

Report on the Diocese in Europe consultation on Refugee and Migrant Ministry Cologne, 11–12 October 2016

Europe-wide consultation on refugees and migrants

The Diocese in Europe, in partnership with USPG, the Anglican Alliance and the Weidenfeld Fund, hosted the first consultation on ministry to refugees and migrants in Europe. 53 participants from 18 European countries, and from North Africa and the USA gathered in Cologne for the meeting from 11–12 October 2016.

The aim of the consultation was to help equip local chaplaincies and churches in: understanding the wider context; supporting the integration of refugees in local communities, tackling negative public opinion; and partnering with local government, civil society and other faith-based groups.

In addition to Anglicans from the Diocese in Europe, the consultation heard from members of the Convocation of

Episcopal Churches in Europe, the Church in Wales, the Province of Jerusalem and the Middle East's Diocese of Cyprus and the Gulf, and the Church of England's Diocese of Canterbury. The discussion was greatly enriched by the participation of three refugees together with representatives from the Roman Catholic Community of Sant'Egidio, the Jesuit Refugee Service, the Lutheran World Federation, the Swiss Evangelical Alliance, the UNHCR, and the Churches' Commission for Migrants in Europe (CCME).

In his welcome letter to the consultation, Bishop Robert Innes acknowledged the valuable support to local chaplaincies from USPG. He said: "It is the human and spiritual resources of our congregations that are in the front line. Without them, without you, there can be no lasting outcomes to refugee ministry. I realise that the demands of refugee work may have been stretching for

many of you over the past year or two. I hope that the chance to share and reflect that this conference brings will be helpful for you to face the future with more confidence and refreshed dedication".



Above: Bishop Robert Innes holding a Lampedusa cross made from a wooden boat used by refugees to cross the



Above: The participants at the consultation in Cologne.



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Case studies

During the consultation the group heard from a range of speakers from across the region on how local churches were responding to refugees and migrants in their local area:

- In **Greece**, churches have worked ecumenically to provide assistance to vulnerable refugees and migrants, long before larger aid agencies were operational.
- In **Finland**, an Anglican priest, himself a refugee from



Above: Daniela Morales (JNRC)

South Sudan, is supporting other refugees, helping them through his own experiences.

- In **Brussels**, a church member joined others in opening her home to a destitute Afghan family – and continues to host them every few weeks for a break from life in the camp.
- In **Rome**, the long-standing Joel Nafuma Refugee Center, based at an Episcopal church, accompanies refugees on their journey through asylum processes to a place of belonging and independence in society.
- In **Turkey**, a local church began a small initiative providing milk and other basic needs which now connects them regularly to 150 refugee families.
- In **Italy**, the St Egidio

Community has worked with the Government and ecumenical partners already to bring 1000 vulnerable Syrian refugees from Lebanon directly to Italy using the legal instrument of the ‘humanitarian corridor’, available to all EU countries.



Above: Revd Amos Manga (White Nile congregation, Helsinki)

• In **Canterbury**, the Diocese links with church and partner agencies in Calais in advocacy and practical responses, especially in supporting government services in receiving unaccompanied asylum-seeking children.

• In **Vienna**, Frank Sauer, of the Department of Practical Theology at the University of Vienna, highlighted the importance of listening

and learning from refugees.

He also noted how people in Europe tend to think of migrants as ‘the other’ but that in reality many members of the Anglican communities in continental Europe have themselves moved from their home country – and this gives them key insights on helping new arrivals to settle.

Regional and global context

The consultation was conscious that the situation in Europe was only part of the wider global emergency.

Janette O’Neill, Chief Executive of USPG, said: “We are facing a global crisis, with 65 million people worldwide currently displaced and seeking safety outside or within their own country. Of this number, 1.3 million came to Europe last year. In response, Anglican churches have been doing amazing work to support these refugees.”

Doris Peschke, General Secretary of the Churches’ Commission for Migrants in Europe, emphasised this point,

pointing out that 27 European countries are together hosting about the same number of refugees as the tiny country of Lebanon hosts alone. “This is not a crisis in Europe,”

Doris said. “We just need to equip the system and not undermine asylum systems in Europe. Churches are ideally placed to assist in integration. Local people can accompany refugees and migrants to help them to participate in local life,” Doris added.

José Riera-Cézanne, Special Advisor to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, also highlighted the key role for

churches and other faith communities. Speaking to the consultation via a weblink, José said: “The international development and humanitarian communities are increasingly recognizing the role of faith in providing significant moral, social and political agency for human development and resilience in the face of hardship and adversity.

“This has been accompanied by recognition that faith leaders, religious institutions, communities of faith, and faith-based NGOs are carrying out critical development and humanitarian relief activities, including in situations of entrenched conflict.”



Above: Rachel Carnegie talks via video link to José Riera-Cézanne at UNHCR.

The ‘[Welcoming the Stranger](#)’ initiative illustrates UNHCR’s commitment to work with faith communities on serving the most vulnerable.

