

JUNE 2015

# 10% OF REFUGEES FROM SYRIA: Europe's resettlement and other admission responses in a global perspective



## ICMC: A Continued Commitment to Protection and Refugee Resettlement

The International Catholic Migration Commission (ICMC) advocates and responds to the needs of the most vulnerable individuals and communities, contributing to preserving the dignity and rights of refugees, migrants, and other displaced persons, regardless of their faith, race, ethnicity or nationality.

Working around the world in partnership with governments, local actors, faith-based organisations, the UNHCR, and other partners, ICMC provides essential humanitarian assistance and support in countries like Jordan and Syria. In Greece, ICMC deploys experts to assist UNHCR in providing protection support, including on the Greek islands of Lesbos, Chios, Samos, Rhodes and Kos.

Since 1951, ICMC has identified more than one million refugees for resettlement, and accompanied them through the resettlement process, including helping them prepare for their new lives abroad. ICMC's resettlement activities are carried out globally and have evolved over the years to address the changing needs of displaced persons.

Since 1998, ICMC has been managing the ICMC-UNHCR Resettlement Deployment Scheme, deploying more than 170 experts in resettlement and child protection to support UNHCR's field offices throughout Africa, Asia, Europe, Latin America and the Middle East. In 2014, these experts submitted around 64,000 persons for resettlement, a full overall half of the global total of resettled persons in 2014.

Through its Resettlement Support Center for Turkey and Middle East (RSC TuME), ICMC processes the applications of refugees referred by UNHCR for resettlement to the United States. With nearly 100 staff members and more than 7,000 refugees currently being resettled each year, the Resettlement Support Center for Turkey and Middle East is one of the biggest refugee resettlement centers in the world.

The ICMC office in Brussels works to promote resettlement in Europe. Together with its partners IOM and UNHCR, ICMC has developed the [European Resettlement Network \(www.resettlement.eu\)](http://www.resettlement.eu), which promotes information sharing, capacity building and exchange on best practices. Through the Resettlement Saves Lives Campaign, ICMC Europe and its partners are advocating for 20,000 resettlement places annually in Europe by 2020.

In order to engage local actors in resettlement, ICMC currently implements the SHARE project to promote refugee protection, a culture of welcome, as well as planned and coordinated refugee reception and integration programmes in cities and regions across Europe. SHARE currently works with refugee ambassadors to raise more awareness about the need for resettlement and refugee protection. These ambassadors, demonstrate through their own experiences and success the talents that refugees bring to their local communities.

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# Foreword

## BACK TO THE FUTURE: EUROPE'S RESPONSIBILITY TO CREATE LIFE-SAVING SOLUTIONS FOR SYRIAN REFUGEES

The Syria conflict has triggered the largest humanitarian crisis of our generation. Over 8 million people are displaced inside Syria, and another 4 million Syrians have fled their country to find refuge in neighboring countries. They hope for the day when they might be able to return to Syria to rebuild their lives, homes and country.

Unfortunately, that day is nowhere in sight. As men, women and children risk increasingly dangerous journeys to reach for a safe and dignified future, we need to come together on both immediate and long-term solutions.

Most Syrian refugees, half of whom are children, currently live in Jordan, Lebanon, Iraq, Turkey and Egypt. These countries have received their Syrian neighbors with great generosity and humanity. However, their capacity to provide them with basic protection and services is reaching a breaking point.

Europe and the wider international community have responded with only a modest level of support and humanity, nowhere near levels comparable to the countries closer to Syria. Certainly more funding is needed. Less than 20% of the €4.09 billion in aid requested this year by the United Nations to ease the refugee crisis has been received.

But funding alone is not the answer, especially as conditions worsen and hopes fade. In the absence of reasonable options for organized departure, resettlement and other admission, an increasing number of refugees are turning to smugglers, traffickers, and high-risk crossings on boat or by land, desperately searching for protection elsewhere. Thousands die trying, amidst suffering beyond measure.

ICMC welcomes the recent emphasis of the European Agenda on Migration on the need for a comprehensive response, beginning with restoring search-and-rescue efforts in the Mediterranean to levels that now allow

for most migrants and refugees to be saved. ICMC also welcomes - but would push considerably further - the Agenda's call for all European countries to participate more equitably in resettling refugees, and to increase other admission channels for refugees.

Indeed, the number of resettlement and other admission places must be increased urgently, not just in Europe but globally. Since 2013, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) has asked governments to open more resettlement and other admissions for Syrian refugees, adding up to 130,000 places between mid-2014 and the end of 2016. It was envisaged that about half would arrive through UNHCR resettlement submissions for vulnerable and pressing protection cases, and the other half through humanitarian admission programmes, humanitarian and student visas, family reunification programmes and community-based sponsorships.

In this report, ICMC Europe analyses the how countries have (or have not) responded to this call. The report shows that by May of this year, governments around the world had pledged around 80% of the 130,000 places, and it is likely that the full number will be reached by the end of 2015.

What target, then, should be set in the next period? UNHCR recently said that the real need was to organize resettlement and other admissions to countries outside the region for the one in 10 Syrian refugees who lack durable solutions within the region.

10%. Today 4 million Syrian refugees are registered in Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Turkey and other countries in the region. At current levels, therefore, 10% is 400,000.

Moved by solidarity with the refugees and with the countries that host them - and also being an operational

partner in the welcome, protection and integration of refugees in countries both within and outside the region - ICMC proposes this 10% target for the immediate next period, 2016-2020.

At current levels, that would mean an average of 80,000 additional Syrian refugees a year resettled or otherwise admitted to Europe, the United States, Canada, Australia, Latin America and other countries beyond those neighboring Syria. It is important that this should not in any way affect the number of persons granted protection in asylum processes, nor the number of non-Syrian refugees being resettled or admitted.

The proposed target is a substantial increase over current resettlement and admissions of Syrian refugees, but it is well within the realm of our experience. In fact, putting together comprehensive responses like these is very much "back to the future" - back to the positive commitment made a generation ago, when Europe and the rest of the world stepped up to the humanitarian emergency of that day: the Vietnamese boat people in the 1970s and 1980s. At that time, in many ways so similar to today, after neighboring countries in Southeast Asia agreed to temporarily admit the boat people, other countries did their part by accepting a percentage for resettlement through safe, organized processes - ultimately, about 800,000. This was a truly global operation: more than half of the refugees were accepted by the United States, and the other half mostly by Australia, Canada, France, Germany and the United Kingdom. These refugees then revived their lives - and often the communities they joined. They worked and built businesses, paid taxes, and became part of the social, cultural, and political vibrancy of their new countries.

A growing number of countries and communities across Europe have already been welcoming Syrian refugees with protection and opportunities to rebuild their lives. Often this happens in local partnerships with civil society organizations, which provide services ranging from initial housing, education, language training and other integration services,

as well as employment assistance. Offering refugees a good start will ensure that Syrians, like the Vietnamese before them, will contribute abundantly to our societies.

Today, as then, these responses are practical and positive, in the immediate and long-term, for governments and societies - together with the refugees themselves. We further believe that more of these solutions are possible than what we've seen so far. I commend this report to you to inspire ideas and greater collaboration among governments, international organizations, civil society and citizens.

Peter Sutherland  
President ICMC

June 8<sup>th</sup> 2015

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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

## I. SYRIAN DISPLACEMENT

Inside Syria today, 7.6 million people are displaced and another 4 million Syrians have fled to neighbouring countries in the region – in particular to Turkey, Lebanon, Jordan, Egypt and Iraq. With no prospects of a political solution in sight, capacity to take in more refugees is reaching a breaking point. Border entry barriers are now being introduced in all the neighbouring countries, limiting the possibilities for Syrians to seek protection in the region.

Less than 25% of the regional refugee response plan is currently funded. Refugees are not receiving the support and services they need and the neighbouring countries increasingly feel that they are being left alone to deal with the crisis, including grave risks to their own stability.

Lacking livelihood possibilities and future perspectives, close to 67,000 Syrians crossed the Mediterranean Sea in smuggler boats in 2014, with a number of them perishing in the effort. Tragically, this number continues to increase in 2015.

Between 2011-2014, just over 200,000 Syrians sought asylum in the European Union, representing just 5% of the 4 million Syrians currently living in the countries neighbouring Syria. While the combination of geography and EU asylum procedures - notably the Dublin regulation - have left most responsibility for dealing with these arrivals to the Mediterranean frontline countries, the new European Agenda on Migration calls for increased solidarity both within the European Union and with refugee-hosting countries in the Middle East.

### Global recommendations

1. The increasingly desperate situation of refugees in the countries neighbouring Syria calls for urgent measures on behalf of the international community to achieve

comprehensive solutions in cooperation with both refugee-hosting countries and resettlement countries.

2. The neighbouring countries and Syrian refugees need to be provided with sufficient financial support from the international community to provide humanitarian assistance to an increasingly vulnerable and impoverished refugee population.
3. The international community - i.e., fully across Europe, and also globally, not just Europe - must substantially increase admission programmes to receive a meaningful proportion of those refugees that are currently hosted in countries neighbouring Syria.
4. For the majority of Syrians who will remain in the neighbouring countries, additional measures are required to ensure more livelihood and education opportunities. Migration and development cooperation should be strengthened to promote cooperation between universities, cities and diaspora communities in the neighbouring countries and Europe.

## II. UNHCR'S CALLS FOR GLOBAL RESETTLEMENT AND OTHER ADMISSION PLACES

UNHCR has urged the international community to show solidarity with countries hosting Syrian refugees in the region by offering greater refugee resettlement opportunities, humanitarian admission places, family reunification or other forms of admission for Syrian refugees.

UNHCR's specific call for states to offer 130,000 places for Syrian refugees by the end of 2016 - which was widely supported by NGOs - is at present just 20,000 places short of being fully pledged, one year early, by nearly 30 states.



Europe has led the way in that response, with over 60% of the places pledged either for resettlement or for other types of admission coming from 21 European states.

Outside of Europe, the biggest contribution has been made by Brazil, in a humanitarian visa programme that has so far issued over 7,000 visas. Security concerns have impeded the largest resettlement countries, particularly the United States, from responding significantly to UNHCR's call for resettlement places.

UNHCR estimates that approximately 10% (400,000) of the Syrian refugees currently in Turkey, Lebanon, Jordan, Iraq and Egypt, is currently in need of resettlement and other types of admission.

#### Global recommendations

1. Give a final push for pledges this year to meet the first milestone of 130,000 places, without waiting until 2016 as originally projected by UNHCR.
2. To relieve pressure on the countries neighbouring Syria and mitigate the protection crisis, the global community should make a further 400,000 places available - i.e., for 10% of Syrian refugees currently in those neighbouring countries - in multi-annual commitments between 2016-2020, prioritizing Syrians with the most urgent needs.
3. UNHCR and the international community should embrace both proven and innovative ways to provide protection to Syrian refugees while continuing international protection of other persons of other refugees and persons of concern:
  - o experience - and confidence - should be drawn from the 1989 Comprehensive Plan of Action (CPA), which saved and opened resettlement opportunities for Vietnamese or Laotian boat people against the threat of countries of first asylum in Southeast Asia engaging in push-back of asylum seekers.
  - o States must achieve consensus on and put in place less time-consuming and more expedited

procedures to process refugees for resettlement. Combining refugee status determination (RSD) and resettlement interviews has been introduced to facilitate the expedited processing of Syrians. Enhanced registration procedures could, in some circumstances, replace UNHCR's resettlement interviews where enhanced procedures gather essential information to inform a resettlement assessment.

- o complementary new legal channels and mechanisms, including within protection-sensitive labour migration schemes, are needed to widen refugee admissions and protection.
- o New partnerships are needed among actors at all levels to ensure that these greater numbers of refugees can effectively be submitted for resettlement and other admissions.

### III. EUROPEAN RESPONSES IN PROVIDING RESETTLEMENT AND OTHER TYPES OF ADMISSION

Europe has pledged approximately 55,000 places for Syrian refugees and for refugees that remain inside Syria thus far, of which around two-thirds (over 38,000) have been made available under ad-hoc humanitarian and other legal admission channels and one-third under resettlement. However, Germany alone provided 35,000 of those places, more than 60% of the total pledges in Europe. After Germany, the largest contributions have been made by two non-EU countries, namely, Norway (8,500 places) and Switzerland (8,200).

By May 2015, some 25,000 Syrians had actually arrived to Europe under these programmes, including over 17,000 to Germany.

#### 1. RESETTLEMENT IN EUROPE

Eighteen European countries have offered resettlement places for refugees from Syria, which accounts for around one-quarter of all places offered.

The recently launched European Migration Agenda proposes an EU-wide resettlement scheme, which may expand current resettlement programmes in the context of a single European pledge for 20,000 resettlement places from 2015-2016, which would be allocated among member states based on a distribution key. The proposed distribution - but not the aim to increase resettlement - has met with enormous debate and some resistance across the region.

At the same time, as refugee numbers have increased, reception and integration programmes have been strained, particularly in the bigger cities. In certain European countries, concerns about current levels of capacity to house refugees have been holding back commitments to further resettlement.

#### Recommendations for Europe

1. At a minimum, the 20,000 target in the European Agenda for Migration should be met with new resettlement places and not filled within existing quotas.
2. Given a limited number of places available relative to high needs, maintain the priority on vulnerability and protection urgency in resettlement and admission selection processes. Resettlement programmes should benefit the most vulnerable based on an assessment of their humanitarian needs according to UNHCR's resettlement submission categories.
3. Build upon recent experience to make European resettlement procedures simpler, faster and more cost-effective.
4. European resettlement can only be advanced by more structured cooperation between states, UNHCR, IOM, EASO and NGOs. Multi-actor platforms like the European Resettlement Network (ERN) promote such exchanges.
5. New countries must also be involved to capitalise on the momentum of the proposals included in the European Agenda on Migration, which should involve all EU Member States.
6. AMIF lump sum financing should be evaluated to be better linked to the provision of new resettlement places and aim at rewarding larger quota commitments.

## 2. OTHER TYPES OF ADMISSION IN EUROPE

### A. HUMANITARIAN ADMISSION PROGRAMMES

With respect to Syrian refugees, humanitarian admission was offered first by Germany, and later also by Austria, France, Ireland and the United Kingdom. "Humanitarian admission" can actually be considered an umbrella term for several different sub-programmes, including family reunification programmes, using different referral mechanisms and aiming at time-efficient refugee processing to provide temporary protection to Syrian refugees.

Responding to pleas from civil society, churches and Syrian family members in Europe, the German Humanitarian Admission Programmes (HAP) have provided access to protection for 20,000 Syrians, the majority of whom have arrived in Germany.

Both the German and Austrian programmes have admitted the a large part of cases through referrals from family members, churches and civil society partners, with the other part processed by UNHCR on the basis of resettlement protection and vulnerability criteria.

The capacity of German embassies has, at times, been stretched in processing such large numbers of applications and entry visas, with a lack of dedicated structures and expertise to support applications.

Austria, France, Germany and the UK have used expedited HAP procedures for some 9,000 UNHCR referred vulnerable cases, resulting in an important increase in UNHCR processing capacities and in ensuring accelerated departures.

Legal status offered under humanitarian admission programmes in Europe varies from two-year temporary residency status (Germany and Ireland), to 5-year temporary residency (UK), subsidiary protection (France), and full refugee status (Austria and France). Given the nature and scope of the conflict in Syria, it is highly likely that those Syrian refugees with temporary residence will have their stay extended or made more permanent.



Providing a durable solution, the French and Austrian programmes can be classified as resettlement, although both programmes use the expedited HAP procedure.

#### Recommendations for Europe

1. Review practices in expedited processing developed under HAP for further use by new countries interested in engaging in such programmes.
2. Further extend the use of new partnerships for the identification and referral of vulnerable cases for HAP, to ensure prioritization according to protection needs and urgency within application procedures, instead of dealing with applications on a first-come, first-served basis.
3. Strengthen support and training for embassies to carry out such additional tasks, including meeting and prioritising the special needs of vulnerable refugees.
4. Since Syrian refugees will not be able to return to Syria in the near future, refugees that have been granted temporary stay should be informed in due course on procedures on how to renew their stay. To avoid unequal treatment, these Syrians should be provided with the same rights of those that have received refugee status.
5. The AMIF should also provide financial support for developing admission programmes, including sponsorship and extended family reunification programmes, that offer a substantial number of places.

#### B. EXTENDED FAMILY REUNIFICATION PROGRAMMES

Since 2013, extended family reunification schemes have provided legal access to almost 31,000 Syrian refugees, with family members in Europe to come to Europe. These programmes offer the possibility to reunite with non-nuclear family members and have been implemented in the framework of the HAPs (Austria, Germany and Ireland), the German Regional Family Member Admission Programme, and the Swiss family admission and humanitarian visa programmes.

Access to the German and Irish programmes has, at times, been limited by a lack of awareness about them amongst potential sponsoring family members, complexity and non-transparency of programme application processes and financial and administrative requirements.

In Germany, a significant proportion of those granted residence permits under the regional family reunification programmes have claimed asylum to access the same rights and benefits as refugees that arrive under the regular asylum procedure.

#### Recommendations for Europe

1. Share experience in extended family reunification schemes to identify constraints and best practices that can be used by other European countries.
2. Explore state provision of financial support in extended family member programmes to ensure access to basic services, at a minimum. This and other measures designed to reduce the financial burdens on receiving family members could ensure equitability of access for the range of families - not just those with affluent family members - and limit the need for incoming family members to seek support by, for example, claiming asylum.
3. Account in future programme design for factors inhibiting access to extended family reunification programmes for eligible families, and consider incorporating the ad-hoc initiatives developed by civil society actors in this area.
4. Include diaspora organisations, churches and NGOs as operational partners in all these programmes, leveraging their wide community presence and networks to raise both awareness and support for these programmes and implement important requirements, such as completing applications, other procedures and essential reporting.

#### C. COMMUNITY-BASED SPONSORSHIPS

The deepening conflict in Syria has been mobilised considerable - and growing - support in Europe from

churches, NGOs, universities, diaspora organisations and other actors, who have stepped in to welcome and offer services to refugees arriving in their communities. A wide range of actors are providing in-kind and financial support, such as housing and underwriting the financial commitments necessary for family members to be accepted into an extended family reunification scheme.

#### Recommendations for Europe

1. Explore initiatives developed for Syrian refugees for opportunities to introduce structured sponsorship programmes, which can be developed in parallel to national resettlement quotas or support other admission programmes, such as extended family reunification programmes.
2. In future sponsorship programmes, provide clear division of responsibilities and allocation of resources between government actors, family members and civil society organisations. The Canadian and Australian sponsorship programme could inspire future modelling in Europe.

#### D. HUMANITARIAN VISAS

To provide for safe and legal entry, humanitarian visas have been issued at diplomatic representations to enable persons arriving in the issuing country to access expedited asylum procedures on arrival.

France has issued around 1,400 humanitarian visas ('visas au titre de l'asile') to Syrians during 2013-2015, all of whom have applied for asylum in France upon arrival. Several other countries have issued visas to Syrians on humanitarian grounds, mobilising existing legislation and available visa instruments, e.g., in Germany (Residence Act), Switzerland (Emergency Visas) and Portugal (Temporary Stay Visa).

#### Recommendations for Europe

1. Promote the use of humanitarian visas and other visas issued on humanitarian grounds to provide Syrians much needed protection and access to Europe.

#### D. STUDENT VISA PROGRAMMES

Stepping up in the context of the Syrian refugee crisis, a number of national and regional governments, NGOs, universities, and university organisations have shown great interest in offering student visas, acting even as donors through a waiver of admission fees as well as in selection processes.

At the same time, accessibility of student admission programmes has, on occasion, been compromised by excessive admission criteria, such as providing proof of previous education that was only available in Syria. Further, a number of study programmes provide time-limited visas, with no option to extend, convert or renew, nor provide ways to support longer-term stay after the expiration of the study programme.

#### Recommendations for Europe

1. Extend admission programmes aimed at supporting students from the region, keeping in mind the specific vulnerabilities of potential candidates and factors inhibiting accessibility to the programmes.
2. Ensure funding for refugee students to be able to access the places made available by European universities.
3. With no end to the conflict in sight at the moment, offer students realistic long-term perspectives. Visas issued in that context should provide the option to stay after finalisation of the study programme.

### 3. RECEPTION AND INTEGRATION

Reception and integration support for Syrians arriving via resettlement and other admission routes varies widely, both across different programmes in the same national context and between receiving countries.

Given the increasing number of Syrian refugees present in Europe, it is crucial that there is adequate reception and integration support in place that responds to their specific needs and facilitates their settlement and integration.

## Recommendations for Europe

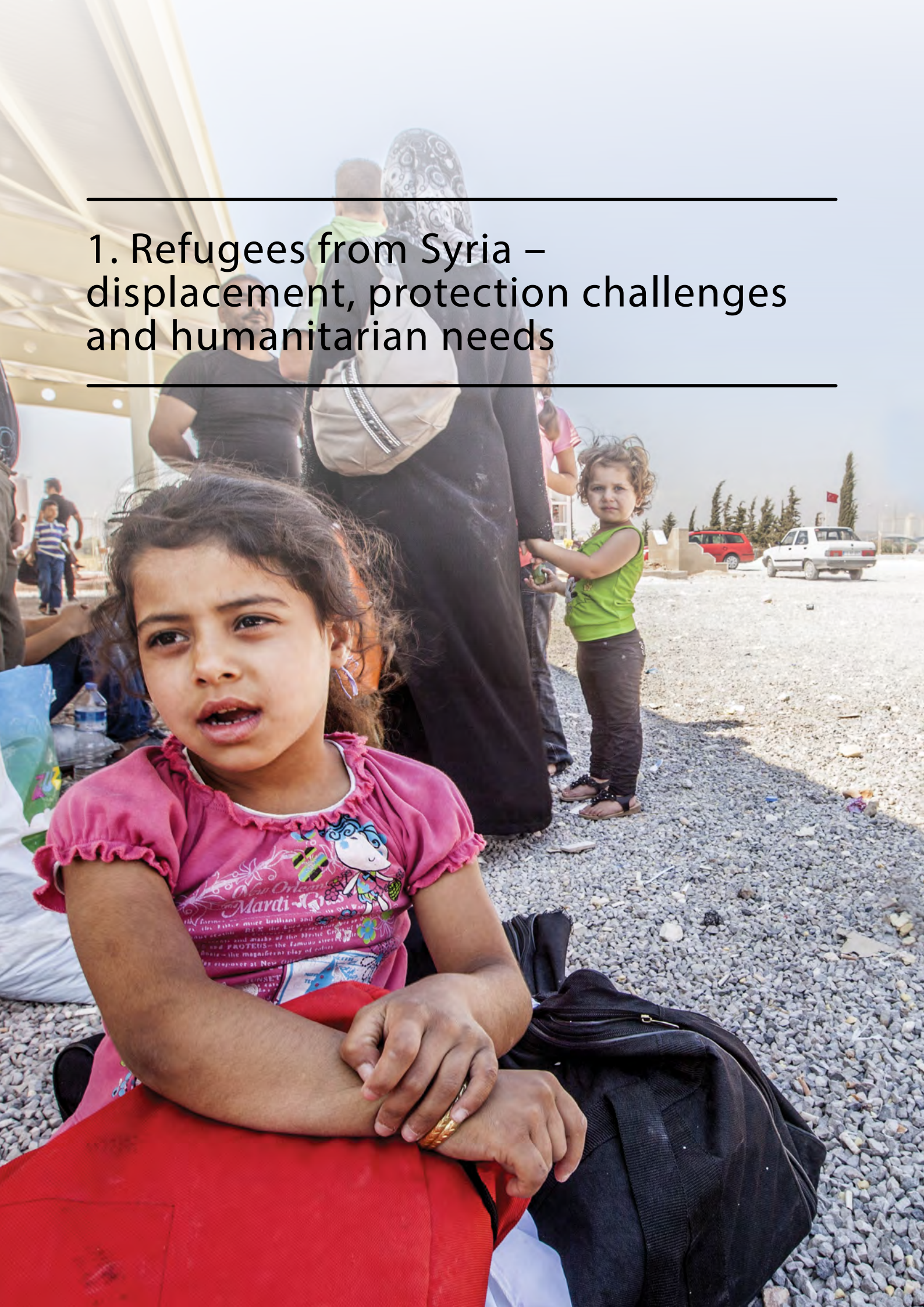
1. Plan and coordinate reception and integration programmes better among national and local stakeholders, including civil society, to maximize the use of available financial and human resources. Early labour market integration has been indicated by many Syrian refugees as a first priority.
2. Develop targeted reception and integration support that responds to specific needs and profiles for Syrian refugees that have been admitted with temporary status under HAP, enabling refugees to live more independently but also develop skills and capacities that could potentially contribute to reconstruction efforts in Syria if they choose to return.
3. As more new countries with less well developed integration frameworks respond to UNHCR's call, provide support to strengthen and develop integration programmes and services that respond to the specific needs and profiles of Syrian refugees. It is important to share best practices among stakeholders receiving Syrians, to further improve reception and integration services.
4. Engage the Syrian diaspora in facilitating reception and integration, in particular:
  - o previously resettled refugees, including refugee led community associations.
  - o family members hosting Syrian relatives arriving via extended family reunification schemes.



