



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

## Guidelines on the Establishment of Membership in the CPCE

On the basis of the Leuenberg Agreement and the CPCE Statutes of 2006 the Council of the CPCE approves the following guidelines on the establishment of membership in the CPCE.

1. Membership in the CPCE is a consequence and an expression of declared church fellowship. A declaration of church fellowship is not an arbitrary act by the churches; rather they “accord one another something that is antecedently given to them” (The Church of Jesus Christ, 1994, III.1.2, p. 120).
2. LA 2 names the theological conditions for the declaration of church fellowship. Church fellowship is to be declared and cannot be denied so far as a common understanding of the Gospel has been established, including administration of the sacraments according to their institution, and any existing doctrinal condemnations have been correctly recognized as no longer touching the present position of the other participants.
3. By its nature church fellowship is an event aiming for reciprocity. The churches united in the CPCE realize church fellowship among themselves and invite other churches to attach themselves to this fellowship so far as the conditions are given or can be fulfilled. The CPCE (as an organization or body established in church law) serves the realization of church fellowship.
4. The establishment of membership in the CPCE is bound to a regular procedure. Since the approval of the Statutes of the CPCE at the General Assembly in September 2006, the principle holds according to §1 paragraph 2 that to join the CPCE a specific agreement is required in addition to the declaration of church fellowship. Churches wishing to join take up contact with the office, which will clarify with them how the declaration of church fellowship can be realized and what should be a subject of the specific agreement. The office conducts these negotiations on behalf of the Council and in consultation with the Presidium.
5. Alongside organizational questions (number of delegates, membership contributions, participation in regional groups etc.) a subject of the agreement must always also be an evaluation of the doctrinal conversations conducted since 1973. Their results are admittedly not binding in the same way as the Leuenberg Agreement, for they handle questions on which remaining differences are not in themselves church-divisive. However, the agreements that have in part been reached contribute to the deepening of the church fellowship. It is to be clarified whether a church wishing to join sees itself in contradiction to the result of a doctrinal conversation approved by a CPCE General Assembly. In this case the implications of this stance for possible membership are to be discussed with the church concerned. The CPCE Council decides on admission to membership on the basis of the report on the ensuing conversation.
6. In LA 33 the signatory churches pledge themselves to the mutual recognition of ordination, including the ordination of women practiced in almost all CPCE churches. This has been expressly underlined in subsequent doctrinal conversations (cf. Neuendettelsau Theses II.5). It must therefore be established that churches wishing to join recognize the ordination and

ministry of women ministers in other CPCE churches. Such recognition is part of the membership agreement.

7. In respect of the procedure three categories of potential member churches are to be distinguished:

- a) *European churches of pre-Reformation or Reformation origin (i.e. the churches named in the first sentence of LA).* The basis for the declaration of church fellowship is as up till now the signing of the Leuenberg Agreement. The Council of the CPCE receives the church on the basis of an agreement.
- b) *Churches of pre-Reformation and Reformation origins which are not based in Europe but appeal to a European identity.* These too can declare church fellowship by signing the Leuenberg Agreement. It must additionally be clarified in the membership negotiations what the motive is for the desire to join and how fellowship with the European churches is to be realized. Priority should lie with efforts for a regional realization of church fellowship. In special cases and after clarification of the above questions the Council of the CPCE can receive a church into membership on the basis of an agreement.
- c) *Churches which do not derive directly from the Reformation tradition.* Doctrinal conversations must explore with them how far the criteria for church fellowship are fulfilled. On this basis a document declaring church fellowship is to be prepared, as in the case of the European Methodists in 1994. The Council of CPCE conducts the negotiations, but in this case only the General Assembly can decide on the declaration of church fellowship and so on membership of the CPCE.

Frankfurt/ Main, 12 February 2011

\*\*\*

Zur Gemeinschaft Evangelischer Kirchen in Europa (GEKE) – Leuenberger Kirchengemeinschaft haben sich 105 protestantische Kirchen in Europa (und in Südamerika) zusammen geschlossen. Lutherische, reformierte, unierte, methodistische und vorreformatorische Kirchen gewähren einander durch ihre Zustimmung zur Leuenberger Konkordie von 1973 Kanzel- und Abendmahlsgemeinschaft. Die Anschrift lautet: GEKE-Geschäftsstelle, Severin-Schreiber-Gasse 3, A-1180 Wien, Tel.: +43.1.4791523.900, Telefax: +43.1.4791523.580, Email: office@leuenberg.eu, Internet: www.leuenberg.eu. Pressekontakt: Dipl. theol. Thomas Flügge (Bern), Tel. +41.31.37025.02, Fax .80, Mobil: +41.79.6401902, Email: t.fluegge@leuenberg.eu.