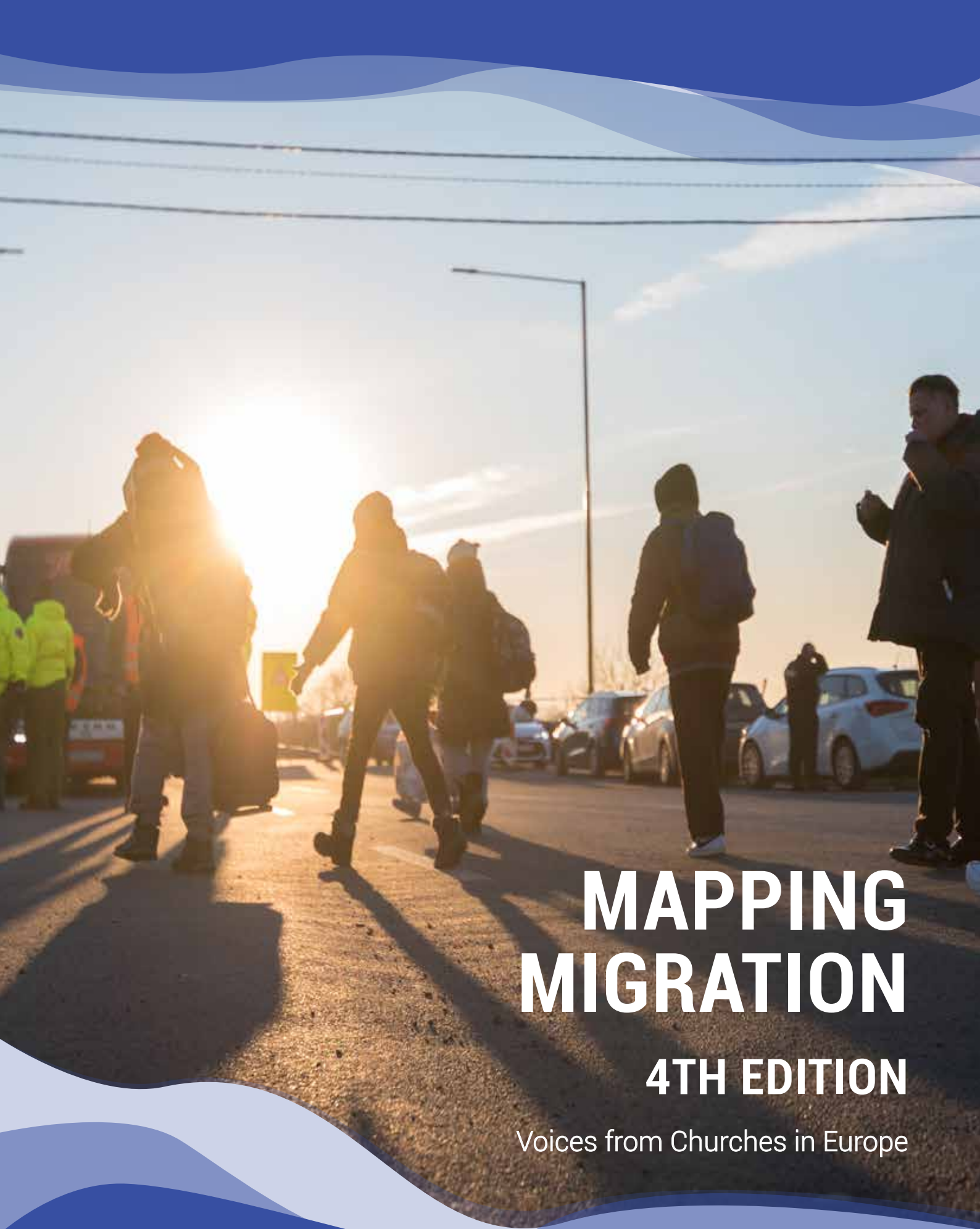


MAPPING MIGRATION

4TH EDITION

Voices from Churches in Europe

Edited by Kirk Sims

World Council of Churches

ccme

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FOREWORD FROM THE CHURCHES' COMMISSION FOR MIGRANTS IN EUROPE GENERAL SECRETARY

It is an enormous pleasure and honour for me to introduce our readers to the *Mapping Migration* report, in its fourth edition in 2026.

Like its previous editions, this report presents a snapshot of the engagement of churches and Christian organizations in Europe with the issue of migration and its many facets, first and foremost in working with and for refugees, migrants, and racialized persons.

