



EMN Ad-Hoc Query on Asylum seekers from China belonging to the Christian sect of the Church of Almighty God

Requested by Rafael BÄRLUND on 26th July 2016

Protection

Responses from Austria, Belgium, Blocked / Unknown, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Estonia, Finland, Germany, Hungary, Ireland, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Slovak Republic, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, United Kingdom, Norway (25 in total)

Disclaimer:

The following responses have been provided primarily for the purpose of information exchange among EMN NCPs in the framework of the EMN. The contributing EMN NCPs have provided, to the best of their knowledge, information that is up-to-date, objective and reliable. Note, however, that the information provided does not necessarily represent the official policy of an EMN NCPs' Member State.

Background information:

During late 2015 and early 2016, Finland has received approximately 40 asylum seekers from China, who have stated in their asylum claims, that they belong to a Christian sect called the Church of Almighty God. The sect is also known by the names Eastern Lightning or the Church of the Gospel's Kingdom. The sect is known to be opposed to communism and its leader has been granted political asylum in the United States. The sect is led from the United States. Finland has not encountered this group of applicants before, and because of the sudden arrival of these applicants, the Finnish Immigration Service would like to pose the following questions.

Summary

Summary:

Only CZ, DE, FR, NL, PT and SE reported cases of asylum seekers from China claiming to belong to the Church of Almighty God. Almost all asylum claims that have been processed on these grounds, have been rejected.

Questions

1. 1. Has your Member States received Chinese asylum seekers, who have claimed to belong to the Christian sect called the Church of Almighty God or have told that they are Christians? If yes, how many have you received in 2015-2016?
2. 2. Which grounds have the aforementioned applicants stated for their claim for asylum?
3. 3. Has the number of asylum seekers belonging to the aforementioned group increased during the last years in your Member State?
4. 4. What kind of asylum decisions have been made in your Member State concerning Chinese asylum seekers belonging to the mentioned sect and in general for Chinese asylum applicants who use Christianity in their asylum claim?
5. 5. Have the aforementioned applicants received return decisions to China in your Member State?

Responses

	Country	Wider Dissemination	Response
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	Austria	No	
	Belgium	Yes	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. No. 2. N/A 3. N/A 4. N/A 5. N/A
	Blocked / Unknown	No	
	Bulgaria	Yes	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. In 2015 and until August 2016 Bulgaria did not receive any Chinese asylum seekers. In August this year 13 asylum applications were lodged by Chinese nationals. They have stated that they are Mongols and their religion is Buddhism. 2. N/A 3. In 2015 and until August 2016 Bulgaria did not receive any Chinese asylum seekers. In August this year 13 asylum applications were lodged by Chinese nationals but they do not belong to the aforementioned group. 4. No applications from Chinese asylum seekers belonging to the mentioned sect or from Chinese asylum applicants who use Christianity in their asylum claims have been submitted. 5. N/A
	Croatia	Yes	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. None.

			<p>2. N/A</p> <p>3. N/A</p> <p>4. N/A</p> <p>5. N/A</p>
	Cyprus	Yes	<p>1. Asylum Service does not register statistical information regarding specific grounds of asylum claims/applications submitted. However, regarding the issue in question, it is noted that Cyprus authorities did not encounter such cases in years 2015-2016 i.e. mass arrivals of Chinese nationals with the aforementioned claim.</p> <p>2. n/a</p> <p>3. n/a</p> <p>4. n/a</p> <p>5. n/a</p>
	Czech Republic	No	
	Estonia	Yes	<p>1. So far Estonia haven't received asylum seekers from China.</p> <p>2. -</p> <p>3. -</p> <p>4. -</p>

			5. -
	Finland	No	
	Germany	Yes	<p>1. Church of Almighty God: Yes. Chinese asylum seekers arriving in Germany during the past months often claim to be members of the Church of Almighty God. This sect is not recorded in our statistics. Further only a part of all applications of asylum seekers from China has been decided upon so far. Therefore no exact numbers of asylum seekers claiming to be members of the Church of Almighty God are available, neither is the exact date, since when they arrive in Germany. About 16 cases were decided upon in July and August 2016. Christians: Yes. 2015: 140, January to June 2016: 75. See also table in answer to question 3.3.</p> <p>2. Church of Almighty God: Most claimants are female. They lived under average living conditions. They claim, they could not and did not practice their religion freely for fear of persecution by the authorities. They met clandestinely in private homes. There police appeared and arrested members for some days, members had to pay a fine. Or police visited claimants at home while they were absent for a meeting with other members of the sect. Others were not persecuted themselves, but told stories about members who were arrested. Some claim other persons notified their religious affiliation to the police; others claim police discovered them at meetings of the sect. Some were reported to police by persons they have tried to proselytize. As they feared further persecution by the authorities, they left their home, stayed some time e.g. with friends or members of the sect before the left China. All claimants left China by plane legally with their documents (passport, visa). Claims usually are not credible or reasonably grounded. Most claimants could not give details of the religious teachings of their sect. (Other) Christians: Only a part of the Christians claim some kind of religious persecution. Other common motifs are e.g. problems with family planning policy or conflicts regarding forced eviction. Exact data are not available, as the individual reasons for claiming for asylum are not recorded in statistics. Furthermore not all cases by Chinese asylum seekers have been decided upon so far. At the moment there are not enough data to suggest, whether the rise of the numbers</p>

