

# RESETTLEMENT OF REFUGEES AND PRIVATE SPONSORSHIP IN IRELAND

Samantha Arnold and Emma Quinn

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EMN Ireland





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## The European Migration Network

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## About this Report

This European Migration Network Study investigates the experience of resettlement and private sponsorship in Ireland, specifically programmes operational between 2011 and 2016. The report consists of information gathered by way of a common template, primarily for an overview, EU-level synthesis report, *Resettlement and Humanitarian Admission Programmes in Europe – what works?*

*The opinions presented in this report are those of the authors and do not represent the position of the Economic and Social Research Institute, the Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service, the Department of Justice and Equality, or the European Commission, Directorate-General Migration and Home Affairs.*



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## Abbreviations

AMIF	Asylum Migration and Integration Fund
DES	Department of Education and Skills
DFAT	Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade
DJE	Department of Justice and Equality
DSP	Department of Social Protection
EMN	European Migration Network
EPIC	Employment for People from Immigrant Communities
ERF	European Refugee Fund
EROC	Emergency Reception and Orientation Centres
ETB	Education and Training Board
EU	European Union
GP	General Practitioner
ICRC	International Committee of the Red Cross
INIS	Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service
IOM	International Organization for Migration
IRPP	Irish Refugee Protection Programme
NGO	Non-governmental Organisation
OMI	Office of the Minister for Integration
OPMI	Office for the Promotion of Migrant Integration
PRA	Principal Resettlement Applicant
RRF	Resettlement Registration Form
SHAP	Syrian Humanitarian Admission Programme
UNHCR	Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

# Executive Summary

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The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) estimates that globally 65.3 million people<sup>1</sup> were forcibly displaced in 2015, including 21.3 million refugees (UNHCR, 2015a). In an international context resettlement refers to the selection and transfer of refugees from a state in which they have sought protection to a third state which has agreed to admit them as permanent residents (European Migration Network, 2014). The current refugee and migrant crisis has brought resettlement programmes into global focus. The UNHCR identifies three possible durable solutions for refugees and stateless persons, namely voluntary repatriation, integration into the host country, and resettlement. Resettlement is a possible solution for refugees wishing to rebuild their lives when the first two options of voluntary repatriation and integration to the host country are unavailable (UNHCR, 2011).

Resettlement is generally carried out with UNHCR acting as an intermediary and it targets those refugees whose protection needs have already been established. Resettlement programmes vary internationally and across Europe. In an EU context resettlement is a process by which third-country nationals in need of international protection are permitted to reside in a Member State. In light of the ongoing refugee and migrant crisis, EU Member States have sought additional means of providing residency to persons affected by conflict, such as ad hoc humanitarian admission and private sponsorship schemes.

In the context of this study, humanitarian admission is understood to be the process by which groups from vulnerable refugee populations are admitted to EU Member States on humanitarian grounds, in a way that is similar to resettlement, but often with temporary rather than permanent residence status. There is no universal definition of private sponsorship and schemes of this nature are uncommon in Europe, but it is generally considered to involve the active participation of private citizens, family members or organisations already resident in the state, in providing financial, emotional and social support to the beneficiary (European Migration Network, 2016b). Humanitarian admission and private sponsorship programmes are mainly introduced as a complement to traditional resettlement programmes.

This study investigates resettlement and private sponsorship programmes operational in Ireland between 2011 and 2016. The study focuses on the

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<sup>1</sup> Includes 21.3 million refugees, 40.8 million internally displaced, and 3.2 million asylum seekers globally.

‘traditional’ Irish Refugee Resettlement Programme and the recent once-off Syrian Humanitarian Admission Programme (SHAP), a private sponsorship scheme. We provide a comprehensive overview of both programmes including some of the associated challenges and successes.

In the global context of record high populations of refugees and displaced persons, the number of refugees resettled to Ireland and to other EU Member States is very low. The overall EU response, as well as the global response (Oxfam, 2016; UNHCR 2015c), to the migrant and refugee crisis has been heavily criticised by NGOs (Médecins Sans Frontières, 2016).

From a domestic policy perspective it is notable that Ireland voluntarily pledged more places than recommended under the EU Resettlement Programme. Ireland’s decision to participate in the EU-wide response to the refugee crisis has resulted in an increase in the number of resettled persons foreseen to arrive in Ireland (discussed below). Accordingly the study is undertaken at a time of expansion for the Irish Refugee Resettlement Programme.

This study also provides a timely opportunity to examine the experience of Ireland’s first private sponsorship scheme: the Syrian Humanitarian Admission Programme (SHAP). This programme provided a new safe legal route to enter and reside in Ireland for family members of Syrian nationals living in Ireland and of naturalised Irish citizens of Syrian origin. The SHAP was an innovation in domestic immigration policy and as mentioned above such schemes are uncommon in an EU context.

## RESETTLEMENT

Ireland was among the first seven countries in Europe to establish a resettlement programme (European Migration Network, 2016b). The Irish Refugee Resettlement Programme has been in operation since 2000<sup>2</sup> and is run by the Irish government in collaboration with UNHCR. Under the Programme persons who have been determined to be refugees by UNHCR in a country of refuge outside the EU, who fall within a UNHCR resettlement submission category, are resettled directly to Ireland in line with Irish quotas (UNHCR, 2011). Resettled refugees are granted the status of ‘Programme Refugee’ under Section 24 of the *Refugee Act 1996, as amended* (Government of Ireland, 2013) (see Section 2). This differs from refugees who arrived spontaneously and independently in the State and who must apply for ‘Convention Refugee’ protection.

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<sup>2</sup> The Irish Refugee Resettlement Programme was established in 1998.

Resettlement is overseen at national level by an Inter-Departmental Working Group chaired by the Office of the Promotion of Migrant Integration (OPMI) in the Department of Justice and Equality (DJE) and at the local level by an inter-agency working group established in each receiving community in Ireland and chaired by the Local Authority. Receiving communities where the resettled refugees will be housed on a long-term basis are selected by OPMI in consultation with the Inter-Departmental Group and to date refugees have been resettled across the country in 29 different locations outside of Dublin and in the four Dublin local authority areas.

In 2015, the Irish government established the 'Irish Refugee Protection Programme' (IRPP) in response to the refugee crisis and the impact it has had in central and southern Europe. The IRPP is now the umbrella under which resettlement operates. The IRPP's remit includes resettlement, relocation and integration of arrivals.<sup>3</sup>

The Minister for Justice and Equality is responsible for resettlement policy, including setting intake quotas and determining the countries from which to resettle, in consultation with the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT). Overall the resettlement process in Ireland can be divided into four parts:

- The selection process, carried out by way of in-country selection missions or the 'dossier method'. Decisions are typically made within three months (Government of Ireland, 2013);<sup>4</sup>
- A period of preparation, involving medical screening, preparing visas and making travel arrangements, etc. This process typically takes a few months (Office of the Minister for Integration, 2008a);
- The reception and orientation process, which involves housing resettled refugees in reception centres for a minimum of six weeks where they undertake an orientation programme; and
- Resettlement and integration in a local receiving community, including preparing the receiving community nine months prior to the refugees' arrival.<sup>5</sup> Targeted integration support is available for one year.

Resettled refugees are housed in full board Emergency Reception and Orientation Centres (EROCs) and undertake an English language programme which consists of up to 20 hours tuition per week for a period of one year to 18 months (Glennon, 2016). After the initial reception and orientation stage, they are housed in

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<sup>3</sup> 'Irish Refugee Protection Programme', [www.justice.ie](http://www.justice.ie)

<sup>4</sup> Decisions can take longer than three months. Decisions relating to urgent medical cases are made within four weeks. See Section 4.3.2.

<sup>5</sup> This process begins before the refugees arrive to Ireland, and can begin prior to selection.

independent accommodation around the country.

Some 766 persons were resettled to Ireland between January 2011 and November 2016. The period has seen a significant increase in the number of refugees resettled annually: 35 refugees were resettled in 2011, rising to 176 in 2015 and almost doubling in the period up to November 2016, to reach 344.

The increase has been driven in part by Ireland's decision to participate in the June 2015 EU Resettlement Programme. Ireland has undertaken to resettle 520 refugees between June 2015 and end 2016.<sup>6</sup> To date 507 persons have been resettled in Ireland under the EU Resettlement Programme. An additional 260 refugees are to be resettled in 2017.<sup>7</sup> The majority of refugees resettled since 2014 have been of Syrian origin.

In November 2016 Ireland ranked seventh in meeting its resettlement commitments under the EU Resettlement Programme among 31 participating countries (European Commission, 2016f). NGOs, such as the Immigrant Council of Ireland and UNHCR, have called on the Irish government to do more to respond to the ongoing refugee crisis,<sup>8</sup> including by creating legal avenues for persons in need of protection to enter Ireland.<sup>9</sup>

Some aspects of the Irish Refugee Resettlement Programme are recognised as positive, for example the interagency work to ensure refugees are resettled into communities that can address their needs (European Parliament, 2013), and the approach to integration more generally for resettled refugees compared to other beneficiaries of international protection (Ní Raghallaigh et al., 2016). An evaluation of the programme was commissioned by the Office of the Minister for Integration (OMI, the predecessor of OPMI) in 2008 as part of an EU transnational project funded by the European Refugee Fund (ERF). The report highlighted some challenges relating to the participation of women in orientation: the attendance of women was not as high as men due to childcare and breastfeeding responsibilities. OPMI noted that this problem persists, and that crèche services and separate classes for women who are breastfeeding are provided in order to try to address the low participation of women.<sup>10</sup> The 2008 evaluation and a further evaluation undertaken in 2011 of the programme in Carlow also found

<sup>6</sup> The relevant period runs from 8 June 2015 to 31 December 2016.

<sup>7</sup> 'Tánaiste confirms plans to accept 260 more refugees under resettlement programme' 6 July 2016, [www.inis.gov.ie](http://www.inis.gov.ie).

<sup>8</sup> For example the Immigrant Council of Ireland. See <http://immigrantcouncil.ie>. See also: Parliamentary Question 19 February 2015 [2134/15] [www.kildarestreet.com](http://www.kildarestreet.com).

<sup>9</sup> Joint Committee on Foreign Affairs and Trade Debate Update on EU Foreign Affairs Council: Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade, 23 September 2015: [oireachtasdebates.oireachtas.ie](http://oireachtasdebates.oireachtas.ie).

<sup>10</sup> Correspondence with OPMI, September 2016.

that integration services within local communities had a positive impact on resettled refugees, specifically mentorship, befriending and sports initiatives (Office of the Minister for Integration, 2008a).<sup>11</sup>

## SYRIAN HUMANITARIAN ADMISSION PROGRAMME

In addition to Ireland's established refugee resettlement programme, the government introduced a once-off private sponsorship scheme in 2014 in response to the deteriorating crisis in Syria: the Syrian Humanitarian Admission Programme (SHAP). Ireland is one of only seven European countries<sup>12</sup> to have initiated a private sponsorship scheme (European Migration Network, 2016b).

Applications for SHAP could be made during a six-week period between 14 March 2014 and 30 April 2014. SHAP allowed Irish citizens of Syrian birth and Syrian nationals lawfully resident in Ireland to apply to bring family members in Syria, or displaced from Syria in surrounding countries, to Ireland. Each sponsor was permitted to submit applications for up to four 'of their most vulnerable family members', while prioritising two (Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service, 2014). However, the authorities took a flexible approach to these numbers to avoid splitting families, and in one case granted five members of one family leave to enter and reside in Ireland.<sup>13</sup>

The Family Reunification Unit in the Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service (INIS) had responsibility for receiving and processing applications made under SHAP. Ireland provided permission to reside in Ireland to 119<sup>14</sup> persons utilising the SHAP scheme out of applications made on behalf of 308 persons. In compiling the current report a number of challenges were identified by UNHCR relating to the functioning of SHAP, in particular the temporary nature of the two-year permission to reside and lack of clarity regarding rights and entitlements of beneficiaries. INIS has stated that a significant number of the SHAP beneficiaries have since applied for protection in Ireland.<sup>15</sup>

<sup>11</sup> 'Ireland', [www.resettlement.eu](http://www.resettlement.eu).

<sup>12</sup> Germany, Ireland, Switzerland, Italy, Poland, Slovakia and the United Kingdom.

<sup>13</sup> Correspondence with UNHCR, September 2016.

<sup>14</sup> Parliamentary Question 24 November 2015 [41635/15] [www.kildarestreet.com](http://www.kildarestreet.com).

<sup>15</sup> Correspondence with INIS, September 2016.



# Section 1

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## Introduction

### 1.1 OBJECTIVES AND BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

This study is based on information gathered for an EU-level report on *Resettlement and Humanitarian Admission Programmes in Europe: what works?* (European Migration Network, 2016). This report investigates the experience of resettlement and private sponsorship in Ireland, specifically programmes operational between 2011 and 2016. The study focuses on the ‘traditional’ Irish Refugee resettlement programme and the recent once-off Syrian Humanitarian Admission Programme (SHAP), providing an overview of the programmes. Resettled refugees are a separate group to asylum applicants in that they have been determined by UNHCR to satisfy the 1951 Convention and 1967 Protocol relating to the Status of Refugees (‘1951 Convention’) definition of refugee, therefore they are not required to apply for protection in Ireland. The purpose of this study is to gather information which is not widely available in order to provide an evidence base for national and EU policymakers, researchers, practitioners and the general public, in Ireland and abroad.

The study is undertaken at a time of expansion for the Irish Refugee Resettlement Programme. As a result of Ireland’s decision to participate in the EU-wide response to the refugee crisis, it is foreseen that the number of arrivals between June 2015 and the end of 2016 will be 520, compared to 96 in 2014. The government also announced that a further 260 will be resettled to Ireland in 2017.<sup>16</sup> This is also a timely opportunity to examine the experience of Ireland’s first private sponsorship scheme: SHAP. SHAP provided a new safe legal route to Ireland for family members of Syrian nationals living in Ireland and naturalised Irish citizens of Syrian origin and represents an innovation in domestic immigration policy. It is also uncommon in an EU context as Ireland is one of just seven European countries to have had a private sponsorship scheme (European Migration Network, 2016b).

Section 1 provides an introduction to the study, its objectives, methodology and key terminology. The national legislative framework is described in Section 2. Section 3 describes the organisation of the resettlement programme. The

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<sup>16</sup>

‘Tánaiste confirms plans to accept 260 more refugees under resettlement programme’ 6 July 2016, [www.inis.gov.ie](http://www.inis.gov.ie).



institutional framework, key actors and institutions and national policies are described. Section 4 discusses the operation of the selection and pre-arrival phases of the resettlement programme. This includes information relating to quotas and actual numbers of persons resettled to Ireland. Section 5 discusses post-arrival orientation and integration supports for resettled refugees. Section 5 also provides information on national policies and measures in place to facilitate and monitor integration in the context of resettlement. Section 6 describes the organisation of the Syrian Humanitarian Admission Programme. Key findings from the study are reviewed in Section 7. Additional data and information are provided in Annex 1.

### **1.1.1 International Context**

The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) estimates that globally 65.3 million people<sup>17</sup> were forcibly displaced in 2015, including 21.3 million refugees (UNHCR, 2015a). In an international context resettlement refers to the selection and transfer of refugees from a state in which they have sought protection to a third state which has agreed to admit them as permanent residents (European Migration Network, 2014). The current refugee and migrant crisis has brought resettlement programmes into global focus (UNHCR, 2016; Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs, 2016).<sup>18</sup>

Resettlement is generally carried out with UNHCR acting as an intermediary. It has been part of the mandate of UNHCR since its establishment in 1951, providing millions of people with ‘protection and the opportunity to build new lives for themselves and their families’ (UNCHR, 2011). Resettlement is viewed by UNHCR as one of three durable solutions for refugees and stateless persons. It is considered for an individual or family where the other durable solutions, namely voluntary repatriation and integration into the host country are not suitable options to enable a refugee to rebuild his/her life. Resettlement programmes vary internationally and across Europe. As well as providing international protection, meeting the specific needs of individual refugees and serving as a durable solution, resettlement is viewed as an expression of international solidarity (UNCHR, 2011) in keeping with the object and purpose of the 1951 Convention (Foster, 2007). Resettlement is achieved through collaboration with international and non-governmental organisations and states. States are not legally obliged to resettle, therefore all resettlement is facilitated on a voluntary basis. UNHCR reported that in 2015, 33 countries worldwide offered resettlement or humanitarian admission (UNHCR, 2015b). Among the 33 countries, some do not have an established resettlement programme, but accept refugees for resettlement on an ad hoc basis (UNHCR, 2011).

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<sup>17</sup> Includes: 21.3 million refugees, 40.8 million internally displaced and 3.2 million asylum seekers globally.

<sup>18</sup> Resettlement is now part of the work programme for the Presidency of the Council of the EU. Sustainable migration and asylum policies are priorities under the current Slovak presidency.

### 1.1.1.1 EU Policy Context

In an EU context resettlement is a process by which third-country nationals in need of international protection are permitted to reside in an EU Member State.

