

NATIONAL  
STAKEHOLDER  
REPORT

September **2019**

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**Integration outcomes of recent sponsorship  
and humanitarian visa arrivals**

INTEGRATION



**National Stakeholder Reports** aim to inquire the **stakeholders' response to the evolving EU policy agenda** and **assess the unmet needs** in EU Member states. They also offer a key opportunity to bring the recently ReSOMA briefs and outputs on each topic to the attention of the relevant actors at national level. As such, the reports play a key role in linking the current EU policy agenda with the debate and recent developments on migration, asylum and integration within Member states.

In the second year of ReSOMA, the consultations underpinning the reports were conducted via the ReSOMA online platform in order to mobilise the community of experts (the "Expert Database") through thread discussions.

**Download this document and learn more about the Research Social Platform on Migration and Asylum at: [www.resoma.eu](http://www.resoma.eu)**

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National Stakeholder Report

# In what ways can the EU foster integration through private sponsorship programs?

By Peter Scholten & Zeynep Kaşlı

Private sponsorship programmes (PSPs) are alternative legal pathways of migration, which include presence of private engagement as well as the governmental involvement. They are aimed at supporting migrants' arrival and integration into the destination society and have recently been implemented in different ways across the European Union. Our discussion brief underlines that PSPs can:

- represent a safe and legal alternative for people in need of international protection.
- if used extensively, allow for a more effective management of migration flows to Europe.
- facilitate inclusion of beneficiaries in the destination country.

As ReSOMA [ask the expert brief](#) mapping the existing research in this field shows, the effectiveness, fairness and in general integration outcomes of existing alternative channels are disputed. In ReSOMA [expert interview](#) with Prof. Birgit Glorius and Prof. Dr Hannes Schammann highlight that:

- it is urgent to provide EU-level political and structural support to local communities/organizations/municipalities willing to take active roles for the integration of private sponsorship or humanitarian visa arrivals.
- more discretionary power and legal flexibility at the local and regional level of governance are key for better cooperation across state institutions and civil society actors.

Key issues and controversies further highlighted in the discussion brief include:

- absence of an established harmonized EU level procedure in selection of beneficiaries
- short duration of existing programmes
- lack of clarity concerning the length and kind of support provided
- securing government involvement and commitment
- monitoring and evaluation

This report summarizes the online discussions via the ReSOMA web portal and survey conducted via the SurveyMonkey platform. The questions for both the online discussion and the survey have been developed based on the needs and specifications of the ReSOMA stakeholder partners and were launched over the course of late June and early July. Dur-

ing that time, experts, who are already registered to the ReSOMA Expert Database, received invitation e-mail to take part in both the online discussions and the surveys. Further promotion was carried out from the ReSOMA twitter account. As a privacy measure, survey responses cannot be matched with Expert Database Profiles whereas the comments posted on the platform match with the name and the institution of each commentator. Summary reports include only the names of the organizations as the comments reflect the views of affiliated institutions.

During the online discussions, the respondents were asked to provide input on the following topics: (1) **the needs** for better support of the PSP applicants; (2) **policy actions** to ensure that needs are addressed and (3) the role of **the EU and other actors**. Although it is hard to make strong inferences due to low response rates, the survey results (N=11) and three inputs mainly from international organizations highlight following points:

It is essential to change attitudes among host societies as well as promoting refugees' participation in local communities.

- One-to-one tailored support is much more important for integration than the length of the program.
- The EU must provide financial and legislative support along the lines of its core values.

## Needs for better support

On this topic, the experts were asked to comment on the following questions: What are the critical factors to be addressed to facilitate integration of newcomers via PSP? What do local and national actors need to ensure the smooth transition and integration of newcomers via those pathways?

In the process of integration, it is of crucial importance to establish and preserve channels for networking, coordination and regular communication among the sponsors, the local and the national authorities.

Red Cross EU underlines that the lack of such coordinated action and the limited or no access to family reunification procedure may turn into post-migration stressors with serious implications on the mental health of refugees, and subsequently hinder their integration. Therefore, protection seekers entering through PSP should have access to a secure residence status, rights, entitlements and responsibilities as soon as they arrive in the destination country.

