MARCH 2018

HUMANITARIAN ADMISSION PROGRAMMES IN EUROPE

Expanding complementary pathways of admission for persons in need of international protection

ERN+ Scoping Paper

EUROPEAN
RESETTLEMENT
NETWORK +
other legal pathways

Co-funded by the
European Union

Foreword

There are more than 65 million people forcibly displaced in the world as a result of violent conflict and persecution. More than 22 million of these are refugees in need of protection. With limited opportunities for voluntary repatriation and local integration, and few spaces made available for resettlement, other solutions for refugees in the form of safe and legal pathways of admission to third countries represent both a vital protection tool for those who need it most and a tangible way to show solidarity and share responsibility with countries hosting large numbers of refugees.

UNHCR estimates that 1.2 million refugees worldwide will be in need of resettlement in 2018.[1] While the need for resettlement of Syrians remains substantial, at 40% of total projections, there are large numbers of other refugee populations in protracted or large-scale displacement situations who are also in need of resettlement, including in several African countries. Without viable alternatives, many refugees are choosing to move onwards, including along the Central Mediterranean route, across deserts and on dangerous sea journeys made in an effort to reach safety. There is therefore an urgent need to establish new and additional opportunities to provide protection to refugees, while continuing to expand and strengthen resettlement, and to develop further possibilities for refugees' safe and legal admission to countries that have the capacity to provide this protection and to offer the conditions to lead productive and full lives.

In Europe, some progress has been made in expanding both the number of countries resettling as well as the places made available on an annual basis. Since July 2015, an unprecedented number of countries have voluntarily pledged to receive refugees through resettlement.[2] However, statistics show that Europe's contribution to global resettlement remains modest, with just 18,175 refugees resettled to the European Union (EU) and Associate Member States in 2016.[3] While the EU is working towards the establishment of a Union Resettlement Framework (URF), it remains to be seen to which extent this will lead to a tangible increase in the number of refugees resettled to Europe.

Establishing safe and legal pathways of admission to complement resettlement programmes is therefore an essential step towards securing a meaningful response to the current unprecedented global displacement situation.

The need to provide increased and complementary pathways for refugee admission is reflected in the New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants, which was adopted by all 193 Member States of the United Nations at the UN General Assembly in September 2016. Countries, including the Member States of the European Union, expressed their intention to "expand the number and range of legal pathways available for refugees to be admitted to or resettled in third countries." [4] In addition to resettlement, a number of forms of admission can make this goal a reality, including community-based private sponsorship programmes, scholarships and visas for students, and the expansion of humanitarian admission programmes.[5] Partnerships between governments, international organisations and civil society are

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1   See UNHCR, Projected Global Resettlement Needs 2018, 12-14 June 2017.

2   The increase in the number of EU countries running resettlement programmes is due, in large part, to the agreement of 27 EU Member States, Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway and Switzerland in July 2015 to resettle 22,504 persons under the Conclusions of the Council of the European Union

3   Persons resettled to the EU, Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway and Switzerland. Eurostat data on resettled persons by age, sex and citizenship, annual data (rounded) (11/07/2017). For context, a total of 125,835 persons were actually resettled globally in 2016, with the United States of America taking 78,340 and Canada 21,838 (see UNHCR Projected Global Resettlement Needs 2018)

4   United Nations New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants, A/RES/71/1, para 77

5   Ibid, para 79

indispensable to expand and develop such pathways, and several important initiatives are currently being undertaken in this respect.

Over the last six years, the European Resettlement Network (ERN)[6] has worked to develop and strengthen resettlement programmes in Europe by connecting a variety of actors involved in refugee resettlement. Recognising the need for new approaches, since 2016 the ERN has broadened its scope of activities to include research on complementary pathways of admission to Europe for refugees.

This paper accompanies two parallel publications on private/community-based sponsorship and on student scholarships for refugees,[7] published under the activities of the EU-funded **ERN+ Project: Developing Innovative European Models for the Protection of Refugees and Providing Support to New Resettlement Countries**. As limited research has been conducted on the potential for complementary safe and legal pathways of refugee admission to the EU,[8] the aim of these papers is to advance some key considerations with respect to different complementary pathways which the European Resettlement Network identifies as having potential for development in the European context. To do this, the papers draw on existing examples of admission programmes for refugees in Europe and elsewhere to present a first exploration of new and relevant initiatives.

As the publications demonstrate, pathways of admission for refugees often have commonalities and can even directly intersect. As such, no one model for complementary pathways can be considered in isolation, and programme definitions and priorities differ according to a range of political and legal factors, as well as the potential for partnerships with civil society organisations and other non-governmental actors. The publications aim to further guide discussions with a variety of relevant stakeholders, leading to more extensive feasibility research proposing recommendations for the development of such pathways in the EU[9].

International Catholic Migration
Commission (ICMC) Europe

International Organization
for Migration (IOM)

Office of the United Nations High
Commissioner for Refugees.
(UNHCR)

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8   Migration Policy Institute has nonetheless addressed this subject in recent publications such as: *No Way Out? Making Additional Migration Channels Work for Refugees*, 2016, Elizabeth Collett, Paul Clewett, and Susan Fratzke; and *Tracing the Channels Refugees use to Seek Protection in Europe*, 2017, Susan Fratzke and Brian Salant.

9   Detailed feasibility studies on community-based private sponsorship, humanitarian admission programmes, and on study opportunities for refugees will be available from spring 2018 at www.resettlement.eu

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6   www.resettlement.eu
7   The papers are available at www.resettlement.eu

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Abbreviations

AMIF	Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund
BAMF	The German Federal Office for Migration and Refugees
CRRF	Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework
HAP	Humanitarian Admission Programmes
ICMC	International Catholic Migration Commission
IDP	Internally Displaced Persons
IOM	International Organization for Migration
RSD	Refugee Status Determination
SEM	Swiss State Secretariat for Migration
SHAP	Irish Syrian Humanitarian Admission Programme
SRC	Swiss Red Cross
UNHCR	Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
VPRS	Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme

1. Introduction

This introductory section will outline the context of and background to the development of Humanitarian Admission Programmes (HAPs) in Europe. As the characteristics of existing and previously implemented programmes sometimes vary as well as overlap, an overview of these will be provided. Such programmes will also be situated in relation to other complementary pathways of admission for those in need of international protection such as private/community-based sponsorship. There will be a particular focus on the two largest humanitarian admission programmes to date for Syrian refugees in Austria and Germany. Attention will finally turn to the challenges that lie ahead for this pathway of refugee admission, and some of the main principles that can be drawn from programmes and experiences thus far.

This exercise has been informed by targeted stakeholder consultations, a desk review, and input provided by a variety of actors during a preparatory webinar on "Enhancing Humanitarian Admission in Europe".[10] That webinar sought to address the possibilities and challenges of Humanitarian Admission Programmes and serve as a forum for the exchange of practice and discussion in the process of identifying potential models suitable for the European context.

1.1 THE NEED FOR COMPLEMENTARY PATHWAYS

The increase in forced displacement worldwide, as well as the protracted nature of many refugee situations, has led to an increase in resettlement needs. At the same time, opportunities through the other traditional durable solutions of voluntary return and local integration remain limited. UNHCR, in its projections for global resettlement needs in 2018,[11] estimates that there are 1.2 million people in need of resettlement globally, though the number of places available through States' resettlement programmes means only a fraction of these needs can be met. In 2017, just one in thirteen refugees deemed to be in need of resettlement could actually be resettled.[12]

Resettlement remains one of the few and most important tools to meet the protection and solution needs of refugees. However, where the need for protection far outstrips the number of places available, other complementary pathways of admission for those in need of international protection can provide additional opportunities as well as expedited legal and practical solutions for refugees in certain situations. This has been recognised by the Member States of the European Union (EU), who are among the 193 countries that adopted the New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants in 2016, and thereby committed to expanding the number and range of third-country solutions for refugees.[13] A number of EU Member States have been particularly active in developing complementary pathways of admission for Syrians in need of international protection since 2013, conceiving policies and programmes allowing for the safe and regulated arrival of Syrians through both short- and long-term residence. These programmes have typically been implemented alongside resettlement, and can lead to similar outcomes.

1.2 CONTEXT

As a reflection of the unprecedented increase in refugees and asylum-seekers arriving in the EU at the time, the 2015 **European Agenda on Migration** underlined the clear need for increased solidarity with refugee-hosting countries in the North Africa, the Middle East as well as the Horn of Africa and for an enhanced use of new legal avenues, including 'private/non-governmental sponsorships and humanitarian permits, and family

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10 ERN+ Webinar on Humanitarian Admission of 23 March 2017.
11 Projected Global Resettlement Needs 2018, UNHCR.

