

ECCAR's General Conference in Karlsruhe 2015 "Welcoming Cities"

Final Declaration

We are here for all of us that are believing that a better world is possible only through building more welcoming cities.

We express our appreciation to UNESCO for having created the International Coalition of Cities Against Racism (ICCAR) and for UNESCO's continuous global leadership and support.

In particular recognizing the first bi-lateral cooperation agreement reached between ECCAR and the Latin-American and Caribbean Coalition under the auspices of UNESCO, ECCAR considers itself to be an international actor conscious of the importance of global perspectives related to networking, particularly with regard to the regional coalitions in the Arab area and Africa when creating a culture of anti-racist reception by Welcoming Cities. This underlines our strength as a network in Europe and the worldwide visibility provided as a member of ICCAR. Member cities recognize as an important goal pushing forward the advocacy and communication in bringing them closer to their citizens.

The fear of wars, civil wars, repression and various forms of persecution, is causing the displacement of people as well as increasing loss of dignity, and poverty. In turn, European cities are being challenged to receive significant numbers of refugees and enable their integration in society.

The ECCAR convenes in order to find appropriate and human rights compliant means with which to accommodate refugees, convinced by the peace-building capacity of cities.

We are aware that our coalition is a network that can be reinforced by exchanging best practices against racism and discrimination and collaborating more intensively, sharing the responsibility for social cohesion through active and integrated municipal policies involving the private sector and civil society.

Bearing in mind the claims and proposals of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees,

referring to the guidelines of the Council of Europe on the protection of human rights in the reception of refugees,

acknowledging the call of the EU Committee of the Regions for support of the municipalities by national governments and international organisations, including the exchange of good practices,

as well as reminding everyone of our statute and Ten-point-plan-of-action, we have agreed upon and signed,

the cities of ECCAR, solidary with those in need as well as with each other,

hope that the situation of emergency will continue to be tackled in a humanitarian and diplomatic way, aware that we cannot expect a relieve of the situation in the near future and conscious that the number of refugees expected today represents less than 1 % of the European Union population,

commit ourselves to making every effort to accommodate people in need and respect their dignity, commit ourselves to an anti-racist welcoming culture with short-term and long-term measures along the lines of the commitments in the Ten-point-plan-of-action, to preserve and improve the social cohesion of our cities, particularly in the fields of vigilance towards racist attitudes, prevention of hate crimes, and equality of access to shelter, health services, the labour market, and education, and the proactive implementation of these measures,

invite those countries and their cities that have not yet done so, to open their doors.

The members of ECCAR thank civil society actors for their efforts and invite them to continue their active support for implementing this welcoming culture in the future.

The Member Cities:

Call on their regional and national authorities for their necessary solidarity as expressed by active support and the provision of adequate resources, removal of administrative barriers, and cooperation with cities in their efforts,

Call on the responsible authorities for the development of more efficient and humanitarian asylum procedures in order to establish as soon as possible clarity on the further stay for both refugees and municipalities,

Call on the European institutions at the Council of Europe and the European Union, to take all opportunities within their competencies in order to support municipalities in providing the best possible reception of refugees while ensuring human rights, fundamental freedoms and security.