



European Refugee Sponsorship Convention

Honouring community-led welcome, celebrating achievements, and looking to the future

La Tricoterie – Fabrique des liens, Rue Théodore Verhaegen 158, 1060 Bruxelles

Wednesday 26th of April
13:00 – 24:00

Context

Since the first European community sponsorship scheme was launched in 2016, sponsorship programmes have expanded under highly diverse national and regional frameworks and partnerships, piloting new ways for citizens, civil society, regions and cities, universities, and other actors, to welcome refugees into their local communities. It is estimated that around 6,000 refugees have now been brought to Europe under resettlement-based sponsorship, humanitarian corridors and other complementary pathways like higher education programmes.

The power of community solidarity and welcome has only grown and solidified in light of the number of Ukrainian refugees that have been welcomed by private citizens and local actors in 2022. Many of these new community-led initiatives have adapted elements from established sponsorship programmes to Ukrainian refugees, inspiring new models of reception, diaspora participation and labour market integration.

At the heart of any community sponsorship initiative are the volunteers, welcomed refugees, and intermediary support organisations who provide support and coordinate with the authorities and different community actors. To celebrate the achievements as well as champions of sponsorship and give recognition to the variety of grassroots actors and volunteers involved in the various initiatives, a **European Sponsorship Convention** will take place in **Brussels on April 26, 2023**.

Participants

We will welcome approx. 150 participants from across Europe and beyond – including grassroots actors, refugees, government representatives, regional and local authorities, and EU institutions.



Programme

13:15 - 14:00: Registration and Coffee

14:00 – 14:30: Welcome and Introduction

Moderation: Ali Al-Jaberi

- **Welcome:** Petra Hueck, Director ICMC Europe & Anne Dussart, Head of Migration and Asylum, Caritas International
- **Keynote Speaker:** Damien Carême, MEP, Group of the Greens/European Free Alliance, Member of the Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs

14:30 – 15:15: **Setting the scene: Community sponsorship across Europe and the Share Quality Sponsorship Network (QSN)**

After a brief welcome and introduction, the Share QSN partnership will present the Quality Sponsorship network and what has been achieved in the last 2.5 years, also highlighting the challenges. As part of the presentation we will introduce the Share QSN booklet on Community sponsorship in Europe, looking at the evolution of the programmes in Europe, their growth and diversification.

- **Gabriela Agatiello**, [ICMC Europe/Share network](#)
- **Lukas Kestens**, [Caritas International](#), Belgium
- **Guilhem Mante**, [Fédération d'Entraide Protestante](#), France
- **Hannah Feldman & Dana Kamour**, [Citizens UK](#), UK
- **Margherita Mazzocchetti**, [Consorzio Comunitas](#), Italy
- **Stephan Leo-Joyce**, [Caritas Cologne](#), Germany
- **Xabier Legarreta**, [Basque country](#), Spain
- **Rory O'Neill**, [Irish Refugee Council](#), Ireland

15:15 – 16:20: **Community sponsorship across Europe: policy debate on key themes**

The Share QSN presentation will be followed by a policy debate including national and European policy makers. The debate will take the form of an interactive panel discussion with key stakeholders from civil society, sponsors, welcomed refugees, government and EU institutions, situating community sponsorship within the framework of resettlement and humanitarian admission, looking at the opportunities and challenges in the development of community sponsorships at the EU level and what the impact of Ukraine and Afghanistan as well as the new models of reception means for future programmes.

Moderator and introductory remarks: Petra Hueck, ICMC Europe/Share Network Director

Part 1: Community sponsorships within resettlement-based and complementary pathways: the current picture and ways forward.

