



PLATFORM FOR INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION ON UNDOCUMENTED MIGRANTS

## Annual Report 2000

# Contents

Contents .....	1
Preface .....	2
1. Mission .....	4
1.1. Mission Statement .....	4
1.2. PICUM's policy .....	5
2. Organization .....	7
2.1. Secretariat and coordinator .....	7
2.2. PICUM Assembly .....	7
2.3. Executive Committee (Excom) .....	8
3. Activities .....	9
3.1. Organizational Work .....	9
3.1.1. Vacancy of Coordinator .....	9
3.1.2. Establishing the PICUM secretariat and administration in Brussels .....	9
3.1.3. Informing member organisations and other contacts about PICUM and its secretariat .....	9
3.1.4. Developing individual contacts with organisations participating in PICUM .....	10
3.1.5. Developing contacts through the PICUM Information Exchange Network.....	10
3.1.6. Extending the network to other relevant NGOs .....	10
3.1.7. Developing contacts with EU and national politicians and government bodies .....	10
3.1.8. Establishing an international committee of recommendation .....	10
3.1.9. Fundraising .....	11
3.2. Thematic Work .....	11
3.2.1. Organisation of an International Expert Seminar on Health Care for Undocumented Migrants.....	11
3.2.2. European policy developments with regard to undocumented migrants .....	12
3.2.3. Research into basic social rights and regularisation of irregular migrants .....	14
3.2.4. PICUM Information and Documentation Centre on Human Rights for Undocumented Migrants .....	15
4. Evaluation .....	16
5. Prospects .....	17

## Preface

This is the first Annual Report presented by the Platform for International Cooperation on Undocumented Migrants (PICUM) located in Brussels. It covers two periods of activities in 2000: a first period of more than ten months without a coordinator and without an office, then the period beginning 15 November when Ms. Nele Verbruggen could begin her work at an office made available by the Steunpunt Mensen zonder Papieren in Brussels.

In 1995 and 1996, conferences were held in German and Dutch academies dealing with the Europeanisation of asylum policies. In the aftermath of these conferences a small follow-up group discussed the need for a third conference, but after some time it concluded that there was even more need for a European initiative for the protection of the rights of undocumented or irregular migrants. Many of these migrants may be asylum seekers whose request for asylum has been rejected and who have stayed on in the host country, but probably in even more cases an undocumented migrant may be a migrant worker without a valid residence permit, or a person who simply has overstayed the period of validity of this authorisation to stay.

In 1998 therefore the follow-up group decided to start the PICUM initiative and to draft, with the help of a questionnaire, a report comparing the social situation of undocumented migrants in Germany, Belgium and The Netherlands. On the basis of this report the initiators wrote a draft project proposal in view of obtaining funds for a study into the question how the human rights of undocumented migrants should be implemented. In 2000, several foundations made funds available for an initial period. Thus PICUM could 'come to life' and develop its project further.

Government policies in most European countries aim at excluding undocumented migrants from many facilities thus provoking their social exclusion. Their marginalisation in society is now understood as

becoming a major social problem, apart from the human tragedies involved. PICUM intends to draw attention to this situation, encourage and enable NGO's supporting 'sans papiers' to effectively do their work and to establish a centre of expertise on this issue.

For the time being the PICUM membership is located in the three countries involved in the original follow-up group, viz. Germany, Belgium and The Netherlands, with an extension towards the U.K. Several European NGO's dealing with asylum and migration issues are involved in PICUM as well. In the near future PICUM will extend its network of members to other parts of Europe.

We hope that this Annual Report will inspire its readers to actively supporting PICUM in its efforts.

March 2001.

On behalf of the PICUM Executive Committee

Pieter Muller, Chairman

# 1. Mission

## 1.1. Mission Statement

The Platform for International Cooperation on Undocumented Migrants aims at promoting respect for fundamental human and social rights in all issues related to undocumented migrants within Europe.

