



**ccme**

churches' commission for migrants in europe

**beyond borders**

since 1964

**CCME GA 2017-3**

# CCME ACTIVITY REPORT 2014 - 2016

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.

### CCME OBJECTIVES

In particular, the objectives of CCME are:

- to monitor European and national migration, refugee and antidiscrimination 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 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 2015 and 2016, 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.

### *Context 2014-2016: Three years at the pace of the “refugee crisis” and its implications*

The year 2014 marked a first recognition of the refugee crisis: as war and conflicts in the Middle East took new dimensions, in particular in Syria and Iraq, the number of displaced persons and asylum applicants remarkably increased. EU member states had to face this new situation even though the main responsibility remained with countries in the region.

In December 2014, CCME and other civil society organisations launched an appeal to the EU Justice and Home Affairs Ministers for an enhanced resettlement response. Indeed, there were increasing incidents of migrants losing their lives on the way across the Mediterranean Sea, the Italian Mare Nostrum operation for search and rescue, launched after the shipwreck off the coast of Lampedusa at the end of 2013, was to be terminated, and pressure on Southern European countries was rising. Incidents such as potential refugees being turned back at EU external borders, or border guards observing sinking vessels carrying persons without acting were reported. In the meantime policy debates on freedom of movements and rights associated with it produced almost hysterical proposals. The general climate had become more hostile as migration figures had gone up since 2011, particularly from crisis-stricken Southern and South-Eastern EU member states.

The year 2014 was also characterized by new institutional actors: the elections for the European Parliament in May 2014 brought a centre-right majority and a sizeable number of extreme-right and xenophobe MEPs; and a new European Commission started its mandate in November with an explicit responsibility

for migration. The adoption of new strategic guidelines by the European Council for the Area of Justice and Home Affairs was a deception because it was rather general and failed to replace the ending “Stockholm Programme”.

The year 2015 was characterized by the most tremendous migratory movements in Europe for decades. During the first half of the year, a significant number of boats, mainly from Libya crossed the Mediterranean Sea. As search and rescue operations had ceased in the beginning of the year, it led to the tragic loss of thousands of lives due to capsizing. Yet, Italy still saw many arrivals in the South of the country. As a consequence, the Italian reception system was under strain. In spring, Italy and Frontex reached an agreement to enhance search and rescue operations again.

During spring, the focus shifted from Italy to Southeast Europe with a steady increase of persons entering through the Greek islands close to Turkey. The mounting crisis situation on the Greek islands was not met by an adequate response. Thus, the majority continued to travel via Southeast Europe to Germany or Scandinavia. Over summer and autumn, large groups of refugees made their way on foot through various countries.

Many governments closed their borders as the number of arrivals was increasing, usually to protest the policies of their neighbouring countries. Therefore, migrants, mostly refugees from Syria, Afghanistan and Iraq, became more vulnerable. Some countries also closed their borders for the usual border-free travel inside the EU as foreseen under the Schengen rules.

The “EU Migration Agenda” as of April 2015 focused mostly on how to deal with the relatively high number of arrivals, while the original intention was to come

up with a comprehensive migration and asylum system. Decisions were made as short and long-term measures, and for the first time a mechanism for EU-wide relocation of asylum applicants and a proposed quota for resettlement was adopted. However, the adopted figures were too low to provide for real solutions, and the majority of measures were more about curbing migration. Many were taken half-heartedly or not implemented at all.

The importance of the refugee movements that year had a considerable impact on CCME's work, more than foreseen in the work programme. While policy responses were weak, solidarity by people across Europe was heartening. Churches had started early in 2015 to support each other, undertook visits and shared resources to address some of the emerging humanitarian crisis situations across Europe.

Deep political divisions between EU member states on migration and refugee policy came to light in 2015 and maintained throughout the year 2016. While the European Commission in the first half of 2016 suggested new legislation for the Common European Asylum System including the Dublin regulation, the proposals aimed mostly at a general curbing down on refugee's rights, and a logic of trying to exclude them from asylum procedures by way of so-called admissibility checks. That year, the number of arrivals into Europe sharply dropped. One major explanation for that is the conclusion of an EU-Turkey deal in March 2016.

