



UBC Conference
The Impact of the European Refugees Crisis in the Cities of the Baltic Sea Region
Rostock, 14-16 March 2016

RESOLUTION
Refugees - a challenge and a chance for the Cities of the Baltic Sea Region

Many UBC member cities have been experiencing the consequences of the recent movement of refugees escaping from war and crisis affected countries, mainly Syria, Iraq, Afghanistan as well as North and East Africa.

The UBC member cities recall the commitment to the 1951 Refugees Convention and the 1967 Protocol, as well as the Resolution on the Refugees Situation in Europe, adopted at the XIII UBC General Conference in Gdynia on 29 October 2015. All people have the right to a home and a homeland, and the refugees should have the chance to return to their safe home countries.

In the unforeseen circumstances of the refugees crisis, the citizens as well as humanitarian organizations, NGOs and city administrations of the Baltic Sea Region have been taking care of the refugees providing them with food, water, health care and shelter, or, helping them to continue their route in an exemplary manner. The cities have been showing a warm welcome, a high level of compassion and solidarity towards these stricken people, and, most importantly, respect for their human dignity.

According to the UBC Strategic Framework 2016-2021, one of the UBC aims is to promote cities as inclusive, diverse, sustainable, creative, democratic and safe hubs, stimulating active citizenship, gender equality and participatory policy making.

UBC emphasizes that refugees who stay in their host cities must be enabled to live in dignity and be provided with access to employment and essential services such as education, housing and health care. They need to be encouraged to integrate into their new societies and to become fully fledged citizens of these municipalities.

UBC stresses that integration is not only a task for refugees who have to learn to live in new social environments, but also for the inhabitants of the receiving cities who have to learn new lessons about multicultural living together. The concerns of the inhabitants about the massive influx of refugees should be taken into consideration. Also, it has to be pointed out that the refugees' integration process is long-lasting one and should get continuous attention. All involved parties, such as local authorities and NGO's should be strongly supported.

UBC calls for a stronger solidarity between the European governments and countries. UBC cities declare their continued willingness to make extraordinary efforts in this challenging situation.

UBC cities are committed to continue their regional cooperation and exchange of good practices. Improved capacity building could be reached by using the potential of the city networks and twinning relationships. Strategies and activities might be developed in cooperation with other regional organizations, such as BSSSC and CBSS and other relevant regional bodies.

UBC urges the national governments, the EU and the international community to make efforts to find a peaceful solution to the crisis in the affected countries and welcomes all political steps which might lead to an end of the wars and to stop the massive exodus of people from the conflict areas.

UBC cities recommend that national governments and the European Commission should provide appropriate financial instruments strengthening regional cooperation and city partnerships to create the infrastructure for good migration governance in the UBC cities.

The history of the development and growth of the cities has been linked to immigration. Cities have become what they are today thanks to all inhabitants no matter from which background they come. Therefore, UBC cities take the massive immigration not only as a challenge but also as a chance for further development. All inhabitants contribute to the local well-being.

Attachment:

Recommendations on measures to be taken to welcome newcomers in our societies and to achieve their effective integration

UBC cities state that education and labour are the basis of any integration.

UBC cities should:

- increase the level of understanding that refugees are an asset to society,
- strengthen the role of the civil society involving and supporting as many people as possible e.g. volunteers, NGOs, to help refugees to integrate,
- invest in teaching the language and its culture and develop mentorships, buddy programmes, etc.
- involve enterprises, public administration in organizing internships as a possibility of integration through work.
- show the true colours of a city and explain the logic of, for example, the compensation and insurance system,
- transfer the diversity management model from companies to cities
- provide education for both inhabitants and migrants
- cooperate with the fourth power (media) to create positive image
- face and combat radicalization tendencies like religious extremism and nationalism
- win back the confidence and trust of the people in politicians and governments
- ensure equal offers for everybody (e.g. housing, social welfare), especially taking care of vulnerable social groups, e.g. children, women, elderly