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Community Sponsorship or Community Support for Refugees?

The Case of Norway

Erlend Paasche

This is an independent report commissioned by UNHCR's Representation for the Nordic and Baltic Countries.

The report is based on research undertaken in the autumn and winter of 2023 and 2024, comprising a desk study of available literature on community sponsorship and refugee integration in Norway and internationally and 15 interviews with Norwegian and international experts, including government officials, practitioners and representatives of civil society.

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Institute for Social Research

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Foreword

Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine in February 2022 has, among other things, created the largest forced migration in Europe since the end of World War II. At the time of writing, more than 85,000 refugees from Ukraine have received protection in Norway. Many of the municipalities that host them report challenges in finding suitable housing and providing welfare services.

Norway's civil society and voluntary sector already contribute significantly to the welcoming and integration of Ukrainian and other refugees. A high degree of participation in associational life is a hallmark of Norwegian society. Most of the adult population engages in voluntary work each year, recognised to be of great social and economic value.

Are there new and innovative ways for central and municipal authorities to enable the host population to engage directly in support of states' refugee protection efforts? This could help welcome refugees and support their integration.

Thanks to Jan-Paul Brekke, Håkon Solbu Trætteberg and Karl Henrik Sivesind for insightful comments and literature tips.

A special thanks to those who took part in this study, offered their time and insights, and connected me with others. I hope the report will serve as a conversation starter on a timely topic.

Oslo, 1st of October 2024

Erlend Paasche

Executive summary

Author Erlend Paasche

Tittel Community Sponsorship or Community Support for Refugees?

Executive The concept of 'community sponsorship' originated in Canada and has journeyed to Europe over the past decade. This report discusses its suitability in a Norwegian national context, as compared with the broader concept of community support. The analysis is based on expert interviews in Norway and beyond, as well as a review of the international literature and international practice.

Following the definition by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), community sponsorship is an umbrella term that covers different types of community-based and private sponsorship programmes. These programmes allow individuals, groups of individuals or organisations to come together to provide *financial, emotional, and practical support* for the reception and integration of refugees who are admitted to their country. Community sponsorship of refugees is intended to harness the productive potential of civil society through a partnership with state authorities, enabling the host population to engage directly in support of states' refugee protection efforts and thereby help to strengthen resettlement and integration.

Advocates promoting community sponsorship stress the need for flexible adjustments to national contexts and warn against 'one-size-fits-all' approaches. Excessive flexibility in the application of the concept, on the other hand, risks leading to imprecision, inconsistency, and conceptual confusion, not to mention the risk that community sponsorship overshadows other forms of community support.

Community support programmes include a diverse set of practices and models. While it is no doubt laudable to harness the productive potential of civil society to welcome refugees and support their integration, community sponsorship is neither the only nor necessarily always the best way of doing so. Programming needs to take national context and existing mechanisms and structures into account before making an evaluative assessment of its eventual added value.

To make an evaluative assessment of whether community sponsorship represents the right way forward for Norway's refugee and integration policy or if a broader approach to community support is needed, it is first necessary to have a clear definition of what community sponsorship is. Part I of this report therefore discusses the definition of community sponsorship programmes, and points to financial sponsorship and additionality as key design principles that help to clarify both what the programme is about and how it is different from community support more broadly. Part II discusses the political, legal and operational context in Norway. Together, these parts lead to the following conclusions:

- The political and legal frameworks for refugee integration in Norway are highly regulated and complex, as specified in the Integration Act. They are also encapsulated within a Nordic-style welfare model. This, combined with limited political awareness and support for community sponsorship in the short to medium term, makes other forms of community support to refugees more suitable. In the longer term, accumulating pressures from record high arrivals of Ukrainian refugees may over time eventually lead to more interest in community sponsorship, perhaps especially at the local level.
- Operationally, Norway's high levels of trust, tradition of voluntary engagement, and long-standing public-private partnerships in the field of refugee integration means that there are myriad forms of local level community support for refugees already in place in Norwegian municipalities. Building on and expanding these, and eventually mapping them, would not only be meaningful in an operational programming sense but also correspond well with the recently launched national strategy to strengthen the role of civil society in refugee and immigrant integration.

This report therefore puts forward the argument that while there may be ample opportunities to strengthen already existing community support measures for refugees in Norway, there appears to be limited political support for introducing a community sponsorship model which would include financial sponsorship and additional refugee arrivals. Community sponsorship has become popular elsewhere but may not be the best suited policy tool in Norway, given the country's political, legal and operational context. This should not overshadow the fact, however, that diverse mechanisms and programmes fostering community support for refugees are already in place in Norway and could be consolidated and expanded.

Finally, there can be cross-fertilisation across community sponsorship and community support programmes. Anyone who wishes to learn about best practice in cultivating community support would be remiss to overlook the many lessons learned from community sponsorship programmes across Europe and beyond.

Index terms Community sponsorship; Community support; Resettlement; Refugees; Integration

Sammendrag

Forfatter Erlend Paasche

Tittel Sivilsamfunn og flyktninger To ulike tilnærminger

Sammendrag Det engelske begrepet «community sponsorship» finnes ikke på norsk, men oversettes her til «sponsorordninger for flyktninger». Begrepet viser til en type gjenbosettingsprogram for flyktninger som først oppstod i Canada og har kommet til Europa i løpet av det siste tiåret. Rapporten drøfter hvorvidt sponsorordninger for flyktninger er gjennomførbart i Norge, og belyser dets fordeler og ulemper oppimot en bredere tilnærming til sivilsamfunnets rolle mottak og integrering av flyktninger. Analysen er basert på ekspertintervjuer i Norge og internasjonalt, samt en gjennomgang av internasjonal litteratur og praksis.

FNs høykommissær for flyktninger (UNHCR) definerer «sponsorordninger for flyktninger» som et samlebegrep som dekker ulike typer sponsorordninger der lokalsamfunn og private krefter gjør at enkeltpersoner eller organisasjoner kan tilby *økonomisk, følelsesmessig og praktisk støtte* ved mottak og integrering av flyktninger. Slike sponsorordninger er ment å ta i bruk sivilsamfunnets potensiale til å understøtte statlig flyktning- og integreringspolitikk, gjennom et tett samarbeid mellom sivilsamfunn og statlige myndigheter.

Tilhengere av at sponsorordninger spres til nye land vektlegger gjerne at programmet må tilpasses nasjonal kontekst, og advarer mot firkantete, universelle løsninger. Samtidig vil for mye fleksibilitet i begrepet gi en risiko for at begrepet blir upresist forstått, inkonsekvent brukt, og slik føre til konseptuell forvirring. Det kan også overskygge andre typer bidrag som sivilsamfunnet kan tilby.

Det er mange måter sivilsamfunnet kan bistå på. Selv om det er lite tvil om betydningen av å dra nytte av ressursene som sivilsamfunnet representerer i mottaket og integreringen av flyktninger, følger det ikke automatisk at sponsorordninger for flyktninger er den beste måten å gjøre det på. For å belyse fordelene og ulempene ved dette programmet må man ta hensyn til nasjonal kontekst, eksisterende mekanismer, og strukturelle forhold.

Siden hensikten er å evaluere hvorvidt sponsorordninger for flyktninger er den optimale måten å videreutvikle norsk flyktning- og integreringspolitikk på, må man først ha klarhet i hva dette programmet er. Del I av denne rapporten redegjør derfor for definisjonen, og viser til økonomisk støtte og gjenbosetting utover en gitt statlig gjenbosettingskvote som to iboende forutsetninger ved programmet. Det klargjør hva som er spesifikt med sponsorordninger for flyktninger, og forhindrer forveksling med andre og bredere typer sivilsamfunnsstøtte til flyktninger.

Del II drøfter den politiske, juridiske og praktiske konteksten som foreligger i Norge. Til sammen bunner del I og II så ut i følgende konklusjoner.

- I Norge er det et komplekst og strengt regulert politisk og juridisk rammeverk for integrering av flyktninger, slik det kommer til uttrykk i Integreringsloven. Dette er knyttet til den nordiske velferdsmodellen. Sammen med begrenset politisk kjennskap og støtte til sponsorordninger for flyktninger gjør det at andre former for sivilsamfunnsstøtte til flyktninger er mer egnet, i alle fall i nær fremtid.

- Rent praktisk gjør Norges høye nivå av generalisert tillit, tradisjon for frivillighet, og tette bånd mellom frivillighet og forvaltning i integrering av flyktninger at sivilsamfunnet allerede bistår på mange måter i samarbeid med norske kommuner. Det vil være hensiktsmessig å bygge videre på disse samarbeidsformene, eventuelt å kartlegge dets former og omfang på grasrotnivå. Dette vil være i tråd med en nasjonal strategi for å styrke sivilsamfunnets rolle i mottak og integrering av flyktninger.

Emneord

Sponsorordninger; sivilsamfunn; flyktning; gjenbosetting; integrering

1 Introduction

This report discusses the feasibility of community sponsorship for refugees in Norway, and whether this programme, or community support for refugees more broadly, represents the best way forward for welcoming and integrating refugees in Norway. With global numbers of refugees and displaced people at a record high, there is a need for innovative programmes that can harness the potential of ordinary individuals and civil society in welcoming refugees and supporting their reception and integration.

Originating in Canada, a variety of community sponsorship models have been designed, tested and implemented in Europe and beyond. Based on desk research and interviews with key stakeholders, this study discusses the key design principles of such programmes as well as the practicability and desirability of community sponsorship vis-à-vis other support programmes in a Norwegian context, offering a roadmap with possible steps forward. This report was commissioned by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees Representation for the Nordic and Baltic Countries (UNHCR RNB) in Stockholm, Sweden.

