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**Minutes of the 3rd meeting of the**

**Assembly Planning Committee of the Conference of European Churches**

**Brussels, 22 - 23 May 2017**

The meeting was opened with a short ecumenical moment of devotion prepared by Elena.

1. **Roll Call**

Apologies were recorded from:

* H.E. Metropolitan Emmanuel of France, Ecumenical Patriarchate (CEC Vice-President)
* OKR Klaus Rieth, Evangelical Lutheran Church in Württemberg
* Mr Danilo Mihajlovic, Local Coordinator
* Ms Charlotte Belot, Assistant

This was followed by a round of introductions. Presents were *Assembly Planning Committee:*

* Ms Nan Braunschweiger, Church of Scotland
* Rev. Michael Bubik, Evangelical Church A.C. in Austria
* Ms Satu Koikkalainen, Evangelical Lutheran Church in Finland
* Rev. Canon Dr Leslie Nathaniel, Church of England (APC Moderator)
* H.E. Archbishop Dr Yeznik Petrosyan, Armenian Apostolic Church
* Rev. Helle Rosenkvist, Evangelical-Lutheran Church of Denmark
* Very Rev Archimandrite Ignatios Sotiriadis, Orthodox Church of Greece
* Ms Elena Timofticiuc, Romanian Orthodox Church
* Ms Catherine Tsavdaridou, Ecumenical Patriarchate

*Guests:*

* Mr Andreas Aarflot, Church of Norway (CEC Governing Board), Legal Advisor
* Rev. Dr Patrick Roger Schnabel, Berliner Missionswerk, Legal Advisor
* Rev. Sabine Udodesku, Evangelical Church in Germany, Chair of the Assembly Worship Committee

*Staff:*

* Very Reverend Protopresbyter Heikki Theodoros Huttunen, General Secretary
* Mr Szabolcs Lörincz, Assembly Coordinator

*Other Staff as needed:*

* Dr Elizabeta Kitanovic, Executive Secretary - human rights
* Rev. Dr Peter Pavlovic, Study Secretary - economic and ecological justice, EU integration, and sustainable development.
1. **Approval of agenda**

**Decision**

The agenda was approved as presented with the proviso that the finance item be covered before 18:15 hours as Michel had to leave at that time.

1. **Approval of minutes**

A follow-up point still needs to take place, i.e. distribution of the CVs of the Assembly Worship Committee (AWC); this can be put on extranet. The APC Coordinator will follow up on this.

Points of clarification:

* Arrival for the general assembly on 31 May was the decision taken in Novi Sad, even though an arrival date of 1 June appears elsewhere – this was decided after the Novi Sad meeting.
* Regional pre-events are not mentioned in the minutes as we did not discuss them in Novi Sad. Fr Heikki reported that the process of consultation leading up to the general assembly has started, providing input on future directions. It was requested that we have this as a point on the present agenda.
* A request was made to have the minutes distributed earlier. It is only possible to have them in draft form as they need to be approved by the next meeting.
* The figure in item 7 of 250 persons (delegates, observers and guests) seemed doubtful. This will be discussed at a later point in the agenda.

**Decision**

With these qualifications, the minutes were adopted as a true record of the proceedings.

1. **Legal Matters**

Patrick and Andreas introduced the revised timeline.

1. **The translation of the constitution**

It is the French version of the constitution which is binding under Belgian law. A *certified translation into English of the new constitution* was circulated. It was commented that this could have been better translated. Andreas and Patrick will work with the APC Moderator on an improved version that will make it easier for the delegates to follow, for approval by the GB. However, if there are time constraints, the presidency would need to approve this improved version.

Once this is done a number of matters concerning the assembly can be firmed up, including standing orders, rules of procedures, etc.

1. **Standing orders and rules of procedure**

At present, there are two sets of standing orders (SOs), the SOs of the conference adopted by the Governing Board and the SOs of the general assembly adopted by the General Assembly.

The standing orders of the General Assembly adopted in 2013 are still valid until the general assembly changes them. In order to avoid confusion between the two sets of rules, it was decided to propose to the Novi Sad General Assembly that the rules governing the General Assembly would be called *rules of procedure (ROP)* of the General Assembly rather than SOs.

