



Saksbehandler: Beate Fagerli

Saksdokumenter:

Final Report of the 7th General Assembly of the CPCE, Firenze, 20.-26. september 2012
Sammendrag av rapport fra CPCEs rådsmøte i Wien, februar 2013

Saker i de økumeniske organisasjonene

Community of Protestant Churches in Europe (CPCE)

Sammendrag

Endelig rapport fra CPCEs 7. generalforsamling foreligger.

Det nyvalgte rådet i CPCE møttes for første gang i Wien i februar 2013. Her ble utfordringene fra generalforsamlingen behandlet, og planer lagt for kommende 6-årsperiode. Fra Norge deltok ingen på dette rådsmøtet, men Kristin Graff-Kallevåg, vara i rådet, har viderefremidlet informasjon. Vedlagt er et sammendrag av rapporten fra rådsmøtet.

Rådet har bl.a. gjenoppnevnt Ulla Schmidt til ekspertgruppe om etikk, Turid Skorpe Lannem er gjenoppnevnt til arbeidsgruppe om Ecclesia Semper Reformanda, og Anne Hege Grung er oppnevnt til arbeidsgruppe om religionsdialog. Kristin Graff-Kallevåg vil som vararepresentant delta på ca. ett rådsmøte i året.

Forslag til vedtak:

MKR tar den endelige rapporten fra generalforsamlingen og sammendrag av rapport fra rådsmøtet i CPCE til orientering.

Rådsmøte i Community of Protestant Churches in Europe (CPCE) 15.-17. februar 2013

Det nyvalgte rådet møttes 15.-17. februar 2013. Dette var første rådsmøte siden generalforsamlingen i september 2012, og rådet hadde derfor en rekke viktige oppfølgingssaker på dagsorden. Ingen fra Norge deltok på dette rådsmøtet. Varamedlem Kristin Graff-Kallevåg deltar på neste møte i desember 2013.

1. Oppfølging av læresamtaler

Det ble vedtatt at dokumentene fra studieprosessen rundt ordinasjon og tilsyn og studieprosessen om skrift, bekjennelse og kirkeforståelse skal utgis som dokumenter i serien «Leuenerger Texte», henholdsvis utgivelse nr. 13 og 14. Samtalene tas med videre i ny studieprosess om forståelsen av kirkefellesskap.

2. Ekspertgruppe Etikk

En ekspertgruppe i etikk er oppnevnt for ny periode. Fra Norge sitter Ulla Schmidt i denne. Gruppen er bedt om å jobbe spesielt med etiske utfordringer som følge av reproduktiv helse, på samme måte som de tidligere jobbet med etikk rundt livets avslutning. I tillegg er gruppen bedt om å skissere et studium rundt protestantiske kirkers forhold til demokrati og deltakelse. Etikkgruppen vil også bli bedt om å være referansegruppe til et arbeid om sosial forpliktelse (Social Commitment).

3. Ekspertgruppe økumenikk

En ekspertgruppe i økumenikk ble oppnevnt. Gruppen blir en intern arbeidsgruppe som CPCE kan benytte seg av som rådgivende organ i forhold til læresamtaler og teologiske studieprosesser. Økumenikkgruppen vil også bli bedt om å levere et utkast til en studie om sosial forpliktelse (Social Commitment), som en oppfølging av generalforsamlingen.

4. Gudstjeneste

Gudstjenestesamarbeidet mellom medlemskirkene i sørøst-Europa i forrige periode har ledet til oppnevning av en ny ressursgruppe som skal jobbe videre med gudstjenestefellesskap på tvers av kirkene, inkludert bruk av liturgier og musikk. Tanken er at dette vil bidra til å styrke enheten mellom kirkene. En første konsultasjon er planlagt i 26.–28. november 2014, med tema «Diversity of Worship and Church Unity».

5. Læresamtale om kirkefellesskap

Rådet satte også ned en arbeidsgruppe for å jobbe spesielt med forståelsen av kirkefellesskap, noe som var en sterk anbefaling fra generalforsamlingen. En foreløpig liten arbeidsgruppe med representanter fra andre ressursgrupper skal utarbeide forslag til en tekst som skal danne grunnlaget for en større konsultasjon. Arbeidsgruppen er også bedt om tenke inn en «Leuenerger Dictionary» i prosessen, et forslag som kom fra den nordisk-baltiske regionen under generalforsamlingen.

6. Europa Reformata

CPCE ønsker å fortsette det påbegynte arbeidet rundt den europeiske dimensjonen ved reformasjonen og reformasjonsjubileet. Reformasjonsbyprosjektet fortsetter, og ressursmaterialet er tenkt produsert for å presentere reformasjonsbyene. I tillegg er en akademisk konferanse planlagt for 2015. En viktig økumenisk dimensjon ved arbeidet er den videre samtalen med Den romersk-katolske kirke.

