Cultural Orientation Leaflet for Resettled Refugees in Portugal

Portuguese Refugee Council (CPR)

In cooperation with the Portuguese Immigration Service (SEF)

With the support of

Ministério da Administração Interna
CULTURAL ORIENTATION LEAFLET FOR RESETTLED REFUGEES IN PORTUGAL

Promoting Entity: Portuguese Refugee Council (CPR), in cooperation with the Portuguese Immigration Service (SEF)

The present leaflet builds upon the previous “Cultural Orientation Programme for Resettled Refugees in Portugal” financed by the European Refugee Fund (ERF)

ABSTRACT

The following Cultural Orientation Leaflet presents information aimed at refugees who might be eligible for resettlement in Portugal.

This Leaflet sets out to portray, in a simple but accurate fashion, the Portuguese historic, socio-economic, political and cultural context, while also describing service provision in favour of resettled refugees after arrival. The aim of this leaflet is to promote autonomy upon arrival in Portugal, minimising potential cultural misunderstandings and facilitating integration into the Portuguese society.

Please note that being offered this leaflet does not by itself alone grant the refugee an automatic right to resettlement in Portugal.
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1. General information about Portugal

1.1 Introduction

Portugal, officially named the Portuguese Republic, is a continental country, located in the southwest tip of Europe, in the western part of the Iberian Peninsula.

It has a total area of 92,391 km² (e.g.: 25 times smaller than DR Congo and 4 times bigger than Rwanda) and it is the most western country of Europe, delimitated north and east by Spain and south and west by the Atlantic Ocean.

Portugal is a member of the European Union since 1986, and is one of the founding members of the Euro currency. Portugal is also a member of NATO (North Atlantic Treaty Organization) and of the Council of Europe.

Portugal is a constitutional parliamentary democracy, with four sovereign organs:

- The President of the Republic (Head of State – moderator power);
- The Republic Assembly (Parliament - legislative power);
- The Government (executive power); and
- The Courts (Judicial Power fully independent from remaining powers).

The President of the Portuguese Republic is elected by popular vote for a five-year term, and the members of Parliament (and consequently the Government) are elected by popular vote to serve four-year terms.

The current President of the Portuguese Republic is Aníbal Cavaco Silva, and its Prime Minister is José Sócrates.
1.2 History of Portugal in brief

The Kingdom of Portugal emerged in the 12th century during the reconquest of the Iberian Peninsula from the Moors. Portugal, originally a county and a part of one of the most ancient Christian kingdoms of the Peninsula - Leão - demanded its independence in 1143. D. Afonso I, the first King of Portugal, received the recognition of Portugal’s independence from the Pope in 1179.

The Arabic culture is clearly seen in several Portuguese cultural aspects. Numerous words of Arabic influence (around 1,000) still remain in Portuguese vocabulary, such as Alface (lettuce), Almofada (pillow), Azulejo (painted tiles) or Chafariz (water fountain).

The technological development of cartography and navigation in Portugal enabled the country to engage in maritime discoveries from the 15th Century on.

The Islands of Madeira and Azores in the Atlantic Ocean were discovered in 1418 and 1427. The western African coast had been explored down to Sierra Leone by 1460. Diogo Cão, a Portuguese navigator, reached the Congo River in 1483. When Bartolomeu Dias, another Portuguese navigator, sailed around the Cape of Good Hope (South Africa) in 1487, the then unknown maritime way to the Indian subcontinent was finally found. Vasco da Gama reached Calicut, in the Malabar Coast, land of spices and luxurious products, in 1498. Brazil was accidentally found by Pedro Álvares Cabral in 1500, when he got lost on his way to India.

In little less than a century, the Portuguese found new lands and linked themselves to peoples from different continents. Until today, and due to the maritime discoveries, Portuguese is spoken by over 200 million persons worldwide, making it the 5th most spoken language in the world.

