Solidarity cities from 7 European countries advocate for a shift in EUmigration policy to be more welcoming

The reform of the Common European Asylum System (CEAS) is in full swing. If enacted, this legislative proposal would have a serious impact on the individual right to asylum and the access to basic human rights for refugees in the EU. Meanwhile, cities across Europe are on the frontline, doing the lion's share of the integration work. Restricted access to asylum at the EU level would alsoseverely affect their possibilities for inclusion of refugees on the ground, e.g. as the reform is expected to lead to more undocumented migrants. Thus, in recent years, they have joined forces incity networks to advocate for a progressive, human rights-based approach to migration policy in the EU.

Already in 2021, solidarity cities and civil society organisations came together in Palermo and founded the civil society network From the Sea to the City (FSTC), as well as the city network International Alliance of Safe Harbours (IASH). In order to include local perspectives more stronglyin the shaping of EU migration policy, solidarity cities from 7 European countries met again at a two-day political discussion and networking event in Brussels on 10–11 October.

Ahead of the 2024 EU Elections, the event created a space for high-ranking local politicians, city officials and city networks, including the International Alliance of Safe Harbours (IASH) and the National Association of Welcoming Cities and Territories (ANVITA) to form alliances with membersof the European Parliament and the EU Commission. The aim of the exchange was to bring about astrategic shift in EU migration policy to be more welcoming.

Ewa Golab-Nowakowska, Foreign Relations Office Director of the city of Wroclaw, points out:

> "The planned EU asylum reform is based on the belief that cities all over Europe are trying to avoid the reception of migrants. From our experience, the reality is quite different: Whenthousands of people from Ukraine reached Wroclaw, our sister cities from the Netherlands,France and Germany immediately offered their support to take in refugees from our city.
> Instead of being hindered by complicated procedures, relocation among solidarity citiesshould rather be strengthened in the new pact on migration."

Max Landero, Berlin's State Secretary for Integration, Diversity and Anti-Discrimination adds:

"Berlin stands by its declaration as a Safe Harbour City. But we need more direct funding from the EU in order to accommodate refugees and to create the necessary infrastructure
– such as schools and housing. People seeking international protection will keep coming. Yet a European asylum reform that relies on a premise of refugee exclusion instead of activesupport for municipalities will make it very difficult for us as a city."

Also the city networks reinforce the need to involve cities in the ongoing EU policy processes. Mathieu Garabedian, Deputy Mayor of Villeurbanne and Member of the International Alliance ofSafe Harbours says:

"We have to build alliances among solidarity cities in order to raise a loud voice to defend the right to asylum in Europe. Carrying forward the spirit of our exchange in Brussels, as theInternational Alliance of Safe Harbours we will meet again in November to reinforce our claims with a joint declaration for a welcoming European asylum system."

City officials and staff took part from 10 European municipalities: Amsterdam, Berlin, Cascais,Ghent, Liège, Munich, Utrecht, Villeurbanne, Wroclaw, and Zagreb.

The event "Heading into the 2024 Elections – Solidarity cities reshaping migration in Europe" washosted by Moving Cities and the EU-funded project Cities4Refugees in cooperation with the Heinrich-Böll-Stiftung European Union, the Rosa-Luxemburg-Stiftung Brussels and the Berlin Governance Platform with the vital support of the civil society network From the Sea to the City.

Find the programme at: https://moving-cities.eu/news/Solidarity-cities-reshaping-migration-in-Europe