

# FROM BUDAPEST TO NOVI SAD

A journey of the Conference of  
European Churches from 2013 to 2018



GENERAL ASSEMBLY  
**YOU SHALL BE MY WITNESSES**  
CONFERENCE OF EUROPEAN CHURCHES  
**NOVI SAD 2018**

**“You shall be my witnesses” Acts 1:8**

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# Report of the President

RT REV. CHRISTOPHER HILL KCVO, DD

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My introduction to the report is in two parts. The first part reports on the internal life of CEC following the Constitutional Assembly in Budapest. The second part reflects on the changing face of Europe in recent years and the context of our work as the Conference of European Churches.

The transformation of CEC goes back, of course, to the Lyon Assembly of July 2009. To understand where CEC is today delegates need to recall the powerful and at sometimes sharp debate at the Lyon Assembly. A mandate was given for a Revision Working Group which included six points:

- the need for concise and easily manageable procedures,
- the Revision Working Group was to be constituted not as an ordinary committee but as a body of experts representing the regions, confessional families and majority and minority churches with the Presidency as advisors,
- the need to meet urgently,
- to complete its work six months before the Budapest Constitutional Assembly,
- to present the report through the Central Committee with advice on any proposed amendments to the constitution,
- to consider the date of the Constitutional Assembly in relation to the World Council of Churches (WCC) General Assembly and for the Central Committee to consider the financial consequences of the implementation of the report.

The Revision Working Group duly presented the report – called the *Uppsala Report* from the place of its last meeting – in 2012 for the Budapest Assembly in 2013.

The whole Budapest Assembly was dedicated to the question of the reform of CEC, and after a very full discussion, the Assembly adopted the proposed new Constitution on 7 July 2013. This may be seen in full in the *Lyon to Budapest* report. As well as the simplification of the governance of CEC, which involved the replacement of the very large and unwieldy Central Committee

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and Presidium Committee by a smaller Governing Board and Presidency, together with the separate governance of the Commissions, the new Constitution also included an Article dealing with transitional provisions. These included the moving of the headquarters from Geneva to Brussels and the necessary consequential legal changes required by Belgian law. (I shall return to this technicality later in this report.)

At the conclusion of Budapest, on my election as president, someone said to me “well done CEC has been reformed and made fit for purpose for the future of Europe and its churches”. I remember replying, “not quite, we have changed the constitution but now comes the time to change the organisation itself!” So the first part of the last five-year period involved the actual implementation of the new Constitution and the direction set by the Budapest Assembly.

The move to Brussels was complicated but relatively smoothly achieved and great thanks must go to the Geneva staff, and we are pleased that they all found new posts. I was able to visit them twice in Geneva during this period of personal transition for them. It must be remembered that the co-ordinator of the Budapest Assembly, Clarissa Balan, could not move to Brussels and therefore the Novi Sad Assembly co-ordinator and his team, with the General Secretary, have had to work without that direct Geneva experience. Our thanks go to the former General Secretary, Rev. Dr Guy Liagre, for his work in the move from Geneva to Brussels. Geneva is of course an “international” city, Brussels is however, with Strasbourg, a “European” city. This is true and will continue to be true irrespective of membership of the EU. The move to Brussels was determined by the Budapest Assembly and its achievement has been no small operation. Our archives have remained in the Ecumenical Centre in Geneva, where they are receiving expert archival care.

But the Budapest Assembly also determined that the independent Commissions should be abolished, so that the new Governing Board would exercise proper responsibility on behalf of the Member Churches directly. This was a more complicated change. The Commission for Churches in Dialogue was directly part of the Geneva secretariat in any case, but the long interval before the appointment of a new staff person responsible has meant that only now is the work of dialogue being fully resumed – as delegates will see from the relevant report. The Church and Society Commission, with its headquarters in Brussels, and partly owning the Ecumenical Centre with the Churches’ Commission for Migrants in Europe, was highly cooperative in the process of “amalgamation”.

I wish to put on record our gratitude to its then moderator, Rev. Serge Fornerod, who guided the “merger” process with skill and diplomacy. This

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included the transitional device of technically transferring the legal identity of the Church and Society Commission (CSC) to the new CEC so that CEC did not have to register legally in Belgium as an entirely new legal body, with consequent property questions etc. Another consequence of this amalgamation was the proper continuation of the work agenda of CSC for the time being so that the work in Brussels could continue smoothly until the Governing Board itself could properly inform its direction. So the continuation of sub-groups is now called Thematic Reference Groups (TRG). At the present time the groups and the staff of CEC are assessing the value of these TRGs. Some are very effective and through them experts of a number of Member Churches fully participate. Others do not seem to work so well and the question arises as to more effective instruments for *some* areas of CEC's work.

The relationship with the Churches' Commission for Migrants in Europe (CCME) has been even more complicated. CEC needs to remember that before the Lyon Assembly plans were developed for the integration of CEC and CCME. However, CCME is technically a separate structure, with its own separate assembly with delegates appointed from agencies and churches, and its own distinct income stream for the essential and ever more important work with migrants and refugees in the current European and global crisis. The Lyon-Uppsala-Budapest process interrupted this integration process somewhat unilaterally. For its part CCME therefore had hesitations due to proper concerns about its wider membership base and income. The natural question asked was: "Would the work of the churches for and amongst migrants and refugees be diminished and become less visible?".

Matters were not helped by personality issues, now happily resolved in the excellent working relationship between the two general secretaries of CEC and CCME respectively. Furthermore, CEC has good representation on the CCME Executive Committee and Assembly. A new Working Agreement was established in 2014 – in which I was personally involved with the then moderator of CCME, and happily now an enhanced agreement for co-operation has been approved by both governing bodies in 2017. The details of this can be found in the relevant reports from CCME. CEC looks forward to even closer collaboration and means of working together as CCME itself moves into a new phase of its work. The delegates of the churches in Novi Sad will surely wish to emphasise the crucial importance for Europe and its "soul" in how we respond to the refugee crisis before us. I record my own strong dissatisfaction with the manner in which the UK has failed to act with generosity and compassion; alas the UK is not the only jurisdiction in such a case.

Continuing on the "internal" side of CEC, I report on the difficulties facing the Presidency, the Governing Board and the Brussels staff at the time of the end of the previous General Secretary's interim contract. This was not a happy period at the Ecumenical Centre. But we wish the former General

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Secretary well, and warmly welcome the present General Secretary in his third year of office. This transition, I speak personally, took a very considerable amount of your president's time and also his emotions, as was also true for all of the Brussels staff.

At that time the Budapest Constitution was amended in accordance with the agreed final transitional section of the Constitution (Article 17) so that it would conform to Belgian (rather than Swiss) law. The Governing Board followed the recommendations made at that time. Nevertheless, since then a very reputable law firm in Brussels has pointed out, on enquiry from our own Assembly Legal Advisor and the Assembly Planning Committee, that the earlier attempt was not perfectly done. So the Assembly will need to make the necessary changes to the Constitution at Novi Sad. All the churches in membership have already been alerted to this and it is absolutely *not* intended that these changes are controversial in any way. They are largely additions because Belgian law requires more detail in a constitution than other jurisdictions, rather than by-laws. The changes are all in the true spirit of Uppsala – Budapest. Novi Sad is not to become a constitutional assembly; we trust that we will be able to pass them quickly due to prior consultation with the churches.

Finally, from “within” CEC, some words of thanks to colleagues in various capacities. The *Uppsala Report* was concerned about CEC's financial transparency and security. The “new” Budget Committee under Rev. Michael Bubik, with a small group of expert colleagues, has certainly transformed CEC's finances in terms of transparency. With the introduction of management accounts it is possible for the Governing Board to see the actual state of our finances. The fact of having only Euro accounts, rather than Swiss francs and Euros, has also made life simpler! There remains the perennial problem of whether a better formula for annual subscriptions can be designed. Rev. Michael Bubik has worked on several models. Our sister organisation the WCC has the same problem. Different churches inhabit different economic cultures and ways of understanding membership. There is also the question of under or even non-payment of subscriptions. The Presidents, General Secretary, and Treasurer are making visits. The Governing Board and the Budget Committee are all aware that this issue has to be tackled. However, some members provide great hospitality to important CEC meetings and conferences, and these contributions are cherished by CEC even if at times it is difficult to account for such contributions. The Budget Committee has now proposed a revised formula for annual subscriptions with the full support of the Governing Board.

My personal debt of gratitude must also be expressed to the General Secretary, with whom I have been in weekly, even daily communication, and with other members of the Brussels “collegium”, that is to say the Executive



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Staff. In addition, we have to thank profoundly our small administrative staff in Brussels. I can testify to both their efficiency and necessity!

To this I must add a huge thanks to my fellow presidents. One very important feature of the last ten years since Lyon has been the fact that the Presidency is corporate. The president and vice-presidents are in regular contact and we work together representing the three confessional strands of the European Churches: Anglican and Old Catholic, Orthodox and Protestant (less of course the Roman Catholic Church, with which CEC also has regular consultation and collaboration through COMECE and CCEE (See the General Secretary's Report).

This "collegial" presidency is not really written into the Constitution which specifies only that the vice-presidents shall support the president or represent him or her. But it is a welcome development, which I very much hope will continue. It began when Metropolitan Emmanuel was President, after Lyon, and it has continued to this day in deep friendship as well as collegial partnership. Thank you Dean Karin, Metropolitan Emanuel and you also Fr Heikki.

But the Presidents, as with the General Secretary, are always subject to the Governing Board. Compared with some sessions of the old Central Committee the present Governing Board has been a "holiday". That is not to say there has always been complete unanimity or agreement. There has been sharp discussion but it has always been with respect for whatever outcomes have eventually been voted on. And the Governing Board meetings have been genuinely happy occasions. I celebrated my birthday with the Governing Board some time ago – in Armenia, though we usually meet in Brussels! Significant friendships have developed and mutual ecclesial understandings have been enlarged. At our last meeting the Governing Board conducted a review of its own work with assistance from a professional consultancy. Strengths and weaknesses were noted and the completed review will be handed on to the new President and Vice-Presidents and Governing Board as part of an induction process so there will not only be a smooth continuity but also so there can be an improvement in our actual working methods and efficiency. I have also conducted a review of the General Secretary's work (as required by the Constitution). The Governing Board has assisted me in this. This too will be handed on to the new President and is already being implemented by the General Secretary.

To the Assembly Planning Committee and Canon Leslie Nathaniel (this is the second time that Canon Leslie Nathaniel has been Moderator of the Planning Committee) and the Assembly Co-ordinator Szabolcs Lőrincz and Assembly Assistant Ms Charlie Belot, we also owe a great debt of thanks, which includes the local Serbian Committee. The latter embody the invitation and welcome of the Serbian Orthodox Church to our Assembly. This has

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been expressed personally by Patriarch Irinej of Serbia, and the Holy Synod, as well as Metropolitan Irinej of Bačka, in whose diocese is Novi Sad.

“ We exist to share a vision of what the churches of Europe can contribute to the nations and cultures of Europe ”

I spoke at the beginning of this report of the wider European context of our Novi Sad Assembly. Our internal reforms must not make us over-preoccupied with ourselves and our ecclesiastical institutions. The distinguished wartime Archbishop of Canterbury, the late William Temple, one of the visionaries behind the original British Welfare State, now in sad disrepair, once said that “the Church is the only society that exists for the benefit of those who are not its members”. So the Conference of European Churches exists not just for its membership, important as that is. We exist to share a vision of what the churches of Europe can contribute to the nations and cultures of Europe: a God-given kaleidoscope of peoples, languages, faiths and political and economic systems. Yet our continent is in deep uncertainty about its identity. What can the Churches say? Here is the “outward” task of CEC; to be a catalyst to the churches in that search for the “soul” of Europe – the request of Jacques Delors many years ago.

Our present involvement, even in some places disenchantment, with the idea of Europe has been developing steadily through the early years of this century, even as the EU itself was expanding in 2004 and 2007. Some analysis of this emerging disenchantment is called for before the churches can effectively contribute to a wider vision to counteract neo-nationalisms and populist politics.

There was the global financial crisis of 2008, eroding the confidence of the latter years of the last century. Various degrees of austerity brought reduction in welfare provision, Greece in particular had to reduce pensions and public service provision just when they were most needed. The Greek example is significantly illustrative. Northern Europe was perceived as forcing deep hardship, while from an EU point of view Greece was seen as having to pay for decades of living beyond its means.

2011 saw the beginning of the so-called “Arab Spring”, but what emerged was government suppression and violent protest. Intervention in the Middle East by the West added significantly to internal turmoil, with the tragic result of the humanitarian crisis we call the migrant or refugee problem. And Southern Europe, Spain, Italy and particularly Greece, Romania and Serbia now face the crisis, with inadequate support from the rest of Europe, where

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national governments – with a few notable exceptions – have been significantly less generous than the European institutions themselves.

Then there is the rise of Euroscepticism, the flames of which are fanned by “scare stories” about migration and refugees, most dramatically in the UK (especially England) but also elsewhere. In the UK, the Brexit Referendum continues to deeply divide the nation(s) and also the two largest political parties.

Though this analysis is necessarily over short and inevitably truncated, I think it is indeed possible to see the inter-related causes of our deep European anxiety. (For an analysis of this for which I am very grateful, see the recently published *Religion and Welfare in Europe*, eds. Lina Molokotos-Liederman, Anders Bäckström, Grace Davie, Policy Press, University of Bristol, 2017.)

It is precisely this crisis of identity which our General Assembly in Novi Sad seeks to address. How do we witness in Europe today; how do we witness to economic justice; how do we witness to the hospitality of God? And already the Member Churches of CEC have been wrestling with these issues. Very significant for CEC has been the four regional consultations on the Future of Europe: in Iceland for the Nordic and Baltic regions; in Edinburgh for the UK and Ireland (post-referendum); in Volos in Greece (seeing the churches’ response to the refugee crisis); in Prague (hearing the issues of Central Europe, also on the refugee frontier).

“How do we witness in Europe today;  
how do we witness to economic justice;  
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hospitality of God?”

The findings of these four consultations are data for our Assembly. But they have also constituted a new and exciting method for CEC which has elicited the participation of no less than 60 - 70 of our member churches. This is a much higher proportion of participation than other mechanisms for our work. Moreover, smaller “minority” churches have also fully participated in these consultations. In seeking a vision for the future of Europe such regional consultations not only say something about how CEC can work more effectively in the future but also how Europe itself can find a way of speaking to itself and its constituent communities, which avoids the fear of monolithic bureaucracies and encourages local and regional identities to flourish.

So to our discussions I commend some analysis of the current crisis in the identity of Europe and its constituent peoples and the contribution of the churches ecumenically in our continent. We are used to being a council of

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churches in the plural. The ecumenical movement rejoices in pluriformity and diversity, just as the vision of the heavenly Jerusalem in the Book of Revelation sees the welcome of the redeemed of every nation entering the City in which the gates are never shut.

Novi Sad means the “new” city. May our General Assembly in Novi Sad, held in a city which not so very long ago suffered bombing in war, allow us to witness a vision for Europe which is closer to that of the New Jerusalem; where the gates are open but also where each nation has its identity and place in justice and peace and where war is no more.





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# Report of the General Secretary

FR HEIKKI HUTTUNEN

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## **The unique character of the Conference of European Churches**

The Conference of European Churches is often described as a unique overarching forum for churches with different traditions from all of Europe. No other organisation offers such a broad spectrum and togetherness. CEC is linked with the global ecumenical movement in the most comprehensive way. It offers a space in which churches come together to work towards the visible unity of the Church of Jesus Christ and “pursue together the path of growing conciliar understanding,” as affirmed in CEC’s 2013 Constitution. This spiritual and theological concurrence inspires a common engagement in Europe.

*“The vision of the Conference 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. 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,” states the Constitution.*

It is part of CEC’s unique ecumenical character that it is one of the Regional Ecumenical Organisations in the eight regions of the world, working together, and with the World Council of Churches. This is an ecumenical character exclusive to CEC, in comparison to other inter-ecclesial organisations, confessional or inter-confessional, national or international church organisations.

It is not straightforward to realise what it means to “be church” in Europe now. Our European churches need each other in exploring this identity. The fact that they are different in doctrinal and spiritual approach, cultural background and political situation, is both an advantage and a challenge.

In order to fulfil their evangelical calling, our churches need “a safe ecumenical space” where they can listen to each other’s experiences and express commitment and solidarity, and where their ultimate unity in following Christ

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may overcome their contextual differences. CEC has the unique possibility to serve them in rediscovering together the authentic meaning of Christian mission and service – the contemporary exercise of the biblical concepts of witness, justice and hospitality.

### **An ecumenical perspective on the future of Europe**

CEC is in a favourable position for having Member Churches from 40 European countries, and not only the European Union (EU). CEC has the responsibility to strengthen ties within churches in the four different nations of the United Kingdom as it prepares to exit the EU. Similarly, CEC considers Russia and its churches, an integral part of the common European reality, and is prepared to welcome the Russian Orthodox Church back into full activity in its community.

“CEC has the opportunity and responsibility  
to reflect on the European spectrum and  
discussions on the future of Europe”

Holding CEC's General Assembly in Novi Sad expresses a conviction that this city on the Danube is indeed the centre of Europe and is fully at home in European fellowship. In a political situation with a major country leaving the EU, and several others aspiring to enter it, CEC has the opportunity and responsibility to reflect on the European spectrum and discussions on the future of Europe.

While our focus is on Europe, the ecumenical calling compels us to remember that everything is inter-related with global, political and ecological realities and that our solidarity is with all of the human family. Therefore, CEC's consultation process on the Future of Europe provides important baselines for the deliberations at the Novi Sad Assembly. One of the echoes from the consultations is the need to hear more than one narrative about Europe. The process stresses that in addition to the habitual description of successful post-war reconciliation in Western Europe, a common vision of the future of Europe in a global context requires an inclusive understanding of Europe.

The narrative of Eastern-Central Europe helps to comprehend the Communist parenthesis, and the hopes and disappointments resulting from it regarding European integration, European values and socio-economic realities. The South European narrative involves the demarcation with the Ottoman past and the current connections with Africa and the Levant, accompanied by the antagonism towards the North created by the treatment of the still on-going economic crisis, felt deeply by Southern Europeans.



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The citizens of post-communist EU countries have been disappointed in their expectations of social and economic advancement. Southern Europeans feel betrayed by the economic crisis. Neither of them are closer to equality with the wealthy Europeans in the North and the West.

In dealing with migration, Western Europeans tend to only think of their own situation, while the issue in Eastern EU countries is the departure of the young and the educated, leaving behind their elderly parents and “Euro-orphaned” children. The aim of most migrants is to reach the wealthier countries of the North of Europe, but they are stuck in the Southern countries, coping with the consequences of the economic crisis, while they are not welcomed by some Central-Eastern countries.

The ideals of social equality of all EU citizens and all inhabitants of our countries is at the core of CEC’s concerns, and these concerns are currently on the political agenda through the European Pillar of Social Rights.

The reforms in CEC were carried out with the conviction that EU is the beacon of Europe, with no Brexit in sight. However, changes in political contexts, discussions about the redefinition of the values and focus of the European Project require reorientation in CECs’ priorities.

### **Conciliarity, *koinonia* and ecumenical initiatives**

Churches in many European countries have celebrated jointly the 500th anniversary of the Protestant Reformation. The occasion was used for manifestations of ecumenical reconciliation, especially between Catholic, Lutheran and Reformed church leaders, but also between bearers of the mainline Protestant traditions with the spiritual heirs of the Anabaptists. Thus, the commemoration of events that once were church-dividing became a “Christusfest”, a feast for Christ – a timely ecumenical testimony in a secular society. The Reformation anniversary was an occasion to rediscover and redefine Christian unity in the context of changing societal, religious and ecclesial landscapes in Europe.

The year 2016 witnessed two significant ecumenical events in church history. One was the Holy and Great Council of the Orthodox Church in Crete, 19 to 26 June, and the other was the Joint Ecumenical Commemoration of the Reformation, jointly held by the Lutheran World Federation and the Roman Catholic Church, hosted by the Church of Sweden in Lund, 31 October. These gatherings consolidated achievements of ecumenical dialogue and rapprochement. In themselves, they did not involve new doctrinal or ecclesial initiatives, but inspired new ecumenical steps, based on existing convergences in self-understanding and mutual acceptance between confessional church families.

The post-conciliar process continues to involve all the Orthodox local church-

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es, including those who attended the Council and those who did not. It is to be expected that the official documents of the Council, which were prepared by local churches in cooperation with each other in the extended preparatory process, will grow in ecumenical importance.

CEC is one of the only four ecumenical organisations mentioned in the document titled *Relations of the Orthodox Church with the Rest of the Christian World*.

Conciliarity is a recurring theme in many ecumenical settings. It is discussed in many bilateral theological dialogues. The Community of Protestant Churches in Europe (CPCE) will be concluding its own process on confessional identity in its upcoming General Assembly. The Porvoo Communion is another growing conciliar reality in Europe. We can observe and recognise a similar process in the Roman Catholic Church, with the beginning of a redefinition of the relation of the papacy to the conciliar *pleroma* of the universal church by both Pope Benedict XVI and Pope Francis, albeit in very different ways. The commemoration of the 1917-1918 local council of the Russian Orthodox Church is also a celebration of profound conciliar renewal, though at the same time a remembrance of the devastating persecution begun by the Bolshevik power, which suffocated the renewal envisaged by the Council.

The European Christian Convention is an important initiative renewing conciliar experience of the lay-led German Kirchentag movement up to the European level. How this phenomenon relates to the possible continuation of the European Ecumenical Assemblies run by CEC together with the Catholic Council of European Bishops' Conferences (CCEE), is a compelling question to which we need to respond.

“ over the past five years, CEC has worked to strengthen the bonds of Christian fellowship (*koinonia*) between churches amidst complex political and ecclesial contexts ”

Through its programmes, over the past five years, CEC has worked to strengthen the bonds of Christian fellowship (*koinonia*) between churches amidst complex political and ecclesial contexts. CEC's efforts were aimed at helping churches to be better equipped and empowered to work together, focusing on how they can advocate an authentic and credible Christian witness to European society, and to the European and international institutions.

The pilgrimages related to the United Nations Climate Change Conference

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(COP21) in 2015 were an impressive manifestation of concern for the environment through a traditional Christian practice, involving actors from across Europe.

CEC's work in the field of human rights has been at the forefront in opening discussion on sensitive issues, such as religious minorities and access to holy places.

The arrival of more than a million refugees and migrants in Europe in 2015 prompted many admirable responses from Christian communities, parishes and monasteries. Together with Churches' Commission for Migrants in Europe (CCME), CEC was able to help churches to communicate and cooperate with one another, and to speak with European and national political leadership. CEC participated actively in European discussions on work-life questions, education and bioethics.

At the same time, it has not been possible to address all the ecumenical challenges since the 2013 Budapest General Assembly. This has been mainly due to demanding administrative reform and limited resources. One of the needs is to evaluate the impact of the *Charta Oecumenica*, a declaration, produced jointly by CEC and the Council of Bishops' Conferences of Europe (CCEE), issued in 2001, and to develop the next steps in the process. The potential of networking in the area of mission and evangelism is another timely challenge. The analysis of the relationship between peace and militarisation in European political thinking, rhetoric and decisions requires attention from the churches. The need for enhanced networking and advancement in the area of inter-religious dialogue is equally urgent.

### **Ecumenical fellowship and partnerships**

In the preamble of its Constitution, CEC defines itself as an ecumenical fellowship of churches. Member Churches of CEC are described as pursuing together the path of growing conciliar understanding and seeking growth in a fellowship of faith, hope and love. Their commitment to mutual respect helps CEC to grow as an inclusive open fellowship of churches, able and willing to both give and receive, ensuring fair and balanced representation in its work and the composition of its bodies.

According to *Charta Oecumenica*, European churches have the responsibility to call each other to a life of reconciliation as an expression of Christian unity, and for the sake of the wellbeing of the European continent and the world. Partnerships and networking are essential, both for the ecumenical essence of CEC and for the successful accomplishment of its mission.

CEC forms a common platform where the voices of European churches are heard and where they can raise and contribute their messages in the European discussion.

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Article 2 (3) of the Constitution stipulates: "Through programmatic development and research, the Conference works to strengthen the bonds of Christian fellowship. To this end the Conference is an instrument of the Churches for common mission in a changing Europe; commits itself to continuous dialogue among its Members, providing them with a space for giving and receiving the spiritual riches of their different traditions."

Article 12 (2) defines one of the tasks of the Secretariat as being to facilitate the interaction between the Member Churches of the Conference, Organisations in Partnership and National Councils of Churches.

Spaces for theological and spiritual richness, as affirmed in the Constitution, oblige CEC to embed the ideals of conciliarity and solidarity in its work. These ideals are prominent in the Constitution, also because they may not always be self-evident or easy to fulfil. The risk is to cultivate a perception that an international body could be far and removed from the everyday reality and tasks of a local church. One of the reasons for this perception is that with a Governing Board smaller than the Central Committee previously, many churches lost their direct, personal link with CEC's governance. Communication from the office and the Governing Board members in their region has not always reached the right recipients satisfactorily.

In the words of the Constitution, "fair and adequate representation" is to be assured in CEC governance. In terms of confessions and regions, this principle has been followed on a tolerable level. However, in the case of gender and age representation, improvement is required. One thing to be noted here is that these balances should not be seen as mere tokens of participation, but opportunities for CEC to be inspired and directed by the various experiences and proficiencies of Christian faith and life, including expressions of witness, justice and hospitality.

It has become clear that the Thematic Reference Groups (TRG) cannot serve as a substitute for this lack of connection, as their primary purpose is expertise; fair and adequate composition in terms of confession, region, gender and age is indispensable in the content of their work.

From 2014 to 2017, around 389 letters were sent from the CEC office to the Member Churches, out of which 41 were common mailings. Requests from the office to react on a particular matter do not always inspire many responses – over 10 reactions from the 113 Member Churches is considered good. The weekly electronic newsletter has been developed by the CEC Communications team to disseminate news about CEC and European ecumenical developments among its members and partners.

The Future of Europe consultation process and recent seminars by CEC's human rights programme have shown the value of regional events. From

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2016 and 2017, we have seen the majority of CEC Member Churches participate in regional consultations. The National Councils of Churches (NCCs) have played a significant role as CEC partners, helping to reach a wider constituency than only Member Churches. It is evident there is a greater commitment by the Member Churches and NCCs to CEC's work than the information received by the CEC office. In Brussels, we are not always fully informed of the discussion of issues introduced by CEC or the use of CEC materials locally and regionally.

It remains a challenge to convince all Member Churches of their privilege to ensure the existence of CEC through regular financial contributions, adapted to the possibilities of each church. Discussions to ensure the proportionate participation of all Member Churches in resourcing need to continue. An appropriate method needs to be developed to indicate various *in kind* contributions made by the churches towards travel, hospitality and organising of meetings and programmes. The use of staff time for the benefit of CEC is also a form of contribution and a concrete expression of commitment.

