

## Conference of European Churches

### Brainstorming meeting on the 15<sup>th</sup> CEC General Assembly

Berlin, 12-14 January 2017

#### Meeting notes

#### 12 January 2017

*Welcome words by Dr. Dieckmann and Fr. Heikki*

Arbeitsgemeinschaft Christlicher Kirchen (ACK) – presentation by Dr. Elisabeth Dieckmann (General Secretary / Geschäftsführerin). Many churches (not only Catholic and Protestant). Oecumenical day of creation – “season of creation” (seasonofcreation.org) to account for different traditions. ACK is giving “Ökumenepreis” (oecumenical reward) every year. Releases a newsletter (we receive a copy in English). Participation in the week of prayer for Christian unity. Very little youth involvement in the ACK → idea to let every delegate take a young person with them.

CEC – Fr. Heikki Huttunen. CEC often needs special help from others: the help of ACK is very important for this encounter. To be forced to do things together by practical needs is a kind of blessing. Welcome on behalf of CEC: expectations on 2 levels for this meeting:

1) Brainstorm to have an adequate youth presence at the GA in 2018. “Adequate” means speaking not only about the future but about the **present**. If there are no young people in our churches, it means we are dying already. Having young people is not a matter of education only, but being aware of the situation we are in, youth is part of our reality.

2) Strengthen the relationship with the organisations present today. WSCF, EYCE and Syndesmos have been classical partners for CEC. It is helpful that we are a small group, to share more and spend time also in a more relaxed way. Very nice to go to Berlin: importance of the fall of the wall in the history of our organisations, since then a lot of evolutions. Disappearance of borders in Europe vs. creation of new walls? What will the future hold? Ecumenism is in crisis: people don't understand why we need this. Sometimes difficult because one minded but because people who do not agree drop off. (‘nice to see a chair of Syndesmos in person’).

Round of presentations of each participant.

*“CEC since Budapest – passing on the baton to the 15<sup>th</sup> General Assembly in 2018” – Fr Heikki*

Swiss church historian said : “Ecumenism was a phenomenon of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and not of the 21<sup>st</sup> century”. There is no ecumenical enthusiasm now, ecumenical institutions are not strong, maybe their time is passé. But the ecumenical movement? If you look at the development of church history: history of conflicts. Breaking relations and building bridges. Big goal = Christian unity. Not to be concerned about Christian unity would not be truthful. This kind of approach of what ecumenical work is like is going to the core of us being Christians and this is very actual.

It also comes back to the way we educate our children. I believe in transmitting the orthodox traditions to my children in “the heavy way”. But at some point you have to get to know the others.

To become really competent, you have to go out of your tradition and learn what all the other are thinking.

History CEC is very much linked to overcoming the divide between east and west. The big success of the assemblies (1989 in Basel, 1997 Graz, 2007 in Sibiu). But the time of ecumenical institutions is in an important way over. Our ecumenical involvement has been professionalised in different organs and branches. Back when I started there were 16 branches in CEC. Now each of these has their own international network. From a theological point of view, it is not a good development: there is a danger that we don't see the wholeness of the witness. The role of big ecumenical institutions was not the beginning of the kingdom of God. We are in the time of networks. ECEN is a good example (independent, related to CEC): it gathers people from different organisations, has a minimum of organisation but an important group of people.

The big question for CEC is: how can we serve these ecumenical networks? How can we be a centre, a hub to support them and keep these things together? How do we keep our churches related, our specialists of different areas, how do we keep the wholeness of Christian area?

The COP21 took place 2015 in Paris and the European Churches decided to celebrate it with pilgrimages. Big success – combined tradition of pilgrimages, closeness to nature, link between current problem and church life.

Here we are, CEC has 115 member churches. CEC went through a process of constitutional reforms 2009-2015. Climax was in 2013 in Budapest where was decided upon the new constitution. A very difficult assembly. The reform of constitution started with a financial crisis (1/2 million debt). Despite the unhappy way the reform was run, the result is good for CEC. Lighter structure, the right size for the organisation. There are issues: small churches are less represented (only 20 people in the staff), less chances to have young representatives. Less offices: from 3 to 2 (Geneva office closed October 2016).

Main areas of CEC activity are:

- Human rights
- Theological dialogue
- Economic justice
- Social (work life) questions
- Environment
- Education in the broad sense
- Bioethics

A lot of areas of work but not so good in all of them: the Assembly should prioritise and find main focus. Geneva tradition of church ecumenism. One example is the response to the document of WCC. Other part is the Bruxelles ecumenical tradition: church collaboration in European institutions was started by people working at these institutions. There are few different levels, it is very demanding and sensitive politically. Religion came as a problem and became a political topic. Can religion be part of the solution? How do we understand our own religious background? The vice president of the European Commission said "in Europe we need more catechism". Positive side of trying to understand our own tradition but risk of instrumentalisation.

