



caritas europa

*United in fraternity for
more solidarity in Europe*

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**Strategic Framework 2020
of the
Caritas Europa Network**

Foreword

The person in need, the poor, in communion with the entire human family and the whole creation, is at the centre of Caritas' actions. In our fast changing world – with new humanitarian crises, with challenging political realities that impact the most vulnerable, with evolving Caritas organisations - Caritas has to constantly read the signs of the times to see and listen where the needs are and be ready to learn, adapt and innovate. In Caritas, all of us: volunteers, staff and leaders, we have to work more and more together, in communion and internal solidarity, assuming responsibility for our service to the people, and assuming a prophetic role in our advocacy. A better, more inclusive and rights based Europe is our vision. Caritas in Europe is only one part of the world wide Caritas Confederation for which we also take a shared responsibility. This Strategic Framework is therefore a tool that shall help us to focus and to do the right things in the best way. Thank you and bon courage!

Mons. Luc Van Looy



President of Caritas Europa

Our identity

Caritas Europa is the network of Caritas organisations on the European continent. It is one of the seven regions of Caritas Internationalis. Caritas Europa is governed by the Regional Conference and the Executive Board and is supported by the Secretariat in Brussels.

Moved by the Gospel, inspired by the witness of the prophets, the parable of the Good Samaritan¹, and by partnership with people and communities experiencing poverty, Caritas is an authentic expression of the teachings and diaconia, that is, service, of the Catholic Church². “Caritas thus reveals the power of Christian love”³, through welcoming the other and through its works of justice, peace and development.

Our vision

Our vision is of a civilisation of love and justice where every human person can flourish and live in peace and dignity as part of one human family.

Our vision of Europe

People in Europe live in an environment of peace, freedom and solidarity, where human and social rights are fully respected and each person, family and community is empowered to develop.

Europe upholds a community of values, where with deep respect for diversity, people live and interact together in a spirit of mutual service⁴, building the common home Europe which revolves around the sacredness of the human person, which cares for, defends and protects every man and woman⁵. There is a thorough understanding and practice of social cohesion in Europe between North and South, East and West.

The voice of the poor and the organisations defending their interests are enhanced, contributing to a more inclusive society. A strong civil society fully participates in a recognised dialogue with the state and the economy. The Church in Europe -and so Caritas-, in a renewed Christian ecumenism and in dialogue with other religions, loves, serves and accompanies society as a bridge of encounter and dialogue for all people of good will. A more humane economy reduces inequalities, prevents exploitation and offers employment for all. Migrant integration is based on dialogue and shared rights and responsibilities. The state guarantees social protection for all, preferentially for the weakest in our societies.

Europe is a society open to the world and in a continuous dialogue with other regions of the world. Europe cares for the common global home and shares responsibility for the world, being prepared and responsive in humanitarian crises and contributing to the sustainable development of people and communities in other parts of the world in partnership with local actors.

¹ Lk 10:25-37

² As organized expression of this Christian responsibility, Caritas organisations are charitable institutions of the Catholic Church promoted by the ecclesiastical hierarchy (Deus Caritas Est 31b and Motu Proprio “On the Service of Charity”).

³ Pope Francis’ homily to the General Assembly of Caritas Internationalis, 12.05.2015

⁴ Pope Francis’ address to the Council of Europe, 25.11.2014

⁵ Pope Francis’ address to the European Parliament, 25.11.2014

Our mission

Caritas Europa has a heartfelt commitment to fight poverty and social exclusion; and to promote true integral human development⁶, social justice and sustainable social systems in Europe and throughout the world. Caritas Europa advocates for, and with people in need in order to transform society into a more just and inclusive civilisation. Caritas Europa promotes analysis, innovation and mutual learning.

Guiding values and principles

Centrality of the person

Caritas Europa believes that we are part of one human family, all made in the image of God. Each person should be able to develop their own life as fully as possible. The human person should be at the heart of all social, economic and environmental policies. The basic principles of the respect for life, the inviolable dignity of every human being⁷, social justice and human rights are inextricably linked. Therefore, all policies and actions tackling the multi-dimensional phenomenon of poverty should foster the integral development, autonomy and participation of every person in the society, without any discrimination.

