



# ANOTHER STORY FROM THE "REFUGEE CRISIS"

Resettlement in Small Towns  
and Rural Areas in France

Matthieu TARDIS

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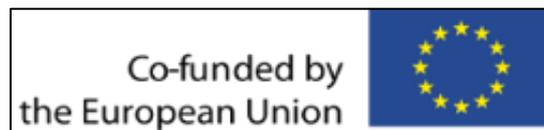
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Since September 2018, he has been co-ordinating Ifri's Observatory of Migration and Asylum which aims to provide French migration actors with a forum for exchange and expertise.

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# Summary

Since 2015, refugee resettlement programmes have grown significantly in Europe becoming a key component of European asylum strategy. In the current context marked by increased resettlement needs and the withdrawal of the United States from global resettlement, the success of resettlement in the EU is ever more important. Key to this success, and indeed to the sustainability of resettlement programmes, is local integration. Although national governments have full control over the selection and transfer procedure, integration is a complex process which involves a host of decision-making levels and actors, including local communities and refugees themselves.

Local actors therefore play a significant role in the resettlement and integration processes. And while the role these local actors is increasingly recognised in migration and asylum policies, particularly when there are large inflows, the focus has been primarily on large cities. Indeed, most migrants, including refugees, are located in urban areas. But, as more and more European countries are implementing dispersal policies (also called placement policies) for asylum seekers and refugees, small and medium sized cities are increasingly becoming safe havens for people in need of international protection. This is even more the case for resettlement programmes: as a legal and orderly pathway, resettlement allows States to decide precisely where to settle refugees. And many have decided to settle refugees in small communities.

This study focuses on local integration in small-sized communities in France. The focus on France is for several reasons. Not only has France scaled up its resettlement programmes, but it has also increasingly sought to distribute asylum seekers, refugees, and even migrants out of large cities, which are currently facing shortages of affordable housing. The dismantling of camps in Calais and Paris was the starting point of a new era for small cities and villages in the country. Many of them received migrants for the first time in 2015 and proved that they can be welcoming cities. At the same time, France is positioning itself as a new European leader in resettlement and is thus aiming to meet its 2018-2019 the resettlement quota.

## Resettlement in France in a nutshell

Resettlement has a long history in France but it was not until 2008 that France committed to receive an annual quota. A framework agreement signed with UNHCR included a resettlement programme with a target of 100 cases per year only on dossier basis (i.e. selecting refugees for resettlement via cases files, without conducting selection missions). This agreement is still ongoing. The launch of the EU resettlement programme based on the EU Council decision in July 2015 resulted in a major step for resettlement in France. Specifically, in 2017, France pledged to resettle 10,000 persons by October 2019, including 7,000 from the Middle East and 3,000 from Niger and Chad. France is now in the top 5 countries of resettlement according to UNHCR.

The increase in resettlement programmes has resulted in a rather complex system in which many actors are involved. Selection missions are carried out by the French asylum administration together with the Ministry of Interior Affairs. Reception and placement are under the responsibility of the Ministry of Interior Affairs, which has contracted more than 20 NGO service providers, which are in charge of providing housing and social assistance for one year. Moreover, the Ministry has enlisted the services of the Interministerial Delegation for Accommodation and Access to Housing (DIHAL) to manage the national housing system. The Interministerial Delegation for the Reception and Integration of Refugees has been entrusted with the overall coordination role for the reception of resettled refugees. Finally, State representatives at the local level (*préfets*) are tasked managing the resettlement programme at the local level for specific target numbers of refugees. Nonetheless, local elected authorities, such as municipalities and districts (*départements*), have no regulatory competence with regards to the reception and integration of resettled refugees.

In this new context, the permanent resettlement programme based on the UNHCR framework agreement does not benefit from the same political attention. Instead, it remains quite invisible within the overall French protection system. Within this programme, the reception and integration system relies on contracts between the Ministry of Interior Affairs and 5 NGO service providers that deliver housing and social assistance for a year.

There are plenty of challenges to address when it comes to receiving refugees in smaller communities. Small and medium sized towns are often less accustomed to refugees, and above all, they do not have the same human and financial resources as large cities to provide services adapted to this population's needs. The lack of opportunities, in particular job opportunities, affects the attractiveness of these areas for newcomers. On top of that, the continuous rise of the far right in France since the 1980s is often perceived as a political hurdle in sized cities and rural areas.

However, this study shows another picture altogether. Following interviews and field visits with some 40 practitioners in 14 *départements*, the study offers an alternative picture to the stereotypes usually associated with areas. Indeed, small towns and rural areas prove to be places of hospitality. Refugees in small towns are not perceived as anonymous newcomers. Instead, they quickly become new members of the local community and receive strong support from many local residents. Likewise, in order to address specific needs of the refugees, local actors are drivers of innovation who often manage to design new solutions in an informal fashion.

Of course, this positive image of the reception and integration of resettled refugees in small towns and rural areas should not obstruct the difficulties encountered. The study identifies several challenges.

The feeling of isolation and the lack of public transportation are the main challenges in these territories. Driving refugees to their administrative or medical appointments and even to stores can become a heavy burden for the social workers and volunteers. It also develops a feeling of dependency among refugees. Driving licences and access to a care are therefore key issues, both of which have a cost.

Access to healthcare is an issue in areas where there is a shortage of doctors and hospitals. More specifically, many rural areas fall short of specialist physicians, such as dentists. Language is another concern considering the low budgets allocated to interpretation services in hospitals and NGOs.

Learning French remains a priority for integration. Compulsory French classes have been offered with some flexibility, for instance by offering classes in the towns where the refugees live and being more sensitive to childcare issues. Additional classes are more problematic and rely on charity organisations and volunteers. But the latter do not necessarily have the required skills and support to offer classes of good quality.

Access to school is not perceived as problematic for young children who received a warm welcome in primary schools. The situation is more complex for adolescents, particularly for those above 16. Schools have different and sometimes contradictory practices when it comes to enrolment and class level assignment.

Access to employment is hindered by the lack of proficiency of French, trauma, health problems, age, or the presence of young children. But all these obstacles to employment are not specific to small towns and rural areas. On the contrary, these areas have several advantages. First, jobs are available in several sectors and constitute opportunities for refugees and local employers. Second, the volunteers and their local networks play a role in labour market integration. Volunteers often recommend refugees to employers in the area avoiding ordinary recruitment processes, which can be disadvantageous or discriminatory for refugees.

Access to employment highlights the strength of small towns and rural areas for the integration of refugees. The local population's high degree of mobilisation has proved to be a powerful driver for integration. Indeed, local citizens often mitigate the lack of services available and, most importantly, contribute to refugees' feeling of belonging in their new community. The other strength of small towns and rural areas is the greater communication existing between local actors. State representatives at the local level, locally-elected representatives, NGO service providers, and volunteer groups work together in partnership with a clear division of roles. Most notably, integration is a success when mayors are involved in the welcoming of refugees and when NGO services providers and volunteers groups find a constructive way of operating together.

However, this informal model needs support, and to a certain extent, needs to be institutionalised and harmonised in all parts of the French territory. Indeed, some concerns can be raised regarding the sustainability of this model and thus of resettlement in France. Considering the limited reception capacities of small towns, the number of "welcoming mayors" should be expanded in order to overcome potential reluctances. In that respect, State representatives at the local level and mayors that have already received refugees are the best ambassadors for the resettlement programmes. Moreover, mainstream social welfare services should be more involved with the integration of refugees in order to cushion the end of the assistance period provided for by dedicated NGOs. Increased involvement could also prevent cohesion issues from emerging later on. The study thus offers a series of concrete and easily implementable recommendations regarding the national and local management of resettlement programmes and the social support to refugees in small towns.

This study also highlights lessons to learn beyond resettlement programmes.

First of all, the study provides evidence that receiving refugees in small cities works. And what works and does not work should be taken into consideration when implementing dispersal and placement policies, including in the context of the reception of asylum seekers. Refugees may initially fear being in small towns and rural areas but they soon realise the advantages when it comes to the living conditions. Direct placement seems to increase the likelihood that refugees feel at home in these territories. Therefore, obstacles at the beginning of the asylum procedures which force them to remain in large cities - and often in slums - may decrease the likelihood that they will want to move to small towns and rural areas. Moreover, the study initiates a discussion on matching between the profiles of refugees and the opportunities offered by small towns. For example, refugees originally from urban areas may have more difficulty in adapting to rural areas in France. The size of the apartments available in these areas also makes them more suitable for families than for single people. It also seems that families with children are more easily accepted upon arrival by the local population. Finally, the least qualified refugees will have more opportunities to find work.

Secondly, larger cities can learn from small cities and rural areas. In these areas, citizens' involvement in refugee integration is key to the positive reception of refugees. They have created an effective model of integration whereby citizens provide these "little things" that help refugees acquire French cultural and social codes, therefore accelerating their integration. But this model does not have to be circumscribed to small towns and villages. It could be replicated in large cities at the level of neighbourhoods, where interpersonal relationships are still possible.

Finally, the study questions how challenges faced by refugees and to a larger extent by migrants are framed. Many obstacles to refugee integration in small towns and rural areas affect local populations all the same. Mobility and access to health and social services are also concerns for French nationals living in these territories. Likewise, access to housing is a common challenge for most inhabitants in large cities. Notwithstanding the specific needs and vulnerabilities of refugees, many of these issues should not only be perceived as "immigration problems". Instead, they present an opportunity to depart from the "us" and "them" paradigm and to support the idea that welcoming refugees can be beneficial for the whole community.



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# Foreword

When refugees arrive to European countries by means of resettlement and other legal pathways, local actors play a crucial role in facilitating integration. With the commitment of EU member states to resettle 50,000 refugees during 2018-2019, we have seen a tremendous growth in resettlement in Europe – which is played out in local communities. And, because of placement (also called dispersal) policies which specify the number of refugees to be received in each municipality or region across the national territory, an increasing number of local communities outside of major cities are receiving resettled refugees.

Many of these communities are small cities and rural areas, and many are welcoming refugees for the first time.

This is an overwhelmingly positive development, but it is also a new challenge. Host communities must be well-prepared to support refugees – to find affordable housing, help them secure social welfare and other support – and ultimately help them find employment and rebuild their lives. Strong preparation is also essential also for newly-arriving refugees. Indeed, preparation and cooperation between all of the stakeholders – at national, regional and local levels – and those involved during both pre-departure and post-arrival phases – is crucial for successful resettlement.

Smaller municipalities have unique advantages: housing is affordable; service providers are better-connected; and it's often easier to get to know your neighbours. Of course, they are not without their challenges: public transportation is often limited or non-existent; small cities are less diverse; mainstream service providers may be unfamiliar with resettlement. Still, as can be seen in this publication, many mayors in France and elsewhere in Europe have risen to the challenge and offered solidarity to newly arrived refugees coming through resettlement, as well as the asylum process, relocation, private sponsorship and other initiatives.

The SHARE Network has worked to engage and prepare these new actors for resettlement – through trainings, best-practice exchange, and research – and has found that there is a great deal of potential for growing welcoming communities in small-size cities and rural areas. And while mainstream media often emphasizes the challenges and the increasingly polarised debate on migration, this report seeks to offer a more nuanced picture: welcoming refugees in small communities comes with unique

challenges *and* opportunities. Indeed, local communities across France (and beyond) are establishing the grassroots partnerships needed in order to make European resettlement a success.

*By Petra Hueck, Director of ICMC Europe*

# Introduction

Since 2015, refugee resettlement schemes<sup>1</sup> have grown significantly in Europe to the point of becoming a key component of European asylum strategy. This is explained by a specific context related to the events of summer 2015: while measures to combat irregular migration have since then led to increased control of the European Union's external borders, the question has arisen of how to guarantee access to Europe for refugees and people who need protection.<sup>2</sup> Resettlement programmes are addressing this situation. In a context where the priority is to stop irregular arrivals on European shores, resettlement is the means for Member States to comply with their international commitments and to contribute to the global refugee protection regime.

## Resettlement: a European and international challenge

Since the summer of 2015, as arrivals in Greece started to grow exponentially, the EU committed to resettling 20,000 refugees from the Middle East.<sup>3</sup> Resettlement quickly came to be established as a bargaining tool with third countries with regard to migration. The EU-Turkey Statement of 16 March 2016, commonly known as the "EU-Turkey deal," is the standard model of co-operation sought by the Europeans. It includes a commitment to resettle 54,000 Syrian refugees from Turkey and to set up a Voluntary Humanitarian Admission Scheme.<sup>4</sup> Resettlement is also a point

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1. Resettlement consists of transferring refugees from a country of asylum to another State which has agreed to admit them and eventually grant them permanent residence.

2. Persecutions are understood here in the meaning of the Convention of 28 July 1951 Relating to the Status of Refugees. Serious threats refer to subsidiary protection as defined by Directive 2001/95/EU of the European Parliament and Council of 13 December 2011. The term refugee will be used in the rest of this study for people who are beneficiaries of refugee or subsidiary protection status. Many people arriving in France as part of resettlement schemes are granted subsidiary protection. They have the opportunity to challenge this decision and ask the National Court for Asylum Law to grant them refugee status.

3. EU Council Decision of 20 July 2015.

4. Statement by the EU Council and Turkey on 18 March 2016. This Statement provides for the readmission of non-refugee migrants to Turkey, as well as those seeking asylum in Greece. Turkey obtained a doubling in financial aid to improve the reception conditions for refugees (€ 6 billion), as well as a resumption in EU accession negotiations and visa liberalisation commitments for its nationals.

of discussion with African countries as part of migration partnerships.<sup>5</sup> More specifically, resettlement is at the centre of the scheme set up in Niger.<sup>6</sup>

In this area, figures count as much if not more than intentions. 24,800 refugees were resettled in the EU as part of the European programmes between 2015 and 2017, and 13,200 between September 2017 and September 2018, as part of the European Commission's new call to receive 50,000 refugees from the Middle East and the central Mediterranean route.<sup>7</sup> It is the highest number in Europe since the South-East Asian refugee crisis in the late 1970s.

