



ccme

churches' commission for migrants in europe

ACTIVITY REPORT 2014

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 promote the vision of an inclusive community through advocating for an adequate policy for migrants, refugees and minority groups at European and national level. In the fulfilment of this mandate it is responding to the message of the Bible which insists on the dignity of every human being and to the understanding of unity as devoid of any distinction between strangers and natives.“
(CCME Mission Statement)

CCME is the ecumenical agency on migration and integration, refugees and asylum, and against racism and discrimination in Europe. CCME members are Anglican, Orthodox, Protestant and Pentecostal Churches, Councils of Churches and diaconal agencies in presently 18 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.



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beyond borders

since 1964

2014 was the year of celebrating CCME's 50th anniversary. This was an occasion for both looking back and turning to the future. In the jubilee event in Frankfurt/M on 27-28 March, participants



Panel at 50 years Symposium, London

expressed their vision for a future CCME. At the CCME General Assembly in June, the focus was more on policy perspectives for the next years. The concluding event, the presentation of the new Mapping Migration study and academic symposium in London on 17th December, was characterised by an optimistic look into the future despite current challenges.

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 concluded 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 had been 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 2014, both in practical work in assisting Member States, particularly Greece, Cyprus and Bulgaria, and in processes, e.g. Country of Origin Information or the Common European Asylum Curriculum.

At the same time, 2014 was influenced by reflections on the future of EU asylum and migration policies, as the current "Stockholm programme" of the EU expired in 2014. The so-called strategic guidelines adopted by Council in June however failed to leave the same mark on the debate which previous five-year programmes had had.

Context 2014:

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

In the area of migration the year 2014 was strongly influenced by events at the doorsteps of Europe and their (perceived) impact on Europe.

The continuing civil strife in Syria and new dimensions of civil war in Iraq have 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. The main responsibility however remained with countries in the region. In



Campaigning against death at sea

this context, CCME, in a coalition with other civil society organisations in December 2014 launched an appeal to the EU Justice and Home Affairs Ministers for an enhanced resettlement 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 had been of grave concern in 2013. The year 2014 saw a remarkable response with the Italian coastguard and navy implementing a large-scale search and rescue operation "Mare Nostrum", which rescued around 100.000 persons. CCME expressed its dismay when the operation was phased out at the end of the year.

There were also continued reports on potential refugees being turned back at EU external borders, thus not being able to reach the protection they would have deserved, and in some places 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 continued in 2014. A number of member states had debates on 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 2014 was still characterised by the consequences of the economic crisis. The financial crisis increasingly 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.

New institutional actors: European Parliament and European Commission

The year 2014 saw two institutional actors renewed: the European Parliament was elected in May 2014 - the elections returned a centre-right majority, but also brought into the EP a considerable number of extreme-right and xenophobe MEPs.



EP election campaign

In the beginning of November a new European Commission assumed office. For the first time a Commissioner with explicit responsibility for Migration has been appointed and legal migration was highlighted as one of the work priorities of the new European Commission.

In June, the European Council adopted strategic guidelines in the area of Justice and Home Affairs, which however remained rather general.

ACTIVITIES 2014

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.

In view of the growing refugee crisis in the Middle East, and the increase of refugee arrivals across the Mediterranean Sea, cooperation of churches and possible coordination activities in the framework of the **Safe Passage** project were explored and developed throughout the year, seeking to enhance the capacity of Southern European member churches, particularly in Greece, Italy and Spain, and of CCME to advocate for safe routes for refugees and migrants.

The adoption of the two directives and the Dublin and Eurodac regulations in 2013 had 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. This included bringing cases of violation of EU law to the attention of the Commission.

CCME also continued to inform members about the provisions of the new EU legislation. In reverse, members provided important information about the correct or incorrect transposition of the new EU legislation into national laws.

The European Asylum Support Office EASO gained further prominence in 2014: EASO was not only supporting Greece, Cyprus 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 EASO expert groups, had a high-level meeting with EASO director Visser, and actively participated in the EASO Consultative Forum at the end of 2014 in Brussels.

CCME contributed to the discussions on inner-EU solidarity, particularly with Greece and Italy. CCME engaged with all

stakeholders to examine how civil society could contribute to the efforts of building up an improved asylum system.

CCME also continued to feed insights into the situation of converts to Christianity in asylum procedures into the EU wide debate on refugee protection – among others at a hearing in March 2014 in the European Parliament.

Jointly with other Christian organisations CCME produced a position paper on safe access to the European Union – thus taking up and further promoting ongoing discussions on access to the EU. The paper received widespread attention as it was one of the first civil society statements on the issue.



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 EU member states by 2020. 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 2014.

CCME joined the appeal for increased resettlement of Syrian refugees to the

EU ahead of the international resettlement pledging conference on 9th December – requesting the resettlement of at least 10 % of the Syrian refugees from neighbouring countries.

