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# AUZOLANA II
# PILOT COMMUNITY SPONSORSHIP EXPERIENCE

## [EVALUATION REPORT]

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# INSTITUTIONAL PRESENTATION

In 2016, the United Nations General Assembly adopted the New York Declaration for Refugees in what constituted a first statement of intent by world leaders to save lives, protect rights and share responsibility for global migration. The declaration brought forward a series of commitments which sought to facilitate the lives of migrants and refugees and to support countries of origin and host communities. The commitments resulted in the Global Compact for Migration, approved in December 2018. This was the UN's response to several humanitarian crises which had led to the greatest displacement of people in search of international protection since the Second World War.

Similarly, on 20 September 2016, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, together with the Government of Canada, agreed to activate the Global Refugee Sponsorship Initiative (GRSI) to promote community sponsorship of refugees globally.

Community sponsorship is an opportunity for local people to play a direct role in receiving and integrating refugees. Groups of community sponsors commit to providing social, material and financial support to new arrivals throughout their process of integrating into their new communities. At a time when the number of people displaced globally due to conflicts and persecution has reached a record high of more than 70 million, there is a greater need than ever to share responsibility for protecting these people and for increasing and diversifying legal pathways for the admission of people in need of international protection.

The Basque Government has launched the **Auzolana II** pilot community sponsorship initiative in the Basque Country as part of its commitment to refugees. The pilot got under way on 26 March 2019 with the arrival of 29 people comprising five separate families. Of these, 16 are children. All came from Jordan and are Syrian nationals. Upon their arrival in the Basque Country, five volunteer local community sponsorship groups took charge of their admission and settlement in five municipalities: Bilbao, Arrigorriaga, Portugalete, Andoain and Vitoria-Gasteiz. The five local volunteer groups are supported by Caritas Diocesana in Bilbao, Andoain and Gasteiz, and the Ignacio Ellacuría Social Foundation in Arrigorriaga and Portugalete, which are in charge of coordinating and monitoring the pilot experience.

The Basque community sponsorship programme Auzolana II is inspired by the Canadian model. It is an example of shared responsibility and effort to find ways of jointly responding to the movements of refugees in a more effective, equitable and just manner. The emphasis of the programme is on shared public and social responsibility as well as political, public and local solidarity. Moreover, it is a powerful teaching and awareness-raising tool that perfectly positions its participants to disseminate the experience.

**Beatriz Artolazabal Albeniz**
**Minister for Equality, Justice and Social Policy**

# INTRODUCTION

The approval of the New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants by the United Nations General Assembly in 2016 was an important step in relation to refugees and migration across the world. For the first time, world leaders had made a declaration to save lives, protect rights and share responsibility for global migration. The declaration recognised the need for more detail around these objectives. Following two years of work, the Global Compact on Refugees and the Global Compact for Migration were approved in December 2018.

The latter highlights the need to explore other admission pathways for refugees in third countries to facilitate permanent solutions for people forced to flee their countries of origin. One of the proposals was community sponsorship, promoted primarily through the Global Refugee Sponsorship Initiative (GRSI).

In this context, the Basque Government has launched the Auzolana II pilot community sponsorship initiative as part of its commitment to refugees. With the involvement of the GRSI, the UNHCR and the Government of Spain, Auzolana II aims to support refugees through community sponsorship by improving and strengthening the coordination of actions to receive and integrate people seeking or already granted international protection in the Basque Country. The collaboration agreement was signed in 2019 and was the foundation of the pilot community sponsorship experience.

Five Syrian refugee families have come to the Basque Country from Jordan via the Auzolana II programme. Of these thirty people, sixteen were children. Despite the families having experienced similar circumstances in refugee camps, the circumstances of each were different. Upon their arrival in the Basque Country, five volunteer local community sponsorship groups took charge of their admission and settlement in five municipalities: Bilbao, Arrigorriaga, Portugalete, Andoain and Vitoria-Gasteiz.

Thanks to the support of the Basque Government and of the entities charged with coordinating and monitoring the pilot experience – Cáritas Euskadi (in Bilbao, Andoain and Vitoria-Gasteiz) and the Ignacio Ellacuría Social Foundation (in Arrigorriaga and Portugalete) – the five local groups have received part-time support and coverage from a trained social worker to receive and integrate the refugees.

This context forms the basis of the Evaluation of the Auzolana II Pilot Community Sponsorship Experience, commissioned by the General Secretariat for Human Rights, Coexistence and Cooperation[1] of the Basque Government in its role as the main driver of Auzolana II. The evaluation that follows provides an executive analysis of the design and implementation of the initiative along with a series of suggestions, lessons learnt and opportunities for replicating this initiative in other territories or countries that wish to explore the possibilities offered by community sponsorship.

1 The Lehendakari or leader of the Basque Government passed Decree 18/2020 of 6 September on the creation, suppression and modification of the departments of the Administration of the Autonomous Community of the Basque Country and on the determination of their functions and scope. Also, 29 January 2021 saw the publication of Decree 12/2021 of 19 January which established the organic and functional structure of the Department for Equality, Justice and Social Policies and created the Department of Migration and Asylum, which oversees this programme.

# 2 COMMUNITY SPONSORSHIP: A COMPARATIVE VISION

Most countries across the world have mechanisms and instruments in place enabling refugees to request international protection. Existing asylum mechanisms generally require that such a request be made on the border of the country in which international protection is sought. Without going into detail, this system creates huge problems for asylum seekers, who in many cases must embark upon long and complicated journeys with no certainty of reaching their desired destination. Not only does this limit the possibility of requesting asylum in a safe country, it restricts this option to refugees who have access to the necessary resources (material, information, etc.).

In response to this, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) has developed a resettlement mechanism by which people in a precarious situation in their country of origin, or who have fled their homeland and are vulnerable, can be resettled in a safe third country. Once there, they will be properly received to ensure their safety and their integration in the host community[2]. Resettlement is the transfer of refugees from an asylum country to another state that has agreed to admit them and ultimately grant them permanent residence (Van Selm 2014).

Under the UNHCR resettlement framework, refugees eligible for this system are those requiring ongoing international protection (whether due to their personal circumstances or because the chronic unsafe conditions or conflict in their country makes their return impossible). It is therefore a lasting, permanent solution. Most countries with resettlement systems in place (Germany, Australia, Canada, the USA, New Zealand, the UK and Sweden, to name a few) work with the UNHCR to determine which refugees will use the process and to share minimum requirements in terms of admission and integration instruments, including protection of their civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights.

2 See https://www.unhcr.org/resettlement.html

**Note: The contemporary beginnings of resettlement**

Contemporary ideas around resettlement first emerged after the Second World War, when the number of refugees and displaced people became one of the main challenges of the post-war reconstruction. The International Refugee Organization (IRO) was established in 1946 as a temporary agency to address the resettlement of refugees or displaced people. More than a million people were supported and resettled during the 1940s. In 1950, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) was established as a permanent agency to continue seeking permanent solutions to support, receive and integrate refugees. From voluntary return (when possible) to integration in the communities where they are first admitted (whether in the country of origin or elsewhere), the instruments developed by the UNHCR have headed in this direction, and resettlement is now a key concept in the international protection of refugees.

The resettlement of Hungarian nationals from Austria during 1956-57 established a unique international precedent which would firmly position resettlement as an instrument for supporting refugees. Many of the 200,000 people who fled Hungary and who could not return to their own countries ended up in Austria. In support of this population and in a show of solidarity and shared responsibility, some 170,000 Hungarian refugees were resettled in 37 countries. 92,950 of these refugees came from Austria. Other resettlement processes have since taken place under very distinct circumstances: the resettlement of Asians from Uganda (1972); the resettlement of refugees living in Chile (1973); the resettlement of Indochinese refugees mostly living in Southeast Asia (1975-1995); and the resettlement of Bosnian refugees living in former Yugoslavia (1992-1999). Resettlement is therefore part of the recent history of international protection and has taken place in various forms on almost all continents (UNHCR, 2019).

Resettlement is a complex process and there are typically restrictions on the number of places offered by states to people in need of international protection. Hence, for several years now the UNHCR has promoted complementary (not substitute) pathways which use innovative and novel approaches to enable more people to be supported in different countries.

This is where **community sponsorship**[3] comes into play. It is a safe pathway for receiving and supporting refugees in need of international protection, involving people and organisations who support and help the refugees to settle into their communities. Whereas resettlement programmes are essentially government-led, the strength of community sponsorship lies in community engagement and social commitment.

Community sponsorship began in Canada in the 1970s as a complementary instrument to the government resettlement programme that would ensure that more people gained access to international protection. To date, more than 300,000 refugees have been integrated through this resettlement instrument, 62,000 of them Syrians who have arrived since 2015. More than two million Canadian nationals have been

3 It was originally called private sponsorship to differentiate it from government resettlement programmes. Over recent years, the term community sponsorship has taken precedence, as it stresses the goal of engaging and involving the host community.

involved in some shape or form in receiving and accommodating Syrian refugees in the country, and more than 117 entities have an agreement with the Government of Canada to receive refugees under the community sponsorship programme[4].

## 2.1. COMMUNITY SPONSORSHIP IN CANADA AND BEYOND

Canada was the first country in the world to establish a sponsorship programme for refugees which engages individuals and social entities in helping to resettle refugees. More than 250,000 refugees have been supported through the programme since it was launched in 1979. From the outset, the programme has been complementary to the general asylum programme, which processes people who arrive in Canada and submit their own application. Canada's asylum policy hinges on a general programme similar to those in place in other countries, and is complemented by the community sponsorship programme (Private Sponsorship of Refugees, or PSR).

Contrary to the first, the second of these programmes only responds to people who are already considered refugees or have already been granted an international protection statute recognised by the Government of Canada. The request for such protection is made abroad. In the traditional system, however, the approval or refusal of a request is processed on Canadian territory. Refugees who use the community sponsorship system arrive in the country as permanent residents.

Community sponsorship involves private sponsorship groups or organisations, many of which are religious in nature, migrant associations or support the foreign population. These groups constitute the source of financial support and basic assistance for refugees for a minimum of one year following their arrival.