According to this statement, asylum applicants arriving in the EU from Turkey could be sent back in exchange of the resettlement of refugees already present in Turkey. The so-called "one in, one out" deal would be one element, borders more strongly patrolled by Turkey the other one. The EU-Turkey deal signalled a general

shift in the inter- and intra-institutional arrangements in the EU. It was largely driven and agreed upon by the member states with Turkey, and did not involve the European Parliament and on the fringes only the European Commission. Participation of Vice-President Timmermans and External Affairs Representative Mogherini at events concerning migration also signalled a shift of responsibility away from the Commissioner and Directorate General for Migration and Home Affairs.

As exemplified by the EU-Turkey deal, a general tendency could be observed to externalise responsibility. Implementation of the Valetta action plan and the Emergency Trust Fund for Africa, both agreed upon 2015 and completed by several regional cooperation mechanisms such as the Rabat Process or the Khartoum Process, aimed at making African states responsible for stopping migratory movements from Africa. Other signs of widening the externalisation of EU asylum and migration policy into a general trend have been sent like the introduction of a "pre-Dublin admissibility procedure" in the European Commission's proposal for a Dublin IV regulation in May 2016 and the EC's Communication of June on a new Partnership Framework with third countries. CCME reacted to this communication and co-signed with 138 other organisations a statement ahead of the European Council of June 2016 to strongly condemn the new EU policies to contain migration.

Disagreements not only prevailed but became more and more real and extended to other policy areas in 2016. Dissatisfaction with the EU in many EU member states was demonstrated by the "Brexit-vote" in June and enhanced by the election successes of populist right wing parties in several countries. Many populist campaigns were built around a widely

perceived fear. This feeling had been nurtured in particular by terrorist attacks such as in Paris in November 2015 or in Brussels in March 2016, as well as other incidents elsewhere. While refugees were only marginally involved in these acts of terror, the latter contributed to an atmosphere of fear and distrust towards newly arrived.

## ACTIVITIES

### 1. Europe's role in refugee protection in the 21<sup>st</sup> century

The two areas of engagement for CCME were the development of a truly Common European Asylum System (CEAS) and efforts to strengthen refugee resettlement to the EU. With the arrival of many people in need of international protection in 2015, several public statements were made to underline the set of rights refugees have, and the need to respect minimum standards for their reception: Joint appeals on the refugee situation with other actors like CEC, WCC, ACT Alliance EU and Eurodiaconia, and input to statements by others like ACT Alliance, LWF or the Community of Protestant Churches in Europe. As a consequence, ecumenical actors had coherent positions with similar tones and content.

Informing members about the provisions of the new EU legislation – particularly the directives and Dublin and Eurodac regulations adopted in 2013, their impact on national legislation and reports from members about correct or incorrect transposition into national laws were also part of CCME activities.

Since June 2016 the recast proposals by the European Commission have dominated CCME's work.

CCME participated in and gave inputs to various events on "alternatives to Dublin". With other members of Christian

organisations, comments on the proposed amendment concerning unaccompanied children were made, highlighting the protection needs of children. CCME also contributed to a joint statement with 77 other organisations asking for seven priority actions to protect all refugee and migrant children in November 2016. Joint comments were provided on the proposed new "Dublin IV" regulation and on the directives/regulations on asylum procedures, refugee qualification and reception conditions. Together with other resettlement actors, CCME issued a comment on the proposed "EU Resettlement Framework".

Cooperation of churches and coordination in the framework of the "**Safe Passage**" project were developed through the years. The 2014 paper on safe pathways to the EU with other Christian organisations was one of the first civil society statements on the issues and received widespread attention. A major conference was held in February 2015, partly in the Italian senate: "Deaths at Sea – there are alternatives". The project enabled influencing discussions on humanitarian visas, also in the context of the new Schengen visa code where advocacy was done based on a joint paper of Christian organisations. CCME organised various information events to raise public awareness about the situation at the EU Southern external borders highlighting the need for solidarity with the Mediterranean EU member states. The issue of refugee protection was also high on the agenda of the German Kirchentag where CCME was instrumental for preparing a series of panel debates and events for this meeting of laity in June 2015 in Stuttgart and in Berlin May 2017. As a part of the "Safe Passage" project, CCME has launched with the WACC World Association for Christian Communication a 12-month project "Reporting Refugees", to assess media portrayal of refugees in

Europe and promote their rights to speak on their own behalf in December 2016.

