

Further Information

Migrationspolitische Leitlinien des Schweizerischen Evangelischen Kirchenbundes (SEK), Bern 1997.

(to order ring 031 370 25 70)

Leitfaden zur Integrationskampagne Joint future (FaMi/Caritas/ HEKS) Bern 2001. (to order see below)

Für eine menschliche Asylpolitik.

Stellungnahme der Christkatholischen Landeskirche der Schweiz, der Schweizerischen Bischofskonferenz, des SEK, der Caritas Schweiz und des HEKS, Bern 2003.

(to order ring 031 370 25 70)

Zeitschrift vice-versa der Fachstelle Migration.

(to order see below)

www.refbejuso.ch/migration – Hintergrundmaterial zur Arbeit der Fachstelle Migration und zum migrationspolitischen Credo.

www.unhcr.ch – UN High Commissioner for Refugees.

www.unhchr.ch – UN High Commissioner for Human Rights.

www.asyl.admin.ch – Swiss Federal Office for Refugees.

www.auslaender.ch – Swiss Federal Office of Immigration, Integration and Emigration.

www.ekr-cfr.ch – Eidgenössische Kommission gegen Rassismus.

www.statistik.admin.ch – Swiss Federal Statistical Office.

www.humanrights.ch – Verein Menschenrechte Schweiz (MERS).

www.unine.ch/fsm – Swiss Forum for Migration and Population Studies, Neuchâtel.

www.sosf.ch – Solidarité sans frontières.

www.sfh-osar.ch – Schweizerische Flüchtlingshilfe.

www.migration.bl.bs.ch – Tatsachen gegen Vorurteile, Basler Stelle für Integration.

www.haus-der-religionen.ch – Haus der Religionen, Bern.

Translation: Lars Simpson

This document is also available in German and French.

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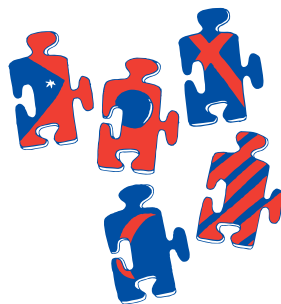
www.refbejuso.ch/migration

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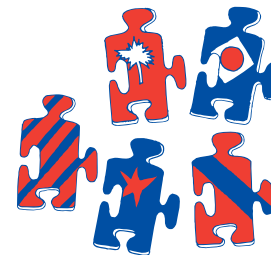


Reformed Churches
Berne – Jura – Solothurn
Switzerland

The politics of migration: a creed



The politics of migration: a creed



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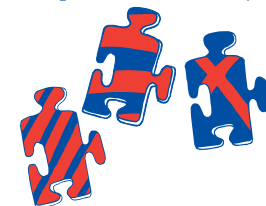
Issues of migration are controversial. They are often used for political ends. More often than not discussion is reduced to a few heated topics (admission, repression and deterrence) whilst other equally important matters of concern disappear altogether from the public arena.

The end is not yet in sight as the global situation is such that an ever increasing number of people set their hopes on migrating to more favourable living conditions. Furthermore a number of items on the political agenda in Switzerland are sure to provoke further discussion: the revision of the Alien and Asylum Act and that of the Citizenship Act, which is intended to make the process of naturalisation easier for second and third generation foreign residents.

The Migration Unit of the Reformed Churches Berne-Jura-Solothurn seeks, with its short creed, to explain the rights it believes to be at stake in the present debate and the rights it is committed to advocating. The Unit will continue to defend these rights even when this might cause offence as it believes basic human rights of migrants are at stake. Furthermore there is also the issue of safeguarding the dignity of our own country and its claim to be a democracy under the rule of law.

There is actually little new to be found in these principles as the churches have been advocating them for decades. They are compelled to do so through obedience to the Good News of Jesus and in faithfulness to the Christian tradition which are both unequivocal in such questions.

The following sections are formulated very concisely. They require further explanation and discussion. The same is true of the Bible passages which have been given. They are not intended as 'proofs' but rather as references and encouragement for further reading. The Migration Unit is pleased when such discussions take place and is always happy to be involved.



All people are made in the image of God and must therefore be protected in their dignity.

Gen 1.26; Col 1.15ff; Gal 3.26–4.7.

We believe this principle to be violated when...

→ political debates and laws regarding foreigners place foreigners per se under suspicion. (The draft of the new Alien Act tends to view migration largely as an issue of controlling foreigners. Under the heading 'Prevention against the misuse of the law' they are restricted in the way they live and their private sphere is infringed through the amassing of personal data.)

