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Making Every Encounter Count: Using Peer Support to Improve Refugee Resettlement

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Hanne Beirens
Associate Director, MPI Europe

Hanne Beirens is Associate Director of the Migration Policy Institute Europe. She specializes in European Union policies related to asylum and migration, human trafficking, and youth.

Prior to joining MPI, Dr. Beirens worked as a Lead Managing Consultant for ICF Consulting, where she focused on impact assessments, feasibility studies, and evaluations for the European Commission, with a particular focus on EU asylum and migration policy, as well as developing products within the European Migration Network (EMN), including pan-European studies and the EMN annual report. Topics covered include reception facilities for asylum seekers, unaccompanied children, and non-EU harmonized protection statuses.

Earlier, Dr. Beirens worked as a Research Fellow at the Institute for Applied Social Studies of the University of Birmingham, evaluating services, organizations, and community-based initiatives pursuing the integration of asylum seekers, refugees, and third-country nationals. She also has worked for the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and as an independent consultant for the International Labor Organization (ILO), and the Quaker United Nations Office (QUNO).

She holds a master's degree in race and ethnic relations (with distinction) and a PhD degree in sociology and ethnic relations on the participation of minors in armed conflict, both from the University of Warwick (UK).

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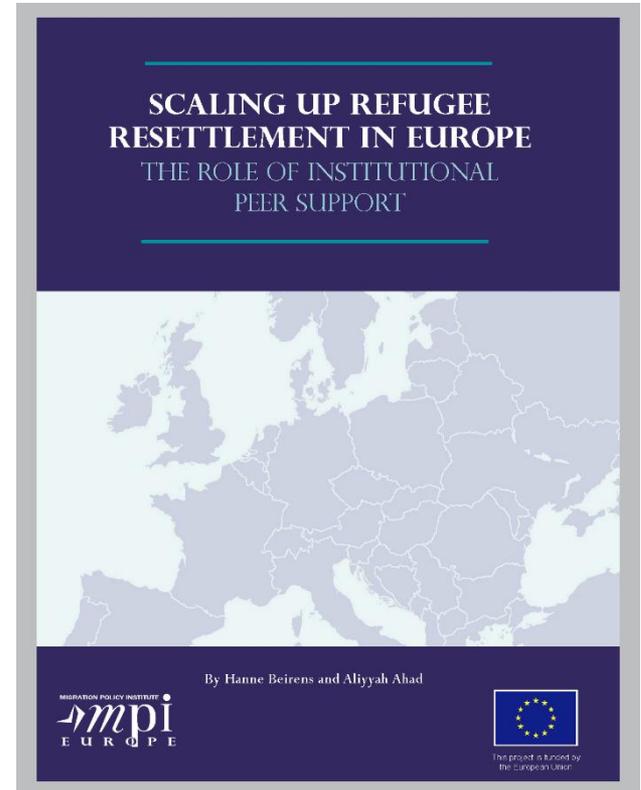
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Scaling up Refugee Resettlement in Europe: The Role of Institutional Peer Support

By Hanne Beirens and Aliyyah Ahad

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Scaling up Refugee Resettlement in Europe: The Role of Institutional Peer Support

Dr. Hanne Beirens

Associate Director

Outline of the presentation

I.   Rationale for the study
II.   Goals
III. Types of peer support activities
IV.   Linking goals with activities
V.   Matching
VI.   Five key lessons

Rationale: Why conduct this study?

- Whenever the EU decides to step up action in terms of resettlement, a peer support project is launched. Is this an effective and cost-efficient **tool to pursue this policy goal**?

- The **architecture of the EU-FRANK project** builds on the mechanism of peer support. What lessons learnt can usefully inform the next phases of the EU-FRANK project?

- Due to limited and/or low quality evidence on what works, MS officials are dependent on their peers to gain insight into how to set up or expand resettlement schemes. How is it **best done**?

Goals of Peer Support Activities on Resettlement

- The **goals** are often broadly defined, with little specificity in terms of the desired outcomes.

- The **buy-in** or ownership of project goals also fluctuates among project partners.

- Asking the question of "**do the activities match the goals we are pursuing?**" is infrequently asked. Reverting to standard peer support activities (e.g. study visits, meetings) as a matter of habit.

- Limited monitoring and evaluation allows for this approach to persist.

Goals of Peer Support Activities on Resettlement

Being clear on the desired goals and outcomes = key

Five broad types of goals:

1. **Motivational**
2. **Informational**
3. **Operational**
4. **Relational**
5. **Innovation**

Types of peer support activities

There are five common types of peer support activities:

1. **Sharing information**
2. **Co-creating information**
3. **Co-creating tools**
4. **Providing general training**
5. **Mentoring**

Linking goals to activities

Types of peer support goals	Types of peer support activities				
	Peers sharing information	Peers co-creating informational materials on how to conduct resettlement	Peers co-creating tools to be used in resettlement programmes	Peers providing general training	Peers mentoring
Motivational	X				X
Informational	X	X		X	X
Operational			X	X	X
Relational	X	X	X	X	X

Matching partners for peer support

- **Matching** peers with regard to resettlement is often based on
  - Based on existing networks;
  - "Cultural affinities";
  - Dependent on voluntarism ("who is willing to join?"); and
  - Done in a *ad hoc*, haphazard manner.

The art of "matching"

A. Level of resettlement experience

B. Parameters defining the design of resettlement programme, e.g. social welfare system;

C. Which level to match? Actors responsible for
- Policymaking?
- Programme design?
- Programme implementation?

Is there a role for "mismatching"?

- Even if the match could have been better, participants of peer support activities referred to positive experiences or lessons learnt.

- **But**: Cost efficiency of designing a resettlement programme by "process of elimination"?

