

32nd Session of the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe

28.03.2017

Speaking notes for Co-Rapporteur György ILLES to present the resolution and recommendation on “From reception to integration: the role of local authorities facing migration”

Madam President, Dear colleagues,

In our Resolution addressing the local and regional authorities, we list a number of actions that can be taken by local and regional authorities to improve the situation of refugees and migrants. Our approach is based on an approach that encourages early integration.

As regards the reception of refugees, we highlight the need for cooperation between the local, regional and national levels of government to ensure a co-ordinated response to the issues related to reception of refugees.

We invite local authorities to bring together local partners, citizen initiatives or NGOs, who can contribute to the reception of refugees.

In line with the Council of Europe Commissioner’s declarations, we underline that refugee reception facilities should not become detention centres, particularly as regards children and minors.

We urge local authorities to develop assistance programmes for refugees, taking into account their personal identities, individual skills and abilities and to prioritise action for children in precarious situations. Networks are needed in order to exchange information on solutions that can be implemented irrespective of national legislative or political choices.

As we say in our report, urgent measures for receiving refugees is of course an activity that requires immediate action. But this should not let us forget the importance of developing sustained programmes with a longer term vision of integration of migrants.

This is why, in keeping with the spirit of grassroots action that the Congress always supports, we encourage local authorities to ensure provision of key services to all residents without discrimination.

They should also promote intercultural activities, intercultural education and volunteer community work. These will allow migrants to contribute to their host community. And this contribution will in turn permit the host community to have a positive perception of newcomers.

Acceptance requires visibility and a sharing of understanding of each other's history. It also requires the sharing of civic responsibilities. If we want a win-win result in the interaction between newcomers and host communities, we must have them working together for a common goal.

As to our Recommendation, it is with an integration-centered approach that we recommend national governments to focus on the following points:

At the international level, we need more solidarity and co-ordination among member States to facilitate the insertion of refugees in the host communities and to overcome concentration of refugees under difficult conditions in one country.

At the national level, governments must clarify the responsibility areas and the distribution of competences between the national, regional and local levels. The aim here is to ensure complementarity between all levels of government.

Governments need to develop the necessary legal framework to facilitate local and regional authorities' missions and actions.

They should ensure financial support through sufficient allocation of national or international resources.

And finally, they should encourage foreigners' participation in the affairs of local authorities once their resident status has been clarified.

Dear Colleagues, we ask you to adopt this resolution and recommendation. These texts will provide us with the necessary background to develop our future activity.

Thank you for your attention.