

2024 REPORT

# FRANCISCAN NETWORK OF THE MEDITERRANEAN





# INDEX

|                                                                   |    |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------|----|
| Presentation .....                                                | 2  |
| Recognition.....                                                  | 4  |
| Who We Are .....                                                  | 5  |
| Mission, Vision and Values .....                                  | 6  |
| RFMed4 Coordinating Committee .....                               | 7  |
| a. Members.....                                                   | 8  |
| b. Coordination committees by area .....                          | 8  |
| Migrants and Refugees Field Committee.....                        | 8  |
| Ámbito Committee for Dialogue-Peace.....                          | 8  |
| Youth Field Committee .....                                       | 8  |
| RFMed5 Activities .....                                           | 9  |
| a. Visit to fraternities in northern Italy.....                   | 9  |
| b. Annual Face-to-Face Meeting of the Coordination Committee..... | 17 |
| c. Virtual Monthly Meetings of the Coordination Committee.....    | 19 |
| d. Presentation of the RFMed in various spaces .....              | 20 |
| e. Activities by field .....                                      | 22 |
| Migrants and refugees .....                                       | 22 |
| Dialogue-Peace .....                                              | 31 |
| Youth .....                                                       | 32 |
| a. Communication .....                                            | 35 |
| b. Historical 2023 .....                                          | 36 |
| Acknowledgement .....                                             | 39 |





## Presentation

In a historical moment marked by growing migratory challenges and a worrying trend towards the rejection of foreigners, the Franciscan Network of the Mediterranean (RFMed) has established itself as a beacon of hope and fraternal welcome. This 2024 annual report reflects our network's tireless commitment to migrants and refugees, rooted in the biblical tradition that reminds us: "You shall not mistreat or oppress the stranger, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt" (Exodus 22:21).

Throughout this year, we have witnessed a tightening of migration policies in many countries and an increase in xenophobia at different levels of society. However, the Franciscan response has been clear and decisive: to reaffirm our vocation of hospitality and service to the most vulnerable. We follow the example of St. Francis, who crossed physical and cultural borders to meet the Sultan in Damietta, showing us that the true Franciscan spirit knows no barriers when it comes to building bridges to the other.

The various initiatives developed by the RFMed during 2024 demonstrate that it is possible to build bridges where others build walls, inspired by that prophetic gesture of Francis who, crossing the lines of conflict, taught us that the encounter with those who are different is always an opportunity to discover a brother or sister. Our work has materialized in multiple dimensions: from direct reception in shelters and solidarity parishes, to legal and social assistance, through important actions of political advocacy and social awareness.

Franciscan prophecy becomes particularly visible in these times when fear and mistrust seem to be gaining ground. Like Francis, who knew how to see beyond differences to find brothers and sisters in all creatures, our network shows that another way of relating to each other is possible, one based on the recognition of the inherent dignity of every human being and on the certainty that we are all part of the same human family.

This report not only collects data and activities, but also testifies to the transformative value of Franciscan welcome in a challenging context. Every story of encounter, every life transformed, every barrier overcome reminds us that the Franciscan charism, rooted in the biblical tradition of hospitality and exemplified in Francis' journey into the unknown, remains a timely and necessary response to the challenges of our time. We invite you to turn these pages with the certainty that every small gesture of welcome contributes to building that Mediterranean of dreams: a space of life, hope and fraternal encounter.

Br. Massimo Fusarelli, ofm

Minister General



# RECOGNITION

In the Franciscan world we are learning to use the expression "networking".

Until a few years ago our numbers and forces in the Franciscan orders and congregations gave so much security that we did not need others to fulfill our mission. Although one of the characteristic notes of the Franciscan service is its creative capacity to respond to local needs, this led to not seeing beyond its own territory. In short, instead of being a beautiful Franciscan mosaic, we have probably been a sad archipelago.

The reality of our numbers and the demands of the historical present are leading us to discover the beauty of working as a family within a synodal dynamic because we discover that together we are stronger and respond better.

Globalization asks us for regional and global responses. We have a beautiful charism in common, the Franciscan charism, which makes a shared mission possible. This miracle is only possible when we put our loaves and fishes in common.

For this reason, **special recognition goes** to all Franciscans in the world, in particular those of the Mediterranean, who every day bet and commit themselves to weaving networks with others, where the Franciscan Network of the Mediterranean (RFMed) is one of its many expressions.

This RFMed Annual Report 2024 testifies to the meaning of "networking". We are sure that, with the strength of Francis and Clare of Assisi and allowing ourselves to be inspired by the Canticle of the Creatures, we will continue in 2025 to cast our nets in the great Mediterranean Sea.

Peace and Good!

Fr. Daniel N. Rodríguez Blanco, OFM

JPIC-Roma

## Who We Are

The Franciscan Network of the Mediterranean (RFMed) emerged from the European Continental Meeting of Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation (JPIC) of the Order of Friars Minor (OFM) in September 2019 in Malta, on the occasion of the Eighth Centenary of the embrace of St. Francis of Assisi with Sultan Malik al-Kamil. The approved areas of work were Migrants and Refugees, Dialogue-Peace, and Youth.

After the difficulties of the COVID-19 pandemic, the OFM 2021 General Chapter, in its 28th mandate, asks that "The Minister General and his Definitory, in collaboration with the JPIC Office and the SGME, should continue with the implementation of the Franciscan Network of the Mediterranean."

The first step taken by the OFM General Government in 2022 is the appointment of a Coordination Committee made up of people from the Franciscan family in order to resume what has already been done. In 2023, projects and roles of each of the work areas are defined, deciding to prioritize that of migrants and refugees.

In its identity, it expresses that the Franciscan Network of the Mediterranean is woven by men and women, lay and religious people of the Franciscan family committed to the issues of migration and refuge, dialogue/peace and young people.



## Mission, Vision and Values

Below are the mission, vision and values, which define and guide the work and objectives of the RFMed:

### Mission

To contribute, from Franciscan spirituality, to the construction of the Mediterranean as a place of life, hope and fraternal encounter through service to migrants and refugees, the promotion of dialogue-peace and commitment to young people.

