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Country: Romania

Topic: The Civil, Political and Socio-economic Rights of Refugees

Committee: UNHCR 3

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The word refugee, defined by the 1951 Convention and Protocols Relating to the Status of Refugees is “a person owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality, and is unable to, or owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country”. However, not every country or nation accepts this idea in the same light, in fact countries such as Poland, Thailand or Malaysia see refugees as unwelcome beings marginalized from society, bearers of illnesses, and sunken in poverty. The issue of refugees is a very important topic that has affected, affects, and will affect Romania unless action is taken to fight it. In the past, Romania made conservative and nationalist socio-political decisions regarding the refugee crisis in order to minimise the impact and guarantee the economic power of its citizens. For instance, in 2013, 25 000 asylum requests were registered in Romania but just 5,200 were approved.

Romania has limited asylum approvals partly because of the limited resources available to refugees. We should also focus on improving the already existing shelters to prevent harmful conditions, such as food and water shortages, lack of sanitation, and even scenes of gender violence. Furthermore, detention centers where refugees are retained if their documents have expired or their asylum requests have been rejected, offer inhumane conditions to asylum seekers as police guards treat them as animals, where they do not have access to information and have to receive money from their families in order to get out of their non-spacious jails. Moreover, refugees are not offered many job opportunities, as it is compulsory to speak the native language, Romanian, and they lack the qualifications requested by employers, despite knowing about the refugees’ precarious journey and situation. In addition, many Romanians have low levels of education and have xenophobic and chauvinistic ideologies, which makes our country an “unwanted destination” for refugees. The government of Romania lacks the funds for more security forces or to improve basic mechanisms due to its relatively low economic power - partly caused by an unemployment rate of 40%, high levels of government corruption, and xenophobic ideologies with the rise of the right wing political parties. However, Romania implemented the Asylum Systems Quality Assurance and Evaluation Mechanism (ASQAEM) funded by the EU between September 2008 and February 2010, and the UNHCR’s Further Developing Asylum Quality Programme. Since then, the basic needs of refugees have been supervised, but improving them is extremely challenging.

On an international level, Romania has little decision-making power; in fact, Romania has not been involved in the drafting of protocols established by the EU and it has not attended meetings held to discuss the refugee crisis. Nevertheless, Romania is a very important country for refugees that want to travel towards Central Europe due to its location. Because of that, Romania establishes communications with the countries refugees flee from, mainly Iraq, Syria and Lebanon. In order to make joint decisions and improve the current situation, Romania counts on the help of the UNHCR.

Romania is in need of foreign help and support to deal with refugees. Foreign aid could have a very large positive impact on Romania’s economy, and the situation could be easily improved. Therefore, we have certain ideas to alleviate the current refugee crisis. Firstly, to improve the quality of shelters, focusing on services and basic needs, as well as providing ethical education in camps to avoid racial or religious altercations. Also, to develop communications with countries under conflict and with organizations to help manage refugees and their camps, as for example UNHCR does in Romania, but on a larger scale. Another idea would be to change the mentality of citizens towards refugees and to reduce xenophobic and chauvinistic ideologies, which challenge the integration of refugees in Romania. This could be achieved by promoting dialogue among citizens about the economic contributions refugees can bring. Plus, we would like to invite foreign NGOs working with refugees to visit detention centers in Romania to ensure that asylum seekers are treated properly, fairly and humanely. Finally, we would like to offer a final concept based on economic improvement in order to improve refugee’s services in Romania. Essentially, we would like to ask monetary organisations, like the World Bank or the IMF, for funds to target these problems and be able to invest in infrastructure, education and basic resources (mainly healthcare and food).

In conclusion, our committee would be pleased to see economically advanced countries undertake international actions to help territories like Romania with the current refugee crisis. Our committee believes all these measures would benefit both the citizens and the refugees in Romania; consequently improving social situations, the national economy and possibly even promoting tourism and business in the future. We are committed to promote further international measures, especially foreign aid and global agreements, as these would have an incredibly positive impact on refugees and guaranteeing their civil, political and socio-economic rights.

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