



National Audit Office

Report

by the National Audit Office

Home Office

The response to the Syrian refugee crisis – an international comparison

SEPTEMBER 2016

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Key facts

13.5m

United Nations' estimate of the number of Syrians in need of humanitarian assistance

4.8m

number of Syrians registered as refugees in neighbouring countries at the end of July 2016

1 in 10

number of Syrian refugees in the Middle East or North Africa region who need resettling, according to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)

20,000

number of Syrian refugees Germany committed to resettle between May 2013 and the end of 2015 as part of its Humanitarian Admission Programme

25,000

number of Syrian refugees Canada committed to resettle between November 2015 and the end of February 2016

20,000

number of Syrian refugees the UK government has committed to resettle between September 2015 and May 2020

Summary

1 Since it began in 2011, the civil war in Syria has caused mass movement of Syrians, both within Syria and to neighbouring countries. Syrians now make up the largest refugee population in the world, with almost five million having fled to neighbouring countries to escape the conflict. Many countries currently hosting large numbers of Syrian refugees are developing countries and cannot afford to support such large numbers. As a result, the United Nations estimates that one in ten Syrian refugees in the Middle East or North Africa region currently needs resettlement.

2 In January 2014, the UK government announced that it would establish a Syrian Vulnerable Persons Resettlement programme (the programme) to allow selected refugees to resettle in the UK. The initial programme was small in scale, and prioritised people requiring urgent medical treatment, survivors of violence and torture, and women and children at risk. In September 2015, the then-Prime Minister announced that the programme would be expanded to resettle 20,000 of the most vulnerable Syrian refugees from the Middle East and North Africa region to the UK by May 2020, and that the programme's criteria would be expanded to include all those recognised as vulnerable by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR).

3 The National Audit Office reviewed the UK's programme to resettle Syrian refugees in 2016, which examined the achievements of the programme to date, the processes in place to deliver the programme, progress against the targets set, and the risks to future delivery of the programme and whether these are being addressed. The report was published in September 2016 and is available on our website.

Our report

4 This international comparison report considers the approaches to dealing with the Syrian refugee crisis from countries outside the UK. Some countries have resettled Syrian refugees as part of their annual agreement with UNHCR to resettle vulnerable persons. Other countries have designed and implemented resettlement schemes specifically for Syrian refugees. These programmes have some similarities with the UK programme. However, many are different in the criteria chosen to identify and select refugees, the status granted to refugees, the referral process, rights to benefits and duration of support provided.

5 Alongside a general overview, this report looks more closely at the approaches adopted by Canada and Germany. Both countries have committed to resettle a similar number of Syrian refugees to the UK and both have successfully delivered against their targets. However, the mechanisms put in place to deliver the programmes differ significantly from the UK programme.

6 We supplemented our review of online and published documents with discussions with, and evidence from, Canadian and German officials responsible for the implementation of their national programmes.

Part One

The Syrian conflict

1.1 This part of the report provides an introduction to the Syrian conflict and how the international community has responded.

The war in Syria

1.2 The civil war in Syria began in 2011 and is estimated to have claimed more than 470,000 lives up to 2015.¹ By the end of 2014, almost 6% of the population were estimated to have been killed, injured or maimed.² The crisis has had a detrimental impact on the Syrian economy, with four out of five Syrians now living in poverty. The United Nations estimates that 13.5 million Syrians are now in need of humanitarian assistance, including six million children.³

1.3 Over half of the Syrian population have left their homes since 2011 to escape the conflict and Syrians now constitute the largest refugee population in the world. Around 6.5 million Syrians are internally displaced within Syria. Almost five million Syrians have fled to neighbouring countries. At 1 June 2016, 4.8 million Syrians were registered as refugees in neighbouring countries, including: 2.1 million in Egypt, Iraq, Jordan and Lebanon; 2.7 million in Turkey; and more than 29,000 in other North African countries.^{4,5,6} The number of Syrians seeking asylum in Europe continues to rise but remains low compared to the number of Syrian refugees residing in Syria's neighbouring countries (**Figure 1** overleaf).⁷ Around 1.1 million Syrian refugees claimed asylum in Europe between April 2011 and June 2016, including around 750,000 in the European Union (EU).⁸

1 Syrian Centre for Policy Research, *Confronting fragmentation*, February 2016.

2 Syrian Centre for Policy Research, *Alienation and violence report 2014*, March 2015.

3 United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, Syria: Regional Crisis Overview. Available at: www.unocha.org/syrian-arab-republic/syria-country-profile/about-crisis

4 A refugee is defined as a person who 'owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group, or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality, and is unable to or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country...' (1951 UN Refugee Convention).

5 Since January 2016, the Lebanese government has stopped allowing the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) to register refugees.

