

Future-proofing resettlement policies: Next steps for resettlement and community sponsorship in the EU



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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AMIF	Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund	IOM	International Organization for Migration
CSO	civil society organisation	MENA	Middle East and North Africa
DG	Directorate-General	MFF	Multiannual Financial Framework
EASO	European Asylum Support Office	M&E	monitoring and evaluation
ERDF	European Regional Development Fund	NGO	non-governmental organisation
ESF+	European Social Fund Plus	RSF	Resettlement Support Facility
ETM	Emergency Transit Mechanism	UNHCR	UN Refugee Agency
EUAA	European Union Agency for Asylum	URF	Union Resettlement Framework
FY	fiscal year		

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Resettlement offers safe, durable solutions to the world's most vulnerable refugees and to the countries hosting them. In recent years, the EU has placed a growing emphasis on advancing its refugee resettlement policies while also supporting community sponsorship as part of a broader investment in developing complementary pathways. Assisted by EU-level initiatives, member states' efforts came to represent, at their peak, 40% of global resettlement. Yet, EU annual resettlement efforts have never covered more than 2% of the refugees in need worldwide.

The current drive to scale up resettlement and complementary pathways is promising, however. If the efforts achieved thus far are to translate into a sustainable and meaningful increase in refugee resettlement numbers, the EU will need to play a stronger role in supporting member states to develop and expand their programmes. The present momentum should be used to reinforce the humanitarian nature of resettlement, maximise the impact of resettlement efforts and meaningfully share responsibility with third countries, not least in light of COVID-19's vast negative impact on resettlement operations. Finally, in expanding the available protection spaces in Europe, the EU should build on and continue supporting the innovative drive behind community sponsorship, given its ability to both support resettlement efforts and complement other pathways to safety.

This Discussion Paper puts forward several recommendations to create more 'future-proof' resettlement policies that would boost resettlement numbers, make it more impactful as a solidarity and humanitarian tool, and increase European communities' engagement in refugee protection and integration.

1. The European Commission and EU agencies should help member states create the conditions for increasing resettlement numbers. This entails building capacity, expertise and political willingness at the national level. Beyond national governments, support should be targeted to actors across all stages of resettlement,

including international organisations and civil society actors. In particular, investing in and inspiring communities' engagement through sponsorship programmes may also support resettlement efforts and complement government-led pathways to protection.

2. The European Commission should improve how EU funding supports national programmes by creating stronger synergies between funding targeted directly at resettlement and sponsorship schemes, and longer-term integration measures. Providing adequate funding to local authorities and civil society is particularly important to harness their welcoming potential. Well-tailored EU action can also reduce costs and uncertainties, especially for member states with budding resettlement programmes or those piloting sponsorship schemes.

3. Resettlement should continue to primarily be a humanitarian and solidarity instrument. The European Commission and member states should not link commitments on resettlement to third countries' cooperation on migration but rather build relationships with refugee-hosting countries based on genuine responsibility-sharing. Partnerships with other resettlement actors should also be explored to coordinate resettlement action and effectively address global needs.

The European Commission can foster exchange not only between resettlement countries but also between the different stakeholders involved in the arrival, reception and integration of refugees. **Fully supporting the potential and willingness of local authorities, civil society organisations and communities involved in refugee sponsorship across Europe to play an active part in these processes** will both expand and diversify the pool of entities hosting newcomers. In a time where political resistance to welcoming refugees remains a challenge, this would help create more protection spaces and more sustainable and dependable integration opportunities.

1. Introduction: Europe's critical moment for resettlement and community sponsorship

“The time is right for a global alliance on resettlement. I’ve called this High-Level Forum to restart resettlement after the pandemic pushed the pause button (...) and to step up other legal pathways to safety [including] humanitarian admissions and community sponsorship.”

YLVA JOHANSSON, HIGH-LEVEL FORUM ON RESETTLEMENT, 9 JULY 2021¹

Refugee resettlement policies, and increasingly complementary pathways, have long been recognised as vital tools for states to offer protection to displaced people and engage in global responsibility-sharing. This recognition is reflected in the commitments made in the UN’s Global Compact on Refugees (2018) and Three-Year Strategy (2019-21) on Resettlement and Complementary Pathways, which set clear objectives for expanding these tools.

The UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR) defines *resettlement* as the transfer of refugees from a state they have already fled to a third country that provides them with a legal status and more permanent protection.² While not mandated by international law, refugee resettlement has grown to become part of the global refugee protection framework.³ In particular, it has been established as a durable solution to forced displacement, alongside integration in host countries and safe return of refugees to their country of origin. Moreover, resettlement programmes emerged as an expression of solidarity and responsibility-sharing with countries hosting siz-

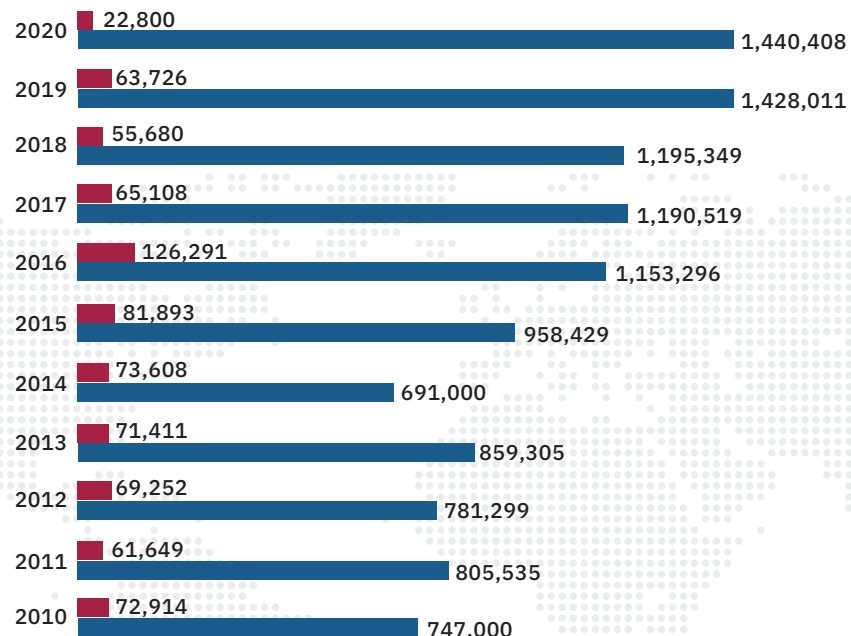
able refugee populations, and a way for states to facilitate the safe and orderly access of refugees to their territory.⁴

In recent years, resettlement has become increasingly necessary as a durable solution, a pathway to long-lasting protection, and a means of sharing responsibility with refugee-hosting states. Since 2010, resettlement needs have almost doubled (see Figure 1) and are projected to reach a record high of 1.47 million persons in 2022.⁵ And yet, high-income economies like the EU only host a minority of the world’s displaced people. Over 85% of refugees are based in developing countries, many of which have limited capacity to provide basic services and protect refugees’ rights.⁶ At the same time, other durable solutions for displaced populations, such as voluntary return or local integration, are becoming less available. The protracted nature of many armed conflicts has decreased the chances of refugees’ safe return home.⁷ Moreover, countries of first asylum are appearing more reluctant to offer local integration pathways.⁸

Fig.1.
Global resettlement needs versus admissions (2010-20)

Source: Authors’ own compilation, based on UNHCR⁹

■ RESETTLEMENT NEEDS
■ RESETTLEMENT ADMISSIONS



In recent years, **the EU has placed a growing emphasis on expanding resettlement and complementary pathways.**

At the global level, Europe's greater commitment to refugee resettlement between 2015 and 2019 coincided with the US' significantly diminished role, evidenced by the dwindling resettlement admissions under the Trump administration.¹⁰ At its peak, Europe played a relatively prominent role, accounting for over 40% of global commitments in both 2018 and 2019.¹¹ This rise in numbers was matched by various policy initiatives, paving the way for EU action on resettlement – at least, on paper.

Most recently, the European Commission hosted two separate high-level fora in July and October 2021 to boost political support for resettlement, raise the number of pledged places, and encourage states to provide protection pathways in response to the Afghanistan crisis more specifically.¹² Prior to that, published in September 2020, the Commission's New Pact on Migration and Asylum included a recommendation on advancing resettlement, humanitarian admissions and other complementary pathways to the EU.¹³ Community sponsorship – wherein private citizens take over greater responsibilities in receiving and integrating resettled refugees – was also mentioned explicitly. For the first time, the Commission proposed establishing a 'European approach' to coordinating, encouraging and supporting such efforts in this recommendation.

However, the momentum built so far cannot be taken for granted, not least due to COVID-19's ongoing impact on global mobility. In 2020, only 22,800 refugees were resettled worldwide – less than half the pre-2019 global figures (63,726).¹⁴ Approximately 8,725 persons were eventually resettled by 14 EU countries, covering less than 30% of the Union's initial pledges for the year.¹⁵ As states continue to recover from the pandemic and displacement crises that require protection-centred responses (e.g. Afghanistan) worsen, the EU must strengthen its responsiveness, coordination and expertise in resettlement. For this to happen in a 'future-proof' way, the EU will need to overcome three challenges.

As states continue to recover from the pandemic and displacement crises that require protection-centred responses (e.g. Afghanistan) worsen, the EU must strengthen its responsiveness, coordination and expertise in resettlement.

1. With the return of other actors to the global resettlement stage, **the next years will test the EU's oft-stated commitment to play a "global leadership role on resettlement"**.¹⁶ The US' new political leadership vowed to increase its resettlement pledges significantly, from an all-time low of 15,000 in the 2020 fiscal year (FY) to 62,500 in FY 2021 and 125,000 in FY 2022.¹⁷ Canada is also resuming its post-pandemic resettlement efforts, doubling places in its resettlement and private sponsorship programmes in autumn 2021.¹⁸

At the recent high-level forum in July, European Commis-

sioner for Home Affairs Ylva Johansson vowed to scale up the EU's resettlement efforts and build stronger coalitions around resettlement. She also encouraged member states to utilise community sponsorship to facilitate the arrival and integration of refugees. However, this political commitment must still be translated into concrete pledges and investment at the national level, including ambitious pledges for 2022 and beyond.

2. If the EU is to fulfil its commitments and become a global leader in resettlement, **it will need to significantly expand resettlement in ways that are commensurate to the needs of refugee-hosting countries.** In the past, member states' joint annual protection places have never surpassed 2% of the UN Refugee Agency's (UNHCR) projected global resettlement needs.¹⁹ Besides increasing the numbers, upholding the humanitarian objectives of resettlement will be fundamental to maintaining resettlement's function as a protection tool. Moreover, given the limited scale of resettlement, the EU must also build future resettlement efforts in closer partnership with refugee-hosting countries to foster trust and strategically maximise protection gains. Moreover, given the limited scale of resettlement, how solidarity with first countries of asylum is displayed is particularly important.
3. In recent years, the EU has also invested in building opportunities for refugees to arrive by means beyond traditional resettlement, **further cementing its role in advancing global policies on legal pathways.** Since 2016, innovation has spawned a range of (pilot) programmes on complementary pathways, most notably community sponsorship, which have enhanced the EU's protection capacities. However, **these initiatives require further reflection on several points, including the role of sponsorship within the overall EU policy framework;** its function of providing additional protection spaces; how EU, national and local stakeholders can best coordinate their efforts; and how EU funding can most effectively be matched to member states' and local authorities' needs.

The EU must now address these three challenges to fulfil its ambitions on resettlement and other legal pathways in a credible way. This Discussion Paper outlines a path towards more future-proof resettlement policies and community sponsorship initiatives. The steps in this path should lead to a greater commitment towards resettlement that goes beyond numbers and entails member states' continued engagement, as well as more effective responsibility-sharing with third countries. Additionally, host communities' involvement in community sponsorship must be leveraged, in light of its dual promise to expand access to protection and make societies more welcoming and cohesive.

The three following sections in this paper explore these three areas in turn. **Section 2** of this paper outlines the challenges and next steps to scale up EU member states' resettlement efforts and capacity. It discusses the state of play of existing resettlement programmes, the instruments that have sustained national efforts so far, and the challenges to securing greater commitments. These include states' limited operational capacity, difficulties in planning resettlement programmes over time, and the political

commitment needed at the national level. To help member states increase their pledges substantially, policy changes must make resettlement more predictable, resilient, and financially and politically sustainable for member states. Section 2 provides recommendations on EU-level actions to boost states' capacity, both financially and operationally, while also highlighting the need for EU political leadership to secure the continued engagement of member states.

Section 3 examines the tensions between the humanitarian and migration management objectives linked to resettlement, calling for reinforcing its protection focus going forward. Several trends currently limit the humanitarian and responsibility-sharing impacts of resettlement. These include the limited availability of this protection pathway across geographic regions or for certain groups of refugees, as well as the limited incorporation of third countries' needs, preferences and perspectives in designing or implementing resettlement programmes and policies. To maximise the impacts of resettlement, access should be equitably expanded and improved to i) meaningfully relieve the pressure on first-asylum countries and ii) boost the positive spillover effects for the refugee population they host.

Finally, **section 4** explores the key issues in developing a European approach to community sponsorship and provides recommendations for the EU to support ongoing and new initiatives. It offers an overview of sponsorship in

Europe and highlights how the current momentum around complementary pathways can help boost the EU's overall protection capacity. Given local authorities' and communities' important roles in reception and integration, it also outlines how the EU can help maximise their efforts. In addition to capacity-building measures, exchanges between EU institutions, member states, local authorities and civil society must be deepened to expand sponsorship in an inclusive and ambitious way. In parallel, for sponsorship to grow, EU funding opportunities will need to be better aligned with sponsorship programmes' needs, while innovative and creative steps must be taken to bring more member states, civil society organisations (CSOs) and individuals on board.

