

# Conference of European Churches Governing Board

Brussels, 22-24 November 2018

## General Secretary's Report

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## 1. CEC 2018-2023

The Conference of European Churches is on the threshold of a new phase. The main item on the agenda of this Governing Board meeting is to discuss and approve the general work programme of CEC for the next years. This is a demanding task, due to the many expectations and the need to match them to the resources at our disposal, as well as the relation of the various on-going CEC programmes to new ideas and demands. CEC needs a comprehensive vision of its work for the period until the next General Assembly, so that the way forward can be lived out as a common journey, a response to the ecumenical calling, following Christ.

The Novi Sad General Assembly – and the proxy general assembly with the Belgian notary public on 5 October – concluded the demanding reform process that started at the 2009 Lyon General Assembly. The Novi Sad General Assembly was a success in terms of the gathering itself, the encounter, togetherness, sharing and common prayer. The European churches have the need and the will to stay together. This is clear from the evaluations undertaken during the weeks immediately after the event. Weaknesses have also been identified. The deliberative part of the programme, especially committee work, was not allocated adequate time in the GA programme. The need to reduce the size of the assembly, in comparison to previous CEC General Assemblies, led to the necessity to decline offers of workshops and exhibitions by ecumenical partners and requests of visits by youth and adult groups from European churches, thus impeding the networking and pastoral functions of a unique event in a unique setting. A deeper question concerns the ecumenical agenda. It was evident that churches did not bring their urgent concerns to be debated and supported by this international ecumenical forum, in the same way as previously. This may have depended on the way discussion of public issues was prepared in the General Assembly. But it can also be a sign of a change in the importance given to ecumenical assemblies and the state of social and political debate in the churches.

To achieve a strengthened sense of togetherness and cooperation, it is recommended that we envisage the work of CEC as a whole until the 2023 General Assembly. A general theme for our work during this period will help in this, and it can also be taken into account in General Assembly planning. Individual projects would need to be considered with a two-year perspective, while adequate flexibility is left for responding to unforeseen political and ecclesial situations.

In the staff reports below, a number of projects for 2019 are mentioned. They are decided by the previous GB, or authorised by the President and the General Secretary due to preparation and fund raising reasons. The most important one of them is the Peace Conference (**see Appendix A**). There is also a GB decision to establish a CEC Peace Force (**see Appendix B**) during the new mandate period.

The 2023 General Assembly of the Conference of European Churches will happen in a context of ecumenical partnerships. It will be preceded by the unique event of a World Council of Churches (WCC) General Assembly in Europe – in 2021 in Karlsruhe, Germany, hosted by the Church of Baden and the Evangelical Church in Germany (EKD) with the other German churches. The CEC General Assembly itself will be an event of partnership, as it is to be held jointly with the Churches' Commission for Migrants in Europe (CCME), as stipulated by the agreement of our two organisations.

## 2. Staff process after the General Assembly

Immediately after the GA evaluation forms were sent to all participants, communications team and staff. The feedback was analysed in the course of July-August and is reported to the Governing Board in the relevant document.

On 21 June the in-house process to analyse and develop the results of the General Assembly was initiated in an all staff meeting with the newly elected President, Rev. Christian Krieger. On 4-5 July the staff Collegium (executive staff) continued the evaluation and planned the process to prepare a work plan proposal to the Governing Board. On 3 September the Collegium discussed written reflections by the executive staff on the GA results. It implied evaluation of the GA experience and visioning the future. As a result, work areas for the future were identified. On 10-11 September, the annual all-staff retreat was held at the Maredret Abbey in Belgian Ardennes. Here the evaluation of the GA experience was visited in a broad way, concentrating on learning for the future, and reflections on the planning of the future work. The emphasis was on the development of the staff team and our work together. On 1 October the Collegium, based on work areas identified in its previous meeting, and targets developed in documents prepared by the colleagues, discussed further themes, and identified programmatic priorities for 2019-2023. The programme areas were finalised in the Collegium on 22-23 October and discussed with the President on 6 November. The staff discussion took into consideration the letter by the President to the GB, outlining programmatic areas and soliciting reflections and ideas. The proposal to the GB was finalised by the President and the General Secretary, on the basis of these discussions and the staff work.

## 3. CEC events

The bi-annual Assembly of the **European Christian Environmental Network (ECEN)** on 6-10 October was held in the Polish mining city of Katowice. The Assembly celebrated ECEN's 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary, and proved to be an important event in more than one way. The high level expertise represented in the ECEN network allows for a timely and focused discussion on the urgent environmental challenges facing humanity. Thus CEC is able to link its constituency with this area where information and understanding are indispensable for the churches politically, socially and pastorally. ECEN also provides a forum for necessary exchanges between theology natural sciences and global politics. ECEN is a good example of a network within CEC connecting church actors, NGOs and academics. Its membership is broader than CEC's. Katowice is the venue for the United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP24) this December, and CEC is involved in coordinating the church presence at the summit.

The annual meeting of **European National Councils of Churches (NCCs)** took place on 24-27 September in Vienna, Austria. It is an important network of collegiality and sharing for the NCC general secretaries, who in most cases are working as the only employees. This time the themes were freedom of religion in the European situation and the results of the Novi Sad General Assembly of CEC. The General Secretary and the Secretary for Theological Dialogue Katerina Pekridou contributed to the discussion. Most NCCs include the Roman Catholic Church in their membership, thus making this network broader than the CEC constituency.

#### 4. Member Church events and other contacts

The General Secretary together with the President and the Study Secretary Dr. Peter Pavlovic participated in the first **Joint Celebration of Season of Creation** as an ecumenical event in Assisi on 30 August to 1 September. It was hosted by the recently started Global Catholic environmental movement.

CEC was represented with a high profile in the **General Assembly of the Community of Protestant Churches in Europe (CPCE)** on 13-18 September in Basel, Switzerland. The CEC President Rev. Christian Krieger delivered the official greeting in the plenary session, while the General Secretary, the Secretary for Theological Dialogue, and the CPCE-seconded Executive Secretary Frank-Dieter Fischbach also participated in the deliberations of the General Assembly. The theme of the General Assembly was *Liberated, Connected, Committed*. CPCE approved new programmatic emphases, which offer possibilities for enhanced cooperation with CEC. The General Secretaries of the two organisations are negotiating the profile of the CPCE-seconded Executive Secretary in CEC, as a new person will be recruited for this position in 2019, after the departure of Frank-Dieter Fischbach at the end of his contract.

The *Uspenskie chtenia* (Dormition readings) annual ecumenical seminar was hosted by the Petro Mohyla Academy on 17-18 September in Kyiv, Ukraine. It offered the General Secretary the possibility to discuss the ecclesial and political situation in the country with domestic and international experts, just before the decisions regarding the Ukrainian autocephaly were made public. He also visited the external relations department of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of the Moscow Patriarchate.

The annual general assembly of the **German Council of Churches** (*Arbeitsgemeinschaft Christlicher Kirchen in Deutschland e. V., ACK*) in Ludwigshafen offered the General Secretary an opportunity to meet representatives of Member Churches in the context of one of the active NCC partners. He spoke to the assembly about the results of the Novi Sad General Assembly and the planning of the work ahead.

The **General Assembly of Act Alliance** was held in Uppsala, Sweden, 28 Oct to 2 Nov. After its formational years Act Alliance seems ready to take seriously the criticism directed to its eventual distance from church realities in local situations and in international ecumenical relations. The assembly was an opportunity for the General Secretary to network with European and global partners, such the Moscow Patriarchate and other Regional Ecumenical Organisations, in particular the All Africa Conference of Churches and the Middle East Council of Churches.

The **Executive Committee of the World Council of Churches** met in conjunction with the Act Alliance in the same city, on 2 to 8 November. This became a worthy commemoration of the Uppsala General Assembly of the WCC in 1968, which opened an important new stage in the development of the Ecumenical Movement. The General Secretary participated in these celebrations hosted by the Church of Sweden and the Swedish Christian Council.

## 5. Staff reports June to November 2018

### 5.1 Executive Secretary for Theological Dialogue, Katerina Pekridou

- June 2018: Ecumenical Theological Education Programme, WCC. Contribution to the second meeting of the Network of Institutions of Higher Ecumenical Theological Education (NIHETE): Global Ecumenical Theological Institute (GETI) 2018 in Tanzania follow-up; Reflection on the network's contribution to the WCC Assembly in 2021
- August 2018: Ecumenical Forum of European Christian Women General Assembly, offered workshop on migration and ecclesiology, led world café theme on migration
- August 2018 Societas Oecumenica: Concluding Paper on migration and ecclesiology and the dialogue between 'mainline', and Evangelical and Pentecostal Churches.
- September 2018: European National Councils of Churches (ENCC) meeting: Presentation on Interreligious dialogue and the responses to the Charta Oecumenica – Additional work on the compilation of responses
- Global Forum of Theological Educators: finalisation of planning of the second meeting on 'Theological Learning and Formation: Vision and Viability in Contexts' that will take place in May 2019
- International Association for Mission Studies: finalisation of Europe Conference 'Locating European missions in a wounded world in deep transformation' that will take place in August 2019
- Until November 2018: CEC Peace Conference 2019
- November 2018: Pro Oriente Working group on Catholic-Orthodox Dialogue, Contribution to future directions of ecumenical dialogue
- March 2019: European Academy of Religion, Joint Panel with Volos Academy for Theological Studies on 'Migration and Global Citizenship'
- March 2019: Colloquium on Justification, Institut Catholique de Paris, paper presentation on Justification and Sanctification
- Ongoing: WCC-CEC Joint publication on the Pilgrimage of Justice and Peace.

