INSTITUTT
FOR SAMFUNNS-
FORSKNING

Report 2021:3

Selection Criteria in Refugee Resettlement

Balancing vulnerability and future integration in eight resettlement countries

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ISBN (print): 978-82-7763-702-0
ISBN (digital): 978-82-7763--703-7
ISSN (print): 0333-3671
ISSN (digital): 1891-4314

www.samfunnsforskning.no

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Acknowledgments

In this report, we analyze resettlement programs for refugees in eight countries, highlighting the similarities and differences regarding their selection criteria and practices. The United Nations (UN) resettlement program has attracted increased attention in several resettlement countries over the last five years. Some reasons for this are the falling numbers of asylum arrivals and the increasing resettlement refugee quotas. This is the case in Norway, which constitutes the baseline case for our analysis.

The report is based on an international query administered by the Intergovernmental Consultation on Migration, Asylum and Refugees (IGC) network and on more than 50 interviews with, among others, civil servants in the eight countries, employees of municipal organizations, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and multilateral organizations.

Consequently, we would like to thank the IGC staff in Geneva for efficiently administering the query, gathering information, and providing contacts for follow up interviews. Furthermore, we would like to thank the civil servants in France, Sweden, United Kingdom (UK), Canada, Australia, and Germany who found time to explain the resettlement programs and practices. The same goes for representatives from the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), who provided information about resettlement as it is perceived by this pivotal organization.

We would also like to thank the employees at three Norwegian municipalities for their participation.

Finally, we would like to thank the civil servants within Norwegian ministries, the Norwegian Directorate of Immigration (UDI), the Directorate of Integration and Diversity (IMDi), the National Police Immigration Service (PU), and several Norwegian NGOs (Norwegian Refugee Council, Norwegian People's Aid, PEN International, and International Cities of Refugee Network). Their openness about the challenges and possibilities within the resettlement program was essential for a full assessment of national resettlement principles and practices.

Oslo, June 2021

Foreword

As this report points out, there has been a lack of transparency and rigorous evaluation with respect to refugee resettlement programs for many years. While there have been numerous small-scale studies of resettled refugees in specific locations, particularly in the United States (US), Canada, and Australia, broader issues related to resettlement policy, as well as to procedures and criteria used in selecting refugees for resettlement, have not received the attention they deserve from academics, practitioners, and advocates.

This report from the Norwegian Institute for Social Research represents an important exception, constituting one of the most comprehensive, systematic, and insightful studies on the issue of refugee resettlement that has been produced in recent years.

In terms of its content, the report very perceptively captures the numerous dilemmas associated with refugee resettlement, especially in the principal focus area of the paper—namely, the trade-off between "vulnerability" and "integration potential" in the criteria employed in prioritizing refugees for resettlement. The report is honest with respect to the key problems associated with resettlement (e.g., fraud, corruption, misrepresentation, and refugee disappointment) and usefully identifies some of the most recent trends relating to and impinging upon this solution, including the growth of private sponsorship, the role of new technology, the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, and the nexus between refugee resettlement and national security.

Future research will have to engage more with the broader questions related to resettlement policy, as well as with the procedures and criteria used in selecting refugees for resettlement and the role played by the UNHCR.

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19 March 2021

Sammendrag

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Tittel Kriterier for uttak av kvoteflyktninger i åtte land. Sårbarhet og hensyn til integrering

Sammendrag Når et land i samråd med FN skal velge ut flyktninger som skal gjenbosettes, hvilke kriterier skal legges til grunn? I denne rapporten analyserer vi utvalgskriterier og praksis for gjenbosetting av FN-flyktninger i åtte land (i tillegg til Norge inkluderer studien Australia, Storbritannia, Canada, Frankrike, Tyskland, Sverige og Nederland).

FNs gjenbosettingsprogram har vakt økt oppmerksomhet i flere gjenbosettingsland de siste fem årene. En årsak til dette er fallende antall asylankomster og økte kvoter av overføringsflyktninger. Dette er tilfelle i Norge, som utgjør startpunktet for studien.

Gjenbosetting blir sett på av FNs høykommissær (UNHCR) som en av tre varige løsninger på flyktningsituasjoner. De to andre er repatriering og lokal integrasjon. I 2019 fremmet UNHCR sakene til over 80 000 flyktninger til behandling i gjenbosettingsland. De største opprinnelseslandene var Syria, Kongo, Afghanistan og Somalia.

Det norske Kunnskaps- og forskningsdepartementet lyste ut denne studien utfra et ønske om å få kunnskap om andre lands kriterier for uttak av overføringsflyktninger.

Basert på flere enn femti dybdeintervjuer med norske embetsmenn, NGO-representanter, UNHCR-ansatte og representanter for myndighetene i de syv andre landene; sammen med dokumentstudier og en internasjonal mini-survey, finner vi at alle landene må balansere prinsipper opp mot pragmatisme. Selv om de tar sikte på å velge ut de flyktningene som er mest sårbare, gjøres det også en vurdering av fremtidig integrering.

Utvalgte funn:

- Alle de åtte landene bruker sikkerhetsscreeninger, med tanke på risiko for nasjonal sikkerhet og risiko for terror. Andre eksklusjonskriterier inkluderer kriminalitet og narkotikaavhengighet.
- Alle unntatt ett av landene (Frankrike) bruker integrering som en viktig faktor ved gjenbosetting av flyktninger, enten når de velger ut grupper til den årlige kvoten, eller i vurderingen av de enkelte flyktningnene.
- Landene varierer med hensyn til om de systematisk samler inn data om integreringsresultater for bosatte flyktninger som en del av deres grunnlag for å bestemme fremtidige kvoter.

- Alle land finner måter å signalisere til flyktningene behovet for minimum samsvar med nasjonale verdier og normer i gjenbosettingsstaten.
- Når det gjelder det norske gjenbosettingsprogrammet, merker vi oss at:
- I 2020 ble de nasjonale retningslinjene for det norske gjenbosettingsprogrammet endret. Individuelle integreringskriterier (utdannings- og arbeidserfaring med relevans for det norske arbeidsmarkedet) ble erstattet med "hensyn til fremtidig integrasjon".
- Informantene i den norske forvaltningen opplevde at det norske gjenbosettingsprogrammet har blitt profesjonalisert etter krigen i Syria.
- Integrerings- og mangfoldsdirektoratet (IMDi) har vært gjennom en sentralisering de siste årene. Denne har utfordret den direkte kontakten mellom kommuner og direktoratet i arbeidet med gjenbosetting.
- De som deltar på uttakskommisjoner opplever at det er vanskelig å forutsi hvilke flyktninger som på sikt vil lykkes med integreringen i Norge.
- Norge prioriterer barnefamilier ved valg av FN-flyktninger. Under intervjuene våre hørte vi ofte "det handler om barna". Deltakerne på uttakskommisjonene var klar over at foreldrene også måtte lykkes i noen grad for at barna skulle få de nødvendige rammer for integering og en god oppvekst.

Anbefalinger
Basert på dataene som presenteres i denne studien, og en gjennomgang av retningslinjer og praksis i de andre syv caselandene, kan følgende anbefalinger vurderes:

- Norske myndigheter kan vurdere å teste en tilpasset versjon av bosetting initiert og trygget av lokale partnere, frivillige organisasjoner eller andre. Slike private sponsorship-modeller brukes i dag i blant annet Canada, Storbrittania og Tyskland.
- Norske myndigheter vil kunne oppmuntre til digital kontakt mellom enkeltflyktninger og deres utpekte kommuner etter at de er godkjent for gjenbosetting, men før avreise.
- Norske myndigheter bør sette i gang en forskningsstudie som dokumenterer og analyserer erfaringene til bosatte flyktninger i Norge. Deres stemmer mangler i stor grad i den norske samtalen om gjenbosetting.
- Vi anbefaler at UDI og IMDi publiserer en årlig felles rapport om gjenbosetting av flyktninger i Norge. Dette vil sikre åpenhet og bidra til å sikre programmets langsiktige bærekraft og omdømme blant interessenter, kommuner og i befolkningen.

Emneord Flyktninger, FN, gjenbosetting, integrering, kommune

English summary

Authors Jan-Paul Brekke, Erlend Paasche, Astrid Espegren, Kristin Bergtora Sandvik

Title Selection Criteria in Refugee Resettlement. Balancing vulnerability and future integration in eight resettlement countries

Summary In this report, we analyze resettlement programs for refugees in eight countries, highlighting the similarities and differences regarding their selection criteria and practices. In addition to Norway, the study includes Australia, the United Kingdom (UK), Canada, France, Germany, Sweden, and the Netherlands. The United Nations (UN) resettlement program has attracted increased attention in several resettlement countries during the last five years. Some reasons for this are the falling numbers of asylum arrivals and the increasing resettlement refugee quotas. This is the case in Norway, which constitutes the baseline case for our analysis.

The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) sees resettlement as one of three durable solutions, the other two being repatriation and local integration. In 2019, UNHCR submitted the files of over 81,600 refugees to resettlement countries for consideration, with the most numerous nationalities of origin being Syrian, Congolese, Afghan, and Somali.

The Norwegian Ministry of Education and Research commissioned this study to obtain an evidence-based comparative overview of national guidelines and practices in different resettlement countries.

Based on more than 50 in-depth interviews with Norwegian civil servants, non-governmental organization (NGO) representatives, UNHCR staff, and governmental representatives from the countries included in the comparative analysis—along with document studies and an international ad-hoc query—we find that all countries wrestle with balancing principles and pragmatism in their selection practices. That is, although they aim to select those refugees who are most vulnerable, they are also taking into consideration the refugees' future integration or, at least, their ability to cope in the host society.

Selected findings:

- All eight countries apply security screenings, taking into consideration risks to national security and risks of terrorism. Other exclusion criteria include crime and drug addiction.
- All but one of the countries (France) apply integration as a key consideration when resettling refugees, either as part of composing their quotas or in their individual screening processes.
- The countries vary regarding whether they systematically gather data on integration outcomes for resettled refugees as part of their basis for determining future quotas.

- All countries find ways to signal to the refugees the need for minimum conformity with national values and norms of the resettlement state.

Regarding the Norwegian resettlement program, we note that:

- In 2020, the national guidelines for the Norwegian resettlement program were changed. Individual explicit integration criteria (education and work experience relevant for the Norwegian labor market) were substituted with “considerations of future integration.”
- Civil servant informants posit that the Norwegian resettlement program has been professionalized over the past six years, following increased quotas.
- The recent reform of the Directorate of Integration and Diversity (IMDi), which has changed to a centralized model, has challenged direct contact between municipalities and the Directorate.
- Civil servants find that it is difficult to predict which refugees will be more successful with respect to long-term integration in Norway.
- Norway prioritizes families with children when selecting UN refugees. During our interviews, we were often told that “it’s all about the children.” The interviewees were also aware that for children to succeed, their parents also need to succeed to some extent.

Recommendations
Based on the data presented in this study and on a review of guidelines and practices in the other seven case countries, the following recommendations are provided for consideration:

- Norwegian authorities could consider testing an adapted version of a private sponsorship model.
- Norwegian authorities, through IMDi, may want to encourage direct digital contact between individual refugees and their designated municipalities after they have been approved for resettlement but before they have left the country in which they are residing.
- Norwegian authorities should commission a research study that would document and analyze the experiences of resettled refugees in Norway. The literature review of the current study has revealed that their voices are missing.
- We recommend that the Norwegian Directorate of Immigration (UDI) and IMDi publish an annual joint report on refugee resettlement in Norway. This will secure transparency and help secure the long-term sustainability of the program among stakeholders, municipalities, and the public.

Index terms Refugees, resettlement, UN, integration, comparative

Acronyms

The Norwegian Ministry of Justice and Public Security	MoJ
The Norwegian Ministry of Education and Research	MoE
The Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs	MFA
The Norwegian Ministry of Health and Care Services	MHCS
The Norwegian Directorate of Immigration	UDI
The Norwegian Directorate of Integration and Diversity	IMDi
The Norwegian Immigration Police Service	PU
The Norwegian Police Security Service	PST
Intergovernmental Consultations on Migration, Asylum and Refugees	IGC
United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees	UNHCR
International Organization for Migration	IOM
European Asylum Support Office	EASO
Nordisk High Level Coordination Group for Refugee Issues	NSHF
Norwegian People's Aid	NPA
PEN International	PEN
International Cities of Refugee Network	ICORN
Norwegian Association of Local and Regional Authorities	KS
Pre-mission questionnaire	PMQ

1. Resettlement—A balancing act

In this report, we describe and analyze various national selection criteria and practices in the resettlement of United Nations (UN) refugees. We do so by contrasting the Norwegian criteria and selection process with that of seven other resettlement countries: Sweden, Canada, United Kingdom (UK), Netherlands, Germany, France, and Australia. These countries are key contributors to the UN resettlement program and provide a solid basis for cross-country comparative analyses.

In the case of Norway, the resettlement program is higher on the national political agenda than ever before. One reason for this is the downturn in the number of asylum applications following the 2015 asylum crisis, which instigated stricter asylum regulations in Europe and most countries in the region. Starting in 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic further added to this trend of fewer asylum arrivals. During the same period, the UN refugee resettlement quota for Norway increased. Since 2018, resettlement refugees constitute more than 50% of the refugees settled in Norway annually, which is an increase from 20% during the 2010–2017 period. Currently, the Norwegian government aims to resettle a quota of 3,000 refugees per year.

Resettlement is also high on the agenda of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). According to the UNCHR, resettlement is the transfer of refugees from one asylum country to another state that has agreed to admit them and ultimately grant them permanent residence.[1] Resettlement is seen by the agency as one of three durable solutions, the other two being repatriation and local integration. In 2019, UNHCR submitted the files of more than 81,600 refugees to resettlement countries for consideration, with the most numerous nationalities of origin being Syrian, Congolese, Afghan, and Somali.

The Norwegian Ministry of Education and Research (MoER) commissioned this study in order to obtain an evidence-based comparative overview of national guidelines and practices in different resettlement countries. The Norwegian government emphasizes its commitment to basing their policies on national and international obligations as well as knowledge. Comparing the Norwegian criteria and practices with those of seven relevant resettlement countries provides

1 https://www.unhcr.org/resettlement.html

a solid background for developing national practices. However, among the countries included in this study, not all have experienced the same patterns in asylum flows. France has, for example, received record numbers of asylum applications in the past few years.

In this report, we describe and analyze the national resettlement programs in these eight countries, identifying their similarities and differences. We find that the countries all wrestle with the balancing of principles with pragmatism in their selection practices. That is, although they aim to select those refugees who are most vulnerable, they also consider the refugees' future integration or, at least, ability to cope in the host society. However, whether these considerations are made explicit in formal selection criteria and in communication with UNCHR varies. The states also differ in the way they set up their selection committees—i.e., using staff at embassies or delegations—and in whether their programs include private sponsorship models.

The Norwegian government decides the national resettlement policy as part of their overall asylum and immigration policies. Over the past eight years, governments led by conservative parties have formulated coalition agreements that have laid the foundation for this policy area. These political agreements have included formulations on the role of integration in resettlement. The 2013 Sundvollen and the 2018 Jeløya political platforms included a statement that the government would "give priority to quota refugees with the greatest chance of achieving successful integration."[2] In the latest Granavolden platform, the criteria is not explicitly formulated but has to be inferred from other parts of the agreement, where it is stated that "the number of quota-refugees (UN refugees) must be considered together with other challenges in the areas of immigration and integration."[3]

The resettlement quota is a recurring topic of political debate in Norway. One recent example of this is reflected in the outcome of the budget negotiations between the current Norwegian government and the supporting Progress party. As part of a political compromise, it was decided that Norway would maintain a level of 3,000 resettlement places for 2021, while at the same time also giving priority to "Christian, Ahmadiyya and Yezidi refugees" at both the group and individual levels.[4]

2 https://www.regjeringen.no/contentassets/a93b067d9b604c5a82bd3b5590096f74/politisk_platform_eng.pdf; https://www.regjeringen.no/en/dokumenter/political-platform/id2585544/
3 https://www.regjeringen.no/contentassets/7b0b7f0fcf0f4d93bb6705838248749b/plattform.pdf
4 https://stortinget.no/no/Saker-og-publikasjoner/Sporsmal/Skriftlige-sporsmal-og-svar/Skriftlig-sporsmal/?qid=82459

Norwegian governments have a long history of considering integration potential as part of the selection criteria for resettlement. Long and Olsen (2008, p. 4) track the explicit mentioning of the criteria in official documents dating back to 2003 but refer to informants stating that Norway applied integration as part of the criteria in the 1980s, and probably even earlier.

Regulations concerning immigration and refugees change rapidly, often reflecting the political composition of the parliament and coalition governments. This makes the field of migration studies interesting, but also challenging at times. During this project, a core piece of the guidelines[5] of the Norwegian resettlement program were adjusted, profoundly changing this criterion for selecting refugees. This seemingly altered the role of integration potential as a criterion for selection. In addition, the COVID-19 pandemic struck at the start of the project, requiring a series of changes to the project design, including the use of digital interviews.

This study was commissioned by MoER, which plays an active role in the resettlement process in Norway. It does so through a variety of channels, including through the Norwegian Directorate of Integration and Diversity (IMDi). IMDi is responsible for providing advice on aspects of integration, mapping refugee needs prior to resettlement, organizing the settlement of refugees in municipalities, and overseeing their initial integration. As part of the resettlement process, IMDi advises the Norwegian Directorate of Immigration (UDI) prior to resettlement, based on their evaluation of the refugees' "prospects for settlement and future integration, in addition to securing the process of settlement and integration in the municipalities after arrival to Norway" (MoJ, 2020, p. 1).[6]

The Ministry of Justice and Public Security (MoJ) has the overall responsibility for the resettlement program, as part of its mandate to administer Norwegian immigration regulations. The resettlement program is a humanitarian program, setting it somewhat apart from overall control policies. UDI is the Ministry's operative arm for fulfilling this mandate. UDI processes immigration and asylum cases in Norway and has a separate unit that is responsible for carrying out the resettlement program. The MoJ is also responsible for national security and the police, including the National Police Immigration Service (PU) and the Norwegian Police Security Service (PST). UDI consults with PST on matters of national security and requests security screenings to prevent the resettlement of

5 In Norwegian: *Rundskriv*.

6 Core MoJ resettlement guidelines (in Norwegian): https://www.regjeringen.no/contentassets/47fe09b332c54f95aad990583df64da6/rundskriv-g-15-2020---retningslinjer-for-arbeidet-med-overforingsflyktninger.pdf

persons considered to pose a threat to national security or to Norway's foreign relations (e.g., if a refugee has been involved in extremist networks, organized crime, crimes against humanity, intelligence services, etc.).[7]

The Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) is responsible for the third political mandate that is relevant to the resettlement program. The UN program involves countries of origin and countries of first asylum (host countries), in addition to multilateral organizations, such as the UNHCR and the International Organization for Migration (IOM). Consequently, the Norwegian MFA has a say in the composition of Norway's yearly quota—i.e., which areas should be prioritized (who, from where). As part of its mandate, the MFA has the overall responsibility for Norwegian humanitarian policies.

In addition to these three ministries and their associated directorates, the Ministry of Health and Care Services (MHCS) also plays a role in keeping track of and considering the national capacity for the resettlement of refugees with major health needs.

Resettlement countries organize their refugee selection through missions, dossier-processing, or a mix of the two. Selection missions consist of officers from the national immigration authorities, sometimes including the police, who travel to the countries that are currently hosting the refugees to conduct face-to-face interviews. The details regarding the selection process of the Norwegian missions are described in Chapters 4 and 5. In dossier cases, case handling is typically performed at a distance, based on information gathered by third parties, most often the UNHCR.

Although the scope of the yearly quota is part of a political decision process, the composition of the quota is decided in a process that includes all above-mentioned stakeholders and others. This process is described in detail below but, in the Norwegian case, it can be summarized as follows. Based on the overall priorities of the UNHCR, the UDI and IMDi forward a suggested quota that is based on input from non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to the involved ministries. This suggestion is then forwarded by the MoJ and commented upon by the MFA, taking into consideration the Norwegian humanitarian and foreign

7 GI-08/2018 – *Instruks om behandling av saker som kan berøre grunnleggende nasjonale interesser eller utenrikspolitiske hensyn etter utlendingsloven kapittel 14, § 35, og saker etter eksportkontrollregelverket* (see Sections 5 and 8 for more details, https://www.regjeringen.no/contentassets/82e6f086a1954abc8520a4ca5d1e0917/instruks-gi-08-2018.pdf). In the core guidelines on resettlement (MoJ, 2020), the Immigration Act § 31 is referenced, covering grounds for rejection in refugee cases reasons similar to those discussed in GI-08/2018. In addition, other grounds for rejection are mentioned, including "unwanted behavior and attitudes." Furthermore, "persons with a criminal record or serious drug abuse" can be rejected (MoJ, 2020, p. 6).

policy agenda, while the MoER considers what groups should be included based on current national integration policy goals. Finally, the MHCS provides feedback in terms of the relevant health capacity.

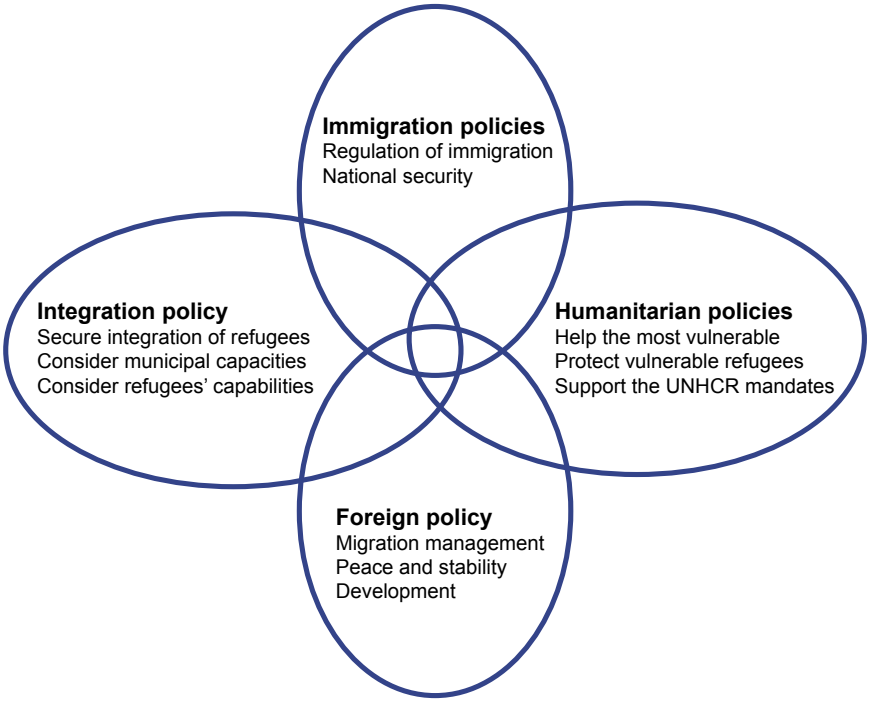
These institutions represent different mandates and aspects of national interests. In this report, we focus on the seemingly overlapping mandates of the MoJ and the MoER. If we set aside MoJ's security and immigration control mandates for a moment, then it would be correct to say that while MoJ and UDI are instructed to represent the humanitarian aspects of the program—i.e., the protection of vulnerable refugees—the main responsibilities of MoER and IMDi are to secure successful settlement and integration of refugees. Both ministries and directorates support the others' mandates. This report discusses how these potentially opposing mandates play out in the Norwegian context, as well as in the contexts of seven other nations. A guiding assumption would be that in case a resettlement country selects only the most vulnerable refugees, the goal of achieving integration may suffer—and vice versa: by selecting only well-adjusted refugees, one may not achieve the goal to protect those most in need. At an overall level, Norwegian authorities seek to strike a balance between the principles of humanitarianism (vulnerability and protection) and the pragmatism of securing long-term integration.

Such overlapping of national political interests are not unique to Norway. As we shall see, other countries experience similar cross pressures when formulating and executing their resettlement programs. Leaving the health mandate of the MHCS aside, the resettlement program is situated at the center of four overlapping political mandates (see Figure 1).

The resettlement program has enjoyed a broad political backing in Norway for half a century. Norway has been resettling refugees through the UN system since 1956, first on an ad hoc basis (Cellini, 2017) and then through yearly quotas starting in 1970s. Norway is also one of the major funders of UNHCR's resettlement work and will provide, for example, approximately EUR 68 million (NOK 680 million) in core support to this UN agency in 2021.

At the same time, the resettlement program has lately been challenged in countries like Denmark and Norway. Political voices have been raised, pointing out the cost of resettlement. Meanwhile, academics have pointed out the challenges connected to the resettlement program, such as instances of fraud and lack of transparency during the selection process (Garnier et al., 2018). We discuss the challenges and potentials of the UN resettlement program in Chapter 2.

Figure 1. Resettlement program at the center of overlapping political mandates



At the core of national policy formulations and practices on resettlement, we find a list of concepts that are interpreted differently by different actors within each resettlement country, as well as across countries. These include need for protection, vulnerability, and integration. We return to these and other concepts throughout the report, providing examples of shifting vulnerabilities according to context and integration understanding—e.g., as individual integration potential and municipal integration capacity.

The key role of the UNHCR

Resettlement efforts look different across all countries covered in this study. At the core, there is one key commonality. All countries collaborate closely with the UNHCR to identify eligible refugees and, eventually, their dependents for resettlement. To understand the international practice of resettlement, one needs to understand the role of the UNHCR and its dual significance as both norm entrepreneur and practical facilitator, as well as the limits to what it can do vis-à-vis individual resettlement states.

The UNHCR is deeply engaged throughout the operational process. As laid out in the *UNHCR Handbook on Resettlement* (UNHCR, 2020), the UNHCR identifies refugees in need of resettlement; assesses their needs and documents them in a file; prepares a resettlement submission through a so-called Refugee Registration Form (RRF); communicates with resettlement states on their capacity and profile; and presents the RRF to a resettlement state. Finally, the UNHCR often collaborates with the IOM to coordinate transportation and logistics. This includes receiving commission members from resettlement states in transit states and arranging the journeys of refugees from the latter to the former.

The fundamental importance of the UNHCR (initiated by its predecessor, the International Refugee Organization) for refugee resettlement has a history that dates to the aftermath of World War II. The UN agency has, since its inception, been involved in large-scale resettlement operations. These include the resettlement of Hungarian refugees from Austria (1956–1957), South Asian refugees from Uganda (1972), Latin American refugees from Chile and Chilean exiles (1973), Indochinese refugees from Southeast Asia (1975–1995), Bosnians from the Former Republic of Yugoslavia (1991–1995), and Syrian refugees from the Middle East (2014–present). Due to the technocratic expertise amassed through such large-scale and complex operations, it has consolidated its international position as the key player in the field. First, the regularly updated *UNHCR Resettlement Handbook* (2011) outlines the key objectives and mechanisms of resettlement in various resettlement states. Second, the UNHCR's yearly *Projected Global Resettlement Needs* report maps needs and offers coordination and information to states and advocacy groups. Finally, Annual Tripartite Consultations on Resettlement (ATCR) bring resettlement states and civil society organizations together on a yearly basis to address global needs and operational challenges. All of these and numerous other activities and resources that the UNHCR offers to resettlement states have given direction to this form of refugee protection.

Resettled refugees in Norway

By early 2020, there were altogether 40,700 resettlement refugees in Norway. Table 1 indicates the distribution of national groups over time since 1987.

