



# **Evaluation of Effectiveness and Relevance of Advocacy Approaches with the EU and in EU/EFTA countries (2015-2017)**

**ANNEX 1 – THEMATIC CASE STUDIES  
MAY 2019**

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## Thematic case studies ANNEX 1

### Evaluation of Effectiveness and Relevance of advocacy approaches with the EU and in EU/EFTA countries (2015-17)

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## Case study I – Unaccompanied and Separated Children – Greece and Sweden

This case study is one of three case studies carried out as part of the evaluation on effectiveness and relevance of advocacy approaches in the EU/EFTA region in the 2015-17 period. The themes and countries were selected in consultation with the Regional Bureau of Europe (RBE). The case studies are based on the following main research methods: 1) document review of available information; 2) review of available monitoring data; 3) face-to-face interviews with relevant UNHCR staff; and 4) interviews with relevant external stakeholders. To determine the effectiveness of the advocacy initiatives, the contribution analysis method was used (see annex 4). Visits were carried out to Athens and Lesbos, Greece (9-14 September 2018) and Stockholm, Sweden (17-19 September 2018).

### Background and context

Since 2015, over 180,000 unaccompanied and separated children (UASC) have arrived in Europe (28 European Union members states), a six-fold increase compared to previous years.<sup>1</sup> The marked increase put “*national systems and administrations under pressure and exposed gaps and shortcomings in the protection of all categories of children in migration*”, according to the European Commission, prompting a new 2017 European Union policy to make specific recommendations to strengthen the protection of children in migration. Since 2015, some 40,000 UASC have arrived in Sweden with and 3,741 UASC are currently in Greece as of the end of 2018.<sup>2</sup>

In 2016, UNHCR, together with UNICEF and the International Rescue Committee established a consultative process to support States in better protecting UASC in Europe, culminating in the publication of the “Way Forward” roadmap and action plan.<sup>3</sup> The report showed that although many European countries have a solid legal framework, the increased arrivals together with cumbersome procedures meant that the best interests of UASC were not always taken into account, resulting in severe consequences for their well-being and future. Even prior to the 2015 refugee and migration crisis, UNHCR has been highlighting the situation of UASC in Europe.<sup>4</sup>

### UASC advocacy - concept, design and strategy

UNHCR’s advocacy on UASC has been driven by the dramatic situation described above and the need to support and encourage authorities to ensure that the best interests of UASC are upheld in their reception and case management. This built on UNHCR’s long-standing work for UASC in Europe.<sup>5</sup>

Throughout Europe, the 2014 “Safe and Sound” report and the 2017 “Way Forward” roadmap provided clear priorities and positions on UASC for UNHCR offices to advocate on. The support of a child protection focal point within the Europe Bureau was also key during the crisis period. In both Sweden and Greece, the situation for UASC from 2015 onwards meant that the offices had to give greater priority to this area, as reflected in their Country Operational Plans (COPs). In both countries, advocacy objectives, priorities and audiences for UASC advocacy were not set out in details in a stand-alone advocacy strategy or plan in the 2015-

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1 Eurostat (11 May 2017), Asylum applicants considered to be unaccompanied minors; UNHCR, UNICEF & IOM (2017), Refugee and Migrant Children in Europe - Overview of Trends 2017.

2 EKKA (2018). Situation update: Unaccompanied children in Greece

3 UNHCR (July 2017), The Way Forward to Strengthened Policies and Practices for unaccompanied and separated refugee and migrant children in Europe.

4 See UNHCR (2014), Safe & Sound: what States can do to ensure respect for the best interests of unaccompanied and separated children in Europe.

5 An example is the Separated Children in Europe Programme. See [www.scepnetwork.org](http://www.scepnetwork.org)

17 period under review. More so, corresponding to the COPs format, the needs and UNHCR response for UASC are only described broadly. The Multi-Year Multi-Partner (MYMP) approach adopted by the Regional Representation for Northern Europe in 2016 did provide more in-depth strategic information, such as specific objectives linked to indicators and audiences for eight countries covered, including Sweden. Drawing on work plans, the COPs and other documentation, the following were understood to be the key UASC advocacy objectives:

- **In Sweden**, in the wake of the 2015-2016 emergency, UNHCR advocated for the development of a holistic and efficient reception procedure for UASC given the gaps identified. Given the range of actors involved in the reception process, including municipalities, national ministries, regional (county) authorities, civil society and UASC themselves, changes were sought to the existing procedures, such as best interest assessments, child-friendly reception and procedures and coordination amongst relevant actors.
- **In Greece**, as of 2015, UNHCR started to advocate for improving the arrival and reception processes for UASC at entry points (Reception and Identification Centre - RICs) on the islands as part of its emergency support activities. As the crisis continued, advocacy extended to improve the overall protection and support to UASC within the Greek national system, such as foster care, guardianship and family reunion in other European Union countries.

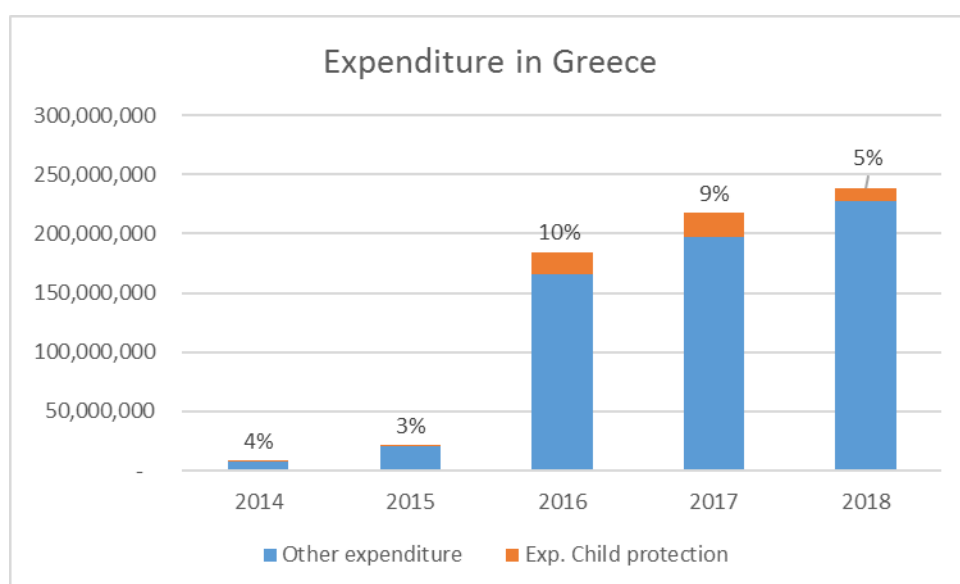
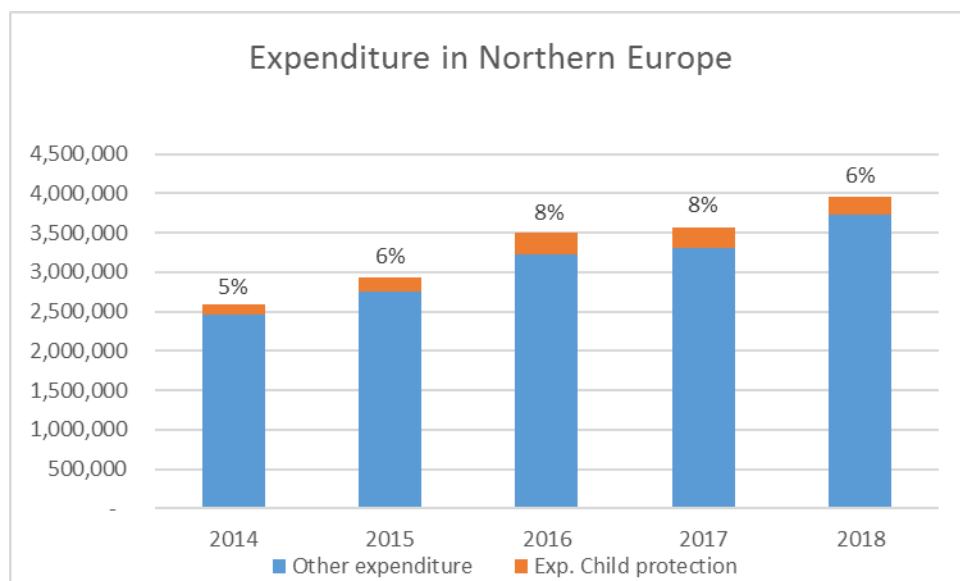
## Resources

In Greece, the UASC advocacy activities were carried out by the protection staff in Athens and in field locations with support of public information staff and management. From 2015 to 2018, two protection staff (one international and one national) were dedicated to child protection with advocacy responsibilities amongst others. This is going to be reduced to one national protection staff in 2019 due to limited funding availability and reduction of posts.

In Sweden, the UASC advocacy activities were carried out by one regional legal/protection staff doing a range of protection duties in Stockholm with the support of public information staff and management. From 2015 to 2018, the regional legal officer and national legal officer (post currently vacant) worked on UASC advocacy amongst other activities with the support, from 2017 onwards, of a child protection consultant (gap filling for vacant national position).

Reflecting the impact of the 2015 crisis, UNHCR's overall expenditure on child protection increased in both countries: in Greece, this went from USD \$340,000 in 2014 to a peak of 20 million in 2017; and in Northern Europe (eight countries including Sweden) from USD \$131,000 in 2014 to \$270,000 in 2017. Both child protection budgets and advocacy activities were considerable these later years. However, the budget descriptions did not always accurately describe the level of funds used for advocacy activities. The following chart shows child protection expenditure as a total of all expenditure in Greece and Northern Europe. It illustrates that in both countries, the budgets for child protection peaked in 2016 and 2017 both in real terms and as a percentage of total expenditure. In Greece, it is estimated that the two Child Protection staff members devoted more than 25 per cent of their time in advocacy efforts and the Public Information unit as well as other Protection staff (Legislative measures) assisted with specific interventions such as strategic litigation when appropriate. In Sweden, it is estimated that three protection posts (regional legal officer and national legal officer and child protection consultant) worked the equivalent of a 50 per cent post on advocacy initiatives, although not limited to advocacy for child protection.

