



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

Share QSN Report on the first European refugee sponsorship convention

*26<sup>th</sup> of April*

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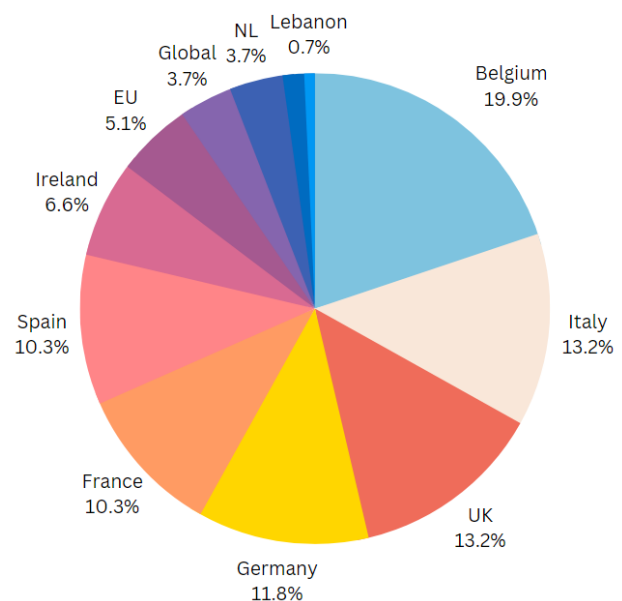
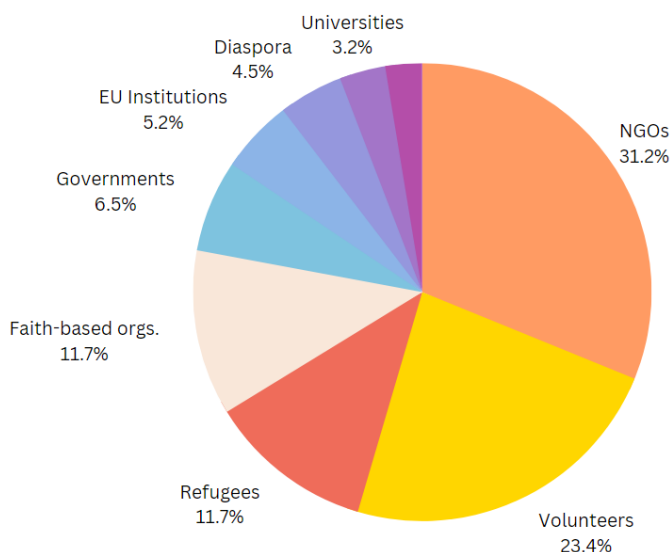
## Introduction

It is estimated that around 6,000 refugees have been brought to Europe under resettlement-based sponsorship, humanitarian corridors and other complementary pathways. The power of community solidarity and welcome has only grown and solidified in light of the Afghanistan and Ukraine conflicts. Many new community-led initiatives have adapted to this situation, inspiring new models of reception, diaspora participation and labour market inclusion. At the same time, higher education and labour mobility programmes have adopted community sponsorship approaches to strengthen welcome and integration of arriving refugees.

The first [European Refugee Sponsorship Convention](#) was organised to celebrate achievements, discuss developments, policies and practices and to reflect on lessons learned to move forward. Co-organised by ICMC Europe/Share Network and Caritas International (Belgium) in the context of the Share QSN programme, the Convention gathered around 150 multi-stakeholder participants, including national, regional and local authorities, lead sponsors, volunteers and refugees themselves. The half day event (programme in Annex) created space for discussion knowledge sharing, exchange of best practices and capacity building among participants. It offered networking opportunities in breakout settings but also through a community choir moment, dancing and music performances from communities across Europe.

## Who was there? Participants in focus

The Share Network is a **multi-stakeholder inclusive network of communities** and actors engaged in the welcome and inclusion of newcomers in Europe. Hence, the participants represented a multitude of stakeholders that had been engaged with during the project years and were reached out for the Convention to **exchange among peers**. The Convention brought together experienced sponsorship stakeholders and new ones from the Netherlands, Sweden, Switzerland, Poland and Portugal to get inspired and learn.



The Convention had a focus on bringing together peers to **foster exchange of best practices**. Grassroots voices were amplified and **bottom-up approaches** highlighted by a strong representation of volunteers and local NGOs. These were heard by the policy makers from national and EU bodies present at the Convention. Active participation of persons with lived experience was a main goal of the Convention and successful even if hampered by visa and travel documentation issues. Refugee participants were leading breakout groups, a sing-along moment and on a policy debate panel.

Both Belgian and European media were present at the event. It being a first of its kind, bringing together key stakeholders from across Europe, it was [covered by diverse national press agencies](#). Following the survey sent around which was answered by 30% of attendees, the Convention was a real success with 93% of persons responding saying that they were very satisfied or satisfied.

*“It was inspiring to be surrounded by people working in Community Sponsorship from across Europe. The panels were interesting and gave insight into how different models work. It was great to more informally talk to and connect with people. It was especially good to hear from those who had lived experience.”* (volunteer)

## Mapping and Research

Leading up to Convention Share engaged in a mapping and research exercise to publish for the Convention a [policy brief](#) in form of a booklet on the current design, policy and advocacy on community sponsorship and complementary pathways on a global, European and national level. Providing background information on the current global trends of resettlement and complementary pathways it points out a growing need for third country solutions.

### GLOBAL CONTEXT

#### Global Trends

Over 100 million forcibly displaced in May 2022

- 80.1 million internally displaced people (IDPs)
- 32.1 million refugees
- 4.5 million asylum seekers
- 83% are hosted in low- and middle-income countries and 72% in neighbouring countries
- Approx. 40% of forcibly displaced are children <18 & 50% are women and girls
- 48% of IDPs live in urban areas

#### Countries hosting the most refugees per capita of population:

- Lebanon (1 in 5 people are refugees)
- Jordan (1 in 10 people are refugees)
- Turkey (1 in 20 people are refugees)

#### 72% of refugees originate from 5 countries:

- South Sudan (2.5m) 10.8%
- Syria (6.8m) 29.4%
- Afghanistan (2.8m) 12.1%
- Venezuela (5.6m) 24.2%
- Ukraine (5.4m) 23.4%

#### 36% of refugees are hosted in 5 countries:

- Uganda (1.5m) 13.2%
- Turkey (3.7m) 32.5%
- Pakistan (1.5m) 13.2%
- Germany (2.2m) 19.3%
- Colombia (2.5m) 21.9%

Credit: Max Hitzel for Icaria Schnyder Human Lines

#### Global Resettlement Needs for 2023

2 million refugees are estimated to be in need of resettlement in 2023, while only 39,266 refugees departed in 2021 (during Covid-19).

