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Refugee Resettlement to Europe 1950-2014:
An Overview of Humanitarian Politics and Practices

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Abstract

This paper presents developments in the field of refugee resettlement from a European perspective. The paper starts out with a historical overview on refugee resettlement in the European continent since World War I and shows that Europe has historically been more of a source of refugee resettlement than a host. The paper then pays attention to the evolution of resettlement at an EU level and sheds light on factors that have contributed to its (re)prioritization in the past 15 years. Indeed, there is an increased manifestation of resettlement on the EU policy agenda, culminating in the adoption of a Joint EU Resettlement Program in 2012. However, as a policy field it has not been part of the binding harmonization process, and while the number of EU resettlement countries doubled in the past decade, the EU lags still far behind other traditional resettlement countries in terms of actual resettlement places. Finally, after shedding light on debates in the European Parliament on the matter of resettlement, the paper presents a number of essential concerns and challenges regarding the future of resettlement programs in the EU. It concludes by pointing at the difficulties of reaching any significant increase in the number of refugees resettled in the EU.

Key words: Refugee protection, Resettlement, European Union, Durable solutions, Europe

Bio note

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1. Introduction: Refugee Resettlement

Resettlement constitutes the moving of a refugee from the first country of asylum to a third country to live. As such, it forms, together with repatriation and local integration, one of the three durable solutions for international refugee protection as stipulated in international refugee law.

Historically, traditional immigration countries—such as the United States, Canada and Australia—have accepted a considerate intake of resettled refugees. Among the intake has been a great number of Europeans throughout the twentieth century: after both World War One and World War Two, the Hungarian Revolution in 1956, the Prague Spring in 1968, and the Balkan wars in the 1990s. Resettlement to or within Europe, on the other hand, has been comparatively (very) low, and has mostly been arranged on an ad hoc basis. However, since the beginning of the twenty-first century, two strong actors, the EU Commission and the UNHCR, have set out to change this through investing a great deal of political effort and monetary resources to increase the EU’s share of global refugee resettlement. While the number of resettlement places has remained rather low (with an average annual intake in the first decade of around 5,000 individuals), the number of resettlement countries has doubled.

The purpose of this paper is to give an overview of the developments in Europe in the field of refugee resettlement. Firstly, it presents an historical overview of refugee resettlement to and from Europe from the end of World War One to the present. Secondly, it introduces the evolution of the EU policy measures and efforts in the area of resettlement: from the acknowledgement of resettlement as a part of the external dimension in the year 2000 to the adoption of the joint-EU resettlement programme in 2012 (the programme is non-mandatory and currently involves 14 EU member states on a regular basis). Further, the paper provides an insight into the main arguments made by Members of the European Parliament during debates on the topic. Finally, the paper points out some of the future challenges facing the resettlement programme—also against the context of refugee protection and asylum politics at large—before ending with a number of concluding remarks.
2. European Resettlement over time

Historically, the European continent has been more of a source of resettlement caseloads than a receiver when considering two major events: those of the post-World War Two and the 1991-1999 period with the breakup of Yugoslavia (Noll & Selm 2003). However, despite the fact that very few states until recently had adopted a resettlement policy in Europe with hardly any legal reference to it, a number of European countries have responded to collective protection needs and have shown a considerable history of receiving resettled refugees (Perrin & McNamara 2013).

One of the first acknowledgments and practical uses of resettlement as an instrument to protect refugees was in Europe itself. A significant tool to help resettlement of refugees during the interwar-period of 1918-1939 was the so-called ‘Nansen Passport’ of 1922.² Such passports were issued to enable some of the 800,000 refugees in Europe to settle to the United States, Canada, Australia, New Zealand and Latin America. Many of the refugees were Russians who fled the Russian Revolution or were displaced after WWI; among them were also Armenians fleeing the atrocities committed against them in the Ottoman Empire. In the 1930s and 1940s, these refugees were joined by Spaniards fleeing their civil war, as well as Jews and others fleeing Nazi persecution and fascism. Several organizations were put in place to deal with refugee protection, including the Nansen International Office for Refugees (1931-1938), the Office of the High Commissioner for Refugees coming from Germany (1933-38), the Office of the High Commissioner of the League of Nations for Refugees (1939-1946), and the Inter-Governmental Committee on Refugees (1938-1947) (Jaeger, 2001). One of the main tasks of such organizations was the resettlement of Jews and others who were fleeing Nazi persecution (UNHCR 2011).

With the establishment of the United Nations (UN) after the end of WWII in 1945, a new body, the International Refugee Organization (IRO), was mandated with the international protection of refugees. The organization’s principal mandate was to protect the estimated 21 million displaced persons scattered throughout Europe in the aftermath of the war. The IRO resettled more than 1 million of these refugees, mainly to destinations outside Europe, and repatriated less than 80,000 to their countries of origin. In 1951, the IRO was replaced by the Office of the United Nations High

² This passport was issued to refugees by the High Commissioner of the League of Nations. It was the first refugee identity document of its time (Goodwin-Gill 2014).
Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), whose mandate was two-fold: firstly to ensure the international protection of refugees, and secondly to work closely together with governments in the search/provision for durable solutions for these refugees. Resettlement was seen as one of these durable solutions, along with local integration and repatriation (Goodwin-Gill 2014; UNHCR 2011).