Competent staff, committed networks, Governing Board, TRG members and volunteers in the ecumenical sphere are CEC's most precious resources. With efforts from CEC staff members and the support from others, it has been possible to reach good results with limited resources. The vacancies in the Strasbourg office and the position of the dialogue secretary has affected the possibilities for CEC's work in some areas. Together with Member Churches, NCCs are CEC's primary partners in their respective countries. Through the NCCs, CEC reaches a broader constituency than its own members. The Organisations in Partnership represent crucially important expertise and are able to contribute significantly to the daily work of the CEC office.

Some networks of the Member Churches are important partners of the CEC office in fulfilling its tasks. The CPCE has seconded a staff member to the Brussels office, and its regional association, the Churches along the Rhine (KKR), supports the Strasbourg office.

The Committee of Representations of Orthodox Churches to the European Union (CROCEU) is a consultative body regrouping all the Orthodox representations to EU, both Member Churches of CEC and others. CEC staff are in regular contact with CROCEU and representatives of Orthodox churches in Brussels. The Protestant Church in Germany (EKD) and its Member Churches (Landeskirchen) are active partners and participants in many aspects of CEC work. Contacts by all the programme staff are almost daily in contact with the EKD office in Brussels, as well as colleagues in Germany. The Anglican liaison office is also a natural partner of CEC both in Brussels and in Strasbourg. A contract formalising this cooperation was approved by the CEC Governing Board in its November 2017 meeting.

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CEC continues its fruitful cooperation with other ecumenical and church bodies, offices and associations to enable a more faithful witness in Europe. These bodies include confessional networks, such as previously mentioned CPCE, the Porvoo communion, European Baptist Federation, Methodist and Anglican Europe structures, the Lutheran World Federation and others.

CEC provides means by which its Member Churches can work at the European level with relevant Roman Catholic organisations. CEC has good working relationships with CCEE (Consilium Conferentiarum Episcoporum Europae) in several programmatic areas. Common statements have been given on the occasion of the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity, the Time of Creation, the Roma Genocide Remembrance Day, and some topical issues. The CEC-CCEE Joint Committee has met regularly. Cooperation with the Commission of the Bishops' Conferences of the European Community (COMECE) is almost a daily occurrence in CEC's work. The activities based on Article 17 of the Lisbon Treaty (Treaty on the functioning of the EU) are organised in close cooperation between CEC and COMECE, and with other relevant partners in the EU institutions.

### **European youth in the ecumenical movement**

The ecumenical youth organisations have played a decisive role in many phases of ecumenical development. The fact that they are experiencing a period of reduced activity and lack of resources is of serious concern for CEC and its Member Churches. The Ecumenical Youth Council of Europe and the World Student Christian Federation (Europe region) continue to offer unique opportunities for young adults to be educated and become active agents in the global ecumenical movement.

These youth organisations remain principal partners of CEC in offering particular exposure and opportunities to young Christians. CEC has played a pivotal role in the planning, organisation and follow-up of the Global Ecumenical Theological Institute (GETI) in Berlin in May 2017. GETI was a vivid opportunity for ecumenical learning and networking for theological students from all church backgrounds and different parts of the world. Resources, staff time and preparatory work have been invested to enable participation of young people at the 2018 Novi Sad General Assembly.

### **CEC and the global ecumenical movement**

The ecumenical movement is always global. It inspires consciousness of belonging to a global community of Christians, but also the human family and the household of God's creation. This basic dimension of the ecumenical call can be forgotten in the European context. It is one of the important tasks of CEC to bring this perspective into European consciousness and to offer concrete possibilities to be globally connected and to be challenged and inspired by this fellowship.

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The Pilgrimage of Justice and Peace of the WCC is an inspiring image of the ecumenical movement. In its programmes, CEC is the most comprehensive European expression of this ecumenical vision and action. Having now left the Ecumenical Centre in Geneva the CEC office, has lost the benefit of daily contact with the staff and visitors of the WCC and other organisations in the same building. However, contacts and cooperation with WCC have continued in many fields, such as environment, migration, human rights, and theological dialogue. If the 11th WCC General Assembly in 2021 is held in Europe, this will offer CEC an opportunity to be closely linked with the deliberations of this global event.

CEC is one of the Regional Ecumenical Organisations (REOs), a network co-ordinated by the WCC. These organisations include the All Africa Conference of Churches (AACC), the Pacific Conference of Churches, the Caribbean Conference of Churches, the Christian Conference of Asia, the Middle East Council of Churches (MECC) and the Latin American Council of Churches. In face of the global political and environmental challenges it is imperative that CEC develops its cooperative links with these ecumenical bodies to the fullest. There are programmatic contacts with MECC, and they need to be enhanced, as with the AACC.

### **Churches' voice in European institutions**

Giving churches a voice in the EU institutions and the Council of Europe is an essential task of CEC. Dialogue with the EU institutions takes place under Article 17 of the Lisbon Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU). It commits the EU to an open, transparent and regular dialogue with churches and religious communities, as well as non-religious convictions.

In the context of this dialogue, CEC is registered as a related faith-based institution to the EU and it also has a structured working relationship with the Council of Europe and other institutions. This dialogue with political structures is an integral part of CEC's work in various areas. It takes the form of annual high level religious leaders' meetings with the EU leadership, topical dialogue seminars, meetings with EU presidencies and various other contacts and activities beyond the definition of the TFEU Article 17.

Interaction with the European institutions in Brussels and Strasbourg follows the pulse of political developments, with church actors developing their responses and initiatives together.

CEC is one of the few Pan-European civil society bodies, which by virtue of its church-based membership has a visible presence at every level of European society. Speaking for the churches, CEC is not an NGO lobbying for a sharply focused agenda, but a voice addressing a broad range of issues on behalf of those who are not always heard, with a general interest for the common good.

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Especially for minority churches, CEC is often the only forum that provides access to the ecumenical sphere and European institutions. On the other hand, political bodies and European institutions request the churches not to act and speak only for themselves, but to present joint statements and motions. Facilitating these joint efforts is a major role for CEC.

The dialogue defined in TFEU Article 17 reflects the potential importance of the churches' voice, or lack of it, in the EU political sphere. For the churches, it is imperative to be active in this regard and to continue to engage in a relevant dialogue with the political leadership.

This dialogue is conducted in most instances by CEC together with CCME, and in close cooperation with the Commission of Catholic Bishops' Conferences in the EU, COMECE.

During the mandate of the present EU Commission, CEC has observed some changes in the practice of the Article 17 dialogue by the European institutions. These dialogue seminars have been reduced from two to one annually. Responsibility for the dialogue has been relocated from the previous arrangement within the Commission President's staff to the General Directorate on Justice and Consumers. The responsibility for the dialogue has been transferred to the First Vice-President, and for some time the answerable official had another important task added to their portfolio. At the present time the arrangement has improved, with a full-time executive position and some administrative assistance.

We have seen that religion has a more prominent position in European politics, due to the challenge of religiously labelled terrorism and the need to find solutions to its causes and consequences. The new migrants and refugees from Asia and Africa have also brought a change in the religious landscape of Europe, posing a real or imagined challenge to European identities. These developments have changed the attitude of European political circles to religion and its role in the public sphere.

In 2016, the EU established the new post of Special Envoy for Promoting Freedom of Religion or Belief outside the EU. This was one more concrete step by which the EU demonstrated the political will to address violations of freedom of religion or belief, including forced conversion and blasphemy legislation among other matters.

CEC has actively engaged in the work of the Council of Europe, especially in the area of bioethics, education and human rights. This task is now primarily covered by the Strasbourg office. Another of the important areas of the Council of Europe also include inter-religious and inter-cultural dialogue.



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## High level religious leaders' meetings with the EU leadership

The annual high level meetings of the EU leadership with religious leaders are an important and visible form of interaction with the EU. These meetings bring together leaders from a large variety of religious traditions. The invitation is issued by the First Vice-President of the European Commission, who is delegated for this task by the President of the Commission.

On 10 June 2014 the 10th high-level religious leaders' meeting took place under the title: "The future of the European Union". The meeting was hosted by José Manuel Barroso, the then President of the European Commission. CEC was represented by its President Christopher Hill, who called for an intensification of the instrumentality of the Lisbon dialogue together with the high level dialogue.

On 16 June 2015, CEC participated in the 11th annual high-level meeting at the European Commission. Among the participants were senior Christian, Muslim, Jewish, Buddhist, Hindu, and Mormon leaders, and CEC was represented by President Christopher Hill and Pastor François Clavairoly, President of the Protestant Federation of France. The event featured a robust dialogue on issues related to migrants, refugee crises, and the role of media as a place for positive contributions from religions.

The 2016 annual high level meeting with religious leaders took place on 29 November. The religious leaders invited from CEC networks were Metropolitan Athenagoras of Belgium for the Ecumenical Patriarchate, Presiding Bishop of the EKD Heinrich Bedford-Strohm, Rev. Christiane Ename, Vice-President of the French Protestant Federation, Bishop Robert Innes of the Diocese of Europe of the Church of England, Archbishop Antje Jackelén of the Church of Sweden, Metropolitan Polycarpus of the Syriac Orthodox Church in the Netherlands and Metropolitan Rastislav, primate of the Orthodox Church in the Czech Lands and Slovakia. The central theme of the discussions was migration and the churches' perspectives on the European response to the refugee situation.

In 2017, the high level religious leaders' meeting with the European Commission took place on 7 November. The Commission invited from CEC networks Archbishop of the Estonian Evangelical Lutheran Church, Urmas Viirma, Präses of the Synod of the Protestant Church in Germany, Dr Irmgard Schwaetzer and Metropolitan Cleopas of Sweden. Metropolitan Emmanuel of France represented CEC on this occasion. The theme was "The Future of Europe: a value-based and effective Union".

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## Dialogue Seminars

CEC and COMECE also cooperate with the European Commission and the European Parliament in organising Dialogue Seminars on specific themes of current interest.

CEC prepared, together with COMECE, a Dialogue Seminar on Migration, on 27 November 2014. The content from the CEC side was provided by CCME.

On 2 December 2015, the European Commission convened a Dialogue Seminar focussed on looking beyond the immediate humanitarian crisis provoked by the recent influx of migrants and refugees in Europe. COMECE, CEC, and CCME gathered experts from across Europe to discuss models of integration, best practices, and the fundamental values that guide integration within EU.

The 2016 Dialogue Seminar was organised in Brussels on 25 October, addressing the theme “Migration: mapping and addressing fear”. Speakers from the CCME and COMECE networks and the EU Commission spoke about the phenomenon of fear in the experiences of the refugees, migrants and the European populations, and the political use of the latter, and how to address these issues effectively. A special emphasis was given to the experience of children and young people. The Directorate General Justice and Consumers hosted the event on behalf of the EU Commission.

Since her election as Vice-President of the European Parliament, Ms Mairead McGuinness, has hosted two dialogue seminars in 2017 on behalf of the Parliament and its President Mr Antonio Tajani. The first seminar took place on 27 June with the theme “The future of Europe: Reflections for the EU by 2025”. Four speakers were invited from CEC Member Churches, which included CEC President Bishop Christopher Hill, Bishop Irja Askola of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland, Bishop Tamas Fabiny of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Hungary and Professor Pantelis Kalaitzidis of the Church of Greece. A second seminar was held on 6 December 2017 on the theme of churches’ and religious communities’ views on EU external policies. From the CEC Member Churches, Metropolitan Joseph of the Romanian Orthodox Church was invited as one of the speakers.

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## ENGAGEMENT WITH EU PRESIDENCIES

CEC and COMECE engaged in a conversation with each EU presidency. The encounter was prepared together with Member Churches and the National Council of Churches of the respective countries.

- 2014** | In December 2014, a delegation of CCME, CEC and COMECE visited the Minister of Foreign Affairs in Rome.
- 2015** | In January 2015, a CEC delegation travelled to Riga, Latvia. They had an informative meeting with the Minister of Foreign Affairs. The local churches welcomed the occasion to sit together with the Roman Catholic delegation to discuss the situation in the country and to talk about seeking solutions in their respective churches.
- A delegation of CEC, COMECE and CCME attended a meeting with the EU Presidency in Luxembourg on 22 June 2015. They discussed migration and social issues in preparation for the EU presidency, together with representatives of local churches.
- 2016** | A meeting with the Council of Churches in the Netherlands was organised in preparation for the Dutch Presidency of the EU Council. However, no meeting with the Dutch Presidency took place. The consultation on migration in Lunteren 14 to 16 June 2016 could have offered a possibility for an exchange with high level representatives of the Dutch government, but this did not happen either.
- The Slovak Ambassador to the EU received representatives of CEC and COMECE in June 2016, and a meeting with Minister Mr Ivan Korcok for EU Presidency with representatives of CEC, COMECE and the Slovak churches was organised on 12 July 2016 in Bratislava. The meeting was preceded by a preparatory session with the church representatives.

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**2017** | Malta held the EU presidency in January to June 2017. As CEC has no member church based in Malta, the initiative for preparations for the meeting were taken up by COMECE. A meeting with the Maltese Prime Minister and other politicians took place on 6 January 2017 in Valletta. CEC was represented by Bishop Robert Innes, the Church of England Bishop for Europe and the CCME General Secretary Doris Peschke. The discussion concentrated on issues of migration and environment.

The Presidents and General Secretary of CEC, together with the representatives of COMECE and the Estonian Council of Churches were received on 18 August 2017 by Estonian Prime Minister Jüri Ratas and the Minister of the Interior Andres Anvelt, on the occasion of the Estonian EU Presidency. Both audiences engaged in open and substantial discussion on current European issues, such as economic governance, internal and external migration, and security issues. A seminar on church, society and state, with a focus on religious extremism was hosted by the Estonian EU Presidency, with substantial CEC and COMECE participation, from 16 to 17 November 2017 in Tallinn.

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## CEC AND THE EUROPEAN PARTNERS

CEC is engaged in dialogue with actors of the EU and the Council of Europe at various levels and on a variety of issues, acting always with relevant partners. Some of these are listed here:

- Europe 2020: 5 May 2014, the European Commission launched an online consultation on the Europe 2020 strategy. CEC collaborated, via an online questionnaire, with an EU mid-term review of the Strategy. Eurodiaconia organised, in conjunction with CEC, a conference on the mid-term review “Europe 2020 Mid-term Review: What track record? What opportunities?”
- Collective Complaint – Netherlands: CEC intervention through Council of Europe’s Social Charter Collective Complaints Protocol, to help undocumented migrants in the Netherlands obtain access to food, clothing and shelter, led to actions by the Dutch courts, municipalities and Parliament.
- CEC has been involved in events organised in the European Parliament on topical issues, ranging from work-life issues to the persecution of Christians and the Protestant Reformation.
- Important CEC documents, such as Beyond Prosperity, have been introduced in the EU context, and they have received interested comments and commendations.
- CEC has been able to follow closely some important political developments, such as the relationship of development and military security in EU’s foreign policy, and the adoption and proclamation of the European Union’s Pillar of Social Rights which aims to guarantee employment and social rights in all member states.
- An evaluation of the EU Guidelines on the Promotion and Protection of Freedom of Religion or Belief has been undertaken by the CEC Human Rights desk, resulting in several practical recommendations.



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### CEC and CCME: Working together on migration

Christians are called to identify themselves with migrants and refugees, minority ethnic people, and particularly those at the margins. The gift of diversity is a challenging one as often diversity is misunderstood as a source of division and as a punishment. In this context, discovering that diversity is indeed a blessing requires reflection and commitment.

CEC and CCME recognise that migration and integration, refugees and asylum seekers, and the work against racism and discrimination in Europe are common concerns.

“ For Christians the commandment to  
“love your neighbour as you love yourself”  
is a guiding principle ”

Yet the discourse on migration and refugee issues, the recognition of minority ethnic persons and diversity in European societies remains controversial. For Christians the commandment to “love your neighbour as you love yourself” is a guiding principle. The Christian tradition remembers that the people of God were strangers in Egypt, they found refuge in Egypt from starvation, and they were liberated from enslavement. The biblical traditions of the exodus, the exile experience, and as a people on the move are critical for the churches’ understanding of migration today. According to the Gospel, Jesus Christ became a refugee in Egypt with His family during the very first time of His earthly life. The Saviour is referred to as stranger by some spiritual traditions, and He can be encountered and received through the people who come as refugees and newcomers in our midst.

2016 has been called the year when Europe stopped caring about migrant deaths at its borders. It was the deadliest year so far, with more than 5,000 people drowned in the Mediterranean according to UN reports, although the number of migrants in general dropped significantly when compared with 2015.

EU states continue to militarise Europe’s borders, and seem to have slipped towards a policy that lets migrants die as a way to deter others from coming. At the same time, our inadequate response to the refugee situation is creating a class of people living in the shadows of the Northern European welfare societies. The year 2017 saw the atrocious consequences of the attempts to stop the flow of migrants over the Mediterranean through contracts with Libyan authorities and armed gangs – inhuman treatment of summarily detained migrants, and even an aggravation of the slave trade.

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## Responding to challenges of migration

CEC, CCME and WCC have cooperated on the basis of the Agreement of Cooperation adopted in 1999 and signed in 2000. Since CEC's 2013 Budapest General Assembly, this cooperation has been developed on the basis of mandates defined by these organisations.

"In its commitment to Europe as a whole, the vision of the 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. In providing an authentic, credible and socially responsible Christian witness, it will work towards a humane, social and sustainable Europe at peace with itself and its neighbours in which human rights and solidarity prevail. CEC commits itself to continued work in the thematic areas of, inter alia, migration and asylum, and diaspora and migrant churches," states 2013 CEC Constitution.

"CCME is an ecumenical organisation that serves the churches in their commitment to promote the vision of an inclusive community through advocating for an adequate policy for migrants, refugees and minority groups at European and national level. In the fulfilment of this mandate it is responding to the message of the Bible, which insists on the dignity of every human being and to the understanding of unity as devoid of any distinction between strangers and natives," states the CCME Mission statement issued at the CCME Assembly in June 2014.

Based on the decisions of the CEC Assembly in Budapest 2013 and the CCME Assembly in Sigtuna 2014, CEC and CCME resolved in December 2014:

- to recommit themselves to a closer working relationship between CCME and CEC for the period 2015 to 2017 before finally deciding what form of integration and cooperation would be envisaged.
- to strengthen the joint witness and service of churches and church-related organisations in Europe with and for migrants, refugees and minority ethnic persons.

Daily cooperation with CCME has been developed in a conscious way. An identity of belonging together needs still to be developed between the governing bodies and staff of the two organisations.

CEC and CCME have been able to assist each other in issues requiring mutual support and exchange of expertise. Several statements on urgent situations have been issued together.

In 2016, the following important meetings were organised jointly:

- "Fear Not: Church leaders on migration" in Lunteren from 14 to 17 June 2017



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- Migration and ecclesiology “To be Church” in Copenhagen, 8 to 10 December 2017.

Migration issues were addressed by the CEC Human Rights desk in various ways. In programmatic work and in contacts with the membership, it is clear that there are more examples of how migration challenges churches' reflection on their mission, service and theological self-understanding.

### Enhanced cooperation to support migrants

During the Budapest to Novi Sad period, various scenarios were considered in the negotiation between CEC and CCME and presented to CEC Governing Board and CCME General Assembly.

The first scenario was incorporation of CCME's work and property into CEC. However, the mere dissolution of CCME was not regarded as providing the necessary conditions for all CCME members to participate meaningfully in and contribute to effective work in the areas of migration and asylum or indeed for giving visibility to it. It was therefore not considered a viable option.

The second scenario was “CCME in CEC”, with the alternatives “two in one” or “one in two”. The one-in-two scenario would entail *one* decision-making structure in two legal structures. In other words, one General Assembly, one Governing Board and one General Secretary for two separate legal entities.

The two-in-one scenario means that CCME would be an entity or agency within CEC, but maintain a certain autonomy in order to ensure a meaningful participation of the members of CCME.

This was seen as the most viable scenario if and when questions like membership, visibility of the work on migration, and others are clarified, and if CEC could adopt a working model allowing the existence of an agency inside its structure. In particular, the participation of migrant and minority ethnic churches calls for new efforts on the part of CEC. Such developments could potentially provide that both organisations, while remaining legally separate, are seen and governed as one.

A third scenario consists of enhanced cooperation between CCME and CEC. As a result of close cooperation in recent years, CEC and CCME are often seen from the outside as one organisation, while formally they have different management and governance structures. Such a system would be developed in consideration of the respective constituencies, membership, capacities and available resources.

Although discussions were held on the CCME in CEC option, concrete proposals to address the issues arising could not yet be achieved, for example on membership issues. Therefore, the negotiation group of CCME and CEC concluded that enhanced cooperation should be recommended.

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The CCME Assembly met in June 2017 in Prague and approved the approach taken and expressed its hope for deeper cooperation. It appreciated that the time frame until 2025 would now allow CEC and CCME to put their energies into the common work more effectively.

A new agreement between the two organisations was signed on 25 November 2017. It stipulates the development of enhanced cooperation, and affirms the goal of a *two-in-one* scenario as a future perspective. It prescribes joint sessions by the governing bodies of the two organisations and the closest possible working relationship of the staff.

### **The new CEC: community of solidarity and accountability**

By God's providence, since the 2013 Budapest General Assembly, CEC has gone through a thorough process of reform. The decisions by the Constitutional General Assembly for the reconfiguration of CEC have been implemented and CEC is fully working as one body. The final technicalities of the process were finalised only by the end of 2016. The efforts of the staff and the Governing Board cannot be overestimated. Both the President, Bishop Christopher Hill, and the previous General Secretary, Rev. Dr Guy Liagre, are to be commended for their efforts.

The reform has resulted in a streamlined and focused structure. The governance, administration and operation of CEC now match one another in terms of the size and resourcing of the operation. The effect of the reform on the work of CEC is still in its first phase. We will see further results of the reform process in the mandate period following the 2018 Novi Sad General Assembly.

The time of triumphal ecumenical organisations is over. The ecumenical movement has given birth to a great number of councils, associations and networks which have borne real fruit in their own fields. Some say that ecumenism belongs to the great trends of the 20th century, but not of the 21st century. If we look at ecumenical organisations, this observation would seem to be accurate.

Councils of churches do not always belong to the highest priorities of our church leaderships, and in terms of participation and resources they have become weaker during the last three decades. On the other hand, specialised ecumenical networks have been set up in many areas, from humanitarian aid to prison chaplaincies to academic networks, and often they respond successfully to the needs of their constituents. An important question is whether this development fragments the comprehensive ecumenical vision and side-lines the role of the churches as the primary owners and actors of the ecumenical movement.

The question for CEC is how to focus our work even more in the areas, where the churches need specific European ecumenical expertise, while

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keeping our fundamental commitment to the Member Churches, which is particularly emphasised in our Budapest Constitution. The time of the ambitious goal of aspiring to be an all-encompassing ecumenical umbrella is over, and the challenge is to become to a relevant service organisation, producing “added value” for the Member Churches, the Organisations in Partnership and the National Councils of Churches.

In designing CEC’s work plan for 2019-2023, we need to take into account the experiences with the Thematic Reference Groups and with networks such as the European Christian Environmental Network (ECEN) and Church Action on Labour and Life (CALL), as well as communication with Member Churches and cooperation with Organisations in Partnership and National Councils of Churches.

Participation of young adults in CEC’s work is an area requiring particular attention, in close cooperation with the European ecumenical youth networks. The goal is to bring about an organisation with a permanent basis for governance and management. This is in the hope that CEC becomes an agile body capable of focused expertise and action in areas of priority defined by the General Assembly, able to react to specific situations and developments which the churches need to study or respond to. This implies that CEC develops into a competent international employer, always attractive to qualified and creative staff.

The Novi Sad General Assembly follows the basic outline of a small decision making Assembly, as envisaged in the *Uppsala Report* to the Budapest General Assembly. However, the preparation process has made it clear that there is a pressing need for a forum broader than the leaders and professional ecumenical officers of the churches. In order to understand the European and ecumenical context and to evaluate the work of CEC, the participation of people with different experiences of the life of our churches is required, as well as the perspective of partner organisations working with particular areas of expertise. Rootedness in local churches would find its expression by making it possible for local parishioners and visitors from other churches to participate in open parts of the General Assembly.

We have advanced in developing CEC into an organisation that is responsive to the Member Churches, capable of being flexible in its ways of working, and a catalyst for new thinking and action in interaction with its members and partners.

The distinguished speakers, including representatives of CEC Member Churches and EU institutions, at the gathering in Brussels in December 2014 to celebrate the New CEC all spoke of the identity and task of CEC. At the meeting, the governing bodies of the Church and Society Commission met to finalise its merger with CEC under Belgian law.

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It was stressed that CEC's identity needs to be strengthened through a theological and mystical focus on Jesus Christ. This focus on faith unites the churches and gives them credibility. The task is to convene the churches around their identity in Christ, and then to give a common voice to the churches' concerns and contributions to the European reality within which they witness and serve.

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# 1. What future for Europe?

## AN OPEN LETTER AND CEC CONSULTATION

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In recent years Europe and the EU have gone through a difficult period. For an increasing number of people on the continent Europe has become a project marked by disillusion, excessive bureaucracy and the growing gap between politics and citizens. Long-term economic difficulties of countries in the South, notably Greece, which revealed the structural weaknesses of the EU and especially the Eurozone have become a disturbing reality of the EU for several years. To this has been gradually added unexpectedly emerging new challenges: the threat to peace and stability caused by the military conflict in Eastern Ukraine, the massive influx of migrants and refugees, including growing and unacceptable number of tragic deaths at the EU borders in the Mediterranean Sea and the growing number of terrorist attacks on European soil raising the urgent question of living together between people of different cultures and religions. Europe and especially the EU have had to face in this period a number of serious challenges as well the need to respond to much more fundamental questions related to the future stability and functionality of the Union, as well as the overall future of the continent. The outcome of the UK referendum leading to the UK decision to leave the Union was, in this regard, just the tip of the iceberg indicating the frustration of significant parts of the population.

In June 2016 in reacting to the situation the Governing Board addressed the CEC Member Churches and Partner Organisations with an open letter on the Future of Europe. The letter emphasized that global problems “need globally coordinated solutions. It is clear that individual countries are less effective in tackling their problems when they act on their own than when they coordinate with other countries. They need partnerships and networks to amplify their voice and strengthen their influence.” Along with outlining the critical challenges of Europe nowadays, the letter directs its attention to the fundamental question of common values and how these are expressed in Europe today. The document further elaborates a theological perspective and encourages churches to make a positive contribution in building a common European home. “Europe needs both vision, as well as clear acknowledgment of our roots. The Union needs to provide for people living there a

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home as well as the space," the letter points out.

