



ccme

churches' commission for migrants in europe

ACTIVITY REPORT 2013

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 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.

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: the first round of harmonisation in this area with 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.

In 2013, the second phase of harmonisation in the area of asylum was completed with the adoption of a new Dublin regulation and the directives on asylum procedures and reception conditions, in addition to the amended qualification directive.

The European Asylum Support Office, EASO, continued to make further thematic moves in 2013, both in practical work in assisting Member States, particularly Greece and Bulgaria, and in processes, e.g. Country of Origin Information or the Common European Asylum Curriculum.

At the same time, 2013 was influenced by starting reflections on the future of

EU asylum and migration policies, as the current "Stockholm programme" of the EU expires in 2014.



Hearing on post-Stockholm programme

Context 2013:

Syrian refugee crisis, deaths at sea and attacks on freedom of movement

In the area of migration the year 2013 was strongly influenced by events at the doorsteps of Europe and their (perceived) impact on Europe.

The continuing civil strife in Syria has led to steadily increasing displacement. While an estimated six million persons have been internally displaced or seeking refuge in neighbouring countries, higher asylum application numbers could be observed in a number of EU member states. In this context, CCME, in a coalition with other civil society organisations in January 2013 launched an appeal to the EU Justice and Home Affairs Ministers for an enhanced humanitarian response to the situation in Syria and its neighbouring countries.

In several countries, among them many with a very dynamic migrant labour market, employment has been under particular pressure. In almost all European countries austerity measures have been introduced or further developed, with Southern European countries being particularly hard-hit.

The increasing incidents of migrants losing their lives on their way across the

Mediterranean Sea have been of grave concern in 2013. While civil society actors had for a long time highlighted the issue - CCME and CEC with a day of commemoration for those dying at borders of the EU - the public attention for the issue came to a peak in October when a boat with more than 300 migrants drowned off the Italian coast in Lampedusa.

There were also more reports on potential refugees being turned back at the EU external borders, thus not being able to reach the protection they would have deserved, and even allegations were made of border guards observing sinking of vessels carrying persons without acting.

While policy debate had so far focussed on non-EU nationals moving to EU member states, a heated debate on freedom of movements and rights associated with it broke out in 2013. A group of ministers of Interior in a letter to the European Commission highlighted what they perceived as "benefit tourism" from newer EU member states to their countries. The debate continued and produced almost hysterical proposals.

..and continued impact of the economic crisis on migration

The year 2013 was still characterised by the consequences of the economic crisis.

On the one hand, the economic crisis in several countries massively influenced and destabilised financial markets, on the other, it impacted on the "real" economy with several countries remaining in recession. There are still few reliable and sufficiently detailed studies on the impact of these developments on migration and migrants. However, it can be said that the general climate around migration has become even more hostile than before. While during 2008-2010 migration

decreased with the economic crisis, it appears that figures have gone up since 2011. Particularly migration from crisis-stricken Southern EU Member States has substantially grown.

ACTIVITIES 2013

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 remained the two areas of engagement for CCME. The Common European Asylum System was finally achieved:

The Commission's 2011 proposals recasting the asylum procedure and reception conditions directive as well as the new Dublin convention were the subject of intense debate between the Council and European Parliament.

CCME joined forces with other civil society actors in appealing to EU legislators not to let legislation drop below certain minimum standards.

In cooperation with its members and other European Christian organisations, CCME has also undertaken last-minute lobbying through contacts with both European Parliament and member states' governments. Central points of intervention were the concerns about the excessive provisions in the texts allowing for the detention of asylum seekers, the effective right to a fair procedure and an individual hearing. The rights of minors in the asylum procedure, particularly when unaccompanied, were also an issue of concern. CCME also voiced concerns about the impact of the Dublin system on asylum applicants, particularly on their chance of receiving a fair and timely hearing and assessment of their case.

The adoption of the two directives and the Dublin and Eurodac regulations

signalled a preliminary end to the process of EU legislation on asylum. On various occasions, CCME engaged with the European Commission concerning the question of good and comprehensive monitoring of existing legislation.

An important new actor, the European Asylum Support Office EASO, gained further prominence in 2013: EASO was not only supporting Greece and Bulgaria in the build-up of their struggling asylum systems, but also putting in place a series of trainings and further developing the European Asylum Curriculum and coordinating exchange of Country of Origin Information. CCME participated in the EASO resettlement expert group and gave informal input to EASO on several occasions.

CCME contributed to the discussions on inner-EU solidarity, particularly with Greece. CCME engaged with all stakeholders to examine how civil society could contribute to the efforts of building up an improved asylum system.



First Reception centre in Fylakiou /GR

CCME also continued to feed insights into the situation of converts to Christianity in asylum procedures into the EU wide debate on refugee protection.

