Detention centres for migrants:
Open the doors,
We have the right to know!

Because European citizens have the right to know the consequences of the policies implemented in their name. We demand that the right of access to detention centres be granted to journalists and civil society!

In Europe today, roughly 600,000 people including children are detained every year, most often without a court decision. This detention can last up to 18 months until the detainee is removed merely for breach of EU member states' immigration laws. These people are not just deprived of their freedom of movement. Often, they are deprived of access to legal advice, health care and the right to live as a family...

Can European citizens say that they do not know all this? Unfortunately they can.

Today, in most EU countries, journalists and civil society have very limited access to migrant detention centres. Often, it is impossible to meet people in detention, or even to talk to them. Generally, only MPs have right of access. This lack of transparency increases the risk of malpractice and numerous rights violations.

Yet access to information is an inalienable right of European citizens, defended by all European institutions (article 11 of the Charter of Fundamental Rights refers to the 'freedom... to receive and impart information and ideas without interference by public authority'). Even the 'Return' Directive of 16 December 2008, which our organisations condemn in particular on the issue of length of detention, states that 'relevant and competent national, international and non-governmental organisations and bodies shall have the possibility to visit detention centres'. These principles must be respected. Places where foreigners are detained must not remain a reality that is hidden from us. Why should we not have access? We want to know what is happening there. That is why,

- We call on the governments of member states and on the institutions of the EU to act in order that ensure that civil society and the press have access to detention centres;
- We also call on MPs and those who do have access to push for improvements to national and European legislation in this field;
- Finally, because the EU is increasingly 'externalising' its migratory policies, pushing non-member states to set up detention centres on their own territory to prevent migrants from entering Europe, we insist that openness and transparence should be the norm in these non-European countries too.