PSR currently operates in different ways, all of which provide alternatives to refugees and widen opportunities for Canadian society to engage. For example, **sponsorship agreement holders** (SAHs) are organisations which have signed a formal sponsorship agreement with the Government of Canada. Most current SAHs are religious organisations, support groups or humanitarian organisations. SAHs may be local, regional or national. They take charge of managing the sponsorship arrangements and provide various opportunities for receiving refugees throughout the year. There are also **constituent groups (CGs)**, which are formed autonomously and authorised by SAHs to sponsor refugees. CGs must submit a sponsorship proposal and plan for approval by the SAH before it can be officially processed. In addition, a **Group of Five** (G5)[5] comprises five or more Canadian nationals or permanent residents who collectively wish to sponsor the resettlement of a refugee and commit to support the refugee throughout the sponsorship period. Their proposal is assessed and approved by the corresponding public authority. To ensure the process is transparent and that the sponsorship proposal is viable, a table of sponsorship costs is reviewed annually to inform the G5 of what is required of it. A G5 can apply to sponsor a specific person. In this case, the proposal should include details of the beneficiary's

4 See https://www.canada.ca/en/immigration-refugees-citizenship/news/2019/04/by-the-numbers--40-years-of-canadas-private-sponsorship-of-refugees-program.html

5 In June 2015, for example, the Lifeline Syria initiative was launched as a result of the humanitarian crisis caused by the Syrian civil war. The goal was to help resettle refugees in the Toronto metropolitan area. Lifeline Syria helped sponsorship groups with their requests and facilitated contact between individuals who wished to engage through the Group of Five approach.

refugee status recognised by the UNHCR or by a third state. This modality facilitates sponsorship for people who may already have a network of family or social contacts in Canada and whose circumstances have led to them requesting asylum[6]. Lastly, the **Community Sponsorship** modality enables any organisation, association or business which is aware that refugees will be arriving to put together a support plan to sponsor their arrival and accommodation. In this case, they must demonstrate that they have funds for supporting the refugee. Again, a table of costs is reviewed annually.

The various modalities are open to individuals or organisations but there are clear limits defining the figure of the sponsor. The initiative is not open to people or collectives who have breached a sponsorship commitment, who have been convicted of a serious crime or are in prison, who are subject to expulsion orders, or who breach the legally approved support agreements, among other reasons.

Irrespective of the type of sponsorship, all sponsors must meet the sponsorship criteria (sponsorship commitment). These comprise the provision of social, emotional, residential and financial support, and covering basic food and clothing needs. Individual or organisational sponsors are legally responsible for the income of the sponsorship beneficiaries. This responsibility generally terminates after twelve months. During the first year of resettlement, the Government of Canada covers healthcare and education costs for children. The remaining expenses must be covered by private funds. During the second year of resettlement, if the refugees have gained permanent resident status and if their sponsor has not been successful in helping them to find employment, they may request government support (subject to verification).

Canada's example has led to community sponsorship programmes in other countries, particularly since the humanitarian crises in 2015 which placed the matter of asylum and refuge among the most pressing global issues. Following the New York Declaration (2016) and the approval of the Global Compact on Refugees (2018), the UN gave its backing to community sponsorship. Under the latter Compact, community sponsorship is one complementary pathway for the admission of refugees into third countries, and seeks permanent solutions for people forced to flee their countries of origin. It is primarily promoted through the Global Refugee Sponsorship Initiative.

> 95. The three-year strategy on resettlement (section 2.2 above) will also include complementary pathways for admission, with a view to increasing significantly their availability and predictability. Contributions will be sought from States, with the support of relevant stakeholders, to facilitate effective procedures and clear referral pathways for family reunification, or to establish private or community sponsorship programmes that are additional to regular resettlement, including community-based programmes promoted through the Global Refugee Sponsorship Initiative (GRSI) (UNHCR, 2018).

6 Quebec takes a different approach to refugee sponsorship. Groups of two to five residents in this area can take part. Sponsors are required to make sure that refugees attend French classes and that they receive information about the society and culture in Quebec.

Through the GRSI, the UNHCR and the Government of Canada have undertaken a series of initiatives to support community sponsorship of refugees in other countries as a pathway to ensure the protection of refugees while engaging, mobilising and raising awareness among civil society and individuals in the host communities. A few of these initiatives are mentioned below.

Of all European countries, the UK (no longer part of the EU following Brexit) is surely the one that put community sponsorship in place first. Established in 2014, the Syrian Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme (VPRS) was closely tied to the humanitarian crisis in Syria. Some 20,000 Syrian refugees were initially supported through the programme. In 2017, the scope was broadened to support refugees arriving from Syria but who were not Syrian nationals. The initiative is complementary to other mechanisms which provide international protection within the UK, such as the Vulnerable Children's Resettlement Scheme[7] or the traditional asylum system. Under the VPRS, local authorities and social entities play a key role in receiving, housing, supporting and orientating refugees so that they become self-sufficient and fully integrate into their new communities. Support groups look after the families from their arrival at the airport. These groups constitute their initial welcome and support the families in matters such as accommodation, cultural and linguistic orientation, finding employment, etc.

The community sponsorship programme in Germany (*Landesaufnahmeprogramme*)[8] was launched in July 2013. The programme is not state-run. Rather, it exploits a legislative reform passed by the German parliament that allows all federal states, except Bavaria, to create their own admission system for Syrian refugees. It complements the federal system of admission for humanitarian reasons and focusses on enabling Syrian families already resident in Germany to accommodate relatives in need of humanitarian protection. These families must prove that they have sufficient financial resources to support and accommodate their relatives for five years. In some Länder, the programme is open to other nationalities while in others it is restricted to Syrians. Caritas Germany facilitates community sponsorship by supporting initiatives in the various states.

The community sponsorship programme in Ireland[9] got under way in 2017. Since then, more than 20 groups have taken part in the project. Individuals, social groups and organisations have provided financial and emotional support to refugees and helped them to find accommodation and to integrate with local communities. Among the objectives set by the Government of Ireland are to use this closer contact with refugees to raise awareness in the community about their situation.

The Auzolana II programme[10] constitutes the first pilot community sponsorship experience in Spain. As in Germany, the programme has been undertaken by a sub-national authority. In this case, however, the Basque Government is the only authority to have fully implemented the programme (to date). The project involves a range

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7 The Vulnerable Children's Resettlement Scheme has provided 3,000 places for extremely vulnerable children and their families from North Africa and the Middle East requiring international protection. Local authorities have a particularly important role in accommodating these children. See https://helprefugees.campaign.gov.uk/

8 See https://resettlement.de/landesaufnahme/

9 See http://www.integration.ie/en/ISEC/Community%20Sponsorship%20Policy%20Framework%20WEB.pdf/Files/Community%20Sponsorship%20Policy%20Framework%20WEB.pdf

10 See https://www.euskadi.eus/auzolana-ii-patrocinio-comunitario/web01-s1lehbak/es/

of public and private stakeholders, particularly two social/religious organisations. These provide the foundation for the support groups that help refugee families to adjust.

Complementary initiatives in Belgium, France and Italy have been designed around humanitarian corridors which enable ad hoc community sponsorship from a point of origin to various points in the host country. There, people are received by local volunteer groups that assist them to find accommodation and other day-to-day matters. This initiative has been promoted in all three countries by the Community of Sant'Egidio Catholic association[11]. More than 150 refugees from Lebanon and Turkey arrived in Belgium between 2017 and 2018, while France accepted 500 refugees from Lebanon in 2018 and a further 365 in 2019. Italy (where the humanitarian corridors initiative was launched in 2015) accepted more than 2,000 refugees throughout that time, mainly from Lebanon, Ethiopia, Jordan and Turkey.

Various countries in Latin America have undertaken similar programmes. Community sponsorship emerged in Argentina in 2019 to institutionalise this mechanism of helping people in need of international protection to integrate into their local communities. The Argentine Support Network for Community Refugee Sponsorship12 comprises various NGOs and social entities and is supported by the IOM and the UNHCR. The initiative sits under the Syria Programme of the Government of Argentina, which provides humanitarian visas to people affected by the Syrian conflict. Through the member entities, refugees can access legal support, Spanish courses, employment assistance, etc.

In Oceania, the Australian Community Support Program has been operational since 201713. It enables individuals, companies or social organisations to support refugees who come to Australia. This government initiative facilitates sponsorship for 1,000 refugees annually. Willing participants are put in touch with refugees; offers and requests are matched based on training, housing requirements, work, etc. This project is essentially government-run – a separate initiative called My New Neighbour has emerged as a community sponsorship programme enabling greater interaction between local people and refugees.

The community sponsorship programme in New Zealand was created to complement the government resettlement programme. Through the Welcoming Communities14 project, more than 10 municipalities in New Zealand have created spaces for receiving refugees who arrived between 2017 and 2019. Support is mainly provided from former refugees and international students. As in Australia, the national authorities supervise the initiative and support the participating municipalities. The programme has been confirmed for a further three years but is still considered a pilot initiative. There is a platform for requesting that it become a permanent programme[15].

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11 See https://www.santegidio.org/pageID/1/langID/en/HOME.html

12 See http://www.patrociniocomunitario.org/

13 See https://immi.homeaffairs.gov.au/what-we-do/refugee-and-humanitarian-program/community-support-program

14 See https://www.immigration.govt.nz/about-us/what-we-do/welcoming-communities

15 See https://www.iwelcome.org.nz/

## 2.2. SOME LESSONS LEARNT FROM COMMUNITY SPONSORSHIP PROGRAMMES

The various community sponsorship programmes in existence all stress the importance of the community in receiving and supporting newly arrived refugees. However, each is unique to the country in which it has been implemented.

The criteria for the participation of refugees in community sponsorship programmes vary, but usually limit participation to refugees unable to return to their country of origin, who are vulnerable or in a precarious situation in the first asylum country, or who have family ties in the host country. State participation is crucial in this first phase. In most countries, it is the central administration that has the power to grant this status (and to guarantee permanent residence in the territory) and to define the criteria both for the refugees themselves and for the sponsors.

From there, community sponsorship differs from resettlement systems in that the refugees are received and supported by collectives or entities whose proposal was assessed and approved beforehand. Community sponsorship programmes generally support refugees for a limited period (between one and two years) to find housing and employment, learn the language(s) in the host society, enter the school system, access healthcare, etc. The sponsors may be groups, families or social networks or social entities, all of whom commit to ensuring that the refugee or refugee family can integrate into the community. In short, the people involved become the source of support for refugees as they integrate into the host society. The sponsoring people or entities provide social and emotional support to refugees and work to inform and raise awareness around refugee-related matters in the host society.

Interestingly, most community sponsorship programmes, including those implemented more recently, have some form of evaluation of how they work in practice and whether the objectives are being achieved. The Canada programme has been up and running for around 40 years, so we can safely assume that it has the most rounded evaluation system. It has also resulted in a series of evaluation indicators which have been taken into account in this document. Of particular interest is the evaluation of the most recent programme for receiving refugees from Syria[16].

The Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment (MBIE) in New Zealand[17] conducted an evaluation of the pilot community sponsorship process using interviews and data collection. Interviews were held with 46 people (11 refugees, 16 individual sponsors, 4 organisations not selected but interested in the process, 12 ministry personnel and 3 UNHCR personnel). The interviews were conducted once the sponsored refugees had been in the country for three months.

In the UK, the Home Office commissioned the Institute for Research into Superdiversity (IRiS) to evaluate (Phillimore et al. 2020) the Syrian Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme (VPRS). It examined the programme and its impact not only on

16 See https://www.canada.ca/en/immigration-refugees-citizenship/corporate/reports-statistics/evaluations/rapid-impact-evaluation-syrian-refugee-initiative.html

17 See https://www.mbie.govt.nz/assets/d3cedd12c2/community-organisation-refugee-sponsorship-category-pilot-process-evaluation.pdf

refugee families but on the communities where they lived. In addition to interviews with refugees and with the volunteers and entities involved, others were held with people from 22 urban and rural areas which received refugees.