PICUM considers the following international treaties and conventions as basic values:

Universal Declaration on Human Rights (UDHR), European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR), Convention on the rights of the child (CRC), International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of their Families (UNCRMW, Convention n°158, not yet operational), International Covenant on Economical, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESR), International treaty on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), European Social Charter, UN Convention on the Protection of Refugees, Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), Convention Against Torture and other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (CAT)

The social rights of citizens as expressed in the constitutions of the national states involved will be taken into account as well.

### **Aim**

The aim of PICUM is threefold:

- 1) To promote respect for the basic Social Rights (such as the right to education and training, the right to healthcare, the right to a minimum income, the right to family life, the right to moral and psychological integrity, and the right to legal aid) of undocumented migrants
- 2) To promote respect for human rights in the detention and expulsion of undocumented migrants
- 3) To investigate the possibilities of, and to promote regularisation of the residence of undocumented migrants

(Note: in agreement with decisions made at the PICUM Assembly meeting at Oirschot, NL, October 2000, detention, expulsion and return migration policies are not given top priority in the initial period. Regularisation policies are monitored only)

## **Objectives**

PICUM seeks to achieve this aim by:

1. Gathering information on law and practice regarding Social Rights, detention and expulsion of irregular immigrants, and the possibilities of regularisation of their residence. The project is focusing on three EU countries in particular, viz. Germany, Belgium and the Netherlands.
2. Developing a centre of expertise in these fields with a view to providing the members of PICUM and other interested parties with expertise, advice and support.
3. Strengthening networking between organisations dealing with undocumented migrants in Europe.
4. Formulating recommendations for improving the legal and social position of these immigrants, in accordance with the national constitutions and international treaties. These recommendations are to be presented to the relevant authorities, to other organisations and to the public at large.

### **1.2. PICUM's Policy**

It is generally agreed that the presence of 'sans papiers' (undocumented, irregular or clandestine migrants) in our countries is a major social problem, both for the people concerned and for society as a whole. Leaving them without any support means their social exclusion. It often leads to inhumane and morally unacceptable situations tending towards their marginalization and their becoming a risk factor in society.

We have to acknowledge the fact that the number of 'sans papiers' – which already is considerable – is increasing day by day in spite of all sorts of restrictive government control measures. In Belgium approximately 50.000 people made an application for the most recent regularisation procedure (January 2000). Estimates indicate that this is only one third of the total number of undocumented migrants in Belgium. In the Netherlands it is estimated that there are over 100.000 people resident illegally, while in Germany, there are thought to be approximately 1.000.000 or more. The legal possibilities for NGOs to give support to these people by providing them with food and shelter are being reduced rapidly.

An enquiry made by PICUM member organizations in Germany, the Netherlands and Belgium found that 'sans papiers' in these countries are often denied the rights they are entitled to under international treaties and conventions, and that protection is lacking. For this reason the structural approach favored by PICUM is focusing on:

- basic social rights of 'sans papiers' as a protection against their marginalization;
- human rights of 'sans papiers' as a protection against unlawful detention and deportation;
- possibilities for regularization of 'sans papiers'.

PICUM also wants to take the situation in the countries of origin into consideration, based on a concern for a durable immigration policy that can also generate development. Regarding return programs, PICUM is concerned about their effectiveness for the personal life project for the person considered (and his family) and the effects on the development chances for the country of origin. PICUM recommends and supports an investigation into the option of investing in organizations run by migrants and refugees that have as a specific aim the establishment of development projects for their countries of origin.

## 2. Organisation

### 2.1. Secretariat and coordinator

In November, 2000, PICUM set up a secretariat on a temporary basis with a full-time coordinator, funded by a number of Dutch and Belgian Foundations.

Secretariat:

Gaucheretstraat 164 / 1030 Brussels – Belgium/ Tel: +32 (2) 274.14.39 / Fax: +32 (2) 274.14.48 / e-mail: info@picum.org (Coordinator: Ms. Nele Verbruggen)

### 2.2. PICUM Assembly

#### **A Double Structure**

At the Excom meeting in Brussels (30/ 11/ 2000), the Excom members agreed to propose to the next General Assembly that PICUM would be given a ‘double structure’. On the one hand, PICUM will be a legally constituted organisation according to Belgian law (asbl/vzw), consisting of individual members proposed by NGOs. On the other hand, PICUM will be a Platform of NGOs who agree to cooperate in the framework of this Platform with a view to defending the human rights of undocumented migrants.