With a substantial increase in the number of refugees in the past decade and an increase in protracted refugee situations, resettlement needs have never been greater. Those in need of resettlement were estimated at 1.2 million people in 2018 and 1.4 million in 2019 by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR).<sup>8</sup> Only 55,000 refugees were able to leave with UNCHR assistance.

Furthermore, the growing involvement of Europeans in these schemes has not been able to compensate for the withdrawal of the United States, where arrivals have been divided into four since 2017. Similarly, European priorities do not extend to populations who, although less present in the irregular arrivals to European shores (and hence who draw less attention to themselves), still have substantial needs, such as nationals from the Democratic Republic of Congo. As can be seen, the challenge of resettlement far exceeds solely European political issues. Resettlement is not just a factor in the fight against irregular migration to Europe; it is also a global issue.

## Local integration: the key to success in resettlement

Resettlement programmes are not only processes that identify, select and transfer people from one country to another. They also involve the reception and integration of refugees in the new country of asylum, aiming to set resettled refugees on the path to autonomy and citizenship.

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5. See M. Tardis, "European Union Partnerships with African Countries on Migration: A Common Issue with Conflicting Interests", *Notes de l'Ifri*, March 2018.

6. Resettlement is used to prevent refugees in Niger from continuing their journey to Europe and entering Libya. Similarly, the EU intends to resettle some of the refugees repatriated to Niger from Libyan detention centres.

7. European Commission, *Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions on the Delivery of the European Agenda on Migration*, COM (2017) 558 final, Brussels, 27 September 2017.

8. UNHCR, *Resettlement at a glance (January-December 2018)*, 27 March 2019.

In fact, resettlement schemes are often assessed in terms of refugee integration. Whatever scope is assigned to the concept of integration, its political impact is important because governments are worried about how the population may perceive the presence of refugees in society. In addition to the US withdrawal already mentioned, the sudden suspension of the Danish programme in 2017,<sup>9</sup> one of the oldest in Europe, emphasises that no resettlement programme can be taken for granted. The weakness of the EU's recent resettlement efforts is measured against a background of increasing suspicion among Europeans towards migration and a rise in populist identity parties.

Yet, although States have full control over the selection and transfer procedure, integration is a complex process which involves a whole host of decision-making levels and actors, including the refugees themselves and the local population, since a major driver of integration takes place at the local level. Local factors influence the refugees' pathways: available accommodation, level of medical infrastructure, education and training opportunities, structure of the job market, existence of a concentrated NGO-based network and the determination of local authorities, are all aspects that go beyond the mere scope of resettlement schemes and even asylum and migration policies.

Insofar as resettlement involves an inflow of refugees which is planned in advance, it is possible to pre-empt problems. This also means that it can be a testing ground for new forms of co-operation between the different institutional, civil and economic components of society.

## From cosmopolitan large cities to small rural towns

It is known that migration is primarily an urban phenomenon. According to the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), nearly two-thirds of migrants settle in metropolitan areas in most OECD countries compared to 58% of citizens by birth.<sup>10</sup>

Therefore, integration firstly occurs in large cities, particularly in national capitals. Migrants often find more public services, NGOs, and job opportunities, but above all networks of foreign communities that have been established there for a long time. This diversity of support, combined with greater acceptability by the local population, is an undeniable advantage of large European cities. In fact, these cosmopolitan cities are more ready to

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9. J.A. Thomsen, *Denmark no longer to automatically accept UN refugee resettlement quota*, Reuters, 20 December 2017 [www.reuters.com](http://www.reuters.com).

10. OECD, *Working Together for Local Integration of Migrants and Refugees*, April 2018.

welcome new migrants.<sup>11</sup> It is generally in these cities that far-right parties get their lowest votes. Because of this openness to diversity, local authorities are inclined to invest in integrating new arrivals and reducing their social disadvantages.

The OECD data also underline that asylum seekers are on average less concentrated in urban areas and that the share of this population tends to increase in rural areas.<sup>12</sup> Although this finding does not apply to all OECD countries,<sup>13</sup> it does resonate with the territorial distribution policies implemented in many countries. Unlike for migrants who come for family or work reasons, freedom of movement for asylum seekers can be regulated or determined, if they wish to benefit from material reception conditions provided by the States. Because of difficulties in finding accommodation solutions in large cities, governments are tempted to send asylum seekers to areas where housing is available and affordable, particularly during periods of high asylum applications.

As a legal and organised pathway, resettlement allows States to decide precisely where to settle refugees. Resettlement provides a means to distribute them throughout the country. In the European context, characterised since 2015, both by an increase in spontaneous arrivals of asylum seekers and a rise in resettlement schemes, many States have chosen to receive these people in small and medium towns. It is possible to measure the difference with large European cities. These small and medium towns are often less accustomed to this population, and above all, do not have the same human and financial resources as large cities to provide services adapted to this population's needs. The reception and integration of refugees in small and medium towns is consequently a nascent topic in the EU.

Whereas the role of towns is increasingly recognised in migration and asylum policies, particularly when there are large inflows, the focus has only been on large cities. These cities have sufficient power to have a political, sometimes critical, voice on these topics and know how to organise networks at the European level.<sup>14</sup> Other initiatives, like the OECD's Champion Mayors for Inclusive Growth<sup>15</sup> or the Urban Agenda for the EU<sup>16</sup> focus on integration governance at local level, but primarily involve large cities. In this context,

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11. *Ibidem*.

12. *Ibidem*.

13. The report emphasises that asylum seekers are particularly concentrated in cities in the United Kingdom and Latvia, whereas receiving asylum seekers is more of a rural phenomenon in Belgium, Ireland and Norway.

14. See Eurocities migration and integration working group: [www.eurocities.eu](http://www.eurocities.eu).

15. [www.oecd-inclusive.com](http://www.oecd-inclusive.com).

16. <https://ec.europa.eu>.

small towns have largely gone unstudied<sup>17</sup> and have fewer opportunities to access networks and share experiences with their European counterparts.<sup>18</sup>

## France as a case study

There are as many resettlement programmes as Member States participating in the European Resettlement Programme. Each State is free to organise the reception and integration of refugees as it chooses. Furthermore, the administrative organisations vary greatly from one country to another. The competences of the actors who work with the resettled refugees are difficult to compare from one country to another. The towns and regions do not have the same powers and resources in terms of reception and integration policies. The same applies to the roles entrusted to NGOs. Because of these variations, which make any comparison difficult, this study does not seek to cover several European countries. The choice was made instead to focus on a single national case in order to permit a more in-depth qualitative analysis of the initiatives and reception experiences of refugees in small towns.

France has some interesting characteristics in terms of the objectives of this study. France is the second largest economy in the EU and is also the largest country. The diversity in its geography, including its rural areas, makes it possible to consider the reception of refugees in small towns in a variety of different environments. Furthermore, although the number of asylum seekers has been continually growing since 2014 and there are many challenges to meet to improve reception conditions for this population, France is not dealing with an emergency on the same scale as its German and Italian neighbours. Finally, France still has significant political influence within the EU. It has confirmed its commitment to develop resettlement in Europe and intends to make it a key part of its asylum policy.<sup>19</sup> France chairs the Core Group for Enhanced Resettlement and Complementary Pathways along the Central Mediterranean Route. This unprecedented *leadership* by France on resettlement issues is important in a context where other countries are withdrawing from this sustainable solution. It will only be sustainable if the French resettlement scheme is perceived as a success.

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17. The OECD study referred to above, looks at data from 72 towns, including one single small town in Germany (Altena [*sic:*] Altena). Research projects are underway in France to further analyse the reception of migrants and refugees in small and medium towns.

18. The Council of European Municipalities and Regions (CEMR) is an exception. It brings together local authorities of all sizes. However, small towns often lack financial resources to actively participate in these European exchanges.

19. Le Monde, *Macron s'engage à accueillir 10,000 réfugiés d'ici à 2019*, 9 October 2017 [www.lemonde.fr](http://www.lemonde.fr).

## The scope of the study

The objective of this study is to identify the challenges encountered and the strategies adopted by the NGO service providers and local authorities in supporting resettled refugees in France. The study aims to highlight the constraints, but also the opportunities, posed by reception in small towns and rural areas. It intends to address topics which are not specific to small towns, but which can arise differently there, such as:

- organisation of initial reception;
- access to medical care;
- access to education and training;
- learning French;
- access to housing;
- labour market integration;
- co-operation with local politicians and municipal services; and
- relationship and co-operation with the local population.

There is little literature available on these issues in France, as the issue is still fairly new. Also, the study is mainly based on a series of interviews conducted between September and November 2018. 34 interviews were conducted with institutional actors, NGO service providers, volunteer groups and local politicians.<sup>20</sup> We tried to hold these discussions with various actors with reference to their method and area of intervention. These actors are located in 14 *départements*<sup>21</sup> in mainland France. Most interviews with people outside of Paris were conducted by telephone. However, two field visits were made to the Corrèze and Deux-Sèvres *départements* in November 2018. Finally, a round table discussion was organised on 20 November 2018 in Paris as part of the SHARE Integration project. Its purpose was to present the initial conclusions of this study and to initiate collective thinking about courses of action to take to improve the reception of resettled refugees in small towns.

The study is not meant to be exhaustive. Although we have tried to contact actors who could embody the variety of interventions and French regions, they cannot be considered as a representative sample. However, despite these differences, we observed strong similarities in the issues

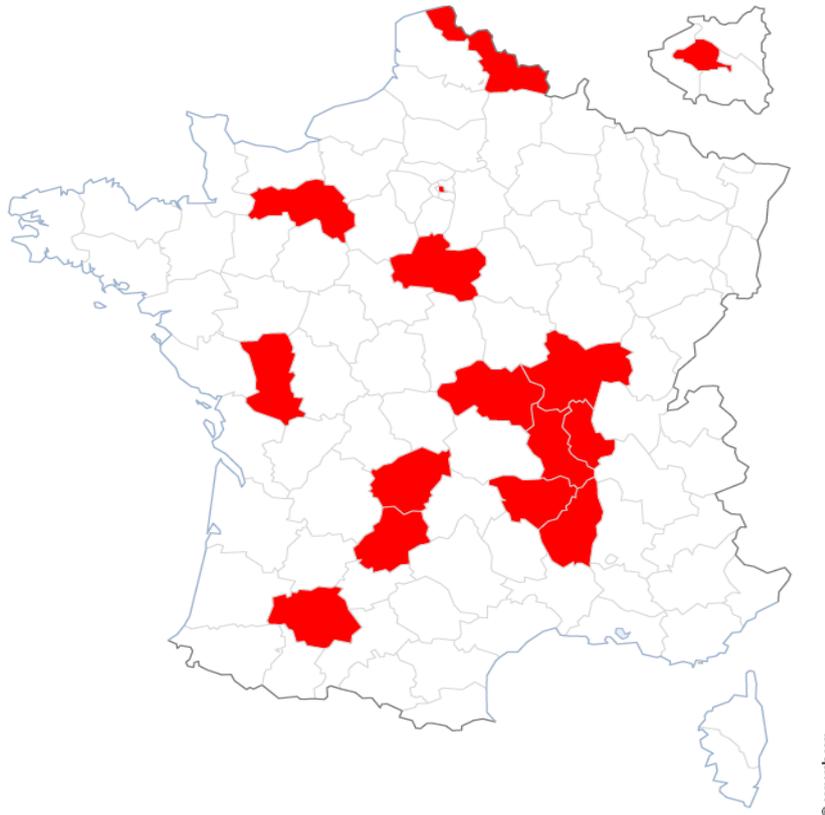
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20. See the list of interviews in the appendix.

21. Mainland France is divided into 96 *départements*, to which must be added 5 overseas *départements*. *Départements* are both administrative divisions, where the State is represented by *préfectures*, and local authorities with an elected council and specific powers.

raised, opportunities highlighted and actual experiences. These similarities provide conclusions that we hope will resonate throughout France and possibly in other European countries.

**Map 1: Departments where the interviewed actors operate**



The first part will present the different resettlement schemes in France, as well as the actors implementing them. The second part will describe the gradual involvement of small towns in the reception and integration process before analysing, in a third part, the challenges that these areas face in meeting the refugees' needs.

## What is a small town?

The concept of a town and city does not have an official definition. The municipality (*commune*) is the smallest and oldest French administrative sub-division. A municipality is defined by its governance (a municipal council elected by universal suffrage, a mayor and his/her deputies from the council) and its powers. As of 1 January 2017, France (mainland and overseas) had 35,498 municipalities. Compared to its European neighbours, France appears to be a country of towns, or more precisely villages, since 85% of towns have less than 2,000 inhabitants. Although more than 1,000 municipalities have disappeared since 2015, due to mergers between them, France has three times more municipalities than Germany and 4.5 times more than Italy. All French municipalities have an identical legal status regardless of their size or other specific characteristics. This rule has exceptions. They concern the overseas municipalities,<sup>22</sup> Paris, Aix-Marseille, Lyon<sup>23</sup> and the 19 large French cities awarded metropolitan status.<sup>24</sup> At the other end of the spectrum, rural municipalities are defined for financial allocation purposes as municipalities with a population that does not exceed 2,000 inhabitants. Therefore, apart from rural municipalities and metropolitan areas, there is no official classification for French municipalities according to their population.

Nevertheless, cities and towns have formed co-operation and influence networks according to the size of their population. The Association of French Small Towns brings together mayors of towns with 2,500 to 25,000 inhabitants. The Association of French Towns aims to represent medium towns. According to its by-law, towns with 15,000 to 100,000 inhabitants can be members. The Association of Rural Mayors of France brings together municipalities with fewer than 3,500 inhabitants. Conversely, the French Urban Association, a network of large French cities, does not specify the minimum population of member cities.

Finally, if you refer to geographers' work, there is no unanimous definition of small and medium towns in France or Europe. The upper threshold of a small town can range from 20,000 to 50,000 inhabitants. It is interesting to emphasise that geographers highlight the functional characteristics of a town to establish a hierarchy between them. In fact, small and medium town are often defined in comparison to their relations with the large cities. With regard to small towns, geographers often characterise them according to their location in relation to large cities. So, we find small "suburban" towns integrated into an urban metropolitan fabric; small peri-urban towns, often former market

towns caught up by urbanisation, without building continuity; and small isolated towns, i.e. population centres which polarise bigger or smaller areas (10 to 20 km).

