



CHURCHES SHAPING EUROPE'S FUTURE

CEC'S JOURNEY from Novi Sad to Tallinn

2018- 2023

“Under God’s blessing – shaping the future” 2023 CEC General Assembly, 14 – 20 June 2023, Tallinn, Estonia

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Report from the President



CEC President
Rev. Christian Krieger

Between Novi Sad and Tallinn, the face of the world, and not least that of Europe, has changed considerably.

Politically, culturally, societally, from the 2018 General Assembly of the Conference of European Churches to the 2023 General Assembly the period is marked by developments that, in some respects, amount to a real change of era.

The Conference of European Churches has been involved in these changes, both in its commitment to serve churches by acting at the heart of European decision-making and by being itself involved in a necessary adaptation of its organisation.

This report covers a period that is both in keeping with the logic of the long-term future, of the awareness of societal institutions of the churches' heritage entrusted to them by their history, and in that of paradigmatic breaks when new challenges, or even critical moments, require adaptations.

I propose to address this articulation between the long-term and paradigmatic ruptures, firstly at the level of the European context, and secondly at the level of CEC.

A new European moment

Since the early 2000s, the founding narrative of the European project underwent a slow process of disintegration. The project of a democratic space to which European states could freely adhere, and which was perceived as a guarantee of peace and freedom, gradually lost its appeal. Exposed to increasing contestation, the European project has had to face up to growing mistrust.

The manifestations of this narrative deficit are manifold. Among them are the difficulties of EU member states to find a concerted and united response to migratory pressure, the rise of Eurosceptic discourses culminating in the Brexit referendum and the UK's exit from the EU, and the rise of a nationalist and populist discourse in many of the member states.

In the spring of 2023, it is, however, clear that European citizens are once again more perceptive to the narrative of the founders, and that the project of a union of European states to overcome historical conflicts and to have a joint political and economic influence on the future of humanity and the planet is once again attracting interest and growing support.

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It is true that EU member states have still not succeeded in establishing a concerted and united approach to the migration issue; it is also true that nationalist and populist discourses continue to weigh significantly in the political debates of member states; however, their protagonists no longer advocate leaving the EU or abandoning the euro.

This evolution is significant. It indicates that the European project, despite the legitimate criticism that can be levelled at EU institutions, seems to be proving its relevance.

The period covered by this report has mirrored this evolution. It has been the scene of two major crises marking a profound rupture, first the pandemic and second the military aggression against Ukraine.

The COVID-19 pandemic revealed the vulnerability of humanity and our civilisation. Despite scientific and technological progress, our globalised civilisation has rediscovered its fragility. In this crisis, the European Union has been able to guarantee access to vaccines for its member states. Moreover, the unprecedented borrowing of more than 750 billion euros at EU level to strengthen the economic resilience of its member states constitutes the emergence of an embryonic common economic policy.

Moreover, the military aggression against Ukraine and the tragic return of war to European soil has shaken previous certainties and caused the reconsideration of several geopolitical positions. The new situation challenges the neutrality stance with the emergence of a need to have the capacity to defend one's freedom or to belong to a group likely to be able to do so.

The European Union has been a major actor in this crisis, committing substantial resources to humanitarian solidarity with Ukraine, implementing the special status of "temporary protection" to welcome Ukrainian refugees in European states. Considerable support to Ukraine's economic resilience has been provided, as well as to the war effort of the attacked country.

The comprehensiveness of these measures and the fact that successive sanction packages against the Russian Federation have been voted by all member states reinforce the emergence of a common policy and the conviction that progress must be made in building a concerted, even common, defence policy.

Unquestionably, the European project, which in the years 2013–2018 was at a crossroads – as stated in the CEC working document discussed prior to the 2018 general assembly – has since entered the

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third phase of its history. Indeed, after the creation of the common market by the Treaty of Rome and the introduction of a common currency we can observe the emergence of a common European policy following the recent major crises of the pandemic and the war in Ukraine.

This renewed process towards political unity will obviously take a long time and will certainly experience setbacks. It is, however, appropriate to welcome the beginning of such a process.

CEC has accompanied these developments and related issues, in particular in the framework of the regular and transparent open dialogue with all the bodies of the European Union as established by Article 17 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the EU, also known as the Lisbon Treaty.

During our term of office, we made the choice to engage in this dialogue, particularly at the highest political level, and to do so in conjunction with the Commission of the Bishops' Conferences of the European Union (COMECE). It was clear to us that to advocate for a united Europe Christians needed to unite their voices.

We have met regularly with high-ranking politicians in the European Commission, the European Parliament, and the governments of the member states holding the presidency of the Council of the European Union to express our appreciation, ask our questions, share our encouragement, and voice our demands.

Thus, we have often pleaded for the continuation of the EU enlargement process, for the strengthening of social policies in Europe, for a more hospitable Europe, for more solidarity in the effort to welcome refugees and migrants, for a Europe more resolutely committed to the energy transition and the fight against global warming, for a Europe more respectful of freedom, especially religious freedom.

I would like to express my deepest gratitude to COMECE, and in particular to its outgoing President, Cardinal Hollerich, for this trusting and effective collaboration. The fact that the President of CEC had the privilege to speak on behalf of Christianity, both for CEC and COMECE, in the plenary session of the Conference on the Future of Europe was a highlight.

Thanks to this collaboration, CEC and COMECE were able to strengthen their image with the European institutions and to reinforce the recognition they are given.

Societal issues for churches in Europe

Faithful to its tradition as a bridge between
Member Churches, CEC

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consistently offers space for meetings and exchanges on societal issues, for instance on the occasion of the annual virtual general assemblies but also via dedicated webinars.

To be able to exchange on church life challenged by the pandemic, to be able to benefit from the testimonies of Ukrainian church leaders to understand the realities experienced under military aggression, or simply to have a place to talk together about the challenges faced by respective churches in their context, is a precious expression of our fellowship in Christ.

Two major topics emerged during the period 2018–2023: the issue of religious freedom and conviction and the ethics of peace. Regarding freedom of religion and belief, some might consider this to be an achievement of democratic societies. We have observed, however, that this fundamental freedom remains a persistent issue in multicultural and secularised European societies.

Indeed, several societal mechanisms, often unsuspected by the general public, are undermining it. Firstly, the rise of radicalism, mobilising a religious narrative for a political project leads governments to draft laws with a security objective. The administrative constraints of these laws represent a real obstacle to freedom of religious expression, particularly for religious minorities. We can point to examples from France and Denmark, among others.

Secondly, places of worship, religious activity, and religious sites are increasingly targets of vandalism and even terrorist attacks. A legitimate feeling of insecurity arises in some places exposed to high tensions. CEC has participated in an ambitious programme funded by the European Commission of providing training for churches, Safer and Stronger Communities in Europe (SASCE).

Thirdly, the development of religious illiteracy in largely secularised societies creates a lack of understanding, often even intolerance, of certain religious practices. Ritual slaughter and circumcision are regularly debated. Circumcision has even been the subject of draft legislation aimed at banning it in the name of respect for the integrity of a child's body.

And fourthly, CEC has regularly intervened against attacks on religious heritage in the context of an action aimed at a change of use, alienation of property, or even demolition. Thus, CEC addressed the High Representative of the EU for Foreign Affairs, requesting his intervention and to bring our support in crisis situations, in particular in connection with the precariousness of the heritage and Armenian nationals in the Republic of Artsakh/Nagorno-Karabakh, the change of assignment of Hagia Sophia in Istanbul, and the situation of

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the monasteries in the Balkans, in Montenegro, or in Kosovo.

Damaging these places, which are full of memory, symbolism, and sacredness, causes perennial and memorial wounds that are the seeds of tomorrow's conflicts. These examples underline the importance of the issue of freedom of religion and belief for all churches in Europe and the interest that CEC must continue to have in this fundamental right.

On the ethics of peace and reconciliation, on the 60th anniversary of CEC and the 100th anniversary of the Treaty of Versailles, our fellowship organised a peace conference in Paris, reaffirming our commitment to the ethics of reconciliation and peace.

Many places and situations require mediation and healing of memories. The military aggression against Ukraine has made this challenge even more essential. CEC spared no effort to work on the religious and Christian dimensions involved in this war.

We have participated in diplomatic efforts, sent open letters to Patriarch Kirill of the Russian Orthodox Church, set up a dedicated space on our website to communicate on initiatives as closely as possible, organised solidarity visits to Ukraine, Poland, and Hungary, and taken initiatives to promote a cease-fire.

In times of war, CEC's advocacy has emphasised the need for justice, truth, and respect for the right to sovereignty as conditions for peace. When the time comes to lay down arms, it will be necessary to work on the healing of memories to eradicate wounds and resentments and to establish the conditions for a lasting peace.

The theme of reconciliation and peace will be an essential part of CEC's work in years to come. The observation of massive reinvestment in the armament of European states reinforces this decision. The Governing Board, by positioning the Pathway to Peace project at the heart of CEC's programmatic work, is responding to this perspective.

Finally, the question of artificial intelligence and emerging digital civilisation will be a major challenge in years to come. The first works carried out at the level of the European Parliament and the Council of Europe in Strasbourg deserve the participation of the churches, as in the future our freedoms and our democracies will be conditioned by this issue.

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A new opportunity for CEC

The 2009 General Assembly in Lyon engaged CEC in a process of change with the vision of a better structured organisation around the authority of a Governing Board. This process, based on the Uppsala Report, was consolidated at the 2013 general assembly in Budapest by the adoption of a new constitution, the decision to move to Brussels and to merge with the Church and Society Commission.

With the reworking of the Constitution adopted in Budapest to the requirements of Belgian law voted at the 2018 General Assembly in Novi Sad, CEC was ready to face the tasks, especially those set out in the Strategy and Policy Committee Report adopted by the General Assembly in Novi Sad.

In trying to transform the latter into a strategic plan, however, the CEC Governing Board encountered the fact that the size of the organisation and the human resources at its disposal were not able to meet all the expectations expressed by the Member Churches.

Moreover, CEC faced additional challenges. Its internal organisation was characterised by a lack of management and cohesion and its programmatic work suffered from low visibility. The latter particularly because certain tasks and the related resources were entrusted to third party organisations, not under the jurisdiction of the Governing Board. Finally, substantial cutbacks in membership fees had been announced by EKD, taking effect as of 2025.

In order to initiate the necessary work aimed at better profiling CEC, the Governing Board recognised the need to entrust the organisation to a General Secretary capable of taking up the managerial challenge of the organisation and of bringing about the necessary change.

After a trying period of eight months without a General Secretary, the arrival of Dr Jørgen Skov Sørensen virtually at the beginning of the pandemic meant that this work could be undertaken. It was carried out from three perspectives: appropriation of CEC by its members, visibility of the programmatic work and coherence within the organisational set-up.

This work, carried out over 18 months, resulted in the Call and Witness Strategy, which basically echoes the analyses and expectations expressed in the Uppsala Report. In fact, this strategy seeks to enhance, for the benefit of the churches and church organisations, the asset represented by the presence of CEC in Brussels and its capacity to bring the voice of the churches to the highest political level in Europe.

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Some questioned the legitimacy of this development before the General Assembly in Tallinn, but never criticised the proposed vision. Noting that the available resources from our largest Member Church would be cut back substantially in 2025 and again in 2030, the Governing Board was convinced by the necessity to take responsibility and to initiate this transformation.

In the final evaluation of its work, carried out in March 2023, the Governing Board measured with satisfaction the work accomplished and noted that the organisation of CEC had undergone a meaningful change and was now much better structured to face the challenges inherent to its mission.

This transformation was made possible thanks to the support of the Vice-Presidents, in particular Rt Rev. Dr Guli Francis-Dehqani, who was always available despite the heavy workload inherent to her role as bishop, thanks to the strong commitment of the General Secretary and the considerable involvement of the Governing Board.

As outgoing President of CEC, I would like to express my deepest gratitude to all of them for their work. My gratitude also goes to all CEC staff involved, concerned, and mobilised by this change.

The promise of the unachieved

I conclude this report by addressing a number of unfulfilled tasks, some of which will potentially shape the future of the Conference of European Churches.

In the framework of the collaboration with the Council of Bishops' Conferences of Europe (CCEE), a revision of Charta Oecumenica has been initiated, in particular to review the ecumenical commitments and to integrate the major societal and ecclesial challenges that have emerged since the signing of this document in 2001. The signing of the updated version is planned for 2026, inaugurating a reception process planned for 2027.

The same year, 2026, a fourth edition of a European Ecumenical Assembly is envisaged in a format still under discussion. The interest of holding this assembly in connection with a gathering of European churches, to demonstrate the societal commitment and contribution of the Christian presence in European societies to European institutions, is still a matter for discussion.

Finally, noting that the dialogue with the European institutions suffers from a regular renewal of actors and for some

participants from a lack of representativeness, I tried to promote the creation of a forum of religions in Europe. This forum could be composed of religious leaders who are representative of faith actors in Europe, to allow for regular consultation and ongoing involvement in European societal and political issues.

The future of dialogue with public institutions will be written in the framework of an interreligious dimension. It would be opportune for religious communities to invest in this dimension.

CEC is and remains a formidable tool for the churches in serving their voice to the European institutions. The process of restructuring and reorganisation has now been completed in broad terms. It remains to be perfected and to promote its appropriation by Member Churches constantly.

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Report from the General Secretary



CEC General Secretary
Dr Jørgen Skov Sørensen

What is carrying us through the grave crises of this generation? Prayer. Resilience. Movement. The constant re-creation of hope – a hope born out of the fellowship of churches connected by Christ and powered by our common, ecumenical movement.

