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Community sponsorship and churches: between opportunities and challenges

CONFERENCE REPORT

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

01 Foreword

02 Opening keynote: "One European way to community sponsorship - or many?"

p. 2

03 Community sponsorship: standards and definitions in existing networks

p. 6

04 Regional approaches to community sponsorship in different social realities

p. 14

05 Church activities in Search and Rescue

p. 23

06 Engaging churches and faith-based organizations in community sponsorship

p. 24

07 Looking forward: what role for CCME and its members?

p. 34

08 Annexes

p. 37

Foreword

Community sponsorship[1] has over the last years received an increasing amount of attention in European debates. Initially based on the model of Canada, a number of initiatives have in Europe started programmes working with elements of community sponsorship.

Several CCME members have been instrumental in implementing community sponsorship in their respective countries while others have more raised concerns e.g. about the risk of blurring responsibilities between state and civil society.

CCME therefore decided to enable an exchange among its membership and network on the opportunities and challenges of community sponsorship as part of its work on SAFE PASSAGE. As you can see from this report the event held in hybrid form, both in Berlin 2nd-3rd December 2021 and online, looked at current experiences and discussions. It also was a space to discuss at the specific role of churches and faith-based organisations and see what role CCME can play in the future in this area of work.

The summaries of discussion as well as the presentations held at the event are compiled in this report. They are complemented by two papers on theological and sociological perspectives on community sponsorship. Both had been drafted by Mr Oisin Desmond and sent as preparatory reading to participants. My thanks go to Mr Oisin Desmond for his work on the papers, at the conference and in drafting this report. My thanks also go to Ms Deborah Romano for her help in preparing the conference as well as finalising the report.

Last not least I would like to acknowledge with thanks the financial support by the Evangelical Churches in the Rhineland (EKiR) and Westphalia (EKvW), the Waldensian Otto per mille OPM and the United Methodist Committee on Relief UMCOR.

I hope this report will inspire further discussion and action on community sponsorship –in a time where SAFE PASSAGEs to and through Europe are more badly needed than ever.

Yours

Dr Torsten Moritz
CCME General Secretary

[1] While there is no universally accepted definition of community sponsorship UNHCR describes it as “covers different types of community-based and private sponsorship programmes that allow individuals, groups of individuals or organizations to come together to provide financial, emotional and practical support for the reception and integration of refugees who are admitted to their country.”

WELCOME AND OPENING PRAYER



Prof. Dr. Goos Minderman, moderator of CCME, opened the two-day conference with a prayer, and with Dr. Torsten Moritz, General Secretary of CCME, welcomed all participants on-site in Berlin and online to the event. They just had received news that a participant on location had tested positive for Covid-19 and had to go into quarantine. It was therefore decided that after the morning session with social distancing and mask-wearing, the two-day conference would proceed online for all participants.

OPENING KEYNOTE: “ONE EUROPEAN WAY TO COMMUNITY SPONSORSHIP – OR MANY?”

DR. NIKOLAS FEITH TAN, SENIOR RESEARCHER AT THE DANISH INSTITUTE FOR HUMAN RIGHTS

The first part of the presentation, which will be annexed to this report, clarified a number of conceptual issues surrounding community sponsorship.

Dr. Feith Tan showed that while there is significant conceptual flexibility, current practices also recognize a number of stable components:

- the controlled nature of the arrival (as contrasted with spontaneous asylum)
- a responsibility-sharing arrangement between government and civil society
- the financial contribution from either civil society or regional governments (which distinguishes the concept from civic engagement and volunteering)
- a protective focus (as opposed to labour migration)

- additionality (in principle): it is additional to state resettlement quotas or it starts out within state quotas but over time becomes additional
- governments retain ultimate responsibility so as to prevent the outsourcing or privatization of responsibility to private actors.

Based on existing programmes, he put forth a tentative typology of community sponsorship in Europe, proposing 3 different modalities (see annex):

- Autonomous, complementary pathways
- Sponsored resettlement
- Hybrid approaches

The proliferation of new community sponsorship models in Europe brings with it risks and opportunities. The flexibility of the concept thus not only provides room for creative initiative, but also brings with it the risk of co-option: it can become a way to protect only certain (religious) groups, or a way to privatize and outsource refugee protection, or a means of labour migration.

These dangers must be kept in mind, and he therefore proposed a number of core protection principles which should remain at the centre of the concept in Europe:

- additionality in principle
- respecting the right to seek asylum
- Non-discrimination and equal treatment
- Protection-focused
- Clarity of legal status
- Robust policy frameworks

In a concluding reflection he reiterated that while a one-size-fits-all approach in Europe is unlikely, the multiplicity of community sponsorship models in Europe should aim to follow these core protective principles. He also pointed to a number of gaps in the current research, in particular regarding integration outcomes. While the consensus in the Canadian literature is that community sponsorship improves integration outcomes, in Europe there is still a lack of evidence-based research on this issue.

PANEL DISCUSSION

Following the presentation, the panel discussion centred on a number of key points, in particular the protective core of community sponsorship, the concept of naming, and the relationship between top-down and bottom-up approaches to community sponsorship.

Dr. Tan reiterated what he sees as the central protective core of community sponsorship, and highlighted potential risks to that protective core and the need to be aware of these dangers. A number of cases were brought up by the participants to highlight potential dangers and opportunities: the Belgian case involving the sale of humanitarian visas showed there's room for corruption; the Australian programme functions essentially as an expensive labour migration programme under the guise of community sponsorship; the focus of Eastern European programmes on members of certain religions was not only discriminatory but also did not always result in integration as some might expect but in secondary migration flows.

Another central concern expressed by many of the participants dealt with the relationship between 'naming' specific persons for sponsorship and selection based on vulnerability. Dr. Tan suggested that a middle way can be found between a 'naming' option, which helps to mobilize and motivate sponsors and get civil society engaged, and community sponsorship's protective focus. While repeat sponsors, as seen in Canada, often have links to the refugees they sponsor, there are also cases of sponsors supporting those without links, for example in the case of former Vietnamese and Afghan refugees sponsoring Syrians in Canada. This is promising: the goal is to help repeat sponsors create a kind of chain link and thus, Dr. Tan explained, to culturally embed community sponsorship as a practice. Dr. Tan explained that naming can therefore be just as important as the principle of additionality. However, contextual and regional differences will also have to be taken into consideration. His sense was that in Europe, as the practice is so new here, and as the diaspora is still in the process of becoming integrated, they have not (yet) been as involved in sponsoring and bringing in others through sponsorship programmes as they have in Canada.

It was also noted that the relationship between 'naming' and selection on the basis of UNHCR lists/referrals is also potentially more complex than an either/or binary between 'intimate' links and vulnerability: community sponsorship 'naming' can also be based on vulnerability criteria (UNHCR referrals) and be complementary to resettlement. The relationship between naming and protection/vulnerability is thus perhaps more complex and it will be important to balance these different interests.

Ms. Nadine Daniel (UK Welcomes Refugees) made a suggestion on how to balance these interests. She explained that in the UK naming is forbidden, because of the concern that, as in Canada, individuals named will often be those with connections to sponsors, and not necessarily those most in need. However, there is a degree of flexibility in the UK. When a family has been identified for a community group, the community receives information about that family, and the sponsoring community can evaluate whether or not they feel they have the resources to meet the family's specific needs (language, medical needs, etc.). Another suggestion on how to balance these interests was to include a naming provision in the UK, but to 'cap' it at perhaps 15%-20% of cases, so as to maintain the protective focus of the programme.

Another question concerned the relationship between top-down and bottom-up approaches to community sponsorship. One participant wondered whether the lack of bottom-up, civil society-led, grassroots engagement affects the long-term sustainability of sponsorship programmes. Dr. Tan suggested that there are signs that the European approach to community sponsorship has been top-down, but that these government exchanges have borne fruit. Even in the case of Humanitarian Corridors, which is largely community driven, the involvement of top officials was crucial for getting pilot programmes off the ground. Pilot programmes that start small can then morph into something larger and evolve along unexpected lines, so Dr. Tan felt that even top-down led pilot programmes can eventually evolve into something more sustainable.

COMMUNITY SPONSORSHIP: STANDARDS AND DEFINITIONS IN EXISTING NETWORKS

In the afternoon, Ms Christina Triantafyllidi (Justice & Peace Netherlands) introduced the representatives of three different European networks, who each gave an overview of their projects and spoke about their definitions and standards.

1. SAFE (Forum réfugiés-Cosi)

Ms Caroline Goerlich introduced Forum Réfugiés-Cosi, a non-profit organization dedicated to the reception and integration of refugees, the defense of the right to asylum and the implementation of the rule of law. She presented their SAFE project, which stands for 'foSter cooperAtion For improving access to protEction'. This project, coordinated by Forum Réfugiés-Cosi working together with a number of different European partners, [1] and co-funded by the European Commission, will run from January 2021 until the end of December 2023.

SAFE aims to develop a multi-stakeholder approach in order to improve access to complementary pathways and community sponsorship, family reunification and humanitarian corridors for persons in need of protection in Italy and France. In France the project aims to foster collaboration between different stakeholders involved in

community sponsorship programmes and complementary pathways in order to develop some common guidelines. In Italy the aim is to design and implement a community sponsorship scheme adapted to the Italian context. At a European level, SAFE wants to facilitate collaboration between different European partners involved in community sponsorship through capacity-building workshops, meetings, webinars, etc. An online platform will be developed which will function as an open forum where technical, operational and conceptual issues linked to the implementation of community sponsorship and complementary pathways can be addressed and shared, and which will also provide the latest reliable data and highlight current research.

They also are currently studying the links between family reunification and private sponsorship schemes.

Their aim is to map the actors involved in Italy and France, to develop two national toolboxes on family reunification and sponsorship, and also to process cases of family reunification.

To these ends, a number of initiatives have already been organized. SAFE workshops held in May and June of 2021 dealt with ways to better deal with the expectations of host communities and refugees; a study visit to Italy in March 2022 will explore the mobilization of communities in different projects. (They also aim to build a network in France, Italy and Morocco of information support desks, providing a repository of material for young refugees and university staff to help refugees gain access to higher education.)

Finally, three papers will be shared (two nationally, one internationally), with all relevant stakeholders at a European and national level, and a final seminar at European and national levels will present the projects' findings and the toolboxes they developed.

[1] These European partners are: Federation of Evangelical Churches of Italy (FCEI), Protestant Mutual Aid Federation (FEP), Italian Red Cross (CRI), French Red Cross (CRF), Oxfam Italy, Union of Mediterranean Universities (UNIMED), and Inter-Cultural Association of Greater Victoria (ICA).

2. SHARE Quality Sponsorship Network (SHARE QSN)

Ms Gabriella Agatiello from ICMC introduced the SHARE network, which was established in 2012 and is led by ICMC Europe. As part of the ERN (European Resettlement Network), it is a platform that provides for the exchange of information and the sharing of best practice for local and regional actors involved in resettlement, integration, complementary pathways and community sponsorship. They also engage in advocacy and policy development, outreach and communications, research and mapping. Currently, it is particularly focused on resettlement and private sponsorship schemes in rural areas. They emphasize a multi-stakeholder approach, seeking to connect local and regional actors in Europe and to provide a bridge between existing networks.

They also emphasize the inclusion of refugees and migrants in the design, roll-out and evaluation of their programmes. Since 2012 they have worked with over 4000 stakeholders in 27 countries in the EU.

Ms Agatiello presented SHARE's definition of community sponsorship as a *public-private initiative, with the government responsible for the legal status of refugees and for ensuring their access to rights (education, healthcare, employment), and with private actors responsible for settlement support (reception, language learning, support with employment and accessing social services; and pre-departure matching/selection in the case of Humanitarian Corridors)*. She listed some of the benefits of community sponsorship: the ability to create support structures in smaller communities that still lack integration support; the ability to bring together a diverse set of actors with a range of expertise and a host of networks that facilitate integration; the ability to expand third country solutions to global resettlement needs; the ability to help maintain public support for refugees; the ability to give sponsors a leading role in welcoming refugees and thereby contribute to improved integration outcomes.

The SHARE QSN Project (Quality Sponsorship Network) seeks to accomplish three objectives, as formulated by Ms. Agatiello in her presentation:

- 1) To build up and strengthen the sponsorship stakeholder community by exchanging practices and information at EU level;
- 2) To ensure the quality and sustained engagement, support and recognition of volunteer sponsoring groups, refugee participation and feed-back;
- 3) To broaden the sponsorship base by engaging a wider spectrum of new actors in welcoming refugees, and by expanding programmes across national territories.

Running from January 2021 to June 2023, and co-financed by AMIF, it brings together a host of actors across Europe involved in private sponsorship schemes, with the aim of transforming ad hoc and pilot initiatives into more sustainable bottom-up, community-driven programmes. Currently it runs in 7 countries that have pilot sponsorship schemes, with ICMC Europe's SHARE network coordinating between the following partners: Basque Government (ES), Caritas International (BE), Consorzio Comunitas (IT), -

the Fédération de l'Entraide Protestante (FR), DiCV Cologne (DE), the Irish Refugee Council (IE), and Citizens UK (UK).

From January to December 2022, capacity building workshops will be held, providing training for lead sponsors and volunteer groups. Some of the issues on the agenda are: how to facilitate a better matching system; how to work with different communities; how to work with local authorities; how to run virtual trainings, etc.

A conference and transnational roundtable on interfaith cooperation and engagement in community sponsorship is planned for the end of March in Cologne. Its purpose is to encourage the engagement of new faith and non-faith actors in community sponsorship, to encourage continued leadership by church actors and to recognize the work of FBOs in community sponsorship.

SHARE has a number of other related initiatives. The SHARE Refugee Sponsorship Mobilization Platform will research grassroots engagement and the impact of community sponsorship on the local level and in the wider community. It will examine how sponsorship has worked in practice, by studying, for example, the relationship between sponsors and refugees, and it hopes -

to draw some lessons from the early practices of the pilot initiatives. This will run from September to June 2022, and results are expected by summer of 2022.

The SHARE Resettlement Ambassador Programme is another initiative of SHARE, in which resettled refugees are designated as SHARE Resettlement Ambassadors, to advocate for and help improve sponsorship schemes, and contribute to the development and promotion of the SHARE network. In 2014-2015, for example, nine SHARE Resettlement Ambassadors were recruited in different European countries, all of whom were trained in advocacy, public speaking and other skills.

[1] Three objectives as also formulated on SHARE's website; see <http://www.resettlement.eu/page/share-qsn-project>

3. COMET (FCEI)

Ms. Fiona Kendall from FCEI presented COMET (COMplementary pathways nETwork), which is a consortium of 14 partners from 7 different Member States, coordinated by the Federation of Protestant Churches in Italy (FCEI).

The project, with funding from AMIF, will seek to bring together existing sponsorship schemes in Europe (Humanitarian Corridors, community sponsorship, etc.) in order to develop an interconnected system and network, as well as perhaps develop new pathways. It will run for 3 years, from January 2022 to the end of December 2025.

On a 'macro-level context', the project has been situated against the backdrop of the EU Pact's recommendations on legal pathways, and the call to increase places in addition to resettlement through the expansion of humanitarian admissions. On a more 'micro-level', inspired by the success of the Humanitarian Corridors programme, a proposal was made to develop a Europe-wide Humanitarian Corridors programme. The pandemic provided some time for reflection, and participants realized it was better to coordinate the variety of pathways and programmes that already exist rather than develop one European blueprint. While Humanitarian Corridors' strength lies in its flexibility, many other individual national pathways have been developed for specific legal and cultural contexts, and this great variety should be seen as a strength.

Taking into consideration these different complementary -

pathways, and the fact that currently refugees themselves rarely can choose their destination or type of sponsorship, the plan is to develop an optimized matching process linking refugees' needs, skills and desires to particular countries and sponsorship models, thus maximizing their potential and improving integration outcomes. The different objectives of COMET, as stated by Ms Kendall in her presentation, are the following:

- To coordinate different types of complementary pathways for persons in need of protection
- To provide 130 admission places for persons in need of protection along the central Mediterranean route
- To exchange good practice between diverse models, experiences and contexts; to monitor and evaluate the project as it unfolds
- To develop an optimized matching system based not only on the need for protection but also the participants' geographical and familial links, skills and integration potential

- To engage in capacity building for participants and host communities, by professionally equipping all stakeholders
- To develop common tools, quality standards and a repository of materials that can be reapplied and put to good future use.

While there are significant operational and political challenges, Ms. Kendall also felt there was more of an openness for the idea at the moment, both politically and from civil society.

PANEL DISCUSSION

After the three presentations, Ms Triantafyllidi as moderator opened the floor to discussion and a number of key points were raised by the participants. It was emphasized that the 'quality' of sponsorship programmes extends in both directions: there has to be a guarantee of 'quality' for refugees themselves, a mechanism that safeguards the protective focus of such programmes; on the other hand, 'quality' must also ensure that the welcoming communities are well-resourced and trained so they are not themselves overwhelmed.

Another point related to the mobilization of support through engaging with local authorities. Many of the participants noted that local authorities can sometimes be more willing than national governments to support refugees by providing access to services and accommodation. In other cases, it was simply a case of the local authorities in rural areas having more capacity than those in urban settings, who can sometimes be overwhelmed.

Local authorities were seen as crucial partners that can help to fundraise and build networks by serving as a bridge between the local and the national. There are differences between countries, however. In France, as was observed in their humanitarian corridors project, local authorities in rural areas were more involved in service provision to refugees and refugee families, particularly with regard to housing. In Italy there is no direct engagement from local authorities, although new proposals currently on the table indicate an openness on the part of local authorities to get more involved and thereby help make the schemes more sustainable in the long-term. In the UK local authorities play a more formal role and are at the core of resettlement. However, it was pointed out that less than half of local authorities are involved, and that there are regional differences, with the Brexit voting core reflected in some local authorities' minimal engagement in resettlement. In Spain, regional governments play a lead role in developing sponsorship schemes. The SAFE project in France has also created a working group in order to make recommendations to both local and national authorities, and to support the mobilization of citizens.

Many of the participants expressed an interest in the upcoming interfaith conference at the end of May 2022 and in engaging with other faith-based organizations. One participant (Mr. Guilhem Manté of FEP) expressed the hope of establishing an alliance of FBOs (Jewish, Muslim and Christian organizations) at a national level in France which could be of immense benefit for the social cohesion of different organizations and for refugees. Ms. Agatiello pointed out that the conference is still in its initial conceptualization stages, but that both in Belgium and the UK (and Canada) there have been interfaith engagements. Dr. Moritz remarked that the Hebrew Immigration Aid Service, which also has an office in Brussels, has expressed an interest in getting Jewish synagogues to sponsor in a number of countries, and Ms. Nadine Daniel (UKWR) highlighted interfaith initiatives in the UK, such as Abraham's Tent Community Sponsorship group in South London.

REGIONAL APPROACHES TO COMMUNITY SPONSORSHIP IN DIFFERENT SOCIAL REALITIES

The late afternoon session looked at regional approaches to community sponsorship, more specifically from a Nordic, a Southern European, and central Northern European perspective. The moderator Rev. Steinar Ims briefly introduced the topic and the speakers.

1. Northern Europe: Norway and Finland

Ms. Karin Anderson, former parliamentary member of the Storting (Norwegian Parliament) for Hedmark County (Socialist Left Party), spoke on the Norwegian situation. She pointed out that while the Nordic countries share similar values and a similar social welfare system based on high taxes, high wages, strong labour unions, and a high percentage of women in the workforce, Sweden, Denmark, Norway and Finland also are different in many other ways, historically, geographically, geopolitically, culturally and linguistically. This is important to keep in mind when purporting to speak from a 'Nordic' perspective.

An important consideration when discussing community sponsorship in Norway is its potential implications for the Nordic social welfare system. The strong welfare state has ensured high education standards,

relatively high wages, lower levels of inequality and smaller wage differences compared to other countries (although this has changed somewhat in recent years). She wondered whether these factors are a strength or an obstacle when trying to meet the needs of asylum seekers and resettled refugees: only a small part of the labour market is open to those who do not speak Norwegian, and the high demand for qualifications can make it difficult for refugees to get a job and 'fit in'. She also noted that some believe such programmes jeopardize the welfare state.

Moreover, there are attitudinal and policy differences between Sweden, Denmark and Norway with regards to immigration. Sweden has in the past generally been more open to immigrants and to refugees than Norway, and has historically had a more multicultural and multi-ethnic -

population. However, Ms Anderson feels that Sweden's integration policy was not robust enough to deal with the influx of refugees in the wake of the Syrian crisis, and that this has led to a backlash in Sweden. Denmark, on the other hand, was one of the first to adopt a hard-line stance and to shut its borders. Norway sits somewhere in between, but it too has undergone changes in recent years. In 2013, a conservative government coalition came to power, and with it, a different refugee policy. The Europe-wide failures of the Dublin system and the perceived lack of a comprehensive approach in Norway led the government to adopt a more hard-line stance and to curtail access to asylum seekers. National politics and strong nationalist sentiments thus currently affect discussions surrounding community sponsorship. For such programmes to work, she argued, they must be supported by a governmental framework, with the government serving as the guarantor of quality, carrying ultimate responsibility, and observing its duties regarding refugee rights. Finally, such programmes have to be based on a strong integration policy that connects refugees with residents.

On a side note, she wondered whether it was possible to implement similar community-based programmes for refugees waiting for their asylum decision, often a particularly difficult and insecure period for them.

Dr. Ulla Siirto, adviser on immigration for the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland, presented a reflection on community sponsorship from a Finnish perspective and an outline of the findings from a study report on community sponsorship made by Jyväskylä University at the request of the Finnish Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment.

Community sponsorship in Finland is understood to be based on resettlement, integration and inclusion, and for now to be restricted to quota refugees. Financial responsibilities are generally seen as the responsibility of the state, in line with general expectations of the Nordic welfare system. The report found that most respondents, mainly municipal workers, responded positively to community sponsorship. They felt that a nationally implemented programme would help refugees settle and make social contacts, improve language acquisition, -

lead to better employment prospects, and provide refugees with the tools to realistically plan their future, and thus prevent marginalization and isolation.

The plan envisages a national coordinator, as well as local coordinators, who would be responsible for matching refugees with community members and for providing them with training. A 'group of 5' would serve as a community sponsor for every quota refugee to Finland. Among these private sponsors would be religious actors and other civil society actors. Hybrid models were also envisioned, with both the state and community involved in the integration process. Currently they are waiting for a pilot, which would run in a number of municipalities.

Addressing the role of FBOs, Dr. Siirto noted a change in attitude in recent years. In her interviews with parish workers, she found that while they understood the economic and financial aspects to be the state's responsibility, a different attitude had emerged after 2015/2016 with the realization that many refugees in Finland were still without official status. Interviewees felt that there ought to be some kind of mechanism for people in such -

situations and that religious bodies and local congregations could take on more responsibilities.

2. Southern Europe: Portugal, Spain and Italy

Ms Giulia Gori (FCEI) gave a brief overview and comparison of community sponsorship initiatives in Portugal, Spain and Italy.

Portugal ran a temporary community sponsorship programme from 2015 to 2018 for over 1500 sponsored refugees. Many of the country's resettlement programmes to date have had an intra-EU relocation focus, such as the recent pledge to take in 500 unaccompanied minors from Greece. While a community sponsorship pilot programme was announced in 2020, its implementation has been delayed due to the pandemic.

Spain launched a pilot initiative in 2019-2021 in the Basque region, sponsoring 29 people referred by the UNHCR. The Basque government covered the costs with sponsoring groups providing post-arrival social support. The programme has now expanded to other regions, for example the Valencia Region (23 people from Lebanon), -

and Navarre (11 Syrian refugees from Turkey).

Italy ran initiatives from 2016 to 2021, taking in 100 Lebanese persons. A new protocol with Libya will sponsor another 500 people, with 200 of them supported by Sant' Egidio and FCEI.

Those admitted in the Spanish programmes were part of existing state quotas. While the Basque government wanted to increase the total number of admitted persons, the central government argued that quota refugees could benefit from community sponsorship schemes. In Italy the principle of additionality remains a central criterion, and while admission numbers are in addition to government resettlement places, the state's resettlement places have been close to 0 in 2020-21.

While the identification process in Spain is part of the existing resettlement programme and is done by the UNHCR, that in Italy is done by organisations working in the field under the broad UNHCR mandate, but without a formal recognition and referral by the UNHCR being required. Sponsor organisations perform interviews and provide for pre-departure orientation.

Another key element to consider is the role of the government in sponsorship. In Spain the engagement of the Basque government is very significant: it coordinates sponsorship programmes, provides funding, access to healthcare, education, etc. While it works together with other stakeholders (FBOs like Caritas), there is a strong (regional) government ownership of the programme. The Italian programmes are not comparable to the Spanish scheme. While Humanitarian Corridors' participants have access to healthcare, etc. like any other asylum seeker in Italy, there is no real government ownership of the programme.

Both Spain and Italy lack a legal framework. In Spain the programmes depend on existing legal frameworks, while those in Italy are based on a MoU between sponsor organisations, the foreign affairs ministry, and in some cases, the UNHCR.

In her concluding remarks, Ms Gori addressed the Italian programmes in more detail and provided some more reflections from the Italian perspective. Italy's programmes are flexible as they are led by civil society and do not necessarily depend on the UNHCR referral system.

As a formal UNHCR identification is not required, sponsor organisations are allowed a certain degree of flexibility and creative initiative, which can be a strength. This more anarchic 'creative' situation has to be situated against the backdrop of the historical conflicts during the period of Italian unification between the (unified) state and the Roman papal states supported by the strongly Roman Catholic population.

There is also considerable variation in reception strategies adopted by FBOs in Italy. Caritas and Sant' Egidio rely on parishes, while FCEI relies on reception professionals. There are benefits and downsides to each approach, and it remains important to find a good balance between the variety of approaches.

Costs are borne by the sponsor organisations in Italy. This raises the crucial question as to whether this poses a difficulty when scaling up and whether it affects the programme's sustainability.

In Italy there is no overarching legislative framework. Negotiation with the government occurs on a case-by-case basis, allowing small groups of sponsor organisations

to enter into dialogue with relevant authorities. On the other hand, a legislative and policy framework that would help develop a national policy, provide a tool for the whole community, and open up a support network characterized by a division of labour, multilevel governance and a monitoring mechanism, would promote a more active role for the government.

Nevertheless, Ms. Gori felt that the Afghan crisis since summer 2021 has elicited a surprising openness, and that now might be the right time to promote the model of community sponsorship in Italy. In the last week of August Italy received 5000 Afghans who were escaping the Taliban regime. Challenges in the reception process may lead governments to accept that having a network of civil society actors ready to help the government in case of a mass emergency could be of benefit. The plan is to discuss this with government officials, and to see if the pilot experience can be turned into a well-designed practice.

3. Central Europe: Germany

Ms Rebecca Einhoff (UNHCR Germany) presented the German community sponsorship -

programme pilot called NesT. The programme has its roots in the many German responses to the Syrian crisis, which saw the mushrooming of different humanitarian programmes and increased resettlement numbers. After the introduction of these pathways, different ideas were floated for both Humanitarian Corridors or community sponsorship. In 2018, the government decided on a community sponsorship pilot programme, which was officially launched in May of 2019. The programme would be additional, work with UNHCR referrals, aim at the admission of 500 persons, and require the joint involvement of both civil society actors and the government.

The Framework of the German programme has a strong legal basis in section 23, art. 4 of the German Residence Act. The legal rights of community sponsorship participants are equal to those of recognized refugees, with the right to family reunification. There is no asylum procedure, and they receive a 3-year residence permit. After 3 to 5 years, they can then apply for a permanent residence permit. They gain full access to social welfare benefits, can attend integration classes and receive official counselling.

Different actors involved the process are the UNHCR, responsible for selection; BAMF (German Federal Office for Migration and Refugees) responsible for the matching process and selection of the sponsoring groups; the civil society contact point (ZKS), responsible for the training, counselling and support of sponsoring groups; the German government, responsible for the provision of social services, access to healthcare and education as laid down in the legal framework; and sponsoring groups, responsible for 2 years of accommodation and 1 year of integration support.

Ms Katharina Mayr from Caritas International Germany then delved more deeply into the current state of the programme, highlighted some lessons learned from the past, and outlined some future considerations.

She explained how ZKS are set up decentrally. They are supported by 3 organizations (the German Red Cross in Berlin, the Protestant Church of Westphalia in its region and German Caritas in Freiburg and the south of Germany). The main tasks of ZKS are to inform people about NesT through the NesT website, email address, -

social media or telephone hotline. They provide obligatory and voluntary training for the mentors, and support mentoring groups before and after arrival, work that can take up a lot of time and commitment.

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Currently there are 64 active groups, 48 of which are trained. 38 have submitted applications, 21 mentoring groups have welcomed refugees so far, and in total 91 persons have been admitted through NesT. 10 more groups are planned, and 50 refugees are expected to arrive in December 2021, or early 2022.

While the Covid pandemic has brought many extra challenges, there have been other difficulties as well, particularly regarding -

the provision of housing for 2 years, and the pre-financing of cold rent (which does not include heating, electricity or hot water). This has proven very challenging and will require creative solutions.

In order to improve the experience for both volunteers and newcomers, steps have to be taken towards better managing participants' expectations, by improving communication and by providing more information and greater transparency. A reader and additional online seminars could be handed out to better prepare for the very first steps to be undertaken after arrival.

The Federal Office for Migration and Refugees Research Centre will perform an evaluation of the pilot, and different civil society organizations will offer suggestions.

PANEL DISCUSSION

Regarding the suggestion to design a programme in Norway for those waiting on their asylum decision, a participant remarked that such a programme would likely fall under a different category, such as civic engagement or volunteering, as the state is responsible for asylum applicants' material living conditions. Another participant explained that something similar had been unsuccessful in the Netherlands.

