

The background of the entire poster is a dense, repeating pattern of small, stylized human figures in various colors (blue, orange, green, purple, red, yellow) on a light blue background. The figures are arranged in a way that creates a sense of a large crowd or community.

# NOW

## FINAL REPORT

### 5<sup>TH</sup> INTERNATIONAL MAYORS' CONFERENCE NOW

"SHAPING THE FUTURE –  
SOCIAL COHESION IN OUR CITIES"

29 – 30 JANUARY 2018

VIENNA, AUSTRIA

ACT  
NOW



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# **GREETINGS FROM THE FEDERAL PRESIDENT DR ALEXANDER VAN DER BELLEN**

Dear Participants,

I regret not being able to personally attend this opening of the 5th International Mayors' Conference NOW - taking place under my patronage today and tomorrow.

Historically cities and municipalities have been and are the nucleus of modern democracy; it is therefore my conviction that social cohesion happens on the communal level.

Politics may create the general framework but implementation of those laws and peaceful coexistence takes place where people live, go to school and work.

In this regard I am very pleased that Mayors, citizens, experts, representatives of governmental and non-governmental organizations from 30 countries from Europe, the MENAT region and the USA are coming together here in Vienna to share their insights and experience and will work on solutions for a peaceful common future. This wide spectrum of knowledge across all borders is a fertile ground for shaping a future where people learn to value what connects them: their ideals, their values and their aspirations for a peaceful and economically stable future.

The fact that this NOW Conference is dedicated to young people in this broad context, and that all of you here are willing to listen to each other, to understand each other and to learn from each other gives me much hope.

My thoughts are with you and I wish you many inspiring encounters, success in your endeavours, and outcomes that can successfully be applied and further developed in your respective areas of activity to touch the lives of as many people as possible.



# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



A group of 190 people from 27 countries, including mayors, other decision-makers, researchers, NGO representatives and refugees gathered in Vienna to join the 5th International Mayors' Conference NOW "Shaping the Future – Social Cohesion in our Cities" on 29 – 30 January 2018. Under the auspices of the Austrian Federal President Dr Alexander Van der Bellen and curated by Dr Viola Raheb, the participants analysed in panel discussions, stage talks and break-out sessions how to overcome the challenges our societies face in strengthening social cohesion. The interdisciplinary discourse offered a holistic and context-sensitive approach. Complementing and contextualising the discussions, local, regional and international networks and initiatives were presented as well as the NOW Working Groups. The latter are composed of academics and practitioners from Europe and the MENAT region and presented their solution-orientated approaches on "Education & Diversity", "Exploitation", "Gender Equality" and "Trauma Surviving" developed throughout the last period.

## SOCIAL COHESION IS SHAPED AT COMMUNITY LEVEL

Faced with rising social inequality and cultural polarisation the conference's aim was to elaborate ways to transform our societies to become more cohesive, democratic, inclusive and socially innovative. There was a broad consensus that municipalities play a key role in this process, as inclusive cohabitation in diversity is best shaped on a communal level. On that level, social needs can be addressed effectively, people across ethnic, religious and cultural backgrounds can get to know each other, people can empower themselves by taking action and human creativity can flourish. Despite the immense potential, cities should not be overburdened, as national and international players are responsible for shaping the structural conditions under which local actors can operate.

It is further essential to take the diverse contexts of municipal action into consideration. They manifest themselves in the different challenges faced by municipalities in dealing with arriving refugees, depending on their position along the escape routes and on their resources. In general, experts and practitioners stressed the importance of serious measures to facilitate everyday encounters between refugees and local populations to support cultural and social integration, instead of centralising refugees on the outskirts of cities. A special focus should be on the inclusion, participation and education of displaced children. Their rights need to be protected and implemented comprehensively in order to ensure strong and sustainable social cohesion in the future. Moreover, the diverse vulnerable groups should not be played off against each other for political gains.

André Heller concluded: "We all have a common goal: building a society shaped by social cohesion, which is committed to upholding indivisible human rights. Each one of us has built up a strong network in their particular sphere. The more effectively we collaborate, the quicker we will achieve our goal." Therefore, as a result, of this inspiring NOW Conference the city networks UNICEF's Child Friendly Cities Initiative, the Mediterranean City-to-City Migration Project, the International Cities of Refuge Network, Mediterranean Hope and Sabir Maydan have decided to cooperate more closely, pooling their strengths.

**FNDD OUT MORE:**

[www.now-conference.org](http://www.now-conference.org)

## BETTER LIVING TOGETHER

Think global, act local, get closer: the 5th NOW Conference – under the patronage of the President of Austria – showed that in times of growing polarisation social cohesion must not only be strengthened from the inside, in the cities, the municipalities, the communities, but also requires external support and networking.

### A CONFERENCE REPORT BY ERNST SCHMIEDERER

Wherever we turn today, unfortunately, the situation is far from rosy.

Let's have a look at Sultanbeyli, for example, a district on the Asian side of Istanbul. At the end of the 1950s, the land which was used only for agriculture up until then, was officially founded as a village since Turkish migrants from Bulgaria were to be settled there and needed land. In the second half of the 1980s, with the expansion of the motorway, Sultanbeyli grew overnight from a population of 3,000 to 80,000. Today, more than 300,000 people live in the area, among them 25,000 refugees from Syria. "We simply have to face this challenge," Halil Ibrahim Akinci, the Strategy Development Manager of Sultanbeyli Municipality says drily.

Or Sahab. An industrial city, located south of Jordanian capital Amman. In addition to the originally 170,000 inhabitants and the 20,000 labour migrants from South-East Asia, 40,000 Syrian refugees have come here in the past few years. One quarter of Jordan's national budget today goes into the provision and support of the two million refugees in the country. "We bear this load as a matter of course. We can't possibly shut the door in these people's faces," says Abbas Almaharmeh, the mayor of Sahab.

Or Tutin. One of Serbia's poorest municipalities. And one of the youngest. The place's infrastructure is outdated. There is hardly any industry, which has resulted in a 40-percent unemployment rate. Tutin is located in the Kosovo-Montenegro border region, a route that is taken by many refugees on their way to Central and Northern Europe. "Actually, these people don't want to stay in Tutin for long," says Kenan Hot, the mayor and adds, "But gradually, we've received quite many of them in our community. We are a poor municipality but we make sure that the children get language classes, a place in kindergarten and learning opportunities. The majority of our population is open-minded towards the refugees. After all, it's about the future for all of us. We must make an effort for these people. Not only in the interests of Serbia, but also in the interests of Europe."

As complex as the problems may be, there seem to be people everywhere willing to set their wits to work, create capacities and enable solutions; people who have realised that, in times of growing polarisation, they must not lose sight of one goal in all of their efforts: it's about creating, strengthening and fostering social cohesion.





"In all of our initiatives to integrate the Syrian refugees in our community, we make sure that the rights of our Jordanian citizens are not curtailed," says Sahab's mayor Almaharmeh.

"We bring Turkish families in contact with Syrian families so they can meet regularly and solve problems together," says Strategy Development Manager Akinci from Sultanbeyli and explains, "In doing so, we place a strong focus on cultural activities. We ask our Turkish citizens, for example, to show the Syrian refugees our town's sights. This strengthens social cohesion."

Cohesion! This focus had been chosen by curator Viola Raheb and the three initiators, the Act.Now partners André Heller, Patricia Kahane and Elke Zuckermann, for the 5th International NOW Conference in January 2018: "Shaping the Future – Social Cohesion in our Cities". The conference placed a special focus on children and youth and asked: What concrete measures must and can we take in our communities, in our municipalities and in our cities to enable children and youth to lead a dignified life in safety and well-being.