UNHCR RNB has previously commissioned feasibility studies of community sponsorship in Sweden (Tan 2020) and Denmark (Tan 2019). The current report adds value through its focus on Norway and its complementary analytical approach. The purpose of this report is not *only* to inform Norwegian policy makers and civil society actors about the potential for introducing community sponsorship in Norway as a complement to existing reception and integration structures, but *also* to explore alternatives. This report briefly explores the history and international practice of community sponsorship and suggests a conceptual clarification of the term. Further, the report discusses the practicability and desirability of this programme vis-à-vis a broader approach to community support. This is an empirical analysis based on interviews with 15 national and international experts that took place during the autumn of 2023, including state and non-state actors, as well as a review of the literature and international practice.¹

¹ See Appendix 1 for more details on data and methods.

To make an evaluative assessment of the relative merits of community sponsorship vis-à-vis fostering community support more broadly, one first needs a clear understanding of these two concepts.² Part I of this report discusses definitions and international practice, after which Part II discusses the respective merits of community support vis-à-vis community sponsorship in a Norwegian context. Since community sponsorship is a relatively new policy tool and unknown to most Norwegians, it will receive greater attention here. However, a brief note on community support is presented first.

Community support

Community support, paraphrasing Strang and Ager (2010: 604), is a reservoir of resources ‘from which refugees may draw and invest in securing other resources’. ‘Community’ is here understood as a group of people with diverse characteristics but with shared social ties and perspectives, engaged in joint action in geographical locations or other settings (MacQueen et al. 2001). Members of existing refugee communities may be especially well positioned to offer community support, e.g. through language skills and cultural knowledge, and can engage in dialogue with integration caseworkers drawing on personal experiences and know-how (UNHCR 2024a). While community support, in a general sense, includes service provision, policy advocacy and empowerment, and constitutes sources and expressions of social values, social cohesion and trust (Arai 2000), this definition can be narrowed down further in the context of community support to refugees. Table 1 presents three forms of support that it can offer to refugees: emotional, practical and advocacy support. All of these can strengthen the triadic relationship between host state, society, and refugee, and all three can serve the mutual adjustment and adaptation of both host state and refugee, integration being a two-way process (Phillimore 2021).³

² For a more detailed discussion of the importance of definitional clarity for feasibility analysis, see Meltsner (1972).

³ Following the UNHCR's definition, ‘any integration policy should seek to empower individuals and communities to promote change, enabling them to exercise their rights and obligation [so that] [m]eaningful refugee participation is both a driver of integration and an outcome of well implemented integration strategies’ ((UNHCR 2024b)

Table 1. Three types of community support

Domain of support	Examples
Emotional	• Emphatic, reflective listening • Contact strategies • Help to reduce feelings of isolation, anxiety or self-blame and promote feelings of worth, belonging, appreciation, and affirmation
Practical	• Information on the availability of public services, labour and housing markets. • Targeted assistance to address refugees' diverse needs and promote resilience through collaborative and respect-based relations, local knowledge and know-how. • Logistical and administrative assistance, language training, cultural orientation, and general encouragement in everyday life.
Advocacy	• Articulation of needs and rights • Safeguarding of legal and legislative entitlements • Agenda setting • Encouragement of participation in social policy • Promotion of refugee agency in instigating systemic change

Sources: Hoagwood et al. (2010); Phillimore (2021); Pejic et al. (2016); Strang and Ager (2010).

Community sponsorship

The concept of ‘community sponsorship’ covers less than ‘community support’ but is nonetheless vaguer. Used to describe a wide range of programmes across different national contexts, there is no agreed upon definition in the literature of this umbrella term (Tan 2020), but as defined by the UNHCR it

covers different types of community-based and private sponsorship programmes that allow individuals, groups of individuals or organizations to come together to provide *financial, emotional, and practical support* for the reception and integration of refugees who are admitted to their country. Individuals or a community can form a group of ‘sponsors’ who are committed to jointly provide support to e.g., resettled refugees, assisting them to start their life in a new country (...).⁴

Community sponsorship of refugees is thus meant to harness the productive potential of civil society through a partnership with state authorities, enabling the host population ‘to directly engage in support of states’ refugee protection efforts and help to strengthen resettlement programmes and integration work.’⁵ We will return later to the element of financial support, i.e., sponsorship. Note also that community sponsorship, unlike community support, represents a potential way of expanding refugee protection by enabling more refugees to be resettled.

⁴ UNHCR. www.unhcr.org/neu/about/our-work-community-sponsorship-programmes. Emphasis added.

⁵ UNHCR. www.unhcr.org/neu/about/our-work-community-sponsorship-programmes.

Textbox 1. Canada as a pioneer in community sponsorship

Canada operates the Private Sponsorship of Refugees, or PSR, program for private groups to sponsor eligible refugees abroad. Private sponsors support refugees for a sponsorship period that typically lasts up to a year through help with start-up costs such as furniture and clothing and ongoing costs like housing, food, and transportation. In private sponsorship, groups decide which refugees they want to sponsor and apply to the Canadian government for approval. More than 100 organizations are recognized as sponsorship agreement holders, or SAHs, that have reached agreements with the Canadian government to help support refugees in the country. Smaller groups of Canadian citizens or permanent residents can also sponsor refugees in arrangements known as Groups of Five. The PSR differs from the Government Assisted Refugee, or GAR, program, where UNHCR or a nongovernmental organization identifies people for resettlement and the Canadian government provides post-arrival assistance. A third program called the Blended Visa-Office Referred or BVOR Program—only established in 2013—allows groups to select refugees to sponsor from a bank of profiles of refugees who have been identified by UNHCR and vetted by a visa office overseas. Privately-sponsored refugees and government-assisted refugees gain the same legal status as permanent Canadian residents and face similar pre-migration circumstances—fleeing their home countries because of war, political persecution, or violence. However, privately sponsored refugees tend to have a higher level of education than government-assisted refugees. Officials also recognize that other unmeasured differences may exist between the two groups of refugees such as exposure to violence and duration of displacement (excerpt from Salazar 2023: unpaginated)

Such programmes have become increasingly popular worldwide over the last decade. The US, Australia and New Zealand operate such programmes at the time of writing. In Europe variations of such programmes now exist in Ireland, the UK, Germany, Belgium, Spain and Italy. Moreover, a feasibility study commissioned by the UNHCR concluded that community sponsorship is feasible in Denmark.⁶ In Sweden and Finland, programmes have recently been introduced which have been referred to as community sponsorship (see further below on page 12). Advocates promoting the practice of community sponsorship stress the need for flexible adjustment to national contexts and warn against ‘one-size-fits-all’ approaches. Excessive flexibility, on the other hand, risks producing imprecision, inconsistency, and conceptual confusion.

Canada pioneered the development of community sponsorship. Since the inception of Canada’s Private Sponsorship of Refugees (PSR) programme in 1979, the Canadian government, community organisations, ‘sponsorship agreement holders’, and residents have invested significant time, energy and resources in the resettlement of refugees to Canada (Reynolds and Kazak). As of 2022, since PSR started out as a response to refugees fleeing Cambodia, Laos and Vietnam more than 40 years ago, individuals and organisations have resettled over 350,000 refugees to large and small communities across Canada (GRSI 2022). See textbox 1 for an outline of Canadian programmes.

⁶ Feasibility assessments in Sweden and Finland prior to the programme inception were positive (Tan 2020, Turtiainen and Sapir 2021).

Next to pioneering the design and implementation of community sponsorship, Canada has played a pivotal role in promoting such programmes. The surge in global displacement, far-right political pressures as well as economic pressures all appear to combine with advocacy to have sparked interest in innovative solutions (see, e.g., Cameron and Labman 2020: 3, Labman and Cameron 2020; Smith 2020). Yet another possible explanation for the rise of community sponsorship can be found in terms of integration outcomes. While resettlement is primarily a humanitarian policy, resettlement states typically also consider the integration potential of those they resettle (Brekke et al. 2021). Proponents of the Canadian programme therefore point to comparably lower costs and enhanced integration outcomes (see, e.g., Bond and Kwadrans 2019). Others see the evidence base for this as questionable and point out that the difference in integration outcomes may have more to do with selectivity, that refugees who get sponsors are better off and less vulnerable from the start, thus ‘...emphasising the importance of considering differences between refugee groups when comparing the impact of these programs.’ (Hynie et al. 2019: 32).

Global displacement and refugee resettlement: A brief background

While community *support* for refugees has a longer history and typically starts when refugees reach the destination country, community *sponsorship* typically offers a potential pathway to the destination country in addition to integration support. Sponsorship programmes have emerged as a policy tool in response to growing global needs for solutions to displacement, currently at a record high (UNHCR 2023a). A decade of unresolved conflicts, combined with new conflicts, climate-related events, state fragility and political violence, amidst spiralling costs of living and a looming global economic recession, pushed the number of people forced to flee war, violence, and persecution in the world above 100 million for the first time in recorded history, in 2022.⁷ Globally, the number of displaced persons soared to a record high of 103 million by mid-2022 (UNHCR 2023a), increasing further in 2023. Europe’s forcibly displaced and stateless population alone is projected to be at nearly 25 million people in 2024.⁸ This year, the war in Ukraine is expected to produce a total of 5.8 million refugees across the region and over 3.7 million people displaced inside the country.⁹

7 UNHCR. www.unhcr.org/spotlight/2023/01/2023-a-moment-of-truth-for-global-displacement/

8 UNHCR. www.reporting.unhcr.org/operational/regions/europe

9 UNHCR. www.reporting.unhcr.org/operational/regions/europe

Resettlement is an essential part of UNHCR's and states' toolkit for responding to such massive global needs.¹⁰ As one of the three durable solutions for refugees next to local integration and voluntary repatriation, promoting resettlement has long been one of UNHCR's priorities. According to the Projected Global Resettlement Needs Assessment for 2024 released in June 2023, over 2.4 million refugees will need resettlement, marking a 20 per cent annual increase (UNHCR 2023a). Of these, the agency's target is for 200,000 refugees to access complementary pathways and family reunification. Yet the target of 90,000 resettlement departures in 2022 was not met due to limited political will and reception capacity among resettlement states. In fact, the number of countries receiving UNHCR resettlement submissions declined from 35 in 2016 to 25 in 2022.¹¹

¹⁰ Resettlement can be understood as the discretionary selection and transfer of refugees from a state in which they have sought protection to a third state, such as Norway, which has agreed to admit them as refugees with permanent residence status.

