



ccme

churches' commission for migrants in europe

beyond borders

since 1964

**CCME
Work Programme
2015-2017**

As adopted by the 19th CCME General Assembly 28 June 2014

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Work Programme 2015-2017 of the Churches' Commission for Migrants in Europe

A. WHERE WE COME FROM

"CCME is an ecumenical organisation that serves the churches in their commitment to promote the vision of an inclusive community through advocating for an adequate policy for migrants, refugees and minority groups at European and national level. In the fulfilment of this mandate it is responding to the message of the Bible which insists on the dignity of every human being and to the understanding of unity as devoid of any distinction between strangers and natives." (CCME Mission Statement, adopted at the General Assembly 2014)

1. Foundations of the work of CCME

1.1. With this work programme, CCME seeks to contribute to the Christian witness in Europe; seeking to develop a Europe welcoming the 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).

1.2. 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 the 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.

1.3. CCME works in the broader context of the European and Global Ecumenical Movement. It therefore is bound to the Conference of European Churches in ever closer cooperation and eventually mutual integration, and cooperates closely with the World Council of Churches.

1.4. The CCME Mission Statement adopted by the 16th CCME Assembly in London, October 2005 continues to guide the work of the CCME. The terminology was however amended by the 19th CCME Assembly in Siguna, June 2014.

2. Mandate of CCME

The 19th CCME General Assembly 2014 has affirmed the mission and mandate of CCME:

- "CCME is an ecumenical organisation that serves the churches in their commitment to promote the vision of an inclusive community through advocating for an adequate policy for migrants, refugees and minority groups at European and national level. In the fulfilment of this mandate it is responding to the message of the Bible which insists on the dignity of every human being and to the understanding of unity as devoid of any distinction between strangers and natives."
- CCME works on issues of migration and integration, asylum and refugees, and against racism and discrimination, undertake research, initiate, develop and implement projects in these fields;
- represent the common voice of the churches in Europe on the above issues vis-à-vis the European institutions.

3. Process towards this work programme

This work programme is the result of a participatory process: The CCME Jubilee in Frankfurt/M. in March 2014 formulated general recommendations for the life of CCME. Input was solicited from members with the invitation to the General Assembly in April 2014.

The General Assembly in Sigtuna 26-29 June 2014 discussed, amended and adopted this CCME work programme 2015-2017.

B. WHAT WE WILL BE DOING

Within its general mandate, CCME will seek to focus its activities on a limited number of strategic areas, in which it pro-actively engages with high quality contributions and potential for impact, rather than trying to address every issue of potential relevance. In other areas, CCME will facilitate contacts between its constituency and other actors leading on the issue, participate in coalitions led by others, or simply monitor without developing own activities. CCME will carefully evaluate if, as a European network with national member organisations, it is best placed to address a particular issue.

In its work CCME will work for coherence in the ecumenical witness in Europe. It will therefore, together with the Conference of European Churches and the World Council of Churches, engage in work on a number of cross-cutting themes. Within the wider ecumenical family CCME will also contribute to the monitoring of developments influencing the life of migrants, such as economic development, conflicts around the world, climate change.

CCME's work will both reflect a socio-political analysis of current contexts and theological reflection on migration.

CCME's work will reflect children's rights as a cross cutting issue.

Wherever possible, CCME will work in interregional cooperation particularly with advocacy or using interregional partners as resource persons.

CCME will establish a forward thinking group which will explore creative solutions to migration challenges.

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

1.1. The large majority of refugees are currently hosted by poorer countries in the world, many of them on the doorstep of Europe. In the 20th century, Europe was the scene of displacement but also of providing protection. New forms of displacement and forced migration (e.g. due to environmental degradation) will pose challenges in the years to come. Violent conflicts have in recent years erupted on Europe's doorsteps. Therefore, in the past years, the overall numbers of refugees in Europe has increased. At the same time, refugees find it increasingly difficult to access Europe, and access to effective protection is becoming increasingly difficult. Effective access to a fair and just asylum procedure for those in need of protection remains crucial. At the same time, the increasingly high numbers of refugees stranded on the doorsteps of Europe further underline the need to extend solidarity to those refugees who will not be able to access European territory.

