

## **The refugee crisis calls for national responsibility and for local solutions**

War in Syria and in other parts of the Middle East and in northern Africa have resulted in the biggest refugee crisis in Europe since the Second World War. Children, adolescents and adults are arriving in Norway and other European countries after spending months fleeing from war-torn areas. Authorities in the countries in which these migrants arrive face considerable challenges in administering this influx. At the same time, we see that individuals are taking responsibility, organising food and handing out clothing and other necessary articles. Solidarity and a will to volunteer in respect of people in need is strong in Norway. The situation experienced by refugees touches us as a nation, and we wish to reach out and lend a helping hand. There is no doubt that more things than woollen blankets are needed to give hope for the future to people who find themselves in an unfamiliar society far away from their homeland.

In the opinion of the National Congress of Union of Education Norway, Norway has two duties that are particularly important in this situation. First, to show a willingness together with other European countries to take in and accept refugees. It is highly important that the Norwegian authorities enter into binding forms of collaboration with other European states in connection with the effort that needs to be made. Second, it is important to facilitate matters so that those arriving in our country can become integrated into society through education and the labour market.

For all the children and adolescents who come to Norway, and particularly those who arrive without their parents, inclusive education can provide them with the safe framework they require in an extremely vulnerable situation – alone in a country where they understand neither the nation's language nor its customs. We know that experiencing as normal an everyday life as possible through play with other children and through challenging learning situations can help provide strength in an unknown environment, helping them prepare for a new society and giving them hope of a better future. For all of these young people, it is important that we do not put their lives on hold. We can afford to give them all a good childhood.

We also need to find solutions for all the adults so that migration will benefit both them and the society in which they have just arrived. It is essential that everyone can quickly attend Norwegian classes with qualified teachers and gain meaningful employment. It is crucial that this latter aspect takes place in collaboration with the trade union movement, so that the situation is not exploited by employers in a way that undermines the Norwegian model.

Our ability to handle this situation expediently will depend on us finding good local solutions swiftly, so that settlement over the entire country can take place in a safe manner. In order to



achieve this, a major joint and coordinated effort is required from local, regional and state entities. NGOs must also be invited to the table. Union of Education Norway wishes to be part of this important work. In the near future, union representatives will therefore take local initiatives and assume responsibility to initiate discussions between relevant parties that can take part in joining this effort.