



ccme

churches' commission for migrants in europe

ACTIVITY REPORT 2011

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

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CCME's MISSION AND MANDATE

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. CCME aims at promoting an inclusive policy at European and national level for migrants, refugees and minority ethnic groups.

CCME is the ecumenical agency on migration and integration, refugees and asylum, and against racism and discrimination in Europe. CCME members are Anglican, Orthodox and Protestant Churches, Councils of Churches and diaconal agencies in presently 19 European countries. CCME cooperates with the Conference of European Churches (CEC) and the World Council of Churches (WCC) in advocacy for migrants', refugees' and minority concerns and rights with European institutions, and in promoting integration and anti-discrimination. CCME is currently in the process of integration with the Conference of European Churches.

CCME OBJECTIVES

In particular, the objectives of CCME are:

- to monitor European and national migration, refugee and anti-discrimination policy, to inform the churches about these policies;
- to support and serve the churches in their advocacy;
- to challenge the European institutions to act in accordance with human rights and international obligations;
- to strengthen on a global, European, national and regional level the cooperation of churches, NGOs and others in this field;

- to support and challenge churches to include migrants (churches, groups or individuals) in the communion of churches;
- to address fears in societies around migration and facilitate churches' initiatives on finding ways to peaceful living together.

Working instruments of CCME are conferences, seminars, studies, information and communication, working groups and thematic ad hoc meetings.



Conference "Migration in times of economic crisis..."

POLITICAL BACKGROUND

European asylum and migration policy

Since 1999, with the Amsterdam Treaty, the European Union has competence on a wide range of issues related to refugees' and migrants' concerns. The Council of Tampere in October 1999 determined an ambitious work programme of harmonisation in the area of asylum and migration of which the first round should have been terminated in May 2004. Many of the envisaged directives and regulations had been decided by the end of 2005, and by the end of 2006 the adopted directives should have been transposed into national legislation by EU Member States. As the guardian of EU treaties and EU legislation, the European Commission had started a review of the transposition of EU asylum and migration law into national law in 2007-8. In 2008

and 2009, the Commission submitted proposals for a recast of the directives related to asylum (directives on qualification, reception conditions and asylum procedures) as well as the Dublin II and Eurodac regulation. These proposals were subject to controversial discussions between member states and the European Parliament between 2009 and 2011. As a consequence, amended proposals so-called "recasts of the recasts" were published in summer 2011.

In 2011 the establishment of a European Asylum Support Office, EASO made substantial steps forward following the official inauguration in Valetta, Malta on 19th June 2011.

The new multiannual programme, the "Stockholm Programme" 2010-2014, has increasingly been challenged due to more short-term political considerations by member states.

Context 2011: the "refugee crisis" in the Mediterranean region...

The year 2011 was, particularly but not only in the area of migration, strongly influenced by events on the doorsteps of Europe and their perceived impact on Europe.

The so-called Arab spring led in many countries to the overthrow of old political regimes, but it also led to massive migratory movements. While they were mainly limited to the region, they nevertheless had some noticeable impact on Europe. While exact figures are difficult to establish, UN agencies or IOM estimated that around 1,5 million persons (Libyans and other nationalities) had been fleeing from Libya in 2011 with events in Tunisia, Egypt and more recently Syria adding to the displacement in the region. It was within this larger context that the arrival of some 35.000 persons by boat in Italy in the first five months of 2011 lead to the wide-spread

perception that a mass influx of migrants and refugees into Europe was happening or was to be expected. The arrival of several thousand refugees on the island of Lampedusa, paired with the Italian government's unwillingness to open the reception facilities on Lampedusa and to speedily move the newly arrived to Sicily and the Italian mainland, led to a visible emergency situation on the island. Along with this, a perception emerged that a refugee crisis was developing at Europe's external border. While data provided e.g. by FRONTEX or Eurostat in early 2012 indicated that the number of irregular entries into the EU in 2011 was in the dimension or even inferior to the scope reached in 2008, and only a moderate increase in asylum applications across the EU was reported, political debate was based on the assumption that an unprecedented crisis was developing.



