



Governing Board, Online 18 Nov 2020
Agenda Item:
Document Name:
2GB2020_DOC19 DRAFT MINUTES 18 NOV 2020
Purpose: For review

DRAFT MINUTES

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Prayers at the beginning and end of each session were led by Bishop Guli, Archimandrite Nektarios, Lea Schlenker, Metropolitan Cleopas and Christian Krieger.

Metropolitan Cleopas took the Chair for items 7, 8, 9, 10 and 11. Bishop Guli chaired item 13c. All other items were chaired by the President.

1. Roll Call

1.1 The President welcomed all participants, recalled the guidelines for the conduct of video meetings and established that the Governing Board was quorate.

The Governing Board **established** that the meeting was quorate (see Appendix 1 for the participants list).

2. Agenda

The Governing Board **took note** of the proposed agenda (see Appendix 2).

3. Minutes previous meeting (GB June 2020)

3.1 Andreas Aarflot asked for a correction to his statement as recorded in paragraph 7.2.

3.2 With this correction, the draft Minutes of the meeting held on line on 5 June 2020 were adopted (see document 2GB2020_Doc3, corrected).

The Governing Board:

- b) **corrected** paragraph 7.2 so as to read as follows: "Andreas Aarflot welcomed the new, simplified presentation of the accounts and confirmed that he had been assured by the CEC Secretariat that they were in accordance with Belgian legal requirements.";
- c) subject to this correction, **adopted** the Minutes of its previous meeting, held on line on 5 June 2020;
- d) **thanked** John Murray for his work as minute-taker.

4. Report of the President

4.1 The President presented his report as set out in document 2GB2020_Doc4 (see Appendix 3). He mentioned the following points in particular:

- now that the new General Secretary was fully operational, the President had been able to concentrate on his strictly presidential tasks;
- the pandemic had had a major impact on the life of the churches and in particular most ecumenical meetings had been cancelled, postponed or held on line;



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- the necessary recourse to video meetings meant that the Presidency was now meeting more often than in the past, and the President also had weekly on line meetings with the General Secretary.

4.2 The President drew particular attention to the fact that during recent months there had been several major political events calling for a response by CEC: the reassignment of Hagia Sophia as a mosque, the fire at the Moria migrant camp on the Greek island of Lesbos, and the armed conflict in Nagorno-Karabagh. Limitations of resources meant that CEC had found it necessary to work with other bodies on these matters (CCME in the case of Moria, WCC in the case of Nagorno-Karabagh). Although this cooperation had worked well, some regretted that CEC had not been able to respond in its own right.

4.3 Concerning CEC's close partnership with CCME, the President recalled that a mid-term review of the cooperation agreement was due to be carried out in 2021. The two organisations had confirmed that they would both hold their assemblies in Estonia at the same time in 2023. They continued to grow together but it had to be admitted that the idea of merging them into a single organisation had disadvantages as well as advantages.

4.4 The WCC General Assembly in Karlsruhe was now planned for 31 August to 8 September 2022. CEC would be participating actively in several ways:

- Katerina Pekridou is a member of the Assembly Planning Committee;
- the President is a member of the Hosting Committee;
- CEC is organising a Pre-Assembly of European delegates in Warsaw, now rescheduled for 25-27 February 2022;
- several members of the executive staff are involved in thematic workshops on topics where CEC has particular expertise.

4.5 Karine Harutyunyan spoke about the tragic armed conflict in Nagorno-Karabagh, which had just been halted by an armistice. Thousands of young Armenians had been killed or wounded. She was worried about what would happen to the historic Christian heritage in districts now being taken over by Azerbaijan. She appealed for prayers and stronger support from European churches.

4.6 Several speakers regretted that CEC had not responded more visibly and forcefully to the Nagorno-Karabagh conflict. At a time when one of our member churches (the Armenian Apostolic Church) was faced with a major crisis, it was important to offer support.

4.7 Archimandrite Nektarios was disappointed that CEC had not expressed clearer support for the Armenian Apostolic Church. The WCC statement, endorsed by CEC, remained in the realm of "political correctness". It was true that the situation, as in all such conflicts, was complex, but this should not prevent the churches from speaking out against aggression.



