



PATHWAYS TO PROTECTION: Resettlement and Europe's response to a global refugee crisis

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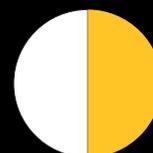


The IRC calls for EU states to resettle 108,000 refugees per year

Over 5 years
that's:



25%
of global
resettlement needs



50%
of Syrian
resettlement
needs

1. Finding European solutions to a global displacement crisis

A rapidly increasing refugee population is one of the world's most significant global challenges – and is growing. By the end of 2014, nearly 60 million individuals, roughly equalling the population of Italy or the United Kingdom, were forcibly displaced worldwide.¹ The rapid acceleration of the scale of forced displacement is disconcerting. In 2010, 10,000 people a day were displaced from their homes. By 2014 this number had quadrupled to 42,500 people on average every day.² As a result of global levels of persecution, conflict, generalised violence, and human rights violations – combined with factors such as climate change and natural disasters - numbers are likely to rise further. In this context, there is growing consensus that the current framework for responding to forced displacement is inadequate.

The deficiency of global solutions for refugees has become increasingly visible in Europe, where there is an urgent need for current chaos to be replaced by a well-managed and effective system. In 2015, more than a million men, women, and children travelled treacherous seas to find sanctuary in Europe.³ Eighty four percent of those who made the journey came from the world's top 10 refugee-producing countries; just under half were Syrian.⁴ In 2016, the situation has become only more critical and is likely to intensify. Tens of thousands⁵ continue to flee into a Europe as yet

Crisis in numbers

- ▶ 60 million displaced worldwide
- ▶ Displaced people would make up the 24th largest country in the world, if they were a national population
- ▶ 1 in every 122 people now a refugee, internally displaced, or seeking asylum
- ▶ 5 million Syrian refugees
- ▶ 1.17 million refugee arrivals into Europe by sea
- ▶ 7,493 unnecessary deaths at sea
- ▶ 1.15 million refugees worldwide in need of resettlement
- ▶ 10% of Syrian refugees require resettlement
- ▶ 108,000 refugees the EU should resettle every year*

Source: UNHCR, *IRC

¹ UNHCR, 18 June 2015, http://unhcr.org/556725e69.html#_ga=1.180709543.1026576994.1453134960

² UNHCR, 18 June 2015, <http://www.unhcr.org/55813f0e6.html>

³ UNHCR, 30 December 2015, <http://www.unhcr.org/5683d0b56.html>

⁴ Ibid

⁵ 153,158 sea arrivals to Europe as of March 16, 2016. UNHCR, 16 March 2016, <http://data.unhcr.org/mediterranean/regional.php>

unable to deliver a coherent, effective, and humane response. Instead, Europe stands by as tragic scenes of deaths at sea, and humanitarian crises along borders, unfold. Since 2014, 7493 adults and children have met a tragic and unnecessary death in Mediterranean and Aegean waters.⁶ EU Member States have displayed an unwillingness to create adequate legal and safe pathways of entry into the region. As a result, desperate refugees continue to be left with no other option but to turn to smugglers and embark on dangerous irregular journeys.

Collectively, the EU's institutions and members constitute the world's biggest humanitarian donor, contributing more than half of all relief assistance every year. They have led the way in responding to the Syria crisis, providing more than €5 billion to relief and recovery efforts in Syria and its neighbours, and pledging a further €3 billion at the recent 'Supporting Syria and the Region' conference in London. But the intensity of the violence inside Syria, the scale of need generated by the war, and the inauspicious prospects of a peace settlement being secured in the short to medium term mean that desperate civilians will continue to flee the country and the region. European states must recognise that the aid system alone will not be enough to meet new global challenges; Europe, as a region with high levels of resource and capacity, must find new ways to contribute to a rapidly changing global refugee crisis.