6 UNHCR, Syria Regional Refugee Response: interagency information-sharing portal. Available at: <http://data.unhcr.org/syrianrefugees/regional.php>

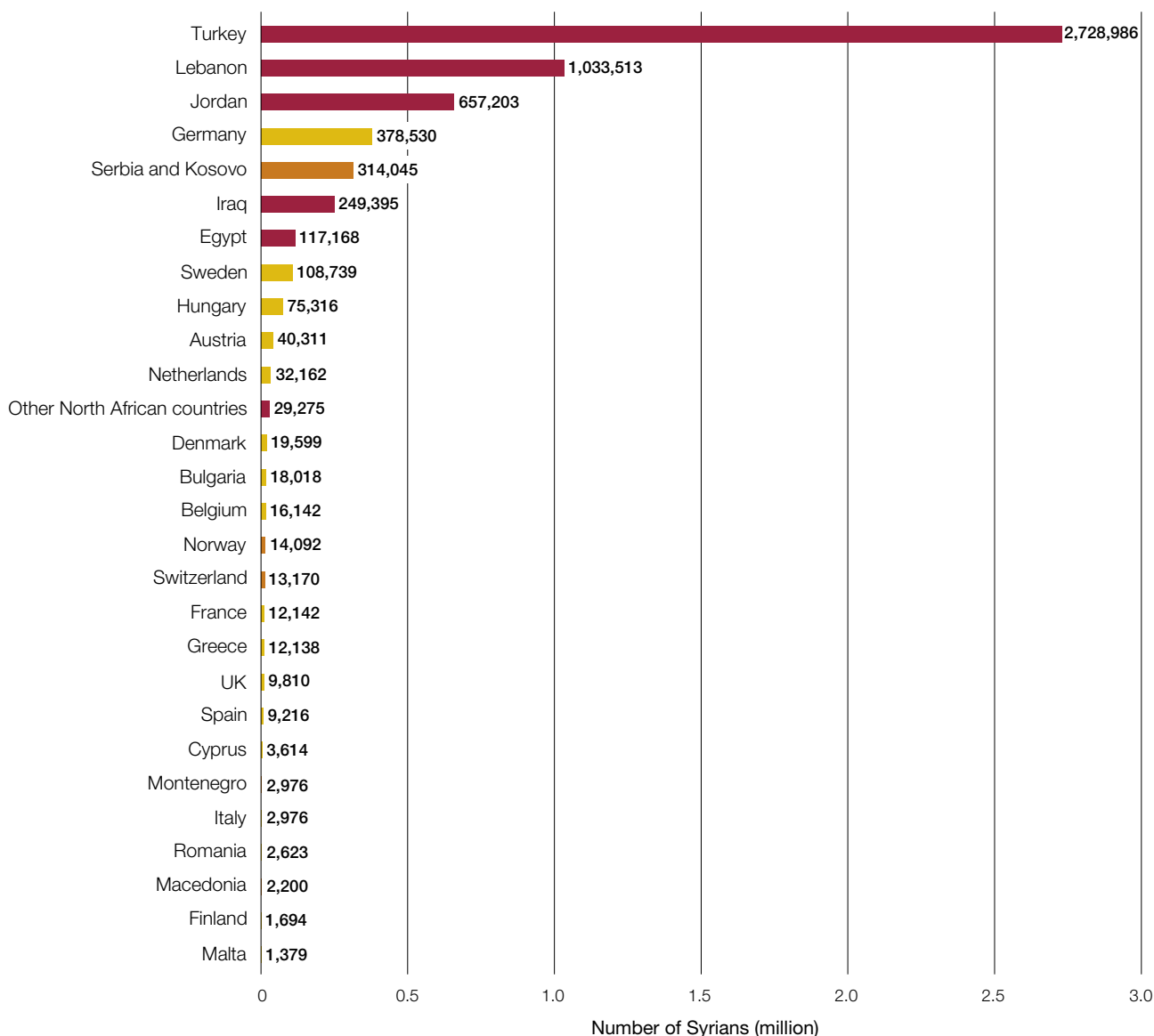
7 An asylum seeker is a person who has left their country of origin by their own means and formally applied for asylum in another country but whose application has not yet been concluded.

8 See footnote 6.

Figure 1

Number of Syrian refugees in neighbouring countries and in Europe

Most Syrians have fled to neighbouring countries; the largest number of Syrians in Europe are in Germany



- Middle East and North Africa countries
- European Union countries
- Non-European Union countries

Notes

- 1 The number of Syrians in European countries is those who have claimed asylum between April 2011 and June 2016 and are awaiting a decision. The number of Syrians in neighbouring countries is those registered by UNHCR (or the government of Turkey) at the end of July 2016.
- 2 Luxembourg, Poland, Czech Republic, Croatia, Slovenia, Portugal, Ireland, Albania, Latvia and Bosnia and Herzegovina have received fewer than 1,000 asylum applications. Slovakia, Estonia and Lithuania have received fewer than 100 asylum applications.

