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People dying on their journey in search for life with dignity

Global Ecumenical Network on Migration,  
Manila, Philippines, 6 November 2012



CCME

CCME – the ecumenical agency on

- Migration and Integration
- Asylum and Refugees
- Against Racism and Discrimination in Europe



Created in the image of God

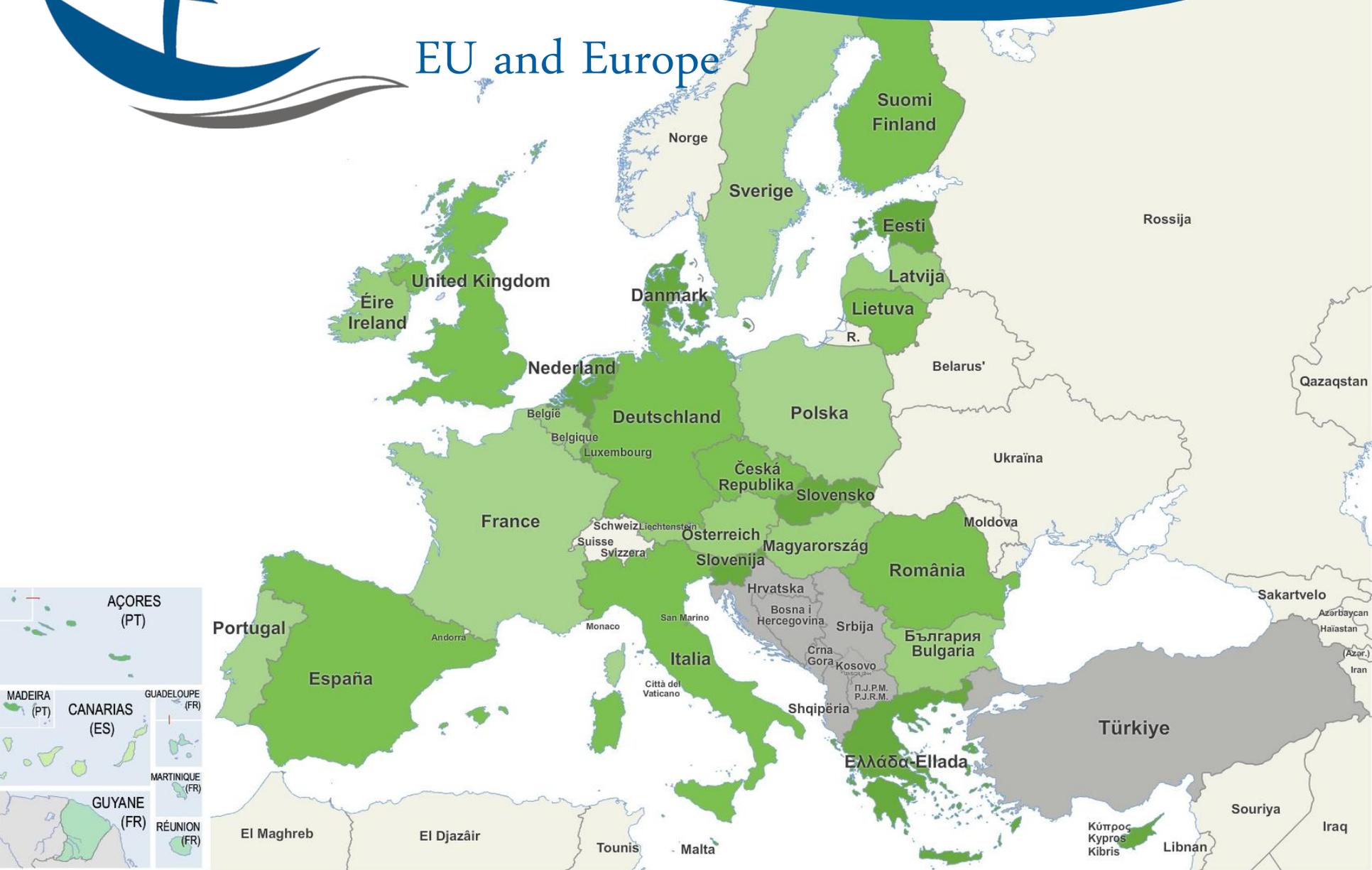
Migrants are

- Forced to leave their home
  - Violence and war - refugees
  - Persecution - refugees
  - Drought and famine
  - Environmental degradation, floods, natural disasters
- Seeking secure and sustainable income for their family
- Moving out of choice, e.g. to marry and form a family, or join family members
- Looking for something new in life, or
- called for a mission





