

Plan of action of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees to meet the refugee emergency in Germany (February 1953)

Caption: In February 1953, Gerrit Jan van Heuven Goedhart, the Dutch United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, draws up an Action Plan to assist the large number of refugees flooding into West Germany.

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Plan of action of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees to meet the refugee emergency in Germany

1. Three types of action to be carried out by the International and the German Voluntary Agencies to meet the present emergency caused by the influx of refugees through Berlin are envisaged.

- (a) emigration,
- (b) immediate relief in Berlin,
- (c) integration of refugees in Western Germany.

All three measures are to be carried out simultaneously. These measures, in addition to assisting the newly arrived refugees, will also directly benefit those non-German refugees in Western Germany who are within the mandate of the UNHCR.

2. The Intergovernmental Committee for European Migration (ICEM) working in cooperation with the World Council of Churches, the National Catholic Welfare Conference, the Lutheran World Federation, the American Joint Distribution Committee and other Agencies, will appeal to some of its member-Governments to give the greatest possible immigration facilities to refugees.

3. The plan of the UNHCR seeks to alleviate the position, partly by supporting youth activities and vocational training in Berlin, itself, but mainly by initiating housing projects to integrate refugees in Western Germany, through the Ford Foundation Grant for Refugees, of which he is the Administrator.

4. (a) Support for youth activities and vocational training will be given in West-Berlin and will be financed partly from the Ford Foundation Grant as follows:

National Catholic Welfare Conference:

Vocational Training School
"Dominicus Savio"

Young Men's Christian Association:

Two community centres (Häuser für Alle), in camp Volkmarstrasse,
Tempelhof (4,300 refugees) and camp Fruchthof, Mariendorff (1,300 refugees) respectively

World Council of Churches/Lutheran World Federation:

Hostel for students at secondary schools

World Council of Churches:

Counselling centre in Marienfelde.

The Norwegian Aid to Europe has made a contribution to a centre of the Bahnhofsmission - Schöneberg - which is used as a night-shelter and counselling centre. Both the Norwegian and the Swiss Aid are contributing towards the erection of a Youth House at Bahnhof Zoo. The Swiss Aid has furthermore given a considerable sum to the Vocational Training School with a Students' Home in the Spandau Citadel, and is also making a financial contribution towards the building of a settlement in Berlin-Schlachtensee.

(b) The German Red Cross, Caritas, Evangelisches Hilfswerk, Heimatlosenlagerdienst and other German voluntary organizations will take care of the emergency needs in West Berlin by providing blankets, towels, soap, newspapers, magazines and books. Vitamins and protein preparations for the children's hospitals will be contributed also by these German agencies or their counterparts in other countries.

(c) The rebuilding and equipping of factories in Berlin to accommodate refugees, and the provision of food, heating, etc., is being carried out by the German authorities.

(d) However, all authorities in Germany, including the Mayor of Berlin, agree that any solution to the problem must be found not in Berlin itself, but in providing suitable accommodation and facilities for the refugees in Western Germany. Any help for Western Germany in this respect is direct help for Berlin.

5. The Norwegian Aid to Europe has allocated a considerable sum for help for refugees in Berlin and Western Germany. The Swiss Aid to Europe has also decided to allocate a considerable sum of money for help for refugees in Berlin and Western Germany. Both have agreed to co-ordinate their projects with the UNHCR plan.

6. The German Authorities have agreed that settlements for refugees can be built in the following areas where employment possibilities are available:

- (a) Emmerich-Münster-Ludenscheid-Aachen
- (b) Hanau-Wiesbaden-Mannheim
- (c) Heilbronn-Ulm
- (d) Munich-Augsburg
- (e) Hannover-Braunschweig-Göttingen.

However, they do not wish any new settlements which may be built to accommodate exclusively newly arrived refugees; in their opinion settlements accommodating only the newly arrived refugees would be detrimental to the possibilities of their integration and furthermore would cause resentment amongst the existing refugee camp population, many of whom have been waiting years for accommodation.

They are also of the opinion that any settlements to meet the present emergency should provide accommodation not only for newly arrived refugees but also for refugees who have been in Western Germany for some considerable time and for non-German refugees.

Thus this plan will benefit in two ways those refugees within the mandate of the UNHCR who are still in camps; firstly the danger of their being overcrowded in the camps due to the influx of new refugees, will be lessened; secondly the provision of this additional accommodation will also be available to them and will facilitate their integration in Germany. These additional facilities for refugees other than the newly arrived refugees, will be made available from the German contributions to the plan.

