

**What advocacy role for ACT ALLIANCE vis-à-vis
Europe's response to the refugee crisis?
*March 2016***

This paper paves the way for drafting an advocacy strategy for ACT¹ on the issue of refugees' reception in Europe.

It consists in a scoping exercise collating information on relevant European policies, processes and other influencing opportunities, and on advocacy towards the EU which is already being done, and by whom. Interviews have been conducted with ACT EU members to understand the contexts and advocacy opportunities and challenges in their respective countries. This exercise will provide much of the information required to develop an effective advocacy strategy for ACT Alliance and within the ACT EU organisations.

This paper was completed by Agnès BERTRAND, Middle-East policy officer at ACT Alliance EU. It started on the 11th of January. **The research ends on the 8th of March** 2016. All information contained in this documents have been updated when the research period ended but that the situation is constantly changing. The person appointed to conduct advocacy work on behalf of ACT will have to make sure he/she works on the latest information.

It is **confidential** and **does not represent the views and opinions of ACT Alliance, ACT EU and members of ACT.**

¹ The research refers to ACT as the organisation which will carry and implement the future advocacy strategy on refugees. ACT member agencies still need to decide whether the future advocacy project will be formally hosted and the future advocacy officer will be directly responsible to ACT Alliance or ACT Alliance EU.

TABLE OF CONTENT

1. Summary of possible advocacy objectives and recommendations.....	4
2. Current and forthcoming policy and political processes and influencing opportunities from the Commission, Council and Parliament.....	9
3. An understanding of the policies of the EU member States.....	17
4. A summary of what ACT EU members are doing, saying and planning in relation to the refugee crisis.....	23
5. What ACT Alliance is saying, doing and planning?.....	29
6. Mapping the work of other Civil Societies Organisations.	29
7. Bibliography.....	33

1. Summary of possible advocacy objectives and recommendations.

- ACT Alliance has a role to play.

Taking into consideration the involvement and actions of members of ACT on the refugee crisis and the achievements of the implementing agencies of the ACT Appeal EUR 151 it goes without saying that ACT Alliance has serious grounds and legitimacy to develop advocacy work on refugees at EU and European level. On top of that, during the course of the interviews conducted for this research, a few numbers of ACT member agencies are doing or are planning to do advocacy on this topic (Christian Aid, Kirk in Actie, Church of Sweden, Finn Church Aid, Brot fur die Welt with Diakonia DE and Diakonia Katastrophehilfe). This could enhance the possibilities of coordinated work at European level. The ones which are not involved in advocacy were usually broadly supportive of this project.

A successful advocacy work will depend on a close coordination between agencies within ACT which are ready to supervise and inform the advocacy work conducted by ACT on the refugee issue; the future advocacy officer and those agencies and; the future advocacy officer and the implementing agencies of the ACT Appeal. It is essential that close and regular contact is being established and maintained between the advocacy officer and the implementing agencies of the Appeal since the work on the ground will inform the advocacy demands in many respect.

Furthermore, for this work to be effectively grounded in the Alliance, the advocacy officer will have to report regularly to the ACT secretariat in Geneva and the ACT Europe Emergency Response Group and liaise with the focal point of ACT's Community of Practice on Migration and Development.

- Building alliances outside of ACT.

ACT Alliance has definitely its place in the NGO choir on advocacy on refugees in Brussels.

First of all, ACT has a strong ally in CCME which has almost two decades of advocacy experience at the EU and is supportive of the potential extension of ACT's mandate to advocacy on the refugee issue. CCME would see a natural involvement of ACT on this issue on a development perspective (e.g. by working on the migration and development theme) or by focusing on refugees protection in the ME or on resettlement. If ACT is to work on the EU's response in general, CCME and is ready to cooperate with ACT provided there is a very close coordination between the two organisations.

The survey has also shown that there exists formal and informal NGOs working groups ACT can definitely participate in to share information, stimulate energy and give voice and force to ACT's messages. One of the most obvious is the working group of Christian NGOs as mentioned below (Caritas Europa, CMME, COMECE, Eurodiaconia, ICMC, JRS-Europe and the Quaker Council for European Affairs). ACT could also participate in the European Platform on Asylum and Migration. If the advocacy project becomes sustainable in time, ACT could also consider a membership in ECRE.

A challenge for the future advocacy officer will also to build new alliances and develop friendly and professional relationships with members of other NGOs so as to enhance the capacity to gather timely information and intelligence and brainstorm together on possible future strategies. On top of that he or she will have to identify and create and maintain contacts with MEPs, MEPs assistants and EU representatives sympathetic to ACT's calls.

- **Advocacy messages**

"This is absolute chaos. The right to asylum is no longer guaranteed in the European Union, most States having refused to implement it and to act collectively". [Vivan Reading](#), MEP, former Justice and Home Affairs Commissioner.

Human dignity and right to protection are not to be relativised and should be the core of any European response to the refugee crisis. At a time when the principles contained in the Geneva Convention are undermined, ACT Alliance must reaffirm strongly the principles which must underline any European action. To paraphrase to our colleagues in Germany, [Europe must protect people not borders](#). This should be the motto of any future advocacy work of ACT Alliance. This work should evidently be grounded in the relevant core principles of human rights and humanitarian law.

With this in mind and looking at the EU's achievements and planned policy, the recommendations or advocacy messages that ACT could adopt are somehow self-evident.

a. Make the relocation scheme work.

The relocation scheme agreed at the July and September 2015 summits is the only tangible measures civil society organisations can work with. We have to make it **real and expanded, fair and proportionate**. The distribution keys offered by the European Commission are useful indicators for a fair share (interview with CCME).

The biggest challenge is the absence of political will to have it fully implemented. Despite this, the heads of State at two occasions in 2016 (European summits of [February](#) and [March](#) 2016) have reiterated the need for a swift implementation of the relocation scheme. A first advocacy step at the Brussels level will be to keep the language existent in public documents and join the unanimous calls of civil society organisations working on this issue for its full implementation for instance through the *Christian group* and EPAM.

The implementation of the relocation scheme is a priori a competence of the member States which have committed to it. However, there exists leverage and means of pressure at EU level to call for its implementation. Advocacy work on this topic certainly will have to be done in close coordination with national agencies member of ACT.

b. Create safe legal passage: increase possibilities for resettlement, family reunification and humanitarian visas.

The creation of safe and legal passages is the only way to combat smuggling and trafficking and save lives at sea. It is also a demand which is widely shared among CSOs in Brussels and other capitals.

The resettlement scheme was agreed at a global level at the initiative of the UNHCR. Like for relocation, its implementation depends on the will of member States to fulfil their initial commitments. Hence the advocacy work should be divided between calls at member States and EU level. UNHCR could be an ally. It is already co-chairing the Quarterly meetings of EPAM.

As stated earlier, the Commission will present next month a horizontal resettlement initiative to ensure a collective approach to resettlement and cement it as a core tool for the EU to assist the countries hosting large numbers of refugees. The content and follow up of this initiative should be monitored and worked upon with allies if ACT is to decide to work on this topic.

Other means of safe passage such as family reunification and humanitarian visas are to be implemented at member States level. An EU demand could be the reform of the EU Visa Code with the creation of a Schengen humanitarian visa. This is something that could be considered by ACT when drafting its strategy.

Since some ACT agencies have already taken up advocacy work on the implementation of the relocation scheme and of measures to ensure safe passage (e.g. Finn Church Aid, BfdW, DKN DE, DKH (DE), CoS and KiA), coordinated advocacy work at member States and Brussels level is conceivable.

All the organisations listed below (non ACT members) are calling for the implementation of the relocation scheme and the paramount importance of safe and legal routes. ACT should join their call and work with them in a coordinated manner.

c. Work with Turkey to better the conditions of refugees but do not use it as pretext for containment and crisis management.