One disturbing and overwhelming event set the agenda for citizens throughout Europe since the CEC Assembly in Novi Sad, Serbia, in 2018. As this report is created, the war in Ukraine rages on. Due to our shared past of the 20th century, war on European soil brings about connotations that transcend their actual time and place in history. It evokes long gone memories. And it challenges a strong European trust that our continent was finally heading into a post-war continent of lasting peace.

Literally since the day of the attack on Ukraine, 24 February 2022, CEC has brought into focus Ukrainian church leaders within and beyond our fellowship. We continue to collaborate with partners in taking a stand for peace and justice. Closely following developments in Ukraine and the neighbouring countries CEC highlights experiences of the churches, reflecting on responses to the war, mourning and praying for those lost, and, always, hoping for a just, peaceful future.

Through events, statements, and public messages, CEC has continued to communicate the support and solidarity of Member Churches, as well as to highlight religious voices in Ukraine. We have urged Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia to raise his voice clearly against Russian aggression in Ukraine and contribute towards efforts to end the war, realising peace. We will continue the push, the prayers, and the persistent hope for justice.

The outbreak of war in Ukraine has once again revealed to us how fragile peace is. For most of western and northern Europe, this sort of armed conflict had long been inconceivable until then, while other parts of the continent, which have experienced conflict in recent years – Armenia, the Balkans, Cyprus, and Northern Ireland – were reminded of their own fragility and unreconciled wounds.

Through CEC's Pathways to Peace Initiative, established in 2022, we intend to be a strong, focused voice promoting Ukrainian on-ground-knowledge related to the European institutions, channelling theologically reflected insights and concerns on lasting peace, justice and reconciliation to the people we have elected as our political leaders. Lasting peace, justice and reconciliation are long term goals, and we as churches stand ready to play our role in achieving them.

As churches and as people of faith, rooted both in local communities and in the rich history

of Christian belief, care and concern this is our way to take responsibility for our shared continent.

Under God's Blessing – Shaping the Future.

Looking back to find the way forward

Looking back at the past five years and even beyond, CEC is evaluating what was, while considering what is before us and what is there to come. We want to prepare the future of an agile and dynamic fellowship – programmatically, spiritually and financially.

We look back on the 2018 General Assembly in Novi Sad, Serbia, as an important ecumenical encounter of Christians from various traditions and experiences of church life. Since our last Assembly, church leaders, theologians, ecumenical experts, lay and ordained, men and women, young and old have been working together to show the world that European Christians belong together – by moving together.

We are all one in Christ.

This report witnesses to our movement together in hope and witness over the last five years, and I would like to take this opportunity to express my sincere gratitude to everyone that took responsibility and carried his or her part. “Just as a body, though one, has many parts, but all its many parts form one body, so it is with Christ. For we were all baptized by one Spirit so as to form one body...” (1 Corinthians. 12 – 13a).

Thus, we rejoice in our fellowship and give thanks for what we have received as God's rich blessings. However, over the past several years, our common Christian witness is occurring amid growing global turmoil. It is more important than ever that we move together to address the multitude of challenges that citizens in Europe face. CEC is committed to claim and safeguard space for faith as a legitimate element in a European political context, and to support churches finding their way as faith-based actors in our diverse and ever changing societies.

Together in Hope and Witness, the theme of the Novi Sad Assembly, stood out as a confirmation of what we share between us and do together. We find common ground and work together through advocacy and witnessing to churches' relevance in society. Our mission calls for a continued and specialised bridge building effort, both requiring and demonstrating our concerted commitment and determination as European churches.

Report from the General Secretary

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Moving on from the 2018 General Assembly, CEC's Governing Board outlined three key aims for the following years: promotion of peace, justice, and reconciliation in Europe; deepening of church communion and ecumenical fellowship; and making the voice of European churches heard throughout Europe and in the European institutions.

Concretely, in 2019 CEC celebrated its 60th anniversary as an instrument of peace and reconciliation. In commemoration of this anniversary year, CEC hosted a Peace Conference that explored the topic of peace from various perspectives. Speakers from different Christian confessions, as well as Jewish and Islamic traditions, reflected together in Paris. There, we identified legacies and challenges of the 1919 Paris Peace Conference, while searching for new and creative ways of peace-building.

As the months went by, and the noise of the world seemed to grow ever louder, CEC realised that the presence and voice of the churches became more necessary than ever for European institutions. Since the crucial decisions taken at the Assembly in Budapest in 2013, CEC has made great efforts in strengthening its work to develop Christian voices in European political institutions and beyond, while being grounded in firm theological reflection.

In 2021, CEC harvested the fruit of several years of organisational scrutiny and analysis, when amidst the challenges caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, the Governing Board developed and launched the Call and Witness Strategy plan. This was done as a bold move to sharpen CEC's profile as a theologically grounded fellowship of churches, while at the same time with the clear intention to focus the work areas of the fellowship to suit the financial mandate granted by member churches. Less work areas allows to gain more impact by better preparation, implementation and follow-up.

The result was an organisational and strategic plan comprising two main pillars, fleshing out in concrete terms what will shape the foundation of our fellowship in the years to come: Theology and Studies, and Dialogue and Advocacy. CEC by this move gives even more attention to assert faith as a legitimate element in European political decision-making, while both engaging expertise and skills held by partner organisations and supporting Member Churches in their navigation in increasingly secular societies.

Founded on this sharpened approach, paving the way for the focused Pathways to Peace Initiative and rooted in our legacy, CEC will continue to work for peace and reconciliation as new bridges of faith, hope and trust continue to be built among churches in Europe and between churches and European societies.

Under God's Blessing – Shaping the Future

From 15–20 June this year, CEC will hold its General Assembly in Tallinn, Estonia. Once again we will gather, confirming what we share, showing Europe that we care. Together we will explore what it means to be under God's blessing – and how that blessing enables us in mutual solidarity to shape the future of Europe through the fellowship we cherish as the Conference of European Churches. And not least how we shape the future of a Europe that is torn by a brutal war, a war raging even beyond the immediate battle fields.

The Church is a fellowship centred around Christ, because we recognise our need for God's grace, for God's love and for God's forgiveness. One of my favourite definitions of the Church reads that “The Church is a world-wide fellowship of mutual encouragement”. This definition was fundamental, when CEC organised a virtual European gathering in early 2022.

Our gathering was long planned for February 25 – 26. We know today this turned out to be a matter of hours after the Russian invasion of Ukraine. Still, CEC staff managed to rephrase our programme - literally overnight – into one that accommodated the fears, the uncertainty and the trauma that had gathered as black clouds over Europe at the time. We listened to Ukrainian voices. We analysed. We prayed together. We cried together. We activated our European fellowship of mutual encouragement.

If the Church should not gather in times of war when should it gather? The history of the Conference of European Churches, born in 1959 out of the midst of the Cold War, witness to this. Gather to focus on Christ. Gather to cry out our vulnerability together. Gather to be silent together. Pray together. Sing together. Gather to dare to hope together.

And this is what we will do in Tallinn, in June this year. We will convene with grateful hearts our Member Churches and partners for a significant moment of prayer, fellowship, and reflection for the life and witness of the churches in Europe – through our shared Conference of European Churches. May our Christian voice become ever stronger as, through the assembly, we come to better know one another, to better know ourselves and to better know Christ who lives and reigns in our midst.

Report from the General Secretary

Response to COVID-19



“As churches and Christians in Europe, we too are passing over from isolation, loss, and anxiety to healing, recovery, and a renewed life, where - ‘death has been swallowed up in victory’ (1 Corinthians 15:54).

Each one of us received the gift of that new life and the power to accept it and live by it. It is a gift, which radically alters our attitude towards the realities of this world, including illness and death.

By his own passing, Christ transformed death into a passage leading to the reign of God. Evil and physical death no longer have the final say in life. In Christ our lives are filled with a promise of real life, abounding in hope and everlasting joy.

May the hope of His Resurrection sustain us and keep us [safe] in the time of the COVID-19 pandemic.”

Christ is Risen!

—Excerpt from joint Easter message,
CEC and COMECE, 2021

Amidst the COVID-19 crisis, CEC constantly accompanied Member Churches, National Councils of Churches, and partners in prayer and solidarity.

CEC consistently recommended following instructions and information from the World Health Organization and local authorities, and referred people to sources of accurate information. To ensure the safety and health of its staff and community at large, CEC took strict measures, cancelling operations in its Brussels and Strasbourg offices, complying with instructions from local authorities, and working on its programmes online.

Many facets of CEC response to COVID-19

CEC offered a multi-faceted response to COVID-19, fulfilling the need for accurate information, spiritual accompaniment, and a sense of community during a time of profound loneliness and fear.

Some of those responses included:

Theological reflections. CEC offered meaningful explorations of partaking in the Lord's Supper amid the pandemic, how churches could express solidarity despite physical distancing.

Going virtual. CEC was able to still offer its Summer School on Human Rights, this time in a virtual setting, with the theme "Challenges for human rights in the times of COVID-19."

Video features. CEC produced videos on topics such as how we supported human rights during the pandemic. One such video featured impressions from participants of the 7th virtual Summer School on Human Rights.

Response to COVID-19

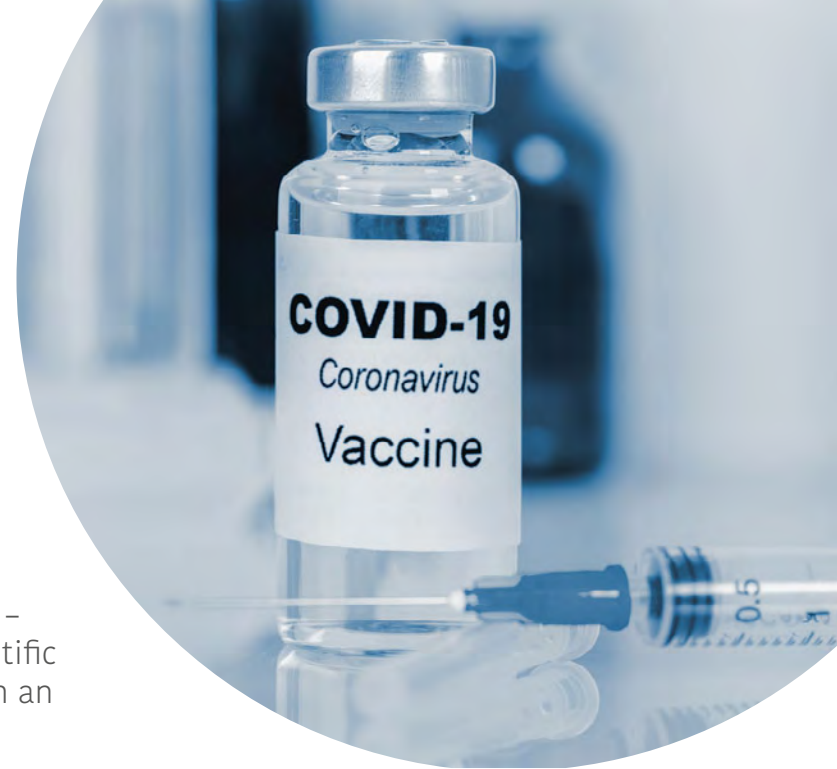


Response to COVID-19

Focus on young people. Given the profound mental health risks to young people during the pandemic, CEC fielded reflections and resources on how churches could support them.

Vaccination reflections. CEC offered Christian perspectives on vaccines, healing, and safety measures. A webinar, “Vaccination – Curse or Blessing?” explored the state of scientific knowledge regarding COVID-19 vaccination from an ethical Christian perspective.

Joint messages. From “Let us Remain United,” a call from CEC presidents and the Commission of the Bishops’ Conferences of the European Union, to “A Time for Pastoral, Prophetic and Practical Christianity: A Joint Statement from the World Council of Churches and the Regional Ecumenical Organizations,” CEC and its partners released messages of hope and accompaniment.



Dialogue with European Political Institutions

“As We Live Amid War ...

May the Gospel of peace bring comfort to wounded and grieving hearts, may it encourage those who are seized by mistrust and suspicion to meet one another, may it pacify our actions and our encounters, and may it strengthen our hope.”

A prayer on the occasion of the 3rd European Catholic Social Days, by CEC President Rev. Christian Krieger.



Calling for peace while meeting urgent needs

CEC Member Churches are united in their efforts to forge ahead with a humanitarian response in Ukraine while simultaneously calling for peace. CEC has amplified the voices of these churches before the European Parliament, sharing striking insights about challenges on the ground. We have listened firsthand to the traumatic stories of those fleeing, as well as fighting in the war in Ukraine. We see the ever-growing needs, and we extend our cries for peace.

CEC, delivering clear messages to the European Union and policy makers, continues to highlight Ukrainian church voices, emphasising the need to strengthen the engagement of local religious communities in realising peace in Ukraine.

A voice in European political decision-making

Over the past several years, CEC has strengthened its work to augment Christian voices in European political institutions while operating from a firm theological foundation. CEC consistently and thoughtfully asserts faith as an important element in European political decision-making.

CEC has cultivated deeper, broader dialogue with European institutions, including the European Union and the Council of Europe. Through open, regular, and transparent dialogue, CEC has monitored, advocated, and built partnerships to influence policies. Such dialogue is ensured through Article 17 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the EU (TFEU).

Highlights of hope

Europe Day. On 9 May 2019, CEC leadership addressed European leaders gathered at the EU Future of Europe Summit in Sibiu, Romania. Leaders used the opportunity to affirm common values shaping Europe's future and bringing together European nations for lasting peace.

