

From Trondheim to Lyon
CEC Activity Report to the 13th Assembly

Chapter I:
General Secretary's Report

At the beginning of this Report, I wish to express my thanks for the interest in the life and work of CEC which is shown by all who will have the opportunity to read through it and reflect upon it. In particular, thanks are due to those who have set time aside to come as delegates to the 13th CEC Assembly in Lyon and so help shape our future. I pay tribute later in this section to the hard work and dedication of those who work for CEC as Staff. It is increasingly clear to me too that the work of CEC could not go forward without the commitment to our common life shown by individuals, groups and Churches throughout Europe. For that CEC is immensely grateful.

Among those who in the last years have shown particular commitment to the life of CEC have been those who were elected in Trondheim to membership of the CEC Central Committee, and not least those who were elected by Central Committee to be our President, Vice-President and Deputy Vice-President, Rev. Jean-Arnold de Clermont, His Beatitude Archbishop Anastasios of Tirana and All Albania and the Very Rev. Margarethe Isberg respectively. To them especially, but also to all members of the CEC Presidium and Central Committee, CEC is greatly indebted for their hard work and commitment in the years since the 12th Assembly in Trondheim.

Under the terms of the CEC Constitution, it is for the Central Committee to execute the decisions of the CEC Assembly and to ensure that the day to day business of the Conference is carried out. In order to fulfill its functions, Central Committee has met as follows: Geneva, December 2003; Prague, September 2004; Crete, June 2005; Londonderry/Derry (Ireland), May 2006; Vienna, November 2007; and Cyprus 2008

In accordance with the CEC Constitution, the Presidium has also met between meetings of Central Committee. Apart from meetings in the context of Central Committee, it has met as follows. Hannover, May 2004; Geneva, December 2005; Cartigny/Geneva, April 2007; Brussels, May 2008; and Tirana, February 2009.

The Central Committee, elected by the 12th CEC Assembly in Trondheim, has worked to address as many as possible of the issues which were signalled by the Assembly as priorities for the years 2003-2009. Many of these are dealt with in the Reports from the

CEC Commissions (see following chapters). I set out here some other issues which Central Committee has been invited by the General Secretariat to address.

1. Integration with the Churches' Commission for Migrants in Europe (CCME)

The 12th Assembly asked that CEC and CCME pursue the question of integration. In the succeeding years, the process of negotiations continued. In 2007, in the context of the meeting of the CEC Central Committee in Vienna, a Memorandum of Agreement was signed between CEC and CCME which set out the basis on which integration between the two organisations would take place. At simultaneous meetings in Cyprus in October 2008, the CCME Assembly voted to amend its own legal documents in such a way that CCME would become a Commission of CEC; and CEC Central Committee voted to amend its own legal documents, as well as its own staffing plan in order to recognize CCME as a Commission of CEC.

It was recognized by the CEC-CCME Negotiation Group that some issues would still need to be addressed even once the integration had taken effect. A group continues to work on the question of harmonization of the CEC and CCME salary scales. The integration with CCME raises, for CEC, issues in relation to how it defines its own membership. Technical issues around the question of the legal status of the two organisations are still under investigation.

However, with these issues still to be resolved, it is clear that the integration between CEC and CCME represents an important moment in the life of both organisations. From the perspective of CEC, it is good that this development takes place in the 50th anniversary of our founding. It is an important sign that at this moment, as we look back to the achievements of the last fifty years CEC, looking forward with hope, is also building for the future. Building on our shared work of recent years, the integration between CEC and CCME has positive effects for both organisations. For CCME, it gives access to the wider constituency which the membership and associated membership of CEC represents. For CEC, it strengthens our witness by enabling us to maintain and develop that clear voice on issues which are at the heart of our common European life, not least issues surrounding migration, which has already been enabled by the close partnership of the last years with CCME.

Both the CEC Central Committee and the CCME Assembly in Cyprus endorsed the concept that the merged CEC/CCME should, as an early sign of their integration invite the churches of Europe to designate the year 2010 as the Year of Migration. This year would be one in which member churches and organisations would actively promote issues surrounding migration. The intention is to assist them in finding ways in which they can both engage with and give great profile to these issues within their own contexts.

2. The structure of CEC

The Trondheim Assembly asked for a careful look at the way in which CEC is organised. In the light of the recommendations from Trondheim, a Restructuring Group was established in order to look carefully at what sort of structure would best serve CEC in order to enable it to operate most effectively. It is fair to say that achieving consensus on this issue proved rather more difficult than had been envisaged. However, Central Committee at its meeting in October 2008 agreed the Paper which represents the final Report from this Group. In broad terms, this envisages a Structure in which there would be:

- transparency concerning the way in which the various parts of CEC act together;
- clarity concerning the issue of the question of which decisions are taken by whom and at what level;
- clarity as to the ways in which the various parts of CEC relate to each other.

It presents CEC as organised around a General Secretariat and three Commissions, defines the role and competence of the General Secretary in his/her own capacity, provides an instrument (the Senior Management Team) for ensuring coherence within the work of CEC and retains for the CEC Central Committee its function of exercising general oversight of the work of CEC between Assemblies (with the Assembly as the highest authority within CEC).