One question concerned the importance of an independent evaluation of NesT so as to avoid bias. One participant asked if an independent evaluation by the German Federal Office for Migration and Refugees lends more credibility to the programme, and if similar cooperation with federal officers would be feasible in the Netherlands. It was felt that having the German Federal Office for Migration and Refugees involved in the evaluation of NesT lends credibility to the programme, as its officers are committed, experienced in the field of resettlement, and share their interim results with the UNHCR.

The legal framework in Italy was discussed, with one participant asking if an overarching legal framework that supports community sponsorship or complementary pathways, as in Germany's NesT programme, was a possibility in Italy. The respondent felt that in Italy, due to political realities, a soft law approach was the path to take, in order to open up a budget for a pilot project, and then on the basis of that to develop the architecture. On the other hand, some of the stakeholders felt that without a 'hard', normative legal framework in place, initiatives or programmes could more easily be jeopardized by changes in government.

One participant asked about decentralising Germany's NesT programme and involving civil society in the selection process in order to scale up the programme. It was felt that while decentralization would support scaling, it also comes with financial obligations and legal questions. A central question then arises as to who bears the costs. Nevertheless, there are ongoing discussions on naming and an interest in finding ways to get civil society involved in future developments.

On the other hand, NesT is not a naming programme for a reason, and consideration must be given to the effects decentralization might have, especially without a clear legal framework in place.

A final question concerned the relationship and interaction between regional, local and national authorities in the Nordic context. The sponsorship proposal in Norway has been framed by some on the right as a way to relieve the state of its responsibilities, and as a way to test the population's will and attitudes regarding refugees. Others felt that in Norway it could only work with a legal framework and with full governmental support. In Finland it rests on an agreement between the municipalities, sponsors and the refugees. As it is seen as a tool for integration, it differs from those community sponsorship programmes in which sponsors take on financial responsibilities. This kind of arrangement might work better than mere voluntarism.

CHURCH ACTIVITIES IN SEARCH AND RESCUE

Ansgar Gilster from Evangelische Kirche in Deutschland (EKD) presented the search and rescue activities on the Mediterranean Sea of their NGO, United4Rescue. Initially founded and led by members of EKD, it is now an independent association, backed by a broad alliance of over 800 partner organizations, including many church communities. CCME is one of the founding members of United4Rescue.

They have succeeded in raising enough funds to buy and deploy 2 rescue ships, Sea-Eye 4 and Sea-Watch 4, and have rescued over 2228 people. Equally important, their activities have been able to draw attention to this humanitarian crisis. They operate mostly in the central Mediterranean, but also support organizations in the Aegean Sea. Interventions are also being considered along other external European borders, as in the Poland - Belarus border, and the border between Spain and Morocco.

Search and rescue has had its ups and downs: once celebrated, it is now criminalized.

On the one hand, many efforts have been made to block boats and one might have little reason to expect positive developments given the current political climate. On the other hand, everyone can understand their simple message which is to prevent people from drowning.

Many of the participants expressed their admiration for the efforts undertaken. One question concerned the replication of United4Rescue's efforts. Mr. Gilster felt that it would be better to use existing structures and not to have too many 'brands' on the market. As United4Rescue can be seen as an open project and platform, it is sometimes easier to get donations for one or a few hats, than multiple hats, so to speak.

Ms. Daniels highlighted a clause in the new Nationalities and Borders bill that criminalizes those who go to the aid of refugees. If the bill passes, then those who come to the UK on boats would be detained under this bill.

ENGAGING CHURCHES AND FAITH-BASED ORGANIZATIONS IN COMMUNITY SPONSORSHIP

Mr. Bill Crooks (FCEI), moderating for the day, welcomed all the participants online and opened up the morning session of the 2nd day, an interactive day of discussions dedicated to the topic of how to engage churches and faith-based organisations in community sponsorship, to the risks of having private actors take on some of the state's responsibilities, and to the role of CCME. Mr. Crooks had drawn a doodle highlighting key questions and issues that had arisen during the conference: in the background a storm was brewing; the key questions and issues are in orange, the green comet signifies a collective approach, and a flashing green light indicates a hopeful change in the future. Beneath the bridge to connect the two communities, sharks swim, a reminder of the current stark environment in which they operate.

1. Belgium

Tetty Roozen, from the United Protestant Church in Belgium (EPUB/VPKB), introduced their project 'Huizen van Hoop – Maisons D'Espoir' ("House of Hope").

The United Protestant Church in Belgium has about 100 local churches in different parts of the country. Many church members had previously been involved in volunteer work, helping refugees during the 2015 crisis, and these many moments of encounter would form the basis of this project. The Synod of Protestant Churches then started a project called 'Over Huizen en Hoop', which later became 'Huizen van Hoop – Maisons D'Espoir'.

They discovered that one of the biggest obstacles for recognized -

refugees (with little or no income) was to find housing. Refugees are expected to leave the asylum reception centre and find housing within 2 months of being granted asylum. This is very difficult, especially without any social network to fall back on and no income to pay a deposit for the rent.

The church set up a working group to find ways to help. Their target group was newly recognized refugees. Enough money was raised to pay 3 months' rent in advance for a number of refugees; they also found that having someone accompany refugees in their search for accommodation improved their chances of success. They decided to work together with a non-profit called

Orbit Vzw, a project that seeks to support local Flemish initiatives helping refugees with housing.

During this time the project was asked to participate in a Humanitarian Corridors scheme for 10 refugees from Lebanon and Syria. They provided financial support, mostly in the form of paid rent. Volunteers from local churches and organizations helped the refugees find accommodation and settle in, welcomed some of them in their churches, helped to contact schools for children and find training for parents.

A scandal broke out in Belgium in 2016 when a sponsor participating in a programme to bring Syrian-Assyrian Christians to Belgium on humanitarian visas was found guilty of visa trafficking. Since then, and as a result of this scandal, it has been difficult in Belgium to discuss such programmes again outside of the official government programme, and it has tainted the concept of humanitarian corridors somewhat.

Ms Roozen made some suggestions for raising awareness, and discussed some of their facts and findings (see annex). Telling stories about these moments of encounter, and the cooperation between

different organizations and projects proved very important in building awareness. Organizing cultural activities to raise both money and awareness, having their own page on the church's website, publicizing messages about the project in both languages (French and Dutch), and getting the synodal councils to support the project were also all valuable ways to raise awareness about the project.

Supporting refugees in this manner gave the churches a better insight into the mechanisms that perpetuate poverty and exclusion: lack of housing, discriminatory hiring practices, etc. They also found that cooperation between churches, social centres and other non-profit organizations is of benefit. Refugees who live in poverty ought to be able to rely on the support churches can provide.

A small church has to know its strengths and its limitations. Nevertheless, it can play a role in changing the narrative. Seeing the commitment and input from faith groups can be a positive influence in broadening the support base in the community.

One question concerned the stories about asylum seekers queueing up for shelter.

Ms. Roozen explained that this is a recurring problem: every winter since 2012 there has been a reception crisis. It is especially difficult in the wintertime to ask for asylum, and more so for a single person. Policy previously led to the closure of extra centres, which led to fewer available places, driven by the rationale that this would discourage people from applying for asylum. However, centres are now reopening again, providing extra places and the authorities are trying to put in place a faster procedure.

One participant asked if there was any reason why Sant' Egidio or the Protestant church are not involved in the current community sponsorship scheme in Belgium, while Caritas is. Ms Roozen explained that churches are involved at a local level but that it isn't organized. While Sant' Egidio has expressed a desire to start again, bringing in a certain number of people to Belgium, much more is not known yet. The Protestant Church has been involved, but perhaps sometimes communication has not always been clear enough.

A question was asked about those persons who are in Belgium but who do not end up asking for asylum.

Ms. Roozen explained that there are volunteering groups and churches who help them with their situation but that their support can only go so far. As some people intend to go to Britain, they don't want to have too much contact. They also don't want to be notified or contacted by the Belgian government who might request them to apply for asylum in Belgium.

2. Germany

Dr. Christoph Picker, Director of the Evangelische Akademie der Pfalz' (the Protestant Academy of Palatinate), an academy that offers political education from a Protestant perspective, including on multiculturalism, migration and refugee policy, presented his findings on their attempt to establish a NesT programme in their Church and in the region of Palatinate, which sits between the Rhine river and the French border. His perspective on community sponsorship takes in broader political and ethical considerations, and he highlighted some of the critical barriers to be taken into consideration when thinking about and implementing community sponsorship programmes. The following findings and reflections are taken verbatim from his presentation (see annex).

They succeeded in convincing the synod of their church to support the programme, and to pay for the rent of 10 of the admitted refugees so as to relieve the mentoring groups of their financial burden. After some difficulty, they also persuaded the officials of Diakonisches Werk Pfalz (Palatinate) to get on board. However, they have found that they are meeting a hesitant audience, and have not been very successful in creating any kind of enthusiasm.

He provided a reflection on this general hesitancy, found even in liberal and welcoming environments as was experienced in 2015/2016. He offered some facts and critical arguments worth considering:

1. Community Sponsorship in the case of NesT means not just civil engagement but financial sponsorship in a strict sense. This doesn't fit with the German constitutional tradition of the welfare state. It is the state's duty to guarantee the needs of everybody – including those of refugees and asylum seekers. This can be complemented but cannot be replaced by private philanthropy. Against this backdrop, NesT is understood as another step in the neoliberal project of undermining the welfare state, and privatizing -

the care for basic needs. This is the first obstacle. In this area there were some bad experiences in the past. In 2014 some volunteers supported the admission of people from Syria and provided financial guarantees, but some years later were confronted with high demands for money, which they had completely underestimated.

2. Amongst activists, volunteers, professionals in refugee work, in organizations such as Pro Asyl, the Geneva Convention and the individual right of asylum as recognized in the German constitution are centrally important. By contrast, resettlement programmes and complementary pathways are voluntary matters. NesT is promoted as an additional and complementary programme, which is not meant to be a substitute for spontaneous protection and the right to asylum. In any case, it can be understood as part of a political strategy: closing the borders, minimizing the applications for asylum, and allowing only controlled and strictly limited humanitarian admissions. Theologically this has to do with the difference between rights and mercy.

3. Critical attitudes concerning the selection of the refugees. Following this reasoning, -

all refugees are vulnerable – not only some small groups. Some people are suspicious that the criterion for admission is not only the needs of the individual refugee, but the needs of the receiving society. And considering the limited dimensions of the programme, the selection remains highly arbitrary.

4. Another concern is that the NesT programme could create two classes of refugees. On the one hand would be the participants of NesT with a secured residence status, supported by a mentoring group, with a high grade of inclusion, and on the other hand, the asylum seekers, or other groups, quite isolated in collective accommodation centres and / or threatened with expulsion. Professionals in particular have argued that it would be better to focus on the established supporting networks and structures rather than to establish new programmes. These structures are, for example, the local migration services and the refugee advice offices, which are often maintained by the churches.

5. Regarding the general sentiments in our societies, Dr. Picker's impression is that many people, both volunteers and professionals, after -

the enthusiasm of 2015 and 2016 are exhausted. Sometimes they underestimate the intensity and the durability of their involvement. Some seem frustrated by the ineffectiveness of their engagement: they see people deported, remaining in an unstable status, remaining strangers in a not always welcoming environment. They are frustrated, too, by the political stagnation, and by the unlikelihood of a humanitarian, human-rights-based refugee policy in Europe.

6. NesT is a state programme: it is controlled by the Ministry of Interior Affairs and by the "Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge" – the Federal office for Migration and Refugees. In the public perception these are the main authorities responsible for shielding borders and for deportations. Now these actors are to be partners. As a result, there is not too much confidence. But maybe precisely this constellation can be seen as an opportunity.

Despite these obstacles, Dr. Picker said they would continue promoting NesT, because it opens a door, however small, for safe and legal passages. NesT may not be perfect, but sometimes one must choose for second best solutions in -

in an imperfect world.

The participants found it helpful to think of the broader philosophy and politics surrounding community sponsorship as listed by Dr. Picker. Equally important was to unpack the barriers to community sponsorship and to explore the reasons why people or groups do not want to get involved, so as to be better able to address those anxieties and concerns.

3. United Kingdom

Ms. Nadine Daniel BEM, Former National Refugee Welcome Coordinator for the Church of England, and current Campaigns & Strategy Lead for UK Welcomes Refugees, presented an overview and a reflection of the state of community sponsorship and refugee resettlement in the UK, and the central role churches and faith-based organizations have played in this area.

FBOs and churches have in the UK been at the forefront of refugee support for a long time, going back to World War I. Moreover, having an established church in the UK with 25 bishops sitting in the upper parliament means that they have a legal right to play a part in the legislature and be involved in asylum work and community -

sponsorship.

She presented UK Welcomes Refugees, which is dedicated to the resettlement of refugees in the UK, primarily through community sponsorship, and which was born after a long period of discussions and study visits to Canada to explore its community sponsorship programmes.

Reacting to the needs of asylum seekers and the unfolding Syrian crisis, the UK's Home Office launched the Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme (VPRS) in 2014. Under this scheme, the UK sought to resettle 20,000 vulnerable persons affected by the Syrian conflict. Initially only for Syrian nationals, it was extended to include other nationalities. At the time, it was proposed community sponsorship be additional to the resettlement scheme and to include a naming provision for resettled refugees seeking to reunite with family members. These requests were denied, however.

There were some challenges. The Home Office was very risk averse, and a number of components of the scheme proved very challenging: community groups had to obtain charitable status, which was very difficult, more so if one was setting up a charity to

support 1 family; each group had to raise 9000 pounds, and provide accommodation for 2 years.

Some independent churches also felt that this aid was primarily the government's job, and discriminated against other refugees not included in community sponsorship schemes who had not been given anything.

They also found that the Brexit voting lines were reflected in community sponsorship's geographical roll-out, with 97 % of community sponsorship schemes happening at one side of the line. Devon in particular has been one of the leading places for community sponsorship, with churches also getting involved educationally there.

The UK Resettlement Scheme (UKRS) will consolidate existing resettlement schemes (the Vulnerable Persons' Resettlement Scheme, the Vulnerable Children's Resettlement Scheme, the Gateway Protection Programme), into a 'global resettlement scheme', aiming at a quota of 5000 refugees in year 1. While community sponsorship is additional to that, there is little knowledge of what kind of actual numbers are in play -

at the moment. The concern is that the new Nationalities and Borders Bill, which includes community sponsorship, is seeking to end spontaneous asylum and pave the way for resettlement, and thus become the only way to enter the country, enabling the government to determine selection.

Important post-pandemic crises have since occurred. The crisis in Hong Kong has led to an estimated 100000 visa applications, with 25000 people believed to have already arrived, although the exact numbers are not known. They are legally entitled to a British Overseas National Passport (BON), and to live in the UK for 12 months. UK Welcome Refugees has a subsidiary UK Welcome Hong Kongers, to help with the integration process.

The Afghan crisis then took everyone by surprise, and actors are looking at a blended model of community sponsorship, in order to get groups who have passed through the Home Office system to assist local authorities who are struggling with the influx of Hong Kongers and Afghans. Churches are working on this at the moment.

A question was raised about the UK's culture of sponsorship, -

swhere cultural events, galleries, etc. are sponsored by charities, and a participant asked if this has been an advantage in the roll-out of community sponsorship in the UK. Ms. Daniels explained that there had been setbacks, as FBOs were seen by some as doing the government's work. On the other hand, other partners in the UK have also become interested in supporting community sponsorship, such as the Burberry Company. But beyond the philanthropic aspect, the manner in which it has been rolled out has led to a two-way transformational process, not just for the refugee families, but also for the life of the community.

PANEL DISCUSSION

A final discussion ensued, with Mr Crooks offering 4 key dimensions to keep in mind when thinking about community sponsorship: 1) awareness raising, 2) preparation, 3) sustainability, and 4) partnerships. Participants offered their comments and suggestions on each of the 4 dimensions.

1. Regarding the importance of awareness raising, for example, one participant felt that a lot of disinformation was being pushed and that the dissemination of properly researched facts was particularly important to counter that. Another central question centred on how to move from more reactive schemes to proactive initiatives, and how to find ways to effect this transformation.

2. Regarding preparation, it was felt that there needs to be a kind of preparatory process in place in which expectations are clearly articulated, for example concerning the government's role. Adequate support for administrative tasks, establishing good connections to the existing public services are also important.

3. As to 'sustainability', repeat sponsorship was seen as key to community sponsorship's success. How to find ways to get sponsors to repeat their efforts, or how to encourage others, including sponsored refugees, to do the same, was a key question and an area that needs work.

Reflection on the philosophy and politics of community sponsorship, and on the barriers to and anxieties surrounding community sponsorship, was also seen as important, thus grounding it in a broader discussion on border externalization and international protection. Community sponsorship could create spaces of encounter between refugees and the local population. Engaging local communities in sponsorship could thus help create policy change in a sustainable manner.

Another obstacle is that often people fall into 'project mode', moving from one project to the next. This current mindset is problematic when aiming for sustainability.

4. Regarding partnerships, it was felt that while there can be a lot of goodwill, the question was how to move goodwill into action, and help sustain grassroots efforts. Engaging with private entities (such as Burberry), was also seen as a potential way to broaden the base beyond FBOs. Clearer communication with key partners was also seen as crucial.

LOOKING FORWARD: WHAT ROLE FOR CCME AND ITS MEMBERS?

Prof. Goos Minderman, moderator for CCME, shared his reflections on the role of CCME. He highlighted the threefold division of CCME's work:

1) activities in which CCME wants to lead (safe passage, community sponsorship, humanitarian corridors, and uniting in diversity);

2) activities in which it wants to facilitate other organisations;

3) activities in which it can follow others.

Leading means taking the initiative, and this can be done in a variety of ways: organizing conferences, lobbying at the EU, bringing people together, connecting networks (North to South, government to church, grassroots to the national or supranational level, etc.), and empowering, inspiring and educating others.

With regards to sponsorship, there are a lot of different projects, and the key will be to align them all. Establishing cooperation between

the different networks and projects is an area where CCME could create added value.

He identified three dilemmas and three challenges to CCME's work:

- Not only are national governments seeking to externalize borders, but also within the Christian churches and networks, migration is not a pressing concern.
- A second issue concerns linking the local to the European level. Lobbying efforts in Brussels are often successful when results at grassroots level can be shown. Has CCME reached that balance between the local and the European level?
- A final challenge is the problem with current legislation. There are increasingly cases of the law limiting refugee aid (such as instances of the criminalization of refugee help). Can a problem always be solved with traditional means? A more activist, less law-abiding stance and approach might become necessary at some point.

PANEL DISCUSSION AND CONCLUDING REMARKS

Recommendations and thoughts from the panel on the role of CCME were many and diverse.

While CCME produces detailed papers, it could perhaps also publish more easily accessible material for the average churchgoer. This need not be written material, but could perhaps also be audio-visual material, or bite-sized materials sent out to the vast number of people that make up CCME's family. This could also equip CCME members with the resources necessary to raise awareness of community sponsorship and to raise CCME's profile.

An objection and concern was that it may not be either realistic nor desirable for CCME to contact every person of denominations connected to CCME. Another key issue are financial constraints, and the fact that CCME's members should share more information about their activities with CCME if they themselves want to know about other members' activities.

Many participants felt that with a broader profile and a public/online presence it would be easier to get the necessary resources, but that to raise that profile and public presence a lot of investment was necessary, including digitally: a catch-22 situation.

He explained that while CCME has no communications department, a more fundamental question is whether CCME should be directing its attention to the grassroots level. CCME has to revert to its national church members and take them into consideration when making decisions. As the national members decide what CCME does and are target groups of CCME's services, it is unclear what the added value would be of targeting individuals and parishes. Finally, as the CCME's working language is English, the amount of resources necessary to have translations and the needed multilingual material sent out to members would be substantial.

A lot of work has been and is being done on community sponsorship. This event was organized to facilitate high-level discussions and the systematic sharing of information, and perhaps even get sceptics and supporters to reach some common ground. This event sought to contribute to the consolidation of information about community sponsorship, and he encouraged participants to add comments and offer suggestions to the preparatory document of the conference.

This was echoed by others who emphasized the importance of these meetings not only in facilitating discussion and systematic information sharing, but also in providing an open and trusting space that is not always available outside of CCME. Not all church organizations are so enthused about the topic of resettlement. Communicating institutionally between churches is thus equally important, before getting the message out on a larger scale. Such an event is thus also a way to test certain grounds and continue discussion on what CCME should be doing.

An important function for CCME, exemplified in the organizing of this event, is CCME's catalytic role: to connect people and networks, bring them together to stimulate discussions and get things moving. He reminded the participants that reservations and challenges are always to be expected, that initiatives start small and perseverance is necessary.

ANNEXES

AGENDA

Community sponsorship and churches: between opportunities and challenges

Berlin 2nd-3rd December 2021

A CCME event in cooperation with and hosted by Diakonie Deutschland
(Evangelisches Werk für Diakonie und Entwicklung e.V.) Caroline-
Michaelis-Str. 1
D-10115 Berlin

Format: hybrid (30 persons on site plus virtual participants) in person participation very much encouraged, virtual participation via zoom (no livestreaming)

Wednesday 1st December 2021

Arrivals, possibility of joint supper for those on location (19.00 h, Papa Pane, Ackerstr 23, Mitte)

Thursday 2nd December 2021 (Open to the public)

9.00 Welcome and opening Prayer Prof Dr Goos Miderman CCME moderator

9.30 Opening keynote: One European way to Community sponsorship – or many ? - Dr. Nikolas Feith Tan, Danish institute for Human right

11.00 Break (tea/Coffee on location)

11.30 Community sponsorship – standards and definition in existing networks

- SHARE Quality Sponsorship Network - Gabriela Agatiello ICMC
- SAFE – NN Forum réfugiés
- COMET – Fiona Kendall FCEI

13.00 Break (lunch for those on location)

- 15.00 Regional approaches to community sponsorship in different social realities
- Norway & Nordic - Karin Andersen former MP (SP Norway)
 - Italy (Portugal and Spain) - Giulia Gori FCEI
 - Germany – NeSt - Katharina Mayr Caritas Germany & Rebecca Einhoff UNHCR Germany
- 17.00 Break (tea/Coffee on location)
- 17.30 Info session on church activities in Search and rescue – Ansgar Gilster EKD
- 18.30 End of programme
- 19.00 Supper in town (for those on location)

Friday 3rd December 2021 (CCME members and partners only)

- 9.00 Engaging churches and faith-based organisations in community sponsorship
(Awareness, preparations, sustainability, partnerships) – panel of participants
- 11.00 Break (tea and coffee on location)
- 11.30 Looking forward: what role for CCME and its member ? – panel with CCME GS and ExCom
- 13.15 Closing words and prayer
- 13.30 End of event (sandwich lunch for those on location)

Afternoon Departures

The language of the meeting is English.

For on location participants, there is a participation fee of 100 €. This includes all meals from supper on 1st to 3rd lunch as well as overnight stay from 1st to 2nd and 2nd to 3rd in a nearby hotel (reservations have been made by CCME).

In case of necessity, the fee can be waved/reduced and support for travel costs provided – please arrange both with the CCME General Secretary.

Virtual participation is free of charge.

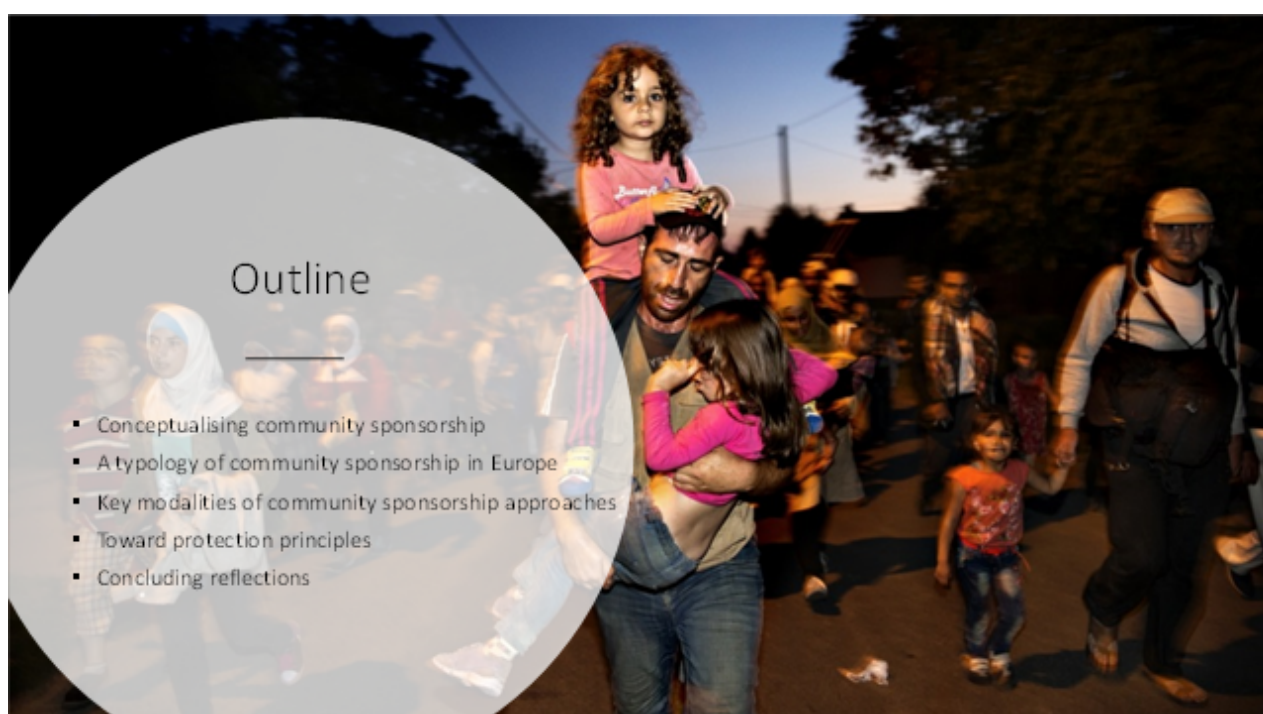
Deadline of registration is 18th November 2021. Please note that CCME will if needed select on location participants to provide for a well balanced group composition. We therefore ask you not make any travel arrangements before you have been accepted as an on location participant.

With the support of EKiR , OPM Valdese/metodiste, UMCOR and the Evangelical Church of Westfalen



PRESENTATIONS

Dr. Nikolas Feith Tan – Keynote: “One European approach to community sponsorship – or many?”



Outline

- Conceptualising community sponsorship
- A typology of community sponsorship in Europe
- Key modalities of community sponsorship approaches
- Toward protection principles
- Concluding reflections

Conceptualising community sponsorship

Working definitions

- UNHCR: “programmes where individuals or groups of individuals come together to provide financial, emotional and practical support towards **reception and integration** of refugees”.
- GRSI: ‘allow individuals to directly engage in refugee **resettlement** efforts. Sponsors commit to providing financial, emotional and resettlement support to help newly-arrived refugees **integrate** into life in a new country.’
- Ricci: an “initiative by private associations with recognized expertise in the field to provide for an alternative, legal, and safe **pathway**”.

Conceptualising community sponsorship

Components:

- Planned arrival of refugees (≠ spontaneous asylum)
- Shared responsibility between government and civil society
- Financial contribution of sponsors/subnational governments
- Protection focus (≠ labour migration)
- Additionality (in principle)
- Government retains ultimate responsibility for refugees



Toward a typology?

Autonomous complementary pathway

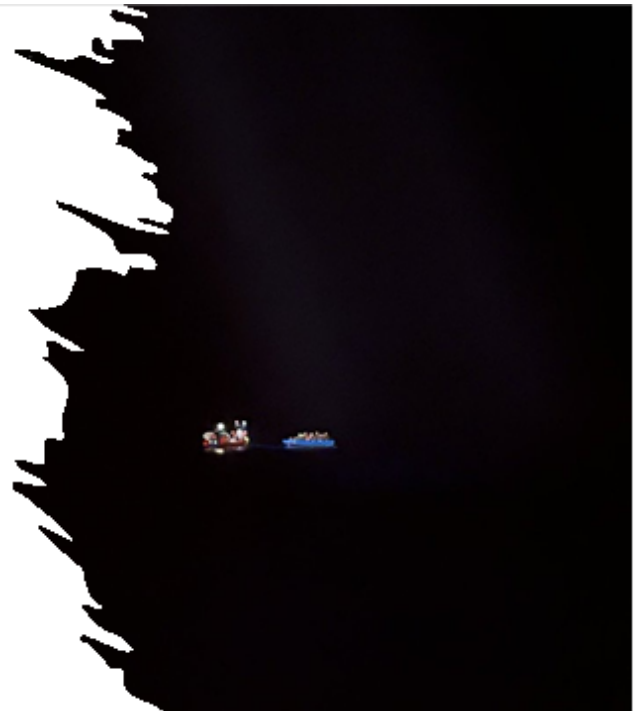
- privately-led admission and integration of refugees
- fx humanitarian corridors in Italy, France and Belgium

Sponsored resettlement

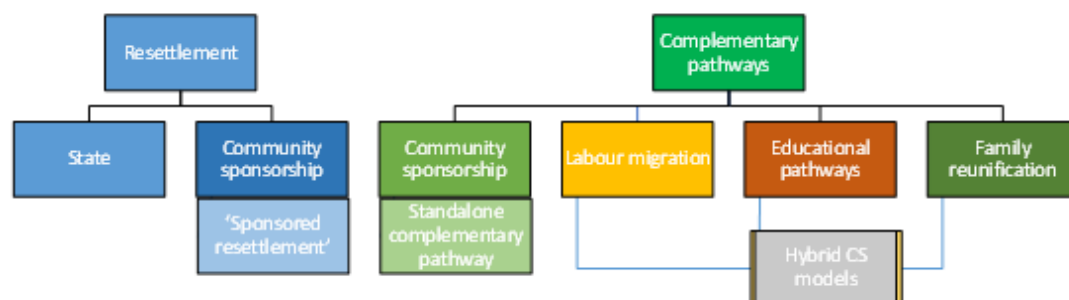
- focused solely on integration support for resettled refugees
- Fx Germany NestT, UK, Ireland, Basque pilot, Finnish pilot?

