

Mounting global needs call for renewed European leadership on resettlement

As the world is confronted with several humanitarian and protection challenges, it is vital that European Union (EU) member states take a forward-looking approach to global refugee protection needs. Commitments to expand refugee resettlement and complementary pathways should not be forgotten, in view of the 1.5 million people in need of resettlement worldwide.

In response to the more than 6 million refugees fleeing Ukraine in the past months, EU member states and citizens have displayed commendable solidarity and political will to support people in need of protection. NGOs and humanitarian organisations have greatly welcomed these efforts, and several of our organisations are directly providing support in Ukraine and in neighbouring countries. At the same time, we stress that other refugee protection needs and resettlement commitments cannot be overlooked. Investments and preparations must be urgently made so that resettlement programmes are not placed on hold or inadvertently delayed, downscaled, or suspended as a result of the pressure on EU reception and asylum systems and a lack of long-term planning of reception capacity or resettlement programming.

At a time of mounting humanitarian and protection needs worldwide, the EU must lead by example, act on its commitment to expand safe and regular pathways for people in need of protection, and take steps to safeguard this vital protection tool and durable solution for refugees in vulnerable situations. After COVID-19, already reduced resettlement efforts must not take a further hit. Rather, the positive momentum and solidarity expressed in welcoming people fleeing Ukraine must lead to strengthened refugee protection and dignified reception for all refugees, regardless of their country of origin.

At two High-Level Forums in [July](#) and [October 2021](#), European leaders firmly stressed the importance of resettlement as a [crucial tool](#) for protecting refugees who face extreme vulnerability in the countries where

available data on humanitarian admissions, makes it difficult to monitor states' actual implementation of recent commitments.²

This decrease in Europe's engagement in resettlement stands in stark contrast to the rapidly rising number of refugees in need of resettlement globally. As UNHCR recently warned, the number of people forced to flee conflict, violence, human rights violations and persecution has now [exceeded 100 million](#) for the first time on record. As many as [1.47 million people](#) were projected to be in need of resettlement in 2022, which is expected to increase substantially in 2023.

Recent delays and shortfalls in resettlement efforts have gravely impacted refugees' lives and left many in limbo, with people fleeing Syria, Afghanistan, the DRC, South Sudan or Eritrea having to wait years for a chance to be resettled. It has also increased, rather than reduced, the pressure on countries in other world regions that have long hosted the vast majority of the world's refugees, amid domestic challenges.

These growing needs are further exacerbated by COVID-19, ongoing conflicts, climate change, and increasing inequality. In addition, the humanitarian consequences of the conflict in Ukraine are being felt across the world, with food insecurity reaching catastrophic levels due to disrupted grain exports and rising fuel and food prices.³ Urgent humanitarian and protection needs across countries of origin and first asylum remain pressing. For example:

In countries neighbouring Syria, the Ukraine conflict's impact on food exports and rising energy prices

In response to rising needs worldwide, EU states must urgently reaffirm their commitment to refugee resettlement and prevent programmes from shrinking further. Experience from the US shows that, once resettlement systems are allowed to shrink or dismantle, it is costly, complex, and time-consuming to rebuild them. Instead, the EU must continue to foster the significant expertise, networks, and local engagement around resettlement that have developed across the continent in recent years.

IOM, and civil society. Innovative processing modalities trialled during COVID-19, which can make resettlement faster, safer, and more cost-