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4.8 Bishop Nicholas said that CEC should press the European institutions on the issues of alleged war crimes, the need for humanitarian support and the protection of holy sites. It could not be denied that the issues were complex but the Armenians felt that the Western response had been weak, thus leaving the field open for intervention by Russia and Turkey.

4.9 Anders Gadegaard said that although it was good to work with WCC, CEC needed to be active in its own right, especially vis-à-vis the European institutions. It was good that the General Secretary had written to the OSCE Minsk Group and the European External Action Service (EEAS) but if such letters were to have an impact they needed to be followed up. In a war situation affecting a Member Church CEC needed to visit the country concerned for purposes of fact-finding and support.

4.10 This point led a number of speakers to recall that CEC had expressed the intention of setting up a Peace Taskforce to monitor precisely this kind of situation. Vilmos Fischl pointed out that the relevant Thematic Group had made detailed proposals along these lines about three years ago.

4.11 Alison McDonald reminded the Board that CEC had issued a good statement on the protection of holy sites. Now was the time to make good use of this work.

4.12 Others wished that CEC had taken up a stronger and more independent line on the other recent crises: the fire in the Moria migrant camp and the reassignment of Hagia Sophia as a mosque.

4.13 The President agreed that recent events had shown that CEC was not adequately equipped to respond more actively to crisis situations affecting European countries and member churches. The Governing Board should make it a priority to think more deeply about how to improve this state of affairs.

The Governing Board:

- a) **received** the report of the President (see document 2GB2020_Doc4);
- b) **decided** to give further consideration at a later stage to the question of how CEC could respond more effectively to crisis situations.

5. Report of the General Secretary

5.1 The General Secretary presented his report (document 2GB2020_Doc5). The pandemic had made his first year a very unusual one; nonetheless CEC had continued to work effectively and he wished to congratulate the staff for their adaptability during this difficult time. His report focused on management issues, these having been his top priority. The appointment of a Head of Finance, Administration and Payroll was a major step forward; attention now had to be given to getting the



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best value for money out of CEC's resources. The work of the executive staff was described in separate papers presented under agenda item 9.

5.2 The General Secretary went on to present the Appendix to his report containing the CEC Communication Strategy 2020-2023. Working on the basis of the work of the Communication Taskforce led by Anders Gadegaard, the strategy proposed some ambitious measures for raising the churches' public voice in Europe, strengthening European church fellowship and adding to CEC's visibility.

5.3 The General Secretary concluded by thanking the President and the Governing Board for their support and prayers.

5.4 The President expressed the Governing Board's thanks to the General Secretary for an encouraging start to his term of office. He had confidence that CEC was going to be well run in the years to come.

The Governing Board:

- a) **thanked** the General Secretary for his first year's work and expressed confidence in his management of CEC administration and staff;
- b) **received** the report of the General Secretary (document 2GB2020_Doc5);
- c) **received** the annexed report on the CEC Communication Strategy.

6. CEC Finances

a. Report of the Treasurer

6a.1 In presenting his oral report, Jelle Brouwer (Treasurer) began by expressing his thanks to the General Secretary and the Head of Finance, Administration and Payroll; with their efficient support, his task had become very much simpler than in the past. He went on to draw attention to the following points made by the Budget Committee at its meeting on 2 October 2020:

- the revised budget layout, which would come into effect after the 2020 and 2021 budgets, was more transparent and understandable;
- the Committee on the initiative of the General Secretariat intended to reflect on alternative possible business plans for AssProp with the intention of making the best use of the building of the Ecumenical Centre and ensuring that each tenant paid its fair share;
- the Committee also on the initiative of the General Secretariat intended to study trends over time in the fee payments received from member churches;
- it was important to have regular contact with the major Member Church contributors while not neglecting relationships with the smaller churches;
- the Committee planned to examine the effects of the pandemic on CEC's finances; these might be more severe in 2021 than they had been in 2020;
- applications for funding from outside sources should be encouraged.



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6a.2 There was some discussion about the need to review the situation with regard to AssProp. It was suggested that an external consultant should be hired to value the building, to review the calculation of depreciation and the level of rents while accepting that existing contracts and the requirements of Belgian law must be respected. While it would not be appropriate to make a profit on the building, neither should CEC be subsidising the other partners. It was noted, however, that a re-evaluation of the property may have implications for the level of property tax.

