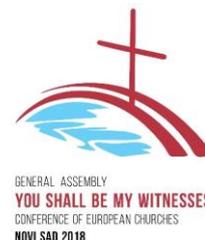


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FOR INFORMATION

The local impact of the *Charta Æcumenica* The current stage of the evaluation process

Introduction

In spring 2017 the Conference of European Churches initiated a new research process on the reception of the guidelines for the growing cooperation among churches in Europe. The process is twofold. On the one hand, the Conference of European Churches addressed its members and partners concerning the reception of the guidelines. On the other hand, it explored online and printed material on the *Charta Æcumenica* in order to enhance its understanding of the reception of the document by its members and dialogue partners. The first part (I) of the present paper provides a summary of the responses to the document, whereas the second part (II) presents a list of online sources that demonstrate how the document was received in different parts of Europe including a list of important publications on the document.

As the *Charta Æcumenica* is a document owned by both the Conference of European Churches (CEC) and the Council of European Bishops' Conferences (CCEE), the Conference of European Churches is cooperating with the Council in order to provide a clear analysis of the impact of the *Charta Æcumenica* on churches and church-related bodies. At the recent meeting of the CCEE-CEC Joint Committee held in Brussels from 9-10 March 2018, the members of the Committee were consulted on the reception of the document and decided to look at how the guidelines could be further strengthened with input from the churches, National Councils of Churches and Bishop Conferences around Europe. The Council of European Bishops' Conferences shared feedback on the reception of the document based on 14 responses to the questionnaire that it had addressed to its members in mid-February. As the evaluation process is ongoing, the present paper does not include this feedback. Further work is needed on the evaluation of the impact of the guidelines and cooperation continues between the Council of European Bishops' Conferences and the Conference of European Churches.

Part I: Responses received by the Conference of European Churches

In September 2017 a letter was addressed by the Conference of European Churches to Member Churches, National Councils of Churches as well as Organisations in Partnership, requesting feedback on the following questions:

1. How have the "guidelines for the growing cooperation among churches in Europe" been used by Churches, National Councils of Churches, and dialogue partners?
 - a. Please name projects and events that were inspired by the *Charta Æcumenica*.
 - b. Please indicate how the guidelines have been applied or developed in your context by councils of churches, by churches bilaterally, by ecumenical fellowships, or in the academic context.

- c. Has the *Charta Œcumenica* been used as the solemn ecumenical reference with regard to establishing ecumenical partnerships or agreements, e.g. a church solemnly signing the document when joining a Council of Churches?
- d. Has the *Charta Œcumenica* influenced the mutual recognition of baptism among churches multilaterally or bilaterally in your context?
2. What are the reasons why the document is found useful or not useful in the different local context?
3. Are the recommendations of the document still valid today in the European context? Are there aspects that are missing?
4. With regard to interreligious dialogue, please indicate projects that your church/organisation is engaged in and resource persons.

By April 2018 the Conference of European Churches received 27 responses that appear in chronological order of submission: 19 responses from Members Churches: the United Methodist Church in Switzerland, the Union of Evangelical Free Churches in Germany, the Church District Markgräflerland-Church of Baden, the Evangelical Church in Germany, the Church of Lippe, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Bavaria, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Northern Germany, the Centre for Ecumenism of the Protestant Church of Hesse and Nassau and the Protestant Church in Kurhessen-Waldeck, the United Protestant Church in Belgium, the Federation of Swiss Protestant Churches, the Council on International relations of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Denmark, the Silesian Evangelical Church of the Augsburg Confession, the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland, the Methodist Church-The Conference Office in the United Kingdom, the Waldensian Church in Italy, the Union of Protestant Churches in Alsace and Lorraine, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Hungary, and the Reformed Church in Hungary; 6 responses from Councils of Churches: the Council of Churches of North Rhine-Westphalia, the Council of Churches in the Netherlands, the Christian Council of Norway, the Council of Churches in Germany; the Christian Council of Sweden, the Ecumenical Council of Churches in Hungary; 1 response from an Organisation in Partnership: Church and Peace; and 1 response from an academic institution: Missions' Academy in Hamburg.

The responses vary in length, detail and style. Some are the outcome of a process of discussion on the questions provided by the Conference of European Churches, and others were drafted by individual church officers responsible for ecumenical dialogue. Some reply directly to the questions, and others engage with the content of the document.¹ The responses demonstrate the great diversity of views within the churches in Europe. They communicate different, sometimes contradictory views on the document, especially with regard to its usefulness, audience, the role it played in developing ecumenical partnerships, and its current relevance. Some churches link their ecumenical cooperation with other partners with the guidelines, others observe that it is rather the spirit of the document that has influenced their ecumenical growth, others consider the guidelines as an outcome of growing ecumenical relations.

Who is the audience of the guidelines?

With regard to the audience to which the guidelines are addressed, a number of responses show that the *Charta Œcumenica* is seen as a document owned by the church leadership and those responsible for or experts in ecumenical dialogue who are convinced of its

¹ The response of the Union of Evangelical Free Churches in Germany is a commentary to the *Charta Œcumenica* which articulates how the Union is engaging currently with each guideline-commitment of the document.

theological and spiritual significance. It is therefore accessible to them rather than their congregations. At the same time, it is noted that at the congregation level there is little interest in the document. Another response shows that ecumenically involved people, such as members of commissions, consider the *Charta Æcumenica* to be a largely unknown text. This general lack of knowledge of the text points to the question of reception.²

In some cases, there is a feeling among people engaging in ecumenical work at the grassroots level that the *Charta Æcumenica* does not contain anything new and they find that it does not have the potential to inspire their work.³ Others find that the *Charta Æcumenica* has actually been able “to sow Europe together, not top down, but bottom up.”⁴ Sometimes, within a single church, some doubt whether the document can be used at the local level, whereas others plan to use it in their congregations. In either case, they express interest in future updates of the document.⁵

Although the questions that the *Charta Æcumenica* is raising are seen to be playing a role in everyday ecumenical life, and to be a concern for many, the document itself is found to be relatively unknown to the younger generation. The need is highlighted to introduce it to them.⁶ The experience of students with the document at the Theological Faculty of the University of Hamburg as well as in the context of various ecumenical trainings shows that many are amazed that such a text exists. They wonder why the guidelines have not been put into practice and why the churches remain so divided.⁷

Church executive boards are seen as responsible for the reception of the *Charta Æcumenica* and of ecumenical texts in general. It is stressed that they should not just make statements on ecumenical documents but actively promote their reception in their church, as well as in the regional ecumenical context, through strategic thinking and operational steps. This also concerns the work of reception in synods as well as involving the level of deaneries/church districts. In this way, people at the local level will be enabled to understand that the *Charta Æcumenica* is a kind of “manual,” on which they should base their own local examples of ecumenical cooperation.⁸

The reception of the documents is closely linked to the commitment of churches to ecumenical work. It was noted that in general in the past decade ecumenism has not been elevated to a priority for ecclesial institutions.⁹ Sometimes withdrawal signs are noticeable and signs of rigidity in their ecclesial identity. At the same time, it was questioned whether

² Response of the Union of Protestant Church in Alsace and Lorraine, p. 1. Similar views are expressed in the Response of the United Protestant Church in Belgium, p. 1: “In general there is no recollection of this document signed and published in 2001. The content and tone are appreciated and sadness is expressed that there is no awareness of this document.”

³ Response of the Council of Churches in Germany, p. 3.

⁴ Response of the Council on International Relations of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Denmark, p.1.

⁵ Response of the United Protestant Church in Belgium, p.1.

⁶ Response of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Northern Germany, p. 1.

⁷ Response of the Missions' Academy in Hamburg, p. 1.

⁸ Response by the Church District Markgräflerland, Church of Baden, p. 1, Response of the Zentrum Oekumene of the Evangelical Church of Hessen Nassau, and the Evangelical Church of Kurhessen-Waldeck, p. hereafter cited as Response of the Zentrum Oekumene.

⁹ The same observation was made by a Mennonite Central Committee Representative for Europe who noted that the *Charta Æcumenica* did not have a big impact on the Mennonite churches in Europe. Response of Church and Peace, p. 1.

a text setting out principles as ambitious as to carry out things together rather than separately might still be signed.¹⁰

The response of the Union of Protestant Church in Alsace and Lorraine expressed regrets that church leaders are generally struggling to bring the achievements of ecumenism and the spirit of the *Charta Æcumenica* to all members of the Church. The response pointed out that the inability to imagine a pedagogy of ecumenism and go beyond symbolic gestures that church leaders put forward, as for instance in the case of the 500th anniversary of the Reformation, ends too often with ecumenical indifference or timidity.¹¹

The use of the “Guidelines for the growing cooperation among churches in Europe”

The responses highlight the cases where the *Charta Æcumenica* was accepted and signed on the level of National Councils of Churches. Such is the case for the National Council of Churches in Switzerland where all of its member churches signed the document on January 23, 2005 in St. Ursanne, Switzerland. The influence of the document reflects also in the preamble of the recent foundational document of the National Council of Churches in Switzerland (*Statuten*, November 4, 2015) that highlights the need “to further the cooperation between churches in the spirit of the *Charta Æcumenica*.”¹²

In the case of Germany, all member churches of the Council of Churches in Germany signed the *Charta Æcumenica* in 30 May 2003 at an ecumenical prayer service held in Berlin during the first ecumenical *Kirchentag*. Since then, the Council of Churches in Germany has been working to implement the ecumenical guidelines.¹³ A sign of the churches’ genuine commitment to the guidelines is the engraved metal text of the *Charta Æcumenica* on the chapel doors of the Hafencity Ecumenical Forum in Hamburg. The project, which is owned by twenty-one churches, shows the text in English, Danish, German and Russian.¹⁴ One of the Churches involved in the process of drafting the document, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Bavaria, proposed that the guidelines should be intensively discussed in multilateral ecumenical relations, e.g. within the Bavarian Council of Christian Churches.¹⁵

The response of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Northern Germany affirms that the *Charta Æcumenica* has become an accepted part of the background for ecumenical work; it has become “flesh and blood”; it is one of the “sacred texts” [the emphasis is of the response] in ecumenism. In its early days, the document was discussed in the context of clergy conferences, e.g. in the area of Hamburg-Harburg. On 31 May 2013 the work of the Conference of European Churches, including the *Charta Æcumenica* was presented at the

¹⁰ Response of the Union of Protestant Church in Alsace and Lorraine, p. 2.

¹¹ Response of the Union of Protestant Church in Alsace and Lorraine, p. 2.

¹² Response of the United Methodist Church in Switzerland, p. 1. The Union of Evangelical Free Churches in Germany was represented at this service by its former president, Pastor Siegfried Großmann. Response of the Union of Evangelical Free Churches in Germany, p. 1.

¹³ Response of the Council of Churches in Germany, p. 1. Note: The response was drafted by the office staff and not the governing bodies of the Council. Therefore, it was sent to the Conference of European Churches, but not regarded by the Council as an official response of the Council.

¹⁴ Response of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Northern Germany, p. 1.

¹⁵ Response of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Bavaria, p. 1.

Europe Committee. On 29 May 2017 the Europe Secretary presented the document in a lecture series at Hamburg University.¹⁶

Concerning the impact of the *Charta Æcumenica* in the Evangelical Church of Hessen Nassau, Germany, a positive example is the merging of the two regional predecessor Councils of Churches in Hessen in order to become the Council of Churches in Hessen-Rhein Hessen. This development was related to the intensified ecumenical cooperation, e.g. through appointing a half-time executive secretary for the Council of Churches. In the statutes of the Council of Churches in Hessen-Rhein Hessen the *Charta Æcumenica* is concretely named as the general, underlying reference text and it is received as such, also by churches that were not at the table in 2001, because they did not belong to either the Conference of European Churches or the Council of European Bishops' Conferences.¹⁷

In *Von der gemeinsamen Hoffnung Zeugnis geben* (Witnessing to our common hope), a volume published by the Council of Christian Churches in North Rhine-Westphalia the *Charta Æcumenica* is called a "binding framework"¹⁸ with respect to the mandate and future work of the Council. Often in the speeches of representatives of the Council the document plays still a significant role in motivating ecumenical activity at the local level.¹⁹

Immediately after the signing of the *Charta Æcumenica* at the European level in 2001, and before it was signed at the German level in 2003, the Council of Christian Churches in North Rhine-Westphalia started to study the document in detail at its Annual Meeting in 2002 in Villigst, Schwerte. In its decades of multilateral ecumenical work the Council had already implemented many of the central recommendations and commitments of the guidelines, e.g. the recommendation to set up multid denominational ecumenical bodies at all levels, or the commitments to overcome prejudices through encounter, to learn about worship and other forms of spiritual life practised by other churches, to work for common witness and, "wherever conditions permit", for joint responsibility for the whole of humanity.²⁰ At their Annual Meeting the delegates proposed to intensify this approach in the future and to suggest that its recommendations be implemented more strongly at the local level.

The subsequent attention given to the *Charta Æcumenica* at the spring annual meeting in 2004 in Freckenhorst enabled a discussion on introducing or intensifying ecumenical

¹⁶ Response of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Northern Germany, p. 1. Note: The report is an outcome of discussions of various bodies and institutions within it, including the Europe Committee of the Centre for Mission and Ecumenism, the three Councils of Churches represented within the Church, and its dialogue desks.

¹⁷ Response of the Zentrum Ökumene, p. 1.

¹⁸ *Von der gemeinsamen Hoffnung Zeugnis geben. Lebendige Ökumene in Nordrhein-Westfalen*, hg. für die Arbeitsgemeinschaft Christlicher Kirchen in Nordrhein-Westfalen von Michael Kappes, Butzon & Bercker/Luther-Verlag, Kevelaer/Bielefeld, 2010, p. 13.

¹⁹ Response of the Council of Christian Churches in North Rhine-Westphalia, p.2.