The deal proposed by Turkey on 7 March summit will be discussed at the 17 March summit. Yet, some voices have already raised their concerns regarding the legality of some of the proposals, particularly the “one for one” proposal and the massive expulsion to Turkey of migrants who have entered Greece even if they have filed an asylum application. Filippo Grandi, the UN High Commissioner for refugees already [expressed deep concerns](#) “about any arrangement that would involve the blanket return of anyone from one country to another without spelling out the refugee protection safeguards under international law”. Indeed, the [legality of the proposals](#) is very doubtful. Collective expulsions are contrary to the Charter of Fundamental Rights and according to European law and the case-law of the ECJ and the ECHR, anyone is entitled to seek asylum in the country of arrival or anyone other country if his or her demand cannot be treated in decent conditions in the latter country. More to the point, any asylum seeker can appeal a decision to be expelled from a EU country.

In short, anything concrete which will come out of the 17 March summit will have to be closely monitored, assessed and acted upon accordingly. It could be a real game-changer. Kirk in Actie have told us they are looking closely at the “deal with Turkey” and have approached Dutch politicians on it –the

Netherlands holding the Dutch presidency until the end of June 2016. A few organisations listed below (incl. HRW, Amnesty) have already raised grave concerns at the proposals put forward by Turkey. CCME, EU CORD Eurodiakonia, CEC and ACT EU are planning to do a statement ahead of the Council.

d. Put in place harmonised, timely, fair and non-discriminatory asylum procedures.

The next big EU challenge with regard to asylum procedure is the reform of the Dublin system. ACT Alliance should work towards a system which takes into consideration the capacity of the member States and the wishes of the applicant.

The Commission will submit a communication on the 16th of March. Most of the member States –apart from Greece and Italy, are eager to preserve the basic principle of the Dublin system and as such maintain the status quo. On the 22d of April, the Commission will release its proposal for amending the Dublin regulation.

To our knowledge, many civil society organisations –CCME together with the *Christian group* and ECRE, among them have already started to do advocacy work in relation to reform of the Dublin system. ACT Alliance could join their efforts.

Another related topic is the creation of the hotspots. ACT could call for the swift creation of all hotspots and that processes implemented in the hotspots respect the rights of refugees and the specific needs of the most vulnerable ones. This includes the right to an effective remedy, humane returns and the limitations on the resort to and length of detention. Most of this will also depend on the result of the 17 March summit.

e. The EU must respond to the humanitarian needs of the refugees, specifically the most vulnerable.

Advocacy on this topic could involve the following asks: better coordination of the European humanitarian response (more funding and more effective coordination mechanisms); ensure reception conditions in accordance with humanitarian standards and the mainstreaming in all activities and interventions of the protection of women and children (boys and girls), especially unaccompanied minors, and people with special needs.

Inputs from implementing agencies will be absolutely necessary on this topic.

On this latter point, the Commission already emphasised in the 10 February 2016 communication the need to protect children and to employ a comprehensive approach for the protection of children throughout the migration chain. This is to be welcomed. Minors and particularly unaccompanied children face great risks in the migration EUROPOL accounts for the [disappearance of 10000 minors](#) who are feared to be in the hands of human traffickers. EU's commitments should be encouraged and monitored to ensure a proper protection of this vulnerable group.

Surprisingly as it may, in the same communication the Commission did not refer to any gender related aspect when committing to scale up its humanitarian assistance to support refugees inside European borders. Some organisations have [reported](#) the high vulnerability of women on their route to Europe – women account for [13%](#) of the refugees who reached Europe last year. ACT should call for particular attention to this issue and for gender mainstreaming in all EU humanitarian interventions towards refugees.

Position of post holder in Brussels should give him or her access to lots of information on EU's humanitarian actions towards refugees which could be of high interest to ACT members and particularly implementing agencies. Furthermore, to our knowledge, VOICE, the European platform of humanitarian agencies has a strong interest into the issue of EU humanitarian aid to refugees inside Europe. Contacts between VOICE and ACT EU are already existent but will have to be developed on this topic.

Remarks.

- At the risk of being repetitive, it should be emphasised that the advocacy work conducted for all of these demands have to thought through by ACT members involved in this future project, in consultation with implementing agencies and acted upon in collaboration with ACT allies. ACT cannot act solo on this.

- The full strategy will have to be developed by the post holder together with relevant ACT members when priorities have been identified. Relevant criteria for the identification of priorities stems in the winnability of the argument and difference ACT can make. Additional to this, ACT could use some of the criteria established in the ACT EU strategy such are EU relevance and focus; In line with ACT Alliance global advocacy strategy; Member support and common voice; relevance to implementing agencies; Specific contribution of faith-based perspectives to the issue. Inputs from the agencies holding the project will be necessary. However at this current stage, it can be said that the implementation of this advocacy project could be divided into two distinctive advocacy tracks: one specifically on the EU reception policy and another on the deployment of humanitarian aid. Concerning the former, recommendations a, b, c, d seem to represent an indivisible package and will have to be implemented through direct advocacy in Brussels or in a coordinated manner within European capitals. As things are moving very fast on this issue, some recommendations will be at time more relevant than others.

2. Current and forthcoming policy and political processes and influencing opportunities from the Commission, Council and Parliament.

The overall context

By the end of 2014, an estimated [59.5 million](#) people were forcibly displaced from their homes, worldwide, including refugees, IDPs and asylum seekers. UNHCR now estimates that as numbers continued to rise during 2015 the figure is likely to by now have '[far surpassed 60 million](#)'. **A large proportion of those are internally displaced -38 millions** in countries including Syria, Iraq, South Sudan, Sudan and Lebanon. **The majority of those seeking refuge outside of their own countries** – such as Syrians, Afghans, Iraqis, Eritreans, Nigerians, Pakistanis and Somalis and Sudanese- **are hosted in surrounding countries**, in a combination of camps and informal hosting arrangements. Some countries are bearing a heavy cost in terms of refugee reception. In Lebanon, 1.1 million Syrians form about [one-fifth of the country's total population](#), while Jordan counts [633 000 registered Syrian refugees](#), making up around a tenth of the total. Ethiopia and Kenya alone are respectively hosting [731 000 refugees](#) and [552,000](#) refugees from Somalia, South Sudan and Eritrea.

An increasing number of refugees have tried to reach Europe through irregular means. They were [more than a one million](#) in 2015. [More than 3,770](#) were reported to have died trying to cross the Mediterranean. The vast majority of these refugees– 816,752 – made their way to mainland Europe via Greece. The overall figure is a four-fold increase from 2014's and has largely been driven by Syrians fleeing their country's civil war. Afghans, Iraqis and Eritreans fleeing conflict and repression are the other significant national groups.

This situation is not about to end or even decrease. Those refugees are not able to return home and there is no near term prospect of the root causes of their displacement ending soon. Yet as of 1st of March, the rate of arrival this year is [more than triple](#) of what it was during the first half of 2015. 411 have died attempting the crossing of the Mediterranean.

What has the EU decided so far? What are the plans for 2016?

The EU was unprepared for this influx of refugees and is now overwhelmed. Pressed by the growing influx of refugees and the human tragedy at its doorstep, the European Commission published the [European Agenda on Migration](#) (13 May 2015) which set the priorities for the EU's migration policy and the basis for discussion of a new measures at the Council. After months of discussions and tergiversations, the current focus of the European response is to **keep people out by reinforcing internal and external border controls and pushing the problem out of Europe at any cost**. To this end the EU signed a deal in late 2015 pledging 3 billion euro for Turkey's help in stemming the migratory flow from Syria into Europe –Turkey is already home to [2.2 million Syrian refugees](#). A 1.8 billion euro trust fund set up for African countries to help them manage migration, takes a similar approach. In February 2016, the informal Council of Justice, Interior and Migration Ministers in Amsterdam on [set the tone](#) of the EU's migration policy in 2016: reduce the influx of migrants on European territory by keeping them at bay in the Middle East. This priority was echoed in the [Communication of the Commission on the State of Play of Implementation of the Priority of Actions under the European Agenda on Migration](#) where reducing the flows of migrants and using Turkey as a buffer zone is presented as a priority.

