



# The Next Generation of Refugee Resettlement in Europe

Ambitions for the future and how to realise them

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## Executive Summary

The global resettlement landscape and Europe's role within it have shifted tremendously in recent years, especially from 2014 onwards as countries responded to the Syrian refugee crisis. Since then, the European Union and some of its Member States have evolved into major players. European countries have welcomed nearly half of all refugees resettled since 2017, and much of the creative energy and innovation in the resettlement space can now be found in Europe. Seven of the twelve refugee sponsorship pilot programmes that have been launched worldwide are in Europe (also called community or private sponsorship, or humanitarian corridors in some contexts). And European countries, under the aegis of the EU Action on Facilitating Resettlement and Refugee Admission through New Knowledge (EU-FRANK) project and with the support of the European Asylum Support Office (EASO), have been at the forefront of efforts to improve the monitoring and evaluation of resettlement systems, build economies of scale among national programmes, and test new approaches for welcoming resettled refugees.

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*European countries have welcomed nearly half of all refugees resettled since 2017, and much of the creative energy and innovation in the resettlement space can now be found in Europe.*

This newfound role comes as both a responsibility and an opportunity for Europe. The growing capacity to resettle, coupled with continued political commitment to resettlement under the European Commission's new Pact on Migration and Asylum, offer fertile ground for the development of a truly ambitious programme for resettlement under the Commission's current mandate, which runs until 2024.

But in order to capitalise on this opportunity, policymakers within Member States and at the EU level will need to continue to motivate political commitment and sustain it over time. Lowering the financial barriers to entry and engagement for national and local governments, for example by increasing the lump sum the European Union provides Member States for each resettled refugee or by sharing more resettlement operations at the EU level, could tip the scales in favour of resettlement for some countries. Government 'champions' of resettlement (e.g., dedicated staff across ministries) who pave the way for the creation of new programmes or the expansion of existing ones, and who share their experiences with others, have in the past inspired others to follow suit. Representatives from champion countries able to speak to the success of emerging models that allow refugees to move through complementary pathways, such as education or employment programmes, could encourage other countries to experiment with similarly creative approaches to offering protection. Strategic targeting and messaging around resettlement efforts by governments to the public may also help generate greater motivation amongst existing or prospective resettlement countries. The Syrian crisis played an important role in catalysing a dramatic increase in EU resettlement from the countries to which many Syrians had fled. As was the case then, capitalising on public interest in and eagerness to support those affected by specific displacement situations may similarly be useful for driving future resettlement efforts.

Delivering on more ambitious resettlement commitments will also require EU Member States to build world-class resettlement systems backed by evidence and data. This will require the European Commission

and EU countries to make further investments in Europe’s administrative capacity and the infrastructure in countries of first asylum to speed up and scale up selection and departure processes and resettle larger caseloads on tighter timelines. Sharing facilities and staff in first-asylum countries could be one way for EU Member States to build capacity in this area, and an ongoing pilot in Turkey involving a departure facility operated by EASO will test this concept. Investments in monitoring and evaluation will also be critical to continue building the evidence base needed to support strong and sustainable resettlement programme design.

The systemic shocks wrought by the COVID-19 pandemic have come at a critical point in the development of resettlement in Europe. The temporary suspension of operations risks eroding the knowledge and infrastructure built up in recent years and may make it more difficult to secure political support in countries facing a looming recession and where public health-care and welfare systems are stretched thin. Yet, this challenging period may also prove to have a silver lining. While some resettlement operations remain on hold and others are only slowly being restarted, there is a unique opportunity to take a step back and examine what has been learnt in recent years; make smart investments in programme design, capacity building, and monitoring and evaluation; and think through what truly ambitious resettlement policy could look like for Europe.

## 1 Introduction

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European resettlement policymakers face a rare opportunity. Growing resettlement capacity and infrastructure, coupled with apparent interest in and commitment to resettlement at the EU level, have created the conditions to develop coordinated and ambitious resettlement programmes within Europe over the next several years.

Since 2017, more than 40 per cent of refugees resettled through the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) have found new homes in Europe, a sharp uptick from 8 per cent in 2007.<sup>1</sup> While the dramatic decrease in resettlement to the United States plays a role in this shift, EU Member States have also scaled up their efforts, with countries such as Germany and Sweden significantly expanding their quotas, and others, such as Romania or Lithuania, launching new programmes. More than 41,300 refugees arrived in Europe between December 2017 and December 2019, the result of pledges by Member States under the European Commission’s September 2017 EU Resettlement Scheme.<sup>2</sup> And at the first-ever Global Refugee Forum in December 2019, EU countries pledged a total of 30,000 resettlement places for 2020. In light of the COVID-19 pandemic, the European Commission’s new Pact on Migration and Asylum, released in September 2020, extends both the EU target quota of 30,000 as well as the ad hoc pledges Member States made for 2020 into 2021.<sup>3</sup> For 2022 and beyond, no specific targets have been set; however, the pact makes a clear political commitment to maintaining current numbers and perhaps growing resettlement.

1 United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), *UNHCR Projected Global Resettlement Needs 2021* (Geneva: UNHCR, 2020); Susan Fratzke and Hanne Beirens, ‘The Future of Refugee Resettlement: Made in Europe?’ (commentary, Migration Policy Institute Europe, February 2020).

2 European Commission, ‘[Delivering on Resettlement](#)’ (fact sheet, European Commission, Brussels, December 2019).

3 European Commission, ‘[Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions on a New Pact on Migration and Asylum](#)’ (COM [2020] 609 final, 23 September 2020).

Over the past five years, a growing community of European resettlement experts has emerged to consolidate cooperation at the operational level, including by developing tools and guidelines that can be shared amongst European resettlement states.<sup>4</sup> And the creation in April 2019 of a European Asylum Support Office (EASO) Resettlement Support Facility in Turkey came in response to the need for more shared infrastructure and coordination on the ground in the first-asylum country from which most refugees are resettled to Europe. In addition, some European countries have shown a growing appetite to monitor and evaluate their resettlement efforts, a crucial step towards building well-functioning and sustainable programmes that make effective use of resources and can be further scaled.<sup>5</sup>

Together, these investments in a common EU resettlement infrastructure and growing resettlement experience at the Member State level create a strong foundation upon which European resettlement efforts can grow. Seizing this opportunity by setting ambitious targets for future EU efforts will allow European resettlement to live up to its potential. On top of the real difference that resettlement can make in the lives

*On top of the real difference that resettlement can make in the lives of individual refugees, an ambitious commitment to resettlement on the part of both Member States and the European Union may have advantages for European policymakers.*

of individual refugees, an ambitious commitment to resettlement on the part of both Member States and the European Union may have advantages for European policymakers. Solidifying the place of large-scale resettlement and complementary pathways in Europe's humanitarian policy would ensure the existence of meaningful opportunities for mobility, within the scope of legal frameworks, for displaced persons. To the extent that resettlement and complementary pathways can be coordinated with first-asylum countries, they could have

additional value by contributing to improved conditions for the wider population of refugees in those countries. And for the European Union, there could be broader soft-power benefits to taking on a leadership role in global resettlement, as Canada and the United States have done in the past.