²⁰ For further information, the response points to Matthias Haudel: *Ökumene mit Zukunft. Gemeinsamer Dialog aller Konfessionen: Der Weg der Arbeitsgemeinschaft Christlicher Kirchen in Nordrhein-Westfalen im Licht der Weltökumene (1945-2011). Anhang: Der dreieinige Gott als Lebenshorizont (= Schriften des Landeskirchlichen Archivs der Evangelischen Kirche von Westfalen 15)*, Luther-Verlag, Bielefeld 2011, 2. Aufl. 2012, and see *ibidem.*: *Wachsende Gemeinschaft im Glauben und in der Weltverantwortung. Die Arbeitsgemeinschaft Christlicher Kirchen in Nordrhein-Westfalen*, in: *Von der gemeinsamen Hoffnung Zeugnis geben. Lebendige Ökumene in Nordrhein-Westfalen*, hg. für die Arbeitsgemeinschaft Christlicher Kirchen in Nordrhein-Westfalen von Michael Kappes, Butzon & Bercker/Luther-Verlag, Kevelaer/Bielefeld 2010, S. 33-59.

partnership agreements between local congregations, which were regarded as an opportunity for more ecumenical continuity. Following up on these efforts, at the subsequent autumn annual meeting in Lage in 2004 delegates discussed the existing tradition of such partnerships in Britain and also partnership models from other regions of Germany.²¹

In Denmark, after the *Charta Æcumenica* was published, it stimulated considerable debate. It was discussed publicly, in the churches and in the Council on Interchurch Relations. The Council produced a translation in Danish, published and sent it to the dioceses of the Lutheran Church for information and debate. Reactions and answers were sent back to the Council for further debate. Due to serious opposition, the document as such was not approved by the Council, but it was shared with the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Denmark as information for further debate and inspiration. The critique to the document was especially aiming at the churches' relations with the European Union and the intention of the *Charta Æcumenica* that the churches should support further European valued-based integration and that they were involved in trying to give the European Union a soul.²²

The Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland considers the *Charta Æcumenica* a major European ecumenical achievement, which was based on the extensive ecumenical agreement of the European churches and thus already continues to inspire shared work for the unity, witness, and service of the churches in Europe and beyond in the cause of reconciliation, peace, and well-being. It therefore expresses content that the Conference of European Churches intends to develop its ecumenical, theological, and interreligious work in continuity with the document.²³

The Waldensian Church in Italy observes that the *Charta Æcumenica* inspired, directly and more often indirectly, the processes of building up local Councils of Churches. One of them, in Milan, organised a series of local events on the main topics of the *Charta Æcumenica* (2016-2017). The recent decision in autumn 2017 to create a National Consultation table of the Christian churches in Italy was not influenced by the guidelines of the *Charta Æcumenica* but by the new ecumenical landscape promoted by Pope Francis and always supported by the Italian Protestant Churches.²⁴

The response of the Union of Protestant Churches of Alsace and Lorraine notes that the *Charta Æcumenica* is regularly cited by a number, albeit a very small number of people. The principles and commitments it outlines serve them as an important reference. In some cases, there is an indirect acknowledgement of the *Charta Æcumenica* as a number of its themed guidelines are used in ecumenical gatherings, e.g. local meetings of the Focolare Movement that have enriched their ecumenical life with the spirit of the guidelines, including the principle of doing things together rather than separately, to continue to feel engaged in the search for full visible unity, to work for a common witness, to continue efforts to develop an ecumenism of charity, to strengthen ties with other religious communities (Jewish, Muslim and other). There is therefore a "convergence" between the spirit of the document and aspects of the ecumenical life of churches. The question then rises, has the spirit of the

²¹ Council of Christian Churches in North Rhine-Westphalia, p. 1. The annual meetings are recorded in Matthias Haudel: *Ökumene mit Zukunft*, p. 60.

²² Response of the Council on International Relations of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Denmark, p. 1.

²³ Response of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland, p. 1.

²⁴ Response of the Waldensian Church in Italy, p. 1.

Charta Æcumenica nourished the ecumenical life of our churches? Or is it rather the ecumenical life of churches that produced this text?²⁵

The same response raises the question of the reception of the guidelines concerning common prayer. Patriarchal visits to Strasbourg attest to an “uneven reception” of the *Charta Æcumenica* in this regard: during their visits to Strasbourg, Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew I prayed “with” [the emphasis is of the response] the Archbishop of Strasbourg, Russian Patriarch Alexy initially declined to pray in the Cathedral of Strasbourg, whereas Patriarch Daniel of Romania prayed and gave a lecture in the Cathedral of Strasbourg. The response observes that as a signatory of the *Charta Æcumenica*, the Orthodox Church clearly moves ahead on ecumenical issues at different speeds. Another area that testifies the non-reception of the guidelines, is the lack of engagement to proclaim the Gospel together.²⁶

In Hungary, the *Charta Æcumenica* as a guideline itself, and the engagement of churches in the process leading to its adoption, has encouraged ecumenical cooperation among member churches of the Ecumenical Council of Churches in Hungary, as well as cooperation between the Council and the Roman Catholic Church in many ways. It has been an inspiration and guideline in the work, study processes and different projects organised by the committees of the Ecumenical Council of Churches in Hungary: Committees on Church unity and theology, Social ethics, Interreligious dialogue, Women and Youth.²⁷

In the Netherlands, the guidelines offered by the *Charta Æcumenica* have been used in the period 2011-2016 as a key principle in the strategic vision of the Council of Churches in the Netherlands. These were received as a common starting point for the policies to be pursued by the Council. Each thematic heading in the *Charta Æcumenica* was used to add three operational focal points, specifically related to the Dutch context.²⁸

In Norway, there have been a few bilateral dialogue processes between churches since *Charta Æcumenica* was published. The document has served as one of the basic documents in these dialogues, as a natural point of reference when dealing with ecumenical relations.²⁹

For Church and Peace, the *Charta Æcumenica* has been an important step towards the reconciliation of churches and their unity in diversity. The guidelines have been also important concerning the common Christian responsibility for the future of Europe and in order to counteract any form of nationalism and oppression of people and national minorities, and to engage in non-violent resolution. So the Church and Peace network often relates to the *Charta Æcumenica* and also challenges the churches to put the guidelines and recommendations into practice.³⁰

²⁵ Response of the Union of Protestant Churches of Alsace and Lorraine, p. 1-2.

²⁶ Response of the Union of Protestant Churches of Alsace and Lorraine, p. 2. Note: The questionnaire provided by the Conference of European Churches was treated by the ecumenical commission of the Union of Protestant Churches of Alsace and Lorraine and the Archdiocese of Strasbourg in order to develop the response.

²⁷ Response by the Ecumenical Council of Churches in Hungary, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Hungary and the Reformed Church in Hungary, p. 1.

²⁸ Response of the Council of Churches in the Netherlands, p. 1.

²⁹ Response of the Christian Council of Norway, p. 1.

³⁰ Response of Church and Peace, p. 1.

Contextualisation and further development of the ecumenical guidelines

The responses to the questions sent out by the Conference of European Churches concerning the reception of *Charta Æcumenica* locally indicate that a number of churches adapted the guidelines for ecumenical cooperation in their local situation or developed them further to build up ecumenical cooperation. As the response of the Federation of Swiss Protestant Churches affirms, the *Charta Æcumenica* has been used many times especially at the local context to launch or consolidate common projects or special collaborations.³¹

In 2006, the Council of Churches in Germany published a document that specifies in what ways the *Charta Æcumenica* could further ecumenical cooperation in Germany. Many councils of churches at the level of the German federal states and at the local level have signed the Charta, sometimes modifying it to fit a specific context. They have also tried to put into practice at least some recommendations of the document. Some churches have published materials to encourage people to work with the *Charta Æcumenica*.³²

In the Evangelical Church of Hessen Nassau, many congregations have drawn up local charters and signed them with ecumenical partners, as a basis for their commitment to ecumenical cooperation. On the one hand, they refer to the *Charta Æcumenica* and, on the other, they spell it out with their own context.³³ Similarly, the *Charta Æcumenica* influenced the growth of ecumenical cooperation of the Church of Lippe with other partners: The cooperation between different denominations in the region is organised reliably through the Council of Christian Churches; The clergy conferences in towns or municipalities are also often ecumenical; There is increased bilateral cooperation with the Roman-Catholic Church at the regional level (Lippe Church – Archdiocese of Paderborn and Bielefeld-Lippe Deanery), e.g. on Protestant-Catholic Chaplaincy Day or the joint annual reception. The latest fruit of ecumenism in Lippe has been developing cooperation in religious education at schools (usually separated by denomination), which from 2018 will be possible all over the State of North Rhine-Westphalia.³⁴

The Evangelical Lutheran Church in Bavaria participated in the relevant bodies involved in the process of drafting the *Charta Æcumenica* and proposed that it should be intensively discussed in multilateral ecumenical relations, i.e. in the Bavarian Council of Christian Churches. In order to publicise the guidelines, it developed a print product, presenting the document in the form of a fold-out leaflet. The response notes that this specific format has been in demand until today (with stocks now low). In order to facilitate the use of *Charta Æcumenica* in parish work, the Ecumenism Desk drew up a study guide to the document.³⁵

In subsequent years, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Bavaria took part in preparing a series of leaflets on the *Charta Æcumenica*, issued by the Bavarian Council of Christian Churches and reflecting on it in a multilateral context. The leaflets can be found online and include: 1. Different approaches to the Charta, 2. Spiritual inspiration, 3. Discovering diversity, 4. Giving a soul to Europe, 5. Reconciling peoples and cultures, 6. Caring for God's creation, 7. Dialogue with Jews and encounters with Muslims, 8. Economy in the service of

³¹ Response of the Federation of Swiss Protestant Churches, p. 1.

³² Response of the Council of Churches in Germany, p. 2.

³³ Response of the Zentrum Oekumene, p. 1.

³⁴ Response of the Church of Lippe, p. 2.

³⁵ Response of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Bavaria, p. 1.

life. Since the publication of the series, the *Charta Æcumenica* has become a natural reference text for ecumenical statements and documents by the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Bavaria. For instance, the ecumenical model adopted by the synod in 2010, contains “Quality criteria for ecumenical talk and action” and refers several times to the commitments of the *Charta Æcumenica* (Valuing the lived faith of other churches, *Charta Æcumenica* II, 5; Acting together, see *Charta Æcumenica* II, 4; et al.).³⁶

A prominent example of making the guidelines for ecumenical cooperation visible in the local context, mentioned earlier in the present paper, comes from the Ecumenical Centre in Hamburg Hafencity (Shanghai Allee), where the *Charta Æcumenica* is engraved on the doors of the ecumenical chapel. Groups of students and ordinands who visit are impressed with the chapel’s doors and in this way are introduced to the local impact of *Charta Æcumenica* in the area of Hamburg and on the establishment of the Ecumenical centre.³⁷

The Synod of the Church of Lippe gratefully received the *Charta Æcumenica* in 2004 and recommended it to its church districts and congregations for further discussion and voluntary commitment. In summer 2005 a policy paper by the Synod followed with questions and suggestions on the *Charta Æcumenica* topics.³⁸

Within the Ecumenical Council of Churches in Hungary, *Charta Æcumenica* is being used in Theological Seminaries of the member churches in the training of pastors, especially in Systematic Theology, Ecumenical and Mission Studies. The aim is to train and instruct future pastors and teachers of religion in the spirit of the guidelines. On the 65th anniversary of the Ecumenical Council of Churches in Hungary a special volume was published with exclusive focus on the recommendations and commitments formulated in the *Charta Æcumenica*. Scholars from different denominational backgrounds explained the document chapter by chapter and reflected on the relevance of its statements in a language accessible to church members.³⁹

After *Charta Æcumenica* was published, it was immediately translated into Norwegian and distributed among the churches in Norway. Later it was used when the Christian Council of Norway developed a set of guidelines for cooperation between the member churches within the Council.⁴⁰

In Sweden, the Board of the Christian Council of Sweden adopted a Swedish translation of *Charta Æcumenica* already in 2001 and decided to let it be a living document for ecumenical initiatives taken by the Council.⁴¹ In 2005 the document *Tio tumregler för god ekumenik* (Ten guidelines for a decent ecumenism) was published as a summary of the *Charta Æcumenica* to promote ecumenical relations at the local level.⁴² In preparation for the

³⁶ Response of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Bavaria, p. 1-2. The series of material on the *Charta Æcumenica* can be accessed on <http://www.ack-bayern.de/themen/charta-oecumenica/>.

³⁷ Response of the Missions’ Academy in Hamburg, p. 1. Also Response of the Council of Churches in Germany, p. 2.

³⁸ Response of the Church of Lippe, p.1.

³⁹ Response of the Ecumenical Council of Churches in Hungary, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Hungary and the Reformed Church in Hungary, p. 1-2.

⁴⁰ Response of the Christian Council of Norway, 1.

⁴¹ Response of the Christian Council of Sweden, p. 1.

⁴² Response of the Christian Council of Sweden, p. 1.

participation of Swedish delegates to the European Ecumenical Assembly in Sibiu 2007, the Swedish edition of the *Charta Æcumenica* was of particular importance. During 2008-2009 church leaders in Sweden published monthly short reflections on the various paragraphs of the document on the website of the Christian Council of Sweden. Further, the *Charta Æcumenica* has been an instrument for ecumenical liturgies in Sweden.⁴³

In the work of the Finnish Ecumenical Council, as well as in the local inter-church relations of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland, the most visible, effective, and lasting outcome of the *Charta Æcumenica* has been the guideline document *Good Manners of Ecumenism*. This document constitutes a local contextualisation of the *Charta Æcumenica*. These local guidelines were approved by the autumn Assembly of the Finnish Ecumenical Council in 2002, whereas an updated summary was endorsed by the 2012 autumn Assembly. As noted in the response, the guidelines have been useful not only in official ecumenical dialogues, but also in organising local ecumenical activities and in developing an atmosphere and culture of mutual respect for local ecumenical work and fellowship. In the academic context *Good Manners of Ecumenism* has for years been especially important and essential in concrete teaching about the nature of ecumenical dialogue.⁴⁴

Further, in 2002 the Faith and Order section of the Finnish Ecumenical Council judged that the positive ecumenical atmosphere, relations, and continuing ecumenical work in Finland made the *Charta Æcumenica* relatively easy to receive in the Finnish context, and that it presented no demanding new challenges there. The document was warmly welcomed as the first ecumenical document to give ecumenical guidelines to all the European churches, and gave good reason to the Finnish churches to reflect on their place on the European ecumenical map. It was felt that reflection on the *Charta Æcumenica* and its commitments would raise questions which would also require elaboration in the Finnish context.⁴⁵

The *Charta Æcumenica* as reference with regard to establishing ecumenical partnerships or agreements

The responses received by the Conference of European Churches to date indicate that there are different experiences of the churches in Europe concerning the use of the *Charta Æcumenica* as a reference in establishing ecumenical agreements and partnerships. Some indicate that the *Charta Æcumenica* was not employed as a basis and starting point for any agreements, and played a subordinate role, if any.⁴⁶ For instance, the response of the Council of Churches in Germany stresses that signing the *Charta Æcumenica* is not a prerequisite for joining a council of churches at any level anywhere in Germany.⁴⁷

Some churches have used the document together with several other documents, especially former agreements between churches,⁴⁸ and quote it in cases where a church applies for member or partnership, as it happens in the case of the Council of Churches in the

⁴³ Response of the Christian Council of Sweden, p. 2.

⁴⁴ Response of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland, p. 1 and 2.

⁴⁵ Response of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland, p. 1.

⁴⁶ Response of the Silesian Evangelical Church of the Augsburg Confession, p. 1; Response of the Waldensian Church in Italy, p. 1; Response of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Northern Germany, p. 1.