1.4 The financial burden for supporting refugees traditionally falls on neighbouring countries. Many of these do not have sufficiently developed economies to support such large numbers of refugees. At the end of 2015, the 30 countries with the most refugees per gross domestic product (purchasing power parity (PPP)) per capita (a measure of national economic development) were all in developing regions. Turkey, Lebanon and Jordan, currently hosting large numbers of Syrians, had a GDP (PPP) per capita of \$19,600, \$13,900 and \$10,900 respectively in 2015, compared with \$41,300 in the UK, \$47,300 in Germany and \$44,300 in Canada (**Figure 2** overleaf).⁹

Overview of approaches to resettlement

The international community's response

1.5 The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) searches for durable solutions for refugees, of which resettlement is one option.¹⁰ It considers all three options before identifying the most appropriate. It currently estimates that one in ten Syrian refugees in the Middle East and North Africa region needs resettlement before 2018. The international community has so far pledged to resettle just over 220,000 Syrian refugees. This is 250,000 fewer than the total number estimated to need resettlement and not all pledges are due to be fulfilled by the end of 2018.¹¹

1.6 The approach adopted varies greatly between countries. There are differences in the criteria for selecting refugees, status granted to refugees, the referral process, rights to benefits and duration of support.

The response in Europe

The European Resettlement Scheme

1.7 The EU is working to establish a common response to the crisis and resettle larger numbers of refugees. In May 2015 the European Commission proposed a European Resettlement Scheme, which was adopted by the European Council in July 2015. Member States have agreed to resettle more than 22,000 refugees in need of international protection from outside the EU to EU Member States by July 2017. The two-year scheme is supported by the EU budget. The aim of the scheme is to provide safe and legal pathways to enter the EU to avoid displaced persons in need of protection having to resort to criminal networks of smugglers and traffickers. By July 2016, 8,268 people had been resettled in 17 EU countries and four other European countries.¹²

9 World Bank, International Comparison Program database. Available at: <http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GDP.PCAP.PP.CD>

10 The other two are local integration or voluntary repatriation.

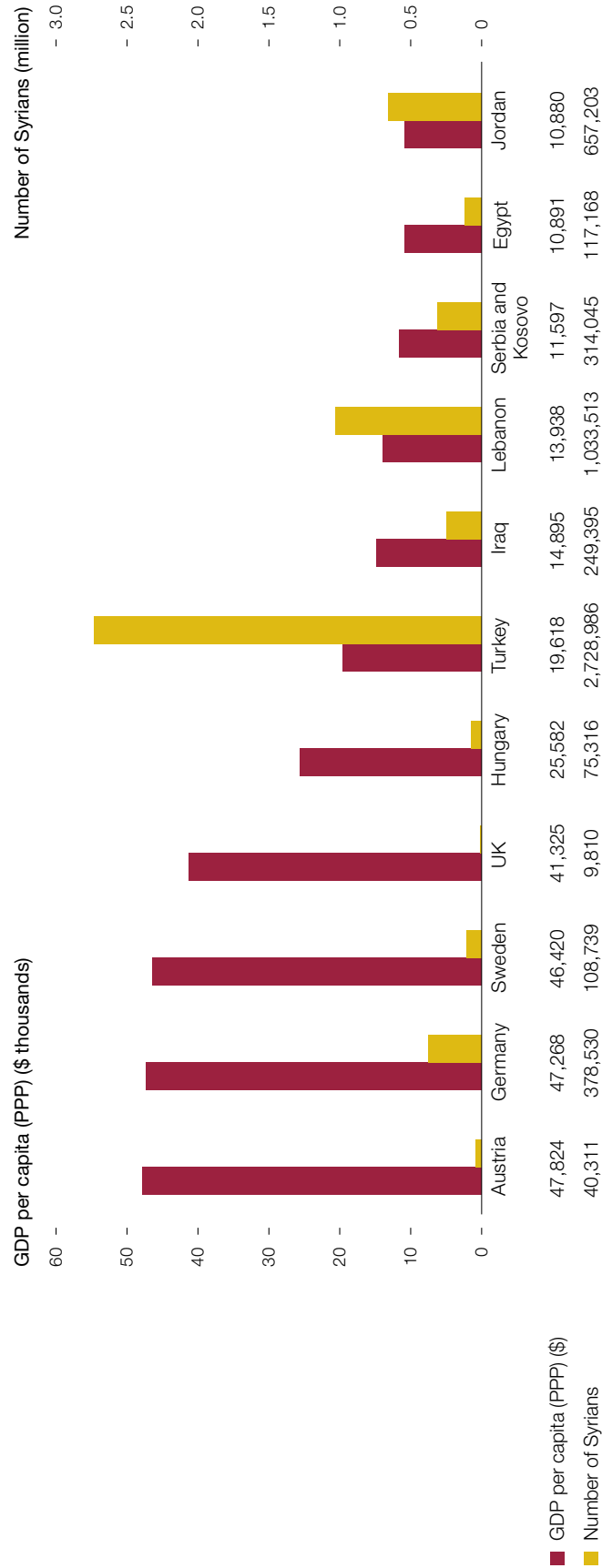
11 UNHCR, *Resettlement and other admission pathways for Syrian refugees*, April 2016.

