



SHARE CROSS-BORDER CONFERENCE:

PARTICIPATION AND INTEGRATION OF REFUGEES

in cities of the Meuse–Rhine Euregion,

28th September 2015 at 'Nadelfabrik' Aachen (Reichsweg 30)



The recent large number of refugees from Syria, Eritrea, Afghanistan, Iraq arriving into Europe forces our society to reaffirm its commitment to solidarity, the protection of human rights and of the right to asylum. The lack of legal routes to access protection in Europe, including resettlement opportunities, have left hundreds of thousands without any prospect of building a dignified future for themselves and their families.

On the other hand, in recent months, a burst of welcoming initiatives have spread across Europe, enabling positive expressions of citizens' support for refugee protection, despite the very often negative public and political discourse concerning refugees and migration.

As arrivals continue to increase into the cities of the Meuse-Rhine Euregion, new mechanisms to receive refugees and facilitate their progress into independent housing and local integration programmes need to be established. In the current context, now more than ever, there is a need for cooperation between regions, towns, NGOs and civil society – also across borders - to generate sufficient support for receiving refugees: to exchange experience and practices in welcoming, receiving and integrating refugees.

The conference will bring together relevant actors from the three neighboring countries to present reception and integration programmes in their respective cities and regions, and to consider which areas could benefit from future cooperation. In addition, the programme will highlight civil society contributions and the involvement of church communities in welcoming refugees to their towns and cities.

For more information about the **SHARE Network** or the planned conference, please contact Magdalena Boehm (boehm@icmc.net) at ICMC.



9:30

Official Opening:

Hilde Scheidt, Deputy Mayor of the City of Aachen

Bert Kamphuis, alderman of the City of Sittard-Geleen

Petra Hueck, ICMC Europe

BLOCK 1

10:00 to 11:00

Responding to the current challenges in Limburg (NL):

- 'Current situation, Reception & Increased arrivals', Chris Baltussen, Director, Dutch Council for Refugees (Limburg)

Experiences in North Rhine-Westphalia:

- 'Current situation, Reception & Increased arrivals', Gerrit Hermans, Caritas Geldern

- 'Reception and Housing of resettled refugees in Aachen' Sandra Knabe, Department Social & Integration affaires, city of Aachen

Experiences in Limburg and Liège (BE):

- 'Current situation, Reception & Increased arrivals', Eupen tbc

Q & A

BLOCK 2

11:15 to 13:00

Refugees are welcome in our communities!

- SHARE short film screening - 'Joint Forces'

- **Volunteering for Refugee Integration:** Romke Hameleers, DCfR, Sittard-Geleen & Gerrit Hermans, Caritas Geldern

- **Supporting refugees & the role of churches:**

'Projekt Neue Nachbarn' Irene Porsch, Caritas/Erzbistum Köln

,Local practice examples diocese Roermond' Hub Vossen, Dienst Kerk en Samenleving

Each talk will be followed by 20min feedback rounds to hear other local experiences from the audience

LUNCH 13:00 – 14:00

BLOCK 3

14:00 to 15:00

Boosting labor market integration: how is it done?

- SHARE short film screening - 'A land of opportunities' with an introduction by Elisabeth Verniers, Caritas International



- **Educational advice & school placement of refugee youth:** Sevim Dogan, Head of office, Communal Integration Centre, the city of Aachen
- **Study and work support for highly educated refugees:** Sabina Aliyeva, The Foundation for Refugee Students (UAF)
- **Employment & Refugee Integration:** Emplooi & DCfR *tbc*

BLOCK 4

15.00 to 16.30

Thematic roundtables & networking

17.00 Closing