

# Matching Needs and Potential: From National Policies to Local Integration

International Conference in The Hague, The Netherlands  
November 12-13, 2018

## Concept Note

### Introduction

When refugees arrive to European countries by means of resettlement and other legal pathways, host communities have the opportunity to plan and prepare for their arrival in order to facilitate early integration in the short term, and ensure better outcomes for both refugees and host communities in the medium and long term. The best outcomes for both refugees and host communities will require preparation and coordination at both the **national level** – ensuring solid placement systems – and the **local level** – ensuring strong local integration systems. This conference will explore the multi-level governance challenge of preparing for refugee arrivals in order to facilitate inclusion in the long term.

### Placement Systems

European countries employ a variety of *placement systems* to determine where newly-arrived refugees will be settled, with some relying on temporary reception centres during the initial post-arrival period, and others placing refugees directly in hosting municipalities immediately after arrival. Some countries have *voluntary systems*, with regions or municipalities choosing to host refugees and determining their respective quotas, while others rely on *mandatory systems* which require municipalities to participate in resettlement, relocation or other programmes for hosting refugees. Finally, while some countries rely on separate systems for resettled refugees and asylum-seekers, other countries' systems determine placement both for refugees who arrive through resettlement and other legal pathways, and for refugees who arrive spontaneously and lodge asylum claims.

Such systems are increasingly important for European countries to develop and improve, given increased resettlement in Europe. In response to the European Commission's call for a new EU resettlement scheme, European countries have pledged to resettle 50,000 refugees by October 2019. With higher numbers comes the need to prepare well and strengthen systems which facilitate arrival, reception, settlement and integration – including placement systems. A number of European countries are increasingly relying on *mandatory distribution keys* which specify the number of refugees to be placed in each location across the national territory, ensuring that refugees settle not only in major cities but also in smaller communities.

### Local Integration

As a result, new actors are playing a role in hosting refugees, including small- and medium-sized municipalities, which often lack experience in this domain. The SHARE Network has addressed the need for multi-stakeholder coordination as the base for successful resettlement. Such coordination starts with placement and distribution, and requires the involvement of actors at the local level in addition to regional and national levels, as well as NGOs. **Placement that is sensitive to the needs and potential of refugees, as well as those of host communities, can influence future pathways to integration.** The availability of housing is often the primary consideration in placement decisions; however, innovative models for providing accommodation, as well as models for incorporating other criteria – including family reunification, education and employment – in placement decisions are available. Indeed, such approaches must be explored given their potential to result in improved integration outcomes in the long term.

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Furthermore, as more and more countries put placement and distribution systems in practice, small-size cities and towns are increasingly playing a role in hosting refugees, and local integration in these smaller communities is distinct from that in larger cities. Smaller municipalities have unique advantages as well as challenges when it comes to welcoming newcomers, and in many European contexts, smaller communities have less experience welcoming refugees. In light of this challenge, successful approaches to local integration in smaller-size cities should be explored.

## **SHARE Network Background**

Part of the broader [European Resettlement Network \(ERN\)](#), the SHARE Network promotes partnerships for refugee inclusion in local communities across Europe. Established in 2012 and led by the Brussels office of the [International Catholic Migration Commission \(ICMC Europe\)](#), the [SHARE Network](#) provides a platform for mutual exchange and learning amongst local and regional actors working on or considering resettlement, and advocates for more and better resettlement in Europe. To date, the SHARE Network has engaged 3,000 stakeholders in 27 EU countries in dialogue and advocacy.

The [2018-19 SHARE Integration project](#), in collaboration with 10 partners in nine European countries and co-financed by the European Union under the AMIF, responds to Europe's expanded role in receiving refugees via resettlement and complementary pathways, particularly private sponsorship. SHARE Integration is implemented in parallel with the [EU FRANK](#) and [LINK-IT!](#) projects, in which ICMC Europe is a partner. SHARE strengthens the capacity of actors newly involved in resettlement by delivering tailored training, conducting research, developing and sharing innovative tools, and facilitating best-practice exchange. In light of increased arrivals to European countries, SHARE is now expanding its focus to include smaller municipalities (<150,000 residents), which – given training and tools – have great potential to welcome refugees successfully.