Solidarity, Fraternity and Gratuitousness⁸

Caritas Europa is led by the basic values of *fraternity* and *solidarity*, which express the equal dignity of all human beings: equality between women and men, between people of different ethnicity, place of origin, capacity and socio-economic status. The free, gratuitous and loving contribution of every person to the common good, for example through volunteering, supports and fosters community building. Love, seeking the integral development of every human being and of the entire human family, is a gift and a responsibility of every person and community.

Peace and Development

European Caritas organisations are involved in building spaces of reconciliation where there is violent conflict, relieving the suffering of those affected by conflict and addressing the causes. True peace and integral human development reinforce each other. A culture of peace and reconciliation is the basis of the Caritas commitment through education, awareness raising, advocacy, dialogue, conflict resolution – especially promoting non-violence - and other actions.

Religious Freedom and Cultural Diversity

Religious freedom is a fundamental human right. It is enhanced by an appreciation for cultural diversity. Caritas Europa regards the cultural diversity of Europe as enrichment, allowing the opportunity to meet other cultures and religions with respect and openness. Caritas Europa is committed to the multi-level dialogue among faiths and cultures towards the common good.

⁶ Encyclical Letter Caritas in Veritate

⁷ Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union, art. 1

⁸ Encyclique Laudato Si, 228

Cooperation and Subsidiarity

Caritas Europa works in cooperation and dialogue with other organisations and networks in the Church, with civil society and the ‘social partners’ and with European institutions and governments in order to better serve people in need. Caritas organisations in Europe belong to the same global Caritas family. They work together respecting each member’s autonomy, strengthening their unity and sustainability. We remain committed to the principle of subsidiarity, which both requires and promotes grassroots empowerment, participation, decentralised decision-making where possible and a partnership of equals.

Professionalism and heartfelt concern

Caritas Europa is committed to the personal and continuing professional development of its employees and volunteers, so as to assure their professional competence. All those working with Caritas need to live and show heartfelt concern, enabling themselves and those with whom they work to experience the richness of their humanity.⁹

Integral ecology¹⁰

As a basic ethical principle and a responsibility, understanding that the environment, the economy, the society, our daily life, the common good and justice between generations are interconnected, Caritas Europa not only works to eradicate poverty and social exclusion today, but firmly commits itself to sustainable development, the stewardship of a sound ecological order and simplicity of life.

Strategic functions, goals and outcomes

Caritas Europa’s Strategic Framework is built around three strategic functions. Each one reinforces the others, so as to serve the people in need and fight poverty in Europe and throughout the world. This Strategic Framework translates for Europe the Strategic Framework of the Caritas Internationalis Confederation.

Strategic function I: Advocacy

Caritas Europa:

- listens to people in poverty or who are in situations of vulnerability;
- witnesses and observes social realities to understand unjust structures and their impacts on peoples’ lives;
- conducts research, analysing through the lens of the ministry of charity and the Catholic Social Thought, and providing evidence-based arguments and positions;
- advocates for and with the poor, “lending its voice to the causes of the poor”¹¹, to influence policies and behaviours that affect the quality of life of people;

⁹ Encyclical Letter *Deus Caritas Est*, 31

¹⁰ Encyclical Letter *Laudato Si*, 137-162, 206, 214, 244

¹¹ Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium* 198.

- applies an integrated approach to combating poverty, restoring dignity of the excluded, contributing to an integral ecology¹², integral human development, social justice and tackling the “globalisation of indifference”;
- applies a cross-sectoral, coherent advocacy and communication approach, mainstreaming the particular situation of the poorest women, children and families and fostering the involvement of people in need in its advocacy work;
- responds to “the signs of the times”, influencing in a timely and professional manner national and European policy makers in response to emerging developments affecting society, especially the most vulnerable.

In this spirit, firmly rooted in its identity, values and principles, Caritas Europa strives to contribute to achieving by 2020 the following goals and outcomes:

Strategic Goal I.1: National governments and European institutions fully implement universal Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs / UN Agenda 2030) in their policies and meet related targets.

I.1.1. All European States have put in place Action Plans and Monitoring and Evaluation Frameworks for the Agenda 2030 and annual targets have been met.

