

## Joint statement of

- **Federation of Swiss Protestant Churches FSPC**
- **Evangelical-Methodist Church in Switzerland EMC**

**and**

- **Old Catholic Church in Switzerland OCC**

**on**

## **Priorities for CEC work 2009 – 2015**

### **A. Importance of CEC**

From a FSPC's perspective CEC as the regional organization of WCC is an absolutely necessary ecumenical body and platform for ecumenical negotiations, dialogues, collaboration and for the development of the ecumenical movement in Europe. Also from the perspective of the Community of Protestant churches in Europe (CPCE), CEC is the right platform to engage in ecumenical dialogue with the non-protestant traditions. We need CEC:

- to bring together all non Roman Catholic churches,
- to feed the ecumenical dialogue with the Roman Catholic church and within WCC with European perspectives and insights,
- to express common positions towards the political European institutions,
- to reflect and discuss the profile of Christian identity in the context of 21<sup>st</sup> century's Europe,
- to bear common witness to the Gospel of resurrection within the globalized world.

CEC was built due to the churches' duty of reconciliation after World War II. Although the iron curtain has now vanished, other dividing curtains still exist in the midst of Europe, in the midst of each of our countries, and last but not least between churches.

### **B. Vision and contents for CEC work in future**

1. Celebrating 50 years of CEC is also an excellent chance to think about its future. Both elements should be the heart of the Assembly and its discussions. Thanks to God for the remarkable history of CEC as well as and a new commitment to CEC work are to be the key issues of the Assembly. Christian churches need to come together to celebrate in a visible way.
2. FSPC appreciates that CEC tried to consult its constituency on the future of CEC with the Future Congress. Based on the results of the Future congress, there should develop concrete discussions among delegates during the Assembly. The Assembly should really stick to this issue and **facilitate an active participation of the delegates in designing the future vision for CEC, as well as in defining its main working areas including proper strategic goals.** There is some kind of contradiction in the received documents between the expectation of an Assembly designing a future vision for CEC and the expectation of one that could at the same

time approve lists of operational priorities and activities (7 for CCME, 10 for CSC, 8 for CiD, 16 for the GS: all in all 31 so called "priorities" !).

3. Seeing the **latest developments** in the ecumenical movement (for instance the discussions with the Russian Orthodox Church or the Vatican, the Global Christian Forum, the growth of free or Pentecostal churches...) as well as the **current and future resources** of the member churches this reflection and discussion during the next Assembly seems even much more necessary.
4. FSPC greatly appreciates CEC's will to broadly consult its member churches in a longer process which allows churches to consult internally and to react on numerous documents to be dealt with during the Assembly. We consider these documents being especially important which are future-orientated. They are a useful basis for the discussions among the delegates. But we are not sure if the Assembly is really able to approve the proposed work programs of the Commissions in detail, because the thorough reflection on CEC's overall aims and future tasks will take its time. We would recommend the **Assembly to truly discuss the main future strategic goals** and **update maybe the Commission's mandates** instead of approving every detailed work program.

### C. Organization and instruments of CEC

5. The institutional development of CEC in the last years (starting with one commission, then two, now three with CCME) **requires a new reflection on the overall and global vision of CEC as well as on its functioning**, the instruments of collaboration and dialoging between member churches. It isn't yet obvious how the overall goal and the rationale of this entire new organizational structure will be reflected. Why should CEC have three Commissions and not five or only one? What is the link between them, how will the coherence of their work be ensured? The reading of the three papers made us notice that CCME issues often have a theological relevance, while some CiD issues also reflect ways churches position themselves in their society, or CSC work and its ethical standpoints often need to be based on a theological rationale. How is the collaboration between the three Commissions intended and organized? How is the division of work and responsibilities foreseen between the Presidium, the Central Committee and the Commissions?
6. Due to the latest developments, the **juridical texts of CEC seem no longer adapted and have to be profoundly rewritten**. This cannot happen during the Assembly, but the new Central Committee could be mandated by the Assembly to do this, based on the discussion about the vision and mission of CEC.
7. FSPC would like to thank CEC for consulting the member churches also on the working programs of the Commissions. But we would point to a possible "overkill" if delegates are expected to discuss all these details. The documents refer to complex issues, and the **wording sounds sometime not very concrete and a bit hermetical**, so that delegates who are not familiar with these issues can feel lost.
8. We fear that the delegates (and not only the newcomers among them) will feel slightly overcharged being expected to comment in a competent way precise working program issues or to choose between different options which look (almost) all fine and convincing. FSPC suggests that the discussions in Lyon **focus on the definition of a small number of strategic goals and fields of activities for each Commission**, and leave the adoption of the detailed Commission's working programs to the next Central Committee or to the plenary meetings of the Commissions. We remember for instance that the work program of the CSC 2004-2009 was approved by the Commission plenary meeting in 2004, at its first meeting after Trondheim. This program was then adapted and updated every year.

9. FSPC notice that the proposed work priorities of the Commissions are mainly based on the status quo, with a tendency to add even more themes to an already long list. Every mentioned theme is quite interesting and valuable in itself, but we miss any effort to prioritize and strategize.

#### D. Concrete proposals

10. FSPC suggests that the Assembly discussions focus on the overall vision of CEC, as well as its identity as ecumenical body. It should also decide on proposals for the future structure and organizing of the various parts of CEC work.
11. FSPC suggests that the Policy Reference Committee makes proposals **to review the mandates** of the three Commissions on the bases of the received Assembly documents as well as on the discussions during the Assembly, to be approved through the General Assembly.
12. FSPC suggests that the Policy Reference Committee makes proposals for the attention of the Central Committee to be elected in Lyon on the topical **priorities** and **strategic goals** of each Commission, on the basis of the received Assembly documents, the discussions during the Assembly and the adopted new version of the mandates.
13. FSPC suggests that the plenary meetings of the Commissions will approve in 2010 their five years planning documents on the basis of the adopted strategic goals and priorities. They will be adapted every year.
14. As far as the **General Secretary** is concerned, FSPC suggests the two following strategic goals:
- reinforce the overall coherence of the entire CEC work
  - reinforce the visibility of CEC in Europe
15. As far as **CSC** is concerned, FSPC suggests to the Policy reference group (cf. Point 12 above) the two following strategic goals:
- to address the European institutions on behalf of and with the member churches on the issues and priorities defined by the Central Committee/Commission plenary
  - to develop the member churches' resources to act nationally and ecumenically on the relevant issues of European policies.
16. As far as **CiD** is concerned, FSCP suggests the two following strategic goals:
- to intensify the theological and ethical debates between orthodox and non orthodox member churches
  - to develop a European ecumenical spirituality
17. As far as **CCME** is concerned, FSPC suggests the two following strategic goals:
- the protection of refugees in the 21<sup>st</sup> century
  - to strengthen the member churches capacities of inclusiveness towards migrants