



The SHARE Quality Sponsorship Network (QSN)

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

The project uses a **multi-stakeholder, grassroots and bottom-up strategy** fostering **refugee participation** to:

- Build up and strengthen the sponsorships stakeholder community;
- Broaden the sponsorship base engaging with new actors such as regions and cities, universities and higher education institutes;
- Ensure quality and sustained engagement as well as support and recognition of volunteer sponsoring groups and refugee participation and feed-back;
- Explore innovative financing methods and new ways to develop co-sponsorships.

Implemented from January 2021 to June 2023 in Belgium, France, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Spain and the UK, QSN is co-funded by the European Union's Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF), and also supported by private funds.



Co-funded by the European Union's Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund

SHARE MAGAZINE



Dear readers,

We hope that this newsletter finds you in good health and spirits. We are happy to re-connect with you again with a new newsletter from the **SHARE Quality Sponsorship Network (QSN)**.

For many of us the past year has been marked by uncertainty and insecurity, forcing us to adapt to new realities. Sitting many hours behind our screens safely at home, we realise how privileged we are compared to the thousands of refugees and migrants – often stuck in deplorable living conditions.

The impact of COVID 19 on resettlement and community sponsorships has been tragic for thousands of refugees. Planned departures were cancelled in most countries, with only a limited number of refugees arriving in Europe. For the few who managed to safely travel to Europe, rebuilding their lives during the pandemic has had its challenges. The story of Yomna and Khalil, a refugee family sponsored by a volunteer collective in the municipality of Montesson in France, demonstrates the tremendous resiliency of refugees to deal with these challenges and the resourcefulness of volunteer groups supporting them throughout the pandemic.

Continues...

Now that the vaccination campaigns are taking up speed across Europe, it is time to reset the clock. It is vital that we unite forces and mobilise our local communities to meet the target of the European Resettlement Programme that were set in 2019: ensuring that 30.000 refugees arrive by the end of 2021.

Planning for 2022, the European Commission and European Member States gathered on the 9th of July at the European Resettlement Forum to initiate the process of setting the number of resettlement places for 2022. In a joint statement, the SHARE Network and a coalition of NGOs urge the European Union and Member States to raise their ambitions and commit to resettling at least 36,000 refugees in 2022.

This is not all. It is now time to advance on the European Commission's proposals to increase complementary pathways, ensuring that additional numbers of refugees are admitted under community sponsorships, higher education programmes, family reunification and labour mobility programmes. Local communities play a vital role in all of these efforts and the momentum to tap into the engagement of NGOs, citizens, regions, municipalities, universities, employers and other actors must not be lost.

We are living through challenging times, but also times that offer new opportunities and hope. The SHARE QSN Network has launched a new programme of activities and we are proud to present our partnership of 7 organisations that are working on a daily basis to build long lasting, protection-based sponsorship programmes. In the following pages, you will read about the work we are carrying out in the area of monitoring and evaluation of sponsorship programmes, taking into account of the experiences of refugees during the process.

Over the past months we have engaged with many new actors that are making community sponsorships a reality across Europe. New groups have been created, new partnerships have been built and many of you have shared your experiences during our online events.

Although our languages may differ, it is inspiring that so many of your experiences are similar, and how much you value to SHARE them with each other. Our most recent roundtable on refugee sponsorship and student pathways once again showed how worthwhile these exchanges can be.

We are very much looking forward to your engagement in our upcoming events and activities and hopefully seeing you soon, not only online but in person!

The ICMC Europe Team



SHARE QSN - Partnership

Starting year: 2019

Programme: Resettlement-based community sponsorship

Total arrivals in IE: 52

Arrivals supported by IRC: 14

Groups* supported by IRC: 3

Irish Refugee Council (IE)

Starting year: 2017

Programme: Humanitarian Corridor

Total arrivals in FR: 514

Arrivals supported by FEP: 277

Groups* supported by FEP: 57

Fédération de l'Entraide Protestante (FR)