7. Religionsmangfold

Generalforsamlingen ba om at arbeid med religionsmangfold blir satt på dagsorden. En arbeidsgruppe ble nedsatt, og fra Norge er Anne-Hege Grung bedt om å være med. Gruppen skal i første rekke utarbeide et dokument som utgangspunkt for en bredere studieprosess.

8. Ecclesia Semper Reformanda

Prosjektet Ecclesia Semper Reformanda ble gjennomført i forrige periode. Her satt bl.a. et ekspertpanel av unge forskere. Det er ønskelig at en fortsettelse av dette studiet finner sted, hvor en kan gå enda grundigere til verks rundt endringer i kirkelige strukturer med særlig tanke på generalforsamlingens tema: «Europas kirker og fremtiden». Turid Skorpe Lannem satt i den forrige gruppen og er bedt om å sitte også i denne arbeidsgruppen.

9. Utdannelse

Rådet vedtok å gjøre utdannelse til et prioritert arbeidsområde i inneværende periode. Den sørøstlige regionsgruppen er bedt om å foreta en studie av utdannelse for fremtiden, i tråd med generalforsamlingens forslag. Meningen er å opprette et forum for utdannelse i Europa, som er tenkt som årlige konsultasjoner.

Som et eget arbeid fortsetter studieprosessen rundt utdannelse til ordinert tjeneste i CPCE.

Andre dialoger, møter og tema

CPCE fortsetter dialogen med katolikkene. Det planlegges også videre samtaler med anglikanerne, ortodokse kirker og med pentekostale og karismatiske grupper. Det er også tenkt videre dialog med migrantkirker og med nye kristne grupperinger i Europa. Det er videre ønskelig å fortsette møter mellom representanter fra de forskjellige kirkesynodene som en oppfølging av møtet mellom synodeledere og representanter i januar 2012.

CPCE vil ellers delta i feiringen av 450-årsjubileet for Heidelbergkatekismen, bidra til «geistreich.de», en kirkelig nettplattform for spiritualitet, og dessuten utgi offisielle uttalelser og informasjon i forbindelse med CPCEs 40-årsjubileum.

Rådet møtes omtrent halvårlig i neste periode. Varamedlem Kristin Graff-Kallevåg kalles inn til annethvert møte.

02.09.13, BFA

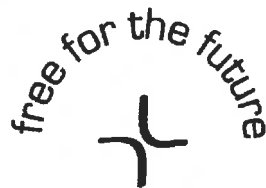


Gemeinschaft Evangelischer Kirchen in Europa (GEKE)
Community of Protestant Churches in Europe (CPCE)
Communauté d'Églises Protestantes en Europe (CEPE)

**7th General Assembly of the
Community of Protestant Churches in Europe
– Leuenberg Church Fellowship –**

Florence, 20-26 September 2012

Final Report



7th General Assembly, 20-26 Sep 2012
Florence, Italy

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1. Introduction

1.1. General

“Free for the Future – Protestant Churches in Europe” was the theme addressed by the Community of Protestant Churches in Europe – Leuenberg Church Fellowship (CPCE) at its 7th General Assembly, hosted in Florence from 20 to 26 September 2012 by the Evangelical Waldensian Church – the Union of Methodist and Waldensian Churches and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Italy.

The previous General Assembly in Budapest, in 2006, had emphasized the CPCE’s essence as a fellowship of worship, and practised this to the full. In harmony with the statement in the Report of the Presidium that “the close fellowship of the churches is most tangible whenever we gather to worship together”, the Florence gathering was also set within a framework of services of worship, each day’s work being opened and closed with prayer as well as pausing for the daily prayer for peace at midday. The 220 participants, amongst them 95 delegates, were able to experience the impressively authentic Protestant way of life in this predominantly Catholic country, dating back as it does in part to the pre-Reformation era, as they worshipped together on Sunday in the Waldensian Church and then strolled around the city in groups, and again at the hosts’ evening of celebration, not to mention the many spontaneous exchanges that took place.

The ecumenical importance of the CPCE was quite evident in the words of greeting delivered by General Secretary Olav Fykse Tveit (World Council of Churches), Metropolitan Emmanuel (representing the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople and President of the Conference of European Churches), Rev. Douwe Visser (World Communion of Reformed Churches), General Secretary Anthony Peck (European Baptist Federation), Msgr Matthias Türk (Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity) and Rev. Jonathan Gibbs (Church of England). All made pointed reference to the way in which the fellowship with the CPCE has grown and intensified over the years, calling for united witness and service in the face of the current crises afflicting this continent. A concerted effort to be true to the cause of the Reformation in our own times was considered to be a significant priority for the coming years.

Rosangela Jarjour, General Secretary of the Fellowship of Middle East Evangelical Churches (FMEEC) spoke very movingly of the current dramatic situation of Christians in the Middle East and asked for the support of the CPCE’s member churches in prayer. The Assembly took this opportunity to frame a statement about the situation of Christians in the Middle East (Appendix 3).

