



Conference of European Churches  
Roadmap 2015-2018

*Forging Our Future*

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## Acronyms

<b>CALL</b>	Church Action on Labour and Life
<b>CDPPE</b>	Steering Committee on Educational Policies and Practices (CoE)
<b>CEC</b>	Conference of European Churches
<b>CCEE</b>	Council of European Bishops' Conferences
<b>CCME</b>	Churches' Commission for Migrants in Europe
<b>CoE</b>	Council of Europe
<b>COGREE</b>	Co-ordinating Group for Religion in Education in Europe
<b>COMECE</b>	Commission of the Bishops' Conferences of the European Community
<b>COP</b>	Conference of Parties
<b>CPCE</b>	Community of Protestant Churches in Europe
<b>DG</b>	Directorate General
<b>EBF</b>	European Baptist Federation
<b>ECEN</b>	European Christian Environmental Network
<b>EDC</b>	Education for Democratic Citizenship
<b>EU</b>	European Union
<b>ICCS</b>	Intereuropean Commission on Church and School
<b>LWF</b>	Lutheran World Federation
<b>OECD</b>	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
<b>OSCE</b>	Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe
<b>REO</b>	Regional Ecumenical Organisation
<b>UEPAL</b>	Union of Protestant Churches of Alsace and Lorraine
<b>WCC</b>	World Council of Churches
<b>WCRC</b>	World Communion of Reformed Churches

## Foreword

The process of developing this Roadmap by the CEC executive staff (Collegium) has been a broadly participatory one. We devoted two extra Collegium meetings to its initial development.

After a first discussion during the meeting of the Governing Board in March 2015, we devoted two extra Collegium meetings to discuss and incorporate comments. We invited CCME to include migration and asylum issues based on the work programme adopted by CCME in June 2014.

The basis for our reflection was that we are a conference of churches, National Councils of Churches and Organisations in Partnership committed to the proclamation of the Gospel of Christ. Various forms of ecumenical cooperation have already proved themselves, but Christ's prayer is *that we all*

*may be one. As you, Father, are in me and I am in you, may they also be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me* (John 17:21).

In this spirit of the Incarnated one, we are devoted to common theological work, ecumenism, dialogue with the European Institutions, and dialogue and cooperation with representatives of other faiths. The Roadmap calls CEC Member Churches, Organisations in Partnership, and National Councils of Churches to an open dialogue addressing contemporary European issues to strengthen our common efforts for advocacy, bridge-building, peace and justice in a European society increasingly torn by the economic crisis, conflicts, and aggression.

Using the Uppsala Report as well as committee reports of the Budapest Assembly, reports of the December meeting

with the launch of the new legal structure, reports of the CSC commission and reports of the Governing Board as a foundation, we developed this CEC Roadmap 2015-2018: Forging Our Future. We thank the administrative staff for logistical help with preparations.

The final goal of this document adopted in May 2015 by the Governing Board is that once we embark upon implementation our Member Churches and other stakeholders may help to strengthen both our work and our witness as a Conference of European Churches.

*Guy Liagre*  
General Secretary

## Overview of the document

The Roadmap builds on the work of the Revision Working Group and the Renewal Process undertaken between 2009 and 2014. The Budapest Assembly was a moment of conscious self-reflection on identity and practice as a conference of European churches. A common Roadmap and terms of reference were agreed upon via the Uppsala Report for the reconfiguration and renewal of CEC as a whole.

The Governing Board requested that the staff prepare proposals for theological work and church and society programmes for the period up to 2018. They asked staff to bear in mind that CEC's church and society work was not confined to the implementation of programmes and asked the staff to include a description of the other kinds of work (e.g., relations with the European Institutions) that needed to be maintained.

The Roadmap seeks to answer this question through work on theological and societal themes of common concern, and by building up trust and commitment among

CEC Member Churches with its plan for the 2015-2018 triennium. It is important to

underline that this work will be undertaken by both the Brussels and Strasbourg offices.



## Structure of the document

**Part I** of the Roadmap sets out who we are as a Conference, our shared vision, purpose and values and the relationships that are of great importance for the years ahead. It is hoped that this part of the Roadmap speaks to the Conference as a whole and helps our shared understanding of being a fellowship of churches and together forming a Regional Ecumenical Organisation.

**Part II** presents the programmatic work for the period 2015–2018. This section describes the proposed priorities for the CEC General Secretariat, as well as goals and commitments for taking these priorities forward. The Roadmap tries to provide clear general directions and encourages flexibility in how these directions might be taken forward in different projects and contexts. This part of the Roadmap will specifically guide the work of the CEC General Secretariat and provide the platform for strategic leadership of the General Secretary and accountability to the CEC Governing Board. It will provide vital guidance for CEC annual operational plans and budgets.

**Part III** presents an overview of participatory working mechanisms.

**Part IV** presents the question of financial sustainability.

**Part V** presents some concluding remarks.



# Part I: Context and objectives

## 1.1 Context

*The understanding of our mission:*

- » *Serve as a common platform for all Member Churches*
- » *Reinforce cooperation and networking within our framework*
- » *Provide an authentic, credible and socially responsible Christian witness*
- » *Building a humane, social and sustainable Europe*
- » *Strengthen the bonds of Christian fellowship*

The Conference of European Churches is an instrument of the churches in Europe for strengthening trust and commitment for common action. CEC is a tangible expression of the European ecumenical community and serves this community *as a common platform for all Member Churches* (§ 1.2.1 below) ... to

*reinforce cooperation and networking within its framework* (§ 1.2.2) (Assembly Policy reference report). In pursuing this aim CEC must in all circumstances seek to create an environment of mutuality and respect (Assembly Policy reference report), offering a reflection forum for discussion of spiritual, social and ethical questions of our time, using dialogue as an important method.

The vision and mission of CEC is *to promote a community of Churches sharing their spiritual life, seeking reconciliation, strengthening their common witness and service and fostering the unity of the Church*. CEC shall provide an *authentic, credible and socially responsible Christian witness* (§ 1.2.3) rooted in the biblical message and *work towards building a humane, social and sustainable Europe* (§ 1.2.4) *at peace with itself and its neighbours in which human rights and solidarity prevail* (CEC Constitution).

Through programmatic work and research, CEC *will work on strengthening the bonds of*

*Christian fellowship* (§ 1.2.5) *and serve as an instrument of the Churches for a common mission in a changing Europe*. CEC will continue to be committed to continuous dialogue among its Members, providing them with a space for giving and receiving the spiritual riches of their different traditions, and facilitate dialogue and cooperation with Roman Catholic partners and with other faith communities. CEC will be encouraging Churches to speak with a common voice wherever possible (CEC Constitution).

## 1.2 Objectives

### 1.2.1 A common platform for all Member Churches

*CEC needs to be heard not only as a prophetic voice, but also as a chorus of churches preaching the Gospel and singing the song of faith and spiritual strength.*

Working for Christian unity in the spirit of the Gospel will continue to be the main task of CEC. As relationships grow closer through programmatic work, Member Churches will gain greater ownership. Improving ownership in turn necessitates reinforcing unity among the churches. CEC should empower churches to own responsibility for their Conference.

At the same time we must also always ask, "What kind of community of churches are we called to be?" The work of CEC in favour of social justice and human dignity is an expression of the Christian faith. This is what the churches and CEC stand for. CEC, therefore, needs to be

heard not only as a prophetic voice, but also as a chorus of churches preaching the Gospel and singing the song of faith and spiritual strength, including through contributions to the Pilgrimage of Justice and Peace.

CEC listens to its Member Churches, and responds to requests and needs in different ways. This includes ongoing reflection on and implementation of our Constitution, the Uppsala Report, and Assembly decisions. An example of such listening is through the December 2014 Colloquium where we heard from stakeholders insights that can be important for our activities from 2015 to 2018. They underlined in the discussion groups and through introductions the wish to make progress towards visible unity and to develop a theology of life in order to become a Church for others. They also addressed CEC with the wish to keep alive the utopias of a common Europe and the unity of all people in Europe as well as globally offering a reflection forum for discussion of social and ethical questions of our time through dialogue.

