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The role of local and regional governments in protecting internally displaced persons (IDPs)

Current Affairs Committee

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Summary

Taking guidance from the previous work of the Congress on the responsibilities of local and regional authorities in the reception of refugees and integration of migrants, this report draws attention to the situation of internally displaced persons (IDPs) and underlines the importance of political commitment and the essential role that local and regional authorities play in promoting the integration, participation and non-discrimination of IDPs.

The report calls on local and regional authorities to facilitate IDPs' access to services and ensure the effective exercise of their human rights, raising awareness among host populations about the situation of IDPs. It also invites them to ensure the participation of the displaced persons themselves in finding local solutions and to recognise the relevance of the private sector in the provision of infrastructure, housing and services.

It recommends that the governments of member States invest in assessing protracted displacement and in what constitutes durable solutions for IDPs. It invites member States to ensure a fair and transparent distribution of funding for IDP-related projects. It also draws their attention to the importance of systematic data analysis and the tracking of progress at the city level in order to achieve national and global development goals.

¹ L: Chamber of Local Authorities / R: Chamber of Regions

EPP/CCE: European People's Party Group in the Congress

SOC: Socialist Group

ILDG: Independent and Liberal Democrat Group

ECR: European Conservatives and Reformists Group

NR: Members not belonging to a political group of the Congress

RESOLUTION 448 (2019)²

1. The issue of displacement is a global phenomenon which has reached an unprecedented scale in recent years. In 2018 alone, 28 million people from 148 countries were internally displaced. However, despite the ever-growing number of internally displaced persons ((hereafter "IDPs") in the world, their plight sometimes tends to be overshadowed by the refugee and migration crisis.
2. An internally displaced person is, according to the 1998 UN Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement, someone who has been "forced or obliged to flee or to leave his/her home or place of habitual residence, in particular as a result of or in order to avoid the effects of armed conflict, situations of generalized violence, violations of human rights or natural or man-made disasters, without crossing an internationally recognized State border". They have the right to seek safety in another part of their country, to leave their country, to seek asylum in another country, the right to recognition everywhere as a person before the law, the right to healthcare, to education, to employment, to security, to liberty of movement, and the right to be protected against forcible return to, or resettlement in, any place where their life, safety, liberty and/or health would be at risk.
3. In Europe, over decades, more than 4 million people have been displaced inside their own countries due to armed conflicts and violence. Added onto the IDPs affected by earlier conflicts in Europe which include Azerbaijan, Armenia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Cyprus, Georgia, Kosovo*, North Macedonia, Russia and Turkey, more recently there have been 1.7 million IDPs in Ukraine due to the situation that arose following the illegal annexation of the Crimean Peninsula of Ukraine by the Russian Federation and the areas affected by foreign military intervention in the Eastern part of the country.
4. Alongside armed conflicts, heightened vulnerability and exposure to sudden-onset hazards are a real risk. Wildfires were a particularly visible expression of this (Greece) and as was the risk of being displaced by floods, particularly in cities (France). Globally, there have been 17.2 million new disaster displacements in 146 countries. In Europe, three quarters of the population are estimated to live in urban areas vulnerable to natural hazards. Consequently, for local and national governments in Europe, disaster displacement needs to be a component of risk reduction and response strategies. This is also in line with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goal 13 which calls for urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts.
5. Internal displacements are, first and foremost, a human rights issue. They should be addressed as such. IDPs are currently facing administrative obstacles preventing their full inclusion. They also encounter issues regarding employment, housing, education, and health – to only cite a few. The authorities have a primary duty and responsibility to provide protection and humanitarian assistance to IDPs within their jurisdiction, and IDPs have the right to request and receive protection and assistance from these authorities.
6. In its Recommendation Rec(2006)6, the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe asked member States to make sure that IDPs are provided with the necessary documents to exercise their rights, and are properly informed. Even though they have been displaced, IDPs remain nationals of the State in which they live. Hence, they are entitled to the same human rights as other citizens, as enshrined in national, regional and international legislations.
7. A 2018 report adopted by the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE), reminded member States that the fundamental human rights of IDPs and their families should be kept in mind when relocating persons. PACE deplored the fact that the humanitarian situation of most IDPs in Europe had been negatively affected by the fact that underlying conflicts are protracted and by forced displacements, and underlined that the human rights and humanitarian needs of IDPs should be a central point in all international efforts to monitor and mediate those conflicts.

² Debated and adopted by the Congress on 29 October 2019, 1st sitting (see Document [CG37\(2019\)09](#), explanatory memorandum), co-rapporteurs: Marianne HOLLINGER, Switzerland (L, ILDG) and Oleksandr SIENKEVYCH, Ukraine (L, ILDG).

* All references to Kosovo, whether the territory, institutions or population, in this text shall be understood in full compliance with United Nation's Security Council Resolution 1244 and without prejudice to the status of Kosovo

8. The Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe (hereafter the “Congress) issued a Human Rights Handbook for local and regional authorities in 2018, which sets out the rights of IDPs and the obligations of local and regional authorities to ensure these rights. The Congress acknowledged the crucial role of local and regional authorities in facilitating IDPs’ integration and participation in public and political life. More specifically, in its Recommendation 419, the Congress considered voting rights as an efficient tool for the integration of IDPs.

9. In the light of the above, and with a view to protecting IDPs’ rights and addressing their precarious situation, the Congress invites local and regional authorities of the member States of the Council of Europe and their national associations, to:

- a. promote the welfare of internally displaced persons and protect their freedoms and rights, providing them with equal access to basic services and infrastructure as local residents on the one hand and recognise their right to return to their places of origin and to their homes or places of habitual residence, in safety and with dignity on the other;
- b. acknowledge that IDPs form a heterogeneous group with varying needs and adapt their approach depending on the target group, keeping such needs in mind when developing policies and initiatives, with particular emphasis on women and vulnerable groups such as unaccompanied minors and the elderly;
- c. raise awareness among the host populations regarding the plight of IDPs and draw attention to the fact that even if the arrival of IDPs might put a burden on local resources in the short-term, their presence can also be an opportunity for host communities;
- d. take appropriate action to fight prejudice against IDPs, prevent violence, promote inter-cultural understanding and ensure social cohesion and provide psychological assistance to IDPs when necessary;
- e. co-operate with civil society organisations, academics and the private sector, in order to come up with innovative solutions to forced displacement and the needs it engenders in areas such as housing, education, health care, employment and financial assistance, and in particular co-operate with private owners and housing associations to tackle the housing issue, providing solutions such as integrating reception centres into already existing residential areas, thereby facilitating IDPs’ access to social services and accelerating their inclusion;
- f. foster and facilitate IDPs’ participation in public and political life by establishing consultative bodies and/or by creating spaces for associations of IDPs to communicate with councilors, NGOs etc. and by protecting them from intimidation and violence which would impede their voting rights;
- g. create mechanisms of consultation so that IDPs can share their experience and invest in the establishment of a pan-European network of local and/or regional authorities in order to deal with protracted displacements;
- h. co-operate with other levels of governance in the organisation of initiatives, from the planning phase to implementation and evaluation;
- i. keep track of new displacements in order to know exactly how many IDPs live in a given area and adapt policies in consequence, creating a check-list in order to create an evidence base including different categories such as data and analysis, capacity and participation, and incentives and political will.