Increased and more effective safe and legal routes into the EU have been called for in numerous European Parliament resolutions over the years, as well as by the European Commission, the Council of Europe's Commissioner for Human Rights, the UN High Commissioner for Refugees, the UN Special Rapporteur on the human rights of migrants, the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, UNHCR, and civil society. A UN Summit on refugees and migrants, and a refugee summit convened by President Obama, both scheduled for September 2016, reflect a global consensus that high level political action is required to address global displacement, with particular attention to pathways to safety, including resettlement.

The IRC and resettlement

The IRC's experience offers us a unique perspective on conditions for refugees and the challenges and opportunities available as Europe and its neighbours struggle to cope with historic levels of displacement. The IRC currently provides urgent humanitarian assistance in high refugee-producing countries including Afghanistan, Iraq and Syria, and in countries currently hosting high numbers of refugees including Greece, Jordan, Lebanon and Turkey. The IRC also has extensive operational experience of, and policy expertise on, resettlement. We have resettled more than 370,000 people from 119 countries across the U.S. over the past four decades. The IRC is one of nine non-profit resettlement agencies partnering with the U.S. Government to receive refugees arriving to U.S. communities. The IRC has 26 offices around the U.S. and currently supports around 10,000 new refugees each year on their path to permanent integration and citizenship, including through language and cultural orientation programmes, access to health, education and social services, and early employment support. The IRC also runs the U.S. Government's Resettlement Support Centre for Southeast Asia in Bangkok and manages the Cultural Orientation Resource Exchange (CORE), which provides cultural orientation information, materials and training to all partners engaged in providing pre- and post-arrivals support to refugee newcomers, to help them acquire the knowledge, skills and attitudes needed to adapt and thrive in the U.S.

There is an urgent need for the EU to adopt policy that directly addresses the global crisis of forced displacement by providing expanded legal routes to protection, and offering the urgent safety sought by refugees. Resettlement – the transfer of a vulnerable refugee from a country in which they have sought asylum to another state that has agreed to admit and grant them permanent settlement – must, on a scale far greater than current efforts, form a significant part of the EU's response.

⁶ IOM, Missing Migrants Project, 8 March 2016, <http://missingmigrants.iom.int/mediterranean>

2. What is resettlement?

Resettlement is the transfer of refugees from a state in which they have sought protection to another state that has agreed to admit them, as refugees, with permanent residence status and legal and physical protection similar to those enjoyed by nationals.⁷ It is a tool to provide international protection and meet the specific needs of individual refugees whose life, liberty, safety, health or other fundamental rights are at risk in the country where they have sought refuge. Resettlement is available only to a small percentage of the world's refugee population each year, and therefore UNHCR must prioritise those refugees who face the greatest risks in their country of refuge or have particular needs.⁸

Resettlement is a well-established humanitarian programme that involves resettlement states engaging with UNHCR, as well as other organisations such as the International Organisation for Migration (IOM), to identify individuals for resettlement, submit applications to states for processing and selection, and organise pre-departure orientation, medical and security checks. In 2014, UNHCR submitted 103,900 refugees for resettlement.⁹ The United States is the world's top resettlement country, while Australia, Canada and the Nordic countries also provide a sizeable number of places annually.¹⁰ Resettlement can depend on refugees' willingness to wait for years for their applications to be decided, but resettlement can also offer quick protection to many.¹¹ Canada recently used resettlement to offer swift safe passage to 25,000 Syrian refugees in just four months.¹²

Resettlement in Europe must be distinguished from, and complementary to, alternative pathways to safety, such as via humanitarian visas¹³ and expanded opportunities for family reunification¹⁴. In addition, humanitarian admission is similar to resettlement but is a speedier process and usually involves states granting temporary, rather than permanent, residence. Due to the huge resettlement demands created by the conflict in Syria, a number of states, including Germany, have invoked humanitarian admission programmes (HAP). In December 2015, the EU began discussions to establish a voluntary humanitarian admission scheme with Turkey in order to create a system of solidarity and effort sharing with Turkey.