¹¹ UNHCR. www.unhcr.org/sites/default/files/2023-11/2023-gcr-indicator-report.pdf

2 Community sponsorship and conceptual confusion

The global backdrop described above has added urgency to the advocacy for community sponsorship and contributed to its rapid ascendancy. Several actors, including Canada as well as its partners, UNHCR, and others, have actively promoted community sponsorship globally. In September 2016 the government of Canada, UNHCR, and the Open Society Foundations announced the formation of the Global Refugee Sponsorship Initiative (GRSI), a partnership aimed at promoting the community sponsorship model and supporting its global spread.¹² Scholars disagree as to whether such promotion took the shape of ‘sharing’ the Canadian model (Bond and Kwadrans 2019: 88; GRSI 2022: 4), ‘replicating’ it (Cameron and Labman 2020: 8), or ‘exporting’ it (Smith 2020: 286). According to Smith (2020: 287), Canada’s

export project was [launched with a good deal of fanfare and] based on the doubtful premise that the Canadian model was readily transferrable to other legal and political contexts (...). To put the matter simply, the Canadian model works because of Canada’s history and geography, and it continues to evolve. The widely different institutional contexts across Europe militate against a ‘one size fits all’ model.

The warning against the one-size-fits-all model has become a common mantra in recent years. According to UNHCR, ‘there is (...) no one-size-fits-all approach to community sponsorship, and different models may be appropriate in different contexts’.¹³ Scholars have echoed this (see, e.g., Reynolds and Clark-Kazak 2019: 6), suggesting that a Canadian-style community sponsorship model should not be ‘accepted and transferred as a complete package of reforms [but] filtered, edited and redefined in a process of practical or pragmatic adaptation’ (Ugland 2008: 41), but adapted to a national context while drawing on lessons from other countries (Tan 2020: 7; Bertram 2020: 254; Tan 2021: 4).

The European Commission advocated for private sponsorship in its 2016 guidelines on regular migration. It then went on to fund an extensive feasibility study of such schemes, inviting member states in 2019 and 2020 to explore sponsorship through three funding calls under the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF), and reiterated the call in the New Pact on Migration and Asylum.

¹² The Giustra Foundation and the University of Ottawa joined the GRSI before it formally launched in December the same year.

¹³ UNHCR. www.reporting.unhcr.org/operational/regions/europe

However, while calling for a distinctly European model of community sponsorship it has remained vague, whether intentionally or not, as to the details that should underpin it (Radjenovic 2021). As Duken and Rasche (2021: 3) point out, it thus ‘missed an opportunity to define clearly the principles and standards that it wishes to promote (...)’ (Duken and Rasche 2021: 3).¹⁴ Moreover, community sponsorship has been embraced in the New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants, the Global Compact on Refugees, the Three-Year (2019-2021) Strategy on Resettlement and Complementary Pathways, and the European Union Pact on Migration and Asylum. Yet none of these offer an authoritative definition of precisely what the term means.

Neither does common usage converge to clear up conceptual confusion. UNHCR calls for a clear distinction between private sponsorship and community sponsorship in the sense that the former includes refugees identified (‘named’) by sponsors and the latter only begin after the arrival of the refugee. For the UN agency, these two programmes ‘are by nature different and must be clearly distinguished’.¹⁵ Others, such as Agatiello et al. (2020), consider community sponsorship to be a subcategory of ‘private sponsorship’. An EU study (European Commission 2018) suggests that private sponsorship schemes implemented in Europe as of 2018 should be divided into four main categories, of which community-based sponsorship is one and the others are humanitarian corridors, ad-hoc schemes for specific religious groups and family reunification. Yet others define community sponsorship as either a form of resettlement or a complementary pathway (EPRS 2021),¹⁶ or, simply as ‘a flexible concept that [in Europe] often has overlaps with resettlement, humanitarian visas, and family reunification programmes’ (SHARE 2023: 3). Adding to the confusion, Canada has used the term Private Sponsorship to describe its community sponsorship programme (GRSI 2022: 6).

Definitional flexibility allows the concept to travel. There is nonetheless a trade-off, rarely noted in the literature on community sponsorship, between flexibility and clarity. If community sponsorship becomes so vaguely defined that it is hard to say what it actually is, conceptual overstretch will pose challenges to policymakers, the public opinion, scholars and advocates. All stakeholders

14 The EU Commission, embracing such programmes, is particularly vague on the nature of partnership with civil society and the role of ‘community’: ‘Community sponsorship models can take *many different forms* and can underpin resettlement, humanitarian admission programmes as well as complementary pathways for people in need of international protection. They help increase the number of admission places and successfully integrate refugees into welcoming host communities. Sponsorship programmes give *a meaningful role* to civil society, communities or groups of individuals in the reception and integration process of newcomers and are based on a *strong* partnership with the State, and private sponsors *usually* provide financial, practical and moral support to newcomers’ (author’s emphasis). https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/qanda_20_1707#sponsorship-progress

15 <https://www.unhcr.org/community-sponsorship>.

16 Complementary pathways are legal-bureaucratic corridors available to refugees based on family reunification, study programmes and labour mobility (OECD-UNHCR 2018). According to the UNHCR (2023), while resettlement is an essential tool to meet protection needs of refugees at heightened risk, complementary pathways can expand third country solutions to many more refugees in need of safe homes, ease pressure on host countries and enhance refugees’ self-reliance by building their capacities to attain a durable solution.

would benefit from conceptual clarity when designing programmes, adapting them to diverse national contexts and when studying their effectiveness and outcomes. Conceptual inflation since the concept's origins in Canada has important practical implications for this report because it makes it unclear what the minimum definitional criteria of the programme actually are and thus what sets it apart from community support more broadly. If the definition of 'sponsorship' is made sufficiently flexible, such programmes at some point *necessarily* become feasible. If the definition needs to be narrowed down, however, and clearly analytically distinguished from the broader category of community support, then how should this be done?

Clarifying the concept of community sponsorship: Two key design principles

An evaluative assessment of the practicability and desirability of community sponsorship in Norway needs to build on a clear idea of how community sponsorship should be defined. Two key elements will be proposed here and discussed with reference to Norway, those of 'sponsorship' and 'additionality'. Looking at existing programmes more or less accurately labelled community sponsorship in Europe and Canada, it is hard to find what they have in common. This makes them challenging to compare and thus hard to see what lessons can be drawn regarding feasibility in a Norwegian context.

To illustrate the above point, it is instructive to look at the Canadian, British, Irish, Swedish, and Finnish programmes. What one could meaningfully group as the Anglo-Saxon (e.g., Canada, the UK and Ireland) and Nordic (Sweden, Finland) programmes, differ markedly from one another (for more detail, see Appendix 2). This is perhaps unsurprising, as the former are designed and implemented in the context of Anglo-Saxon welfare model, and the latter within the context of a Nordic welfare model, which also differ markedly from another (Eikemo et al. 2008). In the former, community resettlement puts significant financial responsibility on sponsors. The Anglo-Saxon model is characterised by its basic and minimal levels of provision, social transfers are modest and often attract strict entitlement criteria, recipients are usually means-tested and stigmatised, the dominance of the market is encouraged both passively, by guaranteeing only a minimum, and actively, by subsidising private welfare schemes (Eikemo et al. 2008).

In the Nordic programmes, no financial responsibility befalls sponsors. Like Norway, Sweden and Finland have relatively generous welfare states which are deeply involved in the reception and integration of refugees. This welfare model is characterised by universalism, comparatively generous social transfers, a commitment to full employment and income protection and a strongly interven-

tionist state used to promote social equality through a redistributive social security system (Eikemo et al. 2008).

In Sweden, four municipalities have introduced pilot programmes of what is often referred to in English as a form of community sponsorship. Danderyd, the pioneer municipality in this regard, has funding from 1 January 2023 until March 2024, while the other three started later and have funding for different periods. In Danderyd, there is no financial sponsorship in the conventional sense of the term. A civil society organisation and the municipal authorities facilitate contact with refugees, refugees are matched with local guides, and a caseworker at the municipality initiates and organises activities such as language training, trips, walks, and museum visits. Initially the plan was to facilitate contact with resettlement refugees but due to the reduction in Sweden's resettlement quota other, non-resettled refugees are now also included.

In Finland, a similar programme connects individuals with quota refugees. This programme was initiated by the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment, co-funded by the AMIF programme and the ministry, and is implemented in partnership with the Finnish Red Cross. As in Sweden, there is no fiscal responsibility, and it is 'not really a sponsorship but more an extra support for integration',¹⁷ through assistance and social know-how offered by members of the local community. Community groups and instructors arrange a variety of customised offerings for those who have moved to the municipality as quota refugees to help them participate in life in their new hometown. As in Sweden, their assistance comes on top of the assistance traditionally offered by the state and local authorities.

Resorting back to the UNHCR definition of community sponsorship, it does stress the *confluence* of the three required types of support by sponsors. Financial support is, in this definition, not optional but a requirement.