7. The plan of the United Nations High Commissioner is an emergency plan designed to meet the present situation with the greatest possible speed. It therefore comprises both the immediate establishment of semi-permanent prefabricated housing units and also the speeding up of plans drawn up by the International Voluntary Agencies in agreement with the German Authorities for permanent houses, both being initially financed from the Ford Foundation Grant for Refugees.

8. There has already been a favourable response from the Governments of Switzerland and Norway to the initiative of the UNHCR. The Swiss Government has offered a considerable number of pre-fabricated housing units, and the Norwegian Government has informed the High Commissioner of its decision to ask the Storting to appropriate one million Kroner (\$140,000) for the purchase of Norwegian prefabricated houses to be used under this plan. These pre-fabricated houses will be erected in the immediate future. The German authorities on their side will provide the transport, sites, labour, plumbing, lighting and other facilities from their own resources.

It is hoped that further contributions from other Governments will make it possible to finance the projects of further housing units designed to accommodate refugee families. It is possible to erect housing units within

6 - 8 weeks from receipt of the order.

9. Plans for a number of permanent housing projects have already been drawn up and the constructors are ready to start as soon as they receive the order.

These projects will be carried out by the International Voluntary Agencies; 20% will be financed initially from the Ford Foundation Grant. The German Authorities have agreed to contribute 40% directly and to raise the remaining 40% from the German Banks on mortgage.

(a) The World Council of Churches and the Lutheran World Federation together will build settlements for 2,000 refugees in the areas of

1. Brunswick (600 refugees),
2. Stetten (near Stuttgart) (800 refugees)
3. Nuremberg (600 refugees).

The amount granted from the Ford Foundation for these settlements will total \$140,000. At least 25% of the accommodation in these settlements will be given to newly arrived refugees.

(b) The National Catholic Welfare Conference will build settlements for 1,538 refugees in the following areas:-

1. Gottwaldshausen (Württ./Baden)	24	housing units	(84 refugees)
2. Moosbach/Baden (Baden)	122	„ „	(427 refugees)
3. Bubenreuth (near Erlangen)	76	„ „	(268 refugees)
4. Heilbronn (near Ansbach)	16	„ „	(56 refugees)
5. Munich/Rürstenried	20	„ „	(69 refugees)
6. Kiesberg (near Würzburg)	15	„ „	(52 refugees)
7. Bad Soden (near Frankfurt)	10	„ „	(35 refugees)
8. Mainz/Gustavsburg	10	„ „	(35 refugees)
9. Friedland (near Göttingen)	60	„ „	(210 refugees)
10. Hengsen (near Una)	18	„ „	(63 refugees)
11. Cologne/Tuehnwald)	48	„ „	(143 refugees)
12. Münster/Vonnheide	18	„ „	(60 refugees)
13. Münster/Maifeld	16	„ „	(56 refugees)
Total:	444	housing units	(1,538 refugees)

The amount granted from the Ford Foundation for these settlements will total \$80,000.

(c) The American Friends Service Committee is building a Home and Family Life settlement for refugees in Hannover, financed by a grant of \$46,285 from the Ford Foundation. It has been agreed that 25% of the space in this settlement will be put at the disposal of the newly arrived refugees from the Eastern Zone.

(d) Thus, the total contribution for housing projects from the Ford Foundation Grant for the UNHCR plan to meet the refugee emergency in Germany is \$306,285. The German Authorities will match the \$266,285 Ford Foundation contribution for permanent housing by contributions and mortgages totalling \$1,065,140. Thus the total amount under this part of the Plan will be over \$1,330,000, providing permanent accommodation for over 3,700 refugees.

(e) The Young Men's Christian Association has used its allocations from the Ford Foundation Grant for Refugees for the purposes described in the terms of reference of the Ford Foundation Grant. In view of the emergency situation, however, it has readjusted its programme for building community centres (Häuser für Alle), to benefit the new influx of refugees. In addition, the National Catholic Welfare Conference, the American Joint Distribution Committee and the American Friends Service Committee have also in hand

several non-building projects for refugees in Western Germany from which the newly arrived refugees will also benefit.

10. The UNHCR will continue to co-ordinate this plan with all the participating Voluntary Agencies, Swiss and Norwegian Aid to Europe, the Allied and German Authorities, and will keep informed all interested Governments and the Council of Europe.

11. Further contributions from Governments will be used to meet the emergency situation created by the great influx of new refugees through Berlin by augmenting the projects described above, or according to the wishes of such Governments. The UNHCR, however, feels that it is most important that every effort be made to ensure that the existing camp population be not increased. Any large increase to the camp refugee population would delay the integration of the refugees in Germany, non-German as well as German, by several years, and undo much of what has already been accomplished in this field.

12. The urgency of this problem is particularly stressed, as new refugees are arriving in considerable numbers every day.

Geneva,

February 1953.