



**Joint webinar of the two Committees Interreligious and interconvictional dimension
of welcoming migrants, refugees and asylum seekers**

Monday, 20th November 2023 6 to 7:30 p.m.

INTRODUCTION:

The aim of this webinar is to focus on two aspects:

- The dimension of fundamental rights contained in the European Convention on Human Rights, in particular Article 9: freedom of thought, conscience and religion in the context of the reception of migrants, refugees and asylum seekers.
- The importance of dialogue as an opportunity, as a facilitating factor in integration, in particular inter-religious and interconvictional dialogue, which is part of people's very identity. The intercultural dimension can also be taken into account in the problematic.

This webinar will look at a particular aspect of migration: the recognition of the need for a spiritual dimension. To do this, it is important to begin by highlighting the differences between migrants, refugees and asylum seekers. Examples of good practice from various host countries - Italy, Portugal, Greece? - show that a positive view of religious practice when welcoming migrants is extremely beneficial for their integration and can also deepen the hospitality of the host country: indeed, religious practice as part of the "imported" culture also leads to reflection on the cultural roots of the host country. Church networks also provide solid support for a successful integration process for migrants, precisely when their spiritual background and forms of expression meet with sympathetic interest.

In order to promote the enriching aspects of taking account of religious viewpoints in the integration process, the webinar will examine and address the issues and conditions of inter-religious, inter-convictional and inter-cultural dialogue and discourse.

THE SPEAKERS:

- **Mrs. Leyla KAYACIK**, Special Representative of the Secretary General of the Council of Europe for migration and refugees, **represented by Jean-François Goujon-Fischer**
- **Alfreda FERREIRA DA FONSECA & Peter STILWELL**, Pax Romana Portugal
- **Stefano Davide BETTERA**, Author and President of the European Buddhist Union (EBU)

WELCOME by Gabriela Frey, Co-Chair of the Committee for Interreligious and Interfaith Dialogue and Representative of the European Buddhist Union (EBU) to the Conference of INGOs of the Council of Europe

Thank you all for your participation in this webinar. Europe is rich in cultural, linguistic and religious diversity, but faces major challenges in terms of social cohesion and interreligious dialogue. We are increasingly experiencing populism, hate speech, tensions and war. It is therefore essential to promote not only interfaith dialogue, but also a broader form of dialogue called Interconvictionality as a vector for unity, mutual understanding and participatory democracy.

Interconvictionality is a comprehensive concept of interpersonal and social relations based on a sincere exchange between people with different convictions and beliefs. It aims to develop relationships based on trust and solidarity and to promote the active participation of citizens.

Interconvictionality is an antidote to polarisation and demagoguery to counter citizens' dissatisfaction with public affairs. It provides a framework for collective decision-making, respecting the convictions, talents and beliefs of each individual. It offers a platform to address sensitive issues and encourages dialogue rather than confrontation.

Europe, with its rich and complex history, has always been a melting pot of diversity. Given the major societal challenges we face due to the multitude of conflicts and the resulting flow of refugees, it is essential to strengthen peace through inclusive dialogue and genuine mutual understanding. Interconvictionality is not just an option today, but a necessity for Europe's future. By promoting dialogue, mutual understanding and civic participation, we can build a more united, stronger and more resilient Democracy in Europe.

This is even more important for all the people who seek refuge within our countries. To address possible ways of dealing with the challenges, we regularly organise webinars, the results of which we later publish on our website.

To guide you through today's webinar, I will hand over now to our Moderator, Dr. Thea Mohr.

Introduction of the speakers by the moderator, Dr. Thea Mohr (EBU), a trainer in intercultural communication, and a brief presentation of the two committees.

Lilia Bensedrine, Robert Schuman Institute for Europe (IRSE),

Lawyer, director of the Festival of World Sacred Music, co-chair of the Committee for Interreligious and Interconvictional Dialogue.

Presentation of the Committee for Interreligious and Interconvictional Dialogue

An important objective of our committee is to establish a permanent platform for interreligious and interconvictional dialogue within the Council of Europe. The Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe has already called for this in 2015 in a recommendation (REC 2080) to the Council of Ministers. This recommendation is entitled "Freedom of religion and living together in a democratic society".

Inter-religious and inter-faith dialogue is recognised by the Council of Europe, the European institutions and the United Nations as an important means of preventing and combating

prejudice, fear of others, discrimination, racism, hatred and violence towards others who are different in terms of culture or religion.

These are often the result of a lack of knowledge about a different culture, beliefs and living conditions. The more we are prepared to learn about them, the more understanding and empathy can develop.

Knowledge, mutual understanding and reciprocal recognition are essential. That's why our committee is gathering examples of inspiring dialogue practices.

New paths, new methods. Dialogue exists at several levels and with different tools such as :

Educational programmes, pedagogy, non-formal training to meet others in their differences.

For example, Les Sacrées Journées in Strasbourg, a Festival of World Sacred Music, with 3 ensembles from 3 different religions performing at each concert in a place of worship, church, pagoda, mosque, synagogue or temple.

In our multicultural society, increasingly faced with the issue of welcoming and accommodating migrants and refugees, where differences of nationality, religion, belief and culture are sometimes felt as a shock, it is vital to offer in-depth education and knowledge of different religions, worldviews and beliefs. The issue of inspiring dialogue practices promoting mutual understanding for a more peaceful society is central.

Presentation of Daniel Guéry and the Committee “Rights of Persons who are Migrants”

Daniel Guéry had a career as a teacher in the field - primary school - before becoming an educational adviser and then director of a local branch of the Centre Universitaire de Formation des Maîtres in Lorraine (France).

For 7 years, Daniel Guéry was international president of MIAMSI: Mouvement International d'Action Catholique (International Movement for Catholic Action), which brings together people with professional, social and political responsibilities. MIAMSI has been a member of the Conference of INGOs of the Council of Europe since 1996 and Daniel Guéry has been its official representative for several years.

The INGO's presence in Italy, Malta and Portugal has made its members very aware of the migratory phenomena in Europe, particularly in 2014-2015. Daniel Guéry has been able to bring this issue to the attention of the Conference of INGOs and, along with other delegates, has led to the creation of a "migration watch" unit until 2021. When the Conference was reformed, a Committee on the Rights of Migrants was set up, and it was only natural that he should be asked to chair it.

