

MIGRANTS, REFUGEES, AND US

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Intro

In 2015, Europe was confronted with a massive influx of migrants and refugees. This was first and foremost a humanitarian crisis but also a political crisis. Thousands lost their lives in the Mediterranean and elsewhere, while politicians were having endless meetings over responsibility and the right response. Several years later, the numbers of people arriving irregularly in Europe have gone down significantly but the political debate on responsibilities and right action is far from over. As Europeans, we have been divided over this issue. This raises questions about what drives us and our decisions: fear, avoidance, love, compassion, justice and/or perspective for a good future of all?

European values

All human beings are created in the image of God and, therefore, are of inherent value and worth regardless the place they were born and the religion or belief they adhere to. Therefore, all migrants and refugees should be treated with compassion, dignity and grace, regardless whether they will be allowed to stay or eventually will be returned to their country of origin.

EEA is deeply worried about what some of Europe's response to refugees says about the societies that we have become and where we, as well as the refugees themselves, could end up. It is often said that we must uphold European values and not allow foreigners to change us. But what has happened to our European values of hospitality, solidarity and compassion? Every human life is sacred. We cannot allow this belief to be downgraded in importance. We cannot allow the suffering of people to become the accepted norm and for the refugee situation only to be featured in the news when yet another big tragedy happens or our nations perceive a new threat.

Different but united

It is clear that we don't serve migrants or our own societies by welcoming everyone. At the same time, we don't serve our God by turning a cold shoulder to those who call on us for protection and safety. We should not support our nation if it leaves it to the frontier states to process and host all migrants and refugees as if it is not our common call to action. The European Union is built on solidarity. That applies to the economy but also to the issue of migration. Further, solidarity does not end at the borders of the European Union. We cannot leave hosting refugees to neighbouring countries or 'the region' exclusively. These neighbouring countries need more than just money and being told what to do while already hosting millions.

Those of us from EU member states all come to the Union with our differences, including different history and cultures. That might call for some flexibility in the Union's policies on migration and asylum. However, this flexibility should not undermine fundamental rights and the basic Christian and European values of compassion, justice, and solidarity that we all have in common.

Our contribution

Christians and other faith and belief communities have a long history of hospitality, of helping the foreigner to feel welcome and to settle into their new home country. This has been important in the integration of huge numbers of new Europeans and, in some cases, has brought new life into local churches. But even if not, helping people to integrate into our society is an important contribution to the safety of our towns and countries. Of course, this comes with an obligation for the foreigner as well. They should honour the rules and culture of their new home. A friendly Christ-like attitude will convince them more to do so than inquisitive eyes and suspicion.

A call to act

In September 2020, the European Commission presented a new Migration and Asylum Pact. The pact includes several regulations that should help the EU to manage migration. EU member states are now discussing the pact proposed. Finding a compromise on such an important and emotional file is no easy task. But this discussion should not result in a trench fight about numbers and budget. Migration and asylum is about people, people looking for a future, people desperate for protection. Denying this need and fencing off our borders is not an answer. We need to act.

Both migrants and refugees should be treated with dignity and respect. They deserve a humane treatment and a fair and transparent process in a reasonable amount of time. They are not to be treated like criminals in prison-like conditions but as human beings, unique individuals loved by God.

In the end, not all of those applying for asylum will be entitled to stay. Some will be returned to their country of origin and if that's the result of a thorough and correct procedure, that's fair and right. But these returns should be executed with full respect for their human dignity and rights.

“ EEA calls upon its members to pray for people living in countries hit by war, suffering from repressive regimes or dictators, and/or natural disasters, for refugees who risk their lives for safety, but also for EU governments, currently negotiating the Migration and Asylum Pact. ”

1. Let's pray for individuals and families who must make life changing decisions whether to stay put and risk great danger or to get moving, seeking safety as refugees but with huge dangers on the journey and no guarantees of acceptance abroad.

2. Let's pray for the asylum seekers and refugees here in Europe who are desperately worried for their families back home. Sometimes there is no news, sometimes the news is tragic. There are so many heart-breaking stories.

3. In contexts of chaos, desperation and danger, there are agencies bringing humanitarian relief, fighting human trafficking and trying to support persecuted Christians. Let's pray that their efforts to care and protect will save lives and bring peace. May the Lord protect the workers themselves and provide all wisdom, strength, resources and open doors.

4. *Let's pray that European politicians will remember the human beings as they worry about security, budgets and numbers. Let's pray that their desire to preserve Europe's values will mean they balance realpolitik with compassion, mercy and justice.*

5. *Let's pray that EU nations will be willing to share in the effort needed to provide financially, to process asylum seekers fairly and swiftly and to welcome those who have the right to remain in Europe. May this lead to a strong and effective new migration pact which is fair towards the migrants as well as each EU nation.*

6. *Let's pray that religious minorities will be regarded as a vulnerable group who deserve prioritising in the provision of humanitarian visas and refugee status. Let's pray for a big improvement in the assessment of Christian asylum seekers, many of whom have been deported in recent years back to danger.*

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EEA calls upon its members to urge their governments to strike a fair compromise in which human dignity, compassion and solidarity will prevail.

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We call on Europe's Evangelicals to follow carefully what their national government is both saying and doing regarding migrants, asylum seekers and refugees. This includes those who are already in your nation, those who are in other parts of Europe and those who may try to come in the future. What is your government's attitude towards other nations and the migrants and refugees on their territory? Does it demonstrate a willingness to play its fair part, both financially and practically?

We call on Evangelicals to urge their government to treat migrants with compassion, dignity, solidarity, and grace. Any government needs to balance the needs of security and stewardship with the duties of compassion and generosity towards the vulnerable, and solidarity towards other nations. We should never forget that migrants and refugees are people, not numbers.

We call on governments to work with civil society actors, including churches, to help those refugees allowed to stay to feel at home and integrate into the society as soon as possible, and to act swiftly when refugees are attacked, harassed, or discriminated against.

We call on Europe's Evangelicals to write politely, concisely, calmly and positively to thank their government for anything positive it is (already) doing but also to insist on anything that needs to be changed.

We call on those living in a European Union member state to urge their government to constructively engage the debate on the Migration and Asylum Pact. Based on the principle of European solidarity, we cannot leave it to border countries alone to deal with the migrants and refugees arriving on European Union territory. We need a joint policy that is both flexible and fair, safeguarding the dignity and fundamental rights of migrants and refugees, and we need it now!

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EEA calls upon its members to help those allowed to stay to integrate into our societies quickly and to speak up when migrants and refugees are treated unfairly, discriminated, harassed, or attacked.

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We can be proud of all the efforts across Europe to welcome refugees in the past few years, including those of many churches and Christian NGOs.

These refugees that are still in Europe will need help to overcome trauma and culture shock and to integrate successfully. EEA calls upon its members to keep helping refugees to find shelter, to offer friendship, to provide language classes, to help refugee children to thrive in school, and to help refugees to find a job to sustain their families.

Refugees will continue to arrive, and new crisis situations are likely to force more to flee. In several nations, churches are already at the forefront of working with their governments to welcome refugees, providing practical support, as well as friendship. This is strenuous, tiring and demanding work. EEA and its members celebrates these acts of love and compassion.

Let's keep praying, funding, encouraging and volunteering for the Christian welcome of refugees.

Let's consider what new work we can do, small or large scale, short term and long-term.

This is the EEA's [Refugee Resource Portal](#) where you will find resources to help you think biblically, pray, campaign and respond practically.

We also highly recommend the [Refugee Highway Partnership](#), a network of Christian projects serving refugees.



Thomas Bucher
General Secretary
European Evangelical Alliance