→ the foreigner is seen only in terms of providing the desired labour force. This has inhuman consequences, for example, when a foreigner is forced to leave the country as a result of unemployment or injury on the grounds that her 'grounds for residency' are no longer valid.

→ new forms of short-term residency are introduced which are akin to the inhuman seasonal statute, which has finally been abolished.

→ in asylum laws ever severer new measures are imposed, especially with regards to repressive sanctions.

→ with the revision of the Asylum Act the idea of asylum itself is infringed and victims of persecution are prevented from having access to fair proceedings.



Fundamental rights must apply equally to all people.

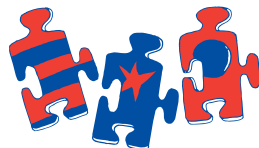
Deut 5.12–15; Mt 7.12; Jas 2.1–6.

We believe this principle to be violated when...

→ racism makes itself felt in daily life or in laws and laws are passed which encourage a spirit of discrimination (cf. the hierarchy of different residency permits).

→ foreigners are divided into two classes according to their country of origin and their basic rights are then either granted or denied according to this (e.g., the rights of marriage and family reunification).

→ the law contains qualifications that leave it to the discretion of officials whether to uphold or deny the rights of migrants.



The family is to be protected as the foremost place of belonging, fulfilment, mutual acceptance and integration.

Gen 2.24; Deut 24.5; Jer 29.1–7; Ruth; Lev 25; Neh 5; Ex 20.5.

We believe this principle to be violated when...

→ people who have lived a long time in Switzerland are denied the right to live together with their family and laws deny or severely restrict the right of family reunification. (This right should also be granted to those who have been given temporary protection if their stay is extended over years. As with EU citizens, family reunification should apply to children up to the age of 21 years, to parents and grandparents and should still be possible after more than 5 years residency.)

→ family reunification is not possible in the case of immigrants with short-stay permits, even when these are repeatedly renewed.

→ immigration of family members is obstructed through extra obstacles which are not applied to Swiss and EU citizens (living together, income, size of apartment).

→ same gender couples are not able to live together.



The socially disadvantaged and minorities deserve our particular solidarity.

Mt 25.31ff.; Lk 1.46–55; Jes 61.1–4; Lk 4.14–21.

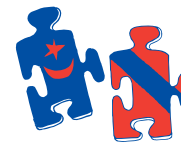
We believe this principle to be violated when...

→ laws almost force people into illegality (sans-papiers) and no attempt is made to legalize their status.

→ when those caught up in violence and human trafficking are denied the protection of the law, e.g., when «dancers» have no possibility to take legal action against their exploiters because they are unable to extend their residency permit beyond their contract.

→ well-integrated foreigners are expelled from this country when they become dependent on social benefits.

→ members of other faiths are unable to practice their religion e.g. because of the unavailability of suitable rooms for communal prayers or because there is no opportunity to pass their faith onto future generations.



Christian social ethics is essentially about establishing and maintaining a responsible society.

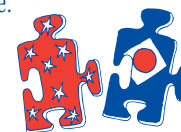
Mk 10.42–45; Mt 5.13–16; Ex 18.13–26.

We believe this principle to be violated when...

→ the authorities, the media or political parties do not inform public debate about migration in such a way that a fair and realistic discussion is possible.

→ fear about change and becoming «overrun» by foreigners is stirred up. (Such anxiety often has little to do with migration. Its roots can largely be traced to other social problems, e.g., the threat of unemployment or poverty in old age.)

→ foreign residents, de-facto fellow-citizens, are given no possibility to shape and take responsibility for the society in which they live.



Our goal is peace and justice: «Shalom». This has to do with «being whole», «becoming whole» and with mutuality.

Jes 32.17; Ps 85.11–14; Lk 1.68–79.

We believe this principle to be violated when...

→ integration is not one of the most urgent tasks of migration politics, thus giving way to social exclusion and division in our society.

→ integration is seen as assimilation of the foreigner rather than as a process which affects both locals and immigrants.

→ immigration policy is not aimed at a constructive mutuality but rather seeks to «pick the best of the crop» thereby encouraging the departure of qualified people («brain drain») and only focussing on what is good for Switzerland.

→ politics of migration is not pursued in conjunction with development policy, the protection of human rights and the furtherance of peace.

→ migration is not seen as something which has affected us for centuries: in give and take, as a country of emigration as well as immigration.

