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OPEN SESSION – REPORTING BACK

TITLE	CITIES OF REFUGE: RECOGNISING THE ROLE OF LOCAL AUTHORITIES IN REALISING THE HUMAN RIGHTS OF MIGRANTS
HOST AND CO-HOST ORGANISER(S)	CITIES OF REFUGE PROJECT (UTRECHT UNIVERSITY – UNIVERSITY COLLEGE ROOSEVELT) / FRA
DATE AND TIME	26.09.2018 14.00-15.15

WHAT WERE THE 3 KEY MESSAGES OF YOUR OPEN SESSION? WHICH CONCLUSIONS WERE DRAWN?

1. There are very important and multifaceted roles for local authorities to play in the realization of the rights of migrants and refugees. The importance of local authorities needs to be recognized.
 2. Policies concerning migrants and refugees need to be created in a participatory and inclusive way, integrating the voice of the people who these policies concern into their creation and negotiation.
 3. Local authorities and the city networks that they build, should aim to facilitate an extensive cooperation between ALL relevant actors both within the city at the local level and also in the national, regional, and international levels. The best results will be reached through extensive cooperation of all actors, such as local authorities, businesses, civil society, EU, citizens, migrants, international organisations, national governments, and more.
- Different discourses, such as refugees being a burden, a benefit, a duty, and their presence being a gift from the host community to refugees, are recognizable for participants of the session from their work and personal positions. However, the importance of the human rights language should not be dismissed and the rights language should be translated to the local level, in a way that is easily understandable for all.
 - Policies and services for refugee reception and integration should be part of a human rights mainstreaming policy framework, and should not be framed as being only for the “others”. In order to facilitate cohesion and avoid resentment within local communities, inclusive policies (especially on housing) should be put into place in a way that locals can also benefit from them.
 - City networks can be very beneficial for international lobbying efforts of local authorities, as well as for information sharing, to serve as an informal peer review mechanism, and to bring in the expertise of local governments to regional and international governance levels. However, their ubiquity can cause confusion for many local authorities, and especially smaller local governments with less resources may find it hard to have information and guidance with regard to city networks. Although the networks have different functions and objectives, a coordination and overview mechanism among them is necessary.

WHAT ARE THE 3 KEY RECOMMENDATIONS AND WHICH NEXT STEPS ARE PROPOSED? (PLEASE INDICATE WHO EACH RECOMMENDATION IS TARGETED AT – EG: THE EU SHOULD...)

1. Local authorities should work together with refugees, citizens, civil society, businesses, NGOs and any other actor available for cooperation, for the realization of the rights of migrants and refugees.
2. The EU should recognize the relevance of local authorities in the protection of rights, coordinate with them when determining asylum policies, and support them both financially and with knowledge dissemination and cooperation.
3. Local authorities as well as other relevant actors should create policies that underline the indispensable necessity of human rights for EVERY human being, mainstream policies for social cohesion to benefiting the whole of society, and not perpetuate the difference between the locals and the "others".

As part of the follow up/next steps after my session, my organization will incorporate the feedback received from the participants of the session to our Cities of Refuge project, continue active engagement with stakeholders throughout research, and disseminate research output as effectively as possible to actors on the ground in need of more information. We will, for instance, put up the flyers shared on www.citiesofrefuge.eu.

We will focus specifically on the standard-setting function of transnational city networks, and on the way in which different constitutions allow local authorities to play a role in international (human rights) law.

As part of the follow up/next steps after my session, I believe, FRA could/should continue raising awareness on the important role of local authorities in the realization of rights (of migrants) and support these authorities with knowledge, training, cooperation, and financial opportunities, as much as possible.

WHICH GOOD PRACTICES OR NEW INSIGHTS WERE GIVEN? DID YOU DISCOVER ANY NEW POTENTIAL PARTNERS TO WORK WITH FOR YOUR ISSUE?

We have collected numerous insights and feedback from our Stakeholder Board and open session participants on three issues: opportunity structures at the local level for the better realization of migrants' rights, the relevance of city networks, and the different discourses used by local governments and other actors with regards to refugee reception and integration. 5 personal or professional stories about discourse were shared by our five groups, as well as many recommendations from all participants. We will be in touch with most of our participants, as we have common ground on the field and in research with many of them.