**Figures 1 & 2: Child Protection as percentage of total expenditure in Greece and Northern Europe: 2014-2018** Source: UNHCR operational expenditure tracking



### Main advocacy activities

In both countries, activities were carried out with a view to achieving the above-mentioned objectives, as summarized in the following table:

**Table 1: UASC advocacy activities in Sweden and Greece**  
Source: Evaluation data/information collected

	Sweden	Greece
<i>Tactics</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lobbying and meetings</li> <li>• Legislative commentary</li> <li>• Capacity development</li> <li>• Communication actions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lobbying and meetings</li> <li>• Legislative commentary</li> <li>• Capacity development</li> <li>• Communication actions</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Research</li> <li>• Collaborative process</li> <li>• Strategic litigation</li> <li>• Human-centered policy design (Co-Lab 2.0)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Research</li> <li>• Coalition actions</li> <li>• UNHCR's judicial engagements before the European Court of Human Rights</li> </ul>
<i>Key Audiences</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• National ministries and agencies (migration, justice &amp; social affairs)</li> <li>• Regional (county) authorities</li> <li>• Municipalities &amp; social services</li> <li>• Civil society and NGOs</li> <li>• UASC representatives</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• National ministries and agencies (migration, labour &amp; social solidarity, education)</li> <li>• Public prosecutors</li> <li>• Police</li> <li>• RIC staff and related services</li> <li>• The Greek Ombudsman and the Deputy Ombudsman for Children's Rights</li> <li>• Municipalities &amp; social services</li> <li>• Civil society and NGOs</li> </ul>
<i>Partnerships</i>	A collaborative process involving a broad partnership was used for the main area of work (see below). Coalitions were also formed for other activities, such as with NGOs and civil society on reforming the Swedish Aliens Act.	Partnering was used for some activities, such as with Ministries of Migration Policy and Labour, EKKA (social services) and UNICEF on the SIL concept and with the judiciary body on SIL and Best Interest procedures (e.g. for semi-independent living and safe zones) and with international, national and local NGOs, both at the national and field level. Advocacy through the Child Protection Working Group and the Alternative Care Task Force which UNHCR chairs was also continuous. For other activities, such as commenting on legislation, this was carried out directly by UNHCR.
<i>Roles</i>	Main work was carried out by the one regional legal/protection staff (doing a range of protection activities) in Stockholm with support of a child protection consultant, public information staff and management. Liaison was maintained with the Brussels office and the HQ (RBE child protection focal point and DIP).	Main work was carried out by Protection staff in Athens and field locations with support of public information staff, programme staff, and management. Liaison was maintained with the Brussels office and the HQ (RBE child protection focal point and DIP).

**The advocacy approach** for both countries on UASC was both similar and distinct. Similar in that in both countries, some standard methods were used such as lobbying/meetings, partnering and legislative commentary.

Where the approach differed was that in Greece, advocacy was carried out to address concrete operational concerns that were identified as a result of direct interactions with refugees and asylum-seekers. For example, UNHCR staff advocated directly with RIC authorities on the islands in reaction to the treatment of UASC. In some cases, such as age assessment, this fed into advocacy for policy change at the national level. At the same time, longer term strategic advocacy was carried out at the national level, for example, on the adoption of a new guardianship law, which UNHCR had been advocating for since 2014. Proactive advocacy efforts approaching high level officials such as the Public Prosecutor of the Supreme Court to introduce the need for diversification of the alternative care for UAC such as the SIL project were also pursued. Another distinction was that Greece aimed for both legislative and policy change, whereas in Sweden, the change desired was at an administrative level and did not require legislative reforms. This was also a strategic choice; as the political climate in Sweden was not conducive to legislative change.

In Sweden, an evidence-based approach was initially used, using the Safe and Sound guidance and the “This is who we are”<sup>6</sup> profiling reports carried out in Sweden. This was built on previous UASC research carried out since at least 2010.<sup>7</sup> Seeking a more comprehensive approach, the office adopted a multi-partner collaborative initiative facilitated by an innovation lab (Co-Lab) that brought together all stakeholders involved with UASC including past unaccompanied children themselves, to study the UASC reception process, identify main gaps and agree upon changes needed in a series of workshops. The initial measures proposed were then tested by the relevant actors (where possible) in 2018 before being presented in a broader stakeholder workshop in December 2018.

Outside of these two countries, UASC advocacy has been active across Europe in response to the 2015 crisis, notably with the EU-funded project “Strengthening Policies and Practices for UASC in Western Europe”, active in seven countries (Austria, Belgium, France, Germany, Luxembourg, the Netherlands and UK) with a strong advocacy component.<sup>8</sup>

### Advocacy achievements to date

In both countries, UNHCR was seen as an authoritative expert reference on refugee and asylum issues according to partners and authorities interviewed. Together with its collaborative approach, this facilitated UNHCR’s access and ability to influence policy developments as regards UASC and other areas of engagement.

Achievements were identified at the legislative, policy and practice levels, where UNHCR was assessed as having contributed to change and where evidence supporting such claims was solid,<sup>9</sup> including:

- **Greece Guardianship law 2018:**<sup>10</sup> The guardianship law adopted in 2018 contained several provisions in line with UNHCR’s position on UASC, such as regarding the appointment of professional guardians, best interest assessment/determination and recognition of supported independent living (SIL) and foster families. This was a significant development as Greece had not had until then a guardianship law and, according to authorities and local NGOs, the introduction of the law would improve markedly the situation for UASC in Greece in addition to other migrant children needing guardians. UNHCR’s role together with UNICEF, local NGOs and social services was seen as key, including through specific input into the draft legislation and oral presentations to and meetings with the relevant parliamentary committee. Factors that contributed to the success of the advocacy initiative were the support provided by civil society, the timeliness of the initiative, the pressures by the European Union to bring Greek law in line with European Union standards, and the know-how of UNHCR staff (extensive local knowledge). Obstacles related to the political context and policy environment, notably the lengthy political process and the limited ability of national authorities to resource the needed support introduced by the new law (considering austerity measures in place following the financial crisis in Greece).
- **SIL as an alternative protection/housing solution for UASC in Greece:** With the necessary legislative support in place,<sup>11</sup> SIL has been accepted as an alternative solution for UASC with two pilots in place (funded by UNHCR and UNICEF). This was a significant development, although less so than the Guardianship law considering the pilot nature of

<sup>6</sup> UNHCR (2015). This is who we are. A study of the profile, experiences and reasons for flight of UASC from Afghanistan seeking asylum in Sweden in 2015 (part 1 &2)

<sup>7</sup> UNHCR, 2010, Voices of Afghan Children - A Study on Asylum-Seeking Children in Sweden; UNHCR, 2014, Why do children undertake the unaccompanied journey? PDES/2014/03; UNHCR, 2010, Trees only move in the wind: a study of unaccompanied Afghan children in Europe, PDES/2010/05; UNHCR, 2014, The Heart of the Matter - Assessing Credibility when Children Apply for Asylum in the European Union.

<sup>8</sup> UNHCR (2018), Strengthening Policies and Practices for Unaccompanied and Separated Children in Western Europe.

<sup>9</sup> Evidence as “high”: Evidence is strong and from multiple sources. See annex 4 for further information.

<sup>10</sup> “Provisions on Social Security and Pension, tackling of undeclared work, strengthening of workers’ protection, guardianship of unaccompanied minors plus other provisions.” (L. 4554/2018)

<sup>11</sup> Law voted on the transposition of the Reception Conditions Directive (recast) and on amendments in the asylum procedures which provides for the Supported Independent Living scheme for older UAC and for the definitions of separated children (L. 4540/2018) and Guardianship Law. (L. 4554/2018).

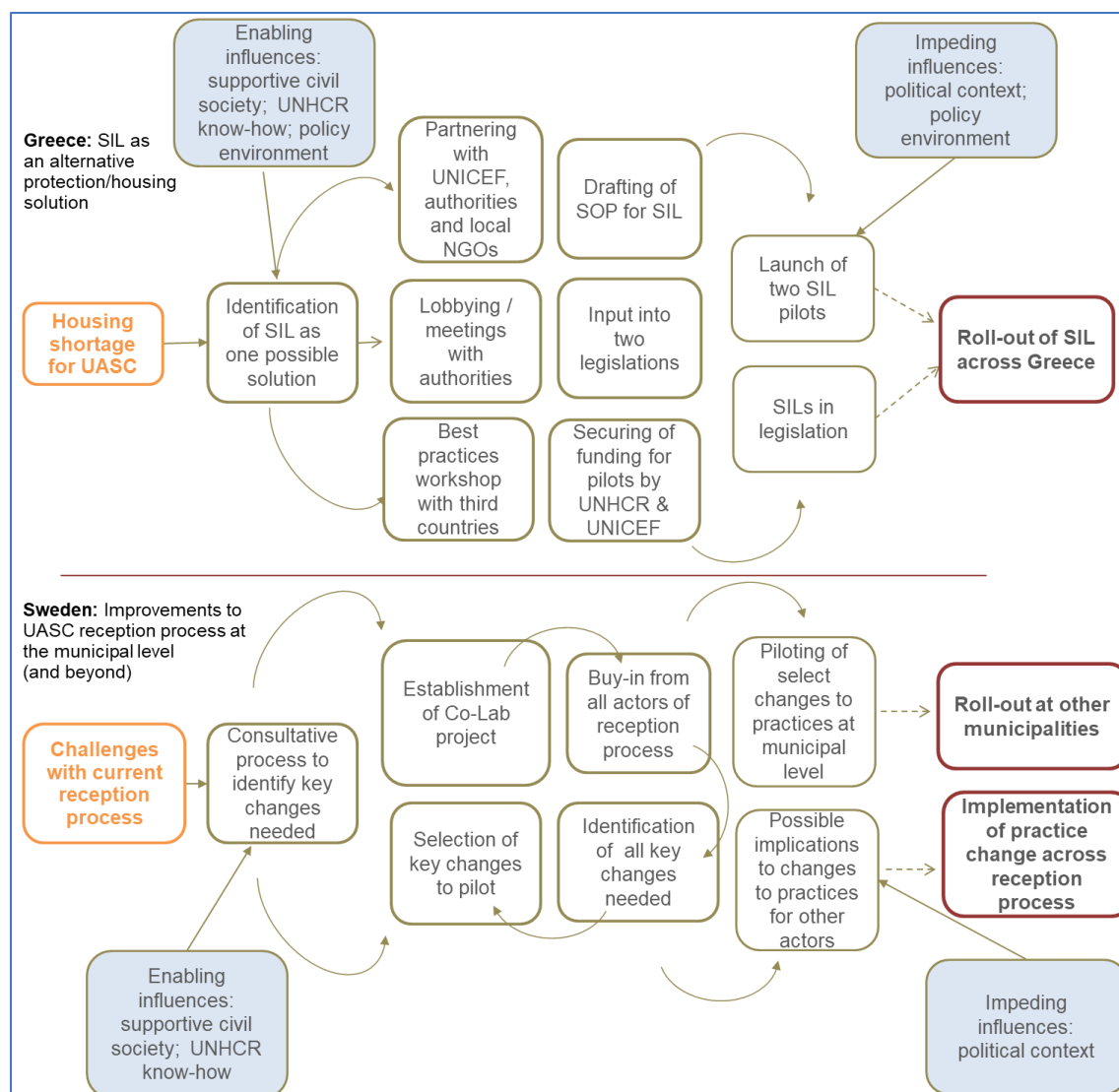
the solution and the number of potential UASC seeking SIL accommodation. UNHCR's role together with UNICEF and local NGOs was important in contributing to advancing the solution with the judiciary body and the competent authorities (Ministry of Labour and EKKA (social services)) very supportive. An indirect initiative was the holding of a "best practices" roundtable where child protection experts from the UK, Italy and the Netherlands discussed their experiences with the SIL solution. According to the authorities and local NGOs, this was a key step in securing the support of authorities for the SIL solution. Given that UNHCR and UNICEF financed the two SIL pilots, this also facilitated the implementation. Knowing that funding was possibly available supported the SIL initiative.

