Community sponsorship and churches: what´s new

Warsaw, 15-17 October 2022

Report compiled by Deborah Romano

Table of Contents

Foreword

From 15 to 17 October 2022, CCME members and partners met for an exchange on recent developments in community sponsorship and the role of churches – the event looked to exchange on developments in the official sponsorship programmes since CCME´s Decembers 2021.

At the same time, the event reflected how special programmes which used procedures similar to community sponsorship e.g. in the reception of Afghans and Ukrainians in the years 2021-22 have impacted on the community sponsorship discussions.

Starting from the UNHCR description of community sponsorship that it "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."[1] The above-mentioned programmes would clearly fall under a logic of community sponsorship.

Discussions in Warsaw therefore took stake of the different realities as well as common elements of these sponsorship activities and analysed how traditional sponsorship and "Sponsorship on the go" (as a speakers defined it) could be mutually supportive or get into competition,

As in previous discussions, the overarching question on the dynamic between wanting to increase protection on the one hand and letting states "off the hook" in their responsibility played an important role as well as the somewhat provocative question: "is it worth it ?"

This conference report summarises the excellent input as well as the discussions of October 2022 and will hopefully provide a basis for further reflection on and improvement of different sponsorship programmes.

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[1] https://www.unhcr.org/neu/about/our-work-community-sponsorship-programmes

CCME is most grateful to Ms Deborah Romano for compiling this report. Thanks also go the speakers and participants as well as the sponsors EKiR, OPM Valdese and UMCOR, whose support made the event possible.

Dr Torsten Moritz

CCME General Secretary

Community sponsorship in light the Afghanistan and Ukraine crises: Some observations and remarks

Dr. Admir Skodo, Migration Policy Institute Europe

Dr. Admir Skodo, Senior Policy Analyst at MPI Europe, delivered the keynote talk titled "Community Sponsorship in Light of the Afghanistan and Ukraine Crises: Some Observations and Remarks," which is attached to this document. His presentation examined the added complexity that arose in the context of community sponsorship -like activities following the Afghanistan and Ukraine crises, specifically whether the aid provided to Afghans and Ukrainians constitutes de facto sponsorship. Dr. Skodo, drawing on the work of MPI with various community sponsorship or complementary pathways programs in Europe and the Afghanistan and Ukraine crises, offered five observations:

1. The Canadian model demonstrates that having clear policy and program objectives, as well as a monitoring and evaluation mechanism, significantly contributes to the success of a community sponsorship program. The European response to the Afghanistan and Ukraine crises also highlighted the importance of setting clear objectives and monitoring, as the consequences of not doing so are particularly evident in these cases. While the response to the Afghan crisis has been chaotic, with no objectives or evaluation system in place, the European response to the Ukrainian crisis shows some improvements, with short-term objectives being established. However, even in this second case, there is a lack of both a broader outlook on how this response can utilize and promote existing channels such as resettlement and community sponsorship and a perspective on future integration strategy. Dr. Skodo emphasized the potentially devastating consequences of not taking a long-term approach.

2. There is growing awareness among European decision-makers of the importance of "naming" (i.e. recommending specific know person as sponsorship beneficiaries by the sponsors) as a mechanism for resettling large numbers of refugees – from Afghanistan, Ukraine, and other countries – through community sponsorship and other channels. In the

US, where there is significant interest among private citizens and residents in hosting Afghans they know personally, naming has been specifically mentioned as a key component of the upcoming private sponsorship program. In the case of Ukrainians in Europe, for which no naming mechanism was needed, Dr. Skodo pointed out what he referred to as "reverse naming," where many Ukrainian refugees found housing with family in certain member states, effectively naming their hosts/sponsors.

3. Among the sponsor groups MPI spoke to, there is a perception that Ukrainians are receiving preferential treatment over Afghans and people eligible for community sponsorship in general. Additionally, there have been reports of volunteer fatigue and rising tensions among volunteers, particularly in Poland.

4. The Ukraine crisis is not easily comparable to community sponsorship, mainly due to the different profiles, needs, and perceptions of Ukrainians and sponsored refugees. According to the assessment of Belgian Caritas, these two groups require different program and policy designs.

5. The difference in the public narratives surrounding the Ukrainian and Afghan crises has an impact on governance and societal level. While the awareness raised by the European Commission around Ukraine has instilled in Europeans a sense of control, a clear signal of welcome, and clear ways to help through volunteering, the same has not been done for Afghans or community sponsorship.

The main points of Dr. Skodo's presentation can be summarized as follows:

- Incorporating strong evaluative components, such as investing in building evaluation components into a program upfront, can be beneficial for existing and new programs.
- Naming has been a crucial element of community sponsorship programs to ensure a large number of beneficiaries.
- Based on lessons learned from the Ukrainian crisis, it is important to consider the differences in profiles and contexts between refugee groups when designing community sponsorship programs.
- Other crises and community sponsorship programs can benefit from the same type of public narratives and the flexibility and coordination efforts that characterized the reception of Ukrainians.

As for the future, Dr. Skodo recommended policymakers:

- To move beyond the crisis management mentality that currently shapes policy thinking around asylum and community sponsorship.
- To reflect on how to design naming mechanisms that align with the core values of a community sponsorship program, namely protection standards, etc.
- To remember the principle of additionality, which is at risk when sponsorship numbers are increasingly included in resettlement quotas.
- To focus on strengthening internal processes and policy design, particularly by taking into account the challenges faced by and with volunteer groups.

Developments in "traditional" Community sponsorship

Ms. Gabriela Agatiello, ICMC/SHARE

Ms. Gabriela Agatiello, Senior Policy & Project Officer at ICMC/SHARE, began her presentation, which is attached to this document, by providing an overview of the Share network. Established in 2012 by ICMC Europe, the Share network engages more than 4,000 stakeholders in 27 EU countries and serves as a platform for local and regional actors working on migrant and refugee inclusion and safe pathways to exchange and learn from one another. The goal is to promote the creation of safe pathways to Europe and improve the welcoming and inclusion of newcomers. The Share network takes a broad approach and focuses on five thematic areas:

1. Promoting community sponsorship and community-led welcoming initiatives;

2. Improving and expanding social orientation and integration for newcomers in rural areas;

3. Supporting the development and expansion of complementary pathways;

4. Researching and mapping integration practices;

5. Promoting migrant and refugee participation in all our programs.

After clarifying the main components of the concept of community sponsorship, Ms. Agatiello introduced the Share Quality Sponsorship Network (QSN) Project. This project aims to support pilot and ad-hoc sponsorship initiatives in developing into sustainable, community-driven programs through a multi-stakeholder, grassroots, and bottom-up strategy. ICMC Europe's partners in the project include Caritas International, the Irish Refugee Council, Citizens UK, DiCV Cologne, Consorzio Communitas, the Basque Government, and La Fédération de l'Entraide Protestante. Ms. Agatiello provided an overview of the programs of each of these organizations.

The core of Ms. Agatiello's presentation focused on the lessons learned from sponsorship programs to date and she presented them according to the five stages and components relevant to each program.

1. Program Governance Framework

    Regarding the governance framework of the program, Ms. Agatiello emphasized the importance of having national legal frameworks to regulate the good governance of community sponsorship programs and the need for greater transparency in agreements outlining the roles and responsibilities of partners. In this context, the refugee/migrant community should be more involved in the design, implementation, and evaluation of each program.

2. Pre-departure and Preparation Phase

    Ms. Agatiello highlighted the need to develop realistic placement expectations for both volunteers and refugee families through pre-departure orientation and training. During this phase, the selection and matching process of refugees with sponsors should be transparent and consider the needs, capacities, and potential of both refugees and communities.