Source: UNHCR Projected Global Resettlement Needs 2023

#### Global Solidarity

3 year Strategy on Resettlement & Complementary Pathways  
Targeting 1m refugees resettled and 2m refugees offered complementary pathways of admission by 2028

Third Country Solutions for Refugees: Roadmap 2030  
Goal 1: Grow resettlement & UNHCR target 2028 to reach 150,000 departures  
Goal 2: Advance compl. pathways and fam. reunif. & UNHCR target 2028: over 2m refugees accessing CP  
Goal 3: Build the foundation by promoting welcoming and inclusive societies incl. through CS

Timeline: Dec 2018 (Global Compact on Refugees (GCR)), Dec 2019 (Global Refugee Forum (GRF)), June 2022 (GRF), Dec 2023 (GRF), 2030

A third country solution is a safe and regulated opportunity to leave the first country of asylum and obtain a temporary or permanent legal status in a third country.

#### THIRD COUNTRY SOLUTIONS

Resettlement	Complementary Pathways	Humanitarian Visas	Humanitarian Admission	Community Sponsorship
		Family Reunification	Education Opportunities	Employment Opportunities
				Other Opportunities

Source: UNHCR complementary pathways for admission of refugees to third countries - Key considerations

Giving an overview of the complex European landscape on resettlement and humanitarian admission, it details Share's advocacy main advocacy points on the subject.

## RESETTLEMENT & HUMANITARIAN ADMISSION IN EUROPE

### 2022 Statistics

#### Main nationalities selected for resettlement

- Syrians: 10,290
- DR Congo: 2624
- Eritrea: 1,285

#### Main departure countries for resettlement

- Lebanon: 5,789
- Turkey: 2,769
- Jordan: 1,682
- Egypt: 1,455
- Rwanda: 1,267

#### Main destination countries for resettlement

- Sweden: 4,980
- France: 3,161
- Norway: 3,110

Source: IOM, EEA Resettlement and Humanitarian Admission in 2022

#### Decreasing resettlement numbers and countries engaging in resettlement

Since 2019 the number of resettled refugees has decreased annually. After Covid-19, numbers are expected to catch up slowly. In 2023, 16 EUMS participate in RST, of which 5 MS pledging no more than 50 persons. In addition to UNHCR RST providing for durable solutions, more MS operate ad-hoc HA programmes providing for subsidiary protection.

#### 2023 Pledges received

Country	Resettlement	Humanitarian admission
Belgium	500	125
Bulgaria	50	0
Finland	1,075	0
France	3,000	0
Germany	6,500	12,000
Ireland	800	100
Italy	500	850
Lithuania	0	20
Luxembourg	15	15
Malta	20	0
Netherlands	737	0
Portugal	300	100
Romania	200	0
Slovakia	50	50
Slovenia	50	0
Spain	1,200	0
Sweden	900	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>15 897</b>	<b>13 260</b>

Grand total: 29 157

#### Share Network Advocacy Points

- The Union Resettlement and Humanitarian Admission Framework (URF) to be adopted in 2023, must establish a more structured, predictable and long-term commitment.
- Within the URF Framework, EU member states should admit, as of 2024, 40,000 refugees annually under resettlement and humanitarian admission (RST & HA), in addition to 42,500 Afghans at risk over the coming 5 years.
- EU MS must in all cases uphold the right to seek asylum in Europe.
- The EU and MS should ensure regular reporting on fulfilling existing pledges on RST & HA and produce regular and reliable statistics.
- With EU support, EU MS develop and incrementally increase complementary pathways programmes, incl. labour mobility and education pathways, with a target of 50,000 by 2028, additional to refugee RST commitments.
- Community sponsorships (CS) can add to additional RST & HA numbers- requiring multi-annual programmes and dedicated governance structures that can set, implement and monitor numbers and outcomes.
- AMIF lumpsum funding to MS for sponsorships under RST & HA, including via CS, should benefit civil society organisations and regional/local govts - implementing these programmes.
- Citizens hosting initiatives cannot replace MS obligations to provide reception. EU MS must expand reception capacity and explore alternative arrangements to support the reception and integration of all refugees.
- Practices linked to welcoming Afghans and Ukrainians should be assessed to innovate ongoing RST and complementary pathways programmes, linked to CS.

#### EU Asylum Migration Integration Fund (AMIF) 2021-7

Supports resettlement and humanitarian admission of refugees

- MS receive 10,000€ for each person admitted through resettlement (including resettlement-based community sponsorship programmes).
- MS receive 6,000€ for each person admitted through humanitarian admission (including humanitarian corridor sponsored refugees) which can be increased to 8,000€ when specific vulnerable groups.

Providing a snapshot of the national context in each of the QSN's partner countries (BE, DE, ES, FR, IE, IT, UK) it details the procedural steps for receiving newcomers through complementary pathways.

## BELGIUM

### RESETTLEMENT PLEDGES & ARRIVALS

Year	First engagement in resettlement: 47 arrivals	1st annual quota: 100 arrivals	1000 pledged 2015-2017	2000 pledged 119 arrivals 2018-9	758 pledged 140 arrivals 2020-1	1250 pledged 71 arrivals 2022	450 pledged (50 of which through CS) 2023
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### COMMUNITY SPONSORSHIP (CS)

Year	2020	2021	2022	2023
Persons welcomed	14	15	10	50 persons to be welcomed

#### Community Sponsorship Programme

- Established in 2020 as an agreement between the State Federal Reception Agency for Asylum Seekers (FEDASIL) and Caritas International
- In 2022, SB Overseas, a secular organisation, supported alongside Caritas International > in 2023 SB Overseas stepped out
- Not additional to resettlement quota
- Only family units
- A core group of 4-5 volunteers supports the family for 12 months. Since 2023 there is an option to prolong for an additional 12 months with follow-up by the partner organisation
- No pre-determined amount to be provided by the volunteers but the estimated amount to cover costs for the family between arrival and reception of social allowance is between 3,000 - 5,000 euros
- Upon arrival, the newcomers have to formally apply for refugee status on Belgian territory but are guaranteed recognition and priority treatment
- After their refugee status is recognised, which usually takes 1-2 months, social benefits and an initial residence permit for 5 years is given
- After 5 years they can apply for a permanent residence permit

#### Higher Education Pathway

- Established in 2022 as a pilot programme between 2022-2024 with KU Leuven (Leuven University), Fedasil and Caritas International
- Community support is provided in Leuven for the students
- Caritas International organises, trains and monitors the Leuven stakeholders involved in community support
- 3 students in 2023; 3 in 2024 and expansion to other Belgian universities.