Since 2014, the number of armed conflicts has steadily increased. A growing number of children grow up in war zones. According to recent studies, today, every sixth child worldwide is affected. Every second one of these roughly 360 million children lives in a region with especially severe conflicts, such as Afghanistan, Syria, Somalia. According to plausible estimates, nearly 90 percent of war victims are civilians; the majority women and children. "More and more people are being displaced, more and more people are on the move. In an effort to ward off these people, walls are raised and fortresses built. We experience how the countries of the south are treated with disrespect, chauvinism and condescension," Viola Raheb outlines the dicey situation. "This makes it all the more critical to provide answers to a very simple question: How does social cohesion work? What brings and holds groups together? What does social cohesion mean on a local level. What does it mean in our cities, in our municipalities, in our closest environment?"

Nearly 200 people from roughly 30 nations accepted the invitation to Vienna for the third conference, sharing their experiences over the course of two days in round table settings, workshops and panel discussions. "The rift across our societies has become palpably wider which affects each and every one of us," stresses André Heller. "Politics defines the framework conditions. But cohesion must be realised where we live, work, or go to school. This makes it even more pressing to learn from each other and to make visible positive counter strategies. The conference offers a stage to those who have already implemented successful activities with plenty of energy and creativity that contribute to an improved living together in society," Heller explains.

On that stage, along with the guests from Istanbul's Sultanbeyli district, the Jordanian city of Sahab and Serbian Tutin municipality, mayors from Germany, Austria and other European countries also shared their experiences. Dieter Posch, for example, who is the mayor of the town of Neudörfel in the Austrian Burgenland state. At the opening podium discussion, which was moderated by member of parliament Muna Duzdar (Social Democratic Party of Austria), Posch painted a realistic picture of the political framework conditions as the backdrop of his work: "I'm the only one in this group who is unable to present my federal government's compliments. Austria's former foreign minister and current federal chancellor has tried to find a solution by keeping refugees away from Austria. This has forced people and organizations, which have initially been applauded, to justify themselves. Now, we are willing to systematically uproot the refugees that live here and place them in camps outside the metropolises, signalling that we don't want interpersonal relations to develop in the first place; we want nobody



to start objecting when these people are deported again. That's some sad evidence about my home country. And that's why such conferences are so important! We must raise our voice and bolster up those who don't pull away. Because even if the Syria crisis is solved one day, we will be faced with other challenges, for example, climate change. This is only the beginning. And whoever believes that these global challenges can be met with a renationalization strategy will fail from the start. Therefore, I'll continue to fight with all might."

Posch's Greek counterpart Manolis Vournous, who had come to Vienna from the island of Khios, is in a similar situation. He is also struggling with a government that has been escaping responsibility. About 2,000 refugees stranded on Khios who are unable to move forward or backward. Roughly 1,500 are housed at a so-called hotspot that is designed for a maximum of 890 people. "This means that 890 people have a place to sleep. Nothing else. No place to eat. No place to watch TV. No place to educate children. No adequate wastewater system. Not enough toilets. No mini market to buy milk or cigarettes or diapers. We are putting up a fight, of course. We went to court and indicted the state of Greece. But who knows what will come of it. After all, there are many hints that this chaos is not just happening, but that it's orchestrated. Neighbouring island Lesbos, for example, has a population of 18,000 and currently 7,000 refugees. This will, of course, result in opposition in the surrounding villages where suddenly 200 locals are faced with 500 refugees. Such a situation causes great harm to social cohesion," outlines Vournous.

Maurizio Zavaglia describes that there is another way. At the mayor podium discussion, he reports from his town Gioiosa Ionica in Calabria, a region that "according to all data and indicators is located in the south of Europe, or to be precise, at the end of Europe, at the end of the European Union, a very poor region in every respect." Since 1870, since people born and raised there have been searching for a better life all across the world, migration is an everyday phenomenon. Zavaglia's grandfather, as a very young man, had also tried to leave on a ship to the U.S. but was sent back into the poverty of his home and beaten up there by police who were serving the fascist regime. In 1998, in the neighbouring municipality Riace, Zavaglia himself witnessed the arrival of the first refugees on a boat.

Today, Riace is world-famous for its welcoming culture, and Zavaglia's city profits from the experiences made by living together with the now 800 migrants living there. That's why, for five years, Gioiosa Ionica has been enjoying a certain reputation reflective of the situation. "We have a population of 5,000 and already welcomed 300 refugees in our community. We don't offer them anonymous large-scale structures but provide them with flats. This is complemented by a wide range of good-practice models which enable integration, inclusion, education and employment. People graduate, they obtain a driving licence, they complete apprenticeships. We invite them to our homes. They bring with them what is customary in a good neighbourhood: salt and oil," Zavaglia explains.

By now, it's no longer about temporary aid in Gioiosa Ionica. The town wants to be more than just a stopover on the way to Germany. Zavaglia outlines: "In our municipality we develop life projects with these people and their families, co-operatives in agriculture or tourism. Why don't you come and visit us? Take a look for yourself and taste the fruits of our efforts!"

At the same time, Maurizio Zavaglia is very involved in an initiative of the Protestant Church which is represented at the NOW Conference by Federica Brizi: the "Mediterranean Hope Project" of the Federation of Protestant Churches in Italy. The project welcomes migrants in Sicily, observes the situation in Lampedusa, lobbies in Rome. "Our priority is, however, to make sure that people in humanitarian corridors are able to reach us legally," says Brizi.

As roughly 300 people drowned in the Mediterranean on their way to Italy in 2013, this new migration policy approach has been developed. "The primary goal of the humanitarian corridors is to save people from drowning. People that have managed to reach Lebanon as refugees from Syria are presented with the possibility of flying to Italy, equipped with a visa, and apply for asylum there," Brizi explains. In doing so, two aspects were critical: Firstly, nothing new had been invented, only European law revived, according to which every state can issue a visa for a limited number of people who are in special need of protection. Politics agreed to this model only after the Protestant churches could guarantee the livelihood of these people and aid their integration with the support of their members. About the second critical aspect Brizi says: "Here, two Christian churches, the Catholic and the Protestant, cooperate with each other to demonstrate together that migration policies can be changed with civil society commitment". The network now consisted of many groups of dedicated people all over Italy. Similar projects had been developed in France and Belgium, too.

"Inspiring Local, Regional and International Networks working on Social Cohesion on Municipality Level".

With this title, the panel – at which Federica Brizi reported on the humanitarian corridors – had already taken centre stage during the programming of the conference. That literally overnight, on the morning of the second conference day, it would result in a "Vienna Declaration" was as unplanned as it was encouraging. Act. Now, the panel participant organisations Child Friendly Cities (UNICEF), Mediterranean City-to-City Migration Project, International Cities of Refuge Network ICORN, European Coalition of Cities against Racism (ECCAR), Mediterranean Hope as well as Italian initiative Sabir Maydan want to pool their strengths in future and co-operate closely. "We all have a common goal," says André Heller, the driving force behind this gathering.



“We want to live in a society that sticks together and is obliged to indivisible human rights. Each one of us has established a strong network in their own environment. The better we co-operate the faster we will reach our goal.”

Unlike the first four NOW Conferences, the most recent edition focuses not exclusively on the flight and migration set of issues. Consequently, every station of the programme also reflects the fact that people who flee from war, hunger and misery, are neither reason nor trigger for the crisis in our democratic societies. Democracy deficits, social inequality, youth unemployment – Western societies had been struggling with all of these problems long before people had to flee by the thousands from Syria or Afghanistan. Therefore, the discussion groups and panels in the two January days vary in terms of topics and participants. Mayors, representatives of local and international NGOs, organisers of civil society initiatives, scientists and social workers as well as children and youth. People with and without flight experience. People who consciously work on living together fruitfully in diversity. People who fight fear and prejudice. People who defend democratic values and basic rights. People who know how important empathy and solidarity are.

In the course of the third NOW Conference in early 2017, various working groups were formed. The participants of which have ever since been meeting regularly in Vienna and Beirut to develop new solutions and programmes in four concrete areas: Education & Diversity, Gender Equality, Exploitation, Trauma Surviving. As a result of their efforts, the 5th NOW Conference was able to present the guide “Sleepless? Dreaming of Time without Bad Dreams”, a book which, in the form of a comic, is directed towards children and youth suffering from traumatic experiences. A book that also helps those who are dealing with such children and youth at school and in everyday life. Unfortunately, children and youth experience traumas everywhere; in Europe, for example, domestic violence, tough social conditions, youth unemployment are a daily reality.