This organisation will be established by the ‘founding members’ of PICUM.(see below)

#### **Members**

At the end of the year 2000, the following NGOs were participating in the PICUM platform:

- Germany: Bundesarbeitsgemeinschaft Asyl in der Kirche, Cologne  
Flüchtlingsrat Nordrhein–Westfalen, Dülmen  
Pax Christi Deutschland, Bonn  
Evangelische Akademie Mülheim an der Ruhr
- The Netherlands: ASKV–SV (Steunpunt Vluchtelingen), Amsterdam  
Council of Churches in the Netherlands, Amersfoort  
Netwerk Religieuzen voor Vluchtelingen, Eindhoven  
Stichting VON (Vluchtelingenorganisaties Nederland)
- Belgium: Steunpunt Mensen zonder Papieren, Brussels  
Protestants Sociaal Centrum, Antwerp
- Great Britain: Human Too, London
- International NGOs: Quaker Council for European Affairs, Brussels  
Jesuit Refugee Service – Europe, Brussels  
Pax Christi International, Brussels  
Justice et Paix International, Brussels

The following NGOs are participating as observers:

Churches' Commission for Migrants in Europe (CCME), Brussels  
Platform of European Red Cross Organisations (PERCO), Brussels  
Espaces (Dominican Brethren), Rixensart (B)  
Migrants Rights International, Geneva

### **Meetings**

The individual members of PICUM meet twice a year at an Assembly. In 2000 the first meeting took place in Düsseldorf (Germany), 7 and 8 May. The second Assembly took place in Oirschot (the Netherlands), on 13 and 14 October 2000.

### **2.3. Executive Committee (Excom)**

In the Articles of Association it will be stipulated that the Excom will be responsible for the day to day work of the PICUM secretariat and administration, including organisational and financial matters. Between the Assemblies the Executive Committee functions as the governing body.

In 2000, the Excom consisted of the founding members of PICUM:

Pieter Muller, Raad Van Kerken Nederland (The Netherlands): Chairman  
Didier Vanderslycke, Steunpunt Mensen Zonder Papier (Belgium)  
Dominique van Huystee, ASKV–Steunpunt Vluchtelingen Amsterdam (The Netherlands)  
Hildegard Grosse, Bundesarbeitsgemeinschaft (BAG) Asyl in der Kirche (Germany)

As soon as the organisation is established the four founding members appoint the first Excom members, who may or may not be founding members themselves.

The coordinator is working on a contractual basis with 'Steunpunt Mensen Zonder Papier vzw' (SMZP), a Belgian NGO that is also a member of PICUM. An agreement has been drafted (and signed at the beginning of 2001) on the relationship between the coordinator, PICUM, and the legal employer, SMZP. It is agreed that the work of the coordinator is directed by the Excom, which delegates its power to Didier Vanderslycke, Excom member and president of SMZP.

## **3. Activities**

At the Assembly in Oirschot (13/14 October 2000), an Action Plan was adopted for the first operational period: from 15 November 2000 until 15 May 2001. Based on this Action Plan, the following are the planned activities of PICUM during the year 2000 (including the period before the Action Plan was adopted).

### **3.1. Organisational work**

#### **3.1.1. Vacancy of Coordinator**

As a result of the positive outcome of our fundraising activities (see below) we were able to invite applicants for the vacancy of coordinator on the basis of the profile adopted at earlier PICUM meetings. We received 14 written applications. Three applicants had a personal interview at the premises of Steunpunt Mensen zonder Papier (SMZP). Ms. Nele Verbruggen, a Belgian national, was unanimously considered to be the best candidate. She was offered a 6-month position beginning in November 2000.

#### **3.1.2. Establishing the PICUM secretariat and administration in Brussels**

The PICUM secretariat became operational on 15<sup>th</sup> November, 2000. An office was set up, phone and internet connections established, and a domain name registered.

