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Refugee crisis continues: Church and Christian organisations call for concerted and ambitious action

Ahead of a meeting of the European Council, five European ecumenical organisations have written to EU political leaders urging action on the refugee and migrant crisis. The Churches' Commission for Migrants in Europe (CCME), the Conference of European Churches (CEC), Eurodiaconia, EU-CORD, and ACT Alliance EU call on European governments to fulfil their promises and obligations under international law.

The letter calls on the EU to increase civilian search and rescue efforts in the Mediterranean region, while at the same time creating safe and legal passages for refugees and appropriate support services once in Europe. Safe passage must include sizable refugee resettlement and humanitarian admission programmes, as well as private sponsorships and family reunion, among other mechanisms. Such an approach is necessary to prevent refugees from risking their lives or resorting to smugglers.

The refugee crisis is a challenge for both the EU and its neighbourhood, requiring extensive cooperation and collaboration with countries beyond the EU's external borders. The letter expresses concern with the proposed EU-Turkey deal, which includes a blanket return of refugees to Turkey and a so-called 'one in, one out' plan for Syrian refugees, leaving out refugees from other countries, such as Afghanistan and Eritrea.

"European states must not shift the responsibility for refugee protection on other countries, they have to share and take the responsibility and alleviate the countries most affected by the current refugee crisis, Lebanon, Jordan, Turkey," Doris Peschke, general secretary of CCME commented.

The letter welcomes EU participation in peace processes, and calls for enhanced efforts to end conflict in Syria. All must pay heed to the example set out by many people in Europe in welcoming refugees, providing services and humanitarian assistance and extending a hand of friendship. Together, CCME, CEC, Eurodiaconia, EU-CORD, and ACT Alliance EU call on European governments to develop more humane responses for refugee protection. Europe can and must do more to protect the lives and dignity of the most vulnerable among us.

For the full text of the letter, please click [here](#).

For more information or an interview, please contact:

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The [Conference of European Churches](#) is a fellowship of some 114 Orthodox, Protestant, Anglican and Old Catholic Churches from all countries of Europe, plus 40 national councils of churches and organisations in partnership. CEC was founded in 1959. It has offices in Brussels and Strasbourg.

The [Churches' Commission for Migrants in Europe](#) 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.

[Eurodiaconia](#) is a federation of 48 social and health care organisations founded in the Christian faith and promoting social justice.

[EU-CORD](#) is a network of European Christian Relief and Development NGOs. We are made up of member organisations - 22 NGOs that work alongside over 1,000 implementing partners worldwide.

[ACT Alliance EU](#) is the association of 14 major development and humanitarian aid organisations in Europe. Its main purpose is to promote justice and peace and the eradication of poverty by influencing European Union decision-making processes as they affect developing countries. ACT Alliance EU pursues rights-based development from a faith-based perspective.