The realisation that social cohesion can develop from a mix of highly varying ingredients manifested itself most impressively in a programme point declared as a cultural event: Under the guidance of the Vienna Opera Ball Master of Ceremonies Roman Svabek, at the end of the conference day, roughly 100 guests danced a quadrille in the midst of the conference setting.

In its original form this kind of group dance emerged in Paris at the time of Napoleon as one of the many fads at court. In Vienna, however, the dance developed into a folk dance, a phenomenon that dance teacher Svabek attests to the influence of Johann Strauss. “He simply preferred spending time with people at the Prater than the imperial court,” Svabek explains. The purpose of a quadrille is obvious: giving the dancers an opportunity to getting to know each other as casually as possible.

For half an hour, everybody was having a ball at the ÖBB railway assembly hangar turned conference centre. The steps announced by Svabek first had to be memorized and then followed. The faster the music, the more exuberant the mood, the more difficult the coordination. Getting into each other’s way is inevitable: there’s shoving and toe-stepping. Despite initial scepticism it soon became clear that the entire experience was a lot of fun for everyone after a day spent sitting and listening.

What André Heller described as a “very, very strange dancing experience” the next morning, demonstrates most impressively what it’s all about both inside that hangar and outside in the world: an improved living together!

# DAY 1

## VOICES OF MAYORS: SOCIAL COHESION IN OUR CITIES – CURRENT REALITIES AND CHALLENGES IN MUNICIPALITIES



### Host:

Muna Duzdar, MP, Austrian Parliament, Austria

### Participants:

Halil Ibrahim Akinci, Director of the Strategic Development Dpt., Sultanbeyli, Turkey

Abbas Almaharmeh, Mayor, Sahab, Jordan

Kenat Hot, Mayor, Tutin, Serbia

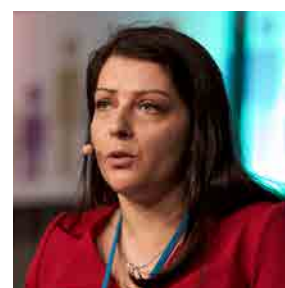
Merhej Najm, Expert for Education, Culture, Information, Habbariyeh, Lebanon

Dieter Posch, Mayor, Neudoerfl, Austria

Manolis Vournous, Mayor, Chios, Greece

Maurizio Zavaglia, Assistant Mayor, Gioiosa Ionica, Italy

**Muna Duzdar:** Act.Now's aim was to come up with a toolkit for mayors providing an overview of good practices on how municipalities from the regions of Europe and the Mediterranean regions were addressing and supporting refugees. The general conclusion from interviews with mayors was that it is not possible to have general guidelines for all the Mayors since they have so different circumstances. Today, we have mayors from the Mediterranean regions, from Lebanon and from Jordan, which are countries that are experiencing a high percentage of refugees in relation to local population and suffering from very limited resources. A second context are countries which are transit countries, like Greece or Serbia, where refugees are uncertain if they will be allowed to move on or stay. We have other European countries which are receiving refugees and which are having a clear integration policy.



**Halil Ibrahim Akinci:** Due to the unavailability of public funds for this issue in Turkey, we have tried to solve problems of social integration differently, with the help of foundations. In order to provide a remedy for language related challenges we have employed Turkish mentors and, with the help of these mentors, it was now easier for Syrian children to follow the curriculum in schools and integrate in Turkish society. We have also tried to bring together Turkish families with Syrian families and these families meet at regular intervals. They try to solve their problems together. We strongly focus on cultural activities. We make sure that Turkish citizens visit Turkish sites together with Syrian refugees, and thereby, we also want to further enhance the integration of Syrian refugees.



**Abbas Almaharmeh:** Our religion is a religion of peace. In the Quran we have a text that says, „We have created you men and women equally and made you into tribes to get to know one another, and the most respected is that person who respects his brother and sister.“ We try to host the refugees and integrate them in our strategic plan that we have put forward in our municipality. We hold meetings at the municipality hall and we are certain that it's not their fault that they have become displaced. All measures taken by the municipality have alleviated the problems of both sides because some of the Jordanian people fear that perhaps the Syrians had been given more attention than themselves.



**Kenat Hot:** In the recent three years, we have hosted about four and a half million refugees here in Tutin. We are only a station which serves as a transit point. 85% of the population of Tutin really welcomed the refugees and have very positive opinion. As local administration we are trying to keep our young workforce and we try to finance as much as possible for them. We have made it possible for children to follow several language courses and have made it possible to give them a kindergarten place. We have also made sure that refugee children can actively participate in other education programs. I think we'll also understand in the future that it's important to accept refugees not only for the sake of Serbia but also for the sake of the European Union.



**Merhej Najm:** In order to alleviate the dire situation of Syrian refugees we have cooperated with international institutions. We have surveyed all families, we have also tried to house them. We did not use camps or tents, we have selected proper houses for all Syrian families. One of the most important points is the creation of a special committee of displaced that can actually follow up on the needs of the displaced with the municipality. The small group representing the displaced allows us to act in a more effective way in addressing their needs.



**Dieter Posch:** The current Austrian government tries to solve a challenge by keeping it away from Austria. The signal is that we don't want human relations to foster, but we want larger and anonymous groups that might even serve as hostile images, can just be stored in big units somewhere, so that no one will oppose any repatriations. The tender flowers of integration that were starting to bloom in the municipalities and the cities thanks to lots of work with the autochthonous population, are now being uprooted. This is why conferences like these are so important because here, many, many people are courageous enough to even stand up against governments in power and not just abide. I do believe that we are only at the beginning of international challenges, but we already fail at the beginning, because we believe that if we renationalise, global challenges can be solved, but this will not work.



**Manolis Vournous:** On Chios, which has 50,000 inhabitants and about 2,000 refugees. 1,500 of which are within a hotspot, with a capacity for 890 people. There are just places for them to sleep. No place to eat, no place for children to be educated, not adequate sewage systems, not enough numbers of WCs. There are serious damages to the social cohesion. When you have in a village of 200, 300 inhabitants, you have 500 refugees and immigrants it changes completely the way of living of everybody on the island. The whole local population is opposing to this out-of-scale use of the infrastructures. Besides, all those refugees and immigrants who have such bad experiences at their first contact with the European administrative system, as it happens with the one that is now being implemented on the Greek islands.



What opinion are they going to form, will they trust our systems in the future? How will it affect their will to be integrated in the future, if they have been mishandled so badly and so inhumanely?

**Maurizio Zavaglia:** Our current welcome model is diffused hospitality. We don't have one big structure, but we have flats in the historical centres, within the municipality. This way we can promote integration, together with an entire series of good and joint practices, with initiatives that are being implemented for socialisation, inclusion and education. Everyone can enter the social network of our municipality and participate in social, political and cultural life or sports within our community. We host migrants in our own homes and welcome them as neighbours. We set up cooperatives in agriculture, tourism and provision of goods. Migrants and young people from my hometown work there together in solidarity projects in order to improve sustainably the lives of the poor.





## PANEL 1: SOCIAL COHESION - TOWARDS NEW POLITICAL DEBATES AND POLICIES



### Host:

Viola Raheb, Conference Curator, University of Vienna, Austria

### Participants:

Jürgen Czernohorsky, Vienna's City Councillor for Education, Integration, Youth and Personnel, Austria

Vera Hinterdorfer, Initiative 'Sichtbar Werden', Austria

Yuri Kazepov, Professor at the Department of Sociology, University of Vienna, Austria

Elena Mavromichali, Lead for Community Engagement and Entrepreneurship, SolidarityNow, Greece

Tarek Mitri, Director, Issam Fares Institute for Public Policy and International Affairs, Lebanon

Mikael Stigendal, Professor of Sociology, Malmö University, Sweden

Rossalina Latcheva, Senior Programme Manager, Statistics and Surveys, Fundamental Rights Agency

Nicholas You, Director Global Partners and Programmes, Guangzhou Institute for Urban Innovation, Kenya

### Absent:

Reinhard Schiefer, Founder, Association Papa Bär, Austria

Josef Weidenholzer, MEP, European Parliament

**Viola Raheb:** Since 2014, there is an increase on armed conflicts. More than 50 at the moment worldwide. It is estimated that close to 90% of the current war casualties are civilians, the majority of whom are women and children. In the context of huge force displacement and refuge, we see walls and fortresses being constructed and the international humanitarian law being violated. In an interdependent world, we hear a statesman speak of America first.