This study does not intend to put forward a definition that legislators, statisticians and demographers have not sought to draw up. Although the SHARE Integration project aims to support small and medium towns, it was found to be more effective for several reasons to focus this study on the smallest towns, often villages far from major urban centres. They encounter similar challenges in terms of reception and integration that we will develop further on. The characteristics of the medium towns studied seemed less homogeneous and would merit more extensive field research than was possible to carry out as part of this project. More pragmatically, we also realised that NGOs managing projects that support resettled refugees often accommodate them across several municipalities in the same area around an urban centre. Therefore, the level of intervention is more often the district than the municipality.

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22. These cities will not be examined in this study insofar as they do not receive resettled refugees.

23. The three cities have a special status with additional powers compared to other communes.

24. Bordeaux, Brest, Clermont-Ferrand, Dijon, Grenoble, Lille, Metz, Montpellier, Nancy, Nantes, Nice, Orleans, Rennes, Rouen, Saint-Etienne, Strasbourg, Toulouse, Tours, Toulon. This status, created in 2010, recognises additional powers in planning and economic, ecological, educational, cultural and social development.



# Resettlement in France: still a tenuous development

Resettlement has a long history in France. From the Hungarians in 1956 to South-East Asian refugees in the 1970s and 1980s, France has contributed to international efforts to share responsibility. The development of resettlement since 2015 is part of the same approach, particularly with regard to the situation of Syrian refugees. The challenge now is the sustainability of resettlement beyond international crises to maintain expertise within French institutions and NGOs.

## Increase in resettlement programmes in France

In 2008, France joined the club of resettlement countries. A framework agreement was signed between the French government and UNHCR including, among other things, a commitment to investigate about 100 resettlement cases per year. The same year, France launched a humanitarian admission programme which received nearly 1,200 Iraqis until 2012.<sup>25</sup>

The framework agreement with UNHCR is still in effect. It provides for a selection of dossiers based on cases referred to the Ministry of Interior by UNHCR. Neither the framework agreement, nor other public documents specify France's selection criteria. Practice shows that France takes in particularly vulnerable people, some of whom have severe medical conditions.<sup>26</sup> 150 people are received on average every year as part of this resettlement scheme. It is characterised by the wide variety of the beneficiaries' nationalities.

This programme paved the way for *ad hoc* programmes which have multiplied since the EU Council's decision of 20 July 2015. An initial programme to receive 500 Syrian refugees was launched in 2014 and then renewed in 2015. It was then integrated into the French quotas set by the EU in the summer of 2015. France then committed to resettling 2,375 Syrian

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25. France terre d'asile, "Quel avenir pour les réfugiés irakiens en France?", *Les cahiers du social*, No. 25, February 2010.

26. French contact point for the European Migration Network, *Programmes de réinstallation et d'admission humanitaire en France*, June 2016.

and Palestinian refugees from Syria. This quota was increased by an additional 6,000 people following the EU-Turkey Statement in March 2016. Finally, a bilateral agreement with Lebanon added 2,000 refugees to France's commitments.

The government formed after the spring 2017 elections renewed France's commitment. In October 2017, the slate was wiped clean<sup>27</sup> but the French President announced the resettlement of 10,000 refugees by autumn 2019 as part of the European Commission's new call in September 2017.<sup>28</sup> This time, the targets were split between Syrian refugees from the Middle East (7,000 people) and refugees coming via the Central Mediterranean route (3,000 people).

The selection procedure is fundamentally different from that of the permanent resettlement scheme. UNHCR still identifies refugees in need of resettlement and puts the cases forward to the French authorities. Selection missions are then conducted jointly with officials from the French Office for the Protection of Refugees and Stateless Persons (Ofpra) and the Ministry of Interior to ensure the candidates' eligibility in terms of French qualification criteria for international protection, to assess their vulnerability and to carry out public security checks.<sup>29</sup> The selected refugees then have a five-hour cultural orientation session conducted on France's behalf by the International Organization for Migration (IOM).

This programme has led to increased arrivals in France. 7,353 refugees were selected from December 2017 to January 2019. 5,403 refugees have actually arrived in France, including 4,472 Syrians and 931 sub-Saharan refugees.<sup>30</sup> The objectives are therefore achievable by October 2019, if the bottom-up implementation of the scheme is taken into account. However, there is an imbalance in the execution of the plan between its Syrian and sub-Saharan components. The latter experience more difficulties in terms of selection, transfer, and as we will see later on, reception in the country.

Hence, resettlement seems to be established in the French asylum landscape. The Act of 10 September 2018 introduced resettlement for the first time into the Code Governing the Entrance and Residence of Foreign Nationals and the Right to Asylum (Cedesa), but it remains a possibility and not an obligation.<sup>31</sup> Despite these recent developments, resettlement

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27. According to the European Commission, 1,965 refugees were resettled in France on 4 September 2017 as part of the 20 June 2015 decision and the Statement with Turkey.

28. *Le Monde*, *op.cit.*

29. Selection missions are conducted in Lebanon, Jordan, Turkey, Niger and Chad.

30. Figures provided by the Interministerial Delegation for the Reception and Integration of Refugees (Diair:).

31. Article 7 of Law No. 2018-778 of 10 September 2018 for controlled migration, an effective right of asylum and a successful integration.

remains a tenuous mechanism whose objectives and methods are not covered by any legal document. At best, it is organised by way of ministerial circulars or directions. Resettlement is therefore subject to the vagaries of the moment. It can be ended without any parliamentary or public debate. The expertise and practices developed for more than ten years in France would then be lost.

### Resettlement Programmes in France

Programme	Annual resettlement programme	EU Resettlement Scheme		
<b>Identification and selection of refugees</b>		Syrian programme in the Middle East	EU-Turkey Statement	Sub-Saharan programme
	Identified and referred by UNHCR (only on dossier), selected by the Ministry of the Interior	Identified and referred by UNHCR, interviewed by Ofpra during selection missions	Identified by Turkey with UNHCR referrals and interviewed by Ofpra during selection missions	Identified and referred by UNHCR, interviewed by Ofpra during selection missions
<b>Nationalities</b>	Various nationalities	Syrians and Palestinians ex-Syria in Lebanon and Jordan	Syrians in Turkey	Various nationalities
<b>Legal status</b>	Refugee status	Refugee status or subsidiary protection		
<b>Quota</b>	100 cases annually	7,000 (2017-2019)		3,000 (2017-2019)

## Humanitarian corridors: a French private sponsorship programme<sup>32</sup>

A complementary pathway for refugee admission in France has experienced strong growth since 2014. A memorandum from the Ministers of Interior and Foreign Affairs in August 2014 allowed the French consulates in Erbil and Baghdad to issue visas to Iraqis from minorities “fearing serious threat or personal persecution, who have close family in France or strong ties with France or are in a situation of specific vulnerability.” These people were then cared for by members of their family or faith-based groups. This scheme grew in importance and was then opened up to Syrian refugees of all faiths. More than 4,000 people were granted humanitarian visas in 2016, including 2,700 Syrians and 1,300 Iraqis.

A step was taken in structuring this initiative with the Protocol for Humanitarian Corridors signed on 14 March 2017 between the Ministry of Interior, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and five NGOs (Community of Sant’Egidio, Federation of Protestant Mutual Aid, Protestant Federation of France, Bishops’ Conference of France and Secours catholique-Caritas France). This protocol allows for the government to issue humanitarian visas to 500 refugees and people in need of international protection from Syria and Iraq coming from Lebanon. The transfer, accommodation, reception and integration in France are fully supported by groups of citizens under the auspices and co-ordination of the five partner NGOs.

The issues raised by humanitarian corridors share similarities with those described in this study on receiving resettled refugees in small towns, as the majority of receptions have taken place there. Similarly, these receptions are naturally based on the significant involvement of volunteers in refugees’ daily lives, which is also a characteristic feature of the reception of resettled refugees in small towns.

## “Silo” management

The launch of the permanent resettlement scheme and the Iraqi humanitarian admission programme in 2008 was a time for collective

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32. For more information on the private sponsorship of refugees in France, see: European Resettlement Network, *Feasibility Study – Towards a model of private sponsorship in France*, April 2018.

learning for the various French actors involved in the asylum sector, from the Ministry of Interior to the NGO service providers, via the French Office for the Protection of Refugees and Stateless Persons (Ofpra) and the French Office of Immigration and Integration (Ofii).

Failures were noted as resulting from a lack of co-ordination and poor management of the scheme.<sup>33</sup> With the subsequent upscaling of European resettlement schemes, the authorities introduced more detailed management of resettlement involving various actors at the national and local levels.<sup>34</sup> The number of refugees received, but also Ofpra's selection missions and the grouped arrivals of refugees, have been positive factors in implementing the schemes. The improved visibility of resettlement is also the result of attention now being paid to this protection tool at the highest level of the French government.

The European resettlement schemes fall under the Ministry of Interior's responsibility, more specifically of its Directorate-General for Foreign Nationals in France (DGEF). The latter approves the list of selected refugees and co-ordinates their arrival in France. It is also responsible for agreements with the NGO service providers who accommodate and assist the refugees with financial support from the European Commission's Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF). The DGEF has enlisted the services of the Interministerial Delegation for Accommodation and Access to Housing (Dihal) to manage the national housing system for resettled refugees and co-ordinate the NGO service providers selected for this purpose. Dihal co-ordinates the NGO service providers, sends on available accommodation, finalises the monthly lists of arrivals and forwards them to the NGOs. Finally, the Interministerial Delegation for the Reception and Integration of Refugees (Diair), which was appointed in 2018, has been entrusted with an overall co-ordination role for the reception of resettled refugees. According to its mission statement of 3 May 2018, it is responsible for guaranteeing the smooth-running of European resettlement programmes, ensuring compliance with France's objectives and co-ordinating initiatives undertaken by the various actors. This partnership governance of resettlement results in a monthly steering committee meeting which brings together the DGEF, Dihal and Diair.

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33. See the contact point for the European Migration Network, *op.cit.*, Forum réfugiés-Cosi, France terre d'asile and ICMC Europe, *La réinstallation des réfugiés en France: état des lieux et voies d'amélioration*, June 2015.

34. Ministry of the Interior and the Ministry of Housing and Sustainable Habitat, information from 23 May 2016 on the implementation of Syrian refugee resettlement operations and the mobilisation of accommodation necessary for this reception.

In addition to this national management, there is co-ordination with local actors, particularly with local state authorities. Migrant co-ordinators have been appointed in each *région* and *département* in mainland France. These co-ordinators are part of the prefectural services, most often the Departmental Directorates for Social Cohesion and Protection of the Population (DDCSPP). They are mainly responsible for the proper implementation of European resettlement schemes in their area. More specifically, they co-ordinate the actions of various local actors and are involved in acquiring housing along with NGO service providers. They also have an important role in informing local politicians about resettlement and encouraging them to agree to receive refugees in their municipality. Finally, resettlement co-ordinators were appointed in the main public services, particularly those responsible for family allowances and health insurance. The objective is to facilitate and accelerate procedures to access social benefits when refugees arrive in the area.

This area management is a key component in European resettlement schemes that we will describe later on. But it is important to emphasize at this stage that devolved authorities, like the departmental council and towns, do not have a direct role in the reception of resettled refugees. Like the asylum seekers reception policy, resettlement is a government policy, a part of whose implementation is delegated to NGO service providers and not to local authorities. Having said that, the government is trying to combine vertical management, national institutions to migrant co-ordinators and NGOs, and horizontal management within the regions, which includes all relevant actors in the *département*. This simultaneous vertical and horizontal management is an innovation in governance methods on asylum and migration issues in France.

The paradox is that these advances in terms of resettlement management do not benefit the permanent resettlement scheme at all. Lacking the same political attention, the permanent scheme has not experienced any change in its management despite its failures, highlighted by the NGOs.<sup>35</sup> Dihal and Diair are not involved in its implementation. The programme has been a partnership between the DGEF and the agreed NGO service providers since the beginning of the 2010s. The local actors are often unaware of the arrival of refugees via this pathway and therefore do not follow the same procedure as for refugees from the European programmes. The steering committees organised between the national authorities, migrant co-ordinators and NGOs do not deal with the implementation of this annual scheme.

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35. Forum réfugiés-Cosi, France terre d'asile and ICMC Europe, *op.cit.*

Consequently, the recurring difficulties of this scheme are never dealt with. These refugees have to follow the same procedure as asylum seekers: get an appointment with a one-stop-shop for asylum applications, send their asylum application to Ofpra and be called for an interview. Pending recognition of refugee status, their visa does not allow them to access subsistence allowance (RSA) and to work. This further delays their path to integration in France.<sup>36</sup>

As can be seen, the various resettlement schemes have been implemented independently which does not enable the permanent scheme to benefit from the good practices and innovations of the European programmes. This observation can be extended to the entire French asylum seeker and refugee reception system. There is little relationship between these different reception systems which nevertheless mobilise the same institutional and NGO actors among populations with similar needs. It is worrying that the European resettlement programmes are more designed as temporary projects and not as a complementary stage in the development of the French reception and integration system.

## Increase in actors involved in the reception of resettled refugees

Since the creation of the national reception system in the 1970s, the authorities have entrusted the management of accommodation facilities and support of asylum seekers and refugees to NGOs. These NGOs professionalized their operations in the 1990s and 2000s. Organisations like Adoma, Coallia, France terre d'asile and Forum réfugiés-Cosi are now the main actors in the French asylum landscape, based on a payroll rather than on volunteers, and mainly financed by national or European public funds.

The public authorities naturally turned to these organisations when launching the resettlement operations in 2008. Initially cared for in reception centres for asylum seekers (Cada), it quickly became necessary to provide dedicated facilities for refugees resettled as part of the permanent programme. Since 2010, France terre d'asile and Forum réfugiés-Cosi have been providing services for this population in the Paris area, Deux-Sèvres and Rhône *départements*. These NGOs were then followed by Adoma in Belfort, Entraide Pierre Valdo in Haute-Loire and Isard Cos in Pyrénées-Atlantiques.<sup>37</sup> They provide about 100 places either in direct accommodation

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36. See the table summarising national and local management of resettlement schemes at the end of this study.