- **Best Interest Assessment (BIA) adopted for UASC seeking family reunion:** The Greek Asylum Service has adopted a BIA for UASC seeking family reunion. The adoption of a BIA was supported by UNHCR and the child protection working group (meeting of relevant child protection actors) in terms of their expertise in BIA and family reunion. This development meant that UASC seeking family reunion would benefit from a BIA.
- **Strengthened protection for UASC at entry in Greece:** Since 2015, gradual improvements have been made to the initial reception of UASC. Examples include: establishment of safe zones in RICs; modification to the age assessment methods; and securing rights for minors that have their status changed from adult to minor during the asylum process as a result of an age assessment. The improvements seen were positive but not uniformly adopted across Greece, for example, it was possible to change practices where UNHCR was present (such as on Lesbos island) but not in all sites in Greece. UNHCR could advocate for such changes as its staff was directly observing the issues faced by UASC at places of arrival and could propose constructive solutions (appreciated by the authorities). In this regard, timeliness in identifying the issues and taking action with the authorities was an enabling factor, in addition to UNHCR's know-how, while challenges were seen with the authorities being able to respond to UNHCR's requests with their limited resources.
- **Modification of UASC procedures for asylum in Sweden:** Aiming to develop predictable, holistic and child-friendly reception procedure, in which best interest considerations and child protection standards are mainstreamed, coordinated to facilitate multidisciplinary responses to meet children's needs, including arrival centers, where children can be safe, supported and protected and a multi-disciplinary interview process through which the best interest procedures are conducted, as part of the child protection system, decoupled from the asylum system. While not questioning practice on all themes at the same time, these were practical changes mainly to administrative procedures that did not require legislative change; a hindering factor was that the political climate and policy environment was not conducive to more significant change. UNHCR was part of a coalition of civil society that was advocating for such change.
- **Improvements to UASC reception process at the municipal level:** Based on the Co-Lab project, two improvements are being piloted at the municipal level; the 'Three party conversation' concept between the child and social workers in both municipality of arrival and the municipality assigned for long term stay to facilitate the transfer of UASC from arrival to host municipality and the designation of an "important adult" who can help the child understand their own situation by navigating the child through complex procedures and explain complicated rules in the initial days of arrival. These were pilots that had yet to be implemented in other municipalities and were still in a test phase. The advocacy approach taken involved a broad coalition of actors including authorities that decided jointly on the priorities to improve the reception process as detailed above. The current political context meant that legislative change was not a feasible goal. The Co-Lab experience will now be rolled out in other countries of Northern Europe.

The following diagram attempts to reconstruct how change occurred through advocacy in two of the policy changes mentioned above with the main impeding and enabling factors included. The pathway shown is simplified and does not show the other possible influences on the changes seen. In both cases, the ultimate outcomes, or goals, (dotted arrows to red boxes) are yet to be achieved.

**Figure 2: Pathways to change: examples from Greece and Sweden**

**Source:** Evaluation data/information collected



The pathways show how change occurred often as a combination of direct and indirect advocacy by UNHCR. For example, in Greece, UNHCR directly met with the relevant authorities and provided comments to the draft pieces of legislation. Authorities and other actors also participated in the above-mentioned roundtable, an indirect approach. As planned, both direct and indirect advocacy activities were seen as key in this instance. In both examples, the advocacy did not have a large public information component, such as public mobilisation although all activities were carried out transparently and involved building broader awareness, such as the workshop held in late 2018 in Sweden.<sup>12</sup>

<sup>12</sup> On 4th December 2018, a roundtable with stakeholders was held to launch the research report "I want to feel safe: Strengthening child protection in the initial reception of unaccompanied and separated children in Sweden". See [www.refworld.org/docid/5c07cc0a4.html](http://www.refworld.org/docid/5c07cc0a4.html)

## Challenges for UASC advocacy

Some of the challenges identified for UASC advocacy were as follows:

- The lack of documented strategies and plans for UASC advocacy (at global, regional or country levels) meant that it was difficult for all to have visibility of the approaches used and progress made. The Way Forward and Safe and Sound reports set out UNHCR's position and desired actions but did not describe UNHCR's plan to carry it forward.
- An absence of monitoring (or visibility of it) on progress towards advocacy objectives meant that progress made was not always known or shared.
- Research and consultative based approaches to advocacy as seen for "The Way Forward" and "This is who we are" were lacking implementation and advocacy plans to follow and optimize their use.
- There was an exchange and sharing between staff in Europe around major UASC activities such as the "Way Forward" report but the building of a network and exchange amongst UNHCR staff working on UASC advocacy in Europe or globally was largely absent as it would need to cut across existing structures (i.e. possibility for direct correspondence between child protection staff, forming of online discussion group, sharing/exchange of resources in quick manner without passing through hierarchy, etc.).
- The collaborative model of advocacy used in Sweden was not without risks; UNHCR could not control what the group would propose to put emphasis on to advocate for change in the reception process.<sup>13</sup>
- The context in each country proved challenging in different ways; in Greece, authorities were challenged to implement all requests from UNHCR given their resource limitations and faced pressure from the European Union and other member states; in Sweden, the political climate made any legislative change challenging even if desired (and made strategic litigation potentially more necessary).
- The use of public communications had to be considered carefully given the efficiency of direct and indirect advocacy and the potential sensitivities of authorities and was consequently used sparingly in both contexts.

## Lessons identified for UASC advocacy

- The existence of clear priorities and positions on an issue (as was the case with "the Way Forward" for UASC) provides UNHCR offices with a clear position and guidance on advocacy.
- Most situations require a combination of direct and indirect advocacy tactics to be effective, including: expertise for commentary on legislation; partnering with like-minded organizations and authorities; financial support for pilot initiatives; securing buy-in from all actors through collaborative processes (e.g. workshops and innovative approaches).
- While some advocacy can produce rapid results to benefit populations of concern (as seen in RICs); most advocacy will require several years to yield results (four years in the case of Guardianship Law) and thus the need to consider resource commitment over time.
- When aiming to influence national legislation, policies and practices, an understanding of the local systems and culture proved important, highlighting the key role of national staff in advocacy.

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<sup>13</sup> To date, the Co-Lab process in Sweden has proposed three changes to practices that are coherent with UNHCR's position on UASC although standardized best interest assessment was not amongst them.

## Case study II – Resettlement and Complementary Pathways - Ireland and Germany

This case study is one of three case studies carried out as part of the evaluation on effectiveness and relevance of advocacy approaches in the EU/EFTA region in the 2015-17 period. The themes and countries selected were identified in consultation with the Regional Bureau of Europe (RBE). The case studies used four main research methods: 1) document review of available information; 2) review of available monitoring data; 3) face-to-face interviews with relevant UNHCR staff; and 4) interviews with relevant external stakeholders. To determine the effectiveness of the advocacy initiatives, the contribution analysis method was used (see annex 4). Visits were carried out to Dublin, Ireland (17-18 September 2018) and Berlin, Germany (8-10 October 2018).

### Background and context

The *New York Declaration on Refugees and Migrants (2016)* saw United Nations Member States commit to “expand the number and range of pathways available for refugees to be admitted to or resettled in third countries”<sup>14</sup> and establish resettlement programmes that were not yet in place. 193 governments made a commitment in the 2016 New York Declaration to complementary pathways for refugees including family reunification, private or community<sup>15</sup> sponsorship programmes (additional to regular resettlement), humanitarian visas, humanitarian corridors and other humanitarian admission programmes (HAPs), such as education opportunities/ grants/ scholarships/ student visas/ partnerships between governments and institutions and labour mobility opportunities.<sup>16</sup>

Commitments to expanded complementary pathways and increased resettlement places to meet UNHCR identified needs were also included in the Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework (CRRF).<sup>17</sup> Following the large-scale arrivals of asylum-seekers in the European Union in 2015-2016, many European Union States gradually closed borders.<sup>18</sup> In 2017, 650,000 first-time asylum-seekers applied for international protection in the Member States of the European Union. Complementary pathways became more formalized in 2016 in response to decreasing global resettlement places,<sup>19</sup> continuing needs and the desire by some European states to leverage community-led systems that circumnavigate the politics of establishing durable solutions at the central government level.

### Germany

In 2017, Germany received 222,560 first time applicants compared to highs of 476,510 in 2015 and 745,155 at the peak of the crisis that occurred in Southern Europe as a consequence of movements from areas of conflict in the Middle East and Africa in particular.<sup>20</sup> Germany resettled 1,600 persons in 2016 and 2017 combined- up from 300 a year in 2014.<sup>21</sup> In 2013, the German government announced a first humanitarian admission programme (HAP I), providing 5,000 places for Syrian refugees. Two subsequent humanitarian admissions programmes (HAP II and III), announced in December 2013 and April 2014, brought the total

14 New York Declaration, paragraphs 77 and 78. See [www.un.org/en/qa/search/view\\_doc.asp?symbol=A/RES/71/1](http://www.un.org/en/qa/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/RES/71/1)

15 Including those promoted through the global Refugee Sponsorship Initiative (GRSI), *Global Compact*, Page 18.

16 DRAFT *Global Compact*, paragraph 3.3, Page 18. See [www.unhcr.org/events/conferences/5b3295167/official-version-final-draft-global-compact-refugees.html](http://www.unhcr.org/events/conferences/5b3295167/official-version-final-draft-global-compact-refugees.html)

17 New York Declaration, Annex 1 paragraphs 10, 14, 16

18 Quartz (2016) These are the routes being closed off to refugees fleeing into Europe: See <https://qz.com/635110/these-are-the-routes-being-closed-off-to-refugees-fleeing-into-europe>

19 UNHCR (2017) UNHCR projected global resettlement needs.

20 See <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/asylum-and-managed-migration/statistics-illustrated>

21 See [www.unhcr.org/protection/resettlement/5162b3bc9/unhcr-resettlement-handbook-country-chapter-germany.html](http://www.unhcr.org/protection/resettlement/5162b3bc9/unhcr-resettlement-handbook-country-chapter-germany.html)

places offered by the three programmes to 20,000 to date. Germany thus became the first European country to commit to large-scale, ad-hoc admission of Syrians outside of regular resettlement quotas.<sup>22</sup> In 2014 the number of third country nationals accepted for family reunification in Germany amounted to 63,677. And in 2015, it rose further, to 82,440.<sup>23</sup>