3. Arrival and Initial Settlement Phase

    In this phase, Ms. Agatiello noted that certain strategies have proven particularly useful, such as having organizations act as intermediary supports for volunteer sponsors, refugee families, and mediating with authorities at the local, regional, and national levels.

4. Transition to Autonomy Phase

Ms. Agatiello not only emphasized the need to support transition planning for volunteer sponsor groups and sponsored refugees, but also identified two related and interlinked challenges: finding available, affordable, and appropriate accommodation at the end of the sponsorship program is particularly difficult in urban settings, while in rural areas, despite being more accessible, there are fewer opportunities for refugees such as specialized settlement services, language classes, employment training, counseling, and public transportation.

5. Promotion of Programs and Mobilization of Volunteer Sponsors

In order for community sponsorship programs to increase in numbers, Ms. Agatiello recognized the need for greater awareness of these programs among the general population through targeted communication campaigns with adapted messaging and decentralized approaches to the recruitment and mobilization of volunteers.

Ms. Agatiello concluded her presentation with some reflections on the impact of Ukraine displacement on welcoming communities. Among the challenges she highlighted were the lack of capacity of civil society and transition planning for long-term accommodation, the displacement of attention, resources, capacity, and accommodation for other refugee populations, the tendency to differentiate beneficiaries of protection based on their origins, and the difficulty in recruiting volunteers for traditional programs. However, there are also opportunities such as the further development of welcoming and open communities and societal commitment to supporting refugees, which contrast with governments' public discourse on migration, as well as the opportunity to structure community sponsorship programs from both an operational and institutional perspective.

Case studies
Italy

Ms. Giulia Gori, Federation of Protestant Churches in Italy (FCEI)

Ms. Giulia Gori, Project Officer at the Federation of Protestant Churches in Italy (FCEI), gave a presentation on the Italian model of community sponsorship.

In the past few years, several Church-based organizations in Italy have played a significant role in the field of community sponsorship and private sponsorship, specifically through the implementation of humanitarian corridors and academic corridors. There are three main Church-based organizations in Italy that have been involved in implementing these corridors: FCEI, Caritas, and the Community of Sant Egidio. Each organization has developed its own approach and strategy for every phase of the pre-departure and post-arrival process, including different identification and assessment strategies, different pre-departure and post-arrival orientations, and different degrees of community involvement. This variance is due to the different sponsoring organizations' ecosystems, as well as the specific framework in each departing country.

In contrast to other models implemented in other countries, the identification of participants in community sponsorship and community protection programs in Italy is not mandatory by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). While participants must fall under the UNHCR mandate, they are not required to be formally recognized by the organization. This flexibility has allowed sponsoring organizations to design a more thorough assessment process for selecting participants. The flexibility of the Italian model proved to be an added value since it allows for a more comprehensive assessment strategy that considers not only protection needs but also other elements that could impact participants' inclusion prospects and improve their matching with receiving territories.

In Italy, the sustainability of community sponsorship and community protection programs is currently being impacted by the lack of involvement and ownership from the government. While these programs provide education, training, and healthcare to asylum seekers and refugees, the government does not financially contribute to them in any other way. Instead, each program is negotiated on a case-by-case basis with the government, which means that only a small group of organizations with the resources and capacity to negotiate and fund a program are able to participate. To ensure sustainability and expansion of these programs, it is necessary to establish a well-regulated framework that defines the roles and responsibilities of all stakeholders, enables multi-level governance, and promotes government ownership. Such a framework would also allow the programs to be open to the wider community and establish a network of people ready to support refugee protection efforts.

> In 2022, the FCEI launched a new project called **COMET (Complementary Pathways Network)**, which aims to create a supra-national platform that brings together a network of different, new, and existing national schemes in Europe to create a more integrated approach to community sponsorship. This project aims to test out a model that does not impose a single pathway across Europe, but rather harnesses the peculiarities and functionality of various pathways that already exist or are in development within Europe, each with its own specific characteristics. The COMET model seeks to provide more flexibility and diversity, as well as more opportunities for sponsors, communities, and beneficiaries.

The Italian Federation of Evangelical Churches (FCEI) and OXFAM Italy have recently presented a community sponsorship model for Italy as part of their ongoing AMIF project SAFE. They are now working with relevant stakeholders to turn this model into a well-designed policy that is open to the entire civil society. After having successfully transformed their pilot experience into a widely accepted good practice, they now hope to take the next step by establishing this model as a formal policy.

UK

Rev. Richard Reddie, Churches Together in Britain and Ireland (CTBI)

The Ukraine crisis, which began in March 2022, has impacted the involvement of churches in sponsorship-related activities in the United Kingdom. Rev. Richard Reddie gave a presentation on the topic, by first providing a general overview of what has been taking place, and then presenting how the churches have engaged.

The United Kingdom government has implemented three programs to respond to the humanitarian crisis in Ukraine, which began in March 2022: the Ukraine Family Scheme, the Homes for Ukraine (Sponsorship) Scheme (Reset), and the Ukraine Extension Scheme. These schemes provide visa-based immigration routes for those affected by the conflict to arrive or remain in the UK for three years with the right to work and access to public funds, including mainstream homelessness assistance. As of October 4, 2022, there were 221,900 total visa applications under these programs, with 189,900 visas issued. There were 134,200 Ukrainian arrivals in the UK as of October 3, 2022, and 25,200 applications for extensions of stay in the UK as of October 4, 2022, with 19,300 of these applications granted and 4,900 awaiting conclusion. The former UK Minister of State for Refugees estimated that between 4,000-5,000 Ukrainians were arriving in the UK each week as of September 4, 2022.

The UK's response to the Ukraine crisis has been met with both praise and criticism. The programs have been praised for changing British attitudes towards refugees and for providing aid to those in need. However, the programs have also been criticized for their excessive bureaucracy and inflexibility, particularly regarding visa requirements and the time it takes for visas to be approved. There have also been concerns raised about the potential for exploitation and abuse of Ukrainian refugees, as well as housing instability and a lack of long-term welfare provisions. The Scottish and Welsh governments have implemented slightly different approaches to the UK scheme, with the Scottish framework being more stringent in some respects. However, even within these programs, there have been issues with housing instability and a lack of independent housing options.

The accommodation arrangements for Ukrainian refugees in the UK have faced some problems, with one in ten refugees leaving their host households before the minimum six-month period is over. The most common reason for

departures is cited as relationship breakdowns, often due to cultural differences and miscommunication. However, some refugees have also returned to Ukraine. Also, a survey commissioned by the former Refugee Minister in September 2022 found that the rising cost of living in the UK was hindering the ability of hosts to support Ukrainian refugees. As fewer UK hosts are coming forward and requests for rematching from Ukrainians are increasing, many Ukrainian households have become homeless, with around one third of them in London. According to government figures, 1,565 Ukrainian households were registered as homeless by councils between February 24 and August 26, 2022.

The churches in the United Kingdom and Ireland have responded to the Ukraine crisis by supporting or sponsoring Ukrainian refugees, often working together despite their theological or ecclesiological differences. Christian non-governmental organizations such as Christian Aid, CAFOD, and Tearfund have also been involved in this effort. Since 2016, parachurch organizations and Christian organizations offering hospitality, welcome, sanctuary, and refuge have been involved in community sponsorship in the UK by signposting and supporting Christians and churches to participate in the scheme. For instance, Welcome Churches, an organization that works with churches and Christian groups across the UK to provide accommodation for Ukrainian families in need, has welcomed over 5,029 refugees in the past 12 months and has received commitments from 1,067 churches to welcome refugees. Despite this positive response, some in the UK have criticized churches involved in community sponsorship or other activities related to refugees or asylum seekers, and negative media stories have suggested that these efforts are undermining community cohesion and the immigration system. These negative narratives may discourage some churches from engaging in community sponsorship and instead focus on less controversial activities, such as food banks.

