓ Continue to invite the implementing partner to provide inputs into the design of the building based on their experience in the ETC.