

Conference of European Churches
Work Priorities 2009 – 2015
Churches Commission for
Migrants in Europe (CCME)



CCME is an ecumenical organisation that serves the churches in their commitment to strangers, responding to the message of the Bible which insists on the dignity of every human being, in order to promote an inclusive policy at European and national level for migrants, refugees and minority groups.

(CCME Mission Statement)

I. FOUNDATIONS OF THE WORK OF CCME

1. With this work programme, CCME seeks to contribute to the Christian witness in Europe; seeking to develop a Europe welcoming strangers and building inclusive societies: “So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but citizens with the saints and also members of the household of God” (Eph. 2:19). CCME will do so as part of the Conference of European Churches.
2. The Conference of European Churches and the Churches’ Commission for Migrants in Europe in their memorandum of understanding “Different Backgrounds – Joint Future” adopted by the CCME ExCom and the CEC Central Committee respectively, have agreed to journey together to make the witness of churches in Europe more visible.
3. The work of CCME in fostering Christian reflection and action on migration is grounded in the clear command in both the Old and the New Testaments to act humanely and compassionately towards strangers who share with all human beings the dignity of the Being of God, (Genesis 1,26-27; John 1,1). That “You shall love the alien as yourself” (Leviticus 19, 34; Hebrews 13, 1-3) is typical of the humane attitude towards ‘the other’ found in the Moses law, an obligation recognized by the three Abrahamic world religions and other faith communities. It is believed to have been given both by revelation and natural law, that is, a moral principle which is capable of being recognized by all human beings.
4. The CCME Mission Statement adopted by the 16th CCME Assembly in London, October 2005 continues to guide the work of the Commission.



II. MANDATE OF THE CCME (of CEC)

As outlined in the joint memorandum of understanding “Different Backgrounds – Joint Future” signed by the leadership of CEC and CCME in Vienna in November 2007, the CCME General Assembly and CEC Central Committee have affirmed the mandate of the CCME of CEC, namely to

1. serve the churches in their commitment to strangers, responding to the message of the Bible, which insists on the dignity of every human being, in order to promote an inclusive policy at European and national level for migrants, refugees and minority groups;
2. work on issues of migration and integration, asylum and refugees, and against racism and discrimination, undertake research, initiate, develop and implement projects in these fields;
3. represent the common voice of the churches in Europe on the above issues vis-à-vis the European institutions.

III. PROCESS TOWARDS THIS WORK PROGRAMME

This work programme is the result of a participatory process: in December 2007 an invitation to CCME members was sent out, asking for input to the future work programme of CCME. These inputs were discussed and further developed by the Ex-Com meeting in Mechelen (Belgium), April 2008. A provisional version of the work programme was circulated prior to the CCME General Assembly in Protaras (Cyprus), 8th-11th October 2008, where the final version was discussed, amended and on 11th October 2008 adopted.

IV: THEMATIC PRIORITY AREAS 2009-15

Within its general mandate, CCME of CEC will seek to focus its activities on a number of strategic areas, in which it engages with high quality contributions and potential for impact, rather than trying to address every issue of potential relevance. In its work, and together with the wider ecumenical family, CCME will monitor developments influencing the life of migrants, such as economic development, conflict around the world, climate change.



For the period 2009-15 the following thematic areas will form work priorities for CCME:

1. Europe's role in refugee protection in the 21st century

The large majority of refugees are currently hosted by poorer countries in the world. In the 20th century, Europe was the scene of displacement but also of providing protection. In the past years, the numbers of refugees in Europe has drastically declined, in disproportion to the global level. Numbers of refugees vary significantly between different European countries. Overall, fewer refugees find access into Europe and access to effective protection.