The *standing orders* (SOs) of the conference adopted by the GB contains rules about how to run the GB meetings, the Thematic Reference Groups and the different procedures for running of the conference on a day to day basis. As the APC needed to be very clear regards the legal situation of the general assembly, and as Andreas and Patrick looked at the English version of the constitution and the still valid standing orders of the General Assembly, some contradictions with the SOs were noted. Based on that, a proposal will be made for the GB to change the SOs of the conference so that they are in accordance with the constitution.

Two sets of rules of procedure for Assemblies will be required: 1 for virtual/written meetings; and 1 for physical convened meetings.

1. **Comparison between the 2013 Budapest Constitution of CEC and the adapted constitution registered under Belgian Law**

Some areas of the French adapted constitution registered under Belgian Law differ from what was approved by the 2013 Budapest General Assembly. The GB was given the authority to make such changes, and only such changes as necessary to enable the transition from Geneva and Brussels to happen. A comparison between the 2013 Budapest Constitution and the adapted French constitution uncovered that there were some changes made during the adaption that constitute legal, and in one case theological, difficulties. In this connection, Art. 8.1 of the French constitution could imply that GB members are elected for 10 years; the wording is different from the possible intention. There is a need for the General Assembly to make some changes in the registered Belgian constitution. We also need to pay attention to capitalization of certain words, e.g. member/Member. It would be good for the group to have a fluent French speaker to assist. We can also enlist the help of Elaine Griffiths in Heidelberg. In terms of legal French advice, Bishop Christopher Hill has mentioned one lawyer, who would be suitable, but there are also other networks one can draw upon, if needed.

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| In conclusion, for the November GB meeting Andreas, Patrick and the APC Moderator will: * Compare the Budapest version of the constitution with the latest English version.
* Look at the Belgian constitution and propose necessary changes.
* Draft 2 Rules of Procedure for assemblies.
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1. **Finances update**

Budget report 04 was circulated showing an estimated total cost of some €1.1 million for approximately 479 participants. This figure is somewhere in between the costs of the Lyon and Budapest assemblies and also compares satisfactorily with the recently held LWF Assembly in Namibia which cost €2.9 million.

*Income*

This is based on the registration fee of €150 and €250 participant’s fee. We may count on €80,000 as the 2017 contribution to the assembly fund and member church contributions are on track and may even exceed the forecast.

Ongoing is the effort to secure external sponsorship and other contributions. So far some €20,000 has been committed by the Church of Norway and €30,000 from EKD for the Youth Programme and a further €20,000 from EKD for subsidies. Approaches will be made to the government in Belgrade as well as to the regional authorities in Vojvodina and to the city of Novi Sad. We may also anticipate a contribution from the Serbian Orthodox Church. All such fundraising is also a good relationship building exercise.

*Expenditure*

The exact hotel and conference centre costs are being worked out. Michael would like to see a copy of the final contracts before they are signed by the GS and a co-signatory according to article 11.4 of the constitution. Additionally a local lawyer in Brussels could check out the legal issues of the contracts.

Other points of note:

* The Youth event will take place in *Hotel Park*.
* All participants will take lunch and dinner at *Hotel Park*; breakfast will be taken at the individuals’ places of accommodation.
* Accommodation is reserved in 5 hotels; the average price at present is € 77 per night although it could be less. Hotel Park has quoted € 60, the 5-star hotel € 77; other hotels are less expensive at € 40 and € 32. We will need to monitor the quality of service. Some advance payments will need to be made.

Michael will inform the June GB of developments since the last version of the budget was presented and continue to update the active forecast. A definitive budget should ready for the November 2017 GB meeting.

Ideally it would not be necessary to use the 2018 assembly fund allocation for the 2018 assembly.

