



## **Solidarity with Refugees in our Past and in our Future**

International Conference in Prague on 23 and 24 September 2021

### **Introduction**

Solidarity belongs to the heart of cooperation of 27 Member States of the European Union. The values of rule of law, human rights, solidarity and justice are not abstract and distant; they are a binding part of the EU legislation and national legislation of the EU Member States. These values are deeply embedded in the Treaty on European Union, Lisbon Treaty, the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights, etc. Mutual solidarity of EU Member States in all possible situations, cooperation and mutual support is the only way to make the EU 27 a strong and reliable partner for the outside world with a lot of challenges be it climate change or migration. What we see today, not only in the asylum and migration field and especially in Central Europe, is the lack of mutual solidarity. We see attempts to exploit EU subsidies as much as possible and at the same time blaming the EU for almost all shortcomings of the globalized societies and for our own weaknesses and failures.

Refugees are the best example of the lack of solidarity and the shortcomings of national responses to the plight of refugees. We, the Central Europeans, do not care that Greece, Italy or Cyprus suffer from never-ending arrivals of refugees and migrants, we do not address that refugees' rights are being violated almost everywhere on their route to the „civilized West“. We have completely forgotten that we ourselves were refugees and we continuously „exported“ our Czech, Polish or Hungarian refugees for 40 years in the last century. Today, our politicians speak always about illegal migrants like refugees do not exist whatsoever; they demand the protection of often unprotectable borders, propose unrealistic and lengthy border or pre-screening procedures somewhere on the outskirts of the European Union, returns of migrants or processing the asylum claims of refugees in specialized centers in third countries that have no reason to accept such unfair “solutions”. This narrative must be changed and we would like to seek together during this conference the ways how can and should our states contribute to the more just and solidary responses of the European Union towards people seeking protection in Europe.

### **PROGRAM**

#### **Thursday 23 September**



15.00 – Advocacy meeting of NGO experts on the current and future solidarity with refugees (discussion advocacy focus on Afghanistan and Belarus, push-backs, the new EU Pact on Migration and Asylum. Location: OPU, Kovarska 4, Prague 9, (metro Ceskomoravska)

18.00 – cultural performances and informal opinion exchange with refugees and civil society workers in Gouč na Výstavišti (Exhibition Center Prague, Výstaviště 415, Prague 7, (food made by refugees available) – entrance fee optional.

## **Friday 24 September**

**Venue: City Hall, Staroměstské náměstí 1, (Old Town Square 1) Prague 1, Sál architektů, Old Town City Hall, 4<sup>th</sup> Floor**

9.00 Introduction – Martin Rozumek (OPU), facilitator Ms. Marie Jelínková, PhD, Charles University in Prague, Faculty of Social Sciences

### **9.10 Solidarity with refugees in our past**

- a) Martin Rozumek, Džana Popović, OPU – reception of Greek, Bosnian and Kosovar refugees in the Czech (recent) past
  - b) Martin Nekola – reception of Czechoslovak Refugees from 1948-1989
  - c) Herbert Langthaler, Asylkoordination Austria, – reflections of reception of refugees in Austria in last three decades
- Q+A

### **10.15 Solidarity with refugees in our presence**

- a) Magda Faltová, SIMI, Sdružení pro integraci a migraci – Czech solidarity with refugees including humanitarian admissions of vulnerable persons from Belarus and Czech experience with resettlement
- b) Iryna Hnasevych, Halina Niec Legal Aid Center – Polish reception of persons at risk from Belarus and Ukraine
- c) Akvilė Kriščiūnaitė, Diversity Development Group (DDG) – Sudden arrivals of refugees to Lithuania from Belarus – responses from state and civil society
- d) Lea Rojec, Slovenia – Current refugee policies in Slovenia - involvement of volunteers and the building of a support network for better integration of refugees in the context of restrictive migration policies
- e) Marv Shamma – personal refugee experience of reception in the Czech Republic

Q+A

11.45 – 12.30 Lunch



### **12.30 Solidarity with refugees in the future EU and our region and discussion on the future European Union**

- a) Welcoming Cities - the example of Berlin, Janne Grote, Migration and Integration Policy Unit of the Berlin Senate Department for Integration, Labour and Social Affairs
- b) Prague for All – Jan Janoušek, Prague City Hall - integration policies in Prague
- c) Nikos Papakostas, Greece, Athens - Municipalism and Response to the Needs of Migrants and Refugees

#### Discussion:

- Coalitions of the willing – states or cities? Future plans and perspective to join
- How the EU should work together on difficult topics like migration - recommendations

### **14.45 Conclusion and Farewell**