An area in which CCME was able to partly set the agenda was refugee resettlement. The CCME ExCom had adopted a position paper in 2012 calling for better quality resettlement to the EU with higher quotas – aiming for 20.000 places annually shared by the EU

member states by 2020. The paper under the heading “20.000 by 2020” continued to receive widespread attention. Other organisations joined the main demands of the position paper and the paper therefore became the heart of a “20.000 by 2020” campaign which developed further in the course of 2013. CCME in cooperation with ICMC was instrumental in developing a guide, which outlines how the German “Save me” campaign contributed to the establishment of a German resettlement programme and how it could be replicated. The guide was presented in May 2013 at an event in the European Committee of the Regions.



20.000 by 2020 campaign logo

CCME gave expert advice at many events on asylum, among others, the French Protestant Federation colloquium on asylum, the advisory council on European Affairs of the Ev. Lutheran Church of Finland, the Austrian Asylforum, and the the Migration Committee of the Swiss Protestant Federation of Churches.

CCME continued 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.

2. Human Dignity in the process of labour migration

Economic developments signalled a major impact of the financial crisis on labour markets as well as labour migration and the rights of labour migrants. In this context CCME highlighted the unalienable human rights of any migrant, highlighting the needs of those in destitution.

In the field of advocacy, the highly debated issue of family reunification of non-EU nationals remained on the EU agenda. While some governments tried to gather support for more restrictive EU legislation, the European Commission decided to elaborate interpretative guidelines rather than going for new legislation. The presentation of the study “Family Reunification: a barrier or facilitator of integration?” by Tineke Strik, Betty de Hart and Ellen Nissen has helped the debate. In cooperation particularly with Caritas Europa and the Migration Policy Group MPG, CCME engaged in regular exchange with the European Commission with a view to establishing guidelines that would indeed enable family reunification.

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

With increasing interest, CCME followed debates on the inner-EU Freedom of Movement and informed its members about it.

CCME also contributed to the advocacy regarding the new EU funding mechanism for the period 2014-2020, the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund, which was debated between Council and Parliament.

Irregular migration

Discussions on irregular migration focused on the EU borders in 2013. The day of intercession and commemoration of persons who have lost their lives at the EU external borders was held for the fourth time across Europe in June 2013, a collection of material for worship had again been prepared by CCME and German partners. Following the Lampedusa tragedy, CCME has used various occasions to underline that the EU Directive on the facilitation of illegal entry and residence has led to criminalisation of persons assisting, such as the fishermen on Lampedusa: while article 1.2 allows Member States not to penalise assistance for humanitarian reasons, many Member States have not applied this exemption.

CCME continued to stress the more positive parts of the return directive and in this context attended several reunions, highlighting various aspects of the directive in consultation with Member States and European Commission, particularly with regard to the evaluation of the transposition of the directive. The evaluation report and recommendations will be available in 2014.

Following the changes of the FRONTEX regulation and the obligation to set up a fundamental rights framework for FRONTEX, a consultative forum on fundamental rights had been set up. CCME was selected as one of nine civil society organisations on the FRONTEX consultative forum on human rights, which had officially been launched in October 2012. While the efforts by the FRONTEX Secretariat towards a fundamental rights approach are commendable, the lack of clarity of competences between FRONTEX and Member States border authorities may impede accountability of this agency, which is at the same time acquiring more

competences.

CCME together with its Greek member participated in a visit of the Consultative Forum to the FRONTEX operation "Poseidon" in July focussing on the implementation of the non-refoulement principle and vulnerable persons such as unaccompanied minors. CCME – in close cooperation with members – was engaged in the elaboration of a "code of conduct" for FRONTEX return operations which was adopted in September 2013.



Several incidents raised severe concern about European border operations, particularly with regard to rescue at sea and alleged push-backs.

CCME also kept up the networking among organisations monitoring forced returns.

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

As a significant number of countries had not transposed the EU directive against trafficking in human beings, debates the continued in 2013.

Many of the points CCME had put forward during negotiations had at least partly been included in the directive and were also highlighted by the UN agencies. CCME therefore has continuously argued for a good and complete transposition of the directive into national legislation.

A new project on labour trafficking, the FINE TUNE project had started its work under the auspices of the International Trade Union Confederation with CCME as one of the lead partners.

In 2013, CCME was mainly responsible for the organisation of the first EU Forum on Labour trafficking 17-19 October in

Vilnius. The Forum took place in the context of the Lithuanian EU Presidency and the EU anti-trafficking day. Participants discussed in detail the best possible intervention in cases of exploitation of bigger groups of trafficked persons and considered the role of low-threshold drop in centres.



FINE TUNE European Forum labour trafficking

CCME continued its involvement in the steering group of COATNET, a platform of Christian Organisations against Trafficking, mainly with Roman Catholic organisations.

