

Minutes of the CEAR visit in the framework of the INTEGRA project, carried out on 13/12/2022 in Valencia.

This document briefly reflects the most important issues discussed in the framework of the meeting between the project partners and a representative of CEAR at its office in Valencia:

- About CEAR:
 - CEAR stands for “Comisión de Ayuda al Refugiado” (Refugee Aid Commission)
 - It is a non governmental organization working since 1979 defending the right to asylum and human rights, promoting the integral development of refugees fleeing armed conflicts or human rights violations, asylum seekers, stateless persons and migrants in need of international protection and/or at risk of social exclusion.
 - CEAR provides direct and comprehensive care to refugees in various areas: from reception, job placement and psychosocial care, to legal defence and complaints to advance in the recognition of the rights of refugees. CEAR has reception centres for asylum seekers and refugees, where they are provided with a space to advance in the process of their autonomy and full social integration. In this process they are accompanied by multidisciplinary professional teams of social, psychological, legal and employment care. CEAR is a leading organisation in the field of asylum law, working directly with refugees, migrants and stateless persons.
 - CEAR also has an important branch dedicated to research and advocacy, in order to make visible the human rights violations committed in Spain and Europe in the field of migration
 - CEAR employs 1.184 people, 71% of whom are women.
 - In 2021, CEAR attended 31.998 people:
 - 79% of asylum seekers
 - 1% stateless persons
 - 20% vulnerable migrants
- About the situation of migrant people:
 - In 2021 at least 50.945 people risked their lives trying to reach Spanish territory.
 - At least 2.048 migrants died in the Mediterranean Sea trying to reach to Europe.
 - In the world, in 2021 at least 89,3 million people were forcibly displaced to seek refugee, the highest number known to date.
- About the right to asylum in Spain:
 - In 2021, 65,404 applications for international protection were lodged in Spain, a decrease of more than 26% compared to the previous year, confirming the downward trend that began with the start of the pandemic in March 2020.
 - During the two years of this global pandemic caused by the COVID-19, asylum applications in Spain have fallen by more than 55%. This decrease is mainly due to the closure of air borders, which made access to Spain more difficult in order to formalise applications for international protection.
 - In general, it is worth highlighting the increase in the recognition rate in Spain, which has exceeded 10%. Although it is true that it has doubled in relation to the year

2020, it is still very far from the recognition rate of the European Union's recognition rate of 35% in 2021.

- In terms of migratory flows, the migratory trend of the Canary Islands route has been consolidated, which was reactivated as of September 2019 due to the closure of the Strait of Gibraltar and the Alboran Sea. This route is way more dangerous than the Strait of Gibraltar, due to the open seas the boats have to face, along with the strong sea currents given in the area.
- The pandemic-related restrictions on movement that have continued for almost the entire year 2021 have greatly increased the difficulties of accessing the international protection procedure.
- Once inside the national territory, the difficulties have been substantially increased given the new system implemented after the pandemic of telematic access to the international protection procedure. The main difficulty lies in the scarce or non-availability of appointments through the Ministry of Interior's online platform, which is mandatory in order to formalise the application for international protection. This generates an invisible collapse in access to the international protection procedure.
- The five Autonomous Communities with the highest number of applications in 2021 were, in descending order: Community of Madrid (18,295), Catalonia (8,519), Andalusia (6,902), Canary Islands (5,495) and Valencian Community (4,259).
- About the work of the CEAR representative:
 - She is working as Spanish teacher for migrant people.
 - She works in the framework of a project aimed exclusively at women. This is important because in the case of women from some Muslim countries, there are significant restrictions on their freedom of assembly. Apart from the permission of their guardian, they are prohibited from meeting with other men. Thanks to this non-mixed approach, it is possible to offer training to these women, whose possibilities for integration would otherwise be very limited.
 - The training workshops also provide a gateway to other services offered by the organisation. It is a way of establishing bonds of trust that allow for other types of interventions of a more social nature, such as detecting situations of gender violence, lack of coverage of basic needs, lack of schooling for minors, etc.