By the end of the 16th century, there was a succession problem as the king of Portugal, D. Sebastião, disappeared in the Ksar el-Kibir (“Alcácer Quibir” in Portuguese) battle in Morocco, in 1578. From then on Portugal was ruled by a Spanish King until the 1st December 1640, when the independence process began. In 1668 a peace treaty was signed whereby Portugal regained its independence.

Due to three French invasions in 1807, 1808 and 1810 the Portuguese royal family was forced into exile in Brazil. The British, taking advantage of several popular uprisings in Portugal and Spain, sent in their troops. By the end of the war, England had a privileged governmental position, controlling all of Portugal’s international commercial relations.

Following an uprising by liberal groups against the English in 1820, that started in Porto and spread through out the country, a new Constitution was approved in 1822. Through it a constitutional monarchy was put in place.

The independence of Brazil in 1822 marked the beginning of troubled times. A war between liberals and absolutists broke out, lasting until 1834.

On 1 February 1908, an attack against the royal family resulted in the death of King D. Carlos and his oldest son and heir to the throne, Prince D. Luis Filipe. D. Manuel II, his second son, was the last King of Portugal, as the Republic was proclaimed on October 5 1910 and the royal family was expelled.

The instauration of the Republic brought about very troubled times. Political instability, including several struggles of workers, riots, murders, and severe financial crisis occurred. Between 1910 and 1926, Portugal had 8 Presidents and 45 Parliaments!

The political instability led to a military coup in 1926 and a military dictatorship was declared. Press censorship was established and all individual liberties were diminished. The military dictatorship evolved towards a corporative regime of fascist tendency, like in many other countries in Europe at the time.

This regime was strengthened by the nomination of Antonio de Oliveira Salazar as President of the Council of Ministers in 1932 and the approval of a new Constitution in 1933, which established a new authoritarian regime – the New State (“Estado Novo” in Portuguese).
During the Salazar regime, the Portuguese economy was almost stagnant. **Between 1960 and 1970 many Portuguese immigrated especially to France and Germany. Political opponents to the government were forced to seek refuge and asylum abroad.**

In 1961 a guerrilla war seeking independence from Portugal started in African territories under Portuguese rule. The colonial war lasted 13 years. The fascist regime and the colonial issue led Portugal to a gradual international political isolation.

The desire for freedom, the unsatisfaction towards the government and the Colonial war led to a **military coup on the 25 April of 1974, called the “Revolução dos Cravos”.** The revolution was named after a flower (carnation: cravo) which became a national symbol. The 25 April 1974 **brought back the freedom of speech and thought to Portugal**, along with the independence of all colonies.

The Portuguese Constitution, adopted 2 April 1976, and its subsequent amendments, placed the military under strict civilian control, and laid the groundwork for a **stable, pluralistic liberal Portuguese democracy.**

### 1.3. Geography and Climate information

The territory of Portugal is composed of its continental regions – Douro e Minho, Trás-os-Montes, Douro Litoral, Beira – Alta, Beira-Baixa, Estremadura, Alto Alentejo, Baixo Alentejo, Algarve - and of its island regions: the archipelagos of Açores and Madeira.

The **capital of Portugal is Lisboa**, the most populated city, with more than 500 000 residents.

Other major cities in Portugal include, for example, **Porto** in the north of the country, **Coimbra** in the centre, and **Faro**, in the southern region of Algarve.

The **climate** in Portugal varies significantly from region to region, and is influenced by height, latitude and the proximity to the sea.

In the areas of Porto, North of Portugal (Douro e Minho, Trás-os Montes) and Beiras (Beira-Alta, Beira-Baixa), winters are colder, even though moderated when compared to other European countries. In the Fall, sunny days with mild temperatures are common all over the country.

In **Porto**, for example, **average temperatures** in the winter are 10º Celsius and in the summer close to 20º Celsius.

You might find some snow fall in the north during the winter, particularly in **Serra da Estrela**, the highest mountain in continental Portugal (1991 metres).