A legal structure according to Belgian law (asbl/vzw) was drafted in order to be put before the General Assembly in February 2001. As stated above, the relationship between the coordinator, the official employer (SMZP), and PICUM was established by way of a formal agreement.

Another part of the organisational work to be mentioned under this heading is the necessary follow up by the coordinator of the Assembly Meeting in Oirschot, the preparation and reporting of the Excom meeting in November, and the setting up of the preparation of the General Assembly in February 2001.

#### **3.1.3. Informing member organisations and other contacts about PICUM and its secretariat**

In order to inform member organisations and other contacts about PICUM and its secretariat, a Mission Statement, a Policy Paper, and an Action Plan have been drafted. All member organisations of PICUM, including those participating in the 'Information Exchange Network' (see 3.1.5.) only, as well as other contacts, have been sent a PICUM folder accompanied by PICUM New Year's wishes.

#### **3.1.4. Developing (individual) contacts with organisations participating in PICUM**

In the course of the first months the coordinator visited most of the PICUM members. The aim was to get to know the participants of the Platform, to get an idea of what they could contribute to PICUM and, especially, of what they expected of the Platform.

#### **3.1.5. Developing contacts through the PICUM Information Exchange Network (mailinglist)**

In the course of the year several NGOs interested in or involved with undocumented migrants joined the PICUM 'Information Exchange Network'. In the period before the Secretariat was operational, one of the PICUM members, Wolfgang Müller (Flüchtlingsrat Nordrhein–Westfalen) volunteered to function as a postmaster. His task was to spread useful and interesting information on undocumented migration to the persons and organizations that are part of the Network. All those organisation can also apply themselves to have certain information spread by the Exchange Network.

At the end of the year the number of participants amounted to 70, and the Secretariat took over the Postmaster activity.

#### **3.1.6. Extending the network to other relevant NGOs**

In February the chairman was present at a meeting at Quaker House in Brussels to which a number of European NGOs involved with undocumented migrants had been invited. He gave a briefing about the aims and methods of PICUM. All the NGOs at the meeting decided to join PICUM either as members or as participants in the Information Exchange Network.

#### **3.1.7. Developing contacts with EU and national politicians, with government bodies**

In the course of the year a number of contacts were made with national politicians in Belgium, the Netherlands and Germany. Pending the establishment of the PICUM secretariat these contacts were kept at low profile. Particularly valuable was a meeting on the issue of undocumented migrants with several German MPs held in Berlin in November. On this occasion political attention was drawn to the section on 'Health Care' of the provisional "PICUM document on basic rights of undocumented migrants in Belgium, the Netherlands and Germany" – a comparative report presenting the social situation of the undocumented in these countries.

#### **3.1.8. Establishing an international committee of recommendation**

Already in early 2000 it was felt that the PICUM project should be supported by a committee of recommendation. In view of this initial contacts were established with a number of senior Dutch politicians and scientists. as well as with Ms. Mary Robinson, UN Commissioner for Human Rights.

### **3.1.9. Fundraising**

Fundraising efforts were primarily developed in the Netherlands. In this country four foundations were interested in supporting the PICUM initiative for an initial period of six months, viz. the Haëlla Foundation, PIN (a fundgiving committee acting on behalf of several Roman Catholic congregations), Cordaid and a fourth foundation. Thanks to their joint efforts it was possible to open the PICUM secretariat in Brussels, hire a coordinator and launch a number of activities.

At a meeting with representatives of these four foundations in The Hague in October 2000, we presented our plans for the initial period and were pleased to note the comments and suggestions made by the fundgivers.

PICUM was also granted a subsidy in Belgium, through Steunpunt Mensen zonder Papier. In the UK the Boyd & Morland Charitable Trust made a small grant available, which arrived in 2001.

Initial contacts were made with several civil servants of the European Commission with a view to exploring possibilities of receiving aid from EU structural funds. These contacts require a follow-up in 2001.

