



DISCUSSION
BRIEF

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**Private Sponsorship Programmes and
humanitarian visas: a viable policy framework
for integration?**

INTEGRATION





The **ReSOMA Discussion Policy Briefs** aim to address key topics of the European migration and integration debate in a timely manner. They bring together the expertise of stakeholder organisations and academic research institutes to identify policy trends, along with unmet needs that merit higher priority. Representing the second phase of the annual ReSOMA dialogue cycle, nine Discussion Briefs were produced covering the following topics:

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- SAR and Dublin: Ad hoc responses to refusals to disembarkation
- Funding a long-term comprehensive approach to integration at the local level
- Public opinion on migrants: the effect of information and disinformation about EU policies
- Integration outcomes of recent sponsorship and humanitarian visa arrivals
- Strategic litigation of criminalisation cases
- Implementation of the Global Compacts on Migration (GCM)
- The increasing use of detention

Under these nine topics, ReSOMA Discussion Briefs capture the main issues and controversies in the debate as well as the potential impacts of the policies adopted. They have been written under the supervision of Sergio Carrera (CEPS/EUI) and Thomas Huddleston (MPG). Based on the Discussion Briefs, other ReSOMA briefs will highlight the most effective policy responses (phase 2), challenge perceived policy dilemmas and offer alternatives (phase 3).

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Discussion Policy Brief

Private Sponsorship Programmes and humanitarian visas: a viable policy framework for integration?¹

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1 Introduction

In the last five years, a relatively small number of **Private Sponsorship Programmes (PSPs)** has been implemented in the European Union (EU), often used in combination with humanitarian visas (EP, 2018a). These programmes, which fall under the broad category of complementary pathways for people in need of international protection², aim to allow asylum seekers to safely arrive to Europe and may possibly represents a viable alternative to irregular movements (EMN, 2016; Kaşli, 2019a; Krivenko, 2012). In the framework of complementary legal pathways and approaches, PSPs can increase States' resettlement numbers (principle of 'additionality') and provide safe and orderly admission beyond governments' capacity (ERN and ICMC, 2017).

Past and current examples of PSPs – mainly from Canada and, to a smaller extent, from Europe – demonstrate that there is a significant potential to further develop these programmes (ERN and ICMC, 2017; Kaşli, 2019a,b; MPI and Fratzke, 2017). The importance of PSPs is threefold:

- They can represent a **safe and legal alternative for people in need of interna-**

tional protection, allowing them not to resort to smugglers and traffickers' services.

- If used extensively and in combination with other legal pathways, they could contribute to a **more effective management of migration flows**, allowing for the creation of a controlled, regulated, systematic, legal and safe channel to Europe.

- Evidence suggests that **PSPs may facilitate inclusion of beneficiaries in the destination country**, while also tapping into the potential of the civil society.

Although defining PSPs may be challenging as different initiatives fall into this category (EC, 2018a), generally speaking, "private or community-based sponsorship of refugees combines legal entry and protection with settlement support, using private means" (ERN and ICMC, 2017:11). As the definition suggests, the **main feature of PSPs is the presence of private engagement**, alongside the governmental involvement, aimed at supporting migrants' arrival and integration into the destination society. This feature distinguishes PSPs from government-assisted resettlement programmes aimed at transferring refugees from an asylum country to another state that has agreed to admit them.

Under PSPs, civil society organizations, NGOs, faith-based organisations, churches and municipalities normally assume responsibility for financial, practical, social and emotional support for a limited period of time (ICMC and ERN, 2017). Governments oversee and facilitate legal admission, normally granting humanitari-

² 'Complementary pathways are safe and regulated avenues that complement refugee resettlement and by which refugees may be admitted in a country and have their international protection needs met while they are able to support themselves to potentially reach a sustainable and lasting solution'. UNHCR, Complementary Pathways, available at <https://www.unhcr.org/complementary-pathways.html>.



an visa or issuing other type of permits (ICMC and ERN, 2017; MPI and Kumin, 2015).

