



ccme

churches' commission for migrants in europe

CCME Work Programme 2011-2014

CCME – Churches' Commission for Migrants in Europe
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Work Programme 2011-2014 of the Churches' Commission for Migrants in Europe

A. WHERE WE COME FROM

CCME is an ecumenical organisation that serves the churches in their 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 minority groups.

(CCME Mission Statement, adopted at the General Assembly 2005)

1. Foundations of the work of CCME

1.1. With this work programme, CCME seeks to contribute to the Christian witness in Europe; seeking to develop a Europe welcoming the strangers and building inclusive societies: "So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but citizens with the saints and also members of the household of God" (Eph. 2:19).

1.2. The work of CCME in fostering Christian reflection and action on migration is grounded in the clear command in both the Old and the New Testaments to act humanely and compassionately towards the strangers who share with all human beings the dignity of the Being of God, (Genesis 1,26-27; John 1,1). That "You shall love the alien as yourself" (Leviticus 19, 34; Hebrews 13, 1-3) is typical of the humane attitude towards 'the other' found in the Moses law, an obligation recognized by the three Abrahamic world religions and other faith communities. It is believed to have been given both by revelation and natural law, that is, a moral principle which is capable of being recognized by all human beings.

1.3. The Conference of European Churches (CEC) and the Churches' Commission for Migrants in Europe in their memorandum of understanding "Different Backgrounds – Joint Future" adopted in November 2007 by the CCME ExCom and the CEC Central Committee respectively, have agreed to journey together to make the witness of churches in Europe more visible.

1.4. The decision of the CEC General Assembly in Lyon in 2009 to completely revise the working structures of CEC, including those agreed upon in the 2007 memorandum of understanding, has effectively put on hold the final steps of the integration process. CCME remains committed to concluding the integration process once CEC has reaffirmed that the memorandum of understanding can continue to be the basis of these final steps of integration of CEC and CCME. In the meantime CCME will contribute as a legally independent organisation to the overall work of CEC and its constituencies and provide input to the common work priorities of CEC and its commissions.

1.5. The CCME Mission Statement adopted by the 16th CCME Assembly in London, October 2005 continues to guide the work of the CCME.

2. Mandate of CCME

As outlined in the joint memorandum of understanding "Different Backgrounds – Joint Future" signed by the leadership of CEC and CCME in Vienna in November 2007, the CCME General Assembly and CEC Central Committee have affirmed the mandate of the CCME of CEC, namely to

- serve the churches in their 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 minority groups;
- work on issues of migration and integration, asylum and refugees, and against racism and discrimination, undertake research, initiate, develop and implement projects in these fields;
- represent the common voice of the churches in Europe on the above issues vis-à-vis the European institutions.

3. Process towards this work programme

This work programme is the result of a participatory process: the CCME General Assembly in Protaras/Cyprus on 11th October 2008 had adopted a work programme 2009-2015 for CCME. CCME members, based on an invitation sent out in March 2011, suggest work priorities for the period 2011-14. The CCME ExCom in its meeting in Geneva 28-30 March 2011 further developed these priorities. The CCME General assembly in Bucharest 16-19 June 2011 discussed, amended and adopted this CCME work programme 2011-2014.

B. WHAT WE WILL BE DOING

Within its general mandate, CCME will seek to focus its activities on a limited number of strategic areas, in which it pro-actively engages with high quality contributions and potential for impact, rather than trying to address every issue of potential relevance. In other areas, CCME will facilitate contacts between its constituency and other actors leading on the issue, participate in coalitions lead by others, or simply monitor without developing own activities. CCME will carefully evaluate if, as a European network with national member organisations, it is best placed to address a particular issue.

In its work CCME will work for coherence in the ecumenical witness in Europe. It will therefore, together with CEC and its Commissions, engage in work on a number of cross-cutting themes. Within the wider ecumenical family CCME will also contribute to the monitoring of developments influencing the life of migrants, such as economic development, conflict around the world, climate change .

CCME's work will both reflect a socio-political analysis of current contexts and theological reflection on migration.

1. Europe's role in refugee protection in the 21st century

1.1. The large majority of refugees are currently hosted by poorer countries in the world. In the 20th century, Europe was the scene of displacement but also of providing protection. New forms of displacement and forced migration (e.g. due to environmental degradation) may pose challenges in the years to come. Yet, in the past years, the numbers of refugees in Europe has overall drastically declined. However, numbers of refugees vary significantly between different European countries and the current system of responsibility-sharing places over-proportional responsibility on the EU member states - and non EU members - at the external border of the EU. Generally, fewer refugees find access to Europe, and access to effective protection is becoming increasingly difficult. Effective access to a fair and just asylum procedure for those in need of protection remains crucial. At the same time, the declining numbers of refugees coming to Europe further underline the need to extend solidarity to those refugees who will not be able to access European territory.

