



# Improving Stakeholder Coordination in Refugee Resettlement

A path to more effective, inclusive programmes

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# Contents

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- Executive Summary** ..... 1
  
- 1 Introduction** ..... 4
  
- 2 Resettlement Programmes: State of Play** ..... 6
  
- 3 How Do Resettlement Partnerships Work and What Are Their Challenges?** ..... 11
  - A. Making decisions on admission numbers and placements..... 15
  - B. Making predeparture preparations ..... 15
  - C. Providing post-arrival support ..... 16
  - D. Practical limits to multilevel cooperation ..... 16
  
- 4 Fostering More Inclusive and Effective Partnerships** ..... 19
  - A. Coordination around programme design and implementation ..... 20
  - B. Coordination at the pre-arrival stage to anticipate and address capacity challenges . 21
  - C. Coordination around post-arrival support..... 23
  
- 5 Conclusions and Recommendations** ..... 25
  
- Appendix. Data Sources for Table 1** ..... 27
  
- About the Authors** ..... 29
  
- Acknowledgments** ..... 30

## Executive Summary

Refugee resettlement programmes have in recent years struggled to keep pace with the growing scale of displacement worldwide. Despite an ambitious push to expand these programmes on the part of actors such as the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the European Union, and some resettlement countries, progress towards increasing the number of refugees resettled each year has largely stalled. One of the principal challenges is that resettlement efforts are operating in a context of multiple crises: the COVID-19 pandemic severely limited, and in some countries temporarily halted, resettlement (and many other kinds of immigration) from 2020 to 2022, and large-scale displacement triggered by the war in Ukraine has diverted resources from resettlement to emergency pathway operations in some of the countries to which Ukrainians have fled.

Another key factor that has constrained resettlement programmes' growth is the difficulty of establishing effective coordination policies and practices among the many stakeholders involved in these systems. This often includes different levels of government, civil-society and community actors, and international organisations, which frequently have very different priorities and may not be used to working

together. But despite the challenges, cultivating more seamless coordination and communication between these stakeholders is an essential part of making resettlement programmes more efficient and sustainable, providing better support to refugees, and unlocking opportunities to expand resettlement operations.

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Most resettlement actors agree that they need to work together more effectively to ensure there are no procedural or service gaps between the many steps of the resettlement process—from setting admissions numbers and selecting refugees for resettlement, to facilitating their travel and placing them within the destination country, to supporting their initial reception and longer-term integration. The question is how. Emergency protection responses to displacement from Afghanistan and Ukraine have been able to overcome some of the coordination issues that have long plagued resettlement programmes, with national government-led efforts actively seeking to include and coordinate with local, regional, and national stakeholders. These responses have highlighted the value of well-coordinated multistakeholder protection programmes, particularly in a context of limited capacity and resources, and offer some lessons that could benefit traditional resettlement and other protection pathways (including sponsorship programmes and future emergency schemes).

Some of the thorniest coordination questions are exactly *who* should be included in resettlement planning and implementation, *how* inclusive should these systems aim to be, and *what* role in key programme decisions should subnational actors have. Even in countries where such stakeholders have opportunities

to provide formal input on resettlement priorities or admission levels, they do not typically have decision-making power and the degree to which their input is integrated into these key programmatic decisions varies. When insufficient attention is paid to how many refugees localities are willing and able to accept, based on whether they have the requisite knowledge and capacity to do so, this can lead resettlement programmes to set unrealistically high or low admissions quotas. Gaps in local–national communication can also result in refugees being placed in communities that lack the services to meet their needs (e.g., specialised medical care) or where they may struggle to find jobs, based on their skill profile. Moreover, when the stakeholders in charge of supporting refugee reception (e.g., authorities at different levels of government, civil society, and local service providers) are not provided sufficient, timely information about the profile of the refugees who will be joining their communities, they may be ill-prepared to welcome and support newcomers. Finally, limited coordination between the actors that provide post-arrival support can lead to gaps or duplication in integration services.

These multistakeholder input and coordination challenges have several causes:

- ▶ **Divergent goals:** Different stakeholders have different motivations for engaging with resettlement processes. For instance, some communities may want to take on a bigger role, whereas others may have concerns about being asked to receive more refugees than they feel they can support or than is backed by public opinion. Concurrently, a national government’s approach to resettlement may be guided by other factors (e.g., humanitarian commitments and foreign policy objectives), and national authorities vary in their openness to including subnational stakeholders in decisions about annual admission numbers, priorities, and placement. And even when the different levels of government actively participate in resettlement, effectively coordinating the involvement of stakeholders with divergent interests and concerns can prove challenging.
- ▶ **Political shifts:** Because final decisions about how many and which refugees to resettle rest with national authorities, when the political tides change, so too can resettlement programme priorities. Unexpected increases or decreases in resettlement numbers can adversely affect local trust in national authorities and local buy-in for resettlement activities, especially where there is limited multilevel communication and coordination between stakeholders and where resource levels are not adjusted to match policy shifts. And when sharp increases follow periods of low admissions (as has been the case in the United States), nongovernmental and other organisations may find it difficult to quickly scale up reception and integration services.
- ▶ **Capacity challenges:** Even when political will exists and multilevel consultation and coordination channels are in place, not all relevant stakeholders will have the time, resources, and knowledge to participate effectively. For example, representatives of small or remote municipalities may be unable to attend in-person consultations in capital cities, and those municipalities may not have or be able to build the capacity to provide refugees with access to needed services. And when communities are consulted and express an eagerness to receive refugees but do not fully understand the resettlement process and what will be required of them in terms of reception and integration services, national authorities may find it difficult to use their input to develop realistic admissions and placement decisions.

Resettlement programmes' operations and refugees' integration outcomes would benefit from stronger multistakeholder communication and coordination at the following three key stages of the resettlement process:

- ▶ **Informing programme priorities and scaling up protection efforts:** While national stakeholders will likely continue to have the final say over admissions numbers and criteria, there are ways to give subnational authorities a greater voice in these decisions. Some countries already have formal consultation mechanisms through which local actors can provide mediated input to national decisionmakers (as in Finland and the United States for placement decisions), though more can be done to ensure local actors feel their voices are truly taken into account. Other promising practices include introducing additional protection programmes that operate under countries' resettlement schemes but are led by subnational governments. Germany's State Admission Programmes, for instance, allow states to help select and welcome refugees (pending approval from the federal government) in addition to those who enter the country via the federal programme. Similarly, the sponsorship programmes run by a handful of Spanish autonomous communities (operating under the country's resettlement scheme) allow these communities to have a more active role in the reception and integration of sponsored refugees.
- ▶ **Anticipating and addressing capacity challenges before refugees arrive:** Effective communication between pre-arrival and post-resettlement actors can help ensure authorities in receiving communities have the knowledge and capacity to provide adequate mental and physical health services and employment and education opportunities to vulnerable individuals with specific needs. Some promising initiatives in this space include trainings and toolkits developed and delivered by UNHCR and the International Organisation for Migration (IOM) to spread awareness among local actors within resettlement countries about what it takes to resettle refugees, which material resources and social services need to be in place, how service gaps can be overcome, and where to find support. Other initiatives aim to build stronger working relationships between pre- and post-arrival actors who work in similar areas (e.g., medical care) to improve the flow of information, ensure refugees' needs are consistently met throughout the resettlement process, and avoid inefficiencies (e.g., unnecessarily conducting the same health screenings multiple times).
- ▶ **Streamlining post-arrival support and service provision:** In an environment where reception and integration assistance is being provided by a variety of actors, coordinated operations and service provision can go a long way towards helping refugees navigate these systems and access services for which they are eligible. Centralising administrative, integration, and other services in one physical location (as one-stop shops do in Turin and soon Naples, with the assistance of UNHCR Italy) can strengthen refugee integration outcomes while also streamlining the work of authorities and nongovernmental service providers. Another strategy is to create networks through which organisations involved in refugee integration can exchange information and best practices (as is done via the Pohmako Network in Finland's Ostrobothnia region, which includes representatives of employment services and employers, training organisations, and municipal integration offices).

These types of investments can help policymakers promote multilevel communication and cooperation along the entire resettlement continuum. Subnational stakeholders would benefit from a much-needed

infusion of timely information, from having greater input on matters that directly relate to how many refugees they are willing and able to welcome, and from communication channels to coordinate on operational issues. National authorities would benefit from more regular updates on local service and support capacity and residents' sentiment towards refugees, allowing them to better tailor annual admissions and placements to localities' capacity, interests, and other characteristics and to provide capacity-building assistance, as needed. And ultimately, refugees would benefit from a well-organised process in which all parties involved are working together to ease their journey to safety and help them establish themselves in their new communities.

