

Statement by the World Federation of Public Health Associations on the Refugee Crisis

FACTS AND CONCERNS

1. The world is witnessing large movements of refugees and migrants across international borders. Now an exceptional and growing number of refugees are arriving in Europe.
2. By definition this crisis is not confined within the borders of any particular country, and urgent action is required to cope with the health needs of the refugees and to tackle the causes of additional and unnecessary suffering associated with their flight across Europe.
3. So far, policies towards asylum-seekers in European countries have been partly characterized by violations of basic human rights and infringements of the UN Refugee Convention.
4. Individual responses have proven to be inefficient and unfair. The European Union could and should provide a framework of shared values, agreements and resources in which policies and actions are designed and implemented. However, the EU is failing to provide leadership in the grave crisis facing both the refugees and the principles that inspired the original movement towards European unity.
5. The lack of a unified European emergency response together with the implementation of diverse measures by individual countries is exacerbating the situation and threatening the wellbeing of the refugees.

POSITION

The WFPHA:

- Endorses the WHO's call for a systematic public health response and UNHCR's demand for the immediate creation of logistic facilities to deal with the needs of asylum-seekers in their transit from countries of origin to refuge in European countries.
- Calls for the implementation of essential public health measures that include: emergency services, access to care during pregnancy and childbirth, vaccination

against communicable diseases, paediatric facilities, medication and care for chronic conditions, as well as mental and social health intervention.

- Emphasizes that as a region with resources and democratic traditions, the European Union has a responsibility to behave in a way that is exemplary and to provide a model of good practice in order to manage the refugee crisis with generosity and solidarity.
- Requests the public health associations involved (in the countries of origin, transit and wherever the refugees settle) to share knowledge, information and advocacy tools in order to strengthen their influence in favour of refugee health and wellbeing.
- Invites public health associations to collaborate with institutions and NGOs by sharing their knowledge and experience. Such activities include offering relevant surveillance information and training on the public health aspects of the crisis to health-care workers providing medical care for refugees.
- Encourages public health associations to advocate through mass media and other methods of influence for the protection and promotion of the human rights of the refugees as well as those of the host communities. Advocacy actions should also contribute to the provision of accurate information on health risks as well as fair consideration of refugees in order to avoid any discrimination and stigma.