



The Scottish Parliament
Pàrlamaid na h-Alba

EUROPEAN AND EXTERNAL RELATIONS COMMITTEE

Mr Humza Yousaf
Minister for Europe and International
Development
Scottish Government

The Scottish Parliament
Edinburgh
EH99 1SP

Direct Tel: 0131-348-5234
(RNID Typetalk calls welcome)
Fax: 0131-348-5088
(Central) Textphone: 0131-348-5415
Email: europe@scottish.parliament.uk

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Dear Mr Yousaf,

Refugee crisis

I am writing to you in relation to the evidence that the European and External Relations Committee heard on 1 October when it held a roundtable evidence session on the refugee crisis in the European Union.

The Committee found the evidence very compelling and moving. A number of issues were raised during the evidence in relation to both the scale of the situation and how Scotland, the UK and the EU could – and should - respond.

The Committee welcomes the financial pledge that the Scottish Government has recently made to charities working to provide relief to refugees, including the British Red Cross, Mercy Corps, Glasgow the Caring City and Edinburgh Direct Aid. However, a number of issues of serious concern emerged from the evidence heard and I would be grateful if you could provide the Committee with your response to them.

Firstly, the Committee considers the level of support offered by the UK to refugees to be inadequate in the face of the scale of the crisis. The Committee heard compelling evidence about the huge numbers of refugees arriving in the EU, the desperation that caused people to flee their homes and the often harrowing and dangerous journeys that they had endured. The Committee was very concerned about the lack of humanitarian relief available for people arriving in the EU, particularly the evidence from the witnesses who had recently visited the Greek island of Lesbos and found that there was no significant coordinated response either from international charities or the local

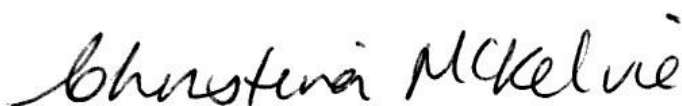
authorities to the refugees arriving in Lesbos by sea. The Committee considers that if this had been a natural disaster, such as an earthquake, the humanitarian response would have been stronger. The Committee therefore urges the Scottish Government to continue to use its influence to persuade the UK Government to take more refugees and to engage with EU efforts to address the refugee crisis in the European Union.

Secondly, in light of the numbers who have already arrived in the EU, and who are likely to arrive in the EU in future, the Committee urges the Scottish Government to consider whether the number of refugees that will be resettled in Scotland can be increased.

Thirdly, the Committee welcomes the commitment by local authorities across Scotland to support the process of resettling refugees. The Committee also recognises that many local authorities have not been directly involved in the past with the resettlement of refugees. It therefore recommends that opportunities should be supported for local authorities for policy learning and exchange, both with each other and third sector organisations with experience of working with refugees. The Scottish Government may also wish to consider policy learning from other countries in Europe. For example, in evidence, one of the witnesses referred to the scheme developed in the Netherlands for refugees to attend university to allow their qualifications to be validated.

Finally, the Committee asks the Scottish Government to closely monitor the process of refugee resettlement in Scotland in order to assess whether improvements can be made to how the process is operated and coordinated, and how successful we can be in integrating refugees into our communities. The Committee intends to follow developments relating to the refugee crisis closely until the end of the parliamentary session, and recommend to its successor committee to also consider this issue.

Yours sincerely



Christina McKelvie
Convener
European and External Relations Committee