Private sponsorship programmes (PSPs) in the EU are rather new if compared to the Canadian programme which resettled more than 300,000 refugees since 1979 (GRSI, 2019). At the EU level, the number of PSPs is still limited, although it has increased in the last five/six years. According to the European Commission, between 2013 and 2018, around more than 31,000 persons were safely admitted through PSPs (EC, 2018a).

In a study carried out by the European Parliament in 2013 (EP, 2013) on best practices concerning the integration of resettled refugees, PSPs did not appear once in the document, which confirms their relatively recent nature. In addition to the limited number of cases, these programmes are also heterogeneous, as they often differ as regards the target group, the number of beneficiaries, and the length, the amount and the kind of support provided by the sponsors (MacGregor, 2019; MPI and Kumin, 2015).

However, some interesting **examples of PSPs among EU Member States** confirm the relevance of these initiatives, as well as their feasibility, and represent potential models to be replicated in other States. Among others some of the most important initiatives are the following (EC, 2018a; ERN, 2017; ERN, 2018): the UK Full Community Sponsorship Scheme (created in 2016 and granting access to 200 refugees through private sponsorship); the German family reunification-focused Humanitarian Admission Programmes (in 2013 and 2014, 20,000 refugees admitted) and the Regional Admission Programmes

(23,000 Syrians admitted from 2013 to mid-2017); the Italian Humanitarian Corridors Programme (since 2016, more than 2500 asylum seekers have been admitted) and the Humanitarian Corridors Programme in France (since 2017, targeting 500 persons from Syria and Iraq residing in Lebanon). In some of these programmes, as in the case of Italy, the beneficiaries' legal access to designated countries is facilitated by humanitarian visas, while in other programmes, different entry visas are envisaged³. It is also worth noting that humanitarian visas are, so far, not extensively used by EU Member States (Carrera and Cortinovis, 2019; EP, 2014 and 2018).

This paper focuses on the potential contribution of PSPs to integration compared to government's resettlement schemes. This paper reads as follow. After framing the overall EU-level and international debate on the topic ([Section 2.1](#)) and summarising previous findings on integration of PSPs' beneficiaries ([Section 2.2](#)), the paper illustrates the possibly 'enabling' factors of PSPs ([Section 2.3](#)). The paper also points out the controversial issues that may hamper beneficiaries' integration, especially in the long run ([Section 3](#)).

2 Scoping the debate

2.1 The EU-level and international debate

The **EU has neither a specific legal scheme regulating the creation and im-**

³ Germany uses the entry on humanitarian grounds for its Regional Admission Programmes, the UK a three-months visa, followed by Biometric Residence Permit, while in the case of France, a Visa D (long stay) is issued for Humanitarian Corridors. See ERN, & ICMC, 2017.



plementation of PSPs, nor a common, unified resettlement framework to admit people in need of international protection to its territory.⁴ Despite the 2016 Commission's proposal to create a structured EU resettlement scheme to enhance and systematise regular migration routes to the EU, Member States have shown a lack of commitment and unwillingness to be bound by minimum quotas (EPC & Bamberg, 2018).

As of now, **there is no harmonized EU legal framework regulating the protected entry procedures for people seeking international protection, thus leaving states the discretion to issue visas (see the Community Code on Visas) on humanitarian grounds** (Carrera and Cortinovis, 2019; EP, 2018b). In fact, despite the EP's approval to the Civil Liberties Committee's proposal to introduce European Humanitarian Visa, the Commission has not yet presented a legislative proposal establishing a common framework (EP, 2018c).