Temperatures are higher in the south. In **Lisboa**, for example the **average temperatures** in the winter are 17º Celsius and in the summer over 26º Celsius.

Usually, the spring months are sunny and the temperatures are high during the dry months of July and August, with **maximum temperatures**, in the centre of the country reaching between 30°Celsius and 35°Celsius, and even higher in the southern region of Alentejo (up to 40° Celsius and more, sometimes).
1.4. Population and Demographic Information

It is estimated that in July 2008 the Portuguese population was of about 10,676,910 inhabitants.

Life expectancy at birth was 78 years old in 2008.

About 84.5% of the population is Roman Catholic, but freedom of religion is a fundamental right of all individuals enshrined in the Constitution.

In 2007, there were 435,736 foreigners living in Portugal, representing little less than 5% of the population. The most representative immigrant communities come from Brazil (66,354), Cape Vert (63,925), Ukraine (39,480), Angola (32,728) and Guinea Bissau (23,733).

Foreign communities living in Portugal are very diversified, including citizens of over 150 countries.

In the case of DR Congo, there are currently about 254 Congolese living in the area of Lisboa.

2. Economic and financial information

2.1. Currency

The Portuguese currency has been the Euro (EUR) since 2002, replacing the old Portuguese Escudo (PTE).

2.2. Portuguese Economy

Since joining the European Union in 1986, Portugal has consolidated its place at the heart of Europe.

Joining the European Union promoted new economic opportunities and development for Portugal. Today, Portugal ranks as the 29th most developed country in the world, in front of countries such as Poland, Mexico and Russia, but behind countries such as Greece, Cyprus and Spain.

Economic growth in Portugal was above the EU average for much of the 1990s, but has strongly fallen back between 2001 and 2007. Currently, the richness created by each Portuguese is only two-thirds of the average EU citizen.

Agriculture products produced by Portugal include: grain, potatoes, tomatoes, olives, grapes; sheep, cattle, goats, swine, poultry, and dairy products.

As for industries operating in Portugal, these include: textiles, clothing, footwear, wood and cork, paper, chemicals, auto-parts manufacturing, base metals, dairy products, wine and other foods, porcelain and ceramics, glassware, technology, telecommunications; ship construction and refurbishment; tourism. Fishing also represents an important industry.

2.3. Employment in Portugal

Portugal has become a diversified and increasingly service-based economy since joining the European Economic Community in 1986.

Currently, only 10% of all Portuguese work in agriculture, while 30% work in industries and 60% work in services.
Since 2001, the Portuguese unemployment rate resembles the EU average. In 2006, 7.7% of the active population was unemployed while the EU average rate was 7.9%.

Unemployment rate among young workers has registered a similar evolution, placing itself at 16.2% of the population, only 0.9% less when comparing to the EU average.

The **average monthly salary in Portugal before tax** is around 850 euros (1,144 USD) and the minimum wage is 450 euros (605 USD). These salaries are quite low when comparing to other EU countries.

Salaries vary significantly between economic sectors and professions. Still, as an example, in 2007 the **average salary** (meaning some workers earned less and some workers earned more) in restaurants was 650 Euros (874 USD), while in construction it was 880 Euros (1,184USD).

### 3. Portuguese transports

The Portuguese transport system is divided into:

- Air transportation (Plains)
- Railroad transport (Train/Metro/Tram)
- Maritime and fluvial transport
- Road transport (Bus/Taxi)

