



# Protect

The Right to International Protection

Report

2021

## Norwegian Dissemination and Communication Network on International Refugee Protection and the UN Global Compact on Refugees (NORCOM)

[protect-project.eu](http://protect-project.eu)



UNIVERSITY OF BERGEN



NORCOM is funded by  
The Research Council  
of Norway



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from the European Union's  
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agreement No 870761.

## About PROTECT-NORCOM

In January 2021, PROTECT received nearly NOK 1 million to create and run a 'Norwegian Dissemination and Communication Network on International Refugee Protection and the UN Global Compact on Refugees' (NORCOM). The funding is part of The Research Council of Norway's Supplementary Funding for Norwegian Participants in Horizon 2020 projects. The project is led by Hakan G. Sicakkan, who is based at the Department of Comparative Politics at the University of Bergen.

### About the call

*The purpose of the Norwegian Research Council's Supplementary Funding is to encourage a greater number of Norwegian actors to take on a key role in Horizon 2020 projects and to give a wider range of Norwegian actors access to knowledge, developed through Horizon 2020 projects.*

The NORCOM-project is dedicated to disseminating and communicating PROTECT's research to Norwegian actors involved in refugee protection, relief aid, and asylum and migration as a policy field. With this funding, PROTECT can disseminate relevant results to the Norwegian government, as well as political and humanitarian actors. This significantly accelerates the transfer of knowledge between academia and politics and increases the impact of the Horizon 2020 project on research, society and trade and industry in Norway.

As part of the national dissemination ambition, NORCOM also developed a Norwegian dissemination and communication network consisting of Norwegian non-governmental organizations and researchers in Norwegian higher education and research institutions.

More information about PROTECT-NORCOM and the dissemination and communication network can be found on the [project-website](#).



## The first NORCOM-symposium

In order to make the research findings and recommendations from PROTECT more visible, between 2021 and 2023, NORCOM will organize three symposia and a final conference, where the different Norwegian actors can come together and discuss about Norway's asylum and refugee policy, and Norway's work in relation to the implementation of the UN Global Compacts on refugees and migration. More information regarding the symposiums can be found [here](#).

The first NORCOM-symposium took place on 20<sup>th</sup> October, between 13.00-14.30, with the participation of the following research institutions, universities, NGOs and national authorities: Ministry of Foreign Affairs (UD), Ministry of Justice (JD), Norwegian Directorate of Immigration (UDI), Immigration Appeals Board (UNE), University of Bergen (UiB), Norwegian University of Science and Technology (NTNU), Chr. Michelsen Institute (CMI), Institute for Social Research (ISF), European Council on Refugees and Exiles (ECRE), Norwegian Red Cross (RK), A Drop in the Ocean (DiH), The Norwegian Centre against Racism (A-S), The Norwegian Organization for Asylum Seekers (NOAS), the Twelfth of January Association (1201). (The detailed list of participants can be found at the end of this document.)

The symposium had the following program:



**NORCOM SYMPOSIUM**  
**20 October 2021**  
**PROGRAMME**

13.00 – 13.05	<i>Opening remarks</i>
13.05 – 13.20	<i>Selection Criteria in Refugee Resettlement - Balancing vulnerability and future integration in eight resettlement countries</i> Jan-Paul Brekke and Erlend Paasche, Institutt for samfunnsforskning
13.20 – 13.35	<i>Taking Vulnerability into Account: Reflections from Norwegian asylum practice</i> Jessica Schultz, University of Bergen and VULNER (H2020)
13.35 – 13.50	<i>Potential Implications of the UN's Global Refugee and Migration Compacts for (Norwegian) Asylum Procedures</i> Hakan G. Siakkan, University of Bergen and PROTECT (H2020)
13.50 – 14.05	<i>Global Refugee Compact, CEAS and (Norwegian) Protection Policies from a European Perspective</i> Catherine Woollard, European Council for Refugees and Exiles (ECRE)
14.05 – 14.30	<i>Q&amp;A and comments by the audience</i>

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The opening remarks by project leader, Hakan G. Sicakkan (UiB), were followed by a presentation about the report on the 'Selection Criteria in Refugee Resettlement - Balancing vulnerability and future integration in eight resettlement countries', by Jan Paul Brekke and Erlend Paasche from the Institute for Social Research (ISF). In their report, they analyzed resettlement programs for refugees in eight countries (Norway, Australia, United Kingdom, Canada, France, Germany, Sweden, Netherlands). They highlighted similarities and differences regarding these countries' selection criteria and practices. Their findings are based on in-depth interviews with stakeholders (commission members, civil servants at various levels, NGO representatives, UNHCR staff, governmental representatives) and document studies. They focused in particular on how states balance humanitarian objectives and integration-related concerns in the selection process, in addition to aspects related to border control and foreign policy, notably the strategic use of refugee resettlement. During which, they found that all countries struggle with the following problem: while the resettlement program is meant to reach those refugees who are 'most vulnerable', resettlement states also need to take into consideration the refugees' presumed future integration and ability to cope in the host society (principles versus pragmatism). The full report is available, [here](#).