Resettlement has been on the EU agenda since 2003. It has been framed by the European Commission as a way to manage the arrival of refugees (European Commission, 2003). In 2005, the Council requested the Commission to put in place a resettlement programme. The Commission responded by introducing an action plan for Regional Protection Programmes, emphasising Member States' voluntary resettlement commitments (European Commission, 2005). A proposal for an EU-wide Resettlement Programme was tabled in 2009<sup>19</sup> and adopted by the European Parliament and the Council in 2012. The Proposal established recommended common resettlement priorities (e.g. geographical priority areas) for 2013 and allocated funding for resettlement by amending the Decision on the European Refugee Fund.<sup>20</sup> Resettlement commitments by Member States remained on a voluntary basis.

In 2014, a Resettlement and Relocation Forum took place addressing the EU-wide Resettlement Programme, which structured financial incentives to encourage Member States to participate in resettlement (European Commission, 2014). In May 2015, in response to the refugee crisis and building on past initiatives, the European Commission published 'A European Agenda on Migration' (European Commission, 2015a), in which the European Commission reiterated the EU's responsibility to assist displaced persons in need of international protection to reach the EU safely and legally, and recommended allocations to Member States for resettlement (European Commission, 2015a).

The 'European Agenda on Migration' was followed in June 2015 by a proposal from the European Commission on a recommended EU Resettlement Programme. The outcome of this proposal was the Conclusions of the European Council on July 2015 in which Member States pledged to resettle 22,504 refugees (European Commission, 2016a). AMIF was amended in order to make available an additional €25 million for the EU Resettlement Scheme (European Migration Network, 2016b). On 13 July 2016, the Commission tabled a proposal for establishing a European Union Resettlement Framework (European Commission, 2016g).

<sup>19</sup> Proposal for a Decision of the European Parliament and of the Council of amending Decision No 573/2007/EC establishing the European Refugee Fund for the period 2008 to 2013 as part of the General programme 'Solidarity and Management of Migration Flows' and repealing Council Decision 2004/904/EC.

<sup>20</sup> Decision No 281/2012/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 29 March 2012 amending Decision No 573/2007/EC establishing the European Refugee Fund for the period 2008 to 2013 as part of the General programme 'Solidarity and Management of Migration Flows':  
<http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:L:2012:092:0001:0003:EN:PDF>.

In the global context of record high populations of refugees and displaced persons, the number of refugees resettled globally is very low (Oxfam, 2016; Médecins Sans Frontières, 2016). The recent EU plan to resettle just over 20,000 refugees, a fraction of the almost 1 million in need of resettlement in 2015 (UNHCR, 2015c), has been heavily criticised by NGOs (Oxfam, 2016; Médecins Sans Frontières, 2016).

The EU response to the crisis also includes the implementation of a relocation scheme.<sup>21</sup> The EU proposed to relocate 160,000 people from Italy and Greece<sup>22</sup> through various Council Decisions (European Commission, 2016b) in an attempt to show solidarity with third countries and ‘frontline EU countries’ affected by the crisis and with a view to addressing the global refugee crisis. Relocation is outside the scope of the current study.

In light of the refugee crisis, the EU Member States have sought additional means of providing residency to affected persons. Humanitarian admission is the process by which groups from vulnerable refugee populations are admitted to states on humanitarian grounds. Persons benefitting from humanitarian admission may be provided with shorter-term residency than resettled refugees, but the programmes otherwise tend to resemble resettlement programmes. Private sponsorship is another example of how Member States have provided residence to refugees. There is no universal definition of private sponsorship, and schemes of this nature are uncommon in Europe. Private sponsorship is generally considered to involve the active participation of private citizens, family members or organisations already resident in the state, in providing financial, emotional and social support to the beneficiary (European Migration Network, 2016b). Humanitarian admission and private sponsorship programmes are mainly introduced as a complement to traditional resettlement programmes allowing states to provide safety to greater numbers of refugees in crisis and fleeing conflict, without making a long-term commitment to provide residence.

### 1.1.1.2 Overview of Main Trends Regarding Resettlement, Humanitarian Admission and Private Sponsorship in Europe

As of 2012, 13 EU Member States had established resettlement programmes<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> In an EU context relocation refers to programmes designed to relocate asylum seekers or refugees between Member States of the EU, while resettlement refers to programmes designed to resettle refugees from locations outside the EU in Member States.

<sup>22</sup> The original figure of 120,000 included 54,000 relocation places from Hungary. This changed in September 2015. The 54,000 were to be proportionally divided between Italy and Greece. If the situation changes, the Commission may then propose to amend this decision.

<sup>23</sup> Czech Republic, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Hungary, Ireland, The Netherlands, Portugal, Romania, Spain, Sweden and the United Kingdom.

and a further two States had committed to establishing programmes (Belgium and Bulgaria). By 2013, Belgium had established a resettlement programme, bringing the total to 14.<sup>24</sup> While Italy did not have an established programme, ad hoc resettlement took place. The first resettlement programme among the 13 Member States was established in 1950 in Sweden. Ireland was among the first seven European countries to introduce an established programme which became operational in 2000 (European Migration Network, 2016b). In addition, Iceland, Norway and Switzerland also had resettlement programmes.<sup>25</sup> A total of 17 EU Member States currently have resettlement or humanitarian admission programmes; the number has increased as a result of the Syrian crisis and as a result of participation in the EU Resettlement Programme (European Migration Network, 2016b). Between 2011 and 2015, almost 29,000 persons were resettled to the EU, with an increase seen since 2013 (see Figure 1.1). A further 8,893 have been resettled to the EU as at November 2016 (European Commission 2016j). Norway, Sweden and Finland are the leading countries in Europe in terms of numbers resettled per million inhabitants (see Figure 1.2).

The July 2015 agreement reflects a readiness to participate from 27 (all but Hungary) EU Member States, plus Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway and Switzerland in the European Resettlement Programme (European Commission, 2016c). Recommendations for pledges under the programme were determined based on the particular situation of each Member State, calculated using criteria such as population size and GDP<sup>26</sup> (European Commission, 2016b). The recommended pledges and numbers resettled are presented in Figure 1.3 and those relevant to Ireland are discussed in Section 1.1.2.

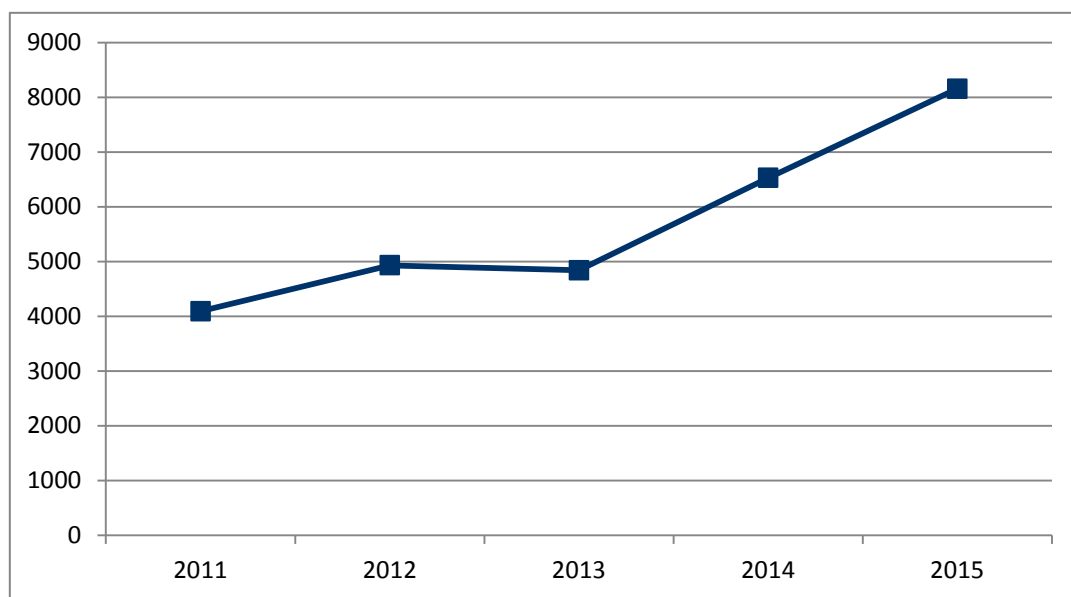
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<sup>24</sup> 'Introduction to Resettlement in Europe', [www.resettlement.eu](http://www.resettlement.eu).

<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

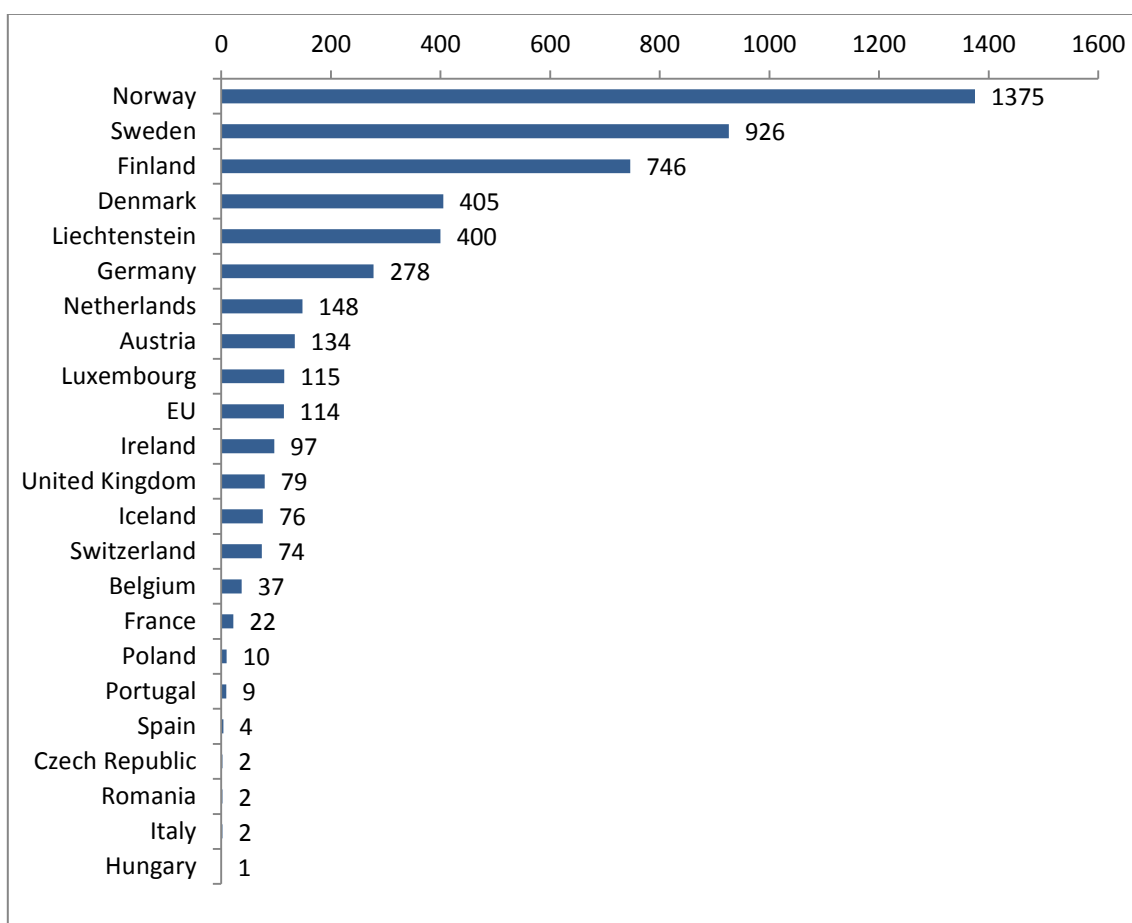
<sup>26</sup> Size of population (40 per cent); total GDP (40 per cent); average number of asylum applications over the previous four years (10 per cent) and unemployment rate (10 per cent). (European Commission, 2014). Calculations are based on statistical information provided by Eurostat (consulted on 8 April 2015). The percentage calculations were made to five decimal places and rounded up or down to two decimal places for presentation in the table; allocations of persons were made on the basis of the full figures to five decimal places (European Commission, 2015).

**FIGURE 1.1** Refugees Resettled from Outside the EU to EU28 Countries, 2011-2015



Source: Eurostat.

**FIGURE 1.2** Persons Resettled or Admitted by Member States per 1 million Inhabitants, 2011-2015



Source: European Migration Network, 2016b.

The European Commission published the seventh progress report on resettlement and relocation in November 2016. Finland, Iceland, Liechtenstein, Sweden, Switzerland and the United Kingdom had resettled 100 per cent of their pledged number. A further five countries had resettled more than 50 per cent. As at November 2016, Ireland had resettled 98 per cent (507 of 520)<sup>27</sup> of the original number of refugees pledged under the EU Resettlement Programme, ranking seventh among 31<sup>28</sup> countries (European Commission, 2016f). (Updated statistics for Ireland are provided in Table 1.1.) As of November 2016, out of the 27 Member States and four European States participating in the EU Resettlement Programme, just 18 Member States had received resettled refugees (European Commission, 2016j). Political resistance<sup>29</sup> and prioritisation of participation in national resettlement programmes (European Commission, 2016f) in part explain the relatively low number of resettled persons to the EU under the programme. Just 11,852 of the 22,504 refugees to be resettled under the EU Resettlement Programme and the EU-Turkey Agreement have been resettled as at November 2016 (European Commission, 2016i).

### *EU-Turkey Agreement*

In addition to the resettlement programme, the European Council and Turkey agreed upon an EU-Turkey joint action plan in November 2015, the EU-Turkey Agreement (European Commission, 2016d). In March 2016, the EU and Turkey agreed to a range of measures, the following relating directly to resettlement and humanitarian admission:

- All new irregular migrants and all new persons deemed to have inadmissible applications for international protection (on the basis that the person has already been recognised as a refugee in a first country of asylum<sup>30</sup> or where the person has travelled from a third country deemed to guarantee effective access to protection)<sup>31</sup> crossing from Turkey to Greece will be returned to Turkey;
- For every Syrian returned to Turkey, another Syrian will be resettled to the EU; and
- Once irregular crossings substantially reduce, a recommendation for a Voluntary Humanitarian Admission Scheme will be activated.<sup>32</sup>

<sup>27</sup> Ireland resettled a further seven refugees after the publication of the seventh progress report on resettlement and relocation (European Commission, 2016j).

<sup>28</sup> Excluding Hungary and including Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway and Switzerland.

<sup>29</sup> See for example 'Here are the countries that want to refuse refugees' 9 September 2015, [www.huffingtonpost.com](http://www.huffingtonpost.com);

Asylum and Refugees: How Ireland compares to the rest of the world' 5 September 2015, [www.thejournal.ie](http://www.thejournal.ie).

<sup>30</sup> Asylum Procedures Directive, Article 35.

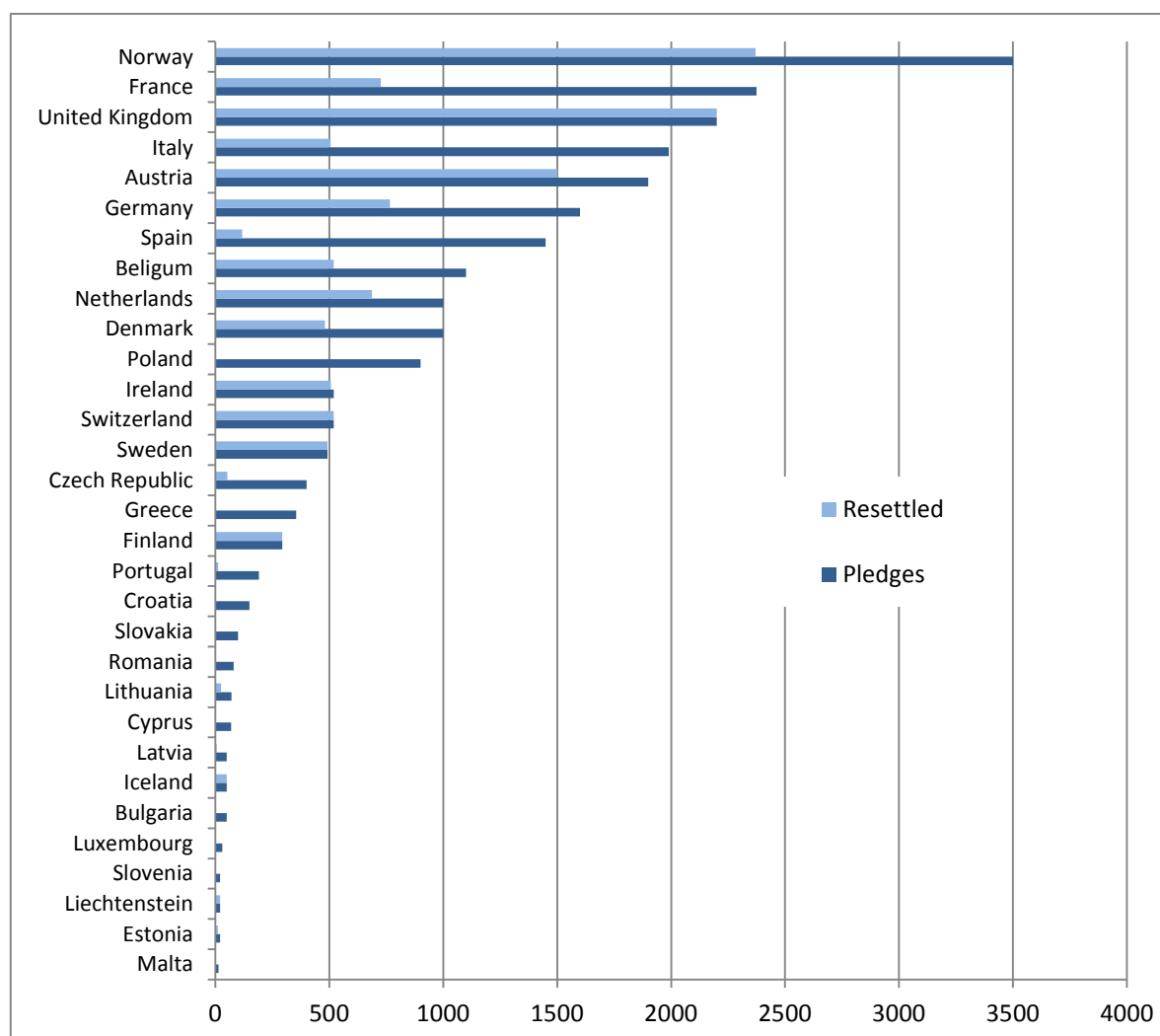
<sup>31</sup> Asylum Procedures Directive, Article 38.