CCME was also asked by other organisations to give evidence, e.g. at the conference of CARE Europe on trafficking. Several churches across Europe solicited CCME's advice on their own involvement in anti-trafficking questions

The useful institutional contact with the OSCE was further developed with CCME participating in the expert alliance of the OSCE special rapporteur against trafficking.

CCME contributed to the presentation in the European Parliament of the report on trafficking, particularly of Africans, in the Sinai desert. The simultaneous presentation in Brussels, Lampedusa, London, Rome and other places received wide public attention on the cruelties against migrants and refugees in desperate situations.

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

The discussion on the Christian unity dimension of migration was highlighted during a workshop of the ENFORMM network on multicultural ministry prior to the WCC Assembly in Busan November 2013. The Theological Statement on Migration of the World Council of Churches "The "other" is my neighbour" was published in October and distributed at some of the Ecumenical Conversations in which migration and inclusive communities were discussed.

At the WCC Assembly CCME participated also in the women's and men's pre-assembly, in which trafficking was highlighted. On the side of the assembly, discussions with members of the Global Ecumenical Network and organisers of the "Churches Witnessing with Migrants" event in October 2013 in New York at the High Level Dialogue on Migration and Development, as well as development agencies were held to prepare plans for 2014 when the Global Forum on Migration and Development will be held in Stockholm, Sweden.



CCME was a partner in the ACCEPT Pluralism project. The project looked into concepts of tolerance and acceptance in European societies, the public discourse around it and developed recommendations particularly for schools and policy makers.



*ACCEPT Pluralism Project Conference in Brussels
March 2013*

As the project came to an end in 2013, CCME organised the final conference of the project in Brussels in March, which was partly hosted by the European Parliament. Findings and recommendations of the project, such as a toolkit for developing tolerance indicators, were presented to EU policy makers and an interested public of civil society organisations.

The ACCEPT Pluralism project has produced a wealth of material on crucial topics of diversity, be it religious, ethnic or cultural diversity. An overview of the material – and most of the documents – are available at: <http://www.accept-pluralism.eu/Documents/Dissemination/AcceptPluralismPamphlet2013.pdf>

CCME also participates in the DIMECCE (Defining and Identifying Middle Eastern Christian Communities in Europe) project, which is conducted by several research institutes. As the name suggests, the project looks into the presence and identity of Middle Eastern Christians in Europe. This project started in 2013 and will continue until 2015.

5. Churches as witness to inclusive communities in Europe

Work on anti-discrimination focussed on efforts to address the exclusion of Roma.

At the German “Kirchentag” in Hamburg May 2013, a Forum Remembrance was organised at the former concentration camp Neuengamme, focusing on the holocaust of Roma and Sinti. Roma inclusion was also the focus of a programme organised by the Reformed Church in Hungary at the Kirchentag and CCME participated in these events.

The CCME Roma news-list was maintained. Plans for visits of member churches have been followed up and the Italian member of CCME participated in a visit to Hungary by the Church of Westphalia, Germany. CCME participated in several meetings of the European Commission on Roma inclusion.

A joint consultation of CCME and the Lutheran World Federation on 22-24 November 2013 addressed Roma migration in Europe. It called for a justice-oriented engagement for and with Roma.



Roma migration conference

CCME highlighted the issues of inclusion and anti-discrimination at a hearing of the European Economic and Social Committee in September.

6. Migration and development

CCME and Christian partner organisations have been involved in the discussions on migration and development.

CCME gave input to the European Commission’s preparations for the UN

High Level dialogue on migration and development, which took place in New York in October.

In cooperation with its Swedish members CCME developed plans for a Churches' presence at the 2014 Global Forum on Migration and Development.

7. Monitoring transposition of EU law and jurisprudence

Throughout 2013 CCME has been monitoring and advising member churches in the process of transposition of EU legislation into national legislation, particularly in the area of a Common European Asylum System and return. CCME continued to contribute to informal evaluations by the European Commission, but also NGO partners particularly on the effects 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 persons in need of international protection". The assessment of the impact 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 continued to participate in 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 area for which the European Commission has signalled increased interest for the time after the adoption of the Common European Asylum System.

An increasingly important part in the process of harmonising EU legislation in practice consists in the monitoring of the EU's Court of Justice jurisprudence in the area of asylum and migration. CCME follows discussions in its own capacity, but also benefits from the legal network inside ECRE, particularly the Asylum Information Database AIDA. Also UNHCR is following the jurisprudence in detail.

Networking: creating synergies, enabling mutual learning

CCME cooperates with other European NGOs in the European NGO platform on asylum and migration and continues to be co-chair of the platform. In 2013, 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. The platform had intense sub-group meetings on asylum and migration, family reunification and on the future Asylum and Migration Fund 2014-2020 replacing the current funding instruments of the European Commission. Members also met with staff of the European Commission for background meetings and briefings e.g. on asylum and migration issues and particular country situations.