# EU and Europe





## The Mediterranean region

- The Mediterranean region is the cradle of Christianity, through movement of missionaries across the Sea and throughout the region, today one would call this migration, the first Christian congregations were founded in the South as well as in the North of the Mediterranean Sea.
- Migration in the Mediterranean region is today high on the political agenda of European countries.
- The Mediterranean region is a region of violent conflicts, forcing people to leave their homes, but it is also a transit region as well as home to thousands of refugees.
- Today, sadly and unfortunately, the Mediterranean Sea can be regarded as a mass grave of thousands of dead and missing persons.



## The case of Greece

- **Greece: EU external border to Turkey**
  - **Last year main entry point Evros river**
  - **Push back operations**

### **Colleagues from Ecumenical Refugee Program report:**

*We heard a very very sad story from a Syrian old lady (80 years old) and her son of people thrown into the river, between them, there were families with babies who were lost in the water. I think a newspaper is going to make a whole story out of this..and there are a lot of other stories like this.*



## The case of Greece

- New arrivals on islands Mitelini, Samos
- Asylum figures not dramatically high, but: people do not have a chance to lodge their application!
- Financial crisis: cuts in public spending and employment
- Parallel spending on asylum and border management required by EU
- Rise in racism, violence against migrants
- Racist organisation Golden Dawn links to police stations
- Frustration in society fuels racist views



## Persons dying on their journey to Europe

- January 1993 to  
June 2012: **16.264**  
documented deaths
- 2011: 1.600-2.500





## Borders and Boundaries

### Role of national borders

(nation state)

- Protection
- Inclusion
- Exclusion

Which role in times of globalisation and internationalisation?



## Borders and Boundaries

### Crossing borders legally

- Visa procedures and conditions
- Fees (visa, departure, passports, applications)

### Demand: Rights-based

- Transparency
- Accessibility



## Borders and Boundaries

**Absence of accessibility leads to**

- **Irregular migration**
- **Smuggling**
- **Trafficking**



# EU Borders and Actors

**EU Member States**

**FRONTEX (since 2006)**

**EASO since (2011-12)**

**EU External Action Service (since 2010)**

**UN and international organisations**

UNHCR

IOM

Council of Europe



## Human Rights Standards and Rights-based approach

### Human rights standards for

- Border guards and procedures
  - Asylum and refugee, international protection status determination
  - assessment of protection needs of individuals, particularly victims of trafficking
  - Law of the Sea: Obligation to search and rescue persons at risk
- Involvement in Frontex consultative forum on fundamental rights



## Day of intercession in memory of those who have died at the borders of the EU

Decision of the Assembly of the Conference of European Churches, Lyon, July 2009:

*„As churches in Europe we commit ourselves to commemorate those who have died on their journey to find a dignified life in Europe through an annual day of prayer.“*

➤ **Worship material at: [www.ccme.be](http://www.ccme.be)**



## Recommendations for WCC (Assembly) and Global Ecumenical Network

- Day of Remembrance globally?
- Advocacy for rights based approach to migration
- Call for recognition of protection needs (refugees, climate displacement, famine)
- Caring for people in deportation detention and removal/deportation procedures
- Re-discover and emphasise solidarity, e.g. Greece in Europe
- Sharing responsibility for „the other“ as only with the „other“ we can find our identity.
- Who is our neighbour today? Where would Jesus be going today?



## Migration: a normal phenomenon, A blessing (grace), not a curse

- Make migration safe
- Value and respect the dignity of every person created in the image of God
- Cherish diversity and migrants as exceptional people, but do neither expect too little nor too much
- Overcome concepts of sending and receiving countries: most countries are both and have to accept old and new minorities!
- „so then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints, and also members of the household of God" (Eph 2, 19)



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Thank you!

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[www.ccme.be](http://www.ccme.be)

[www.migration2010.eu](http://www.migration2010.eu)