The Trondheim Assembly also recommended that CEC should again investigate the question of the appropriate location for the offices of CEC. Further work undertaken on the financial implications of transferring the major body of CEC's work to Brussels has again confirmed that such a move would, in financial terms, have a neutral effect (although the most recent such report, in the light of currency fluctuations experienced in 2008, indicated that the impact of moving to Brussels might in overall terms be negative).

What appears to be clear is that the financial arguments are not so strong in either direction as to make them the governing consideration. The decision which needs to be taken is primarily strategic. Is the work of CEC best served, will CEC be most effective, by concentrating its resources on one site or are there still arguments, for example, for retaining its presence in Geneva? Central Committee has asked that it be enabled to address this issue at its final meeting before the Lyon Assembly in order that the question of location can feature in the Assembly's deliberations.

3. Relationship with Associated Youth Organisations

The Trondheim Assembly asked that CEC review, and define more closely, the relationship with its Associated Youth Organisations (AYOs) in order to build up the participation of young people at every level of CEC's life. Following the

recommendation of the Assembly, CEC Central Committee established a Youth Participation Group which was asked to analyze current features and trends of youth participation in ecumenical life in Europe today, to find ways of strengthening cooperation between CEC and ecumenical youth organizations and to propose ways of strengthening youth participation in everyday life of CEC in general, so as to shape the future relationship between CEC and its AYO: World Student Christian Federation (WSCF Europe), Ecumenical Youth Council of Europe (EYCE), Syndesmos, YMCA and YWCA. This resulted in a Memorandum of Cooperation which was agreed by CEC Central Committee at its meeting in Vienna in 2007. This identified specific ways in which CEC and its AYO could work together, and timescales within which particular goals could be achieved.

The Memorandum of Cooperation in particular envisaged that CEC and the AYO would work together closely in the preparation of CEC's 13th Assembly in Lyon. The AYO have been represented on the Assembly Planning Committee. The Joint Committee established between CEC and the AYO has worked to shape the contribution of young people to the programme of the Lyon Assembly. In addition, this committee has worked to find ways in which CEC can support AYO in relation to churches and organisations which are reducing or withdrawing their funding.

4. Solidarity and Women Desk

In the early part of the period leading from the 12th CEC Assembly to Lyon, the General Secretariat was home to a Solidarity and Women Desk, occupied by Rev. Dr Eva-Sibylle Vogel-Mfato. The desk pursued a number of themes: violence against women, trafficking in women, inter-church service, diaconia, migration issues. Following Trondheim, two consultations were organised: a consultation on Christian Women in Contextual Inter-Confessional Dialogue in Volos, Greece (organised jointly with the European Forum of Christian Women), and a Workshop on Trafficking in Women organised jointly with CAT (Christians Against Trafficking), the Moldovan Orthodox Church (Moscow Patriarchate) and the Moldova Partnership Programme in Chisinau, Moldova.

In addition, Rev. Dr Vogel-Mfato represented and enabled CEC to contribute to the wider debate on gender issues within the European Churches, not least at the 2nd European Womens' Synod and at the yearly National Coordinators Meetings of the European Women's Forum.

After a report commissioned by the Central Committee, and in the framework of the overall restructuring of CEC, the decision was taken by Central Committee meeting in Prague in 2004 to close the desk, also for financial reasons. Rev. Dr Vogel-Mfato continued working with CEC until June 2005.

5. Gender issues

Following the recommendations of the Trondheim Assembly, Central Committee at its meeting in Crete in 2005 agreed that CEC should establish as soon as possible a Gender Desk with a Gender Advisory Group to support it. The Gender Advisory Group has now been established and has been focussing on defining a job description for this post which would attract funding from member churches and from elsewhere. Two so-called Gender Brainstorming Sessions have taken place in order to facilitate this process. A proposed job description has been brought on separate occasions to CEC Presidium and to CEC Central Committee. CEC Central Committee has asked for more work to be done on this and has in particular asked that Gender Mainstreaming within CEC be a particular focus of the task given to the executive. Work proceeds on this issue and potential partners are being sought. An up to date report on progress will be made to the Assembly.

As requested at Trondheim, the Ecumenical Forum of European Christian Women and the European Forum of Christian Men have been closely involved in this work.

6. Relations with other ecumenical bodies

There is a separate section in this report on the relationship between CEC and the Council of European Bishops Conferences (CCEE). Relations between CEC and the Community of Protestant Churches in Europe (CPCE) are strengthened by our joint sponsoring of the “Healing of Memories” Project, which is reported on in the section of this report dealing with the work of the Churches in Dialogue Commission. The work of the CEC Church and Society Commission is also strengthened by CPCE sharing with CEC the services of the Rev. Dieter Heidtmann.

