



How ecumenism is organised

The structure of ecumenism

Ecumenism thrives on diversity in unity and unity in diversity. Consequently, there are no fixed hierarchical structures. In other words, there is no direct relationship of subordination and superiority, but a close inter-connection of the respective institutions at the local, regional, national, and international level.

The most important ecumenical institutions

The most important international ecumenical institution is the [World Council of Churches \(WCC\)](#).

At the national, regional, and local level the [Council of Christian Churches in Germany](#) (Arbeitsgemeinschaft Christlicher Kirchen, [ACK](#); in Austria, Ökumenischer Rat der Kirchen in Österreich, [ÖRKÖ](#); and in Switzerland, La Communauté de travail des Églises chrétiennes en Suisse, [CTEC](#)) plays a central role.

Special institutions such as the EKD Institute for Research on Religious and Ideological Issues in Berlin ([Evangelische Zentralstelle für Weltanschauungsfragen in Berlin, EZW](#)), and the [Interconfessional Institute in Bensheim](#) ([Konfessionskundliches Institut in Bensheim, KIB](#)) on the Protestant side, as well the [Johann-Adam-Möhler Institute für Ecumenism](#) ([Johann-Adam-Möhler-Institut für Ökumenik, JAMI](#)) in Paderborn on the Roman Catholic side, are active in ecumenical research, observation, and consulting.

World Council of Churches (WCC)

www.oikoumene.org

The WCC, also called the World Council of Churches, is a worldwide interdenominational fellowship of currently 352 churches and Christian communities from 120 countries, representing over 580 million Christians worldwide. Its headquarters are in Geneva, Switzerland.

The Roman Catholic Church is not a member because of its understanding of church, but works closely with the Council on various WCC committees. The Orthodox Churches, on the other hand, are among the founding members of the WCC.

The WCC encourages its members to spread the gospel together and to deepen the understanding and fellowship among Christian churches and groups while respecting the identity of each member. It is explicitly not the goal to create a worldwide church under a unified leadership ("supra church") or to bring about a standardisation of the various forms of worship.

Membership in the WCC is open to any church that is legally independent, has a long-term commitment, is active not only in a specific region but worldwide, and has at least 50,000 members. A further precondition is the agreement with the [WCC basis](#) on which the Council is founded: "The World Council of Churches is a fellowship of churches which confess the Lord Jesus Christ as God and Saviour according to the Scriptures, and therefore seek to fulfil together their common calling to the glory of the one God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit."

Discussions are underway with the WCC regarding possible observer status for the New Apostolic Church.



The Lutheran World Federation (LWF)

www.lutheranworld.org/

Founded in 1947, the Lutheran World Federation is a global communion of 149 churches, representing almost 80 million Christians in 99 countries. The General Secretary is based in Geneva, Switzerland.

The LWF promotes the communion of churches in the Lutheran tradition and its mission to evangelise on an ecumenical basis.

World Communion of Reformed Churches (WCRC)

www.wcrc.ch

Founded in 1875, the World Communion of Reformed Churches (formerly World Alliance of Reformed Churches) is comprised of about 100 million members in Congregational, Presbyterian, Reformed, United, Uniting, and Waldensian churches in over 105 countries. It is based in Hanover, Germany.

The WCRC promotes general theological cooperation and joint action in mission and aid of minority churches.

Communion of Protestant Churches in Europe (CPCE)

www.leuenberg.eu

The CPCE (also GEKE for Gemeinschaft Evangelischer Kirchen in Europa) is the umbrella organisation of the Protestant churches. Until November 2003, it was known as the Leuenberg Church Fellowship. Over 94 Lutheran, Methodist, Reformed, and United churches from over thirty countries in Europe and South America with around 50 million believers are united under it. The CPCE is based in Vienna, Austria.

The member churches declared pulpit and communion fellowship in 1973 at a conference centre in Leuenberg near Basle, Switzerland, with the [Leuenberg Agreement](#) and committed themselves to their common undertaking of witness and service.

Today, the Communion of Protestant Churches in Europe (CPCE) is a fellowship of around one hundred churches. Some of the Churches who signed the Concord have meanwhile merged, others have not yet joined the Concord to this day, such as the Selbständige Evangelisch-Lutherische Kirche (SELK; [Independent Evangelical-Lutheran Church](#); Old-Lutheran) as well as free churches such as the [Adventists](#) and [Mennonites](#). There has been a co-operation agreement with the [Baptists](#) since 2010.

