



ccme

churches' commission for migrants in europe

beyond borders

since 1964

“The hope in which we stand”  
(inspired by Roman 1, 5)

CCME  
Work Programme  
2018-2020

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## Table of content

“The hope in which we stand” .....	4
Work Programme 2018-2020 of the Churches’ Commission for Migrants in Europe .....	4
A. WHERE WE COME FROM .....	4
1. Foundations of the work of CCME .....	4
2. Mandate of CCME .....	4
3. Process towards this work programme.....	5
B. WHAT WE WILL BE DOING – PRINCIPLES AND THEMES.....	5
1. Principles.....	5
1.1. Diversity and Solidarity .....	5
1.2. Agency of right holders .....	6
1.3. Conversations and cooperation between European churches on migration and displacement .....	6
2. Specific themes .....	7
2.1. Safe Passage.....	7
2.2. Europe and International Refugee Protection.....	7
2.3. Europe and International Migration.....	8
2.4. Upholding the Dignity of Persons, addressing discrimination .....	8
2.5. Uniting in Diversity.....	9
C. HOW WE WILL BE WORKING .....	9
1. Elements of planning .....	9
2. Planning stages .....	9
3. Working mechanisms .....	10
4. Partnerships .....	11
4.1. Ecumenical .....	11
4.2. Partnerships Beyond the Membership .....	11
4.3. Secular partners .....	12

## **“The hope in which we stand”**

### **Work Programme 2018-2020 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 cooperates closely with the World Council of Churches.

1.4. The CCME Mission Statement adopted by the 16<sup>th</sup> CCME Assembly in London, October 2005 and revised by the 19<sup>th</sup> CCME Assembly in Sigtuna in June 2014, continues to guide the work of the CCME.

##### **2. Mandate of CCME**

The 20th CCME General Assembly 2017 affirms 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, xenophobia and discrimination, undertakes research, initiates, develops and implements projects in these fields;
- CCME represents the common voice of 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 membership was in preparation for the General Assembly invited to present issues for the work programme.

*The General Assembly in Prague 22-25 June 2017 discussed, amended and adopted this CCME Work Programme 2018-2020.*

## **B. WHAT WE WILL BE DOING – PRINCIPLES AND THEMES**

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.

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.

The last years have shown that migration is an overall concern for societies and churches in Europe. Churches far beyond CCME's membership have started to address migration, and they should eventually become members of CCME. This broader appeal makes a slight broadening of CCME's approach necessary.

CCME's work 2018-2020 will therefore be divided into activities addressing a number of overarching questions and principles and into work on more detailed specific themes.

### **1. Principles**

#### **1.1. Diversity and Solidarity**

In this area, CCME with members and partners will be examining how biblically rooted demands and commandments on migration can guide Christians and churches all over Europe. Values such as love, respect, solidarity and openness for diversity are often neglected or forgotten in times when fears and security concerns seem to be the dominating issues in migration policy. The work will address how

security can become a commonly shared notion, which is built on inclusive societies and respects diversity. The theme of overcoming fear of the other will feature centrally in this context. It will build on the statement of the CCME-CEC-WCC-PKN consultation in Lunteren 2016 and work done by members and unite them to a European network.

CCME will monitor the development of groups and parties working with anti-immigrant sentiment and find ways for members to engage and respond constructively to the challenges such groups present.

Together with the World Association of Christian Communication (WACC) CCME will further develop the work on the media's portrayal of refugees and migrants.

Work in this area will also look at the question of integration between newly arrived persons and receiving societies, the need for common principles in society among wide diversity, and the specific role of churches in achieving community cohesion, solidarity, justice and unity.

CCME will contribute to the work of CEC in the areas of freedom of religion and belief (FORB) and interfaith relations from a migration perspective.

## **1.2. Agency of right holders**

CCME will work to amplify the voices of migrants, refugees and minority ethnic groups in policy, culture and practice, particular focus will be paid to gender perspectives and the rights of women and children as well as the right to family life and security of residence.