Community sponsorship refers to programmes where individuals or groups come together to provide financial, emotional *and* practical support toward reception and integration of refugees that have already been admitted in their country through resettlement after a referral by UNHCR or through a complementary pathway (...).¹⁸

Based on the UNHCR definition, the Swedish and Finnish pilot programmes thus do not qualify as community sponsorship because they do not satisfy the definitional criterion of sponsorship. UNHCR, conscious of this, has as of 2024 started referring to the pilot programmes in Sweden and Finland as 'community support programmes' rather than 'community sponsorship'. Some would argue

¹⁷ Email correspondence with the Finnish Ministry of the Economic Affairs and Employment, October 2023.

¹⁸ UNHCR. <https://www.unhcr.org/what-we-do/build-better-futures/long-term-solutions/local-integration/community-sponsorship> Emphasis added.

that the UNHCR definition is too strict.¹⁹ There are, however, reasons to include financial sponsorship as a key design principle for community sponsorship.

Sponsorship is an in-built feature of the programme, as part of its name. This programme builds on the core idea that community members sponsor refugees for a period, as a complement to state services. Cost-sharing agreements are integral to the Canadian model, and have contributed to deepening community support and fostering community buy-in. Exactly what the level of financial responsibilities needs to be in order to be ‘significant’ and where the line is drawn between the investment of the government and the investment of the sponsor, will vary somewhat across national contexts and welfare models (see Janosky 1998: 104-141), but if the term ‘sponsorship’ is to be used in a meaningful way, sponsorship programmes necessarily require sponsors to support refugees for a sustained period. This could be done, for instance, by raising funds and crowdfunding, as in Ireland, or by tapping into their own private resources.

How the ‘right’ balance between public and private costs should be shared will depend on the context, but factors to be incorporated into that assessment include the quality and access to basic welfare services such as housing, education, and healthcare. In Belgium, Ireland, and the UK, for instance, sponsors are fully responsible for refugees’ housing and must support other initial expenses until the refugees can access social payments from the government (Zanzuchi et al. 2023). The notion that civil society can sponsor with housing holds particular relevance at a time when housing markets across Europe are under pressure from high numbers of Ukrainian refugees.

Other factors that may affect the balancing of public and private costs include the duration of sponsorship, eligibility criteria for sponsors, screening and vetting, and strategies to mitigate risks of clientelism and sponsor fatigue.²⁰

Additionality, the other key design principle to be discussed here, also relates to the overall purpose of community sponsorship, emphasising its potential in expanding refugee protection rather than reducing its costs.²¹ There is broad agreement that community sponsorship should comply with the principle of additionality as a gold standard (ECRE 2024: 13).²² The UNHCR Three-Year (2019-2021) Strategy on Resettlement and Complementary Pathways calls on

19 Several actors, including research institutions, the Canadian Embassy to Sweden, and UNHCR, have referred to either the Swedish or Finnish programmes, or both, as ‘community sponsorship programmes’ or as a ‘Nordic model’ of which. See e.g. <https://nordregio.org/events/meet-a-local-a-nordic-model-of-community-sponsorship-for-refugees/>; <https://www.unhcr.org/neu/93651-unhcr-participated-in-launch-of-community-sponsorship-pilot-program-in-danderyd.html>; <https://www.unhcr.org/neu/121697-building-connections-together-community-sponsorship-pilot-for-refugees-in-rautjarvi.html>. In Sweden the programme is referred to as ‘Ideella flyktingstödsprogram’ in Swedish, which translates to ‘idealistic refugee support’ in English. According to the UNCHR Nordic Office, the Finnish term is ‘yhteisölähtöisiä kotouttamisen malleja/ohjelmia’ and literally translates to ‘community-based integration models/programmes’ in English.

20 A detailed view of these operational challenges is beyond the scope of this report but see Zanzuchi et al. (2023).

21 While proponents of community sponsorship often posit that reduced costs could imply that more refugees may receive protection, it is hard to find studies that empirically support that claim.

22 ECRE also calls for transparency in this regard, noting that additionality is not always easy to identify.

states to establish or expand community sponsorship as additional to government led resettlement (UNHCR 2019: 27). Referencing that document, the European Commission agrees and believes it is ‘appropriate’ to view community sponsorship as ‘an additional means of admission to expand the number of places offered through safe and legal pathways’.²³

However, not everyone agrees that additionality should necessarily be a defining feature of community sponsorship (European Commission 2018). For Tan (2021: 6),

pragmatic considerations may require that initial community sponsorship models take place within existing quotas. In such cases, a shift to additionality in the short to medium-term must remain a focus, with the realistic understanding that some government may seek to dilute or reverse-engineer additionality.²⁴

Pragmatic considerations may be invoked to justify many things but bring little clarity on definitional criteria. For the Red Cross, a prominent partner in community sponsorship initiatives in Europe, ‘[the] creation of additional resettlement places for refugees is the most important argument for the establishment of a community sponsorship programme’ (Red Cross 2023: 15). Such insistence is linked to the overall objective of expanding refugee protection at a time of record global needs (UNHCR 2023a).

Current resettlement targets, both in Norway and globally, are ‘woefully insufficient’ to address global displacement and demonstrate solidarity with non-industrialised refugee-hosting countries, even when accounting for COVID-19 setbacks, and incorporating additionality in programming could help to counter the further erosion of resettlement commitments (Osborn and Wall 2021: 28). A net increase in protection places, as has been the case in Germany, France and Italy is therefore central (European Resettlement Network 2017: 39). Adhering to the principle of additionality and expanding refugee protection is also important to ensure that governments do not ‘(...) “offload” their resettlement responsibilities on private actors’ (GRSI 2022: 18), an inherent risk in this type of private-public partnerships (Red Cross 2023: 15). As pointed out by Ugland (2018: 46), scenarios ‘where government responsibility to resettle refugees are merely replaced by private citizens as a cost-cutting measure will not assist more refugees.’ Offloading is not mere theoretical speculation. The Australian Community Support Program, for instance, has been critiqued for not enhancing or expanding refugee protection but merely off-loading the costs of humanitarianism to citizens (Hirsch et al. 2019). Generally speaking, such offloading has been known to alienate actual and potential sponsors (Zanzuchi et al. 2023).

23 Commission Recommendation (EU) 2020/1364 of 23 September 2020 on legal pathways to protection in the EU: promoting resettlement, humanitarian admission and other complementary pathways C/2020/6467 [2020] OJ L 317/13. www.eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32020H1364&from=FR p. 4.

24 The UK was referred to by international informants as shifting from non-additionality to additionality. This illustrates the possibility, but the direction can also be reversed.

3 Community sponsorship or community support for refugees in Norway?

Having narrowed down the definition of community sponsorship through the key design principles of sponsorship and additionality, it is time to turn to the empirical discussion of its feasibility in Norway and potential added value vis-à-vis the broader category of community support. What follows is first a discussion of the feasibility of community sponsorship, before turning to existing forms of community support, followed by a brief outline of selected programmes and projects of relevance, the overall Norwegian institutional landscape, and an outline of relevant national strategies.

The political feasibility of community sponsorship in Norway

In line with the discussion above, the expert informants invoked the strong and universal welfare state in Norway as antithetical to the very notion of community sponsorship of refugees. As one informant put it,

In other countries, community sponsorship takes place in the absence of strong state involvement in refugee integration. These countries (...) have a tradition for civil society organisations to fill that role. Here, we have clearly defined roles and duties. We have a legal and political framework, and we have large public investments in integration. (...) This is the reason why we do well. (...) There is no vacuum here that can be filled. You can see how community sponsorship can work in the US. There, you have to take care of yourself. If you don't have a social security network and you're on your own, you need someone to fill that function in the system. That's not how it is here.

Norway's public investments in refugee integration grew rapidly in 2022–2023, as the country experienced its largest refugee influx in modern history.²⁵ While informants generally reported little political interest in community sponsorship in recent years,²⁶ one informant saw the current spike in Ukrainian arrivals and concomitant pressures on the reception apparatus and housing markets, as grounds for outright dismissal of community settlement. *'I don't think this is the time for a new policy programme right now.'* This informant,

²⁵ Norsk Telegrambyrå (NTB). <https://kommunikasjon.ntb.no/pressemelding/18020638/ber-kommunene-bosette-37-000-flyktninger-i-2024?publisherId=89626&lang=no>.

²⁶ One exception to this general observation will be discussed shortly.

and several others, saw the proposed cut in the Norwegian resettlement quota as illustrative of a hostile political environment to introducing such programmes.

Since Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine, more than 85,000 refugees have been given protection in Norway at the time of writing. Facing a steadily climbing number of Ukrainian refugees that was significantly higher than in Sweden and Denmark during autumn 2023, the government introduced various welfare cuts to bring the number of arrivals down. While Norway remains a resettlement country, it reduced its quota from 3,000 in 2022 to 2,000 in 2023 and to 1,000 in 2024.