Refugee boats at Brandenburg gate, Berlin: installation "at crossroads" by Kalliopi Lemos (photo: H. Thomä)

The most striking and shocking aspect of the situation in 2011, namely that its human cost has dramatically increased, has gone largely unnoticed. With UNHCR reporting more than 1.500 documented deaths in the Mediterranean, and many more migrants dying without being noticed, it seems that more persons have died at the EU's external border in 2011 than in any previous year.

As a result of a major disagreement between Italy and France on the handling of those persons arriving in Lampedusa and the residence title accorded to them by Italy, substantial parts of the EU regime on borders and internal mobility, including the Schengen system, were publically called into question.

In this context CCME has in a coalition with other civil society organisations in April 2011 launched an appeal for solidarity and a humanitarian and facts-based response to the situation in the Mediterranean.

....and impact of the economic crisis

The year 2011 was also characterised by the consequences of the financial and economic crisis. In several countries the financial crisis had increasing impacts on the “real” economy with several countries falling into recession. In several countries, employment has come under particular pressure. In almost all European countries austerity measures have been introduced.

While there are still few reliable and sufficiently detailed studies on the impact of these developments on migration and migrants, it can be said that the general climate around migration has become even more hostile than before.

Activities 2011

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

The development of a truly Common European Asylum System and efforts to strengthen refugee resettlement to the EU remain two areas of engagement for CCME:

While in 2011 agreement could be reached between Council on Parliament concerning the recast “qualification directive” (Directive 2011/95/EU), discussions on other dossiers in the area of asylum remained highly controversial.

In summer 2011 the Commission published proposals for the recast of the asylum procedures and reception conditions directives. These proposals were amending the initial recast proposals which it had published in 2008 and 2009, on which however the EP and Council could not reach agreement. While the orientation still is that a Common European Asylum System should be achieved by 2012 as envisaged by the Stockholm programme, a number of member states began to articulate reservations about the aim of further harmonisation in this area.

Proposals to amend the Dublin II regulation remained equally controversial. At the same time decisions of European and national courts factually brought transfers of asylum seekers to Greece under the Dublin regulation to a halt and stated that no adequate asylum system was in place in Greece.

In connection with its members and in cooperation with the “Christian group” organisations, CCME has continuously undertaken lobby efforts – through contacts with both European Parliament and member states. Central points of intervention were the concerns about the almost unlimited use of detention of asylum seekers in several EU member states, the effective right to a fair procedure and an individual hearing. CCME also voiced concerns about the impact of the Dublin system on asylum applicants, particularly on their chance of receiving a fair hearing.

An important event in this context was the EU Presidency conference hosted by Poland in July 2011.

CCME also participated in the first Consultative Forum of the European Asylum Support Office in December.



EP hearing on asylum and resettlement,
20 October 2011

CCME continues to represent CEC in the European Council of Refugees and Exiles ECRE and participated in the annual general meeting as well as in the directors' meetings. CCME continued to chair the ECRE core group on resettlement.

A dossier which in 2011 received less attention, but was equally controversial, were EU plans for encouraging more refugee resettlement. The plans for amending the European Refugee Fund so that it would offer extra financial incentives to new resettlement countries resettling refugees from a number of common EU priority regions had not found approval. For much of 2011, it seemed as if the dossier was blocked between European Parliament and Council for mainly procedural reasons.

Through a public appeal at an EP hearing in October as well as through contacts in EP and Council, CCME helped to unblock the dossier, which would finally in March 2012 lead to the adoption of a compromise. At the same time, CCME's advocacy for more resettlement places in the EU continued.

CCME was part of a joint NGO-UNHCR-government delegation visit to the USA, which was facilitated by the US state department and fed into a US-EU seminar on resettlement in April. CCME

also gave input at a workshop in Washington DC, which looked at US-EU coordination on resettlement.

