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Zurich, 11 November 2020

Press release

Further action to improve the situation of Sans-Papiers and introduction of a «Züri City-Card»

Sans-Papiers, or undocumented migrants, form part of the city's population. They often live in hazardous situations and do not have adequate protection. The City Council wants to improve the circumstances in which they live. It is launching a package of measures in the field of healthcare. It also wants to introduce the «Züri City-Card» called for by the City Parliament. Such an identity card strengthens the feeling of community in the city as a whole.

The City Council is working on the assumption that there are some 10,000 people living in the City of Zurich who are resident in Switzerland illegally. The vast majority of them work, but often in precarious circumstances. Sans-Papiers generally try not to attract attention and move within very small networks. This may prevent them suffering from homelessness or starvation, but can lead to abuse, exploitation and isolation.

Confederation and canton responsible for central improvements

The City Council demands long-term Sans-Papiers to become regularised and integrated into the regulated employment market, so that they can exercise their fundamental constitutional and human rights without danger. The Confederation and canton are specifically responsible for this. As it affirmed in its position paper of autumn 2018, insofar as possible the City Council also wants to contribute to improving the situation of Sans-Papiers in the City of Zurich ([press release of 12 September 2018](#)). The City Council is now providing information

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on implementation of the position paper in a [report](#) and highlighting the opportunities provided by and limits of a «Züri City-Card» - an identity card for every inhabitant of the City of Zurich. The City Parliament urged for it to be introduced in a motion ([GR Nr. 2018/278](#)).

Sans-Papiers in many areas with good access to municipal services

Comprehensive investigation has shown that Sans-Papiers in the City of Zurich currently have access to numerous important offerings and services, including subsidised crèche or after-school care centre places, discounts on health insurance fund premiums or places in care, or in-patient treatment in the City hospital. The review also identified gaps, however, such as access to emergency accommodation and municipal grants. The City Council is currently examining how to fill these gaps. No improvement is possible where status under the Federal law on foreign nationals has to be reviewed on the basis of superordinate law for access to offerings and services (e.g. marriage, renting accommodation, claiming social assistance).

In recent months financial support for the Sans-Papiers Drop-in Centre Zurich (SPAZ) has been increased to cushion the negative impact of the coronavirus pandemic. Whilst support has mainly been selective and project-related to date, the City of Zurich is currently financing a part-time position at SPAZ for a fixed term, to better meet the great demand for advice. Discussions are currently ongoing with SPAZ regarding longer-term financing.

Identify need for action - improve healthcare provision

Currently, in the City of Zurich, a range of governmental and non-governmental agencies provide and finance healthcare for people who do not have health insurance, especially Sans-Papiers. Cooperation and provision are well integrated. There are, however, structural weaknesses and financial back-up is inadequate. In response to an urgent motion by the City Parliament ([GR Nr. 2017/376](#)), the City Council has devised a detailed concept which highlights the need for action and specific measures, in addition to the current status of medical provision.

Official hospital for treatment and financial support from private sponsors

In improving healthcare provision for Sans-Papiers, the City Council wants to strengthen existing and proven institutions, optimise cooperation between the various agencies and safeguard financing for the medical services provided. The Meditrina medical practice plays a central role in healthcare for Sans-Papiers. It specialises in Sans-Papiers and is part of a wide network. The City of Zurich wants to further strengthen this institution and from 2021 will therefore finance it by means of a performance agreement. To stabilise this structure, the Waid and Triemli city hospital will become the official treatment hospital for Sans-Papiers living in the City of Zurich. The intention is that, as in the past, health insurance will be concluded wherever possible to finance the medical treatment. If it does not make sense to conclude health insurance, or it is not possible to cover all the expenses, the City of Zurich will assume the costs. The measures will be implemented during a three-year pilot phase and cost around CHF 4.5 million.

«Züri City-Card» legally possible

A new legal opinion commissioned from the University of Zurich shows that the City of Zurich can introduce a «Züri City-Card» which will officially confirm the residency of every person living in Zurich, including Sans-Papiers. It will be possible to improve the living situation of Sans-Papiers with such a city identity card because they will easily be able to prove their identity and residency to the authorities. This will not, however, legalise their residency status. In particular, the city identity card will not prevent the need for residence status to be verified during police checks, depending on the situation. The legal basis and practices would have to be adapted at national and cantonal level for Sans-Papiers to be able to move about the city without fear and obtain better access to law and justice.

«Züri City-Card» can simplify life and increase solidarity

The City Council thinks that a «Züri City-Card» has potential. If it is sufficiently widespread it can strengthen the city's society, solidarity and coexistence and offer the entire population even greater opportunities to participate in the social, cultural and political life of Zurich. The intention is that the «Züri City-Card» should give people living in Zurich easier and, for some, discounted access to information, services, opportunities for cooperation and cultural offer-

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ings. For the City Council the emphasis is on a solution that offers digital data storage, combines several previous cards and can be linked to the municipal “Mein Konto” (My Account) service.

The City Council has applied to the City Parliament for a global credit facility worth CHF 3.2 million to fund the comprehensive organisational, technical and legal preparations necessary to introduce a «Züri City-Card». The City Council will request the costs subsequently incurred for provision and introduction of the «Züri City-Card» and for annual recurring costs at a later date.

Further information can be obtained from:

- General information on Sans-Papiers and specifically about the «Züri City-Card»: Christof Meier, Head of the Integration Office, T +41 44 412 36 31
- Specifically about healthcare for Sans-Papiers: Communications Office, Department of Health and the Environment, T +41 44 412 11 12