

Submission by Cytûn: Churches Together in Wales to the National Assembly for Wales Equality of Opportunity Committee's inquiry into matters relating to migrant workers, their families, and the communities in which they live and work

Introduction

Cytûn: Churches Together in Wales is the national ecumenical instrument for Wales. It brings together the principal Christian churches in Wales to deepen their communion with one another, and to proclaim the Gospel by common witness and service in the world. As such, Cytûn is pleased to have been asked to respond to this consultation. A list of Cytûn's member churches is attached at Appendix 1. It should be noted that the views expressed in this response are not necessarily those of any individual member church.

Our submission to this inquiry is based on the recent paper *Migration Principles: Statement for Churches Working with Migrants and Engaging with Migration Issues* (CCRJ 2007). This paper was produced by the Churches' Commission for Racial Justice, an arm of Churches Together in Britain and Ireland, and sets out the basic principles to which we believe churches should adhere in relation to migration. In accordance with *Migration Principles* Cytûn recognises that the presence of Christianity in Wales, and the diversity of the churches' own membership today, are in themselves the result of a continual process of migration. We have a commitment to serve all the communities of Wales, both those long established here and those who have more recently arrived.

The Christian approach to migration must be grounded in the fundamental conviction that all people are created equal in dignity, and made in the image of God. With this in mind, the extent to which we welcome the stranger is a key criterion of faithful Christian living (Matthew 25:35). Furthermore, travel, journey and pilgrimage are all common metaphors for the Christian experience: as the New Testament reminds us, spiritually we too are migrants ('For here we have no lasting city, but we are seekers after the city which is to come' Hebrews 13:14). As such, therefore, matters of migration and inclusion are important to us.

Proposal: status of European and International Conventions in Wales

The Committee's letter inviting evidence asks for suggestions about action that might be taken to improve the life experiences of migrant workers, their families, and the communities in which they live and work.

One of the specific recommendations of *Migration Principles*, to which we would like to draw the Committee's attention, is that the United Kingdom should ratify the Council of Europe's *European Convention on the Legal Status of Migrant Workers* and the United Nations *International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of all Migrant Workers and Members of their Families*. We understand that neither of these has been ratified by the UK government to date. Of course, as a nation within the UK, Wales does not have the capacity to sign or ratify international agreements in its own right. However, we believe that it would be symbolically valuable for the Welsh Assembly Government to declare its support for the principles enshrined in these two Conventions. More practically, the Assembly Government could give partial effect to the Conventions by

declaring that it will follow their principles insofar as they affect the policy areas and functions which lie within its responsibilities. To some extent it already does so: for example, the *Welcome to Wales* pack clearly meets the information requirements of Article 6 of the European Convention. But it might consider whether there are areas in which it could do more, or encourage local authorities to do more.

In respect of the European Convention these areas might include the provision of specialist social services (article 10), inspection of housing (Article 13), and measures relating to education and training (Articles 14 and 15). In respect of the International Convention, part of Article 43, and Article 45, cover education and training. The relevant portions of these articles are attached at Appendix 2.

These articles should, we believe, provide a basis for future action to improve conditions for migrant workers and their families in Wales, and to promote inclusion of migrant workers and their families within existing communities. As such we commend them to the Committee and invite it to seek an explicit endorsement of them from the Assembly Government.

Cytûn: Churches Together in Wales
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Appendix 1: member churches of Cytûn: Churches Together in Wales at 4 January 2008

The Baptist Union of Wales
The Baptist Union of Great Britain
The Church in Wales
The Congregational Federation
The Covenanted Baptist Churches
The German-Speaking Lutheran, United and Reformed Congregations in Wales
The Methodist Church
The Presbyterian Church of Wales
The Religious Society of Friends (Quakers)
The Roman Catholic Church
The Salvation Army
The Union of Welsh Independents
The United Reformed Church

Appendix 2: Extracts from international conventions relating to migrant workers.

European Convention on the Legal Status of Migrant Workers

Article 10 – Reception

1. After arrival in the receiving State, migrant workers and members of their families shall be given all appropriate information and advice as well as all necessary assistance for their settlement and adaptation.
2. For this purpose, migrant workers and members of their families shall be entitled to help and assistance from the social services of the receiving State or from bodies working in the public interest in the receiving State and to help from the consular authorities of their State or origin. Moreover, migrant workers shall be entitled, on the same basis as national workers, to help and assistance from the employment services. However, each Contracting Party shall endeavour to ensure that special social services are available, whenever the situation so demands, to facilitate or co-ordinate the reception of migrant workers and their families.
3. ...

Article 13 – Housing

1.
2. Each Contracting Party shall ensure that the competent national authorities carry out inspections in appropriate cases in collaboration with the respective consular authorities, acting within their competence, to ensure that standards of fitness of accommodation are kept up for migrant workers as for its own nationals.
3. ...

Each Contracting Party shall ensure, by the means available to the competent national authorities, that the housing of the migrant worker shall be suitable.

Article 14 – Pretraining – Schooling – Linguistic training – Vocational training and retraining

1. Migrant workers and members of their families officially admitted to the territory of a Contracting Party shall be entitled, on the same basis and under the same conditions as national workers, to general education and vocation training and retraining and shall be granted access to higher education according to the general regulations governing admission to respective institutions in the receiving State.
2. To promote access to general and vocational schools and to vocational training centres, the receiving State shall facilitate the teaching of its language or, if there are several, one of its languages to migrant workers and members of their families.
3. For the purpose of the application of paragraphs 1 and 2 above, the granting of scholarships shall be left to the discretion of each Contracting Party which shall make efforts to grant the children of migrant workers living with their families in the receiving State – in accordance with the provisions of Article 12 of this Convention – the same facilities in this respect as the receiving State's nationals.
4. ...
5. The Contracting Parties concerned, acting in close co-operation shall endeavour to ensure that the vocational training and retraining schemes, within the meaning

of this Article, cater as far as possible for the needs of migrant workers with a view to their return to their State of origin.

Article 15 – Teaching of the migrant worker's mother tongue

The Contracting Parties concerned shall take actions by common accord to arrange, so far as practicable, for the migrant worker's children, special courses for the teaching of the migrant worker's mother tongue, to facilitate, *inter alia*, their return to their State of origin.

International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of all Migrant Workers and Members of their Families

Article 43

1. Migrant workers shall enjoy equality of treatment with nationals of the State of employment in relation to:

- (a) Access to educational institutions and services subject to the admission requirements and other regulations of the institutions and services concerned;
- (b) Access to vocational guidance and placement services;
- (c) Access to vocational training and retraining facilities and institutions....

Article 45

1. Members of the families of migrant workers shall, in the State of employment, enjoy equality of treatment with nationals of that State in relation to:

- (a) Access to educational institutions and services, subject to the admission requirements and other regulations of the institutions and services concerned;
- (b) Access to vocational guidance and training institutions and services, provided that requirements for participation are met;
- (c) Access to social and health services, provided that requirements for participation in the respective schemes are met;
- (d) Access to and participation in cultural life.

2. States of employment shall pursue a policy, where appropriate in collaboration with the States of origin, aimed at facilitating the integration of children of migrant workers in the local school system, particularly in respect of teaching them the local language.

3. States of employment shall endeavour to facilitate for the children of migrant workers the teaching of their mother tongue and culture and, in this regard, States of origin shall collaborate whenever appropriate.

4. States of employment may provide special schemes of education in the mother tongue of children of migrant workers, if necessary in collaboration with the States of origin.