

PEN MEDITERRANEAN NETWORK
CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS
Zadar, 10th -13th October 2019

1.

We protest against the concept of the “illegal” migrant. Somebody is not illegal just for the fact that (s)he migrates due to dire straits in her/his country. The quest for better life is not illegal.

Many Mediterranean countries have been undergoing traumatic transition characterized by massive displacement of people connected to various forms of intolerance, racism, violence, abuse and social exclusion under the guise of protecting the national and ideological homogeneity.

Everybody has right to seek shelter from the war. Illegality is not inherent - it is imposed upon.

We are all descendants of people who have migrated from one space to another. Mediterranean region has been historically based on migratory relations and it remains to be so. The heritage of the Mediterranean culture is in the concept of the *Encounter with the Other*, where crossing the geographical boundaries also implies opening the space for dialogue.

2.

PEN demands response to S.O.S! We appeal to European governments to respect the Law of the Sea in the Mediterranean.

We protest against the “criminalization” of NGOs and other civic organizations and individuals who help migrants whose lives are in danger.

According to the International Maritime Law the shipmaster has an obligation to render assistance to those in distress at sea without regard to their nationality, status or the circumstances in which they are found. This is a longstanding maritime tradition as well as an obligation enshrined in international law. Compliance with this obligation is essential to preserve the integrity of maritime search and rescue services.

3.

Humans are not commodity.

Conflict as the common outcome of ostentatious capitalism and political propaganda monopolizing cultural and intellectual production, hampers the survival of humanistic values that had been developed in the long history of the Mediterranean culture.

The problem of globalist centralization is hidden behind the migratory problem that has been to a large degree artificially produced. We want to point to neoliberal economic hyper-centralization and hyper-control that finds its way to the web as a supposedly free space of communication.

Rousseau's thought - "Man is born free and everywhere is in chains" – gains new aspects of relevance in a time of rapid technological development mismatched with new forms of economical enslavement in our time decreasing social mobility; vulgar corporatism, corruption, greed, and institutionalized deception of post-truth political and social environments lead by the top 1% or the financial power elite.

4.

We think that is essential – having in mind the actual migratory crisis – to point to the problem of different educational levels, and different scholarly systems and socio-cultural backgrounds that come into contact in the process of contemporary migrations.

It is also our intention to point to the complexity of understanding and interpreting historical narration because history should reflect plurality of voices.

Our intention is to promote educational change based on cultural open mindedness and on developing critical thinking abilities.

Although functioning as a global and dynamic network of interrelated forces, our contemporary World is endangered by new tendencies of extreme nationalism, xenophobia and intolerance. „Human geographies“ connected to the Mediterranean coastal cities, and diverse „linguistic landscapes“ of the Mediterranean region in the history – make the topic that is valuable in the current debates on national languages, the regional languages and dialects, but also debates on migrant languages that have collectively marked the public space of the Mediterranean as it used to be and as it is today.

Concerning the aforementioned we will take concrete actions, and intensify the already established PEN projects:

We will take concrete actions for transmitting skills of critical thinking through a range of “open educational” classes, thematic writing classes, translating workshops both for the local population and for the migrants.

We will contact policy makers and various initiatives to get more funding for different voices (e.g. Euromed Initiative) and for establishing *safe spaces of free artistic expression*. The aim will be in showing the importance of getting to know “the Other” through direct contact and dialogue.

We will work on producing a bibliography of books about the contemporary, as well as historical migrants’ experiences, with special emphasis on testimonial literature, using the already established basis of The International City of Refuge Network (ICORN) that has long been one of PEN International's most important partners.

5.

We oppose the paradox of protecting free trade while current policies make travelling freely for people more and more difficult. Exchanging experiences in real human encounter, not only virtually, is important for free circulation of ideas.

The Mediterranean region has been and remained to be intellectually productive space.

The times we live in now are characterized by the collapse of global security in Europe. However, we can get into grips with the global crisis characterized by the fear of the Other by changing the concept of «we versus them» with the open, non-inclusive, dialogical dynamics of «you and me» that has already proved as possible in the historical context of cultural exchange and the flow of the written word in the Mediterranean region.