



## The Council of the World Communion of Reformed Churches in Europe

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### STEERING COMMITTEE OF WCRC EUROPE

President: Dipl. Pol. Martina Wasserloos-Strunk (Germany)

Vice President: Rev. Dimitris Boukis (Greece)

Vice President: Rev. Jenny Dobers (Sweden)

Secretary: Rev. Jacobine Scholte-de Jong (Netherlands, till March)/Janos Antal (Romania)

Treasurer: Kerstin Koch

### COUNCIL

2./3. May, 2019. Edinburgh

**'Europe: a dividing continent? What role can reformed churches have in promoting unity and peace?'**

*The Council explored the theme both from a political perspective but also, more importantly, from a theological and ecclesiological perspective. How can churches support one another? How can we understand and analyse populist movements and accurately read the signs of the times in which we live? What can churches, as communities of faith, do to reach out to other communities of faith and to express in a new way the belief that all are fundamentally made in the image of God?*

Results:

1. To react to the increasing xenophobia within our communities through dialogue and discussion of political messages, with special focus on "Christian identity in secular Europe", and finding space to confront right wing parties and populist ideologies even within our churches, all taking into account the current political
2. To improve Christian-Muslim relations by increasing cooperation and dialogue with the Middle East partners of the WCRC, and also learning from the experiences of other WCRC European partners in their cooperation with Muslims. This can entail formal dialogues between Reformed ministers and Muslim imams, local partnerships around shared action in civil society.
3. To have a task force "Theology of diversity" – seeking different approaches for strategies against division and strengthen solidarity.
4. To collaborate with WCRC-RAN process.
5. To bring people of several countries together to share their experiences.

## **SOLIDARITY VISITS**

In recent years, the Steering Committee has had a policy of making solidarity visits as part of its work. These have taken place alongside regular business meeting of the Committee. We are extremely grateful that the churches visited have received us with open arms. We think that it is a valuable sign to the smaller churches of our communion that our communion cares about them and shares their joys and sorrows. The hospitality is always touching and we are blessed to share time in prayer with the churches. The current Steering Committee has decided to continue this work.

Following the decision of the Council last year to deepen the communion with the so called Middle-East Churches, the Steering Committee was happy to receive the invitation of the WCRC President, Najla Kasab, from the National Evangelical Synod of Syria and Lebanon, to come and to learn more about the situation of people living there, with regard to different challenges like the refugee crisis, the threat of radical islamistic groups and the consequent and ambitious education projects for children and students, offered by the church.

## **ERASMUS PROJECT**

“Train the unknown trainer” is an EU financed project with participants in Estonia, Italy, Hungary, Germany and the Czech Republic. The aim of the project is to find out the needs of volunteers working with ecumenical organisations which are working for refugees and to support them. The project is administrated by the Reformed Church in Germany on behalf of WCRC Europe. Now the project has come to its end. We are happy about the fruitful work with several partners across Europe. It was a pleasure to learn together and a privilege to come in contact with people in Churches who live out their faith in engaging with suffered people. Now the final report of “Train the unknown trainer”, a project initiated by the European Region of WCRC is finished. The contact and common discussion about the European response to refugees and migration was a great opportunity to learn more about the situation of churches in Europe and about the political situation they have to live with. Sharing our faith and the motives of our work was an important part of our meetings. The administration of an Erasmus project is not easily done, and we are happy that the Reformed Church supported us with knowledge and experience.

## **FUTURE PROJECTS**

WCRC Europe and the Reformed Alliance will organize an international consultation “Newspaper and Bible – Confessing Christ in Europe Today” in October in Budapest. The study of Karl Barth and his theological thinking encourages Christians, to take up their responsibility for European society and to make their voices heard. We will hear theological keynotes from Hungary and the United Kingdom, accompanied by case studies, which will highlight the current political situation in different European countries. With this conference, we follow up the decision of the Council to work on the issues nationalism, xenophobia and how we can respond on it from a Christian perspective.

06.05.2019, Martina Wasserloos-Strunk, President