It was a particular pleasure for the General Assembly welcome the Protestant Lutheran Church in Ecuador as a new member. The Assembly also appreciated the signing of an agreement with the Conference of Protestant Churches in Latin Countries of Europe (CEPPE) through which this community of West and South European churches now form a regional group of the CPCE. They join the existing three regional groups, the Southeast

European Group, the Northwest Group and the Conference of the churches along the Rhine, as well as the network of churches in Northern Europe.

1.2. Work undertaken in Florence

The Presidium and General Secretary of the CPCE delivered two very comprehensive reports to the Assembly.

The Presidium highlighted the church fellowship experienced by the member churches, in which the “community...in teaching and learning together” provided by the doctrinal discussions has played a key role from the very outset, as the very essence of the CPCE’s work. During the period under review, the formal statements issued by the CPCE addressing contemporary ethical dilemmas have also played a key role, serving to broaden public awareness of the “Protestant voice in Europe”.

The General Secretary acknowledged the keen involvement of young ecumenists in the work of the CPCE, as reflected in the reports “Stand up for justice” and “Ecclesia semper reformanda”. He also made particular reference to the activities of the regional groups as an “important form of genuine church fellowship”.

The main theological address to the General Assembly was delivered by Co-President of the CPCE, Michael Beintker. He reminded those gathered of the quintessential and perennial foundations laid down by the early Christian meaning of fellowship. Freedom for the future can only be born from commitment to Christ, the presence of the Spirit of God and our love for one another. This meaning of fellowship – as we experience it too in the CPCE – can open the way towards ever-converging paths between the churches, in our broader ecumenical relations as well.

Cristina Comencini, well-known film director and author, reflected on the role of women in society and in the church today. She concluded that we do not have freedom in either church or society, if women are not equal to men.

The findings of the doctrinal discussions and other reports compiled over the previous six years were debated with great vigour in the six different study groups and the proposals for specific new undertakings examined with great care. The conclusions of the study groups have been incorporated into this Final Report. The response to the work to date has thus provided a basis for identifying new perspectives for the future.

Two half-day sessions were devoted to the forum “Europe’s churches turn to the future”. Assisted by further experts, the General Assembly concerned itself with various reform projects that have been launched by individual member churches and assessed them in the light of the forthcoming anniversary of the Reformation. The agreements reached are listed in part 3.5 of this final report. The forum culminated in the discussion and adoption of a call entitled ‘Europa Reformata: 500 Years of Reformation in Europe’ (see Appendix 1).

The General Assembly also debated and approved a declaration “Free for the future. Responsibility for Europe” (see Appendix 2).

2. Resolutions on the results of the work 2006-2012

2.1. "Scripture – Confession – Church"

1. The General Assembly thanks all persons involved in the 2008 consultation and the drafting group for compiling the document "Scripture – Confession - Church".
2. The General Assembly welcomes the broad discussion of the document amongst the member churches and is grateful for the differentiated comments, which were evaluated and taken into account in the final version.
3. The General Assembly receives the document and adopts it.
4. The General Assembly requests the churches to take up the result of the doctrinal conversation and to consider it in their own further work on the issues raised, both internally and in discussion with other churches and traditions.
5. The General Assembly recommends that the unclarified questions identified in the final chapter of this document be addressed and considered in the new doctrinal conversation entitled "Church Fellowship".

2.2. "Ministry – Ordination – Episkopé"

1. The General Assembly thanks all persons involved in the 2009 consultations and the drafting group for considering and for compiling the document "Ministry – Ordination - Episkope".
2. The General Assembly welcomes the broad discussion of the document amongst the member churches and is grateful for the differentiated responses, which were evaluated and taken into account in the final version.
3. The General Assembly adopts the statement and the recommendations and commends the accompanying resource material to the churches.
4. The General Assembly invites the churches to consider the result of the doctrinal conversation, and to bring it into their discussions both internally and with other churches and traditions.

2.3. "Stand up for Justice"

1. The General Assembly receives the study "Stand Up for Justice" and thanks the study group for compiling it.
2. The General Assembly welcomes the broad discussion of the document amongst the member churches and is grateful for the differentiated responses, which were evaluated and incorporated into the final version.
3. The General Assembly regards the document as a giving guidance for the process of reflecting, commenting and acting on socio-ethical issues and recommends it to the member churches as an affirmation of LA 11: "Christians ... know that God's will, as demand and gift, embraces the whole world. They stand up for justice and peace on earth between individuals and nations."

4. The General Assembly recommends to the Council to set up a freely accessible digital archive to make available socio-ethical statements of member churches.