This report begins by offering a snapshot of how the European resettlement landscape has evolved and assesses what an ambitious EU resettlement policy—one with expanded resettlement targets and a corresponding investment in resettlement infrastructure—could accomplish. It then considers strategies for motivating commitment to such goals, and what additional actions are needed to accomplish them. It concludes by laying out a series of questions regarding what the future of European resettlement efforts might hold and what steps EU and Member State leaders must take in order to realise this vision.

<sup>4</sup> The European Union Action on Facilitating Resettlement and Refugee Admission through New Knowledge (EU-FRANK) project has supported the development of a database of tools, including guidelines for planning resettlement missions and interviews and organising predeparture trainings, which can be used by Member States to facilitate the operation of their resettlement programmes. For more information about the project, see European Union, 'What Is EU-FRANK?—Tools', accessed 11 September 2020.

<sup>5</sup> Ireland, Italy, and the Netherlands, for example, have all invested in developing indicators to measure their programmes' performance. See Aliyyah Ahad, Camille Le Coz, and Hanne Beirens, *Using Evidence to Improve Refugee Resettlement: A Monitoring and Evaluation Roadmap* (Brussels: Migration Policy Institute Europe, 2020).

## 2 An Evolving Resettlement Landscape: A Snapshot

In addition to European countries' rapid expansion of resettlement places over the last decade, the energy and creativity the European Union and its Member States have invested in this area have grown significantly. The cornerstones of this evolution are:

- ▶ **Strengthening Europe's resettlement infrastructure.** Translating EU and Member State political commitments into reality has required the improvement of the operational infrastructure around resettlement. Especially for countries that had not previously engaged in resettlement, this called for support in planning and delivering their programmes. The pressure to quickly build up capacity has led some governments to turn to peers with well-established resettlement programmes for support.<sup>6</sup> Activities under the EU Action on Facilitating Resettlement and Refugee Admission through New Knowledge (EU-FRANK) project as well as EASO's newly minted Resettlement and Humanitarian Admission Network<sup>7</sup> have offered space to exchange and consolidate cooperation at an operational level. Through the establishment of EASO's Resettlement Support Facility, European resettlement states can also benefit from shared infrastructure and increased coordination in Turkey.
- ▶ **Expanding the knowledge base.** Developing and sharing knowledge about resettlement best practices and monitoring the extent to which resettlement efforts are meeting political objectives have become important areas of investment. Ireland, Italy, and the Netherlands, for example, have all developed indicators to measure their programmes' performance.<sup>8</sup> This budding monitoring and evaluation (M&E) culture has not only started to create a stronger evidence base around resettlement in Europe, but also shifted the political focus towards the quality of resettlement operations and their sustainability over time, rather than measuring the success of operations primarily in terms of how many refugees are resettled.
- ▶ **Growing creativity in European resettlement.** As Europe has come to play a bigger role within the global resettlement landscape, countries have increasingly turned to Europe for inspiration and innovative ideas about how to conduct resettlement operations. New approaches aimed at improving resettled refugees' integration, for example, include a tool developed by the International Organization for Migration (IOM) in partnership with civil-society organisations across Europe to create a profile of Syrian refugees' employment-related skills prior to their departure from the first-asylum country to speed up their access to targeted trainings and work opportunities after resettlement.<sup>9</sup> Several countries and civil-society initiatives have also piloted orientation and information sessions for

6 Hanne Beirens and Aliyyah Ahad, *Scaling up Refugee Resettlement: The Role of Institutional Peer Support* (Brussels: Migration Policy Institute Europe, 2018).

7 The European Asylum Support Office (EASO) Resettlement and Humanitarian Admission Network was launched in the first quarter of 2020. For more information about the network, see EASO, 'Two New Cooperation Networks Joined EASO's Family', accessed 11 September 2020.

8 See Ahad, Le Coz, and Beirens, *Using Evidence to Improve Refugee Resettlement*.

9 These organisations include International Catholic Migration Commission Europe, the British Refugee Council, Asociatia Serviciul lezuitilor pentru Refugiatii din Romania (Jesuit Refugee Service Romania), Caritasverband für die Diözese Hildesheim e.V. (Caritas Friedland), and Conselho Português para os Refugiados (Portuguese Refugee Council). The project was co-funded by the European Union's Asylum, Migration, and Integration Fund (AMIF). For more information, see European Resettlement Network, 'About LINK IT', accessed 11 September 2020.

receiving communities in advance of refugees' arrival, including in the United Kingdom and Norway.<sup>10</sup> Moreover, in an effort to save on costs and improve the efficiency of resettlement operations, some EU Member States have started testing different ways of pooling resources, including by conducting joint selection missions in Jordan and Turkey and by chartering planes together for refugees departing from the same locations.<sup>11</sup>

- ▶ **Operating complementary pathways alongside resettlement.** In addition to operational innovations, some Member States have started to diversify the pathways through which refugees can come to Europe. Refugee sponsorship programmes have emerged in the United Kingdom and spread to other European countries, including Belgium, France, Germany, Ireland, Italy, and Spain.<sup>12</sup> These programmes change the way resettlement is implemented by transferring some responsibilities from governments to sponsoring groups or organisations, often including a role in refugees' selection, travel, and reception, typically with the aim of improving integration supports and building more welcoming communities. In addition, several EU Member States have opened complementary pathways for refugees, including labour and education mobility schemes, for example those for refugees who wish to study in France or Portugal.<sup>13</sup> The European Commission's new Pact on Migration and Asylum has made expanding complementary pathways a priority, alongside resettlement, and will provide capacity-building support to Member States to launch or strengthen complementary pathways programmes.

Two wild cards could significantly affect Europe's role and engagement in the global resettlement space going forward: the future course of U.S. refugee resettlement following the November 2020 election and the progression of the COVID-19 pandemic. With Joe Biden poised to take over the presidency, the United States is likely to re-emerge as a global resettlement player, in line with Biden's campaign pledge to set the annual U.S. refugee admissions ceiling at 125,000,<sup>14</sup> up from the 15,000 places set by the Trump administration for fiscal year 2021.<sup>15</sup> Efforts to realise this commitment—even though it may take several years, given how cuts to refugee admissions under the Trump administration have decimated U.S. resettlement infrastructure—would put the United States back on the map as a global leader in resettlement. Europe would then have to decide whether it is content with playing a smaller role or whether it wants to scale up its own numbers alongside the United States.