### 1.2.2 Reinforce cooperation and networking within CEC's framework

Relationship building is part of all our work. Maintaining and strengthening relationships among the family of CEC Member Churches, migrant churches, National Councils of Churches, Organisations in Partnership, as well as with broader civil society is one of our core tasks. Our work will also embody hope for new relationships and reconciliation since "*God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ gave us the ministry of reconciliation. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation. We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us.*" (2 Corinthians 5: 19) It is the task of CEC to create and use networks between Christians, churches, and ecumenical organisations to make this happen. CEC will also be Christ's ambassador through interreligious networks, cultivating productive relationships.



All executive staff, under responsibility to the General Secretary, will contribute to this objective by:

- » visiting and consulting with Member Churches, National Councils of Churches, as well as Organisations in Partnership;
- » engaging Member Churches in a creative way and by creating opportunities for their participation in CEC activities;
- » welcoming visits by church groups and church delegations to the CEC offices;
- » responding to *ad hoc* needs and requests raised by CEC Member Churches.

Projects are only part of CEC's work. Much time also needs to be given to building bridges of mutual understanding reinforcing spiritual bounds. At least a full one-fifth (20%) of each staff member's time will be given to fulfilling this objective. In some cases this can be even more. For example, CEC Organisations in Partnership or Member Churches support our work through the presence of seconded staff in CEC offices. Currently we have an important working relationship with the Community of Protestant Churches in Europe (CPCE) and the Union of Protestant Churches

of Alsace and Lorraine (UEPAL) together with the Conference of Churches on the Rhine. Through these arrangements, CPCE and UEPAL develop CEC's broader ecumenical framework, meanwhile also reinforcing our presence *vis-à-vis* the political institutions in Brussels and Strasbourg.

Other important effective relationship building instruments include annual meetings of National Councils of Churches and meetings of European secretaries for affairs on church and society. For the foreseeable future, CEC will continue to organise these gatherings on an annual basis.

### 1.2.3 Provide an authentic, credible and socially responsible Christian witness

Europe—from the Atlantic to the Urals, from the North Cape to the Mediterranean—is today more pluralist in culture than ever before. In conjunction with the Gospel, we want in the spirit of the Charta Œcumenica to stand up for the dignity of the human person

created in God's image and, as churches together, contribute towards reconciling peoples and cultures.

*The whole of our work will contribute to a vision, a Christian rooted narrative for Europe grounded in sharing, dialogue, and reconciliation.*

CEC activities will make an effort to respond to increasingly pressing questions of identity, nationalism and unity in Europe, promoting peace and justice. The whole of our work will contribute to a vision, a Christian rooted narrative for Europe grounded in sharing, dialogue, and reconciliation. Our work will address questions such as: What does it mean to be European? How do we see ourselves as a global community? How do the churches speak for Europe in a national context? How does the EU relate to the whole European continent? How can we bear witness to European ideals?

## 1.2.4 Building a humane, social and sustainable Europe in dialogue with civil society

*CEC will bring visibility and coherence to dialogue with European political institutions.*

The call to build bridges of peace and reconciliation between East and West after a period of devastating war is at the origin of CEC. On the other hand, the engagement of CEC towards the European unification process is one of the origins of the work of the former Church and Society Commission in Brussels and Strasbourg. Strasbourg work is rooted in the conviction that the work of the Council of Europe, promoting cooperation between European countries in the areas of legal standards, human rights democratic development, the rule of law and cultural cooperation is a gift to Europe and its people. In the pluralistic context of Brussels, discourse among religion, society, and political institutions requires the witness of the Christian tradition, and sharing in the universal quest for truth and justice.

The European Union and related institutions continue to be a decisive element in shaping life and democratic peacebuilding values in Europe. For the whole of Europe, the Council of Europe and its political bodies plays a key role regarding fundamental values.

Therefore, CEC will maintain as indicated in the Constitution an open, regular and transparent dialogue with international organisations, in particular the European Union, the Council of Europe, the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe and the United Nations. CEC will also engage in dialogue with civil society. Our work in this area will pay particular attention to the Assembly recommendation to clarify CEC's specific call and task within the various ecumenical organisations and institutions that exist at a national, European, and international level.

CEC assumes a responsibility in monitoring these—and other—political institutions, engaging its membership on specific issues of European policy, and informing Member

Churches, National Councils of Churches as well as Organisations in Partnership about developments of significance for churches and church-related organisations and their policies. Networking, monitoring the activities of the European Institutions and maintaining working relationships with a host of other NGOs and networks is an important aspect of our work.

Work oriented towards these institutions will be developed in conjunction with our membership and partners to strengthen each other's engagement.

For this reason, CEC commits itself to seek agreement on the substance and goals of our social responsibility, and to represent in concert, as far as possible, the concerns and visions of the churches *vis-à-vis* the secular European Institutions. Our work will bring visibility and coherence to dialogue with European political institutions, bringing a common voice and witness of churches into the decision-making processes.

In this, CEC will continue to build on the work of the Church and Society Commission (CSC), and cooperate with the Churches' Commission for Migrants in Europe (CCME), by establishing efficient exchange with the European Commission, the presidency of the European Council and the European Parliament. This will be accomplished in part by cultivating working relationships with collaborators in the Commission and members of the European Parliament. Dialogue shall also take place through regular official dialogue seminars with the European Commission and the Parliament in close cooperation with the Commission of the Bishops' Conferences of the European Community (COMECE).

Such dialogue will take place where possible in the early, formative stages of EU policy-making on specific themes. CEC will also facilitate initiatives that have an impact on the overall framework for dialogue between churches and EU Institutions, including proposed changes in the organisation of the EU Transparency Register and proposals of the new Commission for organising relationships with churches and faith communities in accordance with the Lisbon Treaty.

## 1.2.5 Strengthening the bonds of Christian fellowship

### CEC churches and ecumenical organisations

*We will seek deeper relations through the framework of the World Council of Churches, Regional Ecumenical Organisations, and confessional bodies.*

Close cooperation with ecumenical partners and church-related organisations is crucial for fulfilling our mission and vision. It is a unique opportunity for CEC that seconded staff are fully integrated into the work and responsible for specific thematic areas. There is great will on the part of CEC to continue this kind of cooperation and to extend this opportunity to other ecumenical partners and Member Churches. CEC will also actively work toward strengthening relationships with church offices representing CEC constituencies in Brussels. It might be helpful to host round-table meetings with the various national church offices present in Brussels working on European issues.

We also seek deeper relations with churches from other continents on issues of common concern, through the framework of the World Council of Churches (WCC), other Regional Ecumenical Organisations (REOs) and confessional bodies such as WCRC, EBF, and LWF. CEC will also be in dialogue at different levels with other religious communities in Europe where appropriate as indicated in the CEC Constitution. It is important that CEC thematic work builds on positive experiences of collaborating with other ecumenical and church-based partners such as NGOs and agencies, including Eurodiaconia, Act Alliance EU, Intereuropean Commission on Church and School (ICCS), Christian academies, educational centres and the academic world.

## Roman Catholic Church

*Specific attention will be given to strengthening relationship with the Roman Catholic Church through CCEE and COMECE.*

Christian fellowship is broader than CEC Member Churches. Specific attention will be given to strengthening the relationship with the Roman Catholic Church through CCEE and COMECE. CEC shall not forget the fruits of the three Ecumenical Assemblies and the conciliar process for Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation. Therefore, partnership with CCEE shall include—as a result of past Ecumenical Assemblies—environmental issues, also clarifying perspectives for a fourth Ecumenical Assembly. Through partnership with COMECE, CEC will continue to work with the European Commission, rotating EU Presidencies, and responding *ad hoc* to initiatives emerging from the EU.

## Ecumenical Centre

One of the objectives of CEC is to strengthen the place of the Ecumenical Centre co-owned by CEC and CCME as a central point for the churches' life and presence in Brussels.