⁴⁷ Response of the Council of Churches in Germany, p. 2.

⁴⁸ Response of the Christian Council of Norway, p. 1.

Netherlands.⁴⁹ In some cases, guidelines for partnership draw explicitly from the document. In some bilateral dialogues the *Charta Œcumenica* has been an instrument for dialogue, as in the case of a statement on a common understanding of baptism by the Catholic Diocese of Stockholm and the Swedish Covenant Church published in 2007.⁵⁰ Other churches trace the influence of the *Charta Œcumenica* on partnerships, and the discussion which preceded and followed the document, to the use of its contextualised version. This is the case with *Good Manners of Ecumenism* in the Finnish context.⁵¹

The member churches of the Ecumenical Council of Churches in Hungary and the Roman Catholic Church were the second in Europe after the churches in the Netherlands to solemnly sign the *Charta Œcumenica* on 1 October 2002. The document also serves as a framework and guideline for ecumenical partnership beyond the constituency of the Conference of European Churches, but it has not been solemnly signed again, whenever the membership of the Ecumenical Council of Churches in Hungary is extended to new churches and organisations joining its fellowship.⁵²

The response of the Federation of Swiss Protestant Churches explains that the *Charta Œcumenica* has been solemnly signed, but is not the first or the only witness of ecumenical collaboration among churches. Especially between the Reformed and the Roman Catholic churches, collaboration has a long tradition, going back to the time after Vatican II Council. The Federation and the Roman Catholic Church run a Common Theological Dialogue Commission for decades. However, the *Charta Œcumenica* is an important statement and document to be recognised by any church wishing to join the National Councils of Churches.⁵³

Similarly, the response of the Church District Markgräflerland, Church of Baden, refers to a lively partnership between the Diocese of Canterbury and the Presbitery Zossen-Fläming (Brandenburg) and its district which is based on the Meissen Document. However, ecumenical efforts and cooperation are seen as part of the spirit of *Charta Œcumenica*. The same is true for the ecumenical partnership with the Catholic district in the same region. The Church of Baden and the Diocese of Freiburg had renewed a commitment on 31 October 2017 and another renewal will take place next year.⁵⁴

As the Council of Churches in Germany notes *Charta Œcumenica* has led to the formation of local ecumenical reference with regard to establishing ecumenical partnerships. Some of them were given the name “*Charta Œcumenica* in (name of town).”⁵⁵ As mentioned earlier in this paper, referring to the *Charta Œcumenica*, 2005 saw a signing of Guidelines for Local Ecumenical Partnerships by the Archdiocese of Paderborn, the Diocese of Münster, the Evangelical Church of Westphalia and the Church of Lippe. Multilateral dialogue in the Council of Christian Churches in North Rhine-Westphalia was therefore able to contribute to promoting bilateral ecumenical progress. The Guidelines on Parish Partnerships drafted by these big churches recommend, in their turn, that bilateral Protestant-Catholic partnerships be opened up to other Christian churches and communities at the local level.

⁴⁹ Response of the Council of Churches in the Netherlands, p. 1.

⁵⁰ Response of the Christian Council of Sweden, p. 2.

⁵¹ Response of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland, p. 3.

⁵² Response of the Ecumenical Council of Churches in Hungary, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Hungary and the Reformed Church in Hungary, p. 2.

⁵³ Response of the Federation of Swiss Protestant Churches, p. 1.

⁵⁴ Response by the Church District Markgräflerland, Church of Baden, p. 1.

⁵⁵ Response of the Council of Churches in Germany, p. 2.

Like the commitments of the *Charta Œcumenica*, the ideas contained in the Guidelines for Parish Partnerships are understood as steps on the way towards visible unity.⁵⁶

These Guidelines appeared as a leaflet with the same name. Since then, several parish partnerships have been founded in Westphalia, both bilaterally and multilaterally. It is striking that the founders and organisers of such partnerships quote explicitly from the *Charta Œcumenica*, not from the Guidelines for Ecumenical Parish Partnerships. Several times the partnerships refer only to the *Charta Œcumenica*, which is often mentioned in the name of the partnerships. The Response of the Council of Christian Churches in North Rhine-Westphalia provides three examples of such Local Ecumenical Parish Partnerships in Westphalia:

First, an official ecumenical parish partnership between the Protestant churches of Holzwickede and Opherdicke and the Catholic parishes of Liebfrauen (Holzwickede) and St. Stephanus (Opherdicke). This is founded on a multi-page partnership agreement that only mentions the *Charta Œcumenica*, not the other above-mentioned Guidelines. After first referring to its theological Preamble the partnership then refers to issues raised by the *Charta Œcumenica*: acting together, encounters, common proclamation of the Gospel, the work of Caritas and Diakonie, safeguarding the creation, inter-confessional marriages and structural cooperation on [gender-inclusive?] language. The last point, however, only refers to the cooperation between staff and not to structural developments in general. The text concludes with openness to other denominations present in the Council and the commitment to further developing the binding framework mapped out in the partnership.

Second, the official partnership between the Catholic *Seelsorgeeinheit* (pastoral unit) in Harsewinkel and the Harsewinkel Protestant parish, along with the Syrian Orthodox parish, is committed to regularly review or evaluate the partnership. This is, at the same time, an example of including another denomination/church (Protestant, Catholic, Orthodox), with the aim of bringing in Free churches in the local area. In so doing, the partnership meets a concern of the Guidelines for Ecumenical Parish Partnerships, but explicitly calls itself *Charta Œcumenica Harsewinkel – Parish Partnership*.

As the response remarks, the partnership relates fundamentally to the *Charta Œcumenica* and starts with a biblically based theological foundation, which also includes texts from World Church Conferences, coming to the conclusion that: "It is not joint action that needs to be justified but separate action." The subsequent statements reflect the suggestions and structuring of the Guidelines on Local Parish Partnerships, which also correspond to the *Charta Œcumenica*. The basic shared beliefs are listed (ranging from Trinity to baptism, from Scripture to practical assistance), followed by commitments to joint witness, shared worship, responsibility for the world, and more. Then with respect to liturgy, joint witness and service, and communal responsibility (here exactly following the division of the Guidelines) there is a detailed description of what already is taking place jointly, before mentioning what will be tackled in the future: e.g. further development of spiritual fellowship, hope for Eucharistic fellowship, or ecumenical structuring of areas of parish work.

Third, the *Charta Œcumenica in Versmold* is the agreement between the Protestant parishes of Bockhorst and Versmold and the Roman Catholic parish of St. Michael's. The agreement is introduced with the indication that, in view of the growth in relations, it seeks to give a binding framework with *mutual commitments* (including regular review). It mentions e.g.

⁵⁶ Response of the Council of Christian Churches in North Rhine-Westphalia, p. 1.

joint services; biblical, theological and spiritual deepening; common social responsibility at the local level or meaningful structures to allow for complementary parish programmes (instead of competition). This agreement has its own profile and, in terms of format imitates neither the Guidelines leaflet nor the *Charta Œcumenica* – yet in substance it matches the concerns of these two documents.⁵⁷

As seen above, the response of the Council on International Relations of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Denmark notes that in one Diocese the *Charta Œcumenica* played a major role. Because of the guidelines, the way for having church fellowship with the Catholic Church opened up. With the *Charta Œcumenica* in hand two Catholic priests, close to Bologna in Italy, went to their Bishop and received permission to engage the Catholic [local] church into close relations with a Lutheran church in Aarhus. The *Charta Œcumenica* “broke a hole in the wall.” With it as its base the churches in Aarhus have built up more relations with an Anglican congregation in London and an Orthodox church in Romania.⁵⁸

Further, the Church Council of the Silesian Evangelical Church of the Augsburg Confession approved the ratification of *Charta Œcumenica*, but its then bishop Stanislav Piętak decided not to sign it (Prague 2007). However, the Silesian Evangelical Church of the Augsburg Confession supports that the document was a catalysing factor in the improvement and deepening of relations between the Czech Bishop Conference of the Roman Catholic Church and the Ecumenical Council of Churches in the Czech Republic. Both parties took part in negotiations about pastoral care providers in the Integrated Rescue Corps (IRC), which was successful and consequently a respective agreement was signed with IRC leadership. Then discussions took place between Ecumenical Council of Churches and the Czech Bishop Conference, with regard to forming a hospital pastoral care organisation. However, in the end the Catholic Church (Czech Bishop Conference) created its own. It is also likely that openness of both dialogue partners was conditioned by friendliness and mutual understanding of their then representatives, Cardinal Miloslav Vlk and Bishop Vladislav Volný. As for the Silesian Evangelical Church of the Augsburg Confession as a whole, it did not view its ecumenical relations and activities (primarily and intentionally) through the perspective of the *Charta Œcumenica*, but was affected by its impact.⁵⁹

The Dutch Mennonite Conference has signed the *Charta Œcumenica*, but the document seems to play no role in the daily life of the church. The document is said to be mentioned rarely in the Council of Churches in the Netherlands. However, the statutes and private regulations of the Council revised in 2009 link explicitly its commitments to *Charta Œcumenica* (Priv. Regulations 1/5). Its policy Scheme for 2017-2021 refers to the World Council of Churches' Busan Assembly as well as the *Charta Œcumenica*.⁶⁰

Lastly, the German Society of Friends (Quakers) is part of dialogues in the context of national and regional Councils of Churches, where the *Charta Œcumenica* played and still plays an important role.⁶¹

⁵⁷ Response of the Council of Christian Churches in North Rhine-Westphalia, p. 2-3.

⁵⁸ Response of the Council on International Relations of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Denmark, p. 1.

⁵⁹ Response of the Silesian Evangelical Church of the Augsburg Confession, p. 1.

⁶⁰ Response of Church and Peace, p. 2.

⁶¹ Response of Church and Peace, p. 2-3.

Projects and events inspired by the *Charta Œcumenica*

This section provides some concrete examples of projects and events within the churches in Europe that drew inspiration from the guidelines for ecumenical cooperation.⁶²

In the spirit of the guidelines, the Church of Lippe has deepened the ecumenical connections and cooperation with ecumenical partners in Lippe and beyond. Although they have not continued to work together explicitly according to the *Charta Œcumenica*, they have progressively planned events and projects jointly which are increasingly ecumenical in format. Such are: The World Women's Day of Prayer that has been celebrated ecumenically for years; Three regional church gatherings (in 2000, 2008, and 2016) have each been deliberately called the *Lippe Ecumenical Kirchentag* and planned by five churches (members of the Council of Christian Churches); In 2006 an ecumenical visit of the Church of Lippe took place. Guests from partner churches (five of them in Europe) visited congregations and institutions of the Church of Lippe and then assessed the work they had experienced; At the local level there are many different ecumenical events. More and more, parish or town festivals are celebrated ecumenically. At many places, ecumenical services are a firm feature on certain church holidays (e.g. Pentecost Monday, Ascension, etc.). Many prayer services in Lent are ecumenical; Support for refugees has since 2015 been organised in ecumenical cooperation at most places, sometimes going clearly beyond the member churches of the Council of Christian Churches; Rallies and demonstrations for peace and tolerance are planned ecumenically in principle; The 500th Reformation anniversary year in 2017 that was marked in and by the Church of Lippe in a very ecumenical way.⁶³

The *Charta Œcumenica* was one of the main readings for participants at The Global Ecumenical Theological Institute in Berlin (GETI'17), held from 19 May-1 June 2017 parallel to the German *Kirchentag* – a major event in the area of ecumenical theological education supported by a variety of churches and organisations in Europe, including the Conference of European Churches. The document appears first in the section of “Fundamentals” in the 324-page Reader⁶⁴ especially published for the Institute. The *Charta Œcumenica* is said to have been the inspiration for organising a European GETI and became central to the discussions during the event.⁶⁵

The response of the Federation of Swiss Protestant Churches affirms that the *Charta Œcumenica* has been used as encouragement and the rationale for ecumenical projects. These include: An Award “Ecumenical Label” that has been created by the National Council of Churches for good and successful projects of ecumenical collaboration. It has been awarded 15 times so far, the last time in April 2017;⁶⁶ Signing up ceremonies of the *Charta Œcumenica* at the National level (2005) and on cantonal levels (2008, 2010); Part of the rationale for common retreats of the Council of Swiss Protestant Federation and the Swiss Catholics' Bishops Conference (happened so far twice); Part of the rationale for common

⁶² The Silesian Evangelical Church of the Augsburg Confession notes that they are not aware that various ecumenical meetings and ventures in which they participated were motivated distinctively by *Charta Œcumenica* and clear references made to its message, Response p. 1.

⁶³ Response of the Church of Lippe, p. 1.

⁶⁴ *Reforming Theology – Migrating Church – Transforming Society, A Compendium for Ecumenical Education*, Uta André, Benjamin Simon, Lars Röser-Israel (eds.), Missionshilfe Verlag, Hamburg, 2017.

⁶⁵ Response of the Missions' Academy in Hamburg, p. 1.

⁶⁶ Also mentioned in the Response of the United Methodist Church in Switzerland, p. 1.

public statements on political issues (e.g. Sunday protection) or for joint visits abroad (Lebanon 2015).⁶⁷

Other examples of the influence of the document come from Sweden. In 2001 the Board of the Christian Council of Sweden appointed a task force group on issues related to *Charta Æcumenica*, which met ten times during the first 1,5 year. After that they met four to six times a year. In 2012 the group was reconstructed into a group dealing with Faith and Order related issues. The group reported regularly to the Board. On the group's agenda were theological issues in a broad sense and throughout the years several seminars have been organised.⁶⁸

In Denmark, the document had an impact on the relationship of Lutherans with Catholics, Anglicans, and Orthodox, as mentioned earlier. These churches participate in the Ecumenical week of Prayer every year, they pray for each other every Sunday, and send confirmands and scouts on exchange visits. Every four years the International Church Days are organised in Aarhus involving 10-15 Lutheran congregations and their ecumenical partners.⁶⁹

In Finland the *Charta Æcumenica* was translated into Finnish and published in the Ecumenical Yearbook, 2001 by the Finnish Ecumenical Council. Several sections of the Finnish Ecumenical Council discussed the document at their meetings in the autumn of 2001 and spring of 2002. In 2002 the Finnish Ecumenical Council published a pamphlet about the *Charta Æcumenica* in three languages: English, Swedish, and Finnish. At its 2002 spring Assembly the Council recommended that its sessions discussed the document. The sections for Faith and Order, local ecumenism, and mission and evangelisation decided to arrange a special seminar on the guidelines. The seminar was held in January 2003 as an open seminar of the Finnish Ecumenical Council, with official representatives from the Christian churches and communities in Finland. At the seminar the *Charta Æcumenica* was presented and discussed the following perspectives: 1) its special theological characteristics; 2) the practical challenges it presented for local ecumenism; and 3) its challenges for Finnish mission and evangelisation in Finland and abroad. In its concluding session the question "To what are we ready to commit ourselves?" was discussed.⁷⁰

In Hungary some events partly inspired by the recommendations and guidelines of the *Charta Æcumenica* are: youth prayer vigil; series of meetings on *From Conflict to Communion*; ecumenical conferences on social ethical issues such as topics in bioethics, euthanasia, human enhancement, family planning; ecumenical theological conferences e. g. on the issue of the Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification, a Conference on Just Peace and Just War; ecumenical network in Roma mission. There have been successful events on an annual basis, coordinated by ecumenical working groups involving local communities of member churches of the Ecumenical Council of Churches in Hungary. Other events include: the Week of Creation, and the National Roma Prayer Day and Women's Prayer Day.⁷¹

⁶⁷ Response of the Federation of Swiss Protestant Churches, p. 1.