We are witnesses of how countries of the south are being treated with disrespect, chauvinism, and patronisation. In cities where the concept of togetherness is needed, unilateral decisions are being taken, bypassing the UN resolutions and the international law. On the Holocaust Memorial Day, 2018, survivors of the holocaust and their descendants in Austria felt the urgent need to go on the street protesting against right-wing extremism, anti-semitism, and xenophobia rather than joining an official memorial.

At the same time when government politicians are preaching slogans of integration, civil society actors are at airports protesting the deportation of fully integrated families and individuals in our cities. This conference is addressing the concept of social cohesion on local level. Not of cities but in cities and in communities or, to put it



in other words, we are looking at social cohesion in our immediate environment.

This conference is designated to allow an interdisciplinary discourse, exchange and encounter among the various stakeholders that are engaged for and in looking at how we can transform our societies to become more cohesive, democratic, inclusive, and socially innovative.

**Vera Hinterdorfer:** "Sichtbar werden" (becoming visible) is a platform of people experiencing poverty, social exclusion and discrimination. The real experts are the people who are experiencing the problem you want to solve. We have to live with poverty, with exclusion, with discrimination each day. I would like to say, we know best how to survive it and how to solve it and where the real problems are. It was recognised that there are so many resources in this group and people concerned have so many qualities which can help the whole society. We can help the government to solve problems for in the long run and in a realistic and authentic way.



I think it's really important as a person experiencing poverty and exclusion and sometimes discrimination to show to society and other people who are experiencing it, that they are not alone, they are no aliens and we are full parts of society and have the energy to help and to make a change.

**Rossalina Latcheva:** For the second time now, our Agency conducted an EU-wide survey on experiences of discrimination but also hate-motivated harassment and physical violence. Trust is the glue of social cohesion, social trust, not only trust in the general other and the belief that all the people independent of their background can trust each other and can trust in the „moral community“ but also in the trust in public institutions. Although, the level of trust is very high in general, victims of discrimination, of harassment, hate-motivated harassment or physical violence, show low level of trust in the public institution, in the police, and in the legal system. One of the positive results is that the majority of the immigrants trust the public institutions like the legal system, the police, even more than the general population.



**Jürgen Czernohorszky:** What helps to boost social cohesion? First of all, we have to leave behind the sectoral approach in administration and we have to find integrated, multi-sectoral policy approaches. We have to connect housing, education, city planning, integration policy on different levels of that action. Just to give you a few examples, it is definitely cohesion policy to avoid segregation through social housing which is very Viennese. It's not only a question about how we can fight social inequality on a city level. Very many things can be tackled at the neighbourhood, in fact, every real challenge we have as a society is a challenge we have to tackle at the neighbourhood level because everything that can work or can fail at the neighbourhood level can be seen as a symbol for failing or succeeding on the city level.



**Tarek Mitri:** The sense of belonging, which is essential to social cohesion, is constantly threatened by either old or rejuvenated forms of sectarianism, communism, ethnicism and by political institutions of dysfunctional states. In some countries such as my own, Lebanon, the unprecedented and massive influx of refugees has severely strained the economic and social systems as well as related institutions. Not only it has revealed the existing tensions in our societies but exacerbated them, like resentment, fears, distrust among citizens and distrust in public institutions. To be sure working on social cohesion involves healing all of these fractures within the societal issue. It is important to make the case for harmony and tolerance not in a preaching like mode, but in arguing that the moral, social and even economic costs of exclusion are higher than those of inclusion.



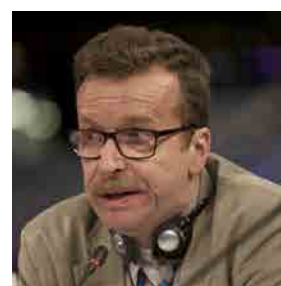
**Yuri Kazepov:** Social innovation is a relational and it's context sensitive. The opportunity structures vary substantially considering the institutional capacities, the resources that are made available, the existing leadership and the actors who are on the grounds. Also, I would like to stress the fact that cities are not the only player in the game. We should not overburden their social responsibility as it is done by many states which they are offloading responsibilities on cities. I think we should be very careful in not falling into the local trap, being trapped into praising the local as the best option to understand needs and the best way to find new solutions. Actually, I think it's overstated, in particular the potential of local agency in addressing structural global processes of social exclusion and also creating the basis for social cohesion. Cities are embedded in broader territorial relations which always need to be taken into account when we praise local social innovation.



**Nicholas You:** How do we eliminate the barriers that are preventing people from joining society? I find them everywhere. I find them in the sectoral approach to the city. A single mother with three children doesn't have time to go one day to the Education Department, the next day to the Welfare Department, the next day to the Health Department. That's how we are asking people to exercise their right to the city, by wasting a lot of time because we've decided to structure our entire society in silence. Because our planners do not realise that by drawing a line on a piece of paper or on a computer can either divide or it can integrate people. Poor people are not poor because they want to be poor, they're poor because they have unsurmountable barriers that they have to fight with every day. If we can plan and design our cities better, we can remove a lot of those barriers. My plea is let's stop designing social exclusion into our cities. Let's start designing our cities to be more inclusive.



**Mikael Stigendal:** Policies of social cohesion of cities tend to express a notion of solidarity which means that the rich and the privileged should care for the poor while the poor should accept the power of the rich. This is one of the inequalities that we should tackle instead. How to achieve that? You have to adopt a perspective which enables you to look behind the obvious, which could be called potential oriented. By potential, I mean both the negatives like austerity policies or indebtedness and, of course, also the positive potentials which do exist, but are not taken advantage of. We could make use of them by knowledge alliances. That's a way of developing and producing knowledge together with, for example, young people. Their knowledge should be taken advantage of to a much higher extent also in research.



**Elena Mavromichali:** We are working as a humanitarian organisation, but recently we have been much more involved in how we're going to be able to support not only our beneficiaries. We are not only assisting refugees and migrants, we have to assist people in Greece that are still living the economic crisis. We have to assist them in so many levels to understand the cultural differences, to understand the responsibility towards these people. Social cohesion is so much connected with this peaceful coexistence. Through this peaceful coexistence, you can build trust. You can now build hope which is very important because in today's youth, you see that hope is something that has been lost. New people that feel strange to them and they cannot understand the language, which is a huge barrier.