### **This includes:**

» Maintaining and building capacity for responding to *ad hoc* requests from Member Churches for information, interventions, and so on. This can be especially important for smaller churches;

» Receiving visitors and organising programmes for them;  
» Developing a programme to present the ecumenical family to audiences in Brussels as a way of involving new people in ecumenical work.



## Part II: Programmatic work

### 2.1 Introduction

*Theological reflection, socio-ethical questions, work with the European Institutions and advocacy work all belong together.*

The Assembly Policy Reference report underlines that “Countries in crisis, migration, human rights violations, competition between states ... Europe is not at peace with itself. The priorities for the Governing Board should be work that brings peace. In all its work CEC must be aware of the context in which it operates, a context of growing secularisation and of a global financial crisis which has specific implications for Europe. Trust and stewardship are not only themes for the internal life of CEC. CEC is also called to promote a culture of trust in a Europe endangered by instability, distrust and anxieties.”

Understandings, contextual insights, and knowledge from Member Churches from all parts of Europe are welcomed as gifts and brought into conversation to shape and deepen our theology, spiritual life, and work together. This work programme responds to the Assembly recommendation to carry out different thematic areas in a more inter-related and systematic way. Theological reflection, socio-ethical questions, work with the European Institutions and advocacy work all belong together. To this end, it will continue to be a priority to integrate theological and ethical perspectives into CEC thematic work. Particular efforts will be made to involve small churches with very limited resources in these projects.

In the spirit of welcoming the stranger, migration and asylum have been acknowledged by CEC as priority areas in which the Conference continues to be engaged.

Migration and asylum pose major challenges in Europe—the challenge of solidarity, protection of human rights and the dignity of persons, as well as the challenges of social cohesion and identity. This is reflected in the Constitution adopted at the last Assembly. An agreement of cooperation was adopted by the CEC Governing Board and CCME in December 2014 stipulating that “In principle, CEC works in the areas of migration and asylum, and diaspora and migrant churches with and through CCME.”

Based on the CEC and CCME decisions in Budapest 2013 and Sigtuna 2014 respectively, both organisations seek to recommit themselves to a closer working relationship for the period 2015-2017. A final decision should be taken after that concerning the form of integration or further cooperation.

By doing so, we want to strengthen the joint witness and service of European churches and church-related organisations with and for migrants, refugees and minority ethnic persons.

CEC thematic work in 2015-2018 will focus on 9 priority areas:

- » Ecclesiology and Theological Dialogue among the Churches (2.2.1)
- » Peacebuilding and Reconciliation (2.2.2)
- » Human Rights (2.2.3)
- » Economic and Environmental Justice (2.2.4)
- » Employment and Social Issues (2.2.5)
- » Bioethics (2.2.6)
- » Education for Democratic Citizenship (2.2.7)
- » Migration and Asylum (2.2.8)
- » EU Policy and Legislation (2.2.9)

*It will continue to be a priority to integrate theological and ethical perspectives into CEC thematic work.*

## 2.2 Priority areas

### 2.2.1 Ecclesiology and theological dialogue among the churches

In the spirit of the Gospel, we must reappraise together the history of the Christian churches, which has been marked by many beneficial experiences but also by schisms, hostilities and even armed conflicts.

Now that CEC is a unitary organisation it should become clearer that theology runs through all areas of work. This does not mean, however, that there is no longer a need for specific projects in the ecumenical and ecclesiological area. Contact with the Faith and Order team so as to exchange views and ideas for CEC's work in the area of theology will be necessary. Different activities in this area will be organised.

In this context, we will give special emphasis to theological reflection on various challenges, dialogue and encounters between Member Churches and National Councils of Churches. We will also focus on issues of majority and minority churches in

Europe as proposed during the Assembly. The basis for all areas of study and dialogue—to defend the rights of minorities and to help reduce misunderstandings and prejudices between majority and minority churches in our countries—will be the Charta Œcumenica.

#### Evaluating the impact of Charta Œcumenica

##### Background

The Charta Œcumenica mentions that it is important to acknowledge the spiritual riches of the different Christian traditions, to learn from one another and so to receive these gifts. CEC will continue to be committed in the same spirit to continuous dialogue among its Members, providing them with a space for giving and receiving the spiritual riches of their different traditions.

Therefore, CEC has a special vocation to make a contribution to the mission of the church, safeguarding of life, renew common witness, and promote Christian fellowship within the CEC family.

We will encourage Member Churches to visit one another, and to look into common expectations from CEC and their experiences as members of CEC.

*CEC will undertake in close cooperation with CCEE a clear analysis of the impact of the Charta Œcumenica.*

### Goals

CEC will undertake in close cooperation with CCEE a clear analysis of the impact of the Charta Œcumenica on churches and church-related bodies in Europe and beyond. This will help churches and

church-related bodies renew and empower their commitment to the Charta and further implement it in ecumenical dialogue. We will also renew the spirit of the Charta in an ongoing dialogue with representative bodies of Roman Catholic, Pentecostal, and Free churches.

### Churches' response to growing secularism

#### Background

Psalm 14 underlines that the fool says in his heart, "There is no God." But today's secularism is one of the major challenges of modern society and can be seen from many different perspectives within the church. For some the rise in secularism is threatening, for others it opens and encourages the deepening of Christian faith and renewal of churches. The discussion about different approaches is a key element in the building of an ecumenical space of dialogue.

*Today's secularism is one of the major challenges of modern society and can be seen from many different perspectives within the church.*

### Goals

In addressing concerns related to secularism, CEC together with ecumenical partners will engage its Member Churches, National Councils of Churches and Organisations in Partnership in broad discussion on the situation of Christianity in Europe today, provide Member Churches with space for sharing experiences, and offer ecumenical and theological guidance through challenges linked with this phenomenon.

## The Reformation in an ecumenical perspective

### Background

The events of the Reformation era marked a major moment in the history of the church and continue to shape ecumenism today. In 2017 there will be widespread commemoration of the beginning of the Reformation.

### Goals

CEC will endeavour to bring an ecumenical perspective to these commemorations, and to again provide an open platform for the churches in Europe, to strengthen our mutual respect as sisters and brothers in Christ.

The objectives of the proposed commemoration include:

- » raising awareness about historical relations and influences between different theological traditions

- » engaging a broad range of partners in debate on how the commemoration of the Reformation can also be a moment for common ecumenical reflection on ecclesiology, theology, ethics, state-church relations, human rights, and so on
- » working towards ongoing sharing and theological dialogue among Reformation churches and other churches in CEC

## Theological education

### Background

While each programme of CEC has its own implications for theological formation, Christian education and theological education, history has shown that churches also need visible and distinct programmatic activity to give shape to common action, ecumenical coherence and international collaboration in these areas.

The Conference of European Churches underlines the strategic significance of theological education for the future of the ecumenical movement in Europe, reminding churches of their responsibilities in the context of emerging challenges for the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

### Theological and ecumenical education

CEC shall take action to implement ecumenical cooperation in theological education and research according to the Charta Ecumenica. The concern for the promotion of theological and ecumenical education has to be a key feature of CEC's agenda. This should be undertaken in close collaboration with the WCC, other organisations and institutes of higher learning.

*The concern for the promotion of theological and ecumenical education has to be a key feature of CEC's agenda.*



From a European perspective there is also urgency to increase international networks to promote theological education on European affairs among CEC Member Churches. There is no future for the ecumenical movement in Europe if there is no commitment to ecumenical formation. If CEC fails to be guided by an ecumenical vision of a church renewed in mission and service, dialogue and interaction with the whole of Europe, there will be a serious shortage in terms of a new generation of Christian leaders equipped to carry out dialogue with European society.

In 2017 we will participate in the Global Ecumenical Theological Institute (GETI). GETI'17 will invite advanced students of theology to meet for an ecumenical encounter and to work together on theological issues. In lectures, seminar groups, meditation and visits, the topic of changing religion(s) will be reflected upon. Our discussions will be theologically and economically focused. We will continue to implement the former Graz process on theological education, in collaboration with our ecumenical partners.

