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# WELCOMING ENGAGEMENT

## HOW PRIVATE SPONSORSHIP CAN STRENGTHEN REFUGEE RESETTLEMENT IN THE EUROPEAN UNION

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EU ASYLUM: TOWARDS 2020 PROJECT



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HOW PRIVATE SPONSORSHIP CAN STRENGTHEN  
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By Judith Kumin

December 2015

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The research project aims to contribute to development of the Common European Asylum System (CEAS) consistent with the European Union's interests, values, and obligations, through research on challenges and options on asylum to inform the development of evidence-based policies and laws. The project involves broad consultations with Member States, EU institutions, civil society, international organisations, and academics, to draw on their expertise and seek to work towards consensus on the many key questions around responses to asylum on which perspectives differ.

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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Refugee resettlement, typically thought of as a state-led activity, can also be sponsored by private individuals, groups, corporations, and other entities. Ideally, private sponsorship programmes would operate in parallel to government-led resettlement efforts and thus expand the number of places available to refugees. Private sponsorship may also increase the number of countries participating in refugee resettlement. Given the opportunity, private actors may play an instrumental role in forging a comprehensive refugee policy.

Over the past four decades, only a handful of private sponsorship arrangements have been put in place. (The oldest and best known is in Canada.) Today, the Syria crisis focuses new attention on private sponsorship as a safe and orderly means for refugees to reach protection, including in the European Union. Such arrangements can also broaden the family reunification channels already open to refugees.

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When given the possibility, members of the public who are concerned about refugee protection can demonstrate their commitment by being private sponsors. Moreover, the ongoing support of sponsors can facilitate the integration of resettled refugees. To be effective, however, private sponsorship programmes have to be carefully structured. Guidelines should clarify the purposes of private sponsorship, who can sponsor and be sponsored, the responsibilities of sponsors, and the safety net in place should problems arise.

Citizens across the European Union have shown extraordinary concern for the plight of refugees, in particular in the face of the large influx in 2015. This suggests that there is considerable scope to develop private sponsorship programmes in the European Union. The European Commission, the European Asylum Support Office (EASO), and nongovernmental organisations (NGOs) should take the lead in investigating the possible benefits, and costs, of private sponsorship arrangements and to launch pilot projects, with a view to making private sponsorship part of the refugee protection landscape in Europe.

## I. INTRODUCTION

Amid disagreements about how to respond to the current asylum and migration crisis in the European Union (EU), there is one point of broad consensus: There should be ‘safe and legal ways’ for refugees to reach EU territory.<sup>1</sup> In reality, however, there are few such possibilities. This report looks at the potential of private sponsorship arrangements to provide refugees a safe and orderly pathway to resettlement in the European Union.<sup>2</sup>

The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) defines resettlement as ‘the selection and transfer of refugees from a State in which they have sought protection to a third State which has agreed to admit

1 European Commission, ‘Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee, and the Committee of the Regions: A European Agenda on Migration’, COM (2015) 240 final, 4, [http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/home-affairs/what-we-do/policies/european-agenda-migration/background-information/docs/communication\\_on\\_the\\_european\\_agenda\\_on\\_migration\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/home-affairs/what-we-do/policies/european-agenda-migration/background-information/docs/communication_on_the_european_agenda_on_migration_en.pdf).

2 In the European Union, it is important to distinguish resettlement from intra-EU relocation. Relocation refers to the redistribution of refugees or asylum seekers from one EU state to another. Both resettlement and relocation are tools to manage asylum challenges, and private sponsorship mechanisms could apply to both. This report looks at private sponsorship only in the context of refugee resettlement.

them—as refugees—with permanent residence status’.<sup>3</sup> As such, it offers a truly durable solution. Importantly, resettlement is also a way for states to share responsibility for refugee protection. Yet half of EU Member States do not resettle refugees and, with a few notable exceptions, the number resettled by the other half is small.<sup>4</sup>

Refugee resettlement is usually seen as a state-led activity. Governments decide how many resettlement places they will offer, select the refugees they will take in, arrange for travel and initial reception, and provide settlement support. Private sponsorship arrangements, meanwhile, shift the primary responsibility for assisting resettled refugees from government to private actors. Private sponsors accept financial responsibility for resettled refugees for a specified period of time, and provide other forms of support. In exchange, they are permitted to identify the refugee (or refugees) they propose to resettle, although the final decision on admission rests with the government.

Until recently, few European countries framed themselves as countries of immigrants. In line with this self-perception, their refugee policies did not involve resettlement. Today’s record numbers of asylum seekers—and attendant concerns about fiscal and social costs—have led some EU Member States to maintain that they cannot establish resettlement channels to take in yet more refugees. (Though, paradoxically, the countries with the most asylum seekers, Germany and Sweden, have been resettling the largest numbers.<sup>5</sup>)

Could private sponsors help generate the political will needed to convince more EU countries to participate in refugee resettlement? Could they increase the intake of those countries already resettling refugees? The outpouring of public support for refugees in the late summer of 2015 suggests that this could indeed be the case.

Reactions to the idea of private sponsorship vary. Some question its compatibility with the obligations of a welfare state, expressing concern that it could encourage governments to offload their responsibilities to the voluntary sector: what ‘starts as a complement to government efforts can quickly become a substitute’.<sup>6</sup> Others herald private sponsorship as a way for the public to demonstrate commitment to refugee protection, calling it ‘an excellent example of the way in which individuals and organizations can participate directly in the implementation of international obligations’.<sup>7</sup>

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### *Could private sponsors help generate the political will needed to convince more EU countries to participate in refugee resettlement?*

Refugee protection is first and foremost a state responsibility, of course, and refugee policies are notoriously difficult to detach from states’ interests, political and otherwise. There is nothing closer to the heart of state sovereignty than deciding who gets in. At the same time, states and intergovernmental organisations are turning to the private sector for help in addressing an array of problems. The private sector already plays a significant role in global governance, in areas that range from public health to child welfare to safeguarding the environment.

3 United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), *Resettlement Handbook* (Geneva: UNHCR, 2011), 3, [www.unhcr.org/46f7c0ee2.pdf](http://www.unhcr.org/46f7c0ee2.pdf).

4 According to Eurostat, 6,380 refugees were resettled to the European Union in 2014. However, that figure does not include special actions for the admission of Syrian refugees and displaced persons, in particular in Germany. Of the 28 EU Member States, the following have refugee resettlement programs: Belgium, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Hungary, Ireland, the Netherlands, Portugal, Romania, Spain, Sweden, and the United Kingdom.

5 In 2014, Germany and Sweden received the largest numbers of asylum applications of all EU countries—202,645 and 81,180, respectively. Each resettled more refugees than any other EU country. Sweden resettled 2,045, according to Eurostat. Germany resettled well over 10,000, including intakes under its annual resettlement quota; the humanitarian admission programs for Syrian refugees and displaced persons announced by the federal government in May 2013, December 2013, and June 2014; and private sponsorship programs operating at the state level. See Eurostat and German Parliament, Drucksache 18/3627 of 19 December 2014 (2015 data not yet available).

6 Katy Long, ‘Private Money, Public Good’, blog posting, 8 June 2015, <http://migrantsandcitizens.org/blog/private-money-public-good/>.

7 Ekaterina Yahyaoui Krivenko, ‘Hospitality and Sovereignty: What Can We Learn From the Canadian Private Sponsorship of Refugees Program?’ *International Journal of Refugee Law* 24, no. 3 (2012): 579.

Aid organisations look to the private sector for innovative ways to deliver humanitarian assistance.<sup>8</sup> There is no reason why the same could not be true for refugee protection.

This report suggests that private sponsorship arrangements, if used transparently and in partnership with state authorities, could significantly enhance refugee resettlement opportunities in the European Union. Section II reviews what private sponsorship consists of in practice, based on sponsorship arrangements described in more detail in the Appendix. Section III outlines key questions to be considered when establishing a private sponsorship mechanism. Section IV looks at possible goals of private sponsorship in the European Union, as well as some pitfalls, and the final section suggests ways to move forward.

## II. WHAT IS THE PRIVATE SPONSORSHIP OF REFUGEES?

There is no agreed definition for private sponsorship, which, in practice, takes different forms in different countries. Attempts to define the arrangement are complicated by the fact that individuals and civil-society groups already help resettled refugees, and do so in a myriad of ways that reflect their own motivations and capacities—and the degree to which the state provides public assistance.<sup>9</sup> In most cases, however, these forms of private assistance fall short of sponsorship.

Private sponsorship arrangements have two central features: First, an individual, group, or other organisation assumes responsibility for providing financial, social, and emotional support to a resettled refugee (or refugee family) for a predetermined period of time—usually one year, sometimes longer—or until the refugee becomes self-sufficient, whichever comes first.

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Second, sponsors have the option of naming the person or persons whose resettlement they are willing to support. Although this last feature is an important one for sponsors seeking to help relatives or friends, some sponsors do not have a specific refugee in mind and agree to be ‘matched’ with refugees not related or otherwise known to them.<sup>10</sup>

For many years, Canada was the only country with a private sponsorship programme. Its Private Sponsorship of Refugees Program was started in 1978, enabled by a passage in the *1976 Immigration Act* permitting sponsorship of refugees by ‘any body corporate’ or ‘any group of citizens or permanent residents’. Most research on private sponsorship has been conducted in Canada, including the only empirical studies comparing the settle-

8 Alexander Betts, Louise Bloom, and Naohiko Omata, ‘Humanitarian Innovation and Refugee Protection’ (working paper series no. 85, University of Oxford Refugee Studies Centre, November 2012), [www.rsc.ox.ac.uk/publications/humanitarian-innovation-and-refugee-protection](http://www.rsc.ox.ac.uk/publications/humanitarian-innovation-and-refugee-protection).

9 On this subject see Joanne van Selm, ‘Public-Private Partnerships in Refugee Resettlement: Europe and the U.S.’, *Journal of International Migration and Integration* 4, no. 2 (Spring 2003): 157–71.

10 This was the case in Canada during the exodus of Vietnamese boat people in the 1970s and 1980s. Building on that experience during the Kosovo war in 1999–2000, the Canadian government took in 7,000 Kosovar evacuees, 5,000 of whom were ‘matched’ by the authorities with unrelated sponsors who provided social and emotional support. See Tracey M. Derwing and Marlene Mulder, ‘The Kosovar Sponsoring Experience in Northern Alberta’, *Journal of International Migration and Integration* 4, no. 2 (Spring 2003): 217–37.

ment experiences of refugees sponsored by private and government actors.<sup>11</sup>

Australia launched a pilot private/community sponsorship programme in 2012, and in June 2015, the government proposed that a Community Support Programme (CSP) be made a regular component of its humanitarian intake.<sup>12</sup> It can be expected that further analytical work on private sponsorship will emerge from Australia in due course.

In 2013, when the European Parliament published a study on best practices in the integration of resettled refugees, there was no single example of private sponsorship in Europe.<sup>13</sup> Today, there are only a handful, even since the Syria emergency prompted the creation of several new schemes. Fifteen of Germany's 16 federal states have set up private sponsorship arrangements, and Ireland and Switzerland experimented briefly with private sponsorship as a way to reunify extended Syrian families.<sup>14</sup> The British Home Secretary announced on 6 October 2015 that the United Kingdom plans to develop a private sponsorship programme, following the Australian and Canadian models.<sup>15</sup> Details have yet to emerge, but this initiative may spur other countries to follow suit.

One challenge in describing private sponsorship is that it invariably overlaps with refugee family reunion. International and European law uphold the fundamental principle that the family is 'entitled to protection by society and the State',<sup>16</sup> and the drafters of the 1951 Refugee Convention identified family unity as an 'essential right of the refugee'.<sup>17</sup> Private sponsorship programmes expand refugee family reunion, making it possible for relatives beyond the nuclear family to be resettled.