<sup>32</sup> Other measures agreed relate to liberalisation of visa requirements for Turkish citizens, monetary and accession related incentives and an agreement that the EU and Turkey will work to improve humanitarian conditions inside Syria.

As of November 2016, 2,217 Syrians had been resettled to the EU from Turkey (1,852 of whom were resettled utilising the scheme of 20 July 2015) (European Commission, 2016j). Some 578 persons who had not made asylum applications in Greece were returned from Greece to Turkey under the EU-Turkey Agreement as of 26 September 2016 (European Commission, 2016k).

Ireland has not yet participated in the resettlement of persons under the EU-Turkey Agreement (see Section 1.1.2). It has been highly criticised by civil society as means of using resettlement as a ‘bargaining chip in political deals’ (Oxfam, 2016). UNHCR also expressed concern that EU priorities will focus more on resettlement from Turkey thereby potentially disadvantaging other regions with resettlement requirements.<sup>33</sup>

**FIGURE 1.3** Pledges Made and Total Resettled under the (20 July) EU Resettlement Programme and the EU-Turkey Agreement by Member State and Participating European States as of 9 November 2016



Source: European Commission, 2016j.

<sup>33</sup> Interview with UNHCR, May 2016.

### *Humanitarian Admission and Private Sponsorship Schemes*

The 'European Agenda on Migration' encourages Member States to explore 'other legal avenues for persons in need of protection, including private/non-governmental sponsorships and humanitarian permits, and family reunification clauses' (European Commission, 2015a).<sup>34</sup> In response to the ongoing civil war in Syria, some European countries have introduced humanitarian admission programmes or private sponsorship schemes as alternative legal avenues to accessing safety in the EU. Outside of these specific and limited initiatives, humanitarian admission programmes and private sponsorship schemes for Syrians are uncommon within the EU. Humanitarian admission schemes are typically characterised by the temporary nature of residence offered to the beneficiary. Not enough is known about humanitarian admission programmes and how they are different from resettlement programmes. UNHCR, for example, report on resettlement figures in respect of both humanitarian admission and resettlement programmes and do not distinguish between the two (UNHCR, 2015b). It appears that humanitarian admission is used to describe ad hoc forms of resettlement. Private sponsorship programmes are typically characterised by the requirement for a sponsor to provide financial and emotional support.

In 2013 Germany introduced a private sponsorship scheme to run to at least end-2016 aimed at Syrians with family links in Germany (Kumin, 2015). Ireland introduced a similar system in 2014, discussed in Section 1.1.2. Switzerland also introduced a humanitarian admission programme in September 2013 based on family links. This programme was terminated in November 2013 due in part to high levels of applications, which were deemed to be unsustainable. Initially, the Swiss scheme did not require sponsorship, but this changed a few weeks before the programme was terminated (Kumin, 2015). The three schemes were characterised by family links, sponsorship obligations and the temporary nature of the beneficiaries' residence permissions. All three were established in response to the crisis in Syria.

Italy and Poland also implemented private sponsorship schemes for Syrians in co-operation with non-governmental organisations or private organisations. Slovakia had an ad hoc private sponsorship scheme, which can also be considered a humanitarian admission programme, for Christians from Iraq in co-operation with a charity (European Migration Network, 2016b).

The UK introduced a 'community sponsorship' scheme in July 2016. The scheme enables community groups to support refugees arriving as part of the UK's wider resettlement programme (European Migration Network, 2016b).

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<sup>34</sup>

Also see Fundamental Rights Agency, 2015.



At present there are no specific initiatives, policy or legislation dealing with private sponsorship at the EU level (European Migration Network, 2016b).

### 1.1.2 Irish Policy Context

The Irish Refugee Resettlement Programme was introduced in 1998 and became operational in 2000. In 2015, the Irish government established the Irish Refugee Protection Programme (IRPP) in response to the crisis and the impact it has had in central and southern Europe. The IRPP is discussed in detail in Section 3.1.

While announcing the establishment of the IRPP, the government confirmed its commitment to provide international protection for up to 4,000 persons under the EU Resettlement and Relocation Programmes.<sup>35</sup> Some 520 refugees are due to be resettled to Ireland under the IRPP between June 2015 and end December 2016.<sup>36</sup> To date 507 persons have been resettled in Ireland under the EU Resettlement Programme. A further 2,622 of this number are to be asylum seekers admitted under the EU Relocation Programme,<sup>37</sup> which involves relocation of persons seeking asylum from Greece and Italy to other Member States. Relocation is mentioned here as relevant to the overall national response to the refugee and migrant crisis, but is outside the scope of this study.<sup>38</sup> Table 1.1 provides available information on how the total of 4,000 persons is to be divided to meet commitments on resettlement and relocation, and on delivery to date. The total number and the distribution is to be kept under review.<sup>39</sup>

<sup>35</sup> Joint Committee on Foreign Affairs and Trade Debate *Update on EU Foreign Affairs Council: Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade*, 11 March 2015: oireachtasdebates.oireachtas.ie.

<sup>36</sup> At national level, Ireland had originally pledged to resettle 100 refugees in 2015 and 120 in 2016. The Tánaiste added 300 to this total.

<sup>37</sup> Ireland voluntarily opted to participate in the EU Relocation Programme. Ireland 'may notify the President of the Council in writing, within three months after a proposal or initiative has been presented to the Council pursuant to Title V of Part Three of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union, that it wishes to take part in the adoption and application of any such proposed measure, whereupon that State shall be entitled to do so'.

<sup>38</sup> Ireland relocated 30 people between 2011 and 2013 (10 annually) (source: www.integration.ie) from Malta under EU-led relocation programmes (source: www.resettlement.eu). Relocation between 2011 and 2013 involved the relocation of persons already recognised as refugees from one EU Member State to another. UNHCR was involved in making referrals to Ireland.

<sup>39</sup> Numbers could move from relocation into resettlement. Additionally, if Ireland takes part in the second tranche of the EU-Turkey one-for-one deal. Interview with IRPP, May 2016.

**TABLE 1.1** Ireland's Stated Commitments under the Irish Refugee Resettlement Programme, which also form the Response to the EU Resettlement and Relocation Programmes

	Timeframe	Number of persons committed to	Number arrived by 8 November 2016
Number of persons Ireland will resettle under the Irish Refugee Resettlement Programme from Lebanon*	8 June 2015-31 December 2016	520**	507
Number of persons Ireland will resettle under the Irish Refugee Resettlement Programme from Lebanon*	2017	260	NA
Number of persons Ireland will take in from Italy/Greece under EU relocation scheme	2015-2017	2,622	109
Balance as yet undetermined between resettlement and relocation	2015-2017	598	NA
Total commitment under IRPP as part of the EU Resettlement and Relocation Programmes	2015-2017	4,000	616

Source: OPMI, September 2016; European Commission, 2016.

Note: \* These figures form part of Ireland's allocation under the EU Resettlement Programmes.

\*\*Including original national resettlement commitment for 2015 of 100 and 220 for the period 2015-2016.

In the global context of record high populations of refugees and displaced persons, the number of refugees resettled to Ireland and to other EU Member States is very low. From a domestic policy perspective it is notable that Ireland pledged more places than recommended under the EU Resettlement Programme, and did so voluntarily. The European Commission calculated recommended pledges in 2014 using a specific criteria (European Commission, 2014), and on that basis the recommended number for Ireland was 272, or 1.36 per cent of the total initial recommendation of 20,000 persons to be resettled across the EU (European Commission, 2015b). Ireland pledged a further 248, bringing Ireland's percentage share of total pledges to 2.6 per cent.

Regarding the EU-Turkey agreement the Asylum Policy Division of INIS confirmed that Ireland will have delivered its full commitment under the Irish Refugee Resettlement Programme (4,000) by end 2017 and as such does not have any unused quota to pledge in respect of the first tranche of persons under the EU-Turkey Statement.<sup>40</sup> It remains open to Ireland to participate in the second tranche.<sup>41</sup> The Minister for Justice and Equality reported in March 2016 that it is not expected that Ireland's commitment to take a total of 4,000 persons under the EU Resettlement and Relocation Programmes will be affected by the new

<sup>40</sup> Correspondence with the Asylum Policy Division, September 2016.

<sup>41</sup> Interview with OPMI, May 2016.

arrangement between the EU and Turkey (European Commission, 2016h),<sup>42</sup> although the mix of relocation and resettlement may be need to be adjusted.<sup>43,44</sup>

In 2014, Ireland also established a private sponsorship scheme, the Syrian Humanitarian Admission Programme (SHAP). It operated from 14 March 2014 to 30 April 2014 as a sponsorship mechanism.<sup>45</sup> Ultimately, 119 people were given permission to join family members in Ireland under the programme. SHAP was described as an additional initiative in response to the crisis in Syria (Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service, 2014), along with resettlement and measures to allow Syrians legally resident in Ireland (students and those with employment permits) to apply for an extension of their permission to remain in Ireland while the crisis continues.<sup>46</sup>

There has been a lot of debate in 2015-2016 on the refugee crisis in the media and within parliament. Much of the debate and many of the concerns expressed by NGOs<sup>47</sup> relate to the scale of the refugee crisis,<sup>48</sup> often referring to the situation in the Mediterranean.<sup>49</sup> Questions have been raised by politicians and others (e.g. UNHCR and GOAL) on whether or not Ireland is contributing enough to respond to the refugee and migrant crisis.<sup>50</sup> Recommendations have been made by UNHCR to the Joint Committee on Foreign Affairs and Trade, for example, on creating legal migration pathways by utilising the existing employment permit or student visa systems.<sup>51</sup> Concerns have also been raised in parliamentary questions about the cost implications for the Exchequer of the newly established IRPP.<sup>52</sup>

<sup>42</sup> The EU issued a proposal to amend the Relocation Decision of September 2015 to enable Member States to offset the number of Syrians admitted to their territories (including under the EU-Turkey agreement) against the number of persons to be relocated to the Member States in relation to the reserve of 54,000.

<sup>43</sup> Parliamentary Question 22 March 2016 [10130/16] [www.kildarestreet.com](http://www.kildarestreet.com).

<sup>44</sup> Interview with OPMI and IRPP, May 2016.

<sup>45</sup> Interview with UNHCR, May 2016.

<sup>46</sup> Parliamentary Question 19 February 2015 [2134/15] [www.kildarestreet.com](http://www.kildarestreet.com).

<sup>47</sup> For example the Immigrant Council of Ireland. See <http://immigrantcouncil.ie>.

<sup>48</sup> Joint Committee on Foreign Affairs and Trade Debate Business of Joint Committee, 23 September 2015: [oireachtasdebates.oireachtas.ie](http://oireachtasdebates.oireachtas.ie); Joint Committee on Foreign Affairs and Trade Debate Update on EU Foreign Affairs Council: Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade, 11 March 2015: [oireachtasdebates.oireachtas.ie](http://oireachtasdebates.oireachtas.ie).

<sup>49</sup> Joint Committee on Foreign Affairs and Trade Debate Update on EU Foreign Affairs Council: Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade, 11 March 2015: [oireachtasdebates.oireachtas.ie](http://oireachtasdebates.oireachtas.ie); Debate in Dáil Éireann and Seanad Éireann on Resettlement of Refugees, 14 May 2015: [www.integration.ie](http://www.integration.ie)  
<sup>50</sup> Parliamentary Question 19 February 2015 [2134/15] [www.kildarestreet.com](http://www.kildarestreet.com).

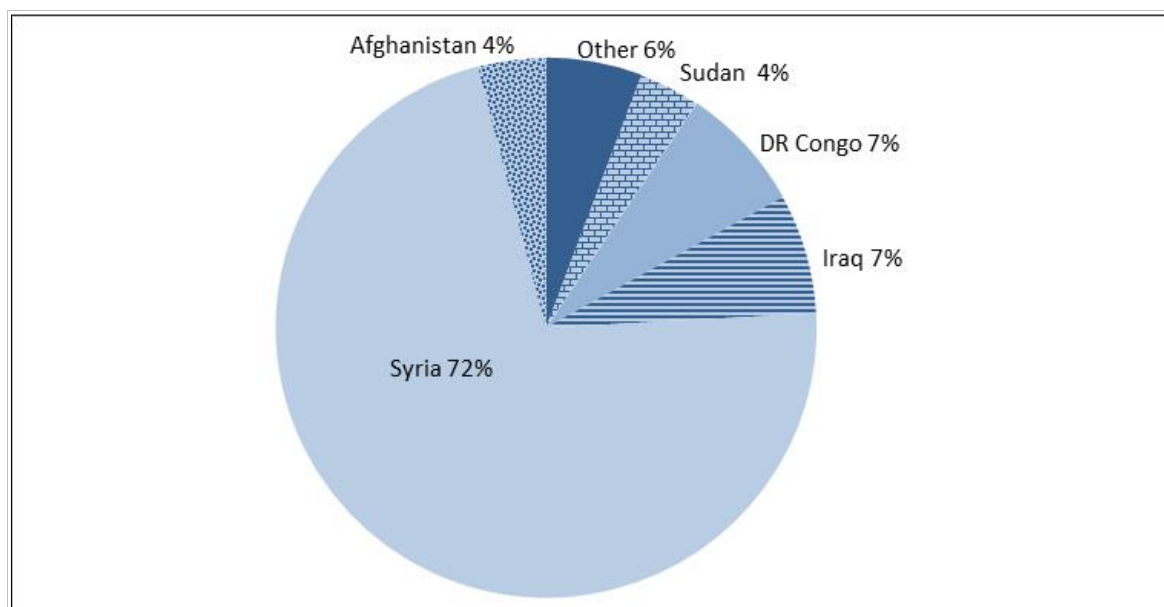
<sup>51</sup> Joint Committee on Foreign Affairs and Trade Debate Update on EU Foreign Affairs Council: Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade, 23 September 2015: [oireachtasdebates.oireachtas.ie](http://oireachtasdebates.oireachtas.ie).

<sup>52</sup> Parliamentary Question 12 November 2015 [39966/15] [www.kildarestreet.com](http://www.kildarestreet.com).

### 1.1.2.1 Overview of Main Trends Regarding Resettlement and Private Sponsorship in Ireland

Ireland resettled a total of 766 persons between January 2011 and November 2016 (see Annex I, Table A.1).<sup>53</sup> The period has seen a significant increase in the number of refugees resettled annually: 35 refugees were resettled in 2011, rising to 176 in 2015 and almost doubling in the period up to November 2016, to reach 344. Syrian refugees, the majority of whom have been and continue to be resettled from Lebanon, represent 72 per cent of the total number of persons resettled to Ireland between 2011 and 2016. The second largest proportion, 8 per cent, is made up of refugees from the Democratic Republic of Congo.<sup>54</sup> Refugees have also been resettled from other countries including Syria, Jordan, Uganda and Tanzania.<sup>55</sup>

**FIGURE 1.4** Nationality of Refugees Resettled to Ireland January 2011 – November 2016



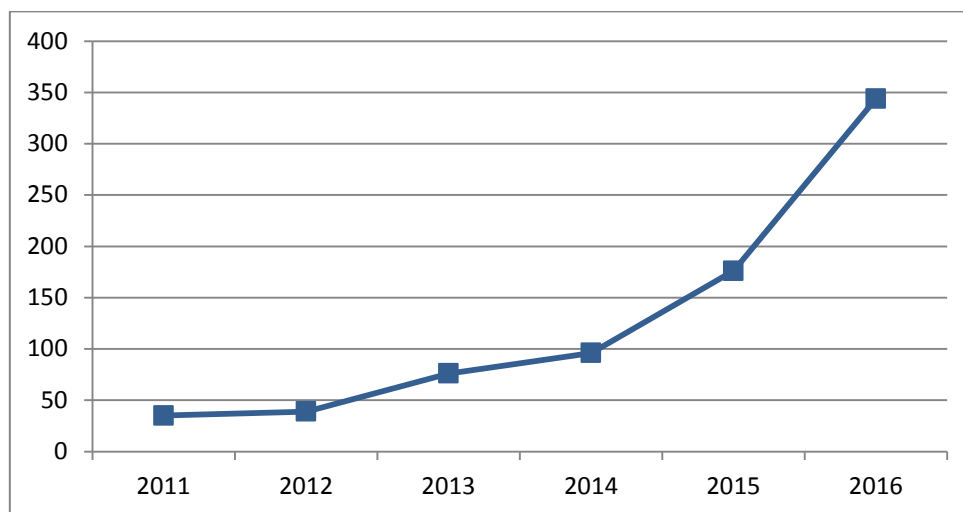
Source: OPMI; [www.integration.ie](http://www.integration.ie).