Table 1. Total number of resettlement refugees settled in Norway per year and the three largest country backgrounds per year.[8]

Total in	Resettled per year	Largest group	Second largest group	Third largest group
1.1.2021	**40,676**	**Syria**	**Iran**	**Vietnam**
2020	1,527	Syria	Congo	Eritrea
2019	2,695	Congo	Syria	Uganda
2018	2,818	Syria	Congo	Uganda
2017	2,362	Syria	Lebanon	Jordan
2016	3,237	Syria	Lebanon	Afghanistan
2015	2,349	Syria	Afghanistan	Iran
2014	1,257	Syria	Sudan	Somalia
2013	952	Iran	Afghanistan	Somalia
2012	1,512	Iran	Myanmar	Eritrea
2011	925	Iran	Sudan	Eritrea
2010	1,031	Myanmar	Iran	Iraq
2009	1,343	Iraq	Myanmar	Bhutan
2008	634	Myanmar	Iraq	Sri Lanka
2007	1,101	Myanmar	Congo	Iraq
2006	959	Myanmar	Congo	Philippines
2005	723	Myanmar	Congo	Burundi
2004	1,105	Liberia	Myanmar	Iran
2003	1,533	Iran	Liberia	Burundi
2002	1,174	Iran	Afghanistan	Iraq
2001	1,339	Iran	Afghanistan	Ethiopia
2000	1,144	Afghanistan	Iran	Croatia
1999	1,125	Iran	Iraq	Afghanistan
1998	853	Iran	Iraq	Afghanistan
1997	816	Iraq	Iran	China
1996	339	Iraq	Iran	Bosnia-Hercegovina
1995	303	Iraq	Iran	Vietnam
1994	312	Iran	Iraq	Vietnam
1993	662	Iraq	Iran	Vietnam
1992	1,175	Iraq	Vietnam	Iran
1991	1,090	Vietnam	Iran	Iraq
1990	899	Vietnam	Iran	Iraq
1989	770	Vietnam	Iran	Iraq
1988	448	Vietnam	Iran	Chile
1987	150	Vietnam	Iran	Myanmar/Cambodia

Source: Statistics Norway (2021).

8 In the table, country background reflects country of birth. For instance, Lebanon and Jordan include the children who were born in exile to Syrian-born refugees.

Table 1 reflects the dominance of Syrian resettlement quotas since 2014. We also see that certain groups, such as the Congolese and refugees from Myanmar, appear in the list repeatedly, indicating a long-term need for protection and resettlement.

Data from Statistics Norway indicate that the overall levels of education and income among resettled refugees are low in comparison with other refugees, quite low in comparison to other immigrant categories, and substantially lower than those of the total population.[9] About two-thirds of all resettlement refugees aged 15–66 years (68%) were either employed or in education in comparison with 83% for the total population. For Syrians, the largest national group that also has the shortest duration of residence, 81% of the household income consists of social transfers from the Norwegian state. Nearly half of the overall population of resettlement refugees live in persistently low-income households, even after 10 years of residence in Norway.

It is against this socioeconomic background that the issue of selection criteria and the question of "presumed integration potential" arise. As we shall see, they are also relevant far beyond the Norwegian context.

In the following sections, we present the detailed research questions to be answered throughout the report. Subsequently, we discuss the methodology used in the study before providing the background of the resettlement program.

Research questions

The overarching research question in this study is: **How do resettlement countries balance the humanitarian goal of securing the protection of vulnerable refugees against the consideration of the refugees' future integration?** In addition to answering this question, we also discuss questions related to the Norwegian resettlement program in detail:

1. **How do Norwegian resettlement criteria and practices compare with those of other countries?**

As part of the comparative analysis, key questions include: How do other countries (Netherlands, Sweden, Australia, UK, Germany, and Canada) balance vulnerability and future integration when selecting refugees for resettlement? Do they have formal criteria for inclusion and exclusion related to integration and,

9 https://www.ssb.no/befolkning/artikler-og-publikasjoner/naer-halvparten-av-overforingsflyktningene-har-vedvarende-lavinntekt

if so, how do these correspond to their practices? What is the rationale behind these criteria and practices? We also ask, at what level do these countries apply integration as part of their selection criteria? Do they consider integration at both the group level—i.e., when composing the quotas for resettlement—and at the individual level? Do foreign policy considerations influence these national resettlement programs?

2. **How does Norway consider vulnerability and future integration when deciding on the composition of the resettlement quota and in the subsequent selection and settlement process?**

When describing and analyzing the Norwegian case, we emphasize the different perspectives of the national actors involved, Norway's interaction with the UNHCR as part of the selection process, the link between the formal selection criteria and practices, and at which stages of the resettlement process (selection–resettlement–local settlement) the question of integration plays a role. In addition, we ask: How does information regarding the selection process and later integration flow between the UNHCR, UDI, IMDi, PU, the municipalities, and the refugees themselves?

3. **In what way does the interaction between the UNCHR and the individual resettlement countries influence which refugees the latter select?**

All countries in this study cooperate closely with the UNHCR in their selection process. How does the UNHCR interpret and adapt to national preferences, criteria, and practices? What is the dynamic between the UNCHR and the resettlement countries and how does this affect the outcome of the selection process? When resettlement countries reject cases forwarded by the UNHCR, what are the consequences for the parties involved? In discussing these issues, we also ask whether there is a correspondence between the needs of the UNHCR, the needs of the refugees, and the preferences of the resettlement countries?

4. **What are the consequences of various national resettlement practices for the actors involved?**

Throughout the report, we look for consequences of the national selection criteria and practices for all parties involved—the refugees who are resettled, the refugee populations remaining in the host countries, the host states in the global South, the resettlement countries, and the UNHCR. Who benefits from resettlement programs?

5. **What are the appropriate selection criteria for Norway?**

Based on the experiences in Norway and in other relevant resettlement countries, what would be the appropriate selection criteria for Norway? To answer this question, we need to consider both national and international contexts for the resettlement program. Adhering to the policy context, we ask: In what way is the current resettlement program in line with Norway's humanitarian, integration, immigration, and foreign policy objectives? At the international level, we ask: How do Norwegian criteria and practices respond to corresponding UNHCR annual resettlement needs and global refugee protection goals?

Data and methodology

We base this study on four main data sources: an international query, qualitative expert interviews, a review of key documents, and participatory observation of first reception of resettled refugees at the Oslo airport.

A survey conducted through the Intergovernmental Consultations on Migration, Asylum and Refugees (IGC)

The international query was conducted during the fall of 2020, providing information on national resettlement programs in Sweden, Netherlands, Canada, UK, Australia, France, and Germany. The query was administered by the Intergovernmental Consultations on Migration, Asylum and Refugees (IGC) secretariat in Geneva and fronted by the MoJ. Except for France, all the responding countries were IGC members. The query format is a mini survey, which allows for quick feedback on a few core questions. For this study, these questions concerned the criteria and practices used for the selection of resettled refugees. Despite these questions being potentially politically sensitive, we received responses from all eight countries, including Norway. Except for the Netherlands, where we were not able to reach the relevant civil servants, we conducted follow-up interviews with civil servants in the other seven countries. During these interviews, the representatives of the national authorities provided more detailed insights into their national resettlement programs.

Qualitative interviews

We conducted qualitative interviews with 65 interviewees who fall into five categories: civil servants and experts in the seven countries plus Norway, NGO

representatives in Norway, UNHCR employees, and employees in three Norwegian municipalities.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, most of the interviews were conducted using digital video platforms (such as Microsoft Teams, Zoom or Skype). We were able to conduct a handful of interviews face-to-face, meeting in cafes or in our offices while ensuring social distancing. Use of digital platforms challenged many of the finer dynamisms of traditional interview techniques, such as gaining confidence, securing turn taking during interviews, knowing how to probe on sensitive issues, etc. It was our experience that the interviewees were, for the most part, comfortable with the interview situation and did not hold back because of technical platform use, and instead shared their views as freely as could be expected.

The interviews were semi-structured, allowing us to follow up on the interviewees' special competencies and to pursue topics of interest that came up during the sessions. We developed separate interview guides for the interviews with different categories of interviewees. Most of the interviews lasted between an hour and an hour and a half.

The IGC query respondents provided contact information, which we later used to make appointments for interviews with national experts in the eight countries. Representatives from two—often three—different ministries or departments were present during the interviews with respondents from the seven case countries outside Norway. This gave us different perspectives on resettlement and signified the complexity involved, as well as on the overlapping mandates that mark resettlement practices.

Norwegian civil servants constituted the largest group of interviewees, covering the key institutions involved in resettlement: the UDI, IMDi, PU, MoJ, MoER, and MFA. Within the UDI, there is a unit solely committed to running the resettlement program in Norway (OFF). We interviewed around two-thirds of the employees in that unit. At IMDi, there is no separate unit dedicated to the resettlement program, but there is a group of employees who primarily work with the selection and settlement of UN-quota refugees. We interviewed most of these employees. In the ministries, including the MFA, we interviewed civil servants with operative responsibility for the program. We conducted two additional interviews with civil servants in the Norwegian Directorate for Children, Youth and Family Affairs (Bufdir). We did this in order to understand how the Norwegian child welfare system experiences the vulnerability of resettled families after they had been settled.

Among the NGOs involved in the refugee and asylum field, we interviewed those that are directly involved in resettlement, including organizations that can suggest cases for resettlement (PEN International [PEN], International Cities of Refugee Network [ICORN]) and Norwegian People's Aid (NPA), which handles the arrival and transit of newly arrived UN refugees. We also interviewed a representative of the Refugee Council Norway, which is responsible for operating field offices in several countries of origin and in first countries of asylum from where resettlement countries select refugees.

Another key informant was the Norwegian Association of Local and Regional Authorities (KS). This organization protects the interests of Norwegian municipalities and serves as their employer organization. It plays a role in resettlement by estimating settlement capacity and fronting the municipalities' interests vis-à-vis the responsible ministries.

The three municipalities selected for interviews were decided upon by choosing one major city, one smaller city/town, and one rural municipality. This strategic sample was chosen to secure variation in the integration environment and in the volume of resettled refugees. We wanted to know how municipal employees, who are at the very end of the resettlement chain, perceived the resettlement program. Again, some of the interviews were conducted face-to-face, while digital platforms were used for others. All these interviewees were highly motivated to tell us about their experiences with the program and with the integration of refugees from different countries of origin.

From the outset of the study, we aimed to interview resettled refugees in all three selected municipalities. However, the COVID-19 situation made it impossible to conduct interviews face-to-face. Given the sensitivity of these refugee interviews and the challenges in terms of securing fully informed consent for their participation, we decided not to interview more refugees for the study. Instead, we made sure to cover the topic of variations in experiences and adaptation in our interviews with local staff in the two other selected municipalities.

Documents

The MoJ and MoER provided the research team with relevant documents throughout the study. These included publicly available documents and government guidelines. We also asked for access to a list of documents and communications concerning the process of establishing the 2021 quota (running from spring of 2020 through to November 2020). Due to this being an ongoing process, we received access to the same process for the 2020 quota instead. The

ministries also granted access to other documents, including one out of two internal reports from IMDi concerning integration criteria. In addition, there are international documents that contain key information for everyone involved in resettlement, including the *UNCHR Handbook* (UNHCR, 2020). Here the preferences of both resettlement countries and UNHCR procedures are described.

There is limited available documentation about Norwegian resettlement criteria and practices. However, key insights are documented in a previous evaluation of integration criteria in 2007 (Long & Olsen, 2007), the overall resettlement program in 2008 (Long & Olsen, 2008), and the related Culture Orientation Program (Proba, 2020).[10] In addition, there is a substantial body of international research on the UN resettlement program (e.g., Suter, 2019; de Boer & Zieck, 2020) and a list of studies on the effects of Norwegian resettlement practice (Henriksen, 2012; Utne, 2018; Lunde & Lysen, 2019; Tønnesen & Andersen, 2019; Utne & Strøm, 2020). We reference these and other contributions throughout the report.

Participatory observation

Two of the researchers were part of the group welcoming resettlement refugees to Oslo airport. This service is organized by the NPA NGO. At the airport, we spoke to the refugee families and to the NGO staff. We also spoke to immigration police members who perform the biometric registration of refugees on site. The NGO staff are responsible for answering any questions that the refugees may have, securing their transition to national flights, or following them through the airport to the waiting representatives of their designated municipalities.

Structure of the report

In Chapter 2, we provide a short description of the UN resettlement program, along with an assessment of its status and a review of the critical points that researchers have raised over the past decades.

In Chapter 3, we use the results from the IGC query and the follow-up interviews with national government employees in the eight countries to identify

10 A. https://www.udi.no/globalassets/global/forskning-fou_i/beskyttelse/a-comparative-study-on-un-resettlement-refugees.pdf;
https://www.imdi.no/globalassets/dokumenter/andre-filer/evaluering-av-kulturorienteringsprogrammet-for-overforingsflyktninger.pdf
B. https://www.udi.no/globalassets/global/forskning-fou_i/beskyttelse/evaluation-of-the-norwegian-program-for-resettlement-of-un-refugees.pdf

similarities and differences between them. We also note examples of what may constitute good practices.

In Chapter 4, we turn to the Norwegian case and describe Norwegian resettlement criteria and practices. This involves a description of the process of deciding on the quota for the coming year, including the actors involved, and a description of how the Norwegian selection committees operate in the field.

In Chapter 5, we use the interviews conducted with Norwegian interviewees to describe and discuss the application of Norwegian selection criteria in practice, based on interviews with Norwegian civil servants, municipal employees, and other experts. This chapter also includes a discussion about the Norwegian resettlement program within the crossing mandates of humanitarian, integration, immigration, and foreign policies.

In Chapter 6, we return to the research questions and discuss them while considering both comparative and Norwegian data. Based on the material presented in this report, we present key findings and a set of recommendation for the Norwegian authorities, which the material suggests may help further improve the national resettlement program. The recommendations view the Norwegian program in the context of crossing national political mandates and the international refugee situation.

2. Refugee resettlement—Prospects and challenges

In this chapter, we take stock of the experiences with the UN resettlement program and more recent national programs over the past several decades. Running these programs is a complex endeavor in the sense that they involve a list of multiple actors, including states (countries of origin, first countries of asylum/host countries,[11] and resettlement countries), multilateral organizations (UNCHR, IOM), and refugee populations.

In the studied countries, refugee policies are often contested, giving rise to changing priorities and engagement volume. In addition, our informants pointed out that the refugees can see resettlement as winning "the big prize." In turn, this creates a space for both legitimate and illegitimate strategies and local dynamics. For the actors involved, it can thus be challenging to secure smooth and fair selection and resettlement processes. During the same period, however, the UNCHR and resettlement countries have addressed several of the challenges that have presented themselves. In the following sections, we take stock of these, as well as of the unique strong aspects of various resettlement programs.

In a rapidly changing world, resettlement offers not only individual protection and a durable solution to the problem of forced displacement but also a solution that—if conceptualized, designed, and implemented the right way—provides one of the few viable contemporary bridges towards workable international migration management that is grounded in international human rights standards, solidarity, and humanity.

This chapter provides an inventory of the possibilities and challenges arising with third-country resettlement programs (Garnier et al., 2018). Academics and others have questioned the viability of resettlement programs over the years. Nevertheless, these programs persist and have strong defenders within the UN and many of the countries that are involved, either as first countries of asylum or as resettlement countries.

11 The UNCHR suggests distinguishing between countries of origin, countries of (first) asylum / host countries, and countries of resettlement (https://rsq.unhcr.org/en). In this report, we use host countries of first refuge after having crossed (a) border(s).

Hence, logistical, political, and moral challenges are part of resettlement operations. Internationally, criticisms include high costs and recurring problems with fraud and misconduct. The discretionary nature of refugee resettlement as a durable solution—rather than an obligation under international law—has contributed to significant fluctuation in resettlement numbers for a variety of reasons.

We argue that it would not be correct to assert the "end of resettlement" (Beers, 2020). This would not be correct even given the difficulties in selecting candidates; the complications of combining humanitarian aspirations with integration; and the challenges of securing resettlement as an effective instrument of international protection. Instead, it is time to reflect on the key debates surrounding resettlement and to look ahead to the potential of these programs post-COVID-19 pandemic.

We make three main points in these reflections: (1) resettlement has shown resilience as an instrument of humanitarian protection, surviving criticism and periods of decline; (2) nevertheless, it continues to be complicated to implement resettlement well and a list of challenges must be kept in mind; and (3) there is an emergent positive focus on resettlement as part of humanitarian multilateralism and, lately, also as a domestic framework for participatory action (through private sponsorships).

The resilience of resettlement programs

In recent years, several actors have pointed to the challenges of resettlement and even discussed a possible end of resettlement. The pandemic and the Trump presidency led to 2020 having the lowest resettlement numbers in recent history.[12] Adding to this, some traditional resettlement countries, such as Denmark, have periodically suspended resettlement altogether.[13] However, history shows that fluctuations in political popularity and in resettlement numbers are integral parts of resettlement.

Several researchers have also lamented the lack of transparency and rigorous evaluations in this field. For instance, Beirens and Fratzke (2017, p. 2) note that there is a dearth of comprehensive evaluations of resettlement programs and a focus on quantity (e.g., quota size) rather than quality (e.g., resettlement's stra-

12 https://www.unhcr.org/news/press/2020/11/5fb4e6f24/unhcr-warns-2020-risks-lowest-resettlement-levels-recent-history.html

13 https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2017-09-09/denmark-suspends-refugee-resettlement-under-un-program

tegic value). Betts (2017), a leading scholar on forced migration, likewise finds that the aims and objectives of resettlement are too poorly specified and measured. Betts' (2017, p. 53) critical summary of the academic literature succinctly identifies some key challenges:

> The purpose of resettlement is specified with surprising vagueness. It is supposedly a protection tool, a durable solution, a means to strategically leverage other durable solutions, and a form of burden sharing and international solidarity. Yet the impact of resettlement is almost never measured relative to any of these putative purposes. Because aims and objectives are often so imprecisely specified, there are no benchmarks or metrics to hold governments accountable for their resettlement practices or to measure what resettlement achieves.

This may, in fact, be an excellent point in time to revisit some of the core challenges to the resettlement program.

Statistics on resettlement

As in many other areas of migration, it is challenging for the UNHCR and member states to secure harmonization of resettlement concepts and statistics.[14] These are often influenced by national practices. One example of national differences concerns the question of whether relocation that takes place in the context of humanitarian visas, complementary humanitarian pathways, and humanitarian admissions programs should count as resettlement.[15] Furthermore, several countries have parallel resettlement programs, such as private sponsorship models, which additionally complicates comparative statistics.

In Norway, the most recent example of relocation occurred in 2020. That year, Norway decided to relocate 50 asylum seekers from Greece. According to the authorities, the decision was made shortly before a major fire broke out at the Moria camp on the island of Lesbos, leading to local displacement. The media coverage reported on the relocation efforts because of the fire at the camp. The selected Syrian families with children were registered as part of the 2021 resettlement quota.[16]

14 https://migrationdataportal.org/blog/global-refugee-resettlement-what-do-statistics-tell-us
15 https://www.europarl.europa.eu/cmsdata/150782/eprs-study-humanitarian-visas.pdf; https://www.unhcr.org/complementary-pathways.html
16 https://www.regjeringen.no/no/aktuelt/norge-starter-prosessen-med-relokalisering-fra-hellas/id2740826/

The (non)registration of rejection numbers is another example of how challenging statistics can be in the area of resettlement. When contacted, the UNCHR's statistical office referred to individual resettlement states.[17]

The emergence of resettlement as a durable solution

The discretionary nature of the resettlement program has become open to significant variation in the number of refugees over the years. The program experienced a falling interest from resettlement countries during the 1980s, when only a small group of countries remained in the program, including the United States (US), Australia, Canada, and Scandinavian countries.[18]

By the mid-1990s, however, UNHCR reframed resettlement as a strictly humanitarian program. It argued that resettlement was a strategic instrument of international protection by states (Fredrikson & Mougne, 1994). A resurgence of refugee resettlement followed, assisted by a clearer distinction between refugees and migrants and by the UNHCR providing guidance to states (Garnier et al., 2018). Refugee resettlement was redefined in major policy documents, such as the *Agenda for Protection* (UNHCR, 2003), as an instrument of international protection that focuses on the most vulnerable refugees (a humanitarian instrument). Simultaneously, UNHCR presented resettlement as a complement to other "durable solutions" to forced displacement. By 2007, the number of resettled refugees reached 54,200 (Garnier et al., 2018). In recent years, optimism with respect to the humanitarian potential of resettlement is visible in documents such as the *UN Global Compact on Refugees*. The compact includes a three-year strategy on resettlement and complementary pathways.[19]

External shocks

Over the years, external shocks have influenced refugee settlement. One past example were the effects of the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks, which led to a significant temporary decline in resettlement to the US.[20]

The COVID-19 pandemic that began in March 2020 is another example. The pandemic led to major delays and suspension of resettlement.[21] In the case of

17 A request was sent to the UNHCR for cross-country comparative statistics on rejection rates and exclusions for the 2013–2020 period on February 23, 2020. The response was that these data were not available.
18 https://www.refworld.org/docid/3da1b32b2.html
19 https://www.unhcr.org/5c658aed4.pdf; also, see Suhrke and Garnier (2018).
20 https://www.niskanencenter.org/wp-content/uploads/old_uploads/2018/09/NC-Refugee-Paper-SalehyanElec_FINAL.pdf
21 https://reliefweb.int/report/united-states-america/us-australia-hit-new-lows-refugee-resettlement

Norway, immigration authorities looked for ways to continue the resettlement process, despite the travel restrictions, including conducting interviews on digital platforms.

Other examples of challenges that have led to the suspension of resettlement have been medical bans on resettling HIV-positive refugees and Ebola outbreaks in West Africa.[22] In 2014, noting the lack of a public health rationale, the UNHCR reported that health concerns have led some resettlement countries to cancel their missions to Ebola-affected regions in West Africa.

Resettlement challenges—A typology

Refugee resettlement is a difficult process to administer—and to administer well. The sheer number of actors and interests involved, along with its transnational and transcultural characteristics, contribute to its complexity. The challenges connected to resettlement can be viewed from four perspectives.

The system perspective

Viewed from the system administration perspective, resettlement represents challenges connected to information and communicative practices both within and across borders. Further challenges are connected to the identification, selection, and screening of candidates, their transportation, and, finally, their arrival and integration in the resettlement country. This perspective is helpful for risk and impact assessments. Looking at resettlement this way also makes comparisons with other forms of protection possible. In doing so, the resettlement process can be broken down into stages, which allows for discussions of, for instance, resource efficiency.

The actor perspective

Seeing resettlement from the actor perspective exposes a different set of challenges. The list of actors who are involved is long and includes refugees, the UNHCR and IOM, host countries, resettlement countries, and civil society actors. In the academic literature, we find studies on how refugees perceive resettlement, how they invest in the selection processes, and how they seek to negotiate access to resettlement (Jansen, 2008; Sandvik, 2009; Balakian, 2020;

22 https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.1111/j.1467-8519.2006.00499; https://www.refworld.org/pdfid/548014ce4.pdf; Australia was among the countries that suspended humanitarian visas for refugees from Ebola-affected countries (https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/av/world-australia-29812014).

Thomson, 2012; Ikanda, 2018). Here, we also learn about the hold that resettlement can have over refugees' everyday aspirations within the camp setting (Horst, 2006). At the same time, research has documented the "coping" strategies of humanitarian organizations and their employees (Janmyr, 2018). Refugees are not alone in finding resettlement frustrating. The scarcity of resettlement also makes it a highly sought-after resource. Furthermore, from the perspective of NGOs, managing resettlement comes with risks. NGOs are often subject to rumors about their practices, pointing to alleged misconduct, suspected favoritism, or fraud (Sandvik, 2013). Meanwhile, host states are often overburdened and easily susceptible to accusations of corruption.

The deviance perspective

A third way to discuss the challenges associated with resettlement is to focus on instances of deviance from established norms. Over the last two decades, there have been multiple reports about corruption and racketeering networks that involve resettlement for cash, resettling host country citizens for cash, and resettling for sex or other favors.[23] Further criticism has been raised because of increased violence within camps and pressure from host country authorities. The UNHCR has concomitantly bolstered its anti-corruption mechanisms and commitment to combat "resettlement fraud." Fraud is here to be understood as the intentional misrepresentation or concealment of facts or evidence material to the resettlement process with the intent of obtaining a resettlement or other benefit for the refugee concerned or for another individual who otherwise would not be entitled to be resettled or to obtain such a benefit.

This remains a constant challenge for the UNHCR. The agency operates in high-corruption settings with limited accountability at the frontlines, where the high demand for a very limited number of resettlement slots makes them extremely valuable commodities for a highly vulnerable population. Researchers report on the practice of refugees seeing the need to "perform" vulnerability during interviews.[24] Some NGOs have, therefore, called for a greater role for NGOs and civil society in making direct submissions to resettlement countries.[25] This, in turn, raises the question of whether NGOs and civil society

23 It goes beyond our mandate to fully discuss the operational challenges of UNHCR's field offices and reports of malpractice; for more see, e.g., https://www.unhcr.org/news/latest/2002/1/3c5198dd4/lubbers-accepts-corruption-report-says-measures-place-prevent-further-abuses.html; https://www.hrw.org/reports/2002/kenyugan/kenyugan1002%20ap%20alter-25.htm; https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2020/jan/17/officials-charged-with-corruption-over-award-of-uganda-refugee-camp-deals

24 Thanks to Dr. Sophie Nakueira at the Max Planck Institute for Social Anthropology for a first-hand account of this from her fieldwork in a UNHCR-operated refugee camp in Uganda, October 2020.

25 https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/ResettlementResearch.pdf

are better positioned to deal with similar structural challenges—not to mention the added logistical complexity of bringing more partners into the process. Such questions are beyond the scope of this report; the point here is merely to allude to the malpractices and unintended outcomes that resettlement can also give rise to.

How can global, national, and local actors help improve the current resettlement programs? There are several ongoing international debates that point in different directions. In this section, we provide a brief review of some of these ongoing debates regarding how to preserve or even expand resettlement.

Is there a need for a binding legal framework to strengthen resettlement? Research is inconclusive. Some researchers hold that states would only accept binding resettlement targets if they were equal or lower to what they are already doing. They point out that the field needs political leadership rather than legal developments (Suhrke, 1998). Litigation has occasionally been used to preserve (or undermine) resettlement.

New programs—Private sponsorships

In traditional resettlement countries, Australia and Canada, civil society advocacy for resettlement increased in the context of the Syrian crisis (Garnier et al. 2018).[26] In Canada, the private sponsorship model, whereby communities, NGOs, and groups of individuals can sponsor individual refugees, had secured protection for 280,000 people by 2020.[27] During the 2016 UN Summit in New York, the Canadian government promised to "export" the private sponsorship model to interested states (Hyndman et al., 2017, p. 56). There have since been multiple initiatives to incentivize community sponsorship.[28] These efforts have met with some success—for example, in the UK and Germany (Bertram et al., 2020; Reynolds & Clark-Kazak, 2019). Concerns about this model have focused on the limits of volunteer capacity and reliance on "friendship-based support." (Frazer, 2020) In Australia, the government piloted a community sponsorship model; however, it did not meet refugee advocates' expectations and was

26 https://policyoptions.irpp.org/magazines/july-2018/success-privately-sponsored-refugee-system/

27 https://www.refugeecouncil.org.au/canada-private-sponsorship/ https://policyoptions.irpp.org/magazines/january-2020/the-cracks-in-our-admired-private-refugee-sponsorship-program/

28 https://refugeesponsorship.org/ ; https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/info/files/commission_recommendation_on_legal_pathways_to_protection_in_the_eu_promoting_resettlement_humanitarian_admission_and_other_complementary_pathways.pdf p. 6

denounced as a profit-making initiative (Hirsch et al.,2019). We revisit these initiatives in the comparative Chapter 3.

The digital transformation of refugee resettlement

Currently, resettlement is impacted by a digital transformation. Even before COVID-19, digital platforms were used by the UNHCR and resettlement countries to systemize and communicate information regarding individuals and processes.

From the adoption of results-based management (RBM) systems[29] in the late 1990s and the introduction of increasingly sophisticated registration software (Project Profile, ProGres), there have been significant expansive shifts in the refugee digital ecosystem. This includes the growth of UNHCR platforms, the introduction of biometrics, and the proliferation of digital devices. This signifies that refugees also produce and possess data of relevance to protection procedures, including registration and resettlement processes, and that their digital bodies are relevant to resettlement selection (Sandvik, forthcoming). Lessons from the digital turn in resettlement suggests that the resettlement experience has undergone significant changes and that successful resettlement (from the user side)—from selection to integration—is increasingly contingent on digital literacy (Gilhooli & Lee, 2014; Lloyd, 2020; Marlow, 2020; Garnier et al., 2018).