### 4. National Bank Holidays

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Observations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1st of January</td>
<td>New Year’s Day</td>
<td>Beginning of the year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tuesday, mobile holiday</td>
<td>Carnival</td>
<td>Mobile holiday also called Entrudo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friday, mobile holiday</td>
<td>Good Friday</td>
<td>Celebrates the Passion of Christ and the death of Christ in Jerusalem.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sunday, mobile holiday</td>
<td>Eastern</td>
<td>It is celebrated in a Sunday, and it is not classified as an official holiday.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25th of April</td>
<td>Freedom Day</td>
<td>Celebration of the Carnation revolution that establish the end of the dictatorial regime in 1974.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1st of May</td>
<td>Worker’s Day</td>
<td>Celebrates the workers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thursday, mobile holiday</td>
<td>Corpus Christi</td>
<td>Second Thursday after the Pentecostes (Holy Spirit). Celebrates the Eucharistic cult, and it started in the Middle Age.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10th of June</td>
<td>Portugal Day</td>
<td>Officially, Day of Camões, of Portugal and all the Portuguese Communities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15th of August</td>
<td>Feast of the Assumption</td>
<td>This holiday celebrates the assumption of the Virgin Mary to Heaven.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5th of October</td>
<td>Implantation of the Republic</td>
<td>In 1910</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1st of November</td>
<td>All Saints Day</td>
<td>Traditionally, is to remember the beloved one that are dead and all saints.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1st of December</td>
<td>Restoration of Independence</td>
<td>In relation to Spain, in 1640.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8th of December</td>
<td>Immaculate Conception</td>
<td>Patron of Portugal since 1646.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25th of December</td>
<td>Christmas Day</td>
<td>Celebrates the birth of Jesus, in Bethlehem. The night of 24 to 25 is called the Consolada.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Besides these holidays, there are local holidays that vary from city to city.
5. Information on National Asylum Entities

5.1 Non-governmental organisation: The Portuguese Refugee Council (Conselho Português para os Refugiados - CPR)

The Portuguese Refugee Council (CPR) was created on the 20th of September 1991, by a group of relevant persons willing to defend and promote asylum and refugee issues within the Portuguese society. In July 1993, CPR signed the first cooperation agreement with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). The operational relation between the 2 organisations was intensified since the closing of the office of UNHCR in 1998.

Current Asylum Law 27/2008, of 30 June, foresees CPR intervention’ as the NGO who provides independent legal counselling to asylum seekers and refugees in all stages of the asylum procedure - article 49 (4).

CPR, the only national NGO that deals exclusively with asylum seekers and refugees’ population in Portugal, was granted the “Human Rights Award”, by the Portuguese Republic Assembly on the 12th December 2000.

5.1.1. The Portuguese Refugee Council’s Mission and Activities

CPR’s mission consists of supporting asylum seekers and refugees from reception until they are integrated in Portuguese society.

CPR provides free legal and social counselling, as well as Portuguese language classes to all asylum seekers and refugees. CPR’s employment and professional training service supports refugees and asylum seekers in their own efforts for securing a job.

Additionally, CPR promotes activities in the area of training of university students and social workers, e-learning and public information with the objective of familiarizing the Portuguese society with human rights and refugee issues.

5.1.2. CPR’s Reception Centre for Refugees (CAR)

The main objectives of CPR’s Reception Centre for Refugees (CAR) include:

a) Accommodating in a dignifying way, asylum seekers in Portugal, immediately after the presentation of their claim, for an average period of 60 days;

b) Accommodating in a dignifying way resettled refugees upon request of the Portuguese Government, for an initial period of six months, renewable, with the aim of preparing for their integration in Portugal.

c) Serve as a transitory facility for asylum seekers and refugees providing accommodation, food, social and legal counselling, psychosocial and medical support, Portuguese language courses and transportation, all with the aim of preparing the ground for future autonomy.

5.2. Governmental Entity: the Portuguese Immigration Service (Serviço de Estrangeiros e Fronteiras - SEF)

The Portuguese Immigration Service has the mission of implementing the Portuguese policies for immigration and asylum in agreement with the provisions of the Constitution and the Law, and the Government’s guidelines.

