

GLOBAL REFUGEE SPONSORSHIP INITIATIVE

AT A GLANCE

The Promising Beginning of Spain's Community Sponsorship Program

Sponsors are preparing for the arrival of the first refugee families in Spain's much-anticipated community sponsorship pilot program this March. Officially announced last November, the pilot is being implemented in cooperation with the Basque regional government and UNHCR Spain. Two civil society organizations, [Cáritas Euskadi](#) and the [Ellacuría Foundation](#), are providing support and guidance to sponsorship groups.

In collaboration with Spanish stakeholders, GRSI experts crafted a four-day training program for the organizations and sponsors welcoming the refugees. The training was delivered in Bilbao and Donosti (San Sebastián) by Lucila Spigelblatt. A native Spanish speaker, Lucila has 34 years of experience in immigrant settlement services. (An interview with Lucila was featured in the January 2019 [GRSI newsletter](#).)

The training combined a review of the Canadian experience, looking at the context and resources for the pilot program in Spain and then working together on areas such as sponsors' roles and responsibilities, newcomers' rights, settlement plans, cross-cultural communication, financial obligations, and working toward successful integration.

In preparing for the arrival of the refugee family, I am realizing now that what we are doing is welcoming them before even knowing them and that is very important for the community.

—Spanish sponsor

The training program was preceded by a GRSI delegation to Spain from February 13 to 15. Chris Gregory of the Government of Canada, alongside UNHCR Spain officers Marisa Gómez and María de Zabala and Roswitha Diehl-MacLean from the Canadian Embassy in Paris, met with senior officials from three Spanish ministries: Labour, Migration and Social Security; Home Affairs; and Foreign Affairs. The Spanish government is championing the pilot and intends to explore the possibility of expanding to a national program in the future.

In Vitoria, capital of the Basque Country, the delegation met with the Basque Government officials responsible for pilot implementation – the General Secretariat for Victims, Human Rights and Co-existence – and presented on GRSI and sponsorship at the Basque Inter-institutional Roundtable on Refugees. Approximately fifty regional representatives were in attendance, including government officials, civil society organizations, and municipal stakeholders involved in launching the Spanish pilot.



Spanish sponsors, Caritas staff and Lucila Spigelblatt (centre)

Returning to Madrid, the delegation met with the national leads of Spanish refugee protection civil society organizations, including [Cáritas](#), the [Jesuit Migrant Service](#), [Refugees Welcome](#), [Amnesty International](#), and the [Spanish Commission for Refugees \(CEAR\)](#). The group discussed possible next steps for expanding the pilot to other regions as well as their potential roles.

The launch of the Spanish pilot follows Secretary of State Consuelo Rumi's signing of the July 2018 [joint statement](#), along with Canada, the UK, Ireland, Argentina and New Zealand, encouraging other countries to adopt community sponsorship. With the launch of its pilot, Spain is joining the community of first adopters boldly leading the way for other countries.

Learn More

Interested in learning more about sponsor training?

- Visit the training website for UK sponsors by [RESET](#)
- Watch these videos from Canada's [Refugee Sponsorship Training Program](#):
 1. [Managing Expectations](#)
 2. [Power Imbalance](#)
 3. [Sponsorship Ethics](#)

Celebrating the Official Launch of Community Sponsorship in Ireland

On March 6, 2019, Ireland officially launched **Community Sponsorship Ireland**. The pilot program will include ten communities who will be sponsoring and welcoming ten refugee families (50 individuals). The first family arrived in Dunshaughlin, County Meath, in December 2018. Full details regarding the pilot and the sponsor application process can be found [here](#).

The Minister of State for Equality, Immigration and Integration, David Stanton, encouraged communities to sponsor refugee families in a [press release](#): "I am calling on communities across the country to extend the hand of friendship to a refugee family and work alongside Government to make this a reality. Community engagement and leadership will drive the success of the initiative."

The Irish Refugee Council, the **Irish Red Cross**, and **Nasc**, the Migrant and Refugee Rights Centre, published a [joint statement](#) on the same day. Each of the organizations is a "Regional Support Organisation" for the program and will support communities sponsoring refugees during the pilot phase of the program over the next 12 months.

We are delighted to see this programme being rolled out across communities throughout Ireland.

—Fiona Finn, Nasc

Many communities across Ireland are ready, willing and able to become community sponsors – to welcome refugees into their communities.

—Nick Henderson, Irish Refugee Council

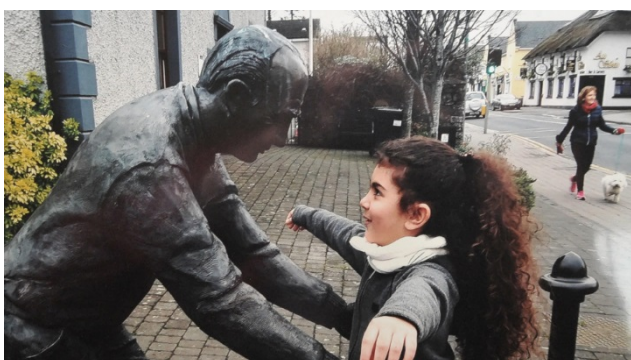
We believe this initiative will bring valuable support to newly-arrived refugees who are resettling in Ireland and establishing a new life.

—Eve Leonard, Irish Red Cross

The UNHCR [welcomed the introduction of the new community sponsorship program](#) and shared the [story of Nola Leonard](#), one of the first sponsors in Dunshaughlin, including a [video](#). The Irish Refugee and Migration Coalition also [welcomed](#) the launch of the pilot.

Congratulations to Ireland on this exciting step in growing support for refugee newcomers through the collaborative efforts of government and communities!

Read more Irish news on the launch [here](#), [here](#), and [here](#).



Lorca Fakir stands in front of the Welcome Statue in her new hometown.

Hockey Team and BVOR Funders Welcome Refugee Families in Canada



The **Giustra Foundation** and the Vancouver Canucks hockey team hosted five newcomer families on February 11 for a night of hockey and fun. Kids high-fived players as they headed out to the ice and the team mascot visited the suite.

It was a privilege to meet the newcomer families and share such a quintessentially Canadian experience with them. It was a great night of celebration.

—Frank Giustra

These families came from the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Iran, and Sudan, and arrived in Canada in late 2018 thanks to a unique, time-limited fund to accelerate the sponsorship of refugees identified by the UNHCR through the Canadian resettlement stream called Blended Visa Office-Referred (BVOR). Giustra and a handful of other philanthropic leaders committed nearly \$3.5 million toward settlement costs.

Read more about the event [here](#).

COMMUNITY SPONSORSHIP IN THE NEWS

- Multi-faith group in bid for Home Office status to support Surrey Syrian refugees
- Waterford town chosen for scheme to integrate refugees into Ireland
- On refugee question, Canada has much to teach Hong Kong



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What is GRSI?

The Global Refugee Sponsorship Initiative is a partnership of five organizations – the Government of Canada, UNHCR, the Open Society Foundations, the Giustra Foundation and the University of Ottawa. It aims to help other countries set up their own community-based refugee sponsorship programs, strengthening local communities and improving the narrative on refugees in the process.

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