⁶⁸ Response of the Christian Council of Sweden, p. 1.

⁶⁹ Response of the Council on International Relations of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Denmark, p.1.

⁷⁰ Response of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland, p. 1-2.

⁷¹ Response by the Ecumenical Council of Churches in Hungary, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Hungary and the Reformed Church in Hungary, p. 1.

Some projects and events highlighted by the Council of Churches in Germany are: the signing of the Charta by all members churches on 30 May 2003; proclamation of the Ecumenical Day of Creation by the Council on 13 May 2010; celebration of the Ecumenical Day of Creation every year, rewriting 'Guidelines for ecumenical cooperation of the councils of churches at the national, regional, and local levels' to include references to the *Charta Æcumenica*; and the creation of a website dedicated to the Charta (www.charta-ecumenica.de).⁷²

The Church and Peace Board states that their regional and international Conferences were explicitly linked to the spirit of the *Charta Æcumenica*, especially the one in Brussels in 2012, including contributions from the Conference of European Churches: "The European Union – an unfinished reconciliation project. The countries of the former Yugoslavia and European integration." Other projects link the document with the World Council of Churches' debate on Responsibility to Protect (R2P) and against military intervention as the 'last resort'. In addition, there are links between the document and the Message of the European Conference of Church and Peace to the Ecumenical Peace Convocation in Kingston, Jamaica, in 2011.⁷³

Finally, the Waldensian Church in Italy notes a single big event on the *Charta Æcumenica* in Italy, a national meeting organised by the Italian Bishops' Conference and the Italian Federation of Protestant Churches in Italy in 2005, in order to celebrate the 5th Anniversary of the *Charta Æcumenica* and to evaluate the follow-up process.⁷⁴

The influence of the *Charta Æcumenica* on the mutual recognition of baptism among churches

In Switzerland, baptism is recognised since 1973 between the Reformed and the Roman Catholic Church. The *Charta Æcumenica* was used as the rationale in an attempt to publish a common approval of the recognition of the baptism among all churches of the National Council of Churches in 2014. Although involved in the process, in the end the Orthodox Churches were not able to sign it for juridical reasons. The Baptist Churches added a comment to the document recognising the value of the process.⁷⁵

As a member church of the Evangelical Church in Germany, the Church of Lippe approved the formal declaration on the mutual recognition of baptism of 2007. At the congregational level, there have been several ecumenical festivals on baptism (remembrance) at the town level (2012, 2015, and 2016, planned for 2018), mostly as a Protestant-Catholic festival, but once including the Baptist Church.⁷⁶

At the ecumenical trainings of the Missions' Academy in Hamburg baptism is always a crucial theme. At the level of pastors and parish leaders there is good mutual understanding. For example, Baptist or Mennonite pastors that are in contact do not motivate people to opt for baptism, if they are already baptised in another context. But still there are some cases

⁷² Response of the Council of Churches in Germany, p. 2.

⁷³ Response of Church and Peace, p. 2.

⁷⁴ Response of the Waldensian Church in Italy, p. 1.

⁷⁵ Response of the Federation of Swiss Protestant Churches, p. 1, Response of the United Methodist Church in Switzerland, p. 1.

⁷⁶ Response of the Church of Lippe, p. 3.

in which the believers themselves after having converted to a Baptist or other church which practises adult baptism want to be baptised again. The mutual understanding on the level of ministers might have been positively influenced by the *Charta Œcumenica*, but there are also other interesting texts which give ground to this development.⁷⁷

The Silesian Evangelical Church of the Augsburg Confession notes that they are not aware that *Charta Œcumenica* would be employed as a catalyst in mutual recognition of baptism within their context. Churches in the Czech Republic had recognised baptism mutually already before the publication of the document.⁷⁸

The response of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland informs that the Finnish Ecumenical Council seeks to produce a joint declaration on Christian baptism to which its member churches can subscribe. The *Charta Œcumenica* and Faith and Order documents such as *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry* and *One Baptism: Towards Mutual Recognition*, and *The Church – Towards a Common Vision*, as well as the German declaration on the mutual recognition of baptism (2007), have all played an important role in this. The response stresses that baptism is weakening as a cultural phenomenon among European churches. Even parents who belong to the church do not always baptise their children. It is thus necessary in the European context to visibly preserve the value of baptism from a missionary perspective.⁷⁹

In Italy there is no official declaration about recognition of baptism among the churches,⁸⁰ whereas in Hungary the *Charta Œcumenica* has encouraged a deepening dialogue on the mutual recognition of baptism, which found its expression in an agreement among the churches. Further, the spirit and actual recommendations of the document contributed significantly to the engagement of the Roman Catholic, Reformed and Lutheran Churches in developing and officially adopting an Ecumenical Wedding Liturgy in 2001. This was a major step in the ecumenical relations of the three churches involved.⁸¹

Although the *Charta Œcumenica* was not the specific document on which mutual recognition of baptism between churches in the Netherlands was founded, it is believed that ecumenical documents like this one assist in giving words to shared ecumenical insights and practices.⁸² Similarly, it is observed that in Norway, although the *Charta Œcumenica* has not been the most important reason for mutual recognition of baptism between the churches, it has contributed among other documents in pointing towards a future in which the churches recognise one another's baptism.⁸³

In the Swedish context, in some bilateral dialogues the *Charta Œcumenica* has been instrumental, as in the case of a statement on a common understanding of baptism by the Catholic Diocese of Stockholm and the Swedish Covenant Church in 2007. In addition to

⁷⁷ Response of the Missions' Academy in Hamburg, p. 1-2.

⁷⁸ Response of the Silesian Evangelical Church of the Augsburg Confession, p. 1.

⁷⁹ Response of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland, p. 3.

⁸⁰ Response of the Waldensian Church in Italy, p. 1.

⁸¹ Response of the Ecumenical Council of Churches in Hungary, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Hungary and the Reformed Church in Hungary, p. 2.

⁸² Response of the Council of Churches in the Netherlands, p. 1.

⁸³ Response of the Christian Council of Norway, p. 1.

this, the response of the Christian Council of Sweden mentions a liturgy for a mutual recognition of baptism that was elaborated upon in 2009.⁸⁴

The Evangelical Church of Hessen Nassau suggests that the *Charta Æcumenica* should be classified as being directly related to the Magdeburg Declaration on Baptism of 2007. The dialogue text between the United Evangelical Lutheran Church in Germany and the Union of Evangelical Free Churches, published in 2009, was strongly influenced by the document. This text, drafted by a Bavarian Lutheran-Baptist Working Group, has become known as BALUBAG. Generally speaking, the *Charta Æcumenica* has become a basic reference text for ecumenism in Germany in the new millennium – in terms of importance it is on the same level as the Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification (1999) and topped only by the Lima documents.⁸⁵

For the Union of Evangelical Free Churches in Germany the crucified Christ as the saviour of the world is at the heart of ecumenical fellowship. This emphasis on “word from the cross” (Paul) poses a limitation on the meaning of baptism as an expression of fellowship of the churches. The Union of Evangelical Free Churches in Germany did not sign the common recognition of baptism in Magdeburg (2007), but does not see a different understanding of baptism as church-dividing.⁸⁶

The usefulness of the document in the local context

The United Methodist Church in Switzerland considers the document useful as one foundation for ecumenical partnership between churches in Switzerland. It serves as reference for true ecumenical spirit within and between churches.⁸⁷ In general it is not the wording of the *Charta Æcumenica* that is most essential but the spirit of ecumenical bonds as a basis of fellowship and the common witness of Christians. The spirit of the document is reflected in the response of the Union of Evangelical Free Churches in Germany which is a commentary on each commitment of the *Charta Æcumenica* with parallel demonstration of how the Union lives out each commitment.⁸⁸

The Church of Lippe observes that the ecumenical spirit is expressed at the regional and local levels in an increasing number of projects and agreements. Although this gratifying development does not explicitly entail references to the *Charta Æcumenica*, the normalisation of the ecumenical idea took place certainly partly due to the wording and drafting of the document.⁸⁹

The United Protestant Church in Belgium welcomed the document’s call to the Christian churches in Europe to express together their common faith for the future of Europe. Several examples of the initiatives taken by the United Protestant Church in Belgium at the local, regional and national level testify to that. The response stresses that the *Charta Æcumenica* provides a well-articulated and balanced European frame for these local and national initiatives and inspires further collaboration on the way to visible unity and fellowship.⁹⁰

⁸⁴ Response of the Christian Council of Sweden, p. 2.

⁸⁵ Response of the Zentrum Oekumene, p. 1.

⁸⁶ Response of the Union of Evangelical Free Churches in Germany, p. 2.

⁸⁷ Response of the United Methodist Church in Switzerland, p. 2.

⁸⁸ Response of the Union of Evangelical Free Churches in Germany, p. 1.

⁸⁹ Response of the Church of Lippe, p. 3.

⁹⁰ Response of the United Protestant Church in Belgium, p.1.

The response of the Missions' Academy in Hamburg notes that in the cases where people become acquainted with the document, they find good impulses in it for their own ecumenical work at the grassroots. However, many complain that they never heard about it before.⁹¹

The Federation of Swiss Protestant Churches finds that the document was and is useful because it is oriented towards concrete actions of collaboration at the grassroots and regional levels. At the church leadership level, it is useful as a declaration of intention and the rationale for common statements. However, it seems unclear whether these common statements would not have been reached also without the *Charta Æcumenica*. The response stresses that this is exactly the limit of the document: although the visible unity of the church is emphasised in its very beginning, the document has no impact on the level of theological discussion or church recognition, nor on the juridical level. Its further development wished for after the Sibiu Assembly in 2007 has made no progress so far. Therefore, it is perceived today as a courageous document, but definitely bound to its time. The lack of progress in the main divisive issues makes it appear as an "exception" [the emphasis is of the response] rather than as the rule, because the congregations at the grassroots level know that the only level of real ecumenical collaboration and recognition is the local one. To call it on looks a bit like a desperate trial to remember the leaderships of the Churches that still have not managed to complete the promises of the document.⁹²

The response of the Council on International Relations of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Denmark notes that today the *Charta Æcumenica* does not play any significant role, which is due to the fact that the ecumenical spirit has grown stronger throughout the years. This means that there are good relations between the church denominations and also fruitful dialogue with the Jewish and Muslim societies. Such an example of good ecumenical relations in 2017 were the celebrations of the Jubilee for the Reformation. And the debate continues when churches are discussing values and the future of the European Union in the Conference of European Churches.⁹³

The response of the Silesian Evangelical Church of the Augsburg Confession does not consider the *Charta Æcumenica* to have been a distinctive incentive to engage new initiatives in ecumenical relations and work. It notes that it is also difficult to name conclusive reasons why churches have not taken up this opportunity. It suggests that churches have been pursuing their ways and activities on the grounds of practical needs and situations.⁹⁴

For the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland the document is useful as a reminder of the shared Christian commitment to the visible unity of the church in Europe and beyond. In difficult and polarised times it can lead and function as a healthy self-corrective to narrow exclusive, and even xenophobic views. The Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland finds that the *Charta Æcumenica* reminds churches of the importance of basic ecumenical work and visioning at a time when practical challenges in interfaith encounter, for example, receive most attention. There is now an alternative for dialogue which has reconciliation as

⁹¹ Response of the Missions' Academy in Hamburg, p. 2.

⁹² Response of the Federation of Swiss Protestant Churches, p. 2.

⁹³ Response of the Council on International Relations of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Denmark, p. 1.

⁹⁴ Response of the Silesian Evangelical Church of the Augsburg Confession, p. 1-2.

its goal. From a holistic Christian perspective, the unity of the church and the unity of human beings and creation cannot be separated. Although the commitments of the document in its present form are not especially relevant today, they invite Christians now to a new visioning and to make new commitments. The response suggests that churches need a roadmap if they are to navigate in the same direction. They should therefore also map contextual requirements, and meet to exchange views and share concrete needs. Local and European views are complementary. According to the response, churches need a “glocal” vision of Europe.⁹⁵

The Waldensian Church in Italy observes that ecumenical processes in the Italian context always involve quite a small number of persons, because of the socio-religious situation of the country. In the last few years the *Charta Æcumenica* has played quite an important role because of the official statements of commitment by the churches: they encouraged “ecumenical minorities” in their work and could be quoted against anti-ecumenical attitudes, which are present in all Christian families. The response points out that the Italian Protestants have always felt that the Italian Catholic Church (except for its internal ecumenical minorities) has never acknowledged the stimulus of the document. The same is true for and, in particular, the Orthodox Churches present in Italy).⁹⁶

The response of the Union of Protestant Churches in Alsace and Lorraine stresses that one of the great values of the *Charta Æcumenica* is its brevity. Aiming for a more comprehensive document by adding new aspects would seriously convolute the content. The response suggests that read in good faith, in its current form, the document encompasses a multitude of nuances and allows those who want to invest more in the reconciliation of churches to find support.⁹⁷ The response of the Christian Council of Norway also comments on the brevity of the document. It is considered to be concrete, to the point, and easy to adapt. However, like all ecumenical documents, people experience it as coming from far away. Therefore, there is a resistance to really get acquainted with it.⁹⁸

The Council of Churches in the Netherlands finds the *Charta Æcumenica* a useful document, as it was agreed upon by several churches and families of churches. It therefore provides a common ground for further ecumenical dialogue in the Netherlands from a wider European perspective. The Council considers that the content of the document is still up to date.⁹⁹

The Council of Churches in Germany recognises that the *Charta Æcumenica* is useful in that it described ecumenical minimum standards on which most churches can agree. For the Council and its member churches it is helpful because it described in greater detail than its statutes what the ecumenical mission of the churches implies. The text of the Council of Churches in Germany dealing with the meaning of the *Charta Æcumenica* in the German context contains many ideas on how to implement it which can still serve as an inspiration today.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁵ Response of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland, p. 4.

⁹⁶ Response of the Waldensian Church in Italy, p. 1.

