



GENSEC-2017-074
Ref: CEC MC-xxx

Conference of European Churches General Secretariat

To: Member Churches

Brussels, 25 July 2017

Esteemed Church Leaders,
Sisters and Brothers in Christ,

“You shall be my witnesses”

With this passage from Acts 1:7-8, the Conference of European Churches has the joy and honour of inviting its Member Churches and partners, to the upcoming General Assembly which is to be held from 31 May - 6 June 2018 in Novi Sad, Serbia.

This theme will be reflected through these three biblical key words that express our approach to the current ecumenical challenges in Europe: **Witness, Justice, Hospitality.**

We would like to extend special thanks to those churches whose invitation and cooperation makes this Assembly possible: the Holy Synod of the Serbian Orthodox Church in liaison with other Member Churches in Serbia; the Reformed Christian Church in Serbia and Montenegro, the Slovak Evangelical Church of the Augsburg Confession in Serbia, and the United Methodist Church in Serbia.

The Governing Board of the Conference of European Churches at its meeting in Belgrade, 30 May – 2 June 2017, asked the General Secretariat to send out formal invitations now. In our letter of 12 April 2017, we gave some information about the General Assembly and confirmed the number of delegate(s) from your Church. This confirmation followed Art. 7 (2) of the CEC Constitution which reads:

“The General Assembly shall be composed of the delegates of the Members of the Conference. Every Member is represented by one or more delegates. If a delegate cannot be present, this Member may appoint a substitute in his/her place or give its proxy vote to another Member or to a delegate of the latter. The delegates may hold several proxies.”

Further to that communication, we are pleased to give you the following additional information:

Conference of European Churches - Conférence des Églises européennes - Konferenz Europäischer Kirchen - Конференция Европейских Церквей

Brussels

Rue Joseph II, 174
BE - 1000 Brussels, Belgium
Tel. +32 2 230 17 32
Fax +32 2 231 14 13
E-mail: cec@cec-kek.be

Strasbourg

8, rue du Fossé des Treize
FR - 67000 Strasbourg, France
Tel.: +33 3 88 15 27 60
Fax: +33 3 88 15 27 61
E-mail: csc@cec-kek.fr

1. Dates and venue

The General Assembly will be held from **31 May - 6 June 2018** (including arrival and departure days) at the “Master” Congress Centre of Novi Sad Fair and Hotel Park in **Novi Sad**, Serbia.

The opening worship and plenary session will take place during the afternoon of Thursday, 31 May 2018, followed by five working days with departures on Wednesday, 6 June 2018. A detailed programme will be communicated to the delegates of the General Assembly in due course.

2. Participation

Up to 187 Member Church representatives will attend the General Assembly as official delegates. Together with non-voting participants, guests and staff, the total number of participants will be approximately 500 people.

3. Delegations

As a necessity for a General Assembly of a reduced size, Churches and organisations are asked to consider a number of issues as follows:

The Governing Board draws your attention to the following considerations concerning the composition of your delegation, detailed in the Constitution of CEC: “each Member (Church) with more than one delegate shall seek to ensure a fair and balanced representation” (Art. 7.3). This statute refers to the presence of women and men, youth, clergy and laity, ethnic, gender and other minorities, migrants and persons with disabilities among the delegates. The generally accepted balances of fair representation require that in the Assembly as a whole **at least 40% of delegates be women and 25% young adults of 18 to 30 years of age**. Although the numbers of delegates are smaller than past Assemblies, we trust that the churches will recognise the importance of the contribution of varied experiences and testimonies of church life at the General Assembly and the work of CEC in general.

We encourage Member Churches to include current Governing Board members within their delegation, as only delegates possess voting rights. Members of the current Governing Board who are not included in Member Churches’ delegations will be invited to participate in the General Assembly as non-voting participants.

Please note that as a result of changes in the Constitution, one is not required to be present as a delegate at the Assembly to be eligible for election to the Governing Board.

Churches should pay special attention to including people with migrant backgrounds in their delegation; which may include co-opted representatives of migrant churches. In this regard, it is recommended that you consider the Churches’ Commission for Migrants in Europe (CCME) network.

It is necessary that your delegates are able to speak one of the four official languages of Conference of European Churches (English, French, German or Russian). We kindly inform you that simultaneous interpretation to the official languages will mainly be available in the plenary sessions.

