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European Youth Centre

Statement by the Council of Europe Joint Council on Youth on the refugee crisis in Europe

Item 6 on the agenda

The Joint Council on Youth of the Council of Europe,

In view of the current situation faced by thousands of refugees and asylum seekers arriving in Europe, and the unprecedented challenges it is causing for European States,

Taking into account:

- the rights and freedoms secured by the European Convention on Human Rights, and namely the right to life, to security and to the prohibition of discrimination as per articles 2, 5, 14 respectively;
- the United Nations Convention relating to the Status of Refugees;
- the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, namely article 22;

Recalling:

- Resolution 2072 (2015) of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe on “After Dublin – the urgent need for a real European asylum system”;
- press release DC114(2015) of the Secretary General of the Council of Europe on “Refugee crisis: Council of Europe reminds States of respect for human rights of all”;
- Resolution 1996 (2014) of the Parliamentary Assembly on ‘Migrant children: what rights at 18?’;
- the on-going work of the Council of Europe’s Youth Sector and the UNHCR Representation to the European Institutions in Strasbourg, in particular the field research on European State practice regarding transition to adulthood of unaccompanied and separated asylum-seeking and refugee children of 2014;
- the No Hate Speech Movement, launched in 2013, and its focus on tackling hate speech and racism towards vulnerable groups, including refugees and asylum seekers;

Bearing in mind that:

- as Parties to the United Nations Convention relating to the Status of Refugees, all Council of Europe member States have an obligation to protect refugees and therefore to examine individual asylum applications in order to determine who should benefit from this protection to avoid breaches of this obligation.

The Joint Council on Youth:

1. points to the particular vulnerability of young refugees and asylum seekers and to the Council of Europe Youth Department’s work in this field;
2. underlines the necessity to address the specific needs of young refugees and asylum seekers, especially unaccompanied minors, in order to ensure their basic right to safety and dignity is respected by means of specific action by the relevant Council of Europe bodies;
3. calls for particular attention to be paid to the condition of especially vulnerable groups, notably young women, who are at risk of becoming victims of human trafficking and sexual violence and invites the relevant Council of Europe bodies to undertake for specific action to safeguard young women ;

4. reminds the relevant Council of Europe bodies to encourage national governments and civil society organisations to be mindful of the fundamental importance of education as a means of addressing and tackling discrimination, segregation and marginalisation, as well as promoting the values of tolerance, respect and dignity;
5. emphasizes the importance of cooperation between civil society and institutional stakeholders to build an inclusive and tolerant society;
6. recalls the Council of Europe Youth Department's on-going work to provide young people, including young refugees and asylum seekers, with capacity building opportunities to achieve inclusive and peaceful societies, as well as the European Youth Foundation's pilot programme, and calls for support for these efforts;
7. urges non-governmental organisations, in particular youth organisations, to increase their efforts to address the current refugee crisis, making use of the above-mentioned resources from the Council of Europe's Youth Department;
8. calls upon all relevant institutional stakeholders within the Council of Europe to provide support for the work of civil society organisations working with refugees;
9. urges all relevant stakeholders and partners of the No Hate Speech Movement to pay particular attention to hate speech towards asylum seekers and refugees;
10. invites all relevant institutional stakeholders to commit to stopping the violence, improving the living conditions of refugees and asylum seekers, and eradicating all of the causes of the current refugee crisis.