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Communiqué of the Pre-Assembly Youth Event 2018, Novi Sad

We, young Christians from all over Europe have gathered for a Conference of European Churches (CEC) Pre-Assembly Youth Event, from 28 to 31 May 2018 in Novi Sad (Serbia), under the theme "You shall be my witnesses" (Acts 1:8). We had the opportunity to reflect on our contribution for the future of Europe plenary, our participation in the Church and to share the concerns and priorities of our generation, as well as our experiences of the themes of Witness, Justice, and Hospitality.

Following the discussions and interactions that were held, we, the participants of the CEC Pre-Assembly Youth Event would like to suggest the next steps in Churches' joint action:

1. As young European Christians witnessing injustice, we support CEC in continuing its efforts in working for justice and advocating for just policies on the European level, including European Institutions and the Council of Europe. For example, but not limited to, working on climate issues that will have a major impact on today's and future generations, collaborating for more human migration policies, and advocating for more accessibility for travelling to the European Union for non-EU citizens.
2. We call the General Assembly to intensify collaboration with the Churches' Commission for Migrants in Europe (CCME) to advocate for legal ways to enter Europe as refugees and to fight against reasons for flight instead of supporting oppressing governments financially and through arms trades.
3. As the Pre-Assembly Youth we strongly recognise the need to give means for interreligious youth dialogue in Europe. We call for CEC, as the home based, privileged religious institution to stand shoulder-to-shoulder with Jewish, Muslim, and other faith communities that are facing growing antisemitism, Islamophobia, and other forms of discrimination. Through interreligious dialogue, both on the grassroots—including within the Churches—and higher levels, we can work against xenophobia, violence, marginalisation and radicalisation, and for peace and mutual understanding.
4. We explicitly invite the youth organisations of the Roman Catholic Church to participate in future Pre-Assembly Youth Events as stewards.
5. We express our concern about the age and gender inequality during the General Assembly. We demand the implementation of a quota system to ensure the significantly increased number of youth delegates in Church delegations who will have a voting right at the General Assembly. We call for CEC to have more time for youth to present their ideas during the General Assembly.
6. We encourage the Governing Board to elect one person from the board acting as youth liaison within CEC and at the European level. Every time CEC is working on an issue related to youth, youth must be consulted. The liaison and European youth organisations should decide together what is relevant for youth to be consulted about. We advise that CEC develops a youth strategy and treats young people as a resource. CEC needs to ensure that youth organisations are financially and structurally equipped to respond to participation requests.
7. We suggest CEC use higher youth quotas in all working areas and mechanisms. We recommend that at least 20% of members of each working mechanism is under 30. Working mechanisms are not valid without youth representation and that meetings are organised in a way that youth are able to attend, including by not organising meetings during working and study weeks.

8. We, as the Pre-Assembly Youth commit to support European Christian Environmental Network (ECEN) work to raise awareness and participation in environmental concerns. We recommend CEC to adopt the Sustainable Development Goals in CEC policy in a way that is accountable to the General Assembly, and also on the basis of their sustainability strategy. We further suggest CEC to strengthen its policy for delegates to donate to a fund for neutralising the ecological footprint of traveling to the assemblies. ECEN can also be consulted on how to arrange eco-management. We call CEC to support environmental programmes at the local level and to increase the use of digital versions of documents during the General Assembly. We suggest that CEC should start a thematic reference group on the issue of digital transformation and the consequences for our Churches and societies within Europe. We further recommend CEC to continue the eco-management of assemblies, following the excellent example in Novi Sad in 2018. For example, putting more effort into eco-management at every event, by making a bigger group impact with no meat products, and offering an option at hotels to not change sheets and towels every day. Finally, we suggest that the CEC office is managed in a more eco-friendly ways that already exist in Member Churches and Organisations in Partnership.

9. We want the Pre-Assembly Youth Event to be kept in future General Assemblies.

Finally we thank the delegations, Churches, the CEC Secretariat for supporting us in taking part in the event and raising our voice. We would like to express our gratitude to all Serbian Member Churches of CEC and the people of Serbia for their wonderful hospitality.

The 2018 Pre-Assembly Youth Event participants