12 European Commission, *Relocation and Resettlement – State of Play*, July 2016.

Figure 2

GDP per capita across some of the countries Syrian refugees have migrated to

Countries hosting the most Syrian refugees tend to be those with lower GDP per capita



Notes

- 1 The number of Syrians in European countries is those who have claimed asylum between April 2011 and June 2016 and are awaiting a decision. The number of Syrians in neighbouring countries is those registered by UNHCR (or the government of Turkey) at the end of July 2016.
- 2 GDP per capita figures were taken at the end of 2015.

Source: United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, Syria Regional Refugee Response: interagency information-sharing portal and the World Bank

1.8 As part of the European Resettlement Scheme, the EU also negotiated an agreement with Turkey in March 2016. From 4 April 2016, for each Syrian sent back to Turkey from the Greek islands, another Syrian will be resettled from a refugee camp in Turkey. This agreement aims to replace irregular flows of refugees travelling in dangerous conditions across the Mediterranean Sea with an orderly and legal resettlement process. Out of the 8,268 people who have been resettled as part of the European Resettlement Scheme to date, 796 were Syrian refugees resettled under the EU–Turkey agreement. The majority of the Syrian refugees were resettled to Germany (294 refugees) and Sweden (254 refugees) (**Figure 3** overleaf).

The Emergency Relocation Scheme

1.9 In September 2015, the EU Justice and Home Affairs Council agreed to relocate 160,000 Syrian asylum seekers currently in Italy or Greece. The scheme is designed to help Italy and Greece deal with the pressures of the refugee crisis in their respective countries. The relocations are expected to take place over two years, with the EU budget providing financial support to the Member States participating.

1.10 Under the Emergency Relocation Scheme, asylum seekers with a high chance of having their applications successfully processed are relocated from Greece and Italy, where they have arrived, to other Member States where they will have their asylum applications processed. If these applications are successful, the applicants will be granted refugee status with the right to reside in the Member State to which they are relocated. The first target of relocating at least 20,000 people by mid-May 2016 was not met, with 3,056 people (15% of target) relocated since September 2015 (**Figure 4** on page 13).¹³

1.11 The UK can choose to opt out of any EU migration policy and has decided not to participate in the EU–Turkey agreement or in the relocation scheme. Instead, the UK programme focuses on resettlement of vulnerable Syrian refugees from Jordan, Lebanon, Iraq, Egypt and Turkey.

13 See footnote 12.

Figure 3

The European Resettlement Scheme

Since the launch of the scheme 8,268 people have been resettled

Member State/ Associated State	Total resettled under the 20 July scheme, including under the 1:1 mechanism with Turkey	Total resettled under the 1:1 mechanism with Turkey (since 4 April 2016)
Austria	1,453	X
Belgium	333	4
Czech Republic	52	X
Denmark	481	X
Finland	192	11 (outside of 20 July scheme)
France	335	X
Germany	294	294
Ireland	273	X
Italy	419	70
Latvia	6	6
Lithuania	5	5
Luxembourg	X	27 (outside of 20 July scheme)
Netherlands	366	56
Portugal	12	12
Spain	118	57
Sweden	380	254
United Kingdom	1,864	X
Iceland	48	X
Liechtenstein	20	X
Norway	1,098	X
Switzerland	519	X
Total	8,268	796

Notes

- 1 Under the European Resettlement Scheme agreed on 20 July 2015, Member States can resettle refugees through multilateral and national schemes. The UK operates under its national resettlement programme and does not receive EU funding.
- 2 Of the 1,864 refugees resettled to the UK by the end of 2015, 1,194 were resettled under the Syrian Vulnerable Persons Resettlement programme (the programme).
- 3 Based on information made available by Member States and associated countries as of 11 July 2016.