One approach which we examined for this evaluation comprises 15 key questions which must be considered when deciding whether a community sponsorship programme has been successful (McNally 2020). It stems from research based on the 40 years' experience gained in Canada but provides a useful conceptual and practical framework for all countries and regions which undertake similar activities.

Figure 1. Key questions when evaluating a community sponsorship programme

| | |
|---|---|
| Lasting solution | Does the programme afford permanent protection and a means of raising awareness among local people? |
| Settlement needs | Does the programme meet the specific needs of refugees? |
| Perspective of the refugees | Do the refugees themselves have a positive experience of the programme? Assesses the ability of the programme to preserve refugees' dignity and help them achieve their goals, its capacity to reestablish the social roles they had prior to the conflict and to foster positive relationships with sponsors and the host community. |
| Integration outcome | Is the outcome of the programme better, the same or worse than for other government programmes to support refugees? The clearest benefit of community sponsorship is that it facilitates better integration and inclusion in the host society so that refugees become self-sufficient as quickly as possible. |
| Resettlement of vulnerable refugees | Does the programme help to resettle the most vulnerable people? |
| Scale | How many refugees can be resettled through the programme? |
| Complementarity | Does the community sponsorship programme replace the government resettlement programme? Community sponsorship is a complementary instrument that does not substitute national resettlement programmes. |
| Public opinion and welcoming communities | Does the programme promote positive public opinion and strengthen community acceptance of refugees and of the concepts of asylum and refuge? |
| Civil society mobilisation | Does the programme effectively mobilise diverse residents and communities (generalist, specific, etc.)? |
| Sustainability | Is there sufficient interest from sponsors and from the government to sustain the programme in the long term? |
| Efficiency of the process | Is the process clear, efficient, fair and transparent? Bureaucratic delays, rejections of private sponsors or lack of transparency in granting international protection status are some of the matters that should be examined in this sense. |
| Guarantees | Are there sufficient guarantees when it comes to protecting refugees and holding sponsors accountable? Ongoing monitoring of public authorities is necessary to prevent controversies, given the increased interest in these sorts of programmes and the growing number of sponsors. |
| Experience of sponsorship groups | Do the sponsorship groups or individuals receive sufficient support and training to enable them to exercise their role again? |
| Family reunification | Does the programme help to reunify separated families? Programmes with this specific objective have been established in Canada, Germany and New Zealand. |
| Global context | Does the programme focus on 'high profile' populations at the expense of other refugees? There is a risk that community sponsorship programmes may under-serve other people in need of international protection, creating disparities between the services provided by these programmes and others. |

Source: McNally 2020

# 3 THE BASQUE COMMUNITY SPONSORSHIP INITIATIVE: AUZOLANA II

The Auzolana[18] II pilot experience aims to support refugees by using community sponsorship to improve and strengthen the coordination of actions to receive and integrate people seeking or already granted international protection in the Basque Country. Inspired by the Canadian model, community sponsorship seeks the direct involvement of local people in this aim.

Auzolana II became operational in 2019 with the arrival of five refugee families in the Basque Country. However, work had already began beforehand. After the outbreak of the civil conflict in Syria, and in light of the increase in people in need of international protection, the Basque Government began exploring the possibility of developing alternative pathways for the admission of refugees, such as the humanitarian corridors that the Community of Sant'Egidio Catholic association had set up in France and Italy. The Basque Government became aware of the Global Refugee Sponsorship Initiative (GRSI, an initiative involving the UNHCR, the Government of Canada and others) via the UNHCR, in a ceremony involving the autonomous communities and the Spanish Ombudsman. The confluence of UNHCR interests in support of community sponsorship, and the explicit willingness of the Basque Government to develop an alternative safe pathway for the admission of refugees, were consolidated with the creation of the Auzolana II pilot experience. In 2018, the Basque Government began negotiations with the central Spanish government to implement this community sponsorship initiative, with institutional support from the GRSI. Contact was made with entities that could run the initiative in the Basque Country.

The collaboration agreement was signed in 2019 and was the foundation of the pilot community sponsorship experience for receiving and integrating refugees and people granted international protection. On behalf of the General Administration of the Autonomous Community of the Basque Country, the General Secretariat for Human Rights, Coexistence and Cooperation of the Basque Government signed the agreement with the Department of Integration and Humanitarian Support – which sits under the Secretariat of State for Migration, in turn part of the Ministry of Work, Migration and Social Security – as well as the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the social entities Cáritas Diocesana Bilbao, Cáritas Diocesana Vitoria, Cáritas Diocesana Sebastián and the Ignacio Ellacuría Social Foundation.

18 This concept could be translated as shared work for the greater good.

## 3.1. STRUCTURE OF THE PILOT EXPERIENCE

Auzolana II was established with the explicit objective of guaranteeing the 'admission and integration of people granted international protection, to support their process of integration in the host society'. The pilot experience is aimed at people who have been granted international protection and who have already been moved to Spain under the national resettlement programme. They are received by, and integrated into Basque society. In the initial two-year phase, five local sponsorship groups support between 20 and 30 people across various municipalities[19].

Under the agreement, the pilot experience has the following objectives:

- To develop a model for receiving and integrating refugees in which, using a range of association, self-organisation and collective engagement formulas, society takes a direct role in receiving and integrating these people.
- To create synergies and added value which lead to a qualitative improvement in these processes and a positive impact on refugees' autonomy and on achieving social harmony in the host society.

The pilot is designed to facilitate the full engagement of the refugees involved in the experience and to put them at the centre of the process together with the host society. The lessons and conclusions from the experience should enable its replication in other autonomous communities.

Auzolana II constitutes a new public-private initiative involving the central and Basque governments, the UNHCR, the entities entrusted with promoting the pilot experience and local community sponsorship groups. Public administrations from various regions interact with third sector entities and organised civil society groups acting under the umbrella of these. Local administrations in the regions touched by the experience may also engage, though they are not signatories to the agreement.

Auzolana II has various governance mechanisms. The Monitoring Committee meets quarterly to coordinate the various actions set out in the agreement, while a local coordination panel in each of the regions would be tasked with optimising the response to the needs of the refugees received in each municipality.

The Auzolana II agreement sets out how the experience will unfold. In the first phase, the central and Basque governments identify the beneficiaries, though agreement is required from all parties involved. In the second phase, the community sponsorship process begins with an initial welcome at the airport from representatives of the central government and from those who will oversee their admission in the Basque Country. From there, the community sponsorship experience gets under way. In the final stage, the families benefiting from community sponsorship become autonomous and self-sufficient. Responsibilities and resources allocated to each stakeholder are identified for each of the two main stages (see Figure 2).

19 Beneficiaries of the programme became part of the National Resettlement Programme 2017, which was put into action in 2018.

Each named entity in the sponsorship agreement and in the local community sponsorship group must submit a strategy for ensuring that the sponsored families integrate and become autonomous. The strategy should include a work plan covering the following:

- Introduction, motivation and aspirations.
- Presentation of the people responsible for the project, the responsible social entity and a contact person.
- Local community sponsorship group: contact person, group members and details of the support network (if applicable).
    - Profiles of the family that will be supported.
    - Fulfilment of requirements: description of housing and conditions of use; bank account with minimum balance of 10,000 euros.
- Objectives and priorities of the admission and integration programme.
    - Specific programme and resources for learning local languages and supporting translation requirements during the initial months; healthcare; psychological support; training and education needs; job training and job hunting; legal advice; leisure needs.
    - Specific programme for managing subsistence expenses.
    - Support commitments and timelines within an empowerment strategy geared towards autonomy and free from patronising solidarity (detailed plan for the first month).

All phases, over a minimum period of 18 to 24 months, must facilitate autonomy and prepare the families for becoming self-sufficient.

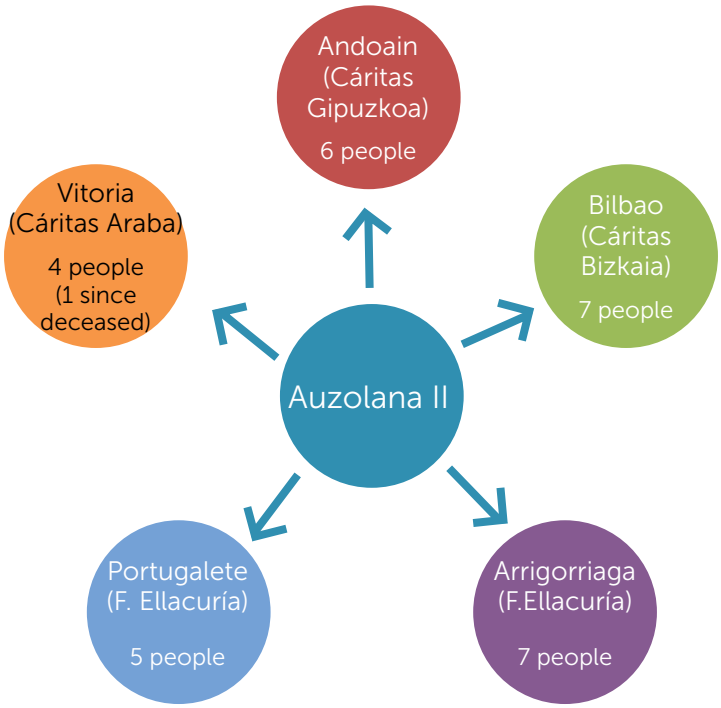
Figure 2. Stakeholders and their functions

| STAGE | | A. IDENTIFICATION, INFORMATION AND REFERRAL | B. COMMUNITY SPONSORSHIP |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Objective** | | Identification and orientation of potential participants | Ensure the best possible journey towards autonomy, independence, integration and participation of the families in the host society |
| **ACTIONS AND RESOURCES** | **UNHCR** | Incorporate the international protection and AGD perspectives | Incorporate the international protection and AGD perspectives |
| | | Support training activities | Support training activities |
| | | Identify refugees requiring resettlement | Support and guide the evaluation and documentation process and disseminate the experience |
| | **Secretariat of State for Migration** | Provision of resources for this first phase | Monitoring the experience<br>Resolving possible incidents related to the General State Administration<br>Deciding what actions to take should a family withdraw from the sponsorship programme |
| | | Identification of participants in coordination with the UNHCR | |
| | | Responsibility for sharing information about the selected participants with the Basque Government | |
| | | Responsibility for giving final approval to integration projects prepared by named entities and local groups | |
| | **Basque Government** | Supporting local groups to implement the admission process<br>Informing the entities, local groups and town halls of provisions for the arrival and accommodation of the families<br>Setting up the Local Coordination Panel | Ensuring beneficiaries have access to public services (education, training, healthcare, etc.) |
| | | | Recruit a part-time trained social worker Set up the Local Coordination Panel and participate when necessary |
| | | | Define and process the instruments necessary for equipping each entity with the funding they require, in accordance with the profiles of the participants |
| | | | Submit six-monthly reports to the UNHCR and to the Secretariat of State for Migration. Inform the Secretariat of State for Migration of any changes to the schedule that result in reduced funding requirements, and in the event that a family withdraws from the programme. |
| | | | Coordination of actions by all stakeholders when necessary, and responsibility for calling meetings of the Monitoring Committee |
| | **Managing entities** | Responsible for defining, driving, supporting and mentoring the local community sponsorship group in the relevant municipalities. | Criteria and resource requirements: adequate housing, bank account with a minimum balance of €10,000 |
| | | Provision of a representative to travel to the airport to receive and transport the families to their host community. | Commitment to support the families for 18-24 months |
| | | After examining the profiles of the participants, they must submit an Admission Proposal to the Basque Government as soon as possible | Report regularly to the Basque Government via quarterly reports or any time there is a significant change to the schedule, or if a participant withdraws from the programme |
| | **Local sponsorship groups** | | Meeting the criteria, in coordination with the managing entities |
| | | | Responsible for close monitoring of the process: integration, inclusion, interaction and degree of autonomy of the family in the host society |

## 3.2. DEVELOPMENT OF THE PILOT EXPERIENCE

As mentioned previously, Auzolana II was launched on 26 March 2019 with the arrival of 29 people (16 of them children) in the Basque Country under the pilot community sponsorship experience. All participants came from Jordan and were Syrian nationals. The five families were received in the regions set out in the sponsorship agreement: Andoain, Arrigorriaga, Bilbao, Portugalete and Vitoria-Gasteiz.