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' meeting. CCME continued to chair the ECRE core group on resettlement.

CCME participated in the WCC consultation on statelessness in Den Dolder 12th-14th September and followed up with a resolution on statelessness adopted both by the CCME ExCom and CEC Governing Board in December, committing the organisations to participate in the UNHCR decade to end statelessness.

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 on 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.

CCME actively engaged in the debate on future policies 2014-2019 in the area of asylum and migration, both in the context of the official consultation with the public as well as informally.

With increasing interest, CCME followed debates on the inner-EU Freedom of Movement and informed its members about it. CCME participated in a debate organised by the Brussels offices of Diakonie and EKD on this topic and, jointly with Eurodiaconia prepared a training for members of both organisations on the issue.

CCME contributed to the consultations

on transforming the EU Integration Forum into the EU Migration Forum with a broader scope.

Irregular migration

Discussions on irregular migration focused on the EU borders in 2014. The day of intercession and commemoration of persons who have lost their lives at the EU external borders was held for the fifth time across Europe in June 2014, a collection of material for worship had been prepared by CCME and German partners, and CCME with the Conference of European Churches called on their respective members to observe such a day. Following the Lampedusa tragedy in 2013, CCME has used various occasions to underline that the EU Directive on the facilitation of illegal entry and residence has led to the 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.

The European Commission has published the evaluation of the Return Directive in 2014, and CCME together with members and other organisations will seek to follow up particularly on the issues of detention prior to removal and removal monitoring. These areas were also topics in the Return Working Group of the Frontex Consultative Forum in which CCME participates as one of nine civil society organisations.

Several incidents raised severe concern about European border operations, particularly with regard to rescue at sea and alleged push-backs. The Frontex Consultative Forum discussed particularly an incident in early 2014 at Farmakonisi, Greece, which raised concerns about clarity of the delineation of responsibility and competence between Frontex deployees and national authorities.

CCME also kept up the networking among organisations monitoring forced returns. The elaboration of a best practice guide for Frontex Return operations was only started with initial exchanges and will be undertaken in 2015.



Based on the report of the Consultative Forum to the Frontex operations in 2013, in which CCME and its Greek member KSPM-ERP participated, exchange and discussions were held with the Frontex secretariat and Management Board, leading to a focus group meeting in early 2015 with representatives of the consultative forum, the management board and the secretariat. The meeting discussed also the report on the 2014 visit to Bulgaria. Several suggestions from the 2013 report have been taken up for Frontex operations and training to enhance human rights knowledge.

The annual report of the Frontex Consultative Forum 2014 is available at: http://frontex.europa.eu/assets/Partners/Consultative_Forum_files/Frontex_Consultative_Forum_annual_report_2014.pdf.

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 on implementation continued in 2014.

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.

The joint project on labour trafficking, the FINE TUNE project continued its work under the auspices of the International

Trade Union Confederation with CCME as one of the lead partners.

In 2014, CCME was together with its member AIDRom responsible for the organisation of the EU learning event on recruitment. Participants in the event in Bucharest in March discussed what role the internet plays in contemporary recruitment.

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

CCME was one of the co-organisers of the dialogue meeting of CEC and COMECE with the European Commission on 27th November, which highlighted the issue of trafficking.

CCME was also asked by other organisations to give evidence, among others at a hearing of the European Economic and Social Committee. 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.

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 the 50th anniversary year of CCME. The work for unity in diversity played an important role both in the 50 years celebration in March in Frankfurt, as well as at the jubilee symposium organised in London on 17th December. The General Assembly in Sigtuna/Sweden also was a vivid expression of that work.



CCME General Assembly

On invitation of the Ecumenical Institute Bossey, a workshop was held in September to evaluate the ecumenical formation of migrant church leaders, which had been initiated by discussions in the CCME ExCom. The workshop provided an important overview of various training concepts in different countries. A trend could be observed to move from more informal to formal and certified training. Some follow-up is intended in the framework of GlobEthics.

CCME participates in the DIMECCE (Defining and Identifying Middle Eastern Christian Communities in Europe) project, which is conducted by several academic research institutes in UK, Sweden and Denmark. The project looks into the presence and identity of Middle Eastern Christians in Europe. In 2014, CCME participated in the steering group meeting in Denmark and a conference organised in Lodz, Poland. This project started in 2013 and will continue until 2015, when CCME will host a presentation of results in Brussels.

5. Churches as witness to inclusive communities in Europe

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

Following up on the joint conference of LWF and CCME, a Call for Justice and Dignity for Roma People containing 12 recommendations was published in early 2014. Translated into Swedish, it was used for a moving worship in Uppsala cathedral on International Roma Day 8 April.

CCME in cooperation with Eurodiaconia carried out a joint assessment of the implementation of National Roma Integration Strategies (NRIS) based on feedback from members who are actively working with Roma communities across Europe.