This Discussion Paper was informed by desk-based research conducted throughout 2021; three expert EPC-KAS roundtables conducted in April, June and September 2021; and interviews with 16 stakeholders conducted between June and November 2021. The interviewees and roundtable participants included national and EU officials directly involved in resettlement and community sponsorship policies; representatives from non-governmental organisations (NGOs), host communities and international organisations across Europe; government and NGO officials from key EU partner and refugee-hosting states; and researchers and analysts with the relevant expertise in Europe, the Middle East and Africa.

2. Boosting resettlement commitments in Europe

2.1. A GROWING EU ROLE IN RESETTLEMENT POLICY

As it recovers from COVID-19, **the EU is at a defining moment for future resettlement efforts.**²⁰ Not only will its resettlement programmes need to be brought back to pre-pandemic levels, they will also have to be scaled up consistently if the EU is to uphold the commitments expressed at the recent EU High-Level Resettlement Forum, including on becoming a more impactful global resettlement actor. Whereas the EU's ambition has become increasingly clear in recent years, the necessary, systemic expansion of its resettlement programmes is yet to follow.

Since the first EU-sponsored resettlement scheme in July 2015, EU resettlement programmes have gained traction. Programmes grew rapidly with over 81,000 refugees resettled in the EU by September 2021.²¹ However, cracks began to emerge as the pandemic erupted, and the subsequent travel restrictions led to a months-long suspension in global

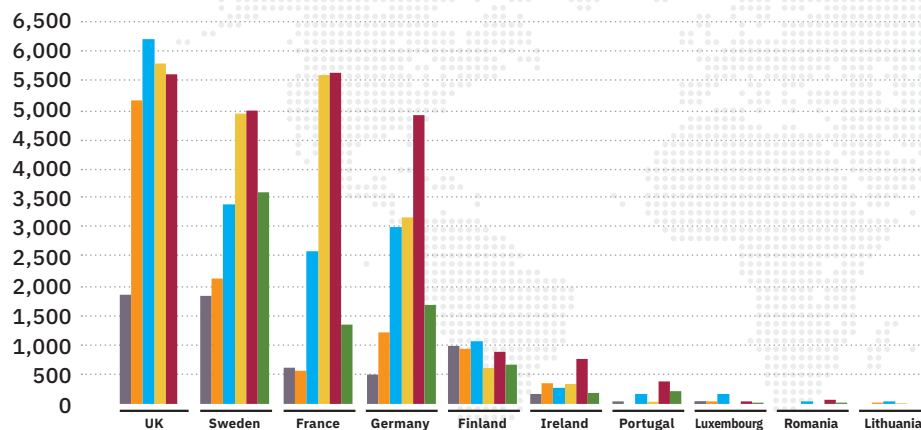
resettlement. EU member states were set to resettle almost 30,000 refugees in 2020, the highest annual joint pledge ever made. National programmes were slow to resume fully, and a year and a half later, in June 2021, less than half of these pledges had been fulfilled (13,500).²²

Nevertheless, while the COVID-19 crisis was a particularly visible and pervasive limiting factor on EU resettlement numbers, it has not been the only challenge. For one, not all member states have engaged in resettlement at the same scale. Between 2014 and 2018, nine out of the EU27 received almost 95% of all refugees resettled to the EU.²³ While countries like Sweden, Germany and France consistently made high pledges within EU and national resettlement schemes, others struggled to keep up and downscaled or suspended their programmes over time (see Figure 2). Others still lack resettlement programmes entirely.²⁴

Fig.2.
Yearly resettlement admissions in selected EU member states (2015-20)

Source: Authors' own compilation, based on Eurostat²⁵

2015
2016
2017
2018
2019
2020



Beyond the numbers, EU resettlement efforts have not always been timely and effective in their implementation. The case of the Emergency Transit Mechanisms (ETMs) in Niger and Rwanda – created to evacuate vulnerable persons from Libyan detention camps in 2017 and 2019, respectively – is emblematic.²⁶ Of the 6,351 resettlement pledges the UNHCR received, mostly from EU countries, only 3,769 were implemented as of summer 2021.²⁷ The delays in carrying out transfers to Europe led to a backlog, preventing other refugees from being evacuated from Libya and causing considerable distress for those left to wait in transit camps for years.

Although the past years have shown some promise in advancing EU commitment towards resettlement, there is still much room to strengthen joint EU action. Looking ahead, if the EU intends to deliver on its global ambitions, going back to the status quo ante the pandemic will be insufficient. Instead, the EU should build on – and step up – its past work to advance European resettlement efforts. EU assistance will be crucial in providing member states with a strong legal and policy framework that underpins resettlement, alongside concrete support for expanding their resettlement operations, including through dedicated funding. With this in mind, what is the set of tools the EU has used to support resettlement in recent years? What are the limitations and challenges that still need to be addressed?

2.1.1. The EU toolkit to support resettlement

With the support of the European Asylum Support Office (EASO), the European Commission employs four key tools at its disposal to promote refugee resettlement at the national level, with varying degrees of success:

1. Legislative efforts

In July 2016, **the Commission proposed a Union Resettlement Framework (URF) to allow Europe to act with “one voice” on resettlement.**²⁸ This proposal sought to establish a unified procedure for resettlement, including joint factors that determine from which third countries resettlement would occur and shared eligibility criteria and grounds for exclusion. Most significantly, the Framework would set out common Union resettlement plans and targeted resettlement schemes, enabling EU efforts to move away from ad hoc schemes to become more predictable and sustainable. However, the adoption of the file has not advanced since the provisional compromise agreement found in 2018, was linked to the broader, deadlocked package of proposals to reform the European asylum system.²⁹

2. Political support

As part of its efforts to advance resettlement politically, **the Commission’s New Pact on Migration and Asylum** from September 2020 **included a non-binding recommendation to encourage greater resettlement.**³⁰ However, despite its positive rhetoric, in practice, it also increased member states’ leeway with their resettlement commitments, allowing the almost 30,000 resettlement places pledged for 2020 to be carried over into 2021. This fell short of humanitarian agencies’ and NGOs’ calls to fulfil the original target and create at least 35,000 additional places in 2021.³¹

Moreover, Commissioner Johansson has raised attention around resettlement, including by **convening resettlement fora at a high political level.** Most notably, the European Commission hosted a High-Level Resettlement Forum and a High-Level Forum on providing protection to Afghans at risk in July and October 2021, respectively. The fora convened representatives from not only the EU27 but also the US, Canada and the UK (in the latter case) to enhance global coordination on resettlement efforts and the Afghanistan response more specifically. Yet, member states’ confirmed pledges as of November 2021 (20,000) still fail to reach the Commission’s target of at least 30,000 refugees in 2022, on top of exceptional, additional admissions of Afghans through resettlement and complementary pathways.³²

3. Funding

The EU uses funding as an incentive to conduct resettlement. The Commission provided specific financial incentives to member states under the 2014-20 Asylum,

Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF), in the form of (i) lump sums per resettled refugee; (ii) funding for the specific national programmes; and (iii) calls for proposals to promote resettlement and other legal pathways. The lump sum of up to €10,000 per resettled refugee is particularly effective in encouraging states to welcome refugees³³ and will be continued under the new AMIF Regulation 2021/1147.³⁴ Conversely, member states have not made the most of other sources of funding that are not targeted at resettlement directly. For instance, between 2014 and 2018, only 12 states used the asylum actions of their AMIF national programmes to finance resettlement.³⁵

Moreover, the use of EU funds to build integration capacity more broadly could be further leveraged. For instance, the European Social Fund Plus (ESF+) and the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) can support refugee inclusion through infrastructures and access to services in different domains such as education, employment, housing, social welfare and healthcare.³⁶ This would not only create the conditions to welcome resettled refugees but also benefit people admitted through community sponsorship and other pathways (see section 4).

4. Operational support and information exchange

Lastly, direct EU involvement in resettlement has increased, including through **EASO’s** growing role. EASO has **developed platforms for coordination and knowledge exchange** between the EU member states and international organisations, such as the EASO Resettlement and Humanitarian Admission Network.³⁷ It also plays an operational role, further reducing the costs and barriers to resettlement programming for member states.

Its pilot Resettlement Support Facility (RSF) in Istanbul is a case in point, as it provides member states with support staff, pre-departure services to facilitate the logistical aspects of resettlement, and a common venue from which to conduct their operations. By providing services from a single location, EASO effectively cuts the costs of setting up missions and infrastructures in third countries, especially for those member states with small and/or budding resettlement programmes. Following a successful pilot phase, the RSF in Turkey was renewed for four more years in 2021.³⁸

EASO’s work effectively facilitates peer learning and support, removes practical obstacles and offers cost-effective solutions to the member states.³⁹ This role is set to grow further in the next few years, following the agreement on the European Union Agency for Asylum (EUAA) Regulation in June 2021.⁴⁰ The new Regulation will transform EASO into the EUAA, a “fully-fledged” EU agency, and strengthen its role in supporting member states’ resettlement efforts.⁴¹ The EUAA will provide enhanced operational and technical assistance, including by deploying liaison officers in third countries and expanding training and coordination.

2.2. UNLOCKING MEMBER STATES' RESETTLEMENT POTENTIAL

The results of this growing number of EU initiatives have varied. On the one hand, the EU's practical and financial support has been effective in helping states to cover the costs of resettlement or to expand their programmes. On the other, EU efforts to advance these through legislative actions or by bolstering political willingness have had less quantifiable outcomes, and the impact of the two high-level resettlement fora on states' political commitments for 2022 and beyond remains to be seen. As resettlement remains a national competence of and voluntary commitment by member states, the key bottlenecks, challenges and/or restrictions that remain at the national level must be understood to identify where the EU can offer the greatest added value going forward.

As resettlement remains a national competence of and voluntary commitment by member states, the key bottlenecks, challenges and/or restrictions that remain at the national level must be understood to identify where the EU can offer the greatest added value going forward.

2.2.1. Capacity constraints

Resettlement processes are resource-intensive and **require expertise, dedicated staff, funding and adequate infrastructures – all of which can take time to build.**

Continued support will be needed to generate sufficient capacity to sustain efforts across the resettlement procedure, from referral and selection in third countries to transfers and post-arrival reception and integration.

National resettlement services need adequate resources for organising and conducting selection missions, issuing visas, organising receptions, running pre- and post-departure orientation briefings, and setting up integration programmes. The same applies to partners involved throughout the resettlement cycle, including international organisations and NGOs.⁴² The importance of allocating sufficient funding for resettlement capacity is reflected in the US' recent decision to earmark \$20 million to strengthen UNHCR's ability to identify and refer persons in need of resettlement alongside expanding national quota for the upcoming years.⁴³ Going forward, scaling up UNHCR's capacity will be essential to simultaneously sustain the increased admission goals of multiple global resettlement players, such as the EU and the US.⁴⁴

The availability of reception infrastructure and housing, too, is often cited as a bottleneck to member states' resettlement efforts. Countries like Spain, Belgium and Malta have reported that the spontaneous arrivals of asylum seekers saturated their reception systems, leading them to reduce their resettlement ambitions.⁴⁵ Others (e.g. Ireland) already face widespread housing shortages or encounter difficulties in finding adequate accommodation for large families or people with specific vulnerabilities.⁴⁶

2.2.2. Unpredictability

A second related challenge concerns **resettlement actors' ability to plan ahead and effectively maximise their resources.** Since 2015, the joint EU resettlement pledges have been made on a biannual (2015-16, 2017-19) or annual basis (2020). While it is difficult to draw a lesson from the implementation of the 2020 commitments due to pandemic-caused disruptions, the previous schemes show that biannual quotas have been implemented relatively successfully.⁴⁷ However, to scale up and plan ahead, a one- to two-year timeframe may be too short to effectively prepare the capacity needed for increased resettlement.

Longer multiannual quotas are often indicated to be good practices, particularly if they are aligned with budgetary planning that enables states to invest early on and build the necessary capacity to meet their goals.⁴⁸ In the EU context, a balance may need to be found in setting up multiannual programmes, given the restrictions of states' national legal frameworks. On the one hand, member states may prefer year-by-year planning; on the other, annual EU-wide pledging exercises are particularly challenging considering states' different policy and budgetary cycles.⁴⁹

The lack of long-term planning and resourcing also raises challenges for the international organisations, agencies and NGOs that support resettlement.⁵⁰ This especially impacts those organisations whose main source of revenue derives from funding for specific projects or operations, and therefore need financial certainty to sustain their work and maintain a presence in countries of transit and first asylum.⁵¹

2.2.3. Fluctuations and systemic shocks

Resettlement is inherently vulnerable to fluctuations in host countries – natural disasters, surges of conflict, mobility restrictions – all of which may complicate safe travel or resettlement processing at short notice. In the face of COVID-19, the resettlement programmes that proved most resilient were also those that had – or were able to quickly incorporate – a certain degree of flexibility. Finland, for instance, managed not to suspend resettlement operations throughout 2020 by using innovative working modalities, including replacing interviews with selection based on UNHCR referrals (dossier-based selection).⁵² Beyond the pandemic, these tools might be useful when conflicts and instability make in-person selection too dangerous. Several other European countries that continued resettling throughout the pandemic, such as France and Sweden, had already adopted tools like remote interviewing for applicants with specific vulnerabilities or who are located in remote areas and/or unable to travel.⁵³

From the perspective of managing resources efficiently, scaling down and rebuilding programmes following changes in government policy or due to external circumstances (e.g. the COVID-19 pandemic), also risk dispersing expertise and knowledge in the process. Following record-low admissions in the previous four years, the US is facing major challenges in rebuilding its capacities and infrastructures, as resettlement

ment agencies had to close or dismiss staff, both domestically and in third countries.⁵⁴ Using flexible tools to kick-start EU programmes in the post-pandemic era and make them more resilient in the long term will help minimise costs and prevent the loss of resources and expertise.⁵⁵

2.2.4. Political factors

Given the voluntary nature of refugee resettlement in the EU, **political commitment at the national level is crucial to building robust and sustainable programmes.** In countries with a strong resettlement tradition, resettlement tends to have broad public support and be viewed as an integral part of the refugee protection system, as well as an effective instrument of solidarity with refugees and third countries. Interviews with Swedish and German representatives indicate that their programmes are less likely to be discontinued for this reason.⁵⁶ In the US, despite the Trump Administration's significant cuts to the resettlement system, public pressure has helped efforts to renew the country's long resettlement tradition under the Biden presidency.⁵⁷

The wide base of actors supporting resettlement (i.e. civil society actors, faith-based groups and other local authorities, which are also often engaged in community sponsorship) is another important factor for increasing resettlement. While data on European public attitudes on refugee resettlement is lacking,⁵⁸ some positive signals emerge from the local level. In recent years, local authorities have urged national governments to let them welcome more

2.3. RECOMMENDATIONS

The EU must now develop its determination to scale up its resettlement numbers, most recently expressed in the two high-level fora, into tangible commitments. The next years will test EU resettlement systems' ability to recover from the pandemic and reach global ambitions. Not seizing the momentum built so far would make it difficult for states to restructure their programmes and recover ground post-pandemic, thereby incurring higher costs in the longer run. The EU should build on the extensive efforts it has already developed to support states' resettlement programmes, addressing the specific challenges and bottlenecks they face based on different countries' programme size, political circumstances, and experience with resettlement.