CCME was able to partly set the agenda on refugee resettlement, too. The CCME Executive Committee had adopted a position paper in 2012 calling for better quality resettlement and higher quotas, reaching 20,000 places annually shared by all member states by 2020. Other organisations joined the main demands and it thus became the heart of a “20,000 by 2020” campaign developed in the course of 2014. CCME also joined the appeal for increased resettlement of Syrian refugees launched prior to the UNHCR Pledging Conference on Resettlement and other Forms of Admission for Syrian Refugees in December 2014 in Geneva. The resettlement of at least 10% of the Syrian refugees from neighbouring countries was requested. In 2015, CCME continued to advocate for safe and legal pathways into Europe with a prominent role for resettlement. A discussion on this topic with the Director General of the European Commission’s DG HOME in November 2015 was co-hosted with EKD and Diakonie Germany, with good experience from Germany and Hungary fed into the debate. In 2016, resettlement issues were highlighted in a joint Comments Paper with Caritas Europa, ECRE, the ICMC International Catholic Migration Commission Europe, IRC International Rescue Committee and Red Cross EU Office was issued on the European Commission proposal for a Regulation establishing a Union Resettlement Framework.

Discussion with the European Commission in 2014 on the question of good and comprehensive monitoring of existing legislation were an occasion to report to the institution cases of violation of EU law. Despite those reports, breaches by member states remained a strong

tendency in 2016: many did not meet their obligations under the asylum acquis, complemented by the unwillingness or inability of the European Commission to hold them accountable. Most striking cases included completely inadequate reception conditions in many member states, but also denying access to an asylum procedure. This lack of implementation extended also to fairly recent decisions: by the end of 2016, only a few thousands refugees were actually relocated from Greece and Italy out of the 160,000 places decided in September 2015. Thus, comments on the asylum proposals were made by CCME and meetings with the different EU presidencies on the asylum package were organised. CCME also commented the proposed reform of the CEAS of July 2016 with the Group of Christian organisations on migration and called upon EU leaders for a change to the migration policies in a joint statement with 30 other NGOs ahead of the European Council of December 2016.

In March 2014, CCME contributed to a hearing in the European Parliament to feed insights into the situation of converts to Christianity in asylum procedures. CCME also developed contacts with EASO European Asylum Support Office with a high level meeting with EASO Director Visser in 2014 and with its participation in expert groups and in the annual EASO Consultative Forum for the last three years. In 2015, an expert meeting of EASO focused on an update to the Afghanistan country of origin report. In several of these meetings, CCME was represented by members.

Throughout the years, CCME represented CEC at and participated in the ECRE European Council for Refugees and Exiles annual general assemblies, directors’ meetings, as well as chairing the ECRE core group on resettlement and the study

process on a new vision for protection in Europe. CCME contributed to an exchange on integration questions related to resettlement by ECRE and ICMC International Catholic Migration Commission.

CCME participated in the WCC consultation on statelessness in Den Dolder, in September 2014; followed by the adoption of a resolution on statelessness by the CCME ExCom and CEC Governing Board in December, committing the organisations to participate in the UNHCR decade to end statelessness.

Cooperation continued in 2015 with the help of WCC Communication for the production of videos for CCME comments on the refugee situation in Europe in September and with the WCC/EKD sponsored Church Summit on the Refugee Crisis in Munich in October. Videos were used at various occasions across Europe. CCME participated, too, in the follow-up conference organised by WCC with UN agencies in January 2016.



Archbishop Kari Mäkinen, Ev. Lutheran Church of Finland presenting on "Have no fear, Isaiah 41:10", Lunteren, June 2016, photo: D. Peschke/CCME

In June 2016, the conference "Have No Fear" organised by WCC, CEC, CCME and the PKN Protestant Church in the Netherlands was held in Lunteren. It discussed the impact of the global refugee

crisis on Europe, the fear and anxieties connected with it, and European churches' responses. As a result a call was made to churches and church-related organisations to significantly step up their participation in the public debate and in the advocacy efforts in the present refugee crisis. The paper also stated six issues that needed to be addressed urgently, both at national level and in the European Union.