The second presenter came from PROTECT's sister Horizon 2020 project, VULNER (Vulnerabilities Under the Global Protection Regime). Jessica Schultz (UiB, CMI) held her talk on 'Taking Vulnerability into Account: Reflections from Norwegian asylum practice'. Schultz began her presentation by highlighting the fact that vulnerability is a vague concept with different meanings in different contexts. Vulnerability is everywhere: as an analytic tool, as a source of special obligation and as a selection criteria. Vulnerability in the asylum process in Norway appears when it comes to the identification of those with specific reception needs, during the asylum procedure and during the assessment of individual circumstances supporting the asylum application (Article 28 of the Immigration Act on 'refugee status', and Article 38 of the Immigration Act on 'strong humanitarian considerations'). During her talk, Schultz focused on good and bad practices, the balancing of individual and state interests surrounding this latter aspect and the consequences of these (fewer rights, greater scope for revocation, less legal security – limits in judicial review, residence permits do not necessarily provide the basis for 1) permanent residence or 2) family reunification). She finished her talk by asking questions regarding the Global Compacts as possible tools that can focus policies on vulnerability over time, and across national borders and regarding Norway as innovator of restrictive interpretations of refugee law versus Norway as leader in international refugee and IDP protection. These and more of her findings will be published in *Vulnerable Protection Seekers in Norway: Regulations, Practices and Challenges* (Lidén, Schultz, Paasche & Wessmann 2021).

After Schultz, Hakan G. Sicakkan (UiB, PROTECT) continued the round of presentations with his topic on the 'Potential Implications of the UN's Global Refugee and Migration Compacts for (Norwegian) Asylum Procedures'. He started off by introducing the GCR and how it came to be, and with what kind of main objectives. After which he elaborated in detail on what 'ease the pressures on host countries', 'enhance refugee self-reliance', 'expand access to third-country solutions', as main objectives may mean in this context. Among the possible implications of the GCR, he mentioned granting work permits to asylum seekers as soon as their applications are put into the normal asylum procedure, increasing the resettlement quotas in times of crises, opening for accepting relocations of asylum seekers to overburdened countries, financial and other aid to overburdened countries, and funding the refugee-helping NGOs' work sufficiently. After focusing on the GCR, Sicakkan turned his focus to the GCM, highlighting its historically pioneering emphasis on the human rights of the people on the move outside their own countries, which he suggested may have implications for state responsibilities for people seeking protection but have not been able to lodge an asylum application yet. Then, he asked the following question: what instruments to use to achieve these goals? According to him, although the

protection objectives are clearly specified in the two Global Compacts, neither the United Nations nor the European Union have identified systematically the governance mechanisms or policies or any other means that can be effectively deployed by the states to achieve these goals. That is, however, what PROTECT does research on, more precisely: PROTECT identifies the sets of protection tools (norms, governance modes, discourses) preferred by different actors in the international system, it assesses how these tools have worked in refugee protection before in different contexts and identifies the best performing norms, governance modes, and discourses. And finally, it tests the performance and resilience of these tools with respect to the resilience tests (cleavage pressure, crisis, citizen tolerability and performance tests). Finally, he shared preliminary findings from the project on which legal norms to introduce and how to organize the refugee status determination to obtain a more human rights-based protection system. In this connection, he pointed to the single asylum procedure system, which is advised by the UNHCR and the EU and is in use in almost all the EU member states, as a candidate for an ineffective protection tool. More information about PROTECT, and its research can be found, [here](#).

The final presenter of the first NORCOM-symposium was Catherine Woollard from the European Council for Refugees and Exiles, who talked about the 'Global Refugee Compact, CEAS and (Norwegian) Protection Policies from a European Perspective'. First, she started off by reflecting on the speeches of the previous three speakers, mainly agreeing with their assessments and at the same time highlighting their contributions to achieving key priorities of international refugee protection and the importance of research and access to research when creating and advocating for a functioning asylum system. During her talk, Woollard briefly introduced the UN's Global Compacts on Refugees and Migration, then continued by elaborating on the Common European Asylum System (CEAS). Finally, she compared the two and constated that the CEAS, in comparison with the GCR is re-stating existing policies and has three main weaknesses (– also due to the shifting of responsibility for processing asylum applications to third countries). Firstly, it does not contribute to the easing of pressure on host countries, it does not enhance the self-resilience of refugees, and it also does not provide enough support in countries of origin. Woollard states that the way ahead for the EU is to take up (more) responsibility – which is a highly politicized matter. There is a dichotomic approach by the states to this question, which can be also seen in reaction to the Afghan situation.

The symposium concluded with a Q&A session, during which the audience and the presenters shared their remarks, reflections and posed their questions.