The Governing Board:

- a) **welcomed** the General Secretariat's initiative to examine more closely the financial situation and potential of AssProp and **looked forward** to receiving further reporting on the matter from the Budget Committee;
- b) **took note** of the Treasurer's oral report;
- c) **thanked** the Treasurer, the Head of Finance, Administration and Payroll and the Budget Committee for their work.

b. September year-to-date status

6b.1 The Head of Finance, Administration and Payroll, reported on the year-to-date status of CEC's finances at the end of September 2020. Taking account of the AssProp deficit of €12,000, there was a surplus of €76,000. €735,000 had been received in Member Church fees (this had now risen to €796,000, on 16 November).

Head of Finance, Administration and Payroll explained that the contribution to CCME and the transfer to the General Assembly reserve were not yet included into the figures but will be added once the final figures are known. In the future these two expenses will be considered into the financial reporting on a pro rata basis.

It seemed likely that the year would end by breaking even or with a slight deficit, depending on a few major Member Church contributions still to be received.

6b.2 Some speakers wondered why there was a risk of a deficit in a year in which activities had been much reduced because of the pandemic. See 6b.4 below.

6b.3 The General Secretary assured the Governing Board that expenditure was very carefully monitored; he was confident that the end of year result would be satisfactory.

6b.4 Head of Finance, Administration and Payroll presented a more detailed table of income and expenditure to the end of September. The pandemic had entailed some additional expense as well as savings. Expenditure on information technology had increased as a result of the serious hacking incident which had occurred in 2019. The termination of the contracts of the former General Secretary and the former Communication Officer had also incurred additional expense.

6b.4 The Chair said that the Governing Board found the more detailed table presented to be a considerable improvement and asked for a similar format to be used in future.



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The Governing Board:

- a) **requested** the Treasurer and the Head of Finance, Administration and Payroll in future to present income and expenditure figures along the lines of the more detailed tables shown to the Governing Board;
- b) **took note** of the report on income and expenditure from January to September 2020.

c. Developments in Member Church Contributions

6c.1 The Head of Finance, Administration and Payroll presented an analysis of Member Church contributions historically over the period 2009-2020 and a general typology of the Member Churches. The analysis showed a reduction of more than 35% over the period. The analysis also showed that among the 114 Member Churches, 15 members provide 85-90% of contributions. He followed with the presentation of the typology of the 114 Member Churches over 2018-2020. Further to the typologies, while 24% pay 100% of their expected contribution, 10% provide 112% of their expected amount, 48% contribute with on average 71% of the expected amount and 18% do not pay any membership contribution.

Head of Finance, Administration and Payroll noted that it had to be recognised that some Member Churches made significant contributions in kind (e.g. by hosting meetings), which should be considered in the Member Church contribution scheme. Further investigation will be done to draw action plans for the future.

A letter had recently been sent to the Member Churches concerned reminding them of the contribution still due for the current year. It seemed justified to expect that contributions amounting to about a further €300,000 would be received by the end of the year, as some top 15 contributors distribute their share in more than one payment and some delay is noticed due to Covid-19 context.

6c.2 Archimandrite Nektarios reiterated the importance of finding a way of showing in kind contributions so as to avoid stigmatising churches which were not in a position to make a monetary contribution.

The Governing Board **took note** of the report by the Head of Finance, Administration and Payroll on trends in Member Church contributions to the budget of CEC.

d. Principles for new budget structures

6d.1 The Head of Finance, Administration and Payroll presented guidelines for a new way of structuring the budget in future on the basis of transparency, stewardship and a suitable level of analysis.

6d.2 The General Secretary thanked Head of Finance, Administration and Payroll for the enthusiastic way in which he had tackled his work since taking up his post a few months ago.



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6d.3 The President said that the Budget Committee should continue to develop its proposals along these lines with a view to presenting them for a full discussion in the Governing Board at a later date.

The Governing Board:

- a) **took note** of the oral presentation of plans for a revised budget structure and lay-out;
- b) **requested** the Budget Committee to continue working along these lines with a view to submitting its proposals for more detailed examination at a future meeting of the Governing Board.

7. Nominations Committee

7.1 Metropolitan Cleopas, Chair of the Nominations Committee presented the report of the meeting of the Nominations Committee held on 18-19 November 2020 (see document 2GB2020_Doc7). Following the withdrawal of Andrew Lane from the Thematic Group on Human Rights, the Committee had agreed to recommend that he be replaced by Natia Tsintsadze whose candidature had been submitted by the World Student Christian Federation.