Technology can also contribute to new challenges. One such area occurs when personal and biological data are merged, raising both legal and policy challenges (Holland, 2011; Lee & Voight, 2020). The combination of such data may be useful when looking to confirm a refugee's identity. This information may also be checked against security-related databases and be used to create profiles when referring refugees for resettlement. Sweden has recently tested robotic automation, arguing that:

> parts of the resettlement process are suitable for automation because it is fully digitalized, such as receiving and registering requests from UNHCR, as well as generating travel itineraries and bookings.[30]

Over the past few years, the question has come up regarding the potential of digital transformation to help expand the resettlement space. Various models are

29 A new public management approach.

30 https://www.migrationsverket.se/download/18.2fa4056d1775f05c203e1/1612527677376/Verksamhetsrapport%20vidarebos%C3%A4ttning%202019_engelska.pdf, p. 18.

now available. A Stanford project designed an algorithm that assigned placements for refugees, projecting that it "would increase their chances of finding employment by roughly 40 to 70 percent compared with how the refugees actually fared." (Shashkevich, 2018). Piloted in Switzerland, the project aimed to substantially increase employment rates while keeping a focus on family preferences (Olberg & Seuken, 2019). The algorithm, which "could be implemented at virtually no cost", was presented to "help resource-constrained governments and resettlement agencies find the best places for refugees to relocate."[31] The algorithm, Annie, was developed in close collaboration with a US resettlement agency—the Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society—where the first version was deployed in May 2018. Annie promised to integrate "machine learning and integer optimization" to suggest "optimal placements while giving substantial autonomy for the resettlement staff" to place refugees who have no relatives in the US (Trapp et al., 2018). How the normalization of this kind of processing technology will reshape the relationship between protection norms and selection procedures remains to be seen (Jones & Teytelbyom, 2017).

At the time of writing this report, it also remains to be seen how long and to what extent resettlement will be delayed due to concerns about COVID-19. In Norway, the authorities suspended resettlement activities during the spring and summer of 2020. During the fall, efforts were made to secure the arrival of as many of the refugees approved for resettlement as possible. Despite these efforts, the pandemic has continued to challenge resettlement activities well into 2021. As we have seen from history, when politics or pandemics have slowed down resettlement, it has had the ability to bounce back. All eyes will now be on how international organizations, states, and civil society act in the coming months to shape resettlement in the future.[32]

31 Alex Shashkevich, 'Stanford Scholars Develop New Algorithm to Help Resettle Refugees and Improve their Integration', *Stanford News* (18 January 2018) <https://news.stanford.edu/2018/01/18/algorithm-improves-integration-refugees/> accessed 7 May 2020.

32 https://www.kaldorcentre.unsw.edu.au/publication/covid-19-resettlement-freeze-towards-permanent-suspension

3. Selection criteria in eight countries—Vulnerability and integration

In this chapter, we compare the criteria and practices related to vulnerability and integration that are used in the eight identified resettlement states (Sweden, Germany, Netherlands, UK, France, Canada, and Australia). Except for the US, traditionally a dominant resettlement state but with a lull in numbers during the Trump presidency, the list covers a good selection of the world's major resettlement states. We are interested in how these countries balance vulnerability and "integration potential," and the link between criteria and practices. As we will see, there are different ways of applying integration to refugee selection.

First, we need to make a few remarks on the premises used for comparing these national resettlement programs. While the output—the registered number of refugees resettled each year—is readily available, it is harder to document how the national criteria are translated into national practices. The criteria change over time, along with changes in political priorities. Furthermore, a range of state and NGO actors are involved in decisions, leading to yearly quotas and shifting practices. These processes often involve competing mandates and institutional objectives. This makes it difficult to trace how guidelines translate into actual practices. It is also important to note that written documentations of criteria and practice may diverge from the experiences of the civil servants and others involved in operating the resettlement programs.

During the data-gathering process in the eight countries, it has been challenging to secure precise knowledge about the selection processes used. Transparency is complicated by the fact that resettlement states: (a) have differing selection criteria with various qualifiers that make them difficult to compare directly; (b) translate these criteria into practice in differing ways and by non-identical actors across resettlement states; (c) consider selection criteria to be a politically sensitive issue and that full transparency could detrimentally affect resettlement states' ability to get requisite information from refugees—for instance, in an interview situation; and (d) are concerned about security and data protection concerns. Still, communication and transparency about various national practices may increase the legitimacy of these programs among refugees. They

could also assure other resettlement countries about the integrity of the resettlement program, in general, and bolster its credentials as a humanitarian mechanism of burden sharing.

As part of UNHCR's role in protecting the humanitarian aspect of resettlement, they have urged resettlement states not to use "integration potential" as the basis for their selection practices:

> UNHCR urges resettlement States not to use integration potential and other discriminatory selection criteria (e.g., family size, age, health status, ethnicity, and religion). Such discrimination undermines the protection and needs-based approach to resettlement, creating inequalities and protection gaps, and limits access to resettlement by some refugees most at risk.[33]

Three observations can be made in this regard. First, the UNHCR clearly encourages resettlement states to lean on the agency's internationally recognized eligibility criteria, as well as on the agency's professionalism and technocratic authority, for selection procedures. Second, the powerful statement also acknowledges that using "integration potential," however defined, as a selection criterion is both a threat to the program's integrity and, indeed, a temptation on the part of (some) resettlement states. Finally, although the UNHCR strongly admonishes against using "integration potential" as grounds for selection, it equally strongly calls for positive integration outcomes. The quote continues:

> To preserve the integrity of resettlement as a protection tool and durable solution for refugees most in need, it is important to ensure resettlement programs are needs-based, non-discriminatory *and achieve successful integration outcomes* (emphasis added).

In theory, it is possible to ensure successful integration outcomes by optimizing whatever "integration potential" refugees represent. In practice, it is likely that all resettlement states conduct some sort of assessment of integration potential, whether at the group or individual level, and that this, if balanced against humanitarian concerns, may indeed ensure the sustainability of the program rather than undermine it. Exactly how these concerns should be balanced is, however, an open question. The UNHCR does encourage that resettlement countries facilitate integration and aim to create "welcoming societies."[34]

33 https://www.unhcr.org/524c31666.pdf

34 https://www.unhcr.org/protection/resettlement/5d15db254/three-year-strategy-resettlement-complementary-pathways.html#_ga=2.150492342.1495333611.1618067781-766231810.1618067781

In the following sections, we will see how these eight countries understand this vague and disputed concept and whether they include it as part of their criteria and practices.

When we compare their national programs, we also ask how they balance integration and humanitarian concerns and on what grounds they exclude and reject cases. Finally, we ask whether they see resettlement as linked to their national strategies regarding humanitarian, foreign, and immigration control policies.

Eight national resettlement programs

The 8 countries selected as cases for this study are among the 11 largest UN resettlement countries worldwide for the 2003 to mid-2020 period.[35] During this period, these 8 countries resettled nearly one-third of the roughly 1 million UNHCR-referred resettlement refugees, departing to 45 resettlement countries, with Canada and Australia resettling 12% and 9%, respectively, and the rest resettling 1–3%.[36]

In addition to these eight countries, the US has traditionally been a leading resettlement country. During the same period, it dwarfed all others by accounting for nearly two-thirds of all resettlements worldwide. According to signals in 2021 from the new Biden-led US government, the country is likely to again increase resettlement quotas following a downturn during the 2016–2020 period. In 2022, the US aims to resettle more than 100,000 refugees through the UN program.[37]

In Table 2, we see the more recent resettlement quotas of the countries during the 2013–2020 period.

35 https://www.unhcr.org/en-us/603e5d344, p 3.

36 The other resettlement countries, listed in order of their share of global resettlement through the UNHCR during that period, are Finland, New Zealand, Denmark, Switzerland, Belgium, Ireland, Italy, Spain, Austria, Albania, Portugal, Brazil, Chile, Iceland, Luxembourg, Republic of Korea, Argentina, Croatia, Romania, Japan, Czechia, Uruguay, Lithuania, Bulgaria, Estonia, Latvia, Slovenia, Monaco, Paraguay, Liecthenstein, Malta, Belarus, Hungary, Slovakia, Mexico, and Poland. Finland and New Zealand account for 1% each, while most others account for 0.1% or less.

37 https://www.unhcr.org/news/press/2021/2/601c56524/biden-move-refugee-resettlement-save-lives-unhcr.html
https://www.voanews.com/usa/immigration/bidens-higher-refugee-cap-will-boost-resettlement-us-eventually

Table 2. Refugee resettlement: Departures through the UNHCR (2013–2020)[38]

	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	TOTAL
Norway	938	1,188	2,220	3,149	2,799	2,324	2,351	1,504	**16,473**
Germany	1,092	3,467	2,097	1,229	3,005	3,217	4,622	1,396	**20,125**
Netherlands	362	743	428	689	2,262	1,190	1,857	415	**7,946**
Sweden	1,832	1,812	1,808	1,868	3,346	4,871	4,993	3,567	**24,073**
France	100	378	700	1,328	2,505	5,109	4,544	1,211	**15,875**
Canada	5,113	7,233	10,236	21,865	8,912	7,704	9,031	3,502	**73,590**
UK	750	628	1,768	5,074	6,202	5,698	5,774	829	**26,723**
Australia	11,117	6,162	5,211	7,502	4,027	3,741	3,464	1,082	**42,306**
Total	21,304	21,611	24,468	42,704	33,058	33,854	36,636	13,506	**227, 141**

The table shows that Canada resettled more than 73,000 refugees over the course of the 8 years. Australia is another major resettlement country with more than 42,000, followed by the UK (27,000), Sweden (24,000), Germany (20,000), Norway (16,000), France (16,000), and the Netherlands (8,000). However, if the rankings were to factor in the population sizes of the resettlement countries, the order of countries would be different.

The numbers in Table 2 also display the yearly variations in all the countries' resettlement volumes. For most countries, the numbers in many cases increase or decrease by 50% or more. Overall, there was an increase in resettlements from 2016 and onwards, following displacement from Syria.

In this report, we have mainly discussed government resettlement through the UNHCR. We have also commented on the trend of complementary national resettlement programs. While all the resettlement countries have governmental programs, Germany, Canada, UK, and Australia also have either private spon-

38 https://rsq.unhcr.org/en/#j8Ig. These departure figures reported by the UNHCR may not match resettlement statistics published by states. For one thing, not all resettlements are registered with the UNCHR. For instance, Norway registered 1,527 resettled refugees in 2020 (UDI.no), not 1,504. The UNHCR figures also include cases in which the UNHCR assisted but did not initially submit.

sorship, community-led programs, or both, as summed up in Table 3 near the end of this chapter.

In Chapter 2, we mentioned that private sponsorship models originated in Canada and different versions have subsequently been tested in Australia, UK, and Germany. These programs are similar in the fact that the resettlement initiatives come from non-state actors, such as local communities, NGOs, religious communities, families, or individual persons.[39]

In these public–private partnerships, governments facilitate admission for the refugees, while the private organizations and other actors provide financial support and often include housing for a limited time. One upside to the model is that the local communities are activated, providing a network, social integration, and emotional support. According to the interviewees from the countries that have these programs, the experiences were mostly positive. Canada saw them as integral parts of an overall successful policy; Australia had yet to conclude after having tested two models of private sponsorship; the UK had mixed experiences and was waiting for an evaluation in 2021; and Germany had met some challenges in finding sponsors but was optimistic. The challenges, in addition to finding suitable partners, included securing long-term commitment from the sponsors and avoiding premature transfers to the public system. For the remainder of this chapter, we focus on the countries' engagement with the UN resettlement program.

The role of "integration potential" in national programs

In the IGC query, we asked the selected countries to answer four questions regarding the use of integration either as an explicit criterion and/or in practice.

We first asked the countries: As a general rule does your country, formally or informally, apply "integration potential" as a criterion when selecting individual refugees through the UNHCR resettlement program?[40]

39 http://www.rstp.ca/en/refugee-sponsorship/the-private-sponsorship-of-refugees-program/; https://www.fes.de/en/displacement-migration-integration/article-page-flight-migration-integration/gesucht-private-sponsorship-programme-fuer-die-aufnahme-von-gefluechteten; https://www.canada.ca/en/immigration-refugees-citizenship/corporate/publications-manuals/guide-private-sponsorship-refugees-program/section-2.html; http://www.resettlement.eu/settlement-early-integration/private-sponsorship; https://www.unhcr.org/dach/wp-content/uploads/sites/27/2018/03/CH_UNHCR-Backgroundnote-and-programm-round-table-11.12.2017-EN.pdf; https://www.caritas.eu/the-future-of-private-sponsorships-in-europe/

40 The precise meaning of the term "integration potential" is contested. Even though respondents may understand it differently, their answers to this question nevertheless offer a useful starting point for our discussion here.

Four countries confirmed that they did apply such a criterion (Germany, Netherlands, Canada, and Australia), while four held that they did not use integration potential as a criterion (Norway, Sweden, France, and UK). An important question is whether these four latter countries, despite answering "No" to this question, still considered the potential integration of those who were selected, and, if so, in what form?

In the IGC query, the country representatives were asked to elaborate on their (non)application of the integration criteria. Below we list the countries' answers to the IGC query and add the voices from the follow-up interviews with their civil servants.

Norway

As we shall see in the two upcoming chapters, Norwegian civil servants diverged somewhat in how they understood the content of the criterion of integration in the selection of resettlement refugees. Until the new guidelines came into effect in July 2020, there was, indeed, such an explicit integration criterion, referring to past competences (education and vocational experience with relevance for the Norwegian labor market).[41] In the 2020 guidelines, these references were dropped, while other criteria related to integration (such as potential for future integration) remained and were reformulated (see Chapter 4).

This background is needed to interpret the answers from the Norwegian authorities (UDI) to the IGC query. When asked about whether they apply integration criteria, they answered:

> No. We do not apply "integration potential" as a criterion when selecting individual refugees for resettlement as of July 1st, 2020. When applying the former guidelines for applying this criterion, exemptions were made for cases consisting of families with minor children[42] or including vulnerable women. Therefore, the integration criterion was used only when assessing single males or families without minor children. For these specific and few cases only, education and relevant work experience were included in the assessment of possibilities for integration. (IGC response, Norway)

As we see in this quote, the answer brings us right into a core discussion on what constitutes integration as criteria for refugee selection. IMDi, the directorate with the main responsibility for evaluating integration aspect of the selec-

41 https://www.regjeringen.no/no/dokumenter/rundskriv-g-042015-retningslinjer-for-arbeidet-med-overforingsflyktninger-jf.-utlendingsloven--35/id2426422/

42 Children under the age of 18.

tion process, would probably have responded differently to the direct question in the query. They would, as we shall see, have pointed out that the consideration for an individual's integration potential is also included in the 2020 guidelines.

The section of the guidelines used between 2015 and July 2020 did include an explicit reference to integration, stating that "in the selection of persons above the age of 18, those with education and vocational experience with relevance for the Norwegian labor market shall be given priority." (MoJ, 2020) As will be described, this section of the guidelines was not applied in practice.

In Chapter 4, we go further into the details of the changes in guidelines in 2020. Here, we only briefly comment on the reasons behind the change of the section containing the explicit integration criteria (of education and vocational experience). There were several reasons for this. One was feedback received by the MoJ that it was difficult for the UNHCR to implement these criteria in the field. In practice, few of the refugees prioritized by the UNHCR would simultaneously meet these criteria. This would also apply to families with children, who were otherwise a prioritized group. The criteria of education and vocational experience would apply to the parent(s) in the families, including female-headed households, another prioritized group. The risk would be that it would not be possible for UNHCR to find and submit enough cases, given the nature of the countries of origin among prioritized refugee situations. This resulted in the MoJ signaling that families with children and women in a vulnerable situation should be exempted from this integration criteria. The informants in the UDI were set to navigate the shifting selection criteria.

> It used to be like that, that we were supposed to consider the "integration potential" for resettlement refugees but not for families—and they constituted 95% of all the cases. For individuals, it is simply not possible to operationalize it.…Is it even possible to judge whether they are possible to integrate or not? You will see after a generation. But it is a bit neither this, nor that. The Ministry of Justice and Public Security wants this, the Ministry of Education and Research wants that, and then the agencies must find a middle way. (Employee, UDI)

In the 2020 guidelines, these explicit integration criteria were omitted. However, Norwegian authorities did consider the integration potential and feedback on the integration of previous arrivals in the process of selecting groups and sub-quotas for resettlement.

Furthermore, as some interviewees pointed out, the capacity of the municipalities could function as integration criteria that could inform decisions in individual cases.

In interviews with refugees during resettlement missions, the IMDi employees also checked whether the refugees' attitudes and actions deviated from basic standard norms in the Norwegian society, including regarding upbringing and gender equality. According to informants in MoJ and MoER, this screening must be seen in relation to, among others, willingness to accept and participate in services provided by Norwegian municipalities under the law.[43] For example, refugees are obligated to take part in an extensive introduction program.[44] In addition, they pointed out the laws covering gender equality, the rights of children, and the laws against forced marriages.

Failure to accept these norms could lead to rejection recommendation being made to UDI; hence, one could argue that, in practice, Norwegian authorities also apply the potential for integration as a criterion at the individual level in this regard. According to informants from both IMDi and UDI, the final test on this topic appeared to be whether the refugee demonstrated a willingness to accept mainstream Norwegian norms in these areas or, at the very least, showed some potential for changing their views in the future. The UDI had the authority to decide in each individual case.

Both the former and the present guidelines include "unwanted behavior and attitudes" as grounds for rejection (in Norwegian: *avslag*). One could argue that this simultaneously is a negative integration criterion—i.e., a criterion of shielding Norway (and the individual) from non-integration. The Norwegian civil servants discussed attitudes and behaviors as part of their consideration of future integration.

In Norway, the question of how to balance different selection criteria has given rise to a longstanding policy debate with diverging opinions on this issue. As we will see in the next chapter, the discussion dates back to at least 2002 when immigration authorities broke with tradition by introducing "integration potential" as an additional selection criterion (Long & Olsen, 2007, p. 3). The current guidelines contain no reference to an individuals' preconditions for integration, understood as educational or vocational background relevant to the Norwegian labor market, but they do refer to "the prospects for settlement and integration" as well as to municipal capacity (MoJ, 2020). This sets up a situation in which

43 https://www.udiregelverk.no/rettskilder/udi-retningslinjer/udi-2016-015/
44 https://lovdata.no/dokument/NLO/lov/2003-07-04-80

the mandates of both MoJ and MoER remain active throughout the missions, spearheaded by the associated directorates (UDI and IMDi), as well as in the interaction with the UNCHR and in the communication with the refugees.

Germany

The German representatives confirmed that they do apply integration potential as a criterion when selecting refugees for resettlement.[45]

> Yes. We do assess integration potential based on existing family links within Germany, education level, job skills, language skills, and age. A distinct unwillingness to integrate into German society and the German legal order can be a reason for denial. (IGC query, Germany)

According to the German response to the query, the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees (BAMF) applies these integration criteria during the interview with the refugees. German authorities also screen the dossier for this information in advance of the interviews. The interviewer evaluates the information on integration potential and includes that in her/his decision. In complex cases, the case handler involves the team leader and the BAMF resettlement unit.

In our follow-up interview with employees from the BAMF resettlement unit, they also confirmed the focus on integration:

> The refugee has to fulfill the requirement of there being a prospect of integration. For individuals, a key criterion is that they accept German values. If you ask me whether we also consider the integration criterion when we choose which groups to resettle, then I would say that we do not do that. On an individual level, yes. Of course, we see some families that might be more easily integrated than others. Still, in the end, there will be a balance between vulnerability and integration, I think, but it is not something we work for explicitly.

In Chapter 5, we will see that Norwegian civil servants stressed the goal of having balanced selection of refugees and of these being representative of the groups at hand. According to the German civil servants, the outcome may be balanced, but their program does not aim for that. Their aim is that, despite resettlement being a humanitarian program, the refugees who are selected should be able to integrate.

Germany first piloted and then escalated their resettlement operations from 2014 onwards. Critics have pointed out that national criteria can be used to selectively

45 Referenced in: Gesetz über den Aufenthalt, die Erwerbstätigkeit und die Integrations von Ausländern im Bundesgebiet, paragraph 23(4).

target profitable refugees and thereby serve as a symbolic "moral fig leaf" (BAMF, 2018). An internal evaluation from 2018 concluded that "most people who have been admitted in Germany through the resettlement program meet at least one UNHCR criterion related to 'particular vulnerability'" (BAMF, 2018, p. 1). The study moreover finds that the program "follows the humanitarian principles of the UNHCR very closely overall" (2018, p. 1). While the study indirectly notes that the national criteria (described above) could be problematic, it finds that they "do not challenge key humanitarian principles" (BAMF, 2018, p. 11).

In conclusion, German authorities explicitly apply a list of integration criteria when selecting refugees for resettlement. The goal is to secure integration for those who come, as well as for such integration to be beneficial for German society. From the interviews, it does appear that they find that they still fulfill the UNCHR's humanitarian ambitions for the resettlement program.

The Netherlands

The Netherlands is another country that explicitly applies integration as a criterion as part of their resettlement program.

> Yes. We do consider integration as part of the individual resettlement profile for each candidate. We introduced this element because of referrals based on practical experience (including feedback from municipalities and resettled refugees). (IGC query, Dutch response)

In their response to the IGC query, Dutch authorities pointed out that they evaluate the individual integration potential at an early stage of the process when screening the resettlement profile. In their answer, they also pointed out that they introduced this practice because of feedback from those involved in local integration—i.e., the municipalities and the refugees themselves.[46] They go on by formulating the basic principle for applying the integration criteria:

> Resettlement should result in improvement of the situation of an individual refugee. The aim is to minimize the risk that this will not be the case. By considering integration, we assess the risk that resettlement may not be in the best interest of the candidate. (IGC query, Dutch response)

46 The notion of "integration potential," viewed as the willingness and ability to integrate into Dutch society, was introduced in 2005. According to ECRE, the principle is anchored in policy documents and not in Dutch Immigration Law. https://www.ecre.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/00013_20140108160733_knowresetrr-2013-04.pdf

The rationale is stated clearly in the Dutch answer: the program should aim to improve the situation for the individual refugee. They sometimes doubted whether resettlement was, indeed, the best solution for all refugees who were accepted. The Dutch answer to this is that they want to secure the successful integration for the refugees they accept. However, the motive for considering future integration is not only altruistic:

> The risk assessment is two-fold. First, would the candidate be at risk of ending up in a situation of increased vulnerability in the Netherlands? Second, would resettlement result in a risk for the Dutch society? For instance, if a candidate for resettlement declares upfront that he or she will not abide by Dutch law or will not seek participation in Dutch society. (IGC query, Dutch response).

The Dutch authorities see future non-integration as a risk for Dutch society as well. They point to the unwillingness to follow Dutch law, as well as to not "seeking participation," which points to an individual's motivation to integrate and become a part of the host society. In other words, the societal risk is formulated both negatively (not breaking national laws) and positively (the individual should actively seek integration).

Looking back at the quote, one may wonder if the first question is asked as a cover for the second question—by phrasing exclusion from a humanitarian program as being in a refugee's best interest. Another reading is also possible, however, whereby the Netherlands here does what any humanitarian agency extending assistance to refugees should do—a needs assessment. Although all the resettlement states at issue here are peaceful, democratic, stable, and prosperous—in short safe havens relative to the camps and urban dwellings in which eligible candidates for resettlement reside—it does not follow as a logical corollary that it is in a refugee's best interest to move there. Inclusion in a resettlement program may be likened to winning a lottery, but it may also mean exclusion from the social universe known to the refugee, loss of location-specific human capital, and a life in marginalization and dependency on state welfare.

More importantly, the candidate considered to be eligible for resettlement may not fully understand the options available to him or her. Refugees cut off from the outside world, lacking in education, and confused by the international bureaucracy of an alien state and its representatives, may well fail to understand what resettlement means beyond a certain change in physical environment. To think of resettlement in terms of risk is, therefore, a useful reminder to practitioners in the field, not as an excuse to favor the least vulnerable but to foreground the refugees' needs and to remember that refugee populations are not

homogenous. In short, the principle of informed consent is key. Resettlement, conventionally thought of as an act of benevolence, carries risks and losses for many refugees, in addition to the potential gains. The Dutch reference to refugees' "risk of ending up in a situation of increased vulnerability in the Netherlands" can thus be seen as a valuable reminder to case workers and commission members to be wary of simply assuming that resettlement is in every refugee's interest.

Dutch respondents mention a practical rationale for mapping integration concerns:

> Furthermore, the resettlement profile is also a means to assess the candidates' needs, so that we can arrange for a suitable reception and provide requisite assistance upon arrival in the Netherlands.

These integration-related aspects are included in the resettlement profile (Pre-Mission Questionnaire [PMQ]), and are also used as part of the pre-selection phase (RRF) and during selection missions. The Dutch resettlement missions resemble the Norwegian missions in that multiple government actors interview the refugees successively.

The Immigration and Naturalization Service (IND) conducts interviews to determine whether a refugee qualifies for asylum according to Dutch asylum law and policy and to see if there are concerns regarding exclusion or security, identity, or family composition. The Central Agency for the Reception of Asylum Seekers and Refugees (COA) conducts interviews to assess the "resettlement profile," and covers expectation management and civic integration capabilities. These include the capacities/experiences/abilities to (learn to) live in Dutch society and their willingness to live in Dutch society. Furthermore, these interviews touch on self-reliance and the expected need for care and support, including whether the candidate has a social network to rely on. Based on this, the Dutch authorities compose and send a social dossier to the municipality that will house the refugee. The Dutch also conduct daily end-of-the-day briefings, similar to those of the Norwegian teams.

It is also worth noting that the Dutch encourage the UNHCR to submit more "high profile" cases, such as human rights advocates.[47] This includes, among others, activists in pro-democracy movements and people with "an academic background who have played an active role in the strengthening of democratic institutions and/or civil society in their country."[48] It is unclear whether this is

47 https://www.resettlement.eu/country/netherlands
48 https://www.refworld.org/pdfid/52a0776c0.pdf

solely motivated by their need for protection or also because they are seen as a group that will easily integrate into Dutch society.

Sweden

According to both the IGC query and the follow-up interview, Sweden does not apply "integration potential" as a criterion in their resettlement practice.

> No. There are no national selection criteria. Submissions are made by the UNHCR and in accordance with the UNHCR criteria for resettlement. The Swedish Migration Agency merely assesses the need for protection in each individual case, according to the rules in the Swedish Aliens Act. (IGC query, response Sweden)

In the follow-up interview, the civil servant confirmed this stance and even disputed the term "integration potential" but then added some interesting nuance:

> Personally, I do not like the term "integration potential," but I think it is important that we relate to it. I do not think "integration potential" is a term we should use, but it should be taken seriously. For one thing, the term "integration potential" is such a broad term that it can be used erroneously. (Interview, civil servant, Sweden)

This civil servant hinted at other states misusing the concept of integration potential to filter out troublesome cases:

> Some other states use "integration problems" to refer to when a candidate represents a possible security threat. Others use the concept as an excuse to avoid refugees with medical needs. When that happens, it creates a heavier burden on us because we do not discriminate based on "integration potential." (Interview, civil servant, Sweden)

In this quote, the civil servant points to Sweden's position as playing the game of resettlement the way it is supposed to be played, namely based on pure humanism and altruism, while others do not. This insistence on not considering the prospects of future integration for the refugee or for the Swedish society sets Sweden apart from the other case-countries. The selection of refugees should "depend on prevailing world conditions and on where the need for resettlement is the greatest."[49]

So, do the Swedish authorities not do any screening of the individual refugees about their potential for adapting to life in Sweden? In the follow-up interview, we asked the civil servant to elaborate:

49 https://www.migrationsverket.se/English/About-the-Migration-Agency/Our-mission/The-Swedish-resettlement-programme/Questions-and-answers-about-resettled-refugees.html

> We do not have any integration criteria. That is, apart from, of course, assessments of exclusion and security. (Interview, civil servant, Sweden)

The assessment of exclusion and security points to there being at least a screening for negative integration, as explained above. Interestingly, the police are not a part of these considerations.