### Vision

To be a network that facilitates and articulates with members of the Franciscan family who exercise various types of services in the Mediterranean, offering:

1. For migrants and refugees: reception and shelters, solidarity parishes, legal and social advice teams, advocacy and individual services.
2. For dialogue-peace: experiences and proposals for dialogue-peace with the collaboration

of study and research centers, Franciscan presences that work in interreligious and ecumenical dialogue, and institutions that carry out peace processes.

3. To young people: spaces for meeting and exchange, learning to welcome different visions, to imagine together and to develop common projects.

### Values

- Welcome
- Culture of encounter
- Accompaniment
- Dialogue
- Listen to me
- Justice
- Peace



## RFMed Coordinating Committee

The RFMed is confirmed by a coordinating committee, on July 20, 2022 under the Decree of the General Curia, the appointment of the members of this committee was given who are in charge of implementing the RFMed.

The committee aims to develop the following activities:

- To know what is already being done.
- To present the Network to the Franciscan Family, Church and Civil Society.
- Interconnect with the Franciscan Family, Church and civil society.
- Schedule face-to-face meetings with the different members of the Network.
- Coordination of what is already being done.
- To dynamize fraternity processes.
- To give answers that humanize in this reality.
- Helping to create a future of life within the Mediterranean

Below we introduce you to the members of the coordinating committee and also to the members of the subcommittees by area.



## a. Limbs



**Maru Ríos**  
OFS Marsella (Francia)



**John Luke**  
OFM, Rodas (Grecia)



**Miriam Oyarzo**  
FMSC, Estambul (Turquía)



**Fabio L'amour**  
OFM, Marrakech (Marruecos)



**Francesco Zecca**  
OFM, Taranto (Italia)



**Eunan McMullan**  
OFM, Ginebra (Suiza)



**Francisco Gómez**  
OFM, SGME-Roma



**Daniel Rodríguez**  
OFM, JPIC Roma



**Fausto Yudego**  
OFM, Pamplona (España)

## b. Coordination committees by field

### **Migrants and Refugees Area Committee**

- Fabio L'amour, OFM, Marrakech (Marrocco)
- Fausto Yudego, OFM, Pamplona (Spain)
- Maru Ríos, OFS Marseille (France)
- Eunan McMullan, OFM, Geneva (Switzerland) Franciscans International

### **Area Committee for Dialogue-Peace**

- John Luke, OFM, Rhodes (Greece)
- Miriam Oyarzo, FMSC, Istanbul (Turkey)

### **Youth Area Committee**

- Francesco Zecca, OFM, Taranto (Italy)
- Miriam Oyarzo, FMSC, Istanbul (Turkey)

## RFMed Activities

### a. Visit to fraternities in northern Italy

In November 2023, the Coordination Committee of the Franciscan Network of the Mediterranean commissioned Fr. Daniel Rodríguez Blanco and Fr. Fabio L'amour to visit the Franciscan fraternities of northern Italy that offer a type of service to migrants or refugees in order to meet the friars involved in this work in view of the RFMed meeting in May 2024 in the city of Marrakech, Morocco.

To fulfill this task, the friars scheduled the visits from the 18th-27th January, 2024. They dialogued and shared with the friars of the fraternities, some of the collaborators and volunteers of the projects and, at the same time, they took the opportunity to talk about the identity and objectives of the RFMed.

Most of the fraternities visited belong to the Province of St. Anthony of Padua of Northern Italy and one, Piombino, to the Franciscan Province of Tuscany.





Below is an account of this visit in the form of a chronicle.

## 1. La Spezia

We arrived in La Spezia on January 18 in the morning hours. In the afternoon we had a conversation with Fr. Gianluigi Ameglio and Fr. Almiro Modonosi, responsible for the various projects of the fraternity.

The next day, 20th January, we visited the work of the soup-kitchen and met the volunteers of that day. In addition, we had the opportunity to collaborate in the care of the beneficiaries that allowed direct contact with the migrants. The project offers between 60-80 lunches each day. In addition, food parcels are distributed once a week to persons registered in the database.

In the afternoon, we had the opportunity to talk with the head of the Listening Centre created for personalized accompaniment and that follows up on various cases of social assistance.

As Fr. Gianluigi was responsible for the pastoral care of migrants in the diocese, on Sunday, the 21st January, he invited us to participate with the migrant community of the Dominican Republic based in the city. They celebrated the Eucharist in honour of their patron saint, Our Lady of Alta Gracia.

At the end and as a farewell, together with Antonella, a friend of the friars and collaborator in the parish office, we visited the beautiful Porto Venero.





## **2. Parma**

On Monday, the 22nd January, we arrived in Parma, Fr. Michele Montemitro (he was waiting for us at the city's train station.

The first thing she knew was the soup kitchen for poor people and migrants. Before lunch, Fr. Andrea Contini, head of the shelter, told us about the work they carry out with migrants within the structure of the convent. The project consists of welcoming migrants for a period of time - from three to nine months - whilst they settle and achieve financial autonomy. Currently, the space is offered to four people.

After lunch we spoke with Fr. Félix Da Dario, chaplain of the city prison, who shared with us the work he has been doing for many years. In addition, he added that in the prison attended there are prisoners from many parts of the world.

Late in the afternoon, we said goodbye to the friars.

## **3. Verona**

At dusk we travel by train from Parma to Verona. Fr. Francesco Vellato, head of the Franciscan soup kitchen, was waiting for us at the Station. We arrived at the friary at dinner time and this allowed us to greet the friars of the fraternity.

The next day, 23rd January, we visited the facilities of the reception project, the volunteers for breakfast and lunch, as well as the friars and Sisters of the "shower service" that is offered daily to people in need, including migrants.

The activities take place from 9 to 12 noon. Within the schedule of the activities, a space is left for prayer and information from the volunteers and those in charge of the soup-kitchen.



#### **4. Bologna**

We arrived in Bologna in the evening and had dinner with the friars of the friary.

During the morning of the 24th January, Fr. Giampaolo Cavalli presented us with the "Antoniano" project that has many service projections, one of them being the 200-300 lunches that are distributed daily. They also have a migration advisory office and courses of various kinds for children and young people.

We began the activities with the presentation of the reception team and registration of people. We visited the area for showers and breakfasts. Afterwards we had lunch with the fraternity.

In the afternoon we talked with Fr. Giampaolo about the meeting in Marrakech. At about 5 pm we headed to Milan.