**Resettlement during the Cold War until 2000**

The political and foreign policy interests of countries involved shaped much of the resettlement of refugees during the Cold War era. The *proxy wars* between the eastern and western great powers, as well as the decolonization processes in Africa and Asia, were among the major events to produce millions of refugees (UNHCR 2011; Bessa 2005). In Europe, the 1956 Hungarian Revolution produced around 200,000 refugees, of which the UNHCR quickly managed to resettle around 100,000 of them, mostly to other European countries (see Table 1). The Hungarian resettlement was the first resettlement operation carried out under the statute of the UNHCR (Zieck 2013).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Table 1. Resettlement of Hungarian Refugees to European Countries</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>United Kingdom</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Germany</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Switzerland</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>France</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Sweden</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Belgium</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Italy</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: UNHCR (2006)

While resettlement in the 1950s and 1960s mostly targeted European refugees, the beginning of 1970s saw a shift of resettlement from Europe as a source region to Africa and Asia, and to a certain extent Latin America (Troeller 2002). Some of the largest resettlement operations in that period included the expulsion of Ugandan Asians in 1972, of Chileans in 1973 and of Indochinese refugees in the second half of the 1970s. In the first case, the UNHCR—in collaboration with the International Organization for Migration (IOM), the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)—resettled some
40,000 Ugandan Asians within a few months to 25 countries (UNHCR 2011). A large part of the resettlement of Ugandan Asians was directed to Uganda’s former colonial power, the United Kingdom, which received around 28,000, while Austria accepted 1,500, Sweden 319 and the Netherlands 253 (Asians from Uganda 2012). Most of the remaining were resettled outside Europe. Concerning the second case, the Chilean coup d’état in September 1973 caused the governments of the Federal Republic of Germany, France, Sweden, Great Britain, Italy, the Netherlands, the German Democratic Republic, Hungary, Romania and Yugoslavia to accept Chileans as resettled refugees (Loescher 1993). None of the above-mentioned events, however, caused such a high number of refugees as the Vietnam War (largely 1945-75) and the mass flight of people following the victory of the communist regimes in 1975 (-1995). At the 1979 Indochinese Refugees Conference in Geneva, the international community agreed that Southeast Asian countries were to host millions of the displaced Cambodians, Laotians and Vietnamese refugees, while western countries would subsequently resettle many of them (Robinson 2004). Between 1975 and 1995, the US resettled more than 800,000 Indochinese refugees; followed by Australia and Canada, taking 138,000 each; France 95,000; and the UK and Germany around 20,000 each (see also Table 2). All in all, more than 15 western states (and Japan) participated in the resettlement operations (UNHCR 2000a).

Indeed, the Indochinese refugee crisis played a major role in rethinking resettlement as a prioritized durable solution to refugees. It was feared that the huge number of those resettled created incentives for non-refugees to migrate for economic reasons to the West. As a result, the second conference on Indochinese refugees in 1989 shifted the focus from resettlement to repatriation of those found not eligible for refugee status, including the abolishment of the recognition of refugees on *prima facie* basis³ (Piper et al. 2013; UNHCR 2011). However, other important economic and political factors also played a significant role in western countries’ changed preference—away from resettlement towards repatriation and local integration. The end of the Cold War meant that political grounds were no longer at the forefront of seeking protection. In addition, the economic recession during the 1990s, along with increased levels of xenophobia in public debate, led to restrictive asylum policies in

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³ *Prima facie* stands for “in the lack of evidence to the contrary”, which means that in refugee crisis, when individual assessment of refugees is difficult, refugees are recognized as such in groups.
general. This period has thus been termed “the Decade of Repatriation” (Piper et al. 2013).

The beginning of the dissolution of Yugoslavia in the early 1990s shifted the focus of resettlement once more to Europe. In particular, the war in Bosnia 1992-1995 and Kosovo 1998-1999 caused the displacement of millions. Although not many people benefited from resettlement due to the limited response of receiving countries, the territorial proximity of the conflicts enabled most refugees who wanted to seek refuge in western countries to leave the conflict regions. The UNHCR and the IOM launched the “Humanitarian Evacuation Programme” (HEP) in early April 1999, which resulted in almost 96,000 refugees being relocated to 28 countries that agreed to host them on a temporary basis. Of those, around 60,000 were resettled in European countries (UNHCR 2000b) (see Table 2). The response from the EU countries was highly diverse and associated with reluctance, despite the fact that the Amsterdam Treaty had already put a legal basis for a more joint-EU action (Selm 2000:6).

### Table 2. Resettlement of Refugees to European Countries, 1970 – 2000

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Chileans</th>
<th>Indo-Chinese</th>
<th>Bosniars</th>
<th>Kosovars</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>United Kingdom</strong></td>
<td>3,000</td>
<td>22,500</td>
<td>2,500</td>
<td>4,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sweden</strong></td>
<td>18,000</td>
<td>2,250</td>
<td>6,367</td>
<td>5,000*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Germany</strong></td>
<td>7000*</td>
<td>35,000</td>
<td>350,000**</td>
<td>15,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>France</strong></td>
<td>15,000</td>
<td>107,500</td>
<td>///</td>
<td>8,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ireland</strong></td>
<td>120</td>
<td>212</td>
<td>455</td>
<td>1032</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Belgium</strong></td>
<td>1100</td>
<td>2500</td>
<td>200*</td>
<td>1200*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>The Netherlands</strong></td>
<td>///</td>
<td>11,54</td>
<td>///</td>
<td>4,062*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Norway</strong></td>
<td>///</td>
<td>10,066</td>
<td>13,000*</td>
<td>6,100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Both Bosnian and Kosovo refugees were temporarily resettled under Humanitarian Evacuation Programmes' Collective Protection.