### Selection countries resettlement 2022

Zambia	6
Egypt	16
Jordan	41
Lebanon	8

### Countries of origin resettled refugees 2022

Sudanese	8
Syrians	55
Others	8

### Selection countries for sponsorship

Egypt	4
Jordan	15
Lebanon	25

### Countries of origin of sponsored refugees

Ethiopiens	4
Syrians	40

### ASYLUM APPLICANTS BE

Source: Eurstat, Asylum and first time asylum applicants - annual aggregated data

### COMMUNITY SPONSORSHIP - OPERATIONAL STEPS

- IDENTIFICATION AND REFERRAL**  
Identification by UNHCR, selection by the Belgian government through the Commissioner General for Refugees and Stateless Persons (CGRA), social + medical screening by Fedasil where families are proposed CS, concluded by the signing of a consent form for agreement.
- MATCHING REFUGEES WITH COMMUNITIES**  
Anonymous shortlist provided by Fedasil, which Caritas discusses with sponsor groups (basic information will be provided such as family composition, ages, language proficiency). Matching is mostly based on capacities/ profiles within a sponsor group and not on preferences.
- PRE-DEPARTURE CULTURAL ORIENTATION**  
Takes place 1-2 months before departure and consists of an orientation course "BELCO" delivered by the Fedasil. The course includes a presentation of life in Belgium and the resettlement programme (+...). Close to the family's departure, an online meeting between volunteers and refugees is organised together with Fedasil and Caritas.
- ARRIVAL**  
Sponsor group picks up the family at the airport. Fedasil and Caritas representatives are also present. An immediate transfer to new home follows.
- POST-ARRIVAL/ INTEGRATION SUPPORT**  
Support by volunteers complementary to public services offered. The Public Centre for Social Welfare (OCMW) provides a social assistant to the family, helps with registrations for language and integration courses, etc.). Sponsor groups are more focused on accompanying the family, welcoming them to the community, helping to build social networks and activities for acquiring language and social skills with locals.

Reflecting on how to broaden the base of sponsorship actors and building on the conference on [Universities as Sponsors](#), [Multi-faith and Wider Community Engagement](#), [Regions and Cities as Sponsors](#) and [Innovative Financing](#) the brief stipulates recommendations on mobilising cities and regions, engaging higher education institutions, mobilising actors beyond faith-based ones and engaging philanthropic actors and developing innovative financing models.

## BROADENING SPONSORSHIP ENGAGEMENT

### MOBILISING CITIES AND REGIONS

Further engaging regions and cities, under varied partnerships and programmes, can allow community sponsorship programmes to grow and become more sustainable. The Spanish sponsorship programme shows that regional governments, working with civil society, can act as co-sponsors of the programme, providing regional government funding, coordination and monitoring and evaluation support.

**WHY ?**

- It offers regions and cities, a direct role in designing and supporting safe and legal refugee admissions, offering community welcome and facilitating local integration
- Community sponsorships allows regions and cities to engage in strengthening local partnerships and community bonds
- Community sponsorships can offer a response to an overburdened central government-led reception system
- Through supporting community sponsorships, political leaders can play the role of 'champion' paving the way for other regions and cities to follow suit.

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

- Need for awareness raising and outreach through eg. networks of cities and regions
- Need for best practice exchange through frameworks for exchange and communication between programme stakeholders
- Need for recruitment strategies that include city officials and political representatives
- Municipalities that already work on successful refugee inclusion programmes should be approached for sponsorship
- Facilitate establishing employment partnerships
- Capitalise on the new models of welcome, designed by cities as a result of the war in Ukraine, delivering fast and flexible support.

### ENGAGING HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS

Expanding and creating higher education pathways is a task that must be undertaken by a multitude of stakeholders. This multistakeholder approach enables the formation of cooperation and partnerships at the regional, national and local level. To be efficient such partnerships must be diverse and include civil society, diaspora, migrant-led organisations, students, university staff, municipalities and the private sector to support refugee students' welcome and inclusion.

**WHY ?**

- Today, only 5% of refugees have access to higher education compared to the global average of higher education enrolment among non-refugees, which stands at 39%.
- Increasing education pathways linked to a secure status with protection safeguards for refugees is thus crucial
- It is a tangible way for states and the international higher education community to provide durable solutions to refugee students while contributing to improvements to their access to tertiary education.
- Sponsorship can provide welcome support upon arrival, ensure the active participation of student and local communities by means of mentoring and opportunities to explore social, cultural, sports, and learning.

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

- A multi-stakeholder approach is key to the success of higher education pathways
- Good cooperation with local partners in countries of first asylum is key
- Engaging civil society organisations with expertise in integration, refugee protection and special needs is beneficial
- Early labour market integration must be an integrated part of the programme design.

## Best practice exchange and peer learning



With French and Spanish translations provided, the event facilitated **best practice exchange** and **peer learning** moments. The [evaluations](#) on sponsorship that were conducted in the partner countries BE, DE, ES, FR, IE and IT throughout mid-2021 to mid-2022 by independent local researchers were presented at the ‘Meet the European Sponsorship Programmes’ booths held by partners.

Participants could move freely around the room and ask questions to about each of the programmes. Partners from civil society organisations, volunteers and refugees were standing at the booths explaining the programmes, answering any questions and giving detailed explanations on their best practices.



Participants were able to exchange in depth in breakout groups. The topics covered were **Sponsorship in rural areas; Mobilisation and recruitment of sponsors; Meaningful refugee participation; Higher education and labour pathways for refugees; Identification and matching of sponsors; Hosting Ukrainian refugees; The role of local authorities; Managing volunteers’ boundaries; Settlement plans and goal setting.** To read in depth about the topical discussions see p.11 ‘Thematic Breakout Discussions’.

## Opening of the Conference

After having been welcomed by Petra Hueck, Director of [ICMC Europe](#) and Anne Dussart, Head of Migration and Asylum at [Caritas International](#), the Share QSN partnership presented the [Share Quality Sponsorship Network](#) and its achievements over the past 2.5 years moderated by Gabriella Agatiello from ICMC Europe/Share Network.



There has been a progressive engagement of European countries in sponsorship. Whether it be through humanitarian corridors like in Italy (since 2015) and France (2017) or resettlement-based sponsorship like in the UK (2016), Ireland (2018), Spain (2018), Germany (2019) and Belgium (2020). In each country, the QSN project has partners who are the main actors in the delivery of support to the programme. Depending on the framework of the community sponsorship scheme, the refugees come in either with humanitarian visas or through resettlement. The main aspect of community sponsorship is the public-private partnership, where the government provides access to the territory and community actors take on the welcome and integration support for the newcomers.