## PRESENTATION OF NOW WORKING GROUPS

### EDUCATION & DIVERSITY (TO BECOME RESEARCH NETWORK DESC)



#### Host & Curator:

Viola Raheb, Researcher, University of Vienna

#### Members:

Nihad Bunar, Professor, Stockholm University

Maurice Crul, Professor, University of Amsterdam

Annette Korntheuer, Member of the executive board, Netzwerk Flüchtlingsforschung

Lutine de Wal Pastoor, Senior Researcher, Norwegian Centre for Violence and Traumatic Stress Studies

Rima Doany, Executive Director, Ana Aqra Organisation

Lina Farouqi, Regional Director, Middle East Children's Institute

Ayşe Lale Hazar, Project Director, ODGEDER-Organization of Positive Behavior Support

Maha Shuayb, Director, Centre for Lebanese Studies

Josef Zollneritsch, HR Dr., Abteilungsleiter, Landesschulrat Steiermark

Barbara Herzog-Punzenberger, Department Manager Education Research, University of Linz

Angeliki Ziaka, Associate Professor, School of Theology of the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki

#### Goals:

- Foster interdisciplinary exchange about promising practices in the field of inclusive education and the integration of newly arrived students between scientists and practitioners from Europe and the MENAT Region

#### Project:

- 'Pathways to educational resilience': Video series about promising practice examples in the field of inclusive education

## EXPLOITATION



### Curator:

Viola Raheb, Researcher, University of Vienna

### Host:

Shams Asadi, Commissioner, Human Rights Office of the City of Vienna

### Members:

Rüdiger Luchmann, Country Coordinator, UNICEF Austria

Geneviève Colas, Sociologist, Secours Catholique, Caritas France

Jihane Isseid, Program Manager Emergency Safe Housing for GBV Survivors, ABAAD

Katie Klaffenböck & Oana Timofte, Counter-Trafficking Focal Point, International Organization for Migration (IOM)

Helga Konrad, Director, Regional Implementation Initiative against Human Trafficking, Austria

Claire Healy, Research Officer, ICMPD

Luna Shamieh, Researcher, National University of Public Service

Marco Buono, UNHCR Libya

Helmut Sax, Key Researcher, Ludwig Boltzmann Institute of Human Rights

Brigitte Holzner, Chair, TAMAR, Counselling Centre for Victims of Sexual Violence

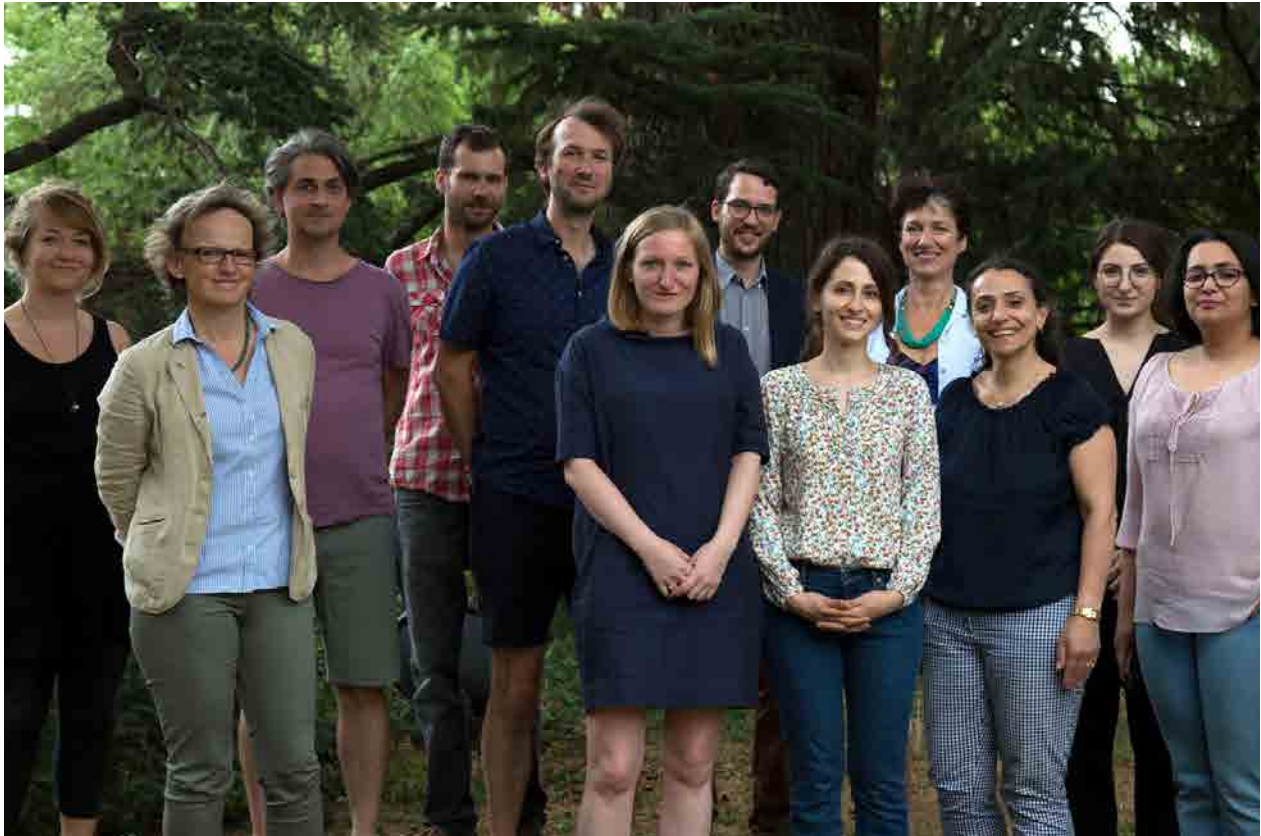
### Goals:

- Awareness raising and capacity building on a local level to improve prevention of exploitation
- Influencing policies and decision-making on prevention of exploitation

### Planned Projects:

- Reshaping public opinion through a cooperation with city-networks and guidelines for municipalities

## GENDER EQUALITY



### Curator:

Viola Raheb, Researcher, University of Vienna

### Host:

Meera Jamal, Journalist, Germany/Pakistan

### Members:

Paul Scheibelholfer, Researcher, University Innsbruck

Majdoleen Hassan, Human Rights Lawyer, Austria/Syria

Zoya Rouhana, Founder and Director, Kafa

Nergiz Abi, Public Affairs Officer, Kurdistan Regional Government-Iraq (Krg)

Fedaa Alarnaoot, Social Consultation And Translator, Queer Base

Besnik Leka, Project Coordinator, Care International

Christof Moser, Clinical And Health Psychologist, Men's Health Center

Laura Schoch, Coordinator, Österreichische Kinderfreunde

Feyza Basar Gulersen, President, Alpbach Turkey

Philipp Leeb, Chairman, Poika

### Goals:

- Fostering interdisciplinary exchange about promising practices to improve gender equality beyond borders
- Collecting and providing knowledge about gender issues

### Planned Projects:

- "Engage": Online art-based project with low barriers to engage with gender issues
- Hand in Hand: "Little University" as a means to exchange knowledge for experts, activists and other stakeholders



## TRAUMA SURVIVING



### Curator:

Viola Raheb, Researcher, University of Vienna

### Host:

Barbara Preitler, Psychotherapist, Hemayat

### Members:

Michael Brune, Psychiatrist, Haveno - Psychotherapie Und Interkulturelle Kommunikation, Germany

Bakhtyar Hadi Hassan, Psychotherapist, Jiyan Foundation

Sana Hamzeh, Clinical Advisor, Restart

Marianne Alkhelewi-Brainin, Psychologist, Hemayat

Arash Razmaria, Adviser in Dari/Farsi, Männergesundheitszentrum

Gabriele Siebert, Trauma Paedagogue & Trauma Educational Consultant

Susanne Stein, Author and Trauma Expert, Trauma Picture Book Project

Katharina Glawischnig, Expert for unaccompanied minors, Asylkoordination

### Goals:

- Support capacity-building for trauma therapy
- Raising awareness about traumatised youth

### Projects:

- Comic series as psychoeducational material explaining trauma to children and youth
- Train the trainer program (in planning)

# INSPIRING LOCAL, REGIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL NETWORKS WORKING ON SOCIAL COHESION ON MUNICIPALITY LEVEL

## Networks:

Child Friendly Cities Initiative (CFCI) - UNICEF: Louise Thivant,  
CFCI Advisor European Cities Against Racism (ECCAR) - UNESCO: Benedetto Zacchiroli, President  
Mediterranean City-to-City Migration Project - ICMPD: Ana Feder, Project Manager  
International Cities of Refuge Network (ICORN): Helge Lunde, Executive Director  
Mediterranean Hope - Federation of Protestant Churches in Italy: Federica Brizi, Coordinator

## CHILD FRIENDLY CITIES INITIATIVE (CFCI) - UNICEF

<http://childfriendlycities.org>

### Members:

Cities and local governments in 38 countries (reached around 30 million children)

### Goals:

Implementing children's rights on a local level

### Description:

A city can become a 'UNICEF Child Friendly City' when its government commits itself to implement the convention of the rights of the child and shows a continued commitment to improve the lives of all children. The CFCI pushes for a strong collaboration between the various departments within the government but also with civil society-organisations, academia, business and – most importantly – children themselves.