At the times, those lines are written, [more than 10000 refugees are stranded at the Greek-Macedonian border](#). The Commission agreed to release [700 million euros](#) to deliver emergency assistance. Europe will not solve the problem by providing humanitarian assistance only. What is urgently needed is a collective and humane EU strategy that responds to the needs of protection the ones making those long journeys are entitled to.

It should be noted that the **EU and Turkey** summit on March 7, Turkey asked for another 3 billion EUR and proposed a deal where Turkey will take refugees from the Greek islands in exchange for the EU resettling an equal number of asylum seekers from Turkey. In the bargaining deal, Turkey also asked for the acceleration of the implementation of the visa liberalization roadmap and the preparation for the decision on the opening of new chapters in the EU accession negotiations. EU member states will discuss these proposals on 17-18 March but it remains to be seen how many of them will agree to the Turkish wish list.

One can sum up EU's decisions, measures adopted and plans for the future with the following table.

What has been decided in 2015?	What has been achieved? (Feb 2016)	The way forward	Advocacy demands and opportunities
Introduction of a relocation scheme concerning 160 000 migrants from Greece, Italy and Hungary.	EU budget has provided 640 million EUR to support for relocation. As of 8 February 2016, only 218 have been relocated from Greece and 279 from Italy.	Commission, Italy, Greece and Germany pressing for the relocation plan to be implemented. At the 18 February and 7 March 2016 European Summits, Member States reiterated the need to implement rapidly the relocation process as agreed last year but there is still lack	Prompt and swift implementation of the relocation scheme. Summits and monthly Council on Justice and Home Affairs. Coordinated calls from ACT member agencies and with like-minded organisations. Parliamentary questions in national parliament.

		of political will to proceed.	Lobby intervention ahead of EP resolutions and EP debates
Agreement over the resettlement of 22504 of recognised refugees in the Middle East over the next two years.	3358 refugees have been resettled by the end of 2015.	By April, the Commission will bring forward a “horizontal resettlement initiative” (i.e. wide approach to resettlement) to ensure a collective approach to resettlement and cement it as a core tool for the EU to assist the countries hosting large numbers of refugees.	<i>Same recommendations as for resettlement taking into consideration Commission’s plans to be presented in April.</i>
Creation of 11 hotspots –initial reception centres- in Italy and Greece.	Hotspots in Lesvos, Chios, Samos and Leros (GR), Lampedusa and Trapani (IT) are functioning.		Creation of hotspots should be completed. Reception conditions should fit humanitarian standards. Advocacy done in close connection with implementing agencies.

<p>Creation of a new CSDP mission, EUNAVFOR MED to fight against smugglers and traffickers.</p>	<p>The mission is operational. Apart from anti-smuggling operations, it has also so far saved the lives 9000 people.</p>	<p>EUNAVFOR MED is ready to expand its operations into Libyan territorial waters.</p> <p>The Commission will present a package on migrant smuggling by the end of 2016.</p>	<p>Policy against migrants smuggling should not be conducted at the expense of rights and protection refugees are entitled to.</p> <p>Advocacy work ahead of release of the Commission's package</p>
<p>Agreement of an EU-Turkey Action plan on tackling the refugee crisis.</p> <p>Allocation of 3 billion EUR to Turkey to improve conditions for Syrian refugees and in return a promise from Turkey to stem refugee flows to Europe and from the EU of a visa exemption policy and the opening of new chapters for EU membership.</p> <p>At the 7 March summit, Turkey came with further proposals (see above).</p>	<p>The 3 billion fund has been approved. The EU contributes 1 billion EUR. After it, Germany, France and the UK are the biggest contributor.</p> <p>The funds will go to the Facility for Refugees in Turkey which will help provide them with education, health and food.</p>	<p>European summit on 17-18 March 2016 to discuss Turkey's proposals formulated at EU-Turkey summit on 7 March.</p> <p>Member States and particularly Germany want to put collaboration with Turkey as a priority.</p>	<p>Cooperation with third country should be implemented in accordance with international law and human rights standards.</p> <p>Close monitoring and reaction to measures agreed upon at the 17 March summit (legal and political implications).</p>
<p>Proposal to upgrade FRONTEX as a new "European Border and Coast Guard Agency". It would function with its own resources and be able to intervene rapidly when urgent action is needed even without the consent of the affected member States.</p>	<p>Discussed at the summit, lukewarm reactions by member States. Germany and France are supportive of the proposal</p>	<p>The European Council Conclusions of December 2015 called on the Council to reach its position on it by June.</p>	<p>Border protection should not be made at the expense of human rights and refugees protection.</p>

			Advocacy work at Council and EP's level.
<p>The revision of the Dublin III Regulation in the course of 2016. The Dublin regulation determines the EU Member State responsible to examine an application for asylum seekers seeking international protection under the Geneva Convention. It sets as a principle that usually, the responsible Member State will be the state through which the asylum seeker first entered the EU. Its implementation has been totally dysfunctional during the refugee crisis of 2015.</p>	-	<p>The Commission will submit a communication on the 16th of March on the revision of Dublin. Most of the member States –apart from Greece and Italy, are eager to preserve the basic principle of the Dublin system and as such maintain the status quo. On the 22d of April, the Commission will release its proposal for amending the Dublin regulation.</p>	<p>The new system should take into consideration the capacity of the member States and the wishes of the applicant.</p> <p>Advocacy work at Council and EP's level.</p> <p>To our knowledge, <i>Christian group</i> and EPAM already involved. (see below)</p>
<p>European Commission is prepared to scale up its humanitarian assistance along the Balkan route at short notice (within EU and non-EU countries).</p> <p>The Commission will target fundings to strengthen protection response for children in migration.</p>	<p>The Commission agreed to release 700 million euros to deliver emergency assistance on March 2 to assist Greece.</p>		<p>Closely monitor the implementation of humanitarian aid and EU's commitment to focus on minors protection</p> <p>Push for a focus on gender related issues.</p>

<p>Creation of an EU Emergency Trust Fund for Africa to address the root causes of irregular migration and displaced persons in Africa at the Valetta summit.</p>	<p>To date, Member States' contributions amount to around €81.3 million and the EU expects more contributions to follow. EU budget contribution amounts to 1.8 billion EUR.</p>	<p>-</p>	<p>Lobby on this topic falls within the theme of “migration and development”.</p>
<p>Creation of an EU Regional Trust Fund in response to the Syrian crisis. It aims at supporting up to 1.5 million Syrian refugees and overstretched host communities in Lebanon, Turkey, Jordan and Iraq through the provision of basic education and child protection, better access to healthcare, improved water and waste-water infrastructure, as well as support to economic opportunities and social inclusion.</p>	<p>So far, €654 million have been committed to the Syria Trust Fund, with €594 million from the EU budget, but only €60.5 million from 19 Member States.</p>	<p>-</p>	<p>Assistance to third country is welcomed as long as it does not consist in a containment policy and responds to the needs of the refugees.</p>
<p>Extension of the capacity of the two search and rescue operations operating under FRONTEX, the European border management agencies: Triton (Italy) and Poseidon (Greece).</p>	<p>In the course of 2015, TRITON and POSEIDON rescued over 250 000 people. FRONTEX in connection with the interventions of those two agencies detected over one million migrants and apprehended 900 suspected smugglers. Still, 3,771 women, men and children lost their lives in 2015 trying to reach Europe by sea.</p>	<p>No specific plans to increase Triton and Poseidon’s capacity. At the Feb 2016 summit, EU members States invited FRONTEX to closely cooperate with NATO in the conduct of reconnaissance, monitoring and surveillance of illegal crossings in the Aegean sea. (NATO announced it</p>	<p>We need to closely research and monitor the exact role of NATO in the Aegean sea before formulating any specific asks (unclear until now) if ACT decides to do advocacy on this.</p>

		would send sea patrol in the Aegean sea)	
--	--	--	--

The role of the European Parliament.

The European parliament approved last year two resolutions on the refugee crisis. In April this year MEPs called in a [resolution](#) for binding quota for distributing asylum seekers among all EU countries, a bigger contributions to resettlement programmes, better cooperation with countries outside the EU and tougher measures against people smugglers. In a [resolution](#) adopted on 10 September, MEPs welcomed [proposals by the European Commission](#) presented the day before during the State of the Union 2015 debate (creation of permanent and emergency relocation schemes, common European list of Safe Countries of Origin, making return policy more effective). MEPs declared themselves ready to work on draft laws to set up a solid migration and asylum policy.