**Temporary resettlement on an *ad hoc* basis*

Sources: Know Reset (2013); Adelman (1983); Povrzanović Frykman (2009); Selm (2000); Deutsche Welle (2014); Bamat (2013); Norwegian Government (2002); Robinson (1998)

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4 Around 4,000 were taken by the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG), the German Democratic Republic (GDR) accepted around 3,000 resettled Chileans.
3. The Evolution of Resettlement in the European Union – policies, motivations and incentives

At the onset of the new millennium, the EU began to actively encourage member states to admit resettled refugees and to increase the overall resettlement pledges made by its members. This section provides an overview of these developments with a focus on policy development—as well as the measures and instruments supporting it—and on the debates concerning resettlement in the European Parliament.

To begin with, the above-mentioned joint-EU resettlement programme adopted by the EU Council in 2012 was, as stated earlier, not the beginning of resettlement to European countries. In fact, while most countries acted on an ad hoc basis, a number of countries had a regular programme beforehand. Sweden is the European forerunner of refugee resettlement through a regular resettlement programme adopted already in 1950. Finland followed almost 30 years later. With the exception of Denmark and the Netherlands—both of which adopted resettlement programmes during the 1980s, and then Ireland during the 1990s—no other EU member state adopted one until the turn of the new millennium (see also Table 3). However, after the year 2000, new developments at both international and European levels changed the EU’s approach to resettlement, resulting in efforts to increase resettlement pledges.

Several factors illuminate the EU’s change of agenda in (re-)prioritising resettlement as a form of refugee protection. Undeniably, the UNHCR’s relentless efforts to increase the number of resettlement places through continuous calls and joint initiatives with the EU and its member states, along with the continuous advocacy from other NGOs, certainly played a major role. At the EU level, both continuous efforts to increase resettlement numbers—amongst others through financial incentives—and to harmonize resettlement practices in the general framework of a Common European Asylum System (CEAS) have contributed significantly to an increase in resettlement places.

Over the years, these efforts have led to a twofold increase of EU member states adopting a resettlement programme. In 2014, a total of 14 EU member states—Belgium, Czech Republic, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Hungary, Ireland, the Netherlands, Portugal, Romania, Spain, Sweden and the UK—were implementing
annual resettlement programmes (McNamarra 2013; European Resettlement Network n.d/a).

Table 3. Form of Resettlement in EU Resettlement Countries

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Program-based</th>
<th>Ad-hoc</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Belgium</td>
<td>Since 2013</td>
<td>2009, 2011</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Denmark</td>
<td>Since 1978</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finland</td>
<td>Since 1985</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>France</td>
<td>Since 2008</td>
<td>Since 1948</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>Since 2012</td>
<td>2009</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hungary</td>
<td>Since 2012</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Italy</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>2007, 2010</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Netherlands</td>
<td>Since 1984</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Portugal</td>
<td>Since 2007</td>
<td>2006</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ireland</td>
<td>Since 1998</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Romania</td>
<td>Since 2008*</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spain</td>
<td>Since 2012*</td>
<td>Since 1979</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sweden</td>
<td>Since 1950</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United Kingdom</td>
<td>Since 2004</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Romania started to resettle only from 2010, Spain from 2011-2012
Source: European Resettlement Network (n.d/a); Perrin & McNamarra (2013)

The resettlement procedures as well as rights and entitlements given vary from country to country. For example, while Belgium, the Czech Republic, France, Finland, Ireland, Portugal, Sweden and the UK grant permanent residence permits to resettled refugees directly, a number of other countries—Denmark, Germany, Iceland, the Netherlands, Norway, Romania and Spain—issue a temporary residence permit instead. The path to a permanent residence permit is open, yet it is conditioned upon a specified period of residency, as well as upon the fulfillment of certain integration criteria, such as a certain level of language skills, good conduct, civic knowledge and financial self-reliance. All states provide a pathway from a permanent residence permit to naturalization, although the requirements vary (European Resettlement Network, n.d/e). What is more, contrary to all other EU resettlement countries which grant refugee status before or upon arrival, Belgium, the Czech Republic, France, the
Netherlands, Norway\(^5\) and Romania require the resettled refugees to undergo an (expedited) asylum procedure after arrival, while Germany only extends humanitarian status with far less entitlements attached (European Resettlement Network, n.d./e). In addition, Germany, France, Austria and Ireland also accept refugees under the Humanitarian Admission Programme: an expedited process allowing one to receive a larger number of refugees in a relatively short time frame. The residence permit granted under this programme is only temporary, and its extension is dependent on a reviewed assessment of protection needs after a couple of years (European Resettlement Network n.d./e; UNHCR 2014e).

EU members that have only resettled once are not part of the Table 3. Examples of such countries are Austria, Luxembourg and Poland. Austria resettled only 31 Iraqi Christian refugees in 2010, but it is continuously involved in receiving refugees through Humanitarian Admission Programmes (HAP). Luxembourg resettled on an ad hoc basis in 2009, with seven Sunni Muslim (two families) and 20 Christian Iraqi refugees (five families). Poland resettled only in 2011 and on an ad hoc basis (European Resettlement Network n.d/a). Other countries which refer to resettlement in either a government act or law but which have not resettled so far include Bulgaria, Slovakia and Slovenia. However, Slovakia hosts an Emergency Transit Center (ETC) for refugees in urgent need of resettlement. Its current capacity is 150 refugees with a maximum stay of six months, which translates to 300 maximum available places per year (European Resettlement Network n.d/c), as they wait for onward resettlement to other resettlement (generally European) countries. Finally, countries like Greece, Cyprus, Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia have no formal basis for resettlement, nor have they resettled so far on either a programme or on an ad hoc basis.