⁹⁷ Response of the Union of Protestant Churches in Alsace and Lorraine, p. 2.

⁹⁸ Response of the Christian Council of Norway, p. 1.

⁹⁹ Response of the Council of Churches in the Netherlands, p. 1. The response notes that partly due to the questions addressed by the Conference of European Churches, it intends to re-appeal the document in the plenary council as to the extent to which the churches actually play a role in their own church policy.

¹⁰⁰ Response of the Council of Churches in Germany, p. 2.

The relevance of *Charta Œcumenica* for the European context today and Recommendations for future work

The Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland recognises that the *Charta Œcumenica* today is familiar only to a relatively small number of ecumenically active people in the Finnish context. However, it acknowledges the need for such general ecumenical guidelines and visioning. The response stresses that in the current context of the internal and inter-church polarisation which partly reflects the European and global political situation and threatens to tear our communities apart, this joint document is more important and valuable than ever for the European churches. The response highlights the necessity to reinvigorate the ecumenical spirit of the document. Perhaps the good ecumenical atmosphere that churches have recently enjoyed during the 2017 commemoration of the Reformation may boost this.¹⁰¹

In the response of Church and Peace, a representative of the Mennonite Central Committee notes that the document is quite impressive and found that it could have had more influence on the Mennonite churches in Western Europe as it is in profound accord with Mennonite ethics. This could provide a chance to work together concerning: counteracting any form of nationalism, equal rights for women and men, safeguarding the creation, striving to adopt a lifestyle free of economic pressures and consumerism, strengthening community with Judaism, cultivating relations with Islam and encountering other religions and world views). However, the impact of the document on national Mennonite conferences or local Mennonite congregations is questionable. There is a sense that much church work happening on peacebuilding and reconciliation goes unnoticed. Much of the content of the document speaks to what often takes place, but is not recognised at local levels. The document is seen as helpful to congregations' dialogue on important issues as they work on peacebuilding.¹⁰²

The response of Church and Peace includes an individual Dutch Mennonite reaction that remarks how ecumenical Christian witness in the field of industry and labour issues has disappeared in the last fifteen years. It also stresses that it is difficult to analyse the impact of the *Charta Œcumenica* or the role of National or local Councils of Churches, as the emphasis of ecumenical cooperation is on networking and discerning the common concerns "in the eyes of the others" [the emphasis is of the response].¹⁰³

The Christian Council of Sweden finds the *Charta Œcumenica* still valid as a basis for ecumenism in Europe.¹⁰⁴ The United Methodist Church in Switzerland observes that the guidelines are still valid today, however, it is doubtful whether it is possible to go beyond stating intentions.¹⁰⁵ A similar hesitation is expressed in the response of the Federation of Swiss Protestant Churches which states that without any progress on the dialogue at the theological and juridical level, the *Charta Œcumenica* will remain an instrument for local ecumenical collaboration on a project basis. In that sense, the response stresses that it is not really useful when European confessional or ecumenical bodies continue to quote from it without addressing the actual divisive issues.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰¹ Response of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland, p. 2.

¹⁰² Response of Church and Peace, p. 3.

¹⁰³ Response of Church and Peace, p. 2.

¹⁰⁴ Response of the Christian Council of Sweden, p. 2.

¹⁰⁵ Response of the United Methodist Church in Switzerland, p. 2.

¹⁰⁶ Response of the Federation of Swiss Protestant Churches, p. 2.

The Council on International Relations of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Denmark observes that when the *Charta Œcumenica* was published, it created much debate on ecumenical relations, church and politics, values and the European Union. The debate was significant and useful, and at least in one diocese in Denmark (as seen above), it has been able to open a fruitful ecumenical fellowship between churches of different traditions. The organisation 'Ecumenical Youth' has worked positively with the document. However, the document itself has had its time.¹⁰⁷

For the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Bavaria the current relevance of the *Charta Œcumenica* is undisputed, even if there have certainly been changes since 2001 in the way people view Europe. The response notes that the Council of Anglican and Episcopal Churches in Europe (CAECG) met in Munich-Fürstenried in March 2016, with the theme "Hope for the Future Church in Europe." In his greeting OKR Michael Martin underlined the relevance of the *Charta Œcumenica*: "It faces nationalism, migration, the living together of majorities and minorities, religious freedom, and, at the same time, also the challenge of a secular and multireligious world."¹⁰⁸

For the Evangelical Church of Hessen Nassau, the ecumenical agenda published in the *Charta Œcumenica* still largely reflects current needs. Due to its sometimes rather general style (e.g. III. §7 and 8), it does not allow to derive a position on the issues of refugees and migration, which at the time were not so urgent as they are now. The same applies, according to the response, to the present issues of climate justice, Sustainable Development Goals and more.¹⁰⁹

The Response of Ecumenical Council of Churches in Hungary, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Hungary and the Reformed Church in Hungary affirms that the recommendations of the *Charta Œcumenica* have proved to be well established and have kept their relevance since the adoption of the document.¹¹⁰ Concerning the question on aspects that are missing in the document, the response emphasises that the *Charta Œcumenica* is still very much up-to-date and there is no need to change the text. The document is considered a milestone document and it is suggested that further reflection is needed on how to enable its reception within the churches. The response finds that all essential points are mentioned in the text. Some points would be probably longer, if the document was written today. More attention could be given to growing nationalism, populism, questions of migration and the concern for sustainability.¹¹¹

The response of the Union of Evangelical Free Churches in Germany notes with concern the rise in right-wing populist forces and parties that was not foreseen at the time when the *Charta Œcumenica* was drafted. Both the office for church youth work and individual representatives of the Union of Evangelical Free Churches in Germany regularly make it clear that xenophobia and nationalist ideas are incompatible with Christian faith.¹¹²

¹⁰⁷ Response of the Council on International Relations of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Denmark, p. 1.

¹⁰⁸ Response of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Bavaria, p. 2.

¹⁰⁹ Response of the Evangelical Church of Hessen Nassau. P. 2.

¹¹⁰ Response of Ecumenical Council of Churches in Hungary, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Hungary and the Reformed Church in Hungary, p. 2.

¹¹¹ Response of the Council of Churches in the Netherlands, p. 1.

¹¹² Response of the Union of Evangelical Free Churches in Germany, 6.

The Waldensian Church in Italy affirms that the recommendations of the *Charta Æcumenica* are still valid. However, the document is found to be slightly outdated, because of the major changes in the European and worldwide situations. Some of them have to do with anti-European attitudes, which can be observed in almost all countries of the European Union. These attitudes also have to do with the whole immigration question, which right now is the real context of interreligious dialogue in Europe. The Roman Catholic Church in Italy and the Federation of Protestant Churches in Italy are engaged in a big common project (basically financed by the Waldensian and Methodist Churches) which aims to help some people to find asylum in Italy without falling into the hands of the criminals who control illegal immigration. This scenario, the political and social issues involved, the struggle against xenophobia and intolerance, has become the main priority, also in the field which could be labelled “inter-religious.” The *Charta Æcumenica* was written before the whole immigration question became the primary challenge for Europe and European churches, and before the explosion of populism, separatist tendencies and xenophobia.¹¹³

The Missions’ Academy in Hamburg is underlining the changing face of Christianity with the growth of migrant churches. It considers vital that the Conference of European Churches reaches these with the *Charta Æcumenica*, because many questions on which “traditional” European Churches agree are new to them and therefore there is need to be discussed further with them. It is not enough that the European churches agree, and it is very urgent that ecumenical common sense is also reached with more charismatic and fundamentalist migrant churches in order to foster a mutual openness and tolerance.¹¹⁴

The response of the Council of Churches in Germany affirms that the recommendations are still valid, especially with regard to working towards the visible unity of the church; the relationship between majority and minority churches; the care of creation; Justice and peace in Europe and worldwide (in accordance with the World Council of Churches’ Pilgrimage of Justice and Peace); Engaging in dialogue with people of other faiths or no faith. What is missing in the text is: Recommendations on how best to proclaim the gospel together (Section II of the document described this aspect as the churches’ task, but the recommendations only deal with conflict and competition between the churches in the field of mission); lastly, a recommendation to pray *together!* [the emphasis is of the response].¹¹⁵

The Silesian Evangelical Church of the Augsburg Confession acknowledges that the *Charta Æcumenica* contains many emphases valid today. For instance, an incentive to proclaim the Gospel as the most important task of the churches, or to catechetical endeavour. Or an incentive to reappraise the history of churches, to speak about what was painful and unpleasant, and process it in the spirit of love, truth, and sharing. An important topic is of marriage and family. The response notes that it is difficult to articulate what is missing in the document as many missing points are present implicitly in those mentioned in it.¹¹⁶

The response of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland states that most of the recommendations remain valid today, although they need concretising, for example, in the programmatic work of the Conference of European Churches, as it faces the challenges mentioned in the document. The response highlights that an essential aspect missing in the recommendations is a call to strengthen the missional and missionary identity and

¹¹³ Response of the Waldensian Church in Italy, p. 1.

¹¹⁴ Response of the Missions’ Academy in Hamburg, p. 2.

¹¹⁵ Response of the Council of Churches in Germany, p. 3.

¹¹⁶ Response of the Silesian Evangelical Church of the Augsburg Confession, p. 2.

cooperation of the European churches. This is an acute challenge not only in the secular and/or post-secular European contexts, but also in the global context. The revitalisation of the Christian witness in word and deed runs in parallel with the endeavour of the Roman Catholic Church in Europe to reinvigorate new evangelisation in Europe. For example, the five ecumenical imperatives in the document *From Conflict to Communion* are useful as reference material. These imperatives indicate that ecumenical discussion of mission is becoming increasingly central in today's pluralistic context, and that churches should seek afresh the power of the gospel of Jesus Christ.¹¹⁷

The Union of Evangelical Free Churches in Germany also underlines that fellowship in common witness and service has become more urgent in the last fifteen years. Continuing secularisation calls for a common response from all Christians. The document *Christian Witness in a Multi-Religious World* also offers a substantial contribution to common witness and service.¹¹⁸

Especially with regard to questions inadequately addressed by the *Charta Æcumenica*, the response of the Union of Protestant Churches in Alsace and Lorraine emphasises that it is evident that the pending issues still being discussed by the Churches, which remain divisive, were carefully avoided in the text.¹¹⁹ Neither the question of Communion/Eucharist,¹²⁰ nor that of the ministries are taken into consideration. They are not part of an inventory or a commitment. The issue of intercommunion is also ignored. Generally, the themes related to unity, the understanding of "full visible unity," communion and reconciled diversity are not given any special attention. Yet the question of communion and discussion on understanding the model of unity are a central issue for the Church of Jesus Christ today, both in the confessional families and that of ecumenical cooperation agencies. In addition, the ethical issues that currently are of cleaving character and growing concern, also seem not to have been given special attention.¹²¹

In addition, the response of the Union of Protestant Churches in Alsace and Lorraine highlights the reality of mixed marriages as a question that requires particular attention. The topic clearly illustrates the gap between church members and institutional leaders, between ecumenical realities on the ground and institutional realities. The response underlines that if churches have produced a guide for ecumenical couples in respect of a host at Communion/Eucharist, they live in deep disappointment with the inertia of ecclesial institutions and no longer expect anything from them. If the *Charta Æcumenica* has generously established the principle to help and make life easier for mixed couples, it does not seem, at this point, that this has been particularly understood by institutional managers.¹²²

¹¹⁷ Response of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland, p. 4.

¹¹⁸ Response of the Union of Evangelical Free Churches in Germany, 2.

¹¹⁹ Cf. Response of the Federation of Swiss Protestant Churches, p. 2.

¹²⁰ Cf. Response of the Union of Evangelical Free Churches in Germany, p. 2: In the view of the Union of Evangelical Free Churches, Eucharistic fellowship exists when Christians remember the death and resurrection of Christ in the Lord's Supper, and he is present there – according to his promise. Even if accents and theological understandings remain different, the Union of Evangelical Free Churches in Germany does not see that fact as an obstacle to celebrating Holy Communion in ecumenical fellowship.

¹²¹ Response of the Union of Protestant Churches in Alsace and Lorraine, p. 3.

¹²² Response of the Union of Protestant Churches in Alsace and Lorraine, p. 2.

The response of the Council of Christian Churches in North Rhine-Westphalia poses a “fundamental consideration”: “The *Charta Æcumenica* is based on the common faith in the Triune God and resultant ecumenical implications for visible unity; this remains constitutive for more far-reaching theological progress, such as the mutual recognition of baptism at the level of the German Federal Council of Churches (Magdeburg 2007). Only on this joint basis can sustainable convergence be achieved on still divisive questions such as the understanding of ministry or the church.¹²³ To avoid resignation regarding these problems, often considered as insurmountable, untiring encouragement is necessary to keep up the quest for sustainable solutions in respect of the common foundations of faith.”¹²⁴

In its response, the United Protestant Church in Belgium expresses the hope that the Conference of European Churches will be able to work on an updated version of the document or on a new timely document that integrates the topics mentioned in the 2016 *Open Letter of the Governing Board on the Future of Europe*. Suggested topics include: migration, which is mentioned in § 8, but since 2001, the question has gained much more prominence on our continent and has become quite divisive; terrorism, which is not mentioned at all. Since 2001, we have seen several serious incidents of terrorism in many countries on our continent, spreading fear among our populations. European churches need to address this topic. The incidents of terrorism have, among other things, an impact on the position of Muslims in our respective societies. From this perspective, § 9 on relations with Islam can be strengthened reflecting the urgent need for increased intensive dialogue with Muslims, countering Islamophobia. Linked with this is the issue of the rise of populism. Last but not least, safeguarding creation is treated in the document § 9, but global warming and climate change are not mentioned at all.¹²⁵

The response of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland underlines the need for guidelines for polite and constructive dialogue in internal church discussions. Good practice in interreligious dialogue is another important dimension. The Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland hopes that perhaps encouraged by the Finnish experience, the Conference of European Churches might produce further general guidelines for meaningful dialogue to supplement those envisioned in the *Charta Æcumenica*. A further recommendation that is added in the response concerns ecumenical and interreligious cooperation in support of persecuted religious minorities. The freedom of religion as a fundamental human right and other basic human rights belong together. The response notes that a recent Catholic survey reveals that Christians face 75% of all religiously motivated persecution and harassment. However, the regrettable nascent challenge of anti-Semitism and Islamophobia cannot be ignored.¹²⁶

The response of the Union of Protestant Churches in Alsace and Lorraine welcomes the initiative taken by the Conference of European Churches to evaluate the reception of the *Charta Æcumenica* that is still seen as a reference text which could stimulate today's ecumenical life. It also expresses the desire that the Conference of European Churches, in partnership with the Council of European Bishops Conferences, reflects on and launches an

¹²³ See Matthias Haudel: *Gotteslehre. Die Bedeutung der Trinitätslehre für Theologie, Kirche und Welt*, Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht/UTB, Göttingen, 2015, particularly Chapter XI.