## Preparatory discussions on future programme

The necessity for CEC to develop a programme that brings the areas of ecclesiology and mission together was highlighted anew during the 2016 joint Consultation of CEC and CCME on 'Migration and Ecclesiology' in Denmark that was held with the participation of the Faith and Order Director. During the Consultation, it became clear that it is necessary to take note of the change of ecclesial landscape in Europe and have an in-depth comparative study of ecclesiologies of 'mainline' churches and ecclesiologies of Evangelical and Pentecostal churches. A focused European project on the different understandings of Church and divisive ecclesiological questions could be of assistance to the Member Churches and would be welcomed as an enrichment of the multilateral dialogue. Inevitably, such a project needs to include questions of nation/state-church relations, but also an analysis of concepts of mission and evangelism that are defining characteristics of the Evangelical and Pentecostal churches. The Global Christian Forum has initiated a study process on perceptions of evangelism and the question of proselytism. CEC should engage with this process and provide responses from the perspective of its Member Churches. Making mission visible in CEC work again is welcomed by a variety of Member Churches and also partners who stress that mission reflection is needed for Churches to respond to contemporary challenges, such as secularisation and the re-evangelisation of Europe. Several mission organisations expressed their willingness to support CEC's work in this area. In 2016 CEC was asked by the International Association of Mission Studies Europe Desk to coordinate a European network on mission studies, but was unable to take it up.

The urgency of work in the area of interreligious dialogue, especially with regard to ongoing migration, is often emphasised by a variety of CEC dialogue partners. A series of meetings sponsored by WCC in 2017 with the participation of major partners such as the Lutheran World Federation, Churches Together in Britain and Ireland, the Vatican, CCME and several CEC Member Churches, stressed the need for Churches in Europe to coordinate their work in this area. CEC was asked to lead a network of church officers responsible for interfaith work, and organise a major conference on interreligious dialogue featuring church leaders active in this area in Europe. However, the General Assembly preparations prevented CEC from participating in such an initiative.

### 5.2 Executive Secretary Sören Lenz, CEC Strasbourg office

#### Conference of the Churches on the Rhine (KKR)

- Working on an illustrated guide for young persons to understand better World War I. PDF Edition in French and English: <http://www.itinerairesprotestants.fr/1918-le-centenaire>

#### Council of Europe:

- Council of Europe: *Steering Committee for Human Rights* (CCDH):
- Attending the Meetings of the Steering Committee as well as the meetings of

the Bioethics Steering Committee

- Monitoring and following up the question of the “Additional Oviedo Protocol on involuntary Treatment and Placement of mentally disordered persons” which includes as well the hearing of the Social affairs committee on this issue.
- Attending the workshop: “Promotion of Human Rights of older persons”
- Meeting of *the Conference of International Non-Governmental Organisations* (INGOs) of the Council of Europe (25-29 June 2018)
- Moderation of the colloquy on “Homosexuality and Church” co-organized by the Faculty of theology, Thessaloniki and the Council of Europe
- Attending the colloquy on poverty organized by the Conference of INGOs. Concerns especially the *European Social Charter*.
- Attending the *Steering Committee on Practices and Policy of Education* (CPPE) meeting – Themes: Populism, History teaching, Competences for a Democratic Culture

### European Parliament

- Networking and participation at Prayer meetings and side events

### CEC

- *Thematic Reference Group* (TRG) meeting on education – summary of the work in the last five years
- Participation in Summer School Human Rights - moderation
- Representing CEC at *Oikosnet Europe* General Assembly in Crete. *Oikosnet* is an organisation in partnership and is known as *Ecumenical Association of Academies and Laity centre*. <http://www.oikosnet.eu/>
- Leading a workshop on the concept of diversity
- Lecture on “Competences of Democratic culture” at the Klingenthal colloquy organised by the *Coordinating Group for Religion in Education in Europe* (CoGREE) and the *COMENIUS Institute*, Münster. (See Appendix C)
- Kirchentag: working in the “Projektleitung Europa” for the Kirchentag in Dortmund 2018

### Diverse

- Several church groups welcomed in Strasbourg – presentation of the work of

CEC and the challenges for Churches in Europe

- Organisation of a meeting for the Lutheran Bishops of Berlin-Brandenburg and Baden with the *Intergovernmental Directorate of Human Rights* at the Council of Europe (DGI DH)

### **5.3 Executive Secretary on Employment and Social Issues, Frank-Dieter Fischbach**

- After Novi Sad I was very much involved in the preparations for the 8th General Assembly of CPCE in Basel, 13-18 September 2018.
- But together with the Commission of the Bishops' Conferences of the European Union (COMECE) I work on the preparation and organisation of the common conference on the future of work, 27 November. (See Appendix D)
- This will be accompanied by a pre-meeting of the Church Action on Labour and Life (CALL) network coordination team on Monday, 26 November, which also has to be prepared.
- In the European Sunday Alliance, we have started to organise a conference in 1st half 2019 around the European Parliament elections May 2019. This conference shall take place in Brussels, in the European Parliament.
- Finally, another part of my work is now to close my work projects and to ensure an adequate transfer from my side to the CEC General Secretariat.

### **5.4 Executive Secretary for Human Rights, Elizabeta Kitanovic**

- Since the CEC Assembly – The Thematic Reference Group on Human Rights has organised the Summer School on Human Rights – Populism, Religious Freedom and Theology in Malaga gathering around 40 participants, which included:
  - Staff from the United Nations (Geneva and New York) and Council of Europe
  - Jewish and Muslim partners such as the European Jewish Congress, Forum of European Muslim Youth and Student Organisations, Scottish Ahlul Bayt Society
- Video on religious freedom and populism is in the pipeline.



- The outcome of Zagreb conference – editing process of book on the Rights of Religious Minorities in Europe was send to printer. The book will be printed by mid of December. Promotion of the book will be done in January 2019.
- Editing process of the Human Rights Training Manual Vol II progressed. The editorial team had several conferences and clarification process continued. The idea is that the long-term editing process is closed by December 2018 and that the book is printed in the first half of 2019.
- In August the planning committee meeting took place in Brussels in order to continue reflection on the conference program related to human rights violations situation in the Middle East. Several CEC Member Churches requested before and during the CEC Assembly discussion on the human rights situation in the Middle East. The conference will take place in Cumberland Lodge from 14-16 December 2018. The outcome should be policy paper which should represent policy input for the European Union and other international organisations. Part of my time was used for the finalisation of the fundraising support for this project. (See Appendix E)
- Preparation of the event on 5th December at Chapel of Resurrection in Brussels – Human Rights within the European Union – CEC marks 70th Anniversary of Universal Declaration on Human Rights. There will be discussion on violation of religious freedom laws in Croatia, Spain, Cyprus and Bulgaria.
- Preparation of the Dialogue Seminar at the EP on Human Rights within the EU – 4th December.
- Preparation of the support letter via European Platform Against Religious Intolerance and Discrimination (EPRID) for the prolongation of the mandate of the EU Special Rapporteur
- Preparation of the fundraising applications for 2019. Project proposals discussed by the Thematic Reference Group on Human Rights:
  - Conference on Religious Freedom and Populism – What churches should do? Madrid, Spain 2019
  - Summer School on Human Rights – Hate Crime, Portugal 2019
  - Youth Human Rights Dialogue – Cypriot Greeks and Cypriot Turks visiting European Union Institutions - Brussels

- Preparation of the CEC visits to the capitals and European Union and Council of Europe related to human rights violations in:
  - Montenegro
  - Bulgaria
  - Spain
- Editing the book on the Access to the Worship Place and Holy Sites, outcome of the Cyprus conference 2017.
- Bulgaria: The draft law which passed in first reading in parliament on October 11, 2018 has implications on the funding and financial management of religious communities as well as on the training and appointing of clergy. Should the law pass, existing theological seminaries are at risk of shutting down, religious communities may no longer be able to conduct worship services, and the acceptance and use of donations will be subject to government approval and limitations. It puts unjustified and disproportionate restrictions on the right to freedom of religion or belief and is in direct violations of the democratic principles enshrined in Bulgaria's constitution and in the legislation of the European Union, of which Bulgaria is a member since 2007. In general it is not in line with all international documents on freedom of religion or belief. As Bulgarian Methodist and Baptist Churches are member of CEC, CEC took several advocacy actions on basis of their request. (see **Appendix F**)

### **5.5 Study Secretary Peter Pavlovic, Economic and Ecological justice**

- Participation and contribution to the programme of the WCC working group on climate change.
- Preparation of churches' activities during the United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP24) including coordination of activities with the WCC and churches in Poland, member churches of the Ecumenical Council of Churches in Poland and Roman Catholic archdiocese in Katowice.
- Human rights summer school: contribution to the programme and presentation freedom, religion, ecology – mutual relationships and dependencies
- Joint celebration of Season of Creation in the ecumenical event in Assisi with participation of Presidents and General Secretaries of CEC and the Council of European Bishops' Conferences (CCEE)
- European Christian Environmental Network Assembly 2018 under the theme: On the

way to economic and ecological justice' in Katowice (Poland). The Assembly hosted 85 participants from 22 countries. The conference document highlights the reaction to the report of Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change: 'As we met in Katowice the United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) published the report Global Warming of 1.5°C setting out what would be needed to limit global warming to 1.5°C and the impacts of failing to do so. Limiting global warming to 1.5°C will require rapid, far reaching and unprecedented changes in all aspects of society. To avoid dangerous climate change and to achieve the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals a fundamental shift must start today.

In another twenty years, if we have not taken effective action to reduce greenhouse gas emissions global warming will not only exceed 1.5°C but also 2°C. This will happen if the parties of the Paris Agreement do not show higher ambition than is evident today. We are now informed and we have no excuses! Also as people of faith we have a moral obligation to put the most vulnerable first in our calling to heal the earth. The theme of the ECEN Assembly is "To give you a future with hope". It is not an option to ignore the science nor to become paralysed by fear. .... To give life on earth a future with hope we must act now.'

The final statement of the conference is attached. (See Appendix G )

## 5.6 Report of the activities of the Assembly Coordinator

In my short report I would like to highlight my main activities since the Novi Sad General Assembly in June.

- Follow-up and thank you letters drafted and sent to the following addressees (alphabetical order:  
Assembly Committee members, APC members, Assembly Staff members, Assembly Worship Committee members, Bible Study leaders, Choir director, Communication staff, Co-opted staff members, Donating churches, Future of Europe Plenary speakers, Host churches, Hotels in Novi Sad, Interpreters, Keynote speakers, Keynote Respondent speakers, Legal advisors, Local coordinator, Local team members, Minute takers, Moderators, Opening Worship speakers, Master Congress Centre, Pastoral Care group members, Serbian Institutional sponsors, Sisters of Kac, Corporate sponsors, Special Guests, Workshop Facilitators, Youth speakers)
- Technical closure of the General Assembly including the following elements:
  - Clarification of participation details and services used with all the Novi Sad hotels.