Dialogue with European Political Institutions



Dialogue with European Political Institutions

Europe: It's our future. That was the vision behind CEC and the Churches' Commission for Migrants in Europe campaign that developed tools to encourage strong church engagement in the 2019 European Parliament elections. The tools addressed concerns about EU-shared values, the future of the EU, migration and refugees, climate change and sustainable development, a European social model and future of work, human rights, and creating a more equal and inclusive Europe.

The "Brexit debate". Throughout 2019 - CEC continued to accompany its Member Churches in the United Kingdom amid the "Brexit debate". In this context, in a special message, the CEC Presidency strongly "reaffirmed the bonds of ecclesial and ecumenical fellowship that unite churches across Europe."



Dialogue with European Political Institutions

Audience with Pope Francis. In 2019, in a private audience held at the Vatican with presidents of CEC and the Commission of the Bishops' Conferences of the European Union (COMECE). Pope Francis offered his blessing to both Christian organisations on their respective anniversaries, the 40th anniversary of COMECE and 60th anniversary of CEC.

Meetings with the Council of European Union Presidencies. In the past years, to strengthen Article 17 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the EU, which allows for an open, transparent, and regular dialogue between EU institutions and the churches, CEC and COMECE held a number of meetings with the Council of European Union Presidencies addressing issues of common concern.

Conference on the Future of Europe. Throughout 2020 and into 2021, a major landmark in the European context was the launch of the Conference on the Future of Europe (CoFoE), an initiative to involve European citizens – particularly young people – and civil society in a broad-based discussion about the future of Europe and the European Union. An interactive multilingual digital platform was created to enable citizens and organisations to share ideas and information about CoFoE-related events. As the CoFoE was officially set up via a joint declaration, CEC expressed appreciation of the move, anticipating a strong contribution from the European churches. CEC and COMECE reiterated these feelings of appreciation and joy with a joint statement representing millions of European citizens.

European Green Deal: Preserving our Common Home. CEC has contributed to several dialogues with the European institutions addressing concerns related to the European Green Deal. The European Green Deal as well as all other efforts to tackle climate change are supported by the churches. At the same time, CEC continues to underline that ecological and social concerns must not be separated. Consideration about radical transformation, which is at the core of the Green Deal, includes social, ethical and human aspects that need to get priority attention.

May we all continue to build new bridges of faith, hope, and trust between churches and European society. The theme of CEC Assembly in Estonia, “Under God’s blessing – shaping the future,” will help us envision how we will continue to contribute towards Europe’s future and, together, make the voice of Christian faith in European societies heard in addressing policymakers.



Ecclesiology and Mission

“Let us pray that the light of the star
in the East lead our steps to Christ. Let
Christ’s compassionate love lead us
to greater visible unity.”

An excerpt from CEC General Secretary
Dr Jørgen Skov Sørensen’s introductory
prayer for the Week of Prayer for
Christian Unity 2022.



Ecclesiology and Mission was one of the core areas of CEC's work and is the lifeblood of the fellowship. Over the past five years, CEC reflected an increased passion for working towards a stronger ecumenical fellowship and a shared sense of Christian unity.

Through celebrating milestones and bringing theological reflection to life in the practical realm of daily church life, CEC's commemorations and resources stretched from the regional to the grassroots. CEC, together with its partner The Churches Commission for Migrants in Europe (CCME), continued to focus on dialogue between churches with historical longevity, as well as "migrant" and "minority ethnic" churches, based on the biblical vision of the church as *koinonia*.

Ecclesiology and Mission



Ecclesiology and Mission

Highlights of Hope

The impact of Charta Oecumenica. The past several years witnessed the strengthening of relations between CEC and the Council of Bishops' Conferences of Europe (CCEE). In a consultation in Brussels in 2019, the CEC-CCEE Joint Committee reaffirmed their commitment to addressing Europe's challenges, inspired by the biblical premise of Isaiah 51:9, "Awake, awake, put on strength!"

Moving into 2020, CEC continued to evaluate the impact of the Charta Oecumenica, the joint CEC-CCEE document from 2001. It also facilitated theological and ecumenical dialogue on topics related to ecclesiology and mission, exploring Christian unity together with "migrant" and "minority ethnic" churches, and studying the mutual recognition of baptism in Europe. Also examining practices and theories of evangelisation in Europe, and reflecting on public theology in the region.

In 2021, to mark the 20th anniversary of the Charta Oecumenica, CEC and the CCEE issued the joint statement, "Charta Oecumenica – Guidelines for the Growing Cooperation among Churches in Europe." "Churches have strengthened their work towards a just and peaceful world, not least because of the increased movement of people from other continents, and have increased their efforts towards the care for creation. The message of the Charta Oecumenica has contributed and given new vigour to all of this growth and transformation," reads the statement.

An online Ecumenical Service, especially prepared for the occasion, was held under the theme "Rejoice in hope, be patient in suffering, persevere in prayer" (Romans 12:12), which also marked the special anniversary.

Praying for Christian Unity. Throughout the past five years, CEC has continued to participate strongly in the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity.

In 2019, a CEC-CCEE joint message on the occasion of the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity delved deeper into the theme "Justice, and only justice,



Ecclesiology and Mission

you shall pursue.” Affirming the year’s reflections from the churches in Indonesia, CEC-CCEE expressed solidarity with people in Indonesia and throughout the world in cultivating harmony, promoting justice, and protecting the weak.

In 2021, hosted by the European Parliament, CEC and COMECE held an online Ecumenical Prayer for Christian Unity and for the Future of Europe. The prayer, attended by nearly 200 people and viewed later by many more, was held under the theme “Abide in my love and you shall bear much fruit” (John 15).

During the virtual prayer, First Vice-President of the European Parliament Roberta Metsola, delivered a message that stressed the values of peace, stability and development – and how much she values the voices of churches. “Sometimes their views differ but many times we can see common threads joining us all together,” she said.

The service also featured a special message from His All Holiness Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew I, reflecting on the European values of peace and justice, and the role of the European churches, especially amid the trying pandemic. “For us, Europe is a great experiment of solidarity and peace, a product of freedom and justice,” he said.

Mutual recognition of baptism. CEC initiated a study process, as well as a series of webinars from 2020 to 2021, to explore the mutual recognition of baptism in Europe. The series identified agreements on baptism within CEC Member Churches, exploring official guidelines with regard to the reception of Christians moving from one church to another, Christian initiation, recognition of and pastoral care for inter-church families, as well as the religious education and pastoral care of children raised in inter-church families. The study took stock of experiences and practices from CEC Member Churches, bringing together diverse perspectives from Anglicans, Orthodox, and Protestant traditions, engaging in bilateral and multilateral dialogue.



Ecclesiology and Mission

Evangelisation: practice and theological reflection in contemporary European churches. From 2020–2021, CEC studied evangelisation as the verbal witness to the gospel with the intention of conversion or deepening of faith commitment in different ecclesial contexts in Europe.

Public Theology in contemporary Europe. From 2020–2021, CEC reflected on the public role of churches in Europe, examining the variety of definitions of public theology, in practical and applied theology, invoking critical reflection on the ethical and political implications of faith and witness.

European Regional Pre-Assembly. In 2022, CEC in cooperation with the Polish Ecumenical Council and the WCC organised an online Regional Pre-Assembly in preparation of the 11th Assembly of the WCC. Tragically overshadowed by the Russian invasion of Ukraine, the Pre-assembly offered space for distinguished speakers and 200 participants from across Europe to come together, listen to the responses of churches to the war in Ukraine, and reflect on questions of unity, interconnectedness, reconciliation, and solidarity. Secularity and increased plurality were discussed as the societal contexts in which churches in Europe fulfil their mission of reconciliation and unity.

The great interest of Member Churches resulted in the responses to the war in Ukraine, a compilation of reactions from churches, that was made available on CEC's website.

Ecumenical Officers' meetings

In 2019, CEC organised the first meeting of ecumenical officers and secretaries for theology in Finland. Twenty-five officers from CEC Member Churches shared priorities and key questions that were summarised in three main areas. One was the mission of the Church in a secular or post-Christian society, second was the way in which the identity of some churches is closely associated with nationality and ethnicity and how this affects ecumenical relationships, third, the need for ecumenical theological education and formation. The meeting explored questions of contextualisation and identity of migrant churches, and discussed Christian communities and migration as an ecclesiological opportunity.



Ecclesiology and Mission

In 2023 CEC hosted a meeting of ecumenical officers and representatives of CEC and the Communion of Protestant Churches in Europe (CPCE) in Brussels. Thirty-two officers explored public theology in Europe and how CEC's work can strengthen the role of churches in the political debate based on CEC's new programmatic directions. They reflected on the relationship between church and state and the churches' relation to EU Institutions. They also discussed the Pathways to Peace Initiative and concrete ways in which the fellowship could contribute to the project.

Meetings of the Heads of the European National Councils of Churches (ENCC). In 2021 CEC hosted two online meetings of the ENCC. The first focused on COVID-19 and its impact on churches. The second discussed feedback from the ENCC on the concept of the European Regional Pre-Assembly. A physical ENCC meeting was hosted in Brussels in 2023 in view of the 2023 CEC General Assembly to discuss key ecumenical questions that relate to the church and state relationship in European societies.

Seventeen heads of the European National Councils of Churches discussed dialogue between churches and EU Institutions, and CEC's new programmatic directions that aim to safeguard space for faith perspectives in the political debate. They reflected on the Pathways to Peace Initiative, exploring ways of cooperation with CEC, while addressing issues churches are facing in their national contexts.

European Academy of Religion Conference. In 2019, theologians explored migration and global citizenship through a CEC panel, discussing Christian identity and citizenship, the nature and consequences of the conversion of refugees, and gender and migration, sharing stories of people fleeing violence and persecution.


The Hope of Communion: From 1920 to 2020. This major online conference brought together over 150 theologians and church leaders from Europe and beyond. The conference focused on the significance and impact of two landmark ecumenical texts from 1920, namely "The Patriarchal Encyclical Letter to the Churches of Christ Everywhere" issued by the Ecumenical Patriarchate, and "The Appeal to all Christian People" issued by the Lambeth Conference of Anglican Bishops.

Person in a Post-Religious Society. CEC co-organised this international conference, with St. Andrew's Biblical Theological Institute, Vrije Universiteit (VU) University Amsterdam – Faculty of Religion and Theology, Beliefs and Practices, and Pokrovskie Vorota Cultural Center in Moscow, Russia.

Ecclesiology and Mission



Peacebuilding and Reconciliation

A lit candle is the central focus, positioned vertically in the middle of the frame. The flame is bright yellow and orange, with a small blue base. The candle is set against a dark blue background with soft, out-of-focus light spots (bokeh) in shades of blue and white. The overall mood is contemplative and hopeful.

“Let us pray
In our damaged histories
Lord, redeem us from our past
In our willing acts of conflict
Lord, lead us to seek peace
In our divisions and extremism
Lord, unite us with your love
In our confusion, indecision
Lord, steady us with your power
In our muddled intentions
Lord, enlighten us with your truth.”

Excerpt from the Global Peace
Prayer 2023

Highlights of Hope

Paris Peace Conference. After its creation in 1959, CEC brought together churches from across Eastern and Western Europe following World War II. Together they joined hands to become instruments of peace to overcome political division and fragmentation.

To mark this occasion, CEC held a Peace Conference in Paris on its 60th anniversary in 2019. The conference explored the legacies of the 1919 Paris Peace Conference, recollecting hard lessons learnt from the past, while seeking new and creative ways of peacebuilding in the 21st century.

Peacebuilding and Reconciliation



Peacebuilding and Reconciliation

Panels and seminars at the conference discussed peace from various perspectives. Speakers from diverse Christian confessions, as well as Jewish and Islamic traditions, reflected together on the theme, evaluating the impact of the Versailles peace treaties.

Deepening ecumenical commitment. The year 2020 witnessed the United Kingdom leaving the European Union. The CEC leadership stressed that such developments did not change the mutual ecumenical commitment of European churches. On the contrary, they called for intensifying the commitment of churches towards reconciliation, cooperation and solidarity in Europe to shape our common future.

Calling for peace in Nagorno-Karabakh. In 2020, affirming church voices from across Europe, CEC called for an immediate end to military actions in the Nagorno-Karabakh region. Engaging with the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) Minsk Group and the European External Action Service (EEAS), CEC urged both parties to increase their efforts to arrive at a sustainable peaceful solution. In 2021, CEC continued to amplify its call for lasting peace in Nagorno-Karabakh.

CEC fully endorsed a statement issued by the WCC expressing “deep concern about the violations of the humanitarian ceasefire agreed between Armenia and Azerbaijan.” It called on “all parties to the conflict to end all military actions immediately, to respect the ceasefire agreement reached in Moscow, and to engage in constructive dialogue aimed at protecting human lives and rights, preventing attacks on civilian infrastructure and places of worship, and achieving a sustainable peace.”

Hagia Sophia. With deep regret, CEC witnessed the conversion of Hagia Sophia, a world heritage site, from a museum into a mosque. CEC engaged with UNESCO and the European institutions on the issue, urging concrete actions from the Turkish government to prevent this change of status.

Pathways to Peace. CEC continues to work for peace and unity in Ukraine. Since November 2022 and in light of the ongoing war, CEC has focused its activities around the initiative Pathways to Peace, which together with a number of Member Churches and European ecumenical partners explores the need for theological reflection on war combined with advocacy and dialogue with the European Institutions.