A particular concern of the Trondheim Assembly was that the relationship between different ecumenical actors within Europe needed to be clarified. This related especially to the relationship between CEC and the World Council of Churches (WCC). In the years since 2003, the WCC has also been reassessing its own regional role, not least within Europe. There appears now to be a greater readiness on the part of WCC, not least in Europe, to recognise that the regional ecumenical bodies such as CEC have a key role to play in fostering regional ecumenical life. In Europe, we have been working together on several issues affecting common member churches in Europe, although this has been made more difficult by the dissolution of the former WCC Europe Desk and the dispersal of issues affecting Europe across other desks within WCC. Colleagues within WCC, however, show readiness to consult with us on issues which impact on CEC or on European Ecumenical life in general.

At the time of writing this report, CEC and WCC are exploring ways of working together in relation to the WCC office in Eastern Europe as well as in relation to the current and former WCC Eastern European Round Tables, and their regular coming together as the European Regional Partnership Group. At the request of CEC Central Committee, the establishing of a liaison group between CEC and WCC, to enable formal consultation between the two bodies, is also being explored.

One aspect of the life of the WCC on which CEC has raised concerns in recent years has been the fostering of ACT Development (soon likely to merge with ACT International). This initiative by larger church based and other Christian Development Agencies to come together in promoting high quality development work based on shared values, to promote common reflection on their development work, to undertake joint development programmes and to work collaboratively in advocacy, has caused concern for two reasons in particular. Firstly, it has the potential to cause separation between church-based and Christian development agencies and the wider ecumenical movement. This has been an especial concern of regional ecumenical organisations in the global south, and one which from the outset of ACT Development they (and CEC with them) have sought to voice. They, and we, are not certain that this has been heard. In this, CEC has sought to be a voice on behalf of the Regional Ecumenical Organisations (REO's) in the Global South who maintain that they have not been sufficiently consulted on the emergence of ACT Development. In relation to this, there is real concern that the churches as churches will not find representation on the governing bodies of the unified ACT.

Secondly, it has become apparent that the unified ACT has been developing its policy on advocacy without reference to those already exercising advocacy in the area of development issues. There is a concern, on the part of CEC especially, that the advocacy role of the CEC Church and Society Commission in relation to the European Institutions has not been sufficiently taken into account.

CEC continues in dialogue with representatives of ACT in order to work through these concerns.

7. National Councils of Churches

CEC has continued to facilitate annual meetings with General Secretaries and other leading representatives of European National Councils of Churches (NCCs). These meetings take place on the initiative of the NCCs, with the agenda planned by them, but CEC is glad to be able to work with the NCCs to provide support for the planning of the meeting as well as facilitating the meetings themselves. The meetings provide a valuable opportunity for CEC to be able to consult with those representing member, and other, churches at national and regional level as well as to hear from them their own perception of the ecumenical context. Themes discussed have included mission and evangelism, secularisation, the EEA3 and relations between NCCs and Orthodox Churches, as well as general discussion of the work of CEC and of ecumenical priorities in the nations and regions represented in the meeting.

CEC is grateful for the continued support for these meetings by those who attend year by year. We are especially grateful for the opportunity which these meetings give us to share the latest developments in CEC and in the European ecumenical life generally as well as to receive advice on our work and priorities.

8. Membership of CEC

Since the Trondheim Assembly, the number of member churches in CEC has increased by one. The Central Committee in Vienna in 2007 admitted into membership the Orthodox Church of Estonia. At the time of writing this report, the application for membership into CEC by the Estonian Orthodox Church of the Moscow Patriarchate remains pending. This application was considered by CEC Central Committee in Cyprus in October 2008, but no final decision was taken. In response to Central Committee's failure to take a decision on this application, the Russian Orthodox Church has suspended participation in the life of CEC. Work is proceeding to resolve this issue before the CEC Assembly meets in Lyon.

Since Trondheim, the Federation of Evangelical Lutheran Churches of Switzerland and the Principality of Liechtenstein has been admitted into associate membership of CEC.

9. CEC and CCEE

In the years since Trondheim, CEC has continued its long standing partnership with the Council of European Bishops' Conferences (CCEE). In the years 2003-9, this relationship has borne fruit in two particular ways: the Sibiu Assembly and the work for relations with Muslims in Europe.

9.1. The Third European Ecumenical Assembly

One of the key issues which was before the current Central Committee was the decision to endorse and then, together with our Roman Catholic colleagues in CCEE, to organise, the 3rd European Ecumenical Assembly (EEA3) in Sibiu/Hermannstadt/Nagyszeben from 4-9 September 2007. It represents the most visible and significant sign of CEC's partnership with CCEE during the years 2003-9

The successor to the two previous Assemblies in Basel in 1989 and in Graz in 1997, the EEA3 took place in a more sober ecumenical atmosphere than its predecessors. It was conceived as part of a process, an ecumenical pilgrimage, which embraced national and regional encounters in countries and regions of Europe as well as two formal ecumenical encounters, one in Rome in January 2006 and another in Wittenberg in March 2007. The response to the call to member churches and ecumenical networks to stage regional and national encounters in preparation for Sibiu was very pleasing. The response was in fact rather greater than had been anticipated and gave hope that one of the aspirations for the Assembly, that it would leave behind it in the nations and regions of Europe an ecumenical legacy, had the possibility to be achieved.

