

**MESSAGE**  
**18 DECEMBER 2010**  
**INTERNATIONAL MIGRANTS DAY**  
**TOGETHER – NOT APART**

**“WHEN AN ALIEN LIVES WITH YOU IN YOUR LAND YOU SHALL NOT ILL-TREAT HIM. THE ALIEN LIVING WITH YOU MUST BE TREATED AS A NATIVE-BORN. LOVE HIM AS YOURSELF FOR YOU WERE ALIENS IN THE LAND OF EGYPT.” (LEVITICUS 19, 33-34)**

The year of European Churches Responding to Migration draws to a close. For 12 months churches across Europe have highlighted different aspects of migration: Forced migration and refugee situations, exploitation and trafficking in human beings, migration in relation to globalisation and climate change, migrants in irregular situation, migrants in detention and facing removals. But also living and uniting in diversity, celebrating together with old and new minorities in the communities was part of this year.

Many churches across Europe have continued to react very concretely to difficult situations, others have started during this year: providing food and shelter, advocating for the rights of migrants and their families, providing sanctuary, visiting detainees, commemorating those who have lost their lives on their way to Europe. Many congregations have reached out to the migrant communities and have celebrated worship together. Churches of different ethnic composition have started to map and understand the diversity of Christianity in their neighbourhood, and many are undertaking steps towards becoming inclusive communities as churches. And indeed, we have affirmed on many occasions throughout the year that **“Christians are migrants by vocation”**.

2010 has not been an easy year in Europe: The financial crisis has an impact on governments and societies, unemployment and reduced income has made life more difficult for many persons in Europe, while public resources have become scarce for social programmes and many governments are under enormous pressure to make further savings. Churches in Europe are deeply concerned that migrants, refugees and ethnic minority persons are increasingly excluded rather than included in European societies and divisions are deepened rather than overcome.

It is of considerable concern that at such a time solidarity is under pressure, too, while it would be needed more than ever. European governments seem to find it difficult to assist each other – and those countries hosting the majority of refugees in the world. Instead, the focus is put on the minority of migrants and refugees perceived as abusing the system. Removals of migrants are set as a priority rather than improving the Common European Asylum System and develop mechanisms to share the responsibility to protect persons in need of international protection.

At this critical time we wish to call on Christians and churches across Europe:

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

- Let us maintain and strengthen the witness and service for migrants, refugees and ethnic minority people. Let us not forget the persons who have lost their lives on their way to safety or in detention.
- Let us find ways to express that Christians are migrants by vocation, and that we uphold the dignity of every person as created in the image of God. Therefore, equality and respect cannot be made dependent on the economic value a person may add or not.

We also wish to call on decision makers in European governments and institutions:

- To enhance the international rights framework for migrants and refugees, continue to improve and work towards a comprehensive common European Asylum System and to ratify the International Convention on the Rights of All Migrant Workers and the members of their families.

Convinced that migration is a normal feature of human history and aware that migration has and will always pose challenges, we believe that we need to actively and positively shape the reality of migration:

- Let us build bridges and create places where people can meet and exchange their histories, stories and experiences.
- Let us talk with each other and not about each other.
- Let us celebrate diversity together and find ways to address the common challenges in society – together, not apart.



H.E. Metropolitan Emmanuel of France  
President of the Conference  
of European Churches



Rev. Arlington Trotman  
Moderator of the Churches'  
Commission for Migrants in Europe