Conference of European Churches (CEC)

www.ceceurope.org

Founded in 1959, the [CEC](#) brings together 114 Protestant, Anglican, Old-Catholic, and Orthodox churches from almost all European countries.

It supports the theological and diaconal cooperation of its member churches. It cooperates with the Roman Catholic Church through the [Council of European Bishops' Conferences \(CCEE\)](#). The CEC is based in Brussels, Belgium.



Council of European Bishops' Conferences (CCEE)

www.ccee.eu

Founded in 1971, the Council of European Bishops' Conferences (Consilium Conferentiarum Episcoporum Europae, CCEE) is a conference of the presidents of the Roman Catholic episcopal conferences in Europe. The secretariat is based in Sankt Gallen, Switzerland.

The CCEE promotes collegial co-operation among the Bishops in Europe. Significant results of the intensive ecumenical co-operation with the [CEC](#) include the three [European Ecumenical Assemblies](#), as well as the joint and fundamentally important ecumenical document, the [Charta Oecumenica](#) (2001).

Evangelical Alliance

www.ead.de

The Evangelical Alliance is a worldwide network of evangelical-reformed Christians from various churches and denominations, who are united in common witness and service. The Alliance is known in particular for its annual Week of Prayer (WOP).

The German Evangelical Alliance, based in Bad Brückenau/Thuringia in Germany, maintains contact with about 350 national organisations and associations and is active locally in about one thousand places in Germany.

Evangelical Alliances also exist in Austria and Switzerland.

Council of Christian Churches in Germany and in Switzerland, as well as the Ecumenical Council of Churches in Austria

These ecumenical institutions are organisations that are independent of the World Council of Christian Churches and seek to promote ecumenism at the national, regional, cantonal, and local level. The Roman Catholic Church is a full member, unlike in the WCC.

In particular, these institutions encourage theological dialogue and the exchange of information among its member churches, organise joint actions and projects in support of Christian unity, and advocate common causes in public.

The individual councils of the CCCG (ACK) at the local, regional, and national level, as well as the member organisations of the Ecumenical Council of Churches in Austria (ECCA), are autonomous and not subject to directives from each other nor from the respective higher levels, but they are nevertheless affiliated with each other.

In the meantime, the New Apostolic Church has multiple memberships at the national, regional, and local level, mostly in an advisory capacity (guest status). Guest status means the ability to participate in all deliberations; participating in decision-making is not possible. As in the case of full membership, agreement with the [WCC basis](#) on which the Council is founded as well as the [Charta Oecumenica](#) is a prerequisite for being granted guest membership. The form of a guest membership is chosen if there are overriding reasons on the side of the applicant church and/or the CCCG (ACK) that do not (yet) make a full membership advisable. These reasons may include questions from the past from both sides regarding the relationship between the two parties or consultation processes between the applicant church and the CCCG (ACK). The transition to full membership in the ecumenical bodies is ultimately a matter of further development,



which also helps to emphasise the self-conception of being part of the one church of Christ. From a New Apostolic perspective, it moreover means further confirmation of the New Apostolic understanding that the apostolate is entrusted to the church of Christ as a whole.

Council of Christian Churches in Germany (CCCG) – national

www.oekumene-ack.de

The CCCG in Germany (ACK) was founded on 10 March 1948, several months before the [WCC](#). The aim was that the churches in Germany should be represented together in Amsterdam. Due to the political division of Germany, the CCCG delegates of the churches in the territory of the then German Democratic Republic could no longer, from 1963 on, participate in the joint meetings. In 1970, the Council of Christian Churches in the German Democratic Republic (AGCK – Arbeitsgemeinschaft Christlicher Kirchen in der DDR) was founded.

After the reunification of the two German states, the two councils merged in February 1992 at a joint meeting in Berlin and reconstituted the CCCG (ACK). Five churches were founding members. Today, the CCCG in Germany (ACK) has 17 member churches and 8 guest members. Five ecumenical organisations have observer status. The current [CCCG \(ACK\) statutes](#) came into effect on 1 January 2006.

Since April 2019, the Regional Churches of the New Apostolic Church in Germany are guest members in the CCCG in Germany (ACK).