- Closure of service contracts with hotels, catering service providers, equipment and hardware providers, transportation agencies
- Transportation and storage of remained office materials, publications.
- Review and transfer of all pending payments regarding Assembly issues
- Launching and concluding the Assembly evaluation process (July-September):
  - Feedback form distributed to Assembly Staff
  - Feedback form distributed to Participants
  - Analysis and conclusions of the feedbacks
  - Evaluation in the Collegium
  - Evaluation, conclusions in the Staff Retreat in Maredret
- Evaluation meetings with:
  - The Local Coordinator and Local Team
  - Corporate sponsors
  - Co-opted Geneva staff
- Supervision and clarification of the GA finances
  - sending out invoices to participants
  - tracking pending/unpaid invoices
  - checking all cost figures and proper allocation in the budget frame
  - preparing expenditure details for donor reporting
  - preparation of budget report for the Finance Committee meeting
- Drafting proposal for fundraising concept for CEC
- Taking part in the Strategic Planning Process discussions within the Collegium

## **5.7 Communication Coordinator**

### **Erin Green**

- Developed work plan, organised work between Communication Coordinator and Communication Assistant
- Started our media and communicators contacts list from scratch, updated and developed the contacts lists
- Implemented media and social media monitoring
- Added press section to the website
- Addressed GDPR compliance for communications, including mailing lists and website privacy policy, and signed agreements from third-party vendors
- Achieved about half of our branding project, including new roll up banners, power

point template, and letterhead

- Restructured the communications section of the company drive
- Developed guidelines for press releases and social media
- Established partnership with the World Association for Christian Communication and Evangelical Lutheran Church in Finland for April 2019 communicators gathering
- Started networking with Brussels based journalists and communicators
- Developed and implemented a media sheet for CEC events that helps participants share news from our conferences and workshops
- Relaunched the weekly news and updated it with a new layout and upcoming events
- Participated in gathering of Lutheran communicators
- Provided regular communication support for CEC and CCME events, including the assembly of the European Christian Environmental Network
- Produced video message for Season of Creation
- Attended to a number of technical and routine things (e.g., merging duplicate YouTube accounts, reordering print resources, dealt with hosting and domain issues)
- Invested quite a bit of time into redoing the book of CEC Member Churches. This included verifying all names in English of the churches, many of which were incorrect. Confirming with nearly all churches which languages for their name they want included, checking translations, reorganising the book, working with a graphic designer on a new layout that is easier to read.
- Edited the latest publication for CEC Globethics series from the Zagreb Human Rights event
- Developed new proposal for Annual Report
- Moved assembly documents and website hosting.

### **Plans for 2019**

- Website redevelopment. Our site is old and it needs a refresh.
- Invest time in building relationships with people and networks who can contribute to CEC communications.
- Plan the April communicators gathering

- Contribute to a World Association for Christian Communication and Churches' Commission for Migrants in Europe project relating to refugees and social media
- Annual Report
- Grow newsletter subscriptions and social media
- Regular communications work including event support

## 6. Dialogue with European Institutions

Dialogue with the European Institutions takes place both in Brussels and in Strasbourg, both through formal dialogue events and in the context of ongoing work in many areas. The dialogue of the European Union with churches and religious associations or communities in the Member States is prescribed in the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU) Lisbon Treaty, Article 17: *Recognising their identity and their specific contribution, the Union shall maintain an open, transparent and regular dialogue with these churches and organisations.* The specific dialogue takes the form of high level religious leaders' meetings with the leadership of the EU and thematic dialogue seminars.

The contacts to the EU Institutions are coordinated on the Member Churches' behalf by CEC and the Commission of the Catholic Bishops' Conferences in the European Union (COMECE). It requires high political and thematic competence in a wide range of issues. It is a priority for CEC to involve representatives from Member Churches in different parts of Europe, with differing ecclesial, social and political experience, while the invitation comes from the EU Commission and Parliament. The fact that our European countries relate differently to the EU and the so-called European project – at the core, in the margin, entering, leaving and not joining – requires ever more reflection in CEC. Although the dialogue with churches and religious communities is prescribed in the TFEU, each Commission defines the organizational position and the political importance of this dialogue according to its particular interpretation. With the European elections in the spring of 2019, and the subsequent appointment of the Commission and the Parliamentary leadership, also this dialogue and its political position will be defined anew.

CEC has great potential as a recognised International Non-Governmental Organisation in the Council of Europe, where all the 40 countries with CEC Member Churches are members. The continuous challenge is to develop our competence in the European Institutions and to provide the information and expertise that our Member Churches need.

A **seminar on social equality** was organised on 26 June by the European Parliament in Brussels. Speakers invited from the CEC constituency were HE Metropolitan Ignatios of

Dimitrias of the Church of Greece Rev. Daniel Topalski of the United Methodist Church in Bulgaria. The dialogue is coordinated by the First Vice President of the Parliament, Ms. Mairead McGuinness.

**Seminar on the rights of minorities** on 4 December in the European Parliament. From the CEC constituency, HE Metropolitan Porfirije of Zagreb, of the Serbian Orthodox Church in Croatia, Rev. Marta López Ballalta, Vice President of the Spanish Evangelical Church, have been invited.

**Meeting with high level religious leaders** hosted by the First Vice President of the European Commission Mr. Frans Timmermans. The discussion was around European values and the upcoming elections. From the CEC constituency, Metropolitan Athanasios of Achaia, permanent representative of the Church of Greece to the EU, Rt. Rev. Dr. Robert Innes, Bishop of Gibraltar in Europe of the Church of England, Bishop Dr. Frank July of the Evangelical Church of Württemberg (EKD), CEC President Rev. Christian Krieger, were invited. The invitations are issued by the Commission, on behalf of the First Vice President, upon consultation with CEC and COMECE, and church representations in Brussels. It should be noted that this time, mainly due to the short notice, it was not possible to involve church representatives from outside of Brussels. Also, the entire company of religious leaders was male.

Several CEC Member Churches have permanent representations in Brussels for contacts with EU institutions – Church of Cyprus, Ecumenical Patriarchate, Church of England, Evangelical Church in Germany (EKD), Church of Greece, and the Romanian Orthodox Church. The Committee of the Orthodox representations (CROCEU) as well as the Community of Protestant Churches (CPCE), who is represented through CEC, are **interested in raising their profile vis-à-vis the Institutions**. CEC has the task to find a balance between this intention of the Member Churches and its task to coordinate a unified and effective dialogue of the churches with the EU and Council of Europe Institutions.

## 7. Towards unified action

In planning the new programmes of CEC after the General Assembly it has become evident that we face the challenge of two kinds of balances: change and continuity, and expertise and wholeness. Not much has changed in CEC style or content in the reform – the Brussels operation (Church and Society) has not been essentially complemented or transformed by the Geneva working style (Churches in Dialogue and General Secretariat). We need to move out from the box of habitual work styles and customary networks towards more agility and inter-connectedness. We have the opportunity to renew our conventional inductive method, which leads to analytic but separate impact, by transforming it with a more holistic ecumenical approach, which leads to synthesis and comprehensive, more durable change.

Contemporary evolutionary biology says that evolution is a result of the ability to

cooperate and combine, not the violent competition of the fittest individuals. We need to invest in inclusivity and togetherness in order to be true to our ecumenical calling, both in method and content. The aim of this Governing Board work on the programme 2018-2023 is to assist the birth of a new phase, corresponding to the needs of the churches and the ecumenical mission of hope and witness today, following Christ.



## Conference of European Churches (CEC)

### Thematic Reference Group Peacebuilding & Reconciliation

#### Proposed Peace Conference in 2019

##### Introduction

The envisaged CEC conference on the commemoration of World War I did not, for various reasons, materialise in 2014 and 2016 as was originally planned.

The CEC Thematic Reference Group Peacebuilding & Reconciliation agreed that there was still enormous potential for a significant peace conference in 2019 with a twin focus on the Paris Peace Conference of 1919 and the current global and European situation.

There are important lessons to be learned. Our discussions have led us to recognise that we cannot ignore the past, but are responsible for how we remember it. Our memories have a profound impact on the present and furthermore shape future actions and our common life in the Europe of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

The proposed 2019 CEC Peace Conference will reflect on the past as well as provide greater understanding for the context in which we live today. Reconciliation for peace as desired and as experienced in the different churches of CEC can then become the leitmotif for CEC in its wider engagement in society.

Historically CEC's calling has also been one of reconciliation and peacebuilding. It has 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. The context is fragile and CEC is once again called to respond appropriately to the challenges to peace and security in Europe, demonstrating its common Christian voice.

##### Background and consequences of the Paris Peace Conference 1919

The First World War resulted in the end of a world order. The map of Europe was redrawn as was much of the map of the world. Much of the world came to Paris in 1919 to try and construct a new world order, and after the most destructive war in history, to perhaps grasp a second chance to end war. High hopes were to be disappointed as much of the promise of Paris was unfulfilled. The Paris Peace Conference met in the shadow of unspeakable human loss.

A key theme, introduced largely by US President Woodrow Wilson, was the right of small nations to self-determination. The European sense of mission to civilise the world had collapsed, as had four of the six imperial powers, the remaining two, France and Great

Britain, coming to an end by the late 1950's or early 1960's. In Russia there had been the 1917 Revolution, no one yet knowing what would replace tsarism. The Ottoman Empire with its Middle East provinces and little bits of Europe was within the last years of its total collapse. Imperial Prussia-Germany was now a Republic. Old nations were re-emerging and new ones were struggling to be born. The Paris Conference had a thankless task, trying to recreate the international order and build peace without a road map.

The Conference was dominated by the United States of America and the European Allies, and a major impact was the humiliation of Germany through the imposition of a penal peace. Germany's old enemy, France, may have drawn immense satisfaction from the Treaty of Versailles, but within twenty years the world was at war again. Parisian hopes were unfilled because there was a failure to integrate the losers in peacebuilding. Russia was excluded, perhaps because the Allies did not want to recognise its survival and the direction it appeared to be taking. It was not to anyone's benefit that Russia developed in isolation after the Peace Conference.

The League of Nations was formed in Paris with the hope that an international body could secure and sustain world peace. This was the centrepiece of Paris, but Russia was excluded and though enthusiastically backed by President Wilson, the United States opted out of the League, having its own expansionist agenda.