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Table 1 provides an overview of recent and ongoing private sponsorship mechanisms (see the Appendix for more details), and shows that no 'one size fits all'. These programmes differ not only with respect to the status granted to the refugee, but also in such important aspects such as who is eligible to sponsor and be sponsored, the nature of the sponsor's obligations, and whether privately sponsored refugees are *within* or *in addition* to the government-financed resettlement quota.

11 See Section III for discussion of several such studies.

12 Australian Government, Department of Immigration and Border Protection (DIBP), 'Community Support Programme' (discussion paper, DIBP, Belconnen, ACT, June 2015), [www.border.gov.au/ReportsandPublications/Documents/discussion-papers/cps-consultation.pdf](http://www.border.gov.au/ReportsandPublications/Documents/discussion-papers/cps-consultation.pdf).

13 Aspasia Papadopoulou, Barbara Treviranus, Torsten Moritz, and Christine Marie Fandrich, *Comparative Study on the Best Practices for the Integration of Resettled Refugees in the EU Member States* (Brussels: European Parliament, Directorate-General for Internal Policies, 2013), [www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/etudes/join/2013/474393/IPOL-LIBE\\_ET\(2013\)474393\\_EN.pdf](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/etudes/join/2013/474393/IPOL-LIBE_ET(2013)474393_EN.pdf).

14 Outside Europe, Argentina developed a humanitarian programme based on private sponsorship. Not all of the existing arrangements meet UNHCR's definition of resettlement as providing for permanent residence. Some, perhaps for reasons related to public perceptions, grant temporary stay, at least at the outset of the refugee's stay, and therefore fall in the category of what UNHCR calls 'complementary solutions'. See UNHCR Resettlement Service, *Unlocking Complementary Solutions* (Geneva: UNHCR, 2014), [www.resettlement.eu/sites/icmc.ttp.eu/files/Unlocking Complementary Solutions for Syrian Refugees - Public version.pdf](http://www.resettlement.eu/sites/icmc.ttp.eu/files/Unlocking%20Complementary%20Solutions%20for%20Syrian%20Refugees%20-%20Public%20version.pdf). For the purposes of this report, these arrangements are subsumed under the general heading of 'resettlement'.

15 *The Independent*, 'Theresa May's speech to the Conservative Party Conference - in full', *The Independent*, 6 October 2015, [www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/politics/theresa-may-s-speech-to-the-conservative-party-conference-in-full-a6681901.html](http://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/politics/theresa-may-s-speech-to-the-conservative-party-conference-in-full-a6681901.html).

16 Article 16 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, 10 December 1948.

17 Final Act of the 1951 United Nations Conference of Plenipotentiaries on the Status of Refugees and Stateless Persons, Recommendation B. But the 1951 Convention does not confer a right to family reunification, and national mechanisms to bring separated refugee families back together adopt different approaches to defining who is entitled to join the 'anchor' relative, and the guarantees the anchor must provide.



**Table 1. Overview of private sponsorship programmes**

Country	Who can sponsor?	Who can be sponsored?	Is direct entry from country of origin allowed?	Is a family link with sponsor needed?	Obligations of sponsor	Duration of sponsor's obligations	Status granted	In addition to resettlement quota?
<b>Argentina</b>	Citizens or permanent residents	Syrians and others affected by Syrian crisis	Yes	No	Housing and settlement assistance, not quantified.	Length of stay or until permanent resident status acquired	2 years residence renewable by 1 year; then eligible for permanent residence	Yes
<b>Australia</b>	Approved Proposing Organisations (APOs) only  Individuals and community groups wishing to support individual refugees must work through an APO	All nationalities	Yes	No	Visa fees of \$19,124 per principal applicant + \$2,680 each secondary applicant + \$5,500 APO administrative fees + \$5,000 bond + medical exams, airfare, household expenses + social support	12 months	Permanent residence	No, within overall humanitarian intake
<b>Canada</b>	Citizens or permanent residents  Groups of 5  Community and corporate groups  Sponsorship Agreement Holders (SAHs)	All nationalities	No	No	Care, lodging, settlement support.  Level of support at least equivalent to prevailing social assistance rates  Official estimate is C\$12,600 for one person; C\$27,000 for family of four	Usually 12 months, longer in special cases	Permanent residence	Yes
<b>Germany (15 of 16 federal states)</b>	Citizens and foreigners with legal residence	Syrians	Yes	Yes	Not quantified but must demonstrate adequate means	Not specified	1-2 year residence, renewable	Yes
<b>Ireland*</b>	Naturalised citizens of Syrian birth and Syrians lawfully staying	Syrians	Yes	Yes	Financial support and accommodation not quantified	Duration of stay	2-year residence	Yes
<b>New Zealand</b>	Citizens and residents (for more than 3 years)	All nationalities	Yes	Yes	Financial support and accommodation not quantified	24 months	Permanent residence	Yes

Note: \* Short-term programme. Deadline for applications was 30 April 2014.

Source: Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service (INIS), 'Syrian Humanitarian Admission Programme', accessed 3 December 2015, [www.inis.gov.ie/en/INIS/Pages/SYRIAN%20HUMANITARIAN%20ADMISSION%20PROGRAMME](http://www.inis.gov.ie/en/INIS/Pages/SYRIAN%20HUMANITARIAN%20ADMISSION%20PROGRAMME).

### III. LAYING THE GROUNDWORK FOR A PRIVATE SPONSORSHIP PROGRAMME

Even though there is no standard approach to private sponsorship, there are some key decisions to make before launching a sponsorship programme. Broad consultation among governmental and nongovernmental actors can foster a shared understanding of what private sponsorship will entail in a given national context, facilitate the smooth operation of the programme, and reduce the possibility of negative results, including public backlash. Well-focused questions about objectives and processes can be helpful. In the interest of transparency, the results of the consultation should be public documents.

Outreach may be needed to ensure that consultation goes beyond the ‘usual suspects’ of faith communities, nongovernmental organisations (NGOs), and academics involved in asylum and migration, to include the business community (representatives of both labour and employers), local and regional governments, as well as refugees and migrants themselves. Consulting with migrants may be particularly challenging in countries that do not have well-established groups representing ethnocultural communities.

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*Broad consultation among governmental and nongovernmental actors can foster a shared understanding of what private sponsorship will entail in a given national context.*

The following questions—to which answers will vary—could provide the basis for broad consultation.

#### *A. What are the principal objectives of private sponsorship?*

A private sponsorship programme may have more than one objective. Does it seek to provide refugee communities with an additional way to assist their family and conationals? To encourage citizens in general and ethnic communities in particular to contribute to the resettlement process? Is the aim to better support resettled refugees? To enable a country to take in more refugees than government capacity would otherwise allow, including in the context of an emergency response?

It will probably not be possible, and may not be necessary, to reach agreement on a single purpose, or even to prioritise the aims of the programme. A discussion of objectives will, however, help to raise awareness of the various perspectives from which private sponsorship can be viewed, and of the strengths and weakness of the proposed sponsorship arrangements.

When the Australian government put forward its refugee sponsorship pilot in 2012,<sup>18</sup> and in a 2015 discussion paper invited feedback on the possible mainstreaming of a Community Support Programme (CSP) to replace the pilot,<sup>19</sup> it listed several potential objectives but did not invite feedback. This may have contributed to the absence of a shared understanding around the adoption of a CSP; for example, civil-society groups questioned whether the government’s main motive behind the programme was to reduce costs rather than to significantly increase resettlement.<sup>20</sup>

18 Australian Government, Department of Immigration and Citizenship (DIAC), ‘Proposed Pilot of a Community Refugee Sponsorship Program’, 20 June 2012, [www.ames.net.au/files/file/Policy/Discussion Paper Private Community Refugee Sponsorship Program.pdf](http://www.ames.net.au/files/file/Policy/Discussion%20Paper%20Private%20Community%20Refugee%20Sponsorship%20Program.pdf)

19 Australian Government, DIBP, ‘Community Support Programme’, 5.

20 Paul Power, Chief Executive of the Refugee Council of Australia, commented: ‘The government has saved money by getting

## B. *Who is eligible to sponsor?*

Governments considering private sponsorship programmes will need to decide who is eligible to be a sponsor. For example, can foreigners with permanent or temporary residence serve as sponsors? Potential sponsors include individuals and groups of citizens and legal residents, NGOs (both faith-based and secular); religious, ethnic, and other community groups; corporate bodies; and academic institutions. All are represented, to varying degrees, in existing sponsorship programmes.

In both Australia and Canada, established NGOs play an important role in supporting and supervising sponsorships. In Canada, around two-thirds of sponsorships are now undertaken (or overseen) by agencies registered as sponsorship agreement holders (SAHs).<sup>21</sup> Of the 94 SAHs that operate across the country, nearly one-third are ethnocultural associations.<sup>22</sup> In many cases, SAHs provide back-up for smaller groups representing Canada's numerous diaspora communities.

In Australia's pilot programme, each sponsorship must be handled by an approved proposing organisation (APO). As in Canada, the APO model was intended to enable ethnocultural and other community-level groups to be involved in sponsorship, while ensuring professionalism in the development and implementation of settlement plans. The Refugee Council of Australia has noted, however, that most sponsorship applications come to APOs from individuals, rather than from or through community organisations.<sup>23</sup> As private sponsorship is a way to channel the willingness and capacity of the diaspora to provide resettlement support, governments developing private sponsorship programmes will wish to consider how to encourage the involvement of community groups. However, the Canadian and Australian models might be challenging to follow in EU countries that do not have a strong corpus of organisations with settlement experience.

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### *In Canada, around two-thirds of sponsorships are now undertaken (or overseen) by agencies registered as sponsorship agreement holders*

Allowing universities (and other educational institutions) to sponsor could help meet an important need: the further education of refugees who have exhausted or do not have access to schooling options in countries of first asylum. This arrangement has worked well for many years in Canada, where World University Service Canada (WUSC) has sponsored more than 1,400 refugee students for resettlement since 1978.<sup>24</sup> At the international level, a number of academic institutions are engaged in the 'Scholars at Risk' network to provide 'positions of sanctuary' to scholars facing grave risks to their lives, liberty, or well-being. Host institutions are asked to provide support, but the scholar must gain legal entry to the country, whether through an international exchange visa or by obtaining another status.<sup>25</sup> These arrangements tend to be temporary, however.

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the families of refugees to pay expenses that previously would have come out of Treasury'. Cited in Nicole Hasham, 'Government Plan to Fast-track Refugees in Exchange for Potential \$19,000 Fee', *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 31 July 2015.

- 21 Ashley Chapman, *Private Sponsorship and Public Policy: Political Barriers to Church-connected Refugee Resettlement in Canada* (Canada: Citizens for Public Justice, 2014), 3, [www.cpj.ca/sites/default/files/docs/files/PrivateSponsorshipandPublicPolicyReport.pdf](http://www.cpj.ca/sites/default/files/docs/files/PrivateSponsorshipandPublicPolicyReport.pdf). Detailed information on Canada's Private Sponsorship of Refugees Program can be found at Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC), 'Private Sponsorship of Refugees Programme', 2015, [www.cic.gc.ca/english/pdf/pub/ref-sponsor.pdf](http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/pdf/pub/ref-sponsor.pdf).
- 22 For a list of Sponsorship Agreement Holders (SAHs) in Canada, see CIC, 'Private Sponsorship of Refugees Program – Sponsorship Agreement Holders', last modified 5 November 2015, [www.cic.gc.ca/english/refugees/sponsor/list-sponsors.asp](http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/refugees/sponsor/list-sponsors.asp).
- 23 Refugee Council of Australia, 'Community Support Program Consultation', accessed 3 December 2015, para. 3.2, [www.refugeecouncil.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2015/07/1507-CSP.pdf](http://www.refugeecouncil.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2015/07/1507-CSP.pdf).
- 24 World University Service Canada (WUSC) is an SAH; see WUSC, 'Student Refugee Programme', accessed 3 December 2015, <http://wusc.ca/en/srp>.
- 25 See Scholars at Risk Network, 'Host a Scholar', accessed 3 December 2015, <http://scholarsatrisk.nyu.edu/At-Risk-Scholars/Host-a-Scholar.php>.