## Ireland

In 2017, Ireland received 2,930 first time applicants compared to highs of 3,275 in 2015 and 2,245 in 2016 at the peak of the crisis. Between 2000 and 2016, over 1,800 refugees from almost 30 nationalities were resettled to Ireland. In addition, the Irish Refugee Protection Programme (IRPP) was established by the Irish government in 2015 as a direct response to the humanitarian crisis accommodating 4,000 places for resettlement, relocation and other pathways.<sup>24</sup> In Ireland family reunification scheme came into place in 2017.<sup>25</sup>

## Resettlement and Complementary Pathways advocacy - concept, design and strategy

In both Ireland and Germany, a relatively accommodating policy agenda at the start of the crisis in Europe allowed for UNHCR offices to prioritize complementary pathways for advocacy. Public opinion and policy engagement with government stakeholders were supportive to the protection agenda. The overall conducive conditions were not due to UNHCR or any other actor's advocacy but were indicative of the differing appetite across Europe for responding to the plight of those fleeing conflict. The relative differences between the German and Irish context related to the geographical borders, with those in Ireland less exposed to ad-hoc arrivals. Sustained engagement and relationship building on this agenda by both local UNHCR offices pre-dated the 2015 crisis. Advocacy priorities, objectives and audiences for complementary pathways were not articulated at the country or regional levels in a strategy or plan but were articulated in broader terms by individual staff members leading on the portfolio and detailed in individual work plans for the year. Drawing on COPs, wider documentation and the evidence collected as part of this evaluation, the following were understood to be the key resettlement and complementary pathways advocacy objectives:

- **In Ireland**, UNHCR prioritized supporting the openness of the government to receive people with quality control of resettlement processes, relocation commitments and HAP; facilitation of information sharing on community sponsorship between Canada and Ireland; supporting civil society partnerships including supporting the Irish-Syria society to meet with key government ministers and officials, amplifying best practice around family reunification and fostering a receptive environment through strategic engagement of the media and awareness raising. **UNHCR** leveraged available access as a strategy. It was not possible to ascertain that activities were developed to deliver to identifiable change objectives. Mapping by the Refugee and Rights Centre (NASC) and the Irish Refugee Council<sup>26</sup> on appropriate complementary pathways for the Irish context were utilized by the small UNHCR office and interventions were based on added value and complementarity.
- **In Germany**, UNHCR prioritized expanding the resettlement programme established in 2012, continued support for HAPs, private sponsorship admission scheme and establishment of community sponsorship with NGO partners and the German government. UNHCR provided information and technical advice on thematic priorities and legislative reforms to partners leading on implementation of complementary pathways at the regional level. Advocacy also aimed at quality assurance on impending legislation on family reunification. Again, interventions were based on ensuring UNHCR activities leveraged the added value the organization could deliver with regards to engagement with the

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<sup>22</sup> See [www.resettlement.eu/country-situation-syria/germany](http://www.resettlement.eu/country-situation-syria/germany)

<sup>23</sup> See [https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/sites/homeaffairs/files/11a\\_germany\\_family\\_reunification\\_en\\_final.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/sites/homeaffairs/files/11a_germany_family_reunification_en_final.pdf)

<sup>24</sup> See [www.justice.ie/en/JELR/Pages/Irish\\_Refugee\\_Protection\\_Programme\\_\(IRPP\)](http://www.justice.ie/en/JELR/Pages/Irish_Refugee_Protection_Programme_(IRPP))

<sup>25</sup> See [www.unhcr.org/news/press/2017/11/5a0b0e874/unhcr-welcomes-irish-announcement-of-family-reunification-scheme-for-refugees.html](http://www.unhcr.org/news/press/2017/11/5a0b0e874/unhcr-welcomes-irish-announcement-of-family-reunification-scheme-for-refugees.html)

<sup>26</sup> See [www.irishrefugeecouncil.ie/wp-content/uploads/2011/08/IMRC\\_PATHWAYS-to-protection-and-inclusion-website.pdf](http://www.irishrefugeecouncil.ie/wp-content/uploads/2011/08/IMRC_PATHWAYS-to-protection-and-inclusion-website.pdf)

authorities and communicating changes in procedures to first line responders. Change objectives remained responsive to the political economy analysis of the context and at the discretion of the individual staff member leading on the portfolio.

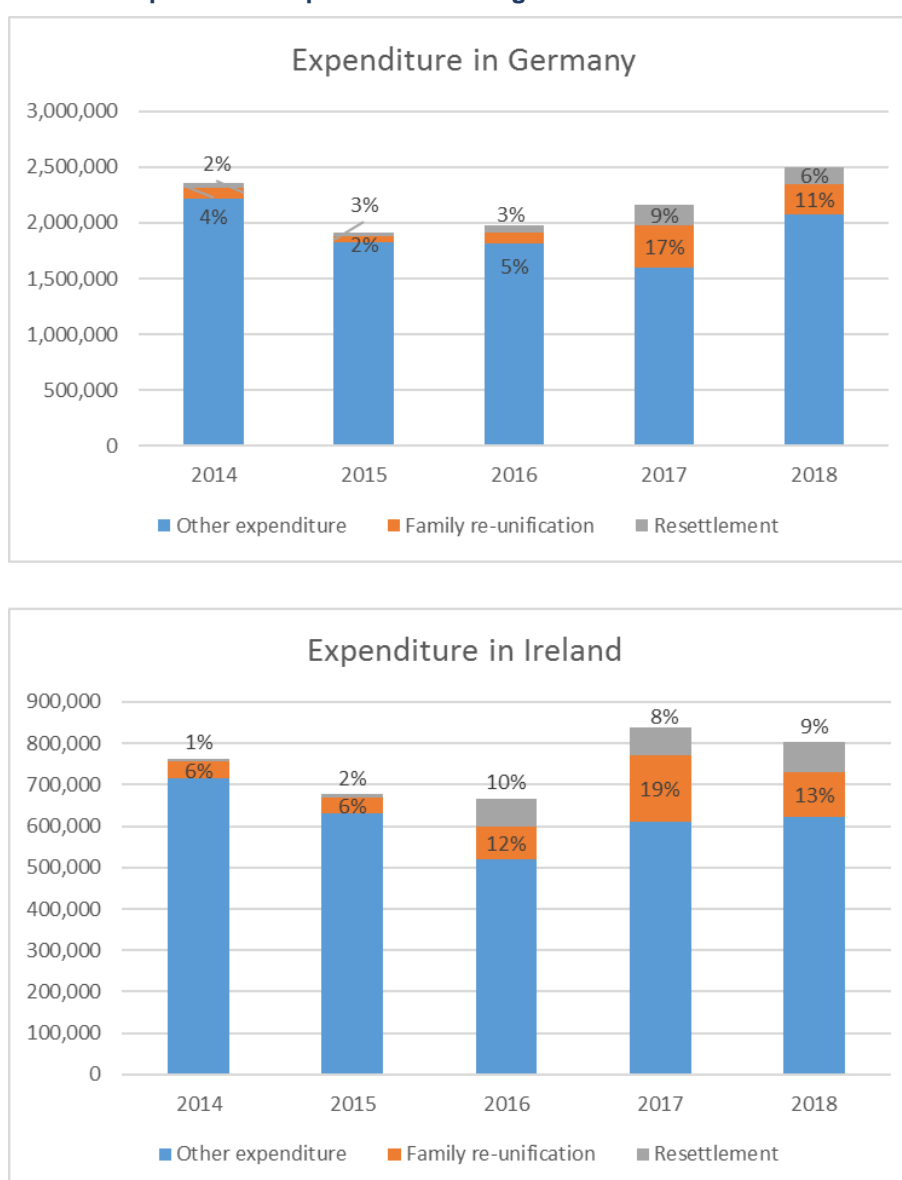
## Resources

In Ireland, the resettlement and complementary pathways advocacy activities were carried out by the Head of Office, protection staff and the External Relations Associate. In Germany, the resettlement and complementary pathways advocacy activities were carried out by the Assistant Protection Officer, the Senior Legal Officer and the Representative. Neither office commissioned consultants on a regular basis because of limited budgets and procedural limitations for securing additional resources in a timely manner.

The following graph illustrates family reunification and resettlement as a percentage of total expenditure for Germany and Ireland. It shows that family reunification and resettlement peaked in expenditure mainly in 2017 in both countries. It is estimated that between 70-100 per cent of these expenditures were on advocacy activities. Advocacy activities and expenditure was also seen in other areas, such as status determination, access to territory, law and policy development, integration and reception.

**Figure 3 & 4: Expenditure for family reunion and resettlement as percentage of total expenditure in Germany and Ireland 2014-2018**

**Source: UNHCR operational expenditure tracking**



**Table 1: Main advocacy activities in Ireland and Germany for resettlement and complementary pathways advocacy**

	<i>Ireland</i>	<i>Germany</i>
<i>Tactics</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Meetings</li> <li>• Information sharing country visits</li> <li>• Staff embedded in quality initiative</li> <li>• Communication actions including op-eds and facilitation of media with stories</li> <li>• Collaborative process</li> <li>• Investment in partnerships and leveraging others</li> <li>• Research</li> <li>• Use of conferences and presentations at events</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lobbying (letters from the office to key government stakeholders related to policy changes on family reunification etc.), meetings, the “roundtable” on family reunification, initially established by “Deutscher Verein”, now organized by UNHCR and GRC TS.</li> <li>• Workshops</li> <li>• Legislative commentary</li> <li>• Capacity development</li> <li>• Information sharing country visits</li> <li>• Technical advice and translation of legislation</li> <li>• Presentations at events</li> <li>• Coalition actions and investment in partnerships</li> </ul>
<i>Key Audiences</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• National ministries and agencies (justice)</li> <li>• National media and cultural institutions</li> <li>• Civil society and NGOs</li> <li>• UNHCR internal</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• National ministries and agencies (Federal Chancellery, Federal Ministry of the Interior, The Federal Office for Migration and Refugees (BAMF))</li> <li>• Länder/Federal level authorities</li> <li>• Legal practitioners</li> <li>• UNHCR internal</li> <li>• Civil society, Faith organizations and NGOs</li> </ul>
<i>Partnerships</i>	A collaborative process involving wide engagement beyond just the government was seen with specific partnership to support research into community sponsorship (Amnesty and the Migrant and Refugee Rights Centre, NASC). Specific partnership with the media was also used to support public opinion.	Partnering integrated throughout <i>all</i> work, specific examples for family reunification work included with the Germany Red Cross Tracing Service. Further, with the churches, Amnesty and other NGOs on community sponsorship as well as Caritas Friedland on resettlement.
<i>Roles</i>	Main work was carried out by the Head of Office, protection staff and the External Relations Associate. Some consultants were engaged throughout the period and the Bureau supported largely through Head of Resettlement liaison.	Main work was carried out by the Assistant Protection Officer, the Senior Legal Officer and the Representative.