37. These projects receive funding from AMIF and the Ministry of the Interior.

on a transferable-lease basis<sup>38</sup> or in temporary accommodation. Care and support in the integration pathway generally lasts a year.

When the Syrian refugee resettlement operations started, the so-called "historical" partner NGOs were asked by the Ministry of Interior to take charge of the reception and support of these people. However, with the increased reception operations following the Statement with Turkey, these actors could not fulfil all the reception needs quickly. In response, new NGO service providers began offering their services by responding to a specific call for proposals from the European Union's Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF). These organisations, like France Horizon, Groupe SOS, Aurore or Viltais, come from the social inclusion sector. They generally already monitored refugees or other migrants in their social welfare systems, but many of them started to open dedicated facilities for these populations in 2015, when the migrant camps in Calais and Paris were evacuated. Resettlement provided an opportunity for these organisations to consolidate their activities in the immigration and asylum sectors.

The NGO service providers offer similar services. These include one-year refugee care plans, direct accommodation with a transferable lease, assistance in accessing social benefits and individualised social support. A team of social workers is responsible for support and covers a larger or smaller area depending on the dispersal of the accommodation. The NGOs receive a fixed sum of € 4,000 per refugee from AMIF.

The increase in Ofpra's selection missions in Turkey, Lebanon, Jordan, Niger and Chad ramped up the pressure on NGO service providers who were struggling to acquire sufficient accommodation in the social and private housing sector. This development could have resulted in increased waiting time for refugees in the countries of first asylum. This led the authorities to change the refugee placement procedure. Before April 2018, NGO service providers sent their rental availability to Dihal, which then decided which refugees to transfer to France. Now, Dihal sends the list of arrivals to the service providers who have three to four weeks to find accommodation.

Furthermore, the authorities have also expanded the number of service providers, this time enlisting actors who help disadvantaged people find housing. Last but not least, the first arrivals of sub-Saharan refugees in December 2017 ushered in a new reception procedure for this population. They are now received in transit centres spread throughout France for a period of four months before being rehoused and monitored by NGOs for a

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38. The transferable lease is an integration method enabling vulnerable households to become tenants. The lease agreement is first signed by the NGO and is then transferred over to the household when they have the necessary means to pay the rent.

further eight months. Although the need to carry out resettlements quickly explains this development in procedures, it is also often emphasised that sub-Saharan refugees are less autonomous than Syrian refugees. For this reason, they need more "intensive" support in collective centres during their first few months in France.<sup>39</sup>

There are now 21 service providers who work with refugees resettled throughout France. Each one is committed to fulfilling the intake objectives for the Syrian and sub-Saharan refugees.<sup>40</sup>

This increase in service providers has had the effect of creating competition between them to acquire accommodation in the same *département*. This could encourage *préfectures* or the DDCSPPs to better monitor the location of reception facilities for resettled refugees, particularly in rural areas and small towns, to prevent the politicians of these communes from being approached too often.

Local authorities also have a preference for NGO service providers that they have already co-operated with as part of social inclusion schemes or the reception of asylum seekers. These local NGOs also have a more detailed knowledge of these areas and access to the support networks in place there. But these NGOs do not always have the ability to manage the administrative and financial bureaucracy of European funds. Consequently, new types of partnerships are emerging under the leadership of Entraide Pierre Valdo. This NGO works in partnership with several diaconates that are members of the Federation of Protestant Mutual Aid. The diaconates are in charge of receiving and supporting the refugees in their area of operation, while Entraide Pierre Valdo is responsible for the co-ordination and the administrative and financial follow-up as part of AMIF. This model is being replicated outside the Protestant network with the NGOs Les chemins singuliers in Corrèze and Regar in Gers. It is proving advantageous in covering an ever-growing number of areas, particularly rural areas and small towns, which are a priority for national authorities to implement resettlement schemes.

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39. The fixed sum is increasing to € 6,000 per refugee.

40. See the list of NGO service providers and their commitments at the end of the study.



# Small towns, a safe haven for refugees in France

The upscaling of resettlement in France has encouraged the authorities to provide a placement policy for refugees. Tensions regarding the reception of migrant populations in large cities made it necessary to rethink and improve distribution across France. This is how small towns have gradually become reception areas for refugees. However, this refugee dispersal policy is not specific to resettlement. It is more broadly one of the priorities of the reception policy for French asylum seekers and refugees.

## Distribution across France: a priority of asylum policy

2015 was a turning point in France's asylum policy. The authorities, like the NGOs, were in general agreement that the French asylum system was "on the verge of collapse." The conclusion was a lack of accommodation for asylum seekers. The government's priority was then to create accommodation facilities for asylum seekers. These doubled in six years to reach 86,510 places by the end of 2018.

This unprecedented effort regarding France's reception capacity raised the issue of where to locate these new accommodation facilities. So, the government's response was to distribute asylum seekers better throughout France to avoid a concentration in the large cities, particularly in the Paris area, which is experiencing a severe housing crisis.

The government then favoured opening centres in towns where accommodation was more available and cheaper. The largest number of accommodation facilities for asylum seekers opened in the regions of the southwest of France. This national scheme was accompanied by "top-down" guidance for asylum seekers. When registering their asylum application, the French Office of Immigration and Integration (Ofii) has to make an offer of accommodation and then an offer of housing. If the asylum seeker refuses, they lose the subsistence allowance benefit allocated during the asylum procedure. The Act of 10 September 2018 goes even further in this regionalisation of the reception system. The Act establishes a residency requirement for asylum seekers, who cannot leave the region to which they have been sent without Ofii's authorisation.

Opening reception centres could not be the only policy measure to address the accommodation problem in France. Indeed, recognised refugees need to find housing opportunities in order to be able to leave reception centres and leave the accommodation to new asylum seekers. As of 2015, the government planned to mobilise 5,000 places for refugees and to open 500 places in reception centres for refugees (CPH).<sup>41</sup> This objective became the authorities' main priority after 2017. Hence, a ministerial direction of 12 December 2017<sup>42</sup> asked *préfets* to mobilise 20,000 accommodation places for refugees by the end of 2018. This ministerial direction set out these objectives regionally depending on the pressure placed on the different reception systems. Finally, 3,000 new CPH places are planned by the end of 2019, bringing the total number of places to 5,200.

However, the situation of migrants on the streets led the authorities to find emergency solutions. Due to the deterioration and visibility of the camps in Calais and Paris, the government decided to hastily open around a hundred temporary accommodation centres called reception and orientation centres (CAO). From October 2015, 119 reception and orientation centres (CAO) opened throughout France with the objective to offer temporary accommodation to the Calais migrants.<sup>43</sup> These centres mainly opened in small towns and rural areas, unaccustomed to receiving foreign populations, but where free buildings were quickly mobilised. The CAOs played a key part in the final dismantling of the Calais camp which had housed nearly 10,000 people in October 2016. The CAOs also received thousands of migrants coming from the Paris camps. Gradually, the CAOs were established in the French countryside. At the end of January 2017, 310 CAOs were located in 84 departments, receiving nearly 10,000 people. Between October 2015 and January 2017, more than 17,000 people passed through one of these facilities.<sup>44</sup>

It is not possible to analyse the reception of refugees resettled in small towns without revisiting this episode. In fact, the Calais migrants, often commonly called the "Calaisiens" by the populations who received them, showed that small towns and rural areas could become reception areas. They

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41. The reception centre for refugees (CPH) are reception centres for recognised refugees where they can be housed for up to a year.

42. Ministry of Interior and the Ministry of Territorial Cohesion, Ministerial Direction of 12 December 2017 on Relocating Beneficiaries of International Protection.

43. Memorandum of 9 November 2015 from the Ministry of Interior and the Ministry of Housing on Creating Emergency Shelters for the Calais Migrants.

44. Ministry of Interior and Ministry of Housing and Sustainable Habitat, *Accueil et orientation des migrants: Bruno Le Roux et Emmanuelle Cosse assurent les associations de leur vigilance sur la situation de Calais et font le point de situation sur les CAO et les CAOMI*, 30 January 2017. The CAOs were closed or gradually turned into CADAs or emergency accommodation for asylum seekers (Huda). There should be no CAOs by the first half of 2020.

paved the way for resettled refugees. They have also paved the way for refugees arriving via humanitarian corridors, the majority of whom are hosted in small towns and rural areas.<sup>45</sup> Several lessons have been learned from this episode. Firstly, worry and hostility can be tackled quickly when the population is informed that the migrants and refugees are arriving as part of a care and support scheme conducted by social workers. Conversely, a strong show of support was observed from the population mobilised to help these migrants. These groups of volunteers are still active. They have especially maintained their engagement with the resettled refugees. Admittedly, local and national politicians have expressed their opposition to the policy of opening centres imposed by the government, but this movement did not flourish. The government learned a second lesson: the need for greater consultation with local elected representatives on reception policies for migrant populations. These lessons will, as we will see, be crucial for the success of resettlement schemes.

## The regionalisation of the resettlement scheme

The ministerial direction of 12 December 2017 stipulates that, out of the 20,000 dwellings that *préfets* have to mobilise for refugees, 2,500 are intended for beneficiaries of European resettlement programmes. The objectives were then applied regionally by a ministerial direction from the Interministerial Delegation for the Reception and Integration of Refugees dated 4 June 2018.<sup>46</sup> The distribution of housing for resettled refugees was based on four criteria: the region's population, efforts already made to receive refugees, pressure on the housing market and the region's GDP. Only Ile-de-France and Corsica were excluded from the housing distribution scheme.

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<sup>45</sup> See the assessment report produced by the five NGOs in the humanitarian corridor programme. Secours catholique – Caritas France, *Hébergement citoyen des personnes réfugiées – témoignage des collectifs d'accueil et des personnes accueillies dans le cadre du projet couloirs humanitaires*, 2018.

<sup>46</sup> Interministerial Delegation for the Reception and Integration of Refugees, Ministerial Direction of 4 June 2018 on the Mobilisation of Housing for Resettled Refugees.

**Map 2: Number of dwellings to be mobilised by region (2018-2019)**



This ministerial direction is a roadmap for the national managers (Diair, Dihal and DGEF), the NGO service providers, and especially the regional prefects. The latter are responsible for determining the distribution by *département* and then by municipalities for refugees to settle in. The national institutions, like Dihal and Diair, however, deny wanting to plan the distribution of refugees throughout France. They only want each *département* to contribute to receiving refugees. Therefore, they leave the local representatives of the State with considerable room for manoeuvre. They consider that the *préfets* are in the best position to know the most appropriate regional balances according to the specific characteristics and local dynamics. In other words, the local authorities must identify the communes most likely to receive refugees.

The French placement system is not a top-down system. The authorities want towns with fewer than 10,000 inhabitants to be volunteers or at least to agree to host resettled refugees, even if it is a state-funded system and the care is provided by the NGO service providers.<sup>47</sup> This agreement is not

47. A ministerial direction of 4 March 2019 from the Ministry of Interior and the Ministry of Territorial Cohesion and Relations with Local Authorities lowers the threshold where the mayor's consent is no longer required. Now mayors of communes with more than 2,000 inhabitants are only informed of the arrival of resettled refugees.

obtained through to a set procedure. Most often, it is the prefectures or DDCSPPs which contact the mayors when they identify available housing in their municipality.<sup>48</sup> Sometimes, the local authorities do not carry out this task of contact and persuasion, leaving the NGO service providers face-to-face with the mayors. Similarly, no formality is required regarding the town's consent. It can be a simple verbal agreement by the mayor or a municipal council resolution. Finally, the public information meeting is not a compulsory step. Some mayors are satisfied with a meeting with the town's services and local NGOs.

This diversity surfaces in all of the interviews conducted with local actors, whether they be authorities or NGO service providers. Some, like the NGO Viltais, recommend that mayors hold public information meetings instead of asking the municipal council for a resolution. Forum réfugiés-Cos regularly organises a steering committee meeting, bringing together all the local actors who will be involved in the refugees' pathways. However, all of them have indicated that they do not wish to go further when they encounter the slightest reluctance from the mayor.

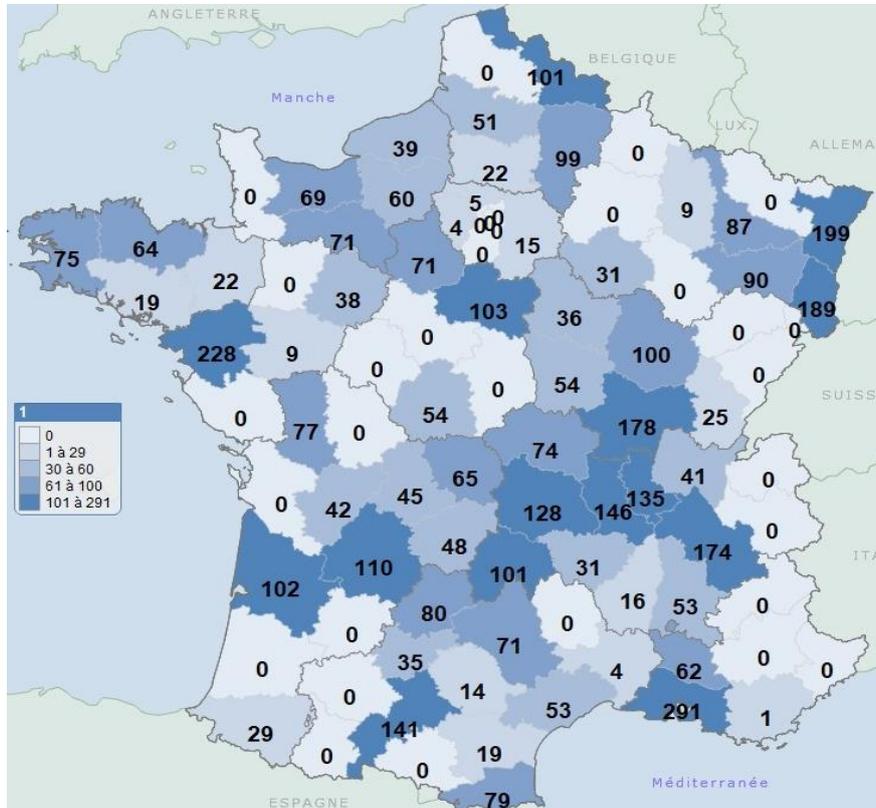
The involvement of the *préfecture* or its DDCSPP has been considered a key factor in convincing the mayors. These authorities are more seen as the government's voice than the NGO service providers. Therefore, resettlement enables *préfectures* and the DDCSPPs to play the role of conductor locally in resettlement policy by being the key actor for politicians, NGOs and public services. For example, the sub-*préfecture* of Figeac in the Lot *département* regularly brings together mayors in the district who have agreed to host refugees, in order to discuss obstacles encountered. Resettlement has brought local politicians closer to local government representatives. The other key factor in the success of resettlement is the involvement of the mayor or an elected municipal councillor. This makes it possible to mobilise municipal solidarity networks. Resettlement therefore becomes a tripartite partnership between government representatives at the local level, municipal politicians and NGOs.

