



Conference of European Churches Governing Board

Strasbourg, 15 – 18 May 2019

President's Report

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I. The work within CEC

1) General secretary and Staff

I continue to have regular contact with the General Secretary. We also take all opportunities given by meeting we attend both, to discuss the ongoing work of CEC. We had a full working day in January (14th in Brussels) to do an evaluation of our cooperation. We discussed several issues of the office management. I raised prior goals for the coming 6 months: management of office, develop the necessary member fees strategy, strengthen the work in the frame of art 17. We had a second full working day on the strategy plan (25th of April in Brussels).

With the General secretary, I've met the collegium (10th of April) to analyse the results on the consultation on the strategy plan and to work on their proposals.

2) Presidency meeting in Leicester (29th of March Leicester)

In presence of the treasurer and the chair of the personnel committee, we discussed the situation of CEC and prepared the agenda for the governing board. The presidency had a discussion in a close session with the General secretary.

At the end of the afternoon we participate in a Service hold in Leicester Cathedral on the supposed day of Brexit. Bishop Guli gave a stimulating message, calling to encounter and cooperation (on CEC's website).

3) Meeting with H.G. Bishop Porfyrios of Neapolis and Father Nektarios (26th of November, Brussels)

The purpose was a debriefing of the tension we had in the GB when we discussed the proposition for the nomination committee, especially the strong words about "the same movie". I explained how the proposal of the nomination committee were made, in accordance to standing orders, with no secret hand behind. If the way to proceed was frustrating for some, it has to be considered as a blunder on my side. I asked Fr. Nektarios to think about accepting the opened position in budget committee. We also discussed several other issues, among them the Ukrainian situation.

II. Institutional meetings

1) Meeting UEPAL – Churches on the Rhine – CEC (28th of November, Strasbourg)

Sören Lenz gave a first report and evaluation of the functioning of the Strasbourg office. He raises several possibilities to work toward the European

institution based in Strasbourg. We discussed also the issue of the financial support given by mainly Churches belonging to the Conference of the Churches along the Rhine. One Church already suspended their contribution to finance Strasbourg office. Short meeting with the collegium.

2) Meeting with his all holiness the ecumenical patriarchate (7th of January, Istanbul)

With the Secretary General I met the ecumenical patriarchate in attendance of Metropolitan Elpidoforos, director theological Halki seminary. We had the opportunity to present the implementation of the General assembly of Novi Sad, in particular the three aims of the drafted strategy plan.

We also had a brief overview of the CEC member churches, and the issue of the orthodox commitment in CEC. We raised the question of the new autocephalous Ukraine orthodox Church. It seems clear for the patriarchate that the Ukraine Church will apply to become member of CEC and he agreed that this will need to take time to avoid tension within the orthodox members.

The patriarchate underlined his commitment to CEC's work and agreed on hosting a CEC event in the future (spring 2020). He wishes to publish a paper on the patriarchate's commitment in history to CEC in the frame of the editorial project of the theological faculty of Halki, in order to regain theological activity.

3) Meeting with Secretary general of WCC (8th of January, Frankfurt)

On the way back from Istanbul, the Secretary general and I met with the Secretary general of WCC. We shared the strategical work of both ecumenical organisations, figured out how to cooperate efficiently, agreed to work on a cooperation agreement, had an overview of the ecumenical situation, exchanged on Ukrainian issue and its implication for both organisations, and discussed the implication of CEC on WCC General Assembly Karlsruhe.

We also spoke about the project of WCC to plan a conference in Paris organized in the frame of their dialogue with IJCIC (International Jewish Committee for Interreligious Consultations) on the theme "The Normalization of Hatred: Challenges to Jews and Christians Today" (26 - 27th of June, 2019). I agreed to be part of the Christian delegation.

4) TFEU Art 17 meeting (17th of January, Brussels)

I took the initiative to invite in CEC office the representatives working in Brussels for a member church or member churches (those having an office, or coming regularly to Brussels in the frame of Art 17). The secretary General from CPCE attended also the meeting. We made an evaluation of the functioning of the dialogue with European institutions.

As for the coming new legislature period, there is an uncertainty how the dialogue will be structured, it was also a prospective meeting. My goal was also to initiate a more cooperative work to strengthen CEC's member churches voice and therefore to figure out a common strategy.

CEC's Initiative was unanimously welcomed. The need of a better cooperation was obvious and generally shared, even if there are differences in the final goals. We decided to have regularly such kind of meeting, on a rhythm needed. Next to work on general strategy goals in the dialogue over the legislator in order to have more or less a common voice.

We also agreed to prepare the paper for EU presidency together (CEC office is in charge of the work, but involves, consults, concerts CROCEU, EKD office, Lena Kumlin, Diocese in Europe...).