The leading committee on the refugee issue is the committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs (known as LIBE) which is chaired by [Claude Moraes \(UK, S&D\)](#). LIBE organises regular debates and exchanges of views on the situation in member States and policy developments at member States and EU level. LIBE Committee organised a mission to Turkey from 8 to 11 February 2016. Its objective was to visit refugee camps and to be informed about the situation of refugees in Turkey as well as the cooperation between Turkey and the EU in the context of the migration crisis. The issue is also regularly addressed in plenary sessions in Strasbourg.

On certain issues, the Parliament possesses legislative powers and negotiates on equal footing with the Council on Commission's legislative proposals (Ordinary legislative procedure or ex-Co-decision). In this respect, the Parliament is in the process of approving the [permanent relocation mechanism submitted by the Commission](#) in September 2015, the [EU common list of safe countries of origin](#) and the [creation of the European Border and Coast Guard](#). The revision of the Dublin will proceed through the co-decision procedure and thus the Parliament will have a say.

Last but not least, the role that the EP has in holding the keys of the EU budget gives MEPs a strong say in the management of the refugee crisis. For instance, In July, the Parliament approved an extra [69.6 EUR million to help EU agencies such as Frontex cope with migrants](#). On 14 October MEPs supported allocating an [extra €401.3 million in EU funding to tackling the refugee crisis](#).

3. An understanding of the policies of the EU member States.

At a time when solidarity and cohesion should be essential drivers of European politics, anti-migrant feelings and a protectionist attitude have taken over the agenda. Governments are competing to seduce a public opinion which is moving further to the right. Given an issue which should only be dealt with collectively, very few member States are advocating a proper coordinated response. This is even more difficult because member States are not affected equally by the arrivals of migrants- Greece, Italy, Germany, Sweden, Hungary and Austria have been at the frontline. Added to that, the tensions created by the Paris attacks and Cologne assaults have certainly reduced the little existing political will to adopt a more welcoming approach. Several European countries have already implemented [a series of legislative measures to deter more people from coming](#). The latest in line has been the [Danish law](#) which will allow police to confiscate any cash or valuables worth more than 10000 kroner (1340 EUR) from refugees. As stated in the last Amnesty International annual report 2015/2016, “In the absence of principled leadership, the place of human rights as a cornerstone of European democracies looked shakier than ever”.

Europe is turning in upon itself. To date, seven EU countries ([FR](#), [DK](#), [DE](#), [SW](#), [AU](#), [HUN](#) and [BE](#)) have already reinstated controls over their borders (inside the Schengen space) for six months. Norway which is not a member of the EU but a member of Schengen has done the same. On 25 January, European ministers of interior, at an informal Council in Amsterdam asked the Commission to increase the length during which France, Denmark, Germany, Sweden, Austria could suspend Schengen –article 26 of the Schengen agreement allows this kind of suspension to last for 2 years). Slovenia and Croatia have placed [new restrictions on entries](#) at their borders, *de facto* closing the Balkan route.

An overall selfishness prevails in the dynamics among member States with some countries being more vocal than others in their anti-refugees rhetoric – with the [exception of Germany](#) which showed leadership commensurate with the scale of the challenge.

- Germany

German authorities claim that about 800,000 migrants have arrived irregularly in 2015. During the summer of 2015, Germany stopped implementing the Dublin procedure. About 476,000 people were able to file a claim for asylum -152,600 Syrians among them. The authorities became totally overwhelmed. Internally, Merkel’s a priori welcoming position is now being challenged not only by the opposition but from inside her own party. This is even more the case after the assaults in Cologne on New Year’s Eve. A recent poll found that [40 percent](#) of Germans believe Merkel should resign for her earlier welcoming stance to refugees. Because Germany is the European country which welcomed the highest number of refugees, de facto it leads the discussions and negotiations at EU level but is increasingly isolated. According to colleagues sitting in Berlin, Germany is currently playing a double diplomatic game: accepting the refugees who have reached its territory while at the same time sealing EU borders and offering financial support for the countries which host a lot of refugees (EU and non-EU e.g. Turkey). Germany is the best supporter of increased cooperation with Turkey.

- **The United Kingdom**

The UK is focusing its support on those in the region and on diplomatic efforts towards conflict resolution. It is a leading provider of aid to the region – and has put efforts into mobilising others to also increase their financial commitments, with the February 2016 UK-hosted Syria pledging conference resulting in pledges of \$11 billion for Syria and the region. It has, however, chosen to opt out of the EU’s relocation scheme, and has instead set up its own scheme to resettle 20,000 Syrian refugees directly from the region, over a period of 5 years – though only 1,000 have been resettled so far. The populist media are taking a hard and unsympathetic line towards refugees, increasingly using the term ‘migrants’ which has largely negative overtones: the government is pandering to and fuelling divisive and negative narratives about people seeking refuge, seeking to frame the majority as undeserving and only a minority – from certain countries, social groups or locations – as deserving of protection.

The situation is complicated because of the debate around the forthcoming referendum on EU membership, in which the refugee crisis is a major issue for both sides.

- **France**

France only registered 79,130 asylum procedures in 2015 – a very small for a country which counts more than 66 million inhabitants. On top of that, France has committed to receive 30,000 refugees within two years as part of a relocation plan. Only 19 have arrived. France is [not an attractive destination for refugees](#). The government and the French public authorities so far have not demonstrated any will to support a fair share of asylum seekers and have voiced their opposition to a permanent relocation mechanism. The November terrorist attacks in Paris and the rise of the far right have only reinforced this trend. France is not favourable Prime Minister Manuel Valls address at the Munich security conference on the refugee crisis says it all: “The solutions are in the Levant, Turkey, Jordan and the Mediterranean. But there is a very clear message that says: Now, we can no longer welcome more refugees. Otherwise, we shall have to re-establish internal borders.” Early March, following an administrative court decision, public forces received orders to [destroy the shanty town or “jungle” of Calais](#) where 7,000 migrants are with the hope of reaching the UK.

- **Greece**

Greece is currently under extreme pressure. 856,723 migrants arrived on its shores in 2015 and 61,746 in 2016 (as of [1 Feb 2016](#)). Greece is now often “scapegoated” for its mismanagement of the crisis and has been [threatened with exclusion](#) from the Schengen area. After the decision of Austria and then Slovenia, Croatia, Serbia and Macedonia to [limit the number of people allowed to cross their territories](#), the risk is that Greece will be turned into a huge *de facto* refugee camp when the country is already experiencing lots of financial strains due to austerity measures. As of today, more than 10 000 refugees are stranded at the Greek-Macedonian border.

On 12 February, the EU officially sent Greece [50 demands for stepping up control of its borders](#) within a three-month deadline. The Commission will then assess the measures implemented by Greece. If the assessment is negative, the Council could recommend the reintroduction of border controls. ([article 26 Schengen Border Code](#))

- **Italy**

Over 153,000 refugees and migrants arrived in Italy in 2015 after crossing the central Mediterranean on unseaworthy and overcrowded boats. Italian authorities struggled to ensure adequate reception conditions. The government enforced a plan to distribute them in reception centres across the country, in some cases encountering fierce resistance from local authorities and population. As the second recipient countries of refugees, Italy is a firm supporter of relocation. It has been pressing hard last springtime for a [reinvestment of the EU in lifesaving operation](#) after the continuation of operation Mare Nostrum had been abruptly stopped. At the February summit, Renzi [threatened](#) Eastern European countries with reductions in EU development funds channelled to their poorest regions if they do not help with the refugee crisis.

The closing of the borders of certain Balkan countries increases the probability that migrants could use Albania and the Adriatic as an alternative route. This possibility already [worries](#) the Italian authorities.