Source: European Commission, *Relocation and Resettlement – State of Play*, July 2016

Figure 4

The Emergency Relocation Scheme

The target to relocate at least 20,000 people by mid-May 2016 was not met

Since the launch of the scheme 3,056 people have been relocated

Member States	Relocated from Italy	Relocated from Greece
Austria	X	X
Belgium	29	90
Bulgaria	X	6
Croatia	4	X
Cyprus	10	35
Czech Republic	X	4
Denmark	X	X
Estonia	X	27
Finland	180	217
France	181	810
Germany	20	37
Hungary	X	X
Ireland	X	38
Latvia	2	39
Lithuania	X	34
Luxembourg	X	71
Malta	17	24
Netherlands	125	242
Poland	X	X
Portugal	150	302
Romania	6	62
Slovenia	6	28
Slovakia	X	X
Spain	40	147
Sweden	39	X
Switzerland	34	X
Total	843	2,213

Source: European Commission, *Relocation and Resettlement – State of Play*, July 2016

The response outside the European Union

1.12 Other European countries involved in resettling Syrian refugees include Norway and Switzerland, which have committed to resettle 9,000 and 2,000 Syrian refugees respectively. The USA has committed to resettle a total of 85,000 refugees, including 10,000 Syrian refugees between October 2015 and September 2016. In the first six months of the programme, 1,285 Syrian refugees had been resettled. The number of refugees resettled has increased sharply since March 2016, with the USA achieving its target to resettle 10,000 Syrian refugees on 29 August 2016. Outside Europe, Canada has resettled by far the highest number of refugees to date, with more than 29,700 Syrian refugees having been resettled between November 2015 and 1 August 2016.

1.13 Some countries have introduced other legal admission routes as an alternative to resettlement. France, Brazil and Switzerland offer the opportunity to apply for a special humanitarian visa. The visa is delivered by the consulate of the country responsible to Syrian refugees in the Middle East and North Africa region to allow them to claim asylum on their arrival into the country. This is designed to provide a legal and safe way for Syrian refugees to travel without having to resort to smugglers. On this basis, UNHCR has recommended an increased use of humanitarian visas as a means of creating more legal channels to safety. At the end of July 2016, Brazil had issued around 8,500 humanitarian visas, with Switzerland and France having issued 4,700 and 2,600 visas respectively.

1.14 A popular response to the Syrian crisis has been to encourage private sponsorship of refugees. The UK launched a community sponsorship scheme in July 2016 to allow individuals, charities, faith groups and businesses to directly support and resettle Syrian refugees in the UK. Refugees resettled under community sponsorship in the UK must still have been identified and referred by UNHCR. Canada has extensive experience of privately sponsored resettlement schemes and has relied heavily on private sponsors to resettle Syrian refugees since 2013. Canada has resettled an average of 5,000 privately sponsored refugees using this approach every year between 2011 and 2014. Some organisations (known as Sponsorship Agreement Holders) have signed sponsorship agreements with the government to sponsor refugees on an ongoing basis. Other sponsors, known as Groups of Five and Community Sponsors, are persons or groups who are not involved on an ongoing basis but have come together to sponsor refugees. In 2013, Canada also introduced a new scheme: the Blended Visa Office-Referred Program, a mix of government support and private sponsorship.

Part Two

Delivering the German and Canadian programmes

2.1 The international community's response to the crisis in Syria has varied considerably by country. This part of the report looks at how Germany and Canada have delivered their programmes to resettle Syrian refugees, including how the programmes were set up, the resettlement process and the financing of the programmes.

How the programmes were set up

Germany

2.2 Germany was the first country in Europe to announce a specific humanitarian programme in response to the Syrian crisis. In May 2013, it committed to resettling up to 5,000 refugees as part of the Humanitarian Admission Programme. The programme was open to Syrian refugees in Syria, Lebanon and Jordan. In December 2013, the programme was expanded with a commitment to resettle a further 5,000 Syrian refugees from Syria, Lebanon, Jordan and Egypt. The programme was expanded for a third time in July 2014 with a commitment to resettle a further 10,000 Syrian refugees by the end of 2015. The programme was also expanded to include Syrian refugees in Libya. All three programmes are now closed.

2.3 Responsibility for the Humanitarian Admission Programme lies with the German Federal Ministry of the Interior. The delivery and operation of the programme is the responsibility of an agency within the Ministry, the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees (Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge (BAMF)). The team consists of 20 people and reports to three officials in the Federal Ministry of the Interior. The Federal Ministry also sent a small team to the German embassy in Lebanon to coordinate the selection process for the programme and successful participants' departure to Germany.

2.4 In addition to the Humanitarian Admission Programme, Germany launched a private sponsorship scheme in 2013 in 15 out of the 16 federal Länder.¹⁴ This gives German citizens, and Syrian citizens who have lived in Germany for more than a year, the opportunity to sponsor relatives from Syria in order to relocate them to Germany. Sponsors have to make a declaration of commitment and demonstrate they have the necessary resources to cover the costs of refugees travelling to, and staying in, Germany. Germany has issued 22,500 visas for privately sponsored refugees since 2013. Most Länder only implemented the scheme until 2015, but some Länder are accepting applications until the end of 2016.

Canada

2.5 Canada has a strong tradition of humanitarian action, granting permanent residency to an average of 26,000 refugees per year between 2005 and 2014, about half of whom are resettled from a war zone country. Claims from Syrian refugees represent the fifth highest of all nationalities of refugees making asylum claims in Canada, although the number of claims has been relatively low due to visa restrictions, with just over 580 in 2015.

