



POLICY OPTION
BRIEF

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INTEGRATION

Fostering integration: recommendations and policy options on the use of Private Sponsorship Programmes and humanitarian visas in the EU



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:

- Secondary movements within the EU
- Implementation of the Global Compacts on Refugees (GCR)
- 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 of asylum seekers and irregular migrants in the EU

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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Policy Option Brief

Fostering integration: recommendations and policy options on the use of Private Sponsorship Programmes and humanitarian visas in the EU

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1. INTRODUCTION

Private Sponsorship Programmes (PSPs) have received increased attention from scholars, policymakers, civil society and governments in the last decade in the European Union (EU). Besides representing a valuable complementary pathway **allowing individuals in need of protection to safely come to the EU, PSPs have also been analysed as a possible tool to facilitate migrants' integration in the country of destination** (Solano, Savazzi, 2019).

Researches and stakeholders have identified a range of factors that ease the integration path of the beneficiaries, along with a series of potential obstacles that may undermine this process. Therefore, it is important to gather the policy options and recommendations put forward by scholars and practitioners to bring effectiveness and sustainability to these programmes.

Policy recommendations reported in this ReSOMA Policy Option Brief extensively represent the voices of non-governmental stakeholders, such as Caritas France, Caritas Italiana, Conférence des évêques de France, the European Council for Refugees and Exiles (ECRE), Fédération Entraide Protestante, Fédération Protestante de France,

International Catholic Migration Commission (ICMC) Europe, International Organization for Migration (IOM), Migration Policy Institute (MPI), Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and Sant'Egidio. This brief also reports recommendations from scholars (e.g. Agrawal, 2018; Bendel et al., 2019; Hyndman et al., 2016; Kumin, 2015; Phillimore et al.) and a few contributions by governmental actors and EU Institutions.

This brief illustrates policy options focused on the following thematic areas:

- Future of private sponsorship programmes (Section 2.1);
- Commitment and involvement of a community (Section 2.2);
- Support and services (Section 2.3);
- Safeguards and "safety net" (Section 2.4);
- Lack of standardised framework and common procedures (Section 2.5);
- Lack of clarity and information provision (Section 2.6);
- Support from the EU and governments (Section 2.7);
- Data collection, learning and sharing, monitoring and evaluation (Section 2.8).

After addressing different areas, this brief concludes by summing up the main and

most recurrent policy options (Section 3).

2. POLICY OPTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

2.1 Future of private sponsorship programmes

The first set of recommendations concern the future of private sponsorship programmes. While some recommend expanding Private Sponsorship Programmes and the number of beneficiaries involved, others underline the importance of striking a balance between the engagement of the civil society and the role of governments in resettling individuals in need of international protection.

On the one hand, the European Union should consider the use of PSPs more broadly, thus increasing their relevance for refugees' protection (MPI, Kumin, 2015). Therefore, any **alternatives promoted by Member States should be supported** (Caritas Italiana, 2019) and **current limits on the number of beneficiaries should be reconsidered** and put into question (Hyndman, Payne, Jimenez, 2016).

On the other, some view with scepticism the possible expansion of PSPs, as it may undermine the principle of additionality. They therefore advocate to **re-direct the EU focus towards the resettlement obligations**, rather than on putting much effort on private initiatives in welcoming refugees (European Commission, 2018). Complementary pathways should **maximise and expand the protection of refugees, not leading to a privatisation of refugee resettlement** (Immigration,

Refugees and Citizenship Canada, 2016). For this reason, many stakeholders recommend that complementary pathways, among which PSPs, should be regarded and used as complementary and additional to any existing resettlement programmes (ICMC, IOM, UNHCR, ERN, 2018).

Lastly, it is also important to make careful consideration as regards the need not to leave entirely the settlement services to the resources of a private sponsor. It is essential to ensure that **other actors directly participate in sharing the responsibility** of resettling refugees (Agrawal, 2018).