- **Spain and Portugal.**

Spain and Portugal are not countries with a tradition for asylum but are rather countries for emigration. As of the end of November, 12,500 asylum applications were filed in Spain and in October, Spain agreed to relocate 14,931 asylum seekers by 2016 under the European relocation scheme. It offered only 130 resettlement places in 2015. In order to put pressure on the government to do more three major municipalities (Barcelona, Madrid and Valencia) declared themselves [open cities for refugees](#) and organised the hosting of refugees.

Unfortunately it is little known that Portugal is in demand of refugees. Portuguese Prime Minister Costa sent [letters to Austria, Greece, Italy and Sweden](#), which have seen refugees arrive in large numbers, offering to welcome up to 5,800 more refugees in addition to the 4,500 Portugal already agreed to take as part of the EU's refugee quota system.

- **Belgium**

Belgium has registered [35500 asylum application](#) in 2015 -a high number for a country of about 10 million inhabitants and Belgium committed to welcome 2.448 refugees as part of the European relocation plan. In 2014, at the federal elections, the NVA (Flemish right wing pro-independence party) which won the highest number of votes accepted for the first time to enter the government and count five ministers including the minister of Interior (Jan Jambon) and the minister of Immigration (Théo Francken). In response to the refugee influx, Belgium had implemented [policies and measures sometimes flirting with](#)

[illegality](#) and whose objectives is clearly to discourage refugees to apply for asylum in Belgium. The public opinion is very divided on this topic with a clear divide between Brussels with a population more supportive of welcoming refugees and the rest of Belgium. After the closing down of the “jungle of Calais” by the French authorities, Belgium increased controls at its border with France out of fear of having another “jungle” on its coast.

- **Poland, Slovakia, Hungary and the Czech Republic.**

The coalition of these four countries known as the Visegrad group has found in the refugee crisis a common cause: strict protection of the EU’s external borders, strict enforcement to the existing migration rules, and an emphasis on assistance to conflict areas, instead of an open border policy and the enforcement of the relocation scheme. Central Europeans have in common the conviction that the German and European Commission-led response to the migration crisis is wrong and contrary to European interests.

In August, the Slovakian Minister of Interior announced that the country would admit [200 Syrian refugees, on condition that they be Christians](#). **Slovakia** voted against the mandatory relocation quotas at a meeting of EU Interior Ministers in September, but was obliged to receive 802 refugees over a period of two years following the proposal’s adoption by qualified majority.

In October, the [UN High Commissioner for Human Rights expressed concern](#) that the **Czech government** was pursuing detention of refugees and migrants as a routine policy and as part of an integral part of a policy to deter migrants and refugees from entering the country. The President’s spokesperson described the UN statement as part of a [larger campaign against the Czech Republic](#). On 17 November, the president Milos Zeman attended an anti-Islam rally on Velvet Revolution anniversary day in Prague. In his speech [he declared](#) that there are half a million foreigners living in the country with whom “there are no problems... Their culture is fully compatible with European values. It is not a culture of assassins, it is not a culture of religious hatred.”

In July and September, [Poland agreed](#) to take in around 6,800 refugees between 2016 and 2017 as part of the European Union and United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) relocation and resettlement programmes. However, since the parliamentary victory of the conservative and Eurosceptic Law and Justice Party (PiS) in the October [election](#), the new government has been sending mixed signals about Poland's intention to meet these obligations. After having turned down the commitments of the previous government, it finally agreed to accept [400 refugees](#) as part of the relocation programme. Since the attacks in Paris, a [wave of hatred against foreigners](#), particularly those of Arab origin, has steadily grown in Poland.

In Hungary, the Refugees arrived in large numbers in spring 2015. The population and the government were taken by surprise by this very sudden and unprecedented phenomenon. The government undertook national surveys of public opinion, communicated on the issue through media, alerting people to be aware of the influx. At first public opinion was divided as how to answer. Solidarity gestures flourished from citizens and churches. The opinion began to shift later towards a more protective approach as numbers of arrivals increased, from 2 -8000 per day. In the Autumn, Hungary decided to seal itself off. It constructed a fence of 200 km along its borders with Serbia and Croatia and adopted legislation criminalising refugees and rendering it almost impossible for refugees and asylum-seekers entering via Serbia to claim asylum. Originally everyone was against the border fence. Now the public is more supportive of the government when they saw other member states also putting up fences. At the end of February, Victor Orban announced the holding of a [referendum](#) on

EU's refugee quotas. HIA colleagues are reporting that the government considers that the best way to help refugees is to provide them with assistance in the countries closest to their homes. It is currently negotiating with HIA a large EC civil society funding to support refugees and IDPs in Iraqi Kurdistan.

- **Sweden**

In 2014, Sweden welcomed 81000 asylum seekers. In 2015, the number doubled to reach 162000 (plus 35000 unaccompanied minors). The recognition rate is of 77%. but is currently going down. Accross 2015, the Swedish political class and the public opinion were *grosso modo* pro immigration. The tone started to change in autumn after a huge increase of refugees, the Paris attacks and the lack of real progress at the EU level on this issue. Sweden is disappointed with the low responsibility sharing in Europe (only DE and SW having positive attitudes) and the Swedish government wanted to send a signal to rest of Europe that they could not deal with the issue on their own and that other member States had to show some good will. (The strategy obviously did not work since we are testifying a race to the bottom in Europe generally).

Consequently the government decided to put radical restrictions which affected the common view of the situation. „We cannot deal with it anymore“ is the current slogan. The media coverage blew it up. Public opinion turned out to be more negative. Swedish society is very much segregated and polarised. Authorities, social services and some municipalities are put under lot of pressure. However, there is still a silent majority which is still in favor but is becoming worried because of the signals they get from the government and the media which are not favorable.

- **Denmark**

In 2015, [21,000 people](#) sought asylum in Denmark. The current coalition government is a minority one which feels the pressure of the right-wing, populist, anti-immigrant [Danish People's Party](#) (DPP), Denmark's second-largest party since [last year's general election](#). While the DPP isn't a formal member of the ruling government, its support is essential for keeping the minority Liberal Party in power. Decision makers currently see themselves as protecting Danish society and welfare – focus on caring for the Danish homeless and the elderly. Prohibitive legislations are being passed, e.g. the confiscation of valuables from refugees as mentioned earlier, more restrictive policy on family reunification, [cuts on social benefits](#) to refugees and immigrants by 45 percent, and legal processes that make it harder for refugees to claim asylum. Early September, Denmark [closed its borders with Germany](#). Denmark also cut its aid budget and allocated 30% of it to domestic costs (including refugee-related assistance).

- **Finland**

32 476 refugees have sought asylum in Finland in 2015, -an important number for a country of 5 million inhabitants. Most of them are coming from Iraq, Afghanistan and Somalia.

A coalition government made of the Centre party, the conservative National Coalition party and the “True Fins”, a Eurosceptic populist party was nominated after the election of April 2015. National policies have not been very favourable to the welcoming of migrants. At EU level, Finland refused to take

compulsory quotas and argued for voluntary ones. Instead of a welcoming policy, Finland advocates for helping refugees in their countries of origin. Many in Finland think that it is a short term policy because Finland might well be the next refugee receiver. A small number of refugees have already crossed the Finnish-Russian border. This crossing has been orchestrated by Russia and there is fear that Russia could organise more in order to put pressure on Europe.

The government is initiating legislative changes aimed at reducing the legal aid refugees can benefit as well as trying to amend conditions for family reunification according to available revenues. Finnish authorities are declaring certain regions in Iraq as safe areas and trying to return people quicker. On top of that the government has already announced that it expects to deport [around two thirds](#) of the 32,000 asylum seekers that arrived in 2015. Several refugees' centres have been attacked. Anti-refugee discourses are benefitting from a wide platform in the media. Some citizens have organised themselves into patrols and militias in some cities to "protect themselves" against refugees. This overall hostile atmosphere is to be looked at within the context of an overall economic situation that is much worse than in the other Scandinavian countries.

