

# ECRE MANIFESTO

## European Elections 2009: Time for a welcoming Europe

The European Parliament will have a bigger say in European Asylum laws and policies and will get to decide on the future of the European asylum policy on equal footing with European governments. ECRE urges citizens of the European Union to vote for candidates who will raise their voice to make Europe a safe and welcoming place for people who have fled war and persecution, torture and other forms of violence. Let's make sure that our representatives live up to the challenge and guarantee that states' interests are properly balanced with individual fundamental rights.

- 1- While the EU's borders are becoming increasingly tight, refugees around the world are finding it ever harder to reach a safe haven. The European Parliament needs to ensure that European borders will still have doors through which refugees can safely enter to obtain protection.
- 2- Those who manage to reach Europe's territory face widely divergent asylum systems and standards. The European Parliament should put an end to this dangerous asylum lottery and achieve a truly common European asylum system where all persons seeking protection will be treated according to the same high standards, in every Member State.
- 3- Any refugee seeking protection is in a vulnerable position. Some of them, such as children separated from their parents, disabled people, elderly people or seriously ill and victims of torture have special needs that should be taken into account by the Member State where they ask for asylum. The European Parliament should ensure that those people are indeed identified as people with special needs so that they can benefit from special care.
- 4- By restricting refugees' access to employment, communities not only deprive themselves of motivated workers but also make the integration process more difficult. The European Parliament should ensure that persons seeking protection are given a chance to make their contribution to society by allowing them to work as soon as possible after their arrival.
- 5- Detention of people who have committed no crime is a widespread practice in Europe. On the basis of the recently adopted "Returns Directive", migrants can even be detained for up to 18 months. A new European Parliament should ensure that detention of asylum

seekers and refugees is used only as a last resort and only if other alternative measures have proven not to work in an individual case.

- 6- The EU is pursuing Readmission Agreements with several third countries as a way to facilitate the return of people who are irregularly present in Member States' territories. These agreements enable Member States to return people to their country of origin or a country through which they have traveled to Europe. MEPs should use their power to ensure that these agreements include human rights safeguards and guarantee that under no circumstance people are sent back to a country where they may face persecution.
- 7- In the next few years there will be a greater emphasis on practical cooperation between Member States in the field of asylum, for instance regarding information about countries of origin. The European Parliament should closely scrutinize the cooperation between Member States to ensure that this remains transparent and accountable.
- 8- The majority of the world's refugees flee to neighboring countries. Many of them end up in developing countries, which struggle to cope with the large number of refugees they host. The EP should ensure that Europe does as much as possible to ensure a safe and dignified life to refugees who are living in countries of origin and countries of transit.
- 9- Resettlement is a very important refugee protection tool and a durable solution to the situation of refugees who cannot return or locally integrate. A new European Parliament should promote an increase in the number of resettlement places in the EU to allow more refugees rebuild their lives in European states, in safety and with dignity.
- 10- The Member States, which are on the borders of Europe naturally receive more asylum seekers. The European Parliament should ensure that responsibilities are shared more fairly throughout the EU, whilst reaffirming that all Member States should fully respect their obligations under international and EU law.