<sup>53</sup> 'Resettlement Statistics', [www.integration.ie](http://www.integration.ie).

<sup>54</sup> See Annex 1, Table A.1 for full breakdown.

<sup>55</sup> 'Resettlement Statistics', [www.integration.ie](http://www.integration.ie); 'Resettlement', [www.unhcr.ie](http://www.unhcr.ie).

Total: 766

**FIGURE 1.5** Total Number of Refugees Resettled from Outside the EU to Ireland January 2011 – November 2016

Source: OPMI, November 2016.

In addition, 119 persons were granted admission to Ireland utilising SHAP.<sup>56</sup>

## 1.2 METHODOLOGY

The study collates data and information on national and EU policy, practice and legislation on resettlement. Its purpose is to provide an evidence base for national and EU policymakers, researchers, practitioners working with refugees/on protection issues, as well as the general public. In Ireland information on resettlement is not widely available and has not been presented in a report comprehensively since the 2008 Most Project (Office of the Minister for Integration, 2008a). This is the first study in Ireland to outline in detail the practice in respect of refugee resettlement. This study also provides the first publicly available overview of the Syrian Humanitarian Admission Programme (SHAP) including on the organisation of SHAP, some detail on beneficiaries and previously unpublished feedback from sponsors and beneficiaries gathered by UNHCR (Section 6).

The scope of this study is limited to resettlement, humanitarian admission programmes and private sponsorship schemes. Relocation is excluded from the scope of this study.

Desk research was undertaken at the outset of the study, including a review of existing academic and policy-based literature. The temporal scope of the study is January 2011 to November 2016. The *UNHCR Resettlement Handbook, Country*

*Chapter – Ireland* (Government of Ireland, 2013), which was prepared by the Irish Government, and the Most Project report (Office of the Minister for Integration, 2008a) were key sources of information. A large amount of information was obtained from government publications and websites, in particular from OPMI.<sup>57</sup> Interviews were then undertaken with officials from the Office for the Promotion of Migrant Integration, the Irish Refugee Protection Programme and the UNHCR office in Dublin. National data were obtained through OPMI and INIS. Outstanding information gaps were filled with comments from the Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service, as well as from NGOs Doras Luimní, International Organization for Migration, Irish Red Cross and Immigrant Council of Ireland. The report was internally and externally reviewed.

The information used to produce this report is gathered according to commonly agreed European Migration Network (EMN) specifications developed to facilitate comparability across countries. The EMN<sup>58</sup> is tasked with producing studies on topics of relevance to policymakers at national and EU levels, in order to meet long and short-term information needs. Topics may be proposed for in-depth strategic studies with long-term relevance, or for shorter studies, responding to immediate information needs. Each EMN National Contact Point produces a national report and a comparative synthesis report is then produced, which brings together the main findings from the national reports and places them within an EU perspective.<sup>59</sup>

### 1.2.1 Key Terminology

The definitions are taken from the EMN Glossary (2014), unless specified otherwise in footnotes.

**Durable solutions:** Any means by which the situation of refugees can be satisfactorily and permanently resolved to enable them to live normal lives.

**Integration:** in the EU context, a dynamic, two-way process of mutual accommodation by all immigrants and residents of Member States.

**International protection:** In the global context, the actions by the international community on the basis of international law, aimed at protecting the fundamental rights of a specific category of persons outside their countries of origin, who lack the national protection of their own countries. In the EU context, protection that encompasses refugee status and subsidiary protection status.

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<sup>57</sup> [www.integration.ie](http://www.integration.ie).

<sup>58</sup> Council Decision 2008/381/EC establishing the EMN was adopted on 14 May 2008.

<sup>59</sup> See European Migration Network, 2016 available at [http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/home-affairs/what-we-do/networks/european\\_migration\\_network/reports/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/home-affairs/what-we-do/networks/european_migration_network/reports/index_en.htm).

**Orientation courses:** Orientation courses typically provide factual information about the country of destination but may also aim to foster positive attitudes for successful adaptation in the long run. These could include opportunities for migrants to gain (and practice) the necessary skills needed to facilitate their integration and to develop helpful attitudes including pro-activity, self-sufficiency and resourcefulness (knowing how to find the information they are seeking); skills include knowing how to conduct oneself in certain situations, time management and goal-setting, as well as being able to navigate complex systems including banking, social, health and emergency services, transportation etc. (Source: IOM Best Practices IOM's migrant training and pre-departure orientation programmes).

**Refugee:** In the global context, either a person who, owing to a well-founded fear of persecution for reasons of race, religion, nationality, political opinion or membership of a particular social group, is outside the country of nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail themselves of the protection of that country, or a stateless person, who, being outside of the country of former habitual residence for the same reasons as mentioned before, is unable or, owing to such fear, unwilling to return to it. In the EU context, either a third-country national who, owing to a well-founded fear of persecution for reasons of race, religion, nationality, political opinion or membership of a particular social group, is outside the country of nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail themselves of the protection of that country, or a stateless person, who, being outside of the country of former habitual residence for the same reasons as mentioned above, is unable or, owing to such fear, unwilling to return to it, and to whom Art. 12 (Exclusion) of Directive 2011/95/EU does not apply.

**Residence permit:** Any authorisation issued by the authorities of an EU Member State allowing a non-EU national to stay legally in its territory.

**Third-country national:** means any person who is not a citizen of the Union (including stateless persons) within the meaning of Article 17 (1) of the Treaty and who is not a person enjoying the Community right of free movement, as defined in Article 2(5) of the Schengen Borders Code.

**United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees:** The refugee agency of the United Nations (UN) mandated to lead and co-ordinate international action to protect refugees and resolve refugee problems worldwide, and to safeguard the rights and well-being of refugees;

**Dossier selection:** in the context of this study, the selection of third-country nationals or stateless persons for the resettlement/humanitarian admission programme on the basis of a written document, as alternative to in-country

selection. In the case of resettlement, such documents are usually submitted by UNHCR.

**Humanitarian admission:** The term ‘admission’ is defined as ‘the lawful entry of an alien onto the territory of a State after inspection and authorisation by an immigration officer’. The term ‘humanitarian admission’ is however not defined. In the context of this study, humanitarian admission refers to schemes which are similar to resettlement but for varying reasons do not fully match the definition of resettlement. For example, resettlement may be a permanent solution for the people benefiting from it, while humanitarian admission may be temporary. Also, whilst a precondition for resettlement is eligibility for international protection, (determined by the UNHCR), humanitarian admission could be available to a wider range of potential beneficiaries. Humanitarian admission is therefore intended as the transfer from a third country to a Member State of a third-country national for humanitarian reasons under national law concerning international protection by administrative or judicial bodies.

**Private sponsorship:** There is no common and agreed definition of private sponsorship. Key elements of private sponsorship are: that a person, group or organisation assumes responsibility for providing financial, social and emotional support to a resettled person or family, for a predetermined period of time or until the person or family becomes self-sufficient. Additionally, sponsors have the option of naming the person or family they are willing to support in resettlement, though some sponsors do not have specific persons in mind but rather seek to match a certain profile.<sup>60</sup>

**Resettlement:** In the global context, the selection and transfer of refugees from a state in which they have sought protection to a third state which has agreed to admit them as refugees with permanent residence status. The status provided ensures protection against *refoulement* and provides a resettled refugee and his/her family or dependants with access to rights similar to those enjoyed by nationals. Resettlement also carries with it the opportunity to eventually become a naturalised citizen of the resettlement country. It is one of three durable solutions for refugees and is sought for the most vulnerable refugees who do not have long-term solutions in their country of refuge.

In the EU context and specifically for the purposes of this Study, *resettlement* is the transfer of a third-country national or stateless person after a referral from UNHCR, based on the need for resettlement in agreement with a Member State, from a third country to a Member State. They are permitted to reside with one of the following statuses:

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<sup>60</sup>

Kumin, J., 2015. *Welcoming Engagement: How private sponsorship can strengthen refugee resettlement in the European Union*, Brussels: Migration Policy Institute Europe.



- (i) refugee status within the meaning of Art. 2(d) of Directive 2011/95/EU; or
- (ii) a status which offers the same rights and benefits under national and EU law as refugee status.

In Ireland, they are granted 'Programme Refugee' status under Section 24 of the Refugee Act 1996, as amended.

**Selection missions:** in the context of this study, the in-country visit carried out to select third-country nationals, refugees or stateless persons for the resettlement/humanitarian admission programme, organised as a mission of Member States' representatives to the third country. In the case of resettlement, such missions are usually prepared in co-operation with UNHCR.

# Section 2

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## National Legislative Framework

Section 2 provides an overview of the legislative framework that governs resettlement and the Syrian Humanitarian Admission Programme in Ireland.

### 2.1 RESETTLEMENT

Resettlement is primarily regulated in law by the Refugee Act 1996, as amended. All persons admitted to Ireland for resettlement are granted Programme Refugee status on arrival.<sup>61</sup> Section 24 of the Act outlines the State's responsibilities towards, and the rights of, Programme Refugees. Section 24 defines a Programme Refugee as

*a person to whom leave to enter and remain in the State for temporary protection or resettlement as part of a group of persons has been given by the Government and whose name is entered in a register established and maintained by the Minister for Foreign Affairs, whether or not such person is a refugee within the meaning of the definition of 'refugee' in Section 2 [of the Act].*

Programme Refugees, like their Convention Refugee counterparts, are in general provided with the same rights and privileges as an Irish citizen; particularly in relation to employment, education<sup>62</sup> and training, medical care, social welfare, travel, access to the courts, freedom of religion and religious education of children, and access to trade unions. This is provided for in Section 3 of the Refugee Act 1996, as amended.

A Programme Refugee may apply in writing to the Minister to request a travel document.

*...the Minister may, on application in writing in that behalf and on payment to the Minister of such fee (if any) as may be prescribed with the consent of the Minister for Finance, issue to a programme refugee a travel document identifying the holder thereof as a programme refugee.*

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<sup>61</sup> Parliamentary Question 26 May 2015 [19950/15] [www.kildarestreet.com](http://www.kildarestreet.com).

<sup>62</sup> Although in respect of the Irish 'Free Fees Initiative' for third level this will be in practice unavailable for three years and as a result of the residency requirement. International fees would therefore apply during this period, see: 'Course fees' [www.studentfinance.ie](http://www.studentfinance.ie).

The Irish government may issue a travel document to a person due to be resettled in order to facilitate travel to Ireland if they do not have their own passport.<sup>63</sup>

Programme Refugees are issued with a Stamp 4 residence permit<sup>64</sup> under the Immigration Act 2004. The length of an authorisation given to a Programme Refugee to reside in the State and the renewal of such a permit are at the discretion of the Minister for Justice and Equality (Stanley and Brophy, 2012). Currently and at the discretion of the Minister, two years of the five-year residence required in order to apply for citizenship can be waived in the case of Programme Refugees. Refugees must have resided in the State for three years immediately prior to the application (Stanley et al., 2010).

The Refugee Act 1996, as amended, does not provide for family reunification for Programme Refugees. However, it is provided for in the Government Decision under which the Irish Refugee Resettlement Programme has operated since 2005.<sup>65</sup> The Minister for Justice and Equality accepts and processes such applications as if made in accordance with Section 18 of the Refugee Act 1996.<sup>66</sup>

The Resettlement Registration Form (RRF) is the individual or family dossier compiled by UNHCR in the country of refuge for resettlement purposes. Selection can be based exclusively on the RRF (the dossier method) or based on the RRF and a face-to-face interview (see Section 4.3). It contains information on the Principal Resettlement Applicant (PRA) and any family members they are to be resettled with. The RRF also lists all other known family members who are not being resettled at that time. UNHCR submits the RRF to national resettlement authorities when officially referring a case for resettlement consideration. The RRF may therefore later assist in identifying family members where an application for family reunification is made by a resettled refugee (Government of Ireland, 2013). Ireland works towards resettling 'intact' families (UNHCR, 2009). OPMI reiterates that every effort is made to ensure complete families are admitted under the resettlement programme.<sup>67</sup>

<sup>63</sup> Correspondence with UNHCR, September 2016.

<sup>64</sup> In Ireland non-EEA nationals are allocated several documents which together comprise a residence permit including a Certificate of Registration in the form of a Garda National Immigration Bureau Registration Card. The Card references the specific stamp issued to the holder, which denotes the level of access to the labour market and to various supports including social security. Stamp 4 permits unrestricted access to the labour market.

<sup>65</sup> Correspondence with OPMI, September 2016. Government Decision not available in the public domain.

<sup>66</sup> Correspondence with UNHCR, September 2016.

<sup>67</sup> Interview with OPMI, May 2016.

*New legislation: International Protection Act 2015*

In December 2015, the International Protection Act 2015 was enacted but at the time of writing had not yet been commenced in full. No substantive changes to resettlement procedures are included in the International Protection Act 2015.<sup>68</sup> Resettlement is provided for under Section 59 of the Act. Pursuant to Section 59(3), the Minister may enter into agreements with UNHCR in consultation with the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade for the purpose of reception and resettlement of refugees. The definition of a Programme Refugee is amended as follows:

*a person to whom permission to enter and remain in the State for resettlement, or temporary protection other than temporary protection provided for in section 60,<sup>69</sup> has been given by the government or the Minister and whose name is entered in a register established and maintained by the Minister, whether or not such person is a refugee within the meaning of the definition of ‘refugee’ in Section 2.*

Persons given permission under Section 59(1) to remain in the State have a number of rights that are the same as persons recognised as Convention Refugees. The entitlements of Programme Refugees are set out under Part 8 ‘Content of International Protection’. Persons accepted as Programme Refugees are entitled to:<sup>70</sup>

- seek and enter employment and engage in any business;
- access to education and training;<sup>71</sup>
- receive medical care and social welfare benefits;<sup>72</sup>
- reside in the State<sup>73</sup> for a period determined by the Minister, this period could be less than three years;<sup>74</sup>
- travel to and from the State,<sup>75</sup> this may be facilitated by the provision of a travel document, to which the person is entitled.<sup>76</sup>

<sup>68</sup> Correspondence with the Asylum Policy Division of INIS, September 2016.

<sup>69</sup> International Protection Act 2015, Section 60 refers to ‘Temporary protection’. Temporary protection is defined in Section 60 as: ‘a procedure of exceptional character to provide, in the event of a mass influx or imminent mass influx of displaced persons who are unable to return to their country of origin, immediate and temporary protection’. This section of the Act refers to Council Directive 2001/55/EC of July 2001 *On minimum standards for giving temporary protection in the event of a mass influx of displaced persons and on measures promoting a balance of efforts between Member States in receiving such persons and bearing the consequences thereof and any Directive amending or replacing it*. Temporary protection is outside the scope of this study.

<sup>70</sup> International Protection Act 2015, Section 59(2).

<sup>71</sup> International Protection Act 2015, Section 53(a).

<sup>72</sup> International Protection Act 2015, Section 53(b).

<sup>73</sup> International Protection Act 2015, Section 53(c), S. 54.

<sup>74</sup> International Protection Act 2015, Section 59(2).

<sup>75</sup> International Protection Act 2015, Section 53(d).

All of these entitlements must be available to Programme Refugees on the same basis as Irish citizens.

The Act of 2015, like the Refugee Act 1996, does not provide an automatic right to family reunification for resettled refugees. However, UNHCR noted that applications from resettled refugees will likely be processed in the same way as Convention Refugees and beneficiaries of subsidiary protection, consistent with current practice.<sup>77</sup> The Act of 2015 also narrows the scope of family reunification of dependent relatives of Convention Refugees, and may impact upon resettled refugees as well.

## 2.2 PRIVATE SPONSORSHIP

There is no dedicated legislation dealing with private sponsorship in Ireland. SHAP is Ireland's only experience of private sponsorship to date. It exists as an administrative arrangement introduced by the then Minister for Justice, Equality and Defence, Alan Shatter.<sup>78</sup> Section 6 describes the operation of SHAP.

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<sup>76</sup> International Protection Act 2015, Section 55.

<sup>77</sup> Correspondence with UNHCR, September 2016.

<sup>78</sup> Interview with UNHCR, May 2016.

# Section 3

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## Organisation of Resettlement

Section 3 describes the organisation of the Irish Refugee Resettlement Programme. The institutional framework, key actors and institutions and national policies are described. The selection and pre-arrival phases of resettlement are discussed in Section 4.