Not seizing the momentum built so far would make it difficult for states to restructure their programmes and recover ground post-pandemic, thereby incurring higher costs in the longer run.

To ensure a wider-scale success of resettlement, the EU should encourage all states to increase their pledges gradually according to their means. It should promote small pilot projects in states with less experience and foster the leadership of traditional resettlement states. In parallel, to achieve

refugees.⁵⁹ Local policymakers also have a role in building awareness within their communities to ensure continued engagement in resettlement programmes.⁶⁰ In turn, action at the local level could reinforce national governments' willingness to welcome refugees by not only exerting pressure to increase admissions but also sharing responsibility for any political and economic costs linked to integrating resettled refugees.⁶¹

Local policymakers also have a role in building awareness within their communities to ensure continued engagement in resettlement programmes.

Finally, the lack of sufficient resettlement monitoring and evaluation (M&E) has been identified as a crucial challenge to raising both political and bottom-up support around resettlement.⁶² Without clear data on the benefits, impacts and costs of resettlement, policymakers have fewer tools available to justify its expansion. Better monitoring would bring added value, both for improving and scaling up existing schemes, and underpinning resettlement efforts in less experienced countries. In particular, qualitative and quantitative data on the costs, outcomes and lessons learned from past programmes would provide policymakers with evidence to support their decision to make or increase their pledges.⁶³

the greatest impact, resettlement numbers will have to remain protection-centred (see section 3). Moreover, to maximise the available places and improve integration outcomes, they should be complemented with the development of other admission pathways, such as community sponsorship (see section 4).

Recommendation 1: Create the conditions to scale up resettlement sustainably

While member states have to find the political will to keep increasing their pledges, the EU can facilitate the changes needed to support and sustain an expansion of resettlement efforts.

- **Build the necessary capacity to sustain resettlement efforts.** Addressing capacity limitations is the first step to increasing resettlement numbers. States should be encouraged to take all the necessary steps to resource resettlement systems adequately and make the most of the available EU support. This involves hiring and training staff, enhancing reception capacities at the national level, and securing sufficient funding for organisations supporting pre-departure processing and resettlement travel (e.g. the International Organization for Migration).

In parallel with pledges, sufficient referrals must be available to match member states' objectives. Thus, securing funding to support UNHCR referrals will be a priority as

resettlement commitments grow. Innovating referral processes (e.g. exploring NGO-driven referral based on UNHCR criteria and supervision) can also complement and support the identification of persons in need of resettlement.

- **Move from ad hoc pledging exercises to multiannual joint resettlement pledges.** Setting pledges over a longer timeframe is crucial for member states to resource their resettlement programmes better and build reception and integration capacity in advance. The European Commission and EU countries should find a suitable timeframe for future resettlement schemes, allowing flexibility when implementing admissions while ensuring that resettlement commitments increase to match the extended timeframe and are not diluted.

Moving towards further harmonisation, this process should strive for a balance between ambitions around the progressive growth of resettlement programmes, and the need for realistic expectations towards member states with limited pledging capacity or funding envelopes, and provide sufficient flexibility, especially from an early stage. The URF should be adopted without delay to kick-start this process, signalling EU commitment and leadership on resettlement and making pledges more predictable and structured.

- **Reinforce networking and information-sharing activities to encourage more states to engage in resettlement.** So far, EU resettlement efforts are primarily sustained by a handful of ‘traditional’ resettlement countries, such as Sweden, France and Germany. Other member states have experienced greater difficulties in sustaining or even starting programmes (see Figure 2, page 8). In addition to financial and operational support, the EU must continue to lower member states’ barriers to resettlement via capacity-building initiatives.

The EASO Resettlement Network has been instrumental in facilitating the exchange among states, targeting support to their needs and finding solutions to common challenges – to the benefit of experienced and fledgling resettlement states alike. A new EASO-led expert platform focused on pathways to safety from the Afghanistan region holds similar promise. Moreover, further linkages should be made to community sponsorship, discussed in a working group within the Network, exploring its potential to fulfil or complement states’ resettlement pledges (see section 4).

Recommendation 2: **Increase funding, lower costs**

EU funding opportunities and initiatives to reduce resettlement costs are crucial in scaling up states’ programmes. Going forward, new synergies should be built among different EU instruments to maximise resettlement funding while also improving its accessibility to various stakeholders, especially at the local level.

- **Enable member states to make the most of EU funding opportunities.** Whereas lump-sum funds remain a valu-

able tool in financing national programmes, the European Commission should encourage states to think creatively and use other funding sources better. These include funding opportunities for resettlement and asylum under the AMIF and funding for longer-term integration measures, such as the ESF+ and ERDF.

The Commission should ensure that calls for proposals and projects that target resettlement explicitly are launched and implemented. Their conceptualisation should benefit from strengthened coordination between its responsible Directorates-General (DGs) and relevant units (i.e. DG Migration and Home Affairs; DG Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion). In particular, authorities at the regional and local level, CSOs and community sponsorship groups – all of which play an active role in supporting resettlement – should be informed adequately on the use of existing funding opportunities to ensure their accessibility (see section 4).

- **Reduce the operational costs of resettlement.** Making resettlement as cost-effective and seamless as possible can reduce states’ obstacles to developing pilot projects considerably. The Commission should work together with the EUAA to increase the number of joint initiatives aimed at reducing costs and pooling resources linked to refugee resettlement. Pilot projects like the RSF in Istanbul (see section 2.2.2.) should be replicated in other host countries. Moreover, framework contracts with external providers could be considered for pre-departure support services that are required regularly by different member states, such as charter flights for transferring resettled refugees.⁶⁴

Recommendation 3: **Incorporate flexibility into resettlement programmes**

During COVID-19, several new instruments or modalities (e.g. dossier-based referrals, remote interviewing, remote pre-departure orientation) have proven useful in containing the pandemic’s negative impact on refugee resettlement. These should become permanent fixtures of member states’ resettlement programmes.

During COVID-19, several new instruments or modalities (e.g. dossier-based referrals, remote interviewing, remote pre-departure orientation) have proven useful in containing the pandemic’s negative impact on refugee resettlement. These should become permanent fixtures of member states’ resettlement programmes.

- **Embed innovative working methods into resettlement programmes.** Post-pandemic, creative working methods will be crucial to speed up selection, facilitate departures and reduce the backlog resulting from travel restrictions. Even beyond the health crisis, a certain degree of built-in flexibility can make programmes more resilient to external shocks. Dossier-based selection, for example, could be used when in-person selection missions are dangerous or

disrupted, or applicants are hosted in remote locations or particularly vulnerable situations. The European Commission and the EUAA, with input from UNHCR and other relevant stakeholders, should create common guidelines for states to make the best possible use of these instruments, with due respect for procedural safeguards and attention paid to the specific situation of the selected persons.⁶⁵

Recommendation 4:

Build political and public support

To increase their engagement in resettlement in a lasting manner, national governments' political will is essential. However, making the larger public aware of the benefits of resettlement and securing stronger grassroots support is also crucial for expanded and long-lasting resettlement programmes.

- **Lead refugee resettlement efforts.** The European Commission should showcase leadership on resettlement and continue to provide impulses for resettlement efforts, within the EU and globally. Recent initiatives like the high-level resettlement fora have kept resettlement on the agendas of civil society as well as national governments, by directly involving ministers and senior officials.
- **Platform the voices of refugees, civil society and host communities.** Communication and coordination activities at the EU level should more firmly include the voices of the refugees, civil society and host communities involved in the process. Giving room to the protagonists of resettlement efforts, and particularly of resettled refugees,

strengthens the credibility and relatability of messages and puts a face on a process that might be otherwise lesser-known.⁶⁶ In turn, creating opportunities for host communities, local authorities or NGOs to share their experiences can increase the number of people advocating for greater refugee admissions or volunteering to support resettled refugees (via e.g. community sponsorship, see section 4). Future resettlement fora and similar platforms must consistently involve refugee and civil society voices to retain their credibility and ensure that policies are based on actual challenges and lived experiences of those affected.

- **Underpin EU resettlement efforts with monitoring and reporting.** Evaluations and data gathering have thus far been limited, precluding an assessment of the real impact of refugee resettlement. To underpin success stories and inform resettlement implementation, the Commission should work with member states to establish reliable data and transparent reporting on resettlement programmes. Moreover, M&E is a crucial tool to document the effectiveness of state-led resettlement programmes as well as of other complementary entry pathways, such as community sponsorship (see section 4). UNHCR's Three-Year Strategy also provides a roadmap that should underpin the development of tools and approaches to monitoring and evaluating programmes.⁶⁷ Relatedly, further research on public attitudes and opinions regarding the most effective strategies to build support for resettlement and other pathways to safety would also help make communication efforts more effective.⁶⁸

3. Maximising the protection benefits of resettlement

3.1. IS EUROPEAN RESETTLEMENT AN EFFECTIVE PROTECTION TOOL?

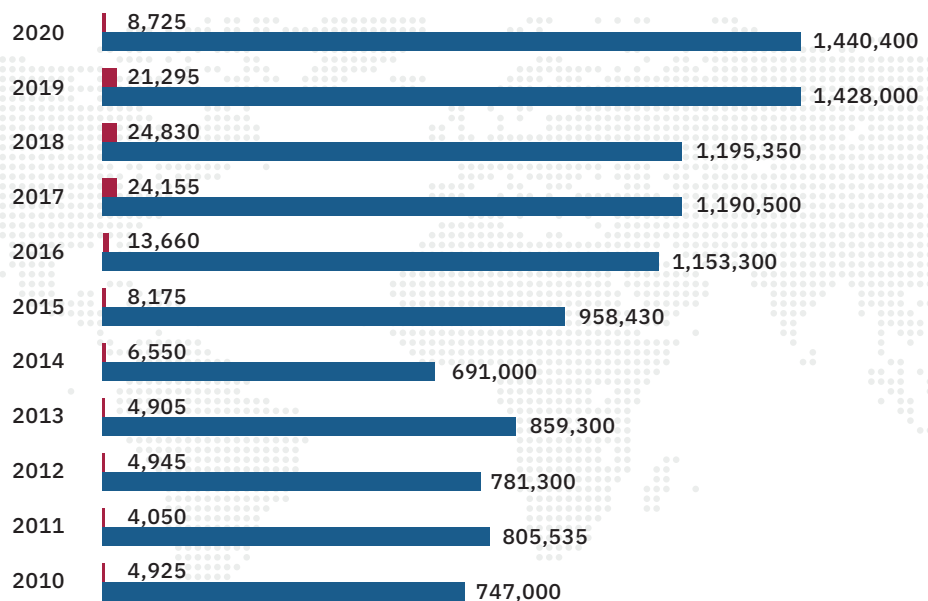
As section 2 outlines, the scale of refugee resettlement so far remains below established needs, rendering its impact highly limited, both in terms of responsibility-sharing with major refugee-hosting states and as a lifeline to those in need of durable protection. On average, resettlement is available to only a fraction of the world’s refugees (less than 0.33% between 2010-20).⁶⁹ Despite the narrative on

the importance of opening new legal pathways to protection consistently promoted at the EU level, even at their peak, EU member states’ annual commitments have never exceeded 2% of UNHCR’s projected global resettlement needs (see Figure 3).⁷⁰ Even in Turkey, the country from where the EU has resettled most refugees, those resettled so far amount to less than 1% of the Syrian refugee population remaining in the country – far from a significant expression of solidarity.⁷¹

Fig.3.
Global resettlement needs and annual EU resettlement (2010-20)

Source: Authors, based on UN Refugee Agency and Eurostat⁷²

■ ESTIMATED GLOBAL RESETTLEMENT NEEDS
■ EU RESETTLEMENT



Expanding admissions to the EU will strengthen its contribution to the responsibility-sharing and humanitarian objectives of resettlement. Nevertheless, even with a relatively large increase in numbers, resettlement would remain a solution only available to a small proportion of refugees in need. Therefore, besides fostering the growth of resettlement, their implementation of resettlement programmes must also be better targeted to maximise these objectives.