## 5. Milán

La tarde del 24 de enero nos esperaba en la estación central de Milán  
On the afternoon of the 24th January, Fr. Luca Volontè, responsible for the charitable works of the Franciscan fraternity, was waiting for us at the central station of Milan.

On the morning of the 25th January, Fr. Luca presented us with the work that offers breakfast and lunch, showers, laundry and a listening centre; like the other Franciscan presences, the project is possible thanks to the volunteers who give of their time for a few hours of the week. Youth, adults and the elderly are counted within the volunteer list.

In the afternoon we board the train to Turin.





## 6. Turín

The last convent to visit in the province of St. Anthony of Padua in Northern Italy was the one in Turin, which is only a hundred meters from one of the city's train stations.

We arrived on the 25th January in the evening. We were welcomed by Fr. Davide, Fr. Marco and Fr. Danielle. We participated in the dinner prepared especially for young people from the parish and the six young people who are part of the reception project, located on one of the floors of the convent.

The next day, the 26th January, we visited the soup-kitchen for the poor and the centre for listening to the people that is run by volunteers including a nun. In this center, the needs of mostly migrants are identified, especially children and young people in school, in order to advise on the process of migratory regularization, as well as help for the rental of an apartment.

The dining room operates within the friary facilities and is designed to feed about a hundred people per day. Before opening the door to the diners, the friars and the team of volunteers say a brief prayer; Then, the food begins to be served.

On the 27th January, early in the morning, we took the train to Pisa.

## **7. Piombino**

On the 27th January, we arrived in Pisa and enjoyed lunch with Fr. Simone and Gabbino, friars of the Franciscan Province of Tuscany, and the volunteers of the Community of St. 'Egidio. Some migrants who benefited from the programme in the city also participated.

After the meeting we left with the friars for the fraternity located in the city of Piombino, belonging to the Italian Province of Livorno. The next day, the 28th January, we were introduced to the shelter for migrants in a part of the friary. The project consists of receiving families with difficulty in finding housing and autonomy.

Similarly, the plan designed includes collaboration for the process of regularization of documents in the country. A young couple is in charge of accompanying the families.

After the lunch shared between the fraternity and the residents of the reception project, we returned to Rome and concluded the time of the visit.

## **8. Saluzzo**

From the 24th-26th March, 2024, Fr. Daniel visited the fraternity of Saluzzo, an Italian Province of Cuneo, located in the Piedmont region. It completed the programme prepared at the beginning of the year.

This fraternity welcomes young people from other countries, especially from Africa, as part of a process of cultural adaptation and migratory assistance that leads to a job opportunity. At the time of the visit, seven young people were there. Fr. Sergio Spiga is responsible for the project. The fraternity also collaborates with the diocesan Caritas service.

## Conclusions:

- Most of the soup-kitchens we visited were created after the Second World War in response to the needs of many poor families. In Bologna, a friar founded a cinema whose profits supported the dining room.
- In recent years, these soup-kitchens have been joined not only by poor people from the place but also by migrants and refugees from different parts of the world.
- Although the projects are led by a Franciscan friar, the truth is that these works are viable thanks to the volunteers who offer their time and strength to serve those in need. Many of the volunteers are pensioners, others young people who meet requirements in the institutions where they study. By making a sum of the fraternities visited, it is possible to count more than a thousand volunteers. All the projects offer accompaniment programmes for them such as prayer, retreats, walks, visits, amongst others.
- It builds up the witness of the volunteers and friars responsible for the projects. The friars know the stories and names of most of the people who come to the projects daily.
- No project is like another. Each one responds creatively based on the human and economic resources available.
- The creative way in which they have made use of convents that for years had empty spaces and today are at the service of the poor, migrants and refugees is striking.
- Many of the friars and volunteers expressed that direct contact with the hopes and sufferings of the migrants and refugees they care for has helped them to change some certain prejudices.
- Without a doubt, these projects can only be secured over time with the work between lay people and Franciscan friars.
- In these circumstances it is possible and necessary to dream and weave a Franciscan network in the Mediterranean.

Our special thanks and recognition go to each of the men and women who serve with affection and dedication in the services in these and other fraternities.

Faternally,

Fr. Fabio Lamour ofm and Fr. Daniel N. Rodríguez Blanco ofm



## b. Annual Face-to-Face Meeting of the Coordination Committee

The annual face-to-face meeting of the Coordination Committee of the Franciscan Network of the Mediterranean was held in Marrakech, from the 7th-9th May, 2024. The objective of the meeting was to share the experience of life and service of each of the members of the RFMed Coordination Committee.

On the other hand, the planning for this meeting was to evaluate the work carried out in the three areas: Migrants and refugees, Dialogue/peace and Youth, also to develop the RFMed 2024-2025 project and the preparation of the face-to-face meeting of migrants and refugees that was held in the following days.

The meeting was attended by Sr. Miriam Oyarzo, Maru Ríos, Fr. Daniel Rodríguez, Fr. Fausto Yudego, Fr. Fabio L'Amour, Fr. Francisco Gómez, Pedro Fernández e Fr John Luke Gregory. At the beginning of the meeting on the first day, there was a general sharing of all the members of the general committee regarding how they feel at this time, their life and the development of their work within the Network.

During this sharing, the situation in Istanbul was discussed, as well as the situation with the fraternity of the OFS in Marseilles, as well as the relationship with the fraternity in Pamplona, as they live in these moments prior to the chapter that will be soon, and all the work carried out in Marrakech and especially the work carried out with migrants and what has been done since the earthquake of September 2023 was also explained. An activity continued in working

groups, where what was discussed was shared on the second day of the meeting, which highlights the following activities of the network to date, by field of work.