5) Budget committee (21th of January, Brussels)

I share with you the outcome of a difficult budget committee meeting.

The General secretary couldn't joint the committee because he was in Bucharest for the meeting in the foreign office in the frame of the EU Presidency of Romania. CEC's finance officer sick leave since October continues to complicate the financial management of CEC. During the meeting, most of our questions couldn't be answered.

Since our governing board, the assembly planning coordinator was asked to figure out a fine-tuned expenditures budget for 2019. He did it by asking the executive staff about their needs. The result is a foreseen deficit in 2019 of more or less 100 000€. The budget committee recommended to the General secretary in discussion with the executive staff to find out how to avoid this deficit.

, the treasurer is well on track and do a good job. I'm confident about his work. Furthermore, the Norwegian Bishop, Atle Sommerfeldt, brings a very good expertise to the budget committee. His leader temperament and financial expertise will be very helpful for CEC. We decide to meet again in March to finalize a balanced budget proposal and finalise recommendations for the Governing board in May.

6) Meeting with COMECE (30th of January, Brussels)

In attendance of Bishop Jean-Claude Hollerich (President) and Bishop Noel Treanor (Vice-President), we discussed 3 points. Ecumenical visibility on EU institutions, Art 17, on what CEC and COMECE could agree, the main challenges for Christians in Europe for the coming years. We decide to organize an ecumenical celebration in the Brussel Parliament in the frame of the 2020 week of prayer for unity presided by both president and with brother Alois as guest speaker. We also agreed on a common Easter statement linked to context of the

coming EU election. We also have agreed on a common strategy to strengthen the efficiency of the Art 17 dialogue for the coming parliamentary period. CEC's strategic plan, which I presented to discuss the coming challenges, was welcomed and appreciated. Over all, I have to say that Monseigneur Hollerich is deeply ecumenical. He is aware of the situation of the churches in the secular countries, and therefore encounters not in an overhanging position, but on an equal level with others. He really seeks to show unity to be more credible in calling for European unity. By the way he told us that Olivier Poquillon, General Secretary of COMECE, will end his mandate at the end of the summer 2019.

7) WCC, assembly planning meeting (28th of February, Karlsruhe)

In September 2021 (8-15th), the General Assembly of WCC will be take place in Karlsruhe (Germany). It will be the third assembly on European ground (after Amsterdam in 1948 and Uppsala in 1968). With Sören Lenz, I attended a Hosting church meeting in which Bishop Petra Bosse-Huber underlined the will of EKD to give, not a German, but a European dimension to that event. We discussed several issues: the role western European churches play in the ecumenical agenda, the way to involve local churches in that event, how to use that opportunity to encourage a new generation of ecumenical actors. There is an expectation that CEC organises a pre-assembly in spring 2021, and a demand that CEC be represented in the Assembly planning committee and in the hosting committee.

8) Visit Mg Hollerich, president of COMECE (6th of March, Luxemburg)

On his invitation, I visited Mg Hollerich, the president of COMECE. The Bishop was keen to be very open, realistic and honest in the exchange. We discussed the situation in Luxembourg from different angles (realities and projects of the Catholic Church, its relations with Protestants, relations with the state since the end of the concordat...). We also discussed the Catholic Church, COMECE (its organisation, functioning, resources, developments with the appointment of a new General Secretary, ...), CCEE, CEC. We have agreed to intensify our collaboration where possible, also at the level of the Presidency, in particular by making the presentation visits after the European elections together. On the subjects that gave rise to different approaches between CEC and COMECE (question of Catholic representation, holding the EU seminar with or without the humanists), Msg Hollerich agreed with the point of view I was making (a proportional representation of Catholicism is difficult to obtain, it is the lot of the majority Church, to privilege the organization of the TFEU art 17 dialogue with humanists, subject to an animation that keeps the debate on the question on the agenda).

9) Meeting with Montenegrin delegation (19th of March, Brussels)

Fr. Velibor Dzomic and Fr. Nikifor Milovic, We were given a lengthy presentation of the situation of discrimination that the Church is facing because of a drafted law. Under the guise of a law intended to guarantee religious freedom, the Orthodox Church in Montenegro, which canonically belongs to the Patriarchate of the Serbian orthodox church, but has an autonomous status in Montenegro, is threatened with being deprived of its legal status in Montenegro and its oldest properties.

10) Meeting with National Council EPUB (20th of March, Brussels)

The meeting offered the opportunity to thank for the commitment of Jelled Brouwer, and provided an opportunity to recall the framework of our request for a seconded staff. The National Council agreed on it in principle. He would like a part of the time to return to the EPUB, both as a participation in groups of ethical and social reflection, as resource persons for the Council and the Church. There are several expectations, such as to inform on current European events, provide dossiers on ethical and societal issues, helping to make ecclesial and social issues accessible.