The Paris Peace Conference 1919 gave mandates to France and Great Britain for the Middle East region. There was a crucial question as to how the former Ottoman provinces were to be governed. The Mandates were to be operated under the League but France and Great Britain ignored the League and carved up the region between them, shaping borders to their own purposes and imposing borders in the largely Arab region. Artificial States were created such as Syria, Lebanon, Trans-Jordan and Iraq. Later Saudi Arabia was constructed. Egypt was to be independent but the British remained until 1956. Palestine had the Balfour Declaration, promising Jews and Arabs different things with no attempt made as to how to resolve two competing nationalisms. Thanks to imperial borders, artificially created countries and double-think promises, it is not surprising that the 'explosive future' is still being played out in the Middle East. The conference at Paris was all about the spoils of war, not least because most of the world's petroleum lay under Muslim - inhabited soil. Paris was about mandatory empire!

Ethno-nationalism has never gone away and there is a resurgence in today's Europe. The Middle East carved out by two Western powers and currently the tinder box of the world, continues to experience Western intervention, but a West powerless to enable a resolution of its complex problems. The displaced of Syria, Iraq, Afghanistan and of other regions and countries are now fleeing to Europe and experience degrees of resistance to their arrival. Tackling migration from the Middle East will need collective wisdom, honest conversations. There will need to be transparent and sincere decision making of arms

exports to the region. Without changes to the current status quo the situation in the Middle East has the capacity to greatly weaken the European Union, a problem much greater than the Euro crisis.

The Paris Peace Conference 1919 has left many legacies. Much of its promise was unfulfilled. Its most destructive legacy has been the Middle East region and peace in today's world may largely depend on peace in the Middle East. In so far as it has a religious dimension, it involves the Abrahamic faiths, and there is a growing tension between Christianity and Islam, politically and media driven. Paris has bequeathed European politics and Churches with multiple and complex challenges and peace agendas.

### **CEC Peace Conference Objectives 2019**

We cannot ignore the past, but are responsible for how we remember it. Our memories have a profound impact on the present and furthermore shape future actions. Therefore the Conference:

- Will 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.
- Will identify the current threats to peace in Europe and the world and articulate the challenges presented by the global experiences of the 21st century.
- Will draw inspiration from CEC's role/work, since its creation, as an ecumenical instrument engaged with peacebuilding, healing of memories and reconciliation.
- Will robustly reflect theologically and ethically 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.
- Will develop appropriate resources for use by Member Churches and partners, so that there is greater recognition of our common Christian life in the Europe of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

### **Shaping the CEC Peace Conference 2019**

The Paris Peace Conference 1919 has left many legacies, not least in the Middle East region. Europe was involved 100 years ago and remains connected for good or ill for what happens in this region. European churches share the history of Europe and also have a role to play in the peace building processes within the global order and also with responsibilities and helping to shape more ethical foreign policies.

The Churches prophetic vocation is often to be a community of criticism, resistance and reform. Its role is driven and shaped by core prophetic faith values of justice, freedom, compassion and peace. Psalm 85 holds these values as integrated and indivisible, each needing the other and at times in tension with each other.

“God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself... and has given us the ministry of reconciliation...”. In the vision of St Paul reconciliation and peacebuilding are a participation in God’s mission in and for the world. Jesus declared the peacemakers the children of God, a Jewish way of describing the most God-like people. The Churches, therefore, are called to witness to and to the practice of peace. The Churches are also part of civil society and therefore engaged with public issues, such as, politics, international affairs, economics, globalization, environmental healing and human flourishing. Reconciliation and peace are therefore not private and individualistic pursuits. The witness to and the practice of peace is public and peace witness is public theology in action. As responsible actors in civil society the Churches do their theology and peacebuilding in the public arena. This is the response of God’s action to Christ, the living out of public theology and being responsible actors in civil society and in the international order.

A public Church accepts its share of responsibility for the spiritual wellbeing of its adherents and for the common good and wellbeing of society. It has a critical voice when necessary, envisioning an alternative world when required, and it articulates a hope-filled voice. It is local, European and global in its engagement.

The Conference will look back and will look forward. It will reflect on what happened in Paris a century ago as leaders try to recreate the world order. The Conference will also engage with the changing world order under way in the 21<sup>st</sup> century and in learning lessons from the past seek to avoid the mistakes and failures of the past as well as shape a contemporary strategy for the building of a new vision. Paris did produce many crucial themes with contemporary resonance. A number of these themes and, including challenges facing Member Churches will provide the focus for the Churches engaging with the challenges of peace in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

The following themes might offer a useful approach to the conference marking the centenary of the Paris Peace Conference 1919:

### **1. Paris 1919: Recreating The International Order?**

Much of the world came to Paris in 1919 to try and construct a new world order, after the most destructive war in history. Did Paris succeed, to what extent was it a thankless task or was much of the promise of Paris unfulfilled? It was to recreate the international order but whose order? What are the legacies of Paris that remain? (keynote address)

### **2. The West's Legacy in the Middle East**

The legacy of the Paris mandate is still with us in the Middle East with the crisis in Syria and Iraq and other regions and countries and the continuing volatile reality of Israel

Palestine. What responsibility does the Atlantic West have for the past, present and future? (seminar)

### **3. Populism, Sustainability and Economics**

Much of the 1919 Conference was about economics, which still dominate our concerns and efforts for peacebuilding. But can we construct just economics within the life of the world? Just economics are needed to address the ongoing challenges of economic migration, in order to create a more just world and healthy environment. What responses are required to increasing populism and the growth of new forms of nationalism? (seminar)

### **4. Threats to Global Peace and Learning from the Dark 20th Century**

In our struggle now to avoid war and build peace in Europe, have we, as Europeans, moved too quickly from the 20th Century without beginning to make sense of it? Have we really understood the dark 20th Century and learned painful lessons from it? What has been the role of the Conference of European Churches in peacebuilding and reconciliation since its creation, 60 years ago? (keynote address)

### **5. Europe's Peace Vocation in the Coming World Order**

The world order is changing. There is a current dynamic described as Easternisation as power and wealth moves from West to East, China in particular as the emerging super power. In the realignment of power blocs what is Europe's role in the coming world order? Has Europe a distinctive peace vocation and what might it look like? What is the Churches' role in helping to shape the peace vocation? Security has become an obsession in the 21st century and it seems to be a militarised form of security. Can this truly be described as peace? (peace forum)

### **6. The Abrahamic Religions and the Dialogue of Peace**

Much conflict in the world has a religious dimension but religion also has resources, deep resources for peacebuilding. No one religion by itself can build peace but peace in the world may depend mainly on peace between the Abrahamic traditions. This is especially true in a world where there are growing tensions between Christianity and Islam. An enhanced and sustained dialogue of peace between the Abrahamic traditions is an imperative of our time. (seminar)

### **7. Women and Peacebuilding**

Women's role in peacebuilding has not been recognised adequately. In a world where patriarchy dominates, men are considered to be the peacebuilders and to have the necessary capabilities for peacebuilding. Women nevertheless had and have an

important role in the prevention and resolution of conflict, peace negotiation, peacebuilding, peace keeping, humanitarian responses and post-conflict reconstruction. It is important that an equal participation and full involvement in all efforts for the maintenance and promotion of peace and security be recognised. (seminar)

### **8. The Public Role of European Churches in Peacebuilding and International Affairs**

Today there is serious thought being given to the role of religion in international diplomacy and affairs as well as its role in local and global peacemaking and peacebuilding. What does this change of direction mean for religion in international affairs? The Conference of European Churches and its Member Churches have a vocation to be active participants in God's mission of peacebuilding and reconciliation. The Conference of European Churches has also the public role of articulating a moral vision of peace. How can this public role be carried out? What actions are necessary or are called for? How can churches mobilise for peace work? (keynote address)

#### **CEC Peace Conference 2019 Methodology**

The conference will be exploring international and political experiences and challenges and then move towards robust theological reflection and action. This is about engaging theological reflection in context. The underpinning assumption is that God has not abandoned the world even with all its wars and violence. After naming the historical and current global challenges and the struggle for justice and peace we engage with theological reflection to apply theological ethics and identify actions.

Some of the above themes will be keynote presentations with others being processed in seminars.

#### **CEC Peace Conference 2019 Outcomes**

- Participants would be more critically aware of the legacy of the past and the legacy impact on contemporary relationships within Europe and the world.
- The capacity for participants to reflect theologically and ethically on a dark past and the major challenges within 21st century Europe and the world would be enhanced.
- CEC and Member Churches would be empowered to be mobilised and to become more actively engaged in a public role of positive peace building in contemporary Europe, especially through the proposed *Peace Task Force of the Conference of European Churches*.

## Conference of European Churches

### CEC Peace Conference 2019

#### Day 1 Naming the Past

##### ARRIVALS

Afternoon Optional: Experiencing the palace of Versailles where the Treaty of Versailles was signed on 28 June 1919.

19.00 – 20.00 Opening of the Conference

Words of Welcome by the President of CEC

(Role of the ecumenical movement in peace; CEC Peace Task Force)

Greetings by:

Political figure: Timmermans? / or ask President to indicate French politician

***Opening keynote address 'Paris 1919: Recreating The International Order?'*** Much of the world came to Paris in 1919 to try and construct a new world order, after the most destructive war in history. Did Paris succeed, to what extent was it a thankless task or was much of the promise of Paris unfulfilled? It was to recreate the international order but whose order? What are the legacies of Paris that remain?

To be invited: Prof. Margaret MacMillan (Johnston to send the contacts to Charlie), etc. Ask Johnston (Charlie to).

Perhaps a response by Sven Gigold or other politician?

20.00 – Dinner

#### Day 2 Understanding the Present

9.00 – 10.30 ***Seminar 1 'The West's Legacy in the Middle East'***. The legacy of the Paris mandate is still with us in the Middle East with the crisis in Syria and Iraq and other regions and countries and the continuing volatile reality of Israel Palestine. What responsibility does the Atlantic West have for the past, present and future?

Speaker: Send invitation to MECC, ask speaker to include reference to arms trade

***Seminar 2 'Populism, Sustainability and Economics'***. Much of the 1919 Conference was about economics, which still dominate our concerns and efforts for peacebuilding. But can we construct just economics within the life of the world? Just economics are needed to address the ongoing challenges of economic migration, in order to create a more just world and healthy environment. What responses are required to increasing populism and the growth of new forms of nationalism?

