



Austria: Arbeiter-Samariter-Bund Österreichs
Bosnia and Herzegovina: Žene sa Une
Czech Republic: Asociace Samaritánů České Republiky
Denmark: Dansk Folkehjælp
France: Fédération des Secouristes Français – Croix Blanche
Georgia: Sakartvelos Samariteta Kavshiri
Germany: Arbeiter-Samariter-Bund Deutschland
Hungary: Országos Szamaritánus Társaság Szövetsége
Italy: Associazione Nazionale Pubbliche Assistenze; Landesrettungsverein Weißes Kreuz
Latvia: Latvijas Samariesu apvienība
Lithuania: Lietuvos Samariecių Bendrija
Poland: Samarytańska Federacja Organizacji Pozarządowych
Romania: Federatia Samaritenilor Romani
Serbia: Initiative for Development and Cooperation
Slovakia: Asociácia Samaritánov Slovenskej Republiky
Ukraine: Spilka Samaritian Ukraini

17 members of SAMARITAN INTERNATIONAL call for more solidarity

SAMARITAN INTERNATIONAL (SAM.I.) is a network of **17 European Samaritan organisations in 16 countries.**

Together with their **3 million members, 45,000 full-time staff** and **140,000 volunteers** they **deplore the worsening European refugee crisis.**

2,7 Mio Syrians found refuge from the civil war in neighbouring countries.

According to EU Commission estimates, in Libya alone 600,000 to up to one million people are waiting for passage across the sea to Italy or Malta. Last year, 170,000 migrants entered the EU via the central Mediterranean route.¹

In 2014 and 2015 alone, over 5,000² refugees are feared dead in the Mediterranean. Thousands more suffer intolerable circumstances after entering the EU.

Volunteers all over Europe give crucial support to refugees but are reaching their limits and need stronger support by the EU and its member states!

¹ Frontex

² 3,500 in 2014 (Frontex) and 1,600 in 2015 (Italian Ministry of the Interior)



Seven calls for change to alleviate the European refugee crisis
Statement of SAMARITAN INTERNATIONAL (SAM.I.)

Samaritan organisations consider refugees who have been displaced from their homes due to war, distress, poverty, persecution, forced labour or famine to have a non-restricted entitlement to aid and support. Developed economies such as the EU bear a special responsibility to render this support, particularly due to policies which had negative effects on the local economies in many emerging countries. Earlier streams of refugees have proven that the EU has the capacity to help, without any of the adverse effects that the proponents of a “Fortress Europe” would have us believe.

Against this background, Samaritan employees, together with thousands of volunteers, organize hands-on help for refugees as well as for internally displaced persons and minorities from, inter alia, **Syria, Iraq, Iran, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Egypt, Ethiopia, Ukraine, Kosovo, Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Georgia.**

Hundreds of volunteers from Italian SAM.I. member ANPAS are confronted with up to **2,000 refugees arriving at Italy’s coast every day.** They work around the clock to provide medical and logistic support in the regions of **Sicily, Puglia, and Sardinia.** Rapid response teams from **Austria, Germany, and Slovakia,** involved in European and national structures, are ready to deploy for humanitarian relief all over the world. **SAM.I. members in several European countries** take over responsibility for refugee facilities and social services and organise neighbourly support for migrants.³

SAM.I. calls upon the EU and its member states to recognise the highly needed contribution of volunteers to keeping up and appropriately expanding crucial aid measures for refugees. Volunteer associations are reaching their limits: State aid has to be expanded and aid organisations need timely support by their communities.

Experience has shown that, while there are many success stories, the resources of voluntary helpers are often hampered by regulations.

Neither can volunteers be released from obligations to their employer nor do the volunteer associations receive adequate resources necessary for helping in the refugee crisis. Such support is possible for other emergency situations in many European countries.

- I. It is necessary to create a European solidarity fund to support the volunteer associations in giving assistance to refugees and asylum seekers.**
- II. The responsible authorities on the local and national level will have to support employers to make sure that volunteering employees get temporary leave from their work.**

³ See Annex *Best practices of four SAM.I. members*



SAM.I. calls upon the EU and its member states to improve emergency shelters and to provide age appropriate emergency aid and care.

Our experience has shown that thousands of refugees are living under intolerable conditions in emergency shelters or refugee facilities. In particular, there is a lack of care facilities for the needs of unaccompanied minors.

- III. The refugees need decent accommodation and psychosocial care after the hardships of their journeys. Particular aid measures are needed for unaccompanied minors.**

SAM.I. calls upon the EU to jointly work out long-term sustainable concepts with a stronger focus on integration and an immigrant friendly culture.

Despite the fact that there is no end in sight for the crises plaguing the refugees' regions of origin, most current approaches focus on keeping them in emergency shelters and refugee facilities until they can be sent back instead of sustainably integrating them. At the same time, sentiments toward immigrants grow increasingly hostile in European countries, even though history has shown them to have more than sufficient capacities for granting asylum⁴.

There is a lot of potential in the strong and courageous people who have managed to cope with the hardships they have experienced. Only people who feel welcome and experience good neighbourhood are inclined to contribute themselves, their skills and their energy, to their new community.

- IV. To allow children and their parents to “arrive” and to make them feel safe, they urgently need an appropriate place to live. Integration can only be successful if a home of their own enables regular family life.**
- V. Good neighbourhood and immigrant-friendly culture have to be encouraged! Community based sponsorships should be organised to accompany refugees and asylum seekers in administrative and daily matters.**
- VI. Asylum seekers should have access to educational opportunities, language learning, and to the labour market as soon as possible, to enable them to build a life for themselves.**

⁴ During the Kosovo War 98-99 over 1 million people were fleeing the war, many of which sought refuge in the EU.



The European Samaritans call upon the EU and its member states to foster meaningful change of living conditions in the refugees' countries and to ensure safe passage for those on their way to the EU. The member states have to live up to their shared humanitarian responsibility.

SAM.I., as an associated member of SOLIDAR, strongly supports their letter to the European Council⁵. European development funds for an early approach of European and member states' support measures for the affected regions of the world are hardly more than lip service and have to be stepped up significantly to effect real change.

We deplore the lack of humanitarian corridors guaranteeing international protection. Even with the resumption of previous rescue operations in the Mediterranean Sea, their scope regarding covered area and financial resources is not reflecting the actual need for aid.

Furthermore there are no fair admission, distribution or sufficiently quick asylum procedures regarding permissions of stay and residence.

VII. It is crucial to define a distribution basis and to conduct fair as well as speedier processing in asylum applications. In particular, this requires a revision of the Dublin III regulation.

With the support of European and national decision-makers the European Samaritan organisations can deepen their important aid for refugees and asylum seekers.

Our employees, together with thousands of Samaritan volunteers, are working to support refugees and asylum seekers in and from more than 15 countries. Their expertise is reaching from immediate relief over running refugee facilities to long term (re-)integration.

SAM.I. members conduct technical and medical emergency aid, sheltering and relief material distribution. They take responsibility for refugee facilities and long term projects leading to gainful employment.

Samaritan Organisations take care of unaccompanied minors seeking asylum, support refugee families and elderly people in daily matters and bureaucratic procedures, and provide legal advice. Helpers organise neighbourly support encouraging an immigrant friendly culture. They provide new perspectives for building a life in the countries of origin or in the receiving countries.

SAM.I. is willing to extend and to deepen these activities in cooperation with European and national decision-makers. We strongly encourage policy changes that would make use of the great potential that lies in strengthening, improving and deepening the highly needed commitment of volunteer associations.

⁵ <http://solidar.org/Press-Release-SOLIDAR-addresses.html>