2.2 Commitment and involvement of a community

PSPs usually involve a high degree of commitment by a wide range of actors from the civil society, such as private citizens, faith-based organisations, NGOs, local municipalities and governmental institutions.

The engagement of all these stakeholders, with a possibility to **extend the participation of the private sector and municipalities** in the context of these programmes, should be always welcomed and encouraged (MPI, Kumin, 2015; Bendel, Schammann, Heimann, Stürner, 2019). Additionally, in order to nurture and **sustain the interest and the engagement of private citizens for PSPs, tailored policies should be established** (Hyndman, Payne, Jimenez, 2016).

In order to create a welcoming environment going beyond the circle of actors directly involved in the reception and support of refugees, as well as to reassure local people about the initiatives, NGOs recommend **working with local media to share stories, facts and good news about the beneficiaries** (ICMC, IOM, UNHCR, ERN, 2018). The provision of training and advice, as well as sensitisation and advocacy initiatives, may allow overcoming possible hostility or scepticism towards the programmes by certain members of the community, as stressed by both scholars and practitioners (Phillimore, Reyes, 2019; ICMC, IOM, UNHCR, ERN, 2018).

Lastly, to improve emotional support and avoid the sense of isolation often felt by newcomers, **refugees' families already in the destination country are recommended to assist** newly arrived beneficiaries (Phillimore, Reyes, 2019).

2.3 Support and services

Once arrived in the destination country through PSPs, beneficiaries have several needs and need to access a wide range of services: suitable housing arrangements, medical and psychological support, language and culture orientation, primary needs goods and financial resources to cover daily expenditure. Therefore, to foster their integration and ensure a smooth settlement process, it is suggested to **meet the economic, physical, psychosocial welfare needs of all beneficiaries**. This would translate concretely, for instance, in the recipients' possibility to access the welfare system of the destination country or to be entitled

to free physiological support (ICMC, IOM, UNHCR, ERN, 2018).

There is a general convergence on **the need to improve the quality of the infrastructure in which beneficiaries are received and housed**. Particular attention should be given to the presence of vulnerabilities and disabilities, which may require specific types of accommodation (Caritas France, Fédération Protestante de France, Fédération Entraide Protestante, Sant'Egidio, Conférence des évêques de France, 2018). Moreover, non-governmental stakeholders recommend paying **close attention to psychological support**, which must be provided for free, along with the presence of **medical care services** (Caritas France, Fédération Protestante de France, Fédération Entraide Protestante, Sant'Egidio, Conférence des évêques de France, 2018).

To counsel and support beneficiaries, as well as to guide them in the realm of bureaucracy and administrative procedures, several stakeholders advocate for **the presence of social workers and administrators at the local level** (European Commission, 2018; Caritas France, Fédération Protestante de France, Fédération Entraide Protestante, Sant'Egidio, Conférence des évêques de France, 2018).

As part of the service provision addressed to newcomers, an important component is represented by the **language and cultural orientation**, which is necessary to boost the overall integration process and it is a precondition for the inclusion in the job market.

First, individual **support with basic literacy and numeracy** is advocated in all those

cases whereby the beneficiaries have received little or no education during their life (Phillimore, Reyes, 2019).

Second, stakeholders recommend the **incorporation of a space for intercultural dialogue and exchange of experiences**, as well as of **courses of the language** spoken in the country (Caritas Italiana, 2019; Caritas France, Fédération Protestante de France, Fédération Entraide Protestante, Sant'Egidio, Conférence des évêques de France, 2018; Agrawal, 2018; European Commission, 2018).

Third, besides **formal, structured courses** provided by the programmes, opportunities for refugees, especially in the case of children, to informally meet, speak and have meaningful experiences together should be encouraged (Phillimore, Reyes, 2019). Researches also recommend that to **enhance the beneficiaries' learning process**, it is also useful to work with local schools and libraries to make sure sufficient and suitable resources are available (Phillimore, Reyes, 2019).