2. Human Dignity in the process of labour migration

Economic developments were in 2011 signalling a major impact of the financial crisis on labour markets and labour migration and the rights of labour migrants.

CCME decided to highlight the issue of migrants' rights in the crisis by organising a European conference "Migration in Times of Economic Crisis – Policies, Migrants' Rights and the Role of Churches" on 17th June, i.e. prior to the CCME General Assembly. The conference helped to take stock of the different impacts of the crisis in European countries and highlighted possible interventions of churches in favour of migrants' rights.



Conference "Migration in times of economic crisis..."

In the field of advocacy, the highly debated issue of family reunification of non-EU nationals was back on the EU agenda. A number of decisions of European courts as well as reports on the implementation of the existing directive had already in previous years signalled a need for some consolidation of member states' practice. At the same time the Dutch government was seeking to gather support for more strict EU legislation. In

November 2011, the European Commission finally launched a consultation in which it was asking for proposals on its further actions, among them a possible recast of the directive. CCME through public appearances (e.g. on a panel hosted by the European Women's Lobby in the EP) tried to promote family-friendly and human-rights driven practices in the debate. Joint comments issued with other Christian organisations appeared in March 2012.

A small but important progress was made when directive 2003/109/EC regulating the rights of long-term resident migrants was extended to include refugees and other beneficiaries of international protection. CCME had contributed to the debate through its research and advocacy on long-term residence (one of the themes of the 2010 Migration year). The study by Lilian Tsourdi was updated accordingly and published in 2011.

CCME monitored debates on EU legislation concerning seasonal workers and intra-corporation transferees, albeit keeping a low profile in the debate.

The day of intercession and commemoration of persons having died at the EU borders was for the second time held across Europe in June 2011, in some countries however on other appropriate days. A collection of material for worship had for the day been published by CCME and German partners.

CCME continued to stress the more positive parts of the return directive and highlighted notable aspects of the jurisprudence of the Court of Justice of the EU in this respect. Several rulings of the CJEU (El Dridi ruling of April 2011) have indicated limits to the practices of several member states to criminalise irregular stay and to apply detention as a

standard policy.



Increasingly challenged by EU jurisprudence: migrant detention (photo: U. Sextro)

Particular attention was also devoted to the provisions of the directive, which call for effective monitoring of removal operations, particularly as churches in Norway and Switzerland became more involved in such monitoring activities.

CCME in the final discussions on the new FRONTEX regulation (adopted by the EP and Council in September/October 2011) insisted on a robust monitoring and human rights orientation of FRONTEX. While the final text is more explicit on human rights commitments of FRONTEX, the lack of clarity of competences between FRONTEX and Member States will continue to impede accountability of this agency, which is rapidly acquiring more competences (e.g. in deploying border guard teams).

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

The debates on a new EU directive against trafficking in human beings came to a preliminary close with the publication of the directive in April 2011. Many of the points which CCME had put forward during negotiations had at least partly been included in the directive. CCME has therefore for much of the year 2011 argued for a good and complete

transposition of the directive into national legislation. Two hearings held by CCME in the European Parliament with a focus on labour trafficking (in cooperation with the EPP and ALDE group, respectively) proved good opportunities to connect policy and practice.

In other developments, CCME concluded its GOING BEYOND project on civil society capacity in combatting labour trafficking. The guide, which had been developed by the project as well as national research in the situation of labour trafficking received wide attention.

CCME also throughout 2011 in the context of the MIRROR project (coordinated by Spanish NGO Accem) developed a policy paper on identification and referral of persons trafficked for labour, which received attention in policy debates.

In 2011 CCME continued its involvement in the steering groups of COATNET (a platform against trafficking, mainly with Roman Catholic organisations) as well as the COMP.ACT project on compensation of trafficked persons.



CCME-EPP hearing on forced labour 9 February 2011

CCME continued its advice for the network of partners in the CIS region, which was established in 2007. A useful institutional contact with the OSCE was further developed with CCME joining the expert alliance of the OSCE special rapporteur.