*Clarification on the various budget entries*

* 8.3 is for a bigger staff meeting for organizational purposes.
* 8.5 are travel costs, e.g. for site visits Novi Sad.
* 8.8 is salary costs
* Catherine opined that all of the above should go under staff costs.
* 9.1 is for publications and currently covers the report from Budapest to Novi Sad, handbook and worship material. It was agreed to add another € 10,000 for the publication of CEC member churches proposed by Archbishop Yeznik. He will prepare a proposal for this to be presented to the GB that will also include the possibility of an online version. The logic of charging the general assembly budget for a CEC-wide publication was questioned. The decision to produce a member church handbook needs to be built into the communications strategy plan. The complete list of agreed publications and timeline for their production should be produced.
* 9.3 is to finance the website for the general assembly. External staff will be hired for that.
* Subsidies still need to be clarified.
* € 50,000 has been earmarked for interpretation and € 24 for translation.
* More detail is available in a fuller version of the budget.
* All budget items are monetary; contributions in kind, e.g. volunteers, are not accounted for in financial terms.
1. **CEC travel and participation financial assistance**

A draft policy paper was circulated. *Discussion*:

* A list of eligible churches/countries should be established; it should take into consideration varying abilities to pay of different churches within one country. This list is for internal purposes only.
* An application form should be produced with a clear deadline/cut-off date
* Replace the word *scholarship* with **financial assistance**
* Collect all applications before allocating amount available (Szabi will provide this figure in the coming week)
* No 100% subsidies will be given
* Firm up/make clearer the travel reimbursement section to reach an agreement in advance with the participants on exactly what will be reimbursed
* No subsidies will be given for registration fees, this should be made clear in the policy
* Attention should be paid to help with the participation of smaller churches
* Favour will be given to churches whose 2016 membership fees are paid and who nominate a balanced delegation.

**Decision**

The APC decided to task a small group comprising Elena and Nan to revise the paper in time for the October APC meeting taking note of the discussion.

1. **Assembly timeline and programme**

*Introduction by the Assembly Coordinator:*

* The programme has been developed keeping the future of CEC in the forefront. The overall theme is the biblical text “you shall be my witnesses” played out through the agenda foci of hospitality, justice and witness.
* It will be of 6 day’s duration, to some extent due to the time needed to travel to Novi Sad. This is longer than was the case for Budapest.
* It will be preceded by 2.5 days of a youth pre-assembly event.
* Colour-coded building blocks encompass spiritual life, programmatic and business sessions.
* Key elements include the opening worship, future of Europe panel discussion (possibly with HH Bartholomew, Archbishop of Canterbury and someone from the European Commission).
* In terms of main speakers, the list of names drawn up at the last APC meeting was taken to the presidents who compiled a list of who to allocate to each slot; we have begun issuing invitations.
* There will be up to 8 parallel groups meeting during the group work sessions.
* Each day begins with prayer and Bible study, supported by the worship committee, followed by keynote speeches, reflection and discussion with business sessions towards the end.
* Plenaries will be held in the conference centre and working groups in Hotel Park.
* On the last evening there will be an official closing reception event at castle.
* Sunday morning worship will take place in local churches.
* Details of the Sunday afternoon bridge celebration have to be firmed up.
* Regional pre-consultations are ongoing, two have taken place so far in Rekyavik and Edinburgh, to give input for the future of Europe issue; more will follow.
* Other elements not yet appearing on the agenda will take place, such as staff briefing, parallel events, etc.