2.4. “Training for the Ordained Ministry”

1. The General Assembly thanks those involved in the 2008 and 2010 consultations and the drafting group for compiling the document “Training for the Ordained Ministry within the Community of Protestant Churches in Europe”.
2. The General Assembly welcomes the broad discussion of the document amongst the member churches and is grateful for the differentiated responses, which were evaluated and incorporated into the final version.
3. The General Assembly regards the document as giving guidance for a common understanding of good theological training.
4. The General Assembly recommends that the member churches take the document into consideration in relation to any reforms in the field of training.
5. The General Assembly asks the Council to take appropriate steps to enable the implementation of the recommendations mentioned in the last section.

2.5. “Anchor in Time”

1. The General Assembly thanks the Southeast Europe regional group for compiling the study “Anchor in Time – Protestant Worship in Southern, Central and Eastern Europe between Continuity and Change”.
2. The General Assembly recommends the document as an exemplary contribution to the liturgical studies within the CPCE. It underscores the view of the study that CPCE implements the principle of “reconciled diversity” also in its worship life. It views the orders of worship that have been used during the General Assembly as well as the hymn book “Colours of Grace” as successful applications of this principle.
3. The General Assembly recommends that observations concerning changes in practice of worship should also be gathered in other regions of the CPCE. The General Assembly requests that the Council respond with the appropriate means to section 7.4 of the report Implications and impulses for further work.
4. The General Assembly proposes that the key findings of the report “Anchor in Time” be disseminated amongst the member churches of the CPCE in the form of a guide summarising its conclusions, to be produced by the Southeast European regional group.

2.6. “Ecclesia semper reformanda”

1. The General Assembly receives the study “Ecclesia semper reformanda” and thanks the study group for compiling the report.
2. The General Assembly requests that the member churches take it into consideration in their continuing or future processes of reform.

3. The General Assembly invites the Council to continue the research on how renewal processes function in the churches. This should build on the work already done by the study group, and aim at giving the churches an opportunity to share experiences of church renewal.
4. The General Assembly recommends that the Council establish a small working group to explore alternative methods for continuing research on church renewal (e.g. through partnership and exchange, sharing experiences and best practices etc.).

3. Resolutions on the fields of work from 2012 onwards

3.1. Church fellowship

1. General Assembly requests the Council to initiate a doctrinal conversation on the subject of "Church fellowship". The General Assembly asks that particular attention be given to the positive potential and visibility of church fellowship. It asks for a theological clarification of the binding character ("Verbindlichkeit") of church fellowship and to take into account its constitutional implications, based on the LA.
2. The General Assembly asks the Council to ensure that the process takes a wide range of church experiences into account, and includes broad representation and reception of the study process.

3.2. Plurality of religions

The General Assembly requests the Council to initiate a study process on the subject of the "plurality of religions", to explore the complex range of interrelated issues and the doctrinal implications. In this context, an empirical study should be initiated which explores the interreligious situation on the ground in the different contexts in which the CPCE member churches operate. Such a study should elucidate both the sociological situation and the churches' current practical and theological response. The Council should ensure that the specific contribution of the Leuenberg approach will be reflected in the study project.

3.3. Inter-church dialogues

1. The General Assembly welcomes the establishing of consultations with the Roman Catholic Church on the Leuenberg model of church fellowship.
2. The General Assembly supports the continuation of conversations with the Anglican Churches on the basis of the Memorandum of affirmation and commitment.
3. The General Assembly requests the Council to seek appropriate ways of deepening cooperation with the European Baptist Federation on the basis of the agreement of 2010.
4. The General Assembly requests the Council to seek appropriate ways of continuing consultations with the Orthodox Churches in Europe.

5. The General Assembly requests the Council to establish contact with Pentecostal churches and charismatic communities and, where appropriate, seek appropriate forms of conversation with them.
6. The General Assembly requests the Council to seek appropriate forms of conversation and cooperation with congregations of migrant Christians. It recommends close cooperate in this area with the Churches' Commission for Migrants in Europe (CCME).
7. The General Assembly requests the Council to initiate a consultation in which the member churches can reflect upon their experiences with newly emerging Christian groups.

3.4. Europa reformata

1. The General Assembly advises the Council to conduct the "Europa reformata: 500 Years of Reformation in Europe" project on the basis of the existing project outline. It requests the Council to take into account whilst working on this project the discussions in the working groups.
2. The General Assembly asks the Council to engage with ecumenical partners, in particular the Roman Catholic Church, in order that the 500th anniversary of the Reformation can be experienced as a significant contribution to the ecumenical process.

3.5. Europe's churches turn to the future

The General Assembly considered issues pertaining to the renewal of the Protestant churches in Europe in the forum "Europe's Churches Turn to the Future" on 24 and 25 September 2012.

It recognizes that many of The CPCE member churches are undergoing spiritual or structural renewal and have started to implement measures aimed at adapting to the changes in their respective contexts.

