

3.14.1.2.2. National developments and challenges

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As governments faced challenges in fulfilling their prior commitments, several new trends were noted. For example, carrying over a part of the quota from the previous year continued to be a common practice in some countries. In Sweden, around 400 of the 900 refugees for the 2023 quota were from the 2021-2022 backlog. Women, girls and vulnerable groups, including LGTBIQ people, were priorities for the remaining quota of 500 refugees. [959](#)

Eligibility criteria play a pivotal role in the success of a refugee's reception and integration in the country of resettlement. These criteria often include the degree of vulnerability, the existence of family members already in the country of resettlement and the ability to integrate based on professional and language skills. In this context, Sweden introduced integration criteria in 2023 for the assessment of cases. The criteria include entrepreneurial spirit, skills, education, work experience and values that would facilitate integration into Swedish society. [960](#)

Geographical coverage

Resettlement and humanitarian admissions from Türkiye remained a priority for EU countries, as witnessed by approximately 4,200 pledges in 2023. In addition, countries accelerated admissions from areas affected by the earthquakes in Türkiye and Syria in February 2023. For example, Spain received two groups of refugees in response to the emergency situation. In March 2023, a first group of 89 Syrian refugees were resettled from Türkiye to Spain. A second group of 36 family units (161 Syrian refugees in total) arrived in May 2023. [961](#) Additional smaller groups of arrivals to the country throughout 2023 brought the total number to 302 persons from Türkiye. [962](#)

The first group of 23 Syrian nationals arrived to Slovenia in December 2023, as part of a project implemented in cooperation with UNHCR, following the government's decision in December 2022 to accept 50 Syrian or Afghan citizens from Türkiye. [963](#) The second group of 27 Afghan nationals arrived in January 2024. [964](#) In the immediate aftermath of the earthquake in Türkiye, France organised two additional resettlement missions in February 2023 and transferred 300 more Syrian refugees than initially planned.

New geographical areas of interest emerged in 2023, such as Central and South America. Finland pledged to receive Venezuelan refugees from Peru as of 2024, [965](#) while Spain admitted Nicaraguans hosted in Costa Rica. In this context, in May 2023, the Spanish Council of Ministers adopted a decision to expand the national resettlement programme, which initially included a yearly quota of 1,200 refugees, [966](#) with a complementary and additional route that would authorise the resettlement refugees from Central and South America during 2023-2025. The profile of the refugees to be resettled will be determined according to their ability to integrate into Spanish society based on their employability. [967](#) The first families arrived in Spain in December 2023 as part of a pilot project. [968](#)

Continued challenges

The volatile security situation in some countries (such as Lebanon and Pakistan) and high exit fees in some countries of first asylum [969](#) made it more difficult to transfer selected refugees. Many countries continued to face a crisis in reception and issues with integration. In addition, French authorities highlighted the challenge that local authorities issued exit permits for refugees with long delays.

As a result, national priorities were shifted in some EU+ countries and changes were made to practical aspects of implementing resettlement programmes. For example, Belgian national authorities took action to address accommodation shortages and ensure the continuity of resettlement programmes. [970](#) As the authority marked its 10th anniversary of offering resettlement programmes, a new reception facility to host up to 115 resettled refugees opened in Alveringem in September 2023. [971](#)

The Dutch government decided to resume resettlements from Türkiye in the framework of the EU-Turkey Agreement in September 2023 following some measures which were implemented in reception (see [Section 3.6](#)). The Netherlands will resettle 500 Syrian refugees from Türkiye annually (1,000 refugees in 2024-2025 pledging exercise) starting from January 2024. [972](#)

In contrast, pressure on the Swiss asylum system and a lack of housing pushed the Swiss Federal Department of Justice and Police (FDJP) to suspend resettlement programmes as of April 2023. The decision was based on recommendations by the Special Asylum Task Force and consultations with cantons. Nevertheless, a few months later, the government approved a new quota for 2024; however, the government indicated that the programme will be only activated after consulting cantons and municipalities and based on sufficient conditions in the reception system.