## 1 Introduction

Refugee resettlement is seen as the gold standard for providing durable protection to vulnerable individuals and families who have been forced to flee their country amid persecution, war, or violence. Although, on average, only 2–5 per cent of internationally displaced individuals deemed by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) to be in need of resettlement are resettled in a safe third country each year,<sup>1</sup> this pathway is viewed as an important mechanism to mitigate the need for protection seekers to undertake dangerous journeys, aid them in re-establishing their lives, and reduce the number of asylum seekers who spontaneously arrive in common destination countries in Europe, North America, and elsewhere.<sup>2</sup>

But several challenges stand in the way of both sustaining effective resettlement programmes and scaling up admissions. First, these pathways' viability depends in large part on political and public support for them, and for immigration more broadly, which can be affected by geopolitical events and other challenges. For example, following the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, pressure to restrict all forms of immigration and close borders also limited or temporarily halted resettlement programmes, from March 2020 until well into 2022. And the war in Ukraine has prompted several countries, mainly in Europe, to divert resources from existing resettlement initiatives to emergency humanitarian assistance. Second, resettlement programmes' ability to both sustain and expand their operations hinges on close working relationships and coordination among stakeholders. This includes actors at different levels of government and across civil society who might have very different priorities, be involved at different stages of resettlement (pre- or post-arrival), and not be used to working together.

The sheer number and diversity of actors that play a role in resettlement can make developing effective, well-coordinated programmes a challenge. National authorities (which include parliaments, migration agencies, and various ministries) typically set annual admissions quotas and make other key decisions about refugee selection and screening, placement, and the allocation of reception and integration resources. Local authorities (which include municipalities, regional governments, and counties) shoulder the bulk of the responsibility for helping new arrivals access housing, education, employment, health care, and language

1 The exact percentage varies from year to year. See United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), 'Refugee Data Finder', accessed 5 January 2023; Benedicta Solf and Katherine Rehberg, 'The Resettlement Gap: A Record Number of Global Refugees, but Few Are Resettled', *Migration Information Source*, 22 October 2021.

2 The European Union, for example, favours a permanent EU Resettlement Framework, to 'provide for legal and safe pathways to the EU and reduce the risk of massive irregular arrivals in the long term'. See European Council, 'European Asylum Reform', updated 5 December 2022.

courses and with general community integration and well-being upon arrival. However, these local actors are often not involved in the process of making the aforementioned key decisions at the national level.

The extent to which resettlement systems provide space for different stakeholders to participate varies greatly not only between countries but also between the stages of the resettlement process within

*The extent to which resettlement systems provide space for different stakeholders to participate varies greatly not only between countries but also between the stages of the resettlement process within the same country.*

the same country. For example, in some countries (the United States and Finland, most notably) multilevel consultations are required by law when deciding how many refugees to resettle and where in the country to place them, while in others (such as Spain) multilevel communication mechanisms do not exist to coordinate support at the pre-

and post-arrival stages. And while municipalities in some countries (for example, Finland and the United Kingdom) decide whether they wish to participate in resettlement, in others (such as Germany, Spain, and Sweden) participation is mandatory.

When multilevel coordination is lacking, it can challenge the effective implementation and expansion of resettlement programmes in several ways. If national resettlement quotas are set without local input and buy-in, they may be unrealistically high or low, leading to unfilled quotas or a mismatch between admission numbers and localities' willingness and capacity to receive and integrate newcomers. Similarly, poorly coordinated placement decisions may not take into consideration how best to match refugees' skills and needs with receiving communities' capacity and characteristics (e.g., specialised health-care services, employment opportunities), which can hamper refugees' integration prospects and lead some to move again after resettlement (e.g., secondary movement). Finally, a lack of coordination around reception and integration support can lead to an inefficient use of resources, overlooked capacity-building needs, duplication of services, and gaps in support.

This report explores the fundamentally multistakeholder nature of resettlement systems and the importance of robust coordination at all stages of the resettlement process. The analysis draws on interviews with local, regional, national, and international resettlement stakeholders, primarily in Argentina, Finland, Germany, Spain, and Sweden (countries that represent a mix of long-standing and newer resettlement players and that have programmes with different features), as well as findings from a related, forthcoming Migration Policy Institute study on resettlement partnerships in the United States.<sup>3</sup> The present report begins with an overview of how different countries make decisions about the design and operation of their resettlement programmes, including which stakeholders and factors shape these decisions. It then examines what coordination mechanisms exist—or could be created—to organise the work of the many actors involved in these systems. The report concludes with recommendations for improving coordination between resettlement stakeholders in ways that would benefit both refugees and the communities in which they settle.

<sup>3</sup> Lillie Hinkle, *Stakeholder Consultation in U.S. Refugee Resettlement* (Washington, DC: Migration Policy Institute, forthcoming).



## 2 Resettlement Programmes: State of Play

The lineup of countries involved in refugee resettlement and the number of refugees each admits have changed over time. UNHCR plays a key role in these programmes by identifying a pool of refugees in need of resettlement (generally, those with acute vulnerabilities) and referring them to countries that have resettlement programmes. These countries set voluntary annual quotas (also called pledges or admission ceilings, depending on country) through which they commit to resettling a certain number of refugees per year or other period. However, these political commitments do not always match actual admission numbers, as can be seen in Table 1.

In recent years, the same handful of countries have led global resettlement efforts. In 2022, 22 countries welcomed refugees via resettlement channels, but a more limited set of 7—the United States, Canada, Germany, Sweden, France, Australia, and Norway—together welcomed almost 88 per cent of all refugees resettled that year.<sup>4</sup> More European and some Latin American countries have recently established resettlement schemes, expanding the number of countries active in this space, but these programmes are currently small in scale.

TABLE 1

**Annual refugee resettlement quota and number of refugees resettled, selected countries,<sup>a</sup> 2016–23**

Country	Annual Resettlement Quotas							
	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
<b>United States<sup>b</sup></b>								
<i>Quota</i>	85,000	50,000	45,000	30,000	18,000	62,500	125,000	125,000
<i>Resettled</i>	85,000	50,000	22,533	30,000	11,814	11,411	25,465	-
<b>Canada</b>								
<i>Quota</i>	44,800	25,000	27,000	29,950	31,700	31,950	32,450	51,255
<i>Resettled</i>	46,319	26,980	28,076	30,087	9,236	20,428	47,600	-
<b>Australia<sup>c</sup></b>								
<i>Quota</i>	11,000	14,800	18,750	18,750	13,750	13,750	13,750	13,750
<i>Resettled</i>	15,552	20,257	14,825	17,112	11,521	4,558	11,545	-
<b>Germany<sup>d</sup></b>								
<i>Quota</i>	800	800	4,600	5,600	5,500	4,500 <sup>e</sup>	6,000	6,500
<i>Resettled</i>	1,240	3,015	3,200	4,890	1,395	5,295	4,787	-
<b>France<sup>d</sup></b>								
<i>Quota</i>	5,000	5,000	5,000	5,000	5,000	3,800	3,000	3,000
<i>Resettled</i>	600	2,620	5,565	5,600	1,340	1,935	3,136	-

4 In 2022, the United States welcomed the largest share of UNHCR-referred refugees resettled that year (37.5 per cent), followed by Canada (18.9 per cent), Germany (8.2 per cent), Sweden (7.7 per cent), France (5.4 per cent), Australia (5.2 per cent), and Norway (4.8 per cent). It should be noted that a larger number of countries have resettlement programmes, but the 22 mentioned in text are those that actively received refugees in 2022. See UNHCR, 'Resettlement Data', accessed 11 May 2023.

TABLE 1 (cont.)

**Annual refugee resettlement quota and number of refugees resettled, selected countries,<sup>a</sup> 2016–23**

Country	Annual Resettlement Quotas							
	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
<b>Norway</b>								
Quota	3,000	3,000	3,000	3,000	3,000	3,000	3,000	3,000
Resettled	3,290	2,815	2,480	2,795	1,525	3,650	N/A	-
<b>Spain<sup>d</sup></b>								
Quota	483	483	1,000	1,200	1,200	1,200	1,200	1,200
Resettled	375	1,490	830	810	365	535	1,112	-
<b>Finland</b>								
Quota	750	750	750	750	850	1,050	1,500	1,075
Resettled	945	1,090	605	890	660	890	1,275	-
<b>Sweden</b>								
Quota	1,900	3,400	5,000	5,000	5,000	5,000	5,000	900
Resettled	2,115	3,410	4,950	5,005	3,590	6,420	3,744	-

<sup>a</sup> This table shows most of the case-study countries for this report (Finland, Germany, Spain, Sweden, and the United States), plus any other country that resettled more than 4.5 per cent of all refugees resettled in 2022 (Canada, Australia, France, and Norway). Argentina, one of the case-study countries, is not shown because it does not presently have a resettlement programme; this report discusses its community sponsorship programme for Syrians, which ran from 2014–22. The countries in this table are organised by the size of their resettlement quotas for 2023.

<sup>b</sup> The U.S. quotas (ceilings) and resettlement numbers reflect pledges and admissions by U.S. government fiscal years, which run from 1 October through 30 September. For example, U.S. fiscal year 2023 is 1 October 2022 through 30 September 2023.

<sup>c</sup> The Australian quotas and resettlement numbers reflect pledges and admissions by Australian government financial years, which run from 1 July through 30 June. For example, Australian financial year 2023 is 1 July 2022 through 30 June 2023.