1.2. While the EU and its members states are formally committed to transposing the legal instruments establishing a Common European Asylum System, procedures and conditions for obtaining refugee status as well as recognition rates vary considerably across the EU. There is a need to further harmonise EU legislation and practice across EU member states. CCME will therefore as a priority inform the European Commission and European Parliament about practical experiences with implementing the CEAS in member states. In order to assist with practical cooperation in matters of asylum, CCME will continue its thematic cooperation with the European Asylum Support Office EASO.

1.3. The numbers of refugees and asylum seekers vary significantly between different European countries and the current "Dublin III" system of allocating responsibility for asylum claims places over-proportional responsibility on the EU member states - and non EU members - at the external border of the EU. CCME will therefore, particularly in the context of the European Council for Refugees and Exiles (ECRE), further stimulate discussions on fair ways of sharing the responsibility for refugee protection among the EU member states. In this context, CCME will campaign for more solidarity between European States in responsibility sharing

1.4. CCME will take forwards initiatives to promote additional and meaningful forms of refugee protection; in particular the resettlement of refugees to Europe. The aim of the high quality resettlement of 20.000 refugees annually to the EU will guide CCME's efforts. CCME will, where possible in cooperation with partners from other regions, seek to strengthen the role of churches in promoting and implementing refugee resettlement.

1.5. CCME will focus on the issue of religious identity and persecution.

1.6. CCME will cooperate with WCC on the issue of statelessness.

1.7. CCME will monitor initiatives of UNHCR to redefine the need of protection in view of present challenges in refugee protection.

1.8. CCME will continue to represent CEC in ECRE.

2. Human Dignity in the process of labour migration

2.1. 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.

2.2. While they are welcome when (cheap) labour is needed, permanent settlement and participation in societies meet barriers and restrictions. In countries recovering from the economic crisis, a trend to increase labour migration can be observed, while migrants' status and rights remain uncertain. In many countries, migrants have become scapegoats for the consequences of the crisis. The right to family life for migrants is particularly under threat in many countries.

2.3. While more and more EU member states need, and actively recruit, migrants for various sectors in the labour markets, there is wide disparity with regard to the rights of migrants across the EU. The call for ratification of the 1990 Convention on the rights of migrants and members of their family will be at the heart of CCME's advocacy in this field.

2.4. CCME will continue its advocacy for a uniform set of rights for all migrants in the debates on EU wide migration policies. In particular CCME will promote the ratification of binding legal instruments Europe-wide and globally.

2.5. In ecumenical cooperation CCME will underline the importance of the right to family life for migrants, both as a human right and as sine qua non of integration. CCME will in particular provide information to the European Commission on the implementation of the Commission's guidelines on implementing the EU Family Reunification directive.

2.6. CCME will continue to monitor and encourage the development of EU legislation on legal migration.

2.7. CCME will continue to support and facilitate exchange among members on monitoring of expulsion, detention and removal of migrants and recommend such activities to churches in Europe. In particular CCME will monitor and give input on implementing the (few) positive aspects of the EU return directive, particularly in view of the European Commission's plans for a handbook on the directive. The work will in particular focus on re-entry bans, monitoring of removals as well as detention conditions. If resources allow CCME will explore how practical cooperation with partners in other regions can be enhanced in this field.

2.8. CCME will continue the cooperation with children's rights organisations in their advocacy for the best interest of the child in return and removal procedures. CCME will organise for its membership a consultation on practical aspects of the best interest of the child determination in asylum and migration cases.

2.9. CCME will cooperate with CEC in following-up on the Council of Europe Social Charter Complaint against the Netherlands for not providing shelter and basic

needs for migrants, thus creating unbearable and undignified situations of destitution.

2.10. CCME will, where appropriate, cooperate with the Platform for Information and Coordination on Undocumented Migrants PICUM in its work of addressing situations of migrants in irregular situation, and seek to involve CCME members in the work of broader platforms such as the International Detention Coalition on the issue of detention. CCME will continue to advocate for regularization and comprehensive perspectives of undocumented persons.

2.11. CCME will observe discussions on the freedom of movement of EU citizens and enable networking between members on the opportunities and difficulties associated with it.

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

3.1. 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 and non-governmental organisations and churches against this international crime have produced some results, trafficking for various forms of exploitation remains still a significant problem. Expertise on trafficking in women for sexual exploitation is fairly developed, but policy responses are still insufficient. Other forms of exploitation, e.g. forced labour are still a rather unknown field. Activities of civil society are still mainly focussed on areas of "damage control" such as prevention and assistance, with issues of rights and compensations often being side-lined.