Delegates gathered in Sibiu under the theme "The Light of Christ shines upon all, hope for renewal and unity in Europe". The central gathering point of the Assembly proceedings was a large tent in which delegates gathered each morning to reflect together

on an aspect of this theme - the Light of Christ and the Church, the Light of Christ and Europe, and the Light of Christ and the World. During the course of the afternoon, Fora enabled these discussions to be taken further in small groups, organised around nine themes, including creation, globalization and peace. Hearings and informal encounters enabled discussion of individual topics. Above all, the Assembly offered varied and much appreciated opportunities for common worship, highlights of which included the opportunity to share in Orthodox Vespers in the Orthodox Cathedral in Sibiu, the common prayer devised for each day, as well as the opportunity on the final day of the Assembly to share in the worship of local churches. Amongst the distinguished guests who took part in the Assembly were Mr José Manuel Barroso, President of the EU Commission, His All Holiness the Ecumenical Patriarch and Bishop Wolfgang Huber, Chair of the EKD Council. The Assembly Programme, as well as the Message which was sent out to the Churches of Europe from the Assembly, are set out elsewhere in this report.

Following the Assembly, a range of those who had been present in Sibiu were invited to share their own evaluation of the Assembly. An evaluation was also carried out by the CEC Central Committee at its meeting in Vienna in 2007.

The general tone was positive. The fact that the Assembly had taken place, and that it had enabled the major Christian traditions to speak to each other in so visible a way was welcomed. The convening of the EEA3 was seen as a sign that there is still a strong will for the ecumenical journey to continue and for offering a challenge to undertake a renewed witness in Europe. Value was also attached to the fact that, with all the difficulties which the venue presented, the Assembly had taken place in Eastern Europe, and specifically in Romania and its predominantly Orthodox context. The visible presence of key leaders from the European Institutions was also welcomed. Certain aspects of the Assembly were particularly affirmed by those who responded. The prayer and worship during the Assembly were valued and some particular moments, such as the common prayer in the Tent each morning, the Opening and Closing acts and the Iona and Taizé services, were particularly mentioned as being appreciated. The Forums and the Hearings in which members had taken part were largely positively assessed, with some question marks over opportunities for participation in the Forums and on choice of speakers in Hearings. The work of the CEC staff and those who worked with them was also, rightly, applauded with much appreciation for what they achieved and for the hard work which lay behind it. The work of the stewards, too, was valued. There was much affirmation for the Message to the Assembly from the young people present. Particular aspects of the Final Assembly Message were also valued. There was however concern over the fact that a late intervention meant that the final wording of the Message presented to the Assembly did not completely reflect the final text agreed upon by the Message Committee and that further discussions between CEC and CCEE were needed after the Assembly before an agreed text could be published.

There were certain notes of regret running through the comments. There was regret that only a small number of women had a visible role with the Plenary Sessions. There was also regret that more time had not been found for contribution by young people to the

Plenary Sessions of the Assembly. Above all, there was general regret that the Plenary sessions of the Assembly had not been more participative in nature, with many retaining the image of a long queue of delegates waiting to speak on one of the few plenary sessions in which delegates had the opportunity to speak

My own summary when I speak of Sibiu on the basis of comments received both in writing and orally in the months following the EEA3 has been that it was an Assembly which was flawed, in particular in the aspects outlined above, but, with openness about its flaws, was nevertheless valued and largely received positively.

In all the preparations for the EEA3, CEC was greatly indebted to our excellent Assembly Secretary, Beate Fagerli, who worked tirelessly to coordinate our preparations for Sibiu. The CEC Local Secretary in Sibiu, Daniel Buda, through his hard work also played an important part in our preparations for Sibiu, as did Smaranda Dochia, who served as Intern in the Assembly Office with particular responsibility for the Youth and Stewards' Programme.

I have been asked on numerous occasions whether there are plans for a 4th European Ecumenical Assembly. In response, I tend to use an idiomatic English expression which betrays my own legal background: on this, the jury is still out. One of the judgments which in the future we will need to make together with our Roman Catholic partners is whether expending considerable time and energy on organizing such large scale events is the best use of our resources. Such events certainly give profile to the ecumenical movement. However, we have to ask ourselves whether smaller assemblies, more focused in terms of subject matter and participants would be equally effective. That discussion is still to take place but may well be one in which we will need to engage before CEC gathers for its 14th Assembly.

9.2. Committee for Relations with Muslims in Europe (CRME)

The outcomes of the meetings of this Committee have been the other major fruit of the cooperation between CEC and CCEE. Information about its operation and work can be found at the end of the Churches in Dialogue chapter of this report.

9.3. CEC-CCEE Joint Committee

The planning of the Third European Ecumenical Assembly as well as the oversight of the meetings of the CRME have been two major focuses of the CEC-CCEE Joint Committee which has continued to meet once every twelve months in order to review the relationship between CEC and CCEE.

In the context of the CEC/CCEE Joint Committee, the two organizations have informed each other about their ongoing work and priorities. Other topics which have been addressed by the CEC/CCEE Joint Committee include:

- common reflection on challenges and prospects for the ecumenical situation in Europe;
- inter-church families;
- common reflection on issues before the European Institutions.