- Still: "Coalition of the willing?" may be a desirable option, but be conscious of the limitations.

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Five key lessons for peer support

1. Define clear, attainable goals + seek buy-in from the main partners;
2. Carefully consider the package of activities that are to attain the goals;
3. Secure the participation of actors with the appropriate affiliation and skills set;
4. Match participants according to a relevant set of criteria;
5. Take steps to duly follow-up on the outcomes and impact of peer support activities.

Vinciane Masurelle
Head, International Unit, Federal Agency for the Reception of Asylum Seekers, Belgium

Vinciane Masurelle heads the International Unit at the Federal Agency for the Reception of Asylum Seekers in Belgium (Fedasil). Created in 2001, Fedasil is a public interest organization, which is responsible for the preparation and implementation of the national reception policy, reception of unaccompanied minors, and the voluntary return and reintegration programme. The Agency coordinates a mixed network reception of about 23,000 places.

Ms. Masurelle has worked at Fedasil since 2006, starting as a programme manager for voluntary return in operational services. She has worked on various strategic projects including development of a refugee resettlement programme; coordination of a resettlement pilot project in 2009; and structural programme management. In 2013, she became head of the international department, coordinating international transfers (including resettlement) and Fedasil's international activities, such as partnerships with other Member States (e.g. EU-Frank project), management of the European Platform of Reception Agencies in cooperation with EASO, sharing and management of Fedasil expertise (deployment of experts, contribution to training development, etc.), and monitoring EU developments and their impact on a reception agency.

She began her career as technical counsellor at the Belgian Development Agency (now called Enabel), where she worked on developing various projects in Africa and the Middle East. She has earned a master's in translation, master's in political sciences, a specialized master's in development cooperation, and certificate in public management.

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Andre Baas
Resettlement Expert
European Asylum Support Office

Andre Baas has been working for the European Asylum Support Office (EASO), since 2017 as a Seconded National Expert from The Netherlands. He mostly works in Turkey (Ankara) at the EU Delegation, working within the Migration Policy Team. This team is responsible for monitoring the EU-Turkey Statement, with specific focus on EU-Resettlement out of Turkey.

Before being seconded to EASO he was the senior officer at COA (the Central Agency for the Reception of Asylum Seekers) in The Netherlands. He was the initiator and project leader, of behalf of the Ministry of the Interior, for changes to the model for resettlement in The Netherlands in 2010, a program that is still running. He initiated partnerships on resettlement with Belgium, the Czech Republic, and Romania. He also worked on monitoring and trainings for resettlement programmes for Lebanon, Jordan, Syria, Thailand, India, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Burundi, Uganda, Kenia, Rwanda, Morocco, and Ecuador. From 2015 to 2016, he was the national project leader from the Ministry of Justice and Security and the national contact point for the implementation of the relocation instrument.

He used to be a member of several steering committees and the national contact point for a number of European Networks related to refugees and asylums seekers. He has served as project leader for projects in Malta, Cyprus, Belarus, Ukraine, Poland, Moldova, and Turkey. He studied at the Tilburg University and at Nijenrode University and was a research scholar at the University of Champaign-Urbana Illinois, U.S.

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Kate O'Malley
Senior Consultant, Resettlement Partnerships
UNHCR

Kate O'Malley is a Senior Consultant on Resettlement Partnerships at the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). Prior to this she directed global resettlement as Deputy Director of UNHCR's Division of International Protection based in Geneva.

Previously, she was with the Policy Group of Australia's Department of Immigration and Border Protection and held the position of Minister-Counsellor Migration at the Australian Permanent Mission to the United Nations in Geneva. She has over 20 years' experience in the Australian government working in both migration and foreign affairs portfolios. Her experience includes development and delivery of Australia's resettlement program, as well as family migration policy and programs. She was also active in the design and implementation of Australia's current legal framework for migration.

She has experience in operational roles and working closely with refugees and migrants, with a number of years spent on postings with her government in Vietnam, Thailand and Greece. In Geneva, she represented Australia in many migration and refugee forums and led on institutional relationships with the headquarters of key UN and other refugee and migration-engaged organisations and processes.

Q & A

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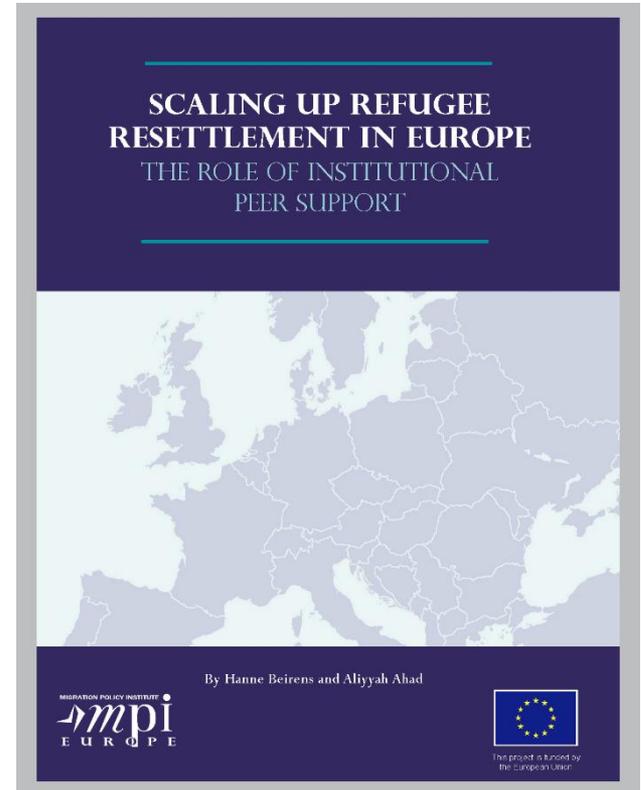
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