



THE CATHOLIC CHURCH IN THE EUROPEAN UNION

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An extended free movement is considered an important element of human development and promotion, so the mobility granted by Schengen is considered a notable advantage. Therefore the temporary border control of some countries causing rejection of certain groups of people is of a certain concern, even though this temporary control is not fundamentally against the Schengen rules.

Family reunification is a key issue and also one dealing with fundamental rights, as everybody has a right to found a family and all members of such a family the right to live together. The concern of the wellbeing of families is already relevant, when one of the parents or spouses goes to another country, even just temporarily for financial reasons. This can pave the way for a break-up of family life. The more it is concerning, when people are fleeing from a country or leaving it for lack of possibilities to sustain a family. In these cases family break up is endangering the more family life and leaving especially women and children in a vulnerable position. Unaccompanied minors make up a considerable group to be cared for. In Sweden a large number of young people disappear out of the records of the authorities out of fear for not having a fair treatment, which makes their situation still more precarious, as they become deprived of education and medical care.

Not every immigrant is a refugee and so not everybody can claim the right to accepted straightaway by another country. A distinction may be made by border controllers distinguishing between immigrants coming because of persecution and threats and those coming to seek a better life, not for desire for mere economical improvement, but to be able to secure their children a better life.

Addressing the root causes of migration must be considered a fundamental task, because most immigrants are leaving their home countries because it has become either impossible or to a large degree uncomfortable to live in a certain place. The main reasons are war, persecution, poverty, famine, environmental problems, lack of perspective for a better life regarding work and education. Some governments, among others Denmark, focus much on assisting refugees in neighbouring countries close to their homelands. Logical as this may seem, life conditions are often very bad in neighbouring countries, because these face great challenges due to the great number of immigrants arriving within a short time.

I dare say, that the main problem regarding immigrants and refugees are rooted in problems in the home countries, sometimes due to political decisions made decades, perhaps one century ago.

Sweden has been known as a country with a very generous asylum and immigration policy, causing a very great influx of new citizens. From 2015 Sweden has introduced a severe border control, thus reducing the number of immigrants considerably. Among some politicians there

seem to be a regret for earlier generosity in immigration policies. A state committee is researching on the topic to evaluate the policy of the latest years.

Some city areas have become hard to control for the civil authorities, with a high rate of crime and parallel society structure. These factors have also given greater support for nationalistic parties and often caused arson in asylum centres.

In Denmark numbers of asylum seekers have dropped as well. The largest group is now from Afghanistan. 81% are granted asylum, one of the highest rates in Europe. Quite a lot is done to get refugees into the working market both through public and private initiatives. Although there is some opposition to refugees in media and parts of the population, this is also met with private initiatives to welcome refugees and to facilitate their integration.

The Catholic Church, the Lutheran Church and some Free Churches are doing a lot to help immigrants of their denomination and also Muslims who want to convert. This functions when refugees can freely contact the churches. It is, however, often difficult for representatives of the churches to enter camps and centres, because authorities want these places to be religiously “neutral.”

Religion is an important element of many peoples' lives and one guaranteed by the Human Rights. Religious freedom is guaranteed by all states making claim to be democratic and tolerant, although there are nuances in concrete application. In some countries there are attempts to curb religious freedom, not always as a direct goal but caused by the assumption that some religious denominations may jeopardize democracy and cause radicalization.

Religion is an important issue when dealing with refugees and immigrants. Thus it inevitably becomes a dominant topic for religious leaders taking interest in the wellbeing of adherents of a given religious denomination.

In spite of some positive experiences the immigrant and refugee question cannot be solved by any country alone. So the increased efforts of many countries to close borders and reduce immigration as much a possible inevitably has to be met by international initiatives.

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