<sup>d</sup> In some years, these countries set their admissions quotas (pledges) for periods of either two or three years. This includes Germany, which set a two-year pledge for 2016–17 (1,600); France, which set two-year pledges for 2016–17 (10,000) and 2018–19 (10,000); and Spain, which set a three-year pledge for 2015–17 (1,449). In this table, those numbers are split evenly across the two or three years in the relevant period.

<sup>e</sup> In 2021, Germany pledged to resettle 485 people in addition to persons not admitted from the 2020 pledge for pandemic-related reasons. The exact number for 2021 is unclear but estimated to be approximately 4,500 to 4,800.

Notes: The quotas and resettlement numbers shown in this table are for the countries' main resettlement operations and may not reflect certain smaller or temporary schemes for certain populations (e.g., for Afghans in Australia). N/A for Norway's resettlement numbers in 2022 indicates that no data could be found.

Sources: See the appendix of this report for a full list of sources, country by country.

Over the years, many national resettlement efforts have sought to expand annual quotas and the number of refugee actually admitted, while also enhancing the effectiveness and sustainability of these programmes, in terms of both supporting refugees on arrival and improving their longer-term integration outcomes.<sup>5</sup> Yet scaling up and improving resettlement has proved challenging.<sup>6</sup> Each year, the number of people resettled is significantly lower than the number of displaced individuals identified by UNHCR as in need of resettlement. For example, UNHCR determined that 1.47 million refugees were in need of resettlement

5 See, for example, Susan Fratzke and Lena Kainz, *Preparing for the Unknown: Designing Effective Predeparture Orientation for Resettling Refugees* (Brussels: Migration Policy Institute Europe, 2019); Hanne Beirens and Aliyyah Ahad, *Scaling up Refugee Resettlement in Europe: The Role of Institutional Peer Support* (Brussels: Migration Policy Institute Europe, 2018).

6 Benedicta Solf and Katherine Rehberg, 'The Resettlement Gap: A Record Number of Global Refugees, but Few Are Resettled', *Migration Information Source*, 22 October 2021.

in 2022, but only 58,457 (less than 4 per cent) were able to depart to a third country following UNHCR referrals.<sup>7</sup>

A variety of factors have constrained efforts to expand resettlement. The COVID-19 pandemic led to an almost full suspension of refugee admissions, raising concerns about whether it would be possible to scale admissions back up to pre-pandemic levels once they resumed.<sup>8</sup> Recent years have also seen heightened polarisation around the issue of refugee resettlement. In two countries that have historically led global resettlement efforts, political parties seeking to reduce immigration have enjoyed electoral success. Under the Trump administration, the United States dramatically cut its annual ceiling for refugee admissions to the lowest level since the creation of the country's modern resettlement programme in 1980.<sup>9</sup> And in Sweden—which boasts the oldest government-led resettlement programme in the world and has long resettled among the highest number of refugees per capita—the government of Prime Minister Ulf Kristersson cut the country's annual admission quota from 5,000 for 2022 to 900 for 2023.<sup>10</sup>

Crises that have resulted in large-scale displacement, such as from Syria, Afghanistan, and Ukraine, have also put added strain on humanitarian protection systems and drawn some attention away from resettlement efforts. To help displaced Syrians, Afghans, and Ukrainians, some countries have introduced new (temporary as well as permanent) protection pathways that run in parallel to traditional resettlement efforts and involve many of the same integration stakeholders, and in some cases reduced their resettlement pledges.

For example, following massive displacement from the war in Syria, several countries in Europe and beyond piloted refugee sponsorship schemes in 2015 and 2016, and some subsequently made them permanent (see Box 1 for more on sponsorship).<sup>11</sup> In some cases (e.g., Canada, France, Germany, and Italy), sponsorship efforts have opened up additional protection opportunities for refugees (that is, adding spots on top of the quota for government-led resettlement), while in others (e.g., Spain, Belgium, and Ireland) sponsorship has served to support national authorities in fulfilling their resettlement quotas (that is, sponsored refugees who are resettled are counted as part of the country's quota). Sponsorship has helped these countries tap into additional (private) resources and more actively engage subnational actors, often providing more tailored support to refugees while easing capacity constraints facing traditional resettlement actors and pathways (such as by offering private accommodation and integration support).

More recently, displacement from Afghanistan following the Taliban takeover in August 2021 and from Ukraine following Russia's invasion in February 2022 has led to the introduction of several temporary protection mechanisms. When the Taliban took power in Afghanistan, a number of countries participated

7 It should be noted that these numbers are for UNHCR-referred refugees, who make up a large share (but not all) of those resettled each year. See UNHCR, 'UNHCR-NGO Toolkit for Practical Cooperation on Resettlement: 1. Operational Activities - Identification and Referral of Refugees in Need of Resettlement: Definitions and FAQs', UNHCR, June 2015.

8 Kathryn Libal et al., 'Human Rights of Forced Migrants during the COVID-19 Pandemic: An Opportunity for Mobilization and Solidarity', *Journal of Human Rights and Social Work* 6, no. 2 (2021): 148–160.

9 After taking office, the Trump administration lowered the admissions ceiling for fiscal year (FY) 2017 from 117,000 to 50,000, and then set lower levels for each successive fiscal year. In FY 2021, the Trump administration set a ceiling of 15,000, but the Biden administration raised this to 62,500 after entering office. See Migration Policy Institute (MPI) Data Hub, 'U.S. Annual Refugee Resettlement Ceilings and Number of Refugees Admitted, 1980-Present', accessed 12 June 2023; Jessica Bolter, Emma Israel, and Sarah Pierce, *Four Years of Profound Change: Immigration Policy during the Trump Presidency* (Washington, DC: MPI, 2022), 73, 76–77.

10 See Government Offices of Sweden, 'Minskad flyktkvot till Sverige förbereds' (news release, 3 November 2022).

11 Susan Fratzke et al., *Refugee Sponsorship Programmes: A Global State of Play and Opportunities for Investment* (Brussels: MPI Europe, 2019).

in emergency evacuations. For example, Germany launched a new admissions programme for people at highest risk under Taliban rule,<sup>12</sup> and the United States created a programme focused on people who had been affiliated with the U.S. government or U.S.-based media and nongovernmental organisations, as well as their spouses and children.<sup>13</sup> Following the start of the war in Ukraine, the European Union activated the Temporary Protection Directive for the first time in March 2022 to facilitate millions of displaced Ukrainians' entry into EU countries and access to integration support.<sup>14</sup> In Canada, the Canada–Ukraine Authorization for Emergency Travel programme was designed as a special pathway for Ukrainian nationals and their immediate family members to enter and stay in Canada for up to three years, without needing to apply for a visa.<sup>15</sup> Finally, the United States' Uniting for Ukraine programme offers an emergency pathway (through a mechanism called 'humanitarian parole') for Ukrainians and their immediate family members to enter the United States and stay for two years, supported by a sponsor.<sup>16</sup>

In all these emergency pathways, coordination has been a critical element. Having parallel permanent and emergency protection programmes has simultaneously created friction within the humanitarian protection field and prompted innovations that could benefit this larger system. In some cases, the same actors in charge of

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selecting, processing, and integrating refugees under traditional resettlement programmes have needed to dedicate some of their limited time and capacity to learn about, operate, and (ideally) coordinate new pathways. Emergency crises have also diverted some funding away from more established resettlement and sponsorship pathways. For example, Switzerland paused its resettlement programme for 2023, citing the arrival of Ukrainians,<sup>17</sup> and France downsized its resettlement pledge for 2022 (from 5,000 to 3,000 refugees) for the same reason.<sup>18</sup> At the same time, the difficulties emergency pathways encountered in terms of ramping up resources and capacity (e.g., trained staff) underline the need for effective communication and well-coordinated reception and integration infrastructure that works in both 'normal' times and in times of crisis. Some of the coordination mechanisms developed to facilitate these emergency initiatives—such

12 German Federal Foreign Office, 'Federal Admission Programme for Afghanistan Launched', updated 17 October 2022; Reuters, 'Germany Starts New Admission Programme for Afghan Refugees', updated 17 October 2022.

13 U.S. Department of State, 'Afghan Arrivals under the U.S. Refugee Admission Program', accessed 23 June 2023.

14 As of March 2023, 4 million people had sought protection in the European Union under the Temporary Protection Directive. See Council of the European Union, 'Infographic – Refugees from Ukraine in the EU', accessed 12 May 2023. The mechanism was originally envisaged to run just for one year, but the European Union has renewed it so it runs until March 2024. See European Commission, 'Temporary Displacement', accessed 11 May 2023.

15 As of April 2023, 216,326 Ukrainians had arrived in Canada under this programme. See Government of Canada, 'Ukraine Immigration Measures: Key Figures', updated 10 May 2023. See also Canada Visa, 'Canada Special Immigration Measures for Ukraine', updated 23 March 2023.

16 As of February 2023, 271,000 Ukrainians had been admitted to the United States under this pathway. See Julia Ainsley, 'U.S. Has Admitted 271,000 Ukrainian Refugees Since Russian Invasion, Far above Biden's Goal of 100,000', NBC News, 24 February 2023. To enter and stay, Ukrainians must have a supporter in the United States who agrees to provide them with financial support for the duration of their stay in the country. Supporters must file an online application for the Ukrainian they wish to sponsor and show that they are able to provide the required financial support. See U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services, 'Uniting for Ukraine', accessed 12 May 2023.