There has been little experience with corporate sponsorships, and no literature was found on the subject. In Canada, a corporation or other business can apply to be a sponsor, but few have done so.<sup>26</sup> As the Refugee Sponsorship Training Program (RSTP) information brochure puts it: ‘A business can engage in Community Sponsorship, provided its involvement is not prompted by an aim of making money, but for purely humanitarian reasons’.<sup>27</sup> The business community’s involvement in refugee sponsorship deserves further exploration in view of the importance of employment to successful integration. Refugee advocates point to labour migration as a possible pathway to protection.<sup>28</sup>

Cities and towns also have an important role to play, not necessarily as sponsors but in creating an environment conducive to sponsorship. In four years, the ‘Save Me’ campaign launched in Munich in 2008 achieved 51 City Council decisions in favour of refugee resettlement in Germany.<sup>29</sup> In early September 2015, as the Canadian public mobilised to sponsor Syrian refugees for resettlement, numerous mayors came forward to announce their cities’ support.<sup>30</sup> Cities could also provide back-up funding (as the Canadian city of Winnipeg has done) to cover the costs of sponsorship agreements that break down, and to make services available to sponsored refugees who do not otherwise have access to state support.

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At the global level, the International Cities of Refuge Network (ICORN) coordinates the temporary refuge of writers and artists at risk. Cities, of course, cannot make decisions on entry into a given country, but participating cities are expected to facilitate the acquisition of legal status.<sup>31</sup>

### *C. What are the sponsor’s responsibilities?*

It is important to set out clear guidelines for sponsors’ financial and other responsibilities. In the initial years of the Canadian programme, there were no such guidelines, and the level of financial (and other) support varied considerably from one sponsor to another. When refugees compared notes, some found themselves to be ‘luckier’ than others.<sup>32</sup> (At that time, it might be noted, most sponsored refugees were not related to their sponsors.)

26 Information provided by UNHCR Ottawa.

27 Refugee Sponsorship Training Program (RSTP), ‘Private Sponsorship of Refugees Program. Engaging in Community Sponsorship: Information Brochure’, Toronto, September 2015, 4, [www.rstp.ca/wp-content/uploads/2014/03/engagingc-smarch2014.pdf](http://www.rstp.ca/wp-content/uploads/2014/03/engagingc-smarch2014.pdf). The brochure explains that the Centralized Processing Office will review applications to ensure that the intentions of the community sponsor are ‘in line with the objectives of the Private Sponsorship of Refugees Program’. RSTP is funded by the Canadian government to address information and training needs of sponsors and initial information needs of sponsored refugees.

28 Katy Long, *From Refugee to Migrant? Labor Mobility’s Protection Potential* (Washington, DC: Migration Policy Institute, 2015), [www.migrationpolicy.org/research/refugee-migrant-labor-mobilitys-protection-potential](http://www.migrationpolicy.org/research/refugee-migrant-labor-mobilitys-protection-potential).

29 The International Catholic Migration Commission (ICMC) Europe and Pro Asyl, *A City Says Yes! Reflections on the Experiences of the Save Me Campaign to Promote Refugee Resettlement in Germany* (Brussels: ICMC Europe and Pro Asyl, n.d.), 26, [www.resettlement.eu/sites/icmc.ttp.eu/files/ICMC\\_SaveMe\\_SinglePages.pdf](http://www.resettlement.eu/sites/icmc.ttp.eu/files/ICMC_SaveMe_SinglePages.pdf).

30 For example: The mayor of Ottawa wrote to the Federal Minister of Citizenship and Immigration confirming the capital city’s readiness to assist in resettling Syrian refugees, and asked the federal government to provide guidance on the role the municipal sector could play. See Letter from Mayor Jim Watson to Minister of Citizenship and Immigration Chris Alexander, 3 September 2015, <https://twitter.com/giuseppelo/status/63953994844460545>.

31 See International Cities of Refuge Network (ICORN), ‘ICORN cities of refugee’, accessed 3 December 2015, <http://icorn.org/icorn-cities-refuge>.

32 Gertrud Neuwirth and Lynn Clark, ‘Indochinese Refugees in Canada: Sponsorship and Adjustment’, *International Migration Review* 15, no. 1/2 (1981): 131–40.

The following is a list of the *possible* responsibilities of private sponsors:

- Propose applicants and submit completed application forms
- Pay any application/visa fees
- Prepare a settlement support plan and submit it for approval
- Pay for costs of any required medical examinations
- Arrange and pay for travel
- Post bond (as a guarantee in the case of the breakdown of sponsorship)
- Meet sponsored refugees on arrival
- Provide accommodation, clothing, and basic household goods on arrival
- Provide orientation to local community services, including transportation, banking, and shopping
- Help refugees register for any services or programmes for which they are eligible, including language training
- Help to enrol children in school
- Help refugees to connect with health-care services and to apply for coverage
- Help to locate translators and interpreters as needed
- Cover costs of accommodation, food, utilities, and incidentals for the specified sponsorship period, or until refugees become self-supporting
- Cover telephone/Internet costs
- Provide cash support
- Help refugees in their search for employment
- Be available to provide guidance and support in the case of an emergency.

The first question potential sponsors will ask is: How much will sponsorship cost? The answer depends on the responsibilities that the sponsor is expected to take on, the duration of sponsorship, and the national context. Sponsorship in Australia, for example, involves considerable fees to be paid to the government and to the APO (approximately A\$30,000 per head of family with additional amounts for secondary applicants), in addition to the costs of care and support. In Canada, the authorities estimate the cost of sponsorship at approximately CDN \$12,600 for an individual refugee. Costs for families depend on family size. The cost for a family of four is estimated at CDN \$27,000.<sup>33</sup> In Germany the sponsor must demonstrate that he or she has resources sufficient to provide the sponsored refugee with support at least equivalent to the social welfare rate prevailing at the intended place of residence. The overall costs of sponsorship, by country, would be a fruitful subject for future research.

<sup>33</sup> CIC, 'Private Sponsorship of Refugees (PSR) Application Guide' (IMM 5413), last modified 30 October 2015, [www.cic.gc.ca/english/information/applications/guides/5413ETOC.asp](http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/information/applications/guides/5413ETOC.asp).

Next, what is the minimum duration of required sponsor support? Australia and Canada have adopted a 12-month period of required support, though in the case of refugees with special needs, Canada has opted for longer periods and for blended forms of support involving both the government and private sponsors.<sup>34</sup> Sponsors under New Zealand's Refugee Family Support Category commit to 24 months of financial and accommodation support.

In Germany, no length of time was specified when the federal states introduced sponsorship programmes. As the war in Syria continues, this omission has given rise to questions about whether the obligations are open-ended and whether they continue even if the sponsored individual applies for and receives refugee protection in Germany.<sup>35</sup>

Information on how long it takes, on average, for sponsored refugees within a given country to become self-sufficient is needed to inform a reasonable sponsorship period. Relevant studies would need to take account of gender, age, family size, remittances sent to relatives, health status, and many other factors.

In general, studies on the integration trajectory of resettled refugees are scarce.<sup>36</sup> Very few contain empirical analysis, most focus on one specific nationality group, and only a handful distinguish between the experiences of privately sponsored refugees and those supported by the government. This is an area ripe for further investigation.

#### *D. How is the safety net defined?*

It is important to help sponsors to prepare for their responsibilities, and to define a safety net. There may be problems that go beyond the capacity of a sponsor. Sponsors need to know where they can turn for assistance, for instance, in supporting refugees suffering from the after-effects of trauma or torture, and in obtaining interpretation assistance or other specialist help. Canada's Refugee Sponsorship Training Program (RSTP), funded by the government and carried out by NGOs, is designed to provide sponsors with information. A detailed handbook for sponsoring groups is complemented by training in the form of workshops, webinars, e-learning modules, and the training of trainers.<sup>37</sup>

Sponsorships can break down, though the literature suggests this is rare. Nevertheless, a safety net should be planned in case a sponsor withdraws or is not able to fulfil a commitment. The city of Winnipeg, in the Canadian province of Manitoba, established an 'assurance scheme' as a last-resort resource for family-linked private sponsorships that run into financial difficulty.<sup>38</sup> Australia requires that potential sponsors pay a bond of A\$5,000 to the APO; the bond is refunded if the sponsor is assessed as having fulfilled his/her responsibilities.

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34 Canada's 'Joint Assistance Sponsorship Program' (JAS) is for refugees with special needs who may require more support than others. Under this programme, refugees receive income support from the government and other forms of help from private sponsors, in most cases for up to 24 months.

35 See Ulrich Karpenstein, 'Endet die Verpflichtungserklärung mit der Asylenerkennung?', accessed 3 December 2015, [www.fluechtlingspaten-syrien.de/endet-die-verpflichtungserklaerung-mit-der-asylanerkennung/](http://www.fluechtlingspaten-syrien.de/endet-die-verpflichtungserklaerung-mit-der-asylanerkennung/).

36 For a recent study on the integration outcomes of the ten largest refugee populations in the United States, see Randy Capps, Kathleen Newland, Susan Fratzke, Susanna Groves, Michael Fix, Margie McHugh, and Gregory Auclair, *The Integration Outcomes of U.S. Refugees: Successes and Challenges* (Washington, DC: Migration Policy Institute, 2015), [www.migrationpolicy.org/research/integration-outcomes-us-refugees-successes-and-challenges](http://www.migrationpolicy.org/research/integration-outcomes-us-refugees-successes-and-challenges).

37 The handbook and information about training are available at RSTP, 'Handbook for Sponsoring Groups', accessed 3 December 2015, [www.rstp.ca/en/resources/handbook-for-sponsoring-groups/](http://www.rstp.ca/en/resources/handbook-for-sponsoring-groups/).

38 Thomas R. Denton, 'Understanding Private Refugee Sponsorships in Manitoba', *Journal of International Migration and Integration* 4, no. 2 (Spring 2003): 257–72.

Monitoring and accountability mechanisms need to be put in place to make sure that sponsored refugees in fact receive the support they need. Where does a refugee turn if he or she has concerns about a sponsor? These and other key questions need to be addressed when planning the safety net.<sup>39</sup>

## *E. Who can be sponsored?*

The question of who can be sponsored is a complex one, given the enormous demand for resettlement worldwide. Countries considering private sponsorship arrangements will want to ask the following questions, among others:

- Should eligibility be limited to applicants with family or other ties in the country of resettlement? If so, what ties?
- Should the programme be limited to specific nationalities and/or to applicants located in specific countries?
- Do candidates need to be outside their countries of origin, or can they be considered for resettlement directly from their home countries?
- Do candidates need to be recognised as refugees by UNHCR or by another state in order to be eligible for sponsorship, or will protection needs be determined by the country of resettlement?

Countries operating private sponsorship programmes have answered these and other questions in various ways. In most cases, the sponsored refugee needs to have a link to the resettlement country, usually a relative. Canada, however, does not limit eligibility to refugees with ties to Canada; sponsors may ‘name’ the refugee they propose to resettle, or may opt to be matched with a refugee put forward for resettlement by UNHCR or by a Canadian representation abroad. Nevertheless, the majority of privately sponsored refugees today do have family in Canada.<sup>40</sup>

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Some private sponsorship programmes allow applications from or on behalf of individuals who have not left their countries of origin but face human-rights violations there. For many years, Canada operated a ‘Source Country’ programme that permitted the resettlement (both government and privately sponsored) of individuals directly from their countries of origin. In 2011, the Canadian administration repealed this programme, arguing that it was ineffective.<sup>41</sup> If one of the objectives of private sponsorship is to discourage irregular movement, it would make sense to extend eligibility to persons still in their countries of origin.<sup>42</sup>

39 Refugee Council of Australia, ‘Response to Proposed Pilot of a Private/Community Refugee Sponsorship Program’ (discussion paper, Refugee Council of Australia, Surry Hills, NSW, 27 July 2012), 7, [www.refugeecouncil.org.au/r/sub/1207-Sponsorship.pdf](http://www.refugeecouncil.org.au/r/sub/1207-Sponsorship.pdf).