More information: <https://www.coe.int/en/web/ingo/rights-of-persons-who-are-migrants>

Why did we choose the topic “The interreligious and interconvictional dimension of welcoming migrants, refugees and asylum seekers”

After a presentation of the complementary approaches of the two Committees:

- Migrants' access to their fundamental rights as part of a holistic vision of the human person
- Respect for freedom of thought, conscience and religion, the importance of dialogue in various forms (interreligious, interconvictional, intercultural)

Introductory text for the Webinar on the interreligious and interconvictional dimension of welcoming migrants, refugees and asylum seekers by Daniel Guery:

For more than two years now, the Committee on the Rights of Migrants of the Conference of INGOs of the Council of Europe has sought to highlight the importance of taking account of the complexity of migration. For the INGO members of the Committee, it is essential to take account of the whole person.

In the recommendation it drew up, which the Conference of INGOs voted for unanimously on 26 April 2023, the Committee insisted on a holistic view of migration.

In its objectives, the Committee insists on each person's access to their fundamental rights. It has focused in particular on health, security and education. However, it is clear that the other constituent elements of the lives of the people concerned must also be taken into account. Defending the access of INGOs and civil society to migrants is also one of the objectives of the Committee on the Rights of Migrants (such as access to camps and other places of detention).

During a visit by a delegation from the Committee to Greece at the end of November 2022, a number of additional issues to be taken into account were identified, such as accommodation and the spiritual dimension of people's lives.

For example, in the reception of migrants that we witnessed, the question of belonging to communities and religious or philosophical beliefs was raised. For example, children of the Muslim faith were welcomed into Orthodox Christian families or homes, where pious images were hung on the wall, and places of worship were set aside so that everyone could say their prayers, or not.

Other INGOs on our committee, which focus more on itineraries, are aware of the importance of belonging to religious communities at the time of departure (blessings), throughout the migration process and, of course, on arrival, where reception can be provided by faith-based or philosophically based NGOs. This is undoubtedly an important point to emphasise in terms of the mental health of the people concerned, an aspect that is undoubtedly conducive to their integration.

Of course, we need to remain alert to the existence of sects or predators who may usurp the identity of religious leaders, for example, exploiting the fragility of people in migration situations. Respecting the spiritual and transcendental dimension of each person, while ensuring their safety, is a constant challenge.

This webinar should help us take stock of this aspect of human rights. Migrants in vulnerable and fragile situations expect international and national institutions to provide them with real protection. May INGOs and civil society in general play their part in meeting this challenge!

PRESENTATION OF THE SPEAKERS :

1. SPEECH: Mrs Leyla KAYACIK, Special Representative of the Secretary General of the CoE (SRSG), represented by **Jean-François GOUJON**, member of the SRSG Bureau, who fell ill at the last minute

Migration and refugees. The Council of Europe is an international organisation that is non-denominational by nature. It is therefore not immediately obvious that there is a link between its work and the theme of this webinar, which deals with the inter-religious and inter-faith dimension of the reception of migrants, refugees and asylum seekers.

However, in at least two respects, the Council of Europe is concerned by this question:

- on the one hand, because its action includes the protection of the fundamental rights of migrants, refugees and asylum seekers, and because this is an issue of human dignity, an issue shared with the great spiritual traditions;
- secondly, because migrants, refugees and asylum seekers themselves have expectations and aspirations other than material ones, and that taking into account the spiritual or religious dimension of the reception of these people is an issue of protection of rights and integration.

I would like to illustrate these two dimensions with a few key points.

I. The protection of migrants, refugees and asylum seekers: an issue of human dignity shared with the great spiritual traditions

The Council of Europe's *raison d'être* and its action for over 70 years are based on the essential value of absolute respect for the human person. Although "secular", this founding value of the Council of Europe is also at the heart of the great religious traditions.

The preamble to the ECHR proclaims fundamental rights and enshrines them in a system of values based on the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which states: "recognition of the inherent dignity and of the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family is the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world".

The attachment to human dignity has at least three sets of repercussions on the rights recognised to migrants.

1) The dignity of the human person prohibits considerations of general interest from taking precedence over the integrity of migrants:

It is in the name of this central value that the ECHR proclaims the right to life (article 2), the prohibition of torture and inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment (article 3), and the prohibition of slavery and forced labour (article 4), which are absolute and non-derogable rights.

Migrants, asylum seekers and refugees entering and staying in Europe are entitled to these rights. The right to life and the prohibition of inhuman or degrading treatment preclude removal measures that would entail a risk to the life or physical integrity of a foreigner.

Article 4 of the First Protocol also prohibits collective expulsions, i.e. removals without examining the particular situation of each person. All foreign nationals therefore have the right to individual treatment that respects their specific circumstances.

The challenges of migration, however great, must not be allowed to call these fundamental rights into question. The European Court of Human Rights has stated on several occasions that "the difficulties arising from the increased influx of migrants and asylum seekers do not relieve the member States of the Council of Europe of their obligations under Article 3 of the European Convention on Human Rights" (Case of J.A. and others v. Italy, 30 June 2023; M.S.S. v. Belgium and Greece; Hirsi Jamaa and others v. Italy; Khlaifia and others; J.R. and others v. Greece).

2) Human dignity means taking into account the vulnerabilities and specific needs of migrants:

Vulnerability is a concept used by the European Court of Human Rights, particularly in its case law relating to the reception of migrants. Although it does not define this concept, the Court uses it to guarantee the enjoyment of the rights recognised by the Convention to people who are particularly exposed to violations because of their situation, in particular :

In its case law, the European Court of Human Rights has also affirmed that the conditions under which migrants are held in administrative detention must be compatible with human dignity.

- to lower the threshold of seriousness that an attack on integrity must exceed in order to be classified as torture,
- to specify the obligations of States to protect vulnerable persons (to conduct an investigation when their human rights are violated),
- to require preventive action, which often involves a reversal of the burden of proof, which rests with the States.
- to limit the rights and freedoms of others.

An action plan on the protection of vulnerable persons in the context of migration and asylum in Europe (2021-2025) has been adopted by the Committee of Ministers. It emphasises the special protection that states must provide to vulnerable persons in the context of asylum and migration.

In this action plan, "vulnerable persons in the context of migration and asylum" are people whose special needs have been identified following an individual assessment of their situation and who are entitled to appeal to the obligation of States to provide special protection and assistance.

It is the responsibility of the national authorities, on the basis of national legislation and international obligations, to effectively identify, on a case-by-case basis, the vulnerabilities of new arrivals and to provide them, where necessary, with the guidance, assistance, information and protection required throughout the migration and asylum procedures.

