



ccme

churches' commission for migrants in europe

## **'Justice for Roma and Sinti: a challenge for churches'**

About 35 people gathered in Budapest, Hungary, from 9-11 March 2020 to reflect on the churches' history, relationship and interaction with the Roma and Sinti communities. The conference, organised by the Churches' Commission for Migrants in Europe in cooperation with the Reformed Church in Hungary, had valuable contributions from Roma/Sinti participants within the churches. The experience of the Reformed Church in Hungary was particularly informative as participants heard of their Roma Mission work of 'Reconciliation, Health and Hope' developed over the last decade.

Many participants acknowledged the richness of sharing together. Rev. Miki Kamberovic of the Serbian Pentecostal Church, a Roma himself, commented: "I have never been in a conference with so many different church and denominational backgrounds but yet I felt so much of a sense of unity and love for one another, especially for the Roma where each of us is involved and serving."

Participants recognised each regional context is different and yet all acknowledged discriminatory practice and division between Roma and non-Roma communities and respective churches. They commented, nevertheless, it was heartening to see the extent of networking, which already exists: the Ecumenical Roma Forum of predominantly Protestant Churches within Hungary and the Roma Network across Central and Eastern European countries of predominantly Evangelical and Pentecostal Churches. They also welcomed the opportunity for broader ecumenical engagement and exchange, which CCME had enabled.

Dr Torsten Moritz, General Secretary of CCME, stated: "We've heard about the encouraging practices in some of the churches across Europe. Most of all we've seen and felt the transforming power of faith and forgiveness, which can move us from division and discrimination to unity and reconciliation."

The conference encouraged churches to consider how to more positively promote the visibility and inclusion of Roma/Sinti. Rev. Eszter Dani of the Reformed Church in Hungary underlined: "If you tell us 'it's not our call to do Roma ministry', I ask 'is it not your call to follow God?'"