The 2008 meeting of the Joint Committee in London raised two issues which at the time of writing this Report (November 2008) remain under discussion. The CEC President in his opening remarks to the Committee invited a decade long reflection on whether the time had come for there to be, as in other regions of the world, one European ecumenical instrument embracing all Christian traditions (including the Roman Catholic tradition. I offer some reflections on this later in this report). Secondly, following an honest recognition that, whilst remaining effective, relations between CEC and CCEE, particularly in relation to the preparation and execution of the EEA3, had not always been easy, the Joint Committee asked for a fresh look at the Guidelines governing the relationship between CEC and CCEE. There will be further discussion of this at the meeting of the Joint Committee in Hungary in February 2009.

10. Communications

The Central Committee in Crete, June 2005, recommended that an **Advisory Group on Communication** (AGC) be set up with whom the Secretary for Communications and Information would be able to discuss and receive comment on any aspect of the work of the CEC Communications desk. The AGC has met four times since then and has advised on various issues including work on a comprehensive Communications Policy Guidelines, communications implications of the merger with CCME, the outcomes of the press operations and procedures from the Sibiu stage of the EEA3, restructuring the CEC website and preparations for the 13th CEC Assembly and 50th anniversary of CEC. The AGC meetings are also attended by staff in charge of communications in the different Commissions (Elizabeta Kitanovic for CSC, Doris Peschke for CCME, and Darrell Jackson for CiD – until 2007).

Much of the work done by the Communications Office deals with the **CEC website**. The original CEC website was designed by Mr Gunnar Bach Pedersen from Denmark and was inaugurated in 1999. This website was replaced and updated in 2004 with a totally new design by Mr Alfredo Franco from Italy. We are currently working on yet another newer version of the CEC website with the Danish Church Media Center, directed by our Central Committee member, Mr Simon Larson. This website is based on the Typo3 system which allows different offices and commissions to put up their own materials on the website through use of templates.

The **13th Assembly** website, inaugurated in October 2008, is the first stage of the new CEC website, which should be completed before Lyon. The Assembly website is a joint venture between the Communications Office and the 13th Assembly Office. It is maintained by Johan Ehrning, a young communicator seconded by the Church of Sweden for the period of time before the Assembly.

The Communications Office, along with CCEE has also completed a new **Sibiu** website with all the available documentation. A printed report from Sibiu is also to be published during 2009. The Communications Office was heavily involved in the Sibiu press operation which supported over 400 media representatives. We are particularly grateful to the co-opted staff who volunteered to help us in this media operation.

The **Press Officers' Network of European Churches (PONEC)** was launched at the initiative of the CEC Communications Office, the Europe region of the World Association of Christian Communicators (WACC Europe) and other ecumenical organisations. After a first meeting in Sibiu, which immediately followed the EEA3, the founding meeting took place in Cartigny, near Geneva, from 5-7 September 2008, with 40 some participants. The aim of PONEC is "to offer a space for members to reflect on strategies for Christian Communication in Europe and to exchange 'best practices'. In particular, PONEC is reflecting on how to integrate the dimension of communication in the leadership of European churches; how to make the voice of the churches more clearly heard in Europe, particularly when it comes to their work with the European Institutions; how to renew church communication in order to get the attention of secular media; how to face common issues such as secularisation and decreasing membership; how to follow the development of information technology."

A close co-operation with **WACC Europe** has been developed in the last years: the Communications Secretary has served as member of the WACC Steering Committee, as its Secretary and, since 2008, as the Vice-President of WACC Europe.

Since 1994 the CEC Communications Office has administered the **John Templeton European Award for Religious Writing in the Secular Press** on behalf of the Templeton Foundation. The Foundation has now decided to go in different directions and so the Templeton prize has been discontinued since 2007. The Office of Communications is now looking for other funding in order to continue the prize for religious writing in the secular press.

The Communications Office continues its support of and cooperation with **Ecumenical News International (ENI)**, the international press agency sponsored by WCC, WARC, LWF and CEC. CEC is represented in the ENI Executive Committee by Ms Marianne Ejdersten, Director for National Communications, Church of Sweden.

Last, but not least, our day-to-day work consists of issuing **press releases** (from 50 to 70 per year) on the work of CEC and its Commissions, of publishing the quarterly newsletter **Monitor** (entirely re-styled in 2003, after the Trondheim Assembly), of producing "**gadgets**" which help the profile of CEC (notepads, pencils, ball-point pens, medallions), and of publishing various **publications** or assisting our Commissions in printing their own reports.

Publications include: **Books:** The Trondheim Report, Sibiu Publications (*Study Guide* in four languages, *Songbook*, *Charta Oecumenica* in four languages and the Sibiu Report). **Leaflets/Brochures:** for CEC, the Church and Society Commission and the Churches in

Dialogue Commission. **ECEN:** Booklet for yearly worship materials and cooperation with the book, *God's Time for Creation* in English, French and German.
CSC Annual Report from 2004: In cooperation with the Brussels office.