In recent years we have seen a growing interest in our initiative. Firstly, because we focus on the specific local context. Secondly, because nowadays, local governments and mayors know they can be an even stronger agents for change instead of relying on national governments.

## EUROPEAN CITIES AGAINST RACISM (ECCAR) - UNESCO

[www.eccar.info/en](http://www.eccar.info/en)

### Members:

134 cities

### Goals:

Fight racism, discrimination and xenophobia in cities

### Description:

To join the network, a city has to implement a 10-points plan of action against racism, discrimination and xenophobia in city policies.

Cities can be the spaces where human creativity takes place or places where conflicts take place. That is why ECCAR is working on a toolkit for administrators.

Cities need three ingredients: (1) a political leadership that inspires people and the community, (2) a socially engaged private sector and (3) the capacity to build an effective network. If we act alone, we will stay alone. Therefore, we need a network of the networks which reminds us about our European roots – "united in diversity".

## MEDITERRANEAN CITY-TO-CITY MIGRATION PROJECT (MC2CM) - ICMPD

[www.icmpd.org/home](http://www.icmpd.org/home)

### Members:

Amman, Beirut, Lisbon, Lyon, Madrid, Tangiers, Tunis, Turin and Vienna

### Goals:

Improving migration governance by addressing the issue at the local level

### Description:

Our conviction is that migration is an opportunity despite all the challenges. None of our partner cities consider migration to be problematic but diversity as an asset in terms of economic growth and development and urban management and renewal.

Our initiative is very action orientated. We want to use migration as an entry point for local urban development. We work in three steps:

- 1) Gaining knowledge through 'City Migration Profiles' about our partner cities
- 2) Encouraging dialogue between stakeholders from different levels. Linking up local players but also cities with one another within our Peer-to-Peer Meetings
- 3) Implementing action through transfer of migration governance and city planning strategies

## INTERNATIONAL CITIES OF REFUGE NETWORK (ICORN)

[www.icorn.org](http://www.icorn.org)

### Members:

65 cities in Europe, the USA and Central America

### Goals:

Advancing freedom of expression, defending human rights and promoting international solidarity

### Activities:

We want cities to be safe havens for writers, human rights activists and artists at risk

To be a city of refuge, a city has to invite, host, protect and promote at least one persecuted writer or artist. This is concrete and symbolic as the city commits itself on the values of human rights, freedom of expressing, solidarity, creativity and hospitality

## MEDITERRANEAN HOPE - FEDERATION OF PROTESTANT CHURCHES IN ITALY

[www.mediterraneanhope.com](http://www.mediterraneanhope.com)

Members: Cities and Municipalities in Italy

### Goals:

Safe migration, prevention of deaths in the Mediterranean Sea

### Activities:

This ecumenical project was born when 300 people died at sea by trying reaching Italy. Besides other activities in Lampedusa, Sicilia and Rome we provide refugees regular flights and humanitarian visas to allow a safe journey to Europe in order to ask for protection once they arrived in Italy.

In Lebanon, Morocco and Ethiopia our staff meets refugees and prepares a list with vulnerable people which the Italian authorities get to check. After that the Italian embassies in these countries issue a VISA that is only valid for Italy.



## THE FUTURE WE SEEK - BUILDING SOCIAL COHESION



### Moderator:

Robert Misik, Journalist, Bord Member of the Bruno Kreisky Forum

### Participants:

Georgi Dragolov, Research Associate, Jacobs University Bremen, Germany

Gilda Johne, Project Manager NachbarINNEN, migrare, Austria

Gianluca Solera, Policy Advisor, COSPE, Italy

Philipp Ther, Researcher, University of Vienna, Austria

**Robert Misik:** On the one hand we have to deal with the entire society and on the other hand we have to care of the people who come to our countries. The question is now how to combine the two? Can we take care of everybody in our societies to improve it as a whole? The problems which are usually seen as problems of migration and reinforce an 'us against them'-mentality actually have their roots in the society as a whole and are problems of the society as a whole.



**Gilda Johne:** The project NachbarINNEN (neighbours) is not about them or us. It is about building bridges between two parts. For me social cohesion means to do something together. It is about building bridges, about working together, cooperating, being there for one another and supporting each other. This is really something that happens on the micro level, in a city quarter, for instance. On the micro level, we suddenly learn that we are not that different. We are all facing the same problems and challenges so there are many, many commonalities.



**Gianluca Solera:** When I think of cohesion, there are three things, three ideas which come to my mind. The first one is sociality – a space where people can enjoy staying together. Therefore, the public space is first of all a space of empathy and also a space of exchange and dialogue – which has a political significance as well. The second one is gratuity. The fact that you do it, not necessarily in order to give it a monetary value – for example think about the concept of hospitality, something absolutely important to the Mediterranean. The third one is diversity. Diversity is the richness of this region of Europe and the Mediterranean. In order to reach cohesion, you need that. In an area where we are faced with many challenges, I think that cities are one of those – maybe the most important – places where you can practice that.



**Georgi Dragolov:** For us social cohesion is the degree of cooperation among people in society, and we could speak of three linkages. First of all, we have the horizontal linkages, do people have social contacts whom they can rely on? Then, do they trust others? The so called generalised interpersonal trust. And then, the acceptance of diversity is important. The other linkage is the vertical one between the individuals and the entity – speaking countries. So, whether people trust the institutions, do they feel a sense of belonging to it, and do they believe that they are treated in a just way by the institutions of this state? The third linkage is – we describe it as a cross cutting one. ...what do people do for the community, in terms of helping weaker others, but also very important respecting the rules of the community of the society? Finally, are they involved in civic life, civic participation?



**Philipp Ther:** Of course, migration always mixes up the society. Obviously, it changes the composition of the society, it adds something new to the society. It is often overlooked that both the society as a whole and the refugees who come are very diverse as there are so many minorities in a minority. Maybe what we need to keep communities together is more social mobility. People can achieve something they want to achieve in their lives, be they refugees or other migrants.



But I also want to ask, why do we actually discuss cohesion now? I think, it is basically a response to the impression that there has been a lot of divergence and differentiation. The societies are kind of growing apart. Otherwise, we wouldn't discuss the cohesion. What is our imagination of a cohesive society? I'm afraid that we're moving back more and more to the old concepts of national societies.

## DAY 2

### MUSIC – A BRIDGE TO SOCIAL COHESION

Since 2015, Marwan Abado organises music workshops for children in Viennese schools and refugee shelters in cooperation with Act.Now. The aim being to introduce the children to both the cultural roots of their country of origin and to Austrian traditions by music.

At this conference, children with diverse backgrounds from two classes from the Oskar Spiel School presented the results of the workshops in a performance including singing, dancing and beatboxing.





## VOICES: CHILD AND YOUTH RIGHTS – A ROADMAP TO IMPLEMENTATION – BARRIERS AND BRIDGES



### Host:

Anna Sporrer, Vice President of the Austrian Supreme Administrative Court, Austria

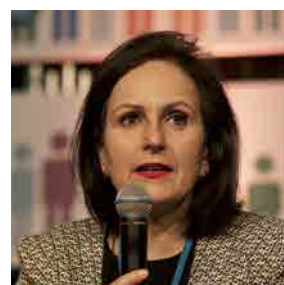
### Participants:

Amer Bani Amer, Head, Al-Hayat Center for Civil Society Development, Jordan

Ronan Mangan, Child Protection Officer, UNHCR Regional Representation for Western Europe

Astrid Winkler, Director, Ecpat, Austria

**Anna Sporrer:** All human rights are children's rights, first of all, and in addition to this, we have – on international level – the Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) which is a universal human rights document. Almost all members states of the United Nations are contractor states of this convention. But there is a German saying, „Having rights, or having rights guaranteed, it's not the same.“ State actors and governments are obliged by themselves to protect the rights of the children. It is necessary that special advocacy for children is built up. For instance, you were talking about these Klagsverband, this is an NGO dedicated to providing for access to justice, access to courts for discriminated people, amongst them children.