RECOMMENDATION 437 (2019)³

1. The issue of displacement is a global phenomenon which has reached an unprecedented scale in recent years. In 2018 alone, 28 million people from 148 countries were internally displaced. However, despite the ever-growing number of internally displaced persons (hereafter “IDPs”) in the world, their plight sometimes tends to be overshadowed by the refugee and migration crisis.
2. An internally displaced person is, according to the 1998 UN Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement, someone who has been “forced or obliged to flee or to leave his/her home or place of habitual residence, in particular as a result of or in order to avoid the effects of armed conflict, situations of generalised violence, violations of human rights or natural or man-made disasters, without crossing an internationally recognised State border”. They have the right to seek safety in another part of their country, to leave their country, to seek asylum in another country, the right to recognition everywhere as a person before the law, the right to healthcare, to education, to employment, to security, to liberty of movement, and the right to be protected against forcible return to, or resettlement in, any place where their life, safety, liberty and/or health would be at risk.
3. In Europe, over decades, more than 4 million people have been displaced inside their own countries due to armed conflicts and violence. Added onto the IDPs affected by earlier conflicts in Europe which include Azerbaijan, Armenia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Cyprus, Georgia, Kosovo*, North Macedonia, Russia and Turkey, more recently there have been 1.7 million IDPs in Ukraine due to the situation that arose following the illegal annexation of the Crimean Peninsula of Ukraine by the Russian Federation and the areas affected by foreign military intervention in the Eastern part of the country.
4. Alongside armed conflicts, heightened vulnerability and exposure to sudden-onset hazards are a real risk. Wildfires were a particularly visible expression of this (Greece) and as was the risk of being displaced by floods, particularly in cities (France). Globally, there have been 17.2 million new disaster displacements in 146 countries. In Europe, three quarters of the population are estimated to live in urban areas vulnerable to natural hazards. Consequently, for local and national governments in Europe, disaster displacement needs to be a component of risk reduction and response strategies. This is also in line with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goal 13 which calls for urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts.
5. Internal displacements are, first and foremost, a human rights issue. They should be addressed as such. IDPs are currently facing administrative obstacles preventing their full inclusion. They also encounter issues regarding employment, housing, education, and health – to only cite a few. The access to these basic services is unequal, and IDPs are disproportionately affected. The authorities have a primary duty and responsibility to provide protection and humanitarian assistance to IDPs within their jurisdiction, and IDPs have the right to request and receive protection and assistance from these authorities.
6. In its Recommendation Rec(2006)6, the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe asked member States to make sure that IDPs are provided with the necessary documents to exercise their rights, and are properly informed. Even though they have been displaced, IDPs remain nationals of the state in which they live. Hence, they are entitled to the same human rights as other citizens, as enshrined in national, regional and international legislations.
7. A 2018 report adopted by the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE), reminded member States that the fundamental human rights of IDPs and their families should be kept in mind when relocating persons. PACE deplored the fact that the humanitarian situation of most IDPs in Europe had been negatively affected by the fact that underlying conflicts are protracted and by forced displacements, and underlined that the human rights and humanitarian needs of IDPs should be a central point in all international efforts to monitor and mediate those conflicts.

³ See footnote 2.

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8. The Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe (hereafter the “Congress) issued a Human Rights Handbook for local and regional authorities in 2018, which sets out the rights of IDPs and the obligations of local and regional authorities to ensure these rights. The Congress acknowledged the crucial role of local and regional authorities in facilitating IDPs’ integration and participation in public and political life. More specifically, in its Recommendation 419, the Congress considered voting rights as an efficient tool for the integration of IDPs.

9. In light of the above, the Congress calls on member States of the Council of Europe to:

- a. respect the rights of IDPs who should enjoy their rights as citizens of their countries but above all as human beings and assemble all resources to provide them with protection and humanitarian assistance in their new environments but also guarantee their right to return to their place of origin in safety and with dignity;
- b. co-operate with local and regional authorities in the planification, implementation and follow-up of initiatives and policies regarding IDPs, making sure that the financial support allocated to local and regional authorities is transparent, fair, and based on declared needs;
- c. raise awareness on the plight of IDPs and build a positive discourse regarding their situation in order to achieve social cohesion and prevent discriminatory discourses;
- d. provide more flexible legislation that allows IDPs to fully exercise their voting rights as these are a natural starting point for successful integration in the life of their community;
- e. provide legislative support to policy development aiming to improve the living conditions of IDPs by facilitating their access to housing as well as to other basic services and infrastructure such as health or education;
- f. keep track of new displacements in order to know exactly how many IDPs live in a given area and adapt policies in consequence, creating a check-list in order to create an evidence base including different categories such as data and analysis, capacity and participation, and incentives and political will;
- g. aim, at the international level, at a strong co-ordination with other member States and to share good practices regarding the situation internally displaced persons.

EXPLANATORY MEMORANDUM⁴

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Displacement: A global phenomenon

1. Mass displacement of populations have various causes ranging from conflicts and wars, man-made or natural disasters aggravated by the effects of climate change, and systemic inequality and chronic poverty. In this report the rapporteurs will be focusing on internal displacement of populations and its repercussions from a local and regional government perspective.
2. According to the UN Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement of 1998, an internally displaced person is someone who has been “forced or obliged to flee or to leave his/her home or place of habitual residence, in particular as a result of or in order to avoid the effects of armed conflict, situations of generalised violence, violations of human rights or natural or man-made disasters, without crossing an internationally recognised State border”.⁵
3. To see the scale of the issue of displacement, it is sufficient to look at the latest statistics from 2018 which show that around the world, in 2018 alone, there were 28 million internal displacements associated with conflict and disasters across 148 countries and territories, with nine countries recording more than one million displacements. 41.3 million people lived in internal displacement as a result of conflict and violence in 43 countries as of the end of 2018. This is the highest figure ever recorded and three quarters, or 30.9 million people, were located in only ten countries.
4. In Europe, over decades, more than 4 million people have been displaced inside their own countries due to armed conflicts and violence. Added onto the IDPs affected by conflicts in Europe which include Azerbaijan, Armenia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Cyprus, Georgia, Kosovo*, North Macedonia, Russia and Turkey, more recently there have been 1.7 million IDPs in Ukraine due to the situation that arose following the illegal annexation of the Crimean Peninsula of Ukraine by the Russian Federation and the areas affected by foreign military intervention in the Eastern part of the country.
5. Although the focus of this report will be member States of the Council of Europe where displacement is mostly due to armed conflict, it needs to be noted that alongside violence and armed conflict, heightened vulnerability and exposure to sudden-onset hazards are a real risk. Wildfires were a particularly visible expression of this (Greece) as was the risk of being displaced by floods, particularly in cities (France). Globally, there have been 17.2 million new disaster displacements in 146 countries. In Europe, three quarters of the population are estimated to live in urban areas vulnerable to natural hazards.⁶ Consequently, for local and national governments in Europe, disaster displacement needs to be a component of risk reduction and response strategies. This is also in line with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goal 13 which calls for urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts.
6. In 2006, the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe adopted Recommendation Rec (2006)6 on internally displaced persons (IDPs) with the objective of preserving and promoting human rights to all, inclusive of IDPs. Member States were urged, inter alia, to introduce more favourable standards for IDPs, advised to receive guidance on internal legislation, and propagate crucial information to all IDPs. It must not be forgotten that internally displaced persons (IDPs) are nationals of the state in which they live and should benefit from human rights enshrined in relevant national legislation, as well as regional and international documents without discrimination.

