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As a safe and legal pathway to protection, community-based sponsorship programmes are gaining ground as an alternative to supporting refugees arriving to EU+ countries. This type of programme allows individuals, private companies and organisations to directly engage in financial, emotional and practical support to refugees who are resettled in their communities.[1332]

Studies were published in 2021 to highlight the opportunities for the development of community sponsorship programmes. UNCHR published a study outlining the challenges and opportunities related to community sponsorship programmes in the Swedish context.[1333] The Finnish Ministry of the Interior and the Ministry of Employment also published a study in May 2021, which concluded that this model could be a plausible option as it speeds up the integration of resettled refugees in Finland.[1334]

Building on previous experience, some EU+ countries, such as Germany, Ireland and Spain, continued developing their existing programmes and established new pilot projects. For example, a community sponsorship pilot programme for the reception of resettled refugees was established in five localities in the Comunidad Valenciana in Spain.[1335] In addition, a new agreement was signed with Navarre to develop community sponsorship initiatives, and the extension of the agreement was signed with the Basque government.

In line with the UNHCR report “Projected global resettlement needs 2021”,[1336]a new co-funded project, SAFE, is financed by the European Commission and being implemented in France and Italy from January 2021 to December 2023 by the NGO Forum Réfugiés-Cosi. The project aims at fostering collaboration between transnational stakeholders to develop and improve access to protection through sponsorship systems and complementary pathways, such as humanitarian corridors, family reunification and student mobility, for beneficiaries of international protection.[1337]

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