



Churches' Commission for Migrants in Europe

Commission des Eglises auprès des Migrants en Europe

Kommission der Kirchen für Migranten in Europa

Recommendations of the Meeting of the Amman Process, 23-25 May 2002, Brussels

From 23rd to 25th May 2002 representatives of churches from Europe and the Middle East, met in Brussels in the context of the Amman Process. The Amman Process is a regular exchange of experience of church related organisations working on migration and asylum North and South of the Mediterranean Sea. It currently has members in Egypt, the Palestine territories, Jordan, Syria, Lebanon, Iraq, Turkey, Greece, Italy, France, Spain and Portugal. They are members of the World Council of Churches, and the members in the Middle East belong to the Middle East Council of Churches (MECC), the Southern European members to the Churches' Commission for Migrants in Europe (CCME).

In Brussels the participants of the Amman Process meeting had the opportunity to meet with representatives of the European Commission, the European Parliament and a representative of the current Spanish Presidency of the Council. The discussion and exchange with the representatives of these institutions were highly appreciated. Topics of these discussions were the Barcelona Process of the EU-Mediterranean partnership, the focus of EU policy on irregular migration, the policy development with regard to countries of origin and the country Action Plans of the Council on Migration and Asylum, the new proposals for a European readmission and return policy for persons not having a permit to stay.

Parallel to this meeting, the 5th European Asylum Conference of Protestant Churches took place in Brussels as well. This has been an opportunity for some joint sessions and exchange and sharing with a wider churches' constituency in Europe on the priority issues in the Mediterranean region.

In conclusion of the meeting, the following recommendations were formulated:

The deliberations and meetings in Brussels once again underlined the importance of international institutions, particularly of the EU, in the management of migration flows. In this context the efforts of the EU institutions to take a comprehensive approach to the issue of migration were much appreciated.

The meeting also took note of the statement of the Euro-Mediterranean Human Rights Network addressed to the ministerial meeting at Valencia 23-24 April 2002. Some of those recommendations are included here as well.

The following aspects are recommended for further action and deliberation:

In order to achieve comprehensive action, national and international institutions should already in the decision-making process aim at including organised civil society, including faith communities.

Prosperity in the Mediterranean region is related to a strengthening of the judiciary, the respect for human rights and the rule of law, and as such the mainstreaming of human rights into all fields of Justice and Home Affairs.

As such, the legitimate concern for security - including the combat of organised and terrorist crime - must not prejudice respect for human rights of migrants, refugees and asylum seekers both in the EU and within the Mediterranean partner countries, the latter being main receivers of migrants, refugees and asylum seekers.

National and EU legislation should therefore clearly differentiate between legislation and programs aiming at combating crime and legislation aimed at addressing the specific situation of migrants and refugees. With regard to combat of terrorism it should be underlined that crime and criminal activity need to be addressed. As often the description "terrorist" is politically motivated, this includes the danger of disregarding human rights standards. Therefore, a clear policy directed against criminal activity and promoting security can be more clearly defined without calling it terrorism.

EU institutions should be requested to promote instruments for the legal protection of and assistance to boat people (with a focus on human rights in general, rescue programs, as well as the correct treatment at arrival in receiving countries, particularly access to asylum procedures and non refoulement). As the concept of burden sharing is underlying EU policies,

this should be further developed particularly for the main receiving EU countries in Southern Europe. However, this concept for the Mediterranean region might need further elaboration reaching also the Southern Mediterranean partners.

The common readmission policy should be developed by EU institutions, with special attention to the respect of human rights in countries persons are readmitted, and include follow up measures for the protection and integration of returnees.

In general, we would recommend that EU institutions undertake an evaluation of the current migration and asylum policy, involving organised civil society in the exercise. Special attention should be given to the relation between restrictive visa policies and illegal migration.

With special reference to the Euro Mediterranean co-operation the meeting recommends:

The Barcelona declaration should be translated into a plan of action for the protection of the rights of refugees and migrants, both in the North and the South of the Mediterranean.

In order to realise comprehensive action on migration, national and European institutions should support networks of civil society in the Mediterranean, which are engaged in advocacy for and protection of migrants, refugees and asylum seekers. The MEDA Programme could be mandated to cover this field of work.

The Euro-Mediterranean partners should develop concrete programmes on training, law reform and capacity building that focus on the promotions of the independence and transparency of justice sector institutions, in particular courts and national human rights institutions.

With special reference to churches and ecumenical institutions, the meeting recommends:

Churches and ecumenical institutions are encouraged to continue efforts to broaden the basis and the support of the network. In particular, they are requested to assist in facilitating access to national and international institutions and other networks and by contributing with experience and other resources.

CCME and APRODEV (the Association of World Council of Churches related development agencies in Europe) should elaborate a common statement on the relationship of migration and development, tackling issues like addressing root causes in countries of origin, distinction between forced and voluntary migration, the role of remittances, readmission and repatriation)

Cooperation between the APRODEV work on the Middle East and the Amman Process should be enhanced.

The ecumenical institutions of both regions should seek to liaise actively with the EU Directorate General on Justice and Home Affairs to share migration concerns in the Mediterranean area. Such activities could include a meeting of church leaders of both regions with the EU Commission.

Participants to the Amman Process network meetings should get actively involved in reporting about the problems, needs, initiatives and results on the field. They should share their perspectives and analysis of arising situations concerning the whole or part of the network.

Members of the network should engage actively in informing and sensitising the churches-and ecumenical organisations with regard to the importance of inter-regional networking in addressing migration issues and concerns, and in particular, in liaising with the EU institutions.

Partners should study and explore ways of becoming more interactive and share resources (such as capacities, knowledge, human and material resources). Some churches have tremendous experience in migration counselling, some have created services and institutions. Efforts should be made with regard to developing joint activities in the field of migration counselling.