3. Why expand European resettlement?

Resettlement is a tangible expression of responsibility-sharing by states. A permanent EU resettlement framework would allow the EU to display the same global humanitarian leadership and shared values it did when developing the fundamental 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees.¹⁵ At a critical juncture, EU commitment to expanded resettlement would constitute one pillar of a sustainable strategy to address the global refugee crisis and the current refugee flows into Europe. Looking ahead over five years also avoids the costs and upheaval associated with current short term planning and reactive, ad hoc policy making.

Resettlement by the EU on a significant scale would:

First, ensure the protection of vulnerable refugees, especially those with special needs or acute protection risks, whose needs according to UNHCR cannot be met in first countries of asylum. It provides critically

⁷ UNHCR, 2016, <http://www.unhcr.org/pages/4a16b1676.html>

⁸ Particular needs and vulnerabilities are outlined in UNHCR's resettlement submission categories are 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 solutions. UNHCR, 2011, <http://www.unhcr.org/46f7c0ee2.html>

⁹ UNHCR, 2016, <http://www.unhcr.org/pages/4a16b1676.html>

¹⁰ UNHCR, 2016, <http://www.unhcr.org/pages/4a16b1676.html>

¹¹ Cathryn Costello, Forced Migration Review, January 2016, <http://www.fmreview.org/destination-europe/costello.html>

¹² This swift resettlement began in November 2015 and was completed by the end of February 2016. It includes 8,567 Syrian refugees resettled via private sponsorship. BBC, 4 March, 2016, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/magazine-35447113>

¹³ Humanitarian visas provide persons in need of international protection with means of accessing a third country in order to apply for asylum. This allows people to travel safely and, upon arrival in a third country apply via normal asylum procedures and rules.

¹⁴ Family reunification enables individuals permitted to travel to and reside in a country in which their family members have sought and been granted asylum.

¹⁵ UNHCR, 2016, <http://www.unhcr.org/pages/49da0e466.html>

needed protection to refugees with specific medical or psycho-social needs, victims of torture or trauma, unaccompanied children, single female headed households, and other high-risk groups.

Second, save lives by providing an alternative to dangerous journeys and diminishing reliance on smugglers. Thousands have lost their lives crossing the seas to Europe.¹⁶ This is a desperate situation that is avoidable. Without alternatives, even the strictest border control efforts will not stop refugees coming - it will only make journeys even more dangerous and play into the hands of smugglers. Resettlement provides the EU with a tool to facilitate pathways to safety in Europe without forcing refugees to make dangerous journeys.

Third, help stabilize fragile situations in the countries surrounding Syria and assist in alleviating the current, immense pressure on hosting countries. There are currently nearly five million Syrian refugees struggling to access protection and services in countries such as Turkey, Lebanon and Jordan.¹⁷ Resettlement may only be a solution for a very small percentage of all refugees, but it focuses on those refugees with particular risks or vulnerabilities whose specific needs are the most difficult, and many times impossible to meet in host countries. Resettlement is a powerful demonstration to these frontline states of EU support, and offers credibility for EU states' diplomatic effects to preserve asylum space in hosting countries for the majority of refugees who will not be resettled and for Syria's neighbours to keep their borders open to those fleeing Syria.

Fourth, enable flows of refugees to become more predictable and manageable. It will allow for a *real* start to the creation of a managed system of entry by refugees into the EU that will avoid overwhelming local authorities and allow for better organisation and provision of basic public services for refugees. It will also provide greater security guarantees thanks to more robust security checks than those which can feasibly be carried out in hotspots under pressure with large numbers of arrivals.

Fifth, facilitate better integration into host societies. This is particularly true for any distribution scheme that would match both the needs of the refugee and the needs of European countries. Such a scheme would ensure, for example, access to facilities specific to the needs of the refugee, work opportunities that match the skill set of the refugee, and acquisition of cultural orientation and language skills.

Resettlement is part of a package of tools that can be used to stabilise the current situation and reduce irregular flows of refugees into Europe, but must work in tandem with alternative pathways to safety, such as humanitarian visas and family reunification. Additional pathways will be required to relieve the tremendous burden on countries hosting large numbers of Syrians, to provide hope to those individuals that do not have the most acute vulnerabilities or risks but are nonetheless desperate, and to enable families to reunite safely – otherwise those with families in Europe will continue to make dangerous journeys.