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\(^5\) Resettled refugees arriving in Norway as a dossier case need to undergo the asylum process, while refugees selected during selection missions usually receive refugee status directly.
Graph 1. Global Share of Resettlement, 2000-2014

![Graph showing global share of resettlement, 2000-2014](image)

Source: UNHCR (2002; 2013b); Refugee Processing Center (2015); Refugee Council USA (n.d.); Australian Government (2015); Refugee Council of Australia (n.d.)

Although at the EU level resettlement as a tool for durable solutions for refugees has began to gain ground since 2000, the actual growth of resettlement quotas has not followed pace. The United States continues to lead the resettlement figures (see Graph 1). For example, in 2014 alone it resettled around 70,000 refugees, a figure that is similar to the number of resettled refugees of previous years (Refugee Processing Center 2015). Canada, which lists second for the 2014 resettlement of refugees, accepted an overall number of 13,900 refugees (UNHCR 2014c). Australia contributed with 11,000 places targeted for resettlement—both government and privately sponsored (UNHCR 2014d). Finally, the EU resettled around 7,500 refugees in 2014 (European Resettlement Network n.d./d). Thus, despite the progress made, traditional EU resettlement countries are still cautious when it comes to increasing their annual quotas directed to refugees through resettlement, while newly engaged countries are yet to consolidate themselves in taking refugees through resettlement. While financial resources influence some countries’ decision regarding resettling refugees, the majority of countries, in particular those traditional resettlement countries, fear a public backlash. The significant lack of information from the media about resettlement, together with the growing negative sentiments towards asylum seekers, is seen as a major problem towards increasing resettlement numbers. As a result, apart from economic resources, much more public support and understanding is needed to
establish more political will for resettlement (see also Bokshi 2013). Finally, of course, the European countries also have a considerable amount of asylum applications to process, which by far exceeds those of North American countries or Australia: in 2013, it laid at almost 500,000 for Europe (400,000 for EU-28) compared to 100,000 for North America (Canada 10,000; USA 90,000) and 26,500 for Australia (UNHCR 2013a; Australian Government 2014).

_Resettlement enters the EU policy agenda_

Since the 1990s, most EU policy measures in the field of migration and asylum have made it more difficult for third country nationals to get legal access to EU territory. The results are, among others, an increasing number of people entering the EU without the proper documentation, often with the help of smugglers and often under substantial risks of life. In light of this, the EU Commission acknowledged the need to create more legal channels for migrants and refugees entering the European Union as key objectives of its Global Approach to Migration and Mobility (GAMM) Strategy (EU Commission 2011b). The intake of refugees through resettlement has been explicitly spelled out as a “key instrument for orderly access to durable solutions in the EU,” while stronger efforts have been announced to solve protracted refugee situations (EU Commission 2011b). After the tragic event in October 2013 where more than 130 migrants lost their life when their boat caught fire and sank outside Lampedusa, the EU Commission named increased resettlement capacities as one of several ways forward to prevent such tragedies⁶ (EU Commission 2013).

The very legal basis to create a Common European Asylum System (CEAS) at a European Union level embarked with the coming into force of the Amsterdam Treaty in 1999. Areas to harmonize comprised of, amongst others, a common visa policy, the setting of minimum standards for the reception of refugees, the processing of their applications and the qualification for refugee and subsidiary protection status (ECRE n.d.). This marks the very beginning of efforts at the EU level in developing a harmonized asylum system. The European Commission has continuously pushed for a

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⁶It has to be noted that the accident outside Lampedusa is just one of innumerable events in which migrants (among them many with protection needs) lost their lives while trying to reach EU territory. The IOM (2014) reports that while there were more than 22,000 registered deaths 2000-14, in 2014 alone more than 4,000 migrants died.
EU-wide resettlement scheme as part of a harmonized asylum system. In 2000, the Commission in its first Communication (COM 2000/0755 final) on this issue states, “facilitating the arrival of refugees on the territory of the Member States by a resettlement scheme are ways of offering rapid access to protection”. Two subsequent Commission Communications in 2003 and 2004 also reiterated the necessity of adopting a EU-wide scheme as a way to provide for “managed and orderly arrivals” of persons in need of international protection (in Perrin & McNamara 2013). In 2005 the European Commission started—within the external dimension of asylum and migration—to develop Regional Protection Programmes (RPP). These serve as an instrument to support the protection capacity of third states: as countries of origin, transit or first asylum. RPPs are seen as an instrument expressing ‘partnership’; and in exchange for developing their asylum system’s capacity, the EU in turn resettles some of the refugees from the third countries into its territory (European Commission 2005). Again, in its 2011 Communication on the EU’s Global Approach to Migration and Mobility, the increased use of RPPs—with resettlement as an explicit part of it—is advocated/recommended as a tool to strengthen these countries’ international protection capacity (EU Commission 2011b).

Furthermore, the EU Commission encouraged new resettlement countries through twinning projects, which connected—in cooperation with UNHCR, IOM and other potential NGOs—a traditional resettlement country with a new one, in order to improve the resettlement process and the quality of integration services (UNHCR 2009). There is a broad agreement among relevant stakeholders on asylum policies that resettlement should be central to the common European asylum system and that increased cooperation on resettlement among member states, the UNHCR and NGOs is highly welcomed (European Commission 2009a).