In the past, member states’ programmes have been guided by multiple strategic considerations in terms of migration management, sometimes running counter to the needs of the refugee population and refugee-hosting countries. Tensions between the function of resettlement as a humanitarian pathway for the most vulnerable and as a migration management tool have also emerged in policy debates at the EU level. The contested link between admitting refugees through resettlement and pursuing cooperation with third countries to reduce irregular arrivals or facilitate returns, which weakens the core purpose of this pathway, has featured explicitly in past resettlement schemes and EU-level initiatives.

One prominent example of resettlement being used as a **tool to curtail arrivals is the 2016 EU–Turkey Statement**. It created a mechanism known as the ‘one-to-one principle’, which stipulates that for each asylum seeker returned to Turkey from Greece, a Syrian refugee would be resettled to the EU. Over 31,000 refugees were resettled under the Statement.⁷³ Although returns to Turkey were never implemented at the same scale, EU and national officials have widely praised the Statement’s success in vastly reducing refugee arrivals from Turkey. Even though member states adopted the text formally, the EU led its implementation and took political ownership over the results.⁷⁴

Moreover, **the initial 2016 URF Commission proposal also contained several control-oriented provisions**. Specifically, it presented migration cooperation with the EU as one of the conditions for third countries to benefit from resettlement.⁷⁵ The European Parliament opposed this provision, fearing that this would undermine the humanitarian nature of this pathway. This stood in contrast to the Council’s view, in whose eyes the URF should become “a strategic instrument to manage migration flows.”⁷⁶ The compromise agreement reached at a technical level in

2018 did not frame resettlement as a migration management tool. Since the negotiations on the URF are not yet finalised, this point may however be revisited.⁷⁷

The conditionality – or linking – of resettlement on broader migration management objectives is also featured in recent policy proposals, including the 2020 recommendation on legal pathways. It clearly refers to the possibility of increasing admissions envisioned under the EU–Turkey Statement, provided that “irregular crossings between Turkey and the EU end or have at least been substantially and sustainably reduced.”⁷⁸ Migration-related conditionality is also featured more broadly in the New Pact, whereby refugee resettlement – in addition to broader policies (e.g. visas, development aid, funding) – could be leveraged to secure greater cooperation on return and readmission, for instance.⁷⁹

The drawbacks of the conditionality approach have been widely debated in different areas of the EU’s external migration policies.⁸⁰ In the context of resettlement, however, this approach is particularly problematic as it risks creating blind spots in the countries where resettlement needs

3.2. MIGRATION MANAGEMENT OVER PROTECTION AND SOLIDARITY

The migration management framing of resettlement in EU and national policy is also reflected in practice. This section discusses several consequences, all of which undermine opportunities to maximise the benefits for countries of first asylum and their refugee populations. Parallel to increasing resettlement places, the EU’s future implementation of resettlement commitments must reverse these trends and refocus strategic objectives on improving the conditions of displaced people worldwide.

3.1.1. GEOGRAPHICAL IMBALANCE

Resettlement opportunities for refugees are not only limited in terms of numbers; they are also **not equally accessible across geographic regions**.⁸³ While the EU introduced indications for common geographical priorities in line with UNHCR indications in previous joint schemes, member states’ resettlement did not cover a full spectrum in terms of geographical diversity.⁸⁴ Besides increasing the availability of resettlement, diversifying efforts across geographic regions is crucial to widening access that is based not on where refugees are hosted, but rather on their needs and vulnerabilities.⁸⁵

Besides increasing the availability of resettlement, diversifying efforts across geographic regions is crucial to widening access that is based not on where refugees are hosted, but rather on their needs and vulnerabilities.

are high but which do not fall under the EU’s migration management priorities.⁸¹ Furthermore, this may create a vicious cycle whereby states that cannot cooperate with the EU on migration management – precisely because they lack the resources to do so – are denied support, creating further pressure on their asylum systems.⁸²

In the context of resettlement, however, this approach is particularly problematic as it risks creating blind spots in the countries where resettlement needs are high but that do not fall under the EU’s migration management priorities.

Far from ensuring that resettlement efforts maximise the protection outcomes for refugees and enhance responsibility-sharing with third countries, the current trends reflect the use of resettlement in the EU as an externalisation tool, running counter to these objectives. In fact, further challenges have emerged when implementing resettlement programmes, limiting the reach of resettlement in this dual role.

For example, since the implementation of the ad hoc EU schemes in 2015, member states have resettled refugees mainly from two macro-regions: (i) Turkey and the Middle East; and (ii) the African continent. These two regions have comparable resettlement needs: Turkey and the MENA (Middle East and North Africa) region host mostly Syrian refugees, accounting for over 40% of global resettlement needs in the past six years. Overall, the African continent is the region that hosts the highest number of refugees in need of resettlement since 2017, representing 43% of the global needs across 32 countries of asylum in 2021.⁸⁶ However, EU resettlement efforts have been much higher in a handful of countries in the former region (i.e. Turkey, Lebanon, Jordan, Egypt).⁸⁷ EU resettlement has also been restricted in terms of nationalities, with Syrian nationals as the main group of beneficiaries (i.e. 67% of refugees resettled to Europe in 2019, and 53% in 2020).⁸⁸

The **EU’s lack of substantial resettlement from Africa seems inconsistent**, firstly, with the continent’s high resettlement needs, which are a result of several protracted displacement situations, conflicts and ongoing instability. In addition, it clashes with the EU’s engagement in addressing the causes of said instability and forced displacement in the African continent (including through considerable funding), rendering the EU a particularly well-placed global actor to resettle from the region.⁸⁹ In his 2017 State of the Union address, then European Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker urged Europe to show “solidarity with Africa and [open] legal pathways”, calling for the resettlement of 40,000 refugees from Libya and surrounding countries.⁹⁰ However, this momentum never translated into concrete commitments. In 2019, 660,000 refugees hosted in African countries were estimated to be in need of resettlement. Only 24,248 places were offered globally in practice, 77% of which were pledged by the US, Canada and Australia.⁹¹

In sum, while the EU's geographical focus has indeed responded to some key priorities indicated by UNHCR, particularly the Syrian crisis, it has failed to provide equitable access to resettlement across other critical refugee situations. While the geographic differences could partly be contextualised given the limited overall resettlement numbers and other political, security or public health concerns, they also indicate a wider problem in EU resettlement targets.⁹² For one, migration management objectives are among the factors guiding member states' efforts. France, one of the few countries that dedicated a pilot project to resettle 3,000 refugees from sub-Saharan Africa from 2017-19, performed its selection by favouring those refugees that were more likely to continue their journey and "undertake 'a migration project' to Europe".⁹³

In sum, while the EU's geographical focus has indeed responded to some key priorities indicated by UNHCR, particularly the Syrian crisis, it has failed to provide equitable access to resettlement across other critical refugee situations.

Moreover, even **when funding and EU support were available, resettlement did not happen at a scale commensurate to needs.** The case of the ETMs, established in Niger (2017) and Rwanda (2019) to evacuate (and subsequently resettle) particularly vulnerable Libyan refugees, is another striking example. Since their creation, only 3,769 refugees have been resettled around the world as of August 2021.⁹⁴ This compares to the over 42,000 asylum seekers still registered in Libya,⁹⁵ who face violence, abuse and arbitrary detention that may amount to crimes against humanity according to the UN.⁹⁶

3.1.2. PRESERVING THE ADDITIONALITY OF RESETTLEMENT TO ASYLUM

The rhetoric that presents resettlement, as opposed to spontaneous or irregular arrival, as the 'right' way to seek asylum in Europe is another element linking resettlement to migration management objectives. This narrative recurs in political discourses in the EU and beyond. The UK's New Plan for Immigration actively discourages seeking asylum through 'illegal routes' and pushes forward 'defined legal routes' like resettlement instead.⁹⁷ Official EU narratives often contrast the dangers of the two routes, and the dichotomy between resettlement and asylum has also featured in EU documents and legislative initiatives.

In 2016, eligibility criteria sanctioning refugees that attempt irregular crossings to reach Europe were included in the URF proposal. The European Commission suggested introducing a mechanism that excludes from EU resettlement schemes those refugees who had previously entered or attempted to enter member states irregularly.⁹⁸ While these elements are, as above, still pending final negotiations, they indicate the overall tensions underpinning the conceptualisation of resettlement as a humanitarian pathway or tool of migration management.⁹⁹

Providing legal pathways as viable alternatives to irregular crossings is one of the stated objectives of EU resettlement.¹⁰⁰ However, while resettlement might save lives that would otherwise be lost through irregular journeys, it would not be realistic to frame it as a practicable solution for most refugees due to its very limited availability.¹⁰¹ Moreover, creating a dichotomy between resettlement and spontaneous arrivals goes against the international principles of refugee protection, which grant refugees the right to access asylum procedures, without discrimination and regardless of the means of travel or arrival.¹⁰²

There are pertinent concerns, therefore, that this rhetoric may translate into and **justify policy efforts that link an expansion of resettlement to restrictions on territorial asylum.** This would wrongfully reduce access to protection for refugees seeking asylum through alternative channels. Preserving resettlement as a protection tool entails ensuring that it expands rather than replaces the few available protection spaces and opportunities. As repeated by UNHCR and others, its expansion as a durable solution for refugees must remain additional and not substitute the possibility to access to asylum for people reaching EU territory through other channels.¹⁰³

Preserving resettlement as a protection tool entails ensuring that it expands rather than replaces the few available protection spaces and opportunities.

3.1.3. LIMITED DIALOGUE WITH REFUGEE-HOSTING COUNTRIES

Lastly, given resettlement's function as an instrument to display international solidarity, **the involvement and perception of third countries vis-à-vis EU efforts are critical.** The failure of resettlement actors to gain the trust and support of host governments may have undesirable side effects, impacting the overall protection of refugees in their territory.

So far, resettlement policies in Europe are predominantly determined 'top down', with limited involvement by refugee-hosting countries in the implementation and outlining of its objectives and priorities.¹⁰⁴ The absence of any country from which refugees are or would be resettled at the recent high-level fora is notable. Relatedly, host countries do not generally report any clear benefits of refugee resettlement. A study conducted in the context of the Syrian refugee response indicated disillusionment among government officials in Lebanon and Jordan as to the potential of resettlement to support the efforts of their respective countries in hosting refugees. This was attributed to the limited resettlement numbers as well as the belief that the selection was not undertaken based on refugees' needs and vulnerability, but rather strategic considerations that would benefit the country of resettlement (e.g. beneficiaries' integration potential).¹⁰⁵

A lack of faith in the effectiveness of international solidarity might lead host governments to devise other policy responses that reduce access to refugee protection. These include closing their borders to refugees, prematurely returning them to unsafe countries, or curtailing their access to basic services, rights and/or livelihoods. Lebanon has repeatedly called on the UN and the international community to help secure the necessary conditions to return Syrian refugees to their homeland.¹⁰⁶ Niger, which experienced frustration due to the ETM's repeated delays and limited resettlement efforts, temporarily halted evacuations from Libya as a result in 2018.¹⁰⁷

A lack of faith in the effectiveness of international solidarity might lead host governments to devise other policy responses that reduce access to refugee protection.

The EU must implement resettlement in closer cooperation with host countries, increasing the transparency of its objectives and managing their expectations regarding the level of support it can provide. Moreover, the cooperation could further explore all possible benefits of resettlement, to encompass not only those that are transferred but also the broader refugee population in the host country. This would be possible if the numbers became sizeable, sufficiently targeted, or accompanied by broader funds or policy instruments.

3.3. RECOMMENDATIONS

The trends outlined in this and previous sections – including the still limited number of protection places and the migration management objectives often associated with resettlement efforts – risk undermining the EU's credibility as a resettlement actor and creating frustration among host countries. The present drive to scale up European refugee resettlement should also be used as an opportunity to maximise the benefits for refugees and host communities in third countries alike, contributing to a more robust protection landscape. These efforts must be carried out in tandem with the development of community sponsorship and other pathways, as outlined in section 4. Maintaining the additionality of these complementary pathways vis-à-vis state-led resettlement and other durable solutions will be critical.

Recommendation 1:
Broaden the geographical scope of resettlement

Aside from numbers, increasing resettlement opportunities across priority regions is key to widening access. They should be based on refugees' needs and vulnerabilities and not their location.

- **Diversify member states' resettlement efforts across geographical areas.** Focusing predominantly on certain countries or regions poses the risk of creating blind spots and neglecting areas that host large numbers of refugees.

The concept of 'strategic use of resettlement', for instance, suggests that resettlement could be employed strategically to secure rights and protection for other refugees still in the host territory.¹⁰⁸ Pressure on host countries could be eased, for example, by resettling refugees that have specific protection needs (e.g. urgent medical needs). The intended effects of these efforts, coupled with protection-oriented policy requests or diplomatic engagement, would be manifold. They would enable host countries to better redirect their resources towards improving their asylum systems, offer better reception conditions to the broader refugee population, and/or keep the borders open to allow the arrival of new refugees.

While there is evidence of a 'strategic misuse' of resettlement (e.g. leveraged to increase returns or reduce irregular arrivals), **examples where the strategic use of resettlement has improved conditions for refugee populations in host countries remain limited.**¹⁰⁹ Efforts to use resettlement as leverage against positive spillovers in countries of asylum could start on a smaller scale, concentrating on the benefits on a limited population group (e.g. a specific refugee camp) or particularly vulnerable cases (e.g. refugees with urgent medical needs).¹¹⁰

The European Commission should encourage member states to follow a broad range of common priorities, across all the regions the UNHCR identifies.

