In our globalized world an ever-increasing number of people live in a country that is not their own. Not a day goes by without the media showing painful images of refugees fleeing to Europe. In 2015, over a million asylum seekers and migrants crossed into Europe. The conflict in Syria continues to be by far the biggest driver of the migration. But also ongoing unrest in Afghanistan, Iraq, Iran, Somalia and Sudan and poverty in the Balkans (Kosovo, Serbia, Albania) are driving people to look for a new life elsewhere. European leaders have held one emergency meeting after another to address the challenges this unprecedented influx presents. The European Agenda on Migration has set out a number of (short-term) measures such as assigning additional funding to Frontex, strengthening Europol’s role and establishing ‘hotspots’. The EU member States seem to have prioritised the reception of asylum seekers and the development of short-term assistance programmes. Yet strategies to tackle the long-term legal consequences of the refugee flows into Europe are less clear. While those short-term interventions are of course important, European countries will sooner or later inevitably be confronted with important legal issues that transcend the reception of refugees, the ‘bed-bath-bread’ and other logistical issues. A complementary approach is therefore needed to improve the sharing of international responsibility in the long-term governance of the asylum and refugee flows into Europe. This paper takes a closer look at one of the long-term legal concerns, namely the cross-border portability of refugees’ personal status (age, parental status, marital status, etc.). This difficult issue is considered in the ‘Declaration on the Legal Status of Applicants for International Protection from Third Countries to the European Union’ (September 2015) of the European Group for Private International Law (GEDIP) to stress the importance of recording and recognizing facts and documents concerning the personal status of asylum seekers and refugees, such as births, marriages and deaths. The Declaration pinpoints the crucial link between international refugee law and private international law. This paper aims to identify and to map interactions between the asylum procedure and the cross-border portability of the refugees’ personal status. It will discuss legal problems encountered by asylum seekers/refugees with regard to their personal status acquired in one country and transferred to another country (such as the absence of documentary evidence, the issue of limping legal relationships). At present, insufficient research data exist on the interaction between international refugee law (relating to the rights and obligations of States regarding the protection of refugees) and private international law (dealing with private relationships in a cross-border context), least of all empirical research data. The lack of in-depth empirical research is all the more worrying as the continuing flow of refugees into Europe will create multiple complex legal issues: How do people prove their family ties? How do asylum and migration authorities assess foreign documents that relate to the civil status of refugees? What if no (authentic) documents can be presented? What if an Afghan couple, claiming for asylum, produce a marriage certificate, proving a religious marriage concluded when the girl was 16? How does a Syrian man prove that a child is his when it was born in a Lebanese refugee camp and there is no birth certificate? These and many other crucial private international law questions remain – due to the short-term crisis management – underexposed. The paper will discuss some interactions between international refugee law and private international law in the field of registration and recognition of the personal status of refugees and their families. It will expand on the private international law concept of personal status in international refugee law and on international refugee protection in private international law instruments.