Such developments have had a certain impact on the attitudes of some EU member states towards resettlement. Some of the most important developments include the adoption of a resettlement programme in 2004 by the United Kingdom (Perrin &

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7 MORE was one of the EU projects that ran between 2003 and 2005 and twinned Finland as a traditional resettlement country with Ireland as a newly emerged country of resettlement to enhance its resettlement capacities. The MOST project twinned the same countries for the period 2006-2008. Furthermore, the Spanish government participated in Sweden’s resettlement missions in 2007 and 2008 to Jordan and Syria. Bulgaria and Slovakia participated as observers in 2009 in a resettlement missions carried out by Netherlands to Syria. Between 2007 and 2009 countries like Romania, Czech Republic, Luxembourg and Belgium also participated in Dutch missions concerning resettlement.
McNamarra 2013); Portugal, France, Romania and the Czech Republic have also provided new resettlement commitments in 2007 and 2008 (European Commission 2009a).\(^8\)

*Joint initiatives and financial incentives*

Apart from the above-mentioned capacity building projects (RPPs) in third countries funded by the EU, financial incentives, such as the European Refugee Fund (ERF) for the period 2008-2013 and the recent the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF 2014-2020), have proved to be effective in attracting new resettlement countries within the EU (Bokshi 2013). For example, Belgium’s pilot project to resettle refugees from Iraq was conditional upon a request of such funding from the EU Commission, where 90 percent of costs for the selection and transfer were covered by the ERF (Penín & McNamara 2013). Furthermore, since the introduction of financial incentives in 2008, the number of EU countries adopting resettlement programmes has doubled as mentioned before. Such financial schemes provide financial support for so-called responsibility sharing, for example, the resettlement of refugees from a third country into a member state. Moreover, for a number of specific categories of refugees, member states can receive additional funds, including those refugees with serious medical needs, children and women at risk, unaccompanied minors as well persons from a country with a RPP in place (European Commission 2009a). The recent Asylum and Migration Fund (AMIF) provides similar financial incentives (European Commission 2011a).

*The introduction of a formal EU Resettlement Programme*

The proposal to establish a joint-EU resettlement programme (JEURP) in 2009, during Sweden’s presidency, was adopted by the EU Council in 2012. In broad terms, the JEURP’s aim is to increase the EU’s humanitarian impact by supporting the international protection of refugees through resettlement, by fully integrating resettlement in the external and humanitarian dimension of the EU’s asylum policy, and by streamlining EU’s resettlement efforts in a more cost-effective manner.

\(^8\)The quotas of these new resettlement states include 30 refugees for Portugal, 350-450 for France, 40 refugees for Romania and 30 refugees for the Czech Republic annually.
(European Commission 2009a). The Programme further has encouraged some member states to move from ad hoc resettlement to annual programme-based resettlement by providing a special allocation of funds for new resettlement countries; Belgium and Germany answered the call; and other new resettlement member states, such as Hungary, are expected to being their efforts (Bokshi 2013). One of the underlying motivations for the involvement of several of the new resettlement countries was the ambition to be part of joint efforts. This was the case with Belgium and Bulgaria, as well as Romania. The Romanian government’s decision to be part of the joint-EU resettlement program was to present the country not only as a responsible EU member state, but also as an international actor in refugee protection (Perrin & McNamarra 2013). Nowadays, Regional Protection Programmes (RPPs) together with the Joint- EU Resettlement Programme form the very backbone of the EU’s external policy in dealing with resettlement and support for countries dealing with the presence of a large number of refugees.

Although the number of resettlement countries has, as already pointed out, doubled since 2008, the traditional resettlement countries, however, are still the ones carrying the main responsibility for resettling refugees, with the Scandinavian countries regularly accepting about 70 percent of all EU resettlement cases. Newly emerged resettlement countries still admit an insignificant number of refugees (see Table 4). However, regular programmes are not the EU states’ sole response to refugee crises. In addition to overall efforts, the states’ ad hoc resettlement and other admissions (humanitarian programmes and individual sponsorships) should also be mentioned. As an example of recent efforts, a large number of countries have responded to an international call initiated by the UNHCR—in cooperation with the EU Commission and NGOs—to resettle Syrian nationals displaced by war. The goal was to resettle 30,000 in 2014 and another 100,000 between 2015 and 2016, in addition to the established resettlement quota (European Resettlement Network, n.d./f). As seen in Table 5 below, a total of 26 countries worldwide, among them 19 European states, have responded to the call for the resettlement of Syrians: led by Germany with 30,000 admissions; Canada, with an estimated 12,000; Australia 5,600; Sweden 2,700 places,

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9 Through resettlement, humanitarian admissions (temporary form of protection), and other programmes.
and Norway with 2,500 places. In addition, the USA has also pledged a substantial number (European Resettlement Network n.d./f).
### Table 4. Number of Resettled Refugees in the European Union, 2000 – 2014