Finally, to meet the needs of the beneficiaries, it is recommended a general improvement as regards the **matching of the beneficiaries with a suitable environment**. This would consider the individual's profile and preferences and the needs of the destination cities or towns (Phillimore, Reyes, 2019; Bendel, Schammann, Heimann, Sturner, 2019). Some scholars are also in favour of a new municipal relocation mechanisms that considers individual preferences and municipalities' characteristics through an **algorithm-based matching process** (Kaşlı, 2019b).

On this, scholars also recommend more **involvement of municipalities**. This could imply a higher degree of directionality upon these actors, which would allow them to make case-by-case location decisions according to the beneficiaries' needs (Kalsi, 2019b).

2.4 Safeguards and “safety net”

The ReSOMA Policy Briefs (Solano, Savazzi, 2019) illustrated that some programmes provide the beneficiaries with the possibility to resort to formal safety nets, crucial in the event of a discontinuation of the support by the sponsor or once the programme has finished. For this reason, relevant actors recommend that **“appropriate safeguards** must be in place, and standards set to facilitate the **incorporation of new and more actors”** (ICMC, IOM, UNHCR, ERN, 2018: 27), among which for instance diaspora organisations, NGOs, individual citizens, education institutions or business of various kinds

Stakeholders urge for the **creation of safety nets** envisaging the support of the government in case beneficiaries of PSPs are not employed or have not found accommodation when the programme finishes. It is also proposed that safety nets should go beyond what is generally covered by State social assistance programmes in the context of a programme (ICMC, IOM, UNHCR, ERN, 2018).

2.5 Lack of standardised framework and common procedures

As of now, at the EU level, there are no common procedures establishing or regulating the functioning of PSPs. The

lack of a common framework results in a plethora of diverse experiences across Europe. On the one hand, certain stakeholders advocate for some sort of **standardisation and harmonisation** in the way PSPs are established and work. This would avoid confusion as regards the status, rights and entitlements of the beneficiaries (Caritas Italiana, 2019). On the other hand, as highlighted by the European Commission, many researchers believe there is no **need to adopt any pieces of legislation at the EU level** on private sponsorship schemes, although no explanation for this position is given (European Commission, 2018). However, as regards the use of **humanitarian visas**, some researchers believe it is fundamental for the EU to make a **declaration of intents** in all member states to issue this kind of visa in a more systematic way (Kaşlı, 2019b).

In order to create more standardised procedures, it is recommended that "States **must establish a solid legal framework** for the implementation of private sponsorships, which requires formal agreements between governments and sponsors, do not require sponsors to bear unrealistic costs and do not substitute for states obligations to provide persons on its territory access to social and economic rights and limit sponsor's responsibilities in time" (ECRE, 2017:28).

The lack of a common framework around PSPs results, for instance, in the selection of beneficiaries based on different criteria depending on the programme. As a response, practitioners recommend that **beneficiaries should be individuals in need of international protection**, that any other eligibility criteria should be based

on the principle of **non-discrimination** and that this should not challenge or replace any other existing entitlements or rights (ICMC, IOM, UNHCR, ERN, 2018).

Lack of standardisation also results in the different legal status granted to the beneficiaries of PSPs (i.e. refugee status or subsidiary protection, which leads to different entitlements). In this respect, stakeholders advocate for the **provision of appropriate status**, whose (initial) duration must allow migrants to regain a sense of normalcy in their life and, at a later stage, to become self-sufficient. Moreover, the status granted to beneficiaries should also take into consideration the possible **protection needs** of the individuals concerned. Finally, any limitations to the access of services that are linked to the particular status granted must be made clear (ICMC, IOM, UNHCR, ERN, 2018).

2.6 Lack of clarity and information provision

The lack of clarity characterising some PSPs may produce in the beneficiaries a sense of uncertainty and, in the long run, undermine the integration process. This holds true in particular when it comes to the duration of the programme, the timeframe of the support received, and the roles and responsibilities of the actors involved (see for example, ICMC, IOM, UNHCR, ERN, ICMC, 2017). Many stakeholders advocate for **clear and comprehensive information provision** that starts before the arrival in the destination country, in combination with an **effective management of expectations**.