While distinguishing between the specific roles of Europe and the EU, the letter reaffirms the understanding of the EU as a community of values pursuing human dignity, peace, reconciliation, justice, the rule of law, democracy, the respect for human rights, solidarity and sustainability. The document encourages CEC Member Churches and all Christians in Europe to step up efforts in making such Christian virtues as respect for others, solidarity, *diakonia* and building up a community more visible in public life. The document calls churches in Europe to an intensive discussion on the future of our continent, the role of the European Union and our vision of shared values.

The substantial element of the letter is an invitation to CEC Member Churches and Partner Organisations: "to react to this letter in considering the specific situation in different parts of the continent and in contributing to a consultative and participatory process leading to the next CEC Assembly."

This letter launched a broad consultation process. Many CEC Member Churches, Organisations in Partnership and National Councils of Churches have contributed to the process through a variety of means. Some have sent written responses, others have invited CEC leadership to ecumenical conferences, while still others have held group discussions and consultations. CEC received over 25 written reactions to the Open Letter. Most of these have been the result of an intensive consultation within the individual churches or National Councils of Churches.

Throughout 2017, CEC hosted a series of four regional consultations to further this process: in February the consultation for churches for the Nordic and Baltic region, in March the event for churches in the UK and Ireland and in the latter part of the year consultations took place for churches in the South and for churches in Central and Eastern Europe. Additionally, several more local or national events took place, for example in Belgium, the Netherlands, Poland, Hungary, Portugal, Finland, or in the Evangelical Landeskirche in Baden, Germany. All of them were organised with the aim of listening to experiences from different geographical parts of the continent, which could help to develop a truly European response to our common challenges.

The consultation for the Nordic-Baltic region took place in Reykjavik, Iceland. The place, because of its location, was a reminder that Europe is more than the space limited by the European Union. For churches it is the understanding that Europe is not primarily about geography. Europe must be neither narrowly limited to the European Union, nor identified with any other political concepts or institutions. Europe in a Christian understanding is a concept related to culture, common history and to the sources of our identity.

Churches have the responsibility to work for a better Europe. Engagement in

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society and dialogue with politics is of significant importance for the church. The aim of such a dialogue is first of all to point out injustices, whenever and wherever needed. Churches should be concrete, strong and articulate in their contributions to such a dialogue.

The importance of theology and anthropology were underlined. For the church it is important to meet those who are outside the church, those who are 'others.' Thus Archbishop Anders Wejryd from the Church of Sweden, European President of the WCC in this regard emphasized: "We are sent to each other, all of us. Grace can only be accepted if it is given by someone who has our lasting respect. God, as we met Him in Jesus Christ, has that respect. The person of Jesus Christ has to be made known, lifted up and repeatedly reminded of in our contemporary societies. This is the task of churches." Through faith we dare to think that the weak should be protected, wealth shared, the refugee welcomed and the world stewarded rather than owned and exhausted by us. If Christians and churches fail to speak out on this, they are guilty of treason. They would then be keeping something hidden from Europe.

The key word in this respect is hope. But, how can we be concrete? What is the content of this hope? *Diaconia* and fellowship can be taken as the common ground for this hope. In such a setting we can talk as well about the economy, a term in which the vision of household and service of one to another is integrated.

The consultation in Edinburgh concentrated on the specific situation of churches in the United Kingdom and Ireland, following the referendum in which the UK decided to leave the Union. Discussion of Brexit revealed deep wounds and disappointments and raised a number of questions resonating in the churches and society across this region.

The discussion went, however, beyond Brexit. It addressed questions such as: How should churches react to political issues and peoples' concerns? How can churches strengthen their work for the common good? How should they, in this context, talk more clearly about their diaconal ministry? And, how should churches talk to those who are pushed by the system to the margins?

The consultation for churches in the South took place in Volos in Greece. It benefited from participation from all over the region, from Portugal and Spain, through Italy and the Balkans up to Armenia. It showed the rich diversity in the European South, as well as the deep-seated differences between the perspective of the South and the North in the discussion of values. Values do not operate in an abstract space, they need to be related to common histories, cultures and identities.

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Recent developments in the region gave an understanding of the present Euroscepticism among many peoples of the region, fed by the spread of poverty and peoples' struggle for life. This includes the very specific situation of the Balkans, where there is a deep-seated suspicion and hesitancy towards the West.

Particular attention was given to the situation in Greece. There are a number of positive examples of the churches' work in responding to the economic crises, or in providing assistance to refugees. Nevertheless, at the same time, critical voices were expressed too. Metropolitan Ignatius of Demetria from the Church of Greece pointed out: "The proximity to power did not allow the church sufficient distance from populism and from corruption, so that we could warn people about where we were headed with the deeply parasitic nature of our economy and our consumeristic absurdity." There is a task to address the power of the market, the need to limit it and to highlight the issue of justice in economic perspectives. In particular, to underline the need for a fair distribution of profits assembled through the market, as well as the issue of the social cost of market operations.

The crises of migration and refugees in this region are particularly visible. What can we do in such a situation? What is the role of the state and what is the role of churches? To what extent should the church replace the role of the state in providing assistance?

It was stressed that the church in the 21st century lives in multi-religious and multi-cultural contexts. New technologies give people a greater awareness of one another's identities and pursuits. Locally and globally, Christians are engaged with people of other religions and cultures. Plurality is a challenge to the churches and a serious commitment to inter-faith dialogue and cross-cultural communication is therefore indispensable.

The consultation for churches in central and eastern Europe took place in Prague. While highlighting its richness and diversity, the region is making efforts to overcome the ever present heritage of the totalitarian ideologies of the 20th century and also to bring about respectful dialogue, and not just integration, with the West. There is an emerging appeal to national identities and growing nationalism. Churches in the region asked how they can make Christianity more visible in society. Some concrete expectations for the churches' action arose: the church has to raise its voice against building walls between people and against corruption; and to be active in the fight against all forms of modern idolatry.

The attitude to secularism is a major challenge. The church has to go beyond seeing secularism as an enemy, and see it more as a partner. An instrument on this path should be intensified public theology. Current political theology is right to focus on the political implications of the churches' action; how-



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ever, it is wrong to associate politics only with social change; the crucial question is: what community has the church to be?

In turning its attention to Europe, it was pointed out that Europe has to be for churches a framework for common action, a space in which churches can make visible their witness; Christians have to be prepared to witness, to hope and to fight for it.

### **What did we learn? What is the conclusion of the process?**

The consultation process made clear that regions are a source of richness and identity. Diversity is to be appreciated; it is a richness not a threat. Four regional consultations with added associated processes offered a space for an exchange. Churches in Europe expressed, along with their wishes and hopes, their aspiration for what they expect from ecumenical collaboration: to provide a forum for an exchange and for learning from each other. Ecumenism is the churches' contribution to building a fellowship in Europe.

**“ Diversity is to be appreciated;  
it is a richness not a threat ”**

The consultation process stressed the need for churches' action in society. In the society of the 21st century this should be underpinned by a qualified theology. The building blocks for such an approach places the accent on the building of fellowship, in classical biblical language called *koinonia*, and offering a service to people and to the world around us, as expressed in the term *diaconia*. Added to that should be providing an understandable witness to the wider society, which is the content of the biblical term *marthyria*. Public theology equipped by such instruments should not be afraid of an inevitable encounter with secularism. Such an encounter will not be a threat, but an opportunity for the churches.

This gives reasons for hope in looking at the future of the continent and in looking at the European Union beyond its economic dimension. In such a Europe and in such a Union, there is a space for an active public role of churches: to raise concerns about increasing injustice, growing political and economic egoism, changing work and life balance and injustice and egoism in relation to nature and the environment, as well as in facing new challenges linked with the latest technologies.

The consultations made clear that in all regions of the continent there are well rooted and widespread wishes for "a church, which listens to the voice of the dispossessed, those on the margins, a church which speaks for justice and unity, because this is what Jesus wanted, a church which does not speak in terms of internal market but a church encouraging the duty

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of solidarity which leads us to fair sharing." This is, however, not just a vision of the church. Such an ambition leads to the vision of respectful and fruitful ecumenical relations and to underlining the duty of solidarity, justice and respect for each other, as well for the world around us. The vision of a fellowship of people in Europe can be enhanced by the church in providing witness on the way to achieve this aim.

CEC is thankful for the cooperation with partners in the preparation and organisation of these events. The consultations demonstrated the commitment of many churches to take seriously their public engagement and their role in outlining the future of the continent. The outcomes of the consultation provided the main building blocks for the document which will be presented to the General Assembly in Novi Sad.





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## 2. Ecclesiology and Theological Dialogue

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*"You will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth," Acts 1:8.*

The mission of the churches in Europe lies at the heart of CEC's agenda. The ministry of the Church is rooted in the promise of Christ and his actions, in his proclamation of the reign of God, and the calling and sending out of men and women empowered by the Holy Spirit (John 20:19-23). When reciting the Creed, Christians confess their faith in the "One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church" and affirm the interdependence of the ministry of Christ and the ministry of the Church grounded in the economy of the Triune God. "The unity of the Church has to find expression in a Catholicity formed by a common confession of the Apostolic faith, common worship/liturgy, and a shared life and mission," says the final statement of the Churches in Dialogue Commission consultation on "Visions of unity in our churches – points of convergence", June 2011.

**“ The mission of the churches in Europe  
lies at the heart of CEC's agenda ”**

CEC's work on unity and mission has been strongly affected by the closing of the CEC office in Geneva. On the one hand, there was no handover process between the staff that served CEC's Churches in Dialogue Commission and the executive staff in Brussels. On the other hand, following the Budapest Assembly in 2013, the position of the executive staff for theological dialogue remained vacant until October 2016, when Ms Katerina Pekridou was appointed as Dialogue Secretary and took over responsibility for the Thematic Reference Group (TRG) on Ecclesiology and Theological Dialogue as well as the TRG on Peacebuilding and Reconciliation.

The TRG on Ecclesiology and Theological Dialogue held only two meetings (4-5 May 2017 and 17-18 October 2017) in Brussels, where only half the members were able to participate. The group, therefore, did not initiate new projects. It offered advice on ongoing projects and focused on the planning

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of the workshops that will take place at the 2018 Novi Sad General Assembly.

### **Local Impact of *Charta Oecumenica***

CEC undertook research on the reception of the *Charta Oecumenica* by churches, church-related bodies and academic institutions in Europe. The ecumenical guidelines were published jointly by CEC and the Council of Bishops' Conferences of Europe (CCEE) in 2001. CEC Member Churches and Organisations in Partnership were addressed with questions concerning the use of the document, the relevance of its recommendations for the European context, as well as the work of the churches and organisations in the area of interreligious dialogue. The official responses and findings of the study conducted in spring 2017 are published in a detailed report that reflects the impact of the document locally.

### **Reformation through an ecumenical perspective**

The Reformation Jubilee was marked, celebrated and commemorated through a variety of events and projects by the churches in Europe. CEC participated actively in several events and conferences. A seminar organised by CEC on "Reformation and the Making of Ecclesial Identities" was held from 21-22 November 2017 in Brussels and offered an opportunity to examine different narratives of the Reformation. Experts on ecclesiology and the Reformation from various Christian streams discussed how the Reformation challenged the understanding of being Church, shaped and defined ecclesial identities and highlighted the importance of naming and participating in mutual acts of repentance that need to continue beyond the Reformation anniversary.

### **Ecclesiology and migration**

The question of what it means to be Church in Europe today has been central in CEC's theological reflections in recent years. A highlight of the ongoing reflection and study was a consultation on migration and the challenges it poses to ecclesiology. The consultation, entitled "Migration and Ecclesiology – Being Church in Europe Today", was organised by CEC together with the Churches' Commission for Migrants in Europe (CCME) and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Denmark from 8-10 December 2016 in Copenhagen, Denmark.

The consultation discussed the 2013 document *The Church: Towards a Common Vision* – produced by Faith and Order Commission of the World Council of Churches (WCC).

An outcome of the consultation was the document titled "The Church – Towards a Common Vision. A response based on the Consultation on Mi-

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gration and Ecclesiology – Being Church in Europe Today”. This response was based on results of the consultation co-published with CCME. The text addresses questions related to gospel and culture, unity and reconciled diversity, and the actual practice of being Church, and facilitation of CEC’s ongoing theological work.

### **Ecumenical theological education and formation**

The Global Ecumenical Theological Institute, 2017, Berlin, on *Reforming Theology – Migrating Church – Transforming Society* (GETI’17)

GETI’17 was an intensive two-week ecumenical formation programme held from 19 May – 1 June 2017 in Berlin, Germany. The project, to which CEC served as the patron organisation, was developed over the course of three years, and brought together several ecumenical, mission and development organisations, and over twenty universities, academic and church institutions in Europe.

Around 140 students and 25 professors participated in the programme and were exposed to keynote lectures. Together they engaged in seminar work that was based on the Reader specifically designed for the programme that featured well-known authors in the field of ecumenical theology. The Reader is entitled *Reforming Theology, Migrating Church, Transforming Society: A Compendium for Ecumenical Education*, edited by Uta Andrée, Benjamin Simon and Lars Röser-Israel. Hamburg: Missionshilfe Verlag, 2017.

Participants also attended lectures, events, worship services, bible studies and spiritual meditations within the German *Kirchentag*. In cooperation with the *Kirchentag*, they contributed to its international programme by organising two panel discussions on “Visions for Christianity in Europe” and “Dangerous Theology”. From 28-29 May GETI’17 participants travelled to Wittenberg to take part in the special programmes in the city.

Upon return to their academic institutions and churches, student participants submitted their academic papers to their GETI’17 supervisors and received their certificate of participation that was accredited by the Humboldt University in Berlin (8 ECTS). Excellent academic papers are under publication in a volume of the Missionshilfe Verlag Hamburg Publishing House. The volume offers emerging scholars the opportunity to publish their work together with recognised scholars in the field of ecumenical theology and includes the presentation during the programme by CEC General Secretary Fr Heikki Huttunen, and greetings by CEC Dialogue Secretary Katerina Pekridou.

The project would have been impossible to bring to fruition without its committed partners that donated substantial amounts of funds: The World Council of Churches provided funds to initiate the project; Bread for the World,

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provided funds and graciously hosted all planning meetings of the Steering, Academic and Finance Committees for the period of three years; the Evangelische Missionswerk in Deutschland, Evangelische Kirche in Deutschland, Evangelisch-Lutherische Landeskirche Hannovers, Missio, Suomen Evankelis-Luterilainen Kirkko, Svenska kyrkan, Missionsakademie an der Universität Hamburg, Berliner Missionswerk, Bremische Evangelische Kirche, Evangelische Landeskirche in Baden, Evangelisch-Lutherische Kirche in Bayern, Evangelisch-Lutherische Kirche in Norddeutschland, Evangelisch-Lutherische Landeskirche Sachsens, Evangelisch-Lutherische Kirche in Oldenburg, Evangelisch-Reformierte Kirche, Evangelische Kirche im Rheinland, Evangelische Kirche in Mitteldeutschland, Evangelische Kirche von Westfalen, Evangelische Theologische Fakultät Leuven, Evangelische Kirche Berlin-Brandenburg-schlesische Oberlausitz, Evangelische Kirche von Kurhessen-Waldeck, Evangelische Landeskirche in Württemberg, Folkekirkens Mellemlirkelige Råd, Community of Protestant Churches in Europe, Humboldt Universität Berlin, Kerk in Actie, Martin Luther Bund, Mission EineWelt, Brücke für Afrika Norddeutsche Mission, Vereinte Evangelische Mission and CEC.

### **Global Forum of Theological Educators: “An International Fellowship of leaders in theological education from every Christian tradition”**

Faithful to its commitment to ecumenical theological education and formation, CEC is actively participating in the planning of the second meeting of the Global Forum of Theological Educators on “Vision and Viability in Contexts: Theological Learning and Formation” that will be held at the Orthodox Academy of Crete, Greece, from 20-24 May 2019.

### **Christian witness in Europe today**

While mission reflection was elaborated through several CEC projects in the past there is need for joint reflection and cooperation among national, regional and confessional or mission studies bodies and networks in Europe, as well as individuals interested in mission studies and mission practitioners.

Additionally, there is also a need to relate to church networks and academic groups in Europe exploring new emerging areas, such as intercultural theology, interreligious studies, public theology, thus revitalising mission studies in Europe.

In this perspective, CEC is cooperating closely with the International Association for Mission Studies-Europe (IAMS-Europe), partnering networks, including Catholic and Evangelical, missiologists and mission studies institutions in Europe, in planning the IAMS European Conference of 2019. The title of the Conference is “Locating European Missions in a Wounded World in Deep Transformation.” The Conference will be held from 23-27 August at the SVD Institute St. Augustin in Bonn, Germany.



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## Interreligious dialogue

Mission reflection was a key feature of the *Charta Oecumenica* which also acknowledges Europe as a multi-religious continent. The current migration situation intensifies the need for a deeper understanding of other religious expressions. Central to the theological reflection of CEC is the question of how churches in Europe respond to migration and increased political polarisation, growing Islamophobia, antisemitism and racism.

A meeting jointly organised by the WCC's Interreligious programme, Churches Together in Britain and Ireland and CEC, with participation of CCME, LWF and churches in Europe, explored the contribution of those involved in inter-religious work addressing current challenges. The meeting took place from 29-31 March 2017 in Woking, UK, and identified the need to examine the inter-religious aspects of migration from practical and theological perspectives, and highlighted the importance of developing a network of inter-religious officers from the churches. An initial step taken by CEC in this direction is collecting resources concerning inter-religious dialogue within its membership.

## Participation at the Global Christian Forum

Through WCC's Commission on World Mission and Evangelism (CWME), CEC also participated in the consultation organised by the Global Christian Forum entitled "Call to mission, perceptions of proselytism: A global conversation." The consultation, which took place from 8-11 June 2017 in Accra, Ghana, is part of a wider initiative organised jointly with the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity, Pentecostal World Fellowship, WCC and the World Evangelical Alliance. The outcome of the consultation was a statement entitled "A call to mission and experiences of proselytism: Steps towards ethical witness" that will contribute to the ongoing study process.

## Conference on World Mission and Evangelism

The theme of the conference that was held in Arusha, Tanzania, from 8-13 March 2018, was "Moving in the Spirit called to Transforming Discipleship." CEC's Dialogue Secretary Ms Katerina Pekridou participated in the conference. She was part of the listeners' group at the women's pre-conference to draft a statement on women's concerns and served as moderator of the workshop "Youth in missional formation."

## Panel at the European Academy of Religion

CEC and the Volos Academy for Theological Studies co-organised a Panel during the First Conference of the European Academy of Religion held from 5-8 March 2018, in Bologna, Italy. The title of the panel was: "Ecumenism in Transition: A Paradigm Shift from the Vision of Christian Unity to the Realism

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of Christian Cooperation.” Speakers included CEC Governing Board Members and other theologians from the CEC networks.

### **Cooperation with the World Council of Churches**

In October 2017, CEC was invited by WCC to contribute to the Editorial Advisory Board of the Faith and Order Papers digital edition. The digital edition process was then at the end of its first phase. The collection was optically scanned and already available online with some search possibilities. At a later stage, the collection will be integrated into a platform that will provide a comprehensive research environment with links to other resources and tools such as Bibles and dictionaries, all within a fully integrated search system.

WCC also extended an invitation to CEC to co-edit a European publication under the theme “Pilgrimage of Justice and Peace”. The general secretaries of the two organisations are the editors of the volume that reflects the ongoing work of CEC and features visionary texts on contemporary challenges, including reflections on the *Charta Oecumenica*, building on the consultative process prior to the 2018 Novi Sad General Assembly. The volume will be published in 2019.





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## 3. Peacebuilding and Reconciliation

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“In Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting the message of reconciliation to us” (2 Corinthians 5:19).

Peacebuilding and reconciliation are fundamental concerns embedded in the deepest historical roots of CEC and continue to form a major part of its *raison d'être*. In this context, CEC's Thematic Reference Group (TRG) on Peacebuilding and Reconciliation, which held eight working meetings in Brussels between 2015 – 2018, served as a platform for CEC to discuss the current situation and challenges related to peacebuilding and reconciliation in Europe.

The TRG's first meeting in September 2015 sought to develop proposals initiated by the CEC Governing Board focusing on nationalism, state, nation and ethnicity, empowering churches towards greater engagement with peace and reconciliation issues. The TRG noted active involvement of the historical peace churches that have emphasised the importance of working in a spirit of protest against the proliferation of arms and recourse to armed conflict for protection.

The TRG was commissioned to organise a conference on the First World War. However, in view of the 2018 General Assembly, and due to the lack of staff to facilitate the preparations, the TRG agreed to propose instead a conference for 2019 with the twin focus on the Paris Peace Conference of 1919 and the current global and European situation.

### **CEC statement on the European Parliament Resolution on arms export and arms embargo**

At its second meeting in February 2016, the TRG focused on developing responses to conflict, especially from a Christian theological perspective. In addressing issues related to conflict and security, the TRG discussed in detail the European Parliament Resolution on the Mutual Defence Clause (Article 42(7) TEU), adopted on 21 January 2016, and the European Parliament Resolution of 17 December 2015 on arms export: implementation of the Common Position 2008/944/CFSP (2015/2114(INI)).

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The group reflected on how EU member states could use the EU instruments to become efficient in the field of security, such as Article 222 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union, the EU Action Plan on combating terrorism, the EU strategy for combating radicalisation, and recruitment and related guidelines, which are specifically designed to deal with prevention and consequences of terrorist attacks in Europe.

Another significant outcome of the second TRG meeting was a statement which was approved by the Presidency of CEC and published on 21 March 2016. The statement urged strong support for the European Parliament resolutions related to arms export, and on the humanitarian situation in Yemen in February 2016, including the issue of an arms embargo against Saudi Arabia.

### **CEC statement to protect EU peacebuilding funds from militarisation**

As the TRG has been promoting non-military peacebuilding in place of security management, it has been monitoring developments with regard to the EU Instrument contributing to Stability and Peace (IcSP). In July 2016, the EU Commission published a proposal for amending the EU “Instrument contributing to Stability and Peace” to serve for Capacity Building in support of Security and Development (CBSD) initiatives. The Commission presented a legal text that aimed to amend the existing Regulation (EU) No. 230/2014. The TRG developed a response to the EU Commission proposal on amending the IcSP that could open the way for the EU to use development funds for military purposes. The mixing of military and non-military budgets was a matter of deep concern to CEC and was seen as a serious challenge to the churches’ reconciliation work and for the church-related development agencies and NGOs. It was thought to run counter to the core values on which the EU was founded.

The TRG stressed that churches should resist increased financial investment in the militarisation of the EU under the guise of improving security. Therefore, an official statement was published on this issue on 13 October 2016, in cooperation with European partners such as Church and Peace, and was positively received by a variety of churches and development organisations especially in Germany, who also issued similar statements.

### **Churches and interfaith engagement**

Engaging in the interreligious aspects of peacebuilding and reconciliation has been a focal point for the TRG. In this perspective, during its third meeting in 2016, the TRG studied the consultation document *Porvoo Communication of Churches – Keys to Interfaith Engagement*, which was the outcome of the joint collaboration between European Anglicans and Nordic Lutherans. Together the TRG explored and devised ways on how this document can be used by churches and church-related groups.

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In 2016, interfaith engagement and reconciliation were major topics of deliberation for the TRG. Special attention was given to the guidelines for interfaith dialogue drawn up by CEC Member Churches. It was acknowledged that ecumenical dialogue increased due to the growth in African and Syrian Christian communities following the influx of refugees in Europe.

The relationship between the secular state and the churches, and the differentiation of their respective roles and tasks, was discussed in detail by the TRG.

In line with the initiatives of peacebuilding in the context of religion and violence carried out by the World Council of Churches (WCC) as the thematic focus for 2017, the TRG decided to explore the theology of active non-violence and how European churches can promote non-violence.

### **Strengthening churches' peacebuilding praxis**

At the fourth meeting of the TRG, a comprehensive analysis was made on how CEC may contribute to peacebuilding and what should be the churches' response to conflict.

TRG members presented a variety of papers on this topic emphasising the spirit of the *Charta Oecumenica* as a foundation for the peacebuilding work of CEC. They stressed the need to embrace diversity as a gift from God, avoiding stereotypes, and encouraged CEC to be linked with similar processes, such as the above-mentioned WCC programme, initiatives of the Community of Protestant Churches in Europe (CPCE), the Church and Peace (an ecumenical faith-based network in Europe) and the European Peacebuilding Liaison Office.

Another aspect highlighted by the papers was the different forms of conflict and the churches' response. The images of the stranger, neighbour and refugee in the Bible were discussed and the Group highlighted the question of how the mission of the churches with regard to refugees and migrants can be strengthened and supported. Examples of current responses of the EU member states to migration were also discussed. The question was raised as to how conflict in the church should be handled by providing biblical examples, and what should be the church's response to ethnic and religious conflict in their local contexts.

The TRG underlined several issues for possible actions, namely the concept of a just peace church, the idea and practice of justice, education in justice and peace (using media), engagement with the public through organising theology seminars, interreligious dialogue events and helping churches to act as trusted mediators and peacemakers (third party intervention).

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## **UN vote on banning nuclear weapons**

The TRG has been attentive to the UN process underway to bring about a ban on nuclear weapons. A thorough paper on this topic was presented and discussed by the TRG. The Swedish churches, as well as the members of the European network Church and Peace, had taken action on the issue. The TRG found it important to raise awareness among churches over the recent UN resolution to begin negotiations on a treaty to ban nuclear weapons. It was recommended to strengthen CEC's involvement in dialogue on the nuclear weapons ban and networking with the WCC's Ecumenical Peace Advocacy Network (EPAN), Pax Christi and the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons (ICAN), which recently received the Nobel Peace Prize for their work on this issue. A letter on this issue, addressed to CEC Member Churches, was drafted including action points for the churches and the TRG. However, the letter was not sent to the Member Churches, as the Presidency decided that CEC did not have enough staff capacity to work on this topic.

## **Document on the role of religion in conflict, peacebuilding and reconciliation**

During its fifth meeting from 27-28 February 2017 in Brussels, the TRG focused on two thematic areas, one was the "reign of God as a theological framework" and the other was the "role of religion in peace and conflict".

The group agreed to produce a document on "The Role of Religion in Conflict, Peacebuilding and Reconciliation" that explores the metaphor of the reign of God from biblical and patristic perspectives. It also examines its implications for the current state and future of Europe with regard to witness, justice and hospitality, the overarching themes of the 2018 General Assembly of CEC in Novi Sad. The document was developed to facilitate conversations at the workshops organised by the TRG at the CEC General Assembly in Novi Sad.