The government suggests reducing the quota of resettlement refugees from 2,000 slots to 1,000 slots in 2024. The quota level is related to the level of asylum arrivals. A reduction of the quota to 1,000 slots frees up about NOK 164.7 million in 2024, and in sum about NOK 3 billion [approximately EUR 89 million] for the period 2025-2028. This money will among other things contribute to take care of the many refugees (primarily from Ukraine) who have already arrived and are expected to come in 2024 (Government of Norway 2023).²⁷

Then, in October 2024, the government proposed to reduce Norway's resettlement quota for 2025 to only 200. For Norway, such cuts are unusual. The discretionary nature of the selection process, as a humanitarian undertaking rather than a legal imperative, makes this possible. The current Norwegian two-pronged approach, whereby high arrivals of refugees result in a diminished quota of resettlement refugees, was stated unambiguously in the current government's political platform, the Hurdal platform (Government of Norway 2021).²⁸

To ensure protection for persons fleeing individual persecution, the asylum institution must become fairer. The government holds that the UN resettlement system is the safest and most just measure to ensure that people with needs for protection are taken care of. We will prioritise quota refugees through the UN High Commissioner for Refugees. The number of quota refugees must be viewed in conjunction with the level of asylum arrivals (Government of Norway 2023).²⁹

This is consistent with a broader restrictive turn in Norwegian refugee policy. Catalysed by the peak in asylum arrivals in 2015, though pre-dating it, this shift is observable, for instance, in Norway's application of the concept of a safe third country, access to territory and penalization for illegal entry or presence (Linha 2022). It is also evident in how practices of temporary protection in Norway have been introduced or modified to limit refugee rights. This is observable

²⁷ Author's translation. The government also suggested to take NOK 3.8 billion from the development aid budget to cover the costs of taking care of these arrivals, in compliance with OECD budgeting guidelines. Protests have been voiced by politicians as well as civil society, see e.g. Vårt Land. www.vl.no/nyheter/2023/10/06/hjelpeorganisasjoner-raser-mot-budsjettet-svokter-verdens-flyktninger.

²⁸ The current national government is in power for the period 2021-2025.

²⁹ As this passage was omitted in the English official translation of the Hurdal platform, this is the author's translation.

through the reduced security of residence and the proliferation of residence statuses with differentiated rights, welfare cuts for asylum seekers and refugees alike, intensification of the scrutiny of refugees' right to remain, obstacles to accessing permanent residence and citizenship, enhanced use of coercive measures such as detention, and barriers to family reunification (Lillevik and Tyldum 2023, Schultz 2022, UNHCR 2021).

Viewed against the ideological shift towards a more restrictive refugee policy, the ongoing mass influx of Ukrainians at a time of weak growth, rising unemployment and overall economic uncertainty,³⁰ can be viewed as an impediment to expanding refugee protection through community sponsorship. By Norwegian standards, the strains on local-level governing structures are exceptional. According to some informants, the state is clearly overwhelmed and any suggestion of introducing new policies for additional refugees at present will likely fall on deaf ears. One informant, however, challenged that analysis by turning it on its head.

First of all, the municipalities are eager to cooperate with civil society actors right now. And generally speaking, these are interesting times to explore the realm of possibility. There is a record high number of Ukrainian refugees in the country [but] most people have not understood this. It's beginning to dawn on the state authorities. But the municipalities definitely notice, because they are in the thick of it. The municipalities need all the assistance they can get. Refugees must be drawn into the local society. (...)

Representing a different view than the other informants, this informant held that the record number of arrivals may require a fundamental rethinking of how the welfare state integrates refugees and how involved the state should be. *'So, it's a question that has to be asked: Are we going to continue with the same level of social services to this group?'* While a universal welfare state in Norway thus far has involved itself deeply in the regulation of refugees' reception and integration, this informant saw the system as being under intense pressure and, as a result, relatively more open to new ideas such as community sponsorship.³¹

On a related note, another informant suggested an ideological reason as to why left-wing parties in Norway have traditionally been negative about the notion of relegating responsibility for refugee integration, conventionally understood as state responsibility, to voluntary actors. *'The elephant in the room in Norway is that we think that it is the state that should do stuff.'* Consistent with this, it was

30 Statistics Norway. www.ssb.no/en/nasjonalregnskap-og-konjunkturer/konjunkturer/statistikk/konjunkturtendensene/articles/norwegian-economy-facing-turning-point.

31 For a detailed discussion of the characteristics of the Norwegian welfare state and possible, reimagined relationships between state, market and third sector in Norway across various policy domains, see the governmentally commissioned report NOU 2024:17. *Kommersielle og ideelle aktørers rolle i felleskapets velferdstjenester* [A Norwegian Official Report 2024:17. *The role of commercial and non-profit actors in providing collective welfare services*], especially pp. 29-36 for a principled discussion and pp. 199-227 for an empirical discussion regarding asylum reception centres.

Sylvi Listhaug from the right-wing Progress Party, a libertarian proponent for a downsized public sector as well as a more restrictive immigration policy, who in the aftermath of the 2015 spike in asylum arrivals went to Canada to study 'the Canadian model' (Ugland 2018).³² The Progress Party subsequently stated in its party program for 2021 - 2025 that it wants to partly condition resettlement via UNHCR on the willingness of private persons, individually or jointly, to 'help' and 'assume responsibility for integrating resettlement refugees', 'sponsor' them, 'find housing' for them, and partly cover their expenses for a period of five years. This would comply with the definitional criterion of sponsorship to qualify as community sponsorship, but does not comply with that of additionality.³³

The legal feasibility of community sponsorship in Norway

A detailed legal discussion of the legislative frameworks governing refugee integration in Norway is beyond the scope of analysis. The brief overview provided here is merely meant to flesh out the degree of state involvement in refugee integration, as referred to above.

The current reception system in Norway accepts refugees either coming as asylum seekers, qualifying for temporary protection on a group basis (such as the case with Ukrainian refugees), or being resettled by the UNHCR through a governmental programme. Refugee resettlement is regulated by the Immigration Act (LOV-2017-12-15-108, section 35), the Immigration Regulation (section 35, subsection 7.6-9), and the Integration Act (LOV-2020-11-06-127). On operational procedures, the circular G-15/2020 offers a detailed account and explicitly refers to UNHCR strategy for resettlement as of June 2019 (The Three-Year (2019-2021) Strategy on Resettlement and Complementary Pathways; and the Global Compact on Refugees).

Since 1 January 2021, Norway's new Integration Act has specified the legal framework for the integration work and clarified the responsibilities of municipalities as well as the rights and responsibilities of resettlement refugees (and other refugees) between 18 and 55 years of age. It is the Norwegian Directorate of Integration and Diversity (IMDi) that has overall responsibility for the settlement of resettlement refugees.³⁴ The government encourages municipalities to offer settlement to refugees, but this is done on a voluntary basis. With governmental support, the municipalities then provide housing, an introduction programme, and social services to the refugees. Resettlement refugees have the same right to health services as the rest of the population, and it is the munici-

³² This was the only sign of political interest in community sponsorship informants could think of.

³³ <https://www.frp.no/files/Partiprogram/2021-2025/Partiprogram-2021-2025.pdf> See page 27-29. Author's translation.

³⁴ This also holds for other refugees and persons who have been granted residence on humanitarian grounds, but here the focus is on resettlement refugees as the potential beneficiaries of community sponsorship.

palities that are responsible for this. Resettlement refugees (and others) in Norway are entitled to social services and have nearly or entirely identical rights to any citizen to social welfare, education, schools and kindergartens, health services, and other basic services.

To support integration and participation, the first municipality of settlement is obliged to organise an Introduction Programme for newly arrived resettlement refugees, as soon as possible and typically no later than three months after arrival. Participating in the programme is both a right and an obligation. It is meant to provide individualised and full-time skill acquisition to increase the beneficiaries' knowledge of Norwegian society (specialised modules include 'compulsory parental guidance' and 'life skills in a new country'), strengthen employability and labour market participation (also for those lacking basic formal qualifications), and promote the financial independence of resettlement refugees (and other newly arrived immigrants).

The Introduction Programme is intended to reach these objectives primarily through Norwegian language training and social studies. The programme may run up to two years, with additional time for approved leaves of absence. In particular circumstances, the programme may run for up to three years or more.³⁵ Participation in the programme entitles the participant to introduction benefits, and the annual taxable benefit equals twice the National Insurance basic amount (participants under 25 years of age receive 2/3 of the benefit). Whereas the emphasis was previously on the number of hours spent in training, the new Integration Act has shifted focus towards outcomes and skills acquired (OECD 2022). An individually adapted plan is to be drawn up for those who participate in the introduction programme, specifying training needs and relevant measures. Norway's 15 administrative regions, called counties, are also responsible for careers' guidance, language training at the level of upper secondary school, developing a career plan, among other things.

Such a detailed legal and policy framework for refugee integration is neither common to all resettlement states nor common to all of those who have introduced community sponsorship programmes.³⁶ The view of Norway as an outlier in terms of state regulations and involvement was widely held among inform-

35 The Directorate for Immigration and Diversity. www.imdi.no/en/the-introduction-programme/the-introduction-programme/; <https://www.regjeringen.no/en/topics/immigration-and-integration/asd/Verkemiddel-i-integreringsarbeidet/introduksjonsprogram/id2343472/> If the refugee already has upper secondary education and the end goal is to qualify for higher education or to find a job, the introduction programme may take up to six months to complete. If the end goal is to complete upper secondary education, the introduction programme may take up to three years to complete. If the end goal is to find a job, the introduction programme may take up to two years to complete. In rare circumstances, it may be possible to extend the duration of the programme. For more information, see www.imdi.no/globalassets/dokumenter/velkommet-til-introduksjonsprogrammet-2021/imdi_introduksjonsbrosjyre_engelsk.pdf.