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# 1. Refugees from Syria – displacement, protection challenges and humanitarian needs

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## 1.1. FROM PEACEFUL PROTEST TO PROTRACTED CONFLICT

Since March 2011, the Syrian crisis has evolved from initially peaceful protests for freedom and democracy that were brutally repressed by the Syrian regime towards a civil war, resulting in a prolonged and ever worsening humanitarian emergency, which today has transformed into a multidimensional and protracted political, security, and social crisis.

Having now entered its 5th year, the Syrian conflict is having a devastating and lasting impact on Syria and across the region. The number of conflict-related deaths has surpassed 211,000 persons<sup>1</sup> and more than one million people have been war-wounded.

Inside Syria today, 12.2 million people remain in need of humanitarian assistance – a twelve fold increase since 2011 – including over 8 million people displaced, of which around half are children. Palestinian refugees in Syria are also affected, with 64% of registered Palestine refugees displaced, 280,000 internally and a further 80,000 abroad. Since violence escalated in Iraq, the influx of Iraqi refugees has increased in Northeastern Syria and is expected to continue to rise in 2015.

By May 2015, almost 4 million Syrians had fled to neighbouring countries in the region – mainly to Turkey, Lebanon, Jordan, Egypt and Iraq, in order of size of refugee population. It is expected that this number will reach 4.3 million Syrian refugees by the end of 2015.<sup>2</sup>

The social and economic capacity of neighbouring countries to deal with the ever-growing influx of refugees is stretched to the limits. With the increase in the numbers of refugees, the great hospitality shown to Syrians over the last 4 years is being put to the test. Tension and discrimination between host communities and refugees is becoming more and more prevalent.

The situation has worsened due to the advance of the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) causing additional inflows of refugees to, and internally displaced persons within, Iraq, Syria, and Turkey. The challenging nature of the conflict is increasingly targeting, persecuting and killing Christians and Christian minorities (Yazidis, Yazidis, Shabals and Turkman) which has resulted in their massive displacement.

At the same time as the conflict has created additional security threats, border entry barriers have now been introduced in all Syria's neighbouring countries, limiting access of Syrians seeking protection.

In order to continue to cope with the refugee crisis, it is clear that the countries neighbouring Syria will need significant additional support from the international community. Such support should not only be financial but also offer concrete measures of solidarity and burden sharing, such as offering a significant number of resettlement places.

1 According to The Syrian Network for Human Rights 211,000 have been killed in Syria since 2011. Source: Report: Civilian death toll in Syria around 211,000 (Worldbulletin, 13 March 2015).

2 3RP Regional Refugee & Resilience Plan 2015-2016 in Response to the Syria Crisis.

## 1.2. PROTECTION CHALLENGES IN THE REGION

Although the situation varies among host countries, certain general observations can be made with respect to the situation of Syrian refugees in neighbouring countries:

- The protracted nature of the Syrian conflict has resulted in a vast majority of refugees facing destitution and living below the poverty level.
- The large majority of Syrian refugees live outside official camps, in cities, towns or informal camp settings in rural areas. The conditions of these refugees is particularly dire. Many have become homeless and lack access to education and health services.
- 30% of Syrian refugees require specific medical attention: one in five refugees is affected by physical, sensory or intellectual impairment; one in seven is affected by chronic disease; and one in 20 suffers from injury, with nearly 80% of these injuries resulting directly from the conflict.<sup>3</sup>
- The national health systems and services, which provide significant health care to Syrian refugees, are under great pressure. There is an increased risk of communicable diseases because of limited access to basic health services, insufficient personnel, lack of medical supplies and inadequate service delivery.<sup>4</sup>
- Many refugees suffer from traumas and psychological distress caused by events linked to the conflict or by living conditions inside refugee camps. Mental health care is a continuing need.<sup>5</sup>
- With extremely limited legal employment possibilities, refugees must revert to the informal employment sector, making themselves vulnerable to exploitation and abuse.
- Women and girls are facing an increasing degree of isolation, violence and insecurity. Sexual and gender-based violence, including domestic violence, is widespread.
- Half of Syrian refugees are children and just under 1 million Syrian refugee children are currently of school age, while only 49% are enrolled in schools.<sup>6</sup> Despite efforts by host countries, public school systems are overburdened. Secondary and higher education are becoming a rare possibility. These children risk becoming a lost generation if education options are not expanded.<sup>7</sup>
- In the absence of schooling, there are increasing reports of child labour and early marriage, with UNICEF and Save the Children repeatedly calling for donors, host countries and the international community to increase funding to respond to the needs of children in the region.

### 1.2.1. Overview of the situation in major host countries

The following sections give a short overview of the number of Syrian refugees in the different countries in the region, in order of size of registered refugee populations.

#### Turkey

As of 4 May 2015 1,759,846 Syrians refugees were registered in Turkey. Considering that many refugees are still unregistered, the Syrian refugee population in Turkey is estimated to be closer to 2 million persons, making Turkey host to the largest number of displaced Syrians in the region. In addition to Syrians, Turkey hosts an estimated 300,000 Iraqi refugees. It is therefore currently the

3 Hidden victims of the Syrian crisis: disabled, injured and older refugees (HelpAge International and Handicap International, 2014), p. 4 and 12.

4 Health 3RP Regional Dashboard February 2015, <http://data.unhcr.org/Syrianrefugees/regional.php>.

5 Fleeing the violence in Syria, Syrian refugees in Lebanon (MSF, August 2012, [http://www.msf-azg.be/sites/default/files/ms1221\\_lebanonreport\\_final\\_lores\\_v2.pdf](http://www.msf-azg.be/sites/default/files/ms1221_lebanonreport_final_lores_v2.pdf)), p. 19; We Spend Time and We Listen: Mental Health Care for Syrian Refugees in Iraq (MSF, October 2013, <http://www.doctorswithoutborders.org/news-stories/voice-field/we-spend-time-and-we-listen-mental-health-care-Syrian-refugees-iraq>).

6 Futures under threat – The impact of the education crisis on Syria's children (Save the Children, 2014).

7 Regional Report on Out-of-School Children: Middle East and North Africa (UNICEF and UNESCO, 2015).



Table 1: SYRIAN REFUGEES IN EGYPT, IRAQ, JORDAN, LEBANON AND TURKEY

| Country of asylum | Syrian refugees(number of persons registered May 2015) | % of Syrians in administered camps | Children under 18 (%) | Humanitarian aid funding needs under 3RP (in €) |
|-------------------|--|------------------------------------|-----------------------|---|
| Turkey            | 1,759,846  | 14                                 | 54                    | 567 Million                                     |
| Lebanon           | 1,183,327  | none                               | 54                    | 1.9 Billion                                     |
| Jordan            | 627,287  | 16                                 | 50                    | 2.6 Billion                                     |
| Iraq              | 248,203  | 40                                 | 46                    | 387 Million                                     |
| Egypt             | 134,329  | none                               | 43                    | 272 Million                                     |
| Total             | 3,952,992  | 11                                 | 52.1                  | 5.726 Billion                                   |

Source: Syria Regional Refugee Response Inter-agency Information Sharing Portal, retrieved 26 March 2015

biggest refugee-hosting country in the world. Turkey has shown great generosity in receiving Syrians, having spent more than €5.4 billion on direct assistance to refugees of which some €272 million has come from the international community. Overwhelmed by the large number of refugees in an increasingly complex security situation, Turkey has set up militarized zones along the 900-kilometer border with Syria and is implementing more strict regulations to check the flow of civilians and fighters crossing the border. In addition, Turkish authorities strictly monitor cross-border humanitarian aid to Syrians. Under the new Turkish Law on Foreigners and International Protection, all foreigners come under the recently established General Directorate of Migration and Management<sup>8</sup> (DGMM). According to the temporary protection regime established in October 2014, registered Syrians are granted Temporary Protection<sup>9</sup> and entitled to access health services and education for school age children. As of late 2014 only 14% of the Syrian population continued to stay in official camp settings (22 camps set up and managed by the government), while the vast majority live in towns and cities, in border areas and across the country. The camps are reported to be safe and in good condition. However, for those living in the urban context, conditions are becoming increasingly desperate. Many Syrians in urban areas find it difficult to find housing, pay rent, and obtain employment and end up working in the informal sector where they are often underpaid and unprotected. Urban

refugees, including school-age children, live in substandard, overcrowded and overpriced accommodations and are unable to access needed services, either because they are un-registered, or due to overstretched resources, language barriers and/or lack of information. Half of the Syrian refugee population in Turkey is children (40% below age of 11) with UNHCR reporting that only 27% of Syrian refugee children living outside camps have access to education due to overcrowded conditions in schools and to the cost of sending children to schools. As a result, many children are sent to work to help provide for their families.

#### Lebanon

Lebanon is host to the second largest influx of Syrian refugees in the region, with approximately 1.2 million Syrian refugees currently in Lebanon. With a local population of 4 million people, Lebanon hosts the largest number of Syrian refugees as a percentage of the local population. Syrian refugees are equal in number to over 25% of the local population. Although Lebanon has kept its borders open since the beginning of the Syrian conflict, the country has tightened border controls since October 2014, only admitting exceptional humanitarian cases. In early 2015, the Lebanese government introduced new visa rules applicable to Syrians, who now must obtain a tourist, business, short stay, student or transit visa.

The Lebanese government has not wanted to create formal refugee camps. Syrians and refugees are spread across the country in 1,700 locations. The influx has caused tensions between host communities and Syrian refugees, competing

<sup>8</sup> Law on foreigners and International Protection which entered into force in April 2014.

<sup>9</sup> Temporary Protection Regulation (22nd October 2014) became immediately applicable to Syrian refugees. The regulation obliges all Syrian refugees residing in the country to register or re-register with the General Directorate for Migration Management (DGMM).



This unofficial camp setting near Saida. Lebanon has hosted refugees fleeing violence in Homs (Syria) for the past 3 years. Courtesy of Caritas Friedland (Germany), 2014

for access to basic resources and services. In some towns and villages the number of Syrians now exceeds the number of local residents. Locals perceive that Syrian refugees receive more international assistance than poor Lebanese citizens who are neglected. At times this causes real problems for refugees, who are sometimes forced to change residence.

Increasing numbers of Syrians are now living in great poverty, with no legal employment possibilities to generate income. In 2012, the Lebanese government announced that medical assistance to refugees had been cut because of funding issues.<sup>10</sup> Housing is vastly unavailable, with refugees moving to abandoned unsafe buildings or to informal tent settlements. Syrian children are allowed to attend Lebanese schools, but due to lack of available places only 25% of the 400,000 refugee children obtain a place. Children who are not in school face an increased risk of exploitation, resulting from prostitution, child labour and/or early marriage.

<sup>10</sup> Fleeing the violence in Syria, Syrian refugees in Lebanon (MSF, August 2012, p. 12).

## Jordan

Jordan is the third country in the region in terms of absolute numbers, as of May 2015 hosting an overall Syrian refugee population of over 627,000 persons registered with UNHCR.

The Jordanian government held an open border policy until autumn 2014 when it decided to unofficially close its borders with Syria. In October 2014, reports indicated that between 4,000-5,000 people from Syria were stranded in the no-man's land between the Syrian and Jordanian borders.

Syrian refugees are dispersed throughout the country. Around 20% of Syrian refugees are located in 4 camps. Zaatari<sup>11</sup> which hosts 82,000 persons is now the second largest refugee camp in the world. The other 80% of refugees are living in cities and rural villages, the majority in the Northern governorates of Al Mafraq and Irbid. The large number of Syrian refugees is putting a huge strain on national resources and infrastructure, causing increasing tensions with the host community. In Jordan, it is illegal for Syrian refugees to work, and in combination with recent cuts in

<sup>11</sup> Za'atari, Marjeeb al-Fahood, Cyber City and Al-Azraq.

food aid and limits imposed on the ways that Syrian refugees can access the government healthcare system, refugees are struggling to survive. It is estimated that over three quarters of refugee households are extremely or very vulnerable. Although children can attend schools over 70,000 Syrian children have no access to education due to lack of capacity. School drop-out rates are high, often due to the children's need to support the family. The Jordanian government estimates that child labour has doubled nationwide since the start of the crisis in Syria.<sup>12</sup>

### Iraq

There are currently around 250,000 Syrians registered in Iraq. Border crossings were mainly possible during irregular border openings<sup>13</sup>. Parts of the border areas are now under ISIS control and therefore inaccessible to refugees, with most recent border crossings taking place at the Ibrahim Khali border crossing with Turkey. Most Syrian refugees live in the Kurdistan region<sup>14</sup> where refugees and International Displaced Persons (IDPs) currently comprise over 20% of the population<sup>15</sup>. During 2014, the conflict in central Iraq and the ISIS advance into Anbar and Mossul have led to internal displacement of 2 million Iraqis. Support agencies in the region have reported a rise in returns to Syria of at least 10,000 persons in recent months<sup>16</sup>. Although 60% of Syrians registered refugees are living in urban areas, authorities prefer for refugees to stay in the nine official camps where humanitarian aid is concentrated. Recently refugees have been moving to official camps in the hope of more extensive support. School enrolment varies between camps where approximately 51% of the children attend school and urban areas where 39% of refugee children are enrolled in school.<sup>17</sup>

### Egypt

There are around 133,000 Syrians registered in Egypt but it is estimated that approximately the same number remains unregistered. A major part has spent periods in a transit country before coming to Egypt. Since July 2013,

the Egyptian border has been effectively closed to refugees from Syria through visa and security clearance requirements introduced by the government, essentially halting any new inflow from Syria. Syrians in Egypt can be found in the large cities, with smaller populations in Sinai and Mansoura. Although Syrian refugees have access to public services, health and education systems are overburdened and in practice barely accessible. Many Syrians do not intend to stay in Egypt, but come to Egypt in order to cross the Mediterranean. More than 1,370 Syrians have been arrested for attempting to depart the country by boat in an irregular manner, some being detained in police stations for prolonged periods. UNHCR has successfully achieved the release of the majority of detained Syrians. Detention is, however, still utilised as a deterrent to prevent Syrians from crossing the Central Mediterranean.

12 Inter-Agency Regional response for Syrian refugees (UNHCR May-June 2014).

13 UNHCR Regional Refugee & Resilience Plan 2015-16 Iraq.

14 Left out in the cold – Syrian refugees abandoned by the international community (Amnesty International, October 2014).

15 UNHCR Regional Refugee & Resilience Plan 2015-16 Iraq.

16 Lynn Yoshikawa, 48th Edition of Field Exchange: Iraq.

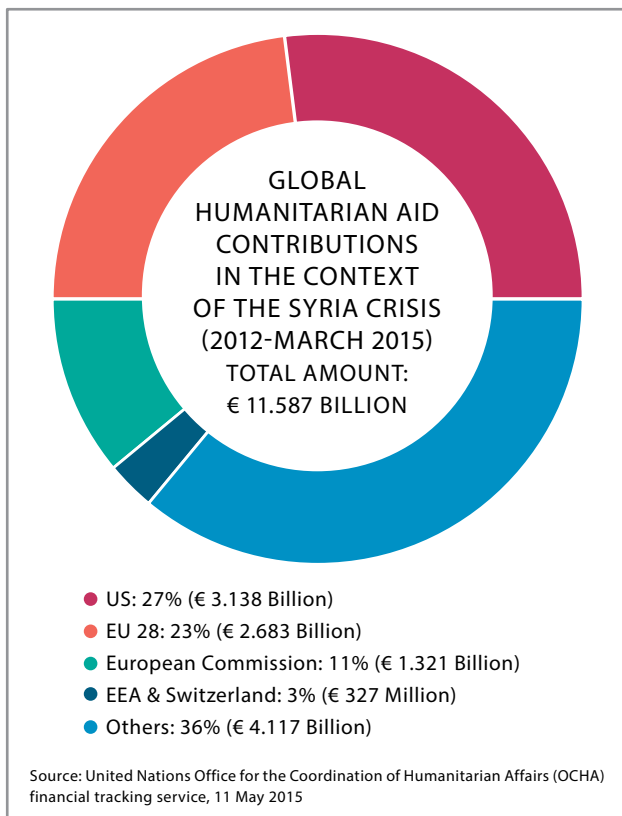
17 Left out in the cold – Syrian refugees abandoned by the international community, (Amnesty International, October 2014).

## 1.3. ADDRESSING HUMANITARIAN NEEDS IN THE REGION

In December 2014, the UN and its partners launched a major new humanitarian and development appeal for Syria and the region. The appeal focuses both on support for the displaced and conflict-affected people inside of Syria as well as on the needs of millions of Syrian refugees in the region and the countries and communities hosting them. The former is reflected in the 2015 Strategic Response Plan for the Syrian Arab Republic (SRP) designed and coordinated by the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA); the latter is addressed by the Regional Refugee and Resilience Plan 2015-2016 in Response to the Syria Crisis (3RP) of UNHCR and UNDP, which was developed alongside the SRP.

### 1.3.1. Financial contributions for humanitarian aid and the role of the EU

According to OCHA's Financial Tracking Service, donors have committed/contributed €11.5 billion of humanitarian assistance to the Syria crisis since 2012 (see chart below).



The European Union and its Member States collectively continue to lead the international response with a contribution of €4 billion or 34.56% thus far, of which the European Commission/ECHO contributed €1.3 billion or 11.40%. With regard to the SRP and 3RP in 2015, the EU together with its Member States remains the largest donor, with the UK and Germany being the largest donor Member States. Thus far, they have provided a total of € 165,313 million (36%)<sup>18</sup> for the SRP and € 336,605 million (43%)<sup>19</sup> for the 3RP.

### 1.3.2. 2015 Strategic Response Plan (SRP) for the Syrian Arab Republic<sup>20</sup>

Based on the Whole of Syria (WoS) approach,<sup>21</sup> the SRP provides a single overarching framework for humanitarian response inside Syria. It was produced by OCHA in collaboration with humanitarian actors and in consultation with the Government of Syria.<sup>22</sup> The SRP covers the period from 1 January to 31 December 2015 and is organised around five strategic objectives: protection, lifesaving assistance, resilience, harmonized coordination and enhanced response capacity. With a financial requirement of € 2.63 billion<sup>23</sup>, it aims to reach 12.2 million people with humanitarian aid throughout the whole of Syria. Thus far, only € 496,815 million (19%) has been funded. Of the 19% that has been funded to date the five largest donors to the SRP in 2015

18 UNOCHA Financial Tracking Service, 2015 Strategic Response Plan, total funding per donor, report as of 15 May 2015 ([http://fts.unocha.org/reports/daily/ocha\\_R5\\_A1069\\_\\_1505151122.pdf](http://fts.unocha.org/reports/daily/ocha_R5_A1069__1505151122.pdf)).

19 UNOCHA Financial Tracking Service, Syria Regional Refugee and Resilience Plan, total funding per donor, report as of 15 May 2015 ([http://fts.unocha.org/reports/daily/ocha\\_R5\\_A1090\\_\\_1505151122.pdf](http://fts.unocha.org/reports/daily/ocha_R5_A1090__1505151122.pdf)).

20 The 2015 SRP can be found here: <http://www.humanitarianresponse.info/operations/syria/document/2015-Syrian-arab-republic-strategic-response-plan>.

21 The Whole of Syria (WoS) approach was adopted in September 2014 as a result of UN Security Council Resolution 2165 (2014). It brings together the humanitarian operations that were previously led from several hubs (Syria, Turkey, Jordan) into a singly framework in order to maximise efficiency and reduce duplication (source: <http://www.humanitarianresponse.info/en/operations/whole-of-syria>).

22 The applied term does not imply the expression of any opinion whatsoever on the part of ICMC concerning the legal status of the authorities in Syria.

23 Conversion rate : 1 USD = 0.908925649882 EUR, based on the European Commission InforEUR USD to EUR rate of 21 May 2015. Available: [http://ec.europa.eu/budget/contracts\\_grants/info\\_contracts/inforeuro/inforeuro\\_en.cfm](http://ec.europa.eu/budget/contracts_grants/info_contracts/inforeuro/inforeuro_en.cfm).



are USA (€ 140,316 Million), United Kingdom (€ 129,223 Million), Canada (€ 24,110 Million, Switzerland (€ 11,051 Million) and the European Commission (€ 10,855 Million).<sup>24</sup>

### 1.3.3. Regional Refugee and Resilience Plan 2015-2016 (3RP)<sup>25</sup>

Developed by UNHCR and UNDP, the 3RP provides a consolidated framework to address refugee protection needs, the humanitarian needs of the most vulnerable and the longer-term socio-economic impacts of the Syria crisis on neighbouring countries. It brings together almost 200 humanitarian and development partners, including governments, UN agencies, and national and international NGOs. The 3RP is country-driven and based on national ownership, i.e. activities are designed in support of the priorities set by the respective governments and response strategies are adapted to the context of the specific country. It integrates the plans developed by the national authorities of Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon and Turkey. The UN and NGOs provide support in each country. The 3RP succeeds the 2014 Regional Response Plan (RRP6) and is innovative as it responds to the crisis by seeking to combine humanitarian and development capacities. Organised around two components (the refugee protection and humanitarian component and the resilience/stabilisation-based development component), the 3RP requires a total funding requirement of €5 billion for 2015 with which it aims to reach 25.7 million beneficiaries. The five largest donors (countries and international organisations) to the 3RP in 2015 are USA (€ 221,303 Million or 24%), UK (€ 122,110 Million or 13%), Germany (€ 112,711 Million or 12%), the European Commission (€ 83,982 Million or 9%) and Japan (€ 69,972 Million or 8%).<sup>26</sup> Thus far, € 922,467 million (19%) of the total requirements has been funded.<sup>27</sup> The 81% funding gap for 2015, represents one of the lowest levels of funding for

UN appeals in decades. This underfunding results in cuts in life-saving humanitarian assistance sectors such as food and shelter, and substantial gaps in service provision to an increasingly vulnerable and impoverished refugee population. The lack of prospects for peace in Syria and increasingly desperate situation of refugees in neighbouring countries, call for urgent measures by the international community to provide significant additional funding and to increase admission programmes to receive a meaningful part of the refugees that are currently hosted in neighbouring countries.

24 OCHA Financial Tracking Service, 2015 Strategic Response Plan, date 15 May 2015 (<http://fts.unocha.org/pageloader.aspx?page=emerg-emergencyDetails&appealID=1069>).

25 The 3RP can be found here: <http://www.3rpsyriacrisis.org/>.

26 OCHA Financial Tracking Service, Syria Regional Refugee and Resilience Plan, total funding per donor, report as of 15 May 2015 ([http://fts.unocha.org/reports/daily/ocha\\_R5\\_A1090\\_\\_1505151122.pdf](http://fts.unocha.org/reports/daily/ocha_R5_A1090__1505151122.pdf)).

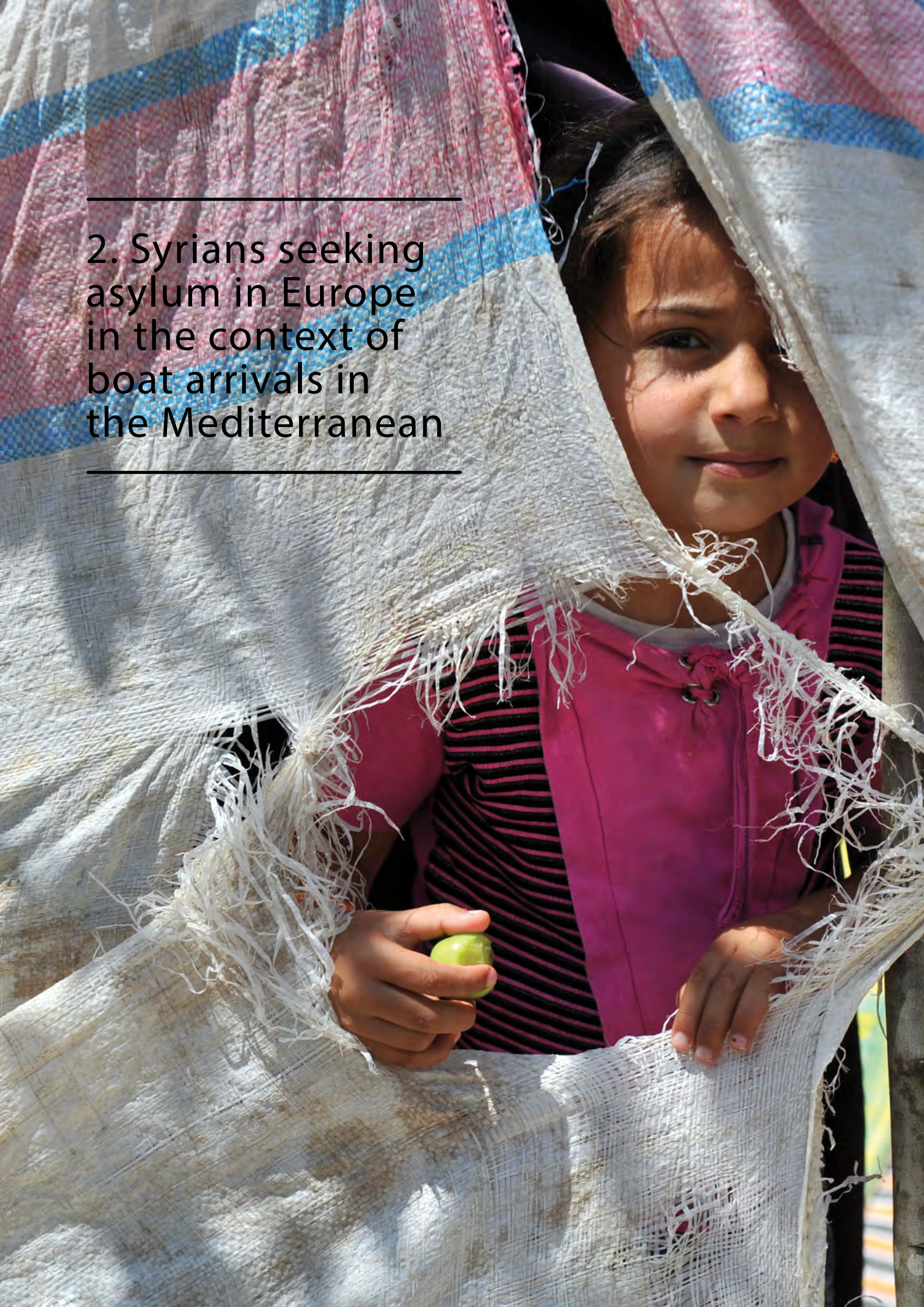
27 OCHA Financial Tracking Service, Syria Regional Refugee and Resilience Plan, date 15 May 2015 (<http://fts.unocha.org/pageloader.aspx?page=emerg-emergencyDetails&appealID=1090>).