This should be done, first of all, by reinforcing coordination and complementarity among EU countries in terms of the regions from which they resettle, especially for states that have limited capacities. In addition, the Commission and the EUAA should continue to promote the pooling of resources, thereby decreasing the costs and administrative burden for states to start resettlement operations in new countries and regions (see section 2). Lastly, as recommended by UNHCR, the EU should encourage unallocated quotas outside priority areas. These could be used flexibly for emergency situations and cases across the world.¹¹¹

- **Ensure EU efforts complement global actors.** Coordination between the EU27 and other major resettlement actors, such as Canada, the UK and the US, will be critical to cover the global needs to the greatest extent possible and ensure complementarity. The pooling of resources, resettlement support infrastructures and expertise on certain countries and/or regions could be facilitated internationally and not only within Europe. Moreover, global coordination could pave the way for other states to also expand their resettlement programmes. The Commission should build upon the dialogue that was kick-started in the 2021 high-level resettlement fora. These should continue to be held regularly to enable coordination, peer learning and exchange on common issues concerning the objectives, priorities and implementation of refugee resettlement.

Recommendation 2:

Ensure that resettlement remains protection-oriented

Linking resettlement to third countries' cooperation on migration management objectives, such as reduced irregular arrivals, could increase instead of relieving the pressure on host countries. This also undermines resettlement's primary objective of protecting vulnerable individuals, paradoxically reducing protection opportunities for the refugees that are not selected.

Linking resettlement to third countries' cooperation on migration management objectives, such as reduced irregular arrivals, could increase instead of relieving the pressure on host countries.

- **Provide durable solutions.** The implementation of EU resettlement programmes should focus on delivering durable solutions to refugees and sharing responsibility with third countries. The European Commission must ensure that resettlement remains a humanitarian pathway for those in need of protection. This means ensuring that resettlement is not conditional on migration management cooperation in future policy initiatives and engagement with third countries. The Commission should encourage member states to prioritise resettlement based on the needs identified by UNHCR, rather than third countries' ability to prevent irregular migration towards Europe. Moreover, if negotiations on the URF resume, the European Parliament and the Council should agree upon a text which excludes any reference to conditionality and points exclusively to the humanitarian objectives of resettlement.¹¹²
- **Ensure resettlement remains additional to the right to asylum.** The expansion of resettlement opportunities will offer a legal pathway to Europe to more refugees with serious protection needs. However, resettlement is not, and cannot become, an alternative to states' obligation to uphold the right to asylum under international refugee law. As such, the Commission's efforts to promote and scale up resettlement must be accompanied by an equally firm and consistent defence of territorial asylum. It should use its role as the guardian of the Treaties to ensure that member states do not impose undue restrictions on the right to asylum. Specifically, the European Parliament and the Council should ensure that the final text of the URF does not contain grounds of ineligibility based on refugees' previous attempts to enter the EU irregularly.

Recommendation 3:

Promote resettlement partnerships with host countries

As this section has outlined, employing resettlement as a tool to externalise the EU's responsibilities to third countries would run counter to the benefits and core function of this durable solution. Resettlement, in fact, holds great and relatively untapped potential to strengthen partnerships with host governments. Developing programmes in closer cooperation with host countries would help their implementation and build awareness of and trust in resettlement as an instrument of solidarity-sharing.

- **Make dialogue around resettlement more inclusive.** Refugee-hosting countries should be part of the EU dialogue on resettlement. Resettlement is often a top-down process that does not involve host governments meaningfully. It can result in the latter's disillusion and mistrust, especially when the objectives and criteria guiding member states' resettlement choices are not transparent. EU countries should ensure that the needs and concerns of countries of first asylum, such as the integrity of selection criteria or the timeliness of transfers, are considered in future resettlement efforts. This can be done in partnership with the host countries' governments, as well as with international organisations and CSOs working within those countries.

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The EU should also open future cooperation platforms (e.g. the high-level resettlement fora) to governments and stakeholders from countries from which resettlement takes place, gathering their input on shared challenges and addressing the obstacles that might reduce host countries' capacity to support people within their territories.

- **Explore the strategic use of resettlement to maximise the rights of refugees remaining in countries of first asylum.** In parallel to scaling up resettlement numbers, states should cooperate with host governments to maximise their coordination and generate positive resource spillovers for the broader refugee population. The European Commission should assess the necessary conditions to improve the strategic impact of resettlement in terms of commitments, selection criteria, the broader diplomacy and policy tools that could be leveraged, and the existing partnership and cooperation with the host government, including an analysis of potential risks. To begin with, pilot projects measuring the positive leveraging of resettlement could be launched in the countries that plan to resettle the largest number of refugees and centred on the gains for a small group, such as refugees in limited areas or with specific and urgent needs.¹¹³

4. Supporting ambitious and sustainable community sponsorship in Europe

4.1. SUSTAINING THE MOMENTUM FOR COMMUNITY SPONSORSHIP IN EUROPE

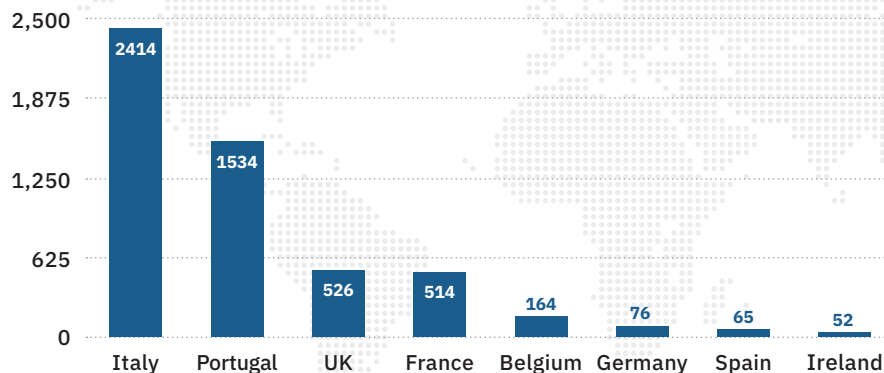
As the previous sections highlight, EU resettlement efforts remain urgent, yet member states' commitments do not sufficiently match the needs. Complementary pathways and new modalities of arrival, reception and integration can help to address this protection gap. Community sponsorship, specifically, occurs in two forms at present. It helps fulfil resettlement pledges by facilitating the arrival and reception of resettled refugees. Or, when linked to complementary pathways (e.g. humanitarian admission programmes, education-based pathways), it allows communities and non-governmental actors to play a leading role in welcoming refugees. The heightened role of this modality is highlighted in the New Pact's Recommendation on resettlement and other complementary pathways, **marking the European Commission's recognition of the potential and added value of sponsorship schemes.**¹¹⁴ Its proposal for a 'European approach to community sponsorship' is a reflection of this.

Community sponsorship in Europe is burgeoning but also faces complex practical and policy dilemmas. These relate, among others, to how harmonised programmes should be across the EU, its place in the broader resettlement and complementary pathway policy framework, and future funding. Since 2016, approximately 5,200 people have benefitted from community sponsorship in the EU (including the UK until Brexit) (see Figure 4).¹¹⁵ At present, six member states (Belgium, France, Germany, Ireland, Italy, and Spain) are conducting promising pilot programmes, making Europe an increasingly diverse and vibrant landscape of initiatives. These schemes are looking to **become more sustainable and develop longer-term means to support newcomers.**

The next step will be to anchor community sponsorship schemes in European societies, ensure their quality and expand them effectively. This section outlines some of the challenges programmes face and explores how EU action could help address them in the coming years, including by reflecting on the Commission's proposal for a European approach to community sponsorship.

Fig.4. Beneficiaries of community sponsorship schemes in Europe, 2016-2021

Source: Authors' own compilation based on European Resettlement Network; ICF and Migration Policy Institute Europe (2020)¹¹⁶



Definitions of community sponsorship vary – and continue to be subject to debate. Nevertheless, it is generally understood as a public-private partnership between governments, who facilitate legal admission for refugees, and private stakeholders (i.e. NGOs, faith-based organisations, groups of citizens) who provide financial, social and emotional support to receive and settle refugees into their communities. A key element is the “transfer of some degree of responsibility” from governments to private stakeholders, who take on a leading role in providing integration support.¹¹⁷ The exact division of responsibilities varies: it is tied to the legal frameworks and welfare systems of member states and is usually established via memoran-

da of understanding or resettlement plans between the relevant parties.

Since 2013, when several humanitarian admission programmes emerged in Europe – notably in Germany, Austria, France and the UK –,¹¹⁸ community sponsorship has been explored across several member states, evolving and growing in ways that have exceeded initial expectations. Born out of the desire to respond to the conflict and displacement crisis in Syria and drawing on the Canadian model of private sponsorship, **community sponsorship has enabled private individuals and groups in Europe to play an active and central part in the integration process.** The current

schemes in Belgium, France, Germany, Ireland, Italy and Spain are either embedded within national resettlement programmes or are tied to a complementary pathway, such as the Humanitarian Corridors. These are civil society-led initiatives aimed at helping particularly vulnerable persons find refuge via humanitarian visas.¹¹⁹

Over the years, sponsorship programmes have continued to expand and mature. In August and October 2021, Italy increased places under its Humanitarian Corridor scheme for both Syrian refugees in Lebanon and 1,200 Afghan refugees based in Pakistan, Iran, and Qatar.¹²⁰ At the same time, other countries like Bulgaria, Finland, the Netherlands, Sweden, Lithuania and Portugal have begun to express varying degrees of interest in developing or relaunching their own programmes soon.¹²¹

There is broad consensus and growing literature on the benefits, added value and importance of community sponsorship (although it is not as sizable as regular resettlement). Often described as a ‘win-win’ situation for sponsors and refugees, its benefits include the creation of new legal pathways to protection, ideally in addition to established resettlement quotas. It also helps facilitate integration and inclusion through tailor-made support for refugees. In Canada, for example, sponsorship has led to better employment and earnings outcomes over time compared to refugees arriving via regular resettlement.¹²² On a societal level, community sponsorship is also considered a means to increase public support for welcoming refugees (i.e. changing and improving perceptions of refugees by highlighting their long-term contributions to their host societies) and strengthen social cohesion.¹²³

Questions of how sponsorship schemes can best complement resettlement efforts (i.e. by offering protection) and help boost countries’ overall welcoming capacity (i.e. by offering integration support) will continue to be of great interest to politicians and policymakers. As such, they require further research and M&E. Many European schemes are currently conducting M&E to boost the evidence basis for sponsorship. While the existing evidence is small compared to Canada’s, it is key to making the case to decision-makers as to why community sponsorship should be supported and expanded.¹²⁴

While the existing evidence is small compared to Canada’s, it is key to making the case to decision-makers as to why community sponsorship should be supported and expanded.

In its 2020 Recommendation on legal pathways to protection, the European Commission invited member states to “contribute to an EU approach to community sponsorship”.¹²⁵ **This constitutes the most concrete EU action to date to embed sponsorship within its policy landscape,** following a 2018 Commission feasibility study on sponsorship schemes¹²⁶ and dedicated calls for proposals under

the 2019 and 2020 AMIF annual work programmes.¹²⁷ In the recommendation, the Commission acknowledges the usefulness of sponsorship, describing it as a tool that can “underpin” a range of pathways, including resettlement or education and work-based pathways.

Through this common approach and a broad definition of sponsorship, the Commission is pursuing two key objectives. First, it seeks to foster exchange on commonalities and experiences between member states that run sponsorship programmes. This is done, primarily, via a Working Group on Community Sponsorship that falls under the EASO Resettlement Network (see also section 2). Second, the Commission strives to continue supporting community sponsorship in Europe, notably by investing in building civil society actors’ welcoming capacity. The current AMIF-funded pilot programmes are one concrete example of this. In addition, the Action Plan on Integration and Inclusion 2021-27, launched in November 2020 as part of the New Pact, further provides a framework for building this capacity in relation to community sponsorship.¹²⁸ Specific actions under the plan include funding for schemes, including for regional and local authorities, as well as strengthening peer exchanges and partnerships between public and private actors involved in refugee integration.

With some concrete reference points in place, practitioners’ and policymakers’ key goal now is to uncover what a uniquely European approach to community sponsorship should resemble. For one, this would position the EU to play a leading role in global refugee resettlement and sponsorship efforts, alongside countries like Canada.

With some concrete reference points in place, practitioners’ and policymakers’ key goal now is to uncover what a uniquely European approach to community sponsorship should resemble.¹²⁹ For one, this would position the EU to play a leading role in global refugee resettlement and sponsorship efforts, alongside countries like Canada. Secondly, a clear sense of shared advantages and challenges can enable member states, local authorities and sponsor groups to maximise their use of EU resources and funding to enhance their protection and/or integration capacities. Thirdly, ongoing policy discussions may culminate in ‘soft’ guidelines or a toolkit for community sponsorship implementation. These could contribute to more clearly defining sponsorship in Europe, which will be useful and ultimately necessary for the broader scale implementation of sponsorship programmes across the EU.

This section explores three questions to guide the discussion around community sponsorship in Europe. What are the key practical and political challenges that the programmes face which inhibit their growth? What policy issues can and should be addressed through a European approach to community sponsorship? Finally, what EU actions and support measures would be most useful to boost sponsorship in the medium to long term?

4.2. MOVING FROM PILOTING TO SUSTAINABLE SPONSORSHIP PROGRAMMES

Member states' experiences in community sponsorship schemes can pave the way from an exploratory approach in the piloting phase to more robust and sustainable programmes in the long run. In the past years, several obstacles that impacted the success and growth of programmes have arisen across states. Some – such as COVID-19-related travel restrictions, (in)sufficient capacities of integration actors, and fluctuating political or public support – are akin to those resettlement programmes face, while others are unique. **If the EU and member states' goal is to develop a shared approach and scale up the number of initiatives incrementally, the EU must support exchange between national and local authorities and civil society, even if the solutions are then tailored to the specific national contexts.**

4.1.1. COORDINATION AND COMMUNICATION

A common challenge often inhibiting the success of pilot programmes is devising effective coordination systems between sponsor groups, NGOs providing services, and local and national authorities. Experiences from member states like France or Spain show that **the lack of inter-institutional coordination or a robust policy framework at the regional or national level creates recurring obstacles for the success and growth of sponsorship programmes.**¹³⁰ While the multi-stakeholder nature of sponsorship is often praised as one of its strengths,¹³¹ it can also lead to gaps in communication, organisation and planning. For example, without direct communication channels, government authorities may be unaware of the practical problems sponsors face at the start of the pilot phase, such as finding adequate housing.