It does so by highlighting practices of churches that are in many ways typical of activities of churches and Christian organizations across Europe. The examples show the commitment to work with and for migrants across the different groups of migrants and across the different denominations and regions in Europe. They show commitment of old and young, clergy and laity in countries affected by immigration and—often forgotten—emigration. They also hint at the cooperation of persons with and without their own background in migration in the work of churches and Christian organizations.

This report shows the will of churches and Christian organizations to see migration and migrants as an opportunity: an opportunity to show compassion and to offer fellowship, based on the biblical foundations. This is coupled with the recognition of the important contribution migrants have been making and are making to European societies. At the same time, the report gives an account of the challenges associated with migration in a society in which voices that see migration as nothing but a problem become more and more vocal in the media and politics.

Last but not least, this report shows the potential and the benefit of churches and Christian organizations working together in an organization like the Churches' Commission for Migrants in Europe (CCME) or the World Council of Churches (WCC). The mutual learning by working across borders, denominations, and other aspects is complemented by the encouragement derived from knowing that the different churches and Christian organizations are working not in isolation but as part of a wide network. This encouragement is particularly important these days, when the news on migration is most of the time very discouraging.

This report will hopefully, like the previous editions, become an important reference for churches and Christian organizations in Europe. However, let me add a brief word of caution: the report does not aim to be fully representative of the work of all churches and Christian organizations in Europe. It is mainly based on the activities in the membership of CCME. It also contains the most recent information and data available at the time the manuscript was completed (December 2025). Some information will, by the time the report is published or read, be outdated, given that migration and churches' responses to it are constantly changing.

This report would not have been possible without the hard work of several people, whom I'd like to thank. First, this includes the authors of the different articles. Lyn van Rooyen and Masiiwa Ragies Gunda from the World Council of Churches were once again instrumental in publishing this report as a joint endeavour with the WCC, offering a more global perspective and providing expertise in turning a draft into a publication: all of this was indispensable. Thanks also go to Tim Widmaier, who came in near the end of the process and helped tremendously with tedious but necessary things like checking copyright and graphs. The core person for getting this report together was Kirk Sims, seconded by the United Methodist Church to CCME. His intellectual and theological clarity, perseverance, commitment, and competence are the key to this report.

Thanks so much to all of you.

Thanks also go to the Protestant Church of the Rhineland (EKiR) for financially supporting this publication and the work which went into it.

I hope you find the report informative and inspiring.

Dr Torsten Moritz

CCME General Secretary

FOREWORD FROM THE WORLD COUNCIL OF CHURCHES GENERAL SECRETARY

In 2020, the World Council of Churches (WCC) and the Churches' Commission for Migrants in Europe (CCME) revised, updated, and published their joint study, Mapping Migration: Mapping Churches' Responses in Europe. Five years later, we are back with a new edition! I want to thank the CCME secretariat for continuing to draw attention to problems around migrating to Europe, especially for people from the Global Majority.

The WCC acknowledges and proudly embraces the idea of a "migrant faith" because, drawing on resources from ancient Israelite times, we encounter the origins of the Christian faith in the call of Abraham (Gen. 12), whose first assignment was to migrate. Through the generations, Israelites became a migrant people, moving from one place to another in search of better opportunities: food security, economic opportunities, and refuge due to the incessant conflicts in the Promised Land. They also moved internally, especially the pilgrimages to Jerusalem and other central places for worship, religious festivals, and rituals (Amos 5:5, Ex. 23:14-17, Ps. 84:5). The New Testament carries this theme; in fact, the Jesus movement grew because of migration seen especially in the missionary journeys of the Apostle Paul (Acts 13–21). Through these examples, we believe there is no single legitimate reason for migrating. Some migrated to find refuge, others to explore economic opportunities, yet others due to climate emergencies or violent conflicts; still, there were those who migrated to spread the Good News of Jesus Christ, of the triune God.