40 One observer has described the transformation of Canada’s Private Sponsorship of Refugees Program into a family-linked immigration program. See Tom Denton, ‘Unintended Consequences of Canada’s Private Sponsorship of Refugees Program’ (paper prepared for the 2013 International Metropolis Conference, 9–13 September 2013, Tampere, Finland), [www.hhrmwpg.org/Unintended%20Consequences.html](http://www.hhrmwpg.org/Unintended%20Consequences.html).

41 CIC, ‘Government to Refocus Resettlement Efforts’, (news release, 7 October 2011), <http://news.gc.ca/web/article-en.do?nid=627069>.

42 This was the main argument behind the United States’ recent establishment of in-country refugee processing for minors in El

Managing numbers and expectations is a major challenge. In an effort to avoid backlogs of applications and to focus resources on high-priority situations, in 2013 Canada took several steps. It capped the number of applications that can be submitted by SAHs, set additional limits on applications that can be submitted on behalf of refugees processed at certain locations, and stipulated that sponsoring groups that are not SAHs may only sponsor refugees already recognised by UNHCR or another state. The refugee advocacy community reacted with concern; some stated that these limitations resulted in a more politicised and government-led programme and reduced the opportunity for private sponsors to respond to refugees they believed deserved attention.<sup>43</sup> In 2015, the requirement of prior recognition by UNHCR or another state was lifted for Syrian and Iraqi applicants, as a result of public pressure.<sup>44</sup>

## F. *How will applicants be chosen?*

How can applications for private sponsorship be best received and assessed? What government service will be responsible for deciding who gets in? Will decisions be made on the basis of dossiers, or will interviews be conducted with the applicants in countries of first asylum (or, where applicable, in countries of origin), either in person or online?

Experience shows that the number of applications is likely to be high; it will therefore be critical to allocate sufficient resources to avoid the development of a backlog. The long delays seen over the years in the Canadian programme not only created an administrative bottleneck, but meant that people in need of protection were left in limbo for many years, sponsors grew frustrated, and tensions mounted between the authorities and the NGO community. Particularly if private sponsorship is seen as part of an emergency response, it will be important to establish an expeditious procedure.

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The decision-making process needs to be transparent. Sponsors should know how long they will be expected to wait for a decision, and how it will be made. Any national criteria and priorities applied to the candidates put forward by private sponsors need to be clearly stated.

## G. *What status or entitlements will sponsored refugees be granted?*

What status will privately sponsored refugees receive in the country of resettlement, and to what services will

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Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras. See Faye Hipsman and Doris Meissner, *In-Country Refugee Processing in Central America. A Piece of the Puzzle* (Washington, DC: Migration Policy Institute, 2015), [www.migrationpolicy.org/research/country-processing-central-america-piece-puzzle](http://www.migrationpolicy.org/research/country-processing-central-america-piece-puzzle). It was also the rationale for UNHCR's establishment of the Program for Orderly Departure from Vietnam in 1979. See Judith Kumin, 'Orderly Departure from Vietnam: Cold War Anomaly or Humanitarian Innovation?' *Refugee Survey Quarterly* 27, no. 1 (2008): 104–17.

43 Canadian Council for Refugees, 'Important Changes in Canada's Private Sponsorship of Refugees Program', January 2013, <http://ccrweb.ca/en/changes-private-sponsorship-refugees>.

44 Steve Meurrens, *The Private Sponsorship of Refugees Program after Alan Kurdi: Policy Options* (Ottawa: Institute for Research on Public Policy, 2015), <http://policyoptions.irpp.org/2015/09/25/the-private-sponsorship-of-refugees-program-after-alan-kurdi/>.



they have access? UNHCR has defined resettlement as the selection and admission of a refugee for permanent residence, with rights similar to those of nationals and the eventual opportunity to become a citizen.<sup>45</sup> This reflects the tradition in Australia, Canada, New Zealand, and the United States. However, among European countries, only Sweden and the United Kingdom grant permanent residency to resettled refugees immediately upon arrival.<sup>46</sup> In several countries, resettled refugees have to lodge (mostly pro forma) asylum applications on arrival.

This patchwork is further complicated by ad hoc arrangements adopted in response to specific emergencies, such as the Syrian crisis. In the case of the German federal states' sponsorship arrangements for Syrian refugees, the refugees receive residence permits valid for one or two years, whereas those admitted with government support under the federal government's Humanitarian Admissions Program are given two-year permits, and those who enter as part of the annual resettlement quota receive three-year permits.<sup>47</sup> The rationale for these differences is not evident.

The proliferation of temporary stay arrangements developed in various national contexts prompted UNHCR to issue Guidelines on Temporary Protection or Stay Arrangements in February 2014. These guidelines note, among other points, that temporary protection is not suitable if the individual's stay becomes prolonged.<sup>48</sup>

From the perspective of integration, there are strong arguments for granting privately sponsored refugees the same status as other resettled refugees, even if access to services may differ during the period of sponsorship. At the very least, access to the labour market, including self-employment, needs to be assured for adults, as does primary and secondary education for youth. And while the responsibilities of sponsors may vary, privately sponsored refugees should have access to state health-care services. Expecting private sponsors to cover unpredictable medical costs seems unreasonable.

## *H. Will sponsorship add to existing quotas?*

If private sponsorship is to enhance refugee resettlement, it should not replace government-funded resettlement, but rather add to it. This is an important feature of the programmes of Canada and Germany. In Australia, advocacy groups objected to the government's decision to count privately sponsored refugees within the ceiling of the Refugee and Humanitarian Program, perceiving this as a cost-cutting measure.<sup>49</sup>

In the European Union, only 14 of the 28 Member States operate resettlement programmes, and most of these are very small. In this context, the added value of private sponsorship lies in its potential to expand resettlement opportunities, including but not exclusively for refugees with family or other ties to the resettlement country.

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45 UNHCR, *Resettlement Handbook*, 3

46 Ibid., country chapters (various dates).

47 E-mail to the author from UNHCR Berlin, 14 August 2015. These permits are granted under sections 22 and 23 of the *German Residence Act*. See German Federal Ministry of Justice and Consumer Protection, *Act on the Residence, Economic Activity and Integration of Foreigners in the Federal Territory*, official translation (Berlin: Federal Ministry of Justice and Consumer Protection, 2013), [www.gesetze-im-internet.de/englisch\\_aufenthg/index.html](http://www.gesetze-im-internet.de/englisch_aufenthg/index.html).

48 UNHCR, 'Guidelines on Temporary Protection or Stay Arrangements', February 2014, [www.refworld.org/docid/52fba2404.html](http://www.refworld.org/docid/52fba2404.html).

49 The CEO of the Refugee Council of Australia objected to the government decision, stating, 'Now that refugees resettled through the pilot will be included within the capped Refugee and Humanitarian Program, the incentive to achieving increased resettlement through marshaling private sponsorship is ... gone'. Refugee Council of Australia, 'Pilot Sponsorship Program Welcome but Needs Further Work', New South Wales, 15 December 2012, [www.refugeecouncil.org.au/nr/121215\\_Sponsor.pdf](http://www.refugeecouncil.org.au/nr/121215_Sponsor.pdf).

Private sponsorship could also be an effective way to introduce resettlement in EU Member States that do not yet host resettled refugees. Even though the initial pool of sponsors and the number of sponsorships might be small, the fact that newly arrived refugees are taken under the wing of established residents could help to reduce fears about (and resistance to) refugee resettlement, and help to develop capacities to integrate newcomers more broadly.

### *I. What is the role of UNHCR, the International Organization for Migration, and other partners?*

Countries considering private sponsorship arrangements will want to identify potential partners, both at home and abroad. UNHCR and the International Organization for Migration (IOM) can provide relevant assistance. For one, UNHCR can suggest refugees it has identified as needing resettlement. And both agencies can help organise field missions. IOM has for many years assisted Canada and United States—and, more recently, Australia—in the resettlement of privately sponsored refugees by, among other things, arranging travel, administering no-interest travel loans, carrying out predeparture health checks, and delivering predeparture cultural orientation programmes.

At the domestic level, established NGOs and ethnocultural groups are natural partners. Diaspora communities, as key stakeholders, can also make important contributions to the private sponsorship process.

### *J. How will sponsorships be monitored and evaluated?*

Mechanisms for the monitoring and evaluation of private sponsorship arrangements are needed, not only to ensure that sponsors meet their responsibilities, but also to build a better and more empirically based understanding of how private sponsorship affects the settlement experiences of refugees and costs to government. Involving refugees in monitoring and evaluation will provide an obviously crucial but often-neglected perspective on the resettlement and integration process.

In terms of ensuring the accountability of sponsors, adequate mechanisms for vetting sponsor groups at the outset will reduce the need for sanctions or other measures in case a sponsor is unable to fulfil the assigned responsibilities. Nevertheless, governments considering private sponsorship arrangements will want to determine the legal responsibilities of the sponsor in advance, and how these will be enforced. Sponsors who fail to carry out their obligations might be barred from future sponsorships, for example. A coordinating body charged with the periodic monitoring (‘spot checks’) of sponsorship arrangements may be useful.

It is also important to think in advance about how programme outcomes will be evaluated, and after what time period. Measuring progress toward programme goals requires an assessment of the living conditions of individual refugees as well as the costs and benefits of the programme overall.

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## IV. POSSIBLE GOALS OF PRIVATE SPONSORSHIP IN THE EUROPEAN UNION

Developing channels for the orderly admission of refugees needs to be at the core of new strategies to address asylum and migration challenges in the European Union. Private sponsorship may be one piece of a complex puzzle.

In the European Union, appeals for the establishment of private (or community) sponsorship arrangements have mounted since the start of the Syrian refugee emergency. The European Commission has encouraged Member States to ‘use to the full the . . . legal avenues available to persons in need of protection, *including private/non-governmental sponsorships*’.<sup>50</sup> NGOs,<sup>51</sup> the European Parliament,<sup>52</sup> and the European Fundamental Rights Agency<sup>53</sup> all identify private sponsorship as one of several legal ways to access Europe. UNHCR has said that European governments ‘must make some fundamental changes to allow for larger resettlement and humanitarian admission quotas’<sup>54</sup> and has called for expanded sponsorship programmes.<sup>55</sup> The United Kingdom’s plan to establish a community sponsorship programme suggests that these calls have been taken to heart.

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*Private sponsorship may be one piece of a complex puzzle.*

The principal reasons why governments and refugee advocates might see private sponsorship as part of a comprehensive response are set out below, along with some possible pitfalls to avoid.

### A. Channelling public engagement to expand resettlement

With private sponsorship, citizens are not confined to observing refugee policy from the sidelines, but can move ‘from defensive reaction to proactive engagement’.<sup>56</sup> At the time of the Indochinese refugee crisis, one Canadian observer commented: ‘*For once, private citizens normally confronted with huge and horrifying problems that seem totally beyond the powers of the individual to solve suddenly find people, ordinary people, who need help of a kind we, as individuals, can provide*’.<sup>57</sup>

The willingness of private individuals and community groups can be translated into specific measures on behalf

50 European Commission, ‘Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions: A European Agenda on Migration’, COM (2015) 240 final, 13 May 2015, 5 (emphasis added).

51 Churches’ Commission for Migrants in Europe (CCME), ‘Recommendations for the Development of Safe and Legal Paths to Protection in the European Union’, 19 November 2014.