17 Maïa Courtois, 'La Suisse suspend l'admission de réfugiés vulnérables', InfoMigrants, 21 December 2022.

18 French Ministry of the Interior and Overseas, 'Annexe 9. Bilan du programme de réinstallation français en 2022', updated 23 May 2023.

as standing meetings and joint or coordinated efforts to find housing solutions and job opportunities and to manage the distribution of resources and the work of volunteers<sup>19</sup>—could be leveraged to foster closer cooperation between national and subnational actors in traditional programmes as well.

## BOX 1

### Stakeholder coordination in resettlement-based sponsorship programmes

Resettlement-based sponsorship schemes (that is, those operating as part of a country's existing resettlement scheme, with admissions counted either towards or in addition to the national quota) are based on a formal agreement or framework between key stakeholders. This includes groups of private individuals (typically referred to as sponsors, mentors, or simply volunteers), government actors, and civil-society organisations (typically referred to as 'intermediary' or 'partner' organisations). In most cases, international organisations are also part of such agreements; for example, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) may be responsible for referring cases, while the International Organisation for Migration (IOM) organises refugees' travel. Since the first sponsorship programme was created in Canada in the 1970s, these programmes have been introduced in many countries, most notably following the start of the war in Syria and the subsequent 2015–16 migration crisis. As of mid-2023, sponsorship schemes exist in North and South America, Europe, and Oceania.

The key distinguishing element of all resettlement-based sponsorship programmes is that they transfer some integration responsibilities from government to private actors (whether individuals or civil society), while government actors retain the final say on admission numbers and selection and responsibility for conducting general oversight of programme operations. The operational design of such programmes and volunteers' time requirements and practical commitments vary from country to country. For example, in Belgium and Germany, volunteers must cover all housing costs and provide integration support for one year, while in Ireland sponsors must commit to providing housing and integration support for 18 months. In contrast, sponsors under the new Finnish and Swedish programmes have no financial responsibilities. And in one of Canada's refugee sponsorship schemes (the Blended Visa Office-Referred Program), the costs are shared between the government and volunteers.

Despite differences in design, sponsorship programmes have played a valuable role in the resettlement space. They have often helped to secure more tailored integration support for refugee families (without putting much additional pressure on often-overwhelmed social service providers) and given private citizens and other subnational stakeholders an opportunity to step in and welcome refugees, building a greater sense of community ownership over international protection channels. Sponsorship programmes can also help raise empathy for refugees and shape societies' perceptions of these newcomers. However, running these programmes has not been without challenges. To reap the potential benefits, sponsorship schemes need to raise awareness about the programme, convince volunteers to share their time and resources, and provide them with training and guidance (often via civil society and/or government) to ensure that they have a positive sponsorship experience, that refugees receive appropriate support, and that the programme is sustainable.

Sources: Susan Fratzke and Emma Dorst, *Volunteers and Sponsors: A Catalyst for Refugee Integration?* (Washington, DC: Migration Policy Institute, 2019); Susan Fratzke, *Engaging Communities in Refugee Protection: The Potential of Private Sponsorship in Europe* (Brussels: Migration Policy Institute Europe, 2017).

<sup>19</sup> For example, Canada's Operation Ukrainian Safe Haven project is 'a national and coordinated communications initiative to bridge and link communications and resources with key stakeholders involved with supporting Ukrainians coming to Canada'. See Operation Ukraine Safe Haven, 'About Us', accessed 12 May 2023.

### 3 How Do Resettlement Partnerships Work and What Are Their Challenges?

Resettlement programmes are incredibly complex systems. They require the involvement of and coordination between different actors—typically a mix of local authorities, national policymakers, international organisations, and nongovernmental organisations (NGOs)—who may have very different areas of expertise, resources, and priorities.<sup>20</sup> Such collaboration is critical both within and across stages of the resettlement process. Exactly which stakeholders are involved at each stage, the roles they play, and the ways in which they interact as programmes are designed and implemented vary between countries and programmes (see Table 2 for examples from this report’s study countries).

TABLE 2

**Stakeholder roles and coordination in refugee resettlement and sponsorship programmes, selected countries**

Country & programme(s)	Setting the admission quota/ceiling	Making placement decisions	Pre-arrival planning and support	Post-arrival reception and integration
<p><b>Argentina</b></p> <p>Community sponsorship programme for Syrians – <i>Programa Siria</i> (2014–22)</p> <p><i>Note:</i> Argentina does not currently have a resettlement programme, and while it has launched other targeted sponsorship measures, the details are still being discussed.</p>	<p>National authorities did not officially set an admission quota; admission numbers were determined by how many applications CSOs in the Sponsorship Network made to the Ministry of the Interior, on behalf of volunteer groups, to sponsor refugees. The ministry approved or denied admissions applications.</p>	<p>Admitted refugees were placed in locations where their sponsors resided. Approval from local authorities was not required.</p>	<p>The Ministry of the Interior issued humanitarian visas to refugees. IOM prepared refugees for resettlement (e.g., predeparture orientation), organised their travel, and conducted health checks.</p> <p>CSOs from the Sponsorship Network trained volunteers (e.g., programme rules and expectation management). Volunteers found housing.</p>	<p>Refugees were directly placed in municipalities. Volunteer groups were fully responsible for refugees’ reception and integration support for about a year. CSOs, UNHCR Argentina, and others assisted volunteer groups with integration support (e.g., finding language classes, employment opportunities). Local and national authorities were not involved, except in the province of San Luis, where the province sponsored the refugees and provided support after arrival.</p>

20 See Chapter 8 in UNHCR, ‘UNHCR Resettlement Handbook’, accessed 15 May 2023; Jostein Askim and Anton Steen, ‘Trading Refugees: The Governance of Refugee Settlement in a Decentralized Welfare State’, *Scandinavian Political Studies* 43, no. 1 (2020): 24–45.

TABLE 2 (cont.)

**Stakeholder roles and coordination in refugee resettlement and sponsorship programmes, selected countries**

<b>Country &amp; programme(s)</b>	<b>Setting the admission quota/ceiling</b>	<b>Making placement decisions</b>	<b>Pre-arrival planning and support</b>	<b>Post-arrival reception and integration</b>
<b>Finland</b> National resettlement programme (1985–ongoing)	The Finnish parliament, in consultation with several ministries (incl. Ministry of the Interior), sets yearly quotas. Municipalities can provide input on their capacity and willingness to receive refugees through regular consultations with Finland’s Regional Centres for Economic Development, Transport, and the Environment (ELY Centres), which convey this to national authorities.	The Finnish Immigration Service (Migri) places refugees across the country’s regions. The ELY Centres, based on prior consultations with municipalities, then place refugees in municipalities that have voluntarily agreed to receive refugees and have the capacity to do so.	Officials from national and local authorities conduct selection missions to assess whether refugees meet the resettlement programme’s eligibility criteria and what their integration potential is. IOM Finland works closely with Migri on predeparture orientation. IOM conducts health screenings and organises refugees’ travel.	Refugees are directly placed in municipalities. The Red Cross greets refugees upon arrival and communicates their arrival time to a municipal contact. Until 2023, local authorities were responsible for housing, health, and education support. In 2023, regional authorities became responsible for these services. The Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment supports refugees’ labour market entry and integration.
<b>Germany</b> Federal resettlement programme & humanitarian admission programme (both 2012–ongoing)	The federal government sets the quota for these programmes, without consulting state or local authorities.	A formula known as the Königsteiner Key is used to distribute refugees across German states, taking into consideration their population size, tax revenue, and prior experience hosting refugees. Local authorities’ approval is not required.	Federal authorities conduct selection missions. IOM conducts health screenings, provides predeparture orientation, and organises refugees’ travel.	Refugees spend the first two weeks in a Caritas-run reception centre for basic orientation. Refugees are then transferred to accommodation in the municipality where they have been placed, and local authorities and service providers provide integration support.
State humanitarian admission programme (2013–ongoing)	State authorities decide whether and how many refugees they want to receive (in addition to those received via the national programmes). State decisions must be approved by the federal government.	State authorities make placement decisions. Local authorities’ approval is not required.	State authorities conduct selection missions. IOM conducts health screenings, provides predeparture orientation, and organises refugees’ travel.	Same as federal programmes

TABLE 2 (cont.)