⁴ This explanatory memorandum is based on the document prepared by the Council of Europe consultant Bina Desai, senior researcher at IDMC (Geneva, Switzerland). The written contribution is available from the Secretariat upon request. A reflection group consisting of Congress members and Youth Delegates has also contributed to the preparation of the report.

⁵ <https://www.unhcr.org/protection/idps/43ce1cff2/guiding-principles-internal-displacement.html>

⁶ <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/ALL/?uri=COM:2009:0084:FIN> <https://www.preventionweb.net/news/view/32483>

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7. In 2018, the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE) adopted a report which underlined the fact that “humanitarian needs and rights of the four million internally displaced persons in Europe need greater attention”. It underlined that any relocation of persons must be carried out in a manner that does not violate the rights to life, dignity, liberty and security of those affected. Regardless of ethnicity, IDPs and their families must be able to fully enjoy their human rights, including fundamental social, cultural and economic rights as enshrined in international law.

8. In 2018 the Congress also published a Human Rights Handbook for Local Authorities⁷ in which it highlighted the rights of IDPs and the obligations of governments and other authorities including local and regional authorities with regard to IDPs who should enjoy their rights as citizens of their countries but above all as human beings. They have the right to seek safety in another part of their country, to leave their country, to seek asylum in another country, the right to recognition everywhere as a person before the law, the right to healthcare, to education, to employment, to security, to liberty of movement, and the right to be protected against forcible return to, or resettlement in, any place where their life, safety, liberty and/or health would be at risk.

9. Also in 2018, the Congress adopted a report on voting rights at the local level as a tool for the integration of migrants and IDPs in Europe (Recommendation 419). In the report the Congress recognised the responsibility that municipalities and regions bear in promoting the integration, participation and non-discrimination of IDPs and encouraging good relations between them and local residents.

10. In short, authorities have the primary duty and responsibility to provide protection and humanitarian assistance to IDPs within their jurisdiction, and IDPs have the right to request and receive protection and assistance from these authorities. The political leadership of elected representatives in rallying the inhabitants of their cities and regions for solidarity with their displaced fellow citizens is crucial for a successful solution of IDP-related issues both in the short and long term.

11. Aligned with the above, the current report will look at internal displacement of populations in the territories of the Council of Europe member States, from the perspective of local and regional authorities and their responsibility, competence and action in the face of internal displacement. The report will aim to draw attention to the precarious situation concerning IDPs in Europe which sometimes gets overlooked by the refugee and migration crisis. While the arrival of refugees in several European countries over the last few years has drawn most of the attention with regard to displacement, it is important not to forget that large numbers of those internally displaced still live in situations of uncertainty and vulnerability.

1.2. Internal displacement in Europe: a snapshot of 2018⁸

12. New displacements associated with conflict and violence in 2018 were only recorded in Ukraine. Other countries in the region, however, continue to face unresolved conflict and/or protracted displacement situation, resulting in a total number of 2.9 million people living in displacement due to conflict. Most of them, or around 800,000, live in the Ukraine, but there are also significant numbers in Azerbaijan, Georgia and Cyprus. A total of 53,000 new displacements were recorded in Europe in 2018. Of these, the majority – 41,000 – were in the context of disasters with 9,200 displacements due to wildfires in Greece and 5,400 in the context of flooding in France.

2. ADDRESSING AND REDUCING INTERNAL DISPLACEMENT IN EUROPE: CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR LOCAL AUTHORITIES

13. The responsibility for addressing and reducing internal displacement lies primarily with national governments as well as the States exercising effective control over occupied territories. In cases of unresolved conflicts, authorities in effective control over occupied territories bear responsibility for any violation of the fundamental rights of IDPs and refugees for a safe and dignified return to their homes, as well as for human right abuses. However, due to the localised nature of internal displacement, in reality, it is the local authorities, community organisations and those affected by displacement who are

⁷ <https://rm.coe.int/human-rights-handbook-for-local-and-regional-authorities-vol1/168093aaf2>

⁸ All figures from IDMC 2019 : Global Report on Internal Displacement.

at the forefront of responding to existing internal displacement and investing in the prevention of new and onward displacement.⁹

14. Europe is no exception to this and the role of local and regional governments in the protection and assistance to IDPs in the region needs to be better understood. This is particularly important in urban centres with large numbers of IDPs as municipal authorities face the challenge of providing housing, services and infrastructure to all citizens, and of regulating labour and trade.

15. On the one hand, IDPs can pose significant challenges and burdens on host communities and local authorities. The arrival of large numbers of IDPs can be seen as a demographic shock and exacerbate pre-existing problems. The presence of IDPs may, for instance, contribute to high unemployment. Effective integration into local community life is a challenge. Ensuring social cohesion is not easy, as newcomers often do not speak the local language, are not acquainted with the local culture or customs or lack political participation and understanding of national procedures. At the local or regional level, an influx of additional people for an extended period can strain local services, reducing authorities' capacity to respond to the needs of the local population, including the most vulnerable people among them.

16. Unease or hesitation among the host community to accept newcomers is an issue and it requires political action on the part of local authorities to fight prejudice, prevent violence, promote intercultural understanding and ensure social cohesion. Protecting the rights of newcomers is not an end in itself. It is fundamental for ensuring integration and social cohesion and, consequently, the well-being of communities.

17. On the other hand, the arrival of IDPs may be an opportunity for host communities. For example, in Ukraine, some institutions such as universities and businesses have been relocated following the displacement patterns from non-Government- to Government-controlled area. Villages facing declining population have been able to avert the risk of having their schools or other services closed with the arrival of new families or it may create new markets and with them new jobs.

