



GENSEC-2017-075
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Conference of European Churches General Secretariat

To: **National Councils of
Churches**

Brussels, 25 July 2017

Sisters and Brothers in Christ,

“You shall be my witnesses”

The Conference of European Churches has the joy and honour of inviting its Member Churches, National Councils of Churches, Organisations in Partnership, and other partners, with this passage from Acts 1:7-8 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 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.

Therefore, we would like to invite you to the 2018 General Assembly of the Conference of European Churches.

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

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1. NCC status at the General Assembly

Regarding the National Councils of Churches (NCC) and their participation in the General Assembly, the Constitution stipulates the following:

"National Councils of Churches are the ecumenical instruments through which Churches engage nationally, and they shall each be invited to send a representative to attend the General Assembly without voting rights" CEC Constitution Article 5(2).

The National Councils of Churches are indispensable and permanent partners to the Conference of European Churches in our common mission to serve the European Churches in the ecumenical movement. The NCC network widens and deepens in a unique way the possibilities of CEC to reach its constituency, and churches and organisations beyond it. The NCCs also offer competence and expertise that complement the work of CEC in an important way. For the Conference of European Churches, it is a high priority to develop this partnership and common action to the benefit of all constituents. With this in view, the Conference of European Churches invites you to ensure your participation at the General Assembly through the process outlined below.

Representation at the General Assembly expresses in an institutional way the high value the CEC Constitution places in the relationship with the NCCs. For purposes of definition, it is therefore necessary that this relation be recorded through a minimum of formality between the Conference of European Churches and each National Council of Churches. Therefore the Governing Board of CEC has at its meeting in June 2016 proposed a text as a basis for a Memorandum of Understanding with the National Councils of Churches. This can be developed to suit the needs and structures of both CEC and each NCC. A proposed text has been sent to the NCCs for their consideration. Some NCCs have responded formally, presenting their agreement and/or their proposals for changes in the text, while others have so far responded in an informal way or not at all. For CEC to register the representatives of the NCCs in a constitutionally indisputable way, we ask each NCC to give their response as to the feasibility of the text, eventual corrections to it, or proposals for an alternative approach. These responses will be presented to the Governing Board of CEC, which can then confirm each agreement and establish the list of NCCs whose representatives are part of the CEC General Assembly. This process is intended as a most flexible one, not imposing one formula of agreement to all. The proposed text of the Memorandum of Understanding is attached. The deadline for the responses of the NCCs is **31 October 2017**.

We are pleased to communicate to you the following further information about the General Assembly:

2. Dates and venue

The General Assembly will be held from **31 May - 6 July 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 participants of the General Assembly in due course.

3. Participation

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

4. Representation

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 National Councils of Churches will only appoint one representative, the Governing Board trusts that they will take into account the ecumenical principles of fair representation.**

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

5. Procedure and deadline for Representatives

Upon settlement of the status of your Council with CEC, you are kindly asked to complete the attached form for your representative and return it to the General Secretariat by **15 December 2017** to the following email address: assembly@cec-kek.be

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

6. Financial information

6.1 Registration Fee and Conference Fee

The full package price for the General Assembly is 775 EUR/person which consists of the followings:

- 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)

The amounts indicated will be invoiced preceding the Assembly.

6.2 Travel arrangements and costs

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

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 council 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 Assembly news.

Please do not hesitate to contact us for further information:

Szabolcs Lőrincz, Assembly Coordinator
Charlie Belot, Assembly Assistant

Conference of European Churches

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BELGIUM

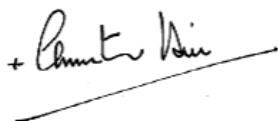
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Looking forward to our common endeavours towards the 2018 General Assembly, shaping the future of the Conference of European Churches.

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:

- Form for your representative
- Memorandum of Understanding