The vulnerable persons or persons with special needs identified are accompanied and unaccompanied children, people with disabilities, the elderly, pregnant women, single parents with minor children, victims of human trafficking, people with serious illnesses, people with mental disorders, people who have been subjected to torture, rape or other serious forms of psychological, physical or sexual violence, LGBTI people and people with special gender-related needs.

In particular, the action plan aims to:

- Promoting effective procedures for detecting vulnerability and the guarantees that go with it (guiding professionals in identifying and referring vulnerable people, procedures for assessing the age of minors, protecting children affected by the refugee crisis, the vulnerability of accompanied and unaccompanied minors and access to asylum, migrant women and girls, asylum seekers and refugees, etc.).
- Improving specific assistance, protection and support services
- Improving access to healthcare and participation in disaster risk reduction and emergency measures

3) Human dignity imposes positive obligations on States Parties:

The Court has developed its case law on the positive obligations of Member States under the Convention in many areas, including the protection of migrants during a rescue operation at sea.

In its *Safi and Others v. Greece* judgment, no. 5418/15, 7 July 2022, the Court held that the Greek authorities had failed to fulfil their obligation under Article 2 of the Convention to take preventive operational measures to protect migrants whose lives were threatened at sea.

In its *Darboe and Camara v. Italy* judgment, no. 5797/17, 21 July 2022, concerning the procedures for assessing the age of young migrants seeking international protection, it considered that the protection of the right to privacy of these young migrants implied respect for certain procedural rights, in particular the right to be promptly appointed a legal representative and the right to receive adequate information during the age assessment procedure.

The European Committee of Social Rights (ECSR) also relied on the right to dignity, recognised by the European Social Charter, to recognise certain rights, even for irregular migrants.

The rights recognised by the Charter are limited, according to its letter, to foreign nationals who reside or work legally in the territory of the Party concerned. However, the ECSR has recognised the right of irregular migrants to medical assistance ("an essential condition for the maintenance of human dignity", *FIDH v. France*) and the right of children to adequate shelter, a right "directly related to the rights to life, to social protection and to respect for human dignity and the best interests of the child" (*Defence for Children International v. Netherlands*).

II. The religious dimension of the reception of migrants, refugees and asylum seekers: an issue of protection of rights and integration

1) Taking account of migrants' needs that are not exclusively material - the issue of psychological support

The Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary General on Migration and Refugees coordinated pilot training courses on "Psychological support for refugees: building professional capacity" in Moldova and Poland. The training focused on psychosocial support for children and adolescents.

Children who experience war or conflict are confronted with multiple traumatic events and losses that impact on the full spectrum of a child's contextual, interpersonal and intrapersonal domains, such as living in constant fear for their personal and family safety, being exposed to violence, suffering distress at being separated from family members and even the death of a loved one.

They may have to flee the war at short notice, leaving behind their home, school, friends and family. These experiences simultaneously expose them to many adversities during childhood. Providing children with systematic psychosocial support from an early age may not eradicate psychological distress and pain, but it can improve children's resilience and overall healing and well-being.

The training courses provided information and practical tools on resilience-based psychosocial support for children during acute and calmer periods of war. More serious mental health disorders caused by traumatic events and their evidence-based clinical treatments for children and adolescents were also presented. The SRSG's office is coordinating the development of a series of manuals, tools and compendiums of good practice for victims of sexual violence, children's experiences of traumatic events, psychological first aid and voluntary mental health measures.

2) Protecting freedom of conscience, combating discrimination and promoting integration.

The CoE's actions to protect freedom of conscience (article 9 - freedom of thought, conscience and religion) in the context of the reception of migrants, refugees and asylum seekers:

On 1 January 2023, the Secretary General created the function of Special Representative on anti-Semitic and anti-Muslim hate crimes and all forms of religious intolerance, and appointed Mr Alexandre Guessel as Special Representative.

The Special Representative is responsible for raising public awareness and giving greater visibility to the Organisation's action and the Secretary General's priorities by actively communicating on these issues with governments, relevant international organisations, religious organisations in member states, political leaders, influential individuals and the general public, in accordance with the European Convention on Human Rights and other relevant Council of Europe standards.

Combating discrimination and promoting integration:

The SRSR action plan provides for capacity-building at all levels in the Member States on managing diversity and preventing and combating xenophobia, racism and all forms of discrimination, including on grounds of religion or belief, sexism and other forms of intolerance against vulnerable people in the context of migration and asylum.

According to the action plan, this involves developing awareness-raising programmes, including campaigns to combat hate speech, xenophobia, racism, all forms of discrimination, including on the grounds of religion or belief, and intolerance towards vulnerable people in the context of migration and asylum.

The plan also provides for regional and local public awareness campaigns to combat negative stereotypes, xenophobia and all forms of discrimination - including on grounds of religion or belief - against vulnerable people in the context of migration and asylum.

The work of the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI):

These include General Policy Recommendations No. 5 (revised) on preventing and combating racism and discrimination against Muslims, No. 9 (revised) on preventing and combating anti-Semitism, No. 13 on combating anti-Gypsyism and discrimination against Roma and No. 16 on protecting irregular migrants against discrimination.

The religious dimension of intercultural dialogue:

Since 2008, in order to promote the religious dimension of intercultural dialogue, the Council of Europe has organised a series of exchanges with the participation of representatives of religious communities, non-religious convictions, NGOs and other civil society actors, as well as representatives of the governments of the Member States.

The 2017 exchange, organised under the French Presidency, focused on "Migrants and refugees: challenges and opportunities - The role of religious and non-religious communities" and "The development of migration policies - The role of religious and non-religious communities".

The participants recognised that diversity is enriching for everyone and that immigrants and refugees can integrate and contribute actively to economic and social development. They

regretted the rise of nationalism, which fosters division and hatred at a time when we really need solidarity and understanding.

2. SPEECH: Alfreda FERREIRA DA FONSECA & Peter STILWELL, Pax Romana

Alfreda FERREIRA DA FONSECA, borb 1956, holds a Degree in Philosophy, plus Professionalization, University of Lisbon and Open University, Portugal. Philosophy Teacher in Secondary Schools for 40 years, until November 2022. Elected to several management positions in the educational field, including public school Headmaster and President of the General Council of the School Group, ending March 2022. Previously, Secretary to Eng^a M. L. Pintasilgo – who, at the time, was Special Advisor on East Timor to the President of the Portuguese Republic. Former European Deputy Secretary of Young Catholic Student Movement (IYCS / IMCS). Committed to Human Rights causes and to the reform of the Catholic Church. Currently, member of the Coordination Team of “Metanoia” (Pax Romana).

