

The following is a joint press release from the Conference of European Churches, Churches' Commission for Migrants in Europe, and the World Council of Churches.

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Being Church in Europe Today: Migration through a theological lens

Migration touches all aspects of church life in Europe today. From social and diaconal action, to liturgical life, pastoral care, and theological reflection, churches are responding and adapting to the movement of migrants within Europe and from beyond its borders. These changing landscapes were the focus of a recent consultation convened by the Conference of European Churches, Churches' Commission for Migrants in Europe, with participation from the World Council of Churches, together with host Evangelical Lutheran Church in Denmark from 8 to 10 December 2016 in Copenhagen (Denmark).

The consultation, *Being Church in Europe Today: Migration and Ecclesiology*, brought together 30 participants from a diversity of church backgrounds. Together they addressed pressing challenges including how the gospel can speak in increasingly multicultural contexts, how Christianity relates to other faith communities, and how migration impacts understanding of ministry, membership, and sacrament.

Reflecting on the global context of this work, WCC Director of Faith and Order, Rev. Dr Odair Pedroso Mateus introduced the text *The Church: Towards a Common Vision* and called participants to reflect on the ecumenical significance of the mystical, corporate nature of the Church of the Triune God as new ways of being church emerge constantly throughout the world and Christians are challenged by secularist and religious ideologies of material, individualist prosperity.

Responses from the group included the sharing of experiences from local contexts including Italy, where the "Being Church Together" model is taking hold. Developed by the Federation of Protestant Churches in Italy, the model relies on mutual integration where both the receiving community and newcomers undergo transformation. Others highlighted efforts in Germany to develop worship styles and community identity across the lines of German-African cultural heritage.

In a keynote presentation, Metropolitan Stephanos of Tallinn and all Estonia, discussed the problem of "phyletism" (relationship between church and ethnic and national identities) especially within the so-called Orthodox diaspora. Others gathered identified with this issue, reflecting on growing nationalism in other European contexts.

Rev. Dr Aguswati Rambe from the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Bavaria also turned to Christianity's roots to understand today's setting. Migration, she noted, is an essential experience of forming church, even from the stories of Adam and Eve, the exodus, the apostles, and other believers throughout the millennia. Today, this experience of movement is a "vein of spreading the gospel."

The fruitful encounter will lead to an early 2017 European response to the World Council of Churches' Faith and Order document *The Church: Toward a Common Vision*. This contribution will contribute spiritual, pastoral, and theological perspectives on migration to this important global dialogue on what it means to be Church.