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<td>470*</td>
<td>1000*</td>
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<td>463</td>
<td>642</td>
<td>857</td>
<td>669</td>
<td>432</td>
<td>989</td>
<td>935</td>
<td>671</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*including refugees coming through HAP (Humanitarian Admission Programmes)
**cases**
(-) data are not available/ not applicable
Sources: Figures taken for years 2000-2012 are taken from: Know reset database, whereas data for 2013-2014 are taken from the country profiles of the European Resettlement Network.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
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<th>Country</th>
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<td>Liechtenstein</td>
<td>25 Resettlement</td>
</tr>
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<td>Australia</td>
<td>5,600 Resettlement and Special Humanitarian Programme</td>
<td>Luxembourg</td>
<td>60 Resettlement</td>
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<td>1,500 Humanitarian Admission</td>
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<td>2,500 Resettlement</td>
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<td>Brazil</td>
<td>Open-ended humanitarian visa programme*</td>
<td>Poland</td>
<td>100 Resettlement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>10,200 Resettlement; 1,100 Private Sponsorship</td>
<td>Portugal</td>
<td>23 Resettlement; 70 Emergency Scholarships for Higher Education</td>
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<td>Spain</td>
<td>130 Resettlement</td>
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<td>2,700 Resettlement</td>
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<td>1,000 Humanitarian Admissions and Resettlement</td>
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<td>20,000 HAP; 10,000 Individual Sponsorship</td>
<td>UK</td>
<td>Vulnerable Persons Relocation Scheme</td>
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<td>USA</td>
<td>Open-ended number on resettlement</td>
</tr>
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<td>Ireland</td>
<td>310 Resettlement</td>
<td>Uruguay</td>
<td>120 Resettlement</td>
</tr>
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</table>

**TOTAL PLEDGES: ca 60,000 + additional number to the USA**

Source: European Resettlement Network (n.d/l)* Under the humanitarian visa programme selected individuals have the right to apply for refugee status in Brazil. So far 5,700 visas have been issued (January 2015).

This multilateral call has been one of the more successful ones. Undoubtedly, the launch of multilateral initiatives by the Commission in cooperation with UNHCR and other key stakeholders has had a clear impact on member states’ motivation to join the collective efforts (Perrin & McNamara 2013). Apart from the call to aid Syrians, earlier multilateral calls initiated by the UNHCR targeted Iraqis after 2008, as well as refugees from ex-Libya after 2011. After calls from the UN High Commissioner for Refugees at the beginning of 2008 to resettle Iraqi refugees, the EU released a quite successful joint EU-Call in November 2009 for the resettlement of 10,000 Iraqis to EU countries. While the number of Iraqi resettled refugees in 2007 was roughly 280, the number increased to 700 in 2008 and more than 3,000 in 2009. In 2009 alone, twelve EU countries responded to the call—again with the traditional resettlement countries receiving most of the amount (Perrin & McNamara 2013). Later calls for urgent
refugee situations from the UNHCR came in 2011 and 2012 for refugees from former Libya. Around 3,400 refugees, who previously resided in Libya, were living in the Shousha Camp on the Tunisian border, with another 2,000 in the Salloum Camp along the Egypt-Libya border. Although the call did not receive the same response as for the Iraqi refugees, especially from European countries, the year 2013 enabled the closure of the Shousha Camp. Most of the camp residents were resettled, 869 of whom in member states (European Resettlement Network n.d./b).

**The UNHCR as a major actor**

The development towards multilateral calls can also be derived from changes within the UNHCR. With the appointment of former Portuguese Prime Minister António Guterres in 2005, the agency received a High Commissioner with a declared interest in resettlement. Although developments to address resettlement through a non-binding multilateral framework had been on the way since 2000, a specialized Resettlement Service was set up within the UNHCR with the aim to increase the agency’s effectiveness regarding coordinating resettlement pledges with different stakeholders (Piper et al. 2013). It also led to an increase in the organization’s capacity to identify refugees for resettlement: a number that is currently well beyond the resettlement places provided by resettlement states. In 2014 the UNHCR identified 690,000 refugees in need of resettlement, but only 94,113 places were pledged by the resettlement states (excluding Syrian refugees). For 2015 the UNHCR projected a number of around 960,000 refugees in need of resettlement, including Syrian refugees, while the UNHCR’s planned number of submissions is around 127,000 refugees, which converts to 13 percent of refugees able to be referred for resettlement (UNHCR 2013a; 2014a).

**Justification of resettlement in the European Parliament**

To get a better insight into the financial and political instruments adopted at EU level on resettlement and the justification behind them, this section will cast light on how resettlement has been debated in European Parliament (EP) during the period 2008 to 2014: the period considered significant to the rise of resettlement in the EU. The
debates in the EU Parliament are centred around three main events: First, the amendment of the European Refugee Fund in 2009 (COM [2009] 456 final) concerning resettlement funding; second, the establishment in 2010 of the European Asylum Support Office (Regulation No 439/2010), which includes resettlement as an external policy programme; and third, the adoption of the Joint-EU Resettlement Programme in 2012 (COM [2009] 447) (European Commission 2009a&b; European Union 2010).

First, what can be drawn from the debates in this period is that the majority of the Members of the European Parliament (hereinafter ‘MEPs’) are in favour of increasing the number of EU resettlement places as the ‘proper’ mechanism for showing solidarity and regularizing asylum seekers’ entrance in the EU. Just as many MEPs see resettlement as an important solidarity tool that the EU should use to protect refugees, while there are others who see resettlement or generally the promotion of ‘legal’ migration as part of the means to stop or combat ‘illegal’ migration. There have been largely four underlying reasonings for supporting resettlement. Firstly, statements made by members of the European People’s Parties (EPP) often recognised both the need of the EU to show solidarity with refugees and simultaneously called for hindering irregular migrants from entering the EU, regardless of their motivation:

These kinds of programmes are important because they demonstrate the European Union’s willingness to show its human side with refugees worldwide. However, their other important objective is to curb the influx of illegal immigrants towards the European Union, including those who require protection.