Even though the particular circumstances of the individual member churches can differ quite considerably, they often face similar challenges in terms of spiritual renewal and organisational reform. Therefore the General Assembly recommends that, more actively than to date, the member churches share their experience with reform processes so far completed or their plans for impending renewal.

It requests the Council of the CPCE to follow up on the topic of 'Europe's Churches turn to the future' and, in particular, to examine, and possibly act on the following suggestions:

1. To commission a report investigating the importance of the Reformation as a driver of spiritual renewal in the 21st century;
2. To share in the consultation of the Federation of Swiss Protestant Churches and the Evangelical Church in Germany on a theological interpretation of the Reformation churches in the present day; this should particularly involve the study group on 'ecclesia semper reformanda'.

3. To support the member churches in exchanging information on innovative projects and processes implementing change, for example through linking up existing web platforms.

3.6. Resolutions concerning other areas of activity

1. The General Assembly requests the Council to commission a report investigating the subject "Education for the Future". The General Assembly proposes that the Southeast European regional group be assigned with this task.
2. In the light of the meeting of members of Protestant synods in January 2012 in Bad Boll, Germany the General Assembly requests the Council to support the joint work of the synodal bodies of the member churches.
3. The General Assembly reaffirms the decisions of the General Assembly in Budapest, in 2006, on close cooperation in the field of political, social and economic issues in order to strengthen the Protestant voice in Europe. It approves the work of the CPCE representative in Brussels and welcomes the collaboration with the Church and Society Commission of the Conference of European Churches.
4. The General Assembly requests the Council to consider ways in which the Social Commitment of the Protestant Churches in Europe contained in the Study Document "Stand Up For Justice" [p. 49] may be developed further.
5. In order to have as precise as possible an understanding of the terminology commonly used in the CPCE, the General Assembly recommends that the Council initiate the compilation of a 'Leuenberg Dictionary' that contains and explains terms and expressions in CPCE's three official languages and examines how they can be expressed in different languages.
6. The General Assembly requests the Council to establish a study process on the theology of diaspora. It asks the Council to reflect on how to connect this process with the topic of Gospel and Culture, looking also at cultural identities within the churches, including that of majority and minority churches.
7. The General Assembly requests that the Council examine whether conversations should be taken up with the European Evangelical Alliance.

4. Elections: Council, Presidium, General Secretary

The General Assembly elected the CPCE's new Council on 24 September 2012. The following persons are now members of the Council:

Members	Proxies
1. Heetderks, Jan-Gerd Protestant Church in the Netherlands	1. Rieth, Klaus Evangelical Lutheran Church in Wurtemberg
2. Jørgensen, Kirsten Evangelical Lutheran Church of Denmark	2. Graff-Kallevåg, Kristin Church of Norway
3. Kopsch, Cordelia Evangelical Church in Hesse and Nassau	3. Killat, Barbara Evangelical Church in Central Germany
4. Locher, Gottfried Dr Federation of Swiss Protestant Churches	4. Hirzel, Martin Dr Federation of Swiss Protestant Churches
5. McPake, John Dr Church of Scotland	5. Bradbury, John Dr United Reformed Church
6. Pöder, Thomas-Andreas Estonian Evangelical Lutheran Church	6. Brzóska, Marcin Evangelical Church A.C. in Poland
7. Rudolph, Barbara Evangelical Church in the Rhineland	7. Kayser, Susanne Evangelical Church of Bremen
8. Tarr Cselovszky, Klára Dr Lutheran Church in Hungary	8. Bölcskei, Gusztáv Dr Reformed Church in Hungary
9. Thaarup, Jørgen United Methodist Church, Central Conference, Northern Europe	9. Pöll, Lothar United Methodist Church, Central Conference, Central and Southern Europe
10 Weber, Friedrich Dr Evangelical Lutheran Church in Brunswick	10. Hauschildt, Friedrich Dr United Evangelical Lutheran Church in Germany
11. Weinrich, Michael Dr Union of Evangelical Churches	11. Martin, Michael Evangelical Lutheran Church in Bavaria
12. Wieland-Maret, Esther United Protestant Church in France	12. Gajewski, Pawel Dr Waldensian Evangelical Church in Italy
13. Zikeli, Daniel Dr Evangelical Church A.C. in Romania	13. Boukis, Dimitrios Greek Evangelical Church

The inaugural meeting of the Council took place on 25 September 2012, at which it elected the tripartite Presidium comprising Dr Friedrich Weber (Executive President), Dr Gottfried Locher and Dr Klára Tarr Cselovszky.

It also re-elected Dr Michael Bünker as General Secretary.

Appendix 1: Europa reformata: 500 years of Reformation in Europe.