1.2. While the EU and its members states are formally committed to establishing a Common European Asylum System, procedures and conditions for obtaining refugee status as well as recognition rates vary considerably across the EU. There is a need to further harmonise EU legislation and practice across EU member states. While the EU Asylum Support Office, which will officially be opened on 19 June 2011 in Valetta, Malta, will play a role in practical cooperation, true harmonisation will depend on "hard law". The assessment of the correct implementation of previously adopted EU framework legislation on asylum, both in terms of legal transposition into national law by EU Member States, as well as in terms of practical impact, will be of critical importance.

1.3. In the context of the European Council for Refugees and Exiles (ECRE) CCME will support efforts to defend asylum, including complementary protection, in Europe. CCME in cooperation with its members will in particular monitor the implementation of framework legislation on asylum, e.g. through sharing existing briefing material or existing practice on advocacy. CCME will also advocate for improved framework legislation (Asylum directives, Dublin II revision). CCME will advocate for a fair system of sharing of responsibility for refugee protection, which will offer access to a fair asylum procedure and a high level of protection throughout Europe.

1.4. CCME will take forwards initiatives to promote additional forms of refugee protection; in particular the resettlement of refugees to Europe. CCME will, where possible in cooperation with partners from other regions, seek to strengthen the role of churches in promoting and implementing refugee resettlement.

1.5. CCME will monitor initiatives of UNHCR to redefine the need of protection in view of present challenges in refugee protection.

1.6. For CCME, the area of work on "Europe's role in refugee protection in the 21st century" will be a privileged field of cooperation with CEC and its Commissions on Church and Society and on Churches in Dialogue under the heading "Representing the common voice of the Churches vis-à-vis the European institutions". In this context CCME will continue to represent CEC in ECRE:

2. Human Dignity in the process of labour migration

2.1. With economic globalisation, patterns of international migration are changing. While the majority of migrants move within their region, more migrants travel further distances for a job and a living.

2.2. While they are welcome when (cheap) labour is needed, permanent settlement and participation in societies meet barriers and restrictions. In countries recovering from the economic crisis, a trend to increase labour migration can be observed in, while migrants' status and rights remain uncertain. In many countries, migrants have become scapegoats in times of crisis. The right to family life for migrants is particularly under threat in many countries.

2.3. While more and more EU member states need, and actively recruit, migrants for various sectors in the labour markets, there is wide disparity with regard to the rights of migrants across the EU. The Council of Europe has addressed the issue of labour migration in September 2008 in the conference of ministers responsible for migration, and the Council of Europe standards, conventions and recommendations on labour migrants ought to be taken as a common basis also for developing EU standards. In addition, the recommendations of the International Labour Organisation in this field provide a good framework for advocacy with governments, employers and trade unions. The call for ratification of the 1990 Convention on the rights of migrants and members of their family will be at the heart of CCME's advocacy in this field.

2.4. CCME will continue its advocacy for a uniform set of rights for all migrants in the debates on EU wide migration policies. In particular CCME will promote the ratification of binding instruments Europe-wide and globally.

2.5. In ecumenical cooperation CCME will underline the importance of the right to family life for migrants, both as a human right and as sine qua non of integration.

2.6. CCME will continue to monitor the development of EU legislation. Seeking coherence with the area of migration and development, CCME will advocate for circular migration on the basis of a migrant-centered approach.

2.7. CCME will continue to support and facilitate exchange among members on monitoring of expulsion, detention and removal of migrants and recommend such activities to churches in Europe. In particular CCME will monitor and give input on implementing the (few) positive aspects of the EU return directive and seek to acquire additional resources for operational activities in this area. If resources allow CCME will explore how practical cooperation with partners in other regions can be enhanced in this field. CCME will continue the cooperation with children's rights organisations in their advocacy for the best interest of the child in return and removal.

2.8. Following up on the recommendation of the CEC Assembly in Lyon 2009, CCME and CEC will encourage their members to hold prayers of intercession for persons who have lost their lives on their way to dignity and safety.

2.9. CCME will, where appropriate, cooperate with PICUM in its work of addressing situations of migrants in irregular situation, and seek to involve CCME members in the work of broader platforms on the issue of detention.