4. Procedure and deadline for delegates

On the basis of the Constitution of the Conference of European Churches and as indicated in our letter dated 12 April 2017 your church is entitled to appoint delegate(s). We kindly ask you to complete the attachments (list of delegate(s) and form for each delegate) and return them to the General Secretariat **by 31 October 2017** to the following email address: assembly@cec-kek.be.

Organisational details, the programme of the Assembly as well as information concerning the online registration procedure, will be forwarded to the delegates directly following the above deadline.

5. Financial information

5.1 Registration Fee and Conference Fee

Delegates' full package price for the General Assembly is 775 EUR/person which consists of the following:

- Registration Fee – 150 EUR
- Food Fee (full board, coffee breaks, special dinner, water) – 250 EUR
- Accommodation (including local taxes) – 375 EUR (62.50 EUR/night x 6 night)

Member Churches will be invoiced according to the above rates before the General Assembly.

5.2 Travel arrangements and costs

Travel to and from Belgrade Nikola Tesla Airport must be arranged by delegates. Travel costs by any means must be covered by delegates or their Member Churches. Transfer between Belgrade Airport and Novi Sad will be arranged and covered by CEC.

5.3 Request for subsidies

The costs should not be an obstacle to attending the General Assembly. Should your Church require financial assistance, please indicate it on the attached form. The budget that is available for subsidies is applicable on three levels: food, accommodation, and travel costs. The registration fee of 150 EUR is not subject to financial assistance.

5.4 Solidarity fund

As with previous Assemblies, an appeal will be made for Member Churches to help finance the participation of delegates who, if they do not receive further financial assistance, might not be able to participate in the General Assembly.

6. Nomination of Member Church Advisors

A participant category has been established by the Governing Board to make it available for Member Churches to nominate and send a Member Church Delegation Advisor as a non-voting participant. The aim of this participation is to provide expert support for the delegation. Due to the high number of overall participants, capacity in this category is limited to 15 people. Member Churches can indicate their willingness to nominate advisors by sending an email to the General Secretary upon which a nomination form will be sent. The Governing Board will confirm this category of participants by considering other relevant balances.

Member Church Advisors are not entitled to subsidies; their full costs (registration fee, accommodation, full board, coffee breaks, and special events) will be invoiced to the delegating Member Church (see 5.1.).

7. Youth at the General Assembly

An important feature of the 2018 General Assembly is to enable young people of the Member Churches to be involved in shaping the future of CEC. A youth programme will include a youth pre-assembly event and a substantial stewards' programme. The youth pre-assembly event (29-31 May 2018) will involve

young delegates, stewards and other young participants. Your church is kindly invited to encourage and suggest young people to send their application to the stewards' programme. Further details of the youth programme as well as instructions for the application procedure of the stewards' programme, will be provided by October 2017 through our CEC and General Assembly websites.

8. Hosting by local churches

The 2018 General Assembly will take place at the invitation and the support of the Holy Synod of the Serbian Orthodox Church and its diocese of Bačka. They offer significant support in the organisation, local coordination for the planning, implementation and follow up phases of the General Assembly. Together with other local Member Churches of CEC they will take an active part in the life of the General Assembly, including hosting Sunday worship.

The General Assembly enjoys important and substantial support from the Ministry of Justice of the Government of Serbia, the Autonomous Province of Vojvodina, and the City of Novi Sad.

9. General Assembly Website

A website dedicated to the General Assembly will be designed and launched by October. The CEC website will also be updated with General Assembly news.

Please do not hesitate to contact us for further information:

Szabolcs Lörincz, Assembly Coordinator
Charlie Belot, Assembly Assistant

Conference of European Churches

174 Rue Joseph II

B-1000 Brussels

BELGIUM

Tel.: +32 2 230 17 32

Fax: +32 2 231 14 13

Email: assembly@cec-kek.be

Looking forward to our common endeavours towards the 2018 General Assembly, shaping the future of the Conference of European Churches.

With greetings in Christ Jesus,



*Right Rev. Christopher Hill KCVO, DD
President of CEC*



*Very Rev. Fr Heikki Theodoros Huttunen
General Secretary of CEC*

Enclosed:

- List of delegate(s)
- Form for each delegate