In October 2016, CCME together with several Christian organisations issued a statement commenting on the European Commission's proposal for the Dublin IV regulation. The same month, the CCME Executive Committee expressed its concern about the erosion of protection of refugees in Europe and visited a refugee camp in Eleonas, Athens.

Solidarity visits of churches to Italy, Greece and Hungary were initiated or facilitated by CCME throughout the years, and CCME staff participated in a number of them. They are a good way to support those churches, raise awareness, talk to authorities, and to express solidarity toward refugees. CCME contributed to the discussion on inner-EU solidarity with Greece and Italy with various stakeholders to examine how civil society could contribute to the efforts of building up an improved asylum system.

## 2. Human Dignity in the process of labour migration

Economic developments had a major impact on labour market and on labour migration and the rights of labour migrants. CCME highlighted the inalienable human rights of all migrants, especially the needs of those in destitution.

CCME was engaged in the debate on future policies 2014-2019 in the area of asylum and migration through the official consultations and informal channels.

CCME followed throughout the years with increasing interest the intensive debates on the Freedom of Movement and associated rights of EU nationals and informed its members. CCME participated in a debate organised by the Brussels offices of Diakonie and EKD and prepared a training with Eurdiaconia for members on the issue. Held in January 2015, the training was a good opportunity to influence European Commission officials. A 2015 meeting of the CALL Churches Action on Labour and Life network offered CCME the opportunity to continue this debate.

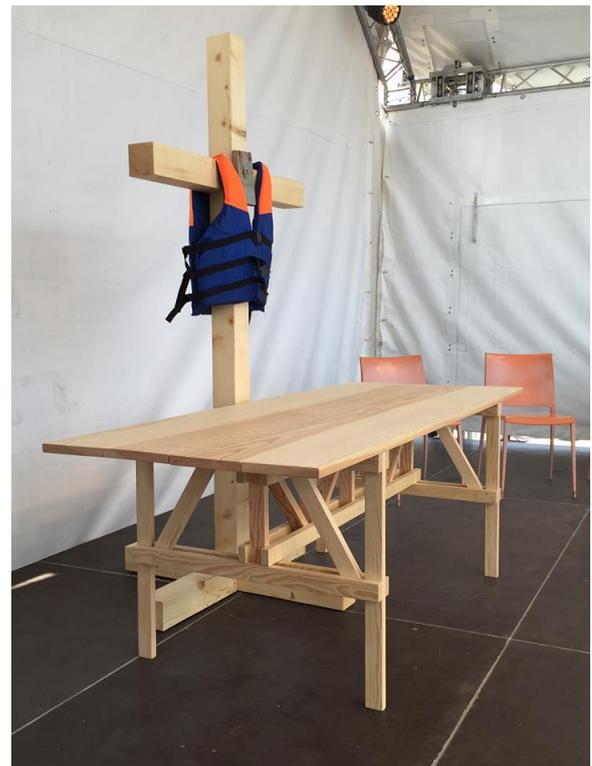
#### *Irregular migration*

Throughout the years, the Day of intercession and commemoration of persons who have lost their life at EU external borders was held in June. This occasion was prepared for by CCME with a collection of material of worship – a joint initiative with German partners. Joint calls on members to observe the day were made in partnership with CEC. The most widespread observation was witnessed at the Berlin Kirchentag in May 2017 when more than 100,000 persons observed a minute of silence in memory of those having died on their way to Europe.

The day was also the occasion to remind of the CCME position against the criminalisation of persons assisting refugees and migrants. Article 1.2 of the EU directive on the facilitation of illegal entry and residence allows member states not to penalise the assistance for humanitarian reasons, but many still do not apply this exemption.

CCME followed up the EC evaluation of the Return Directive and infringement procedures in 2014 and 2015. Particular attention was given to issues of detention prior to removal and monitoring of forced removals. Networking with organisations monitoring deportations enabled contributions for the elaboration of a best

practice guide for Frontex Return operations. Another aspect of advocacy on irregular migration was the promotion of alternatives to migrants' detention in the context of the International Detention Coalition advocating for engagement with the respective persons. CCME also participated in discussion on those topics in the Return Working Group of the Frontex Consultative Forum on Fundamental Rights. It gave advice in the process of reflection inside the European Commission regarding a reopening of the return directive. In March 2017 CCME joined a coalition of NGOs criticising the European Commission for its suggestions to member states to increase the use of detention in return procedures.