Beyond biblical times, the Christian faith has grown through the centuries because of the understanding of the close intersection between evangelism and migration, which saw men and women who believed journeying into communities to share God's mission to reconcile humanity and creation to God. Today, this faith is found on all continents, mostly because of migration. As a migrant faith, we unconditionally believe in the sanctity of human dignity and human rights for all, including people on the move and those in new places. There is no justification whatsoever for discriminatory—and, in particular, racially motivated—policies and laws regulating migration where human lives are at stake. The WCC shares in the disappointment of churches and Christians with the increasingly draconian and anti-human dignity policies and laws being pushed through by the European Union members. The WCC continues to work closely with the CCME, under the theme "Protecting People More than Borders," in advocating for more humane migration policies and law enforcement to curb the increasing instances of racism in migration policies and law enforcement. The 2023 report of the Fundamental Rights Agency of the EU, *Being Black in the EU*, clearly shows the increase in anti-Black racism across Europe in the past decade. We know the same has been happening for Asians and Middle Easterners as well.

This new edition will once again draw the attention of Christian actors in Europe, and globally, to the increasingly difficult obstacles being thrown in the face of sisters and brothers who are forced to migrate due to consequences of the climate emergency, violent conflicts, and non-performing economies and who therefore wish to explore their opportunities for refuge, asylum, and better economic opportunities. It cannot be morally acceptable for countries to prioritize exclusionary strategies at the expense of life-saving inclusive strategies, including undoing the legacies of European colonialism. The WCC applauds many churches in Europe and other Christian organizations that continue to be credible, love-driven first responders to people on the move.

I want to encourage our members and partners, especially those in Europe and those from regions from where sisters and brothers are migrating to Europe, to read this resource and plan for strategic and structured interventions to save lives. Protect people more than borders!

Rev. Prof. Dr Jerry Pillay

General Secretary,
World Council of Churches



PREFACE

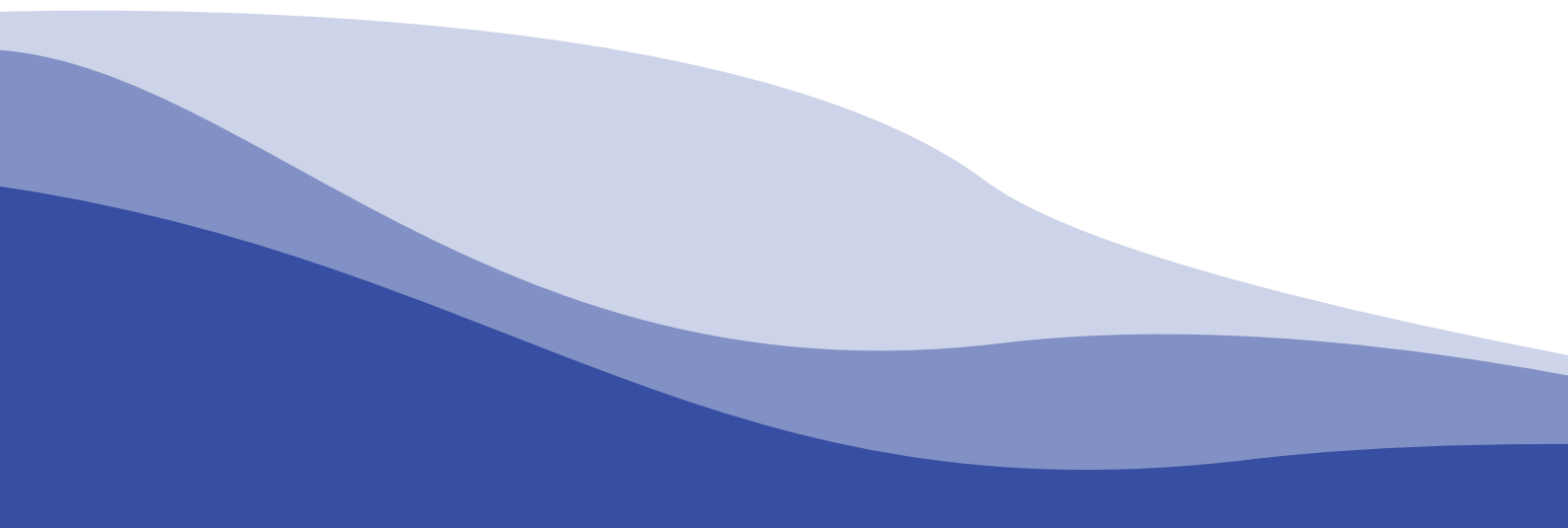
Mapping Migration, 4th Edition, Voices from the Churches builds upon the rich tradition established by and replicated three times by Darrell Jackson and Alessia Passarelli. This edition has been prepared for church leaders at the denominational, national, and local levels working in congregations, *diakonia*, advocacy, and other parachurch settings. It is an effort to inform them with insights from the churches across Europe and how they have engaged with the complex realities of migration. You will see we have sought to showcase numerous voices from very different theological traditions and backgrounds. We have leaned heavily into case studies with this edition, which are not meant to be comprehensive but representative of different approaches of churches within the European context. We hope that the case studies could seed ideas or inspiration for other church-related entities about ways they could possibly respond in their contexts.

