

20 June 2011

Economic crisis changes patterns of migration in Europe

1. European Churches committed to living diversity and solidarity
2. Prof. Dr Victoria Kamondji elected moderator of CCME

"Christians are migrants by vocation", underlined H.E. Metropolitan Emmanuel of France, President of the Conference of European Churches in his statement to the *18th General Assembly of the Churches' Commission for Migrants in Europe (CCME) in Bucharest, Romania, from 16-19 June 2011*. "With these words and the meaning they contain, we make the migrant status ours; ... The diversity, of which we are making ourselves the heroes of, has meaning only if we reveal the object, namely the very subject of our faith, the image of God, which he has fashioned himself for us."



The conference at the opening of the CCME Assembly tackled the changes in migration patterns observed as a consequence of the economic crisis. Representatives of the Romanian Office for Immigration and Refugees shared their knowledge on immigration and emigration as well as asylum and refugee protection in Romania. Delegates of the churches in Greece, UK, Hungary and Spain gave a testimony on the effects on migration in their countries, pointing to the shortcomings of politicians to respond appropriately and the rise of populist responses. Countries most affected by the crisis observe an increasing departure of skilled professionals as their prospects have become bleak, while arrivals of persons from regions of conflict in North Africa and the Middle East seeking protection continues to challenge particularly Greece.

"Quite unsurprisingly, the economic crisis has had a significant impact on immigration flows, especially to the traditional migrant-receiving EU countries, where the economic downturn has stifled, and in some cases even reverted, what had once been a seemingly ever-growing stream of immigrants." Arcadio Diaz Tejera of the Council of Europe Parliamentary Assembly stated. He underlined that

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"all in all, we cannot talk about any Europe-wide tendencies" He explained that the crisis had a disproportionate impact on immigrant workers, especially on migrant men and youth, while in some European countries employment of migrant women has gone up, as they have taken up jobs to compensate for loss of income by male family members. "A realistic and responsible discussion on the benefits and costs of migration are in the long-run interest of both states and migrants," he concluded.

In his greeting and blessing of the CCME Assembly, His Beatitude Patriarch Daniel of the Romanian Orthodox Church underlined that "under these circumstance (of economic crisis) we must multiply prayer as a source of hope and organise solidarity with those less favoured and marginalised."

CCME Assembly commemorates 60th Anniversary of the International Refugee Convention

"European churches regard the Geneva Refugee Convention and other International and European Conventions an important basis which need to be fully applied.", reads the public statement adopted by the CCME Assembly at its closing on the eve of International Refugee Day. "Churches demand from European governments an enforcement of international refugee protection according to these conventions." (full text of the statement attached)

Professor Dr. Victoria Kamondji from France elected as CCME Moderator

Professor Dr. Victoria Kamondji, Vice-President of the Federation of Protestant Churches in France, was elected CCME Moderator in a unanimous ballot by the CCME Assembly. Dr Kamondji succeeds the Reverend Arlington Trotman from UK who completed two three-year terms as moderator. Apostle Adejare Oyewole was elected CCME Treasurer, Dr Antonios Papantoniou (Greece) and Kristina Hellqvist (Sweden) as vice-moderators in addition to Rev. Alfredo Abad (Spain), Rev. Thorsten Leisser (Germany), and Elena Timofticiuc (Romania).



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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.