18. IDPs with specific qualifications such as needed by the host community can compensate for diminishing populations that would have otherwise led to the closure of schools or health facilities or create new opportunities for members of host communities when IDPs relocate their pre-existing businesses or institutions. Overall, host communities with better access to resources are more likely to benefit from forced displacement inflows, while the more disadvantaged become increasingly vulnerable, reinforcing inequalities. This requires a careful and holistic analysis of each specific situation.

19. The positive contributions of displaced populations are still not well understood, but evidence points to the significant potential of internally displaced in shaping the economic, cultural and political futures of their host communities. In Europe, as in other regions of the world, there also has to be growing recognition that internal displacement that is not sufficiently addressed, can generate new cross-border flows, both of migrants and refugees, into other parts of Europe.

20. Both urbanisation and human mobility present great opportunities for social and individual well-being. Rapid and badly managed urban growth and the forced movement of people to and within cities, however, are a growing challenge for local authorities and their partners. In cities and neighbourhoods with already stretched system capacities, the way that displacement and urban change are mediated and managed can make the difference between urban resilience or systemic collapse.

21. Local authorities are at the forefront of responding to such challenges in order to benefit both displaced and host communities. The way in which people cope with the impact of displacement depends on their own economic capacities and social support networks, but also on the way local and national governments respond to urban crises. While cities work as amplifiers of inequality and vulnerability, they can also act as catalysts for social and economic change and offer concrete opportunities to those displaced in finding durable solutions.

⁹ <https://www.unocha.org/sites/unocha/files/Breaking-the-impasse.pdf>

22. Facing internal displacement, municipalities have generated innovative solutions to improve prevention and response to all types of displacement. There are several examples of local authorities that have forged alliances and synergies between communities, civil society organisations, academics and the private sector to find innovative solutions to forced displacement.¹⁰ To decrease disaster displacement risk, for example, more and more local authorities in urban areas are investing in “green infrastructure” and environmental approaches to manage displacement risk. For example, the city of Oostend in Belgium is constructing a new beach to help protect the city from storm surges and coastal flooding and with it to mitigate the risk of disaster displacement in the country.¹¹

23. In this context the question of funding of initiatives, projects and investments becomes paramount. Lack of financial resources can be an issue for local governments in dealing with IDPs whose needs must be heard by the national government. On the one hand, the amounts granted are not always commensurate with the needs on the ground. On the other hand, the distribution of funds arriving from multiple sources can raise issues of transparency and fairness of the distribution criteria, as well as questions regarding proportionality or fair calculation of subventions.

2.1 Protracted displacement and convergence of multiple causes

24. Internal displacement related to unresolved conflicts in Europe is often protracted and thus represents a concern not just from a humanitarian perspective, but also for the peaceful settlement of conflicts. Furthermore, local authorities are directly affected. The Council of Europe has previously recognised that a key challenge is the promotion of building safe and inclusive societies that respect diversity, both to allow for previously displaced populations to integrate as well as to avoid and mitigate the impacts of new displacement. If IDPs are not dealt with in a correct manner, they risk constituting the next wave of refugees for Europe.

25. IDPs often struggle disproportionately with administrative barriers related to documentation, property rights or access to social benefits. They can also experience differences in the level of access they have to services such as education and health. And importantly, they also face critical economic challenges in finding adequate housing and employment, further exacerbating their precarious status. Serbia has found a way to address some of the challenges with access to documentation that IDPs face, by introducing a law that provides for a reduction or exemption of administrative fees for birth, marriage and death certificates for IDPs (art 19 Law on Republic Administrative Taxes).¹²

26. In protracted displacement, as witnessed in several cases in Georgia, Azerbaijan and Ukraine, psychological trauma can increase during protracted displacement, and can lead to physical manifestations of the trauma in the form of new diseases. In such contexts, psychological services should be seen as part of the mandate of local authorities, and yet, usually support to mental health and psycho-social support are provided by external or non-governmental actors. In Georgia, as a result of strong advocacy from civil society and in particular, women’s organisations, the third National Action Plan includes provisions for revising concept of psychic health, taking into account psychological trauma. As a result, some local authorities have included in their programs co-financing of projects of psychological and medical assistance for IDPs.¹³

27. IDPs are disproportionately more likely to be discriminated against in their access to services even years after displacement. IDPs also face legal barriers, which can increase their invisibility, particularly in urban settings. In Serbia, for example, legal documents are accessible on the basis of the registration of place residence. In the case of social housing for IDPs, the legal basis for registering a place of residence is the housing contract signed with the local government. It serves as proof that the person is actually living there.

28. Marginalisation of displaced persons in urban settings can also come in the form of social exclusion. For instance, Kurdish IDPs face challenges accessing public services because of the lack of recognition of the Kurdish language in public fora.¹⁴

¹⁰ <https://jpi-urbaneurope.eu/news/review-agora-workshop-on-migrationforced-displacement/>

¹¹ <https://www.eea.europa.eu/media/newsreleases/europe2019s-future-depends-on-cities#tab-news-and-articles>
<https://www.eea.europa.eu/highlights/new-mapping-method-for-2018green>

¹² This and the following examples on Serbia are based on inputs to the Expert consultation.

¹³ This and the following examples on Georgia are based on inputs to the Expert consultation.

¹⁴ <https://www.fmreview.org/sites/fmr/files/FMRdownloads/en/urban-displacement/montemurro-walicki.pdf>

29. In the case of Georgia, close to half a million IDPs and refugees from the Georgian regions of Abkhazia and Tskhinvali region/South Ossetia expelled during the armed hostilities in the 1990s and during the August 2008 Russo-Georgian war, continue to be deprived of their fundamental right to safe and dignified return to their places of origin. The continuing Russian illegal military presence in the two Georgian regions is cause for restriction of freedom of movement by the so-called “borderisation” process which complicates access to healthcare and education as well as family links creates a risk for a further wave of forcible displacement. IDPs residing in the Gali district are caught between parallel systems of citizenship and residency which mean that they cannot retain their IDP status and the relative protection that comes with it and at the same time gain full citizenship.

30. The different drivers and triggers of displacement also increasingly converge, exacerbating existing and creating new risks. For example, people already displaced by conflict have been displaced again by disasters, a phenomenon that is on the increase.¹⁵ The opposite also happens as in Georgia, where in the village of Yalguja in Kvemo Kartli district, people who were settled originally as “ecological migrants” turned into IDPs from 2008 onwards as their areas of origin was affected by conflict and occupied.

31. The question of how the management of issues differ with respect to the context of displacement, i.e. whether they are conflict-based or disaster-based is crucial in determining both how to approach these populations but also to determine the financial responsibilities: if it is a disaster-based displacement, mostly national government and local or regional authority funds would be used. However, if it is displacement caused by an international conflict, the finance responsibility is more complex and has international repercussions.