*Discussion*

* Thematic blocks and workshops: these will be further reflected on for better compatibility, but will depend to some extent on the availability of keynote speakers.
* Some blocks may have to straddle over two days, one idea could be to have them colour coded.
* Explore the possibility of having just one group work session per day.
* Time set aside for ecumenical greetings will need consideration.
* Make good use of committee meeting slots to have some other meetings, such as confessional and regional meetings at the same time.
* Investigate possibility of having evening prayer before dinner.
* Colour business session on 1st evening.
* Create space for appointment on committees during 1 June before they have their first meeting at the end of that day.
* Explore the possibility of committees doing some of their work during working group time so that they don’t have to work late nights? Some thought could be given for certain lunchtime meetings, where possible.
* Output from the keynote speeches will feed into the message, policy reference committee, group work, outcomes and future programmatic direction.
* We need to appoint keynote listeners, especially for group work.
* While it may look disjointed to have worship in local churches on the Sunday, we must remember that there is richness in diversity. Also we are invited by the different churches and ethnicities who want to welcome us. We need to be sensitive to their hospitality; they are really looking forward to receiving us. We need to pay special attention to the smaller churches, especially the non-Orthodox ones who seldom receive visitors. This will be a good moment to get to know each other; there will be mixtures of denominations at each church. The delegations will be organized in advance. Danilo is looking in to how to include refugees.
* Remove “areas of conflict” from the title of the June 3rd Future of Europe session.
* The General Secretary informed APC were informed that the presidents had decided that Archbishop Ephraim be the keynote speaker on hospitality; Whether Archbishop Antje Jackelén for witness and justice has still to be decided; the possibility of having an eminent young theologian or church leader to give visibility for younger faces would be worthwhile considering.
* The work of the eight thematic working groups during the 2015-2018 period needs to be honoured and given due place in influencing the future work of CEC. This will be made clear through the publications but still some effort is needed to get their work owned by the member churches. Their work will also be featured through the group work sessions, and the reports of the GS and the president.
* We need to bear in mind the concept of inclusive society, e.g. regarding persons with disabilities and Romas.
* Keynote listeners can be agreed upon by the GB; they will work closely with the policy reference committee.
* The Petrovaradin Castle event could also take place on the Sunday. It might be that we don’t need committee meetings on the evening of 4 June.
* There was a brief introduction to the participation of ECEN; fuller discussions took place the next day.

**Decision**

It was decided that all these thoughts and suggestions be given reflection by the Assembly Coordinator in consultation with the APC Moderator in terms of feasibility and can be further discussed at the next APC meeting.

*Concept note on hearings and workshops*

Discussion on the exact title of the sessions is ongoing. Colleagues and network/IRG members have contributed to the paper and is a résumé of the discussions taking into consideration logistic limitations (5 parallel sessions).

Discussion:

* We should try to as far as possible not to reduce the number of workshops.
* It would be useful if MCs and partners can contribute to them.
* It would be useful for participants should sign-up in advance, at the pint of registration, asking for options 1 and 2. The most popular can be allocated the biggest rooms.
* It may be necessary to explore the need for possible new emerging priorities to be addressed.
* The question of whether to keep the focus within EU or not needs to be addressed (e.g. persecution of minorities in Syria, which has in any case a ripple effect in EU)

*Women’s pre-assembly*

There was divided opinion on whether to have one or not but in any case there is no money or staff available for it. It was agreed to explore the possibility further in the programme planning, e.g. the possibility of having a women’s session and/or a workshop dedicated to women’s issues.

1. **Assembly Worship Committee**

Sabine presented the report of the first meeting of the AWC that had taken place in Novi Sad from 8 to 10 May. A list of recommendations, presented in items 2. to 14. were agreed upon by the APC with the following clarifications:

1. Worship places – groups will gather in different churches to begin with, proceeding to the main ceremony which will take place in a square in town. Participants will carry some visible symbol during the procession, e.g. flowers, banners, olive branches. The local authorities will need to be informed of the event and bear in mind security issues.
2. Morning prayer – morning prayers will be confessional, all other prayers inter-confessional.
3. Lunch time prayer – lunch time prayer will last approximately 5 minutes.
4. Evening prayer – the same evening prayer will be used for all groups even if this takes place in various venues/groupings. We should also investigate the possibility of holding a common evening prayer in the lobby of Park Hotel before dinner.
5. Bible studies – a small group comprising Leslie, Sabine, Heikki and Ignatius was tasked to reflect on who could do the Bible Studies (the Armenians will propose someone for their BS) and which texts would be best, subject to GB approval. BS will be done in plenary; as it is not possible to conduct them in small groups for logistical reasons the buzz group methodology may be used.
6. Peace prayer near the bridge - could we plant an olive tree? We must bear in mind that we can’t have interpretation as we are outside. Should we invite the Jewish community? Interreligious prayers can be delicate. We should depend on local people who do this event every year. Could Russians come for this and sing something in Russian; Russian is still an official language of CEC? We do need some visible Russian presence so this could be a good opportunity.
7. Sunday worship services in local congregations – get participants to sign up for visits, possibly at point of registration. Refreshments or lunch will be possible in most places.
8. Music – this will not increase the total number of the AWC as Miodrag Andric will become a member of the local committee.
9. Worship material – a worship book similar to what was done for Budapest will be produced with the prayers/liturgy in 4 languages plus Serbian for the opening service. The AWC will translate themselves as much as they are able but some costs for this must be foreseen.