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## 2. Syrians seeking asylum in Europe in the context of boat arrivals in the Mediterranean

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## 2.1. SYRIAN ASYLUM FIGURES: WIDE DISPARITIES

As a result of conflicts and political insecurity in countries such as Syria, Iraq, Eritrea and Afghanistan, there has been a steady increase in the number of persons in need of international protection. Between 2011- 2014, just over 200,000 Syrians sought asylum in the European Union. However the number of Syrian refugees that sought asylum in Europe over the past 4 years is equivalent to just 5% of the 4 million Syrians who are living in Syria's neighbouring countries: Turkey, Lebanon, Jordan, Iraq and Egypt (See Chapter 1). In 2014, Syrians lodged more asylum applications than any other national group (representing 20% of all asylum applicants in Europe), followed by Afghans, Kosovars, Eritreans and Serbians. As of April 2015, just over 74,000 Syrian refugees were awaiting a decision on their pending asylum applications in EU member states.

Recognition rates of Syrian asylum claims have grown since the beginning of the crisis from only 50% in 2011 to 95% in 2014, although disparities in the recognition rates across Europe remain. In 2014, four European countries, namely Estonia, Greece, Italy and Slovakia still recognised less than 70% of applications

The number of asylum claims by Syrians across EU member states has been highly uneven with 7 out of 27 member states receiving 85% of all Syrian asylum claims. In 2014, Germany and Sweden together received just over 60% of all Syrian asylum claims made in the EU, with a further 25% received by just 5 other Member States (The Netherlands, Bulgaria, Austria, Denmark and Hungary).

Between 2011-2014, in more than half of the positive decisions, European countries granted Syrian applicants subsidiary protection or humanitarian status<sup>1</sup> rather than full refugee status<sup>2</sup>. Refugees qualifying for subsidiary

protection or humanitarian status do not in all EU countries benefit from all of the rights associated with refugee status, most pertinently the right to apply for family reunification<sup>3</sup>. Without their families, Syrian refugees have more difficulty with longer term integration which may contribute to such refugees moving on to other EU countries which have more lenient policies regarding family reunification. Since 2013, Sweden has granted permanent residency to all Syrian asylum applicants regardless of the type of status granted. In accordance with UNHCR's advice<sup>4</sup>, other European countries have more recently displayed a tendency to more readily grant full refugee recognition amongst positive decisions.<sup>5</sup> The following graph displays the number of applications, status and recognition rates in more detail, clearly showing wide disparities across Europe.

Although more Syrians are claiming asylum in the EU, the opportunities to access protection at its land borders is limited. The construction of fences at both the Greek-Turkish (2012) and Bulgarian-Turkish (2013) borders, increased border patrols and strong evidence of illegal 'pushbacks'<sup>6</sup> from European land borders has led many asylum seekers to take to the seas, in particular the dangerous Central Mediterranean sea route to Europe.

1 Eurostat data retrieved April 2015 (Table: First instance decisions on applications by citizenship, age and sex Annual aggregated data (rounded) (migr.asydcfst)).

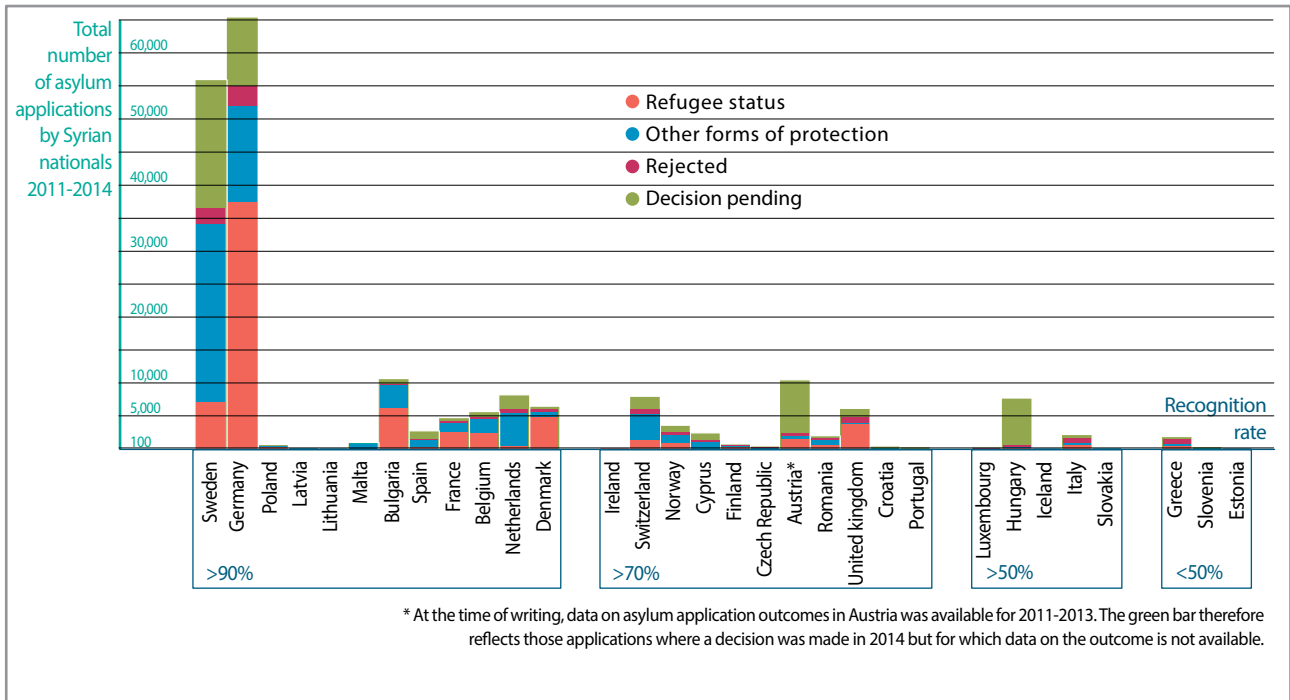
2 In 2014, in the Netherlands, Malta, Spain and Sweden more than 80% of positive decision in Syrian asylum applications amount to subsidiary protection and protection statuses other than refugee recognition.

3 According to the 'EU directive on the right of third country nationals legally staying in a member state to family reunification', recognised refugees in Europe can, within three months after granting of refugee status, apply for reunification with their family members (including spouses and minor children, as well as other family members dependent on refugees) with an exemption from financial support elements and other related requirements as e.g. regarding documentary evidence of family links. This right does not extend to persons granted subsidiary protection.

4 UNHCR believes the majority of people feel Syria falls within the refugee criteria in the 1951 Refugee Convention and that Syrians should thus be recognised as refugees. If, exceptionally, the criteria for refugee status is found not to be met, subsidiary protection criteria is likely to be met.' (Syrian Refugees in Europe – What Europe Can Do to Ensure Protection and Solidarity (UNHCR, June 2014)).

5 Between 2013 and 2014, the percentage of decisions amounting to full refugee recognition of all positive decisions on Syrian asylum applications has risen from 30% to 52% (Eurostat, March 2015).

Table 2 - SYRIAN NATIONALS SEEKING ASYLUM IN EUROPE 2011-2014



Source: Eurostat Annual Aggregated Data 2011- 2014 - compiled by ICMC Europe.

## 2.2. RESPONDING TO RECURRING TRAGEDY – REACTIONS TO DEATH AT SEA IN THE MEDITERRANEAN

The sinking of a boat off the coast of the Italian island of Lampedusa in October 2013, costing 366 lives, galvanised and provided a reference point for the European response to the tragedy of deaths of migrants at sea.

As a result of these incidents, the issue of creating legal channels of access to Europe has become a new policy agenda item. At the Justice and Home Affairs Council Meeting only days after the 2013 incident, the Task Force for the Mediterranean<sup>7</sup> was established to identify and make recommendations in 5 key areas for action to prevent deaths at sea. These focus on EU migration management and addressing irregular migration and smuggling via the Central Mediterranean route, but also make specific reference to expanding legal ways for migrants to access Europe, including via refugee resettlement.

With an ongoing Syrian refugee crisis, and various other worsening refugee situations such as in Eritrea, Iraq, Somalia and Sudan), migrants and refugees increasingly use the same dangerous routes to reach Europe. In 2014, over 220,000 persons<sup>8</sup> of which close to 66,700 were Syrians, crossed the Mediterranean Sea in smuggler boats<sup>9</sup>. In 2014, the Eastern Mediterranean route (via Turkey to Greece) accounted for 56,000 persons. The Central Mediterranean route (mostly departing from Libya to Italy and Malta) accounted for 170,000 persons, of which around 23% were Syrians<sup>10</sup>.

IOM estimates that 3,500 women and children died in attempts to make the crossing in 2014 and estimates that roughly half of those attempting to cross the Mediterranean via the Central Mediterranean route were rescued by the

6 Pushed back, November 2013, Pro Asyl.  
7 European Council Conclusions Brussels, 25 October 2013.

8 Frontex Annual Risk Analysis 2015.  
9 Many more entered Europe via other means, or overstayed visas.  
10 Of these 170,000, 39,651 were Syrians and 33,559 Eritreans.

Italian navy under the 'Mare Nostrum' operation. Since the end of 'Mare Nostrum' end of 2014, the EU Triton operation, being run by the EU's agency for border surveillance FRONTEX, has continued patrols in the Mediterranean.

The tragic drowning of 800 migrants off the Libyan coast, finally got European leaders around the table to discuss measures to avoid further loss of lives. At the emergency summit convened in April 2015, the Commission to draw up 'a more systematic and geographically comprehensive approach' to respond to deaths in The Mediterranean. Accordingly, the European Commission adopted a European Agenda on Migration on May 13th 2015.

### 2.2.1. European Agenda on Migration

European Commission proposals for a "European Agenda on Migration" maintains four pillars of action, namely the reduction of incentives for irregular migration, increased border management, a strong common asylum policy and a new policy on legal migration. In addition, the Commission proposes the following key points of immediate action:

- Expanding the Poseidon and Triton operations, the latter expanding the geographical scope to the level previously maintained by the Mare Nostrum operation off the coast from Libya.
- Possible Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) operation in the Mediterranean, aimed at dismantling trafficker networks and fighting smuggling of people (for which a mandate from the Security Council is needed).

- Proposal for a temporary relocation mechanism from frontline countries such as Greece and Italy, for persons in clear need of protection (such as Syrians) within the EU according to a country by country allocation.<sup>11</sup>

- Proposal for an EU-wide resettlement scheme to offer 20,000 places in all Member States according to a country by country allocation.

In addition to expanding the EU resettlement scheme the Agenda encourages Members States to make full use of other safe and legal avenues available to persons in need of international protection, such as private non- governmental sponsorships, humanitarian visas, and family reunification clauses. However, the Agenda falls short of proposing specific European action with respect to expanding, harmonising or introducing new legal avenues for refugees, and on expanding labour migration opportunities for migrants, particularly for unskilled workers.

In a current context of increased boat arrivals, with over 100,000 people having made the crossing during the first months of 2015, of whom at least 1,800 have died, solidarity mechanisms and secure legal avenues to access protection are now more needed than ever. The fact that Syrians now constitute around 60% of persons crossing the Mediterranean to Greece is a sad reflection of further deterioration of the conflict and a decreasing protection climate in the Middle East.

<sup>11</sup> Distribution criteria include GDP, size of population, unemployment rate and past numbers of asylum seekers.

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### 3. Resettlement and other admission channels for Syrian refugees – a global response

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## 3.1. UNHCR AND REFUGEE RESETTLEMENT

### 3.1.1. Introduction

Through resettlement<sup>1</sup>, refugees are selected and transferred from a State in which they have sought protection, to a third State that has agreed to admit them as refugees.

Refugee resettlement is a *voluntary* scheme coordinated by the UNHCR, which facilitates burden and responsibility-sharing amongst countries that are party to the 1951 Refugee Convention. Significantly, UNHCR emphasizes that resettlement should *complement* and not be a substitute for the provision of protection to persons who apply for asylum under the Convention (for example, spontaneous arrivals, such as asylum seekers arriving by boat).

Resettlement is one of three durable solutions UNHCR is mandated to implement together with States, and provides a crucial means to protect refugees who are unable to integrate locally in their host country or return to their country of origin.

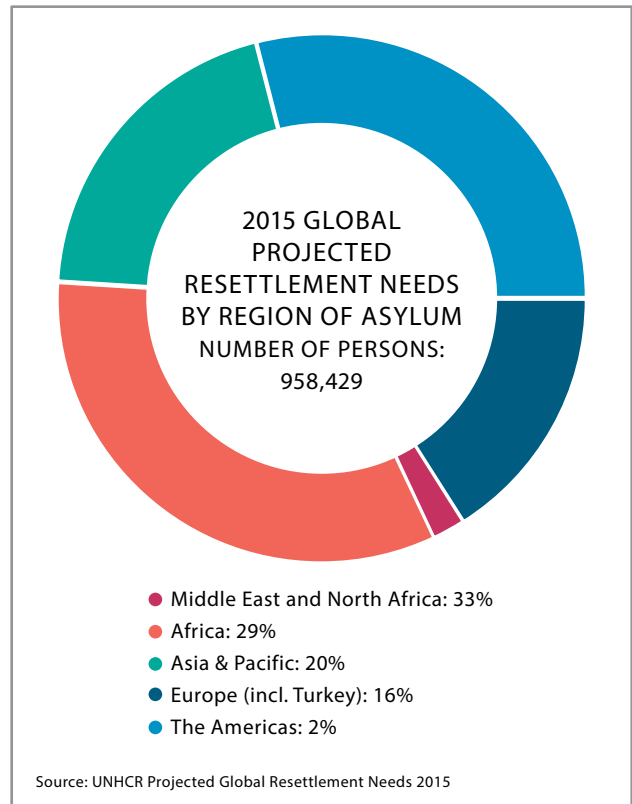
In practice, resettlement is available as a durable solution for a comparatively small number of refugees. Only around 1% of the world's refugees are resettled to third countries each year. The vast majority of refugees are staying in neighbouring, often non-industrialised countries. Resettlement schemes thus also provide a way for the international community to show solidarity with refugee-hosting countries.

Resettlement permits refugees to rebuild their lives in a new country. The status provided to resettled refugees in their new home country ensures protection against *refoulement* and normally provides a resettled refugee and his/her family or dependants with access to rights similar to those enjoyed by nationals. In Europe, resettled refugees are granted full refugee status or subsidiary protection, although the status and rights that are granted varies by State (see chapter 4)<sup>2</sup>.

1 "Resettlement" in the EU differs from "relocation", which refers to the resettlement- between two EU member States- of recognised beneficiaries of international protection, which is carried out for the purpose of burden-sharing amongst EU Member States. To date, only Malta has benefitted from a relocation scheme.  
 2 For overview see 'Welcome to Europe – a comprehensive guide to resettlement in Europe, pages 124-128.

Being provided with a secure status and the opportunity to eventually become a naturalised citizen<sup>3</sup> is a condition *sine qua non* to foster long-term refugee integration, making resettlement a truly durable solution.

### 3.1.2. Global resettlement needs and capacities



UNHCR estimates a global total of 960,000 persons as in need of resettlement in 2015, compared to 691,000 persons in 2014. Due to the Syria refugee crisis, projected resettlement needs have grown steeply with an increase of 39% for 2015 as compared to 2014. In 2015, 377,700 Syrians are in need of resettlement<sup>4</sup>, which represents

3 Syrians were not included in the global resettlement needs projections for 2014.  
 4 UNHCR Projected Global Resettlement Needs Report 2015, June 2014.

around 10% of the Syrian combined refugee population in Turkey, Lebanon, Jordan, Iraq and Egypt.

Although the need for resettlement has increased steeply, the number of available resettlement places globally has stayed constant. Obtaining sufficient resettlement places from States remains one of UNHCR’s biggest challenges. Compared to a global need of 960,000 resettlement places, 28 resettlement countries around the world offer only around 80,000 places through their annual quota places for all UNHCR resettlement submissions, of which, over the last year, approximately 50% have been offered by the

United States, 10% by Canada, 12% by Australia and New Zealand, and 13% collectively, by Europe. In recent years, small programmes have started in Argentina, Brazil, Chile and Japan.

Countries may also offer places on top of or in addition to annual quotas in case of major refugee crises following UNHCR appeals, as has been the case for Syrian refugees. UNHCR has encouraged states to offer resettlement places for Syrians outside of their annual resettlement quotas to ensure that resettlement opportunities also remain available for refugees from the rest of the world.

## 3.2. RESETTLEMENT AND OTHER ADMISSION CHANNELS FOR SYRIAN REFUGEES – A GLOBAL RESPONSE

### 3.2.1. UNHCR calls for resettlement and other admission places

In the first two years since the start of the Syrian conflict, UNHCR concentrated on refugee registration and addressing humanitarian needs. Sweden resettled the first group of 112 Iraqis and Palestinians that were stuck inside Syria in 2012. Germany made the first large-scale European commitment for the admission of Syrians in late 2013, by offering an initial 5,000 places for Syrians in need of safe and legal access to Europe. This announcement was *‘in anticipation of a bigger European response’*<sup>5</sup> and in fact triggered the first of a number of UNHCR appeals listed in the table below.

As the conflict has become more and more protracted, resettlement has become more embedded in the UNHCR protection and durable solutions response. The agency has been looking to prioritise the most vulnerable Syrians and called for solidarity and burden-sharing with Syria’s neighbouring countries, whose capacity to host nearly 4 million Syrian refugees becomes more and more strained.

Since 2013, UNHCR has issued two calls to states for resettlement places or other forms of admission for Syrian refugees outside of state’s annual resettlement quotas. These are outlined in the table below:

#### Overview of UNHCR calls for resettlement and other admission places for Syrians

2013:

Responding to the announcement of the German Humanitarian Admission Programme (HAP) in March 2013, UNHCR calls States to provide 10,000 humanitarian admission places for Syrians in the Middle East /North Africa region, and 2,000 resettlement places for vulnerable Syrians in Lebanon and Jordan. In September 2013, UNHCR, IOM and states receiving Syrian refugees established the Core Group for Syrian Resettlement, as well as a host countries Resettlement Working Group. In October, *UNHCR appeals for 30,000 places on resettlement and other admission programmes for Syrians during 2013-14*. This target was met by June 2014, with European countries providing approximately 80% of all places pledged.

2014:

In February 2014, UNHCR makes a further appeal for states to make multi-annual commitments for 100,000

<sup>5</sup> Statement of the German Minister of the Interior (March 2013).



additional resettlement and admission places for Syrians from 2013-16. This brings the total number of requested places to 130,000.

The appeal requests that:

- 65,000 of the 130,000 places are available for UNHCR to refer vulnerable and urgent protection cases in line with the UNHCR resettlement submission categories.
- These places should be pledged as much as possible as additional places, outside of the annual resettlement quotas in order not to replace and jeopardize resettlement from other refugee situations.
- The remaining 65,000 should be offered by means of alternative legal admission programmes, to be implemented outside the UNHCR resettlement framework.

In November, UNHCR provides guidance to states that will be offering places for Syrians, in which it outlines 'traditional' refugee resettlement and 7 additional types of admission ('tools') that states might use to develop programmes for Syrians, namely:

- Humanitarian admission
- Community-based private sponsorship
- Medical evacuation
- Admission of relatives
- Academic scholarships
- Humanitarian visas
- Labour mobility schemes

UNHCR asks states to offer places via multi-annual commitments (2015-2016) to enable a sustained and coordinated response.

#### Resettlement needs beyond 2015

At the Ministerial-level pledging conference for resettlement and other forms of admission for Syrian refugees, which was organized by UNHCR on 9 December 2014 in Geneva, the UN High Commissioner for Refugees announces that UNHCR estimates that one in ten of the Syrian refugee population is in need of resettlement or some other form of admission.. This number responds to the UNHCR 2015 projected global resettlement needs assessment, which determines that one out of ten Syrians registered in neighbouring countries are in need of resettlement. UNHCR did not specify a timeline by which this target should be reached.

### 3.2.2. Global Responses to the UNHCR call for 130,000 places

Since 2014, UNHCR has called for 130,000 resettlement and other types of admission places to be offered by the end of 2016. UNHCR has asked states to provide half of these places (65,000) through resettlement and humanitarian admission programmes; and the other half through other admission channels, mentioned in the table above.

As of May 2015, around two-thirds of the requested 130,000 places have been made available by states around the globe<sup>6</sup>, of which one-third are resettlement places, as can be shown in the table on the following page. Taking into account additional unofficial bilateral pledges made by a number of states, this means that, as of May 2015, only 23,500 places must still be secured to meet UNHCR's target.

European countries have, to date, offered approximately 55,000 of the 130,000 places made available. The traditionally largest resettlement countries, namely Australia, Canada and the United States, have been slow to respond to resettlement needs for Syrians. Neither Australia, Canada nor the United States has increased annual resettlement quotas to allow for a substantial intake of Syrians.

#### Syrian Resettlement in Australia, Canada and United States

##### Australia

The Australian Humanitarian Programme has an annual quota of 13,000 places and includes both resettlement and special humanitarian admission places. For 2014-2015, 2,200 Syrians will be admitted under this quota. The majority will be admitted under the humanitarian admission component, involving sponsorship by family members who will provide for immediate accommodation needs, assistance in finding permanent accommodation, familiarization with services and service providers, etc.

##### Canada

Canada has an annual quota of 13,400 refugees and

<sup>6</sup> UNHCR data May 2015, available at <http://resettlement.eu/news/crisis-syria>.