Speaker: From Bread for the World

10.30 – 11.15

Break

11.15 – 12.45

Seminar 2 and Seminar 1

12.45 – 14.30

Lunch

14.30 – 15.30

***Keynote Address 'Threats to Global Peace and Learning from the Dark 20<sup>th</sup> Century'***. In our struggle now to avoid war and build peace in Europe, have we, as Europeans, moved too quickly from the 20th Century without beginning to make sense of it? Have we really understood the dark 20th Century and learned painful lessons from it? What has been the role of the Conference of European Churches in peacebuilding and reconciliation since its creation, 60 years ago?

Merge with

***Keynote address 'The Public Role of European Churches in Peacebuilding and International Affairs'***. Today there is serious thought being given to the role of religion in international diplomacy and affairs as well as its role in local and global peacemaking and peacebuilding. What does this change of direction mean for religion in international affairs? The Conference of European Churches and its Member Churches have a vocation to be active participants in God's mission of peacebuilding and reconciliation. The Conference of European Churches has also the public role of articulating a moral vision of peace. How can this public role be carried out? What actions are necessary or are called for? How can churches mobilise for peace work?

Speaker: Prof. Fernando Enns



*Discussion (30 min)*

- 15.30 – 15.45 Break
- 15.45 – 17.00 ***Peace Forum 'Europe's Peace Vocation and the Role of Security and Peace'*** The world order is changing. There is a current dynamic described as Easternisation as power and wealth moves from West to East, China in particular as the emerging super power. In the realignment of power blocs what is Europe's role in the coming world order? Has Europe a distinctive peace vocation and what might it look like? What is the Churches' role in helping to shape the peace vocation? Security has become an obsession in the 21st century and it seems to be a militarised form of security. Can this truly be described as peace?
- Speakers: Prof. Jan Öberg, Evangelical Lutheran Church in Denmark [http://www.oldsite.transnational.org/About/j\\_oberg.html](http://www.oldsite.transnational.org/About/j_oberg.html)
- Antje Heider-Rottwilm, OKRin.i.R., Church and Peace
- In another room (open forum)
- 19.00 Cocktail and Dinner, concert close by the venue or around.

### **Day 3 Visioning the Future**

- 9.00 – 10.30 ***Keynote address 'The Abrahamic Religions and the Dialogue of Peace'***  
Much conflict in the world has a religious dimension but religion also has resources, deep resources for peacebuilding. No one religion by itself can build peace but peace in the world may depend mainly on peace between the Abrahamic traditions. This is especially true in a world where there are growing tensions between Christianity and Islam. An enhanced and sustained dialogue of peace between the Abrahamic traditions is an imperative of our time.
- Speaker: Archbishop Anastasios of Albania
- 10.30 – 11.15 Break
- 11.15 – 12.45 Seminar 4

**Seminar 4 'Women and Peacebuilding'.** Women's role in peacebuilding has not been recognised adequately. In a world where patriarchy dominates, men are considered to be the peacebuilders and to have the necessary capabilities for peacebuilding. Women nevertheless had and have an important role in the prevention and resolution of conflict, peace negotiation, peacebuilding, peace keeping, humanitarian responses and post-conflict reconstruction. It is important that an equal participation and full involvement in all efforts for the maintenance and promotion of peace and security be recognised.

Speaker: Carin Gardbring, Church of Sweden

### **Seminar 3 'Young people in mediation of conflict'**

Speakers: Celina Falk, Church of Sweden, Iain McLarty, Church of Scotland

12.45 – 14.30

Lunch

14.30 – 15.30

***Keynote address 'The winds of freedom in the new independent states of Europe: From the Baltics to the Balkans'***

Speaker: Prof. Mart Laar, Estonia? (Fr Heikki to contact him). Other options of speakers who can refer to Central and Eastern Europe?

15.30 -

16.00

Coffee Break

16.00 – 17.00

### ***Creating a CEC 2019 Paris Peace Treaty***

A century ago, the Paris Peace conference produced a series of treaties. Perhaps the best known was the Treaty of Versailles. Could we create a CEC 2019 Paris Peace Treaty? This session will involve a series of small groups with each group invited to come up with one action point, which would encourage and help the Churches to be peacebuilders in the 21st century.

Microphone goes around the room, amongst the groups.

Internal: The League of Nations agreed at Versailles was constitutionally framed in the language of Covenant. This was set out in a series of pledges. These were also included in the text of the Versailles Treaty 1919. The language of Covenant is recognisable in the Judaeo-Christian tradition, which can resonate with the attempts in the Peace Conference to produce a CEC 2019 Treaty of

Versailles. What pledges, commitments and action points would this contain? The use of the initial imagery of the Treaty of Versailles with its language of Covenant and pledges does not suggest that there is anything legally binding in relation to CEC. This is rather an imaginative attempt to create positive outcomes and action points from the Conference.

18:00                    ***The way forward*** (Summarising what the listeners group produced and presenting the next steps for CEC)

Speaker: CEC General Secretary

19.00 -                    Closing dinner

### **CEC Peace Conference 2019 Resources**

The CEC Peace Conference 2019 should be viewed in conjunction with the ***Peace Task of the Conference of European Churches*** to be established. The two CEC projects are integral and require a designated resource person within the CEC General Secretariat. This would ensure not only coherence but the enhancement of delivery and implementation as well as crucial planning for both projects.

An ideal location for the Conference would be Paris in 2019. The conference provides the opportunity for collaboration with the Member Churches in France. This collaboration would include the sourcing of funding, the provision of conference location and active involvement with the local logistics in making the conference possible.

## Thematic Reference Group Peacebuilding & Reconciliation

### A CONFERENCE OF EUROPEAN CHURCHES PEACE TASK FORCE

#### i. DEVELOPING A PEACE TASK FORCE

##### RATIONALE

'God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself...and has given us the message of reconciliation...' (2 Cor. 5:19). In the vision of St Paul reconciliation and peacebuilding are a participation in God's mission in and for the world. Jesus declared the peacemakers the children of God, a Jewish way of describing the most God-like people. The Churches, therefore, have a witness to and practice of peace. The Churches are also part of civil society and therefore reconciliation and peace are not private and individualistic pursuits. The witness to and practice of peace is public and peace witness is public theology in action. As responsible actors in civil society the Churches do their theology and peacebuilding in the public arena. The development of a CEC Peace Task Force is a response to God's action in Christ, the living out of public theology and being responsible actors in civil society. It is an essential step in becoming a peace Church.

##### DESCRIPTION

A public Church accepts its share of responsibility for the spiritual wellbeing of its adherents and for the common good and wellbeing of society. It has a critical voice when necessary, envisioning an alternative world when required, and it articulates a hope-filled voice. It is local, European and global in its engagement.

CEC and Member Churches are active participants in *Missio Dei*. As a concrete expression of this, a Peace Task Force will be developed to give active witness to God's ministry of reconciliation.

As a Peace Task Force their action will essentially be as mediators of peace in the wider European and local contexts. This mediation work will be through CEC and its Member Churches. The task will be threefold:

- i. Responding to situations of Conflict
- ii. Peacemaking
- iii. Peacebuilding

The first point has to do with finding appropriate responses to the different situations of conflict. This will include working through case studies. The second point has to do with action to avoid any escalation, to keep conversations going. The third point is much more long term and is about the sustainability of a process of peace. The Task Force's role will reflect third party mediation. There will be times when in a local situation all three strands will be called for. At other moments it may only be one strand, perhaps the sustainability work of strand three. The Peace Task Force will exist to take initiatives and to respond to the call of Member Churches and other parties for intervention and help in building bridges for mediation and working for peace.

## **TASK & PRACTICE**

There is a need for churches at all levels to develop the capacity for peace building. The Task Force will be pro-active and reactive and will take appropriate steps in this connection. There will also be occasions when member Churches or local churches will call for CEC's engagement. Whether pro-active or reactive the role of local churches will be important, since only with local participation can situations be better understood and sensitivities taken into account. Local churches may also be willing to make initial contacts with the parties in conflict and become significant instruments of peacebuilding. CEC through its Task Force will offer sustainable coordination, mediation and long term support in a peace process as opposed to short term initiatives.

In collaboration with the local churches the Task Force will develop a strategy for peace engagement in the local context. Where appropriate the Task Force will keep the local church informed of developments and progress. The Task Force will decide when local sustainable peacebuilding has been achieved and discontinue its involvement. To this end, part of the Task Force activity may be to offer training programmes for development of skills in peacebuilding for purposes of sustainability.

The process will strengthen the Churches at all levels in their participation in God's mission in and for the world. The Church will also be seen as a positive actor in civil society and its ultimate wellbeing. CEC is a servant of peace. In an increasingly complex and fragile world in which conflict can erupt quite easily, Churches are called to pool their resources and work for a world in which there is peace and reconciliation for justice. Such an initiative will enable healing of memories and the building of right relationships thus contributing to God's Peace.

CEC already has credibility within European political and in civil society which enables it to be a trusted and accepted voice in situations of conflict and violence. CEC's capacity to be connected with grass-roots contexts through Member Churches makes it an authentic body to engage in peacebuilding. The Task Force will have two joint coordinators one of whom could be the CEC General Secretary and the other elected from the Task Force membership.

## **IDENTIFYING THE TASK FORCE**

The Task Force will draw on experienced practitioners from different parts of Europe. There will be people who have experience in conflict mediation, its resolution, and those who bring peacemaking and sustainable peacebuilding skills. Such practitioners will also have experience in training others, underpinning their practice and experience with their faith values and ethics in relation to peace.

Initially the pool will consist of 16 people, each nominated by their Member Church. Ideally the pool will be drawn from a range of geographical locations, confessional backgrounds and have a gender balance.

## **INDUCTION**

A Task Force pool will be aware that CEC and its Member Churches are instruments and servants of God's ministry of reconciliation. An induction process will include awareness raising of the history and ethos of CEC. Attention will be given to core values given expression at the 2018 General Assembly. These are justice, hospitality and witness. Together these are integral to peacemaking and peacebuilding. Without justice there is no peace, without the generosity of hospitality and openness

to each other there is no resolution of conflict. Without witness reconciliation and peace do not become public theological practice.