Despite this, there is a **clear aim to promote complementary legal pathways for refugee admission**. In 2016, EU Member States signed the United Nations' New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants (UN, 2016), which aims, inter alia, to help fill the gap in the international protection system. The Declaration proposes several actions to expand complementary pathways for admission of refugees, such as PSPs. In particular, it emphasizes the importance of the private sector engagement, which is at the core of PSPs, in enabling migrants' integration

(UN, 2016). Similarly, both the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration (GCM) and the Global Compact on Refugees (GMR) stresses the importance of enhancing availability and flexibility of pathways for regular migration, including complementary pathways to protection (UN, 2018a and 2018b). At the EU level, since the adoption of the European Agenda on Migration (EC, 2015), the EU has recognised that more legal channels to access its territory by people in need of protection must be developed. The 2018 European Commission Communication (EC, 2018b) underlines the need to enhance resettlement efforts by developing other legal pathways relying on the private engagement, with the aim of better ensuring legal and safe arrivals and social integration. As stressed by Hueck (2018), to implement effective schemes in this sector, the EU should promote common objectives, terms and conditions of PSPs, as well as multi-stakeholders dialogue and consultation frameworks.

2.2 Is integration boosted by PSPs?

The European Commission has stressed the potential role of PSPs and other complementary pathways as enablers of better and faster integration for beneficiaries (EC, 2018a). There is a general agreement on the fact that PSPs have a positive impact on migrants' integration in the country of destination and there are anecdotal evidences of this in Europe (ERN and ICMC, 2017; MPI and Kumin, 2015). However, it is important to note that studies on the integration paths of PSPs' beneficiaries are limited and they focus mainly on the Canadian experience (Kaida, Hou and Stick, 2019; Kaşli,

⁴ For more information on the EU and international legislative framework, see: Carrera and Cortinovis, 2019.



2019a; MPI and Kumin, 2015; MPI, Beirens and Ahad, 2018). Therefore, **the intuitive conclusion that integration is fostered by these programmes has received so far inadequate empirical confirmation** and existing findings are often in contradiction and “fluctuating” (Hyndman Payne and Jimenez, 2017; Kaida, Hou and Stick, 2019; Kaşli, 2019b; MPI and Kumin, 2015).

In general, previous studies have compared private-sponsored refugees and government-sponsored refugees and focused on employment status, income, health status and language skills. For example, one of the first studies on integration of beneficiaries of PSPs assessed the degree of integration of Indochinese refugees in Canada (Neuwirth and Clark, 1981). The authors found that private-sponsored refugees were more integrated than government-sponsored refugees.

Despite the findings of this pioneer study, **there is no consensus on whether private-sponsored refugees perform better than government-sponsored refugees concerning their employment status and income** (Kaida, Hou and Stick, 2019; Kaşli, 2019a; MPI and Kumin, 2015). Literature agrees that private-sponsored refugees become self-supporting more quickly than the government-sponsored refugees and they adopt more constructive financial practices (CIC, 2007; Beiser, 2009; Hyndman Payne and Jimenez, 2017; Holm, Sargent and Moser, 1999). Furthermore, literature suggests that there might be a possible economic advantage of private-sponsored refugees in the short run (Beiser, 2003; DeVoretz, Pivnenko, and Beiser 2004; Kaida, Hou and Stick, 2019; Mata and Pendakur 2017; Sweetman and Warman 2013).

A 2007 study by the Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC, 2007) found that PSPs' beneficiaries became self-supporting within six months upon arrival, which does not happen with government-sponsored refugees. However, in the study, there were no significant differences in the employment status and earnings over time. In addition, Hyndman (2011) showed that PSPs' beneficiaries reported incomes that were between 29% and 45% of Canada's low income cut off.

Two other studies show partially different results. A recent research on refugees covering the 1992-2009 period illustrated that PSPs' beneficiaries earned more than the other groups of refugees (Dhital, 2015). This is only partially confirmed by another assessment of conditions of refugees in Canada (IRCC, 2016). This research found only slightly better performances in the job market as regards private-sponsored refugees compared to government-assisted refugees, despite the higher educational level and the less vulnerable condition of the former.