12 Match Resettlement Commitments with Action: UN refugee chief, UNHCR press release.
13 United Nations New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants, UN A/RES/71/1.

reunification clauses'.[14] Nevertheless, some Member States had already started making use of existing legislative provisions to establish Humanitarian Admission Programmes as a complementary pathway to protection even prior to this.

At a global level, the United Nations General Assembly unanimously adopted the **New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants** on 19 September 2016. In this landmark political declaration, signatories committed to *"consider the expansion of existing humanitarian admission programmes, possible temporary evacuation programmes, including evacuation for medical reasons and flexible arrangements to assist family reunification, […]."*[15] Annexed to this is the Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework (CRRF), which proposes specific actions to expand resettlement opportunities **and complementary pathways for admission of refugees such as Humanitarian Admission Programmes**.[16]

Several EU Member States as well as Associated States have consistently been admitting persons in need of international protection through resettlement programmes for many years. Some European States had resettlement or ad hoc programmes in the decades between the Second World War and the end of the Comprehensive Plan of Action for Indo-Chinese Refugees adopted in 1989, including for Hungarians in 1956, Czechoslovaks in 1968, and the Indo-Chinese in the 1970s and 1980s. More recently, a number of Member States began resettling for the first time in response to the Council of the European Union Conclusions on resettlement of July 2015.[17] Moreover, they are expected to continue to do so under the latest call by the European Commission for Member States to offer at least 50,000 resettlement places to admit by October 2019 persons in need of international protection from third countries[18].

In this context, resettlement and Humanitarian Admission Programmes along with other complementary pathways of admission have been the focus of increased attention from policymakers in individual EU Member States as well as at the EU-level. HAPs have been developed in response to advocacy from various domestic actors (including civil society organizations and regional legislative bodies, for example) to offer admission and protection for Syrians as well as, in some cases, extended family members of Syrians already in the relevant European State. Such programmes are, and could be further developed as highly valuable tools for protection in responding to displacement situations offering predictable and stable solutions for those displaced.

There is currently little consolidated knowledge about existing HAPs and further evaluation is needed to assess their success and potential sustainability.[19] What is known of the experience with HAPs in several States reveals various challenges that need to be addressed for the further development, implementation and governance of these programmes.

The primary question in this scoping paper is whether the HAPs that have been developed in European States to date can be built upon to: a) complement and support resettlement by providing an additional pathway; b) be used for groups other than Syrians; and c) expand the protection and solutions architecture to deal with contemporary refugee crises, and in particular those that are large-scale and protracted.

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14 *A European agenda on migration*, EC COM(2015) 240 final.
15 New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants, Art. 79.
16 New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants, Annex 1, para 14.
17 http://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/meetings/jha/2015/07/20/, Justice and Home Affairs Council.
18 EC - Recommendation on enhancing legal pathways for persons in need of international protection

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19 E. Collett, P.I Clewett, and S. Fratzke, *No Way Out? Making Additional Migration Channels Work for Refugees*, p. 40.

1.3 HUMANITARIAN ADMISSION PROGRAMMES AS A PATHWAY FOR ADMISSION AND PROTECTION

There is no commonly agreed upon definition of Humanitarian Admission and the objective of this paper is not to define Humanitarian Admission per se, particularly as the focus is on Humanitarian Admission *Programmes*. However, it is important to flag that the latter are different from broader Humanitarian Admission, and that within such (nascent) admission approaches there can be some overlap as well as distinctions identified.

ICMC Europe, in its "*10% of Refugees from Syria: Europe's resettlement and other admission responses in a global perspective*" paper, notes that 'Humanitarian Admission' is used as an umbrella term for several different sub-programmes, including family reunification programmes as well as programmes using diverse referral mechanisms aiming at time-efficient or expedited refugee processing to provide temporary protection to Syrian refugees.[20]

An earlier attempt to define Humanitarian Admission by the European Resettlement Network at the onset of the German programme in 2013 referred to it as the "process by which countries admit groups from refugee populations in third *countries so as to provide temporary protection on humanitarian grounds*",[21] even though in practice the status granted to beneficiaries can vary considerably from one State to another. For example, while some States have provided temporary protection under HAPs, some provide for the same rights as under resettlement.

Unequivocally defining 'Humanitarian Admission' is quite challenging to do, given the disparate approaches of EU Member States as well as evolving Union-level discussions around the eligibility criteria. Moreover, there is a difference between 'Humanitarian Admission' as an umbrella term capturing various protection and admission tools, and HAPs as the operational and programmatic instrument for admission which are the subject of this scoping paper.

In most of the European examples of HAPs cited below, beneficiaries are admitted by a State in view of being granted (often initially short-term) residence in receiving countries, with the possibility of reviewing the ongoing need for protection in the future. They might be granted refugee status, subsidiary protection or another national status dependent on the country and programme in question.

Complementing States' traditional resettlement programmes, where these exist, HAPs can be a flexible and responsive tool that has the potential to provide an additional solution or pathway for large numbers of persons in need of international protection and act as a responsibility sharing mechanism. Core features of HAPs that make them interesting for further consideration are their expedited procedures and the fact that they can enable large numbers of beneficiaries to depart a given situation and be admitted for protection purposes relatively quickly. In addition to refugees eligible for resettlement, beneficiaries have included relatives of refugees already in the receiving State who cannot benefit from family reunification under the EU's Family Reunification Directive or national legislation,[22] as has been a component for some of the programmes to date. Other groups have included individuals still in their country of origin, including for instance Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs).

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20 ICMC Europe, *10% of Refugees from Syria: Europe's resettlement and other admission responses in a global perspective*, p. 8.

21 http://resettlement.eu/page/resettlement-relocation-or-humanitarian-admission-we-explain-terminology

22 COUNCIL DIRECTIVE 2003/86/EC of 22 September 2003 on the right to family reunification

2. Humanitarian Admission Programmes in Europe

Austria, France, Germany, Ireland, Switzerland, and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland[23] have implemented or are currently implementing Humanitarian Admission Programmes – in different forms – in response to the Syrian refugee crisis. Both the **Irish** and **Swiss** programmes focused on family ties, for example, and could also be considered sponsorship or family-based programmes, although labelled 'Humanitarian Admission Programmes' by the governments involved. The **UK** programme quite quickly became a large-scale resettlement programme for Syrians, alongside the longer-standing Gateway Protection Programme.[24]

The **Austrian** and **German** Humanitarian Admission Programmes (HAPs) both demonstrate a range of interesting features, at least in the earlier phases, relative to both family programmes and resettlement. In both States' programmes, large groups of individuals have been granted protection within a limited period of time; expedited processing of applications has made timely admission possible; a variety of actors were involved in the referral of possible beneficiaries; a clear component of admission of extended family members was included; and both programmes have been adapted through three phases, allowing for initial evaluations of these protection programmes. However, there are also distinctions between these two HAPs, with the Austrian programme being very similar to traditional resettlement, although Austria does not have a regular resettlement programme. While the German programme is completely independent from the German resettlement programme,

it is very much complementary to it and provides for additional protection to a large number of persons in need of international protection.

2.1 AUSTRIA

Austria's Humanitarian Admission Programme targeting specifically Syrian refugees began in 2013 and was implemented in three phases (HAP I to III). The total number of Syrians who benefitted from this programme by mid-2017, coming from Turkey, Jordan, and Lebanon, was 1,668 refugees (the goal was to admit 1,900 Syrians by September 2017).[25] Previously HAPs were implemented between 1991 and 1992 for refugees from the Balkans, whereby Austria admitted and provided care to about 13,000 individuals arriving from Croatia, and in 2011 for Iraqis who were persecuted for their religious beliefs. (This initiative was launched by the Catholic Church of Austria.)[26]

The long-term protection status provided to beneficiaries of the earlier versions of the programme and the UNHCR referral mechanism used for a part of the caseload under the Austrian programme, particularly in the later adaptations, make this programme very similar to a resettlement scheme.[27] However, the earlier Austrian HAPs included possibilities for the involvement of referral actors other than UNHCR and often used an expedited procedure for non-UNHCR referrals. These aspects differ from what is generally seen in resettlement schemes, and are worthy of further analysis.

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23 The UK's programme has undergone a series of policy changes and is therefore considered a Resettlement programme and referred to as such by the UK government and UNHCR. Initially however, some years ago this programme was rather seen as a Humanitarian admission programme – cf. ICMC, 10% of Refugees from Syria:…, op. cit., p. 8 and p. 59.