As part of the Pathways to Peace initiative, a webinar on the role of faith-based actors in



political processes regarding Ukraine and Russia was held, developing the project further.

Global Peace Prayer. In 2022 during an online service, CEC, together with the Lutheran World Federation (LWF), the World Communion of Reformed Churches (WCRC), and the World Methodist Council (WMC) called for prayers for peace for the people of Ukraine and the region. The prayer brought together Christians from Ukraine and other parts of the world, seeking peace and an end to the ongoing conflict. In 2023, CEC, LWF, WCRC, WMC, the Baptist World Alliance, the Mennonite World Conference, and the WCC organised an online Global Prayer for Peace featuring Christian voices from Ukraine.

CEC-CCEE Joint Committee addressing Russian war against Ukraine. The annual joint Committee meetings of CEC and the Council of Bishops' Conferences of Europe (CCEE) in Bratislava in 2022, discussed the war in Ukraine and issued a joint declaration. The Committee also discussed the war in its meeting in November 2022, this time with a focus on questions of security and peace in Europe, and also the inter-Orthodox ecclesiological, ethical and other questions that the war brings.

CEC Governing Board advocating for peace in Ukraine. War in Ukraine and the call of churches for peace deeply concerned the CEC Governing Board. In their meeting they invited church leaders from Ukraine to share about the situation and explore solutions together. The CEC Governing Board continued to reaffirm its consistent stance on Ukraine, condemning Russian aggression, and calling for peace with justice. In this context, an online seminar was held specifically on the role of churches in conflict and peace with the participation of speakers from the two Orthodox churches in Ukraine.

Another seminar open to the public was held by CEC on the role of religion in the ongoing conflict. Speakers representing Ukrainian churches spoke about the global church response, religious diplomacy, and the responsibility of European churches in promoting ecumenical dialogue, while safeguarding justice and truth.

Solidarity visit to Poland. Culminating points of exchange

Peacebuilding and Reconciliation



Peacebuilding and Reconciliation

and solidarity with the churches and people of Ukraine were part of a joint visit of CEC and COMECE presidents. They visited the Polish border with Ukraine, where they addressed the migration crisis, meeting with the local church leaders.

Before the European Institutions. Cardinal Jean-Claude Hollerich SJ and Rev. Christian Krieger, presidents of COMECE and CEC, met with the President of the European Parliament Roberta Metsola in June 2022 to discuss the final CoFoE report, as well the ongoing war in Ukraine and the implementation of the Article 17 of Treaty on the Functioning of the EU.

In context of the follow up to the CoFoE, the representatives of European churches expressed their will to support concrete outcomes – as opposed to symbolic ones – and to stand ready to “further contribute to the works of the Conference, especially in the context of empowering the youth and reducing the distance between EU citizens and institutions.”

The meeting also addressed the ongoing Russian war on Ukraine, pointing out the role of the churches and religious communities in supporting the suffering local population, as well as refugees arriving in EU countries. In view of the renewed efforts to end the war, the ecumenical delegation stressed that “truth and justice are preconditions for lasting peace in Europe.”

The war and the mediating role of the churches in conflict has been brought to the attention of the French Presidency of the Council of the EU. CEC organised a hybrid meeting with the French Presidency of the Council of the EU, together with the participation of Ukrainian resource persons invited to discuss the engagement of local religious communities in realising peace in Ukraine. Several questions relating to the war were also picked up by the Slovakian and Swedish Presidencies that followed.

Humanitarian response from the European churches was highlighted by Bishop Peter Mihoč of the Evangelical Church of the Augsburg Confession in Slovakia at the Article 17 Dialogue Seminar held in July 2022 at the European Parliament in Brussels. He shared striking insights about challenges faced by local churches in providing support to those fleeing the war in Ukraine, as well as strengthening efforts aimed at realising peace in the region.

At a high-level meeting of religious leaders at the European Commission, CEC President, Rev. Krieger, and Bishop Åsa Nyström of the Church of Sweden discussed the impact of the war on national contexts, sharing concrete experiences with the reception of Ukrainian refugees, the energy crisis, and the impact on the most vulnerable segments of society.

At high-level interreligious meetings. Katerina Pekridou, CEC Executive Secretary for theological dialogue, participated in a meeting of a high-level delegation of religious leaders from Ukraine, who visited the COMECE secretariat in June 2022 in Brussels and

exchanged with representatives of EU churches and religious communities on perspectives for peace in their war-torn country and ways to support the Ukrainian population.

COMECE organised the meeting in collaboration with the EU office of the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung.

Before the French EU Presidency. In a hybrid meeting in June 2022 in Brussels with the French Presidency of the Council of the EU, CEC highlighted Ukrainian church voices, emphasising the need to strengthen the involvement of local religious communities in realising peace in Ukraine.

“The churches in Ukraine are widely respected and trusted, usually more than governmental institutions. This gives them a unique moral authority to promote peace,” said Dr Pavlo Smytsnyuk, director of the Institute of Ecumenical Studies at the Ukrainian Catholic University.

“To actively promote peace, it is pertinent to engage Ukrainian religious communities, as well as their educational institutions and charities. They are able to spread the message of peace in places inaccessible to political actors,” added Smytsnyuk, who joined the meeting online.

Through prayer. The presidents of CEC and COMECE issued a special Easter message from the Polish-Ukrainian border in April 2022, invoking prayer and action for peace in Ukraine and beyond. “Let us continue to pray and work for justice, reconciliation and peace between people, cultures and nations.”

On Ash Wednesday in 2022, Christians from around the globe joined in a powerful prayer service of lament and solidarity with all those suffering from the effects of Russia’s invasion of Ukraine. The online ecumenical service included participation by Ukrainian pastors and parishioners living in towns and cities that have been under attack since Russian warplanes, tanks, and troops attacked Ukraine’s eastern border.

The service of prayer and chant, Lenten reflections, and personal testimonies was jointly organised by various Christian world communions, including the Lutheran World Federation, CEC, the World Communion of Reformed Churches, the World Methodist Council, the Mennonite World Conference, and the Anglican Communion.

Peacebuilding and Reconciliation



Human Rights

“We remember, O Lord,
those who suffer from any kind of
discrimination,
your children, and our brothers and sisters,
who are humiliated and oppressed.
We pray for those who are denied fundamental
human rights,
for those who are imprisoned,
and especially those who are tortured.
Our thoughts rest a few moments with them ...
And we pray that your love and compassion may
sustain them always.”

Excerpt from the Week of Prayer for World Peace



Human Rights

CEC continued its concern for on human rights, freedom of religion or belief, protection of places of worship, as well as strengthening the safety and security of religious communities in Europe. Together with our Member Churches, we engaged with the European Union, the Council of Europe, and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe and United Nations.

CEC advocated for the promotion and protection of human rights at the highest standards inside Europe and beyond its borders.

Highlights of Hope

CEC Summer School on Human Rights. Since 2013, the CEC Summer School on Human Rights has offered churches and church-related organisations the opportunity to train members on human rights issues. The school focuses on the legal, societal, political, and institutional dimensions of a different theme each year. Participants benefit from meeting and dialoguing with a network of CEC Member Churches and learn from interaction with prominent human rights experts from various international organisations.

CEC Summer School on Human Rights dealt with the issue of rising populism, the pandemic's impact on human rights, the protection of worship places and religious communities, and the intersection of security and artificial intelligence.

Safer and Stronger Communities in Europe. Together with the European Jewish Congress' Security and Crisis Centre (SACC), Faith Matters, and the European Buddhist Union, CEC worked for the protection of places of worship in Europe. The outcome of this interfaith partnership, which represents Christian, Muslim, and Jewish communities across Europe, is the project Safer and Stronger Communities in Europe

The logo for SASCE is centered on the page. It features the letters 'SASCE' in a bold, yellow, sans-serif font. A small yellow copyright symbol (©) is positioned to the right of the 'E'. The text is set against a white circular background that is framed by a thick, blue, hand-painted style border. The entire graphic is set against a background of overlapping green and grey shapes.

SASCE ©

Human Rights

(SASCE) funded by the Internal Police Fund of the European Commission.

With the rise of extremism and hate crime across Europe, SASCE is the only project to cut across various faith communities, providing usable, relevant, and practical ways for Christian, Muslim, Buddhist, and Jewish communities to ensure the safety and security of their faith institutions in the public spaces.

The SASCE project has worked across 15 European countries since April 2021 and has advised numerous churches, mosques, Buddhist temples, and synagogues, given the risks to them resulting from geo-political events, from how people are radicalised by these events, as well as from theft risks to them due to the sharply deteriorating economic situation in Europe in 2022.

Universal Declaration of Human Rights 70th anniversary. In 2018, human rights work culminated in the celebration of the 70th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), with a strong statement from the CEC Governing Board affirming the equality and dignity of all people. An ecumenical event at the Chapel for Europe also honoured the UDHR with an evening debate on human rights and religious freedom in the European Union, addressing the situation in countries like Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, and Spain. The event provided an opportunity for CEC Member Churches to share their struggles relating to freedom of religion or belief and how this is a hindrance to the mission of the churches.

Mounting concern for the vulnerable. Into 2021, CEC expressed mounting concern for the vulnerable. In a joint statement with COMECE, CEC conveyed solidarity for people in Afghanistan, urging European decision-makers to show humanity and act with determination in addressing the human tragedy currently unfolding there.

Addressing the Danish political leadership, CEC conveyed deep concern regarding a proposed initiative on the compulsory translation of sermons from other languages into Danish. Politically, CEC perceived such legislation as an unreasonably negative signal in relation to religion and the role of religious communities in society.



In a letter to the French government, CEC expressed deep concern over the draft law introduced to fight Islamic radicalism. CEC, together with its Member Churches in France, while recognising the need to counter extremism, pointed out the damaging effect the law can inflict on law-abiding religious communities. CEC stressed the need for the government to engage further with religious leaders.

Human Rights





Economic and ecological justice for a sustainable future

“Loving Creator,
you care for the land by sending rain;
you make it fertile and fruitful.
What a rich harvest you provide!
All your creation sings for joy.
When we take care of the land,
sowing the seed and reaping the harvest,
All your creation sings for joy.
When we keep streams and rivers clean,
when we respect the purity of lakes and seas,
All your creation sings for joy.
When we recognise that we are one family,
brothers and sisters together,
with responsibility for the land and the waters,
All your creation sings for joy
for you bless us abundantly all our days.”

— Excerpt from the opening prayer of the European
Christian Environmental Network 2021

As CEC address the climate emergency and ecological injustice, the work is divided into three areas:

Advocacy and dialogue with the political institutions. CEC provides a strong voice from churches in dialogue with relevant political institutions, especially the EU and the UN.

Public theology, eco-theology and liturgy. CEC highlights the churches' particular role in addressing care for creation, sustainable development, and economic and ecological justice in word and prayers.

Networking and churches' engagement. CEC has been increasing church engagement in areas related to care for creation, ecological justice, and a sustainable future.

European Green Deal. An important step in addressing ecological concerns in Europe was the launch of the new EU initiative, the European Green Deal. The initiative aims to achieve substantial steps towards a sustainable future, reducing the risk of the future impact of climate change and to reach climate neutrality in the EU by 2050. The European Green Deal offers a space for a dialogue, addressing environmental concerns and new economic models that cover a broad agenda beyond merely reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

Economic
and ecological
justice for
a sustainable
future



Economic and ecological justice for a sustainable future

A number of churches welcomed the initiative, carefully monitoring developments and setting up constructive dialogue on the topic. CEC contributed to several events in the frame of a dialogue on the Green Deal organised by the European institutions.

Every Part of Creation Matters. CEC delved into creation theology and critically analysed the European sustainability policies. The outcome of their efforts was the discussion paper *Every Part of Creation Matters*, published by CEC in partnership with Globethics.net.

The paper integrates the elaboration of some critical concerns for eco-theology related to advocacy, notably to the European Green Deal. The European Green Deal is of immense importance, not only to CEC Member Churches, but to Europe and beyond, effecting communities globally around the world.

The discussion paper serves as a reminder of key concerns in contemporary eco-theology, inviting discussion among CEC Member Churches, and identifying questions for further dialogue with European institutions. The paper highlights issues related to just transition to circular economy, lifestyle, consumerism and sufficiency, inviting everyone to reflect and act to preserve the environment.

Climate change as a global concern. The UN Framework Convention on Climate Change and its annual Conference of Parties of the Convention (COP) offer a world stage for raising concerns related to climate change. Churches and faith-based communities have become, over the years, visible actors on the scene. CEC contributes to raising the churches' voice in COPs in particular through participation in the ecumenical delegation under the leadership of WCC.

Over the years, CEC has been particularly highlighted in COPs that took place in Europe, through engaging local churches and coordinating a visible presence of churches during the event.

In the period since 2018, four out of five COPs took place in Europe. Along with contribution to COP these were welcomed opportunities for local churches for organising ecumenical activities and highlighting the churches' role in efforts for climate justice.



Science, New Technologies, and Christian Ethics

“As we distance physically from each other, let us remember to be close spiritually. Together we pray for the vulnerable and elderly. We pray for those who are frightened or depressed because of isolation and exclusion. We also pray for the medical staff and nursing professionals at the front lines, in hospitals and care homes.

We pray too for researchers and scientists searching for proper medication and a vaccination to deliver us from this virus, and for the health authorities, who have the primary responsibility for planning, confronting and overcoming this crisis. We keep in mind all those who continue to work for our basic needs and we live with the hope that science will indeed prevail!”