5.2.1 Nature

The Serviço de Estrangeiros e Fronteiras (SEF), is a security service organised vertically under the Ministry of Home Affairs. It has administrative autonomy and its fundamental objectives within the internal security policy include border control of persons, leave to stay and the activities of foreigners in Portugal, as well as the study, promotion, coordination and execution of measures and actions related to these activities and migratory flows.
As a criminal police body, in the terms of criminal procedural law, SEF acts in the process under the direction and operational dependence of the competent legal authority, implementing the measures determined by that authority and the acts delegated by the same authority.
6. Resettlement in Portugal

Article 35 of Portuguese Asylum Law states that:

“1 – The requests for the resettlement of refugees under the mandate of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees shall be presented to the Government member responsible for the internal affairs area.
2 – The Portuguese Immigration Service shall ensure the necessary proceedings for the course and the decision on applications within a period of ten days.
3 – The Portuguese Refugee Council shall be informed on the lodged applications and may render an opinion upon said applications within five days.
4 – The Government member responsible for the internal affairs area shall decide on the acceptance of the resettlement request within 15 days.
5 – The acceptance of the resettlement request shall grant the persons in question with a status (…) refugee or subsidiary protection.”

6.1. Rights and duties of resettled refugees

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>RIGHTS</th>
<th>1. Non discrimination</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. Access to jobs and training</td>
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<td></td>
<td>3. Access to public education</td>
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<td></td>
<td>4. Social support</td>
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<td></td>
<td>5. Access to health</td>
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<td></td>
<td>6. Access to family reunification</td>
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<td></td>
<td>7. Freedom of movement</td>
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<td></td>
<td>8. Travel Documents</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

| DUTIES | 9. Respect for all laws, regulations and measures aimed at maintaining public order. |

Article 65 of Asylum Law 27/2008, 30 March states that: “Beneficiaries of refugee status and of subsidiary protection enjoy the rights and are subjected to the duties of resident aliens in Portugal, in so much as these are not contrary to this Law, to the Geneva Convention of 1951 and its New York Protocol of 1967, and they should conform, among other, to the obligation of respecting all laws, regulations and measures aimed at maintaining public order.”

Simultaneously, article 15 (1) of the Portuguese Constitution determines that: “Aliens and stateless persons finding themselves or residing in Portugal enjoy the same rights and are subjected to the same duties of Portuguese citizens.”

6.2. Non discrimination and gender

Article 13 (Equality Principle) of the Portuguese Republic Constitution (CRP) determines that all citizens have the same social dignity and are equal before the Law and that no one can be privileged, favoured, impaired or deprived of any right or exempt of any duty by reason of ascendancy, sex, race, language, territory of origin, religion, political or ideological convictions, instruction, economic situation or social condition.

Criminal authorities and the Commission for Equality and Against Discrimination (CICDR) are responsible for enforcing national Law against discrimination and for investigating all complaints of discrimination brought before them.

Equality between men and women is a fundamental value of Portuguese society, namely regarding access to employment, education and professional training.

Portugal is among the EU countries with the highest number of women who are employed. In 2006, 68% of all women between 15 and 64 years old had a job.

Regarding education, in 2005, almost 60% of all Portuguese women over 15 years old had achieved basic education, 14% secondary education and 10% higher education.

6.3. What to expect when you arrive

6.3.1. Housing

Housing is one of the most urgent needs when a refugee arrives in Portugal.

Therefore, in the immediate reception phase, refugees are offered accommodation in the Refugee Reception Centre (CAR) of CPR, for a period up to six months, based on individual analysis.

CAR

The new facilities, inaugurated in 2006, have a total lodging capability of 34 residents, and offer a common kitchen and lounge, training classrooms, ateliers, public library, access to Internet and a mass-media archive.

The transition of resettled refugees from the Reception Centre for Refugees (CAR) into private housing is prepared by the CPR in cooperation with the local social security services.
In Portugal it is possible to rent rooms, or parts of a house. It is also possible to rent a house. In this case tenants are normally responsible for the monthly payment of water, electricity, gas, and have to do an initial down payment that usually corresponds to a month rent.

