

Migrare

CONVEGNO
NAZIONALE

» COMPLESSO
MONUMENTALE
DELLO STERI

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Appeal to the Europe
of Enlightenment



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UN PONTE TRA LE CULTURE

INIZIATIVA INSERITA NEL PROGRAMMA



PROMOSSO
DA



Appeal to the Europe of Enlightenment

We are a group of researchers, workers and students, women and men based at the University of Palermo, and this document is a call for members of other European universities to contribute towards the construction of a space dedicated to observing and proposing action in contexts involving human rights and equality, in particular of migrants today, but also with an eye towards the rights of future generations.

It is important for us to start this initiative in Palermo as Sicily has been and is still today a major centre of both emigration and of immigration. We are conscious of and indignant about the grave violations of human rights and dignity to which thousands of men, women and children are subjected during their attempt to reach our shores, and often even after their arrival here in Europe. We are also sadly aware that many, far too many, young people are migrating away from the South of Italy towards any place, even outside Europe, that might seem to offer a quality of life that is simply not possible in the place where they were born. The Mediterranean Sea is in many ways one of the central nodes which will determine many aspects of our future, and not just the future of Europe.

We believe that the role of universities should be that of building up a solid network of facts and analyses that refuses and refutes the oversimplification of political slogans and their language of hate and fear. The validity of migrant policies depends on the reasoning behind them, on the facts they take, or do not take, into consideration, their respect of inviolable human rights and, last but not least, their effectiveness in promoting acceptance and integration. This is also the best way to foster the integration of young people in Southern Europe and everywhere in the world. For this reason, we believe that it is our duty to encourage the circulation of people and the discussion of ideas among students and researchers at both school and university levels, in Italy and abroad.

In our view a global discussion aimed at producing global policies can be postponed no longer, and should be founded on the following points:

1. Migration must be seen as part of a larger context which includes: climate change; the reduction or disappearance of non-renewable resources such as land and water; the insufficiency of sustainable food resources, the dominance of financial transactions over the real economy; the appearance of authoritarian organisations and parties threatening democracy and freedom. In this scenario in uninterrupted evolution, the recognition of the right of people to migrate would be a significant contribution towards the reaffirmation of democracy and freedom today and for future generations.
2. Migrant policies in Italy and in Europe must primarily guarantee the respect of the fundamental human rights as defined by the international community. The first of these is the right to health and all this entails. More in general, the rights of the weak are guaranteed in our own Constitution; they are defined in the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights and in the constitutions of most democratic countries. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights has recently celebrated its 70th anniversary and in art. 14 states that: «Everyone has the right to seek and to enjoy in other countries asylum from persecution». Policies which deny the freedom of circulation of all human beings everywhere on the planet constitute a major step backwards in civil rights in all those countries which attempt to implement them.

3. Human lives and human dignity are at risk every time a migrant is exposed to extreme conditions such as during their journeys across the Sahara or the Mediterranean Sea. In many of the countries they travel through, they are predestined victims of detention, torture and sexual violence. The indifference of the silent majority and the unimportance given to human lives are undermining the foundations of our civilisation, which arose also out of a total rejection of the tragic practices of the past. These attitudes have devastating consequences in that racism is often not the cause, but the direct result of the oppression and violations of rights of weaker people and peoples.

4. Education and formation are the sectors in which to teach the respect of differences and their valorisation, as well as the fight against economic and social inequalities. These principles should form part and parcel of the educational process of all young Europeans in order to make them aware of the complexity of modern societies. The same principles should guide the integration of new citizens and migrants, adults and children alike, as all migrants have the right to learn about the culture and the language, both written and spoken, of the country which is offering them hospitality. Acquiring familiarity with these aspects is a fundamental step before they can be truly “included” in their new society. We consider the construction of educational projects open towards multiple interwoven points of view to be one giant leap towards the dismantling of stereotypes and commonplaces, towards new ways to be part of this world.

Traduzione di **Neil Andrew Walker** (Centro Linguistico di Ateneo)