10 For more information, see Susan Fratzke and Lena Kainz, *Preparing for the Unknown: Designing Effective Predeparture Orientation for Resettling Refugees* (Brussels: Migration Policy Institute Europe, 2019).

11 Information based on interviews with government officials in the context of a workshop convened by the Migration Policy Institute (MPI) Europe, EASO, as well as the EU-FRANK project secretariat on 'Opportunities for Efficiency: Tracking Resources in Refugee Resettlement', 24 June 2020.

12 In Spain, there are ongoing sponsorship pilots in the Basque region as well as in Valencia. Globally, refugee sponsorship programmes are operational in Argentina, Australia, Brazil, Canada, and New Zealand, and the U.S. programme has some elements of sponsorship through the voluntary agencies that manage resettlement. Author email exchange with representative of the Global Refugee Sponsorship Initiative (GRSI), 3 November 2020; Susan Fratzke et al., *Refugee Sponsorship Programs: A Global State of Play and Opportunities for Investment* (Brussels: MPI Europe, 2019).

13 Sophia Lowe, *Doubling our Impact: Third Country Higher Education Pathways for Refugees* (N.p.: World University Service of Canada; UN Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organisation; and UN High Commissioner for Refugees, 2020).

14 See Biden for President, 'The Biden Plan for Securing Our Values as a Nation of Immigrants', accessed 11 September 2020.

15 White House, 'Presidential Determination on Refugee Admissions for Fiscal Year 2021' (presidential memorandum, 28 October 2020).



The systemic shocks brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic have come at a particularly unfortunate time for European resettlement programmes, many of which were just getting off the ground or beginning to grow. The pandemic has not only temporarily halted resettlement globally, but also made it more challenging politically to make the case for resettlement in the face of a looming global recession and when public health-care and welfare systems are stretched thin. With operations suspended, there is a risk that the knowledge and infrastructure Europe has built up in recent years will begin to erode and that delays in interviewing and processing refugees for resettlement will create bottlenecks in referral pipelines that will further slow arrivals once operations fully resume. However, the hiatus has also created an opportunity for policymakers to take a step back and reflect on how to make a stronger case for resettlement in the post-pandemic world and what investments are needed to deliver on a more ambitious resettlement policy in Europe.

### 3 Making the Case for Resettlement

A coordinated effort to scale up resettlement commitments within the European Union would accomplish a number of objectives, as outlined in the subsections that follow.

#### A. *Increased humanitarian impact*

Offering those fleeing persecution the possibility to resettle to a third country provides a safe means of reaching protection, and for some, including refugees with urgent medical needs, resettlement can be the difference between life and death. For a large proportion of the world's refugee population, neither returning to their country of origin nor integrating locally in their country of first asylum are viable options; this leaves resettlement as the only durable solution to their displacement. If the European Union were to increase its investment in resettlement—making it a more central and sizeable arm of the bloc's protection commitments—it would be making a meaningful contribution to addressing pressing humanitarian concerns worldwide. In the realm of complementary pathways, changes to existing education or labour channels that would allow refugees to more easily access them (such as introducing the possibility for applicants with refugee status to travel without a passport or without proving an intention to return) would enable refugees to actively shape their futures when many are often deprived of such agency.

*Policymakers and UNHCR have also looked to large-scale or targeted resettlement as a means to improve protection conditions in countries of first asylum.*

In addition to benefiting resettled refugees, policymakers and UNHCR have also looked to large-scale or targeted resettlement as a means to improve protection conditions in countries of first asylum more broadly—an approach known as the strategic use of

resettlement.<sup>16</sup> By resettling large numbers of refugees or taking those with particularly resource-intensive assistance needs, such as medical conditions, resettlement countries could help first-asylum-country governments abide by their legal obligations, such as nonrefoulement, or encourage them to implement more favourable policies toward the remaining refugees. The opening of Turkey's labour market to Syrian

<sup>16</sup> Hanna Schneider, *The Strategic Use of Resettlement: Lessons from the Syria Context* (N.p.: Durable Solutions Platform, 2020).

refugees was, for example, one of the commitments the Turkish government made as part of negotiations of the EU-Turkey Statement in which the European Union pledged to undertake large-scale resettlement of Syrians from Turkey.<sup>17</sup> And prior to the dramatic cuts to the U.S. resettlement programme, U.S. officials reported regularly using resettlement commitments in diplomatic negotiations with first-asylum countries to gain concessions on the treatment of other refugees in these countries or in exchange for maintaining an open border to refugees.<sup>18</sup>

Such larger-scale operations could also serve broader humanitarian objectives, including fostering stability in fragile regions. In assessing the effects of the U.S. resettlement programme, for example, U.S. military officials have described resettlement as a key tool in preventing the large-scale and premature return of refugee populations to fragile post-conflict situations, which is seen as a significant risk factor for rekindling conflict.<sup>19</sup>

## *B. Humanitarian leadership and soft power*

Given Europe's evolution into the top resettlement destination region worldwide, as well as its tremendous learning curve in resettling refugees,<sup>20</sup> the European Union and its Member States could use the momentum they have built up over the past five years to position themselves as world leaders and shape the global resettlement space more intentionally and ambitiously. Europe's creativity, as shown through its experimentation with sponsorship schemes and field-building investments through EASO and EU-FRANK, together with its increased numerical commitments to resettlement and complementary pathways could be a source of soft power in relationships globally and with third countries. The Canadian and UK governments, for example, have used this strategic branding vis-à-vis their efforts on refugee resettlement as well as sponsorship.<sup>21</sup>

As a major player in the resettlement sphere, taking on this mindset and role could allow Europe to set the agenda and influence how and from where resettlement operations take place globally. A coordinated effort on the part of EU countries, and potentially in cooperation with non-EU resettlement countries as well, could allow for a greater and more strategic impact in regions of concern. The European Union and Member States could also take on greater financial responsibility for supporting UNHCR and IOM as they facilitate resettlement operations to Europe and elsewhere and, in doing so, help to shape the focus and direction of resettlement efforts. Taking on more of a leadership role could also entail efforts to make resettlement more affordable and attractive to other countries, for example by undertaking diplomatic or logistical efforts to

17 European Council, 'EU-Turkey Statement, 18 March 2016' (press release, 18 March 2016).

18 Statement of Barbara L. Strack, Former Chief, Refugee Affairs Division Refugee, Asylum, and International Operations Directorate, U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services, at a hearing of the U.S. House Judiciary Committee Subcommittee on Immigration and Citizenship, *The Current State of the U.S. Refugee Program*, 116th Cong., 2nd sess., February 27, 2020.