CCME maintains regular exchange and cooperation with the offices of the

Church and Society Commission of CEC, Eurodiaconia, APRODEV 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 exchange regularly and cooperated on advocacy. While this cooperation sometimes costs considerable energy and time, it enhances the credibility and impact of the joint Christian witness and advocacy on migration in Europe

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

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 with other international organisations with a migration-related mandate, such as the International Labour Organisation, ILO and the International Organisation for Migration, IOM.

Council of Europe

Contacts with the Council of Europe Parliamentary Committee on Migration were maintained and information regularly shared. The reports have been very useful. On some occasions meetings with the Human Rights Commissioner of

the Council of Europe led to fruitful exchange.

On request of the Protestant Church in the Netherlands, CCME as partner of the Church and Society Commission of CEC participated in advice and preparations for a complaint under the Social Charter of the Council of Europe for not providing shelter for rejected asylum applicants. The dossier was handed over and declared admissible in 2013. In October 2013, the Social Charter Committee requested the government of the Netherlands to undertake “Immediate Measures” to prevent serious and irreparable harm to persons. Together with the Protestant Church in the Netherlands, CCME has publicised this decision. The decision of the Social Charter Committee on the case will be taken in 2014.

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.

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 2013, groups and representatives of Churches and civil society organisations from across Europe visited CCME. In addition, CCME contributed to several dozen academic researches, and in addition to sharing its own information regularly briefed journalists.

CEC-CCME INTEGRATION



CCME continued to contribute to the debates on the restructuring of CEC through written communication with delegates prior to the 13th CEC General Assembly in Budapest. CCME staff served in various capacities as staff of the CEC General Assembly.

The CCME General Secretary has cooperated in the Staff Management Team of CEC until the CEC Assembly. After the Assembly one – informal – meeting took place. However, CCME staff continue cooperation at all levels, contributing to newsletters and providing information on topics relating to the CCME mandate.

Following the decision of the CEC Assembly for a new structure of CEC, which does not leave room for implementing the Memorandum of Understanding of 2007/2008, the ExCom requested the CEC governing board meeting in November 2013 to continue cooperation on the basis of the agreement of 1999, and to set up a negotiation group to elaborate scenarios to be presented to the CCME Assembly in 2014. The proposals were supported by the CEC governing board.

CCME internal

The ExCom of CCME met twice in 2013: in Edinburgh (UK) in April and in Brussels in November.

The meeting in Edinburgh was an excellent opportunity for meetings with representatives of the Church of Scotland and other churches, while the Brussels meeting enabled renewed contact with both Belgian and French CCME members. This was the first meeting which could take place in the entirely renovated Ecumenical Center in Brussels!

The **financial situation** has unfortunately not followed the many tasks. The result of the year 2013 for the CCME activities is a deficit of 17.400,50 EUR, and the 37 % ownership of the Ecumenical Center added a deficit of 8.098,88 EUR to the balance. At the end of the year, not all membership fees had been received, and could therefore not be included in the accounts. (see Financial Report 2013 for details).



ExCom Edinburgh

The **secretariat** is comprised of three permanent staff: General Secretary Doris Peschke, Executive Secretary Torsten

Moritz and Office Manager Emmanuel Kabalisa. Emmanuel Kabalisa had reduced his working time until June 2013, and CCME had granted additional time off for him to pursue further studies.

As renovations of the Ecumenical Center continued, all staff had to again move their offices in the course of the year, and to endure noise and dust of the works. While this has certainly been a challenging time, progress could be seen month by month, and everyone was pleased with the completion of work in September 2013.



ExCom Brussel, October 2013

CONCLUDING REMARKS

2013 has again provided huge challenges for Europe and more particularly, the countries most hit by the financial and economic crisis in the South and East of the continent. Unemployment and fear

of the future, unfortunately, are not conducive to creating welcoming societies for new-comers. Thus, the crisis is a challenge to governments, but even more for the people who have to make their living, and to those, who are afraid they might also be affected. At the same time and more than ever, it becomes clear that migrants, at the moment in majority intra-EU migrants, contribute qualifications and skills to host societies, while at the same time they are supporting their families in their home countries. We can see how migration is, indeed, constantly changing: the patterns and routes are changing, societies are changing, and new challenges are arising.

In this complex and challenging time, churches and church-related agencies play a key-role in welcoming migrants and speak out against blaming migrants for flaws in societies. Notions and concepts of solidarity, in Christian terminology caring for the ones in need, for the neighbour, are put in practice by so many persons, and yet, these good examples find it hard to reach the policy level. As difficult as it may currently be, it would be even more 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)**