52 European Parliament, Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice, and Home Affairs, ‘Working Document on Developing Safe and Lawful Routes for Asylum Seekers and Refugees into the EU, Including the Union Resettlement Policy and Corresponding Integration Policies’, 15 July 2015, 4, [www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?pubRef=-//EP//NONSGML+COMPARL+PE-564.908+01+DOC+PDF+V0//EN](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?pubRef=-//EP//NONSGML+COMPARL+PE-564.908+01+DOC+PDF+V0//EN).

53 European Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA), ‘Legal Entry Channels to the EU for Persons in Need of International Protection: A Toolbox’, Vienna, 2015, 5, [http://fra.europa.eu/sites/default/files/fra-focus\\_02-2015\\_legal-entry-to-the-eu.pdf](http://fra.europa.eu/sites/default/files/fra-focus_02-2015_legal-entry-to-the-eu.pdf).

54 UNHCR, ‘Legal Avenues to Safety and Protection through Other Forms of Admission’, 18 November 2014, [www.refworld.org/docid/5594e5924.html](http://www.refworld.org/docid/5594e5924.html).

55 UNHCR, ‘UNHCR Chief Issues Key Guidelines for Dealing with Europe’s Refugee Crisis’, (news release, 4 September 2015), [www.unhcr.org/55e9793b6.html](http://www.unhcr.org/55e9793b6.html).

56 Long, ‘Private Money, Public Good’.

57 Alan Breakspear, ‘Community Support and Backlash—A Commentary’, in *The Indochinese Refugee Movement: The Canadian Experience*, ed. Howard Adelman (Toronto: Operation Lifeline, 1980), 112.

of specific refugees. Moreover, the mobilisation of civil society in favour of private sponsorship may help to generate political will to initiate or expand government resettlement programmes.

When private sponsorship began in Canada in the late 1970s under the label ‘Operation Lifeline’, the government pledged to resettle one refugee for every privately sponsored individual.<sup>58</sup> Ever since, the Canadian government’s support for resettlement ‘has been guided in large measure by its gauging of public opinion’.<sup>59</sup> The government is today confronted with a groundswell of support for a new ‘lifeline’ for Syrian refugees.<sup>60</sup> A similar pattern can be seen in recent developments in Germany. In 2012, the government re-established an annual resettlement programme after a hiatus of several decades.<sup>61</sup> This resulted at least in part from the grassroots support generated by the ‘Save Me’ campaign launched by NGOs in 2008,<sup>62</sup> in which thousands of German citizens pledged to serve as *Paten* (“mentors” or “sponsors”) for resettled refugees.

Efforts to expand resettlement through private sponsorship are not without possible pitfalls. Sponsors may propose candidates who are rejected by immigration authorities because they do not meet eligibility criteria. If this happens repeatedly, it may sap public enthusiasm for sponsorship. Government processing of applications can be time-consuming, and sponsors may lose interest or not be willing to block funds if waiting periods are very long. In countries where settlement services and the support of ethnocultural groups are lacking, sponsors and refugees may face particular challenges. Backlash from opponents of resettlement, if not carefully managed, can threaten progress.<sup>63</sup>

## B. Increasing opportunity at reduced cost to government

The private sponsorship of refugees for resettlement offers a way to resettle more refugees at lower cost to the government. Governments may rightly ask whether private sponsorship simply postpones costs, for sponsorship periods are generally time-limited, and sponsored refugees are likely sooner or later to have access to the state welfare system. In most cases they will have immediate access to at least some state services, such as education and health care.

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### *The private sponsorship of refugees for resettlement offers a way to resettle more refugees at lower cost to the government.*

The Australian government identified its pilot community sponsorship programme ‘as a lower cost to government option’.<sup>64</sup> It has justified the high application and visa fees sponsors are required to pay as necessary to

58 The matching goal was not quite met. In 1979 and 1980, there were 32,698 government-assisted refugees admitted to Canada and 35,137 who were privately sponsored. See Barbara Treviranus and Michael Casasola, ‘Canada’s Private Sponsorship of Refugees Program: A Practitioners Perspective of its Past and Future’, *Journal of International Migration and Integration* 4, no. 3 (Spring 2003), 177–202.

59 Michael Lanphier, ‘Sponsorship: Organizational, Sponsor and Refugee Perspectives’, *Journal of International Migration and Integration* 4, no. 3 (Spring 2003): 237–56.

60 See, for example, New Canadian Media, ‘Canadians Take Syrian Refugee Crisis into Own Hands’, New Canadian Media, 21 June 2015, <http://newcanadianmedia.ca/item/28453-canadians-take-syrian-refugee-into-own-hands>; and Lifeline Syria, ‘Home’, accessed 3 December 2015, <http://lifelinesyria.ca>.

61 In December 2011, the interior ministers of Germany’s federal states decided to establish an annual resettlement quota. See Sammlung der zur Veröffentlichung freigegebenen Beschlüsse der 193. Sitzung der Ständigen Konferenz der Innenminister und –senatoren der Länder am 08/09.12.2011 in Wiesbaden, item 19, 27, [www.innenministerkonferenz.de/IMK/DE/termine/to-beschluesse/11-12-09/Beschluesse.pdf;jsessionid=18CE313486B832C9934C83811636AB58.2\\_cid374?blob=publicationFile&v=2](http://www.innenministerkonferenz.de/IMK/DE/termine/to-beschluesse/11-12-09/Beschluesse.pdf;jsessionid=18CE313486B832C9934C83811636AB58.2_cid374?blob=publicationFile&v=2)

62 ICMC Europe and Pro Asyl, *A City Says Yes!*

63 Howard Adelman, ‘Understanding Backlash’, in *The Indochinese Refugee Movement: The Canadian Experience*, ed. Howard Adelman (Toronto: Operation Lifeline, 1980), 98–110.

64 Australian Government, DIBP, ‘Community Support Programme’, 9.

offset the costs of government support services made available to all resettled refugees, including privately sponsored ones, or in case a sponsorship arrangement breaks down.

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*More research is needed to estimate government costs associated with private sponsorship in the immediate, medium, and long term.*

In order to keep costs to a minimum, governments may be tempted to prioritise the selection of refugees they see as having good ‘settlement potential’, i.e., those who are considered likely to become self-reliant more quickly, whether because of age, language ability, educational level, or professional training. But increasing short-term returns on investment by avoiding refugees who may need more support runs counter to a core objective of resettlement: that is, the protection of the vulnerable. If private sponsorship favours some refugees over others, it needs to be accompanied by government programmes to protect the most vulnerable.

More research is needed to estimate government costs associated with private sponsorship in the immediate, medium, and long term. Already several studies indicate that privately sponsored refugees may indeed become self-supporting more quickly than other categories of refugees, and thus require fewer government services.<sup>65</sup> One Canadian study noted that privately sponsored refugees had higher income levels than those who were government-sponsored, albeit still below the level of average Canadians. This finding appeared to hold at the two-year mark and over longer periods.<sup>66</sup>

Why would privately sponsored refugees outperform other refugee categories and be less susceptible to volatile economic conditions? The explanation appears to rest in the relatively high social capital they gain from being sponsored. Many studies refer to the importance of social ties and networks in securing and maintaining employment,<sup>67</sup> and in other facets of integration.

NGOs have warned that private sponsorship should not be used to ‘let the government off the hook’, but rather, to increase capacity.<sup>68</sup> UNHCR recommends that private sponsorship arrangements not be used as a substitute for core resettlement capacity, but rather as an additional measure.<sup>69</sup> This is a valid position, though it may be necessary to weigh the risks of substitution against the broad benefits of increased community involvement in refugee protection. At the same time, the costs to private sponsors should not be underestimated; providing sponsorships can put significant strain, for example, on migrant and refugee families desperate to help their relatives.

65 Soojin Yu, Estelle Ouellet, and Angelyn Warmington, ‘Refugee Integration in Canada: A Survey of Empirical Evidence and Existing Services’, *Refuge* 24, no. 2 (2007): 17–34; Jennifer Hyndman, ‘Research Summary on Resettled Refugee Integration’, UNHCR, Geneva, May 2011, 15, [www.unhcr.org/4e4123d19.html](http://www.unhcr.org/4e4123d19.html).

66 Dikshya Dhital, *The Economic Outcomes of Government Assisted Refugees, Privately Sponsored Refugees and Asylum Seekers in Canada* (Ottawa: Graduate School of Public and International Affairs, University of Ottawa, 2015), [www.ruor.uottawa.ca/bitstream/10393/32311/1/DIKSHYA\\_Dikshya\\_20151.pdf](http://www.ruor.uottawa.ca/bitstream/10393/32311/1/DIKSHYA_Dikshya_20151.pdf).

67 For example, Navjok K. Lamba, ‘The Employment Experiences of Canadian Refugees: Measuring the Impact of Human and Social Capital on Quality of Employment’, *Canadian Review of Sociology/Revue canadienne de sociologie* 40, no. 1 (2003): 45–64; Daniel Hiebert, ‘The Economic Integration of Immigrants in Metro Vancouver’ (Research on Immigration and Integration in the Metropolis Working Paper Series 9 [08], Metropolis British Columbia, Vancouver, 2009), 1–99, <http://mbc.metropolis.net/assets/uploads/files/wp/2009/WP09-08.pdf>; Pieter Bevelander, ‘The Employment Integration of Resettled Refugees, Asylum Claimants, and Family Reunion Migrants in Sweden’, *Refugee Survey Quarterly* 30, no. 1 (2011): 22–43.

68 Concerning Australia, see Immigration Advice and Rights Centre, Inc., ‘Details of Community Sponsorship of Refugees Pilot Announced’, (news release, 7 February 2013), [www.iarc.asn.au/blog/Immigration\\_News/post/Details\\_of\\_privatecommunity\\_sponsorship\\_of\\_refugees\\_pilot\\_program\\_announced/](http://www.iarc.asn.au/blog/Immigration_News/post/Details_of_privatecommunity_sponsorship_of_refugees_pilot_program_announced/); Canadian Council for Refugees, ‘Important changes in Canada’s Private Sponsorship of Refugees Program’.

69 UNHCR, Regional Representation in Canberra, ‘Submission of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. Proposed Community Support Programme’ (unpublished paper, 20 July 2015).

## C. *Broadening family reunification channels*

Private sponsorship could significantly enhance family reunification opportunities for beneficiaries of international protection in the European Union.<sup>70</sup> The EU Directive on family reunification gives individuals who are recognised by Member States as refugees (in the sense of the 1951 Convention relating to the status of refugees) the right to be joined by their spouses and minor children, without such admissions being counted against any quota.<sup>71</sup> That narrow approach to what constitutes family—in particular the exclusion of grandparents, parents, and siblings—frustrates many refugees. It does not tally with a common understanding of family and of family responsibilities.<sup>72</sup>

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*A private sponsorship programme that is dominated by family reunification may not be seen to be responding to protection needs, and support for the programme may wane as a result.*

Under current EU law, Member States are not required to extend family reunification rights to beneficiaries of temporary or subsidiary protection, or to individuals protected under national humanitarian arrangements. Such individuals, separated from their family members and refugees in all but name, may resort to the services of smugglers and other irregular means to bring their families to safety. Private sponsorship arrangements can help to reunite these families in a safe and orderly manner.

Reuniting refugee families can also promote integration, as concern over relatives left behind is often an impediment to successful settlement.<sup>73</sup> UNHCR has emphasised that ‘family reunification is an important element for the integration of beneficiaries of international protection in their host societies’.<sup>74</sup> UNHCR’s Executive Committee Conclusion 104 and numerous studies on refugee integration and mental health make that same point.<sup>75</sup>

However, a private sponsorship programme that is dominated by family reunification may not be seen to be responding to protection needs, and support for the programme may wane as a result. It will be important to strengthen public understanding of family unity as a basic human right, and of the particularly difficult situation in which refugees find themselves as they try to put their families back together. Careful efforts will also be needed to manage expectations and the processing pipeline, as experience suggests that there is likely to be a large demand for additional family reunification possibilities.<sup>76</sup>

70 UNHCR makes this point in UNHCR, ‘Legal Avenues to Safety and Protection’. On private sponsorships and extended family reunification in Canada, see Denton, ‘Understanding Private Refugee Sponsorships in Manitoba’.