> The main reasons for exclusion are crimes against humanity or potential threats to Sweden.…While exclusion is based on what they have done, the security check is on what they might do. (Interview, civil servant, Sweden)

All countries had security checks, varying in intensity in accordance with which group the authorities were screening. The Swedish interviewee draws an interesting distinction between exclusion due to past actions (exclusion) and exclusion because of possible acts in the future (security check).[50] During the interviews, the Swedish civil servants doing the interviews cannot reject a refugee because they show a lack of integration potential.

> For example, we ask the women about their background and not about whether they want to work or about other plans that they may have about the future. (Interview, civil servant, Sweden)

What they can and sometimes do, in cases where integration seems very unlikely, is to talk to the UNCHR. Then the UNHCR can withdraw that person from the list.

Despite the clear rejection of integration criteria as part of the individual screening process, integration still plays a part at the group level in the Swedish resettlement policy.

> We have resettled some nationalities that have been difficult to integrate. Then we have had to discuss this with the municipalities. For example, a group from a central African country, they were very difficult to integrate. We then removed that group from next year's quota and told the UNHCR about the challenges. (Interview, civil servant, Sweden)

The municipalities communicate their experiences with settlement and integration of the various nationalities to the central government. As part of the process of composing the quota for the coming year, the Swedish Migration Agency

50 Paragraph 7 (d) of the 1950 UNHCR Statute, Article 1F of the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees obliges states and the UNHCR to deny the benefits of refugee status to certain persons who would otherwise qualify as refugees, on the grounds that certain acts are so grave as to render their perpetrators undeserving of international protection as refugees. For a detailed discussion, se https://www.unhcr.org/publications/legal/3f7d48514/guidelines-international-protection-5-application-exclusion-clauses-article.html

reflects on the previous year. They do so by gathering the experiences of UNHCR, of the embassies, and of the municipalities. They adhere to the signals from the government, pointing to the priorities for the coming year.

> They may signal that within persons with need for protection, we may prioritize those belonging to minority groups, women and children, or persons who already have some link to Sweden, e.g., they are overaged children of someone who lives in Sweden. (Interview, civil servant, Sweden)

The civil servant described the priority given to people with a prior link to Sweden as a humanitarian principle. However:

> The municipalities communicate their experiences with integration to SKR,[51] who in turn pass these on to their Ministry of Labor, who finally let us use them in our reflections on the resettlement quota for the coming year. (Interview, civil servant, Sweden)

As we see in this quote, the Swedish government does apply considerations of integration potential on the group level through this feedback mechanism. However, this is at the group level and this study has not looked at the content of these communications on integration or lack thereof.

France

France has upheld its commitment to the resettlement program over the past few years despite experiencing record numbers of asylum arrivals (REF). According to their answers to the IGC query, they do not apply integration potential when screening refugees:

> During our missions, we do not apply "integration potential" as a criterion, except maybe in rare cases which could be considered as extreme.…We will never refuse someone because of his or her lack of education, unfamiliarity with foreign languages, professional experience, or lack thereof, income, health condition of a family member, etc. (IGC query, France)

The French answer explicitly excludes integration as a criterion for selection. They do, however, mention French values in all interviews:

> We always remind refugees of the core principles of our Republic (secularism, freedom of religion, gender equality and women's rights, compulsory education for both sexes at least until 16 years of age). (IGC query, France)

51 Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions (SKR).

According to the civil servant interviewed in the follow-up interview, they do not ask the refugees whether they agree to these values. They do, however, note whether the refugee has ties to France:

> It is always appreciated if the refugee has ties with France from before, such as language skills, family members in France, studies, or similar, but this is of course not a criterion. (IGC query, France)

The values of the country and the ties to the country are both mentioned but are not used as criteria. The program does, however, have limits regarding who can be included:

> However, France does not accept unaccompanied minors under the resettlement program. Moreover, as France does not recognize polygamy, refugees' cases falling into this matrimonial regime are also excluded from the resettlement program. (IGC query, France)

The French case illustrates how selection criteria that are not explicitly linked to "integration potential" can still be relevant to it. Unaccompanied minors require, of course, particular follow-up and resources to encourage positive integration outcomes and excluding them from consideration requires none. Polygamy was legally banned in France in 1993, but it has also been linked to integration and even security because several politicians stated that polygamy was a cause of the 2005 French riots.[52] Practicing polygamy has consequently, to some extent, "been treated as a sign of insufficient assimilation" in France (Ersanilli, 2012, p. 343).[53] The selection criteria referred to here are not anchored in French legislation. The Code on Entry and Residence of Foreigners and Right of Asylum (CESEDA) only specifies that France will grant the status of refugee to anyone over whom the UNHCR exercises its mandate in terms of Articles 6 and 7 of its statutes.[54]

Media have occasionally criticized the French government for *not* taking future integration into account when resettling refugees.

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52 https://www.nytimes.com/2005/11/18/international/europe/immigrant-polygamy-is-a-factor-in-french-unrest-a.html

53 Polygamous marriages raise serious concerns from an international human rights law perspective and is legally banned in most resettlement states, not only France. The UNHCR recognizes the legal dilemmas but also "aims to respect the culturally diverse interpretations of family membership and ensure the protection of members of polygamous marriages." The agency also points out that one risk of not resettling families on the basis of polygamy is that family cohesion is undermined. A (typically female) spouse and family dependents may be left behind with exacerbated vulnerabilities and protection needs, as the rest of the family seeks resettlement on its own. This is not only counterproductive in terms of refugee protection but in violation of the right to family unity and the rights of the child. https://www.unhcr.org/en-ie/3d464e176.pdf, 209–211.

54 https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/sites/homeaffairs/files/what-we-do/networks/european_migration_network/reports/docs/emn-studies/emn-studies-fr_study_on_resettlement_and_humanitarian_admission_en_version.pdf, p. 9.

> We do not consider the future integration in France. Sometimes, the national press confronts us with this. For instance, last year we had a program for 100 Yezidi women. The media asked about how their situation is now, whether they work or not, if they are in schools or not. (Interview, civil servant, France)

According to the French civil servant, France does not take into consideration integration when composing the quota.

Canada

Canadian officials are required to consider integration potential in the implementation of their government resettlement program at the individual level.[55]

> Yes. There is a formal requirement pertaining to integration potential.[56] In cases where the migration officer considers that there is an "urgent need for protection," or the applicant is "vulnerable," then the applicant need not meet this requirement. (IGC query, Canada)

As we see in the quote, the guidelines balance the integration requirement against vulnerability.

> In general, the higher the vulnerability of the individual, the less weight is given to their ability to establish in Canada. In practice, the bar for this requirement is very low. (IGC query, Canada)

According to the IGC query, a Canadian migration officer makes a final decision on UNHCR-referred cases based on the available information, including information gathered during the interview, which touches on the person's ability to establish after arrival. Meeting the requirement to be able to establish is considered alongside other requirements, which together inform the officer's final decision.

At the group level, integration is not discussed. During the follow-up interviews, the Canadian civil servants pointed out that there is not a lot of attention on integration outcome for the resettled groups:

> In my experience, there is no discussion about integration on the level of groups. I cannot think of any instance where we have said that we want more or less of a national group because of how they integrate. There is

55 The answers provided by the Canadian civil servants to the IGC query refer to the government-led resettlement program (GAR). The parallel Canadian private sponsorship programs are mentioned explicitly where relevant.

56 Contained in Section 139 (g) of the Regulations. More details regarding the application of this requirement can be found in the Canada chapter of UNHCR's resettlement handbook (see Sections 1.1, 2.2(i), 3.1, 7, and 8).

> not a huge focus on integration success overall. (Interview, civil servants, Canada)

At the same time, the Canadian government did commission reports on the integration indicators for different groups of forced migrants in Canada.[57] The civil servants pointed out one example that they saw as demonstrating that the government does not emphasize integration at the group level:

> For instance, we resettled a severely traumatized national group which is still struggling today, several years later. They have a lot of trauma still. That is certainly something we are concerned about, we do want them to have as much success as they possibly can, and we have [taken some steps to help this group]. But the resettlement of this group is also a good example that we do not exclude the vulnerable based on their presumed integration prospects. (Interview, civil servants, Canada)

In the Canadian Immigration Act from 2001, it is the refugees' "ability to establish" is mentioned as a requirement. It is forward looking. Before 2001, the requirements included what the refugee had already acquired, such as language skills and work experience. According to the Canadian civil servants, "it was a conscious decision to look more at vulnerability".

> It is only for the extreme and exceptional cases where the integration criterion really applies. An 85-year-old single person with no ties to Canada may be refused, but in general we do not reject cases on such a basis. (Interview, civil servants, Canada)

The civil servants reflected on their own integration requirement, realizing the challenges posed by having forward-looking integration criteria, and stressed the underlying immigration and humanitarian policies:

> It raises very difficult questions as well. How do you assess the ability to settle? We generally do not use it as a criterion. In the governmental program, we take our lead from the UNHCR. In the private sponsorship programs, the sponsors decide whom to resettle.…Canada is an immigration nation.…We always look at the resettlement programs as a demonstration of our humanitarian nature. (Interview, civil servants, Canada)

Canada takes great pride in its resettlement programs, especially the Private Sponsorship of Refugees program, through which it has resettled more than 300,000 refugees since its inception in 1979. It has been increasingly active and vocal in recent years, lobbying for other states to establish innovative solutions

57 https://www.amssa.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/06/Infosheet38_resettled_refugees.pdf

and sharing its experience in an institutionalized and professionalized manner.[58] "The Canadian model" of community-based sponsorship programs has created quite a buzz on the international arena.

The apparently positive reception of the community-based model may be partly due the refugees' improved integration compared to the governmental program, outscoring them in terms of language acquirement, employment, and other measures. It is also said to create better social relations between refugees and of the community-based model local population and to not only serve the former well but to be "equally if not more transformative for the sponsors and their community."[59] The Canadian model has inspired new programs in Australia, New Zealand, Germany, and UK, with some national adjustments and tweaks in design.

The Canadian programs (government and private) made it possible to resettle 45,000 refugees between late 2015 and mid-2017.[60]

United Kingdom

According to the UK answer to the IGC query, they do not apply a criterion of "integration potential." However, they do limit the number of complex and large cases in line with local authority capacity. Relying on dossiers and the UNHCR for their government program, integration is not a part of their individual screening process:

> Integration potential is not part of the selection process. Refugee resettlement is fundamentally about the UNHCR's choices in referrals. If a case involves particularly heavy needs, it may be too much for the local authorities. We do not have any integration-based selection criteria.

They reference the limitations of the local authorities and local capacity. In the follow-up interviews, the British civil servants pointed out heavy needs, referring to, in most cases, medical needs. In individual screenings, they did not ask for values.

> Neither do we screen for values and attitudes. The screening criteria for us is that the UNHCR refers refugees as being in need for resettlement. We do not have social criteria for whom we resettle. I know some countries use such criteria, but it is difficult to assess in an interview. It would

58 For instance, through the Global Refugee Sponsorship Initiative, a joint initiative led by Canada, the UNHCR, the Open Society Foundations, the Giustra Foundation, and the University of Ottawa.
59 https://medium.com/airbel/refugee-resettlement-minister-ahmed-hussen-explains-the-canadian-model-21dde951c48
60 https://www.oag-bvg.gc.ca/internet/English/parl_oag_201711_03_e_42668.html

> be interesting to see how they do it exactly. According to our internal evaluations, the social integration for resettlement refugees in the UK is rather good.

Again, we find that those involved in resettlement want integration to take place. It is a wanted outcome. However, for the refugee to benefit from resettlement, integration may be a factor. The UK civil servants formulated this background role of integration this way:

> Our political leadership does ask if resettlement is in the best interest of the refugee. There is an argument that it is in the best interest of the refugee to resettle successfully, which in turn is an argument for selecting those likely to be able to establish themselves. But presumed integration potential is not considered as part of the selection process in the UK.

A number of studies have looked at the integration outcomes of resettlement refugees in the UK. Since 2015, the UK has resettled over 25,000 refugees referred by the UNHCR, more than any other country outside the US and Canada. Around 80% of these have been resettled through the Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme (VPRS), which is accessible to refugees displaced by the conflict in Syria. This program, as well the Vulnerable Children's Resettlement Scheme (VCRS) and the Gateway Protection Programme (Gateway), to be replaced in 2021 by a new UK Resettlement Scheme (UKRS). The new program is expected to continue to focus on the Middle East region.[61]

The new Syria-focused program was explicitly tasked with assisting "the most vulnerable" refugees, as stated by the Home Secretary upon its launch.[62] A critical report by the Independent Chief Inspector of Borders and Immigration found that the Home Office was "sensible" in recognizing that it was "not qualified to assess vulnerability" and that it was "effective and efficient" to rely on the UNHCR to identify and prioritize "the most vulnerable." The report commented on the Home Office prolonging processing time. The authors do not, however, imply that the government, formally or informally, applied integration criteria. The report concludes that the UK Border Office should continue to make the most out of the expertise of the UNHCR and the IOM in order to reach "the most vulnerable."[63]

61 https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/933956/An_inspection_of_UK_Refugee_Resettlement_Schemes.pdf
62 https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/oral-statement-by-the-home-secretary-on-syrian-refugees
63 https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/705155/VPRS_Final_Artwork_revised.pdf, p. 10–11.

Australia

Australia applies integration criteria when selecting refugees for their resettlement programs.

> Yes. The Government considers Australia's capacity to facilitate the entry and settlement of humanitarian entrants to ensure they are successfully integrated into Australian society. This includes a consideration of the extent of the applicant's connection with Australia as well as the capacity of the Australian community to provide for the permanent settlement of persons such as the applicant in Australia. (IGC query, Australia)

This quote clearly states that the Australian government considers future integration as a criterion for their programs. It also shows that the concerns first mentioned by the respondents relate to the societal capacity to ensure integration, and not individual competences or integration potential. Such individual requirements do, however, figure into the government's answer to our query when commenting on reasons for the refusal of candidates:

> UNHCR referrals may be refused where they do not meet the Government's regional and global priorities. In addition, applicants may be refused for failing to meet security and character requirements.

The final sentence of this quote led us to ask the Australian civil servants what "character requirements" meant. This referred to documented misconduct, including criminal acts and use of narcotics. According to the civil servants:

> In short, it means everything you have not done. Asking for this is more a matter of insurance in case they do something wrong later.

Integration was a key element of the individual interviews with refugees, according to the civil servants.

> Generally speaking, we do not make assumptions about someone's presumed "integration potential" on an individual level, apart from security considerations. Integration potential is relevant to the interview, however. We do ask if they have contacts in Australia, about what jobs they have had, and so on. For our settlement colleagues who work hard to meet the government's criteria, we match those who have contacts. There is a push to look at language, for instance. Does the person speak English? It is not a decision point, but we get information about it and consider how it might affect settlement.

Australian authorities explicitly applied integration criteria at the group level. Here, prior experiences with nationalities had consequences for later priorities:

> Integration is coming to the fore in the individual interviews, but we mostly look at the caseload or the cohort level. We look at how previous arrivals from this group have fared in Australia. Groups with higher crime rates, for example, are not prioritized. If a national group is resettled well, the government is more willing to have more of those nationals.

Australia has been involved in the UNHCR resettlement program since 1977 and has consistently ranked as one of the top three resettlement countries in the world.[64] As with Canada, the number of asylum seekers arriving spontaneously at Australia's borders is comparatively few and this frees capacity for refugee resettlement. One scholar goes far in supporting the quote above by suggesting that a bipartisan political discourse presumes resettlement refugees to be more vulnerable than they are. "By expecting widespread trauma, Australia effectively views a large section of the refugee population as impaired; as such they are not expected to participate in Australia [and are transformed upon arrival] into semi-functional dependents."[65]

Comparative overview

There is great variety in how the eight countries present and deal with concerns relating to the integration of resettled refugees. At the same time, it is also clear that even the countries that do not have integration as part of their explicit selection criteria have some sort of feedback mechanisms at the group level, letting integration concerns influence future selection processes (see Table 3). In Table 3, we also see that some of the resettlement countries rely on civil servant missions to host countries. Others mainly rely on dossier-case processing—i.e., cases with information prepared by third parties, such as the UNHCR.

64 https://apo.org.au/sites/default/files/resource-files/2015-02/apo-nid52632.pdf
65 https://www.fmreview.org/sites/fmr/files/FMRdownloads/en/resettlement.pdf, p .65.

Table 3. Comparative characteristics: Eight countries

Country	Explicit integration criteria?	Integration criteria in practice, individual level	Integration considera-tion in practice, group level	Long-term integration feedback on integration outcomes	Mainly missions / dossier (from home)	Private sponsor-ship
Norway	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Missions	
Germany	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Missions	X
Netherlands	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Missions	
Sweden	No	No	Yes	Yes	M/D	
France	No	No (?)	No	No (?)	Missions	
Canada	Yes	(Yes)	Yes	Yes	Dossier	X
UK	No	No	Yes	Yes	Dossier	X
Australia	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Dossier	X

In Table 3, we see that although four out of the eight countries stated they do not have explicit written integration criteria in their IGC responses, four said they did not. In the next column, we see that Norway does apply integration criteria in individual screenings and interviews, leaving the number of countries not applying integration criteria at three.[66] This number is further reduced if we look at the countries that apply integration considerations at the group level and let the experience of groups' integration outcomes influence decisions on new quotas.

The country that stands out in Table 3 is France. In both the written response to the ad-hoc query and in the follow-up interview, they held that they do not apply integration criteria at any level or at any stage of the selection process. Yet, as we have seen, during the interviews, French civil servants do remind individual refugees of the core principles of the French republic: "secularism, freedom of religion, gender equality and women's rights, compulsory education for both sexes, at least until they turn 16" (France, IGC query). Furthermore, they explain that the principles of secularism involve a prohibition against wearing the niqab in public, religious symbols in schools, etc. Finally, for France, we see that there is a question mark about whether France lets integration outcomes influence the composition of quotas. Here, the data indicates that they do eval-

66 The UDI contests this conclusion because it views "individual integration criteria" as distinct from "municipal capacity" or "attitudes and behavior." While that may be in line with internal guidelines and fully understandable, we would argue that legal-bureaucratic categories should not be conflated with analytical ones.

uate integration outcomes for refugees from the resettlement program, but it is unclear whether this has an impact on their nationality priorities or sub-quotas.

Toward the right in Table 3, we see whether the countries mostly used dossiers or missions as part of their selection processes. The results show that the three Commonwealth countries, UK, Canada, and Australia, all predominately used dossiers when selecting refugees for resettlement. As a rule, this appeared to let them rely more on the UNCHR in the process, as well as on their embassies in the host countries or in the regions.

Sweden experienced a change in the balance between missions and dossiers in 2020 because of the COVID-19 pandemic. They estimated a 50/50 share of the two types of selection processes for that year.

Prioritized demographics in the UNHCR Resettlement Handbook

Although the IGC survey and interviews were conducted to obtain entirely up-to-date data, there is also a case to be made to draw on the (partly) standardized data and formal guidelines described in the *UNHCR Resettlement Handbook*. These countries' chapters have, at the time of writing, unfortunately not been updated since 2018. Still, they offer additional insights. Here, we zoom in on the demographics given priority by the various resettlement countries.

Table 4. Prioritized demographics[67]

Program(s)[68]	Special categories / Specific needs
Norway (Resettlement program)	• Medical cases • Unallocated quota • Women at risk • Unaccompanied children (highly limited) • LHBTIQ+[69] • Persecuted Christian, Ahmadiyya and Yezidi refugees
Germany (Resettlement program)	• Survivors of violence and/or torture • Medical cases • Women and girls at risk • Children and adolescents at risk • Unaccompanied children
Netherlands (Resettlement program)	High-profile cases (e.g., journalists, political leaders, academics, human rights activists) are given priority
Sweden (Resettlement program)	No sub-categories
France (One small dossier-based program (100 slots), and a much larger commission-based OFPRA program.)	France does not set quotas for cases involving people with specific needs
Canada (Government-assisted refugees [GAR]; Privately sponsored refugees [PSRs]; Blended visa office-referred [BVOR]).	• Refugees with medical needs • Survivors of violence and torture • Women at risk • Children • Elderly
UK (Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme [VPRS]; Vulnerable Children's Resettlement Scheme [VCRS]; Gateway Protection Programme [GPP]; Mandate Refugee Scheme [MRS]).	• Urgent emergency cases • Medical cases (no specific sub-quota) • Survivors of violence or torture • Women at risk • Unaccompanied children (VCRS)[70] • Refugees with close family ties in the UK • Elderly
Australia[71] (Refugee Program; Special Humanitarian Program [SHP]; Community Support Program [CSP])	For the Refugee Program and the SHP: • Vulnerable women, children, dependents and others referred by the UNHCR (no specific sub-quota) • Refugees from protracted populations • Survivors of violence and torture are eligible (no specific sub-quota) • Unaccompanied humanitarian minors are eligible (no specific sub-quota)

67 All information is based on country chapters in the *UNHCR Resettlement Handbook* and cross-checked with the European Resettlement Network country pages, unless otherwise specified. Since neither source has been updated since 2018, the abbreviated information given here may not be up to date.

68 Very small programs (< 100) have been omitted.

69 https://www.regjeringen.no/contentassets/47fe09b332c54f95aad990583df64da6/rundskriv-g-15-2020---retningslinjer-for-arbeidet-med-overforingsflyktninger.pdf

70 UK no longer resettles unaccompanied minors.

71 Applicants may be refused on character grounds where there is evidence of criminal conduct or the applicant represents a security threat. This is ambiguous wording but has been omitted here on security grounds, shared by all resettlement states, as discussed above.

Even though the list is not updated, it is worth noting that different resettlement states singled out specific demographics for consideration in 2018. Although this does not give a full picture of whether these demographics are prioritized in practice, without statistically breaking down the resettlement quota to see how many of each are actually resettled, it at least gives an idea of what is possible to include in national criteria and how vulnerability can be understood at the group level. Table 4 also balances our discussion of integration. Except for the possible exception of the Netherland's "high-profile cases," discussed above, few of these categories appear to be driven by an emphasis on integration.

Comparative reflections

All resettlement states do some form of security screening prior to resettling a refugee, even if they differ widely in exactly how they formulate it. The boundaries between what constitutes "integration" and what constitute "security" are blurred to say the least. Some national experts, in addition to the UNHCR officials interviewed, remarked that even though it causes tremendous damage to the resettlement prospects of a refugee to have been categorized as a security risk, some national security apparatuses may be too quick to do so. Security assessments are important and must be conducted with due diligence but, as the Swedish interviewee rightfully pointed out, there is a risk of securitizing refugees as threats based on flimsy evidence. One expert informant offered an example in which a single picture of a person holding a gun led to a rejection on security grounds. It is no easy task to strike the right balance between diligence and excessive securitization.

Some of the respondents mentioned that integration potential can operate as a hidden criterion. It appears possible to give preferential treatment to certain national groups associated with good integration outcomes without officially attributing it to a concern over integration outcomes. Several factors will shape how group-level integration outcomes affects selection criteria, including statistical robustness over time, whether outcomes are direct determinants of selection or merely one out of several relevant factors, and the conditions and prospects facing potential newcomers in the asylum country.

There is a lack of publicly available documentation about countries' practices of resettlement. In fact, civil servants may not themselves be aware whether there is a gap between rhetoric and practice. Practitioners in the field may develop a feel for changes in policy, but they may lack the raw data to substantiate their perceptions or may make conclusions based on insufficient data. For instance,

the German BAMF report, cited above, holds poor integration outcomes among resettlement refugees vis-à-vis asylum seekers as evidence that resettlement refugees are not positively selected. This could, however, also be a result of contextual factors, such as integration policies, differentiated migration experiences, and so on.

Rejection rates are another example, referring to how many of the UNHCR-referred cases are rejected. These vary considerably between the resettlement states discussed here. Yet their meaning is unclear. High rejection rates could be taken to indicate strict screening measures and possible selection that is based on presumed integration potential. High rejection rates could also mean that the resettlement state asks for an inflated number of cases to reduce the risk of not delivering the target numbers. Or there could be other reasons, such as the country profile communicated from the resettlement state to the UNHCR being vague or the fact that the UNHCR official who is tasked with compiling the list fails to understand it.[72]

Another reason for the final numbers of resettled refugees possibly being lower than those presented by the UNHCR is that the refugees themselves withdraw. Norwegian immigration authorities have worked to reduce the number of refugees who withdraw their applications after having been approved for resettlement. For example, they have tested timing their cultural orientation program before the interview process. This orientation is normally offered after approval as preparation for resettlement.

Finally, it is challenging to estimate a refugee's "integration potential" based on limited facts about a candidate's past experiences. Furthermore, past integration outcomes for the national group may not resonate at the individual level and there is, to our knowledge, no evidence base that can adequately guide a selection process based on presumptions about a candidate's likely integration. Caseworkers and commission members may develop expertise in their narrow field, but their personal experiences may not be representative, and future behavior and adaptability will necessarily be exceedingly hard to predict without drawing on personal biases and prejudices.

72 We asked the UNHCR for data on rejection rates. We were told that the UNHCR does not publish data on rejection rates. In theory it could seem possible to subtract the UNHCR's departures from the agency's submissions, but this would not offer meaningful data since submissions statistics 'include some refugees who are being resubmitted multiple times, withdrawn, etc.' UNHCR personal correspondence 1 March 2021.

This is not to say that it should necessarily be avoided. It is easy to think of refugee resettlement as "merely the movement of bodies,"[73] transferred from a situation of vulnerability to a safe resettlement state with higher life chances. The quantitative focus on target numbers is, indeed, conducive to such thinking. Practitioners speak of tight deadlines and constant pressures to deliver the numbers. In this context, the Dutch approach of conducing a two-fold risk assessment is interesting.

73 Thanks to Prof. Michaela Hynie and Prof. Jennifer Hyndman at the University of York for this formulation, interview, October 2020.

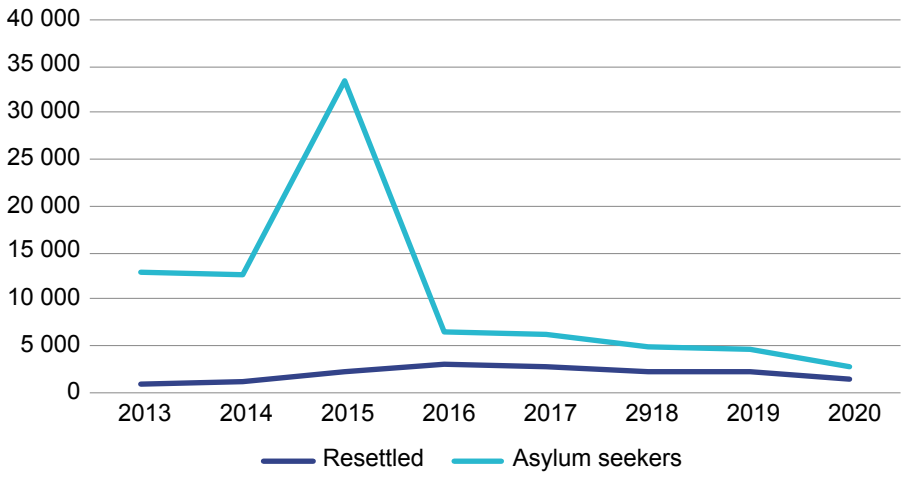
4. The Norwegian resettlement program—Criteria and procedures

In this chapter, we describe the Norwegian policies and processes of selecting refugees for resettlement. We base the discussions in this chapter on available policy documents and the in-depth interviews with commission team members from UDI and IMDi.

Resettlement as part of Norwegian immigration and integration policies

The Norwegian resettlement program exists in close tandem with the country's asylum policies and practices. With respect to volume, several political parties have explicitly made the connection between the reception of asylum seekers and refugees coming through the UN resettlement program. Here, the argument has been that if the number of asylum seekers increases, the quota for resettlement may be decreased, and vice versa.[74]

Figure 2. Norway: Asylum applications and resettled UN refugees 2013–2020



74 See, e.g., the Labor Party's manifest on migration: https://www.samfunnsforskning.no/aktuelt/arrangementer/2021/kan-vi-outsource-behandlingen-av-asylsoknader.html (page 13) and Høyre's concept of target levels of immigration: https://www.aftenposten.no/norge/politikk/i/mRkkbv/hoeyre-utvalg-lanserer-handlingsregel-for-aa-styre-en-skjerpet-innvandri.