Hybrid approaches

- As 'wrap-around' tool for any given complementary pathway, for refugee students, workers and family members
- Fx German FLSS (family reunification), UNICORE Italy (education)



Resettlement, complementary pathways and hybrid approaches

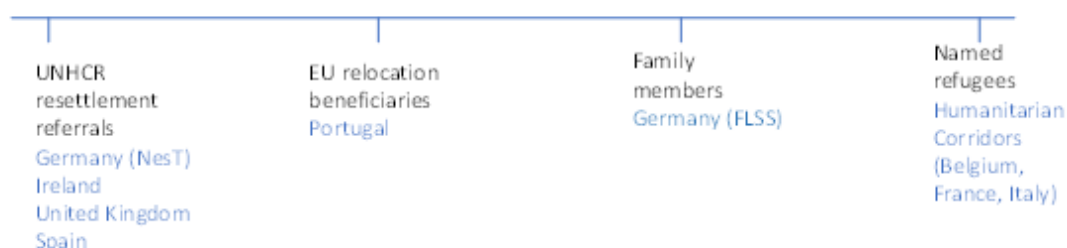


European practice on community sponsorship

- 2013-18: German Federal Länder Sponsorship Scheme as **hybrid community sponsorship/family reunification**
- 2015-16: Czech Republic, Poland and Slovakia as **complementary pathway** for protection of Christian refugees
- 2015-18: Portuguese temporary scheme to meet **relocation** targets
- 2016: Humanitarian corridors in Italy, France and Belgium as **complementary pathway**
- 2016: United Kingdom's program launched focused on protection of Syrians as **sponsored resettlement**
- 2019: Ireland pilot focused on integration (now permanent) as **sponsored resettlement**
- 2019: Spain pilot in the Basque region focused on integration as **sponsored resettlement**
- 2019: German NesT model focused on integration and expanded protection as **sponsored resettlement**
- 2019: University Corridors for Refugees (UNICORE) as **hybrid community sponsorship/education pathway**
- December 2019: Belgium, Malta and Portugal pledged to explore pilot community sponsorship models
- 2020: Swedish feasibility study
- 2021: Finnish feasibility study

Key elements of community sponsorship

1. Who can be sponsored?



Key elements of community sponsorship

2. Who can sponsor?

Individuals ('Group of 5')
Ireland
Germany (FLSS)
Germany (NesT)

Organisations
United Kingdom
Spain
Humanitarian
Corridors
(Belgium,
France, Italy)

Key elements of community sponsorship

3. Duration of sponsorship

1 year
Germany (NesT) (integration)
Humanitarian Corridors
(Belgium, France, Italy)

18 months
Ireland (integration)
United Kingdom
Portugal

2 years
Germany (NesT) (housing)
Ireland (housing)

5 years or more
Germany (FLSS)

Key elements of community sponsorship

4. Sponsors' share of responsibility for financial costs

Social welfare
United Kingdom
Germany (FLSS)
Humanitarian
corridors

Housing
Ireland
United Kingdom
Germany (NesT)
Humanitarian
Corridors (Belgium,
France, Italy)

No obligations
Spain (Basque
regional
government)

Key elements of community sponsorship

5. Actors

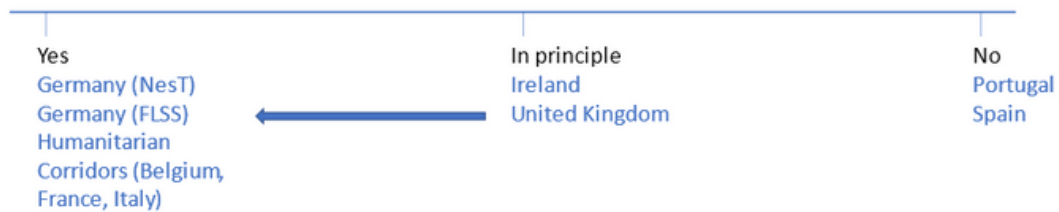
Local/regional
government
Germany (FLSS)
Spain
Humanitarian
Corridors

Civil society focal point
Germany (NesT)
Ireland
United Kingdom

Faith-based
organisations
United
Kingdom
Spain
Humanitarian
Corridors
(Belgium,
France, Italy)

Key elements of community sponsorship


6. Additionality



Towards protection principles

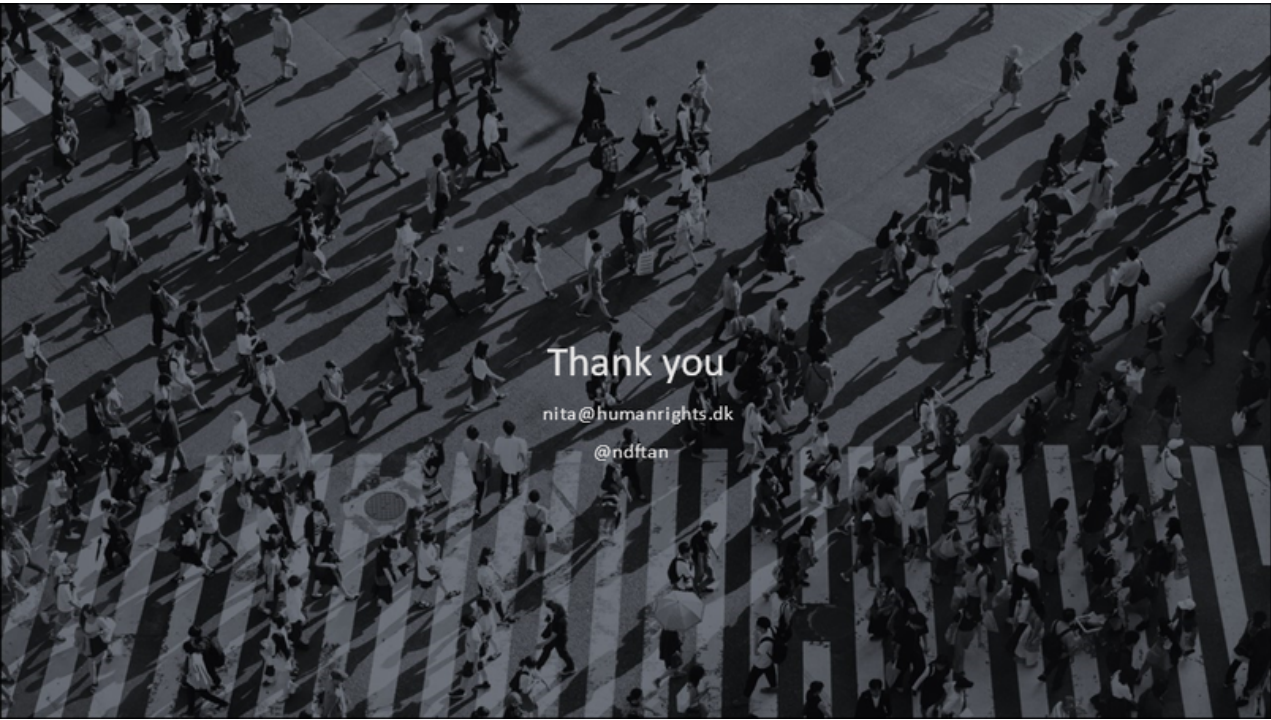
- Additionality in principle
- Respecting the right to seek asylum
- Non-discrimination and equal treatment
- Protection-focused
- Clarity of legal status
- Robust policy frameworks



An abstract painting featuring a large, stylized face with a prominent nose and a hand reaching out. The colors are vibrant, including reds, oranges, yellows, and blues. A semi-transparent white circle is overlaid on the left side of the image, containing the title and a list of bullet points.

Concluding reflections

- Multiple European community sponsorship models
- Core set of principles?
- Top-down or bottom-up?
- The role of local authorities
- Research gaps remain

A high-angle, black and white photograph of a large crowd of people walking across a zebra crossing. The shadows of the people are cast long and dark on the pavement, indicating it is either early morning or late afternoon. The crossing has white stripes.

Thank you

nita@humanrights.dk

@ndftan



Credit: Isabel Corthier for Caritas International

SHARE QUALITY SPONSORSHIP NETWORK (QSN)

Conceptualisations of Community
Sponsorship and opportunities for
actors to engage



The SHARE Network

Created in 2012

Has engaged 4,000 stakeholders in 27
EU countries in dialogue, capacity-
building and advocacy

SHARE focuses on connecting and
engaging with local European actors and
communities interested in or working in
the fields of refugee and migrant
inclusion, refugee resettlement,
complementary pathways of admission,
refugee sponsorship and relocation.

What does the SHARE Network do?



Multistakeholder engagement

Best practice exchange & peer learning

Training & capacity building

Research & mapping of practices

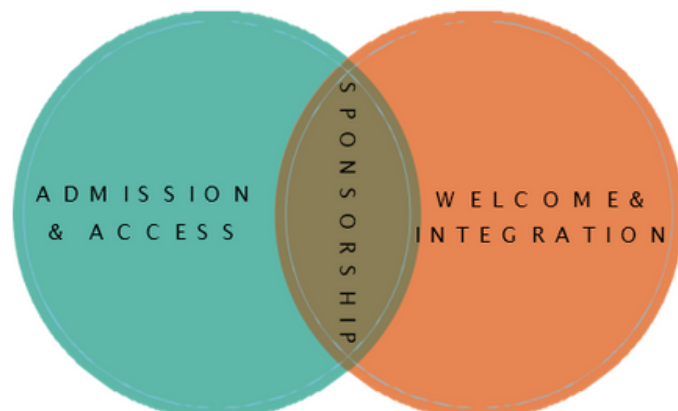
Outreach & communications

Advocacy & policy development



What is community sponsorship?

A public-private partnership between **governments** who facilitate legal admission for refugees and **private actors** who provide financial, social and/or emotional support to receive and settle refugees into the community





Sharing Responsibilities between private and public actors

GOVERNMENT

- Legal Status - refugee, temporary, humanitarian status, asylum seeker
- Access to rights - Education, healthcare, employment

Sponsored
refugee

PRIVATE ACTORS

- Pre-departure and selection/matching (HC)
- Housing
- Settlement support
 - Welcome, language learning, access to medical and social services, support towards employment...

Benefits of community sponsorship



01

It expands third country solutions for persons in need of protection

02

It can help maintain public and political support for refugees and other newcomers

03

It gives sponsors and local communities a leading role in welcoming and integrating refugees

04

Diverse actors bring in different expertise and networks that can create better integration outcomes

05

Creates support structures in smaller communities - that still lack integration support structures.



Credit: Isabel Corthier for Caritas International

SHARE QSN Programme

Supports pilot and ad-hoc sponsorship initiatives develop into sustainable, community-driven programmes

QSN uses a multi-stakeholder, grassroots and bottom-up strategy fostering refugee participation



SHARE QSN



SHARE QSN Partner Countries

A consortium of actors across Europe experienced in refugee integration and currently carrying out community sponsorship programmes in their national and local contexts



Objectives of QSN



To build up and strengthen the sponsorships stakeholder community



Ensure quality and sustained engagement, support, and recognition of volunteer sponsoring groups, ensuring refugee participation



To broaden the base by engaging a wider spectrum of new actors in welcoming refugees through sponsorship

OPPORTUNITIES FOR ENGAGEMENT WITH QSN



OPPORTUNITIES FOR ENGAGEMENT WITH QSN



Multi -faith engagement in refugee sponsorship



Conference on Interfaith Community Engagement

Transnational roundtable in Germany on interfaith cooperation in community sponsorship. The goal is to encourage the continued leadership of Church actors and the engagement of new faith and non-faith actors.

Broadening the base of volunteer groups
Conference is part of the overall objective of broadening the base of sponsorship programs by engaging a wider spectrum of new actors in welcoming refugees and by expanding programs across national territories.





Sponsorship Mobilisation Platform



Series of meetings, activities and initiatives that gathers sponsor group representatives, FBOs, refugees, civil society organisations, regional governments, local authorities and practitioners to exchange and discuss how to work together to grow and expand refugee sponsorship.

The platform also works to enable refugee participation in sponsorship and bring their lived experience and concerns to the local, national and EU level and ensure balanced advocacy on sponsorship.



Thank you!



Reach out to us if you have any questions



Gabriela Agatiello
agatiello@icmc.net

Follow us on Twitter
[@ShareNetwork3](https://twitter.com/ShareNetwork3)

Website
www.resettlement.eu

Dr. Ulla Sierto – Community Sponsorship in Finland

This year a report of the community-based sponsorship was published. The study was ordered by the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment and made by Jyväskylä University. Actually, one member of this research group used to work on the field of migration in our church. Religious actors were involved in the study process. I invited workers from local congregations to an interview made by a researcher of this study. We were able to give our input for this issue.

Community -based sponsorship in Finland is understood a bit differently than it originally is. So, it is not expected that private persons or communities are taking economical responsibility about refugees' life, but from the point of resettlement, integration, and inclusion. This study and planned activities are concentrating on quota refugees.

I draw some outlines from the recently made study report: In general, all respondents reacted positively to the idea of community-based sponsorship in the meaning of integration. It was seen as very important that the national programme would make it easier for refugees to settle in early phase, find social networks, learn the language, improve employment opportunities, and plan their future realistically.

The research suggest that a national coordinator should be named for the programme as well as local coordinators, whose task would be taking care of matching refugees and community members and train them. It is planned to have about five people group for every quota refugee for 1-2 years from their coming to Finland. The model would be joining civil society, including religious actors, stronger in refugees' integration process. Activities based on partnerships between different actors can be called a hybrid model. If successful, a community-sponsored programme would support integration and prevent marginalisation. Now we are just waiting for a pilot, which will be in some municipalities.

I asked from different parish workers among immigrants what they are thinking about private sponsorship a couple years ago. According to that round it was obvious that in Finland (at least among parish workers) economical responsibility of certain refugees during certain years was not understood. This is very much related to Nordic welfare model where we see this kind of economical responsibility belonging to state's role.

When time has gone and parish workers have been along with refugees who hasn't been able to get official status in Finland or whose family reunification is being stuck, I have also got another kind of messages. People and religious communities having such refugees around would like to take more responsibility of those people's living.

More information about the study:
https://julkaisut.valtioneuvosto.fi/bitstream/handle/10024/163177/TEM_2021_37.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y



NesT

The German Community Sponsorship Programme

Genesis, Structure, State of Affairs, Future

Genesis of the German Programme



- Syria crisis led to different humanitarian admission programmes and increased RST numbers
- Discussion among CSO and churches about a CSP started with different ideas (i.a. humanitarian corridors)
- In February 2018, the State Secretary of the German MoI announced to introduce a pilot CSP in Germany
- Different ideas were discussed and, in July, 2018 the cornerstones of the programmes were decided by the MoI
- Details were set in project groups, consisting of German, CSO and IOs
- In May 2019 the pilot programme officially started



Framework of the German Programme



- Legal Basis is Sec 23 Para 4 of the German Residence Act (AufenthG)
 - Legal Rights equal those of recognised refugees (1951 Geneva Convention)
 - e.g. with regard to family reunification, reasonability of obtaining documents, consolidation of residence
 - No asylum procedure
 - 3 year residence permit (that can be extended)
 - Legal possibility to apply for a permanent residence permit after 3-5 years
 - Entitlement to social welfare
 - Right to attend integration classes and receive official counselling

3

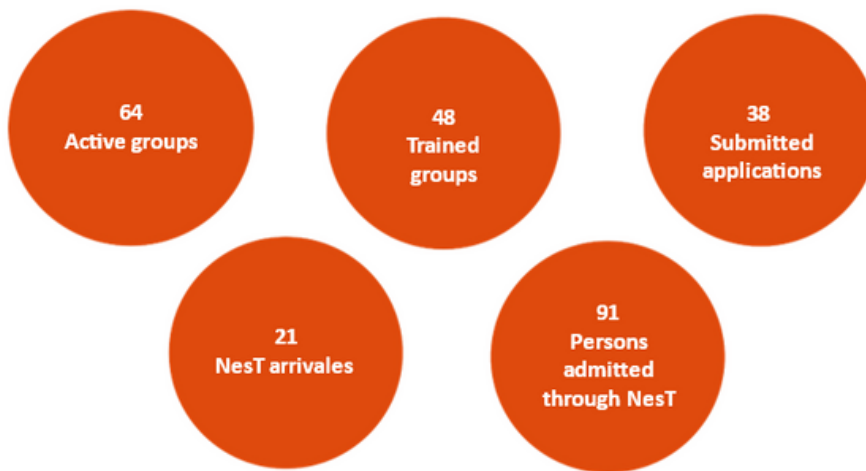
Actors and Structures of the Programm



- Refugees are selected by UNHCR and proposed to the German government (regular RST procedure with involvement of *inter alia* IOM and German authorities)
- Matching and selection of sponsoring groups is conducted by BAMF
- The civil society contact point (ZKS) trains, counsels and supports sponsoring groups
- The German government is responsible for *inter alia* the legal framework and provides social services, education and health care
- Sponsoring groups are trained and provide integration support to refugees (2 years of accommodation, 1 year integration support)

4

State of Affairs: total number of groups and arrivals



Challenges and Lessons Learned



Challenges

- Challenges caused by the pandemic
- Provision of housing
- Pre-financing of cold rent

Lessons learned

- Better preparation for the first steps after arrival → Reader and additional online seminar
- Expectation management, information and transparency

Future



- Pilot phase: up to 500 arrivals through NesT
- Evaluation of the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees Research Center
- Development of suggestions for the adaption of the program by different civil society actors



Ms. Tetty Roozen – Huizen van Hoop/Maisons d'Espoir



VPKB/EPUB
PROJECT

HUIZEN VAN HOOP
MAISONS D' ESPOIR

Presentatie CCME Berlijn
3-12-2021

The start of the project

Preparation:

Clear agreements about:

- The procedure for applications
- Description of the refugee target group
- Selection procedure: criteria for granting aid, selection group,
- *Collecting stories to inspire others and ideas for sponsoring*
- *Establishing a budget with fixed costs and living expenses for hosting a family/person under Humanitarian Corridor/Community Sponsorship*

- Increased arrival of refugees/asylum seekers in 2016
- The messages in the media
- Above all 'The ENCOUNTER'



Cooperation for housing en integration for recognized and newly arrived refugees



Cooperation can be an additional and inspiring reinforcement of the church's diaconal commitment, image and outreach in society in longer term. Uptill now 60 families and single persons got support and many churches were directed to other initiatives and services which could help them with their questions about asylum, family reunion and integration.

Ecumenical Cooperation:

As partner in the refugee housing project of **Orbit** by training and support for volunteers (helpdesk, project newspaper, policy influencing, exchange of experiences and expertises, research (universities)....

As partner in the Humanitarian Corridor programme, led by **San Egidio**, for 'resettlement' on the basis of humanitarian visas for 150 refugees from Libanon/Syria. VPKB/UCB was responsible for 3 families (12 persons).

Awareness building



Telling stories of the cooperation between the volunteers and refugees

Churches visits to share the inspiration from the Gospel for this project

Newspapers of the project in both languages.

Messages of the Synodal Council to support the project.

Cultural activities to raise awareness and money

Own page on the website of the church

.....

Facts and findings

A small church in action must clearly communicate its inspiration and objective and know its strengths and weaknesses.

- Corona has its influence on mutual contacts where the engagement was either limited or changed.
- The engagement became more diverse in terms of target group, working method, cooperation and activities.
- The church can play an important role in strengthening the support base for resettlement and community sponsorship by story telling and changing the narratives about the causes of flights and living conditions of refugees in the public debate.

Dr. Christoph Picker - der Evangelischen Akademie der Pfalz

Gegenwart verstehen – Perspektiven entwickeln.



Community sponsorship and churches: between opportunities and challenges

Stand 20. gennaio 2022

Engaging churches and faith-based organizations in community
sponsorship

Friday, 3 December, 9-11 am

Panelists

Tetty Rooze, Eglise Protestante Unie de Belgique

Nadine Daniel, National Refugee Welcome Coordinator for the Church of
England

Dr. Christoph Picker, Direktor der Evangelischen Akademie der Pfalz

Input Christoph Picker

I am not a professional refugee worker. I am the director of the Protestant academy of Palatinate – a region between the Rhine River and the French border. We offer political education from a Protestant perspective. Multiculturalism, migration, and refugee policy is one of our topics. Together with some colleagues I am trying to establish the NesT program in our Church and in our region. We are at the very beginning. In Palatinate there are no mentoring groups as yet. And there were no arrivals in the context of NesT. So, I am not sure if I can be helpful for your discussion as I have got more questions than answers. I told that to Torsten Moritz, but he insisted that I should share my experiences with you. To make matters worse I will do it in poor English. I apologize for that.

I am not a professional refugee worker. I am the director of the Protestant academy of Palatinate – a region between the Rhine River and the French border. We offer political education from a Protestant perspective. Multiculturalism, migration, and refugee policy is one of our topics. Together with some colleagues I am trying to establish the NesT program in our Church and in our region. We are at the very beginning. In Palatinate there are no mentoring groups as yet. And there were no arrivals in the context of NesT. So, I am not sure if I can be helpful for your discussion as I have got more questions than answers. I told that to Torsten Moritz, but he insisted that I should share my experiences with you. To make matters worse I will do it in poor English. I apologize for that.

What we did:

1. After some consultations beforehand, we convinced the synod of our church to support the program. This was not difficult. The synod passed a unanimous resolution in support of the program. It decided that the church should pay the rent for 10 of the admitted refugees to relieve the mentoring groups of this financial burden.
2. It was a little bit more difficult to convince the officials of Diakonisches Werk Pfalz.
3. We were not successful – until now – in creating any kind of enthusiasm or buzz. Rather we are meeting a hesitant audience – as Torsten Moritz remarked. Last week we had a public workshop to move the issue forward which was organized by the academy in collaboration with Diakonisches Werk. Unfortunately, it had to be a conference – unfortunately. We'll see, what happens.

Why this kind of hesitation in an environment that, in general, is quite liberal and welcoming towards refugees – as we experienced in 2015/2016? There are some facts and critical arguments worth considering.

1. Community Sponsorship in the case of NesT means not just civil engagement but financial sponsorship in a strict sense. This doesn't fit with the German constitutional tradition of the Welfare State. It is the state's duty to guarantee the needs of everybody – also those of refugees and asylum seekers. This can be complemented but cannot be replaced by private philanthropy. Against this backdrop, NesT is understood as another step in the neoliberal project of undermining the welfare state, and privatizing the care for basic needs. In this area there were some bad experiences in the past.

In 2014 some volunteers supported the admission of people from Syria and provided financial guarantees. And some years later they were confronted with high demands for money, which they completely underestimated.

2. Amongst activists, volunteers, professionals in refugee work, in organizations such as Pro Asyl, the Geneva Convention and the individual right of asylum as recognised in the German constitution are centrally important. By contrast, resettlement programs and complementary pathways are voluntary matters. NesT is promoted as an additional and complementary program, which is not meant to be a substitute for spontaneous protection and the right to asylum. In any case, it can be understood as part of a political strategy: Closing the borders, minimizing the applications for asylum, and allowing only controlled and strictly limited humanitarian admissions. Theologically this has to do with the difference between rights and mercy.

3. Critical attitudes concerning the selection of the refugees. Following this reasoning, all refugees are vulnerable – not only some small groups. Some people are suspicious that the criterion for admission is not only the needs of the individual refugee, but the needs of the receiving society. And considering the small dimensions of the program – the selection in any case remains highly arbitrary.

4. Another concern is that the program NesT could create two classes of refugees. On the one hand would be the participants of NesT with a secured residence status, supported by a mentoring group, with a high grade of inclusion. And on the other hand, the asylum seekers, or other groups, quite isolated in collective accommodation centers and / or threatened with expulsion. Professionals in particular have argued that it would be better to focus on the established supporting networks and structures rather than to establish new programs. These structures are, for example, the local migration services and the refugee advice offices – often maintained by the churches.

5. Then we should talk about the general sentiments in our societies. My impression is that many people, both volunteers and professionals, after the enthusiasm in 2015 and 2016 are exhausted. Sometimes they underestimated the intensity and the durability of their involvement. Some seem frustrated: they consider their engagement not to have been really effective: they see people deported, remaining in an unstable status, remaining strangers in a not always welcoming environment.

They are frustrated, too, because of the political stagnation, and that there is not much hope for a humanitarian, human-rights-based refugee policy in Europe.

6. This leads me to a last argument. NesT is a state program. It is controlled by the Ministry of Interior Affairs and by the “Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge” – the federal office for migration and refugees. In the public perception these are the main authorities responsible for shielding borders and for deportations. Now these actors shall be partners. As a result, there is not too much confidence. But maybe precisely this constellation can be seen as an opportunity.

Despite all these obstacles we will march on. NesT opens the door – even if it's just a small crack – for safe and legal passages. I'm convinced that community-based programs are crucial for social inclusion. NesT is not perfect. But sometimes we must choose the second-best solution because we must not wait for ideal solutions in an ideal world. I'm not sure, if we will come to a good end with our efforts. But at least we are keeping the topic on the agenda.



ccme

churches' commission for migrants in europe

beyond borders

since 1964

Community sponsorship: Preparatory documents¹

Section I. Community Sponsorship: A Survey

Why? The global refugee crisis

Over the past decade, the number of refugees² counted by the UNHCR has doubled, and in 2019-2020 alone, despite Covid restrictions, jumped from 20.4 million to almost 26.4.³ At end of 2020, there were 82.4 million forcibly displaced persons worldwide, including 26.4 million refugees, and 48 million persons internally displaced due to conflict.⁴ Of these, 68% came from Syria, Venezuela, Afghanistan, South Sudan and Myanmar.⁵ In 2020, the UNHCR estimate of the number of refugees still needing to be resettled was 1.44 million, while that for 2021 is 1.45, and for 2022 is 1.47 million.⁶

The three durable solutions proposed by the UNHCR are resettlement (moving refugees from the country of first asylum to one where they may be permanently resettled), voluntary repatriation or safe return to one's home country, and local integration into the first country where one seeks asylum. However, there are no legal obligations governing the acceptance of refugees; rather 'responsibility by proximity' has until quite recently been the dominant principle.⁷

Not surprisingly then, 73% of the world's refugees in 2020 were hosted in neighbouring countries, mostly in the global South. Of those who had left their country, 86% ended up in

¹ The two preparatory documents provide an up to date overview on the state of community sponsorship in Europe (as of December 2021) and a reflection on the theological basis of Christians and Christian churches to engage in community sponsorship. Both have been compiled by Oisín Desmond and were shared with participants prior to the vent.

² A *refugee* according to the 1951 Refugee Convention is "someone who is unable or unwilling to return to their country of origin owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group, or political opinion". <https://www.unhcr.org/what-is-a-refugee.html>. *Quota refugees* are persons who have fled their own countries and have been granted refugee status by the UNHCR through a resettlement programme that offers them safe passage to a third country where they are granted residence. UNHCR, *Resettlement Handbook* (Geneva 2011), <https://www.unhcr-resettlement-handbook-complete-publication.html>.

³ See graph in UNHCR, "Global Trends in Forced Displacement 2020", <https://www.unhcr.org/60b638e37/unhcr-global-trends-2020>, p. 69. Also p. 2, 12.

⁴ Ibid., p. 2, 12.

⁵ Ibid., p. 3, 7, 17-18.

⁶ UNHCR, "Projected Global Resettlement Needs 2021", <https://www.unhcr.org/protection/resettlement/5ef34bfb7/projected-global-resettlement-needs-2021.html>, p.11; "Projected Global Resettlement Needs 2022", <https://www.unhcr.org/protection/resettlement/60d320a64/projected-global-resettlement-needs-2022-pdf.html>, p. 13.

⁷ Doyle, M.W., "Responsibility Sharing: From Principle to Policy", *International Journal of Refugee Law*, 2018, cited Nikolas Feith Tan, "The Feasibility of Community-based sponsorship of Refugees in Denmark", <https://amnesty.dk/wp-content/uploads/media/6130/feasibility-study-community-based-sponsorships.pdf>, p.4.

developing countries with serious economic problems, and 27% in the least developed countries.⁸ In Europe, the countries closest to those in crisis – Greece, Italy and Spain – have experienced the greatest influx of refugees. In recent years new resettlement countries have emerged which have introduced permanent resettlement programmes, though others have chosen humanitarian programmes as an immediate, temporary response to a specific crisis. In 2017, 40% of all refugees resettled by the UNHCR were settled in Europe, by comparison with 8% in 2007.⁹ This increase was partly spurred by the “20,000 by 2020” campaign launched in 2012 by six leading organizations in the field of migration (Amnesty International, CCME, ECRE, ICMC, IOM and Save Me). This increase continued in subsequent years: between December 2017 and December 2019, 41,300 refugees were resettled in Europe, although this number still accounted for only 25% of the total number worldwide.¹⁰ In 2021, the global South continues to host the greatest number of displaced persons, and there is a clear need that the responsibility for protection and resettlement be distributed among countries across the globe.