- **Nathalie Springuel**, [UNHCR](#) Representation for EU Affairs
- **Giulio Di Blasi**, [Global Refugee Sponsorship Initiative](#)



- **Anita Vella/Heide Nidetzky**, [DG Home](#), European Commission
- **André Baas**, [European Union Agency for Agency](#)

Part 2: Development of Community sponsorship at national and local level

Moderator: Gabriela Agatiello, ICMC Europe/Share Network Senior Policy and Programme Manager

- **Hanne Beirens**, [Migration Policy Institute Europe](#)
- **Florian Tissot**, [BAMF Research Service](#), Germany
Ulrich Kober, Volunteer sponsor and Director of Programme Democracy and Cohesion [Bertelsmann Stiftung](#), Germany
- **Barry Quinn**, [Irish Government](#), Ireland
Mawaheb A. Elnour, medical student and volunteer sponsor, Ireland
- **Fiona Kendall**, [Federation of Protestant Churches of Italy](#) (FCEI), Italy

16:20 – 16:40: Coffee Break

16:40 – 17:10: Community choir & sing-along with Adam Labar, singer-song writer & vice-president of the [Refugees Union in Portugal](#) (UREP)

Interactive music session showcasing community-led welcoming initiatives.

17:10 – 17:50: Meet the European sponsorship programmes

Interactive booths with presentations of QSN partners programmes in Belgium, France, Germany, Italy, Spain, and the UK (hosted by partners and volunteers) where participants will have the opportunity to go around and learn about the different country programmes, discuss tools, ask questions, and network with each other.

18:00 – 19:30: Best practices and key questions in sponsorship

A number of theme-based breakout groups, showcasing best practice examples will be proposed to participants. Participants will rotate through two different breakouts (each 40 mins)

Theme-based discussions:

- 1. Sponsorship in rural areas: What are the opportunities and challenges?**
Facilitated by **Fiona Hurley**, Nasc
- 2. How to best mobilise, retain and recruit sponsors**
Facilitated by **Thomas Huddleston**, Consultant
- 3. Meaningful refugee participation – how to enable it and what does it consists of?**
Facilitated by **Anna Coulibaly**, ICMC Europe; **Yohannes Sisay Molla**, Share refugee advisor; **Abdulrahman Bdiwi**, Share refugee advisor
- 4. Engaging universities, sponsoring students and local communities in higher education pathways**
Facilitated by **Hannah Gregory**, Refugee Hub
- 5. Engaging private sector and communities in labour pathways for refugees**
Facilitated by **Marina Brizar**, Talent Beyond Boundaries



6. Experiences from welcoming Afghans – Identification and matching of sponsors with refugees

Facilitated by **Fiona Kendall**, FCEI

7. A new generation of sponsorship? How to bridge CS frameworks with short-term engagement of volunteers for hosting Ukrainian refugees

Facilitated by **Cova Bachiller Lopez**, Red Cross EU Office and **Rory O'Neill & Kevin O'Leary**, Irish Refugee Council (IRC)

8. What role can/should local authorities and regional governments play in sponsorship?

Facilitated by **Tihomir Sabchev**, Refugee Hub

9. Volunteering - empowering refugees and managing boundaries (sessions in EN and FR)

Facilitated by **Hannah Feldman**, Citizens UK; **Lukas Kestens**, Caritas International

10. Volunteering – what works well in groups & how to engage with diverse volunteers (sessions in ES and FR)

Facilitated by **Inés Vicente Barbero**, Jesuits Basque Country; **Guilhem Mante**, Fédération de l'Entraide Protestante ; **Nina de Lignerolles**, Fédération de l'Entraide Protestante

11. Collective goal setting - how to develop settlement plans & achieve goals

Facilitated by **Sara Wilson & Khadeja Alamary**, Pickwell Foundation

19:30 – 20:15 Reception and drinks

20:15 – 22:00: Dinner and awards in the presence of the Belgian Secretary of State for Asylum and Migration Mrs. Nicole de Moor

Participants will be invited to a reception and sit-down dinner where champions of sponsorship will be recognised and their efforts celebrated.

21:30 – 22:15: Concert Fanfare: Jour de fête

Participants will enjoy a live music performance in a convivial atmosphere.

22:15 – 24:00: Disco & Dance

To finish off the celebration, participants will enjoy music and dancing.



Fédération
Entraide
Protestante



Diözesan-
Caritasverband für das
Erzbistum Köln e. V.



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ETA GIZARTE POLITIKETAKO SAILA
DEPARTAMENTO DE IGUALDAD,
JUSTICIA Y POLÍTICAS SOCIALES