

PRESS RELEASE of 26 October 2004

***“Regard migration as normal, deal with the challenges”***

*Statement on 40 years of the Churches' Commission for Migrants in Europe*

“In CCME, and based on our biblical traditions, we have concluded that migration is normal. Thus it should not be prevented, but better managed.”, summarized CCME General Secretary, Doris Peschke, after a European consultation on “International Migration, Globalisation and Christian Ethics”.

The consultation was held at the Protestant Academy, Arnoldshain, Germany, the same place were 40 years ago the World Council of Churches brought together representatives of Western European churches to discuss the issue of migrant workers in Western Europe. CCME was founded in 1964, after the WCC Conference.

At the conference in Arnoldshain, 22-24 October 2004, presentations provided insights into trends in international and EU migration policies, economic aspects of migration, the effect of EU policies on other countries e.g. the Middle East. Also discussed was the situation of migrants in the EU, particularly irregular migrants, asylum seekers and refugees.

Participants expressed the concern that the current EU policy seeks to avoid its obligation to protect refugees and to put the burden on weaker countries. Border and boarding controls in Africa and Asia, as well as the often humiliating processing of visas are seen as an expression of still prevailing colonial attitudes in Europe.

In particular, the concepts of securitising migration policies were discussed. Security of states has become more important than the security of people, thus the understanding of security and the effects of policy instruments, particularly in the field of immigration and asylum, need to be challenged.

As economy is the driving force for migration, particularly at this time of globalisation, churches will have to look into economic aspects more closely. Churches will also need to enhance contacts with social partners and entrepreneurs.

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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 across Europe. CCME formally cooperates with the Conference of European Churches and the World Council of Churches.