32. Depending on how existing displacement and the risk of future displacement are managed, addressed and reduced over time, cities can also create opportunities for those previously displaced or at risk of displacement, as well as benefit from productive social and economic contributions of both its displaced and non-displaced populations.

33. The interaction of IDPs displaced in the context of conflict and disasters is an important area that needs to be better understood as problems can arise if different support programs and humanitarian assistance are offered for different groups of people. In Georgia there are examples of disaster and conflict IDPs coming together in one place: IDPs migrating under pressure from environmental change in the region of Achara (predominantly Muslims) and conflict IDPs from Swaneti in Abkhazia (Orthodox Christians) have settled in the village of Tsintskaro (Tetritskaro district, Kvemo Kartli). There are also many cases in which IDPs from earlier waves of displacement and more recent new displacement situations are settled together.

34. In this regard, the rapporteurs would emphasise that internal displacement in Europe (and in the world) is a development challenge as well as a human rights issue and local authorities have a critical role to play in promoting the welfare and development of IDP populations as well as in protecting their freedoms and rights. The establishment of a pan-European network of local and/or regional authorities to face the challenge of dealing with protracted displacement might be one step in the right direction.

2.2 IDPs as a heterogeneous group

35. IDPs form a heterogeneous group and therefore different approaches will need to be adopted in addressing their specific needs. For example, women and youth will have a particular role to play when local authorities consider developing integrated programmes in education and health.¹⁶

36. Young IDPs, especially girls, often experience particular pressure and difficulties as they can be subject to discrimination along the lines of gender and suffer from gender-based violence. Supporting particularly young IDPs must be recognised as a long-term investment with positive pay back, rather than a cost to governments. Where youth have been actively involved in peace programmes, as for example in Georgia, there are clear dividends both in terms of peace outcomes as well as education attainment and investment.

¹⁵ IDMC 2019 (*Ibid*).

¹⁶ See also UN Resolutions 2250 and 2419.

37. Regional authorities who are responsible for higher education in many member States have the competence to provide young IDPs with better access to education by collaborating with universities to find ways to encourage access to higher education, for example by simplifying the criteria for enrolment in universities.

38. IDP women, too, have been found to be important agents of change in IDP communities as they take on much of the responsibility for the survival of their families and their communities. Therefore, more targeted and dedicated support to IDP Women at the local level is has been found to be important in several European countries that host conflict IDPs. This includes their direct involvement in local decision making, in peace building efforts and work for the prevention of conflict. Good practices in the creation of special mixed working groups, where IDP women have direct access to decision makers and participate in the identification of local development priorities and budgets can be found both in Georgia and Ukraine.

39. More attention has to be paid also to the elderly, who according to several surveys are often traumatised by the loss of their home and community identity and therefore need special integration programmes.

40. The rapporteurs would like to underline the importance that the implementation of mechanisms that respond to the particular needs of vulnerable populations, in particular children and unaccompanied minors, by offering psychological support, mentor programmes and dedicated assistance by health professionals and ensuring safe spaces and support by professionals in order to facilitate their entry into the ordinary educational system and transition into working life.

3. THE ROLE OF LOCAL AUTHORITIES IN PROTECTING IDPS AND OVERCOMING THE DISPLACEMENT CHALLENGE

41. There are several critical areas in which local authorities play a key role in facilitating and promoting equal access to and protection of IDPs.

42. First, ensuring equal rights to documentation, and the resulting access to welfare schemes, such as pensions and social protection is of critical importance. In addition, understanding the diverse barriers that exist for IDPs in accessing employment and livelihood opportunities, housing and basic services is a first step towards a strategic and long-term response by local authorities. To date, systematic data and knowledge on the key gaps and challenges, but also opportunities, that IDP communities face is either not collected and analysed or not used to a sufficient extent in urban development planning.

43. A good practice that has been showing success in some regions of Georgia is the creation of joint working groups in municipalities affected by conflict. These include representatives of city councils and executives, as well as IDPs and conflict-affected women and play a critical role in the localisation of peace efforts through participatory pathways.¹⁷ Such groups can create the space for new advances in gender equality in the country. In addition, the inclusion of provisions of UNSCR 1325 in the Gender Equality Plans allows to increase IDP women's participation in decision making, their protection as well as support prevention of violence against women, a critical issue for post-conflict societies and women in protracted displacement.¹⁸

3.1 Facilitating integration and participation in public and political life

44. In its human rights handbook, the Congress has drawn the attention of local and regional authorities to the need to co-ordinate civic and public action in order to facilitate the integration of IDPs in their new communities by establishing co-ordination desks or local and regional centres to best assess their needs and prevent duplication of activities. Making use of educational facilities and providing

¹⁷ United Nations 2015: "Preventing conflicts, transforming justice, securing the peace", p. 15.

¹⁸ World Bank, 2017: Gender-based violence in Georgia – Links among Conflict, Economic Opportunities and Services: <http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/558211513619282554/Gender-based-violence-in-Georgia-links-among-conflict-economic-opportunities-and-services>

workshops, art classes or sport events for residents and newcomers, so as to promote integration also in the evening, weekends or during summer holidays is one example of local government action for facilitating integration.

45. In order to carry out integration-related activities, separate local comprehensive strategy and action plans are needed for the integration of IDPs; these should include various areas of activity, touching upon the social, economic and humanitarian aspects of the situation. Local plans which are agreed between a group of municipalities (and supported by regional administrations) which are home to IDP communities would allow for exchange of information and experience in order to develop actions best suited to the needs on the ground. Such plans should be thought of as complementary to any existing national strategies for integration and would also have the additional advantage of helping local authorities to put pressure on the national level to allocate the necessary financial resources to the local level. The rapporteurs are of the opinion that the national associations of local and regional authorities in the countries concerned have a pivotal role in bringing mayors, councillors and local and regional authorities together for this purpose.

46. An essential component of integration is ensuring civil participation in public life and in decision-making at local level as well as ensuring that IDPs can use their political rights. IDPs need forums in which they can express their concerns and opinions and share their experiences. Local governments are an ideal locus for establishing consultative bodies or creating spaces for associations of IDPs to interact with councilors, city administration, NGOs etc.

47. IDPs, as citizens of their countries, should also be able to participate in elections. In its recent recommendation on voting rights (cited in the Introduction), the Congress has examined the international standards and best practices with regard to voting rights of IDPs at local level. These international standard setting texts include the United Nations International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the European Charter of Local Self-Government and its Additional Protocol on the right to participate in the affairs of a local authority (ETS No.122), Recommendation (2006)6 of the Council of Europe Committee of Ministers to member States on Internally Displaced Persons, the Code of Good Practice in Electoral Matters (2002) of the European Commission for Democracy through Law of the Council of Europe (Venice Commission) as well as the Congress Recommendation 369 (2015) on Voters' lists and voters residing de facto abroad.