¹²⁴ Response of the Council of Christian Churches in North Rhine-Westphalia, p. 3.

¹²⁵ Response of the United Protestant Church in Belgium. 1

¹²⁶ Response of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland, p. 5.

educational process for its Member Churches to develop the reception of the document and thus enable it to better irrigate the ecumenical life with its spirit.¹²⁷

Interreligious dialogue and the churches in Europe

The response of the Council of Churches in Germany explains that together with the Central Council of Jews in Germany and four Muslim associations launched in a project called *Weißt de, we rich bin?* (Do you know who I am?), which aims at encouraging encounter and dialogue between people of different faiths at the grassroots level. The project receives support (including financial support) from the German government. The Project coordinator is Ms Annika Foltin. More information and contact details can be found on: www.weisstduwerichbin.de.¹²⁸

The Evangelical Church in Germany and its member churches are engaged in bilateral as well as multilateral interreligious dialogue in a manifold way. As far as Christian-Jewish dialogue is concerned there is a week of fraternity with special activities and events taking place in different cities in Germany every year. There is also a meeting of representatives of the Evangelical Church in Germany, the Catholic Bishops' Conference and the two Rabbi conferences in Germany on a regular basis. The Evangelical Church in Germany has a committee for Church and Judaism that meets regularly and works on certain issues concerning Jewish-Christian dialogue such as Antisemitism or Mission among Jews.¹²⁹

Secondly, in terms of Christian-Muslim dialogue there are meetings once a year between the Evangelical Church in Germany and Islamic organisations, as well as a conference organised by the Evangelical Church in Germany on issues related to Islam. The Evangelical Church in Germany is also involved in the ecumenical European network for Christianity and Islam called *Journées d'Arras*, which exists for more than 30 years now and brings together up to forty people from more than fifteen European countries. Other multilateral interreligious activities include the Round Table of Religions in Germany, the European Council of Religious Leaders (ECRL) and the project "Do you know who I am?" carried out by the working group of Christian churches in cooperation with Jewish and Islamic organisations supporting interreligious dialogue as well as help for migrants and refugees in Germany. Resource persons on interreligious dialogue included: OKR Dr Martin Hauger (Christian-Jewish Dialogue), OKR Dr Detlef Goerrig (Interreligious Dialogue). Bishop Petra Bosse-Huber, Head of the Department for Ecumenical Relations and Ministries Abroad, is also responsible for interreligious dialogue. Bishop Dr Martin Hein (ECRL and Round Table of Religions in Germany) and Bishop Kirsten Fehrs (Round Table of Religions in Germany) are also representatives by the council of the Evangelical Church in Germany.¹³⁰

The Union of Evangelical Free Churches in Germany stresses that it is aware that the terrible suffering inflicted on the Jewish people over centuries has created an almost insurmountable cleft between Christians and Jews, Germans and Israelis. The Union of Evangelical Free Churches in Germany notes that Christians are especially bonded to Judaism for theological reasons and as Germans they are particularly committed. Hence, the Union of Evangelical Free Churches in Germany sees it as a mandate from God to build

¹²⁷ Response of the Union of Protestant Churches in Alsace and Lorraine, p. 3.

¹²⁸ Response of the Council of Churches in Germany, p. 3. Also, response of the Evangelical Church of Hessen Nassau, p. 2.

¹²⁹ Evangelical Church in Germany, Unit on Interreligious Dialogue, p. 1.

¹³⁰ Evangelical Church in Germany, Unit on Interreligious Dialogue, p. 1. More on resources can be found here: www.ekd.de.

bridges to the Jewish people through practical service of reconciliation, and to promote Christian-Jewish dialogue. This has happened since 1975 interdenominationally through young Christians aged between 18 and 30, who care for and mind the elderly, sick and disabled persons in social institutions. That is a particularly practical way of building bridges of understanding and showing signs of love. It is also a way of reducing and overcoming uncertainty, prejudices and misunderstandings. Back in 1997 the Union of Evangelical Free Churches in Germany issued a guide to dialogue with Jewish brothers and sisters. For some years now, an expert group of Jews and Christians has been working on theological clarifications, e.g. on questions of Israel's lasting election. Direct dialogue with representatives of synagogue communities generally takes place at the local level.¹³¹

The same response notes that many Baptist churches are actively involved in accompanying and integrating refugees. The interest in lived Muslim piety has revived thanks to people coming from Muslim countries. At the local level, the congregations of the Union of Evangelical Free Churches in Germany have less official contact with Muslim associations but, instead, many contacts with mosque communities. In this area, however, mutual prejudices and actual problematic experiences with different political and religious positions make dialogue harder. For this reason, the Union of Evangelical Free Churches in Germany supports the project "Do you know who I am?" mentioned above. It recommends that its congregations initiate and cooperate with local projects at this level. The project aims to promote peaceful cooperation of the three major religions in Germany and to foster interreligious dialogue. In cooperation with the Federal Ministry of the Interior, it grants subsidies to local projects and initiatives that serve this purpose. A representative of the Union of Evangelical Free Churches in Germany also sits on the grant committee of the project.¹³²

The Church of Lippe observes that some church congregations at the local level maintain regular contacts with mosque communities. The Church of Lippe offers a greeting at Ramadan. At present, a Lippe-wide dialogue is being planned with Jews and Muslims ("trialogue"). The contact person for this project is Dieter Bökemeier.¹³³

The model for interreligious dialogue of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Bavaria (adopted by the Synod in 2016) is expressly motivated by the *Charta Oecumenica* section III, § 10 and 11.¹³⁴ However, in other cases the document is not seen as relevant in interreligious encounter. For instance, the Missions' Academy in Hamburg notes that the *Charta Oecumenica* is used more as a tool among Christians to find common ways of understanding and deepen their commitment for interreligious dialogue rather than referring to the text within interreligious encounters.¹³⁵

The Federation of Swiss Protestant Churches also notes that its work on interreligious dialogue was not enhanced through the *Charta Oecumenica*, and also that it is not run ecumenically. Its response underlines that the Swiss Council of Religions is not a platform for theological dialogue but for trust-building and political work towards the federal authorities; The Federation of Swiss Protestant Churches offers an exchange platform for church officers involved in interreligious dialogue (especially with Islam); The Federation

¹³¹ Response of the Union of Evangelical Free Churches in Germany, 7.

¹³² Response of the Union of Evangelical Free Churches in Germany, 7-8.

¹³³ Response of the Church of Lippe, p. 3.

¹³⁴ Response of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Bavaria, 2.

¹³⁵ Response of the Missions' Academy in Hamburg, p. 2.

of Swiss Protestant Churches has a Theological Dialogue Commission between Judaism and Evangelical faith; The Federation of Swiss Protestant Churches organised some bilateral events and meetings with representatives of the Muslim communities present in Switzerland. The last one was the Sarajevo Declaration with the Big Mufti of Bosnia.¹³⁶

The response of the Silesian Evangelical Church of the Augsburg Confession notes that the Church has not been involved in any project based on interreligious dialogue. It also remarks that the Interreligious Dialogue Commission of the Ecumenical Council of Churches has been inactive for several years. At the time when the Silesian Evangelical Church of the Augsburg Confession was its member no project of that sort was running. However, in some of its congregations there are pro-Jewish initiatives, which are sometimes reflected also in their worship life.¹³⁷

Concerning the ecumenical and interreligious developments in Finland since the *Charta Œcumenica*, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Finland has been able to take some new steps in the spirit of these European guidelines in interreligious work and the promotion of human rights, and especially the freedom of religion. The Finnish Ecumenical Council and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Finland were the founding members of the *Faiths Forum* (representing the three Abrahamic faiths) in Finland. It was established in 2011 (www.uskot-resa.fi), and there are plans to include other religions in it. The Finnish Ecumenical Council has also contributed to the inclusion of the freedom of religion as a theme of Finland's foreign policy.¹³⁸ The Forum is a member of the organisation Religions for Peace organisation.

Since 1977 there has been a Church and Judaism working group, a network for Christian-Muslim relations supporting local interfaith encounters, and regular three-faith theological discussions using the Scriptural reasoning method. Christian, Muslim, and Jewish leaders meet regularly. Resource persons within the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Finland are: Rev. Dr Elina Hellqvist, Interfaith Secretary (Interfaith dialogue in general); Rev. Dr Risto Jukko (Christian-Muslim relations and mission); Rev. Dr Pekka Lindqvist, Dr Anni Maria Laato, Rev. Dr Tomi Karttunen (Christian-Jewish relations and scriptural reasoning), Rev. Dr Jyri Komulainen, General Secretary of the Bishops' Conference (Eastern Religions, especially Hinduism).¹³⁹

The Waldensian Church in Italy remarks that traditionally it has a collaboration and friendship with the Italian Jewish Communities. They share a common history of repression and ghettoisation and the Waldensian Church in Italy helped Jews during the racial persecutions of Fascism. Since the 1970s a direct interreligious debate (together with the Catholic Church) has also been emerging. Further, dialogue with Islam is not so frequent, but there are particular initiatives developed and created by the magazine *Confronti* which specialises in interreligious dialogue. The experience with religious freedom in Italy provided the Waldensian Church the opportunity to collaborate with the Italian Government to reach cooperation agreements with the many Islamic communities present in Italy. A resource person in this regard is Prof. Paolo Naso. The response notes that the Waldensian Church

¹³⁶ Response of the Federation of Swiss Protestant Churches, p. 2. See <http://www.kirchenbund.ch/de/communiqués-de/2017/sarajevo-message-bosnischer-grossmufti-bekannt-sich-zu-schweizer-werten>.

¹³⁷ Response of the Silesian Evangelical Church of the Augsburg Confession, p. 2.

¹³⁸ Response of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Finland, p 3.

¹³⁹ Response of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland, p. 5.

helped Buddhists from the Italian Buddhist Union and Hindus to reach an agreement of legal recognition with the Italian Government, while it played an important role in the creation and formalisation of interreligious tables in Turin and Milan. These groups work together with the local public administrations.¹⁴⁰

The response of the Conference Office of the Methodist Church notes that there is no officer working on interfaith matters, however there is a Methodist/United Reformed Church interfaith relationships group whose work is available online: <https://interfaithconnections.org/>. The response highlights that it is important to work in partnership with others wherever possible: that includes those belonging to other Christian traditions, those of other faiths, and all who seek the common good.¹⁴¹

With regard to interreligious dialogue the Council of Churches in the Netherlands maintains close relationships with representatives of other religions in the country. The Council meets on a regular basis, especially with the Jewish and Muslim communities in the Netherlands and even has a permanent Commission for Jews, Christians and Muslims called *Overlegorgaan van Joden, Christenen en Moslims*. In addition, the Council of Churches in the Netherlands cooperates with an organisation called *In Vrijheid Verbonden* (Connected in Freedom) in which Jews, Muslims, Christians, Hindus and Buddhists work together in upholding freedom of thought, conscience and religion. From this perspective, the Council also holds an annual meeting between representatives of the various religions and members of Parliament.¹⁴²

In Norway, the Christian Council of Norway is a member of the Council for Religious and Life Stance Communities (www.trooglivssyn.no) together with all other religious communities. The Christian Council of Norway has an observer status on the Church of Norway's Contact group with the Islamic Council of Norway. The Council has case-by-case-cooperation with the Islamic Council of Norway and the Norwegian Humanist Association, especially related to the issues concerning politics of religion. Many of the local churches within the member churches of the Christian Council of Norway are part of local dialogue groups.¹⁴³

In Sweden, the board of the Christian Council of Sweden established a task force group for interreligious dialogue. An example of the influence of the *Charta Æcumenica* in the area of interreligious dialogue is the reception of the document *Christian Witness in a Multi-Religious World*. This document was translated into Swedish. The task force group for interreligious dialogue later in 2013 published a similar document to the document *Ten guidelines for a decent ecumenism* with inspiration from the *Charta Æcumenica*, namely *Krista I möten med människor av annan tro* (Christians in meetings with people of other beliefs).¹⁴⁴

In 2011 the Ecumenical Council of Churches in Hungary established a new committee on interreligious dialogue and cooperation. The Council maintains bilateral contacts with the representatives of the different world religions in Hungary: Hare Krishna, Buddhists, Muslims, Baha'is and, if needed, it gives help and advice to the Presidium of the Council. Though Muslims are small in number and are not as visible as in the Western part of the

¹⁴⁰ Response of the Waldensian Church in Italy, p. 1-2.

¹⁴¹ Response of the Conference Office of the Methodist Church, UK.

¹⁴² Response of the Council of Churches in the Netherlands, p. 1.

¹⁴³ Response of the Christian Council of Norway, p. 1.

¹⁴⁴ Response of the Christian Council of Sweden, p. 3.

continent, the Ecumenical Council of Churches in Hungary has both formal and informal relationship with the two Muslim communities that are among the thirty-one recognised churches/religious communities in Hungary.¹⁴⁵

Lastly, the response of Church and Peace underlines certain interfaith projects, such as the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament (CND). Its constitution includes an objective to explore interfaith understanding and cooperation in establishing justice and reconciliation. The 2017 annual report of the Campaign notes the occasion when it provided speakers at major Ahmadiyya Muslim Community and Buddhist celebrations who were able to explain why Christians support the Ban Treaty. The event led to two further radio interviews and increased contacts. Another interfaith side meeting was held during the Nuclear No-Proliferation Treaty PrepCom in Vienna. The first speaker was a Muslim and the second a Japanese Buddhist, with CND representing the Christian element. Further, Michael Pulham was invited to address the London Peace Pagoda at their anniversary celebration in June. Also, Martin Birdseye attended an Ahmadiyya Islamic international conference in October after an invitation sent to Network for Peace.

Other resources on interreligious dialogue pointed out in the response of Church and Peace include: Gewaltfrei handeln, Diemelstadt-Wethen, <http://www.gewaltfreihandeln.org>; Christina Garve-Liebig; Believers for Peace, Zagreb, Dr Ana Raffai; Fellowship of the Lord's people, Pristina, Vjolca Racai.¹⁴⁶

Part II: List of resources on the reception of the *Charta Œcumenica* by member churches and dialogue partners¹⁴⁷

This section includes online and printed material on the *Charta Œcumenica* published in different parts of Europe. This material provides a sense of the variety of reactions and responses to the ecumenical guidelines:

Croatia

Tomislav Žigmanov, The impact of the *Charta Œcumenica* on the ecumenical dialogue, article, www.ceir.co.rs/ojs/index.php/religija/article/download/5/5, Abstract: The author analyses the document in terms of its positive and negative effects on the process of ecumenical dialogue. Among the positive sides is the general concept of ecumenical cooperation: focusing on the things that bring churches together and avoiding some controversial theological differences. At the same time, the *Charta Œcumenica* is considered as a general and non-understandable document concerning the practical fulfillment of its commitments. For some theologians in Croatia the document is even “harmful” for ecumenical cooperation.