—Excerpt from a message from CEC presidency,
March 2020

Highlights of hope

Ethics in education. Throughout the last several years, CEC has been active in a number of online events, closely monitoring developments concerning ethics in education, the consequences of the COVID-19 crisis for education worldwide, the accessibility of digital learning and opportunities for the socially disadvantaged.

Engagement with the Council of Europe. Among other areas, CEC continued to engage with the Steering Committee on Bioethics at the Council of Europe, where it holds participatory status. CEC participates regularly in the meetings of the Steering Committee on Bioethics where the focus is on the legal framework provided by the European Bioethics Convention of Human Rights and Biomedicine, and on new developments in science and its ethical challenges.

The context of COVID-19. In 2020, CEC contributed reflections on “Christian Communion in a Time of Physical Distancing and COVID-19,” in particular in view of Easter church celebrations during the pandemic. “Exceptional situations demand exceptional faith in the power and presence of the living God. Physical distance does not mean social distance. In a mysterious manner, we are all connected through the spirit of God,” read the reflections.

Artificial intelligence. CEC formulated a response to the European Commission’s “White paper on Artificial Intelligence (AI) – A European approach to excellence and trust.” The response focused on anthropological issues and human dignity, religious discrimination, freedom of religion and belief, and concerns about social and ecological issues related to AI, as well as sharing European church perspectives on ethics and inherent human dignity.

“Human dignity is only achieved where mutual solidarity is extended. Thus, in our view, the White Paper rightly points out the need to consider the impact of AI, not only from an individual perspective, but also from the perspective of the society as a whole,” reads the CEC response.

COVID-19 vaccinations. A discussion paper entitled “COVID-19 Vaccination – Christian Perspectives” was published by CEC. “Critically examining the evidence is an essential part of scientific work,” the paper noted. “From a Christian perspective, this also includes critical questioning in ethical terms.” CEC continued to pay close attention to the legal and intergovernmental discussions related to anthropology, law, and Christian ethics.

Science, New Technologies, and Christian Ethics





Education for Democracy and Diversity

“Let us put forward an important element to counter populism – that of building relationships. Let us encourage a ‘salty connectivity, a place of connection, which offers a sense of belonging, and where all individuals are empowered as equals.’ ”

—Excerpt from a presentation by Alex Wimberly, leader of the Corrymeela Peace and Reconciliation Centre in Northern Ireland, at the Online Academy on Populism, Diversity and Democracy organised by CEC from 21 to 22 June 2021.

Highlights of hope

Engagement with the Council of Europe. Over the past several years, CEC has continued to foster relationships and cooperation with the Council of Europe's Steering Committee for Educational Policy and Practice. During 2020, CEC presented its thoughts on the pandemic at a video conference organised by the Steering Committee for Educational Policy and Practice. Published by the Council of Europe, the reflections sought initial inspiration from the Bible and the Charta Oecumenica: "As churches we should actively contribute to shaping the future of Europe. This includes a sincere and open discussion in our churches, in a fraternal spirit, which takes on board the great challenges regarding the making of a socially just and unified Europe." CEC played a leading role in the establishment of an Interreligious and Interconvictional Dialogue Committee with the Council of Europe.

CEC Online Academy on Populism, Diversity and Democracy. How can European churches deal with populism by being the "salt of the earth"? The question guided a lively exchange at the CEC Online Academy on Populism, Diversity and Democracy. Participants discussed how public discourse has been, at times, reduced to a trade in competing slogans and devoid of any underlying vision or content. They explored the importance of an international ecumenical organisation like CEC to work out what lies behind the issues and questions faced by our societies today, particularly populism. They tried to answer a key question: How can education prepare both young and old to be alert to "fake news" and overly simplistic answers and aware of the pitfalls of misinformation?

Other online meetings and events. CEC organised various online meetings addressing a variety of issues, including populism and cooperating with CEC human rights programme.

CEC was also active in a number of online events, closely monitoring developments concerning intercultural learning, ethics in education, the consequences of the COVID-19 crisis for education worldwide, accessibility of digital learning and opportunities for the socially disadvantaged.

Education for Democracy and Diversity

Cooperation with European ecumenical networks

“Unite us with one another
as we come from the North
and from the South,
from the East and from the West,
old and young,
men and women
to bow down
before you and offer you homage,
our heavenly king.
Amen.”

— Excerpt from Week of Prayer for
Christian Unity 2022



CEC cooperated with the European ecumenical networks to highlight various issues. CEC provided financial support to the networks in order to address topics such as climate emergency, employment and social issues, and migration and asylum.

European Christian Environmental Network

Financially supporting the European Christian Environmental Network (ECEN), CEC continued to address the climate emergency, care for creation, and sustainable development. Over the past several years, the work has flourished in many creative ways:

ECEN Assemblies. These offered an opportunity for church delegates engaged in care for creation, as well as for experts and interested individuals to meet and share experience in church activities on care for creation.

Season of Creation. Promotion and contribution to the ecumenical celebration of Season of Creation, 1 September – 4 October, belong to key activities in ECEN. Together with other ecumenical partners, ECEN has been regularly contributing to the Season of Celebration Guide, a resource inviting the Christian family to unite in a worldwide celebration of prayer and action to protect our common home, and to the organisation of the opening worship service on 1 September. An increasing number of churches in Europe and beyond participate in activities of the Season of Creation.

“Churches Contribution to a Sustainable Society.” This conference, organised by ECEN and the Church of Norway in Oslo, explored how churches can be agents of change for a more sustainable society, responding to the Paris climate agreement and the UN sustainable development goals.

Visit to Belarus. An ECEN team aimed to strengthen networking and share information on actions of local churches on care for creation in the eastern part of the continent. The visit reinforced ECEN communication with Belarussian churches, by which they learnt about the richness of church activities in caring for creation, sharing expressions of solidarity, and discussing possibilities for future cooperation.

Ecological Theology and Environmental Ethics (ECOTHEE). ECEN supported conferences at the Orthodox Academy of Crete, under the auspices of His All Holiness Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew.

Cooperation with European ecumenical networks



A project on “Twinning.” This partnership linked grassroots initiatives on the protection of creation between churches from different parts of the continent.

Employment and social issues

Life in Europe continues to be formed by financial, economic, social, and employment crises. These realities affect many people and households in Europe, including the people who make up CEC Member Churches.

CEC reflects on how our experience and theological traditions can contribute to a socially inclusive and sustainable European policy. CEC has addressed employment and related economic and social issues from the perspective of Christian theology by supporting financially the work of the Church Action on Labour and Life (CALL) Network.

Since 2017 CALL continues to reflect on the effects of digitalization on society and workplaces. This issue is very dynamic on the technological level but also as a challenge for society.

A series of CALL webinars addressed the wellbeing of digitalized societies and the workplace from 2020 to 2021 as in-person meetings were not possible. Named “CALL Talks,” the webinars covered technical and theo-ethical aspects, the digital shift of work and life, remote-working, and sustainability in IT.

CALL also made a statement in 2020 about the uncertainty and the exacerbation of inequalities during the COVID-19 pandemic. “One effect of this period is on one hand, the acceleration of the digital abilities of an increasing number of people, and on the other hand, the exclusion of other people as the social digital gap is widening if one has no sufficient access to technical facilities,” reads the statement.

From 2022 to 2023 and in cooperation with European institutions and CEC Member Churches, CALL Network worked on topics related to adult education on ethics of sustainable digitalization, considering social, ecological, and economic aspects. CALL events were held in Strasbourg, Helsinki and Mannheim.

CALL Network strengthened efforts to create an ethical compass for sustainable digitalization related to ecology, economy, and social relations. The dialogue addressed politicians, authorities, companies, trade unions and decision makers on different levels, as well as church organisations.

Cooperation with European ecumenical networks



Cooperation with European ecumenical networks

Migration and asylum

CEC supports financially and works closely with the Churches' Commission for Migrants in Europe (CCME) to realise hope and show Christian witness in addressing migration and asylum issues.

Over the past several years, CCME has continued to strongly advocate for refugee protection. Representing diverse Christian and ecumenical organisations across Europe, CCME contributed with recommendations to the European Commission's Return Directive.

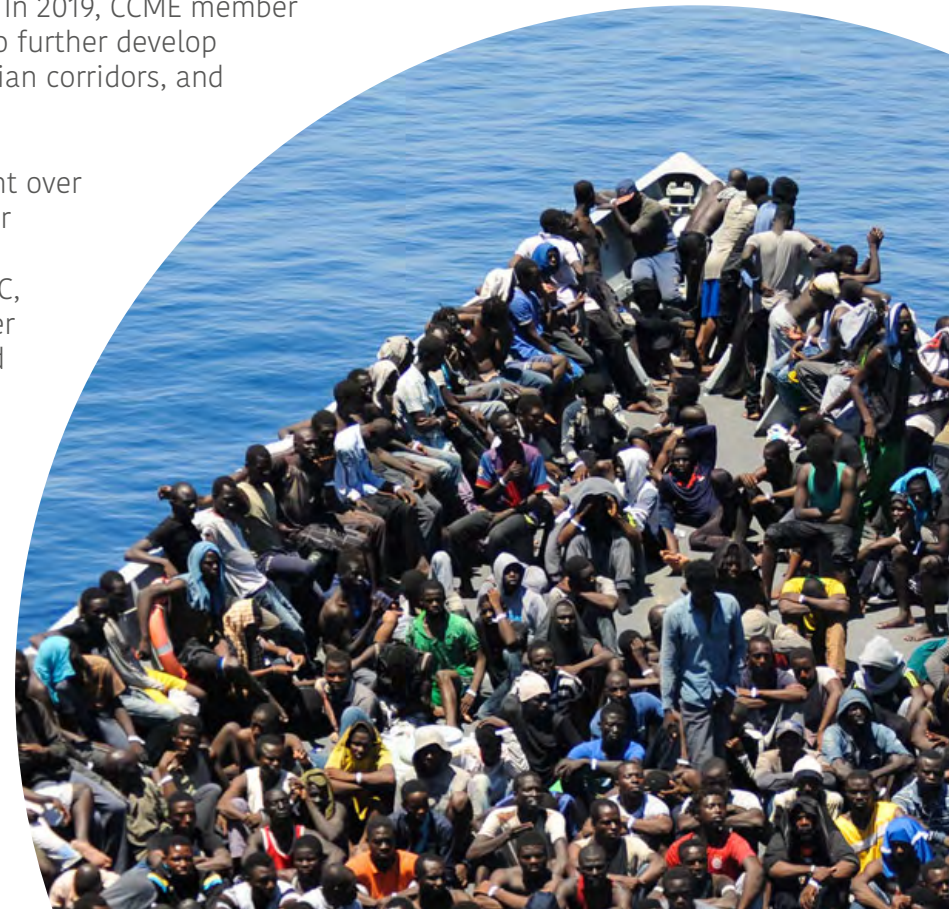
Each year on World Refugee Day, CEC and CCME continued to issue a joint call for justice. European churches held services commemorating refugees and migrants who lost their lives on their way to safety in Europe.

For many years, CCME has consistently advocated for safe and legal passage for persons seeking international protection at European borders and realistic, human labour migration policies. In 2019, CCME member organisations and churches met in Berlin to further develop strategies on search and rescue, humanitarian corridors, and relocation.

The year 2019 also witnessed disappointment over the failure of EU Ministers of Interior in their Helsinki meeting to find an agreement on search and rescue in the Mediterranean. CEC, CCME, and ACT Alliance EU produced a letter calling for the ministers to create safe and regular pathways, search and rescue and fair sharing of responsibility.

In 2020, CCME continued to advocate for access to asylum, as well as decent, dignified, and hygienic reception amid the COVID-19 pandemic.

Tensions at the EU-Turkey border remained of grave



concern to CEC and CCME, while they urged the EU and its Member States to extend solidarity to countries and people at the EU external border. The organisations advocated for safe access to protection, respectful reception, and relocation.

CCME and CEC, with several other global and regional religious organisations, released an advocacy statement on the situation of migrants and refugees in Europe. Together they urged for an end to the “broken state of European migration.” The statement emphasised that solidarity should be the guiding principle governing migration and particularly refugee reception: “We expect the EU to reject the discourse and politics of fear and deterrence, and to adopt a principled stance and compassionate practice based on the fundamental values on which the EU is founded.”

In 2021, CEC also supported a coalition of nine Christian organisations from across Europe, including CCME, by publishing a series of position papers reflecting on the proposals put forward by the European Commission regarding a European “pact” on asylum and migration. The five papers issued by the Christian organisations reflected on the pact in general, proposals on pre-entry screening and border procedures, return and readmission, search and rescue, and criminalisation of solidarity with migrants, as well as solidarity on asylum and migration.

CCME published Mapping Migration, Mapping Churches’ Responses in Europe: Being Church Together. In commenting on the third edition, CCME General Secretary Dr Torsten Moritz wrote in the foreword: “In addition to presenting more recent statistical data, this third edition of the study particularly looks at how migration is changing the reality of churches in Europe – with new patterns of Christian churches springing up and changing the reality of existing churches.”



Cooperation with European ecumenical networks

Communication, raising Christian voice in Europe

“Communication and digital media have been changing rapidly. The requirement for churches and ecumenical organisations to move with the trends became ever stronger. The COVID-19 pandemic brought this reality even closer to home. CEC recognised the challenge and responded.”



The CEC Communication Strategy

Following the 2018 Novi Sad General Assembly, engaging the CEC Communication Task Force, CEC developed a communication strategy rooted in CEC's theological mission, focusing on raising the churches' voice in Europe and European institutions, strengthening church fellowship and adding visibility to the impact of CEC's work. The strategy managed to create content that enhanced witnessing together, encouraging spirituality, allowing space for candid reflection and formation, and showcasing efficiently the diversity of CEC Member Churches.