19 Statement of Barbara L. Strack, Former Chief, Refugee Affairs Division Refugee, Asylum, and International Operations Directorate, U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services.

20 Fratzke and Beirens, 'The Future of Refugee Resettlement'.

21 For example, the government of Canada leads a joint initiative, GRSl, together with UNHCR, Open Society Foundations, the Giustra Foundation, and the University of Ottawa that aims to increase the momentum around refugee resettlement and sponsorship by engaging citizens, communities, and businesses and strengthening receiving communities as they welcome newcomers. For more information, see GRSl, 'About GRSl', accessed 30 October 2020. In the United Kingdom, the Home Office funds RESET, the country's learning hub for community sponsorship, which offers training and support to sponsors and sponsored refugees and conducts policy advocacy and research. For more information, see Reset, 'What We Do', accessed 30 October 2020.

support the development of resettlement systems in Latin America and Asia, thus diversifying the countries involved in resettlement and further expanding its potential impact. To this end, the European Union could also focus on building or expanding global infrastructure, including supporting the development of identification and referral capacity for resettlement and complementary pathways.

### C. *Building welcoming communities*

Some countries may also wish to leverage resettlement as a tool to build communities that have the capacity to welcome newcomers and that are set up to thrive on diversity. Resettlement offers the opportunity to both test new approaches to integration and community building, and to systematically apply those that work.<sup>22</sup> Where refugee resettlement and integration are handled well, communities may be better prepared in the future to adapt to greater diversity, whether as a result of the spontaneous arrival of asylum seekers or the admission of immigrants through legal channels such as labour recruitment. A positive resettlement experience could also increase EU Member States' willingness to participate in intra-EU relocation efforts or offer lessons for how to mitigate the secondary movement of resettled refugees and other humanitarian newcomers within the bloc. Sant'Egidio, the faith-based organisation that led the development of 'humanitarian corridors' in Italy and elsewhere, has studied how lessons learnt from these programmes could be applied to intra-EU relocation efforts.<sup>23</sup> Another example of how this can work comes from across the Atlantic: The Pictou County Safe Harbour project in Canada first began supporting the resettlement of refugees to a rural community in Nova Scotia via private sponsorship in 2015.<sup>24</sup> The first sponsorship was such a success that the community has since resettled dozens of additional refugees and is now participating in a pilot programme to sponsor refugees for travel to Canada via a labour mobility programme, where they will take up jobs in high-demand occupations in the community.

### D. *An orderly alternative to spontaneous arrivals?*

In addition to raising the odds that those in need find protection, a coordinated increase in global resettlement could have knock-on benefits for migration and asylum systems. This was one of the stated objectives of the EU Resettlement Framework proposed by the former European Commission in September 2017. Even though the new migration pact has dropped references of a direct link between resettlement and spontaneous arrivals, the idea that making resettlement places (alongside legal migration pathways) more widely available could reduce incentives to embark on dangerous, unauthorised journeys still aligns with Europe's political vision around better migration management.<sup>25</sup> This idea is also not limited to the EU context. In 2014, for example, the U.S. government introduced a resettlement programme for Central American Minors in the hopes of dissuading unaccompanied children from travelling without authorisation

22 See, for example, Liam Patuzzi, Monica Andriescu, and Antonio Pietropolli, *Building Welcome from the Ground up: European Small and Rural Communities Engaging in Refugee Resettlement* (Brussels: MPI Europe, 2020).

23 Working Group of the Humanitarian Corridors Project, *Humanitarian Corridors: Implementation Procedures for their Extension on a European Scale* (N.p.: Humanitarian Corridors Project, 2019).

24 For more information, see Pictou County Safe Harbour, 'Our Story', accessed 29 October 2020.

25 European Commission, 'Proposal for a Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council Establishing a Union Resettlement Framework and Amending Regulation (EU) No 516/2014 of the European Parliament and the Council' (COM [2016] 468 final, 13 July 2016).

through the region in an attempt to reach the U.S.-Mexico border.<sup>26</sup> A similar rationale has been put forward in support of the expansion of complementary pathways that would allow a wider group of refugees to travel safely, beyond those typically eligible for resettlement; this could include facilitating access to family reunification, labour or education pathways, and other humanitarian admission schemes.

Whether or not resettlement could (or should) be used as a means to an end for other migration policy objectives is not straightforward. To date, there is limited evidence of the effectiveness of resettlement operations as a tool to achieve migration-management goals. Reliable data is scarce on whether increasing resettlement places can shift refugees' decisions about whether to migrate via unauthorised means or incentivise them to stay in the hope of resettling elsewhere. There is equally little evidence on the impact of resettlement operations on resettlement countries' relationship with third countries.<sup>27</sup> In addition, deploying resettlement to serve nonhumanitarian policy goals is likely to create tradeoffs in other areas. For example, there may be a push to prioritise resettlement departure locations that are of interest to the European Union for migration-management purposes, which could shift resources away from locations with potentially greater humanitarian needs. If done for extended periods or at scale, such a diversion of resources from fragile displacement contexts could undermine stability in those regions.

## 4 Motivating Action

Ultimately, the decision of whether to engage in resettlement—and at what scale—lies in the hands of national political leaders. And whatever the critical humanitarian benefits of resettlement for individual refugees and overtaxed first-asylum countries, or the reputational and soft-power benefits to resettlement countries, resettling and supporting the integration of refugees also entails costs. Sending missions to select refugees for resettlement, conducting predeparture orientation courses, and arranging travel and initial reception must all compete for space in national budgets. At the local level, schools must adapt their curriculum and staffing to serve students with disrupted education and with language learning needs, and space must be found to accommodate newcomers in often-oversubscribed public housing.

While there is an abundance of research demonstrating the economic contributions refugees often make to their new homes,<sup>28</sup> these benefits are diffuse and usually take time to manifest, and thus they may be

26 See, for example, testimony of Doris Meissner, Director of U.S. Immigration Policy Program, MPI, before the U.S. Senate Judiciary Committee's Subcommittee on Immigration and the National Interest, *Ending the Law and Diverting Taxpayer Resources: An Examination of the Administration's Central American Minors Refugee/Parole Program*, 114th Cong., 1st sess., 23 April 2015; Muzaffar Chishti and Faye Hipsman, 'Unaccompanied Minors Crisis Has Receded from Headlines but Major Issues Remain', *Migration Information Source*, 25 September 2014); Hanne Beirens and Susan Fratzke, *Taking Stock of Refugee Resettlement: Policy Objectives, Practical Tradeoffs, and the Evidence Base* (Brussels: MPI Europe, 2017).

