

## European churches encouraged to work together to address refugee crisis

**In the wake of the current refugee crisis, European churches are being encouraged to deepen their efforts in receiving, supporting and protecting refugees who arrive in the region. This call was made in a letter issued jointly by the World Council of Churches (WCC), the Conference of European Churches (CEC) and the Churches' Commission for Migrants in Europe (CCME).**

“At this crucial time it appears very important to work together,” reads the letter that was made public by the ecumenical organizations on 9 September 2015. “One action alone will not solve the refugee crisis, yet we can spread the light of hope we have seen over the past weeks, and we can encourage more persons in our churches to engage,” it says.

The letter notes how more than 300 000 refugees have crossed the Mediterranean Sea through August of this year, with more than 100 000 arriving in Italy. Many have been rescued by Italian and other European navy ships. Another 200 000 persons or more have arrived through the Greek islands, according to the UNHCR reports.

“We advocate for a Common European Asylum System including decent reception conditions as well as a Common European Resettlement Scheme that puts the human being and his/her dignity at the centre of the processes,” reads the letter. “We urge the European governments to take responsibility in particular for the situation of minors, the most vulnerable group who are often deprived of basic stability, a full family life and education.”

In a statement CEC has requested the European churches to “cooperate in changing policies in the European Union and associated states from migration deterrence to policies that put the human at the heart of migration policies.”

The CEC statement also encourages churches to “address national governments and responsible authorities in EU member states in order to support such human centred migration policies” in line with the spirit of showing “hospitality to strangers”.

A [statement](#) by the WCC Executive Committee in June, asked the “WCC member churches and ecumenical partners, together with all people of goodwill, to promote a more open and welcoming approach to the ‘stranger’ and to the neighbour in need and distress, and to help receive and care for refugees and migrants in full respect for their God-given human dignity.”

The CCME Assembly in 2014 also called for “a change of attitudes regarding migration in accordance with European values. This also implies a truly human approach to refugee protection in line with the relevant European and international conventions. This includes legal and secure access to Europe for those in need of protection.”

The letter notes good examples of initiatives undertaken by churches as part of the widespread movement of solidarity with refugees in Greece, Hungary, Germany, the United Kingdom, Sweden, Italy, the Czech Republic and the Netherlands.

[Full text of the WCC-CEC-CCME joint letter on European refugee situation](#)

[More information: Conference of European Churches](#)

[More information: Churches' Commission for Migrants in Europe](#)

[Migration and social justice](#)