It is important to add that in order to rent a house it is necessary to have a bailer that will be responsible for the payment of the rent in case the tenant doesn’t pay.

Information on available housing can be found in newspapers ads, Internet, among others.

Following the initial accommodation period at CPR’s reception centre, housing is usually the main concern, taking the largest part of a household monthly income.

Prices of houses vary significantly depending on their location, size, date of construction, neighbourhood and whether they are furnished. Below are some examples of houses available for rent in Portugal and their corresponding price.

**Example 1:** Apartment in Lisboa, 2 bedrooms, 750€/month

**Example 2:** Apartment in Loures (20Km from Lisboa), 3 bedrooms, 550€/month

**Example 3:** Apartment in Amadora (14 Km from Lisboa), 1 bedroom, 380€/month

### 6.3.2 Access to health

**National Health Service**

Article 64 of the Portuguese Constitution guarantees to all citizens the right to Health, which is guaranteed by the State through the National Health System (**Serviço Nacional de Saúde** - SNS).

Besides SNS, there are other health subsystems, private institutions and professionals in a liberal regime, which can celebrate contracts and agreements with the Ministry of Health, in order to integrate the SNS, guaranteeing that all citizens have access to their services in the same way as in SNS.

The National Health Service is universal, general and, taking into account the social and economic conditions of the citizens, in tendency, free.

The National Health Service is under the care of the Ministry of Health and it is provided by all “Health Regions” by the Council of Administration of their respective Administrative Health Region.

According to Law n.º 48/90, 24 August (Basic Health Care Law), foreigners and stateless persons, while residing in Portugal, are granted access to the National Health Service.
Such access was further regulated by Dispatch 25360/2001, paragraph 1 that states that “Foreign citizens legally residing in Portugal have access to identical medical and medicinal assistance by all units and services of the SNS as granted to the remaining beneficiaries of the National Health Service.”

In accordance to Articles 73 of Asylum Law 27/2008, 30 March, refugees and beneficiaries of subsidiary protection are entitled access to the SNS under the same conditions of Portuguese citizens.

Upon arrival, resettled refugees are referred to the Institute for Hygiene and Tropical Medicine (Instituto de Higiene e Medicina Tropical) that provides for health screenings and health care relating to transmissible diseases. Recommended tests require explicit consent by the refugees. Examination results are confidential.

6.3.3. Access to education

In accordance to Article 70 of Asylum Law 27/2008, 30 March, refugees are entitled to education.

The Portuguese public education system is the main education system in the country, although there are some private schools for all levels of education. In Portugal, compulsory education starts at the age of 6. Every person has to attend and complete a minimum of 9 years in school (Basic Education).

As such, the school system is divided into mandatory basic education, secondary education and higher education. Basic Education is divided into 3 cycles:

1st cycle, from the 1st till the 4th grade;
2nd cycle, 5th and 6th grade;
3rd cycle, 7th till 9th grade.

Secondary school comprehends the 10th, 11th, and 12th grades.

In accordance to the common European Higher Education System (Bologna System), Portuguese higher education is composed of 3 cycles: Higher Degree (Licenciatura: +/- 6 semesters); Masters (Mestrado: +/- 4 semesters); and Phd. (Doutoramento: +/- 4 Semesters).

Access of refugee children to education at basic/primary level is fully guaranteed. Kindergarten children (4 months to 5 years old) are referred upon arrival to the nursery school, located nearby the Refugee Reception Centre of CPR.

6.3.4. Access to jobs and vocational training

Jobs

In accordance to Articles 70 and 71 of Asylum Law 27/2008, 30 March, refugees are entitled to professional training and work.

As a rule, however, refugees encounter difficulties in finding paid employment, namely due to the lack of recognition of their previous work experience by employers.