The voluntary placement system obviously has disadvantages. The goodwill of local politicians is insufficient to achieve the French policy's objectives and to ensure that each *département* contributes to hosting refugees. The map below shows the imbalances between the *départements*. It also shows that many *départements* have not yet received any resettled refugees.

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48. The Saône-et-Loire DDCSPP meets the mayors of towns where social landlords identify available housing. The representative presents a case for the resettlement system and examples from other towns in the *département*. They also ensure proper distribution throughout the area and the existence of minimal services in the town.

**Map 3: Number of resettled refugees by *département* on 30 January 2019**



Source: Dihal

The main concern of government representatives at the local level is often the acceptability by politicians and the population against a background of a rise of the far right. They are ill-equipped to respond to these concerns. However, it may be possible to build on small towns' positive experiences. This would help showing that the reception of refugees has not led to more intolerance towards foreign populations. Thus, it would be possible to build on the first years of implementation of the European resettlement schemes, to highlight what works and what does not in terms of regional management. This would provide guidelines to the *préfectures* and DDCSPPs, without trapping them in procedures not suited to local balances and dynamics.

Yet, there is an actor who is usually forgotten in this local partnership approach: the refugee. Investment by local actors can turn into frustration if the refugees leave or wish to leave the town where they are accommodated. The refugees are not usually informed of the place where they will be hosted. The refugees discover their destination airport at the time of departure. They

do not know that the airport is not the end of their journey. The trip by car between the airport and the municipality where they will be settled is a cause for concern and the isolation of small French towns often comes as a shock.

The interviews conducted stress that almost all the refugees who arrived in a small town want to return to a large city in the first few months. Only a minority of them will leave in the end. Obviously, the refugees are exhausted by their years of exile and travel to France. They know that they will no longer be able to benefit from accommodation and support in the event of departure. However, after a few months, following discussions with fellow countrymen in large cities as well as unsuccessful attempts at finding social housing, many refugees become aware of the quality of their living conditions and the hospitality they receive. The municipal council of Saint-Clar in Gers even received an application from Syrian refugees hosted in a large city, who were informed about the warm welcome in the village.

This situation contrasts with that of refugees arriving in small towns after having lived in a larger city during their asylum application period, who find living in these small towns restrictive. Therefore, refugees seem to accept living in these areas more when it is their first place of stay in France.

It is still too early to know if settling refugees in small towns will be sustainable. The first refugees arrived in these areas too recently. However, a departure should not automatically be seen as a failure. Small towns may be a springboard to integration and a gateway into French society. The success or failure will be measured by the depth of the relationships formed between the refugees and the local population. Throughout the interviews conducted for this study, it became clear that the refugee population was also a vital asset in these areas.



# Refugees and small towns: moving towards a new reception model in France?

The arrival of resettled refugees in small towns and rural areas responded to two main concerns: firstly, the improved distribution of refugees throughout France; secondly, the availability of cheaper housing, in comparison to large cities. However, reception is not limited to housing. Refugees have other needs which are more easily met in large cities. Therefore, small towns had to adapt quickly to respond to these needs. At the same time, a new integration model for refugees has been identified, characterised by a greater commitment from the host society.

## Compensating for the disadvantages of rural areas with citizen “solidarity”

It is possible to highlight the host society’s greater involvement in the course of the refugees’ integration pathways in small French towns, by studying several segments of this pathway: housing, of course, but also building relationships with the host society, mobility, access to employment, education, healthcare or even language courses. For each of these aspects, the lack of specific programmes has been overcome by mobilising the local population, as well as the existence of solidarity networks.

### *Housing*

Unoccupied housing is the undisputed advantage of small towns compared to large cities. As has already been highlighted, the housing crisis in large cities explains to a large extent the placement of refugees in these areas. Conversely, many rural areas have a percentage of empty dwellings close to 20%. These areas are faced with a deterioration in the condition of their rental housing stock. The resettlement of refugees in small towns therefore appears to be a win-win situation: not only do refugees obtain permanent housing upon arriving in France, without moving from one temporary accommodation centre to another; but the areas also benefit from the renovation and occupation of their rental housing stock.

The refugees are mainly accommodated in social housing identified by the NGO service provider or the DDCSPP. However, it is not unusual for municipalities to provide available municipal housing or empty public buildings that they renovate into places of residence. For example, the village of Latronquière in the Lot *département* has rehabilitated the former gendarmerie to house a family of Syrian refugees. Similarly, the municipal council of Saint-Clar in Gers has hosted a family of ten in a building located in the village's health centre. This building was renovated to house an educational centre which never opened.

In these circumstances, the reception of refugees constitutes an opportunity for these villages. However, the use of unoccupied buildings is not the main motivation of these local politicians, whose main objective is to contribute to the protection of refugees. This solidarity effort is only possible because of the existence of available structures.

In addition to the availability of housing, the moderate rents make it possible to consider transferring the lease to the refugees' names after some months of care. Indeed, the refugees are usually able to pay the rent as soon as they receive subsistence allowance (RSA),<sup>49</sup> housing benefit and family allowances. The appointment of co-ordinators in public services has accelerated the procedures to access social benefits. So, social support can be focused on other aspects of living in housing, including managing the budget and bills.

However, the mobilisation of accommodation in small towns and rural areas may encounter some constraints. In the first place, not all accommodation is suitable for people with reduced mobility. This raises the issue of information about the refugees' condition that is sent on to the NGO service providers. However, according to some, this information is piecemeal or incorrect. Finally, most available accommodation is large. This suits Syrian families, who may have many children, but much less so sub-Saharan refugees, who have most often come to France without a family.

Finally, despite the housing vacancy rate, refusals by mayors are common, deterring NGO service providers from hosting refugees in these communes. Even the mayors most favourable to hosting are anxious to restrict the reception to a limited number of refugees in their towns – usually to one or two families. Given the amount of subsidies allocated to the service providers, around 30 refugees must be monitored to fund a social worker's position, which forces providers to distribute refugees across several municipalities in the same area.

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49. RSA is a financial benefit paid to anyone aged over 25 years without any means of livelihood. Refugees are eligible for this allowance under the same conditions as French nationals.

## ***Feelings of isolation and mobility***

Although accommodation is the advantage of small towns, isolation is their disadvantage. Feelings of isolation can stem from the lack of foreign communities in the host area. However, the fear of being stigmatised as the only foreigners in a village does not seem to be a salient feeling among refugees.

This issue could be further analysed based on additional interviews describing the perspective of refugees arriving in these areas. In any event, most of the NGO service providers try to find a balance, by both avoiding resettling only one family and too many families in a single town. Local actors underline that building stronger relationships with the local population is a success factor in resettlement and a driver of integration. In addition, the diversity of French society is also a reality in small towns and rural areas. Therefore, it is not unusual to find Arabic-speakers who can build bridges between the Syrian refugees and the host society.

In fact, feelings of isolation mainly stem from restrictions to mobility in areas where public transport networks are reduced, or even non-existent. Some journeys are mandatory to undertake the administrative procedures to access social benefits, to attend meetings at the *préfecture* and the French Office of Immigration and Integration and to undertake a number of medical examinations. These services are usually only available in the nearest medium town or the regional capital.

The settlement of refugees within a radius of several dozens of kilometres forces social workers from NGO service providers to spend a lot of time on the road, transporting refugees from one appointment to another, often to the detriment of social support. The role of volunteers is considered essential here. They provide invaluable help to social workers by driving refugees to their various administrative and medical appointments. They also accompany the refugees, particularly children, to leisure and sports activities.

This can lead to a feeling of dependency for refugees on social workers' or volunteers' availability. The issue of access to a car is therefore key. The driving licence is a topic raised by all the actors who were interviewed. The driving licence is the most useful document for refugees, more so than any academic degree. Therefore, recognition of the driving licences in France is one of the first steps carried out by social workers, with shorter or longer delays, depending on the *préfectures*.

However, not all refugees have a driving licence. Of those who do, many no longer have it upon arriving in France. Yet obtaining a driving licence in France is often a difficult cost for refugees to take on. Ad hoc solutions can be found. For example, the town of Saint Clar in Gers was able to contribute to driving school fees by using funds received from the government and the Occitanie region for the reception of refugees.<sup>50</sup> But these solutions are one-off and difficult to extend throughout the country. Hence, a specific initiative to facilitate refugees' access to a driving licence would be a significant step likely to accelerate integration in the same way as learning French.

Diarr's national strategy to receive and integrate refugees<sup>51</sup> allows for the development of existing schemes to fund the driving test. It intends to extend the "€1 a day licence" scheme currently open to young people aged 18 to 25 years through the use of micro-credits. These programmes must take the language barriers into account for access to driving licences. The lack of proficiency in French is an obstacle to the Highway Code and driving lessons with an instructor. Ader Mobilité launched the Intégracode project in seven regions, enabling a recently arrived population to develop their French skills and substantiate the driving school entry requirements.

Such projects should be a priority for the public authorities, especially for refugees in small towns. Mobility is a factor that fosters autonomy and facilitates access to work. It is also important in keeping refugees in these areas and avoiding them from reaching large cities. Although the refugees often wish to leave small towns during the first few months, this feeling decreases when they buy a car.

### ***Access to healthcare***

Healthcare is one of the first issues that social workers from NGO service providers have to deal with when refugees arrive. In areas with few medical facilities, they have to respond to diseases developed by refugees during their migration pathways. The medical services are not accustomed to receiving a refugee population. Again, the more direct communication networks in small towns and rural areas enable appropriate solutions to be found.

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50. Between 2015 and 2017, towns which made housing available for refugees received a grant of € 1,000 from the government. The Occitanie region decided to double this grant by also paying € 1,000 per refugee received. This financial support ended in 2018. Now, only AMIF finances European Resettlement Schemes. It is only paid to NGO service providers who have an agreement with the Ministry of Interior.

51. Interministerial Delegation for the Reception and Integration of Refugees, *Stratégie nationale pour l'accueil et l'intégration des personnes réfugiées*, 5 June 2018.

Information sent to NGO service providers before the refugees' arrival includes little medical information. Information on refugees' health can be collected at several points in the period prior to their arrival in France, either during the selection interview with Ofpra or at the IOM's assessment of their fitness to travel. Although information from Ofpra is sometimes sent to the NGOs, refugees' medical conditions can change between the interview date and their arrival in France. Similarly, refugees are not always able to report on the examinations conducted by the IOM.

This medical information is useful to NGOs for several reasons. It can help them to find accommodation and a location suitable to the refugees' state of health. It is necessary to pre-empt possible urgent medical needs. Although the refugees have access to universal healthcare, delays in accessing benefits do not allow for immediate treatment, despite there being co-ordinators for refugees in the relevant administrative departments.

The NGO service providers try to solve this situation in several ways. They can enter into agreements with town doctors who agree to advance costs until the refugees are covered. Here again, reception in small towns facilitates relationships with family physicians either through town halls or through volunteers' knowledge. The Permanent Access to Healthcare centres<sup>52</sup> (Pass) are also facilities used for first aid and medical examinations. Finally, some hospitals agree to examine refugees before they access their benefits. This last option is more difficult to obtain, including for reasons of hospital budgetary constraints. However, the relationships already established by the service providers facilitate the treatment of resettled refugees in hospitals.

Access to healthcare faces two cross-cutting issues in supporting this population. First and foremost, the issue of mobility arises. Usually, hospitals are not found in small towns and villages, but in medium towns. Social workers and volunteers are therefore obliged to drive refugees to their medical appointments. Secondly, communication between the medical practitioner and their patient is hindered by the lack of a common language. The Pass centres and hospitals have low budgets allocated to interpretation services. The NGOs regularly have to insist for them to be used. Interpreting more generally relies on informal solutions. The NGOs try to identify Arabic-speaking doctors or Arabic-speaking volunteers. When necessary, they resort to professional interpreters, but their budget does not allow for them to be used extensively. The networks and volunteers make it possible to find ad hoc solutions. Syrian refugees are less likely to face these interpreting

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52. The permanent access to healthcare centres (Pass) provide medical and social care for people who need care, but have difficulty accessing it, due to the lack of social welfare, their living conditions, or financial difficulties. It provides access to general or specialist consultations.

issues because of the presence of Arabic-speaking people in France, including in more rural areas.

The actors interviewed all emphasised their difficulty in finding specialist doctors who agree to see refugees within a reasonable time frame. Some of these areas are "medical deserts," where a few specialist doctors have to meet the needs of the entire population. Consequently, people sometimes have to wait several months or even a year to be seen by dentists, ophthalmologists or gynaecologists. Dental treatment was mentioned as a widespread need among Syrian refugees.

Psychological support is also an issue which the NGOs are aware of, due to the trauma experienced by refugees. Some NGOs have been able to enter into partnerships with mental healthcare centres, but it is usually difficult to find a psychologist or psychiatrist in these areas. The NGO service providers rely on mobile mental health outreach teams (EMPP), which can provide consultations at the refugees' places of residence. However, the service providers stress in interviews that Syrian refugees show little interest in such psychological support, unlike sub-Saharan refugees.