In the first place, Fausto explains what was developed in the Migrants and Refugees group:

- Face-to-face meeting in Rome in which the plan of activities to be carried out was considered. March 2023
- Sending of an official letter from the RFM requesting the Diocese of Marseille to be officially invited to the Mediterranean Mosaic of Hope Meeting. Meeting with the Vicar of the Diocese. June 2023
- Participation of the RFM in the Mediterranean Mosaic of Hope Meeting held in Marseille. September 2023
- Presentation to the Fraternitas Foundation of the RFM's work plan with the aim of obtaining funds, the project was presented in June. They positively resolved the financing of the project and budget for the year 2024 towards January 2024
- Planning for the Meeting on Migrants and Refugees in the Mediterranean (Marrakech, Morocco) May 2024
- Mapping carried out in: Morocco, France, Spain, Italy, Malta, Turkey, Icos and Rhodes. Perennial work of searching and updating
- Creation of the RFM website and "launch" / official presentation during the May 2024 Congress

Secondly, Sr. Miriam presents the evaluation of Diálogo/Paz:

- Animate in their fraternities themes of peace and integral ecology with the young friars
- That Istanbul be the meeting place for the development of dialogue-peace activities since it is a territory frequented by Asians and Africans.
- After several points of proposals, two questions are formulated that are worth highlighting:
- How to work together with the OFM's Interreligious Dialogue Commission?
- What is the point of this Network and the OFM dialogue commission?

Thirdly, Pedro then explained what was developed in the Youth work team:

- Presentation of Oikos in Valencia and Madrid, including the Pontifical University of Comillas.
- Sensitive points to be considered were discussed, such as local differences in groups of young people do not allow regional participation, sometimes there is not enough economic capacity so it is worth thinking about other means
- As a next step, it is proposed to develop a program of the Network in addition to the one already developed in OIKOS.



On the third day of the meeting, work was done on the 2024-2025 planning of the RFMed, with the proposal of work objectives for each of the areas. For the field of migrants and refugees, the monitoring and updating of the mapping, the continuation of visits to the collaborators of the Network and the proposal to the Fraternitas Foundation of the upcoming project/program to renew the financing for the operation of the network are proposed.

For Dialogue-Peace, it is proposed to develop a mapping of the work of the Franciscan family that works with dialogue/peace in the Mediterranean and to have a meeting with the Commission for Interreligious Dialogue of the OFM to find common issues and thus work collaboratively. And, for young people, it is proposed to develop a mapping of work with young people in the Mediterranean, and to develop a volunteer program for young people in different presences in the Mediterranean such as Istanbul, Morocco, Spain, etc.

Finally, the communication strategy of the Network is established through the implementation of the website and the development of the same feeding it with news, the website is available to everyone in several languages here: [franciscannetwork.eu/es/](http://franciscannetwork.eu/es/). And as a last point, to close this meeting, an evaluation was made as it was one year since the first meeting was held in 2023, given the importance of evaluating the path taken.

## c. Virtual Monthly Meetings of the Coordination Committee



The RFMed coordinating committee holds virtual meetings on a monthly basis in order to learn about the situation of the network, follow up on the objectives and organize the work. All the members of the committee participate in these meetings that take place on Zoom and, when appropriate, external guests to discuss a specific topic.

Within these monthly meetings, the three areas of work of the network are monitored, to know the development of the same, and propose the next steps of action, in the same way the communication plan of the RFMed is followed up, which is through the management of the website. Later in this report you will be able to know the activities of each area in the year, which is the reflection of what was constantly discussed in all the meetings of the coordinating committee and members in general.

| Calendar of virtual meetings held in 2024 |             |              |
|-------------------------------------------|-------------|--------------|
| January 11                                | February 29 | March 21     |
| April 25                                  | June 27     | September 26 |
| October 24                                | November 28 | December 19  |



## d. Presentation of the RFMed in various spaces

Throughout 2024, the Franciscan Network of the Mediterranean (RFMed) was presented in the following spaces:



- Virtual course of Higher Education in Integral Ecology and Mediterranean, organized by the Pontifical Antonianum University of Rome. Fr. Francesco Zecca was in charge of the presentation conference on March 18.
- Chapter of the Mats of the OFM Provinces of Puglia-Molise and Lecce in the city of Taranto with representation of the Franciscan Family. The exhibition was held on June 15 and was made by Fr. Daniel Rodríguez Blanco.
- Ecumenical and Interreligious Dialogue Course in Istanbul. Sister Miriam Oyarzo shared with the participants of the afore-



- responsible for the Ecclesial meetings of the Mediterranean, Fr. Daniel had the opportunity to present the RFMed on October 30 and learn about the project A School Boat for Peace in the Mediterranean.
- Meeting of the Franciscan Family of East Africa. Fr. Daniel shared the work of the Network on December 5.
- Interprovincial Conference on the Formation of the Franciscans of Spain and Portugal. Fr. Daniel was invited to present the RFMed on November 5 in Madrid.





## e. Activities by field

- **Migrants and refugees**
  - **Meeting in Morocco**

From May 10 to 12, 2024, the RFMed Meeting for Migrants and Refugees was held in Marrakech, this is the first meeting of the Franciscan family that serves migrants and refugees in the Mediterranean, brothers and sisters of the Franciscan family and special guests from Spain, Italy, Turkey, France, Morocco, Greece and representatives of Franciscans International in Geneva. The three days were full of great emotion and above all an encounter with reality by learning about several testimonies of work with migrants and refugees in the Mediterranean.







The meeting began on Friday with the Eucharist presided over by Fr. Daniel Rodríguez Blanco, OFM, Director of the JPIC General Office. In his homily he invited us to have the audacity to build a Franciscan network of the Mediterranean to be a drop of fraternity in this immense sea. There was a pleasant message to the participants from Fr. Massimo Fusarelli, Minister General, in which he highlighted the beauty and at the same time the current tragedy in the Mediterranean, and asked the Franciscan family to join forces so that no one feels alone in their work, but part of a fraternity in the "Mare Nostrum" and that this is not, as Pope Francis has said, "a cemetery", but a house open to all.

The Franciscan Custody of Morocco in the person of Fr. Jean de Dieu welcomed all the participants, where there was a day of reflection with a historical look at the Mediterranean introduced by Fr. Giuseppe Buffon, the testimony of two migrants, currently welcomed by Caritas Marrakech, and of a Moroccan woman who works with and for migrants, and the exhibition of good practices by the Jesuit Foundation Migra Studium of Barcelona, in the person of Margarita García and Saving Humans Mediterranea, represented by Luca Casarini. To end this first day, an activity was carried out in working groups in order to echo everything heard on this day and obtain their own conclusions.

[In this article](#) you can learn more details about the first day of the match.