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

The work of CCME in this area was still largely influenced by popularising and sharing the findings of the MIRACLE project (Models of Integration through Religion, Activation, Cultural Learning and Exchange; which ran 2009-2010). The modules which had been developed during the project were tested in many countries and working material translated into an additional language (Swedish). The issue of diversity as opportunity and challenge for churches in Europe also was a central theme of discussion with visiting groups as well as partners in the Global ecumenical network on migration (GEM). CCME contributed to the GEM network, which is coordinated by the World Council of Churches, in particular in preparation for a regional event with CCME and partners from Africa and the Middle East under the heading "Migration and the Ecclesial Landscape: Who is my Neighbour?" in Beirut in December.

CCME gave input to an international conference looking at the role of religion in making integration a two-way process.

CCME was involved in shaping the agenda and activities of the ACCEPT Pluralism project. The project looks into concepts of tolerance and acceptance in European societies and develops recommendations particularly for schools. CCME's role in 2011 was more an advisory role, while in 2012-2013 CCME will cooperate in the dissemination of project results.

As a member of the advisory committee, CCME also participated in the Research Project "Support and Opposition to Migration" coordinated by the University of Neuchatel, Switzerland. The second meeting took place at Amsterdam University. The project concludes in 2012.

5. Churches as witness to inclusive communities in Europe

Work on anti-discrimination was in the year 2011 largely dominated by efforts to address the exclusion of Roma; as also the decade for Roma inclusion entered its second half.



The Hungarian EU Presidency in the first half of 2011 had made Roma inclusion one of its priorities. The Reformed Church in Hungary hosted meetings of the CCME Reference group on Roma and the Eurodiaconia Roma group in early February 2011 which provided for an opportunity of a consultation on the issue.

Based on the consultation, CCME and Eurodiaconia issued a joint contribution with regard to the proposed EU framework for national Roma integration strategies in March. The proposals negotiated between the European Commission, Council and Parliament took up some of the considerations and the framework was adopted by the Council in June and approved also by the summit of heads of government in June.

This issue of Roma inclusion received further visibility through a "dialogue meeting" which COMECE, CEC's Church & Society Commission and CCME co-hosted with the Bureau of European Policy Advisors of the European Commission on 27th June.

In September 2011, the Central Committee of the Conference of European Churches adopted a statement encouraging European churches "...to make their ministry with and for Roma minorities more visible, and to take further steps to overcome barriers between minority and majority communities".

CCME was invited to participate in the

European Platform for Roma Inclusion coordinated and organised by the European Commission and participated in the meeting in November 2011 which looked at first reports on national Roma integration strategies.

CCME continued to play an active role as member of the European Coordination of the European Network against Racism (ENAR). The ENAR European Coordination met on several occasions in 2011. In 2011, ENAR launched a consultation process of restructuring which will be finalised with the adoption of revised statutes in 2012.

In a coalition with other civil society actors, CCME highlighted a number of guiding principles for the EU's agenda on integration, both in preparation for the European Integration Forum of civil society actors as well as in response to the European Commission's "agenda for integration".

6. Migration and development

CCME and Christian partner organisations have been actively involved in the discussions on migration and development. Following two workshops on this topic, CCME's member Diakonisches Werk in cooperation with the German Protestant development organisation Bread for the World and EKD had initiated a task force relating to questions of migration and development, looking in particular on circular migration. The working group of the network of development agencies APRODEV was unfortunately largely inactive due to staff changes/vacancies in various development agencies, which were interested in the issue.

CCME was again involved in the process around the Global Forum on Migration and Development, which was this year largely decentralised and coordinated by the Swiss government, while the coordination of the civil society dialogue

was entrusted to the International Catholic Migration Commission.