Starting year: 2018

Programme: Resettlement-based community sponsorship

Total arrivals in ES: 65

Arrivals supported by Basque

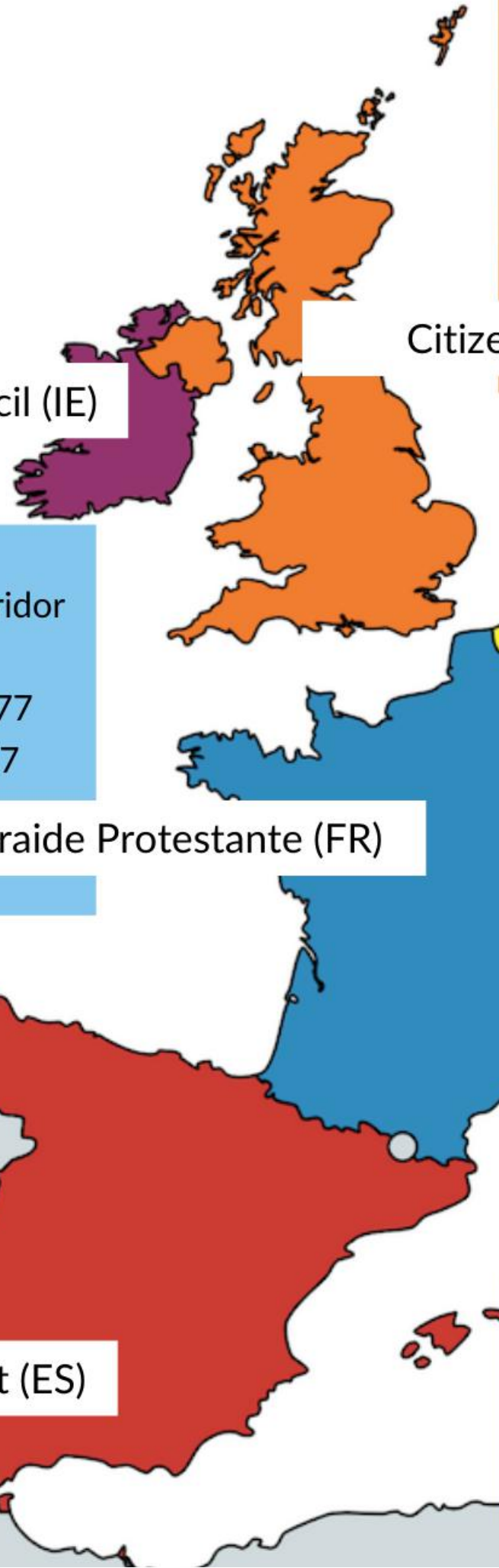
Govt: 31

Groups* supported by Basque

Govt: 5

Basque Government (ES)

*Sponsor groups who have welcomed arrivals





Starting year: 2016
Programme: Resettlement-based community sponsorship
Total arrivals in UK: 526
Arrivals supported by Citizens UK: 119
Groups* supported by Citizens UK: 22

ens UK (UK)



Caritas International (BE)

Starting year: 2020
Programme: Resettlement-based community sponsorship
Total arrivals in BE: 14
Arrivals supported by Caritas: 14
Groups* supported by Caritas: 3

DiCV Cologne (DE)

Starting year: 2019
Programme: Resettlement-based community sponsorship
Total arrivals in DE: 66
Arrivals supported by DiCV: 13
Groups* supported by DiCV: 3

Consorzio Comunitas / Caritas Italiana (IT)

Starting year: 2015
Programme: Humanitarian Corridor
Total arrivals in IT: 2343
Arrivals supported by Caritas: 536
Dioceses supported by Caritas: 55

Starting year: 2019
Programme: University Corridor
Total arrivals in IT : 26
Groups: 24 universities

Yomna and Khalil taking an
online course while their
children play

SUPPORTING REFUGEE FAMILIES DURING THE PANDEMIC

In France, the community sponsorship programme is part of the humanitarian corridors and is supported by the five organisations that signed the protocol with the government.

The Fédération de l'Entraide Protestant (FEP), a partner in the SHARE QSN project, is one of these organisations, working via support structures in five regional areas across France.

Patrick is a member of the volunteer sponsorship group (called 'citizens collective' in France) of the Protestant parish of Le Vésinet, near Montesson, in Île-de-France. The group has supported 3 refugee families since they came together in 2016, with two of the families arriving in France via humanitarian corridors at the end of 2018. Prior to these arrivals, Patrick and the group worked together raising funds, looking for housing and making all the necessary arrangements to prepare for the families.



To do so, the thirty active members could rely on the support provided by the Fédération de l'Entraide Protestante (FEP).