We are very grateful for the support we have received, and look forward to a further meeting with our Dutch funders in March 2001.

## **3.2. Thematic Work**

### **3.2.1. Organisation of an International Expert Seminar on Health Care for Undocumented Migrants**

The first aim of the Platform, as mentioned above, is promoting the respect for the basic Social Rights of undocumented migrants. One of these rights is the Right to Health Care. The situation, both in law and in practice, relating to this right differs considerably in the different European countries. In some, undocumented migrants have (legally) no access at all to Medical Care, in others, the policy is less restrictive and health provisions tend to be more accessible for this group of migrants.

A comparison of the situation in different countries provides valuable information and opportunities. Arguments and opinions can be exchanged to influence national policy, views and recommendations can be assembled for communication to the relevant European policy makers. To encourage this information exchange, PICUM has organised an International Expert Seminar on '**Access to Health Care for Undocumented Migrants**'. This takes place in March 2001.

This project will bring together experts in health care for undocumented migrants from the Netherlands, Belgium, Germany and Great Britain for a day and a half, to discuss

both law and practice concerning access to doctors and hospitals, access to specialists like dentists, access to mental health care, and health insurance. What is laid down in the law, what are the problems, what are possible solutions, what can be learnt from each other's countries? We will also address the theme of (temporary) residence permits for medical reasons. During the last part of the Seminar, which will be attended by several members of the European Parliament, the conclusions and recommendations of the seminar will be formulated.

The publication following the seminar will contain theoretical information about the situation in the participating countries, together with written reports of the seminar discussions, and the final conclusions and recommendations. This publication will be given to all the participants and can be bought from PICUM by non-participants. We consider such a publication useful for further disseminating the results of the seminar: to communicate our points of view and concerns to relevant policy makers, to contribute to the work of scientists involved, and to provide information to NGOs working with undocumented migrants. In this way the Seminar will contribute substantially to existing knowledge on the theme, which so far is limited.

The first concrete preparations for the seminar were started in early 2000. Experts in Health Care among the PICUM contacts were consulted. With the help of PICUM members and contacts in the four participating countries, Health Care Experts were searched out and invited to participate in the Seminar.

### **3.2.2. European policy developments with regard to undocumented migrants**

In the area of EU policy, the PICUM Action Plan of October 2000 defined four headings: the 'EU Charter for Fundamental Rights', the 'Amsterdam Proposals', the 'UN Convention 158' and 'Further EU Policy Developments'.

#### **EU Charter for Fundamental Rights**

One of our members (Quaker Council for European Affairs) monitored the debates on the considering the European Charter. We've been reported on this theme at the general Assembly and through e-mail.

#### **The Amsterdam Proposals**

The Amsterdam Proposals were published in March 2000 by the Immigration Law Practitioners' Association (ILPA) and the Migration Policy Group (MPG). The Proposals reflect the views and concerns of non-governmental organisations, law practitioners and academics active in the field of immigration and asylum. They are intended to assist EU policy makers in formulating legislation.

The Amsterdam Proposals put forward directives on Asylum, on the right to Family Reunion, on Long-term Residents, on Visas and Border Controls, on the Admission of Migrants, and on Irregular Migrants. Of PICUM's particular concern is the Proposed Directive on Irregular Migrants.

PICUM recognized the importance of this initiative, and decided to monitor its evolvments. We decided to conduct a Workshop on this Amsterdam Proposal at the next Assembly meeting in Antwerp, to which we invited Mr. Jan Niessen (MPG, Brussels) as the main author of the Proposed Directives.

### **UN Convention Nr. 158**

'Convention 158' is the shorter name for the 'United Nations International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families'. This Convention was adopted on the 18<sup>th</sup> of December 1990 by the UN General Assembly.