7.2 The Governing Board agreed unanimously to follow the recommendation of the Nominations Committee.

The Governing Board **appointed** Natia Tsintsadze to the Thematic Group on Human Rights in replacement of Andrew Lane who had withdrawn.

8. Report from the Youth Representative

8.1 Lea Schlenker, the Board's Youth Advisor, presented her report on her activities during the period December 2019 to October 2020 (document 2GB2020_Doc8). She had concentrated on strengthening relations with existing youth networks, notably the World Student Christian Federation (WSCF) and the Ecumenical Youth Council in Europe (EYCE). This had been welcomed by the bodies concerned which, having very limited resources, were run almost entirely by volunteers. She also intended to support and liaise with the youth representatives in the thematic groups. On the other hand, she had not to pursue her initial idea of constituting a pool of youth experts on the grounds that it would not be helpful to try and set up an additional network. Finally, she recommended that the Governing Board make it a regular practice to appoint one of its members as a youth representative.

8.2 Members of the Board congratulated their youth representative on a very promising start to her work. They welcomed her decision to work primarily through existing structures.

8.3 The President invited Lea Schlenker to discuss with the General Secretary ways in which her work might be developed further.



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The Governing Board **received** the report of its Youth Representative (document 2GB2020_Doc8), Lea Schlenker, and thanked her for her work.

9. Reports from Executive Secretaries and the Communication Officer

9.1 Peter Pavlovic (Study Secretary) presented his report on work in the area of Economic and Ecological Justice & Sustainable Future (document 2GB2020_Doc9). On-line ecumenical worship services for the beginning and the end of the Season of Creation had attracted hundreds of participants worldwide. The European Green Deal being developed by the European Commission had several promising features such as the strong desire to get European citizens involved. Churches should make the most of this opportunity.

9.2 Elizabeta Kitanovic (Executive Secretary) presented her report on work in the area of Human Rights (document 2GB2020_Doc9a). The Summer School on Human Rights took place on-line (instead of being hosted by the EKD in Berlin as originally planned) and the theme was changed to: "Challenges for Human Rights in the Time of Covid-19". Videos would be produced on restrictions to religious freedom during the pandemic. In the absence of a thematic group and a staff person to deal with peace and reconciliation, she had also been involved in CEC's response to the crises arising during the past few months.

9.3 Katerina Pekridou (Executive Secretary) presented her report on work in the field of Ecclesiology and Mission (document 2GB2020_Doc9b). The work had concentrated on the following topics: different theological understandings of eucharistic communion in a time of on-line worship, mutual recognition of baptism, "migrant and minority ethnic" churches (in cooperation with CCME) as well as cooperation with the WCC and others. She also put forward a proposal by the Thematic Group on Ecclesiology and Mission for a project to be entitled "Evangelisation: practice and theological reflection in contemporary European churches".

9.4 In response to a question, Katerina Pekridou said that that the Thematic Group was collecting official documents on the subject of on-line eucharists and a series of on-line reflections was planned.

9.5 Valérie Duval-Poujol welcomed the fact that the Thematic Group on Ecclesiology and Mission was planning to work on evangelisation but asked for greater care in the language used in the project proposal to describe Evangelical and Pentecostal approaches.

9.6 Katerina Pekridou commented that the lack of Evangelical and Pentecostal members in the Thematic Group was a challenge. Few such churches were members of CEC but it was necessary to find ways of engaging with them.

9.7 Lena Kumlin (*Senior EU Policy Advisor*) presented her work on EU Policy (document 2GB2020_Doc9d). Although the pandemic had drastically changed her way of working, she had



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been able to make good progress, for example on liaison with successive EU presidencies and preparing for the Conference on the Future of Europe.

9.8 Archimandrite Nektarios expressed surprise that the Taskforce on EU Legislation, which he and many others considered to be a priority, had not yet been set up.

9.9 The General Secretary explained the reasons for delay and undertook to proceed with setting up the Taskforce before the end of the year.