Table 3 - THE GLOBAL RESPONSE TO THE SYRIAN REFUGEE CRISIS:  
PLEDGES FOR RESETTLEMENT AND OTHER FORMS OF ADMISSION 2013-2016

| Country                   | Total places pledged     | Details of programme   |
|---------------------------|--------------------------|--|
| Argentina                 | open-ended               | Humanitarian Visa Programme (2014-unspecified)   |
| Australia*                | 5,600                    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Resettlement (2013-2015)</li> <li>Special Humanitarian Admission Programme (2013-2015)</li> </ul>   |
| Austria                   | 1,500 <sup>1</sup>       | Humanitarian Admission Programme (2014-15)   |
| Belarus                   | 20                       | Resettlement   |
| Belgium*                  | 300                      | Resettlement: 300 places (2014-15) of those 150 outside existing annual quota  |
| Brazil                    | open-ended <sup>2</sup>  | Humanitarian Visa Programme  |
| Canada*                   | 11,300                   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Resettlement: 200 places (2013-14) plus an unspecified share of the 10,000 places pledged for 2015-17</li> <li>Private Sponsorship: 1100 places (2013-2014) plus an unspecified share of the 10,000 places pledged for 2015-17</li> </ul> |
| Czech Republic            | 70                       | Resettlement (2015)  |
| Denmark*                  | 390                      | Resettlement (2014-16)   |
| Finland*                  | 850                      | Resettlement: 850 places (2014-15) of those 300 outside existing annual quota  |
| France*                   | 1,000 <sup>3</sup>       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Resettlement (2014-15)</li> <li>Humanitarian Admission Programme (2014-15)</li> </ul>   |
| Germany*                  | 30,200                   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Resettlement: 200 places (2014)</li> <li>Humanitarian Admission Programme: 20,000 places (2013-15)</li> <li>Landesaufnahmeprogramme (Regional family member admission programmes): 10,000 places (2013-undefined)</li> </ul>              |
| Hungary                   | 30                       | Resettlement (2013-14)   |
| Ireland*                  | 420                      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Resettlement: 310 places (2014-16)</li> <li>Syrian Humanitarian Admission Programme (SHAP): 110 places (2014)</li> </ul>  |
| Italy                     | 450                      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Resettlement: 400 places (timeframe not yet determined)</li> <li>Private Sponsorship: 50 places (timeframe not yet determined)</li> </ul>   |
| Liechtenstein             | 25                       | Resettlement (2014)  |
| Luxembourg                | 60                       | Resettlement (2014)  |
| Netherlands*              | 500                      | Resettlement (2014-15)   |
| New Zealand*              | 100                      | Resettlement (2014-15)   |
| Norway*                   | 8,500                    | Resettlement: 2,500 places (2014-15) plus 3,000 in 2016 and 3,000 in 2017  |
| Poland                    | 100                      | Resettlement (2015-20)   |
| Portugal*                 | 23 <sup>4</sup>          | Resettlement (2014)  |
| Spain*                    | 130                      | Resettlement (2014)  |
| Sweden*                   | 2,700                    | Resettlement (2014-15)   |
| Switzerland*              | 8,200                    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Resettlement: 2,500 places (2013-15)</li> <li>Additional admission for family members: 4,700 places (2013)</li> <li>Humanitarian visa programme for family members: 1,000 places (2015-2017)</li> </ul>                                   |
| United Kingdom*           | unspecified <sup>5</sup> | Ad-hoc 'Vulnerable Persons Relocation Scheme' (VPRS): unspecified number of places (approx. 300 2014-16)   |
| United States of America* | open-ended <sup>6</sup>  | Resettlement (2013-unspecified)  |
| Uruguay                   | 120                      | Resettlement (2014)  |
|                           | 72,588                   | Total number of official pledges   |
|                           | 16,911                   | Visa granted under programmes with open-ended or unspecified number of places 2013 - March 2015  |
|                           | 89,499 <sup>7</sup>      | Total number of places made available for refugees from Syria 2013-2016  |

Source: UNHCR and <http://resettlement.eu/news/crisis-syria>

\* Countries with annual resettlement quota programmes: Australia (annual admission under the Humanitarian programme (including resettlement and Special Humanitarian Admission Programme: 13,750), (Belgium (100), Canada (flexible annual quota (including resettlement and private sponsorship) between 12,000-14,000 persons), Denmark (1,500 in a 3 -year multiannual quota), Finland (750), France (100 dossier cases considered annually), Germany (300 (500 from 2015 onwards)), Ireland (80, Netherlands (2,000 in a 4 -year multiannual quota), New Zealand (750), Norway (1200), Portugal (30), Spain (100), Sweden (1900), Switzerland (300 in a 3 year pilot programme), UK (750 yearly), U.S. (approx. 70,000)

- 1 Division of places between resettlement and the Special Humanitarian Admission programme has not yet been defined.
- 2 By March 2015 6053 visas had been issued under this programme.
- 3 Division of places between resettlement and humanitarian admission has not yet been defined for 2015. Approximately 75-80% of the total 770 places for 2014-15 are expected to be humanitarian admission.
- 4 Portugal has also admitted 70 students from Syria in the framework of the Global Platform for Syrian Students (2-year student visas).
- 5 143 persons had been accepted under the scheme by March 2015.
- 6 By February 2015, 10,715 persons had been submitted for resettlement to the United States.
- 7 Plus an unspecified number of places under the Argentina, Brazil, German, UK and US programmes 2015-16. Humanitarian visa and admissions under special visa and extended stay programmes for Syrian students are not included.

received around 1,200 Syrian refugees in 2013 and 2014 combined, and has committed to receiving 10,000 Syrians over the coming three years (2015-2017) under its annual quota. The Canadian programme consists of a resettlement component (Government Assisted Refugees - GAR) for UNHCR submitted cases, and a private sponsorship component under which:

- Refugees are referred and sponsored by either a group of 5 persons or recognized Sponsorship Agreement Holders (SAHs).
- Refugees do not need to be recognized refugees and can be family members. However, they must fulfill vulnerability criteria.

For the 2013-2014 period, 1,200 Syrians were referred under the private sponsorship programme, and have subsequently arrived in Canada, while for 2015-2017, 6,000 Syrian refugees will be resettled under the resettlement and 4,000 under the private sponsorship.

#### United States

The United States Refugee Admission Programme (USRAP) has a current annual quota of 70,000 and selects refugees through a priority system established

in a report to Congress. For 2013, 2,000 Syrians were resettled under the USRAP. In 2014, UNHCR submitted over 13,000 Syrian referrals to the United States. As of mid-2015, approximately 800 Syrians have arrived. Enhanced security clearance processes have led to many delays, sometimes adding years to refugees' processing and waiting periods.

#### Brazil's Humanitarian Visa Programme

Outside of Europe, the biggest contribution has been made by Brazil, which has offered a significant number of places through a humanitarian visa programme<sup>7</sup> under which over 7,000 visas have been issued to Syrians<sup>8</sup> to date. Under a special decision issued by the Brazilian authorities for this purpose, Syrians affected by the conflict and who wish to apply for asylum in Brazil, receive a tourist visa (valid for 90 days) at Brazilian consulates, while declaring their intention to apply for asylum. In this case, the regular tourist visa requirements will be waived. Upon arrival in Brazil, Syrians apply for asylum with the authorities. Like other refugees, Syrians are granted the right to work and have access to public health and education services. Since the Brazilian government does not cover any other costs, NGOs and churches have been providing Syrian refugees with assistance.

## 3.3. UNHCR PROCESSING OF SYRIAN REFUGES FOR RESETTLEMENT AND HUMANITARIAN ADMISSION

### 3.3.1. UNHCR Capacity and submission criteria

In 2015, 377,700 Syrians are in need of resettlement<sup>9</sup>, which represents around 10% of the Syrian combined refugee population in Turkey, Lebanon, Jordan, Iraq and Egypt.

UNHCR has substantially increased its capacity to process resettlement cases. While UNHCR submitted over 21,000 Syrians for resettlement in 2014, UNHCR has estimated to increase the number of submissions for 2016 to 36,000 for 2015<sup>10</sup>. In order to submit these cases, UNHCR depends on the support of staff deployed to UNHCR field offices; who are responsible for around 45% of total submissions.

Overall, numbers are still very low. As is shown in the table below, UNHCR submitted around 21,000 Syrians in 2014. Around 10,000 Syrians departed during that year, of which

<sup>7</sup> Normative Resolution 17 issued by the Brazilian National Committee for Refugees (CONARE).

<sup>8</sup> These may also include other nationalities than Syrians affected by the conflict.

<sup>9</sup> UNHCR Projected Global Resettlement Needs Report 2015, June 2014. According to the Global Resettlement Needs Report 2016 the number of resettlement needs from Turkey, Lebanon, Jordan, Iraq, Egypt combined will rise to 493,530 for 2016.

<sup>10</sup> Notably via the ICMC - UNHCR deployment scheme.

Table 4 - UNHCR RESETTLEMENT OF SYRIANS: PROJECTED NEEDS, PROCESSING CAPACITY, SUBMISSIONS AND DEPARTURES

| Country of asylum | UNHCR resettlement submissions in 2014 | UNHCR resettlement departures in 2014 | Projected resettlement needs for 2015 | Resettlement needs in % of overall Syrian refugee population 2015 | UNHCR resettlement submission planned for 2015 |
|-------------------|--|---------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|---|--|
| Turkey            | 5,480                                  | 303                                   | 130,000                               | 8.37%   | 15,000   |
| Lebanon           | 7,333                                  | 4,874                                 | 150,000                               | 12.84%  | 15,500   |
| Jordan            | 6,086                                  | 1,554                                 | 60,000                                | 9.61%   | 6,000  |
| Iraq              | 429                                    | 25                                    | 22,700                                | 9.36%   | 1,250  |
| Egypt             | 1,583                                  | 273                                   | 15,000                                | 10.98%  | 2,000  |
| Total             | 20,911                                 | 7,029                                 | 377,700                               | 10.14%*   | 36,750   |

Sources: UNHCR Projected Global Resettlement Needs 2015 and UNHCR field offices

\* Average percentage of Syrian refugee populations in need of resettlement across countries

over 83% to European countries, of which half resettlement and the other half UNHCR - referred cases in the framework of humanitarian admission programmes (HAP). These numbers do not include humanitarian admission cases that are not referred by UNHCR nor does this include arrivals through other legal pathways for refugees. (See section 3.4.2 for further details).

Resettlement is time-consuming, with the entire resettlement process (reception and registration, Refugee Status Determination (RSD), case identification, referral to a resettlement country, case processing, adjudication, departure and reception) for regular cases typically taking from 3 months up to 1 year. Although progress has been made in introducing expedited procedures, certain countries, such as the United States, still have very long processing periods for Syrians due to lengthy security screening and clearance procedures.

UNHCR, in cooperation with partners, is responsible for the identification, assessment and prioritisation of cases to be submitted for resettlement to states. In general, refugees are identified as in need of resettlement when they are at risk or have particular needs or vulnerabilities that cannot be addressed in the country of refuge.

Registration is vital to ensure protection and to identify refugees for resettlement consideration. To this end, UNHCR

uses the ProGres database, which includes written details of individuals, and stores their biometric data: more specifically, their iris data and photographs for facial recognition.

Not every refugee is eligible for resettlement. The seven categories used by UNHCR to prioritize refugees for resettlement include:

- Legal and/or Physical Protection Needs of the refugee in the country of refuge (this includes a threat of *refoulement*)
- Survivors of Torture and/or Violence, where repatriation or the conditions of asylum could result in further traumatization and/or heightened risk, or where appropriate treatment is not available
- Medical Needs, in particular life-saving treatment that is unavailable in the country of refuge
- Women and Girls at Risk, who have protection problems particular to their gender
- Family Reunification, when resettlement is the only means to reunite refugee family members who, owing to refugee flight or displacement, are separated by borders or entire continents
- Children and Adolescents at Risk<sup>11</sup>, where a child has compelling protection needs which are not addressed in the country of asylum, and

<sup>11</sup> With respect to Syrian children, most children-at-risk cases are those who are at risk of child labour and child marriage, abuse, and other similar risks.

- Lack of Foreseeable Alternative Durable Solutions, which generally is relevant only when other solutions are not feasible in the foreseeable future, when resettlement can be used strategically, and/or when it can open possibilities for comprehensive solutions.<sup>12</sup>

For the resettlement of Syrians, UNHCR prioritises most often urban refugees outside the camps, focusing on the most vulnerable.

In view of the overwhelming needs of the Syrian refugee population in cities and towns, and in the context of limited resettlement places, prioritization has become a major challenge. It is estimated that around 30% of Syrian refugees require specific medical attention and many refugees suffer from traumas and psychological distress caused by events linked to the conflict or by living conditions inside refugee camps (See chapter 1.2) .

In order to identify refugees for resettlement, the local UNHCR Case Identification Teams reach out to refugees based on the information contained in the ProGres database, make follow-up phone calls, and use information and referrals from different UNHCR units, governments and NGOs. If a case falls in one of the above-mentioned submission categories, and the refugees have expressed an interest in resettlement, they are invited for a Pre-Screening interview, at which they will be informed about the cultural and social practices in the countries to which they may be resettled, in order to make an informed decision about whether they want to proceed with resettlement. UNHCR also performs a rapid assessment to confirm their vulnerabilities and whether to prioritise the case for resettlement or other interventions.

If a refugee wishes to proceed with resettlement, UNHCR will carry out a merged process, combining Refugee Status Determination (RSD) and resettlement processes, to then draft the Refugee Registration Form (RRF), and submit the file to the resettlement country in question.

Under the different Humanitarian Admission Programmes (HAP) of Austria, France, Germany and the UK<sup>13</sup>, UNHCR has submitted around 9,000 vulnerable cases using the simplified

HAP form<sup>14</sup>. This has resulted in more streamlined and more cost efficient procedures, increasing UNHCR capacity to process and submit cases. The HAP procedure does not require UNHCR to decide on the refugee claim and carry out a Refugee Status Determination (RSD), thus reducing interviewing time with the refugee. The HAP does not require Country of Origin Information (COI) to be included in the HAP submission form, nor does it require an assessment of submission criteria. This substantially shortens the time needed to prepare submissions and results in shorter periods leading up to departure. It is reported that HAP submissions are two times quicker to produce than those under traditional resettlement.

The simplified procedures under the HAP have also led to discussions among resettlement countries about the need to streamline procedures which has led to the introduction of a Syria Short Form RRF now used for all Syrian submissions.

Although most countries select refugees by means of selection missions in countries of first asylum, dossier (electronic file) submissions, i.e. 'paper-based' submissions are a critical component of UNHCR resettlement processing, particularly when selection missions cannot take place as a result of security conditions or dispersal of refugees throughout a sub-region. UNHCR requires around 2,000 places for emergency or urgent cases, but only around 900 places (mostly from European countries) are available. These are normally used for refugees with acute protection or health needs.

Digital Video Conference (DVC) interviews are increasingly used to pre-select and process refugees for resettlement in cases where the refugees are otherwise inaccessible due to safety and security concerns. In 2013, UNHCR Damascus interviewed approximately 2,000 individuals, mostly Iraqis and Palestinians, stranded in Syria via video conferencing. Evacuations to the Emergency Transit Centers (ETC)<sup>15</sup> in Romania and Slovakia have also been used by UNHCR to ensure processing and expedited resettlement.

<sup>12</sup> UNHCR Resettlement Handbook, UNHCR website, chapter 6, accessed March 2015.

<sup>13</sup> The Vulnerable Persons Relocation Scheme- VPRS.

<sup>14</sup> 6,500 vulnerable cases to Germany, almost 900 to Austria, around 1,000 to France and over 400 to the United Kingdom (under the Vulnerable Persons Relocation Scheme- VPRS).

<sup>15</sup> For further details on emergency resettlement and use of the ETC see information on the European Resettlement Network (ERN) website at <http://resettlement.eu/page/essential-role-emergency-and-urgent-resettlement-life-saving-measure>.

## 3.4. EUROPEAN RESETTLEMENT AND ADMISSION RESPONSES: A SUMMARY

### 3.4.1. Introduction

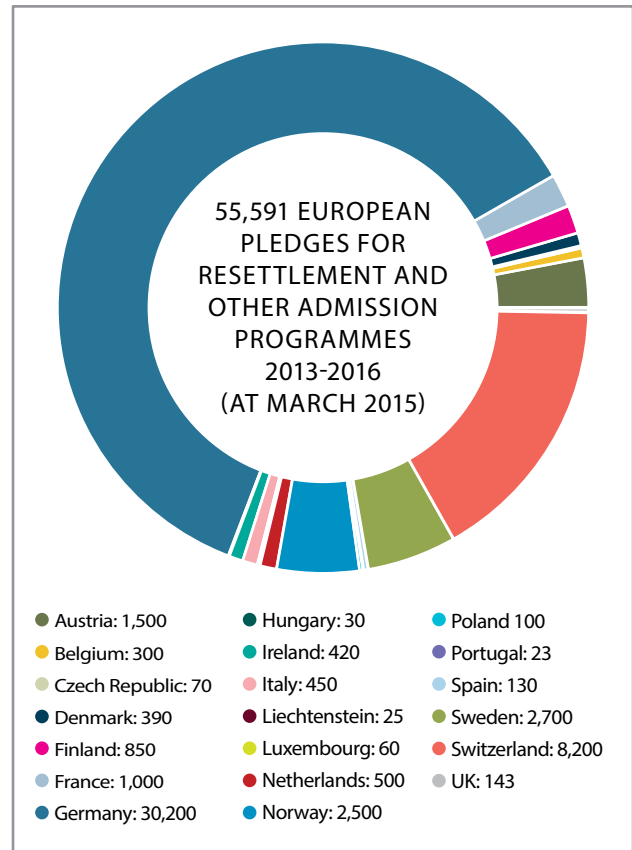
In 2013-2016, European countries pledged approximately 56,000 of the 130,000 places called for by UNHCR. ICMC research shows that half of these places have been filled and that at least 25,000 Syrians have arrived in Europe<sup>16</sup>, of which over 17,000 have arrived in Germany<sup>17</sup>.

European countries have offered resettlement places for Syrian refugees both within and outside of existing quotas, and have used new and existing admission channels, including mainstream migration channels, to complement and extend 'traditional' refugee resettlement programmes.

As requested by UNHCR, this has created an extended 'toolbox' of protection measures for use by receiving states, ultimately contributing a significant number of places within a relatively short time period. Whilst it is a positive development that several European countries without pre-existing annual resettlement quotas are now receiving Syrian refugees,<sup>18</sup> it should be noted that the bulk of the European response is concentrated on a few exceptional contributors, with Germany alone currently providing more than 60% of European places.

Although UNHCR has called on states to offer 50% of places under resettlement and the other 50% under other types of admission, less than one third has been admitted under traditional resettlement programmes, while around two thirds (over 38,000)<sup>19</sup> were made available under ad hoc humanitarian admission programmes and other legal pathways.

For 2015 and beyond, commitments by European states to offer places have decreased rapidly compared to 2013 and 2014. The German HAP is phasing out in 2015, and there are no new large-scale admission programmes for Syrians in the pipeline.



Recently however, substantial commitments to resettle and admit Syrians have been made by two non-EU countries: Norway and Switzerland. In June 2015, Norway announced it would take in 8,000 Syrian refugees to the end of 2017,<sup>20</sup> and Switzerland recently announced an additional 2,000 resettlement places and 1,000 humanitarian visas for Syrian refugees in 2015-2017.

Additional commitments for places in the European Union, however, may still be made available for 2015-2016 following the publication of the EU's Agenda on Migration<sup>21</sup>. The Agenda proposes an EU-wide resettlement scheme, which will consist of a single European pledge of 20,000 resettlement

16 This number does not include Syrians that have arrived under the German Regional Family Reunification Scheme, since these arrive by their own means and are therefore not reported upon.

17 Data provided by officials by end of 2014.

18 Austria, Czech Republic, Hungary, Italy, Liechtenstein, Luxembourg, Poland and Switzerland.

19 This includes 9,000 UNHCR referred cases under the HAP.

20 2,000 in 2015, 3,000 in 2016, 3,000 in 2017.

21 [http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/home-affairs/what-we-do/policies/european-agenda-migration/background-information/docs/communication\\_on\\_the\\_european\\_agenda\\_on\\_migration\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/home-affairs/what-we-do/policies/european-agenda-migration/background-information/docs/communication_on_the_european_agenda_on_migration_en.pdf).



places, with all EU Member States requested to participate, while Associated States are also invited to partake. Currently, the scheme would not only include Syrian refugees, but refugees from all EU priority regions, i.e. Regional Development and Protection Programme (RDPP) regions for the Middle East, North Africa, and the Horn of Africa. It is proposed that resettlement places would be divided among all EU Member States according to a distribution key based<sup>22</sup> on criteria related to Gross Domestic Product (GDP), size of population, unemployment rate, as well as past numbers of asylum-seekers and resettled refugees received. According to this country-to-country allocation, only four countries would be asked to resettle more than 1,000 refugees. The EU budget will support this scheme through additional funding of EUR 50 million for 2015-2016. Currently voluntary, if needed, the Commission is considering proposing a binding approach for an EU-wide resettlement scheme beyond 2016.

The table in the annex 1 of this publication provides an overview of the European responses to the Syrian refugee crisis, including asylum-related figures, pledges made in response to the UNHCR calls, and also includes the proposed country allocations proposed in the EU Agenda on Migration.

### 3.4.2. Main features of European admission responses

The overview set out above uses common characteristics and approaches to categorise European programmes as either resettlement or other types of admission. However, some individual programmes are hybrid in nature since they encompass a variety of responses that sometimes overlap and are not subject to easy categorization. The country chapters included in chapter 4 of this report describe the responses of the different European countries in detail.

#### a) Refugee resettlement

Resettlement accounts for around one-third of the 56,000 places for refugees from Syria. For the period 2013-2016, 18 European countries have offered resettlement places:

- 12 States<sup>23</sup> have pledged places from existing annual resettlement quotas.
- 4 States<sup>24</sup> have pledged places in addition to annual resettlement quotas.
- 6 European countries<sup>25</sup> have established ad-hoc resettlement initiatives for Syrian refugees.

Five European countries (Denmark, Finland, The Netherlands, Norway and Sweden) provide emergency resettlement places, available for the referral of Syrian refugees, as sub-quotas within their resettlement programmes outlined above. In addition, Denmark, The Netherlands and Norway operate a sub-quota specifically for medical cases.

It is estimated that during 2014-2015, over 13,000 Syrian resettled refugees will have arrived in Europe. Resettlement processing has, in most cases, been relatively quick, although a lack of available places in municipalities in Europe has sometimes held up departures from the host country.

The Asylum, Migration & Integration Fund (AMIF) provides support for resettlement through: lump sums per person resettled and financial support to specific activities and infrastructure. Member States receive a lump sum of 6,000€ for each resettled person, which can be increased to 10,000€ in case Member States resettle under the common EU resettlement priorities (which includes refugees from Syria) or concern a specific category of vulnerable persons. Lump sums cannot be allocated to persons under the Humanitarian Admission Programme HAP) that have been provided with temporary stay and not with refugee status, since resettlement must provide for a durable solution. For 2014-2015, 16 Member States have asked funding for 6,000 Syrian refugees (being one of the common EU resettlement priorities). Syrians account for 40% of the total number of 14,500 persons to be resettled to EU countries with AMIF funding during this period. The total AMIF funding envelope for 2014-2015 represented around EUR 137 million. Sweden has received the largest portion of AMIF funding (25% - with 2,670 persons), followed by the UK (2,040 persons), Finland (1,873 persons), France (1,855 persons) and Germany (1,300 persons)

<sup>22</sup> See the proposed allocations in the comparative table 1 in the annex of this report, indicated under column 'quota allocations'.

<sup>23</sup> Belgium, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Ireland, The Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, Spain, Sweden and Switzerland.

<sup>24</sup> Belgium, Finland, Norway and Switzerland.

<sup>25</sup> Czech Republic, Hungary, Italy, Liechtenstein, Luxembourg and Poland.

Table 5 - Asylum, resettlement & admission: the European response to the Syrian refugee crisis 2011-2016

|                  | Country        | Number of asylum applications from Syrian nationals 2011-2014 (Recognition rate in %) | Total places pledged for refugees from Syria 2013-2016   | Name of programme  | Refugee status on arrival (Yes/No)  | Total allocation based on the European resettlement scheme proposed by the European Commission in May 2015 (% of overall 20 000 persons) <sup>1</sup> |
|------------------|----------------|---|--|--|---|---|
| EU-member states | Austria        | 10,350 (84%)  | 1,500  | Humanitarian Admission Programme: 1500 places (2014-15)  | Yes   | 444 (2.22%)   |
|                  | Belgium*       | 5,510 (94%)   | 300  | Resettlement: 300 places (2014-15) of those 150 outside existing annual quota  | Yes   | 490 (2.45%)   |
|                  | Bulgaria       | 10,545 (98%)  | 0  |  |   | 216 (1.08%)   |
|                  | Croatia        | 260 (80%)   | 0  |  |   | 315 (1.58%)   |
|                  | Cyprus         | 2,260 (81%)   | 0  |  |   | 69 (0.34%)  |
|                  | Czech Republic | 270 (86%)   | 70   | Resettlement: 70 places (2015)   | Yes   | 525 (2.63%)   |
|                  | Denmark*       | 9,825 (89%)   | 390  | Resettlement: 390 places (2014-16)   | Yes   | 345 (1.73%)   |
|                  | Estonia        | 25 (0%)   | 0  |  |   | 326 (1.63%)   |
|                  | Finland*       | 575 (85%)   | 850  | Resettlement: 850 places (2014-15) of those 300 outside existing annual quota  | Yes   | 293 (1.46%)   |
|                  | France*        | 4,590 (94%)   | 1,000 <sup>2</sup>   | A: Resettlement: (2014-15)<br>B: Humanitarian Admission Programme (2014-15)  | A & B: Yes (subsidiary protection in some cases)  | 2375 (11.87%)   |
|                  | Germany*       | 65,325 (93%)  | 30,200   | A: Resettlement: 200 places (2014)<br>B: Humanitarian Admission Programme: 20,000 places (2013-15)<br>C: Landesaufnahmeprogramme (Regional family member admission programmes): 10,000 places (2013-undefined) | A, B & C: No  | 3086 (15.43%)   |
|                  | Greece         | 1,705 (36%)   | 0  |  |   | 323 (1.61%)   |
|                  | Hungary        | 7,580 (68%)   | 30   | Resettlement: 30 places (2014-15)  | Yes   | 307 (1.53%)   |
|                  | Ireland*       | 70 (93%)  | 420  | A: Resettlement: 310 places (2014-16)<br>B: Syrian Humanitarian Admission Programme (SHAP): 110 places (2014)  | A: Yes<br>B: No   | 272 (1.36%)   |
|                  | Italy          | 2,020 (59%)   | 450  | A: Resettlement: 400 places<br>B: Private Sponsorship: 50 places   | A & B: Details not yet established  | 1989 (9.94%)  |
|                  | Latvia         | 75 (100%)   | 0  |  |   | 220 (1.10%)   |
|                  | Lithuania      | 20 (100%)   | 0  |  |   | 207 (1.03%)   |
|                  | Luxembourg     | 120 (50%)   | 60   | Resettlement: 60 places (2014)   | Yes   | 147 (0.74%)   |
|                  | Malta          | 800 (98%)   | 0  |  |   | 121 (0.60%)   |
|                  | Netherlands*   | 12,445 (89%)  | 500  | Resettlement: 500 places (2014-15)   | Yes   | 732 (3.66%)   |
|                  | Poland         | 495 (100%)  | 100  | Resettlement: 100 places (2015-20)   | Yes (subsidiary protection in some cases)   | 962 (4.81%)   |
|                  | Portugal*      | 165 (100%)  | 23 <sup>3</sup>  | Resettlement: 23 places (2014)   | Yes   | 704 (3.52%)   |
|                  | Romania        | 1,830 (85%)   | 0  |  |   | 657 (3.29%)   |
|                  | Slovakia       | 45 (50%)  | 0  |  |   | 319 (1.60%)   |
|                  | Slovenia       | 195 (33%)   | 0  |  |   | 207 (1.03%)   |
|                  | Spain*         | 2,575 (96%)   | 130  | Resettlement: 130 places (2014)  | Yes   | 1549 (7.75%)  |
|                  | Sweden*        | 55,835 (93%)  | 2,700  | Resettlement: 2,700 places (2014-15)   | Yes   | 491 (2.46%)   |
| United Kingdom*  | 6,000 (81%)    | unspecified <sup>4</sup>  | Ad-hoc 'Vulnerable Persons Relocation Scheme' (VPRS): unspecified number of places (approx. 300 2014-16) | No   | 2309 (11.54%)   |   |
| EEA              | Iceland        | 15 (50%)  | 0  |  |   | N.A.  |
|                  | Liechtenstein  | 0 (n/a)   | 25   | Resettlement: 25 places (2014)   | not known   | N.A.  |
|                  | Norway*        | 3,430 (84%)   | 8,500  | Resettlement: 2,500 places (2014-15) plus 3,000 in 2016 and 3,000 in 2017  | Yes   | N.A.  |
|                  | Switzerland*   | 7,840 (87%)   | 8,200  | A: Resettlement: 2,500 places (2013-15)<br>B: Additional admission for family members: 4,700 places (2013)<br>C: Humanitarian visa programme for family members: 1,000 places (2015-2017)                      | A: Yes (subsidiary protection in some cases)<br>B & C: Depending on outcome of asylum procedure | N.A.  |
|                  |                | 212,795 (91%)   | 55,591 <sup>5</sup>  | Total number of pledges by EU-member states  |   |   |

Source: Communication from the Commission to the European parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee of the Regions – A European Agenda on Migration (European Commission, 13 May 2015).