General Assembly 30 May (Thursday) to 6 June 2018. 4 work days (shorter as before) and smaller than before. The number of delegates is defined by the constitution: many churches have only 1 delegate, or 2 delegates. There is a will to look for a real participation of young people. We can brainstorm now to see how young people can bring a real contribution to the debates, even when they are not delegates.

*We discussed on the ways how people who cannot vote can contribute: intertwined program, organise sessions to listen to the voice of the youth or of non-voting persons, sometimes parallel programs can disconnect the 'observers' (they will not be called this way) from what happens in the assembly. Other issue is to decide how the young representatives will be found? Sometimes young people are selected simply on their connection to the bishop, and speak for themselves. They should be representing a movement or an organisation. Fr. Heikki shares that the advisors (who came with the bishops) were present throughout the discussions.*

*Why does CEC want to have young people at the assembly?*

*Elisabeth want to stress that there should be a way to start a discussion for the non-voting participants.*

*Szabolcs returns the questions: what are the issues your Youth organisation wants to bring forward? This is important for you, youth organisations, to take this opportunity to share the opinion of the youth. It is up to you, within the next 1 ½ years how you can connect to such an assembly. CEC then should look how to include it inside the assembly.*

*Katarina answers personally to Marias questions: 1) have contributions from young experts in the different areas that interest CEC. 2) Identify the burning issues. 3) have a questioning of the way institutions do things.*

*Young people are the one to ask: why are things like this? How could they be done differently?*

*Benjamin suggests that a "pre-meeting" could be organised and that their conclusions will be included in the main assembly. Well prepared participants and well informed can then have an impact on the different topics. The preparation should go hand in hand with the staff of CEC.*

*Lisa: how can we prepare the young people to this assembly? Young people coming to this kind of assemblies with a lot of delegations they don't know and with a bishop they also don't know. We could organise a platform where they can meet and organize themselves. Regarding the topics: it is a tricky thing because youth could feel not concerned by them. We could take ecumenism as an issue, since the networks are often topical networks → put stress on an inclusive, whole question.*

Thinking about the theme of the assembly and about the content. There are people saying « this is the last chance for CEC », because of the last assembly. An organisation cannot spend all time discussing herself. What came out of the discussions until now is that the assembly should be about Europe. What is the role of European churches in the changing and challenging European context. There are many ways the churches are challenged. Two areas that are not yet touched by CEC: interreligious dialogue and peace is not self-evident. There is a very broad task of reporting about the activities of the churches and also a question about the focus of CEC for the future. The angle of approach proposed is the one of **witness**. This is the starting point. Previous brainstorming to express the task of the assembly found 3 words: Witness! Justice! Hospitality!

*"Ecumenical Theological Education and leadership formation in Europe today" – Rev Dr Dietrich Werner (Bread for the World)*

EWDE (Evangelisches Werk für Diakonie und ...). It is an important sign of hope that you meet as representatives of ecumenical youth organisations. "It is students who make the game in the ecumenical movement". Sense of dedication, sense of deep friendship and boldness. Against the sense of depression, nationalism and ... We need to send the message that there is a new wind of ecumenism.

2 Short examples why a new ecumenism is developing.

- Orthodox Academy of Crete. You feel the longing for mutual connectedness. There is a spirit of renewed ecumenical commitment
- Lund. Pope Francis came and it was deeply moving that a pope comes to a Lutheran church to give thanks to the contribution of Reformation. 500 years of separation – 50 of ecumenical dialogue.

Something is happening. A new ecumenism of hope and determination is growing. We need to feed it in our educational programs. Twin Consultations (2016) on “Reformation – Education – Transformation” → put a stress on the ongoing reformation. Reformation movements in orthodox and catholic churches. New focus on the scripture, etc.

There is also a focus on the link between reformation and education. Reformation in Germany was a movement of students. Students carried the revolutionary pamphlets of Luther around. Only if the triangle of Reformation –Education- Social action. Link between returning to the biblical roots and social engagement. Empowerment of social Diakonia

This we need in Europe today. Not only formal education. In Europe there is a trend for privatisation of Christian voices. As Christians we claim that the values of the kingdom are also for the public space.

We need a kind of education for world citizenship. We face a process of closing, of creating high walls. “Nationalism in the end means war” (Francois Mitterand). We need to create an understanding of citizenship – global, European. To be a citizen today has a European dimension. Deliberate education for a distinct Christian identity

We need a debate on what is the soul of Europe. Popular masses don’t know what is the value of Europe. The Christian voice of Europe should be loud and clearly articulated. This is not to mean that Christians are the only voice. There is Islam and other religions.

We need education for ecological transformation (STG).