48. In its Recommendation 419(2018) on "Voting rights at local level as an element of successful long-term integration of migrants and IDPs in Europe's municipalities and regions" the Congress underlined that residence requirements should not prevent IDPs from exercising their voting rights. They should be able to move their registration between their constituency of origin and their current constituency (and vice versa) without undue obstacles or delays. Legal provisions do not require IDPs to choose between expressing their voting rights and being eligible for IDP status and/or social benefits.

49. IDPs should be guaranteed protection against manipulation, intimidation or threats throughout the electoral process, the free exercise of their voting rights without fear of retribution and granted access to a system of complaints and appeals covering all stages of the election process that is accessible in terms of timing and location.

50. The Congress recommended that voters' registration and polling procedures should take into account the specific situation of IDPs with regard to the location of assigned polling stations and the type of documents required for voters' identification purposes (with temporary special measures introduced as appropriate to prevent disenfranchisement).

51. Similarly, voters' education campaigns should specifically target IDPs in a relevant language, in order to increase their understanding of registration and polling procedures and to enable them to make informed electoral choices.

52. The situation is variable according to the legislation of different countries. Refugees can vote at the local level in some countries in Europe but IDPs cannot vote in Ukraine.

53. The above notwithstanding, integrating and facilitating life for IDPs in the new communities should obscure a very fundamental right: IDPs from conflict zones have the right to return to their places of origin and to their homes or places of habitual residence, in safety and with dignity. The rapporteurs

would underline that; although this is essentially an issue that is better tackled at national/international level, local authorities can lend their political support by acknowledging this right.

3.2 Employment challenges and income opportunities

54. Access to job opportunities and income is crucial to improving self-reliance and preventing displacement from becoming protracted.¹⁹ Employment and self-employment also allows IDPs to integrate socially and economically, reduce their dependency on government and humanitarian aid and actively contribute to the local economy.²⁰ One distinct advantage for those displaced into centres of economic and social activity can be that choices increase. If access to employment and basic services is granted, the range of opportunities usually expands, particularly for those who previously lived in rural areas and had less diversified potential sources of income.²¹

55. In Kosovo*, the policy on return of Displaced Population advocates for a better co-operation between the national and the local governments. According to the Global report on internal displacement, local governments and international agencies have also worked together to address displacement in Kosovo*, where policies have been put in place to help municipalities support sustainable returns for people displaced by conflict between 1998 and 2004. The Regulation on the Return of Displaced Persons and Durable Solutions in Kosovo*, for example, calls for municipal action plans on the issue and emphasises the importance of IDPs' socioeconomic integration based on their skills, gender, age and disabilities. It also aims to improve cooperation between national and local authorities to ensure return conditions are comparable across the territory.²²

56. In Turkey, the Province of Van launched an action plan on internal displacement in co-operation with the UNDP, in the framework of Durable Solutions for Internally Displaced Persons, aiming at highlighting potential strategies that will improve the living conditions of IDPs in Van (see Handbook). Based on consultation, not only with IDPs but other stakeholders such as district Governorates and other local authorities, non-governmental organisations (NGOs), private sector representatives, business and professional chambers, employer organisations and labour unions, the plan aims to empower IDPs through the "expansion of existing initiatives", increasing household welfare, including a food bank, a "Green Network" providing various social assistance services, microcredit programmes and the province's Child Research Rehabilitation and Training Center.

57. The National Action Plan for Employment of Serbia recognises IDPs as "hard-to-employ" people who have a priority in inclusion in active employment policy measures. Through the National Employment Service, they can also access cash benefits, for which the rules of assignation are lowered than for non-displaced population. This initiative, called New Approaches to IDP Assistance, took as a starting point and its main objective IDP self-reliance, and though mainly led by national authorities, the new approaches are beginning to take shape at and impact on the local level.

58. In the Kharkiv Oblast in Ukraine, the "Worthy Work" pilot project for the employment of IDPs, is being successfully implemented where families who lost all their possessions were placed in host communities. The project is supported by the Ukrainian Social Investment Fund and the Kharkiv Professional Development Foundation. The aim is to improve professional skills of IDPs for finding employment or starting their own business. The project is being implemented in six cities of the Kharkiv oblast (Zolochiv, Dergachi, Lozova, Krasnograd, Izum, Bogodukhiv) with the assistance of the regional employment service. Host communities have organised a number of training modules for those who want to get employed and those who wish to set up their own business. Participants are trained in self-presentation skills and get acquainted with the methodology of effective job search (in areas such as the beauty industry and internet marketing).

¹⁹ <https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/Breaking-the-impasse.pdf>

²⁰ https://www.iom.int/sites/default/files/press_release/file/170829_IDP_Framework_LowRes.pdf

²¹ Davis et al., 2019: Comparing the experiences of internally displaced persons in urban vs rural areas. Findings from a longitudinal study in Iraq, 2015-2017. Background paper to the Global Report on Internal Displacement 2019. Geneva: IDMC. http://www.internal-displacement.org/global-report/grid2019/downloads/background_papers/Davis_FinalPaper.pdf

²² Government of Kosovo*, "Kosovo*: Regulation on the Return of Displaced Persons and Durable Solutions (GRK) - NO01/2018", February 5, 2018

* All references to Kosovo, whether the territory, institutions or population, in this text shall be understood in full compliance with United Nation's Security Council Resolution 1244 and without prejudice to the status of Kosovo

3.3 The central role of housing, property and land

59. Affordability, adequacy and accessibility of housing, as well as tenure security and property rights, are essential to guarantee a successful adaptation of displaced people in their new environments.²³ While the housing challenge for IDPs has been accepted, it is important to note that it goes beyond crisis contexts. Therefore, a critical look at existing housing policies and private sector initiatives labelled as “social” and “affordable” is needed. Local authorities have again a critical role to play in turning the housing challenge into an opportunity for local development as well as economic growth.

60. Examples of promising approaches that have been promoted over the past decades, often in other regions of the world, include incremental housing support schemes and incremental tenure, housing purchase certificates and rental support grants to name a few. Studies have shown that more attention should be given to the provision of affordable rented accommodation and housing rather than focus solely on support to buying own property.²⁴

61. In Ukraine, new housing laws have created the space for IDPs to form co-operatives. There are regional assistance programmes for individual housing construction as well as innovative, subsidy programmes. For example, Mariupol municipality in Ukraine, recognised a need to provide IDPs with the option of affordable rented accommodation as well as the opportunity of buying property. It developed a “rent to own” initiative, in which a range of stakeholders including an international development bank, the local government, civil society organisations and contractors have come together to create affordable housing options for IDPs. Those eligible received homes with a contract that gives the title deeds to their rented property after 10 years.²⁵ Again in Ukraine, a project has been implemented through the co-operation of the Ministry and the Danish Refugee Council with funding from the US State Department to strengthen the role of local authorities in providing local durable solutions for IDPs, for instance, through the renovation of their buildings into condominium cooperatives for IDPs.