3.2. The human rights of trafficked persons are generally still insufficiently protected. However, implementation of both legislation by the EU and the Council of Europe Convention and relevant jurisprudence offer opportunities to better protect the rights of trafficked persons.

3.3. The basis of the work and the rights-based approach of CCME against trafficking are laid down in the 2008 CCME position paper "if the son sets you free" on trafficking.

3.4. CCME will maintain its role as a centre of expertise for churches in Europe wishing to address trafficking in women. CCME will contribute to events organised by churches and Christian agencies across Europe and based on experiences from the field give input to European policy debates.

3.5. CCME will further develop expertise on patterns of labour trafficking and best practice to combat it – if possible in partnerships and with specific projects. Particular focus will be on the role of civil society organisation in identification of victims and on models of guaranteeing the access to rights, such as compensation.

3.6. CCME will explore possible connections between the disappearance of persons seeking asylum and trafficking

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

4.1. There is an increasing awareness that migration is changing the ecclesial landscape in Europe: 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. The way churches in Europe manage to achieve the goal of uniting in diversity will in many ways determine the future of Christianity in Europe. The credibility of Christian witness for inclusive communities in Europe will largely be influenced by the way in which churches achieve inclusiveness in their own midst.

4.2. As one of its priorities CCME will further advance activities assisting and encouraging churches in Europe in the process of "Being Church Together" with "migrant churches" (including migrant-led, black majority and minority ethnic churches). Based on the updated study "Mapping Migration in Europe – Mapping Churches Responses", CCME will seek to enhance exchange on good and best practice.

4.3. CCME will seek to encourage input from ecumenical bodies on the specific role religion can play in integration of migrants and host societies. The theological reflection on migration will be encouraged by CCME.

4.4. CCME will cooperate with the Community of Protestant Churches in Europe CPCE in elaborating recommendations for common worship with migrant churches.

5. Churches as witness to inclusive communities in Europe

5.1. Various forms of exclusion continue to exist in societies, some of which are becoming even more dramatic. Vulnerable groups of migrants are particularly affected by exclusion, e.g. asylum applicants and undocumented migrants, children of migrants, but also minority ethnic persons are often marginalised. Anti-discrimination legislation provides an important instrument even if it also poses challenges.

5.2. CCME will maintain its involvement in anti-racism networks, both ecumenical and secular. It will in this context keep informed about anti-discrimination legislation and, where appropriate, contribute to its promotion in churches. Where possible CCME will participate in platforms for the Inclusion of ethnically discriminated groups within church and society.

5.3. CCME will organise an exchange on initiatives against right wing extremist groups, hate speech, xenophobia and racist attacks.

5.4. The issue of discrimination of Roma has in recent years received considerable attention. EU policy declarations have highlighted the need for decisive action by member states as well as the need for civil society involvement in overcoming the discrimination of Roma. Churches and Christian agencies in some countries have begun to address the issue in a more coherent fashion.

5.5. CCME will continue to enhance the cooperation with Eurodiaconia to develop synergies between the two organisations working in this field.

5.6. CCME will in particular continue to seek funding for a programme looking at the role of churches in overcoming the discrimination of Roma. Activities could include team visits and studies on acknowledging the role of the Roma community in national and church history.

5.7. In cooperation with other partners CCME will monitor discussions on migrants' integration. CCME will where appropriate contribute to them, based on the conviction that integration in all aspects is a two way process, that should include migrants' rights and anti-discrimination and should create a logic of better inclusion rather than pre-emptive exclusion of certain groups of (potential) migrants.

6. Migration and development

6.1. 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. The process around the Global Forum on Migration and Development has shown interest in the issue, but equally signalled the difficulty to get actors from both fields, migration and development, into communication.

6.2. 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 of being actors of migration and development is not yet fully used.

6.3. CCME will continue to seek cooperation with APRODEV, its agencies and global bodies like ACT Alliance to monitor policy developments at European level. CCME will where possible advance project cooperation with partners from other regions in the area of migration and development, in particular with the network "Churches witnessing with migrants" and around the Global Forum on Migration and Development. One aspect of particular attention for CCME should be the development perspective of returning migrants.

7. (Beyond) Borders

7.1. Over the past two decades, known deaths and casualties at the European borders have constantly increased. The treatment of migrants and refugees at the EU's external border has become a litmus test for the humanity of Europe as a whole.