In 2017 and the following years, Protestant Christians will mark the 500th anniversary of the Reformation. This movement signified a new departure for the church, society and history of ideas and its impact is felt throughout the whole world to this day. The persona and works of Martin Luther were to play a pivotal role here. His criticism of indulgences in 1517 and the broad debate surrounding his Ninety-Five Theses provided the central focus for a movement of such enormous persuasive force that it propelled the church onto a faster, more profound and far-reaching course of renewal. The Reformation profoundly affected the history of Europe and the churches located here. The efforts to reform the one Church of Jesus Christ based on the gospel of justification by faith alone gave rise to the Protestant churches.

The Protestant churches' "starting point was a new experience of liberation and assurance in the power of the Gospel. In taking a stand for the truth as they recognized it, the Reformers found themselves in common opposition to the church traditions of that time. They were at one therefore confessing that the life and doctrine of the Church are to be measured by the original and pure testimony of the Gospel in scripture. They were at one in testifying to the free and unconditional grace of God in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ for all those who believe in this promise. They were at one in confessing that the practice and shape of the church are only to be determined by the commission to deliver their testimony to the world, and that the Word of the Lord remains sovereign over every human ordering of the Christian community. In all this, together with the whole of Christendom, they received and confessed anew the faith expressed in the creeds of the early Church, in the Triune God and in the divine-human nature of Jesus Christ." (Leuenberg Agreement, 4).

The churches of the Reformation have always shared this common witness, irrespective of differences and contradictions existing between them. From this stems the Church Fellowship that formally declared itself in 1973 with the Agreement between Reformation Churches in Europe and in which they recognize their calling to common witness and common service in today's world. The Methodist churches, which arose later, in the 18th century, also share the fundamental beliefs of the Reformation.

The Gospel brings a breath of fresh air, banishes fear, gives new life, grants freedom, opens our eyes to the needs of others and banishes mournful spirits. Whenever we experience this amongst ourselves, we feel the stirrings of the Reformation among us. It is when the Christian churches allow themselves to be guided by the Gospel that the Reformation is properly honoured.

The Gospel inspires reflection within our minds and souls: What does it mean to be Protestant these days? What makes Protestantism fascinating for others? But also: In what ways do we perhaps hinder the Gospel? How can we become more welcoming to others? What elements of the Reformation inspire the shaping of the modern day church?

And finally: What does a Reformation renewal of the church mean for the future of the church and the co-operation between Christian churches?

On the path towards the forthcoming anniversary of the Reformation we should carry these experiences and questions with us. The General Assembly of the CPCE in Florence encourages its member churches to be motivated by their experiences of the Gospel and seek inspiration from the questions that it raises. It calls for a joint celebration of the Anniversary of the Reformation in 2017 and, under the auspices of the project "Europa reformata: 500 Years of Reformation", offers ideas for projects, initiatives and joint ventures.

The aim of the Reformation was to renew the one Church of Jesus Christ. For 500 years now the Reformation has challenged all Christendom, transcending all confessional divides and borders, to seek the meaning of the Reformation for the "one holy catholic and apostolic church".

And far beyond our church walls, the quincentenary should also, throughout all of Europe, inspire renewed public engagement with the Reformation and fresh dialogue on its dynamic contribution to culture and society.

Florence, 25 September 2012

Appendix 2: Free for the future. Responsibility for Europe

Statement of the General Assembly

The Community of Protestant Churches in Europe (CPCE) gathered together in Florence on the occasion of its 7th General Assembly, convening just as the process of European integration is undergoing a deep crisis with incalculable repercussions for Europe's citizens, society, democracy and the process of European integration. This situation prompted the General Assembly to issue this statement, addressed to the member churches of the CPCE and to the general public throughout Europe.

"Free for the Future" is the motto of the CPCE's General Assembly in Florence. God bestowed this freedom upon us through Jesus Christ, whose message inspires trust and liberates us for responsible service in the world. The Protestant churches of Europe therefore committed themselves in the Leuenberg Agreement (LA) to work for justice on earth and peaceful relations amongst individual persons and between the nations. "In consequence, they must join with other people in seeking appropriate rational criteria and play their part in applying these criteria." (LA 11).

In the current crisis in Europe many people are afraid of the immediate future. Many Europeans are affected by unemployment, falling income levels, cuts to welfare services, austerity measures that affect state financing of public services, and growing poverty. One of the most disturbing developments is the extremely high level of youth unemployment in many countries. Deep-seated fears for their livelihood and a complete lack of prospects are driving huge numbers of people onto the streets to demonstrate.

The General Assembly of the CPCE is well aware that, in this crisis, there are no simple answers, and no single, one-size-fits-all solution, particularly as the European economy and financial markets are so closely bound up with the global economy. The General Assembly also wishes to express its respect - and assure its intercessions - for the political leaders who have been placed under such extreme pressure by this crisis and who carry a great burden of responsibility for the future.

