

Seven Priorities to Expand Resettlement and Safe Pathways to Europe

Ahead of EU Member States submitting their pledges for the EU resettlement scheme, we call on leaders to ambitiously expand safe pathways to international protection and better reflect Europe’s capacity to welcome.

Resettlement and other complementary pathways to protection offer a lifeline to people forced to flee – a way to reach safety without endangering their lives. For countries of first refuge, they represent a form of solidarity and support. While for receiving countries, they provide a structured and durable approach to welcoming people in need.

After many years of reduced pledging for resettlement and humanitarian admissions, the coming months offer new opportunities for the EU to commit to ambitious quotas of safe pathways for refugees. The COVID-19 pandemic no longer poses an obstacle to international transfers and the upcoming second [Global Refugee Forum](#) in December is a crucial chance for the EU to show leadership on international protection. As negotiations on the EU Pact on Migration and Asylum continue, the essential role of safe pathways in truly sustainable and balanced asylum and migration policies must not be overlooked.

Even with ongoing displacement from Ukraine, EU Member States currently only host [a small proportion](#)¹ of forcibly displaced people globally, while only addressing a marginal 1.1% of global resettlement needs in recent years. It is clear that Europe can and must do more to support people in need of protection and show solidarity with countries hosting the vast majority of displaced persons.

The undersigned non-governmental and humanitarian organisations call on the EU, Member States and associated countries² to:

1. **Step up resettlement efforts to achieve the objectives set in the Third Country Solutions Road Map 2030**

Since the establishment of the first EU resettlement scheme, [global resettlement needs](#) have continued to grow. In 2024, the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR) expects approximately 2.4 million refugees to need resettlement – a 20% increase compared to 2023, due to a rise in conflicts and situations of instability. Despite these acute needs, many EU Member States have gradually reduced their resettlement programmes because of scarce reception facilities and political deprioritisation. All 27 EU Member States must play their part in global responsibility-sharing on international protection by reversing this trend, in line with [UNHCR recommendations](#).

¹ According to [UNHCR data on forcibly displaced people](#), including internally displaced people, refugees, asylum seekers and people in need of international protection who have not yet applied for a status, the EU hosts about 8% of globally displaced people, including displaced people from Ukraine (data checked on August 2023).

² Countries associated to the EU, such as Iceland, Norway, Lichtenstein and Switzerland sometimes participate in resettlement planning with EU Member States. References to “EU+” Member States below, also address and these associated countries, in as far as they participate in the pledging circle and policy discussions on resettlement.

We call on EU Member States and the European Commission to:

- Match the goal of 44,000 resettlement pledges in 2024 and of 48,000 in 2025. To reach this goal, resettling states have to increase their resettlement quotas, while more EU Member States must join the EU resettlement scheme.
- Resettle at least 42,500 Afghans in need by 2026 (on top of the numbers above), as called for by UNHCR and civil society organisations since 2021.
- Improve access to complementary pathways for protection in Europe by strengthening existing education and labour mobility programmes, which should include adequate protection safeguards and aim to offer durable solutions for refugees.

2. Invest in preparedness and ensure adequate capacity for emergency resettlement

This year, EU Member States have the opportunity to announce their pledges for 2024-2025. The two-year pledging cycle must be forward-looking and foresee unallocated places to accommodate people from countries and regions that may be affected by emerging humanitarian crises. An adequate number of emergency resettlement places is also necessary to allow for the flexible admission of individuals who require a rapid response due to imminent protection risks or life-threatening medical needs.

We call on EU+ Member States and the European Commission to:

- Ensure that the two-year cycle results in better preparedness for the implementation of quotas and not in reduced numbers overall. Emergency admissions and unallocated quotas for future needs are key aspects of this planning and should be incorporated into the two-year pledging exercise.

3. Improve the implementation of resettlement commitments

Resettlement is a complex and lengthy process, involving many actors and requiring considerable time and capacities for the identification of profiles and for the selection and admission of candidates. Limited political commitment, postponed processing and departures, and difficulties in finding timely reception solutions lead to recurrent implementation delays. Despite pledging to resettle over 20,000 refugees in 2022, EU Member States only admitted 16,695 refugees, leaving thousands of people in limbo. These delays and shortfalls imply significant financial costs and a mental health burden for refugees who have their lives put on hold. They also represent a hurdle for receiving communities, civil society organisations and municipalities, who can face challenges in adapting to changes and setbacks.

We call on EU+ Member States, the European Commission and the EU Asylum Agency (EUAA)³ to:

- Streamline the procedures related to resettlement to support full implementation of annual committed places. Enhancing cooperation with countries of first asylum to simplify departures, exit visas, travel document requirements and medical clearances can help to improve implementation rates.

³ As it coordinates its Resettlement and Humanitarian Admission Network, the agency has an important role in facilitating and increasing operational cooperation, coordination and efficiency between national authorities of resettling EU+ countries, as well as with relevant actors at both strategic and operational levels.

- Improve accountability through timely and transparent communication about the progress made in executing resettlement pledges.

4. Include the expertise of refugee communities in resettlement implementation

Working with refugee communities and refugee-led organisations is crucial to guaranteeing the effectiveness of resettlement programmes, as it supports the successful inclusion of newly arrived refugees. Diaspora and refugee communities can also play an important role in developing, implementing and evaluating new and innovative hosting schemes – as witnessed in ongoing community sponsorship programmes in Europe – enabling states to put forward more ambitious pledges.