4. **A fair and achievable European resettlement commitment**

The EU should resettle 108,000 refugees per year; at least 540,000 refugees over the next five years. This is a fair and achievable minimum commitment for a new European resettlement programme which takes into consideration the rapidly increasing challenge of global forced displacement and the European refugee crisis, and the capabilities of European states and the UNHCR resettlement system. It is vital that resettlement also be complemented by alternative pathways to safety, such as humanitarian visas and family reunification, and does not diminish Europe's responsibilities to asylum seekers at borders.

Meeting global resettlement needs

The total number of refugees has increased significantly and consistently over the past four years. At the end of 2011 the refugee population was 10.4 million. By mid-2015, it had reached an estimated 15.1 million¹⁸, its

¹⁶ 7493 deaths since 2014. IOM, Missing Migrants Project, 8 March 2016, <http://missingmigrants.iom.int/mediterranean>

¹⁷ As of 16 March 4,812,204 Syrian refugees in the region. Includes 2.1 million Syrians registered by UNHCR in Egypt, Iraq, Jordan and Lebanon, 2.7 million Syrians registered by the Government of Turkey. UNHCR, 16 March, 2016 <http://data.unhcr.org/syrianrefugees/regional.php>

¹⁸ This number refers to refugees under UNHCR's mandate; this does not include the 5.1 million Palestinian refugees registered by the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA). UNHCR, 2015, <http://www.unhcr.org/56701b969.html>

highest level in 20 years.¹⁹ Within three and a half years, the global refugee population grew some 45 percent, a significant proportion due to a large number of refugees from Syria.²⁰ Resettlement is currently available for only a small proportion (around 8 percent) of the global refugee population; yet needs are rapidly increasing.²¹ UNHCR now estimates 1,150,000 refugees are in need of resettlement, reaching over 1 million for the first time since resettlement reporting began.²²

Global resettlement remains inadequate to meet these rapidly growing needs. If the world is to be able to manage this growing challenge then not only must states globally step up to meet resettlement needs, Europe must take a significantly greater share. In 2014, there were 8,579 persons resettled to the EU under the Joint EU Resettlement Programme, accounting for approximately 12 percent of UNHCR resettlement worldwide.²³ Sixteen EU Member States participated in this programme and, of those, eight Member States took less than 100 persons.²⁴ By contrast, the U.S. received 48,911 arrivals for resettlement, or 67 percent of the total refugees referred by UNHCR.²⁵ It should be noted that the U.S. admitted an additional estimated 21,000 refugees outside of the UNHCR programme during that same year, resettling around 70,000 refugees in total.

In response to the European crisis, following a Commission recommendation in June 2015²⁶, EU Member States committed to resettle 22,504 refugees from various regions outside of the EU over two years.²⁷ However, there has been little movement in fulfilling these commitments; only 3,358 were resettled by the end of 2015²⁸. The Commission has stated that it will propose a resettlement initiative to ensure a collective approach to resettlement and cement it as one of the core tools for how the EU assists the countries hosting large numbers of refugee populations.²⁹ This proposal must include ambitious numerical targets and should aim to be a permanent and mandatory scheme to avoid a slow and inadequate system.

As the EU accounts for around a quarter of the world's Gross Domestic Product (GDP)³⁰, the IRC believes it has the resources and capacity, over the next five years, to resettle a quarter of those refugees that UNHCR has identified as being in need of resettlement globally. This would mean working with UNHCR and others to resettle around 290,000 refugees from around the world over the next five years, or 58,000 refugees per year.

Resettling Syrians

Syria is a special case, given the immense pressure that the refugee caseload is exerting on the Syria region and in particular on Europe. UNHCR is currently calling for states globally to commit to resettle or provide alternative pathways for 10 percent of Syrian refugees.³¹ There are currently nearly five million Syrian refugees; and nearly 500,000 Syrians are in need of resettlement and other forms of legal admission.

