



THE CATHOLIC CHURCH IN THE EUROPEAN UNION

THE REFUGEE CRISIS REQUIRES A COMMON EUROPEAN SOLUTION

Statement of the Standing Committee of the Commission of the Bishops' Conferences of the European Community (COMECE) on the current refugee crisis and the debate on a common European migration and asylum policy

The flux of refugees to Europe places the countries on our continent before enormous challenges. Yet these challenges can be overcome, if we Europeans consider them as a shared responsibility and cooperate for their resolution. When we observe the situation in the countries of arrival of refugees in southern Europe, it becomes obvious that the Dublin system is not working. However, the situation in the countries of coveted destination also shows that it is not possible to go on without a European regulation. The fact that some countries are seeking to disengage entirely from their responsibility is unacceptable. After all, the European Union is founded on the solidarity of Europeans amongst themselves. The refugee problem is a common challenge and therefore requires a common European solution. In this respect, we welcome the recent initiative of the European Commission for a more equitable distribution of refugees and common standards on asylum in Europe. In this context, further measures will certainly be needed.

We cannot accept that people drown and suffocate at the borders of Europe. Building barbed wire fences and walls to prevent refugees from entering Europe is not a solution. Moreover, it is a Christian duty to help the refugees, whatever their origin or religion.

Pope Francis called the Church in Europe to welcome refugees: "I address my brother bishops of Europe, true pastors, so that in their dioceses they back my appeal, remembering that Mercy is the second name of Love". The call of the Pope obliges the Church in Europe to act. The fate of those seeking refuge or asylum must touch us all.

In recent weeks we have all been deeply moved by the spirit of solidarity and helpfulness so many Europeans have shown in the reception extended to refugees. We thank all those who are committed to ensuring that refugees are received with humanity and warmth in a spirit of compassion and Christian charity - regardless of whether or not their asylum claims are ultimately recognised. However, it is shocking that this situation also causes harassment and hostility towards refugees. We must firmly oppose this.

Europe must adopt without delay a common immigration and asylum policy. If we can solve an economic crisis at an overnight EU extraordinary summit, then it should be just as easy with this crisis, especially when the fate of so many people is at stake. After all, the question of a common solution to the refugee crisis is also an issue that directly affects the values and the future of Europe.

This statement of the Standing Committee of COMECE (Cardinal Reinhard Marx, Bishop Jean Kockerols and Bishop Gianni Ambrosio) was adopted at a meeting in Munich on Sept. 9, 2015.