**Stakeholder roles and coordination in refugee resettlement and sponsorship programmes, selected countries**

<b>Country &amp; programme(s)</b>	<b>Setting the admission quota/ceiling</b>	<b>Making placement decisions</b>	<b>Pre-arrival planning and support</b>	<b>Post-arrival reception and integration</b>
Community sponsorship programme — <i>NeST</i> (2019–ongoing)	The federal government sets yearly admission goals without consulting state or local authorities. The number of arrivals depends on how many sponsorship applications are submitted and approved.	The Federal Office for Migration and Refugees (BAMF) places refugees in the locations where the volunteers with whom they have been matched have found housing. Local authorities' approval is not required.	Same as federal programmes	Refugees spend the first two weeks in a Caritas-run reception centre for basic orientation. Private individuals (supported by civil-society actors) then provide integration and housing support for one year, after which the federal government provides subsidised housing.
<b>Spain</b> Resettlement programme (2009–ongoing)	The Ministry of Interior sets the admission quota, without consulting the autonomous communities or municipalities.	The national government places refugees in reception centres based on capacity. Most of the centres are owned and operated by CSOs. Local authorities' approval is not required for placement in these centres.	The national government runs selection missions and predeparture orientation. IOM conducts health screenings, supports predeparture orientation, and organises refugees' travel.	Resettled refugees spend the first six months in a reception centre, where they can access language courses and orientation. After that, the CSOs in charge of the centres help refugees secure private accommodation in a municipality, and refugees receive integration support from local actors (incl. local authorities and service providers).
Community sponsorship programmes by autonomous communities (Basque Country, Valencia, and Navarra)	Sponsored refugees count towards the national quota. The number sponsored is determined through agreements signed between the national government and each participating autonomous community.	National authorities place refugees in the locations where the autonomous community governments have found housing. Local authorities' approval is not required.	Same as the resettlement programme	Refugees move to accommodation in the municipalities with which they were matched. Volunteer groups support refugees' integration for at least 18 months.



TABLE 2 (cont.)

**Stakeholder roles and coordination in refugee resettlement and sponsorship programmes, selected countries**

<b>Country &amp; programme(s)</b>	<b>Setting the admission quota/ceiling</b>	<b>Making placement decisions</b>	<b>Pre-arrival planning and support</b>	<b>Post-arrival reception and integration</b>
<b>Sweden</b> National resettlement programme (1950–ongoing)	The national government sets the admission quota.	The national government decides on placement across regions based on population size, tax revenue, and other factors. Municipalities are required to accept refugees.	UNHCR makes referrals to the national government, which then conducts selection missions and predeparture orientation. IOM provides support with travel.	Local authorities provide access to language courses and accommodation, but national employment agencies provide support with developing an integration plan for each refugee.
<b>United States</b> Resettlement programme (1980–ongoing)	The president, in consultation with Congress, sets the admission ceiling for each fiscal year. Subnational authorities are not part of this decision.	Refugees are placed through a formal consultation process, in which nine national resettlement NGOs negotiate with the federal government to decide how many and which refugees each organisation can support in the states where they operate. Decisions are based on refugees' needs and the resources available in U.S. communities.	A U.S. embassy, UNHCR, specially trained NGO, or a private sponsor refers refugees to the federal government, which decides who to resettle. The State Department provides predeparture orientation. IOM provides support with travel.	The State Department provides a one-time payment per refugee to the resettlement NGO supporting the refugee's resettlement to fund rent, food, clothing, furniture, and initial services (e.g., cultural orientation, support enrolling children in school, employment assistance, medical and legal services). The NGOs provide support for up to 90 days, after which the federal Office of Refugee Resettlement (part of the Department of Health and Human Services) works with state, local, and nongovernmental actors to provide longer-term assistance (e.g., language training, employment support, and social services).

CSO = Civil-society organisation; IOM = International Organisation for Migration; NGO = nongovernmental organisation; UNHCR = United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees.

Sources: author interview with protection officer, UNHCR Spain, 31 March 2022; author interview with policy officer, City of Sant Boi de Llobregat, Spain, 12 July 2022; author interview with official, UNHCR Germany, 23 March 2022; author interview with official, UNHCR Argentina, 21 February 2022; author interview with resettlement affairs officer, Finnish Ministry of the Interior, Migration Department, 24 March 2022; author interview with integration officer, Nurmijärvi Municipality, Finland, 14 June 2022; author interview with the head of public affairs, Finnish Refugee Council, 28 March 2022; author interview with integration officers, Åre Municipality, Sweden, 25 August 2022; UNHCR, '[UNHCR Resettlement Handbook](#)', accessed 15 May 2023; IOM Germany, '[Humanitarian Admissions](#)', accessed 15 May 2023; Paula Hoffmeyer-Zlotnik and Marlene Stiller, '[Freedom of Movement: Germany](#)', European Council on Refugees and Exiles, 6 April 2023; U.S. Department of State, Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration, '[Reception and Placement](#)', accessed 23 June 2023.

In most countries, there are no formal communication or coordination platforms between these actors. And while some have given local actors more of an active role from early on in the resettlement process (e.g., Finland, the United States, and to some extent Germany), others have followed more centralised models (e.g., Spain and Sweden) and relied on local stakeholders mainly to support refugees' access to integration services. The next three subsections take a closer look at the variation in the degree and nature of stakeholders' involvement and input at different stages of the resettlement process.

## A. *Making decisions on admission numbers and placements*

In most countries, national authorities make the final decisions about programme design, including setting yearly admission numbers, determining eligibility criteria and priority groups (e.g., certain nationalities), and deciding where to place resettled and sponsored refugees. Some countries, most notably the United States and Finland,<sup>21</sup> have formal mechanisms through which subnational authorities can provide input on these matters; others, such as Spain and Germany,<sup>22</sup> do not.

Placement decisions follow two general models. Most countries have a mandatory reception model, in which local authorities are required to receive refugees placed there by national authorities. A more limited number of countries (Finland, the United Kingdom, the Netherlands, and until 2015, Sweden) have a voluntary reception model, in which local authorities must consent to receiving refugees.<sup>23</sup> In both models, local authorities and organisations are ultimately responsible for meeting the reception and integration needs of refugees.

Both models present potential benefits as well as challenges for resettlement programmes. A mandatory placement model can help ensure that national commitments are met and that responsibility for assisting refugees is evenly distributed across the country, even if some local areas are more reluctant to engage than others. Meanwhile, a voluntary placement model can give localities a greater sense of ownership over the process and enhance their commitment to welcoming refugees. However, under either model, if local actors do not fully understand the resettlement process, their input into national decision-making processes may be unrealistic. And if they do not have the capacity to support newcomers effectively, this can leave gaps in refugees' reception and hinder their integration. Thus, in both cases, good communication and coordination channels are key.

## B. *Making predeparture preparations*

Before resettlement, several actors engage with refugees to provide predeparture or cultural orientation, conduct health checks, and assist with travel arrangements. The orientations are typically developed and

21 Author interview with the head of public affairs, Finnish Refugee Council, 28 March 2022; Hinkle, *Stakeholder Consultation in U.S. Refugee Resettlement*.

22 Author interview with policy officer, Caritas Germany, 25 March 2022; author interview with official, UNHCR Germany, 23 March 2022; author interview with official, InStrategies, Spain, 31 March 2022; author interview with official, UNHCR Spain, 31 March 2022.

23 Author interview with policy officer, Senate of Berlin, 13 July 2022; author interview with integration officer, Iisalmi Municipality, Finland, 7 July 2022; author interview with resettlement affairs officer, Finnish Ministry of the Interior, Migration Department, 24 March 2022; author interview with Head of Immigration, Regional Centre for Economic Development, Transport, and the Environment (ELY), Ostrobothnia, Finland, 8 April 2022; Robert Shaffer, Lauren E. Pinson, Jonathan A. Chu, and Beth A. Simmons, 'Local Elected Officials' Receptivity to Refugee Resettlement in the United States', *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences of the United States of America* 117, no. 50 (2020): 31722–28.

administered either by staff of resettlement countries' national agencies or by International Organisation for Migration (IOM) officials under contract with national agencies.<sup>24</sup> In some sponsorship programmes, sponsors may also complement these efforts by, for example, meeting the refugees they are sponsoring via phone or video call to introduce themselves and learn about the refugees' specific needs or wishes, or by sharing information packages that provide details (and sometimes pictures) on the size and location of the village or city where they will live, the house, and the group that will be supporting them to give them a better sense of the community where they will be resettled.<sup>25</sup> IOM officials are also often in charge of conducting pre-arrival health checks and organising travel.<sup>26</sup>

### C. *Providing post-arrival support*

Several different actors are also involved in providing support to refugees after they arrive in the resettlement country, including through initial reception services, where applicable, and longer-term integration support. In some countries (e.g., Finland, Sweden, and the United States<sup>27</sup>) refugees are placed directly in their receiving communities when they arrive and can access local integration services right away. In others (e.g., Spain and Germany<sup>28</sup>), they spend the first weeks or months in a reception centre run by civil-society organisations where they receive support as they prepare to settle and integrate in a new community, with the aim of reducing culture shock.

In both scenarios, when refugees arrive in the municipalities where they will live, integration support (including access to language courses and accommodation) usually comes from local entities (typically, local authorities, NGOs, and/or service providers). However, there are cases where certain integration services fall under the responsibility of national agencies (e.g., job-seeking assistance in Sweden) or regional authorities (e.g., health, education, and accommodation support in Finland). And in most community sponsorship programmes, volunteers (with help from CSOs) play an active role in assisting refugees as they access integration services and supporting their social integration into the community, typically for at least one year.

### D. *Practical limits to multilevel cooperation*

As countries design and adjust their resettlement and sponsorship programmes, certain factors shape how many and which actors are involved in these systems. Some of these same factors also influence the effectiveness and scalability of refugee protection efforts.