In 2014, CCME participated in the EU Roma Summit organised by the European Commission and in a civil society coalition in preparation and follow-up to this.



Several participants holding cards with the inscription "Dignity!" and "Stereotype!" - photo: European Commission, April 2014

CCME assisted in preparation and holding of a conference of CEC and CCEE "Improving the situation of Roma people in Europe: Challenges and open questions" held during the Greek EU Presidency in Athens in May.

The CCME Roma news-list was maintained.

6. Migration and development

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



Churches Witnessing with Migrants

In cooperation with its Swedish members, CCME developed plans for a Churches' presence at the 2014 Global Forum on Migration and Development (GFMD). The consultation "Churches Witnessing with Migrants" finally on 10th and 11th May in its 5th edition brought together partners from all over the globe in an in-depth exchange. A significant number of the partners were also present at the Global Forum itself.

CCME elaborated a set of factsheets on the GFMD to inform a wider public of the migration and development issues, particularly of partners from the global South.

7. Monitoring transposition of EU law and jurisprudence

Throughout 2014 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 2014, 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, Members prepared joint input into the consultation on future asylum and migration policies. They also met with staff of the European Commission for background meetings and briefings e.g. on asylum and migration issues and particular country situations. On International Migrants Day 18th December, a joint website was launched.

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. 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. The decision of the Social Charter Committee on the case was supporting the complaint of CEC and made public in November 2014. The Protestant Church in the Netherlands organised a public meeting on this occasion. It is hoped that in the follow-up to this decision, the fundamental rights to food, shelter,

medical care will be safeguarded in the Netherlands. Based on this decision, some municipalities declared they would again provide services for migrants and rejected asylum applicants.

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 2014, groups and representatives of Churches and civil society organisations from across Europe visited CCME. In addition to sharing its own information, CCME contributed to several dozen academic researches, and regularly briefed journalists.

CEC-CCME INTEGRATION

Following the decisions of CEC taken at the Budapest Assembly, CEC and CCME had established a negotiation group. During 2014 it became clear that the exact structure and way of working of CEC was still in transformation. The General Assembly therefore decided to look for a way of closer cooperation without fully completing integration. In December, the CEC governing board and CCME ExCom adopted a new agreement of cooperation.

CCME 19th Assembly



CCME Assembly celebrating 50 years Beyond Borders

The 19th General Assembly was held 26-29 June 2014 at Sigtuna, Sweden. "Crossing Borders – at what price?" was the theme of a wider and interesting conference preceding the assembly business. Sigtuna Foundation provided a wonderful setting to celebrate CCME's 50th anniversary. In addition to the previously mentioned decisions, 3 new members were accepted, the mission statement adjusted, work programme and budget for 2015-2017 adopted and a message calling for "A change of attitudes regarding migration in accordance with European values" adopted. A full report is available.

CCME internal

The ExCom of CCME met three times in 2014: in Frankfurt/M./Germany in March, in Sigtuna/Sweden in June and in Brussels in December.



ExCom meeting December 2014

The **financial situation** has unfortunately not followed the many tasks. The year was closed with a negative result of 24.401,06 EUR. The programme activities of CCME closed with a deficit of 12.583,39 EUR, and the share in the owners' association contributed a loss of 11.817,67 EUR. The situation was monitored and discussed by the ExCom throughout the year.

The **secretariat** is comprised of three permanent staff: General Secretary Doris Peschke, Executive Secretary Torsten Moritz and Office Manager Emmanuel Kabalisa. They were supported by the interns Imogen O'Rourke, Vera Melucci and Ji Young Heo, who contributed in manifold ways to the work of CCME.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

Beyond Borders since 1964 – remembering the history of CCME, achievements and development, has been an encouraging part of CCME's

work throughout 2014. The support from its members expressed in so many different ways sustains the profile and activities of CCME, despite the difficult financial situation.

The world is facing the biggest refugee crisis since World War II, as the UN High Commissioner for Refugees Antonio Guterres has underlined. Of course, this has an impact on Europe, yet the real challenges are still to come. Can we build the bridges, provide safe passage in order to avoid that so many people lose their lives?

Spreading courage and signs of hope, and that the dignity of every person will be respected, that fundamental rights of migrants and refugees are safeguarded, wherever they have come from, will be more important than in previous years. This is essential, too, to overcome fears, stereotypes and racist hatred. Welcoming refugees and migrants, meeting the other, making space for the other, sharing, this is done by many churches at various levels. Sharing these experiences, giving signs of hope, can be the starting point for a different political approach to responding to the refugee crisis.

Let us together work and pray that we can strengthen our **“commitment to promote the vision of an inclusive community through advocating for an adequate policy for migrants, refugees and minority groups at European and national level.”**

“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)