**The advocacy approach** for both countries on resettlement and complementary pathways was similar with an openness from the relevant institutions to regularly engage with UNHCR staff they had ongoing dialogue and access to. In both countries, some standard activities were undertaken such as meetings, partnering and country liaison visits to assess opportunities for community sponsorship. National staff members led advocacy efforts in both countries. Staff maintained relationships with stakeholders in government, media and civil society, fostered by regular informal and formal engagement. Advocacy was less formal unless in response to policy change when letters or other methods were used to amplify messages also coming from civil society or to add legal commentary when relevant and/or requested.

Aside from largely consistently favourable environments for resettlement and complementary pathways due to the public desire for action and political strategy designed to respond and profile these efforts on the European stage, the operating context in the two countries remains culturally distinct. For example, in Germany UNHCR staff advocated directly with the German authorities to progress initiation of formal resettlement processes and on issues of concern such as the new family reunification law. The scale and professionalism of the civil society, extensive local authority activity on resettlement and complementary pathways and integration and domestic knowledge meant that the UNHCR entry point was more appropriately high-level.

In Ireland, UNHCR staff focused on leveraging the access that networking and quality assurance positioning could lend. UNHCR Ireland used their positioning to moderate the cultural differences between the government and lobbying civil society on key issues such as community sponsorship, endorsed by the Irish government in late 2017 to be operational in 2018.<sup>27</sup> This facilitation role was further demonstrated in UNHCR staff ability to amplify success stories of resettlement and complementary pathways in the media that appealed to public sentiment such as several emotive stories about the reunion of family members in The Irish Times newspaper and the National Broadcaster RTE in Dublin airport and of a community in Ireland preparing to receive a family arriving through community sponsorship.<sup>28</sup> The stories highlighted empathy and cultural tolerance to accepting displaced persons. The strategic design of the engagements in Ireland reflects an overall approach to assist in complementing an overall enabling environment for quality pathways and subtly leveraging communications when policy changes were identified as contrary. Whilst communications activities were leveraged as a gentle tactic to highlight the problems refugees faced, they were not focused on specific changes in legislative or policy structures but more so an environment that would encourage positive practices such as the need for flexible ministerial discretion on family reunification. Efforts to professionalize of the civil society show early dividends for the overall advocacy environment in Ireland and the increased capacities of government stakeholders additionally contributed to the momentum. Irish public opinion (whilst not homogeneous and without animosity) identified with the plight of displaced and placed pressure on authorities to respond accordingly.

In Germany, the approach to advocacy was also seen with UNHCR facilitating mutually reinforcing opportunities for meetings with central government and civil society on resettlement and community sponsorship. Universally government, NGO and civil society partners reported in external interviews that advocacy in this context was not possible without UNHCR at the table, that their access to central government and local actors was in light of the respected, known staff and their historic knowledge of the context. Strategically the German office has focused on its unique positioning around advancing resettlement whilst playing a facilitation and quality assurance role to wider complementary pathways and to supporting stakeholders leading on their implementation.

### **Advocacy achievements to date**

In both countries, UNHCR continues to be seen as an authoritative expert reference on refugee issues and legal protection, based on feedback from partners and external stakeholders. Together with its collaborative approach set against a positive political context, this facilitated UNHCR's access and ability to support progress on policy developments for resettlement and complementary pathways and other fields.

Achievements were identified at the legislation, policy and practice levels where UNHCR was assessed as having contributed to the changes, including:

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<sup>27</sup> See [www.nascireland.org/campaigns-for-change/community-sponsorship/](http://www.nascireland.org/campaigns-for-change/community-sponsorship/)

<sup>28</sup> See [www.irishtimes.com/news/social-affairs/tears-of-joy-as-syrian-parents-reunited-with-daughter-in-dublin-1.2867921](http://www.irishtimes.com/news/social-affairs/tears-of-joy-as-syrian-parents-reunited-with-daughter-in-dublin-1.2867921) and [www.irishtimes.com/life-and-style/people/new-to-the-parish/homs-to-wicklow](http://www.irishtimes.com/life-and-style/people/new-to-the-parish/homs-to-wicklow)

- **Community Sponsorship and knowledge sharing:** The Irish office led a successful joint UNHCR-Government of Ireland-NGO mission to Canada to facilitate discussions on community sponsorship and endorsement of a community sponsorship programme in 2017. This was possible because of the national lead office, the respected uniquely positioned national staff, the access garnered through quality assurance work and because of an overall openness in the policy space to deliver such a programme. Germany also engaged with Canada and the UK on this agenda and in part due to UNHCR engagement, political will and support to implement at the civil society level, has established a pilot project on community sponsorship.
- **Resettlement:** UNHCR worked closely with the German Government to advance resettlement processes and increase places for refugees and clearly contributed to the commitment to increase resettlement from under 300 a year in 2014 to 10,200 in two years until autumn 2019.<sup>29</sup> UNHCR was a driver of the development of the “Humanitarian Admission Programmes” in Germany that have been carried out since 2013 with the admission of more than 20,000 Syrians and has lobbied for the introduction of a “Community Sponsorship Programme” which will – after a respective political decision -be implemented in 2019.<sup>30</sup>
- **Family Reunification:** In Germany, UNHCR advocated with partners for lifting of the moratorium on a right to family reunification for subsidiary protection holders on the same (privileged) footing as for recognized refugees. Finally, in August 2015 a new law was introduced to accord these individuals the same legal rights as recognized refugees. However, in March 2016 a moratorium on subsidiary protection cases was introduced (2016-2018). Again, UNHCR advocated with partners to lift in August 2018 this ban. In August 2018, a monthly quota (1,000/month) was introduced.
  - In 2016 UNHCR Germany approached several institutions in writing in order to express concerns and initiate political changes on the suspension of a right to family reunification with subsidiary protection beneficiaries and removal of the reunification of minor siblings. UNHCR approached various Federal Ministries (including MOI and MFA), counterparts in various political parties, the Interior Committee in Parliament and the Interior Ministers’ Conference on these points. A paper addressed to the newly established Federal Parliament was published in autumn 2017 to complement this agenda; the paper was followed-up on in numerous meetings with Parliamentarians and their staff in late 2017 and early 2018. In August 2018, family reunification restrictions for beneficiaries of subsidiary protection were lifted albeit limited to a quota of 1,000 a month. UNHCR and others have continued to advocate for this quota to be extended to accommodate the 40,000 applicants awaiting reunification with their families. However, political deadlock with the Christian Democratic Union (CDU) and sister party, Christian Social Union (CSU) and the center-left Social Democrats (SPD) left little space for successful advocacy from UNHCR or other actors.<sup>31</sup>
  - In 2018, UNHCR Germany has established cooperation with the German Red Cross (GRC) Tracing Service and meets 3-4 times a year with them and MFA in order to discuss legal and practical aspects of family reunification. *Inter alia* as a consequence of these meetings and advocacy interventions by other partners, special email addresses were created to facilitate the process and additional staff seconded to embassies for these populations. Syrian Palestinians were provided

29 See <https://resettlement.de/en/eu-resettlement-program-germany-pledges-10200-places/>

30 In this respect, UNHCR has successfully advocated for specific cornerstones of the programme, e.g. identification and selection of individuals exclusively by UNHCR, no official financial obligation according to Sec 68 of the Residence Act, RST-residence title for individuals admitted to Germany.

31 Interview with externals reported how traditional tactics (Letter writing, meetings, media etc.) had been utilised and the conditions were not conducive for further advocacy risking exacerbating further the political deadlock that exists on this agenda.

documentation for them to cross the border into Lebanon to attend their appointments.

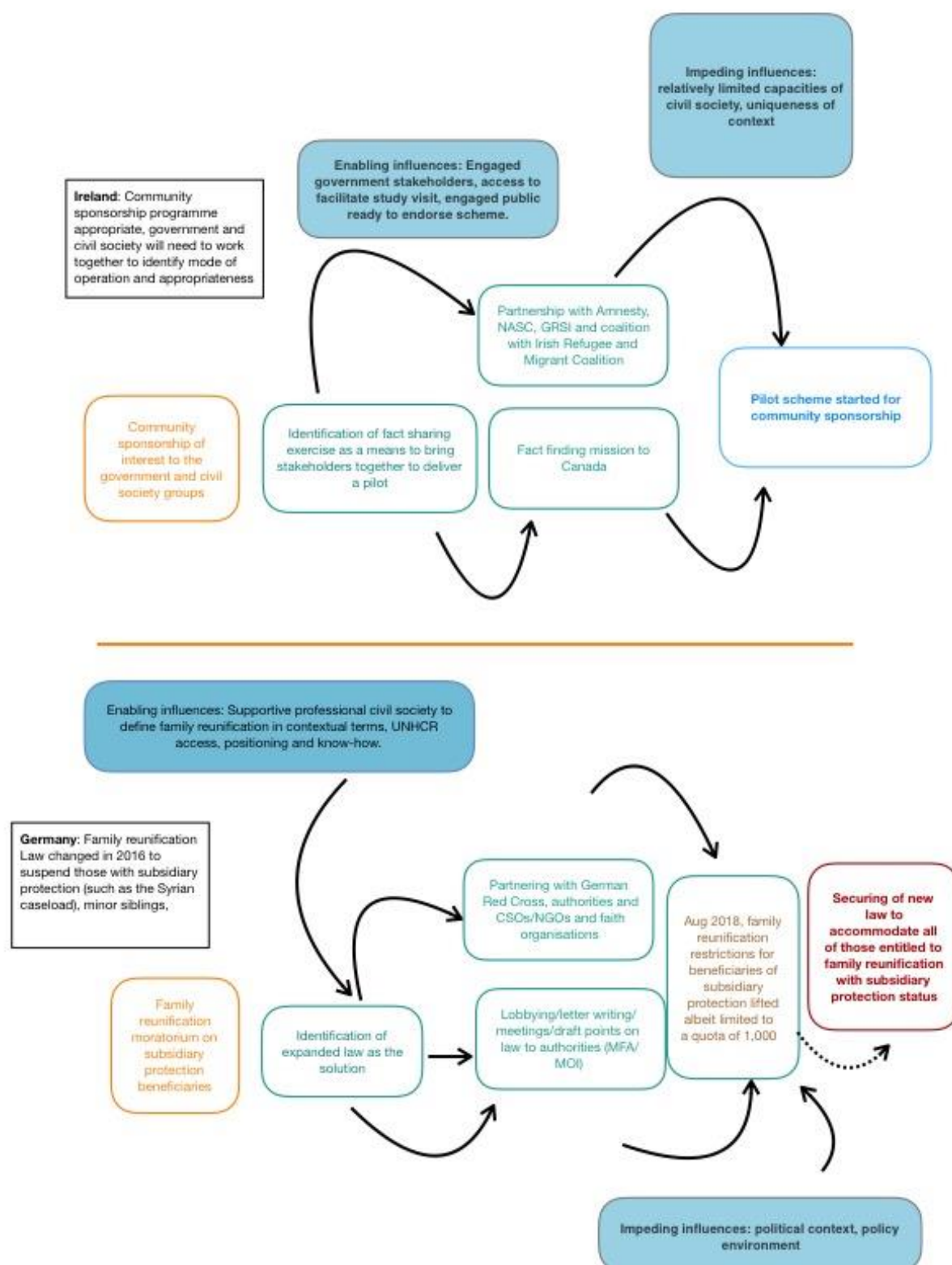
- **Partnership and quality assurance:** UNHCR Ireland and Germany have provided current legislative and thematic support to governments, civil society and NGOs on resettlement and complementary pathways as well as resettlement needs. Both Germany and Ireland continue to engage with UNHCR on quality assurance work.

