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(Resolutions, recommendations and opinions)

RESOLUTIONS

EUROPEAN ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMITTEE

510ST PLENARY SESSION OF THE EESC ON 16 AND 17 SEPTEMBER 2015

Resolution of the European Economic and Social Committee on the current refugee crisis

(2016/C 013/01)

The EESC calls for immediate responsible and collective European action to address the massive arrival of refugees

The current unacceptable situation of asylum seekers calls for a robust strategy at EU level in cooperation with Member States, social partners and other stakeholders to immediately address the multiple issues refugees are facing.

The ongoing humanitarian crisis endured by so many refugees is of great concern to our Committee as every day men, women and children are risking their lives to reach Europe. The scale of the current refugee crisis is unprecedented and a number of Member States are disproportionately affected by it. The challenging situation requires European Member States to show solidarity both towards people fleeing war, persecution, conflict and poverty and towards each other. Ensuring safe entry and welcoming them is the responsibility for all Member States and is part of our fundamental European values.

The EESC expresses its solidarity and profoundly regrets the loss of lives and the harsh conditions faced by the refugees on their way to safety. We call on civil society organisations, especially the ones represented in the EESC, to do whatever possible to help welcome and integrate refugees. The EESC praises the commitment of people working in local public administrations, non-governmental organisations and volunteers active in grassroots initiatives all around Europe providing assistance to people in need.

Today the European Union needs to act as a real Union and adopt a unified asylum law starting with a revision of the Dublin Regulation. It is time for governments and politicians to follow the lead of citizens, associations, as well as many municipalities that are mobilizing much more and faster than our governments and the EU Institutions. The EESC regrets that the Council was not yet able to take the necessary decision in this pressing humanitarian crisis. Therefore the EESC urges the European Council to hold an extraordinary summit before the end of the month in order to reach an agreement on concrete measures and actions, including a fair quota scheme.

The EESC is very concerned about the current undermining of the Schengen agreement and of free movement, as it is one of the fundamental achievements benefitting EU citizens.

It is crucial to develop immediate measures also to address the root causes of the current refugee flows. The EU needs to work with countries of origin and transit on these issues and the EESC welcomes the human right-based approach foreseen by the Commission for this cooperation. Lastly, the EESC underlines the necessity of including civil society in the dialogue with third countries.