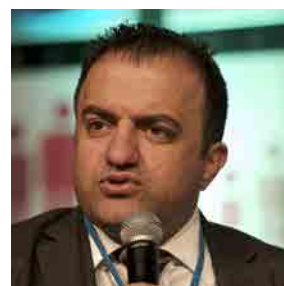


**Astrid Winkler:** Those who suffer the most are the children. I have seen quite a few of these European slums, and it's really heart-breaking. Authorities often simply gave up on them, which practically means they do not care and fulfil their obligations anymore. These children are extremely vulnerable to all sorts of violence, including trafficking and exploitation for the various reasons. Children have the right to be heard and to be involved. For instance, it is necessary to inform unaccompanied minors properly in their language with child-friendly information on their rights on regulations on practices. The problems which children facing, not only the refugee children, the unaccompanied minors, but children, in general, are getting bigger.



**Amer Bani Amer:** Jordan's population from 1948 until now become like five times than the original one. We received a lot of refugees from different countries, and more than 90% of those refugees have full citizenship now, and they have political rights, and they are part of the society, so it can be considered also as a very important model.

The relation between social cohesion, and violent extremism should be discussed. The UN Convention on rights of the child includes economic, social, health and other rights, but we need to add the protection from extremism, especially the recruitment of children. There is a lot of reports talking about thousands of children, they are recruited by extreme groups recently in Middle East and North Africa.



**Ronan Mangan:** We have seen that child protection systems in many Western European countries are not properly equipped to answer the needs of the unaccompanied or separated children coming to Europe, such as best interest considerations, child participation, provision of child-centred services, and quality alternative care arrangements. We found that the gaps are not necessarily linked to the legal status of the child per se, but more to the non-existence, or overburdening of appropriate procedures, and services for unaccompanied and separated children. Specifically, we've noted that the best interest of the child is not being given primary consideration in child protection processes at national level, and that procedural safeguards to ensure best interests are either not implemented, or unfortunately, they're ignored.



## PANEL 2: THE MAGIC WAND TO CHILD PROTECTION – EMPOWERING LOCAL STAKEHOLDERS



### Host:

Helmut Sax, Key Researcher, Ludwig Boltzmann Institute of Human Rights, Austria

### Participants:

Monica Gutierrez, Research Support Officer, Fundamental Rights Agency

Alireza Halimi, Refugee and Student, Afghanistan/Austria

Rüdiger Luchmann, Country Coordinator, UNICEF Austria

Nikolina Milic, Legal Officer, Belgrade Centre for Human Rights, Serbia

Elisabeth Schaffelhofer-Garcia, Coordinator, National Coalition Children's Rights, Austria

Maria Semaan, Child Protection Program Coordinator, KAFA, Lebanon

Margaret Tuite, Commission Coordinator for the rights of the child, European Commission

**Helmut Sax:** From my perspective, there is still a lack of attention being paid to children as a target group in society. Childhood is a unique phase in personal life, with specific needs, challenges but also resources. There's always these discussions about agency and competence of children and the need to actually involve children and receive their feedback in all these services we devise for them. Of course, there's always the role of parents or families to be taken into account. Ultimately, it's a question about the responsibilities to ensure social cohesion, access to justice for children.



**Alireza Halimi:** It's really great that 20 Austrian parents voluntarily helped me and other young refugees. This was a huge degree of sympathy that – it was so nice and so it made me feel so well. For the time being, I get a lot of support and help from my host family, but there's also state and support on the part of Caritas and other organisations. Actually, at the beginning when I arrived, I was supported through the cooperation of different people. I have to say, I was lucky because there were several young people who were not as lucky as me and who were facing lots of difficulties.

But I will have an interview appointment soon and I've been waiting for this for almost 27 months. I have to say that when I wanted to study, I was simply not able to perform better, because I was uncertain about my asylum status, and I didn't know what my future would look like. I never knew whether I will be extradited or deported or not.





**Margaret Tuite:** If we want to make progress, we really need to focus on systems, rather than one by one for each child. For example, for children in migration, when the child protection system isn't involved, when you only have migration authorities. This system is there to protect children from violence. Integrated child protection systems are the way all the different authorities at local, regional, national and European level, or cross-border level, because there are cases that are cross-border. If you think, for example, of the child in migration or children who go missing. They need to work together.



**Maria Semaan:** KAFA is a Lebanese association that was created in 2005 by female activists. Our objective is to fight against violence against children and woman. I wish to concentrate on the creation of special committees, adult committees dedicated to the protection of children, comprised of people who wish to work within their societies on the issue of protection of children. This includes men, women, children, teenagers. We train them on many aspects: peer training, awareness-raising, outreach and how to monitor and intervene in cases of violence and early marriage. When we actually included men in the committees, these men changed their outlook. Other men are learning from these role models.



**Nikolina Milic:** In 2012, we have become implementing partner of the UNHCR in Serbia for providing free legal assistance, and the representations to asylum seekers and refugees. Serbia is perhaps the only country in Europe that still hasn't got the law on free legal aid, which means that all refugees and asylum seekers are not entitled to a free lawyer by the law from the states. The only ones who can represent them in asylum procedures, not just adults, but children as well, are the lawyers financed by NGOs. Unaccompanied children are in particularly difficult situation. There are not enough guardians. The minimal standards say that's not more than 25 children should be under the guardianship of one guardian. In Serbia, it often happens that it's, 60 or even more children.



**Rüdiger Luchmann:** Now, the challenge that we've been facing in Austria with the situation here is that we had a huge influx of refugees and asylum seekers. 35% of them were unaccompanied children. It's safe to say they have been very well looked after when it comes to accommodation and catering basic provisions. It is also true that there are certain gaps in the provisions of social protection, of child protection systems and services. Traditionally child protection is seen as a domain of the Ministry for Social Welfare. Here, in Austria, the Ministry for Family and Youth. Yet at the same time, it is the Ministry of Interior that is responsible for anything that has to do with refugee reception and accommodation. In order to make things just a little bit more complicated, in a federal system that accountability is then pushed down into nine federal states that in themselves have got a great degree of autonomy on how to function in this.



**Elisabeth Schaffelhofer-Garcia:** The National Coalition for the Implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child was established 20 years ago to be in this process of examining states, how they implement children rights. Nowadays, 20 years later, we are 44 member organisations, and they come from all fields of children rights, so it really broad variety of topics. For example, we organised the press conference at the International Day of Children Rights, 20th of November, two years ago. The panel was just asylum seekers, young ones, some just three months in Austria others 20 years who came with their families, and the audience or the journalists were school classes. It was just young people talking and the media listening, and it was really impressive how they handled everything.



**Monica Gutierrez:** Coordination, that's for me the key element, that's the key element in the field of general migration. We are doing a round of trainings and there we are putting together the new child protection staff, national staff with some of the child protection actors that work in the hotspot itself. Still, it's very, very surprising to see the lack of information, the lack of tools there is in between them to basically understand who is doing what, who is responsible for what. Another key element is the location of reception centres to promote interactions with the local community. We see that in many municipalities, they are somewhere in the periphery of the city. This really does not facilitate interaction. The second point is education, children in the hotspots don't even access compulsory education under the age of 16.



# BREAK OUT SESSIONS

## EDUCATION & DIVERSITY

### Hosts:

Maurice Crul, Professor of Sociology, Chair: Diversity and Education, University of Amsterdam, Netherlands

Heidi Schrodtr, Chair, Education Initiative „BildungGrenzenlos“, Austria

### Recommendations & Key Findings:

- Holistic approaches of alternative education systems should be included in regular schooling.
- Engagement of a wider circle of people in education, such as the family, social workers and therapists is important
- Teacher trainings and support need to be improved.
- Children should be supported according to their needs in diverse classrooms to ensure inclusive education.
- All forms of discrimination in schools have to be tackled and prevented

## GENDER EQUALITY

### Hosts:

Besnik Leka, Young Men Initiative, Kosovo

Katharina Payk, Executive Editor, an.schläge - Feminist Magazine, Austria

### Recommendations & Key Findings:

- Gender equality is essential for social cohesion in multiple dimensions.
- Gender roles and their effects, such as gender-based violence should be addressed on a local level (e.g. with emancipatory workshops in schools).
- Structural inequalities have to be addressed on a national level, such as through legislation.
- Economic empowerment of women and deprived men (e.g. through provision of child care) is essential.