24 Guidance Gateway Protection Programme: Information for Organizations, UKHO, Visas and Immigration.

25 ERN+ Webinar on Humanitarian Admission in Europe of 23 March 2017.

26 K. Kratzmann, *Resettlement and the Humanitarian Admission Programme In Austria*, p.28.

27 This is also the case for the French Special Operation for Syrian and Palestinian refugees hosted in Lebanon, Jordan and Egypt Programme.

In the first two phases (HAP I and HAP II) both UNHCR and family members, via the Austrian Federal Ministry of the Interior or an NGO, could refer potential HAP beneficiaries, whereas under the HAP III only refugees referred by UNHCR were admitted. The reasons for this change lay in part with the better quality of files referred by UNHCR and the funding mechanism involved, as UNHCR-referred cases were eligible for EU-funding.

To allow admission to the Austrian territory, a **Limited Territorial Validity (LTV) Schengen Visa (C-type)** is issued by the Austrian diplomatic representation in the country of first asylum. Since May 2016, a preliminary limited **asylum status** is granted on arrival, allowing a temporary residence of three years.[28] This applies both to HAP beneficiaries as well as to other refugees, including those having arrived irregularly and applied for asylum. The temporary nature of the residence status can be considered a preliminary formality, as, after three years in the country, this permit will be renewed *ex-officio* unless safe return to the country of origin is possible. In the event that safe return is considered possible, the status will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis.

The first two parts of the Austrian HAP (I and II) included a **component of admission of extended family members**, in which the identification and referral of beneficiaries was carried out either by civil society, faith-based organizations, and churches under the auspices of the Archdiocese of Vienna based on suggestions by family members residing in Austria or through individual applications for protection of family members submitted directly to the Ministry of Interior by family members entitled to reside permanently in Austria. Under the family component of HAPs I and II, **family members** in Austria were, in most cases at least, responsible for **reimbursing the cost of travel** and for providing **accommodation** for relatives. In one province, the authorities housed those families whose relatives could not provide accommodation. All beneficiaries were granted **access to the basic Welfare System by the Austrian government** within four months of their arrival.[29]

Criteria for admission varied depending on the referral actor: referrals by UNHCR were made on the basis of established resettlement submission categories, which focuses on refugees at risk in their country of origin or those with particular needs or vulnerabilities; whereas in cases of referral by a family member, the beneficiaries had to belong to the target group, as established by the Austrian government, of particularly vulnerable persons (e.g. families with minors, women and girls in precarious living situations, and members of persecuted religious minorities) and have family ties with a person who had already been granted permanent residence in Austria. Moreover, they had to provide identification documents and show willingness to come to Austria. The prioritization was based on the first come first served principle. Cases were reviewed on a dossier-basis by the Federal Ministry of Interior in cooperation with the Federal Office for Immigration and Asylum.

Individuals admitted to Austria under the HAP possess the status of *persons granted asylum* and as such enjoy the same right to family reunification as all persons granted asylum in Austria.[30]

In terms of **pre-departure support**, IOM provided pre-departure health assessments to ensure that people travel in a safe and dignified manner, are fit to travel, receive the appropriate assistance and follow-up for those with specific medical conditions and that they do not pose risks towards other travellers nor towards receiving communities.[31] Furthermore, pre-departure orientation was provided by IOM under the "Austrian Cultural Orientation Trainings – AUCO"-programme for the UNHCR-referred caseload under HAP II in countries of departure (Lebanon, Jordan and Turkey) allowing refugees to be informed about the HAP process; their travel to and their life in Austria and to develop realistic expectations as well as a set of attitudes and skills relevant for sustainable integration in their new environment.[32]. The training continued under HAP III for Turkey and Jordan. Movement assistance was also provided by IOM to all beneficiaries of the HAP programmes including booking and flight arrangements.

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28 K. Kratzmann, ibid. p.37.
29 ICMC, *10% of Refugees from Syria:…*, op. cit., p. 43; ERN+ Webinar on Humanitarian Admission in Europe , intervention from Barbara Kurz from Caritas Austria at min. 31:00

30 K. Kratzmann, *Resettlement and the Humanitarian Admission Programme in Austria*, p.37
31 Ibid, pp. 53-54
32 Ibid, pp. 54-55

It should be noted that a **different degree of post-arrival assistance** was granted to beneficiaries depending on the referral actor (UNHCR or family members/faith-based and other organizations). Despite the fact that basic welfare support was granted to both family members and UNHCR-referred cases, special integration support (such as accommodation, counselling, language courses, pre-childcare, education and employment counselling) was given exclusively to UNHCR-referred persons through the assistance of the Working Group on Humanitarian Admission (ARGE Resettlement - comprised of the Austrian Red Cross, Caritas and Diakonie) contracted by the Austrian government. Non-UNHCR referred cases had access to the same integration support provided to those granted status following an in-country asylum application. The model for housing provision changed for the non-family referrals over the course of the three parts of the HAP: in the first part, those referred by UNHCR were initially sheltered in quarters provided through basic welfare support in the provinces. Under HAPs II and III, UNHCR referred cases went directly to accommodation provided by ARGE Resettlement.[33]

Among the main challenges reported by the actors involved were obtaining exit and security clearances to leave the first country of asylum, which, together with sometimes complex medical conditions of beneficiaries, contributed to major delays in admission and challenged logistical arrangements such as accommodation in Austria.

Initial Observations

The Austrian HAP included several elements of interest that warrant further reflection and could usefully be evaluated with the potential to inform recommendations for future Humanitarian Admission Programmes.

The **eligibility of extended family members** in the Austrian HAP, for example, could benefit from further assessment to identify whether there is added value of its incorporation in other forms of HAPs. Evaluation of the eligibility criteria could positively consider the nature

and role of non-discrimination safeguards. In addition, in connection to the specific criterion of family ties, the need for private (i.e. family) support in the integration process, and particularly in the financial aspects thereof, should be carefully assessed. The **diverse range of stakeholders** involved in this HAP from the referral process to the overall integration support stage is another element worthy of deeper assessment for consideration when designing future HAPs. In this context, reflection on the necessary safeguards and integrity-assurance in the identification and referral process is essential. Thirdly, the way in which the Austrian HAP initially granted **longer-term protection** rather than starting from a short-term residence standpoint could be evaluated for its role in the protection and well-being of beneficiaries as well as the programmatic balance vis-à-vis resettlement. The relationship, and differences, between HAPs and resettlement should be carefully considered on various criteria and the question of when a HAP becomes a resettlement programme should be addressed.

2.2 GERMANY

Although its resettlement programme is relatively recent (initiated in the framework of a pilot project from 2012 -2014, and subsequently introduced as a regular programme in 2015), Germany has been conducting resettlement or humanitarian admission on an ad hoc basis since accepting Hungarians from Austria in 1956. In 2013, well in advance of the spike in migrant and refugees' arrivals of 2015 in Europe, the German Federal Government announced the admission of 5,000 Syrian refugees from Lebanon via a Humanitarian Admission Pilot Programme (HAP Syria), which prioritized refugees with humanitarian needs, those with family links in Germany, and individuals who could eventually contribute – at a later stage - to the rebuilding and reconstruction of Syria. In practice the latter criterion, although used to inform the design of the programme, was not used as a standalone criterion and had limited use in practice.

Other Humanitarian Admission programmes that have been implemented by Germany include the HAP for

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33 Ibid, p. 11

Afghan local staff implemented since 2012[34], and the HAP for 1,000 vulnerable Yazidi women and children from Northern Iraq to Baden-Wuerttemberg implemented by IOM[35] in 2015-2016.

From 2013 to 2016, three phases of the Germany's "HAP Syria" (HAPs I, II and III) were implemented, targeting Syrian refugees as well as stateless Palestinians and Kurds from Syria and its neighbouring countries, plus Egypt and Libya. Across the different phases of the programme a total of 19,047[36] persons in need of international protection were admitted to Germany.

The German (Federal) HAP Syria stands out for its inclusion of a component of admission of family members, which shares some similarities with "private sponsorship".[37] In fact, many family members (the sponsors) were requested to demonstrate whether they could contribute in part to the costs related to the travel, accommodation, and integration of their relatives admitted under this HAP, and in many cases, sign a formal commitment. In July 2014, a change was integrated into the second and third phases of the HAP so that a part of these costs, more specifically medical costs, could be borne by the federal states (Länder) in order to alleviate sponsoring families from too heavy a financial responsibility. Nonetheless, the rights and entitlements provided to persons admitted through the HAP were not the same as the ones granted through the Länder's own separate private sponsorship programmes. Individuals who were admitted in the framework of the Federal HAP received a residence title according to Section 23, Paragraph 2 of the Residence Act with several derivative rights (e.g. integration courses etc.). Individuals who were admitted in the framework of the (private sponsorship) admission programmes of the Länder, i.e. more than 23,000 individuals, received a different title (Section 23 Paragraph 1 Residence Act).