In early April 2022, over 60 church leaders gathered in London to discuss the roots of the Ukraine crisis and how the church can respond. The ecumenical church bodies/councils CTBI, Cytûn, and CTE have since established a Churches Ukraine Refugee Roundtable that meets every two weeks to support British churches in welcoming refugees under the Homes for Ukraine scheme. The Church of England has produced a toolkit and safeguarding guidance for those wishing to help refugees, including through the Homes for Ukraine scheme. The Christian NGOs, CAFOD and Christian Aid, were among the Disasters Emergency Committee (DEC) members to appeal to help the people

who have fled their homes to escape the conflict in Ukraine. There were other church appeals for financial assistance from: All We Can (Methodist relief and development) and the Methodist Church in Britain, The Church of Ireland Bishops' Appeal, Church of England Diocese in Europe and USPG, The Methodist Church in Ireland, Salvation Army, SCIAF.

Several criticisms have been put forward, toward both churches and government. Some have accused the UK churches of being more concerned with the crisis in Ukraine because those impacted are largely Christians. There have also been criticisms of the UK Government's recent introduction of strict immigration and asylum policies, such as sending asylum seekers to Rwanda for processing and criminalizing those who arrive in the UK by illegal routes. Earlier this year, a group of UK church leaders gathered over 1,000 signatures in protest of the Borders and Nationalities Bill being considered by the UK Parliament, stating that there were double standards and inconsistencies in the Government's immigration policies.

Rev. Richard Reddie concluded his presentation by pointing out that the potential for compassion fatigue to set in and the current cost-of-living crisis in the UK could potentially lead to churches focusing more on local needs and less on international ones. However, it is hoped that the infrastructure and commitment from the UK Government will be in place to allow churches to welcome all those in need, including Ukrainian refugees. The former Archbishop of Canterbury, Dr Rowan Williams, emphasized the importance of not limiting charity to within one's own country.

Poland & Nordic countries

Dr. Ryszard Bobrowicz, Lund University

Dr. Ryzchard Bobrowicz, researcher at Lund University and co-founder of the World of Neighbours practitioners' network, presented on the concept of community sponsorship from a non-institutional perspective. He posed questions about the development and sustainability of community sponsorship when it is implemented informally and without a comprehensive planning process, and suggested comparing the state of community sponsorship in 2015 and 2022. Dr. Bobrowicz emphasized that there is no singular definition of community sponsorship, but rather multiple definitions.

He, thus, proposed to look at the definition given by Bond and Kwadrans (2019):

> *We define community sponsorship programs as programs that empower groups of ordinary individuals—as opposed to governments or professionalized agencies—to lead in welcoming, supporting, and integrating refugees. While policy design features vary between countries, the basic model is a "public-private partnership between governments who, [at minimum,] facilitate legal admission of refugees, and private actors who provide financial, social and/or emotional support to receive and settle [those] refugees into [their] community."*

> *Under our conceptualization of community sponsorship, the model responds to the observation that "by redefining basic human needs as 'problems' that only professionals can resolve ... over-professionalization alienates people from the helping relationships they could establish with neighbours and kin." The deep engagement and high degree of responsibility undertaken by individual refugee sponsors repositions newcomers from vulnerable outsiders whom private individuals watch fail or succeed, to partners in a project of collective interests: the newcomers' success is inherently also the sponsors' success. This profound partnership divides sponsorship programs from other forms of refugee support, including those that rely heavily on volunteers but are fundamentally led by paid professionals.*

Indeed, the initial implementation of community sponsorship programs in Sweden, Poland, and Denmark involved private-public partnerships in which the government facilitated the legal admission of refugees and private actors took the lead. Dr. Bobrowicz highlighted the importance of the concept of "encounter" and the inter-group contact theory and human factor in the context of community sponsorship and community sponsorship "on the go". He discussed the challenges of traditional community sponsorship in emergency situations and introduced the concept of "community sponsorship on the go" as an alternative approach, providing examples.

In 2015, encounters were unsustainable and temporary. As an example, Dr. Bobrowicz discussed the Hungarian government directing refugees and asylum seekers to the Budapest train station. During this time, there was not an

increase in xenophobia among the local population, but rather an increase in those who were unsure of their views on foreigners. This suggests that encounters between the local population and refugees can have a transformative effect, even in a country with a history of hostility towards migrants. Dr. Bobrowicz also discussed the emergence of community sponsorship "on the go" in Sweden, where the government enlisted the support of the church due to the influx of refugees. This led to a wave of enthusiasm and support, but the political climate has since changed, making this form of community sponsorship unsustainable. Both of these examples demonstrate transformational, but ultimately unsustainable, encounters through community sponsorship on the go. When the encounter ends, due to formal changes such as relocation, the community sponsorship on the go also ends.

Between 2015 and 2022, progressively, there have been more sustainable encounters through community sponsorship "on the go". Dr. Bobrowicz cited the example of Poland, where there was a large influx of Ukrainian refugees and the community sponsorship on the go principles were implemented from the start. Sponsorship groups directly contacted families in Ukraine and organized support, including housing and assistance with administrative matters. The legal framework in place in Poland facilitated these processes and made them more sustainable. The church also played a significant role in providing assistance to Ukrainian refugees, with 98% of parishes participating. In Poland, the community sponsorship on the go was still sustainable two months after the influx of refugees. In contrast, in Hungary after three months, there was an increase in xenophobia. In Poland, 91% of people were in favor of welcoming Ukrainian refugees, with 52% strongly in favor. 75% had encountered a person from Ukraine in their neighborhood, and 63% were directly involved in supporting refugees, providing financial or material assistance, administrative assistance, and housing.

Dr. Bobrowicz identified several challenges to the sustainability of community sponsorship on the go in Poland, including a low employment rate, high private costs, growing resentment towards the government, volunteer fatigue, a saturated housing market, economic problems and inflation, limited capacity in education and healthcare, and the potential for political capitalization. He also discussed Denmark and Ukraine, where the Lutheran Church played a significant role in supporting Ukrainian refugees and facilitating encounters

with the local population. As a result, over a quarter of Ukrainian refugees in Denmark are employed.

While community sponsorship on the go is effective in the short term for supporting large numbers of people, more formalized programs may be more sustainable with smaller numbers. He, therefore, concluded by proposing a reflection upon the possibility to find a sustainable compromise between the two approaches.

Joint reflection on community sponsorship and churches: what do we learn from the last year and what's next

Conversation starter by - Ms Deborah Romano, CCME

Ms. Deborah Romano, from CCME, provided, an overview of the main considerations and issues that arose during the event on community sponsorship last December, which was organized by CCME as part of its work on safe passage. It took place both in Berlin and online and included discussions on the current experiences of CS programs, the specific role of churches and faith-based organizations, and the potential role of CCME in this area of work. Throughout the event, participants had the opportunity to exchange ideas and experiences on the opportunities and challenges of community sponsorship programs. A year later, many things have changed, particularly in light of the ongoing conflict in Ukraine. This panel aimed at revisiting the discussions from last December's event in the context of these recent developments and consider the most current information on community sponsorship programs.

One of the main issues when discussing community sponsorship programs, it is the tension between the principles of complementarity and additionality, which are central to such programs, and the various responsibilities that lie with state authorities, particularly in regard to providing essential services to refugees and other migrants.

Complementarity and additionality refer to the idea that community sponsorship programs should be additional to, and not a replacement for, state-run resettlement programs. The principle of additionality is particularly important as it ensures that community sponsorship programs are not used to undermine the efforts of states to fulfill their responsibilities towards refugees and migrants. However, there is a risk that under certain circumstances, the implementation of these programs could encourage governments to neglect their duties towards asylum seekers and rely solely on private actors for legal pathways and integration. This could potentially lead to a situation where the principle of additionality is compromised.