## **1.3. Conversations and cooperation between European churches on migration and displacement**

This area will provide space for discussions between diverse churches with sometimes different approaches to migration and refugee protection. Work in this area takes up strands of discussions which began between different churches in 2015 and 2016 when responses to the so-called "refugee crisis" were rather diverse across Europe. The work in this area seeks to develop a broad consensus among European churches on the role of churches towards migration and refugee protection. It will include bilateral and multilateral exchanges and visits of solidarity between churches in Europe. Elements of capacity building and resource sharing will be included in this programme area.

The efforts for consensus building among European churches will include efforts of coordinating the positioning of different ecumenical actors such as the ACT Alliance, CPCE, LWF, WCRC, and WCC in Europe. These conversations will be undertaken in close cooperation with CEC and the consultation process on the Future of Europe.

The work under this heading will also have a specific focus on the questions of ecclesiology in times of migration, continuing the work undertaken by CEC and CCME in the Copenhagen consultation in December 2016. The issues of so-called "migrant churches" and unity in diversity will prominently feature in this work area.

## 2. Specific themes

### 2.1. Safe Passage

Under the heading of “Safe Passage” CCME will continue its work to overcome the current European<sup>1</sup> migration and border regime, which costs the lives of thousands every year. Activities will be undertaken with and through members and partners and include observation of search and rescue as well as reception at Europe’s external borders. CCME will continue its membership in the Frontex Consultative Forum on Fundamental Rights until end 2018. In the course of 2018, the CCME ExCom will evaluate and decide whether to continue this engagement. The main focus will however be put on continued advocacy and networking efforts to enable safe and legal access to Europe for those in need of protection, but also for those migrating in search of labour. The main instruments proposed will remain family reunification, resettlement and humanitarian admission programmes, humanitarian visa, lifting of visa requirements as well as legal channels for labour migration, the mutual recognition of protection status between states and fairer sharing of the responsibility to provide for protection. CCME’s work will be closely coordinated with similar initiatives of members and partners.

CCME will consider in this context promoting a **European Citizens Initiative** on migration, which foresees a focus on creating a legal framework for sponsorship for refugees.

### 2.2. Europe and International Refugee Protection

The EU’s agenda on refugees and asylum will continue to be one of the main preoccupations of CCME’s work. In its advocacy efforts with EU institutions, CCME will seek to uphold the right of persons in need of international protection to access a fair, speedy and high quality procedure with adequate reception conditions. This includes access to free legal aid. CCME will further support the search for solidarity in responsibility sharing for refugee protection between different states. The group of Christian organisations<sup>2</sup> and ECRE will remain privileged fora of addressing these issues.

CCME will continue to advocate for lesser known forms of refugee protection such as resettlement and further explore churches’ positions on private sponsorship in resettlement. Private sponsorship is seen as a possibility to increase national resettlement capacity and not to replace the state’s engagement in this area.

Addressing a growing concern, CCME will work with members on the issue of conversion in the asylum procedure, exchange relevant information and seek to improve asylum procedures through dialogue with relevant authorities on this subject.

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<sup>1</sup> Reference to European/Europe is meant to include EU member states and non EU states with similar policies

<sup>2</sup> Currently: ACT Alliance EU, Caritas Europa, CCME, COMECE, Don Bosco International, Eurodiaconia, ICMC, JRS-Europe, Protestant Church in Germany, Quaker Council on European Affairs, St. Egidio Community

Together with international partners such as ACT Alliance and WCC, CCME will follow the processes of new norm setting at UN level, such as the UN “Refugee Compact”, and try to influence its impact on Europe in favour of refugees’ rights.

### **2.3. Europe and International Migration**

While the current European migration policies are still mainly designed around the mantra of “no immigration”, migration is happening through many, often informal channels. CCME will continue to advocate for a clear, transparent and accessible system of migration to Europe – based on fundamental rights of migrants. The right to family unity is central in this field. Also in this context, the group of Christian organisations will provide a privileged tool for addressing these issues, together with other specialised organisations in the European Platform on Asylum and Migration.