These gaps appear more likely to emerge in cases where sponsorship is tied to complementary pathways, given the absence of stable resettlement infrastructures upon which sponsors and refugees can rely. For this reason, pilots are often embedded within resettlement programmes. Belgium, for instance, launched its current pilot programme in 2020 as part of its regular resettlement programme given the vast existing knowledge and experience of the Office of the Commissioner General for Refugees and Stateless Persons (CGRS) and Fedasil, which jointly manage resettlement operations.¹³² Eased access to financial resources (e.g. lump sum resettlement payments, funding for humanitarian admissions) can be another reason for organising sponsorship within resettlement programmes rather than on an ad-hoc basis. Coordination mechanisms between the different stakeholders can also be improved through jointly developed and robust policy frameworks. However, these may only be developed and fleshed out once programmes have gathered sufficient experience during the piloting phase and political decisions are made on the continuation of programmes.

4.1.2. EXPANDING THE SPONSORSHIP BASE

A second challenge concerns expanding the pool of sponsors beyond faith-based organisations and churches¹³³ to boost European societies' reception capacity and, in turn, accommodate a higher number of beneficiaries. Faith-based organ-

isations have traditionally spearheaded community sponsorship efforts and continue to be important partners in several member states, notably France and Italy.¹³⁴ But there are also other groups, such as cultural or sports associations, that have expressed their willingness to welcome refugees, have close ties to local communities and could thus fulfil this function, too. **While the opportunity to sponsor refugees has had the positive spillover effect of motivating individuals who are not already involved in refugee integration to take up such a role,** they may, however, have different human or financial resources and are likely to encounter practical obstacles.¹³⁵ Housing is a prime example: in contrast to faith-based organisations, which often already possess available accommodation for newcomers, newer sponsors face substantial difficulties in securing private housing. This is only complicated further by the ongoing housing shortages in many European states.¹³⁶ **Targeted actions, financial support, or coordination by national governments may be needed to address these gaps, diversify the traditional sponsorship profiles, and support new sponsors.**

4.1.3. IMPEDING POLITICAL PRIORITIES

Finally, and more broadly, governments' de-prioritisation of refugee protection can limit the growth of community sponsorship. Showcased through ebbing commitment to global responsibility-sharing, in the form of some EU member states' more restrictive border control measures or disinterest in expanding legal pathways to protection,¹³⁷ this trend can make it harder for sponsors to win governments' support. Going forward, the argument must be made that sponsorship is not just a temporary, ad hoc arrangement but also has long-term potential in complementing resettlement efforts effectively, without supplanting the role of national governments in offering protection.

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More recently, during the pandemic, political support for community sponsorship did not seem to lessen as a result of priorities shifting to pandemic management or economic recovery, counter to the experiences of resettlement programmes and some experts' concerns.¹³⁸ Rather, the pandemic showcased communities' willingness to support refugees and show solidarity in times of crisis. It also reinforced the importance of maintaining a constant dialogue between governments and sponsors from the very start to communicate about and manage unforeseen obstacles jointly (see above). As such, sponsorship schemes continued to receive people despite suboptimal circumstances and even as resettlement numbers fell: in 2021, Ireland received a new group of sponsored refugees, while in Italy, a new agreement was concluded to receive a thousand refugees from Lebanon over the next two years via its Humanitarian Corridor scheme.¹³⁹ The more this momentum can be sustained, the more these kinds of bottom-up initiatives can also act as a bulwark against xenophobia and discrimination as well as populist political movements.¹⁴⁰

4.3. TOWARDS A EUROPEAN APPROACH TO COMMUNITY SPONSORSHIP

The European Commission's efforts to advance a European approach to community sponsorship recognises the added value of civil society's recent efforts to support newcomers, as well as the potential role these initiatives could play across the EU.¹⁴¹ The outcome of this approach – sometimes also termed 'model' or 'narrative' – is yet to be defined, interviews and roundtable discussions conducted in the course of the project reveal a general consensus on the following points.

- 1. A European approach should reflect the different legal frameworks, state responsibilities, and welfare systems and social services across the EU27**, all of which are factors that impact the need for or ability of civil society to engage in community sponsorship.
- 2. As such, the approach should not be 'one size fits all'**, but rather accommodate current schemes' flexibility, diversity and grass-roots nature, while also offering space to reflect on the shared challenges.
- 3. Practical tools or guidelines developed under this approach should address these shared challenges while being context-specific**, as the transferability of experiences between member states is limited. To this end, any strict legislative reforms or streamlined definitions may be counterproductive at this point.¹⁴²

These points constitute a starting point; future discussions will have to focus on more specific and complex policy questions. The following three themes will play a key role as EU member states and the relevant stakeholders continue to pilot, grow and expand community sponsorship.

4.3.1. DIVERSITY AND FLEXIBILITY

Although the 'one size fits all' approach has largely been rejected as an option, deciding how much diversity and flexibility are needed and appropriate is a different and more challenging process. **Getting the balance right is key to defining the way forward for a European approach.** The current variability in European community sponsorship schemes reflects not only the different laws and social welfare systems in place but also points to the creativity behind the programmes' design and local CSOs' strong role in defining them. In past years, schemes have been developed around regular resettlement channels, humanitarian admission, family reunification and (on an exceptional basis) intra-EU relocation. Each of these pathways entails different sponsors, organisational set-ups and groups of beneficiaries.¹⁴³ This diversity contributes to making community sponsorship distinctly 'European', in the eyes of some,¹⁴⁴ and could therefore be considered an element of the new common approach.

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However, diversity and flexibility also create considerable pitfalls and risks that must ultimately be mitigated at the programme level.¹⁴⁵ More experienced schemes can share where they see the need for minimum common criteria or practices that could be included in the European approach – or, alternatively, where these are best left to member states' discretion. For example, programmes will, on the one hand, need enough flexibility to allow for some degree of trial-and-error in running programmes. On the other, they should have safety nets in case sponsors cannot provide sufficient support and help guarantee minimum standards for the reception and integration of sponsored refugees.¹⁴⁶

Balancing the differing concerns and expectations between governments and sponsors can be challenging, especially in the launch phase. While governments will be focused on the finances, visas and other bureaucratic steps, sponsor groups will be eager to receive newcomers following long periods of preparation and investment and want reassurances that any delays are not due to lacking governmental commitment.¹⁴⁷

4.3.2. ADDITIONALITY

A further question concerning the future of sponsorship in Europe is its additionality to the other government-led pathways to protection. To maximise protection outcomes, CSOs, UNHCR and others have long called for any sponsored pathways to be on top of government-pledged resettlement places. **However, defining and creating this additionality is not a simple exercise.** For instance, if a sponsorship scheme sits within a national resettlement programme, it can help fulfil pledges that could not have been met without strong civil society support.

Conversely, in some contexts, community sponsorship may be understood as having a different primary function: rather than constituting a new pathway to protection, it supports established pathways by improving integration outcomes. In states that boast strong legal frameworks for long-term government support for refugees (e.g. Sweden), sponsorship may be most effective if limited to complementing integration efforts. This could involve community-driven orientation and language support in the pre-departure and post-arrival phases (and not one to two years upon arrival) or the immediate channelling of refugees into the state's welfare system.¹⁴⁸

Going forward, policymakers and civil society stakeholders will need to tackle three questions. How should community sponsorship be linked to broader protection pathways? What purpose(s) should it fulfil? Finally, against this background, what is the role for monitoring and specific targets?

For the European Commission, sponsorship is largely considered a tool or modality for enhancing various pathways (i.e. resettlement, complementary pathways) rather than a pathway in itself. A case in point is its notion of sponsorship 'underpinning' different pathways.¹⁴⁹ This leaves it up to member states to decide to what degree sponsorship remains additional or not. UNHCR and CSOs have long maintained that community sponsorship should be entirely additional to regular resettlement. This means that sponsored refugees

are not embedded in or counted towards national annual resettlement quotas. This principle of additionality is also said to encourage sponsorship: communities are more motivated to help when they know they are facilitating the arrival of people above and beyond government-led efforts.¹⁵⁰

Community sponsorship schemes will likely achieve the greatest added value by becoming additional over time, not least to ensure that they maximise their protection and integration impacts without replacing governments' responsibilities.¹⁵¹ **Yet, in the short term or specific contexts, sponsorship can usefully play different roles.** In response to acute crises like Afghanistan, sponsorship programmes can help fulfil resettlement pledges that for practical reasons would not be met otherwise (e.g. insufficient state reception capacities, slow coordination between relevant EU and national stakeholders in setting up evacuation and resettlement plans).¹⁵²

A related policy question beyond defining the precise relation of sponsorship to other pathways – including the additionality of places – relates to concrete annual targets or quotas, as is typical for refugee resettlement programmes.¹⁵³ Concrete targets can incentivise growth and increase visibility, but also undermine communities' sense of ownership in the process and apply pressure on them to deliver on complex commitments. At this stage, and in order to decide whether and what kind of quotas or targets make sense, **a better understanding of how programmes work best across member states and different sets of ambitions is needed.** Clear and transparent M&E of resettlement pledges and sponsorship commitments, as well as their implementation, will be instrumental to this end. More specifically, in relation to national resettlement efforts (see section 2), they can also help monitor the additionality of community sponsorship, creating a clearer distinction between government-led and civil society-led efforts.

4.3.3. FUNDING

As with national resettlement programmes (see section 2), EU funding continues to be an important vector to expanding community sponsorship. So far, it has been beneficial for launching pilot projects and developing integration capacities. However, **lacking clarity on how it fits into the wider EU policy framework makes it difficult to predict a longer-term funding strategy.** Where sponsorship falls in various legislative binaries is unclear. Based on the 2020 Commission Recommendation, where does it stand between resettlement and humanitarian admissions programmes? What would be the funding implications if sponsorship is linked to EU-related resettlement pledges versus national programmes? Similarly, how might the type of funding differ if sponsorship is placed within resettlement programmes, humanitarian admissions or complementary pathways? Lastly, to what extent will funding be linked to the additionality of sponsorship? A broad understanding of sponsorship as a tool 'underpinning' different pathways or stages of resettlement can mean a wide variety of funding opportunities, including integration funding. However, all these questions need to be clarified, and EU funding targeted accordingly.

A broad understanding of sponsorship as a tool 'underpinning' different pathways or stages of resettlement can mean a wide variety of funding opportunities, including integration funding.

At present, **funding needs can be aligned with three different stages of community sponsorship.** First, it can help incentivise or mobilise sponsorship schemes. This can be in the form of lump-sum payments, seed funding or matching funds from sponsor groups. Second, funding can also build integration and reception capacity more broadly, irrespective of pathways or the legal status of beneficiaries. Investing in the areas identified by the Action Plan on Integration and Inclusion 2021-27 (e.g. education, skills development, housing) would then benefit a broader population, including but not limited to sponsored refugees. Third, funding can play a role in the implementation of programmes and potential continuations. To avoid shortages and manage finances during the initial one to two years effectively, programmes should be aware of the kind of social costs the government is willing to cover and put into place cost-sharing models with specific and agreed-upon margins.¹⁵⁴

For both the first and third stage, backstop funds can also be useful in this regard, with both governments and private funders ensuring some level of funding in case the programmes encounter difficulties.¹⁵⁵ Moreover, they can provide a safety net that encourages the involvement of and reassures new sponsors. Private funding can also provide additional support for scaling efforts, as in the case of the US-based Shapiro Foundation, which announced a million-pound fund to support the growth of sponsorship in the UK in late 2020.¹⁵⁶

Going forward, funding opportunities should be matched to these three stages. This would allow member states willing to launch pilots to receive the necessary support, while enabling sponsors and NGOs in states where sponsorship already exists to use mainstreamed integration funding, particularly in the second and third stages. The upcoming AMIF annual work programmes, for example, will provide the Commission with an opportunity to launch opportunities for each of these stages. The upcoming AMIF annual work programmes will be important indicators of the Commission's thinking in this regard, as will opportunities under other funding sources (e.g. ESF+, ERDF).

However, to make full use of EU funding, questions around accessibility will also need to be addressed: community sponsorship is organised in a multi-stakeholder fashion, but financial resources are disbursed to national governments for the most part. **Cities and municipalities across member states have played an active part in implementing community sponsorship, reflecting their important role in devising and implementing integration policies.**¹⁵⁷ Under the new AMIF Regulation, 5% of its 'thematic facility' funding will be allocated to local and regional authorities.¹⁵⁸ This novelty resulted from increased demand and interest expressed in member state consultations in the run-up to the 2021-27 Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF).¹⁵⁹ Such changes in eligibility criteria could prove particularly helpful in cases where member states' governments are reluctant to provide political and financial support, but local authorities are not.

4.4. RECOMMENDATIONS

Community sponsorship in Europe is currently marked by great diversity and variety, with member states at different stages of exploring and implementing programmes. Nevertheless, it is also underlined by a shared understanding that investing in sponsorship is a worthwhile and important step in boosting the EU's refugee protection capacity and resettlement infrastructure. After promising growth in recent years, European sponsorship programmes face considerable practical challenges in scaling up their pilots and converting them into more sustainable schemes. Delayed arrivals, difficulties in setting up effective communication channels between governments and sponsors, and the challenge of bringing in new actors, impact sponsorship schemes' ability to grow and succeed. Likewise, policymakers face complex policy questions in defining the future approach that refugee sponsorship should take in Europe. **Working towards more clarity on the purpose of sponsorship vis-à-vis other pathways will help to embed it more firmly within the larger policy framework for pathways to protection.**

Yet, with stable political support, effective coordination and sufficient financial and operational resources, the EU and its member states are well-positioned to establish a European approach to community sponsorship. Investing into these schemes can offer greater refugee protection as part of the EU's resettlement and complementary pathways, as well as sustainable, community-driven integration support.