**“Peace Task Force will be set up to give active witness to God’s ministry of reconciliation”**

## **Conference of European Churches Peace Task Force**

CEC and Member Churches are active participants in God's mission, in and for the world. As a concrete expression of this, a Peace Task Force will be set up to give active witness to God's ministry of reconciliation. The Peace Task Force will essentially be mediators of peace in Europe. This mediation work will be carried out through CEC and its Member Churches.



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The Peace Task Force will focus on responding to situations of conflict. It will take initiatives in the area of peacebuilding and will respond to the call of Member Churches and other parties for intervention in building bridges for mediation and negotiation. During its sixth meeting from 26-27 June 2017 and its seventh meeting from 27-28 November 2017, the TRG developed a detailed proposal on the task, practice and resources for the Peace Task Force that was approved by the CEC Governing Board in November 2017.

### **Consultation with experts in conflict mediation**

As one of the initial steps in developing the Peace Task Force, the TRG held a consultation on 28 November 2017 in Brussels with experts in conflict mediation working in different parts of Europe. Among these experts were Ms Jenny Svanberg from the Life and Peace Institute in Sweden, Mr Geoffrey Corry from the Glencree Centre for Reconciliation in Ireland and Dr Ana Raffai from RAND-Regional Address for Nonviolent Action in Croatia, who shared their operational models and experience in the field. They discussed with TRG members the format, tasks, and membership of the Peace Task Force, as well as the type of training programmes and mediation skills it may offer, and the challenges that the project entails.

### **Peace Conference 2019**

Developing the Peace Task Force is integrally linked to the organisation of the Peace Conference planned for 2019. The TRG agreed on the enormous potential for a significant peace conference in 2019 with the focus on the Paris Peace Conference of 1919 and the current global and European situation. The conference will reflect on the past as well and will provide greater understanding for today's contexts, and the work of peacebuilding.

Historically CEC's calling has always been of one ecumenical body working for reconciliation and peacebuilding. CEC ably demonstrated this during the time of the iron curtain. In recent times there is an increasing sense of insecurity and a loss of identity in different regions of Europe. In this context, CEC is once again called upon to respond appropriately to the challenges to peace and security in Europe, demonstrating its common Christian voice.

A comprehensive proposal for the Paris Peace Conference was approved by the CEC Governing Board in November 2017. The conference objectives are:

- To identify the current threats to peace in Europe and the world, and articulate the challenges presented by the global experiences of the 21st century.
- To explore the Paris Peace Conference of 1919 in its centenary year, to identify its legacies and to learn some hard lessons from our European and global past.

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- To engage in robust theological and ethical reflection on the past and contemporary world and identify a theological praxis that can enable CEC and its Member Churches to faithfully engage in transformation, healing and reconciliation.
  - To develop appropriate resources for Member Churches and partners, so that there is greater recognition of our common Christian life in the Europe of the 21st century.

### **Prioritising peacebuilding and reconciliation over the militarisation of the EU**

In June 2017 the European Commission presented a communication on a new European Defence Fund, a proposal for the regulation of financial support for the European arms industry, and a reflection paper with possible forthcoming scenarios for the future of Europe defence.

CEC published a press release on the issue on 4 June 2017 opposing in particular policies that would lead to a third of the scenarios described in the Commission's reflection paper, as this would mean transforming the EU into a military alliance.

CEC criticised funding military research and defence industry from the civilian EU budget and stressed that increasing its military spending has adverse effects on security. CEC called upon the European Union to instead turn its attention to youth unemployment, regional economic development, and social issues, especially in southern European countries, and asked its Member Churches to engage with national governments in a critical discussion on the future development of EU defence policies.

### **Contributions at 2018 Novi Sad General Assembly**

The TRG on Peacebuilding and Reconciliation is organising two workshops at the General Assembly entitled "The role of religion in conflict and peace" and "No peace without justice! No justice without peace!". The workshops will build capacities of participants from Member Churches and Organisations in Partnership with CEC, working on peace related issues.

## **DIALOGUE WITH THE EU INSTITUTIONS**

### **Meetings on Resilience**

In light of the Joint Communication from the EU High Representative and the European Commission entitled "Resilience as a strategic priority of the external action of the EU", CEC co-organised a series of meetings to explore how the EU can enhance its peacebuilding initiatives at grassroots and how

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to draw on the extensive experience and insight of faith-based organisations in identifying and building on the strength at the local level. These meetings were jointly organised by CEC, the Commission of the Bishops' Conferences of the EU (COMECE), the Bahá'í International Community (BIC) and the Quaker Council for European Affairs (QCEA).

### **Meeting on Resilience with faith-based organisations**

The first meeting was held on 18 June 2017 with representatives from faith-based communities at the COMECE offices. Participants of the meeting reflected on the concept of resilience and its relation to religion, especially in the peace discourse. However, the question remained open on how the European institutions can effectively tap into the social and spiritual resources contained within the religious communities.

### **Resilience in practice: A dialogue between faith-based actors and policy-makers**

The second meeting was held on 12 July 2017 in Brussels and brought together representatives from faith-based communities and policy-makers. The meeting focused on the role that religious actors can play in fostering resilience.

### **Meeting with religious actors and policy-makers**

In the follow-up to the second meeting on resilience, the four organisers convened a brainstorming session to collect ideas on which religious actors could engage in a dialogue with the European institutions. The meeting was held on 27 September 2017 in Brussels.

### **From aid to partnership: migration, development and peace**

CEC together with COMECE, BIC and QCEA organised another brainstorming meeting in February 2018. The purpose of this session was to reflect together on the elements of a fair partnership approach that the EU should undertake with regard to migration, development and peace as well as on the role of faith-based actors in promoting fair and equitable partnerships in the context of each of the three interconnected fields.

The context for this discussion was generated, among others, by the upcoming EU-ACP (African, Caribbean and Pacific countries) negotiations, the recent launch of the European External Investment Plan, the debate on the post-2020 framework for "Capacity-building in support of security and development", the UN Global Compact process on migrants and refugees as well as the Sustainable Development Goals 17 "Revitalize the global partnership for sustainable development." The meeting collected ideas and formulated key questions in preparation of a larger gathering of policymakers and

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faith-based actors on the same topic to be organised by the four convening organisations in the spring of 2018.

**Visibility of TRG's work: participation in consultations and forums**

The members of the TRG have been active in several events promoting initiatives related to peacebuilding and reconciliation. TRG members participated at the international peace consultation on "How to become a just peace church" organised by the Evangelische Kirche in Deutschland – EKD - from 28 September - 1 October 2016 in Berlin; and at the roundtable discussion on "Clash or dialogue of civilisations? globalised religions and the need of dialogue" organised by the Dialogue Platform on 28 June 2017 in Brussels.





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## 4. European Churches and Human Rights

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Since the last CEC General Assembly in Budapest 2013, issues that have remained in focus on the CEC's human rights agenda include the universality of human rights, freedom of religion or belief, anti-discrimination legislation, religious minorities, access to the places of worship and holy sites, women and children's rights and migration.

In some European countries when human rights violations occur, Member Churches have approached CEC for assistance. Through its official responses, CEC has been engaging with the European Union (EU), using international human rights instruments and mechanisms to help churches to improve their situations, and reminding European states of their legal obligations in general and specifically when receiving complaints of human rights violations.

The Churches' work for the protection of human dignity lies at the heart of their theological teaching. Monitoring and advocacy for the implementation of civil, political, social, economic and cultural rights has always remained high on the agenda of CEC Member Churches. This work has important consequences for inter-religious dialogue. Therefore, CEC attempts to advocate for specific human rights issues relevant for CEC Member Churches and Organisations in Partnership.

The excellent working relationships CEC has developed with international organisations, has helped CEC to assist European churches with advocacy for human rights and justice issues. Addressing the needs of the European churches and beyond, CEC's Thematic Reference Group (TRG) on human rights, has remained efficient and effective. The TRG has met regularly in Brussels and Strasbourg since its inception. These meetings have been carried out under the professional and smooth moderation of Rev. Dr Göran Gunner from the Church of Sweden.

Since the CEC's Budapest Assembly, the universality of human rights has become a particularly significant topic, especially with the rise of populism in some parts of Europe. More than ever, decisions of the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) and even – quite unprecedentedly – of the European Court of Justice (ECJ) are contested at national levels. The typical question raised by populists is, why should foreign judges decide cases of human

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rights violations at the national level? The refusal to implement decisions of the ECHR and the ECJ represents a direct threat to European values such as democracy and the rule of law, and principles on which Europe was rebuilt following World War II.

At the same time, due to the increase in migration flows, the question of freedom of religion or belief has become even more challenging. One aspect is the fact that persons converting from Islam to Christianity often have difficulty in obtaining protection on these grounds, as asylum authorities question the credibility of their conversion. Related issues are, for example, when Christians converting to Islam, especially women, are attacked for wearing the hijab. Likewise, Christians from Muslim majority countries feel that their persecution by Islamists somehow continues in European asylum centres.

These trends show that human rights issues are increasingly important in times of high migration. But other international issues also have an impact. One pertinent question is how the conflict in Israel and Palestine influences the increase in anti-Semitism and Islamophobia in Europe.

European churches have expressed concern over the war in Syria and Iraq. Many churches, monasteries and cultural heritage sites were destroyed during these wars. Countless people were killed as they disagreed with the so-called Islamic state (ISIS), not only Christians, but several different ethnic and religious groups, including Muslims who did not want to submit to ISIS's view of life.

The Governing Board of CEC has issued several statements on this issue asking the European institutions to take action in order to help churches and people in need. Also CEC monitored very closely the European Parliament's non-binding resolution of 4 February 2016 on the systematic murder of religious minorities by the so-called ISIS.

In this context, European churches developed human rights training material on the basis of which a CEC's human rights education programme was established. Instrumental to this was the CEC's Summer School on Human Rights, tackling all the themes highlighted by the human rights training manual called *European Churches Engagement in Human Rights* issued in 2013.



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Following are significant initiatives in this regard:

- Summer School on Human Rights addressing freedom of religion or belief, held in Palermo, Italy, 15-18 September 2014, with academic support of the Catholic University of Leuven (KUL) and Professor Dr Marco Ventura.
- Human rights training course on the freedom of religion or belief addressing minority rights and relations initiated by the European Baptist Federation, 12-15 November 2014, Elstal, Germany.
- Summer School on Theology and Human Rights focusing on anti-discrimination legalisation, held from 25-29 May 2015 at the Hagabergs College in Södertälje, Sweden; held in collaboration with Dr Göran Gunner, current moderator of the TRG on Human Rights.
- Summer School on Human Rights entitled “Stand up for Women and Children’s Rights” took place from 31 May - 4 June 2016 in Thessaloniki, Greece, with the academic support of Dr Nikos Maghioros from Aristotle Theological Faculty in Thessaloniki.
- Summer School on Human Rights entitled “Rights under Threat – Stand Up for Refugees and Migrants’ Rights” took place in Palermo, Italy from 2-6 July 2017. The event was organised in partnership with the Churches’ Commission for Migrants in Europe (CCME).

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It was evaluated that these initiatives increased awareness of religious freedom or belief among the general public, CEC Member Churches and its Organisations in Partnership. These initiatives also provided the latest update on the institutional developments in the human rights area for human rights advocates, as well as strengthening partnerships and cooperation among European churches.

On 6 May 2016, the President of the European Commission Jean-Claude Juncker appointed Ján Figel as first Special Envoy for the Promotion of Freedom of Religion or Belief outside the EU. This was a concrete step by which the EU demonstrated its political will to address violations of freedom of religion or belief, including forced conversion, blasphemy legislation and other related matters.

The establishment of this post by the European Commission was a response to the brutal killing of Coptic Christians in Libya. Therefore, CEC re-established effective relationship with Mr Figel, which resulted in regular meetings and exchange. CEC, together with European Platform on Religious Intolerance and Discrimination (EPRID), had been advocating for the establishment of this post for several years. Some EU member states followed this example and appointed their own “envoys”.

### **Guidelines on freedom of religion or belief**

In 2013, the European External Action Service (EEAS) issued guidelines on freedom of religion or belief. EEAS was obliged to evaluate the impact of the guidelines after three years. After five years that has still not happened, but the EEAS reflection process started in March 2017, showing the difficulty in monitoring violations of human rights.

In this context, CEC’s TRG on Human Rights sent a questionnaire to CEC Member Churches about the implementation of these guidelines in 2017. The responses came from the following churches: the Church of Denmark, the Church of Cyprus, the Swedish Mission Council, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Hungary, the Presbyterian Church in Ireland, the Protestant Church of Luxembourg and the Shiloh United Church of Christ Apostolic Worldwide, among others.

CEC shared the findings from this process with Mr Figel and informed him about the churches’ engagement with the EU guidelines. On the basis of these guidelines, churches have formulated effective and far reaching responses. The Council on International Relations of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Denmark started a debate in the Danish Foreign office, stressing the need for the training of civil servants on freedom of religion or belief. A new special envoy on religious freedom was established in Denmark by the Danish Government following the practice of Hungarian government.

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The Finish Ecumenical Council published a book on this issue of religious freedom and foreign policy.

The Church of Cyprus was of the opinion that religious freedom is not only important for countries outside the EU, but also for the members of the EU and countries who seek to join the EU.

On the basis of these guidelines, the Slovakian Reformed Church suggested to its government to address the discrimination in schools faced by students belonging to minority communities. The Reformed Church in Luxembourg suggested that the guidelines serve as a basis for the legal text regulating relations between church and the state at the national level. The EEAS staff have in the past few years held training courses on freedom of religion or belief, in which CEC participated via EPRID.

During the past years CEC has developed human rights education material in the area of religious freedom related to these guidelines, and distributed it among EEAS staff. CEC also shared related information on behalf of CEC Member Churches.

CEC maintains regular contacts with the UN Human Rights Commissioner's Office and UN Special Rapporteur on Religious Freedom or Belief in Geneva and other UN offices in New York, as well as European institutions, engaging particularly with the EU Fundamental Rights Agency, the office of Special EU Envoy on Religious Freedom or Belief at European Commission and the Council of Europe and its monitoring mechanisms (ECRI), the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) and the Human Dimension Implementation Meeting (HDIM), among other partners.

CEC also collaborated with civil society organisations participating in the work of the Human Rights and Democracy Network in Brussels, and in Strasbourg it collaborated with International Non-Governmental Organisations (INGO), a platform at the Council of Europe of which CEC is part and the EU Fundamental Rights Platform in Vienna where CEC maintains its membership.

### **Churches engaging with EU over human right issues**

In year 2013 and 2014, in response to a questionnaire issued by the European Parliament, CEC put forward suggestions for amendments to the material on Cypriot cultural and religious heritage in the EU's report on fundamental human rights. Due to the joint efforts by CEC and the representation of the Church of Cyprus to the EU, an amendment on Cyprus was included in the European Parliament's final report on the state of fundamental rights in the EU. The report was adopted in 2015.

In addition, CEC with the representation of the Church of Cyprus organised a conference entitled "Cyprus: Freedom of Religion and its Cultural Heritage"

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at the European Parliament on 10 November 2015. The event addressed the situation of the Cypriot churches and the monuments in the Northern part of Cyprus. The event helped the Church of Cyprus to advocate to the EU to continue to fund them at the same level used for the reconstructions of holy sites in Cyprus.

In 2017, CEC also organised a conference on the “Situation of Places of Worship and Holy Sites in Nicosia” hosted by the Church of Cyprus. The high level conference was attended by the Archbishop Chrysostomos II of the Church of Cyprus, the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Cyprus and the Greek Orthodox Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos III. The debate initiated at this conference aimed at contributing to the dialogue at the European Year of Cultural Heritage 2018.

### **Churches, minorities and religious freedom**

The Ecumenical Patriarchate and CEC organised the conference “Advancing Freedom of Religion or Belief for All” from 6 to 9 September 2015 at Halki/Istanbul, Turkey. Several CEC Member Churches are monitoring day-by-day the Turkish accession process to the EU. They have their own communities in that country and they are concerned about democracy, human rights, and the rule of law in Turkey’s diverse, although predominantly Muslim, society. The first question on the agenda of the conference was the reopening of the Theological School of Halki. The Turkish authorities arbitrarily closed it down in 1971. Another important item was the situation of migrants and refugees from Syria and Iraq who live in the Turkish camps. For further information about this event, please see the publication on the CEC website.

CEC has been deeply concerned about human rights violations in Syria and Iraq. To raise awareness, CEC invited to Brussels on 22 May 2015, Mor Dionysius Jean Kawak of the Syriac Orthodox Church for a lecture on “Situation of Internally Displaced Persons and Vulnerable Families in Syria and Iraq”.

CEC with its partners also organised a hearing at the European Parliament entitled “The Hurdles of Establishing and Maintaining Religious Freedom in the World – What must the EU do?”. The hearing addressed issues related to EU’s support with humanitarian assistance, the situation of Yazidis in Syria and freedom of religion or belief in Syria and Iraq.

CEC’s Member Churches engaged with the EU institutions over a draft law on freedom of religion issued by the Government of Montenegro on 30 July 2015. A delegation of the Metropoly of Montenegro and the Littoral and the Diocese of Budimlje and Nikšić visited EU institutions in Brussels, bringing attention to the concerns of religious communities about the draft law. This issue was addressed in the second volume of the Human Right Training Manual produced by CEC. As result of these actions by the churches, the

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draft was suspended pending revisions by the Government of Montenegro.

Similarly, the issue of discrimination against minorities is of great concern for the churches. The Serbian Orthodox minority in Croatia is confronted with this issue. Therefore, a visit of representatives from the Metropoly of Zagreb and Ljubljana in Croatia to the EU took place in 2015, headed by Metropolitan Porfirije of the Diocese Zagreb and Ljubljana. As a follow-up, CEC organised a conference on "Religious Minorities as Part of Culturally Diverse Societies" from 21-22 October 2016 in Zagreb. The event was organised by CEC in partnership with the Serbian Orthodox Church - the diocese of Zagreb and Ljubljana, the European Parliament Antiracism and Diversity Intergroup and CCME.

As an outcome of this conference, several initiatives were developed, one of which was the visit of young Serbs and young Croats to the EU institutions. The interaction between these young people was captured in a video documentary entitled "Standing up for Minority Rights". The video was launched at the European Parliament in Brussels in October 2017, in the presence of many young Serbs, Croats and other international guests. The host of the event was the Croatian MEP Ivan Jackovčić.

CEC also provided assistance to Member Churches in the area of human rights, such as the organisations of Protestant churches in Spain, where pastors are being deprived of benefiting from the public pensions scheme, while Catholic priests are included.

To address this issue, CEC initiated several actions vis-à-vis Council of Europe and EU institutions, in particular EU Fundamental Rights Agency, assisting the Spanish Protestant churches.



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# 5. Economic and Climate Justice:

## A PILGRIMAGE OF JUSTICE AND PEACE

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Climate change and sustainable development have increasingly become defining issues on the global political agenda. Efforts for economic justice and climate justice are not separable. Even if the economy, ecology, energy, and climate change and care for sustainable development take centre stage, their links and mutual dependency are becoming increasingly visible.

Climate change became a more significant subject prior to the global climate summit in 2015 in Paris. The Paris Agreement signed by 196 countries of the world has become a unique document, which demonstrates the political commitment of world leaders.

Along with political leaders, the conference was attended by a number of religious personalities and church leaders, as well as by representatives of church-related and ecumenical organisations and a public representing a wide spectrum of civil society.

The Paris conference acknowledged that climate change is an ethical challenge. The role of faith-based communities, their contribution and cooperation in addressing climate change has become pertinent. Engagement of churches on the issue is increasingly expected and welcomed. It is recognised that through mutual cooperation of the world community and joint action of diverse actors, including religions and faith-based actors, post-Paris efforts may pave the way for a transformation towards sustainable development.

The EU reaffirmed its commitment to address climate change by a speedy ratification of the Paris Agreement. Efficient initiatives to address climate change are one of the most visible expectations of European citizens in the EU. How far-reaching is the ambition, and how to translate it into a political programme of the EU, and to ensure its implementation, is a question of serious concern and the subject of an intensive dialogue between the EU and civil society. Many churches across the continent have recently stepped up their activities in this area. Climate change, care for creation and efforts for sustainable development have become themes of public interest and

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themes on which churches' have expressed their concerns and have deepened their engagement, action and dialogue with politics.

In this area CEC works hand-in-hand with the European Christian Environmental Network (ECEN) that provides a broad platform for the exchange of experience, sharing of best practices and for stimulating the churches' work in this area. CEC's objectives in addressing concerns of ecology, climate change and sustainable development are:

- to encourage and assist churches in their work on care for creation
- to facilitate sharing of experience
- to stimulate theological reflections related to care for creation
- to identify and promote contributions from churches and faith-based organisations to the overall environmental agenda
- to facilitate and contribute to dialogue with political decision makers.

These objectives also include engaging with the EU, as well contributing to the Conference of the Parties (COPs) organised by the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. CEC's work on climate change, especially in relation to the UN initiatives has been carried out through close cooperation with the WCC, Act Alliance and other partners.

An important, although still not fully acknowledged moment in recent years was the UN adoption of Sustainable Development Goals. Climate change cannot be treated as an isolated agenda. The necessary call for transformation of life style, change of consumption and production patterns has received a growing momentum. Therefore, addressing injustices is an undeniable task of the churches. This topic was underlined at a CEC consultation in 2013 organised as a European preparatory meeting for the WCC 10th Assembly in Busan, Republic of Korea held in 2013. This understanding guided CEC's work for the whole period following the CEC Assembly in Budapest.

### **European contribution to “Pilgrimage of Justice and Peace”**

One of the substantial outcomes of the WCC Assembly in 2013 has been an invitation to the churches to take part in the “Pilgrimage of Justice and Peace”. This call came into focus in 2015 with initiatives taking place around the UN political summit in Paris.

CEC was able to contribute to the process in a significant way. Numerous churches individually, as well as in cooperation with one another in different constellations, organised local, regional and cross-continental pilgrimages to highlight the urgency of the issue. These projects helped to express expectations towards the summit and assembled political leaders.

“Pilgrimage of Climate Justice” has become the headline for numerous activities of CEC, as well as a number of its Member Churches.



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CEC, along with acknowledging these initiatives, focused its efforts primarily on:

- encouraging and helping churches in central and eastern Europe to contribute to the process
- facilitating the voice of churches in Europe reflecting the churches' role in responding to climate change and expressing their expectations of the Paris climate summit.

CEC supported contributions to the pilgrimage in central Europe. The most successful in this regard were initiatives from churches in Hungary, Poland, Czech Republic and Slovakia.

The highlight of CEC's work on the way to Paris was the conference entitled "For a more just and sustainable tomorrow". Church leaders from European churches, including the leadership of CEC and WCC assembled in 2015 in Villigst, Germany.

These church leaders walked and met pilgrims participating in northern branch of the pilgrimage heading from Northern Europe to Paris.

In view of the Paris conference the participants adopted a message, which underlined: "We are all on a pilgrimage that is an exodus from the Carbon economy. We journey together with the climate refugees and migrants and for the right of the coming generations to a life of wellbeing on a sustainable earth. The pilgrimage is not only a way to express concerns for the future but also a hope for a future where we will live in freedom, peace and justice as part of the whole of Creation."

In responding to the need for dialogue with EU political actors, CEC has been engaged in organising several events enabling to raise concerns of churches and highlight numerous activities in which Christians across the continent are engaged in responding to these challenges. Particular attention was given to the following events:

- "Climate change – a matter of solidarity and global justice" – a dialogue between churches and the EU organised jointly by CEC, Commission of the Bishops' Conferences of the European Community (COMECE) and the Bureau of European Policy Advisors of the EU in October 2013.
- "Climate change: Young Christians call on the EU to commit to eco-justice," an event organised with COMECE and partner youth organisations in September 2014).
- The conference on climate change in the European Parliament, organised together with COMECE, Act Alliance and other partners in September 2015.
- Meeting of the European Christian Environmental Network (ECEN)

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with members of the European Parliament Carbon Divestment Group in January 2016.

CEC strengthened its efforts in highlighting ambitions and expectations regarding the ratification of the Paris Treaty and the role of churches. These aspirations were summarised in a statement of the CEC Governing Board: "Climate change is a matter for all" adopted in November 2014. The statement highlighted: "Climate change is a moral and ethical challenge that goes beyond denominational and religious differences.... The Conference of European Churches calls on churches in Europe and Christians everywhere to join in our common struggle for climate justice. We acknowledge and feel encouraged that many churches have already adopted environmental strategies aimed at saving energy and promoting renewable energy and divestment from fossil fuels. We encourage our membership to build upon these good examples."

The concept of climate justice has been systematically promoted in CEC's work. This very concept has been shaping the churches' action on climate change and sustainable development. It is not without interest that the terminology of climate justice is making its way gradually into the world of politics. The document of the European Economic and Social Committee, an advisory body of the EU, entitled *Climate Justice* elaborates a number of concerns, which was presented by churches, especially the fact that "the concept of climate justice frames global climate change as a political and ethical issue and not just a strictly environmental one. It recognises that the most vulnerable and poorest in society often have to suffer the greatest impact of the effects of climate change."

### **ECEN's initiatives for climate justice**

The highlights of the ECEN activities have been its assemblies organised in bi-annual periodicity. The 2014 Assembly entitled "Energy and Climate Change – the Churches' Role and Voice" was held in Balatónszárszó, Hungary. The Assembly emphasised: "We pray as a community of faith. We listen to each other and we share our fears but we also share our hopes; fears for the foreseeable impact of climate change and hopes for the possibilities of change and a renewed world." In the letter to the churches in Europe the Assembly stressed: "We are called to act locally with a global outlook. As churches and faith communities we are called to care for our neighbour and our neighbour is every living creature in God's creation. We call upon the churches and church leaders across Europe to respond to the spiritual and practical crisis of climate change."

In a letter to the EU, the Assembly urged the Union to step up its ambition in reducing CO2 emissions, energy saving efforts and promotion of renewable energy.

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The ECEN Assembly met in 2016 in Helsinki and addressed the theme “Water in a Sustainable Future”. The gathering offered a venue for sharing and strengthening cooperation, and for further encouragement of the churches’ work in the follow-up to the Paris climate conference. The Assembly adopted a statement emphasising the theological and biblical imperative to work for water justice, and a call to action for individuals and churches.

Among other activities of ECEN have been the most relevant:

- The consultation: “Is the use of nuclear energy ethically justifiable?” Heidelberg, 2015, which offered a space for sharing the positions and for searching an ethical framework in the complex issue of nuclear energy use. The event helped in clarifying differences and in moving discussion forward in this difficult area.
- The symposium: “Faith Communities and Environmental Activism,” organised in cooperation with the University of Edinburgh in 2017, which brought together faith-based environmentalists and scholars around an interdisciplinary dialogue on the beliefs, cultures and traditions that undergird environmental activism. The event focused on the respective and overlapping roles of faith communities and academics in mitigating climate change and forming alliances.
- The seminar: “Hope in the age of climate change,” Budapest, 2017. The event focused on the central question, “does theology of creation serve as a vehicle for a secular green movement, or is it a genuine contextual theology of today?”
- Two workshops in 2015 and 2016 on twinning partnership programme facilitating the exchange of experience and coordination of work on eco-management.

