

Conference of European Churches
Work Priorities 2009 – 2015
Churches in Dialogue Commission



The Churches in Dialogue Commission (CiD) of the Conference of European Churches (CEC) is more than a study commission preparing ecumenical texts for the member churches of CEC. The CiD rather initiates and supports a variety of bilateral and multi-lateral encounters and dialogues, with a special emphasis given to theological reflection on the various challenges.

The Commission carries out its work at annual plenary meetings, and in between through consultations and working groups, as well as through communication with various research institutes and other ecumenical organisations. The framework of the CiD is the *Charta Œcumenica*, used as a basis in all areas of study and dialogue.

Looking back at 2003, the CiD was given its mandate with the following priorities of work by the 12th Assembly of CEC:

1. Relations between the Orthodox churches and other member churches of CEC - **Support**
2. Our common mission in Europe
3. Majority and minority churches - **Support**
4. Cooperation among theological Faculties in Europe + **specification of student internship, teacher's and literature exchanges**
5. Spirituality and worship life at ecumenical meetings - **Support**
6. Theology of Religion
7. Ecumenical training & formation in Europe + **transcultural education leading to coexistence, question of inculturation of religion**
8. Healing of Memories

Generally we support all of them, but to those underlined we give special priority. We suggest also one new priority: **Support the dialog about baptism among CEC member Churches with the goal of common recognition of baptism.**

As a primarily theological commission, CiD is addressing its working priorities first of all in a theological manner. In this respect the issue of ecclesiology was identified as a major theme. This topic is to be a permanent reference point in the discussion of this commission. In the same way, the issues such as Mission, Spirituality, Ecumenical Forma-



tion or the Theology of Religion should be considered as ongoing concerns for the Churches in Dialogue.

At its fifth meeting (25-27 June 2008, Pullach, Germany) the Churches in Dialogue Commission (CiD) of CEC recommended for 2009-2015 the following working priorities:

1. Promoting dialogue and encounter between the Orthodox Churches and other member Churches of CEC

There is already a tradition of theological cooperation between the various confessions within CEC, which should be continued more intensively. In this respect a special consideration should be given to dialogue and encounter between the Orthodox and the other member churches of CEC. A concrete way in this respect would be to continue the consultation process on the ongoing official theological dialogues between these churches, initiated by the CiD between 2005-2009.

2. Towards a Common Mission in Europe

The churches in Europe should be incited to help each other in their mission. Competition between churches in the field of mission should be avoided. Studies on the understanding of "mission", "evangelisation" and "proselytism" should be carried out in order to achieve a common vision for all churches. The spirit of the Charta Oecumenica should be further implemented in the cooperation between all churches.

3. Majority and Minority church relationship in Europe

Many of the churches in Europe exist either as large majority or as small minority churches within their countries. Here a permanent learning process is necessary in order to bring about more ecumenical fellowship and mutual help. The experiences with the common consultations so far indicate that they should be continued in order to facilitate the cooperation between all churches at the local level.

4. Strengthening co-operation between theological Faculties from all over Europe

The facilitating role of the CiD by organising consultations of the Theological Faculties from all over Europe should continue. Among the questions to be addressed in this respect are: the relationship between Church and Faculty, what to teach and how to teach, the importance of research, interdisciplinary studies, theology versus religious studies, how the faculties and the churches understand and respond to modernity or post-modernity.



5. Sharing spirituality and worship life, between churches and at ecumenical meetings

The issue of Spirituality is directly related to the issue of the theological dialogue between the churches. The 3rd European Ecumenical Assembly underlined the direct link between theological dialogue and the issue of sharing the spiritual experience of the ecumenical partners. One of the best opportunities to acknowledge the spirituality of other church traditions is offered by ecumenical gatherings. How spirituality is expressed and how it could best be received by others at ecumenical gatherings should be reflected upon. Some guidelines in this respect may be developed.

6. Improving Ecumenical Training & Formation in Europe

There is an increasing need for ecumenical training for leaders and members of the churches in Europe. Ecumenical formation may include learning about and from the past, but it is also about creating present and future expressions of ecumenism. The ecumenical movement will only thrive if every one understands it with their hearts as well as their heads. It must be based on an active relationship rather than institutions. Ecumenical training should offer motivation for being ecumenical and working ecumenically.

7. Continuing the consultation process towards a common Theology of Religions in Europe

The CiD has already collected and reviewed church statements on a Theology of Religions. The intention was first of all to make the work already done by individual churches available to the other member churches of CEC. In addition some reflections were made on what is in common and what differs in the church statements. This process should continue towards a possible common theological basis of the European churches in their relations with other religions.

8. Promoting the Healing of Memories process in Europe

Healing of Memories is a process directly related to the reconciliation between people and churches. As long as the common past of the churches is still a source of divergent interpretation or even of conflict between them, the churches should work to overcome their past together. CEC has initiated and accompanied Healing of Memories processes in Norway, Germany, Former Yugoslavia and Romania, among others. This process should continue.

9. Reflecting upon new ecumenical spaces for a more inclusive cooperation between the churches in Europe



The Ecumenical cooperation promoted by CEC has brought almost all European churches closer to each other. There are still churches on this continent which are not part of the ecumenical family for various reasons. The experience of the Global Christian Forum at the world level showed that new ecumenical ways or spaces for a more inclusive cooperation between all churches is possible. CEC should consider creating such new ecumenical spaces in Europe as well.