Monitoring transposition of EU law and jurisprudence

CCME has been monitoring and advising member churches in the process of transposition of EU legislation into national legislation, particularly on the area of a Common European Asylum System. CCME continued to contribute to informal evaluations by the European Commission, particularly on the effect of the so-called "Dublin" regulation, the transposition of the Asylum Procedures Directive as well as the "Qualification" directive determining the status and rights of refugees and persons otherwise in need of protection. The assessment of transposition on the ground, which some CCME members had undertaken, as well as experiences from the field were brought to the attention of the EU institutions and contributed to the work of other actors, e.g. UNHCR. CCME joined informal efforts to motivate the EU institutions to hold respective EU member states accountable for the correct implementation of EU and international refugee law.

An increasingly important part in the process of harmonising EU legislation in practice would need to consist of the monitoring of CJEU jurisprudence – a challenge in view of limited staff resources available for this.

Networking: creating synergies, avoiding duplication

CCME cooperates with other European NGOs in the context of the European NGO platform on asylum and migration. CCME continues to be co-chair of the platform. In 2011, members of the platform of NGOs continued to organise briefings for members of the European Parliament in view of their activities, e.g. on border control, asylum and resettlement issues, removals and

detention conditions, but also migration questions in a broader perspective. Members also met with staff of the European Commission for background meetings and briefings.



Icon of friendship (St Menas with Jesus Christ):
a contribution to Migration 2010 from Finland

CCME maintains regular exchange and cooperation with the offices of the Church and Society Commission of CEC, APRODEV, Eurodiaconia, the European Ecumenical Association of Lay Academies and the Ecumenical Youth Council in Europe, as well as the various offices of national churches, which are represented in Brussels.

As mentioned above, the "Group of Christian organisations" in the asylum and migration field comprising Caritas Europa, CCME, COMECE, Eurodiaconia, the International Catholic Migration Commission (ICMC), the Jesuit Refugee Service-Europe and the Quaker Council for European Affairs continued to have a considerable degree of visibility.

As Eurodiaconia had expressed a wish to be more active in the area of migration, cooperation has been strengthened, with Eurodiaconia more looking at diaconal issues and CCME addressing a policy framework. Cooperation was also intensified in the area of Roma inclusion.

Cooperation with the Community of Protestant Churches in Europe (CPCE) was further explored with an attempt to

develop recommendations for the inclusion of migrant congregations, as well as identifying a possible follow-up to the Liebfrauenberg Declaration of 2004. New contacts were developed by the Europe region of the World Community of reformed churches, which is exploring ways of positioning itself in the area of refugees and asylum. The Lutheran World Federation has actively participated in the Roma Reference Group.

CCME continued its contacts and cooperation with international organisations, first and foremost the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees UNHCR – particularly in view of resettlement, but also other international organisations with a migration-related mandate, such as the International Labour Organisation ILO.

Council of Europe

CCME maintains contacts and follows closely the work of the Council of Europe on migration and refugees. It observes the work of the Parliamentary Assembly Committee on migration and refugees, and the CCME Moderator attended one of their meetings. The Council of Europe also sent a representative to the CCME conference on “Migration at times of economic crisis” in Bucharest as the Committee had adopted a report on this subject.

Visits

An important part of CCME's work is to provide information services on the European migration agenda and related issues for Churches, church-related groups/ agencies and civil society at large.

Groups or representatives of Churches and NGOs are regularly visiting the Ecumenical Centre and/or CCME Secretariat in Brussels, and CCME organises a visitors' programme for

these groups/ individuals, or representatives of CCME are invited to give thematic inputs at various events. In 2011, the visits of Hungarian and Polish churches were of particular importance in view of the EU Presidencies of Hungary and Poland in 2011.

Often CCME is invited to present the work of Churches in Europe on migration and related questions, both in Brussels and through visiting churches across Europe. In 2011, groups and representatives of Churches and civil society organisations from across Europe visited CCME. In addition, CCME contributed to several dozens of academic researches and, in addition to sharing its own information regularly, briefed journalists.

CCME was represented at the Religious Leaders Summit in Bordeaux in May, which preceded the G 8 summit hosted by the French government.

