

Position Paper on the European refugee crisis

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The current refugee crisis is one of the biggest challenges in the modern Europe and is more and more driving Europe apart. Martin Schulz is warning the European Union, that "...the centrifugal forces of national egotism threaten to tear our union apart. Beggar thy neighbour policies will destroy our European project."^[1] This needs, under all circumstances, to be avoided. AEGEE stands for an open minded, borderless and united Europe where everyone is treated equally and where laws and human rights are valid for everyone. The statutes of AEGEE-Europe^[2] state:

"Freedom and human rights are essential elements of a European society. Through our work and behavior, we aim to serve as an example and spread these values among the youth of our continent. [...] A strong Europe is built upon the foundations of respect, tolerance and solidarity. Following these values, we stand for an inclusive society where citizens enjoy equal opportunities and rights."

These rights should not only be valid for us but also for the hundred thousands of refugees coming to Europe. We can not longer accept the the apparent inability of governments, despite current efforts, to find a sustainable and humanitarian solution to this crisis. Therefore this challenge leads us to the following statements:

Regarding the refugee crisis, Europe has to create a better atmosphere of cooperation to work together on sustainable solutions instead of drifting apart from each other, because no one is willing to step away from its own national politics. Therefore, we are sure that the only solution to the refugee crisis is a strong and united Europe. Support from voluntary organisations and political institutions for integrative projects is also needed. To finance this, a general fund, paid by all member states of the European Union, is needed as well.

It is also clear that the member states where most refugees arrive cannot be left alone to cope with this challenge. Thus, AEGEE-Aachen recommends structured distribution of the refugees among the member states after taking into account, among other things, both population and economic strength of the countries.

We should not make it harder for the refugees to find their way to Europe, but rather help them to exercise the Asylum right they are entitled to. A holistic management of the inner- and outer-european borders needs to be developed. To do so, the European Union needs to adopt far-reaching reforms of the Dublin Convention towards a supranational solution. This is, in our opinion, the only acceptable and humanitarian way for Europe to solve the crisis and provide help to the refugees.

Fleeing from any country is challenging and dangerous. We cannot accept to see refugees struggling and dying on their way to Europe. Thus, a comprehensive and humanitarian aid for refugees coming to European Union, funded by all member states, is needed. Europe needs to become a safe place for every human being, including refugees.

Regarding the integration it is important that governments take action, but a complete integration of such a huge amount of people can only be done with general help from the population and especially from volunteers like us. AEGEE-Europe is one of the biggest and most influential student organizations in Europe. As we have the power to improve something we should definitely do so. AEGEE-Aachen hereby calls everyone to take action within this situation!

AEGEE-Europe in particular and its members, as students involved in the development of Europe, are able to help in this crisis. We have experienced a peaceful and cooperative European Union during our childhood, we grew up in an open-minded community and now it is our duty to remind this very community of its fundamental values, which shall be applied to every human being. We can show refugees our vision and passion for Europe, and make Europe the safe place they need it to be to escape from persecution and war.

AEGEE-Aachen has worked out some ideas for interactive projects with refugees. We want to integrate the refugees by encouraging them to plan events for themselves. If they have the time and are willing to participate, it makes the integration a lot easier, than being passive. Concrete ideas are:

- Organization of intercultural workshops. We can learn a lot from each other!
 - Organizing language tandems, e.g. nonverbal communication helps a lot.
- Organization of sports events.
 - Sports in general have a very low language barrier.
 - "Changing Teams" tournament always mixes groups of locals and refugees.
- Organization of regular meetings for and with refugees, to facilitate contacts to the local population.

It is up to all of us now to take action and to help solve the crisis, to integrate the refugees and to make them feel safe!

AEGEE-Aachen e.V., 17.11.2015

[1] http://www.europarl.europa.eu/the-president/en/press/press_release_speeches/speeches/speeches-2015/speeches-2015-september/html/speech-at-the-informal-meeting-of-heads-of-state-and-government

[2]

<http://www.aegee.org/about-aegee/statement-of-principles/>