CCME involvement in the FRONTEX Consultative Forum continued, the mandate was renewed for the years 2016-2018. CCME participated in a visit to the operation Poseidon in Greece in summer 2016. The Consultative Forum discussed human rights implications of the growth of Frontex due to the new mandate adopted

in 2016 to make Frontex the European Border and Coast Guard Agency. A major issue remains the accountability of FRONTEX. The Annual Reports of the FRONTEX Consultative Forum are available at: <http://frontex.europa.eu/partners/consultative-forum/documents/>

Regular contacts were kept with the EP's LIBE secretariat as the European Parliament was preparing an initiative report on the "Situation in the Mediterranean and the Need of a Holistic Approach to Migration".

CCME participated in a 2015 meeting with the UN Special Rapporteur on the rights of migrants, François Crepeau as he was preparing a report on the situation in Europe presented in June, and in a 2-day consultation on migrant's rights organised by the office of UN High Commissioner for Human Rights in Brussels.

A joint call with CEC and WCC for the ratification of the UN Convention on the rights of all migrants and their family members was published on December 18<sup>th</sup> 2015, on the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of its adoption.

Advocacy for legal pathways to Europe for labour migration were also part of CCME activities in 2016. CCME participated in the UN preparatory consultation for the UN summit and on invitation of Church World Service in hearings in Washington. CCME contributed with ACT Alliance, WCC and CWWM to a joint statement to the UN Summit addressing the large movement of Refugees and Migrants in New York in September 2016. In July 2016,

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

As many of CCME's points had been partially included in the EU directive against trafficking in human beings and were highlighted by UN agencies, CCME has continuously argued for a good and complete transposition of the directive into national legislations throughout the years since many member states had not done so. The lobbying with member states has continued in 2015 thanks to pro a bono work agreement with the law firm Dechert and the examination in detail of the transposition of the directive.

CCME was one of the lead partner of the International Trade Union Confederation for the joint project on labour trafficking, the FINE TUNE project. The partnership continued in 2015 and the project particularly addressed the issue of gender and labour trafficking that year. Three sets of Question & Answers sheets on labour trafficking were published and CCME was responsible for hosting the 2<sup>nd</sup> EU Forum on labour trafficking in Brussels in May, bringing together actors from all EU institutions and civil society.

As the study on extreme labour exploitation was presented by the EU Fundamental Rights Agency in June 2015, CCME hosted a side event to the official presentation to popularise and discuss the study. Intense contacts were made with the World Community of Reformed Churches in view of its European anti-trafficking consultation in October 2015. The meeting underlined the need for good cooperation of all church actors in the fight against trafficking.

In January 2016, CCME participated in a two-day conference “Multidisciplinary Approach to People Smuggling” organised by the Netherlands Presidency held in Amsterdam. In May, a contribution to the new EU Strategy against Trafficking in Human Beings Beyond 2016 was made. It highlighted the paramount importance of a full and correct implementation of the anti-trafficking directive and the short term residence directive throughout the EU, as well as the need for the integrity and independence of the EU’s anti-trafficking policies.

During the past three years, CCME continued to be involved in the platform COATNET Christian Organisation against Trafficking, mainly with Roman Catholic organisations and was re-elected into the steering group in 2015.



CCME participated in the Forum on Modern Slavery “Sins Before our Eyes” held in February 2017 in Istanbul, co-sponsored by the Ecumenical Patriarchate and the Church of England. The Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew and

the Archbishop Justin Welby of Canterbury renewed their commitment against trafficking in human beings by signing a joint declaration.

Since CCME’s participation in the expert alliance of the OSCE Special Rapporteur against trafficking, useful institutional contacts with the OSCE Special Rapporteur on trafficking have been developed and maintained.