Community sponsorship being a relatively new programme in Europe, the QSN project had a focus on monitoring and evaluation to assess challenges and ensure that policies regarding

sponsorship are evidence-based. As part of the evaluation work, the Share Network commissioned researchers in all partner countries to conduct in-depth research and interviews to a multitude of stakeholders on community sponsorship. The Belgian partner [Caritas Belgium](#) played an important role in mapping monitoring practices across Europe by organising a [workshop](#) at the beginning of the project, bringing together various stakeholders across Europe to exchange on and discuss monitoring practices. Bringing all best practices together, Share published a [policy brief on monitoring and evaluation practices across Europe](#).

A pillar of the Share QSN project is to build the capacity for all actors involved in sponsorship. During the project, the British partner [Citizens UK](#) held a multitude of capacity building workshops to train intermediary organisations, volunteer sponsors and refugees. A free [training platform](#) was developed as part of the

training, acting as a resource bank for sponsorship actors on all levels, it will be updated regularly with best practices from across Europe.

For sponsorship programmes to be efficient it is important to consider the pre-departure stage. Identifying vulnerable persons, matching them to sponsors in Europe and engaging in cultural orientation before departure are key to a successful programme. The French partner [Fédération de l'Entraide Protestante \(FEP\)](#) brought its expertise to the partnership since they rely on a strong multi-partner approach in Lebanon, where they select persons for the humanitarian corridor programme. They hosted a [roundtable on identification, referral, cultural orientation and matching](#) highlighting their approach and bringing together best practices across Europe.

Another pillar of the Share QSN project is to broaden the base of stakeholders engaged in community sponsorship. To make the programmes sustainable and have the buy-in from authorities, it is important to engage them in sponsorship. Having the [Basque Government](#) as the Spanish partner in the project allowed the Share community to learn from the pioneering Spanish model which is led by autonomous regional authorities. The [Regions and Cities](#) conference allowed the Share community to take part in a look and learn visit and experience firsthand when administrative bodies such as regional/local authorities lead on complementary pathways.

Part of broadening the base is to reach out to new actors and support already existing pathways such as higher education. The Italian

partner [Consorzio Comunitas](#), which operates [UNICORE](#), a refugee student pathway that involves community support shared the ins and outs of their programme at the occasion of the [Universities as Sponsors Conference](#) in Bologna, which brought together actors from Canada, Ireland, Germany and the UK working on student pathways. Over the past three years their programme has grown and now comprises 30 universities involved and 60 scholarships for the next academic year.

Community sponsorship is driven by faith-based actors, which is reflected in the QSN partnership where five out of the eight organisations are Christian. To grow and diversify the actors involved in sponsorship strategies must be found to reach non-faith or other faith actors. The German partner [Caritas Cologne](#) co-hosted the [Multifaith and Wider Community Engagement Conference](#) which showcased best practices of Muslim faith engagement and offered rich conversations on finding new ways to engage secular and diaspora actors including refugee-led organisations.

Since community sponsorship are community-, in most cases, the volunteers have to fund the refugee family for one year. Moreover, community sponsorship is a highly resource intensive programme including for civil society organisations. Therefore, it is imperative to find innovative ways to finance it. The Irish partner [Irish Refugee Council \(IRC\)](#) held a roundtable on [Innovative financing and engaging philanthropic actors](#) which looked at social impact bonds and the role philanthropy can play in sponsorship.



## Policy Debate on Governance and Coordination of Sponsorship within Resettlement-based and Complementary Pathways



Moderated by **Petra Hueck**, Director, ICMC Europe/ Share Network, the panellists representing global and European policy actors discussed the way forward for governing and coordinating community sponsorship within the wider framework of resettlement and complementary pathways.

**Nathalie Springuel**, from the UNHCR Representation for EU Affairs, gave an overview of the rising displacement with over 100 million people displaced in May 2022 and 2.1 million refugees in need of resettlement in 2023. While scope and scale of global displacement increase, solutions must also increase and become more adapted to the needs of refugees. This is reflected in the objectives of the [Global Compact on Refugees](#) (GCR) which recognises the importance of third-country solutions and calls for expansion of those. To achieve this, the GCR has been translated into the [Three-Year Strategy on Resettlement and Complementary Pathways](#) and the [Roadmap 2030](#) which targets by 2028 for 1 million refugees to be resettled and 2 million refugees to be offered complementary pathways of admission. To be able to achieve this, existing pathways must be expanded and accessed on a more systematic basis. The reception capacity crisis that Europe is currently facing is the greatest challenge to it. Arrivals from Ukraine added pressure to an already strained reception system and resulted in some countries suspending or slowing down

resettlement admissions. Springuel added that nevertheless challenges bring opportunities and called for capitalising on the new partnerships that arose to welcome Ukrainians and the new states that engaged in the admission of refugees. She gave an outlook of the [Global Refugee Forum](#) in December 2023 in Geneva where stakeholders will come together to make new pledges and commitments.

**Giulio Di Blasi**, from the [Global Refugee Sponsorship Initiative](#), provided an outlook on the potential for growth for CS over the coming 5 years. Di Blasi explained that the below main points must be leveraged to effectively increase the numbers of refugees landing in Europe through sponsorship:

- 1) Diversification of pathways that are connected to CS such as labour, education, naming (family members, friends, LGBTQIA+)
- 2) Cities, local and regional authorities must play a role in scaling sponsorship
- 3) Sustainable financing models
- 4) Retain capacity that has been generated by the arrival of Afghan and Ukrainian refugees – from diaspora engagement to retaining volunteers

**Heide Nidetzky**, from the European Commission's DG Home, gave an overview of the European policy stage regarding resettlement and humanitarian admission. The [Union Resettlement Framework](#) (URF) which was tabled in 2016 by the Commission and is to

be adopted by 2024 defines resettlement and humanitarian admission. Humanitarian admission complements resettlement but they differ in two main areas: referral and status. Resettlement cases are usually referred by UNHCR whereas referrals in humanitarian admission programmes can come from international bodies but also States, civil society and in the future the EUAA. Resettled persons arrive in Europe as beneficiaries of

international protection whereas persons arriving through humanitarian admission with a visa. Resettlement is voluntary for MS and the number of countries engaged has not increased. The adoption of the URF can result in a stronger EU voice and is accompanied by increased funding for States for resettlement. However, civil society will still have to play a major role in putting pressure on the national political leaders to make pledges.

## Policy Debate on Developing Community Sponsorship at the National and Local Level



Moderated by Gabriela Agatiello, the panellists representing a European think tank, a German government research service, volunteers from Germany and Ireland, the Irish Government and an Italian civil society discussed the national sponsorship schemes and their unique features.