(Maltese MEP, EPP¹⁰ April 20, 2010)

Secondly, several MPs stressed the EU’s moral obligation to support people in need of international protection. Many saw a need for the EU to revive its humanitarian spirit and humanitarian tradition by helping those refugees for whom the only solution is resettlement. Sometimes these statements were made with reference to Europe’s history as a source continent of refugees, with a particular focus on the response to the Hungarian refugee crisis of 1956. Others connected the contemporary refugee source countries’ problems with colonization at the hands of European countries, pointing out

¹⁰ EPP stands for “The Group of the European People’s Party”, which consists of centre and centre-right pro-European political forces from the Member States in the EU Parliament.
a moral obligation to make things right by admitting refugees from such countries. Such statements include:

Refugees are important for the Hungarian Presidency for historical reasons because it was for Hungary, in 1956, that the first concerted effort was made by the international community to resettle thousands of refugees.

(Portuguese MP, Greens–EFA\textsuperscript{11} March 28, 2012)

And:

I object to any notions of ‘Fortress Europe’ that would be isolated from the problems of the Third World, many of which have directly or indirectly been caused by the former colonizers. Europe cannot turn its back on its commitments to countries that once were recklessly exploited.

(Estonian MEP, ALDE\textsuperscript{12} May 6, 2009)

Thirdly, in line with the moral duty argument, several other MPs use the reciprocity argument to support resettlement to the European Union. Europe is mentioned here both as a producer and a receiver of refugees to argue for an increase in resettlement places. Others draw comparisons between the EU and traditional immigration countries like the United States, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, or Brazil, most of which accept the equivalent or a much higher number of refugees and migrants than all the EU countries together. Examples of statements made along these lines are contained in the following excerpts of longer speeches:

(S)ometimes we have to remind ourselves where we came from. If we look at the history of international law on refugees, we see that founding the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR) in 1949, signing the Geneva Convention on Refugees in 1951 and the first great effort to resettle refugees, which followed the 1956 revolution in Hungary, were targeted, all of them, at

\textsuperscript{11} Greens-EFA stands for “The Greens – European Free Alliance”: a leftist European Parliament political group pushing for policies concerning the environment, regionalism and minorities.

\textsuperscript{12} ALDE stands for “Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe Group”, which is currently a liberal centrist group in the European Parliament.
European refugees. At that time, Europe was the continent of refugees. We Europeans often forget that was the case today when we see refugees arriving from the rest of the world.

(Portuguese MEP, GUE-NGL\textsuperscript{13} March 23, 2011)

And:

The figures speak for themselves. In 2010, only 4,700 refugees were resettled in the European Union, which is 4.4% of all those who were resettled during that year. In respect of this somewhat poor record – for that is what it is – let us remember that this programme is aimed at encouraging the Member States to join the collective solidarity movement to which countries like the United States and Canada are already broadly committed.

(French MEP, S&D\textsuperscript{14} March 23, 2011)

Fourthly, a number of arguments are also presented from the opponents of resettlement. Reasons for rejecting resettlement vary, ranging from cultural differences, impossibility of integration in the host countries, the economic burden of refugees, as well as security issues. Such MPs, who come mainly from the group of European right-wing parties, instead support the strengthening of solutions which are already a part of the external dimension of the EU’s migration and asylum strategy, namely, regional protection programmes and financial assistance to countries of first asylum or countries which are a source of refugees.

It is a foolish plan to resettle in the EU... is a mistaken kind of encouragement. Not only will it nowhere near cover the costs, but that money could be much better and much more effectively spent in the regions where these refugees are received. And that, Mr. President, ensures better help for even more refugees.

(Dutch MEP, NI\textsuperscript{15} March 28, 2012)

\textsuperscript{13} GUE-NGL or “European United Left-Nordic Green Left”, is a left wing European political group.
\textsuperscript{14} S&D stands for the Group of the Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats in the European Parliament.
\textsuperscript{15} The MEP in this period was part of the Dutch right-wing party “Party for Freedom” (PVV), which was part of the NI (Non-Inscrits/ Non-Attached Members) group in the European Parliament.
4. Criticism and challenges ahead

Despite an overall positive development to increase the number of resettlement places in the European Union since 2000—in terms of the number of resettlement countries, multilateral initiatives, harmonization of resettlement policies at an EU level, and launching of financial incentives—the actual resettlement numbers to the EU remains, as has been pointed out above, insignificant compared to other countries, such as the USA, Canada and Australia. The evolution of resettlement over the past 15 years within the EU has had to face various challenges and criticism in terms of the way resettlement is used or carried out, as well as the scope of involvement of the EU countries in resettlement operations. Some of the challenges and criticism identified during this period include the following: The simultaneous increase in the number of asylum seekers has affected the decision of several countries to further engage in resettlement activities (Bokshi 2013). Both 2013 and 2014 have been the most decisive ones with asylum applications reaching 500,000, a number which not seen since the early 1990s (Eurostat 2014). France is one of the countries that have expressed reluctance to increase resettlement quotas due to the considerate number of asylum seekers received in recent years (Silga & Tardis 2013). Furthermore, there is considerable diversity among member states in applying selection criteria and procedures for refugees to be resettled. For instance, some states resettle only individuals who have been recognized under the 1951 Refugee Convention, thereby excluding a large number of refugees who have been recognized under the UNHCR’s broader definition of the term ‘refugee’.16 There is also a concern that the introduction of specific integration criteria is diverting the role of resettlement from a protection tool to integration concerns. Major resettlement countries like Germany, Denmark and Finland apply several criteria during the selection of refugees, for example, age, educational and professional background, national and religious affiliation, and so on (Know Reset 2013). Other countries apply discretionary criteria during selection missions. The introduction of such criteria has received criticism from various organizations including the UNHCR, and are seen by migration scholars as infringing

