

December 18 2015: International Migrants' Day

25 Years of the International Convention on the Rights of Migrant Workers and All Members of Their Families

On the occasion of International Migrants' Day on 18 December, the Churches' Commission for Migrants in Europe (CCME), the Conference of European Churches (CEC), and the World Council of Churches (WCC) appeal to states to ratify the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families.

The Convention was adopted 25 years ago today and provides the most comprehensive and coherent international instrument to protect the rights of migrants and their families. Yet it remains poorly ratified, particularly by migrant-receiving countries in Europe. "For years, churches across Europe have called on European governments and EU institutions to ratify this important convention," remarked CEC general secretary Guy Liagre, "Yet no EU Member State has taken this step."

The convention recognises the human rights of migrant workers and promotes their access to justice as well as to humane and lawful working and living conditions. It provides guidance on the elaboration of national migration policies and for international cooperation based on respect for human rights and the rule of law.

It also sets out provisions to combat abuse and exploitation of migrant workers and members of their families throughout the migration process. "This is very significant for future stability for both vulnerable people and societies as a whole," explained Olav Fykse Tveit, general secretary of the WCC, "Our cooperation with the International Labour Organisation on the rights of workers is an important part of this work for social justice."

In a time when abuse and exploitation of migrant workers is a reality all over the world, the Convention is an important instrument in providing a fair playing field. It covers important aspects such as the rights of migrants to live with their families. Regular reporting mechanisms provide recommendations for policy and legislation. If implemented, these recommendations can enhance the rights of migrants in countries that are signatories to the convention.

"The Migrants' Rights Convention is a sign of hope for migrant workers in the most vulnerable situations. European states would show their commitment to migrants' rights by ratifying it now," Doris Peschke, general secretary of CCME added.