71 European Union, ‘Council Directive 2003/86/EC of 22 September 2003 on the Right to Family Reunification’, L251/12, 3.10.2003’. Chapter V sets out the requirements for the reunification of refugee families.

72 European Council on Refugees and Exiles and Red Cross EU Office, *Disrupted Flight: The Realities of Separated Families in the EU* (Brussels: European Council on Refugees and Exiles and Red Cross EU Office, n.d.), <http://ecre.org/component/downloads/downloads/958.html>.

73 Denton, ‘Understanding Private Refugee Sponsorship in Manitoba’, 259.

74 UNHCR Bureau for Europe, ‘Refugee Family Reunification: UNHCR’s Response to the European Commission’s Green Paper on the Right to Family Reunification of Third Country Nationals Living in the European Union’, February 2012, 3, [www.refworld.org/docid/4f55e1cf2.html](http://www.refworld.org/docid/4f55e1cf2.html).

75 UNHCR Executive Committee Conclusion 104 (paragraph n) ‘recognizes that family members can reinforce the social support system of refugees, and in so doing, promote the smoother and more rapid integration of refugee families’. For more on the importance of family in integration, see Alastair Ager and Alison Strang, ‘Understanding Integration: A Conceptual Framework’, *Journal of Refugee Studies* 21, no. 2 (2008): 166–91.

76 For instance, after the German federal government announced its second Humanitarian Admission Program for Syrians on 23 December 2013, which focused on refugees and displaced Syrians with family members already in Germany, family members had until 28 February 2014 to lodge an application on behalf of their relatives. Many more applications were received than places available. In the state of North Rhine-Westphalia alone, applications were received for 31,500 persons, whereas only 1,700 places were allocated to that state; see UNHCR, ‘Das humanitäre Aufnahmeprogramm für syrische Flüchtlinge’, accessed 3 December 2015, [www.uno-fluechtlingshilfe.de/fluechtlinge/themen/asyl-migration/humanitaeres-aufnahmeprogramm.html](http://www.uno-fluechtlingshilfe.de/fluechtlinge/themen/asyl-migration/humanitaeres-aufnahmeprogramm.html). On 4 November 2013, the Swiss government extended the family reunification rights of Syrians residing lawfully in Switzerland to non-core relatives; this policy ended abruptly three weeks later, after Swiss embassies in

## D. Supporting integration

Refugees' initial experiences in their country of resettlement will naturally differ, depending on whether they are assisted by government services or by private individuals.<sup>77</sup> Logic suggests that privately sponsored refugees will settle more easily than those who are government sponsored because they have more one-on-one support, benefit from more in-kind contributions and unofficial cash support, and have more regular, more intensive, and earlier contacts with their host community. Broadly speaking, they have more social capital, and this can help them to find housing and employment and to learn the language and customs of the host country.

Integration is widely recognised as a two-way process involving adjustments by hosts and newcomers alike, and private sponsorship can help to narrow the cognitive gap between refugees and host communities. Very often, refugees' main contacts with the host society, especially during the initial period after arrival, are with government offices and service providers, and they have little social contact with the host population. (One refugee, invited to dinner in a German home, noted that it was the first time she had conversed with German people about her life, instead of about 'documents and formalities'.<sup>78</sup>)

The intuitive conclusion that privately sponsored refugees have a smoother path to integration than those who are entirely dependent on government support appears to be supported by the little empirical research on this subject. Only a few studies, all North American, compare how government and private assistance affect resettled refugees. These investigations, which mostly concern the Indochinese refugees resettled in the 1980s and the Kosovars in the late 1990s, are not conclusive, and their relevance to today's more diverse resettlement contexts can be questioned; nonetheless, they contain a number of interesting, positive findings on the role of sponsors as social facilitators of refugee resettlement.<sup>79</sup>

One early study of 1,300 Indochinese refugees resettled in Canada in 1979-81 assessed the 'success' of their settlement based on English language ability, employment, and health status ten years later. Using these three measures, it found that private sponsorship resulted in more successful settlement than government sponsorship.<sup>80</sup> In contrast, a comprehensive internal evaluation of the private sponsorship programme conducted in 2007 by Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC) found 'no noteworthy differences' in the success of privately sponsored and government-assisted refugees 'in terms of having their immediate needs met' and also found 'no sizable differences in the incidence of employment and employment earnings over time (i.e., three years after arrival)'.<sup>81</sup> More recent analysis of income data on the three categories of refugees in Canada (privately sponsored, government-assisted, and recognised in Canada) found that both male and female privately sponsored refugees did much better than those in the other two categories. The analysis was based on 18 years of data (1992 through 2009) derived from the Canadian Immigration Database.<sup>82</sup>

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the region were inundated with applications; ECRE, 'ECRE Weekly Bulletin of 6 December 2013', [www.ecre.org/component/downloads/downloads/826.html](http://www.ecre.org/component/downloads/downloads/826.html).

77 Neuwirth and Clark, 'Indochinese Refugees in Canada', 131.

78 Roland Kirbach, 'Ein Teller Wärme', *Die Zeit*, no. 26/2015, 10 July 2015, [www.zeit.de/2015/26/fluechtlinge-hamburger-welcome-dinner](http://www.zeit.de/2015/26/fluechtlinge-hamburger-welcome-dinner).

79 See for example, Morton Beiser, 'Sponsorship and Resettlement Success', *Journal of International Migration and Integration* 4, no. 2 (Spring 2003): 203-15; Yuen-Fong Woon, 'The Mode of Refugee Sponsorship and the Socio-economic Adaptation of Vietnamese in Victoria: A Three-Year Perspective', in *Uprooting, Loss and Adaptation: The Resettlement of Indochinese Refugees in Canada*, eds. Kwok B. Chan and Doreen Marie Indra (Ottawa: Canadian Public Health Association, 1987), 132-46. Thanh V. Tran has studied the effect of different modes of sponsorship (church, individual, voluntary agency) on employment status in the United States. See Thanh V. Tran, 'Sponsorship and Employment Status among Indochinese Refugees in the United States', *International Migration Review* 25, no. 3 (Autumn 1991): 536-50.

80 Beiser, 'Sponsorship and Resettlement Success'.

81 CIC, 'Summative Evaluation of the Private Sponsorship of Refugees Program', 2007, [www.cic.gc.ca/english/resources/evaluation/psrp/psrp-summary.asp](http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/resources/evaluation/psrp/psrp-summary.asp). The Canadian Council for Refugees expressed concern about the methodology of the Summative Evaluation. See Canadian Council for Refugees, 'Comments on the Private Sponsorship of Refugees Evaluation', September 2007, <http://ccrweb.ca/files/psrevalcomments.pdf>. The evaluation is nevertheless, to date, the most complete effort to assess the operation of the private sponsorship program.

82 Dhital, *The Economic Outcomes of Government Assisted Refugees*.

One finding common to U.S. and Canadian research is that privately sponsored refugees tend to become self-supporting sooner than government-assisted refugees.<sup>83</sup> This should be of interest to governments, although several analysts have cautioned that this may be due to privately sponsored refugees being pushed quickly into the labour market by sponsors eager to keep their own costs to a minimum.<sup>84</sup> It has been pointed out that if refugees enter the labour market in low-end jobs, rather than enrolling in language classes or vocational training, this may not help their long-term employment prospects.<sup>85</sup>

Studies in Austria and in Canada also suggest that the support of private sponsors can strengthen refugee mental health. The Austrian study did not concern resettled refugees but rather asylum seekers and refugees who had been diagnosed as depressed and who were given sponsors/mentors for six months. This led to improvement in their conditions.<sup>86</sup> Research in Canada also suggests that the support of a like-ethnic community has a particularly positive impact on mental health in the early years of resettlement.<sup>87</sup> This finding underlines the important role that sponsors from refugee and immigrant communities can play.

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It is noteworthy that the Canadian government turns to private sponsors for help in the resettlement of refugees with special needs. Canada's Joint Assistance Sponsorship (JAS) matches such refugees with sponsoring groups.<sup>88</sup> Because these cases are financed by government sources, they are counted within the government programme rather than as private sponsorships, but nevertheless provide further evidence of the contribution of private sponsors to refugee mental health.<sup>89</sup>

On another note, can private sponsorship encourage refugees to settle outside major cities and thereby contribute to a more balanced geographic distribution—while revitalising areas that have been losing population? In Canada, the arrival of privately sponsored refugees is seen to have helped to revitalise rural communities.<sup>90</sup> This is an issue of particular relevance in parts of Central and Southern Europe where populations are dwindling and ageing. Although it might be difficult to identify sponsors there, church communities could potentially play a role.

Finally, only a couple of studies investigate how privately sponsored refugees *themselves* perceive their adjustment process and their relationship with their sponsors. One study involved refugees settled in the Canadian

83 Charles F. Hohm, Paul Sargent, and Robert Moser, 'A Quantitative Comparison of the Effectiveness of Public and Private Refugee Resettlement Programs: An Evaluation of the San Diego Wilson Fish Demonstration Project', *Sociological Perspectives* 42, no. 4 (1999): 755–63.

84 Hyndman, 'Research Summary on Resettled Refugee Integration in Canada'; Neuwirth and Clark, 'Indochinese Refugees in Canada', 136–37. This point is also noted by CIC in its *Summative Evaluation*.

85 Neuwirth and Clark, 'Indochinese Refugees in Canada', 137.

86 Walter Renner, Anton-Rupert Laireiter, and Marco T. Maier, 'Social Support as a Moderator of Acculturative Stress among Refugees and Asylum-Seekers', *Social Behavior and Personality* 40, no. 1 (2012): 129–46.

87 Morton Beiser, 'Longitudinal Research to Promote Effective Refugee Resettlement', *Transcultural Psychiatry* 43, no. 1 (March 2006): 56–71.

88 Treviranus and Casasola, 'Canada's Private Sponsorship of Refugees Program', 181–82 and 191. On the operation of the Joint Assistance Program, see also, CIC, Guide to the Private Sponsorship of Refugees Program, section 3.3, [www.cic.gc.ca/english/resources/publications/ref-sponsor/index.asp](http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/resources/publications/ref-sponsor/index.asp).

89 In 1999, when Canada responded to UNHCR's request for the evacuation of refugees from Kosovo, the government considered all Kosovar evacuees as having special needs, based on reports of trauma, and therefore matched them with sponsoring groups. Derwing and Mulder, 'The Kosovar Sponsoring Experience in Northern Alberta'.

90 Denton, 'Understanding Private Refugee Sponsorships in Manitoba', 262–63.



province of Manitoba,<sup>91</sup> the other concerned Kosovar refugees evacuated to Ontario.<sup>92</sup> To better understand whether and how private sponsorship improves the settlement support delivered to newcomers, it would be important to research the views of refugees themselves.

### *E. A viable alternative to irregular movement?*

The extent to which private sponsorship can offer a viable alternative to irregular movement is perhaps the most critical question amid the current surge of irregular arrivals at Europe's land and sea borders. UNHCR and others have long advocated for resettlement not only as a tool of protection and a durable solution, but also as an alternative to dangerous irregular movements. Most refugee populations, including some of those coming to Europe in the largest numbers—Afghans, Iraqis, Somalis, Syrians—know that their prospects of orderly resettlement directly from countries of first asylum (or from their countries of origin) are extremely limited. This is one of the reasons why they take matters into their own hands.