We need education for interreligious peace ethics. How to become a just peace church? We are living in a period of enormous threats. Resurgence of nationalisation and militarisation. Completely forgetting about the heritage of the Helsinki process on common security. Building a common security architecture in Europe. Europe is a field where there is a massive amount of nuclear weapons. We have to make huge efforts to ensure disarmament.

We need education for a new culture for hospitality for refugees and migrants. European churches undergoing an immense learning process on how to welcome refugees. There are almost no parish in Germany which is not concerned in a way or another to the migrants. Grassroots diakonia and renewal taking place.

We need a YEEN: a Young Ecumenists European Network. Movements to come together and face the generational gap. CARE for Europe. How to continue the GETI project after it is finished. Find sponsor to build a regular European leadership academy.

Points raised by Dietrich:

**The future of Europe, the mission of the church and the strategic role of education and leadership training**

- 1) Time has come to reconfirm: Another world is possible, a new ecumenism is emerging!
- 2) The ecumenical movement started as a student movement of young committed Christian pioneers and leaders (SCM)

- 3) The vision of Europe needs to be defended and re-articulated again, as support for the European vision is crumbling and threatened by concepts of re-turning and seeking refuge in ill-informed and narrow-minded concepts of rigid nationalism and populism
- 4) There are signs of a new emerging hopes and longing for a more radical and committed ecumenism (Orthodox Academy of Crete and the post-Holy synod phase in Greece and other orthodox countries; Encounter of Pope Francis and Martin Junge from LWF in Lund).
- 5) In the context of 500 years of Reformation Jubilee we need to re-emphasize the strategic linkage between Reformation – Education – Transformation (see the twin-consultation process and its website with many good resources on this background)
- 6) The Reformation, i.e. radical return to the roots of the Gospel, survived and became historically successful only due to the strategic collation between faith and education, i.e. the shaping of a Christian leadership generation with a critical and ecumenical mind.
- 7) We therefore need renewed efforts to strengthen ecumenical and global education in European churches, research institutions, ecumenical youth movements and universities!
- 8) We need education for public theology and responsibility (faith nothing restricted to private sphere, to the values of the Gospel to be brought to the market space)
- 9) We need education for European and Global citizenship (against populism and the wall and fences mentality which is creeping in again): SAs Christians we are always citizens in solidarity with others beyond our own national boundaries; citizens of Gods Kingdom first
- 10) We need education for distinct Christian profiles and more articulated Christian values in Europe (renewed efforts for articulating the “Soul of Europe”!
- 11) We need education for Ecological Transformation, or the Big Transformation in the context of the SDG Agenda (Manifesto for Ecological Reformation of Christianity!, see internet)
- 12) We need more Education for Interreligious Peace Ethics (Europe not to be come the place again for a Cold War between East and West and the threat of nuclear deterrence or even war...). The OSCE heritage of common security concepts for Europe (Helsinki process, which is almost forgotten today) needs to be spelled out again.
- 13) We need for education for a new culture of hospitality with migrants and strangers and refugees in Europe (many positive examples from the recent mass based local Diaconia renewal movement in German local parishes and other countries like Greece etc)
- 14) How can we continue beyond GETI in May 2017? – The vision of a regular European Leadership Academy for Young Christian Leaders.
- 15) Calling a movement CARE for Europe: **C**ount on Europe; **A**ct for Europe, **R**evive the European Vision, **E**ngage with European partners! CARE could also read: **C**ombat Religious (and national Extremism)
- 16) Exploring new and creative ways for funding European Ecumenical Youth work beyond the known channels: Call together a workshop on exploring improved ways of securing funds for future Ecumenical Leadership Formation in Europe...

### 13 January 2017

#### Discussion on Open Letter of the GB

- Reflection on how information should be communicated by CEC: Show what has it to do with me, emphasise main points, describe concrete task expected and the relevance of it
- EYCE
- Campaign on the topic-link to migration and change of society
- Issue of Europe more than an economic market – It started as a peace project
- Unhappy with EU policies, but there has never been such a long period of peace
- CEC to be brave enough to address the issues, what does that concretely mean?
- What is the Christian responsibility for foreigners and people in need?
- Multiculturalism - who is our neighbour and what actions do we need to talk as churches?