Although the formal adoption of this Convention took place ten years ago, the Convention is not yet in force. Few countries have taken the necessary steps to adopt its standards by signing and ratifying or acceding to this Convention, thus incorporating its standards into national law. To 'enter into force' – in other words; to become operative and part of international law, ratification or accession by 20 states is required for this instrument. It may then be used as an authoritative standard of good practice, and thus may exercise strong persuasive power on non-party States as well, even though they have not agreed to be bound by its standards. So far the Convention has 15 accessions: Azerbaijan, Bolivia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Cape Verde, Colombia, Egypt, Ghana, Guinea, Mexico, Morocco, Philippines, Senegal, Seychelles, Sri Lanka and Uganda. Furthermore, 10 States are signatories, so it is highly probable that the Convention will enter into force in the year 2001.

While the Convention specifically addresses migrant *workers*, ratification and implementation of its provisions would provide a significant measure of protection for most other migrants in vulnerable situations. This, together with the fact that all the countries that acceded so far – apart from Bosnia Herzegovina – are not European, made the PICUM Assembly decide to undertake some action within the framework of the ratification campaign for this Convention. We decided for this reason to invite Patrick Taran, director of Migrant Rights International (Geneva) to our next Assembly meeting in Antwerp.

### **Further EU policy developments**

The main subject of PICUM attention under this heading is the proposal by the French Presidency (july–december 2000) that would criminalise many, if not all PICUM' NGO members. Through the PICUM Information Exchange System we disseminated information on these proposals, aiming at penalising those providing help to 'sans papiers' in the EU and imposing heavy fines on organisations in this field. These proposals do not differentiate between help given for payment and help given free on purely humanitarian grounds. Such unremunerated help is a major part of the work of all the NGOs concerned with undocumented migrants.

At their meeting in Brussels in December the EU Ministers of Justice and of the Interior decided to postpone a decision on these proposals pending the formulation of a humanitarian clause excluding help given free on humanitarian grounds. Political lobbying in this matter is a major priority for PICUM.

PICUM was accepted as a member of the NGO Platform of the UNHCR, where developments considering migration and asylum on the European level are discussed. The coordinator attended one meeting before the end of the year 2000.

### **3.2.3. Research into basic social rights and regularisation of irregular migrants**

#### **Fact finding**

An important part of PICUM's activities is fact-finding about research in the fields of basic social rights and regularization of irregular migrants. The secretariat started to set up an inventory of the researchers, research institutions, completed research and existing literature on basic social rights and regularization of irregular migrants.

#### **Book of Solidarity**

Within six months, it was felt PICUM should produce some outcome, a tangible product. The Assembly meeting (Oirschot October 2000) agreed on the idea of a 'Book of Solidarity'. This publication would demonstrate support for undocumented migrants, and illustrate the contrast between principle and practice in the treatment of irregular migrants and the role of the organisations that help them. In this way we can transmit an important message, providing examples of solidarity, for instance, in Germany, where helping 'illegals' is forbidden. We would like to show that PICUM's cause is shared, – that 'we have troops behind us'. Preparations for the publication started at the beginning of 2001.

#### **Easy Scapegoats**

In October, Hildegard Grosse (Excom) and Pieter Muller (Chairman) attended a conference in Mannheim during which discussions took place on the results of a research project: 'Easy Scapegoats – Sans Papiers Immigrants in Europe – State Strategies and Intervention Strategies for Civil Society'. The research examined the position of irregular immigrants in Germany, Belgium, Italy and Spain. This project was supported by the Freudenberg Stiftung at Weinheim, Germany, jointly with several foundations in Belgium, Italy and Spain, as well as the European Commission. At the conference researchers, representatives of foundations and NGOs concerned with irregular migrants' issues considered the research findings and drafted recommendations.

In a discussion with the director of the Freudenberg Stiftung, the feasibility of cooperation between PICUM and this foundation was discussed with a view to providing an effective follow-up to the 'Easy Scapegoats' project. It was agreed that this idea would require further discussion.

## **Conferences**

In April, the Chairman made a presentation on the issue of undocumented migrants in Europe at a conference of the Academy of the Rothenburg Diocese in Stuttgart which covered the question of persons without valid residence permits.

A similar presentation was made at a conference of the 'Asyl in der Kirche' Association at the Protestant Academy at Mülheim/Ruhr on 'Rights for those without rights - Protection for illegal refugees', in May.