Figure 3. Participating families in the Auzolana II experience




### Stakeholders

In terms of **stakeholders**, at the design phase the Basque Government decided to structure the community sponsorship experience around two social entities which were identified for their background and proven experience in social support. Both Cáritas Euskadi and the Ignacio Ellacuría Social Foundation are part of the inter-institutional/social panel set up to address the situation of refugees in the Basque Country. Hence, they had already worked together and possessed shared knowledge. The selected entities are both religious organisations with vast experience working with vulnerable people and broad local support and close ties to the region. Neither is involved in the general refugee support system in Spain for people in need of international protection.

The participating entities have made an institutional commitment to providing hospitality and protection; people's well-being is at the heart of their work. The entities were asked to provide at least five volunteers, a coordinator with strong local ties, and a strong social network. They are required to provide housing for the two-year duration of the project, financial support of 10,000 euros, and to support the participants throughout the same period. The entities are under no obligation to follow the guidance set out in the Integration and Admission System Handbook[20], which the Secretariat of State for Migration prepared for the general admission system. However, they must ensure that the minimum requirements set out in said handbook are met.

Figure 4. Auzolana II stakeholders

The contribution of the main entities is complemented by support from the Basque Government, which in addition to driving and coordinating the experience provides a part-time trained social worker to support the local groups.

The Basque Government has played a key role in coordinating the sponsorship project and has facilitated communication and the flow of information between the central government, the UNHCR and the local entities. In the first phase of the project, it was in charge of transmitting the necessary information about the participating families to local entities, local groups and the relevant town halls. Following the arrival of the project beneficiaries, the Basque Government ensured they had access to education, training and healthcare. It also facilitated the hiring of a trained social

20 See http://extranjeros.inclusion.gob.es/ficheros/subvenciones/area_integracion/proteccion_internacional/manuales_comunes_gestion/Manual_de_Gestion_Sistema_acogida.pdf

worker to support the work of the local groups, and set up the Local Coordination Panel and organised the necessary financial resources for the local entities and participating families.

The Spanish government has engaged as the institution with competence for planning, developing and managing the national system for the comprehensive admission and integration of people who have requested or already been granted international protection. It has participated via the Secretariat of State for Migration of the Ministry of Work, Migration and Social Security, and via the Department of Integration and Humanitarian Support. Prior to the project getting under way, the Secretariat of State for Migration identified and selected candidates for the Auzolana II experience from among people under international protection in their first host country, based on proposals by the UNHCR. It also shared information about the selected candidates with the Basque Government. In addition, it supported local community sponsorship groups to design and gain approval for their admission and integration proposals. Under the collaboration agreement, the central government is responsible for including participants in the general refugee support system if, with good reason, they wish to withdraw from the community sponsorship programme.

The UNHCR also plays a key part in this process. It drives the GRSI initiative and provides the Basque Government with information about this and about community sponsorship, and works to promote the initiative on the international stage. The UNHCR has also supported technical training for the entities and works with the IOM and with the national authorities to select refugees for resettlement.

## Process and phases

In terms of **the process,** the first phase began with identification of the participants. This was carried out at the point of origin by the UNHCR under the agreement for the Spanish government's resettlement programme. After defining a group of potential participants, the Secretariat of State for Migration identified who would benefit from community sponsorship and communicated the final decision to the Basque Government and to the managing entities in the host community, in addition to providing pertinent information about the participants.

The Basque Government initially intended to boost the number of resettled people, though the central government eventually decided that people already identified in the resettlement programme would benefit from community sponsorship. The criteria for identifying these people were therefore established by the central government without the participation of any other stakeholder.

Given the selection was made from within the resettlement programme, the beneficiaries had already taken part in orientation courses offered by the IOM as standard to all people destined for resettlement in Spain. Participants in the sponsorship project therefore received the same information as those taking part in the general resettlement project.  Specific, tailored information about the sponsorship programme was provided to participants prior to their departure. Families participating in community sponsorship were required to give their consent at three specific junctures: to join the Spanish government's resettlement programme, to participate in Auzolana II, and to accept the proposals from the local entities.

The second phase began with the arrival of the participants in the Basque Country. Once the participants were received in the airport, representatives from the five local sponsorship groups facilitated their initial accommodation in the municipalities mentioned previously. Each local group had prepared their admission and integration proposal during the previous phase and had arranged housing for the families. Furthermore, each had the support of one of the named entities for promoting community sponsorship: Cáritas in Bilbao, Andoain and Vitoria-Gasteiz, and the Ellacuría Foundation in Arrigorriaga and Portugalete. These organisations also coordinated and monitored the pilot experience. The initial reception of the families marked the start of the process of accommodation and support to integrate the families into the host society, in which the main stakeholders are the local support groups. Support is required in several areas, from learning local language(s), official paperwork, enrolment in the school system when required, financial management, access to public services and activities to foster social interaction. While the local group was in charge of closely monitoring the family, local entities and their networks were also involved, in addition to the other stakeholders.

## Benefits and services

In terms of **benefits**, as with the general resettlement programme, the public administrations are responsible for ensuring that participants in the Auzolana II project have the documentation they require. The central government makes sure that participants, upon arrival at the airport, receive a copy of the resolution verifying their international protection status, and that they are given the relevant instructions for processing long-term residency as beneficiaries of secondary protection (the card must be processed in their local police station within 15 days from arrival). The local and regional administrations must ensure that the participants are registered in the local register of residents (a process called *empadronamiento*) and that they process their health card, enrol in school, etc. Local support groups are key to facilitating these processes and to supporting families with this initial paperwork.

It is the local support groups that help families to access education, healthcare and employment, in addition to anything else they require. Furthermore, these groups assist families to negotiate the initial linguistic difficulties and to bridge any information gaps in terms of existing health issues, level of education, etc. The support of hired staff has helped define and support the work of the group and, at times, to foster teamwork.

## Governance

Lastly, in terms of the **governance** of the initiative, the Monitoring Committee held their planned quarterly meetings. However, the local coordination panels were not established as permanent entities. Beyond formal instruments, the Basque Government has maintained bilateral, fluid and constant communication with the managing entities and with the central government. Said entities have supported and assisted the local groups throughout the entire process.

In March 2020, a year after the project got under way, the Government of Spain declared the state of emergency due to COVID-19. The restrictions imposed, particularly during the months of lockdown, presented a significant challenge to the overall goal and purpose of the community sponsorship project. Training courses and normal school activities, among other things, were suspended, slowing down the process of ensuring that the families integrate and become autonomous. The new circumstances posed a challenge to participants' education, job prospects and general contact with the host society. Despite these challenges, the local groups and other stakeholders have strived to get the most out of the situation, such as facilitating online teaching for children.

Auzolana II has fostered participation and interaction between various stakeholders on multiple levels so that these shoulder more of the responsibility for receiving and integrating refugees. As a pilot initiative, it has succeeded in involving local communities in the process of accommodating and integrating refugees under community sponsorship, in turn facilitating support from public administrations and greater international awareness through the UNHCR and the GRSI.

Figure 5. Community sponsorship

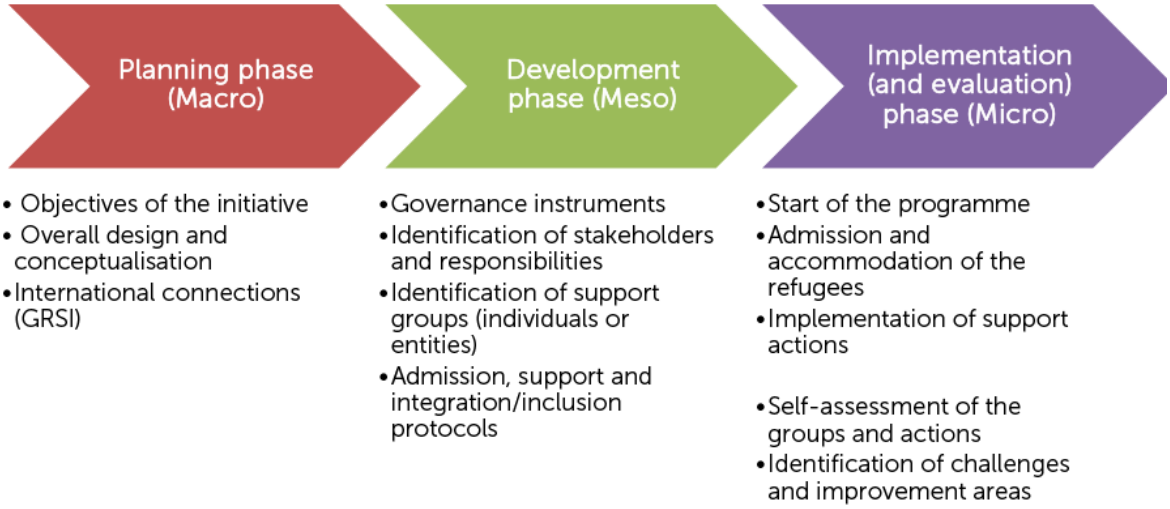
# 4 ANALYSIS AND ASSESSMENT OF THE PROGRAMME ACTION AREAS

Auzolana II is a pilot initiative for the admission and integration of people granted international protection. The intervention model used in the pilot experience was based on the Canadian model of fostering direct involvement of local people in receiving and integrating people under international protection, within a national resettlement programme.

The evaluation examines the objectives and purpose of the Auzolana II pilot experience and identifies the role of the various stakeholders, of the procedures and of the governance of the initiative. It primarily seeks to identify positive aspects and areas for improvement with respect to future versions of the project and the possible implementation of similar initiatives in other regions.