Reception and education of migrant children and young people in Portugal.

Challenges in the field.

Experience shows that, in addition to the important international reports on the monitoring of education systems (Eurydice 2023, <https://data.europa.eu/doi/10.2797/443509>) the integration of young people from different countries and cultures poses ever new challenges that are particularly relevant for the promotion of human rights, including the right to education.

In a global world, how can we respond to the needs of migrants and refugees from other latitudes, with cultures and human experiences different from those of the majority in the host country?

The case of Portugal is interesting in many ways.

1. In the past, the geographical situation has led to the sea being a route to other parts of the world, which raises the issue of meeting other cultures. If we set aside the dramatic centuries of colonization, slavery, the Inquisition, and the expulsion of the Jews, it is possible to highlight an underlying constant which is the miscegenation of Portuguese families overseas, as they encountered peoples from other latitudes. Perhaps there is here something deeply linked to the Christian matrix of the Portuguese culture, as suggested by the 17th century Jesuit, Fr. António Vieira, himself descended from a West African grandmother and eloquent defender of first nation Brazilians. In the second half of the twentieth century, many Portuguese emigrated to escape poverty or the colonial wars. Many Portuguese families have thus experienced being foreigners in distant lands. What it means to be an emigrant and an immigrant is, therefore, not new to many Portuguese, and has woven bonds of tolerance and openness to migrants, in our culture. The decolonization resulting from Democracy in 1974, and the migratory flow from Africa of many people carrying Portuguese passports, who progressively integrated into social life, further diversified this experience of otherness. Today, racist incidents are rare. There is a diffuse racism, not always distinguishable from class discrimination, but it is massively rejected as socially unacceptable.

2. If Portuguese history has left traces of the meeting of cultures on the 5 continents, these should be duly appreciated. The Brazilian communities and those of the former African colonies, mostly migrants, are clearly a success story of integration because we communicate in the same language, even if there are distinct variants. Cultural differences are mitigated by a common past whose lights and shadows are now part of the vicissitudes of life.

3. School is, therefore, a privileged place for the integration of young people, given the cultural and linguistic diversity in some parts of the country, namely in central Lisbon – which is the first place of arrival for most migrants, and refugees. Compulsory 12 years of schooling in Portugal, from 6 to 18, obliges migrants to enrol their children and prevents the exploitation of child and youth labour. Attending school provides them with a very small economic grant from the School Social Action for low-income families, and access to school insurance linked to the National Health Service for accidents during school activities. In short, they receive the same social benefits as any student of the same age, regardless of where they were born or the legal status of their parents.

4. Portugal, a signatory to the Schengen agreements and a member of the European Union, is a natural gateway to Europe for people coming from other continents. For those who want to settle in the country, the problems are different from those faced by migrants just passing through to other European destinations. The latter place extra pressure on the education system, namely a lack of interest in learning Portuguese and the resulting failure of performance at school. It is also in this context that the dropout of young people due emigration from Portugal occurs.

5. These situations, classified statistically and legally as school dropouts, pose big problems for schools, since they are responsible for tracking the whereabouts of their students during the age of compulsory schooling. However, this is often not understood by parents, who believe that they are solely responsible for their minor children. These situations are particularly difficult to detect and legally follow-up: when families do not respond to the school's contacts, the school notifies the Commission for the Protection of Minors at Risk, and the latter follows up by involving the police and the courts. No matter how much support and remedial measures the education system provides, if there is no motivation to learn, students are doomed to school failure and the school is just the "parking lot" for those waiting to leave or turn 18.

6. The housing problem is very serious in Lisbon, both for Portuguese and low-wage foreigners. For the latter, who want to settle and work in the city, if they it is an almost insurmountable difficulty for migrants who. With no financial means to rent a whole apartment, several families share the same apartment, or live in the backrooms of their shops, etc. But, to enrol a child in the education system, it is mandatory to present a declaration from their local parish council attesting to residence, and those who live in precarious conditions cannot easily provide proof of residence. Schools do not inquire about the legal status of parents. That is not up to them. Schools are required to ensure the right to education for all those of compulsory schooling age. But this implies knowing which school a student can attend; in other words, what is their area of residence, or where do their parents work. If parents do not have a legal employment contract, the situation is complicated. These are

some of the social issues that increase discrimination against the poor and the migrants and hinder their children's academic success. Public support services are frequently unable to provide a satisfactory response to these issues in a timely manner. Housing, work, and school particularly affect those who have the double burden of being immigrants and poor. Fortunately, civil organisations and religious communities seek to alleviate these issues by providing tailored support to address or solve them.

7. In addition to the lack of competence in their new language of instruction, Portuguese, and difficulty they find in learning it, there is the problem of an increased diversity of students. For the waves of immigrants from Europe, learning Portuguese did not pose the kind of difficulties faced by recent arrivals from Asia. After the fall of the Berlin Wall, families coming from East European countries, even with the difference of the Cyrillic alphabet, valued school, and the standards of a common Judeo-Christian culture were similar. With high-standard education systems in their countries of origin, the prior preparation of these students facilitated their integration into the Portuguese system. Today, the situation is very different. Initially, from Asia, came disciplined and hard-working students, mainly from China. Later, however, migrants arrived from the northern states of India, Bangladesh, Pakistan, Nepal and the patterns of culture and religion became increasingly diversified, as well as the level of previous schooling. Differences in alphabets, in linguistic and grammatical systems, education systems have become incomparable, and the rule of giving equivalences according to the age of the pupil or the year of schooling he or she attended in the country of origin does not always work in the host country, or rather, there is not yet a system to ensure true and effective equivalence of skills. This situation is a predictor of school failure that needs to be corrected.

8. The management of the public education system is almost totally dependent on the central services of the Ministry of Education with well-defined rules and, in the case of migrant students, a clearly insufficient weekly workload of Portuguese as a Non-native Language (PLNM), with only 4 weekly 50 minutes timeslots. The system provides for only A1, A2 and B1 language proficiency, after which pupils are integrated into the "normal" Portuguese Language class. It is obvious that B1 students can only communicate at a very basic level and is very far from possessing the skills necessary to succeed, so they hold back the whole class, even more so since at 9th Grade and 12th Grade, they must sit exams on an equal footing with native speakers. For real equality, schools should provide for students to reach levels B2, C1 and C2 before they sit national exams. But to increase the workload of PLNM by another 50 minutes and introduce projects to reduce the gap between foreigners and nationals, special authorization is required from the Ministry of Education. To solve the problem, schools and teachers have been very creative in the way they foster curricular learning by using mobile phone translators, English summaries, and differentiating activities so that students studying Physics, Chemistry, Philosophy, or any other subject, can follow what is being taught.