Being informed about what to expect from a PSP is crucial for both sponsors and beneficiaries (Solano and Savazzi, 2019).

Therefore, stakeholders urge for the **provision of pre-departure information** to all actors involved, about the scope and the nature of the programme, which in turn may help with managing expectations (Caritas France, Fédération Protestante de France, Fédération Entraide Protestante, Sant'Egidio, Conférence des évêques de France, 2018; ICMC, IOM, UNHCR, ERN, 2018).

According to some, there should be a proper **strategy to improve the awareness of the beneficiaries** on what they are entitled to at all stages of the programme. **Rights and obligations for sponsors, beneficiaries** and for all other stakeholders involved should be **made clear prior to migrants' arrival** (Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada, 2016; ICMC, IOM, UNHCR, ERN, 2018).

From the perspective of the duties that the sponsors need to fulfil, it is recommended to establish a structured procedure that clearly defines and **informs about roles and sharing of responsibilities** between the State, local communities, international agencies and sponsor organizations. This may prevent sponsors from experiencing excessive pressure and workload (Caritas Italiana, 2019; Phillimore, Reyes, 2019; ICMC, IOM, UNHCR, ERN, 2018; Caritas France, Fédération Protestante de France, Fédération Entraide Protestante, Sant'Egidio, Conférence des évêques de France, 2018).

The provision of information should go beyond the "terms and conditions" of the programme. It is in fact suggested to provide relevant instructions and **guidance also on possible pathways to employment** and self-employment, the

culture of the destination society, and where to access **facilities** such as places of worship or basic principles of how to socialise in the new country (Phillimore, Reyes, 2019).

In order to better enhance the information flow, scholars also suggest the creation of a **repository of information** to provide easily accessible materials at beneficiaries' disposal, including, for instance, useful telephone numbers, health service providers, list of translators, charities supporting refugees etc. (Phillimore, Reyes, 2019). Whenever possible, the use of written materials should be avoided and replaced with multi-media contents, such as videos or podcasts, that can be more easily understood and remembered.

2.7 Support from the EU and governments

As underlined in the ReSOMA Policy Brief (Solano, Savazzi, 2019), another challenge in the context of PSPs is to ensure a certain degree of commitment by the government.

According to practitioners, a certain extent of **government involvement** should be always foreseen in the framework of any PSPs (ICMC, IOM, UNHCR, ERN, 2018). Governments for instance can step in these schemes to ease and speed administrative procedures, or step in as regards the provision of services. Some examples of facilitation in this field regard the issue of a humanitarian visa through which beneficiaries access the territory of the destination country, the creation of an agreement such as a memorandum of understanding with the stakeholders involved in a PSP, or the provision of funds and services by the State. Among

stakeholders, there is convergence on the importance of **providing funds and financial incentives to support pilot PSPs** (ECRE, 2017; Alraie, Collins, Rigon, Citizens UK, 2018).

Various stakeholders suggest the use of several instruments, among which the **funding coming from the EU**, either in the frame of the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF) or of additional ad-hoc funding instruments (Caritas Italiana, 2019; ECRE, 2017; ICMC, IOM, UNHCR, ERN 2018; MPI, Kumin, 2015). Beyond the potential role that the EU can play in this field, however, funding to boost these programmes can also **come from the national governments or the private sector**.

2.8 Data collection, learning and sharing, monitoring and evaluation

The recent nature of PSPs in the European context makes it difficult to exhaustively assess their impact on their beneficiaries (Solano, Savazzi, 2019). Scant research on the topic, combined with limited monitoring and evaluation mechanisms prevents policy makers from having a comprehensive overview of the strengths and weaknesses of PSPs. Researchers recommend **bolstering the limited literature available** on the private engagement in resettling refugees, as well as to carry on **policy-focused studies** that may help create innovative approaches (MPI, Kumin, 2015; ICMC, IOM, UNHCR, ERN, 2018).