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## Creation Day and Creation Time

Respect, appreciation and contemplation of Creation are the common concern of Christian churches. On the occasion of the Time for Creation, observed from 1 September – 4 October and the Day for Creation (1 September), CEC, the Council of European Bishops' Conferences (CCEE) and ECEN have since 2016 issued joint statements including the call to all churches and Christians in Europe inviting "all European Christians, Member Churches of CEC and Bishops' Conferences of CCEE, parishes and Church communities and every person of good will to join in *Time for Creation*, to celebrate *Time for Creation* together, within your own liturgical traditions and to uphold the common Christian faith in God the Creator. We urge you, in your respective settings, to offer, prayers for the gift of Creation, and join us in praying together."

## Economic justice

The economic and financial crisis, which started in 2008, has had a devastating impact on a number of countries in Europe, especially Greece. The crisis with its impact on the weakening of social standards and living conditions of many has revealed substantial structural deficits of Eurozone. CEC focused its attention on expressing solidarity with the most affected and vulnerable, as well as on addressing the structural aspects of the crisis.

“ The dignity of persons, created according to Christian faith in the image of God, is in all circumstances to be protected ”

In a particular reaction to developments in Greece, the Presidium of CEC shared in July 2015 a pastoral letter with churches in Greece. The Presidium expressed, on behalf of CEC, its solidarity with the churches of Greece and all Greek people. The letter underlined: "The diminishing of living standards, in particular for those who are poor or who are living on their pensions below the poverty line as well as those who are on the margins of society, is unacceptable in the Union based on sharing and solidarity. ... The dignity of persons, created according to Christian faith in the image of God, is in all circumstances to be protected. ... We urge leaders of the Union together with leaders in Greece to find a common ground for the future of Greece inside the Eurozone and inside the Union."

The sources of the economic and financial crisis and especially weaknesses of the European political and economic construction in responding to the crisis has been the subject of a special Task Force. The final document adopted by the Governing Board in November 2016 "Beyond Prosperity? Eu-

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ropean Economic Governance as a Dialogue between Theology, Economics and Politics,” offers perspectives on the structural aspects of the crisis. The document provides policy recommendations reflecting the current situation and the vision for Europe’s future emerging from the churches’ perspective.

The document focused on the most visible aspects of the crisis, as well as the role of transparency in democratization, building confidence in the European institutions, global connection to European problems and the need for grassroots reform of the financial institutions.

The document underlines the need for a more systemic consideration about the dominant economic paradigm based on the ever growing GDP and the need to take into consideration the necessity of diversification of approaches including the efforts for a more sustainable pattern of production and consumption.

The document stresses that the economy needs to be embedded in social structures, respecting environmental limits and standards. The call for a transition towards a sustainable economy is an expression of growing acknowledgment and respect for mutual dependency between the economy, ecology and social aspects, and ethics including the faith-based perspective.



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## 6. Employment and Social Affairs

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From 2013 to 2018, Europe was affected by the economic and financial crisis, which resulted in major social consequences for many countries and societies. The crisis triggered a rise in unemployment especially among youth, increased poverty, including in particular child poverty, and the decrease of social protection in many countries due to policies which were actually aimed at overcoming the crisis.

This is when economic and social inequalities between European countries increased as well as between regions within the countries. And the crisis is not finished yet. This economic and social decline has undermined the confidence of societies in the political system, as well as in democracy and European policy. The emergence of nationalistic voices and political parties all over Europe, the departure from the European project as expressed by Brexit but also formulated in programmes of political parties are interpreted by many commentators as strong and clear indicators for the detrimental effects of the crisis.

Commenting on the situation, Secretary General of the Council of Europe, Thorbjørn Jagland rightly stated, “The social question and the democratic question are in fact closely connected. The construction of Europe, whatever the substance of the economic policies implemented, must always concern itself with the realisation of fundamental rights that meet citizens’ everyday needs”.

“Disregarding them means creating fertile ground for anti-social, anti-political, anti-European and racist movements, or movements based simply on political exploitation of social egoism. Such attitudes could imperil the pillars of democracy, the rule of law and fundamental rights, which the Council of Europe has never ceased to champion and promote and which underpin European integration,” added Jagland in the document Opinion on European Pillar of Social Rights in 2016.

Given that the CEC constitution defines the organisation’s aim as being to “work towards building a humane, social and sustainable Europe at peace with itself and its neighbours in which human rights and solidarity prevail” (Article 2.1) – this crisis and its consequences have to be at the centre of CEC’s work.

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## Thematic Reference Group on Employment and Social Issues

### *The European Semester and the Europe 2020 strategy*

In 2010, the European Commission established the Europe 2020 strategy to achieve “smart, sustainable and inclusive growth”. It defined five targets. Two of them are closely related to employment and social policies: 75 percent of all people in the EU aged between 20 to 64 should be in work by 2020, and at least 20 million fewer people in – or at risk of – poverty and social exclusion. This target was defined in three different ways: people living in households with very low work intensity; people at risk of poverty after social transfers, the risk of the poverty threshold being set at 60 percent of the national equivalent disposable income and people severely materially deprived.

To achieve these targets, the EU member states had to report on their policies. These national policies were assessed and monitored by the European institutions in the process known as the European Semester, leading to recommendations from the EU institutions to the member states in terms of how to do better in the next year.

Together with CEC partner organisation Eurodiaconia, there was a chance to involve CEC Member Churches in the process of discussion between the national and European level, addressing challenges of employment and social policies and discussing how to achieve the targets. Therefore, in cooperation, conferences were organised in 2011, 2012 and 2013 to introduce opportunities of the European Semester and the targets of Europe 2020. The participation at the conferences was small but intensive.

The nuanced experiences with the strategy enabled CEC to participate officially in the mid-term review of the Europe 2020 strategy launched by the Commission in 2014. However, due to the economic and financial crisis and its social consequences, the rise in the number of people at risk of poverty and unemployment, the European Commission decided to give enhanced prominence to the strategy.

One such example is mentioned in the annual report of the Social Protection Committee of the EU stating that “around 1.7 million more people are at risk of poverty or social exclusion in the EU28 compared to 2008, and a total of 118.8 million or close to 1 in 4 Europeans” which has to be taken into account, as stated in an official document issued by the Employment, Social Policy, Health and Consumer Affairs Council configuration (EPSCO) in 2017.

### *The European Pillar of Social Rights*

In 2014, the new European Commission and its President Jean-Claude Juncker were elected. One of his strong messages at the beginning of his tenure was that the European Union has to deliver a “social Triple-A”. In



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March 2016 the Commission launched a public consultation on the proposal of a European Pillar of Social Rights, which outlined 20 principles for the existing EU employment and social rights to serve as a guideline for European and national policies and to ensure implementation of social rights in EU member states.

CEC's Thematic Reference Group on Employment and Social Issues prepared a response to this consultation, taking into account former CEC position papers, but also in exchanges with many actors in Brussels such as Eurodiaconia, Commission of the Bishops' Conferences of the European Community (COMECE) and others.

In October 2016, CEC submitted its response. In the process, the CEC General Secretary was invited to conferences by the European Commission, the European Parliament (EP) and the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC). Together with COMECE, CEC proposed amendments to the draft report of the EP, which were taken into account. One example is when CEC and COMECE proposed to relate the Pillar to the Social Charter of the Council of Europe with its demand for "a common weekly day of rest recognised by tradition and custom in the country or region".

In the discussions of CEC's Thematic Reference Group on Employment and Social Issues and other actors, it became obvious that the main challenge would be the implementation of the European Pillar of Social Rights, particularly on national, regional and local level. CEC raised this concern in a joint letter with COMECE, Eurodiaconia and Caritas Europe to the three EU Presidencies of Estonia, Bulgaria and Austria. It was again expressed in a public letter addressing the Social Summit in Gothenburg held on 11 November 2017, in which the European Pillar of Social Rights was signed as an Inter-institutional Proclamation by the President of the European Commission, Jean-Claude Juncker, the President of the European Parliament, Antonio Tajani, and the President of the European Council, Donald Tusk.

The European Pillar of Social Rights will be a considerable tool for CEC and its future work to consider, monitor and advocate social justice in Europe.

Among other more specific topics that have occupied CEC's Thematic Reference Group include the discussion on a new directive on parental leave and work-life-balance.

### ***Council of Europe, the Steering Committee for Human Rights, Drafting Group on Social Rights***

As CEC has participatory status at the Council of Europe, the General Secretary was invited to contribute to a report on social rights. The report analysed the legal framework of the Council of Europe for the protection of social rights in Europe, examining especially the role of the European Court

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of Human Rights but also European law instruments, such as the *acquis communautaire* on social rights of the EU. On this basis, the report will develop proposals to improve the implementation of the Social Charter and will facilitate the relationship between various European instruments for the protection of social rights.

Beside the opportunity to contribute to this assessment and debate, it was a particular chance for CEC to hold a dialogue through its Committee with delegates of national governments from all over Europe. It showed them the commitment of the churches in Europe to social rights and the development of a social Europe.

### Church Action on Labour and Life

The Church Action on Labour and Life (CALL) network started in 2010 and focusses on questions of employment and labour. It functioned both through working groups and through its general assemblies which were held every year or every second year.

CALL working groups concentrated on the phenomena of precarious work, highlighting a theological and social-ethical understanding of “good work”. It addressed forms of sustainable economy and developed responses of churches on the economic and financial crisis in Europe, youth unemployment and the challenges and opportunities for politics.

The network was led by the CALL coordination team, consisting of nine persons, representing the confessional and regional composition of CEC. The *Kirchlicher Dienst in der Arbeitswelt* of the Evangelical Church in Germany (EKD; the German Protestant industrial mission), the Evangelical-Lutheran Church of Finland as well as the Church of Sweden supported the CALL network and its projects financially.

After assessing the work of the network, the CALL coordination team stressed the need for reforms. It concluded that the method of operating in working groups and assemblies, as well as participation in the network was not satisfactory after six years. In November 2016, following this development, the CEC Governing Board asked that the concept of CALL be revised, and to involve especially those CEC Member Churches which are working in this area in a regular and professional manner.

Together with delegates from the Evangelical Church of Finland, the Church of Sweden, the Protestant Federation of Italy, the Church of Greece, the Church of England and the Evangelical Church in Germany, a core-group was established and a revised concept was identified. It stated that CALL will be engaged with the economy, employment, work and activity, and sustainability. It will focus on contextual challenges, like the complexities of changes in the structure, conditions and content of work and employment; on theo-

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logical and ethical reflection, e.g. on social ethics, human rights, theology of employment, work and activity in the changing economic context; and on social and diaconal practice, like good practices for church and society on local, national and international level.

It aims to produce analysis of developments; to devise guidelines for policy (advocacy) and practice; and to share information and good practice in working for change.

From 23 to 25 April 2018, CALL is holding a “conference on digitalisation and the future of work and social relations” as a fresh start to its work.

### **CALL CONFERENCES**

#### **Youth employment in Europe – a challenge for Churches?**

Brussels, Belgium

24 to 26 March 2014

#### **Bridges between hope and reality – Overcoming imbalances in Europe**

Rome, Italy

22 to 24 September 2014

#### **EU-labour-mobility - A gift or a burden?**

Brussels, Belgium

26 to 28 October 2015

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## The European Sunday Alliance

CEC is a founding member of the European Sunday Alliance (ESA) and the CEC General Secretary is member of the steering committee of the alliance, and coordinator of the steering committee, serving from 2016 to the end of 2017.

The ESA is a network of national Sunday Alliances, trade unions, civil society organisations and religious communities committed to raising awareness about the unique value of synchronised free time for European societies.

In the reporting period, one major effort was a project on the elections to the European Parliament in May 2014. The steering committee established a pledge, and with the support of the national partners of the ESA, asked the candidates for EP elections to sign it, agreeing to support in their parliamentary work “all relevant EU legislation both respects and promotes the protection of a common weekly day of rest for all EU citizens, which shall be in principle on a Sunday, in order to protect workers’ health and promote a better balance between family and private life and work” and to promote “EU-legislation guaranteeing sustainable working time patterns based on the principle of decent work benefiting society as well as the economy as a whole.”

The pledge attracted remarkable interest in a conference held in January 2014 at the premises of the EP. One result was the founding of the EP-Interest Group on Work-Life-Balance, hosted by MEP Evelyn Regner (S&D group) and MEP Thomas Mann (EPP). They invite, three to four times a year, MEP’s, assistants and other interested persons in Brussels to a breakfast in the EP, presenting and discussing different aspects of the ESA themes such as the “Acceleration Society – Quality vs. Quantity towards a Better Work-Life-Balance” and “Digitalisation and the Future of Work – Best Practices and Legislative Challenges for Europe”.

Digitalisation was also the theme of an ESA conference with the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC) on “Work-Life-Balance 4.0 – Challenges in a Time of Digitalisation” on 15 November 2015. With around one hundred participants, the conference was well attended. It was an achievement and a Brussels acknowledgment for the ESA. Also, the EU Commissioner Günther H. Oettinger, currently responsible for Digital Economy and Society, was willing to give a keynote address at the conference of the European Sunday Alliance. Nonetheless, major economic trends in many European countries have led to a reduction in legal protection for weekend and Sunday work.

The ESA invites its members to specific actions on 3 March, the European Day of a Work-Free Sunday, and 7 October, the World Day for Decent Work. These recognised days can be used for bringing forward the request to protect Sunday.

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Conference on work-free Sundays and decent work in the EU  
21 January 2014  
European Parliament, Brussels, Belgium

Conference Work-Life-Balance 4.0 – Challenges in time  
of digitalisation  
15 November 2016  
European Economic and Social Committee, Brussels, Belgium

### European Parliament-Interest Group meetings

The key role of work-life-balance for Europe's sustainable  
future on the occasion of the launch of the Interest Group  
Work-Life-Balance  
3 March 2015

Acceleration Society – Quality vs quantity: towards a better  
work-life-balance?  
1 June 2015

Healthy work places in Europe: Key to prevent psychosocial risks  
and ensure wellbeing at work?  
10 December 2015

Competitiveness needs innovation, innovation needs creativity  
and creativity needs recreation!  
29 June 2016

Digitalisation and the future of work – best practices and  
legislative challenges for Europe  
18 April 2017

A question of time – the role and conditions of volunteering,  
social and civic engagement in a connected society  
22 February 2018



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# 7. Bioethics and Christian Faith

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CEC's Thematic Reference Group (TRG) on Bioethics worked according to the task and mission defined in the roadmap document *Forging our Future*. Consequently, the main tasks were to monitor and propose CEC reactions to the evolutions in the European institutions, Directorates-General (DGs) on Science, Research and Development (in the European Union and Council of Europe). The group aimed to monitor, comment and reflect on the developments in bioethics, biotechnology and genetics, as well as euthanasia issues and human enhancement, and to study the relationship with the work done in the DG on Science and Technology of the European Commission.

Given that CEC enjoys a special relationship as observer at the Council of Europe Committee for Bioethics (DH-BIO), the TRG was particularly attentive to the current work of this Committee. This committee addressed issues related to genome editing, predictivity, genetic testing and insurance; research on biological materials of human origin; protection of the human rights and dignity of persons with mental disorders with regard to involuntary placement and involuntary treatment; emerging technologies; surrogacy; transgender and intersex children and gender aesthetic surgery.

## Bioethics and biotechnology

Bearing in mind the wide scope of the issues covered by bioethics and biotechnology in general, and by this Committee in particular, at the beginning of its work the TRG on Bioethics proposed to focus on two major topics important for CEC Member Churches and of considerable theological significance. The two chosen topics were the new developments in assisted procreation and in predictive medicine, which finally brought together under the single heading of gene editing. As a result of its work, the Group submitted to the Governing Board of CEC, and through it to the Member Churches and Organisations in Partnership, the discussion document entitled: *Moral and ethical issues in human gene editing*.

In this document, it is stated that a significant recent “game-changer” has been the emergence of CRISPR-Cas9 and other related technologies, which have the potential to allow the very precise modification of genetic sequenc-

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es. This inevitably raised the question of whether – and how – these techniques should be used in humans. After presenting the potential therapeutic importance of genome editing, its implications to medicine with an emphasis on the human germline modification, the document concentrated more specifically on the challenges it involves and the legislation which needs to be developed in accordance with the application of human gene editing.

Accordingly, even though the group recognised that many of the issues related to genome editing in plants or animals are important, comments and discussions in this paper focused specifically on human genome editing and concluded that “the notion that knowledge and the choices it offers might be our downfall is as old as the biblical tale of the Garden of Eden, but, in equal measure, history demonstrates the enormous benefits in health and happiness that come with responsible exercise of our intellect and powers of invention”. Bearing that in mind, “the newest developments in genome editing will demand that we think again about how to balance hope and fear”. However, while there are challenges uniquely associated with human genome editing, this topic was approached by employing an analytical framework which might be applicable to any potential bioethical innovation, covering issues of safety, efficacy, ethics and prudence.

### Science, ethics and new perspectives

This discussion document presented a fruitful basis for the organisation of the International Conference on Gene Editing “Playing God? – the science, ethics and theology of gene-editing” as the European churches’ contribution to this current and burning public debate. The conference was organised in Paris from 27 to 28 February 2018, with the financial support of the Council on Interchurch Relations of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Denmark, hosted by the Protestant Institute of Theology and the Orthodox Institute of Theology “Saint-Serge” and with the media partner for this event, [Orthodoxie.com](http://Orthodoxie.com).

The aim of this conference was to stimulate an ecumenical and Europe-wide discussion on gene editing. The event featured European churches’ reaction to current research developments and sought to take into consideration a variety of challenges, to listen to churches’ experiences and reactions to these challenges and to use the outcomes of these discussions for a CEC publication.

As gene-editing (in particular, germline editing) is one of the most important and controversial topics in modern bioethics it was interesting to see what are its implications for our understanding of what it means to be human. What effects might it have on society as well as on individuals and families? What limits ought to be set for scientific intervention in the process of human development?



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The scientists from the Francis Crick Institute in London who are at the leading edge of developing and potentially using new gene-editing techniques were joined by philosophers, Roman Catholic, Protestant and Orthodox ethicists and theologians, and representatives from the Committee on Bioethics of the Council of Europe. This direct interaction with scientists was the key to developing an understanding of the techniques involved but also of the motivation behind research and possible therapeutic applications. The conference explored what contribution Christian churches might usefully make in this pivotal debate and what recommendations we might realistically make to legislators.

Participants supported the statement on genome editing technologies adopted by the DH-BIO of the Council of Europe in December 2015, by “the acknowledgement of the positive perspectives of genetic modification with the development of knowledge of the human genome; but also by the greater concern about possible misuse and abuses, in particular the intentional modification of human genome so as to produce individuals or groups endowed with particular characteristics and required qualities”.

The Article 13 (Interventions on the human genome) of the Oviedo Convention – the only international legally binding instrument addressing human rights in the biomedical field – addresses these concerns about genetic enhancement or germline genetic engineering by “limiting the purposes of any intervention on the human genome, including the field of research, to prevention, diagnosis or therapy. Furthermore, it prohibits any intervention with the aim of introducing a modification in the genome of any descendants”.

## “ human being is not a mere biological existence but also a spiritual one ”

Subsequently, it is stated that “in order to responsibly govern research and innovation of this cutting-edge biotechnology a comprehensive ethical approach is more than needed”. It is suggested that one of these approaches might be founded on the “concrete ethics of responsibility”, or on the statement that the “human being is not a mere biological existence but also a spiritual one, which should not be underestimated in bioethical debates”. With this perspective in mind, “human desire of ‘playing God’ can be understood in a theologically acceptable manner, since the human being has been created in the image of God which supposes three basic features, namely human freedom, sovereignty and creativity, and is called to become similar to His Creator. As such, these features considered in the context of the genome editing discussion might be very helpful in a search for an ethical orientation.”

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## Outcomes, events and results

The members of the TRG on Bioethics met after the conference to evaluate the results of the conference, and committed themselves to preparing a publication on gene editing before the CEC Assembly in Novi Sad. It will comprise most of the publications made at the conference and an update of the previous TRG discussion document. It will also suggest further work on the issue of the contribution of the Christian viewpoint in the bioethical debate on modern parenthood, reflecting on the interactions between societal and technological developments that are leading to new concepts and forms of parenthood, including the impact on cross-border practices and reproductive justice.

In addition, group members have been able to collaborate with and participate in different events organised by the CEC's Organisations in Partnership. Thus, in March 2016, four members of the TRG on Bioethics participated in the Consultation of the Expert Group on Ethics of the Council of the Community of Protestant Churches in Europe (CPCE) on the Guide to the Ethics of Reproductive Medicine for which the CEC TRG provided one of the expert speakers. The document was published in May 2017 under the title "Before I formed you in the womb..." and its aim is to offer a fundamental and manifold guide for a common Protestant orientation at the European level and to invite and encourage churches to work further on these questions in their specific contexts. The moderator of the TRG on bioethics of CEC also participated in a CPCE presentation and discussion of this report in November 2017.

As an observer at the DH-BIO, CEC participated in a European Programme for Human Rights Education for Legal Professionals in the 28 European Union member states (HELP in the 28) held from 6 to 7 October 2016 in Brussels. The principal aim of the Programme was to support legal professionals from the EU in acquiring the knowledge and skills on how to refer to the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union (the Charter), the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR) and the European Social Charter (ESC). In addition, prior to a regular meeting of the DH-BIO, in December 2016 CEC participated in a high-level seminar organised by the Committee on Bioethics under the auspices of the Cypriot Chairmanship of the Committee of Ministers, entitled "International case-law in Bioethics: Insight and foresight" and in October 2017, at the International Conference on the occasion of the 20th anniversary of the Oviedo Convention: "relevance and challenged" which was held under the auspices of the Czech Chairmanship of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe.

The objective of this conference was to analyse the relevance of this international reference instrument in the light of developments in the biomedical field and the perspectives with a view to defining the elements of a "stra-

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tegic action plan" for the work of the Committee on Bioethics (DH-BIO) for the 2018 – 2019 biennium and possibly beyond. To that end, the evolution of practices and the scientific and technical developments in the biomedical field were examined, as well as the Convention principles at stake and possible challenges raised with a view to identifying likely areas for action.

Priority issues were defined, such as new genomic technologies in germinal cells; big data and e-medicine as new actors; informed consent as an issue needing to be revisited; whether migrants' health is a current issue or a future problem; access to innovative drugs; and is big pharma a business like any other?

As elements of an Action Plan for these priority issues, the following were proposed: 1) for the CRISPR-Cas9 in germinal cells: a) to define the *green line* for the research and b) to define the *red line* for clinical trials; 2) for the big data and artificial intelligence: a) to consider Europe as a major actor to improve ethical issues to GAFA; b) to work on a new vision of informed consent; 3) for migrants' health: to establish a common package for access to care; 4) for the innovative drugs: avoid the discussion on prices, which is too complex, and assert the idea that a new efficient drug should be considered as a universal health good.



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## 8. Education for Democratic Citizenship

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CEC's Thematic Reference Group (TRG) on Education for Democratic Citizenship (EDC) has a mandate to contribute to the debate on the concepts and strategies of the European educational and church institutions. This means theological reflection on the religious dimension of a intercultural dialogue and monitoring the EU framework of Education and Training 2020. It also implied to engaging in the education strategies of the European churches.

This mandate has been difficult to fulfil with active representation from only a few European churches. It would also have been helpful to share in the related activities of the other Thematic Reference Groups through their minutes and reports.

The time period 2015 to 2017 is short in which to assess and evaluate efforts and effects of the group's work. It is, therefore, too soon to know the full impact of the seeds that have been sown.

### **The empty office in Strasbourg**

To partly explain why this has been so, the past two years have also been a period where the Strasbourg office has not been fully functional, having lost CEC staff members Richard Fischer to a well-earned retirement in 2016, and Maria Pomazkova in 2017 to seek opportunities elsewhere.

The group, therefore, did not have the support of secretarial assistance lately. The attendance among the members has been somewhat modest. However, despite these handicaps, the moderator has had a lively communication with some participants, which kept the information flowing to the group members, and in 2017 also called and organized the meetings.

### **Active attendance and participation**

However, highlights of the achievements include active participation in a number of conferences. This included being an observer at the meetings of the Steering Committee for Education Policy and Practice (CDPPE) of the Council of Europe.

Among others were events organised by the Council of Europe's Standing

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Conference of Ministers of Education, the Co-ordinating Group for Religion in Education in Europe and the International Civic and Citizenship Education Study (ICCS), also known as the KlIngenthal Colloquy, in October 2016.

In addition to its bi-annual meetings, the Group also participated in the Nordic preparations in Iceland for the 2018 General Assembly in Novi Sad, as well as at the conference on Christian Communications entitled “Turn It Up”. The group also made presentations at a number of conferences where the work of the TRG – EDC has been presented.

The group has been involved in several webinars, an electronic tool used often to bring direct dialogue to people across Europe, as it is direct, lively, accessible and – above all – of low cost.

### **Growth of democratic understanding**

The Group's work focused on the growth of democratic understanding in Europe among young people and provided a platform for the interaction between church and school on these issues. It was stressed that democracy is not learnt in the classroom, but lived out in society among real people, with real commitments, real knowledge, and with real issues. The work of the Group encouraged participants to look deeply, scrutinize and inform today's Europe about its new face of multi-ethnic, multi-religious and multi-cultural realities.

The Group discussed the needs in education, religion, and culture, following the influx of refugees especially in 2015 and 2016, and relayed the programmes that various churches and countries have developed, some with success.

TRG – EDC discussed the various models and ideas that some countries, mainly from northern Europe, had developed for both schools, churches and society to try to deal with anti-radicalisation. This also involves mutual religious understanding and respect.

### **Migration**

A meeting with Doris Peschke, General Secretary of CCME, in March 2016 underlined the size of the migration issue. It was pointed out that fear could lead to unwholesome attitudes that again would lead to political populism against migration, a reaction that was clearly reflected in the referendum and election outcomes in 2016.

A belated reaction to our postcards produced to support the activity for the EU election in 2014 has come from a church where they have spent some time on the questions that we posed on the cards, which also provided the issue with a biblical quote. This particular church has used the cards and compared biblical quotes with quotes from the Quran to show that the two religions share many ideas and have parallel beliefs that support the ideas of a fair or fairer world for all.

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## Presentation and workshop in Novi Sad

The past two meetings concentrated on discussing the possible content of the workshop for Novi Sad, discussing the identifiable areas where we could offer a creative workshop which would inspire churches and communities, families and schools to take initiatives in their own local area or country. The result is a plan for an interactive workshop:

Democracy and Populism: The role of Education and of CEC.