### 3.1 THE IRISH REFUGEE RESETTLEMENT PROGRAMME

Prior to 1998, Ireland provided resettlement to groups of refugees on an ad hoc basis.<sup>79</sup> Ireland has formally participated in the UNHCR-led Refugee Resettlement Programme since 1998, and the programme became operational in 2000.<sup>80</sup> The government decision to establish a programme was sought by the then Minister for Foreign Affairs<sup>81</sup> and the decision was taken following approaches by UNHCR (Office of the Minister for Integration, 2008a). Initially, Ireland agreed to resettle ten refugees and their immediate family members (approximately 40 people) each year. In 2005, this pledge was increased to 200 persons.<sup>82</sup>

In 2015, the Irish government established the Irish Refugee Protection Programme (IRPP) in response to the refugee crisis and its impact on central and southern Europe. The IRPP was established with a view to adopting a multi-faceted approach to offering refuge to persons in need of international protection. The IRPP has four key strands:

- Firstly, the Irish government pledged to accept up to 4,000 persons overall under the EU Resettlement and Relocation Programmes. Ireland will resettle 520 refugees between June 2015 and end 2016 and the Minister has announced her decision to admit a further 260 refugees for resettlement in 2017<sup>83</sup> (see Table 1.1).
- Secondly, a cross-departmental Taskforce chaired by the Department of Justice and Equality (DJE) to deal with the operational and logistical aspects of the support programme has been established. The Taskforce is adopting a whole of government approach. Its membership comprises all

<sup>79</sup> This includes groups from Hungary, Chile, Vietnam, Bosnia and Kosovo beginning in the 1950s. Debate in Dáil Éireann and Seanad Éireann on Resettlement of Refugees, 14 May 2015: [www.integration.ie](http://www.integration.ie).

<sup>80</sup> 'Resettlement', [www.unhcr.ie](http://www.unhcr.ie).

<sup>81</sup> Interview with OPMI, May 2016.

<sup>82</sup> OPMI, 'Resettlement Programme', [www.integration.ie](http://www.integration.ie).

<sup>83</sup> 'Tánaiste confirms plans to accept 260 more refugees under resettlement programme' 6 July 2016, [www.inis.gov.ie](http://www.inis.gov.ie).

the main Government Departments and State agencies as well as UNHCR and Irish Red Cross. Associated meetings have been held under the Taskforce e.g. with religious leaders and NGOs.<sup>84</sup>

- Thirdly, the Government established a method for engaging with public pledges of support. The Irish Red Cross leads on this. Since 2015 the Irish Red Cross has recorded pledges of public offers of accommodation, goods and services, including accommodation, befriending, English lessons, food, clothing, translation services and IT services.<sup>85</sup> They have also followed up on pledges to check the suitability of the offers.<sup>86</sup>
- Fourthly, the government established two full board Emergency Reception and Orientation Centres (EROCs) for the initial reception of those arriving under the relocation programme as well as new resettlement arrivals since late 2015.<sup>87</sup>

The Government also committed to the commencement of the International Protection Act 2015 (see Section 2) and the provision of additional resources to deal with major increases in asylum and other immigration cases.<sup>88</sup>

### 3.1.1 Organisational Structure

Traditionally, the Department of Justice and Equality, in consultation with the Inter-Agency Working Group on Resettlement and UNHCR would decide on the numbers to be resettled each year. However, in recent years, these decisions are taken at Government level, in consultation with UNHCR and the European Commission.<sup>89</sup> They also determine the countries of refuge from which they should be resettled. These decisions are informed by discussions at the biannual Working Group of Resettlement in Geneva and information provided by UNHCR during the Annual Tripartite Consultations on Resettlement (Government of Ireland, 2013).

Under the IRPP, the government has continued to focus on resettling persons displaced by the conflict in Syria since 2013,<sup>90</sup> including 31 Afghans who were refugees in Syria and a small number of Iraqi and Palestinian refugees displaced by the Syrian conflict.<sup>91</sup>

<sup>84</sup> 'Irish Refugee Protection Programme', [www.justice.ie](http://www.justice.ie) At the time of writing, this group had met four times. Some follow up meetings early in 2016 were cancelled due to a period with no government. Interview with UNHCR, May 2016.

<sup>85</sup> 'Solidarity Pledges', [www.redcross.ie](http://www.redcross.ie).

<sup>86</sup> Interview with Irish Red Cross, September 2016.

<sup>87</sup> Correspondence with UNCHR, September 2016.

<sup>88</sup> 'Irish Refugee Protection Programme', [www.justice.ie](http://www.justice.ie).

<sup>89</sup> Correspondence with UNCHR, September 2016.

<sup>90</sup> Correspondence with OPMI, September 2016.

<sup>91</sup> Correspondence with UNCHR, September 2016.

Operationally, the OPMI within the DJE is responsible for the resettlement programme in Ireland. OPMI works with UNHCR, IOM, An Garda Síochána, Health Service Executive (HSE), Department of Education and Skills (DES) and Department of Social Protection (DSP) in the operation of their programme (see Table 3.1).

**TABLE 3.1** Relevant Actors in Resettlement and Snapshot of Responsibilities

Actors	Responsibilities
<b>Office for the Promotion of Migrant Integration (OPMI)</b>	Manages the UNHCR led Resettlement Programme in Ireland. OPMI are involved in selection, reception and integration (Office of the Minister for Integration, 2008; Government of Ireland, 2013).
<b>Irish Naturalisation and Integration Service (INIS)</b>	INIS provides residence permits for persons admitted under the resettlement programme on an ongoing basis. <sup>92</sup>
<b>Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT)</b>	The DJE, in consultation with the DFAT, decides whom Ireland will accept for resettlement. This includes deciding from which countries of origin and from which countries of refuge the refugees are to be admitted (Government of Ireland, 2013).
<b>Department of Justice and Equality (DJE)</b>	The DJE are responsible for deciding who Ireland will accept for resettlement in consultation with the DFAT and UNHCR, as above (Government of Ireland, 2013).
<b>United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)</b>	UNHCR identifies refugees in need of resettlement and submits resettlement referrals to the Resettlement Unit of OPMI for their consideration. UNHCR assists in selection missions by OPMU to the country of refuge (Office of the Minister for Integration, 2008a; Government of Ireland, 2013).
<b>Educational Training Boards (ETBs)</b>	The orientation programme is provided by the Education and Training Boards (ETBs) in co-operation with the Office of the Promotion for Migrant Integration (OPMI) and other service providers (Gusciute et al., 2016).
<b>International Organization for Migration (IOM)</b>	IOM makes travel-related arrangements, including: flights, exit visas, in-transit assistance, medical escorts, fitness to travel examinations and health screenings. Travel assistance is arranged by IOM from departure to port of arrival (Office of the Minister for Integration, 2008a; Government of Ireland, 2013).
<b>Health Service Executive (HSE)</b>	The HSE assists with health assessments and preparation for arrival of resettled refugees with particular health needs. The HSE also assists in determining how many and the type of medical cases that Ireland can accept (Government of Ireland, 2013).
<b>An Garda Síochána</b>	An Garda Síochána undertakes security screening and attends interviews on selection missions with OPMI (Government of Ireland, 2013).
<b>Department of Education and Skills (DES)</b>	The DES assists in preparation for arrival and undertakes the initial assessment of the educational needs of resettled refugee adults and children. The DES ensures children are registered in age appropriate classes. The DES provides funding for language training and the orientation programme through Solas. <sup>93</sup>
<b>Department of Social Protection (DSP)</b>	The DSP administers social welfare payments e.g. supplementary welfare allowance, exceptional and urgent needs payments etc. (Gusciute et al., 2016). Intreo are involved once refugees are job-ready. <sup>94</sup>
<b>Local Authorities, Dept. of Environment, Community and Local Government</b>	The Local Authorities, Department of the Environment and Local Government provide social housing, housing support and information. The Local Authorities chair the local inter-agency working group (Gusciute et al., 2016; Glennon, 2016).

Source: OPMI (June 2016).

<sup>92</sup> 'Ireland', [www.resettlement.eu](http://www.resettlement.eu).

<sup>93</sup> 'Tánaiste confirms plans to accept 260 more refugees under resettlement programme' 6 July 2016, [www.inis.gov.ie](http://www.inis.gov.ie); Correspondence with OPMI, September 2016.

<sup>94</sup> Intreo is a single point of contact for employment and income supports. [www.welfare.ie](http://www.welfare.ie).



### 3.1.2 *The Resettlement Process*

The Minister for Justice and Equality is responsible for formulating resettlement policy, including setting quotas and determining the countries from which to resettle in consultation with DFAT. OPMI oversees the operation of the resettlement programme. Overall the resettlement process in Ireland can be divided into four parts:

1. The selection process, which is carried out by way of in-country selection missions or the 'dossier method'. Presently, dossiers are not used. The selection process involves acceptance or rejection of cases. This occurs after the initial referral from UNHCR. Decisions are normally made within three months of the mission (Government of Ireland, 2013).<sup>95</sup>
2. Preparation for resettlement, during which time medical screenings are undertaken by IOM, visas and travel documents, where needed, are issued, travel arrangements are made etc. This process typically takes a few months.
3. The reception and orientation process, which involves housing resettled refugees in EROCs for a minimum of six weeks where they undertake an orientation programme. Children follow a separate induction programme which aims to prepare them for mainstream education.
4. Finally, resettlement and integration takes place in a local receiving community. Language, of up to 20 hours per week, and orientation training is available free of charge by the local ETB for a period of one year to 18 months (Gusciute et al., 2016; Glennon, 2016). Childcare is free of charge for parents who wish to attend. Resettled refugees are assigned a GP, receive the same income from the State as an Irish person/family that is unemployed and they receive a subvention to pay for their house. Children attend local schools and additional supports may be provided. Resettlement support staffs are employed to support the refugees during the first 12-18 months to facilitate access to mainstream services.

Preparing the receiving community begins nine months in advance of resettlement. This process involves setting up an Inter-Agency Working Group in each receiving Local Authority Area, which is chaired by the Local Authority, sourcing accommodation and English language training and ensuring and facilitating access to schools, general practitioners, childcare services and transportation (Glennon, 2016). OPMI provides information on the resettlement programme and training to management and staff of relevant local agencies (Office of the Minister for Integration, 2008a).

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<sup>95</sup>

Decisions may take longer. Decisions relating to urgent medical cases take approximately four weeks. See Section 4.3.2.

## 3.2 FUNDING

OPMI stated that no specific funding allocation is made available by the Irish Government to resettlement. The relevant 'Government Decision' requires that the resettlement programme is implemented using mainstream services and existing resources, and that each Department must make the appropriate provision within their budgets. Local authorities must budget for all persons in their catchment area, including refugees. Grants made to the local areas are therefore through the general, national budget process. OPMI also provides local grants for additional services such as for support workers and interpreters. Childcare to facilitate attendance by both parents at English language classes is funded by the Department of Children and Youth Affairs under the mainstream model of service.<sup>96</sup> The DJE makes a small fund available from its annual budget for the implementation of the resettlement programme by OPMI. This breaks down to the following services: selection missions, pre-departure measures and information and assistance on arrival.<sup>97</sup>

The 2016 forecast budget for OPMI shows a substantial increase from €2.346 million in 2015 to €4.445 million. This represents an almost 90 per cent increase and is the largest budget available to the Office since 2009.<sup>98</sup> The increase reflects the establishment of the IRPP.<sup>99</sup> The government announced that €6 million was budgeted for in the short term to establish the IRPP and a further €25 million was required to meet costs associated with delivering the IRPP including EROCs, orientation and integration services and additional staff to work in 'key bottleneck areas'.<sup>100,101</sup>

### 3.2.1 EU Funding

Ireland continues to avail of relocation and resettlement incentives through the European Commission based on pledges made. Under the resettlement and relocation schemes, Ireland receives €10,000 and €6,000 per person respectively. The EU also provides funding for specific vulnerable categories of refugees admitted. Funds are paid to the Irish Government as Appropriations-in-Aid and go into central government funds. While these funds are not accounted for as 'EU funds', the money is used as part of government funding and therefore supports the mainstream services that migrants including refugees utilise.<sup>102</sup>

<sup>96</sup> Interview with OPMI, May 2016.

<sup>97</sup> Ibid.

<sup>98</sup> Indicative estimate included in 2016 'Revised Estimates for Public Services', Department for Public Expenditure and Reform, 2016. Available at: [www.per.gov.ie](http://www.per.gov.ie)

<sup>99</sup> Interview with OPMI, May 2016.

<sup>100</sup> To speed up procedure and target backlog.

<sup>101</sup> Parliamentary Question 17 December 2015 [45769/15] [www.kildarestreet.com](http://www.kildarestreet.com).

<sup>102</sup> Interview with OPMI, May 2016.

In 2012, the European Refugee Fund (ERF) was used for persons resettled under a Regional Protection Programme and persons with a serious medical need that could only be addressed through resettlement. In 2013, the ERF was used for persons resettled from a country or region designated for the implementation of a Regional Protection Programme and persons with a serious medical need. In addition, ERF funding was accessed based on pledges made to resettle under ERF resettlement common EU priorities, specifically: Congolese refugees in the Great Lakes Region; and refugees from Iraq in Turkey, Syria, Lebanon and Jordan (100 accepted in 2012).<sup>103</sup>

The Financial Plan for the European Commission Asylum Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF) in Ireland as it relates to resettlement is as follows:

**TABLE 3.2** AMIF Financial Plan for Resettlement in Ireland

2014	2015	2016	2017 <sup>104</sup>	Total
€1,580,000	€1,580,000	€2,600,000	€2,600,000	€8,360,000

Source: Department of Justice and Equality, 2016.

This is a contribution to the following services; selection missions, pre-departure measures and information and assistance on arrival.<sup>105</sup> The figure of €8.36 million is part of the total €18.632 million allocated to Ireland through the AMIF for pledges, which include both resettlement and relocation.

However the figures could change depending on how the unallocated figure of 598 is dealt with (see Table 1.1). There are resource implications for a number of government departments. As previously stated, AMIF funding goes into centralised government funds and is then allocated to departments and local authorities through the normal national budget process.

<sup>103</sup> 'Introduction to Resettlement in Europe', <http://resettlement.eu>.

<sup>104</sup> Unallocated 2018-2020.

<sup>105</sup> Interview with OPMI, May 2016.

# Section 4

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## Selection

Section 4 discusses the operation of the selection and pre-arrival phases of the resettlement programme. This includes information relating to quotas and actual numbers of persons resettled to Ireland.

### 4.1 WHO IS ELIGIBLE?

For a person to be eligible for resettlement, they must be determined to be a refugee by UNHCR in the country of refuge. In addition, resettlement must be identified by UNHCR to be the most appropriate durable solution for the person or family (UNHCR, 2011).<sup>106</sup> UNHCR and partner organisations on the ground identify vulnerable cases who will then be assessed for resettlement eligibility by UNHCR.<sup>107</sup> Persons or families are identified as having a resettlement need if they are at risk in the country of refuge or have particular needs that correspond with the various UNHCR resettlement categories, including:

- Legal and/or physical protection needs,
- Survivors of torture and/or violence,
- Medical needs,
- Women and girls at risk,
- Family reunification,
- Children and adolescents at risk, and
- Lack of foreseeable alternative durable solution (UNHCR, 2011).

UNHCR refers persons deemed eligible for resettlement to Ireland in line with the quota and priorities. Ireland considers whether or not those referred are acceptable for interview and then arranges a selection mission. After the mission, Ireland officially accepts some or all refugees interviewed.

#### 4.1.1 Prioritisation

Family groups are prioritised for resettlement in Ireland.<sup>108</sup> The European

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<sup>106</sup> Stateless persons or refugees falling under the broader UNHCR mandate may also be considered for resettlement, but in Ireland at present all persons referred are Convention Refugees.

<sup>107</sup> Interview with OPMI, May 2016; Correspondence with UNHCR, September 2016.

<sup>108</sup> Interview with OPMI, May 2016.

Parliament referred to Ireland's preference for a 'balanced' caseload, including women at risk, persons with disabilities and other special needs cases (European Parliament, 2013). Priority is given to persons with 'legal and physical protection needs' (Government of Ireland, 2013).

The HSE is consulted in advance on the quota of medical cases and the types of conditions that can or cannot be treated effectively in Ireland. At present, Ireland accepts four serious medical cases each year.<sup>109</sup> Over recent years, a number of serious child-related medical cases were referred, including cases of childhood cancers. Due to the long waiting lists for such treatments in Ireland, it was agreed with UNHCR that no further serious child medical cases would be submitted for three years. It was further agreed with UNHCR, following the submission of a number of chronic medical cases requiring long-term care, that acute/surgical cases where lifetime care was not required would be preferred. In general, Ireland does not accept medical cases where there are exceptionally long waiting periods for treatment or where part of the treatment must be sourced outside Ireland.<sup>110</sup> In addition, some resettled refugees are not classified as medical cases, but they have complex and continuing medical needs.<sup>111</sup> The Immigrant Council of Ireland (ICI) described Ireland's acceptance of difficult cases as a positive.<sup>112</sup>

The focus of the Irish Refugee Resettlement Programme in recent years has been on the resettlement of refugees displaced by the Syrian conflict. This is informed by the priorities set under the EU Resettlement Programme (European Commission, 2015b).