**Day 2**

1. **ECEN Assembly**

Peter introduced the synergy and potential mutual benefits from holding the ECEN assembly as a parallel event to the CEC general assembly, with some joint sessions. ECEN can help assembly to be more ecologically aware and it will be underlined that their work is part of churches’ awareness, concern and identity. CEC ‘s general assembly could be more participatory, this gives the opportunity for wider church participation, including from the smaller churches. The event would be for approximately 80 persons.

Difficulties identified:

* The question of whether anyone should be organizing a parallel assembly at the same time as CEC’s was raised. It would be better to have it as a pre-event
* It was felt that having so many additional persons with a specific environmental focus would change the nature of this general assembly in a way that was not deemed appropriate.
* It would create imbalance as this is only one of 8 thematic foci of our work 2015-2018, it would not be fair for one of the TRG topics to dominate. The peace TRG, for example felt it would have been even more advantageous for them to organize a WW2 commemoration event.
* Upwards of 80 persons is far too many. It was the clear intention of the constitutional general assembly in Budapest to reduce the number of delegates considerably. It would not be acceptable to fill the difference with too many guests.
* With the new constitution in mind, we should concentrate on our own business and not have this as a distraction.
* 80 extra persons will add an additional logistics burden (meals, moving, interpretation, security, etc.)

**Decision**

It was unanimously agreed that the two events should not run as parallel events. Peter will look into the possibilities of holding the meeting either before, after or detached from the CEC assembly.

1. **Categories of Participation**

Figures were presented that correspond to what was agreed upon in Novi Sad with minor adjustments in some categories. Of note:

* It was legally clear that current GB members would be present at the Assembly. However, we will not know how many of them will also be among the new church delegations until churches send their delegation list. GB members continue their mandate until the end of the assembly. They can speak but not vote; they can be elected to the next GB if they are nominated by their church (In fact a person does not need to be present in the general assembly to be elected to the GB.)
* Remove the word ordinary from the delegate category.
* Some delegates may represent at the same time OIP and/or NCCs
* NCCs can send one representative; OIPs can send more than one.
* For the sake of transparency we should prepare a list of NCCs to be approved by GB.
* Observers comprise guests, such as representatives of REOs, the RCCs, Coptic, Syrian and Ethiopian churches. Increase this category to 15 persons.
* Create a new category of advisers to delegations with 15 places. All travel, accommodation and food costs will need to be borne by the respective member churches.
* Youth advisers are needed to enhance youth presence due to the reduced number of delegates. We need to develop some criteria for selection of who they are.
* We need to balance out the churches from which the youth delegates, advisers and stewards come.
* Stewards’ applications must have the endorsement of their churches.
* The “extra participants’ special event” category should be renamed facilitators and used for TRG representatives and those involved in hearings and workshops. Reduce the number to 15
* Create a new category of VIPs for 5 persons.
* Staff, including those for interpretation and translation corresponds to the usual estimate.
* APC members need to be fitted in to one of the existing categories.
* The steering committee will comprise members from already existing categories.
* We need to avoid adding on more participants in order to be able to remain within budget. Any additions should be compensated by reductions elsewhere.
* When the list is revised a clear distinction between participants and “helpers” should be shown.
* Add legal advisers as a category and reduce something else.
1. **Youth Pre-Assembly Event (new agreed official name for this programme)**

The document drafted by Katerina Pekridou was reviewed. It is designed to prepare young participants to be able to make good contributions to the general assembly, e.g. on the future of Europe. The programme is in draft format; some speakers and guests have still to be contacted or confirmed. The event has its own budget which has been presented to the Nordics churches and EKD; a total of € 50,000 has been pledge by the Church of Norway and EKD. The Saturday afternoon plenary at the CEC general assembly will have a focus on youth. Katerina and Szabi have been taking the lead so far, in collaboration with an advisory team. A steward’s coordinator will be appointed in due course. We need to designate a staff person fully dedicated to this event and the programme for the event needs to be fine-tuned.

1. **Other business:** A new seating plan was issued.
2. **Closure:** The meeting was closed in prayer given by Father Heikki.

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