

Council of European Municipalities and Regions
Conseil des Communes et Régions d'Europe
Συμβούλιο των Ευρωπαϊκών Δήμων και Περιφερειών
Consejo de municipios y regiones de Europa
Consiglio dei comuni e delle regioni d'Europa
Raad der Europese gemeenten en regio's
Conselho dos municípios e regiões da Europa

| RGRE | Gereonstraße 18 – 32 | 50670 Köln



Rat der Gemeinden und Regionen Europas | Deutsche Sektion

Ettlingen, 05-06 October 2015

Resolution

**of the Council of European Municipalities and Regions (CEMR)
– German Section –**

In favour of a pan-European refugee policy

The cities, counties and municipalities united in the German Section of the Council of European Municipalities and Regions agree

- that the present refugee situation is a considerable challenge to many member states and the European Union itself. Most affected are, on the one hand, countries with external European borders such as Italy and Greece. These countries are facing an unprecedented arrival of people who enter European territory for the first time after their often extremely dangerous escape from troubled regions in the Middle or Far East or Africa. However, countries such as Germany or Sweden are also concerned, given that many refugees wish to travel to one of these countries. Germany alone reckons that 800,000 refugees will seek their home there, and Sweden is prepared to receive 80,000 refugees. Meanwhile, other countries presently are subject to a lesser burden.
- that an increasingly national approach to the arrivals of refugees, as can be witnessed today, entails a considerable risk to the principles of the European Union. Cities, counties and municipalities, are very concerned that the European Union as a community of laws and values has not yet found an appropriate answer to the present situation. Recriminations, border fences between EU member states, a lack of willingness to compromise and the unilateral revocation of existing European provisions are no solution.
- that the present development shows that the Schengen/Dublin system is hitting the wall – a system that provides for open internal borders and checks basically only at the external borders but that also delegates the responsibility for the execution of asylum procedures to the very EU member state where asylum seekers have entered European territory for the first time.
- that the wrong signal is sent out, however, when some member states virtually abolish European provisions. This is the case, for instance, when European border countries refrain from registering refugees on their entering European territory for the first time.

Therefore, the German Section of the CEMR calls for a pan-European asylum and refugee system on a new basis. One of the most important elements of such a new system must be the support of EU border countries in their effort to protect the Schengen territory, especially by adopting the following measures:

- As already announced, “hot spots” are to be created in the border countries affected in order to register arriving refugees for the first time and check their application for asylum for its prospect of success.
- Especially asylum seekers from secure countries of origin are supposed to pass the entire asylum procedure in these institutions located near the border. As a prerequisite, EU member states have to agree upon a list of secure countries of origin.

- Refugees with a prospect of staying would then have to be distributed among the EU member states according to a fixed quota. This distribution scheme would have to be binding for refugees.
- Such a pan-European distribution scheme can only work if there are harmonized standards for the reception and accommodation of refugees throughout Europe. This also applies to benefits in cash and in kind.
- Unilateral action of some member states to the disadvantage of a balanced distribution of refugees must be avoided to the greatest extent possible.
- As regards refugees fleeing from the civil wars in Middle and Far East, most of whom are protected by the 1951 Refugee Convention, Europe has to engage in a serious discussion whether fixing a quota could contribute to manage refugee flows in view of limited reception capacities. However, this would not constitute a limitation of the constitutional right to asylum.
- One of the tasks Europe only can address as a whole is the improvement of the living conditions prevailing in the countries of origin of the refugees. The first priority of the European refugee policy must be to eliminate the reasons for escape in the countries of origin.
- Furthermore, there must be a guarantee that all expenses incurred by the cities, counties and municipalities – who bear the main burden of the refugee flows – for accommodation, public health, and social assistance to refugees shall be reimbursed.

Therefore, in the sense of a European community of values and law, the German Section of the CEMR advocates a holistic and joint approach to the asylum and development policy of the European Union.