27 Schneider, *The Strategic Use of Resettlement*.

28 In 2017, the Trump administration rejected the results of a study that it had commissioned on the fiscal impacts of resettled refugees, which found that refugees brought in USD 63 billion more in government revenues over the past decade than they cost. *The New York Times* published a copy of the study: *The New York Times*, 'Rejected Report Shows Revenue Brought in by Refugees', *The New York Times*, 19 September 2017. See also New American Economy, *From Struggle to Resilience: The Economic Impact of Refugees in America* (New York: New American Economy, 2017); Alexander Betts, Louise Bloom, Josiah Kaplan, and Naohiko Omata, *Refugee Economies: Forced Displacement and Development* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016); Maria Vincenza Desiderio, *Integrating Refugees into Host Country Labor Markets: Challenges and Policy Options* (Washington DC: MPI, 2016); Stefan Kordel and Tobias Weidinger, *Wechselwirkungen, Steuerungsmaßnahmen und Handlungsempfehlungen: Vielfalt von Zuwanderung und Entwicklung ländlicher Räume* (Stuttgart: Robert Bosch Stiftung, 2020).

less noticeable in the everyday life of other residents. And particularly in communities with little previous exposure to immigration, the arrival of visibly and culturally different newcomers can be disorienting for long-time residents. Turning a blind eye to these types of tensions may make them more difficult for policymakers and community leaders to solve later on.<sup>29</sup> It is the immediate, localised, and visible effects on a community that shape the public's views of resettlement, and immigration more broadly, and that elected officials must explain and frame for their voters.<sup>30</sup>

Small-scale and short-term pilot programmes that help 100 or 200 people are relatively low cost, and thus low risk, and are easy enough to introduce. Many resettlement countries stayed comfortably at this level for years, until the Mediterranean migration crisis prompted the expansion of their efforts starting in 2015. Ambitious resettlement commitments that are large enough to have a strategic impact, however, entail risks and thus require the investment of political capital. Canada's commitment to resettle 25,000 Syrian refugees in late 2015 and early 2016, for example, grew out of a pledge by Justin Trudeau during his campaign to become prime minister.<sup>31</sup> In the United Kingdom, the commitment to resettle 20,000 Syrians under the Vulnerable Persons Relocation Scheme, which has now been folded into and expanded the country's permanent resettlement scheme, was made directly by Prime Minister David Cameron in response to heavy pressure from a range of political, advocacy, and charity groups at the height of the crisis in 2015.<sup>32</sup>

If the European Union seeks to implement a more expansive resettlement policy, the question, then, is how to motivate the necessary level of commitment from national governments. Some actors, including the European Parliament, have argued for the introduction of a legal obligation for EU Member States to engage in resettlement at a certain level.<sup>33</sup> While a legal threshold would ensure the availability of a potentially larger number of resettlement places in the near term, it would not address the need to attract the interest and support of members of the public in these efforts; indeed, a heavy-handed approach could undermine future success if national publics begin to resent the obligations placed upon them by Brussels. In the United States, where resettlement stakeholders have acknowledged in recent years that the country's programme has become

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*If the European Union seeks to implement a more expansive resettlement policy, the question, then, is how to motivate the necessary level of commitment from national governments.*

29 For a more in-depth exploration of different ways to address and mitigate tensions around the arrival and integration of refugees and immigrants more broadly, see, for example, Natalia Banulescu-Bogdan and Meghan Benton, *In Search of Common Values amid Large-Scale Immigrant Integration Pressures* (Brussels: MPI Europe, 2017); Demetrios G. Papademetriou and Natalia Banulescu-Bogdan, *Understanding and Addressing Public Anxiety about Immigration (Transatlantic Council Statement)* (Washington DC: MPI, 2016); Demetrios G. Papademetriou, Richard Alba, Nancy Foner, and Natalia Banulescu-Bogdan, *Managing Religious Difference in North America and Europe in an Era of Mass Migration* (Washington DC: MPI, 2016).

30 Natalia Banulescu-Bogdan, *When Facts Don't Matter: How to Communicate More Effectively about Immigration's Costs and Benefits* (Washington DC: MPI, 2018).

31 Michelle Carbert, 'Liberals' Revised Goal Met as 25,000th Syrian Refugee Arrives in Canada', *The Globe and Mail*, 28 February 2016.

32 Jamie Merrill and Andrew Grice, 'Exclusive: A Call of Duty – 25 Leading Charities Urge PM to Open Britain's Door to Its Share of Syria's Most Vulnerable Refugees', *Independent*, 17 January 2014; BBC News, 'UK to Accept 20,000 Refugees from Syria by 2020', BBC News, 7 September 2015.

33 European Parliament, 'The European Parliament Resolution of 12 April 2016 on the Situation in the Mediterranean and the Need for a Holistic EU Approach to Migration' (Procedure 2015/2095 [INI], adopted 12 April 2016).

too professionalised and disconnected from the communities where it operates, the rapid dismantling of the programme since 2017 offers a vivid lesson in the risks of underinvesting in public engagement.<sup>34</sup>

Motivating national governments to take action is thus a core part of developing a more ambitious EU resettlement agenda, and could be done in several ways:

- ▶ **Capitalise on opportune moments and favourable public narratives.** Events that create a significant shift in public attention to or perceptions of refugee issues can create openings to introduce new resettlement commitments. The Syrian refugee crisis notably prompted the launch of a number of new resettlement and humanitarian pathways across the European Union, including Germany's sizeable Humanitarian Admission Programmes.<sup>35</sup> And the 2015–16 Mediterranean migration crisis gave rise to the EU resettlement programmes created in 2015 and the proposal for an EU Resettlement Framework in 2016.<sup>36</sup> More recently, the pandemic and widespread protests against racism have heightened public awareness of global inequalities, including those that affect migrants and refugees. Whether this marked shift in public discourse will translate into greater social openness to receiving refugees in practice, however, remains to be seen.
- ▶ **Brand resettlement efforts strategically.** Linking resettlement programmes to broader policy objectives, and to national or EU interests, may offer another way to generate public and political will. Resettlement conducted as part of a wider EU strategic plan of action to address displacement crises, for example, can be a way for states to show solidarity with affected countries or to contribute to efforts to reach shared policy objectives. Similarly, coordinating resettlement with first-asylum countries in exchange for policy changes that preserve or improve protection conditions for refugees who remain in those countries can motivate governments to embark on resettlement and members of the public to support such efforts. The Comprehensive Plan of Action for Indochinese Refugees adopted in 1989, whereby Thailand and other Southeast Asian countries kept their borders open to arriving refugees in exchange for other countries' commitment to resettle them, is a classic example.<sup>37</sup>
- ▶ **Find champions.** States that are willing to pave the way with a new or expanded resettlement programme can inspire others to join them. Study visits and meetings that facilitate exchange between senior policymakers in experienced resettlement states and those in countries interested in starting or growing their programmes have proven to be an effective way to motivate action at the government level.<sup>38</sup> Elevating voices from civil-society groups in more experienced states has also proven valuable in building support among the public and civil society in newer resettlement states. With countries such as Germany, Portugal, France, and Sweden that are enthusiastic about