36 For a good though not entirely up-to-date cross-country overview of nine resettlement states, one Nordic and ten non-Nordic countries, of which nine countries operate programmes typically labelled as community sponsorship (Australia, Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Spain, Sweden, the UK, the US), see Ferris (2020). For more detailed information on policy and legal frameworks for refugee integration in the Nordics, see, for instance, Hernes et al. (2022) on Norway, Wahlbeck (2018) on Finland, and Hamza (2021) on Sweden.

ants and seen as relevant to the legal feasibility of community sponsorship by the large majority, because, as discussed in the section above ‘...*there is no vacuum to fill for the community.*’ Several agreed with the following informant: *It may not be impossible to introduce community sponsorship but it will be challenging to adjust it to this [national] legal framework. It is legally specified what kind of services the municipality is to offer.*

The same informant pointed out that a stated rationale for the Integration Act was to ensure that all resettlement refugees (and others) are given the same level and quality of services as a matter of rights. To allow for private actors to offer components such as housing or language training, for instance, was seen by this informant to risk undermining the principle of universalism, to risk clientelism, and to risk that some refugees would get services of lower or higher quality than others. *‘The kind of services that are to be offered is a matter of law. It is clear. We shall not have an A team and a B team of refugees. They are to be given equal treatment.’*

Another informant added that today’s highly regulated model (speaking broadly and not of the recently introduced Introduction Programme) seems to work comparatively well by international standards. The informant suggested that this in itself could perhaps help to explain the limited interest in Norway in community sponsorship, both politically and from practitioners.

Finally, several informants perceived tension between a government programme and the notion of community sponsorship, fearing that the latter could in the long term undermine the legal-bureaucratic logic of the former. Noting that community sponsorship in some countries combine with educational or labour mobility pathways for relatively privileged refugees ‘*who are relatively more easily integrated*’, one informant saw a long-term risk that the government programme could be subjected to political pressure to resettle less vulnerable and more privileged refugees. Another perceived risk was that a policy of additionality ‘*could be stated initially and then reversed, undermining the system in the long term.*’

Existing community support in Norway

Community support to refugees, as defined and exemplified in the introduction, is here understood as a group of people with more or less diverse characteristics but with shared social ties and perspectives, engaged in joint action in geographical locations or other settings to offer primarily emotional, practical and advocacy support to refugees. This often involves coordinated partnerships with central or local authorities.

Norway already has numerous projects and programmes of this variety in place, which can be scaled up or otherwise expanded. Especially following the high numbers of Ukrainian refugees, there appears to be much ongoing interest among municipal authorities in partnering with civil society actors, and also some innovation at the national and municipal level in terms of actually committing to this. Brekke et al. (2024: 199) found that following the arrival of Ukrainian refugees, municipalities in Norway ‘have found new forms of working together with [civil society], such as funding positions in voluntary organisations and developing partnerships specifically meant to strengthen the settlement and integration of refugees’.³⁷

While the five following examples are anecdotal, they are presented here merely to illustrate and exemplify how public-private partnerships in community support to refugees can look like.

- In terms of resettlement, there is a long-standing partnership between the Norwegian Directorate of Immigration on the one side and the PEN International association and the International Cities of Refugees Network (ICORN) initiative on the other. In short, PEN Norway is entitled to apply to the Norwegian Directorate of Immigration (UDI) regarding relocation for persecuted writers and artists who have been invited to a Norwegian ICORN city, thus ‘naming’ refugees for resettlement before ‘matching’ them with one of 24 ‘cities of refuge’, so that when the refugee arrives in Norway the caseload on the state is lessened. The refugee gets a local contact person who need not be a municipal case worker, but they tend to be municipal employees, such as librarians. There is also some follow-up and networking activities for the community of beneficiaries, and, where appropriate, support to engage in activism and advocacy for those who wish to do so. Refugees are guaranteed protection and the possibility of resuming their pre-flight work for up to two years. These refugees are not resettled in addition to the resettlement quota but within it (Ministry of Justice 2020).³⁸ There is generally no significant sponsorship in financial terms, and the local contact person is typically a public sector employee.

³⁷ Author's translation.

³⁸ As per section nine in the official guidelines, these refugees are typically but not necessarily resettled as part of the subset of ‘open’ slots within the overall quota.

- There are plenty of civil society initiatives that are specifically meant to offer social support from community members to refugees (and others). Some examples of which are ‘Flyktningguiden’ (eng. *Refugee Guide*, Red Cross), ‘En god nabo’ (eng. *A Good Neighbor*, Save the Children), ‘Sammen-prosjektet’ (eng. *The Together Project*, SOS Children’s Villages), and ‘Folkevenn’ (eng. *People’s Person*, Norwegian People’s Aid).³⁹ These programmes involve practical and emotional support extended by members of the community to refugees and other immigrants, and coordination and collaboration with local municipal authorities is far from uncommon. One study of the Red Cross Refugee Guide programme dating back to 2012 found that this programme was somehow connected to the introduction programme for refugees in 85 percent of the cases, that refugees were informed about the offer by municipal case workers, and that there was often close coordination between the guides, refugees and caseworkers, among other things in terms of organising joint activities (Paulsen et al. 2012: 26-27). Being a resettlement refugee is not an eligibility criterion for any of these programmes. There is generally no significant sponsorship in financial terms.
- The housing of refugees is a major topic at present and has intensified interest in the public sector of partnering with the private sector. The private company FINN is a Norwegian equivalent to a combined eBay and Airbnb. FINN developed a designated platform in the wake of the 2015 spike in asylum arrivals to connect landlords, municipalities and refugee. This platform was recently refined to help house Ukrainian refugees. ‘Hjerterom’⁴⁰ - Refugee Rental Housing’ gives people with a rental housing advertisement the opportunity to make it available for refugees and easy for municipalities and refugees to find. FINN sets aside the equivalent amount of money as the ad costs (price paid per ad minus VAT) and the money is donated to the Red Cross’ work to help and integrate refugees. Landlords can rent out to refugees, but the municipality approves the accommodation and typically pays the deposit or offers a guarantee. Either the municipality or refugee sign the lease. The refugee pays the rent with social welfare money. For more inspirational examples of public-private partnerships in different municipalities, one need only look to The Housing Bank.⁴¹ The *Hjerterom* programme is open to all refugees, not just resettled ones. There is indirect financial support but generally no significant sponsorship in the conventional, individual sense.

39 All examples taken the Norwegian governmental strategy on integration: Ministry of Education and Research (2020). *Strategi for å styrke sivilsamfunnets rolle på integreringsfeltet* [Strategy to strengthen the role of civil society in the field of integration], available for download at www.regjeringen.no/contentassets/b6ae799c27fb4455a1e5c6d8d06f6c7d/hverdagsintegrering.pdf. For more details of the individual programmes mentioned here, see www.hjelpesenter.finn.no/hc/no/articles/4903987535122-Hjerterom-Refugee-rental-housing; www.rodekors.no/en/lokalforeninger/oslo/english-pages/refugee-guide/; www.reddbarna.no/bli-frivillig/en-god-nabo-for-familier-som-er-nye-i-norge/; [www.sos-barnebyer.no/vart-arbeid-for-barn-i-norge/sammen](http://www.reddbarna.no/bli-frivillig/en-god-nabo-for-familier-som-er-nye-i-norge/); www.folkehjelp.no/vil-du-bli-frivillig-for-flyktninger

40 ‘Hjerterom’ literally translates to ‘Heart Space’ in English language.

41 See, for instance, <https://www.husbanken.no/eksempler/flyktninger-ullensvang/>; <https://www.husbanken.no/eksempler/flyktninger-rendalen/>; <https://www.husbanken.no/eksempler/flyktninger-voss/>; <https://www.husbanken.no/eksempler/flyktninger-grimstad/>; <https://www.husbanken.no/eksempler/flyktninger-ulstein/>

- Having been provided with housing, newly arrived refugees typically bring little furniture with them. The furniture they are entitled to is purchased by integration case workers and does not always correspond with dynamic needs and personal preferences. Lack of a car and unfamiliar banking services complicate the situation. In the city of Trondheim, the municipal authorities therefore requested assistance from the local voluntary sector organisation MITA (Målrettet integrering til arbeid),⁴² run by the Tordenskjold Foundation, which then initiated so-called 'Finn Evenings'. Information about these fortnightly events is circulated to recently arrived refugees through the municipal authorities. Under the leadership of one former volunteer now working in a 25 percent position, around five volunteers typically show up for these events and facilitate communication, negotiation and, if needed, payment for second-hand furniture at Finn. Communication between volunteers and the refugee is either done through Google Translate or with interpretation of a Ukrainian refugee who is themselves a volunteer. A member from Byåsen Men at Work, another volunteer group of male refugees, founded in 2016 is also present at the Finn Evenings, who sets a time schedule, rents a car, plots the route, estimates times for pick-up and delivery, and coordinates with other members to carry the furniture. Many refugees who have received help in this way reportedly enlist as volunteers themselves.⁴³ No sponsorship is involved.
- The Council for Music Organisations in Norway (Norsk musikkråd (NMR)) was granted NOK 5 million by the Ministry of Culture and Equality in 2022, for the project Cultural Community with Ukrainian Refugees.⁴⁴ The umbrella organisation in turn contacted an estimated 9,500 Ukrainian refugees, often through social media. More than 4,500 of whom then reportedly took part in various music and cultural activities, together with 2,563 volunteers in 110 organisations. A broad range of activities across the country were hosted in refugee reception centres, townhalls, private residences and elsewhere, in which the NMR found an eagerness among participant refugees to practice and present Ukrainian culture. Workshops in craftsmanship, cooking classes and Ukrainian songs were held, among other things, and several Ukrainian choirs were established. On the premise that participatory music and cultural activities of this kind can be socially and emotionally supportive, NMR aimed to reduce barriers for local-level associations to invite refugees by producing a step-by-step manual drawing on lessons it learned in the process, and detailing challenges, constructive approaches and funding opportunities.⁴⁵

42 Literally, '*Targeted Integration for Work*'.

43 Interview, December 2023.

44 *Kulturfelleskap med ukrainske flyktninger*. For a discussion of the project name and the ingroup status of Ukrainian refugees, see Bjånesøy and Bye (2023).

45 Norsk Musikkråd (NMR). www.musikk.no/prosjekt/ukraina/veileder-arrangorer. A compilation of resources is available at <https://www.musikk.no/prosjekt/ukraina>. The information provided here is based on NMR's project report (Norsk Musikkråd 2023).