Consequently, small towns and rural areas do not lack the resources needed to respond to the refugees' medical needs. Discussions about public healthcare services in these areas affect refugees in the same way as the local population. Nevertheless, specific issues relating to mobility and language arise for refugees. They require further multi-sectoral reflection, aimed at establishing a healthcare pathway for refugees locally. This healthcare pathway must also determine the medical needs which cannot be managed by the area services. When the refugees have had to undergo serious treatment, the NGO service providers have been able to transfer them to large cities. However, this issue could be further pre-empted by improving information-sharing on refugees' state of health before their arrival in France.

## ***Learning French***

Like all new arrivals, the resettled refugees have to sign the Republican Integration Contract<sup>53</sup> (CIR) with the French Office of Immigration and

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53. The Republican Integration Contract (CIR) is concluded between the French state and any non-European foreigner authorised to reside in France, who wishes to settle there long term, with exceptions. The signatory agrees to undertake training courses to foster their integration into French society. Civic education is mandatory. Language training can be prescribed depending on the level of French. It is intended to reach A1 level in the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages.

Integration (Ofii). For this reason, they are enrolled in free French courses delivered by Ofii's contractors.

The group arrivals of refugees have enabled some flexibility in implementing these courses. The course providers were able to relocate the courses and provide them in towns where refugees are located, which has avoided organising transport to the place where these courses are normally held. Similarly, for childcare reasons, it is common for separate sessions for men and women to have been set up. However, this flexibility is not consistent and the acceleration of arrivals since 2018 has paradoxically limited the course providers' ability to relocate courses.

By all accounts, the Ofii courses do not allow refugees to achieve proficiency in French. This is a matter of both course organisation and the refugees' abilities, a number of whom are illiterate, particularly the men. Few of them reach the A1 level in the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages. Additional offers of language workshops vary from one area to another. NGO service providers rely on local NGOs which were mobilised before the refugees' arrival. However, their capacity may be limited, particularly when the areas are also faced with the problem of illiteracy. Consequently, volunteers are specifically mobilised for teaching French. Indeed, some of them become the main points of contact for refugees in this field.

This key role of volunteers in teaching French does not yet have institutional recognition in the refugees' pathway. More specifically, they would like better links with the Ofii courses. However, the interviews report a lack of communication with Ofii's course providers regarding the running of courses and *ultimately* about how the volunteers could help to better support refugees to achieve A1 level. There is a particularly high demand for training volunteers to teach French. This view is shared by all local actors, including the volunteers themselves, who are aiming to improve their skills.

Some local authorities have understood the importance of supporting volunteers better, and indirectly, acknowledging their usefulness in the reception of refugees. For example, the DDCSPP in Corrèze launched an Internet platform together with Casnav<sup>54</sup> and the Canopé<sup>55</sup> network, with

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54. The Casnavs, Academic Centres for the Education of Newly-Arrived Non-French-Speaking Pupils and Children of Occupational Travellers and Travellers, provide advice and teaching expertise to the various actors involved in the education of these pupils. Academic support roles, they organise and run training initiatives for these populations. They also support educational teams in schools and educational institutions.

55. The Canopé network is a public institution which undertakes a role in publishing, producing and distributing educational and administrative resources for teaching professionals. It contributes to the development of information and communication technology for education, as well as to artistic and cultural education.

information on asylum in France and in the *département*, as well as a list of social and language workshops in Corrèze.<sup>56</sup> This platform is complemented by a teaching kit including books, whose educational value has been validated by Casnav. Finally, a trainer in French as a Foreign Language is providing workshops to volunteers on how to use this kit.

This initiative underlines once again the leadership role that government authorities can play locally. It also highlights how the national education system can lend its teaching expertise to a non-French-speaking population. This partnership approach is facilitated by more fluid communication between local actors in areas like Corrèze, but the issue of financial resources in a context of budgetary restriction remains. It should be emphasised that this type of initiative does not require substantial resources. The leverage effect it can use to justify the government's investment is the increase in volunteers' skills and the impact that it can have on refugees.

However, you have to question the host society's expectations in terms of the refugees' proficiency in French. These expectations must be measured in terms of learning abilities, which may be affected by their migration pathway and social-educational profile. It has been observed that a lack of proficiency in French can justify a withdrawal of certain public services to support refugees in employment, or even access to social benefits. Obviously, it is important for refugees to understand work instructions, including for low-skilled positions, but this cannot be an insurmountable barrier. Learning French also happens through socialisation and contact with French citizens, whether in the context of work or in relationships established with the local population. In this respect, mobilising volunteers is a powerful driver of integration.

### ***Access to school***

Access to school affects practically all Syrian refugees whose population is overwhelmingly made up of families with children. Access to primary school does not seem to pose any particular problem. The actors interviewed have even stressed the quality of the welcome which was given to young refugee children. Teachers prepare the other children, as well as the pupils' parents, for the arrival of their new Syrian classmates.

The situation is more complex for adolescents. Schools have different and sometimes contradictory practices. Some place young people in classes corresponding to their age. Others prefer to direct them according to their

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56. <https://atelier-canope-19.canoprof.fr>.

educational level. Each practice has its disadvantages, but all the people interviewed emphasised the young people's desire to learn. Their success in integrating into the French education system depends on the willingness to adapt teaching to these young refugees, particularly the arrangement of their school time so that they can take additional French courses. Schools are obliged to provide teaching units for incoming, non-French-speaking students (UP2A). However, the provision of UP2A varies from one school to another.

Young people aged over 16 years are in the most difficult position. Beyond this age, schools are no longer obliged to enrol them. Although some schools agree to receive them, others refuse. These young people then find themselves without a solution, since the local access points for employment and social services decline to monitor them, because of their lack of proficiency in French.

This group of young people is the one which is the most cause for concern. They need specific attention to ensure that they successfully transition into adulthood and acquire basic skills, with consideration about how to support them in learning a profession.

The school's contribution in receiving refugees is not limited to educating the children. Indeed, retired teachers are the largest group of volunteers. This closeness between the volunteers and teaching staff also facilitates relationships with the schools.

### ***Access to employment***

The interviews we conducted dispel stereotypes that small towns and rural areas are regions with few employment opportunities. The respondents interviewed confirmed the labour requirements in several of the areas studied. Obviously, labour market conditions are not the same in all areas. Significant differences exist between former industrial areas, agricultural areas and regions which are experiencing increased tourism. Can refugees benefit from these employment opportunities? This is what some local actors interviewed for this study think. This is particularly the case in the agricultural and food processing sectors where several refugees have been employed.

Labour market integration is therefore a reasonable prospect, but it must take the refugees' pathway into consideration. Indeed, trauma, health problems, age, and the presence of young children are all factors which do not envisage employability in the short and medium terms. Expectations in terms of labour market integration must be realistic. Indeed, it is most often

the father of the family or the eldest siblings who find employment. The majority of Syrian women do not intend to work.

The lack of proficiency in French is the main obstacle to employment for skilled and less skilled positions. But the latter jobs are more accessible and make it possible to look at occupation-based learning modules for French. One of the difficulties encountered is that the Ofii courses are difficult to reconcile with working hours and can thus delay access to employment.

Of course, all these obstacles to employment are not specific to small towns and rural areas. Likewise, these areas present a number of important advantages. Unlike in large cities, for example, refugees are not anonymous candidates among others seeking employment when they apply for a position. The volunteers and their local networks play a role in labour market integration. Volunteers often recommend refugees to employers in the area. The latter can also spontaneously offer to employ refugees whether out of solidarity or to fulfil a recruitment need.

The visibility of refugees and the mobilisation of volunteers established in the social and economic fabric are undeniable advantages. They make it possible to avoid ordinary recruitment processes which can be disadvantageous or even discriminatory for refugees. Although these are mainly seasonal or short-term positions, these opportunities allow entry into the labour market and gradually build up a career pathway.

This pathway to employment has limitations. Its spontaneous and informal nature ensures its effectiveness in areas where interpersonal relationships have an influence. It is rather a matter of scale to make it possible for more refugees to access employment. The issue of employment is part of the NGO service providers' strategies when identifying a commune for settlement and convincing their politicians. They try to co-operate with the actors in employment and vocational training and local employers. In this respect, temporary agencies are very important potential partners. They can play an intermediary role between local companies, NGO service providers and refugees. They know their clients' requirements and can advise them on employing refugees.

The arrival of refugees is too recent to know if their labour market integration in small towns and rural areas will be more stable than a succession of seasonal jobs and temporary contracts. In any event, the arrival of refugees does not seem to be viewed as a "threat" to the employment of local populations. Conversely, it may be an opportunity for revitalisation and to meet unfilled labour needs. Employment is more than an economic activity. It is involved in sustaining the regions. Furthermore,

it seems that the use of refugees is preferred to that of temporary European workers.

As can be seen, the small towns and rural areas have many advantages that enable refugees to build a new life in France. Nevertheless, this conclusion must be qualified in terms of the diversity of the refugee profiles involved. Indeed, you have to question the suitability of settlement in these areas depending on the profiles involved.

For example, urban refugees may have more difficulty in adapting to these rural areas. The size of the apartments available in these areas also makes them more suitable for families than for single people. Families may also be more resilient to feelings of isolation. It also seems that families with children are more easily accepted upon arrival by the local population. Finally, the least qualified refugees will have more opportunities to find work. These few aspects emphasise the reasoning required to establish a refugee placement policy that is capable of jointly taking into account the profile of people and the characteristics of reception areas.

## **Successful resettlement: future challenges**

The future of resettlement in small towns will be determined by two aspects: one concerns refugees' pathways, once the support period by NGO service operators has finished, and the other deals with the capacity of small towns to host a continuous number of refugees in the long term.

### ***The difficult transition to mainstream social welfare***

The resettled refugees benefit from personalised assistance as part of the projects supported by the European Union's Asylum, Migration, and Integration Fund. This care is usually for a period of a year. One of the NGO service provider's objectives is for refugees to be able to access social benefits from their first year in France. More broadly, NGO service providers' objective is to support the refugees on their path to autonomy.

However, everyone recognises that 12 months is too short a period for refugees to achieve sufficient autonomy and to be able to live without social support. This is particularly the case for refugees who have arrived under the permanent scheme and which includes particularly vulnerable categories of people who have lived for many years in very precarious living conditions. In addition, the obligation to apply for asylum in France delays access to social benefits and integration for several months. These procedures are

quicker for Syrian and sub-Saharan refugees, particularly due to the coordinators in the various public services. Nevertheless, due to healthcare problems and the lack of proficiency in French, full autonomy cannot be considered for the majority of them.

At the end of a year, the resettled refugees become mere beneficiaries of French social policy, just like any other disadvantaged population. They are an issue for the mainstream social welfare system.<sup>57</sup> In the interviews, the transition to mainstream social welfare services is often described as "harsh" for refugees. They benefited from personalised support by caseworkers trained to meet their specific needs. Social workers from the mainstream system have neither the same availability nor the same knowledge of refugees, who they perceive as a population with separate problems. Difficulties in communicating in French and the formality of making appointments reinforces a feeling of distance between the refugees and their new social contact points.

The NGO service providers sometimes offer additional, intermittent and unfunded support beyond the first year. This is more feasible in the context of the permanent schemes, insofar as the systems have been retained in the same areas since the early 2010s. It is more difficult in the context of European schemes. Indeed, the service providers' systems are temporary. There is only a dedicated team for the support period, unless new refugees arrive in the same area. Although the majority of NGO service providers have chosen to support their resettlement projects with sustainable systems like reception centres for asylum seekers, social workers in these facilities do not have the time for and the role of taking care of the resettled refugees.

In the small towns, volunteers often fill the gap left by the end of NGO service providers' support, taking over in terms of social support. This leads them to adopt a position of assistance that many wished to avoid in their relationships with the refugees. Obviously, the volunteers can help lessen the effects of the transition to mainstream social welfare support by acting as contact points for social workers. But it is impossible for them to be a substitute for professional social workers.

The transition to mainstream social welfare must therefore be organised gradually. Several options are possible: for example, extending the length of the NGO service providers' support or a more intensive follow-up as part of mainstream social welfare. Both options have a financial cost, but it is important to ensure that the efforts for refugees' empowerment are

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57. In France, the *départements* are designated as the "leader" in terms of social assistance, people's autonomy and regional solidarity. They are mainly responsible for the subsistence allowance and social integration initiatives. The communes have skills in the field of voluntary social assistance through the Community Social Welfare Centres (CCAS).

not jeopardised by ending support without transition. In any case, the mainstream social welfare system would need to be involved and aware of the resettled refugees' specific needs as soon as possible. A government financial initiative would enable the mainstream social welfare system to be more involved with the resettled refugees.

The issue also takes on a more political dimension. The *département* councils, which are responsible for mainstream social welfare policies, may or may not be aware of France's resettlement policy. They may also provide guidance to their services which does not always converge with the resettled refugees' needs. The social policies may also favour other social priorities in the department.

However, in rural areas, mayors are often also *département* councillors. In this way, they can influence guidance to ensure that refugees are included in the social policies. It is also reasonable to think that the Community Social Welfare Centres in towns that have agreed to host refugees are more inclined to focus on this population. Obviously, the communes have limited skills and resources for social initiatives. However, it is not a question of providing a follow-up similar to that provided by the NGO service providers, but acting as a contact point for refugees, to ensure they continue their integration pathway in France.

### ***The issue of the "reception capacity" of small towns***

During the autumn of 2015, hundreds of small and large French municipalities participated in a show of solidarity following the broadcast of Aylan Kurdi's photo. They offered to provide accommodation for refugees. For the government, it was an opportunity to implement its commitments under the European Resettlement Scheme. However, asylum seekers from Greece and Italy took a long time arriving in France and were received in other accommodation facilities.

Local politicians showing enthusiasm for receiving resettled refugees often participated in this show of solidarity. Having gone without news from the authorities for a long time, they were finally contacted for resettlement.

In the meantime, the mobilisation of many municipalities waned. Additionally, the opening of reception facilities for asylum seekers increased throughout the country. It is likely that the government's objectives to increase the distribution of resettled refugees encountered opposition from some local politicians, who may have feared hostility from the population towards the resettled refugees, or considered that their town already had enough migrants.

In other words, is the number of “welcoming towns” limited and when will this limit be reached? The search for new host cities is a major challenge for local authorities and NGO service providers and seems to be an increasingly difficult task.