#### **4.1.2 Exclusion, De-prioritisation and Pre-admission Security Screening**

##### **4.1.2.1 Exclusion**

Applicants for resettlement to Ireland are determined to be refugees by UNHCR (see Section 1.2.1 Key Terminology). Once an applicant is deemed eligible for refugee protection, UNHCR must then consider if there are any reasons for exclusion (UNHCR, 2011), in reference to Article 1F of the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees (Government of Ireland, 2013). Article 1F states:

*The provisions of this Convention shall not apply to any person with respect to whom there are serious reasons for considering that:*

<sup>109</sup> Interview with OPMI, May 2016.

<sup>110</sup> Correspondence with OPMI, September 2016.

<sup>111</sup> Correspondence with UNHCR, September 2016.

<sup>112</sup> Interview with ICI, September 2016.

- (a) *He has committed a crime against peace, a war crime, or a crime against humanity, as defined in the international instruments drawn up to make provision in respect of such crimes;*
- (b) *He has committed a serious non-political crime outside the country of refuge prior to his admission to that country as a refugee;*
- (c) *He has been guilty of acts contrary to the purposes and principles of the United Nations.*

#### 4.1.2.2 De-prioritisation

In principle, Ireland does not accept emergency quotas (European Parliament, 2013). UNHCR observed that Ireland has been cautious regarding resettlement of single males.<sup>113</sup> This is based on the view that single men will be harder to integrate in the community as Ireland does not have large resettlement populations and most people are resettled in family groups. In some cases, a single adult male may be resettled along with other family members, e.g. a sibling.<sup>114</sup> Unaccompanied minors are not a feature of the Irish Refugee Resettlement Programme (Government of Ireland, 2013), but they are deemed eligible by UNHCR.<sup>115</sup>

#### 4.1.2.3 Pre-admission Security Screening

Security screenings are also undertaken by the selection team, specifically An Garda Síochána, who individually assess each case to ensure the refugee does not pose a threat to national security or public order. The team seeks to ensure that there are no serious concerns regarding the applicant or a member of the applicant's family's declared identity or relationship, and that there are no serious concerns or discrepancies in relation to the applicant's claim (European Parliament, 2013).

## 4.2 QUOTAS

The quota for intake of resettled refugees increased steadily from 45 to 90 annually between 2011 and 2014. This number increased significantly in 2015 on the basis of the EU Resettlement Programme. The quota is reviewed annually (Government of Ireland, 2013), but it may also be set to be fulfilled over a longer period.<sup>116</sup> As discussed in Section 1.1.2, Ireland at present has a quota for the period 2015 to 2016. Ireland has pledged to resettle 520 persons between June

<sup>113</sup> Interview with UNHCR, May 2016.

<sup>114</sup> Correspondence with UNHCR, September 2016.

<sup>115</sup> Ibid.

<sup>116</sup> Interview with OPMI, May 2016.

2015 and end December 2016.<sup>117</sup> The increase in the quota from 2014 to 2015 was nearly 190 per cent.<sup>118</sup>

Based on the available information, differences in quotas and numbers resettled are small. Ireland committed to resettle 80 persons in 2013 and resettled 76 (a difference of 4). Ireland committed to resettle 90 persons in 2014 and resettled 96 (a difference of 6). Over the two years, Ireland resettled two more persons than originally pledged. The quota for 2015 forms part of a three-year quota. It is therefore not yet possible to say whether or not there is a difference. UNHCR noted that delays in resettling, which may impact upon the actual numbers resettled in a given year, may be attributed to delays in getting families ready for travel.<sup>119</sup> OPMI note that all persons who are accepted and who wish to travel are resettled eventually.<sup>120</sup>

The European Parliament (2013) noted that the reason for the failure to meet quotas prior to 2012 was ‘apparently due to Ireland’s current economic difficulties’.

### 4.3 THE PROCESS: SELECTION

UNHCR, in co-operation with partner organisations at a local level, identify the most vulnerable persons for resettlement purposes, regardless of their race, religion, nationality or ethnicity. Where a person or family is determined by UNHCR to be eligible for resettlement, UNHCR then refers the cases to Ireland for consideration. Self-referrals or referrals by other organisations or individuals do not form part of this programme.<sup>121</sup> Referrals for resettlement are submitted by UNHCR to the Resettlement Unit of OPMI in line with OPMI’s quota.

Resettled persons are mainly selected based on the RRFs following face-to-face interviews in the country of refuge, e.g. Lebanon, with an OPMI delegation including members of An Garda Síochána. This is facilitated by UNHCR on request from the Resettlement Unit of OPMI. UNHCR arranges support if requested, which may include acquiring in-country permissions/camp permissions; organising interview venues; arranging interpretation staff; transferring refugees to venue (IOM may also assist with this); assisting transport of interview team; organising lunches and beverages for staff and interviewees and providing accommodation. The Irish government covers these costs (Government of Ireland, 2013). OPMI sends up to two interview teams to interview the pre-

<sup>117</sup> This number was reached by dividing the total number of pledged, 780, by the total number of years, i.e. three.

<sup>118</sup> The quota was 90 in 2014 and 176 in 2015.

<sup>119</sup> Interview with UNHCR, May 2016.

<sup>120</sup> Correspondence with OPMI, September 2016.

<sup>121</sup> Parliamentary Question 3 November 2015 [37719/15] [www.kildarestreet.com](http://www.kildarestreet.com).

selected group. A three-person team from An Garda Síochána (the Irish police force) also interviews each person aged over 14 years and takes fingerprints (Office of the Minister for Integration, 2008a).

No selection missions took place between 2008 and 2013 due to the ‘economic climate’ in Ireland.<sup>122</sup> One mission to Jordan took place in 2014. Two missions to Lebanon took place in 2015. At the time of writing, one mission to Lebanon had taken place in 2016.<sup>123</sup>

In exceptional circumstances,<sup>124</sup> selection may be based exclusively on dossiers, also known as RRFs (see Section 2.1).<sup>125</sup> Where selection occurs by the ‘dossier method’, the RRFs are submitted by UNHCR to the OPMI Resettlement Unit and copied to DFAT. The RRF is examined to ensure Ireland can offer a durable solution, i.e. resettlement. Relevant sections of the RRFs, which are confidential, are submitted to other departments or service providers as appropriate (e.g. to the HSE to assess medical needs, the DES to assess special educational needs or An Garda Síochána for a security assessment). The dossier method has not been used since 2013.

#### 4.3.1 Interviews

As stated above, an interview team usually consisting of one or two teams (depending on numbers being interviewed) from the Resettlement Unit and An Garda Síochána will go on mission for face-to-face interviews in the country in which the refugees are residing. All persons listed on the RRF attend the interview together. A brief introduction is provided by OPMI to the interviewees in advance. The interview can last up to two hours. Persons 12 years and older have a short interview initially, separate to the family unit. All persons referred are required to provide copies of documents including identity documents, health, education certificates, evidence of trade or skill, etc. The interview process provides an opportunity for OPMI to: check the information provided in the RRF; ascertain the full extent of family, their status and location; ‘hear’ the applicant’s story and that of the family; impart information on the resettlement process including rights and responsibilities, and to manage expectations on all sides; gather information which may not be available in the dossier; and gather information that may assist service providers post-arrival in Ireland (Government of Ireland, 2013).

<sup>122</sup> [www.integration.ie](http://www.integration.ie).

<sup>123</sup> Correspondence with UNHCR, September 2016.

<sup>124</sup> For example where it is not safe to carry out selection missions, or when Ireland is unable to carry out missions due to the economic climate.

<sup>125</sup> ‘The Irish Resettlement Process’, [www.integration.ie](http://www.integration.ie).



### 4.3.2 Decisions

The decision to accept or reject a case is not taken at the time of the interview but is made on return to Ireland by OPMI. Special needs and medical cases may be referred on to the HSE for consideration as to whether or not Ireland can offer the necessary medical treatment or supports. All cases are referred for security clearance prior to final decision. A submission is prepared for the Minister of the Department of Justice and Equality to approve. Decisions are normally made within three months of the mission, but may take longer. Decisions relating to urgent medical cases take approximately four weeks. Decisions cannot be appealed (Government of Ireland, 2013).

## 4.4 THE PROCESS: PRE-ARRIVAL

OPMI provides pre-departure orientation for persons interviewed for resettlement during selection missions.<sup>126</sup> Orientation normally consists of a brief overview of Ireland, including basic information on topics such as geography, climate, the political situation, education, work, cultural norms, gender relations etc. Before the interview, a short presentation is made describing the process and what will happen on the interview day. During the interview, information about Ireland, including child and family issues, housing and income and post-arrival accommodation is provided. In addition, the main pre-arrival orientation programme takes place over one or two days at the end of the selection mission.<sup>127</sup>

The Irish government requires applicants for resettlement and their families to indicate their willingness to participate in resettlement and to accept the ‘primacy of Irish law over their own cultural or religious practices’ (Government of Ireland, 2013), but they do not require applicants to satisfy any other integration requirements in order to be considered for resettlement.<sup>128</sup>

### 4.4.1 Travel

IOM makes travel arrangements for the refugees who have been accepted for resettlement to Ireland including flights, exit visas, in-transit assistance, medical escorts, and fitness to travel examinations. Travel assistance is arranged from departure to port of arrival. Costs of travel are agreed between DFAT and IOM and paid for by the Irish government. This process usually takes a few months and begins after selection is confirmed. The IOM takes responsibility for securing

<sup>126</sup> Refugees may not be selected from the larger group where: there are medical conditions Ireland cannot treat efficiently; the applicant decides not to be resettled to Ireland; there are national security implications etc.

<sup>127</sup> Orientation normally takes one day if refugees live a distance from the interview location or where it is dangerous for people to travel. It may last two days if the interview takes place in the camp setting.

<sup>128</sup> Interview with OPMI, May 2016.

exit visas, obtaining passport photos, signatures, travel documents where needed and for making travel arrangements (Government of Ireland, 2013).

The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) or INIS issues travel documents for refugees who do not have passports. Irish entry visas are processed by the Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service (INIS) of the DJE and are issued by the closest Irish embassy in the region.<sup>129</sup> OPMI may contact the authorities in the country where the resettled person is present to facilitate the issuing of exit visas.<sup>130</sup>

In consultation with the HSE, IOM carries out pre-departure medical screenings on behalf of the Irish Government.<sup>131</sup> The results are passed to the HSE. Once resettlement approval is received, medical screening is organised by IOM and any conditions which may affect travel will then be identified. Once everyone is deemed fit to travel a travel budget will be prepared and will be sent to the DFA for approval.

Once the visas, travel documents and budgets are in place and the refugees have been health screened, IOM will book commercial flights for passengers. The details will be sent to the relevant government department within the host country in order to arrange exit permits.

Refugees will receive a pre-departure check up 24 to 48 hours prior to travel to ensure that everyone is fit for travel. Medical escorts, wheelchairs, oxygen, blood pressure medication etc. are organised for anyone requiring specialised care. Information is provided on the journey regarding travelling by plane; transiting airports and what happens on arrival. Refugees travel to the airport independently unless there is a special requirement and in such cases they will be brought to the airport by IOM staff or by ambulance. IOM staff will be with the refugees in the departure airport, checking them in and ensuring that all goes smoothly with exit procedures. Refugees are met in the transit country by IOM staff and assisted to the onward boarding gate. Refugees are met on arrival in Ireland by OPMI staff,<sup>132</sup> in many cases the same team that conducted the interviews (see Section 5.2).<sup>133</sup> They are then brought to their initial reception accommodation (one of two EROCs).

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<sup>129</sup> 'Ireland', [www.resettlement.eu](http://www.resettlement.eu).

<sup>130</sup> Interview with OPMI, May 2016.

<sup>131</sup> 'Irish Resettlement Process', [www.integration.ie](http://www.integration.ie).

<sup>132</sup> One member of OPMI staff or multiple members may meet refugees at the airport.

<sup>133</sup> Interview with IOM, May 2016.

## 4.5 CHALLENGES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Some evaluations of the Irish resettlement programme have been carried out. One evaluation was commissioned by the Office of the Minister for Integration (OMI, the predecessor of OPMI) in 2008 as part of the Most Project, a transnational project funded by the ERF (led by the Ministry of Labour in Finland). The final project report made several recommendations regarding pre-departure orientation and selection and many have since been implemented. Some of the concerns identified were as follows:

- The length of time (one day) spent on orientation was too short;
- It was difficult for the persons providing the orientation during the mission to strike a balance between a positive view of resettlement and preparation for the potential negatives;
- Communicating through interpreter(s) and not knowing how much information is understood was a challenge;
- Participants felt that apprehension amongst resettled refugees about whether or not they would be selected for resettlement may have affected their engagement with pre-departure orientation (Office of the Minister for Integration, 2008a).

Other challenges identified related generally to difficulties encountered when facilitating selection missions (transport, childcare, catering).

The main recommendations arising from the report related to orientation. The report suggested that pre-departure orientation was a good idea, but that it should be longer and more comprehensive. They also noted that orientation might be more beneficial after the interviews to allow better focus and engagement from participants who might otherwise be worried about the interview (Office of the Minister for Integration, 2008a).

For the present study, OPMI identified managing the expectations of potential resettled refugees as a challenge (Glennon, 2016). For example, it may not be possible to immediately provide access to a medical service for which there is a long waiting list in Ireland and refugees' expectations with regard to the Irish health service or provision of treatment should be managed. OPMI further noted that care must be taken to ensure Ireland has capacity for and is prepared to provide services and supports to persons with particular needs.<sup>134</sup>

# Section 5

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## Post-arrival Integration Supports for Resettled Refugees

Section 5 discusses orientation and integration supports for resettled refugees. This section also provides information on national policies and measures in place to facilitate and monitor integration in the context of resettlement.

### 5.1 NATIONAL ORGANISATION OF INTEGRATION IN THE CONTEXT OF RESETTLEMENT

Ireland pursues a policy of mainstream service provision in the area of integration (Office of the Minister for Integration, 2008b), meaning that policies are often devised and implemented by different government departments, organisations and/or agencies. Targeted integration services are not available for Convention Refugees who may access mainstream integration supports. SHAP beneficiaries may have access to integration supports, but their access is limited to those not linked to social protection (see Section 6).

Resettled refugees are the only group to have access to targeted integration supports (Gusciute et al., 2016). Research carried out by UNHCR (2013) noted that resettled refugees are in a more favourable position than other migrant groups in that they

*...receive an induction course upon arrival in Ireland and gain an understanding of where to access information for specific needs. In light of this, the process of access to information is potentially less difficult for them.*

Services outside of the orientation programme may be accessed using existing providers. The mainstreamed nature of service provision also means that integration and other supports are provided at the local level and by mainstream Government Departments within existing resources. However, where a service provider in the receiving community identifies a particular need, they can apply to OPMI for a grant (up to one year) to provide a targeted service with a view to mainstreaming the initiative in the longer term.<sup>135</sup>

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<sup>135</sup>

Interview with OPMI, May 2016.

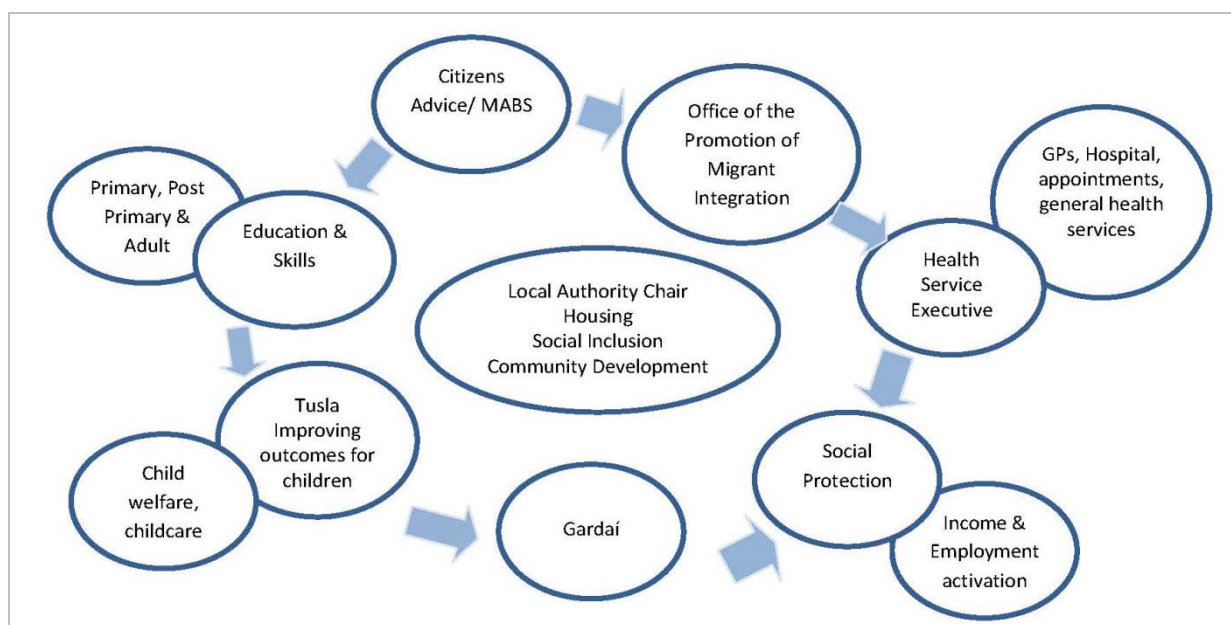
This section outlines the integration and support measures from the point of arrival. This section draws on a previous EMN report (Gusciute et al., 2016) with additional details from further consultation for the present study.