11. Preparation for the 13th CEC Assembly in Lyon

No description of the work of the General Secretariat would be complete without an account of the Assembly Office which has been working to prepare the 13th CEC Assembly. Smaranda Dochia who served as Intern with particular responsibility for preparing the Youth and Stewards Programme of the EEA3 was retained by CEC in order to serve as Secretary for the 13th CEC Assembly. She has been assisted by the Intern employed to deal with the Youth and Stewards Programme, Annie Osborne. A priority of the preparation has been to try to ensure that member churches and individual delegates are enabled to participate in the shaping of the Assembly as effectively as possible and in particular to participate in the process which will lead to decisions concerning the future shape of CEC's work in the years leading up to the 14th Assembly. A priority has also been to engage those who work for CEC in the preparations of the Assembly. In addition, the Assembly Office has been working hard to enable delegates to arrive in Lyon with all that they need in order to help them for the task which lies before them. At the request of the Central Committee, a special preparatory Conference for young delegates to the Assembly will take place in Lyon in late May and early June.

12. Finance and Personnel

A separate chapter of this report deals with financial and human resources. The full staff listing can be found in the appendix. Nevertheless, I would like to do more than simply record the names of those who work in CEC. I also want to put on record the huge debt of gratitude which CEC owes to its staff. That CEC has been able to achieve so much in the years since Trondheim has been the result of all our staff working beyond what we ought reasonably to ask of them, and to do that willingly. Without the readiness to give of themselves fully, again and again, CEC would be so much less effective. I am sure that I speak for all who know something of the life of CEC in recording how much CEC owes to all who work with us to achieve so much.

The Report of the General Secretary gives the opportunity not just for reviewing the life of CEC between Assemblies, but also for looking forward to what the coming years might hold for the ecumenical movement in general and for CEC in particular.

There is therefore posed the question, whither CEC?

13. Whither CEC?

The Lyon Assembly takes place at a pivotal moment. In 2009, CEC celebrates the fiftieth anniversary of its foundation. CEC was founded in a very different Europe than the one in which it seeks to bear witness at the beginning of the 21st century. Born into a divided Europe, CEC came into being as an organisation called to build bridges between East and West so as to ensure especially that the Church in Central and Eastern Europe could, despite all the difficulties placed in their way, maintain contacts with the Church in Western Europe. CEC was also born at a moment in which the barriers between churches seemed still to be set high. It was in fact founded at a moment at which, in many ways, the ecclesiastical landscape of Europe was set in a pattern which, with various local fluctuations, in essence had been unchanged for centuries.

The intervening fifty years have seen much change. The political changes of the late 1980s and early 1990s opened up Europe in a way which just several years before would have seemed unthinkable. The opening up of ecumenical relations heralded by Vatican II and by the entry into the ecumenical institutions of the Orthodox Churches of Europe enabled new possibilities for ecumenical engagement by the churches of Europe. The development of the European Institutions offered new possibilities for common engagement by the churches of Europe on issues, especially, of social and ethical policy.

In those years, too, CEC has grown into an organisation based in three centres with a broadly based membership of 120 Anglican, Old Catholic, Orthodox and Protestant Churches which have constantly been finding new ways of acting together in order to bear witness to the Gospel of Jesus Christ in a Europe which, at least in its western half, has been at risk of becoming increasingly secularized.

There is therefore much for which to give thanks as we look back on the last fifty years. However, there is at least a case for arguing that as we celebrate our fiftieth anniversary CEC finds itself in a context which is increasingly parallel with the context in which it was founded. Relations between churches of Eastern and Central Europe and those of Western Europe are not always straightforward. Many churches in Eastern and Central Europe suspect their Western Christian sisters and brothers of not listening with sufficient attention to their own particular concerns and to their own particular understanding of what it is to be a servant of the Gospel in the early years of the 21st century. The CEC Orthodox member churches, in particular, challenge CEC to ensure that the Orthodox voice is heard clearly within our counsels. CEC was founded as a 'bridge' organisation between East and West. As the years go by, the building of bridges is a role which increasingly we find ourselves called to rediscover.

Nor, as we take stock on our fiftieth anniversary, do we find the ecumenical situation as straightforward as once it was. The days of the 1970s and 1980s when so much seemed possible have given way in some circles to a sense of ecumenical weariness, even disillusion. What is commonly seen as the harder line taken by the Vatican in recent years has contributed to this, as has the increasing reluctance of many churches in Europe, in challenging times, to engage at every level of their lives with the ecumenical agenda, at least in its institutional form.

It is against that background that in Lyon CEC invites its member churches to join together in committing ourselves to play our part in building up the ecumenical movement, indeed in building up the Church, in the early decades of the 21st Century. The challenge is to engender and re-create that sense of optimism which so motivated those who were the mothers and fathers of CEC, who in the late 1950s, with all the challenges which then were in place, looked forward with vision and hope to what the churches could achieve in the Europe which we are called to serve.

