



Photo: Churches' Commission for Migrants in Europe

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World Refugee Day: “Have No Fear” – Churches call for intensified efforts

Today, 20 June, is World Refugee Day. The United Nations estimates that every minute 8 people flee from war, persecution, or terror. This day is observed to bring attention to their collective struggle and to address the widespread global displacement of millions of people.

Refugees, asylum seekers, internally displaced and stateless persons often risk everything, including their own lives, seeking peace and safety. It is these people that brought more than 60 representatives of churches and ecumenical organisations to Lunteren (Netherlands) from 14 to 16 June to call for an improved response to the global refugee crisis. Those gathered at “Have No Fear” identified opportunities for collaboration on joint assistance and advocacy initiatives.

The first hand experiences of refugees and asylum seekers were central to their work in Lunteren. The group heard stories from refugees who had made difficult and dangerous journeys to Europe. They also visited a center outside of Amsterdam where many men are housed as their asylum claims are processed.

The conference concluded with a joint public appeal to churches and church-related organisations to increase their participation in public debates and advocacy efforts. Participants addressed a number of issues at both the national and European level. They stressed that work must be done to correct public perception about European capacity to receive refugees and that more must be done to alleviate suffering and offer basic services. The experience of churches in working on the frontline must be leveraged to cultivate a fair and compassionate view of the current situation in Europe.

The statement also stresses the importance of policy in protecting the dignity of every human. It repeats calls for Europe to develop safe and legal channels of entry, and to respect the right to protection as enshrined in the European Convention on Human Rights. Such means are necessary to end the immense suffering caused by persecution and conflict, but also widespread smuggling and trafficking.

[For the full text of the statement from Lunteren, please click here.](#)

Have No Fear was organised through a partnership of the Conference of European Churches, the Churches' Commission for Migrants in Europe, the World Council of Churches, and the Protestant Church in the Netherlands.

For more information or an interview, please contact:

Erin Green
Communication Coordinator
Tel: +32 2 234 68 42
Email: eeq@cec-kek.be
Website: www.ceceurope.org
Facebook: www.facebook.com/ceceurope
Twitter: [@ceceurope](https://twitter.com/ceceurope)

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Rue Joseph II, 174 - Brussels 1000 - Belgium

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