Since their inception, community sponsorship schemes have evolved. This is illustrated in the case of the German NesT programme. **Florian Tissot** from the [BAMF Research Service](#) explained that initially volunteers were asked to financially support the family and pay rent for two years. After the government commissioned a broad field evaluation, which consulted refugees, sponsors, operational stakeholders and steering actors, it was decided to shorten the financial and housing commitment of the volunteers to adjust it to the one year administrative and emotional support. **Ulrich Kober** a volunteer sponsor and Director of Programme Democracy and Cohesion [Bertelsmann Stiftung](#) added that this was reflected in the sentiment of volunteers in Germany not wanting to be called 'sponsors' and thus donors but rather 'mentors' that

accompany the refugees in their journey of discovery of a new life in Germany. The evaluation also found that the programme contains many hidden costs such as the need for translators, cultural mediators, taxi drivers to facilities etc. that were not communicated properly to the mentors. This has now been taken up in the curriculum to train mentors. Having welcomed 139 persons since 2019, there are doubts whether the programme is scalable to the extent the German government would like to see it, namely 200 admissions over the next year. Nevertheless, the programme is seen as a success as mentor groups grow and more persons are welcomed into German communities.

Community sponsorship also evolved in Ireland when it became part of a crisis response. **Barry Quinn**, from the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration & Youth in the [Irish Government](#) explained that many Afghans arriving in Ireland after fleeing the fall of Kabul were welcomed by Irish sponsors. Similarly, many sponsor groups decided to host Ukrainians after the Russian invasion. Private hosts were able to benefit from the knowledge,

training and toolkits developed by civil society organisations and the national support organisation for community sponsorship. Sponsorship as part of a crisis response was only possible due to the collaborative approach of all actors (state and non-state) who met regularly through established communication channels, and the structures that were already in place. **Mawaheb Alnour**, a refugee and volunteer sponsor in Ireland explained that for volunteers the shift to support not only resettled refugees but also those arriving after a crisis came quite naturally. However, she pointed to the fact that mental health support needs to be expanded and access to it strengthened for newcomers.

In Italy, the crisis in Afghanistan also led to some innovations in the humanitarian corridor programme. Humanitarian corridors, contrary to resettlement-led welcome initiatives allow

for the civil society organisation to refer and select refugees to be welcomed in the host country. **Fiona Kendall** from the [Federation of Protestant Churches in Italy](#) explained that typically, the organisation that manages the humanitarian corridor identifies, through partners in the first country of asylum, the beneficiaries. This meant that when the Taliban seized power, a protocol was set up to open a pathway for Afghans to come to Italy that would allow the ‘nomination’ of persons to be welcomed. This was interrupted due to the crisis in Ukraine. Nevertheless, an Afghan women’s cycling team of 60 persons was welcomed to Italy through the collaboration of FCEI, the local authority in Regiona Bruzzo, the Italian Federation of Cyclists, a financial backer and a journalist. This demonstrates that programmes can allow for receiving individuals based on shared interests, and this may be a way to counter hosting fatigue.

## Thematic Breakout Discussions: Best Practices and Key Questions in Sponsorship

The afternoon of the Convention saw the participants split into ten different breakout groups including French and Spanish speaking groups. Below are listed some key reflections.



## 1. *Sponsorship in Rural Areas: What are the Opportunities and Challenges*

Led by **Fiona Hurley** from [Nasc](#), participants agreed that there is an advantage for newcomers to start in rural areas, but that if specific gaps and challenges remain unaddressed, long-term residence there will be unlikely. Rural areas need investment in infrastructure to counter limited job market inclusion, language learning and means of transport. As communities are tightly knit in rural areas, this can create opportunities for newcomers to immediately create links with the host society. However, due to a lack of diversity, those communities may be more conservative and newcomers could feel more isolated and lonely than in more urban settings. Participants discussed whether digital connectivity and internet literacy may present unforeseen opportunities in bridging gaps.

### **Best practices for sponsorship in rural areas**

#### *Pre-arrival:*

- Get the key personalities on board such as the local doctor, mayor or church
- Organise local events to increase knowledge and raise awareness about refugees and immigration such as football matches
- Only match suitable refugee profiles to rural areas
- Link the community to the refugee family through a video call to prepare the refugees

#### *Mobilisation:*

- Events in small communities are a good means to meet and recruit volunteers
- People who already have experience working with refugees should be approached
- Word of mouth works best to convince other groups to form
- Strong stakeholders need to be identified

## 2. *How to Best Mobilise, Retain and Recruit Sponsors?*

Strategies for community engagement have diverse goals, from mobilising local grassroots support to diversifying the volunteer base and expanding beyond the traditional, often faith-based, core. Retention strategies in particular aim to strike a delicate balance—mobilising experienced sponsors' skills & enthusiasm, while avoiding burnout.

Led by **Thomas Huddleston**, an independent consultant and sponsor, participants came up with these key recommendations on who is best placed to mobilise new sponsors:

- Spokespeople should have the same profile as targeted sponsors
- Local, 1-on-1, in-person outreach is more effective than generic ads or social media because sponsorship involves major formal commitments & a lot of trust/relationship-building
- Education/awareness-raising activities, accompanied by a variety of volunteer asks, are time-consuming, but effective when targeted to the specific public
- Children can act as ambassadors as schools are the heart of every community
- Civil society is often more effective as mobilisers than governments alone
- Recognition should be provided to previous sponsors by asking a few to become ambassadors, provide testimonials, and reach out & present to their networks (similar local organisations in other areas or regional/national networks)
- Regional partners with strong community networks open doors within specific local communities by identifying groups with a potential interest or similar programmes
- Local parishes are often the start and engage when asked directly, often in person, by a trusted partner. Faith groups are often strong at networking with their faith/interfaith networks.
- Successful previous sponsors & sponsored families are the most effective messengers, especially when connected to

potential sponsors' own  
networks/organisations/area

They further recommended that for successful programmes, sponsors need

- Civil society organisations that offer support and advice
- Different levels of volunteering: core vs. flexible ad hoc sponsorship group members so that volunteers can move in and out of different roles as their availability & readiness fluctuates over time
- The support of a social worker for administrative/legal tasks
- Training to focus on refugees' strengths and resilience rather than vulnerability
- Realistic expectation management
- Be matched with a family profile that plays to the strengths of the sponsors

On retaining and re-engaging sponsors, participants recommended for organisations to