CCME has been part of the preparatory team for the panel series on migrant churches at the Protestant Kirchentag in Dresden May 2011.

CCME ASSEMBLY AND CEC-CCME INTEGRATION



Opening Prayer at CCME General Assembly

The 18th General Assembly of CCME was held 16-19 June in Bucharest/Romania. It was an occasion to welcome two new

members into the fellowship of CCME, namely the Church of Cyprus and Romanian ecumenical agency AIDRom.

The assembly deliberated upon the achievements in CCME's work since the last General Assembly in 2008 in Cyprus. It also established a new work programme for CCME until the next assembly in 2014.

The assembly reviewed the situation of the CEC-CCME process of integration after the CEC General assembly 2009 in Lyon, in which CEC had resolved to embark onto another structural reform process. The CCME General Assembly underlined CCME's commitment to the integration process and highlighted that the memorandum of understanding signed between the CEC and CCME in 2007 continued to be the basis of such an integration. The CEC-CCME Memorandum of Understanding had clarified changes and requirements for both organisations to facilitate the integration taking effect.

The Assembly decided "to put on hold the process of changing the articles of association of CCME until the time when clarity on the future structure of CEC allows for the envisaged changes of the CCME of CEC." The assembly also highlighted a number of points to be taken into consideration by the CEC restructuring group in its work.

The assembly also decided that CCME should in the interim period act as if it was a commission of CEC. The senior management team of CEC, in which the CCME General Secretary fully participates, was maintained to organise a renewed CEC in a way which would ensure accountability within the organisation while allowing enough flexibility to respond to pressing issues and concern for the churches in Europe.

CCME at the General Assembly sought to involve the individual members of the

"provisional commission" appointed by the CEC Central Committee in December 2009, who formally would not have had any voting rights. CCME member organisations had agreed to transfer voting rights to these persons, so that all those present at the assembly could participate in the formal decision making.

CCME has worked like the other CEC Commissions by reporting to the Presidium and Central Committee meetings. CCME has closely cooperated in clarifying CEC work priorities and budgets for 2011 and 2012 in a new format according to the strategic objectives of the Lyon Assembly..

CCME internal

The ExCom of CCME met three times in 2011: in March in Geneva, prior to the General Assembly in Bucharest in June and in Brussels in October.



CCME ExCom meeting with WCC General Secretary Rev. Olav Fykse Tveit

The meeting in Geneva was an excellent opportunity for meetings with representatives of the CEC secretariat as well as representatives of the World Council of Churches, the Lutheran World Federation and ACT Alliance. An informal get-together was organised with representatives of the churches involved in the "temoigner ensemble a Geneve" process between migrant churches and traditional churches.

The **financial situation** for 2011 has been stable with regard to membership fees; the support from church related agencies to project activities was unfortunately partly reduced. The result of the year is a modest surplus of 5.840,10 EUR for the operations, which however only resulted from exchange rates working in CCME's favour. (see Financial Report 2011 for details).

The **secretariat** is still comprised of three permanent staff: General Secretary Doris Peschke, Executive Secretary Torsten Moritz and Office Manager Emmanuel Kabalisa. During 2011, the team was temporarily strengthened by Federica Morelli who undertook an internship in spring 2011. The team is once per week assisted by an accountant Charlotte Vander Borcht.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

As the financial crisis turns more into an overall economic crisis and as European governments seek to reduce spending

particularly in the social realm, migration and integration policies come under strain. Unemployment and fear of the future, unfortunately, are not conducive to creating welcoming societies for newcomers. The crisis is a challenge to governments, but even more for the people who have to make their living. More than ever it becomes clear that migrants, currently more intra-EU migrants, contribute their qualification and skills to news host societies, while at the same time supporting their families in their home countries.

In this complex and challenging time, churches and church-related agencies play a key-role in welcoming the migrants and speak out against blaming migrants. As difficult as it may be, it would be necessary and timely if together we could strengthen our **witness and commitment to strangers, responding to the message of the Bible, which insists on the dignity of every human being.**



**“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)**