\* countries with annual resettlement quota programmes: Belgium (100), Denmark (1,500 in a 3-year multiannual quota), Finland (750), France (100 dossier cases considered annually), Germany (300 (500 from 2015 onwards)), Ireland (80), Netherlands (2,000 in a 4-year multiannual quota), Norway (1200), Portugal (30), Spain (100), Sweden (1900), Switzerland (300 in a 3 year pilot programme), UK (750 yearly)

- 1 Division of places between resettlement and humanitarian admission has not yet been defined for 2015. Approximately 75-80% of the total 770 places for 2014-15 are expected to be humanitarian admission.
- 2 Portugal has also admitted 70 students from Syria in the framework of the Global Platform for Syrian Students (2-year student visa).
- 3 143 persons had been accepted under the scheme by March 2015.
- 4 + An unspecified number of places under the German Regional Family Member Admission Programmes and the UK VPRS 2015-16. Humanitarian visa and admissions under special visa and extended stay programmes for Syrian students are not included.

## b) Other types of admission of Syrians

UNHCR has called on states to offer half of the 130,000 required places by means of other types of admission, not being resettlement. Table provides an overview of the several ad-hoc admission programmes offered by European countries for the period 2013-2017, as of the time of writing. The table classifies programmes by type of protection offered (refugee status as opposed to temporary stay), and the extent to which these programmes take in Syrians on the basis of protection needs and/or vulnerability criteria.

Effectively, over 38,000 (or 69%) of the 55,000 places provided by Europe have been offered under the banner 'other types of admission'. However, the different legal avenues mentioned under this section are not strict and do overlap. For example, within the German and Austrian HAP, a substantial number of places are offered for family reunification, some humanitarian visa programmes allow for family reunification, and some family reunification programmes allow entry on humanitarian grounds.

Around 20% of 'other ad hoc admission places' listed in the table below concern vulnerable Syrian cases submitted by UNHCR. It is estimated that over 28,000 have been processed by embassies and concern family reunification or other humanitarian cases. Such departures and arrivals are not consistently monitored by national governments. ICMC-obtained data<sup>26</sup> show, however, that the majority of persons that were submitted under these programmes have effectively arrived in Europe, which has successfully ensured protection for a substantial number of Syrians.

A major outstanding issue under the German but also the UK programmes, will be the temporary nature of the status offered. In the context of the HAP, the German government has continuously declared that the two-year temporary status offered under the HAP will be renewable. Since the situation in Syria has worsened instead of improved, Syrians that have arrived under HAP I (2013-2014) will soon need to extend their stay. It is hoped that renewal of status can be ensured without too much red tape and additional requirements, so that Syrians can focus on their longer-term integration instead of keeping their lives on hold in the absence of a durable refugee status.

<sup>26</sup> See the relevant country sections in chapter 4, particularly those referring to Austria and Germany.

## Humanitarian Admission

The term humanitarian admission was first used for Syrians by Germany, and later also by Austria, France, Ireland and the UK. This can be considered an umbrella term for several different programmes, including family reunification programmes, aimed at simplified, time-efficient refugee processing to provide temporary protection to Syrian refugees.<sup>27</sup>

Programmes under the 'humanitarian admission' banner make up more than half of the places currently offered by European countries, and include:

- 3 German programmes, announced in March and December 2013, and April 2014, providing 20,000 places for Syrians and granting two-year temporary residence on arrival. 70% of the HAP cases were referred by NGOs, family members and other sources, the remainder by UNHCR based on vulnerability criteria.
- 2 Austrian programmes, announced in 2013 and 2014, providing 1,500 places and granting refugee status on arrival. Over half of these cases were referred by UNHCR on the basis of resettlement vulnerability criteria, and the other half via church organisations and family members.
- A French programme, announced in October 2013, providing approximately 770 places for persons referred by UNHCR on the basis of UNHCR vulnerability criteria,<sup>28</sup> and granting refugee status or subsidiary protection on arrival.
- An Irish programme (the Syrian Humanitarian Admission Programme-SHAP), announced in March 2014, providing an unspecified number of places for family member of Syrians residing in Ireland.
- A UK programme (the 'Vulnerable Persons Relocation Scheme - VPRS'), announced in January 2014, providing an unspecified number of places (likely to be around 300) for vulnerable persons referred by UNHCR, and granting 5-year residency on arrival.

<sup>27</sup> "The term humanitarian admission, is defined in the framework of The Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF) as "ad-hoc processes whereby a Member State admits a number of third-country nationals to stay on its territory for a temporary period of time in order to protect them from urgent humanitarian crisis due to events such as political developments or conflict". Art. 2(b) of the AMIF.

<sup>28</sup> For the French HAP, UNHCR can consider 'links with France' when submitting cases, which includes language ability, family and friends in France.

Table 5 - EUROPEAN AD-HOC ADMISSION PROGRAMMES FOR SYRIAN REFUGEES (NON-RESETTLEMENT)

| Programme  | REFUGEE STATUS  |   |  |                                      | OTHER FORMS OF PROTECTION   |   |   |  |  |   |   |  |
|--|---|---|--|--------------------------------------|---|---|---|--|--|---|---|--|
|  | Austrian Humanitarian Admission Programmes              | French Humanitarian Admission Programme                 | UK Vulnerable Persons Relocation Scheme                                |                                      | German Humanitarian Admission Programmes  |   |   | German Regional Family Member Admission Programmes                         | Irish Syrian Humanitarian Admission Programme            | Swiss Additional Admission for Family members                   | Swiss Humanitarian Visa Programme for family members              |  |
| Number of places                                       | 850   | 650   | approx. 77% of the 1000 places pledged                                 | Unspecified (approx. 300)            | 6,100   | 3,400   | 10,500  | 15,000   | 110  | 4,700   | 1,000   |  |
| Timeframe  | 2014-15   | 2014-15   | 2014-15  | 2014-2016                            | 2013-2015   | 2013-2015   | 2013-2015   | Varied according to federal state; usually time limited application period | March-April 2014 application period, arrivals thereafter | September-November 2013 Application period, arrivals thereafter | 2015-2017   |  |
| Recognised as refugees by receiving country?           | Yes   | Yes   | Yes (subsidiary protection for Palestinians ex-Syria)                  | No                                   | No  | No  | No  | No   | No   | Dependent on outcome of asylum procedure                        | Dependent on outcome of asylum procedure                          |  |
| Residency on arrival                                   | Permanent residency                                     | Permanent residency                                     | 10-year residency (1-year subsidiary protection automatically renewed) | 5-year residency                     | 2-year temporary residency  | 2-year temporary residency  | 2-year temporary residency                                | 2-year temporary residency   | 2-year temporary residency                               | Visitor visa to facilitate application for asylum               | Humanitarian visa to facilitate application for asylum            |  |
| Identification & referral                              | UNHCR   | Family members residing in Austria Church organisations | UNHCR  | UNHCR                                | UNHCR (with NGO assistance)   | Pre-programme exit visa applications et embassies in the region German parliamentarians                     | Family members residing in Germany                        | Family members residing in Germany   | Family members residing in Ireland                       | Family members residing in Switzerland                          | Family members with subsidiary protection residing in Switzerland |  |
| Country where person resides at the time of referral   | Jordan, Lebanon, Turkey                                 | Jordan, Lebanon, Turkey                                 | Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon   | Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Turkey | Egypt, Lebanon  | Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Qatar, Lebanon, Libya, Syria, Turkey   | Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Qatar, Lebanon, Libya, Syria, Turkey | Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Libya, Syria, Turkey                         | Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Turkey, Syria                     | Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Turkey                            | Not specified   |  |
| Selection method                                       | Dossier selection                                       | Dossier selection                                       | In-country selection   | Dossier selection                    | Dossier selection   | Dossier selection   | Dossier selection   | Dossier selection  | Dossier selection  | Dossier selection   | Dossier selection   |  |
| Primary referral criteria                              | Registration with UNHCR                                 | Registration with UNHCR and Family links in Austria     | Registration with UNHCR  | Registration with UNHCR              | Registration with UNHCR or Caritas Lebanon and Humanitarian criteria as defined by the Germany government | Humanitarian criteria or Links to Germany or Ability to contribute to post-conflict reconstruction in Syria | Family links in Germany                                   | Family links in Germany  | Family links in Ireland                                  | Family links in Switzerland                                     | Family links in Switzerland and Recognised as a refugee by UNHCR  |  |
| Use of specific protection and vulnerability criteria? | Yes   | Yes   | Yes  | Yes                                  | Yes   | No  | No  | No   | Yes  | No  | No  |  |
| Funding source(s)                                      | National EU Asylum, Migration & Integration Fund (AMIF) | National  | National EU Asylum, Migration & Integration Fund (AMIF)                | National                             | National  | National (contribution by family members in some cases)   | National (contribution by family members in some cases)   | Family members   | Family member  | Family members (for first 3 months after arrival)               | National  |  |

Source: ICMC research and UNHCR/European Resettlement Network (ERN) data available at <http://resettlement.eu/news/crisis-syria>

### Resettlement or HAP: What's in a name?

While the German HAP the Irish SHAP and the UK VPRS provide *temporary status*, the Austrian and French programmes, while called humanitarian admission, are effectively resettlement. Both programmes select cases on the basis of UNHCR submission criteria and provide refugee status, and therefore represent a durable solution. They have therefore received funding under the AMIF. However, both programmes have used the expedited HAP procedure and are therefore classified under Humanitarian Admission.

Some features of programmes established to date include:

- Use of identification and referral sources other than UNHCR, including NGOs, church organisations, family members in receiving countries, and self-referral by Syrian refugees at embassies in countries of first asylum.
- Consideration of cases other than those submitted on the basis of UNHCR submission categories, though on the basis of vulnerability criteria.
- Use of expedited processing tools and procedures for UNHCR submitted cases, including admission of *prima facie* refugees who have not undergone Refugee Status Determination (RSD).

Additional admission channels for family members of Syrians resident in Europe

Since the outbreak of the conflict, Syrians in Europe have called for options to have their family members join them by means of safe and legal channels. In response, Europe has looked at different ways to admit family members of Syrians to Europe. Up to May 2015, almost 31,000 visas have been issued to Syrians in refugee-hosting countries allowing them to travel to Europe. This represents 60% of all 'other type of admission places'.

The following family reunification (sub) places have been provided:

- 650 places within the 1,500 places provided by the two Austrian Humanitarian Admission Programmes (HAP) noted above (2013-2015).
- 10,500 of the 20,000 places provided by the three German humanitarian admission programmes (HAP) noted above. (2013-2015).
- 15,000 visas issued under the German regional

admission programmes<sup>29</sup> established by 15 (not including Bavaria) of the 16 German regional governments, granting two-year temporary residence. This programme is open-ended and is thus still ongoing.

- 110 visas issued under an Irish programme (the 'Syrian Humanitarian Admission Programme'), which was open for applications in March-April 2014, and grants two-year temporary residence to family members of Syrians in Ireland.
- 4,600 visas issued under a Swiss programme, open for applications in September-November 2013, providing entry visas to enable asylum applications by Syrian family members.

Some common characteristics of European family admission programmes for Syrians include:

- Referral by a wide variety of actors: family members in Europe, church partners, NGOs and others, in addition to self-referrals at embassies in the region.
- Possibility to reunite with non-nuclear family members and children above 18.
- Access to the territory through different general migration visa instruments incorporated in national law issued at embassies or consular services. These visas offer family members temporary residence, including the right to work, but in most cases no access to social benefits.
- A type of 'sponsorship' component, requiring a financial commitment on the part of applying relatives, ranging from financing travel to providing for all costs related to their relatives' stay.
- Time-limited application periods, except for the German regional admission programmes, which are open-ended.
- Little or no consideration of individual vulnerability as a factor in decision-making about admission (except for the Irish programme), with a common use of a 'first come, first served' rationale for approving applications.

Student visa and extended stay programmes

European responses in this context have supported entry to Europe by Syrians for the purpose of studies, and extended the stay of Syrian students already studying in European countries.

<sup>29</sup> According to Article 23.1 of the German residence law, regional governments can grant residency from a specific country for humanitarian reasons, independent of national programmes.

These programmes usually involve:

- assistance with exit visas and travel arrangements;
- the use of temporary residence permits;
- private and/or government funding to pay tuition fees and provide subsistence grants; and
- selection by universities and other civil society actors, with a focus on individual academic achievements and potential to contribute to Syria in the future.

The following table illustrates examples of European student visa and extended stay programmes in France, Germany, Portugal and Sweden that have been identified over the course of this research.

Humanitarian visas

Whereas Syrians were able to obtain visas before the start of the conflict in 2011, the issuing of short or long-term visas has since ceased. To provide for safe and legal entry,

humanitarian visas have therefore been used to provide entry, and thus as a legal alternative to irregular migration channels. Humanitarian visas are issued at the discretion of individual states, and may enable persons arriving in the issuing country to access expedited asylum procedures on arrival. In order to apply for a humanitarian visa, the applicant must approach the diplomatic representation of the potential host state, who may process the humanitarian visa application in-country to identify protection needs. Once a humanitarian visa has been issued and the migrant has entered the territory of the destination state, he or she can then claim asylum. The use of humanitarian visas for Syrians by European countries has to date been very limited.

- France has utilised humanitarian visas (so called: ‘*Visa d’asile*’) on a larger scale, issuing visas to around 1,400 Syrians during 2013-2015, all of whom have applied for asylum in France upon arrival.

Table 6 - STUDENT VISA AND EXTENDED STAY PROGRAMMES

| Programme   | Global Platform for Syrian Students (Portuguese admissions)   | German 'leadership for Syria' Programme  | Swedish Institute Study Scholarships for Syrian students   | French Syrian Student Visa Programme  |
|---|---|--|--|---|
| Number of places  | 70  | 100  | 30   | 25  |
| Visa type   | 1-year renewable student visa   | 2 year student visa  | 2 year student visa  | 1 year student visa   |
| Lead organisation                                       | Consortium (UNCHR, the League of Arab States, the Council of Europe, the Institute of International Education and others)   | German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD)  | Swedish Institute  | Association Démocratie et Entraide en Syrie   |
| Application process                                     | Online application  | Online application followed by interview with DAAD in Istanbul, Amman, Beirut or Bonn  | Online application   | Online application  |
| Country where person resides at the time of application | Not specified   | Any country outside of the EU (applications also accepted from within Germany)   | Not specified  | France, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Turkey   |
| Selection criteria                                      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recognised refugee or facing immediate threat to life</li> <li>• Prior education (secondary school or undergraduate level)</li> <li>• Wish to pursue a course that is likely to lead to employment in Syria</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Registered with UNHCR or residing in Syria or Germany (without legal residency in another EU country)</li> <li>• Prior education (undergraduate level)</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Undergraduate degree from a Syrian university</li> <li>• Place on a postgraduate programme in Sweden</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Aged under 28 years</li> <li>• Prior education (secondary school level)</li> <li>• Wish to pursue specific study programme offered by the University of Créteil</li> </ul> |
| Funding   | Private donors<br>International organisations   | National government  | National government  | Regional government   |

Source: ICMC research with stakeholders.



- Switzerland will issue 1,000 humanitarian visas to Syrian refugees with family members in Switzerland as of 2015. These family members can apply for asylum upon arrival.

The possibility to issue humanitarian visas is included in articles 19 and 25 of the EU's Schengen Visa Code. Members of the European Parliament and NGOs propose to further promote the use of humanitarian visas through this channel.

#### Community-based responses to welcome Syrians

The ongoing and deepening conflict in Syria has mobilised, since 2013, support from many civil society actors across Europe calling for concrete measures of solidarity and support at European, national and local levels. Churches, NGOs, universities, diaspora organisations and migrant associations and other actors have stepped in to facilitate family reunification and assist in contributing to (a part of) the costs involved. Also in other areas civil society has filled the many gaps left due to a substantial decrease in public funding for reception, social services and integration support. This has occurred in the context of strained reception systems in a number of countries due to increased arrivals of asylum seekers.

These numerous initiatives may form the first seeds for a more structured approach in developing community-based private sponsorship programmes, which already exist in Australia and Canada. These programmes use private resources, provided by private citizens (within legal entities), NGOs or other interested groups to enable more refugees to be admitted, thus adding to the national quota allocations. Sponsorship programmes, take place alongside national resettlement programmes, with private actors and government sharing responsibility and costs to select and receive a defined number of refugees from a particular country of first asylum, within a framework of clearly defined rights and responsibilities.

Sponsorship programmes can work with a range of parties that refer refugees to the programme, including diaspora communities in receiving countries, refugee assisting NGOs, churches, universities and others.

The following provides some brief examples of the many community-based initiatives offered to Syrians across Europe:

- **Awareness-Raising Campaigning:** In an increasingly negative political climate against refugees and other newcomers, awareness-raising on refugee protection needs has become a necessity in order to maintain support to receive refugees in local communities. In this effort, the 'Refugees Need a Home' campaign initiated by the Finish Red Cross has raised awareness on the war in Syria, encouraging municipalities to offer more places to resettle refugees.
- **Supporting family reunification:** NGOs in Germany, Ireland and Switzerland have assisted Syrian communities to apply for family reunification and underwritten or paid for travel, housing, living expenses, health insurance and other costs.
- **Offering accommodation:** In Austria, Belgium, France, Germany, Italy and The Netherlands, churches and private citizens have offered rooms, houses and buildings to accommodate Syrians and other refugees coming to their communities. Initiatives like the 'Refugiato a Casa Mia' initiative in Italy has helped to host 40 families across regions, while the "Aktion Neuer Nachbar" initiative by the archdiocese of Cologne has supported reception, housing, integration and the promotion of welcoming communities.
- **Supporting Syrian students:** The University of Créteil (Paris) and the Association Démocratie et Entraide en Syrie has provided scholarships and subsistence support to 50 Syrian students in France, while the Global Platform for Syrian Students supported 70 Syrian students from Lebanon, who arrived to Portugal to continue their studies.
- **Volunteering:** Thousands of volunteers across Europe are helping Syrian refugee families to find their way in their communities, such as in assisting with paperwork, learning the local language, helping children with their homework, looking for employment, amongst and many other forms of support.

The above described initiatives developed for Syrian refugees, may serve as a first basis to explore opportunities to introduce structured sponsorships programmes, which can be developed in parallel to national resettlement quotas or of support other legal avenues, such as family reunification programmes.

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## 4. European Resettlement and other Admission Programmes for Syrian Refugees

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## 4.1. AUSTRIA, GERMANY, SWITZERLAND & LIECHTENSTEIN

### 4.1.1. Austria

| Programme                                 | Humanitarian Admission Programme (I) |  | Humanitarian Admission Programme (II)         |  |
|---|--------------------------------------|--|---|--|
| Implementation period                     | Start: August 2013 - Completed: 2014 |  | Start: April 2014 - Expected completion: 2015 |  |
| Places                                    | 500                                  |  | 1,000   |  |
| Programme components                      | Resettlement (250 persons)           | Admission of family members (250 persons)  | Resettlement (600 persons)                    | Admission of family members (400 persons)                                    |
| Identification & referral                 | UNHCR                                | Church organisations <sup>1</sup> and the Austrian Red Cross (based on suggestions by family members in Austria) | UNHCR   | Archdiocese of Vienna (200 persons); family members in Austria (200 persons) |
| Country/countries of first asylum         | Jordan                               | Jordan, Lebanon, Turkey  | Jordan, Lebanon, Turkey                       | Jordan, Lebanon, Turkey  |
| Selection criteria                        | UNHCR submission categories          | Family links in Austria <sup>2</sup>   | UNHCR submission categories                   | Family links in to Austria   |
| Prioritisation of vulnerability criteria? | Yes                                  | No   | Yes   | No   |
| Final selection                           | Ministry of the Interior             |  |   |  |
| Status on arrival                         | Refugee status                       |  |   |  |

The broader context (2011-14)

|   |              |
|---|--------------|
| Total asylum applications by Syrian nationals   | 10,350       |
| Percentage share of total Syrian asylum applications submitted in European countries (EU and EEA) | 6.5%         |
| Syrian asylum applications per capita   | 0.0012%      |
| Recognition rate  | 84.04%       |
| Humanitarian aid for Syria and neighbouring countries   | € 13,266,010 |
| Percentage share of humanitarian aid contributed by European countries                            | 0.5%         |

<sup>1</sup> Syrian Orthodox Church, Catholic Church, Greek Orthodox Church, Archdiocese Vienna

<sup>2</sup> Spouses, children, parents, siblings, grandparents and grandchildren (additional family members were considered in some cases)

### Austrian resettlement & admission programmes

Despite substantial advocacy efforts from international and civil society organisations,<sup>3</sup> the Austrian government has long been reluctant to engage in resettlement. The August 2013 announcement of a humanitarian admission programme for 500 Syrian refugees (HAP I) was therefore surprising, as was the further announcement less than a year later of a second programme (HAP II) to receive another 1,000. The launch of these programmes has made Austria the fourth largest ad-hoc respondent to the UNHCR call for admission places for Syrians, after Germany, Switzerland and Norway. Despite a generally conservative political climate in Austria, the programmes have been supported across the political spectrum.

Following the German lead, Austria makes use of expedited processing via the simplified HAP form (see chapter 3) and acceptance of referrals from sources other than UNHCR.

#### I Resettlement

Although Austria has used the 'humanitarian admission' label, parts of both the HAP I (250 persons) and HAP II (600 persons) are effectively resettlement programmes. Cases are referred by UNHCR according to resettlement submission categories,<sup>4</sup> those arriving into Austria are granted full refugee status, and these elements of both programmes are financially supported under the European Asylum, Migration & Integration Fund.

The 850 places for UNHCR-referred cases in HAP I and II were for refugees in Lebanon, Jordan and Turkey, with most of the 250 persons under HAP I arriving during July-October 2014. The majority within that group were Muslims from rural areas of Syria living in urban areas of Jordan, including many large households with elderly parents and/or dependent children over 18.

For UNHCR cases with ICRC travel documents, the time between selection and departure was 4-6 weeks. As a pre-departure leaflet distributed to refugees was reported to be insufficient, UNHCR-referred cases for HAP II will receive a

2-day pre-departure cultural orientation programme provided by IOM Austria.

#### II Admission of family members

The remaining 650 places in HAP I and II were referred by church and civil society partners, pre-selected from applications by family members residing in Austria, with the Ministry of the Interior making the final selection. Admission of family members under HAP I enabled a rapid response, with first arrivals within 3 months of the programme's launch.

NGOs criticised pre-selection by church organisations,<sup>5</sup> concerned that 88% of cases selected were Christians. Additionally, and although the final selection of cases by the Ministry of the Interior incorporates consideration of vulnerability criteria, vulnerability is not the primary rationale for selection decisions.