To assess the potential value of PSPs as a tool for integration of beneficiaries, a continuous process of **sharing information and good practices** amongst States is recommended by governmental and academic stakeholders (European Commission, 2018; MPI, Kumin, 2015).

Moreover, several scholars proposed the use of **handbooks, green papers or guidelines** in order to collect past experiences and lessons learnt in this field, as well as to guide policy makers in implementing new schemes (MPI, Kumin, 2015; Alraie, Collins, Rigon, Citizens UK, 2018).

Furthermore, intending to exchange successful practices and lessons learnt, some recommend **multi-level stakeholder dialogues or networking events** with relevant actors from the governmental sector, international organisations, the private sector, sponsors and refugees (ENR, 2018; Phillimore, Reyes, 2019).

In conclusion, the provision of valuable information on the use and impact of PSPs is only possible insofar as effective mechanisms of monitoring and evaluation are in place. Hence, organisations in the European Resettlement Network suggest setting up **consistent internal and external monitoring and evaluation**, which would help capture and apply lessons learnt for future programmes (ICMC, IOM, UNHCR, ERN, 2018).

3. CONCLUSION AND SUMMARY OF POLICY OPTIONS

In this ReSOMA Policy Option Briefs, the policy recommendations put forward by relevant stakeholders mainly come from the non-governmental sector and academia. We sorted them by thematic area. Some of them specifically target some stakeholders, be they Member States, EU Institutions, NGOs, researchers and academics or municipalities, while others are more generic.


Recommendations both address the architecture of PSPs in general (Figure 1) and also refer to them as a tool for integration of beneficiaries (Figure 2).


The first set of recommendations focuses on the use of PSPs, its legal structure, roles and responsibilities and funding mechanisms. The second set of recommendations groups all those policy


options which could support the integration of selected recipients of the programmes. Overall, this ReSOMA Policy Brief shows that there is **convergence on the idea of extending the use of these programmes, if additional to resettlement quotas**. Various actors also stress the importance of investing in monitoring and assessing the values of PSPs, as well as of sharing good practices to increase the knowledge of policy makers on the integration path of newcomers through PSPs. On the whole, in fact, PSPs still represent a grey area whose impacts have yet to be analysed exhaustively (Solano and Savazzi, 2019).


Recommendations and policy options illustrated in this ReSOMA Policy Option Brief may represent a source of inspiration for future programmes to tap the integration potential of private sponsorship programmes.


Figure 1. Main recommendations on the use of PSPs, legal structure, roles and responsibilities, and funding mechanisms

- 


Expand the use of Private Sponsorship Programmes (PSPs) and the number of beneficiaries
- 


Ensure that PSPs are additional and complementary to resettlement programmes
- 


Create a solid legal framework to standardise the way PSPs are established and work
- 


Ensure the beneficiaries of PSPs are vulnerable individuals in need of international protection
- 


Ensure funding opportunities to support pilot PSPs from the EU, governments and the private sector
- 

Provide clear and comprehensive pre-departure information to both beneficiaries and sponsors to manage expectations
- 

Ensure that the appropriate safeguards and safety nets are in place
- 



Develop specific policies to sustain the interest and engagement of private citizens for PSPs
- 

Establish effective and consistent monitoring and evaluation mechanisms
- 

Produce evidence-based handbooks and guidelines to support the Implementation of PSPs
- 

Support the exchange of good practices and lessons learnt, and encourage multi-stakeholder dialogues

Figure 2. Main recommendations on the use of PSPs to foster the integration of beneficiaries

-  Ensure that the status granted in the context of a PSP is clear, appropriate, and sufficient in time
-  Improve the matching of beneficiaries with geographical settings, considering needs and preferences of individuals and municipalities
-  Ensure that the economic, physical, psychosocial welfare needs of all beneficiaries are met
-  Encourage and support intercultural dialogue, language learning and beneficiaries' education
-  Provide beneficiaries and sponsors with a repository of useful information, contacts and focal points
-  Disseminate stories and successful examples of PSPs to overcome possible scepticism and hostility of the welcoming community

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