



SHARE Network Conference

'Protecting and Welcoming Refugees in Europe: responding to an unprecedented refugee crisis'

**Committee of the Regions, Brussels
Tuesday October 20th 2015**

The recent large number of refugees from Syria, Eritrea, Afghanistan, Iraq arriving into Europe forces our society to reaffirm its commitment to solidarity, the protection of human rights and of the right to asylum. The lack of legal routes to access protection in Europe, including resettlement opportunities, have left hundreds of thousands without any prospect of building a dignified future for themselves and their families.

As arrivals continue to increase and new mechanisms to receive refugees are discussed, the role of European towns and cities in providing reception, welcome and integration for the many refugees arriving into Europe becomes ever more crucial.

Since 2009, ICMC Europe has in the context of the **SHARE Network** collaborated with numerous cities and local partners and stakeholders from across Europe to strengthen refugee protection, advocate for more and better refugee resettlement, and promote planned reception, coordination and integration. Creating local awareness of and support for refugees, resettlement, integration and protection has been an important part of this work, particularly at a time when such definitions and notions have become increasingly blurred in the public debate.

The **SHARE Network** has become a platform for European exchange on building a culture of welcome and hospitality in communities receiving refugees, and promoting good practice and the full involvement of authorities and citizens in reception, protection and integration. This work has been timely for the many countries planning new involvement in receiving refugees, particularly those in Central, Eastern and Southern Europe in which cultures of welcome and community involvement are less well undeveloped.

In recent months, a burst of welcoming initiatives have spread across Europe, enabling positive expressions of citizens' support for refugee protection, despite the very often negative public and political discourse concerning refugees and migration.

As the second phase of the development of SHARE draws to a close, ICMC is organising a **one-day SHARE Network Conference 'Protecting and Welcoming Refugees in Europe: responding to an unprecedented refugee crisis'**, co-hosted by the **Committee of the Regions** and taking place in **Brussels on Tuesday October 20th 2015**.

Via debates and interventions from actors from across Europe working on initiatives to build awareness and welcome refugees, in addition to presentations by the main actors and networks that



are supporting reception and integration, the conference will seek to build on this groundswell of support to welcome refugees in Europe.

Bringing together 100 participants drawn from European regional and local authorities, civil society organisations and networks, previously resettled refugees, national governments, international organisations and European institutions, the conference programme will:

- Provide an update on the new resettlement and relocation measures and, as far as possible, reflect on the operational measures to implement them.
- Discuss planning for sustainable reception and integration arrangements in the context of current relocation and resettlement proposals.
- Present the learning and resources generated by the **SHARE Network**, and the activities of SHARE partners and stakeholders in refugee reception, protection and integration in Europe.
- Highlight the many grassroots, citizen-based initiatives to welcome refugees and asylum seekers to Europe and explore potential synergies with regular reception systems for refugees.
- Enable partners, participants and stakeholders of the SHARE Network to endorse the '*Charter of Principles on Reception & Welcome*'.

An **outline conference programme** is included overleaf.

For more information about the **SHARE Network** or the planned conference, please contact Rachel Westerby (westerby@icmc.net) or Magdalena Boehm (boehm@icmc.net) at ICMC.