Czech Republic

¹⁴⁵ Response of the Ecumenical Council of Churches in Hungary, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Hungary and the Reformed Church in Hungary, p. 3.

¹⁴⁶ Response of Church and Peace, p. 3-4. Further information if available on <http://www.church-and-peace.org/en/network/members/links>.

¹⁴⁷ Research for this part was carried out by Mr Oleksandr Uigeli, PhD candidate at the Faculty of Theology of the Pontifical University of John Paul II in Krakow. From July-August 2017, Mr Uigeli worked as an intern with the Conference of European Churches under the Erasmus+ scheme.

-Reinhard Frieling, *Charta Œcumenica* - an obligation or a recommendation?, article, <https://www.getsemany.cz/node/1825>, Abstract: The author analyses positive and negative examples of reception of the document by European churches. He considers the document an ecumenical breakthrough in the dialogue between churches. However, a lot of the churches in Europe claimed that the *Charta Œcumenica* did not introduce new ideas (or models) of interchurch dialogue beyond what the churches have already been experiencing.

-Vladimír Bíba, *Charta Œcumenica*: Comparison with the specific provisions of Canon Law of the Roman Catholic Church, article, <http://www.apologet.cz/?q=articles/id/65-charta-oecumenica-kriticka-reflexe-se-zretelem-ke-katolicckemu-dogmatu-a-kanonickemu-pravu%5C%22>, Abstract: The author discusses the importance of the *Charta Œcumenica* in the light of Code of Canon Law of the Roman Catholic Church. According to the article, provisions of Canon Law regarding the understanding of sacraments (Eucharist) and Church are contrary to the *Charta Œcumenica*. The article supports that ecumenical dialogue between Roman Catholic and Protestant Church(s) is possible only if the latter accepts Catholic teaching on issues described in the text.

-Štěpán Havlíček, Is *Charta Œcumenica* a legally binding document?, Discussion, http://www.christnet.eu/clanky/3755/je_charta_oecumenica_pravnim_zavazkem_url, Abstract: The discussion was held on 27 March 2007 at the Evangelical Methodist Church in Prague. Participants of the discussion claimed that the *Charta Œcumenica* can be regarded as a kind of inspiration for further ecumenical activity, and not as an obligation for the churches. One of the speakers compared the document with the elections during the communist era: some of the churches signed the document, because they did not want to be treated as supporters of the anti-ecumenical movement, so there was no freedom of choice.

Finland

-Rev. Dr Tomi Karttunen, A community in search of unity, article, [http://sakasti.evl.fi/sakasti.nsf/0/2EEE800EEBB8BA41C225773400279C85/\\$FILE/The%20Œcumenical%20Endeavour%20of%20the%20ELCF.pdf](http://sakasti.evl.fi/sakasti.nsf/0/2EEE800EEBB8BA41C225773400279C85/$FILE/The%20Œcumenical%20Endeavour%20of%20the%20ELCF.pdf), Abstract: The fellowship between churches speaks about the fact that both doctrinal and practical cooperation are needed in the context of ecumenical cooperation. Following the *Charta Œcumenica*, the churches should ask how they could cooperate in a way that they witness to Christ and their common faith.

-Finnish Churches on the presidency of Finland in the Council of the European Union in 2006, Document, http://www.ekumenia.fi/sen_esittaytyy/kannanottoja_ja_lausuntoja/kirkot_tukevat_suomen_eu-puheenjohtajuutta_2006/?hitspic=3&hitspage=1, Abstract: Churches in Finland expressed their vision of the main activities to be undertaken during the presidency of Finland in the EU: "Churches want to make their contribution to the development of a peaceful, socially just and common value-based Union. In the *Charta Œcumenica*, adopted in 2001, the European Churches have committed themselves to supporting European integration and the foundation of Christian faith in building a human, socially conscious Europe in which human rights and the values of peace, justice, freedom, tolerance, participation and solidarity prevail."

France

-Rémi Gounelle, Critique of the *Charta Æcumenica*, presentation at a conference, <http://orthodoxie.com/une-conference-a-luniversite-de-thessalonique-a-loccasion-du-10eme-anniversaire-de-la-signature-de-la-charte-oecumenique/>, Abstract: On 9 May 2012 a Conference dedicated to the tenth anniversary of the signing of the *Charta Æcumenica* was organised in Thessaloniki. During the conference, French Protestant theologian Rémi Gounelle presented different shortcomings of the document: The lack of novelty in terms of ecumenical progress; the ecclesiological nature of the document and its focus on dialogue between Churches rather than of relations between Christians; the concept of common prayer should be elaborated more thoroughly; there is a certain limitation of the meaning “Gospel of Christ” to the Holy Scripture and the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed of 381; little attention is paid to the Old Testament in light of the dialogue with Judaism. Alongside with the critics, Gounelle presented positive sides of the document.

Denmark

-Peter Lodberg, On *Charta Æcumenica*, article, [denarticle.pdf](#), Abstract: The author discusses the concept of the *Charta Æcumenica*, especially in the context of practical issues of ecumenical cooperation between churches, taking into account the position of the Evangelical-Lutheran Church of Denmark.

Germany

-The Ecumenical Situation in Germany, Report by the Council of Churches in Germany, http://www.geii.org/week_of_prayer_for_christian_unity/prayer_worship/ecumenical_situation_in_Germany.html, Abstract: In 2003 the ACK published its own text which reflects on the meaning of the *Charta Æcumenica* in the German context and how the *Charta Æcumenica* can be put into practice in Germany.

-Theology as Wisdom for Life, Document of the Evangelical Church in Germany, [jointger.pdf](#), Abstract: Joint statement of the Church of England Delegation Visit to the Evangelical Church in Germany, 31 January-3 February 2006, Berlin/Schwanenwerder.

-Werner R.A. Klän, Confessional Lutheran commitment in the International Lutheran Council –A conservative contribution of Lutheranism to the Ecumenical Age, article, <https://www.hts.org.za/index.php/HTS/article/viewFile/1984/3791>, Abstract: At present, it does not seem likely that a major awakening will stir up European Christians, churches, or societies in the near future. All church bodies in Europe face the challenge of ‘re-Christianising’ areas that have been ‘de-Christianised’ (Rosin 2007), utilising for this purpose also models of cooperation in altar and pulpit fellowship, inter-celebration, and intercommunion. Especially with regard to ethical challenges, Christians and Christian churches ought to strive to respond to those with one voice as, for example, as in the case of the *Charta Æcumenica*.

-Stefan Höschele, Response of the Euro-Africa Division of Seventh-day Adventists on the *Charta Æcumenica*, in “Interchurch and interfaith relations. Seventh-day Adventists statements and documents,” *Adventistica* 10, Peter Lang, Frankfurt am Main, 2010.

Greece

-Conference on the Tenth Anniversary of the *Charta Œcumenica* in Thessaloniki organised by the Faculty of Theology of the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, <http://orthodoxie.com/une-conference-a-luniversite-de-thessalonique-a-loccasion-du-10eme-anniversaire-de-la-signature-de-la-charte-oecumenique/>.

-Joint Declaration of His Holiness Bartholomew, Ecumenical Patriarch of Constantinople, His Beatitude Ieronymos, Archbishop of Athens and all Greece, and His Holiness Pope Francis, document, https://w2.vatican.va/content/sco/en/speeches/2016/april/documents/papa-francesco_20160416_lesvos-dichiarazione-congiunta.html, On 16 April 2016, the three church leaders signed a joint declaration on the current situation of refugees and migration. The text of the declaration refers to the *Charta Œcumenica* with regard to reconciliation: "Reconciliation involves promoting social justice within and among all peoples... Together we will do our part towards giving migrants, refugees and asylum-seekers a humane reception in Europe."

Hungary

-Dr. Béla Harmati, The contemporary status of the Lutheran Evangelical Church in Hungary with a view to Churches of Central European Countries, article, <http://www.evangelikus.hu/lutheran-evangelical-church-hungary-2008?language=en>, Abstract: The most important task of the churches in Europe is to collectively preach the Gospel in both word and deed for the salvation of humankind. We need to work together in the Gospel spirit to bolster the story of Christian churches, a story that is characterized by many good experiences but also by division, and enmity that sometimes extends as far as hostile controversy. This is the task for the twenty-first century that the churches of Europe, i.e. the Conference of European Churches and the Council of European Bishops' Conferences, Protestant, Orthodox and Roman Catholic, have defined and summarised for themselves in the *Charta Œcumenica*. In the context of present discussions about which role individual churches have played as cooperating entities and as societal majorities or minorities, this article attempts to illuminate the mutual connections between Church and State in Hungary, looking also at how the churches of central Europe developed a sense of ecumenism after the Berlin Wall fell in 1989/90.

-Contribution of Hungarian Churches to the Hungarian EU Presidency, presentation, Ecumenical Council of Churches in Hungary, http://www.reformatus.hu/data/attachments/2012/07/17/In_Community_for_Europe_2011_1.pdf Abstract: the presentation touches upon different sections of the *Charta Œcumenica* regarding Churches' Expectations in Relation to the Hungarian EU Presidency.

Ireland

-Dr Gesa E. Thiessen, Irish School of Ecumenics, article, Author, <http://www.ecumenics.ie/wp-content/uploads/Response-to-Surveys-Gesa-Thiessen.pdf>, Abstract: The author of the article discusses the role the *Charta Œcumenica* in fostering local ecumenical dialogue in Ireland.

Italy

-Maria Guarini, InternEtica, *Charta Æcumenica*: what happened in Strasbourg?, http://www.internetica.it/punto_Strasburgo.htm, Abstract: The author provides a brief analysis of the *Charta Æcumenica*. The conclusion describes four main positive values of the document, in particular: It encourages churches for close ecumenical dialogue, despite different obstacles; It represents the concept of “unity in diversity” and emphasises the idea of complementarity of theological teachings (to overcome the feeling of self-sufficiency); It deals with anti-Semitism; It fosters dialogue with Islam.

-Evangelical Church on *Charta Æcumenica*, Interview, Federation of Protestant Churches in Italy, http://www.noisiamochiesa.org/Archivio_NSC/attual/Long.Chart.html, Abstract: The text is the interview of Gianni Long, president of FCEI, regarding the *Charta Æcumenica*. He underlines the importance of the document in representing a common position of churches on different challenges. At the same time, he mentions that in Italy the document was treated without a big interest, due to the fact that the majority of Italian society is Catholic.

-Gianna Sciclone, *Charta Æcumenica* for Christian Churches in Europe, <http://saemilano.gruppisae.it/Allegati/INTROD.%20CARTA%20ECUMENICA.pdf>, Abstract: The author provides a general overview of the *Charta Æcumenica*, and analyses its positive and negative aspects. The novelty of the *Charta Æcumenica* is to encourage churches to overcome obstacles and act together regarding different issues, such as the prohibition of proselytism, especially in relation to minority churches, and overcoming the feeling of self-sufficiency. The author notes different problems of fulfillment of some tasks stipulated by the document, such as the question of appreciating different forms of liturgy and pray together, taking into account theological differences.

-Franco Giampiccoli, The lights and shadows of *Charta Æcumenica*, article, <http://upedi.altervista.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/11/LACARTACUMENICA.pdf>, Abstract: The text discusses the model of ecumenical dialogue presented by the *Charta Æcumenica*. The author stresses the importance of the principle of “unity in diversity” that means close cooperation between churches and respect for theological differences. For the author, the *Charta Æcumenica* lacks explanation of Christian values (e. g. human dignity, freedom), and the problem of secularism, but underlines the issue of environmental protection, and consumerism.

Lithuania

-Annual meeting of the Council of European Bishops' Conferences (CCEE) and the Lithuanian Bishop's Conference in Vilnius, report, <http://lvk.lcn.lt/lt/naujienos/,26>, Abstract: CCEE and LBC discussed priorities of their activity. Commitments of the *Charta Æcumenica* were discussed by the participants.

The Netherlands

-Symposium on *Charta Æcumenica* in Zeeland, press release, Council of Churches in the Netherlands, <http://www.oecumene.nl/nieuws-blogs/nieuws/382-symposium-over-charta-oecumenica>, Abstract: On 21 November 2012 the Council of Churches in the Netherlands (Zeeland province) organised a symposium dedicated to the reception of the *Charta Æcumenica* by the churches in the province of Zeeland. The Bishop of Breda Mgr. Dr. Jan Liesen, and the Secretary of the Council Dr. Klaas van der Kamp took part in the symposium.

It was noted that despite strong support for the *Charta Œcumenica* in the Netherlands, on the local level the churches are not acquainted enough with the document.

Norway

-Abel Struksnes, Christian Information Service (CIS) on *Charta Œcumenica*, article, <http://www.endtime.net/engelsk/charta.htm>, Abstract: The article is a comparison of two ecumenical documents: the *Charta Œcumenica* and The Work of the Jesuits in the New Millennium. According to the author, the guidelines for cooperation in the *Charta Œcumenica* coincide with those of the Jesuit document. The author criticises both documents for their wrong understanding of ecumenical dialogue, and supports that "God's true church will not be a gigantic cathedral, it will not be an enormous ecumenical church, but where two or three are gathered together in His name."

Portugal

-João Duque, The ecumenical situation in Portugal, article, <http://www.agencia.ecclesia.pt/noticias/nacional/ecumenismo-em-portugal/>
Abstract: The author analyses the state of affairs in ecumenical dialogue in Portugal. The article deals with the ecumenical activities organised by the Portuguese Council of Christian Churches. Considerable attention is given to the project "Ecumenical Day," which aims to deepen relations between churches and organise common prayers in the light of the commitments of the *Charta Œcumenica*.

Romania

Mircea Brie, The European Ecumenism. Case Study: Oradea, article, https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=2220656, Abstract: The new Europe will bring together a plurality of religions, traditions and cultures. The process of European integration has not only political implications, but also economic, political, social and religious implications. In this context, the building of a New Europe requires a coherent interreligious dialogue. The perspectives of the world and European ecumenical movement concern the realisation of the unity among churches. There is a visible tendency towards the realisation of a unity in diversity, at the same time seeing the obstacles that exist in front of this vision. A big step forward in Europe was made by the cooperation between CEC and CCEE to organise the European Ecumenical Assemblies and to elaborate the document *Charta Œcumenica*.

Russia

-Statement of the Russian Orthodox Church regarding specific provisions of *Charta Œcumenica*, <http://www.interfax-religion.ru/?act=news&div=16871>, Abstract: On 28 February 2007 the Secretary of the Department for External Church Relations of the Russian Orthodox Church noted that some of the provisions stipulated by the *Charta Œcumenica* are not acceptable in the frame of ecumenical dialogue. He noted that religious pluralism in Europe cannot be regarded as one of the principles of successful dialogue between churches, and expressed the skeptical attitude of the Russian Orthodox Church with regard to the provisions of the document.