Beneficiaries arriving via the Humanitarian Admission Programmes HAP I – III were granted 2-year temporary residency permits with a possibility to renew on a two-year basis. This was due to the German government considering initially that the protection needs of Syrian refugees would be short-term expecting the conflict to be resolved sooner rather than later.[38]

With regards to the **referral actors**, under HAP I referrals came from UNHCR in Lebanon as well as from Caritas Lebanon and German diplomatic missions in the MENA region. Under the HAP II and HAP III, in addition to UNHCR- referrals, a substantial referral role was introduced for Syrian nationals[39] resident in Germany, who could apply for family members resident in Syria, neighbouring countries, Egypt and Libya to join them in Germany. Family members were required to lodge their application with the federal Länder who were allowed to refer family members of Syrians already in Germany to the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees (BAMF). Those family members in Germany had to give a declaration of commitment or a promise of support. This could have involved a financial obligation, but could have also been non-monetary in nature. Quotas for places available for referrals by family members were set for each region in Germany using the numerical key through which asylum seekers are distributed across the national territory. A third referral method, for specific cases, was directly implemented by the Foreign Office or the Federal Ministry of the Interior. In total, some 30 per cent of the beneficiaries were selected through UNHCR referrals and 70 per cent via alternative avenues.[40]

As for the **selection criteria**: For HAP I, in order of priority, the first criterion was based on **humanitarian reasons**, the second on **(family) ties** in Germany, and the third was the individual ability **"to make a special contribution to the reconstruction of the country once the conflict has ended"** (e.g. by improving

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34 J. Grote, M. Bitterwolf and T. Baraulina, Resettlement and Humanitarian Admission Programmes in Germany, p. 6
35 Raising Hope – The German Humanitarian Admission Programme 2015-2016 – IOM and State Ministry of Baden-Württemberg
36 Legal Channels For Refugee Protection in Europe – MPI webinar 12/10/2017 – presentation by Janne Grote – slide 21
37 ERN+ Scoping paper on Private Sponsorship in Europe. It should be noted that there is no actual private sponsorship scheme at the Federal level in Germany, although there are such schemes operated by the Länder.

38 ICMC, 10% of Refugees from Syria:…, op. cit., p. 46.
39 Ibid. Syrian nationals referring family members are not required to be refugees or to have a refugee background in Germany.
40 Ibid.

existing qualifications during the stay in Germany[41]). As mentioned above, it is not clear in practice how this last criterion was used. In particular for the last two criteria, priority was often given to those whose relatives made a declaration of commitment to provide accommodation and integration support. It should be noted however that the Federal States referring individuals for protection were autonomous in their application of the above-mentioned criteria (e.g. the Federal State of Schleswig-Holstein decided to submit individuals on the basis of humanitarian criteria alone). For HAPs II and III, the priority order of the criteria were 1) family (and other, such as language) ties, 2) humanitarian reasons and 3) contributions to reconstruction.[42] All cases under HAP were selected on dossier-basis, the BAMF decided on the approval for admission based on the proposals and data submitted by the actors involved (i.e. federal Länder, UNHCR, Foreign Office, Federal Ministry of the Interior).[43]

Pre-departure orientation and pre-departure health assessments were provided by IOM for UNHCR-referred cases.[44] Moreover movement assistance was also provided by IOM for UNHCR-referred cases while the other beneficiaries made their own travel arrangements. UNHCR cases were accommodated in reception centres for the first two weeks, where NGOs are also involved, before they left to their host municipalities. The other beneficiaries went directly to their family members or municipality.

The initial permit issued entitled beneficiaries to a **two-year residency** with possibility of prolongation. A **work permit** was issued from the beginning, giving immediate access to the labour market.

The right to family reunification for those refugees who were admitted under the HAP was extended only to special cases of dependency of the relative on family support and only if such support could be provided exclusively by the family residing in Germany (e.g. caring for a relative with particular medical care needs). Since August 2015 beneficiaries of international protection - excepting those admitted under HAP or through private sponsorship schemes - have been put on an equal footing with resettled refugees, which entitled them to a more favourable treatment consisting in waiving certain required conditions (such as a minimum income or adequate living space or knowledge of German before departure). As such, HAP beneficiaries remain excluded from family reunification with any nuclear family members who might be unable to travel with them. Although such separation is avoided by organising appropriate travel, this could become an issue of concern, and should be addressed.

In terms of Integration Support: Beneficiaries admitted through HAPs are granted permission to work, have access to the general welfare system, and have the right to integration courses. Integration subsidies for municipalities are also provided for a period of 2 years after arrival. Admitted refugees are distributed over the Federal States territory through the same distribution key used for the resettlement programme. Under HAP Syria, as is the case for resettled refugees arriving in Germany, approximately one third of arrivals were accommodated for two weeks at **Reception Centres** primarily in Friedland and initially in 2014 at Bramsche, where continued orientation and initial language programmes was offered.[45] Those beneficiaries with family, who committed to support them, were received directly by their relatives. HAP Syria beneficiaries without family links were assisted by IOM with the arrangements for travel and received pre-departure health assessments and pre-departure orientation. Finally, they were received and welcomed in centralised reception facilities.[46]

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41 *Anordnung des Bundesministeriums des Innern gemäß § 23 Absatz 2, Absatz 3 i. V. m. § 24 Aufenthaltsgesetz zur vorübergehenden Aufnahme von Schutzbedürftigen aus Syrien und Anrainerstaaten Syriens vom 30. Mai 2013*, BMI.
42 J. Grote, M. Bitterwolf and T. Baraulina, *Resettlement and Humanitarian Admission Programmes in Germany*, p. 25.
43 Ibid, p. 23.
44 Ibid, p. 20.

45 J. Grote, M. Bitterwolf and T. Baraulina, Resettlement and Humanitarian Admission Programmes in Germany, pp. 28-29.
46 See table in ICMC, *10% of Refugees from Syria:…*, op. cit., p. 48.

Initial Observations

Like the Austrian HAP, the German programme included several elements of interest that warrant further reflection and could usefully be evaluated with the potential to inform recommendations for future Humanitarian Admission Programmes on the basis of deeper analysis. Indeed, there is also some overlap in these points of interest, even though the two approaches were not identical.

The **criteria for eligibility** beyond protection needs (family, humanitarian, and ability to contribute to reconstruction) are worthy of further evaluation, with due attention for the need to safeguard the principle of non-discrimination. The expansion of **identification and referral actors**, likewise with a focus on ensuring the integrity of the process and the appropriate safeguards, is also an area for evaluation and further development. The **different arrangements for travel and post-arrival assistance** for a) UNHCR referred cases and b) family referred cases creates a divergence that could warrant further exploration so as to ensure that any such divergences are fully justified and do not disadvantage certain groups. A homogeneous organization of travel arrangements and post-arrival integration support for all beneficiaries would probably guarantee more equal treatment and a better integration outcome also for those individuals referred by their relatives.[47] The **direct access to the labour market** provided under the HAP is a positive aspect which could be included as a minimum standard in future Humanitarian Admission Programmes.

Another apparently useful practice is the short stay after arrival at the Caritas Friedland (and initially Bramsche) **reception centre** (14 days) and the availability of interpretation, clothing and medical care support directly upon arrival. During the ERN+ Round Table on Humanitarian Admission these elements were positively appraised by several actors involved and are worthy of consideration for possible replication in other HAPs.

The **difficulty of finding independent and affordable housing** in local communities was identified as a challenge during the ERN+ Webinar on Humanitarian Admission.[48] This is an issue that requires innovative consideration, not just in Germany but in other EU Member States also. In addition, enhanced coordination among actors involved in different parallel federal and regional admission programmes could be beneficial both to the counselling services and to the refugees to avoid any confusion on entitlements.

2.3 OTHER PROGRAMMES

Other European Humanitarian Admission Programmes reflect the complexities, overlaps and entwinements of these programmes with, on the one hand, resettlement and, on the other, family reunification.

The United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland

The UK's Vulnerable Persons Relocation Scheme, later the Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme (VPRS), was announced by the then Home Secretary, Theresa May, on 29 January 2014. The announcement came as a result of significant pressure for the government to act.[49] At the time some parliamentarians[50] questioned the separation from the regular resettlement scheme (i.e. Gateway) as well as the low numbers being admitted at the time, and asked why a parallel programme needed to be established.

An initially unspecified number of places were made available, but it was expected to be in the range of 300-500 places. People admitted on this scheme would be granted five-year residency on Humanitarian Protection grounds upon arrival. Referrals were to be made by the UNHCR with a particular focus on survivors of torture and violence, women, and children at risk or with medical needs.[51]

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47 High-Level Conference on the Integration of Beneficiaries of International Protection, OECD/UNHCR.