- Recognise that sponsorship is an emotional learning process: feelings of stress and burnout can come from the most successful experience, often due to factors beyond everyone's control
- Create a community to share contacts of sponsors so that sponsors feel connected to each other and problem-solve together. This is particularly useful for new sponsors to get information & support from more experienced sponsors
- Listen to volunteers' ongoing needs and struggles to develop training & resources
- Speak to & celebrate the benefits of sponsorship on the sponsor themselves
- Prepare the end of the sponsorship period, with specific ongoing training on the transition from being a sponsor to being a 'good neighbour'
- 'Naming' has an echo effect motivating repeat sponsorship of extended family members of previously sponsored refugees

- Ask previous groups to wait & take time to rest until they are ready to re-connect
- Ensure that sponsored refugees are also being trained & included in the sponsorship process, so that the programme and previous sponsors may reach out to them to join, either as their own sponsorship groups or as volunteers

### 3. *Meaningful Refugee Participation – What Does it Consist of & How to Enable it?*

Led by **Anna Coulibaly** from [ICMC Europe/Share Network](#) and two Refugee Advisors Abdulrahman Bdiwi and Yohannes Sisay Molla, participants discussed how meaningful participation cannot be ad-hoc or happen in a vacuum but must be systematic and institutionalised. It is a slow process that must have long-term goals with adequate resources and training for the newcomers. Co-design must happen at all levels – in the design, development, implementation and evaluation of the programmes. Participants agreed that it was horizontal partnerships that must be sought also with refugee-led organisations. A common thread along the discussion on what participation can look like was self-governance and agency as active members of organisations/ decision-making bodies. Mentorship and peer-to-peer support were emphasised as an empowering means to participate.

It can be enabled by

- **Local authorities:** refugee advisory boards, refugees being part of the local or district council, through affirmative or positive discrimination
- **Civil society organisations:** refugees as employees and not just volunteers, quota and target setting, allocate human and financial resources to train and recruit refugees to be able to participate, provide remuneration
- **Sponsors:** make them part of the sponsor group in some capacity, change the narrative and harmful public attitudes

- **Refugees:** mobilise in diaspora organisations and form refugee-led organisations

#### **4. Engaging Universities, Students and Local Communities in Higher Education Pathways**

Sponsorship provides refugee students with an immediate support network pre, during and post-study. The sponsorship group can provide connections into the wider community, mitigating potential isolation outside of term-time and supporting longer-term integration into the wider community including employment opportunities. Several complementary pathways for refugee students with differing structures have developed in recent years, either through mainstream student pathways (Germany, France, Belgium, Italy) or under resettlement-based sponsorship programmes (Canada).

Led by **Hannah Gregory** from the [Refugee Hub](#) and **Lukas Kestens** from [Caritas International](#), participants discussed ways of sustainably embedding sponsorship in education pathways:

- Different types of visas/pathways can be used to underpin education pathways, however, it is critical to consider the *legal status* of refugee students when designing pathways
- When selecting refugees, universities and education institutions should play a critical role alongside civil society actors
- The training of sponsors must differ for an education pathway and resettlement-based sponsorship

#### **5. Engaging the Private Sector and Communities in Labour Pathways for Refugees**

Refugees bring many skills and talents, including qualifications and work experience in a wide range of professional and essential

roles. Labour mobility schemes offer refugees pathways to employment via admission under mainstream national labour visa schemes.

Led by **Marina Brizar** from [Talent Beyond Boundaries](#), participants discussed its identification of candidates, and the barrier of qualification translation and sponsorship as part of the solution for labour pathways. TBB identifies displaced workers in need of international protection rather than formally recognised refugees. Regarding the recognition of qualification certificates a number of points and options to counter this challenge were raised:

- It is very sector dependent: in the IT sector employers can decide to conduct their own assessment contrary to the health sector
- The government may also waive all skills assessment provided that the employer is content that the worker will meet the requirements (as is the case in Australia)
- For the UK health sector, TBB worked with relevant health bodies to streamline the approach, enabling health workers to work as health assistants until they had completed the necessary UK-specific requirements (usually within 6 months)
- Generally, it is important to understand what is required and then decide whether it is reasonable or sensible to seek an exemption or propose some adaptations

There was a discussion about whether existing community sponsorship programmes could be adapted to support labour mobility. It was felt that existing CS programmes that primarily support the resettlement of UNHCR-referred refugees who meet the vulnerability criteria are not set up to enable labour mobility. However, aspects of the sponsorship approach as an integration tool could be adapted to support the sustainability of labour pathways. Participants noted that how somebody arrives, the 'label' (refugee or employee) attached, can impact both on employer perspectives and an individual's sense of agency.

## **6. Experiences from Welcoming Afghans – Identification and Matching of Sponsors with Refugees**

As a direct response to the crisis in Afghanistan in late 2021, countries decided to sponsor Afghans via humanitarian admissions. The Afghans were either identified by family members (Ireland), as human rights defenders or specific groups that were under immediate threat (women’s sports teams). This opened the possibility of ‘naming’ refugees to be sponsored.

Led by Fiona Kendall from [FCEI](#) participants discussed the advantages and limitations of ‘naming’. The option to ‘name’ refugees can create sponsor groups that may have otherwise not formed and also reach sponsors that usually would not be mobilised. Moreover, relationships are already in place and sponsorship periods may continue past the usual assigned period of 1-2 years due to the family link or community of interest connection. However, concerns were raised over the fact that this may mean that the people who need it the most based on a vulnerability assessment will not be identified. Hence, participants agreed that it should not become the main way to identify and select refugees for sponsorship but part of it. While some participants raised the issue that related persons may take more time to acquire language skills due to tending to stay in their own communities, others held that integration outcomes are stronger when a person is ‘named’ since the profile is known and links are already established pre-arrival. Participants found that naming is not a straight-forward issue but it was agreed that for refugees, whether resettled/sponsored or not, bringing over other family members is a priority. Thus, the option of ‘naming’ will remain discussed as a possibility for family members to join and specific groups to be identified based on characteristics such as sexual orientation, gender identity or a sport played.

## **7. A New Generation of Sponsorship? How to Bridge Community Sponsorship Frameworks with Short-Term Engagement of Volunteers for Hosting Ukrainian Refugees**

The Ukraine crisis has allowed many cities to develop and pilot new models of welcome, delivering fast and flexible support. The lessons learned from, notably, citizen housing initiatives and the management of volunteers should influence community sponsorship programmes, just as the key lessons from the latter (vetting of sponsors, matching, safeguarding, training, providing ongoing support and possibilities for peer learning) should inform the new models of welcome piloted for Ukrainians. This has been reconfirmed by the European Commission which published its [Safe Home Guidance](#) in July 2022.

