



EU Agenda on Migration: a first step in the right direction

“Do not forget to show hospitality to strangers” (Hebrew 13:2)

Since 19 April 2015, when 800 people died in a boat disaster in the Mediterranean off the Libyan coast, the European institutions have intensively addressed the issue of migration and the treatment of refugees in Europe and on its borders. The Executive Committee of the European Conference of Justice and Peace Commission (Justice and Peace Europe) joins the public debate at this stage to welcome all efforts for a more compassionate treatment of those who have been forced to abandon their country because of war and civil unrest, natural disaster or unbearable economic and social conditions. It also draws attention to Europe’s responsibility to work for justice and peace in the world and - accordingly - to design long-term policies for conflict prevention and transformation and for sustainable development. Justice and Peace Europe strongly invites those member states of the European Union who are opposed to a fairer allocation for welcoming refugees and asylum seekers to reconsider their position.

1) The engagement of Heads of State and Government during the Extraordinary European summit on 23 April 2015 to triple the financial resources for search and rescue missions and, thus, to address the immediate humanitarian crisis, shows a renewed preparedness to increase rescue operations in the Mediterranean. *Justice and Peace Europe* welcomes this decision and asks for its immediate, complete and continued application.

2) *Justice and Peace Europe* supports legitimate measures to suppress smuggling and trafficking of human beings, and put an end to all criminal activities carried out on the back of refugees. The detection and prosecution of these criminals should be actively promoted and measures harmonised at the EU and international levels. The decision taken by EU ministers for Foreign Affairs and Defence on 18 May 2015 to establish a naval military operation – EUNAVFOR Med – which includes the collecting of information, the blocking, control and, ultimately, neutralisation of the boats of trafficking organisations may be useful in this respect. However, any form of military intervention should be covered by a clear mandate of the UN Security Council and the lives of innocent people should not be exposed to risk.

3) *Justice and Peace Europe* furthermore recognises the right of each state - or group of states as in the case of the European Union – to exercise its sovereign right to control and manage its borders as long as it is done with due respect for the dignity and fundamental rights of each person. Measures to prevent flows of irregular migration in cooperation with neighbouring countries are justified if they form part of an integrated approach. Repression on its own will not resolve anything. It is even more important to address the root causes of irregular and forced migration. In this respect, *Justice and*

Peace Europe recalls the European promise to devote 0.7% of GNI to public development aid and to reserve half of it for the poorest countries. However, much more effort needs to be invested in addressing root causes, including good governance, accountability and just economic structures. The EU should also consider new ways for legal migration and mobility. In the future, EU member states could create a common corps of Border Guards. All in all, the “European Agenda on Migration”, which the European Commission adopted on 13 May 2015, sets out a balanced approach in this respect. It is a first step in the right direction.

4) The same document and the first concrete proposals adopted on 27 May 2015 by the European Commission also suggest the relocation of around 40,000 refugees from Greece and Italy to other member states and resettling about 20,000 people from outside the EU who have been identified by the UNHCR as being in clear need of international protection. Both measures should cover the next two years and are considered part of the immediate crisis response. They propose a guideline for allocating refugees among member states based on four criteria (GDP, population, unemployment and asylum seekers already received) in order to share the task of welcoming refugees and dealing with their requests for asylum.

5) The European Commission has also stated its intention to use the same allocation mechanism to provide for a lasting solution for sharing the responsibility for refugees and asylum seekers. This constitutes a new path and signals the willingness of the European Commission to replace the current Dublin Regulation, which is ineffective. In 2014, for instance, more than 600,000 people asked for asylum in one of the 28 EU member states. Nearly 300,000 did so in just two member states (Germany and Sweden). During a debate in Strasbourg on 20 May 2015 a large majority of Members of the European Parliament welcomed the Commission plan and pressed the European Council to do the same. Unfortunately, several EU governments have voiced their opposition to the introduction of a system of allocation. A few days ahead of the European Summit on 25-26 June, *Justice and Peace Europe* strongly invites those governments which are still reticent, to re-examine their reservations and to constructively engage in the discussion of the proposal. Member states with an opt-in clause for the Common European Asylum System should make use of it.

Caring for refugees and asylum seekers requires solidarity among all EU members. Hospitality is a task for all Europeans and their governments. Europe must not forget “to show hospitality to strangers”.

Prague, 15th of June 2015

The Conference of European Justice and Peace Commissions (*Justice and Peace Europe*) is a European network of 31 national Justice and Peace Commissions, working for the promotion of justice, peace and respect for human dignity. It contributes to raising awareness of the Catholic social doctrine in the European societies and the European institutions. The Executive Committee of *Justice and Peace Europe* is composed of 9 elected members and its President is Archbishop Jean-Claude Hollerich of Luxembourg.

Contact: secretary@jupax-europa.org
www.jupax-europa.org