In June, the Chairman, Dominique van Huystee and Rian Ederveen attended a day seminar at the University of Brussels, held by the academic network of legal studies on the immigration and asylum policies in Europe. The Seminar, which considered the issue of regularisation of illegal foreigners in Europe, was the first in a series of research topics within the context of the EU 'Odysseus' Programme.

In September, the Chairman attended a conference of Pro Asyl at the Protestant Academy at Arnoldshain on asylum policies in the European Union, partly in order to present Dutch asylum policies, partly in order to develop PICUM contacts with relevant German NGOs.

In December the coordinator attended a 'Congress for specialist lawyers in the area of immigration and asylum in Europe' in Brussels organized by the Academic network of Legal Studies on Immigration and Asylum in Europe.

During the year the Chairman and Dominique van Huystee (Excom) attended several meetings of the Dutch Platform of NGOs on Undocumented Migrants, drawing attention to developments with PICUM.

### **3.2.4. PICUM Information and Documentation Centre on Human Rights for Undocumented Migrants**

During the first months of its existence, the secretariat received requests for information which it was able to answer with the help of the network. It is one of the aims for 2001 to develop further the PICUM Information and Documentation centre on the basis of the PICUM Information Exchange System.

## 4. Evaluation

Set against our targets for the year 2000, our progress is as follows.

- Successful fundraising results have been obtained in the Netherlands; results in Belgium were less, but helpful; results in the UK were little, but unexpected.
- During the first ten months of the year, building on contacts established in two previous years, we were able to prepare the background i.e. by organising assembly meetings, exchanging information through the PICUM Mailing List, making numerous contacts and presentations at conferences in a number of countries. Thus a network of NGOs in Belgium, Germany and The Netherlands – with a first step into the U.K. – has been developed. These NGOs are becoming familiar with each other's general approach and specific working methods towards the fundamental issues PICUM stands for, and are willing to contribute to the common objective. In addition, an organisational structure for PICUM has emerged, in which those member organisations and persons most willing to push PICUM forward in their three countries have committed themselves as members of an Executive Committee (Excom).
- In the course of the year it became clear that we had to rethink our first aim of ourselves undertaking research into the basic social rights of undocumented migrants. We concluded that our aim should instead be: to assemble information on existing and ongoing research in this field and make this available for member NGOs and other interested parties, in order to back up their practical work. At the same time, the political lobbying at European level has emerged as a priority. The other priority areas – regularisation, detention and expulsion – had to be given less attention than was first intended. The return option (return migration) also came up as an issue to claim attention, but we felt that we, with our limited means, could not for the foreseeable future develop this further.
- Finally, it was felt that PICUM should prove its value by producing 'concrete products'. Accordingly, the international seminar on Access to Health Care, the 'Book of Solidarity', as well as the two workshops in February 2001, make a positive start in fulfilling this goal.

## 5. Prospects

PICUM has the potential to develop into a European NGO that can make a major contribution to the defence of the basic social rights of undocumented migrants. This potential lies in the fact that we have

- a nucleus of member NGOs in a number of European countries who have a clear vision of the grave situation of 'sans papiers' in their countries and the ways this situation should be tackled; are able and willing to share their experience in this field and strongly support the cause PICUM stands for
- a small secretariat in Brussels with a full time coordinator
- moral and practical (financial) support for the PICUM initiative from many sides
- increasing understanding of the fact that present asylum and migration policies in Europe lead to social exclusion and marginalisation of increasing numbers of people endangering social cohesion in European societies.

In order to be able to act as a European NGO PICUM has to develop its NGO network in countries in Southern and Northern Europe, servicing the relevant NGOs in these countries in view of their work and involving them in expert seminars etc. in order to influence state and local policies.

The focus of PICUM activities should be to support its member NGOs in their work both by providing them with practical information and models of action, and by helping them to create a political and economical environment which enables them to actively carry out their humanitarian work on behalf of undocumented migrants.

We foster the hope that we shall be able to muster the means to develop our work to the full in the difficult years to come.