## 2.2.2 Peacebuilding and reconciliation

*Peacebuilding and reconciliation are among the deepest historical roots of CEC and continue to form a major part of our raison d'être.*

### Background

CEC will be a part of the worldwide Pilgrimage of Justice and Peace. In June 2014 the Governing Board adopted 'Declaration on the Centennial Commemoration of the First World War'. The Governing Board later repeated the wish to work on specific proposals in the field of reconciliation, in which CEC has traditionally made an important contribution.

Peacebuilding and reconciliation are among the deepest historical roots of CEC and continue to form a major part of our *raison d'être*. Nonetheless, the present era in Europe is marked among others by extreme nationalistic tensions and armed conflicts, between nations, states and societies due to

the global economic crisis, as well as interreligious tensions.

### Goals

As a bridge-building organisation, we will actively seek to resolve tension and find peaceful solutions to conflicts. We will seek to build bridges of reconciliation, contribute to peaceful pluralism, social justice, and empower people and Member Churches in their own bridge-building work.

*We will seek to build bridges of reconciliation, contribute to peaceful pluralism, social justice, and empower people and Member Churches in their own bridge-building work.*

Strengthening our profile as an organisation promoting justice and peace, and building capacity for dialogue between churches and church-related organisations are two key challenges. CEC should develop capacity for challenging extremist positions both in religion

and politics and attempt to be a bridge-builder that can offer solutions to conflicts.

More specifically and implementing the spirit of the Charta Œcumenica CEC will resist any attempt to misuse religion and the church for ethnic or nationalist purposes. Churches can hereby cooperate in reconciling peoples and cultures and stand against extreme nationalism. In this spirit, questions of nationalism, people, state, nation, and ethnicity are at the heart of our preoccupations.

We acknowledge that the divided churches are sometimes part of the divisions of Europe. CEC seeks to contribute to ecumenical solidarity in situations of crisis. We will actively commit ourselves to counter-acting any form of nationalism which leads to the oppression of other peoples and national minorities and to engage ourselves in non-violent resolutions as stipulated in the Charta Œcumenica.

Between 2015 and 2018, CEC will join in commemorations of the First World War. The Governing Board expressed a particular

interest in preparing a conference for Member Churches in 2016. During this time of reflecting on tragedy, conflict, and peace, the Charta will be our guide. It is candid in its stance that conflict requires supported mediation and peace, *"On the basis of our Christian faith, we work towards a humane, socially conscious Europe, in which human rights and the basic values of peace, justice, freedom, tolerance, participation and solidarity prevail."*

### 2.2.3 Human rights

#### **Background: Human rights**

In this area of work, cooperation between the CEC offices in Strasbourg and Brussels is particularly well developed.

The churches' work for the protection of human dignity is at the heart of its theological teaching. Strengthening the voice of the voiceless, poor, oppressed, marginalized and others in distress is central to the witness of Christian theology: *In all things I have shown you that by working hard in this way*

*we must help the weak and remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he himself said, 'It is more blessed to give than to receive. (Acts 20: 35)*

*Monitoring and advocacy for the implementation of civil, political, social, economic and cultural rights remain on the agenda of CEC Member Churches.*

This work also has important consequences for the interreligious dialogue. Religions are also often sources of conflict and societal tensions, which contradict human dignity.

Human rights work has a long history. The emergence of states saw the organisation and distribution of power based on law. With this came the growth of rights and evolving notions of what they constitute, and eventually the development of human rights law. The emergence of the state is a crucial development in the evolution of human rights precisely because so many rights, if not most of them, are state-centred. The state is a bearer of duties in respect of

individual persons, who depend on it for the protection of their rights and are entitled to claim against it for violations of those rights.

Human rights law provides the tools and mechanisms with which these protections and claims may be realised. The European Convention on Human Rights has been in force since 1953. Monitoring and advocacy for the implementation of civil, political, social, economic and cultural rights remain on the agenda of CEC Member Churches. The question of improving a human rights culture has become more important than ever before. Debates on the relationship of Christian witness and human rights among churches in Europe has also shown the need for a Christian reflection on such a culture.

### **Background: Religious freedom**

Freedom of religion or freedom of belief is a principle that supports the freedom of an individual or community, in public or private, to manifest religion or belief in teaching, practice, worship, and observance. The concept is generally recognised also to include the freedom to change religion or not

to follow any religion. Freedom of religion is considered by many people and nations to be a fundamental human right.

Article 18 of the UN International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights limits restrictions on freedom to manifest one's religion or beliefs to those necessary to protect public safety, order, health, or morals or the fundamental rights and freedoms of others.

### **Addressing international organisations**

Among international organisations, the work of the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) and the United Nations (UN) have yet to be systematically included within CEC's work. Especially in light of potential or actual conflicts on European soil. Preparing input from the churches, work with the OSCE and the UN could help foster the implementation of human rights as a precondition for resolving conflict situations. Maintaining close ties with civil society organisations such as the European Platform on Religious Intolerance and Discrimination and the Human Rights and Democracy Network and working with

them on different human rights issues coming from European civil society is a complementary challenge.

Therefore, CEC will advocate for specific human rights topics as they arise from the CEC Member Churches or institutional agendas such as freedom of religion or belief, social, economic and cultural rights, anti-discrimination and minority rights. CEC will also closely monitor the implementation of EU guidelines and recommendations from the Council of Europe on the promotion and protection of freedom of religion or belief.

### **Cooperation with Churches and church organisations**

CEC will support Member Churches in programmes on the implementation of religious freedom as an important element of human rights discussions. We will focus on developing a dialogue between churches on specific human rights issues, using and implementing the existing Human Rights Manual through seminars and other similar training sessions. It is our intention to organise in particular contexts individual

training sessions at the request of CEC Member Churches. We will also develop a new human rights training manual focused on the promotion and protection of human dignity such as women's rights, prisoners' rights, as churches respond to the current state of European human rights culture.

## 2.2.4 Economic and environmental justice

*CEC will monitor and provide expertise for dialogue and advocacy on EU environmental and climate policies and will seek possibilities for dialogue between the EU and the churches.*

### Background

The challenges arising from recent economic crises, continual economic imbalances and injustices, and the growing urgency of environmental concerns are among the key ethical concerns of churches. In parallel,

discussions about the ongoing threat of climate change and how to address it have intensified. It is increasingly clear that economic and environmental challenges are closely related. At the same time they cannot be separated from the ethics and questions of sufficiency, lifestyle, availability and overuse of natural resources, wealth distribution, ecological and monetary debt, and so on. CEC's future work on these challenges will be addressed using the framework of economic and environmental justice. CEC's work in this area will reflect both socio-political and ecumenical developments in Europe as well as the broader global perspective.

### Dialogue with political institutions

CEC will monitor and provide expertise for dialogue and advocacy on EU environmental and climate policies and will seek possibilities for dialogue between the EU and the churches. Among the envisaged EU initiatives, particular attention will be given to follow-up of the UN climate change conference in Paris, and to the proposal for a strategic framework for the Energy Union. CEC will also focus

on EU proposals for post-2015 Sustainable Development Goals and initiatives related to EU economic governance from the work plan of the European Commission.

### Cooperation with WCC and other ecumenical organisations

In its Policy Reference Committee report, the 13th Assembly recommended that CEC develop the capacity to be an effective partner in dialogue. CEC's work on economic and climate justice will pay particular attention to the development of the effective working relationship with the World Council of Churches, as well as with other partners working on these concerns. In addressing economic justice CEC will relate its work to two WCC programmes: "Pilgrimage of Justice and Peace" and "Economy of Life for All Now."

### Pilgrimage for Climate Justice

The Pilgrimage for Climate Justice will be a significant ecumenical activity leading to the United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP 21) in Paris in December 2015. With this programme CEC wants to make a

contribution to the Pilgrimage of Justice and Peace in a European context. In this regard the CEC programme will aim in particular:

- » To encourage, to support and to accompany its Member Churches in their efforts to contribute to the Pilgrimage. CEC will play an active role in encouraging and enabling CEC Member Churches before and after the UN summit to participate in and contribute to the Pilgrimage.
- » To identify and to work on a specific European contribution to the Pilgrimage.