- Christian hospitality: A term that is extended beyond its biblical/theological understanding, is debated
- How do we open to other people? Migrant churches and youth organisations/ e.g. Vietnamese youth - they appear in the structure of the German churches. What happens if they do not go back and stay in Europe? How can the church be a home for them?
- Investigate motivation of why countries outside the EU want to join. Is it the economy or EU as community of values that is appealing?
- Open letter as coming back to values –What the EU is about?
- Is there a common understanding of common values?
- European identity comes out of the way people are living. You can wish that some of the values will be part of the core, but you cannot really shape A Christian European identity
- People of good will, and different faith, need to be considered in convivial setting, not in parallel. Is it healthy to create on each side reflection? Ways needed to bring them into the process from the beginning – how religious people can contribute to the European context – think together about core values – plea to be more in contact towards the GA to listen to each other

### Major questions for youth organisations at present

- **How will the framework of the ecumenical movement look like for the future of Europe? How do we make sure that someone does not drop off and is not lost on the way? Seminars on the topic are needed supported by CEC**
- **What is the vision for ecumenical involvement for CEC? Network or a movement? What do we want to achieve? What is the ideal world we want to create? If we want a movement, we need to inspire people, fight injustice, be sure about the vision, apply concrete projects and measures**
- Huge potential around the table, use the GA as a joint venture to contribute to these questions
- Seminar could be organised on 1. The future of the ecumenical movement in Europe, 2. Migration, 3. Environment. Outcomes to feed into the GA
- Pre-Assembly youth event to discuss the theme of the GA
- Pre-Assembly Consultations need to develop the idea of the future of the ecumenical movement
- Involve national movements in the pre-Assembly events
- Ask youth organisations to identify young participants
- Include the delegates already in the youth pre-Assembly before the GA starts
- Invite specialised networks to be at the Pre-Assembly consultations
- Tasks for the Pre-Assembly Youth event need to be clearly defined: will there be papers produced for the GA? E.g. Letter to the Assembly
- Participants need to be trained on how to take part in the GA

### EYCE

- 2019 publication on the history of the ecumenical youth movement in Europe
- Projects: Poverty on the European level, Campaign on migration (European values and identity)
- Topics for 2017: Ecumenical theology of migration, Event in Italy about the role of churches in modern society

## WSCF-E

- Leadership training and networking
- Projects: How to run a campaign on national and European level – case study: No hate speech movement, xenophobia and social exclusion

## Syndesmos

- Coming back to the main roots: the fundamentals of Syndesmos
- Project: Annual event this summer in Samos

## Why should CEC be involved with youth organisations?

- Overlapping membership and topics (despite difference in structures)
- Target group of EYCE broader, not only students
- CEC needs youth organisations urgently because churches are not investing in the fields of international and ecumenism
- CEC struggles to reach the young people in the churches. Easier to involve them through youth organisations. Young participants can even be nominated for specific reasons because they are known to youth organisations
- Motivated people who have the skills, know the ecumenical field from an early stage, and live Christianity together despite diversity – life changing experience

## Input to the GA – Suggestions

Who are the young people? Stewards, Delegates (around 10) under 30 years of age, representatives from organisations in partnership, advisors or other from the delegations

100 young participants in total: 40 + 10 stewards from Serbia

## Report by Listeners

1. Pre-Assembly event
2. Discuss adequate representation of youth delegates, advisors etc., numbers?
3. Roles of young people (animals in the zoo, the crayon dilemma). Speaking right in the GA? How big is their input to the GA?
4. Separate event with youth organisations, networks and experts from CEC
5. Ecumenism of hope and determination, reviving the vision for Europe and engaging ecumenically
6. Identify important issues for youth
7. Ecumenical leadership formation crucial

## Quality youth participation:

1. Pre-Assembly Consultations. Have young people there, MC encouraged to send people and invite youth organisations
2. Youth Pre-Assembly event right before the GA in Novi Sad. Tasks: network (of different groups), education (procedures, policy papers, voting etc.), preparation (input of pre-Assembly consultations, aware content-wise, discuss in advance), contribution
3. Youth participation in the GA itself: provide the right to speak

**Other important questions:**

- How to get young people to the GA (e.g. as advisors)
- Topic of the GA: values and identity of Europe and the role of churches and ecumenism in Europe
- European ecumenical structures and how they can be inclusive and sustainable in the future
- Youth participation and Governing Board elections: Constitution does not mention that new members need to be delegates. Maybe include advisors of delegations with a provision that they need to have a nomination by their MC?
- The three organisations (EYCE, WSCF-E, Syndesmos) to propose one candidate each (from the CEC MC) to be part of the APC



## List of participants

### **CEC**

1. Very Reverend Protopresbyter Heikki Theodoros **Huttunen**
2. Szabolcs **Lörincz**
3. Katerina **Pekridou**

### **ACK**

4. Dr. Elisabeth **Dieckmann**
5. Kerstin **Rau**

### **EYCE**

6. Lisa **Schneider**
7. Satu **Koikkalainen**

### **GETI' 17**

8. Rev Prof Benjamin **Simon**

### **WSCF-Europe**

9. Maria **Kozhinova**
10. Krista **Autio**

### **Syndesmos**

11. Jean **Rehbinder**

### **Bread for the World**

12. Rev Dr Dietrich **Werner**