A recent research analyses the long-term economic integration of private-sponsored and government-assisted refugees who arrived in Canada in the period 1980-2009 (Kaida, Hou and Stick, 2019). The findings from this study show that beneficiaries of PSPs fare better than government-assisted refugees in term of employment and earnings especially in the short term (1-3 years). These gaps tend to close over time, although they persist for 15 years after arrival,

The research also underlines that the private-sponsored refugees' economic advantage over government-assisted refu-



gees is greater for low educated refugees.

The fact that private-sponsored refugees find a job quicker and that their income is not considerably higher than the one of other refugees suggests that PSPs' beneficiaries may be pushed into the labour force as quickly as possible and, therefore, enter the labour market in low-ends and not very profitable jobs (Hyndman, 2011; Hyndman Payne and Jimenez, 2017; MPI and Kumin, 2015).

As for health status of private-sponsored refugees, literature agrees that they do better than government-sponsored refugees (Agrawal, 2018; Beiser, 2003 and 2009; Oda et al., 2019). For example, Oda and colleagues (2019) found that private-sponsored refugees reported lower perceived physical and mental issues. Based on several studies on the topic, it is possible to hypothesise that this is due to the lower level of pre- and post-departure stress that private-sponsored refugees experience (Bakker et al., 2014; Tuck et al., 2019). For example, in Canada sponsors are often family members of the beneficiary and this lower his/her post-departure stress.

Finally, several sources report on particularly better outcomes for language learning, due interactions with the welcoming community (Beiser 2003 and 2009; Cameron, 2013; Hyndman and Hynie, 2016; ICC 2016; MPI and Kumin, 2015; Smith, Hadziristic, Alipour, 2017). Destination-language proficiency is particularly important as it makes it easier to find a job, access services, interact with the local community and foster community participation (Dubus, 2018; De Vroome and van Tubergen, 2010; Kaida, Hou and

Stick, 2019; MPI, Wilkinson and Garcea, 2017).

Literature on Canada reports a higher language level of private-sponsored refugees than government-assisted refugees (Agrawal, 2018; Beiser 2003; ICC 2016; Neuwirth and Clark, 1981). For example, in his article on Southeast Asian refugees who arrived in Canada between 1979 and 1981, Beiser (2003) found better integration - including language skills - of the former than the latter.

More recently, an evaluation of refugees' characteristics admitted to Canada reported that private-sponsored refugees were more likely to know an official language of Canada than government-assisted refugees (ICC 2016).

There are still fewer findings on Europe. Caritas Europa and the European Federation of the Community of Sant'Egidio report that, in the humanitarian corridors in Belgium (Sant'Egidio, 2018), beneficiaries learn the language rather fast thanks to contacts with the local population. This seems to be the main difference between government-assisted and private-sponsored refugees in Belgium.

In conclusion, previous research suggests that private-sponsored refugees may have slightly more positive integration outcomes, although the results are sometimes contradicting and far from being definitive. Furthermore, while limited in number and not yet exhaustively covered by empirical research, the private sponsorship experiences show the potential positive role that PSPs and private actors can have in refugees' integration (ERN and ICMC, 2017; MPI, Beinerens and Fratzke, 2017).



2.3 Positive factors enabling integration

The idea of an easier and faster integration through PSPs among professionals in the sector is mainly supported by the proximity to the destination society. There is normally a community consisting of different sponsors that welcomes and accompany the beneficiaries throughout the entire duration of the programmes (Caritas Italiana, 2019).

Unique commitment and involvement of a community

Key of PSPs is indeed the unique **commitment and involvement** of a (local) **community** (Kaşli, 2019b), which becomes an active part of the reception and integration process of the beneficiaries by the provision of initial reception and daily support (Macklin et al., 2018). By doing so, the sponsors experience the receiving process as a choice, rather than an imposition (Alio and Omidvar, 2018). In other words, PSPs allow the destination community to conceive newcomers not as a burden, but rather as a positive challenge taken by people devoted to the cause (Smith, Hadziristic and Alipour, 2017). This works especially in towns or small cities, where the feeling of belonging to a community is stronger and refugees can more easily become fully-fledged members of the receiving society.