48 ERN+ Webinar on Humanitarian Admission, 23 March 2017

49 B. Smith, M. Gower, and J. Bardens, Syrian refugees and the UK, House of Commons Library Standard Note, SNIA/6805.

50 UK House of Commons debate on Resettlement of Vulnerable Syrian Refugees, 10 December 2014, Volume 589

51 Oral Statement by the Home Secretary on Syrian Refugees delivered on 29 January 2014, UKHO

When the programme was first established as a HAP, no full individual Refugee Status Determination (RSD) was required. Once UNHCR developed a combined RSD and resettlement interview, that requirement was introduced, as the programme became overtime a distinct resettlement programme.[52]

The first group of 10-20 people arrived on 25 March 2014, and another group arrived in April 2014. By 24th June 2014, 50 people had arrived in the UK and by the end of September 2014, 90 people. The programme was then significantly expanded in September 2015, to 20,000 over 5 years with a very quick turnaround allowing for the first 1,000 refugees to arrive before the end of that year.[53]

On 22nd of March 2017, the Home Secretary, Amber Rudd, announced that instead of the 5-year humanitarian protection status, new arrivals would be granted "refugee leave to remain" (arrivals on the Gateway programme are given "indefinite leave to remain", which is not actually a refugee status). The announcement noted that Humanitarian Protected Status did not convey the same rights, including swifter access to education and an internationally recognized refugee travel document.

In July 2017, the VPR scheme was expanded to include refugees who had fled the conflict in Syria but do not have Syrian nationality, allowing for the possible referral of Iraqis, Palestinians and Kurds affected by the Syrian conflict (Travis, 2017).[54]

By the end of 2017, a total of 10,538 Syrians had been resettled under the Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme since it began in 2014.[55]

Ireland

The first Irish Syrian Humanitarian Admission Programme (SHAP) was announced in March 2014. It was intended to admit an unspecified number of vulnerable family members of Syrians already in Ireland.[56] Some 119 visas were actually granted under the programme. Many considered the SHAP to be a family reunification programme rather than a humanitarian admissions programme: it prioritized elderly parents, unaccompanied mothers with children, single women and girls at risk, children, and people with disabilities.

Naturalized Irish citizens of Syrian origin could sponsor two family members per person, although they were permitted to propose up to four family members with two being prioritized. The authorities committed to apply the quota rule flexibly to avoid breaking up family units. Applications had to be received within a six-week period after the mid-March 2014 announcement.[57]

Temporary immigration permission for up to two years was granted, with no automatic renewal of that permission. Beneficiaries had to be in possession of a valid national passport or travel document, into which the entry visa would be placed prior to travel to Ireland. Beneficiaries had the right to work and access to early childhood, primary and secondary education (up to age 18), as well as basic healthcare. However, no housing would be provided or subsidised and no social welfare benefits would be paid. Sponsors were required to undertake to support and maintain beneficiaries for the duration of their stay if they could not support themselves.

In 2017, the Irish government announced a new Family Reunification Humanitarian Admission Programme for up to 530 family members of refugees already living in Ireland to be admitted over a two-year period[58]. The refugee family members applying on behalf of the new entrants would sponsor them, and priority would be given to those for whom housing would be provided by the sponsors. This new programme is not limited to Syrians, but open to all refugees as an additional mechanism alongside the growing Irish resettlement programme and family reunification of nuclear family members of refugees. Early indications are that priority

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52 Information received in discussion with UK officials.
53 T. McGuiness, *The UK Response to the Syrian Refugee Crisis*, House of Commons Library Briefing Paper Number 06805.
54 A. Travis, *Non-Syrians can come to UK as part of refugee programme, says Rudd*, The Guardian.
55 UKHO, National statistics, 22/02/2018.

56 ICMC, *10% of Refugees from Syria:…*, op. cit.
57 *Syrian Humanitarian Admission Programme; Family reunification for recognised refugees* , Irish Naturalization and Immigration Service (INIS)
58 S. Pollack, *Up to 530 refugee family members to be welcomed under new scheme*, Irish Times.

will be given to family members of refugees coming from countries identified by UNHCR as hosting large numbers of refugees.

France

The French Humanitarian Admission Programme is, on paper and in practice, entwined in its resettlement programme. The ad hoc HAP was announced in October 2013. A total of 770 places were available for combined resettlement and 'ad hoc HAP'.[59] HAP candidates were all submitted by UNHCR on the basis of specific needs, and were granted refugee status or subsidiary protection on arrival.[60] In 2014, 300 Syrian nationals arrived in France under this new programme, which was renewed in 2015. An additional 643 Syrians arrived in 2015, of whom 561 were admitted under the HAP.[61]

EASO reported in 2017 that France has pledged for the admission of 2,000 Syrians from Lebanon.[62] 1,784 persons were selected there, in addition to the 109 "dossiers" received in 2016 through a bilateral framework agreement with UNHCR. The dossier framework agreement allows for the resettlement of mostly non-Syrian cases, with a particular focus on emergency cases. France also has a humanitarian asylum visas programme for persecuted minorities from Iraq and Syria which is not discussed in this paper.

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

Switzerland

Switzerland[63] operated two programmes for Syrian nationals which involved what could be described "HAP-like forms of family reunification". The first programme (Syria I) ran for two months (for applications) from September to November 2013 and was based on a special directive launched by the State Secretary for Migration (SEM) facilitating the obtainment of visas for family members of Syrians living in Switzerland. Beneficiaries were persons with relatives in Switzerland and who were residing in Syria, or in neighbouring countries of Syria, as well as Egypt and who had fled to one of these countries after the crisis broke out in Syria in March 2011. Applications were filed at Swiss Embassies or consular missions in Syria or a neighbouring State. If successful, they were granted a three-month humanitarian visa for entry to Switzerland. Once in Switzerland, the family members could either apply for asylum under management of the State Secretariat for Migration (SEM) or for a status according to the Foreign Nationals Act, under the cantonal migration authorities.[64] The high number of applications received overwhelmed the consular sections involved, and some family members waited two years before they could enter Switzerland.

Family members that applied for the programme where initially required to have their travel to Switzerland financed by their relatives in Switzerland, which later also extended to providing costs related to housing, living expenses, and health insurance for the first 3 months after arrival. In support of the applicants, the Swiss Red Cross launched in September 2013 a project providing the following services: information and advice, issuing of subsidiary financial guarantees, assistance with administrative procedures, organizing and financing flights, providing financial support according to subsidiary financial guarantees, and referrals to humanitarian aid structure

59 UNHCR Resettlement Handbook: country chapter France.
60 ICMC, *10% of Refugees from Syria:…*, op. cit.
61 UNHCR Resettlement Handbook: country chapter France.
62 Annual Report on the Situation of Asylum in the European Union 2016, EASO, p.79

63 Information on the Swiss programmes was obtained in conversations with representatives of the Swiss authorities and NGOs at the ERN+ Roundtable on Humanitarian Admission Programmes.
64 Easing of visa requirements for relatives of Syrian nationals living in Switzerland, Swiss State Secretariat for Migration, The Federal Council, Press Release.

in neighbouring countries of Syria. The project ran until end of 2014.[65]

The Swiss Red Cross (SRC) assisted 250 people who applied for visas for their family members under the terms of the directive, as such providing support for more than 2,500 people who fled from the Syria conflict and applied for protection in Switzerland. Eventually, 1,500 people, supported by SRC, received a visa under the terms of the directive. A financial guarantee was provided for all these people. The SRC financed the flights, which were organized in cooperation with IOM.[66]

The second programme offering legal pathways for Syrian refugees, adopted by the Swiss Federal Council on 6 March 2015, involved a quota of 500 places for family reunification. This programme was restricted to nuclear family members of Syrian nationals in Switzerland who were not granted asylum, but only a provisional admission, which carries no right to family reunification during the first three years.[67] In practice, the anchor relatives for the second programme were primarily people who had entered on Syria I. The State Secretary for Migration (SEM) financed the travel of the beneficiaries under this programme with part of the flights organized through IOM particularly for the most vulnerable or those needing extra assistance with exit permits and other logistical arrangements.

