

Statement on the International Migrants Day, 18 December 2019

Fair migration policies for the sustainable development of all

On International Migrants Day, Caritas Europa calls on the new European Commission to promote policies that enhance, foster and facilitate the potential of migration to contribute to sustainable development worldwide. This entails encouraging EU Member States to expand safe and legal migration channels to Europe and ensuring European policies do not undermine regional mobility in other parts of the world.

“**In the current political climate, we urge European policymakers to be bold and to prioritise fair migration policies. Migration is an opportunity for our societies to build a more prosperous, global ‘Common Home’, where everyone can make a meaningful contribution and live in dignity.”**

Maria Nyman, Caritas Europa Secretary General

The Caritas network recently launched a series of publications on the strong links between migration and development, entitled “Common Home”. All 11 national publications and the final European one, show that migrants and migration can make important contributions to sustainable development. Here is but one example from Belgium indicating how migrants can improve access to healthcare in their countries of origin:

Solidarco is an association created by the Congolese diaspora and the Belgian Mutual Fund Solidaris that offers Congolese migrants residing in Belgium the opportunity to purchase health insurance for their relatives in Kinshasa. While payments are made to a European-based insurance company, health services can only be enjoyed by non-migrants in the country of origin. This scheme ... aims at providing a solution to non-migrant family members who have no or limited access to healthcare in their country. Most importantly, it aims at reducing financial hardship on the immigrant themselves, as they often have to contribute to the health expenses of their relatives in the country of origin.

Jean-Michel Lafleur and Abdelsalam Marfouk, Belgian Common Home Publication

From job-creation to social security, from art to politics, from remittances to international cooperation, findings by Caritas Europa’s Common Home series show the potential of migration as a lever for development both in Europe and beyond. Research has also consistently shown that most migration is not across continents, but within regions and countries. For example, in West Africa, over 70% of emigrants stay in the region (UNCTAD). In drought-stricken Sahel, seasonal and temporary migration are a key survival strategy for many, including for vulnerable households and communities.

Yet, particularly in Europe, migration is increasingly seen as a threat rather than an opportunity. In their relations with African countries, the EU and its Member States have increasingly prioritised migration control and the fight against irregular migration, closing the door to regular migration channels. As most recently argued by the UN Special Rapporteur on the human rights of migrants, European pressure on West African governments to control Europe-bound migration has contributed to undermining regional freedom of movement and led to the criminalisation of mobility altogether. Such mobility is a key factor of social and economic development for local communities in West Africa.

“**On the one hand, European policy-makers need to prioritise fair migration policies that include the expansion of safe and regular channels to Europe, such as pilot projects on labour migration that draw on the Global Skills Partnership model. On the other, EU policy-makers need to ensure that their migration policies do not harm regional mobility elsewhere, undermining development in the Global South”**

Dr. Shannon Pfohman, Caritas Europa Policy and Advocacy Director

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about caritas

Caritas Europa is a network of 49 member organisations in 46 European countries and one of the 7 regions of Caritas Internationalis. Our members assist and provide services to millions of people in need.

Caritas Europa aims at lifting people out of poverty by empowering them and by influencing unjust structures and unfair policies that keep people trapped in positions of disempowerment.