2.6 Canada also made a commitment to resettle Syrian refugees in 2013, when the previous Canadian government committed to resettling 1,300 Syrian refugees by the end of 2014. It expected that the overwhelming majority (85%) of refugees would be privately sponsored. The Canadian government achieved its target to resettle 1,300 refugees in March 2015, a few months behind schedule. In January 2015, it expanded the programme to resettle 10,000 Syrian refugees and 3,000 Iraqi refugees by the end of December 2017. However, the deadline was brought forward by 15 months to September 2016, although the overall target remained the same. The government again expected that the majority of the refugees (60%) would be privately sponsored. Of the 10,000 Syrian refugees to be resettled, 2,302 refugees had arrived in Canada by the end of July 2015.

2.7 The new Canadian government, elected in November 2015, significantly expanded the resettlement programme, in line with its electoral commitment. The newly elected government made three commitments:

- to resettle 25,000 Syrian refugees by the end of February 2016;
- to resettle 25,000 government-supported Syrian refugees by the end of 2016; and
- to process all privately sponsored Syrian refugee applications submitted up to 31 March 2016 by the end of 2016 or early 2017.

¹⁴ Bavaria only considered cases on an individual basis.

2.8 The responsibility for the resettlement programme lies with the federal department of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship. Several other departments are involved in the delivery and operation of the programme, including Canada Border Services Agency, the Department of National Defence, Global Affairs Canada, Public Health Agency of Canada, Public Services and Procurement Canada and the Royal Canadian Mounted Police. Some of these departments are not usually involved in resettlement operations.

The resettlement process

2.9 The UK only accepts referrals from the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), which identifies refugees eligible for resettlement based on its vulnerability criteria. The UK's processing of resettlement cases is different from some other countries, including both Germany and Canada. Germany also accepts Syrians who have not necessarily been recognised as refugees by UNHCR, or who have been referred by third parties such as non-governmental organisations and Federal Länder. Unlike the UK, Canada has established teams within host countries to interview refugees and has sent considerable additional resources to the region to ensure that its target of 25,000 arrivals within three months was met.

2.10 The majority of cases accepted for humanitarian admission in Germany were identified by Federal Länder (10,500 individuals). Around one-third (6,000 individuals) were identified and submitted by UNHCR. German embassies in the Middle East and North Africa region identified a further 2,000 Syrians for humanitarian admission. The German Foreign Office and the Federal Ministry of the Interior identified 1,500 Syrians for humanitarian admission. The Syrian nationals these organisations identify were not necessarily registered as refugees by UNHCR but were either considered as particularly vulnerable or had relatives in Germany willing to support them upon arrival.

2.11 As part of the Syrian resettlement programme, Canada has sent about 500 staff overseas to process Syrian refugees eligible for resettlement and ensure that its target of 25,000 arrivals within three months was met.¹⁵ Those posted overseas are responsible for processing applications for resettlement in dedicated visa offices in Jordan, Lebanon and Turkey. Visa officers sent from Canada and from other overseas missions enhanced the visa processing capacity in these missions. Staff also conduct security screenings, collect biometrics from refugees and help arrange flights to Canada.

¹⁵ Germany has sent a small team to the German embassy in Beirut. The aim was to build up appropriate structures to act as a blueprint for future resettlement programmes.

Eligibility criteria

2.12 The Syrian Vulnerable Persons Resettlement programme (the programme) is one of two current resettlement programmes in the UK to target support for refugees on the basis of clearly defined vulnerability criteria. Until September 2015, the programme prioritised people requiring urgent medical treatment, survivors of violence and torture, and women and children at risk. The eligibility criteria have since been expanded. The programme is now open to all Syrian refugees registered in Jordan, Lebanon, Iraq, Egypt and Turkey who meet one or more of UNHCR's criteria for vulnerable groups.¹⁶

2.13 The profile of refugees selected for admission into the German Humanitarian Admission Programme has gradually changed over time. During the first phase of the programme, the majority of refugees were selected on the basis of referrals from UNHCR under humanitarian criteria, notably: children in special need of protection, with their parents or legal guardians; women at risk; people with medical needs; and members of religious minorities subject to specific religious persecution. Later during the programme, the Länder submitted more cases of Syrian nationals who were referred to the programme by their relatives in Germany. A small number of Syrians were also identified on the basis of their expected capacity to contribute to the social, political and economic reconstruction process in Syria after the conflict. The different criteria were not ranked and many of the cases met several criteria for humanitarian admission.

2.14 The current Canadian resettlement of Syrian refugees has similar vulnerability criteria to the UK. It gives priority to vulnerable refugees who present a low security risk, such as women and complete families. This is in line with Canada's overall approach to refugee resettlement.