We call on EU+ Member States and the European Commission to:

- Promote and fund strategies that involve refugees and asylum seekers in integration activities at all policy levels, including in relation to resettlement programmes.
- Enable co-creation of hosting programmes through training and empowerment of migrant and refugee-led organisations.

5. Adopt the Union Resettlement and Humanitarian Admission Framework

We welcome progress made on the [Union Resettlement and Humanitarian Admission Framework](#) and the interinstitutional agreement that [was reached in December 2022](#). Adoption of the framework will signal that the EU institutions and Member States are serious in their commitment to expand access to pathways to safety. While resettlement is a life-saving mechanism and needs to remain the primary admission tool, it is important to strengthen other additional pathways: the implementation of the framework should focus on maximising the number of individuals who are brought to safety through durable solutions. To be effective, the framework should ensure the meaningful involvement and consultation of relevant civil society and humanitarian organisations, including within the High-Level Resettlement and Humanitarian Admission Committee. This would guarantee recommendations regarding resettlement numbers and priority target regions are informed by operational and field knowledge.

We call on the European Parliament and EU Member States to:

- Finalise the adoption of the Union Resettlement and Humanitarian Admission Framework and ensure its proper implementation via ambitious commitments that address today's unprecedented global resettlement needs.

We call on the European Commission to:

- Involve UNHCR and civil society organisations supporting resettlement and humanitarian admissions programmes in the preparation of pledging exercises and the identification of goals and priorities.

6. Invest in dignified reception systems and promote additional community-led solutions

Investing in dignified reception solutions is critical to the success of efforts to enhance resettlement and complementary pathways. Adequate reception facilities and services are essential to meeting the immediate needs of arriving refugees: shelter, healthcare and

psychosocial support – cornerstones of successful integration which should be ensured from day one.

Community sponsorship and other schemes engaging civil society and private citizens in welcoming refugees have the potential to significantly boost the capacity of our societies to offer refuge to more people in need. In addition, community-based reception can be a powerful driver of inclusion at grassroots level. However, such approaches must remain additional to resettlement and should not replace the responsibility of states to guarantee adequate reception standards. Moreover, providing for minimum safeguards and requirements in these schemes is essential, as well as clearly setting the balance of responsibilities between state authorities and hosts.

We call on EU+ Member States, with the support of the EUAA, to:

- Invest in long term preparedness by establishing new reception solutions. Setting up dedicated facilities specifically for resettled refugees can help to overcome the accommodation shortage.
- Further explore and assess private hosting schemes as a way to bring more people to safety, alongside existing forms of community sponsorship. During the Ukraine response, these proved to be innovative, citizen-driven means of hosting tens of thousands of people.

We call on the European Commission to:

- Encourage greater investment in community-based reception solutions, including when reviewing states' national programmes under the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF), as well as through the resources of the AMIF Thematic Facility. Higher co-financing rates for specific types of reception could contribute to achieving this.
- Promote multi-stakeholder exchanges and peer-learning to improve and scale up community-led solutions.

7. Defend the right to asylum for all, regardless of how people arrive in Europe

Resettlement and complementary pathways are essential elements of a functioning asylum policy. Yet, safe pathways to international protection cannot represent a 'substitute' for providing full and fair access to asylum in the EU, as required by international and EU law. Resettlement efforts do not relieve states from their obligations to establish and sustain high-quality and human rights-compliant asylum procedures within EU territory.

We call on the EU institutions and Member States to:

- Firmly oppose any national developments aimed at combining increased engagement on resettlement with more stringent asylum policies affecting the rights of asylum seekers. Cooperation on resettlement with third countries should by no means be made conditional on compliance with EU migration management objectives.

Signatories:

Amnesty International
Caritas Europa
Churches' Commission for Migrants in Europe
European Council on Refugees and Exiles (ECRE)
HIAS Europe
International Catholic Migration Commission (ICMC) Europe/ Share Network
International Rescue Committee (IRC)
Red Cross EU Office

Afghanistan LGBTIQ Organization (ALO)
Africa Solidarity Centre Ireland
Association for Legal Intervention (SIP)
AsyLex
Asylrättscentrum - Swedish Refugee Law Center
Caritas International Belgium
Centre for Peace Studies
CONVIVE - Fundación Cepaim
Croatian Law Centre
Danish Refugee Council (DRC)
European Network on Statelessness
FARR, the Swedish Network of Refugee Support Groups
Fédération de l'entraide protestante
Federation of Protestant Churches in Italy (FCEI)
Female Fellows e.V
Forum réfugiés
Fundación Social Ignacio Ellacuría
Jesuit Refugee Service Europe
Jesuit Refugee Service France
Mosaico azioni per i rifugiati
Nasc, the Migrant and Refugee Rights Centre
New Women Connectors
Newcomers with Disabilities in Sweden
PIC - Legal Center for the Protection of Human Rights and the Environment
Plattform Asyl - FÜR MENSCHEN RECHTE
Quaker Council for European Affairs
Red Acoge
Refugee Advisory Board Bulgaria
SB OVERSEAS
SolidarityNow
United Protestant Church in Belgium
Vluchtelingenwerk Vlaanderen