The process of induction to the CEC ethos will lead to consideration of an agreed purpose in relation to the pool of practitioners and to an agreed and flexible methodology in relation to an operation plan of the CEC Peace Task Force.

A Task Force coordinator will be elected. Lines of communication will also be agreed between the Task Force Coordinator and the CEC General Secretary. There will be periodic meetings of the Task Force for reflection on practice and sharing of new developments in conflict resolution and peacebuilding skills.

## **II. TRAINING OF PEACEBUILDERS**

### **RATIONALE**

To actively participate in God's mission skilled peace mediators are required. The ministry of reconciliation according to St. Paul is the task of all of God's people. Yet within this there is need for practitioners equipped with the knowledge and skills for engaging and responding appropriately to particular situations of conflict and for being instruments of peace. The Task Force will already consist of experienced practitioners who can bring their faith values and ethics to the processes of peacebuilding. Part of their task will be to train others in the same knowledge and skills, thereby creating a cascade effect which will benefit CEC and Member Churches as active participants in God's mission of peacebuilding and reconciliation.

It is recognised that there is generally a deficit of peacemakers and peacebuilders in the Churches. The development therefore of experienced practitioners who are also engaged in training others will address this deficit and enhance the churches ministry within conflictual communities.

The existence of practitioners lacks a geographical balance and it will be important to intentionally address this in a strategy for training. Addressing this deficit and imbalance will potentially strengthen the churches witness and its practice for peace. This would mean a more conscious and intentional engagement in God's purpose of Peace. Reconciliation and Justice for Peace initiatives will become central to the churches self-understanding and participation in God's mission in and for the world.

### **DESCRIPTION**

The CEC Peace Task Force will offer training programmes for Member Churches in how one responds to conflict, reconciliation and peacebuilding. Member Churches will be encouraged to nominate two peace agents to undertake training. The training will be sensitive to the tradition of peace witness within the different churches.

A training programme which will require to be written by members of the Task Force should include a module dealing with local history and context and a second model which will look at the wider European context. Other modules will include knowledge and skills of the three strands on Responding to situations of Conflict, Peacemaking and on Peacebuilding. The Task Force members will be drawing on a diverse range of techniques and skills required in the above.

All of the above would mean that CEC will have a training programme which can benefit Member Churches in their witness and practice of peace. This in turn would enable the churches to be more actively committed to peace as an essential part of their ministry.

#### **PEACE TASK FORCE RESOURCES**

The proposed Conference of European Churches Peace Task Force should be viewed in conjunction with the proposed CEC Peace Conference for 2019. The two proposals are integral and would require a designated resource person within the CEC General Secretariat. This would ensure not only coherence but the enhancement of delivery and implementation as well as crucial planning for both proposals.

#### ***CEC Thematic Reference Group Peacebuilding & Reconciliation***

19 October 2017

## Klingenthal colloquy “Religion and Education - Dialogue, Values and European Integration”

Religion and Education - Dialogue, Values and European Integration”

CEC President Rev. Christian Krieger and CEC Executive Secretary Rev. Sören Lenz recently participated in the Klingenthal colloquy, a biennial event held from 1 to 5 October in Alsace. The event was organised by the Inter-European Commission for Churches and Schools (ICCS) and the Coordination Group for Religion in Education in Europe.

The colloquium brought together around twenty-five experts on education and religion from CEC Member Churches and universities across Europe, addressing the theme “Religion and Education - Dialogue, Values and European Integration”.

CEC President Rev. Christian Krieger shared information about CEC’s work following the Novi Sad General Assembly held earlier this year. He stressed the need for “churches to take action against existing Euroscepticism and the image of Europe as a fortress.” He encouraged churches to raise their voice in advance of the European elections to be held in May 2019.

Rev. Sören Lenz introduced initiatives of the Council of Europe on competences for democratic culture essentially linked to the inter-cultural dialogue. He said that churches and religious communities have a responsibility to participate in such dialogue.

“At CEC we hope to actively contribute to the inter-cultural and inter-religious dialogue. Our observer status at the Council of Europe education committee affirms the significance of CEC’s participation in shaping such dialogue initiatives,” added Rev. Lenz.

ICCS President Dr Peter Schreiner underlined the willingness of ICCS to collaborate with CEC as an Organisation in Partnership, especially in the field of education. Dr Peter Schreiner has presided CEC Thematic Reference Group on Education for the last five years.

The colloquy gathers every two-years, researchers, education policy-makers, teachers, representatives of Christian educational institutions and universities from Europe.



THOUGHT

INTENSITY

# PROGRAMME AND INFORMATION



## SHAPING THE FUTURE OF WORK

A FAITH-BASED CONTRIBUTION TO THE ILO CENTENARY INITIATIVE

**Date:** *Tuesday 27 November 2018 (9:00 - 16:45)*  
**Venue:** *European Economic and Social Committee  
 (Rue van Maerlant 2, 1040 Brussels)*



with the support of



The Future of Work,  
Labour After Laudato Si



# SHAPING THE FUTURE OF WORK

## - A faith-based contribution to the ILO Centenary Initiative -

The world of work faces transformative changes. Several processes and innovations, such as digitalisation, accelerating globalisation, artificial intelligence as well as the need for an ecological transition alter the conditions and our understanding of work and employment.

In order to respond to these challenges, the International Labour Organisation (ILO) has launched a **Future of Work Centenary Initiative** as one of seven initiatives that mark the ILO's 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 2019. Churches and their faith-based partners in Europe aim to contribute to this global dialogue bringing in expertise and insights from their movements and organisations as well as their socio-ethical reflections.

The conference *Shaping the Future of Work* brings together representatives of Churches, religious communities and faith-based organisations in the field in order to give a profound contribution to the ILO initiative. In three panel debates, EU representatives, experts and practitioners of Christian, Jewish as well as Muslim faith will discuss the challenges of a changing world of work and assess new opportunities to shape the current transformation for the benefit of all members of society.

- For practical information on accommodation and funding, please see also page 3 -

### PROGRAMME

- Moderation: Pierre Baussand, Head of Brussels Liaison Office of Eurofound -

08.15 - 09.00

Registration & Coffee

09.00 - 09.15

Welcome

WELCOME

- Luca **Jahier**, President of the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC)

09.15 - 09.45

Opening remarks

OPENING

- Mairead **McGuinness**, First Vice-President of the European Parliament
- Archbishop Jean-Claude **Hollerich**, President of the Commission of the Bishops' Conferences of the EU (COMECE) and Archbishop of Luxembourg
- Heinz **Koller**, Regional Director for Europe and Central Asia of the International Labour Organisation (ILO)

09.45 - 11.00

The importance of work from an inter-religious perspective

FIRST PANEL

- Bishop Antoine **Hérouard**, President of the COMECE Social Affairs Commission and Auxiliary Bishop of Lille, France
- Prof. Dr. Mouez **Khalifaoui**, Centre for Islamic Theology Eberhard Karls University Tübingen, Germany
- Dean Satu **Saarinen**, Cathedral of Oulu, Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland
- Rabbi Avi **Tawil**, Director of the European Jewish Community Centre (EJCC), Belgium

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11.00 - 11.30

Coffee break

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11.30 - 13.00

Access to work in times of transformations - jobless future or new opportunities for decent work for all?

## SECOND PANEL

**Input:** John **Hurley**, *Research Manager, European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions (Eurofound)*

- Sefer **Calis**, *former chair of the works committee of Amazon Pforzheim, Germany*
- Dr. Rev. Kari **Latvus**, *Senior Adviser for Society, Work, Public Theology, Digital Media at the National Church Council - Worship and Society, Evangelical-Lutheran Church of Finland*
- Sébastien **Lenormand**, *Alphabet [Google] EMEA Account Director at Intel Corporation and Vice-President of the Technology & Innovation Section of Entrepreneurs & Dirigeants Chrétiens (EDC), France*
- Patrizia **Toia**, *Member of the European Parliament (S&D), Vice-Chair of the Committee on Industry, Research and Energy*

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13.00 - 14.30

Buffet Lunch

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14.30 - 16.00

New forms of labour and flexible working time - start for a more self-determined life or end of job security?

## THIRD PANEL

- Inge **Bernaerts**, *Head of Cabinet of EU Employment and Social Affairs Commissioner Marianne Thyssen, European Commission*
- Prof. Dr. Thomas **Gergely**, *Director of the Institute for Jewish Studies, Université libre de Bruxelles (ULB), Belgium*
- Prof. Dr. Radu **Preda**, *Chair of Orthodox Social Theology, University of Cluj-Napoca, Romania*
- Sarah **Prenger**, *President of the International Young Christian Workers*
- Claude **Rolin**, *Member of the European Parliament (EPP), Vice-Chair of the Committee on Employment and Social Affairs*

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16.00 - 16.30

Takeaways for the ILO dialogue and social partners

## COLLECTING IDEAS

- Luc **Cortebeek**, *International Labour Organisation (ILO)*
- Rebekah **Smith**, *Deputy Director, Business Europe (tbc)*
- Thiébaud **Weber**, *Confederal Secretary of the European Trade Union Confederations (ETUC)*

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16.30 - 16.45

Closing

## CLOSING

- Rev. Christian **Krieger**, *President of the Conference of European Churches (CEC)*

## PRACTICAL INFORMATION

- 1.) **REGISTRATION:** We reached the maximum capacity of the main conference room and therefore closed the registration for the conference.
- 2.) **TIMING:** The conference starts on Tuesday 27 November 2018 at 9.00 and registration will open by 8.15. We kindly ask participants to arrive **at least 15 minutes before 9.00**, in order to allow the conference to start in time.
- 3.) **VENUE:** The conference will take place in the premises of the **European Economic and Social Committee (EESC), building VMA - Rue van Maerlant 2, 1040 Brussels** (opposite the main building at Rue Belliard). **Please have your passport or ID card with you on the day of the conference.**
- 4.) **EVENT LANGUAGES:** The conference will be interpreted into **English, French, German and Spanish.**
- 5.) **ADDITIONAL ELEMENT:** We offer a welcome reception on the eve before at the premises of the Secretariat of the Commission of the Bishops' Conferences of the EU (COMECE), Square de Meeûs 19, 1050 Brussels. **The reception will start on 26 November 2018, at 19.00.** The reception is not part of the conference but an additional element for Church-based actors to connect with each other.
- 6.) **TRAVEL & ACCOMMODATION:** No conference fee will be required, but participants are expected **to cover their travel as well as their accommodations and to make their travel arrangements.** For the night from 26-27 November 2018, the organisers have pre-booked single rooms in a selection of hotels that you find on page 4 of this document.
- 7.) **FUNDING:** For those who cannot afford participating at their own expense, **please write an email to [conference.futureofwork@gmail.com](mailto:conference.futureofwork@gmail.com) to apply for financial support.** Please only apply if you need the support, as there is a limited amount of money available. The maximum sum of support per person is 500 € covering accommodation as well as travel costs (within Europe only) and the organisers of the conference will not be able to bear the costs caused by any late cancellations of registrations.