The second day of the meeting began with the Eucharistic celebration presided over by Fr. Francisco Gómez, Secretary for Missions and Evangelization, who in his homily noted the contradiction of globalization as it is more for the economy and not for the transit of people. The call for Franciscans is to globalize love and thus make transparent the dream of Jesus, which is the life and dignity of people, as sons and daughters of God.

The day continued with listening to the projects that each of the participants carry out locally, who had the opportunity to show that the Franciscan family in the Mediterranean has been working for many years with migrants and refugees in shelters, health care, soup-kitchens, psychological care, legal and migration advice, listening centers, job training, language schools, spaces for personal hygiene and laundry, amongst others.



On the other hand, Blair Matheson, Executive Director of Franciscans International, presented the programs they develop in different parts of the world and the impact they make before the United Nations (UN) and in embassies. The last program started a few months ago is that of Europe by Fr. Eunan McMullan, OFM, who presented the lines of work of the program in which the collaboration with the Franciscan Network of the Mediterranean is included.

The second part of this day was the work in two teams, where it was proposed to work on the following questions, in order to propose a schedule of joint work:

- Do you want to join a Franciscan Network of the Mediterranean that works in the field of migrants and refugees?
- Why should we bond?
- What could the structure of that network look like?

To conclude, several common points were shared, in which the need for a network to respond to the needs of the Mediterranean can be highlighted, which has an agile, dynamic and non-mammoth structure and offers a solid and updated mapping of each of these presences of the Franciscan family in the Mediterranean that works with migrants and refugees.

Learn more about this day of the meeting in the [following article](#).





The last day was marked by the visit of Cardinal Cristóbal López Romero, SDB, Bishop of Rabat, who very clearly presented the identity and mission of the Church in Morocco. Who shared several reflections, mentions that his wife is a migrant, because his wife is the Church and all Christians are migrants.

There are 30,000 Catholics in Morocco of 100 different nationalities, migration is made a problem, but there are differences. If the migrant has money, there are no problems since the problem is poverty. Migration is not a disgrace. Wars, poverty, imbalances are. The Church does not want to be foreign, it wants to become incarnate and it has to be inculturated, for which Cardenal López calls us to make an effort. You can read all the reflections shared in his intervention in [this article](#).

There is a lot of Church, little Kingdom because justice is forgotten. The faith must be lived with enthusiasm and joy. We are a passionate and exciting Church. Passionate about Christ and because Christ is passionate about us.

We have to share experiences, personal and community. TO WELCOME AND LISTEN.

The day ended with a wonderful Eucharist presided over by Cardinal Cristóbal and sharing with the entire community of Marrakech.



"The Franciscan Network of the Mediterranean is woven by men and women, lay and religious people, of the Franciscan family engaged in the areas of migration and refuge, dialogue/peace and youth."

Ref. <https://www.franciscannetwork.eu/>

- **Mapping Franciscans working with migrants and refugees**

To map the care that the Franciscan Family is already carrying out around the Mediterranean; and making it available on the RFMed website is one of the activities carried out by the coordinating committee in the field of migrants and refugees.

The mapping was carried out in some countries and cities, and also in some fraternities, for which a template similar to the one used in

Latin America but adapted to the reality of the Mediterranean was used as a basis.

All the information available can be found on the network's official website which can be accessed through this link: <https://www.franciscannetwork.eu/es/donde-estamos/> there you can find information and a map of the fraternities that work and offer support to migrants.

## *Where we are*







- **Virtual meetings of the migrant and refugee committee**

Along with the virtual meetings of the entire coordinating committee, the expanded committee of the Migrants and Refugees area during 2024 met on a couple of occasions virtually in order to organize the work regarding that area and share information and updates with the group.

As a key topic in these meetings, the importance of continuing to collect information for the mapping, through the use of the existing template and thus be able to offer more information on the website, has been discussed. In addition, it has been decided to continue with these meetings during 2025 to boost the network's work in the field of migrants and refugees.



- **Meeting of confres**

In November 2024, members of the RFMed participated in the CONFRES Interprovincial Conference on the theme of the care of creation and migrants.

These days are part of the ongoing formation of the Friars Minor, whose main objective is to study, raise awareness and update on various topics of interest. The more than 30 participating friars from the four Franciscan provinces of the Iberian Peninsula were joined by a Franciscan couple from Pamplona and two friars from the custody of Morocco. You can read more about the encounter in [this article](#).



## Younger friars and sisters in the care of creation and migrants

The provincials of CONFRES asked the JPIC Commission to "update" the program planned for 2020 that could not be due to the COVID pandemic.

This has been done from a **"Rereading of 2 Kings 3:10-14"** where we feel that, as Franciscans today, **"We continue to be sent into the world"**. That Our cloister is the wide earth: the streets, the fields, the factories, the offices, the places of meeting and controversy, the missions, the beaches, the shacks, the hospitals... That our mission begins by inserting ourselves into the condition of people, especially those who suffer the most.

**We want a new, egalitarian and fraternal humanity**, reconciled with one another and with God, according to the peace promised by the prophets and proclaimed as a gift of the Messiah Jesus. And also that we have no illusions about this unsupportive, violent and unjust world. We are aware that it can only be transformed by people whose love exposes them to persecution and dispossession. We think that our method must be scandalously evangelical: **to live the beatitudes of the Kingdom, peaceful, peaceful and measured, meek and humble**. Believing in this love, which claims nothing for itself, which seems passive and stronger than death.

Subordinating the **word to praxis**. We urgently need to preach, but we want to shout and act the Gospel, above all, with our lives. We like to approach people devoured by anguish and wish them with simplicity and frankness the peace of the Lord; **But we do not want to fall into the temptation of efficiency**, not even for pastoral reasons. We must remain minor in spite of all the pressures, especially those within the ecclesiastical and those of the "prudent" friars of the fraternity.

**Dedicating our lives to promoting justice, but without social leadership**. We will proclaim the Gospel, but we will value the human person more than his or her adherence to the faith. The surest path is fidelity to our mission of minority and fraternity, **adopting the way of life of the most disadvantaged people**.