9. The ideal goal of the Portuguese education system is found in the document. "[Profile of the student leaving compulsory education](#)", which is valid for Portuguese and foreign students. The fundamental question, however, is: What mediations are needed to achieve the desired learning outcome? Constant changes in the national curriculum cause significant entropy at a local level. The complexity of the system and the bureaucracy required to deal with each case is one of the causes of wear and tear in the teaching profession. Part of the

problem is trying to deal in a centralized fashion with the diversity facing each school. Innovative projects, differentiated pedagogies, support classes, school clubs, tutoring programs, all of these are means to achieve the inclusion of all students, whatever their origins, interests, or disabilities. But this would call for significant autonomy and financial resources.

10. The experience of some schools that receive students from disadvantaged social backgrounds (TEIP project www.dge.mec.pt/teip) is one of small "miracles" that occur with the few means and some pedagogical autonomy. For these projects, there are teams of psychologists and social educators who collaborate with teachers, families, and public institutions to respond to all kind of problems due to economic, social, migration, or other issues. Multiculturalism is the rule in these TEIP schools, where there are more than 40 nationalities and about 25% of students of migrant origin. The challenge is to move from "multiculturalism" to "inter-culturalism", or in other words to learn how to interact with these differences within the school context. A [historic high school](#) in the center of Lisbon, for example, which previously recruited from the elite classes, now heads a school grouping where everyone has access to inclusive education. Even its site reflects that diversity and is available in Hindi, Nepali, and Mandarin, as well as English, French and Spanish. Over the years, successive projects and programs have been tested to reduce the gap between those who arrive any time during the school year and those who are originally from Portugal. This academic year a further page was added, called "Space I", where the "I" stands for integration, a study and social room so that the first three months at school are of transition between the regular classes where the students are inserted from the beginning and the support for learning the Portuguese and the different subjects. There are 3 or 4 teachers of languages, geography, etc. available. that help newcomers through the many difficulties they encounter at any grade level from 6th to 12th grade. It also allows mutual help between students of different ages and from different countries or not. The back-and-forth between traditional classrooms and this private learning room takes place throughout the day in cooperation with the teachers of the subjects that these new students are to learn. Result? At least it is another attempt to obviate the failure that the small teaching workload of PLNM offers, reinforcing the basic Portuguese and valuing the skills that students already bring, smoothing the passage between different educational systems.

11. The school's cooperation with other institutions is essential in the integration of migrant families and their children. Cooperation protocols with NGOs and institutions that support migrants and refugees is a mutual necessity. Between the active forces of civil society and the educational community in which the school is located, there is an effort to fight against discrimination against migrants in all fields, including education. An example of this is the local existence of organizations that are especially dedicated to supporting migrants, such as CEPAC, (cepac.pt) which, being a Catholic NGO dedicated to migrants from the former colonies, has been restructured and at the invitation of the High Commission for Migration (acm.gov.pt/pt/acm), CEPAC is part of the Network of Local Support Centers for the Integration of Migrants and aims to support the entire process of reception and integration of migrants, articulating with the various local structures, and promoting interculturality at the local level.

12. Different religions and their places of worship coexist in Lisbon and its surroundings, support migrants concretely in social areas and promote informal learning of the Portuguese language, to parents and children can succeed both in professional and school integration. They are a factor of socialization and a way of not losing the cultural roots for young people who feel sometimes crossed by the desire to fit in, acculturation, and devaluation of their origins, but what is needed is to support the value of their background as well the acquisition of new perspectives of life, school educational system should be able to provide it.

An open conclusion: no doubt that there is a long way to improve, but school attendance and changes in the education system towards a most more flexible way, along with real autonomy financial resources, are essential means of fighting discrimination and giving refugees and migrants opportunities to have their human rights respected. This is an asset to Portuguese students as well as to migrants: more and better education diminishes the possibility to radicalism of any kind, and open paths for a common peaceful world to live in.

Peter Stilwell, Roman Catholic priest from the diocese of Lisbon, Pax Romana, Portugal

Roman Catholic priest of the Diocese of Lisbon, Portugal. Doctorate in Theology from the Pontifical Gregorian University, Rome. Dean of the Faculty of Theology, Catholic University of Portugal, from 2002-2011. Rector of the University of Saint Joseph, Macau (China), from 2012-2020. Director of the Department for Ecumenical Relations and Interreligious Dialogue, Diocese of Lisbon (2000-2012, 2020-...). Member of Metanoia (Pax Romana).

Religions, Migrants and Refugees

When asked to say a few words on the topic of this Webinar, what immediately came to mind was that I could share with you some of the conclusions of a recent meeting organised by our Working Group for Interreligious Dialogue (GTDIR), in Portugal, entitled “Religions in Dialogue on Migrations” (28.09.2023).

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There are two permanent groups promoted by the State, in Portugal, responsible for overseeing issues related to religion. They are the Commission for Religious Liberty (CLR), under the Portuguese Parliament, and a Working Group for Interreligious Dialogue (GTDIR), under the High Commission for Migration”.

The Commission for Religious Liberty provides Parliament and Government with research, updated information, and proposals on all matters relating to Religious Liberty; it may also propose amendments to the law of 2001, or improvements to religious rights and freedoms in general. By all accounts, however, what at the moment takes up most of its time and energy is the assessment of requests by religious communities to receive official recognition under the Law.

The Working Group for Interreligious Dialogue (GTDIR), on the other hand, has a very different purview. It was established in 2015 to provide both Government and religious denominations with a platform for efficient multi-directional exchange on issues affecting religious communities and society in general. Migration is a case in point, with religious communities

helping to house on a temporary or long term basis the sudden influx of refugees following NATO's withdrawal from Afghanistan and Russia's invasion of Ukraine. The Group's mission statement also highlights the need to forestall and defuse tensions arising from ignorance or prejudice involving religious or cultural differences.

Members of the Commission and the Working Group represent religious denominations, and are coordinated by a President / Moderator appointed by the State. The Working Group meets on a monthly basis and is composed of 13 mainline religious denominations. Fewer denominations are represented on the Commission, but on the other hand it includes experts on Civil and Canon Law.