So far, global pledges for resettlement and other forms of legal admission for Syria's nearly five million refugees stands at a pitiful 178,195³², and only a fraction of that number have travelled to date. Canada, a country removed from the immediate implications of the crisis, has confirmed at least 38,089 resettlement places for Syrian refugees.³³ Europe can and must do more.

¹⁹ Ibid

²⁰ Ibid

²¹ UNHCR, 2015, <http://www.unhcr.org/558019729.html>

²² This is an estimate for 2016. There has been a 50% increase in needs since 2012, and 22% increase since 2015. Ibid

²³ European Parliament, 15 July 2015, http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?pubRef=-%2F%2FEP%2F%2FNONSGML%2BCOMPARI%2BBPE-564_908%2B01%2BDOC%2BPDF%2BV0%2F%2FEN

²⁴ Ibid

²⁵ UNHCR, 2015, <http://www.unhcr.org/558019729.html>

²⁶ European Commission, 8 June 2015, http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/home-affairs/e-library/documents/policies/asylum/general/docs/recommendation_on_a_european_resettlement_scheme_en.pdf

²⁷ This is a voluntary system with the participation of 27 out of 28 EU Member States, including 11 states participating in resettlement for the first time. European Commission, 10 February 2016, <http://ec.europa.eu/transparency/regdoc/rep/1/2016/EN/1-2016-85-EN-F1-1.PDF>

²⁸ List of refugees resettled in EU Member States: Belgium (123), Czech Republic (16), Ireland (163), Italy (96), the Netherlands (220), United Kingdom (1,000), Liechtenstein (20), Switzerland (387).

²⁹ European Commission, 10 February 2016, <http://ec.europa.eu/transparency/regdoc/rep/1/2016/EN/1-2016-85-EN-F1-1.PDF>

³⁰ World Bank, 2016, <http://data.worldbank.org/region/EUU>

³¹ UNHCR, 25 January 2016, <http://www.unhcr.org/56a628619.html>

³² UNHCR, 10 March, 2016 <http://www.unhcr.org/52b2febafc5.html>

³³ This number includes Canada's commitment since 2013 and the 25,000 Syrian refugees that Canada resettled between November 2015 and the end of February 2016 through humanitarian transfer. Ibid. The total number of refugees Canada will resettle in 2016 will be 44,800, including Syrian refugee resettlement places. Government of Canada, 8 March 2016: <http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/department/media/notices/2016-03-08.asp>

In recognition of the moral and legal imperative placed on Europe by huge numbers of Syrian refugees fleeing violence to Europe, the IRC believes the EU should resettle at least half of the 500,000 Syrians identified for resettlement or alternative pathways in the region over the next five years, or five percent of the total number of refugees. This would amount to 250,000 Syrian refugees over the next five years, or 50,000 per year.

A European commitment

The IRC therefore calls on the EU to resettle, as a minimum, 108,000 refugees every year, amounting to 540,000 refugees over the next five years. This 540,000 represents a quarter of the global resettlement needs according to UNHCR (290,000) and, in addition, half of the Syrian refugees in need of resettlement and other forms of admission according to UNHCR (250,000).³⁴ By making a commitment over five years Europe takes a step away from the short term and reactive policy making that has dominated over the past year.

The call for resettling 108,000 per year is approximately five times the 22,504 Syrian refugees that EU Member States have already committed to resettle, yet is in line with the resources and capacity of EU states. As a comparison, the U.S. plans to admit 85,000 refugees this fiscal year³⁵ and is expected to raise that target even further next year; if EU states were to take the same proportion in relation to its population, this would amount to 135,000, significantly more than 108,000. The IRC call for Europe is therefore only in line with what other wealthy nations such as U.S., Canada, and Australia are already doing – and without the proximity and urgency of the refugee crisis on their doorstep.