### 5.1.1 Inter-agency Co-operation

The resettlement team of OPMI provides information and training on the resettlement programme for both the management and staff of local agencies. OPMI sets up an inter-agency working group on resettlement in each receiving community (see Figure 5.1). OPMI sits on the working group for up to two years. One objective of the group is to resolve issues arising in the early years of resettlement.<sup>136</sup>

The resettlement programme is co-ordinated at a national level by OPMI, whose officials pass case profiles to local actors in the receiving municipality via the inter-agency working group during the selection phase. The profiles include background information on the specific refugee situation and a broad overview of special needs amongst the refugee group. OPMI starts to prepare the local community nine months before arrival of the refugees, in particular informing local authorities regarding housing needs.<sup>137</sup>

**FIGURE 5.1** Local Resettlement Inter-agency Working Group



Source: Glennon, 2016.

<sup>136</sup> Interview with OPMI, May 2016.

<sup>137</sup> They may not know who will be resettled at the time.

Medical screening is provided post-arrival. Medical and other professionals in the reception centre pass information through their own networks to local practitioners. Resettled refugees are linked to local service providers and have time allocated to visit their GP to have urgent health matters addressed.<sup>138</sup>

OPMI noted that the process of resettlement in the community (post-orientation) involves working in partnership in respect of education (English language and primary education, for example), health care, housing, transport and childcare (Glennon, 2016). OPMI described co-ordination and working with other agencies as a challenge.<sup>139</sup>

## 5.2 ARRIVAL

Resettled refugees are met by an OPMI delegation at the airport who then accompanies them through passport control, assists with baggage retrieval etc. and brings them to the EROC (Gusciute et al., 2016). OPMI stresses the importance of having the delegation that interviewed the resettled refugees also meet them at the airport (Office of the Minister for Integration, 2008a), for identification purposes and to make the newly arrived refugees feel comfortable.<sup>140</sup>

## 5.3 ORIENTATION

The orientation programme is provided locally by the Educational Training Boards (ETBs) (Gusciute et al., 2016). OPMI provides training to local authorities and service providers, including the ETBs who provide the orientation course (Gusciute et al., 2016). The programme is adapted and tailored to the needs of each group and covers topics such as rights and entitlements, life in Ireland, child protection, children's rights, domestic violence, the role of An Garda Síochána, the position of women, the Irish education system, employment etc. (Gusciute et al., 2016). Services such as interpretation and crèche facilities are provided to ensure that all adult refugees can fully participate in the programme. Children follow a separate induction programme which aims to prepare them for mainstream education (Gusciute et al., 2016).

In a 2008 evaluation, the Office of the Minister for Integration (OMI, which was the precursor to OPMI) noted that the orientation programme may need to be varied depending on the needs of the particular group, with more emphasis on practical application (visits to various offices or services) and more planning for activities for children and adolescents. OMI also concluded that the time spent in

<sup>138</sup> 'Irish Resettlement Process', [www.integration.ie](http://www.integration.ie)

<sup>139</sup> Interview with OPMI, May 2016.

<sup>140</sup> Ibid.

orientation was too short. OMI found that the programme should involve more local service providers in the towns where refugees are going to live and include people who will be dealing directly with refugees. It stressed the importance of career planning in the introduction and orientation process, including an initial and individualised skills audit. Lastly, the report concluded that the resettlement support worker (see Section 5.5) should be employed and in place at the time of the orientation programme (Office of the Minister for Integration, 2008a).

OPMI confirmed that many of the recommendations from this study have been implemented. For example, the evaluation also stressed that attendance was higher when crèche services were provided (Office of the Minister for Integration, 2008a). OPMI provide crèche services and separate classes for women who are breastfeeding.<sup>141</sup> The crèche services are funded by Department of Children and Youth Affairs. For the present study, OPMI stated that despite the provision of free childcare, attendance of women in orientation classes is still lower than their male counterparts.<sup>142</sup> OPMI reported that low participation may also be related to low literacy levels and a lack of prior experience of studying or employment among the women in the group.<sup>143</sup>

### 5.3.1 Housing During Orientation

During orientation, accommodation is provided in EROCs.<sup>144</sup> EROCs were established as part of the IRPP to provide for persons admitted to Ireland under the EU Relocation and Resettlement programmes (Gusciute et al., 2016). At the time of writing, there were two EROCs, one in Monasterevin, Co. Kildare, and the other in Clonea Strand, Dungarvan, Co. Waterford.<sup>145</sup>

During the orientation phase, resettled refugees access the same weekly allowance as persons seeking asylum in Ireland. A payment of €19.10 per adult and €15.60 per child is made to each resettled refugee per week. This equates to the supplementary welfare allowance minus the cost of board (Gusciute et al., 2016). UNHCR noted that the allowance makes it harder for resettled refugees to save towards establishing their new life.<sup>146</sup>

The use of EROCs has been criticised by politicians and NGOs due to their similarities with the controversial direct provision system. The criticisms are based on the reduced social welfare payment and the conditions generally.

<sup>141</sup> Interview with OPMI May, 2016.

<sup>142</sup> Correspondence with UNCHR, September 2016.

<sup>143</sup> Correspondence with OPMI, September 2016.

<sup>144</sup> EROCs receive government funding after a tendering process [www.justice.ie](http://www.justice.ie).

<sup>145</sup> 'Irish Resettlement Process', [www.integration.ie](http://www.integration.ie).

<sup>146</sup> Correspondence with UNHCR, September 2016.

However, the reduced social welfare payment is only applicable during the orientation phase (Gusciute et al., 2016).<sup>147</sup>

## 5.4 SELECTING RECEIVING COMMUNITIES

When selecting a receiving community, OPMI considers if all services required by new arrivals will be available to them in that community. Serious medical cases are generally placed in a city, close to a hospital. Persons with special needs are placed as near as possible to the service(s) they require, while persons admitted as part of a group of five or more families are generally placed in a town outside of the capital.<sup>148</sup> In order to avoid isolating families, groups are not resettled individually (Glennon, 2016).

Receiving communities are selected by OPMI in consultation with the inter-agency group. Receiving communities are generally smaller towns (populations of 4,000-10,000 people). The Irish government believes that smaller communities can offer a better welcome and support<sup>149</sup> and the evaluations and feedback from resettled refugees in Ireland support this.<sup>150</sup> In addition, it is more difficult for housing authorities to allocate suitable housing to resettled refugees in Dublin due to the housing crisis.<sup>151</sup>

To date resettled refugees have been resettled in 29 different communities throughout Ireland – Killarney, Kilkenny, Killorglin, Carlow, Cavan, Monaghan town and Carrickmacross, Carrick-on-Shannon, Roscommon, Sligo, Ballina and Castlebar, Ennis, Limerick, Tralee, Cork City, Mallow, Thurles, Portlaoise, Tralee, Tullamore, Waterford, Naas, Arklow and Mullingar, Shannonside and Sixmilebridge – and in four Dublin Local Authority areas.

OPMI allocates one arrival group of the same national, ethnic and/or cultural background at a time to a local community. Communities typically receive only one arrival group each, although second and third resettlements have taken place in the same community in cases where refugees from the same country of origin or with a common language are being resettled.<sup>152</sup>

<sup>147</sup> The fact that resettled refugees remain may only receive reduced benefits until the orientation is completed, has been criticised by some commentators as a ‘mild’ form of mandatory integration programme (Murphy, 2013).

<sup>148</sup> ‘Ireland’, [www.resettlement.eu](http://www.resettlement.eu).

<sup>149</sup> Ibid.

<sup>150</sup> Today with Seán O’Rourke ‘Syrian Refugees’ RTÉ Radio 1, 9 September 2016, [www.rte.ie/radio](http://www.rte.ie/radio); Pat Kenny Show ‘Syrian Refugees in Mallow’ Newstalk, 10 September 2016, [www.newstalk.ie](http://www.newstalk.ie).

<sup>151</sup> Correspondence with UNHCR, 2016.

<sup>152</sup> ‘Ireland’, [www.resettlement.eu](http://www.resettlement.eu).



### 5.4.1 Housing Post-orientation

A non-EEA national who has been granted refugee or subsidiary protection status and resettled refugees are eligible for social housing support on the same basis as an Irish citizen (Department of Environment, Community and Local Government, 2012). Resettled refugees may be housed in privately rented accommodation and may receive rent allowance supports through the Department of Social Protection. The housing provided is fully furnished. Housing in both the private rented sector and social housing is provided and sourced by the local authorities.

The local authorities are the main providers of social housing in Ireland. Housing associations such as Clúid Housing<sup>153</sup> provide social housing for resettled refugees with the aid of grants.<sup>154</sup> Both OPMI and IRPP identified securing housing as a challenge. OPMI referred to the housing shortage in Ireland as a factor (Gusciute et al., 2016).<sup>155</sup> However, resettled refugees are prioritised as homeless (Glennon, 2016).

## 5.5 LOCAL DELIVERY OF INTEGRATION SERVICES POST-ORIENTATION

Following the orientation course resettled refugees are assigned a resettlement support worker. This position is organised by the local implementing partner (often a community development worker or occasionally an NGO) who tenders for the role and receives a grant from OPMI (Gusciute et al., 2016). The role of the resettlement support worker is to facilitate access to local services and assist with any problems that might arise.<sup>156</sup> The full-time resettlement support worker is employed for one year to act as the co-ordination point between local agencies and resettled families.<sup>157</sup> The resettlement support workers are generally appointed two to three weeks before resettlement in the community takes place. OPMI note that there are occasions where this does not occur due to unforeseen circumstances.<sup>158</sup>

OPMI states that it is recognised that additional supports may be needed for targeted initiatives that could not have been anticipated or that may be required due to special needs of the resettled refugees.<sup>159</sup> All resettled refugees have the

<sup>153</sup> Clúid Housing is an independent, not-for-profit organisation providing housing for people who cannot afford purchase their own home or pay for private rented housing. Clúid Housing was established in 1994 and is one of the largest housing associations in Ireland. [www.cluid.ie](http://www.cluid.ie).

<sup>154</sup> Interview with OPMI.

<sup>155</sup> Interview with OPMI, May 2016.

<sup>156</sup> Interview with OPMI, 2 March 2016.

<sup>157</sup> Correspondence with UNHCR, 2016.

<sup>158</sup> Correspondence with OPMI, 2016.

<sup>159</sup> 'Irish Resettlement Process', [www.integration.ie](http://www.integration.ie).

contact details of their principal OPMI resettlement officer should any issues arise that cannot be resolved locally.<sup>160</sup>

## 5.6 ADDITIONAL MAINSTREAM SUPPORTS

Mainstream integration supports are available to resettled refugees on the same basis as third-country nationals, including Convention Refugees. Once orientation concludes, a period which lasts up to 50 weeks after moving to the receiving community (Glennon, 2016), resettled refugees may access mainstream social welfare protection payments.<sup>161</sup> Resettled refugees, in contrast to other migrant groups including Convention Refugees, receive targeted information and guidance on how to navigate the Irish social service system during orientation and from a resettlement support worker.

Minimum resource payments are not subject to time limits in Ireland but are means tested. These are available through mainstream social welfare services and may vary depending on individual circumstances and entitlements.

On arrival in Ireland, resettled refugees may apply for medical cards and may access GP and hospital services. While resettled refugees are assisted to apply for medical cards, medical cards are means tested and are not automatically granted.

Mainstream health services are available to resettled refugees and others on referral by GP and include specialised services, such as counselling.<sup>162</sup> Resettled refugees receive assistance with applying for family reunification from various NGOs where available (varies by region).<sup>163</sup> Advocacy and community outreach services are private sector (not-for-profit), with the exception of the resettlement support worker.

## 5.7 EVALUATIONS AND FUTURE PLANS

In an evaluation in 2008, the OMI reported concerns relating to anti-social behaviour/racism, lack of interpretation, integration within local communities, including challenges with joining local sports clubs and other groups. A 2011 study on the Carlow Rohingya Resettlement Programme noted that a year in the context of integration should be considered a short amount of time.<sup>164</sup> This report also identified challenges for refugees' integration, including inadequate

<sup>160</sup> Interview with OPMI, January 2016.

<sup>161</sup> MISSOC Guide (2012). Your Social security rights in Ireland. The European Union. <http://ec.europa.eu>.

<sup>162</sup> Correspondence with OPMI, September 2016.

<sup>163</sup> Nasc, Doras Luimní, Irish Refugee Council, Immigrant Council of Ireland.

<sup>164</sup> 'Ireland', [www.resettlement.eu](http://www.resettlement.eu).

interpreting resources (particularly for health services) and specific challenges for refugee teenagers.<sup>165</sup>

On the other hand, the 2011 study highlighted successful aspects of the programme including strong local partnerships, volunteering and befriending and the positive engagement of local media. The 2008 report also highlighted the positive impact of post-arrival orientation. Mentoring, befriending and sports initiatives for long-term integration post-arrival were found to be good practice (Office of the Minister for Integration, 2008a).

Feedback from persons who have been resettled to Ireland and benefitted from integration supports here has been positive (Office of the Minister for Integration, 2008a). UNHCR noted that OPMI has a lot of involvement with the resettled families, and staff members know individual and family cases and needs very well. UNHCR also noted that OPMI is recognised internationally as having a well-established resettlement programme.<sup>166</sup> There have been recent examples reported in the Irish media of good practice emerging from the new local communities where resettled refugees have been resettled.<sup>167</sup>

Nationally, a recent study recommended that the orientation programme should be extended to also include persons exiting direct provision, in other words for people who have been granted permission to remain in Ireland on the basis of a protection or humanitarian application (Ní Raghallaigh et al., 2016).

Internationally, UNHCR (2014) concluded that resettled refugees are better equipped than Convention Refugees to integrate as a result of the provision of and access to information. The European Parliament (2013) also found that Ireland's inter-agency approach to resettlement, specifically OPMI's work preparing receiving communities and ongoing support provided to resettled refugees to be good practice. The European Parliament also identified language training and access to social welfare payments while seeking employment as good practice.

OPMI confirmed that no further evaluations of resettlement are currently planned; noting that evaluations are resource intensive and can become an administrative burden.<sup>168</sup>

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<sup>165</sup> Ibid.

<sup>166</sup> Interview with UNHCR, May 2016.

<sup>167</sup> For example, a Principal of a secondary school in Mallow, County Cork discussed the school's initiative to raise awareness on the conflict in Syria and refugees affected by it, to help make the resettled families feel welcome. Today with Seán O'Rourke 'Syrian Refugees' RTÉ Radio 1, 9 September 2016, [www.rte.ie/radio](http://www.rte.ie/radio).

<sup>168</sup> Interview with OPMI, May 2016.

# Section 6

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## Organisation of the Syrian Humanitarian Admission Programme

Section 6 describes the organisation and functioning of the Syrian Humanitarian Admission Programme. The institutional framework, key actors and institutions and national policies are described. Success and challenges are also discussed.

### 6.1 INTRODUCTION

In addition to Ireland's established refugee resettlement programme, the government introduced a new private sponsorship scheme in 2014 in response to the deteriorating crisis in Syria.<sup>169</sup> This programme, which provided a new safe legal pathway to Ireland for family members of Syrians living in Ireland or naturalised persons of Syrian origin, represents an innovation in domestic immigration policy and is unusual in an EU context (Merriman, 2016).

The Syrian Humanitarian Admission Programme (SHAP) operated from 14 March 2014 to 30 April 2014 and was a once-off admission programme. Operating as an administrative scheme brought in by the then Minister for Justice and Equality, Alan Shatter, TD, it was established as a private, and specifically family, sponsorship mechanism.<sup>170</sup>

SHAP allowed Irish citizens of Syrian birth, and Syrian nationals lawfully resident in Ireland, to apply within a six-week period to bring family members to Ireland. This applied to family members in Syria, or displaced from Syria in surrounding countries, following the outbreak of the civil war in March 2011. Each sponsor was able to submit applications for up to four 'of their most vulnerable family members'. Two of the family members within an application of four had to be prioritised. The limit on the number of family members for whom a sponsor could apply was applied flexibly to preserve family unity, e.g. a family of five would not be split if the sponsor and family met all other conditions and criteria. The Sponsor had to undertake to support and maintain family members throughout their stay (see Section 6.4). Priority was given to applications made on behalf of; elderly parents, children, unaccompanied mothers and their children, single

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<sup>169</sup> 'Syrian Humanitarian Admission Programme', [www.inis.gov.ie](http://www.inis.gov.ie).

<sup>170</sup> Interview with UNHCR, May 2016.

women and girls at risk and disabled persons. No overarching quota was set for the SHAP programme.<sup>171</sup>

As stated in Section 1, Ireland is one of only seven European countries to have had a private sponsorship scheme. Ireland and Switzerland established time-limited and once-off schemes. Germany has extended the private sponsorship programme, which began in 2013 to at least end-2016. All three programmes require/d a family link and sponsorship, and all three were borne out of the crisis in Syria (Kumin, 2015). In 2015, Italy, Poland and Slovakia all had private sponsorships schemes established in co-operation with non-governmental organisations or private organisations. Lastly the UK recently introduced a ‘community sponsorship’ scheme in July 2016 (European Migration Network, 2016b).

