

Press Release 17/20
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Commemorating lives lost on the way to safety

Since 2000, more than 30 000 migrants and refugees have lost their lives on their way to Europe, often drowning at sea or suffocating in containers on trucks and ships. Churches throughout Europe have responded through intensive solidarity and humanitarian efforts at Europe's borders and by advocating for safe and legal passage.

The Christian response has also included widespread prayer for and remembrance of those who have died. In 2013, the General Assembly of the Conference of European Churches renewed a call for an annual day of prayer on the Sunday closest to 20 June, International Refugee Day, to commemorate those who have lost their lives on their journey to find a dignified life in Europe. **Together, the Conference of European Churches and the Churches' Commission for Migrants in Europe encourage their membership and supporters to join in this day of prayer on Sunday, 18 June 2017.** Resources to help congregations, parishes, and other communities prepare are [accessible on the CCME website](#).

In an appeal to the CEC and CCME constituencies, CEC General Secretary Fr Heikki Huttunen remarked, "We cannot escape the facts that reveal Europe's guilt for this unending ordeal. As churches and Christians our divine calling is to be witnesses and servants of the resurrection and new life in justice and peace for all, regardless of their ethnicity, nationality, or religion."

CCME General Secretary Doris Peschke added, "To date, 1,808 persons have been reported missing or dead in 2017 in the Mediterranean region. Commemorating these persons challenges us, too, to step up humanitarian responses, search and rescue operations, and to provide for safe passage."

The Churches' Commission for Migrants in Europe and partners have launched the [Safe Passage project](#) in direct response to the deaths of migrants and refugees at European borders. The project advocates for safe and easier pathways to Europe, including family reunification, humanitarian visas and mutual recognition of positive asylum decisions.

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The [Conference of European Churches](http://www.ceceurope.org) (CEC) is a fellowship of 115 Orthodox, Protestant, Anglican and Old Catholic Churches from all countries of Europe, plus 40 National Councils of Churches and Organisations in Partnership. CEC was founded in 1959. It has offices in Brussels and Strasbourg.

The [Churches' Commission for Migrants in Europe](http://www.ceceurope.org) (CCME) is the ecumenical agency on migration and integration, asylum and refugees, and against racism and discrimination in Europe. Members are Anglican, Orthodox and Protestant Churches and Councils of Churches as well as church-related agencies in presently 18 European countries. CCME cooperates with the Conference of European Churches and the World Council of Churches.