



Migration and CLC Europe

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With the recent conclusion of the International Day against Racism and Xenophobia held on March 21, along with the tremendous news of the signing of the agreement between Europe and Turkey which further develops the policy of European border externalisation and examines the dual idea that, in exchange for money, others carry out what we do not want to do and that it is much easier to talk about human rights than to defend them, *we wish to ask ourselves, what are we doing in this context from CLC in Europe?*

A Structure for Discerning the European Challenges and Responses on Migration

By the end of 2014 in Europe, CLC Spain adopts, through its migrations team, the mandate of the World EXCO to accompany and promote some kind of European proposal within this context. Since then we have been taking small steps in order for these not to become some circumstantial response to the present time, instead, that they might effectively consolidate a structure, a European Migration Network, allowing us to understand the scope of migrations as a field to which CLC in Europe is especially called, and therefore, one to which it must respond. This means that we can pray, discern and work on the issue based on the awareness of each of the members comprising the same and ask ourselves, what can we do from our Christian perspective, from our CLC vocation worked out in our daily lives and with our vital realities? But also, that as an organisation we must have the ability to position ourselves, cooperate with others, define priorities for action, channel proposals...

In this sense, we have been working with the Euroteam and proposing the need to form a “European Migration Team”, i.e., a group of national communities that have greater sensitivity towards this area, with sufficient experience working therein, which may be established as a small com-

munity for discernment and service that enables the coordination of the European work in this area, establishing a medium-term action plan both towards the European community itself, as well as from the same to its surrounding environment. This includes proposing some priority lines that allow the development of specific projects within a comprehensive understanding and framework for action, with a horizon enabling the evaluation thereof, as well as cooperation with other actors at European level, such as the Jesuit Refugee Service (JRS). All of which should be collected by the Migration Network, which is the structure that makes it possible to disseminate the proposals made by the Migrations Team to every national community, and from there, to the local communities. To achieve all this would require people who are sent to those workspaces on behalf of their national communities and with the backing from their communities and national councils, who have a sense of our Apostolic body and that, based on those service areas to the European Community, can establish spaces for discernment and decision-making, which are then accompanied and collected by the national communities.

At the beginning of the European crisis (note: not “refugee crisis”), as CLC Europe we have been able to agree on a first position in relation to the response to those requesting refuge. We have drawn up prayer and awareness-raising material to implement in each of the European communities which share a common feeling and sense in relation to the reality of migration in order to respond in a quicker and more acceptable way in the face of different dramatic situations we are witnessing today.¹

This prayer material is pending dissemination and the implementation of the work proposal for the communities.

As of November, we have a meeting planned that will allow us to define and specify a European migrations apostolic plan, as well as the forming of that migra-

¹ For example: The latest news is the eviction of all the NGOs that were involved in Lesbos, thus kicking out, without witnesses, all those seeking refuge who were being attended in the camps on this island and sending them to Turkey.

tions team referred to at the beginning. We will need to continue working on this matter incrementally, given that the draft presented to Euroteam earlier this year seemed too ambitious and we will have to work on simpler ideas that allow us to establish a common and solid base.

Evaluation and Moving Forward

We have just finished the evaluation process of the project developed in Ragusa (Sicily, Italy), a project for the promotion of volunteerism among the CLC to support migrant and refugee people who come to this island in cooperation with the San Giovanni Battista Foundation and a Jesuit community. This was a project proposed by CLC Italy and adopted by the Euroteam for its development at European level, requesting coordination on the part of CLC Spain as a benchmark for the European migration network. Various aspects related to the improvement of an ongoing project considered merged from the evaluation. These aspects are timely and interesting due to their potential for making a European reality evident: the South border, the possibilities of awareness raising, the importance of direct contact with those who suffer, and our Ignatian spirituality as a basis for performing the same. The evaluation is also relevant because of the potential it has in the face of structuring relational dynamics, communication and internal coordination of CLC Europe. With it, we may be able to open doors of potential to the team and the actual structuring of the migration network. This will likewise help define lines of action which can take the form of a specific expression in the form of project that, with a larger frame-

work and a shared understanding of our course of action in CLC Europe, will make its sustainability possible and even the development of other concrete experiences.

Challenges and Hopes

At the present time we still have to overcome many difficulties related to communication, work patterns, priorities that must be established, and the different sensitivities regarding a situation that requires urgent answers. However, despite being Christians with a shared spirituality and vocation, there are those who continue putting forward feelings that give rise to threats, fear, invasion, inability... for attending to the people who are fleeing, who suffer and are in a situation of great vulnerability.

We need to rejuvenate the spirit of a decrepit, self-centred and forgetful Europe; to motivate it with youthful vigour, to awaken again sensitivity for human beings, for the brotherhood of mankind, from the direct, simple, clear and non-demagogic evangelical message of Jesus, which is hard for us to live out with sincerity.

We remain hopeful knowing that it is a process that requires time, which ultimately depends on God and in which, from our part, we are investing everything we know. From CLC Europe, this action must help us consider the people arriving as brothers and sisters, and to commit ourselves to welcoming and receiving them, while at the same time working to change the unfair structures that compromise this possibility and the development of their lives in the countries of their birth.

*Original in Spanish
Translated by Clifford Schisler*