The interaction between migrants and sponsors has long-term effects on the perception of migration and migrants (Caritas France, 2018). In general, a recent study in UK and the Netherlands (Sobolewska, Galandini, and Lessard-Phillips, 2017) underlines that migrants are

more positively perceived when they speak the language fluently, have friends within the receiving community and are civically engaged. PSPs promote all of these factors. The Canada's World Survey (found that Canadians pay greater attention to migration issues than before, and they connect this to sponsorship programmes - either through their own personal involvement or by knowing someone who was involved (Environics Institute, 2018).

A welcoming community also helps disconnect asylum seekers' arrival from a passive, unfamiliar and remote experience, creating mutual understanding and personal, intimate connections. This allows migrants to feel accepted from the moment they arrive (Alio and Omidvar, 2018).

The involvement of the community has also the effect of enhancing the human dimension of the beneficiaries-natives relationship, while most of the time migrants and refugees are perceived as non-persons (Dal Lago, 2012).

There is a shift from a one-way integration process - whereby migrants are called to integrate in the society of destination - to a two-way integration process (Albiom, 2016; Hyndman, Payne, and Jimenez, 2017; Hyndman and Hynie, 2016). In the latter, migrants integrate with the support of the receiving community and, at the same time, natives adapt to the newcomers, which is a recognized key factor for better and smoother integration outcomes (Paat, 2013; Wimelius, Isaksson, Ghazinour, 2017). For example, Caritas Belgium and UK report that private-sponsored refugees have a better command of the destination country's lan-



guage than government-sponsored refugees, due to frequent interactions that private-sponsored refugees have with the supporting group and the local community.

Caritas Italiana' survey (2019) among professionals and reference persons involved in the Italian humanitarian corridors programme (2017-2019) showed that one of the most important factors in the integration process was the engagement of a wide range of actors from the local community. When the involvement was low, many difficulties in the reception and integration process were reported. The same report stressed the importance of preparing the local community, through, for example, trainings and information sessions (Caritas Italiana, 2019). This helps to ensure a smoother welcoming process.

One-to-one support

The welcoming community provides the initial reception and a daily support. The provision of **one-to-one, tailored support** by the sponsors is a key factor in the integration of private-sponsored refugees (Caritas Italiana, 2019; GRSI, 2019). While beneficiaries receive support from people devoted to their settlement, other refugees are largely reliant on caseworkers, which take care of a larger number of refugees (Smith, Hadziristic and Alipour, 2017).

Beyond a more tangible type of support – mainly board and lodging, sponsors are also able to represent a point of reference and guide. For example, in the case of Sant' Egidio-led humanitarian

corridors in Belgium (Sant'Egidio, 2018), volunteers, accompanied by Caritas Belgium, are supporting beneficiaries in dealing with bureaucracy and accessing government services. This kind of support, which is often precluded to other migrants and refugees, lessen the settlement burdens (Dubus, 2018). In supporting a particular individual, sponsors become an essential part of refugees' everyday life in the destination country, which often creates a strong, long-lasting engagement that goes beyond the duration of the programmes (ERN, 2017; Kantor and Einhorn, 2017).

Creation of a unique support network

The provision of support to the beneficiaries creates **a unique support network** consisting of several sponsors (Caritas France, 2018; Caritas Italiana, 2019; GRSI, 2019). Being the sponsors often organised around organisations, associations or local municipalities, a new, articulated network of several actors is created around the beneficiary.

The Canadian experience, which traces back to the late 1970s, shows that refugees benefit from these programmes through the creation of solid bonds with the destination society (ECRE, 2017). The creation of these bonds may facilitate refugees' empowerment and improve their integration outcomes in the short and long term. The presence of these interconnected, dynamic structures may also result in better integration outcomes compared to those achieved under the government resettlement schemes (ERN and ICMC, 2017). Many studies underline how social and emotional ties and networks, as well as the social capital gained through them, are key in securing differ-



ent aspects of integration, such as well-being, access to health and welfare service, finding a job (Coley et al., 2019; Collyer et al., 2018; Cheung and Phillimore, 2016; Hanley et al., 2019; MPI and Kumin, 2015). Furthermore, this may also determine the sponsors' willingness to prolong their support to the designated beneficiary in the long run (Kantor and Einhorn, 2017).

