

Regional Update on Europe
NGO Collective Statement – Oral Statement

Dear Chair, Distinguished Delegates,

This statement was drafted in consultation with a wide range of NGOs.

Since our statement to the Standing Committee meeting one year ago, the European Parliament has approved the European Pact on Asylum and Migration. The EU Pact has been presented as a historic agreement. Now is the time for Member States to make history.

The EU Pact provides a framework for national governments to develop tailored action plans which are deliberately inclusive of those with specific needs including persons with disabilities. National strategies must address accessibility, provide specialized services, and ensure meaningful participation of persons with disabilities in decision-making processes. These steps align with the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) and the Global Compact on Refugees, both of which underscore the importance of inclusive policies.

- NGOs call on EU Member States to ensure that national action plans are in line with agreed protection commitments and are designed in consultation with affected populations, applying an age, gender, and diversity lens that includes those with disabilities.

Statelessness is often overlooked in asylum and migration debates. It is a hidden but very real issue affecting thousands in Europe. While European countries are increasingly encountering stateless people in their asylum systems, their legal frameworks, policy and capacity to identify, record and determine statelessness are lacking. The new EU Pact introduces for the first time a legal requirement in EU law to identify and record indications of statelessness, pending a determination. This constitutes important progress towards improved identification and protection of stateless applicants and beneficiaries of international protection in Europe.

- NGOs urge that the full and robust implementation of this legal requirement under the EU Pact be a priority.

The EU Pact introduces measures that could see thousands of people – including children – being held in de facto detention at the EU's external borders. This approach not only raises serious concerns about fundamental rights but also creates additional barriers for those seeking safety.

- NGOs ask European states to tailor action plans which strive for humane and less coercive alternatives to detention.

NGOs note with concern the reducing funding and rising anti-refugee narratives across Europe. , These are compounding the sustainability of humanitarian programmes to meet the needs of displaced populations close to their homes, while closing down safe and legal pathways for refugees to access international protection and solutions.

- NGOs urge European governments to increase their humanitarian assistance and champion responses towards gender equality, reproductive health, inclusion of marginalized groups, and climate action. Let us not lose sight of our collective commitment to global responsibility sharing and humanitarian principles.

With finite resources, shifting power and resources to local organisations in all their diversity – be they stateless-, refugee-, women-, or LGBTIQ+- led – will be critical for immediate and lasting efficiencies. To promote locally led action, Member States, UNHCR and NGOs must support sustainable and equitable partnerships.

- Hence, we recommend elevating the expertise and leadership of these organizations. To achieve this, donors must scale up opportunities for flexible, direct and sustainable funding and partnerships, capacity sharing, collective advocacy, and coalition development. Partnerships with the private sector – as funders and programmatic partners - will help further reinforce impact.

This is a time where we must uphold human rights, global responsibility sharing and accountability to affected populations. We call on the EU Member States, together with UNHCR and NGOs, to be leaders in standing up for humanity.

Further details are available at icvanetwork.org.

Thank you.