9.10 Lea Schlenker asked the Secretariat to explore the possibility of including youth representation in the Taskforce.

9.11 Naveen Qayyum (Communication Officer) presented her report on CEC Communication (document 2GB2020_Doc9e). She expressed gratitude for all the ideas and advice received from the Taskforce on Communications Strategy set up by the Governing Board.

9.12 Anders Gadegaard said that the Taskforce wished to continue making a contribution to the work on communication.

9.13 The President thanked Anders Gadegaard and the Taskforce for their valuable work.

9.14 Archimandrite Nektarios welcomed the improvement in the drafting and presentation of CEC's press releases.

9.15 Finally, the President thanked all the executive staff for their reports and noted that the Governing Board would engage in more detailed discussion of the progress of CEC's current activities at the next physical meeting.

The Governing Board:

- a) **received** the activity reports of the Executive Secretaries and the Communication Officer:
 - Economic and Ecological Justice & Sustainable Future (document 2GB2020_Doc9);
 - Human Rights (document 2GB2020_Doc9a);
 - Ecclesiology and Mission (document 2GB2020_Doc9b);
 - Education, Democracy and Diversity, and Science, New Technologies and Christian Ethics (document 2GB2020_Doc9c);
 - EU Policy (document 2GB2020_Doc9d);
 - CEC Communication (document 2GB2020_Doc9e);
- b) **requested** the Secretariat to establish the Taskforce on EU Legislation and Policy as a matter of urgency;
- c) **noted** that the Communication Taskforce would continue to contribute to the work on a communication strategy;

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d) **thanked** all the staff for their hard work under the difficult circumstances of the pandemic and **agreed** to have a fuller discussion of the work in progress as soon as it was possible to have a physical meeting.

10. Report from CCME

10.1 The Chair extended a special welcome to the new Moderator of the Executive Committee of CCME, Professor Goos Minderman.

10.2 Prof Minderman mentioned some of the new issues which had come up in recent months: new flows of refugees (e.g. to the Canary Islands), the Black Lives Matter campaigns, and the fire in Moria camp. He was pleased to be working with the extensive CCME network on these and many other important issues.

10.3 Torsten Moritz (General Secretary of CCME) then reported orally on current migration issues and recent CCME activities. He considered that the EU's proposed Migration Pact had some positive points but many worrying aspects too. It failed to change the Dublin arrangements in any significant way and it offered very little real solidarity between Member States. Cooperation with CEC was going well. CCME looked forward to a meeting between its Executive Committee and the Governing Board in 2021 and to the linked General Assemblies in 2023. A mid-term review of the Cooperation Agreement would be useful although it did not seem necessary to redraft the Agreement at this stage.

10.4 Following some comments on the need to distinguish between Islam and islamism and on the impact of terrorism on attitudes towards migration, Torsten Moritz agreed that it was necessary to be compassionate without being naïve, while being very careful about the use of language.

The Governing Board **took note** of the oral report by the new Moderator of the Executive Committee of CCME, Professor Goos Minderman, and by Torsten Moritz, General Secretary.

11. Towards the 2023 General Assembly

a. Terms of Reference: Assembly Planning Committee (APC)

11.1 Andreas Aarflot presented draft terms of reference for the Assembly Planning Committee (APC) as set out in document 2GB2020_Doc11. Working with the Secretariat, he had tried to ensure that, while conforming to the requirements of the Constitution, the Standing Orders and the Rules of Procedure, the terms of reference were clearer than those of the previous APC.

11.2 Bishop Nicholas, supported by Archimandrite Nektarios, recalled that the lack of continuity between the work of the APC and the Assembly itself had been a major problem at the Novi Sad General Assembly in that the Assembly committees had found themselves having to try and function without being provided with any preliminary drafts as a starting-point for their work.

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11.3 There was general agreement that the Assembly committees must in future be provided with mandates and preliminary draft texts as a basis for their work.

11.4 Deacon Iakovos pointed out that it would also be a great help if each Assembly committee included one Governing Board member who could provide any necessary guidance as to its task.

11.5 There was some discussion about the reason why the APC needed to be dissolved some time (the draft proposed three months) in advance of the General Assembly. The President explained that, in the immediate run-up to the General Assembly, the Governing Board, the Assembly Coordinator and the Secretariat needed to take over the implementation of the decisions of the APC and all other preparatory work. However, to ensure continuity, the draft terms of reference provided (paragraph 2.9.3) that the APC could continue to offer any necessary assistance with the final preparations.