Under some programmes, as in the case of the UK Full Community Sponsorship, an additional, **formal safety net** is established prior to the implementation of the schemes. The presence of this mechanism is key in the event of a discontinuation of the support by a sponsor, who may be unable to meet their commitments (ERN and ICMC, 2017). As a matter of fact, there might be problems that go beyond the sponsor's capacity (Smith, Hadziristic, Alipour, 2017). In this event, it is essential for the migrants to have a network where they can turn to for assistance and further support (MPI, 2015). For example, the city of Winnipeg (Canada) established an 'assurance scheme' which represents a last-resort resource for families that are unable to meet their financial needs in the context of their sponsorship (MPI, 2015). Furthermore, the pre-establishment of safety-nets may also represent an additional guarantee and back-up for refugees, who can rely on additional resources and support after the end of the PSPs, in case they find themselves in precarious conditions (e.g., unemployment or lack of accommodation) (ERN, 2018).

3 Key issues and controversies

Despite the benefits of PSPs, their relatively recent nature and the heterogeneity of experiences so far show several limits and potential obstacles that should be tackled to guarantee a successful beneficiaries' integration (Hyndman and Hynie, 2016; Ugland, 2018).

3.1 No common approach on beneficiaries' selection

A high degree of discretionarily characterises the use of PSPs and humanitarian visas (Carrera and Cortinovis, 2019; EP, 2018b). **There is no established, harmonized procedure at the EU level as regards the selection of beneficiaries**, given the heterogeneous nature of the programmes and the diverse selection criteria adopted. The selection process can be incumbent on either the private sponsor - the sponsoring group puts forward the name of a refugee or refugee family it is interested in sponsoring - or, in some other cases, it can be informed by the government, as in the case of UK's Home Office with the UK Full Community Sponsorship (ERN and ICMC, 2017; ERN, 2017). In some cases, UNHCR also plays an important role by referring to organisations or governments the individuals who can be eligible for the programmes.

PSPs usually address vulnerable individuals; for example, the new German private sponsored resettlement programme 'Neustart im Team' targets victims of trafficking, unaccompanied minors, pregnant women and other vulnerable people (Bathke, 2019). Another example is the Belgian Humanitarian Corridor established by the Community of Sant'Egidio, selecting as beneficiaries vulnerable people meeting the criteria defined in



the Directive 2013/33/UE on standards for the reception of applicants for international protection, and focusing predominantly on families with children, older people and individuals with special medical needs (Schneider, 2017).

In some programmes, selection criteria are strictly linked to family bonds and are aimed at supporting family reunification. An example is represented by Canada, where up to 90% of PSP arrivals are 'family linked' (ERN & ICMC, 2017, Alio and Omidvar, 2018), but also by the German Humanitarian Admission Programmes, which incorporate several different sub-programmes revolving around family reunification (ERN & ICMC, 2017).

Given the differences in the target group, the process of matching between the beneficiaries and the welcoming community is very important to ensure the provision of specific, ad-hoc support. For example, beneficiaries with particular vulnerabilities need a different kind of support than beneficiaries of PSPs that focus on family reunification. In the case of humanitarian corridors in Belgium and Italy, people with disabilities were selected and matched with local communities that had particular structures to support them (e.g., specialised medical centres).

Finally, beyond vulnerability conditions and potential family ties which may facilitate the inclusion process, the specificities of each individual (e.g., gender, age, and level of education) may also have a significant impact on the integration outcome; the support provided by sponsors should take into consideration these specificities (Caritas Italiana, 2019; MPI, 2015).