There are several implications and concerns to consider in this regard. The first concern is the sustainability of community sponsorship programs, which can be affected by the level of engagement and ownership from the government, as well as the financing of such programs. If the government does not provide sufficient support and resources, CS programs may struggle to remain operational and effectively support refugees and migrants.

The second concern is the legitimacy of community sponsorship programs in the host society, which can be influenced by the presence of a clear governmental framework and the perception of potential impacts on the social welfare system. If the government does not clearly outline the role and responsibilities of community sponsorship programs, or if there is a perception that such programs could negatively impact the host society, it can lead to resistance or opposition to the implementation of community sponsorship programs.

The quality of community sponsorship programs can also be impacted by the presence of a clear legal framework, as seen in the successful implementation of such programs in Germany. Without a clear set of rules and guidelines, it can be difficult to ensure that community sponsorship programs are implemented in a fair and consistent manner.

There is also a risk that the principle of additionality, or the idea that community sponsorship programs should be additional to state resettlements, could be put at risk if governments rely solely on private actors for refugee protection. If states neglect their obligations to provide protection to refugees and instead rely solely on private actors, it could undermine the overall efforts to provide protection to refugees and could lead to a situation where the principle of additionality is not upheld.

Additionally, there is a concern that governments' support for community sponsorship programs could detract from the support offered to other programs and groups of asylum seekers, potentially leading to a situation of double standards, as seen with the different treatment of Ukrainian and non-Ukrainian refugees in some cases. If resources and support are focused solely on community sponsorship programs, it could lead to a situation where other groups of asylum seekers are neglected and do not receive the same level of support.

Overall, it is important for governments to consider the potential tension between the principles of complementarity and additionality and their responsibilities towards refugees and migrants, and to ensure that any community sponsorship programs are implemented in a way that is sustainable, legitimate, of high quality, and does not compromise the rights and protections of asylum seekers. It is also essential that states fulfill their obligations to provide protection to refugees and not rely solely on private actors to do so.

DISCUSSION

Participants in the event discussed the importance of maintaining connections and encounters between refugees and the local population in order to avoid stereotyping and to promote a more supportive and sustainable community. One argument put forward was that grassroots, self-organizing efforts by individuals in creating conditions for community sponsorship, such as housing and schooling, have been successful in involving a large portion of the population and fostering a sense of connection. However, it was questioned whether these efforts are significantly different from the work that churches and volunteers have been doing for years. It was also noted that traditional programs often involve "activists" who already have visas and professional support, whereas the individuals involved in grassroots efforts may not have such support. The possibility of professionalizing these efforts in order to improve the quality and effectiveness of the services and encounters was also discussed.

The group also discussed the difference in attitudes towards Ukrainian and Belarusian refugees and the use of different terminology in media coverage, leading to a discussion on the connection between media portrayal and levels of compassion. The impact of the war and displacement on their own society and daily lives and how this may affect engagement with refugees was also

considered. It was suggested that media attention is important in maintaining public interest and motivation for supporting refugees. It was also noted that while support from the government and media is not necessarily necessary, having media and government against these efforts can be a problem.

Overall, the importance of supporting society in managing encounters between different groups, such as migrants and hosts, was emphasized. Professional accompaniment is important in this process, but it is also crucial to maintain wide engagement from society. Managing expectations and addressing issues of bureaucracy are key challenges that must be addressed in order to support the successful integration of migrants into society. The role of national identities in shaping migration narrative and policies and the potential use of theology in developing inclusive post-migration societies were also discussed.

ANNEXES

Community sponsorship in light the Afghanistan and Ukraine crises: Some observations and remarks - Dr. Admir Skodo, Migration Policy Institute Europe

Community sponsorship in light of the Afghanistan and Ukraine crises: Some observations and remarks

MIGRATION POLICY INSTITUTE

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E U R O P E

Dr. Admir Skodo
Senior Policy Analyst

Community sponsorship and churches: what´s new?
Warsaw, October 15, 2022

1

Defining community sponsorship

- There is no unitary meaning to community sponsorship on the European level, or the global level.

- Common denominators:
  – "Community sponsorship involves community or private groups providing mentorship, assistance, and some level of financial or in-kind support to refugees, whether they have entered through resettlement or applied for and received asylum after arrival." (Fratzke 2017)
  – Shared responsibility between the state and civil society for admission and/or integration of refugees.

mpi
E U R O P E

Overview

- 5 recent observations across Europe and Canada (and the US)

- Some key takeaways from recent observations

- What lies ahead for community sponsorship in Europe?

Observation 1

- The importance of clear policy and program objectives and of monitoring and evaluation has become apparent
  - The Canadian model's success derives in large part from built-in M&E.
  - M&E in European community sponsorship is uneven, though there are good examples (UK and Portugal, e.g.)
  - Response to Afghan crisis deeply flawed: no clear objectives, no evaluation.
  - Response to Ukraine crisis robust *but for short-term goals* – Polish NGOs are looking to develop evaluative frameworks and integration policies

Observation II

- The importance of naming as a mechanism that allows for large numbers of refugees to be resettled through community sponsorship and through other channels
  - Canadian naming accounts for most sponsored refugees.
  - German family reunification sponsorship a form of naming.
  - Ukraine a form of "reverse" naming?

Observation III

- The response to the Ukraine crisis is having a chilling effect on sponsors, and increasingly on volunteers for Ukraine
  - There is a strong sense among sponsor groups in Europe that Ukrainians are receiving preferential treatment over Afghans and people selected for community sponsorship in general.
  - "Volunteer fatigue" and tensions among volunteers for Ukraine in e.g. Poland

Observation IV

- For some EU, national government, and civil society actors that we have spoken to recently, the Ukraine crisis is regarding some key aspects proving *not* to be comparable to community sponsorship to allow for effective transfers
  - Belgium: The different profiles of refugees call for entirely different support and interventions
  - Ireland, Belgium: The expectations and responsibilities of sponsors/volunteers differ significantly
  - Poland: government's hands-off approach allowed civil society and individuals to adapt, scale, quickly without

Observation V

- The public narratives and awareness raising around Ukraine and Ukrainian refugees have been very effective
  - Contrast to European narratives around Afghans: "We are not going back to 2015-16."
  - Contrast to community sponsorship: knowledge and awareness of sponsorship is often limited where it counts the most: potential sponsor populations and local authorities.

Key takeaways

- There is an opportunity to embed strong M&E component to existing and starting programs through e.g. peer-learning.
- So far naming in some form or other has been the key component across all programs with large numbers.
- In trying to learn from the Ukraine crisis, community sponsorship programs should consider the differences in profile and contexts (operational, political, etc.) between the two groups of refugees.
- The public narratives and awareness-raising, flexibility around funding, and coordination efforts for Ukrainians could be transferred to other crises and to community sponsorship programs.

What lies ahead for community sponsorship?

- Moving away from "crisis mode"?
- Will naming become more of a norm in Europe?
- Will there be a stronger focus on labor pathways?
- What will happen to additionality?
- Focus on strengthening internal processes and policies?

Recent MPI publications and webinars

- *Briefing on Ukraine: Avenues to Safety and Meeting Immediate Needs*, March 2022
- *One Year On: The Situation for At-Risk Afghans in Afghanistan and Abroad*, August 2022
- Hanne Beirens and Aliyyah Ahad, *Measuring Up? Using Monitoring and Evaluation to Make Good on the Promise of Refugee Sponsorship*, MPI Europe, 2020.
- Susan Fratzke, Lena Kainz, Hanne Beirens, Emma Dorst and Jessica Bolter, *Refugee Sponsorship Programs: A Global State of Play and Opportunities for Investment*, MPI Europe, 2019.
- Susan Fratzke, *Engaging Communities in Refugee Protection: The Potential of Private Sponsorship in Europe*, Migration Policy Institute, 2017

For more information

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Developments in "traditional" Community sponsorship - Ms. Gabriela Agatiello, ICMC/SHARE

WHAT IS THE SHARE APPROACH?