Efforts will be given to follow-up work after the UN Paris summit. CEC will cooperate with the WCC in coordinating the global action of churches on climate change, in particular caring for European contribution to UN negotiations on climate change.

### **Economy of Life for All Now**

CEC will make an effort to contribute to the WCC programme on “Economy of Life for All Now.” At the same time attention will be given to the initiative “An Ecumenical Action Plan for a New International Financial and Economic Architecture.” CEC will work on the assessment of WCC position documents from a specific European perspective, arising from the European economic and financial crises. One objective of these efforts is to offer broader reflection on critical challenges presented by the modern economy including the need for regulation, international capital flows, sustainable investments, and so on.

CEC will also explore the possibility of addressing concerns of economic justice with partners from other regional ecumenical organisations and seek exchange on an interfaith level. It will support church environmental organisations and ecumenical networks in their efforts for the safeguarding of creation—as indicated in the Charta Oecumenica.

### **European Christian Environmental Network**

In its work on environmental justice and care for creation CEC will pay attention to continuing cooperation with the European Christian Environmental Network (ECEN), especially focusing on raising awareness of environmental concerns in agendas of churches across Europe and on providing a platform for sharing, mutual encouragement and cooperation. ECEN will continue to serve as a primary CEC instrument in responding to environmental challenges and for working together with the Member Churches. CEC will continue to provide the secretariat of ECEN work.

Emphasis will be given to organising biannual ECEN Assemblies (2016, 2018) and programmes aimed at strengthening partnerships and cooperation among churches in caring for creation, especially focusing on: eco-theology and liturgy, climate change, energy, practical eco-management and biodiversity.

## 2.2.5 Employment and social issues

### Background

The CEC Constitution states: “In providing an authentic, credible and socially responsible Christian witness, it will work towards building a humane, social and sustainable Europe at peace with itself and its neighbours in which human rights and solidarity prevail.”

In the coming years, life in Europe will continue to be formed in important ways 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.

*The theological traditions and cultures of European Churches can contribute to socially inclusive and sustainable European policy.*

Economic and social imbalances between countries and regions in Europe, and also

within countries and societies, are increasing. This threatens the integration of EU Member States and their societies.

The European Union is deeply implicated in these issues, especially through the common single market, the Economic and Monetary Union, and the common Euro currency. The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and the Council of Europe are also monitoring the development of these crises from their respective perspectives.

The Governing Board expressed a particular interest in organising a conference for Member Churches in 2016 to consider churches’ views of the EU response to the economic and financial crises. This would also be an opportunity to consider the relationship between economic, social and environmental policies with a view to arriving at a European “common good”.

### Addressing institutions

CEC will monitor European policies meant to overcome these crises. CEC will also reflect on how the expertise, experience, theological

traditions, and cultures can contribute to socially inclusive and sustainable European policy. These reflections will bear in mind the principle of subsidiarity, which arranges duties and responsibilities across the levels of municipal, regional, national, and European governance.

The EU proposals addressing EU employment and labour market will be monitored. We will also address the mid-term review of the Europe 2020 strategy (See the European Commission Work Plan for more information). As well as the social policy on EU and Council of Europe level, including questions of youth and intergenerational dialogue.

### Means

To achieve this goal CEC will work *inter alia* through the CALL Network (Church Action on Labour and Life) and cooperate with other organisations, especially Eurodiaconia and the European Sunday Alliance.

## 2.2.6 Bioethics

*CEC will continue to increase cooperation in this field with churches and church organisations and bodies, including ethics committees, universities and research centres, and academics.*

### Background

Over the next decade a range of game-changing innovations will emerge in society with far-reaching implications. Biotechnology and genetics are key areas to watch (Uppsala Report). It is important to communicate in a better manner on this subject. A future goal is to collect good practices from churches and other stakeholders.

### Addressing institutions

Increasingly we note that issues relating to biotechnology and ethics in science and technology are being taken up by the

European Institutions in Brussels, as well as by the Council of Europe (CoE) in Strasbourg. CEC will monitor and contribute to work done in this area by the European Institutions and other bodies including: DH-BIO (Steering Committee on Bioethics of the CoE where CEC has observer status), European Court of Human Rights, Parliamentary Assembly of the CoE, European Parliament in Strasbourg and in Brussels, European Commission Directorate General Research, European Group on Ethics in Science and Technology of the European Commission, European Court of Justice in Luxembourg, and European Patent Office in Munich.

### Cooperation with churches

CEC will continue to increase cooperation in this field with churches and church organisations and bodies, including ethics committees, universities, research centres, and academics. An example of such work is the workshop “Christian Arguments and the Reception of Bioethics in the Public Debate in Europe.” Potential thematic areas include questions related to euthanasia and physician assisted suicide.

CEC also underlines the importance of religious education as crucial for the churches’ approach to bioethics and shall explore ways of enlarging and intensifying work in this direction. This should include facilitating the launch of further discussions and work among theologians, ethicists, researchers, and communication specialists with a view of producing a more substantial publication.

## 2.2.7 Education for democratic citizenship

*CEC shall also continue to monitor the EU 2020 strategy on education and to contribute to it.*

### Overview

The Conference of European Churches should regard the support for cultural European education as a priority mandate and obligation. Without proper and qualified theological education systems reinforcing an

open and democratic perspective on society, European churches weaken themselves. Those with properly developed education programmes on questions of theology and culture qualify themselves for greater degrees of interaction with European society and its political actors. They reach out to the different levels and challenges in European society as well as to a deeper commitment to holistic Christian mission, as mandated by the Budapest Assembly.

## **Background**

Education is also recognised in interreligious context as an important means for promoting shared values of peace and reconciliation, intercultural dialogue and active European citizenship.

Participating in economic social life requires initial and lifelong quality training allowing employability. Tolerance and participation in a democratic society is also seen as a means of preparing children and young people to become responsible and active citizens.

## **Addressing institutions**

CEC shall monitor and contribute to the work of the European Institutions and work with the churches in this area through contributing as an observer to the Steering Committee on Educational Policies and Practices (CDPPE) of the Council of Europe (CoE). CEC shall also continue to monitor the EU 2020 Strategy on education and to contribute to it, in particular on education for democratic citizenship and human rights, active participation in society and the importance of solidarity.

## **Cooperation with Churches**

CEC is in the process of co-organising in 2015 a first pilot project for teachers in church-related kindergartens based in several European countries. The aim is acquiring and developing skills for creating contexts for positive development and interaction with other children and teachers. The project will be funded by the European Commission Erasmus+ Programme and concerns

kindergartens with many socially disadvantaged children. The focus will be on acquiring interreligious and intercultural competences, a field where the CoE develops groundbreaking tools and methods. If the first one proves successful, similar projects will be pursued in the following years until 2018.

## **Cooperation with specialised Organisations in Partnership**

CEC shall pursue fruitful cooperation with ICCS (Intereuropean Commission on Church and school), IACE (International Association for Christian Education) and CoGREE (Coordinating Group for Religion in Education in Europe). In no way do learning communities intend to contribute to “a” or “one” European identity as it does not exist. Democratic citizenship also means education in interreligious and interfaith perspective. The cognitive aspect has to be reinforced by a culture of critical reflection and debate. It is important to promote an effective dimension of citizenship as well.



## 2.2.8 Migration and asylum

### Europe's role in refugee protection in the 21<sup>st</sup> century

#### Background

In the 20<sup>th</sup> century Europe was a scene of displacement, but also a place of protection. New forms of displacement and forced migration (e.g., due to environmental degradation) will pose challenges in the years to come. Violent conflicts have in recent years erupted on Europe's doorsteps. Refugees find it increasingly difficult to enter Europe and access effective protection. A fair and just asylum procedure for those in need of protection remains crucial. At the same time, the increasingly high numbers of refugees stranded on the doorsteps of Europe further underline the need to extend solidarity to those refugees who will not be able to access European territory.