34 See, for example, Idean Salehyan and Larry Yungk, 'Restoring the United States' Refugee Resettlement Program' (policy brief, Niskanen Center, Washington, DC, 22 September 2020).

35 In 2013 and 2014, the German government operated three humanitarian admission programmes for a total of 20,000 Syrians in need of international protection travelling from Egypt and Libya as well as from Syria and its neighbouring countries. Since 2017, the German government has operated one humanitarian admission programme for Syrian and stateless refugees in Turkey as part of the EU-Turkey agreement. In September 2020, the German government also initiated the humanitarian admission of 1,553 persons in need of international protection from Moria, Greece. See German Federal Ministry of the Interior, Building, and Community, 'Humanitäre Aufnahmeprogramme', accessed 30 October 2020.

36 European Commission, 'Delivering on Resettlement'.

37 For more information, see Alexander Betts, Gil Loescher, and James Milner, *UNHCR: The Politics and Practice of Refugee Protection* (London: Routledge, 2011).

38 Beirens and Ahad, *Scaling up Refugee Resettlement*.

resettlement holding the presidency of the European Council in the next three years, there may be an opportunity to make resettlement efforts and successes more visible across Europe.

- ▶ **Lower barriers to entry.** While sparking interest in resettlement is a critical element of motivating action, lowering the costs to national and local governments can also help to tip the balance in favour of resettlement. The lump sums the European Union provides to countries that resettle refugees are already a crucial factor for many Member States when deciding to undertake resettlement.<sup>39</sup> Romania, for example, primarily funds the selection of refugees and their predeparture orientation, travel, and initial reception with support from the European Asylum, Migration, and Integration Fund (AMIF), and has thus been able to present its programme as essentially cost free.<sup>40</sup> Lump sum funding under AMIF could be expanded to make participation even more financially accessible and appealing. A portion of such funding could even be earmarked for municipalities to partly cover their reception and integration costs, potentially motivating cities to agree to receive refugees or even exert bottom-up pressure on national governments to undertake resettlement.

Aside from directly funding resettlement, there may be ways to lower the costs of launching or operating a resettlement programme by increasing EU cooperation. Jointly chartering flights when large numbers of refugees will be travelling from the same departure location, as some EU countries are considering, could cut costs in some situations.<sup>41</sup> Other cost savings could potentially come from jointly procuring certain services, such as translation or venue rental, or from building internal capacity within EASO or EU countries, as Belgium has opted to do, to manage certain aspects of resettlement, such as the predeparture health checks typically provided by IOM.

The COVID-19 pandemic is a great unknown in efforts to motivate a more ambitious EU resettlement agenda. Refugee departures from first-asylum countries remain largely suspended or scaled down in most EU countries as of early November 2020, making the chances that countries fulfil their 2020 resettlement targets slim. And while the first wave of the pandemic was largely met with generosity and mutual support within communities, months of anxiety over the health risks associated with the virus, the state of the economy, and on-again-off-again lockdowns may be wearing that generosity thin. At the same time, the public-health risks and economic hardship brought on by the pandemic in many first-asylum countries have sustained or even increased the need for investments in resettlement. Preventing conditions from worsening in the countries hosting the majority of the world's displaced people will thus almost certainly need to remain a priority.

## 5 Building a World-Class Resettlement System

Delivering on expanded resettlement commitments requires not just motivation but also investments in infrastructure. Identifying, processing, and resettling refugees quickly or in large numbers to minimise

<sup>39</sup> The European Union provides Member States a lump sum of 10,000 euros for each resettled refugee from selected priority regions and 6,000 euros for those resettled from elsewhere. See European Commission, 'Delivering on Resettlement'; Rachel Westerby, *'Follow the Money III': Solidarity: The Use of AMIF Funds to Incentivise Resettlement and Relocation in the EU* (Geneva: UNHCR and ECRE, 2020).

<sup>40</sup> Author interview with a Romanian government official, 23 March 2018.

<sup>41</sup> Author interview with a Belgian government official, 15 June 2020.

pressures in first-asylum countries is a complex logistical undertaking. European resettlement states have significantly professionalised and expanded their operational capacity over the last five years. But successfully resettling refugees, and doing so at scale, is likely to require processing a larger amount of cases in a shorter timeframe than has been done to date, while remaining responsive and flexible enough to deal with different profiles of refugees, departure locations, and unexpected emergency situations. If the European Union is to become a leader in this area, it will need world-class resettlement systems to match its ambitions.

## A. *Scale up selection and departure*

Resettling at scale relies on having the capacity to identify large numbers of refugees in need of resettlement, screen them for eligibility and document their profiles, match them with resettlement states, and to do so on a tight timeline that does not delay states in moving refugees' cases through the resettlement pipeline. The role of identifying and referring refugees for resettlement has typically been filled by UNHCR, which has extensive familiarity with refugee populations and with states' resettlement requirements as well as existing infrastructure and procedures for identifying and processing cases. While UNHCR is almost uniquely well placed to fulfil this role, it has at times struggled to maintain the pipeline of referrals in some areas, such as urban settings where its connections with refugees are more limited than in camps.<sup>42</sup> Funding cuts resulting from the shrinking of the U.S. resettlement programme have also had an impact on the agency's referral capacity. Maintaining a sufficient number of referrals will thus require adequately resourcing UNHCR's infrastructure. In some areas, EU Member States might consider either supporting UNHCR to work with experienced nongovernmental organisations that could provide supplementary identification and case preparation capacity, particularly in first-asylum countries where resettlement countries wish to reach specific populations or from which a large number of countries will be conducting resettlement operations simultaneously.<sup>43</sup>

*The European Union or EASO could create a 'resettlement academy' through which interested countries could receive hands-on operational support in setting up, implementing, and evaluating resettlement programmes.*

Equally important is maintaining qualified and knowledgeable staff within EU Member States to handle the selection and processing of refugees for resettlement after they are referred. In order to lay the groundwork for expanding operations or evaluating

the impact of resettlement programmes, Member States could invest in staffing and training within their national resettlement units, or partner with EASO to provide more EU-wide resettlement services and staffing. Similar to EASO's existing pools of experts, the agency could, for example, create and train a corps of resettlement experts to help staff national government departments, develop a pool of predeparture orientation trainers, or deploy medical experts to conduct predeparture health checks. In addition, building on the work of the EU-FRANK project, the European Union or EASO could create a 'resettlement

<sup>42</sup> Melonee Douglas, Rachel Levitan, and Lucy W. Kiama, 'Expanding the Role of NGOs in Resettlement', *Forced Migration Review* 54 (February 2017), 34–37.