The pandemic

CEC communication rose to the challenges posed by COVID-19 pandemic. With increased online events, a specific communication plan and guidelines were developed to promote CEC programme activities via webinars. A special landing page on the CEC website featured various pandemic-related materials produced by CEC, including prayers, news items, feature articles, discussion papers, etc. A major element was videos from CEC online events. The videos published to all CEC media channels increased audiences, and matched the trend despite CEC communication's limited capacity. In the challenging times of human disconnect, CEC communications facilitated connectivity.

Raising a European church voice

Cooperation remains an integral part of communication. CEC strengthened relations with its Member Churches and partner organisations. Communication highlighted voices from Member Churches raising awareness about themes that shape Europe's future. Whether it was the Armenia conflict, Brexit, freedom of religion, or climate change, to name a few, CEC news buzzed with strong stances from its leadership together with representatives of CEC Member Churches, invoking attention. Joint communication materials were produced together with the Bishops' Conferences of the European Union, the World Council of Churches, the Lutheran World Federation, the Churches' Commission for Migrants in Europe, the European Christian Environmental Network, and the World Association for Christian Communication – Europe region among others.

Communication,
raising Christian
voice in Europe



Communication, raising Christian voice in Europe

Call and Witness

The new programmatic and structural directions taken by CEC Governing Board in 2021 brought the focus on public theology, advocacy, in very concrete ways expressed in the peacebuilding efforts of Pathways to Peace. CEC affirmed and owned its role as a unique Christian voice in dialogue with the European institutions. Communications reflected this change through diverse content. Voices from CEC leadership and Member Churches were highlighted, speaking about the significance of the Call and Witness process and the role of CEC. All news shared with the constituency emphasised the potential of CEC aiming to influence policy makers, contributing in shaping the future of Europe. CEC audience was informed, taken into trust and confidence through the constant sharing of updates relevant to CEC Member Churches.

Ukraine war

The Russian invasion of Ukraine in 2022 demanded a rapid response from CEC communications. Within days and hours, CEC and its Member Churches issued statements and letters, engaging with European institutions, praying and urging concrete action for peace. CEC communications published prayers, press releases, statements, and letters written to the world leaders, as well as to Patriarch Kirill to raise his voice against the war. The CEC website featured a special landing page on its homepage offering CEC resources related to Ukraine in one place. A special page compiled responses from European churches. The updated information kept CEC audience informed and aware about the important role played by CEC and its Member Churches, theologically, spiritually, politically, as well as in meeting the humanitarian needs.



Communication, raising Christian voice in Europe

Tallinn Assembly

Assemblies remain a significant moment in the life of CEC. The inspiring theme “Under God’s blessing – shaping the future” permeated all CEC communication content. An assembly website, digital materials together with strong media relations remained at the heart of the assembly communication strategy developed with the Assembly Planning Committee. CEC continues to engage its Member Churches, partner organisations, and the press for the 2023 Assembly. Diverse reflections on the theme are featured on CEC channels, aiming towards an extensive and quality coverage of the assembly in 2023 in deep cooperation with the Estonian churches.

New CEC logo

CEC’s visual identity was revamped through a new CEC logo, which embraces traditional Christian symbolism—with a modern flair. The logo officially launched at the 2023 CEC General Assembly in Tallinn in June was commissioned by the CEC Assembly Planning Committee and designed by Nikos Kosmidis. The CEC Governing Board approved the logo in its meeting in November 2022. The new logo is created in accordance with the intentions of CEC’s Call and Witness strategy, reaching back into the ecumenical legacy, while looking into a future with CEC playing a crucial role as a fellowship of churches in the heart of European decision making.



CEC new website

CEC website remains the main hub of all public information, updated with current news, videos, publications, and documents. The new website launched in 2023 created an updated outlook for CEC programmatic activities, offering an aesthetically pleasing design structure, user friendly access to the resources, adding a special section for archives preserving past projects. The new website also meets the requirement of a system preventing security threats.

In the last five years, the CEC website received over 133K users, over 80K page views from Europe and beyond. The most visited pages were related to news, the COVID-19 pandemic, and Ukraine.

CEC social media, including Twitter and Facebook, gained over 3K followers, and YouTube over 3K views.

CEC was mentioned online over 3.4k times, with 6.9m impressions. Christian press and communicators covered CEC news in English, French, German, Italian, Spanish, Castilian, Portuguese, Polish, Greek, Slovene and Croatian. Top locations were United States, France, Belgium, Switzerland, Germany, Italy, United Kingdom, Vatican City, Austria and Spain.

Source: Media Toolkit Analytics 2022

Communication, raising Christian voice in Europe



Reflections on
2023 CEC General
Assembly theme:
“Under God’s blessing –
shaping the future”

By Rev. Anders Gadegaard,
Chair of CEC Assembly
Planning Committee, from the
Evangelical Lutheran Church
in Denmark



The Christian faith expresses itself in a double movement. It sets people free and, in so doing, it places a responsibility upon us. As Christians we are free because we exist under the blessing of God. We do not have to fear whether we will achieve everything we want because, with God, we have already achieved everything: His love and forgiveness. Precisely for this reason, demands can also be made on us as Christians. As free and forgiving, we are expected to do our utmost to contribute to the common good. To make human communities flourish by ensuring that everyone – or as many as possible – can unfold their own humanity. It requires security and a fair framework for the distribution of goods.

This duality of freedom and obligation must be preached by churches everywhere and actively practiced. We must proclaim our freedom under the blessing of God and our commitment to shaping the future together for mutual benefit and joy. Indeed, the role of CEC in the world is to serve in a European context by influencing its surrounding society politically, ethically, and culturally.

If the churches stand together in Europe, we will be better able to spread and sustain this view of freedom and responsibility. At a time when over-consumption of resources is threatening the existence of the planet, when the gap between rich and poor is increasing, and excessive national feeling is weakening the attention to those who need help in other parts of the world, this is what Europe needs. This is why European churches call for action and courage at this time: Under God's blessing – shaping the future.



Reflections on
2023 CEC General
Assembly theme:
“Under God’s
blessing –
shaping
the future”

Finance Report: From Novi Sad to Tallinn

The constitution of CEC states in Article 14 that the Conference shall be financed by contributions from the Member Churches and donations from third parties. In practice, this means our fellowship is by and large financially sustained by membership fees submitted from among our 113 member churches.

The Governing Board is grateful for the commitment shown by European Member Churches of CEC in this very concrete way. CEC is a fellowship of churches, larger and not so large, all wishing to be part of a wider European ecumenical fellowship, prioritising and allocating resources to this fellowship as an act of solidarity and mutual encouragement.



Finance Report: From Novi Sad to Tallinn

Add to this the fact that the COVID-19 pandemic, which basically hindered physical church life for a considerable period of time and set back churches on collections, did not in a defining way jeopardise the continued financial support to our fellowship. The Governing Board sees this as a demonstration of commitment and is thankful that it proved possible to maintain the support.

CEC as an organisation and fellowship relies on the accrued membership fees. Not all Member Churches pay the same amount. Our calculation formula, which determines the amount due for each individual Member Church, takes into consideration among other factors the relative size of the church in question as well as the relative wealth of the country in which the church is registered.

This way of calculating membership fees is a manifestation of solidarity between the churches of the fellowship. The financially most resourceful churches carry the major financial burden. A principle known throughout church history and reflected in the ecumenical movement. A principle we can be proud of. It comes, however, with a drawback, an imbalance, that needs our attention.

Looking at CEC's membership revenue between 2019 and 2022, 90% was generated by 14 out of 114 Member Churches. Again, this cannot and certainly should not be underestimated as a strong sign of unity. Larger, more resourceful churches support our fellowship to a degree that it is secured as a robust network throughout Europe.

Looking into the details, however, an imbalance among contributors presents some difficulties that need to be addressed. We are challenged to ask some testing questions concerning the future financial – and hence programmatic – sustainability of the Conference of European Churches. This challenge of imbalance has been made particularly clear to the Governing Board since the last assembly.

CEC's largest Member Church, The Protestant Church in Germany (EKD), as an act of due diligence announced in the November 2019 Governing Board meeting that due to internal cutbacks its membership fee would be kept at the 2019 level until 2024, reduced by 10% (35,000 euros) as from 2025, and with an additional 30% (90,000 euros) to be removed in 2030.

The current level of actually paid membership fee from EKD makes up 38% of CEC's

Finance Report: From Novi Sad to Tallinn

total annual membership fee revenue. With this in mind it takes little calculation effort to realise that the EKD announcement is a serious development for CEC. The Governing Board in 2019 fully acknowledged the decision by the Member Church, but also realised the need to immediately take responsibility.

An exercise of accountability and stewardship led to immediate decisions regarding the size of the secretariat. The Governing Board turned to redundancies and decided not to replace outgoing staff.

Permanent CEC staff in the secretariat compared to 11.75 FTE in early 2019 is today 8 FTE (comprising a general secretary, three programme staff, and basic support functions). This is considered the absolute minimum for an organisation of CEC's current scope and nature.

As a long-term response and a bold attempt to reconfigure CEC to a new context, the Governing Board launched the Call and Witness Strategy in November 2021. This was a move designed to increase the agility of the organisation, to focus the working portfolio to fit within the future financial framework and to sharpen the organisational profile of the fellowship to potentially attract additional funds.

Implementation of the Call and Witness Strategy is well underway. The Pathways to Peace initiative is an example of how increased organisational agility, even with a low number of programme staff, enables our fellowship to respond to a new context – war on European soil. Unfortunately, the current soaring inflation adds an unpredicted element of pressure on our budgets and obstructs the full implementation of the strategy.

Pathways to Peace is attracting some interest from external supporters, but it is still too early to say what kind of financial result we will see from the initiative. The Governing Board is thankful and pleased that some Member Churches have been able to allocate staff to work directly with the secretariat in Brussels, developing and implementing the initiative.

Facing the realities of war and responding in various ways is necessary – even within a reduced future financial frame granted to the fellowship by Member Churches. Our Conference has constantly delivered. We are, however, facing financial challenges on a more structural level that also need our attention and hence have been addressed by the Governing Board.

Finance Report: From Novi Sad to Tallinn

Announced substantial cuts in the membership fees of the major contributing church caused the Governing Board to react promptly and with the needed results. In the aftermath, however, time and attention has been allocated to analyse the impact of a permanent gap between the amounts pledged in Novi Sad and the received amounts.

CEC receives year by year on average 85% of the amount voted and pledged by delegates at the Novi Sad Assembly. A breakdown of contributions shows a gap of 15% caused by inconsistencies in financial contributions by some Member Churches. Analysis shows that 11% of Member Churches never pay their fees and that 55% pay partially. This accumulates a lack of 729,000 euros over 2019–2022 compared to the amount pledged in Novi Sad. Some 34% pay the full amount due.

There are always reasons for Member Churches to never pay their membership fees or to pay only partially. There are churches for whom even the minimum annual amount of 450 euros is an impediment. Similarly, for larger Member Churches that can pay only in part their dues, there are always reasons for the decisions made.

Accumulated, however, several smaller, but at the end of the day missing, contributions could have made bigger things happen. And accumulation is exactly the basic *raison d'être* of a fellowship. Larger or smaller churches – we carry the workload together because we believe we achieve more together. This is expressed in the assembly's financial pledges.

But if this 15% shortfall becomes permanent, then we should take this assembly as an opportunity to openly discuss what we can and cannot do together. Were we to agree not only to pledge amounts but also to work on fulfilling our pledges, our fellowship would be able to employ two additional full time programme staff – a 40% increase of the current number.

Our fellowship is today running on the lowest possible staffing, simply in order to respond in a meaningful and professional manner to requests and expectations related to the war in Ukraine. CEC is no way near being an organisation that can in a meaningful and constructive way cover the list of thematic priorities that found their way into the 2018 constitution in Novi Sad.

Finance Report: From Novi Sad to Tallinn

Impressive as a list of important and burning issues for European churches and humankind in general, in the current financial framework that is given to us as a fellowship of European churches it is an unrealistic one and will – at best – serve as a vision for the future. The Governing Board wants to be transparent and honest about this, inviting to an open exchange.

What is then a realistic commitment from Member Churches for the next five years? Third-party fundraising demands long-term financial commitment from Member Churches to build up and maintain the basic functionalities of a secretariat that can both identify sources of funding, create convincing applications, and deliver on all parameters to satisfy large institutional donors.

CEC has walked its first step on this road with the European Commission-funded project Safer and Stronger Communities in Europe (SASCE). The project has delivered among Member Churches across Europe. Furthermore, it has secured the funding of CEC's Human Rights work. But it has also made it clear that fundraising requires fundamental human resources to be in place before it can be considered seriously.

The Governing Board believes and respects churches that face financial cutbacks in light of soaring inflation rates and waning membership figures. This has been expressed very clearly on several occasions and deserves to be repeated in this report. The Governing Board also, however, believes and respects the fact that a fellowship builds on commitment and solidarity.

A trademark of the ecumenical movement was from the beginning the discernment of the times in which we live. Churches discerning together, acting together based on our faith and commitment to Christ. Major signs of our immediate time since Novi Sad are pandemics, soaring inflation rates, decreasing membership in our churches, and, not least, war on European soil.