Overall, these examples serve to illustrate that while community sponsorship does not exist in Norway at present, the country already has a variety of relevant programmes in which community support includes service provision, policy advocacy and empowerment, and constitutes sources and expressions of social values, social cohesion and trust. As the next section discusses more broadly, the institutional landscape in Norway is conducive to community support.

The Norwegian institutional landscape for community sponsorship and support

Norway has a high level of voluntary participation by international standards. Surveys from the last three decades consistently show that more than half the population participates in at least one voluntary activity on an annual basis, which is high both by European and Scandinavian standards (Arnesen et al., 2023: 7). Also unique to Norway is the fact that voluntary community engagement is primarily directed towards sports and culture rather than welfare and social services (Arnesen et al. 2023: 8). Norway also has very high levels of social trust (Arnesen 2020), as observed in a white paper (Meld. St. 10 (2018–2019)). During the mass refugee influx in 2015, a large number of volunteers mobilised to assist refugees. One out of three Norwegians contributed with money, clothes, food or equipment, according to one study (Fladmoe et al. 2016).

It follows that civil society in Norway includes many potential partners with whom state actors could discuss community sponsorship if they would so wish. The Red Cross may be the most obvious candidate for an eventual pilot project in Norway, given its prominent role in community sponsorship programmes elsewhere in Europe (e.g., the NEST Project in Germany in which the Red Cross plays a key role, the RESET project co-chaired with the British Home Office, and the involvement of the Irish Red Cross as a coordinating ‘Regional Support Organisation’ in Ireland).

By another and more domestic logic, a number of civil society actors in Norway are already involved in resettlement in terms of suggesting cases for resettlement and consulting state authorities on their resettlement priorities (as per the circular G-15/2020), such as PEN, but also the Helsingfors Committee and Norwegian People’s Aid. The latter also receives resettlement refugees at the airport during transit in Norway. Both the Red Cross and the Norwegian People’s Aid are semi-professional organisations with broad geographic coverage. For outreach to more local-level organisations, the Association of NGOs in Norway (‘Frivillighet Norge’), with more than 350 member organisations, could perhaps serve as a so-called Regional Support Organisation, coordinating between state and local authorities and smaller, grassroots initiatives.

If one were to develop community sponsorship for resettled refugee children and youth in particular, the Norwegian Olympic and Paralympic Committee and Confederation of Sports (NIF) reports to have approximately 1,900,000 memberships, across 55 national federations, 11 regional confederations, more than 300 sports councils and more than 9,400 clubs. Partly with funding from the Norwegian Directorate of Integration and Diversity (IMDi), NIF set up a project after the mass influx of refugees in 2015 to offer in-kind support such as free transportation, interpreting services, equipment, fee waivers, and other items, to recently arrived refugees at the municipalities, for them to ‘get a meaningful everyday life and knowledge of the Norwegian society’.⁴⁶

While all of these organisations could be relevant partners, one informant warned that they would likely not wish to collaborate on a policy programme if they would merely be taking on tasks that they view as public responsibilities. *‘It would have to be a supplement’.*

Finally, it is also worth mentioning that an internal concept note for community sponsorship was jointly designed and explored by the Church of Norway, Diocese of Stavanger, and refugee advocacy NOAS, with input from UNHCR, during the period 2020-2022. Insisting on additionality, it envisioned a combined community sponsorship and educational pathway programme in the city of Stavanger, offering university enrolment for education as nurses to skilled refugees proficient in English, with private sponsors (to be identified) and mentoring by student peers. This was to be implemented in partnership with the municipality and University of Stavanger. While the concept note did not translate into practical reality, the initiative nonetheless demonstrates a modicum of institutional interest and illustrates potential partnerships.⁴⁷

Alignment with national strategic objectives for community sponsorship and support

Community sponsorship and support both align well with several national strategies. For one thing, they resonate with Norway’s strategy for engaging more with civil society in the field of immigrant integration. A white paper on the voluntary sector in 2018 (Meld. St. 10 (2018-2019)) posited that municipal authorities generally play a key role in strengthening interaction with the voluntary sector, and that overarching objectives for the government’s voluntary policy include fostering engagement, involvement and a sense of community. Even more to the point, in 2021, the previous government launched Norway’s first

46 The Norwegian Olympic and Paralympic Committee and Confederation of Sports (NIF). <https://www.idrettsforbundet.no/idrettskrets/troms/tema/inkluderende-av-flyktninger/> See also Council of Europe. www.coe.int/en/web/sport-migrant-integration-directory/the-nif-refugee-fund for a historical overview and budget posts in English.

47 This paragraph is based on an internal concept note accessed by the author, and informal conversations with three stakeholders, March 2023.

ever strategy to highlight and support the efforts of civil society organisations in integration, *Hverdagsintegrering: Strategi for å styrke sivilsamfunnets rolle på integreringsfeltet* (eng. *Everyday Life Integration: Strategy to Strengthen the Role of Civil Society*) 2021-2024 (Ministry of Education and Research 2020). The governmental strategy sets out the overarching objectives to ‘...enable civil society actors to complement the work of state actors in the field of integration’ (p. 25), promote the participation of immigrants, descendants and immigrant organisations in civil society organisations (p. 15) and harness the productive potential of civil society in promoting digital skills, language skills and social networks among newcomers’ (p. 24-35). All of which corresponds with community sponsorship and community support alike.

As discussed above, community sponsorship is a potential mechanism for expanding refugee protection. Norway’s Humanitarian Strategy pledges that Norway will work at the multilateral level to achieve a more effective and better coordinated refugee response in line with the Refugee Convention and the New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants, obliging Norway to ‘expand access to third-country solutions, including through resettlement or complementary pathways’ (Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2018: 33). The latter could also serve labour market needs. As one informant noted, ‘*Norway needs workers. Labour and education programmes [combined with community sponsorship] can help us with that*’.

The 2021 white paper ‘Long-term Perspectives on the Norwegian Economy 2021’ (Meld. St. 14 (2020–2021): 4) does indeed note that an overarching objective for Norway, not for a distant future but at present, is to ‘maintain a large and skilled labour force’.

4 Conclusion

The concept of community sponsorship has become increasingly popular in Europe over the last decade. For its proponents, the many different forms it has taken across the continent and beyond testify to its flexible adjustment to a variety of national contexts. However, looking at such programmes in Canada and Europe, programmes subsumable under the loose rubric of ‘community sponsorship’ appear to differ so fundamentally from one another that it becomes unclear what they have in common, how to compare them, and what lessons to draw about the programme’s feasibility in a Norwegian context. This calls for definitional consistency and for avoiding conceptual overstretch, if the programme is to have a clear identity and a foundation in key design principles. The proposition made here is to view the programme as an instrument to expand refugee protection through the additionality principle, and to uphold the UNHCR definition so that sponsors provide financial in addition to social and practical support. These definitional criteria offer a way of analytically distinguishing community sponsorship from community support. A key argument proposed by this report is that the two should not be conflated, because community sponsorship is better understood as one specific form of community support. In a diagram, the former is subsumable under the latter, as per figure 1.

Figure 1. Conceptualising the relation between community support and community sponsorship.



This understanding has guided the analysis of community sponsorship's relative merits and practicability vis-à-vis community support in Norway. How one defines the programme affects what Norway can learn from other Scandinavian welfare states with regard to community sponsorship. As mentioned above, the Swedish and Finnish cases were initially somewhat inaccurately labelled as community sponsorship programmes, eventually with a qualifier, such as 'Nordic models' or 'radical hybrid models' of community sponsorship (Zanzuchi et al. 2023: 23), prompting UNHCR to rename them to 'community support programmes' in 2024. These programmes do not include financial sponsorship or additionality, and neither do they claim to do so. Rather, these programmes should perhaps be viewed in their own right as laudable examples of community support programmes aimed at welcoming and integrating refugees. In these programmes the local community members represent 'buddies' rather than 'sponsors' (Zanzuchi et al. 2023). This could be viewed as a strength. One could make the argument that buddies, and community support, are in fact *especially* important for refugees in Norway *precisely* because of its strong, universal welfare state and the many public services it provides.

Politically and legally, while community support is well established, the feasibility of a community sponsorship model including the key components of additionality and financial sponsorship, is assessed to be limited. The Progress Party envisions a model which may resemble community sponsorship, but which does not incorporate the key design principle of additionality. Although community sponsorship would align with several national strategic objectives, there appears to be limited interest given the current political context. Informants stressed that Norway's refugee integration is highly regulated and that the recently revised Integration Act specifies a wide range of tasks for the municipalities to ensure universalism in order for refugees to receive the same quality of services, as a matter of legal entitlement, regardless of where they happen to be settled. Operationally, Norway's high levels of trust, tradition of voluntary engagement, and well-established public-private partnerships in the field of refugee integration, all combine as potentially enabling factors for community sponsorship as well as for community support. The tradition of the latter means that partners and structures would potentially be available for the former.

Norway's municipalities are facing higher numbers of refugees and shorter timelines for the Introduction Programme than before. Over the coming years the Norwegian government is likely to take a growing interest in exploring alternative and innovative partnerships with civil society actors who can help to alleviate pressures and public goods and foster positive outcomes in terms of integration, cohesion, and inclusion. Quite a few municipalities collaborate closely with civil society already. It is a limitation of this report that few interviews were conducted at the municipal level. Informants from local-level authorities

may have been more positive to the model of community sponsorship and may have assessed it differently vis-à-vis community support than informants at the national level of governance. There may also be ongoing local programmes and pilots in Norway that could have further informed the analysis, but which have been overlooked.