3.2 Short-term approach

PSPs seem to be characterised by a **rather short-term approach, which may hamper beneficiaries' integration in the long run**. The duration of the residence permit and of PSPs is short, usually ranging from one year to two or, in some virtuous cases, three or five years (MacGregor, 2019, ERN and ICMC, 2017). For instance, Italy's humanitarian corridors range between 1 and 2 years, while in the case of Germany, the Regional Admission Programmes sets out a 5-year sponsorship duration.

The **short duration of some of the existing programmes** can pose several problems, including a sense of insecurity in the beneficiary, which can in turn have severe effects on their integration (Bakker et al 2014; Tuck et al 2019). Moreover, if beneficiaries do not manage to achieve a certain degree of integration (e.g., finding a job) by the end of the programme, they may fall in a condition of irregularity (Kantor and Einhorn, 2017). Although this is an issue that all migrants and refugees may experience (e.g., when the residence permit expires), beneficiaries of PSPs may face additional challenges as private sponsorship may be characterized by relationships of structural dependency (Agrawal, 2018; Beiser, 2003 and 2009; Smith, Hadziristic and Alipour, 2017; Lenard 2016). As a consequence, the agency of the beneficiaries may be limited, and they can face more challenges in coping with difficulties than other migrants and refugees.

In order to avoid these shortcomings, in some cases, for instance in Canada, the sponsor is responsible until the refugee



becomes self-sufficient, even after the established duration of the programme (MacGregor, 2019).

This issue leads to a second possible critical point. As stressed by Kumin (MPI and Kumin, 2015), the limited duration of the programmes for the beneficiaries and the financial burden for the sponsors may force both the former and the latter to opt for short-term solutions, such as accepting low-end jobs not in line with the competences of the refugees. As noted in [Section 2.2](#), the programme might lead the beneficiary into a low-quality integration (e.g., professional downgrading). For example, in her analysis of Canadian private sponsorship, Ritchie pointed out that “privately sponsored refugees encounter the same forms of deskilling and downward mobility as racialised newcomers” (Ritchie, 2018: 663).

3.3 Lack of clarity and beneficiaries' state of uncertainty

The duration of the programme is directly linked to the sponsor's commitment, which has to be guaranteed for a certain period of pre-agreed time. However, according to the European Resettlement Network (ERN and ICMC, 2017), there is often a **lack of clarity concerning how long sponsors will provide support** and to what extent public social assistance will be available to sponsored persons when the PSP finishes. The above-mentioned Caritas Italiana's survey underlined that the beneficiaries' lack of information is

one of main factors potentially hindering their integration (Caritas Italiana, 2019).

Lack of precise information may create a sense of insecurity in the beneficiaries of the programmes, which can in turn have a negative effect on beneficiaries' integration. For example, Kosovar beneficiaries in Alberta received insufficient information on the sponsorship, their rights and how to access services (Derwing and Mulder, 2003). Similar issues have been reported for the 2016 Italian humanitarian corridors programme. Some of the Syrian beneficiaries expressed their concern about the lack of clarity, in particular about their sponsorship and the provision of social assistance after the programme (ERN and ICMC, 2017). However, since then, the programme has improved and there is in place a pre-departure mechanism to inform the beneficiaries about the destination society and the programme, which can be also helpful to manage their expectations (Caritas Italiana, 2019).

Indeed, in order to avoid misunderstandings, every programme should ideally provide beneficiaries and sponsors with clear information about the entry visa and their legal status, the sponsorship duration and the support provided. It is equally important that the rights and duties linked to the sponsorship are made clear and the financial commitment for sponsors is limited to a realistic timeframe and amount (MPI and Kumin, 2015).

Therefore, pre-departure and post-arrival orientation sessions are critical to ease the settlement and integration process by managing refugees' expectations and clarify sponsors' role (Coley et al., 2019; UNHCR, 2002).