- **Netherlands**

As the current holder of the presidency of the European Union, the Netherlands is under pressure to coordinate member States' efforts to come with a common response. The Dutch presidency clearly [expressed the objective](#) to decrease the influx of refugees. It initiated the idea of the creation of an EU border and coast guards backed by the European Commission which it hopes to see real by June 2016. At national level, the government which is formed of a coalition of social-democrats and liberals is divided on the refugee issue. The PVV (Partij voor de Vrijheid – Freedom Party) headed by Geert Wilders is calling the shots in Dutch politics to the extent that no *mainstream* politicians are daring raising their voice and calling for an unequivocal policy in favour of welcoming refugees. The population is also very divided on the topic. Holland welcomed about 58000 refugees mostly from Syria, Afghanistan and Iraq.

- **Norway**

31,145 refugees sought asylum in Norway. Among them, 5500 came through the Norwegian-Russian border –by bicycles as it is not legal to cross the border crossing by foot. On 25 November the Norwegian government, eager to make a clear stance that it does not want too many asylum seekers, issued an instruction which denied access to the asylum procedure in Norway for any person who applied for protection after having lived in or transited through Russia. After that, Norwegian authorities began deporting mainly Syrian refugees back to the Russian border. Around 70 asylum seekers went on hunger strike in Norway to [protest](#) against possible deportation Norway temporarily [halted](#) sending them back to Russia in January but has [renewed deportations](#) a month later. According to Norwegian law, Russia is considered a safe third country, viable for refugees to claim asylum there.

- **Austria**

Austria acts both as transit and as target country for refugees. In 2015, it has registered in 2015 90 000 asylum applications. Across the year 2015, Austria was an ally of Germany with which it agreed on a transit corridor. However, by the end of 2015 and beginning of the year 2016, the government, partly

under the pressure of the rise of the far-right, hardened its position. Austria last December [closed its border with Slovenia](#). On January 20, the Austrian government announced a limit of 37.000 additional refugees for 2016. As a consequence, by mid-February, Austria decided to [impose of a cap on the number of people](#) it would admit each day to 80 asylum seekers and 3,200 people seeking transit to other EU countries. The restriction prompted Macedonia to [stop Afghans crossing its border from Greece](#), triggering riots by Afghans and bitter complaints from Athens and the UN refugee agency, the UNCHR. On 24 February 2016, Austria organised a conference “[Managing Migration Together](#)” where it invited Albania, Bosnia, Bulgaria, Croatia, Kosovo, Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia and Slovenia, to discuss how to manage the flows of refugees on the Balkan route. Greece which was not invited [recalled its ambassador](#) in Vienna the day after.

- **Switzerland**

Switzerland registered about 40 000 applications for asylum in 2015. Refugees and wider migration (including from EU) are a huge issue for the Swiss public. Last year a right-wing party (Union Démocratique du Centre) pushed for a referendum to limit immigration. It won and the programme has to be implemented by end 2016. Restrictions on immigration and refugees could be problematic. Refugees and broader migration situation are closely linked with issue of Switzerland’s future relationship with the EU. Switzerland is part of Schengen, and also has a lot of bilateral agreements with the EU. EU’s line is that if Switzerland violates one agreement all the network of cooperation will fall. Public opinion split – some say don’t let EU tell us what to do, others say we need to negotiate. On the weekend of 20-21 Feb, the government agreed not to do anything unilaterally and to negotiate with the EU. If Austria continues to limit numbers arriving from Italy, many fear that more refugees are likely to travel through Switzerland. The Swiss government says they’ll take a fair share of refugees if other European countries take their fair share – but they don’t expect the East Europeans to join in.

4. **A summary of what ACT EU members are doing, saying and planning in relation to the refugee crisis.**

- **Brot fur die Welt (BfdW)/ Diakonia Deutschland (DE)/ Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe**

Broet fur die Welt supports programmes assisting refugees in Lebanon and Jordan through local partner organisations. In terms of advocacy, BfdW looks at the root causes of forced displacement. One of the main policy focus is European externalisation of migration control with, as case-studies Morocco, Turkey, Tunisia, Moldova and Mauritania and more recently Egypt and Niger. BfdW helps develop connections between the root causes of several conflicts which constitute push factors for migration and German external policies (e.g. arms trade).

Diakonie DE (DK DE) runs over 500 programmes across the country for asylum-seekers and people who have exceptional authorisation to remain on a temporary basis (*Duldung*). These centres concentrate mainly on giving impartial advice on the asylum procedure and social questions, psychosocial counselling and psychotherapy, as well as social work with refugees in the local communities. With a total of 14 locations, Diakonie Deutschland is in charge of more than half the psychosocial centres for refugees of all German welfare. DKN DE coordinates a large group of volunteers (about 5000). It is part of the

“legal adviser conference” which evaluates legislative and policy proposals of the government and gives individual legal advice. Diakonia DE is a member of the European Council on Refugees and Exile (ECRE) and of CCME (the Churches’ Commission for Migrants in Europe).

DKH has been active since 2012 in the Syrian refugee camps in Turkey, Jordan, Lebanon and Iraq providing food and non-food items and supporting refugees in building a new livelihood. DKH aid programme has so far reached over [600,000 people](#) – above all, refugee families, who live outside the official camps and communities who receive them. DKH is also involved in Greece, Serbia, Macedonia through the ACT appeal 151 on refugees.

- **DanChurchAid**

DCA doesn’t work with asylum-seekers, as there are domestic organisations with that expertise (eg Danish Refugee Council, Danish Red Cross, Salvation Army) and DCA mandate is to work *outside* Denmark. DCA has nonetheless contributed \$100,000 to the ACT European refugee appeal, and participate in the coordination group.

DCA is also doing advocacy on refugees but from a global angle. The key messages for politicians and media focuses on addressing the root causes of displacement i.e. fight hunger, extreme poverty, nourish peace and create the ability to live dignified lives. Alternatively, if the fulfilment of those objectives fail and the push factors for migration remain, government must help fast and near the crisis for better reception conditions, safety, etc. When confronted with refugees coming to Europe, it is our duty to help them, treat them with dignity, according to international conventions and moral codex’s.

DCA briefs ministers ahead of trips to relevant recipient countries, sometimes escorts them.

With other agencies, DCA is doing advocacy challenging aid cuts arguing that development aid should be part of the solution.

- **Diakonia (SW)**

The independent churches to which Diakonia is affiliated to offer practical support to refugees, e.g. accommodation. They do advocacy at local level – refugee reception is devolved to local authorities. Free churches support work with refugees in East and Central Europe. Diakonia itself supports partners in Lebanon.

Diakonia has no refugee/asylum expertise. It engages with refugees through popular campaigns and awareness-raising, from the perspective of its development work. For Diakonia, “refugee” means “someone who is fleeing”. Its definition goes beyond the one of the Geneva Refugee Convention and can cover also flight from climate change, poverty, gender and other discriminations. Diakonia uses the case of refugees coming to Sweden as an entry point to

its campaigns but that's not the main focus. Diakonia see displacements as a global issue, not just the current movements from and in the Middle East and is concerned that current crisis is seen as more important than all the others elsewhere in world.

- **Christian Aid (UK)**

Christian Aid (C Aid) has for some time had dedicated advocacy and policy capacity on the situation in Syria and in neighbouring countries. It is now gearing up to undertake advocacy towards the UK on the EU refugee reception crisis, in line with the following principles. These are seen as a package and are already being articulated by and with other UK NGOs. They relate to all refugees trying to come to Europe, wherever they come from.

1. The UK should take a fair and proportionate share of refugees, both those already within the EU and those still outside it
2. Safe and legal routes to the UK, as well as to the EU, need to be established
3. Safe and legal routes within the EU, including the UK, should be established
4. There should be access to fair and thorough procedures to determine eligibility for international protection wherever it is sought

C Aid are in touch with a range of UK church denominations as well as other UK civil society and are aiming to work collaboratively on these issues, both in undertaking advocacy and informing the churches and raising awareness of the issues among their members. They are also reflecting on the bigger 'migration and development' theme though this is a much longer-term project.

