



ccme

churches' commission for migrants in europe

beyond borders

since 1964



Lemma Desta (top left) from the Church of Norway was elected as Moderator of the Churches' Commission for Migrants in Europe at the General Assembly in Prague. He stands with the rest of the newly elected Executive Committee (right).

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HAVE NO FEAR – BUT HOPE!

20th General Assembly of the Churches' Commission for Migrants in Europe concluded in Prague

We see expressions of hope in those multiple prayers and actions of European citizens that have supported the common good. They are working to share Christian principles of solidarity, peace, generosity and the imperative to welcome the stranger. We have seen hope in the contribution of hundreds of thousands of people across Europe. Many people

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

are giving their time to offer a welcome in Europe to newly arrived people who have been forced to flee their homes,” reads [the message adopted by the 20th General Assembly](#) of the [Churches’ Commission for Migrants in Europe](#) (CCME) in Prague (Czech Republic) hosted by the [Evangelical Church of Czech Brethren](#) (ECCB). Rev. Daniel Ženatý, synodal senior of the ECCB, opened the General Assembly with prophetic words about the churches’ role in being a true witness by welcoming refugees and migrants.

The message drew on the rich history of migration in Europe to find new hope for the current situation. It commended citizens and church members to support integration, and encouraged efforts to make societies welcoming and safe for those forced to leave their homes. Signatories to the message also urged governments and political actors to give specific attention to safe passage, swift family reunification, and respecting the fundamental rights of those in Europe who were not granted a permit but cannot return to their country of origin.

More than 70 participants from across Europe participated in a conference on “The role of churches for the integration migrants” on the first day of the General Assembly. Delegates from 34 member churches and organisations from all over Europe received greetings from the general secretary of the Conference of European Churches, Fr Heikki Huttunen, from Diakonie of the ECCB, as well as from the All Africa Conference of Churches, the Lutheran World Federation, and the World Council of Churches.

In addition to presentations on CCME activities and a presentation summarizing the statements and actions of churches across Europe over the last two years, Francesca Pierigh, a consultant working with CCME, updated the group on the progress of the joint CCME-[WACC Europe](#) project on refugees and communications rights in Europe. The year-long project, [Refugees Reporting](#), focusses on media portrayal of refugees and improving representation through media monitoring and direct collaboration with refugee networks.

The General Assembly adopted a work programme and budget for the coming period, voted in favour of enhanced cooperation with the Conference of European Churches, and elected a new Executive Committee, which will serve through 2020. Mr Lemma Desta, Church of Norway/Christian Council in Norway was elected as moderator; Apostle Adejare Oyewole from the Unification of Council of Cherubim & Seraphim Churches, UK as treasurer. Other members of the Executive Committee are Mr David Bradwell, Church of Scotland, UK, Rev Sabine Dressler, Evangelical Church in Germany, Ms Dana Gavril, AIDRom, Romania, Ms Dora Kanizsai-Nagy, Reformed Church in Hungary/Kalunba Charity (vice-moderator) and Ms Efthalia Pappa, KSPM-ERP, Church of Greece (vice-moderator). Mr Andreas Henriksen Aarflot was appointed to the Executive Committee by the Conference of European Churches, and Dr Katalina Tahaafe-Williams by the World Council of Churches. Ms Talvikki Ahonen from the Orthodox Church of Finland and Fr Cristian Popescu from the Refugee Commission of the Ecumenical Council in the Czech Republic were elected as substitute members.

“The commitment of churches to work with and for migrants, refugees and minority ethnic persons has been strengthened by six churches and organisations admitted as new members in CCME,” General Secretary Doris Peschke commented. “The new Executive Committee reflects this, too, with persons with migrant background, women and men, young and elder members of diverse denominations. They will be able to represent the spirit of the Assembly Message which concluded: ‘So we say: Have no fear! Christ is Alive! We have hope. We can move beyond borders, physical barriers and walls in our hearts and minds