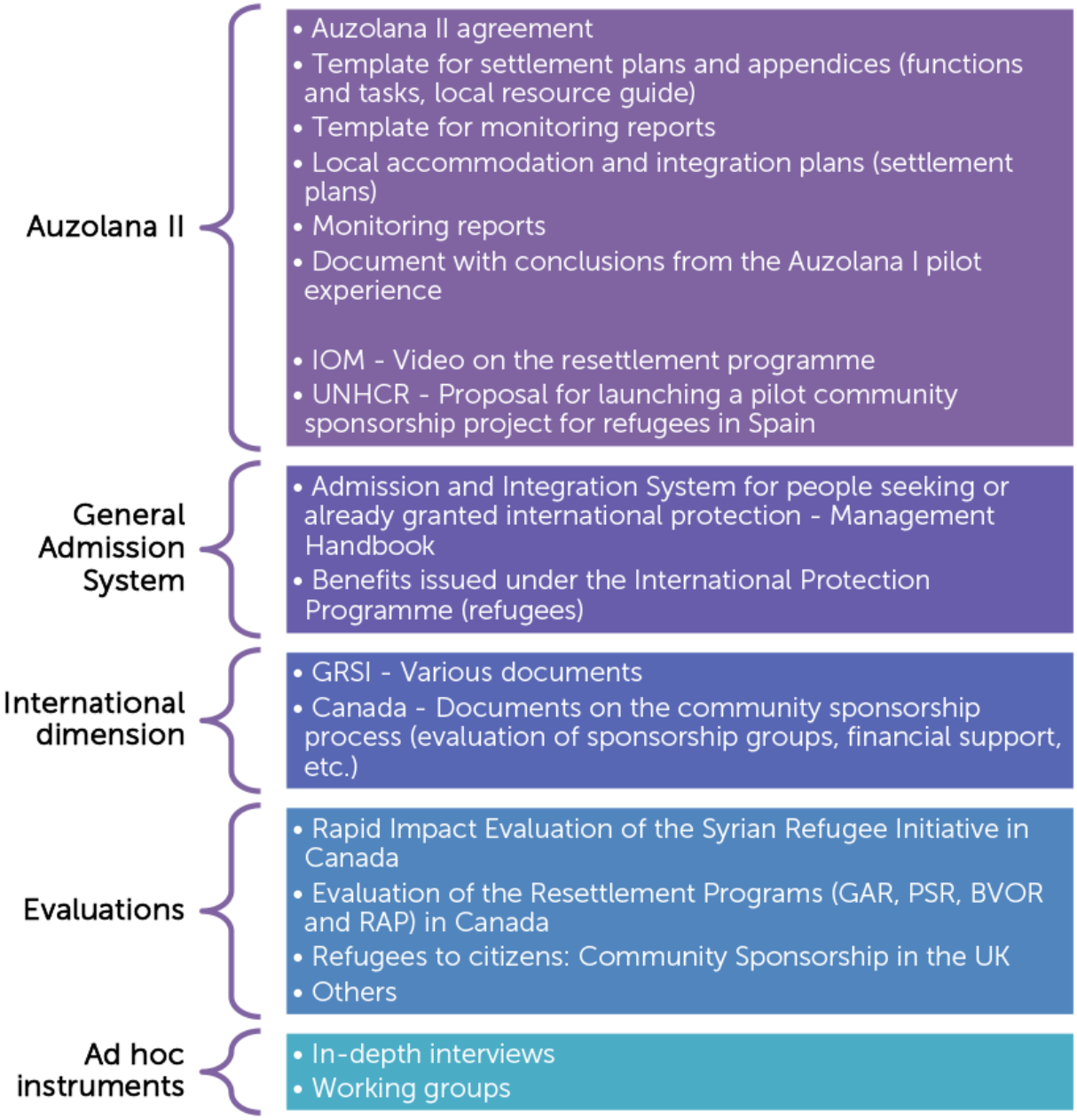
The Auzolana II evaluation methodology (see Appendix 1) comprises three analysis levels: the macro level, which identifies the objectives of the initiative, the planning and definition of resources, the governance framework and the relationships between the stakeholders; the meso level, which provides the most comprehensive perspective of the development and overall implementation of the pilot experience; and the micro level, which looks at the implementation and roll-out of specific actions. In the evaluation, these levels have been integrated into the various stages and phases of the pilot experience, the roles and coordination of the stakeholders, and the resources and fundamental objectives.

Figure 6. Analysis phases applied to Auzolana II




The evaluation has drawn upon the documentation provided and supplementary information from other community sponsorship processes and their evaluations. The information gathered through interviews and meetings has also been examined in depth. The initial aim of reaching the participating families via an online questionnaire has been substituted by various personalised interviews (see appendices 2 and 3).

Figure 7. Information and data for the evaluation




To facilitate navigation of the document, the evaluation has been structured by planning, development and implementation. In the latter, the analysis has been divided into the three key steps of any community sponsorship process: pre-arrival; admission and initial accommodation; and roll-out of the settlement, integration and inclusion instruments.

## 4.1. PLANNING PHASE

The first stage of a community sponsorship programme such as Auzolana II comprises significant planning to define in detail the objectives, the overall design and how the initiative fits into the general context. The objectives are clear and coincide with the objectives of most programmes of this nature, with the overarching aim of ensuring the arrival and admission of people in need of international protection and engaging the host society to take part in, and support, the admission, accommodation and integration of the beneficiaries.

Auzolana II was originally conceived as a community sponsorship project that would supplement the Spanish government's resettlement programme. That is, it would use community sponsorship to offer additional places for refugees in the country. However, the Spanish government eventually decided to reserve the Auzolana II allocations for participants of the general resettlement programme. This decision had two key impacts. Firstly, the community sponsorship programme did not lead to the resettlement of an additional number of refugees, resulting in the loss of one of the objectives of the initiative: to open up alternative and different pathways for receiving people in need of international protection. Though the decision is understandable given it was a pilot experience, and given the urgency of implementation, this should ideally be rectified in future versions of the programme to ensure better alignment with the New York Declaration of 2016, which highlights community sponsorship (in the chapter on durable solutions) as a complementary pathway for the admission of refugees (UNGA, 2016). Secondly, the decision to subsume the Auzolana II experience under the resettlement programme distorted the information provided to the refugee families. This point will be explored further on.

Auzolana II is an initiative of the Basque Government and, by definition, should engage civil society. Though it bears a resemblance to similar programmes around the world, it has a unique component pertaining to the role of a sub-national administration. In most community sponsorship programmes, the role of sub-national authorities is defined in the design of the initiatives (as happened with local authorities in the British case). The Quebec model is the only one involving the active participation of a sub-national government.21 The Government of Quebec has greater capacity in the collective sponsorship programme than in the Basque case: it participates in the selection process and can place certain requirements on the sponsorship entities and individuals, and on the beneficiaries themselves. In this sense, Auzolana II has clear added value in that it is the first multilevel collaboration experience for the admission and integration of refugees in Spain.

Auzolana II emerged as an internationally relevant initiative from the outset. The participation of the GRSI, which in turn involves the Government of Canada and the UNHCR, and its support for the initiative, in addition to the Basque Government's efforts to promote Auzolana II (see Appendix 9.4), affirm the will to see this pilot experience form part of the growing network of similar initiatives being implemented in many countries in the Global North. It is an attempt not only to create new opportunities for people requiring international protection but to innovate in the development of actions and instruments to facilitate and improve their integration and inclusion, thanks to the participation of the host civil society. Interestingly, the

21 See http://www2.publicationsduquebec.gouv.qc.ca/home.php#

initiative seems to have had a smaller impact nationally than internationally. Despite the recent willingness of other autonomous communities to replicate the initiative, it has had little media coverage outside of the Basque Country.

**In the planning phase, Auzolana II was conceived as an innovative pilot experience with clear objectives and good conceptualisation. It does not coincide with the approach of community sponsorship programmes in that it does not provide additional vacancies, and it has had an unequal impact, with greater international coverage than national.**

## 4.2. DEVELOPMENT PHASE

The development phase of Auzolana II comprised the launch of the main lines of work, the introduction of the governance and coordination instruments, the identification of the main stakeholders and their responsibilities, and the preparation of basic protocols for the admission, accommodation and integration processes.

The main governance instruments for Auzolana II is the agreement signed by all participating stakeholders and which sets out their responsibilities in the two distinct phases of the programme. The agreement clearly identifies the participating stakeholders and their responsibilities in each phase identified.

It is understandable for all stakeholders to sign a single agreement in a pilot experience. However, longer-standing models would suggest that the best approach is to sign collaboration agreements with each sponsorship entity to ensure greater monitoring and accountability. In fact, future community sponsorship programmes following the Auzolana II example should ideally start with a macro agreement between the central government and the Basque Government, and specific agreements between the latter and the sponsorship entities. This will ensure that the responsible authorities can supervise and monitor the entire process. The agreement sets out coordination mechanisms (mainly monitoring meetings and reports) in accordance with the current context of the pilot experience. The Monitoring Committee and the local coordination panels, both instruments pertaining specifically to Auzolana II, work alongside existing coordination instruments including the inter-institutional/social panel for the admission of refugees in the Basque Country. The agreement sets out the need to monitor and evaluate the initiative, particularly as it *'may provide a model for extending the initiative to other autonomous communities and even other countries'* (Auzolana II agreement). However, the agreement does not contain con-

tinuous evaluation mechanisms to enable monitoring of the various specific actions. Consolidation of the initiative will require the development of various standardised instruments not just to enable coordination, monitoring and evaluation of community sponsorship processes but which guarantee an equivalent and equal level of service to the beneficiaries.

The distribution of responsibilities is particularly evident in the two distinct phases of the agreement: the first phase comprising identification, information and referral, and the community sponsorship phase. These two phases reflect the management structure of Auzolana II: the first mainly concerns the responsibilities of the central administration while the second hinges on the role of the Basque Government in driving and coordinating the initiative

The identification and referral phase follows the standard process of the national resettlement programme. The UNHCR carries out the initial identification of beneficiaries and the Spanish government makes the final decision. The IOM takes part in orientation courses prior to the beneficiaries leaving their country of origin and provides logistical support. No provisions were made for the participation of the Basque Government in the final identification of Auzolana II participants. This could be improved in future versions of the experience. In other community sponsorship programmes, the entities that come forward can offer vacancies for refugees in particular need or who are particularly vulnerable, and the final decision on who will participate and on the suitability of the admission and integration proposals always rests with the competent government body.

The second phase comprises community sponsorship itself and the participation of the social entities and local support groups. The social entities with responsibility for community sponsorship are signatories to the Auzolana II agreement. In this pilot experience, the Basque Government identified entities with sufficient experience and history of working with vulnerable people and of social mentoring to coordinate the sponsorship and promote the local sponsorship groups. Cáritas Euskadi and the Ignacio Ellacuría Social Foundation fulfilled the requirements, and given neither is a participant in the national admission system for refugees, their involvement boosts the core of stakeholders involved in the admission and integration of these people. That said, given these entities are similar in nature to those participating in the national admission system, their involvement could raise suspicions. This should be taken into consideration when developing a stable community sponsorship programme in the future. In most existing programmes, the responsible authorities use an open selection process. Entities wishing to become promoting social entities must meet a series of requirements which range from their financial status and their social network to the specific community sponsorship programme they wish to implement. The final decision, taken by the authorities, ensures that the entities are suitable and that the process is open and transparent.