*Where, "even if we are called crazy and considered subversives, communists or any other qualifier they tell us... we know that we are doing nothing more than practicing solidarity, that great tenderness of peoples, and the subversive preaching of the beatitudes that have turned everything upside down by proclaiming blessed the poor and those thirsty for justice" (St. Romero of America)*

By Fausto Yudego, OFM



- **Recommendations for Italy, Franciscans International**

In June 2024, Eunan McMullan had an in-person meeting with the Special Rapporteur on the human rights of migrants, in which several recommendations were made to the UPR (Universal Periodic Review) of Italy and Bosnia and Herzegovina on the topic of migrants/refugees. Among these recommendations, the following points can be highlighted:

- **For Italy:**
  - Take steps to implement the European Union Pact on Migration and Asylum without delay
  - Adopt concrete measures to ensure the integration of migrants into Italian society.
  - To facilitate immigrants' access to public services, including health and education,
  - Consider granting Italian nationality to the children of immigrants born in Italy.
  - Strive to provide information about the positive contributions of immigrants to society and avoid using or amplifying any kind of misinformation, xenophobic rhetoric, etc.
- **For Bosnia and Herzegovina**
  - Review and evaluate immigration laws and policies in Bosnia and Herzegovina to ensure that migrants' rights are fully safeguarded in accordance with international human rights standards.
  - Ensure humane and legal conditions for migrants, including the accommodation provided to them, taking into account the safety of women and children, and ensure adequate access to medical and translation services..



Fotos de los participantes en el taller celebrado en abril de 2024 en Asís.



Taller de preparación del informe para el Examen Periódico Universal (EPU) de Italia.

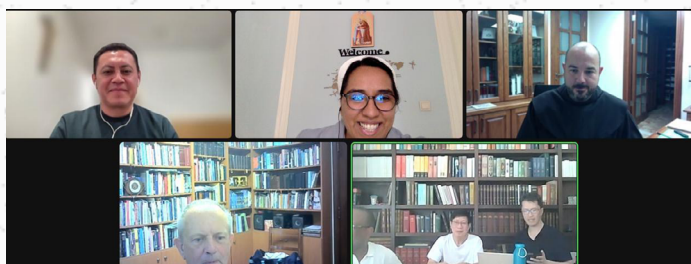


Marzo 2024, Declaración sobre los migrantes en la ONU

## • Dialogue-Peace

### • Meeting between the OFM Committee for Interreligious Dialogue and the Franciscan Network of the Mediterranean

This meeting took place in September 2024 in order to learn about the objectives and activities that each commission carries out within the framework of its program. The meeting took place in the context of the face-to-face meeting of the OFM Interreligious Dialogue Commission in Rabat, Morocco. The participants on behalf of that commission were Br John Wong, Br Stefano, Br Alberto, Br Alberto, Br Albert, Br Eleuther and Br Lorenzo Raniero, while on behalf of the RFMed Br John Luke, Br Miriam Oyarzo and Br Daniel N. Rodríguez Blanco participated



First, the OFM program of interreligious dialogue was presented where the brothers shared the work they do on a personal level or in their entity either with migrants or in interreligious dialogue. Afterwards, Fr. Daniel and Sr. Miriam presented the RFMed, mentioning the 28th mandate of the 2021 General Chapter, the members of the committee were also introduced, the objectives and activities developed by the network were shared.

At the end of the meeting, a mutual collaboration was agreed for the elaboration of the database of the Franciscan family in the Mediterranean that worked on the themes of interreligious dialogue and peace.

### • Work tool

The RFMed has committed itself for the year 2024-2025 to the preparation of a mapping of the brothers and sisters of the Franciscan family who carry out activities in favor of interreligious and ecumenical dialogue and peace-building projects in the Mediterranean. For this purpose, this working tool has been developed to collect information from Franciscans in the Mediterranean who work on this issue, the tool is available in English, Spanish and Italian.



**FRANCISCAN MEDITERRANEAN NETWORK**  
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#### Franciscan Mediterranean Network

The Franciscan Mediterranean Net (RFMed) is made up of men and women, lay and religious people, of the Franciscan family committed to the areas of migration, to refugees, dialogue/peace and young people.

The RFMed has committed itself for the year 2024-2025 to the further development of a map of the brothers and sisters of the Franciscan family who carry out activities in favour of interreligious and ecumenical dialogue and peace-building projects in the Mediterranean. Therefore, we request your collaboration by filling in the following:

Name of the Entity:

Fraternity:

Address:

E-mail:

| Project name or initiative | Brief description | Person's Responsible | Other |
|----------------------------|-------------------|----------------------|-------|
|                            |                   |                      |       |
|                            |                   |                      |       |
|                            |                   |                      |       |



- **Young people**

- **First Summer School of Integral Ecology of the Mediterranean: "Interweaving hopes. Between the land and the sea we change the present."**



The first summer school was organized in Taranto by OIKOS from July 24 to 30 and was an extraordinary experience, first and foremost of fraternity. It brought together 15 lecturers from different Mediterranean universities (Nice, Barcelona, Milan, Rome, Loppiano, Bari, Al-Alzhar...) and 30 young people, all of them of very high level, from Italy, Egypt, Lebanon, Georgia, France and Bosnia.



In the mornings, the young people had the opportunity to listen and debate with the speakers on different topics, in the key of integral ecology, in a multifaceted way (we started with the thinking of complexity, necessary to face the new challenges, and then we stopped at how we inhabit cities, in the economy and finance, and in the role of religions and politics).



In the afternoons, divided into five groups, the young people addressed different topics: economic regeneration, environmental regeneration, sociocultural regeneration, architectural regeneration and the diffuse university of the Mediterranean. There was the possibility of a boat trip on the piccolo sea of Taranto, a visit to the old city, sharing a day at sea, a visit to the city of Matera with moments of fraternity and celebration.

The stimuli that arose were many: from exercising the imagination, with a utopian and non-dystopian view of reality, to the need for new thinking capable of facing change. We talk about purpose, city diplomacy, regeneration, care, energy, spirituality. Some questions resonated: What do I do for others? What is my contribution to a better world? The beauty of the poetic dimension, which opens us to the gratuitous.



These days have woven a small network of fraternity, activating comparisons and contaminations, hopes and imaginations



## • Visit to Egypt

From the 8th-12th November, a delegation of OIKOS made a visit to Egypt, and thanks to our Egyptian friars, it was possible to meet with the young Franciscans in Alexandria, Egypt, and then a meeting with the students of the University of Al-Azhar in Cairo (the most important university institution in the Sunni world), they gave us a great welcome and the opportunity to present and activate projects. We presented the OIKOS project for young people, and there was a lot of enthusiasm and exchange with teachers and students.