Just over 75% of family members arriving via HAP I departed from Lebanon, and the majority of the remaining 25% from Turkey. All were provided with travel documents by the Austrian government. IOM carried out pre-departure medical screenings and arranged travel for groups of up to 30 persons at a time. Applying family members in Austria were responsible for reimbursing the cost of travel. The time between selection and departure was 2-3 weeks.

Within the HAP II family member admission component (400 places), 200 persons were pre-selected by the Archdiocese of Vienna, and 200 from individual applications submitted directly to the Ministry of the Interior by family members during a 2-week application period in July 2014.<sup>6</sup> HAP II family members will arrive throughout 2015.

### Reception & integration

Reception and integration arrangements for Syrians arriving via the HAP I and HAP II programmes differ considerably depending on how cases are referred.

3 The ARGE Resettlement Working Group, comprised of UNHCR, IOM and 3 NGOs (Red Cross, Diakonie and Caritas Austria) has led advocacy for Austria to engage in resettlement for several years.

4 Legal and physical protection needs, women and girls at risk, survivors of violence and torture, older refugees at risk, and medical needs/disabilities.

5 Kleine Zeitung: 'NGO-Kritik an Bevorzugung christlicher Flüchtlinge' (3 September 2013); Die Presse: 'Flüchtlings-Streit: 'SPÖ redet Christenverfolgung klein' (7 September 2013)

6 More than 2,000 applications were submitted to the Ministry during the 2-week period.

All cases are initially accommodated in a central reception facility in Traiskirchen, near Vienna, for up to 10 days,<sup>7</sup> during which the administrative granting of refugee status is completed. All are eligible for 4 months financial and advisory support available to all refugees in Austria, after which point they are eligible to access mainstream social welfare.

The Working Group on Humanitarian Admission (ARGE Humanitarian Admission), comprised of the NGOs Red Cross, Diakonie and Caritas, is contracted by the national government until April 2015<sup>8</sup> to provide additional support for UNHCR-referred Syrian arrivals. Support covers arranging accommodation, and providing orientation, language tuition, and education and employment counselling.<sup>9</sup> The Working Group distributes UNHCR-referred arrivals to accommodation across the country based on availability, ranging from larger facilities with an NGO presence to individual places in small bed and breakfast/hostel facilities.

Applying family members are responsible for providing accommodation for relatives arriving via the family admission components of HAP I and II, who are not able to access the additional support provided by the Working Group.

## Reception and integration for Syrian refugees in Vienna – a view from Diakonie...

130 of the first 250 UNHCR-referred Syrian refugees arriving in Austria are housed in 'integration apartments' on the outskirts of Vienna, where they receive support from the NGO Diakonie.

"Diakonie provides individual advice, community services and start-up housing for refugee and migrant populations in Vienna. We have incorporated integration measures for Syrians - housing, educational support and social counselling - into this wider framework. Of crucial importance is legal advice on family reunification, often a first priority for new arrivals. We've also developed additional measures to aid orientation and build welcome, such as a volunteer 'buddy' system that matches new arrivals with local residents.

To help ensure new arrivals can access basic services, we've developed a range of partnerships with mainstream local actors, including schools and employment centres. Of particular concern for the Syrian arrivals is the lack of timely access to specialist psychological support, for which there is a great need amongst them. The medical and psychological state of many of the new arrivals has also really made it difficult for them to engage in activities such as language learning.

Working in a neighbourhood with many different migrant groups, we have experienced difficulties in providing services where people may have different rights and entitlements according to how they arrived. We try to minimise this by making our services as accessible as they can be for everyone. For the Syrian arrivals, we're of course quite concerned about what will happen when our contract to deliver integration measures expires in April 2015"

Carina Pachler, Diakonie Vienna

7 As integration support services were put in place only after the first groups had arrived, some early arrivals spent several weeks at the reception facility.

8 At the time of writing, it is not yet clear if integration support currently provided by the Working Group will be extended beyond April 2015.

9 The call for expressions of interest to provide reception and integration support was published at <https://www.pep-online.at/CP/eTender.aspx?id=5C927CF3-63F1-467D-B282-EC5B04B499F3&action=show>.

4.1.2. Germany

| Programme*                                    | Humanitarian Admission Programme I (HAP I)   |  | Humanitarian Admission Programme II (HAP II) |  |  | Humanitarian Admission Programme III (HAP III) |   |  |
|---|--|--|--|--|--|--|---|--|
| Implementation period                         | Start: June 2013<br>Completed 2014   |  | Start: December 2013<br>Completed 2014       |  |  | Start: July 2014<br>Expected completion: 2015  |   |  |
| Places  | 5,000  |  | 5,000  |  |  | 10,000   |   |  |
| Identification & referral (number of persons) | UNHCR, with the NGO Caritas Lebanon (total 3,100 persons)                              | - German parliamentarians (national/regional)<br>- Pre-programme exit visa applications at German embassies in the region (1,600 persons)<br>- 300 identified and referred to the Federal office for Migration and Refugees by Caritas Lebanon | UNHCR (1,000 persons)                        | - German parliamentarians (national/regional) - Pre-programme exit visa applications at German embassies in the region (500 persons) | Family members in Germany (3500 persons) | UNHCR (2,000 persons)                          | - German parliamentarians (national/regional)<br>- Exit visa applications at German embassies in the region made prior to the start of the HAP programmes (1,000 persons) | Family members in Germany (7,000 persons)                                      |
| Primary selection criteria                    | UNHCR submission criteria  | Humanitarian criteria <sup>10</sup> to Germany <sup>11</sup> or to make a notable contribution to post-conflict reconstruction in Syria  | UNHCR submission criteria                    | Humanitarian criteria to Germany or to make a notable contribution to post-conflict reconstruction in Syria                          | Family links                             | UNHCR submission criteria                      | Humanitarian criteria to Germany or to make a notable contribution to post-conflict reconstruction in Syria   | Family links   |
| Prioritisation of vulnerability criteria?     | Yes  | No   | Yes  | No   | No                                       | Yes  | No  | No   |
| Country/countries of first asylum             | Lebanon  | Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Turkey (also referrals from inside Syria)  | Lebanon                                      |  |  | Lebanon, Egypt                                 | Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Libya, Turkey (also referrals from inside Syria)  | Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Libya, Turkey (also referrals from inside Syria) |
| Final selection                               | Federal Office for Migration and Refugees - BMI  |  |  |  |  |  |   |  |
| Status on arrival                             | 2-year temporary residence permit (with option to extend once for a further two years) |  |  |  |  |  |   |  |

\*this table does not include the 15 regional admission programmes for Syrian family members established by all German regional governments except Bavaria (see Regional admission programmes for family members, below)

10 Families with children, women in vulnerable situations, medical cases (an upper limit of 3% of all admissions was set for medical cases), members of religious minorities in special need of protection.

11 Family ties, previous residence, language skills.



The broader context (2011-14)

|   |               |
|---|---------------|
| Total asylum applications by Syrian nationals   | 65,325        |
| Percentage share of total Syrian asylum applications submitted in European countries (EU and EEA) | 41%           |
| Syrian asylum applications per capita   | 0.0008%       |
| Recognition rate  | 93.05%        |
| Humanitarian aid for Syria and neighbouring countries   | € 674,323,743 |
| Percentage share of humanitarian aid contributed by European countries                            | 25%           |

German resettlement & admission programmes

With a pre-conflict Syrian population of approximately 30,000 persons, calls from diaspora and civil society for Germany to respond to the Syrian crisis came soon after the start of the conflict in early 2011. Receiving broad support across the German political spectrum and from a large section of the general public, they asked that the German government offer both humanitarian aid and safe access channels for Syrians to come to Germany.

Germany is to date the third largest national donor of humanitarian aid for Syria and its neighbouring countries. In addition to pledging 20,000 places for Syrians through 3 national humanitarian programmes, the German government has led calls for a coordinated European response to the Syrian refugee crisis. In October 2014 the government convened the 'Conference on the Syrian Refugee Situation - Supporting Stability in the Region' and called on Member States to significantly expand their contributions:

*'If the remaining 27 Member States would involve themselves according to their size and capability, like Germany, then we could secure the survival of families and children and offer them long-term prospects.'*

*Gerd Müller, German Federal Minister for Economic Cooperation & Development*

I Resettlement

In 2012 the German government established a small-scale resettlement programme, operated in conjunction with UNHCR and providing 300 places each year. From 2015 the annual quota will be increased to 500 places. Refugees selected for resettlement are granted 3-year temporary residency, renewable on an annual basis, and permanent

residence can be applied for after 5 years of legal residency.<sup>12</sup> 200 places of the 2014 German resettlement quota were reserved for refugees to be resettled from within Syria,<sup>13</sup> including Iraqis, Somalis, stateless Palestinians, Ethiopians and Afghans.

II Humanitarian admission

The German government initially considered that the protection needs of Syrian refugees were short-term, and could be met by providing temporary protection until the conflict was resolved. They also recognised the need for large-scale, organised movement of refugees out of the region surrounding Syria so as to facilitate this protection. The national resettlement programme was not considered to be a suitable mechanism for such a response, due both to its purpose of providing long-term durable solutions and its inability to facilitate rapid and substantial admissions.

On March 20 2013, the German government announced a first humanitarian admission programme (HAP I), providing 5,000 places for Syrian refugees. 2 subsequent humanitarian admission programmes (HAP II and III), announced in December 2013 and April 2014, brought the total places offered by the 3 programmes to 20,000. Germany thus became the first European country to commit to large-scale, ad-hoc admission of Syrians outside of regular resettlement quotas.

To effect greater capacity to process cases and facilitate arrivals, the German humanitarian admission programmes have made use of expedited processing and a range of referral sources.

<sup>12</sup> From 2015, those resettled to Germany will be recognised as refugees and will be able to apply for permanent residency after three years.

<sup>13</sup> Selected on the basis of UNHCR dossiers and video interviews via the UNHCR office in Damascus.

UNHCR is responsible for referrals for 6,000 of the 20,000 places available across the 3 programmes, based on UNHCR resettlement submission categories and using the simplified HAP Form. (see chapter 2) UNHCR referrals for HAP I (3,100 persons) and HAP II (1,000 persons) were from Lebanon. In order to respond to the increasingly insecure situation of Syrian refugees in Egypt, in HAP III the countries of first asylum for UNHCR referrals (2,000 persons) include both Lebanon and Egypt.

In HAP I, the NGO Caritas Lebanon, which provides humanitarian assistance in both camps and urban areas in Lebanon, identified and referred 300 persons referred 300 persons to the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees

3,100 places across the 3 German programmes are cases 'known to' the Ministry of the Interior and the Foreign Ministry, via referrals from German national and regional parliamentarians, or applications for entry visas at German embassies in the region made prior to the start of the HAP programmes.

HAP II and III introduced a substantial new referral role for Syrian nationals<sup>14</sup> resident in Germany, who can apply for family members resident in Syria, neighbouring countries, Egypt and Libya to join them in Germany. HAP II created 3,500 places for referrals by family members, and a further 7,000 places are included in HAP III.

Quotas for places available for referrals by family members are set for each region in Germany using the numerical key through which asylum seekers are distributed across the national territory.<sup>15</sup> Family members are required to lodge applications at their local Foreigners Office (applications outside of the federal state where they reside are not permitted), who then forward applications to the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees. The Ministry selects cases on a 'first come, first served' basis, without consideration of vulnerability criteria.<sup>16</sup> Family members should normally pay for and organise travel to Germany, and a legal commitment by family members to part-finance the

14 Referring family members are not required to be refugees or to have a refugee background.

15 The Königssteiner Schlüssel distribution key guides the distribution of asylum seekers across the 16 German federal states, using indicators including tax income and population. Distribution is calculated on an annual basis.

16 Although not a formal requirement some regional governments take into account and prioritise vulnerability criteria before submitting cases to the Federal Office.

costs of reception and stay is viewed positively within the pre-selection process in some of the regional governments.

Syrians arriving via the 3 German humanitarian admission programmes are granted 2-year temporary residency with the possibility to renew for an additional 2 years. Although German humanitarian admission programmes were initially established to provide temporary protection, the German government has recently stated that the lack of a foreseeable political solution to the Syrian conflict means persons arriving under these programmes are expected to stay permanently.

At February 2015, 11,321 persons had arrived through HAP I, II and III, and had reported their arrival<sup>17</sup>, 85% of which were families. 52% departed from Lebanon, 35% from inside Syria, and the remainder from Turkey, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan and Qatar. Approximately 60% of the group were persons over 18 and 30% younger than 12 years old. 60% were Muslims and 20% Christians, with the remainder of unknown or no religious affiliation.

III Regional admission programmes for family members

In June 2013, the German Conference of the Ministers of the Interior<sup>18</sup> announced that regional governments were free to establish admission programmes for family members of Syrians resident in Germany. This decision was taken in response to widespread calls from Syrian communities in Germany for increased opportunities for family members to join them.

Following this announcement, 15 of the 16 German federal states<sup>19</sup> implemented programmes that allowed Syrians<sup>20</sup> resident in participating states to apply for a temporary residence permit on humanitarian grounds for spouses, immediate relatives<sup>21</sup> or members of the wider family.<sup>22</sup> Relatives can be those with Syrian nationality or stateless persons, residing in Syria, its neighbouring countries or

17 At the time of writing, approximately 17,500 visas have been issued under the programme. As persons selected based on their family member's referral are required to report their arrival individually, a substantial number of arrivals is not included in the figure stated.

18 The German Conference of the Ministers of the Interior is held twice a year (with additional sessions held in case of urgent developments) and is attended by all regional ministers for the interior and the federal state minister.

19 Excluding Bavaria.

20 Limited to Syrians with German citizenship or a permanent or temporary residence permit issued prior to January 2013.

21 Parents and children.

22 Grandparents, grandchildren and siblings.



Yamen O. works as an architect in the German federal state of North Rhine-Westphalia. In 2014, he successfully applied for his parents and 2 siblings to join him in Germany via the regional admission programme for family members:

“I wanted my family to come because I expected the situation to escalate, so I worked on it for 3 years. My brother and sister were rejected at the embassy several times, getting visitor visas was impossible and my parents only wanted to come if my siblings would be able to come first. Last September, I accidentally discovered the federal state family member admission programme on Facebook and I applied. The local Foreigners Office calculated my living costs, based on my last 3 months’ payslips and factors such as my marital status and dependant family members. Everything above that subsistence was included in a calculation of what I would be able to provide for my family. €300 per month was required for each family member in North Rhine-Westphalia, but that’s good compared to other regions - in Berlin a €2,500 net monthly wage is required just for personal subsistence, and nobody has that much money. It’s for this reason that my cousin and lots of friends of mine could not bring their family over. Thank God it worked out for me, also because I only have 4 relatives - some have many more.

My family has been here for a month and we are struggling, but we know there is no way back. ‘Home’ does not exist anymore - it was bombed, and we have to find a solution here. We want my family to learn German and find work as soon as possible so that they can stand on their own feet. I hope that we will find a way.”

Egypt.<sup>23</sup> The 15 regional programmes originally offered a varying number of places, with the largest programme of 1,000 places provided by North Rhine-Westphalia. Quotas for nearly all programmes have since been continued for applications but will phase out in July 2015.

Documentary proof of family relationships is generally accepted, although DNA testing has been used in a limited number of cases.

Family members lodging applications must provide proof that they have the financial means to cover all costs related to their

relatives’ travel to and stay in Germany, and sign a legally binding letter of intent to provide for such. In July 2014, in response to concerns at the considerable financial burden borne by receiving family members, all participating regional governments have agreed to pay health-related expenses. Regional governments have also accepted underwriting of family members’ financial commitments by both individuals and organisations.<sup>24</sup>

However, the feasibility of long-term financial commitments by family members remains questionable. To date, 16% of family members arriving via these programmes have claimed asylum in Germany, reportedly due to their families’ inability to continue supporting them. Regional governments differ

23 The programme is based on Article 23/1 of the German residence law, which grants regional governments the right to grant residency to groups of persons from a specific country for humanitarian reasons, independent of national programmes. Regional governments are free to set individual quotas, reception conditions and other programme aspects.

24 Mostly church organisations and some groups of private individuals.

significantly on assessing eligibility of these claimants for mainstream asylum support.<sup>25</sup>

At March 2015, a total of 13,500 entry visas had been issued under the regional family admission programmes. By the end of 2014, 6,120 visa holders had arrived in Germany. This number only reflects those who have registered their arrival

with the local office for migrants. The actual number of arrivals is expected to be substantially higher.

**Reception & integration**

Reception and integration arrangements for Syrians arriving via HAP I, II and III programmes differ considerably depending both on which programme facilitates their arrival and how they are referred, as below:

|  | Resettlement                                | Humanitarian Admission                      |   | Regional admission programmes for family members |
|--|---|---|---|--|
|  |   | Without family links                        | With family links                           |  |
| Travel arrangements                    | Assisted group travel <sup>26</sup>         | Assisted group travel                       | Self-organised <sup>27</sup>                | Self-organised                                   |
| Pre-departure cultural orientation     | Yes   | Yes   | No  | No   |
| Reception                              | 2-week stay in centralised reception        | 2-week stay in centralised reception        | Direct reception by family members          | Direct reception by family members               |
| Permission to work                     | Yes   | Yes   | Yes   | Yes  |
| Access to general welfare system       | Yes   | Yes   | Yes   | No   |
| Legal right to integration course      | Yes   | Yes   | Yes   | No (though possible if spaces are available)     |
| Integration subsidy for municipalities | Yes (for a period of 2 years after arrival) | Yes (for a period of 2 years after arrival) | Yes (for a period of 2 years after arrival) | No   |
| Placement via Königssteiner Schlüssel  | Yes   | Yes   | Yes   | No <sup>28</sup>                                 |

**4.1.3. Switzerland**

The broader context (2011-2014)

|  |               |
|--|---------------|
| Total asylum applications by Syrian nationals  | 7,840         |
| Percentage share of total Syrian asylum application submitted in European countries (EU and EEA) | 3.7%          |
| Syrian asylum applications per capita  | 0.1%          |
| Recognition rate   | 88.49%        |
| Humanitarian aid for Syria and neighbouring countries  | € 114.006.386 |
| Percentage share of humanitarian aid contributed by European countries                           | 4,2%          |

25 The Ministry of the Interior has stated that lodging an asylum application does not imply a change in purpose of the original residence permit, and that families' financial commitments therefore remain unchanged.

26 From September 2013 to July 2014, refugees departed every 2 weeks in groups of 300.

27 Requirement to organise travel within 3 months of notification of selection (delays due to medical reasons allowed in exceptional circumstances).

28 Persons received by family members are factored into future distributions made via the Königssteiner Schlüssel for the relevant federal state.

## Resettlement

Switzerland does not have a resettlement quota programme, and initially restricted its response to the Syrian refugee crisis to several ad-hoc admissions in cooperation with UNHCR.<sup>29</sup> In October 2013, following NGO advocacy and strong political leadership from the centre-left, the Swiss government announced a 3-year pilot resettlement programme to resettle 500 vulnerable refugees<sup>30</sup> from Syria during 2013-15.<sup>31</sup> Switzerland is one of the few European countries to resettle refugees from within Syria. In March 2015, the government announced an additional 2,000 resettlement places for 2015-17.

Refugees are identified and referred by UNHCR, and selected either via government-led selection missions or video interviews. In May 2014, 113 Syrian refugees were selected via a mission to Lebanon. A further group of 87 refugees from within Syria (26 Iraqis and 61 Palestinians) were selected through video interviews conducted via the UNHCR office in Damascus. All 200 were selected based on specific vulnerability criteria<sup>32</sup> and 'proven willingness to integrate' after arrival into Switzerland. 192 of the group were in families and 8 were single persons, and approximately 60% were children and young people. All 200 had arrived in Switzerland end 2014.

Pre-departure cultural orientation for those resettled from countries other than Syria is provided by IOM<sup>33</sup>. IOM, UNHCR, ICRC, the Swiss embassy in Beirut and the Swiss State Secretariat for Migration together coordinate travel arrangements.

Additional selection missions to Lebanon and video interviews with refugees in Jordan are planned for 2015.

Those resettled to Switzerland are recognised as refugees, and are eligible to access social welfare until they find employment. On arrival, refugees spend approximately 10 days at a reception centre, during which time they complete a short interview, undergo a health examination and complete procedures necessary for residency documentation to be issued. They are then transferred to longer term housing in a Swiss region (canton).

Cantons participate in receiving resettled refugees on a voluntary basis. Participating cantons receive a lump sum payment per refugee received (CH20,000 - approximately € 16,500), and are required to draft a 2-year integration programme based on 8 goals set by the government,<sup>34</sup> and canton integration programmes are monitored by an external company contracted by the national government. Refugees agree upon individual integration plans with integration coaches upon arrival. Unwillingness to follow the plan can result in reduced eligibility for integration support.

## Additional admission channels for family members

In September 2013, the Swiss government published a directive alleviating conditions for Syrians legally residing in Switzerland<sup>35</sup> to apply for a 90-day visitor visa for their relatives.<sup>36</sup> Applying family members were initially required to finance travel to Switzerland, a commitment later extended to costs related to housing, living expenses, and health insurance for the first 3 months after arrival. In many cases, financial commitments were underwritten by NGOs, in particular the Swiss Red Cross. 8,200 applications were received within 3 months of the programme's announcement, when the directive was revised due to unexpectedly high numbers of applications. By February 2015, 4,600 applications had been approved and 4,200 persons had travelled to Switzerland.

Many of those arriving via the programme have applied for a temporary residence permit issued by the canton, which enables them to stay with their relatives and limits

29 36 refugees from Lebanon in September 2012, referred by UNHCR; 37 Iraqi and Palestinian refugees from Syria in March 2013, referred by UNHCR and selected via video interview.

30 At least 7% of the 500 places are allocated for medical cases, people with disabilities and older people, and 40-60% are for women/girls.

31 Iraqis, Palestinians and Syrians residing in Syria or neighbouring countries.

32 Victims of torture/trauma (32 persons), disabled persons (4 persons), medical cases (26 persons), women and girls at risk (5 persons) elderly persons (3 persons) and victims of sexual and gender-based violence (1).

33 Refugees departing to Switzerland from within Syria do not receive any cultural orientation due to the security situation.

34 Covering drafting and evaluating individual integration plans, access to education for children (including pre-school age), language competence, access to healthcare and appropriate housing, and basic knowledge about Swiss society.

35 with a naturalized status or residence permit of type B/C.

36 (including next to the core family, children aged over 18, parents, grandparents, grandchildren and siblings and their core family).



but does not fully prevent access to the labour market and social welfare.

**Humanitarian visas**

In 2012, the Swiss government revised the basis on which Swiss embassies can issue humanitarian visas. Prior to the revision, visas were issued to all those able to evidence a need for international protection. The revision limited visas to those applying only in their country of origin, and made issuance dependent solely on government discretion.

Although applications from persons in third countries are accepted only in very rare cases, in 2014 Swiss embassies in Lebanon and Turkey issued visas to 4 and 12 persons, respectively.

In March 2015, the Swiss government announced plans to issue an additional 1,000 humanitarian visas to Syrian refugees with family members granted temporary protection in Switzerland in the context of the crisis.

**4.1.4. Liechtenstein**

The broader context (2011-2014)

|   |           |
|---|-----------|
| Total asylum applications by Syrian nationals   | 0         |
| Percentage share of total Syrian asylum applications submitted in European countries (EU and EEA) | n/a       |
| Syrian asylum applications per capita   | n/a       |
| Recognition rate  | n/a.      |
| Humanitarian aid for Syria and neighbouring countries   | € 228,681 |
| Percentage share of humanitarian aid contributed by European countries                            | 0.008%    |

Liechtenstein does not have an annual resettlement quota programme, but in October 2013 decided to resettle a family of 5 persons as a pilot exercise. The family was selected in Jordan based on a UNHCR dossier submission and subsequent video interview, and arrived in Liechtenstein in August 2014. Travel was coordinated by IOM, and arranged together with that for refugees resettled to Switzerland. Based on this experience, the government pledged a further 25 resettlement places for refugees from Syria. 17 Syrian refugees (5 families) have since been selected in Turkey and are expected to arrive

by mid-2015. Refugees resettled to Liechtenstein receive a residence permit issued to foreigners intending to residing in Liechtenstein for more than 12 months, and are eligible to access social welfare. The Office for Foreigners & Passports, in cooperation with the Federal Office for Social Services and the NGO Caritas Refugee Aid Liechtenstein, provide integration support including housing, language tuition and post-arrival cultural orientation.