2.4 UNDERSTANDING FAMILY TIES AS A CRITERION IN HUMANITARIAN ADMISSION PROGRAMMES

Between 2013 and May 2015, almost 31,000 visas were issued to Syrian family members in refugee-hosting countries in the MENA region, allowing them to travel to Europe and join their relatives already resident in those countries. This represents 60 per cent of all 'other types of admission places' additional to resettlement and includes: 650 places within the 1,500 places provided by the two Austrian HAPs (2013-2015); 10,500

of the 20,000 places provided by the three German HAPs (2013-2015); and 4,700 visas issued under the Swiss programme, open for applications in September-November 2013.[68]

Some European countries have established limited Humanitarian Admission Programmes for which only extended family members of a relative already in the country are eligible. Although some of these have been called 'Humanitarian Admission Programmes', this label is debatable, as they have been primarily or exclusively financed by private actors (communities or family members), therefore more resembling a form of private/community-based sponsorship scheme.[69] One example of this is the **Irish Syrian Humanitarian Admission Programme**, implemented in 2014, and conceived as an additional admission channel for extended family members.[70]

The provisions under the **Swiss additional admission channel for family members** (Syria I) that ran from September to November 2013 highlights some issues of overlap between this type of programme and other family-focused admission schemes. This channel was intended to alleviate administrative and financial conditions generally required (e.g. civil registry documents, a minimum income) for the admission of nuclear family members. It was also extended to other relatives including children aged over 18, parents, grandparents, grandchildren and siblings of Syrian nationals living in Switzerland. Under this first programme, recognized Syrian refugees had the possibility to apply for a humanitarian visa for extended family members to join them in Switzerland. The second programme (in 2015) allowed Syrians provisionally admitted to Switzerland to apply for a humanitarian visa for nuclear family members, effectively enabling Syrians to apply for family reunification, even if they did not fulfil the regular criteria for this. In other words, the two Swiss programmes effectively created parallel tracks for the admission of family members who otherwise did not qualify under existing family reunification practice.

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65 Swiss Red Cross presentation during ERN+ webinar, and "Activities to help Syrian nationals apply for a visa for Switzerland".
66 SRC activities to help Syrian nationals apply for a visa for Switzerland
67 Crise humanitaire en Syrie, Swiss State Secretariat for Migration

68 ICMC, *10% of Refugees from Syria:…*, op. cit., p. 37.
69 ERN+ Private Sponsorship in Europe: Expanding complementary pathways for refugee resettlement
70 Ibid.

Several other HAPs and private/community-based sponsorship schemes partially overlap, at least on the component of admission of family members (as, for example, in the case of the German HAP and the Länder programmes, which initiated a regional family reunification/sponsorship programme) and some element of commitment to support the newcomers on the part of the family. It is therefore not always easy to draw clear distinctions between these protection programmes. One question attached to this overlap is the role of governments and, alternatively, civil society, as active stakeholders in creating programmes.

The issue of family ties in Humanitarian Admission Programmes requires further and deeper research: family ties, and their role in offering eligibility or access, can become elements of HAPs in two ways, and both **require careful consideration**. The first way is the use of (extended) family ties as an eligibility criterion. This could be viewed as a benefit or a compassionate approach towards the family member already in Europe as much as bringing protection to the new arrivals. There should ideally be consideration to balance this with access for those in need of international protection who do not have those family ties and who are in need of a third country solution but would as such not be able to access it if family ties were the sole criterion of a programme. The second way is in terms of the rights and entitlements that are attached to admission and protection under a HAP. Most EU Member States that have operated HAPs have expected all nuclear family members to travel together and, in part on that basis, the HAP beneficiaries have not had access to family reunification. [71]

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71 Family life is a fundamental human right included in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948, and a principle laid down in the 1951 Convention on the status of refugees. Family unity can become a critical factor in refugees' decision making. Regular family reunification schemes guarantee the reunification of the "nuclear family": i.e., principle, spouse and non-adult, unmarried children. "Extended" family refers to those relatives (siblings, cousins, etc.) who would not be eligible to family reunification with the applying refugee as per regular family reunification schemes (with the exception of the "May Clauses" under the Family Reunification Directive).

3. Key components, considerations and safeguards for Humanitarian Admission Programmes

3.1. KEY COMPONENTS

A key component among the current practices of Humanitarian Admission Programmes to date was to grant large(r) groups of individuals in need of international protection immediate and expedited access to protection on an initially temporary basis, renewable and reviewed on a needs-basis. Such an expedited entry can be facilitated by inclusion on a *prima-facie or presumably eligible* basis and therefore the elimination or reduction in scope of the Refugee Status Determination phase prior to the selection process.

The **type of visa** used could also play a role in the speed of the procedure for admission into the host country. Despite that, the use of **visas issued on humanitarian grounds** is still very limited in such protection frameworks. Further research should explore what the advantages are of using, or where necessary creating, this category of visa as a tool for expedited entry within HAPs would be, and which implications there are for refugee protection.

3.2. ELIGIBILITY, REFERRAL AND SELECTION

On the basis of State practice, outlined previously, Humanitarian Admission Programmes have been shown to benefit individuals in urgent need of protection, including those who would not necessarily fall under regular resettlement or who do not meet the eligibility criteria for family reunification schemes. Such programmes can also offer expanded access where resettlement programme numbers are not sufficient to provide the capacity to meet real needs, thereby granting at least short-term admission, in the first instance, to refugees who might otherwise qualify for resettlement. While programmes

in the EU to date have focused on those in need of international protection from the MENA region, in particular Syrians, but also in some case Iraqis and other nationalities, it would be worthwhile to explore the need to expand the scope of such programmes to address global protection needs in other regions.

In various recent Humanitarian Admission Programmes, a variety of actors have been given a role in the identification and referral process. In other words, not only UNHCR, but also civil society, relatives, and church organizations have played a crucial role in identifying persons in need of protection, to some extent, self-referrals have also been possible, under some programmes, at embassies in the country of first asylum. Whereas the involvement of other qualified actors could be beneficial, future programmes would need to be managed in such a way to allow for a meaningful number of cases to be referred by UNHCR in view of meeting the most pressing protection needs, and so as to guarantee that the HAPs remain accessible to a wide range of refugees in urgent need of a solution. In addition, UNHCR based on its mandate remains the only actor with the breadth of experience to offer full safeguards in this process.

Moreover, the **use of additional eligibility criteria** such as family ties may **give access to the territory to persons who otherwise would not qualify for resettlement**. As noted, family ties are a criterion for admission of beneficiaries under some of the above-mentioned programmes (aspects of the Austrian and German programmes, and also the Irish and Swiss programmes), which has possibly contributed to public support for larger scale admissions within the host society. However, **protection needs must be emphasized as the core criterion**, with any additional eligibility factors being only identifiers that go beyond that central need.

Protection under Humanitarian Admission Programmes to date has not been limited to refugees but has occasionally included, in some cases such as the French (particularly under their humanitarian visa programme for persecuted minorities from Iraq and Syria), German and Swiss programmes – individuals still residing in their home country, including for instance Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs).[72]

Under several Humanitarian Admission Programmes (Austria, France, Germany, and UK) expedited procedures have been used, including UNHCR using the simplified HAP form for submitting cases. The HAP procedure did not require UNHCR to decide on the refugee claim and carry out a Refugee Status Determination (RSD) procedure.[73] This resulted in reducing interviewing times with the beneficiaries and a more streamlined and cost-efficient procedure for submission of files. Moreover, the HAP procedure does not require Country of Origin Information to be included in the HAP referral form, nor does it require an assessment of submission criteria, all resulting in shorter processing times leading up to departure. It is reported that processing applications for beneficiaries of humanitarian admission have been twice as quick as those for traditional resettlement,[74] and that "transfer to the Member State could provide more benefits than a longer stay in the country of refuge, e.g. because it accelerates the integration path in the country of destination."[75]

With Humanitarian Admission Programmes, Member States can implement large-scale admission programmes with a form of admission that entails a commitment to grant protection and integration support to beneficiaries on an initially temporary basis (with the commitment to renew the residence status of the beneficiary upon review of the situation in the country of origin, and any non-renewal of status to be carried out with a case-by-case evaluation of the individual's situation and circumstances). While Austria and France have been granting permanent residency and refugee status on arrival (as is the case under resettlement schemes), other countries, such as Germany, have chosen to grant a temporary form of protection. In the

UK, beneficiaries of the Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme were first granted Humanitarian Protection and five years' limited leave to remain, which changed in July 2017 to Refugee Status and 5 years limited leave, giving beneficiaries a higher level of entitlements.[76]

Humanitarian Admission Programmes should always be complementary and additional to resettlement schemes, and be designed as such to not undermine existing programmes providing durable solutions. Nevertheless, HAPs can be a flexible tool to provide large numbers of refugees with protection, albeit in some cases with temporary forms of protection, and act as a responsibility sharing mechanism for specific situations.

