



Visegrad  
Group's  
Ombudsmen  
30 Sept – 2 Oct  
2015  
Hungary

## „People first”

We, the signatories to this Joint Statement, acting within our statutory competence, strive to ensure that state authorities in our countries treated all migrants and refugees in a humane and non-degrading manner, based on laws, EU directives and commitments following from international and European treaties. In cases where we believe such treatment is not guaranteed, we do not hesitate to raise our voice publicly. We also support those groups of civil society that provide help to migrants in all four of our countries.

Traditionally, protecting the members of the most vulnerable groups is in the core of ombudsmen's mandates all over Europe. People who are forced to leave their country belong, regardless of their legal status, to a group which deserves to be protected. It cannot be ignored that there are around 60 million forcibly displaced persons worldwide, among them numerous children fleeing together with or separated from their families and elderly people who were forced to leave their homes because of their religious, racial or ethnic background – all of them requiring special protection. At the same time, we would like to emphasize that, because of the diversity and complexity of their individual lives, refugees may not be considered and treated as a homogeneous group. Guaranteeing their fundamental rights has to be the task and responsibility of the international community, i.e., of the recipient countries and societies. Recipient countries should decide on granting international protection on the basis of personalized, individualized and thorough examinations.

Acknowledging the importance and legitimacy of discussions on the medium and long-term treatment of refugee situation, we have to point out that in each and every refugee we have to see the human being inherently entitled to human dignity. This unprecedentedly grave situation that has risen as a result of mass migration, requires cooperation by all states including the countries of the Visegrád Four, and solutions meeting human rights standards.

We firmly believe that assuming responsibility for the refugees is a moral and legal obligation of the states of Europe. Receiving, based on humanitarian considerations, foreigners fleeing from persecution, war or armed conflicts has been a time-honored practice of civilized societies since early times. In response to the trauma caused by the 2<sup>nd</sup> World War, the 1951 Geneva Refugee Convention formulated the international legal standards of protecting refugees. Asylum is not a privilege or a gift, but a human right.

Done in Visegrád, Hungary, on this 2<sup>nd</sup> day of October of the year 2015

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