62. As from 2016, IDPs and people who have the status of participants in hostilities, have received financial support of 40% of the estimated cost of housing, financed from the regional budget, within the framework of the Kharkiv Regional Programme of providing support for the construction and acquisition of housing in the Kharkiv oblast for 2016-2018. Some 97 families have already become owners of apartments and 50 more apartments will find new families in 2018.

63. Local authorities in Serbia have invested in the allocation of funds to buy building material for the completion or adaptation of residential buildings for IDPs. Moreover, they have provided assistance in the form of mortgages for IDPs to support the development of unfinished housing in the Autonomous Province of Vojvodina; and facilitated the financing of the construction of housing units in support of social housing for IDPs.

64. Home ownership and improved living conditions are important to ensure a full integration of IDPs into host municipality life. In 2016, the City of Niš invested 10 million dinars to purchase 10 rural houses for internally displaced people with the assistance of the Commissioner for Refugees. The housing contracts were signed between the sellers, the IDPs families and by the Niš City Mayor Darko Bulatovic. This initiative of the municipality is part of an active partnership between the City of Niš and the Commissioner for Refugees that aims at improving the living conditions of IDPs by granting them access to property, notably by buying rural households in the vicinity of Niš each year for a number of IDPs. Since 2015, houses have already been provided for 18 families and 320 other families have shown interest in solving housing problem in this way.

²³ <http://www.internal-displacement.org/sites/default/files/inline-files/20150325-global-home-sweet-home-en-full-report.pdf>

²⁴ <https://www.nrc.no/resources/reports/social-housing-solutions-for-internally-displaced-and-conflict-affected-population-comparative-analysis-of-bakhmut-sloviansk-and-kramatorsk-projects/>

²⁵ OCHA, “Addressing Protracted Internal Displacement: National and Sub National level workshops Presentation”, November 2018.

65. Since 2005, different schemes have been tested in Georgia for durable housing programs. A “voucher system” in the Imereti region has supported internally displaced families to access housing and negotiate rents directly with owners and sellers. While the first round of the project was successful, a second phase, expanded into the town of Kutaisi quickly showed the limit to this approach as available housing at affordable prices was limited.

66. Another programme in support of rural housing was started in 2011-2012 and has been implemented since. Where local authorities have public land available, such an initiative can be a good approach towards self-reliance as families are given a plot of land in a rural area on which it is eligible to build housing. Further, the construction of new urban settlements since 2011 in Georgia has also contributed to an expansion in the provision of housing to IDPs in the country. While such dedicated settlements fill a housing gap, they have also shown to create a high concentration of poverty as deprived families are settled in the same place with limited access to employment. Such an effect of creating pockets of poverty has also been found in rural areas such as in Shida Kartli region where the government constructed a number of rural cottage settlements for IDPs since 2008.

67. In Georgia, a study assessing the access of IDPs to services found that at least 28 service providers were involved in two regions only, while municipalities themselves were less likely to be in the lead, especially when it came to the provision of housing. However, IDPs were considered in social assistance programmes in the majority of municipalities and were able to create homeowners' associations and co-invest in infrastructure rehabilitation.

68. The most successful construction and settlement projects in Georgia have been those that allowed for integration of IDPs with local populations. In Shida Karti this was the case, as in other regions where private sector developers were also invited to invest and thus attracted other tenants and owners than the subsidised social housing units. In Tbilisi, municipal social housing for both IDP and local populations resulted in an integration of both groups, but as the host community was already marginalised, the concentration of poverty remained a problem. Lessons from other programmes, in support of social housing for vulnerable populations that are not IDPs, can be applied, however, including from Gori and Zugdidi municipalities.

69. The rapporteurs would like to mention in this context that housing solutions should be personalised and decentralised by co-operating with private owners and housing associations, avoiding segregation tendencies. Integrating reception centres into already existing residential areas will improve the access to social services (e.g. educational facilities, job centres, child care, health centres), enhance social inclusion and counter fear and prejudices among the population.

3.4 Provision of basic services and infrastructure

70. There can be stark differences in the access to and quality of different types of services that IDPs see. Studies conducted in nine post-socialist countries have shown significant differences in satisfaction levels with health versus education services. In these countries, IDPs were found to be disproportionately more likely to be dissatisfied with the quality of public health services in urban areas than the non-displaced, even 10 to 15 years after displacement. On the other hand, satisfaction with access to and quality of education was not different between the two population groups. Analysis showed that IDPs invested more on education over other services and expenses, as education is a transferrable human capital that is key for rebuilding lives after conflict and displacement.

71. In Serbia, this has been recognised and is reflected in the fact that all IDP children can enroll in school even if their birth certificates cannot be provided. In addition, there is support available to ensure the education of children and youth of marginalised population groups, including IDP families, through programmes such as the Fund for Young Talents on the Republic of Serbia. These are currently national programmes, however, and priority should now be to develop similar initiatives and enough investment at the local level.

72. In the health sector, the Republic of Serbia has introduced the position of a Roma health mediator whose role is to provide health institutions with better insights into the situation and needs of Roma settlements, and to keep records of the health status of inhabitants of informal settlements. This role has been included in a wider project for Roma inclusion including Roma co-ordinators, pedagogical

assistants and representatives of the National Employment Service and implemented by the OSCE Mission in Serbia and financed by the European Union.

73. Finally, in many cities across Europe, slow as well as rapid urban change processes have resulted in forced evictions as well as displacement of marginalised households. While not all of these instances correspond to the definition of internal displacement as laid out in the UN Guiding Principles, some do. In these contexts, a range of actors are involved, including local authorities and the private sector.

74. The Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement mention the role of the private sector in terms of its obligation to respect the human rights of those forced to move. Less explicit in terms of displacement, the Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights point at higher accountability from business enterprises on the respect of human rights. There is of course a critical role that local authorities play in all this as regulators and law enforcers as well as conveners of planning processes, which can either foster diversity and inclusion or be exclusive, resulting in further marginalisation of already vulnerable groups.

4 LOOKING AHEAD: OPPORTUNITIES FOR REDUCING INTERNAL DISPLACEMENT AND MEETING LOCAL DEVELOPMENT PRIORITIES

75. Despite the highly localised and context-specific nature of each displacement situation, a few general conclusions can be drawn. Clearly, more international efforts are required to facilitate the solution of the issue of the return of IDPs and refugees to their homes through peace negotiations. The lack of progress in several such negotiations designed to address the issue of unresolved conflicts in Europe requires a firm stance and mobilisation on the part of the international community to find peaceful solutions.