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16 This has, among other reasons, led to the temporary suspension of processing asylum claims of Afghan nationals in Turkey in 2012 (see Suter 2014).
upon the normative requirements of the 1951 Geneva Convention (Nakashiba 2013a).17

Furthermore, the favouring of refugees from certain regions or nationalities has also been identified as a problem in several EU countries. Some of the countries favour nationalities for consequent resettlement of the refugees already present in the host country. For example, Finland’s annual quota is largely based on the communities of refugees already present in the country (Perrin & McNamarra 2013) Denmark is another example where refugees from certain regions or nationalities are prioritized. The vast majority of resettled refugees included in the annual Danish quota consist of Bhutanese, followed by Burmese and Congolese (European Resettlement Network n.d./h). Concern has also been raised about the tendency to use resettlement and other forms of humanitarian admissions as replacement for accepting the spontaneous arrivals of asylum seekers and refugees in some EU countries, although there is still no ample evidence to suggest resettlement-asylum correlation (Troeller 2002; Nakashiba 2013b; Hyndman & Giles 2011). The link between resettlement and asylum seeking is also mentioned by Bokshi (2013), who states that, in spite of the lack of clear evidence, there “seems to be a point at which an increasing number of asylum seekers impacts the government’s decision to engage in resettlement or vice versa”.

Finally, the emergence of intra-EU relocations18 as a ‘burden-sharing’ mechanism and as an expression of solidarity between EU member states has come to be seen as a competing instrument with resettlement and has raised concerns among traditional resettlement states such as Finland and Sweden. The funds (ERF, AMIF) indeed provide financial support both for resettlement and for intra-EU relocation programmes, and in some countries intra-EU relocations have been added under the

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17 Interestingly, a study conducted on Danish selection mission confirms the use of the integration criteria, but concludes, that in practice less people than anticipated were excluded on the basis of these criteria (Kohl 2015).

18 Intra-EU relocation involves the transfer of refugees from particular countries that experience refugee crisis to other countries committed to admitting refugees. While relocation is done in the name of solidarity and on a strictly voluntary basis, former Commissioner of Home Affairs, Cecilia Malmström, saw it as a useful tool in mainly two contexts: firstly, to alleviate Malta’s overcrowded situation, and secondly, to reduce the pressure on the asylum systems in Cyprus, Bulgaria, and Greece, due to the high number of Syrian asylum seekers (Malmström 2013). This practice is greatly debated between the EU member states. In 2010 and 2011, a total of 227 refugees were relocated from Malta to France, Germany, Luxembourg, Portugal, Slovenia and the UK (European resettlement Network n.d./g).
annual resettlement quota (while, in some cases, having relocation be put as part of the annual resettlement quota (European Resettlement Network n.d./g).
5. Concluding remarks

As this paper has shown, for a long time one of the European states’ dominating instruments in international refugee protection was ad hoc resettlement initiatives and other humanitarian admissions providing temporary shelter in different refugee crisis. Apart from that, a handful of EU member states also practiced a regular quota program. However, since 2000 both the UNHCR and the EU have made significant efforts to increase the number of EU resettlement countries and to raise the number of resettlement places in the European Union. This development can largely be separated into different stages: from closer cooperation between the UNHCR and the EU, to joint EU-UNHCR calls under a multilateral framework responding to both urgent and protracted refugee situations, to the very institutionalization of resettlement at an EU level by incorporating it as an external dimension of the Common European Asylum System (CEAS).

The impact of measures adopted by the EU—such as the introduction of financial incentives, the initiation of twinning projects, and the participation in multilateral operations—contributed significantly towards the goal of increasing resettlement places. Between 2008 and 2014, several of the new resettlement countries participated in resettlement missions through twinning projects in order to ascertain practical insights into how resettlement process is carried out, and the number of EU resettlement countries doubled (from 7 to 14). Moreover, a large number of members of the European parliament are, for one reason or the other, positive towards increasing the EU’s share of resettlement places.

That said, the number of refugees resettled has not even come close to the number of people in need of resettlement, despite the increased commitment by traditional and new resettlement states and substantial efforts made on a multilateral level. What is more, the largest share of resettlement places by far is still offered by the traditional resettlement countries—the USA, Canada and Australia—with the EU trailing at the bottom of the league. One reason for the European reluctance is, as stated above, the number of asylum applications, which is still significantly higher for European than for North American countries.

The future of resettlement in the European Union still remains unclear regarding whether it will be expanded in terms of the number of refugees resettled or if more EU
countries will adopt a resettlement programme. Irrespective of future developments, one of the EU’s key challenges in the years to come—with a view on the developments in the area of border control—will be to use resettlement as a means to ‘manage migration’ and to offer a legal channel into the EU for people in need of protection without simultaneously violating the right of ‘spontaneous asylum seekers’ to seek asylum by hindering their access to the territory.
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