<sup>43</sup> Douglas, Levitan, and Kiama, 'Expanding the Role of NGOs in Resettlement', 34–37.



academy' through which interested countries could receive hands-on operational support in setting up, implementing, and evaluating resettlement programmes.

Resettlement operations also require infrastructure in first-asylum countries, including space to conduct interviews and predeparture orientations, and interpreters to assist with casework and briefings. In places where large or long-term resettlement operations are planned, experienced resettlement countries such as the United States and Canada have established processing centres to support the preparation of resettlement applications; provide space for interviews, predeparture orientations, and medical checks; and host staff and interpreters. The EASO Resettlement Support Facility established in Turkey aims to take on some of these roles by providing facilities and technical equipment for Member State selection missions and predeparture orientations.<sup>44</sup> Should this pilot project be deemed a success after it is evaluated, a similar model could be deployed in other regions that are a priority for EU resettlement efforts, including in certain parts of Africa. Alternatively, rather than starting from scratch, EU countries could use or build upon existing infrastructures linked to the Emergency Transit Mechanisms in Rwanda and Niger or to previously U.S.-led resettlement centres in Kenya, Jordan, and elsewhere to save time in terms of setting up the necessary infrastructure.<sup>45</sup>

## ***B. Invest in crucial partnerships at home and abroad***

Resettlement is typically seen as an important tool to show solidarity and take pressure off of first-asylum countries in 'developing regions', where 85 per cent of refugees reside.<sup>46</sup> To date, however, coordination with the first-asylum countries from which refugees are resettled has not always been deep or meaningful. Rather than being informed by such countries' buy-in and interests, resettlement efforts have primarily been guided by destination countries' interests and not been embedded within broader development or humanitarian efforts taking place in the first-asylum countries.<sup>47</sup> If resettlement continues to take place in this kind of vacuum, these programmes are less likely to be able to meet their strategic goals and could even risk souring relations between the countries involved.

To deploy resettlement in a more meaningful and politically sensible way, the European Union's future resettlement efforts could be embedded within a holistic displacement response strategy designed in cooperation with first-asylum countries. To the extent that a resettlement effort is undertaken with strategic objectives in mind (e.g., expanding access to work rights for the broader refugee population), the first-asylum country's government should be consulted as a partner in developing priorities. Resettlement efforts would also benefit from being undertaken in a more targeted and coordinated way, with resettlement

44 EASO, 'External Dimension: New EASO External Cooperation Strategy', accessed 11 September 2020.

45 For more information, see European Commission, 'Rwanda: The EU Provides €10.3 Million for Life-Saving Refugee Support Measures' (press release, November 2019); UNHCR, 'Emergency Transit Mechanism' (fact sheet, April 2020); Church World Service, 'Resettlement Support Center Africa', accessed 30 October 2020.

46 UNHCR, *Global Trends: Forced Displacement in 2019* (Copenhagen: UNHCR Statistics and Demographics Section, 2020). UNHCR uses the designation 'developing countries and regions' in its *Global Trends* report, in line with the term's use by the UN Statistics Division as well as the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and without 'judgement about the stage reached by a particular country or area in the development process'. For background information regarding this statistical choice as well as an overview of countries classified as 'developing', see UN Statistics Division, 'Methodology—Other Groupings: Developing Regions', accessed 3 November 2020.

47 Schneider, *The Strategic Use of Resettlement*.

countries agreeing on how to prioritise particular situations and target groups. Past cooperation in other contexts, including migration partnerships as well as humanitarian and development efforts more broadly, could offer valuable lessons on how to engage first-asylum countries in the design and targeting of interventions.

Similarly, support from local communities in destination countries, which play a central role in providing reception services and facilitating integration, is critical for resettlement to flourish. Relationships between the central government and local authorities on immigration matters have, however, often been fraught. National policymakers may thus need to consider carefully how to match refugees with receiving communities, engage with local authorities, and create or strengthen a local sense of ownership over and commitment to the resettlement process. This is critical to the long-term success and sustainability of resettlement programmes as a whole.<sup>48</sup>

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In Europe, several resettlement countries have started to invest in building stronger relationships at home and deepening community involvement in the welcoming refugees. These efforts have included:

- ▶ **Consulting with and gaining the consent of receiving communities.** In the United Kingdom, for example, local groups sponsoring refugees are required to gain the consent of the local government before they can resettle a sponsored refugee to the community.<sup>49</sup> While this requirement was a source of criticism from civil society at the beginning of the programme due to concerns that local governments would say no or slow the process down, it has since proved to be a strength; sponsoring groups now engage in in-depth consultations with local governments about the resettlement process, which often lead to a strong partnership in supporting refugees after their arrival.
- ▶ **Ensuring refugees' placements are a good fit for receiving communities.** Resettled refugees can be an asset to receiving communities, including in ways that can be harnessed for local development. Having better insights into how this plays out in practice would allow policymakers and programme designers to match refugees and communities more strategically.<sup>50</sup> Such matching mechanisms could, for example, take into account the kinds of services receiving communities can and cannot offer, what types of housing are available, and whether there are diaspora groups in the area that could act as 'bridge builders' throughout the integration process. If successful, more thoughtful matching could not only contribute to the better management of refugees' and receiving-community members' expectations for resettlement, but also decrease the onward movement of resettled refugees to other locations and reinforce hospitality in receiving communities.

48 Petra Bendel, Hannes Schammann, Christiane Heimann, und Janina Stürner, *Der Weg über die Kommunen: Empfehlungen für eine neue Schlüsselrolle der Kommunen in der Flüchtlings- und Asylpolitik der EU* (Berlin: Heinrich Böll Stiftung, 2019).