Regarding case processing, the Norwegian authorities stress that the assessment of the protection needs of resettlement refugees should not differ substantially from the assessment of spontaneous asylum seekers' protection needs. According to the current guidelines, it is important that both the assessment of the need for international protection and the assessment of the refugees' credibility are aligned with asylum practices (MoJ, 2020). It follows that regardless of whether the UNHCR identifies a person as a refugee—and thus as qualified for resettlement—Norway will not accept this person for resettlement if she/he would not qualify for protection as an asylum seeker.

The Norwegian resettlement program is also coordinated with national integration policies. The resettled refugees are entered directly into the school system, if under the age of 18, or into a nationally coordinated and locally implemented introduction program. This integration program is designed to qualify and prepare the refugees for either the education system or the labor market.

Refugees cleared for resettlement in Norway are settled in different municipalities. The municipalities can themselves decide whether they want to settle refugees or not (Hernes et al., 2019, p. 31). The refugees are assigned to a specific municipality. Until 2021, adult refugees received a full-time integration program lasting two years or more. From 2021 onwards, this introductory program was expected to become further tailored to meet the needs of individual refugees.[75]

The voluntary settlement model has implications for Norwegian refugee resettlement policies (Askim & Steen, 2020). In the case of resettlement refugees, a settlement agreement between IMDi and a municipality regarding the number of persons to be settled is always in place before the refugees arrive in Norway. Resettlement refugees settle directly into a municipality upon arrival and, as a rule, do not spend time in reception centers. Another implication is that UDI and IMDi must take into consideration the willingness of the municipalities when deciding upon the recommended annual refugee quota and when selecting individual refugees for resettlement.

The refugees are assigned according to two separate processes. First, the national authorities (IMDi) request and suggest the number of refugees for settlement in each municipality. The municipality then rejects, adjusts, or accepts this number. Second, there is an assignment and dispersion process, where IMDi present individual families and refugees for acceptance to the municipalities. As will be described in the next chapter, the municipality must either accept or reject each individual case based on a minimum of information. However, once

75 https://www.imdi.no/kvalifisering/regelverk/ny-integreringslov/

the case has been accepted, the municipalities are provided with detailed information relevant for ensuring the quality of the settlement and integration processes.

Current resettlement policies

The current Norwegian resettlement policy is described in the MoJ guidelines (MoJ, 2020). The previous version can be found in the country chapter of the *UNHCR Resettlement Handbook* (UNHCR, 2020).

In the following, we first describe the process of deciding on the composition of the quota for the coming year, before moving to the set up and implementation of the Norwegian selection missions. The focus throughout is on the role of integration consideration.

Negotiating quota size and composition

The annual Norwegian quota for resettlement refugees is decided politically, both in terms of quota size and which groups to prioritize. The Norwegian Parliament, the Storting, decides on the size of the yearly quota. Until recently, there has been political consensus concerning resettlement refugees in Norway. The political discussions have mainly revolved around the size of the quota. In 2020, for the first time, a political party in opposition, the Progress Party, entered budget negotiations with a proposal to withdraw Norway from the UN refugee resettlement program. As we have seen, the negotiations ended with maintaining the level of 3,000 resettlement refugees per year.

According to the current guidelines (MoJ, 2020), the following considerations should be made when composing the resettlement quota. First, the different subquotas should reflect a well-balanced composition of the refugee-group and, second, one should consider the possibility of integration including the refugees' formal and informal skills. These considerations come in addition to an assessment of (1) the refugees' need for protection, (2) the host-country's need for burden sharing, (3) experiences with operational cooperation with UNHCR at the relevant local office, and (4) assessment of the refugee group and whether it consists of many vulnerable refugees (women or girls at risk, or LHBTIQ+ persons) (MoJ, 2020).

The composition of the resettlement quota is dependent upon both UNHCR's advice and Norwegian policies and guidelines. The MoJ, in cooperation with

MFA and MoER, allocates the annual quota to different sub-quotas, after input from UDI and IMDi (RS G-15/2020).

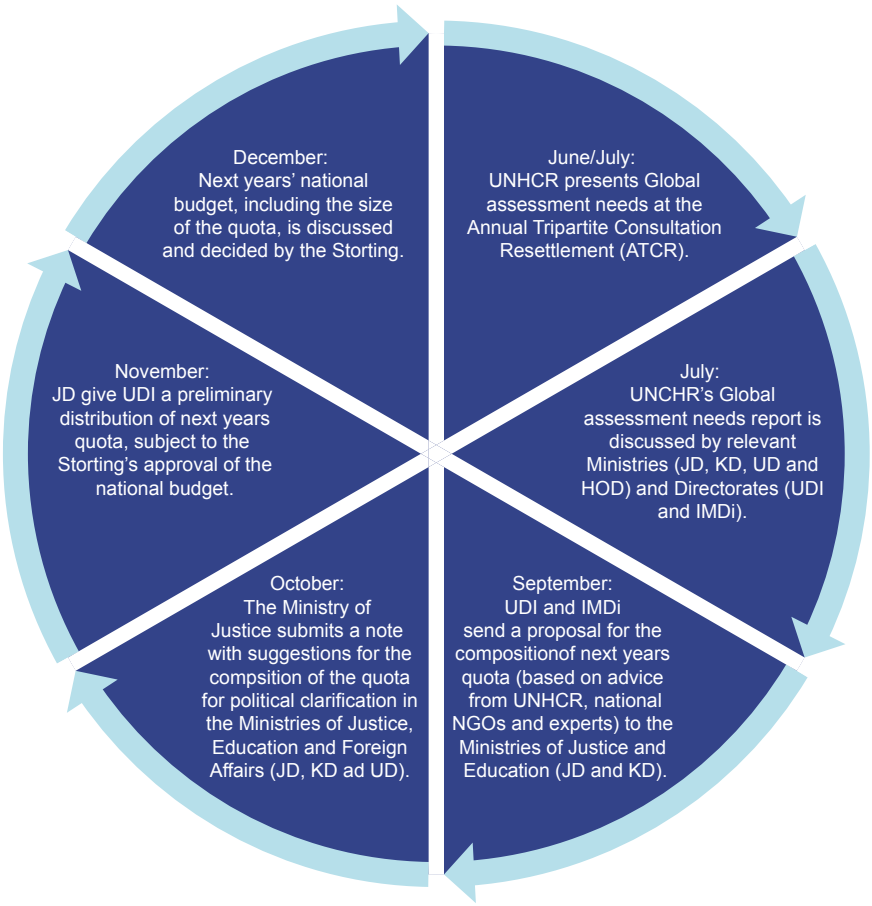
As part of this process, UDI considers UNHCR's global assessment of needs, and receives concrete advice for Norway, balancing this with Norwegian asylum policies, practical considerations, and practical experiences. The UDI also must consider the practicalities involved in the selection process, such as whether it is possible to arrange selection missions to these countries and previous experiences of cooperation with local UNHCR offices.

However, these considerations do not rule out the possibility of trying out new transit or host countries and new nationalities. IMDi must also consider the UNHCR proposal and then give input based on the feedback from the municipalities regarding the settling of different groups. In these considerations, the IMDi considers available research and statistics on how well different groups are integrated into Norwegian society, including participation in education and the labor market.

Additionally, the MoJ receives input and discusses the sub-quotas with the MoER and the MFA. The MHCS gives input about the slots for medical cases. The most important inputs are still the global resettlement needs, as identified by UNHCR. Priority is also given to referrals made by UNHCR, with some exceptions.

The yearly process for deciding next year's composition of the quota and the different agencies involved at different times is illustrated in Figure 3 below.

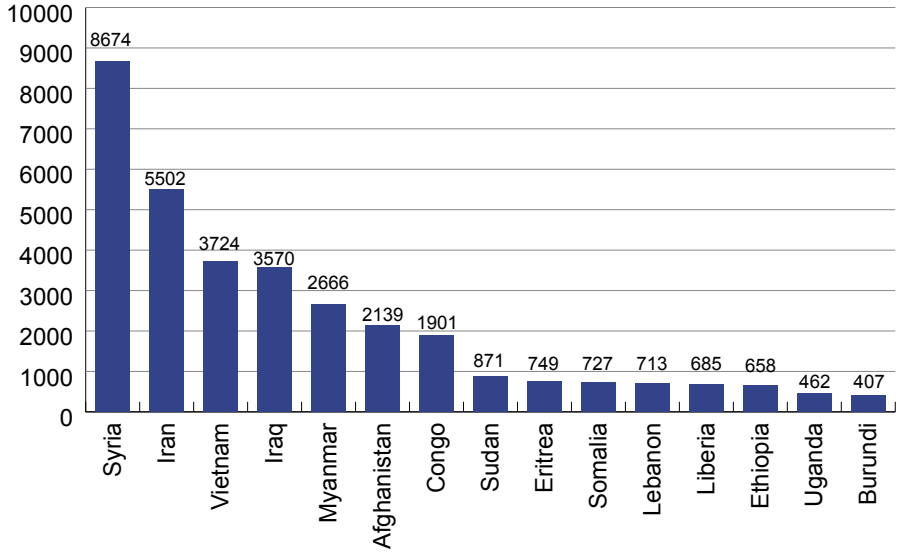
Figure 3. The yearly cycle: Deciding next years' resettlement quota



Changing group composition

The Norwegian resettlement quota is divided into country sub-quotas, which are adjusted every year. In the three-year period of 2015–2017, the quota mainly consisted of Syrian refugees from Lebanon, Jordan, and Turkey. As a result, Syrians currently constitute the largest group of resettlement refugees in Norway (Utne & Strøm, 2020). Over time, however, the composition of the Norwegian quota has encompassed many of the major refugee populations in the world. This is reflected in the accumulated number of resettlement refugees to Norway, which is presented in Figure 4.

Figure 4. Number of UN resettlement refugees residing in Norway, according to nationality (settled 1979–2019) (Utne & Strøm, 2020)



During the 2015–2018 period, Syrian refugees dominated the arrival of resettled refugees to Norway. Over the last couple of years, other nationalities have again become part of the quota, including protracted refugee populations in Africa. Even though the quota still consists of sub-quotas from Syria, it now also includes Congolese refugees in Uganda and Eritreans.[76] Additionally, the quota has lately also consisted of sub-quotas from UNHCR transit centers in Libya, Romania, and Rwanda (Kvotebrev, 2018, 2019, 2020)[77]. The shift towards selecting more groups from East-Africa and the Horn of Africa is also related to the UNHCR initiative "Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework" (CRRF), as part of the Global Compact on Refugees. This framework aims, among other things, to ease pressure on host countries and, in the case of Africa, to prevent more refugees from moving north to Libya and further across the Mediterranean Sea. Over the last couple of years, the UNHCR has prioritized the CRRF countries, protection needs related to the Central Mediterranean route, and the refugee situation stemming from the war in Syria.

76 Detailed statistics on yearly arrivals to Norway: https://www.udi.no/statistikk-og-analyse/statistikk/overforingsflyktninger-etter-statsborgerskap-innvilgelser-og-ankomster-2020/

77 Letters providing details on quota composition. Provided by the MoJ. See https://www.udi.no/aktuelt/3000-overforingsflyktninger-i-2020/

National eligibility criteria

Norway, like other resettlement countries, has developed its own additional eligibility criteria to select individual refugees. According to the guidelines from 2020, the criteria are as follows:

1) The refugee's need for international protection
2) The need for resettlement
3) Families with children under the age of 18 shall be given priority
4) Women at risk (given priority)
5) LHBTIQ+-persons (given priority)

It is also stated that the following circumstances will, as a general rule, lead to rejection:

1) People who are excluded from refugee status according to Norwegian Immigration Laws
2) Refugees with unwanted behaviors and attitudes
3) Lack of settlement capacity in Norwegian municipalities

In short, according to the guidelines, the Norwegian resettlement profile comprises families with children under the age of 18 and cases that include women and girls at risk. LHBTIQ+ cases are also given priority. In addition, Christians, Ahmadiyya-Muslims, and Yezidis who are being persecuted on the basis of their respective faiths have been given priority in 2021.

In the previous guidelines from 2015, an explicit integration criterion was also included at the individual level, stating that those with relevant education and/or work experience that is relevant for the Norwegian labor marked should be given priority. However, this criterion was not to be applied to children below the age of 18 (MoJ, 2015). Because it was not possible to operationalize the criterion, it was in practice not applied to families with children. Consequently, the criterion was only relevant to a very limited number of resettlement refugees because families with children have made up the bulk of the quota in recent years.

Resettlement refugees living in Norway are rather young; on average, almost half are 18 years or younger when they arrive in the country. Especially since 2012, the relative share of underage resettlement refugees has grown. For the 2017–2019 period, the share has been almost 60% (Utne & Strøm, 2020, p. 21). This is attributable to the political priority given to the resettlement of families with underage children.

The 2020 guidelines do not have an explicit integration criterion to prioritize refugees "with relevant education and/or work experience" at the individual level. The prospect of integration, including formal and informal skills, should now be considered in the process of composing the quota and sub-quotas, shifting the focus from individual qualifications (2015) to group prospects and skills (2020): "The different sub-quotas should in total result in a balanced composition of the refugee quota. The refugees' potential for integration, including established competence" (MoJ, 2020, p. 5).

In the 2020 guidelines, the UDI is further instructed, at the group level, to consult with IMDi with regards to the prospects for (successful) settlement and integration in Norway and to include their input in the PMQ sent to the UNHCR. Importantly, at the individual level, the advice from IMDi about prospects for settlement and future integration should be part of UDI's process when deciding whether to accept or reject candidates for resettlement (MoJ, 2020, p. 2).[78]

The guidelines from 2015 and 2020 are specified in circulars that make for interesting comparison. In the latest guidelines, the MoER has been given a more prominent role in developing the size and composition of the resettlement quota and a more explicit role in ensuring that integration consideration is secured in the process. At the same time, the explicit formulation of the integration criteria (education and vocational experience) has been removed in the latest guidelines.

In some ways, IMDi has more influence than before. UDI previously suggested a quota after consulting with IMDi and others. Now, UDI and IMDi are asked to send separate suggestions to their respective ministries (MoJ and MoER) for consideration. UDI was previously instructed to elicit advice from IMDI on specific refugees' prospects for successful integration in Norway. As we see in Table 5, this advice shall, as of 2020, feed into the profile that is sent to the UNHCR in the PMQ as well as into UDI's case processing. IMDi's role in assessing the resettlement capacity of municipalities and matters of integration was likewise made more explicit in 2020.

Table 5 shows, in more detail, the changes in operational procedures for quota composition.

78 The relevant quote in Norwegian: "*UDI skal innhente IMDis råd om utsikter til bosetting og integrering i Norge, som skal tas inn i arbeidet med profil til UNHCR (Pre-mission Questionnaire) og i UDIs vurdering av vedtak om innreise eller avslag*" (MoJ, 2020, p. 2).

Table 5. Policy developments observable in two key documents[79]

	2015	2020
Composition of the quota	UDI and IMDi submit a joint report to MoJ with a summarized evaluation of experiences with selection and settlement over the previous year and the last six months. Evaluations shall also include longer-term experiences when possible. This feeds into the composition of the quota.	UDI and IMDi can either submit a joint report to MoJ or prepare their own suggestions for the composition of the quota. Results from the integration process at the level of national groups shall be communicated to the extent possible, including longer-term experiences. MoER shall give an assessment to the MoJ of which refugee groups should be offered resettlement in line with Norway's integration policy objectives. The MFA shall give advice to the MoJ on which refugee groups should be offered resettlement, and how resettlement can be in line with the Norwegian refugee and humanitarian policies, in line with foreign policy objectives.
Factors to be considered for quota composition	Refugees' prospects for integration shall be considered.	For the different sub-quotas, there shall be a balanced composition of the refugees. Possibilities for integration, including the refugees' skill-level, shall be considered.
Selection criteria	The main criterion is the need for international protection, based largely on the UNHCR's assessment, with threshold levels approximately as in domestic asylum cases, and the lack of alternatives. Among secondary criteria, women and children below the age of 18 shall be given priority. For resettlement of persons above the age of 18, those with education and professional experience relevant for the Norwegian labor market shall be given priority.	The main criterion is the need for international protection, based largely on the UNHCR's assessment, with threshold levels for needs and credibility assessments approximately as those in domestic asylum cases, and the lack of alternatives. Among secondary criteria, families with children under the age of 18 shall be given priority. LHBTIQ+ persons shall also be given priority.

Our UDI interviewees understood the integration criteria as they were formulated in the 2015 guidelines, partly constituting the already mentioned explicit criteria of education and work-experience and partly as a reference to the capacities of municipalities. The latter speaks to the municipalities' ability to provide the refugees with what they need. Examples include interpreters in the languages that refugees speak or available wheelchair-accessible housing. However, it can also be seen as a capacity challenge that results from previous

79 Our translations: this is a stylized table and the original texts have been summarized; the list is non-exhaustive.

selection missions having accepted many resettlement refugees with little education or relevant work experience, thereby linking back to the previous integration criterion.

The link between considerations for integration and municipal capacity also remains relevant in the context of the 2020 guidelines (MoJ, 2020). The fact that a resettlement request can be rejected due to a combination of causes (for example, little prospects for future integration, unwanted attitudes and behaviors, and health issues), makes it possible to reject cases with reference to the "capacity of the municipalities" rather than "integration prospects." As such, the similarities and links between the different criteria make it possible for decision-makers to avoid using the more sensitive and somewhat problematic criterion of integration or integration potential in individual decisions.[80]

The capacity and responsibility of the municipalities

The Norwegian municipalities are responsible for providing newly arrived refugees with an introduction program to help them integrate. The goal is to ease refugee transfer into the ordinary education system or the labor market and, in turn, to secure their economic independence.

To receive requests to settle new refugees, the municipalities must demonstrate, among other things, that a certain percentage of the participants from previous introduction programs have, in fact, transitioned to work or further studies. However, when measuring the results of the integration program, input, such as the refugees' mental traumas, [81] previous vocational experiences, and educational level, are not considered (Guribye & Espegren, 2019, p. 8).

Over the past five years, when the number of asylum seekers has been low, the KS has argued that Norwegian municipalities have unused competence and capacity and could receive more resettlement refugees.[82] This can also be considered as a way of ensuring that core competence is maintained during a period of low asylum numbers.

Examples of factors influencing municipalities' overall capacities and willingness to settle refugees include available houses, available translators, medical facilities, and child welfare facilities. Keeping up to date with this information is demanding because the municipalities' willingness and capacity to settle refu-

80 For a more detailed description of the problematic aspects of the integration criterion, see Long and Olsen (2008, p. 6).
81 https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.3402/ejpt.v7.28057%40zept20.2016.7.issue-s1
82 Source: https://www.ks.no/kronikker/den-globale-flyktningsituasjonen-er-viktigst/

gees change continuously, according to their experiences with refugee groups and individuals recently settled—even if several informants consider municipalities to be more willing to resettle resettlement refugees than asylees. Given a lull in asylum numbers, for instance, some municipalities are keen to accept refugees for resettlement to maintain core competences. This ever-changing picture indicates that an updated and transparent process is important.

Central immigration authorities do not have to confer with municipalities in ad-hoc cases of requests for refugee resettlement. This has become part of public discussion after the Socialist Left Party (SV) raised the issue in the Norwegian Parliament, following the request for the resettlement of 123 Syrian refugees made by the UNHCR in 2014. The group was found to have particularly high medical needs. The rejection of these refugees gave rise to a parliamentary debate in Norway about selection criteria, transparency of the decision-making process, and whether municipalities had sufficiently been consulted.[83] The rejection of the request was made without consulting the municipalities specifically related to these cases. In the debate that followed, it turned out that several municipalities stated that they had the reception capacity that was needed. They reacted to not having been consulted before the authorities rejected the refugees. Informants pointed out that IMDi needs to be able to act on its institutional knowledge of feasibility, accumulated over time, in order to be operational and effective.

Refugee resettlement practice—The missions

While it is the MoJ, in cooperation with MFA and MoER, that is responsible for allocating the quota, the UDI, in cooperation with PU and IMDi, is responsible for the selection of resettlement refugees. Approximately 95% of the resettlement places on the annual Norwegian quota, specified to country of origin and country of transit, are selected through selection missions that consist of public officers from the immigration and integration authorities together with the police.

The remaining cases are the so-called *open cases*, without a specified country of origin, and presented as dossier, urgent, or medical cases (MoJ, 2020). No more than 60 medical cases and 40 unaccompanied minors can be resettled on an

83 https://www.stortinget.no/no/Saker-og-publikasjoner/Publikasjoner/Representantforslag/2014-2015/dok8-201415-018/?lvl=0
Response from the Government: https://www.stortinget.no/no/Saker-og-publikasjoner/Publikasjoner/Innstillinger/Stortinget/2014-2015/inns-201415-121/?lvl=0

annual basis. These cases can be selected without an interview prior to travel and can be summoned for a registration interview by the Norwegian police after arrival. The UDI then decides the case based on the application and the interview with the police, granting the vast majority refugee status. In emergency cases, UDI decides within 48 hours and, with the help of relevant embassies and the IOM, does its best to ensure that the refugee travels to Norway as soon as possible (UNCHR, 2020, *Resettlement Handbook*, country chapter Norway). As part of this process, IMDi secures that a municipality accepts the refugee for immediate settlement.

Since most cases are selected through selection missions, we provide a thorough description of how these missions are organized and how different criteria and guidelines are interpreted in practice by public officers.

Preparing for a mission

The most important preparation for a selection mission is the PMQ. UDI sends this document to the UNHCR country office and the UNHCR Regional Hub. The PMQ is, in many ways, a recipe or a detailed order for the Norwegian quota for that mission. It includes the target number of refugees for the mission and the number of cases Norwegian authorities want the UNHCR to present. The latter number will always outnumber the first number by approximately 20%. This enables the missions to reach their target number.

The yearly quota is flexible over a three-year period. Even so, efforts are made to ensure that the yearly quota corresponds with the sub-quotas decided for that particular year. The result is that some informants experienced that there was more flexibility for selecting cases within different sub-quotas (e.g., medical cases or cases of unaccompanied minors) at the beginning of the year than at the end of the year.

The PMQ, therefore, contains updated information of remaining places within the different sub-quotas. For example, if there has been a relatively high number of unaccompanied minors who have already been accepted that year, then this sub-quota might be full or almost full. The mission may thus not be open for this sub-quota.

As mentioned previously, the guidelines for the Norwegian refugee resettlement policy state that the different sub-quotas should consist of a balanced composition of the refugee group. In addition, one should take into consideration their perceived possibilities for integration. Hence, in the PMQ, it is specified that

referrals should reflect: "a well-balanced approach as regards to education, literacy, gender, health and family size."[84] At the same time, it is stated that priority should be given to vulnerable women and families with children under the age of 18: "Our female perspective does not, however, exclude boys and men within families." The PMQ emphasizes that "particularly vulnerable single men might also be prioritized if they are vulnerable due to their sexual orientation (LHBTIQ+)." (PMQ Norwegian Mission to Ethiopia, spring 2020).

Even though the Norwegian profile is explained in bilateral meetings and in the PMQ, the interviewees found that UNHCR offices in new locations often find it difficult to fully grasp the practical consequences of the profile. It takes time to develop a good relationship with new UNHCR offices, which includes communicating the practical implications of the profile.

An example of a misunderstanding at an early stage of a relationship is when Norwegian authorities specifically ask for refugees speaking a language for which they have available interpreters in Norway and the UNHCR submits cases where only children speak this language. These cases might be rejected on the grounds that children (according to Norwegian law) should not act as interpreters for their parents. Another example has to do with family composition. Even though the Norwegian profile gives priority to families with children, this implies nuclear families of a limited size. In the PMQs from 2020, the Norwegian guidelines for the UNHCR regarding family size (F/S) were commented on:

> Unfortunately, we don't have receiving capacity for too many large families due to a lack of big houses/apartments. Large families are considered F/S six and above. A few large families in a group of 250 persons should be manageable from our side. F/S above eight should be limited to an absolute minimum due to very few municipalities with large enough houses. (PMQ Norway to UNHCR, Ethiopia, spring 2020)

Neither in the Norwegian guidelines on resettlement (UDI, 2020) nor in the PMQs that we had access to were there comments regarding the preferred age of children in the prioritized group "families with children." As we shall see in the next chapter, there was a general understanding among the commission members from both UDI and the IMDi that families with younger children (under the age of 14) were to be preferred.

Cases referred by the UNHCR to Norwegian authorities are pre-screened by UDI, IMDi, and the police prior to the selection mission. The purpose of pre-

84 PMQ Norwegian mission to Ethiopia, spring 2020.

screening is to identify cases that do not fall under the Norwegian profile at an early stage in order to avoid people being called in for an interview in a case that is likely to be rejected.

On a mission

Norwegian selection missions have recently become more complex, involving more agencies and more professionals. According to our respondents, there was "shift of paradigm" in 2015, when the Norwegian quota was increased from an annual quota of 1,120 to 8,000 over a three-year period. Prior to 2015, the selection missions were described by our respondents as being more "manageable," involving a handful of public officers from UDI and IMDi, on the basis of having an oral culture and being less critical towards UNHCR's assessments. Before 2015, there was also less distinction between immigration and integration aspects, whereas in the post-2015 period, the individual mandates for the two directorates have been strengthened.

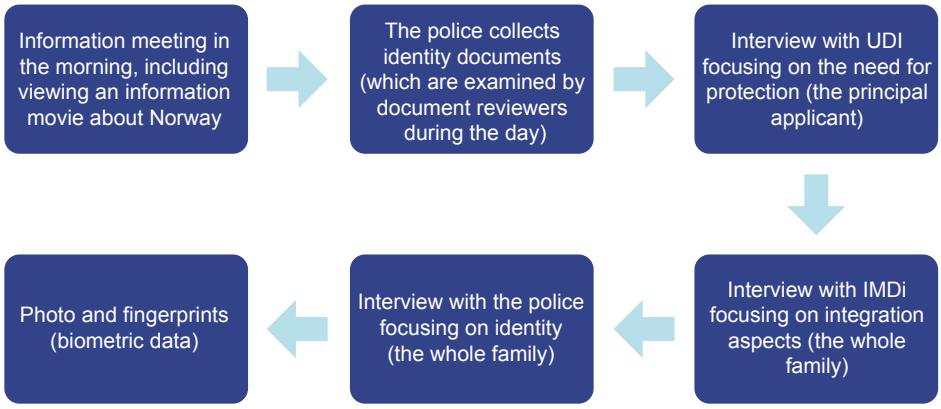
The selection missions, led by UDI, now consist of professionals from UDI, IMDi, PU, and—in the case of Syrian refugees—PST. The duration of the missions is approximately 10 days and the number of people involved varies from 20 to 35. The implication of this cooperation between several public agencies for refugees is that the head of the family must go through up to three interviews with different purposes: one interview by UDI to document the asylum claim, one by IMDi on integration issues, and one by PU to determine identity. Additionally, the PU collects identity papers and certificates and investigates their validity while the PST assesses whether individual refugees may pose a security threat. When UDI is assessing the need for protection, the alignment with Norwegian asylum practices for asylum seekers is checked. Normally, UDI only interviews the head of the family or single refugees. IMDI interviews all members of a family. Family members who are older than 14 are interviewed individually.

In this process, involving three different interviews, there is a risk that refugees do not fully understand the distinction between the different agencies and might withhold information if this information had already been given to professionals from another agency. To ensure a clear process, it is thus important for refugees to be given thorough and customized information about the procedures. This is handled by holding an information meeting at the beginning of the day, where the refugees are shown an information movie about Norway and given information about the procedure during the interview day.

It is vital for the success of the missions that the cooperation between different public agencies is working well. According to the interviewees, they found the inter-agency cooperation developed through these missions to be successful. In fact, the government has used the cooperation model from the missions as a model for the organization of the new national asylum seeker arrival center (in Råde, Norway).

Figure 5 illustrates what a typical day looks like for the refugees during missions (note that the sequence of different interviews may vary).