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

CCME participated in the DIMECCE Defining and Identifying Middle Eastern Christian Communities in Europe project, conducted by several academic institutes in the UK, Sweden and Denmark. It aimed at looking into the presence and identifying of Middle Eastern Christian communities in Europe. CCME was present at the steering group meeting in Denmark and at a conference in Lodz, Poland. The DIMECCE project ended in 2015. CCME contributed to the project conference in St. Andrews University, hosting a presentation of the project results for an audience of EU institutions in July 2015 in Brussels. The nuanced approach and presentation of results were widely appreciated. The booklet with results received great attention.

Throughout the last years, cooperation continued with the Community of Protestant Churches in Europe to work on migrant churches. CCME participates in an expert group which submitted a proposal to the CPCE Council in October 2015 to start an explorative dialogue with various migrant churches which was accepted. The expert group met again in Rome in 2016 and in Berlin in 2017 and discussed further steps for such dialogues.

The completion of the publication of the new study “Mapping Migration” took more

time than expected. The approach was presented at the CCME Assembly in Sigtuna in 2014, and first findings presented at the conference to conclude CCME's 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary in London in December 2014. This study was published by CCME in early 2016 and provides information on migration in the different countries in Europe, collected and collated information on churches addressing migration in their own work. It is hoped that the study will become a reference for churches when working on migration.

As the GETI Global Ecumenical Theological Institute 2017 held parallel to the Kirchentag in Berlin 2017 with a focus on Europe, CCME participated in some preparatory groups and work in 2015 and contributed to the background reader "Reforming Theology · Migrating Church · Transforming Society". CCME contributed also to the preparation of the German Mission Yearbook with the theme "Zuflucht Europa – Refuge Europe" published early 2016, with many persons from the CCME network providing articles.



*Participants of the consultation on migration and churches in Europe, Copenhagen, 8-10 December 2016. ©CEC*

In December 2016, CCME co-organised with CEC a consultation "Being Church in Europe today", hosted by the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Denmark in Copenhagen, focusing on migration and ecclesiology.

## 5. Churches as witness to inclusive communities in Europe

Exclusion of Roma was at the heart of CCME's anti-discrimination work.

CCME participated in a joint assessment of the implementation of NRIS National Roma Integration Strategies with Eurodiaconia, based on feedback from members actively working with Roma communities across Europe, as well as in the EU Roma Summit organised by the European Commission and a civil society coalition in preparation and follow-up to this. CCME was also involved in the preparation of a conference of CEC and CCEE "Improving the situation of Roma people in Europe: Challenges and open questions" held during Greek EU Presidency in Athens in May 2014.

In 2015, CCME continued its work on Roma inclusion by cooperating with the European Network against Racism to address anti-migrant propaganda and with the European Roma Information Office and the group of civil society organisations engaged with the EU Roma Inclusion Platform. The 2015 Platform meeting highlighted antigypsyism as major obstacle to Roma inclusion in European societies. CCME joined the Alliance against Antigypsyism in July 2016. With CEC, CCME published a statement "Remembering the Roma genocide of World War II Porajmos" on August 2<sup>nd</sup> 2015, a day dedicated by the EP as Roma Holocaust Memorial Day.

In April 2016, CCME visited a Roma settlement close to Thessaloniki with the Evangelical Church in Greece and a

delegation of the Protestant Churches in Hesse, in the Rhineland and the Reformed Church in Germany. A video about on this visit was made by the Ev. Church in the Rhineland.

Throughout the years, the CCME Roma news-list was maintained as a tool for sharing information.

CCME staff spoke at the launch of the European Network against Racism (ENAR) of the shadow report 2016 on racial discrimination against migrants.

The organisation of a dialogue meeting on migrant integration in November 2015, in partnership with the European Commission, CEC and COMECE, enabled to underline the notion of integration as a two-way process. Also in 2016, CCME co-organised such a dialogue meeting with the European Commission, CEC and COMECE in Brussels, and many CCME members contributed their expertise.

## 6. Migration and development

CCME and Christian partner organisations have been involved in the discussions on migration and development. In 2014, CCME co-organised the Churches Witnessing with Migrants meeting in Stockholm and participated in the Civil Society Dialogue.