Outreach, advocacy & policy development

Multi-stakeholder & inclusive engagement

Bottom-up & place-based approaches

Research & mapping of practices

Refugee & migrant participation

Training & Capacity building

Best practice exchange and peer learning

Share Network

Thematic Areas of Focus

01 **Promote community sponsorship & community-led welcoming initiatives**

We support community sponsorship initiatives to develop into larger, and more sustainable community-driven programmes.

02 **Improve & expand social orientation & integration for newcomers in rural areas**

We use bottom-up approaches, involving local communities and newcomers to strengthen social orientation and integration.

03 **Support the development & expansion of complementary pathways**

We support the expansion of complementary pathways by promoting education & labour mobility pathways linked to sponsorship.
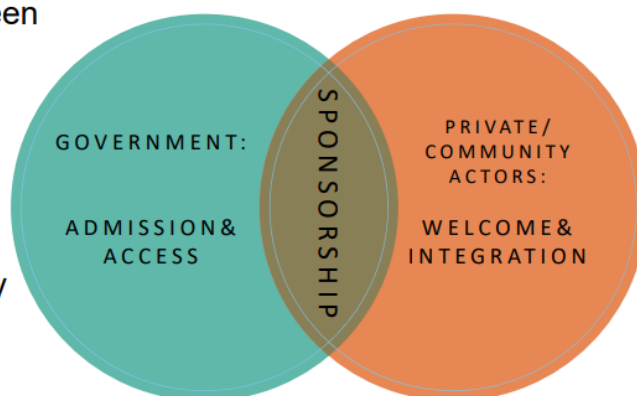
04 **Research & mapping of integration practices**

We contribute and advocate for evidence-based policy-making and the connection between research, policy and practice.
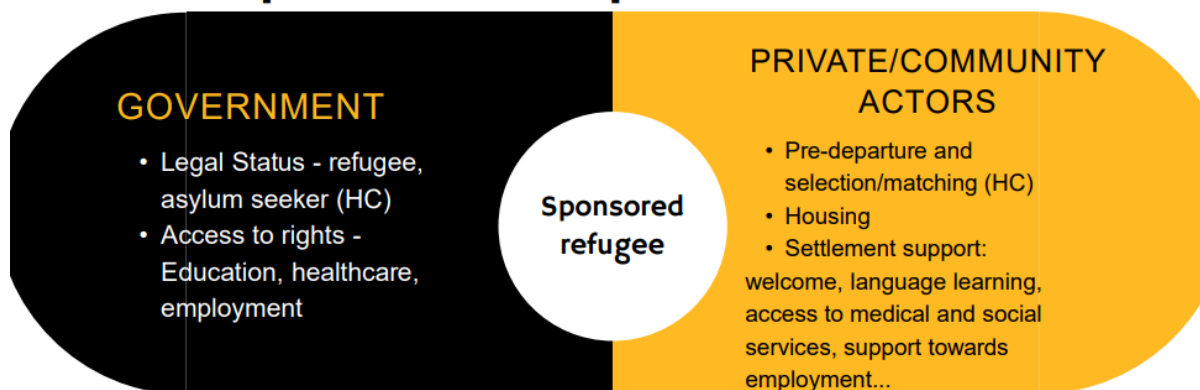
05 **Promote & mainstream migrant & refugee participation throughout all our programmes**
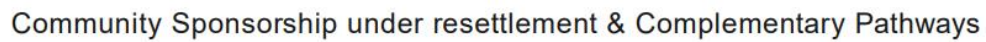
Share Network

What is community sponsorship?

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

GOVERNMENT:

ADMISSION & ACCESS

SPONSORSHIP

PRIVATE/ COMMUNITY ACTORS:

WELCOME & INTEGRATION

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Sharing Responsibilities between private and public actors

GOVERNMENT
- Legal Status - refugee, asylum seeker (HC)
- Access to rights - Education, healthcare, employment

Sponsored refugee

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

Safe Pathways to Europe

85% of refugees are hosted in developing countries outside of Europe[1]

Some refugees are identified by UNHCR and NGOs and travel safely to Europe

Once in Europe, community sponsorship ensures that refugees are welcomed by an inclusive community

Resettlement
Complementary Pathways
Sponsorships
Labour Mobility
Humanitarian Visas
Higher Education Pathways
Family-based Reunification

On average less than 1% of refugees access safe pathways to Europe[2]

[1] UNHCR Refugee Statistics 10.11.2021
[2] UNHCR The History of Resettlement 2020

Governments
Schools
Universities
Businesses
Churches
Community sponsorship
Communities
Civil Society
Municipalities

Community Sponsorship under resettlement & Complementary Pathways

Resettlement		Complementary Pathways				
UNHCR to government	UNHCR to individual sponsors	Named sponsorship	HN Visas	Education pathways for Refugees	Labour mobility pathways	Family Reunification Progs.
Government resettlement programmes	Resettlement-based sponsorship	Private Sponsorship for Refugees Prog. in Canada	Humanitarian corridors in Italy and France	University Corridors in Italy and France, WUSC in Canada, DAAD programme in Germany	Economic mobility programme in Canada, Talent beyond boundaries prgramme in UK	Afghan admission prog. in Ireland

Community Sponsorship

Share QSN Project

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

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

Credit: Isabel Corthier for Caritas International

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Objectives of QSN

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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

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
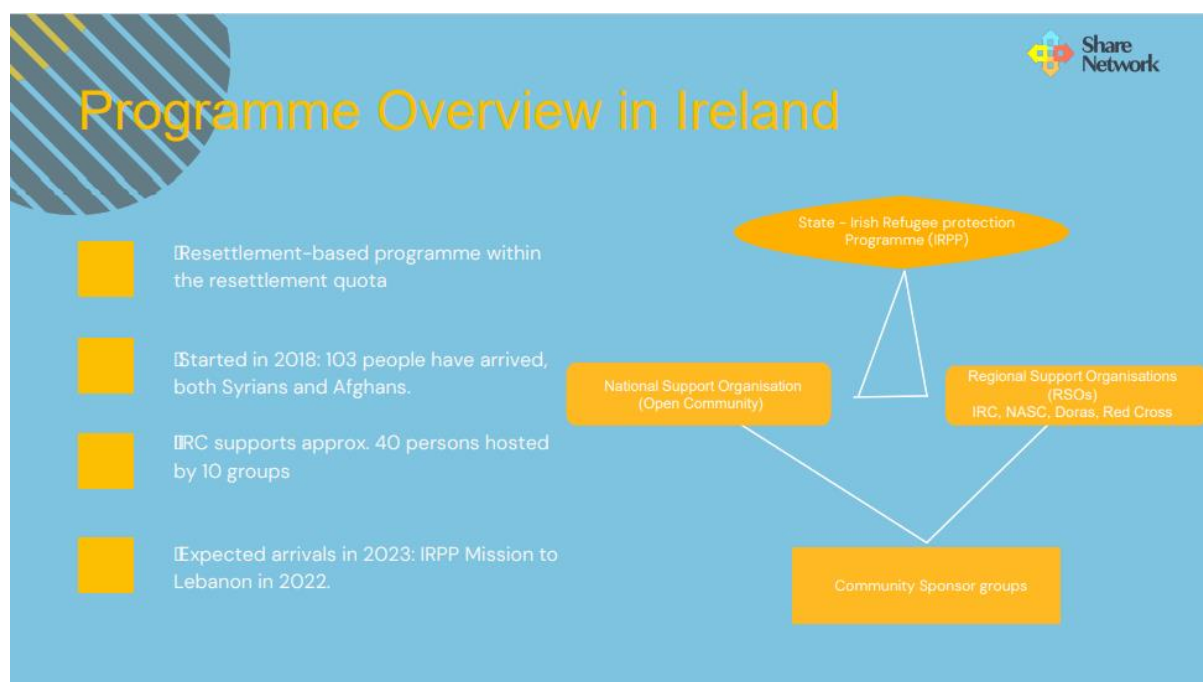

Community Sponsorship in Ireland

Irish REfugee Council (IRC)

READ MORE

www.irishrefugeecouncil.ie

Programme Overview in the UK

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- Programme is Resettlement based – Community Sponsorship. Started in 2016.