3.3. LEGAL STATUS AND ESSENTIAL RIGHTS

Legal status has varied depending on the national context in which the HAP is implemented. Normally international protection (either refugee status or subsidiary protection) is granted, with the right to stay permanently after a certain period of time has passed (Austria, France, and the UK since June 2017) or as a renewable short-term residency (Germany and Switzerland).

The right to family unity through family reunification post-arrival has not generally been granted to beneficiaries of HAPs. The UK has been the exception in this regard, allowing individuals with Humanitarian Protection Leave the same rights in terms of family reunification as those with refugee leave.

The right to access the labour market is granted on arrival to beneficiaries of HAPs in Austria, Ireland, Germany and the UK.

Beneficiaries have the right to apply for naturalization according to the requirements and procedures foreseen by the relevant national law. There are no differences in the requirements for naturalization compared to other refugees.

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72 Legal Entry Channels to the EU for persons in need of International Protection: a toolbox, EU FRA, p. 8.
73 ICMC, *10% of Refugees from Syria:…*, op. cit., p. 37.
74 Ibid., p. 31.
75 Resettlement and Humanitarian Admission Programmes in Europe- what works?, EMN, p. 41.

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76 A. Rudd, Syrian Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme and Vulnerable Children's Resettlement Scheme – Arrangements

3.4. INTEGRATION SUPPORT

Integration support is crucial to any legal admission programme, and ideally starts with **comprehensive pre-departure orientation** to prepare the refugees for life in their host country and to enable them to manage their expectations. For HAPs in the UK, France, Germany,[77] and Austria, such pre-departure orientation is generally delivered by IOM in coordination with the respective national governments.

The German HAP has involved a two-week initial period in a Reception Centre (as described above) for those people arriving without family members already in Germany. This is reported by both beneficiaries and government officials to be positively beneficial and valuable, and is a programme element that could be considered for expansion to other groups (including those with family ties) and to other countries.

Integration support across HAPs has varied considerably from State to State: in some countries, it was granted to all HAP beneficiaries (e.g. the UK); in other countries, support was granted to selected beneficiaries (as was the case under both the Austrian and German HAPs). The uncertainty for refugees and integration stakeholders regarding support available under different statuses is of concern. For example, in the UK, refugees interviewed in the study "Towards Integration" have expressed concern and a lack of understanding as to the benefits linked to their Humanitarian Protection Leave status and what would happen to them after five years, which made it more difficult for some to invest, plan, and commit to a long-term future in the UK. Employers and local authorities have also mentioned that they were uncertain of the rights and benefits that came with the status of Humanitarian Protection Leave.[78]

In the Austrian and German HAPs, the family members present in the Member State who were able to identify extended family members to join them under a HAP often enjoyed a higher level of integration support than the latest HAP newcomers. Besides issues concerning the need for professional support in the integration process, and the negative impact of apparent discrimination according to when and how a person arrived, this opens up questions as to the boundaries between HAPs and private (family) sponsorship: whether the overlap is appropriate and whether 'blended' programmes would be useful.

The situation with regard to locating appropriate and affordable **housing** has generally been challenging, particularly as such housing can be difficult to find in many European States both for nationals and those arriving through resettlement or other programmes.[79] Under HAPs involving family ties for eligibility purposes, the resident family members have often been expected to, or have offered a commitment to provide shelter to their newly arriving family members. Depending on how quickly the newcomers can achieve adequate self-sufficiency to find alternative, independent housing, this has been seen to give rise to tensions (noted specifically in the **Irish** case).[80]

Another factor in the type of integration support offered has been whether the anticipated **period of stay** is initially foreseen to be temporary or longer-term (even if initial residence permits have a time limit).[81] This variable is important as it impacts upon the level of support required further down the line. Initial temporary residency could become longer-term if conditions in the country of origin do not change in the short-term. A well-integrated refugee, that is a person who is able (with varying degrees of support over time) to adjust to their circumstances and become self-sufficient, will be able and willing to contribute more efficiently and more effectively to both the receiving society and the country of origin (in the event their return does at some point become possible). Predictability in status, including when and how renewals of temporary stay will be considered and delivered, is an important factor in such integration, such as is sustained support while needed, on a case-by-case basis.

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77 In the German case, such orientation has only been provided to those beneficiaries referred by UNHCR, and not to those whose inclusion in the programme is on the basis of a family referral.

78 *Towards Integration: The Syrian Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme in the United Kingdom*, UNHCR.

79 *Resettlement…?*, EMN, op. cit. p. 42.

80 *Legal Channels for Refugee Protection in Europe: A Pivotal Moment for Strategic Thinking*, MPI Webinar.

81 *Resettlement…?*, EMN, op. cit. p. 30.

3.5. FUNDING

As described above, existing HAPs are primarily government-initiated programmes in which considerable national funding (totally or partially covering the costs) is a necessary pre-condition for implementation. When HAPs provide long-term protection and permanent residency to beneficiaries, that is to say a durable solution, they meet at least one of the conditions for potential eligibility for funding under the European Commission's Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF) 2014-2020[82], through lump sums accorded per person admitted for resettlement. This fund grants an amount of either €6,000 or €10,000 (when it concerns a specific category of vulnerable persons and responds to the common Union Resettlement priorities) per resettled person referred by UNHCR, and is made available to Member States as financial support for specific activities and infrastructure.[83] Austria, for example, was able to receive AMIF funding to cover some of the costs under its HAP due to meeting the criteria for AMIF funding (i.e. UNHCR referrals) for part of its caseload. Austria was granted as a result €7,000,000 under AMIF for the 850 arrivals referred by UNHCR under HAP I and II.[84] Under HAP III, consisting of only UNHCR referrals, further funding from AMIF was obtained.

The **availability of AMIF funding for refugee admission** is constrained by **two clear conditions**. Firstly, it can only be allocated to programmes that grant persons resettled on Member States' territory either refugee status, subsidiary protection, or an equivalent status offering the same rights and benefits so as to guarantee effectiveness, and the durability of the protection solution (within the calendar year of the respective annual AMIF programme). Secondly, an eligibility assessment by UNHCR is a necessary precondition allowing for EU funding.

Whether this EU funding situation will remain the same in future is uncertain as ongoing negotiations on the proposal for a Union Resettlement Framework could lead to changes in the funding mechanism, possibly supporting HAPs under the Framework. A 2018 mid-term review of AMIF funding is also under way and might also provide further recommendations on funding considerations for resettlement and HAPs at the EU-level.

3.6. STAKEHOLDERS AND PROGRAMMING

A variety of actors have been **part of the identification and referral process** in different countries. In addition to the UNHCR, NGOs, relatives, community and faith-based organizations have also played a crucial role in identifying possible beneficiaries on some programmes, and even self-referrals have been possible, for example under the Swiss programmes, at embassies in the country of first asylum. Often a combination of referral types has been used in existing programmes. However, it could be instructive to note that the Austrian programme has shifted over time from multiple referral sources to only UNHCR, which has supported a focus on the most vulnerable, the integrity of referral processes, and assurance of anti-fraud safeguards.

Once beneficiaries are selected for admission, IOM can support, in close collaboration with the admitting authorities, with the provision of pre-departure orientation courses, **pre-departure health assessments, fit-to-travel checks, and movement assistance**. This enables beneficiaries to be well informed; to develop realistic expectations; to be provided with medical care, follow-up treatment, and referrals as needed; and to travel in a safe and dignified manner with required support where needed.

Integration support can be provided by civil society organizations, religious communities and/or family members, but government actors and public administrations nevertheless continue to play a crucial role in the creation of a framework to assist beneficiaries with post-arrival integration support. Such support can reflect both mainstream or specialized professional support to facilitate integration through language courses, orientation classes, and access to housing.

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82 The European Union's Asylum, Migration, and Integration Fund (AMIF) provides funding through lump sums to Member States for resettlement. Specifics on funding requirements can be found in Article 17 of the AMIF Regulation.
83 ICMC, *10% of Refugees from Syria:...*, op. cit., p. 33.
84 K. Kratzmann, *Resettlement and the Humanitarian Admission Programme in Austria*, p. 66.

4. Considerations on the path to expanding Humanitarian Admission Programmes

As European States as well as the international and non-governmental organizations involved in refugee protection and assistance look to how Humanitarian Admission Programmes can be further developed alongside resettlement as a complementary pathway to legal admission, a number of challenges need to be taken into account.

4.1. ENSURING COMPLEMENTARITY AND ADDITIONALITY TO RESETTLEMENT

Humanitarian Admission Programmes should be, to the extent possible, **complementary and additional to existing resettlement programmes and support protection and solutions strategies** for the country and region of first asylum. Such complementarity can be achieved through ensuring that humanitarian admission and resettlement programmes are coordinated at the national level to minimize overlap and maximize the benefit for refugees taking into account new modalities and flexibility.

