

Study visit by Conselho Português Para os Refugiados (CPR) from Portugal to The Netherlands

01-05-2024



After a successful internship last November, where four COA colleagues visited Portugal, five colleagues from the Conselho Português Para os Refugiados (CPR) came from Portugal to visit the COA in the Netherlands. From the 11th until the 15th of March they had the opportunity to take a look behind the scenes at the reception center in Utrecht.

The week started with a warm welcome at A Beautiful Mess, where the Portuguese colleagues were received and everyone got to know each other. Lisse Gilling, case manager from Utrecht, gave a presentation about how the reception of asylum seekers is organized in The Netherlands. After a traditional Dutch lunch with the team from the Utrecht reception center, an extensive tour followed during which the CPR colleagues had the chance to meet various partners working at the reception center, including the Dutch Council for Refugees (VWN), case managers and program coordinators.

Sharing knowledge and experiences

In the following days, a varied program was followed, with training, practical experiences and moments of reflection. While one group participated in training sessions such as the KNM (Knowledge of Dutch Society) training and Dutch language lessons, the other group shadowed case managers and program coordinators. There was also room for discussion about medical care, attended by medical care for asylum seekers (GZA) employees, and for an inspiring information session with intercultural mediators Kamar and Maha. On Wednesday

it was time for location visits and the group visited the intensive supervised shelter (IBO) in Schalkhaar and the Budel reception center, where they received a tour and colleagues gave a presentation. In this way, the Portuguese got a varied picture of how reception in the Netherlands are arranged within the different modalities.

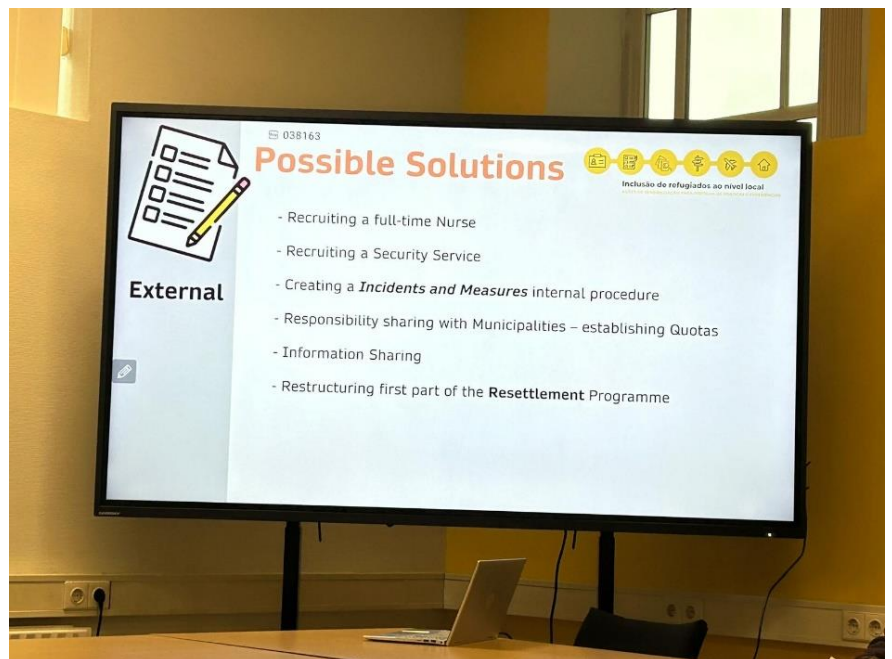
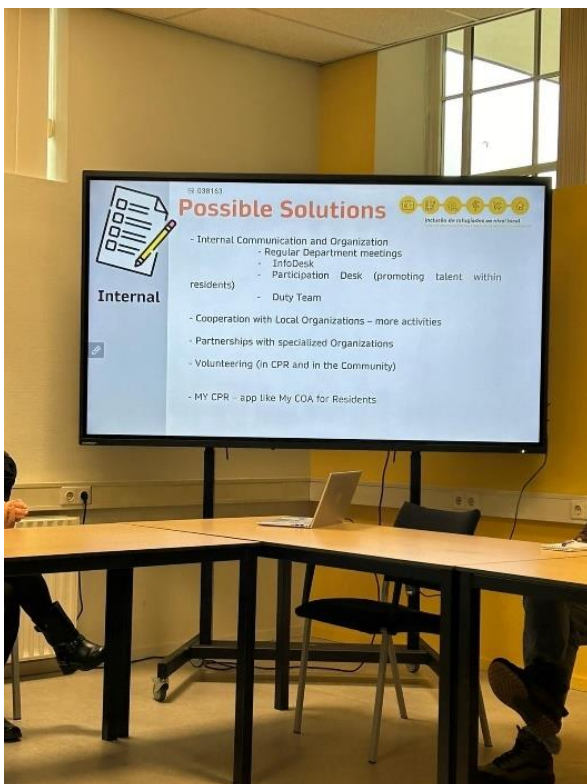
During informative sessions with organizations from the Participation Desk on Thursday, they gained insight into the various options for participation and integration of asylum seekers in The Netherlands. CPR colleagues were impressed by the large number of volunteers and the extensive efforts of volunteer organizations. "We would love to have a big volunteer program, but the problem is that volunteers often come at night or in the weekends, this is not sustainable because of CPR work hours," said one of the CPR colleagues. Perhaps one of the highlights of the week was lunch in the sun at A Beautiful Mess, where impressions and experiences were shared while enjoying delicious meals cooked by residents of the reception center.

Lessons Learned

At the end of the week, all of the impressions and reflections were shared during a reflection session at the Hayden Hub. Here the CPR colleagues shared their findings and what they would like to implement going back to Portugal.

The most valuable insights and observations that were shared during the retrospective session:

- Discussions about similarities and differences, such as dealing with Ukrainian refugees and the presence of legal aid for asylum seekers.
- Comparisons between the Dutch and Portuguese systems, in particular the need for structure emerged.
- Shared challenges, such as the lack of childcare and different levels in language classes.
- The importance of more mutual cooperation between different departments and clear division of tasks.
- The idea to implement the Participation Desk/Information Desk and MyCOA/MyCPR.
- The COA's Regulation withholding provisions (ROV) measures policy was an inspiration for the Portuguese as a way to deal with nuisance behavior. "More consequences and structure would make our work a lot easier".



The study visit by the CPR colleagues not only led to knowledge exchange, but also to new ideas and insights that can further help both organizations in their efforts to effectively accommodate and integrate refugees. We look forward to further cooperation and exchange of experiences between the Netherlands and Portugal.

Thank you to everyone who helped make this week a success!

Do you want to know more?

Feel free to contact us through our e-mail address: internationalknowledgeplatform@coa.nl
And keep an eye on our website for more knowledge sharing on asylum reception.



Co-funded by
the European Union