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Let us return then to that recent inter-religious meeting on Migration. It was held at Lisbon's Central Mosque, last September, just days after Pope Francis visited Marseilles, which was useful, as some of the Pope's words helped stitch together the ideas and good practices we had shared between us that afternoon¹. It is a revised version of those conclusions that I propose now to share with you on this Webinar.

1. What do the migrants tell us?

A recurrent theme in Pope Francis's appeals has been that we must listen to the poor; in our case, that means the migrants and refugees. They should be seen as "faces, not numbers". This is obviously not feasible for many of us who are not actually on the frontline. However, the challenge is ultimately not just physical. It has a broader psychological and deeper spiritual dimension. It is a call for empathy; to put ourselves in the shoes of these people. Who are they? Why are they risking life and limb to reach Europe and other safe havens?

It is not difficult to see that these seemingly endless lines of children, women and men have left their homelands in some cases to survive, and in all cases hoping for a better life. The financial and physical costs for so many of them speak to the dangers and desperation they leave behind. But they are also a call to remember three outstanding duties that the First World neglects to its peril.

- **Our duty of solidarity** – What aid are we providing to developing countries, we who have built our wealth partly on exploiting their human and physical resources?
- **Our duty to ensure Economic and Social Justice** – What attention have we paid to fairness in trade, credit and investment? What local partnerships have we set up? Are we in any way responsible for having fed the roots of the internal and external armed conflicts displacing millions from their homelands?
- **Our duty of Care and Universal Fellowship** – To what extent are we motivated, individually and politically, to promote a more humane world and avoid self-destruction? What interest have we in changing our lifestyles and learning, from science and minority cultures, how to live more simply, and in harmony with Nature?

¹ It is worth mentioning that Pope Francis had met with the leaders of the main religious denominations in Portugal during World Youth Day, in August, so there was a warm feeling towards him. Besides which, his stand on behalf of migrants has become a byword both for supporters and opponents.

2. Humanizing society

The influx of migrants and refugees poses many challenges, not the least of which is the need to humanize our ever more multicultural and multireligious societies. This can be facilitated, for example, by:

- **Weaving community ties** – *Digital distancing* and *technocratic urban planning* tend to disrupt the weaving of ties, namely with those from different cultures and traditions.
- **Deconstructing prejudices** – Buddhism reminds us that *identity and “self”* are spiritual, psychological, and social constructs, the root of many conflicts and of much individual and collective suffering.
- **Developing Emotional intelligence** – As with other human talents, the empathy required to understand those who are different can and should be developed through education.
- **Promoting the positive role of religious communities:**
 - They bring with them the risk of radicalization through a hardening of identities, but they are also a powerful spiritual and psychological source of *solidarity* and *compassion*;
 - Their gatherings, festivals and services afford welcome and comfort to migrants who find in them familiar references and fellow believers;
 - When closely linked to local authorities, personal networks and customs, they facilitate the integration of old and new members into the wider society.
 - Recent events have shown that they are quite prepared to share their facilities with others, for the common good (they have welcomed refugees, provided venues for sports, formed centres for vaccination), and in some cases have even shared places of worship on a more permanent basis (the Roman Catholic Church, for example, has opened chapels and churches to Orthodox and Maronite communities, and in some cases to mixed groups of Christian migrants).

3. Engaging with young people

Young migrants, and young people in migrant families are an important interface in the meeting of worldviews and cultures. Which is why religious leaders should: listen to them on the great issues of the world, society and religion; explore and value diversity with them; and together develop a cosmopolitan ethic that respects both religious tradition and the changing world around us.

Special attention should be paid, both in the family and in the community, to promoting an ongoing dialogue between generations. This is a particularly sensitive area, where deeply embedded cultures of origin and fragile cultures of transition often clash and tragically decouple, as young and old collide over civic practices, ethical choices, and religious interpretations.

4. Cooperating with local authorities

Cooperation with local authorities is of the highest importance, when integrating migrants and refugees. They are familiar with the local networks of residents, businesses, religious communities and civic associations.

An excellent example of best practices in this field was shared with us by the mayor of Fundão, just west of the Spanish frontier. Working with the local Roman Catholic Diocese and business leaders, the municipality has channelled migrants to a region affected by a diminishing and rapidly aging population. A vacant Minor Seminary was converted into a centre for training – language learning, technical skills, and best procedures to access the local job-market. Conditions are also provided for Muslims and Hindus to worship. Leisure activities and sporting events are organised on a regular basis– including, for the first time in that part of the world, the playing of cricket.

The success of this project reminded us that religions would do well to work with other public officials within our health and education systems, armed forces, and prisons. These involve publicly managed institutions that serve people from different cultural and religious backgrounds with specific spiritual, ritual and dietary needs that should be respected.

5. And where should we go from here?

As a steady stream of migrants and refugees flows into Europe, it is obvious that change is afoot. But that should not trouble us too much. Things cannot forever remain the same. Change is the one constant we can be certain of in European history. Something will be lost. Something will be found. The challenge we face is to handle creatively the time we have been allotted.

On his recent trip to Marseille (22-23.09.2023), Pope Francis called for **a new Mediterranean culture and a renewed Mediterranean theology**. His words provide food for thought. Allow me to briefly paraphrase them as a conclusion to my contribution to this Webinar.

The Mediterranean, which now separates Europe from Africa and Asia, was once a sea where religions and cultures met. Why could it not once again be *a laboratory of peace*, where peoples revisit their common humanity, so much greater than their opposing ideologies?

For this, we need a fresh **Mediterranean theology**, capable of uniting generations, linking memory and hope, promoting unity among Christians and dialogue between religions. A theology that **reflects on the mystery of existence, on the harmony of nature, on the depths of human dignity, and on God** whom no one may ever fully know or possess, and we may only approach with humility **as seekers after goodness and truth**.

3. SPEECH : Stefano Davide Bettera, President of the European Buddhist Union

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THE MIGRATION CHALLENGE IN THE NEW EUROPEAN CIVILISATION

The migration phenomenon represents a challenge for western societies, not only in terms of flow management and security but also, perhaps above all, because it forces us to reflect deeply and urgently on the identity of European society itself and on the fragility of modern democracy. The constant landings on the island of Lampedusa, right in the heart of the Mediterranean, are an example of this crisis, the most obvious symptom of a condition that often leaves us astonished and creates strong tensions and divisions in public opinion.

