



migration 2010

european churches responding to migration 2010

Press Release

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Conference of European Churches and Churches' Commission for Migrants in Europe launch Year of European Churches Responding to Migration 2010

Visibility of churches' work with and for migrants, refugees and minority ethnic people as well as advocacy for residence permits at heart of 2010 campaign

A meeting of some 70 representatives of churches from across Europe and participants from other world regions today in Budapest launches the focus year of "European Churches responding to Migration" - a joint initiative of the Conference of European Churches and the Churches' Commission for Migrants in Europe.

Tonight's official launch is hosted by the Reformed Church in Hungary and "marks the beginning of activities by which churches in Europe seek to make visible the churches' commitment to strangers, responding to the message of the Bible, which insists on the dignity of every human being throughout the year 2010", the General Secretary of the Conference of European Churches, the Ven. Colin Williams, stated. "Churches shall be encouraged to strengthen and enhance their work with and for migrants, refugees and ethnic minority people." At the same time, the activities aim at improving the situation of migrants in Europe very concretely - through joint advocacy for migrants' and refugees' right to a long-term residence status after five years of legal stay, irrespective of the grounds of stay.

The launch is part of a three-day-conference, in which participants exchange how their churches are addressing migration - as an issue related to the unity of the church, the socio-diaconal calling of the church and the political involvement of the church. Speakers from across Europe will give testimonies of their work. Participants from the World Council of Churches' Global Ecumenical Network on Migration will offer their observation on the work in Europe from an external perspective.

Tonight's launch will feature the presentation of a calendar for the year 2010. The calendar highlights specific area of churches' work on migration and encourages churches to further develop and give more visibility to these activities. Suggestions range from organising bible studies between congregations with different ethnic background and joint worship of congregations worshipping in different languages to the setting up psychological support for refugees and advocacy for irregular migrants.

"Migration has become a reality in almost all European countries, be they more immigration, emigration or transit migration countries," CCME General Secretary Doris Peschke stated. "It is important to recognise this reality and overcome fears in our societies. Migration is a blessing and not a curse," she added, as churches have a rich biblical basis to understand migration in a more positive way.

migration 2010 - The year of *European Churches responding to migration 2010* shall make visible the churches' commitment to strangers, responding to the message of the Bible, which insists on the dignity of every human being, in order to promote an inclusive policy at European and national level for migrants, refugees and ethnic minority groups.

The *Churches' Commission for Migrants in Europe (CCME)* is the ecumenical agency on migration and integration, asylum and refugees, and against racism and discrimination in Europe. Members are Anglican, Orthodox and Protestant Churches and Councils of Churches as well as church-related agencies in presently 18 European countries. CCME cooperates with the Conference of European Churches and the World Council of Churches.

The *Conference of European Churches (CEC)* is an ecumenical fellowship of churches in Europe which confess the Lord Jesus Christ as God and Saviour according to the Scriptures and therefore seek to fulfil together their common calling to the glory of the one God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit.