



Gemeinschaft Evangelischer Kirchen in Europa (GEKE)
Community of Protestant Churches in Europe (CPCE)
Communion d'Eglises Protestantes en Europe (CEPE)

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General Secretary

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Collaboration between CEC and CPCE

Dear General Secretary, Fr Heikki,

In February, the Council of the CPCE – newly elected at the 2018 General Assembly – held its first working session. Among other things, it discussed the CPCE's representation at the European institutions and the collaboration with the CEC.

A) Cooperation between CEC and CPCE

The Council of the CPCE resolved to seek a new collaboration with the CEC and instructed the head office to draft a cooperation contract with the CEC based on the negotiations conducted so far.

The Council took note favourably of the general framework for cooperation, as agreed by the two of us at our meeting in Brussels on 18 December 2018, in order to discuss the topics for a future cooperation agreement between the CEC and the CPCE:

General framework of the cooperation

1. It was agreed that the **CEC-CPCE relationship needs to be invigorated**, both in programmatic work and with regard to visibility and contacts within the European institutions. The perspectives opened up by the General Assemblies of both organisations present new opportunities for enhancing cooperation with regard to both programme and visibility.

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2. The CEC and CPCE bolster each other, both in terms of the content of their work and external contacts, strengthening the voice of the churches in Europe. The two organisations **should never duplicate each other's work** or appear to compete with each other.
3. The General Secretaries of the CEC and the CPCE shall **meet more than once a year**.
4. The General Secretary or members of the Presidium of each body are to be **invited to council meetings of the CPCE or to meetings of the CEC's governing board** at least once a term.
5. **The CEC shall provide the channel of representation for the CPCE towards the European institutions.** The visibility of the church families in the CEC – Anglican, Protestant and Orthodox – needs to be strengthened, particularly in the European Parliament. Regular meetings about TFEU-Art17 dialogue, including the CPCE, will be helpful. This should concern the high-level meetings of religious leaders hosted by the European Commission and the Dialogue Seminars focusing on specific topics hosted by the European Parliament or the European Commission. The CEC shall organise a meeting of the church bodies in Europe who deal with TFEU-Art17 in the future.
6. **The CEC shall forward the CPCE's political statements to the European institutions and include the CPCE in its own processes of adopting statements.**
7. Upon becoming a legal entity under Austrian public law, the **CPCE shall apply to be entered into the transparency register of the European Commission.** This now legally enables the CPCE to act independently towards the European Institutions for the first time. This is not in order to compete with the CEC, but in order to strengthen Christian positions.
8. **The CPCE's head office proposes** to the Council **to leave certain programmatic areas to the CEC**, such as Protestant-Orthodox theological dialogue or digitalisation and the ensuing changes in working life. This is very welcome, as it exemplifies the possibility for the two organisations to cooperate and complement each other in specific programme areas.
9. The **CPCE's study secretary shall support the CEC's theological officer** with regard to Churches in Dialogue in well-defined areas of work.
10. The **CPCE shall consider CEC/CCME staff** when appointing its **new advisory boards**.

B) CPCE staff in Brussels

Regarding the question of a staff member to represent the CPCE vis-à-vis the European institutions and being a member of the CEC's collegium and sharing his/her work with the CEC General Secretariat, the Council of the CPCE **decided not to second a staff position in Brussels anymore.**

In practice this means:

- The CPCE will act in Brussels mainly via its member churches or the CEC.
- The Presidium and the Council of the CPCE will represent the "Protestant voice" vis-à-vis the European institutions.



- The CPCE has no staff member in Brussels any more.
- Areas of work such as social ethics and religious education at the European Schools will now be managed by the head office in Vienna.
- A staff member from the CPCE (General Secretary) will need to meet regularly with representatives of the CEC and the EKD office in Brussels in order to keep up-to-date with issues in Brussels.

The Council also agreed to reconsider this decision in two or three years after a short-term evaluation of the consequences of this new model.

C) Specific areas of work – Orthodox-Protestant dialogue

The General Assembly of the CPCE asked the Council to find further means of contact with the Orthodox churches, perhaps in conjunction with the CEC. The Council resolved to refrain from independent dialogue with the Orthodox churches during the years ahead and instead leave this sphere of work to the CEC, considering the CEC's mixture of Protestant and Orthodox churches the appropriate forum for fostering theological dialogue between these churches.

We would appreciate the CEC's agreement to continue the Orthodox-Protestant dialogues on the subject of baptism in the life of the churches in connection with mixed marriages, as we both discussed in Vienna.

Our Study Secretary, Prof. Martin Friedrich, is ready to join a preparatory group or advisory board and to support the CEC's Executive Secretary for Theological Dialogue, Katherina Pekridou, in her task.

Finally, I like to thank you for the open and friendly atmosphere in which we were able to discuss the relationship between the CEC and the CPCE these the last few months. I am looking forward to collaborating with you during the years ahead. I hope we can find an opportunity within the next few months to specify the topics for a future cooperation agreement between the CEC and the CPCE.

Warm regards, in the name of Christ,

Dr Mario Fischer
General Secretary of the CPCE