

Vitality & Engagement

Developing Communities

Project Newsletter Mar 2023

PARTNERS



The VE Project is being implemented by Amnesty International Ireland and The Portuguese Refugee Council (CPR).

Amnesty International Ireland and The Refugee Council (CPR) Portugal are working in partnership to raise engagement and awareness of the Community Sponsorship (CS) initiative- locally, nationally and transnationally. The newsletter is here to share the voice of refugees, CS industry allies, highlight milestones and look to next steps for the VE programme.

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THE OPEN COMMUNITY



AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL

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Infographic Summary

MARCH 2023

19



Civil Society Events Hosted

73



Outreach Events Hosted

1061



Community Sponsorship Enquiries

373



Civil Society Event Attendees

1185



Outreach Event Attendees

1025



Social Media Followers

13



Project Case Studies

26



Allies Network Partners

11



Online Training Modules Developed

650



Online Training Users

17



Resources Available

Case Study – Portugal: Sponsor Perspective



PATH TO SPONSORSHIP

“TRANSFORMATIVE ACTIONS THAT LOCAL COMMUNITIES CAN TAKE BY SPONSORING A REFUGEE FAMILY AND CHANGING THEIR LIVES”

Active participation has marked the process of co-designing community sponsorship in Portugal. Since the beginning of Vitality & Engagement in 2021, the Portuguese Refugee Council (CPR) has made it a point to engage with different sectors and different communities. Civil Society Organisations have been one of these groups.

To ensure active engagement, CPR has been hosting a meeting every semester, starting from November 2021, specifically dedicated to creating a space for debate, good practice sharing and working in partnership with Civil Society Organisations from different sectors with the goal of creating synergies and movement around developing the first community sponsorship scheme in the country.

The first meeting, held in November 2021, marked the beginning of public discussions around policy design: how could sponsorship work in Portugal? Who should be the main actors? What solutions were needed to make this complementary pathway a reality? The meeting was held through participatory activities to ensure co-designing of the implementation of the pilot program for Community Sponsorship in Portugal between the different participating organizations.

The second meeting took place in June 2022, in the scope of World Refugee Day. Drawing from the experiences of staff and volunteers working with the refugee population, the issue at hand was safeguarding and its' relation to monitoring and evaluation. Strategies were developed and in-depth discussions were held about the duration and support package of sponsorship, as well as safeguards to be implemented.

For the third meeting, CPR decided to shake things up and hold the meeting in Porto, to guarantee the geographical diversity of participants. The theme for this meeting was autonomy and the end of the sponsorship period. How to building and maintaining independence and agency for those who are sponsored and how to ensure a smooth transition period after the end of the program.

“COMMUNITY SPONSORSHIP IS AN IMPORTANT SOLUTION. BUT IT HAS TWO SIDES: THE COMMUNITY HAS TO BE VERY SENSITIVE AND THERE CAN BE CULTURAL CLASHES, BECAUSE THERE ARE PEOPLE WHO CANNOT BE IN A DIFFERENT COUNTRY WITHOUT THEIR COMMUNITY. PEOPLE HAVE TO BE WELL SELECTED FROM BOTH SIDES”

These meetings have proven to be fundamental for sharing experiences and best practice advice for working with refugees, seeking closer support and monitoring networks and strategies for creating a practical and intercultural community.

As sponsors, individuals and organizations will welcome families who have fled conflict or persecution and who want to be safe and rebuild their lives, sponsors are entering a journey filled with responsibilities and that requires a high level of commitment, while offering great benefits.

Ultimately, these civil society meetings have served as the pillars for active participation, but also as beacons of advocacy, enabling the production of advocacy documents and manuals that have been very well received by public services, governmental authorities and, of course, sponsors, which is why CPR will continue to organise these moments in 2023: in June we will discuss Community Engagement and Mobilization; in November the theme will be Meaningful participation.

Case Study – Ireland: Organisational Perspective



SPONSORSHIP ACCOMMODATION GUIDE

“THE GUIDE AIMS TO BE A ROADMAP FOR COMMUNITY SPONSORSHIP GROUPS TO FIND THE INFORMATION THEY NEED ALL IN ONE PLACE”

Safe and secure housing provision is a fundamental component of integration that provides shelter and stability, and allows people to participate in education, work and in society more broadly. Securing suitable accommodation for the duration of the sponsorship commitment is a key aspect of the community sponsorship programme, but also one of the most challenging to fulfil.

An [Accommodation Guide](#), specifically for the community sponsorship programme in Ireland, has been developed to give community sponsorship groups and people who are resettling the information they need at each stage of the accommodation journey.

The guide was developed by The Open Community, the national support organisation for Ireland’s Community Sponsorship Programme for Refugees, together with community sponsorship groups from across Ireland as well as in partnership with A&L Goodbody, Nasc, the Peter McVerry Trust, The Housing Agency and Threshold.

Karen Moynihan from The Open Community said: “As there are so many different steps to be taken when supporting families or individuals with their accommodation, we felt it important to create a guide that gives sponsors the information they need, to support the families from the start to the end of the sponsorship journey. The guide aims to be a roadmap for groups to find the information they need all in one place.”

“IT IS AN ESSENTIAL RESOURCE FOR GROUPS [...] IT PROVIDES CLEAR, PRACTICAL GUIDANCE THROUGH ALL THE MANY STEPS THAT MUST BE NEGOTIATED WHEN SETTING UP FAMILIES IN THEIR NEW HOMES IN IRELAND AND MAKES THIS TASK, WHICH IS ONE OF THE MOST DIFFICULT FOR COMMUNITY SPONSORSHIP GROUPS, SO MUCH EASIER THAN PREVIOUSLY”

NOLA, COMMUNITY SPONSOR

There are 3 sections in the Guide: Pre-arrival, Post-arrival, and then the Transitional Stage, with links to resources needed in each section. The three sections cover sourcing accommodation before the family arrives; supporting the family in navigating accommodation services once they have arrived; and ensuring the family are aware of their rights and entitlements as the community sponsorship support period comes to an end.

Nola Leonard, who is a member of two community sponsorship groups and was involved in the Guide's development, said she welcomes its publication.

"It is an essential resource for groups welcoming refugees into their communities. It provides clear, practical guidance through all the many steps that must be negotiated when setting up families in their new homes in Ireland and makes this task, which is one of the most difficult for community sponsorship groups, so much easier than previously," she said.

The Accommodation Guide can be downloaded from [The Open Community website here.](#)



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