



Conference of European Churches

To the member churches and associated
organisations of CEC and CCME

20. January 2009

European Churches Responding to Migration 2010 Invitation to participate and cooperate

Your Beatitudes, Your Eminences,
Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ, dear Friends,

The Conference of European Churches and the Churches' Commission for Migrants in Europe have negotiated on the integration of the two organisations for some time and concluded a Memorandum of Understanding "Different Backgrounds – Joint Future" which is forming the basis for the two organisations.

Following the decisions taken at the Central Committee of CEC and CCME Executive Committee in November 2007 in Vienna, the Assembly of CCME and the Central Committee of CEC at their respective parallel meetings in Paralimni, Cyprus, endorsed planning, launching and implementation of a joint year **European Churches responding to migration 2010**.

Recognising that migration is an overall reality in society today, and aware that migration is posing challenges to societies, political institutions and churches, the Assembly (of CEC) confirms the obligation on churches and each Christian to "welcome the stranger".

Aims of the Year European Churches responding to migration 2010:

The year of **European Churches responding to migration 2010** shall make visible the churches' *commitment to strangers, responding to the message of the Bible, which insists on the dignity of every human being, in order to promote an inclusive policy at European and national level for migrants, refugees and ethnic minority groups.*

Churches shall be encouraged to strengthen and enhance their work for migrants, refugees and ethnic minority people. At the same time, with **joint** activities and cooperation with **CCME/CEC**, existing programmes shall be highlighted also vis-à-vis governments and political institutions as well as society at large, to emphasise the need for more inclusive policy development, which recognises the potential of diversity in society for greater justice, solidarity and equality and facilitates participation in community and social life.

The **dignity of every person**, as created in the image of God, migrants, refugees, old and new ethnic minority people shall be emphasised in all activities.

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With higher visibility of churches' views and positions, word and action, the joint advocacy of churches for more inclusive communities and societies shall be underlined. At the same time fears in societies shall be addressed, and positive features of migration shall be highlighted.

At political level, the rights of migrants and the responsibility for effective programmes welcoming migrants and refugees, encounter and participation shall be emphasised.

As a mid-term aim, strengthening of migrants' and refugees' right to a long-term residence status after five years of legal stay, irrespective of the grounds of stay, shall be envisaged.

The activities

Every month of the year 2010 shall focus on a specific aspect of migration, e.g. June 2010 with International Refugees Day dedicated to refugee related issues, October with the EU anti-trafficking day on the fight against trafficking in human beings, December with International Migrants Day on migrants' rights. The calendar of focus themes shall be developed until summer 2009 in order to be translated and distributed widely. Member churches and associations of CEC and CCME shall be invited to plan activities around the calendar. Information on the activities shall be collected and publicised on a specific part of the new CEC website.

Four regional meetings/conferences addressing issues prevailing in that region should be foreseen to highlight various aspects and concerns. Churches shall be invited to propose possible themes, regions and venues.

A collection and exchange of worship material and prayers related to the themes of migration – preferable in the order of the calendar - shall be produced for the year 2010, offering biblical and theological reflections on the various themes.

It is hoped that CEC and CCME members as well as specialised ministries and all CEC staff will actively contribute to the year of churches focussing on migration in Europe in order to make the journey together a step towards more inclusive societies in Europe.

Programme Planning

Based on the study "Mapping Migration – Mapping Churches' Responses" (<http://www.ccme.be/secretary/NEWS/Mapping%20migration%20report%202008-05-28.pdf>) themes and activities shall be identified which are of concern regarding migration in Europe. Emigration and immigration, protection of refugees, participation in churches and societies of old and new ethnic minorities, shall be addressed.

The CCME reader on theological reflections is offered to CEC member churches and associations as a basis for further reflections and contributions (see: <http://www.ccme.be/secretary/NEWS/Theological%20Reflection.pdf>). For the year 2010, a more comprehensive reader could be produced.

Jointly with the World Council of Churches a Europe Hearing will be planned to take place at the end of 2009 which officially opens the Year of **European Churches Responding to Migration 2010**.

Invitation to participate and cooperate

Today we would like to invite you to reflect and act with us to make the Year of "Churches Responding to Migration" a success. What can be done?

- Contribute to theological reflections on migration, refugee protection and uniting in diversity with ethnic minorities and send contributions to CCME.
- Collect and/or elaborate worship material, prayers, hymns, etc. relating to the issues of migration, refugees and uniting in diversity with ethnic minorities. If possible, indicate the topics in English, German or French and send it to the CCME secretariat.

- Identify a priority aspect in your church, country or region and plan an event accordingly.
- What and how does your church/related agency or organisation want to highlight in 2010 and communicate to other churches?
- Would you have proposals for one of the approximately four regional consultations?
- Study the legal situation of migrants and refugees: do they have access to a permanent residence title after five years of stay? Which conditions do they have to meet? Depending on the outcome of this, what would be necessary to achieve a permanent status? How could the church(es) in your country contribute to achieving this?
- Plan one or more collections to raise funds for the churches' work with and for migrants, refugees and ethnic minorities at national and European level.
- Contribute with a grant or donation to the planning and implementation of the European Churches Responding to Migration 2010, both for the preparation of the material and the events and communication in 2010. A detailed budget is available on request.
- Identify a contact person of your church/organisation for activities in the year of **European Churches Responding to Migration 2010**.

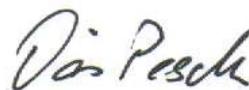
We will soon also issue an invitation to a first ad-hoc group to brainstorm further for the calendar of activities.

We look forward to cooperating with you in preparation as well as undertaking the year of **European Churches Responding to Migration 2010**.

With best wishes and greetings,



Ven. Colin Williams
General Secretary of CEC



Doris Peschke
General Secretary of CCME