The Montesson municipality has been a key partner in the sponsorship, identifying suitable accommodation for the family, which is often a real challenge since affordable housing is not easily available. This close cooperation between the volunteer groups and the local authority has been key to the success of the sponsorship and its sustainability.

Although the Covid-19 measures required social distancing, the volunteer group was committed to not letting the families become isolated. "During the first lockdown, we organised drinks on Zoom on Friday evenings to check in on Abdul and Khalil, Yomna and their children, and in general we stepped up our phone calls and support," says Patrick.

However, the pandemic has also provided opportunities. FEP ensured online networking among the different sponsor groups, so that they could share their experiences, learn from each other, and feel less alone. Due to the success of these networking meetings, FEP will continue hosting them on a monthly basis.



Instead of being another refugee,
I could now present myself as a
volunteer from Montesson.

Which I liked.

- **Khalil**

Imagine the following situation: You are newly arrived in a country and a municipality and you are just starting to feel comfortable in your new environment when Covid-19 measures confine you to your home and prevent you from making progress in finding a job. How would you feel?

This is exactly what happened to Khalil, a Syrian refugee sponsored by the parish of Le Vésinet in Montesson, where he has lived with his family since December 2018. A computer engineer in Syria, he expected to be able to work as soon as he arrived, which turned out not to be the case, mainly because of the language barrier and the "different work culture in France".

He now considers the group of volunteers who helped his family settle into their new environment as one big family. "The group is amazing, the people in the group give us material support but also moral support, which we appreciate a lot", says Khalil. However, he is eager to make the next step and find a permanent job, which would also help him to expand his social network more broadly.

Already having experience as a volunteer in Lebanon and Syria, when the health situation started to deteriorate in France he thought that engaging with his new community and

fellow citizens would be a good way to get to know new people and use his skills.

During the first lockdown, Khalil offered his help to the Montesson's municipal services for the elderly, going shopping once a week in the local supermarket and taking out the garbage. He also volunteered at the IT help desk, a service that was in great demand during the health crisis. This is now an activity that he continues while also starting a work-study programme similarly to his wife, Yomna, who is an electrical engineer.

With these occupations and the children well settled in school, the family is beginning to gain independence. "Speaking the local language is very important," Khalil says, "but also learning the more practical aspects of local life". The role of the sponsoring group, offering administrative, logistical and emotional support as well as organising social activities and gatherings, has been fundamental. However, broadening their social network will require more time and effort

"Montesson is a small town, but despite that, it has everything you need and it is very pleasant for the children," Khalil concludes, describing his new home with optimism.



ROUNDTABLE ON REFUGEE SPONSORSHIP MONITORING AND EVALUATION

"Monitoring and evaluation is an essential component in achieving sustainable and high-quality programmes that ensure durable solutions and overall inclusion of sponsored refugees"

**Petra Hueck, ICMC Europe
Director**

On the 31st of March 2021 the SHARE Network hosted a Roundtable on Community Sponsorship Monitoring and Evaluation in the framework of the **SHARE QSN Project**. The event provided a platform to present and discuss the lessons learned from EU countries' experiences with community-based sponsorship programmes and best practices in conducting evaluations.

Paralleling the multi-stakeholder nature of the SHARE QSN Project, the roundtable event was transnational and attended by over 90 participants from a consortium of actors including civil society, international organisations, national and regional governments, EU institutions, universities, research centres, NGOs and other practitioners.

The event was centred around two main themes.

The first theme examined different pilot project experiences and initial lessons learned regarding **programme design and monitoring practices** in the Basque Country, Ireland, and Germany.

The second theme focused on the **impact of sponsorship on local communities and early refugee integration** on the basis of qualitative research of programmes in France, Italy and the United Kingdom, as well as reflecting on measuring their success, using the Canadian private sponsorship programme as an example.

Overall, the different interventions conveyed the positive impact that community sponsorship programmes can have on the integration outcomes of refugees and the host communities themselves, by offering an opportunity for citizens to be actively engaged in welcoming refugees and proactively contribute to refugee protection and integration.

The focus of the roundtable being on evaluations, the discussion also looked at the programmes implemented under a more critical angle, identifying aspects that could be further improved and adapted to tackle the challenges that arose during implementation.