I.1.2. European external policies have supported the full implementation of SDGs.

I.1.3. Appropriate social policies and measures for all in the field of social protection, family policies and inclusive labour markets have been implemented in Europe.

Strategic Goal I.2: National governments and European institutions guarantee in their policies the human dignity and human rights of people migrating.

I.2.1. European countries have responded to humanitarian needs of people migrating in and to Europe and putting the person and their rights at the centre of European Union and Council of Europe migration and mobility policies.

I.2.2. European and local societies have implemented welcoming, sustainable integration policies and measures for refugees, internally displaced people and migrants.

I.2.3. European countries have implemented a coherent Common European Asylum (and reception) System, consistent with human rights and international law.

Strategic Goal I.3: National governments establish stronger partnerships with Caritas organisations in Europe.

I.3.1. National governments have involved Caritas organisations as interlocutors in strategic dialogue toward policy development and implementation, considering them as reliable social service providers and advocates for the poor.

Strategic function II: Humanitarian Action

Caritas Europa:

¹² Encyclical Letter Laudato Si

- takes care of people in need in cases of humanitarian crises in Europe, listening to and supporting the most vulnerable women, children and families to rebuild their lives in dignity;
- is prepared to be effective and accountable during emergencies;
- responds in a professional and effective way and endeavours, with respect for the mandate and strength of each agency, to achieve the best possible coordination and communication;
- contributes, as a region of Caritas Internationalis, to the development, promotion and use of the common mechanisms and tools for the emergency work in Europe;
- makes visible the efforts and results of its humanitarian action within the network and beyond, towards the European institutions.

In this spirit, Caritas Europa strives to achieve by 2020 the following goal and outcomes:

Strategic Goal II.1: Caritas Europa, as part of Caritas Internationalis, strengthens the effectiveness and coordination of its response to humanitarian crises.

II.1.1. Caritas Europa has given an effective, coordinated and visible response to humanitarian crises in Europe.

II.1.2. Caritas Europa has increased the preparedness of member organisations and the network as such for humanitarian crises.

II.1.3. Caritas Europa has achieved a coordinated and improved cooperation with ECHO in the response to humanitarian crises and in advocating for a higher recognition of local partners in emergencies.

Strategic function III: Strengthening the network

Caritas Europa, in order to continuously improve the service we offer to the people in need:

- aims to increase the impact of its common action;
- is an expression of communion within the Church, of a shared identity and of common values, exchanging people and knowledge;
- promotes mutual solidarity in the institutional development and capacity strengthening of the network and its members toward more autonomy, professionalism, transparency and accountability;
- shows a supporting and accompanying attitude towards one another in its actions - whether advocacy, humanitarian action, social services or mobilisation of Christian communities and society – ;
- invests in the global Caritas Confederation, with strong members and regions and fosters an attitude of sharing and working together on common challenges and actions.

In this spirit, Caritas Europa strives to achieve by 2020 the following goals and outcomes:

Strategic Goal III.1: Caritas Europa builds its action with grassroots people, including people in poverty, and acts in communion within the Church.

III.1.1 Caritas Europa has strengthened its capacity as a network to work together with people experiencing poverty.

III.1.2. Caritas Europa has promoted exchanges and network cooperation involving grassroots people.

III.1.3. Caritas Europa is engaged through its practice in the Theology of Charity and Catholic Social Thought and has increased its understanding and promotion of Catholic Social Teaching.

III.1.4. Caritas Europa has promoted the diaconia among Catholic communities at all levels, with a specific focus on parishes.

Strategic Goal III.2: Caritas Europa learns and exchanges knowledge, experience and expertise to be more effective and sustainable.

III.2.1. Caritas Europa has implemented a common capacity building system of which the “Learning Paths” are a core element.

III.2.2. Caritas Europa has implemented a comprehensive system for institutional development, of which an internal solidarity system and the Caritas Internationalis Management Standards are core elements.

III.2.3. Caritas Europa has improved the access of the network to diverse public and private funding sources.

III.2.4. Caritas Europa has implemented a knowledge management system, i.e. a systematic way of sharing experiences and key information for continuous improvement, mutual learning and joint actions.