The following diagram attempts to reconstruct how change occurred through advocacy in two of the policy changes mentioned above. The pathway shown is simplified and does not show the other possible influences on the changes seen.

The pathways show how change occurred often as a combination of direct and indirect advocacy by UNHCR. For example, in Germany, UNHCR directly met with relevant authorities and provided comments to draft legislation/policy reflecting the unique position the organization has compared to other actors. Authorities and other actors participated in meetings in both cases with UNHCR playing a key facilitation role. The fact-finding mission was an example of indirect advocacy, allowing the government to learn from the Canadian example and customize as appropriate for Ireland. In neither example advocacy took the form of interventions in public although there were instances of a) leveraging partners to do this (in Ireland through Irish Times coverage of community sponsorship preparations) and b) Head of Office or others speaking out publicly on specific points.

Figure 3: Pathways to change: Examples from Germany and Ireland

Source: Evaluation data/information collected



## Challenges for Alternative Pathways Advocacy

- While advocacy documents were available these did not form a strategy for sustained advocacy on the issue. This lack of strategies and longer term plans for alternative pathways' advocacy (at global, regional or country level) meant that it was difficult for the evaluators to have visibility of the approaches used and progress made.
- An absence of monitoring (or visibility of it) on progress towards advocacy objectives meant that progress made was not documented, shared and known.
- Proactive and reactive approaches to advocacy appear to have been left to the design of individual staff members at the heart of understanding the context and political sensitivities, however without investing in individuals with the appropriate, outward orientated approach to develop coalitions, respond to the fluidity in context and deliver the right gravitas for key stakeholders in the context such efforts are unlikely to lead to more systematic and sustained opportunities for advocacy.
- Whether States have endorsed using alternative pathways as a managed migration tool as opposed to a protection tool is unclear and this uncertainty has been keenly understood by staff who, at the local level, had tried to assess the trade off against advocating for resettlement quotas.<sup>32</sup>
- Despite the best efforts of UNHCR advocacy, political compromise can stilt the overall result. Understanding how to leverage hard to reach audiences and go beyond the echo chamber of partners may be more challenging than working in traditional NGO coalitions.
- Where there was a benign context for advocacy on alternative pathways, goodwill of governments to accept higher numbers may have been at odds with pressure from right wing populations who are not always in a minority. In such conflicting contexts, UNHCR's ability to fill the agreed places or host governments' ability (or perceived ability) to process sufficient numbers and deliver on promises with appropriate structural investment (around housing/integration, etc.) can have a negative reputational impact. The longer-term risks, responsibilities, resources and capabilities associated need to be considered when advocating for numbers.
- Whilst both offices recognized the need to share experiences, there was limited evidence of regional/cross-office lesson learning on contextual experiences of alternative pathways, integration and resettlement outside the annual resettlement meeting. The loss of a communications and advocacy focal point in Regional office for Western Europe made this job more difficult.
- Actions and decisions by UNHCR on politically sensitive issues such as regional disembarkation platforms caused frustration at the local level of partners and governments, affecting UNHCR's overall advocacy role. UNHCR Country Offices reported that they were not always aware of the organizational stance on these issues. This lack of awareness influenced the offices' ability to advocate effectively and affected the reputation of the organization.
- External interviews reflected that where UNHCR was advocating more publicly for alternative pathways for refugees, external stakeholders suggested a need to be more sensitive to the protection needs of migrant communities so as not to feed politically charged distinctions around protection being an exclusive right of refugees fleeing conflict.

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<sup>32</sup> In Germany, it is clear that the increased engagement in pathways goes along with an increasingly restrictive approach to spontaneous access to asylum in the European Union and Germany. There is a concrete danger of a political (and moral) trade-off to the detriment of spontaneous arrivals.

### **Lessons identified for Alternative Pathways Advocacy**

- Interviews reflected that internal understanding of how to balance efforts around resettlement and alternative pathways were not very clear at HQ at the start of the crisis and the terminology regarding pathways remained in flux. There was a sense that UNHCR was focused on resettlement all the while Member States were proceeding with wider alternatives such as HAP. Whilst this was not entirely negative, UNHCR's position as the "resettlement agency" was clear whereas the role UNHCR could play on alternative pathways was less so, affecting advocacy efforts. Ensuring UNHCR plays a strategic role to leverage others at the local level will help clarify position on alternative pathways.
- Advocating to governments for numbers of refugee resettlement, or other protection solutions, has critical impact; as does amplification in media outlets. Failure at the global level to deliver (or encourage Member States to do so) on processing resettlement caseloads or facilitating alternative pathways such as HAP impacts on the credibility of the organization.
- Advocacy on alternative pathways will be heavily influenced by the context, the refugee population in question and the priorities given to the different pathways; thus the need to adapt advocacy to the local conditions was evident.
- Advocacy on alternative pathways required a collaborative type of advocacy (rather than confrontational) with the authorities and civil society partners.
- Due to the range of actors involved in facilitating complementary pathways, building coalitions and determining common goals jointly works well in achieving change.
- Strategic use of media coverage can support advocacy objectives, as seen with family reunification in Ireland.

## Case study III – Influencing public opinion – Austria and UK

This case study is one of three case studies carried out as part of the evaluation on effectiveness and relevance of advocacy approaches in the EU/EFTA region in the 2015-17 period. The themes and countries selected were in consultation with the Regional Bureau of Europe (RBE). The case studies used four main research methods: 1) document review of available information; 2) review of available monitoring data; 3) face-to-face interviews with relevant UNHCR staff; and 4) interviews with relevant external stakeholders. To determine the effectiveness of the advocacy initiatives, the contribution analysis method was used (see annex 4). Visits were carried out to Vienna, Austria (7-9 August 2018) and London, UK (28-30 September 2018).

### Background and context

Far-right parties and media capitalized on the 2015 crisis in what many saw as contribution to a hardening of public opinion towards refugees and asylum-seekers based on fears of terrorism and wider social economic grievances.<sup>33</sup> At the same time, studies showed consistently that those communities in Europe with most immigration have the most favourable views towards immigrants – and attitudes towards immigrants have improved gradually in most European Union countries in the past decade.<sup>34</sup> While the veracity of the changes to public opinion is debated, there is agreement that the 2015 crisis put immigration at the top of people's minds in Europe. In the UK in 2015, the public perceived immigration as more worrisome than health, the economy and poverty,<sup>35</sup> however the degree to which fears around immigration were stoked by media is unclear.<sup>36</sup> Studies also show that many Europeans fall into an “*anxious or conflicted middle*” – aware of the benefits of immigration but concerned about the risks also.<sup>37</sup>

In this context, UNHCR saw its voice during the crisis as “*critical in helping to shape the narrative*” on refugees and migrants.<sup>38</sup> Prior to the 2015 crisis, UNHCR had been active in influencing public opinion, with public information staff in most European capitals, including Vienna and London. As a response to the 2015 crisis, the Regional Bureau for Europe (RBE) stepped up its communications capacity, establishing a Communications and Information Management (CIM) Team that incorporated information management, communications, analysis and reporting activities. To respond to the 2015 crisis, the team produced a range of communication products including monthly external reports, the “Desperate Journeys” reports that aimed to humanize data and analysis, fact sheets, updates, infographics and the Mediterranean data portal on refugee and migration flow.<sup>39</sup> In 2017, UNHCR HQ with the Purpose branding/research agency carried out research and/or staff workshops in five European Union countries (including desk research and a workshop in the UK) that provided insights on public sentiments towards refugees and the “*conflicted middle*”.<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> European Social Survey (2017). *Attitudes towards immigration in Europe: myths and realities*.

<sup>34</sup> European Union (2017). Integration of immigrants in the EU. Eurobarometer 469. Ipsos (2017). Global Views on Immigration and the Refugee Crisis. Of note, polling and studies often do not distinguish between immigrants and refugees and asylum-seekers.

<sup>35</sup> Dempster, H., & Hargrave, K. (2017). *Understanding public attitudes towards refugees and migrants*. Working Paper 512. London: Overseas Development Institute.

<sup>36</sup> Migration Observatory (2016). *A Decade of Immigration in the British Press*. University of Oxford.

<sup>37</sup> Dempster, H., & Hargrave, K. (2017). Op. Cit.

<sup>38</sup> UNHCR (2018). Europe Communications and Information Management Strategy and Action Plan 2018. Internal document. P.1

<sup>39</sup> Data portal: <https://data2.unhcr.org/en/situations/mediterranean>. For further information on communication products, see Europe Communications and Information Management Team - 2017 Review. Internal document.

<sup>40</sup> The research was carried out in Germany, France, Italy, the Netherlands and UK (desk research only) in 2018. Workshops were held with UNHCR staff to discuss findings and to inform consequent communication and advocacy strategies in all countries in 2017 and 2018.

## Influencing public opinion - concept, design and strategy

In both Austria and the UK, UNHCR was active before, during and after the 2015 crisis in carrying out activities aimed at influencing public opinion. Both offices having a long-term objective on “public attitude towards persons of concern improved” (Country Operational Plans). While the COP format does not provide specific objectives, indicators activities and timelines, it more so sets out the broad focus and priorities for the public opinion work.