CCME elaborated a set of Factsheets on the GFMD Global Forum on Migration and Development to inform wider public of the migration and development issues, particularly partners from the global South. An update of those documents has been published in 2015 as they were shared with ecumenical partners at the meeting CWWM Churches Witnessing With Migrants prior to the GFMD in Istanbul in October 2015. CCME gave input to CWWM 2016 Dhaka Assertions and to the meeting about claiming and mobilizing narratives to address forced migration and enforced movement. The

CWWM preceding the GFMD 2017 will take place directly after the CCME General Assembly with CCME participation.

CCME participated in the pre-meetings for the EU-Africa summit in Valetta in 2015, in close coordination with the All Africa Conference of Churches representation to the African Union.

Active participation was maintained through the years in the Action of Churches Together ACT Alliance Community of Practice on Migration and Development. Since the UN summit of September 2016, the focus is on the developments of the Global Compacts on Refugee Protection and on International Migration.

## 7. Monitoring transposition of EU law and jurisprudence

CCME has been monitoring and advising member churches in the process of transposition of EU legislation, particularly in the area of a Common European Asylum System and return.

Thanks to this monitoring, and by sharing field experiences and observations with other NGO partners and European institutions – particularly European Commission's officials from the thematic teams of the Commission and in the cabinet of the Migration and Home Affairs Commissioner, CCME continued to contribute to informal evaluation on the effects of the so-called "Dublin" regulation, the transposition of the Asylum Procedures directive and of the "Qualification" directive determining the status and rights of persons in need of international protection. This type of information also helps with an independent assessment of national situations in member states and in motivating the EU institutions to hold them accountable for the correct

implementation of EU and international refugee law.

Incidentally, these questions have been discussed with the cabinet of the Commissioner on Migration and Home Affairs in the course of meetings joined and organised by the CCME as of January 2015. As transposition of EU asylum legislation was insufficient in many member states, the European Commission wanted to put more emphasis on the monitoring and enforcement of the existing legislation, and to develop a proposal for an EU Migration Agenda by July 2015. Because of the perceived pressure of higher arrival numbers, the delivering of proposals was advanced to May, and civil society consultations suffered from it.

Throughout the years, CCME has been following the jurisprudence of the European Court of Justice in the area of asylum and migration, as its decisions influence the interpretation of EU law. CCME has benefited from the legal network inside ECRE, particularly the Asylum Information Database, and the ELENA network. Thanks to these helpful partners, CCME shared with its membership the relevant judgements.

### **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. Throughout the years, it had intense sub-group meetings on asylum and migration and members prepared joint input into the consultation on future asylum and migration policies. They met with the staff of the European Commission for background meetings and briefings e.g. on asylum and migration issues, particular country situations, reform of the Dublin system and refugee resettlement. On International Migrants

Day 18<sup>th</sup> December 2014, a joint website was launched. With the Social Platform and the Human Rights organisations networks, the platform participated in regular debriefings of the embassies holding the EU Presidency after Justice and Home Affairs Council meetings, in 2014, with the Italian and Greek representations, in 2015 with the Latvian and Luxembourg Permanent Representations, in 2016 with the Slovakian Permanent Representation and 2017 with that of Malta.

CCME maintains regular exchange and cooperation with CEC, Eurodiaconia, ACT Alliance EU, WCC, and the Ecumenical Youth Council in Europe, as well as various offices of national churches, which are represented in Brussels.

As mentioned above, the Christian Group on Migration comprising Caritas Europa, CCME, COMECE, Don Bosco International, EKD, Eurodiaconia, ICMC, the Jesuit Refugee Service-Europe, St. Egidio and the Quaker Council for European Affairs continued to exchange regularly and cooperated on advocacy. While this cooperation costs considerable energy and time, it enhances the 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 and CCME participated in several Eurodiaconia migration network meeting in 2015 and in the following years.

CCME continued its contacts and cooperation with international organisations, first and foremost the UNHCR – particularly in view of

resettlement; but also with other international organisations with a migration-related mandate, such as the International Labour Organisation and the International Organisation for Migration, which became a UN agency in 2016.

An increasing amount of work was devoted to enabling links between CCME members and partners, e.g. through visits of solidarity and fact-finding. Outreach to churches which are not yet members of CCME became more intense as many churches felt the need to react to the refugee influx 2015-16.