TRG's last meeting was held in September 2017 in Brussels.

## Recommendations from TRG – EDC:

There is no doubt that the issues of education for democratic citizenship are as relevant – if not even more so – for today and for the years to come. Europe is at a crossroads, confused as to where to go and why. The many-faceted concept of formation and cultural development, also within the political arena, of values, of the self and of the other, of the role of religion, of thinking skills and reflection, of local and global awareness and knowledge, these ideas all come from dialogue and interaction with one another with respect and mutual curiosity, be it at home, at school or church, or in society.

The Group is aware that the major issue of the power of social media and the lack of critical thinking and analysis is an area that has its own urgency.

Therefore, the work is not yet finished. The questions are not answered. And the future starts now.







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# 9. Churches' Commission for Migrants in Europe

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The work of the Churches' Commission for Migrants in Europe (CCME) for and with CEC continues to be governed by the agreement of cooperation approved and signed by the CCME Executive Committee and CEC Governing Board in 2017. Indeed the work between the Budapest and Novi Sad Assemblies was undertaken in the spirit of closer cooperation.

On the basis of this agreement, four thematic priorities in the area of migration were chosen by CEC and CCME. The most important activities held under these priority areas since CEC Budapest Assembly are described below.

## **Europe's role in refugee protection in the 21st century**

Intensive work was undertaken on the EU asylum legislation between 2011 to 2014, concluding the second phase of developing the Common European Asylum System. As of 2016 the European Commission opened the agreed package with redrafted Directives, and the new Dublin and Eurodac regulations. Moreover, the "Arab Spring" and the "asylum crisis" influenced the work of CCME, especially from 2014 onwards. Since 2015 the so-called "refugee crisis" in many ways impacted the work of CCME and churches across Europe, challenging CCME and its members to respond through both networking and advocacy. In many ways CCME was at the forefront of repairing the existing system through the provision of legal and safe passages.

In 2013 CCME, in coalition with other civil society organisations, launched an appeal to the EU Justice and Home Affairs Directorate of the European Commission for an enhanced humanitarian response to the situation in Syria and its neighbouring countries.

As the continuous movement of refugees and migrants from the Middle East and Africa across the Mediterranean led to thousands of casualties, CCME and CEC every year have called for the commemoration of persons who lost their lives at sea.

Throughout the creation of the Common European Asylum System (CEAS), CCME kept appealing to the EU for minimum standards to be respected. CCME engaged in crucial and timely lobbying concerning provisions on de-

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tention for asylum seekers and for the access to fair and timely hearings in cases of Dublin referrals.

CCME and the International Catholic Migration Commission (ICMC) led efforts to make known the German Save Me Campaign, leading to the establishment of the German resettlement programme. In 2014, CCME with other civil society organisations launched an appeal to the EU Justice and Home Affairs Ministers for enhanced resettlement response. Based on the CCME position paper adopted in 2012 calling for 20,000 resettlement places in the EU by 2020, the joint campaign “20,000 by 2020” was developed with a framework of the European Resettlement Network. In 2014, CCME joined an appeal for substantially increased resettlement of Syrian refugees before the UNHCR’s pledging conference in December 2014.

Together with secular partners, CCME advocated for a generous EU resettlement framework. Together with other resettlement actors, CCME issued a comment on the proposed EU Resettlement Framework in 2016. In cooperation with its Roman Catholic partners, CCME hosted a conference in September 2017, discussing the role of churches in sponsoring the resettlement of refugees.

CCME gave expert advice at many events held by member organisations and partners. Informing members about the provisions of the proposed new EU legislation and its impact was a substantial part of CCME’s work. CCME continued to represent CEC in the European Council of Refugees and Exiles (ECRE) where it chaired the core group on resettlement.

In 2015, Europe experienced tremendous migratory movement. This increased CCME’s work more than anticipated. Together with CEC and the World Council of Churches (WCC), CCME called on churches for enhanced support and networking. Many churches extended their assistance to vulnerable persons and undertook ecumenical visits to Greece, Hungary, Italy and Serbia; and several conferences were organised at global and regional level.

### **CCME working with churches and refugees along the “Balkan route”**

Since the spring of 2015, large groups of migrants, most of them refugees from Syria, began to enter Europe via Greece. Their onward movement via the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (FYROM), Serbia, Hungary to Austria and Germany, and often further afield to Scandinavia, created the so-called “Balkan route”. Humanitarian conditions along this route have been catastrophic and dangerous, particularly for vulnerable persons. Many churches and church-related organisations in the affected countries immediately started to help those transiting their country by providing food, shelter, information and other facilities.

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CCME facilitated visits of churches from the more affluent parts of Europe to the churches assisting refugees along the “Balkan route”. Such visits helped to understand the situation, boosted the morale of those providing assistance and increased direct financial support.

Along with its partners, CCME managed to support church actors, including church development agencies in pooling and coordinating resources, sustaining the work of churches in the region, and therefore contributing towards better assistance for refugees.

CCME facilitated statements from churches and church federations, including CEC, the WCC, the ACT Alliance, the Community of Protestant Churches in Europe (CPCE), the Lutheran World Federation (LWF) and the World Communion of Reformed Churches (WCRC) – in support of comprehensive and complementary solutions for refugees. Thus, CCME successfully developed coherent positions with similar tones among the ecumenical actors.

CCME observed the EU’s tendency to externalise responsibility for migration and refugee protection. One such example was during the European Commission’s Communication in June 2016 on a new Partnership Framework with third countries. CCME with 138 organisations signed a statement ahead of the European Council of June 2016, criticizing the new EU policies to contain migration at its doorstep irrespective of the EU’s international obligations.

CCME contributed to the discourse and organised events on “alternatives to Dublin”, especially concerning the protection needs of unaccompanied minors. As usual, CCME commented on the European Commission’s proposals for the revision of the CEAS together with other Christian organisations. The ecumenical cooperation in this field has been intensive and positive. In November 2016, CCME contributed to a joint statement with 77 other organisations demanding seven priority actions to protect all refugee and migrant children.

CCME organised events to raise public awareness about the situation at the EU Southern external borders highlighting the need for solidarity with Mediterranean EU member states.

Other activities included:

- Series of panel debates and events on migration and refugee protection during the German Kirchentag in 2015 and 2017.
- In 2017, the Kirchentag held a moment of silence in memory of those who had lost their lives on the way. Together with an alliance of several churches in Germany, CCME participated in a special event around this moment of silence: Fluchtgedenken.

- In June 2016, CCME with CEC, WCC and the Protestant Church in the Netherlands organised a conference “Have No Fear” addressing the impact of the global refugee crisis in Europe and the response of European churches. A joint statement from CCME, CEC, WCC and the Protestant Church of the Netherlands (PKN) was issued following the conference, encouraging churches to continue and strengthen their commitment.
- In October 2016, CCME issued a statement on the Commission’s Dublin IV proposal (EU), and expressed its concern about the erosion of protection of refugees in Europe following a visit to the Eleonas refugee camp in Greece.
- In December 2016, together with the World Association for Christian Communication (WACC), CCME launched a 12-month project “Reporting Refugees” to analyse the media portrayal of refugees in Europe, with the objective of promoting their rights.
- Together with a group of 30 other NGOs, CCME called upon EU leaders to change the migration policies ahead of the December 2016 European Council meeting.

### Countering human trafficking as a form of slavery

CCME continued its work in specific projects providing advice to the churches in Europe:

As a leading partner with the International Trade Union Confederation on the Fine Tune project, CCME organised the EU Forum on labour trafficking from 17-19 October 2013 in Vilnius, Lithuania. The project continued focusing on gender issues and labour trafficking until 2015.

CCME continued to be involved in the steering group COATNET, a Christian platform against trafficking. As part of the cooperation, the CCME representative was re-elected onto the steering group in 2015. CCME was also asked to provide recommendations at a conference of CARE Europe on trafficking, where advice from several churches had been solicited related to anti-trafficking questions and solutions.

CCME contributed to a presentation at the European Parliament regarding a report on trafficking particularly regarding Africans in the Sinai desert.

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In November 2014, CCME on behalf of CEC gave input to a dialogue seminar with the European Commission on “Common Action to Fight Trafficking in Human Beings”.

Based on a pro-bono legal study on national anti-trafficking legislation undertaken for CCME by the Dechert law firm, CCME actively lobbied with member states for an effective and complete transposition of the Directive against Trafficking into national legislation. CCME added points to this Directive.

Following the presentation of a study on extreme labour exploitation, CCME hosted a side event to popularize and discuss the study, emphasising good cooperation among all church actors in their fight against trafficking.

In May 2016, CCME contributed with a position paper to the new EU Strategy against Trafficking in Human Beings beyond 2016.

In February 2017, CCME participated in a joint forum of the Ecumenical Patriarchate and the Church of England on modern slavery, entitled “Sins Before our Eyes” in Istanbul, at which the two churches signed a joint declaration of a renewed commitment against trafficking.

### **Putting an end to death at Europe’s border – Safe Passage**

Since 2011, the number of deaths at the European borders has continued to increase. To address this issue, CCME has launched a project called “Safe Passage” in order to respond concretely to deaths at the borders. The project looks at the situation around Europe’s southern borders and proposes policy changes to allow safe passage to and through Europe.

The project advocates the need for humanitarian visas, increased resettlement, more generous family reunification and lifting of visa requirements in case of conflict. Such steps can help prevent fatalities, undermine smugglers’ business and in the long run can make migration to Europe more manageable. CCME has mobilized churches across Europe to address these issues. The pilot projects for safe and legal entry to Europe run by churches in Italy and France show that these proposals can work effectively. And at the EU level CCME has managed to convince the European Parliament to support many of its proposals.

### **Uniting in diversity: Migration, a challenge for the unity of the Church**

Under this heading, CCME was addressing the challenges and opportunities provided by migration of Christians to Europe. The activities which touch upon migration issues as well as ecclesiological questions included the following:

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CCME participated in a workshop held by the Ecumenical Network for Multicultural Ministry (ENFORMM), where the link between Christian unity and the issue of migration was highlighted.

CCME actively participated at the WCC Assembly in Busan, Republic of Korea in 2013, and its pre-assembly events, focusing on trafficking in human beings.

From 2013 to 2015, CCME participated in a project called “Defining and Identifying Middle Eastern Christian Communities in Europe”. The project identified Middle Eastern Christians in the UK, Denmark and Sweden and analysed their relations with churches and societies in the hosting countries.

CCME also contributed to international conferences looking at the role of religion in making integration a two-way process, including events by the European Integration Forum and meetings of experts organised by the European Economic and Social Committee.

As member of an expert group, CCME contributed to a proposal to the CPCE Council in October 2015 to start an exploratory dialogue with migrant churches. The project is ongoing.

The study *Mapping Migration* was revised and published by CCME in 2016. It provides insights on the issue of migration in different countries in Europe and the role of the churches in addressing migration in their own work. CCME contributed to both the *Zufucht Europa* – Refuge in Europe German mission yearbook 2016, and the *Reforming Theology – Migrating Church – Transforming Society*, a publication of the Global Ecumenical Theological Institute in 2017.

In December 2016, CCME and CEC organised a consultation entitled “Being Church in Europe Today” in Copenhagen, hosted by the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Denmark. The consultation looked into the understanding of ecclesiology affected by the issue of migration.

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## Churches as witness to inclusive communities in Europe

Exclusion of Roma in Europe was at the heart of CCME's anti-discrimination work. This work included engagement with policy initiatives as well as with project work.

Some of the activities included:

Between 2012 and 2014, CCME participated in meetings organised by the European Commission on Roma Inclusion. The Commission also sent Roma from the Netherlands as delegates to the EU Roma Summit held in Brussels.

CEC, the Catholic Bishops' Conference in Europe and CCME were involved in the preparation of the conference "Improving the situation of Roma people in Europe: Challenges and open questions" in May 2014 in Athens, held during the Greek EU Presidency.

CCME continued to work for Roma inclusion and to address anti-migrant propaganda, in cooperation with the European Network against Racism (ENAR), the European Roma Information Office and civil-society organisations engaged with EU Roma Inclusion Platform.

Since 2015, 2 August is honoured by the European institutions as Roma Holocaust Memorial Day. CCME observed the day and published statements under the title "Remembering the Roma genocide of World War II" every year since then.

In July 2016, CCME joined the Alliance against Antigypsyism, as antigypsyism had been identified as a major obstacle in inclusion of Roma in European societies.

CCME participated in the consultation on a new structure of the European Network against Racism (ENAR) continuing its role as an active member of the organisation since its foundation.

A CCME staff person spoke at the launch of the *2016 ENAR Shadow Report on Racial Discrimination against Migrants*.

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Migration and refugee protection remain significant issues in Europe particularly from 2013 to 2017 and beyond. Churches in Europe have played an important role in welcoming migrants and in policy discussions on just and humane responses to their arrival. Due to efforts of CCME, churches in Europe have found themselves in a better position to network and share their resources in solidarity for and with refugees and migrants. It is through initiatives by CCME that churches in the region have been better able to articulate their positions to European policy makers.

In the coming years it will be important to extend to those churches which, in the past, were not very much involved the ongoing discussions on Christian responsibility towards refugees and migrants, in view of the biblical commands.



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# 10. EU Legislation and Policies

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CEC's Thematic Reference Group (TRG) on EU legislation and policies focuses on this subject in relation to the jurisprudence of interest to churches.

The aim of the group and its special value is to share information in EU legislation affecting church-state-law at an early stage. The efforts of the group are focused on fostering a common church approach to these EU legislative proposals and raising awareness among churches without a representation in Brussels so that they can get an overview of EU topics of interest to the churches.

The scope of the deliberation also extends to fundamental human rights issues, equal treatment, dialogue between the EU and the churches (Article. 17 [3]) - Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU), employment and data protection law, rulings of the European Court of Justice (ECJ) or the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) and other relevant legal matters. The TRG brings legal experts from nine different CEC Member Churches together for exchange, information, sharing and discussions twice a year – normally for a one day meeting in Brussels and a two-day meeting in one of the Member Churches represented in the TRG.

## **Brexit and the churches**

One of the crucial topics for the TRG, since the establishment of its new mandate in 2015, has been the British decision to withdraw from the European Union. Starting with the negotiations between the European Council's President Donald Tusk and the former British Prime Minister David Cameron on concessions from the EU side, in order to keep Great Britain on board up to the referendum in 2016, and now the difficult exit negotiations, the TRG has closely followed political developments and legal implications.

The work of the TRG has benefited from the fact that it is comprised of three representatives from different churches from Great Britain and Ireland, who provide input from different viewpoints. Worth mentioning is the exchange with David Bruck, Deputy Head of the Brexit Unit at the Permanent Representation of Ireland to the EU, in November 2017, who briefed the group on the current state of play of the Brexit negotiations and discussed with the

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TRG, the severe impact it has on Ireland economically and politically.

### **The debate on “Future of Europe”**

Another important subject has been the Future of Europe debate. The discussion was fostered by the European Commission’s White paper on the Future of Europe and gained further impetus through the speeches by President Jean-Claude Juncker and President Emmanuel Macron in September 2017. Many of the ideas presented by both Presidents are important for the churches in Europe. These topics include boosting social Europe, the introduction of a financial transaction tax, more legal access to asylum and migration, and involving citizens in the debate. These topics are addressed in the CEC’s open letter on the Future of Europe and serve as basis of discussions held prior to the CEC General Assembly in Novi Sad. The proposed idea of citizens’ conventions all over Europe in 2018 was picked up by some Member Churches, who planned to organise debates on the future of Europe in the different churches at the national level.

### **Data protection**

The reform of the data protection rules had already been discussed at the last TRG (2011-2015). The current TRG followed the conclusion of the inter-institutional negotiations on the data protection regulation. As a follow-up at the national level, some of the Member Churches are currently working on updating their data protection law.

### **Rule of law dialogue in Poland**

The rise of populist and right-wing parties and governments all over Europe has also led to intense discussions in the Group. The TRG focused on the worsening situation in Poland and the activation of the rule of law framework in 2016. The same year, the debate with Paul Nemitz, Principal Advisor in the Directorate-General for Justice and Consumers of the European Commission, addressed the limited possibilities of the EU to enforce compliance with the rule of law and the adherence to EU values in the member states. The debate was very intense and helped to gain a realistic picture of the situation.

The erosion of the consensus on democracy and European values was an issue which the TRG followed over the last two years, since the symptoms of such developments could be observed in almost all EU member states. With the activation of Article 7 TEU, the particular situation in Poland has taken a new turn and will certainly stay on the political agenda for a while.

### **The future of the Article. 17 (3) TFEU dialogue**

With the incoming Commission in 2014, certain aspects changed regarding Article. 17 (3) TFEU dialogue between churches and EU institutions. These

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aspects include the position of the dialogue coordinator within the European Commission and the settings of the high level meetings with religious leaders.

The TRG took the change in the position of the dialogue coordinator as starting point for a discussion on the history, challenges and important aspects of the dialogue between religious communities, churches and the EU institutions. Out of this discussion a draft reflection paper was produced, which could, in view of the upcoming European elections and a new Commission, be further developed and be used by CEC and CEC Member Churches for discussions with the European institutions on the organisation of the different dialogue formats.

### **Jurisprudence**

The TRG followed judgments of the European Court of Justice in Luxembourg closely. The topics of the judgments included asylum policy, free movement for workers; freedom of religion and church labour law. Some judgments and pending cases directly concern churches such as the currently pending case of the German church labour law or the exemption from taxes for the Spanish Catholic Church. Other judgments included sensitive topics that encompassed the issue of freedom of religion, one example of which could be the ban on wearing headscarves in private companies.

The discussion about social welfare tourism within the EU and the possibility enshrined in the EU citizen Directive (2004/38/EC) to exclude unemployed EU citizens from welfare benefits in another Member State, on which the Court of Justice ruled on several occasions, was debated in several member states. It was an important factor in the debate leading to Brexit and was, therefore, also a topic important for the TRG.

### **Visiting Member Churches**

TRG meets regularly outside Brussels and visits a CEC Member Church in order to gather insights into the legal functioning of the churches represented in the TRG and the specific church-state relations forming the diversity of state church systems in the EU. During these meetings, the TRG meets with representatives of the church and learns more about the respective state-church relationship and the work of the church on the ground.

The first visit to a Member Church during the new mandate took place in Athens in 2016. This meeting addressed the situation of the Evangelical Church in Greece and its legal status after the official recognition as a legal entity by the Greek state in 2014. Moreover the group learnt about the commitment of the church in assisting vulnerable refugees.

At the 2017 meeting in London, the TRG was informed about the state-church relations in England and got an insight into the characteristics of

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church law of the Church of England. Moreover, the group discussed the history, structure and upcoming challenges of the Methodist Church. In 2018 a meeting is planned in Riga. The focus will be on the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Latvia and its position in a post-communist country.

### **Recommendations from TRG**

After developing the mandate in 2015 new legal experts from CEC Member Churches joined the TRG in addition to the existing experienced members. This has proved to be a good basis for an active participation and lively discussions. So far, the TRG has only two members from Eastern-Central Europe. It would be beneficial for the future to enlarge the level of involvement of the CEC Member Churches from this region. The focus on legislation and policies has enlarged the work of the group, though in order to avoid overlaps with other TRGs its main focus remains a legal one. The meetings with experts from the EU institutions in Brussels on topics of special interest to churches have been deemed very insightful and helpful in understanding EU developments and getting a chance to deepen the understanding of certain issues such as the impact of Brexit, and Article 7 TEU procedure etc. and to enable churches to be vocal about them.

“ discussion on European values and the future of EU 27 touches upon questions such as social cohesion, democracy, rule of law, citizen involvement and European integration ”

The visits abroad have been successful since they provided important background knowledge on the legal position of the churches in their respective member states and broadened the basis for mutual understanding and a common approach to the EU.

The discussion on European values and the future of EU 27 touches upon questions such as social cohesion, democracy, rule of law, citizen involvement and European integration, which are at the core of European church matters. Hence, these topics will stay on the agenda in the future. Moreover, legislative acts and the judgments of European courts will grow in importance for European churches and awareness and informed debates on these developments will be more needed than ever in the churches.





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# 11. Communications: Cultivating the CEC Voice

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Communication at the Conference of European Churches has flourished in the years leading to the 2018 Novi Sad General Assembly. Notably, CEC renewed its commitment to this aspect of its work by adding a full-time Communication Coordinator and Communication Assistant to its Brussels team. This has brought about significant growth and improvements, especially following the merger of the Church and Society Commission with CEC.

The objectives of CEC communications are several. Foremost among these is cultivating a distinctive and consistent voice for the organisation that reflects its history, diversity and positions emerging from other programmatic areas. This includes honouring its roots as a peacebuilding organisation and an ongoing commitment to bridging denominational, cultural, political and social differences. It also means holding together the diversity of our Member Churches and their contexts, while presenting perspectives and contributions that are distinctively and uniquely CEC.

Communications presents the multiple aspects of CEC's identity in accessible and useful ways. These aspects include our contributions to dialogue at the European level with the EU Institutions, and other partners in Brussels and Strasbourg; providing a platform for encounter among our Member Churches, and other partners; and strengthening the common witness of the churches to promote unity of the Church and peace in the world.

Supporting programmatic work of CEC remains central to all our communications. This ranges from on-site support for events, developing publications and other promotional materials, and maintaining a steady online presence through newsletters, website, press releases and social media. Importantly, dedicated communications staff works for consistency and cohesion in messaging, and supports the entire team in their own participation in CEC communications.

CEC communications strives to listen to our membership and learn about their unique needs and contexts, and to reflect this in its communications. Further to this, CEC is developing a network of church and ecumenical communicators better to understand its membership and how best to communicate with and for them.

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A well-developed communications programme is essential to the life of the Conference of European Churches. It expands the interest in CEC's work from the staff, to the Thematic Reference Groups, to the governing bodies and Member Churches, to partners throughout Europe and beyond.

### **Secular culture, digital life**

Two broad trends shape communication not only for CEC, but for our Member Churches, Organisations in Partnership, and National Councils of Churches as well. Throughout Europe, church communicators repeatedly describe the challenges of communicating Christian messages in increasingly secular settings. They struggle to find a balance between an authentic witness to the Gospel and the need to articulate this message to those outside the church. This expresses itself in many forms, including in dialogue with politicians and political institutions, collaboration with non-governmental organisations, and media relations around newsworthy events (e.g., terrorist attacks, natural disasters, national elections, commemorations, and so on).

In parallel to these social changes, our increasingly digital world presents new challenges for church and ecumenical communications. Even in a matter of months, new technologies or trends can radically transform online communication. The churches and CEC face the challenge of holding together traditional means of communication alongside these new opportunities.

Social media continues to gain ground as an important vehicle for CEC communications. Twitter is a good platform for interaction with some of our members and partners, journalists, staff and departments of the European institutions. The micro-blogging platform is also an excellent way to facilitate interaction at CEC conferences and events. Facebook is also useful for CEC communications in that very many of our core supporters and partners are active there. It also allows for easy sharing of multimedia content, like photos and video. Both Twitter and Facebook are useful for CEC as they encourage the mutual sharing of content. Social media fuels a more collaborative approach to communication, which is an invaluable asset given the diversity of our constituency and the resources available to the secretariat.

Video is increasingly a part of everyday CEC communications. Various tools have helped share our work to broader audiences in a cost-effective and accessible way. This has included a series of webinars (online video conferences) that highlight various aspects of our work, interviews and messages directly related to conferences and other international events, and greetings for Easter, Christmas, the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity, among others. So far, response to these initiatives has been positive. Video complements other forms of communication, such as press releases and letters, in offering personal and engaging messages for annual events. This kind of communication can also help make CEC conferences and similar events available to



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broader audiences, especially those who are unable to commit to travelling away from their home contexts for an extended period.

### **Turn It Up!**

CEC has responded directly to the challenge of communicating a Christian voice in secular contexts through the development of a network of church and ecumenical communicators and journalists. This network is still in its early, informal stages, but is taking shape in promising ways. Work for this began with many visits with the communication staff of CEC Member Churches and other partners. These visits illuminated the differences in communication and the various challenges our collaborators face in their day-to-day work. They were also helpful in identifying resources available to CEC, including professional experience, staff time and help in hosting events. A result of this groundwork was a December 2016 meeting to prepare a conference for church and ecumenical communicators in Paris, the first of its kind since the Budapest General Assembly. Unanimously, those gathered said that communicating in an increasingly secular Europe is a pressing concern for their work.

The first outcome of this meeting was a gathering, "Turn it up" conference in Paris in September 2017 where some 50 communicators from across Europe met to discuss the theory as well as the practice of how the profession can meet the demands of a changing religious and faith landscape in Europe.

Increasingly relationships with our constituency and other partners enhances CEC communications. Such collaboration allows CEC to reach broader audiences, use more languages, draw on other networks, and reach regional and national levels. This collaboration takes many forms and contributes to the common witness central to CEC's identity. Frequently CEC issues joint press releases with members and partners, which strengthens our messages and helps present a unified contribution from the churches. This is especially helpful in terms of dialogue with the European institutions, jointly hosted events, conferences involving local partners, and other important ecumenical events, including the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity. The exchange of resources and staff also improves CEC communication by drawing on the experience of others working directly with and for our constituency.

At the global level, CEC frequently coordinates communication with the World Council of Churches, the Lutheran World Federation, the World Communion of Reformed Churches and World Association for Christian Communication, among others. Regional and national collaboration typically involves Member Churches and National Councils of Churches. Local partnership often involves church journalists and media outlets, as well as universities and non-governmental organisations.

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Technical aspects of CEC communication remain, of course, essential. In the intra-assembly period, the Communication Coordinator developed and launched a new website, streamlined CEC's social media presence, and developed an overall communications strategy. The strategy focussed on addressing the multiple, but usually minor, technical problems with CEC's communication and implementing solutions. This allowed for better use of our materials and grew audiences and interactivity. Importantly, these efforts also give insight into how people, churches, and other organisations are using CEC materials, which leads to better relationships with our constituency.

One of the major successes of the communications programme in the years leading to Novi Sad is the development and implementation of a publishing programme in collaboration with Globethics.net. This has led to several publications, reaching out to the networks of more than 155,000 subscribers worldwide. Some significant publications from this partnership include: *Beyond Prosperity? European Economic Governance as a Dialogue between Theology, Economics and Politics* (2017); *Advancing Freedom of Religion or Belief for All; Europe's Heart and Soul. Jacques Delors' Appeal to the Churches* (2015) and *The European Vision and the Churches: The Legacy of Marc Lenders* (2015), among others. This initiative is particularly exciting as it disseminates results of CEC consultations and conferences to broader audiences, and provides a quality and lasting record of important CEC initiatives.