24 Fratzke and Kainz, *Preparing for the Unknown*.

25 Participants comments during the roundtable 'Workshop on the Recruitment and Retention of Sponsors for Scaling Sponsorship Programmes in Europe', convened under the *Building Capacity for Private Sponsorship in the European Union (CAPS-EU) Project*, 9 November 2022.

26 International Organisation for Migration (IOM), '*Migration Health Assessments & Travel Health Assistance*', accessed 12 May 2023.

27 Hinkle, *Stakeholder Consultation in U.S. Refugee Resettlement*; author interview with integration officer, Nurmijärvi municipality, Finland, 14 June 2022; author interview with integration coordinators, Åre municipality, Sweden, 25 August 2022.

28 Author interview with policy officer, Caritas Germany, 25 March 2022; author interview with official, UNHCR Germany, 23 March 2022; author interview with official, Instrategies, Spain, 31 March 2022; author interview with official, UNHCR Spain, 31 March 2022.

## Diverging political will and motivations

The variety of reasons actors within receiving societies have for engaging (or not) with resettlement has a major influence on the extent of coordination within these systems. This is especially true when it comes to deciding who should be involved in decision-making and what the goals of the resettlement or sponsorship programme should be.<sup>29</sup>

In some cases, the national authorities in charge of making top-level decisions around resettlement numbers and priorities have been hesitant to include subnational authorities in this process. National authorities' commitment to resettlement has often been guided by a mix of international humanitarian commitments and foreign policy objectives, and these actors thus see these as decisions to be made at the national level. A German official, for example, described in an interview the view that it is important to make the decision around numbers at the national level and to make states' involvement in resettlement mandatory to ensure that national resettlement goals are met.<sup>30</sup> The potential for mismatches behind this concern could be seen in Finland (where municipalities decide whether to receive refugees) between 2009 and 2015, when municipal pledges were not enough to meet the national quota of admitting 750 refugees per year.<sup>31</sup> However, limiting subnational authorities' input into decisions about admissions numbers can also constrain programmes in some cases; for example, UNHCR Germany estimates that if Germany had incorporated state governments' pledges into the national quota in 2020, an additional 2,800 resettlement places could have been added.<sup>32</sup>

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Yet, even if national authorities are open to involving local authorities in key decisions, there is no guarantee of smooth multilevel coordination unless subnational authorities are willing to take on a more active role. Across countries, local authorities have exhibited mixed opinions around the idea of receiving more refugees and being more active participants in resettlement programming and decision-making. For example, through the Safe Harbours initiative, several German cities (initially, largely led by Potsdam and Berlin) have demanded that the federal government allow municipalities willing to welcome and support refugees rescued at sea to do so by introducing new legal pathways for arrivals (e.g., municipal admission programmes).<sup>33</sup> Other cities have been more reluctant to welcome refugees or are wary of taking on a more active role in resettlement decision-making.<sup>34</sup>

Subnational governments have varied reasons for either wanting to or being wary of participating in refugee resettlement. Among others, this may include community activism and public opinion, economic

29 Hanne Beirens and Susan Fratzke, *Taking Stock of Refugee Resettlement: Policy Objectives, Practical Tradeoffs, and the Evidence Base* (Brussels: MPI Europe, 2017).

30 Author interview with policy officer, Senate of Berlin, 13 July 2022.

31 Author interview with Head of Immigration, ELY Centre, Ostrobothnia, Finland, 8 April 2022.

32 Author conversations with official, UNHCR Germany, October 2021.

33 Author interview with project leader, Save Me Munich, 21 July 2022.

34 SVT Nyheter, 'Inga kvotflyktingar till Staffanstorp – kommunen vägrade ta emot dem', SVT Nyheter, 26 May 2022.

and demographic concerns, and local service capacity. For example, in some European cities (such as Barcelona, Munich, and Potsdam<sup>35</sup>) political and civil-society leaders have actively advocated for welcoming people in need of international protection, motivated by public support and moral values (e.g., desire to do more in response to people dying on dangerous routes to seek refuge in Europe). Some other localities, such as smaller, remote communities in Finland,<sup>36</sup> have mentioned their desire to welcome refugees to help revitalise the local economy and society, though capacity to support newcomers in such localities can be a concern.<sup>37</sup>

Another dynamic at play is that resettlement programme priorities are tied to the tides of political will and can thus shift unexpectedly. When national governments unilaterally decide to drastically change a programme or policy (whether increasing or decreasing admission numbers) without receiving or considering input from affected subnational stakeholders and without providing adequate time and resources to help them adapt to the change, local trust and buy-in to resettlement efforts can wane. In Finland, for example, a major administrative change in 2023 shifted responsibility for many integration services from municipal to regional authorities, which left many municipalities uncertain what their future role in resettlement would be and how to plan for it.<sup>38</sup> And in the United States, after the Trump administration slashed the admission ceiling to a fraction of what it had been under prior administrations, both Republican and Democrat, it has proven tough to rebuild the capacity of resettlement NGOs and bring federal admission and reception capacity back up to the higher admission ceilings set by the Biden administration.<sup>39</sup> Sweden, another long-time leader in global resettlement, could face similar issues if in future years it seeks to scale resettlement back up after reducing its annual resettlement quota from 5,000 in 2022 to 900 in 2023.<sup>40</sup>

Finally, even where there is political will at both the national and subnational levels to make resettlement systems more collaborative and improve coordination, hammering out the details can be challenging. It may be difficult to reach agreement on how the programme should be structured and operated and how best to coordinate different stakeholders' work, given differences of opinion over the purpose of resettlement, how many refugees to admit, which populations to prioritise for resettlement, and what factors to consider when placing refugees within the resettlement country.

### Limited time, resources, and clarity around multilevel coordination

The time and resources required to bring subnational authorities to the decision-making table have also influenced whether countries create multilevel consultation and cooperation mechanisms and whether these are sustainable over time. In all the case-study countries, funding has been a major barrier to

35 Peter Scholten and Rinus Penninx, 'The Multilevel Governance of Migration and Integration', in *Integration Processes and Policies in Europe: Contexts, Levels and Actors*, eds. Blanca Garcés-Mascareñas and Rinus Penninx (Cham, Switzerland: Springer International Publishing, 2016), 91–108; Mayors Migration Council, 'Global Mayors Joint Statement: Welcome Afghan Refugees Now' (press release, 9 September 2021); Blanca Garcés-Mascareñas and Dirk Gebhardt, 'Barcelona: Municipalist Policy Entrepreneurship in a Centralist Refugee Reception System', *Comparative Migration Studies* 8, no. 1 (2020): 8–15.

36 Author interview with Head of Immigration, ELY Centre, Ostrobothnia, Finland, 8 April 2022.

37 Author interview with Head of Immigration, ELY Centre, Ostrobothnia, Finland, 8 April 2022; author interview with resettlement affairs officer, Finnish Ministry of the Interior, Migration Department, 24 March 2022.

38 Author interview with integration officer, Iisalmi municipality, Finland, 7 July 2022.

39 Nicole Ward and Jeanne Batalova, 'Refugees and Asylees in the United States', *Migration Information Source*, 15 June 2023.

40 Government Offices of Sweden, 'Minskad flyktingkvot till Sverige förbereds'.

municipal involvement.<sup>41</sup> In Finland, some municipalities decline to accept resettled refugees, arguing that the national government's payments to receiving communities do not meet the cost of supporting resettled refugees (particularly those with acute vulnerabilities and needs) and that the system for having costs reimbursed is too complex and bureaucratic.<sup>42</sup>

Funding can also be a barrier to effective coordination even when such channels exist. For example, where in-person coordination meetings have been established, smaller and more remote municipalities may find it difficult to send representatives to these meetings if they are far away or travel is prohibitively costly. Other officials, including those in larger cities and ministerial representatives, may have too much on their schedule to fit in additional meetings. Furthermore, if limited resources and effort are dedicated to conducting outreach, some relevant stakeholders may not be aware that coordination structures exist or when meetings will be held, further constraining participation.<sup>43</sup>

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Lastly, a lack of clarity around how consultations work (including their value-add) and an absence of feedback mechanisms can lead to frustration and disengagement among subnational stakeholders. These actors may believe there is limited or no national uptake of their input, making it harder to convince these stakeholders to invest time and resources in participating in consultations. For example, the head of one Finnish Regional Centre for Economic Development, Transport, and the Environment (ELY Centre) described it as 'a hierarchical relationship', saying it is difficult to determine whether municipalities' input has any impact on priority-setting.<sup>44</sup>

## 4 Fostering More Inclusive and Effective Partnerships

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Even with its challenges, improving coordination between national and local actors is critically important. During the programme design phase, effective coordination supports informed decisions on how many refugees to take, what criteria to use in their selection, and where to place them based on local capacity and public support. Before refugees depart for the resettlement country, coordination helps to ensure communities have the resources and services needed to welcome the newcomers. And after their arrival, coordination between stakeholders can help refugees more easily access and navigate the integration services available to them. The subsections that follow consider ways to strengthen stakeholder coordination and communication in these three areas.

