



# Workshop for Refugees: Refugee Advisor Programme for Community Sponsorship

*25 January 2022 (14:30 – 17:00 CET)*

## Concept Note

### INTRODUCTION

**Community sponsorship offers local residents an opportunity to be actively engaged in the integration of refugees by hosting or supporting refugees in their communities.** It can be broadly defined as a public-private (non-state) partnership: between governments that facilitate legal admission for refugees, and private or community-based actors who provide financial, social and/or emotional support to receive and settle refugees in communities. This type of citizen engagement can have a transformative impact on communities by promoting social cohesion and creating more welcoming societies. Although not a legal pathway as such, community sponsorship supports resettlement and complementary pathways by adding more places for refugees and offering them additional benefits in terms of welcome and integration in local communities.

**Working collaboratively with different partners in seven European countries currently implementing community sponsorship schemes, the Share sponsorship programme uses a multi-stakeholder, grassroots and bottom-up strategy to build strong and sustainable sponsorship programmes that foster refugee participation, and ensures the voices, experiences and learning of grassroots sponsorship stakeholders are present at the national and EU level.**

While in Europe, participatory and co-creation approaches have been developed in sectors such as healthcare and the social sector, these approaches have not really been used in the context of legal pathways and integration and refugees are seldom included as stakeholders in the development of policies that impact their lives. While community sponsorship schemes have only been around for a few years in Europe, we see that the voices of refugees and local communities are rarely represented in the design, development, implementation and evaluation of the programmes.

**To further develop community and multi-stakeholder engagement in sponsorship, the Share Network has developed a Refugee Sponsorship Mobilisation Platform which gathers a wide variety of stakeholders,** including civil society organisations, cities and regions, faith communities, volunteer groups, diaspora organisations, universities, private business, philanthropy, and refugees themselves. The platform builds strategies and joint advocacy initiatives to expand and develop different types of sponsorship programmes adapted to national contexts.

As part of the [Refugee sponsorship mobilisation platform](#) activities, the Share Network is working on setting up a **Refugee Advisor Programme for Community Sponsorship** to ensure refugee voices are represented in advocacy at the local, national and EU level.

## **WORKSHOP FOR REFUGEES: REFUGEE ADVISOR PROGRAMME FOR COMMUNITY SPONSORSHIP**

### **Objectives of the Refugee Advisor Programme**

The programme aims to:

1. Enable the participation of refugees and raise awareness about sponsorship, bringing their lived experience and concerns to the local, national and EU level.
2. Enhance refugee participation in the creation, implementation, and evaluation of sponsorship programmes and policies.
3. Offer a platform for refugees to network and exchange with a variety of actors in the sector.
4. Develop recommendations and influence through advocacy.

### **Preliminary Workshop for Refugees**

We decided to start the elaboration of a Refugee Advisor Programme for Community Sponsorship with a workshop. This preliminary workshop is targeted towards refugees admitted via sponsorship, diaspora organisations, migrant and refugee-led organisations and organisations that have experience with meaningful participation. The goal is to put into place a dynamic of co-creation by offering a space where refugees can speak freely and express how refugee participation can support feed-back on policy, advocacy, or local inclusion in addition to other areas to be further defined.

It will give participants an overview of community sponsorship, as well as best practices for meaningful participation of refugees. The VOICES network in the UK will present their own sponsorship ambassador programme as an example of a successful and inspiring initiative. We will also hear from R-SEAT, an international initiative working to increase the participation of refugees at the global and national level in a meaningful, sustainable, and transformative way. There will be a third presentation by New Women Connectors on meaningful refugee participation in advocacy at the EU level using a gender lens. New Women Connectors is a non-profit organization led by migrant and refugee women.

**Most importantly, the workshop will provide a meaningful opportunity for attendees to co-design and give feedback on proposed features of the advisor programme (selection criteria, training, activities, networking, personal/professional development, compensation, etc.), as well as discuss what would be the most effective tools to communicate refugees' views (e.g. research, reports, testimonies, policy events, video/podcast series, etc.). (Please refer to Working document for more detailed list of proposed features.)**

### **Tentative Timeline:**

1. February 2022: Develop a call for applications based on feedback from first workshop
2. Early March 2022: Review applications
3. March 2022: Second workshop for core group of advisors (Present programme, opportunities for engagement, co-create training plan)
4. April 2022: Start trainings for refugee advisors
5. May 2022- March 2023: Engage Refugee Advisors in Share sponsorship activities
6. July 2022– February 2023: Work on a common project (i.e. policy paper, video output, blog, etc.)