3. Countering contemporary forms of slavery, in particular trafficking in human beings

3.1. Parallel to stricter immigration controls, trafficking in human beings has become more visible in the past two decades as a new form of slavery. While joint efforts of authorities and non-governmental organisations and churches against this international crime have produced some results, trafficking for various forms of exploitation remains still a significant problem. Expertise on trafficking in women for sexual exploitation is fairly developed, but policy responses are still insufficient. Other forms of exploitation, e.g. forced labour are still a rather unknown field. Activities of civil society are still mainly focussed on areas of "damage control" such as prevention and assistance, with issues of rights and compensations often being sidelined.

3.2. The human rights of trafficked persons are generally still insufficiently protected. However, implementation of new legislation by the EU and the Council of Europe Convention offer opportunities to better protect the rights of trafficked persons.

3.3. The basis of the work and the rights-based approach of CCME against trafficking have been laid down in the 2008 CCME position paper "if the son sets you free" on trafficking.

3.4. CCME will maintain its role as a centre of expertise for churches in Europe wishing to address trafficking in women. CCME will contribute to events organised by churches and Christian agencies across Europe and based on experiences from the field give input to European policy debates.

3.5. CCME will further develop expertise on patterns of labour trafficking and best practice to combat it – if possible in partnership and with specific projects. Particular focus will be on the role of civil society organisation in identification of victims and in models of guaranteeing the access to rights, such as compensation.

4. Uniting in Diversity: Migration as an opportunity and a challenge for the unity of the church

4.1. There is an increasing awareness that migration is changing the ecclesial landscape in Europe: more congregations of migrants are found, a greater diversity of denominations is observed. Separate and segregated church life is a phenomenon similar to fragmentation in societies, at the same time more transnational and international congregations emerge. Migration constitutes an enormous opportunity and yet a considerable challenge for churches in Europe. The way churches in Europe manage to achieve the goal of uniting in diversity will in many ways determine the future of Christianity in Europe. The credibility of Christian witness for inclusive communities in Europe will largely be influenced by the way in which churches achieve inclusiveness in their own midst.

4.2. As one of its priorities CCME will further advance activities assisting and encouraging churches in Europe in the process of "Being Church Together" with "migrant churches" (including migrant-led, black majority and minority ethnic churches). CCME will map ongoing activities of churches in Europe in this area, collect them and share information.

4.3. CCME will seek to encourage input from ecumenical bodies on the specific role religion can play in integration of migrants and host societies. As a member of the "ACCEPT Pluralism" research project consortium, CCME will exchange and share knowledge on tolerance and cultural diversity in Europe.

4.4. For CCME, the area of work on "uniting in diversity" will be a privileged field of cooperation with CEC and its Commissions on Church and Society and on Churches in Dialogue under the heading "Promoting the unity of the churches..."

5. Churches as witness to inclusive communities in Europe

5.1. Various forms of exclusion continue to exist in societies, some of which are becoming even more dramatic. Vulnerable groups of migrants are particularly affected by exclusion, e.g. asylum applicants and undocumented migrants, children of migrants, but also ethnic minorities are often marginalised. Anti-discrimination legislation provides an important instrument even if it also poses challenges.

5.2. CCME will maintain its involvement in anti-racism networks, both ecumenical and secular. It will in this context keep informed about anti-discrimination legislation and, where appropriate, contribute to its promotion in churches. Where possible CCME will participate in platforms for the Inclusion of ethnically discriminated groups within church and society.

5.3. The issue of discrimination of Roma has in recent years received considerable attention. EU policy declarations have highlighted the need for decisive action by member states as well as the need for civil society involvement in overcoming the discrimination of Roma. Churches and Christian agencies in some countries have begun to address the issue in a more coherent fashion.

5.4. CCME will continue to enhance the cooperation with Eurodiaconia to develop synergies between the two organisations working in this field.

5.5. CCME will in particular seek funding for a programme looking at the role of churches in overcoming the discrimination of Roma. Activities could include team visits and studies on acknowledging the role of the Roma community in national and church history.

5.6. In cooperation with other partners CCME will monitor discussions on migrants' integration. CCME will where appropriate contribute to them, based on the conviction that integration in all aspects is a two way process, that should include migrants' rights and anti-discrimination and should create a logic of better inclusion rather than pre-emptive exclusion of certain groups of (potential) migrants.

5.7. For CCME, the area of work on "churches as witness to inclusive communities" will be a privileged field of cooperation with CEC and its Commissions on Church and Society and on Churches in Dialogue under the heading "promoting inclusive communities".