#### Goals

The EU and its Member States are formally committed to transposing the

legal instruments establishing a Common European Asylum System (CEAS). Meanwhile procedures and conditions for obtaining refugee status as well as recognition rates vary considerably across the EU. There is a need to further harmonise EU legislation and practice across EU Member States. CCME will inform the European Commission and European Parliament about practical experiences with implementing the CEAS in Member States. In order to assist with practical cooperation in matters of asylum, CCME will continue its thematic cooperation with the European Asylum Support Office (EASO).

*Through CCME, CEC will campaign for more solidarity between European States in responsibility sharing for refugee protection.*

The numbers of refugees and asylum seekers vary significantly between different European countries. The current Dublin III system of allocating responsibility for asylum claims places disproportional responsibility

on the EU Member States and non-EU members at the external borders of the EU. CCME will, therefore, on behalf of CEC, particularly in the context of the European Council for Refugees and Exiles (ECRE), further stimulate discussions on fair ways of sharing the responsibility for refugee protection among the EU Member States. In this context, we will campaign for more solidarity between European States in responsibility sharing.

Through CCME, we will take forward initiatives to promote additional and meaningful forms of refugee protection, in particular the resettlement of refugees to Europe. The aim of the high quality resettlement of 20,000 refugees annually to the EU will guide our efforts. Where possible in cooperation with partners from other regions, CCME will seek to strengthen the role of churches in promoting and implementing refugee resettlement, also focussing on the issue of religious identity and persecution. CCME will cooperate with WCC on the issue of statelessness and monitor initiatives of UNHCR to redefine the need of protection in view of present challenges in refugee protection. CEC will be represented in ECRE through CCME.

## Countering trafficking in human beings as a form of slavery

### Background

Parallel to stricter immigration controls, trafficking in human beings as a form of slavery has become more visible to the public in the past two decades. Joint efforts of authorities and non-governmental organisations and churches against this international crime have produced some results, but trafficking for various forms of exploitation remains a significant problem. Expertise on trafficking in women for sexual exploitation is fairly developed, but policy responses are still insufficient. Other forms of exploitation (e.g., forced labour) are still rather unknown. Civil society activities are mainly focussed on areas of 'damage control' such as prevention and assistance, with issues of rights and compensations often being sidelined in the process of identification and legal redress.

The human rights of trafficked persons are generally still insufficiently protected by policy and programmes. However, implementation of both legislation by the EU and the Council of Europe Convention and relevant

*CCME will explore possible connections between the disappearance of persons seeking asylum and trafficking.*

jurisprudence offer opportunities to better protect the rights of trafficked persons.

The basis of the work and the rights-based approach of CCME against trafficking are laid down in the 2008 position paper "So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed" on trafficking.

### Goals

CCME will maintain its role as a centre of expertise for churches in Europe wishing to address trafficking in women. Contributions will be made to events organised by churches and Christian agencies across Europe. Based on experiences from the field, CCME will give input to European policy debates.

It will be important to further develop expertise on patterns of labour trafficking and best practice to combat it – if possible in partnerships and with specific projects. Particular focus will be given to the role of civil society organisations in identifying victims and to models of guaranteeing the access to rights, such as compensation.

CCME will explore possible connections between the disappearance of persons seeking asylum and trafficking.



## Uniting in Diversity: Migration as an opportunity and a challenge for the unity of the Church

### Background

There is an increasing awareness that migration is changing the ecclesial landscape in Europe: more congregations of migrants are found, a greater diversity of denominations is observed. Segregated church life is a phenomenon similar to fragmentation in societies. At the same time more transnational and international congregations emerge. The way churches in Europe manage to achieve the goal of uniting in diversity will in many ways determine the future of Christianity in Europe. The credibility of Christian witness for inclusive communities will largely be influenced by the way in which churches achieve inclusiveness in their own midst.

*Theological reflection on migration will be encouraged by CCME.*

### Goals

We will assist and encourage churches in Europe in the process of “Being Church Together” with “migrant churches” (including migrant-led, black majority and minority ethnic churches). Based on the updated study “Mapping Migration in Europe – Mapping Churches Responses”, we will seek to enhance exchange on good and best practices.

It is important to encourage input from ecumenical bodies on the specific role religion can play in integration of migrants and host societies, as well as the theological reflection on migration.

It is our intention to cooperate with the Community of Protestant Churches in Europe in elaborating recommendations for common worship with migrant churches.



## Churches as witness to inclusive communities in Europe

### Background

Various forms of exclusion continue to exist in societies. Vulnerable groups of migrants are particularly affected by exclusion (e.g., asylum applicants and undocumented migrants, children of migrants, but also minority ethnic persons are often marginalised). Anti-discrimination legislation provides an important instrument even if it also poses challenges.

### Goals

CCME will maintain its involvement in ecumenical and secular anti-racism networks. It will keep informed about anti-discrimination legislation and, where appropriate, contribute to its promotion in churches. Where possible CCME will participate in platforms for the inclusion of ethnically discriminated groups within church and society.

CCME will organise an exchange on initiatives against right wing extremist groups, hate speech, xenophobia and racist attacks.

The issue of discrimination of Roma has in recent years received considerable attention. EU policy declarations have highlighted the need for decisive action by Member States as well as the need for civil society involvement in overcoming the discrimination of Roma. Churches and Christian agencies in some countries have begun to address the issue in a more coherent fashion. CEC and CCME will continue to enhance the cooperation with Eurodiaconia to develop synergies between the two organisations working in this field.

CCME will continue to seek funding for a programme looking at the role of churches in overcoming the discrimination of Roma. Activities could include team visits and studies on acknowledging the role of the Roma community in national and church history.

In cooperation with other partners we will monitor discussions on migrant integration. CCME will contribute to these discussions where appropriate. This is based on the conviction that integration in all aspects is a two-way process that should include migrants' rights and anti-discrimination. It should create a logic of better inclusion rather than pre-emptively exclude certain groups of (potential) migrants.



## 2.2.9 EU policy and legislation

### Background

In the past, the task of monitoring and informing churches of EU policy and developments was carried out by a (CEC working) group of church experts on EU law organised in cooperation with CSC and EKD Brussels. The monitoring of the jurisprudence of the European Court of Human Rights with regard to state-church-law will remain an area of interest. The Charta Œcumenica mentions that we have allowed differences of opinion on doctrine, ethics and church law to lead to separations between churches, with special historical circumstances and different cultural backgrounds often playing a crucial role.

*EU policy and legislation group provides an early warning function and expertise to the Governing Board in responding to developments within the EU.*

### Addressing institutions

The group is a forum for discussion and exchange of information on current legal and political matters emerging from the European Institutions. Its main focus is to share, at an early stage, information on EU legislation with regard to church-state-law. We will foster a common church approach to EU legislative proposals and help churches without representation in Brussels to get an overview of EU topics of interest to them. The scope of its deliberation also extends to fundamental rights issues and equal treatment, dialogue between the EU and churches, employment law, rulings and other relevant legal matters.

Exchange and reflection on possible EU legislation impacting on the status of the churches (e.g., the area of anti-discrimination) and the future development of Article 17 III of the Treaty of the Functioning of the European Union will be at the centre. Possible accession of the EU to the European Convention on Human Rights will continue to be an important issue.

### Cooperation with Churches

Currently the secretariat of this working group lies with the EKD office in Brussels and usually meets twice a year. Officials of the European Institutions are involved in the meetings. These encounters contribute to maintaining the open, transparent and regular dialogue between churches and the EU, but also allow the working group to take advantage of external expertise to be able to better assess current legal and political developments.

The group also exchanges information on legal issues of importance for Member Churches and works to deepen the mutual understanding of and exchange on the different state-church systems within CEC. It also serves as a pool of expertise for organising European church lawyers' conferences, which are especially intended to keep small CEC Member Churches up-to-date on important legal developments on EU level.