## **BACKGROUND**

### **1/ Refugee and Migrant Participation in EU policy**

During 2018-19, the European Commission established the [European Migrant Advisory Board \(EMAB\)](#) as an 18-month pilot programme. The EMAB was designed to address the need to better manage the involvement of migrants and refugees in policymaking processes. It enabled nine individuals from refugee and migrant backgrounds to act as expert advisers for the [Partnership on Inclusion of Migrants and Refugees](#), and as key contributors to its [Action Plan on Inclusion of Migrants and Refugees](#).

Following this pilot action, the European Commission created the [Expert Group on the Views of Migrants in the field of Migration, Asylum and Integration](#). Expert Groups are established by the European Commission to obtain specialist advice from outside experts as a basis for sound policymaking, and refugee and migrant participation has been mainstreamed into this wider structure. Members of the Expert Group on the Views of Migrants were selected via an open call for proposals, and the group [first met in November 2020](#).

The [Action Plan on Integration and Inclusion for 2021-2027](#), launched by the European Commission in November 2020, promotes migrant participation in consultation and decision-making processes, multistakeholder/multilevel partnerships and cooperation frameworks for integration, and the design and implementation of EU and national integration funding resources.

### **2/ Refugee and Migrant Participation at the Share Network**

#### **How we enable participation**

- **Peer learning and best practice exchange:** We identify and disseminate best practice and lessons learned in refugee and migrant participation in the EU.
- **Refugee voices and ambassadors:** Through refugee [ambassadors](#) and [interviews](#) with refugees we share lived experiences on resettlement and sponsorships programmes - as well as local integration - to point out challenges and opportunities of programmes and identify needs to address such challenges.
- **Capacity-building:** We foster co-creation approaches for refugee and migrant welcome and integration across the SHARE Network, through training, capacity-building, best practice exchange and the creation of tools and resources.
- **Partnerships:** We develop and pilot participatory approaches for newcomer welcome and integration, in partnership with actors in local territories.
- **Evaluation:** Our evaluation work includes experiences and feed-back from refugees as beneficiaries as well as actors in implementing local integration programmes.
- **Advocacy:** Our research and advocacy work ensures participation by bringing refugees and migrants' expertise to the floor at local, regional, national and EU events. We advocate for the inclusion of participatory and co-creation approaches for welcome and integration in EU policies and funding instruments.

To read more about our tools for participation and selected past activities, please see the appendix at the end of this note.

## Appendix

### The Share Webinar on Participation and co-creation for refugee and migrant integration in the EU participation (December 2020)

In December 2020, our **Webinar on Participation and co-creation for refugee and migrant integration in the EU** was a first step in our 2020-2023 programme of work and it led to the creation of two key tools to guide our activities and advocacy and that of the wider network:

- **The SHARE Network 10 Key Principles for Refugee & Migrant Participation:** To guide our training, capacity-building, projects and advocacy activities, we have compiled 10 Key Principles for Refugee & Migrant Participation.
- **The SHARE Network Ladder of Participation (Refugee & Migrant Integration):** We also created the Share Network ladder of participation in order to provide:
  - A **framework** to situate current work on participation, and assess the type and level of engagement and involvement it is producing.
  - A **reference tool** to guide the development of new participatory and co-creation activities.
  - **Practical approaches** that can be used to facilitate different types and levels of refugee and migrant participation.

### The SHARE SIRA Expert Group Meeting on Migrant and refugee participation (December 2021)

In December 2021, in the context of the SHARE SIRA project, we organized an online meeting on the topic of the **participation of migrants and refugees** in orientation and social integration actions, as well as in governance, at EU, national and local levels, with a special focus on rural areas. The objective was to explore how to promote meaningful participation of migrants and refugees in policymaking and governance, how to organize and structure multi-level participation across territories (from local level to EU), and how to foster migrant and refugee participation in social orientation and integration actions (design, implementation and evaluation) and in building evidence-based practices.

Below are some of key questions that led our discussions:

- What makes the difference between meaningful/sustainable participation and “ad hoc” participation? How to avoid tokenization?
- What systemic changes are necessary to promote co-designing and governance? How to define an approach to participation (goals, methods, structure)?
- What are the necessary conditions to establish local participation structures in rural territories? How to create cooperation and coordinate between regional/local government, local communities and newcomers?
- Which form should capacity-building take in order to support participation?
- How can we adapt our participation strategy to the diversity of migrants’ profiles, experiences and life constraints? How to involve the most marginalized in participation (e.g. Women, LGBTQA+, those with a disability, etc.)?

Experts from across the EU shared lessons learned, challenges faced, ideas for replicating good approaches, policy implications and recommendations. We notably had presentations from the [Greek Forum of Refugees](#) (Greece), the [Académie pour la participation des personnes réfugiées](#) (France) and the [ParticipAzione](#) programme (Italy).

A policy brief summarizing the discussions and highlighting the recommendations will be published in early 2022.