

**Churches in Dialogue Commission (CiD)
of the Conference of European Churches**

Communiqué:

Minority-Majority Church Relationships

The reflection on the relationships between minority and majority churches has been a continuing concern for CEC. In addressing this topic the CiD Commission took at first stock of reflections, experiences and outcomes of previous consultations, such as *Minority/Majority Churches in Europe – on the way to reconciliation and common mission* (CEC Study Committee, Trondheim 1996) and *Religious Freedom. Majority and Minority Communities in their relation to the State* (Church and Society Commission of the CEC, Vienna 2002). This material formed the basis for the work of the Commission on the topic. Such work was organized along two main lines of reflection, as indicated by the CEC Central Committee at its meeting in December 2003, the first one being “*to continue a process of consultation, promoting dialogue between majority and minority churches (...), leading to greater clarity about the way in which the terms “minority” and “majority” churches are used*”.

At its meeting in Aarhus (Denmark, May 2004), the CiD decided to organize a case study exploring the topic in three different countries: a) a country with Orthodox majority (Greece); b) a country with Protestant majority (Norway); and c) a country with a Roman-Catholic majority (Italy). This project was meant to investigate the situation in the respective countries in order to identify common issues and trends. The discussion around these case studies during the meeting of the CiD in Cartigny (Switzerland, May 2005) proved to be rather difficult: the Commission ascertained the differences in understanding of terminology, and experienced how it is sometimes difficult for the churches to listen and understand sympathetically each other’s stories.

The second main line of reflection was “*to continue a close cooperation with the Church and Society Commission, since human rights play a major role in the relationship between churches and the State*”. At its meeting in Tallinn (Estonia, June 2006) a common strategy with the CEC Church and Society Commission under the title *Majority and minority church relationship: ethnic identity, national identity and the search for common witness of the churches in Europe* was discussed.

In view of the above and in the spirit of the *Charta Oecumenica*, which encourages churches “to defend the rights of minorities and to help to reduce misunderstandings and prejudices between majority and minority churches”, the CiD at its meeting in Malaga (Spain, 11-14 May, 2009) wishes to recommend:

- that should the terminology of minority-majority be applied to churches, this should not be understood in ecclesiological terms, but only numerically: the quantity of members does not affect the ecclesial quality;
- churches to affirm that being a majority or minority church is not a privilege or a disadvantage, rather a following the call of God and a living that call with love, care and obligations to all people and to their neighbouring churches;
- churches – both majority and minority – to continue actively to engage themselves in the processes of reconciliation, better knowledge and understanding of each other;
- churches – both majority and minority – to overcome misunderstanding, prejudice, negative attitudes coming from the past, indifference, exclusiveness and suspicion, and to foster attitudes of care and support.

We trust that CEC will continue promoting dialogue on the topic between majority and minority churches through the interaction between the CiD, the Church and Society Commission and the Churches’ Commission for Migrants in Europe.

Malaga, Spain, the 14th of May, 2009