The enthusiastic response to the short-term and narrowly defined family-linked programme for Syrians offered by Ireland, and to the private sponsorship possibilities offered by the German federal states, are evidence that private sponsorship can be an attractive alternative to irregular movement—at least for refugees who have family or other connections able to provide the necessary guarantees. This is assuming, too, that sufficient places are available, criteria are not overly restrictive,<sup>93</sup> costs are not exorbitant, and processing is expeditious. If private sponsorship comes to be seen as a viable alternative to irregular movement, it could not only increase opportunities in countries already hosting resettled refugees but also spur other countries to take part in the resettlement process.

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91 The study, conducted in 2007 by researchers at the University of Winnipeg, involved a small-scale survey of 50 privately sponsored refugees who had arrived between one and five years earlier in the Canadian province of Manitoba (population 1.2 million—the European Union has just five Member States with populations under 2 million: Latvia, Estonia, Cyprus, Luxembourg, and Malta). Manitoba receives around 600 privately sponsored refugees per year. See Tom Carter, Anita Friesen, Chesya Polevychok, and John Osborne, *The Resettlement Experience of Privately Sponsored Refugees, Phase Two Report prepared for Manitoba Labour and Immigration* (Winnipeg: University of Winnipeg, 2008), [http://geography.uwinnipeg.ca/Carter/Publications/Journals/PSR-Report\\_Phase-Two.pdf](http://geography.uwinnipeg.ca/Carter/Publications/Journals/PSR-Report_Phase-Two.pdf). The Phase One report was also published in 2008 and discusses in detail the methodology for the study.

92 Lawrence Lam, C. Jansen, and P. Ansief, *A Report on the Settlement Experiences of Kosovar Refugees in Ontario* (York University: Center for Refugee Studies and Joint Center of Excellence for Research on Immigration and Settlement, 2001), <http://yorkspace.library.yorku.ca/xmlui/handle/10315/2673>.

93 Australian nongovernmental organisations (NGOs) reacted strongly to the government's proposal to deny access to private sponsorship under the Community Support Programme to people who have a relative who entered Australia by boat in an irregular manner. See Refugee Council of Australia, 'Community Support Program Consultation', para. 4.8.

## V. *Recommendations to the European Union, Member States, and other actors*

The European Union and its Member States should consider using private sponsorship arrangements more broadly. Private sponsorship has demonstrated its utility as a part of a holistic refugee policy in Canada over many years. Interested Member States and NGOs have already benefited from a number of information-sharing initiatives on the subject, including study visits to countries of resettlement and workshops on the topic.<sup>94</sup> Not all Member States will have the necessary preconditions for private sponsorship, and there is no single model appropriate to all countries, but the consideration of private sponsorship should now be taken to the next level. With this in mind, a number of recommendations follow.

General recommendations to all actors:

- Examine, consult on, and assess the potential value of private sponsorship arrangements in the current context.
- Develop information on the population of asylum seekers, refugees, and migrants flowing into Europe to assist in determining the potential impact of private sponsorship programmes on the intentions and actions of people who might otherwise move irregularly.

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Recommendations for the European Commission:

- Launch a formal consultation process, issuing a green paper on private sponsorship and inviting public discussion of it, with a view to achieving a clear, shared understanding of the concept in a reasonably short timeframe.
- Consider developing specific incentives for private sponsorship programmes, including financial support for pilot programmes in Member States that would be separate from, and additional to, the support currently available for resettlement under the Asylum, Migration, and Integration Fund (AMIF).
- Provide support for NGOs working with governments to launch pilot programmes and eventually enable NGOs to develop training and other forms of information for sponsors akin to the Refugee Sponsorship Training Program supported by the government of Canada.
- Suggest that financial and in-kind contributions made by individuals undertaking private sponsorships be tax-deductible.
- Support and encourage research into the modes and outcomes of private sponsorship in the EU context and beyond, in order to spread knowledge about this resettlement channel.

<sup>94</sup> A workshop on the Canadian private sponsorship model was organised in Brussels in June 2014 by the Canadian Permanent Mission to the European Union, UNHCR, and the ECRE. For earlier study visits and exchanges, see CCME, *Resettlement: Protecting Refugees. Sharing Responsibility*, eds. Alessia Passarelli and Doris Peschke (Brussels: CCME, 2006), [www.ccme.be/fileadmin/filer/ccme/20\\_Areas\\_of\\_Work/01\\_Refugee\\_Protection/2006-10-19\\_CCME\\_Publ\\_-\\_Resettlement\\_-\\_Protecting\\_Refugees\\_Sharing\\_Responsibility.pdf](http://www.ccme.be/fileadmin/filer/ccme/20_Areas_of_Work/01_Refugee_Protection/2006-10-19_CCME_Publ_-_Resettlement_-_Protecting_Refugees_Sharing_Responsibility.pdf).

Recommendations for the European Asylum Support Office (EASO):

- Support Member States in the design and implementation of private sponsorship pilot programmes. This support might include general tools for private sponsorship such as a handbook of best practices, as well as assistance in developing specific programmes in individual Member States, together with UNHCR and IOM.
- Provide a forum for the exchange of information on and experiences of private sponsorship, and ask that non-EU countries and NGOs participate.

Recommendations for Member States:

- Identify and engage with potential partners at the national and international level to establish pilot private sponsorship programmes as soon as possible.
- Consider making financial and in-kind contributions to the private sponsorship of refugees tax-deductible.

Recommendations for NGOs, think tanks, and academics:

- Bolster the limited literature available on private sponsorship (which focuses on the Canadian context). Among other topics, focus on Germany's recent experience with the private sponsorship of Syrian refugees.
- Collect the thoughts of refugee and migrant communities on the desirability, impact, and configuration of private sponsorship arrangements.
- Welcome the involvement of municipalities, academic institutions, and the business sector in private sponsorship, and consider how to best encourage sponsorship programmes in countries with no prior experience in refugee resettlement.

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## APPENDIX

The following are short descriptions of mechanisms for the private sponsorship of resettled refugees. Some of these programmes (as in Argentina, Germany, Ireland, and Switzerland) were adopted as special measures for Syrian refugees. The Australian and Canadian programmes are not nationality-specific. The New Zealand arrangement is a small-scale measure aimed at enabling family reunification outside the narrow categories otherwise permitted. The United States is included here because it is often cited in the context of private sponsorship, though its resettlement programme is more properly described as one of public-private partnership.

### *Argentina*

Since October 2014, Argentina has offered a ‘Humanitarian Visa’ for Syrians and Palestinians who were previously resident in Syria and are affected by the war. These persons are eligible to come to Syria at the request of a sponsor who is an Argentine citizen or permanent or temporary resident and guarantees to provide accommodation and other settlement assistance. As of early September 2015, some 100 visas had been issued under this programme, which was extended for a second year.<sup>95</sup> During the first year of the programme, sponsors had to be family members. A 2015 amendment broadened the pool of potential sponsors by lifting the requirement for a family or other close link.

The sponsor has to provide a signed affidavit for each person/family being sponsored, committing to provide ‘accommodation and maintenance’. An organisation can present itself with an intended sponsor to provide the required guarantee of support. The sponsor’s financial obligation has not been quantified by the government, but the directive setting out the programme stipulates that the government can require the sponsor to present ‘adequate documentation’ of resources necessary to provide for the sponsored individuals.

Beneficiaries receive a temporary residence permit for two years, renewable by a further year, after which they may apply for permanent residence.<sup>96</sup> They have the right to work, to education, and to health care. They may also apply for asylum at any time.<sup>97</sup>

### *Australia*

Australia’s long-standing Special Humanitarian Program (SHP) has some features of private sponsorship. It was set up in 1981 to allow people who face human-rights abuses in their home country and who have a connection to Australia to resettle permanently there. Australian citizens and permanent residents may propose refugees and people in refugee-like situations for admission under the SHP. There is no charge for this application. The sponsor (‘proposer’) is responsible for travel costs, meeting the refugee on arrival, initial accommodation, and familiarising the refugee with available government services. A target for SHP admissions is set each year within Australia’s overall Humanitarian Program, which also includes the refugee resettlement category (implemented in cooperation with UNHCR) and onshore grants of protection.<sup>98</sup>

95 Infojus Noticias, ‘Cómo funciona el programa para recibir sirios en Argentina?’ 4 September 2015, <http://thomsonreuterslatam.com/2015/09/22/programa-especial-de-visado-humanitario-para-extranjeros-afectados-por-el-conflicto-de-la-republica-arabe-siria-prorroga-de-la-vigencia/>.

96 See Dirección Nacional de Migraciones, Disposición 4499/2015 of 15 September 2015 and Disposición 3915 of 14 October 2014, available on [www.infojus.gov.ar](http://www.infojus.gov.ar).

97 Information provided by UNHCR Argentina, e-mails to the author of 22 September and 9 September 2015.

98 For explanation of Australia’s Humanitarian Program, see Government of Australia, DIBP, ‘Refugee and humanitarian

In July 2013, Australia launched its first full-fledged pilot private sponsorship programme, the Community Proposal Pilot (CPP). Under the CPP, individuals and community groups, working with ‘Approved Proposing Organisations’ (APOs), identify refugees they are willing to sponsor. The sponsor must pay the visa application charges (A\$19,124 for the principal applicant and A\$2,680 for each secondary applicant) as well as pay for medical check-ups and air travel, provide settlement support for up to 12 months, and pay an administrative fee to the APO of A\$5,500 and post a refundable bond of A\$5,000. Despite the high cost of sponsorship and concerns that the unstated aim of the programme was to reduce costs to the government,<sup>99</sup> response to the CPP has been strong, and the government is considering mainstreaming this programme.

No additional capacity was created for this programme, which (like the SHP) is situated within Australia’s overall Humanitarian Programme. In other words, refugees resettled with private sponsorships are counted against the overall administrative ceiling for humanitarian admissions (as are spontaneous arrivals), and the authorities do not resettle additional refugees if the CPP or SHP amounts to a substantial proportion of the total. Persons admitted under the SHP and CPP receive refugee and humanitarian visas giving them permanent residency.<sup>100</sup>

## Canada

Canada’s private sponsorship of refugee programme is an integral part of the country’s broader refugee policy, and has a 37-year history.<sup>101</sup> Private sponsorship was made possible by a passage in the *Immigration Act of 1976* that allows sponsorship of refugees by ‘any body corporate’ or ‘any group of citizens or permanent residents’. Between 1979 and 2014, 230,650 refugees were resettled in Canada through private sponsorships, comprising 42 per cent of all refugees resettled in Canada during this period.<sup>102</sup>

The admission of privately sponsored refugees to Canada is additional to the government-funded resettlement programme.<sup>103</sup> However, the government sets an annual target range for privately sponsored admissions, as it does for government-sponsored resettlement. These are aspirational rather than binding figures. The target for private sponsorships is largely a reflection of the government’s capacity to process applications, rather than of the capacity of the sponsors; NGOs have been critical of the low targets set in recent years.

Today, most private sponsorships are provided by organisations that hold agreements with the government for this purpose, termed sponsorship agreement holders (SAHs).<sup>104</sup> Groups of five or more Canadian citizens or permanent residents and other community groups—including corporate entities—may also sponsor refugees. All sponsors must submit a detailed settlement plan to Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC) for approval. In most cases, private sponsors provide financial support for one year (or until the refugee becomes self-sufficient), as well as social and emotional support. Canada also has ‘blended’ programmes, where responsibilities are shared between the government and a private sponsor; admissions under these programmes are counted under the government-sponsored resettlement programme.

program’, accessed 3 December 2015, [www.border.gov.au/Trav/Refu](http://www.border.gov.au/Trav/Refu).

99 Refugee Council of Australia, ‘Pilot Sponsorship Program Welcome But Needs Further Work’.

100 For further information on the Community Proposal Pilot and the proposed Community Support Program, see Government of Australia, DIAC, ‘Proposed Pilot of a Private/Community Refugee Sponsorship Program’; and Government of Australia, DIBP, ‘Community Support Programme’.