- Families sponsored through the UK Resettlement Scheme are additional to government resettlement.

- Families sponsored through the new Afghan Citizens Resettlement Scheme contribute towards the government's target to welcome 20,000 Afghans.

- 873 arrivals to date (187 families)

- The majority of arrivals are Syrian – have also welcomed families from Sudan, Somalia, Palestine, Iraq, Iran, Pakistan, Afghanistan and the DRC.

- There are 334 Community Sponsorship Groups across the UK (not all these groups have welcomed yet)

- Citizens UK is Lead Sponsor for 79 groups, we have welcomed 206 people (41 families) to date.

Community Sponsorship in Germany

DiCV Cologne

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READ MORE

www.caritasnet.de

Programme Overview in Germany (NesT)

- The NesT programme is resettlement-based and additional: outside the resettlement quota (up to 500 places; 200 is the target for 2022)

- Pilot programme started in 2019, programme to be consolidated in 2023

- To date 139 persons have arrived (Syria 44, South Sudan 33, Somalia 31, Sudan 14, Dem. Rep. Congo 10, Eritrea 5, Uganda 2)

- 31 mentoring groups (consisting of 5 persons) have welcomed refugees – roughly another 30 groups are waiting to be matched with refugees

- Caritas Cologne supports 3 of the groups by covering accomodation costs

- Expected arrivals in 2022 for DiCV (5 Persons, 1 Family)

- The newly set target for government is 250 refugees per year

Community Sponsorship in Belgium

Caritas International Belgium

READ MORE

www.caritasinternational.be

Programme Overview in Belgium

- Programme is resettlement-based and additional to resettlement quota

- Started in 2020 as a pilot project

- Total of 39 arrivals (35 Syrians, 4 Ethiopians) hosted by 8 sponsor groups (incl. 1 recurrent group)

- Expected arrivals in 2022/23 : November 2022, February 2023, ...

- Possible arrivals from Jordan, Lebanon, Turkey, Rwanda, Libya, Uganda, etc.

Community Sponsorship in Spain

Basque country Programme

READ MORE

www.euskadi.eus/patrocinio-comunitario

Programme Overview in Basque Country

- Programme is Resettlement-based and within resettlement quota, despite request for complementarity to Spanish Govt.

- Starting date of programme: March 2019 as a result of an agreement between the Basque Government, the Central Government, UNHCR, Jesuits and Caritas

- Total Number of arrivals to date: 58 people

- 2019: 5 Syrian families from Jordan (29 people + 2 family reunification)
  2022: 6 Syrian families from Lebanon, as a result of the extension of the agreement to carry out a pilot experience (27 people)

- Total number of sponsorship groups: 5 groups in 5 municipalities during pilot experience, 5 new groups during extension, in new places.

- The pilot experience has made it possible to replicate it in the regions of Valencia and Navarra wjo have eached welcome 5 failies each.

Humanitarian Corridors linked to sponsorship in Italy

Caritas Italiana/Consorzio Communitas

READ MORE

www.caritas.it

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Programme Overview in Italy (HC)

Starting date of Caritas programme: 2017

First agreement in 2019,
2nd agreement in 2021,
3rd agreement only for Afghans (1200) , 300 beneficiaries for Caritas

Total Number of arrivals to date, since start of Caritas programme: 1100 first two protocols, 71 students (university corridors 3 editions), 353 Ukrainians + Family reunification

Total number of hosting/sponsorship groups: 87 diocesan Caritas

Total number of universities participating in UC: 31 universities

Expected additional arrivals in 2022: 51 refugee students from Africa – 36 Afghans from Pakistan

Humanitarian Corridors linked to sponsorship in France
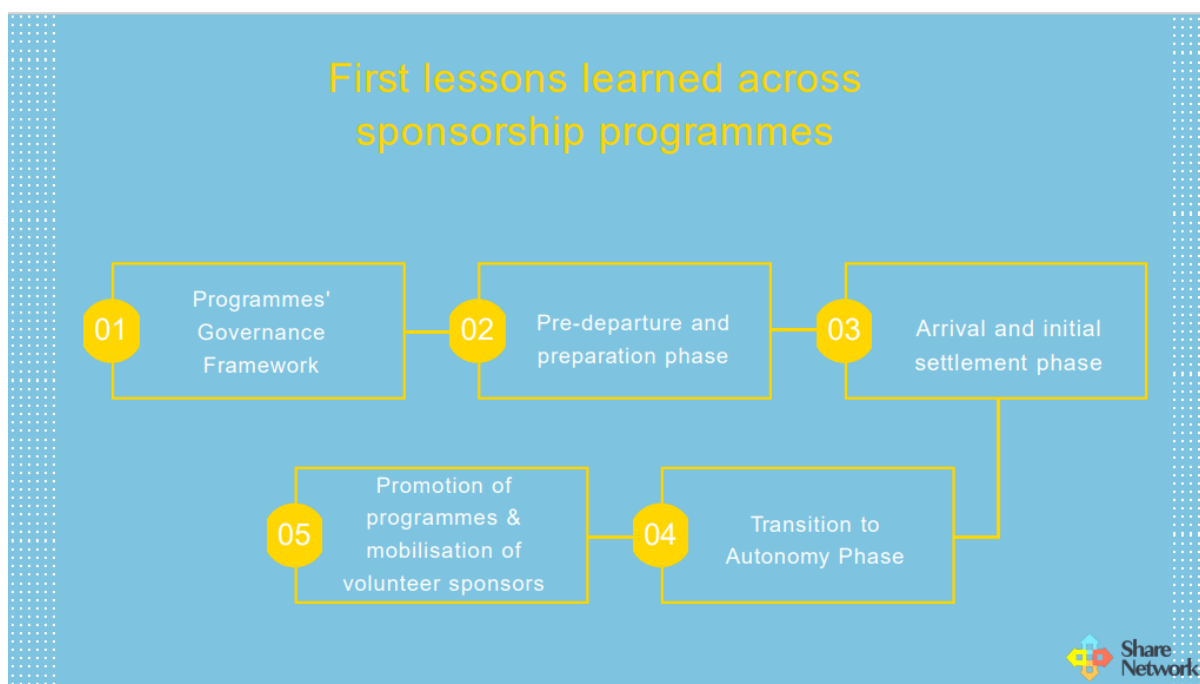
Fédération de l'entraide protestante (FEP)

READ MORE

www.fep.asso.fr

COULOIRS humanitaires
Fédération protestante de France

BIENVENUE EN FRANCE

مرحبا بكم في فرنسا.

