

Press Release - Tuesday 20 June 2017

TIME TO BE WELCOME: YOUTH WORK AND INTEGRATION OF YOUNG REFUGEES

On World Refugee Day 2017, we believe that the time is now for Europe to stand together and welcome the integration of refugees.

Today, the European Youth Forum and the World Organisation of the Scout Movement, with support from the partnership in the field of youth between the European Union and the Council of Europe mark the vital role of youth work and youth organisations in integration of young refugees with a dedicated conference.

Every refugee deserves to be equipped with the knowledge, qualifications and competences that allow them to be fully included in society. Young people and youth organisations have often been at the forefront of welcoming refugees in Europe, who are mostly young people, promoting active citizenship and human rights education as well as fostering intercultural dialogue.

This event brings together key stakeholders including the European Council on Refugees and Exiles (ECRE) and Voices of Young Refugees (VYRE), to share good practices from the ground and give visibility to successful initiatives such as 'Time to be Welcome'.

Research findings so far highlight the active role of the youth sector in supporting young refugees at arrival and throughout their route for a better life across Europe. The conditions experienced upon arrival add to the trauma and stress these young people have experienced on the already dangerous journey and the lack of activity particularly during the transition and "waitinghood" period is a critical moment that policy-makers and practitioners across the youth, social, humanitarian, healthcare and other sectors should address. There are inclusive integration models developed already and European policy frameworks require all the rights and duty bearers across the spectrum to act in good faith.

The youth sector, particularly organisations, volunteers and youth workers at all levels want to say now is the Time to be Welcome and we extend a hand of solidarity, friendship, support and guidance to young refugees in accessing their rights and play an active role in the spaces they are.

Carina Autengruber, Vice-President, European Youth Forum:

“Far from being a champion for human rights in the world, the European Union’s deplorable response to the influx of migrants, refugees and asylum-seekers in recent years has led to severe rights violations, and the tragic death of thousands at its doorstep. Youth organisations across the continent have responded by mobilising, independently and in coalitions, to welcome people fleeing war and persecution, to support social integration and to advocate for refugee rights. It is high time for politicians and governments to ditch racist, xenophobic rhetoric, and to invest in inclusive, sustainable societies.”

Andreas Tzekas, World Organisation of the Scout Movement (Scouts of Greece)

“Young people in my country and in Europe were the first to address the refugee crisis. It was them, that opened their arms and tried to support and welcome the refugees arriving in their towns, even when their countries were closing the borders. I can tell you that as every refugee that have travelled through this painful way to Europe has so much stories that changed his/her life, the same applies to every person that was involved helping them. This crisis was and is an opportunity for youth all around the region to shape the future of Europe that they want to live in, through their actions.”

European Commission - Council of Europe youth partnership’s seminar

[Journeys to a New Life](#) has highlighted the importance of inclusion practices from youth work, the need to support self-organised initiatives of young refugees and strengthen their voice in relevant policy debates, cross-sectoral coordination and support at arrival, transit and in final destination communities through intercultural dialogue and human rights based education. Furthermore, policy frameworks such as the [Council of Europe Action Plan for on Protecting Refugee and Migrant Children in Europe](#) and the European Union’s [Agenda on Migration COM 240 \(2015\)](#) together with the [Action Plan on the Integration of Third Country Nationals COM 377 \(2016\)](#) set an enabling policy framework for the youth sector. Funding programmes such as [Erasmus +](#) and the [European Youth Foundation](#) provide financial opportunities for youth organisations to carry out activities with young refugees.

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ABOUT THE EUROPEAN YOUTH FORUM



The European Youth Forum is the platform of youth organisations in Europe. Independent, democratic, youth-led, it represents 104 National Youth Councils and international youth organisations from across the continent. The Forum works to empower young people to participate actively in society to improve their own lives, by representing and advocating their needs and interests and those of their organisations towards the European Union, the Council of Europe and the United Nations.

For more information, visit www.youthforum.org

ABOUT THE WORLD ORGANIZATION OF THE SCOUT MOVEMENT



The World Organization of the Scout Movement is a voluntary non-political educational movement for young people. Its purpose is to contribute to the global development of young people as individuals but also as responsible citizens and as members of their local, national and international communities. This happens through a value system based on the 'Scout Promise and Law' to help build a better world where people are self-fulfilled as individuals and play a constructive role in society. The latter is achieved by involving young people throughout their formative years in a non-formal educational process, by using a specific method that makes each individual the principal agent of his or her development as a self-reliant, supportive, responsible and committed person and by assisting them to establish a value system based upon spiritual, social and personal principles as expressed in the 'Promise and Law'.

For more information, visit <https://www.scout.org/>

ABOUT THE THE EU-COE YOUTH PARTNERSHIP



The EU-CoE youth partnership provides an added value to the programmes of the two institutions and their institutional partners, fosters co-operation, complementarity and synergies and enhances the EU-CoE youth partnership's impact on youth related policies and activities in Europe and beyond.

For more information, visit <http://pjp-eu.coe.int/en/web/youth-partnership>