Another constraint in the access to the labour market is related to refugees’ limited Portuguese language skills. Hence, it is important for refugees, to attend Portuguese language courses immediately after their arrival. Such courses are promoted by non governmental organizations such as CPR, but also by public services such as schools and Instituto do Emprego e Formação Profissional - IEPF (Institute for Employment and Vocational Training).

Vocational training

The importance of vocational training inhabits in the fact that it can allow the actualization or transference of skills in a way that it can be adapted to particular labour market situation and, when possible, the acquisition of national certificated qualifications.

Oriented towards the requalification and updating of skills, Professional formation can allow refugees to adjust their skills to the national labour market,
augmenting, in this way, their capacity of insertion in the active life.

In Portugal, there are no vocational training programmes specifically directed to refugees, but they can apply to the programmes offered by the IEFP. The professional formation developed by the IEFP (directly or indirectly) is for all persons residing in Portugal.

Depending on the individual case, refugees are referred to CPR’s employment service (UNIVA) in the Refugee Reception Centre. This initiative offers a range of services such as training, job search techniques, establishing links with potential employers, individual counselling in professional training, job search support, and access to the Internet. Here, refugees are assisted to find work according to their skills and interests.

At this stage some refugees are offered professional training even though demanding and bureaucratic equivalence procedures might hamper their access to the national training system offered by the Employment and Professional Training Institute (IEFP). CPR, in cooperation with other partners, such as the Food Vocational Training Centre, has on occasion run separate professional training programmes for resettled refugees and asylum seekers.

6.3.5. Social support

In accordance to Article 72 of Asylum Law 27/2008, 30 March, refugees and beneficiaries of subsidiary protection are entitled access to the Social Welfare System.

6.3.6. Documentation

Resettled refugees are issued a residence permit upon arrival, issued by the Portuguese Aliens and Borders Service (SEF). This residence permit entitles refugees to work and access to all services.

Refugees should use these first six months as a stage to fully focus on learning the language and familiarising with the host society.

6.3.7 Family reunification

In accordance to Article 68 of Asylum Law 27/2008, 30 March, refugees are entitled upon request to the extension of their status to family members located in Portugal or overseas.

For the purposes of family reunification, family members shall include the spouse, minor children, including adopted children, dependent minor brothers, father or mother. In the case of the refugee being under 18 years old, asylum might be extended to the father or mother.

Refugees are normally required to pay for all costs associated with the transfer of their family members to Portugal, namely travel costs.

Also expect that: …..

During the initial 6 months period spent at the Refugee Reception Centre (CAR), assistance offered to resettled refugees by CPR includes financial support for basic needs, legal and social counselling, mandatory Portuguese language classes, cultural information and activities, as well as computer training.

As of December 2008, and subject to changes, financial assistance provided to resettled refugees accommodated at the Refugee Reception Centre (CAR) amounts to 120€/month. Additionally, food items, hygiene items and clothes are regularly put at their disposal. Refugees are also entitled every month to a public transportation pass and a 5€ telephone card.

Following the initial 6 months period spent at the Refugee Reception Centre (CAR), financial assistance granted to refugees by social security services covers accommodation expenses, food and other day-to-day expenses, transportation, education and health related expenses.

At this stage occasional delays in the provision of social security financial assistance might occur. This is a nation wide problem that affects all Social Security beneficiaries, including refugees but also Portuguese nationals. For that reason, self-sufficiency by means of Portuguese language skills and access to employment should be considered a priority by both refugees and service providers at all times.
Refugees are expected by social security services to become self-sufficient and as such financial support will gradually scale back. Refugees are gradually referred to the general Social Security regime applicable to all Portuguese citizens.
Sources

- Universal Declaration of Human Rights, 1948;
- Geneva Convention of 1951 relating to the Status of Refugees;
- Constitution of the Portuguese Republic;
- Portuguese Asylum Law N.º 27/2008, 30 June;
- Portuguese Aliens Law n.º 23/2007, 4 July;