## LIST OF PRE-BOOKED HOTELS

- Please note that the hotels are only pre-booked until 15 October 2018 -

- 1.) **Aloft Brussels Schuman**, Place Jean Rey, 1040 Brussels, Tel : +32 2 710 80 06  
**Type of room:** Loft Single Category room at **179,00** (+ 4,24 EUR city tax)  
**Pre-booking:** 30 rooms under the 'Association des Episcopats' group rate  
**How to get to the EESC:** Across the Conference venue (2 mins walk)  
**Booking link:**  
<https://www.starwoodmeeting.com/events/start.action?id=1805315129&key=2BF75CF>
  
- 2.) **NH Brussels Louise**, Chaussée de Charleroi 7, 1060 Brussels, Tel : +32 2 539 01 60  
**Type of room:** Double room single occupancy **144,00 EUR** (+ 4,24 EUR city tax)  
**Pre-booking:** 40 rooms under the 'COMECE' group rate ('Audrey Marot')  
**How to get to the EESC:** **Metro line 2 or 6** from Louise to Arts-Loi / Kunst-Wet (dir. Elisabeth) and **line 1 or 5 to Maelbeek or Schuman** (dir. Stockel or Delta or Hermann Debroux)  
**Booking link:** <https://www.nh-hotels.com/event/eu-venue-finders>
  
- 3.) **Hilton Garden Inn**, rue Berckmans 128, 1060 Brussels, Tel : +32 2 538 88 30  
**Type of room:** Standard Single Room **115,00 EUR** (+ 4.24 EUR city tax)  
**Pre-booking:** 40 rooms under the 'COMECE' group rate  
**How to get to the EESC:** Metro from Hôtel des Monnaies or Louise to Arts-Loi / Kunst-Wet (dir. Elisabeth) and **line 1 or 5 to Maelbeek or Schuman** (dir. Stockel or Delta or Hermann Debroux)  
**Booking link:**  
[http://hiltongardeninn3.hilton.com/en\\_US/gi/search/findhotels/results.htm?view=LIST](http://hiltongardeninn3.hilton.com/en_US/gi/search/findhotels/results.htm?view=LIST)

Follow the link to **Hilton Garden Inn homepage** and fill the blanks with the following information:

Where are you going: **Brussels**

Date: 26 Nov 2018

**GROUP CODE: gvenb**

You will be redirected to another page where you can select the room: **SELECT = COMECE Superior Room at 115,00 EUR**. Please follow the instructions on the website to book your room afterwards.

- 4.) **An alternative, but without pre-booking, is the following hotel:**

**Easy Hotel**, rue d'Argent 1, 1000 Brussels, Tel: +32 2 781 02 59

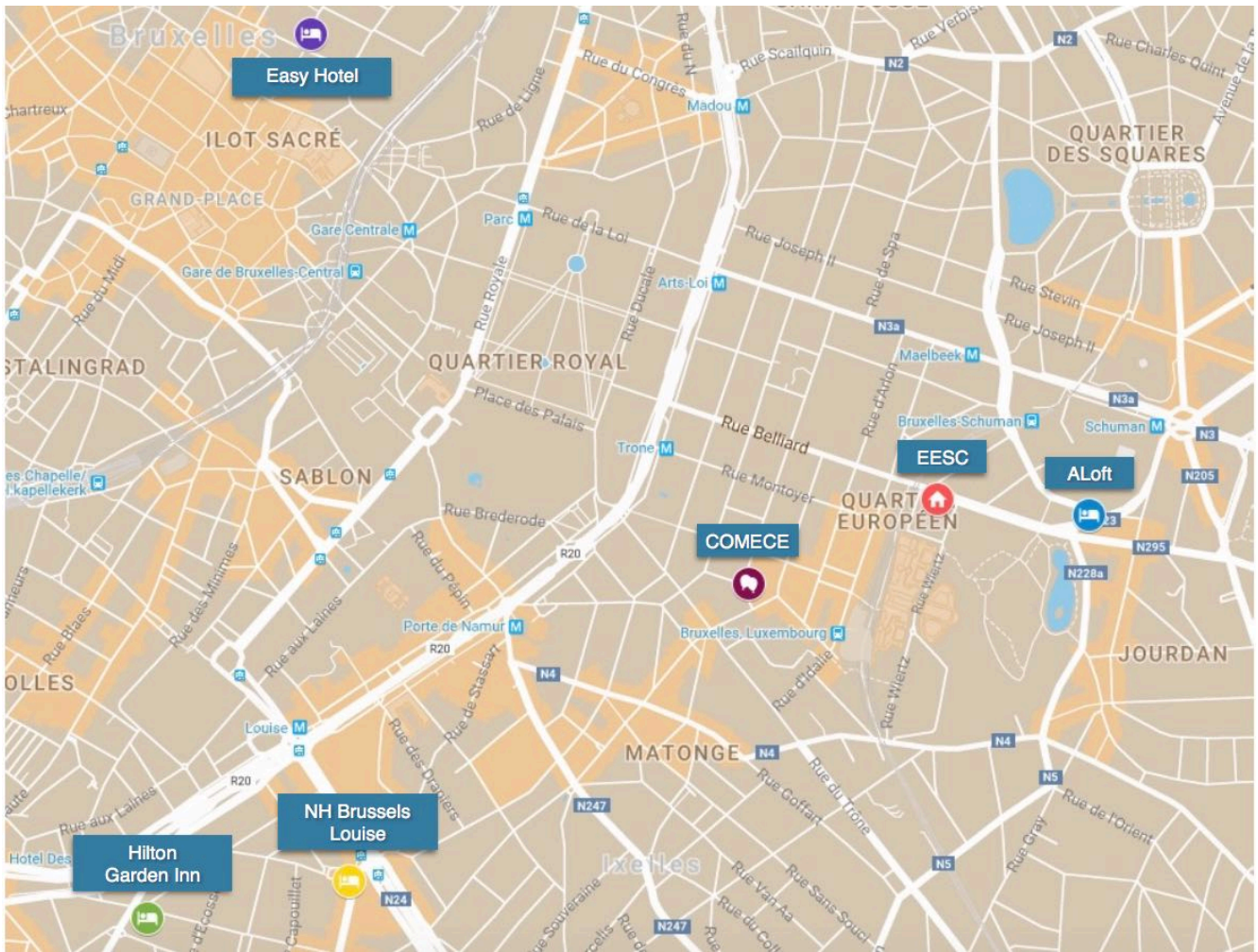
**No group rate**, but rooms from 76,00 EUR per night

**How to get to the EESC:** The Easy Hotel is downtown. Metro from De Brouckère, **line 1 or 5 to Maelbeek or Schuman** (dir. Stockel or Delta or Hermann Debroux)

**Booking link:** <https://www.easyhotel.com/fr/hotels/belgium/brussels/101939>

## HOTELS AND LOCATIONS

You can access the interactive map to prepare for your stay in Brussels under the following link:  
[https://drive.google.com/open?id=1dwjnz8UPqgf68uBbaRfFF2Ghrpv0X\\_Vj&usp=sharing](https://drive.google.com/open?id=1dwjnz8UPqgf68uBbaRfFF2Ghrpv0X_Vj&usp=sharing)



**DRAFT 12/11/2018**

**Towards Peaceful Coexistence in the Middle East:**

**Challenges and Opportunities**

**14-16 December 2018 Cumberland Lodge, UK**

**DAY I – 14 December**

**14:00 Registration, tea & coffee**

**15:00 Prayer and official welcome addresses**

- ♦ *Opening Prayer (Ecumenical form)*  
*Fr Heikki Huttunen, General Secretary of the Conference of European Churches*
- ♦ *Right Reverend Christopher Chessun, the Lord Bishop of Southwark, Church of England*
- ♦ *Rev. Christian Krieger, President of the Conference of European Churches*
- ♦ *Mr. Bob Fyffe, General Secretary of Churches Together in Britain and Ireland*
- ♦ *Moderation: Dr Elizabeta Kitanović, Conference of European Churches*

**15:30 Session I – Cultural and Religious Diversity: Source of Richness**

- ♦ *Religious plurality in the Middle East: An Inside Perspective (15 ‘)*  
*Fr Dr Alexi Chehadeh – Director General of the Department of Ecumenical Relations and Development of the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate of Antioch and All the East*
- ♦ *Religious plurality in the Middle East: An Outside Perspective (15 ‘)*  
*Rev. Dr Patrick Roger Schnabel – Head of the Church Development Service and Commissioner for Human Rights of the Protestant Church of Berlin-Brandenburg-Silesian Upper Lusatia within the Evangelical Church in Germany*
- ♦ *His Grace Archbishop Angaelos of London, The Coptic Orthodox Church (15’)*
- ♦ *Debate (30 ‘)*  
*Moderation: Dr Elizabeta Kitanović, Conference of European Churches*

**16:30 Tea and coffee break**

**17:00 Session II – Education as a means for mutual understanding and overcoming prejudices**

- ♦ *Talitha Kumi – Education and Peacebuilding in the Westbank (15’)*
- ♦ *Mr. Matthias Wolf, Principal, German Evangelical Lutheran School, Palestine*
- ♦ *Tabeetha School – Education and Peacebuilding in Israel (15 ‘)*

- ♦ Debate (60 ')  
*Moderation: Prof. Dr Pamela Slotte, Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland*