Programme Overview in France (HC)

- Humanitarian Corridors is a community-based sponsorship, allowing additional places of resettlement to persons in Lebanon in need of international protection

- 2017 – 2022 Humanitarian corridors: 363 persons supported by FEP through: Identification, preparation and matching in Lebanon

- Approximately 60+ volunteer sponsor groups made up of 15-20 volunteers mobilised by FEP to welcome refugees

- Accommodation and early integration=> from sponsor groups in France

- Administrative and asylum request procedure support=> from regional hub caseworkers

- From 2021: Renewal of the HC protocol for 300 more persons for 3 years

- Sept. 2022: arrival of 6 refugee students (via university corrdiors) supported by FEP with accommodation, administrative and legal support

First lessons learned across sponsorship programmes

- 01 Programmes' Governance Framework
- 02 Pre-departure and preparation phase
- 03 Arrival and initial settlement phase
- 04 Transition to Autonomy Phase
- 05 Promotion of programmes & mobilisation of volunteer sponsors

1. Governance Frameworks

- Many community sponsorship programmes lack a legal framework in their national legislation to regulate the good governance of the programmes.
- Need for more transparent partnership agreements with clear roles and responsibilities and their duration between government, intermediary support organisations, volunteer sponsors and other actors.
- High cost of running sponsorship programmes threat to their long-term sustainability.
- Lack of awareness/understanding of programmes among local authorities and wider community
- Adequately resource intermediary support organisations to coordinate and promote porgrammes
- Use of decentralised approaches to mobilise, coordinate, and provide support to volunteer sponsors and refugee families
- Programmes need to adhere to protection standards and basic levels of quality: safeguarding mechanisms (sponsorship breakdown, child protection, abuse) and monitoring should be built into design
- Need for meaningful involvement of the refugee/migrant community in design, implementation and evaluation of programmes

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2. Pre-departure and preparation phase

- Thorough pre-departure orientation and preparation key to develop realistic placement expectations for all participants (volunteers and refugee families).
- Selection and matching process of refugees with sponsors should be more transparent and completed prior to arrival
- Programmes should be sensitive to needs, capacities and potential of both refugees and communities
- Support for volunteer sponsors to deal with delays in travelling arrangements
- Group formation and training of volunteer sponsors

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3. Arrival/Initial Settlement phase

- Having organisations which act as intermediary supports for volunteer sponsors, refugee families, and can mediate with authorities (local, regional and national) - such as regional support organisations – proven to be very useful
- Training/capacity building opportunities for volunteer groups
- Employing intercultural mediators or migrant/refugee volunteers who speak language/are familiar with culture
- Regular and facilitated opportunities for peer learning and best practice exchange
- Outreach and active engagement of wider community to support long-term integration and transition to independence.

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4. Transition to autonomy

- Need to support with transition planning for volunteer sponsor groups and sponsored refugees
- Finding available, affordable and appropriate accommodation at the end of the sponsorship programme is a central challenge in all programmes (rural more accessible vs. urban settings)
- Rural communities tend to have fewer opportunities for refugees such as specialised settlement services, language classes, employment training, counselling and public transport.
- Lack of an effective multi-level/cross-sector collaboration amongst different stakeholders limits refugees' opportunities to gain self-sufficiency.
- Sponsorship groups should develop a clear strategy to ensure that the broader community is engaged with sponsored refugees, in order to achieve social integration.

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5. Promotion of programmes & mobilisation of volunteer sponsors

- Programmes remain very niche and small in numbers, not widespread awareness of programmes among the population.
- Need for targeted communication campaigns with adapted messaging to raise awareness about sponsorship programmes among population and how they can support/get involved
- Need buy-in from govt. authorities at different levels raising awareness/supporting programmes
- Need adequate resourcing of national, regional, and local organisations to be able to invest time to promote programme and mobilise volunteers
- Need to expand sponsorship base and recruitment beyond traditional volunteer networks to be able to scale up programmes
- Use of decentralised approaches to recruitment and mobilisation of volunteers

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Impact of Ukraine displacement on welcoming communities: Challenges

- Displacement of attention, resources, capacity and accomodation for other refugee populations
- Lack of capacity of civil society, services overburdened
- Extremely limited availability of accommodation– particularly in urban areas
- Housing often inapproapirate and substandard, lack of control
- Many refugees placed in emergency reception, hampers long-term integration

- Lack of transition planning into long term accomodation
- Temporary suspension of RST transfers in some countries
- Drop out of potential sponsor groups– housing going to Ukrainians
- Difficulty recruiting volunteers for traditional programmes
- Temporary vs. long-term engagement of volunteers
- Double standards: tendency to differentiate beneficiaries of protection according to their origins

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Impact of Ukraine displacement on welcoming communities: Opportunities

- Temporary Protection Directive (TPD) allows refugees to access rights from day 1

- Opportunity to apply experience acquired in community sponsorship to accompaniment of families and volunteers hosting Ukrainians --> BUT requires great deal of planning and coordination which is challenging in emergency situations

- Opportunity to develop welcoming and open communities and societal commitment to supporting refugees

- Bring the value of widespread local welcome -> to contrast government public discourse on migration

- Mobilization of new partners, stakeholders and alliances (municipalities, private sector, local residents, housing associations...)

- Citizens can host Ukrainians with less administrative burdens BUT also less safeguarding, vetting

- Widespread engagement of private citizens can offer short term solution to reception crisis

- **Lessons learned:** opportunity to structure community sponsorship programs both from an operational and an institutional point of view

THANK YOU
FOR YOUR
ATTENTION

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Poland & Nordic countries - Dr. Ryszard Bobrowicz, Lund University

Community Sponsorship on the Go

Scandinavia and Central-Eastern Europe between 2015 and 2022

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A WORLD OF NEIGHBOURS

1 **Community sponsorship on the go?**

2 **2015 – unsustainable encounters**

    a. **Hungary**

    b. **Sweden**

3 **2022 – more sustainable encounters?**

    a. **Poland**

    b. **Denmark**

Community sponsorship on the go?

The terms community sponsorship, private sponsorship, and refugee sponsorship have not been universally defined, resulting in conceptual confusion amongst stakeholders (...)

we define community sponsorship programs as programs that empower groups of ordinary individuals–as opposed to governments or professionalized agencies–to lead in welcoming, supporting, and integrating refugees. While policy design features vary between countries, the basic model is a "public-private partnership between governments who, [at minimum,] facilitate legal admission of refugees, and private actors who provide financial, social and/or emotional support to receive and settle [those] refugees into [their] community."

Bond and Kwadrans 2019

Under our conceptualization of community sponsorship, the model responds to the observation that "by redefining basic human needs as 'problems' that only professionals can resolve ... over-professionalization alienates people from the helping relationships they could establish with neighbours and kin." The deep engagement and high degree of responsibility undertaken by individual refugee sponsors repositions newcomers from vulnerable outsiders whom private individuals watch fail or succeed, to partners in a project of collective interests: the newcomers' success is inherently also the sponsors' success. This profound partnership divides sponsorship programs from other forms of refugee support, including those that rely heavily on volunteers but are fundamentally led by paid professionals.

Bond and Kwadrans 2019
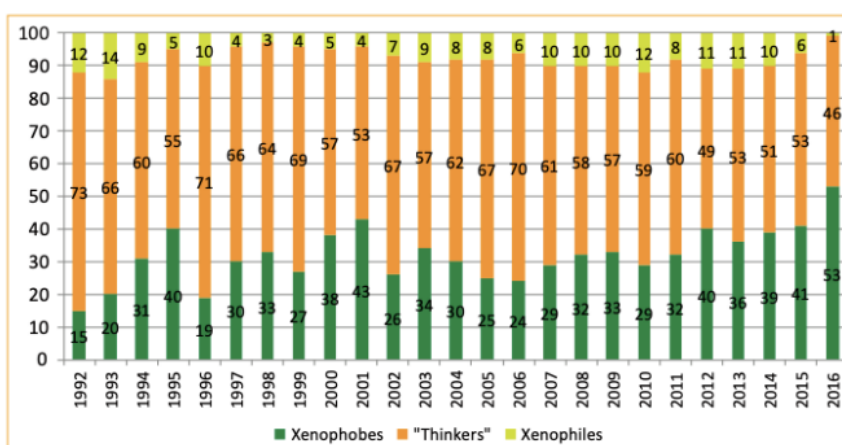
Inter-group contact theory