We also had the opportunity to visit

- Darb1718 district: historic district, a point of reference for artisanal ceramics and cultural enhancement, in synergy with local traditions and the economic support of families.
- Children's Hospital 57357: Egypt's leading pediatric oncology center, observing the facilities of excellence and the educational and recreational activities offered to children.
- Garbage City: here the inhabitants live by recycling garbage, and a group of children offered us a music workshop with instruments made from waste.





- **2025 plans in development**

Since 2024, the following activities have been promoted and will be carried out in 2025:

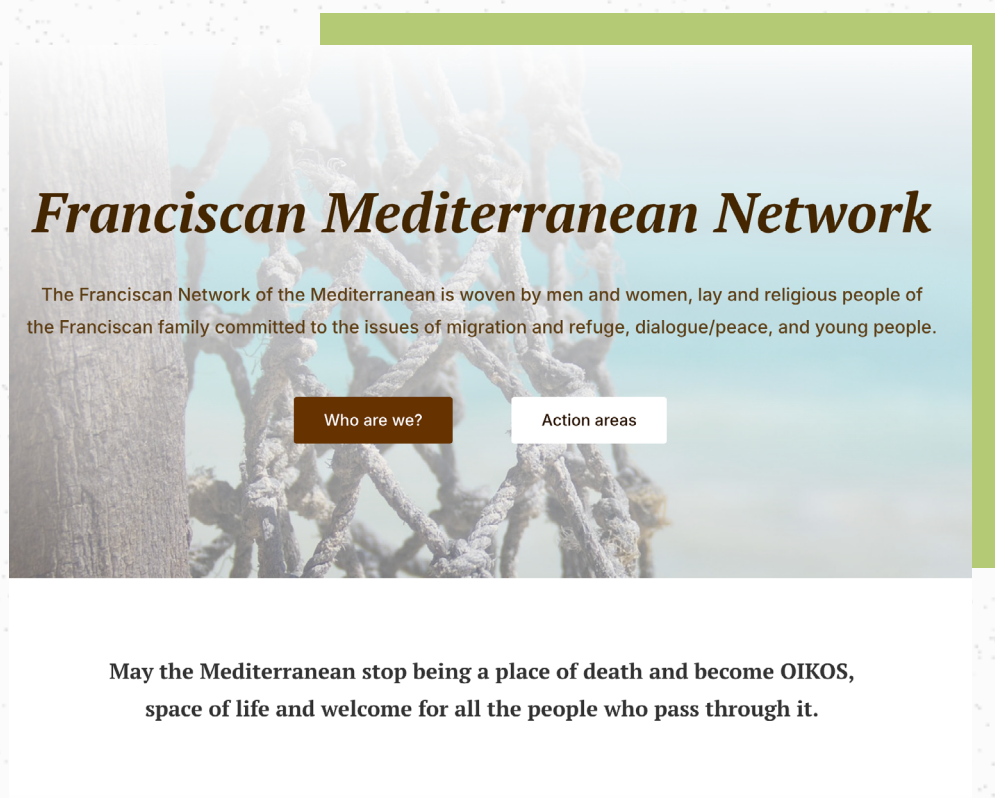
- **Integral Ecology Course:** The Pontifical University Antoniana and OIKOS Mediterráneo presented the Online Course of Higher Education in "Integral and Mediterranean Ecologies. Land, sea, peoples and spirituality". The Mediterranean is the cradle of cultures, traditions and challenges, now more than ever a symbol of connection and change. The Course, therefore, offers a free and international training path in Italian, Spanish and Arabic, which explores new visions, skills and planning to address the ecological crisis with an integrated and transformative approach.
- **Summer School 2025:** The II Summer School of Integral Ecology will be in Castel Gandolfo from July 24 to 30, 2025 with the theme "Interrelated Dialogue: Fraternal Cities for Peace"
- **Experiences of dialogue, exchange and service for young people 2025:** To offer the opportunity to young people (18-35 years old) to be able to immerse themselves, for at least one month, in the concrete realities of some Mediterranean countries, touching concretely vulnerabilities, situations of poverty, having the opportunity to experience fraternity and knowledge immersed in a different reality. The young person will have the opportunity to live interreligious dialogue, service, encounter, gift, care.

## a. Communication

- **Website**

The official website of the RFMed is [FranciscanNetwork.eu](https://FranciscanNetwork.eu), which is available in English, Spanish and Italian. This site is the official medium where information, news and updates of the network are shared, and you can find a map with information on the presence of the network in the Mediterranean, of Franciscans who carry out actions and efforts with migrants and refugees, on issues of dialogue-peace; and with young people.

The maintenance and updating of the website is in charge of the coordinating committee of the network and the secretariat, additionally, any member of the network is welcome to send information or news to the web.





## b. Historic 2023

The Diocese of Marseille invited the RFMed to participate in September 2023 in the III Meeting of the Churches of the Mediterranean in Marseilles; three members of the Committee of the Franciscan Network of the Mediterranean (Fabio from Morocco, Francesco from Italy and Fausto from Spain) and Eunam from Franciscan International office in Geneva (Switzerland) were able to participate in this meeting.



The week's programme was extensive and intense. We began with the first presentation at the "Regional Parliament" in Marseille, by the Bishop of Constantinople and Hippo Nicolas Lhernoud, there we were with the 70 young people of all confessions and religions invited to participate in this seven-day meeting; the young people began on Monday with various activities, visits, group work, etc. and the Bishops who came from 25 countries on Wednesday, also having their own meetings; Starting on Friday, there were joint meetings-sessions of all the young people and bishops. The program ended on Saturday with an Assembly of young people and bishops together with Pope Francis, in the Auditorium of El Faro and the Mass at the Orange stadium in Marseille, with a full capacity of 60,000 people.

This third meeting of the **Mediterranean** had as its motto: **"Mediterranean: mosaic of hope"**, with the shared objective that this mosaic of peoples, cultures and religions that make up the Mediterranean, build and share the same hope.