49 UK Home Office, *Community Sponsorship: Guidance for Prospective Sponsors* (London: UK Home Office, 2018).

50 In Belgium, Italy, and Sweden, MPI Europe is conducting research to explore different approaches that rural receiving communities deploy to harness the potential of resettling refugees to support local development. See Patuzzi, Andriescu, and Pietropolli, *Building Welcome from the Ground up*.

- ▶ **Informing and educating local authorities and residents.** Efforts to better share information about arriving refugees with local authorities and community members have proven to be useful in creating a welcoming attitude and generating volunteer support. In the United Kingdom and Norway, for example, the central government works with IOM to provide information sessions on intercultural communication to receiving-community professionals (e.g., social workers, teachers, police) and volunteers who will be working directly with arriving refugees.
- ▶ **Providing the necessary funding at the local level.** Where receiving municipalities or community groups within them are underfunded, it will be significantly more difficult to turn resettlement into a positive experience for both refugees and their receiving communities. While many local efforts geared towards welcoming refugees and building strong ties between them and their new neighbours take place thanks to the work of volunteers, financial support could help them flourish and sustain these efforts over time. This could take the form either of an add-on to EU lump sum funding split between the central government and local authorities, or a separate funding pot, and would help local actors maximise the impact of their integration and community-building efforts. An AMIF funding call released in October 2020, for example, aims to solicit proposals for projects to promote complementary pathways for those in need of protection as well as their effective integration in receiving communities.<sup>51</sup>

### C. *Build up the evidence base through monitoring and evaluation*

In order to ensure that resettlement activities meet policy ambitions, it is important to know what works, where, and why. Investing in robust M&E of resettlement programmes offers several benefits, including the ability to track progress towards policy objectives over time, to support continuous learning and improvement, and to identify ways to attain value for money throughout the resettlement process.<sup>52</sup> In Europe, policymakers in the resettlement space have already started to develop a greater appetite for M&E. For example, Ireland, Italy, and the Netherlands have all championed M&E efforts in their national resettlement programmes and started to work with a set of detailed indicators to gauge the impact of their programmes over time.<sup>53</sup>

If European countries wish to systematically test the influence of resettlement efforts more broadly, they could pick two or three departure locations and pilot projects that seek to deploy resettlement strategically and evaluate their outcomes. Arriving at a more nuanced understanding of what kind of difference resettlement efforts can make—and what it would take to get there in terms of scale or targeting specific situations or populations—would require European policymakers to develop a clearer sense of what

51 For more information, see European Commission, '[AMIF Funding Call 2020: Complementary Pathways for Protection and Integration](#)', European Web Site on Integration, 15 October 2020.

52 See Ahad, Le Coz, and Beirens, *Using Evidence to Improve Refugee Resettlement*, 1. This report also lays out a roadmap of six concrete steps policymakers will need to take to get monitoring and evaluation (M&E) efforts off the ground and set up effective systems. These include: getting the right actors involved, choosing the right starting point; being clear on what objectives to monitor and evaluate; turning objectives into measurements; developing the tools and processes to conduct M&E; and gathering the data to measure progress on indicators.

53 In a workshop series on M&E in resettlement held as part of the EU-FRANK project in collaboration with MPI Europe and EASO, government officials from these countries came together to exchange good practices and practical advice on how to monitor and evaluate different parts of their resettlement programmes.

strategic goals they wish to evaluate, whether these relate to primarily humanitarian ambitions, migration-management objectives, or the goal of taking pressure off of first-asylum countries. Some existing policies, such as labour mobility agreements between the European Union, Ethiopia, and Eritrea, may already offer opportunities to test the strategic use of resettlement or complementary pathways in terms of expanding protection space or serving as incentives in migration cooperation with third countries.

The slowdown of operations due to the COVID-19 pandemic offers an opportunity to strengthen M&E frameworks and put governments in a better position to demonstrate the merits of particular programme design choices or resettlement efforts writ large once operations have resumed. Going forward, EASO could also seek to maintain the momentum it has built around M&E within its Humanitarian Admissions Network, or it could create a global ‘resettlement academy’ in which countries could share evidence-based resettlement experiences, learn from each other, and make smart choices regarding the design and implementation of their own resettlement programmes.

## 6 Conclusion

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Investments made in EU resettlement infrastructure over the last decade have demonstrably borne fruit. More countries are participating in resettlement efforts, and at a larger scale, than a decade ago. And investments in capacity building through the EU-FRANK project and under EASO mean that Member States are more well-prepared to conduct resettlement operations than ever before. Yet there is more to be done if these efforts are to become sustainable and have a long-term impact. Many newer resettlement initiatives have been launched as ad hoc responses to particular emergencies, such as the Syrian civil war and resulting displacement, or are temporarily scaled-up commitments, meaning they may easily end or be scaled back down once the sense of urgency subsides. Moreover, the scale of European resettlement commitments, while now larger, remain well below the level needed to make a significant difference on the ground in first-asylum countries. And there are many places where the political will to engage in resettlement or scale it up does not exist, or where a shortage of resources or infrastructure poses significant barriers, even with support from AMIF and EASO.

Addressing these constraints and building European resettlement programmes that can achieve meaningful impact will require EU leaders to take several steps. First, the Commission and Member States will need to set clear resettlement targets based on agreed upon goals and a sound assessment of the number of places needed to accomplish those goals. Second, resettlement targets and goals will need to be tailored in a way that can motivate action at the national level; this may require prioritising resettlement from regions of interest to Member States, or encouraging the development of complementary pathways programmes that can tap into interest among specific subnational constituencies, such as educational institutions or businesses, in supporting refugees. Tying resettlement efforts to larger policy objectives, such as stabilising fragile situations in areas of strategic interest to the European Union, could also help—especially where policymakers invest in collecting the evidence to ascertain if and how resettlement efforts achieve their desired impact. Continuing or even expanding funding for resettlement under AMIF will be critical to sustain resettlement programmes and ensure resettled refugees receive the support they need both before and after their arrival. Finally, the European Union will need to continue to expand investments in joint

infrastructure, such as processing facilities and procurement arrangements, that can lower the barriers to entry for new resettlement states and stretch the resources of those already engaged. Pilot projects and regular monitoring and evaluation of resettlement programmes can help identify areas where closer coordination and the pooling of resources between EU countries and EASO could save costs, speed up the resettlement process, and help EU countries fulfil their quotas.

While the COVID-19 pandemic has severely disrupted resettlement operations across the European Union and beyond, it may also come with a silver lining: It offers an unanticipated opportunity to take a step back and jointly think through how to generate the necessary political commitment and operational strength to develop and run a truly ambitious programme of resettlement within Europe.

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