### **The way forward**

Communication will remain an exciting and essential part of CEC's future. The work accomplished in the years between Budapest and Novi Sad has prepared CEC well for even more effective and far-reaching communication efforts. These will help continue building a community of communicators, and a culture of communication relating to all programmatic work of the organisation. To this end, CEC will focus on the following:

Drawing on the experiences of Member Churches and the broader CEC constituency to learn more about the concerns and work of members and partners. This will contribute to communication that is relevant and useful to those who make up the Conference of European Churches.

Strengthening existing partnerships to reduce overlap in our work and messaging. This will contribute to CEC reaching broader audiences and represents the importance of bridge building and reconciliation in all our work.

Developing a culture of communication among CEC staff, supporters, and those who contribute to our work through vehicles such as the Thematic Reference Groups. This involves encouragement in sharing CEC materials, more opportunity for participation in the development of CEC communication, and some training in communication (e.g., social media best practices).

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Ongoing professional development and training for CEC communication staff. This contributes to up-to-date skills that will help CEC meet the needs of its constituency and be at the forefront of church and ecumenical communications in Europe and beyond.



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# Reflections on the Novi Sad Assembly

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## **“YOU SHALL BE MY WITNESSES”– HOSPITALITY, JUSTICE AND WITNESS**

**Reflections on the theme of the 2018 Novi Sad General Assembly  
by Rev. Canon Dr Leslie Nathaniel, Moderator of the CEC Assembly  
Planning Committee**

The General Assembly of the Conference of European Churches in 2018 which meets under the theme “You shall be my Witnesses” takes place in a Europe that is undergoing enormous change. The theme, inspired by the passage from Acts 1.8, is to be understood as an appeal to build Christian confidence in the current context of uncertainties and fear. These challenges are faced by both individuals and nations focussing on some of the core Christian imperatives of hospitality, justice and witness.

“ These challenges are faced by both  
individuals and nations focussing on some of  
the core Christian imperatives of hospitality,  
justice and witness ”

To briefly reflect on this theme in the context in which it was written, we learn in the immediately preceding verses that the Apostles are gathered together. The term *Apostles* Luke uses to describe the twelve disciples. Matthias had been enrolled by lot to complete the number after the death of Judas, who had betrayed Jesus, thereby restoring the twelve tribe symbolism of the people of Israel.

The Apostles understood the fact that Jesus had chosen twelve close friends for his ministry as their enlistment, so to speak, into God’s purpose through Jesus to renew and restore Israel. The incidents of the recent past were, however, overwhelming, quite disconcerting and puzzling to the Apostles. Over the years they had spent with Jesus they had gone through many ups

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and downs. There were times of experiencing great hope and assurance and even of glory, but there were also times when they felt empty and were filled with doubt and agony. They could see Jesus as king in a very this-worldly sense. At one point we find them wrangling over getting the best jobs for themselves in the kingdom ruled by Jesus. Here they have recovered from the situation of utter despair, which they faced at the crucifixion of Jesus. They are now convinced that He had risen and this fact had restored in them the confidence that God would restore Israel. The whole world would then be subjected to God's judgement. The nations would be punished for their wickedness and God's blessing would spread to all His creation. Justice and peace would flourish.

Hence it is no surprise to read in verses 6 and 7 that the Apostles were burning with the desire to ask Jesus one particular question, namely when the kingdom as envisaged by them would finally be restored to the people of Israel. However, Jesus' reply is not what they expected. He replies: "It is not for you to know the times or periods that the Father has set by his own authority. But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."

Jesus, therefore, does not give them any timeline; they were not going to have any indication of when and how God's plan and His purposes would unfold. Yet, they are assured of something different, namely, God's power and His presence in their midst. Their three-year rigorous preparation with Jesus was not to be of no consequence. They, who were fully in tune with His way of life who had witnessed His miracles and imbibed His teachings, they who had seen Him suffer for His cause and had experienced His risen presence. They who were about to see Him ascend to heaven, they, as His Apostles, were therefore best placed to bear witness to Jesus - and His life and His ministry - in every part of the earth, not just Jerusalem, but also in all surrounding Judea, even in Samaria (the region of semi-foreigners) and as far as the ends of the earth. They were to be the ones who would testify to everything they knew of Him. That was their mandate, and it was a global one. True, in the eyes of the world they were not powerful people, neither were they in possession of obvious resources with which to carry out their mission. Yet as the story in Acts develops, we begin to sense that their mission was a success story, and by the end we realise that these Apostles had indeed worked wonders, despite the trials they had undergone. In about three or four decades after Jesus' crucifixion, Christianity had spread from an insignificant number of Jews in Jerusalem to large sections of the eastern Mediterranean and to the West as far as Rome itself. It had touched many races and people of different religious experiences; and that was just the beginning.

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Today over 2000 years later, in a time when the Conference of European Churches has chosen for its General Assembly 2018 the passage in Acts 1.8 “You shall be my witnesses,” it is to signal in no uncertain terms that it is now embarking on a journey with the same purpose in mind as during the time of Jesus’ assurance to the Apostles. It is a forward looking agenda of being messengers and working towards fulfilling “the common calling to the glory of the one God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit,” (Preamble of CEC Constitution). This means communicating the good news in word and deed and of taking forward CEC’s agenda of: “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,” (Article. 2.1. of the CEC Constitution).

This is far from being a triumphalist claim but one that is made in humble obedience to our one Lord. Nor does CEC need to be anxious about when God is going to restore all things unto himself. God has his own timeline, but there is nevertheless an urgency of acting here and now as instruments of God. It is the agenda that is set by our troubled world. We are challenged afresh to work towards the implementation of Article 2.1. of the constitution; we are called to heal relationships between one another and between us and God and to build a confident church of committed faithful Christians in an increasingly secular and pluralistic Europe. As a Conference of about 115 churches, it is this sense of being together on the road towards greater unity and closer fellowship that will help in taking CEC forward. Therefore there is engagement with the three key sections of our General Assembly theme: hospitality, justice and witness, and that the world may believe.

### **Shaping the work of the General Assembly**

Regarding the work of the General Assembly itself, the programme is designed to look ahead into the future with Bible Studies, keynote addresses; reflections or responses to the keynote addresses. Some significant personalities will be present and provide insight and wisdom in taking us forward.

The discussions in plenaries and workshops will address substantial issues in the life of CEC and are planned to address future goals. The General Assembly agenda has been designed keeping these points in mind, the limited time available and the cost of an Assembly.

The General Assembly aims to furthermore:

- Receive and respond to the reports on the life and work of CEC since the last Assembly
- Discuss and make decisions on CEC’s future, including the approval of an amended constitution.

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The General Assembly will also:

- Provide an authentic Christian Witness within the European Context and to the churches in Novi Sad and will participate in the worship life of their congregations during a Sunday worship with local churches
- Be a place for encounter and exchange between delegates and delegations
- Discern the challenges facing Europe today and learn from each other through the day-to-day engagement and reports
- Empower youth delegates and stewards through a youth pre-Assembly event.

### Methodology

The Assembly Planning Committee's suggestion to introduce a concept of "keynote listeners" to the methodology, has been approved by the Governing Board. Keynote Listeners will be the listeners and scribes in group work. The groups will also have a facilitator. Information, where appropriate from different meetings will be handed over to the Moderator of the General Assembly by the Keynote Listeners, who will then meet, compare the different notes or reports from the various groups and present to the Assembly a collated document for decision making, where necessary. The Moderators of the Assembly, at his/her/their discretion may invite the Keynote Listeners to reflect at appropriate times on the group work sessions in business plenary.

### Pastoral Care

Pastoral care will be provided during the Assembly. Ms Elena Timofticiuc from Ecumenical Association of Churches in Romania will lead an able team who bring the necessary experience and commitment.

### Thanks

This is also an opportunity for me to thank all members of the Assembly Planning Committee for their tireless and dedicated work and to express the thanks of APC to one and all for the support it has received in order to carry out its tasks.

The Moderator and the Deputy Moderator of the Assembly Planning Committee, who will be members of the Assembly Steering Committee, will continue to provide CEC with the expertise, transparency and commitment for a successful conclusion of the Novi Sad Assembly.

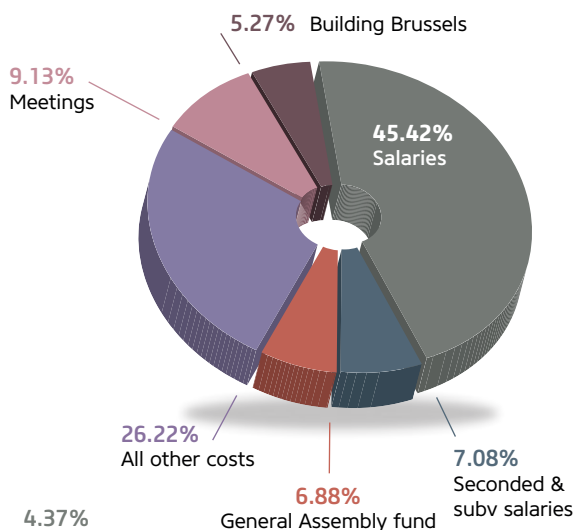


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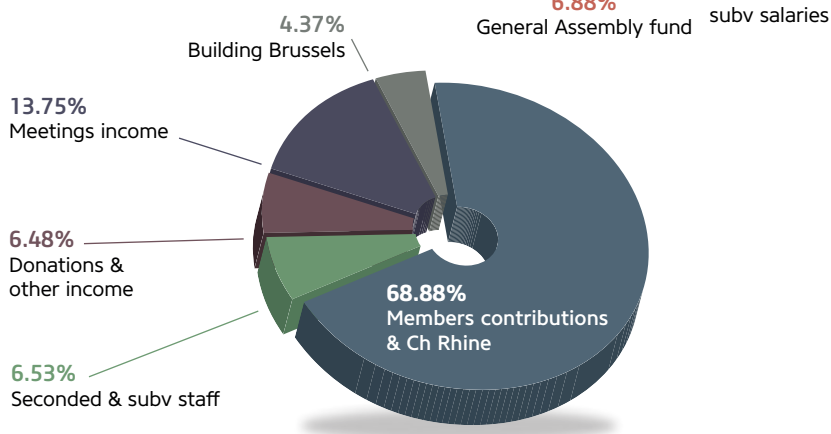
# Report of the Budget Committee to the CEC Novi-Sad Assembly 2018

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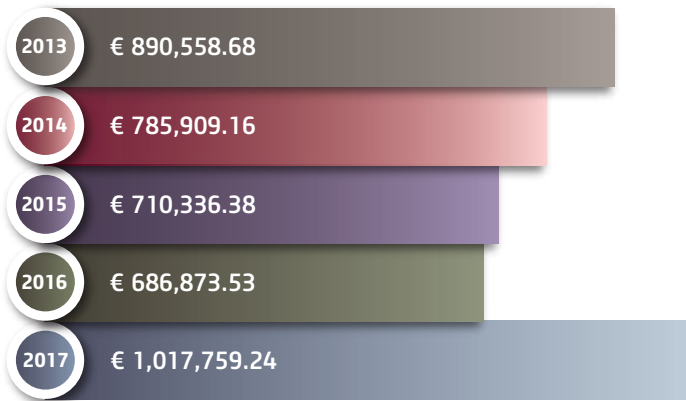


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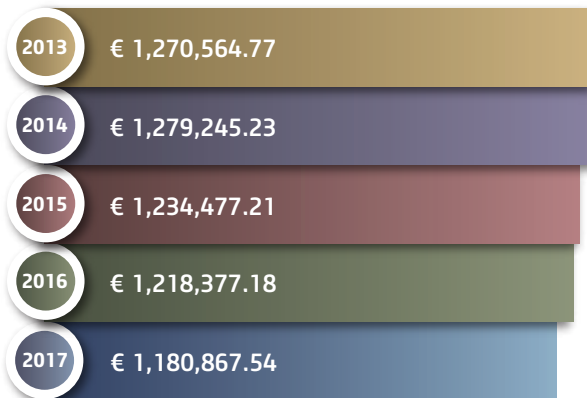


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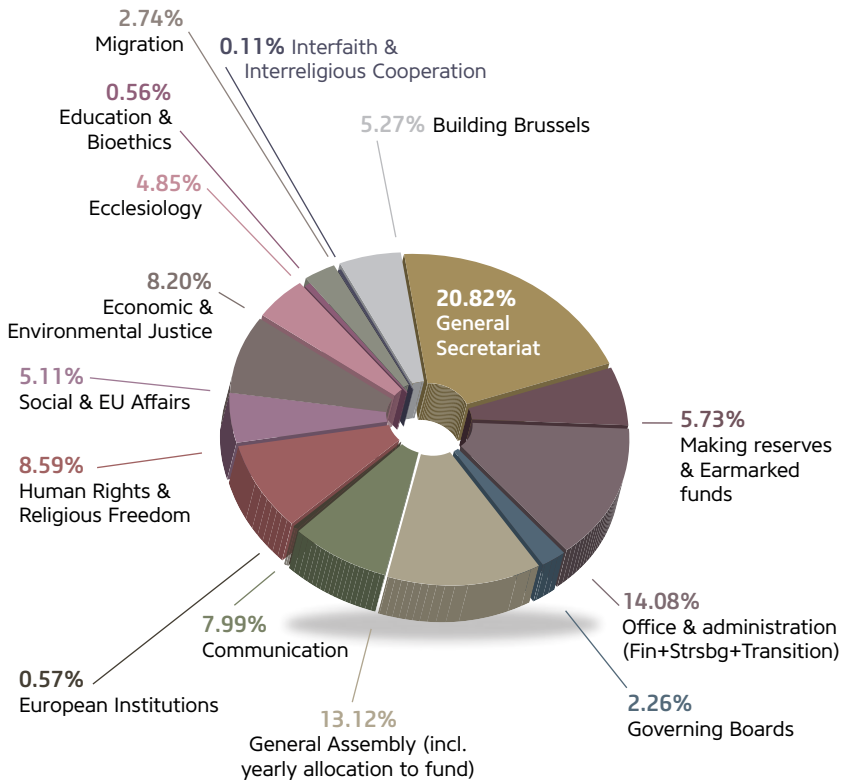
## SALARIES - PER YEAR



## MEMBERS CONTRIBUTIONS & CH RHINE SUPPORT



# EXPENSES ON AREAS OF WORK



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## Financial responsibilities within CEC

The Budapest Assembly adopted a new Constitution for CEC which established the current working structure of the Conference. The Governing Board was to have a membership of 20. Its responsibilities, as set out in Article 8(4) of the Constitution include to

*"ensure the financial stability of the Conference;*

*ensure adequate resources for the Conference to fulfil its mission and manage them effectively".*

The Finance Committee of the Budapest Assembly considered it important that there be a budgetary competence in the new Governing Board. It envisaged the appointment of a Treasurer and identified the required competences:

*"After due preparation of the document by the General Secretary, [the Treasurer] will present*

*- the draft budget for the coming year at the autumn session of the Governing Board*

*- the annual financial statement of the preceding year at the spring session*

*- a report on the financial situation of CEC at every meeting."*

To comply with the requirements of Belgian law, the financial statements are now submitted to an annual Written Assembly for approval by the Member Churches.

The Governing Board at its first meeting in October 2013 appointed the Rev. Michael Bubik as Treasurer of CEC. Experience showed that it was desirable to have a Vice-Treasurer, and Rev. Christian Krieger assumed this responsibility with the consent of the Governing Board in June 2014.

The position and duties of Treasurer and Vice-Treasurer are not specifically regulated in the Standing Orders. In §2(3) of the Standing Orders it is provided that the agenda of a regular meeting of the Governing Board must include an item 'Report of the Treasurer'. In §8(4) the Treasurer is named as a member and as moderator of the Budget Committee. Following the previous practice, Article 13(4) of the Constitution requires the Governing Board to elect a Budget Committee. Its composition is regulated by provisions in Standing Orders. §8(4) declares the Budget Committee to be an internal body of the Governing Board to consist of:

*"the Treasurer, the General Secretary and staff responsible for finance in the General Secretariat as well as two non-Governing Board members who are elected by the Governing Board during its first meeting after the*

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*General Assembly. The Budget Committee is responsible for looking at CEC's financial situation and makes recommendations for decisions and actions of the Governing Board".*

In accordance with this regulation in October 2013 the Governing Board appointed Prof. Dr David McClean (Church of England) and Mr Pasi Perander (Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland) as the additional Budget Committee members. After Mr Perander's resignation, Ms Arja Stenholm (Church of Sweden) was appointed to fill the vacancy but was not able to participate until 2017. The Budget Committee had its first meeting in March 2014, and since then it met twice a year, three times in 2017 and in 2018 once before the Assembly.

In March 2014 it discussed its Terms of Reference which define the responsibilities of the Budget Committee as being to:

1. Examine the balance sheet at the close of each financial year, identify issues of concern and develop recommendations that address those issues for considerations of the Governing Board.
2. Comment on and make recommendations to the provisional core and programme budget before presentation to the Board for approval.
3. Systematise financial procedures through the development of protocols around subsidies, reimbursement, financial reporting and the like.
4. Based on internal and external trends, assist in identifying financial objectives and goals that support the CEC strategic plan, including ensuring financial viability and good stewardship of existing resources.
5. Examine the current membership fee formula, undertake comparative studies in relation to other organisations and propose a new one based on the principles of solidarity and fair share.
6. In the context of restructuring, accompany CEC staff in reflecting on the financial situation, anticipating the implications of the new structure in relation to membership fees and relationships to donors and constituents and fundraising. As appropriate, give advice on the development of fundraising strategies and protocols, the strengthening of procedures for accountability, the exploration of new avenues for fundraising and the nurturing of relationships with donors and other stakeholders.
7. Secure that the strategy to rebuild reserves formulated at the Budapest General Assembly is followed by budget planning and adapted following the real results.
8. Examine together with the General Secretary financial and operational risks and propose appropriate provisions to encounter the risks.

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The Budget Committee decided to develop instruments to accompany the development of the finances of CEC:

1. A properly and thoroughly prepared budget including the staff plan and the salary scheme;
2. Quarterly updated projections of the real figures and comparison to the budget (although due to staff shortages it was not always possible to have them quarterly);
3. A bi-monthly liquidity statement, showing the actual liquidity situation and the expected liquidity movements over the following three months. This was less essential once it was possible, as early as 2013, to put €200,000 to general reserves, so greatly easing the liquidity situation.

Staff resources for the financial function were very limited indeed for much of the period covered by this report; we hope that this will not be the case in the years ahead. Ms Charlotte Van der Borghet was initially employed part-time to do the book-keeping and prepare the yearly financial statement. She was soon also required to prepare the material for the Budget Committee and the Treasurer, prepare the minutes of the Budget Committee, liaise with banks, and many other tasks. She was increasingly consulted on staff matters and became our in-house specialist on employment issues. As a consequence a new part time book-keeping post was created in Spring 2017 and Ms Van der Borghet has since served as a specialised assistant on finance and personnel matters. The Budget Committee thanks her very much for all the work she has done in the past period since without her dedication and competence it would not have been possible to run the organisation with such limited finance staff resources.

### **Reflections on the financial structure**

The Nominations Committee must keep in mind that the functions of Treasurer and Vice-Treasurer are needed in the Governing Board. It may be appropriate to regulate the appointment of the Treasurer and Vice-Treasurer and their responsibilities in the Standing Orders.

An important task, especially in relation to membership fees, is the maintenance of good contact with those responsible for financial decisions in the large and medium-sized churches. This is a specific task, distinct from that of keeping contact with church leaders. It is unlikely that a Treasurer or Vice-Treasurer will have time to undertake the financial liaison role and the General Secretary and the staff team will have to take on the task. A clear plan for such contacts over the coming period should be formulated and implemented. It should be related to a fundraising plan in relation to membership fees, with yearly targets.

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As already mentioned, CEC has the services of Charlotte Van der Borgh as a specialised assistant on finance and personnel matters. It is important that staff capacity for this type of work is maintained and consideration may have to be given in the future to the appointment of a finance officer with wider responsibilities.

### **Financial outturn of the Budapest Assembly**

A report on the financial outturn of the last Assembly was given by Clarissa Balan at the October 2013 meeting of the Governing Board. The final accounts showed a surplus of €94,348.40, which was allocated to the assembly fund for 2018. It has proved possible to make annual transfers to that fund which has provided a good basis for the financing of the Novi Sad Assembly.

### **Moving CEC to Brussels**

A major feature of the decisions taken in Budapest was to close the Geneva office of CEC, to bring about the complete merger with CEC of the Commission on Church and Society (CSC), which had functioned as part of CEC but with its own governing structures, and to locate the united CEC in the former CSC premises in Brussels. The 'new' CEC began to operate under Belgian law on 1 January 2016.

The members of the CEC staff in Geneva looked for new employment possibilities in Geneva and did not transfer to Brussels. The only staff member destined to transfer to Brussels was the General Secretary, then the Rev. Dr Guy Liagre. In the event, the Governing Board decided not to renew his contract and in September 2015 appointed Fr Heikki Huttunen as General Secretary from 1 January 2016. A legal issue about the period of notice of non-renewal led to a settlement in which a sum equivalent to 3 months' salary was paid to the Rev. Dr Guy Liagre.

If that sum is included the total cost of the move to Brussels was just over €80,000. The sum included in the budget agreed in Budapest was €70,000, €50,000 having already been set aside for this purpose in 2013 and the actual costs (excluding the payment to the former General Secretary) were well within that budget. Most of the costs went into counselling costs and on preparing to establish proper archives (which are kept at the ecumenical centre in Geneva).

At the time of the Budapest Assembly, the possibility of a merger between CEC and CCME was under discussion. A decision on greater cooperation rather than a merger was taken in 2015. As a consequence the CEC annual financial statements no longer include the financial statements of CCME. The first single financial statement for the 'new' CEC was for the year 2016.

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## New membership fee formula

As already noted, the Budget Committee was charged with proposing a new formula for setting the membership fee “based on principles of solidarity and fair share”. The existing formula dates from 1996; it was hoped to have a new formula in place by 1 January 2016.

The Budget Committee spent much time during its first two years, in meetings and by correspondence between meetings, in wrestling with this issue. The “principles of solidarity and fair share” imply (a) a grateful recognition that some churches will demonstrate their commitment to CEC by making a generous contribution; (b) that some member churches are very small and can make only a minimal financial contribution; and (c) that the fee requested for member churches should take into account the size of the church concerned and the relative wealth of the country in which it is based. Those principles are found in one form or another in the other ecumenical organisations studied by the Budget Committee, all of which combine statistics of church membership and some factor such as GDP or the UN contribution of each State.

The application of these principles is far from straightforward. Different churches have different understandings of church membership. In some countries, records are accurately maintained (for example for use in arrangements with the national tax authorities); in others membership is only an estimated figure. The structure of a church may mean that considerable funds are held at a local level with only a small amount available to the central church budget out of which payments such as the membership fee are made. It was also the case that application of any one of a number of possible formulae would produce very large changes (upwards or downwards) in fees set for particular churches, and it would be necessary, if such changes were to be acceptable, to smooth them by adding a factor based on past contributions.

No consensus was reached at that stage. It was agreed that the minimum fee be set at €850 rather than €800 and the half dozen larger contributors were asked to maintain their existing level of payment over the following years.

Up to and including 2015, some churches made separate payments to CSC in addition to their membership fee to CEC. It was hoped that the total contributions to the ‘new’ CEC would be the same, but it was recognised that this might not happen. In fact, total member contributions fell from a peak of €1,325,000 to an estimated €1,185,000 in 2017; it is not clear how far this was an effect of the merger.

The Budget Committee returned to the issue in 2017 and explored further options including one relating the fee to the number of Assembly delegates set in the Constitution. But no satisfactory solution seemed possible. The



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Treasurer and Vice-Treasurer started on 6 February 2018 a last attempt to formulate a new proposal which was also discussed in the Budget Committee on 23 February and brought forward to the Governing Board on 14 March 2018. It was received with appreciation and will be forwarded to the Finance Committee of the General Assembly for consideration and possible decision at the General Assembly. The new formula for the ordinary membership fee sets a target for the amount to be raised by the membership fees (membership fee income target = MI), takes into account the number of church members, the Gross National Income by Purchasing Power Parity (GNIPPP)/Person and an "Experience factor". The multiplication of the number of church members with the GNIPPP/Person gives the fictional wealth of all church members and its comparison results in the "Wealth factor" (WF%). The membership fee payments for 2014-2016 form the "Experience factor" (EF%). Both factors enter the formula with a decided weight factor (W1 for WF% and W2 for EF%). The formula to reach the requested membership fee (MF) of a church is then:

$$MF = MI * (W1 * WF\% + W2 * EF\%)$$

Since many churches seem to have difficulties in paying the requested minimum fee it is additionally proposed to recommend that churches be asked to pay only half of the minimum fee if the regular formula gives a calculated amount between €0 and €500, and the full minimum fee of €850 if the formula calculation results in €501-€1000.

For international members it will be necessary to negotiate the membership fee for the next 5-year period according to the numbers of church members they represent and the number of delegates they send to the Assembly.

For new members the membership fee must also be set by negotiation according to the size of the church, the GNIPPP/Person of the church's country and the fee of comparable churches until they can be taken into the formula calculation with an experience factor.

The idea is to apply the calculation every five years well ahead before the Assembly, using the church membership figures which were used to determine the number of delegates and the latest available GNIPPP/Person figures published by the World Bank.

It is further proposed to build in two dynamic elements: to increase slightly per year the membership fee income target amount (MI) and to decrease slightly per year the experience factor. At the same time a clear target is set for the Secretariat to reduce the expected amount of unpaid membership fee each year by a certain percentage.

With that method a fixed membership fee scheme for the next five years could be decided by each physical General Assembly. To achieve that the

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Assembly – after deliberations in its Finance Committee - would have to decide on the membership fee income target per year (MI) according to the 5 year financial plan and the weight of the two factors. Only the membership fee of new members would be initially be decided by the Governing Board.

The Budget Committee also took note that a number of churches made significant contributions in kind, by hosting meetings (e.g. the Hungarian churches at the time of the Budapest Assembly; the Armenian Apostolic Church in hosting the Governing Board in 2016), and in paying the travel and accommodation expenses of the President and Vice-Presidents of CEC and of other members of CEC committees. Some such costs are borne by the individuals concerned and the amount may not be known to their own church authorities. For this and other reasons, it has not proved possible to find ways of recording the total of such contributions.

### **Expenditure 2013-2017**

The Budapest Assembly, on the recommendation of its Finance Committee, confirmed the budgets for 2013 and 2014 and received the financial plan for the period 2015-2019. On the expenditure side, the Assembly Finance Committee hoped to see the establishment of a substantial general reserve of some €200,000 to provide greater security for CEC, allocations to the Assembly Fund of some €400,000 over the period and the establishment of a project reserve of €100,000. These aims have been met, and transfers to the Assembly Fund exceeded the target. It proved possible also to designate €100,000 as a reserve against the possibility of another ecumenical assembly in Europe.

