



Churches' Commission for Migrants in Europe

Commission des Eglises auprès des Migrants en Europe

Kommission der Kirchen für Migranten in Europa

CCME 02/087

Mr. António Vitorino
European Commissioner for
Justice and Home Affairs
Rue de la Loi 200

B-1049 Brussels

31. May 2002

Comments on the

Communication from the Commission to the Council and the European Parliament On a Common Policy on Illegal Immigration, COM (2001) 671 final of 22 November 2001 and on the Proposal for a comprehensive plan to combat illegal immigration and trafficking of human beings in the European Union as adopted on 28th February presented by the Presidency to the Council of the European Union (Document ST 6621/1/02 REV 1)

Dear Mr Vitorino,

On behalf of Caritas Europa, the Churches' Commission for Migrants in Europe (CCME), the Migration Working Group of the Commission of Catholic Bishops' Conferences of the European Communities (COMECE), the International Catholic Migration Commission (ICMC), the Jesuit Refugee Service – Europe and the Quaker Council for European Affairs, I forward today to you comments on the Communication from the Commission on a Common Policy on Illegal Immigration of November 2001 as well as on the Spanish Presidency's proposal for a comprehensive plan to combat illegal immigration and trafficking of human being in the European Union adopted on 28th February 2002.

Christian organisations had pointed to the need to deal with issues of irregular migration as part of a comprehensive approach to migration already in their comments on a Community Immigration Policy in May 2001. We share the concern about increased smuggling and trafficking, as these phenomena leave hundreds of persons in dependence on criminal organisations, result in countless deaths at European coasts and borders and lead to new forms of slavery in Europe.

However, we also recognise that the increase in smuggling and trafficking has taken place parallel to tightening of immigration possibilities and stricter border controls. It should be remembered in this context that even refugees often have to resort to smugglers or traffickers to escape persecution and reach a safe place. There are reasons to believe that with an opening of immigration possibilities less people would be forced to choose these ways as their last means to enter the EU. We therefore wish to stress, that a common immigration policy as outlined in the Commission's communication on a European immigration policy and further agreement on the proposed directives on entry and residence for the purpose of employment and self-employed activity as well as for entry and residence for the purpose of study, training and voluntary services, an open coordination mechanism for a European immigration policy are of prime importance, if this issue shall be tackled appropriately.

The total exclusion of regularisation programmes is of great concern to churches as well, as this disregards the principle of best practice and the analysis of regularisation procedures.

Attention needs to be given to the plight of individuals, particularly refugees, who often do not see or actually do not have any other choice than to resort to traffickers or smugglers.

Churches and church related organisations would like to express their wish and ability to participate in and contribute to further deliberations on this topic, which affects a great number of persons. We do hope that a comprehensive approach will be maintained in developing action and strategies.

With kind regards,
sincerely yours

Doris Peschke
General Secretary

encl.