4.1. More investment in assessing protracted displacement and what constitutes “durable solutions” is required

76. Data availability poses a limitation in many contexts of displacement. Investing in focal points within local authorities and in systems for systematically recording new displacement can fill some of the existing gaps. Data collection is only a first, but an important step in accounting for and becoming accountable for all IDPs. This includes accounting for new displacement (movements) in the context of conflict and violence, disasters and development projects, and recording the number of people living in displacement at a given point in time. It also includes applying existing and developing appropriate standards for data collection and analysis on internal displacement, support for which can be provided by international partners.²⁶

77. However, beyond the more technical approaches in support of durable solutions, investments are mostly needed in peaceful resolution of the conflicts still underlying a number of displacement situations in the region. The option of safe and dignified of IDPs to their areas of origin as a matter of choice will only be available if lasting political solutions are found. The European and international community will need to invest more in conflict resolution in the region.

4.2. In the context of highly urbanised patterns of displacement in Europe, intra-urban displacement needs to be recognised by local authorities and solutions developed

78. Much attention is focused on rural to urban migration and displacement. This needs to be rectified by also accounting for and addressing intra-urban displacement and what causes it. Various forms of tenure, including informal, should be acknowledge and recognised, because they are key to the progressive realisation of the right to adequate housing. In this regard, documentation again plays a key role for IDPs, in the form of identity documents as well as property deeds etc.

²⁶<https://unstats.un.org/unsd/demographic-social/Standards-and-Methods/files/Technical-Report/national-reporting/Technical-report-on-statistics-of-IDPs-E.pdf>

4.3. Leadership and participation of the displaced is paramount

79. Evidence shows that the involvement and even leadership of those displaced are central to the success of urban planning and service provision. Community-led data collection, needs assessments and risk analysis (in informal settlements, at risk neighbourhoods and other urban areas) have shown success in facilitating sustainable approaches to urban integration and resettlement efforts.

80. By providing space for public participation as well as by supporting the access of IDPs to documentation, by planning for urban change/adaptation as a driver for ending displacement, local and regional authorities can ensure favorable conditions for IDPs' integration.

81. The rapporteurs would emphasise that consultations with IDPs by the local and regional authorities is vital for allowing the sharing of experience, which provides valuable input for the development of appropriate policies. Putting in place regular mechanisms of consultation with the national level and co-operating with authorities at all levels of governance in the planning, implementation and evaluation of activities is essential for success. The role of the associations of local and regional authorities is crucial in co-ordinating such consultation and information exchange.

82. Consultation is also a safeguard against reinventing the wheel and would benefit local projects by using the experience of national, international or other local/regional actors who may have already done something on the issues and better support already existing associations and projects. In this context, making use of international networks can provide crucial support in starting or improving projects.

4.4 Local authority action to raise awareness regarding the situation and rights of IDPs is essential

83. As with refugees and migrants, the political stance taken by local or regional elected representatives in promoting the inclusion of displaced persons in local life plays an important role in shaping how local communities perceive and react to the presence of IDPs. The rights of IDPs as citizens of their countries are a key pillar in engagement from any actor.^{27,28} Elected representatives at the local and regional level can use their leadership position to recognise IDPs as local citizens and speak out for the protection and integration of IDPs as well as their return when possible.

4.5. Recognising the role of the private sector

84. The private sector plays a significant role in the provision of infrastructure, housing and services. In this role, and as a by-product rather than by design, it can contribute to the facilitation of local integration and of durable solutions to internal displacement. Similarly, to findings in refugee contexts, including IDPs in local and global supply chains can achieve social impact and gain reputational benefits while also maintaining and enhancing the bottom line of businesses. In IDP contexts, businesses often face fewer legal barriers to employing those that are displaced. At the same time, accountability mechanisms vis-à-vis citizens and IDPs may be weaker for private actors than they are – at least in principle – for public ones and humanitarian responders. The role of local authorities as regulators, law enforcers and conveners is critical in this context.

4.6. Tracking progress at the city level will be key to achieving national and global development goals

85. In 2019, the international community will take stock of progress in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals. With the first quadrennial review of progress due in July, countries with significant internal displacement and displacement risk have the opportunity to report what they have done to address the issue. Given the central role that local authorities play, reporting on local progress, particularly in cities, will be key.

²⁷ <https://rm.coe.int/human-rights-handbook-for-local-and-regional-authorities-vol1/168093aaef2>

²⁸ <https://rm.coe.int/booklet-a6-en-local-voting-rights-for-the-integration-of-migrants-demo/1680931f2e>

86. For local authorities to reflect more systematically how both local actors and the international community and national governments can directly support local action, a set of key steps can be suggested. While many of these revolve around building and strengthening capacity for evidence, planning and monitoring, they do form the prerequisite for concerted action.

4.7. Ensuring commensurate and fairly distributed funding

87. The rapporteurs are of the opinion that member States should be invited to ensure that the funds to be allocated to local and regional authorities for IDP-related projects and investments are commensurate with the declared needs. They should also guarantee the criteria and procedures for the allocation of such funds are fair and transparent. The Congress has reiterated in various texts including its Recommendation 424(2018) on “Transparency and open government” that in order to increase public trust and reduce corruption, both of which are necessary in order for local democracy to flourish, open government principles, i.e. transparency, participation and accountability, should be applied at all levels of government.²⁹

4.8. Creating an evidence base for local action on internal displacement³⁰

88. The rapporteurs invite local and regional authorities to use a checklist that can be further developed in partnership with local authorities in the coming years. Some of the steps that the checklist could include are:

Data and analysis

- Systematically account for IDPs. Record their number and the duration and severity of their displacement, disaggregated by sex, age, disability and other relevant criteria
- Monitor movements and conditions of those displaced over time, not just during and immediately after crises
- Undertake profiling exercises that include both displaced and host populations
- Collaborate with humanitarian, development and other stakeholders working to reduce vulnerability and risk to ensure that any data collected is interoperable.

Capacity and participation

- Build on communities' existing capacities, including for the collection of data on their vulnerabilities and needs, but also their existing resources, skills and community services.
- Strengthen the capacity of local organisations and government departments for data and statistical analysis.
- Work with IDPs and those at risk of displacement to identify priority areas in service delivery and infrastructure development.
- Identify urban development approaches that accommodate informality, including through flexible and secure tenure arrangements and adaptive labour market strategies in line with national and international sustainable development initiatives.

Incentives and political will

- Estimate the impact of displacement on local development and the risks inherent in inaction, including effects on the local economy, security, stability and social well-being.
- Use risk assessments to advocate for new and appropriate financing mechanisms to support city action and make displacement risk one of the core considerations in urban planning and local development.
- Document successful approaches to managing and reducing internal displacement in cities and provide a platform for exchange and learning for municipalities and their partners.

²⁹ Resolution 435(2018) and Recommendation 424(2018): <https://rm.coe.int/transparency-and-open-government-governance-committee-rapporteur-andre/16808d341c>

³⁰ Adapted from IDMC 2019: Global Report on Internal Displacement 2019.