The requirements on the promoting entities are relatively modest compared to other programmes in which they are required to organise housing and subsistence and are liable for expenses (healthcare, etc.) for the families for a period of two to five years. The contribution of the Basque Government in guaranteeing these people access to public services is a positive addition to the programme and strengthens the unique public-private collaboration underpinning this initiative. The overall goal of Auzolana II is that the participating families become autonomous. Over a period

of two years, several instruments are put into action to facilitate their integration and inclusion and ensure autonomy is achieved. The agreement contains a clause whereby families wishing to withdraw from community sponsorship can join the general admission system. However, the necessary instruments in the case that autonomy is not achieved are not sufficiently developed. There should ideally be a bridge or temporary adjustment enabling participating families to access existing support following the community sponsorship period, such as the income support (guaranteed minimum income) provided by the Basque Government.

In terms of local support groups, it is important that the members of these be selected carefully. Though there are no specific requirements for who can volunteer in the pilot experience, this would not be the case were the programme to be expanded elsewhere.

Lastly, in terms of the instruments for implementing the initiative, there are various settlement plans in which several levels of government as well as the promoting entities and local support groups have been involved and collaborated in a positive way. It is worth encouraging and facilitating self-evaluation for the local groups to identify successes and areas of improvement. Meetings enabling support groups to share experiences, ideas and suggestions would constitute a new engagement space under Auzolana II. Thinking to future versions of the initiative, the development of these standardised tools should be improved to include monitoring and evaluation indicators for community sponsorship itself and for the various actions rolled out as part of this process. Expert support staff have made a critical contribution to the development and coordination of the management work carried out by the entities, and these roles should be maintained.

**The development phase comprises key stages of the process of beginning a community sponsorship project, including identification of stakeholders and resources as well as governance mechanisms. Various decisions have been taken in this pilot project which, in the event that it becomes a structural project, should be modified to provide greater assurances and transparency throughout the entire process.**

**Strengths**

- Agreement detailing stakeholders and well-defined responsibilities.
- Support for inter-administrative coordination and collaboration.
- Design of monitoring and coordination instruments (Monitoring Committee, Local Coordination Panel).
- Clear identification of promoting entities, but no open selection process.
- The agreement contains a clause whereby families wishing to withdraw from community sponsorship can join the general admission system.
- Development of standardised tools for creating settlement plans and other protocols for action.

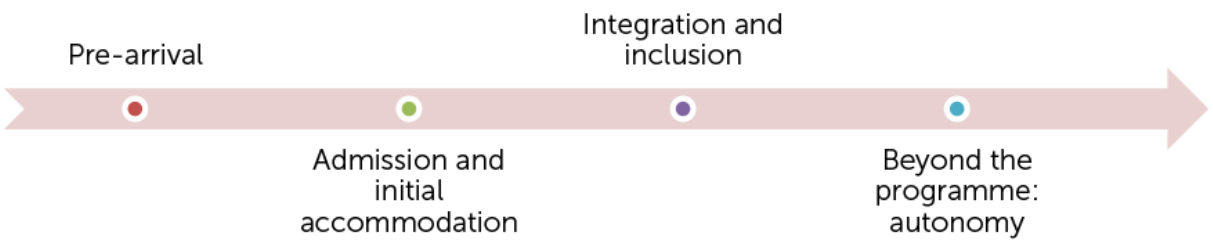
**Areas of improvement**

- Assess the possibility of having specific agreements with the social entities, separate from the macro agreement between administrations.
- Assess the participation of the Basque Government and the promoting entities in selecting the beneficiaries.
- Incorporate mechanisms to identify and select suitably equipped volunteers for the local support groups.
- Link the selection of the host region with the housing supply.
- Reassess the financial contribution of the sponsorship entities.
- Explore suitable alternatives for cases where autonomy is not achieved by the beneficiaries within the period of the experience.
- Incorporate continuous evaluation mechanisms in the models for settlement plans and protocols.
- Encourage self-evaluation for groups and create opportunities for the various local support groups to meet.

## 4.3. IMPLEMENTATION PHASE

The implementation phase comprises the roll-out of the community sponsorship programme. The sponsorship entities and local support groups play a key role here. In line with the various evaluations of experiences similar to Auzolana II, the implementation phase is divided into three key stages along with a fourth that goes beyond the pilot project to reflect on the autonomy of the participating families once the support has ended. Auzolana II became operational before the official collaboration agreement was signed. This should be corrected in future versions of the project.

Figure 8. Various stages of the Auzolana II experience



### 4.3.1. Pre-arrival

For a community sponsorship project to be implemented correctly, various actions must get under way before the participating families arrive.

Project participants must be selected at the point of origin in accordance with UNHCR criteria and those of the Spanish government. They must be informed of what community sponsorship involves and be given as much information as possible about their final destination. Pre-arrival orientation courses should include all this information and, as far as possible, begin language training or impart basic knowledge of the destination to help facilitate participants' integration.

In Auzolana II, there was no specific preparatory training for the participants in the community sponsorship project. They were already part of the general resettlement programme and therefore received generic information geared towards people who would be relocated in Spain. This created confusion and disarray in terms of the expectations of the participating families, who did not always understand how community sponsorship works, why this approach is different and its added value.

In the host community, the stage prior to the arrival of the beneficiaries is a time for putting together and approving the settlement plans that will be implemented by the sponsorship entities and local support groups. In Auzolana II, the plans were designed by local support groups with the support and supervision of the central and Basque governments. This was a successful exercise in inter-administrative collaboration and public-private cooperation.

The sponsorship entities require fewer resources than in similar programmes. The 10,000 euros in funding is fair, though in some cases the local support groups have provided extra funds in addition to their time and availability. This funding should be reassessed. The requirement to secure a flat for the duration of the project is also appropriate though the condition of the flat and the availability of housing in the area should be verified. If the families cannot remain in the same neighbourhood or municipality when support under Auzolana II comes to an end, the success of community sponsorship in providing stability could be jeopardised.

Members of the local support groups received basic training on community sponsorship and their responsibilities but were not offered supplementary training in areas such as intercultural skills, which would have been useful in the admission and integration process.

There was no stipulation for individuals to make an indefinite commitment, nor were any specific requirements put in place. The sponsorship entities provided information to their existing volunteers and issued a general invitation to other entities or like-minded movements from the host municipality to attract more participants. No specific guidelines were issued on the composition of the groups, which ended up being plural and diverse. Most members were adults (between 35 and 65 years old), though young people and senior citizens were also involved, and there was a balance of men and women. Most groups comprised people from the host area (neighbourhood or municipality) – this has been identified as key to the integration and inclusion processes. The local support groups were established from the outset and their meetings helped prepare the various actions that had to get under way upon arrival of the refugees.

The Basque Government was responsible for coordinating the Monitoring Committee and ensuring it operated as planned. The committee was launched prior to the refugees' arrival and it has held quarterly scheduled meetings. The Basque Government was also responsible for setting up the local coordination panels. Though discussions were had with the various host town halls, the panels were not set up as planned. Informal mechanisms have been used to run and coordinate the support groups, sponsorship entities and the Basque Government in collaboration with the municipalities. Local coordination panels are key to inter-administrative coordination and facilitate the refugees' integration into local life. This instrument should be reassessed to ascertain which administration can bring more added value to its development and implementation. This will also require that dialogue be strengthened with the local administrations in the host municipalities.

### 4.3.2. Admission and initial reception

The participating families travelled to Spain under the resettlement programme. Representatives from the sponsorship entities, along with volunteers from the local support groups, organised their reception at the airport upon arrival. Despite the presence of an Arabic speaker to translate and facilitate this first contact, unforeseen circumstances hindered this initial communication between the families and the sponsorship entities. Community sponsorship hinges primarily on the voluntary contributions of the people involved. However, the services of a professional translator should be employed, particularly for the reception and initial accommodation of the families (throughout the first month, for example). Otherwise, the person communicating with the family may be overwhelmed, and communication with the family could be hindered when they are not present.

The Auzolana II participants were not identified until the last minute. Furthermore, information about the families did not reach the Basque Government, the sponsorship entities or the support groups far enough in advance. Better and more detailed information about the families would help in planning for their needs and enable the group composition to be modified, if necessary.

Once the refugees arrive in the various host communities in the Basque Country, the local support groups ensure they have accommodation and that their essential and immediate needs are met. This is the point at which the families experience initial doubts and worries and when there are the greatest information gaps between expectations and reality. It is also the point at which the local support group takes on the role as a key contact for addressing and responding to the family's worries, and when trust is first built between the new family and their neighbours. Some of the concerns expressed by the families stem from them having received incomplete information about their participation in a community sponsorship project.

The groups were distributed by specific work areas (education, health, training, etc.). This was an excellent way of organising their work that facilitated better responses to the needs identified.

During the initial accommodation of the refugees, the local support groups together with the social work professionals implement procedures to assist them in obtaining the necessary documentation (long term residency) and with administrative

matters that must be processed such as registering on the local register of residents (empadronamiento) or getting a health card. They also help the families to register for official language courses, to enrol children in school and to access public services. The refugees are given an initial introduction to the local area and supported to discover and make contact with their new neighbourhood and neighbours. In some cases, the lack of advance information about the refugees complicated the support provided, particularly in terms of medical care. In others, the lack of documentation caused problems or delays in administrative matters for the new families. Regulations that impede equal access to services, such as requirements for documentation that does not exist or is not available in the refugees' country of origin (e.g. the family record book or Libro de familia), should be reviewed. Likewise, existing processes should be reviewed to ensure these do not impede integration (such as in-year registration for languages courses). Dossiers and information about the various members of the family should be as comprehensive as possible (health and education records, etc.).

The unforeseen circumstances at this initial stage were mostly addressed by the volunteers with the support of the Basque Government (access to public services) or the central government (documentation) when necessary.

### 4.3.3.Integration and inclusion

Supporting the integration and inclusion of the refugee families means working with the families and with the local community in a two-pronged approach.

The families are supported to become autonomous and receive assistance with learning official languages, professional training and mandatory education. Other instruments help them establish social networks and improve their capacity for a life beyond the programme.

Financial management support is also key, since the families must take responsibility for their domestic finances from the outset. Expenses are funded by the sponsorship entity but these are managed by the family, which must look after accommodation expenses and basic spending. Where this information was not properly explained or understood, this aroused suspicions in relation to other families supported by the national admission system, which highlights the need for better provision of information about community sponsorship to the participants. Volunteers used the available funding and their own contributions to cover basic expenses and others which were initially unforeseen. In this sense, the principles of commitment, solidarity and support in the community sponsorship programme clearly came to the fore.