In addition, as underlined in [Section 2.3](#), most programmes do not establish safety-net mechanisms or formalised procedure thus failing to provide a full account of financial capacities and human resources of the sponsors involved before and during the implementation of the programmes (ERN and ICMC, 2017). Only few programmes provide for a safety-net by establishing ex-ante pre-defined roles for different actors (i.e. the municipality) if sponsorship is discontinued, as in the case of the UK Full Community Sponsorship.

3.4 Government involvement and commitment

A challenge in PSPs is to ensure a certain degree of involvement and commitment from the government. Indeed, these programmes may be seen as a substitute for governments' resettlement schemes and support (OECD, 2016; Ritchie, 2018; Umland, 2018) and, thus, leading to a privatization of state responsibility and, possibly, creating a private integration framework.

Although PSPs normally combine private and public engagement, some cases show a greater involvement of governments, providing for instance access to social services or to education, while in

other cases, government's commitment appears to be lower. For example, although the Irish government engaged consistently with civil society stakeholders to set up PSPs, in Ireland's Syrian Humanitarian Admission Programme, beneficiaries were not eligible for social welfare (ERN and ICMC, 2017). In Canada, Wilkinson and Garcea (MPI, Wilkinson and Garcea, 2017) reported that government-sponsored refugees qualify for additional federal services and support compared to beneficiaries of PRPs (e.g., federal income support). In France, anecdotal evidence from Caritas France shows that, in some cases, volunteers replaced social workers in the provision of certain services, due to difficulties in accessing them. Therefore, a risk for beneficiaries is to receive less support from the government, have access to services to a smaller extent or receive services from semi-professionals (e.g., volunteers instead of social workers), in comparison with migrants and refugees under other programmes.

Access to public services, such as social welfare, may depend on both the conditions of the programme and the permit granted, as well as on the national context of the destination country. The rights granted to sponsored individuals vary from country to country: "some countries in Europe grant a protection status to the beneficiary which means they have the same rights as anyone with international protection, while in others, beneficiaries have a status equal to that of asylum seekers" (MacGregor, 2019).

The national welfare system and the way beneficiaries can access it is a key feature when defining sponsors funding obli-



gations (Hueck, 2018). Similar remarks can be also done as regards education, especially for youth, as well as possible access to the labour market. Therefore, the commitment of the government to provide support and the cooperation between the government and private sponsors is critical when it comes to integration of beneficiaries.

3.5 Monitoring and evaluation

As pointed out by many authors (Hyndman and Hynie, 2016; MPI and Kumin, 2015; Wimelius et al., 2017), **there is an overall lack of monitoring system to assess PSPs and identify the factors of success and failure of these programmes.** This is also reflected in the small amount of evidence on the integration outcomes of beneficiaries of PSPs (see [Section 2.2](#)). The establishment of periodic follow-up to check the status and progress of a sponsorship is also critical to improve the quality and the effectiveness of the support offered (Coley et al., 2019).

Furthermore, an evaluation system would help acquire a better understanding of the impact of these programmes and it would also inform the development of future schemes.

Monitoring and evaluation mechanisms would allow an assessment of integration outcomes, in order to understand the potential benefits for beneficiaries' integra-

tion and/or differences vis-à-vis government resettlement programmes. In Canada, the Private Sponsorship of Refugees Programme establishes a monitoring process of the settlement support carried out by local offices of the Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (ERN and ICMC, 2017).

In the EU, some programmes, such as the humanitarian corridors programmes in Belgium and France provide for the possibility of holding meetings with the sponsors in order to assess at which stage the implementation of the programme is, thus creating a simple monitoring and evaluating mechanism, allowing for a quick feedback. In addition to this, the Belgian programme established a hotline, which sponsors and beneficiaries can call for support. In the frame of the French humanitarian corridors, a survey was conducted among beneficiaries and sponsors, to understand the needs and the difficulties faced by them (Caritas France, 2018).

The Italian humanitarian corridors programme created a monitoring system consisting of regular feedback meetings and training sessions. The University of Notre-Dame also carries out an independent analysis and monitoring of the programme in different areas of the Italian territory (Caritas Italiana, 2019).

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