Immigration status

2.15 The immigration status given to Syrian refugees differs in Germany and Canada. Although referred to as refugees, those resettled in Germany as part of the programme are granted humanitarian protection status rather than refugee status, as is the case in the UK. Humanitarian protection is a form of immigration status granted by the Federal Ministry of the Interior to a person who has to rely on humanitarian aid and whose country is facing a severe crisis. While the UK grants those resettling in the UK as part of its programme a five-year residency permit, Germany issues a two-year residency permit. The permit is renewable as many times as necessary if the situation in Syria remains unchanged. Refugees are eligible to apply for permanent residency after five years in Germany and can apply for German citizenship after eight years.

¹⁶ UNHCR's criteria include women and girls at risk; survivors of violence or torture, or both; refugees with legal or physical protection needs, or both; refugees with medical needs or disabilities; children and adolescents at risk and refugees with family links in resettlement countries.

2.16 Syrian refugees resettled in Canada automatically receive permanent residency on arrival. They can apply for Canadian citizenship after four years.

Financing the resettlement programmes

2.17 The federal government of Germany allocated a total of €12 million to the Syrian Humanitarian Admission Programme between 2013 and 2015: €4.8 million in 2013, €5.5 million in 2014 and €1.8 million in 2015. In 2016, the budgets of the Humanitarian Admission Programme and of the resettlement programme were pooled and reached a total of €9 million, the highest annual amount to date. The federal government is responsible for covering the costs of selection and transport (unless refugees travel individually), medical checks before departure and the initial accommodation in a reception centre when applicable. Federal Länder take over responsibility once the refugees have settled into their host municipalities and provide assistance, care and accommodation.

2.18 In November 2015, the federal government of Canada announced that up to \$678 million would be used over six years to cover the resettlement process and the integration support for refugees once they have arrived in Canada. The government has also granted \$100 million to UNHCR for humanitarian assistance as well as the identification of refugees for resettlement. All expenditures for 2015-2016 have been published on Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada's website. The government spent \$319 million in 2015-2016, 70% of what it had originally planned for.

Part Three

Progress to date

3.1 This part of the report looks at progress made to date in resettling refugees in the UK, Germany and Canada, including: the programmes' achievements; the experience of those involved; and the scale of the remaining challenge.

Achievements of the programmes

3.2 The UK met its target to resettle 1,000 Syrian refugees by Christmas 2015, exceeding it by almost 10%. It has resettled a further 1,561 Syrian refugees since then, taking the total to 2,659 by the end of June 2016, 13% of the overall target.

3.3 By May 2016, Germany had resettled more than 19,000 individuals as part of its Humanitarian Admission Programme, with more still expected as more than 20,000 visas had been issued as part of the programme. All three successive Humanitarian Admission Programmes in Germany are now closed. Germany has also issued 22,500 visas for privately sponsored refugees since 2013. Privately sponsored refugees had to organise their own flight arrangements to Germany and then claim their temporary residence permits in the local authority where their sponsor lives. The local authority in turn notifies the Länder, which notifies the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees. This information chain takes time, which is why not all arrivals have yet been officially verified.

3.4 The Government of Canada met its target to resettle 25,000 Syrian refugees by the end of February 2016, resettling 26,172 Syrian refugees between 4 November 2015 and 1 March 2016, an average of 6,543 per month. The majority of refugees were resettled from Lebanon (54%) and Jordan (34%), with the remainder coming from Turkey (9%) or other neighbouring countries (**Figure 5**). Most of the refugees (57%) were government-assisted refugees. Just over one-third (34%) were privately sponsored, with the remainder being resettled under a mix of government support and private sponsorship (Blended Visa Office-Referral Program). The province that has resettled the most refugees is Ontario (41%), followed by Quebec (19%).

Figure 5
Characteristics of those resettled

Number of Syrian refugees resettled		United Kingdom	Germany	Canada
		2,659 (as at the end of June 2016) (%)	18,952 (as at the end of 2015) (%)	26,172 (as at 1 March 2016) (%)
Gender	Male	51	50	51
	Female	49	50	49
Children		49	37	52
Family size	1 member	8		9
	2–3 members	24		13
	4–6 members	67		55
	7 members or more	1		22
Country of origin	Lebanon		45	54
	Jordan		2	34
	Turkey		12	9
	Syria		34	0
	Other		7	3

Notes

- 1 Figures for Germany only relate to the Humanitarian Admission Programmes and do not include privately sponsored refugees.
- 2 Children are refugees under the age of 18, except for Canada where the percentage is for refugees under the age of 20.
- 3 There are no data available for family size of Syrian refugees resettled in Germany or for the country of origin of refugees resettled in the UK.
- 4 Figures may not total due to rounding.