11.6 Noting that the APC needed plenty of time to carry out its work, Anders Gadegaard urged the Secretariat to send out a request for candidates very soon so that the Governing Board would be in a position to appoint the APC at its next meeting.

11.7 The President said that the letter requesting candidatures would be sent out at the beginning of 2021.

11.8 The question was raised as to what form the General Assembly might take if the pandemic was continuing to require restrictions on meetings. It was agreed that this matter would be considered by the Presidency at its next meeting and discussed with Andreas Aarflot. The Presidency would report back at the next meeting of the Governing Board.

11.9 The draft terms of reference as set out in were adopted unanimously.

11.10 The General Secretary pointed out that the Timeframe annexed to document 2GB2020_Doc11 did not form part of the terms of reference as such. The Secretariat would now amend it to reflect the points made in discussion.

The Governing Board:

- a) **recalled** the importance of providing the Assembly committees with clear mandates and preparing in advance preliminary draft texts to serve as a starting point for their work;
- b) **agreed** that the letter calling for candidates for membership of the Assembly Planning Committee should be sent out early in 2021;
- c) given the risk that the pandemic might still be a problem in 2023, **requested** the Presidency to discuss how the arrangements for the General Assembly might need to be adapted, and to **report** back on this question at the meeting of the Governing Board in May 2021;



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d) **adopted** the terms of reference of the Assembly Planning Committee (APC) as set out in document 2GB2020_Doc11, noting that the Timeframe in the Appendix to Document 11 was not part of the terms of reference and would be amended by the Secretariat in line with the points made in the discussion.



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Appendix 1

PARTICIPANTS LIST

- Rev Christian **Krieger**, Union of Protestant Churches in Alsace-Lorraine (President)
- H.E. Metropolitan **Cleopas** of Sweden and All Scandinavia, Ecumenical Patriarchate (Vice President)
- Rt Revd Dr **Guli Francis-Dehqani**, Church of England (Vice President)

Members

- Mr Andreas Henriksen **Aarflot**, Church of Norway
- Deacon Iakovos **Andriopoulos**, Church of Greece
Electoral Reserve for Very Rev Archimandrite Ignatios Sotiriadis, Church of Greece
- Rt Revd Nicholas **Baines**, Church of England
- Rev Jelle **Brouwer**, United Protestant Church in Belgium
- Rev Anne **Burghardt**, Estonian Evangelical Lutheran Church
- Dr Valérie **Duval-Poujol**, Federation of Evangelical Baptist Churches of France
- Dr Vilmos **Fischl**, Ecumenical Council of Churches in Hungary
Electoral Reserve for Ms Zsuzsanna Répás, Reformed Christian Church in Slovakia
- Dean Anders Borre **Gadegaard**, Evangelical-Lutheran Church in Denmark
- Ms Karine **Harutyunyan**, Armenian Apostolic Church
Electoral reserve for Bishop Hovakim Manukyan, Armenian Apostolic Church
- H.E. Metropolitan **Joseph** of the Romanian Orthodox Metropolis of Southern and Western Europe
- OKR Frank **Kopania**, Evangelical Church in Germany
- Prof Petr **Kratochvil**, Evangelical Church of Czech Brethren
- Very Rev Archimandrite **Nektarios Ioannou**, Church of Cyprus
- Rev Alison **McDonald**, Church of Scotland
- Dr Aleksandra **Pistalo**, Serbian Orthodox Church
- Ms Lea-Kathrin **Schlenker**, Evangelical Church in Germany
- Ms Emma **Weaver**, Methodist Church of Great Britain



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Apologies

- Bishop **Hovakim** Manukyan, Armenian Apostolic Church
- Very Rev Archimandrite Ignatios **Sotiriadis**, Church of Greece
- Ms Zsuzsanna **Répás**, Reformed Christian Church in Slovakia

Staff

- Ms Véronique **Engels**, Assistant to the General Secretary
- Dr Elizabeta **Kitanović**, Executive Secretary
- Ms Lena **Kumlin**, Senior EU Policy Advisor
- Rev Sören **Lenz**, Executive Secretary
- Mr Georgios **Maglis**, Head of Finance, Administration & Payroll
- Rev Dr Peter **Pavlovič**, Study Secretary
- Ms Katerina (Aikaterini) **Pekridou**, Executive Secretary
- Ms Naveen **Qayyum**, Communication Assitant
- Dr Jørgen Skov **Sørensen**, General Secretary