As a place to showcase voices from the churches, this edition is written by church insiders to others inside the church, which distinguishes it from other secular resources. Although you will find rigorously researched articles by academics and others with scholarly credentials, this 4th edition of *Mapping Migration* does not make any pretence of being an academic work, but a highly reflective one by and for practitioners. It presumes an educated audience but does not assume that all of the technical language of migration is known.

I am personally grateful, especially to the Executive Committee of the Churches' Commission for Migrants in Europe, which believed that this should come to fruition again. And I am grateful for the partners in the World Council of Churches who have made the publication a reality. I am also indebted to the authors, all of whom are busy people with many other responsibilities, who made time to contribute to the resource. Nearly all of the authors have experience migrating at some point in their lives, and all have demonstrably evident solidarity with migrants.

It is safe to say that all involved in this project believe in and are committed to the fundamental principle of human dignity. It is our desire that, as people migrate, which is part of the human condition and narrative, for reasons of choice or by force, they will encounter a Europe that has churches that care about and are concerned for their wellbeing and rights.

Kirk Sims



INTRODUCTION

Mapping Migration, 4th Edition, Voices from Churches in Europe documents the evolving role of faith communities as they navigate the complex realities of migration. These essays, case studies, data sets, and maps collected here come out of the experiences of churches as they encounter migrants and wrestle with what welcome and solidarity demand in practice. Migrants from within Europe and from beyond are actively shaping the European landscape.

Across the volume, contributors address the tension between freedom and restriction. European integration has enabled unprecedented freedom of movement for many, reshaping labour markets, congregations, and patterns of everyday life. Particularly along the southern and eastern edges, people on the move have found refuge and exclusion. Several sections expose the gap between migration perceptions and migration realities, showing how public perceptions often diverge from the situations on the ground. By situating their analyses in data and case studies, the contributors challenge simplified narratives that often portray migration as a threat or a burden.

This edition of *Mapping Migration* also highlights the significance of recent displacement crises, especially the migration of large numbers of Ukrainians since February 2022. The activation of temporary protection mechanisms to respond to the largest displacement of people in Europe since the Second World War revealed both the capacity of European institutions for swift, coordinated action and the unevenness of solidarity across different groups of displaced people. Read alongside reflections on the longer Syrian displacement experience, these chapters invite readers to ask difficult questions about selectivity, racialization, and historical memory in European asylum practices. Migration linked to climate change and environmental degradation further expands the horizon of concern, pressing churches and policymakers alike to confront forms of displacement that do not fit neatly into existing legal categories.

Within this complex landscape, *Mapping Migration* calls attention to the role of churches and ecumenical actors. Rather than treating churches merely as service providers or moral commentators, the contributions show them as being embedded in communities that are transformed by migration. Congregational life, patterns of leadership, worship practices, and understandings of unity are reshaped through encounters with migrants and refugees. Several chapters document how Christian fellowship is forged across linguistic, cultural, and confessional boundaries, often in situations of limited resources and ongoing disagreement. This lived ecumenism offers a counter-narrative to polarizing debates within both church and society.

This edition begins with broad themes in migration and those with a migration experience or background, then moves into thinking theologically about migration. After that, you will find case studies that highlight Christian unity, *diakonia*, and advocacy.

This volume is intended as a resource for church leaders and practitioners who seek to understand and respond faithfully to migration in their contexts. As you read through *Mapping Migration,* listen to these voices from the churches, and may they inspire a response of welcome, embrace, or advocacy in your context.



MAJOR MIGRATORY THEMES IN EUROPE TODAY

Migration is a fundamental part of the human story, but to understand it today, we have to look closely at how it is unfolding across Europe. Over the next few articles, we will step into the realities of the Syrian and Ukrainian displacements and the challenges at the southern border. We will also address the prejudice many face upon arrival, while highlighting some policies that have been proven to actually work, the European Union's Freedom of Movement policy and the Temporary Protection Directive that was invoked in 2022 for the first time. At the end of this section, we will see pages of country-specific data so we can see how the countries of Europe compare.