IOM and the Reception and Integration Agency launch a community sponsorship initiative

Reinforcing Integration through Sponsorship Enhancement (RISE) project aims to promote community sponsorship (CS) schemes and integration of persons in need of international protection. The objective is to contribute to addressing housing shortages for beneficiaries of international protection by piloting community sponsorship schemes and enhancing engagement of sponsors in Belgium, Italy and Lithuania.

The project follows the "Housing at the Centre" approach, which recognizes access to affordable and accessible housing as a fundamental human right and essential for building sustainable communities. The initiative seeks to achieve multiple objectives, including:

- Strengthening knowledge on existing programmes and increasing capacities to implement innovative schemes with a focus on housing (by assessment of the most effective approaches to housing solutions for CS models).
- Increasing the availability of and access to housing options (by mobilising support from local governments, real estate agencies / landlords and host families.
- Developing toolkits.
- Ensuring the engagement of sponsors and building their capacity on housing.
- Matching sponsors with beneficiaries of international protection.
- Expanding the number of Member States implementing CS programmes focused on housing solutions (by piloting and assessing schemes in BE, IT and LT).
- Fostering cross-border exchange and disseminate lessons learned (by organizing transnational events and publishing thematic briefs structured around 5 areas on access to housing, in particular: engagement of local communities, recruitment and support for sponsors, repository of available housing facilities and verification of available accommodations, mechanisms for matching sponsors with people in need of international protection, training of sponsors).

Through this approach, it seeks to generate a positive momentum towards greater housing equality.

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Benefits

Benefits
WHY IS THIS ACTION RELEVANT?

In 2022, 881,220 first-time asylum seekers applied for international protection in the European Union (EU), which was the highest number since the peaks of 2015 and 2016, and 384,245 asylum seekers were granted protection status. Moreover, around 4 million people fleeing Ukraine after the Russian invasion benefitted from temporary protection in the EU. In addition to that, in 2023, 17 EU Member States (MS) pledged more than 29,157 places for resettlement and humanitarian admission.

The growing number of applicants and beneficiaries have put significant pressure on MS' reception systems and, in particular on the availability of housing.

In this light, the EU's 10-Point Plan on stronger European coordination on welcoming people fleeing the war, acknowledged the need for longer-term accommodation solutions. The European Commission (EC), in its Recommendation on Legal Pathways to Protection in the EU, encouraged MS to rely on community sponsorship (CS) to increase resettlement places while fostering integration and overcome challenges related to the limited availability of hosting mechanisms, stressing the EU's readiness to support its MS in establishing CS schemes, relying on housing facilities beyond the traditional concept of state-led reception facilities.

The EC feasibility study, which explored possible EU actions to support MS in setting up community sponsorship has further demonstrated the interest and support at the EU level for the development of new CS schemes. While sponsorship programmes demonstrated a great success in Canada, Australia, the UK and the US, allowing many people to benefit from community integration support, in Europe most programmes have been developed relatively recently. The EC in its Communication Towards a reform of the common European asylum system, encouraged the development of the best practises at EU-level, taking inspiration from the models and experience from other third countries. As a part of the New Pact on Migration and Asylum, the EU has committed to supporting

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national community sponsorship schemes to develop a European model of community sponsorship.

TIMELINE

Source(s)

- International Organization for Migration (15 April, 2025), [Reinforcing Integration through Sponsorship Enhancement (RISE)], https://lithuania.iom.int/reinforcing-integration-through-sponsorship-enhancement-rise

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