A lack of documentation from the country of origin hindered the processing of the required documentation in the host society, which in turn created problems with accessing basic services or certain benefits. In other cases, participants' arrival did not coincide with the school year and created issues around enrolment in the school system or on language courses. The local groups were forced to find alternative options based on what was available and the resources in their area.

After the initial accommodation phase, much of the work of the local support groups was to broaden the social networks of the refugee families. In some cases, the families were offered the chance to get involved in other voluntary solidary activities

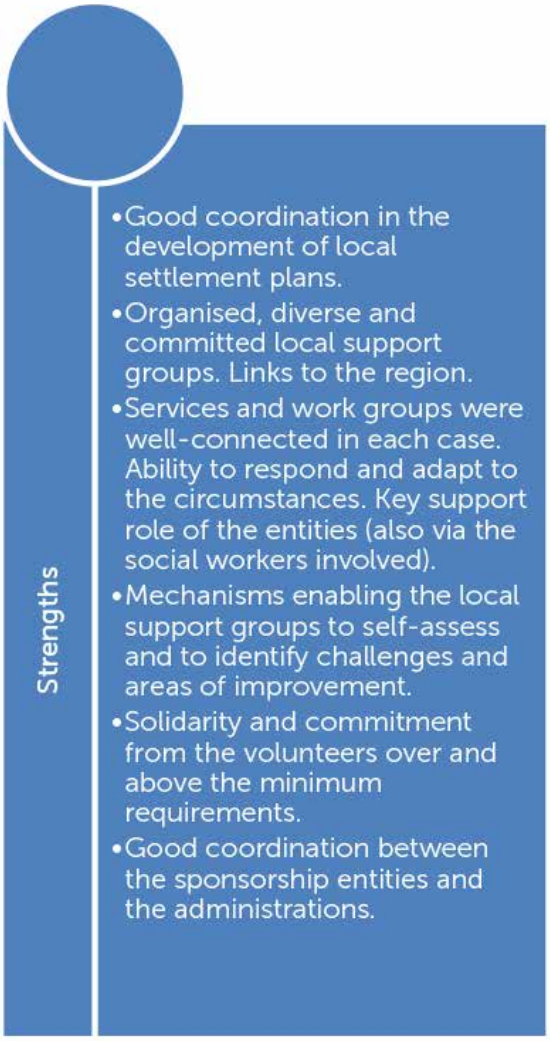
run by people in the support group, to widen their knowledge and perspective in relation to the municipality. In any case, it is crucial that links with local entities be strengthened and that interaction with refugee families be facilitated, based on interest, in the various spaces with which they can engage (PTAs, neighbourhood associations, etc.)

The local support groups also had to adapt to the unforeseen COVID-19 pandemic. The lack of mobility during the lockdown mandated by the state of emergency, the lack of access to education or training courses, and the cancellation of many social activities all impacted negatively on the integration and inclusion of the participating families. The local support groups responded in various ways, from installing Internet connections in the housing to arranging educational support for children. The groups met regularly to assess their actions and the sporadic, unforeseen interventions that were part of adapting the families to their new surroundings. They self-assessed and reflected on key issues, among them the difficult balance between support and dependence, and gender equality. In their responses, the groups demonstrated a commendable capacity for adapting and for identifying areas of improvement. The sponsorship entities and the Basque Government (via the social services professionals) also exercised their support role appropriately.

The engagement of the host society in the integration and inclusion processes can be understood using the concentric circles model. The innermost circle, comprising volunteers, was clearly engaged; their pre-existing solidary commitment that drove their participation in the Auzolana II initiative was consolidated. This circle has access to several spaces for learning about the families' circumstances and about the conflict in their country of origin, the human rights situation in general and the right to asylum in particular. A second circle comprises people who were directly connected to one or more members of the refugee families. From schools to adult training spaces, many people were aware of other contexts and of the difficulties inherent to restarting an entire life in a completely new place. A third circle comprises local people in the wider sense. Residents in small municipalities may have

been aware of the arrival of a refugee family, while their presence may have gone unnoticed in larger places. The local coordination panels could have been a useful instrument for raising awareness and organising actions and events about human rights, asylum, refuge, and living together in diversity, without placing the focus on the families themselves.

**In summary, the implementation phase of Auzolana II was a notable success. The participation of the local support groups and social work professionals, supported by the sponsorship entities and the various administrations, was key to a successful experience. Any shortfalls detected in the planning and development of the initiative were addressed thanks to the engagement and commitment of all stakeholders involved, who were able to respond to the unforeseen and extreme situation caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. The integration and inclusion processes in this first year of operation did not reach all of civil society in the host regions. However, there is scope to improve the development of coordinated actions with town halls and organised social networks in each municipality.**



The Auzolana II experience has been running for one year. During this time, it has had to deal with the exceptional circumstances brought about by the multiple impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. It is not possible to assess the success of Auzolana II in terms of the degree of autonomy of the refugee families beyond the implementation of the initiative, because it has not yet finished. Since the challenges faced by the families and the local support groups due to COVID-19 have affected the estimated schedules and altered expectations, it is difficult to assess the scope for autonomy over a one-year period in this case. This should be taken into account when assessing and evaluating the final outcome of Auzolana II.

# 5 CHALLENGES AND LESSONS LEARNT

Auzolana II is an extraordinary initiative of the Basque Government that aligns perfectly with its commitment to solidarity, human rights and peace. The experience was conceived to provide a humanitarian response to the crisis in Syria. It is one of a range of similar experiences that have been brought forward in various countries in the Global North over recent years.

Distinct interests converged in what was devised from the outset as a pilot experience. This explains the specific characteristics of the initiative, some of which should be modified in future versions.

## *About the initiative*

Auzolana II sits within the national resettlement programme and does not, therefore, constitute an alternative, complementary pathway. This arrangement is understandable given it is a pilot experience though should be rectified in future versions to highlight the safe alternative pathways promoted by the United Nations and by the European Commission in its new Pact on Migration and Asylum.

Community sponsorship programmes are opportunities for civil society to devise mechanisms for the admission, support and integration of refugees and which are complementary to national programmes. In Auzolana II, the Basque Government decided to drive the project forward with the support of various social entities. In this sense, it constitutes an original hybrid model for good practice that strengthens the support for the work of social entities while ensuring the Basque Government stays true to its commitment to the admission and integration of refugees.

Though Auzolana II has facilitated admission and integration for a limited number of people only, the launch of collaboration mechanisms between administrations, and in turn with various civil society stakeholders, makes it a pioneering and innovative initiative. It is vital that work continue with a range of civil society stakeholders to strengthen and bring continuity to the experience, and to increase the number of host communities in the Basque Country.

In future versions, the collaboration agreement should be signed prior to the start of the pilot experience. In addition, a collaboration agreement should be signed between the central government and the Basque Government setting out the responsibilities of each administration and specifying the number of vacancies for admitting and accommodating refugees in the Basque Country. This would lay the groundwork for an open process for selecting the collaborating entities, including

specific requirements, mandatory detailed settlement plans and pertinent information, and the transparent selection of entities which are suitable and relevant.

The coordination instruments have worked correctly and hinged in particular upon collaboration and dialogue between the now-defunct General Secretariat for Human Rights, Coexistence and Cooperation of the Basque Government (replaced by the Department of Migration and Asylum) and the Department of Integration and Humanitarian Support of the Secretariat of State for Migration within the current Ministry for Inclusion, Social Security and Migration. The Basque Government has maintained bilateral, fluid and constant communication with the managing entities and with the central government. It is unlikely that such a dynamic can be ensured in a situation in which there are more community sponsorship experiences under way, meaning administrative units and communication links should be strengthened in the event that the experience be broadened.

While the sponsorship entities are under no obligation to follow the handbook for the general admission system, they must ensure they meet the minimum requirements therein, as was the case in Auzolana II. This provides a mechanism for limiting inequalities in access to services and benefits for people supported in one system or the other. The creation of a specific handbook for the sponsorship entities, in accordance with models in other countries, could be a good way of guaranteeing comparable levels of support, benefits and services for refugees beyond the pilot experience.

The Auzolana II experience provides support and monitoring for refugee families for two years, until they become fully autonomous. Refugee families should become autonomous as soon as possible and should not have to leave the community sponsorship system to access the support system for vulnerable families. Hence, programmes that foster autonomy and emancipation from community sponsorship should gradually be integrated with integration and inclusion instruments to ensure their success. Consideration should also be given to the problems that may arise throughout this process. Instruments should be developed to address unforeseen situations (such as the COVID-19 pandemic) as well as challenges that the families themselves may face. It is therefore crucial to explore opportunities for continued support for the families beyond the programme, whether by extending it to three years to facilitate their access to income support in the Basque Country, or by facilitating bridges for access to this system by this collective in case of need.

Local administrations can enrich community sponsorship and should be involved from the outset. The municipalities play a key role as providers of certain specialist services (job support, gender equality, language training, leisure activities, etc.) and as key stakeholders for raising awareness and engagement among civil society in relation to the admission of refugees.

The development of the Auzolana II experience in the context of an international network such as the GRSI which, alongside the UNHCR, promotes community sponsorship initiatives at the global level, has positioned the Basque initiative on the international stage.

## *Pre-arrival matters to consider*

Refugees participating in community sponsorship should be informed of what this involves from the outset. Pre-travel orientation courses should inform participants about community sponsorship and, as far as possible, about the region to which they will be relocated.

The possibility of the Basque Government's participation in selection processes for community sponsorship candidates should be assessed. With the guidance of the UNHCR and the experience of the Spanish government, more suitable profiles could be selected to address the debate around ease of integration and vulnerability that the UNHCR has already identified, and to prevent 'a la carte' selection of refugees.

Communication, as far as possible, should be enabled between volunteers and the refugees prior to arrival. All these individuals should receive all the information they need, whether volunteers who are aware of and understand the needs of the participants, or to manage the expectations of the refugees themselves and include them in the decision-making process. The expert role of social work professionals is key, not just in terms of their contribution to identifying content but for their role in the work of the local support groups, which they naturally end up engaging with.

The diversity and plurality of the volunteer groups presents multiple advantages for problem solving and in terms of availability, relationships and ways of communicating. Groups with a diversity of sexes, professions and cultural, linguistic or religious backgrounds can strengthen communication and connection with the refugee family, and their involvement in the accommodation process is particularly important. The distribution of group work into specialist areas (education, health, administration, etc.) is useful and could be strengthened through the selection of suitable volunteers.

It may be useful for volunteers to sign a sponsorship commitment, particularly in the interests of programme growth. This would ensure they receive specialist training and that any incompatibilities in terms of their participation in a project of this nature are identified.

Preparatory training for volunteers should be better designed to enable them to find out about the community sponsorship project and to equip them with intercultural skills to help them deal with complex situations or moments of misunderstanding. It is also important to address such key elements as human rights, equality between men and women and respect for diversity, as driving principles of a democratic society. Volunteers who have taken part in Auzolana II are an excellent source of support for new volunteer groups and can use their experience and knowledge to strengthen the programme and address doubts in subsequent versions.