This resettlement commitment should be shared across the EU Member States based on a resettlement distribution key. An indicative example of a possible distribution key is attached at the end of this paper. These numbers show that the proposed European commitment is both reasonable and realistic. For example, whilst the UK would have an opt-out from any official EU resettlement scheme, a possible UK share of the European commitment would amount to 15,609 people per year, or 78,039 over five years. This is just 24 refugees per parliamentary constituency per year – only 18 more than the UK is already taking via its current commitment to resettle 20,000 Syrians over five years.³⁶

In practice, some EU states will do more than this, some EU states may exercise their opt-out from an EU-wide resettlement scheme, and some non-EU Member States may decide to take part in the scheme. For example, Germany has already shown significant leadership in offering international protection for those refugees fleeing to Europe, and Norway has agreed to be part of the EU relocation mechanism despite not being a member of the EU. All European states will need to complement resettlement with other mechanisms for safeguarding international refugee protection, and continue to tackle the causes of forced displacement.

Resettlement is not the only solution to the scale and urgency of the global refugee crisis, but it is one critical and operational pathway for providing desperate and vulnerable refugees with safety and a future. By making a realistic long term commitment to resettlement, Europe can begin to more effectively manage a refugee crisis that has so far revealed its inability to respond humanely and collectively, and has resulted in the tragic and avoidable death of thousands of people in European waters. As political leaders look toward high level refugee meetings in September 2016, the global refugee crisis demands bold, practical and long term solutions from Europe and beyond.

³⁴ The total number of 540,000 over five years still only amounts to 10 percent of the number of refugees that Syria's neighbours are currently hosting. UNHCR, 16 March 2016, <http://data.unhcr.org/syrianrefugees/regional.php>

³⁵ This will include at least 10,000 from Syria. U.S. Department of State, 21 October 2015, <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/pl/249076.htm>

³⁶ The UK committed to resettling 20,000 Syrians via its Vulnerable Person Resettlement (VPR) Programme. Home Office, 28 October 2015, https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/472020/Syrian_Resettlement_Fact_Sheet_gov_uk.pdf. Since 2004, the UK has been resettling around 750 refugees every year through the Gateway Protection Programme. UK Government, 11 January 2010, <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/gateway-protection-programme-information-for-organisations/gateway-protection-programme>

ANNEX

This table provides an example as to a possible distribution of resettlement responsibility for 540,000 refugees over five years by EU Member States. These calculations do not amount to specific calls to individual states by the IRC, but instead are indicative of a possible distribution based on an average of each EU Member State's population and GDP. The EU may, for example, opt to use the distribution key currently employed by the EU relocation scheme.³⁷

EU Member States	Number of refugees to be resettled over five years**	Number of refugees to be resettled each year***
Austria	10,926	2,185
Belgium	13,730	2,746
Bulgaria	4,652	930
Croatia	3,077	615
Cyprus	789	158
Czech Republic	8,590	1,718
Denmark	7,998	1,600
Estonia	1,084	217
Finland	6,876	1,375
France	76,528	15,306
Germany	99,532	19,906
Greece	9,201	1,840
Hungary	7,251	1,450
Ireland	6,116	1,223
Italy	63,510	12,702
Latvia	1,511	302
Lithuania	2,256	451
Luxembourg	1,245	249
Malta	369	74
Netherlands	21,798	4,360
Poland	28,130	5,626
Portugal	8,865	1,773
Romania	13,455	2,691
Slovakia	4,341	868
Slovenia	1,817	363
Spain	44,811	8,962
Sweden	13,505	2,701
United Kingdom	78,039	15,608
Total:	540,002	107,999

**Average of EU Member State population size and GDP

***Average of EU Member State population size and GDP

³⁷ EU relocation scheme distribution key is based on (a) the size of the population (b) total GDP (c) average number of asylum applications and the number of resettled refugees (d) unemployment rate. European Commission, April 2015, http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/home-affairs/what-we-do/policies/european-agenda-migration/background-information/docs/communication_on_the_european_agenda_on_migration_annex_en.pdf.

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