



“YMCA working for Refugees and Asylum Seekers”

11-13 March 2016

“Ernst Sillem Hoeve”

Den Dolder (The Netherlands)

Conference Statement

Approximately 70 YMCA leaders from 16 countries met from 11.-13. March 2016 in the Netherlands to exchange experiences in their work with young refugees, asylum Seekers, internally displaced persons and migrants in their countries, and to explore new initiatives and new projects for future years.

This conference was a joint initiative of YMCA Europe (www.ymcaeurope.com) and YMCA of the Netherlands (www.ymca.nl).

The YMCA (Young Men's Christian Association) in Europe is an inclusive ecumenical Christian organization where young people can grow and develop in body, mind and spirit. It works in more than 45 countries in Europe.

In the context of this work the primary focus of the YMCA is in the work with children and young people.

Conference delegates recognize that:

- wars and other global challenges are increasing tension in Europe and in the world. This leads to many young people searching for safe places and a better future.
- this causes large scale migration, that will continue for many years, asking for an increased response from society.
- young refugees and asylum seekers arriving in new societies are a special vulnerable group that requires specific attention.
- the YMCA has a longstanding tradition and a good reputation in its work with and for refugees and asylum seekers.
- the YMCA is available and willing to deliver support in emergency situations and helping refugees, asylum seekers and internally displaced persons to integrate in societies in Europe, and support them in building a new future.
- National governments are inclined to see refugees and asylum seekers as a “logistical” issue and that the YMCA can deliver complementary support to develop young refugees and asylum seekers to become European citizens and full members of their new societies.

Therefore the participants in this conference recommend:

- YMCAs in Europe to join forces in developing programmes for young refugees, asylum seekers and internally displaced persons to stimulate integration in the different countries.
- to create spaces in order to enable co-operation, sharing experiences and developing new initiatives across Europe.
- YMCAs in Europe, in coordination with YMCA Europe and YMCA World to make representation to European institutions, the United Nations and other relevant agencies to offer support in assisting young refugees and asylum seekers across Europe.
- YMCA Europe to develop project proposals together with the National YMCAs in Europe, to be delivered by national and local YMCAs.
- that YMCA Europe advocates on issues expressed in this statement.

Den Dolder (The Netherlands),

13. March 2016.

This statement will be sent to all national YMCAs in Europe; to the other YMCA Area organizations and to the World Alliance of YMCAs.