**18:30 Evening Prayer (Orthodox tradition)**  
*Fr Aimilianos Bogiannou, Ecumenical Patriarchate*

**19:00 Dinner**

**Fireside talks (networking opportunity at the Lodge)**

## II DAY – 15 December

**08:45 Morning Prayer (Anglican tradition)**  
*Representative of Cumberland Lodge*

**09:00 Peaceful Coexistence and Citizenship: Country studies for challenges and opportunities**

- ♦ Syria and Iraq (20 ')  
*His Beatitude, John X, Patriarch of Antioch and All the East*
- ♦ Lebanon (20 ')
- ♦ Maronite Archbishop of Cyprus, Youssef Soueif
- ♦ Egypt (20 ')
- ♦ *His Eminence Georgios Vladimirov, Metropolitan of Guinea & Western Africa, Exarch of the Patriarch of Alexandria in Athens*
- ♦ Debate (30 ')
- ♦ *Moderation: Fr Heikki Huttunen, Conference of European Churches*

**10:30 Tea and coffee Break**

**11:00 Peaceful Coexistence and Citizenship: Country studies for challenges and opportunities**

- ♦ Israel/Palestine (20 ')
- ♦ *Archbishop Isodoros, Abbot of Sepulchre, Patriarchate of the Holy City of Jerusalem and all Holy Land*
- ♦ Jordan (20 ')
- ♦ *His Eminence Sani Ibrahim Azar, Bishop of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Holy Land*
- ♦ Debate (50 ')
- ♦ *Moderation: Rev. Dr Göran Gunner, Church of Sweden*



**12:30 Luncheon**

**14:30 Thematic Fora – parallel sessions**

Freedom of Religion or Belief in the Middle East

*Rev. Dr Ganoune Diop, IRLA, Dr. Ján Figel, Special Envoy for the promotion of freedom of religion or belief outside the EU, Ambassador Matti Lassila, Finish Foreign Office, and Ms Mariannne Ejdersten, WCC Communication Director*

*Facilitator: Canon Dr Edmund Newell, Principal, Cumberland Lodge*

**16:00 Tea and Coffee break**

**16:30 Closing session and consensus on participants' communique**

- ♦ Keynote listeners' reports  
*Canon Dr Edmund Newell; Professor Dr Pamela Slotte; Rev. Professor Dr Göran Gunner*
- ♦ CEC's future commitment  
*Dr Elizabeta Kitanović, Conference of European Churches*
- ♦ Consensus on a communique by the participants  
*Rev. Dr Patrick Roger Schnabel, EKBO*

**18:00 Sending Blessing (Ecumenical format)**

*Fr Heikki Huttunen, Conference of European Churches*

**18:45 Dinner**

**DAY III – 16 December**

**Departures**



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

GENSEC-2018-441

**HE Rumen Radev**

*President of the Republic of Bulgaria*  
2, Dondukov Blvd., 1123 Sofia,  
Bulgaria  
[priemna@president.bg](mailto:priemna@president.bg)

13 November 2018

Your Excellency,

The Conference of European Churches (CEC) is a fellowship of 113 Orthodox, Protestant, and Anglican churches from across Europe, plus more than 40 National Council of Churches and Organisations in Partnership. We have two member churches in Bulgaria: Evangelical Methodist Episcopal Church and Union of Evangelical Baptist Churches.

Human rights is one of our main programmatic areas, and we regularly monitor developments in the area of freedom of religion or belief in our constituencies' countries. In the past few months we have been closely following developments in Bulgaria.

The Conference of European Churches would like to express its deep concern due to perceived problems in the draft proposal of the law on religions and its consolidated draft bill, which has been adopted on 11 October by the Committee on Religion and Human Rights of the National Assembly of the Republic of Bulgaria. According to national and international human rights law experts, who have reviewed the current draft, we note the following that are not in line with international legal human rights standards.

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

Our main concerns are as follows:

1. Violation of the Bulgarian Constitution's provision of the **separation of Church and State** and of the right of independence of all religious organisations provided by the Bulgarian Constitution. By intending to control donations, to interfere with theological education and to install state regulations on issues of clergy responsibilities, the Bulgarian state is **wrongly assuming power into the internal life of religious communities**. Almost every single article in the newly proposed bills erroneously and unfairly claims political authority over religious life.
2. **State financial support only for those religious organisations that have more than 1% of the population** according to the last census (Bulgarian Orthodox Church and Islamic Religious Community in Bulgaria).
3. **Banning or Restricting funding and financial support from abroad to the religious organisations**. No foreign money can be used for paying salaries. Money from abroad (only for social projects and for building and repair projects) can be received only after prior permission from the Religious Department of the Cabinet [paragraph 8]. Any donations from local people or organisations, above a certain amount, is to be reported to the Religious Department.
4. **Heavy restrictions for foreigners to perform religious duties in the country**. The only way a foreigner (a missionary, a preacher, a teacher, an evangelist, and so on) could conduct a worship service or preach a sermon would be if he is doing it jointly with a Bulgarian ordained minister.
5. **Restrictions in the area of theological education**. Bulgarian citizens should be able to carry out liturgical activity only if they have completed their theological education in Bulgaria or if their foreign diploma is recognised by competent government institutions and upon certification by a local denomination that is recognised and registered with the government.

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

The right to open religious schools and train denominational ministers would be given **only** to the Eastern Orthodox and Muslim faiths. All other religious groups, discriminated due to a low number of self-identified followers according to a 2011 national census, will not be allowed to open their own institutions for clergy training. Issuing academic certificates to theology students will be prohibited for all smaller denominations.

6. Restrictions in the area of **membership and religious practice**. The new legislation requires membership of three hundred people in order for a religious group to obtain the status of judicial entity. It also forbids carrying out religious practices in buildings that are not intended for religious activities.

As we celebrate 70<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Universal Declaration on Human Rights we do hope that the Bulgarian government will apply the highest international human rights standards in the area of freedom of religion or belief. In case we can be of service in the area of legislation on freedom of religion or belief, the Conference of European Churches would be happy to assist in these matters.

Most respectfully yours

Very Rev. Protopresbyter Heikki Theodoros Huttunen  
General Secretary of CEC

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## EUROPEAN CHRISTIAN ENVIRONMENTAL NETWORK KATOWICE, OCTOBER 2018

### A CALL FROM THE ASSEMBLY A FUTURE WITH HOPE

The 12<sup>th</sup> Assembly of ECEN met from 6 to 10 October 2018 under the heading ‘On the way to economic and ecological justice’ in Katowice (Poland), hosting 85 participants from 22 countries of Europe and overseas. Discussions of the Assembly were guided by the biblical words of the prophet Jeremiah 29:11 *“I know the plans I have for you, says the Lord, plans for your welfare and not for harm, to give you a future with hope.”*

We gathered to share joy in God’s creation, to remind ourselves that everywhere it is under threat, and that churches across Europe as well as in other parts of the world have a duty to care for creation; in worship, in action, and in advocacy.

In discussion with colleagues from churches, academia, and civil authorities in the region of Upper Silesia we learned about efforts to reduce air pollution and Green House Gas (GHG) emissions; and to transform the economy from coal mining to more sustainable energy production.

The focus of the Assembly discussions was the relationship between economy and ecology; ways to achieve a just distribution of available resources while respecting the principles of economic and ecological justice.

The Assembly offered an opportunity to celebrate the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of ECEN. Twenty years after ECEN met for the first time we can witness in Europe growing movements of green churches, eco-churches, and eco-congregations. In worship, practical action and advocacy for climate justice and a sustainable future, faith communities reflect the message: It is our responsibility and duty to care for creation. We celebrate this success and encourage all churches to join this movement.

#### **What is the challenge?**

In twenty years there have been momentous changes in our use of natural resources. In these decades we have seen the loss of biodiversity and habitats across the world to the extent that scientists talk of a new ‘mass extinction’. Massive deforestation contributes to climate change and humanity has added greenhouse gases to the atmosphere at an alarming rate, particularly through burning fossil fuels. As a result, the climate is changing; we know this beyond doubt.

As we met in Katowice the United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) published the report *Global Warming of 1.5°C* setting out what would be needed to limit global warming to 1.5°C and the impacts of failing to do so. Limiting global warming to 1.5°C will require rapid, far reaching and unprecedented changes in all aspects of society. To avoid dangerous climate change and to achieve the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals a fundamental shift must start today.

In another twenty years, if we have not taken effective action to reduce greenhouse gas emissions global warming will not only exceed 1.5°C but also 2°C. This will happen if the parties of the Paris Agreement do not show higher ambition than is evident today.

We are now informed and we have no excuses! Also as people of faith we have a moral obligation to put the most vulnerable first in our calling to heal the earth. The theme of the ECEN Assembly is “To give you a future with hope”. It is not an option to ignore the science nor to become paralysed by fear.

From our faith derives hope; A hope that is not a naïve or wishful.

### **Why do we do this?**

We want *a future with hope*. Science can tell us what is happening; faith tells us why we must respond. To give life on earth a future with hope we must act now.

In John chapter 6:1-11 we learn of the feeding of the five thousand and of the importance of sharing. It is a vulnerable child who brings loaves and fish. The act of sharing that comes from the child and is an inspiration and a path for us to follow. Sharing, not greed, is the way to climate justice.

Individually and collectively we must reduce our environmental impact and in particular our carbon footprints. The extractive economy and lifestyle we know and enjoy are not sustainable. Structures and patterns of consumption and production must change very rapidly to a low carbon economy with a more just distribution of resources.

We call governments and political decision makers to:

- Take situation seriously and act accordingly: to commit to reducing GHG emissions to align with the scientific data in the IPCC report.
- Work for sustainable future and adequate mechanisms to support the most vulnerable. No excuse is acceptable.
- In anticipation of the forthcoming United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP24) in Katowice we call for a visible and determined action plans from all parties.

We call churches and faith communities:

- To initiate and sustain a broad dialogue among churches and in wider society on the necessary changes to bring about a more sustainable and equitable lifestyle; to respect Creation, promote a just transition to a low carbon economy and act for intergenerational justice.
- To support, encourage and mainstream environmental initiatives in faith communities and churches to respond to ecological challenges.
- To build a new narrative of hope that addresses the seriousness of the situation but also promises a vision of more just and sustainable future.
- To develop theological and liturgical resources on care for creation; including Season of Creation into liturgical calendars and sharing celebration of it in an open ecumenical spirit.