The question raises the issue of the ability to achieve France’s resettlement objectives and, possibly, of the continuation of this international protection tool beyond 2019, especially considering that the capacities of towns which have already received refugees are in fact limited. It is less an issue of available accommodation than of investment in groups of volunteers. The mobilisation of these people contributes to the successful reception of resettled refugees. It can nowadays give way to a certain fatigue. There is also over-investment by mayors and municipal politicians behind the reception decision. In small towns, they act as volunteers and municipal councillors.

Support for local politicians and volunteers therefore seems important to convince of the need to continue receiving resettled refugees. Often mentioned during interviews, there is an important need for authorities to recognise the role of volunteers. Volunteers grant importance to the fact that they are not just “useful” in responding to needs, but that they themselves contribute at their level to the refugee protection policy. The social and language workshops’ teaching kit provided by the DDCSPP in Corrèze is an example of the authorities’ recognition of the role of volunteers.

Finally, local politicians and volunteers may be the best ambassadors for resettlement with reluctant mayors. They are in the best position to share the challenges, but above all the positive effects of resettlement on the municipalities. Local networks of municipal politicians are the vectors of communication for these “*success stories*”. They also allow these politicians to mutually support each other.

## **Citizen involvement in integrating refugees: an effective model**

The strength of resettled refugees’ reception in small towns and rural areas lies in good co-ordination between the various local actors: government representatives at the local level, municipal elected representatives, NGO service providers, charity organisations and citizens. Although this co-ordination is facilitated by close relations and local inter-knowledge networks, the fact remains that the role of volunteers must be linked to that of NGO service providers.

## ***Volunteers and NGO service providers: mutual learning***

The professionalisation of NGOs working in the asylum sector since the 1990s has gone hand in hand with a complexification of asylum and social welfare rules in France. This has resulted in the NGOs entrusting the support of asylum seekers and refugees to employees rather than to volunteers. The latter have occupied a more marginal place in these NGOs' activities, even though some have formalised the relationship between employees and volunteers to a greater extent.

The reception of refugees in small towns examines this social intervention model. The high presence of residents among refugees has been established by the NGO service providers. These citizens are not involved as volunteer members of the NGO, but as autonomous groups of individuals, sometimes formed into a collective. The NGO service providers quickly considered these active citizens as allies and supporters.

Realistically, the limited means of NGO service providers and the dispersal of refugees over several communes in an area restricts the degree of intervention by social workers. However, the volunteers do not just provide support for social workers. They allow the refugees to feel less isolated and to master their new living environment. They can develop emotional ties with the refugees, whereas social work involves keeping a certain distance from the client. Therefore, there is a complementarity between the volunteers and social workers which must be explicit to prepare for the refugees' arrival.

In practical terms, all the NGO service providers organise steering committees before receiving refugees, either at their own initiative or at the mayors' initiative. These committees make it possible to present the framework and the support objectives, but also to determine everyone's roles. They bring together government representatives, public services, municipal services and, when necessary, local NGOs. The residents are easily informed of the refugees' arrival in small towns and these committees are an opportunity to mobilise the population. Several set-ups are possible: there may be an NGO network in the area, or already established groups helping migrants, particularly following the reception of migrants "from Calais and from Paris"; residents may want to volunteer.

The NGO service providers interviewed during our study emphasised that they did not encounter any particular difficulties in setting up these groups of volunteers, particularly when the social workers have personal networks in the area.

However, social workers must monitor these shows of support. It is important to advise volunteers of the various support stages for resettled refugees, for a perfect understanding of the roles and limitations of social workers. Volunteers are aware of the complexity of administrative procedures to access social welfare and the need for professional involvement in these aspects of support. Social workers can also offer the volunteers considerable advice, particularly on "interculturality", the leadership of workshops, the space that should be left for refugees and "gratitude" that they can expect from the refugees.

The last points deserve further attention. Misunderstandings between refugees and volunteers can be a source of frustration and disappointment for both parties. The authorities, with their NGO service providers, should be encouraged to offer volunteers training or discussion workshops to address these issues. Recognising the role of volunteers in the reception of refugees is not just thanking them for their commitment. It is rather about providing them with the necessary tools to engage in appropriate long-term initiatives.

### ***Building a sense of belonging***

Mutual learning does not only involve volunteers and NGO service providers. It also applies to relationships between the volunteers and the refugees. The volunteers are very present in the refugees' lives. In this way, they help transfer the cultural and social codes of French society to refugees. This transfer differs fundamentally from the civic education provided as part of the Republican Integration Contract. It is not an order to adhere to republican principles, sometimes viewed as abstract. Rather, it is an immersion in the everyday life of the host population. Representatives from NGOs and groups interviewed reported "these little things" which make integration possible and cannot be learnt in a classroom.

The reception of refugees in small towns seems to be a factor in the acceleration of refugees' integration, including learning French. Life in small towns has its distinctive features that refugees understand quickly. Examples illustrate the building of a sense of belonging by refugees at local level. For instance, some of them have participated in village fetes or in armistice ceremonies. Others have joined residents to clean the streets after a flood.

Integration is not an expectation of assimilation by the residents. Concerns regarding religion, and more specifically, the Islamic veil, which could exist before the arrival of the refugees, very quickly disappeared after they settled. People initially hostile to receiving refugees are among the most

active volunteers. As one interviewee underlined, "in small towns, people change their minds." Concerns about religious differences give way to a curiosity about the newcomers' culture. Several volunteers and local politicians have stated their willingness to learn Arabic or Kurdish, and even to promote the learning of Arabic in schools so that the children of refugees can master their native language in addition to French.

The reception of refugees in small towns is a series of meetings. These meetings are at the heart of refugees' inclusion process. They find a new host community there, the first faces of their new life in France.



# Conclusion

Small towns and rural areas have proved to be welcoming areas for people fleeing war and persecution. Far from the stereotypes of neglected areas closed in on themselves, small towns have shown great generosity towards the refugees. They provide them with an environment and the opportunity to build a new life. These encounters between the inhabitants of these areas and the refugees tell another story of the “migration crisis” which has been shaking Europe since 2015.

Obviously, solidarity with refugees is not the monopoly of small towns. There are many examples of initiatives for refugees in large European cities. However, the narratives collected during the course of this study tell another story about these areas.

The inhabitants of these small towns have shown their desire to contribute to a situation, which at first glance, is very far removed from them. The citizens’ initiative is evident in the speeches of local politicians and volunteers who have mobilised to receive refugees. The show of solidarity of French communes in 2015, the reception of the Calais migrants in 2016 and now the resettled migrants are proof that in the Auvergne, Gers or Lot areas, it is possible to contribute to the global refugee protection scheme.

But perhaps what differentiates small towns from large cities the most is the residents’ strong sense of belonging to their area. They feel a sense of pride in showing that these areas have a capacity for action. Reference has often been made during interviews to episodes from the past, particularly refuge given to Spanish Republicans, Jews and Resistance fighters. Nowadays, these inhabitants feel they are writing a new page in the history of their village by receiving refugees.

However, there is also a strong awareness of the problems that refugees may encounter in these areas. In many ways, these problems affect the local population just as much. The issues of mobility, lack of infrastructure and “medical deserts” affect everybody. By including refugees in a local community, these small towns show that we can break out of the “us” and “them” paradigm and the competition between disadvantaged groups.

Although support policies for small towns have an impact on the reception of refugees in these areas, we have also identified measures which would improve the refugees' integration. It is a matter of ensuring the sustainability of resettlement schemes, but also the integration of refugees in the long term.

## The national management of resettlement programmes

- ▀ *Strengthening the legal basis for resettlement:* The Act of 10 September 2018 introduced resettlement into French law. Although this provision of the Act is a more solid legal basis than a simple agreement between the French government and UNHCR, it does not guarantee that resettlement becomes a regular pathway to accessing international protection in France. Indeed, the existence of a resettlement scheme is a government decision that is not subject to debate in parliament. Similarly, several aspects of resettlement could be enshrined in French law, specifically the selection criteria, as well as the procedure for recognising international protection in France.
- ▀ *Merging the management of resettlement schemes:* Significant progress has been made in managing resettlement since the implementation of the European programmes. However, this progress does not benefit the permanent programme, which has been dealing with recurring problems for years. Without challenging the distinct framework of these different schemes, joint management would enhance the permanent resettlement programme's effectiveness and would make it possible to formalise a sustainable administrative organisation nationally and centrally.
- ▀ *Improving the information given to refugees about the advantages and disadvantages of small towns and rural areas in France:* The first few days in small towns and rural areas are often a shock for refugees. They are rarely informed of where they will be living prior to their departure. Furthermore, the refugees are not in a position to imagine living conditions in small French towns. It is important to improve the information given to refugees, including the advantages and disadvantages of small towns, and as far as possible, obtain their consent to settle in these areas.
- ▀ *Favouring the direct placement of families in small towns:* Several factors make it easier to accept resettlement in small towns. Firstly, refugees are more likely to stay in a small town when they have not previously passed through a large city in France. Secondly, small towns seem to suit families with children more because of the size of available

housing, but also because the family unit reduces feelings of isolation. Similarly, families are better accepted by the local population. Other factors, such as the refugees' rural or urban origin or their professional qualifications, can favour placement in a large city or a small town.

## Local management of resettlement programmes

- *Confirming the regional and département co-ordinators' roles:* The appointment of regional and *département* co-ordinators in the local government services (*préfectures* and DDCSPPs) has been a key factor in implementing the resettlement schemes, by taking local realities and dynamics into account. It has also enabled the government to reinforce its role leading local actors in the areas of asylum and social inclusion. It is important that the involvement of the devolved government services be the same throughout France, particularly with regard to relations with local politicians. The latter are more likely to agree to receive refugees in their area when they are approached by the authorities rather than NGO service providers.
- *Involving the mayors in receiving refugees:* The ministerial direction of 4 March 2019 reduced the threshold for which local politicians' consent is necessary to receive refugees to 2,000 inhabitants. Although we can understand the need to expand the number of communes where refugees are resettled, it became clear that the involvement of local politicians is crucial for the success of reception in small towns. In this respect, the threshold of 2,000 inhabitants could be too low. The mayors of small towns, which have already hosted refugees, are the best ambassadors for resettlement. They can share the challenges and the problems, but also the positive aspects of hosting refugees with their counterparts. For this reason, local co-ordinators could support and lead the local mayors' networks in order to share their experiences.
- *Improving the information given to host towns before the refugees' arrival:* To date, mayors and groups of mobilised inhabitants receive little to no information about the refugees who must be hosted in their town. The increase in information channels usually leaves out volunteers who will however become the refugees' main links with French society. Knowledge of the refugees' names, profiles and family make-up would further humanise the preparation for reception and the volunteers' mobilisation. Confirming and reinforcing the local management roles of departmental co-ordinators would make it possible to centralise this information and ensure successful delivery to the volunteers.

- *Developing partnerships between national and local operators:* The development of resettlement in small towns may be restricted by the lack of national NGO service providers in these areas. On the other hand, local NGOs do not always have the organisational capacity to meet the many requirements related to management of the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF). Nevertheless, the NGOs who know the economic, social and local political fabric, have significant advantages to guide refugees in small towns and rural areas. The partnerships formed between Entraide Pierre Valdo and local NGOs are interesting models for the development of resettlement throughout France. They also help maintain the diversity of French NGOs and boost the co-operation between them.

## Social support for refugees in small towns

- *Establishing an inclusive mobility plan for refugees:* Mobility is the main concern for resettled refugees in small towns and rural areas. It helps them to combat feelings of isolation and to make them less dependent on social workers and volunteers. Mobility also facilitates labour market integration. This issue is not addressed in its entirety by the authorities. Although Diar intends to support the acceleration of the driving licence exchange procedure and the expansion of existing systems to obtain a driving licence, issues relating to proficiency in French and access to a vehicle also arise. The mobility of refugees in areas where a vehicle is required should be the subject of a national action plan developed in partnership with inclusive mobility actors.
- *Sending more detailed information about the refugees' medical condition:* Information sent to the NGO service providers about refugees' health is piecemeal, sometimes non-existent or obsolete. However, this information is vital for ensuring the compliance of accommodation with refugees' motor disabilities or to meet urgent medical needs. The institutional and NGO resettlement actors should be able to identify the medical information required for the treatment of refugees and define a protocol for collecting and passing this information on. In accordance to the principle of medical confidentiality, this information could be translated by a healthcare professional in terms of housing conditions and closeness of specific medical services.
- *Establishing local healthcare pathways:* Access to healthcare is a greater challenge, as small towns and rural areas are often "medical deserts." Although NGO service providers and volunteers manage to find

town doctors in small towns who agree to treat refugees, some specific issues arise for hospital examinations before access to medical healthcare and for specialised medicine, particularly dental care. Finally, interpretation is an obstacle in accessing healthcare. The Departmental Directorates for Social Cohesion in connection with the regional health agencies could establish local healthcare pathways, making it possible to enter into refugee treatment protocols with hospitals, Permanent Access to Healthcare centres and specialists. The use of available funds for interpreting must be promoted by these protocols.

- *Relocating French courses closer to refugees' towns of residence:* Several language service providers for the French Office of Immigration and Integration have agreed to conduct French courses in the municipalities where resettled refugees are located because of mobility restrictions. Similarly, it has been proposed to provide different sessions for men and women, for childcare reasons. This flexibility could become widespread when a yet-to-be-determined number of refugees arrives in the same area. Finally, the situation of refugees already in employment, whose working hours do not permit them to attend French courses, should be taken into account by Ofii.
- *Training and supporting volunteers in social and language workshops:* It is generally agreed that Ofii's language training does not suffice to reach an adequate level of French. The volunteers' social and language workshops are therefore vital tools to further refugees' knowledge. However, being a language trainer requires teaching skills. Several local actors have explored how to boost volunteers' skills through training and support initiatives. The co-operation between the Departmental Directorate for Social Cohesion in Corrèze, the national education system and the Canopé network offers educational support and training sessions for volunteers in the department. It is an example of pooling institutional actors' resources and skills, which can be replicated in other areas with limited financial means. Better recognition of volunteers' role in teaching French also means better communication and co-ordination with the Ofii courses.
- *Harmonising education practices for adolescents:* Although the integration of children in primary school does not present any specific problems, it is not the same for secondary schools. The schools select the class of reception depending either on the adolescent's age or their educational level. Similarly, classes are tailored to young refugees differently depending on the school. The national education system could provide schools with guidelines on the education of adolescents by highlighting the good practices of certain secondary schools. These

guidelines should address the matter for young people over 16 years of age. In this respect, it would be important to plan for "the education obligation" of young people aged 16 to 18 years, which is mentioned in the Anti-Poverty Plan of September 2018 and must be implemented starting 2020. This education obligation may include enrolment in a general or vocational course or an apprenticeship with additional support for learning French.