101 For more information, see CIC, *Private Sponsorship of Refugees Program*, June 2015.

102 Data from CIC.

103 Information in this section applies to all Canadian provinces except the Province of Quebec, which has its own immigration and refugee resettlement program.

104 Around two-thirds of sponsorships are provided by SAHs. SAHs are both faith-based and secular organisations. A growing number are ethnocultural groups representing Canada’s immigrant and refugee communities. See Chapman, *Private Sponsorship and Public Policy*.

## Germany

Following a decision by the German Parliament in 2013, the federal government authorised the federal states (*Bundesländer*) to admit privately sponsored Syrian refugees. Of Germany's 16 states, all but Bavaria have done so. These programmes differ from state to state, but the common prerequisites are family links to a sponsor who is a German citizen or holder of a residence permit, and a requirement that the sponsor have sufficient monthly income to provide for each of the sponsored relatives.

The sponsored refugees receive renewable residence permits of one to two years duration, and are allowed to work. In most of the states, no numerical limitations have been set for these admissions. There are no comprehensive statistics, but according to UNHCR, more than 15,000 visas were issued under this programme between mid-2013 and mid-2015.<sup>105</sup>

The sponsorship arrangements described above are additional to Germany's annual resettlement quota and to the three Humanitarian Admission Programmes for Syrians implemented by Germany since May 2013. The Humanitarian Admission Programmes were set up to take in a total of 20,000 Syrian refugees. The first in May 2013 was for 5,000 refugees, the second in December 2013 for another 5,000, and the third in July 2014 for 10,000. These programmes also contain an element of private sponsorship, insofar as they prioritised applications of persons proposed by relatives in Germany able to provide some support, for instance, to cover travel costs.<sup>106</sup>

## Ireland

Ireland established a Syrian Humanitarian Admission Programme (SHAP) that operated for six weeks from March to April 2014. The SHAP offered temporary residence to Syrians (whether still in Syria or in surrounding countries) with close family members (sponsors) in Ireland. Sponsors had to be Irish citizens or Syrian nationals residing lawfully in Ireland, and had to demonstrate the ability to support their family members during their stay in Ireland, and organise and pay for travel. Sponsors could apply for up to four family members; two had to be prioritised for admission in the first instance.<sup>107</sup> Successful candidates received two-year residence permits, and permission to work. Beneficiaries must have a valid passport or travel document, proof of vaccinations, and obtain their entry visa prior to travelling to Ireland. Eighty-four applications (covering 308 persons) were received, of which 44 were granted (114 persons). By 9 September 2015, 67 persons had arrived, 90 per cent directly from Syria.<sup>108</sup> The SHAP is additional to Ireland's annual resettlement programme.

## New Zealand

The 'Refugee Family Support Category' (RFSC) allows refugees and former refugees who have been legally resident in New Zealand for at least three years to sponsor relatives not otherwise eligible for family reunion (i.e., who are not spouses or unmarried minor children). Under this programme, relatives are admitted for permanent residence. This category is limited to 300 persons per year and is additional to New Zealand's resettle-

<sup>105</sup> E-mail to author from UNHCR Berlin, 12 August 2015.

<sup>106</sup> Information on the Humanitarian Admission Programs can be found at Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge (BAMF), 'Aufnahmeverfahren syrischer Flüchtlinge', last updated 30 October 2014, [www.bamf.de/DE/Migration/AufnahmeSyrien/aufnahmeverfahren-syrien-node.html](http://www.bamf.de/DE/Migration/AufnahmeSyrien/aufnahmeverfahren-syrien-node.html).

<sup>107</sup> Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service (INIS), Syrian Humanitarian Admission Programme, accessed 3 December 2015, [www.inis.gov.ie/en/INIS/Pages/SYRIAN%20HUMANITARIAN%20ADMISSION%20PROGRAMME](http://www.inis.gov.ie/en/INIS/Pages/SYRIAN%20HUMANITARIAN%20ADMISSION%20PROGRAMME).

<sup>108</sup> E-mail to author from the Irish Ministry of Justice, 8 September 2015.

ment quota. Sponsors are responsible for financial support and accommodation for up to 24 months. They may sponsor a parent, grandparent, grandchild, aunt, uncle, niece, nephew, adult sibling or adult child, and their immediate families.

Sponsors are divided into tier one and tier two. Tier one sponsors have no immediate family living lawfully and permanently in New Zealand or are the sole care-giver of a dependent relative in New Zealand. All others are tier-two sponsors. Priority is given to tier-one sponsors. Registrations from tier-one sponsors are put in a queue, and visas are granted to cases in the tier-one queue until the annual 300 places are filled. If any of the 300 annual places remain available, registrations are selected from tier two until the 300 places are filled. Tier two is not operational. It was last opened for applications for three days in April 2012, at which time enough applications were received to last through 2016-17.<sup>109</sup>

## Switzerland

On 4 September 2013, Switzerland launched a ‘facilitated family reunification program’ for Syrians with refugee status or permanent residence in Switzerland.<sup>110</sup> Initially the programme did not have a sponsorship element, but on 4 November 2013 an amendment was introduced requiring the host (sponsor) to demonstrate sufficient living space and funds to provide for invited family members.<sup>111</sup> The programme faced a number of challenges, including the high number of applicants, and was terminated on 29 November 2013.<sup>112</sup> More than 8,200 applications were received, 4,700 visas were granted, and as of February 2015, more than 4,200 persons had arrived.<sup>113</sup>

## United States

The United States is often mentioned when private sponsorship is discussed, but it does not currently have a private sponsorship programme. Instead, the entire U.S. resettlement programme operates as a public-private partnership.<sup>114</sup> For all resettled refugees, settlement services are provided by voluntary agencies (‘volags’) that hold contracts with the Department of State.<sup>115</sup> Settlement assistance is partly funded by government grants and partly from the volag’s own resources. The agencies, both faith-based and nonsectarian, work through hundreds of affiliates around the country, often called sponsors or sponsoring agencies. These affiliates, in turn, usually work with friends or relatives of the refugee (and sometimes also called sponsors). This may explain why U.S. refugee resettlement is often seen as a sponsorship programme.

Adding to the confusion over terms is the fact that all candidates for refugee resettlement in the U.S. family reunification category (Priority 3) must have an Affidavit of Relationship filed by the U.S.-based relative.

<sup>109</sup> UNHCR, *Resettlement Handbook*, chapter on New Zealand.

<sup>110</sup> Swiss Confederation, Federal Office for Migration, ‘Facilitated Procedure for the Issuance of a Visitor Visa for Relatives of Syrian Nationals Living in Switzerland’, 4 September 2015, [www.bfm.admin.ch/dam/data/bfm/rechtsgrundlagen/weisungen/auslaender/einreise-ch/20130904-weis-SYR-e.pdf](http://www.bfm.admin.ch/dam/data/bfm/rechtsgrundlagen/weisungen/auslaender/einreise-ch/20130904-weis-SYR-e.pdf).

<sup>111</sup> E-mail to author from UNHCR Switzerland unit, 7 September 2015.

<sup>112</sup> Confédération Suisse, ‘Octroi facilité de visas aux parents de ressortissants syriens vivant en Suisse: levée de la mesure provisoire’, 29 November 2013, [www.news.admin.ch/message/index.html?lang=fr&msg-id=51180](http://www.news.admin.ch/message/index.html?lang=fr&msg-id=51180).

<sup>113</sup> E-mail from UNHCR Switzerland Unit, 7 September 2015.

<sup>114</sup> On the characteristics of the U.S. resettlement program, see Norman L. Zucker, ‘Refugee Resettlement in the United States: The Role of the Voluntary Agencies’, *Michigan Yearbook of International Legal Studies* 3 (1982): 155–77; van Selm, ‘Public-Private Partnerships in Refugee Resettlement’; Anastasia Brown and Todd Scribner, ‘Unfulfilled Promises, Future Possibilities: The Refugee Resettlement System in the United States’, *Journal on Migration and Human Security* 2, no. 2 (2014): 101–20.

<sup>115</sup> These are Church World Service, Episcopal Migration Ministries, Ethiopian Community Development Council, Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society, International Rescue Committee, Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service, United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, U.S. Committee for Refugees and Immigrants, and World Relief.

Also, members of certain religious minorities still in their country of origin are eligible for resettlement under the Priority 2 category if they have relatives permanently residing in the United States who petition for them. (This applies to religious minorities in Iran and in countries that were formerly part of the Soviet Union.<sup>116</sup>) The relatives, usually termed ‘sponsors’, do not have to commit to support the resettled refugee or even to provide evidence of a certain income level.

The United States had a private sponsorship programme for several years subsequent to passage of the *1980 Refugee Act*. In fiscal years (FY) 1987 through 1994, the annual presidential determination allocating refugee resettlement numbers contained a ‘private-sector reserve’ for admissions contingent on private-sector funding.<sup>117</sup> Altogether 57,000 places were allocated for private-sector admissions (4,000 in FY 1987, 1988, and 1989; 14,000 in FY 1990; 10,000 in FY 1991, 1992, 1993; and 1,000 in 1994), but only 16,067 were actually used.<sup>118</sup> The private sponsor was responsible for filing the required application forms, maintenance of the applicant in a third country from application to departure, medical check-ups, transportation, reception, health-care insurance costs for two years, care and maintenance for two years or until the refugee became self-supporting, and other services (such as counselling, interpretation, English language training, vocational training, recertification, job development etc.).<sup>119</sup>

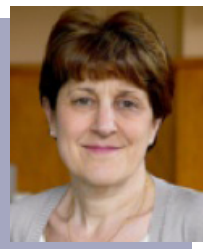
<sup>116</sup> Hipsman and Meissner, *In-Country Refugee Processing in Central America*.

<sup>117</sup> This was mainly driven by Cuban immigrant groups’ lobbying for a channel to admit Cubans who had fled to third countries, mostly in Central America. On 13 June 1988, the Cuban-American National Foundation (CANF) signed an agreement with the U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) pledging to cover costs for the admission of up to 1,500 Cubans annually who were in third countries. The so-called Operation Exodus began in 1988 with the arrival of 671 Cubans from Costa Rica and Panama. The Federation of Zoroastrian Associations of North America, which resettled Iranian Zoroastrian refugees, was also pressing for a private-sector initiative.

<sup>118</sup> Information drawn from annual reports to Congress on the Refugee Resettlement Program presented by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR); see ORR, *Annual ORR Reports to Congress* (Washington, DC: ORR, various years), [www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/orr/resource/annual-orr-reports-to-congress](http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/orr/resource/annual-orr-reports-to-congress). Statistics provided by the State Department’s Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration (PRM) yield an even lower total of just 8,163. The discrepancy has not been explained, but may be due to how the admission of Soviet Jews following the passage of the November 1989 Lautenberg Amendment was counted.

<sup>119</sup> Information on the sponsors’ responsibilities is drawn from a 1989 California Department of Social Services letter sent to all county welfare directors; State of California, Department of Social Services, ‘Private Sector Initiative Program’, 12 October 1989, [www.dss.cahwnet.gov/getinfo/acin89/I-70-89.pdf](http://www.dss.cahwnet.gov/getinfo/acin89/I-70-89.pdf).

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Dr. Kumin worked for the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) from 1979 to 2012. From 2009 – 2011 she was UNHCR’s Director for Europe and Representative to the European Union; in 2012 she authored UNHCR’s *State of the World’s Refugees*. Earlier, she served *inter alia* as UNHCR Representative in the Benelux countries, Canada, Germany, and Yugoslavia; and as Director of Public Information. Over the years, she was involved with refugee resettlement in several capacities, having led the agency’s program for Orderly Departure from Vietnam, supervised the resettlement of Indochinese refugees out of Thailand and of East European refugees out of Yugoslavia, and having launched the program for resettlement of Bosnian refugees out of Germany in the 1990s.

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