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Press Release

The European Group for Worker Pastoral met in Remich (Luxembourg) from 4 to 7 October 2017 for its annual symposium. The theme for the symposium was **“Integrating refugees and the long-term unemployed on the labour market: new prospects for social dialogue in Europe.”** From the various speeches and exchanges, the meeting formulated a message intended for its structures and member associations as well as Christians involved in the world of employment.

Final message from the symposium

An analysis of geopolitical realities leaves no doubt concerning the fact that migratory pressures and international applications for protection will remain very considerable in years to come. Armed conflicts, the consequences of climate change and the injustice of the global economy leave hardly any other choice than flight and exile for many people.

Recognizing the need above all to make a commitment to improve the situation in the countries of origin of refugees, we also know that this battle for greater justice is not an adequate, sufficient or rapid enough response for those who are forced at the present time to flee.

Without minimising the social difficulties in Europe, we know that it still represents a place of peace and prosperity for the very many who arrive from outside its borders. We are proud that Europe is built on values of justice, freedom and solidarity and that it is a place where fundamental rights are respected. It is by being loyal to those traditions that we “respect our values”.

As Christians, we are particularly sensitive to welcoming strangers. Welcoming others is a fundamental dimension of our theological understanding of God, which is Love and Justice. Mary and Joseph had to flee Nazareth because of the murderous madness of Herod. By our faith, we are called on to go to meet those others. We are convinced that migration offers an opportunity for our European societies faced with economic and demographic challenges and we want it to provide a “win-win” situation for everybody.

We want to strengthen our work of welcome and integration for all those men and women who have come in search of a future in our countries. We want to defend a vision of solidarity in our countries and in that commitment. We demand a culture of openness at a European level and ask the decision-makers not to succumb to the populist sirens who advocate a fortress Europe indifferent to the human tragedies on its borders. We are opposed to agreements with countries neighbouring the European Union which deal with turning away refugees for payment.

Our lines of action for the different pastoral workers are:

- welcoming and integrating refugees to our country, placing the emphasis on integration in the world of employment and, as a consequence, housing and educating children,
- highlighting the positive contributions refugees make to our society,
- informing and raising awareness in our communities of commitment to the reality of migration and exile,
- at a political level, requiring fair and effective procedures for family reunification,
- resolutely committing to the weakest who, in the field of migration, are the most vulnerable (women alone, minors, sick people),
- campaigning at a European level for a migration and reception policy which is in line with the values of the European Union and ensuring respect for the dignity of the person.