Through its 'Preparing Welcoming Communities' initiative, the SHARE Network is designing and delivering trainings to strengthen the capacity of mainstream service providers in small municipalities to support refugees who arrive through resettlement, relocation and other legal pathways. The trainings, currently being piloted in smaller cities and towns in eight European countries, also serve as a platform to identify common gaps – not only in service delivery and capacity, but also in coordination structures at local, regional and national levels. One such gap relates to placement systems: local actors, especially those from smaller municipalities, are often not involved in placement decision-making and, at best, are informed later about new arrivals. In contrast, placement systems which coordinate effectively with local actors can ensure that host communities are well-prepared for arrivals which, in turn, contributes to improved integration.

## **International Conference in The Hague**

ICMC Europe, in collaboration with the [Dutch Central Agency for the Reception of Asylum Seekers \(COA\)](#) and the [Dutch Council for Refugees \(DCR\)](#), are organising a conference on this topic. The conference will examine placement policies at the national level, integration and welcoming approaches at the local level, as well as linkages and coordination structures between the two.

COA and DCR will explore experiences and lessons learned from Dutch model for placement and distribution, including looking at key findings from recent evaluations. COA, with DCR, coordinate regularly with regional and local authorities and stakeholders across the Netherlands in order to ensure swift transfer to local communities, or to facilitate short stays in temporary reception centres, where early integration measures (language learning, job training) are delivered by professional case workers and volunteers. COA and DCR have longstanding arrangements with smaller-size local authorities, building commitment to support refugee resettlement as a global responsibility-sharing instrument. Click [here](#) to view a short video on the Dutch resettlement approach.

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As discussed in the SHARE publication, "[Building a Resettlement Network of European Cities and Regions - Experiences of the SHARE Network 2012-2015](#)," the SHARE network has identified key factors for successful placement and local integration systems, including equitable distribution of refugees across the national territory, regional coordination, and flexibility and sensitivity to refugees' needs and aspirations. Building on these recommendations, this conference will examine good practices of placement policies across Europe, as well as approaches to local integration in smaller municipalities where refugees are increasingly being placed.

The 1.5-day interactive conference (November 12 afternoon – November 13) will be held in The Hague and will welcome approximately 40 experts from Member States of focus. Participation will be open to mixed delegations of central, regional and local government as well as civil society. Participants are encouraged to propose their respective counterparts from national and local government and civil society to register. An optional half-day study visit (self-funded) to Zaanstad, NL will be held immediately preceding the workshop (November 12 morning) so that participants can see the way placement and reception works in practice.

The conference will focus on placement of refugees who arrive via resettlement, relocation and other legal pathways. However, it will also look at the broader context given that refugees who receive a protection status after lodging asylum claims are often placed in local municipalities through the same mechanisms.

## **Objective**

The overall aim of the workshop is to map existing systems, identify good practices and develop recommendations for placement policies, with a specific focus on the role of smaller municipalities and metro areas of larger cities. As an outcome of the workshop, SHARE will also publish a series of infographics which will visualize and contextualise various European models of placement systems.

## **Member States of Focus**

Belgium, Finland, France, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Netherlands, Portugal, Romania, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, UK

## **Content**

The key question forming the base of this workshop is: **how should actors best plan for arrivals to promote future integration and inclusion?**

Topics for discussion include:

- Multi-level governance challenges in resettlement and practical approaches to refugee placement across national territory
  - Structures for placement & multi-level coordination
  - Mandatory vs. voluntary placement systems, and the use of (mandatory) distribution keys
  - Criteria influencing placement decisions (housing, family composition, employment, etc.)
  - Matching refugees' needs and potential with those of host communities
  - Temporary reception facilities vs. direct placement in municipalities
- Good practices and case studies from the Netherlands, UK, Germany, Portugal and beyond
- Local integration challenges and approaches in small-size municipalities

## **Registration**

More information on conference fees and support for travel, as well as a form to register your interest can be found [here](#); **please register your interest to attend before 12 October 2018**. A full programme as well as logistical details will follow shortly. For more information on the conference, as well as the SHARE project, please contact Programme Manager Magdalena Boehm: [boehm@icmc.net](mailto:boehm@icmc.net).