Bearing in mind that the Mediterranean reality is a common but fragmented space, a theatre of conflicts, a gift of creation, a cradle of faith, a frontier of peace, a tragic abyss, a space of exchange, a threatened whole and fragility, a treasure of spirituality and history, a space of blissful coexistence and a multipurpose history with many wounds as well.

Bishop Nicolas Lhernoud, in his initial presentation at the "Regional Parliament" proposed to us the theme: "**Choosing life**"... from the longing that we have to live in this time, **recognizing the dignity of every human person, in order to be able to revive among all a worldwide desire for brotherhood.** Among all: "as a beautiful secret to dream and make our life a beautiful adventure; since no one can fight life in isolation."

Aware that we need a community that sustains and helps us, in which we support each other to look forward. **Because it's important to dream together!** Since alone we run the risk of having mirages, in which to see what is not there; and knowing that dreams are built together.

Let us dream **as one humanity**, as walkers of the same human flesh, as children of this same land that shelters us all, **each with the richness of his faith or convictions**, each with his or her own voice, **all brothers and sisters**" (Fratelli Tutti n.8 – 2020)

**The objectives** of the meeting were: **To achieve concrete actions of reconciliation and solidarity between peoples**, from the most fragile people, ecology, freedom of conscience, peace and conflicts, education...

Knowing that, as human beings, we are made in such a way that we do not realize ourselves and cannot develop or find fulfillment "except in the sincere surrender of oneself to others". For we are not able to fully recognize one's own truth except in the encounter with others: "I only really communicate with myself to the extent that I communicate with the other." This explains **why no one can experience the value of living without concrete faces to love.** This is the secret of true human existence, **because "life subsists where there is bond, communion and fraternity;** And it is a life stronger than death when it is built on true relationships and bonds of fidelity. On the contrary, there is no life when we pretend to belong only to ourselves and to live as islands: in these attitudes death prevails" (Fratelli tutti n.87 – 2020)





That is, it is necessary to help recognize that the only possible way is **to learn to "meet the other" in a fair way**, appreciating and accepting them as companions on the road, without inner resistance. Indeed, it is a matter of learning to discover Jesus in the faces of others, in their voices, in their demands... (The Joy of the Gospel n.91 – 2013)

**Because "Solidarity**, understood in its deepest sense and as a challenge, **is a way of making history**, where tensions and oppositions can reach a multiform unity, a unity that generates new life. (The Joy of the Gospel n.228 – 2013)

*"These are bad, difficult times, we repeat everywhere. Let's live well and times will be good. It is we who make times good or bad; time is what we do" (St. Augustine. Sermon 80:8)*

**Summarizing**; that it is possible to live life not as an expression of an idea but **as the unfolding of a freedom and call to communion**.

**Knowing that each personal and collective story** is a message that **unfolds and develops step by step, where we must learn to listen and share**.

Knowing that this unveiling constitutes the dynamics of history; **that by consenting to it and making this path of listening and sharing, we contribute to the development and construction of a Mediterranean as a "mosaic of hope"** that ceases to be only a cemetery for so many migrants who travel it.

By Fausto Yudego, OFM





## Gratitude

As we conclude this year 2024, we raise our praise to the Most High for having allowed us to work and try to be instruments of his peace in this world so in need of fraternity. We want to express our deep gratitude to all the brothers and sisters who have been part of this mission. It is our deepest hope that the work that has been undertaken will continue to flourish in its three essential axes: Migrants and Refugees, Dialogue-Peace and Youth.

In the service of migrants and refugees, we thank all those who have embodied the spirit of hospitality, welcoming Christ in the face of the pilgrim brother. Every gesture of love towards those seeking refuge and hope is a living witness to Franciscan mercy and solidarity, reminding us that we are called to be "minors" at the service of the most vulnerable.

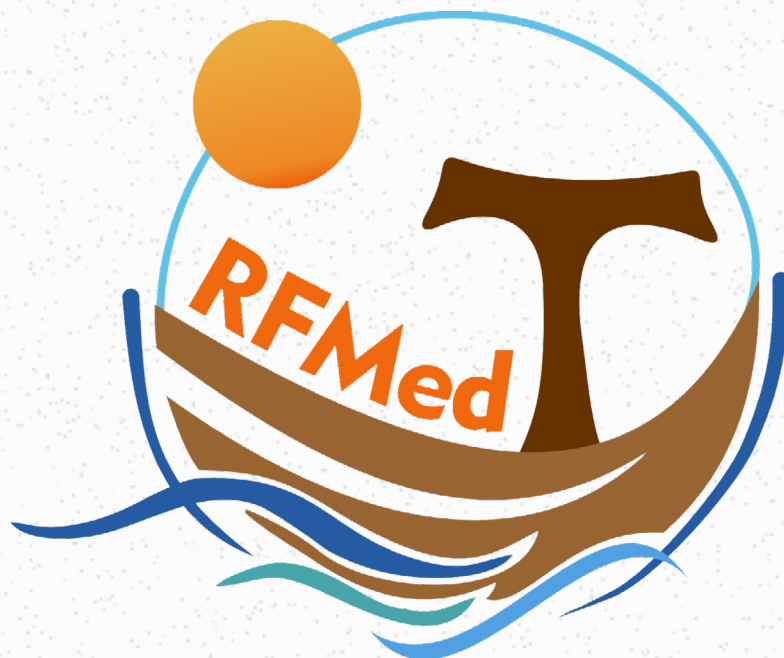
In the context of dialogue-peace, we recognize with gratitude those who have been artisans of reconciliation, sowing seeds of unity in the midst of a fragmented world. Like St. Francis in front of the Sultan, we strive to be messengers of peace, building bridges of interreligious and ecumenical encounter that reflect universal fraternity.

To the young people, light and hope of our Franciscan family, we thank them for their joy, creativity and commitment. They remind us that the future of creation is in their hands and that, like St. Francis, they are called to dream of a new world, in communion with God, with their brothers and sisters and with creation.

May the Lord, source of all good, continue to strengthen this network of fraternity that seeks to make the Mediterranean a place of life, hope and encounter. We are confident that, as "younger brothers", we will be able to continue to be witnesses of God's love in every service and in every encounter.

Peace and goodwill!





**Franciscan Network of the Mediterranean, 2024**

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