			<p>of Christian asylum seekers from China (see attached figures) corresponds to a rise in claims regarding religious persecution.</p> <p>3. Church of Almighty God: See answer to question 1.1. Christians: The numbers of Christian asylum seekers rose from 14 (5.0 % of all Chinese asylum seekers) in 2012 continually to 75 (28.2 %) in the first half of 2016 (see attached table).</p> <p>4. Church of Almighty God: Most claims were rejected because: claims were hard to believe; claimants had superficial knowledge of the elementary teachings of the sect only; after purported arrest or harassment or observation by police they were able to travel e.g. by train in China freely and to legally leave China with passport and visa by plane, which is deemed impossible for persons who are wanted by authorities. In three credible cases claimants were granted refugee status/asylum. As all cases were decided upon in July and August 2016, they are not yet contained in the statistics in the answer to question 3.3. (Other) Christians: Some claim to have been arrested or threatened by police because they are leaders or members of groups belonging to underground or house churches. In credible cases refugee status/asylum may be granted.</p> <p>5. Church of Almighty God: Yes. (Other) Christians: Yes. There are no numbers available on how many were actually returned, as the religious affiliation of returnees is not recorded.</p>
	Hungary	Yes	<p>1. No, there hasn't been any applicant claiming to belong to the above mentioned Christian church. In general it is not typical that Chinese applicants in Hungary mention their Christianity as the reason of persecution.</p> <p>2. n.a.</p> <p>3. n.a.</p> <p>4. n.a.</p>

			5. n.a.
	Ireland	No	
	Latvia	No	
	Lithuania	Yes	<p>1. No.</p> <p>2. n/a</p> <p>3. n/a</p> <p>4. n/a</p> <p>5. n/a</p>
	Luxembourg	Yes	<p>1. No, in 2015 and 2016 LU has not received any Chinese international protection applicant.</p> <p>2. N/A</p> <p>3. N/A</p> <p>4. N/A</p> <p>5. N/A</p>
	Malta	Yes	<p>1. as per attached</p> <p>2. as per attached</p>

			<p>3. as per attached</p> <p>4. as per attached</p> <p>5. as per attached</p>
	Netherlands	No	
	Poland	Yes	<p>1. Chinese citizens didn't apply for asylum in Poland [In case of Poland asylum and international protection: refugee status and subsidiary protection applies as different procedure]. However Chinese citizens applied for international protection (2015 - 5 applications, 2016 - 8 applications).</p> <p>2. Chinese citizens didn't apply for asylum in Poland [In case of Poland asylum and international protection: refugee status and subsidiary protection applies as different procedure]. However Chinese citizens applied for international protection (2015 - 5 applications, 2016 - 11 applications).</p> <p>3. Asylum applicants – N/A All Chinese applicants for international protection have stated religious grounds for their claim.</p> <p>4. N/A</p> <p>5. No, the number of asylum seekers belonging to the aforementioned group has not increased during the last years in Poland.</p> <p>6. No, the number of asylum seekers belonging to the aforementioned group has not increased during the last years in Poland.</p> <p>7. N/A</p>

			<p>8. N/A</p> <p>9. No</p> <p>10. N/A</p>
	Portugal	Yes	<p>1. Yes. In 2015, Portugal received 75 applications (17 from men; 58 from women). So far, in 2016, PT has received 8 applications (4 from men; 4 from women).</p> <p>2. The applicants have claimed religious persecution to justify their request.</p> <p>3. Once the trend in 2016 isn't clear, it's not possible to give an appropriate answer to the question</p> <p>4. The requests were all refused.</p> <p>5. Once the request is refused and all the appeal stages are exhausted, the rejected applicants are notified to leave the country.</p>
	Slovak Republic	Yes	<p>1. No.</p> <p>2. N/A</p> <p>3. N/A</p> <p>4. N/A</p> <p>5. N/A</p>
	Slovenia	Yes	<p>1. We didn't receive yet application from this categories of Chinese asylum seekers.</p>

			<p>2. NTR</p> <p>3. NTR</p> <p>4. NTR</p> <p>5. NTR</p>
	Spain	Yes	<p>1. In Spain there are no asylum seekers with the aforementioned profile.</p> <p>2. -</p> <p>3. -</p> <p>4. -</p> <p>5. -</p>
	Sweden	Yes	<p>1. Yes. In 2015, approximately 5, and so far in 2016, approximately 11 persons have claimed their Christian belief as ground for their asylum application. Out of these 11 persons so far in 2016, 5 have claimed that they belong to this sect. All five have entered Sweden since June this year. None of those who applied in 2015 have claimed that they belong to this sect.</p> <p>2. Arrestment and torture, house burning.</p> <p>3. Yes, but only from zero to five.</p> <p>4. No decisions have yet been taken on applications from those belonging to this sect. Three negative decisions have been made on other applications where Christian belief was given as the ground for asylum applications. The applicants have appealed to the Migration Court, but the Court has not yet made any decisions. No positive decisions have been taken.</p>

			5. Yes, three of them, as stated under question 4 above.
	United Kingdom	Yes	1. Unfortunately the UK doesn't record asylum 'claim type' on our databases. We are therefore unable to break down and assess how many Chinese claims of this nature we have. 2. N/A 3. N/A 4. N/A 5. N/A
	Norway	Yes	1. No. None. 2. N/A 3. N/A 4. N/A 5. N/A