C Aid have funded the EU advocacy scoping exercise which is almost completed, and have encouraged the inclusion in the latest ACT Alliance European refugee crisis appeal of an EU advocacy post to be hosted by ACT EU, for an initial period of six months. They are keen that their UK advocacy on the issues should be coherent with the hoped-for ACT Alliance EU advocacy.

- **Church of Sweden**

In 2015, the board of Church of Sweden allocated 15 millions kronas for parishes for the welcome of refugees (about 1.6 million EUR). The dioceses are very active at the regional level, the parishes being involved at local level. They have been arranging meeting places, excursions, discussion groups, psycho-social groups, translation services, cultural activities. In many places where there is no public actor, the Church is there to fill the gaps. This has triggered an internal discussion on how the church could help with housing - both on the short and long term.

The number of volunteers is rapidly changing. It is not possible to give an exact figure.

Church of Sweden is actively involved in advocacy at the national level. This includes lots of media work, particularly opeds by the general secretary and the Archbishop, dialogue with politicians, with national and regional authorities and trainings. Church of Sweden is advocating for safe passage and humanitarian visas -in cooperation with the Churches' Commission for Migrants in Europe (CCME) to which Church of Sweden is a member agencies. Church of Sweden counts 6 million members in Sweden. Advocacy work could reach out to them or others who have more anti immigration feelings. That's an opportunity but according to our colleagues in CoS, it is not easy to get to them.

- **Finn Chuch Aid**

FCA did a lot of advocacy ahead of the elections in Finland on development aid and refugees. FCA's work culminated with a statement of the Nordic NGOs members of ACT which influenced the ACT EU statement on refugees (see below).

FCA did advocacy work towards the Finnish minister of development ahead of UNGA meeting. The main points were:

- Importance of development work in places refugees come from (part of FCA's campaign on right to education, livelihood, right to peace).
- Humanitarian aid and development aid should go more hand-in-hand.

FCA also did advocacy work ahead of the Valetta summit.

After the influx of refugees, FCA did lots of media work and worked closely with Interior Minister.

FCA is involved into a campaign on radicalisation whose main line is "Give a reason to stay". It is working with a coordination of several civil society actors on identifying potential reasons for youth to be attracted to violent radicalism.

FCA is also active into a campaign named "shoulder-to-shoulders" on inter-religious dialogue.

FCA works in one of the asylum refugee centre and with congregations on work directed at refugees. (Some congregations in Finland have their own centres).

FCA will also be part of a campaign focused on the planned legislation on family reunification (mentioned above) and lead by Amnesty Finland.

The archbishop of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland has been very vocal. As he stood as a moral voice, his discourse has been appealing to secular parts of the Finnish population who does not recognise itself in anti-refugee discourse.

FCA is one of the donor agency of the ACT Appeal 151.

FCA has its own program in Jordan dealing with refugees (which is not part of ACT appeal on Syrian refugees).

- **ICCO/Kerk in Actie**

ICCO and KiA are both contributors to the ACT Appeal EUR1. ICCO is mostly involved on the international work on the question of refugees whereas KiA is doing assistance and advocacy work in Holland.

KiA works with CCME at EU level and with a coalition of various NGOs in NL. The advocacy work is done on behalf of both ICCO and KiA.

Their first statement dates from 2011 when they raise concerns about the situation in the Mediterranean.

Since the Netherlands are holding the Dutch presidency, KiA are constantly in contact with politicians. They recently addressed their concerns regarding the deal between Turkey and the EU and on the question whether Turkey qualifies as a safe third country. KiA is very critical on that.

KiA is also advocating for the creation of safe passage, hotspots with capacities commensurate to the number of arrivals.

In the Netherlands, KiA focuses on the reception conditions for asylum seekers.

Together with CEC and CCME, KiA initiated a court case before the European Court of Human Rights against the Dutch government on the issue of reception shelters including for undocumented migrants. They won the case but there are now political difficulties for its implementation.

KiA supports local congregation on the refugee issue. The question gathers lots of support in churches, many volunteers are involved to help make asylum seekers feel at home.

KiA is supportive of the idea of ACT doing advocacy on EU's reception policies provided it cooperates very closely with CCME. KiA sees as a priority the deal with Turkey and the question whether Turkey qualifies as a safe third country.

- **Hungarian Church Aid**

HIA is one of the implementing agencies of the ACT Appeal 151. Before the Hungarian government closed its borders in September and October 2015, HIA was providing food and non-food items to refugees. Its work was conducted in coordination with social workers, psychologists, humanitarian experts. After that, HIA concentrated its work essentially in psycho-social support for children and adults in open reception centres. As part of the revision HIA will purchase of non-food items and, will probably distribute them by mid-March.

Outside of the Appeal, HiA cooperates with Church of Sweden in Slovenia.

Over last 2 years HIA have been advocating for a larger development budget in Hungary -which have always been very small, and for parts of it to help the most vulnerables in Middle East. HIA have done very little advocacy on the refugee crisis so far, but is looking for opportunities.

In Middle East, HIA is providing shelters for women and children and psychosocial assistance in refugee camps.

- **Norwegian Church Aid**

For NCA, this crisis needs to be solved with all European countries, Norway has commitments according to international law and it has to take its shares. Despite this position, NCA chose not to profile itself. NCA's mandate is not to work inside Norway.

NCA works with refugees in the Middle East. It has actually a long history in the region – specifically in Palestine, Syria, Jordan and Iraq.

In Europe, NCA is supporting the ACT appeal, and in parallel it also supports other partner agencies: MCIC in Macedonia, IHO in Serbia and MIC in Greece which are mostly involved with food distribution and WASH activities. A NCA humanitarian coordinator is based in Belgrade.

Advocacy work is important for NCA. The problem is not limited to certain countries but it is a European one.

It should be grounded in principles of human rights and humanitarian law and basically on the principle that people in need of protection have rights.

It is crucial that Implementing partners are consulted in the drafting of the advocacy messages and the future implementation of the strategy.

The good relations they put in place with local authorities are crucial for the implementation of their work and should not be jeopardised.

- **HEKS**

Interviews in process.

5. What ACT Alliance is saying, doing and planning?

- The ACT Alliance Refugees/Migrants Humanitarian Response EUR151.

ACT Alliance launched the European refugee appeal EUR 151 in summer 2015 at the request of three members of ACT: International Orthodox Christian Charities (IOCC, Greece), Hungarian Interchurch Aid (HIA, Hungary), Philanthropy (Serbia). These three organisations are the implementing agencies of the appeal and act in those three countries. Their activities involved distribution of food and non-food items, shelters, WASH and psycho-social support and advising depending on needs of the targeted population and capacities.

The Europe-based contributing agencies are Christian Aid UK, Church of Sweden, DanChurchAid, Diakonie Katastrophehilfe, FCA, ICCO/KiA, Norwegian Church Aid.

- The ACT Migration and Development Community of Practice.

The Migration and Development Community of Practice, newly formed in 2014, takes advantage of ACT members' and partners' in-depth knowledge to help develop useful interventions for the protection of migrants' rights. The group's common working issues include migrants' rights, statelessness, migration and livelihoods, migration and climate change, and trafficked persons on the move. It also aims to strengthen and increase the visibility of ecumenical structures related to migration and development. Migration and Development Community of Practice is currently preparing an ACT position on Migration and Development for the Global Forum on Migration and Development.

- Statements by ACT.

ACT Alliance published [a statement](#) calling for a collective and rights-based response from EU Member States to the refugee crisis on the 4th of September 2015. ACT Alliance also published in July [a general call](#) to faith communities, civil society organisations, governments and intergovernmental bodies protect the dignity and rights of migrants.

ACT EU published one [statement](#) together with CCME, EU COD, the Conference of European Churches and EuroDiakonia ahead of the Informal Justice and Home Affairs Council 14-15 September 2015.

6. Mapping the work of other Civil Societies Organisations.

The following agencies have been identified as doing active advocacy work in direction to EU. This list is non-exhaustive.

- **Amnesty International**

Amnesty's work on the refugee issue is too large to be summarised in a few lines. Amnesty publishes regularly reports and issues communiqués on the situation of refugees, analysing, commenting and mostly criticising the EU's and member States response.