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41 Author interview with official, UNHCR Germany, 23 March 2022; author interview with policy officer, City of Sant Boi de Llobregat, Spain, 12 July 2022; author interview with official, UNHCR Argentina, 21 February 2022.

42 Author interview with official, Finnish Ministry of the Interior, 24 March 2022.

43 Hinkle, *Stakeholder Consultation in U.S. Refugee Resettlement*.

44 Author interview with Head of Immigration, ELY Centre, Ostrobothnia, Finland, 8 April 2022.

## A. *Coordination around programme design and implementation*

Setting programme priorities is likely to remain in the hands of national authorities. However, subnational authorities and other stakeholders could take on a greater role in informing this process and how humanitarian protection plays out in a country more broadly.

Subnational authorities could do this—and in some cases, already are doing this—in the following ways:

- ▶ **Integrating information and input from subnational actors into national resettlement decision-making and programme operations.** While subnational authorities are generally not directly represented in decision-making processes around setting resettlement programme priorities, admission numbers, selection criteria, and placements, they could provide more input into this process. At a minimum, this could involve national authorities giving subnational actors (e.g., local authorities, NGOs, and service providers) a chance to directly or indirectly (i.e., through a mediator) respond to national proposals around resettlement numbers and/or placements from the perspective of receiving communities, or otherwise feed information into these decisions. Such input need not have binding force, but it could generate greater local ownership over this process and give national actors a better understanding of and appreciation for local views and capacity. Alternatively, input could be required at the operational level, once topline decisions have been made. For example:
  - *Finland's ELY Centres as mediators between municipal and national stakeholders.* In Finland, municipal integration officers regularly meet with immigration officers from their region's ELY Centre to discuss how many refugees each municipality is willing and able to accept for the coming year, with the aim of better informing national decisions around quota setting and placement.<sup>45</sup> ELY Centre representatives subsequently meet with officials from the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment to convey municipalities' commitment or preference to receive a certain number of refugees (whether an increase, decrease, or the same as the prior year), to receive refugees with certain profiles, and other information. The Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment then brings the outcomes of this discussion forward to the Ministry of the Interior and Parliament, although it is unclear the extent to which this information shapes final decisions.<sup>46</sup>
  - *Legally required multistakeholder consultations in the United States.* Unique in the global resettlement landscape, U.S. federal law requires national authorities to regularly consult with the NGOs (i.e., the resettlement agencies) and state and local authorities that implement the resettlement programme.<sup>47</sup> The purpose of these community consultations is to inform local stakeholders about upcoming arrivals, solicit information about local capacity to receive refugees, coordinate the appropriate placement of refugees, and plan for their reception, material needs, and core services. However, while the consultation process is meant to balance providing and soliciting information, the opportunities for subnational stakeholders

<sup>45</sup> Author interview with integration officer, Iisalmi municipality, Finland, 7 July 2022; author interview with integration officer, Nurmijärvi municipality, Finland, 14 June 2022.

<sup>46</sup> Author interview with Head of Immigration, ELY Centre, Ostrobothnia, Finland, 8 April 2022.

<sup>47</sup> Hinkle, *Stakeholder Consultation in U.S. Refugee Resettlement*.

to provide input are often limited in practice. Some local stakeholders report relying on more informal information exchange and input channels with state and federal partners for this purpose.<sup>48</sup> Moreover, these consultations largely focus on programme operations rather than scale as it is the president, in consultation with Congress, who makes the final decision about the annual admissions ceiling.

- ▶ **Creating subnational programmes that complement national resettlement efforts.** Although they can be resource-intensive to start, costly to operate, and divide the resettlement landscape into different pathways (which may not always communicate and coordinate with each other), a few examples exist of subnational authorities creating a separate resettlement stream that successfully complements national government-led resettlement efforts. For example:
  - *Germany's State Admission Programmes (Landesaufnahmeprogramme).* In addition to the country's national resettlement programme, German states (*Länder*) have since 2013 been allowed to run their own resettlement programmes, deciding their yearly quotas and criteria and leading selection missions. State admission programmes have existed most recently in Berlin, Brandenburg, Bremen, Hamburg, Schleswig-Holstein, and Thuringia to resettle Syrians (and in Berlin, also Iraqis) with close family members in Germany.<sup>49</sup> In addition, Schleswig-Holstein has run a state programme for refugees without family ties in Germany.<sup>50</sup> As they make decisions, the state programmes continuously communicate and coordinate with federal authorities around issues such as security vetting, which remains in the hands of the national government.
  - *Community sponsorship programmes in Spain's autonomous communities.* The proliferation of sponsorship programmes provides another pathway through which subnational actors can take a more active role in resettlement, while supporting national government-led efforts. In Spain, several autonomous communities (Basque Country, Valencia, and Navarra) have each reached an agreement with the national government to run sponsorship programmes. These allow the communities to have a more active role in refugees' integration and to tap into the energy and resources of local volunteers and civil-society organisations that want to support newcomers, while still coordinating with the national government on maximum yearly numbers, selection, and arrival.<sup>51</sup>

## B. *Coordination at the pre-arrival stage to anticipate and address capacity challenges*

To effectively prepare for refugees to arrive, local authorities must have adequate service capacity and knowledge about the resettlement process and their duties. They must also receive timely and relevant information about unexpected changes, such as delays in refugees' arrival or information about newly identified medical needs.

48 Hinkle, *Stakeholder Consultation in U.S. Refugee Resettlement*.

49 Resettlement.de, 'Humanitäre Aufnahmeprogramme der Länder', accessed 12 May 2023.

50 Resettlement.de, 'Humanitäre Aufnahmeprogramme der Länder'.

51 Author interview with official, UNHCR Spain, 31 March 2022.



Some promising practices and initiatives in this space include:

- ▶ **Capacity-building assistance for stakeholders in receiving communities.** Making informed decisions about whether a community has the capacity to participate in resettlement hinges on municipalities having a good understanding of what is expected of them. For those that participate, preparing for refugee arrivals requires that the municipalities have access to funding and resources to address any capacity gaps that could keep them from meeting newcomers' needs. Trainings and toolkits have been instrumental in spreading awareness among local actors of what it takes to receive and support refugees, what material resources and social services need to be in place, how service gaps can be overcome, and where to find help. For example, IOM Finland's Navigator 2.0 training programme aims to prepare volunteers, community organisations, and local professionals to support refugees as soon as they arrive, providing information and concrete guidance on key issues.<sup>52</sup> Similarly, UNHCR Spain's tools and guidance for municipalities are designed to help municipal actors understand the minimum standards for engaging in resettlement and how to effectively support refugees' integration, including helping them assess whether they have (and ways to build) the capacity to provide adequate mental and physical health services and employment and education opportunities to vulnerable individuals with specific needs.<sup>53</sup>
- ▶ **Enhanced coordination between pre- and post-arrival actors.** Creating links between actors involved in the pre- and post-arrival phases of resettlement can help ensure a seamless journey for refugees and avoid inefficiencies (such as unnecessarily having refugees undergo the same medical test several times). It can also help these stakeholders navigate common communication issues, including miscommunications (e.g., because partners use different terms for the same concept or assign different meanings to the same term) as well as information-sharing gaps and delays.<sup>54</sup> This can be done in different ways, from ensuring that communications with municipalities convey vital and timely information about new arrivals' needs and characteristics (e.g., in communications between placement officials and municipalities<sup>55</sup>) to introducing formal communication mechanisms. For example:
  - *Health-care coordination for refugees being resettled in the United States.* Launched in 2022, a partnership between IOM, the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the University of Minnesota, and other Minnesota organisations has linked up the pre- and post-arrival medical services provided to refugees. Through face-to-face meetings between the partners and with previously resettled refugees as well as by having IOM clinicians observe the work of domestic refugee clinics, this partnership acts as a platform for the 'exchange of knowledge and best practices and creation of networks that provide for clearer communication and

52 Author interview with coordinators of the Navigator 2.0 project, IOM Finland, 22 April 2022.

53 Author interview with official, UNHCR Spain, 31 March 2022.

54 To take one example, Munich city officials have described finding it difficult to plan and mobilise the services needed to prepare for refugees' arrival when their state officials share limited information about newcomers' needs and on very short notice. Author interview with project leader, Save Me Munich, 21 July 2022.

55 An example of vertical information-sharing can be seen in the German state of Schleswig-Holstein. The state maintains an open informal channel of communication through regular telephone and email exchanges between its integration officers and municipalities, giving the latter an opportunity to signal if they are beyond capacity to receive refugees who are meant to arrive in their communities. A resettlement officer in Schleswig-Holstein described this as 'eye-to-eye collaboration' ('Zusammenarbeit auf Augenhöhe'). Author interview with resettlement officer, State of Schleswig-Holstein, Germany, 19 July 2022.

improved care.<sup>56</sup> These exchanges have also led to the co-creation of standard operating procedures (SOPs) for the coordinated management of refugees' health needs (including specific conditions) before and during resettlement in the United States.