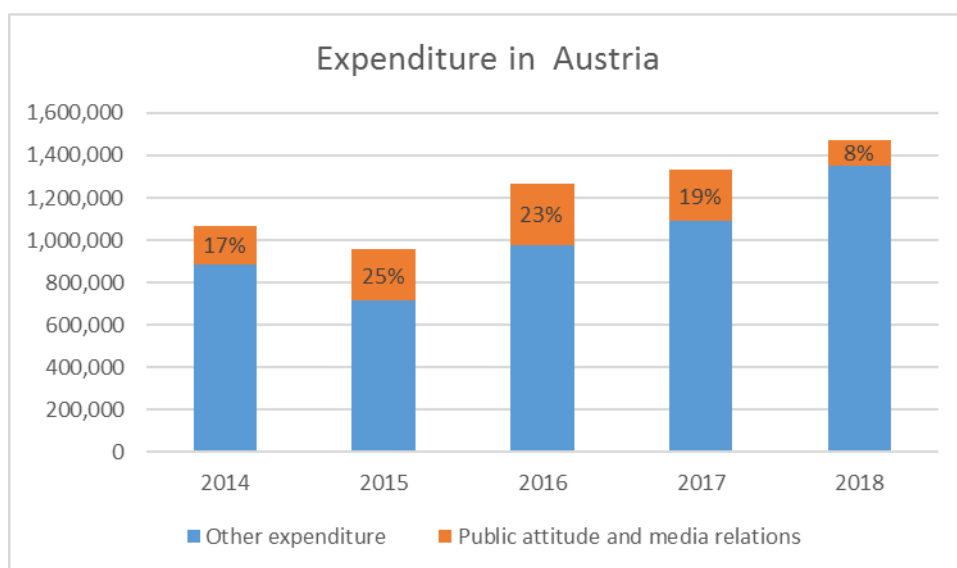
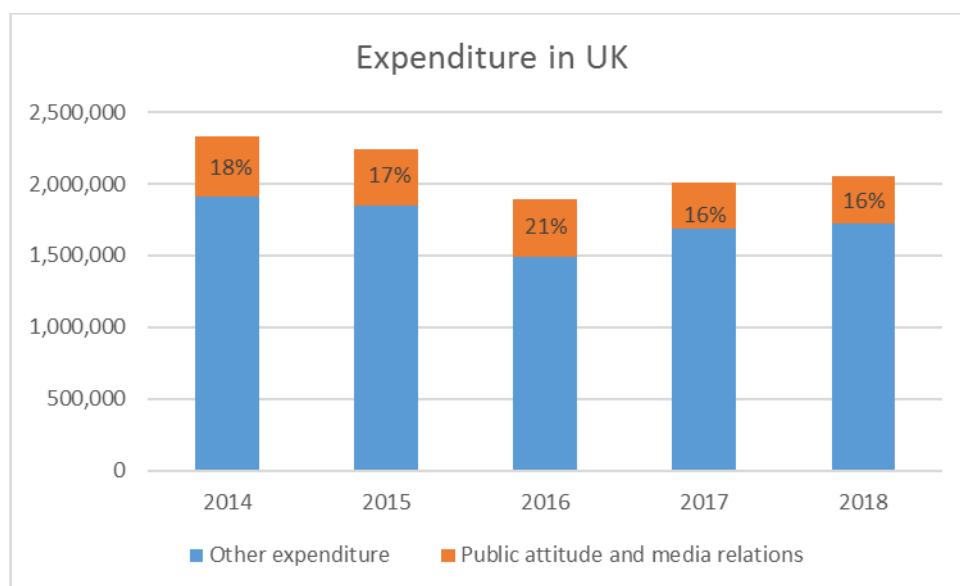
In 2014, there was a focus on promoting “*positive messages*” and “*positive and emotional stories*” on refugees (COP UK, COP Austria 2014) that was complemented during the crisis with “*setting the agenda of the media and public debate*” and “*reframing the asylum topic*” (COP UK 2015, COP Austria 2016). In both countries, an emphasis was put on positioning UNHCR as a reference and source on refugees with Austria highlighting the need to communicate “*basic facts about asylum and flight countering wrong and misleading information*” (COP Austria 2017). The UK office produced a 2017-18 communication strategy that has as its main goal to “*improve UK public understanding of and support for refugees in the UK and globally, as well as support for UNHCR’s work*” and described its primary target audience as the “*conflicted middle*”. The Austria office also confirmed this was a key target for them.

In both countries, the public opinion activities relied on limited research and analysis to design their strategies, identify audiences and develop activities relevant to where those audiences were consuming content. This meant that activities were largely designed without measurable outcomes; also linked to the challenge faced by both offices to monitor and assess the success or not of their public opinion activities. Outcomes in terms of changes to knowledge, attitudes and behaviors were not measured often due to the budget required. At the same time, less expensive outcome and output measurement was carried out inconsistently, such as reactions of audiences to events and communication activities, number and type of people being reached, etc. In 2017, the UK office benefited from the above-mentioned Purpose research but was not yet able to operationalize its findings due to resource constraints. The global communications team provided support, notably with the Purpose research, although no overall strategy or approach to the changing landscape was seen. At the same time, both Austria and UK drew from some of the key findings of the research, in terms of audience segmentation and better targeting, resource limitations considering.

## Resources

In both offices, the public opinion activities were carried out by public information (PI) staff with three PI staff in UK office and two PI staff in Austria, with the support of other staff and management. The public opinion budget (expenditure) of the UK ranged from a high of USD \$426,000 in 2014 to \$317,000 in 2018; in Austria from a high of \$293,000 in 2016 to \$97,000 in 2018. The following graph shows public opinion expenditure as a percentage of total expenditure of the two offices. In both countries, public opinion activities as a percentage of total expenditure peaked in 2015/16 and consequently decreased. Other work to influence public opinions could have also been budgeted outside of the public opinion expenditure item, notably if integrated within another type of activity, for example, advocacy on a particular issue.

**Figure 5 & 6: Public opinion expenditure as a percentage of total expenditure in Austria and UK**  
**source: UNHCR operational expenditure tracking**



### **Main public opinion activities**

Despite the variances seen in budgets available for public opinion activities, in both countries activities were stepped up in response to the crisis given the public interest and the need identified to balance and shape the public debate. Following are the main activities carried out:

- **Media relations:** In both Austria and the UK, the PI staff (and management to some extent) increased their interactions with the media to place and promote UNHCR stories and respond to queries. The level of interest increased markedly in both countries, for example the number of mentions of UNHCR in the Austrian press doubled from 2014 to 2015. In addition, the UK office also serviced the many global media actors based there though struggled to reach media not already sympathetic to refugees, also due to access and resource constraints. There was a regular liaison with the Communications and

Information Management team of the RBE on emerging issues and shaping the positions and responses required.

- **Outreach events and campaigns:** In the UK, the office in 2016 launched a “Great British Welcome” campaign showcasing people and projects welcoming refugees across the UK. The campaign featured web stories, photo and video content that were covered in local and national media. In Austria, the “Long Day of Flight” was held annually (since 2012) over a day that had numerous partners organize conferences, workshops, exhibitions and school activities with the aim to “*personalize and reframe the asylum topic*” (2016 Austria COP). In 2017, 164 events were organized across the nine provinces of Austria. Both offices also had major outreach activities around World Refugee Day that they refocused during the crisis.
- **Regional communication initiatives:** Both offices participated in two regional initiatives that were launched to influence public opinion in Europe in response to the 2015 crisis:
  - The Dream Diaries: An online series of visual content developed by external “social media influencers” that documented the hopes and dreams of refugee and asylum-seeking children and young people in five European countries, including Austria and was supported by the UK office with media outreach.
  - Photo project “No stranger place”: A series of stories and photos developed by the photographer Aubrey Wade profiling refugees and their hosts across Europe, including Austria and the UK (renamed as the “Great British Welcome” campaign). The photos were consequently featured in a touring exhibition across Europe and media.
- **Schools and youth programme:** The Austria office has developed an education programme targeting youth since some six years. The programme developed several handbooks/guides that are used by secondary and primary school teachers as supplementary material for subjects such as geography, history, languages etc. The programme is implemented in collaboration with youth services, education NGOs and the teacher training institutes.
- **Support to advocacy goals:** In both countries, the PI staff amplified protection priorities responding to the 2015 crisis (and prior), notably in advocating for changes to laws, policies and practices in areas such as resettlement, family reunion, integration and documentation. Support was mainly focused on creating a public element of advocacy through media, events or coalition building to complement the other advocacy activities.

**The approach** for public opinion activities was sometimes collaborative, in working with partners to build interest and momentum with the public. In both countries, UNHCR capitalized on its existing relationships to build coalitions, for example with NGOs as well as cultural and sports institutions in Austria in their “Long Day of the Flight” event to extend the reach of their activities or built new relationships, such as with social media influencers for the Dream Diaries project.

**The public opinion activities adapted** to the 2015 crisis notably through responding to the increased demand for information from the media as well as from civil society, authorities, academics etc. and reorienting existing activities to take into account the crisis. The need to advocate with authorities on their response to the crisis also meant increased communication support for advocacy initiatives. The RBE, HQ and Brussels regional office supported public opinion activities in both offices through coordination, drafting of press lines/key messages and content for local adaptation. There was no European-wide strategy or approach paper found on influencing public opinion in response to the 2015 crisis beyond the commissioned Purpose research (nor any written approach seen at the global level). Of note, the two regional

communication initiatives mentioned above were both proposed to UNHCR by the respective influencers/photographer and were not initiated by UNHCR in reaction to the crisis.

### Achievements to date

Through its public opinion activities, UNHCR was able to position itself as a source and reference on refugees; it was either the first or second international organization or NGO quoted on the crisis in the European media from 2015 to 2017.<sup>41</sup> External stakeholders and partners saw UNHCR as a serious and respected voice for refugees, positioned as a reference for providing facts and figures that was seen as very much needed in the polarized media and public opinion environment.

The Dream Diaries project reached potentially at least 10 million people in Europe and worldwide, given its profile on social media and coverage seen in mainstream media across 18 countries.<sup>42</sup> It was estimated that project reached a broader and diverse audience for UNHCR than it usually does although there was no in-depth audience analysis available.

Where public opinion activities supported advocacy goals, evidence was available that these activities contributed to pressure and influence for policy change. For example, in 2017, UNHCR in the UK supported a coalition of NGOs and parliamentarians to advocate for changes to the UK law and policy on refugee family reunification. Combined with advocacy activities, UNHCR carried out communication actions such as making family reunification one of its six “election asks” ahead of the June 2017 national election and issuing a public letter signed by the country Representative. The “election asks” were covered by the Times, a national newspaper and a public parliamentary briefing held featuring two Syrian youth who had benefited from family reunion. This combination of communication and advocacy actions contributed to an overall change in the UK authorities’ response to family reunification. Where UNHCR was able to leverage the access garnered through quality initiative access, similar changes were evident.

Concerning other public opinion activities, it is assumed that the range of public opinion activities in Austria and UK reached audiences in these countries, based on the available data on reach (participation statistics and media monitoring) and feedback from external stakeholders and partners. However, beyond estimating reach, it is difficult to assess more precisely the contribution of UNHCR to any change of public opinion as no outcome monitoring data exists. Given the absence of this data and sentiment analysis of relevant audiences, it is difficult to estimate the extent to which UNHCR is reaching its stated target (from about 2015 onwards), the “*conflicted middle*” or even whether relevant platforms were leveraged to this end.