However, there has been a clear decline in the number of refugees who have been resettled in recent years. In 2016, the UNHCR identified 126,000 refugees and 36,700 refugees were resettled through separate state programmes; by 2019 this number had dropped to a total of 107,800 refugees, 63,700 of whom were resettled; by mid-2020, only 17,400 refugees had been resettled. UNHCR estimates in 2021 that there are some 423,700 persons in Turkey awaiting resettlement. In 2019, Europe received 29,066 refugees via resettlement programmes; in 2020 the Member States and the UK had settled 9,119 persons.¹¹

This resettlement gap is caused by many factors, such as limited funding for the UNHCR, excessively bureaucratic processing procedures, and – a major reason – the change in refugee policy in the US during the Trump administration. While the US had an average annual refugee admissions ceiling of 95,000 since 1980, it was cut to 15,000 during Trump’s presidency.¹²

The Covid pandemic has only exacerbated all these trends, eroding the political readiness, the financial capacity and the public willingness to undertake resettlement projects. The EU’s resettlement programmes were halted for a while because of the pandemic, and those of many organizations, such as Mediterranean Hope, have been severely impacted. As a result, crisis situations have mushroomed, while political conflict continues to cause huge displacement, as is evident in the current crises on the Poland-Belarus border and on the English Channel. Looming ever closer is climate change, which promises to accelerate

⁸ UNHCR, “Global Trends in Forced Displacement 2020”, p. 8, 11.

⁹ UNHCR, “Projected Global Resettlement Needs 2021”; over 41,200 refugees were settled in Europe between Dec. 2017 and Dec. 2019

¹⁰ European Commission, Fact sheet, “Delivering on Resettlement” (Brussels 2019), https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/FS_19_6079.

¹¹ UNHCR “Global Trends – Forced displacement in 2019”, <https://www.unhcr.org/flagship-reports/globaltrends/globaltrends2019/>; UNHCR, “Resettlement data 2020, 2021”, <https://www.unhcr.org/resettlement-data.html>

¹² The Biden Administration raised the ceiling to 62,500 in 2021, although only 11,000 were actually resettled because of poor infrastructure. <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/statements-releases/2021/05/03/statement-by-president-joe-biden-on-refugee-admissions/>; Singh, Maanvi. “Biden Raises US Refugee Admissions Cap to 62,500 after Delay Sparks Anger”, *The Guardian*, 3 May 2021. <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/may/03/biden-refugee-cap-us-immigration>.

displacement.¹³ A selection of recent headlines in one Belgian newspaper, *De Standaard*, gives an indication of the worsening situation: 400 migrants rescued on the English Channel, German rescue boat with 800 migrants allowed to land in Sicily, 12 migrants missing off the coast of Spain, 17 migrants missing in the Mediterranean, 500 migrants in an old fishing boat land in Lampedusa, 15,000 migrants have attempted to cross the English Channel to the UK by October 2021, twice the number of 2020...

The increasing number of refugees, the upsurge in irregular migration and the decline in resettlement numbers have led to attempts to find ways to deal with the crisis by providing safe and legal pathways and to complement existing resettlement programmes. Community sponsorship is one such tool and pathway.

What is meant by “Community sponsorship”?

This term is difficult to define and as Nikolas Feith Tan points out, “it is best understood as an umbrella term encompassing several different modalities”.¹⁴ The idea is largely based on the 1978 Canadian “Private Sponsorship of Refugees” (PSR) programme, which arose in response to an influx of refugees from Indochina. ‘Private sponsorship’ is generally the term used in Canada, whereas ‘community sponsorship’ is more common in Europe, although the two terms are often used interchangeably.¹⁵

Using N.F. Tan’s three ‘modalities’, the term “community sponsorship” can then be understood to refer to the following:

(1) *Private sponsorship programmes* are based on the Canadian PSR model, are additional to state refugee schemes, and include a variety of different programmes (such as humanitarian corridors, family reunification, educational visas). These programmes are run by civil society or religious organizations with varying degrees of state input, and involve sponsoring organizations naming the beneficiaries.

2) *Community-sponsored resettlement programmes* target UNHCR-approved refugees who are matched with sponsoring communities which provide integration support. This model is based on a partnership between the UNHCR, government ministries, NGOs and FBOs, and civil society; it has been defined as “a public-private partnership between governments, which facilitate legal admission for refugees, and private actors, who provide financial, social and/or emotional support to admit, receive and settle refugees into the community”.¹⁶ The European Commission defines it similarly: “private sponsorship is a

¹³ The World Bank estimates 216 million persons may be forcibly displaced within their own countries by climate change by 2050. <https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/press-release/2021/09/13/climate-change-could-force-216-million-people-to-migrate-within-their-own-countries-by-2050>.

¹⁴ N.F. Tan, “Community Sponsorship, the Pact and the Compact: Towards Protection Principles” (Sept. 2020), <https://www.asileproject.eu/community-sponsorship-the-pact-and-the-compact-towards-protection-principles/>

¹⁵ N.F. Tan suggests “private” is avoided in Europe, “possibly to avoid negative connotations associated with privatization of public functions”. “Community Sponsorship in Europe: Taking Stock, Policy Transfer and What the Future Might Hold”, *Frontiers in Human Dynamics* 3:564084, doi.10.3389/fhumd.2021.564084. The Share Network also prefers “community-based sponsorship” as it reflects “the vital role of local communities in initiatives that admit, protect, and welcome refugees in need of protection”. In “Fostering Community Sponsorships across Europe”, http://resettlement.eu/sites/icmc/files/SHARE%20Publication_Private%20Sponsorship.pdf (Brussels, 2019).

¹⁶ European Resettlement Network, Scoping Paper, “Private Sponsorship in Europe. Expanding complementary pathways for refugee resettlement” (September 2017), <http://www.Expanding%20complementary%20pathways%20for%20refugee%20resettlement.pdf>;

transfer of responsibility from government agencies to private actors for some elements of the identification, pre-departure, reception or integration process of beneficiaries.”¹⁷ These programmes are often, though not always, restricted to existing state quotas, but are intended to be eventually expanded (“additionality”).

(3) The third understanding of community sponsorship is to see it in broad terms, as what Tan calls *“a wrap-around tool”* for a multiplicity of complementary pathways to resettlement. He notes that this modality “does not focus on the pathway or legal status of refugees sponsored, but rather on civic engagement embracing refugees”.

*General key features of community-sponsored resettlement programmes in Europe include the following.*¹⁸

*State immigration authorities are responsible for policy, the screening of refugees referred by the UNHCR, maintaining the state quota agreed with the UNHCR, issuing visas, and providing a safe and legal passage for refugees. This is a difference to the Canadian model where private groups have the right to name refugees. Many governments (e.g. UK, Ireland) have initiated community-sponsored programmes, and have made legal and financial accommodation to support them. Ultimate responsibility for all programmes lies with the state.

*A contact point is set up to act as a link between local sponsor groups and the state, and to intervene in the case of sponsorship breakdown. This can be municipalities in some countries (eg. Nordic countries) or a civil society contact point (such as the ZKS in Germany, ‘Samen Hier’ in the Netherlands, Reset in the UK, or RSOs (Regional Support Organizations) in Ireland). This contact point matches sponsors and refugees, trains sponsors, intervenes in cases of sponsorship breakdown, and monitors developments.

*Sponsors, who are usually volunteers in a particular charity or members of a civil society or faith-based organization, have to be approved either by the state, the municipal authorities or by the contact point. They focus on enhancing integration, and commit to providing financial, emotional and social support for a certain period of time. The degree and nature of the commitment varies from country to country (as will be evident below in the survey of programmes in individual countries), but the emphasis is on responsibility being shared between the state and the sponsors.

*For the community sponsorship resettlement programmes (and not other programmes such as Humanitarian Corridors), refugees are chosen from the UNHCR lists, and except

<http://www.resettlement.eu/sites/icmc/files/ERN%2B%20Private%20Sponsorship%20in%20Europe%20>; see also N. F. Tan, “Community Sponsorship in Europe: Taking Stock, Policy Transfer and What the Future Might Hold”; idem, “A Study on the Potential for Introducing a Community Sponsorship Program for Refugees in Sweden”, p.7.

¹⁷ European Commission, “Study on the Feasibility and Added Value of sponsorship schemes as a possible pathway to safe channels for admission to the EU, including resettlement” (Brussels, 2018), [https://publications.europa.eu/en/publicationdetail/-/publication/1dbb0873-d349-11e8-9424-01aa75ed71a1/language-en/format-PDF/](https://publications.europa.eu/en/publicationdetail/-/publication/1dbb0873-d349-11e8-9424-01aa75ed71a1/language-en/format-PDF/source-7797821030) source-77978210 30, p. 4.

¹⁸ See N.F. Tan, “The feasibility of community-based sponsorship of refugees in Denmark”, p. 7-8; N.F. Tan, “A Study on the Potential for Introducing a Community Sponsorship Program for Refugees in Sweden”, p. 6; N.F. Tan, “Community Sponsorship in Europe”, p. 3; Duken, C. and L. Rasche, “Towards a European Model for Community Sponsorship”, Policy Brief, Hertie School, Jacques Delors Centre, Bundesministerium der Finanzen, 31 March 2021, <https://d-nb.info/1235655717/34>, p. 4-5. SHARE, “Fostering Community Sponsorships across Europe”, p. 5- 12.

for Germany and the UK, are part of the resettlement quota agreed by each country. Additionality remains an ideal generally for many states, with just the UK and Germany making definite commitments thus far. Beneficiaries are usually given full refugee status, unlike those admitted under the family reunification and the humanitarian corridors schemes.

One should note in addition that while community sponsorship in Europe is first and foremost connected to the transfer, reception and integration of beneficiaries from outside Europe, some elements have also been used in initiatives that provide for relocation within the EU.

The Community Sponsorship Model: initial stages

Community Sponsorship is not a totally new concept and was initially developed in Canada in the 1970s, in response to the refugee crisis in Indochina, although similar initiatives began to emerge also in Europe in the early 2010s. The success of the Canadian initiative led the Canadian government in 2016, together with the UNHCR, the University of Ottawa and a number of civil society organizations, to launch the Global Refugee Sponsorship Initiative (GRSI) in order to promote similar community-based programmes internationally.¹⁹

In September 2016, in response to the increasing urgency of migration, the UN adopted the New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants (and its Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework/CRRF), with the view to providing “a more predictable and sustainable response” to the crisis rather than responding through “a purely, and often underfunded, humanitarian lens”.²⁰ Such a response was intended to involve all stakeholders in a ‘whole-of-society’ approach. It pledged “to enhance refugee self-reliance, expand third-country solutions and support conditions in countries of origin for return in safety and dignity” and to negotiate a global compact for ‘safe, orderly and regular migration’. At the subsequent Leaders’ Summit on Refugees, 47 states agreed to legal and policy changes that would include ‘resettlement or complementary pathways’ for admission, involving all stakeholders. About a dozen states started to apply the CRRF.²¹

CRRF formed the basis for the 2018 Global Compact on Refugees adopted by the UN in 2018 which focused on providing a framework for the international sharing of responsibility for the safe passage and resettlement of refugees, and encouraged the adoption of ‘complementary pathways’, such as humanitarian visas, humanitarian corridors and community-based sponsorship. The Compact stressed the central role of local partners in refugee reception and integration, and urged the international community to support local resettlement initiatives with infrastructure, accommodation and funding.

The policy was reiterated in the 2019 UNHCR’s Three-Year Strategy on Resettlement and Complementary Pathways 2019-2021, which also stressed the importance of distributing responsibility among all stakeholders – states, government ministries, NGOs, civil society,

¹⁹ See “Global Refugee Sponsorship Initiative”, <http://www.refugeesponsorship.org>.

²⁰ <http://www.unhcr.org/57e39d987>

²¹ See summary at <https://www.unhcr.org/5b8d1ad34>.

faith-based organizations, and refugees – and of developing comprehensive responses to the refugee crisis, through complementary pathways such as community sponsorship.²²

Community sponsorship programmes in Europe: initial stages

Refugee policy beyond asylum in Europe for long focused on family reunification, state resettlement of quota refugees and humanitarian visas, but as the refugee crisis in Europe intensified, new initiatives were launched. For example, in 2014, the Federation of Evangelical Churches in Italy, in response to refugees drowning in the Mediterranean, started the Mediterranean Hope project which focused on sea rescues and providing reception centres in Lampedusa, Sicily and Calabria.²³

The adoption of the Global Compact on Refugees and the 2015 influx of Syrian refugees, in particular, led to a search for further ways of providing safe passage and resettlement for persons in need, and for integrating them in their new homes. Increasingly in Europe, community sponsorship came to be seen as a way of achieving this, while also providing a controlled pathway to protection that many governments preferred to spontaneous asylum. In 2016, the European Commission put forward detailed, albeit limited, proposals regarding legal avenues, pre-departure preparation of the refugees and the local reception communities, language training, providing employment and education opportunities, health care services, promoting interaction with the receiving society, and preventing racism and xenophobia.

In 2017 the European Resettlement Network recommended private sponsorship as a complement to government programmes, and used France as an example where such a programme would be feasible.²⁴ In the same year the European Asylum Support Office started a pilot project on community sponsorship. The European Commission in a feasibility study of 2018 argued the community sponsorship model could meet “the goal of promoting safe and legal channels of admission”²⁵ and in 2019 launched an Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF) to fund dedicated projects. Numerous other programmes have been launched, such as the EU-FRANK project (EU Action on Facilitating Resettlement and Refugee Admission) for the sharing and exchange of knowledge about community sponsorship among Member States and others.

The result is that while there were no community sponsorship programmes in the EU in 2013, by 2020 pilot or permanent projects of various kinds had been established in many European countries. Nevertheless, there is no unified legal scheme in the EU regarding the creation of community sponsorship programmes (nor even on migration in general), with the result that there is a huge variety in the extant programmes.²⁶

²² <https://www.unhcr.org/protection/resettlement/5d15db254/three-year-strategy-resettlement-complementary-pathways.html>

²³ <https://mediterraneanhope.wordpress.com/2015/05/19/for-a-humanitarian-corridor-to-avoid-death-at-sea/#more-471>; https://www.globalministries.org/project/mediterranean_hope.

²⁴ European Resettlement Network (2018), p. 33, 35, cited N.F. Tan, “The Feasibility of Community-based sponsorship of Refugees in Denmark”, p.13

²⁵ European Commission, “Study on the feasibility and added value of sponsorship schemes”, p. 11.

²⁶ See Solano, Giacomo and Valentina Savazzi, “Private sponsorship programmes and humanitarian visas: a viable policy framework for integration?” Discussion Brief, RESOMA (Research Social Platform on Migration and Asylum, June 2019), https://www.migpolgroup.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/Discussion-Policy-Briefs-PSPs_0.pdf, p. 5-6.

In more recent years, the EU has focused more on issues of securitization, border controls and managing migration by cooperation with third countries, such as Turkey. Yet refugees and migrants still undertake dangerous journeys, resulting in disasters in the Mediterranean Sea, the English Channel, and elsewhere. Because of this continuing crisis, and the havoc wrought by the Covid pandemic, the European Commission presented a “New Pact on Migration and Asylum” in September 2020. This also includes a section on complementary pathways, and calls on member states to set up a “European model of community sponsorship” in cooperation with civil society so as to identify those in need of protection and aid in their resettlement.²⁷ N.F. Tan stresses the novelty of the concept of a ‘European model’ and considers the call for such a model as pointing “to a sense of ownership and uptake that moves beyond Canada”.²⁸ The Pact however remains vague about the legal details, perhaps recognizing each Member State’s agency and traditions. Other points stressed include ensuring selection criteria are transparent and fair, fostering solidarity between member states, close cooperation with civil society to promote better integration and providing funds for supporting initiatives in Member States. The Pact also extends into 2021 the EU pledge at the Global Refugee Forum of 2019 to provide 30,000 resettlement places.²⁹ However, this represents only 0.6% of global needs and various stakeholders have called for a pledge to provide 36,000 places for 2022, with a long term goal of 250,000 places by the end of 2025.³⁰

Another recent development that has helped promote the community-based sponsorship model has been the importance attached to local resettlement initiatives of individual member states, municipalities and regions, again a recommendation of the Global Compact on Refugees. With growing decentralization and the increasing competencies of local government authorities, cities and towns have become important leaders in locally organized migration policy and projects, with some cities having their own immigration offices.³¹ In 2010 the Eurocities Integrating Cities Charter was launched, and a statement in 2015 stressed the role of cities in all aspects of the integration of migrants, “to ensure that asylum seekers settle in well for the duration of their stay, however short or long”.³² Numerous cities across the continent joined the initiative and various conferences and projects were launched in the following years, including one to receive refugee children

²⁷ European Commission. “New Pact on Migration and Asylum: A fresh start on migration in Europe”, https://ec.europa.eu/info/strategy/priorities-2019-2024/promoting-our-european-way-life/new-pact-migration-and-asylum_en. See also Commission Recommendation (EU) 2020/1364, issued 23 September 2020, on legal pathways to protection in the EU: “Promoting resettlement, humanitarian admission and other complementary pathways”, https://ec.europa.eu/info/strategy/priorities-2019-2024/promoting-our-european-way-life/new-pact-migration-and-asylum_en.

²⁸ N.F. Tan, “Community Sponsorship, the Pact and the Compact: Towards Protection Principles”

²⁹ See Susan Fratzke, et al., “Refugee Sponsorship Programs: A Global State of Play and Opportunities for Investment”, (Brussels: MPI Europe, 2019), <https://www.migrationpolicy.org/research/refugee-sponsorship-programs-opportunities-investment>.

³⁰ See letter from International Rescue Committee, Caritas, CCME, Share, Red Cross, International Catholic Migration commission to the EU Institutions in June 2021.

³¹ See for instance the network of large cities, Eurocities, established in 1986 by the mayors of six major cities, that now includes 200 cities, which cooperate on different areas such as mobility, climate change, and migration issues. www.eurocities.eu. See also Papadopoulou, A. et al., “Comparative study on the best practices for the integration of resettled refugees in the EU member states” (Brussels, European Parliament, 2013), cited N.F. Tan, “Community Sponsorship in Europe”, p. 4. See also Sabchev, T. and Moritz Baumgärtel, “The path of least resistance? EU cities and locally organized resettlement”, *Forced Migration Review* 63 (Feb. 2020), <https://www.fmreview.org/cities/sabchev-baumgartel>; A. Radjenovic, “Community Sponsorship Schemes under the new pact on migration and asylum”, p. 7-9.

³² www.eurocities.eu/latest/cities-rally-for-integration

from refugee camps in Greece. The main points of the Eurocities charter were taken up in the European Commission's EU Action Plan Integration and Inclusion 2021-2027 which officially recognizes the important role of cities and local bodies in integration and promises EU funds for specific projects.³³ And in March 2021 the Commission announced a partnership with the European Committee of the Regions in order to increase support to cities and regions in integrating refugees.

Examples of cities cooperating in community sponsorship abound. One instance is the Solidarity Cities project launched in 2016 by the mayor of Athens, within the framework of Eurocities.³⁴ Barcelona, for example, entered into an agreement to accept 100 refugees from camps in Athens and has assertively lobbied the Spanish government to increase its quota of refugees. The Seebrücke movement in Germany, which includes over 100 towns, is lobbying for permission to admit refugees directly from Italy. Other municipalities in Germany have joined the Cities of Safe Haven Alliance (Städte Sicherer Häfen) to take in refugees from camps or who have been rescued at sea. In the UK, the cities of Birmingham and Bristol, among others, are actively working with the UK Home Office and local communities in developing and supporting community sponsorship schemes, while Sheffield was closely involved in a resettlement programme sponsored by SHARE.

The benefits of local sponsorship by cities and communities are clear. In their article assessing locally organized resettlement, Sabchev and Baumgartel argue that local government initiatives have the best chance of overcoming the resistance of member states for two reasons: states retain the right to screen applicants, thus allaying security concerns, and second, the costs of integration do not have to be borne by central governments, thus allaying fears of offending their tax-paying voter base. At the same time, some areas hope the advent of refugees could help alleviate the labour force problems caused by the aging demographics of European countries.³⁵ Cities, the authors argue, are best placed for hosting refugees as they have the local knowledge about services and conditions, have contact with potential local sponsoring organizations, and have built up significant experience in the field of refugee reception and integration. They conclude: "If successful, the gradual expansion of city-led resettlement practices could turn into a type of 'controlled' policy reform that, without reinforcing political divides, could bring about a paradigm shift in migration governance".

That paradigm shift is increasingly being seen to lie in the community sponsorship model, which is currently being further extended into smaller towns and rural areas, thanks in part to the support of the Share Network.

³³ European Commission, "Action plan on Integration and Inclusion 2021-2027", https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/system/files_en?file=2020-11/action_plan_on_integration_and_inclusion_2021-2027.pdf

³⁴ According to its website, Solidarity Cities rests on four pillars: "(1) information and knowledge exchange on the refugee situation in cities; 2) advocating for better involvement and direct funding for cities on reception and integration of refugees; 3) city-to-city technical and financial assistance and capacity building; 4) pledges by European cities to receive relocated asylum seekers". <https://solidaritycities.eu>

³⁵ Sabchev, T. and M. Baumgartel, "The path of least resistance?"

The Benefits and Challenges of Community Sponsorship

i) The benefits:³⁶

a) Helps to “manage” migration and make it safer: In a context of continuing irregular and dangerous migration, community sponsorship fosters the orderly movement of refugees, and increases the number of safe and legal pathways of entry for refugees while also increasing the number of options for those who have been in protracted displacement for years. This view, that sponsorship could contribute to meeting the goal of providing safe and legal channels of admission, was reiterated by the European Commission in 2018.

b) Fosters global solidarity and justice: It spreads the responsibility for hosting and integrating refugees between many countries and organizations. There is currently a clear inequity in the reception of refugees, with some countries, mostly in the South, bearing most of the responsibility, a situation that has to change if the needs of vulnerable persons for protection throughout the world are to be met in a sustainable fashion. Further, community sponsorship can help with the migration of refugees within Europe, thereby contributing to the possibility of better integration and to solidarity among the Member States.

c) Additionality: Community sponsorship increases the numbers of those people who are given protection. In Canada private sponsorship was historically in addition to the state quota of refugees. While community sponsorship in Europe has generally been anchored in the quota refugee system, many are calling for increasing access in the light of the worsening refugee situation since 2020.³⁷ At the same time, many argue that well-designed community sponsorship programmes will have the effect of overcoming the resistance of some Member States, and will help persuade authorities to increase the number of permanent resettlement places.³⁸

d) Integration: Studies indicate that community sponsorship generally hastens the early stages of integration for beneficiaries. The commitment of sponsors ensures refugees are welcomed, housed, learn a language, get quicker access to the job market; it also prevents psychosocial problems and loneliness, enhances trust in public authorities, and provides the social capital that state bodies cannot provide. Furthermore, cooperation between states, cities and civil society would make integration programmes more sustainable.

e) Social cohesion and a positive narrative: In societal terms, community sponsorship is considered to promote social cohesion and positive relationships between different population groups. By involving communities in welcoming newcomers, this model can help promote the public's sympathy for the difficulties of refugees and counter the anti-refugee, anti-immigrant and xenophobic sentiments which are on the rise in many

³⁶See, among others, N.T. Feith,, 'The Feasibility of community-based sponsorship of refugees in Denmark', p. 8-9; idem, "A Study on the Potential for Introducing a Community Sponsorship Program for Refugees in Sweden", p. 14-16; Thais Bessa, "From Political Instrument to Protection Tool? Resettlement of Refugees and North-South Relations," *Refugee* 26, no. 1 (2009): 91-100, <https://doi.org/10.25071/1920-7336.30610>; Solano and Savazzi, "Private Sponsorship Programmes and humanitarian visas", p. 6-15.

³⁷See letter from International Rescue Committee, Caritas, CCME, Share, Red Cross, International Catholic Migration commission to the EU Institutions in June 2021.

³⁸ European Resettlement Network, "Private Sponsorship Feasibility Study – Towards a Private Sponsorship Model in France (2018), <http://www.resettlement.eu/sites/icmc/files/ERN%2B%20Private%20Sponsorship%20Feasibility%20Study%20-%20Towards%20a%20Private%20Sponsorship%20Model%20in%20France.pdf>, p.35

European countries. Indeed, according to Allport's theory of "intergroup contact theory" (as outlined in his 1954 book, *The Nature of Prejudice*), under certain conditions, sustained contact between immigrants and natives has the effect of dissipating anti-immigrant sentiments and reducing prejudice.³⁹ This theory has been borne out by more recent studies in Austria, the UK, Denmark and Finland, and provides a powerful argument in favour of community sponsorship. The foreword to the Share document on the subject is apposite here:

Fostering human encounters and breaking communication barriers between people coming from very different backgrounds is one of the strengths of community sponsorship schemes. In addition to facilitating integration, community sponsorship can also be a catalyst for creating more tolerant and inclusive societies, even in small municipalities with little tradition of having received refugees before.⁴⁰

f) Economic benefits: Community sponsorship can help reduce the costs of resettlement to the state as sponsors take on some of the costs. Moreover, because they are small-scale projects, they can be more effective in availing of EU funds.

ii) Challenges facing community-sponsored resettlement programmes:

a) Selection of refugees: Given the scarcity of resettlement places, what selection criteria should be used? The UNHCR prioritises vulnerable refugees, who are described as those requiring legal and physical protection, survivors of torture or violence, those with severe medical needs, women, and children at risk, those in need of family reunification and those for whom there is no other durable solution.⁴¹ A frequent criticism is that such candidates are neglected in community sponsorship resettlement programmes, which give an unfair advantage to selected UNHCR-approved refugees. Critics also contend that by relying on UNHCR referrals, community sponsorship programmes offer less access to protection than those programmes that allow private sponsors to name beneficiaries, who often are persons not otherwise eligible for protection. Nor are they as efficient as other programmes, such as Humanitarian Corridors which offers protection to a much larger number of vulnerable persons in crisis situations.

In some programmes, sponsors choose beneficiaries on the basis of family connections, or sexual orientation, or religion, or a shared ethnic identity. However, these criteria can be perceived as discriminating against those who do not meet these criteria. In fact, most states do not permit such criteria for admission⁴² and require that refugees be chosen from the UNHCR priority list. Another danger here is that some community sponsorship schemes, such as Humanitarian Corridors, tend to focus on refugees coming from emergency situations, such as those from Syria and Afghanistan in recent years, and neglect the chronic, long-standing and forgotten refugee situations elsewhere.⁴³ Some even contend that community groups often are swayed by the attention given by the media

³⁹ These conditions are common goals, equal status, intergroup cooperation and institutional support. Wikipedia, "Contact hypothesis", https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Contact_hypothesis.

⁴⁰ Share, "Fostering community sponsorships across Europe", p. 3.

⁴¹ UNHCR, *Resettlement Handbook*, p. 19-23, 80-88.

⁴² Sarah Fine, "Immigration and Discrimination", in *Migration in Political Theory*, ed. Sarah Fine and Lea Ypi (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 125-50, cited P.T. Lenard, "How Should We Think about Private Sponsorship of Refugees?" in *Strangers to Neighbours: Refugee Sponsorship in Context*. Ed. S. Labman and G. Cameron (Montreal: McGill UP, 2020), p.6.

⁴³ However, see entry on COMET below for an exception to this.

to particularly dramatic situations. The question has ethical and legal ramifications. However, if communities are required to choose the most vulnerable, some justice may prevail for the many millions of migrants who remain displaced for years.⁴⁴

b) *Issue of state responsibility*: Questions remain on how best to integrate community sponsorship and state resettlement programmes. Many fear that community sponsorship will mean the privatization of refugee work, with governments reneging on their duties to asylum seekers and their commitments to resettlement quotas. In Canada, for example, the government's support for resettlement has gone hand in hand with stricter policies towards asylum-seekers, as is also the case in other countries adopting the Canadian model.⁴⁵ Another concern raised is that governments' support for community sponsorship programmes will detract from the support offered to other programmes, for example those for asylum seekers, or for programmes in the global South, which, some contend, reach far greater numbers of those in need. The question arises here as to whether community-sponsored resettlement differs in any significant way from state-sponsored resettlement.

d) *Additionality*. Some express the fear that community sponsorship instead of expanding refugee protection would replace state programmes. In his report on community sponsorship in Europe, Tan suggests that while autonomous programmes such as the Humanitarian Corridors programme have proven successful in sponsoring additional refugees, 'pragmatic considerations' suggest that pilot community sponsored resettlement programmes would be best introduced within existing resettlement quotas, with additionality remaining a more long-term goal. He also suggests that an "incremental approach" involving the introduction of limited pilot programmes of community sponsorship would help promote general public acceptance of such programmes and would reduce the opposition that such aid programmes can arouse.⁴⁶ In this way, individual municipal and regional governments and bodies may prove more amenable to the introduction of community sponsorship programmes than would national authorities.

e) *Legal feasibility*. According to the Schengen Agreement Access to EU territory via a visa can be limited to a visa valid for only one country. Humanitarian Corridors avails of this legislation to provide admission to the refugees it sponsors. Its programmes are based on a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) or various protocols drawn up in individual countries. However, the model does not have a firm legal structure, as it operates outside the usual asylum procedures in place in the EU, and relies too heavily on the good will of the individual country.⁴⁷ By contrast, the legal framework for community sponsorship, as N.F. Tan notes, is simpler than that of other programmes: community-sponsored refugees are admitted through the same legal channels as state-sponsored refugees, and therefore have the same rights to work and access to social benefits. However, questions have been raised in some countries with regard to the precise legal status of resettled refugees, particularly their right to social welfare and their right to work.

⁴⁴ See M. Bradley and C. Duin, "A Port in the Storm: Resettlement and Private Sponsorship in the Broader Context of the Refugee Regime", in *Strangers to Neighbours: Refugee Sponsorship in Context*. Ed. S. Labman and G. Cameron, p. 74-94.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 2.

⁴⁶ N.F. Tan, "Community Sponsorship in Europe", p. 5, 6.