Solutions to the practical problems outlined above will ultimately have to be tailored to member states' contexts. Yet, with stable political support, effective coordination and sufficient financial and operational resources, the EU and its member states are well-positioned to establish a European approach to community sponsorship. Investing into these schemes can offer greater refugee protection as part of the EU's resettlement and complementary pathways, as well as sustainable, community-driven integration support. While more time is needed to assess what types of community sponsorship programmes work best in each respective national context, this Discussion Paper recommends taking the following actions at the EU level.

Recommendation 1: **Support exchange and build networks**

The past few years have seen a growing number of transnational networks and partnerships around community sponsorship evolve to improve stakeholder coordination, enable the exchange of good practices and peer learning, and build states' and civil society's capacity. These opportunities for exchange should be preserved to boost member states' involvement in setting up sponsorship, provide opportunities to address joint obstacles, and devise strategies to scale up sponsorship. Bringing these exchanges to the EU level offers great potential to achieve these goals, yet it should not

come at the cost of duplicating existing efforts or sidelining important stakeholders (e.g. civil society).

- **Foster exchanges between member states.** The EASO-led Working Group on Community Sponsorship convenes mainly member states to discuss what a European approach to sponsorship should comprise.¹⁶⁰ It also allows states interested in sponsorship (e.g. Sweden, Finland) to explore how it could work in their respective contexts through exchange and peer learning. This offers possibilities for mentoring, with more experienced states offering guidance and advice to less experienced ones. This could, in turn, help potential sponsors ultimately secure government buy-in thanks to other member states' reassurances of the added value of sponsorship. In some cases, civil society actors piloting new schemes could, in turn, inspire more established programmes by showcasing new and innovative approaches that may be adaptable to other contexts. With some new member states having expressed ambitions to launch sponsorship since the launch of the Working Group, the benefits of exchanging on this level are clear. Going forward, the EU should keep these on board while also increasing its outreach to states currently not involved in the group.
- **Preserve the local, grassroots-level origins of community sponsorship.** At the same time, the local, non-governmental and community-driven nature of sponsorship must be maintained, and the creative and innovative thinking that has driven forward such schemes encouraged. The SHARE Network, led by the International Catholic Migration Commission Europe since 2012, and the Global Refugee Sponsorship Initiative, which opened an office in Brussels in 2020, have played important roles in fostering exchange at the community, practitioner and state levels. While the challenges experienced by each community sponsorship initiative will be different and context-specific, this section highlights a number of common obstacles, from establishing effective means of coordination between multiple stakeholders and finding housing to wavering political support. The European Commission should hold regular consultations to allow such CSOs operating at both EU and national levels to provide input and suggestions as to where EU support would be more useful. In the near term, the prioritised discussion points should include the concerns already reported by these stakeholders, such as funding opportunities, eligibility criteria and operational support for implementing programmes.¹⁶¹

Additionally, the Commission should prioritise engaging with cities and municipalities in scaling up sponsorship efforts. As seen in Germany and Spain, cities have boasted a strong willingness and involvement in sponsorship and are often well-placed to play an active role in refugee integration due to their capacity and expertise.¹⁶² The Commission should therefore develop a better understanding of how it can support them, notably through eased access to EU financial resources and/or enhanced visibility of cities' activities. Eurocities, a network of 200 cities across Europe, could act as a key interlocutor, for example.¹⁶³

Recommendation 2:

Provide a range of funding options for piloting and scaling up

As the range of community sponsorship initiatives continues to grow, funding opportunities must be matched to the different sponsorship stages and the best-suited actors. For instance, some member states may wish to launch their own pilot projects in the coming years and seek funding similar to that of the 2019 AMIF work programme, which was aimed at strengthening capacities for community sponsorship implementation.¹⁶⁴ Other, more established programmes may wish to make greater use of integration funding to improve their support measures for newcomers.

- **Create a more coherent set of funding opportunities.** The European Commission should provide financial resources that correspond to sponsorship programmes' differing degrees of maturity. This is not only key to driving the innovation behind pilot programmes but also ensuring continuity over longer periods. In relation to the EU's financial framework, and similarly to resettlement, this means creating more coherence between the AMIF's short-term funding and the ESF+' or ERDF's medium- to long-term integration funding – an issue raised by civil society and experts alike.¹⁶⁵ To this end, the Commission should explore and highlight the synergies between its different units and DGs (e.g. DG HOME and DG EMPL) in devising new funding opportunities (see also Recommendation 2, section 2).

The European Commission should provide financial resources that correspond to sponsorship programmes' differing degrees of maturity. This is not only key to driving the innovation behind pilot programmes but also ensuring continuity over longer periods.

- **Create more awareness of funding opportunities among relevant stakeholders.** To spur the growth of community sponsorship and showcase its willingness to support schemes, the Commission should also strengthen its engagement with civil society and local authorities. The 5% funding allocation of the AMIF Regulation's Thematic Facility for local authorities is a sign that the Commission is starting to react to their needs. Nevertheless, more could be done. In particular, it should consider launching additional calls for proposals relating to specific elements of community sponsorship, humanitarian admissions programmes or other complementary pathways (beyond capacity) to match and further encourage engagement in this area.

Moreover, it should improve its communication about funding opportunities for NGOs and civil society, to strengthen awareness about their content as well as eligibility criteria.¹⁶⁶ This could be done through intensified promotion and outreach, notably through toolkits and information-sharing events. Finally, the Commission should encourage national authorities to engage with CSOs and local authorities more actively in the discussions around the potential of sponsorship in national contexts, par-

ticularly in relation to questions of capacity. This would create a better-linked network of sponsorship actors and help drive new initiatives forward.

Recommendation 3:

Explore ways to broaden involvement and diversify the sponsorship base

More and more of the EU27 are showing a growing interest in community sponsorship but face important challenges around the small scale of programmes, the narrow scope of actors driving sponsorship forward, and devising schemes that best fit the national context. The EU can support member states effectively by coordinating and providing resources, which could encourage and facilitate the involvement of new sponsorship actors.

To get more states on board, important differences in cultural and/or economic conditions should be seen as opportunities for creative and unique approaches and not insurmountable challenges to adopting sponsorship programmes.

- **Encourage member states to explore community sponsorship creatively.** The number of countries involved in sponsorship in Europe remains small and is limited to states with strong civil society involvement and political support. Its relevance and potential for new member states merits further attention. To get more states on board, important differences in cultural and/or economic conditions should be seen as opportunities for creative and unique approaches and not insurmountable challenges to adopting sponsorship programmes. While diversity continues to be a key aspect of sponsorship in Europe, a typology could help establish a clearer legal and practical basis upon which states can build their efforts.¹⁶⁷

Beyond that, the European Commission and member states could also consider regional models, toolkits or approaches that reflect more closely the welfare systems, the role of NGOs in providing integration support, and societal, cultural or religious traditions in Europe's different regions. This may be useful, for example, for Scandinavia, which features strong welfare systems and a weaker role of NGOs. The same could apply to the Baltic region, which does not have a strong tradition of national resettlement programmes but where countries may instead add community sponsorship elements to education- or work-based pathways. Additionally, sponsorship could also be explored in Eastern Europe, including its rural areas, where local communities that are motivated to help welcome and integrate newcomers may not benefit from national political support or infrastructures, due to their national government's anti-immigration political agenda.¹⁶⁸ This could, in turn, help counter trends of onward movements from countries of first asylum to preferred destination countries in Northern and Western Europe seen in the past years.¹⁶⁹

- **Encourage the growth of the sponsorship ecosystem itself.** Going forward, the challenge will be to not only bring in more member states but also encourage the growth of the sponsorship ecosystem within states themselves. Until now, faith-based organisations have, for the most part, driven community sponsorship efforts in Europe. While they will likely continue to do so, other groups have great potential to contribute in various ways, and states should empower them to become involved. Knowing where NGOs are already providing support or filling gaps left by public services, and how community sponsorship can complement these efforts, is crucial. The EU could target the following three areas to (i) tap into and build upon the motivation and know-how of groups well-placed to facilitate refugees' integration process; and (ii) preempt and resolve possible bottleneck situations that limit programmes' capacities and flexibility.
1. Encourage new actors (e.g. sports or cultural associations) to become sponsors and build multi-stakeholder partnerships with universities and employers exploring sponsorship (e.g. Canada's Student Refugee Program).¹⁷⁰ Cities and municipalities can help in identifying potential groups or organisations to lead or support future schemes. Regardless of their affiliations, the new actors should have the necessary financial and resource capacities, as well as strong ties to their communities.¹⁷¹ By championing the efforts of local groups and communities, providing funds and resources, and advancing policy responses to likely common challenges (e.g. housing), the EU could increase the pool of sponsors.
 2. Naming relatives that usually fall outside the legal definition of family members under EU law could also be further explored in Europe to increase the number of refugee sponsors.¹⁷² This is distinct from the current sponsorship practice in Europe, which is based on UNHCR referrals. While well-established in places like Canada, it is not yet practised widely in Europe, partly for legal reasons as well as administrative hurdles. Amongst others, one caveat is that naming should not undermine access to regular resettlement, which serves a vital function for refugees in situations of particular vulnerability. Likewise, it should go beyond standard family reunification procedures to which member states are legally obligated, enabling individuals who fall outside the legally defined nuclear family to benefit from protection pathways.¹⁷³ Additionally, and depending on the scale, it could also result in the longer-term de-prioritisation of granting protection to those with high vulnerability.
- However, if legally and practically sound frameworks are put into place, this practice has several advantages: not only would it entail additional places and motivate further sponsor groups to form, it could also benefit people who do not fall under established UNHCR vulnerability criteria, such as members of the LGBTQI community, or those who are unable to easily access resettlement procedures.¹⁷⁴ Finally, thanks to pre-existing family ties, it could facilitate the integration process.

5. Conclusions: Paving the way to an ambitious and future-proof EU policy on resettlement and community sponsorship

There are fertile grounds for resettlement and complementary pathways, notably community sponsorship, to grow further in Europe. In light of the high resettlement needs around the world, the ongoing restrictions to global mobility due to the COVID-19 pandemic, and protracted displacement crises, both old and new, the imperative for the EU to build and invest in a ‘future-proof’ resettlement system is strong. This Discussion Paper has highlighted the following key takeaways, which can make resettlement and sponsorship more sustainable, ambitious, inclusive, and firmly protection-centred.

In light of the high resettlement needs around the world, the ongoing restrictions to global mobility due to the COVID-19 pandemic, and protracted displacement crises, both old and new, the imperative for the EU to build and invest in a ‘future-proof’ resettlement system is strong.

- The challenges to scaling up resettlement and other pathways in Europe are relatively clear, and include issues around the capacity, expertise, and political willingness held by member states. To advance a sustainable increase in resettlement targets, **the European Commission must cement the necessary conditions** by continuing to foster information-sharing and capacity-building initiatives, providing operational and financial assistance, and driving political support for refugee resettlement. At the same time, it is true that member states remain the most relevant actors across resettlement and community sponsorship alike. **Their willingness to invest into these pathways and make full use of the tools and support available at EU level will be vital.**
- The diverse political and economic contexts, needs and challenges across the EU27 should inform future Commission initiatives, including those falling under EASO’s new mandate as the European Union Agency for Asylum. While not all states will engage in resettlement in the same way, or to the same extent, **all have the capacity to nurture and expand their programmes and to offer valuable lessons.** Peer-learning and information-sharing activities should therefore continue in order to reduce the barriers to developing and expanding programmes across new and traditional resettlement states alike. Additionally, the European Commission will

need to improve monitoring and evaluation to assess the success and impacts of the assistance and coordination provided so far. This should contribute to equitable growth and high quality of resettlement across the Union.

- Policymakers will need **to foster more inclusive exchanges in order to scale up refugee resettlement and sponsorship.** Refugees, host communities, countries of first asylum, CSOs, and local authorities must be better embedded within dialogues, fora, and policymaking relating to resettlement and community sponsorship. This will ensure that EU support addresses the real gaps and barriers experienced by the protagonists of these pathways; strengthen their credibility; and broaden and diversify the ecosystem of actors involved in supporting the arrival, reception and integration of refugees, with more people making the case for refugee protection.
- **With a new MFF in place, the EU should offer diverse funding opportunities** enabling resettlement actors, CSOs and communities (including sponsorship groups) to expand their welcoming capacities. Local authorities’ growing role and potential in hosting and integrating refugees, too, should be recognised across funding streams. Finally, policymakers should also explore new and underutilised sources and targets for funding, both to develop the European approach to community sponsorship and foster long-term integration across different pathways.

The credibility and effectiveness of future resettlement efforts will largely depend on the EU27’s willingness to place protection principles at their core, admitting refugees based on needs and vulnerability rather than migration management objectives.

- **The credibility and effectiveness of future resettlement efforts will largely depend on the EU27’s willingness to place protection principles at their core, admitting refugees based on needs and vulnerability rather than migration management objectives. The way resettlement is embedded into broader partnerships merits critical reflection,** given that they should be aimed at establishing trust-based and mutually bene-

ficial relations with host countries. Most immediately, strategic opportunities to use resettlement to improve protection for the broader refugee population should further be explored.