## VULNERABILITY IN THE CONTEXT OF EXPLOITATION AND HUMAN TRAFFICKING

### Hosts:

Irina Todorova, Senior Specialist on Assistance to Vulnerable Migrants, IOM

Jihane Essaid, Program Manager Emergency Safe Housing, ABAAD, Lebanon

### Recommendations & Key Findings:

- Protection of children and their families has to be guaranteed on the move and in reception countries.
- A secure future is essential to give people a perspective and fight vulnerability.
- Preventive structures on a local level need to be strengthened.

## FOSTERING RESILIENCE IN CHILDREN IN DIFFICULT TIMES

### Hosts:

Katharina Glawischnig, Expert for Unaccompanied Minor Asylum Seekers, Asylkoordination, Austria

Elisabeth Brainin, Psychoanalyst and Psychiatrist, Austria

### Recommendations & Key Findings:

- The support of young people needs to continue after the 18th birthday.
- The prospect of deportation causes stress and uncertainty.
- CAMHS (Child Adolescent Mental Health Services) should be strengthened.
- Support groups for foster families and guardianships are needed.

## PROTECTING CHILDREN AND YOUTH

### Hosts:

Geneviève Colas, Trafficking in human beings, Unaccompanied minors, Juvenile Justice, Secours Catholique-Caritas, France

Daniela Gruber-Pruner, Leader of Education, Kinderfreunde, Austria

### Recommendations & Key Findings:

- A peer-to-peer approach (e.g. youth councils) should be used as a means distribute information about children's rights in a child-friendly manner.
- Legal assistance to children, especially unaccompanied minors, needs to be guaranteed.
- Decisive measures have to be taken to protect children and youth from extremism.

## MAYORS

### Hosts:

George Antoun, Country Director, Mercy Corps, Lebanon

Uta Zeuge-Buberl, Project Manager, Act.Now, Austria

- 15 Mayors and 9 experts from the respective municipalities discussed major challenges in their municipalities and presented good practice examples for reducing unemployment among young people, improving synergies between local authorities and NGOs as well as facing prejudices and discontent among the local population towards refugees etc.
- Even though the municipalities' challenges vary due to different political and socio-economical pre-conditions, the Mayors' inputs underlined that they have implemented various measures addressing both refugees and local population.
- The group agreed to strengthen their cooperation with Act.Now and its NOW Working Groups in order to exchange knowledge and expertise and establish joint projects.



# FINAL DECLARATION OF THE 5TH NOW CONFERENCE



## SHAPING THE FUTURE - SOCIAL COHESION IN OUR CITIES 29 – 30 JANUARY 2018

In times of increasing polarisation sensitivity, empathy, and a sense of responsibility are more important than ever. We need to guarantee that human rights and the rights of children, in particular, are respected and implemented without exception. In doing so we need to strengthen those who are disadvantaged, excluded, or prosecuted.

Refugees are neither the cause nor the trigger of the crisis in our democratic societies. Poor education and youth unemployment for instance, have been issues long before people from Syria or Afghanistan had to flee to Europe. It is hence all the more important today to step up our awareness for social and economic inequalities of all kinds.

In order to make sure that children and adolescents can live their lives in safety, dignity, and prosperity we must focus both our thinking and actions on propagating and strengthening social cohesion in our immediate vicinity, in our communities, in our municipalities, and in our cities and countries.

Women, children, and adolescents are prone to be the first victims of social discrimination. Whenever declining living standards, unequal educational opportunities, and cracks in the welfare networks are wreaking havoc in our societies, it is especially the youngest and the weakest who suffer most. Therefore it is absolutely necessary to break up the old destructive discourse patterns of THEM-against-US and instead settle on an approach of solidarity, focusing on what unites us as human beings, on what we share – now, in our joint presence, with a view to our common future.

Mobility and migration have always been part of life in our cities. What is important is not where the people present in our city, in any specific city, at any given time came from originally. If the focus is on the future we agree with sociologist Mark Terkessidis: the only thing that truly counts, is that these people are here now and are part of our common future.

An international network of humanity and attentiveness, information and assistance has been created over these past two years and in the course of the first four NOW Conferences. This network has already proved itself strong and useful on many occasions and in different contexts and will further contribute to develop a solid basis for the future commitment of individuals and groups, of institutions and communities.

At the end of January 2018 the 5th International Mayors' Conference NOW has therefore focused on how to boost the strengths of social cohesion in our municipalities, thereby allowing children and adolescents to live blessed, fulfilled lives. Here is a short extract from contributions to the debate:

*„Our goal must be a society in which each of us must find a place to live, where everyone living in Vienna is Viennese. This is what we must advocate.“ (Jürgen Czernohorszky)*

*„We must discard all those impediments that keep people from participating in society.“  
(Nicholas You)*

*„We have an obligation to safeguard human rights, promote social cohesion, and support people in developing trust and a feeling of belonging.“ (Viola Raheb)*

*„It is indispensable to do justice to the autonomous contribution of children and adolescents to social cohesion, take their expectations seriously, and make sure that they are not denied human rights.“ (Helmut Sax)*

*„We must create possibilities for people to legally come to Europe on humanitarian corridors.“  
(Federica Brizi)*

*„We need trust, we need courage, we need resources – this will create many possibilities.“(Helge Lunde)*

*„We can't get by without networks. If we act alone, we stay alone.“ (Benedetto Zacchirolli)*

*„Within two years we have grown into a community, attuned to each other, and determined to come up with joint answers to the challenges of our times – answers which we make available to all stakeholders.“ (André Heller, Patricia Kahane, Elke Zuckermann)*

Several communal networks represented at the 5th International Mayors' Conference NOW – European Cities Against Racism, Mediterranean Hope, Child Friendly Cities Initiative, ICORN and others – have agreed to start a cooperation in order to put out there their expertise and ideas for sharing, replicating, scaling and adapting in other communities' contexts. A first networking workshop has been agreed upon in a joint letter of intent.

**IT IS TIME TO ACT. LET'S ACT NOW - TOGETHER!**

Vienna, January 2018

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## INTERNATIONAL MAYORS' CONFERENCE NOW VIENNA 2018

INITIATED BY ACT.NOW  
ANDRÉ HELLER, PATRICIA KAHANE AND ELKE ZUCKERMANN

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# ABOUT ACT.NOW

Promoting collaboration, thinking across international borders, developing solutions and working with the utmost commitment – in order to safeguard social cohesion.

We help to build national and international networks for new civil-society initiatives, NGOs, institutions, public organisations and experts. The first International Mayors' Conference NOW on refugee and migration policy took place in Vienna in 2016. Four further conferences have been held since then, in Athens, Vienna and Kampala.



## WHO WE ARE

Act.Now is an enterprise based on a private initiative and that acts nonpartisan and internationally, based in Vienna.

## WHAT WE WANT

We experience profound changes in society. Act.Now aspires to a respectful and appreciative social coexistence to be possible in the near and distant future.

## WHAT WE DO

Act.Now encourages people to take on more responsibility in their respective social environment.

Act.Now connects active individuals and initiatives in order to be more effective together.

Act.Now provides information about social changes and their impact, to promote the discussion of new solutions.

Act.Now therefore uses formats that are both cognitively and emotionally effective.

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The background of the entire page is a dense, repeating pattern of small, stylized human silhouettes in various colors (blue, green, yellow, orange, red, purple) against a light blue background. The silhouettes are arranged in a way that creates a sense of a large crowd or community.

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