It is possible for States to establish HAPs even if they do not yet have a resettlement programme, as has been demonstrated (for example, Austria). There is the potential for experience with HAPs to form the basis for a longer-term resettlement programme in a State, and indeed that would be a desirable outcome in terms of strengthening resettlement and the protection regime. However, it does not need to be a pre-condition.

One challenge in ensuring the complementary nature of HAPs with regard to resettlement will be to ensure that resettlement itself remains strong. There is a danger, of which policy makers should be wary, of HAPs, due to their greater numbers, as well as factors such as the blending

with sponsorship from a resource perspective, actually reducing resettlement opportunities. Resettlement is a vital protection and responsibility-sharing tool that can respond to a variety of refugee situations, and must remain so. It is therefore vital that in ensuring 'complementarity' both sides of the balance are addressed, i.e. both resettlement and HAPs, and that States and other stakeholders are encouraged to address both the overlaps and differences between these programmes, and to maintain and/or develop both.

4.2. PROTECTION CONSIDERATIONS

When designing a Humanitarian Admission Programme, the key consideration should be the specific needs of those in need of international protection, based on protection considerations and vulnerability informed by UNHCR's resettlement submission categories, with the necessary safeguards and preconditions built-in to ensure this. The driving forces behind a HAP might, as was for example the case for Syrians, include advocacy by and on behalf of family members already in a European State who seek the safety of their relatives in the region. Nevertheless, the core criteria should be a refugee's need for admission to a third country on a HAP, owing to their specific situation from a protection and vulnerability perspective. Furthermore, while existing criteria used for resettlement would appear robust enough, should any additional criteria for selection be developed, it should be protection-sensitive.

Having selected beneficiaries on the basis of their protection needs, their protection after arrival needs to be ensured through a safe and predictable status for the duration of their needs, as well as through integration support. The ability to integrate is generally enhanced

through respect of the right to a family life, and thus provision for family reunification of admitted beneficiaries who may have not have been able to travel with them is important.

4.3. INTEGRITY AND SAFEGUARDS

HAPs have used flexible and *ad hoc* arrangements, in comparison to much of traditional global resettlement, to achieve the goal of quick procedures for relatively large numbers of beneficiaries in a rather short space of time.

As programmes become more established, it is important to reflect on the integrity of, and safeguards within, procedures. The standards and policies applied need to be reviewed, and attention paid to the actors involved and the outcomes of decision-making processes. There has been relatively little monitoring or evaluation of HAPs, and those made were generally internal and/or informal.

A few changes that were made between phases of the Austrian and German programmes reflect a return to established practices and actors, in part, in order to ensure the integrity of the procedures. For example, Austria turned from a mixed approach of referrals from families/NGOs and faith-based organizations and UNHCR, to UNHCR only. With decades of experience in resettlement referrals, as well as the expertise and responsibilities that flow from UNHCR's mandate for the protection of refugees, UNHCR offers a well-developed platform of identification and referral grounded in safeguards and standards. As has been demonstrated, States may rely on other referral actors also; however, they would need to demonstrate and maintain similarly high standards.

4.4. NON-DISCRIMINATION

Programmes should be non-discriminatory and make no distinctions on the basis of nationality, race, gender, religious belief, class, political opinion, or any other factor that is not protection-related. Programmes should also be based on objective criteria taking into consideration the protection needs of the refugees concerned, as well

as the overall protection context in which humanitarian admission is undertaken.

HAPs to date have primarily focused on Syrians. One of the questions going forward is how these programmes could potentially be broadened on the basis of global protection needs and not targeting exclusively a specific nationality or group. Can HAPs be more generalised programmes, or is it in their very nature as flexible, 'quick action' protection tools that they will, in each instance and iteration, be targeted at specific groups for which there are specific protection concerns in a given context?

Another area for consideration in ensuring that HAPs are non-discriminatory in nature is the way in which they offer integration support. To date, the key HAPs have differentiated between beneficiaries who are referred by and will be supported by family members, and those beneficiaries who have been referred by UNHCR on protection and vulnerability grounds. In order for there not to be discrimination within a single HAP, do they need to become two strands of government-supported beneficiaries on the one hand, and family/privately sponsored HAP beneficiaries on the other? If within one programme it is difficult to justify the differing integration approaches, it can appear discriminatory.

4.5. PREDICTABLE AND SECURE STATUS

Humanitarian Admission Programmes have often, but not always, granted an initial temporary status at the point of admission, allowing for short-term but renewable residence. They have also often, but not always, involved subsidiarity protection status.

In order to ensure that HAPs achieve their protection and long-term solution goals (whether long-term involves remaining in Europe or returning to the country or region of origin on a voluntary basis in safety and dignity), the safety and well-being of the beneficiaries is essential, which is intimately linked to receiving a secure and predictable status. A short-term status, of two, three or five years, can optimally be granted for as

long as possible according to the prevailing political and legal circumstances, and the fact that it is renewable should be stressed to the beneficiaries in order for them to manage their expectations.

Predictability is also key to the ability to integrate in a new community. Pre-departure orientation is in this sense essential, as confirmed by countries that participated in the EMN survey on "Resettlement and Humanitarian Admission in Europe". This survey reported that one of the main challenges both for resettlement and Humanitarian Admission Programmes was managing the expectations of beneficiaries.[85] IOM has longstanding practice in this area, being invited by most resettlement countries to offer pre-departure orientation as well as fit-to-travel health checks, for example. As is the case with referrals, the integrity of the process is served by involving actors with established practices and experience.

Predictability in the programmes is also important for all the stakeholders involved, and the success of their partnerships in ensuring optimal outcomes for HAPs. A clear division of roles, tasks and responsibilities is of great importance for successful programming.

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85 Resettlement...?, EMN, op. cit. p. 42. (Thorough preparation might also be important in minimizing secondary movement – p.44).

5. Conclusions

This scoping and stock-taking exercise asked whether the HAPs that have been developed in European States to date can be built upon to: a) complement and support resettlement by providing an additional pathway; b) be used for groups other than Syrians, and c) expand the protection and solutions architecture to deal with contemporary refugee situations, and in particular those which are protracted and large-scale. The preliminary answer to this enquiry is that yes, the potential is there. Further evaluation, research, and reflection, as well as engagement will be required to assess this potential and the commitment of States to expand the number and range of protection and solution options available to beneficiaries in need of international protection.

KEY CONCLUSIONS:

I. Complementarity and additionality

While resettlement remains the preferred option as a durable solution for those in need of international protection, Humanitarian Admission Programmes can be a flexible tool to provide large numbers of refugees with protection and as such provide a complementary pathway, be it in some cases with lower protection outcomes compared to resettlement in terms of the durability of the solution and/or the rights that go with the status afforded to beneficiaries under HAP.

HAPs can add a flexible element to States' protection tools in being able to respond more quickly to major displacement situations worldwide. As such HAPs may add value in situations where there is a need to provide protection and safety to large numbers of refugees within short periods of time, as well as where there is a need to respond to situations of mass displacement as a responsibility-sharing mechanism.

Finally, complementarity can be achieved through ensuring that humanitarian admission and resettlement programmes are coordinated at the national level to minimize overlap and maximize the benefit for refugees taking into account new modalities and flexibility.

II. Enlarge the scope of Humanitarian Admission Programmes

HAPs to date have focused mainly on the Syria crisis, though they have the potential to be applied beyond this and take into account global protection needs in both protracted situations as well as situations of mass displacement.

III. Roles and responsibilities

Humanitarian Admission Programmes have been implemented in close collaboration between governments (national and local), UNHCR, IOM, civil society, and other stakeholders such as family and local service providers. The roles and responsibilities between the different stakeholders need to be clearly articulated at the start of programmes in order to have a clear division of roles, tasks, and responsibilities; to manage expectations of all stakeholders involved; and to ensure predictability and sustainability of the programmes. HAPs also provide an opportunity for civil society and other actors to be a source of referral, to identify beneficiaries for the programme, and to provide additional support at the post-arrival and integration phase.

IV. Ensuring quality, integrity and protection

As programmes become more established, it is important to reflect on the integrity of, and safeguards within, procedures. The standards and policies applied need to ensure quality and integrity, and attention needs to be paid to the actors involved and the outcomes of decision-making processes.

Moreover, when designing a Humanitarian Admission Programme, the key consideration should be the specific needs of those in need of international protection, based on protection considerations and vulnerability - informed ideally by UNHCR's resettlement submission categories-, with the necessary safeguards and preconditions built-in to ensure this, and with careful consideration of any additional ad-hoc criteria, which must be protection-sensitive.

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Notes