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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

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