



## EU-RUSSIA CIVIL SOCIETY FORUM ГРАЖДАНСКИЙ ФОРУМ ЕС-РОССИЯ

### **A Solution for the Refugee Crisis Should Be Sought on Both Governmental and Non-Governmental Level**

#### **Statement by the Steering Committee of the EU-Russia Civil Society Forum**

The Steering Committee of the EU-Russia Civil Society Forum calls on the authorities of the European Union and the EU member countries to develop sound policies for short- and long-term reception of asylum seekers and to comply with their human rights obligations. We urge the related institutions to closer cooperate with local authorities, NGOs, bottom-up initiatives, and human rights defenders worldwide.

We appreciate efforts of civil society across Europe aimed at assisting the refugees<sup>1</sup>. The Steering Committee also calls on the EU and other international actors, including the OSCE, to cooperate with such initiatives and active citizens. Germany has an important role in leading such support: It overtakes the OSCE presidency in 2016 and is one of the main final destinations for refugees. Latest efforts by the European Commission to relocate 120,000 refugees across all the EU member states and the decision of Switzerland to accept up to 5,000 individuals are steps in the right direction. However, it is only a temporary solution in the face of a daily arrival of thousands of people to Europe.

Simultaneously, single EU countries including Austria and Germany introduced border controls within the Schengen Area and discontinued railway transportation between EU states. These moves endanger one of the achievements of “big Europe” – free border traffic. Other crucial EU values – humanity and respect of human dignity – were put into question by states that principally oppose refugee quotas<sup>2</sup> or have adopted stricter immigration laws, including deportation and prison terms for the refugees “entering the EU illegally”<sup>3</sup>.

Within and outside of the EU, increasingly hostile rhetoric towards refugees, xenophobic pronouncements (as preferential treatment of non-Muslim refugees), human smuggling under

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<sup>1</sup> See, eg, “Migration Aid” (Hungary, <http://www.migrationaid.net/english>) – assistance to refugees arriving in Hungary; humanitarian aid to refugees collected by citizens themselves like a caravan from Spain to Hungary ([http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2015/09/14/aid-caravan-madrid-budapest\\_n\\_8123228.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2015/09/14/aid-caravan-madrid-budapest_n_8123228.html)); initiatives aimed at providing guest families and own properties to refugees - “Citizen UK” (United Kingdom, [http://www.citizensuk.org/help\\_find\\_homes\\_for\\_syrian\\_refugees](http://www.citizensuk.org/help_find_homes_for_syrian_refugees)), “Flüchtlinge Willkommen” (Germany, <http://www.fluechtlinge-willkommen.de>), etc.

<sup>2</sup> Read, eg, quotes by the politicians from the Czech Republic and Slovakia: <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-34331126>, <http://www.reuters.com/article/2015/09/22/us-europe-migrants-czech-idUSKCNORM10420150922>, <http://uk.reuters.com/article/2015/09/22/uk-europe-migrants-slovakia-idUKKCNORM24L20150922>

<sup>3</sup> See more on the case of Hungary at <http://444.hu/2015/09/14/nemzetkozi-birosagokon-sokat-veszithet-majd-a-magyar-allam-az-uj-menekultellenes-torvenyek-miatt>

