

# ASSESSMENT REPORT

## FACTSHEET

The RISE Assessment Report provides key insights and recommendations on community sponsorship (CS) schemes and the integration of persons in need of international protection in Belgium, Italy, and Lithuania. The report is based on research conducted by the RISE project team throughout 2024. In Belgium, RISE is implemented in collaboration with Odisee University of Applied Sciences and in coordination with Fedasil.

## CONTEXT AND OBJECTIVES

The project aims to **address housing shortages for beneficiaries of international protection** by piloting **community sponsorship (CS) schemes** and enhancing sponsor engagement in Belgium, Italy, and Lithuania. It follows the **"Housing at the Centre" approach**, recognizing access to affordable and decent housing as a fundamental human right.

## METHODOLOGY



Comprehensive literature review



Surveys for volunteers and beneficiaries



Focus group discussions (FGDs)



In-depth interviews with various stakeholders

A **Community Sponsor or volunteer (V)** supports resettled refugees by helping them establish a safe home and adapt to their new environment. Sponsors assist with practical matters like education, healthcare, employment, and social services, while also offering emotional support throughout the integration process. In some cases, sponsors also hosted beneficiaries. With **beneficiaries (B)**, we refer both to beneficiaries of international protection and of temporary protection, who have been benefitting from CS or other types of support.

## INSIGHTS FROM BELGIUM

**Personal and community networks** play a significant role in disseminating information about housing or integration support, often more so than formal channels.

Volunteers are motivated by:



Sense of fulfillment



Moral duty



Social networks

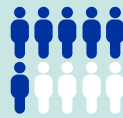
However, a large proportion of respondents reported **no formal matching process**, and volunteers often receive **basic information** about hosting forced migrants, such as legislation, organizations to turn to, and insurance.

## GENERAL DEMOGRAPHICS



VOLUNTEERS PROVIDING HOUSING THROUGH CS

- Belgian nationals (83%)
- 45 years or older (74.3%)
- Well-educated
- Financially stable (80%)



FORCED MIGRANTS BEING SUPPORTED THROUGH CS SCHEMES

- Younger (58.6% < 35)
- Diverse educational backgrounds
- Financial challenges (72.9%)

## CHALLENGES

- Housing challenges: affordability, availability, accessibility, and discrimination (B)
- Communication and language barriers (B/V)
- Cultural differences (B/V)
- Social issues (B/V)

## NEEDS

- Better institutional guidelines (B/V)
- Need for a helpdesk (V)
- More efficient collaboration with local administrations (V)

## GENERAL CONCLUSIONS

The report highlights the need for **diverse gender representation among volunteers, mobilizing younger demographics** to volunteer, and **leveraging high educational attainment** through opportunities for skill utilisation and further education. It emphasizes the importance of **comprehensive screening processes**, structured **training and mentorship programmes**, **formal matching processes**, and **the recognition of volunteer motivations**.

## RECOMMENDATIONS



### Recruitment and mobilisation of volunteers

- **Expand the older demographic** of volunteers due to their greater inclination to assist. Offer **flexible opportunities for younger individuals**, such as volunteering focused on specific tasks or short-term commitments;
- **Acknowledge the expertise of higher educated residents** by offering roles that tap into their skills, such as mentoring, language tutoring, administrative support, or professional advice;
- **Investigate obstacles for diaspora engagement** in CS programmes and find solutions to increase their involvement;
- **Offer financial incentives** like cost reductions, vouchers, or small grants for active volunteers;
- **Inform the public** about CS and its benefits through media campaigns, testimonies, and local community events.



### Screening, Training and Matching

- Establish a **systematic screening process** for sponsors, balancing safety and accessibility;
- **Mandatory screening of accommodation** offered by volunteers to ensure it meets basic safety and suitability standards;
- Develop **tools for preparation and training** of volunteers in multiple formats covering practical information, welfare system, cultural sensitivity, communication skills and trauma-informed care;
- Develop **matching criteria** for a structured approach to match volunteers and migrants based on language skills, shared interests, household composition, housing needs, and living arrangements;
- **Ensure at least one contact prior to the start of CS support** between the volunteer and the forced migrant to reduce pressure on the initial contact.



### Support for volunteers and forced migrants

- **Strengthen administrative and legal support** for volunteers and migrants, offering continuous support and mediation services;
- Create **central information sources** for volunteers and migrants, such as an interactive platform or helpline;
- **Foster collaboration** between government agencies, NGOs, and local communities to ensure a coordinated support system;
- **Establish a leading organisation for CS** with a robust structure, reliable income, strong ties with governmental bodies, and widespread recognition and acceptance within society.



### Language learning opportunities

- **Provide free or subsidised language classes** tailored to different skill levels, including conversational practice sessions;
- Provide **basic language learning material** for volunteers or facilitate informal language exchanges;
- List mobile apps or online platforms with language learning tools and resources specific to integration needs.



## Address emotional and psychosocial needs

- **Inform volunteers** about mental health awareness and identifying psychosocial needs or trauma;
- **Collaborate with mental health professionals** to provide counselling and therapy to forced migrants in their native language;
- **Create safe spaces** for migrants and volunteers to share experiences, reduce isolation, and build supportive communities.



## Facilitate integration in the local community and labour market

- **Develop guides and workshops** to help forced migrants navigate local transportation, healthcare, education systems, and social norms;
- Organise **cultural exchange events and social activities** to foster relationships between forced migrants and local residents;
- Offer **vocational training and job placement services** tailored to workplace needs, partnering with local employers and organizations;
- **Encourage employers** to hire forced migrants and **create foreseeability** in processes required to access jobs requiring higher qualifications.



## Housing

- Establish **housing support** to assisted forced migrants in finding suitable accommodations and navigating the rental market;
- Facilitate **intermediary support** to build trust between landlords and forced migrants;
- Establishing **revolving loan funds** to help forced migrants with rental deposits;
- Encourage **collaboration between social initiatives and the real estate sector** to improve access to quality housing;
- Consider **financial incentives** for landlords to make housing available to forced migrants;
- Create an **insurance system for landlords** in case of payment issues or potential damages;
- Provide **legal help and advocacy** to combat discriminatory practices and unethical rental practices;
- Make **alternative housing options legally possible** and invest in **social housing** to increase the supply of affordable housing;
- Develop a **standard rental contract for private accommodation** within CS models to ensure protection of volunteers' and migrants' rights.

These recommendations aim to enhance the effectiveness of community sponsorship programmes and support the integration of forced migrants in Belgium, Italy, and Lithuania.



Overall, the report provides valuable insights and recommendations to enhance the effectiveness of community sponsorship programmes in Belgium and across Europe.



If you have questions, please contact [communitysponsorshipbe@iom.int](mailto:communitysponsorshipbe@iom.int)

**READ THE FULL REPORT**

