



Churches' Commission for Migrants in Europe
Commission des Eglises auprès des Migrants en Europe
Kommission der Kirchen für Migranten in Europa



Commission of the
Bishops' Conferences of the
European Community



International Catholic
Migration Commission



Jesuit Refugee
Service - Europe



Quaker Council for
European Affairs

European Commission

Vice President Franco Frattini
Justice, Freedom and Security

Commissioner Benita Ferrero-Waldner
External Relations

Commissioner Louis Michel
Development Cooperation

Rue de la Loi 200
B-1040 Brussels

Brussels, May 12th 2006

**Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament and the Council
“Thematic programme for the cooperation with third countries in the areas of migration
and asylum” COM (2006) 26 final**

Dear Vice President, dear Commissioners,

Our organisations represent churches throughout Europe - Anglican, Orthodox, Protestant and Roman Catholic - as well as Christian agencies particularly concerned with migrants and refugees and the issue of development. Being part of the global fellowship of Churches, our church and grassroots church-related partner organisations are active in most developing countries, with an outreach in the most remote areas. Promoting worldwide justice, we are particularly engaged in defending the right to asylum and protection, the protection of migrants against exploitation and exclusion and are well acquainted with the links between development and migration.

We would therefore in the first place like to express our appreciation of the measures undertaken by the European Commission to reinforce the thematic programme for migration and asylum. We welcome the opportunity offered to our organisations to engage in a discussion with your services concerning the consultation document on this thematic instrument. This shows an appreciation of the particular role that Churches and NGOs can play in developing innovative and effective projects in migration and asylum.

We would, however, like to express concern regarding specific issues relating to the implementation framework for external assistance in the field of migration and asylum, limiting the participation of NGOs in the Aeneas programme:

1. According to present procedures, international organizations, EU member states, European and beneficiary governments and Non Governmental Organizations (NGOs) can all submit proposals under the Aeneas programme. However, in practice, the present minimum amount of 500,000 EUR privileges proposals from international organisations and governments to the detriment of proposals from NGOs. Although we understand that for reasons of administrative capacity, disbursing high amounts is convenient, our organisations advocate:
 - a) the lowering of this threshold to 200,000 EUR for NGOs.
 - b) the introduction of an instrument similar to the EIDHR micro-projects programme, which has a support volume between 10,000 and 100,000 EUR, and is meant for small-scale activities by local civil society-based organisations.
2. Minimum allocations within certain strands to NGOs would furthermore ensure that these organisations can more effectively participate in the Aeneas programmes than is currently the case.
3. We particularly advocate adequate allocations to programmes which can improve concretely the conditions of refugees, Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) and migrants.

Co-operation in the area of asylum and migration is still a relatively new area of assistance. We believe that the European Commission and civil society are important partners in the achievement of the objective to obtain durable solutions for millions of refugees and IDPs and in responding to the numerous migration-related challenges stemming from various parts of the world.

We would welcome a meeting with you and your services to discuss the abovementioned concerns and recommendations at further length and we look forward to hearing from you at your earliest convenience.

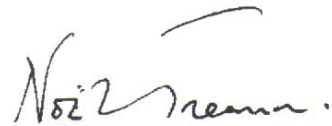
Sincerely,



Marius Wanders
Secretary General
Caritas Europa



Doris Peschke
General Secretary
CCME



Mgr. Noel Treanor
Secretary General
COMECE



Johan Ketelers
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CC: Koos Richelle, Director-General, EuropeAid Co-operation Office