Source: National Audit Office analysis of Home Office data, Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge data and Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada data

Resettlement and integration into the local community

3.5 The participation of UK local authorities to the Syrian Vulnerable Persons Resettlement programme (the programme) is voluntary. Participating local authorities are responsible for securing accommodation for those they have agreed to resettle, meeting refugees at the airport and transporting them to their accommodation, registering them for health and education services and welfare benefits, and providing English language classes. Refugees receive a welcome pack of groceries on arrival, as well as an allowance of £200 per person from local authorities to ensure that they have sufficient funds while they wait for their benefit claims to be processed.

Dispersal across the country

3.6 The approach to resettlement and integration into local communities in Germany is different from that taken in the UK. Germany has used a distribution key since 1949 to ensure an equitable spread of refugees and asylum seekers among Länder. The Königsteiner key is calculated each year according to the tax receipts and population numbers of the Länder. Three Länder received half of the total refugee population in 2015.

3.7 The approach in Canada is similar to the UK as it also relies on the voluntary participation of the Canadian ‘communities’ (the Canadian equivalent of local authorities). An increasing number of communities have participated in the scheme, with a total of 44 communities across the country having participated at April 2016. The Matching Centre, a team within Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC), is responsible for matching refugees to a community based on an assessment of criteria such as family connections, medical needs, and ethnic and cultural communities.

Resettlement services

3.8 Refugees resettled in Germany are accommodated in dedicated reception centres in Friedland or in Bramsche for the first two weeks after their arrival. They receive cultural orientation courses, including basic language training and background information about Germany, interactions with the local authorities, and school and health systems. Refugees are then dispersed across the country according to the Königsteiner key and often accommodated in council housing.¹⁷

3.9 Refugees resettled in Germany have full access to medical and educational services. They also automatically receive the right to work in Germany and can apply for benefits. Privately sponsored refugees also benefit from an unrestricted work permit. However, their sponsors are expected to cover most of their costs for a period of five years.

3.10 Canada has adopted a different approach overall to resettlement and integration from those in both the UK and Germany, although its approach has elements which are similar to both. Government-assisted refugees resettled in Canada between November 2015 and February 2016 were hosted in temporary accommodation on arrival, including welcome centres, but also hotels, due to the large number of refugees to be resettled in a short amount of time.¹⁸ The process to find permanent private-rented accommodation can take up to six weeks. At the end of July 2016, all Syrian refugees resettled between November 2015 and February 2016 had received permanent accommodation.

¹⁷ Accommodation is the responsibility of the sponsors for privately sponsored refugees.

¹⁸ Privately sponsored refugees were directly welcomed into permanent accommodation by their sponsors or hosted in temporary accommodation until permanent accommodation could be found.

3.11 Government-assisted refugees receive income support from the federal government. Service provider organisations, funded by IRCC, also provide various settlement services, including language classes, employment services and professional mentorship programmes and workshops to facilitate integration into Canadian society. Other support includes a one-off start-up payment to help them set up a household in Canada, as well as monthly income support to cover food, shelter and basic household needs such as household goods, linen and furniture. The amount provided by the Canadian government varies by family size and is comparable to local social assistance rates in the province where the refugee lives. The financial support provided usually lasts for one year after refugees arrive in Canada, or until refugees can support themselves, whichever comes first.

The scale of the remaining challenge

3.12 All three Humanitarian Admission Programmes in Germany are now closed. Some Länder are still accepting applications to privately sponsor Syrian refugees until the end of 2016. Germany is also still resettling Syrian refugees under the new EU–Turkey agreement.

3.13 A total of 29,713 refugees have been resettled in Canada as at 1 August 2016. The Canadian government reports that it is on track to resettle 25,000 government-assisted refugees and refugees under the Blended Visa Office-Referred Program by the end of 2016, with 18,951 refugees resettled as at 1 August 2016. It similarly reports that it is on track to process all applications to privately sponsor Syrian refugees received up to the end of March 2016, by the end of 2016 or early 2017. By 31 March 2016, the government of Canada had received roughly 12,000 applications to privately sponsor a Syrian refugee, of whom 3,375 had been interviewed and were awaiting medical or security screening, 3,316 had their applications finalised and a further 1,771 had arrived in Canada (data correct as at 1 August 2016). It has committed additional staff working in the Middle East region to process the remaining applications.

Appendix One

Our audit approach

1 This study gathered information on other countries' approach to the Syrian refugee crisis and compared them to the UK Syrian Vulnerable Persons Resettlement programme (the programme). It is a companion piece to our main report on the UK programme. We reviewed:

- the response in a number of different countries, with a focus on Germany and Canada;
- the set-up of resettlement programmes for Syrian refugees in Germany and Canada;
- progress to date in delivering resettlement programmes in Germany and Canada; and
- the scale of the remaining challenge.

2 We gathered publicly available documents and data and supplemented this using information gathered from interviews with the organisations responsible for implementation of the resettlement programmes in Germany and Canada.

3 We have presented our findings to allow for comparison between programmes, but we have not sought to conclude on the value for money of individual programmes, nor have we judged programmes against each other.

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