7.2. CCME and CEC will encourage their members to hold a day remembrance and intercession for persons who have lost their lives on their way to dignity and safety, e.g. on a Sunday around International Refugee Day in June.

7.3. With its members, CCME will develop a monitoring of the EU's Southern borders and promote policies providing safe access to Europe and legal migration possibilities for both asylum applicants and labour migrants.

7.4. CCME will continue its involvement in the Consultative Forum on fundamental rights of the EU border agency FRONTEX.

C. HOW WE WILL BE WORKING

1. Elements of planning

1.1. Potential activities of CCME will need to be evaluated against their potential:

- 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;
- to make a specific contribution of 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 otherwise voiceless.

2. Planning stages

All activities need to be scrutinised in a process following a number of stages:

- 2.1. A thorough needs assessment,
- 2.2. Reflection on possible alternatives (e.g. other actors addressing issue, other working method),
- 2.3. Initial reflection on strategy and methodology of activity;
- 2.4. Assessment of potential impact, in particular of the potential added value for member organisations of addressing a particular topic on European level and in the context of CCME,
- 2.5. Reflection on how CCME activities would link to similar activities undertaken by other actors in the same thematic area,
- 2.6. Analysis of potential impact on CCME's advocacy work for refugees, migrants and minority ethnic people,
- 2.7. Identification of thematic and financial support, in particular among members and strategic partners,
- 2.8. Support for project methodology among members,
- 2.9. Adequate methods of impact assessment and evaluation will need to be developed.

3. Working mechanisms

The CCME working mechanisms are derived from the mandate of CCME:

3.1. ... *to serve the churches in their commitment to promote the vision of an inclusive community through advocating for an adequate policy for migrants, refugees and minority groups at European and national level. In the fulfilment of this mandate it is responding to the message of the Bible which insists on the dignity of every human being and to the understanding of unity as devoid of any distinction between strangers and natives.*

- Communication with CCME members: in this context CCME will further explore mechanisms of information sharing with and between members, e.g. through facebook;

- fora of exchange of members with European institution on matters of concern;
- working groups, ad hoc task forces and regional consultations convened by CCME members;
- trainings and project activities;
- visits;
- membership in and cooperation with follow up mechanisms to the Global Ecumenical Network on Migration of WCC.

3.2. 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:

- networking with Christian and non-governmental organisations,
- partnerships with academia (theological faculties, migration researchers),
- thematic public hearings,
- international conferences,
- mid-term and long-term projects.

3.3. Represent the common voice of the churches in Europe on the above issues towards the European institutions and international organisations active in Europe:

- European Union
- Council of Europe
- Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe OSCE
- UN (UNHCR, ILO)
- Global Forum on Migration and Development
- IOM

4. Partnerships

As ecumenical agency in Europe, CCME can only realize its mandate to serve the churches if it works in partnership with other Christian organisations as well as secular partners. CCME seeks to develop partnerships with like-minded organisations. Existing partnerships, which will be maintained, include:

1. Ecumenical

a. Conference of European Churches CEC: CEC has decided in 2013 at its Budapest Assembly that asylum and migration as well as diaspora and migrant churches should be thematic priority areas for CEC. CCME will in the context of negotiations with CEC seek agreement how CCME can undertake or contribute to the overall work of CEC in these thematic areas.

b. World Council of Churches WCC: After the Busan Assembly 2013, WCC is currently setting its work priorities. CCME will seek agreement with WCC on future cooperation particularly with regard to interregional cooperation.

PARTNERSHIPS BEYOND THE MEMBERSHIP

c. within the European ecumenical family

- Group of European Christian organisations on migration and asylum (Caritas Europa, COMECE, Eurodiaconia, International Catholic Migration Commission ICMC, Jesuit Refugee Service JRS Europe, Quaker Council on European Affairs).
- APRODEV, Ecumenical Youth Council in Europe EYCE, WSCF-Europe, Community of Protestant Churches in Europe.

d. In the global ecumenical family

- World Council of Churches, Lutheran World Federation, World Communion of Reformed Churches.
- All Africa Conference of Churches, CLAI, Middle East Council of Churches, Church World Service Immigration and Refugee Program USA.

2. Secular partners

European Council on Refugees and Exiles ECRE
European NGO Platform on Asylum and Migration EPAM
European Network Against Racism, ENAR
European Coordination for Foreigners' Right to Family Life

Adopted by the CCME General Assembly on 28 June in Sigtuna/Sweden
