



Conference of European Churches
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21. November 2016

**Initial response to
"What future for Europe?" from the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Denmark**

Dear friends at CEC,

Thank you for sending your deliberations on the current situation in Europe in *What future for Europe* as a means to think through ideas and priorities as we approach the next CEC assembly. We understand the paper as a helpful and timely discussion starter. The issues being raised need no naïve and petty answers. We are dealing with something that may be about fundamental changes to our self-understanding of Europe and ourselves as Europeans and our position in a now globalized world, where our old privileges are removed and it becomes visible what is hiding underneath our apparent layer of humanism when global developments implies that even we and our ways of living on top of the world must change.

We discussed the paper in our recent Europe working group meeting and want to give some basic feedback for the continued process:

1. We find that the notion of "European values" have eroded and is somewhat unclear in the paper and therefore needs further clarification.
2. We find that it is important to leave ample room for the EU skepticism. EU may not be the answer to our problems - in the same way Americans did not think that Clinton and Washington bureaucrats was the answer, which they currently prefer. So while maintaining EU vision we need to work alongside the EU sceptics in finding appropriate responses.
3. The role of the churches in this must be made much more visible. We know that it is part of the upcoming dialog up to and after CEC 2018 to work on this. However, the next version will benefit from being candid and challenging in this regard. Even to the point that awakens dispute and heated reaction.
4. The document seems to lean too much towards Western Europe. What is the voice of Eastern Europe?

5. As to the next step it will be helpful with some more keen theological reflection that raises the issues theologically/contextually above our ordinary ecclesiastical or national/regional perspectives. We think of contribution from outstanding theologians like Miroslav Volf and thinkers of his caliber that help us get beyond narrow confines. We do not claim to have people of that league in Denmark. But we would point to our seasoned ecumenical theologian Peter Lodberg, University of Aarhus as a person that carries some of the same ability to relate theological reflection to current world issues.

With these opening remarks, we would like to see a more daring theological and church-related next version of the paper presented for further challenge and discussion in the CEC fellowship of churches towards the 2018 assembly.

Yours Sincerely



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