Group work reviewing local responses

What's worked

- Learning from and being guided by refugees – what do they need?
- Personal contact – understanding problems and aspirations
- Mutual hospitality – enabling refugees to be hosts
- Linking church and refugee families with children
- Teaching principles of European culture
- Help host community understand refugees' realities
- Support micro-enterprise
- Networking - partnership with other agencies
- Working with specific groups to build

- relationships
- Offering pastoral counselling and linking to professional trauma care
- Helping refugees to use mobile apps to find services

Challenges

- Negative attitudes within church and wider community
- Refugees blamed for wider social problems
- Local people feel economically insecure
- Different cultures even within the church community
- Complexity of asylum systems
- Different rules in different countries

- Keeping track of refugees who move
- Many of us are already guests in another country
- Clergy and lay leaders getting support from wider church members who may be time-poor or economically challenged
- Language barriers

Learning

- Move from transactional to relational engagement
- Be networked, connected and informed
- Build on own local assets, skills and gifts
- Everyone can do something: think creatively – e.g. joint gardening and cooking
- Value and use skills of

- refugees
- Need to understand religious and cultural needs of refugees, e.g. food requirements, female teachers for women's groups
- Care needed for carers – counselling for emotional impact
- Use our own experience of moving to a new country to help new arrivals
- Need to consider immediate and long term needs of refugees
- Supporting older refugees to help new arrivals
- Mapping local assets – knowing where you can refer to
- Dare to follow your heart and faith calling

Binyamin's story

A young refugee, who fled Afghanistan to avoid being forced into jihadi conflict, gave his moving account of his life's journey.

Aged just 15, 'Binyamin' (not his real name) fled to Europe, where he spent the next eight years being bounced from one country to another, his asylum applications repeatedly rejected.

It was when he finally visited a church-based refu-

gee centre that he was connected with a proper asylum lawyer and was given official status in just two weeks.

At last he could settle and begin his life again.

Below: Group sessions



Marketplace

The consultation ended with a marketplace where participants shared stories and photos of their own local initiatives. Amongst many displays, Doug Marshall, CMS mission partner in Malta, talked about his work with the International Association for Refugees. Other displays included photos from Greece, Wales, Casa-blanca and Florence (a series of paintings of refugees by student artists).



Asset mapping and planning

What distinguished all the positive case studies was that they build on the skills, talents and assets of local churches.

Allison Duvall, Program Manager for Church Relations at Episcopal Migration Ministries (EMM), shared how her organisation uses

this 'asset-based' approach in working with local congregations and matching their gifts to the needs of refugees and local refugee settlement agencies. She described these as gifts of *head* (learned skills), *hand* (practical skills) and *heart* (empathy and caring),

and, fourthly, other partners in the community (*human resources*).

Allison said that helping congregations to discern their gifts is to "frame conversation around hope," enabling people to realise that "my gifts can make people feel welcome."

Concluding remarks

Bishop Robert Innes commented: “Migration has hit the European Union in the wake of a deep financial crisis. Many people in Europe are suffering austerity.” This, he said, has created an extremely difficult situation. Yet as churches “we have more assets and talents than we might have supposed”, he added.

Bishop David Hamid challenged churches to “gently correct the narrative” and to challenge in preaching and teaching “the growing toxic narrative around the world” which feeds fear and resentment of refugees and migrants. “One of the

strengths of churches is that we are a flexible body, because we have no charter or mandate other than to love God and love our neighbour, so we can go where others cannot go and fill the gap.”

Insights gained during the consultation included the idea that as churches reach out to welcome the stranger, what starts as a transactional encounter, such as giving food and clothing, develops and deepens into a transformational relationship – a friendship, in which both host and guest are blessed.



Above: Bishop David Hamid

Local churches are well placed as a networker, mapping and connecting refugees to local services, faith based and secular. Churches can also provide a ‘safe space’, where the various agencies and others actors can meet to share and plan.

‘Refugees in Europe: How can the Church help?’

Partnership between the Church and other organisations was highlighted by all presenters in the webinar as a key element of success in efforts to help refugees arriving in Europe.

Participants heard from Janette O’Neill, Chief Executive at USPG; Daniela Morales, Program and Volunteer Coordinator at Joel

Nafuma Refugee Center (JNRC) in Rome; Allison Duvall, Program Manager for Church Relations at Episcopal Migration Ministries (EMM); and an advocate and refugee from Afghanistan who is now living in Europe.

Presenters tackled issues such as addressing hostility in the local community, forming partnerships

with other organisations working with refugees, helping refugees integrate with host communities, and ways in which refugees can enrich the life of the church.

[Watch a recording of the webinar here](#)

Next Steps

Rachel Carnegie, Co-Executive Director at the Anglican Alliance, highlighted the value of coming together to learn from the different contexts for mutual encouragement.

In terms of next steps, she said that the Anglican Alliance would welcome updates to the **survey** from all chaplaincies and churches across Europe. This will enable the group to have a confidential list of contacts so that they can signpost individual refugees to services offered by churches and other local institutions.

The Anglican Alliance will continue to work USPG and with the Diocese in Europe and the Episcopal Convocation in Europe to share learning and highlight any useful **resources** on working with migrants and refugees. These will focus on the thematic areas discussed by the groups. It will also highlight potential partners for churches to engage with.

Above all, the group was encouraged to join in telling the **good news** about these encounters bringing mutual transformation to the

lives of churches and refugees – good news that is so vital to counter negative stories. The Anglican Alliance connects churches across the worldwide Anglican Communion, many of which also have their own

experiences of ‘welcoming the stranger’. If there is demand, the Anglican Alliance stands ready to convene a wider consultation on ministry with refugees and migrants.



Above: The USPG team with Revd Amos Manga