We proposed two options covering two thematic fields, one for a position on peace, future of Europe for a theologian profile with a training or sensitivity on political science, the other on a social justice and AI position for a theologian profile with a training or sociological and economic sensitivity. The EPUB will decide on her position by mid-April and think about possible candidates. A starting at the end of the year or beginning of 2020 is foreseen. A note will be sent to us for the additional costs inherent to the status of pastor (housing etc.).

11) Meeting with Bishops of Lutheran Church of Finland (27th of march, Strasbourg)

The conference of finish Lutheran Bishops went to Strasbourg for a three-day seminar. In the Frame of their visit to Council of Europe and European Parliament, the General secretary, Sören Lenz and my-self presented them CEC's work toward the European institution. I took the opportunity to have a special meeting with Lena Kumlin, officer for EU matters. She informed me about a potential project of the finish Church to have a part time office in Brussels to do a better network toward the EU parliament and commission. There is a possible connection with CEC (hosting her office, e.g. preparing CEC's paper for EU presidencies, and following up).

12) Staff secondment by the Swiss Protestant Church

Having heard about a possible secondment of a part time staff position for the Strasbourg office, I had several discussions to bring the issue forward. We have

clarified how the secondment is possible, because it would come from the Church of Zurich, but it is only the Swiss Protestant Church who is member of CEC. It seems that there is now a realistic possibility.

13) ExCom of CCME (8-9th of May, Brussels)

I participate in the ExCom of CCME. President Lemma welcomed the fact that it is the first so high representation of CEC in ExCom of CCME, having both, the vice-president and the president. The ExCom is more an operational body, composed of members in their church very committed to concrete work about and with migrants and refugees. I presented CEC's work since the general assembly, especially the strategy plan. We also explained how CEC will celebrate its 60th anniversary. I remembered the way to go forward in the reflection to implement CEC-CCME agreement. Until CCME's General Assembly in 2020, we will focus on intensifying the implementation of the agreement. Toward a common General Assembly in 2023, we have then to evaluate where we stand and to prepare the draft of the future cooperation.

14) Seconded staff position from CPCE

CPCE is now a registered ASBL in Austria. After having mainly work on an academic level, especially on deepening the theological understanding of communion and the communion among its member churches. CPCE's governing body and presidency is now seeking to play a greater role toward the European institutions.

The General secretary informed CEC that CPCE did not succeed in finding a German Landeskirche to second staff they can propose to succeed to Frank Dieter Fischbach. We agreed on cooperation with several ideas:

- General Secretary of CPCE will be associated to CEC's task force Art 17.
- CEC will try on its own to find an opportunity for staff secondment to take over the position of Frank Dieter Fischbach.
- To engage Katerina Pekridou more to the theological work of CPCE.
- the General secretary from CPCE and CEC will meet regularly.
- To invite the General secretary for a Governing Board.

III. Representation, conferences and other events

1) Conference shaping the future of work (27th of November Brussels)

The conference was opened by Vice-President, Ms. Mairead McGuinness. It first reflects on the understanding of work from an inter-religious perspective, how define work? And who is a worker? Then the conference discussed the issue of

the access to work in times of transformation. Do we face a jobless future, or can we expect new opportunities for decent work for all? The conference was well prepared by Frank Dieter Fischbach, in cooperation with COMECE.

2) Christmas statement CEC-CCME (4 December, Brussels)

The first Vice president of European's parliament, Mms Mc Guinness, received the Christmas Statement worked out in cooperation with CCME and signed by 30 church leader from the broader Europe. The statement underlined the meaningful need of safe passages (e.g. resettlement, humanitarian visa, realistic labour migration policies) and search and rescue on the way to Europe. It also reaffirms the notions of the Tampere summit, in particular the "absolute respect of the right to seek asylum" and "the full and inclusive application of the Geneva Convention" as guiding principles of asylum policy today. Ms Mc Guinness welcomed the statement.

3) Religion and Human Rights within the EU, a shared responsibility (4th of December, Brussels)

Meeting was well prepared and chaired by the first Vice president of European's parliament, Ms Mc Guinness. In presence of a few MP's, several contributions, even a humanist one, figured out a global picture. During the debate, CEC raises the concern of the Spanish Evangelical Church and the situation of religious minorities in Bulgaria. The non-confessional representatives were well prepared and took very a large part of the discussion during the debate raising their fundamental criticism against faith organization focused on gender discrimination, the sensitive report to human rights. The first Vice president of European's parliament conclude the seminary in encouraging to dialogue, to encounter.