All of these are signs that call for our action together. Let us take the opportunity when we gather in Tallinn this year to reflect on what is needed from us as a fellowship of churches, renewing our commitments, and acknowledging the needs for financial and human capacity to act in appropriate ways in a Europe that needs our united Christian voice.

The Governing Board 2018–2023 invites you to grant the incoming Governing Board with a strong mandate to act in a challenging financial situation and calls you to return to your churches after our shared deliberations and reflections as

ambassadors for our European fellowship of mutual support, solidarity, and inspiration, committing the churches we represent to allocate resources to such a fellowship in a manner reflecting and respecting our mission and goals.

Thank you for supporting one another through CEC. Together in financial commitment, responsibility, and solidarity. Under God's blessing – shaping the future.

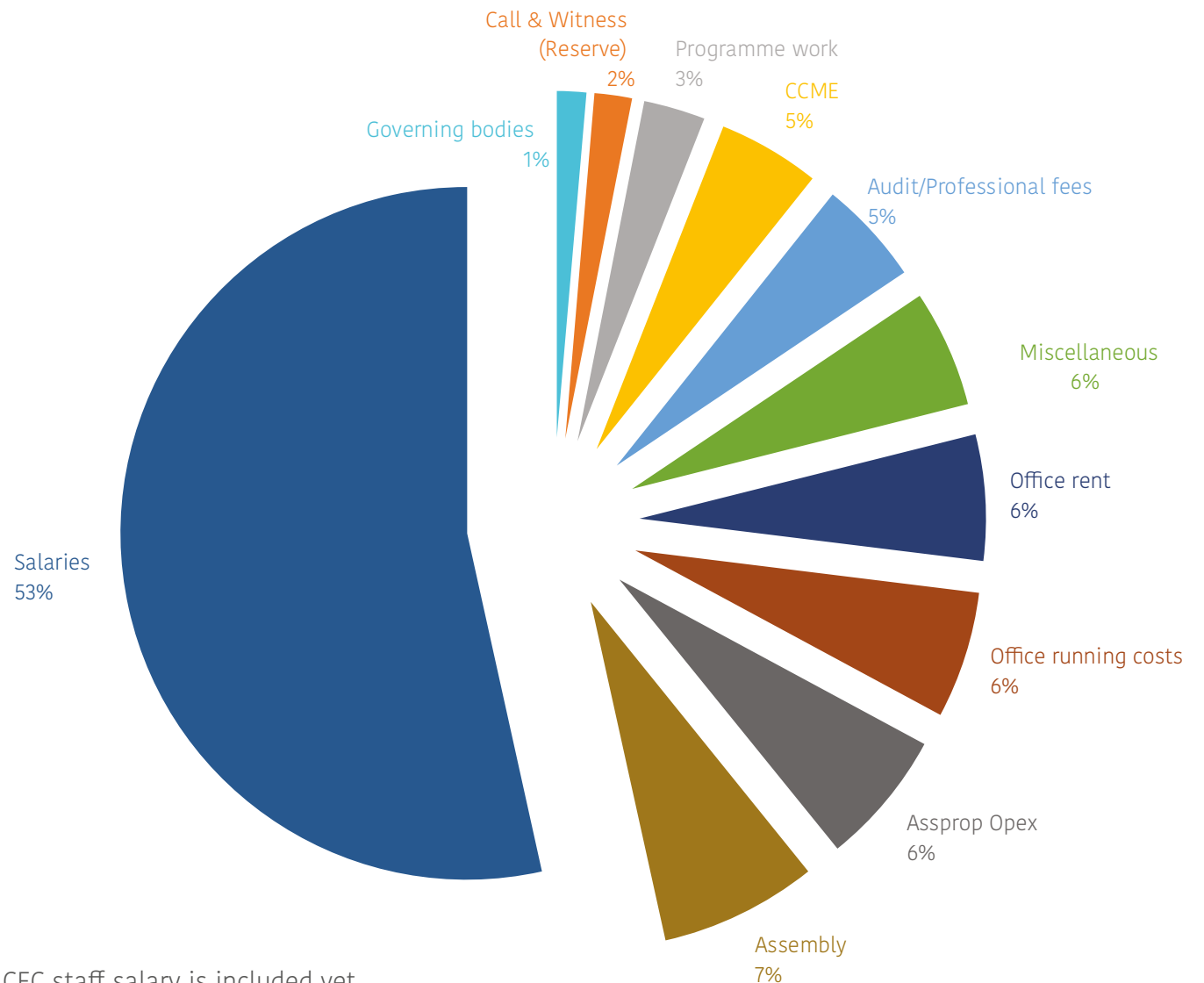
Finance Report: From Novi Sad to Tallinn



Finance Report: From Novi Sad to Tallinn

CEC 2019 - 2022 : CHARGES

Expenses	Amount	%
Governing bodies	77.935 €	1%
Call & Witness (Reserve)	100.000 €	2%
Programme work	164.115 €	3%
CCME	272.254 €	5%
Audit/Professional fees	279.499 €	5%
Miscellaneous	313.701 €	6%
Office rent	337.163 €	6%
Office running costs	340.091 €	6%
Assprop Opex	360.499 €	6%
Assembly	421.362 €	7%
Salaries	3.063.742 €	53%
TOTAL	5.730.363 €	100%

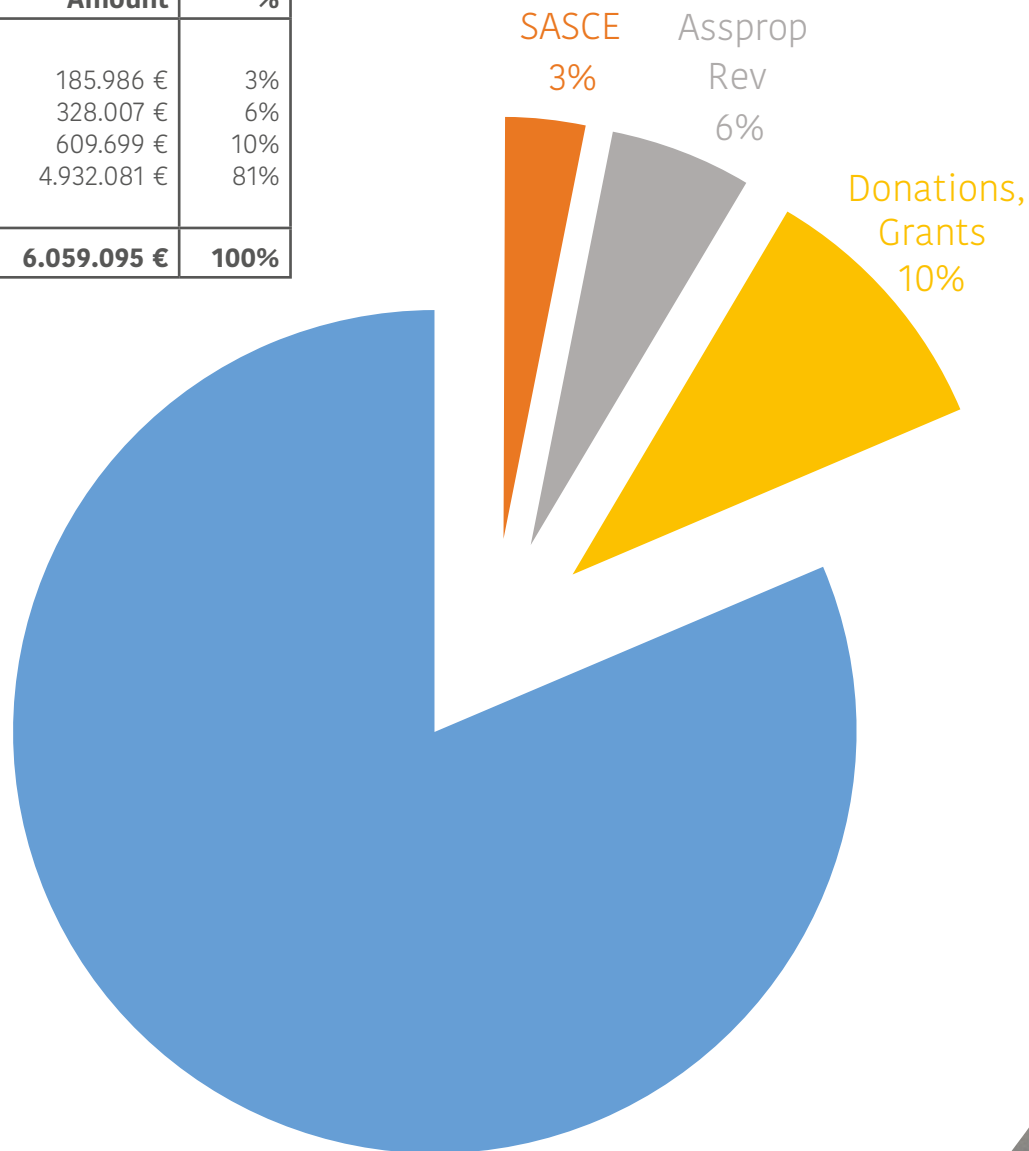


Note:

1. Salaries also contain ECEN : 50% CEC FTE.
2. Assembly = Annual reserve built over 2019-2022, no CEC staff salary is included yet.
3. The 2022 figures are provisional as audited.

CEC 2019 - 2022 : INCOME

Income	Amount	%
SASCE	185.986 €	3%
Assprop Rev	328.007 €	6%
Donations - Grants	609.699 €	10%
MC Contribution	4.932.081 €	81%
TOTAL	6.059.095 €	100%



MC Contribution
81%

Finance Report: From Novi Sad to Tallinn

Note:
SASCE project is between 03/2021 - 06/2023

Appendices



CEC Member Churches

Albania

Orthodox Autocephalous Church of Albania

Armenia

Armenian Apostolic Church

Austria

Evangelical Church of the Augsburg Confession in Austria
Evangelical Church H.C. in Austria
Old-Catholic Church of Austria
United Methodist Church in Austria

Belgium

United Protestant Church in Belgium

Bulgaria

Pentecostal Assemblies of Bulgaria
Union of Evangelical Baptist Churches in Bulgaria

Croatia

Baptist Union of Croatia
Church of God in Croatia
Evangelical Church in the Republic of Croatia
Evangelical Pentecostal Church in Croatia
Reformed Christian (Calvinist) Church in Croatia

Cyprus

Church of Cyprus

Czechia

Czechoslovak Hussite Church
Evangelical Church of Czech Brethren
Old-Catholic Church in the Czech Republic
Orthodox Church in the Czech Lands and Slovakia
Silesian Evangelical Church of the Augsburg Confession in the Czech Republic
United Methodist Church in the Czech Republic

Denmark

Baptist Union of Denmark
Evangelical Lutheran Church in Denmark

Estonia

Estonian Evangelical Lutheran Church
Orthodox Church of Estonia

Finland

Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland
Orthodox Church of Finland

France

Federation of Evangelical Baptist Churches of France
Malagasy Protestant Church in France
Union of Protestant Churches in Alsace and Lorraine
United Protestant Church of France

Georgia

Evangelical Baptist Church of Georgia

Germany

Catholic Diocese of the Old-Catholics in Germany
Protestant Church in Germany
Union of Evangelical Free Churches in Germany (Baptist Union)
United Methodist Church in Germany

Greece

Church of Greece
Evangelical Church of Greece

Hungary

Baptist Union of Hungary
Evangelical Lutheran Church in Hungary
Reformed Church in Hungary
United Methodist Church in Hungary

CEC Member Churches

Iceland

Evangelical Lutheran Church of Iceland

Ireland

Church of Ireland
Methodist Church in Ireland
Presbyterian Church in Ireland

Italy

Christian Evangelical Baptist Union of Italy
Evangelical Lutheran Church in Italy
Evangelical Methodist Church in Italy
Waldensian Church in Italy

Latvia

Evangelical-Lutheran Church of Latvia
Latvian Evangelical Lutheran Church Abroad

Liechtenstein

Evangelical Church in the Principality of Liechtenstein

Lithuania

Evangelical Lutheran Church in Lithuania

Luxembourg

Protestant Churches in Luxembourg

Netherlands

Mennonite Church in the Netherlands
Old-Catholic Church of the Netherlands
Protestant Church in the Netherlands
Remonstrant Church

North Macedonia

United Methodist Church Macedonia

Norway

Church of Norway

Poland

Baptist Union of Poland
Evangelical Church of the Augsburg Confession in Poland
Evangelical Reformed Church in Poland
Old-Catholic Mariavite Church in Poland
Polish Autocephalous Orthodox Church
Polish Catholic Church (Old-Catholic)
United Methodist Church in Poland

Portugal

Evangelical Methodist Church in Portugal
Evangelical Presbyterian Church of Portugal
Lusitanian Catholic Apostolic Evangelical Church

Romania

Evangelical Church of the Augsburg Confession in Romania
Evangelical Lutheran Church in Romania
Reformed Church in Romania Kiralyhagomellek (District)

Romanian Orthodox Church

Transylvanian Reformed Church

Russia

Union of Evangelical Christians-Baptists of Russia
Evangelical-Lutheran Church of Ingria in Russia
Russian Orthodox Church (suspended its membership in 2008)

Serbia

Reformed Christian Church in Serbia
Serbian Orthodox Church
Slovak Evangelical Church of the Augsburg Confession in Serbia
United Methodist Church in Serbia

CEC Member Churches

Slovakia

Evangelical Church of the Augsburg Confession in Slovakia
Orthodox Church in the Czech Lands and Slovakia
Reformed Christian Church in Slovakia