⁴⁷ See E. Frasca, "Private Sponsorship Programmes in Europe and the Rule of Law: Towards a Greater Involvement of Private Actors in International Protection", ADiM Blog, Accademia Diritto E Migrazioni, Università degli studi della Toscana, p. 3-5;

f) *Economic questions*: Some objections focus on the high cost of community sponsorship, given the small numbers involved – an objection often raised about resettlement in general. More money is spent on resettling refugees than on helping those who remain in the global South, often with less than satisfactory results. Other problems arise with regard to a shortage of funding. There are many complaints about the barren conditions in refugee centres throughout Europe, while in some countries (e.g. Ireland), sponsors' commitment to finding suitable accommodation often runs aground on the severe shortage and cost of housing generally. Finally, the financial demands on sponsors can be a significant deterrence.

g) *Increased bureaucracy*: Excessive bureaucracy is a charge levelled against community sponsorship. Sponsoring groups have to be accredited by the state or other authority, involving complex application procedures, and contractual obligations that are sometimes demotivating for volunteers. Governments and funding agencies impose stringent accountability requirements and labour regulations on organizations. Moreover, the constant application for funds, often involving complicated form filling, eats away at the time and morale of community sponsorship groups. This has been a complaint also in Canada.⁴⁸

h) *Sustainability and quality of community sponsorship*: Many concerns centre on the long-term commitment of sponsors, given the heavy toll on their time and resources. Moreover, the Canadian experience has shown that sponsors are not always well-trained and some of them do not do a very good job.⁴⁹ Some argue that sponsors can be paternalistic, do not communicate clearly, leading to erroneous expectations among those sponsored.

However, while acknowledging the difficulties, most would argue that they can be overcome by developing transparent and well-designed models. The case for the defence is summed up in the foreword to the Share document on community sponsorship:

First, clear objectives and targets for complementary pathways and resettlement should be established to enhance transparency. Likewise, the partnership framework between civil society actors and the state should also clearly define each actor's roles and responsibilities, the duration of support, and the safeguarding mechanisms in place. Enhanced transparency is also needed in the criteria used to identify and select sponsored refugees, and we argue that programmes should target both vulnerable refugees and family-linked cases. In addition, legal rights and entitlements must be clearly communicated to sponsored refugees from the outset. Importantly, community sponsorship programmes should complement, rather than replace, state service provision; this requires sustained government investment in social housing and refugee reception to avoid discrimination between groups and support broader social cohesion. Finally, civil society must be the main stakeholder in governing and developing programmes, and ensuring high-quality sponsorships. Civil society actors must coordinate both among themselves and with the government, and they must receive adequate funding by states, as well as the EU and other stakeholders. Well-designed private sponsorship schemes can contribute

⁴⁸Treviranus, Barbara and Michael Casasola, "Canada's Private Sponsorship of Refugees Program: A Practitioner's Perspective of Its Past and Future", *Journal of International Migration and Integration* 4, no.2 (2003), <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12134-003-1032-0>, p. 177-202.

⁴⁹ See P. T. Lenard, "How Should We Think about Private Sponsorship of Refugees?", p. 61-73.

*to the increased admission of refugees into Europe and to better integration outcomes and more tolerant and welcoming societies. For that to happen, EU and national policy makers must seize this opportunity and tap into citizens' increased desire to proactively contribute to refugee protection and integration.*⁵⁰

Community sponsorship programmes in European countries:⁵¹

There is a plethora of refugee resettlement programmes across Europe, each with varying structures and responsibilities.⁵² These programmes have to operate within the structures of the receiving country; the European Commission recognized this in 2018, stressing that they must be adapted to a country's context, laws and culture. In some countries, municipalities play a crucial role in providing support to local sponsor groups, and the cooperation between both is often crucial to the success of the community-based sponsorship. In others such as the UK, Germany and Ireland, civil society organizations are set up to act as links between the state authorities and the private sponsor groups. In Nordic countries where the state and the welfare system are central, proposals for community sponsorship are more strictly delimited than is the case in countries such as Ireland and Italy where the welfare system is less comprehensive and the state plays a less comprehensive role in providing social assistance. The result is that private organizations and sponsors play a more extensive role in countries such as Ireland, Italy and Spain in funding and organizing refugee integration. The traditional relationship of Church and State in countries is also a significant factor, particularly in the part played by FBOs.

Humanitarian Corridors: Italy, Belgium, France⁵³

Italy:

The first Humanitarian Corridor project, "Mediterranean Hope", was launched in late 2014 in Italy by the Federation of Evangelical Churches in Italy (FCEI) and the Waldensian Church in response to the tragic drownings of refugees in the Mediterranean Sea.⁵⁴ The project was supported by the Union of Methodist and Waldensian Churches, the Evangelical Church of Westphalia, Global Ministries, the Reformed Church of the United States, and other churches and individuals both in Italy and abroad. The project continues to focus on offering safe passage to migrants (often carrying out sea rescue operations), monitoring Europe's southern borders, providing protection places that are additional to state resettlement, and running reception centres in Sicily, Lampedusa and Calabria. A similar project "Safe

⁵⁰ Share, "Fostering Community Sponsorships across Europe", p. 5.

⁵¹ See, among others, SHARE, "Fostering Community Sponsorships across Europe", p. 5- 12

⁵² For a table listing different community sponsorship programmes in Europe from 2013 to 2019, see SHARE, "Fostering Community Sponsorships across Europe", p. 23; for a table of current programmes, see Duken and Rasche, "Towards a European Model for Community Sponsorship", p. 6.

⁵³ Information here is based on the Humanitarian Corridors website, <https://www.humanitariancorridor.org/en/homepage>; Share, "Fostering Community Sponsorships across Europe"; "The Italian Humanitarian Corridors Program Achievements through the Eyes of Participants", <https://www.eurodiaconia.org/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/AMIF-PPI-Impact-Assessment-Report-FINAL-27072020.pdf>

⁵⁴ https://www.mediterraneanhope.com/en_en/; <https://mediterraneanhope.wordpress.com/2015/05/19/for-a-humanitarian-corridor-to-avoid-death-at-sea/#more-471>.

Passage” was initiated by the Churches’ Commission for Migrants in Europe (CCME), also as a response to the ongoing migration and refugee crisis in the Mediterranean.⁵⁵

The Humanitarian Corridors project was officially started in 2015-18 and is based on a partnership between several non-governmental organizations and the national government of Italy (as well as the governments of France, Belgium and Andorra). The project is based on a number of protocols and Memos of Understanding (MoUs), the first being that in Italy in 2015, which was signed by the Federation of Evangelical Churches in Italy (FCEI), the Waldensian Church, the Italian Catholic Bishops’ Conference, Caritas, the Sant’Egidio community, and the national government. This provided for the reception of 1,011 Syrian refugees from Lebanon between 2016 and 2017, and was extended in 2018-19. Another MoU was signed for 2017-19 between the Catholic Bishops’ Conference, Caritas Italy, Sant’Egidio and the Migrantes Foundation for the reception of 500 persons from South Sudan, Somalia and Eritrea. The same stakeholders signed the latest MoU for 2019-20 which committed to receiving 600 refugees from Ethiopia, Niger, and Jordan. This project has continued into 2021, with 63 refugees arriving from Ethiopian refugee camps on 12 November 2021.⁵⁶

In this model, the sponsoring organization takes over almost all responsibility: identifying and selecting applicants from refugee camps, in consultation with local partners and with the UNHCR; screening is done by the public authorities in the countries of transit and in Italy. Local consulates or embassies issue humanitarian visas. Once refugees arrive in Italy, Humanitarian Corridors arranges asylum applications, reception, and meeting with the sponsoring communities. Refugees are then sent to about 90 cities in different parts of the country where they are given accommodation, language training, and legal assistance. Sponsors commit to supporting refugees for at least year, though usually social and accommodation assistance continues for a longer period.

The model has the clear advantage of being able to respond quickly to crisis situations, as became evident during the 2021 emergency in Afghanistan when Humanitarian Corridors brought some 4,900 Afghan citizens to Italy. It offers additional protection to those in need, and to vulnerable persons who might not be eligible for state resettlement. Some argue it seems to generate successful integration; for example, despite the increasing incidence in recent years of onward migration by migrants from Italy to other European countries, only 3% of Ethiopian refugees on the Humanitarian Corridors programme migrated elsewhere, indicating that the welcome and security offered by HC enhances integration.⁵⁷

However, there are challenges. Finding employment is a significant obstacle to integration in Italy: a high percentage of newcomers remain unemployed after years of residence, and many highly educated refugees can only find jobs far below their educational level, although one must add that this is a significant problem for Italian workers generally.⁵⁸ A

⁵⁵ See below, for a fuller discussion.

⁵⁶ <https://www.infomigrants.net/en/post/36501/63-refugees-from-ethiopian-camps-brought-to-italy-via-humanitarian-corridors>.

⁵⁷ Caritas Italiana, *Oltre Il Mare*, 2019, http://www.caritas.it/caritasitaliana/allegati/8149/Oltre_il_Mare.pdf, cited Share, “Fostering Community Sponsorships across Europe”, p. 17

⁵⁸ <https://www.eurodiaconia.org/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/AMIF-PPI-Impact-Assessment-Report-FINAL-27072020.pdf>, p. 15

further challenge lies in the structure of the sponsorship: the criteria for selecting sponsors are not clear, most of the responsibility for integration falls on the sponsors, and little provision is made for alternative protection in the event of sponsorship breakdown. Nor is there a clear delineation of the responsibilities of the government, or of the rights and obligations of migrants. Concerns have been raised about the criteria used in selecting migrants and decisions about acceptance which, though flexible, are not always transparent. Finance is an ongoing concern. The programme receives some funding from the EU and from other migrant networks, but most of its costs are covered by the partner organizations and civil society and primarily through Italy's "8 x 1,000" (*otto per mille*) system which allows taxpayers to give a compulsory 0.08% of their annual income to their choice of charities.⁵⁹

Some of the difficulties with the model have been reported in Italy in recent months with the reception of Afghan refugees.⁶⁰ Organisers fear that the government will leave all costs and responsibilities for reception and integration to local communities which are in danger of being overwhelmed. The organization plans to look to the community sponsorship model as a way of providing a sustainable system of integration, but without government support this is not guaranteed. Representatives of Humanitarian Corridors acknowledge that the programme is 'at a crossroads' given the increasing concern in the EU with securitization and borders and the complex state agreements regarding refugee reception.

France:

Concern about persecuted minorities suffering from IS (Islamic State) motivated a number of faith-based organizations in France to start a family reunification scheme in 2014. It admitted a total of 7,344 Syrians and Iraqis in 2015-2016, who entered France on humanitarian visas and then applied for asylum. Family members and (religious) organizations were responsible for travel and initial settlement costs until the newcomers were given refugee status and could state benefits.

Another scheme was started by the Ordre de Malte which by December 2018 had supported 766 refugees who had arrived under the family reunification scheme. In one region it set up a coordinating group consisting of representatives of the regional government, health and housing services. The result enhanced both the integration of the refugees and the cohesion in the local community, as well as providing a model for other refugee initiatives.⁶¹

In March 2017, a Humanitarian Corridors programme was launched, with a protocol being agreed between the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Ministry of Interior, the Community of Sant'Egidio, the Protestant Federation of France, the Federation of Protestant Mutual Aid, the Bishops' Conference of France and Caritas France.⁶² The programme, which is ongoing, has a quota of 500 refugees from Lebanon, and by May 2019, 364 people had arrived. The structure is the same as that in Italy: beneficiaries are selected by local partners in the country of first asylum and by the UNHCR, and are then given humanitarian visas by the French embassy in that country. On arrival in France, they may

⁵⁹Ibid.

⁶⁰ This paragraph summarizes an interview in September 2021 with representatives of the International Humanitarian Corridors programme published in the "Human Lines" website of the University of Notre Dame: <https://keough.nd.edu/human-lines-stories-and-analysis>.

⁶¹ Share, "Community Sponsorship in Europe", p. 14.

⁶² <https://www.humanitariancorridor.org/en/homepage>.

claim asylum, and once they receive official status, they may apply for state benefits. The programme is funded by faith-based organizations and private fundraising. Caritas France and Sant' Egidio provide training and support to sponsorship groups, most of which are parishes in smaller villages with little or no experience in the field of migration. The Share Network report notes that difficulties with the programme have arisen due to delays in the delivery of visas, and to complaints that these visas are often restricted to those in the Humanitarian Corridors programme, with the result that other refugees and migrants have difficulty in getting humanitarian visas. Nevertheless, the programme is viewed positively by those involved.

Belgium:

A Humanitarian Corridors programme was introduced in Belgium in November 2017 with the signing of an MoU between the Secretary of State for Asylum and Migration and the Community of Sant'Egidio, in partnership with Caritas and the Christian, Muslim and Jewish faith communities with the goal of sponsoring 150 Syrian refugees from Lebanon and Turkey. Caritas International provides training and support to sponsors, who are usually members of parish communities, and the Sant'Egidio Community acts as coordinator. Selection is focused on families with children, older people and persons with special medical needs.⁶³ The programme is additional to state resettlement. By 2019, all 150 refugees had arrived and had achieved semi- if not full-autonomy.

In 2015 the then Secretary of State for Asylum and Migration, Theo Francken, put in place a system in which Syrian-Assyrian Christians were brought to Belgium on humanitarian visas through intermediaries. A scandal broke out when news emerged that one of the intermediary amember of Francken's own party, had charged money for these humanitarian visas: he was subsequently found guilty of visa trafficking. The system was moreover criticized for being discriminatory, intransparent and in violation of Belgian antiracism laws.

Despite this scandal, and despite its having been introduced just after the terrorist attacks in Brussels in 2016 and the subsequent hostility towards immigration in general, the Belgian programme is by some considered to be one of the most successful, thanks to the active support of the government, the involvement of civil society and all religious communities, and wide-ranging awareness-raising campaigns. Moreover, the fact that many of those arriving had family members already in Belgium is seen to have facilitated integration, and is presented as another argument in favour of increasing the family reunification pathway in Europe.

⁶³ "150 Syrian asylum seekers due to be welcomed in Belgium by religious communities", *The Brussels Times*, 22 November 2017, <http://www.brusselstimes.com/belgium;9618/150-syrian-asylum-seekers-welcomed-in-belgium-by-religious-communities>.

Northern/Central Europe

United Kingdom:⁶⁴

A number of different resettlement schemes have been in operation in the UK for many years. A family reunification scheme, known as the Mandate, allows family members to sponsor refugees, provided they can provide accommodation and support.

In 2004, the Gateway Protection Programme was launched to provide 750 resettlement places annually to refugees who had been displaced for at least 5 years. This is state-run with volunteers, under a service provider contract, responsible for certain integration activities.

The city of Sheffield together with the Yorkshire and Humber regions were leading actors in the ICMC/SHARE resettlement programme in 2012-14. Their experiences were outlined in a publication entitled *Welcome to Sheffield: Reflections on 8 years' experience of receiving refugees at the local level*.⁶⁵ Together with EURO CITIES, Sheffield hosted the SHARE City Exchange Visit Programme in 2012-13 which offered exchange visits to towns and cities across Europe interested in learning about Sheffield's experience of refugee reception.

The Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme (VPRS) was started in 2014, initially targeting Syrian refugees and then extended to vulnerable people of other nationalities, with a goal of providing 20,000 places by 2020. Some of these were supplied by community sponsorship.

In 2020, all the resettlement programmes, except for the family reunification scheme, were fused into one programme which operates in collaboration with the UNHCR, and had a quota of 5,000 refugees for the first year.

The first Community Sponsorship Scheme (CSS) was started by the UK government in 2015, to help with the integration of UNHCR-referred refugees.⁶⁶ It is a public-private partnership, and in announcing it, the Prime Minister, Theresa May stressed it was intended "to allow individuals, charities, faith groups, churches and businesses to support refugees directly".⁶⁷ Initially CSS refugees included only those within the UK's quota, but the opposition of sponsors to this restriction led the government to make the scheme additional from 2020.

Like the Canadian BVOR programme,⁶⁸ the UNHCR, not the sponsor, identifies and selects the refugees, who are then matched with sponsoring groups. Beneficiaries are given the

⁶⁴ See McFadyen, Gillian, *Refugees in Britain: Practices of Hospitality and Labelling* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2020), p. 124-128; D'Avino, Gabriella, "Framing community Sponsorship in the context of the UK's hostile environment", *Critical Social Policy* (2021): 1-23, DOI: 10.1177/02610183211023890; J. Phillimore, K Dorling, "Community and Private Sponsorship – summary of the global state of knowledge".

⁶⁵ https://www.resettlement.eu/sites/icmc.ttp.eu/files/ICMC_WelcomeToSheffield.pdf

⁶⁶ Home Office, "Community Sponsorship, Guidance for prospective sponsors", https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/964199/2018-12-04_Community_Sponsorship_Guidance.pdf

⁶⁷ Cited G. McFadyen, *Refugees in Britain*, p. 124.

⁶⁸ In Canada's BVOR programme, refugees are chosen from a list of UNHCR referrals and are screened by the government; sponsors provide six months financial support and a year of emotional support with the government providing another six months financial support. This programme was introduced as a way of reducing the financial commitment of sponsors and speeding up the process of resettlement. See Phillimore, Jenny and Kamena Dorling,

same legal status as resettled quota refugees. The selection of sponsors involves an extensive process of up to one year: they have to be affiliated with registered charities (or “lead sponsor”), and are approved by the government on the basis of their financial standing, their resettlement plan, as well as several other security criteria. They must commit to providing financial support for one year, securing accommodation (which is paid for by state benefits) for two years, fundraising at least £9000, obtaining local authority consent, and providing language training.

The ‘lead sponsor’ organizations provide training, support and consultation for the local groups. These include Reset, a charity founded in 2018 with the aid of the Home Office; Citizens UK a community-organizing NGO that supports the model of community sponsorship; and the Sponsor Refugees Foundation. Churches also use their own networks to set up and support sponsoring groups. Faith-based groups dominated from the beginning with the first family being housed on the grounds of the property of the Archbishop of Canterbury, Lambeth Palace. In more recent years rugby clubs and universities have also become involved. Finally, a ‘Multiple Sponsorship’ model is being considered whereby a lead sponsor could underwrite multiple groups, thereby minimizing the bureaucracy required of sponsoring groups – a major challenge for community sponsorship everywhere.

Since the inception of CSS, nearly 400 refugees have been resettled and supported by around 70 groups. In 2019 the UK government promised to support the CSS for another five years, with a view to increasing the number of community sponsored refugees, particularly vulnerable refugees fleeing conflict.⁶⁹

The main criticism of CSS has echoed the criticism elsewhere that this model replaces state and UNHCR resettlement programmes. One study argues that the government is using CSS “... more as a tool of migration management than as a tool of international protection and have mobilized the commitment towards ‘vulnerable’ refugees to legitimize and reinforce more restrictive immigration control over asylum seekers and refugees outside CS”.⁷⁰

Germany:⁷¹

Germany’s long tradition in accepting refugees is reflected in the variety of programmes in the country. In 2019, it ranked fifth worldwide among resettlement countries and accepted the highest number of asylum seekers. In 2020 it hosted the third largest number of refugees worldwide (5%), almost 1.5 million, with Syrian refugees and asylum-seekers constituting the largest groups (44 per cent), making it the 2nd largest hosting country in

“Community and Private Sponsorship – summary of the global state of knowledge”, IRiS (Institute for Research into Superdiversity, University Birmingham, March 2020), <https://www.birmingham.ac.uk/Documents/college-social-sciences/social-policy/iris/2020/community-sponsorship-summary-global-state-of-knowledge.pdf>, p.3.

⁶⁹ Home Office, “New Global resettlement scheme for the most vulnerable refugees announced”, <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/new-global-resettlement-scheme-for-the-most-vulnerable-refugees-announced>.

⁷⁰ G. D’Avino, “Framing Community Sponsorship”, p. 2

⁷¹ Grote, J., Bitterwolf, M and Baraulina, T., “Resettlement and Humanitarian Admission Programmes in Germany”, Focus-Study by the German National Contact Point for the European Migration Network (EMN), Working Paper 68 Federal Office for Migration and Refugees, 2016; Caritas Germany, “Admission programmes”, <https://resettlement.de/en/admissionprogrammes/>.

Europe.⁷² In 2021 already, over 100,000 applications for asylum have been received.⁷³ The country committed to providing 5,500 resettlement places in 2020, with a goal of 160,000 to 220,000 places per year in all its refugee programmes, although this has been much criticized as possibly curtailing access to asylum.

Resettlement: Under the EU Resettlement Programme, in 2020 Germany provided 1,900 places for refugees from Egypt, Jordan, Kenya, Lebanon and Niger, though the pandemic prevented all the admissions from taking place.

Most refugees resettled in Germany are admitted on a humanitarian admission scheme. In recent years this has been largely determined by the 2017 EU-Turkey Agreement, which attempts to reduce the number of refugees arriving in Europe from Turkey via the Aegean Sea. This scheme allows for the admission of up to 500, mostly Syrian, persons per month. They are given a residence permit for two or three years, and after five years may apply for permanent residence if they have a knowledge of the language and are self-supporting. They are given permission to work and are entitled to social security benefits.

Family Reunification/regional programmes: this is additional to the state's resettlement programme. The main programme was the Landesaufnahmeprogramme, the Regional Admission Programme or FLSS, which operated between 2013 and 2018 as a family reunification programme for Syrian refugees, and continues to operate in some regions. By mid-2018, some 25,000 people had been received under this programme. German residents were allowed to sponsor family members from Syria who were given humanitarian visas. Their legal status and entitlements were the same as those for resettled refugees. However, difficulties arose as the exact nature of the sponsors' engagement was often unclear at the time of sponsors formally engaging and in some cases could only be decided by the courts after years of legal battles between private sponsors and government. Sponsors were often responsible for almost all financial costs for an unlimited period. Despite volunteer fundraising efforts to help with the costs, the heavy financial burden on sponsors led to the sponsorship period being limited to 5 years, and to the costs of healthcare being assumed by the state authorities.

Community resettlement sponsorship: The NesT (Neustart im Team) pilot programme was started in May 2019, and will provide 400 places in addition to the state's resettlement programme.⁷⁴ The goal is both to improve integration and expand protection to those who might not otherwise be able to avail of the other resettlement programmes. Resembling the UK's CSSR programme and Canada's BVOR programme, NesT involves cooperation between the UNHCR, civil society, faith groups, and the government.

The selection of beneficiaries is done initially by the UNHCR, and the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees is responsible for the final selection. Vulnerable persons, such as unaccompanied minors, pregnant women, and victims of trafficking are given special consideration.⁷⁵ Those selected are given renewable three-year residence permits prior to admission, and with the same legal status as settled refugees, they are entitled to social

⁷² UNHCR, <https://www.unhcr.org/60b638e37/unhcr-global-trends-2020>, p. 8, 14, 19.

⁷³ "Germany still top destination for asylum-seekers in Europe", <https://www.dw.com/en/germany-still-top-destination-for-asylum-seekers-in-europe/a-59530275>.

⁷⁴ See NesT – New Start in a Team", https://resettlement.de/wp-content/uploads/nest_broschuere_quadratisch_aufgabe_EN_v03.pdf

⁷⁵ Solano and Savazzi, "Private Sponsorship Programmes", p. 11.

welfare benefits. Sponsorship groups of at least 5 people are responsible for providing integration support (language courses, administrative help) for 1 year and housing for 2 years. The first sponsors were members of a Catholic parish in the North Rhine-Westphalia region, with housing assistance provided by the Archdiocese of Cologne, which was already involved in welcoming programmes for refugees.⁷⁶ Sponsors and refugees are matched by the Federal Office for Migration. ZKS, a civil society contact point, comprising Caritas, the Red Cross and the Protestant Church of Westphalia, provides training and support and acts as a link between the federal authorities and the sponsors.

Ireland:⁷⁷

As elsewhere, a number of differing initiatives have characterized Irish immigration policy on complementary pathways. The emphasis has been on official resettlement programmes, but community sponsorship was recently added.

Resettlement: In 1998, the Irish Refugee Resettlement Programme (IRRP) was launched by the Irish government in collaboration with UNHCR. Between 2000 and 2019 over 3000 persons were resettled under this initiative. At the Global Refugee Forum in 2019, Ireland agreed to resettle 2,900 refugees during Phase II of the IRRP programme from 2020 to 2023.

The Irish Refugee Protection Programme (IRRP) was started in 2015, with a pledge to provide 4,000 resettlement places for persons in need of protection. This was in part a response to the EU call for the relocation of refugees from hotspots in Italy, Hungary, etc. as well as an effort to meet the needs of unaccompanied minors in camps in Calais. Ireland also agreed to participate in a number of ad hoc emergency refugee initiatives, such as the search and rescue missions on the Mediterranean during the 2015-17 crisis, and relocated some of those rescued. Ultimately only 1570 persons arrived during this phase, because of complications in the hotspots, a lack of interest among the young people in Calais in coming to Ireland, as well as the difficulties of arranging accommodation due to the housing crisis in Ireland. By 2019, almost 800 of the 4,000 committed resettlement places remained unfilled. For the period 2020-2023, the programme agreed to accept 2900 refugees.

Family Reunification: In addition, the International Humanitarian Assistance Programme (IHAP) was launched as a complement to family reunification, whereby Irish citizens or residents could sponsor relatives, with a total of 740 places pledged. However, the programme was beset by obstacles, such as the restriction to beneficiaries from certain countries, and a very short application period for sponsors. By 2020, of the 740 available places, just 276 had arrived. A specific programme, the Syrian Humanitarian Admission Programme (SHAP) was started which allowed Irish citizens and residents to sponsor Syrian relatives who entered on humanitarian grounds and then received a renewable residence permit, as in Germany. The programme was implemented for about six months in 2014, and admitted 119 Syrians. A similar HAP has recently been added to provide 500

⁷⁶ "Community Sponsorship via the German Nest Programme: An experience to Repeat", <https://resettlement.eu/page/community-sponsorship-german-nest-programme-experience-repeat>

⁷⁷ See www.justice.ie/en/IELR/Pages/PR18000245; Quinn, E. and Moriarty, D., "Protection with Dignity: A Humane Response to Global Displacement" (Jesuit Refugee Service, Ireland, 2021), <file:///C:/Users/mgbke/Downloads/Protection%20with%20Dignity%20-%20Humane%20Response%20to%20Global%20Forced%20Displacement.pdf>; UNHCR, *Resettlement Handbook: Country Chapter, Ireland*, <https://www.unhcr.org/protection/resettlement/3cac29da4/unhcr-resettlement-handbook-country-chapter-ireland.html>; http://www.integration.ie/en/isec/pages/community_sponsorship_ireland.

additional places for Afghan refugees. Afghans nationals already resident in Ireland can sponsor up to 4 close family members from Afghanistan.

Community Sponsorship Ireland (CSI) was launched in 2019 as part of Phase 2 of the IRPP (2020-2023). As elsewhere, it is influenced by the Canadian model, and GRSI representatives offer guidance. It involves a partnership between the Department of Justice and Equality, the UNHCR, the Irish Refugee Council, the Irish Red Cross and five Regional Support Organizations (RSOs), each of which works to recruit community sponsorship groups, and provide training and monitoring.

Existing procedures for the referral of refugees are also applied to community sponsored refugees. The UNHCR selects and refers the refugees, who are then approved by the Irish Refugee Protection Programme. The programme is committed to providing 50 resettlement places annually until 2023, as part of the existing resettlement quota, although the government has promised additionality in the long term. However, as Walsh and Moriarty point out in their study, “that additionality principle is under threat in the Irish context, as the next phase of the IRPP envisages approximately 14% of commitments being met by communities”.

As in the UK, Regional Support Organizations (RSOs) act as a link between the Department of Justice and Equality and the community sponsorship groups. These organizations must be incorporated and show proof of having the necessary resources and experience so as to be able to provide consistent support. The plan is eventually to follow the Canadian model and set up a civil society-led umbrella organization that will coordinate all the RSOs.

Local sponsoring groups are envisaged as being villages, towns, parishes, trade unions, sporting organizations and community groups in general. A group has to consist of at least five people and must be aligned with an RSO, and be approved by the Department of Justice. They are required to raise a minimum of €10,000 and draft a settlement plan, including a safeguarding policy. They are required to assist with housing for two years (though rental costs are covered by state benefits), and provide social, emotional and financial support for eighteen months. Since then, almost 20 groups nationwide have taken part in the scheme and the number is growing.

The hope is that the community sponsorship model will help to fill Ireland's pledges for resettlement, meet the social and personal needs of newcomers and allow for contact between refugees and their hosting communities. Various factors suggest a positive outcome. Unlike other European countries, anti-immigrant sentiment does not dominate the narrative in Ireland, as indicated in the 2021 Ipsos Global Trends study of 2021, in which just 31% agreed with the statement “there are too many immigrants in my country”, by comparison with approximately 60% in Denmark and France. Further, the study indicates that social cohesion is higher in Ireland than elsewhere.⁷⁸ Some difficulties persist: the Ipsos study indicates that 1/3 of the population is not happy with recent developments. Perhaps the introduction of community sponsorship will help change this, in line with the ‘intergroup contact theory’ discussed earlier. A major difficulty, peculiar to Ireland, is the continuing shortage of housing which has reached crisis proportions, and for which there are no ready solutions. The result is that many refugees are housed in direct provision

centres which do not include any provision for social integration. The hope is that creative private sponsorship groups will be able to offer solutions.

*The Netherlands:*⁷⁹

In 2018 a community sponsorship pilot programme, entitled “Samen Hier” (Here Together), was launched by Justice and Peace Netherlands. Building on earlier initiatives for welcoming refugees, the programme was based on the Canadian sponsorship model. Its stated goal was “to promote faster integration in all its versatility by giving access to social networks”. The Dutch model is unusual in the attention it pays to integration and social cohesion. Integration is seen as “a two-way process, in which both receiving societies and the newcomers learn from each other and adapt”. However, because the burden of assimilation too often has fallen on newcomers, a gap exists between their world and that of the receiving society. This has led to “intergenerational ‘parallel societies’”, each distrusting and misunderstanding the other.⁸⁰ This situation can however be turned around by fostering closer personal relationships between both groups; community sponsorship is seen as a way of doing this.