Among its recommendations to the EU on the refugee crisis, Amnesty is calling for opening up safe and legal routes, including through increasing resettlement, family reunification, and humanitarian admissions and visas; ensuring that refugees have access to territory and asylum at the EU's external land borders; ending push-backs and other human rights violations at the borders, particularly through effective investigations into allegations of abuse at the national level, and the initiation of infringement proceedings by the EU Commission, where EU law is breached; significantly increase reception capacity and short-term humanitarian assistance in Europe's front-line countries; and accelerate and extend the implementation of its relocation scheme for asylum seekers.

- **The Churches Commission for Migrants in Europe (CCME)**

CCME is an ecumenical organisation that serves the churches in their commitment to promote the vision of an inclusive community through advocating for an adequate policy for migrants, refugees and minority groups at European and national level. CCME currently has 28 members from 18 countries all over Europe, as well as 2 associated organizations. The Conference of the European Churches (CEC) and the World Council of Churches (WCC) formally and closely cooperate with CCME. KiA and CoS are members of CCME.

CCME works on a wide-array of topics such as safe passage, refugee protection, labour migration, anti-trafficking in human beings, migration and development.

CCME asks for refugee protection in line with the relevant European and international Conventions which includes legal and secure access to Europe for those in need of protection; for a Common European Asylum System including decent reception conditions as well as a Common European Resettlement Scheme that puts the human being and his/her dignity at the centre of the processes; CCME asks European governments to embark upon policies that aim to address the main causes for forced migration and to take responsibility in particular for the situation of minors, the most vulnerable group, who are often deprived of basic stability, full family life and education.

- **CONCORD**

CONCORD is the European confederation of Relief and Development NGOs. It is made up of 28 national associations, 20 international networks and 3 associate members that represent over 2,600 NGOs. ACT Alliance EU is a member of CONCORD. CONCORD has a working group on migration which does advocacy to the EU from a development perspective.

CONCORD key asks are: the EU should make migration a driver for development instead a component of a security police; the EU should increase investment in inclusive development, decent work and social protection in countries of origin so that migration becomes an option among others and not a necessity; the EU should forge a new humanitarian and development policy for preventing crisis and conflicts as well as trade and common security policies that are coherent with development objectives; EU must refuse to negotiate with countries that do not respect human rights. CONCORD also calls on Heads of State to adopt measures to open realistic legal safe channels of migration to the EU, in order to reduce irregular migration and ensure that people migrate without risking their lives.

- **ECRE**

ECRE is the pan-European alliance of NGOs protecting and advancing the rights of refugees, asylum seekers and displaced persons. Its mission is to promote the establishment of fair and humane European asylum policies and practices in accordance with international human rights law. Like for Amnesty, it is not doing justice to ECRE to summarise its work on refugees in a few lines. ECRE does research and advocacy work on access, protection, resettlement, integration, returns and protection in third countries. ECRE runs the European Legal Network on Asylum (ELENA), a forum of legal practitioners who aim to promote the highest human rights standards for the treatment of refugees, asylum seekers and other persons in need of international protection in their daily individual counselling and advocacy work. ECRE also provides regular training for its members.

CCME, Diakonia Germany, Diakonia Austria are members of ECRE.

- **European NGO Platform on Asylum and Migration**

EPAM is an informal network of Brussels-based NGOs and NGOs networks seeking to contribute to the development of asylum and migration policy in the European Union. The Platform has been running on a voluntary basis since 1994. Quarterly meetings are co-chaired by the Churches' Commission for Migrants in Europe (CCME) and UNHCR, while quarterly working groups on asylum and migration are chaired respectively by the European Council on Refugees and Exiles (ECRE) and the Migration Policy Group (MPG).

- **European Programme for Integration and Migration (EPIM)**

EPIM is the coalition of 13 European Foundations, based in Brussels (Belgium). EPIM is an initiative of the Network of European Foundations (NEF). It has the goal of strengthening the role played by civil society in advocating for constructive approaches to migration in Europe.

EPIM's key asks are safe and legal access to the EU; ensure that European Asylum Policy improves its human rights standards and ensures due process and fair determination procedures for all those seeking protection; protect undocumented migrants who are at risk of destitution and exploitation, including through access to justice and essential services that guarantee human dignity; Promote the social inclusion, economic empowerment, civic participation and

social responsibility for vulnerable migrants; a fair distribution system between EU Members States in refugees relocation; reduce the use of detention to a tool of last resort only and promote alternatives.

- **Human Rights Watch**

HRW is very active on the issue of refugees' reception in Europe and its many reports and communiqués constitute an invaluable source of information. The international human rights group is advocating for more safe and legal channels; significantly increase refugee resettlement from other regions of the world and greater avenues for family reunification; expand the use of humanitarian visas to allow people to travel to the EU for a temporary period or to apply for asylum; fixing the EU's broken asylum system; a robust search and rescue operations in the Mediterranean; a permanent relocation scheme to share asylum seekers across member states; develop a list of "unsafe" countries whose nationals are presumed to need international protection.

- **Doctors without Borders**

On top of running rescue mission and humanitarian projects with refugees in Europe, Doctors without Borders is also doing advocacy at EU level on the question of refugees. Doctors without Borders calls the EU to swiftly provide safe and legal channels for people seeking asylum; create legal migration pathways to decrease the demand for irregular migration and smuggling networks; create an ambitious European search and rescue mechanism to save lives at sea; Invest in reception according to EU standards instead of deterrence measures only; invest more ambitiously in intra-EU relocation schemes and the creation of safe passage through the EU; put an end to acts of violence and abuse from state authorities.

To our knowledge, **Oxfam, the International Rescue Committee and the Norwegian Refugee Council** are also involved on advocacy work on this issue in Brussels but their website has not provided sufficient information on their advocacy asks and time was limited to conduct interviews.

Finally, CCME has informed us of the existence of an **informal coalition of ecumenical and Christian organisations** named the **Christian group** which works very closely on advocacy to the EU on refugees. It is made of Caritas Europa, CMME, COMECE, Eurodiaconia, ICMC, JRS-Europe and the Quaker Council for European Affairs.

7. Bibliography.

(Non exhaustive).

- EU Statements and documents

[European Agenda on Migration](#), 13 May 2015

[Communication of the Commission on the State of Play of Implementation of the Priority of Actions under the European Agenda on Migration](#), 10 February 2016

[EU-Turkey Joint Action Plan](#), 15 October 2015

[Statement of EU Heads of State and Government](#), 7 March 2016.

[Resolution on the latest tragedies in the Mediterranean and EU migration and asylum policies](#), European Parliament, 29 April 2015.

- Statements by ACT and ACT member agencies

ACT Alliance, [Protect the dignity and rights of migrants in crises](#), July 2015.

ACT Alliance, [Call for a collective and rights-based response from EU Member States to the refugee crisis](#), September 2015.

ACT Alliance EU, CCME, CEC, EUCORD, Eurodiaconia, [Statement ahead of the Informal Justice and Home Affairs Council 14-15 September 2015](#).

Brot fur die Welt, Diakonie Deutschland, Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe, [Helping Refugees Together](#), 2015.

Brot fur die Welt, Diakonie Deutschland, Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe, [A joint call to Europe in the reception crisis: Protect people, not borders](#), 2015.

Kerk in Actie, [Walled World Europe](#), 2015.

- NGO reports and statements (non ACT members)

Amnesty International, Report 2015/2016, [The State of the World's Human Rights](#).

Doctors without Borders, [Obstacle Course to Europe](#), December 2015.

CCME and WWC, [Mapping migration, Mapping Churches Responses in Europe](#), January 2016.

Human Rights Watch, [Europe's refugee crisis, an agenda for action](#), 16 November 2015.

- **Think tanks**

Carnegie foundation, [The Roots of the Refugee Crisis](#), October 2015.

Centre for European Policy Studies, [The 2015 Refugee Crisis in the European Union](#), September 2015

European Centre for Development and Policy Management and Overseas Development Institute, [Challenges to a Comprehensive EU Migration and Asylum Policy](#), December 2015.