## 4.2. THE BENELUX & FRANCE

### 4.2.1. Belgium

|   |              |
|---|--------------|
| Total asylum applications by Syrian nationals   | 5,510        |
| Percentage share of total Syrian asylum applications submitted in European countries (EU and EEA) | 2.6%         |
| Syrian asylum applications per capita   | 0.05%        |
| Recognition rate  | 94.05%       |
| Humanitarian aid for Syria and neighbouring countries   | € 27,920,066 |
| Percentage share of humanitarian aid contributed by European countries                            | 1%           |

Following several ad-hoc resettlement initiatives during 2009-12, in 2013 the Belgian government established an annual resettlement quota programme providing 100 places. Belgium had initially reserved a total of 150 places within its quota programmes for 2014 and 2015 (75 per year) for Syrian refugees. In November 2014, in response to UNHCR's calls, the Belgian government announced that the 2015 resettlement quota would be doubled to 300 places, including 225 allocated to Syrians and Iraqis.<sup>37</sup>

Refugees resettled to Belgium are identified and referred by UNHCR, and selected during missions carried out by the Belgian Office of the Commissioner General for Refugees and Stateless Persons (CGRS). In June 2014, the Federal Agency for the Reception of Asylum Seekers (FEDASIL), responsible for pre-departure cultural orientation and post-arrival reception and integration, organised an exploratory

mission to Turkey to meet with stakeholders and assess operational challenges for resettlement. A subsequent selection mission took place in August 2014, resulting in the selection of 20 families and 12 single persons. Delays in obtaining travel documents and exit visas<sup>38</sup> meant the first group of 22 persons arrived in Belgium only in December 2014. The remainder travelled to Belgium in smaller groups, the last of whom arrive in early 2015.

Those resettled to Belgium are recognised as refugees. They spend 6 weeks in a central reception facility<sup>39</sup> before moving to individual housing in municipalities. FEDASIL coordinates the provision of housing with local welfare agencies (CPASs/OCMWs) that volunteer to receive refugees, and reception and integration support is provided by the Belgian NGOs Caritas International and Convivial.

### 4.2.2. Luxembourg

|   |              |
|---|--------------|
| Total asylum applications by Syrian nationals   | 120          |
| Percentage share of total Syrian asylum applications submitted in European countries (EU and EEA) | 0.05%        |
| Syrian asylum applications per capita   | 0.02%        |
| Recognition rate  | 68.75%       |
| Humanitarian aid for Syria and neighbouring countries   | € 15,712,972 |
| Percentage share of humanitarian aid contributed by European countries                            | 0.58%        |

<sup>37</sup> With a focus on the Yezidi minority and Christians.

<sup>38</sup> The Turkish government does not recognise ICRC travel documents. While the Turkish Temporary Protection Directive (implemented in October 2014) and the residence permit issued to Syrians under this directive remove the requirement to obtain exit visas for those selected for resettlement to other countries, registration and issuing of relevant documents has been delayed.

<sup>39</sup> Groups arriving in Belgium are placed in one of two reception centres in Pondrome (Wallonia) or Sint Truiden (Flanders).

Whilst Luxembourg does not have an annual resettlement quota programme, it has carried out periodic ad-hoc resettlement since the 1970s. In August 2013, in response to UNHCR's calls, the government announced 60 resettlement places for vulnerable Syrian refugee families with children.

In February 2014, a joint selection mission to Jordan with the Dutch government resulted in the selection of 28 refugees (5 families with 16 children) who arrived into Luxembourg in April 2014. A second selection mission to Turkey in December 2014 selected 32 Syrian refugees to fill the remaining places. IOM provided pre-departure medical checks and arranged travel (including travel documentation).

Those resettled to Luxembourg are granted refugee status, generally within 60 days after arrival. Reception and integration is coordinated by the Luxembourg Reception and Integration Agency (OLAI) in the Ministry for Family and Integration. Resettled refugees are initially placed in a centralised reception facility also used to accommodate asylum seekers, where it is anticipated they will stay for a period of several months until individual housing can be arranged.

At the December 2014 ministerial-level pledging conference, the government of Luxembourg committed to welcoming an as yet unspecified number of resettled Syrian refugees during 2015.

### 4.2.3. The Netherlands

The broader context (2011-14)

|   |               |
|---|---------------|
| Total asylum applications by Syrian nationals   | 12,445        |
| Percentage share of total Syrian asylum applications submitted in European countries (EU and EEA) | 5.85%         |
| Syrian asylum applications per capita   | 0.07%         |
| Recognition rate  | 90.63%        |
| Humanitarian aid for Syria and neighbouring countries   | € 128,826,634 |
| Percentage share of humanitarian aid contributed by European countries                            | 4.79%         |

The Netherlands established an annual quota resettlement programme in the mid-1980s, and currently receives an average of 500 resettled refugees each year.<sup>40</sup> In September 2014, the Dutch Parliament adopted a motion asking the government to provide 250 resettlement places for Syrian refugees additional to the quota programme. Although the Dutch government did not act on this proposal, it has since 2013 allocated resettlement places from within the existing quota for Syrian refugees.

The 2013 Dutch resettlement programme resettled 73 Syrian refugees, of whom 38 were selected on a dossier basis. In the 2014 programme, a total of 277 Syrian refugees were resettled to the Netherlands, with 253 selected during missions to Jordan, Lebanon and Thailand, and 24 on a dossier basis. 250 places within the 2015 quota programme have been

allocated to Syrian refugees the majority of whom are due to be selected via missions to Lebanon and Turkey.

The Dutch Immigration & Naturalisation Service (IND), in consultation with the Central Agency for the Reception of Asylum Seekers & Refugees (COA), selects refugees for resettlement using UNHCR submission categories and an assessment of individual potential to integrate in the Netherlands. All selected refugees receive 3 pre-departure cultural orientation sessions provided by the COA.

Those resettled to the Netherlands are recognised as refugees, and are eligible to access the mainstream integration programme and social welfare. COA coordinates direct reception in individual housing in cooperation with municipalities, who can volunteer to receive resettled refugees as part of their overall 'refugee quota' agreed every 6 months.

<sup>40</sup> The Dutch government currently operates a 4-year multiannual resettlement quota programme (2,000 places). The current quota period is 2012-2015.

## 4.2.4. France

The broader context (2011-14)

|   |              |
|---|--------------|
| Total asylum applications by Syrian nationals   | 4,590        |
| Percentage share of total Syrian asylum applications submitted in European countries (EU and EEA) | 2%           |
| Syrian asylum applications per capita   | 0.01%        |
| Recognition rate  | 94.5%        |
| Humanitarian aid for Syria and neighbouring countries   | € 62,288,909 |
| Percentage share of humanitarian aid contributed by European countries                            | 2.3%         |

| Programme                                 | Humanitarian admission & resettlement   |  | Humanitarian admission & resettlement   |  | Humanitarian visas   |
|---|---|--|---|--|--|
| Implementation period                     | Start: January 2014<br>Completed February 2015                                  |  | Start: January 2015<br>Expected completion December 2015                        |  | Unspecified (existing mechanism)   |
| Places                                    | 500   |  | 500   |  | n/a  |
| Programme components                      | Resettlement (115 persons)  | Humanitarian admission (385 persons)                                     | Resettlement <sup>41</sup>  | Humanitarian admission   |  |
| Target groups                             | Syrian refugees and refugees ex-Syria (including stateless Palestinians)        | Syrian refugees and refugees ex-Syria (including stateless Palestinians) | Syrian refugees and refugees ex-Syria (including stateless Palestinians)        | Syrian refugees and refugees ex-Syria (including stateless Palestinians) | n/a  |
| Identification & referral                 | UNHCR   | UNHCR  | UNHCR   | UNHCR  | Self-referral via applications at French consulates in Syria or country of first asylum              |
| Country/countries of first asylum         | Jordan, Lebanon   | Jordan, Lebanon, Egypt   | Jordan, Lebanon, Egypt  | Jordan, Lebanon  | Various  |
| Selection criteria                        | UNHCR submission categories   | UNHCR submission categories; 'connection with France' (not mandatory)    | UNHCR submission categories   | UNHCR submission categories; 'connection with France' (not mandatory)    | Self-referral via application  |
| Prioritisation of vulnerability criteria? | Yes   | Yes  | Yes   | Yes  | Yes (presumed protection need)   |
| Final selection                           | Asylum service of the Ministry of Interior (dossier submissions <sup>42</sup> ) | OFPRA <sup>43</sup> and the Ministry of Interior                         | Asylum service of the Ministry of Interior (dossier submissions <sup>44</sup> ) | OFPRA and the Ministry of Interior                                       | Consulate determines if visa will be issued; French mainstream asylum system determines asylum claim |
| Status on arrival                         | Refugee status  |  |   |  | Humanitarian entrant (visa holder)   |

41 The number of places allocated for resettlement & humanitarian admission for 2015 is yet to be specified.

42 'Dossier submissions' refer to selection made solely on the basis of case files submitted by UNHCR, with no selection interview.

43 Office français de protection des réfugiés et apatrides.

44 'Dossier submissions' refer to selection made solely on the basis of case files submitted by UNHCR, with no selection interview.



### The French resettlement & humanitarian admission programme

France has implemented a resettlement programme since 2008, via which the French government guarantees UNHCR that it will examine a minimum of 100 resettlement dossier submissions each year. Numbers of resettled refugees arriving into France via the annual programme have remained small. The Syrian refugee crisis has provided new impetus for France to expand its programme, using new coordination and reception mechanisms, selection procedures, NGO partners, and expedited processing of resettlement dossiers.

Following a visit to Jordan, and response to the UNHCR call for resettlement or other forms of admission of Syrian refugees, in October 2013 the French President announced the admission of 500 Syrian refugees and refugees ex-Syria from Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Turkey and Iraq via resettlement (115 persons) and humanitarian admission (385 persons). At the end of 2013, reception agreements for the new programme were signed between the Ministry of the Interior and 3 NGO partners.<sup>45</sup> In November 2014, the Government announced a further programme providing an additional 500 places for 2015.

#### I Resettlement

Persons admitted via the resettlement programme must be recognised as refugees by UNHCR. Cases are referred by UNHCR via dossier submission, to the Asylum Service of the Ministry of Interior, which is responsible for considering cases and making final decisions in consultation with other ministerial services (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, OFPRA and security services). Decisions are taken within 1 month, compared to 6 months in the annual resettlement programme, and the average time between decision and arrival is 1 month.

IOM provides pre-departure assistance and health checks, and coordinates travel arrangements. When a group is larger than 15 persons, IOM provides a 1-day pre-departure

cultural orientation programme.<sup>46</sup>

Within the annual resettlement programme, refugees are required to lodge an asylum claim with OFPRA on arrival, with refugee status usually granted within 3 months. For the Syrian programme OFPRA protection officers visit reception locations within 10 days of refugees arriving to conduct interviews and deliver identity and protection documents, including those relating to refugee status.<sup>47</sup>

By November 2014, 115 refugees had departed for France from Jordan and Lebanon. Refugees admitted under the 2015 programmes are due to arrive by the end of 2015.

#### II Humanitarian admission

Cases arriving through the humanitarian admission programme are selected based on UNHCR submission categories, via selection missions conducted by OFPRA and the French Ministry of Interior in Jordan, Lebanon and Egypt. A supplementary, optional selection criterion of 'connection with France' (for example through a previous period of study, language ability, and/or family and friends in France) may also be considered within the selection process. Persons with medical needs and Palestinians at risk of forcible return to Syria are being prioritized for departures. Asylum claims are resolved during selection mission interviews, and refugees are granted refugee status or subsidiary protection on arrival.

IOM is in charge of pre-departure assistance, health checks and travel arrangements. When the group is larger than fifteen individuals, Syrian refugees admitted under both programmes take part in a one-day pre-departure cultural orientation programme delivered by IOM.<sup>48</sup>

388 refugees, including an unspecified number of Palestinians ex-Syria, were selected during three missions

<sup>45</sup> Adoma in the department of Isère and municipalities of Le Havre, Bourges, Apt and Grenoble, Coallia in Châtillon-sur-Seine, Rennes and Saint-Brieuc and Association de Soutien de la Dordogne in municipalities of Jumilhac-le-Grand and La Coquille in Dordogne.

<sup>46</sup> The programme is based on the information booklet about the resettlement programme and life in France developed by IOM, the French Asylum Service and Forum Réfugiés-Cosi in 2009. The booklet has been updated and adapted for Syrians by the Asylum Service of the Ministry of Interior.

<sup>47</sup> The French government does not consider that a post-arrival asylum procedure is necessary for Syrian refugees, as UNHCR files are sufficiently recently prepared.

<sup>48</sup> The programme is based on the information booklet about the resettlement programme and life in France developed by IOM, the French Asylum Service and Forum Réfugiés-Cosi in 2009. The booklet has been updated and adapted to Syrians, by the French Asylum Service.

- 52 from Egypt, 162 from Lebanon and 174 from Jordan. The average time between decision and arrival was approximately 2 months.

### Reception & integration

Toward the end of 2013, the Ministry of the Interior appointed a Préfet<sup>49</sup> to oversee placement, coordinate pre-arrival planning in with the contracted NGOs, and engage other stakeholders (including local authorities, schools, healthcare providers and social landlords). Additionally, in February 2014, the French government launched a call via the Network of French Mayors for cities to offer places to receive refugees. Launched during a pre-election period, the appeal received very few positive responses, largely from municipalities located in rural areas. The call was renewed in February 2015 for the new programme.

The Préfet and participating NGOs coordinate the distribution of refugees, based on the availability of housing in areas not already hosting significant numbers of asylum seekers. All refugees move directly into long-term housing.

Where possible, participating NGOs receive information on refugee profiles at least 1 month before arrival. All participating NGOs receive a lump sum of € 2,800 per person and per year, funded by the EU Asylum, Migration & Integration Fund, and are responsible for providing social assistance, financial support and housing allowance during a maximum period of 3 months until refugees become eligible to access mainstream social welfare.

### Humanitarian visas

Persons in need of international protection can present a need for asylum (although not a full asylum claim) at French consulates in their country of origin or a third country. The request is pre-assessed by consular authorities,<sup>50</sup> and those deemed eligible are provided with a visa to travel to France and stay for a period of up to 6 months (renewable) to lodge an asylum claim. Unlike those claiming asylum on French territory, humanitarian visa holders have permission to work in France and the possibility to live in a temporary

accommodation centre (CPH) used to accommodate refugees.

France is unique amongst European countries in making use of humanitarian visas to provide protection for Syrians. A total of 1,400 visas have been issued to Syrians since 2011, 985 of which were issued in 2014.

### Syrian student visa programme

In January 2014, the Association Démocratie et Entraide en Syrie established a 1-year programme to provide legal entry, scholarships and subsistence support for 25 Syrian students within or outside of France. With an initial 1-year implementation period, the programme was renewed until the end of the academic year in September 2015. Participating students receive a 1-year renewable study visa.

The Association conducted outreach to potential candidates and received a total of 60 applications. Other national partners facilitated specific aspects of the programme, as follows:

- the University of Créteil selected 25 students on the basis of the following criteria: have the baccalaureate, be under 28 years old, and be willing to continue their studies on a course proposed by the University. Tuition fees were waived. The University also provided a French language entry course;
- the Conseil Général du Val de Marne provides each student with a monthly subsistence grant of € 400;
- the NGO France Terre d'Asile provided students with post-arrival information about the asylum procedure, works with Campus France and CROUS<sup>51</sup> to make student housing available on arrival and organises regular coordination meetings with all partners.

A year after the programme began, 8 students of 25 currently follow courses at universities other than Créteil and receive mainstream scholarships managed by the CROUS. To date 12 students have applied for asylum in France, some of whom have been recognised as refugees or granted subsidiary protection.

<sup>49</sup> A Préfet is the State's representative in a department or region.

<sup>50</sup> Pre-assessment is based on the 1951 UN Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and rules for subsidiary protection, focusing particularly on individual vulnerability and the risk of refoulement. Individual connections with France and ability to integrate may also be considered.

<sup>51</sup> The Centre régional des Suvres universitaires et scolaires (CROUS), a regional organisation providing student bursaries, university halls of residence, reception for foreign students reception, student cultural activities, and campus restaurants.

## 4.3. CENTRAL AND EASTERN EUROPE

### 4.3.1. Czech Republic

The broader context (2011-14)

|   |             |
|---|-------------|
| Total asylum applications by Syrian nationals   | 270         |
| Percentage share of total Syrian asylum applications submitted in European countries (EU and EEA) | 0.13%       |
| Syrian asylum applications per capita   | 0.3%        |
| Recognition rate  | 84.44%      |
| Humanitarian aid for Syria and neighbouring countries   | € 4,022,617 |
| Percentage share of humanitarian aid contributed by European countries                            | 0.1%        |

The Czech Republic first implemented a pilot resettlement programme in 2008, which during 2011-13 received 109 Burmese refugees identified and referred by UNHCR. For 2014, the Czech government had initially pledged to resettle 100 Syrian refugees, comprising 70 medical cases identified by UNHCR and 30 refugees with family links to the Czech Republic. In December 2014, the Czech government announced the suspension of the programme, citing security concerns, a decision protested by NGOs and church organisations. In January 2015, the government reinstated the programme to resettle 70 medical cases.

The programme is based on experience gained through MEDEVAC, a medical evacuation programme providing protection and medical treatment for persons from various conflict regions since 1993. MEDEVAC is an ongoing programme run by the Ministry of the Interior in cooperation with UNHCR. Selection is based on medical diagnosis and the possibility of treatment in the Czech Republic, reconfirmed by Czech medical professionals in

the field. Priority is given to children requiring intensive and prolonged treatment, with a reasonable prospect of a considerable improvement in their health after treatment in the Czech Republic. In 2012, the programme facilitated the evacuation and medical treatment of 14 Syrian refugees (6 children and 8 adults) from Jordan.

Based on the MEDEVAC model, Syrian refugees selected for 2015 resettlement quota will be pre-selected by UNHCR using Czech medical criteria and assessed by medical specialists to determine treatment possibilities. The Czech Ministry of Interior will then carry out a selection mission, and all 70 cases are expected to arrive during 2015.

Persons arriving under the programme are granted refugee status within approximately a week after arrival. The State Integration Programme for beneficiaries of international protection will provide essential support as language training and housing with NGO support.

### 4.3.2. Hungary

|   |           |
|---|-----------|
| Total asylum applications by Syrian nationals   | 7,580     |
| Percentage share of total Syrian asylum applications submitted in European countries (EU and EEA) | 3.6%      |
| Syrian asylum applications per capita   | 0.07%     |
| Recognition rate  | 67.29%    |
| Humanitarian aid for Syria and neighbouring countries   | € 649,598 |
| Percentage share of humanitarian aid contributed by European countries                            | 0.02%     |

Whilst resettlement has no legal basis in Hungary, governmental decrees since 2012 have enabled very small-scale resettlement activities. The Hungarian government pledged to resettle Syrian refugees at the October 2013 UNHCR ministerial-level pledging conference, and subsequently set a 2014-15 quota of 20-20<sup>52</sup> places for Syrian refugees with family links to Hungary.<sup>53</sup> As no Syrian refugees with the required links were registered with UNHCR, referral is now based on applications made by family members in Hungary, with final selection facilitated via missions to Jordan and Lebanon.

A group of 9 persons (2 families and a single person) were selected for the 2013 quota, and arrived in Hungary in early 2014. A further group of Syrians is scheduled to be selected in Lebanon in December 2014, and are scheduled to arrive in March 2015.

Those resettled to Hungary are recognised as refugees and can access mainstream integration support, which after a 2014 reform<sup>54</sup> includes financial support and a 2-year support programme as well as support through European funding. For 2014, EU funding was used to provide additional services including interpretation and language tuition.

### 4.3.3. Poland

The broader context (2011-14)

|   |              |
|---|--------------|
| Total asylum applications by Syrian nationals   | 495          |
| Percentage share of total Syrian asylum applications submitted in European countries (EU and EEA) | 0.23%        |
| Syrian asylum applications per capita   | 0.0013%      |
| Recognition rate  | 100%         |
| Humanitarian aid for Syria and neighbouring countries   | € 10,225,270 |
| Percentage share of humanitarian aid contributed by European countries                            | 0.38%        |

Despite civil society advocacy efforts, Poland has not to date established an annual resettlement quota programme. At the ministerial-level pledging conference in December 2014, however, the Polish government announced plans to implement a pilot resettlement scheme, via which 100 Syrian refugees will be resettled during 2015-20. The government has stated its desire to develop further resettlement initiatives following the pilot programme.

Following a post-arrival determination procedure expected to be completed within 30 days, those resettled to Poland will be recognised as refugees or granted

subsidiary protection. For the first 6 months after arrival, the national Office for Foreigners will assist refugees with accommodation, subsistence, medical assistance and language tuition. Following this introductory period, refugees will be eligible to access the state-financed national mainstream integration programme for a period of 12 months.

Further details of the programme - including timeframes, selection locations and submission/selection criteria - will be established by the Working Group on Resettlement of 100 Syrians established by the Office for Foreigners in February 2015.

52 Official pledges with UNHCR so far only include 30 places.

53 10 Persons in 2013, and 20 persons in 2014.

54 Whilst several EU Member States had ceased returning asylum seekers to Hungary under the Dublin system due to reports of systematic detention, destitution and physical abuse amongst asylum seekers, the European Court of Justice ruled that the January 2013 reform of the the Hungarian asylum system, means that these returns no longer contravene the European Convention on Human Rights.



## 4.4. IRELAND AND THE UNITED KINGDOM

### 4.4.1. Ireland

The broader context (2011-14)

|   |              |
|---|--------------|
| Total asylum applications by Syrian nationals   | 70           |
| Percentage share of total Syrian asylum applications submitted in European countries (EU and EEA) | 0.03%        |
| Syrian asylum applications per capita   | 0.002%       |
| Recognition rate  | 88.89%       |
| Humanitarian aid for Syria and neighbouring countries   | € 34,346,492 |
| Percentage share of humanitarian aid contributed by European countries                            | 1.3%         |

#### Resettlement

Although the Irish government has operated a nominal annual resettlement quota programme providing 200 places, with a legal basis established in 1996, since 2008 the quota has not been filled. In 2013 Ireland announced a new annual quota of 80 places, 31 of which were reserved for Afghani and Palestinian refugees from Syria who arrived in Ireland in July and October 2014.

In response to UNHCR's calls, Ireland allocated 310 places for 2014-16 to Syrian refugees. In 2014, 90 Syrians selected from Jordan and Lebanon arrived in Ireland. Refugees resettled to Ireland are granted

"SHAP aimed to provide a legal channel for families to reunite with and protect their relatives at risk due to the conflict in Syria. However, our experience has shown that administrative procedures and sponsor requirements have made it challenging - and often impossible - for families to make use of this option. When the SHAP was announced on the government website, we and other Irish NGOs reached out to Syrian communities to create awareness of the programme and provide support to make applications. The application process was really challenging for people unfamiliar with migration law in Ireland, and the financial implications were so extensive that it was impossible for many to file an application. Some relatives in the region took considerable risks trying to arrange required documents, even returning to conflict zones to find things like birth certificates. Should there be a similar programme in the future, it should be adapted to meet the specific needs of vulnerable persons affected by a conflict."

Fiona Hurley, Irish Immigrant Support Centre (Nasc)

'programme refugee' status, with the same rights and entitlements as persons granted refugee status through the asylum system. All spend 10-12 weeks in a centralised reception facility before moving to longer term housing in municipalities.

#### Additional admission channels for family members

Alongside resettlement, in March 2014 the Irish government announced the Syrian Humanitarian Admission Programme (SHAP), via which Syrian nationals legally residing in Ireland could apply for family members<sup>55</sup> to join them with the quota remaining flexible depending on number of applications and developing circumstances. Family members could submit applications for up to 4 persons, indicating 2 who they considered to be priorities, and SHAP was open for applications during March-April 2014. 308 applications were received.

Final selection focused on vulnerability, prioritising elderly persons, children, unaccompanied mothers, women and girls at risk and disabled persons, and considering other vulnerabilities where applications provided evidence of serious risk.

Those arriving via SHAP are granted 2-year temporary residency. They are entitled to work in Ireland, but are not eligible to access social welfare. Applying family members are responsible for all costs related to their relatives' travel, entry visas and stay, including subsistence should their relatives not find employment. In December 2014, the Irish government announced the approval of SHAP applications for 111 persons<sup>56</sup>

<sup>55</sup> Spouses, children, parents, siblings, grandparents and grandchildren (as well as in some cases relatives according to a broader definition of family, e.g. aunts, nephews, etc.) residing in Syria or a neighbouring country.

<sup>56</sup> Arrivals cannot be traced unless new arrivals report to the Department of Justice. At March 2015, not all of the 111 persons approved had received their entry visa and were therefore still waiting to depart from the country they applied from.

## 4.4.2. United Kingdom

The broader context (2011-14)

|  |                 |
|--|-----------------|
| Total asylum applications by Syrian nationals  | 6,000           |
| Percentage share of total Syrian asylum application submitted in European countries (EU and EEA) | 2.8%            |
| Syrian asylum applications per capita  | 0.01%           |
| Recognition rate   | 81.78%          |
| Humanitarian aid for Syria and neighbouring countries  | € 1,052,959,166 |
| Percentage share of humanitarian aid contributed by European countries                           | 39%             |

The UK is the second largest bilateral donor of humanitarian aid in response to the Syrian refugee crisis, after the United States. Although the 2013 UK annual resettlement quota programme received Iraqi refugees from within Syria, the UK government was initially reluctant to allocate resettlement places for Syrian refugees, stating that humanitarian aid was a more effective way to address the crisis.

