



HOW DO HUMANITARIAN CORRIDORS WORK?

An ecumenical project from Italy, a sign of hope for Europe

Humanitarian corridors are the result of an ecumenical collaboration between Catholics and Protestants: the Community of Sant'Egidio, the Federation of Protestant Churches in Italy (FCEI), the Waldensian and Methodist Churches have decided to join forces for a high-profile humanitarian project. On December 2015, they signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of the Interior.

The Humanitarian Corridors envisage the arrival in our country, over a two-year period, of thousands of refugees from Lebanon (mostly Syrians who fled the war), Morocco (where land most of those coming from sub-Saharan countries affected by civil wars and widespread violence) and Ethiopia (Eritreans, Somalis and Sudanese) regardless of their religious and ethnic background.

IT IS A PILOT PROJECT, THE FIRST ONE OF ITS KIND IN EUROPE, AND HAS AS ITS MAIN

OBJECTIVES:

- to prevent refugees from travelling on “death” boats in the Mediterranean
- to combat the deadly business of human smugglers and traffickers
- to allow people in “vulnerable conditions” (e.g. victims of persecution, torture and violence, unaccompanied children, families with children, women, the elderly, sick people, the disabled) to enter legally into Italy on a humanitarian visa, with the possibility to seek asylum;
- to allow safe entry into Italy for themselves and for everyone, since the issuing of humanitarian visas requires all necessary controls to be made by the Italian authorities.

The proposing associations, through direct contacts in the countries involved in the project or through reports provided by local actors (e.g. local NGOs, associations, international organisations, churches and ecumenical organisations, etc.) have prepared a list of potential beneficiaries. Each situation is verified first by the people of the associations and then by the Italian authorities. The lists of potential beneficiaries are sent to the Italian consular authorities of the countries involved to allow monitoring by the Ministry of the Interior. Italian consulates in the countries concerned finally issue “visas with limited territorial validity” pursuant to article 25 of EC Regulation no. 810/2009 of 13 July 2009, which established the community code of the visas, and which gives a Member State the possibility to issue visas for humanitarian reasons or national interest or because of international obligations.

For these reasons, the humanitarian corridors are proposed as a replicable model by the countries of the Schengen area and not only by associations or privates.

THE ORGANISATIONS THAT HAVE PROPOSED THE PROJECT TO THE ITALIAN STATE ARE

COMMITTED TO PROVIDING:

- legal assistance to beneficiaries of the visas in the submission of the application for international protection;
- hospitality and accommodation for a reasonable period of time;
- economic support for the transfer to Italy;
- support in the integration process in our country.

THE INITIATIVE IS COMPLETELY SELF-FUNDED

The Humanitarian Corridor project does not weigh in any way on the State: funds for the creation of the project come mainly from the “8 x 1000” system of the Waldensian Church, but also from other fundraising efforts, such as the donation campaign launched by the Community of Sant’Egidio.

The Community of Sant’Egidio, the Federation of Protestant Churches (as part of the Mediterranean Hope project) and the Tavola Valdese through the Synod Commission for the Diaconate (CSD), cover the costs for hosting refugees. In addition, promoters of the project with the collaboration of other partners and associations, such as the Pope John XXIII Community, present for months in Tel Abbas, Lebanon, have helped to identify several beneficiaries of the project.