Figure 5. A typical day for refugees being interviewed by Norwegian resettlement missions



The "difficult cases"

During missions, the civil servants from UDI, IMDi, and PU discuss the so-called difficult cases in-between interviews. Then, at the end of each day, team-leaders from the agencies discuss these cases and make decisions. Cases for which they cannot reach a decision are labelled as pending. Often, more information is needed from the UNHCR, police authorities, medical advisors, or Norwegian municipalities. Cases that are difficult to decide might involve health issues that require extra follow-up and/or concerns about lack of parental care. Another cause for doubt is cases in which refugees, during the interviews, express conservative attitudes and opinions contrary to Norwegian legislation and Norwegian education and working life. This is often related to the fact that women are expected to work, that girls and boys go to school together, and that Norway is a liberal society. Cases labelled "difficult cases" or "cases with doubt" often include a combination of several of the above-mentioned factors.

Even though decision-makers must consider the implications of the Norwegian voluntary settlement model and be certain that there is a municipality willing to settle the refugees selected for resettlement, Norway does appear to emphasize other characteristics more than manifest formal qualifications. According to Statistics Norway, Norway selects refugees with modest levels of education and/or work experience (Utne & Strøm, 2020). On a group basis, the selection of vulnerable refugees is related to different sub-quotas chosen. On an individual basis, the selection of vulnerable refugees is often related to the medical quota, the focus on women and children at risk, and the focus on families with children.

Newly published statistics show that there has been a decrease of resettlement refugees with higher education in recent years and an increase in refugees with an undocumented education level (Utne & Strøm, 2020). This might, among other things, be a result of the recent sub-quotas from Sub-Saharan Africa. According to the interviewees, most of these refugees have little to no schooling and very modest formal qualifications. Likely also relevant for overall integration outcomes is the declining drop in socioeconomic selectivity among the large group of Syrians. Nearly 25% of all the current resettlement refugees in Norway are from Syria and most have arrived during the last six years.[85] Initially relatively well-educated and coming from what used to be a lower middle-income country until 2011, many Syrian refugees have now been displaced and immiserated in the Middle East region for a decade. In Lebanon, for instance, more than half of the Syrian refugee children are now out of school,[86] while 90% of Syrian refugees in Lebanon now live in extreme poverty.[87] In Jordan, close to 80% survive on about USD 3 a day.

Missions during the COVID-19 pandemic

When the COVID-19 pandemic hit Europe in March 2020, resettlement was suspended. No resettlement refugees travelled to Norway between March and July of that year. At the same time, UDI and IMDi had to restructure their work and start interviewing on digital platforms. The selection process was still conducted in collaboration with IMDi and the police, but the remote interviews did not allow for the collection of biometric data. The restrictions on travel and the delays in the process made it challenging to meet the quota for 2020, thus 608 unused places were transferred to 2021.

85 https://www.ssb.no/befolkning/artikler-og-publikasjoner/overforingsflyktninger-2019
86 https://www.unhcr.org/lb/education
87 https://www.unhcr.org/syria-emergency.html

After a few months of remote interviewing using digital video platforms, it has been reported that the digital experience delays the process, both due to the logistics involved and because the UNHCR also had to conduct video interviews to identify refugees for resettlement and fulfil the refugee resettlement form (RRF). Remote interviews on digital platforms have also been reported to have several shortcomings and to result in more cases being rejected. First, this interview method requires a good internet connection, which excludes some locations and, thus, some refugee groups. Second, selection team members find it difficult to obtain the same level of information concerning identity, security issues, the need for protection, and integration aspects during remote interviews. Hence, the latter is the main reason for a higher rejection rate.[88]

According to the interviewees, there are also positive lessons to be learned from the video interviews and they felt that this format might be useful for certain cases even when it is possible to resume physical interviews. Although the interviews require extensive planning by the UNHCR and selection teams, it is probably less exhausting for the refugees who do not have to travel to an interview location (often far away from the area they reside in). The fact that the refugees can be interviewed in the area in which they live also makes it possible to conduct follow-up interviews when needed. It is argued that technological innovations might have the potential to expand the resettlement space, something that might be important to compensate for the temporary suspension of resettlement and to expand the future resettlement intake. In the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic, it will be important to evaluate the new methods used and see whether or how these methods can contribute to improving the national selection process.

88 Source: The podcast: "UDI-Innsikt," episode "Stengte grenser, korona og overføringsflyktnigner" ("Closed borders, corona and resettlement refugees"), published 04.09.2020

5. The Norwegian resettlement program in practice

In the previous chapter, we described how Norwegian immigration authorities decide on the quota for resettlement in the coming year and on the routines for before, under, and after selection missions. In the introductory chapter, we described briefly the actors involved from the Norwegian side during these processes, including the local authorities that are responsible for the integration of refugees.

In this chapter, we use interviews with civil servants, NGO representatives, and employees in the three chosen municipalities to describe and analyze selected aspects of the Norwegian resettlement practice. The criteria and practices regarding integration constitute a pivotal point for these descriptions and analyses. Some topics, however, point to the overall functioning of the resettlement program and thereby provide context for a more focused discussion.

In the following, we present and discuss aspects of the Norwegian resettlement program that the interviewees found particularly important. These aspects were mentioned repeatedly during our interviews, often across institutional settings. We first present the interviewees' comments on the organization of the Norwegian resettlement program and the roles of the involved agencies. Next, we highlight their comments on the flows of information between the actors. In the remainder of the chapter, we convey and discuss the interviewees' views on contact with the UNHCR, security assessments, integration potential assessments (including attitudes and actions), vulnerability, who can be seen as benefitting from resettlement, and on the practice of other resettlement countries. In the final section of the chapter, we study the Norwegian resettlement program in the context of other national relevant policy areas in addition to the global refugee situation.

Coordinating the national agencies of resettlement

The organizational set-up of the Norwegian resettlement program has changed over the past five years, also changing the basis for the practices of the criteria for the selection of refugees. The interviewees referred to the political decision

made by the Norwegian Parliament in 2015 to receive 8,000 refugees from Syria over a 3-year period as a turning point. The share volume and increased attention made several interviewees label this a paradigm shift for the resettlement program, fueling an ongoing professionalization of the operation. Informants in all the involved institutions commented on this professionalization, often praising the increased quality of work. However, sometimes they added that some aspects of their work were still not clearly defined:

> From 2016 onwards, the work was increasingly formalized; for example, the cooperation with IMDi.…There has been a professionalization, whereby we have formalized the roles of the involved agencies and of what is expected of us. But there are still some grey areas. Integration is one such area. (Employee, UDI)

This formalization included the use of interview guides, forms that the mission members filled out during interviews, and forms for the rejection of cases during missions.

Whereas selection missions before 2015 had consisted of representatives from UDI and IMDi, the PU and PST were now also included in both the prescreening of cases and the selection missions. This was a result of a caseload that included refugees from war-torn Syria. However, the PU and, in some cases, the PST, were later included in missions to other regions as well. Their representatives mainly assisted with recording biometrics and verifying documentation but, during some missions, they also took on other tasks.

The interviewees who had been part of the missions pointed out that the cooperation was excellent for the two- to three-week duration of these missions. UDI, IMDi, and PU found that there were daily routines used during these missions and that they found ways to reach agreement in difficult cases. They did however also point out that there were disputes and somewhat competing mandates. Here, they singled out disagreement regarding the role of integration as a criterion for selection as a divisive topic. This resonated with the information provided by informants at higher levels of government.

Here, the two main key ministries involved in the resettlement program, MoJ and MoER, have argued about the primacy of their mandates. The MoJ underscored that this is primarily a humanitarian program, where the needs of the refugees and UNHCR's priorities should come first, given security clearance. The MoER did not dispute this, in principle. Instead, they repeatedly pointed out that their concerns were about individual integration and the integration capacity of the municipalities during the preparatory process leading up to the new guide-

lines (MoJ, 2020). Whereas the MoER and their directorate (IMDi) must respond to feedback from the municipalities and adhere to political goals of securing integration of refugees in the labor marked and education, the MoJ and UDI must relate to the target numbers set by Parliament, concerns for the refugees, the Norwegian Immigration Act, and the asylum practice, safety, and security in the context of selection missions. Both parties seek to find a balance between the mandates. According to UDI informants, changes in signals regarding criteria can elicit reactions from the UNHCR.

Meanwhile, some informants from the PU expressed concerns that that other government agencies did not fully value their roles. During the years after the 2015 decision to resettle Syrians, the police took on a more substantial role in selected missions. One of these was a mission to Amman in 2020. On this mission, the PU cooperated with the PST and took on an extended role, applying more thorough methods than on previous missions, including checking digital data sources.

> In Amman, we decided to do this the way it should be done. Both we and the PST were very happy with the process. We exchanged so much information. There is no doubt that the result was that more cases were rejected. (Employee, PU)

According to the interviewees from the police, while UDI mission members were appreciative of this extra diligence, the response from UDI administrative staff was that this delayed the process and meant increased case processing time.

Meanwhile, the UDI and IMDi exchanged case-by-case information during missions. The PU took part during these end-of-the-day debriefs, where the agencies' representatives discussed the details of cases that were not clear-cut. According to some of the UDI interviewees, they would have wanted to have more information about both the interview guides that the IMDi used to assess the integration potential and updates about the municipalities' capacity to receive challenging, often medical, cases. A few UDI staff confirmed that they had taken part in the IMDi interviews, thereby gaining valuable information about the overlaps and differences between the interviews.

The interviewees also noted that there were subtle shifts in the delicate balance in the cooperation between UDI and IMDi in the practice of resettlement. The 2020 version of the guidelines on resettlement (MoJ, 2020) does not state the integration perspective as clearly as the 2015 version, and UDI still had the final

word in singular cases.[89] However, the IMDi employees found themselves to be heard regarding the composition of the quotas and the profiles sent to the UNHCR; they were involved in the pre-screening of individual cases and, as before, had a pivotal part in the interviews and decisions during the missions.

Changes challenge the link between central and local authorities

As we saw in the previous chapter, the national distribution of settlement places is a process that has several stages. The Norwegian settlement model encompasses both successful asylum seekers and resettlement refugees, and is anchored in an agreement between the KS and the government.

The process starts with input from the national committee (Norwegian: *Nasjonalt utvalg*) consisting of KS, individual municipalities, UDI, IMDi, Norwegian State Housing Bank, the county municipalities, and other national organizations, which results in criteria for the distribution of places to be requested from the municipalities.[90] The national committee suggests the criteria for distribution of resettlement places. The MoE has the final say regarding these criteria.

Subsequently, there is a two-step process involving the central government (IMDi), KS, and the municipalities. First, IMDi, with the support of KS, suggests the number of refugees for resettlement in each municipality. Then, it is up to the individual municipality to either accept or reject the suggested number. Next, when this has been agreed upon, IMDi presents individual refugees and families for settlement while taking into consideration special needs, family size, etc.[91]

During the second part of this process, the municipalities respond to the numerical request from the IMDi. The municipalities confirm or suggest alteration to this number, following local political approval. During the settlement year, the individual cases are suggested to and confirmed by the municipalities. This entails challenges for all involved actors in the settlement process, particularly the municipalities, in terms of information flows, which we discuss in the next section, as well as in terms of organization.

89 According to UDI, the explicit integration perspective was removed in the 2020 version of the Guidelines. However, they note that the *prospects* of integration at the group level is central to the 2020-version. In addition, UDI found that the chapter on Norway in the UNHCR Handbook still states that persons with relevant education and work experience can/may (Norwegian: kan) be prioritized (MoJ 2020:12).

90 https://www.imdi.no/planlegging-og-bosetting/bosettingsprosessen/nasjonalt-utvalg-for-bosetting/

91 https://www.imdi.no/planlegging-og-bosetting/slik-fordeles-flyktningene/

In 2020, IMDi changed from a decentralized model with regional offices to a centralized model. As part of the reform, the county municipalities were given a role as rapporteurs with municipal capacity to the central IMDi office. The reform further led to increased reliance on the digital platform designed to ease the communication between IMDi and the municipalities (IMDinett). The removal of the regional offices, where the staff often had expert knowledge of individual municipalities and their history regarding resettlement and integration, led to insecurity among municipal employees, according to our interviewees.

> Before the reform, we could pick up the phone and solve cases quickly. Our contact would know both our housing situation and our local labor market. He could say: "Yes, I know that house. We have a single engineer; he would be perfect for vacancies at the industrial plants nearby. I will send him over." Now, everything is digital. It is a faceless system. (Employee, municipality).

Our interviewees in the central IMDi office did not agree fully with the criticism of the municipalities' staff regarding the digital communication platform (IMDinett). By having the municipalities putting their capacities, including available housing, onto one platform, this should make for the allocation of refugees more efficient, according to them. The system's knowledge of the situation in the municipalities should be the same. This should be further secured by involving a third agency, the county municipality (Norwegian: *fylkeskommune*).

Informants from IMDi reported that 2020 was a period of transition, where the reform that involved the county municipalities needed time to settle. Information about the capacity of individual municipalities was coming through channels that had not yet fully been established. As one informant put it: "We have the same information as before the reform. That is, we are supposed to have it, but…" (Employee, IMDi).

Distribution of refugees to the municipalities

When IMDi (fronting the process described above) requests resettlement places in a municipality for the coming year, it considers how well previously settled refugees have integrated into that municipality. The municipalities' efforts were measured by looking at the outcome of the introduction and qualification program. In practice, the IMDi looked at the success rate—i.e., the proportion of all attendees who managed to get a job or move into the ordinary education system after they had finished the introduction program. The interviewees in the municipalities were frustrated because the system apparently did not take into

consideration the level of competency that the refugees in each municipality had when they were first settled:

> IMDi's system for measuring the performance of the municipalities, NIR, does not work. They do not include the input into the system.…So, a low NIR score results in fewer refugees in the coming years, and lower prestige for the municipality. (Representative, NGO)

The employees at IMDi's central office were aware of this critique. While working on the digital system for measuring the input, they pointed out what the practice had been up to 2020:

> We have responded to this by distributing the refugee groups as evenly as possible across municipalities, mixing families and single persons, spreading health cases, mixing levels of education, etc. (Employee, IMDi)

IMDi was, at the same time, working on refining their evaluation for the integration performance of municipalities:

> We have now started working with "contribution indicators" (Norwegian: *bidragsindikatorer*)—that is estimating the net integration added by the municipalities; their value added, if you will. (Employee, IMDi)

Using an expanded registration system (KOMBO), the program intends to use an individual's results from the introduction program (i.e., transfer to work/education) and then to subtract the level that the refugee had when they started.

> By doing it this way, we can see how much the refugees have improved. Thereby, an illiterate person learning to read can equal someone with a bachelor's degree getting a job. (Employee, IMDi)

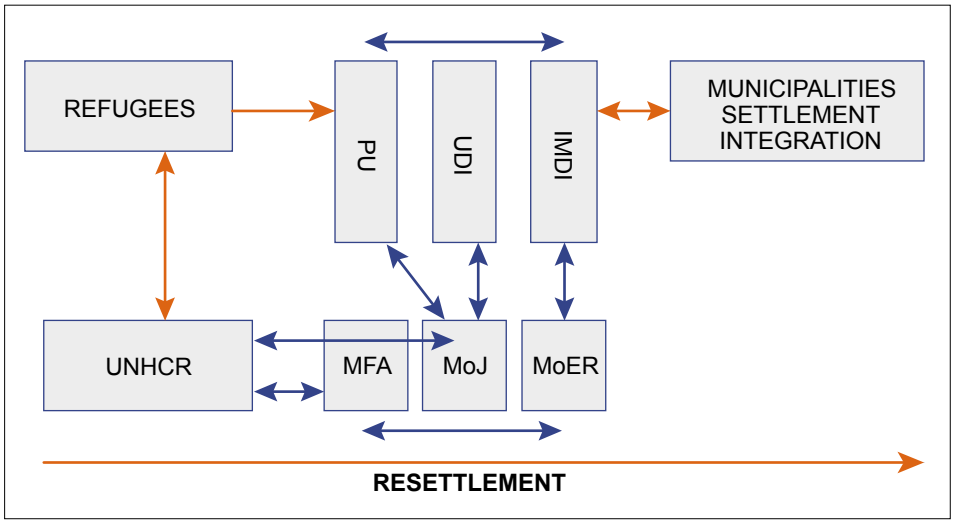
The municipalities were not aware of these developmental processes. What they saw were substantial variations in the different groups of formal refugee competencies and that IMDi evaluated them based on their integration output a few years later.

As we have seen, IMDi was part of the larger group of government and non-governmental actors taking part in decision-making regarding the distributions of requests for the settlement of refugees and asylum seekers each year. Yet, from the point of view of the municipalities, IMDi was the government body they interacted with and the one that held the key to the allocation of places, individual refugees, and their families.

The flow of information on vulnerability and integration

As we saw above, the list of actors involved in the resettlement process is lengthy. The interviewees from all ministries, agencies, the UNHCR, NGOs, and municipalities commented on the challenges involved in securing adequate and timely flow of information between different parties regarding vulnerability and different aspects of integration.

Figure 6. Information flows between involved actors in resettlement

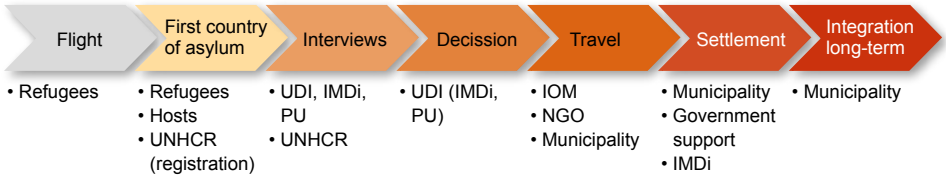


In Figure 6, we see the complexity of the communication between the actors involved in the Norwegian resettlement process. Toward the left of the figure, we see the process starting out with the UNHCR gathering information about the refugees. At the top of the figure, we see the three ministries that are involved, the MFA, the MoJ and the MoE. Of these, the MoJ is the responsible formal contact point on the Norwegian side. In the middle of the figure, we find the two directorates, the UDI and IMDi, and the police agency, PU. These take part in the selection process and communicate with the UNHCR before, during, and after missions, with refugees during and after missions, and with the municipalities as part of the settlement process.

We could add further actors, such as those government institutions involved in the negotiations of the criteria for the distribution of places for resettlement in the municipalities. Figure 7 illustrates the long distance between the refugees and the municipalities at the outset of the process. These are the two key sets of actors in the long-term integration process. To discuss the challenges of infor-

mation, both with actors involved earlier and later on in the process, it is helpful to also refer to the full resettlement process and the actors involved, illustrated in Figure 8.

Figure 7. The resettlement process for refugees: Involved actors



In Figure 7, we see the process from the perspective of the refugee, starting with the flight, the stay in the first country of asylum (host country), the interviews with the UNHCR and national authorities, the decision, the travel to the resettlement country, the settlement process, and the long-term integration. At the bottom of the figure, we find the actors and agencies involved during the different stages of the process.

Lack of information about what happens later in the process

The interviewees from UDI and IMDi, who had participated on selection missions, noted that they often wondered whether groups of refugees really understood what was going on and what they were a part of. Did they know what the process entailed at the time of the interview? Did they have sufficient information about what happens during the selection process? Furthermore, did they know what awaited them if they were selected for resettlement? Although detailed information about life in Norway cannot be expected, it may be argued that the less informed the refugees are, the less they are able to make an informed decision as to whether resettlement is in their best interest.

Those refugees who are selected for resettlement to Norway are expected to attend a cultural orientation program to prepare them for the process ahead and a life in Norway.[92] This program is presented before their departure for Norway. In 2019, following withdrawals from several Syrian refugees already cleared for resettlement to Norway, the authorities tested moving the cultural orientation program for a group of Syrians to take place before their screening. In 2020, this cultural orientation program was evaluated. While given good overall marks,

92 https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/sites/default/files/2018.1308_-_ahqs_on_pre-arrival_integration_measures_in_country_of_origin_.pdf

the experiment that provided information before the selection interviews was not found to have the intended effect.[93] Instead, the information provided to the test groups made it possible for the refugees to act strategically during the subsequent selection process.

The informants who took part in the missions were still worried that the refugees did not understand the selection process itself. The informants saw this as particularly relevant during missions to Uganda, Ethiopia, and Kenya. During several of the interviews, those conducting the interviews had to spend time explaining what the interview was about.

> The ones we interview in Africa appear to know little about the process. They do not know what the interview is about or that they are going to Norway. So, we ask them, "Do you know why you are here?" If they say no, we repeat the information. It is difficult to do the interview if they do not know why they are there. (Employee, UDI)

Several informants mentioned this challenge regarding some interviews among these groups of refugees. They did not know what caused this information challenge.

> They do not understand that they are going to another country. I do not know whether it is due to a lack of information or whether they do not have a framework for understanding and interpreting what is going on. (Employee, UDI)

We do not know how representative these impressions from the missions in Africa were. All the Norwegian civil servants who were interviewed recognized this phenomenon and many shared worries about the refugees being sufficiently informed about their choice. At the same time, there were reports that not all the refugees seemed to lack this information. What seems clear is that the refugees who were interviewed on the missions to the Middle East were better informed, both about the selection process and the life awaiting them in Norway.

It has not been possible for us as researchers to follow one of the missions by going into the field. Therefore, we can only give examples of these situations and describe the frustration of the Norwegian civil servants suddenly doubting whether the refugees they interview know the gravity of the choice they are about to make.

93 https://www.imdi.no/globalassets/dokumenter/andre-filer/evaluering-av-kulturorienteringsprogram-met-for-overforingsflyktninger.pdf, p. 12.

> In the African portfolios, we meet people who do not know anything about Norway. In addition, they do not have any questions—even after we tell them that resettlement means they cannot go back for many years. They do not know what it means to travel. They are uninformed. The reason may be cultural, as in what happens, happens, but I do not know. (Employee, UDI).

Not all African refugees were unaware of the process and lacked information about what awaited them if resettled to Norway. There was substantial variation between different missions, nationalities, sub-groups, and tribes. The quotas also included people who knew exactly what was going on, acted adequately, and were informed about conditions in Norway. For the missions to Lebanon and Jordan, the refugees were mostly aware about the process and about what resettling in Norway would entail.

Informants from both UDI and IMDi who were part of the missions said they could use more detailed information about what happens to different types of refugees and even to individual refugees who were selected for resettlement.[94] Were they able to participate and live good lives in Norway? What about their children? Often faced with difficult choices about who to include or exclude from resettlement, they would have liked to have some sense of the consequences of their choices for the refugees themselves. At the same time, the informants understood that they could not be given access to data on individual refugees due to their rights to privacy.

> No, we have no way of finding out how they [individual refugees] fare after they are resettled. And we are not supposed to be able to because we have no mandate or official reason for having that information. (Employee, UDI)

At a group level, one could ask whether information about earlier arrivals from one nationality should inform the priorities for the composition of future quotas. There is such a feedback mechanism in place, whereby IMDi transmits general information about a group's settlement from the municipalities to the discussions on quota.

94 Interestingly, this has also been voiced by UNHCR staff. According to Jeff Crisp, former head of UNHCR's research and evaluation unit: "A critique sometimes heard within UNHCR is the organization's inclination to 'write refugees off the books' once they have arrived in a resettlement country and to consider that they have 'found a solution,' irrespective of any problems they might experience in adapting to their new way of life" (personal communication, March 2021).

The flow of information—What happens upstream?

The employees in the municipalities commented on two points for which more information could be helpful. First, more information about the considerations going into the composition of the yearly quota with regard to vulnerability and integration potential. Second, they saw the need for more information and information at an earlier stage about the individual refugees that are to be settled in their municipalities.

> We, who work at the municipal end of the process, do not know anything about what goes on during the missions. I think I would have understood more about what happens at this end, if I had known what happens at the other end. And I definitely believe that those who do the interviews would have understood more if they saw what we have to handle. Then they would see the range between the humanitarian aspect and the ability to integrate. (Employee, municipality 1)

The same employee elaborated on the variation in integration capacity that they had had to handle over the years:

> We do not know how the criteria are applied. Some arrive here without shoes, while others come with 18 carry-ons. They are very, very different from each other. Someone may be a lawyer who has had English as their working language, while others may have major health challenges or have three children, of which two need 24-hour care. (Employee, municipality 1)

This quote points out the second need for information that the employees in the municipalities mentioned the need for information about individual refugees prior to settlement. This part of the process comes after IMDi and the individual municipality have agreed upon that year's quota. It is now a question of who they are willing to accept.

> The request from IMDi about individual refugees comes through the digital platform IMDinett. It includes a bare minimum of information: number in the family, age, country of origin, information about special health issues. The information is often incomplete. (Employee, municipality 2)

At this stage, little information is provided to the municipalities; however, they must decide. If they accept, they are provided more information about who the refugees are.

> When I have accepted the request, I get more information. Then we get pictures, information about their competencies, languages, literacy, edu-

> cation, need for psychosocial support, health issues. This information may or may not be outdated. (Employee, municipality 1)

The next step is then for the municipality to arrange for the arrival of the refugees, housing set up, support for children, school engagement, health checks, and more. The stepwise access to information was a challenge for the municipalities. From IMDi's point of view, data protection comes into play here and, in addition, one interviewee saw an upside to the fact that municipalities must sign up before they can learn more about whom they would have to settle.

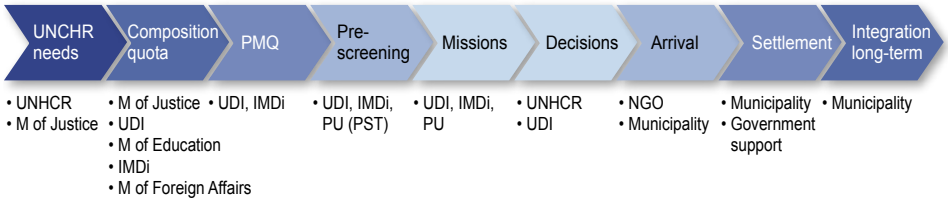
> This is a matter of data protection, if they get it and then say no, there is a problem. But it is also a question of ethics. How much should the municipality know about the individual refugee before they can say no? We do not want this to be at the discretion of the local authorities. It is a need-to-know situation. (Employee, IMDi)

The COVID-19 pandemic created delays in the resettlement process during 2020. One municipality used this extra time to contact a refugee family on digital platforms after it had been agreed that this family was going to be resettled in this specific municipality. The family was still in Lebanon and both parties found this contact to be most helpful. The family could ask questions and the municipal employees could get to know the family, including the children, a little before their arrival.

The selection process

According to the interviewees, questions related to the balance between vulnerability and potential for integration came up during all stages of the selection process. From the point of view of Norwegian civil servants, the process starts with UNHCR's identification of needs, followed by a decision on the quota, a PMQ, pre-screening, missions, decisions, arrival of refugees, settlement, and long-term integration (see Figure 8).

Figure 8. Selection processing stages



Who should benefit from the resettlement program?

Many of the interviewees in this study raised this question both rhetorically and as a real concern: Who should benefit from the program? Is it possible to secure benefits for all actors involved? The UNHCR claims that the program benefits the individual refugees who are resettled, that it alleviates the pressure in camps or settlements for other refugees, and that it shows solidarity with and easing of the burden on the host countries. Some of the interviewees were critical of the effect of resettlement for those who remained in the first country of asylum:

> Resettlement always helps those who are resettled but, for example, in Lebanon, the program has not improved the situation for the 95% who are left. On the contrary, the UNCHR offices use a lot of resources on this. (Norwegian expert with past experience with the UNHCR).

Here, one could point to the other humanitarian efforts made by the Norwegian government to alleviate the situation for non-resettled refugees in countries such as Lebanon. These would include core funding of UNHCR, as well as its specific humanitarian programs and NGO activities. That said, the guidelines for the resettlement program state that the ambition of the program is to also improve the situation for those who are left in the refugee situation. As we understood this informant, the point made was that the resources used on those who were resettled could not be compared to those resources that were allocated to who were left behind.

A balanced selection of refugees

At the individual level, the answer to the question of who the UNHCR and the resettlement states should select appears to constitute a delicate balancing act. In fact, key Norwegian civil servants talked about the need to have a "balanced selection" of refugees (see UDI, 2020). Norway cannot only select those who are the most vulnerable.

