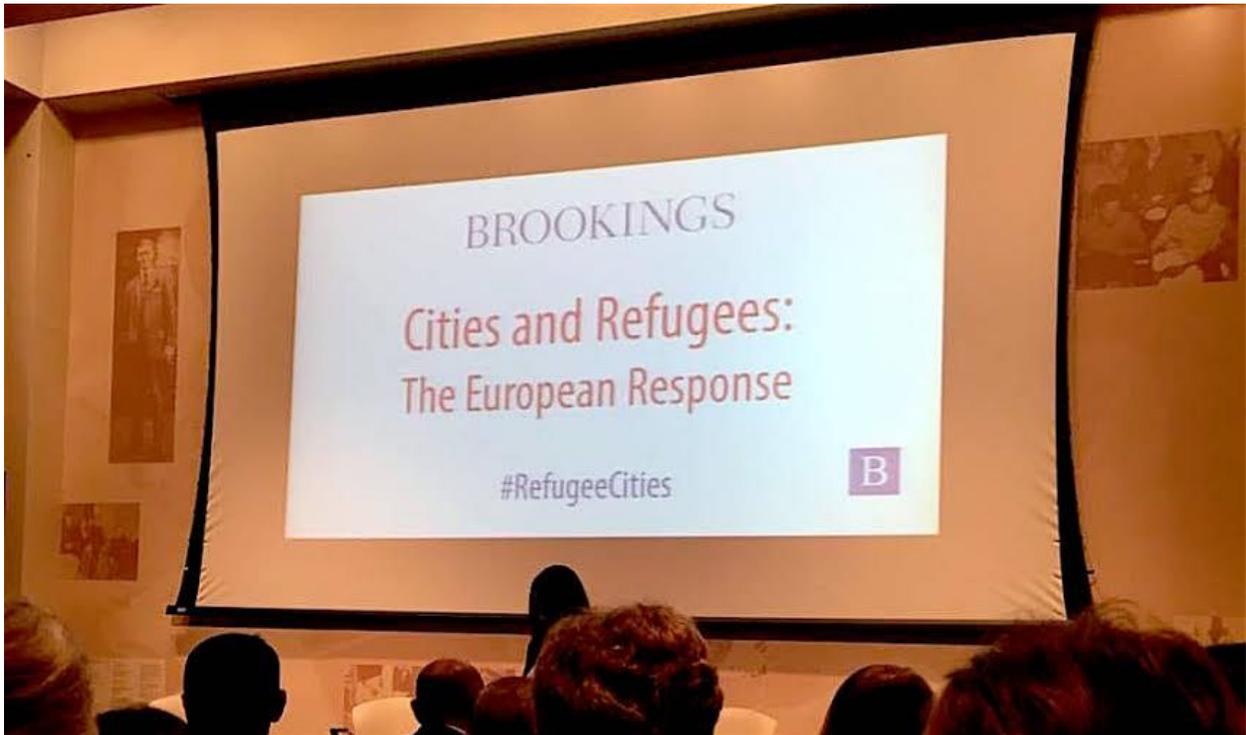


Cities and Refugees: The European Response



(Photo Credit: Brandon Jackson)

EVENT SUMMARY AND GENERAL INFORMATION

- [Thursday, September 22th, 2016, 8:30:AM - 12:00PM]
- The Roosevelt House Public Policy Institute at Hunter College

ORGANIZED BY

- Brookings Institution

PANELISTS/PARTICIPANTS

- Welcome by Jennifer Raab (President, Hunter College)
- Introductions and Remarks by Bruce Katz (Centennial Scholar, Brookings Institution)
- Remarks by Antony Blinken (Deputy Secretary of State, U.S. State Department)
- Remarks by David Miliband (President, International Rescue Committee)

Panel One: Moderator Roger Cohen, (New York Times)

- Honorable Annise Parker, (Former Mayor of Houston & Neighborhood Centers Inc.)
- Philipp Appel, (Save the Children, Germany Qutaiba Idlbi, People Demand Change)
- Arnd Boekhoff, (Hanseatic Help)

Panel Two: Strategies for Integration

- Moderator Lara Setrakian, (News Deeply)

- Volker Türk, (Assistant High Commissioner for Protection, UNHCR)
- Mazen Darwish, (Syrian Center for Media and Freedom of Expression Honorable)
- Georgios Kaminis, (Mayor of Athens, Greece)
- Michael Berkowitz, (100 Resilient Cities)
- Closing Remarks by Bruce Katz (Brookings Centennial Scholar)
- Antonio Guterrez (former United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees)

EVENT DESCRIPTION

- The event was organised into two panels. The first panel: The Emergency and Short Term Response: Providing Safety and Sanctuary focussed the strategies implemented by local actors, including civil society organisations in accommodating newly arrived refugees, especially in housing, medical and psychological needs and food and shelter. The first panel also discussed lessons learned from these actors and what could be taken on board when addressing this issue in the future.
- Keynote speaker Antony Blinken (Deputy Secretary of State, U.S. State Department), highlighted the new commitments undertaken by the United States including increasing the number of refugees resettled in the coming fiscal year to 110 000- a 60% increase.
- Panelists in the first panel further highlighted the difficulties faced when a city was ill prepared to provide an immediate response to the crisis, and stressed the need for cooperation between city, government and social organisations.
- Speakers further discussed the need for political will and action and leadership needed in order to advocate for refugees.
- The second panel: Strategies for Integration, addressed workforce participations including skills training, housing solutions and education of refugees living in urban cities and the different approaches implemented to benefit both the host cities and communities and the refugees themselves.
- Panelists discussed the difficulties cities face when addressing the issues including interaction of various agencies, organisations and stakeholders, highlighting that the silos that exist within city governments further exacerbated the difficulties faced.
- Furthermore, panelists discussed the benefit of investing in refugees and noted that locals could also benefit from facilities that are put into place for refugees, and stressed the importance of education and providing tools for refugees to integrate and rebuild their lives, and thus by extension, benefit the community.

QUOTES

Antonio Guterrez (former United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees)

“Resettlement is a fundamental tool of refugee protection..we need a quantum leap”

Honorable Annise Parker, (Former Mayor of Houston & Neighborhood Centers Inc.)

“At the national level it’s a matter of politics, at the local level it’s a matter of people”

Antony Blinken (Deputy Secretary of State, U.S. State Department)

"countries pledging to take in more refugees, enroll more children in schools, pledging more aid to refugees"

Antony Blinken (Deputy Secretary of State, U.S. State Department)

"If we turn our backs on refugees & immigrants, we wall off one of single most productive pools of talent we have"

GENERAL NOTES / REMARKS

- The event touched on the role of civil society in supporting on the ground action to aid the arrival of new refugees. Arnd Boekhoff, (Hanseatic Help) used a particular example from Hamburg which experienced the arrival of 12 000 refugees a day and caused a strain on the cities resources. His organisation worked at a local grassroots level to support the refugees in addressing their immediate needs of food, shelter and and basic supplies.
- No reference was made to women, gender or women's specific needs in the crisis. Panelists did not take a gender perspective, rather focussing on the issue as a whole and most emphasis was placed on the response at a local and state level, identifying lessons learned and difficulties and needs to be addressed going forward.