The pilot “Samen Hier” programme was hosted by four municipalities, Almere, Haarlem, Rotterdam and The Hague. The beneficiaries, referred to as ‘status holders’, were asylum seekers (mostly from Syria and Eritrea) who had been granted asylum and a residence permit, and had already lived for one year in one of the pilot municipalities. A statistical software programme, “Pairity”, with a preference-matching algorithm, was used to match beneficiaries with a suitable group. Groups, called “welcome groups” consisted of five people, and 42 groups signed up. Each group was assigned a contact person for guidance and support, and a cultural ambassador familiar with the language and culture of both group and beneficiary. The group was responsible for one year for a variety of integration activities, not just help with language and employment. Unlike community sponsorship elsewhere, sponsors were not responsible for any financial costs, partly because of the social welfare supplied by the state, partly because of a desire to foster an equal relationship between the welcome group and the status holders.

A review carried out in December 2020 concluded that the pilot was successful in fostering cohesion and integration, and augured well for the future of such a programme in the country. Some challenges were highlighted: the role of the cultural ambassador was not clearly defined; as in other countries, sponsors and beneficiaries had differing expectations regarding the nature of the sponsors’ commitments; the sustainability of sponsorship was an issue of concern. However, with appropriate steps, these challenges were deemed solvable, and the conclusion was that sponsorship programmes are the best way of ensuring social cohesion, the well-being of all participants and a more positive migration

⁷⁹ European Commission, “‘Samen Hier’: Local Solidarity Networks for Community Sponsorship”, https://ec.europa.eu/migrant-integration/integration-practice/samen-hier-local-solidarity-networks-community-sponsorship_en; Justice and Peace Netherlands, “Samen Hier”, <https://justiceandpeace.nl/en/initiatives/samen-hier/>; Justice and Peace Netherlands, “Midterm Review Pilot Samen Hier” (December 2020), <https://justiceandpeace.nl/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/2021-03-Samen-Hier-Mid-term-report-EN.pdf>

⁸⁰ “Midterm Review Pilot Samen Hier”, p. 16.

narrative in society at large. The programme is currently being expanded to other cities, including Amsterdam.

Nordic countries

The Nordic countries have played a major role in international humanitarian action in modern times, devoting a large share of their GDP (1%) to overseas development aid and accepting more asylum seekers per capita than many other countries. Some have argued that they are also providing a model of public-private partnership, of a close cooperation between civil society and state policy, which has inspired other countries.⁸¹ Tensions between state and non-state actors are therefore not as evident in the Nordic countries as elsewhere. The reasons for this, and for Nordic generosity, have been attributed to the countries' histories, to their central role in receiving refugees during and after the world wars, and to their participation in UN activities from the 1960s to 1990s, all leading to a strong sense of solidarity and altruism in the general population.⁸² In recent times however, with declining membership in civil society organizations, rising public hostility to immigration and criticism of overseas development aid, the popularity of aid and refugee programmes has declined.⁸³ To offset this development and to improve the integration of refugees, the model of community-based sponsorship has been mooted. A 2018 study on the feasibility of the model in Scandinavia encouraged its introduction, particularly the Canadian model but adapted to local conditions.⁸⁴

Sweden:⁸⁵

Sweden's commitment to receiving refugees is clear, and its resettlement quota has grown from 3400 to 5000 since 2017, with that number increased to 6,401 in 2021 to compensate for places not filled in 2020 because of the Covid pandemic.⁸⁶ It is also committed to a clear asylum policy, although in 2020, presumably because of the pandemic, the number of asylum seekers dropped to 12,991, the lowest in over 20 years.⁸⁷ The government's official goal is "to ensure a sustainable migration policy that safeguards the right of asylum, and within the framework of managed immigration, facilitates mobility across borders, promotes demand-driven labour migration ... and deepens European and international cooperation".⁸⁸ Most of the government's efforts focus on reinforcing this goal by clarifying legislation and selection criteria. In July 2021, migration legislation was changed so that all

⁸¹ Or as Carl Marklund puts it, "Top-down policy-making and bottom-up popular mobilisation have largely been mutually reinforcing." "Neutrality and solidarity in Nordic humanitarian action", Humanitarian Policy Group Working Paper, January 2016, www.odi.org.uk/hpg, p. 23.

⁸² For a full discussion, see Marklund, "Neutrality and solidarity", p. 1-24.

⁸³ Marklund, "Neutrality and solidarity", p. 23.

⁸⁴ Ugland, T. "Canada Can – Can We? Sponsoring Integration of Refugees the Canadian Way", cited Tan, "A Feasibility Study of Community sponsorship in Denmark", p. 14, note 41.

⁸⁵ This section on Sweden relies on: C. Marklund, "Neutrality and Solidarity in Nordic humanitarian action", p. 5-8; N. F. Tan, "A Study on the Potential for Introducing a Community Sponsorship Program for Refugees in Sweden", Scoping Paper for UNHCR Representation for Nordic and Baltic Countries (Stockholm, Feb. 2020), p. 1-30; "The Swedish Resettlement Program for 2020", <https://www.migrationsverket.se/download/18.2fa4056d1775f05c203918/1616140229618/Annual%20Report%20on%20the%20Swedish%20Resettlement%20Programme%202020.pdf>; M. Nyman and P. Varga, "Country Report: Sweden", Asylum Information Database (December 2020); and official publications by the Government of Sweden.

⁸⁶ "The Swedish Resettlement Programme".

⁸⁷ Sweden Fact Sheet, UNHCR, <https://reporting.unhcr.org/sites/default/files/Bi-annual%20fact%20sheet%202021%2002%20Sweden.pdf>

⁸⁸ <https://www.government.se/information-material/2019/07/swedens-migration-and-asylum-policy>.

refugees, except quota refugees, are to be granted temporary residence permits, usually for two years, with permanent residence permits requiring at least three years residence, as well as evidence of financial independence and good conduct.⁸⁹ Other changes included a focus on assisting vulnerable persons, minority ethnic and religious groups.

In assisting refugees, there is a close cooperation between the state and civil society. Sweden's historic role in assisting refugees during and after WWII was characterized by close cooperation between the government, organizations such as the Red Cross, trade unions, employer organizations and the country's churches. This model continued in later aid initiatives and policies. During the 2015 crisis, when almost 163,000 asylum seekers arrived in Sweden, overwhelming the state system, civil society played a central role in providing assistance. Still, concerns remain about the quality of integration. An agreement of 2009 between the central government, municipalities and civil society, recognized the impersonality of the official state programme and emphasized the need to strengthen the ties between each level of governance and civil society actors. The government also acknowledges that while there is a need to expand the number of safe and legal channels into Sweden, the country's resources for that are limited.⁹⁰

Since other complementary pathways to resettlement are so far not considered suitable to the Swedish context, the community sponsorship model has been proposed as a way of addressing these concerns. While no definite schemes have been put forward, the UNHCR report contains the first detailed study on the potential of such a model and identifies two steps towards its realization:

1) Community Engagement Model: this model would focus on improving the quality of integration of refugees already admitted through the quota system by involving communities in a systematic way and expanding on existing initiatives. In this way, the infrastructure for additional programmes would be developed.

2) Community sponsorship pilot for 'sponsored resettlement': This model is very similar to community sponsored resettlement programmes in the UK, the Netherlands and Ireland. The proposal is to develop a small-scale pilot programme in 1 or 2 municipalities with a small number of sponsors and refugees. Beneficiaries would be selected by the Swedish Migration Agency from the UNHCR referral list, and would be part of the state's refugee quota. Sponsorship groups would consist of at least 5 persons, be supported by an established organization, and enter into a formal agreement with the state or municipality. Their responsibilities would be clearly delineated, restricted to providing assistance with housing and social support for a fixed period of one year. Ultimate responsibility would remain with the state.

Some factors augur well for the success of such a pilot. The report confirms the interest of some civil society organizations and municipalities in improving the integration of refugees in the state's resettlement programme, and some municipalities are interested in expanding immigration in order to meet local labour demands. Other positive omens include increasing interest in refugee issues in civil society since the influx of 2015, and the

⁸⁹ "Changes to the Swedish Aliens Act in 2021", <https://www.migrationsverket.se/English/About-the-Migration-Agency/Changes-to-the-Swedish-Aliens-Act-in-2021.html>

⁹⁰ "Sustainable migration policy for the long term", <https://www.government.se/articles/2020/09/sustainable-migration-policy-for-the-long-term/> (Ministry of Justice Government of Sweden, Stockholm, September 2020).

feasibility of developing a community sponsorship scheme within the existing legal framework.

Challenges include the lack of experience in civil society in integration matters, “empathy fatigue” among over-subscribed volunteers, the shortage of funding for volunteer organizations and concerns that community sponsorship is discriminatory and does not include access to the welfare state.⁹¹ Finally, the political climate is increasingly critical of immigration and favours imposing further restrictions, while others fear that community sponsorship will negatively impact the state’s resettlement programme and the right to seek asylum in Sweden. Moreover, the deeply engrained conviction that the state is responsible for integration presents a significant challenge to community sponsorship in Sweden.

The outcomes of the model are generally perceived to be positive. While resettled refugees in Sweden do not integrate as quickly as those who come through other channels – perhaps because they do not have the same economic and social capital as those who, having come through the asylum channel, have usually resided in the country for years and are familiar with its ways – over time these difficulties are overcome and research suggests that “sponsored refugees receive enhanced access to employment, language skills and social capital through immediate contact with a dedicated group of welcoming individuals”.⁹² N.F. Tan concludes that by introducing a model that is legally feasible, cooperates with the UNHCR’s resettlement programme, foregrounds the role of the state, and involves the wider community, the hope is that the ‘sponsored resettlement’ model will overcome these challenges and change the negative narrative on immigration.⁹³

*Denmark:*⁹⁴

Development aid had been a very stable feature of Danish foreign policy for many years, partly because it was an important issue for the left and centre-left governments but with a change of government, immigration policy became much more restrictive, and focused more on repatriation than on resettlement. In the 2010s laws became even more stringent: solely temporary visas became available for refugees, permanent visas were curtailed, restrictions on family reunification, reductions in social welfare benefits for asylum seekers implemented, along with an increase in the number of push backs, and even a temporary halt to the state’s resettlement programme. As a result, asylum applications fell from 21,316 in 2015 to 1547 in 2020. In 2019, in what became known as the “paradigm shift”, legislative changes were introduced stressing the temporary nature of asylum and the importance of arranging return at the earliest opportunity. The change in attitude is reflected in the announcement by the Social Democrat anti-immigration prime minister

⁹¹ N.F. Tan, “A Study on the Potential for Introducing a Community Sponsorship Program for Refugees in Sweden”, p. 5, 17-19.

⁹² Ibid., p.14

⁹³ Ibid., p. 27-28.

⁹⁴ This section on Denmark relies principally on N.F. Tan’s working paper, “The feasibility of community-based sponsorship of refugees in Denmark”, p. 1-24; UNHCR, “Recommendations to Denmark on strengthening refugee protection in Denmark, Europe and globally”, <https://www.unhcr.org/neu/wp-content/uploads/sites/15/2021/01/UNHCR-Recommendations-to-Denmark-on-strengthening-refugee-protection-in-Denmark-Europe-and-globally-January-2021.pdf>. (Jan. 2021), p. 1-11.

Mette Frederiksen in January 2021 that because the social cohesion of Danish society was under threat, immigration had to be curtailed, and a zero asylum policy introduced.⁹⁵

This negative political climate is acknowledged as a major challenge to the development of community sponsorship, even though community involvement in refugee work has been active and vibrant.⁹⁶ In the wake of the Syrian crisis and triggered by the sight of refugees camping on highways, Venligboerne, a grassroots movement was founded in 2013, quickly gaining membership nationwide.⁹⁷ It comprised loosely-organized groups that provided relocation and social assistance to refugees, all coordinated via Facebook. Other groups also sprang up, offering the same support, such as “Venner Viser Vej”, a type of buddy programme aimed at improving the integration of refugees which was launched in 2015 and was operative in 93% of Denmark’s municipalities.

However, Venligboerne too became caught up in the anti-immigrant narrative. Initially the movement was apolitical, but differences arose regarding its relationship to the state, with some arguing for active opposition to the government’s asylum policy, others wanting to avoid all political discussion. These differences have been particularly aggravated by postings on social media, especially Facebook, where criticism of the movement has been particularly vicious, with some dismissing it as a semi-religious movement, others seeing its members as ‘traitors’. A common charge is that in helping refugees, Islam is spread, threatening Danish values and democratic way of life.⁹⁸ This narrative is further aggravated by recent changes in immigration law by which refugees are accepted only on a temporary basis and are issued just a two-year visa, to be renewed only in the case of continuing danger, as well as by the law allowing the deportation of asylum seekers to processing centres outside of Europe –changes that make commitment difficult for sponsors and Denmark an unattractive destination for refugees.⁹⁹ Perhaps not surprisingly then, the government revoked the permits of 94 Syrian refugees in March 2021 and is considering the return of 500 more on the grounds that parts of Damascus are safe.¹⁰⁰

Nevertheless, while asylum-seekers are discouraged, there are some signs that the government is open to organized resettlement programmes that stress integration and social cohesion. In 2019 the government indicated its willingness to participate in the UNHCR resettlement programme and to accept quota refugees once again. In its report, the UNHCR recommends complementary pathways and community sponsorship as a way for Denmark to improve integration, increase protection and show global solidarity. Nikolas Feith Tan’s feasibility study argues that these developments augur well for the success of

⁹⁵ M. McGregor, “Denmark aims for zero asylum seekers”, <https://www.infomigrants.net/en/post/29842/denmark-aims-for-zero-asylum-seekers> (25 January 2021). See also Ayse Bala Akal, “Denmark leading the race to the bottom: Hostility as a form of migration control”, PRIO/Blogs, <https://blogs.prio.org/2021/10/denmark-leading-the-race-to-the-bottom-hostility-as-a-form-of-migration-control> (October 2021).

⁹⁶ See N.F. Tan, “The feasibility of community-based sponsorship of refugees in Denmark”, p. 16. The UNHCR expressed dismay at Denmark’s response, while recognizing that it was “fuelled by frustrations about irregular migration towards and a lack of functioning responsibility-sharing arrangements within the European continent” and warned that such responses risk destroying the entire system of refugee protection internationally. UNHCR, “Recommendations to Denmark on strengthening refugee protection in Denmark, Europe and globally”, p. 9.

⁹⁷ See <https://www.information.dk/debat/2017/03/kaempesuccessen-venligboerne-doenflue-baeredygtig-bevaegelse>

⁹⁸ See R.W. Poulsen, “How the Danish Left Adopted a Far-Right Immigration Policy”, *Foreign Policy*, 12 July 2021, <https://foreignpolicy.com/2021/07/12/denmark-refugees-frederiksen-danish-left-adopted-a-far-right-immigration-policy>; <https://www.information.dk/debat/2017/03/kaempesuccessen-venligboerne-doenflue-baeredygtig-bevaegelse>.

⁹⁹ See N. F. Tan, “The feasibility of community-based sponsorship of refugees in Denmark”, p.17.

¹⁰⁰ R.W. Poulsen, “How the Danish Left Adopted a Far-Right Immigration Policy”.

a community sponsorship model, as do the strong tradition of volunteerism and the success of volunteer programmes to date.¹⁰¹

A workshop was held in February 2019 involving a wide array of volunteer organizations, the Red Cross, the Danish Refugee Council, Action Aid Denmark, municipality representatives, etc. to discuss the setting up of community sponsorship in Denmark as a way of addressing many of these challenges.¹⁰² The model proposed is a public-private partnership, similar to that in the UK and Ireland. The state would choose the quota refugees and then enter an agreement with some NGOs which would choose and train community sponsors and bring them into contact with the refugees. Community sponsors would either be volunteers from a supporting organization or groups of five or more people approved for the task either by the supporting organization or state authorities. Municipalities would offer support to sponsor groups and take responsibility for the integration of the refugees once the agreement period of the community sponsors expires. Integration programmes would be mandatory for refugees for one year.

A continuing difficulty is the issue of the legal status of sponsored refugees. Given the recent changes in immigration law, refugees can only get temporary visas, whereas the sponsorship model requires long-term or permanent residence permits. The challenge of how to finance the model was also one of considerable debate, not surprising since the role of the state as social provider is a contentious factor in all of Denmark's refugee programmes. Quota refugees have a statutory right to free education, health care, family reunification and social benefits, but the question arises if sponsored refugees would be able to receive the same rights as other refugees and if the private sponsors would be able to raise enough funds to support them. Moreover, there is considerable opposition in Denmark to private citizens contributing in this way given what is seen as the onerous taxation system. Danish proposals then focus more on NGOs and Faith Based Organisations acting as supplements to the state, with the state assuming most costs and providing sponsored refugees with most of the same rights and services as Danish citizens. N.F. Tan's paper offers precise suggestions about the division of costs between state and sponsors, as a way of overcoming the financial challenges.¹⁰³

In short, community sponsorship is seen to promise better integration of refugees, better social cohesion and, a not unimportant consideration in the eyes of many, reduced costs to the state. N.F. Tan is optimistic about the success of such a model in Denmark, given its active volunteers, civil society interest, and the willingness of Danish state authorities to participate.¹⁰⁴ Others are not so optimistic, given the continuing hardline policies being pursued by the government, and the politicization of migration by a centre-left government intent on winning votes by feeding public hostility towards immigrants.¹⁰⁵

¹⁰¹ N.F. Tan, "The feasibility of community-based sponsorship of refugees in Denmark", p.15 -17, 20.

¹⁰² See summary in N. F. Tan, *ibid*, p. 18-19.

¹⁰³ Suggestions include the state assuming responsibility for pre-arrival costs (such as plane tickets), social orientation and language training of the refugees, while community sponsors would be responsible for accommodation and employment help (e.g. helping with applications, providing contacts). Sponsors would not give money directly to refugees as this might compromise the relationship; rather the state would provide all the financial help and sponsors would later reimburse the state.

¹⁰⁴ N. F. Tan, p. 20

¹⁰⁵ See A. B. Akal, "Denmark leading the race to the bottom", Michelle Pace, "Denmark's immigrants forced out by government policies", *Chatham House Newsletter*, 28 June 2021, <https://www.chathamhouse.org/2021/06/denmarks-immigrants-forced-out-government-policies>.

Finland¹⁰⁶

Finland has until recently been a country of emigrants rather than of immigrants. This changed in the 1970s as the country began to accept refugees from Chile, and later from Vietnam, the latter under the quota refugee programme of the UNHCR. Starting with 500 quota refugees in 1985, Finland gradually increased that number to 1050 in 2021, mostly persons from Syria, Afghanistan, Turkey and Iraq. The number of asylum seekers has varied from 1,500 to 6,000 per year, except for 2015 when 32,476 arrived; by 2020 this had dropped to 1,176, of whom 42% were refused.¹⁰⁷

In receiving immigrants, Finland differs from other Nordic countries in that municipalities have more autonomy and so policies can vary significantly from one region to another, making coordination on a national level difficult if not impossible. Perhaps because of this there is already close cooperation between the municipalities and local organizations such as the Red Cross, educational institutions, volunteers etc. in the reception and integration of quota immigrants. Moreover, this cooperation between the municipality and organizations is written into the Act on the Promotion of Immigrant Integration. Municipalities have a statutory responsibility for coordinating the immigration work in their area while other tasks are agreed on between municipal employees and community sponsors. Final responsibility remains with the municipality.

Over half of municipalities actively cooperate with faith-based organizations and churches and religious communities play a significant role in supporting the integration of immigrants. The Finnish Evangelical Lutheran Church is especially active which, thanks to its power to levy taxes, has greater financial resources than smaller religious communities. Parishes and municipalities have worked together, and in some places the church's integration workers participate in the actual reception of quota refugees. Churches also give financial support as well as language training and social integration activities. A multitude of other civil society organizations are actively involved in numerous areas of integration.¹⁰⁸

The Finnish UNHCR report examines the possibilities of developing community-based sponsorship programme for refugees who come to Finland via resettlement programmes or humanitarian visas. The goal is to complement existing quota refugee resettlement programmes, with the view to making resettlement more efficient, integration more successful and in the long term increasing the refugee quota. A pilot project that would run in a few municipalities for two to three years is proposed. This would build on existing networks in a kind of hybrid model: a national organization would act as coordinator with some 5 to 7 municipalities; this together with municipalities would select local coordinators who in turn would choose community sponsors and act as links with the public sector.

¹⁰⁶ This section relies principally on Turtiainen, Kati and Henna Sapir, "Feasibility study on the potential of community-based sponsorship in Finland", a report produced by the Kokkola University Consortium Chydenius, Publications of the Finnish Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment (2021, No.37), https://julkaisut.valtioneuvosto.fi/bitstream/handle/10024/163177/TEM_2021_37.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y; Ministry of the Interior, Finland, "Refugees flee persecution in their home countries", <https://intermin.fi/en/areas-of-expertise/migration/refugees-and-asylum-seekers>; UNHCR, *Resettlement Handbook*: "Country Chapter Finland", <https://www.unhcr.org/protection/resettlement/3c5e57f07/unhcr-resettlement-handbook-country-chapter-finland.html>; <https://valtioneuvosto.fi/en/-/1410869/report-community-sponsorships-for-quota-refugees-could-supplement-authorities-measures>

¹⁰⁷ WorldData.Info, "Asylum applications and refugees in Finland", <https://www.worlddata.info/europe/finland/asylum.php>

Sponsors should be both native Finns as well as integrated immigrants, and should be ideally in groups of 5 people. Their tasks would be to offer tangible everyday help and guidance with all aspects of integration for a period of one to a maximum of two years. Again, because of the Nordic model of the welfare state, funding would be state or municipal based; private sponsors paying for housing is not possible in Finland.

Topics discussed in the report include respecting the agency of refugees who should be included in the implementation of the programme; addressing prejudices regarding culture, religion and gender; the importance of transparency of information; concerns about refugees being chosen to meet the demands of the labour market; the enduring commitment of sponsors. Much debate centred on the selection of refugees, with municipalities favouring selecting vulnerable persons, while others favoured selecting refugees whose needs could be matched with the competencies of the particular sponsoring group; all agreed selection should take place post-arrival with municipal employees making the final choice. The public sector would continue its traditional work in the reception and integration of refugees, but would cooperate much more fully than heretofore with civil society, in what the report considers would be “a paradigm shift in the integration work conducted by the public sector”.

The potential success of community sponsorship in Finland is considered to be highly promising in the UNHCR report, because of the already close links between municipalities and the numerous civil society organizations already involved in refugee integration on a voluntary basis. The hope is that by using approaches not possible in traditional integration schemes, the community sponsorship model would facilitate change in those communities where refugees live and would further “reciprocal integration” and the emergence of a truly multicultural society. The expectation is that it would also create “permanent structures of cooperation” between public authorities and civil society, rather than the present project-based cooperation, and would eventually lead to an increase in the refugee quota which is “at the core of community-based sponsorship”.¹⁰⁹

A possible challenge comes from the increasingly popular nationalist-populist Finns Party with its strongly anti-immigrant platform, whose popularity seems to have kept pace with the increase in migration to Finland. Given Finland’s generous social welfare benefits, which are available to refugees after one year, claims are made of immigrant ‘benefit tourism’ and of immigrants being a burden on the already overtaxed Finnish taxpayer. However, an interesting study of Finnish municipal voting patterns by Jakub Lonsky suggests that this danger is exaggerated, and that, under certain conditions, the inflow of migrants and the hosting of refugees in a municipality has in fact lessened the far-right vote and reduced prejudice towards new arrivals.¹¹⁰

The Finnish experience then suggests that the community sponsorship model may be an effective means of countering the anti-immigrant narratives in other Nordic countries such as Denmark and Sweden also, and in developing truly cohesive societies.

¹⁰⁹ Turtiainen and Sapir, “Feasibility study”, p. 63

¹¹⁰ Lonsky, Jakub, “Does immigration decrease far-right popularity? Evidence from Finnish municipalities”, *Journal of Population Economics* (2021) 34: 97–139, <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s00148-020-00784-4>.

Pan-European Resettlement Networks and Projects: A Selection

1. The European Migration Network (EMN)¹¹¹ is led by the European Commission's Director General of Migration and Home Affairs and by EMN National Contact Points in all EU member states (except Denmark). They coordinate a network of migration and asylum experts from a wide range of organizations throughout the EU, including government bodies, academic and research communities and NGOs. Their remit is to examine emerging issues in the area of migration and asylum and to provide "policy-relevant outputs" by collecting and analysing data on migration and asylum. EMN organizes conferences, summer schools etc. and publishes monitoring reports, information leaflets, policy documents etc. on all issues relating to asylum procedures and community/private sponsorship. A conference in October 2020, for example, featured a panel discussion on the financing of the private/community reception of refugees.

2. The European Resettlement Network (ERN)¹¹² was started in 2010 and is coordinated by the UNHCR, the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and the International Catholic Migration Commission (ICMC) Europe. It promotes refugee resettlement and integration by connecting different organizations involved in the area.

3. The SHARE Network¹¹³ was started in 2012, is part of the ERN and is led by ICMC Europe (International Catholic Migration Commission). It promotes the integration of refugees and migrants in Europe, especially by fostering the participation in the local programmes of both the refugees themselves and the local communities, which are considered to be particularly successful at integrating new arrivals. One of its most successful programmes was in the city of Sheffield and in the Humber and Yorkshire region in the UK.

4. European Council on Refugees and Exiles (ECRE)¹¹⁴ is a network of 105 NGOs in 39 European countries, which was started in 1974. It works to advance the rights of refugees and asylum seekers in Europe, and operates in diverse areas, including safe passage, integration, legal assistance, advocacy, and monitoring. The council's secretariat in Brussels supports members through events, briefings, an annual conference, among other activities.

5. EU-FRANK¹¹⁵ (European Union Action Facilitating Resettlement and Refugee Admission through New Knowledge) is a project that started in 2016 and is led by the Swedish Migration Agency in partnership with other European countries (Belgium, Italy, The Netherlands, and Switzerland), international organizations and NGOs. It is co-funded by the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF). Its mission is to provide operational support to Member States' resettlement programmes by sharing the experiences of different resettlement stakeholders (ERN, SHARE, etc), providing resettlement training for government officials or organizations, carrying out research (through its partner, the Migration Policy Institute), as well as arranging study visits and exchanges.

¹¹¹ https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/networks/european-migration-network-emn_en; https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/system/files/2021-03/emn_information_leaflet_final_march2021_en.pdf

¹¹² <http://www.resettlement.eu/page/who-we-are>

¹¹³ <https://www.resettlement.eu/page/welcome-share-network>

¹¹⁴ <https://ecre.org/>

¹¹⁵ <http://www.resettlement.eu/eu-frank>

6. COMET¹¹⁶ (COMplementary pathways nETwork) is an initiative involving a consortium of 14 organizations from 7 different member states of the EU led by the FCEI (Federation of Protestant Churches in Italy). Among the participating partners are the CCME (Churches' Commission for Migrants in Europe), the German Evangelical Church of Westphalia, Reset UK, the UNHCR as well as NGOs from Italy, the Netherlands, France and Spain. The project recently won funding from the EU Commission's AMIF (Asylum Migration and Integration Fund) for 2022 – 2024 to promote complementary pathways for migration, targeting in particular refugees who are overlooked, such as those in Libya and particularly in countries along the Central Mediterranean route. It intends to create what it calls "a network of diversity" or an "interlocking system", by combining existing practices such as humanitarian corridors, community sponsorship, and unaccompanied minors programmes, with the aim of matching the needs and aspirations of refugees with a suitable programme and location. The goal is to provide 135 additional places for persons transiting through the central Mediterranean Route, 85 of whom will be hosted in Italy. The hope is that "its multilateral approach will provide a pilot blueprint for the EU to which numerous countries and programmes can contribute, a system strengthened through shared resources and learning". The long-term goal is to "provide a basis for continued advocacy to expand legal migration".

7. Mediterranean Hope¹¹⁷ is a project that was started in 2014 in response to the disasters happening on the Mediterranean Sea. It includes the Humanitarian Corridors programme, and aims to offer safe passage and resettlement in Italy. It is led by the Federazione delle chiese evangeliche in Italia (FCEI), with the support of the Waldensian Evangelical Church, the Union of Methodist and Waldensian Churches, the Evangelical Church of Westphalia, Global Ministries, the Reformed Church of the United States, as well as churches and individuals in Italy and abroad. It supports reception centres and migration services in Sicily, Calabria, Lampedusa and beyond in multiple ways, from providing help with asylum applications, safe shelter, exchange between newly arrived and residents and more recently, protection during the Covid epidemic. Its long-term goal is to promote awareness of asylum issues in Italy among European Protestant churches in order to further European solidarity and to promote research into the problem of forced migration globally. As a result, similar programmes have been implemented in several European countries.

8. Safe Passage¹¹⁸ is a project of CCME (Churches' Commission for Migrants in Europe) to respond to the migration and refugee crisis in the Mediterranean. The project is based on monitoring the EU's external borders, disseminating the information collected throughout the EU, and advocating for a more humane EU asylum and migration policy. Together with other Christian organisations, it has suggested a "toolbox" for providing safe and legal pathways to Europe and for protecting refugees and migrants. The 'tools' are various and differentiated for different target groups include maintaining rescue operations at sea, continuing border monitoring which has been shown to be effective in improving conditions for unprotected persons, increasing the number of resettlement places, suspending visa

¹¹⁶ "Complementary Pathways for Migration, FCEI to Lead", in Agenzia NEV, 23 June 2021. <https://www.nev.it/nev/2021/06/23/complementary-pathways-for-migration-fcei-to-lead>

¹¹⁷ <https://mediterraneanhope.wordpress.com/2015/05/19/for-a-humanitarian-corridor-to-avoid-death-at-sea/#more-471>

¹¹⁸ <https://ccme.eu/index.php/areas-of-work/safe-passage/>

requirements for those fleeing war and dictatorship, providing more opportunities for family reunification, sharing responsibility for migration between Member States, and labour migration channels. These tolls are promoted by directly networking with the EU Commission and Parliament as well as EU member states and non-EU countries in order to influence European policy on migration.