- *Involving temporary employment agencies in labour market integration pathways:* Small towns and rural areas provide refugees with job opportunities. Through volunteer networks, refugees gain access to jobs, sometimes short-term ones, but which may gradually lead to more stable contracts. Although informal, this employment access model is suited to the newcomers by avoiding the usual and discriminatory recruitment procedures. It would be possible to expand this model by increasing the involvement of local temporary employment agencies, which have in-depth knowledge of the labour requirements in these areas. Additionally, they are employers' privileged partners and can support them in employing refugees by mobilising vocational training schemes in connection with the NGO service providers. The integration of refugees into the labour market in small towns and rural areas must be accompanied by a consideration of their professional profiles. Skilled jobs are scarce in these areas and even less accessible for refugees because of requirements regarding qualifications and proficiency in French. Professional and social demotion can be an additional hurdle to refugees returning to work.
- *Developing an action plan to integrate female refugees:* It appears that female refugees are not less qualified than their husbands. Sometimes, they are even more so. However, many do not consider working for family or cultural reasons. Without it becoming an order, it would be important to integrate in the initiatives that support refugees provisions that promote the integration of women into the labour market. These may include periods of on-the-job immersion, as well as finding childcare solutions. These initiatives should be accompanied by raising employers' awareness of the different aspects of cultural and religious diversity.
- *Recognising the role of volunteers in supporting refugees:* What distinguishes the hosting of resettled refugees in small towns and rural areas is the strong mobilisation of its inhabitants. This mobilisation is a considerable factor in social and labour market integration. It reduces refugees' isolation. The NGO service providers play an important role in managing volunteers. It is important to further formalise the respective

roles of NGO service providers and volunteers to avoid misunderstandings and tensions. The partnership charter model proposed by the Interministerial Delegation for the Reception and Integration of Refugees' national strategy is a tool which could be developed in a short amount of time. Similarly, volunteer work should be further valued and recognised by the authorities. This recognition mainly occurs through training activities on asylum and interculturality, as well as discussion workshops between volunteers from the same area.

- *Strengthening support for refugees through mainstream social welfare:* The support period for resettled refugees by NGO service providers is too short given the refugees' migration pathways. Discussion should be initiated about the optimal length of the dedicated support period, by taking the example of countries with greater experience in receiving resettled refugees. If extending the support period for NGO service providers cannot be considered by the authorities for financial reasons, then it is essential to further involve and raise awareness of refugees' specific needs among the mainstream social welfare services. In small towns, community services, particularly Community Social Welfare Centres, have the potential to be in the best position to respond to refugees' expectations. This enhanced follow-up for a limited period of time may require financial incentives by the government to support mainstream social welfare.



# Appendix 1: List of interviews

- ▀ Fatiha Mlati, Director of Integration, Adeline Poulain, Service Manager at Faar, and Olivier David, Department Head European Resettlement Network, France terre d'asile, 4 September 2018, Paris
- ▀ Lucile Froitier, JRS ruralité Co-ordinator, JRS France, 4 September 2018, Paris
- ▀ Janine Rubio, Migrant Centre Co-ordinator, Regar, 23 September 2018, Auch
- ▀ Rémi Court, Resettlement Scheme Manager, Forum réfugiés-Cosi, 11 September 2018, Villeurbanne
- ▀ Jean-Philippe Morel, Director of the Refugee Centre, Viltais, 13 September 2018, Varennes-sur-Allier
- ▀ Virginie Guérin-Robinet, Director of the Migrant Strategy Centre, and Faustine Masson, Migrant Strategy Project Manager, Interministerial Delegation for Accommodation and Access to Housing, 14 September 2018, Paris
- ▀ Suzanne Bignebat, Deputy Mayor, town of Saint Clar, 20 September 2018, Saint Clar
- ▀ Audrey Gollucio, Resettlement Project Manager, Entraide Pierre Valdo, 24 September 2018, Saint Étienne
- ▀ Marion Collombet, Head of Resettlement Support Scheme Centre Ardèche, Forum réfugiés-Cosi, 8 October 2018, Privas
- ▀ Sandrine Oriol, Area Manager, Chronos intérim, 11 October, Moulins
- ▀ Isabelle Pontes, Social Worker, Faar Nord, France terre d'asile, 11 October 2018, Maubeuge
- ▀ Camille Thomas, Director of Asylum and Integration, Groupe SOS, 11 October 2018, Paris
- ▀ Simon Karleskind, Social and Digital Economy Advisor at the Interministerial Delegation for the Reception and Integration of Refugees, Ministry of Interior, 16 October 2018, Paris
- ▀ Sophie Alary, Director of Cross-sectoral Programmes and their Development, Aurore, 19 October 2018, Paris
- ▀ Aurore Guillot, Service Manager, Entraide Pierre Valdo, 24 October 2018, Les Vans

- Isabelle Barthod-Malat, Service Manager, Entraide Pierre Valdo, 24 October 2018, Le Chambon sur Lignon
- Éliane Lavergne, Mayor of Latronquière, 25 October 2018, Latronquière
- Ludovic Plotard, Director of the Solidarity Centre, Beaugency, 31 October 2018, Beaugency
- Pierre Delmas, Director, Jean-Marc Vareille, Technical and Educational Advisor, Corrèze Departmental Directorate for Social Cohesion and Protection of the Population, 5 November 2018, Tulle
- French as a Foreign Language Departmental Meeting, presentation of teaching tool kit to volunteers, Corrèze Departmental Directorate for Social Cohesion and Protection of the Population, 5 November 2018, Tulle
- Éric Zabouareff, General Secretary of Corrèze Prefecture, 5 November 2018, Tulle
- Le Roc NGO, 5 November 2018, Tulle
- Jérôme Perdrix, Municipal Councillor, 6 November 2018, Ayen
- Les chemins singuliers NGO, 6 November 2018, Vigeois
- Jean-Paul Grador, Mayor of Uzerche, 6 November 2018, Uzerche
- Céline Dumont, Social Worker Faar Orne, France terre d'asile, 9 November 2018, Alençon
- Hélène Girand, Social Worker European Resettlement Network, France terre d'asile, 12 November 2018, Niort
- Mme Ebalo, Refugee, 12 November 2018, Niort
- Virginie Artot, Director of CADA in Niort, 12 November 2018, Niort
- Véronique Ducoulombier, Head of the Social Inclusion and Solidarity Mission, Deux-Sèvres Departmental Directorate for Social Cohesion and Protection of the Population, 12 November 2018, Niort
- Fabienne Seron, RSA point of contact, and Denis Thibaud, RSA co-ordinator, Deux-Sèvres Departmental Council, 12 November 2018, Niort
- Pauline Portet, Educational Co-ordinator, Aurore, 12 November 2018, Niort
- Elisabeth Saint Guily, volunteer, les 4A NGO/Maubeuge Citizens' Group, 15 November 2018, Avesnes sur Helpe
- Jean-Paul Demarthe, Migrant Strategy Manager, Saône and Loire DDCSPP, 24 November 2018, Mâcon

# Appendix 2: Managing resettlement schemes locally and nationally

## Annual resettlement programme

Asylum Department (Ministry of Interior):

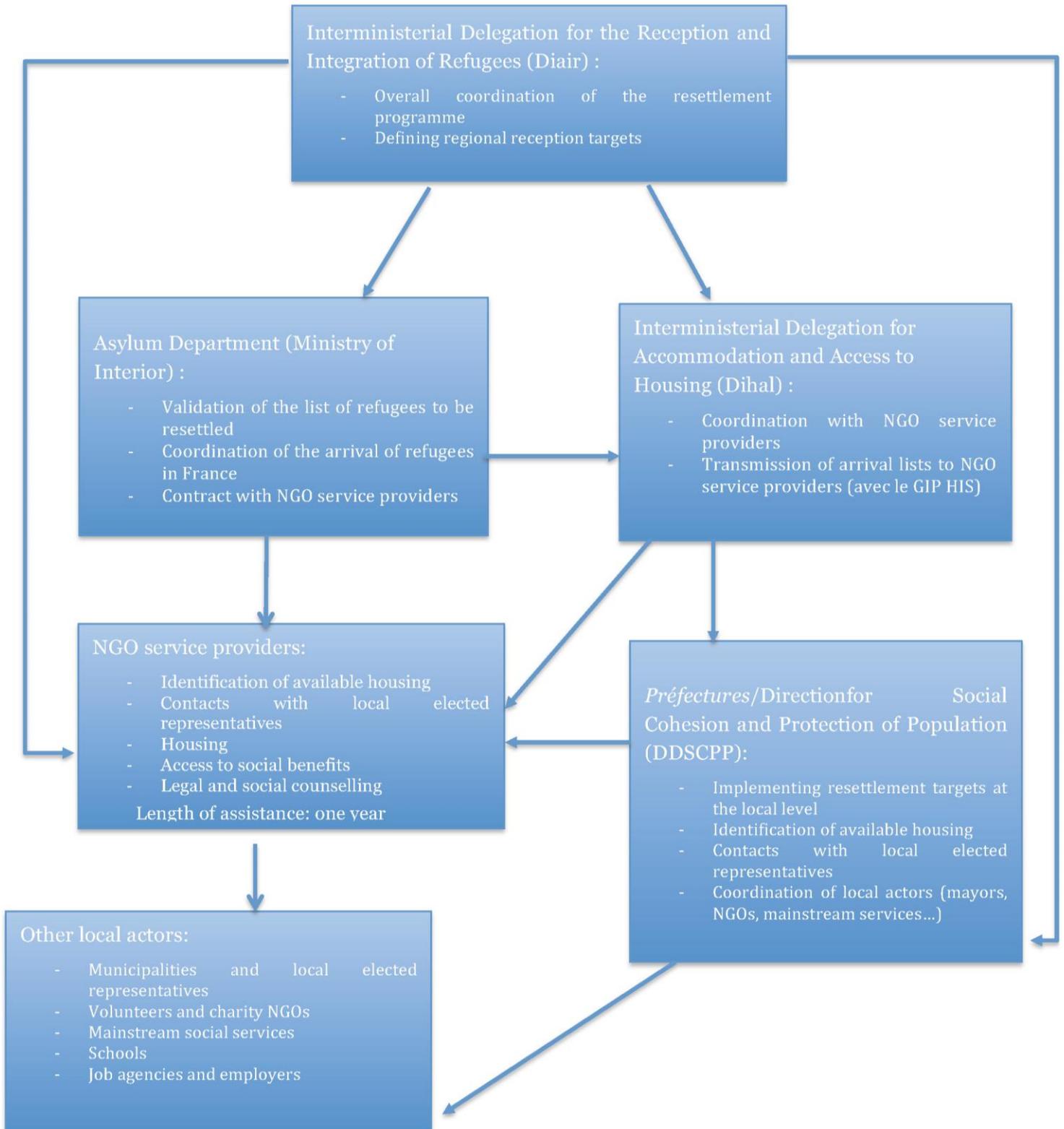
- Selection of resettlement dossiers
- Contract with NGO service providers
- Placement of refugees according to availabilities in reception facilities

NGO service providers (Adoma, Entr'aid Pierre Valdo, Forum réfugiés-Cosi, France terre d'asile, Isard Cos) :

- Housing
- Access to social benefits
- Legal and social counselling

Length of assistance: one year

## European resettlement programmes



## Appendix 3: Resettlement service providers and their reception targets

Service provider	Targets for Syrian refugees	Targets for sub-Saharan refugees
Adoma	844	240
Ampil	201	0
Aurore	547	0
Coallia	814	390
Forum réfugiés-Cosi	329	50
France horizon	1,051	410
France terre d'asile	905	105
Groupe SOS solidarité	461	0
Un toit pour tous	297	0
Viltais	446	264
Entraide Pierre Valdo	653	0
Soliha	500	0
GIP relais logement	20	130
Elia	80	0
Habitat et humanisme	100	0
ACSC	60	0
Croix Rouge (Red Cross)	80	300
ACAL	50	150
Alfa 3A	0	240
Accueil et promotion	0	150
Cecler	0	162
<b>Total</b>	<b>7,389</b>	<b>2,591</b>

Source: DIAIR

## Appendix 4: List of abbreviations and acronyms

- ▀ CADA: Reception Centre for Asylum Seekers
- ▀ CAO: Reception and Orientation Centres
- ▀ Casnav: Academic Centres for the Education of Newly-Arrived Non-French-Speaking Pupils and Children of Occupational Travellers and Travellers
- ▀ CCAS: Community Social Welfare Centres
- ▀ Ceseda: Code Governing the Entrance and Residence of Foreign Nationals and the Right to Asylum
- ▀ CIR: Republican Integration Contract
- ▀ CPH: Reception Centres for Refugees
- ▀ DDCSPP: Departmental Directorates for Social Cohesion and Protection of the Population
- ▀ DGEF: Directorate-General for Foreign Nationals in France
- ▀ Diair: Interministerial Delegation for the Reception and Integration of Refugees
- ▀ Dihal: Interministerial Delegation for Accommodation and Access to Housing
- ▀ EMPP: Mobile Mental Health Outreach Teams
- ▀ AMIF: Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund
- ▀ UNHCR: United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
- ▀ OECD: Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
- ▀ Ofii: French Office of Immigration and Integration
- ▀ Ofpra: French Office for the Protection of Refugees and Stateless Persons
- ▀ IOM: International Organization for Migration
- ▀ Pass: Permanent Access to Healthcare Centres
- ▀ RSA: Subsistence Allowance
- ▀ UP2A: Teaching Units for Incoming non-French-speaking Students



