



ECUMENICAL FORUM OF EUROPEAN CHRISTIAN WOMEN
FORUM OECUMENIQUE DE FEMMES CHRETIENNES D'EUROPE
ÖKUMENISCHES FORUM CHRISTLICHER FRAUEN IN EUROPA

European Christian women acting in God's love

Message from the National Coordinators Meeting in Larnaca, Cyprus

With a 10,000 year history, Cyprus, the island of Aphrodite, is a place of great natural beauty and geo-strategical importance. This is the island where Jesus' Apostles walked. The EFECW women were invited to walk in their footsteps.

Over fifty National Coordinators from 23 European countries, and a representative from the World Council of Churches 'Just Community of Women and Men', enjoyed the hospitality of their sisters in Cyprus who hosted the conference on the theme "How can justice, cultural diversity and sensitivity go hand in hand?" from 29 June to 3 July 2016 in Larnaca.

We were inspired by the message of the prophet Amos, "... Let justice roll down like waters, and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream" (Amos 5, 24), because we want righteousness and justice to flourish in our churches and in our societies through a continual and living communion with God, and cooperation and love between one other. This can be achieved using modern technology and ecumenical networking in addition to traditional ways. We strongly believe that in this way we will be empowered to take bold actions in our communities.

During 2014-2015, EFECW women carried out many projects on both national and international levels to meet the needs of societies struck by poverty, migration, injustice and war. These projects, implemented with cultural relevance, sensitivity and peacebuilding efforts, addressed issues such as: how different religious groups learn to live together, pilgrimage, awareness raising around issues relating to sex-selective abortions, faith expressed through the arts, women producing their own food to sustain themselves, and improving community cohesion with Roma and other marginalized groups.

Moreover, as we reflected on 18 years since the end of the World Council of Churches Decade in Solidarity with Women, we discovered that the main recommendations are still very urgent. The economic situation and its impact on women, and the issue of women's participation in churches as well as in the business world, in politics and social life are still high on the agenda. Violence against women is as prevalent as before, and we need a renewed commitment to breaking the silence and challenging the systems, structures and cultural attitudes that sustain its existence.

The experience of the Pop Up Monastery (an EFECW 2015 inter-generational project initiated by young women) provided women with a space for individual spiritual growth in the search for their own identity, acknowledging their often busy and stressful lives. It set a precedent of good practice for empowering women for leadership, and providing opportunities for

ecumenical and intercultural dialogue. It is essential that other women can gain similar experiences, and steps are being taken to establish the Pop Up Monastery as part of the wider ecumenical movement in Europe.

The strength of our Forum is to keep opening up to society. We want our voice to be heard like “living letters” as a sign of hope, reconciliation and mutual respect (2 Corinthians 3:3).

Larnaca – Cyprus, July 2nd, 2016

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