Led by **Cova Bachiller Lopez** from the [Red Cross EU Office](#) and **Rory O’Neill & Kevin O’Leary** from the [Irish Refugee Council](#) (IRC) participants agreed that the hosting schemes were mainly carried by the civil society and active citizens. Discussion centred around whether hosts were mentors or friends, with participants concluding that friendship reflects a more balanced relationship. A major point of difference between CS and citizen-led housing initiatives is safeguarding. While civil society organisations vet the sponsors, citizens offered their houses on Facebook groups with potentially unsafe homes and hosts. Since the hosting initiatives were a crisis response, the timeframe differs also quite substantially from community sponsorship. While regularly sponsored refugees will stay in the host country in the long term, Ukrainian refugees may return or stay with the goal of returning as soon as possible. Participants ended their discussion by identifying the double standard and structural racism in migration and integration policies.

## 8. *What Role Can/Should Local Authorities and Regional Governments Play in Sponsorship?*

Early engagement with municipalities is key for the success of sponsorship programmes. Cities and regions that already work on successful refugee inclusion programmes are the most evident partners to facilitate and support community sponsorship. Municipalities can play a role in providing financial and structural support to volunteers.

Led by **Tihomir Sabchev** from the [Refugee Hub](#) participants discussed and exchanged ideas on the possible 'roles' that local and regional authorities can/are playing in supporting community sponsorship.

Building close partnerships with local authorities is often challenging. Housing is often a great challenge in CS programmes and local authorities are the ones with the best access to public housing. However, the lack of available housing is often raised by local authorities as a reason for not engaging in sponsorship. In the UK, for sponsor groups to reach out to local authorities is not a challenge since their consent is needed by the sponsorship group to be able to welcome a family. The challenge lies more in building an equal relationship with a stakeholder that is used to 'being in charge'.

In BE, there is little contact with local authorities. Even financial incentives have not been successful in mobilising their support.

In the NL, which has no fully-fledged CS programme, local authorities have to be on board as they are approving the resettlement requests. Further engagement from their side has been difficult to obtain due to a lack of trust and interest.

To counter these challenges participants came up with the following recommendations:

- **Bottom-up pressure from citizens:** citizens can appeal to their local government for housing for refugee families
- **Advocacy:** showing local authorities that it relieves their work in the long run and that CS can actually be part of the solution addressing the reception crisis

- **Identifying pioneers and champions:** mayors and/or high-level civil servants that push the agenda

## 9. *Volunteering – Empowering Refugees and Managing Boundaries*

The [country evaluations](#) conducted by Share highlighted how managing boundaries between volunteers and newcomers, fostering empowerment and independence, and good practices on transition planning away from group support were key considerations for volunteers. In community-led welcome schemes across Europe, fostering independence and empowerment for newcomers is fundamentally important for the wellbeing of the welcomed individuals themselves and also the sustainability of the sponsorship experience.

Led by **Hannah Feldman** from [Citizens UK](#) for the English-speaking participants and **Veerle Steppe** from [Caritas International](#) for the French-speaking participants, expectation management based on clear and transparent information was deemed central to empowerment and management of boundaries. These clear and transparent roles should be provided to all actors from those involved in the matching process, governments, local authorities and intermediary organisations to welcoming groups. Generally, participants noted that language acquisition and housing remain the biggest challenges for both refugees and volunteers. Usually, even after 2 years the family does not have their own house or acquired a professional language level. Participants agreed that there should be a longer, more structured and supported 'phasing-out' period after the initial hosting period. Moreover, the first three months after arrival should only be dedicated to getting introduced and adjusted to the new environment without any additional stress or administrative pressure. Participants found that on average, refugee families become autonomous after a period of three years. Similarly to acquiring language skills and housing, access to employment should be supported and better programmed. In terms of empowerment and autonomy, refugees



should be made aware of their own competencies and strengths to become less dependent on help (no matter how well intended). Refugees should be guided more professionally and skilled towards taking charge of their own path and future. This can be achieved by focusing at a preliminary stage on the objectives and future expectations of refugees to be able to better frame these in time and context. In terms of boundaries, volunteers and refugees should find a gradual and common understanding as to where they would like to draw the line. Refugees should get the opportunity (and language support) to participate and co-manage the proximity degree with all welcoming actors, separating social contacts from the necessary procedural and administrative stages. Finally, a more diversified approach is needed to respond adequately and effectively to the very diversified needs of refugees; instead of 'one size fits all' personalised and more intensive guidance in line with the individual profiles proves to be more productive in terms of reconstructing autonomy, for it is more respectful of the diverse background and capacities of the refugee and build a more solid ground for future development.

### **10. Volunteering – What Works Well in Groups & How to Engage with Diverse Volunteers**

The number and constellation of volunteer sponsor groups are different for every refugee family sponsored. The various groups have all found clever ways to work together and rely on each volunteer's strength. While a number of sponsoring groups were formed by Churches or local parishes, the sponsoring groups themselves profit from diversity, joining volunteers from different faiths and secular backgrounds.

Led by **Guilhem Mante** and **Nina de Lignerolles** from the [FEP](#) participants discussed best practices in :

- **The Basque Country**
- Regular monthly meetings to exchange information between members of the volunteer group on different subjects: education, health and administration

- Sharing of tasks: 5 people per subject with different ages and availability
- The family's best interests should always be central

- **Toulouse**

- 1 main contact point for each volunteer group to link with the supporting organisation FEP which has the role of mediator between the supporting organisation and the volunteers
- The mediator does not have much contact with the sponsored family
- Guarantees security of everyone/ gives the framework

- **Bretagne**

- Volunteers changed their governance to form a commission
- 3 co-presidents responsible for the commission that coordinates:
  - Welcoming the Family
  - Finances
  - Awareness raising in the streets
  - Organisation of events

- **Portugal**

- A diverse collective looks for complementary financing
- Received EU financing for welcome (5eur per day)
- There is a peer-help programme where they match a family of similar origin to a newly arrived family

- **Belgium**

- 1 group of volunteers, welcomes 1 family with the help of 1 cultural mediator
- Caritas takes the role of facilitator and mediates to fulfil 'life projects' identified by refugees
- Caritas guides the volunteer group and the family members and shares the sponsorship experience

### **11. Collective Goal Setting – How to Develop Settlement Plans & Achieve Goals?**

Sponsoring and welcoming a refugee family into a community is a serious undertaking, while also being a hugely rewarding process.

With the right preparation through a settlement plan, the support given can be monitored and adapted as necessary in collaboration with the sponsored family. Settlement plans can outline the roles and responsibilities of group members and the sponsored family, detail how the sponsor group can support early integration, and together set out settlement goals that the sponsored family would like to achieve. Setting goals also gives the groups and sponsored refugees something to work towards and to measure progress against.