If we are to do that, it means that we must recognize that the ecclesial landscape of Europe has not stood still in recent years, and will not stand still in the years to come. To that there are several aspects worthy of note:

- the strength and growth of the Pentecostal/Free Churches within Europe is a marked feature of European Church life particularly in the West of Europe;
- the impact of migration means that Migrant Churches are now an increasingly common feature of European church life;
- those who wish to be engaged in ecumenical expression are increasingly drawn to the ecumenical movements – Taizé, Iona, Focolare, St. Egidio among them – rather than to involvement in ecumenical institutions.

Nor is the political landscape of Europe as positive as we might have hoped in the first flush of excitement following the political changes which marked the Europe of the late 1980s and early 1990s. As I write these comments, in November 2008, the issues of human rights, of political freedom, of the placing of missiles within Europe remain topics of hot political debate. I write these remarks too as the impact of the economic slowdown, the so called “Credit Crunch” on Europe becomes clearer. In common with several individual economies inside and outside the EU, the Eurozone has gone into recession for the first time in its history.

To these factors and others, CEC needs to respond positively if we are to retain a valued place within the life of the churches in Europe. There are several questions which we will need to ask ourselves.

14. How widely can the ecumenical tent in Europe spread?

This is not a new question for CEC, and to some degree we have already been pursuing it in recent years, but it is one to which we will need to pay increasing attention in the years to come. It has several strands.

First of all, what should be the position of CEC in relation to the Roman Catholic Church in Europe. As is reported elsewhere there is a long standing and fruitful relationship between CEC and CCEE, a relationship whose highlight has been the coming together around *Charta Oecumenica* as well as the shared organizing of three European Ecumenical Assemblies. CEC is involved in forging effective relationships with the Roman Catholic Church in other ways too, not least through the working together of CSC

and COMECE. CEC (and CCEE) have already been challenged by the outgoing CEC President to reflect on whether we can any longer be satisfied with a situation in which non-Roman Catholic and Roman Catholic structures exist side by side in Europe. In other regions of the world, not least in the Middle East, that is not so. Catholic Churches have been drawn under the same ecumenical umbrella as non-Catholic churches. Is it inconceivable that in the coming years we cannot move towards this inclusive approach? Of course, widening the ecumenical tent does not simply raise questions concerning CEC's relationship with the Roman Catholic Church in Europe. It means too that we must especially take seriously the increasing strength of Evangelical/Pentecostal Churches in Europe. With the support and encouragement of the WCC, the Global Christian Forum has already been gently but with determination encouraging contacts between the ecumenical movement and the Evangelical/Pentecostal Churches. The CEC Churches in Dialogue Commission has set the continuation of these contacts on a European level as one of its priorities for the coming years and this is a task which clearly CEC must take seriously.

The other new manifestation of church life which is becoming increasingly prevalent in the European church scene stems directly from the impact of migration within and into Europe. Migrant Churches are increasingly to be found in the towns and cities of Europe. The integration between CEC and CCME encourages CEC, rightly, to take this aspect of the European ecumenical scene more closely into account. For that reason, representatives of migrant churches will be in Lyon as delegates, as they were already at the EEA3 in Sibiu.

A new generation is growing up in Europe which is increasingly impatient of boundaries which place limits on our ecumenical involvement. Over the next years, CEC will need to face seriously the challenge to contribute to the broadening of the ecumenical base within Europe.

15. What has CEC to learn from the growth of the ecumenical movements within Europe?

As has already been suggested, there is a clear contrast in the European church scene between the increased questioning of institutional ecumenism and the increasing numbers who identify themselves with the life and work of the ecumenical movements. Freedom, spontaneity, evident spirituality, all these are factors which seem to attract individuals, often young individuals, to the life of Taizé, Focolari, St. Egidio and others of the ecumenical movements.

What can CEC learn from this in the coming years? First of all, that we ought not to compete with these movements, that we ought to find ways of affirming their presence within the European ecumenical scene and finding ways in which we can work together and learn from each other. There is though maybe one other insight which we need to draw from the growth of these ecumenical movements. CEC is emerging from a period in which it has needed, to a large degree, to focus on its own internal life. The planning for

the integration with CCME has rightly taken up much time over the last years. The redrawing of the structure of CEC into an organisation doing much of its work through three Commissions has also inevitably taken up much time and energy. There is still unfinished business on the question of the structure of CEC, not least in working anew on our understanding of the qualifications for membership of CEC and also on the question of where CEC is best located. Be that as it may, as we form our programmes for the coming years, our profile as CEC needs to be more clearly that of an organisation which can excite and engage, and of an organisation which is able to communicate that excitement and engagement. The seeds of that emphasis are there already, not least in the redrawing of the CEC Website, in the refashioning of the CEC *Monitor* and of other good pieces of work such as all that is done within CSC to communicate and facilitate the churches' response to the agenda of the European Institutions.