We recommend that such a group provide an early warning function and expertise to the Governing Board in responding to developments within the EU.

## 2.3 Horizontal activities

### 2.3.1 Interreligious and interfaith cooperation

#### Background

In the upcoming time, interreligious and interfaith cooperation will be a horizontal task shared by all staff. It will be included in all programmes since the pluralities of religious and non-confessional beliefs and ways of life have become a feature of European culture. Relationship and cooperation between religions and faith-based organisations is of increasing importance in a multicultural Europe. In all its future work areas CEC should draw on its past engagement in interreligious and interfaith work.

*In all its future work areas CEC should draw on its past engagement in interreligious and interfaith work.*

#### Goals

The objective in this area is to look for and grow connections with partners from other religious traditions on specific thematic areas of concern for CEC (e.g., climate change, environmental protection, human rights, economic justice, and so on).

Alongside these efforts, CEC will engage in monitoring existing interfaith activity at the European level and be proactive in connecting with potential partners for cooperation.

Developments in Europe show the necessity to consider establishing a regular dialogue between religions at a European level to discuss urgent topics such as the relation and balance between freedom of expression and freedom of religion. We commit ourselves to oppose all forms of anti-Semitism in the church and in society and seek to intensify dialogue with our Jewish sisters and brothers at all levels. We recommend, in particular, also speaking in a multilateral context about our faith in one God, and clarifying ideas about human rights.

### 2.3.2 Youth and youth-related work

Youth are the church, and they are great advocates for Christian unity. CEC wants to empower young Christians to enliven the ecumenical movement: as stewards at the Assembly, or as participants in activities liaising between youth, churches, CEC bodies and CEC programmes as multipliers of a sustainable way of life. Solidarity and social justice on local, national and global levels should be manifested through education, prayer, lobbying and sharing their expertise.

CEC will make an effort to enhance youth participation and include young people, inviting them to participate in programmes.

CEC shall organise an annual meeting with representatives of European Youth Organisations: WSCF-E, EYCE and Syndesmos to discuss possible synergies and collaborations.

*Youth are the church, and they are great advocates for Christian unity.*

### 2.3.3 Assembly 2018

Member Churches need to have confidence that any new strategic framework document presented to the Assembly is informed by and captures the contribution and expertise of our stakeholders: Member Churches, Pan-European Federations of Churches, Organisations in Partnership and National Councils of Churches. The process by which Assembly documentation is prepared is therefore all the more important. The preparation process needs to be both wide and deep. It needs to be participatory, inclusive and bottom up. It must enable all voices to be heard.

The Assembly, whatever its size, needs adequate staffing and resourcing. The Secretariat will require administrative capacity to assist in the planning of meetings of the General Assembly. A general and a local planning committee needs to be set up in 2016.

In advance of the next CEC Assembly a communications strategy will be developed to meet communication needs leading up

to, during, and following the Assembly. This will take into consideration the preparation of the report “From Budapest to ...”, branding and theme for the logo. This will be undertaken in parallel with other Assembly planning groups, resourcing the Assembly with communication professionals, developing materials for and during the event, press releases and informing Member Churches, and more. This work is contingent on the work of the Assembly planning committee and on the resources available for communications in the years immediately before 2018 (e.g., information technology, social media, and so on).

### 2.3.4 Communications

#### Background

Communications at CEC is a mixture of strengths and opportunities for improvement. Our greatest strength is that our programmatic content is theologically and politically relevant, and we have many good relationships with other organisations and institutions. Our weakness is that most

of the tools we use to communicate need repair, replacement, or updating. Updating communication tools is relatively easy and cost-effective in today’s communication climate. We will move through a three-phase process of rejuvenating communications at CEC.

*Updating communication tools is relatively easy and cost effective in today’s communication climate.*

#### Goal: Building

The first phase—Building—will involve repairing, replacing, or updating the tools we use to deliver news and inform our stakeholders. This includes a complete redesign of [www.ceceurope.org](http://www.ceceurope.org) in light of the CSC-CEC merger and current web technologies, streamlining our social media presence, a new way of delivering the CEC newsletter, and weekly email updates. Importantly, we will also begin collecting and analysing data in this phase to help guide communications decisions.

The website redesign will make news items more prominent and our content easier to find and share. It will be made more attractive and user-friendly. The redesign will also improve search engine performance. Moving our newsletter to an email marketing tool allows us to deliver a more attractive and user-friendly product, to track performance, and grow audiences.

Strategies and guidelines will also be developed for publishing, social media, translating, and press releases during this phase.

### **Goal: Engagement**

The second phase—Engagement—will see CEC benefit from a new website, streamlined social media presence, and updated newsletters. Our updated communications tools and strategies will make it much easier for people to understand, talk about, and get involved in the work of CEC. Here, for example, we will work on getting audiences to download and use CEC resources, comment and like social media posts, forward or reuse pieces from our newsletter. We will also see increased attention to CEC press releases and news stories in

media outlets. This phase is also largely educational, where through clear and frequent communications people will become increasingly fluent in the mission and work of CEC.

### **Goal: Growth**

In the third phase—Growth—we already enjoy up-to-date communication tools and good engagement with our existing audiences, so we are ready to grow our network of supporters. This will be achieved in part through direct requests to our existing core audiences (e.g., asking them to forward newsletters to their networks) and through marketing campaigns (e.g., paid promotion on Facebook, experimenting with Google Adwords). This phase will encourage us to refine core messaging and build new relationships in light of what we have learned from the first two phases. It will also open the way for exploration of CEC fundraising options.

The renewal of communications at CEC has implications for the entire staff. We strive to create a culture of communication at our Brussels and Strasbourg offices. Each

staff member will in time take responsibility for some aspects of our communications work. This might include contributions of web, newsletter, and social media content, professional development on various topics in communications, and responsibilities towards networks and relationship-building.

### **Event-related tasks**

In addition to the renewal and implementation of the tools and methods named above, communications in the 2015 to 2018 period will also take on several event-related tasks. The first of these is a pan-European gathering of church communications professionals. The second is a series of web-based panel discussions on communications themes important to CEC Member Churches.

### **Pan-European gathering of church communicators**

Communications professionals and volunteers who serve member denominations benefit from ongoing professional development and networking. This conference will bring together church



communicators from across CEC Member Churches to learn from each other and to address themes and questions of common concern. Those gathered will discuss best practices, learn from the strengths and resources of other participants, and discuss issues emerging in European churches that impact how and what we communicate. A concrete outcome of this conference is a renewed network of church communicators in Europe.

### **Webinar series**

A monthly series of webinars will lead to the pan-European gathering of church communicators. Starting in January 2016, CEC will organise and host monthly 90-minute webinars on themes and issues important to Member Church communicators. This will provide an opportunity for professional development, advancing church communications in Europe, collaboration, and community building in advance of the face-to-face gathering.



## Part III: Participatory working mechanisms

### Background

In order to fulfil its aims CEC again takes instruction from its Constitution. CEC will establish *fora for programmatic development and research, such as conferences, working groups and seminars for dialogue. In this, it collaborates with its Organisations in Partnership, National Councils of Churches, the World Council of Churches, and other ecumenical bodies inside and outside Europe.* (CEC Constitution Art. 2.4).

Future activities will take up work of the former Church and Society and Churches in Dialogue Commissions. Following the outcomes of the Budapest Assembly future activities will be designed emphasising a variety of participatory working mechanisms. All efforts will be made to identify the best mechanisms for the aims of our work. Flexibility, competence, and potential for quick response will be core values.

For the overall ensemble of participatory working mechanisms employed in the future for programmatic aims, two aspects will be

kept in balance: expertise and effectiveness on the one hand, and representation and involvement of Member Churches and Organisations in Partnership on the other.

