

GLOBAL REFUGEE SPONSORSHIP INITIATIVE AT A GLANCE

Sponsorship in Europe

The future of community sponsorship in Europe

Before COVID-19, the landscape for community sponsorship in Europe was extremely positive: important pilots and programs were delivering results in Germany, Ireland, Spain, and the United Kingdom; the innovative experiences of Humanitarian Corridors were sustaining new pathways to protection; new countries were actively exploring introducing new sponsorship programs; and the European Commission launched a study and a €4M [call for funding proposals](#) under the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF) to catalyze momentum.

While COVID-19 has partly slowed the pace, the general willingness and enthusiasm around growing community sponsorship programs in Europe remains the same. Commissioner Johansson has expressed support for refugee sponsorship on several occasions and the upcoming [Asylum and Migration Pact](#) will offer another way forward. At a national level, States are engaging actively to leverage community sponsorship programs as part of the restart of their resettlement activities.

Overall, the coming months may prove that refugee sponsorship is more important than ever in the post-COVID resettlement landscape. With States confronting resource constraints and heightened risks of deteriorating narratives around refugee protection, we can expect them to be searching for new, innovative solutions to both deliver on their international commitments and to foster better integration and social cohesion.

A recent videoconference between EU Commissioner for Home Affairs Ylva Johansson and several civil society actors, including the GRSI, provided an opportunity to confirm continued energy around community sponsorship in Europe. The meeting revealed a willingness of economic and social stakeholders (businesses, trade unions, chambers of commerce, etc.) to play an active part in sustaining more proactive migration policies.

This fertile ground may create new opportunities for sponsorship to take hold, support, and sustain third-country protection solutions for refugees in a partly altered European landscape.

Giulio Di Blasi joined the Global Refugee Sponsorship Initiative as the new Director for Europe at the University of Ottawa – Refugee Hub. He brings expertise gained during a 10-year tenure as an EU civil servant in the field of asylum and migration, including three years as migration advisor to High Representative/Vice-President Federica Mogherini.

Eurocities Webinar on Community Sponsorship

Cities have an important role in building welcoming communities and helping sponsor communities to thrive, and the GRSI recently had the opportunity to engage with Eurocities to discuss what community sponsorship means at the local level of government. Representatives from several European cities joined GRSI colleagues to learn about community sponsorship and hear from local governments and sponsors in communities where these programs already exist. Participants engaged in thoughtful discussion on the challenges and benefits of community sponsorship, including the importance of building positive narratives to help resettlement and the importance of centering refugees as actors within the process and the narrative.

[Check out the Global Refugee Sponsorship Initiative on Twitter!](#)

[Follow @theGRSI on Twitter for more updates on #communitysponsorship](#)

Supporting and celebrating our refugee community

New Zealand Minister of Immigration Ian Lees-Galloway recently [celebrated](#) the contributions of refugees during an announcement of the community sponsorship pilot extension. New Zealand is extending their community sponsorship pilot for another three years and is

working to gather more information on its effectiveness. The extended pilot looks to include up to 50 sponsored refugees in each of the three years of the pilot. The minister highlighted that New Zealand is working to ensure that resettlement can restart as soon as UNHCR is ready and border restrictions are lifted.

World Refugee Day: Celebrating the contributions of refugees, commitments to resettlement

Ministers from across the world celebrated the contributions refugees have made to their communities this World Refugee Day. **Canadian ministers** for Immigration, Foreign Affairs and Development highlighted the contributions refugees have made to their communities in this time of crisis, and ministers from **New Zealand** and **Australia** also celebrated the successes of refugees in their communities. All ministers highlighted continued commitment to refugee resettlement, and are looking for ways to move forward with the challenges presented by COVID-19. Irish Minister for Integration David Stanton **called on local communities** to get involved in sponsorship and help resettle refugees into communities across Ireland.

Community garden helps immigrants heal, and grow their future



The Gardens at **Land of Dreams**, an initiative launched 11 months ago by the Calgary Catholic Immigration Society (CCIS) is a 30 acre urban farm that has helped refugees resettled in the community to find peace. CCIS offers a wide range of resettlement and integration services to newcomers, including securing accommodations, counselling, employment workshops and work experiences, as well as helping refugee children integrate into schools. CCIS is also a key partner in the community

sponsorship program. The 21 circular plots have allowed newcomer families to work with other members of the community, and the hope is that newcomers could become ecological leaders through this initiative.

More than 200 Syrians cleared to travel to Ireland once restrictions lifted

Shortly before the travel restrictions were implemented due to COVID-19, Irish officials went on a selection mission to interview refugees for resettlement to Ireland. More than 200 Syrian refugees currently located in Beirut have been cleared to travel to Ireland once quarantine is lifted. The government of Ireland has said that it plans to house about 100 refugees each year between now and 2023 through community sponsorship.

Tailor from Syria makes free masks

Khabat Alissa arrived in Halifax in October 2016 as a sponsored refugee from Syria, and started a tailoring business, Jano Enfield Tailor Shop, in June 2019. The COVID-19 pandemic has slowed down his business, so Mr. Alissa has begun volunteering to make masks for those in need. So far Mr. Alissa has made about 1700 masks for members of the community, advertising his services through his business's Facebook page. Mr. Alissa has also donated some masks to local volunteer fire departments. He said the community seems eager to support him **once this is over**.

Check out the **GRSI COVID-19 Resource Portal** for more information about GRSI activities, tools and resources during this challenging time
<https://covid19.refugeesponsorship.org/>

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.

SUBSCRIBE **GRSI ONLINE** **CONTACT US**