To all this is linked a further issue:

16. How can we communicate positively the value of being a member of CEC?

Those who are involved with the life of CEC know that it has so much to offer. Each of our three Commissions have much to offer our member churches. Through CSC, member churches have access to much insight and wisdom concerning the working and priorities of the European Institutions and the ways in which they may impact on the nations and regions which our member churches serve. Through CSC the views and concerns of member churches can be articulated to the European Institutions. Through the integration with CCME, and not least through the invitation to engage with the Churches' Year of Migration in 2010, member churches of CEC are equipped and enabled to relate to one of the defining issues of the Europe of the early 21st century. Through the work of the Churches in Dialogue Commission, member churches are served in their own ecumenical dialogues, as well as receiving shared insights on issues which are central to the life of the Church in Europe, not least on the issue of mission.

We need as CEC to work harder to promote to member churches (and to our associated organisations) the value of membership of CEC, of what membership of CEC can bring of value to member churches, of how membership of CEC enables the voice of individual churches to be stronger within Europe, of how the voice of the Church can be much more effective when it is expressed collectively.

As part of the process of enabling member churches to feel that they have a share in the life of CEC, it will be likely that in the next period CEC will want to examine the possibility of moving to some form of consensus voting within its decision making processes.

17. How can CEC continue to respond effectively to the issues which will shape the Europe of the coming years?

My introduction to this section of my report already flagged up that the geopolitical and economic context within which CEC will need to operate during the next six years will look somewhat different than in the years after Trondheim. The economic slowdown will have its impact especially on several thematic areas which colleagues in CSC and CCME seek to address. How can nations whose citizens face unemployment and impoverishment nevertheless be encouraged and urged to treat fairly those who come to them as migrants? How can European citizens who are in employment be treated fairly when unemployment beckons? In our globalised world, how can national and European policymakers, even in a time of economic slowdown, still fashion policy with regard to the needs of the poor of the Global South? How can the care of creation remain high on national and regional agendas when the recreation of wealth and prosperity becomes the priority?

These and other questions will form part of our common European life over the coming six years. For Europe to deal with these effectively, it is important that the voice of the Church be heard at the European level. Through the hard work of our colleagues in CSC and in CCME we are already equipped to make the Churches' voice heard on these issues. This Assembly is invited to assert confidently that the Church in Europe has important things to say on these issues and to encourage CEC with boldness and confidence to say them on their behalf.

18. How can CEC see itself in a wider context?

CEC cannot and should not see itself in a purely European context. In its dialogue work it needs to respond to issues which are also the concern of the Churches globally. The work of the Church and Society Commission in its witness to the impact of globalization deals with phenomena which have both their origins and their impact beyond the borders of Europe. CCME, too, inevitably deals with issues which have a global implication. For that reason, in recent years, CEC has been working to forge links with REOs from other regions of the world. Discussions have been taking place with the Middle East Council of Churches about the shape of a possible partnership with CEC. CSC has been working on specific issues with the Latin American Council of Churches. Informal contacts have also been taking place with the All Africa Conference of Churches.

Our vision for the future working of the European ecumenical movement needs surely to take us beyond the borders of Europe. For a key element of our witness to Europe needs to be that Europe cannot and must not turn in on itself, but must remain open to the hopes and the fears of those who live outside its borders.

It is not for nothing that in setting its theme for the 13th CEC Assembly, CEC has placed "the hope which we share in Jesus Christ" at the centre of our common life. There is much work still for CEC to do in the Europe of the 21st century. Through all that we decide in Lyon we need to demonstrate that the hope and vision which impelled the founders of CEC fifty years ago still holds good. Their vision, that there is much that we

are called to do together in order to fulfill God's purposes within the continent of Europe and within its churches remains today.

Already in 2001 the *Charta Oecumenica* set the agenda. By the time we will come together for the 14th CEC Assembly, *Charta Oecumenica* will already be 14 years old, so that we may need between Assemblies to envisage a process whereby it is revisited and renewed. However, so much that it had to say still holds true, and so much remains to be achieved. The *Charta* already gives us important signposts towards the future. The CEC Future Conference which was held in Lyon in September 2008 already pointed us forward to different aspects of the vision which we need to share for the future. It looked forward, for example, to the sharing of a common Baptism and of a common Eucharist; to CEC expressing itself with a strong and respected voice within society on the issues which touch us all, such as creation and intercultural dialogue; to the ecumenical forging of bridges to those in Europe who are of the Muslim faith; even to an ecumenical university and an ecumenical cathedral as symbols of what we are and what we can do together. In CEC, we hope that that forging of vision for CEC's role in the future can be a real feature of our time together in Lyon. Even if at the Future Conference we found it hard to envisage how these aspirations could be carried into reality, the message was clear: as people of hope we are called to go forward in hope. I invite the 13th CEC Assembly to set the course for CEC over the coming six years, to go forward faithfully and creatively to reach out for that hope which is our calling, the hope and the confidence that we are all called to be one in Christ Jesus, and to continue with that work of bridge building which impelled the founding of CEC fifty years ago.

I end with a prayer from the Church of England which reminds us of the task to which we are called:

Heavenly Father,
You have called us in the Body of Your Son Jesus Christ
to continue his work of reconciliation
and reveal you to the world.
Forgive us the sins which tear us apart;
give us the courage to overcome our fears
and to seek that unity which is your gift and your will;
through Jesus Christ Our Lord. Amen.