### 3.1 Working mechanisms

#### Thematic reference groups

The mandate of thematic reference groups (in principle established for the period between Assemblies) might differ and needs to be clearly determined by the CEC Governing Board. Thematic reference groups may either deal with a precise topic (e.g., physician assisted suicide) or cover a wider field (e.g., human rights). Depending on this, these groups may have an advisory function, suggest or implement projects. The main criteria for membership of a thematic reference group are expertise and willingness to actively participate. Thematic reference groups should reflect CEC constituency as much as possible. Formal reference groups have a specific goal or mission.

#### Task Forces / Ad-hoc Working Groups / Project Groups

Task forces, *ad hoc* working groups or project groups may be established in order to fulfil a very specific task, which needs to be achieved in a limited time span (e.g., preparing a publication, substantive responses to the European Institutions, preparation of a consultation, and so on).

#### One-off consultations

One-off consultations may serve as a think-tank, to test ideas with a wider audience or to launch a broader debate on policy issues.

#### Networking

Networks (e.g., CALL, ECEN) help to draw on existing expertise in Member Churches, National Councils of Churches and Organisations in Partnership. They are useful tools for communication and for engaging Member Churches in thematic work and common activities.

## Team visits

Team visits are a useful tool for closer exchange between CEC and Member Churches, National Councils of Churches or Organisations in Partnership. Team visits might serve as fact-finding missions or instruments to foster a closer dialogue or cooperation. Often, especially in crisis situations, this may also be a living witness that CEC cares about its membership and the people therein.

## Cooperation with other partners

Partners may work in similar fields as CEC, diaconal or development agencies. In these cases possibilities for cooperation should be discussed and implemented.

## Out-sourcing

It might also be possible to out-source a specific task to one member of our constituency or a partner organisation that has greater expertise or that is already working on a similar project. The expectation would be, however, that the partner then takes into account—or even involves—the broader constituency of CEC.

## Internships

Internships are a valuable pathway to strengthening relationships with CEC Member Churches and benefitting from two-way learning. CEC internships would provide the opportunity for in-depth learning on a single thematic area or about ecumenism in Europe more broadly.

## Ad-hoc collaboration with local churches

Where beneficial to both CEC and local churches, we will seek and be open to opportunities for cooperation on a range of events and initiatives. This might include dialogues and debates, hosting conferences and

meetings, engagement with politicians and political institutions across Europe.

## 3.2 Brussels-based activities

### Chapel of the Resurrection

The Chapel is a Roman Catholic Church with an ecumenical orientation in the heart of Brussels' European district. CEC supports the administrative and spiritual life of the ecumenical activities there and has access to the facilities for certain events. This is a great resource for relationship building in the Brussels church community.



## Part IV: Financial sustainability

By the time of the next ordinary meeting of the General Assembly, CEC will have put in place fundraising strategies and have developed its own capacity to deliver on these strategies by securing project funding from a range of European organisations and institutions.

One of the main tasks of the Governing Board (Constitution Art. 8.4) is to ensure, in partnership with the General Secretary and relevant finance personnel, the financial stability of the Conference and to guarantee adequate resources to fulfil its mission, managing finances effectively. It is critical that the Secretariat is well resourced and has an adequate and stable income.

Up to 2015 cash flow problems were solved, avoiding a deficit after the General Assembly. The General Secretariat started to build general reserves, reserves for the next Assembly,

provisions for a possible future ecumenical assembly, as well as a programmatic fund, as was decided during the Assembly.

### Achieving a secure income

Achieving a secure and growing income base depends on developing and implementing relevant programmes and processes that bring added value to partners, participants, and beneficiaries. It also requires high standards of quality and accountability in all programmes and activities, and being able better to communicate and demonstrate CEC's value, expertise, and achievements to funding partners. CEC will review contributions to close the gap between expected and actual income and establish in dialogue with churches a membership fee structure. Comprehensive project planning, including the costs of materials and personnel, fundraising and financial control have to be improved.

### Funding options

As to how the Conference shall be financed, various funding options have been considered (Constitution Art. 13):

- » A membership fee paid by all members
- » Voluntary contributions from the members of the Conference
- » Project funding for specific programmes
- » Donations or grants from third parties
- » In kind contribution as capital or income increases that is not in cash

There have been many and varied contributions in kind: seconding of staff, free media work, sponsorship, administrative assistance, board and lodgings for meetings, hospitality to the General Secretary or the presidency, meeting rooms and meals for meetings, covering travel costs, and so on.

### **Strengthen partnerships and funding models**

While CEC will explore new models of funding, we remain committed to our existing funding partners and models of joint work that have been developed. We will invest strongly in these relationships in order to maintain and expand funding received, adapting our models to fit the changing realities and aligning funds available for our goals and priorities. CEC will monitor spending in line with its budget and manage cost-conscious budgeting. Governing Board members will be engaged to be champions for and ambassadors of CEC, raising awareness and promoting CEC's identity as a Regional Ecumenical Organisation. Also, the Governing Board shall apply the procedures for non-payment of membership fees.

### **Develop new sources of funding**

We know that we cannot rely solely on these models that have worked in the past. Tapping new financial resources through a comprehensive fundraising strategy will be one of the objectives. CEC will seek public funding

and other donors, foundations, and private sources. We recognise this is easier in the area of "Church and Society" and migration work than in other priority areas of work. We will be creative in looking for new funding sources for activities that have traditionally been difficult to fund. Co-funding will be one of the important options to investigate.

### **Improve contributions from members**

Membership fees enable us to undertake work that is important to Member Churches, National Councils of Churches and Organisations in Partnership. We will work to achieve a better recovery of membership fees and to explore other ways that Member Churches can contribute to the work of CEC.

CEC Member Churches will be encouraged to commit themselves to regular payment of the membership fees by 1 April as is the general practice with organisations that depend on members' contributions. The General Secretariat will be inquiring and/or sending reminders when the fees are not paid. Consultations with stakeholders will be organised as appropriate.

We will increase transparency, including through budget and accounts being approved directly by the members. We aim to raise 75 to 80% of the fundraising halfway into the fiscal year, as the last 20 to 25% is typically the hardest to raise. Finally we will encourage Member Churches to give voluntary contributions designated for programme and advocacy work (Pareto Principle: 80% of our gifts will come from 20% of our donors).

Experience shows that fundraising is primarily successful for projects and work on specific themes while CEC administration and staff will have to be maintained from membership fees. Churches will also be encouraged to facilitate or supplement the work of CEC through their own resources (e.g., projects, staff, and so on).

## Fundraising and communication

CEC will set up intensive communications and pro-active networking. Fundraising work will remain closely integrated with our communications and relationship management strategies. Diversifying the funding base will be a complex and long-term effort. Build relationships, communications, and systems that enable to seek funding successfully from other sources are one of the key issues. CEC will work through an annual resource mobilisation plan to assure the finances needed to carry out the programme of work and activities, consolidate and build reserves, provisions for the General Assembly and for an Ecumenical Assembly. Nevertheless the term “resource mobilisation” denotes more than raising funds and includes gaining support from local churches including time, expertise, volunteers, and gifts. Focus on accountability to donors and stakeholders through professional, timely, and well-written reports on each programme and activity will be key.

An annual fundraising workshop with external experts, to be attended by all staff members and those members of the Governing Board with competence in this area will be organised.

## Part V: Conclusions

This document is issued at an important turning point in the history of the Conference of European Churches. The work on the vision and goals has led to a statement of faith, a historical narrative, a vision for CEC and Europe, a description of the mission of CEC, a proposal for core values and a number of general strategic goals for the next few years.

A basic prerequisite for the entire proposal, amended and accepted during the Budapest Assembly of 2013 is that the Member Churches commit themselves to be involved in CEC’s work not only financially but also in the development of various projects and programmes.

In the coming three years we intend to capitalise on the relationships we have been building with organisations and churches who have an interest in CEC’s work. The hard work of achieving the vision of this Roadmap can only succeed with the involvement of the widest possible coalition. We hope and believe that our plans match that ambition and we pray that God may bless our endeavours.

As the Psalmist wrote, *“Unless the LORD builds the house, those who build it labour in vain.”* (Psalm 127:1)





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