The reception model adopted so far seems unsuitable for dealing with an ongoing and growing emergency in the face of which governments are struggling to find shared action. The problem then shifts from the first reception centres to European cities, Italy in the first place, where thousands of people find themselves in a state of semi-neglect. The most obvious consequences are the increasing number of crime episodes and the marginalisation of most of these people who struggle to find a community spirit and a concrete relationship with their new host countries whose history, character, traditions and rules they do not really know. Moreover, the attractiveness of religious affiliation in its most extreme forms often becomes the only identity factor capable of restoring meaning to the lives of many immigrants. And even this refuge ends up increasing the sense of distance and mistrust in part of the European population that feels threatened by phenomena it does not understand or know.

The French philosopher Michel Onfray has rightly emphasised that only religions are capable of forming the basis for the creation of a true civilisation, and it is no coincidence that it is precisely religious identity that plays a decisive role in the possibility or otherwise of creating a new community of dialogue or, on the contrary, of impermeable communities that regard each other with suspicion. A first question that cannot be taken for granted is whether and how the immigrant communities in formation in Europe perceive this need or are really interested in it. Then, I emphasise again, we need to ask what credible and non-rhetorical proposals can be put forward to foster this process. If the migratory phenomenon is unstoppable, it is clear that it must be governed and that the response to the needs and profound problems it brings cannot be restricted to a generic spirit of welcome.

The reflection that the confrontation with new cultures, often profoundly distant, brings to the surface concerns our own awareness or otherwise of being part of a cultural and identity context that, over the centuries, has expressed an idea of humanity and the governance of states, religious traditions and political proposals that today seem fragile in the face of the imposing challenge of the migration phenomenon. For the West, until a few decades ago,

there was no idea of civilisation that could be completely detached from the culture that generated it, which has its roots in Christianity, philosophy and the Enlightenment worldview. However, every civilisation in human history has arisen, developed and then, for various reasons, passed away, transforming itself into something else, leaving more or less visible footprints, a witness in some cases picked up by other men who came later and reinvented themselves also in relation to these pasts. There is nothing in human history that has not blossomed from ancient roots. If, therefore, we are faced with a transition that is now as evident as it is rapid and destabilising of a model of society for the modern man who becomes aware of it, the issue to be addressed is what new paradigm is looming on the horizon, what new civilisation is on the horizon, and on what soil or what rubble will it be able to put down roots capable of indicating meaning.

And even in this case, a distinction must be made between the purely humanitarian issue related to the migratory phenomenon, which concerns the indispensable aid to people in distress, such as victims of trafficking who risk their lives at sea, and the more complex picture where several different worlds come face to face, on a larger scale. The challenge, therefore, is not only to redefine the word 'integration', which is now synonymous with an adaptation to a cultural model that is perceived elsewhere as an unacceptable straitjacket. When we talk about a reflection on the cultural roots of a country and the role that religious traditions can play in this complex phenomenon, we cannot take into account the fact that the issue affects the entire idea of civilisation, which is being challenged by other civilisations that are not always compatible with it. If we want an honest reflection that goes beyond the rhetoric of universal human rights but includes the concrete, even practical aspect of this situation, we cannot ignore another problematic element: the new strongly identity-based cultural proposals bring with them precisely a different idea of 'modernity' that is not always in tune with the Western market society model.

So, precisely as a result of the cultural paradigm shift imposed by the migration phenomenon, is it possible to identify new and significant elements that can be the matrix of a new culture and capable of tackling the pervasive aggressiveness of the consumer society? Are these elements capable of bringing with them or creating imaginaries, languages, rituals that are credible for today's complex man? Consequently, we must also ask ourselves what can and must be preserved of our way of life: however new forms may appear in the present, there has always been in man the need for a profound spirituality of rootedness in history. But is this idea of being human still true today, and what contribution can old and new religious experiences make to it? Or has the encroachment of the digital and the dissolution wrought by globalisation to the detriment of tradition, of transmission, of roots, which many immigrants still rightly consider inalienable, rendered this part of Western interiority forever fragile? If there is a need to preserve, to care for, to give new breath to the inner, relational, spiritual dimension of modern man, it is not enough to carry out an operation of replacing commonplaces with others. It is necessary to open a dialogue, to accept the complex dimension of the present in order to build a bridge to the future.

Of course, there has been no lack of reactions to the new 'religious phenomena'. In 1997, in an interview with the French weekly *Express*, the then Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger declared: 'The relativism that has gripped minds today is developing a kind of moral and intellectual

anarchism that leads men to no longer accept a single truth... To affirm one's own truth now is a sign of intolerance'. Benedict XVI's warning was not about a hasty analysis of another faith. Rather, it revealed a concern about modernity's tendency towards a superficial and consumerist approach to the spiritual dimension. An approach that focuses only on individual fulfilment and well-being and is therefore incapable of analysing emerging phenomena in depth. This nihilist dimension exiles the communitarian dimension, the sacred, and too easily and quickly liquidates identities, memberships, and all those elements that represent the foundation of a civilisation. The break between the Christian religion and Christian civilisation makes possible the entry and spread of other faiths that propose their own perspective. But this process requires reflection, time, and a dimension of community exchange that, once again, claims a sacred dimension.

Religion, in a certain sense, can represent a solid proposal of relationships, of community. Its task is to guarantee, through a timeless, absolute orthopraxis and rituality, the connection, the reunion of man with the sacred and make its meaning possible. The desacralisation of Europe is a sign that the break between religion and civilisation for many Europeans is now complete. And it is this rupture that makes possible the entry is the spread of other religions that propose their own civilisation. It is not a matter of defending values in opposition to others, but of realising that the cultural structure of the West, as we knew it, must be imagined anew, not by simply looking back with a nostalgic spirit, but by restarting from the care of what is precious precisely this tradition of ours can offer the present to the future. It is therefore not a question of a return to the sources but of a recourse to the sources as an element of inspiration and as a wealth to be shared, in dialogue. And this applies both to our civilisation and to those from other cultural contexts.