Therefore, priorities will be:

- a. Defending asylum (including complementary protection)*
- b. Additional forms of refugee protection; including resettlement of refugees to Europe*
- c. Revising the need for protection (e.g. environmental refugees, internal displacement)*

2. Human Dignity in the process of labour migration

With economic globalisation, patterns of international migration are changing. While the majority of migrants move within their region, more migrants travel further distances for a job and a living. While they are welcome when (cheap) labour is needed, permanent settlement and participation in societies meet barriers and restrictions. Currently a trend can be observed in many European countries to increase labour migration, while their status and rights remain uncertain. The right to family life for migrants is particularly under threat in many countries.

Therefore, priorities will be:

- a. A uniform set of rights for all migrants*
- b. Ratification of binding legal instruments Europe-wide and globally*
- c. Advocating for the right to family life as sine qua non of integration*
- d. Monitoring expulsion, detention and removal of migrants*
- e. Address irregular situations of migrants*



3. Countering contemporary forms of slavery, in particular trafficking in human beings

Parallel to stricter immigration controls trafficking in human beings has become more visible in the past two decades as a new form of slavery. While joint efforts of authorities, non-governmental organisations and churches against this international crime have produced some results, trafficking for forced labour is still a rather unknown field. The human rights of trafficked persons are generally still insufficiently protected.

Therefore, priorities will be:

- a. Trafficking in women*
- b. Trafficking for forced labour*

4. Uniting in Diversity: Migration as an opportunity and challenge for the unity of the church

Migration is changing the ecclesial landscape: more congregations of migrants are found, a greater diversity of denominations is observed. Separate and segregated church life is a phenomenon similar to fragmentation in societies; at the same time, more transnational and international congregations emerge. Migration constitutes an enormous opportunity and yet a considerable challenge for churches in Europe.

Therefore, priorities will be:

- a. Being Church together*
- b. Integration and the role of religion*
- c. Theological reflection on migration*

5. Churches as witness to inclusive communities in Europe

Various forms of exclusion exist in societies, and they are becoming even more dramatic. Vulnerable groups of migrants are particularly affected by exclusion, e.g. asylum applicants and undocumented migrants, children of migrants, also ethnic minorities are also often marginalised. Anti-discrimination legislation provides an important instrument even if it also poses challenges and needs improvement.

Therefore, priorities will be:

- a. Anti-discrimination legislation: monitoring and promotion in churches*
- b. Inclusion of ethnically discriminated groups: within church and society*
- c. Churches addressing racism*



6. Migration and development

The nexus between migration and development is recognised in communication and statements. Policies and concrete cooperation activities (e.g. the European Neighbourhood Policy) are however still largely dominated by the aim to use development cooperation as a tool for migration restriction and control. Churches as actors in the fields of migration and development are ideally placed to explore positive ways of action which go beyond remittances. However, this potential for being actors of migration and development is not yet fully used.

Therefore, priorities will be:

- a. Monitoring policy development at European level*
- b. Cooperation with other regions, particularly through the World Council of Churches and its Global Ecumenical Network on Migration*
- c. Networking with church development agencies and identifying relevant projects*

7. European year of churches responding to migration 2010

Recognising that migration is an overall reality in society today, and aware that migration is posing challenges to societies, political institutions and churches, CEC and CCME are planning a European Year of Churches focussing on migration. During this year, churches activities for migration and integration, asylum and refugees and against racism and discrimination shall be made more visible through joint activities, a joint calendar of meetings and at least four regional meetings. The study “Mapping Migration in Europe – Mapping Churches’ Responses” provides a starting point. The European Year of churches responding to migration 2010 will also assist churches in sharing their good experience, strengthening existing work, and identifying possible new areas of work so as to become more effective in pursuing the aims of inclusive societies in Europe and welcoming strangers.

All future activities of CCME will need to be evaluated against their potential:

- to make a specific contribution from churches to a wider debate and serve the churches’ witness in the area of migration on a global level;
- to be complementary to or to have specific added value in relation to activities of other actors and to achieve synergy with them;
- to give a voice to the voiceless;
- to have a clear impact among churches or
- to have an impact in voicing the churches’ concerns towards policies on the national level;
- to provide specific added value by addressing an issue on a European level.