9. LLinking in ¹¹⁹ was a project with the goal of improving the integration of Syrian refugees resettled from Jordan, Lebanon and Turkey to Germany, Portugal, Romania and the United Kingdom. The project ran from January 2018 to July 2019 and was co-funded by the EU. It was led by the International Organization for Migration (IOM, UN Migration) in partnership with ICMC EUROPE, the British Refugee Council (BRC), and other FBOs in the field of migration. It organized a conference and provided a platform for the exchange of information between participating countries; it fostered integration by profiling refugee skills, providing support for refugees in the form of multilingual pre- and post-arrival videos and websites, multi-lingual reception guides for hosting groups and other online tools

10. SHARE-QSN Project 2021-2023 is focused on offering support to pilot community sponsorship programmes currently in operation in Europe (the UK, Ireland, Germany, France, Belgium, Spain, and Italy) with a view to developing them into sustainable programmes. It involves a wide variety of organizations and governments involved in refugee integration.¹²⁰ Co-funded by the AMIF (Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund of the EU), it follows the guidelines set in both the UNHCR's *Three Year Strategy on resettlement and complementary pathways* and the EU's *Action Plan on Inclusion and Integration*. It plans to achieve its objectives by arranging for the exchange of information at EU level, extending the range of sponsors, expanding existing programmes and promoting stakeholder engagement at all levels, including refugees themselves.

Conclusion

In recent years in all continents, civil society has become increasingly involved in refugee resettlement. In this context, the community sponsorship model has become increasingly popular, having been introduced in different shapes and forms in the UK, Germany, the Netherlands, Ireland, Spain and Portugal.¹²¹ Feasibility studies have been carried out in France and the Nordic countries, while in 2019 Belgium, Malta and Portugal expressed interest. The basic structure of community-sponsored resettlement programmes is largely the same in all the countries where it has been introduced, albeit with varying details: a public private partnership, with sponsors responsible (to varying degrees) for accommodation and support services, and with refugees chosen by the UNHCR and state

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<https://www.resettlement.eu/page/link-it#:~:text=LINK%20IT%20was%20an%20innovative,Romania%20and%20the%20United%20Kingdom.>

¹²⁰ These include Citizens UK, Irish Refugee Council, Caritas International, ICMC Europe, Federation de l'Entraide Protestante, DiCV Cologne, Consorzio Comunitas and the Basque Government.

¹²¹ The programme in Spain was developed in 2019 by the Basque regional government, in cooperation with Spanish government ministries, UNHCR, Caritas and two faith-based organizations, in order to support 25-30 refugees referred by UNHCR as part of Spain's quota. Spain has pledged to expand this to 500 refugees by 2022. Portugal undertook a three-year sponsorship programme in 2015 which admitted 1500 persons.

authorities. In that respect, it has proven popular with governments eager to find ways of responding to the influx of refugees while at the same time allaying the fears of reluctant citizens. The Humanitarian Corridors model shares many of the same characteristics, although one could perhaps say that the scale is balanced more on the side of the civil society sponsors than on the government side: this allows for more autonomy and control by the sponsoring group, but also can lead to difficult challenges, as has been seen above. HC, however, is a more flexible programme, able to adapt quickly to changing circumstances. Both models provide safe passage and hold out much promise for meeting the challenges facing migrants and refugees.

For now, the community resettlement model seems to be gaining in popularity in Europe. If legal difficulties could be resolved, funding clarified, and a supply of willing sponsors be guaranteed, it could well become the standard model in European migration policy, as the EU hopes. Whether it will be used by governments to offload their responsibilities towards migrants and to control asylum migration remains a continuing concern. Whether it, or any organized programme, will meet the ever-urgent needs of the ever-growing number of the world's migrants is even more so.

Section II. Theological perspectives and sociological considerations

1. Theological perspectives

Hospitality and hostility¹²²

As the philosopher Richard Kearney points out, the word 'hospitality' has two etymological roots: 'hostis', which can mean both guest and enemy, and 'hospes', meaning 'host', 'guest' or 'stranger'. 'Hospes' also contains the Latin root word 'pet/potestas', signalling the host's 'power' or ability to either welcome or refuse a guest or stranger.

The double etymological roots of the word 'hospitality' thus reflect the equivocal meanings of the word, and reveal something of the existential demands and conditionalities often associated with extending hospitality. Hospitality as it is generally understood involves a kind of reciprocal disarmament, figuratively or literally, and is predicated on the necessity of establishing a certain degree of mutual trust between host and guest. This in turn is intimately connected to their opposites, to mutual suspicions and the throwing up of one's guard. As such, Kearney writes, "the ethos of hospitality is never guaranteed. It is always shadowed by its twin: hostility. In this sense, hosting others – aliens and foreigners, immigrants and refugees – is an ongoing task, never a fait accompli."¹²³ Against that background, the World Council of Churches in 2015 had underlined "The other is my neighbour" in one of its publications.¹²⁴

In hosting a stranger, one comes to the realization that one is also a stranger in need of a host; in showing hospitality one comes to know that one is in fact also a guest to the guest's hospitality. One might here point to the many times Jesus allows himself to be the guest, who in accepting the hospitality of 'outsiders', exemplifies perhaps the most moving kind of hospitality. Of course, not all who saw this liked it, as Luke 19:17 recounts: "When they saw it, they all began to grumble saying, 'He has gone to be the guest of a man who is a sinner.'" Authentic hospitality is then never easy and is always aware of its darker twin and shadow, as Kearney puts it. Hospitality is one of the key concepts of churches in Europe, as was indicated at the 2018 General Assembly of the Conference of European Churches' which focused on hospitality as one of its 3 central themes.¹²⁵

Community sponsorship, if it is to be a practice and example of hospitality, is thus always more than a mere technical solution to a migration or refugee jigsaw puzzle: showing hospitality constitutes a spiritual journey, both for host and guest, and is thus an existential decision each individual, community and generation faces anew.

On Biblical hospitality

The Bible is filled with stories in which this drama between hostility and hospitality plays out. The divine commandment to welcome the stranger appears 36 times in the Old Testament, the most frequent divine injunction after the command to worship God. In the

¹²² This section relies on and is inspired by Richard Kearney, "Hospitality: Possible or Impossible?", *Hospitality & Society* vol.5, nr 2/3, , 171-184.

¹²³ R. Kearney, "Hospitality: Possible or Impossible?", *Hospitality & Society* vol 5, nr 2/3, p. 173

¹²⁴ <https://www.oikoumene.org/resources/publications/the-other-is-my-neighbour>

¹²⁵ <https://www.ceceurope.org/hospitality-we-are-called-to-love-and-tenderness/>

New Testament, St. Paul implores Christians to be 'given to hospitality', writing in Romans 12:13 of the need to pursue eagerly 'philoxenia', which means 'loving strangers'. And as Jesus makes clear in the story of the good Samaritan, the foreigner is also one's neighbour, whom Christians are called to love without exception and 'as themselves'. Jesus' agapeic love goes further than the conditionality often associated with 'normal' hospitality: a radical unconditional hospitality, exacting nothing in return, even extended to one's enemies.

There are innumerable stories in the Old Testament in which the people of God show hospitality to the stranger, and in which the stranger is afterwards recognized as an angel, a messenger of God, or a person in whom God has revealed Himself. The oldest and perhaps most famous is the story of Abraham who, in welcoming 3 strange visitors, is in turn welcomed by their good news that his wife, the old and childless Sarah, will bear a child and become a "mother of nations" (Gen 17:16). It is only subsequently that Abraham sees the strangers for what they really are and does he understand that by showing hospitality to these strangers, he had in fact 'entertained angels unawares' (Heb 13:12).

However, as Kearney shows, the fact that God has to repeatedly remind his people to extend hospitality is an acknowledgement of the fact that showing hospitality is neither self-evident nor easy. Distrust and fear are among the natural human responses to the unknown, and the Bible is also filled with stories of hostility being chosen over hospitality, of hospitality turning into hostility, and of hospitality being betrayed by hostility. The perennial nature of this drama between hostility and hospitality is perhaps most archetypically on display in the story of Jacob, who wrestles with an unknown angel (or according to other accounts with God, 'the entirely Other'), only to find deliverance in seeing God face-to-face, and in being renamed 'Israel', the one who 'contends with God'. This drama or battle later finds its climactic expression on Golgotha, where on the Cross God's unconditional hospitality met and contended with - and absorbed - the hostility of humankind.

The biblical commandment to show hospitality to the foreigner and to care for the stranger is thus grounded not merely on the Golden Rule, but more fundamentally, on God's self-identification with the suffering and the stranger in need, on the God who is love (John 4:16). Famously God calls His people to care for the stranger, because they "know how it feels to be strangers, having been themselves strangers in the land of Egypt" (Ex. 23:9). Many of the biblical heroes chosen by God for salvific purposes had to flee for their lives: Jacob fleeing from his home to escape his brother's hostility; Moses fleeing from the Pharaoh and from Egypt; David seeking refuge in the land of the Phillistines in order to escape King Saul's persecution; the prophet Elijah fleeing into the wilderness, to get away from King Ahab and Queen Jezebel; the people of Israel living in exile under Babylonian rule; the story of Ruth, the foreign 'Moabite' (an enemy people to the Israelites), who migrates, marries an Israelite (against custom) and becomes an instrument in God's salvific plan (Ruth is 1 of

the 5 women mentioned in Jesus' genealogy); Mary and Joseph fleeing Egypt in the dead of night in order to escape Herod's persecution.¹²⁶

This inseparability of the Golden Rule (which implies a compassionate self-identification with the other), and God's Self-identification with 'the least of these' (which undergirds the commandment to love the stranger) is also famously expressed in Leviticus 19:33-34: *"When a foreigner resides among you in your land, do not mistreat them. The foreigner residing among you must be treated as your native-born. Love them as yourself, for you were foreigners in Egypt. I am the LORD your God"*.

This passage reveals, as Heinrich Bedford-Strohm points out, the inseparability of the ethical demand to love the stranger and of faith in God. He writes: "this rationale expresses the origin of love among humans in their human-divine relationship", and that this rationale becomes "comprehensible (...) from Israel's own experience" on the one hand, and the reference to God on the other ("I am the Lord your God").¹²⁷

The same self-identification of God with the suffering and needy stranger reaches a climax in Matthew 25, when Jesus, speaking of the Kingdom of God, says of the 'blessed ones': *"I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me (...). Just as I did it to one of the least of these, you did it to me."* And to 'the cursed' he says: *"just as you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to me"*.

This otherness of Jesus is also central to the story of the Resurrection and the birth of the Church. Jesper Svartvik writes how the meeting with the Resurrected Jesus on the road to Emmaus "was a meeting with a familiar stranger and a strange friend. Even when Christ himself is a guest of Christians, he remains a stranger, mysterious and unfathomable".¹²⁸ The meeting with this friendly Stranger is a lifelong mysterious encounter to which Christians are invited and called.

Matthew 25 thus calls Christians to go into the unknown, to be witnesses of God's love, by loving Christ and those whom Christ loves, including the stranger who finds him- or herself in need of a home away from home. Jesus' words call Christians out of their complacency to witness to a love that indeed may more often than not seem strange, impossible, imprudent and 'not of this world'. One asks: can community sponsorship be a concrete expression of this love and a response to Jesus' call to welcome the hungry and thirsty stranger?

¹²⁶ These examples are drawn from "Chapter 2: Jesus was a Refugee. Thinking Biblically about Migration", in Stephan Bauman, Matthew Soerens, Issam Smeir, *Seeking Refuge. On the Shores of The Global Refugee Crisis*, Chicago, IL: Moody Publishers (2016).

¹²⁷ Heinrich Bedford-Strohm, "Responding to the Challenges of Migration and Flight from A Perspective of Theological Ethics", in *Theological Reflections on Migration. A CCME Reader*, edited by Benz H.R. Schär and Ralf Geisler, Brussels: Churches' Commission for Migrants in Europe (CCME) (2008), p. 41

¹²⁸ Jesper Svartvik, *Reconciliation and Transformation. Reconsidering Christian Theologies of the Cross* (translated by Karen Hagersten), Oregon: Cascade Books (2021), p. 121.

Justice or charity?

i) Biblical hospitality: between justice and charity

Deuteronomy 27:19 states, “Cursed is he who distorts justice due a stranger, orphan or widow”. The symbol of biblical justice is not that of an impartial blindfolded woman with a sword in one hand and scales in the other. Rather, the Bible resolutely takes the side of the oppressed and downtrodden, including the ‘stranger’. The Bible also does not present a mere procedural understanding of justice, but rather defines it relationally, both ‘vertically’ or covenantally between God and his People, and ‘horizontally’, between people.

As Bauman, Soerens and Smeir point out in *Seeking Refuge on the Shores of the Global Refugee Crisis*, the Old Testament has two words for justice: 1) mishpat, a form of ‘rectifying justice’, refers to the concrete justice due a stranger, orphan or widow, and means ‘giving people their due’, or ‘rendering judgement’; 2) ‘tsdeqa’ signifies a justice in the context of the covenant, and means ‘right relationships’ and the fulfilling of one’s ‘relational’ duties. The Bible then, as Bauman, Soerens and Smeir put it, defines justice relationally: “in its fullness, justice is about right relationships – relationships that work”.¹²⁹ The two greatest biblical commandments most succinctly express this intimate connection between the vertical and horizontal dimension: “to love the Lord thy God with all thy heart (...) and thy neighbour as thyself”.

Biblical justice is also grounded on the notion of the ‘Imago Dei’, on the belief that each human person is created in the image of God and endowed with an inviolable dignity. As Imago Dei, as the image of a Trinitarian, relational God, the human person is fundamentally relational, both receptive and hospitable to God and others, as well as capable of showing hospitality unto others. ‘Human rights’ according to a biblical understanding are thus not merely individualistic, but communitarian.

Created in the image of God, refugees and migrants have a God-given relational need: the need to belong, to be made to feel welcome, as well as the need to contribute and be given the opportunity to give to others. This can only happen within a community. Community sponsorship as a path toward resettlement is thus perhaps better suited to address these relational aspects and improve integration outcomes, simply because state institutions are less capable of providing, over an extended period of time, a personal touch to the resettlement process. In turn, the host community also finds itself transformed, and hospitality can turn into friendship and a sense of fellowship and community.

ii) ‘Justice or charity’: ethical considerations ¹³⁰

Duties of justice are sometimes seen as obligatory whereas charity is understood as not obligatory and something ‘extra’. Patti Tamara Lenard argues that this distinction between justice and charity has ethical implications for how one thinks of community sponsorship

¹²⁹ Stephan Bauman, Matthew Soerens, Issam Smeir, *Seeking Refuge. On the Shores of The Global Refugee Crisis*, Chicago, IL: Moody Publishers (2016), p. 150–151.

¹³⁰ This section relies on Patti Tamara Lenard’s line of reasoning in her chapter “How should we think about private sponsorship of refugees”, in *Strangers to Neighbours. Community Sponsorship in Context*, edited by Shauna Labman and Geoffrey Cameron, Montreal, Canada: McGill-Queen’s University Press (2020), p. 67–79.

also, in particular around the issue of 'naming' and the selection criteria used in the sponsoring process.¹³¹

States have duties of justice to admit asylum seekers who arrive in their territories and to abide by the principle of non-refoulement. Some argue this duty should be extended to include the resettlement of refugees. In this view, the refugee is not merely a victim dependent on the charity and hospitality of other countries, but a person endowed with intrinsic rights. When those rights are violated or not met by their own political community or state, then refugees or migrants have a right to migrate and other states have a duty to process their application and/or welcome them. However, as Lenard points out, this is also seen to be in a sometimes tense relation to the principle of state sovereignty by which a state has the right to admit and resettle those whom it chooses. If resettlement and community sponsorship is viewed in purely humanitarian terms, then states should help all refugees but have the discretion in choosing whom to help and when to do so; in this view "the admission of refugees [is] more like charity than justice."¹³² In the area of community sponsorship then, if sponsoring is seen to be a matter of justice, then the preference of sponsoring groups for certain refugees should not be honoured in allocating resettlement places, and the criteria ought to be based on the criteria of vulnerability and protection. However, if the sponsoring is seen as a matter of charity, then private sponsors may be seen as having the right to select refugees on the basis of some intimate connection whether familial, religious, ethnic or other.

Balancing both of these types of duties is a pressing issue in organizing community sponsorship. On the one hand then, identity connections can be a factor motivating community groups to undertake sponsorship and can help sustain their efforts; moreover, this is cited as a principal reason for the success of such groups in Canada's long-standing programme. On the other hand, if these connections influence admission decisions, then justice is denied to those who do not have those links.

iii) Between charity and institutions

Sometimes charity and justice are conceived as strictly separate ethical notions, with charity described as a specific, supererogatory demand of Christian love and as a personal grace, while the duties of justice are rational, universal, obligatory and legally enforceable. Charity is thereby sometimes seen as the task of the Church, while the State ensures that the duties of justice are met. However, a biblical vision perhaps does not draw up quite so strict or total a distinction. Personal charity gives justice a personal face, while justice provides the ground upon which love can *more easily* flourish. So too a 'dialectical' relationship exists between acts of charity and institutionalized forms of charity or justice. Acts of charity historically contributed to the rise of charitable and social organizations, and to an 'ethos' of charity. These concrete expressions of charity in time became charitable organizations, which in turn became institutionalized in the many hospitals, care centres,

¹³¹ P.T. Lenard, "How Should We Think", p.73.

¹³² Matthew Gibney, "Liberal Democratic States and Responsibilities to Refugees", *American Political Science Review*, 93, no.1 (1999): 169-181, cited P.T. Lenard, "How Should We Think", p.74. See also Michael Walzer, "On Humanitarianism: Is Helping Others Charity, or Duty, or Both?", *Foreign Affairs* 90, no. 4 (August 2011): 69-72, 73-76, 77-80.

refugee asylum centres, etc., and which today also contribute to justice in the biblical sense of right relationships. Institutions today, with their extensive professionalization and emphasis on technical competence, are thus indispensable to meet the needs of others in a just and professional manner. However, for those same reasons, they also run the risk of losing sight of the human person, and of drying out and losing their 'esprit de coeur', namely charity and justice in its biblical sense, as 'right relationships'. Thus perhaps the dichotomy between justice and charity, and between individual charity and institutions, is not so absolute, and can be viewed as more a question of both/and, rather than either/or.

Baumans, Soerens and Smeir draw on the story of the Good Samaritan to point out the necessity of both individual charitable acts as well as the need to engage with questions of public policy and the transformation of institutionalized structures of sin, quoting Martin Luther King Jr, who said of the Jericho Road: "True compassion is more than flinging a coin to a beggar. It comes to see that an edifice which produces beggars needs restructuring". In other words, they write, "love of neighbour must compel us also to ask, "What's wrong with this road?".¹³³ Public policy directly impacts refugees and migrants, and is thus also a question of justice in its biblical sense, of righting broken relationships. To that end, Christians engage in advocacy, which as Bauman, Soerens and Smeir point out, is etymologically connected to 'voice'. To advocate for someone, they write, quoting Prov 31:8, is "to speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves".¹³⁴ Citizens thereby can advocate for those who do not enjoy the same rights as citizens. Advocacy, as a form of prophetic speech, can impact policy-makers, which in turn can influence refugee resettlement policy, influence public attitudes, and the lives of refugees and migrants.

The Bible naturally does not provide a clear-cut political programme, policy blueprint, or defence of community sponsorship. However, its many stories, examples, divine commandments and fundamental principles continue to provide a guide and inspiration for how a Christian can think about and respond to refugees and refugee resettlement policy.

A theology of migration and community¹³⁵

This theme of healing and righting relationships is taken up by Daniel Groody, who identifies a theology of migration operative on 4 dimensions, corresponding to the crossing of 4 'relational' divides:

- 1) The Imago Dei: this dimension he calls the problem-person divide, wherein a person is perceived as a problem. Refugees and migrants are dehumanized, reduced to statistics, or in the words of a Honduran migrant whom Groody recalls, called

¹³³ Stephan Bauman, Matthew Soerens, Issam Smeir, *Seeking Refuge. On the Shores of The Global Refugee Crisis*, Chicago, IL: Moody Publishers (2016), p. 158.

¹³⁴ Stephan Bauman, Matthew Soerens, Issam Smeir, *Seeking Refuge. On the Shores of The Global Refugee Crisis*, Chicago, IL: Moody Publishers (2016), p. 163.

¹³⁵ The following section provides a summary of Daniel G. Groody's 'Theology of Migration'. See Daniel G. Groody, C.S.C., "Theology of Migration. In his incarnation, Jesus overcame all borders between us", *Celebration Feature* (February, 2010); Cf. Daniel G. Groody, C.S.C., "Crossing the Divide: Foundations of A Theology of Migration and Refugees", *Theological Studies* 70 (2009), 638-667.

- 'cucarachas', cockroaches or insects. For many, being treated and seen as a non-person or 'insect' is what is most hurtful.
- 2) The Verbum Dei: this dimension relates to the divine-human divide. God, in Jesus, makes a migratory journey into the human condition, into suffering and the effects of sin, and in emptying Himself, assumes the condition of a slave, outcast, a refugee. Groody writes that for many migrants and refugees, this belief, that God is with them, provides them with a lasting source of hope when there is little else to hope for.
 - 3) The Missio Dei: this dimension pertains to the Church's mission to build a Church and to establish a community of love and hospitality, by crossing the human-human divide, which is marred by sin and suffering.
 - 4) The Visio Dei: this is the vision that flows forth from the Kingdom of God, and is about seeing the world with the eyes of Jesus. This vision, Groody writes, while recognizing the relative value and importance of borders, simultaneously sees beyond relative values to Christ's more ultimate ones, of reconciliation, healing broken relationships, of fellowship and of bringing 'good news' to the poor, the captive, the stranger. In this manner, theology can contribute to a new vision, a new language, and a new imagination.

Migration, Groody argues, is thus at the heart of salvation history. It is at the heart of the story of the People of God and the many biblical heroes, it is at the heart of every individual believer's life that involves a spiritual pilgrimage, an exile from and return to God. Finally, it is at the heart of the story of a God who migrates into the affairs of human beings, heals their brokenness and broken relationships, and welcomes them home, as the father welcomed the prodigal son after he had ventured out into a far away land.

This aspect of healing a relational divide and overcoming isolation is also touched on by Bedford-Strohm in CCME's *Reader on Theological Reflections on Migration*. For Bedford-Strohm, a good starting point for thinking about migration is the reality of sin, a reality that, GK Chesterton wrote, is as clear as day and a fact "as practical as potatoes". Sin St. Augustine described as 'incurvatus in se', a state of being turned in on oneself: the opposite of relationship. Bedford-Strohm draws on Martin Luther, who followed St. Augustine's definition, in describing the sinful human being as "homo incurvatus in seipsum", a human being curved inward on oneself, walled off from God's grace. This turning inward produces the effects of sin and alienation and separation from God, from others, from self. It is a move away from Christ, the Image of God, and the trinitarian life to which Christians are called, which is receptive and relational. These same inner spiritual dynamics, Bedford-Strohm argues, are also at play at large, in communities and societally. Thus it is, Bedford-Strohm writes, that sin can take on a social reality, that communities can also become walled in, and be "a communion incurvate in se ipsam".¹³⁶

Satan, 'the adversary', 'the accuser', seeks to fragment, to divide, to pit person against person, group against group, thereby creating a false sense of community. Jesus, on the

¹³⁶ Heinrich Bedford-Strohm, "Responding to the Challenges of Migration and Flight from A Perspective of Theological Ethics", in *Theological Reflections on Migration. A CCME Reader*, edited by Benz H.R. Schär and Ralf Geisler, Brussels: Churches' Commission for Migrants in Europe (CCME) (2008), p. 39.

other hand, seeks to heal, reconcile, and gather together all in true communion and fellowship, through the cross. While the exclusionary power of sin remains a reality, and thus the political, institutional and legal framework surrounding migration must take into account the fallibility and 'sinfulness' of human beings so as to prevent abuse on a variety of different levels, argues Bedford-Strohm, this nevertheless is no recipe for the flourishing of true communion. He writes, "human nature is not determined by the reality of sin", but rather "by the reality of love." True communion for churches, he suggests, is to be found in celebration: "celebrations remind us that the true source of our social life does not lie with legal proceedings or with the struggle for political compromises (...) Celebrations are a remedy against a moralistic exhortation for neighbourly love that fail to take root in the heart (...) Celebrations may even help to overcome the walls between the social strata". Love seeks out the other, seeks to "receive and being received", and, quoting Chrysostomus, Bedford-Strohm writes "... where love rejoices, there it celebrates".¹³⁷

For the European churches, the opportunity to celebrate together with refugees and migrants Bedford-Strohm envisions as a possible Pentecostal experience of the Spirit, of uniting in diversity, in which everyone speaks in the tongues of others, yet all are understood. And it won't be for having had too much wine, as Peter said in Acts 2:15: "these people are not drunk, as you suppose. It's only nine in the morning!" This community of Pentecostal celebration is finally made possible through God's grace, Christ's sacrifice on the Cross, and the gift of the Holy Spirit received.

As John Stott wrote of Christian community: "*The Christian community is a community of the cross, for it has been brought into being by the cross, and the focus of its worship is the Lamb once slain, now glorified. So the community of the cross is a community of celebration, a eucharistic community, ceaselessly offering to God through Christ the sacrifice of our praise and thanksgiving.*"¹³⁸

"The Kingdom of God is like a mustard seed": a reflection

i) The history of Canadian private sponsorship and the central role of religious groups

The history of how Canada's model of private sponsorship came about reflects many of the points above: a story of a struggle between hostility and hospitality, a story of how its institutionalized programme started small, with individuals and groups both speaking out and doing small acts of charity, thereby contributing to the creation of an ethos of hospitality.

Geoffrey Cameron in his book *Send Them Here: Religion, Politics and Refugee Resettlement in North America*, argues that the development of the programme in fact had a tumultuous path, and that it would be a mistake to romantically portray it as merely an example of Canadian niceness. According to Cameron, the leading role was played by religious groups,

¹³⁷ Heinrich Bedford-Strohm, "Responding to the Challenges of Migration", p. 45

¹³⁸ John Stott, *The Cross of Christ*, Nottingham, England: Inter-Varsity Press (2006, 20th anniversary edition), p. 316.

which continues to be the case today.¹³⁹ Below is a summary of a number of points he makes in the book.¹⁴⁰

Cameron emphasizes the role historical contingency and the power of agency played in the development of Canada's refugee resettlement policy. Of particular importance were crisis moments and so-called 'critical junctures', periods when societies undergo big changes, such as the post-war period of 1945–1951, the Indochina refugee crisis of the 1970s, and the ongoing Syrian refugee crisis. During these periods of upheaval, existing institutions and political decision-making pathways prove insufficient and a space opens up for the more voluntary, 'entrepreneurial' responses of other actors. The responses to a 'critical juncture' are thought to set in motion a process in which these responses, through feedback loops, can become 'path dependent' and institutionalized. The theory of path dependence emphasizes how institutions emerge out of the interaction between contingent historical moments and particular actors' responses to those contingent moments.

In Canada, he argues, many of the resettlement pathways created during the postwar period were 'ad hoc', but these 'ad hoc' solutions gradually became more consolidated and 'path dependent'. The general public support for private sponsorship in Canada today is thus arguably the result of a long normalization process, the outcome of which was far from self-evident at the beginning. It was the indispensable role played by religious groups during this 70-year process that proved crucial in shaping Canada's current refugee resettlement policy.

As Cameron points out, prior to and during WWII, Canada had a very restrictive immigration policy based on racial admission criteria, which enjoyed broad public support. After the war, Canada's resettlement plan was based largely on economic interests, admitting labour migrants under the so-called 'Bulk Labour Program'. While Canada also established the Close Relatives Program, enabling Canadians to resettle and sponsor first-degree relatives from Europe, the criteria upon which this determination was based were so narrow that many of the applications were rejected, and the program subsequently floundered. It was the personal and creative efforts of a Lutheran, T.O.F. Herzen, that led to the establishment of the Canadian Christian Council for the Resettlement of Refugees (CCCRR), a coalition of churches, which agreed with the government to take on the responsibility of keeping and further developing the Close Relatives Program. The CCCRR quickly succeeded in broadening its mandate, by assuming greater resettlement responsibilities and transforming the Close Relatives Program into a church-sponsorship one, making it the first example in Canada of a private-sponsorship programme with government approval. Other groups quickly followed suit, so that by 1953, the government officially recognized the 'Approved Church Programme', a group comprised of the CCCRR, the Canadian Jewish Congress, the Canadian Council of Churches and the Rural Settlement

¹³⁹ Geoffrey Cameron, "Recognizing the Role of Religious Groups in Refugee Sponsorship", *Policy Options* (March 31, 2021), Institute for Research on Public Policy, <https://policyoptions.irpp.org/magazines/march-2021/recognizing-the-role-of-religious-groups-in-refugee-sponsorship/>

¹⁴⁰ This section summarizes sections from G. Cameron's book, *Send Them Here. Religion, Politics and Refugee Resettlement in North America*, Montreal, Canada: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2021.

Society. These first efforts of religious individuals and groups proved crucial in establishing working relationships with the Canadian government, relationships that remained in place after the end of the postwar period. As such, while initially conceived as merely temporary arrangements, these ad hoc arrangements developed into more permanent patterns of cooperation between religious groups and the state, a cooperation still found to this day. In short, it was the lobbying and advocacy work of religious groups during this period that paved the way for the creation of resettlement pathways based on other criteria, such as humanitarian criteria or family reunification needs.

