

Wrap up debate on rights-based governance

Speakers:

1. Corinna Wicher, Head of International tasks and Administration of EU Funds in the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees, Germany
2. Paul Nemitz, Director of Fundamental Rights and Citizenship, Directorate-General for Justice and Consumers, European Commission
3. Anastasia Crickley, Chair of the Committee on Elimination of Racial Discrimination, United Nations
4. Vincent Cochetel, Director Europe, Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
5. Evelyne Paradis, Executive Director of ILGA-Europe

An idea that was discussed was that of a European Asylum office. The panel was convinced that this could be a workable solution to the problems we are currently facing. It was admitted that this would take time for bureaucracies to change, but that this is something that they would get used to and which would work out over time.

When looking for solutions to the current migration crisis, there is a need to focus on what works in practice. We tend to focus on what is not working, when in fact there are lots of areas that are doing well, such as the support for refugee reception by the people in Germany.

They also spoke about the lack of leadership that we're seeing among many European States and other industrialised countries, as well as a lack of internal and external solidarity. One solution could be legal regulations, based on realistic expectations of the number of people we're dealing with. We also need to consider where our values, that were so overwhelmingly present in the 1950s, have disappeared to.

It was mentioned that rights are not the key to helping people; they are meaningless without implementation. We need the resources to be able to deliver on these rights, which includes judges, courts, and the political will. In this sense digital age and migration overlap. As one of the resources, judges should be included in the debates on these issues.

Participation and civil society must be resourced. We need to provide opportunities for people to come together and collectively decide on their needs. Participation should not be mistaken for representation. This means non-governmental organisations and civil society voices need to be permitted to say what needs to be said. States in democracies need to resource participation and also dissent from civil society.

The debate touched upon power and privilege. One of the greater revolutions of the human rights world is that it placed power in different sources. All the discussions we're having about inclusion, make something stand out: whose power and privilege are we talking about? We need to talk about the shrinking space for civil society, but we need to go back to basics and be honest with ourselves; we're shying away from a conversation about who is afraid of losing power and privilege.