### *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 Right Commissioner of the Council of Europe led to fruitful exchange. For instance, he participated in a panel on "The right to leave a country" at the 2015 Kirchentag in Stuttgart.

In 2012, on request of the Protestant Church in the Netherlands, CCME as partner of the then Church and Society Commission of CEC participated in advice and preparation 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; and the decision of the Social Charter Committee on the case to support the complaint of CEC was made public in November 2014. The Protestant Church organised a public meeting on this occasion and the issues was raised in several meetings in 2015-2016. It is hoped that is the follow-up to this decision, the fundamental rights to food, shelter, and medical care will be safeguarded in the Netherlands. Based on this decision, some municipalities provide services for migrants and rejected asylum

applicants, despite the national government still not following the decision.

CCME participated in a special meeting of the Parliamentary Assembly Committee on Refugee Integration in Berlin in December 2016.

### *Visits*

An important part of CCME's work is to provide information and 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.



Visit to Idomeni camp, Northern Greece, April 2016, photo: D. Peschke/CCME

Since 2014, many 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, and contributed articles to several church media. In view of the high media interest in 2015 and 16, interviews and requests for article or background information increased a lot.

More than in previous years, CCME was invited for presentations to conferences

and meetings of churches all over Europe. Many of the meetings were very encouraging, as they facilitated sharing and learning about wonderful initiatives launched by churches.

### ***CEC-CCME INTEGRATION***

Following the decision of CEC taken at Budapest Assembly, CEC and CCME has 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 2014, the CEC governing board and CCME ExCom adopted a new agreement of cooperation. This cooperation was practiced throughout the years. Information was shared between the two organisations regularly. CCME took part in the meetings organised by CEC and COMECE with various EU Presidencies, advised on public statements of the governing board, and joint letters, also with WCC, were sent to member churches and organisations of both organisations. Joint letters to heads of government addressing the refugee situation in Europe ahead of meetings of the European Council were written together with other ecumenical organisations in Brussels. CCME participated in the meetings of the governing board of CEC, and since 2016 CCME staff participates in the CEC collegium. CCME has participated in meetings of the Thematic Reference Group on Education in Strasbourg and on Human Rights in Brussels. In 2017, CEC and CCME have jointly prepared the CEC Human Rights Summer School focusing on refugees and migrants' rights, which will be held in Palermo, Italy in July.

### ***CCME internal***

The ExCom of CCME met regularly during the past three years: in Sigtuna, Sweden in June and Brussels, Belgium in December 2014; in Madrid, Spain in April and Timisoara, Romania in October 2015, combined with a conference jointly organised by AIDROM in partnership with the Orthodox Metropoly of Banat under the theme "European Christian Churches responding to the migration phenomenon"; in Brussels in April and Athens, Greece in October 2016 where the ExCom also visited a refugee center and met with the regional UNHCR director and a representative of the Greek Asylum Service. After a meeting in Brussels in March 2017, the ExCom will meet prior to the CCME General Assembly in Prague.

The financial situation has varied a lot for the past three years. After a rather difficult financial situation in 2014, the situation improved in 2015 and 2016 thanks to generous support from member churches.

The secretariat is comprised of three permanent staff: General Secretary Doris Peschke, Executive Secretary Torsten Moritz and Office Manager Emmanuel Kabalisa. The accountant of CEC Charlotte Vanderborcht works 5 hours per week for CCME. CCME is grateful to the Global Board of Ministry of the United Methodist Churches for the secondment of international mission fellows, the first placement of Nicodemus Tigbe Doe from Liberia started in February 2016 and comes to an end in mid-June 2017. Valuable support has been received from several short-term and long-term interns.

## CONCLUDING REMARKS

The world is facing the biggest refugee crisis since World War II as the then UN High Commissioner for Refugees, now UN Secretary General, Antonio Guterres has underlined. "Of course, this has an impact on Europe, yet the real challenges are still to come", was written in the 2014 report. Indeed, in 2015 many people and churches across Europe were touched by this new and challenging situation. Yet we still need to 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, still has to become the starting point for a different political approach to responding to refugees and migrants arriving in Europe.

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."**



"Dreams", drawn by refugee children in Helsinki, January 2016, photo: D. Peschke/CCME