In response, a coalition of civil society organisations led by the British Refugee Council engaged in sustained advocacy for the UK to create admission places for Syrian refugees. Following a parliamentary debate in January 2014, the UK government announced the Syria Vulnerable Persons Relocation Scheme (VPRS), an ad-hoc programme for vulnerable persons from Syria. The VPRS is independent of the UK's annual resettlement quota programme, the Gateway Protection Programme (GPP), which receives 750 refugees each year. The VPRS is 'needs-based' - no specific quota has therefore been set, and the government has stated its intention to admit 'several hundred' people during 2015-18.

The VPRS prioritises cases falling into 3 submission categories: victims of violence and torture, women and girls at risk, and those in need of urgent medical care. In theory places within the programme are allocated equally between these 3 categories, although in practice cases selected to date have tended to fulfil more than one of these criteria. Selection is based on UNHCR referrals from Jordan, Egypt, Iraq, Lebanon and Turkey, using the expedited HAP form (see Chapter 3). IOM provides pre-departure medical assessments, assistance with obtaining travel documentation, coordinating travel (including flight support) and pre-departure cultural

orientation.

Persons admitted via the VPRS are granted 5-year residency and humanitarian protection status on arrival. Although not recognised as refugees, reception conditions are the same as for those recognised as refugees in the UK, including eligibility to access social welfare, permission to work and access to family reunification. Permanent residency can be applied for after the initial 5-year period has expired, should the situation in Syria not have stabilised.

Municipality participation in the programme is voluntary. In many cases, reception and integration of persons admitted under the VPRS is modelled on existing GPP structures and partnerships. As GPP refugees, VPRS arrivals are received directly into independent housing in municipalities, and receive 12 months specialised reception and integration support.

The first group of persons selected under the VPRS arrived in the UK in March 2014. The pace of arrivals has since then slowed significantly, with just 143 persons accepted under the scheme by March 2015. In a November 2014 open letter to the UK government, NGOs criticised the rate of arrivals as 'woefully inadequate compared to the scale of the crisis' and urged the government to admit larger numbers.<sup>57</sup>

<sup>57</sup> 'The Independent 'Charities' open letter to David Cameron: We applaud British aid to Syria, but aid is not enough' (26 November 2014).

## 4.5. SOUTHERN EUROPE

### 4.5.1. Portugal

The broader context (2011-14)

|   |           |
|---|-----------|
| Total asylum applications by Syrian nationals   | 165       |
| Percentage share of total Syrian asylum applications submitted in European countries (EU and EEA) | 0.08%     |
| Syrian asylum applications per capita   | 0.002%    |
| Recognition rate  | 75%       |
| Humanitarian aid for Syria and neighbouring countries   | € 286,527 |
| Percentage share of humanitarian aid contributed by European countries                            | 0.01%     |

In 2009, Portugal established an annual resettlement quota programme providing 30 places. 23 places were reserved from within the 2014 quota for Syrian refugees, selected on the basis of UNHCR dossier submissions.

At the time of writing final case selection had not yet been completed, and arrival of refugees submitted under the 2014 quota was therefore moved to 2015. Dossiers for 26 persons currently residing in Egypt were under consideration. The group comprises 6 households, 3 of which together constitute a single extended family, and

“When the situation escalated I moved to Jordan, where tuition fees were too expensive for me to afford. I found the Global Platform for Syrian Students on the website of the Syrian NGO Dubarah, and I applied in September 2013. By the time I received a reply in February 2014 I had gone back to Damascus to try to continue my studies there. But it’s too great a risk to attend classes - to travel to and from the university is very dangerous, and teaching is sometimes interrupted for weeks at a time. I had to arrange my travel to Beirut within a week of receiving my reply from the Platform, and there I met a group of other students admitted to the programme. We were flown to Portugal on a military plane.

I am a student in a regular Portuguese programme, so everything is taught in Portuguese. In the beginning it was difficult to concentrate on learning the language because there were so many other things to arrange, but we received a lot of support from university staff and from people involved in the Platform. So now, a year after I arrived, I am able to hold a conversation in Portuguese and also understand what the teachers are saying. I am now taking more language classes, so that I will be able to gain as much work experience as I can here in Portugal until such time as I can return to Syria.

What the Platform, the Portuguese government and everybody else involved did for me and the others was crucial for the future of Syria. If you don’t save education you won’t save the country - it’s the first pillar of everything. For me personally, it was my last chance. It saved my dream of becoming a civil engineer.”

Syrian civil engineering student, who in February 2014 came to Portugal to continue his studies, which had ceased when he fled Damascus in March 2013

are submitted under the ‘survivors of violence and/ or torture’ and ‘women at risk’ submission categories.

Those resettled to Portugal are recognised as refugees, and follow a 6-month post-arrival reception and integration programme provided by municipality social services.

In addition to planned resettlement, by November 2014 70 Syrian students from Lebanon had arrived into Portugal to continue their studies. Their arrival was facilitated by the Global Platform for Syrian Students (see Chapter 3.5).

### 4.5.2. Spain

The broader context (2011-14)

|   |              |
|---|--------------|
| Total asylum applications by Syrian nationals   | 2,575        |
| Percentage share of total Syrian asylum applications submitted in European countries (EU and EEA) | 1.2%         |
| Syrian asylum applications per capita   | 0.005%       |
| Recognition rate  | 96%          |
| Humanitarian aid for Syria and neighbouring countries   | € 23,270,007 |
| Percentage share of humanitarian aid contributed by European countries                            | 0,86%        |

In 2009, the Spanish government effected legislative changes that created the basis for 2 subsequent ad-hoc initiatives to receive refugees from Shousha camp in Tunisia, in 2011-12 (80 persons) and 2013-14 (30 persons). In December 2014, the Spanish government responded to UNHCR’s appeals for resettlement and admission places by announcing a 2014-15 programme to receive 130 Syrian refugees. The programme focuses on vulnerable Syrian families, in particular female-headed households, currently living in Jordan.

All cases were referred by UNHCR, with final selection made during a November 2014 selection mission to

Jordan in November 2014. The majority of those selected have serious medical and/or psychological care needs. 30 persons arrived in Spain in December 2014, and 90 persons are expected to arrive during the first half of 2015.

Those resettled to Spain are recognised as refugees, and are accommodated in centralised reception facilities for a period of up to 12 months after arrival. Centres are managed by the Spanish government or by NGOs, and individual integration programmes are established for all refugees during their stay. Programmes include specific actions and assistance to prepare for a move to longer term accommodation in municipalities.

### 4.5.3. Italy

The broader context (2011-14)

|   |              |
|---|--------------|
| Total asylum applications by Syrian nationals   | 2,020        |
| Percentage share of total Syrian asylum applications submitted in European countries (EU and EEA) | 0.95%        |
| Syrian asylum applications per capita   | 0.003%       |
| Recognition rate  | 60.56%       |
| Humanitarian aid for Syria and neighbouring countries   | € 74,536,506 |

|  |      |
|--|------|
| Percentage share of humanitarian aid contributed by European countries | 2.8% |
|--|------|

Situated at the southern border of Europe, Italy has in recent years received large numbers of asylum seekers arriving by boat via the Mediterranean Sea, with Syrians and Palestinians ex-Syria constituting the majority of boat arrivals during 2013-14. In October 2013, prompted by the deaths of 366 migrants when their boat capsized off the coast of the island of Lampedusa, the Italian government invested significant resources in the nationally-led 'Mare Nostrum' sea search and rescue operation. Mare Nostrum was closed in late 2014, following the establishment of the smaller and much more limited in mandate Joint Operation Triton coordinated by FRONTEX.<sup>58</sup>

Although Italy has no annual resettlement quota programme, in 2009 it received 173 Palestinians from Syria within an ad-hoc resettlement initiative. Refugees arriving via this programme were required to apply for asylum on arrival in Italy, and were then granted renewable 5-year residency; with eligibility to apply for citizenship after 10 years residency in Italy.

In March 2015, the Italian government pledged 450 places for refugees from Syria, 400 of which are offered in the framework of an ad-hoc resettlement programme and 50 places through private sponsorship programme. At the time of writing, no further details on the timeframe for arrivals or any other aspects of the programmes had been announced



Syrian refugees from Beirut upon arrival in France, Courtesy of the French Office for the Protection of Refugees and Stateless Persons (OFPRA)

58 European Agency for the Management of Operational Cooperation at the External Borders of the Member States of the European Union (FRONTEX).



## 4.6. NORTHERN EUROPE

### 4.6.1. Denmark

The broader context (2011-14)

|  |               |
|--|---------------|
| Total asylum applications by Syrian nationals  | 9,825         |
| Percentage share of total Syrian asylum application submitted in European countries (EU and EEA) | 4.6%          |
| Syrian asylum applications per capita  | 0.18%         |
| Recognition rate   | 90.54%        |
| Humanitarian aid for Syria and neighbouring countries  | € 104,845,777 |
| Percentage share of humanitarian aid contributed by European countries                           | 3.9%          |

In the face of increased numbers of asylum seekers in Denmark, including Syrians, there were growing calls for the government to impose restrictive measures. In September 2014, the Danish government announced plans to limit protection for Syrian asylum seekers to a 1-year temporary residency (renewable for another two years) instead of refugee status and delaying access to family reunification until 2 months before initial residency is approved for extension. UNHCR has criticised these measures, asking Denmark to recognise Syrian asylum seekers as refugees and ensure timely family reunification.<sup>59</sup>

Despite these developments, Denmark allocated 140 places from within its 3-year multiannual quota programme for 2014 to refugees fleeing Syria.<sup>60</sup> In March 2015, the government extended the number of pledges to an overall 390 places. Of the 140 places offered in 2014, a limited number were made available for Syrians with particular protection needs under the emergency and urgent submission category (3 persons)<sup>61</sup> and the 'Twenty or More' programme (6 persons).<sup>62</sup>

<sup>59</sup> Denmark to limit family reunification for refugees, THE LOCAL dk, 7 October 2014 & UN criticises Denmark's refugee restriction, THE LOCAL dk, 10 October 2014.

<sup>60</sup> Since July 2005, the Danish government has operated a 3-year multiannual quota resettlement programme (1,500 places), with the majority of cases submitted based on the geographical priorities and selected via in-country selection missions.

<sup>61</sup> Within the Danish quota programme, 75 places per year (225 during each 3-year quota period) are reserved for those with 'urgent and emergency protection need (refugees at immediate risk of refoulement and/ or physical harm in the country of asylum).

<sup>62</sup> 30 places a year from within the resettlement quota are reserved for the UNHCR 'Twenty or More' programme (TOM) for persons with special medical needs, selected via UNHCR dossiers or during selection missions.

In September 2014, a mission to Lebanon selected 126 refugees ex-Syria<sup>63</sup> (24 families and 12 single persons), including the 6 'Twenty or More' programme (TOM) persons with special medical needs, and those submitted as victims of torture and SGBV, and disabled persons. One family with urgent medical needs arrived shortly after the mission, with the remainder of the group due to arrive in early 2015.

During September-October 2014, 2 Syrian cases (3 persons) in Iraq and Turkey were submitted via UNHCR dossier under the emergency and urgent category, with selection decisions taken within 19-30 days of submission. By December 2014, 1 of the 2 cases had arrived in Denmark.

Refugees resettled to Denmark receive a 5 day pre-departure cultural orientation programme. Upon arrival in Denmark, resettled refugees are granted a 6-month temporary residence permit which is automatically extended for further 6-month periods for up to 5 years from the date of entry, after which permanent residency can be acquired based on a set of conditions.<sup>64</sup> Reception of resettled refugees and provision of housing and a three year integration programme<sup>65</sup> is mandatory for Danish municipalities.

<sup>63</sup> Both Syrian nationals and stateless persons.

<sup>64</sup> After five years, refugees must apply for further extension of temporary residence or permanent residence in case they fulfill a set of criteria, including independence from several types of public benefits for a period of 3 years, language skills, a signed declaration of integration and active citizenship, and full-time employment or training for at least 3 years.

<sup>65</sup> Refugees are obliged to sign an integration contract based on personal assessment, which includes language classes, an introduction to Danish society and employment advice.

## 4.6.2. Finland

The broader context (2011-14)

|   |              |
|---|--------------|
| Total asylum applications by Syrian nationals   | 575          |
| Percentage share of total Syrian asylum applications submitted in European countries (EU and EEA) | 0.27%        |
| Syrian asylum applications per capita   | 0.01%        |
| Recognition rate  | 86.79%       |
| Humanitarian aid for Syria and neighbouring countries   | € 41,120,592 |
| Percentage share of humanitarian aid contributed by European countries                            | 1.5%         |

Since 2009, the number of resettlement places provided by Finnish municipalities has decreased, creating challenges for the national programme's implementation.

To encourage the provision of local places, in 2014 the Finnish Red Cross, the Ministry of Employment & the Economy and The Centres for Economic Development, Transport and the Environment (ELY Centres) launched an awareness-raising campaign. The campaign visited 21 municipalities across Finland, displaying an original refugee tent and providing information on the living conditions of refugees in need of resettlement across the world.

Additionally, the government-led VIPRO project, launched in late 2012 to support municipality involvement in resettlement, has expanded its activities to include training for practitioners supporting the integration of Syrian refugees. The training focuses particularly on trauma arising from experiences of conflict.

At December 2014, 24 municipalities had offered places for Syrian resettled refugees, 20 of which will be engaging in resettlement for the first time.

Finland has received resettled refugees since 1979, and now operates an annual quota programme providing 750 places per year, including 100 places for emergency resettlement cases selected on a dossier basis. In response to UNHCR's calls, in September 2013 the Finnish government allocated 500 places for refugees from Syria in 2014: 200 from the annual quota and 300 additional places. 350 places from within the 2015 quota have since also been allocated to Syrians.

In 2014, 2 selection missions focused on urban refugee populations in Jordan and Lebanon, selecting 495 refugees. The majority of the group were families, and approximately 50% were children. Many were submitted under the 'survivors of torture and/or violence' submission category.

A 3-day cultural orientation programme was provided by the Lutheran group Finn Church Aid, financed by the Finnish government, and smaller group arrivals took place during June-December 2014. Stateless Palestinians and Somali nationals residing in Syria were selected under the Finnish emergency quota for 2014, although no Syrian refugees were submitted via this route.

Refugees resettled to Finland are granted refugee status with permanent residency. Finnish municipalities are responsible for reception and integration of resettled refugees, engage in the programme on a voluntary basis via annual agreements with the national government. Agreements and are coordinated by the regional offices of the Ministry of the Employment & Economy (ELY centres).

### 4.6.3. Norway

The broader context (2011-14)

|  |               |
|--|---------------|
| Total asylum applications by Syrian nationals  | 3,430         |
| Percentage share of total Syrian asylum application submitted in European countries (EU and EEA) | 1.6%          |
| Syrian asylum applications per capita  | 0.07%         |
| Recognition rate   | 86.93%        |
| Humanitarian aid for Syria and neighbouring countries  | € 177,223,719 |
| Percentage share of humanitarian aid contributed by European countries                           | 6.6%          |

In July 2013, Norway became one of the first European countries to make a large-scale commitment to receive refugees ex-Syria by announcing an allocation of 1,000 resettlement places for 2014, 500 of which were additional to the annual resettlement quota of approximately 1,200 places a year.<sup>66</sup> Domestic political support for the response has been mixed: in June 2015 centre and left-wing parties proposed that Norway receive a total of 10,000 refugees ex-Syria, within 2 years. A compromise was found after long discussions between the right-wing minority government, which had opposed allowing in any more refugees. The country now plans to welcome 2,000 Syrians this year, that is 500 more than previously planned, followed by 3,000 each year in 2016 and 2017.

At August 2014, 1,006 refugees ex-Syria had been selected for resettlement to Norway during selection missions to Jordan (327 persons), Lebanon (298 persons) and Turkey (380 persons). 54% of those selected were children. Whilst Norway traditionally reserves 60% of its resettlement quota for women and girls at risk, this requirement was suspended for the Syrian caseload as very few cases falling into this category were submitted by UNHCR. The selected caseload included significant numbers of victims of torture and violence, with approximately 60% of those selected in Lebanon falling into this category.

The Norwegian resettlement programme has traditionally been characterised by short timescales for decision-making and processing, both of which have continued in the case of refugees ex-Syria. Decisions for cases from

Jordan and Lebanon were made within 3 weeks of selection missions taking place, and the average processing time from selection to arrival in Norway for those selected via in-country missions was 4.5 months. While no Syrian cases were submitted under the emergency resettlement quota, more vulnerable cases were given priority within decision-making, with timescales from submission to arrival in Norway averaging 3 months.

IOM ensures pre-departure assistance, health assessments and travel arrangements. All refugees, including Syrians, receive 4-days of pre-departure cultural orientation training provided by IOM, delivered by cross-cultural trainers. The programme, called NORCO, also includes information seminars with municipalities to ensure proper transfer and feed-back of pre-departure and post arrival information.

Municipalities receiving resettled refugees receive an integration subsidy per refugee for a 5-year period, and additional funding for refugees falling into specific vulnerability categories. Following initial arrivals in August<sup>67</sup>, the Norwegian government voiced concerns about future arrivals, citing difficulties experienced by municipalities in providing services for traumatised, 'high needs' refugees. This hesitation was met with criticism from some political parties, and led to municipalities publicly expressing their willingness and capacity to receive such cases.

<sup>66</sup> The Norwegian resettlement programme operates a multiannual 3-year quota of approximately 1,200 places per year. The current multiannual quota period is 2016-19.

<sup>67</sup> At the time, 152 persons from Jordan and 214 persons from Lebanon had arrived in Norway. All Syrians selected in Jordan and Lebanon have arrived in Norway in 2015.

## Receiving survivors of violence and trauma in the Norwegian municipality of Bergen

“Here in Bergen, the City Council determines how many refugees will be received in the city during the coming year. The second largest city in Norway, Bergen is specialised in receiving cases with particular medical or health needs, given the expertise available to us at the city’s hospital and trauma centre.

When the government voiced its hesitance to receive persons with special needs from Syria, Bergen was one of the municipalities that publicly supported their being received. In 2014, 50 persons from Syria, with 4 families and also many single persons arrived into Bergen from Jordan, Lebanon and Turkey. They were placed in individual housing on arrival, and are now participating in the integration programme offered by the municipality and our civil society partners.

Most of the persons who arrived here this year have some sort of medical condition and have experienced trauma experiences and torture and many require special care. In many cases the new arrivals have got to know their social workers and feel comfortable in opening up to them about their experiences. Social workers receive some basic training on how to deal with trauma before working with refugees who arrive in the city. Two psychologists specialized in working with trauma coach and assist social workers in dealing with trauma. They also provide direct support to refugees if needed.”

Elin Gjaere & Bassam Minzalji – Bergen municipality

Those resettled to Norway are recognised as refugees and are eligible to access mainstream services. Municipalities are obliged to prepare individualised 2-year introductory programmes for all adult refugees, incorporating areas such as language tuition and support for education and

employment. Refugees receive an introduction subsidy during the 2-year period, conditional on their following the programme.

### 4.6.4. Sweden

The broader context (2011-14)

|   |               |
|---|---------------|
| Total asylum applications by Syrian nationals   | 55,835        |
| Percentage share of total Syrian asylum applications submitted in European countries (EU and EEA) | 26.2%         |
| Syrian asylum applications per capita   | 0.58%         |
| Recognition rate  | 93.33%        |
| Humanitarian aid for Syria and neighbouring countries   | € 120,594,829 |
| Percentage share of humanitarian aid contributed by European countries                            | 4.49%         |

## Swedish resettlement for Syrian refugees 2013-2016

| Year  | Annual quota | Number of places reserved for refugees from Syria | Dossier submissions | Of which emergency cases | Selectionmission location(number of persons selected) | Arrivals to date (number and nationality)   |
|-------|--------------|---|---------------------|--------------------------|---|---|
| 2012  | 1,900        | 112   | Not available       | Not available            | Not available   | 112 (Syrian)                                |
| 2013  | 1,900        | 450   | 250                 | 3                        | 200 Jordan  | 376 (362 Syrian /14 stateless)              |
| 2014  | 1,900        | 750   | 650                 | 21                       | Jordan (100)  | 480 (440 Syrian /40 stateless Palestinians) |
| 2015  | 1,900        | 750   | 550                 | 0                        | Lebanon (200)   | 62 (50 Syrian /12 stateless)                |
| 2016  | 1,900        | 750   | -                   | -                        | -   | -   |
| Total | 9,500        | 2,812   | 1,450               | 24                       | 500   | 1,030                                       |

After Germany, Sweden hosts the second largest Syrian refugee population in Europe. Since September 2013, in recognition of the absence of any foreseeable solution to the conflict in Syria, Swedish authorities have granted all asylum seekers from Syria permanent residency, including the right to work and to apply for family reunification. From 2013 to the early part of 2015, the Swedish Migration Agency (SMA) chaired the Syria Core Group, playing a lead role in engaging states round the world in offering resettlement and admission places for Syrians.

In 2012, Sweden allocated 112 places from within its annual resettlement quota of 1,900 to Syrian refugees. Almost 3,000 Syrians and refugees ex Syria were resettled between 2012 and 2016 upon referral by UNHCR, making an average of just under 30 % of the annual resettlement quotas within that time period.

Approximately 75% of Syrian cases selected for resettlement to Sweden have been selected via UNHCR dossier submission, with the remainder via in-country selection missions. Syrians have been selected from all countries in the region, and 64 of the 2,812 places provided were allocated to Palestinians and stateless persons ex-Syria. At March 2015, 1,030 persons had arrived into Sweden. Average time periods between selection and

departure are generally 7 days for emergency cases,<sup>68</sup> and within 6 months for other cases.

Over the last 2 years, however, arrivals have slowed due to housing shortages in municipalities, in part due to the increased number of asylum seekers also requiring accommodation. To address these challenges, the SMA in cooperation with 5 of the 21 County Administrative Boards (CABs - regional agencies of the national government) established the SMAK project. SMAK aims to improve settlement capacity and quality, in particular for vulnerable persons, through analysis and mapping of existing capacities and by developing and testing new models for settlement.

In addition to resettlement, in 2014 700 Syrians granted employment visas arrived into Sweden, the majority to work in the catering industry. Smaller numbers have been granted humanitarian visas to travel to Sweden for emergency medical treatment. A small university scholarship programme for Syrian students, coordinated by the public agency the Swedish Institute, enabled 30 Syrians to arrive into Sweden to study during 2014-15. The programme ran an online application process targeting highly qualified Syrian students, and scholarships cover tuition and living expenses during a 12-month programme.

<sup>68</sup> The Swedish annual resettlement quota programme reserves an annual sub-quota of 350 places for emergency cases.



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## 5. References and Bibliography

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The following governmental ministries, organisations and international institutions graciously responded to our inquiries and participated in interviews. Information provided by the following sources was used to create the base of statistics used in this report and to write the sub-sections focusing on countries.

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MENA Protection Service based in Amman, Jordan  
UNHCR Europe Bureau

### IOM

International Organisation on Migration (IOM) Jordan

### ICMC

Operations Service  
ICMC UNHCR deployment scheme

## EUROPE CHAPTERS

### AUSTRIA

International Organisation for Migration  
Austrian Red Cross Steyr  
Austrian Ministry for the Interior (Department for Asylum and Foreigners)  
Austrian Ministry for Europe, Integration and Foreign Affairs (Department for Integration)  
Caritas Vienna  
Diakonie Zinnergasse  
UNHCR Austria

### GERMANY

Caritas Friedland  
Refugee Council North Rhine Westphalia e.V.  
Ministry for the Interior  
Federal Office for Migration and Refugees (BAMF)  
Bundesverband der Arbeiterwohlfahrt (AWO)  
UNHCR Germany

### SWITZERLAND & LIECHTENSTEIN

Swiss Federal Department for Justice and the Police (State Secretariat for Migration)  
Schweizerische Flüchtlingshilfe (SFH)  
UNHCR Switzerland

#### BELGIUM

Office of the Commissioner General for Refugees and Stateless persons (OCGRS)  
Fedasil  
Caritas International

#### LUXEMBOURG

Luxembourg Reception and Integration Agency (OLAI)

#### NETHERLANDS

Immigration and Naturalisation Service (IND)  
Central Agency for the Reception of Asylum Seekers (COA)

#### FRANCE

Ministry of Interior (Asylum Service)  
French Office for the Protection of Refugees and Stateless Persons (OFPRA)  
Forum Réfugiés-Cosi  
France Terre d'Asile  
Coallia and Adoma

#### CZECH REPUBLIC

Ministry of the Interior – Department for Asylum and Migration Policy

#### HUNGARY

UNHCR Budapest

#### POLAND

UNHCR Budapest

#### IRELAND

Nasc  
Jesuit Refugee Council Ireland

#### UK

UK Home Office – Visas and Immigration

#### DENMARK

Danish Immigration Service

#### FINLAND

Finnish Red Cross

#### NORWAY

Norwegian Directorate of Integration and Diversity  
Norwegian Directorate of Immigration  
Bergen municipality

#### SWEDEN

Swedish Migration Agency (SMA)  
Caritas Sweden

#### PORTUGAL

Portuguese Refugee Council  
Global Platform for Syrian Students

#### SPAIN

Ministry of Labour and Social Security



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