Guest

- Prof. Dr Goos D. **Minderman**, Moderator – Churches' Commission for Migrants in Europe
- Dr Torsten **Moritz**, General Secretary – Churches' Commission for Migrants in Europe

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Minute taker

- Rev John **Murray**



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 - a. Terms of Reference: Assembly Planning Committee (APC)



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Appendix 3

REPORT OF THE PRESIDENT

Check against delivery

Summary

In the present period of the pandemic crisis, CEC is functioning well. The organisation's office is administratively fully operational. However, the impact of this crisis will have some consequences on the work that will have been accomplished in view of the next General Assembly.

The other strategic issue that emerges from this report concerns the high expectations addressed to CEC during important political events that call for its action. The treatment of these expectations, which are often contradictory, underlines simultaneously the limitations of our own resources, the importance of collaborations and partnerships as well as the limits of the latter.

General remark

For the period from May to November 2020, the positioning of the President and his work rhythm has again changed radically. There are two reasons for this.

Firstly, CEC has now had a full time Secretary General since the beginning of 2020. After a phase of discovery, Jorgen Sorensen is fully operational, very diligent to this task, which he is increasingly taking the measure of, despite the restrictions that have impacted international cooperation since the pandemic crisis. With the General Secretary taking up his duties fully, the President can concentrate on his duties, but also better assume his responsibilities within his own church.

Secondly, the pandemic crisis has had a significant impact on churches, not only in their local mission of celebrating God and witnessing to the Gospel, but also in their international ecumenical cooperation. Indeed, all meetings scheduled for 2020 and partially those for 2021 have either been cancelled, postponed, suspended, or reduced to a short videoconference format. To mention a few: The *General European Baptist Congress*, originally scheduled for September 2020 has been postponed to 2022. The ECEN General Assembly, originally scheduled for the end of August 2020 has now been postponed to May 2021. The Hosting Committee of the WCC General Assembly has been reduced to a 3-hour videoconference format. The G20 interfaith meeting in Riyadh and CEC's Summer school were organised and hold in the form of a videoconference. Visits to member churches on the occasion of their synod or assembly have been postponed.



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While work continues, the hugs, coffee taken together, discussions at the table, singing and praying together are sorely missed. Real bursts of laughter are rare in videoconferencing. All in all, a period for me personally, with a slower pace of work for CEC, practically without travel, with the only fatigue caused by the succession of videoconferences.

Two lines of work

Considering that the work of representing and visiting Member Churches has almost been suspended, two main axes characterise the work of the President. The specific institutional functioning of CEC and the handling of politically sensitive events which concentrate sometimes divergent expectations of action on the part of the CEC.

Institutional functioning of CEC

Since becoming familiar with videoconferencing, the Presidency has become accustomed to meeting several times. The usual one-day meeting halfway between two Governing Boards is dedicated to follow-up work and the preparation of the agenda. Other meetings are convened when the need for consultation so requires. For example, the reassignment of Saint Sophia as a mosque required several short virtual meetings. I will come back to this later.

The main impetus of the institutional work lies in the daily accompaniment of the General Secretary. We continue to have regular weekly videoconferences and add as much contact as necessary during the week. The weekly meetings on Mondays at 8.30 a.m. give rise to an exchange of information, a consultation on current issues, methodological arbitrations, a distribution of tasks if necessary, a comparison of our respective analyses of CEC's situation, regular exchange on the functioning of the office and the situation of staff. In general, it should be stressed that communication between the President and the General Secretary continues to be good and fluid.

During the summer period, we took 2 days to review our cooperation after 6 months and to examine different issues at stake for CEC (staff review, CEC's Call & Witness paper methodology, evaluation of CEC's cooperation, etc.).

Political events and developments that call for action

Several political events during the last 6 months have concentrated important and sometimes contradictory expectations towards CEC. Let us mention the reassignment of Hagia Sophia as a mosque in Turkey which has created strong emotions within Christianity, not only orthodox, but also at the level of international organisations.

Let us mention here the fire at Camp Moria housing 12,000 migrants on the Greek island of Lesbos.