## *Questions to consider throughout the process of admission, integration and inclusion*

Someone who knows the language spoken by the families must be present when the families are first received and during their initial accommodation. The Basque Government or the promoting entities must hire the services of a professional translator, at least for the initial reception and accommodation of the families. Where

volunteers know the language, these should not be over-burdened by being placed in the role of key communicators.

Support mechanisms and spaces should be set up for volunteers (who will communicate with the families) to manage their expectations and provide responses to complex questions around the dependence or autonomy of the families. In this sense, the volunteers from the first edition of Auzolana could be a good source of knowledge and know-how for Auzolana II.

Ideally, the Basque Government should prepare a volunteer handbook with key principles about the commitment to the right to asylum along with general information. Standardised tools to ensure the initiative is implemented correctly, including continuous evaluation mechanisms, could bring added value not just to the operation of the programme but to enable its replication in other regions.

Lastly, the engagement of the host community beyond the volunteers and the promoting entities should be strengthened. The local administration has a key role here, and the comprehensive development of the local coordination panels could provide a good instrument for supporting this collaboration.

**Auzolana II has shown that where there is a will and a commitment, alternative pathways can be explored that provide a better means of receiving and integrating refugees, ensuring coexistence and social cohesion. The pilot experience has worked as it should and has afforded an opportunity for five families, supported by five support groups in five host communities. The challenge now is how to move forward; how to take the steps required to build on the good work of Auzolana II and optimise those aspects identified as areas of improvement. The innovative proposal by the General Secretariat for Human Rights, Coexistence and Cooperation of the Basque Government to foster lasting alternative solutions for the admission and integration of refugees is an important step forward and paves the way for other administrations, social entities and society in general to act in solidarity and protect refugees.**

Figure 9. Summary of main considerations

| General questions | Considerations |
|---|---|
| Strong institutional commitment driven by the General Secretariat for Human Rights, Coexistence and Cooperation of the Basque Government. | Turning the initiative into a structural programme. |
| Strengthening the public message around protection of the right to asylum and of the human rights of refugees. | Improving information about, and visibility of, the experience. |
| Pilot experience to complement the national resettlement programme. | Vacancies for refugees in the pilot experience were subtracted from the national programme. This should be rectified so as to align with the definition of sponsorship as a complementary pathway. |
| Hybrid community sponsorship system. This is a feature of the pilot experience. | The Basque administration's involvement makes it a key driving stakeholder and a nexus between the central administration and social entities. |
| Inter-administrative cooperation.<br><br>Public-private initiative (social commitment). | Supporting similar initiatives that could be undertaken in other autonomous communities (replication). Improving engagement in the municipality (town hall, other entities, etc.). |
| Design of the community sponsorship programme in the Basque Country. | Good planning of the initiative in terms of defining objectives, processes, stakeholders, resources and identifying needs relative to community sponsorship. |
| Advance selection of social entities to promote community sponsorship. | Advance selection has ensured the participation of entities with experience, resources and support, all of which are key to successful community sponsorship. If replicating the model, an open selection process should be undertaken with minimum requirements for the sponsorship entities to prevent problems and improve transparency. |
| Consolidating procedures and adapting instruments to take the pilot experience further. | Requires a different administrative approach if the programme becomes structural. |

| Pre-arrival | Considerations |
|---|---|
| Successful selection and creation of the group of sponsors, mainly due to their link with the sponsorship entities. | Ensuring diversity of profiles (ages, sex, training, etc.), prioritising residence in the host region, and assessing knowledge of languages (of origin).<br><br>Exploring the requirement for a long-term commitment by the volunteers, and which requirements can be stipulated. |
| Prioritising and consolidating training on admission and community sponsorship for volunteers. | Improving prior training and exploring complementary training (intercultural skills, countries of origin, etc.).<br><br>The Basque administration should prepare a handbook to support volunteers |
| Planning of services: preparing and identifying needs. | Good identification of needs and good distribution of work areas (among the local support groups).<br><br>Support role of social workers. |
| Planning of services: areas of improvement. | Exploring the provision of more specialist services with the local administration and other entities in the region.<br><br>More emphasis on issues concerning equality between men and women.<br><br>Foster actions to disseminate and raise awareness about community sponsorship, asylum and refuge, and about human rights in general. |
| Information and interaction at the point of origin. | Better information at point of origin to refugees about community sponsorship – stressing its added value – and about the host society.<br><br>Facilitate at least a first contact between the volunteers and the refugees before they arrive. |

| Arrival and initial accommodation | Considerations |
|---|---|
| Provision of services: areas of improvement | Improve the information that the sponsorship entities receive about the refugees.<br><br>Ensure the provision of professional translation services when the refugees first arrive. |
| Housing | Monitor the availability of flats in the host region as this may determine the ability of the participants to remain there (and may impact their integration and inclusion). |
| Support and monitoring mechanisms for volunteers. | Create spaces for dialogue around expectations, doubts and other considerations for groups of volunteers. Exploit the know-how of people who have taken part in Auzolana II for future versions. |
| **Integration and inclusion** | **Considerations** |
| Provision of services: Good planning in the various work areas. | Actions around educational support, administrative support, health support, language training and professional training were implemented correctly.<br><br>Key role of volunteers. Care should be taken to avoid overloading volunteers and to improve communication and connections with existing public services in the region. |
| Provision of services: areas of improvement. | Explore the possibilities for in-year registration for specific courses (particularly languages).<br><br>Improve collaboration with local public services (career support, for example).<br><br>Incorporate continuous evaluation mechanisms. |
| Strengthen refugees' social networks. | Look beyond the sponsorship entities and volunteers. Facilitate social interaction for refugee families based on their interests (PTAs, leisure, etc.). |
| Support their autonomy beyond Auzolana II. | Strengthen instruments to ensure autonomy is achieved. Link with other social support programmes (income support). |

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# APPENDICES

## 7.1. METHODOLOGY

The approach to the **Rapid Impact Evaluation: Auzolana II Pilot Community Sponsorship Experience** has two objectives:

- To evaluate the initial results of Auzolana II with a focus on the resettlement and initial accommodation of the refugees supported by the initiative. The aim here is to identify challenges to implementation and to determine the degree to which the needs identified were met, as well as identifying difficulties, opportunities and lessons learnt.
- To facilitate transfer of knowledge about Auzolana II with a view to the application and development of the initiative in other regions; to identify steps, stakeholders, problems that should be identified and opportunities to be exploited, among other matters.

The **Evaluation of the Auzolana II Pilot Community Sponsorship Experience** will contain two sections. Each can be used in a different way to achieve greater impact and awareness.

The first section comprises the **Auzolana II Evaluation** itself. It will be based on the evaluation model applied in other similar studies, with a focus on the definition and design of the initiative. It will analyse the characteristics of the initiative as applied to the refugee population that has come to the Basque Country through the programme. The analysis will include the following, among other matters:

- The phases and main outcome of the immediate resettlement and initial accommodation.
- Issues around learning official languages, training and capacity for employment, access to basic services, etc.
- The role of the various stakeholders, particularly the individuals involved in community sponsorship and the diverse entities that have taken part in the community sponsorship process.
- Lessons learnt and challenges to consider for similar initiatives in the future.

The evaluation will examine documentation and will also comprise interviews with the parties involved and a questionnaire for users.

The report will include an **executive summary** of the main issues identified in the evaluation. These issues are included further on, and the executive summary should be used as an operational tool to support the reading and understanding of the outcome of the initiative.

The second section will comprise a **systematic guide on the steps to implementing a community sponsorship initiative** for regions or administrations that wish to draw upon the Basque Government's example. An exhaustive plan will not be provided, as this should be tailored to the circumstances and context of each initiative. Rather, this section will provide a clear guide as to the various stages and phases that should be planned, the role of the stakeholders and their coordination, and the resources and key objectives required to ensure a successful community sponsorship initiative, drawing on the lessons learnt from Auzolana II.

## 7.2. INTERVIEWS AND MEETINGS

- **Public Administrations**
    - Secretariat of State for Migration
    - General Secretariat of Human Rights, Coexistence and Cooperation
- **International bodies**
    - UNHCR-Spain
    - IOM-Spain
- **Sponsorship entities**
    - Cáritas Diocesana
    - Ignacio Ellacuría Social Foundation
- **Local Groups**
    - Local Group - Cáritas Diocesana Donostia-San Sebastián
    - Local Group - Cáritas Diocesana Vitoria-Gasteiz
    - Local Group - Cáritas Diocesana Bilbao
    - Local Groups - Ignacio Ellacuría Social Foundation
- **PeBeneficiaries of the project**
- **Others**
    - CEAR Euskadi

## 7.3. LIST OF EVENTS WHERE THE PROJECT HAS BEEN PRESENTED

The following is a list of national and international interventions, events and conferences where the Basque Government has presented the pilot community sponsorship experience implemented in the Basque Country.

**Auzolana II**

- Presentation of the agreement between the Spanish and Basque governments for the development of a community sponsorship experience in the Basque Country (28 November 2018).
- Visit from the Government of Canada, the University of Ottawa and the UNHCR, as members of the GRSI, to develop the proposal (Vitoria-Gasteiz, 14 February 2019).
- Presentation and signing of the agreement with the signatory entities (20 June 2019).

**Auzolana II presentation events**

- Seminar organised by the GRSI (Canada) and the UK Home Office (London, 9 and 10 May 2018)
- Participation in the Annual Tripartite Consultations on Resettlement organised by the UNHCR and the Swiss Federal Department of Home Affairs (Geneva, 25 and 26 June 2018).
- Ratification of the London Declaration (London, 16 July 2018).
- Participation in the 1st Basque Congress on Equality of Treatment and Freedom from Discrimination (Vitoria-Gasteiz, 13 and 14 December 2018).
- Participation in the seminar titled Is Spain on the front line of admission and integration? organised by CIDOB (Madrid, 5 March 2019)
- Participation in the conference titled Refuge and asylum in Europe and the Basque Country, organised by Ikuspegi (Bilbao, 7 June 2019).
- Participation in the seminar titled Integration of Migrants and Refugees in Small Territories: A factor for local development, organised by the European Committee of the Regions (Brussels, 25 June 2019)
- Participation in the conference titled Now that they're here, they need your support, organised by Cruz Roja (Madrid, 16 September 2019).
- Participation in the SHARE Network Conference titled Expanding Resettlement across Europe, organised by the European Committee of the Regions (Brussels, 21 and 22 October 2019).
- Participation in the Global Refugee Forum (Geneva, 17 and 18 December 2019).
- Submission of the SHARE QSN, Quality Sponsorship Network project to the call for applications to the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund of the European Commission. The project is led by ICMC Europe (International Catholic Migration Commission) in partnership with Caritas International Belgium, Caritas Germany, Consorzio Communitas in Italy and the Basque Government (January 2020).

**Other**

- Community-based refugee sponsorship in Spain: What are the experiences? http://library.fes.de/pdf-files/bueros/budapest/15599.pdf
- GRSI newsletter
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