- Likewise, in developing a European approach to community sponsorship, EU institutions will need to carefully navigate the future development of sponsorship in terms of maximising refugee protection, on the one

hand, and boosting integration capacities on the other. For one, to firmly embed sponsorship within EU policy, policymakers should aim to establish a clearer definition of its purpose and forms of implementation while also working towards additionality, at least over time. EU support for national initiatives, meanwhile, needs to be tailored to the programmes' level of maturity while also allowing for the innovative thinking behind pilots to continue to grow.

Turning challenges into opportunities will not happen overnight, but sufficient EU support can provide the necessary building blocks to make resettlement policies and the European approach to community sponsorship more future-proof. *The European Commission remains keen on increasing commitment by member states, revitalising resettlement partnerships and coalitions within the EU and with countries like the US, Canada and the UK. Member states, for their part, will have to band together and demonstrate their willingness to engage in genuine responsibility-sharing. If the EU as a whole remains steadfast in its ambitious resettlement trajectory, it would not only increase its commitment to protection and build more sustainable partnerships, but also fulfil its ambitions to become a stronger global champion of humanitarian efforts.*

By making full use of the opportunities and actions this Discussion Paper outlines, EU institutions and member states can make a meaningful and longer-term impact in addressing global protection needs, while strengthening Europe's welcoming capacity from the ground up.

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- 3 See Garnier, Adèle, Jubilit, Liliana Lyra and Sandvik, Kristin Bergtora (2018, eds.), *Refugee Resettlement: Power, Politics, and Humanitarian Governance*. Oxford: Berghahn Books, 1-28.
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- 5 UN Refugee Agency (2021a), ["UNHCR Projected Global Resettlement Needs 2022"](#), Geneva.
- 6 UN Refugee Agency (2021b), ["Global Trends: Forced Displacement in 2020"](#), Geneva, p.2.
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- 11 UN Refugee Agency (2020a), ["Resettlement to Europe – January to December 2019"](#), Geneva.
- 12 European Commission, ["High-Level Resettlement Forum"](#), 09 July 2021; European Commission, ["High-Level Forum on providing protection to Afghans at risk"](#), Brussels, 06 October 2021.
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- 14 UN Refugee Agency (2021a), op.cit., p.129.
- 15 Eurostat, ["Resettled persons by age, sex and citizenship - annual data \(rounded\) \[mig_r_asyresal\]"](#) (accessed 29 September 2021). Note: the initial 2020 pledges also included the UK, which left the European Union on 31 January 2020.
- 16 European Commission (2020a), op.cit., p.14.
- 17 However, the US only managed to resettle 11,411 persons in the 2021 fiscal year, despite its more ambitious target. Besides difficulties in organising international travel, this was also due to the closures of many resettlement agencies during the Trump administration, some of which only reopened recently. See Alvarez, Priscilla (2021), ["Refugee admissions to US the lowest in 40 years"](#), CNN, 05 October 2021; White House, ["Memorandum for the Secretary of State on Presidential Determination on Refugee Admissions for Fiscal Year 2022"](#), 08 October 2021.
- 18 See Garneau, Marc, ["Address by the Honourable Marc Garneau, PC, MP, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Canada at the General Debate of the 76th United Nations General Assembly – 'In Our Hands'"](#), UN General Assembly, 27 September 2021; Raman-Wilm, Menaka, ["Moral imperative' to help behind Canada's pledge to resettle 40,000 Afghan refugees"](#), The Globe and Mail, 28 September 2021.
- 19 International Rescue Committee (2020), ["10 things to know about global displacement and EU refugee resettlement"](#), p.2.
- 20 The authors acknowledge the importance of viewing resettlement not only in terms of numbers but also of improving resettlement outcomes for refugees. The quality of resettlement, including the reception and integration process and post-arrival support, is an integral aspect of resettlement's success as a durable solution. Section 3 expands on how resettlement policies can maximise protection outcomes.
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- 22 In June 2015 and September 2017, the European Commission presented two recommendations to member states on the respective creation of two European resettlement schemes, to resettle 22,000 and 50,000 people in need of international protection respectively over two years. In total, 19,452 people were resettled under this first EU scheme (86% of the total pledge). 43,827 people were resettled between 2018 and 2019 (88% of the total pledge). See Council of the European Union (2015), [Conclusions of the Representatives of the Governments of the Member States meeting within the Council on resettling through multilateral and national schemes 20 000 persons in clear need of international protection](#), ASIM 62 RELEX 633, Brussels; European Commission (2017), [Recommendation on enhancing legal pathways for persons in need of international protection](#), C(2017) 6504, Brussels; European Commission (2020a), op.cit.
- 23 I.e. in order of descending resettlement numbers, the UK, Sweden, France, Germany, the Netherlands, Finland, Spain, Belgium and Italy. Westerby, Rachel (2020), ["Follow the Money III. Solidarity: The use of AMIF funds to incentivize resettlement and relocation in the EU"](#), Brussels: UN Refugee Agency/European Council on Refugees and Exiles, p.29.
- 24 E.g. Cyprus, Greece, Malta and Slovakia have not reported any resettlement. Some countries, such as Latvia, Lithuania and Slovenia, reported some resettlement between 2015 and 2018, yet completely stopped between 2018 and 2019. Others, such as Bulgaria, Croatia and Estonia, stopped their operations in 2020. After resettling relatively high numbers between 2015 and 2017, Austria has not reported any resettlement since 2018. Belgium reported that the saturation of its reception systems led it to scale down resettlement from 2018 to 2019. See also EASO (2021), op. cit., p. 199. See Eurostat, ["Resettled persons by age, sex and citizenship - annual data \(rounded\) \[mig_r_asyresal\]"](#) (accessed 19 September 2021).
- 25 Authors' calculations based on ibid. N.B. UK data does not include 2020 figures as the country left the European Union on 31 January 2020. Greece, Cyprus, Slovakia and Poland are not included due to their low resettlement admissions; they did not admit any refugee under the EU resettlement scheme between 2015 and 2020. The Czech Republic, Hungary, Malta, Latvia and Slovenia admitted less than 50 refugees in the same period.
- 26 See Jegen, Leonie and Franzisca Zanker (2019), ["European dominance of migration policy in Niger"](#), Kiel: Mercator Dialogue on Migration and Asylum, pp.8-9.
- 27 The UN Refugee Agency received these pledges already by December 2019 from Belgium, Canada, Finland, France, Germany, Italy, Luxembourg, Malta, the Netherlands, Norway, Sweden, Switzerland, the UK and the US. UN Refugee Agency (2019), ["Niger: Emergency Transit Mechanism \(ETM\)"](#), p.2; UN Refugee Agency (2021c), ["UNHCR Niger Factsheet: August 2021"](#); UN Refugee Agency (2021d), ["Rwanda"](#).
- 28 European Commission (2016), op. cit.
- 29 The reform of the Common European Asylum System encompasses a series of proposals by the European Commission in 2016 and 2018 and updated in 2020 via the New Pact on Asylum and Migration. These proposals are interlinked and part of a comprehensive approach. The co-legislators have been reluctant to adopt specific files individually, following the principle that "nothing is agreed until everything is agreed". Lücke, Matthias; Olivia Sundberg Diez; Franzisca Zanker; and Leonie Jegen (2020), ["European and African perspectives on asylum and migration policy: Seeking common ground"](#), Kiel: Mercator Dialogue on Asylum and Migration, pp.17-18.
- 30 European Commission (2020a), op.cit.
- 31 See e.g. Churches' Commission for Migrants in Europe (2020), ["Resettlement can't wait!"](#).
- 32 European Commission, [Press briefing by Ylva Johansson, European Commissioner, following the High-Level Forum on providing protection to Afghans at risk](#), 07 October 2021.
- 33 Under the 2014-20 Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund, member states could receive a lump sum of €6,000 per person resettled following national priorities or €10,000 EU priorities. As the arrival of the resettled person is the sole requirement, this form of financing is easy to implement and not subject to burdensome reporting demands. See Fratzke, Susan and Lena Kainz (2020), ["The Next Generation of Refugee Resettlement in Europe: Ambitions for the Future and How to Realize Them"](#), Brussels: Migration Policy Institute Europe, p.12; Westerby (2020), op.cit., p.8.
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- 49 Comments by participants during third project roundtable, 29 September 2021.
- 50 On the difficulties experienced by the UN Refugee Agency, see Fratzke et al. (2021), op.cit. pp.29-30.
- 51 Comments by participants during "Future-proofing EU resettlement policies: Key challenges and policy priorities", first roundtable as part of the Future-proofing EU Resettlement Policies project on 13 April 2021, European Policy Centre and Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung, Brussels; interview with an International Organization for Migration representative, July 2021.
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- 53 UN Refugee Agency (2020b), "[Remote Interviewing: Practical Considerations for States in Europe](#)", pp.1-2; Interview with Susan Fratzke, Migration Policy Institute, June 2021.
- 54 Kegels, Michael (2016), "[Getting the Balance Right: Strengthening Asylum Reception Capacity at National and EU Levels](#)", Brussels: Migration Policy Institute Europe; National Conference on Citizenship and the Penn Biden Center for Diplomacy and Global Engagement (2020), "[A Roadmap to Rebuilding the U.S. Refugee Admissions Program](#)", Washington DC.
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- 56 Ibid.; interview with a senior official from the Swedish Ministry of Justice, June 2021; interview with an EU member state official, June 2021; interview with a Spanish UN Refugee Agency representative, July 2021.
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- 148 Interview with a senior official from the Swedish Ministry of Justice, June 2021. See also ICF and Migration Policy Institute Europe (2018), op.cit., pp.74-80.
- 149 European Commission (2020a), op.cit.
- 150 ICF and Migration Policy Institute Europe (2018), op.cit., pp.17, 36; interview with a UN Refugee Agency official, Brussels, June 2021.
- 151 Also known as "additionality in principle". See Tan, Nikolas Feith (2021), "[Community Sponsorship in Europe: Taking Stock, Policy Transfer and What the Future Might Hold](#)", *Frontiers in Human Dynamics*, p.3.
- 152 International Rescue Committee (2021), "[Joint Statement: The EU cannot shirk its responsibilities towards Afghans in need of international protection](#)," 16 September 2021.

153 Discussions around EU-wide goals or introducing a specific percentage of additional admissions by way of community sponsorship are largely deemed premature at this stage. Non-governmental organisations have long called for sponsorship to be completely additional, stating that without a clear distinction between resettlement and sponsorship numbers, sponsorship runs the risk of fulfilling governments' commitments rather than complementing them. That said, reaching a total of 5,000 community sponsorship beneficiaries by 2030 has been considered reasonable, for example. If, conversely, admissions fall under regular resettlement, an annual share of around 10% is considered a realistic starting point. Interview with an EU institutional representative, July 2021; interview with SHARE Network representatives, led by ICMC Europe, June 2021; interview with a UNHCR official, Brussels, June 2021. See also ICMC Europe and Caritas Europa (2019), published within the framework of the SHARE Network, op.cit., p.36.

154 Interview with Susan Fratzke, Migration Policy Institute, June 2021.

155 See Fratzke et al. (2019), op.cit., p.10.

156 The Guardian, [“Game changer’: £1m pledged to help refugees resettle in UK”](#), 7 December 2020.

157 See Radjenovic (2021), op.cit.

158 Council of the European Union and European Parliament (2021), op.cit.

159 Interview with Agnese Papadia, DG HOME, European Commission, August 2021.

160 EASO (2021), [“EASO’s external action – Updates,”](#) (accessed 22 November 2021).

161 See, for instance: Hueck, Petra, [“The Future of Private Sponsorships in Europe,”](#) 08 November 2018.

162 Sabchev, Tihomir and Moritz Baumgärtel (2020), [“The path of least resistance? EU cities and locally organized resettlement”](#), Forced Migration Review, Volume 63, pp.38-40.

163 See Eurocities (2021), op.cit.; Stürner-Siovit, Janina and Paul Costello, [“What More Can Cities do for Afghan Refugees?”](#), The German Marshall Fund of the United States, 26 August 2021.

164 European Commission (2019), [AMIF Work Programme 2019](#), Brussels, C(2019) 7883 final, p. 6.

165 See Red Cross (2019), [“Joint Statement on the Future of the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund”](#); Beirens, Hanne, and Aliyyah Ahad (2019), [“Money Wise: Improving How EU Funds Support Migration and Integration Policy Objectives”](#), Brussels: Migration Policy Institute Europe, p.2.

166 Beirens and Ahad (2019), op.cit., p.4.

167 Comment by participant during third project roundtable, 29 September 2021.

168 Fratzke et al. (2019), op.cit., p.7.

169 Comment by participant during second project roundtable, 21 June 2021.

170 See, for example, Canada’s youth-to-youth refugee sponsorship initiative: World University Service of Canada, [“Student Refugee Program”](#), (accessed 15 October 2021).

171 See Patuzzi, Liam; Monica Andriescu; and Antonio Pietropolli (2020), [“Building Welcome from the Ground up: European small and rural communities engaging in refugee resettlement”](#), Brussels: Migration Policy Institute Europe. Kumin, Judith (2015), [“Welcoming Engagement: How Private Sponsorship Can Strengthen Refugee Resettlement in the European Union”](#), Brussels: Migration Policy Institute Europe.

172 See European Resettlement Network (2017b), [“Private Sponsorship in Europe: Expanding complementary pathways for refugee resettlement”](#), Brussels, p.11; ICF and Migration Policy Institute Europe (2018), op.cit., p.38. For the definition of family members for the purpose of family reunification, see Council of the European Union, [Directive 2003/86/EC of 22 September 2003 on the right to family reunification](#), L 251/12, Brussels.

173 Comment by participant during third project roundtable, 29 September 2021.

174 Interview with Irish community sponsorship organisation representatives, July 2021; interview with Susan Fratzke, Migration Policy Institute, June 2021. UN Refugee Agency (2011), op.cit., p. 243.

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