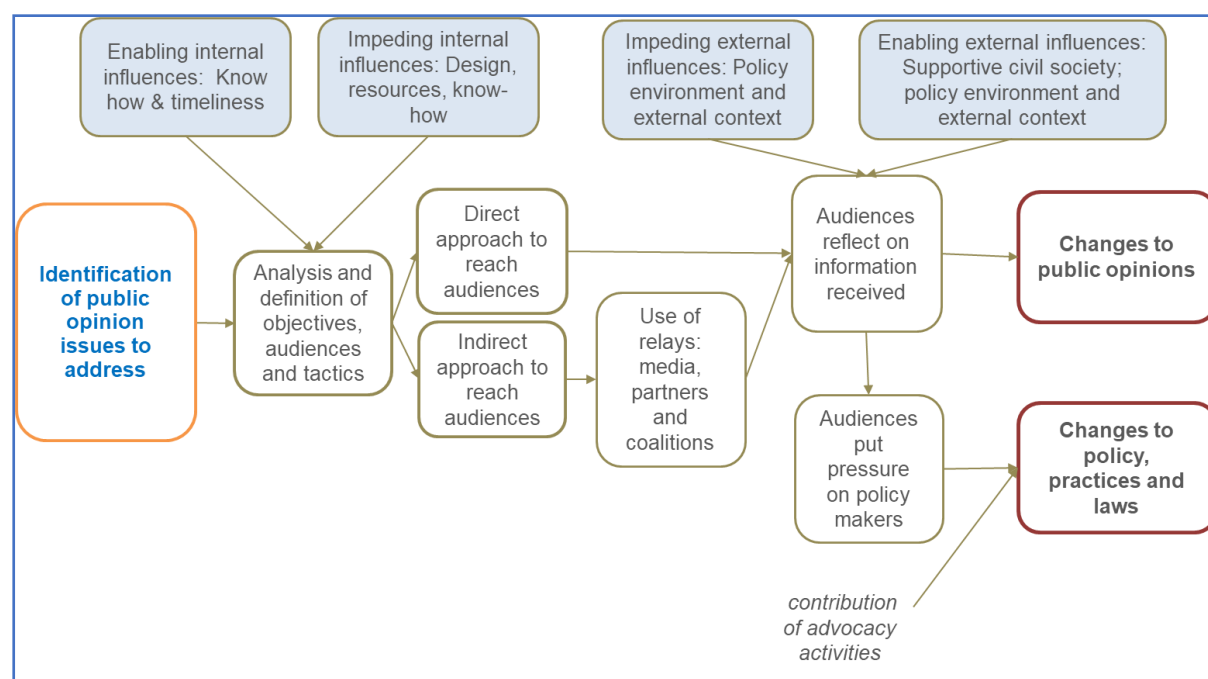
The following diagram is a simplified pathway of how change was anticipated to happen in influencing public opinion. The diagram shows that there are both direct and indirect approaches to influencing public opinion, for example a “direct approach” being where a person attends a presentation by a UNHCR official which directly influences their opinions; and an “indirect approach” being where a person is reached by UNHCR through a partner or media, for example by viewing media content that influences their opinion (such as the Dream Diaries). The diagram also shows the path that public opinion activities can be used to support advocacy goals, by reaching audiences that then place pressure on policy makers that could lead to changes to policy, practice or laws (such as the example of family reunification above).

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41 According to UNHCR media monitoring reports, from 2015 to 2017, IOM or UNHCR were often interchangeable in the first or second places. See UNHCR (2017). Europe Review. UNHCR Europe Communications. Strategic Communications Section. Internal document. The ranking used mixed both NGOs and United Nations agencies active in refugee response.

42 Estimated reach: 8 million – external social media channels, 2 million – UNHCR own social media channels. See UNHCR (2018). The Dream Diaries. UNHCR Communications Report. Results and Findings. Strategic Communications Section.

**Figure 3: Pathways to change for influencing public opinion**  
**Source: Evaluation data/information collected**



## Influences

The diagram shows the main internal and external influences identified that both enable and impede UNHCR’s public opinion activities, as expanded upon below:

**Design of public opinion activities:** Design includes the analysis, definition of objectives and audiences and tactics. This was the strongest impeding influence for UNHCR for public opinion activities. The activities were based on an understanding of the context but not based on analysis and/or existing or commissioned research that informed desired outcomes, appropriate messaging, tactics and the ability to assess their success or not. For example:

- The main outreach activities in both countries, “Great British Welcome” and the “Long Day of flight” are both lacking a baseline and monitoring and evaluation component to estimate their contribution to influencing public opinions. Tactics have not been tested or assessed to see to what extent they would reach the “*conflicted middle*”, whether the organization could intervene in the platforms where this audience was most active and whether the organization was best placed and prepared to make the trade-offs necessary (beyond “truth telling”) to engage these audiences.<sup>43</sup>
- The messaging in both countries during the crisis has been focused mainly on positive stories and fact-setting as described above. However, such messaging was not designed or tested with their main intended target, the “*conflicted middle*”. Studies indicate that positive messaging and facts can be ignored by indifferent audiences implying that the positive messaging strategy may not have been appropriate for the intended target. Further, that refugees facts and figures can be manipulated by right wing media.<sup>44</sup> So while

<sup>43</sup> See best practices on evaluation set out in the chapter “Practical guidance for conducting impact evaluations of information campaigns in Tjaden, J., S. Morgenstern and F. Laczko (2018), “Evaluating the impact of information campaigns in the field of migration: A systematic review of the evidence and practical guidance”, Central Mediterranean Route Thematic Report Series. International Organization for Migration, Geneva. See

[https://gmdac.iom.int/sites/default/files/papers/evaluating\\_the\\_impact\\_of\\_information\\_campaigns\\_in\\_field\\_of\\_migration\\_iom\\_gmdac.pdf](https://gmdac.iom.int/sites/default/files/papers/evaluating_the_impact_of_information_campaigns_in_field_of_migration_iom_gmdac.pdf)

<sup>44</sup> Dempster, H., & Hargrave, K. (2017), Op. Cit., Crawley, H. (2009). Understanding and Changing Public Attitudes: Review of Existing Evidence from Public Information and Communication Campaigns. Centre for Migration Policy Research, Swansea University; Op. Cit.; Migration Observatory (2016); Op. Cit.

there is evidence in different studies that targeting advocacy with specific messages to identified audiences, there is little evidence that positive stories in general has an effect on the '*conflicted middle*'.

- The use of UNHCR's goodwill ambassadors were not always representative of the more conservative audiences, according to external stakeholders although this evaluation did not investigate further their selection and if audience testing was carried out. UNHCR UK had purposely aimed to target more conservative audiences, with media placements and working with celebrities that are popular with conservative audiences.

**Resources:** Available staff and budgets were identified as an impeding influence in that these resources were not available for the design phase and any consequent monitoring. More research-based public opinion activities would require considerable budgets and attention considering the specific localized grievances that fuel anti-immigration sentiment in the UK. The design and strategy required for such activities also limited the ability to progress with this approach.

**Know-how:** The skills and know-how of staff was an asset to the public opinion activities as experienced communication professionals. It was in the design, innovation, monitoring and evaluation of public opinion activities where staff lacked the time and resources to use their know-how in these areas (or use consultants/staff to support them).

**Timeliness:** When UNHCR was able to respond and be active in a timely manner this was an enabling influence. However, some partners and stakeholders did comment on the slowness of UNHCR to respond on joint communication and advocacy opportunities as well as the difficulty for UNHCR to clarify their own positions/views on issues.

**Supportive civil society:** The support provided by civil society, NGOs and other United Nations agencies was seen as key to amplifying and reinforcing the messages of UNHCR. However, civil society also played a role in exposing the lack of response sometimes coming from the organization on pressing issues such as on unaccompanied minors in Calais.

**Policy environment and political context:** Both were enabling and impeding influences often dependent upon the country and the situation. For example, the current political context in the UK meant that there were more opportunities to bring influence through public pressure compared to Austria. The policy environment was also more favourable to significant changes in the UK compared to Austria, where changes were possible but not at a legislative level. There was however limited risk assessment of how the social political dynamics might change for better or worse reflecting UNHCR's position as reactive as opposed to proactive.

### Challenges for influencing public opinion

The challenges identified for public opinion activities were as follows:

- The limited emphasis put on the design, monitoring and evaluation of public opinion activities meant that little was known about their actual impact on audiences' opinions or behaviours.
- The resources available were not sufficient to carry out the research, analysis and monitoring that would be required to achieve the set goals of public opinion activities to influence public opinions – or where research was carried out (such as the Purpose research), consequent resources were not available to use the research findings adequately to assess relevance of UNHCR role and ability to access intended audiences for influencing.
- The lack of analysis meant that UNHCR did not consider sufficiently questions on "source" and "messages", such as whether it was best placed to be the "source" to influence public opinions or if it should be facilitating others to do so given the platforms where relevant audiences were consuming information.

- The absence of an overall strategy or approach to influencing public opinion in Europe in that it was more general than targeted: there was no known prioritization of countries, prioritization of the issues/attitudes to change and prioritization of audiences. Of note, influencing public opinion was not featured in the RBE Strategic Directions 2017-2020.
- A communication “success” may have longer term implications. For example, UNHCR’s advocacy efforts to increase numbers for resettlement or expand alternative pathways were often delivered without enough reflection or outside consultation as to the potential consequences. Whilst securing 10,000 resettlement places in the UK through communications may be an overall achievement, there needs to be assessment of whether the country has the capacity and the resources to respond to meaningful integration when the population is polarized on issues such as Brexit and immigration more widely. While the UK office thought it was a realistic and achievable target, some external stakeholders thought that the conservative media could further use this to fuel grievances around inequality.

### **Lessons identified for influencing public opinion**

- Influencing public opinion on refugees is “notoriously difficult” and most campaigns are “ineffective or have a relatively modest degree of impact”.<sup>45</sup> Further to that “Although organizations working on refugee and migration issues may not be best placed to address some of the broader concerns [of publics] surrounding migration, progress might be made through partnerships and coalition-building”.<sup>46</sup> These realities have to be taken into account by UNHCR when dedicating resources to this area of work. Increased resources and a dedicated strategy would be needed if UNHCR is to reach its current ambitions. It may be better for the organization to leverage relevant goodwill ambassadors, commercial partners or focus on public opinion contributing as part of advocacy efforts for policy change, where progress has been seen.
- Positive messaging and countering mistruths are not likely to resonate beyond those who are already supportive; messaging strategies for the “conflicting middle” need another approach – “emotive and value driven arguments” that recognize their concerns.<sup>47</sup> UNHCR in Europe has started to reflect and adapt its approach towards this direction.
- The source of the message is all important. UNHCR has to consider in influencing public opinion, if it is best placed to be the source or it should be facilitating the work of others (e.g. local NGOs, businesses or refugees themselves) to speak out. Also considering perceived lack of neutrality of UNHCR; i.e. it tends to highlight refugee needs and rights while not speaking about duties and avoiding more contested or problematic issues in relation to refugee protection and integration.
- To be able to show the contribution of public opinion activities beyond reach, resources have to be invested in strategy design, research, monitoring, analysis and evaluation. Otherwise, UNHCR cannot show convincingly the contribution it is making.

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<sup>45</sup> Crawley, H. (2009), Op. Cit. p. 19-20.

<sup>46</sup> Dempster, H., & Hargrave, K. (2017), Op. Cit., p. 21.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid, p. 1.

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