Slovenia

Evangelical Church A.C. in the Republic of Slovenia

Spain

Spanish Evangelical Church
Spanish Reformed Episcopal Church

Sweden

Church of Sweden
Uniting Church in Sweden

Switzerland

Protestant Church in Switzerland
Old-Catholic Church of Switzerland
United Methodist Church in Switzerland

Ukraine

Reformed Church in Transcarpathia

United Kingdom

Baptist Union of Great Britain
Church in Wales
Church of England
Church of Scotland
Congregational Federation
Council of African and Afro-Caribbean Churches UK
Methodist Church in Britain
Presbyterian Church of Wales
Salvation Army – UK Territory and Ireland
The Scottish Episcopal Church
Shiloh United Church of Christ Apostolic Worldwide
United Reformed Church

International Areas

Ecumenical Patriarchate
European Baptist Federation
Federation of Evangelical Lutheran Churches in Russia and Other States
Moravian Church – European Continental Province
Salvation Army – International Headquarters
United Methodist Church – Nordic & Baltic Area

National Councils of Churches

Austria

Ecumenical Council of Churches in Austria

Belgium

Consultation of Christian Churches in Belgium

Czechia

Ecumenical Council of Churches in the Czech Republic

Denmark

National Council of Churches in Denmark

Estonia

Estonian Council of Churches

Finland

Finnish Ecumenical Council

France

French Protestant Federation

Germany

Council of Christian Churches in Germany

Hungary

Ecumenical Council of Churches in Hungary

Ireland

Irish Council of Churches

Italy

Federation of Protestant Churches in Italy

The Netherlands

Council of Churches in the Netherlands

Norway

Christian Council of Norway

Poland

Polish Ecumenical Council

Portugal

Portuguese Council of Christian Churches

Romania

Ecumenical Association of Churches in Romania

Slovak Republic

Ecumenical Council of Churches in Slovakia

Spain

Spanish Committee on Cooperation between the Churches

Sweden

Christian Council of Sweden

Switzerland

National Council of Churches in Switzerland

United Kingdom

Action of Churches Together in Scotland
Churches Together in Britain and Ireland
Churches Together in England
Churches Together in Wales

Organisations in Partnership with CEC

Church and Peace

Churches' Commission for Migrants in Europe

Conference of European Clergy

Conference of European University Chaplains

Ecumenical Forum of European Christian Women

Eurodiaconia

European Alliance of YMCAs

European Forum of Christian Men

The European YWCA

Friends World Committee for Consultation (FWCC) – Europe and Middle East Section (EMES)

Intereuropean Commission on Church and School

International Association for Christian Education

International Prison Chaplains Association – Europe

Oikosnet

Protestant and Anglican Network for life-long learning in Europe – EAEE

Union of Evangelical Free Churches

World Student Christian Federation (Europe)

Members of CEC Governing Board

Presidency

Rev. Christian Krieger
Reformed Protestant Church of Alsace and Lorraine
President

Rt Rev. Dr Guli Francis-Dehqani
Church of England
Vice-President

Metropolitan Cleopas of Sweden and All Scandinavia
Ecumenical Patriarchate
Vice-President

Governing Board members:

Mr Andreas Henriksen Aarflot, Church of Norway

Rt Rev. Nick Baines, Church of England

Rev. Jelle Brouwer, United Protestant Church of Belgium

Dr Valérie Duval-Poujol, Federation of Evangelical Baptist Churches of France

Very Rev. Anders Gadegaard, Evangelical Lutheran Church in Denmark

Archimandrite Ignatios, Church of Greece

Metropolitan Joseph of Western and Southern Europe, Romanian Orthodox Church

Prof Petr Kratochvil, Evangelical Church of Czech Brethren

Rev. Frank Kopania, Evangelical Church in Germany

Mr Tuomo Mäkelä, Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland

Bishop Hovakim Manukyan, Diocese of the Armenian
Church of the United Kingdom and Ireland

Rev. Alison McDonald, Church of Scotland

Archimandrite Nektarios, Church of Cyprus

Dr Aleksandra Pistalo, Serbian Orthodox Church

Late Ms Zsuzsanna Répás, Reformed Christian Church in Slovakia

Ms Lea Kathrin Schlenker, Evangelical Church in Germany

Ms Emma Weaver, Methodist Church in Britain

Electoral reserve:

Rev. Alfredo Abad, Spanish Evangelical Church

Archimandrite Iakovos Andriopoulos, Church of Greece

Rev. Ella-Maria Boba, Evangelical Church in Austria

Ms Katarzyna Charkiewicz, Polish Autocephalous Orthodox Church

Rev. Peter Ciaccio, Evangelical Methodist Church in Italy

Rev. Dr Vilmos Fischl, Evangelical Lutheran Church in Hungary

Ms Karine Haryutunyan, Armenian Apostolic Church

Ms Renate Japenga, Protestant Church in the Netherlands

Rev. Klaas van der Kamp, Protestant Church in the Netherlands

OKR Rainer Kiefer, Evangelical Church in Germany

Ms Maria Mountraki, Orthodox Church of Finland

Rev. Gregory Pelushi, Orthodox Autocephalous Church of Albania

Dr Petr Jan Vins, Old-Catholic Church in the Czech Republic

Members of Assembly Committees

Members of Assembly Planning Committee

Rev. Grand Ecclesiarch Aetios Nikiforos, Ecumenical Patriarchate

Rev. Frank-Dieter Fischbach, Protestant Church in Germany (EKD)

Rev. Dean Anders Gadegaard, Chair of the Assembly Planning Committee, Evangelical-Lutheran Church in Denmark

Rev. Dr Agnes Pángyánszky, Lutheran Church in Hungary

Ms Tijana Petković, Vice Chair of the Assembly Planning Committee, Serbian Orthodox Church

Rev. Dr Sarah Rogers, Church in Wales

Rev. Dr Patrick-Roger Schnabel, Protestant Church in Germany

Mr Andreas Aarflot, legal advisor to the CEC Governing Board, Church of Norway

Rev. Jelle Brouwer, treasurer of the CEC Governing Board, United Protestant Church in Belgium

Rev. Peter Ciaccio, Evangelical Methodist Church in Italy

Members of Local Assembly Planning Committee

Rev. Vilver Oras, Estonian Council of Churches

Ms Age Ploom, Orthodox Church of Estonia

Ms Kadri Eliisabet Põder, Estonian Evangelical Lutheran Church

Ms Triin Salmu, Estonian Evangelical Lutheran Church (special adviser to the Assembly Worship Committee)

Ms Kaísa Tamme, Estonian Council of Churches

Members of Assembly Worship Committee

Rev. Sabine Udodesku, Evangelical Church in Germany

Irene Grassi, Evangelical Methodist Church in Italy

Fr Mattias Madis Palli, Estonian Apostolic Orthodox Church

Sigrid Põld, Estonian Evangelical Lutheran Church

Stefan Zeljkovic, Serbian Orthodox Church

Samuel Williams, Church of England

Members of CEC Budget Committee

Rev. Jelle Brouwer, United Protestant Church of Belgium, president

Bishop Hovakim Manukyan, Diocese of the Armenian Church of the United Kingdom and Ireland

Ms Emma Weaver, Methodist Church in Britain

Mr Simmer Carsten, Protestant Church in Germany (EKD)

Bishop Atle Sommerfeldt, Church of Norway

CEC Thematic Groups 2019-2023

Ecclesiology and Mission (no moderator)

Dr Melanie Beiner, Protestant Church in Germany

Pastor Gwenaël Boulet, United Protestant Church of France

Dr David Heith-Stade, Ecumenical Patriarchate

Mr Jonas Adelin Jorgensen, Evangelical Lutheran Church in Denmark

Rev. Dr Tomi Karttunen, Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland

Dr Olle Kristenson, Church of Sweden, Uniting Church of Sweden,
Christian Council of Sweden

Rev. Pavel Milko, Orthodox Church in the Czech Lands and Slovakia

Rev. Dr Mattijs, Ploeger, Old-Catholic Church of the Netherlands

Rev. Canon Dr Jeremy Worthen, Church of England

Mr Stavros Yagazoglou, Church of Greece

Dr Marianna Apresyan, Ecumenical Forum of European Christian Women – Armenia

Ms Christiane Gebauer, World Student Christian Federation

Ms Natallia Vasilevich, Arbeitsgemeinschaft Christlicher Kirchen
in Deutschland - Belarus

Education, democracy and diversity

Ms Bianca Kappelhoff, Intereuropean
Commission on Church and School ICCS, moderator

Mr Matthias Blöser, Protestant Church in Germany

Rev. Dr Vilmos Fischl, Ecumenical Council of Churches in Hungary

Ms Sigrid Flaata, Church of Norway

Mr Pantelis Kalaitzidis, Church of Greece

Rev. Dr Triin Käpp, Estonian Evangelical Lutheran Church

Mr Arutyun Karapetyan, Armenian Apostolic Church

Mr Alexandru Ojica, Romanian Orthodox Church

Dr Claudio Paravati, OPCEMI/Methodist Church in Italy

Kirchenrat Raphael Quandt, Protestant Church in Germany

Dr Ulla Siirto, Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland

Economic and ecological justice and a sustainable future

Mr Kees Nieuwerth, Church and Peace (Quaker), moderator

Ms Guro Almås, Church of Norway

Mr Nikolaos Asproulis, Church of Greece

Mrs Theresa Lundquist French, Interchurch Council - Evangelical
Lutheran Church of Denmark

Mr Henric Götefelt, Church of Sweden

Rev. Dr Tamas Kodacsy, Reformed Church in Hungary

Mr Mikko Kurenlahti, Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland

Br. OP Gabriel Salmela, Finnish Ecumenical Council

Mr Adrian Shaw, Church of Scotland

Rev. Fr George Valcu, Romanian Orthodox Church

Mr Antonios Kalogerakis, Oikosnet, Institute of Theology and Ecology,
Orthodox Academy of Crete

Ms Miriam Meir, Oikosnet, Evangelische Akademie Sachsen-Anhalt

CEC Thematic Groups 2019-2023

Science, new technologies and Christian ethics

Dr Julija Vidovic, Serbian Orthodox Church, moderator
Dr John Jacobs, Council of Churches in the Netherlands
Mr Konstantinos Kornarakis, Church of Greece
Bishop Maximos of Melitene, Ecumenical Patriarchate
Rev. Dr Brendan McCarthy, Church of England
Dr Ulrik Nissen, Evangelical Lutheran Church in Denmark
Rev. Prof Johann-Christian Pöder, Estonian Evangelical Lutheran Church
Mr Henrikki Benjamin Pöntinen, Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland
Prof. Luca Savarino, Italian Protestant Federation
Prof. Dr Thomas Zeilinger, Protestant Church in Germany
Mr Alexei Bodrov, Oikosnet, St Andrew's Biblical Theological Institute
Dr Konstantinos Zormpas, Oikosnet, Orthodox Academy of Crete

Human rights

Rev. Dr Patrick Schnabel, Evangelical Church in Germany, moderator
Very Reverend Archimandrite Aimilianos Bogiannou, Ecumenical Patriarchate
Dr Altana Filos, Evangelical Church of Greece
Dr Göran Gunner, Church of Sweden
Programme Officer Karine Kocharyan, Armenian Apostolic Church
Dr Attila Palcsó, Reformed Christian Church in Slovakia
Dr Aleksandra Pistalo, Serbian Orthodox Church
Rev. Dr Pamela Slotte, Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland
Prof. Vassiliki Stathokoska, Church of Greece

Dr Daniel Topalski, United Methodist Church in Bulgaria – stepped down in April 2022
Ms Kieryn Wurts, European Baptist Federation
Ms Natia Tsintsadze, WSCF-Europe
Ms Angelita Tomaselli, Ecumenical Youth Council in Europe (EYCE)

Social justice and labour

Due to an ongoing decrease in staff capacity, the CEC secretariat was not able to support a Social Justice and Labour TG.

Mr Vladimir Gerka, Orthodox Church in the Czech Lands and Slovakia
Dr Sven Thore Kloster, Church of Norway
Rev. Dr Kari Latvus, Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland
Ms Fenja Lüders, Evangelical-Lutheran Church in Bavaria
Rev. Petra Schipper, United Protestant Church in Belgium
Mr Christos Tsironis, Church of Greece
Ms Renate Zäckel, Protestant Church in Germany
Mr David Forbes, Church and Peace

CEC Staff

Dr Jørgen Skov Sørensen
General Secretary

Ms Véronique Engels
Assistant to the General Secretary

Ms Naveen Qayyum
Communications Officer

Dr Elizabeta Kitanovic
Executive Secretary
Work area: Human rights

Rev. Dr Peter Pavlovic
Study Secretary
Work areas: Economic and ecological justice, EU integration, and sustainable development. 50% working for ECEN.

Ms. Katerina Pekridou
Executive Secretary
Work areas: Theological dialogue, ecclesiology, and mission

Mr. Georgios Maglis
Head of Finance, Administration and Payroll

Ms Vanessa Barreto
Administrative Assistant

Rev. Sören Lenz (until 1 January 2023)
Executive Secretary
Work areas: Bioethics, human rights, engagement with EU institutions

Ms Barbara Weber (until 31 December 2022)
Administrative Assistant

Late Ms Lena Kumlin (until May 2022)
Senior EU Policy Advisor seconded by the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland

Assembly staff

Rev. Dr Triin Käpp
Assembly Planning Coordinator

Ms Eleri Soidla
Assembly Assistant

Alexander Heindel
Stewards Coordinator



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Shaping Europe's future:
CEC's journey from Novi Sad to Tallinn: 2018 – 2023

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