The review of the EU Migration Agenda of 2015 will start already in summer 2017. CCME will follow the developments and seek to intervene in favour of migrants’ rights, solidarity and social cohesion whenever possible. After the European elections and prior to a new Commission taking office in 2019, some principles for the development of EU migration policies could be formulated.

CCME will work together also in this area with international partners to influence international norm setting, such as the work on a UN “Migration Compact” with its impact on Europe.

Special concern will be given to the most vulnerable in international migration, such as undocumented migrants, women and children. In its advocacy, CCME will have a particular focus on dignified returns, including perspectives of reintegration of returnees, working with agencies to improve standards and reviewing the legal frameworks concerning detention. CCME will continue to advocate for the exemption of humanitarian support to undocumented migrants from punishment, and the decriminalisation of migrants who face the threat of deportation.

CCME will continue to follow efforts against trafficking in human beings in legislation and practical work, and act as an expertise centre for European churches on the issue.

### **2.4. Upholding the Dignity of Persons, addressing discrimination**

Work in this area will address the protection of those groups discriminated against in the context of ethnic, social, racial, religious and gender based exclusion.

CCME will together with CEC and in cooperation with WCC address the issue of statelessness in the context of the UNHCR decade to end statelessness by 2024.

Further efforts will be undertaken in addressing the issue of Roma discrimination, with particular focus on the role played by churches. CCME will continue its commitment against racism and xenophobia, particularly when related to migration and pursue its work with the European Network Against Racism ENAR.

## 2.5. Uniting in Diversity

As migration changes the ecclesial landscape of European countries considerably, the topics of diversity and “Being Church Together” will stay on the ecumenical agenda. While some of the relevant topics may emerge during ecumenical visits and encounters (see points 1.1 and 1.2.), closer cooperation with migrant or minority ethnic churches will be important.

CCME will cooperate with CEC to intensify and enhance the ecumenical cooperation at national and European levels with migrant and minority ethnic churches. CCME will continue the cooperation with the Community of Protestant Churches in Europe (CPCE) for exploring possibilities towards church communion with migrant and minority ethnic churches. This work will take place on the understanding that migration presents an opportunity for European churches

CCME will explore how research and relevant publications can be promoted, building on the publication of “Mapping Migration”. When appropriate and sufficient funding allows, a European ecumenical conference with migrant-led and minority ethnic churches will be organised in 2019 or 2020.

## C. HOW WE WILL BE WORKING

### 1. Elements of planning

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 develop mechanisms of information sharing with and between members, e.g. through Facebook, other social media platforms and the CCME website;
- Sharing information on current asylum and migration policy, including country of origin information where available;
- 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 of networking and support;
- 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, xenophobia 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, including its agencies such as EASO or FRONTEX
- Council of Europe
- Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe OSCE
- UN (UNHCR, ILO, IOM)
- Global Forum on Migration and Development

#### **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. An important aspect is to have partnerships with ecumenical organisations related to countries of origin to enable rooted advocacy cooperation.

Existing partnerships, which will be maintained, include:

##### **4.1. 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. For 2018-2020 CCME and CEC are preparing an agreement on the cooperation. CCME will seek to further enhance the cooperation.

b. World Council of Churches WCC: CCME will seek agreement with WCC on future cooperation particularly with regard to interregional cooperation.

##### **4.2. Partnerships Beyond the Membership**

a. within the European ecumenical family

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

b. In the global ecumenical family

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

#### **4.3. Secular partners**

- European Council on Refugees and Exiles ECRE,
- European NGO Platform on Asylum and Migration EPAM,
- European Network Against Racism, ENAR,
- European Network on Statelessness, ENS.

Council of Europe, European Asylum Support Office EASO, EU Fundamental Rights Agency FRA, Frontex CF.

The ExCom shall explore membership in PICUM.

Adopted by the CCME General Assembly on 24 June 2017 in Prague/Czech Republic