From this perspective, Buddhism and Islam in particular are religious proposals on the rise in the West that are capable of actively involving not only people of foreign origin but also many Europeans. For different reasons, they seem to be able to play a role in the construction of new paradigms, in the realisation of a new civilisation. Profoundly different but linked by a somewhat similar challenge, namely that of finding their own dimension in the spirit and culture of modern man. In fact, these two religious traditions have very ancient roots whose current and future traits have yet to be clearly delineated, although some founding elements can be glimpsed that may prove to be the basis for a new individual and collective ethic. In fact, both have another decisive element in common, namely to relate the sacredness of the person with the community, as a fundamental and central element of the model of humanity they propose. An aspect that places both traditions, and perhaps even more so in the case of Islam, in clear opposition to the market society model that dominates in the West. For its part, Buddhist thought is equally alternative to the postmodernist paradigm, in that it is characterised, in its own vision of life, by the centrality of compassion, interdependence and care, which are not simply declared values but commitments acted out in the world as a vow. These are therefore distinctive traits of two traditions that make them attractive as alternatives to the nihilism prevalent in modernity and foundations of an organic worldview. In particular, the Buddhist idea of an interconnected and impermanent reality is a strong response to the perceived fragility of the restless spirits of postmodern man. But these faiths, 'new' to western man, will in time need rituals and imaginaries of their own, that is, they must

be able to speak to him, without which no religious thought becomes time and space, but without this need translating into a replication of imported metaphysics, languages and meanings. Community first and foremost represents the strong revolutionary thrust of Buddhism and Islam, able, at least in power, to play a significant role in reshaping the world today.

Following this reasoning, it is evident that the response to the growing phenomenon of ghettoization, marginalisation and impoverishment of immigrant communities cannot be delegated only to solidarity as an alternative to a transformation that is now reshaping the very cultural identity of our countries. We need a new perspective and instruments capable of tackling the transition towards a new model of society. We need choices and actions capable of concretely guaranteeing citizenship and dignity to newcomers and equal security to those who perceive this presence as a threat. The model of solidarity and generic education for citizenship have shown their limits in the face of a transformation that confronts European countries as never before with a serious reflection on what are the fundamental values to be considered inalienable.

As already mentioned, it is a matter of facing the challenge of encountering new cultural, social and religious paradigms. In short, faced with what has been transformed, for various reasons and interests, into a permanent emergency, it is increasingly evident that the response cannot be that of a generic compassion, as a perspective from which to conceive an action. But it requires, precisely, a reasoning on what we consider to be the fixed points of a continental cultural context that we call Europe, on what values are to be preserved for a serious and honest proposal of adherence to a civil model required of anyone arriving in our countries.

Only in this way can we imagine a model of community in which the various components meet and dialogue in respect of a common context of belonging. And this belonging is and must first and foremost be a recognition of the institutions and of the model of civil and community coexistence that are their expression and of the rules that allow them to translate this identity into concrete actions. There is therefore first of all a need to define the framework in which a possible model of 'integration' can take place, and this model retains as inescapable the characteristics of the democratic society represented by our European model, as it has developed so far. This leads to a consequent question as to what the limit of the reception capacity of this same society might be. Not so much in numerical terms, which has to do with the organisational aspect. Rather, it has to do with the cultural balances that immigration calls into question. With the risk, moreover, of creating social and political tensions and those reactions of fear and closure that we have already witnessed in the recent history of our continent.

Therefore, the lack of serious reflection on the migration phenomenon and its consequences risks fuelling further confusion, prejudice and fear. With the consequent marginalisation of part of the immigrant population, the increase of criminal phenomena and poverty, and the ultimate inability of dialogue and real knowledge between the parties. A simple attitude based on good feelings is not a realistic starting point for imagining an approach to the migration phenomenon. Instead, it is necessary to reflect on what values and virtues our western

civilisation is still able to bring to bear, what needs to be preserved so that new generations can build a common home there, and what gradual adaptation is required to tackle and manage a process that otherwise risks overwhelming the foundations of an entire continental system with the risk of damaging both those who are here and those who arrive. From here, it is necessary to imagine concrete solutions that go beyond mere solidarity and respond instead to that demand for wellbeing, security and future that immigrants themselves first require in order to be able to be a community within a wider community that is national first and European later.

A valuable example of concrete planning comes from a project supported in Italy by the Buddhist community in Camini, Calabria, where migrant women learn a trade, become independent and keep local traditions alive. The Ama-La project of EUROCOOP Servizi Cooperativa Sociale, supported by the Italian Buddhist Union, concerns a textile workshop that sells handicrafts online, created by refugee women using the ancient techniques of loom weaving and other natural technologies and materials such as eco-printing.

The success of this initiative has made it a model of integration and socio-environmental sustainability. The name Ama-La is composed of two Tibetan words, Ama meaning woman and mother, while La conveys a sense of respect and affection. But this name is also an appeal, an exhortation to respect women and mothers around the world, especially those in fragile conditions such as migrants with children and those who have suffered violence.

The spirit behind this initiative is the desire to welcome and nurture migrant women with the same benevolence a mother has towards her children. The project's name also reflects psychoanalyst Carl Gustav Jung's definition of 'mother' as 'the magical authority of that which is benevolent, protective, tolerant; that which favours growth, fertility, nurturing; the places of magical transformation, rebirth'. And it is precisely transformation and rebirth that it is all about: creating and creating a new life, a new possibility in a new country, welcomed and nurtured with the same benevolence a mother has towards her children.

In the workshop in Camini, a group of migrants from Africa learned the art of loom weaving according to the local tradition thanks to the teachings of a local craftsman. These are combined with modern, environmentally friendly techniques such as eco printing and the recovery of raw materials. Most of the materials are 0 km and the products are sold in the online shop. The proceeds become a source of income for the weavers and part is reinvested to keep the workshop running and welcome new apprentices. Initiatives like Ama-La's textile workshop have a very special characteristic: they are good for everyone.

Obviously, the first to benefit are the migrants, who have the chance to start a new life in our country by becoming independent through a profession. Then, the host territory also benefits, from which raw materials and equipment are bought or recovered. In addition, the local culture is reinvigorated, kept alive by the weavers and enriched by the experiences of their home countries.

And finally, the local people also benefit, who see the village of Camini reborn thanks to the new migratory flows. This is exactly what can be called a virtuous circle from which everyone benefits: the people who are welcomed, the land that hosts them and even the environment

itself. This project represents a concrete and immediate example of a path on which to build that new community from which will flourish the inspirations, the elements, the dialogue capable of imagining the Europe to come.

Information Camini project <https://www.solidarum.org/inclusion-sociale/camini-village-deserte-revit-grace-aux-refugies>

The presentations were followed by a discussion among the participants and concluding remarks by Dr. Gerhard Ermischer, President of the Conference of INGOs