



All Africa
Conference of Churches



World Council of Churches



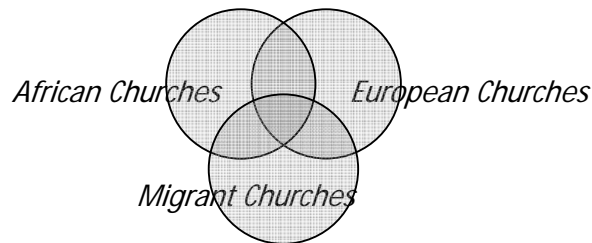
Recommendations of the African-European Churches' Consultation on Migration and the Changing Ecclesial Landscape, Palermo/Italy, 20-23 November 2008

Migration has led and is leading to changes in the ecclesial landscape: Migrants become members of congregations, or form their own congregations; some maintain links with churches in their home country, others establish links with churches in their new country of residence. Congregations and churches are changing: They become more transnational, more diverse. And yet, there are challenges and issues: In this first Africa-Europe Churches' Consultation on Migration and the changing ecclesial landscape, organised by the World Council of Churches, the All Africa Conference of Churches and the Churches' Commission for Migrants in Europe as well as the Federation of Protestant Churches in Italy and in cooperation with CEVAA, church representatives from Africa and Europe have shared their experience and exchanged views on challenges and chances for the churches' life and mission in times of accelerated migration.

The consultation discussed various aspects around *Migrant Christians: Believing as Wanderers between Nations and Cultures* and the diversity of situations. The specific relations with Africa, in view of European colonialism of African countries, but also neighbourhood policies and mission relations between European and African countries were discussed. It was underlined that different languages and cultures are not divisive factors for the churches, the common faith and confession can be expressed in very diverse ways. However, recognition of migrant congregations and inclusive strategies have to be further developed. These issues were also discussed in view of integration policies in the European Union and its member states.

The working groups discussed how African and European churches can respond together to the challenges of "Being Church Together" and recommended:

Diversity and commonalities



- *Migration is not only a political issue, but multi-faceted: on the advocacy level, there is no distinction of religious affiliation. The possibility and right of expressing faith needs to be guaranteed in line with the right to religious freedom.*
- *The challenges churches are facing have to be named, such as different historical, ethnic, social, cultural and religious backgrounds.*
- *Realize and recognise the change and integration which has already occurred.*
- *Positive experiences of uniting in diversity ought to be given greater visibility as a testimony to society;*
- *Mutual and profound knowledge about African and European churches need to be enhanced. It is important to know the different backgrounds and contexts of African and European countries and societies better.*
- *There are two areas of work necessary, ecclesiological, within denominational families, and ecumenical also in relation to Pentecostal and charismatic churches;*
- *African and European leadership of the churches need to be recognised;*
- *Exchange between African and European churches would be helpful to work on theological and practical issues. Short and long-term exchange of pastors as well as exchange of groups of church members;*
- *Establishing a network between European and African churches; a further consultation ought to be envisaged to involve also other African and European churches and countries;*
- *Strengthen Councils of Churches, federations and unions at national level with regard to important role for the recognition of migrant churches and congregations;*
- *The ecumenical organisations - AACC, CCME-CEC, CEVAA, CPCE, WCC etc, should inform their member churches on the challenges of "Being Church Together";*
- *Churches' institutions should provide education programmes and material on multi-culturalism and diversity;*
- *Education and specific challenges of the second generation need to be seriously addressed by congregations and churches. This appears important with regard to understanding integration, living diversity and becoming more inclusive while recognising that persons and identities change. The need to create space to discuss identities and changes for families and communities was highlighted.*

- *Christians live in civil society: Churches and congregation need also to be open to natives to foster common live, mutual exchange and thereby integration.*
- *Some migrant churches are trying to conserve their home traditions disregarding also changes taking place in their home country; this may pose risks to integration with the societies as well.*
- *Continue working across cultural boundaries to advocate on social issues*
- *Encourage Churches to be open to change – change is a two way process on both sides. Even in cases where we feel wounded by the loss that change brings about, we experience growth in long term,*
- *Promote prayer meetings involving participants from different Churches of different cultures. Begin by sharing about why each group prays as it does, and then encourage praying for specific concerns of participants.*
- *Celebrate the ways we are already “Church together”*

Three persons had been asked to specifically observe the consultation The Observers: Mrs. Innocence Ahadzi Kluvia, Mr. John van Tilborg and Mrs. Victoria Kamondji concluded:

All the organizers – the World Council of Churches, the All Africa Conference of Churches, the Churches’ Commission for Migrants in Europe, the Federation of Protestant Churches in Italy – must be complimented for bringing together such a wide range of participants and giving them the opportunity of sharing together.

This was a meeting at equal levels for the three parties concerned – the European, Migrant and African representatives. The importance of this tri-dimensional approach is that responsibilities and experiences were shared which showed the need to continue this process in the future.

Answers could not be given to all the questions but we were all enlightened and believe that we need to continue, to create a space in order to respond to the needs expressed in this Consultation. There are still many major practical issues that need to be addressed.

This will ring a bell, so that we know how we can come as closest as possible together before God and know what he expects of us, transcending our borders of national, linguistic and cultural backgrounds.

The experience here was unique and in spite of our denominational differences we all felt as one in Jesus Christ working towards the same goal. “Exclusion,” as someone said, “is an answer to a feeling of threat to one’s identity”.

The questions we should ask ourselves is: Who are we? Where do we want to go? Where are we going? In order to know who we are, we need to look into the eyes of the other person and see ourselves as we are in his/her eyes. But first of all we have to meet that person.

This type of Consultation can be considered to be only the beginning; it is strongly recommended that it continues.

Brussels, 28.11.2008