> There are different types of vulnerabilities, for instance, due to health problems of various kinds. It would not be possible or sustainable to only include cases with severe health problems on the quota due to the capacities and costs for the municipalities. On the other extreme, it would not be possible to only include refugees with education, work experience, and language skills. There is a need for a balanced approach to make the program work in the long-term perspective. (Employee, ministry)

Some interviewees pointed out that it was easier for those on missions to accept medical cases for which assistance in Norway would bring about rapid improvement, such as children needing surgery. Heavier cases were also accepted but, in such cases, there were fewer resettlement places available.

The concept of aiming for a representative selection of refugees was challenged by a UDI-employee who had done several missions in Africa. She asked: "Representative of whom? Of the refugees in one camp or of the tribes still living in the area they fled from?"

Others were very pragmatic, pointing to the long-term consequences of putting too much of a burden on the municipalities and stressing sustainability:

> We cannot select solely people who will form a B-team in the Norwegian society. Then this system will not work long-term.…I think it is a sound model that the different authorities have their say. To succeed, you need both: protection and integration. (Employee, UDI)

However, several of the interviewees held that Norwegian authorities struggled with finding this balance. One informant noted that a lack of clarity in the formal criteria may make the role of the UNCHR more challenging:

> We have shifted the responsibility for finding a balance over on the UNHCR. We have an unsolved conflict between the two mandates so, instead, we include all the criteria in the PMQ to the UNHCR, and then we let them sort this out—we leave them to bridge the contradictions. (Employee, UDI)[95]

At the same time, some interviewees realized that the Norwegian criteria could be challenging for the UNHCR. If the criteria and the pool of refugees are too narrow, then the number of refugees they could present to Norway becomes much smaller. Sometimes, they found that the UNHCR offices took their directions too much to heart.

> For example, ahead of a recent mission to Ethiopia, we found that the UNHCR had misunderstood and thought that we had as a criterion that families had to speak other languages in addition to Tigrinya. That was a misunderstanding. (Employee, UDI)

95 Commenting on a draft version of this report, a civil servant informant questioned whether this was part of an explicit strategy from the Norwegian authorities. We do not indicate that there is such a strategy. The quote still provides an important point in that this may be an unintended consequence as resettlement countries strive to strike a good balance when it comes to integration.

Prospects for integration

IMDi distinguishes between the integration perspective (screening for education, work experience), which was pulled as an explicit policy from the 2020 guidelines, and the prospects for integration (Norwegian: *utsikter til integrering*) (MoJ, 2020).

In the interviews with the civil servants who were part of selection missions, the prospects for integration were often raised as a concern. At the group level, it was often discussed whether refugees within the quotas from The Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and South Sudan, who had little experience with urban modern lifestyles, would have a harder time integrating in Norway. At the group level, the interviewees often mentioned examples of the opposite. For example, they pointed out that, despite having less formal education and work experience than most Syrians, the Congolese often adapted to new environments and were therefore quite successful at adapting to the new environment in Norway. Coming from Syria with high expectations may put some at a disadvantage when these expectations clash with the reality of being a newcomer in Norway, according to these voices. The bottom line is that it is difficult to judge who will integrate well and who will not.

> It can be extremely hard coming from Syria with an education and a position and then having to start at the bottom, without status. Here, they are no one. (Employee, UDI)

During some of the missions to East Africa, however, the Norwegian civil servants noted cases that they thought might have a hard time integrating.

> On a mission to Ethiopia, interviewing refugees from South Sudan, we saw refugees who were much more vulnerable than those we had met elsewhere. Some could not find their way inside the house in which we did the interviews. One man had never seen stairs and crawled up the stairs to the interview. Then you start thinking: these persons will have a long way to go before they are part of the Norwegian society. (Employee, UDI)

In some of the more extreme cases, the Norwegian civil servants taking part in the missions wondered whether resettlement was really the better solution for the refugees.

> I used to think that we have to take the most vulnerable. But now I think about, in some of the portfolios, what is the best solution for them? Stay there with their extended families or be spread out in Norway? (Employee, UDI)

Such personal reflections were widespread among the civil servants interviewed, often relating to specific cases.

> Sometimes, I think to myself—how will these people manage to integrate in Norway? Would they not, perhaps, be better off in their home countries or in the camp? (Employee, UDI)

The informants found the concept of vulnerability to be challenging to get a grip on because it is used to mean different things in different contexts.

> The concept of vulnerability is used everywhere and with all sorts of meanings. If you are a refugee and the UNHCR puts you forward as one, then you are vulnerable. As a refugee in exile, who will not get a job or be able to live a full life, then you are in a vulnerable situation. (Employee, IMDi)

They discussed the consistency in vulnerability, distinguishing between situational vulnerability and permanent vulnerability. Would the same people who are vulnerable in the camps, still be vulnerable after coming to Norway? Examples were ample of groups and categories of refugees who would be vulnerable across situations and those who would not be. In the last category, informants mentioned LHBTIQ+ refugees living in, for example, Kampala. They were vulnerable there but, after they arrived in Norway, they were not. Likewise, families with different constellations may also have shifting vulnerability, depending on their context.

> The classic example is female-headed households. These may be vulnerable in the refugee camp setting and if they were to return to their home countries. Coming to Norway, however, they would not be considered vulnerable. (Employee, UNHCR)

It is all about the children

The interviewees acknowledged the long road that some of the middle-aged parents would have to travel in order to integrate after resettlement. As a counter to this, they pointed to the children. The Norwegian focus on families with children had this as one underlying logic—if not the parents, then the children would be able to integrate.

> Adults need more time to integrate. So we know that we should focus on the children and their future. (Employee, IMDi)

This also resonated with the municipalities, according to IMDi employees. Children were viewed as easier to integrate.

> When people who arrive have passed 55, you know that it is improbable that they will be able to find work. But when there are children! Then the municipality thinks that they can help them be an asset. They can pass through the school system and contribute. (Employee, IMDi)

In order to be able to spend enough time in school, however, there was an unpronounced preference for younger children, according to several informants.

> The formal age limit is 18. However, we know that the municipalities think that children who are 15, 16, and 17 years old will only have time to spend a few years in high school. If they only have a couple of years of schooling when they arrive, the municipalities know that they will have trouble [succeeding]. (Employee, IMDi)

The interviewees knew that even in cases in which the focus was on the success of the children, the parents were also of key importance. Throughout our fieldwork, we heard cases in which dysfunctional parents had difficulties supporting their children. We also spoke to an expert on refugee mental health. The expert pointed out that it is important for local authorities to support the refugee parents in their role as parents, and that they provide support, instead of taking over.

Unwanted attitudes and behaviors as basis for rejection

As part of the pre-screening and interview process during the missions, the civil servants have as their mandate to detect values and actions that are not compatible with Norwegian values (MoJ, 2020). During the missions, both UDI and IMDi ask questions about attitudes and behaviors related to integration:

> During the interviews, we ask directly about their attitudes. We have that as part of our mission, to detect values that are unwanted in Norway. Sometimes it is easy, for instance, when… (Employee, IMDi)[96]

Some cases of rejections resulting from unwanted attitudes and behaviors were clearer than others. Often, strongly conservative views on gender and family life were considered to be a part of these decisions. Informants often referred to a set of specific questions that were meant to uncover such attitudes and a lack of willingness to integrate.

96 In the quotes in the following sections, text has been redacted and replaced with (...). The reason is that the content is exempt from public disclosure, according to the Act relating to the right of access to documents held by public authorities and public undertakings (Freedom of Information Act, § 24, first section). See also redacted sections of UDI's Internal Guidelines UDI 2016-015 (udiregelverk.no). The basis for exemption is that revealing the methodology and the questions that are posed by civil servants on these issues during missions could disturb future screening processes.

Some cases were subtle, requiring more nuanced questions. These situations could leave interviewers from UDI and IMDi feeling uncertain. One interviewer from IMDi stated that it was difficult to detect unwanted behavior and attitudes as well as the willingness to integrate.

> I feel that it is up to me, that it is a bit like, "Ups, he seems a bit like…" At the same time, this decides their future. Is it right if that is decided by whether they will…? That…does not mean they will not integrate in Norway. (Employee IMDi)

Often, the interviewers referred to whether they found that the refugees showed a willingness to change.

> We ask them directly whether they…. Many would think that if they say yes, then we will automatically have to reject their case. But in my head, the important thing is whether this family will be able to change their attitudes and actions and start following Norwegian norms before they arrive. (Employee, IMDi)

There are no clear publicly available criteria for rejecting cases based on values and norms related to integration. In practice, however, there appear to be a few red lines.

Resettlement and foreign policy

The Norwegian MFA has a say in the composition of the yearly quota for resettlement. A key aspect of the MFA's role is to offer advice on how resettlement can best align with Norway's refugee and humanitarian policy, as formulated in the Norwegian foreign policy. Informants from the MFA and elsewhere pointed out three instances in which foreign policy had directly influenced the priorities of the program.

The first dated back to the late 2000s, according to the informants. Then, Norway had taken the lead in resettling Afghan refugees (women) from Iran. This was part of a broader cooperation with the UNHCR and other resettlement countries. One goal was to start a humanitarian conversation with Iranian authorities and to maybe create an opening for the UNHCR in Iran. As things worked out, a lasting positive effect of this effort was that the Iranian authorities allowed the Norwegian Refugee Council to continue operating in Iran.

A second example was an effort to resettle refugees from Eastern Sudan using a mix of development aid and multilateral organizations (UNHCR, United Nations Development Programme [UNDP]). The project also involved coopera-

tion with the Sudanese authorities, something that, in the end, proved to be impossible at the time.

A third example cited by the interviewees was the resettlement of Afghan combat interpreters. The MFA took the initiative in 2012, together with the Ministry of Defense and others, to offer residence permits for Afghan interpreters who had served the Norwegian armed forces (ISAF/NATO troops) and police in Afghanistan.[97] In 2015, the Parliament decided that the government should establish guidelines allowing interpreters to apply for protection in Norway from Afghanistan with a low threshold for accepting the cases. Citing time pressures, the government decided to use the resettlement quota for this group. As the quote was not expanded, however, the MoJ decided to cancel a selection mission to Uganda for the selection of 150 UNHCR-referred refugees from the DRC in order to have enough places for the combat interpreters. Some informants found it troubling that interpreters who had served as long ago as 2006 were included in the sub-quota for Afghan combat interpreters and given priority over the UNHCR-referred refugees from the DRC. This operation was described as an example of a politicized process with ad hoc solutions.[98]

Although the MFA took an active role in this case, informants gave the impression that such active involvement is unusual. One informant in the MFA described the ministry as a "peripheral actor" in resettlement with rather limited ambitions. Another MFA informant described the ministry's approach in similar terms:

> They assess whether an origin state may respond negatively to resettlement but otherwise they do not think too much about the foreign policy function.…Resettlement is, in their eyes, most important for Norway's relation with the UN system and not so much for bilateral relations.

However, this does not mean that the MFA does not play a part at all in the Norwegian resettlement program. Embassies in concerned areas provide input regarding groups to be included in the quota and are also consulted during subsequent process.[99] In the guidelines (MoJ, 2020), the role of the MFA is further described:

97 https://www.regjeringen.no/contentassets/09faceca099c4b8bac85ca8495e12d2d/no/pdfs/nou201620160008000dddpdfs.pdf; p. 187–189.

98 https://www.aftenposten.no/norge/i/OPzA/velger-kamptolker-foran-kongolesiske-flyktninger. Two circulars regulate resettlement for this specific group. For more details, see https://www.regjeringen.no/no/dokumenter/gi-062015-retningslinjer-for-overforing-av-personer-som-har-vart-ansatt-av-norske-styrker-i-afghanistan-og-som-har-deltatt-i-operativ-tjeneste-som-tolk-etter-01.01.2006-samt-deres-narmeste-familiemedlemmer/id2409996/ and https://www.regjeringen.no/no/dokumenter/gi-082017--overforing-til-norge-av-tolker-som-har-vart-ansatt-av-forsvaret-i-afghanistan-etter-1.-januar-2015/id2563705/

99 Embassies may also forward individual cases for resettlement (MoJ, 2020).

> The MFA shall evaluate which refugee groups Norway should offer resettlement and how resettlement may be a part of the larger Norwegian refugee policy and humanitarian strategy, as well as be in line with foreign policy goals. (MoJ, 2020, p. 4, our translation)

The Norwegian resettlement program amidst competing policy objectives

How should the selection criteria for refugee resettlement balance key policy objectives on integration, immigration control, foreign policy, and humanitarianism?

As a theoretical example, a resettlement policy that would be purely humanitarian—say, uncompromisingly aiming to resettle "the most vulnerable" and entirely disregarding other societal considerations—might be detrimental to the absorptive capacity of municipal authorities and would likely undermine popular support. If, by contrast, the resettlement mechanism of immigration were to be recalibrated into a form of labor immigration, aiming to resettle "the least vulnerable," then this would ease the burden of the welfare state while violating fundamental humanitarian principles.

Another possible conceptual tension is that between security and humanitarianism. Refugee crises may call for urgent humanitarian interventions, where time consuming security screening is impractical. Nevertheless, extensive in-person interviews with conflict-displaced refugees, collection of biometric and biographic information that is cross-checked with available databases, and other forms of background checks are instrumental for ensuring the effectiveness of the adjudication process and for protecting the integrity of the program. If state security logic goes too far, however, securitizing refugees on flimsy grounds would undermine the humanitarian principles of the program. Indeed, upholding those very principles can also be viewed as a source of security.

A refugee policy that puts too much weight on resettlement vis-à-vis alternative forms of protection would also be problematic. For resettlement states, resettlement is more predictable and orderly than asylum migration, and responsibilities are not as regulated by international law. This offers resettlement states more discretionary power and partly explains the political ascendancy of resettlement. However, seeking asylum is enshrined in international law as a fundamental and inviolable human right, and Norway is a signatory to agreements that prevent the operation of resettlement at the expense of the right to seek asylum.

Table 6. Strategic objectives in Norwegian migration policy

POLICY OBJECTIVES			
Integration policy	**Immigration policy**	**Foreign policy**	**Humanitarian policy**
• For a knowledge economy, it is not sustainable that two out of three immigrants lack the formal competence to succeed in the Norwegian labor market.[100] • Resettling refugees is based on humanitarian principles and international legal commitments, not on profitability. Even so, the costs of such immigration must be considered when weighing these considerations against other societal considerations.[101] • Promoting immigrants' participation in working life and in society is one of the government's six focus areas.[102] The main challenges for integration are low employment rates, skills gap and exclusion.[103]	• Norway has a sovereign right to regulate its national immigration and refugee policy. The government pursues a restrictive and responsible immigration policy, characterized by rule of law and within the framework of international commitments.[104] • In 2019, the number of quota refugees was higher than the number of asylum seekers. This is good. This is about predictability, both for migrants and for Norwegian authorities. A predictable migration policy prevents people from risking their lives seeking asylum.[105]	• Given the global and protracted refugee crisis, Norway must use aid to stabilize countries and prevent migration and must integrate the issue of migration into our foreign policy to a greater degree.[106] • Norway shall be at the forefront of finding good, multilateral solutions for the world's refugees, both by providing support to neighboring areas and by receiving resettlement refugees.[107] • Multilateralism is in Norway's interests.[108]	• Humanitarian action is an important part of the government's international engagement. The government will maintain Norway's engagement relating to protection of and assistance to refugees; it will be a strong advocate in the UN for the need to improve protection for internally displaced people and help find durable solutions in this area.[109] • More humanitarian assistance to refugees in the refugee-sending regions is in line with European Union (EU) policy and is cost-effective.[110]

100 https://www.regjeringen.no/no/aktuelt/tydelegare-krav-og-betre-opplaring-for-innvandrarar/id2770393/
101 Meld. St. 29 47 *Perspektivmeldingen* 2017, p. 47
102 https://www.regjeringen.no/en/dokumenter/integration-through-knowledge/id2617092/
103 https://www.regjeringen.no/en/dokumenter/integration-through-knowledge/id2617092/
104 Meld. St. 27 (2018–2019) Report to the Storting (white paper) 2018–2019 Norway's Role and Interests in Multilateral Cooperation p. 55
105 https://www.regjeringen.no/no/aktuelt/vil-ikke-eksperimentere/id2689083/
106 https://www.regjeringen.no/en/aktuelt/migration/id2457814/
107 https://www.regjeringen.no/contentassets/5673dadc917448148b491635289ac690/no/pdfs/stm-201820190027000dddpdfs.pdf, p. 54.
108 https://www.regjeringen.no/contentassets/5673dadc917448148b491635289ac690/en-gb/pdfs/stm201820190027000engpdfs.pdf
109 https://www.regjeringen.no/globalassets/departementene/ud/dokumenter/hum/hum_strategy.pdf
110 Meld. St. 29 (2016–2017) *Melding til Stortinget*, p. 53.

As Table 6 illustrates, policy makers would be hard pressed to reconcile all these competing policy objectives in a coherent resettlement policy. If refugee resettlement policy is intended to reflect governments' broader and dynamically evolving policies in terms of integration, immigration, international relations, and humanitarian policy, then it would be helpful to specify how various overarching principles must be prioritized. Refugee resettlement is first and foremost a humanitarian program. This fundamentally defines the framework for program design and selection criteria, but also comes with some key implications.

First, as a humanitarian policy alone, it comes with exorbitant costs both in terms of operational costs (i.e., the bureaucracy of resettlement) and social costs (i.e., transfers from the welfare state). However beneficial resettlement may be for the individual, less than 1% of the world's refugees are resettled. According to Jeff Crisp, the former head of the policy development and evaluation department at the UNHCR, who is currently affiliated with Chatham House and Oxford University's Refugee Studies Center, opinions can be quite sharply divided internally in the UNHCR on the validity of resettlement:

> While some staff members place a very high value on resettlement and regard it as an almost unconditional good, others are less enthusiastic They may refer to its high cost, the labor-intensive nature of the work involved, the fact that some refugees shun other solutions if resettlement appears to be a possibility, as well as some refugees' tendency to portray themselves as "vulnerable" as possible in order to be selected for resettlement. (Crisp, e-mail, March 2021)

A similar observation regarding internal division in the UNHCR was made by Van der Selm in the early 2010s (Van der Selm, 2013, p. 53) based on interviews with the agency's staff:

> Resettlement is still seen by some as the solution of last resort; to others it is the optimal solution that ideally would exist for almost all refugees. Few UNHCR staff appear ambivalent about resettlement—one is either for or against.

One way of justifying the high costs of resettlement is to optimize its "strategic use." The core idea of this concept lies in ensuring that resettlement of a few refugees expands protection space for the many refugees left behind. The notion that resettlement should be incorporated into broader protection strategies was explicitly introduced by a Canadian-led 2003 UNHCR Working Group on Resettlement. It defined the strategic use of resettlement as:

> The planned use of resettlement in a manner that maximizes the benefits, directly or indirectly, *other than those received by the refugee being*

> *resettled*. Those benefits may accrue to other refugees, the hosting state, other states, or the international protection regime in general.[111]

The term "strategic" has proven to be an unfortunate misnomer given its geopolitical connotations. Despite controversy and conceptual confusion surrounding the concept,[112] the strategic use of resettlement was merely intended to denote a positive humanitarian multiplier effect. Its stated intention is to "maximize the potential" for expanding refugee protection by catalyzing other solutions. A review by the UNHCR itself notes several possible multiplier effects of resettlement, identified by the agency's field staff. These include improved access of remaining refugees to labor markets and livelihoods; camp decongestion; less *refoulement* by host states; better access for UNHCR staff to detention centers; and improved lines of communication between the UNHCR and host states.[113]

The UNHCR review notes that none of this is either verified or falsified by rigorous evidence. It goes on to conclude that the lack of hard evidence should not lead to the dismissal of a "brilliant" concept. Rather, it should lead to better benchmarking, conceptual clarification, and better implementation. Although the strategic use of resettlement is difficult to achieve and measure and the metrics of success will be debatable, the core idea is no less important given the high costs and limited reach of resettlement. Poor and unstable host states overwhelmed with regional refugees may be underwhelmed if rich and stable resettlement states resettle a tiny fraction of them—nevertheless, resettlement may still have some symbolic value that can help expand refugee protection in host states. Relatedly, the study argues, host states should not be passive bystanders but "should be brought into the thinking and planning [of the strategic use of resettlement] at the earliest possible opportunity."[114]

The UNHCR does not appear particularly ambitious with regards to the strategic use of resettlement today.[115] It is not at all mentioned, for instance, in the *UNHCR Three-Year Strategy (2019–2021) on Resettlement and Complementary Pathways*.[116] Neither does Norway appear keen to re-launch the idea. It requires strong commitment and active political efforts to analyze the direct and indirect effects of resettlement on refugee protection in host states and to incorporate it

111 https://www.refworld.org/docid/41597a824.html, p. 3 (our emphasis).
112 https://www.refworld.org/docid/520a407d4.html; for a more recent and more skeptical discussion, see https://dsp-syria.org/sites/default/files/2020-04/Strategic%20Use%20of%20Resettlement_0.pdf
113 https://www.refworld.org/docid/520a407d4.html; some also cited, controversially, the possible attitudinal and behavioral change in the refugee population hoping to be resettled; see also the *UNHCR Handbook on Resettlement* at https://www.unhcr.org/46f7c0ee2.html, pp. 54–57.
114 https://www.refworld.org/docid/520a407d4.html p. 62; for a more recent discussion, see https://dsp-syria.org/sites/default/files/2020-04/Strategic%20Use%20of%20Resettlement_0.pdf
115 https://dsp-syria.org/sites/default/files/2020-04/Strategic%20Use%20of%20Resettlement_0.pdf
116 https://www.unhcr.org/5d15db254.pdf

into the program and quota composition. Such political analysis would also require targeted assistance from the MFA and consultancy with other resettlement and host states. Few of our 50+ informants reflected, unprompted, on how resettlement can have a humanitarian multiplier effect. This objective is stated in the formal 2020 guidelines and was stated in the 2015 guidelines as well; however, informants rarely referred to it.[117] Today the resettlement program primarily demonstrates Norway's support for the UNHCR and its mandate.[118] It may have the potential to reach further.[119] A starting point in this direction could be to request a yearly analysis from the UNHCR of the wider strategic value of resettlement from different prioritized refugee populations. This should highlight and discuss the potential added value for (a) other refugees, (b) the host state, (c) other states, and (d) the international protection regime in general. This could feed into the annual composition of the quota right from the start.

The consequences of selection strategies for these stakeholders should also be considered when deciding on selection criteria and national sub-quota priorities. Would these criteria help to maximize benefits for non-resettled refugees and the states that host them?

A recent example from the Norwegian context may help illustrate this point. In December 2020, as part of a political compromise, the Norwegian government decided that priority should be given to persecuted Christian, Ahmadiyya (Muslim), and Yazidi (minority religions) refugees. These priorities came in addition to other priorities (e.g., families with children) and would apply to the selection process at both the group and individual levels.[120]

We asked two Middle East regional experts what the potential consequences could be of prioritizing these groups for other stakeholders—i.e., of their strategic value.[121] As of summer 2021, it is too early to evaluate the actual conse-

117 "Strategic value" is mentioned as one of six factors to consider while composing the quota for resettlement. "Possibilities for multinational, coordinated efforts, including joint European interventions to solve prioritized refugee situations and/or to achieve a strategic value in the form of a solution or better conditions for refugees who are not offered resettlement." (our translation).

118 Norway's high reliance on UNHCR's priorities, formalized in its 2020 guidelines, could also be considered "strategic," as opposed to uncoordinated unilateral action, but the concept calls for more than this.

119 https://dsp-syria.org/sites/default/files/2020-04/Strategic%20Use%20of%20Resettlement_0.pdf

120 As of June 2021, it is unclear what the impact of these criteria will be on the Norwegian resettlement practice, both regarding the number of cases involved, and regarding which host countries such cases would be resettled from. Decision 154 of the budgetary negotiation states that «The Storting asks the government to ensure that also persecuted Christian, Ahmadiyya and Yazidi refugees are prioritized as groups and individuals in the resettlement» (our translation). https://www.stortinget.no/no/Saker-og-publikasjoner/Vedtak/Vedtak/Sak/?p=81523
See also the leader of the Christian Democratic Party on the decision: https://www.nrk.no/norge/ropstad-forsvarer-prioritering-av-kristne-flyktninger-1.15269796

121 Personal communication, December 2021.

quences of these changes, but we find that these experts' reflections raise interesting and relevant questions regarding how national selection criteria may increase or decrease the strategic value of resettlement. The experts pointed out potential challenges that could follow if such criteria were implemented in the context of specific host states.

In the case of Lebanon, Dr. Reinoud Leenders (King's College, London) noted that these criteria could possibly aggravate sectarian tensions. In Lebanon, the Christian exodus dates back to the end of the Civil War in 1989. Among non-resettled refugees, he notes, it can "likely embolden sectarian identities, and through them, readings of Western attitudes toward refugees." Moreover, from the perspective of the Lebanese host state

> [such a] policy will surely be viewed as contradicting official European and UNHCR policy on resettlement for the most needy and persecuted refugees as, arguably, the Christian refugees already enjoy a relatively better position thanks to local Christian attitudes toward them and a comparably brighter prospect for return to Syria.

In Jordan, the other main regional host state from which Norway resettles Syrian refugees, Dr. Filippo Dionigi (University of Bristol) observes similar undesirable local effects of applying criteria that prioritize the three mentioned religious minorities. He stated that the monarchy of Jordan sees itself as a leading institution of the Muslim world community and that the king has been at the forefront of national and regional initiatives to advocate for the rights and protection of Syrian refugees as "brother Muslims" in need of protection. Against that backdrop, he argues that:

> a preferential treatment of Christian, Yazidi, and Ahmadiyya may be interpreted as arbitrary and responding to Western negative perceptions of Islam rather than responding to the actual nature of the phenomenon of Syrian displacement that, in fact, affects a population in which the greatest majority is indeed Muslim.

In Iraq, from where Yazidi refugees will presumably be resettled, the story is different, but the foreseeable outcome similarly grim. Here, Dionigi adds, the Iraqi government may see "with favour a policy that will have the effect, in the longer term, of rendering more uniformly Muslim the Iraqi population."

These reflections point out the potential challenges that specific selection criteria may have in national and local contexts in the host states. They serve as a reminder that national governments, when introducing new criteria, should ask:

Will these also be beneficial, directly or indirectly, to non-resettled refugees, the hosting state, other states, and to the international protection regime in general?

The example also demonstrates, more broadly, the importance of regional knowledge on the foreign affairs that the MFA represents. Much like IMDi is requested to offer advice on the quota composition and sub-quotas based on the integration outcomes of specific national groups and sub-groups during previous years, the MFA could likewise offer advice based on the observed strategic value for resettling specific national groups and sub-groups during previous years. This could, ideally, be in dialogue with the UNHCR and host states. In other words, the UNHCR's assessment should be scrutinized and tested retrospectively, using its own definition.

In a cautiously worded statement, the UN agency posits that resettlement *may* have strategic value in that "opening resettlement as a durable solution for a number of refugees may open avenues for others remaining behind to enjoy improved conditions of asylum in the country of asylum" (emphasis added).[122] Given these, albeit limited, ambitions, and the resources spent in the resettlement program, we hold that these secondary political and humanitarian effects—i.e., the strategic use of resettlement—should be given increased attention and documented as part of the resettlement process.

On a concluding note for this chapter, integration is not necessarily the antithesis to humanitarianism. A fundamental humanitarian imperative is "do no harm." In the context of resettlement, it needs to be constantly kept in mind and linked to integration. On the one hand, resettlement should not be a covert mechanism for labor migration sailing under a false flag as a humanitarian operation. On the other hand, there is at least some notion of a win-win situation in resettling refugees who can adjust to and prosper within the challenging context of a Norwegian knowledge economy and society. Several informants raise this issue—not out of cynical interest in economic profitability but out of genuine concern for the refugees' wellbeing.

