



european christian **environmental** network

To all members and friends of ECEN

Brussels, 12 March 2024

Re: FUTURE OF EUROPEAN CHRISTIAN ENVIRONMENTAL NETWORK

Dear friends,

We have reached a turning point that requires us to inform you about significant changes in the life and structure of ECEN.

The Board of the Conference of European Churches (CEC) has made the decision to terminate the relationship with ECEN in its current form, recommending instead ECEN transition into an independent and autonomous entity. The decision is in effect from the beginning of 2024.

The process was initiated two years ago by CEC with an unexpected announcement of the intention to separate ECEN from CEC. Over the past two years, ECEN has presented arguments aimed at keeping ECEN under the CEC umbrella. Guided by the experience of our previous work, as well as by the vision of a coherent ecumenical action, as it was expressed in pointed words of Martin Luther King: “If we are to have peace on earth, our loyalties must become ecumenical rather than sectional...”, our reasoning was grounded in two main convictions:

- ECEN believed that ecumenical coherence is of key importance. Aligned with decisions made by the World Council of Churches (WCC) and with growing support from churches, we believe that care for creation, climate justice, and concerns for a sustainable future must be integrated into the mainstream of the ecumenical agenda.
- ECEN believed that the significant practical and financial demands associated with establishing a new administrative and legal structure would be detrimental to both ECEN and CEC.

For this reason ECEN advocated for maintaining a continued relationship with CEC, while demonstrating flexibility in presenting various alternative models of co-existence, including one where the network would operate as a long-term project under the auspices of CEC. These arguments, unfortunately, were not acceptable to CEC.

As part of our endeavour, ECEN also reached out to churches, seeking their advice and preferred solutions. We were delighted that most responses we received expressed support for the ECEN's continued existence within CEC.

We were encouraged by CEC's Assembly in 2023, which recognized that: *“The eco-crisis, caused by climate change and human agency, is immediate and urgent. Climate change is affecting all, but first and foremost, those who have contributed least to its reasons. This leads to insecurities and has impacts on everyday lives of every part of Creation. Responsible stewardship of the earth means taking action now....”* The Assembly adopted the decision that CEC, in responding to these challenges, should seek collaboration with ECEN. This is consistent with the commitment expressed in Charta Oecumenica to support ecumenical networks in their effort to safeguard creation and encourage churches across the continent to respond to this challenge.

Unfortunately, the CEC Board took a different view in its meeting in November 2023. While formally keeping climate justice among its priorities, an annex was added stating that this would only be pursued if possible. The Board did not accommodate these themes in the work program with the consequence that it would stop resourcing ECEN in any way.

ECEN must now embark on a new path. Confronting environmental destruction as an existential threat, the network has proven over its 25 years that it can support churches in delivering results, supporting advocacy, challenging those in authority and creating resources. ECEN continues to work on the theological framework underpinning churches' engagement in care for creation, building on the liturgical celebrations of the Season of Creation it was involved in initiating, facilitating networking and partnering among churches of different ecclesial traditions and from different parts of the continent, contributing to dialogue with policymakers, collaborating with partners, and amplifying the concerns of youth.

We are now considering the best way forward. The ECEN Assembly in 2023 reaffirmed the vitality of efforts for churches' action reflecting concerns of climate change and a sustainable future. Care for creation is now firmly entrenched in the agenda of churches, and it remains the ambition of the network to continue in this mission.

We count on your continuous support. At this time we ask you to ensure that your churches and denominations understand that ECEN faces new challenges as a new European ecumenical organization and that we will depend on your support to ensure its continued existence.

Please be in touch with any ideas or support you may be able to offer. In turn we will let you know where our journey takes us next!

If there are others you would like us to be in contact with please let us know.

In Christ's service

ECEN Enabling Team