



Churches' Commission for Migrants in Europe
Commission des Eglises auprès des Migrants en Europe
Kommission der Kirchen für Migranten in Europa

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Combating trafficking for forced labour: signs of hope among alarming realities

Churches continue partnership-building against contemporary slavery

Representatives of churches, trade unions, parliaments, NGOs and state institutions from across Europe met in Bucharest 24-27 February 2010 , to take stock of the reality of trafficking for forced labour in Europe and to devise common strategies against it.

The workshop “Trafficking in Human Beings for Labour Exploitation - emerging civil society responses to a growing challenge”, which was co-hosted by the Churches' Commission for Migrants in Europe (CCME), the Romanian AIDROM association and the Romanian Senate, was the first of a series of meetings, by which CCME seeks to build civil society capacity to combat trafficking for forced labour.

In their opening messages to the workshop, both His Beatitude Daniel Patriarch of the Romanian Orthodox church and Secretary of State for the Interior Dan Fatoliou underlined the dramatic situation of Romanian citizens, who often find themselves exploited when migrating. Participants from the Czech Republic, Greece, Ireland and Italy in presentations of recent findings about the extent and dynamic of trafficking for forced labour in their respective regions confirmed that the problem was not limited to Romania. While the problem is still poorly researched, informed estimates indicate that trafficking for forced labour is endemic across Europe in sectors such as agriculture, construction, domestic work but also construction or manufacturing. While legislation to protect victims and to persecute trafficking for forced labour exists in most European countries, few victims are actually identified and assisted. The regional studies underlined that adequate support structures are still largely missing. In a number of countries, new initiatives and partnerships had however been developed in recent years, involving churches, NGOs and trade unions as well as specialised state agencies. Participants however voiced the concern that there seemed to be little political will to address the problem in its complexity.

Torsten Moritz , executive secretary of CCME underlined : “It is good to see that we are no longer starting from zero in combating trafficking for forced labour. However, trafficking for forced labour raises a number of broader questions: why is it that legislation often makes

migrant workers more vulnerable rather than protecting them.” He added “ If we look at the extent of the problem, we also need to ask ourselves if the way labour is organised in certain sectors needs to be changed if we seriously want to combat trafficking.”

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The views expressed and information provided by the project and the partners involved do not necessarily reflect the point of view of the European Commission and do in no way fall under the responsibility of the European Commission.

The Churches’ Commission for Migrants in Europe (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 across Europe. CCME formally cooperates with the Conference of European Churches and the World Council of Churches.