Led by **Susannah Baker** and **Sara Wilson** from the [Pickwell Foundation](#) participants discussed that to make empowering settlement plans, volunteers should not see themselves as 'empowerers'. Volunteers and refugees should be aware that although the goals may be clear, the path to achieving those is not. Participants agreed that volunteers should not always jump

to help but let the newcomers figure some things out by themselves, even if this will take more time. However, it was cautioned that pressuring individuals into autonomy is not a desirable approach. For settlement plans to work, ownership must be on both sides. Settlement plans are frameworks that must be held lightly. Nevertheless, monitoring and reviewing progress on the plan is important. To allow for this the volunteer group must have the right pace and level of communication with the refugee family. Potential barriers to setting goals for a settlement plan are language, the slow speed of achieving progress, managing expectations, trust and mental health. This is particularly valid when the goals are unrealistic and related alternatives must be found. It is important to find the right balance between enabling progress and not going too fast. Participants identified that having support in place for the volunteer group is crucial, especially when things do not go as expected.

## Conclusions & Main Takeaways

Bringing together a European sponsorship community, including participants from countries with long-standing community sponsorship programmes and emerging ones, from volunteers and welcomed refugees to civil society and government actors, the Convention was successful in creating a sense of community empowerment, reinvigorating actors to expand and strengthen sponsorship in Europe.

Mieke Verrelst, Deputy Head of Cabinet of the Belgian State Secretary for Asylum and Migration Nicole de Moor, addressed the audience to express gratitude to all the grassroots actors, insisting on the need for more resettlement and community sponsorship programmes in Europe to build on existing legal pathways and expand them.



## *The Convention's main takeaways*

### **Recognising volunteers for their work in making community sponsorship schemes successful**

Volunteers are at the heart of community sponsorship programmes. They need to be trained by civil society organisations to be able to offer the best support to newcomers, but also be recognised and celebrated for their efforts. Sponsorship should be a rewarding and positive experience and citizens who take on state responsibilities of integration should receive the appropriate recognition. By bringing together volunteers from across Europe to exchange with one another but also with other stakeholders, the Convention placed volunteers at the centre, highlighting the crucial role they play in sponsorship.

### **Involving the refugee community in the design, implementation and feedback of sponsorship programmes**

Refugees as persons with lived experience must be involved in sponsorship on an equal footing to be able to strengthen and grow the programmes on an evidence base. Their involvement should be equal, manifold and cross-stakeholder: they should be part of the design of sponsorship schemes, be consulted, part of sponsorship groups, give feedback and evaluate etc.

### **Seeking local authorities' support and government backing**

Although volunteers and civil society are the main actors in sponsorship programmes, it is

important to involve local and regional authorities. Especially since housing is one of the greatest challenges across Europe to expanding sponsorship and local authorities are the best place to assist in finding suitable accommodation for the newcomers. They are also the greatest guarantor of sustainability since they can take part in advocating for the scheme on a wider scale.

### **Harnessing support from Ukraine response**

The Ukraine response has been spearheaded by citizens who offered housing and inclusion support. When these spontaneous responses were in countries with sponsorship programmes, those benefitted from the existing structures. This included safeguarding policies and civil society organisations being familiar with supporting volunteers that host refugees. However, ways must be found for such ad-hoc hosting initiatives to benefit sponsorships. The outpour of support and housing offered must be harnessed and mobilised for sponsorship.

### **Strengthen complementary pathways through sponsorship**

Higher education and labour mobility pathways are sought to be expanded in Europe. Community sponsorship can be a stand-alone pathway, although in Europe it mainly underpins resettlement. However, in Italy and France, sponsorship underpins complementary pathways in the form of student and humanitarian visa programmes. This has proven a successful approach to strengthening complementary pathways by involving the civil society actors and the community on the ground.

## A celebratory networking event for over 150 stakeholders across Europe



[Adam Labar](#), a Singer-songwriter & vice-president of the [Refugees Union in Portugal \(UREP\)](#) singing his song 'Community Support' specially created for the Convention. As a community exercise, all participants sang the refrain together.



The Convention provided ample time for networking bringing together stakeholders from volunteers and refugees to civil society, government, EU policy, and grassroots actors.

The Convention ended with the fanfare [Jour de Fête](#) inviting the participants to dance to lively live music.



## Annex 1: Agenda

### Programme

13:15 - 14:00: Registration and Coffee

14:00 – 14:30: Welcome and Introduction

Moderation: Ali Al-Jaberi

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

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

*After a brief welcome and introduction, the Share QSN partnership will present the Quality Sponsorship network and what has been achieved in the last 2. 5 years, also highlighting the challenges. As part of the presentation we will introduce the Share QSN booklet on Community sponsorship in Europe, looking at the evolution of the programmes in Europe, their growth and diversification.*

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

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

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

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

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

- **Nathalie Springuel**, [UNHCR](#) Representation for EU Affairs
- **Giulio Di Blasi**, [Global Refugee Sponsorship Initiative](#)
- **Anita Vella/Heide Nidetzky**, [DG Home](#), European Commission
- **André Baas**, [European Union Agency for Agency](#)

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

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

- **Hanne Beirens**, [Migration Policy Institute Europe](#)
- **Florian Tissot**, [BAMF Research Service](#), Germany

**Ulrich Kober**, Volunteer sponsor and Director of Programme Democracy and Cohesion [Bertelsmann Stiftung](#), Germany

- **Barry Quinn**, [Irish Government](#), Ireland

**Mawaheb A. Elnour**, medical student and volunteer sponsor, Ireland

- **Fiona Kendall**, [Federation of Protestant Churches of Italy](#) (FCEI), Italy

16:20 – 16:40: Coffee Break

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

*Interactive music session showcasing community-led welcoming initiatives.*

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

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

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

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

Theme-based discussions:

1. **Sponsorship in rural areas: What are the opportunities and challenges?**

Facilitated by **Fiona Hurley**, Nasc

2. **How to best mobilise, retain and recruit sponsors**

Facilitated by **Thomas Huddleston**, Consultant

3. **Meaningful refugee participation – how to enable it and what does it consist of?**

Facilitated by **Anna Coulibaly**, ICMC Europe; **Yohannes Sisay Molla**, Share refugee advisor; **Abdulrahman Bdiwi**, Share refugee advisor

4. **Engaging universities, sponsoring students and local communities in higher education pathways**

Facilitated by **Hannah Gregory**, Refugee Hub

5. **Engaging private sector and communities in labour pathways for refugees**

Facilitated by **Marina Brizar**, Talent Beyond Boundaries

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

Facilitated by **Fiona Kendall**, FCEI

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

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

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

Facilitated by **Tihomir Sabchev**, Refugee Hub

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

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

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

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

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

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

19:30 – 20:15 Reception and drinks

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

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

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

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

22:15 – 24:00: Disco & Dance

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