



HUMAN RIGHTS OF REFUGEES

Joint Statement from the World Association of Girl Guides and Girl Scouts (WAGGGS Europe Region) and the World Organization of the Scout Movement (European Scout Region)

Refugees make the difficult choice to flee from dangerous situations of war, conflict and persecution. We can and we must take action to support refugees, who deserve our empathy and support, and who must be protected by international law for their human rights and the right of asylum.

Guiding and Scouting want to create a better world for refugees, and take actions in refugee camps, give support in countries of destination, and cooperate with other organisations to have the biggest impact possible.

We make a pledge to help:

With the current refugee situation becoming an increasing concern across Europe, at the European Guide and Scout Conference in 2016, Guides and Scouts from across Europe agreed that they needed to do something about it. We are committed to playing an active role in Europe by continuing to encourage partnerships with humanitarian organisations that can support us in taking action and in producing educational materials for Guides and Scouts. We also committed to call on the European institutions to take action to support human rights in response to the refugee situation in Europe, and to identify opportunities for working together relating to human rights of refugees.

The list of actions by Guides and Scouts is impressive, yet our young volunteers are facing unrealistic and unreasonable expectations and urge the European institutions to make a stronger pledge:

The World Association of Girl Guides and Girl Scouts (WAGGGS) and the World Organisation of the Scout Movement (WOSM) are value-based organisations that reflect citizenship, service to others, international solidarity and friendship. We believe in helping others in need. That is why we, WAGGGS Europe Region and the European Scout Region of WOSM, call on the European institutions to make decisions and take action to support human rights in response to the ongoing refugee situation in Europe.

European Institutions should move the focus of their migration policies from “closing Europe” to “integrating Europe”

Young refugees have a greater capacity to learn quickly: learn a new language, adapt to new customs, etc. They are eager to rebuild a new life in Europe: they deserve a chance that we can give them.

WAGGGS Europe Region and the European Scout Region (WOSM) urge the European institutions and national governments to:

- Tackle the root causes of forced displacement around the world (for example climate change, poverty and conflict).
- Keep their borders open to all those fleeing active conflict and respect the human rights of refugees to seek asylum from violence and persecution based on the principle of shared responsibility and empathy.
- Implement international and European human rights law for all migrants, regardless of their status (asylum seeker or not).
- Allocate more financial resources to support refugees and their integration in local communities in Europe.
- Work in partnership with local and international NGOs to meet the challenges of this situation.
- Integrate job training and skill development programmes in the humanitarian response
- Lift restrictions on refugees entering the labour market and allow refugees to work legally, so they and their families can benefit from it.

- Implement the European Convention on Human Rights and Universal Declaration of Human Rights in all European countries.
- Use the full potential of the Charter of Fundamental Rights in national legislation and case law as well as in EU policy cycles; countering the erosion in the commitment to fundamental rights and values; supporting rights defenders.
- Take steps to ensure that these opportunities are accessible for young people.
- To promote in the European Union the principles of hospitality and brotherhood.

A special focus: Young People

- Implement the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and related protection and humanitarian assistance. Request for a common EU policy on asylum that is sensitive to the needs of children.
- Provide better stability to refugees who are minors to increase their ability to integrate in local communities, in particular through the absolute prohibition of expelling/deporting minor refugees and the absolute prohibition of their confinement - no matter their legal status (those absolute prohibitions could be incorporated in particular in EU law)
- Develop and increase the professional opportunities they can access (internships, training, civic services, paid volunteering).
- Listen to children, work with them and engage with children as equals, since under the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child involving children in decisions affecting their lives is mandatory.
- Improve family reunification procedures - these need to be quicker and more effective - and importantly children need to be adequately informed.
- Ensure all educational opportunities – whether formal, non-formal, or informal – are inclusive and accessible for all children and young refugees, including increasing resources allocated to them.
- Allow for inclusive and flexible registration and documentation systems that allow refugee children to enrol in and attend formal education.

A special focus: Girls and Women

- Establish a coordinated response system within and across borders that protects refugee women and girls, including cross-border referral mechanisms.
- Deploy specialist personnel – not only in camps, but also along migration routes – specifically to prevent, identify, and respond to SGBV.
- Create safe spaces in camps for women and girls that give them privacy and dignity, and create opportunities for survivors to access psychosocial support and health services.
- Adopt comprehensive policies to end all forms of violence against women and girls in the EU and its member states, and specific measures to ensure that women and girl refugees and asylum seekers are protected and have access to justice.
- Ensure the Global Compact on Refugees is formulated with a focus on women and girls to fulfil the rights of female refugees - see the list of concrete recommendations:
<http://www.migrantwomennetwork.org/2018/02/14/global-compact-on-refugees-women-girls/>