Within our own countries, but also the world over, the gap between rich and poor is widening. The victims of this crisis are to be found not only in Europe but also in other parts of the world. Any proposed solutions and decisions must also be carefully evaluated in terms of their effectiveness in assisting those people and societies most deeply affected, their potential impact on the stability of European integration and their contribution to global solidarity. This profound crisis has multiple causes and effects. The following aspects are of particular importance to the General Assembly:

Gathering courage to face the truth

Christian faith lives from the experience that the truth liberates us for the future. It abides by the biblical promise that "the truth will set you free" (John 8:32). Trusting in this promise, the member churches of the CPCE believe that the truth about the extent and consequences of the current crisis in Europe is not only something with which people can actually cope - it can even be liberating. Only if we have the courage to face the truth can we open up new avenues for action and find fresh prospects for the future. On this basis

the General Assembly seeks to encourage the leading figures in politics and business, and indeed Europe's citizens as a whole, to face what clearly might be very inconvenient truths.

Courage to face the truth frees us to challenge any claims that the current political strategies are the only options. There may well be certain situations in which a particular solution seems to be the only one. However, there is also an ideology claiming there is no alternative, which is the opposite of one that encourages truth and freedom. It runs a real risk of ruining any chance of future freedom. Admitting one's own perplexity or uncertainty is not a sign of political weakness but a sign of strength. In fact, this is a way of reinforcing people's faith in politics, without which the European project is doomed to failure. The crisis will not be solved overnight. The main objective in facing the continuing crisis must be to generate new scope for creative action aimed at creating a more just, caring and peaceful society.

This call for honesty and integrity is simultaneously aimed at the churches themselves who, after all, are not located somewhere outside of society, politics and the economy, but are protagonists in their own right. For this reason the General Assembly encourages its member churches to critically evaluate their own involvement in this crisis. Only then can they appeal to others with any credibility.

Strengthening democracy

This crisis is exerting enormous pressure on *democracy and democratic procedures* for decisive action. The impression has arisen that national parliaments, governments and the European institutions are no longer the ones taking the decisions and that the real power is exerted by the financial markets. People feel increasingly at the mercy of forces beyond their control. This development is due not least to the policies of recent years to increasingly liberalise the financial sector and withdraw it from public supervision.

The General Assembly is convinced that the only way to overcome this crisis in an effective and sustainable manner is via the application of stronger transparent and democratic procedures at all levels of government throughout Europe. Full participation and active involvement in decision-making processes are, in the Protestant understanding, fundamental for good neighbourly relations and peaceful co-operation within Europe.

Considering the consequences for society

The remedies dispensed for countering the crisis so far have failed to sufficiently consider its *social consequences* or the social hardship caused by the very strategies adopted. Concentrating on austerity measures and budgetary discipline, however necessary and desirable the latter might be, has proved disastrous in immediate social terms throughout the countries concerned.

The General Assembly welcomes the European Council's decision of June 2012 to invest €120 billion from the EU's structural funds in a Compact for Growth and Jobs, but still fails to see any systematic consideration of the social repercussions of political decisions, as is stipulated in the social clause of the Treaty on European Union itself (article 9 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union).

This divide is particularly obvious in the concept of *European economic governance*, which the EU has developed only in the last two years; it strongly emphasises cost-cutting and budgetary consolidation, way ahead of any consideration of socio-political aims. However, the formal aim of establishing a “highly competitive social market economy” (as declared in the Treaty on European Union, article 3.3) requires regulatory procedures that address both economic and social concerns.

Devising a fair taxation policy

Compared to cost-cutting programmes for budgetary consolidation, too little attention is paid to *fiscal policies*. The General Assembly calls to mind that our societies and states live from the taxes and solidarity of everyone and that all citizens have obligations towards the common good. For example, in these times of crisis such high levels of youth unemployment clearly highlight yet again the importance of public investment in the general sphere of education.

It is the Christian belief that the privileged can, and should, contribute more and bear a greater burden than those who are less well-off. If high incomes and assets were subject to higher taxation – even for a limited period – or to a one-off levy, this would be an appropriate means of distributing the burden of the crisis more fairly. At the same time, effective measures must be taken to detect and combat tax evasion and fraud, and an effective tax administration needs to be established, or reinforced.

Regulating the financial market

There have been different national causes of the financial, economic and sovereign debt crisis in the individual European states. These factors must be subject to careful analysis and suitable correction. It is unethical to pursue a policy consistently relying on accruing debts to an extent that will inevitably burden and severely hamper the welfare of future generations. Nonetheless, it should not be forgotten that the current debt crisis largely stems from the crisis on the *financial market*: the rescuing of stricken banks has - together with economic stimulus programmes, falling tax revenues and climbing social spending - led to an unprecedented increase in sovereign debt in every single country to have been hit by the crisis. It should go without saying that regulating the financial market and banks must be considered crucial for the future not just of the European Union but of the continent as a whole.

Freedom and responsibility are intrinsically linked, in the Protestant understanding. This fundamental relationship between risk and liability must therefore be restored in the financial sector as well. In addition, the financial sector and those who have gained from the crisis should be more closely involved in remedying it. It is absolutely unacceptable that profits are still privatised and losses passed on to the whole of society!