4) Conference "Towards Peaceful Coexistence in the Middle East: Challenges and Opportunities", Cumberland Lodge (14-16th of December)

I attended the Conference "Towards Peaceful Coexistence in the Middle East: Challenges and Opportunities" and had the opportunity to do an opening speech. I took the opportunity to affirm our solidarity with the member churches in the United Kingdom and Ireland. I also underlined our concern about the situation of the middle east churches, quoting the CEC-CCME Christmas statement and the GB public issue on the 70th anniversary of the human rights declaration. The discussion went to reflect the different understanding of expression: freedom of conscious (free choice of religion ≠ free not to have a religion); freedom of religion (free choice of religion ≠ free to worship and

practice religion); freedom to be different (minorities rights ≠ acknowledgement of citizenship).

With Patrick Schnabel, we were introduced to her Majesty in the frame of a Christmas carol in the All saint chapel in the Windsor park.

5) Third Forum on modern slavery (5-8th of January, Istanbul)

A high-level conference, hosted by the ecumenical patriarchate. Session I: forming modern slavery, human rights and legal framework. Session II: forced migration and human trafficking. Session III: practitioners and Grassroots action.

The conference showed somehow deep commitment orthodox churches to social and societal justice. The terminology “modern slavery” covers several realities, such as child labour, child trafficking, prostitution... There is a clear expectation towards the religious authorities, because they are not seen linked or depending on GDP, financial, economic or political interest, and are just moved by love, friendship, a vision of a just society, dignity...

The agenda include a celebration of Theophany on the 6th of January with the overhanding of the document of autocephaly to the new elected bishop of the new Ukraine orthodox Church, which I didn't attempt.

6) Holocaust remembrance-day in EU Parliament (30th of January, Brussels)

The president of EU Parliament, Antonio TAJANI, welcomed for the first Holocaust Remembrance Day which takes place in the European Parliament chamber, during the plenary session. To keep memory alive and to fight relentlessly every possible form of hatred, discrimination and anti-Semitism, he invited Dr Charlotte Knobloch, President of the Jewish Community of Munich and Upper Bavaria, to give her Testimony. Remembering her own fate, she spoke about the new forms of anti-Semitism which lead many of Jewish people to feel unsecure in European countries.

7) Visit to Finland (9-11th of February, Helsinki)

CEC General Secretary Fr Heikki Huttunen, CEC President Rev. Christian Krieger and Ms. María Mountraki, electoral reserve for CEC Governing Board visited CEC Member Churches in Finland, strengthening relations and discussing common concerns.

The group congratulated Bishop Kaisamari Hintikka, who has been consecrated recently as the new bishop in the diocese of Espoo in Finland. Bishop Hintikka has previously served as Assistant General Secretary for Ecumenical Relations and Director of the Department for Theology and Public Witness at the Lutheran World Federation.

The group also met with Archbishop Leo of Helsinki and All Finland, Bishop Emeritus Munib Younan from the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Holy Land, Mari-Anna Auvinen, General Secretary of the Finnish Ecumenical Council, Ms Lena Kumlin, legal adviser on EU affairs to the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland and Rev. Dr Tomi Karttunen among others.

8) Seminar on AI (19th of March, Brussels)

Well prepared seminary. The last of the legislative period. A few MPs attended it. Succession of speeches of 6 minutes. A debate which do not ended with a contestation of churches and religions by the humanists.

9) Pastoral meeting (11th of April, Kehl)

Presentation of CEC's work toward the European institutions and the flyer "Europe is our future" produced for the EU parliament's election.

10)International scientific conference on freedom of religion or belief in Montenegro (2-4th of May, Podgorica)

A draft law on religious freedom by the Montenegrin government to replace the audited law from 1977, presents serious difficulties in regard to international human rights standards. These problems include registration procedures, discrimination on the basis of citizenship and the existence of territorial requirements for registration, illegitimate interference in the autonomy of churches or religious communities, and violations of property rights. On the invitation of the orthodox Metropolitane of Montenegro and littoral, CEC organised a conference to analyse and to discuss the draft law in order to identify which political rather than legal process can bring the government of Montenegro to reconsider it. All participants, layers, academics, theologians, were aware that specifically in the Balkans there is a particular interference of political and ecclesial dimensions. CEC's support in the organization of the conference and the advocacy work is very appreciated by the orthodox Metropolitane of Montenegro and littoral.

11)Conference on Europe day (9th of May, Lille)

I joined a round table on the theme "Europe and justice" in the protestant church in Lille. Reflecting on the understanding of justice, I discussed how Human rights – right for Asylum and Freedom of religion or belief – continue to be challenged in modern Europe. Father Nektarios spoke about justice on social sustainability, and Monseigneur Hérouard (President of social committee of COMECE) presented the COMECE publication *Shaping the future of work*.