

All One in Christ

CEC Strategy 2023 – 2028

Our Call and Witness

The foundation of the work of CEC is hearing the call of Christ, and living and witnessing as churches together in committed fellowship. This is what motivates us when we gather to discern what it means to be part of God's mission in contemporary European society.

Under God's blessing, we as Christians, with all people of goodwill, are called to contribute to the building of just and peaceful European societies, today and in God's future. What we have been given by grace we are committed to share generously, as we also receive from others. We are "Called Together to Unity in Faith" as expressed in the opening sentences of Charta Oecumenica.

The ways that our churches participate and contribute to our societies are diverse and multifaceted, according to the needs we encounter. As those who live in Christ, through the grace of God, we are moved to build bridges and to create relationships of faith, hope and love. As churches, we encounter the incarnate Christ in our own specific contexts, seeking to apply God's unconditional love as the measure for our discernment and action. Through the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, we are all one in Christ.

Our Context and Opportunities

European societies are very varied. More voices are being heard. Established authorities of former times are being questioned. Not only are there challenges, but also opportunities for churches, to welcome, to listen and to speak.

As a fellowship of churches, we stand united and want to show the world that we work for justice, peace, human dignity, human rights and the flourishing of creation. We are ready, throughout Europe, to build a common future together with all people of good will and in respectful harmony with all of God's creation.

Building Bridges

The Member Churches, the National Councils of Churches and Organisations in Partnership share a common platform in CEC. CEC's prime mission as a fellowship committed to Christ's call is "to help the European Churches to share their spiritual life, to strengthen their common witness and service and to promote the unity of the Church and peace in the world" (Constitution preamble). Building bridges was the paramount raison d'être for establishing CEC in 1959.

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We hope to fulfill this mission through advocacy and by witnessing to the churches' relevance and resonance with and within society. Our mission calls for a continued bridge building effort, requiring our concerted commitment and determination as European churches. CEC is building and maintaining bridges for churches and faith-based organisations, so that they might share with decision makers their concerns and commitments.

Such efforts need informed, consistent and coordinated action by CEC, in cooperation with the churches and with Organisations in Partnership, at the heart of European decision making, with special attention to the European Union, the Council of Europe and other European bodies. It is hoped that, in this way, all engaged will find their voices lifted up.

We reaffirm our commitment to building bridges and fellowship as well as our intention to ensure that CEC will continue to be an effective agent in this endeavour, on behalf of our Member Churches and Organisations in Partnership.

Questions on the way to a strategy:

- Why do we do this as a fellowship of churches, and what is our vision?
- What do we want to do as a fellowship of churches, and what are our mission and our goals?
- Who are we going to do this with, and who shares our values?
- How will we achieve our goals?

The Why: Vision

As Christians, and with other people of faith, under God's blessing we seek to listen openly to the voices of others, especially to those who are marginalized. In humility we share our treasure of knowledge, faith and resources for the common good of the future of Europe. What is close to our hearts is to be shared with and within wider society for the benefit of our continent and beyond, creating hope for a shared future of renewed trust and just peace. We cherish the sacred gift of life and long for its fulness to be shared by all people, as we also celebrate the holiness and gift of God's whole creation.

The What: Mission and goal

CEC's mission is to claim and shape a space for faith, and affirm the Freedom of Religion and Belief, as a legitimate element in the European social and political context, and to support churches navigating as faith-based actors in this environment.

This mission is realised through:

- forming a strong platform to support dialogue, mutual learning and cooperation on issues that are of concern to the churches in Europe such as
 - o Peace,
 - o Climate Justice (with European Christian Environmental Network),
 - o Migration (with Churches Commission on Migrants in Europe),
 - o Human Rights,

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- o Education and,
 - o the COVID-Pandemic and its consequences;
- establishing and developing skills within the two mutually reliant areas of Public Theology and Political Advocacy;
- monitoring what the Member Churches are themselves doing in their wider navigation and engagement in society and assisting them as asked;
- building long-lasting bridges between Member Churches and European political institutions;
- bringing churches together to discuss questions of ecclesiology and their mission in society.

The Who: Sharing values

CEC works on its mission and goals through and with a value based, cooperating network of Member Churches, respective National Councils of Churches and Organisations in Partnership. We will encourage, empower and support young people in participation in CEC. In addition, CEC reaches out to and cooperates with specific individual churches, organisations and institutions that support CEC's mission and goals, including Roman Catholic organisations and interfaith institutions. We commit to clarifying and exploring ways of deepening our relationship with the World Council of Churches. CEC resolves, in this next period, to reach out to a broader range of churches and organisations, including migrant churches and those churches not yet represented at the CEC table.

The How: Strategy

CEC is founded and supported by its Member Churches and will achieve its mission only through a strategy that has the backing of the Member Churches.

As CEC Member Churches, we commit ourselves to sustain the mission and goals of the Conference of European Churches - CEC.

- to work together as a fellowship of churches, staying together in our diversity, while seeking common ground through theological dialogue, reflection, discernment and action;
- to allocate resources (membership fees, special contributions, and human resources) to the fellowship of CEC in a way that reflects and respects our mission and goals, acknowledging the need for financial and human capacity;
- to be a focused, professional fellowship that values quality above quantity, transparency in internal and external communication, full participation, sustainability, and also follows Gospel-led values.