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Finally, let us mention the armed conflict in Nagorno-Karabagh, the suffering it has awakened and the wounds inflicted, not only on the Armenian people, but on all victims of this armed conflict.

In his report, the General Secretary describes how these expectations have been managed, the difficulty that these expectations represent for our organisation, which is not endowed with the resources to treat them as they deserve. I would like to report here on the working mechanisms that have been put in place to take action, because each time we have had to mobilise resources from outside the office. The advice of the Vice-President, Metropolitan Cleopas, has been invaluable in defining our strategy concerning the reassignment of Hagia Sophia.

The expertise and reactivity of CCME, notably by publishing an interpellation from its General Secretary, was relayed by CEC's communication service. However, it seemed essential to me from the outset to take advantage of this tragedy to work on a more fundamental advocacy on the migration issue, which CEC signed with other organisations. The close collaboration with Peter Prove, director of the WCC Commission of the Churches on International Affairs, and the expertise of his department, which has been monitoring the situation in Nagorno-Karabagh for years, were valuable in understanding the comprehensible emotion of the Armenian Apostolic Church.

I mention this point because the choices we made, namely to send letters to political organisations working on these issues and to relay the communication of partners, are also subject to criticism. CEC must act by itself. It is the voice of the European Churches! It cannot hide behind the expertise, however remarkable it may be, of a partner. Sometimes, some Member Churches have chosen to speak more loudly and therefore more audibly. The Governing Board must keep these questions in mind, both when it is reflecting strategically on the profile of the organisation and when defining the modalities of the partnerships it engages in.

Cooperation with close partners

In December 2017, CEC signed a partnership agreement with CCME going until 2024. Covering an unusually long period of time for a cooperation agreement, the CEC General Secretary had an exchange with the General Secretary of CCME to discuss the prospects, especially following the discussions on holding the 2023 general assemblies at the same time and in the same place.

We have agreed:

- For the existing CEC-CCME agreement: This should be reviewed in the first half of 2021 and if deemed necessary, amended. Art 9 of the agreement provides for this.
- For the GA 2023:
 - CEC and CCME will organize their 2023 GA in the same location (Estonia)
 - The two GAs will have a common thematic session



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

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- the two organisations will perform a joint symbolic act.

The intention of the refoundation of CEC, decided in Lyon in 2009, implemented with a new CEC constitution in Budapest 2013, is an integration of CCME into CEC. We have been able to appreciate that there are strong arguments in favour of maintaining two separate organisations.

- CCME has more freedom in its advocacy work than a more traditional ecumenical church organisation and due to its decision-making structures can act faster.
- Some National Councils of Churches are members of CCME while they are not members of CEC (they are CEC partners).
- The CEC Constitution does not provide any voting status for churches' specialised ministries and diaconal work institutions (they can conditionally apply for status as Organisation's in Partnership).
- There is a concern that the financial commitment of CEC and CCME Member Churches will be reduced as a result of a merger and costs higher due to different salary levels.

However, in view of the emotion aroused by the fire at Camp Moria, as was the case during the migration crisis in the summer of 2015, a number of voices regretted that there was no stronger statement from an organisation of ecclesial cooperation such as CEC. It will be important to clarify in the near future the strategic direction of this cooperation.

The WCC General Assembly in Karlsruhe, originally scheduled for September 2021, is now scheduled for 31 August to 8 September 2022. Its organisation is taken care of by two structures, on the one hand the Assembly Planning Committee reporting to the WCC in Geneva and covering the coordination of the overall running of the general assembly, the organisation of thematic and business sessions, and finances. On the other hand, a Hosting Committee, chaired by Bishop Petra Bosse-Hubert and Bishop Jochen Cornelius Bundschuh, is responsible for the local programme for General Assembly delegates and visitors expected to attend the event, and for the organisation of the programme of visits planned for 3 and 4 September in the vicinity of Karlsruhe.

I would like to point out here CEC's involvement in the organisation of this important event. Katerina Pekridou is a member of the Assembly planning committee. CEC is organising a Pre-Assembly of European delegates in Warsaw, now rescheduled for 25-27 February 2022. CEC has also made proposals for a plenary session on Europe Day. Several members of the executive staff are already mobilised for the hosting programme that will propose 11 thematic work places, some of which are in line with the essential elements of the CEC strategic plan, "together in hope and witness".