

**The Way Forward:
Refugee assisting organisations present vision for
future of refugee protection in Europe**

Today, at the European Parliament, NGOs lay down a challenge and an invitation to all involved in political decision-making to take a new approach to refugees and asylum. The European Council on Refugees and Exiles, uniting the main refugee-assisting NGOs across Europe, launches its pamphlet *"Europe's role in the global refugee protection system. The Way Forward: an Agenda for Change"*. This agenda aims to guide Europe's politicians and the NGO community to work together towards improving protection for refugees and finding effective long-term solutions to the complex challenges faced by states. In ECRE's view the EU has an essential role to play.

ECRE General Secretary, Peer Baneke said: *"The human cost of the failure of Europe's asylum and migration policies is simply unacceptable. If we really started working together, we could protect refugees much better in Europe and beyond. Our agenda calls for a new approach where European countries put human rights and respect at the core of their programme and start sharing responsibility for refugees."*

Scottish Refugee Council Chief Executive, and Vice Chair of ECRE, Sally Daghljan, added: *"We are pleased to have been involved in the production of this vital resource, which should be added to the bookshelf of every MEP. The agenda is concise, informative and designed to meet the needs of people with busy schedules. It will make a major contribution to the quality of debate on asylum in Europe."*

The European Parliament has recently gained a more powerful decision-making role in EU asylum policy. Over the next months ECRE members throughout Europe will discuss the Agenda for Change with their MEPs. ECRE looks forward to a new, principled and strong input to the debate on refugees by the European Parliament.

While more than 70% of the world's refugees remain in poor, developing countries that struggle to give them the protection they are entitled to, the number of asylum seekers arriving in Europe continues to decrease as governments strengthen border controls and develop ever more restrictive asylum systems. Reports of migrants dying in the Mediterranean and, recently, off the Canary Islands are a constant reminder that a new approach is needed.

"Europe's role in the global refugee protection system. The Way Forward: An Agenda for Change" puts forward 25 positive recommendations, including to:

- help developing countries strengthen their ability to protect refugees;
- create resettlement programmes in each European country, leading to a Europe-wide resettlement programme;
- improve asylum determination procedures in Europe and ensure the Common European Asylum System enhances refugee protection through genuine cooperation;
- invest early in integration;
- support people to return safely and in dignity.

For copies of the pamphlet, further information and interviews, contact the European Council on Refugees and Exiles (ECRE) at:

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Notes to Editors:

1. **Sally Daghlian will be available for interview at the launch event at the European Parliament.**
2. ECRE unites the 80 main refugee-assisting organisations in 30 European countries.
3. *"Europe's role in the global refugee protection system. The Way Forward: An agenda for change"* is available from contacts below. It can be downloaded on 26 April from www.ecre.org
4. The report will be launched in the European Parliament at 1800 on Wednesday 26 April 2006.

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