6. Migration and development

6.1. The nexus between migration and development is recognised in communication and statements; policies and concrete cooperation activities (e.g. the European Neighbourhood Policy) are however still largely dominated by the aim to use development cooperation as a tool for migration restriction and control. The process around the Global Forum on Migration and Development has shown interest in the issue, but equally signalled the difficulty to get actors from both fields, migration and development, into communication.

6.2. Churches as actors in the fields of migration and development are ideally placed to explore positive ways of action which go beyond remittances. However, this potential of being actors of migration and development is not yet fully used.

6.3. CCME will continue to seek cooperation with APRODEV, its agencies and global bodies like ACT Alliance to monitor policy developments at European level. CCME will explore possible project cooperation with partners from other regions in the area of migration and development, in particular around the Global Forum on Migration and Development.

C. HOW WE WILL BE WORKING

1. Elements of planning

1.1. Potential activities of CCME will need to be evaluated against their potential:

- to have a clear impact among churches, or
- to have an impact in voicing the churches' concerns towards policies on the national level;
- to provide specific added value by addressing an issue on a European level.
- to make a specific contribution of churches to a wider debate and serve the churches' witness in the area of migration on a global level;
- to be complementary to or to have specific added value in relation to activities of other actors and to achieve synergy with them;
- to give a voice to the voiceless.

2. Planning stages

All activities need to be scrutinised in a process following a number of stages:

2.1. A thorough needs assessment,

2.2. Reflection on possible alternatives (e.g. other actors addressing issue, other working method),

2.3. Initial reflection on strategy and methodology of activity;

2.4. Assessment of potential impact, in particular of the potential added value for member organisations of addressing a particular topic on European level and in the context of CCME and CEC,

- 2.5. Reflection on how CCME of CEC activities would link to similar activities undertaken by other actors in the same thematic area,
- 2.6. Analysis of potential impact on CCME-CEC advocacy work for refugees, migrants and minority ethnic people,
- 2.7. Identification of thematic and financial support, in particular among members and strategic partners,
- 2.8. Support for project methodology among members,
- 2.9. Adequate methods of impact assessment and evaluation will need to be developed.

3. Working mechanisms

The CCME working mechanisms are derived from the mandate of CCME:

3.1. To serve the churches in their 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 minority groups.

- Communication with CCME and CEC members CCME will in this context explore mechanisms of information sharing between members, e.g. through newslists and a "members only" section of the website;
- working groups, ad hoc task forces and regional consultations convened by CCME members;
- trainings and project activities;
- visits;
- membership in and cooperation with the Global Ecumenical Network on Migration of WCC.

3.2. Work on issues of migration and integration, asylum and refugees, and against racism and discrimination, undertake research, initiate, develop and implement projects in these fields;

- networking with Christian and non-governmental organisations,
- partnerships with academia (theological faculties, migration researchers),
- thematic public hearings,
- international conferences,
- mid- term and long-term projects.

3.3. Represent the common voice of the churches in Europe on the above issues towards the European institutions and international organisations active in Europe:

- European Union
- Council of Europe
- Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe OSCE
- UN (UNHCR, ILO)

- Global Forum on Migration and Development
- IOM

4. Partnerships

As ecumenical agency in Europe, CCME can only realize its mandate to serve the churches if it works in partnership with other Christian organisations as well as secular partners. CCME seeks to develop partnerships with like-minded organisations. Existing partnerships, which will be maintained, include:

1. Ecumenical

a. within CEC

Church and Society Commission

Commission Churches in Dialogue

PARTNERSHIPS BEYOND THE MEMBERSHIP

b. within the European ecumenical family

Group of European Christian organisations on migration and asylum (Caritas Europa, COMECE, Eurodiaconia, International Catholic Migration Commission ICMC, Jesuit Refugee Service JRS Europe, Quaker Council on European Affairs)

APRODEV, Eurodiakonia, Ecumenical Youth Council in Europe EYCE, WSCF-Europe, Community of Protestant Churches in Europe

c. In the global ecumenical family

World Council of Churches, Global Ecumenical Network on Migration, Lutheran World Federation

All Africa Conference of Churches, Middle East Council of Churches, Church World Service Immigration and Refugee Program USA

2. Secular partners

European Council on Refugees and Exiles ECRE

NGO Platform of European organisations on migration and asylum

European Network Against Racism, ENAR

European Coordination for Foreigners' Right to Family Life

IMISCOE – Network of Research Institutes on International Migration Integration Social Cohesion in Europe

Adopted by the CCME General Assembly on 18th June 2011 in Bucharest/Romania