

Policy Statement of EKD on the Future of the Conference of European Churches (CEC)

The Situation of the CEC

The founding history of CEC is inextricably linked with the history of the division of Europe. We are grateful for CEC's bridge-building function during the time of the Iron Curtain. Since the division of Europe was overcome, the CEC has been increasingly affected by centrifugal forces, by diverging theological interests and emphases predominant in the respective families of churches. Apparently CEC has not adapted its objective and structure sufficiently to the profoundly changed situation in Europe.

In the spirit of the messages from the two European Ecumenical Assemblies of Basel (1989) and Graz (1997), CEC and the Council of European Bishops' Conferences decided to preserve and develop the grown fellowship. In this spirit, the Charta Oecumenica was adopted as a common commitment to dialogue and co-operation. It describes fundamental ecumenical responsibilities, from which follow a number of guidelines and commitments. It is designed to promote an ecumenical culture of dialogue and co-operation at all levels of church life, and to provide agreed criteria for this. However, it has no magisterial or dogmatic character, nor is it legally binding under church law. Its authority will derive from the voluntary commitments of the European churches and ecumenical organisations. Building on this basic text, they can formulate their own local agenda, designed to meet their own specific challenges and resulting commitments.

The Charta Oecumenica is and will remain an invaluable and indispensable foundation for the further development of ecumenical relations in Europe and will provide essential terms of reference also for the future of CEC.

Within this framework, we would like to define and ensure CEC's responsibilities for the future. It is our aim to make the voice of the churches' witness heard in the cultural, social and political development of Europe, and to create an ecumenical platform for the theological and ethical debate and our spiritual living together. CEC will be able to contribute significantly to the achievement of these commitments if it meets the following objectives:

Strengthening the content of the Church Fellowship

We will have to define and develop the criteria and concepts necessary to establish which tasks should be undertaken at which level (member church, national level, LWF, WARC, CPCE, CEC, WCC etc), and how these levels are meant to cooperate with each other. In this respect, CEC should regard itself a regional organisation of WCC and concentrate on a small number of specific issues, working together in concerted action with other ecumenical bodies and institutions. It should distinguish itself as a service provider for

the member churches and operate within a framework of clearly allocated responsibilities. The following priorities should be set:

In the ecclesiastica arena:

- to contribute to the theological dialogue between member churches on relevant issues of the time and on fundamental ecclesiological questions.
- to promote ecumenical learning and experience.
- to encourage the cultivation of common elements of spirituality (e.g. mutual recognition of baptism).
- to engage in dialogue with charismatic movements and Pentecostal churches.
- to provide ideas and initiatives for the inter-faith dialogue in Europe.

In the socio-political arena:

- to respect the competences and contributions of member churches for the European discourse, to reinforce their statements, to organise the coordination between the member churches'
- to monitor and show presence of European churches at European institutions, focussing in particular on issues around the conciliar process for justice, peace and the integrity of creation, including human rights and religious freedom.
- to foster cultural dialogue in Europe and with European institutions.

The Purpose of the General Structure of the CEC

We want to reinforce and further develop the restructuring process of CEC as begun in the Central Committee meetings in Prague and continued in the Central Committee meetings in Cyprus. All theological work of CEC should in future be bound to the guidelines agreed in the General Assembly and the concrete assignments given by the Central Committee and its Presidium.

We propose to move away from the CEC's commission structure, and to instead introduce a structure of specialised departments. In its diverse fields of action, the CEC's operational work can then be performed under the general direction of the General Secretary. The Presidium is responsible for the strategic governance of the work.

Adapting the mode of operation to the new structure, we suggest the following procedure: Under the direction of each Head of Department, and within the framework of the

guidelines agreed by the General Assembly, each specialised department prepares a standard draft contract containing the targets, target groups, responsibilities and plans for the coming year. The draft contracts should also state each department's requirements in terms of personnel and material costs, and specify certain indicators to measure the department's success. These draft contracts will be coordinated and integrated by the Leading Management Team under the direction of the General Secretary. The CEC Presidium will discuss and perhaps change them, decide on them and be signed by the President, the General Secretary and the respective Head of Department. Thus mandated by the CEC central governing body, the specialist departments can do their operational work. At the end of the year, a standardised report written by the respective Head of Department will help to evaluate and further develop the work.

In addition, the constitution of CEC needs to be adapted to reflect the CEC's efficiency. It needs to ensure the CEC's ability to work out and implement its commitments within the framework of a general strategy. It needs to render the responsibilities and decision-making procedures transparent and effective.

The way CEC is financed also needs to be reviewed again. All member churches should be involved in a fair financing of CEC in relation to their size and financial power.

In Favour of a clear Profile of the Families of Churches

It is of great significance for CEC's future that the church families import their distinctive profile to CEC. Bringing in one's own distinctive image is not contrary to an ecumenical culture of dialogue. Rather, it is a necessary precondition for a dialogue of substance and consequence.

This profiling of church families needs to be accepted by all and for all, and practised as a natural attitude for work in CEC. It also needs to be reflected in concrete decision-making processes.

Therefore, the Protestant profile of member churches of the Reformed tradition needs to become more evident in future, too.

In this way, it will also become clear that the work of the Community of Protestant Churches in Europe (CPCE) does not run contrary to the work of CEC, but that it complements and improves CEC's work as it brings out the distinctive Protestant profile.