- *Platforms to coordinate responses to displacement from Ukraine.* Following Russia's invasion of Ukraine, a flurry of multilevel coordination forums have been created to help authorities in receiving countries plan to meet the immediate and longer-term assistance needs of displaced Ukrainians. Although the humanitarian pathways at play are different in design and purpose from resettlement programmes, the coordination mechanisms that have accompanied them provide useful lessons on improving coordination between local, regional, national, and international actors that could benefit other humanitarian protection programmes. In this case, these mechanisms sought to streamline these stakeholders' work in furtherance of the shared goal of quickly and effectively provide safety, reception, and integration support to a specific group with specific needs. In the Swedish municipality of Åre, municipal integration officers spoke with enthusiasm of their initially weekly, and subsequently monthly, meetings with national agencies and regional stakeholders on how to coordinate preparations for Ukrainian arrivals.<sup>57</sup> Some even said they wished similar coordination tools existed in the country's resettlement programme. In Argentina, meanwhile, civil-society organisations pushed for the introduction of informal roundtables to discuss how to coordinate predeparture and post-arrival activities for Ukrainians sponsored for resettlement in the country.<sup>58</sup>

### C. *Coordination around post-arrival support*

More than in any other stage in the resettlement process, post-arrival integration support is the phase in which the widest array of local and national (and at times, international) stakeholders converge. For example, while in some countries national agencies support refugees with accessing employment opportunities, they do so within the cities and localities where local stakeholders—often from multiple governmental and nongovernmental entities—shoulder most other integration responsibilities. Such geographical and operational overlap between stakeholders calls for both vertical and horizontal collaboration and communication. Such coordination is critical to helping refugees find their way in a new country and achieve specific integration goals, and to ensuring that resources are used efficiently and gaps in support and duplicated efforts are avoided.

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56 Erin M. Mann et al., 'Health Challenges in Refugee Resettlement: An Innovative Multi-Sector Partnership to Improve the Continuum of Care for Resettled Refugees', *Journal of Travel Medicine* 27, no. 7 (2020): 1–3.

57 Author interview with integration coordinators, Åre municipality, Sweden, 25 August 2022.

58 Author interview with official, Amnesty Argentina, 24 January 2023; author interview with official, AMAL Argentina, 31 January 2023.

Developing this type of operational collaboration requires robust relationships and information-sharing between actors. The following approaches can help build these capacities:

- ▶ **Peer-to-peer networks for the exchange of best practices.** By providing local stakeholders opportunities to learn from their peers and share advice, such networks can help them address operational challenges and spread integration best practices. For example, the Finnish Pohmako Network, which comprises 50 people representing various local and regional organisations in the Ostrobothnia region (including employment services, training organisations, employer organisations, and municipal integration offices), meets monthly to share lessons and challenges related to supporting refugees' integration.<sup>59</sup> And in Germany, the NGO Caritas plans to launch an expert network involving states, municipalities, civil-society organisations, and refugees, with the aim of addressing communication gaps and offering a space in which these actors can discuss integration challenges from various perspectives.<sup>60</sup>
- ▶ **Coordinated integration support to newcomers.** Resettlement partners—even those with overlapping operational areas, such as national employment agencies and municipal integration offices—often do not work together. In Spain, for example, there is often no coordination between language and integration courses offered at the country's reception centres and the language and job training courses available to refugees after they leave these centres.<sup>61</sup> Taking steps to coordinate operations and service provision can tap into synergies between these organisations' work and strengthen the accessibility and quality of the support provided to refugees. The one-stop shop (Spazio Comune) that UNHCR Italy has helped deploy in Turin, with another planned for Naples, is a promising example of how this can work in practice.<sup>62</sup> In one physical location, refugees and asylum seekers are able to access administrative, integration, and other services. Bringing authorities and nongovernmental service providers together in one place can also help facilitate communication and coordination between their work on individual cases. Coordination around service provision is especially relevant when several humanitarian pathways exist within a country. For example, the NGO-run accommodation centres in Spain have dedicated spaces for resettled refugees and for newcomers who enter the country on humanitarian visas, but these two systems are not connected and stakeholders have described cases in which one space is full while the other is underutilised.<sup>63</sup> Better coordination and collaboration in such situations could create more flexibility to adjust systems' capacity to meet changing needs.

59 Author interview with Head of Immigration, ELY Centre, Ostrobothnia, Finland, 8 April 2022; author interview with integration officer, Iisalmi municipality, Finland, 7 July 2022.

60 Author interview with policy officer, Caritas Germany, 25 March 2022.

61 Author interview with official, Instrategies, Spain, 31 March 2022.

62 UNHCR Italy, 'UNHCR-Comune di Napoli: uno Spazio Comune per l'integrazione dei rifugiati' (news release, 3 March 2023).

63 Author interview with official, Instrategies, Spain, 31 March 2022.

## 5 Conclusions and Recommendations

Without more effective multilevel communication and coordination, resettlement programmes will find it difficult to maintain their current capacity, let alone enhance refugee integration outcomes and make good on promises to expand operations. At the same time, there is an abundance of lessons from resettlement countries that can be built upon to form more inclusive local–national partnerships and implement collaborative approaches to building local resettlement capacity in both ‘normal’ times and emergencies.

The following recommendations can help guide stakeholders as they think through how to best incorporate these lessons into their resettlement programmes:

- ▶ **Invest in awareness raising, trainings, and guidance for local actors to ensure they have the knowledge and resources to become genuine partners in resettlement.** International and national stakeholders with expertise in resettlement law, practice, and processes should consider further investing in the development of trainings and guidance for subnational stakeholders that do not already have the specialised knowledge or information needed to resettle refugees. Such tools could generate confidence among local partners and encourage them to engage actively in resettlement, help them fill capacity gaps that prevent them from participating or from providing specific services, and support them in becoming trusted, well-informed partners throughout the resettlement process.
- ▶ **Establish local–national communication channels to facilitate the meaningful exchange of knowledge, concerns, and feedback.** National authorities should consider setting up formal or informal communication and information-gathering mechanisms to give a greater voice to subnational entities in resettlement decision-making and to facilitate greater coordination between national and subnational actors. This could take the form of a designated and trusted contact point (less ideally, a hotline) that local stakeholders can reach out to in both normal times and emergency situations to signal to national decisionmakers their needs, capacity, issues that need to be addressed, and willingness to take a more active role in resettlement. Merely opening communication and coordination channels, however, will not be enough. There is also a need for proactive outreach to make sure subnational stakeholders are aware that these tools exist and feedback mechanisms to highlight how subnational actors’ input will genuinely be considered in decision-making.
- ▶ **Build stronger links between resettlement stages, partners, and protection pathways through better information-sharing.** Peer-to-peer exchange opportunities exist at some of the stages of the resettlement process, but national authorities and international organisations (such as UNHCR and IOM) should consider building cross-cutting coordination channels and fostering relationships that link up different resettlement stages and actors as a way to facilitate learning and improve the performance of the broader protection system. Innovative operational partnerships such as the one between IOM, U.S. national authorities, and subnational stakeholders in Minnesota provide good examples of how this can work in practice and the benefits that such initiatives can bring in terms of filling service gaps and creating continuity of support for refugees before, during, and after resettlement. Where multiple protection pathways run in parallel to resettlement, a baseline level of communication and coordination is needed to ensure resources and capacity are used effectively.

- ▶ **Secure sufficient funding to get multilevel partnerships off the ground and to bolster local involvement in resettlement.** Multilevel coordination can be both time-consuming and resource-intensive. Stakeholders should consider creating dedicated funding streams to foster local participation in coordination efforts. Such funding is critical to make sure all relevant stakeholders can participate, to support them as they build capacity, and to reinforce their pre-arrival preparedness and post-arrival integration services. National authorities can play an important role here, but they are not the only actors when it comes to securing funding; regional and local stakeholders themselves can also play a part. In Spain, for example, the autonomous community of Catalonia funnels 53 per cent of the immigration funds it receives from the central government directly into Catalan municipalities so they can invest in building their own capacity.<sup>64</sup> Local authorities in the Swedish municipality of Åre have also managed to secure national, regional, and EU funding to pursue more active integration support.<sup>65</sup>

The uncertainty resettlement programmes often face—arising from humanitarian and other crises, and from shifting political will and public opinion—has vividly highlighted the need for the many stakeholders involved in these systems to work together efficiently and pool their resources, knowledge, and expertise. Coordination and collaboration are crucial to ensuring that resettlement plans are well crafted and implemented, resources are optimised, and issues are addressed in a timely manner. Better multilevel communication and coordination channels can also help build trust between resettlement actors and with receiving communities and contribute to the sustainability and potential growth of resettlement programmes. In short, these investments are key to ensuring a more robust response to evolving protection challenges and to meeting the complex needs of both refugees and the communities in which they are resettled.

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<sup>64</sup> Author interview with official, Catalan Department of Interior, Spain, 21 June 2022.

<sup>65</sup> For instance, the municipality managed to secure funding from the Coordination Association of the Region of Jämtland (Samordningsförbundet), a national association that funds local coordination efforts. Author interview with integration coordinators, Åre municipality, Sweden, 25 August 2022.

## Appendix. Data Sources for Table 1

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