The Red Cross EU Office emphasised the importance of ensuring access to safe pathways to Europe, including through resettlement, humanitarian admissions and other complementary pathways. In this context, Red Cross published a “Handbook on safe avenues to access protection in Europe”, which highlights the activities it carries out and good practices and existing challenges. [973](#) Additionally, in May 2023 the Red Cross presented seven recommendations to EU+ countries, namely: ensuring the use of other instruments as complementary to resettlement; avoiding their use as a tool to leverage third country cooperation; investing in high-quality reception conditions and access to services; ensuring adequate financial, logistical and capacity-building support programmes; enhancing the involvement and financial support of civil society organisations; capitalising on the grassroots elements of community sponsorship and support its sustainability on migration management; and establishing clear criteria for eligibility for community sponsorship. [974](#)

[959](#) Swedish Migration Agency (SMA) | Migrationsverket. (2023). *Färre kvotflyktingar till Sverige [Fewer quota refugees to Sweden]*.

[960](#) Swedish Migration Agency (SMA) | Migrationsverket. (2023). *Färre kvotflyktingar till Sverige [Fewer quota refugees to Sweden]*.

[961](#) Ministry of Inclusion, Social Security and Migration | Ministerio de Inclusión, Seguridad Social y Migraciones. (2023, May 19). *El Ministerio de Inclusión acoge a un nuevo grupo de 161 refugiados sirios afectados por el terremoto de Turquía [The Ministry of Inclusion welcomes a new group of 161 Syrian refugees affected by the earthquake in Turkey]* [Press release].

962 United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. (2023). *Resettlement Data Finder*.

963 Ministry of the Interior | Ministrstvo za notranje zadeve. (2023, December 15). *Slovenia accepts refugees under the resettlement project*.

964 Ministry of the Interior | Ministrstvo za notranje zadeve. (2024, January 26). *Prispela druga skupina beguncev iz projekta trajne preselitve* [The second group of refugees from the resettlement project has arrived].

965 Sisäministeriö | Ministry of the Interior. (2023, December 20). *New year brings changes to the Ministry of the Interior's administrative branch* [Press release].

966 Ministry of Inclusion, Social Security and Migration | Ministerio de Inclusión, Seguridad Social y Migraciones. (2024, January 9). *El Gobierno aprueba el Programa Nacional de Reasentamiento de Refugiados en España para 2024 por el que se acogerá a 1.200 personas* [The government approves the National Refugee Resettlement Program in Spain for 2024, which will welcome 1,200 people] [Press release].

967 La Moncloa, Council of Ministers | La Moncloa, Consejo de Ministros. (2023). *Ampliacion del programa nacional de reasentamiento de refugiados* [Expansion of the National Resettlement Programme].

968 Ministry of Inclusion, Social Security and Migration | Ministerio de Inclusión, Seguridad Social y Migraciones. (2023, December 12). *Llegan las primeras 23 familias refugiadas nicaragüenses en el marco del proyecto piloto de migración laboral* [The first 23 Nicaraguan refugee families arrive within the framework of the labor migration pilot project] [Press release].

969 Human Rights Watch. (2023, November 29). *Pakistan: Widespread Abuses Force Afghans to Leave*.

970 Federal agency for the reception of asylum seekers | L'Agence fédérale pour l'accueil des demandeurs d'asile | Federaal agentschap voor de opvang van asielzoekers (Fedasil). (2023, October 6). *10 ans de réinstallation en Belgique* [10 years of resettlement in Belgium] [Press release].

971 Federal agency for the reception of asylum seekers | L'Agence fédérale pour l'accueil des demandeurs d'asile | Federaal agentschap voor de opvang van asielzoekers. (2023, July 31). *Un nouveau centre d'accueil à Alveringem* [A new reception centre in Alveringem] [Press release].

972 National Dutch goverment | Rijksoverheid. (2023, August 28). *Kamerbrief over besluitvorming opvangcrisis* [Letter to Parliament about decision-making on reception crisis]: State Secretary Van der Burg (JenV) informs the House of Representatives about the decision-making surrounding the crisis in the reception of asylum seekers. He discusses administrative agreements with fellow authorities, temporary measures and additional reinforcement and deployment.

973 Red Cross EU Office. (2023). *Handbook on safe avenues to access protection in Europe*.

974 Red Cross EU Office. (2023, March 14). *Safe avenues to access protection in Europe*.