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Some key findings identified in the evaluations included:

- The importance of **incorporating monitoring and evaluation (M&E) into programme design** and using it to shape, adapt, and improve programmes throughout their implementation;
- Ensuring that **M&E is affordable, realistic, implementable and flexible**;
- The importance of **clearly defining the roles and responsibilities** of different actors in order for community sponsorship to be more efficient and effective and ensuring greater transparency between stakeholders locally, regionally and nationally;
- The need to **improve coordination, communication and engagement with local authorities and local actors** traditionally outside the refugee serving community;
- The importance of **training volunteers**, especially in intercultural skills, as significant differences in cultural understanding can lead to tensions or conflict within groups;
- The importance of **providing clear information prior to arrival** to mitigate expectations of both the volunteer groups and refugees;
- The need for **increased funding support** for civil society actors involved in sponsorship to ensure adequate resource support for refugees, groups and programme manageability. This is important given the key role played by intermediary support organisations and/or lead sponsors in supporting volunteer groups with information, application procedures, recruitment, capacity building, training, resources, counselling, and ensuring safeguarding procedures.
- The importance of **connecting refugees** to diverse networks to reduce isolation, support them in their transition to autonomy and social inclusion, and improve their chances of remaining connected to the wider community.

A policy brief will follow in the coming months and will include recommendations and best practices in monitoring and evaluation of community sponsorships.

For a comprehensive summary of the roundtable and main points presented by the speakers you can read the **[Roundtable Report here](#)**.

Refugee Sponsorship & Student Pathways

“Coming to Europe as a student was liberating, a dream turning into reality. However, refugee students cannot be considered simply as international students”.

-Yohannes, first cohort UNICORE programme

© Caritas Italiana



The virtual roundtable on Refugee Sponsorship and Student Pathways, co-organized by the SHARE Network and Caritas Italiana on 30 June 2021, brought together over 130 participants from 39 countries representing governments, universities and civil society organisations engaging in, or considering, higher education programmes for refugees.

The event was also attended by a significant number of students potentially interested in these pathways and represented a great opportunity to learn more about the offer available, and the challenges and lessons learned to provide young people with both protection and opportunities to pursue a higher education in third countries.

The presentations and interventions provided insights into some of the programmes currently implemented in both Europe and Canada, outlining the existence of two main approaches in education pathways for refugees:

- Giving refugees access to mainstream student pathways, via partnerships between the national government, tertiary education institutions and civil society organisations;
- Admitting refugees under resettlement-based refugee sponsorship schemes.

The German DAAD Leadership for Syria and Africa and the Italian University Corridors implemented with the support of Caritas Italiana (UNICORE) are examples of the first approach, with prospective students applying for programmes in Germany or Italy and, if selected, receiving a study visa as well as pre-departure and post-arrival orientation and support to help them succeed within the programme and eventually find a job after completing their studies.

Alternatively, the Student Refugee Program (SRP) in Canada, managed by WUSC (World University Service of Canada), is operated under Canada's private sponsorship of refugees programme. This means that admitted candidates receive international protection upon arrival, and continuous financial, academic and social support by sponsoring groups made up of students, faculty members and staff from the postsecondary institutions. Likewise, King's College London is currently piloting an initiative to resettle a refugee family through community sponsorship and to offer a fully-funded undergraduate scholarship to one family member, hoping to pave the way for similar actions from other universities in the UK.

Both approaches contribute greatly to increasing the number of opportunities for refugee students wishing to continue their studies in Europe and Canada. Yohannes, one of the first to arrive in Italy through the UNICORE programme and also a speaker at

the event, confirmed the importance of opening complementary student pathways, and of continuing the good work to expand and improve them, ensuring that refugees become aware of their existence.

Having arrived in Italy in September 2019, he is now studying Mechanical Engineering at the University of Bologna and planning to find a job right after graduation to kickstart his professional career in Europe; and hopefully get the chance to contribute to the community.

He is extremely grateful for the opportunity and for the helpful pre-departure and post-arrival support he received from the partner organisations involved. Having almost completed his studies, his feedback is pivotal to tackle the challenge of transitioning to post-student life and ensuring the programme identifies and addresses the particular needs refugee students might have so they can successfully complete their academic journey.

The full interview with Yohannes is available on the SHARE Network's website.

[Click here to read it.](#)



SHARE QSN Project Partners



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For more information or enquiries about the **SHARE QSN Project**, please contact Gabriela Agatiello (ICMC Europe) at agatiello@icmc.net



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