



a european resettlement
network for cities and regions

Protecting and Welcoming Refugees in Europe

A joint statement issued by ICMC Europe on behalf of the SHARE Network, on the occasion of the SHARE Network Conference (Brussels, October 20th, 2015)

SHARE - [the network of cities, regions and local actors committed to offering protection and welcome for refugees resettled to Europe](#) – calls for a multi-stakeholder engagement to ensure a durable integration of refugees in times of the largest displacement crisis in Europe since World War II. This includes coordination, information-sharing, awareness-raising and citizen support for countries and municipalities welcoming people in need for international protection.

The number of forcibly displaced persons around the world has now reached approximately 60 million, around a third of whom are refugees. Europe has seen an unprecedented level of refugee arrivals, and numbers continue to increase on a daily basis. It is essential that [European responses continue to uphold international obligations to protect refugees in this context of multiple refugee crises](#), including refugees fleeing both Syria and the many other refugee-producing conflicts and situations across the globe.

An effective European response requires [sustained solidarity and cooperation](#), both amongst European countries, and between the EU and the countries currently hosting the vast majority of those who are displaced. It will require increased and sustained support for these countries, the realisation of internal EU protection mechanisms such as relocation, and expanded safe and legal avenues - complementary to existing refugee resettlement programmes - that enable refugees to enter and seek protection in Europe.

To ensure the solutions offered to refugees and those seeking protection in Europe are truly durable, this reformulating of European policies and frameworks must include [a renewal of approaches to reception and integration](#). This [requires engaging actors in local communities](#), particularly in countries with little previous experience of receiving refugees, and [continued advocacy at the political level](#) to counter xenophobia and improve the level of understanding amongst the European public about the need for refugee protection.

Welcoming newcomers in European cities and towns

[Direct contact and interaction with local citizens in receiving communities](#) can counter isolation, improve language skills, foster a sense of belonging, and assist in the understanding of local cultures and systems. Citizens can be engaged in supporting refugee integration through volunteer programmes focused on refugees' immediate needs post-arrival, or accompanying refugees through the integration process towards their full independence.

[Citizen-led initiatives can supplement but cannot replace refugee reception and social services, and/or integration programmes](#). In this way, citizens can build support for refugee integration from all sections of society, and continue to make a substantial contribution to offering a broad and inclusive welcome for newcomers in European towns and cities.

Integration is a complex, two-way process of mutual adaptation that does not happen overnight. In addition to standard components of integration, such as language-learning, children's access to education, health services and employment support, planning for partnerships that will facilitate integration should address the specific needs of particular refugee groups, such as those related to trauma and periods spent without access to basic healthcare. Partnerships should also include grassroots, citizen-led initiatives, which have a central role to play in extending local capacity to provide a welcoming environment.

To ensure European countries can receive larger numbers of newcomers, [new and innovative partnerships must be developed amongst governments, local authorities, civil society organisations and other service providers](#), which should in turn engage with a broader set of stakeholders such as churches, migrant and diaspora associations, employers, universities and others.

Recommendations: What Europe can do?

1. Integration is what will come next for Europe, and needs to be the main priority for action under the European Agenda on Migration. EU emergency programmes must be part of future decision-making.
2. National AMIF programmes need to include more funding for integration, whereas defined part must be dedicated specifically to *refugee* integration.
3. Cities, in consultation with civil society partners and local populations, must be able to determine integration priorities and target groups, as they know best what is needed in terms of integration. Direct access for cities to AMIF integration funding would ensure that European funding for integration reaches the local level and supports effective, locally developed integration measures and priorities.
4. Volunteering and active citizenship initiatives should be supported, endorsed and celebrated at the European, national and local levels - including through the development of inclusive policies, funding for coordination, and tools to recruit, manage and support volunteers.
5. European funds take too long to be processed and allocated by Member States. Cities and their partners are frontline service providers, with proven capacity to respond urgently to humanitarian crises.
6. Coordination and information-sharing on integration can be improved. Countries with experience of receiving refugees should share practices with those with less history of doing so, and national authorities to local actors.
7. Actors at all levels should prioritise awareness-raising on refugee protection and solid communication on legal rights and integration support measures, including by incorporating both in anti-discrimination policy and programmes.

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Signatories

European networks/platforms:

- Churches' Commission for Migrants in Europe (CCME)



- European Council on Refugees & Exiles (ECRE):



- European Federation of National Organisations Working with the Homeless (FEANTSA)



FEANTSA

- International Catholic Migration Commission (ICMC) Europe

- Jesuit Refugee Service (JRS) Europe:



International organisations

- United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)



- International Organization for Migration (IOM):



Austria

- Refugees Welcome Austria



- Diakonie Refugee Services



Belgium

- Caritas International



- Convivial

Convivial
MOUVEMENT D'INSERTION DES RÉFUGIÉS

- Mentor-Escale



Bulgaria

- Bulgaria Red Cross



Czech Republic

- Burma Centre Prague



- Society of Citizens Assisting Emigrants (SOZE)



Finland

- Finnish Red Cross



France

- Forum Réfugiés



Germany

- city of Aachen



Ireland

- Saint Catherine's Community Services Centre



Italy

- Consorzio Communitas



Malta

- Kopin



Netherlands

- Dutch Council for Refugees



- The Foundation for Refugee Students (UAF)



- City of Sittard-Geleen



Poland

- City of Slupsk



- Helsinki Foundation for Human Rights



- Refugee.pl Foundation



Romania

- Romanian Arab Cultural Center



Spain

Spanish Commission for Refugee Aid (CEAR)



- The city of Madrid



Sweden

- Caritas Sweden



United Kingdom

- British Refugee Council



- Coventry Refugee and Migrant Centre



Malvern Welcomes

- City of Sanctuary

- **City of Sheffield**



- **Migration Work**



- **Scottish Refugee Council**