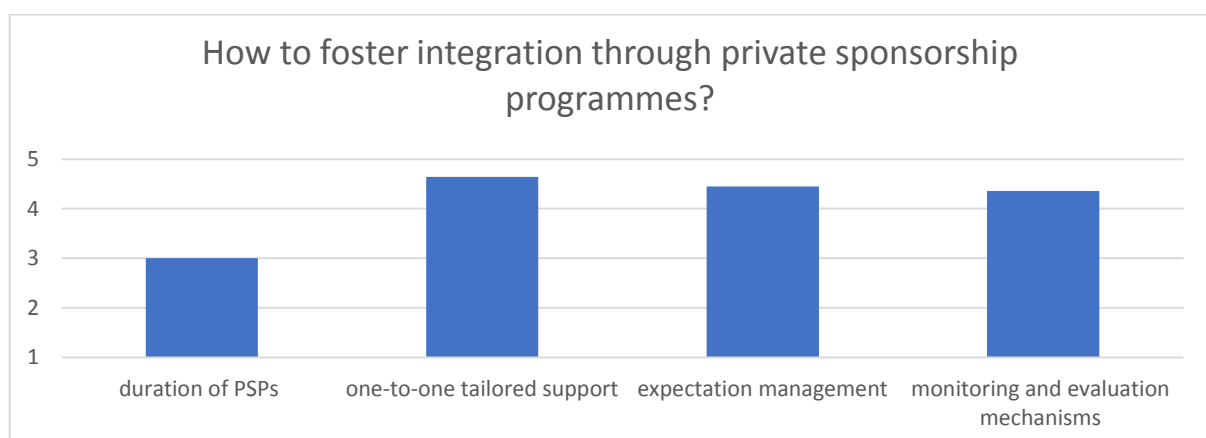
While Red Cross EU's experience shows that, although good start in the early days following arrival is an important investment for the future, social inclusion interventions for migrants remain relevant well beyond the arrival phase. As Red Cross EU argues, against the obstacles to social inclusion of refugees in the long run related to discriminatory attitudes, stereotypes, and xenophobia, it is important to offer activities that target not only the refugee population but also the local population. Such an approach aims at changing atti-

tudes among host societies as well as promoting refugees' participation in local communities at both political and societal levels through, for example, having a job or volunteering. More generally, for the PSPs to be conducive to integration, Red Cross EU stresses the necessity to consider PSP as part of many different visa schemes, hence not as an exceptional one. In other words, it is important to ensure that all applicants for international protection have access to and enjoy fully the same rights regardless of the way they have arrived, which may be spontaneously or through resettlement, PSP or any other legal avenue.

## Policy actions to ensure that needs are addressed

On this topic, the experts were asked to comment on the following questions: What are the measures that have been implemented to fulfil these needs in your national/local context? What other possible measures could be implemented to fulfil these needs?

Red Cross EU refers to the agreements between national authorities and sponsors and how important they are to clarify the respective roles and responsibilities, especially to ensure that national authorities do not relinquish their responsibility in supporting the integration of newcomers. Survey results also support this view. According to respondents, the length of the PSPs matters much less in fostering migrants' integration through PSP. What Elements considered more important include providing one-to-one tailored support clarifying since the beginning what beneficiaries should expect and what sponsors should provide and establishing monitoring and evaluation mechanisms to understand the strengths and weaknesses of the programme. The chart below presents the weighted average of answers given to each factor on a 5-point scale (N=11).



## The role of the EU and other actors

On this topic, the experts were asked to comment on the following questions: What role could the EU play in fostering good practices and empowering local and national stakeholders in PSP adoption and implementation processes? Who are the other key institutions and actors that are or should be involved in PSPs in your national/local context? How can they help ensure the successful integration of newcomers via PSPs?

Red Cross EU states that all actors, especially local communities, should be involved in the integration process while the EU could support networking and exchange of practices among a multitude of stakeholders involved in the implementation of PSP, namely the refugees themselves, the receiving government, institutions, civil society organisations and communities. Survey results also show that the private sponsorship consortium that includes both sponsors (e.g., private citizens, families, churches) and organisations that have already field experience in welcoming refugees, to ensure the creation of a diverse and effective support network (4,67 weighted average), the local community where the beneficiary settles (e.g., public service providers, social assistants, municipality, associations, private citizens), to ensure a smooth settlement process (4,83 weighted average) are the two most important actors in fostering migrants' integration through PSPs.

According to ECRE, one way for the EU to support to national and local stakeholders in promoting the launch and continuation private sponsorship programmes is through funding. In this regard, in the context of ongoing negotiations on the next Multi Annual Framework adequate support to resettlement and private sponsorship programmes should be secured through dedicated funding in the proposed AMF. Yet ECRE also stresses that the EU must ensure that support to private sponsorship does not substitute national resettlement programmes and rather comes in addition to national commitments.

In rolling out private sponsorship programmes, both Red Cross EU and ECRE argue that member states must establish a solid legal framework for their implementation, in the form of formal agreements between governments and sponsors that clearly define the respective responsibilities of the state and the sponsors concerned, limit the sponsor's responsibilities in time and that ensure refugees and communities receive guidance and support throughout the process. For Red Cross this is not only possible through EU's financial and legislative influence but also a key role that EU has to play to maintain these core values of tolerance and unity for a more inclusive continent.

# ReSOMA

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## **ReSOMA - Research Social Platform on Migration and Asylum**

is a project funded under the Horizon 2020 Programme that aims at creating a platform for regular collaboration and exchange between Europe's well-developed networks of migration researchers, stakeholders and practitioners to foster evidence-based policymaking. Being a Coordination and Support Action (CSA), ReSOMA is meant to communicate directly with policy makers by providing ready-to-use evidence on policy, policy perceptions and policy options on migration, asylum and integration gathered among researchers, stakeholders and practitioners.

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