Statistics on past outcomes (medium- and long-term), disaggregated by national groups as well as more analytically derived sub-groups (e.g., urban refugees vs. camp refugees; protracted vs. non-protracted; pro-democracy and human rights activists vs. others; various types of medical conditions; degrees of literacy and formal skills), may inform the priorities of future resettlement. While this is already done today to some degree (and further investments by IMDi are underway), there appears to be untapped potential for understanding and

122 https://www.unhcr.org/hk/wp-content/uploads/sites/13/2016/04/FAQ-about-Resettlement.pdf, p. 2.

drawing from the analyses of the link between group characteristics and integration.

In this chapter, we have heard the voices of Norwegian civil servants, NGO representatives, scholars, and experts discuss selected topics that they held to be important during our interviews. We have now presented in-depth knowledge on the formal criteria and guidelines for the Norwegian resettlement program, discussed the challenges that the system faces in practice, and introduced the notion of "strategic use."

6. Key findings

The material presented in the previous chapters shows the multitude of actors involved in resettlement and the complexity of the selection process. In this chapter, we first reflect on how these state actors balance vulnerability and integration concerns in their resettlement practices. Next, we briefly revisit the research questions before presenting a list of selected findings. Finally, we present a handful of recommendations for consideration by the Norwegian government.

Do resettlement countries apply integration considerations?

The question that triggered this study was: Do resettlement countries formally or informally apply integration as part of the criteria used in their selection process? As we have seen in the previous chapter, the eight countries that were included in this study all promoted resettlement as a primarily humanitarian endeavor. The countries diverge on whether they explicitly apply integration criteria or not. Some are open about their inclusion of future integration as part of their screening and interviewing processes. Others do not have integration as an explicit criterion but still apply such considerations in practice during the selection process. All countries have routines to secure exclusion (due to security threat, extremism, etc.). It appears that all countries also have some sort of feedback mechanism, whereby experiences of the integration of previously arrived national groups are communicated from the local level to the central government. This information then, to varying degrees, impacts the national processes of composing future quotas.

Of the eight countries included in this study, it appears that traditional immigration countries, such as Canada and Australia, are open about the need for a formal integration requirement. Other countries with explicit integration criteria include the Netherlands. The Dutch have a tradition of also applying integration criteria in other parts of their immigration policies, such as family reunification. Germany is the last country on the list of countries that apply explicit integration criteria. In Germany, the substantial number of asylum arrivals following the 2015 asylum crisis may possibly have fed into the integration requirement.

Sweden, Norway,[123] and the UK, do not use explicit integration criteria. In all these countries, however, integration consideration still constitutes a part of their practices, as argued in Chapter 3.

The balancing of vulnerability and integration considerations can be expressed as the meeting point of idealism (humanitarianism) and realism (long-term sustainability). What appears to be the case in all countries is that realism presents itself in all the programs we have studied, coming in either through the front or the back door.

Resettlement as a balancing act

Less than 1% of the worlds' refugees are resettled, mostly through the UNHCR. In 2021, the UNHCR estimated that global resettlement needs will affect 1.4 million persons, a slight increase from the year before. The need in Africa alone, the region with the highest projected resettlement needs, is estimated to affect more than 600,000 persons. Even if the basis of this calculation is not entirely clear—and any number used for advocacy can and should be subjected to critical scrutiny—it nevertheless remains clear that global needs far surpass the available slots.

Over the past few years, refugee resettlement has gained prominence in many ways. Commitment to this form of refugee protection has grown steadily since the early 2000s, was catalyzed by the urgency and magnitude of the Syrian refugee crisis beginning in 2014, and has recently been reaffirmed through the 2018 Global Compact on Refugees, the 2019 Global Refugee Forum, the UNHCR's Three-Year Strategy (2019–2021), and the proposed European Union (EU) Pact on Migration and Asylum.

For the worlds' refugees, however, resettlement still constitutes a needle's eye. In this report, we have compared national selection criteria and procedures in Canada, Australia, Netherlands, Norway, Sweden, UK, Germany, and France, primarily based on interviews and an international survey. We find that while resettlement states face a similar dilemma between "helping those who need it the most" and not overburdening local administrations with refugees who are "too vulnerable," their approaches differ. Some put more emphasis on humanitarian principles and rely largely on the UNHCR's eligibility assessments,

123 As we have seen in previous chapters, since 2020, Norway does not apply direct prior education or vocational experience requirements. IMDi is, however, tasked with considering an individual's prospects for future integration.

whereas others put more emphasis on integration-related concerns. It is therefore important, we argue, to go beyond mere statistics and national "quotas" in this field.

Each individual resettlement state holds discretionary power to decide not only how many refugees to resettle but also who to resettle. Their selection processes are perceived to be not fully transparent and void of representation, access to appeal procedures, and more. This has led some scholars to label the selection process a legal abyss.[124] This discretionary power may help explain the political ascendancy of refugee resettlement. Simultaneously, however, it may also highlight the potential tension between international commitment to humanitarian principles and national pragmatism. The questions of *who* should be selected and *how vulnerable* these persons should be is also a reason why resettlement cannot be fully understood in isolation from asylum. If the people who qualify for protection greatly outnumber those included in resettlement quotas, then the drivers for self-selection of asylum seekers will remain.

This report is limited by both analytical scope and budget and does not include the voices and expertise of resettlement refugees themselves. This is an all too typical hallmark of studies and evaluations of humanitarian programs addressing the needs of refugees.[125] There is a clear need for research on how resettled refugees themselves experience the selection process, subsequent resettlement, and long-term integration. Such research would also reflect the initiatives taken by the Global Refugee Forum to involve resettled refugees in key roles.[126] Ideally, this should involve refugees at all stages of planning and research, not only to empower them but to generate novel insights that can be drawn on in order to enhance program effectiveness and fully optimize refugee resettlement and long-term integration.[127] While a few such studies do exist, [128] this area nevertheless constitutes a knowledge gap—internationally and in Norway—that requires future research investments.

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124 https://academic.oup.com/ijrl/article-abstract/32/1/54/5802478

125 Some interviews with resettlement refugees were planned for this study. Due to a combination of time pressures, COVID-19 pandemic measures, and intensive data-gathering from other sources with a limited budget, they were not conducted as planned.

126 https://www.unhcr.org/global-refugee-forum.html

127 For an example of how this can be done well and truly expand the state of the art, see the *Optimising Refugee Resettlement in the UK: A Comparative Study* project at http://www.sussex.ac.uk/migration/research/integrationcitizenship/refugeeresettlement, along with its final report at https://www.sussex.ac.uk/webteam/gateway/file.php?name=4375-resettled-refugees-report-web.pdf&site=252. The report drew on unique data and involved 280 refugees. Refugees were involved at all stages of planning and research.

128 Examples include: https://www.imdi.no/contentassets/9d289d578a9f49ffb5db6345b8e55c49/innsikts-rapport-livshendelsen-ny-i-norge.pdf

Among the resettlement states included in this study, two are non-European. Although Australia and Canada are traditional heavyweights in terms of resettlement (with the US currently re-engaging), European countries have welcomed nearly half of all refugees resettled since 2017. There is now substantial innovation in Europe, where seven of the twelve refugee private- and community-sponsorship pilot programs can be found (also called community or private sponsorship, or humanitarian corridors). European countries have been at the forefront of the efforts being made to improve the monitoring and evaluation of resettlement systems.[129] There seems to be potential to help build economies of scale among national programs and to test new approaches for welcoming resettled refugees.[130]

There are reasons to expect that diffusion of the "Canadian model" will continue. First, international experiences have demonstrated that this model, while clearly not without risks and challenges, enables resettlement states to tap into the resources and generosity of the civil society and population at large.[131] At the same time, it may be premature to launch a "Canadian model" pilot in Norway now, before those international experiences have been subjected to systematic evaluations and external scrutiny. Both Germany and the UK plan to make such evaluations available in 2021–2022. Norway should learn from their experiences and evaluate whether a similar model could be adapted to the Norwegian context. The experiences from Germany and the UK, together with those from Australia and Canada, should also inform a discussion regarding whether there is a need for such a supplement in Norway.

The digitalization of resettlement

Resettlement poses serious challenges in terms of information flow. Stakeholders range from those at the supranational and national to those at the local and individual levels. The management of resettlement involves the handling of highly sensitive information about refugee vulnerabilities. Personal data is gathered, coded, transformed into bureaucratic categories, digitized, and shared among stakeholders, ranging from the supranational to the municipal levels. New data gathering and analyzing techniques pose both opportunities and challenges.

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129 Under the aegis of the EU Action on Facilitating Resettlement and Refugee Admission through New Knowledge (EU-FRANK) project and with the support of the European Asylum Support Office (EASO).

130 https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/mpie-eu-frank-resettlement-final-report_final.pdf p. 1.

131 https://medium.com/airbel/refugee-resettlement-minister-ahmed-hussen-explains-the-canadian-model-21dde951c48

A recent evaluation called for a smart resettlement platform that would reflect the increased professionalization of the field and ongoing digital revolution.[132] National governments should take note of these technological developments and actively explore their potential. If strictly compliant with data privacy legislation, the gains can be significant. Such developments can assist in security screening prior to resettlement, help national and municipal services to flexibly accommodate refugee needs, avoid squandering of resources (e.g., apartments that are rented for months prior to the actual arrival of resettlement refugees—a problem exacerbated by COVID-19), and facilitate dialogue between social workers and refugees fatigued by repeated questioning. Finally, if a smart resettlement platform can help optimize the matching of refugees and municipalities, then this would benefit both parties while simultaneously reducing costs.

Researchers in the US and Switzerland have recently developed "a data-driven algorithm to optimize the process by which refugees are assigned to locations within a resettlement country" and the results are promising thus far.[133] It remains to be seen whether these results could be replicated across resettlement states. For Norway, this would, in part, depend on the algorithm's compatibility with municipal sovereign powers in terms of resettling or not. The matching of skill sets and locations in this model has resulted in substantial employment gains and merits further attention from decision-makers. Among other things, such gains in employability can increase the absorptive capacity, especially for vulnerable refugees, and thus increase humanitarian effectiveness.

Research questions revisited

Based on the data presented thus far, we are in a position to now re-address the research questions presented in Chapter 1. The overarching research question was: **How do resettlement countries balance the humanitarian goal of securing the protection of vulnerable refugees against the consideration of the refugees' future integration?**

In the comparative chapter and in the introduction to this chapter, we saw that the countries examined here have found different solutions to this balancing act. Some countries outsource the balancing to the UNHCR—i.e., giving them the responsibility for interpreting the opposing humanitarianism and integration mandates. All countries, apart from France, consider integration perspectives—

132 https://www2.deloitte.com/uk/en/insights/industry/public-sector/technology-refugee-resettlement.html
133 https://immigrationlab.org/project/harnessing-big-data-to-improve-refugee-resettlement/

either explicitly in written criteria and in face-to-face interviews or through various feedback channels. The sub-questions were:

1. **How do Norwegian criteria and practices compare with those of other countries?**

During the last few decades, Norway has tried different versions of balancing the integration criteria with consideration for those who are most vulnerable. The humanitarian ambitions of the resettlement program and integration concerns are reflected in two separate yet overlapping ministerial mandates. Recently (2020), the Norwegian government replaced explicit integration criteria (education and vocational experience in certain cases) with a vaguer notion of future integration. Thus, the country could be said to follow a less explicit line than those countries that have set explicit individual integration criteria (Canada, Australia, Germany, Netherlands).

2. **How does Norway consider vulnerability and future integration when deciding on the composition of the resettlement quota and in the subsequent selection and settlement process?**

Chapters 4 and 5 cover the Norwegian selection process in detail. Although having removed integration as an explicit formal criterion at the individual level in 2020, integration considerations are still made while composing refugee quotas, as well as during individual screenings and interviews. There are explicit criteria regarding quota composition, future integration, and municipal integration capacity. The institutions involved in resettlement in Norway continue to look for good ways to balance the humanitarian and the political and normative integration mandates. The Norwegian resettlement program gives priority to families with children. These families can be seen as fulfilling both criteria at the same time. Families with children are often in a more vulnerable situation in host countries and in camps. At the same time, Norwegian authorities and municipalities see the long-term integration potential of the children in these families.

3. **In what way does the interaction between the UNCHR and the individual resettlement countries influence which refugees the latter select?**

There is a fine-tuned interaction between the UNHCR and resettlement countries. The UNHCR plays a key role in deciding what refugee situations, regions, and nationalities should be prioritized. The resettlement countries adhere to these priorities while also taking into consideration factors such as the security

situation and the feasibility of conducting successful missions in various host countries. The parties communicate updated criteria and practices to one another when deciding on the sub-groups for the yearly quotas as well as for the purposes of individual pre-screening and interview processes. In the best-case scenario, the UNHCR fully understands an individual country's criteria, preferred profiles, and routines. As we have seen, however, the involved parties still need to learn from each other. Each host country situation is different. Criteria and practices are partly communicated explicitly between the parties, partly via the backstage at different levels. A key role for the UNHCR also lies in nudging resettlement states away from their narrowly defined interests and toward upholding the humanitarian credentials of the program.

4. What are the consequences of various national resettlement practices for the actors involved?

The actors who are affected by the resettlement programs include the refugees who are resettled, the refugees who are left behind, the host states, the UNHCR, the local communities, and the municipalities. Who benefits from these programs? We discussed the potential for strategic use of resettlement programs in this report, pointing out the absence of host states as visible stakeholders and the lack of discussions about the consequences for those who are left behind. Furthermore, we discussed the extent to which the potential strategic value of resettlement is exploited for the benefit of all actors involved. We hold that there is potential for documenting the wider effects of resettlement for host states, for regional refugee situations, and for the refugees who are not resettled.

Through the informants, we raised the question of whether resettlement is the best solution for every resettled refugee. There may be reason to take seriously the doubts that some case-handlers have regarding whether resettlement does, indeed, benefit all those who are resettled. Refugee selection obliges resettlement states and frontline staff to be sensitive to the specific contexts in which they are intervening. They need to ensure that the refugees understand the process they are a part of and can, therefore, give their fully informed consent. Refugees are vulnerable at the time of selection and it is not always easy for them to grasp what awaits them in, for example, Norway.

While Norway may be one of the "best places in the world" to live, foreseeing future well-being of refugees is difficult. This can be particularly difficult in cases where the refugees are unfamiliar with a modern urban lifestyle. One Congolese instructor—who was offering "cultural orientation" to those refugees from the Congo who were selected for settlement in Norway—stated that within

selected sub-quotas, "99% of these refugees do not know what a credit card is and that some of them are also not familiar with the phenomenon of electricity"[134] At the same time, informants shared stories of successful integration of many Congolese refugees. These all serve as examples that it is hard to predict how life in Norway will unfold for resettled refugees.

5. What are the appropriate selection criteria for Norway?

The existing selection criteria fulfill the humanitarian agenda, and the humanitarian mandate is upheld. The Norwegian government follows the recommendations from the UNCHR and carefully mixes new resettlement groups with established ones. Integration criteria are applied at the group level. At the individual level, there are no explicit positive integration criteria, in the sense of education or vocational experience; however, civil servants are tasked with considering future integration and ask questions about attitudes and behaviors. In medical cases, special considerations are made. The criteria applied before and during the selection process—e.g., by commission members in the field doing interviews—were not well-known among those informants working with local integration at the municipal level. These municipal employees did, however, see the need to include considerations for integration as part of this process. They discussed these issues, referring to groups and individuals for whom it had been challenging to adapt and integrate in recent years. The MoJ is the responsible ministry.

The information about integration challenges and outcomes is fed back from the local level to the IMDi, as part of the processes described in this report. This information is then included in the discussions about next year's quota.

There is a fine balance between providing predictable criteria for the selection of refugees and the need to be susceptible to political influence over time. The resettlement program must be flexible enough to cope with, for example, the post 2015 surge in Syrian resettlement refugees while also seeking to provide consistency when faced with political pressures, such as in the case of Afghan interpreters.

In the end, what criteria shall steer refugee selection within the Norwegian resettlement program is ultimately a political question.

A key takeaway from this study is the need for communicating the selection criteria within the system to multiple stakeholders, including the municipalities

134 https://www.imdi.no/globalassets/dokumenter/andre-filer/evaluering-av-kulturorienteringsprogram-met-for-overforingsflyktninger.pdf s. 34–35.

and the public. The criteria and the selection processes are not well known, nor are they actively communicated to the public. If resettlement continues to be the major source of refugees to Norway in the coming years, transparency on the selection criteria and practices will be even more important.

Findings

In this report, we have presented reflections on the future of resettlement program (Chapter 2), compared resettlement programs in eight different resettlement states (Chapter 3), and provided insights into the structure and experience of the Norwegian resettlement program (Chapters 4, 5). Below, we first present our key findings from the comparative sections and then those related to the Norwegian program.

Resettlement in eight countries

Comparing the criteria and practices in eight key resettlement countries, we found that:

1. All countries apply security screenings, taking into consideration the risks to national security and risks of terrorism. Other exclusion criteria include crime and drug addiction.

2. All but one of the countries (France) apply integration as a key consideration when resettling refugees. Whereas Australia, Canada, Germany, UK, and Netherlands have explicit integration criteria at the individual level, Sweden, Norway, and France do not. The latter, however, do apply integration considerations when composing their quotas, at least to some extent.

3. The countries vary in terms of whether they systematically gather data on integration outcomes for resettled refugees as part of the basis on which they decide future quotas.

4. All countries find ways to signal to the refugees the need for minimum conformity with national values and norms of the resettlement state. Either civil servants specifically ask the refugees about the norms and practices relating to areas such as gender equality, upbringing, and tolerance or they somehow communicate their own national values and norms.

5. There are rumors within the field that some countries point out security concerns as a reason for exclusion when they are really worried about conservative non-liberal attitudes. Labeling an individual as a security concern bans that person from future resettlement.

6. Government representatives from all eight countries describe their national resettlement programs as being politically rather non-controversial and as having popular support, often more so than asylum migration. Its popularity and political ascendancy can also be viewed more critically—if, for example, resettlement is used to delegitimize the asylum system.

7. Although some informants reported that their countries see refugee resettlement as intertwined in their foreign policies (France, Norway, and Australia), others did not.

8. The UNCHR plays a key role in the resettlement process of all the case countries. Some countries rely heavily on this organization throughout the selection process, depending mostly on dossier methodology (UK, Australia, and Canada), whereas others rely mostly on in-person missions.

9. The civil servants taking part in this study had limited knowledge of the criteria for and practices of resettlement in other countries. Knowledge-sharing networks exist (UNHCR, European Asylum Support Office [EASO], and Nordisk High Level Coordination Group for Refugee Issues [NSHF]), but there still appears to be potential for further cross-national spreading of good practices and solutions to operational dilemmas.

10. There are ample rumors about how other countries practice resettlement and about integration-driven "cherry picking." There is, however, little consistency in these rumors. While some informants reported that it was rumored that country X only picks the most qualified refugees, other informants told us the complete opposite. Whether true or not, the existence of such rumors represents an argument for fostering ongoing dialogue across resettlement states, at various levels of government, from decision-makers to commission members.

The Norwegian resettlement program

The detailed analysis of Norwegian resettlement criteria and practices revealed a list of key insights. It is important to remember that the program was studied from the angle of understanding the role of integration in the selection process.

11. In 2020, the national guidelines for the Norwegian resettlement program were changed. In the new guidelines, integration considerations were included at the group level (quota) and for future integration (individual level), along with references to municipal capacity. The former explicit individual integration criteria (education and work experience with relevance for the Norwegian labor market) were replaced.

12. During selection missions, Norwegian civil servants also screened refugees for unwanted attitudes and behaviors. The exact content of these screenings is exempt from public disclosure but pertains to values, norms, and behaviors in, among others, the areas of gender equality, upbringing, and tolerance. These interview sections also seek to establish that the behaviors are in line with Norwegian law and establish motivation to take part in obligated activities and services after settlement.

13. Civil servant informants experienced that the Norwegian resettlement program has been professionalized over the past six years. As the quota first rose to 2,000—and later 3,000—refugees a year because of the war in Syria, detailed routines were established to regulate the cooperation between UDI and IMDi.

14. Following the resettlements from Syria, the PU and PST became involved in the resettlement process. Currently, they contribute with ID and document verification as well as individual security screening. Police informants still found that their role as part of the three-party missions (together with UDI and IMDi) was not fully established.

15. Although the size of the resettlement quota is decided by Parliament on a yearly basis, the program is provided flexibility through a three-year span for contingency purposes. Despite this flexibility, our informants reported that the yearly target numbers could create pressure on the resettlement missions toward the end of each year.

16. The recent IMDi reform, changing to a centralized and digitalized model, has made direct contact between municipalities and IMDi more challenging.
17. New technology, including machine learning, creates new possibilities for the consideration of new models of refugee distribution and for matching refugees and municipalities.
18. Informants reported that it was challenging to ensure that all refugees interviewed in Ethiopia and Uganda understood the resettlement process. Pre-interview cultural orientation was tested in 2018 but was found to have unintended consequences and was consequently not introduced as standard procedure.
19. Municipal employees wished for more information about the considerations inherent in the selection criteria and their implementation during the resettlement process.
20. There seems to be a clear potential to establish online dialogue between municipal staff and refugees at an earlier stage than practiced today. This would help the refugees mentally prepare for their new lives, build trust with municipal refugee counsellors, and, perhaps most crucially, help the municipality conduct better needs assessments and obtain more fine-grained information about the preferences and characteristics of refugees, particularly their medical needs.
21. The information about selection criteria in national chapters of the *UNHCR Handbook* appears to often be outdated and incomplete. Frequent revisions, securing updated information, would improve transparency to the stakeholders in refugee resettlement.
22. With respect to the process of allocating a total number of refugees for each municipality, informants working at the municipal level found the use of success rates from the introduction program as criteria for allocation to be unsatisfactory. IMDi employees reported that a digital program was being implemented that would take into consideration the starting point of each refugee entering the introduction program, thus enabling the estimation of the municipality's net contribution to the integration of an individual refugee.

23. Some civil servants taking part in the missions to certain areas in Africa asked, rhetorically, whether "resettlement is the best solution for all individual refugees who are resettled." They referred to refugees who they said "had an especially long way to go" to adapt to a digitalized modern life in Norway. These were individuals unaccustomed to living in houses, to having running water, electricity, etc.

24. Civil servants from UDI and IMDi, who had participated in missions to both the Middle East and Africa, reported that it was not easy to predict which refugees would be more successful regarding long-term integration in Norway. Even when comparing Syrians with formal education and Congolese without any formal education, they pointed out that a transfer to life in Norway might even be easier—and integration more successful—for some refugees from the latter group than from the former.

25. Civil servants who participated in missions reported that their focus regarding integration was on the children. In families in which the parents were deemed to not be likely to succeed in the Norwegian educational system or labor market, they said "it's all about the children." They were also aware that for the children to succeed, the parents also needed to succeed to some extent. An expert on immigrant mental health stressed the importance of empowering parents to secure the mental well-being of their children. There seems to be limited knowledge of the inter-generational socioeconomic mobility for the resettlement refugees in Norway. To the best of our knowledge, there are also no available statistics on the number and type of childcare incidents in which resettlement refugees are involved.

26. Civil servants who had participated on missions to East Africa mentioned the challenge regarding children who were under the care of but not the biological offspring of parents who were going to be resettled. Local practices varied from one sub-quota to the next, highlighting the imperative role of knowledge of the groups, local traditions, and cultures prior to missions but also asking for clear guidelines for civil servants, set to include or not include these children.

27. On one mission, the selection process began without the civil servants knowing what language the members of the group spoke, which created confusion when it turned out that no interpreters in Norway knew this language. This example illustrates the need for specialized local knowledge.

28. Informants within the MFA pointed out that this ministry has limited direct foreign policy involvement in the resettlement process. We have identified individual cases in which the MFA recommended giving priority to specific sub-quotas.

29. The UNHCR has pointed out the potential strategic use of resettlement—i.e., that the program can benefit stakeholders other than just the refugees who are resettled. Highlighting and reporting on this aspect of the program may strengthen its legitimacy.

Recommendations

Based on the data presented in this study and on the review of guidelines and practices in the other seven case countries, the following recommendations are presented for consideration by Norwegian authorities:

- Norwegian authorities could consider testing an adapted version of a private sponsorship model. This test should await the results and experiences of ongoing trials in the UK and Germany.
- Norwegian authorities, through IMDi, may want to encourage direct digital contact between individual refugees and their designated municipalities after they have been approved for resettlement but before they have left the country in which they are residing.
- Norwegian authorities may want to consider assessing the extent to which its resettlement program has, in fact, created positive humanitarian multiplier effects. Is there evidence of "strategic use" in Norwegian resettlement during the last 5–10 years—for instance, where resettlement has expanded other refugees' protection space in host states? If not, the loose reference to this in the 2020 guidelines should either be removed or further defined and refined. If the concept is kept, then the UNCHR could, in the future, be asked to specify the potential for strategic use in its annual proposition for the resettlement quota and the MFA could be more actively consulted in this regard.
- Norwegian authorities should take measures to secure the communication between IMDi and the municipalities in matters concerning resettlement.
- As part of the ongoing digitalization process of resettlement, IMDi should secure personal contact options that could complement the centralized system.
- Norwegian authorities should commission a research study documenting and analyzing the experience of resettled refugees in Norway. The literature review in the current study revealed that their voices are missing. What are

their experiences of the selection process, the arrival to Norway, and long-term integration?

- Norwegian authorities should consider including a member with cross-cultural medical competence on selected missions. This may help secure a more thorough mapping of medical needs in advance of resettlement and prepare the municipalities in which those with such needs are to be settled.
- Norwegian authorities should consider reviewing their current practices to ensure that all refugees are fully informed about the process and implications of resettlement. Mission members should have clear instructions on what to do when there is uncertainty regarding the refugees' understanding of their situation.
- Norwegian authorities (UDI and IMDi) should publish an annual joint report on refugee resettlement in Norway, modelled on the recent report by Sweden.[135] Resettlement continues to increase in importance relative to asylum in many countries. In this context, it is important to disseminate information about this work to both the public and the municipalities in Norway as well as to other stakeholders. The annual report could include (a) the process and priorities leading to next year's annual quota composition; (b) experiences among previous cohorts of resettlement refugees in Norway; and (c) operational dilemmas and challenges of the program. This openness could help secure the program's long-term sustainability among the stakeholders, municipalities, and the public.

135 https://www.migrationsverket.se/download/18.2fa4056d1775f05c203e1/1612527677376/Verksamhets-rapport%20vidarebos%C3%A4ttning%202019_engelska.pdf

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Appendix:

List of informants

Institution / informants	Number of persons	Number of interviews
UDI	14	14
IMDI	5	5
PU	4	4
KS	1	1
MoJ	1	1
MoER	1	1
MFA	2	2
Municipality 1 Big city	3	2
Municipality 2 Major suburb	3	2
Municipality 3 Rural	3	2
Municipality 4 Medium size city	1	1
PEN	1	1
ICORN	1	1
NRC	1	1
Amnesty	1	1
NVA	3	2
Academics / international experts	4	3
UNCHR	2	2
Civil servants, case countries	14	7
Norwegian Embassy in African country	1	1
Total	**66**	**54**

Selection Criteria in Refugee Resettlement

Balancing vulnerability and future integration in eight resettlement countries

In this report, we analyze resettlement programs for refugees in eight countries, highlighting the similarities and differences regarding their selection criteria and practices. In addition to Norway, the study includes Australia, the United Kingdom (UK), Canada, France, Germany, Sweden, and the Netherlands.

Based on more than 50 in-depth interviews with Norwegian civil servants, non-governmental organization (NGO) representatives, UNHCR staff, and governmental representatives from the countries included in the comparative analysis—along with document studies and an international ad-hoc query—we find that all countries wrestle with balancing principles and pragmatism in their selection practices. That is, although they aim to select those refugees who are most vulnerable, they are also taking into consideration the refugees' future integration or, at least, ability to cope in the host society.

We conclude the report by providing a number of policy recommendations for consideration by Norwegian authorities, based on the data presented in this study and on a review of guidelines and practices in the other seven case countries.

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ISBN (print): 978-82-7763-702-0
ISBN (digital): 978-82-7763--703-7
ISSN (print): 0333-3671
ISSN (digital): 1891-4314