-Meeting of Christian churches in Moscow, <http://pravoslavie.ru/21086.html>, Abstract: On 1 March 2007 representatives of different European churches gathered in Moscow to discuss the agenda of the future European Ecumenical Assembly. The representative of the Russian Orthodox Church discussed the understanding of particular provisions of the *Charta Œcumenica* in Russia.

-Gregoriy Larentsakis, The concept of ecclesiology in the dialogue between Christian churches, (in Russian), <http://www.theolcom.ru/uploaded/298-311.pdf>, Abstract: The author of the article discusses the question of a common ecclesiology, as one of the major points in the dialogue between churches. He mentions that the *Charta Œcumenica* contributed to the elaboration of a joint model of church in Europe, and the acceptance of the common ecclesiological formula: "We believe in one holy catholic and apostolic Church."

-Anna Radetskaya, Ecumenism and anti-ecumenism in contemporary Orthodox Church, PhD research, <http://cheloveknauka.com/ekumenizm-i-antiekumenizm-v-sovremennom-pravoslavii>, Abstract: The author of the dissertation explores the problem of ecumenical dialogue between the Russian Orthodox Church and other Christian churches. She discusses the importance of the *Charta Œcumenica* in defining the main principles of cooperation between churches.

- Olga Chetverikova, The problem of ecclesiological unity in the Orthodox Church in the light of the Pan-Orthodox Council of Crete, article Author: Olga Chetverikova, <http://www.vstanzave.ru/posts/5555>, Abstract: The author discusses the main aims of the Pan-Orthodox Council of Crete and the role of the *Charta Œcumenica* in providing the principles of ecclesiological unity between churches. The author makes reference of the document: "Because we here confess the "one, holy, catholic and apostolic church" our paramount ecumenical task is to show forth this unity, which is always a gift of God... We commit ourselves: ...in the power of the Holy Spirit, to work towards the visible unity of the Church of Jesus Christ in the one faith, expressed in the mutual recognition of baptism and in eucharistic fellowship, as well as in common witness and service."

-International Theological Conference on "Orthodox Ecclesiology," <http://www.pravmir.ru/hronika-mezhdunarodnaya-bogoslovskaya-konferentsiya-pravoslavnoe-uchenie-o-tserkvi/>, Abstract: From 17-20 November 2003 the Russian Orthodox Church organised an international theological conference in Moscow. 85 participants from 17 countries representing 26 churches took part in the conference, which analysed the text of the *Charta Œcumenica* and discussed its importance for the dialogue between churches.

Serbia

-Жељко Которанин, Analysis of *Charta Œcumenica*, article, <http://www.novinar.de/2009/06/15/ekumenska-povelja-sveto-predanje-o-njoj.html>, Abstract: The article is an analysis of the *Charta Œcumenica* in the light of the dogmas of the Orthodox Church. According to the author, the document is heretical and cannot be accepted by the local Orthodox Churches. The author presents the concept of ecumenical unity according to the theology of the Orthodox Church. Some of the problems of the model of ecumenical unity promoted by the *Charta Œcumenica* (unity in diversity), is the concept of ecumenical prayer and mutual recognition of baptism, as well as eucharistic fellowship.

-Serbien-Tagungen, Inter-church dialogue between the Serbian Orthodox Church and the Evangelical Church in Germany, https://www.academia.edu/3437631/Ten_Years_of_Churches_in_Serbia_and_Germany_in

Dialogue 1999_2009, Abstract: The *Charta Æcumenica* was featured and analysed at the Serbien-Tagungen on a number of sessions.

Poland

-Wacław Hryniewicz OMI, *Charta Æcumenica* of European churches, article, http://www.psd.edu.pl/uploads/files/Charta_Oekumenica_%E2%80%93_z_prawoslawneg_o_punktu_widzenia.pdf, Abstract: Hryniewicz discusses the general concept of the *Charta Æcumenica* and points out its main themes. The author shares his own point of view on the reception of the document in the future by different churches, and stresses the necessity for all interested parties to take responsibility for putting the document into practice. The article was published on the official website of the Polish Episcopal Conference.

-Perception of *Charta Æcumenica* by the Orthodox Church in Poland, article, <http://www.opoka.org.pl/biblioteka/T/TE/charta.html>, Abstract: The author presents the reactions of the different Orthodox churches to the *Charta Æcumenica* and discusses the problem of practical realisation of the tasks suggested by the document.

-P. Jaworska, A. Boczkowska, *Charta Æcumenica*, information on website, Old Catholic Mariavite Church of Poland, <http://mariawita.pl/kek.php>, Abstract: General information about the Conference of European Churches and the structure of the *Charta Æcumenica*.

-*Charta Æcumenica*, information on website, Evangelical Church of the Augsburg Confession in Poland, http://www.luteranie.pl/materialy/ekumenizm/charta_oekumenica_karta_ekumeniczna_2001,470.html, General information about the Conference of European Churches and the structure of the *Charta Æcumenica*.

-Leonid Szeszko, The use of natural resources of the Białowieża Forest in the light of ecumenism, article, https://www.mos.gov.pl/fileadmin/user_upload/mos/Aktualnosci/marzec_2016/Ks_L_Szeszko.pdf, Abstract: The article examines the question of environmental protection and the rationale for the use of natural resources of the Białowieża Forest in Poland. The author makes a reference to part III of the *Charta Æcumenica* regarding the safeguarding of creation. The article was published by the Ministry of Environment of Poland.

-Roman-Catholic Archdiocese of Gniezno, The discussion on the *Charta Æcumenica* in the Archdiocese of Gniezno, http://www.archidiecezja.pl/aktualnosci/archiwum/2001/maj/ks._abp_h._muszynski_o_karcie_ekumenicznej.html, Abstract: The Archbishop of Gniezno (Henryk Muszyński), organised a discussion on the document for bishops. The Archbishop noted that *the Charta Æcumenica* is a very important document in light of the multicultural nature of European society. He underlined that document is underestimated in Poland, particularly by the Roman Catholic Church.

-Leonard Górka, *Charta Æcumenica*, monograph, https://www.kul.pl/files/324/bibliografia/gor_l.pdf, Abstract: The monograph includes chapters dedicated to an overview of the main areas of the *Charta Æcumenica*, and chapters that develop his personal point of view on these areas.

Sweden

-Christian Council of Sweden, Ten rules for ecumenical cooperation, <http://www.skr.org/produkt/tio-tumregler-for-god-ekumenik/>, Abstract: In 2005 the Christian Council of Sweden published document "10 rules for good ecumenism." The document is an elaboration of some of the principles for ecumenical cooperation stipulated by the *Charta Æcumenica*.

Switzerland

-Federation of Swiss Protestant Churches, The 10th Anniversary of the signing of the *Charta Æcumenica* celebrated in Switzerland, press release, <http://www.kirchenbund.ch/en/press-releases/2011/we-take-our-commitment-common-proclamation-seriously>, Abstract: On 9 May 2011 Bishop Norbert Brunner and the President of the Council of the Federation of Swiss Protestant Churches, Gottfried Locher, marked the 10th Anniversary of the signing of the *Charta Æcumenica* in Switzerland and issued a joint statement on the document.

-Rudolf von Sinner, Ecumenical Institute, Bossey, Ecumenism in the 21st century: Theses for discussion, article, <https://www.oikoumene.org/en/resources/documents/commissions/continuation-committee-on-ecumenism-in-the-21st-century/ecumenism-in-the-21st-century-theses-for-discussion>.

United Kingdom

-Church of England, Council for Christian Unity, A commentary on the *Charta Æcumenica* from the Council for Christian Unity by the Revd Canon Dr Charles Hill, <https://www.churchofengland.org/media/36078/charta.rtf>

- Alan Dixon, Salvation Army in the UK on *Charta Æcumenica*, <https://www.salvationarmy.org.uk/files/chartaocumenicaendorsementpdf/download?token=WaOWjCHL>, Abstract: The *Charta Æcumenica* seeks to stimulate anew the churches' common witness to their faith throughout Europe. It not only enumerates areas of cooperation, but also calls on the churches to commit themselves to work in these areas, by receiving the concerns described in the document and implementing them at practical levels in their church and national life.

-Churches Together in England on *Charta Æcumenica*, The text of the *Charta Æcumenica* with commentaries of Churches Together in England, www.cte.org.uk/Publisher/File.aspx?id=11442

-Elizabeth Fisher and Colin Williams, Faith in Europe, The Challenges of Sibiu to the Churches and to Faith in Europe, commentary, <http://www.faithineurope.org.uk/williamsfisher.html>. Abstract: The text highlights the following challenges: To show that the European churches are part of the solution to globalisation rather than part of the problem; To promote the use of the *Charta Æcumenica* and spreading knowledge of it throughout Europe; To promote theologically-based dialogue between majority and minority churches; To promote theologically-based work on interfaith relations; To encourage secular European organisations to engage more with the churches; To involve young people, with a view to training the ecumenical leaders of the future; To take forward any of the points in the Sibiu Final Message.

- *The Very Revd Dr John Arnold former President of the Conference of European Churches*, The Church's identity is naturally European, newspaper article,

<https://www.churchtimes.co.uk/articles/2016/3-june/comment/opinion/christian-and-european-identities-are-enriched-not-threatened>, Abstract: The *Charta Œcumenica* is clear that the scope of the church community is pan-European. It cannot and must not be a reincarnation of Western Christendom or the Holy Roman Empire. Eastern Europe is as European as Western Europe.

- David Fieldsend, EU Attaché to the Bishop of the Diocese in Europe, A Christian and Continental Perspective on the Brexit Debate, speech, <http://www.winchester-cathedral.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/Winchester-Cathedral-Presentation.pdf>, Abstract: The speaker refers to the *Charta Œcumenica* while talking about the concept of a "closer Europe": "The Conference of European Churches in its *Charta Œcumenica* gave support for this process of seeking to bring Europe closer together." "On the basis of our Christian faith, we work towards a human, socially conscious Europe, in which human rights and the basic values of peace, justice, freedom, tolerance, participation and solidarity prevail. Churches in the same document boldly stated that "without common values, unity cannot endure."

-Report of the Church of England Delegation at the 13th General Assembly of the Conference of European Churches, Lyon 2009, <https://www.churchofengland.org/media/39083/gsmisc937.pdf>, The report of the Church of England on the 13th CEC Assembly including the message of CEC to the Member Churches.

Ukraine

-Ukrainian Orthodox Church of the Kyivan Patriarchate, Presentation of Ukrainian edition of *Charta Œcumenica*, [Ukrainian Orthodox Church of the Kyivan Patriarchate, http://logos.at.ua/news/2007-12-13-316](http://logos.at.ua/news/2007-12-13-316), Abstract: On 13 December 2007, the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of the Kyivan Patriarchate organised a presentation of the *Charta Œcumenica* at the Kyivan Theological Academy. Filaret, Patriarch of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of the Kyivan Patriarchate, participated in the event.

-Conference organised by the Lviv Theological Seminary http://postup.brama.com/000415/70_3_4.html, Abstract: The conference was dedicated to the problems in the history of ecumenical movement in Ukraine, as well as to the contemporary issues in the dialogue between the churches in Ukraine. During the conference, the significant role of the *Charta Œcumenica* was mentioned in the positive outcomes of dialogue between churches in Ukraine. Participants to the conference were representatives of the main Ukrainian theological institutions, such as the National University of Kyiv-Mohyla Academy, the Superior Institute of Religious Sciences of St. Thomas Aquinas, the Lviv Theological Seminary of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of the Kyivan Patriarchate, and more.

-Ukrainian Greek-Catholic Church, Celebration of The Day of God the Creator, common prayer, <http://novazorya.if.ua/20092012/925-2012-09-20-18-02-56>, Abstract: On 1 September 2012 the Patriarch of the Ukrainian Greek-Catholic Church called all adherents to celebrate every year the Day of God the Creator. The Patriarch underlined the importance of the *Charta Œcumenica* in establishing the festival. During that day all Christian world should gather for a common prayer to thank God

for life, and Creation of the world. The Patriarch also addressed the seminarians, and stressed the importance of ecological education for future young priests.

Wales

-Churches Together in Wales (Cytûn), International contribution of Cytûn, meeting, www.cytun.org.uk/11Spring.doc, Abstract: In late April 2011 a number of officers of the Ecumenical National Council of Churches (Cytûn) met in Warsaw to discuss secularisation in Europe ten years after the publication of the *Charta Oecumenica*.

Documents

-Písek Declaration (2007) of the International Ecumenical Fellowship (IEF), document, <http://ief-oecumenica.org/pisek-great-britain/>, Abstract: The declaration refers to the *Charta Oecumenica* and calls for a closer study of its commitments.

-Freedom is binding. Final report of Community of Protestant Churches in Europe (CPCE), document, http://www.leuvenberg.net/sites/default/files/publications/freedom_ist_binding.pdf, Abstract: Final report of the 6th General Assembly of the CPCE refers to the main commitments of the *Charta Oecumenica* in accordance with the tasks of CPCE (E. g. evangelisation, social ethics).

-Contribution of the Community of Protestant Churches in Europe to the Consultation Process on the Preparation of the "White Paper on intercultural dialogue" of the Council of Europe, document, <http://www.leuvenberg.net/sites/default/files/statement/doc-7189-1.pdf>.

Books/articles

-Charta Oecumenica, A Text, A Process, and a Dream of the Churches in Europe, Viorel Ionita and Sarah Numico (eds.), WCC Publications, Geneva, 2003.

Also in French: Charte Oecuménique, Un Rêve, Un Texte, Une Démarche, Conseil Des Conférences Épiscopales D'Europe, Conférence des Églises Européennes, sous la direction de Sarah Numico et Viorel Ionita, Parole et Silence, 2003.

-Charting Churches in a Changing Europe, Charta Oecumenica and the Process of Ecumenical Encounter, Tim and Ivala Noble, Martien E. Brinkman and Jochen Hilberath (eds.), Currents of Encounter, Studies on the contact between Christianity and other religions, beliefs, and cultures, Vol 28, Rodopi, Amsterdam/New York, 2006.

-Peter De Mey, Ecumenism in Europe: The *Charta Oecumenica*, in "In God's Hands, Festschrift M.A. Fahey, S.J.," Jaroslav Z. Skira and Michael S. Attridge, Leuven University Press, Leuven/Paris/Duddley, 2006.

-Carolyn Althaus, Die Charta Oecumenica und ihre Bedeutung, Studeinarbeit, Dokument Nr. V86950 aus dem GRIN Verlagsprogramm, 2007.

