



**Civil Society Report on the Administrative Detention of
Vulnerable Asylum Seekers and Illegally Staying Third-
Country Nationals**

**Steering Committee, 20-21 January 2009
Chant d'Oiseau
Brussels, BE**

Chair: JRS Europe

DEVAS Project Summary

In the beginning of 2009 JRS-Europe and its project partners will begin a new project that will research the conditions of detention for vvulnerable asyylum seekers in the EU, known as the "DEVAS Project." It is partly funded by the EU Commission and will be implemented in 23 EU Member States.

More and more, asylum seekers arriving in Europe are detained in closed reception centres or other places of detention. Increasingly, vulnerable asylum seekers are being detained in these centres. The detention of vulnerable asylum seekers is a concern because these individuals require a higher degree of protection due to characteristics that place them at a level of increased risk for abuse and neglect. Detained female asylum seekers, for example, are vulnerable to physical and sexual abuse from male detainees or male staff in the detention centre. Women also experience medical needs, such as pregnancy, that require specialised protection and attention. Individuals who remain in prolonged detention may suffer from psychological trauma as a result, not to mention potential de-skilling which can make their integration upon release – whether in the host country or country of origin – more difficult. Persons with serious medical needs require specialised attention from trained medical professionals, and some may even require 24-hour care. Whilst all asylum seekers require the full protection of the law, where vulnerable asylum seekers are concerned, a higher standard of protection should be implemented.

The DEVAS Project aims to research and identify the detention conditions and practices of 23 Member States towards vulnerable asylum seekers. Instead of pre-identifying categories of vulnerability, the research will determine which vulnerable groups exist in detention. This will be achieved by focusing strongly on the voices and experiences of detainees. Project partners will use the same methodology to research illegally staying third-country nationals detained in their respective country.

The project will be lead by a steering committee whose task will be to guide the research, to ensure its implementation and analysis, and to see the project through to its completion at the end of 2009. Each project partner will write a national report, which will be published into a final regional report. The report and its accompanying advocacy strategy will be released to EU policy makers and other interested parties at a conference workshop in Brussels.