Encounter

The human factor

Traditional CS difficult to apply
in **emergency situations**
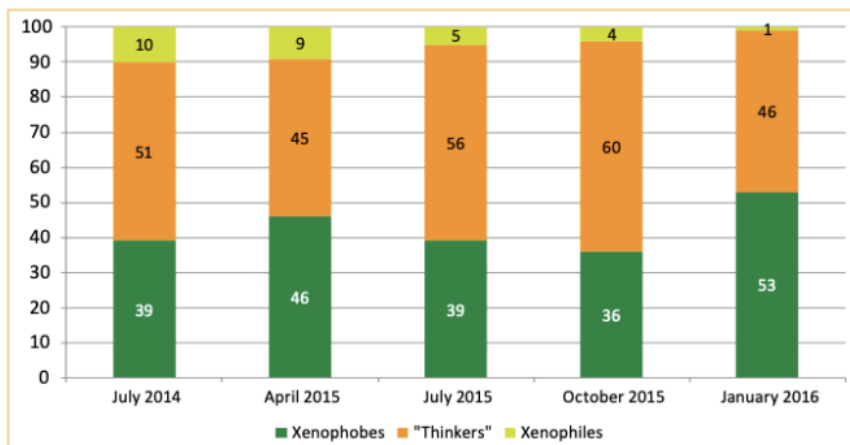
The emergence of CS **on the go**
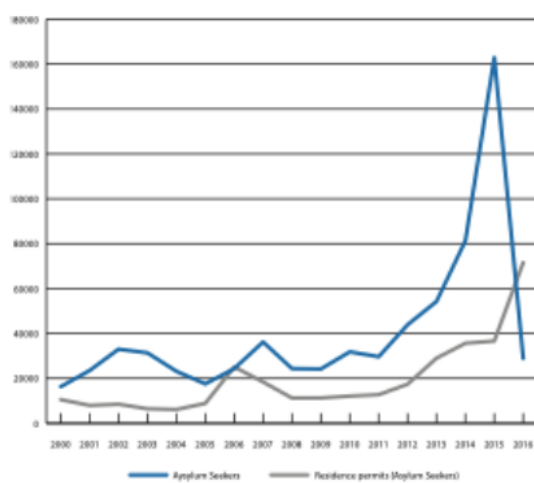
2015– The time of unsustainable encounters?

HUNGARY

Source: TÁRKI Omnibus 1992–2016.

Note: The question asked was the following: "Should Hungary accept asylum seekers… (all of them/ some of them/non of them)?"
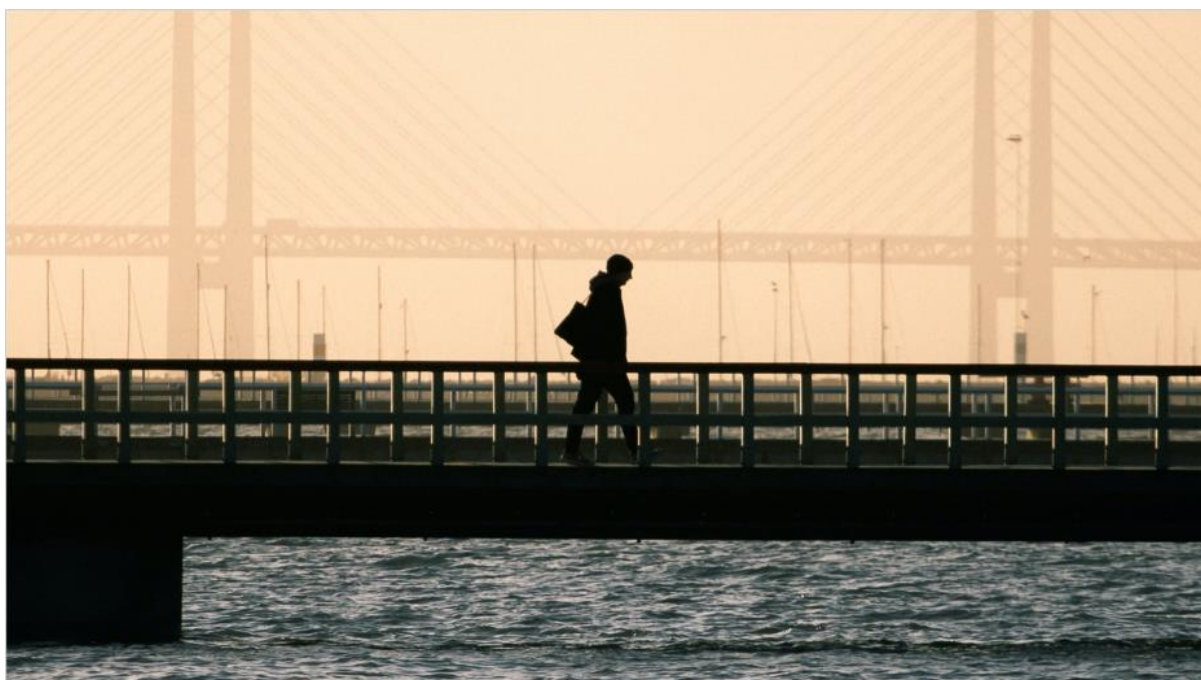
Source: TÁRKI Omnibus 2014–2016.

SWEDEN

FIGURE 1.1. NUMBER OF ASYLUM SEEKERS AND RESIDENCE PERMITS GRANTED

Source: The Swedish Migration Agency, Statistics, Residence permits granted 2000–2016.

37 000 participants between 10.2015-10.2016
80% of parishes took part
8 000 volunteers

A Time of Encounters

The Work with Asylum Seekers and New Arrivals in
the Parishes of the Church of Sweden 2015-2016

KRISTINA HELLQVIST AND ANDREAS SANDBERG

2022 – The time of (slightly) more sustainable encounters?

POLAND

6 782 275 people crossed the border
between Ukraine and Poland since the start
of the invasion out of which
1 436 558 stayed as refugees

Within the first month 98% of parishes
(N=10114, n=1338) took part in helping the
Ukrainian refugees and they oferred on
average:
*   **9 871 PLN** in financial help (94.4%)
*   **10 213 PLN** in material help (73,9%)
*   Found housing for **27 people** (44.6%)

ISKK 2022

Two months in:
*   **91%** were in favour of welcoming the refugees from
    Ukraine out of which **52%** were strongly in favour (4%
    were against);
*   **75%** encountered a person from Ukraine in their
    neighbourhood;
*   **63%** were involved in direct support for refugees, out
    of which:
    *   **75%** were oferring financial or material support
    *   **10%** assisted people in administration, schooling, or
        healthcare
    *   **8%** provided refugees with a house or an apartment

CBOS 2022

Challenges ahead:

- Relatively low employment rate

- High private cost

- Opposition vs Government

- Volunteer fatigue

- Saturated housing market

- Mounting economic problems

- Education

- Healthcare

- Beginnings of political capitalization

DENMARK

35 850 Ukrainian Refugees in Denmark

Nearly half of Danish *Folkeskirke* priests
affected by the incoming refugees from Ukraine

91% thinks that it is the task of the *Folkeskirke*
to support Ukrainian refugees

97% thinks that Ukrainian refugees should be
oferred Eucharist in the Lutheran Church

Over a quarter of Ukrainian refugees in Denmark
are already working

Denmark is preparing to accept **100 000 refugees**

What next?

THANK YOU!

RYSZARD BOBROWICZ

@CTR.LU.SE

Community sponsorship and churches: what´s new

Warsaw, 15-17 October 2022

ccme
churches' commission for migrants in europe

beyond borders
since 1964

Founded by

EVANGELISCHE
KIRCHE
IM RHEINLAND

UMCOR
United Methodist Committee on Relief

8tto
per
mille
CHIESA VALDESE
UNIONE DELLE CHIESE METODISTE E VALDESI