The financial plan made certain assumptions as to the expenditure. It was expected that the Governing Board, meeting twice a year albeit with a much smaller membership than its predecessor, would result in a slight increase in governance costs. In fact the costs were less than 50% of what had been anticipated, partly on account of Member Churches paying the costs of their delegates and, in one case, hosting the whole meeting of the Governing Board.

Costs of “working mechanisms”, the Thematic Reference Groups dealing with particular subjects and their related activities, were much lower than expected, though this was partly due to a longer than expected delay in establishing some of these mechanisms which became fully operational only in the second half of 2016.

The financial plan reflected the Assembly Finance Committee’s belief that a staff of between 10 and 15 persons would be required; the actual number at the time of the Budapest assembly was 10.5 full-time equivalents. A reduction in costs per post was envisaged but in reality staff costs were well below the financial plan, by 24% in 2014, 30% in 2015 and 34% in 2016. This was

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due to longer than expected vacancies, e.g. the ecclesiology department only had a new executive secretary in autumn 2016. The full staffing was reached only in the second half of 2017.

It was expected that premises costs, in terms of rent, would be lower than before the merger. Although the rent in Brussels was rather higher than expected, the flexible nature of the accommodation meant that the staff vacancies reduced the space taken and therefore the rent payable, by 20% in 2014 and 32% in 2015.

The overview of income and expenditure 2013-2017 shows that the accumulated results over the five years were €50,952. Part of it might be needed in 2018 to cover the higher legal costs in drafting a legally correct version of the Constitution of CEC.

### **Novi Sad General Assembly**

The budget of the General Assembly was fixed by the Governing Board in December 2017 with €1,175,900. The maximum size was set with 515 participants (the Assembly 2013 had 470 participants). 60% of the costs are covered by CEC membership contributions (Assembly fund), 16% by participants' fees, 16% by separate church and church related donations, 8% by State or other contributions. The latest revision of the budget shows that underspending in certain budget categories might be higher than overspending. So it is expected that the costs will be kept within the budget limits.

### **Reserves position**

Due in large part to a longer period of vacant staff positions in the years 2013-2016 it was possible to put €266,301.77 to a general reserve. To this has been added the capital of the former CSC of €233,698.23, so that the general reserves by the end of 2017 stand at €500,000. This corresponds to rather less than a third of a yearly budget of CEC. As already noted, €100,000 has been put aside for a future Ecumenical Assembly after 2020, €100,000 is available as an ecumenical project provision and €50,000 serve as reserve for unforeseen staff costs. This gives CEC a sound position for the coming years.

### **Concluding Assessment of Strategy 2014-2018**

At the Budapest Assembly 2013 the Finance Committee in its adopted report set the following objectives for the coming period:

1. Sustainable financial stabilisation
2. Finding a lasting solution to cash flow problems
3. Giving financial security to projects and all substantive/thematic activities

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4. Avoiding deficits after General Assemblies
  5. Tapping new financial resources through a comprehensive fundraising strategy.

With the exception of point 5 all targets have been reached. Fundraising strategies are part of the new financial plan 2019-2023 elaborated by the budget committee.

### **Financial Plan 2019-2023**

A financial plan for the years 2019-2023 was drafted by the Budget Committee, discussed and received by the Governing Board and will be forwarded to the Finance Committee of the General Assembly. It is based on the assumptions of the new membership fee scheme, entails elements of a fundraising strategy to decrease the amount of unpaid membership fees, to increase certain church donations, to raise additional money to pay for desired additional staff and to raise additional contributions for the 2023 Assembly. At least 50% of the expected assembly costs of €1,2 million should come out of the Assembly reserve which is to be built up during the five years.

YEARLY RESULTS	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	TOTAL 5 years
<b>Expenses</b>						
Salaries	890,558.68	785,909.16	710,336.38	686,873.53	1,017,759.24	4,091,436.99
Seconded & subv salaries	140,116.74	145,318.64	139,469.27	121,856.62	90,805.15	637,566.42
General Assembly fund	80,000.00	100,000.00	200,000.00	120,000.00	120,000.00	620,000.00
All other costs	731,824.42	470,584.86	438,143.31	411,206.93	310,793.51	2,362,553.03
Meetings	380,220.95	85,550.56	80,894.62	111,559.19	163,952.42	822,177.74
Building Brussels	94,323.86	94,185.38	96,978.00	95,053.52	94,516.26	475,057.02
<b>total expense</b>	<b>2,317,044.65</b>	<b>1,681,548.60</b>	<b>1,665,821.58</b>	<b>1,546,549.79</b>	<b>1,797,826.58</b>	<b>9,008,791.20</b>
<b>Income</b>						
Members contributions & Ch Rhine	1,270,564.77	1,279,245.23	1,234,477.21	1,108,059.07	1,291,185.65	6,183,531.93
Seconded & subv staff	125,057.38	130,442.00	125,275.09	114,202.60	90,805.15	585,782.22
Donations & other income	169,342.44	133,467.57	122,318.33	74,895.30	81,249.50	581,273.14
Meetings income	662,526.05	112,382.73	128,694.29	164,570.43	165,925.76	1,234,099.26
Building Brussels	80,533.87	74,063.41	83,712.00	74,370.83	79,691.89	392,372.00
<b>total income</b>	<b>2,308,024.51</b>	<b>1,729,600.94</b>	<b>1,694,476.92</b>	<b>1,536,098.23</b>	<b>1,708,857.95</b>	<b>8,977,058.55</b>
Result = Income - Expense	-9,020.14	48,052.34	28,655.34	-10,451.56	-88,968.63	-31,732.65

MAIN RESERVES MOVEMENTS	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	TOTAL 5 years
Allocation to general reserves	200,000.00		66,301.77			266,301.77
Allocation to earmarked reserve					50,000.00	50,000.00
Allocation to the Assembly fund	94,348.14	100,000.00	200,000.00	120,000.00	120,000.00	634,348.14
Allocation to fund for future EEA		100,000.00				100,000.00
Allocation to fund for Ecumenical Projects					100,000.00	100,000.00
Building Brussels result	-13,789.99	-20,121.97	-13,266.00	-20,682.69	-14,824.37	-82,685.02
CEC activities results	4,769.85	68,174.31	41,921.34	10,231.13	-74,144.26	50,952.37

EXPENSES ON AREAS OF WORK	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	TOTAL 5 years
General Secretariat	414,288.09	447,301.43	387,920.22	331,916.22	294,108.57	1,875,534.53
Making reserves & Earmarked funds	200,000.00	100,000.00	66,301.77		150,000.00	516,301.77
Office & administration (Fin+Strsb+Trans)	319,529.75	327,571.45	199,402.15	241,675.58	179,986.19	1,268,165.12
Governing Boards	56,980.05	40,259.76	37,379.11	30,594.75	38,587.45	203,801.12
General Assembly (incl. yearly allocation to fund)	636,346.69	105,407.76	200,000.00	120,189.00	120,000.00	1,181,943.45
Communication	95,593.01	102,324.31	157,299.26	157,609.32	206,745.23	719,571.13
European Institutions	18,661.05	3,086.67	9,230.80	15,868.52	4,554.07	51,401.11
Human Rights & Religious Freedom	140,926.72	130,867.23	168,393.74	152,426.57	181,408.50	774,022.76
Social & EU Affairs	79,677.04	71,288.08	103,685.14	102,340.85	103,151.45	460,142.56
Economic & Environmental Justice	127,372.16	121,619.25	155,694.08	154,602.27	179,865.72	739,153.48
Ecclesiology	80,426.90	67,625.09	38,488.07	76,210.54	173,761.87	436,512.47
Education & Bioethics	12,919.33	30,012.19	1,667.61	3,623.52	2,304.81	50,527.46
Migration	40,000.00	40,000.00	43,000.00	60,508.05	63,000.00	246,508.05
Interfaith & Interreligious Cooperation			381.63	3,931.08	5,836.46	10,149.17
Building Brussels	94,323.86	94,185.38	96,978.00	95,053.52	94,516.26	475,057.02
<b>Total</b>	<b>2,317,044.65</b>	<b>1,681,548.60</b>	<b>1,665,821.58</b>	<b>1,546,549.79</b>	<b>1,797,826.58</b>	<b>9,008,791.20</b>





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# Appendices

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## **MEMBERS OF CEC GOVERNING BOARD**

Mr Andreas Henriksen Aarflot, Church of Norway

Rev. Michael Bubik, Evangelical Church of the Augsburg Confession in Austria

Very Rev. Karin Burstrand, Church of Sweden

LKR'in i.R. Christine Busch, Evangelical Church in Germany (EKD)

Dr Katerina Dekanovska, Czechoslovak Hussite Church

H. E. Metropolitan Emmanuel of France, Ecumenical Patriarchate

Rev. Adriana Florea, Evangelical Church A.C. in Romania

Rt. Rev. Christopher Hill KCVO, DD, Church of England

Very Rev. Archimandrite Ignatios Sotiriadis, Church of Greece

Ms Emma Johnson, Methodist Church of Great Britain

H. E. Metropolitan Joseph of Western and Southern Europe, Romanian Orthodox Church

Mr Edouard Kibongui Kanza, Baptist Union of Italy (UCEBI)

Rev. Christian Krieger, Union of Protestant Churches in Alsace and Lorraine

Prof. Dr Aila Lauha, Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland

Rev. Canon Dr Leslie Nathaniel, Church of England (from 2016)

Rev. Alison McDonald, Church of Scotland

H. G. Bishop Porfyrios of Neapolis, Church of Cyprus

Rev. Silke Tosch, Union of Evangelical Free Churches in Germany (German Baptist Union)

Dr Julija Vidovic, Serbian Orthodox Church

H. E. Archbishop Dr Yeznik Petrosyan, Armenian Apostolic Church

Late Canon Gwynn ap Gwilym, Church in Wales (served until 2016)

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## **CEC PROXIES GOVERNING BOARD**

Ms Sarah Bach, Evangelical Methodist Church in Switzerland

Ms Sonila Dedja-Rembeci, Orthodox Autocephalous Church of Albania

Rev. Elfriede Dörr, Evangelical Church A.C. in Romania

Pfr. Mag. Thomas Hennefeld, Reformed Church of Austria

Bishop Hovakim Manukyan, Armenian Apostolic Church

OKR Rainer Kiefer, Evangelical Church in Germany (EKD)

Rev. Martina Kopecka, Czechoslovak Hussite Church

Rev. Dr Andrzej Kuzma, Polish Autocephalous Orthodox Church

Ms Dunia Magherini, Christian Evangelical Baptist Union of Italy (UCEBI)

Rev. Christian Roar Pedersen, Evangelical-Lutheran Church in Denmark

Dr Aleksandra Pistalo, Serbian Orthodox Church

Rev. Tapani Rantala, Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland

Rev. Canon Sarah Rowland Jones, Church in Wales

Rev. Marc Seiwert, Union of Protestant Churches in Alsace and Lorraine

Rev. Dr Sorin Selaru, Romanian Orthodox Church

Rev. Stephan von Twardowski, United Methodist Church in Germany

Rev. Dr Donald Watts, Presbyterian Church in Ireland

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## **MEMBERS OF COMMITTEES**

### **Budget Committee:**

Rev. Michael Bubik - Treasurer  
Prof. Dr David McClean  
Rev. Christian Krieger  
Ms Arja Stenholm

### **Nominations Committee:**

LKR'in i.R. Christine Busch  
H.E. Metropolitan Emmanuel of France - Moderator  
Ms Emma Johnson  
H.E. Metropolitan Joseph of Western and Southern Europe  
Rev. Christian Krieger

### **Personnel Committee:**

Rt. Rev. Christopher Hill KCVO, DD  
Rev. Michael Bubik  
Very Rev. Karin Burstrand  
Fr Heikki Huttunen

### **CEC-CCME Negotiating Team**

Dr Victoria Kamondji Johnston  
Ms. Elena Timofticiuc  
Rev. Thorsten Leißer  
Ms. Doris Peschke  
Very Rev. Karin Burstrand  
Rev. Christian Krieger  
Mr Andreas Henriksen Aarflot  
Fr Heikki Huttunen  
*Invited as expert:*  
Rev. Michael Bubik

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### **CEC-CCEE Joint Committee**

Very Rev. Karin Burstrand, Church of Sweden

H. E. Metropolitan Emmanuel of France, Ecumenical Patriarchate

Rev. Adriana Florea, Evangelical Church A.C. in Romania

Rt. Rev. Christopher Hill KCVO, DD, Church of England

H. E. Metropolitan Joseph of Western and Southern Europe. Romanian Orthodox Church

Very Rev. Archimandrite Ignatios Sotiriadis, Church of Greece

Rev. Silke Tosch, Union of Evangelical Free Churches in Germany (German Baptist Union)

### **2018 Novi Sad General Assembly Planning Committee**

Rev. Canon Dr Leslie Nathaniel, Church of England, Moderator

Ms Catherine Tsavdaridou, Ecumenical Patriarchate, Vice-Moderator

Ms Nan Braunschweiger, Church of Scotland/World Council of Churches

Rev. Michael Bubik, Evangelical Church A.C. in Austria

H.E. Archbishop Yeznik Petrosyan, Armenian Apostolic Church

Rev. Helle Rosenkvist, Evangelical Lutheran Church in Denmark

OKR Klaus Rieth, Evangelical Lutheran Church in Württemberg

Very Rev. Archimandrite Ignatios Sotiriadis, Church of Greece

Ms Elena Timofticiuc, Ecumenical Association of Churches in Romania (AIDRom)

### **2018 Novi Sad General Assembly Local Planning Committee**

Ms Valentina Karanovic

Mr Danilo Mihajlovic

Mr Milan Tolj

Mr Ivica Markovic

Ms Jelena Lalic

Ms Branko Kalaba

Ms Mirjana Banović

Ms Dragana Masic

Mr Saša Kuridža

Mr Ivan Vasiljevic

Mr Milovan Krstic

Mr Miroslav Ilić

Mr Srdjan Stevanovic

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Mr Mladen Kaurin  
Mr Bojan Djurdjevic  
Mr David Bajac  
Mr Nikola Duvnjak

**Members of the Assembly Worship Committee**

Rev. Sabine Udodesku, Evangelical Church in Germany, Moderator  
Fr Miodrag Andrič, Serbian Orthodox Church  
Ms Marianna Apresyan, Armenian Apostolic Church  
Ms Anna Barton, Church of England/Old Catholic Church of the Czech Republic  
Fr Constantin Miron, Ecumenical Patriarchate  
Mr Nikos Kosmidis, Church of Greece  
Ms Triin Salmu, Estonian Evangelical Lutheran Church  
Rev. Karin Wiborn, Christian Council of Sweden  
Ms Jooa Sotejeff-Wilson, Orthodox Church of Finland

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## **THEMATIC REFERENCE GROUPS (TRG)**

### **TRG Bioethics**

Rev. Dr Jean Boboc, Romanian Orthodox Church  
Dr Andrea Dörries, Evangelical Church in Germany  
Prof. Konstantinos Kornarakis, Church of Greece  
Dr Murdo Macdonald, Church of Scotland  
H.G. Bishop Makarios of Christoupoleos, Ecumenical Patriarchate  
Rev. Dr Brendan McCarthy, Church of England  
Asst. Prof. Marioras Michalis, Church of Greece  
Dr Ulrik Becker Nissen, Evangelical Lutheran Church of Denmark  
Pastor Meego Remmel, Estonian Council of Churches  
Prof. Luca Savarino, Waldensian Church in Italy  
Rev. Dr Miriam Szőkeová, Silesian Evangelical Church A.C. in the Czech Republic  
Dr Julija Vidovic, Serbian Orthodox Church

### **TRG Ecclesiology and Theological Dialogue**

Rev. Dr Mária Ágútsdóttir, Evangelical Lutheran Church of Iceland  
Rev. Branimir Bučanović, Reformed Christian (Calvinist) Church in Croatia  
Rev. Eva Guldanova, Ecumenical Forum of European Christian Women  
Most Rev. Dr Michael Jackson, Church of Ireland  
Rev. Dr Tomi Karttunen, Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland  
Rev. Hilde Marie Ø. Movafagh, Church of Norway & Christian Council of Norway  
Dr Friederike Nüssel, Evangelical Church in Germany  
Rev. Dr Mattijs Ploeger, Old-Catholic Church in the Netherlands  
Rev. Dr Sorin Selaru, Romanian Orthodox Church  
Very Rev. Fr Agathangelos Siskos, Ecumenical Patriarchate  
Prof. Chrysostomos Stamoulis, Church of Greece  
Rev. Daniel Topalski, United Methodist Church Central and Southern Europe

### **TRG Economic and Ecological Justice**

Mr Nikolaos Amanatidis, Ecumenical Youth Council in Europe  
Prof. Nikolaos Asproulis, Church of Greece  
Ms Adéla Denková, Czechoslovak Hussite Church  
Rev. Dr Tamas Kodacsy, Reformed Church in Hungary  
Mr Kees Nieuwerth, Church and Peace

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Rev. Dr Panu Pihkala, Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland  
Rev. Hans-Martin Renno, United Methodist Church of Germany  
Rev. Dr Raag Rolfsen, Church of Norway & Christian Council of Norway  
Mr Adrian Shaw, Church of Scotland  
Rev. Sabine Udodesku, Evangelical Church in Germany  
Mr Rob van Drimmelen, United Protestant Church of Belgium

### **TRG Education for Democratic Citizenship**

Ms Hanna Broadbridge, Evangelical Lutheran Church in Denmark  
Mr Vincent Dubois, United Protestant Church of Belgium  
Protopresbyter Christos Filiotis, Ecumenical Patriarchate  
Rev. Vasile Iorgulescu, Romanian Orthodox Church  
Asst. Prof. Marioras Michalis, Church of Greece  
Ms Hana Moualla, Czechoslovak Hussite Church  
Mr Jan Schinkelshoek, Protestant Church in the Netherlands  
Dr Peter Schreiner, Evangelical Church in Germany & Inter-European  
Commission on Church and School  
Rev. Tuula Helena Vinko, Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland  
Ms Maria Wingård, Church of Sweden

### **TRG Employment and Social Issues**

OKR Dr Ralph Charbonnier, Evangelical Church in Germany  
Mr Vladimir Gerka, Orthodox Church in the Czech Lands and Slovakia  
Prof. Dr Konstantinos Delikostantis, Ecumenical Patriarchate  
Dr Vasileios Meichanetsidis, Church of Greece  
Ms Heather Roy, Eurodiaconia  
Mag. Martin Schenk, Evangelical Church A.C in Austria  
Ms Eva Ungvari, Ecumenical Youth Council in Europe  
Fr George Valcu, Romanian Orthodox Church

### **TRG EU Policy and Legislation**

Dr Altana Filos, Evangelical Church of Greece  
Ms Lena Kumlin LLM, Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland  
Prof. Nikolaos Maghioros, Church of Greece  
Dr Joanna Matuszewska, Evangelical Reformed Church in Poland  
Prof. Dr David McClean, Church of England  
Dr Kenneth Milne, Church of Ireland

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Prof. Dr Rüdiger Stotz, Evangelical Church in Germany  
Mr Reinis Vanags, Evangelical Lutheran Church of Latvia  
Mr Laki Vingas, Ecumenical Patriarchate  
Ms Louise Wilkins, Methodist Church in Britain

### **TRG Human Rights**

Archimandrite Aimilianos Bogiannou, Ecumenical Patriarchate  
Ms Marta Cecha, Polish Autocephalous Orthodox Church  
Rev. Serge Fornerod, Federation of Swiss Protestant Churches  
Rev. Dr Göran Gunner, Church of Sweden  
Dr Peter Krömer, Evangelical Church A.C. in Austria  
Ms Pirkko Mäkinen, Orthodox Church of Finland  
Rev. Attila Palcsó, Reformed Christian Church in Slovakia  
Dr Aleksandra Pistalo, Serbian Orthodox Church  
Rev. Dr Patrick Roger Schnabel, Evangelical Church in Germany  
Ms Lisa Schneider, Ecumenical Youth Council in Europe  
Prof. Dr Vassiliki Stathokosta, Church of Greece  
Ms Natallia Vasilevich, World Student Christian Federation - Europe  
Ms Geesje Werkman, Protestant Church in the Netherlands  
Dr Pamela Slotte, Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland

### **TRG Peacebuilding and Reconciliation**

Ms Anne May Agerup, Church of Norway  
Rev. Dr Björn Cedersjö, Uniting Church in Sweden, Church of Sweden  
& Christian Council of Sweden,  
Rev. Dr Vilmos Fischl, Ecumenical Council of Churches in Hungary  
OKR'in i. R. Antje Heider-Rottwilm, Church and Peace  
Dr Johnston McMaster, Methodist Church in Ireland / Irish Council  
of Churches  
Rev. Canon Dr Leslie Nathaniel, Church of England  
Rev. Joost Röselaers, Remonstrant Church  
Rev. Aaro Rytkönen, Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland  
Ms Catherine Tsavdaridou, Ecumenical Patriarchate  
Prof. Christos Tsironis, Church of Greece



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## **CCME EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE**

### **Current team (as of June 2017):**

#### **Moderator:**

Mr Lemma Desta, Church of Norway/Christian Council of Norway

#### **Vice-Moderators:**

Ms Efthalia Pappa, Church of Greece

Ms Dora Kanizsai-Nagy, Reformed Church in Hungary/Kalunba Charity

#### **Treasurer:**

Apostle Adejare Oyewole, Unification of Council of Cherubim and Seraphim Churches, UK

#### **Members:**

Mr David Bradwell, Church of Scotland

Rev. Sabine Dressler, Evangelical Church in Germany

Ms Dana Gavril, AIDROM-Ecumenical Association of Churches in Romania

Dr Katalina Tahaafe-Williams, Representative of the World Council of Churches

Mr Andreas Henriksen Aarflot, Church of Norway, Representative of the Conference of European Churches

#### **Substitutes:**

Ms Talvikki Ahonen, Orthodox Church of Finland

Fr Cristian Popescu, Refugee Commission of the Ecumenical Council of Churches in the Czech Republic

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## **Executive Committee until June 2017**

### **Moderator:**

Dr Victoria Kamondji Johnston, French Protestant Federation

### **Vice-Moderators:**

Rev. Alfredo Abad, Spanish Evangelical Church

Ms Elena Timofticiuc, AIDROM-Ecumenical Association of Churches in Romania

### **Treasurer:**

Rev. Thorsten Leißer, Evangelical Church in Germany

### **Members:**

Mr Lemma Desta, Church of Norway/Christian Council of Norway

Rev. Dr Jeri Jehu-Appiah, Council of African and Caribbean Churches UK

Ms Efthalia Pappa, Church of Greece

Dr Katalina Tahaafe-Williams, Representative of the World Council of Churches

Mr Andreas Henriksen Aarflot, Church of Norway, Representative of the Conference of European Churches

### **Substitute Members:**

Rev. Nektarios Ioannou, Church of Cyprus

Ms Dora Kanizsai-Nagy, Reformed Church in Hungary/Kalunba Charity

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## **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

YMCA Europe

European Forum of Christian Men

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 in Germany

Ecumenical Association for Adult Education in Europe

World Student Christian Federation (Europe)

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## NATIONAL COUNCILS OF CHURCHES

Action of Churches Together in Scotland  
Christian Council of Norway  
Christian Council of Sweden  
Christian Interconfessional Consultative Committee  
Churches Together in Britain and Ireland  
Churches Together in England  
Churches Together in Wales  
Concertation of Christian Churches in Belgium  
Council of Christian Churches in Germany  
Council of Churches in the Netherlands  
Ecumenical Association of Churches in Romania  
Ecumenical Council of Churches in Austria  
Ecumenical Council of Churches in Hungary  
Ecumenical Council of Churches in Slovakia  
Ecumenical Council of Churches in the Czech Republic  
Estonian Council of Churches  
Federation of Protestant Churches in Italy  
Finnish Ecumenical Council  
French Protestant Federation  
Irish Council of Churches  
National Council of Churches in Denmark  
Polish Ecumenical Council  
Portuguese Council of Christian Churches  
Spanish Committee on Cooperation between the Churches  
Swiss National Ecumenical Council

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## **CEC MEMBER CHURCHES**

### **Albania**

Orthodox Autocephalous Church of Albania

### **Armenia**

Armenian Apostolic Church

### **Austria**

Evangelical Church of the Augsburg Confession in Austria

Old-Catholic Church of Austria

Reformed Church in Austria

United Methodist Church in Austria

### **Belgium**

United Protestant Church in Belgium

### **Bulgaria**

Pentecostal Assemblies of Bulgaria

Union of Evangelical Baptist Churches in Bulgaria

United Methodist Church in Bulgaria

### **Croatia**

Baptist Union of Croatia

Church of God in Croatia

Evangelical Church in the Republic of Croatia (Lutheran)

Evangelical Pentecostal Church in Croatia

Reformed Christian (Calvinist) Church in Croatia

### **Cyprus**

Church of Cyprus

### **Czech Republic**

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

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## **Denmark**

Baptist Union of Denmark

Evangelical Lutheran Church in Denmark

## **Estonia**

Estonian Evangelical Lutheran Church

Estonian (Apostolic) Orthodox Church

## **Finland**

Evangelical-Lutheran Church of Finland

Orthodox Church of Finland

## **Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia**

United Methodist Church in the FYR of Macedonia

## **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

Evangelical 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

## **Iceland**

Evangelical Lutheran Church of Iceland

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## **Ireland**

Church of Ireland  
Methodist Church in Ireland  
Presbyterian Church in Ireland

## **Italy**

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 (Germany)

## **Liechtenstein**

Evangelical Church in the Principality of Liechtenstein

## **Lithuania**

Evangelical Lutheran Church in Lithuania  
Lithuanian Evangelical Lutheran Church in Germany

## **Luxembourg**

Protestant Churches in Luxembourg

## **The Netherlands**

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

## **Norway**

Church of Norway

## **Poland**

Polish Baptist Union  
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

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## **Portugal**

Evangelical Methodist Church of Portugal

Evangelical Presbyterian Church of Portugal

Lusitanian Catholic Apostolic Evangelical Church

## **Romania**

Evangelical Church of the Augsburg Confession in Romania (Sibiu)

Evangelical Lutheran Church in Romania (Cluj-Napoca)

Reformed Church in Romania

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 and Montenegro

Serbian Orthodox Church

Slovak Evangelical Church of the Augsburg Confession in Serbia

United Methodist Church in Serbia

## **Slovak Republic**

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



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## **Switzerland**

United Methodist Church in Switzerland  
Federation of Swiss Protestant Churches  
Old-Catholic Church of Switzerland

## **Ukraine**

Reformed Church in Transcarpathia

## **United Kingdom**

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

## **International Areas**

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







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conference of european churches