### 6.1.1 Overview of SHAP Beneficiaries

Some 119 persons were granted permission to reside in Ireland under SHAP out of applications made in respect of 308 persons.<sup>172</sup> A total of 114 persons were initially granted permission to reside in Ireland in 2014 and a further five permissions were granted in 2015. The additional permissions were granted based on applications that had been kept under review for a period until the sponsor met the requirements set out under SHAP. SHAP beneficiaries began arriving in Ireland in 2015.

At the time of writing data were available on 90 of the 119 beneficiaries. This showed that there were 29 adult male, 30 adult female beneficiaries and 31 children. INIS noted that many of the SHAP beneficiaries were the elderly parents of Syrians in Ireland.<sup>173</sup>

## 6.2 THE APPLICATION AND REGISTRATION PROCESS

SHAP applications were received and processed by the Family Reunification Unit of INIS.<sup>174</sup> The application period was six weeks from 14 March 2014 to 30 April 2014. Applicants were notified of decisions in writing. The Minister’s decision was final and there was no option to appeal. However, as mentioned above, INIS showed flexibility in keeping some applications under review after the end of the application period until conditions were met.<sup>175</sup>

<sup>171</sup> ‘Syrian Humanitarian Admission Programme’, [www.inis.gov.ie](http://www.inis.gov.ie).

<sup>172</sup> ‘Resettlement’, [www.unhcr.org](http://www.unhcr.org).

<sup>173</sup> Correspondence with INIS, June 2016.

<sup>174</sup> Interview with UNHCR, May 2016.

<sup>175</sup> Correspondence with INIS, June 2016.

INIS aimed to process all standard applications within 12 weeks of receipt, but in the end, this took seven months<sup>176</sup> and decisions were made in November 2014. The decision-making process took longer than expected to facilitate the production of documentation by applicants.<sup>177</sup> Successful applications were subject to the subsequent issuing of a visa at a cost of €60 in respect of each beneficiary. Beneficiaries also had to provide appropriate documentary evidence of being screened and/or vaccinated against certain diseases prior to arrival. On arrival in the State the beneficiaries were required to submit their passports for endorsement with the SHAP authorisation stamp (SHAP Stamp). Finally each beneficiary aged 16 and over had to register with the Garda National Immigration Bureau (GNIB) in order to obtain a Certificate of Registration at a cost of €300 per person.<sup>178</sup>

During 2016 UNHCR spoke to 31 people in relation to SHAP, each of whom was either a Syrian beneficiary who came to Ireland under SHAP or a sponsor.<sup>179</sup> Some beneficiaries expressed the view that the six-week application period was too short considering the difficulties related to cost of securing and posting documents, often to or from Syria.<sup>180</sup> However, INIS stated that the six-week period was agreed with a Syrian community group in advance. The period was decided based on a sense of urgency from the perspective of the group.<sup>181</sup> In addition, it was reported to UNHCR that some Syrians in Ireland did not learn of the programme until it was too late to make an application, while others were concerned they would not be able to fulfil the documentary requirements in time to make an application.<sup>182</sup> UNHCR recommended that if another scheme similar to SHAP were to be established that the time period during which sponsors could make an application should be extended to allow for sponsors and families to obtain relevant documents and for word to spread about the programme.

UNHCR stated that the assessment of applications and the decision-making process appeared to be robust. While some sponsors reported to UNHCR that the reasons for refusing applications were insufficient and that there were inconsistencies in decision-making,<sup>183</sup> INIS stated that each applicant received a decision letter stating the reasons for refusal and that the only grounds for

<sup>176</sup> Interview with UNHCR, May 2016.

<sup>177</sup> Correspondence with INIS, September 2016.

<sup>178</sup> In Ireland non-EEA nationals are allocated several documents which together comprise a residence permit including a Certificate of Registration in the form of a Garda National Immigration Bureau Registration Card. The Card references the specific stamp issued to the holder, which denotes the level of access to the labour market and to various supports including social security.

<sup>179</sup> Unpublished summary report on SHAP compiled by UNHCR, July 2016.

<sup>180</sup> They referred to the costs associated with securing and posting documents.

<sup>181</sup> Correspondence with INIS, September 2016.

<sup>182</sup> Unpublished summary report on SHAP compiled by UNHCR, July 2016.

<sup>183</sup> Interview with UNHCR, May 2016.

refusal under SHAP were a lack of sufficient financial or accommodation support.<sup>184</sup>

### 6.3 THE RIGHTS OF BENEFICIARIES

Beneficiaries of SHAP were given permission to remain in Ireland on a temporary basis for up to two years. SHAP beneficiaries are issued with a SHAP Stamp, which is different to any existing residence stamp in use in Ireland. The period spent resident in the State on a SHAP Stamp is reckonable for the purposes of naturalisation.<sup>185</sup>

There is no automatic right to the renewal of any SHAP permission granted. However, INIS confirmed that in light of ongoing conflict in Syria the SHAP permission would be renewed on an individual basis for a further two years subject to good character, security checks and verification of identity.<sup>186</sup> INIS stated that a notice is to be uploaded on the INIS website informing beneficiaries of the process for renewal.<sup>187</sup>

A key condition under SHAP is that the beneficiary should ‘not become a burden on the State’<sup>188</sup> therefore persons admitted under the scheme are required to refrain from applying for or receiving non-insurance based social welfare payments or housing services by a housing authority.<sup>189</sup> The sponsor is responsible for the maintenance of the beneficiary (see Section 6.4).<sup>190</sup>

Persons admitted under the programme are entitled to work, establish a business, or invest in the State. Persons admitted to Ireland have access to essential medical treatment only and also have access to early childhood, primary and secondary education for persons under the age of 18.

SHAP beneficiaries have the same access to some mainstream services as other third-country nationals (i.e. English classes and labour market supports such as Intreo) but the particular orientation and integration services provided to those who arrive under the resettlement programme (see Gusciute et al., 2016) are not available to persons granted permission to remain through the SHAP programme (see Section 5).

<sup>184</sup> Correspondence with INIS, September 2016.

<sup>185</sup> Unpublished summary report on SHAP compiled by UNHCR, July 2016.

<sup>186</sup> The beneficiary will be issued with a renewal of the SHAP Stamp. SHAP Stamp is reckonable towards citizenship. Correspondence with INIS, September 2016.

<sup>187</sup> Correspondence with INIS, June 2016.

<sup>188</sup> ‘Minister Shatter announces Humanitarian Admission Programme to assist vulnerable persons suffering in Syria and surrounding countries’ 12 March 2014, [www.justice.ie](http://www.justice.ie).

<sup>189</sup> This includes medical treatment or services, where such provision is essential and the person concerned or the sponsor does not have sufficient resources to pay for that treatment or service and medical or other services necessary for the protection of public health.

<sup>190</sup> Correspondence with INIS, September 2016.

The 'SHAP Stamp', which is affixed onto beneficiaries' passports, outlines the rights of beneficiaries, including their right to work and establish a business. Some beneficiaries consulted by UNHCR observed that this stamp was unknown to immigration officers in Dublin Airport, employers and other service providers, which sometimes created delays in accessing employment, schools or language courses; accessing medical services; opening bank accounts; and obtaining a PPS (social security) number.<sup>191</sup> UNHCR also noted that the temporary nature of the residency permission, which was for two years, also contributed to problems accessing employment and adult third-level education.<sup>192</sup>

If another scheme similar to SHAP were to be established, UNHCR recommended that State officials and employers should be informed about 'SHAP Stamp' and information for beneficiaries could be laid out on the INIS website and by letter on arrival. Alternatively, they proposed that beneficiaries could be issued a recognisable stamp (rather than SHAP Stamp) to avoid confusion when accessing the labour market.<sup>193</sup>

#### 6.4 RESPONSIBILITIES OF SPONSORS

Sponsors of SHAP beneficiaries had to take full responsibility and make a declaration of commitment to organise and cover the costs of travel of family members to be admitted to the State in making their application. Sponsors undertook to support and maintain family members admitted under the Programme for the duration of their temporary residence in the State. SHAP beneficiaries are therefore the guests of their sponsors. SHAP sponsors must pay a €60 fee per person for the Irish entry visa and €300 per person for registering with the GNIB.

Of the five EU Member States that have had private sponsorship programmes included in the Synthesis report for the present study, Ireland and Italy are the only two countries to require sponsors to pay visa fees for family members. Slovakia is the only country that does not require the sponsor to cover medical costs. Ireland only covers essential medical costs that the sponsor and beneficiary cannot afford.<sup>194</sup> The other responsibilities of the sponsors in Ireland such as travel and housing and household costs are similar to those required in the schemes in Denmark, Italy, Poland and Slovakia (European Migration Network, 2016b).

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<sup>191</sup> Unpublished summary report on SHAP compiled by UNHCR, July 2016.

<sup>192</sup> Interview with UNHCR, May 2016.

<sup>193</sup> Unpublished summary report on SHAP compiled by UNHCR, July 2016.

<sup>194</sup> Correspondence with UNHCR, September 2016.



Although the beneficiary is eligible to access the labour market and could therefore become self-sufficient,<sup>195</sup> this may not always be possible due to their age and or health. As stated above, many of the beneficiaries were elderly parents. UNHCR suggested that the period of time the sponsor must materially provide for the beneficiary should be limited so that, where necessary, the beneficiary can transition to public services. Rent allowance, medical cards, reduced transportation costs for seniors and other financial assistance could be considered to support beneficiaries and sponsors, but this could be time limited.<sup>196</sup> Some SHAP beneficiaries stated that it was important to be able to access some financial assistance after coming to Ireland in order to lead their own lives and stop being dependent and a burden on their sponsor.<sup>197</sup>

## 6.5 SHAP BENEFICIARIES AND APPLICATIONS FOR ASYLUM

INIS stated that Syrians would not be subject to return due to the ongoing conflict in their home country. Other options available to the beneficiary where sponsors could no longer meet the financial requirements under SHAP include applying for asylum.<sup>198</sup> UNHCR<sup>199</sup> and the Asylum Policy Unit with the Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service (Merriman, 2016) noted that a significant number of SHAP beneficiaries had applied for refugee protection by early 2016, with some grants already issued. UNHCR expressed the view that insecurity of residence (i.e. two years with no automatic right to renewal) may have led SHAP beneficiaries to apply for asylum before the end of the two-year period. Some other reasons that may have led beneficiaries to apply for asylum in Ireland include the fear of an uncertain future, believing that refugee status would provide more rights and entitlements such as a travel document and potentially a medical card.<sup>200</sup> INIS also confirmed that if a sponsor did not meet his or her requirements, the SHAP Stamp could be withdrawn or not extended,<sup>201</sup> which may have resulted in persons making an application for protection.<sup>202</sup> Many beneficiaries also expressed gratitude to the Irish government, but felt they would have benefited from more information and support after their arrival to Ireland.<sup>203</sup>

<sup>195</sup> Correspondence with INIS, September 2016.

<sup>196</sup> Unpublished summary report on SHAP compiled by UNHCR, July 2016.

<sup>197</sup> Correspondence with UNHCR, September 2016.

<sup>198</sup> Correspondence with INIS, June 2016.

<sup>199</sup> Interview with UNHCR, May 2016.

<sup>200</sup> Correspondence with UNHCR, September 2016.

<sup>201</sup> Correspondence with INIS, June 2016.

<sup>202</sup> Interview with UNHCR, May 2016.

<sup>203</sup> Correspondence with UNHCR, September 2016.

## 6.6 EVALUATIONS AND FUTURE PLANS

There are no plans to run another private sponsorship scheme in Ireland.<sup>204</sup> However, UNHCR and some NGOs<sup>205</sup> are advocating for a new version of SHAP to run alongside other legal avenues to be established, e.g. student visas.<sup>206</sup>

SHAP is monitored internally for the purposes of establishing those who will potentially apply for renewal.<sup>207</sup> It has not been evaluated at government level.<sup>208</sup> However, it was a once-off programme and it will not be renewed.<sup>209</sup> UNHCR Ireland has been in contact with SHAP sponsors and beneficiaries and is reviewing some aspects of the scheme for their own purposes as discussed throughout this section.<sup>210</sup>

<sup>204</sup>

Correspondence with INIS, June 2016.

<sup>205</sup>

'Nasc Proposal for New Humanitarian Admission Programme' 23 November 2015, [www.nascireland.org](http://www.nascireland.org).

<sup>206</sup>

Interview with UNHCR, May 2016.

<sup>207</sup>

Correspondence with INIS, September 2016.

<sup>208</sup>

Correspondence with INIS, June 2016.

<sup>209</sup>

Correspondence with INIS, September 2016.

<sup>210</sup>

Interview with UNHCR, May 2016.

# Section 7

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## Conclusions

In the last two years resettlement, humanitarian admission and private sponsorship have moved up the agenda in Ireland, the EU, and internationally. Resettlement and relocation have been pursued as responses to the ongoing refugee crisis in south-eastern Europe. The development of safe legal avenues, including humanitarian admission, private sponsorship, student visas and employment permits, has also been explored to varying extents as complementary measures.

The EU resettlement programme agreed in July 2015 has increased the number of EU Member States involved in resettlement: in 2013, 14 Member States had established resettlement programmes while the July 2015 agreement involves a commitment from 27 EU Member States plus Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway and Switzerland. Provided pledges are met, the EU programme should result in greater numbers of persons being resettled across Europe, including in countries already resettling refugees. In Ireland for example it is foreseen that the number of resettled refugees arriving between June 2015 and end December 2016 will be 520, compared to 96 in 2014. Ireland's decision to participate in the EU Resettlement and Relocation Programmes was voluntary.

This study investigates resettlement and private sponsorship programmes operational in Ireland between 2011 and 2016. The study focuses on the 'traditional' Irish Refugee Resettlement Programme and the recent once-off Syrian Humanitarian Admission Programme (SHAP) sponsorship scheme.

Ireland began operating a formal resettlement programme in 2000 and was among the first seven countries in Europe to do so (Kumin, 2015; European Migration Network, 2016b). Resettled refugees have rights set out in legislation that are equivalent to Irish citizens in relation to education, travel, employment and access to social services. Aspects of the Irish Refugee Resettlement Programme are recognised as positive, both nationally and internationally (European Parliament, 2013; Ní Raghallaigh et al., 2016).

Ireland has developed a formal, well respected orientation programme for resettled refugees, which provides information and training tailored to the specific needs of the resettled group. Longer-term targeted integration supports

are also made available for up to 18 months after arrival. Nationally, there have been calls to extend the integration supports of the resettlement programme to persons exiting the direct provision system who have sought asylum in Ireland and subsequently received permission to remain on the basis of international protection needs or humanitarian considerations (Ní Raghallaigh et al., 2016).

The current study is undertaken at a time of change for the Irish Refugee Resettlement Programme which, as discussed above, will be required to expand to accommodate increased numbers of arrivals in the coming years. Maintenance of the current model of high-quality, targeted orientation and integration support to refugees resettled to Ireland could become more challenging as the programme expands.

Ireland established a once-off private sponsorship scheme in 2014 in response to the Syrian conflict. The Syrian Humanitarian Admission Programme (SHAP) is still one of only seven examples of private sponsorship schemes in Europe (European Migration Network, 2016b). SHAP, established as an initiative which complemented the resettlement programme, resulted in 119 persons being granted permission to enter and reside in Ireland. Some aspects of the programme were criticised due to its temporary and ad hoc nature. Advocates have nevertheless called on the government to establish similar improved programmes to contribute to the response to the ongoing refugee crisis (Red Cross EU Office, 2015).<sup>211</sup>

Critics have argued that in the context of the huge humanitarian crisis in Syria and surrounding countries, the number of refugees being brought to safety via the EU resettlement and relocation programmes is meagre (Oxfam, 2016; UNHCR 2015c; Médecins Sans Frontières, 2016). As of November 2016, 507 refugees had been resettled to Ireland as part of the allocation under the EU programme. It could be argued that by voluntarily establishing the Irish Refugee Resettlement Programme and the SHAP, Ireland has shown commitment and direction in Europe. However NGOs and international bodies have called on the Irish government to do more to respond to the ongoing refugee crisis, including by creating more legal migration pathways. Possible examples of safe legal routes for refugees include: another private sponsorship programme, flexible student or work schemes and more accessible family reunification programmes. However the *International Protection Act 2015*, due to be commenced in the coming months, narrows the scope for family reunification of dependent relatives of Convention Refugees.

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<sup>211</sup>

'21 Red Cross National Societies in the European Union call for more legal avenues to access protection' 12 May 2015, [www.redcross.eu](http://www.redcross.eu).

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## Annex

**TABLE A.1**      Origin of Refugees Resettled to Ireland January 2011 – November 2016

Origin	Number of Persons
Syria	550
Democratic Republic of Congo	58
Iraq	55
Afghanistan	31
Sudan	28
Syrian (Palestinian)	10
Ethiopia	8
Egypt	5
Somalia	5
Iraq (Kurdish)	5
Liberia	4
Iraq (Palestinian)	4
Morocco	1
Congo Brazzaville	1
Eritrea	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>766</b>

Source: OPMI, [www.integration.ie](http://www.integration.ie).



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