The financial and banking sectors require efficient and enforceable supervision and ethical regulation. One tangible step in this direction is the planned tax on financial transactions that should involve as many states as possible. Another could be a European banking union that would be subject to common rules and the same supervisory body.

Rejecting any resurgence of nationalism

The crisis has magnified people's general mistrust towards the European institutions, in many countries giving fresh impetus to nationalist and populist leanings and political parties. We must be careful to distinguish between a state's right to self-determination and the protection of its genuine national interests, and a nationalism that leads to competition and animosity between peoples and the repression of ethnic minorities. The process of European integration arose precisely as a counterforce to the *nationalism* that emerged in the 19th century and had such devastating consequences in the 20th century. For this reason the Protestant churches – who in some cases were themselves deeply embroiled in this nationalism – are grateful for this integration process and give it their support. In this context the General Assembly refers to the CPCE's 2001 report entitled "Church – People – State – Nation".

Rethinking our economic model

Alongside these contemporary and immediate considerations, many Christians are pondering the broader possibility that this crisis might actually warrant a reconsideration of the prevailing *economic model* that defines any increase in prosperity primarily in terms of economic growth and extends the logic of market forces to all fields of life. The General Assembly welcomes any ideas and discussions about different economic approaches and alternative ways of life amongst the churches and their congregations, as well as throughout society as a whole, such as those identified in the study "Stand Up for Justice" presented here at the General Assembly. It is not a matter of turning away from the principles of the social market economy. In the Protestant understanding, this is not only an economic order, but also embodies a whole system of values. Rather, the issue is to turn towards greater distributive justice, guaranteeing meaningful and secure employment, providing stable social systems, offering adequate and appropriate public services and, ultimately, establishing a sustainable economic system based on care for Creation.

Supporting a Europe of solidarity

The European Union has so far made an important contribution towards peace, freedom and prosperity with justice throughout Europe. The CPCE is also committed to these aims. It seeks to strengthen the partnerships between churches and their congregations right across Europe, and in so doing strengthen solidarity from one end of the continent to the other.

In this of all times, church partnerships and ecumenical cooperation are especially valuable for our life together in Europe, and for understanding and cohesion in the midst of crisis. The major challenges of the 21st century – such as globalisation, climate change, demographic shifts, changes in the world economy, and political transformation in Europe's neighbouring regions – call for a free and united Europe whose readiness to show solidarity does not end at the borders of individual states and, indeed, stretches beyond the continent of Europe.

Florence, 26 September 2012

Appendix 3: Statement on the situation of Christians in the Middle East

“Christianity is freedom” – Philip Melanchthon’s formulation of 1521 has become a motto for Protestant churches. Wherever in the world people are striving for freedom, they can be sure of the sympathy and support of the Protestant churches. Therefore many Protestant Christians in Europe have very much welcomed the “Arab Spring” in various countries of the Middle East, because they sense in this movement the articulation of people’s justified desire for freedom.

But in recent months we, the Community of Protestant Churches in Europe, have become increasingly worried by many reports from our partners in the countries of the Middle East.

Protestant Churches in Europe are connected with the churches and Christians in the Middle East in a multitude of ways.

The CPCE has an intensive partnership with the Fellowship of the Middle East Evangelical Churches, a federation of 17 mostly Protestant Christian churches in the region.

The member churches of the CPCE are connected with churches and Christians in the Middle East through partnerships, diaconal projects and many personal relations.

As the CPCE we observe that Christians in the Middle East share an interest in, and a striving for, the freedom of their fellow citizens of different faith. But now they are worried about the constitutional, legal and political developments in their countries, which seem to threaten their participation in society and their religious freedom.

Christians in Syria are especially deeply worried about the threat to basic human rights and security in the present civil war. As well as this they fear an impending loss of religious and cultural plurality in Syria and the loss of the principle of the participation of all groups in their society.

As the CPCE we are deeply concerned because it is often difficult to recognize in the politics of our governments a concern for the life of our Christian sisters and brothers in Syria, for their religious freedom, and for the preserving of religious and cultural diversity in Syria.

We ask the governments in Europe to strengthen their advocacy for legal certainty, full participation in society and full religious freedom for Christians and churches, as well of all other religious minorities, in the countries of the Middle East.

We ask our member churches and all Christians in Europe to inform the public about the very difficult situation of Christians in Syria and elsewhere in the Middle East – so as to provide a more comprehensive picture than is available in the media.

We ask our member churches and all Christians in Europe to fully support the Christians in the Middle East, and all others who suffer there from violence, legal uncertainty and restrictions on their freedom.

We especially ask our member churches and all Christians in Europe to pray for our Christian sisters and brothers and for all people in the Middle East and to ask God to help them in their suffering and their struggle for freedom.

