

Final Message of the Public Issues Committee of the 14th General Assembly of the Conference of European Churches

The Public Issues Committee has discussed all the issues raised by member churches during the 14th CEC Assembly to be considered as public issues. Three of the issues were referred to the Policy Reference Committee, one was considered to have been dealt with in an other way; the Committee hopes that the CEC Secretariat will follow up on that issue.

The Public Issues Committee recommends the following texts to the Assembly which contain recommendations for CEC and its member churches. The Public Issues Committee recommends, further, that

- A letter be sent to the Churches in Syria,
- The statements on Youth and Egypt be made public in a press statement
- The Social Charter Complaint against the Netherlands be made public.

The Public Issues Committee requests the CEC Assembly to adopt this report.

1. Europe in times of financial and economic crisis

The global financial crisis has severe effects on European states and societies. Particularly in the Southern European countries and increasingly in Eastern and Central European countries the crisis leaves thousands of persons in despair: people have lost jobs and houses, decreasing income and increasing prices have severe effects on the ways of life for many. Social systems are under strain, pensions and savings are no longer safe. The gaps between rich and poor are widening in the majority of European societies.

Governments and political authorities have difficulties to agree on common solutions in Europe, responsibility is neither taken nor shared but shifted around. Thus in Europe governments lose credibility and trust, and as a consequence extremist populist movements are on the rise in many European countries, taking advantage of a complicated situation by seemingly providing easy solutions. Racism and friction are a consequence of this development, excluding the socially marginalised population groups, often along ethnic dividing lines. Open racism and violence are on the rise.

Churches in Europe have sought to address issues of economic globalisation over the past years, encouraging their members to opt for attitudes and concrete measures regarding consumption of energy and water, paying attention to scarce resources as well as fair and just production conditions and prices, unveiling forced labour and trafficking in human beings. Churches