

European Council on Refugees and Exiles

Annual General Conference 2019

And UNHCR Europe NGO Consultation

Organised by ECRE and UNHCR

Brussels, 23 and 24 October 2019

Venue: Renaissance Brussels Hotel, Rue du Parnasse 19, 1050 Brussels, Belgium
Copenhagen/Essen/Warsaw Room

WORKSHOP: CHANGING THE NARRATIVE – BUILDING A WELCOMING EUROPE

Title	Changing the narrative – Building a welcoming Europe Led by JRS Europe
Objectives	The workshop will look for answers to the: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• How can civil society and UNHCR contribute to reverse the far-right, anti-migration discourse that has been on the rise in the past years throughout Europe?• What are the role and responsibilities of EU institutions in shaping and changing such a discourse?• How can civil society effectively combine advocacy and communication work to raise awareness among public opinion and to force a change of narrative?
Speakers	Maeve Patterson – Communications and Advocacy Officer, UNHCR Eef Heylighen – Head of Communications, Flemish Refugee Action Laura Corrado – Head of Unit Legal Migration and Integration, DG Home European Commission Anila Noor and Shaza Alrihawi – Global Refugee-led Network

Description and structure

In recent years, the discourse around migration in Europe has been increasingly dominated by racist and xenophobic rhetoric. Several political forces have systematically linked migration to security issues, presenting people with migration backgrounds as a threat to European welfare and identity.

The experience on the ground shows that, contrary to the visible anti-migration discourse, there is widespread support across Europe for the inclusion of refugees in our societies. These voices, however, do not seem to manage to become loud enough to impose a narrative change.

During the workshop we will discuss about the role of civil society in promoting a different, positive, narrative. We will look into the role and responsibility of EU institutions in shaping the discourse and we will discuss about how we can combine advocacy work and communications work to achieve this.

The workshop will start with a round of reflections on these questions:

- Maeve Patterson from UNHCR will present on UNHCR's work to reverse the far-right, anti-migration discourse that has been on the rise in the past years throughout Europe?
- Eef Heylighen will explain how the Flemish Refugee Action tries to counter the rising far-right discourse in Flanders through public campaigns
- Laura Corrado will give her views about the role of the European Commission in shaping/changing the narrative and tell us what her DG is concretely doing about it
- Anila Noor and Shaza Alrihawi will tell us how refugee-led organisation work to change the current narrative and give their views on the role of the EU.

After these interventions the floor will be opened for discussion with the audience.