These 2 resettlement programmes ran side-by-side throughout the 1950s: the government-led resettlement programme driven by economic considerations, and the Approved Church Programme, with religious groups sponsoring refugees. The tension that existed between both, and between their adherents' sometimes diverging views on refugee policy, in particular on selection criteria and the ability to 'identify', played itself out over the next few decades. This tension first came to a head during the Hungarian refugee crisis of 1956, which initially elicited a reluctant response from the Canadian government to the many calls to open the doors to the Hungarians. It was under sustained pressure from voluntary organizations, in particular religious groups, as well as individual citizens and opposition parties, that the ruling Liberal party at the time shifted course and opened and expanded resettlement places. The temporary, 'ad hoc' arrangement of the Approved Church Programme again proved successful in the resettlement process, with the 4 groups together sponsoring nearly all refugees.

While the Hungarian programme came to enjoy broad support and serve as a model for future refugee efforts in Canada, nevertheless the underlying tensions remained and in the ensuing years a more adversarial relationship developed between immigration officials and religious groups.

This led in 1958 to the closure of the Approved Church Programme in an attempt by the government to maintain a greater control over the selection process. Religious groups called for the right to select on the basis of humanitarian and family criteria and for continued governmental welfare support for refugees. The government, on the other hand, while seeing the added value of religious groups during the integration process, sought to retain ultimate control over the admissions process in order to attract skilled workers and not burden the state. A compromise was put forth by the government, which ultimately resulted in the replacement of the Approved Church Program with a 'private-sponsorship scheme'. Under this scheme, religious groups were permitted to sponsor and 'name' refugees on condition that the groups assumed the full financial burden of resettlement for the first year. While the groups initially participated in this scheme, the scheme ultimately led to a fracture in the relationship between the government and religious groups, who saw the government as relieving itself of its responsibilities and putting an unreasonable financial burden on the churches. In time, many religious organizations withdrew from this private sponsorship scheme, taking on a more external advocacy role and critical public stance vis-à-vis the Canadian government's resettlement policies.

This state of affairs continued throughout the 1960s, when private sponsorship schemes were drastically reduced. Government-led resettlement programmes in the wake of the Czechoslovakian crisis of 1968 and the Ugandan Asian crisis of 1970 were driven by foreign policy and economic considerations, drawing in skilled and educated individuals. However, in 1973, Christian groups re-mobilized in response to Pinochet's coup in Chile, and confronted and successfully pressured the Canadian government to resettle some 7000 Chileans. In the context of domestic debates surrounding immigration reform and the growing recognition of the international dimension of the refugee problem, with Canada signing the 1951 Geneva Refugee Convention in 1969, the Chilean events sparked off a public debate about private sponsorship and the important role of churches and other voluntary organizations therein. It also marked the beginnings of a renewed working relationship between government officials and religious organizations. Again, the actions of religious groups, this time through the adoption of more adversarial, lobbying tactics, proved highly influential in shaping Canada's refugee resettlement policy.

These public debates and high level negotiations culminated in the 1976 Immigration Act, which included legislation for a private sponsorship provision. Legislators and policy-makers had looked to Canada's previous resettlement practices and decided to include it as a provision 'just in case', the specificities of which were left to future policy-makers to concretize. It was not until the Indochina refugee crisis of 1975 that private sponsorship truly took off and became consolidated.

It is worth noting that public sentiment at the time was generally not favourable to the idea of welcoming large numbers of refugees, and the Canadian government initially took a very cautious approach. The Hai Hong incident, in which thousands of Vietnamese refugees ("the boat people"), were declined entry into Malaysia and were stuck at sea on a freighter waiting for resettlement, and the sight of thousands of other Vietnamese 'boat people' undertaking perilous journeys across the South China Sea, changed this and created a considerable degree of public pressure. In response, the Canadian government started increasing its admission numbers. The reasons for this increase are various, but the role played by religious organizations and especially by the Mennonite Central Committee of Canada, is indisputable. The government agreed to provide for more professional services and share the financial burden, while also allowing other groups to name and select refugees. This led to the establishment of the so-called 'Master Agreements' between the government and corporate bodies, all 40 of which were religious in 1979. It also allowed for private citizens and groups of 5 to privately sponsor a refugee.

Absolutely central to this private sponsorship model was the principle of additionality, which ensured private schemes were additional to government-led resettlement programmes. Thus a shared, complementary framework emerged between the government and other actors, the groundwork of which had been laid by the Close Relatives Program, the Church Sponsorship scheme and the Approved Church Program.

The response to the boat people crisis in 1979 marked the start of Canadian private sponsorship, which continues to this day. However, Cameron poses the question what Canada's resettlement policy might have looked like without the influence of religious

groups. Looking at the other policy proposals that were put forth during crisis moments reveal that Canada could also have developed its refugee resettlement policy in an entirely different direction. Cameron concludes that “without the engagement of religious groups with refugee policy in the post-war period, Canadian refugee policy would almost certainly have continued to be economic migration by another name”, as evidenced in the way refugee policy took shape during the 1960s when churches retreated from private sponsorship. The interventions of religious groups to support the Close Relatives Program, transform it into a church-sponsorship program, and later the Approved Church Program and private sponsorship scheme, paved the way for the Immigration Act of 1976 and helped create the institutional structures and private-public relationships that characterize Canada’s model today.

As a result, since 1979, some 2 million Canadians have reportedly personally helped Syrian refugees resettle in Canada. 327000 refugees have been resettled by private sponsors, additional to government resettlements. Over half of the 62000 Syrian refugees resettled to Canada since 2015 were sponsored privately; over 49000 Polish refugees were privately sponsored between 1980 and 1996; 34000 refugees from Indochina in the 70s and early 80s; 28000 Iraqis and 2600 Afghans between 1988 and 2018; 17000 Eritreans between 2004 and 2018; 9000 Iranians between 1982 and 2018 and almost 9000 Somalis between 1988 and 2018. Moreover, the UN awarded the people of Canada with the Nansen Medal, the highest award for refugee aid, the first time it was awarded to a country and its people.¹⁴¹

Numbers aside, there are many personal stories of how private sponsorship has also changed the lives of the hosts. Moreover, while much of it is anecdotal, a study led by the government found that privately sponsored refugees have found it easier to integrate and adjust. El-Chidiac shares the findings of a government-led study, finding that private sponsored refugees (PSRs) had better integration outcomes than government-assisted refugees (GARs) on a whole host of issues: learning the language, finding employment, adjusting to the daily challenges of Canadian life. Government-led programmes cannot provide the same kind of holistic and personal support, which proves indispensable to providing a welcome reception and improving integration outcomes.¹⁴²

However, the Canadian programme of private sponsorship is not perfect and a number of criticisms have been made of it. Some of these criticisms pertain to the support provided by the sponsors, which is not consistently of a good standard nor always efficient. Some see in it the danger of paternalism, or asymmetrical power relationships developing between host and guest. Sponsors have not always had the requisite training to deal with some of the challenges and difficulties that arise, and the mechanisms for supervising the process are not perfect. A more fundamental criticism is that private sponsorship is a kind of trojan horse, a backdoor by which states will find a way to shirk their responsibilities

¹⁴¹ Canada.ca Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, “By the Numbers – 40 years of Canada’s Private Sponsorship of Refugee Program”, <https://www.canada.ca/en/immigration-refugees-citizenship/news/2019/04/by-the-numbers--40-years-of-canadas-private-sponsorship-of-refugees-program.html>

¹⁴² Sabine El-Chidiac, “The Success of the Privately Sponsored Refugee System”, *Policy Options* (July, 2018), Institute for Research on Public Policy, <https://policyoptions.irpp.org/magazines/july-2018/success-privately-sponsored-refugee-system>

toward refugee resettlement by privatizing it and outsourcing to civil society actors and citizens.¹⁴³

Despite these criticisms and challenges, the Canadian programme is by and large seen as a success story. But it remains to be seen what its future will be. While the Canadian response to the Syrian crisis has proven that there remains a general interest in private sponsorship, and the desire of many Canadians to personally get involved in the resettlement process, Cameron wonders whether this charitable sentiment can be channelled into something more sustainable without the intermediary religious institutions, organizations and groups that were so crucial to its development. He asks whether the future success or failure of private sponsorship will in the end depend on the strength of associational life and the future of religion, and on these mediating and intermediary institutions of civil society that were key to its success. The duty of hospitality, he writes, “cannot simply end with states themselves (...) it needs to be cultivated within communities formed around moral and ethical ideals that call on their members to befriend the foreigner and show kindness to the stranger”. And while secular humanitarian organizations may step in to fill the gap, or communities with intimate connections to refugee groups, he also recognizes that “the most powerful communities organized around such ideals have always been identified with religion.” And as religion does not occupy the same place in society as it did 50 years ago, it remains to be seen how private sponsorship will develop or be sustained.

ii) The Canadian model and European context

The Canadian model has been crucial in shaping European responses to migration, but exporting the Canadian model to Europe comes with its own challenges. Craig Damian Smith draws attention to the potential difficulties of ‘policy transfer’, and of transferring Canada’s PSR model to a European context.¹⁴⁴ As Smith points out, the historical and geographical context in which the Canadian model took shape differs from the variety of political and institutional contexts found in Europe which militate against the possibility of constructing a “European blueprint” or a one-size-fits-all model. He identifies a number of other potential difficulties of ‘policy transfer’. European countries might not support the same model of Canadian multiculturalism, share the same integration concept, or the same understanding of citizenship; moreover, Europe’s relative shift to the right regarding immigration might suggest that the political climate is not as hospitable as Canada’s for demands for ‘additional’ resettlement. The success of the Canadian model was largely dependent on public demand, and so a central question then is whether this demand exists in Europe, and/or whether it can be mobilized.

Canada went through a long process of normalizing and institutionalizing these programmes, and as Smith writes, “history and public sentiment cannot be exported”¹⁴⁵.

¹⁴³ P.T. Lenard summarizes a number of these criticisms in “How should we think about private sponsorship of refugees”, in *Strangers to Neighbours. Community Sponsorship in Context*, edited Shauna Labman and Geoffrey Cameron).

¹⁴⁴ See Craig Damian Smith, “A Model for the World? Policy Transfer Theory and the Challenges to “Exporting” Private Sponsorship to Europe”, in *Strangers to Neighbours. Community Sponsorship in Context*, edited by Shauna Labman and Geoffrey Cameron, Montreal, Canada: McGill-Queen’s University Press (2020), p. 284-300.

¹⁴⁵ Craig Damian Smith, “A Model for the World? in *Strangers to Neighbours*. p. 295.

Nevertheless, the great strengths of the small, initial pilot programmes or ‘ad hoc’ Canadian initiatives, as well as the advocacy efforts of religious groups, was precisely the effect they had on shaping public sentiment, changing the narrative, getting citizens involved and thereby driving an increased demand. As the success of community sponsorship depends on public demand and support, Smith argues, successes in Europe ought to be viewed in incremental terms.

Indeed, while Europe’s quotas remain small and are a mere ‘drop in the ocean’ when viewed against the magnitude of the global refugee crisis, and while community sponsorship as a complementary pathway will never fully ‘solve’ the crisis, the Canadian experience and history has also shown that every initiative starts small. As Jesus said, *“the kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed, which a man took and planted in his field. Though it is the smallest of all seeds, yet when it grows, it is the largest of garden plants and becomes a tree, so that the birds come and perch in its branches”* (Matthew 13:31-32).

2. Sociological considerations

Why churches and faith-based organisations in Community Sponsorship?

A majority of the organizations involved in private and/or community sponsorship are churches or other religious or religiously-inspired entities. However, more generally, the specific role of churches and FBOs in humanitarian assistance has often been obscured in the past, thanks to a Western secular bias that coloured humanitarian discourse. This bias has diminished in recent years, in part because predictions about the demise of religion have not come to fruition: for the vast majority of the world’s population, faith is the norm rather than the exception. Increasing attention is now paid to the specific role of FBOs and faith communities in providing humanitarian assistance. The UNHCR has worked closely with FBOs and faith communities, a commitment reflected in the 2012 UNHCR High Commissioners’ Dialogue on “Faith & Protection”. The UNHCR and faith communities signed ‘16 Affirmations’, which laid down a number of fundamental principles shared by all the major world’s religions, including the importance of showing hospitality and ‘welcoming the stranger’. In its strategy report of 2019, the UNHCR included religious organizations among the stakeholder groups that should be involved in finding permanent solutions to the refugee crisis.¹⁴⁶ The much-lauded Canadian model of community-based sponsorship also recognises ethno-cultural and religious associations as contributors.

The specific strengths of FBOs then include:¹⁴⁷

¹⁴⁶ See UNHCR, “On Faith-Based Organizations, Local Faith Communities and Faith Leaders. Partnership Note” edited by Volker Turk, Jose Riere and Marie-Claude Poirier, 2014, <https://www.unhcr.org/protection/hcdialogue%20/539ef28b9/partnership-note-faith-based-organizations-local-faith-communities-faith.html>.

¹⁴⁷ These points have been made by various authors. For example, see: “Faith and Responses to Displacement”, *Forced Migration Review (FMR) Issue 48*, edited by Marion Couldrey and Maurice Herson, Refugee Studies Centre, University of Oxford, 2014; Elizabeth Ferris, “Faith-based and secular humanitarian organizations”, *International Review of the Red Cross* 87, number 858 (June 2005), p. 311-325;

- 1) **Motivation/Faith:** a deep understanding of the centrality of religious faith in the lives of many, and the role religious faith and hope plays in providing guidance, sustenance and resilience. Religions' emphasis on a transcendent dimension, in particular, speaks to a deep human need for a sense of purpose and meaning, and is intimately connected to a sense of duty and moral obligation toward one's neighbour. As Linda Shovlain of the Center for Faith-Based and Community Initiatives of the United States' State Department's USAID explains, faith-based organizations are "usually the people on the front lines of need and human assistance. They go there motivated purely out of love for their human brothers and sisters (...). The faith-based mechanism is a lot of times the easiest mechanism for the government to use to reach those people who are not usually reached, and, therefore, more in need".¹⁴⁸
- 2) **Reach/Networks:** religious traditions have well-established structures, networks, and institutions that are able to connect communities both globally and locally. FBOs and local faith communities thus often have a knowledge of the realities on the ground, as well as an understanding of local sensitivities. This enables churches, FBOs and faith communities to 'identify' those in need, and puts them in a position to provide refuge for those in need. Moreover, faith-based communities often have the physical spaces, such as churches, mosques, etc. to host refugees and migrants, spaces that secular NGOs might not have.
- 3) **Trust/Community:** churches and FBOs are locally embedded in a community, are able to tap into local resources, social capital, and sometimes rely on a strong volunteer base. Faith leaders also can play an influential role in shaping public attitudes. FBOs can thus play a key role in advocacy, driving public awareness, and in mobilizing a constituency. It is worth noting here Putnam's observation that "faith communities ... are arguably the single most important repository of social capital ...".¹⁴⁹

David Holcroft sees FBOs as being in a privileged position to provide services that sometimes go beyond what governments can provide, in particular in successfully establishing connections to local communities. Governments are sometimes constrained by perceptions of public sentiment and electoral considerations. FBOs and faith communities, on the other hand, have more freedom to speak up for the intrinsic dignity of each human person, including those most vulnerable, and to remind states of their responsibility to respect universal human rights.¹⁵⁰ Moreover, the language of FBOs has a humanity and warmth that is often lacking in the technical language of governments and secular international human rights discourse.¹⁵¹

¹⁴⁸ Elizabeth Ferris, "Faith-based and secular humanitarian organizations", p. 324.

¹⁴⁹ R. Putnam, *Bowling Alone. The Collapse and Revival of American Community*, New York, NY: Simon Schuster (2000), p. 66.

¹⁵⁰ David Holcroft, "The Contribution of FBOs working with the displaced" in *Faith and Responses to Displacement*, in *Forced Migration Review (FMR) Issue 48*, edited by Marion Couldrey and Maurice Herson, Refugee Studies Centre, University of Oxford (2014), p. 14-16.

¹⁵¹ This point was made by both Alaister Ager and Robert Cuickland and Cat Cowley, respectively, in *Faith and Responses to Displacement*, in *Forced Migration Review (FMR) Issue 48*, p. 16-18, p. 18-22.

The role of church-based individuals and organizations in humanitarian work is one of long standing in Europe.¹⁵² Churches and monasteries were for centuries places of refuge and hospitality. In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, Catholic and Protestant missionaries provided humanitarian assistance – and, although the association with colonialism has tarnished their work, churches still continue to be involved in welfare and education. As William Headley of Catholic Relief Services in the US stated, “the principal agents of human development in the world have been or continue to be faith-based organizations. (...)”.¹⁵³ FBOs such as the World Council of Churches and Christian Aid were centrally involved in providing humanitarian need for Europe’s refugees in the wake of World War II, with one 1953 study finding that 90% of post-war relief was provided by religious organizations.¹⁵⁴ Recent studies have focused on the continuing role of FBOs in fostering social cohesion, providing access to social capital, and countering exclusion.¹⁵⁵ Financial aid is another area in which, FBOs can help. Given the increasing prevalence of ‘compassion fatigue’, FBOs can be important partners in fundraising.¹⁵⁶

The role of FBOs and churches in community sponsorship in Europe: other considerations

i) European welfare states and differing church-state relations

When implementing community sponsorship programmes in a European context, it becomes clear that they have to be adapted to the particular context in which they are being implemented, taking into consideration a country or region’s history and institutionalized structure. One recurring objection is that community sponsorship potentially opens a door for states to outsource and privatize their (international) responsibilities regarding refugee protection, and/or can be a ‘trojan horse’ that might contribute to the dismantling of the welfare state. Different attitudes regarding the state’s role as social welfare provider, different historical church-state relations, and the different state of the volunteering sector all are elements that need consideration and further exploration. This section provides a little bit of background on these issues, and traces a number of lines of reflections that can perhaps be of help when thinking about the involvement of FBOs in community sponsorship in a European context.

Religious institutions and FBOs have since the beginning of the 21st century taken a more prominent role in social welfare provision across a number of European countries, and this despite widespread decreasing levels of belief and religious practice. Josef Hien points to this paradox and suggests a number of explanatory factors or causal pathways, which will

¹⁵² The following discussion on FBOs is indebted to Elizabeth Ferris, “Faith-based and secular humanitarian organizations”, p. 311-325.

¹⁵³ Ibid., p. 316.

¹⁵⁴ Cited by Bruce Nichols, , *The Uneasy Alliance: Refugee Work and US Foreign Policy*, Oxford University Press, New York, 1998), p. 68.

¹⁵⁵ For a full discussion and graphs of migrant involvement, see T. Vodo, “Faith-Based Organizations. The role of Christian Organizations to Social Cohesion in EU Member States”, study for *European Christian Political Movement* (July, 2016), p. 9-11 See also, e.g., J. Van der Sar and R. Visser, R. *Gratis en waardevol: Rol, positie en maatschappelijk rendement van migrantenkerken in Den Haag*. De Haag: Stichting Oikos, 2006; J. Beaumont, P. Cloke, *Faith-based Organizations and Exclusion in European Cities*. Bristol: Policy Press 2012; FACIT (Faith-Based Organizations and Exclusion in European Cities): http://cordis.europa.eu/result/rcn/55806_en.html.

¹⁵⁶ Ecumenical Partners Survey, WCC, Geneva, 2003. Cited Elizabeth Ferris, “Faith-based and secular humanitarian organizations”, p.313 n.7.

be summarized here.¹⁵⁷ The general neoliberal climate of the 1990s is often listed as a contributing factor, opening up a space for private companies, FBOs and other civil society actors to become involved in welfare provision; another contributing and related factor in this regard are the austerity measures and government cut-backs taken in the wake of the financial crisis of 2008.

Nevertheless, while it continues to perplex sociologists of religion who adhere to some variant of the modernization-secularization thesis, other theorists look to religion as a serious causal factor, and explore religion's historical role in the configuration of different welfare states to see if this sheds some light on the contemporary situation. Some, like Van Kersbergen, emphasize the historically central role that Christian democratic political parties played, and the influence they had in institutionalizing, along subsidiarist lines, intermediary structures between the state and family, such as those of faith-based providers. This, Van Kersbergen argues, could be one reason why faith-based social welfare institutions are found in countries with strong Christian democratic political parties such as Belgium, Germany and Austria, but not in a country like France, which never had the same strong Christian democratic tradition. However, this explanation only goes so far according to Hiens, as Dutch faith-based provision is more limited yet the Netherlands has historically also had a strong Christian democratic tradition.

Manow added to Van Kersbergen's more 'Catholic' subsidiarist emphasis, by focusing on the differences between Protestant denominations and highlighting how these differences affected the development of different types of welfare states. Mainline Protestant traditions were more 'étatist', he argues, and thus were more amenable to the state taking on the role of sole welfare provider, whereas Reformed Protestant traditions (which found their way to the United States), were more anarchic and anti-étatist, and thus more of an obstacle to the development of the welfare state.

Kahl emphasizes theological aspects and the influence salvation doctrines had on the formation of different types of welfare states. The Catholic stress on the religious duty of giving to the poor (both faith and works); the Calvinist emphasis on the religious duty of work; and the Lutheran stress on faith alone: these salvation doctrines all contributed to the creation of a particular ethos and influenced the formation of different welfare state configurations and attitudes regarding the state and the role and place of the church. Kahl argues it is less a matter of religion disappearing, than of religion taking on a secular cloak, in the shape of different welfare states.

Others, such as Fix and Castles, look at the socializing effects of religion and religious traditions more broadly, and examine their influence on shaping attitudes and beliefs regarding church-state relations. Before the rise of the modern nation state, churches took care of the sick and needy. The 19th century saw a great transmigration of responsibilities from Church to State, including on the social welfare front. As the State sought to take on

¹⁵⁷ This section relies on and summarizes a number of points made by Josef Hien, in "The Return of Religion? The paradox of faith-based welfare provision in a secular age", MPiFG Discussion Paper, No. 14/9, Max Planck Institute for the Study of Societies, Cologne (2014).

many of the roles previously held by churches, a tug-of-war developed between Church and State. The particular manner in which this conflict was resolved, they argue, in the context of the national revolutions of the late 19th century, is one of the factors that accounts for the development of different types of welfare states found in Europe today, and the different attitudes regarding state-church relations.

In countries where there was little to no conflict, and where state-churches were formed, as in Scandinavia, Fix and Castles argue the state took over the work of the Church on the social welfare front. In France, on the other hand, where there was more of a conflict, religious actors were marginalized by the state. In countries with multiple denominations and where different groups were vying for dominance (liberals, Protestants, Reformist, Catholics), compromises were made. For example, the German state granted privileges to faith denominations and legally enshrined faith groups as social welfare providers. Elsewhere, in Belgium and the Netherlands, similar compromises were made as well, leading to the pillarization of social welfare.

ii) Individual European welfare states and changes in church-state relations

The importance of the nature of church-state conflict in accounting for the different types of welfare states today was also argued by Göçmen, who explored the historical church-state relations in tandem with recent societal changes in social welfare provision in the UK, France, Germany and Sweden. A quick survey of a few individual countries will reveal the variety of involvement of FBOs and some of the recent societal changes in church-state relations.¹⁵⁸

United Kingdom

The formation of a state-church system in the UK, and the close relationship between church and state, was reflected in the social welfare policy of the 20th century. Until the mid-20th century and into the 1970s, religious charity was seen as complementary to the state's role as primary provider of welfare. The neoliberal turn under Thatcher in the 1980s changed this configuration. The state cut back on its social welfare programmes and began to take an interest in the role the voluntary sector and FBOs could play in social welfare provision, providing a space for Thatcher's ideal 'active citizens'. According to Göçmen, it was these changes that opened up a space for the voluntary sector and FBOs to become the primary actors in the social welfare space. Since the 1980s, the State has increasingly seen in the voluntary sector and in FBOs an attractive partner in both social welfare provision and in shaping social policy.

France

While the UK was marked by a relatively close and 'friendly' state-church relationship, France's has historically been more conflictual. This has had an effect on the place of FBOs

¹⁵⁸ This section relies fully on and summarizes Ipek Göçmen's article, "The Role of Faith-Based Organizations in Social Welfare Systems: A comparison of France, Germany, Sweden and the United Kingdom", *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly* 42: nr. 3, 495-516.

and churches in France. Göçmen identifies two factors that traditionally have prohibited the rise of FBOs in France.

The first is France's particular brand of *laïcité*, and its strict separation of church and state. The historically hostile relationship between church and state during the postrevolutionary period led finally to the complete separation of church and state in 1905, with the state banning religious charities and taking on the role of social welfare provider.

The second factor is France's 'étatisme' and a concomitant downplaying or rejection of mediating and intermediary structures and institutions between the state and the individual citizen. However, this emphasis on a centralized state underwent changes with the newly-elected Socialist Party passing the Decentralization Law of 1982. This law marked the decentralization of the welfare state, creating a more democratic competitive 'market' environment, and enabling the voluntary sector to take on more responsibilities.

Yet, despite greater cooperation now between the French State and the voluntary sector on social welfare provision, Göçmen sees the *laïcist* tradition in France still exerting a strong influence on the place of FBOs in society in general. As a result, and in line with France's *laïcist* tradition, FBOs do not enjoy any special status, although church-based organizations play a crucial role in the country's Humanitarian Corridors sponsorship programme.

Germany

Germany may be characterized as situated between France's *laïcist* and Britain's state-church system. The historical conflict between Catholics and Protestants in Germany led the German State to recognize and include both as pillars of the German social welfare system. The Protestant 'Diakonie', Catholic 'Caritas' and the German State became the three main actors involved in social welfare, along with organizations related to the workers' movement like AWO (workers' welfare). From this cooperation emerged a corporatist welfare state with religious actors institutionalized, and not subject to German federal labour laws. The principle of subsidiarity was included in legislation in the latter half of the 20th century which strengthened the voluntary sector and helped establish a network between the State and more local voluntary organizations. As a result, the voluntary sector in Germany is well-established. Moreover, the demographic changes Germany underwent in the 1990s contributed to a more diverse, pluralist and 'democratized' voluntary sector than the strictly corporatist model.

Sweden¹⁵⁹

Historically, as Göçmen points out, the relative lack of conflict between church and state, and the establishment in Sweden of a state-church system, resulted in a close and friendly relationship between state and church, with the state taking on the dominant role as social welfare provider, and the Church adopting a more supportive role. The Church's role was

¹⁵⁹ This section on Sweden relies on Anne Birgitta Pessi, Olav Helge Angell and Per Pettersson, "Nordic Majority Churches as Agents in the Welfare State: Critical Voices and/or Complementary Providers?", *Temenos (The Finnish Society for the Study of Religion)* 45: no. 2 (2009), 207-234; Cf. also Tommy Lundstrom and Lars Svedberg, "The Voluntary Sector in a Social Democratic Welfare State - The Case of Sweden", *Journal of Social Policy* 32: nr. 02 (April, 2003), 217-238.

primarily seen as spiritual, as providing a sense of meaning and symbolic belonging through church membership and life rites. This spiritual role of the Church has in Sweden and other Nordic Countries been professionalized and institutionalized, resulting in a division of labour between the state, municipalities and church. This historical division between state and church is still reflected in attitudes today when it comes to the specific role of each in the welfare setting.

While Sweden is one of the most secularized countries in the world in traditional terms of declining religious belief, participation in life rites and church membership is still relatively high compared to some other European countries. This is sometimes referred to as the Nordic paradox: privately it is very secularized, while publicly the Church is still recognized as a defender of fundamental values and a provider of social capital and meaning.¹⁶⁰ Thus while a pro-state attitude and high levels of trust in government have traditionally resulted in a degree of scepticism of churches as social welfare actors – especially as they may be perceived as unable to maintain the state's ideological principle of neutrality – nevertheless the churches are also recognized as playing an indispensable 'complementary' role to the state, argue Pessi et al. The church is understood to be better able to provide intangible needs, such as a sense of transcendent meaning, a feeling of communal belonging, the existential need for life rites and psychosocial, spiritual support.¹⁶¹

Moreover, while there was a great degree of consensus on this complementary 'spiritual' role of the church in the welfare state, Pessi et al. did find differing opinions on the way this spiritual role was understood. Some saw the welfare debate as primarily a political issue, and thus something the church ought not to get involved with. Others emphasized the prophetic calling of the church, expecting it to challenge public authorities and to act as a moral voice and engage in advocacy work on behalf of the weakest and those on the margins. However, when they do act as a critical voice, it is in fundamental support of the welfare state, calling on the local governments not to shirk their social responsibilities

This 'complementarity' was reflected in an Agreement signed in 2009 between the central government, municipalities and civil society, which recognized the essential work of civil society actors and FBOs. There is thus a formal recognition that the state and municipalities cannot provide everything, especially in times of crisis and when it comes to adopting a more personal and holistic approach. This leaves open a permanent space for FBOs, who as Fridolfsson & Elander point out, are in a particularly privileged position to also help those left out by the state, such as asylum seekers and undocumented people.¹⁶²

The formal separation of the (Evangelical Lutheran) Church of Sweden and the state in 2000, together with the legal recognition of other faith groups, has led to a more liberalized relationship between Church and State, and to the growth of other FBOs involved in social

¹⁶⁰ Social capital has been defined by Robert Putnam as "connections among individuals – social networks and the norms of reciprocity and trustworthiness that arise from them".

¹⁶¹ Pessi et al. draw on Kramer's typology of voluntary actors: primary, complementary, and supplementary. See Pessi et al, "Nordic Majority Churches as Agents in the Welfare State", p.212.

¹⁶² Charlotte Fridolfsson and Ingemar Elander, "Faith-based Organizations and Welfare State Retrenchment in Sweden: Substitute or Complement?", *Politics and Religion* 5 (2012), 634-654.

welfare and in refugee assistance.¹⁶³ This, together with the strong tradition of mass popular volunteerism, underlines the role of FBOs in the roll out of community sponsorship in Sweden.

¹⁶³ A point made by I. Göçmen, "The Role of Faith-Based Organizations in Social Welfare Systems."

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