Be that as it may, one finding of this report is that community *support* in refugee integration is already in place in Norway. It can be further consolidated and expanded, even without community *sponsorship*. Positing these options as alternatives, other forms of community support seem more suitable for the Norwegian national context. That said, there can be cross-fertilization across community sponsorship and community support. Anyone who wishes to learn about best practice in cultivating community support would be remiss to overlook the many lessons learned from community sponsorship programmes across Europe and beyond.

5 Roadmap: Possible steps forward

Based on the above discussion some possible steps forward can be identified.

For state authorities:

- There may be ample opportunities to strengthen already existing community support measures for refugees in Norway. By contrast, there currently appears to be little political support for introducing community sponsorship, as understood here, namely including the key design principles of financial sponsorship and additionality. Norway's detailed state regulation of refugees' rights-based access to services, and the record high number of recently arrived refugees, are among the factors that combine to make community sponsorship an unlikely instrument for expanding refugee protection in Norway in the short term. Operationally, its feasibility is higher. Given this political and legal framework, policy makers could perhaps instead be inspired by the concept to rethink how the engagement of civil society actors, especially immigrant and diaspora organisations, could contribute to refugee integration, in line with the national strategy.
- Could transnational contact be established with a refugee guide prior to resettlement, to foster preparedness and trust? Could, for instance, LGBT+ individuals routinely be offered to be put in touch with local LGBT+ communities in Norway for social and emotional support, also prior to their arrival?
- The mass arrivals of Ukrainian refugees may spark political interest in community sponsorship in Norway at a later stage. If this happens, decision-makers in Norway have easy access to a wealth of information on implementation, feasibility, and practical know-how, through organisations such as UNHCR, the GRSI or the EUAA. It is rare for any policy programme to come with such a vast body of training manuals, operational details and platforms for knowledge exchange. The GRSI Guidebook alone offers a plethora of practical insights, operational details and guiding principles.⁴⁸ Drawing on Canadian and other countries' models of community sponsorship, it offers cross-country comparisons that can easily inspire innovative public-private partnerships in Norway as well, tailored to its own national context.

⁴⁸ Global Refugee Sponsorship Initiative (GRSI) (2022). *Building blocks of community sponsorship*. www.refugeesponsorship.org/resource-directory/grsi-guidebook/.pdf

- Currently, the Norwegian government does not single out resettlement refugees as part of its strategies for civil society involvement in refugee integration. The strategy to strengthen the role of civil society in immigrant integration in Norway, *Everyday Life Integration (2021-2024)*, does not specifically discuss resettlement refugees as potential beneficiaries of civil society or the mechanisms through which they can be welcomed and supported. One possible step for the Ministry of Labour and Social Inclusion could be to undertake that task in a more focused follow-up strategy devoted to this specific demographic. Another possible follow-up step could be to simply map the various innovative and experimental community support programmes that are currently unfolding at the municipal level as local authorities struggle with the high number of Ukrainian refugees, and eventually try to measure the impact and effectiveness of these initiatives.

For municipal authorities:

- There may be opportunities for the municipalities to experiment with community support or even sponsorship. If a municipality would be interested in exploring community support more broadly or community sponsorship more specifically, they could seek permissions to experiment with it. The Ministry of Local Government and Regional Development has invited municipalities and county councils to apply for exemption from rules and regulations in order to test new ways of solving their legally imposed tasks without breaking the law.⁴⁹ At the time of writing, 87 applications were registered, of which only two had to do with refugee resettlement and integration. There should, in other words, be some potential for innovative pilots.⁵⁰
- Community sponsorship may not be a political priority in Norway today, yet this may change. The Norwegian Association of Local and Regional Authorities (KS), the organisation for all local governments in Norway and Norway's largest public employer organisation, recently made a statement in which it urgently called for increased support to meet critical needs for housing, language training, health services and recognition of foreign-earned educational degrees, in the midst of the Ukrainian refugee crisis.⁵¹ KS warned that without more support the ability of municipalities to deliver public services is at risk. In this context, municipalities could advocate new and innovative ways of working with civil society to safeguard those services, e.g., housing needs, drawing on lessons learned elsewhere from community sponsorship, including in the GRSI Guidebook.

49 Ministry of Local Government and Regional Development. www.regjeringen.no/no/tema/statlig-forvaltning/forvaltningsutvikling/tillitsreform/forsokskommune/id2967899/.

50 Ministry of Digitalisation and Public Governance. www.regjeringen.no/no/tema/statlig-forvaltning/forvaltningsutvikling/tillitsreform/forsokskommune/87-soknader-er-til-vurdering/id3014560/.

51 The Norwegian Association of Local and Regional Authorities (KS). www.ks.no/contentassets/6c6f740764af4c8e97ebc9461f7e6d6a/Uttalelse-flyktningsituasjonen-KS-Landsstyremote-10112023.pdf.

For the humanitarian community:

- Definitional flexibility may facilitate advocacy in the short term. There is nonetheless a trade-off, rarely noted in the literature on community sponsorship, between flexibility and clarity. If community sponsorship becomes so vaguely defined that it is hard to say what the concept actually means, conceptual overstretch poses challenges for policymakers, the public opinion, scholars and advocates who all need to know how to design it, understand it and study its effectiveness and outcomes. The definition of such programmes should analytically distinguish it from the broader category of community support. One way of doing so is through considering financial sponsorship and additionality as key design principles.

For the voluntary sector:

- Voluntary organisations can contribute greatly to the process of welcoming, including and supporting refugees in Norway, as a complement to public services. With record high numbers of refugees in Norway at present, and strained public resources, there are reasons to expect a growing need for innovative programmes that can harness the potential of voluntary organisations. This may represent new opportunities for voluntary organisations to seek possible partnerships with central and municipal authorities.

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Appendix I

Data and methods

This report is based on interviews with Norwegian stakeholders, international experts, and a review of relevant literature. Eight interviews were conducted with ten representatives from key state and non-state organisations. Three interviews were conducted with international stakeholders. In addition, four informal interviews were conducted with Norwegian stakeholders involved with a grassroots-led community sponsorship initiative and complementary education pathway in Stavanger, Norway. All interviews were conducted during the period May-December 2023. Extensive notes were taken throughout the interview, confirmed if in doubt, and coded thematically using NVivo software. Interviews with national stakeholders include two ministries and their subordinate directorates. First, the Ministry of Justice and Public Security (JD) which has overall responsibility for refugee resettlement as well as its subordinate Directorate of Immigration (UDI), represented by the unit that implements refugee resettlement. Second, the Ministry of Labour and Social Inclusion (AID) as responsible for labour market and integration policy, and its subordinate Directorate of Integration and Diversity (IMDi), which implements integration policy. For a more local-level perspective, an interview was also conducted with a public sector organisation for all local governments in Norway and Norway's largest public employer organisation, the Norwegian Association of Local and Regional Authorities (KS). Representatives from two non-state organisations engaged with refugees and immigrant integration were also interviewed. The three interviews with international stakeholders, included a total of five representatives from an EU agency, an international advocacy and support organisation, and the municipality of Danderyd, Sweden.⁵² Finally, attending a two-day international conference on community sponsorship at the Canadian Embassy in Brussels in October 2023 offered valuable contextual knowledge and allowed for informal conversations with a wide range of stakeholders at various levels of governance.⁵³ Attending a more focused online roundtable discussion on matching in refugee sponsorship also provided additional contextual knowledge of how practitioners and decision-makers assess innovations and future directions in the field.⁵⁴ In addition to these interview data, the report draws from a broad review of the grey and academic literature.

52 A request for an online interview with the Finnish Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment, for additional comparative insights, was made.

53 Building Resilient Community Sponsorship in Europe and Beyond, 13-14 October 2023, Brussels. The conference was organised by the Global Refugee Sponsorship Initiative (GRSI).

54 Matching in Refugee Sponsorship and Complementary Pathways: Innovations for Enhancing Outcomes and Strengthening Communities. Convened by the MPI Europe under the EU-funded Building Capacity for Private Sponsorship in the European Union project (CAPS-EU).

Appendix II

Table 3: Five national programmes referred to as community sponsorship programmes/ community support programme pilots

	Canada	UK	Ireland	Sweden	Finland
Welfare regime	Anglo-Saxon			Nordic	
Fiscal responsibilities of the sponsor?	Yes Household items, furniture, linens, food staples, clothing, utilities, phone installation, ongoing costs of housing, food, public transportation, and 12 months of income assistance. Typically, sponsors also need to help to apply for grants.	Yes The amount community sponsors need to raise can vary significantly, depending on the in-kind support they are able to draw on, but the amount can typically range from around EUR 5,700 to EUR 23,000, for costs such as housing, cash grants upon arrival, and interpretive services.	Yes Expenses such as food, medical expenses, clothing, schoolbooks, school uniforms, etc. Additional funding may be required to ensure refugee participation in local society. Community group must commit to raising EUR 10,000 to support a sponsored family, of which a maximum of EUR 2,000 may be in-kind. Planned fundraising efforts are required.	No	No
Specified time frame	12 months	12 months overall, 24 months for housing	N/A	None	None
Stated additionality ⁵⁵	Yes	Yes	No	No	No

⁵⁵ ' Interview, October 2023.

Community sponsorship or community support for refugees?

The case of Norway

The concept of 'community sponsorship' originated in Canada and has journeyed to Europe over the past decade. This report discusses its applicability in a Norwegian national context, as compared with the broader concept of community support. The analysis is based on expert interviews in Norway and beyond and a review of the international literature and international practice.



Institutt for
samfunnsforskning

Institute for
Social Research

Munthes gate 31
Postboks 3233 Elisenberg
0208 Oslo
Tlf.: 23 08 61 00
samfunnsforskning.no

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