Council of Christian Churches in Germany (CCCG) – regional

In addition to the national CCCG (ACK), there are fourteen regional councils in Germany, which are closely affiliated with the national council. These essentially correspond to the Länder, or parts of these, also taking into account the former boundaries of ecclesiastical provinces.

The regional CCCGs (ACKs) are (month/year marking the beginning of the guest membership of the New Apostolic Church):

ACK in Baden-Württemberg (March 2017) – www.ack-bw.de

ACK in Bavaria (application process is ongoing) – www.ack-bayern.de

ACK in Bremen (February 2020) – www.ack-bremen.de

ACK in Hamburg (June 2017) – www.ack-hamburg.de

ACK in Hesse-Rhenish Hesse (November 2018) – www.ack-hessen-rheinhessen.de

ACK in Mecklenburg Western-Pomerania (June 2017) – www.kirche-mv.de/mecklenburg/oekumenische-arbeitsstelle/oekumene-vor-ort

ACK in Lower Saxony (October 2019) – www.ackn.de

ACK in North Rhine-Westphalia (October 2019) – www.ack-nrw.de

ACK in Saxony (October 2020) – www.ack-sachsen.de

ACK in Saxony-Anhalt (February 2018) – www.ack-sachsenanhalt.de

ACK in Schleswig-Holstein (February 2019) – no website



ACK in Thuringia (November 2018) – www.ack-thuringen.de

ACK Region South-West (Rhineland-Palatinate and Saarland; November 2018) – www.ack-suedwest.de

Ecumenical Council Berlin-Brandenburg (October 2017) – www.oerbb.de

Council of Christian Churches in Germany (CCCG) – local

There are several hundred local councils, local ecumenical working groups, and further comparable ecumenical bodies in Germany which are independent from the national council and its respective regional council, but are nevertheless closely affiliated with them.

At present, more than 350 New Apostolic congregations are members in about 150 local councils, most with guest status.

Council of Christian Churches in Switzerland (Communauté de travail des Eglises chrétiennes en Suisse, CTEC)

www.agck.ch/

The CTEC was founded in 1971. Its objective is to coordinate and bring together the joint work on a national level.

In the context of the ecumenical movement, the focus of the work was initially on the search for ecclesial unity, whose objective was not only faith and mutual recognition, but also extended to the search for institutional consequences.

In view of the increasing secularisation today, it is becoming increasingly a question of the joint representation of the interests of Christianity vis-à-vis the government and society, as well as of coordination with other institutions, such as the Swiss Council of Religions.

The New Apostolic Church Switzerland has been a guest member of the CTEC since April 2014. After a five-year observation and reflection phase, which had been agreed upon and has been successfully completed, the plenary assembly of the CTEC will decide on the application of the New Apostolic Church Switzerland for full membership in June 2022.

Council of Christian Churches in Switzerland (Communauté de travail des Eglises chrétiennes en Suisse, CTEC) – cantonal

There are ten cantonal councils in Switzerland, which are independent from the national council, the CTEC, but are closely affiliated with it. These cantonal CTECs are (month/year marking the beginning of the guest membership of the New Apostolic Church):

Council of the Churches in Berne (AKB – Arbeitsgemeinschaft der Kirchen im Kanton Bern January 2008) – www.rkmg.ch/akb

AGCK Basle (January 2012) – www.inforel.ch/wissen/religionsgemeinschaften/arbeitsgemeinschaft-christlicher-kirchen-beider-basel

AGCK Sankt Gallen and Appenzell (January 2013) – www.ack-asg.ch

Council of Christian Churches in the region of Davos (AkiD – Arbeitsgemeinschaft Christlicher Kirchen in der Landschaft Davos; January 2018) – www.akid-davos.ch/



AGCK Zurich (April 2019) – www.agck-zh.ch/

Rassemblement des Églises et Communautés Chrétiennes de Genève (RECG) – www.recg.ch/

AGCK Neuchâtel (no website)

AGCK Schaffhausen (no website)

Comunità di lavoro delle Chiese cristiane in Ticino (CLCCT) – www.catt.ch

Communauté des Églises Chrétiennes dans le Canton de Vaude (CECCV) – www.ceccv.ch/

Council of Christian Churches in Switzerland (Communauté de travail des Eglises chrétiennes en Suisse, CTEC) – regional

There are many regional and local CTECs, local ecumenical working groups, and further comparable ecumenical bodies in Switzerland which are independent from the national council and respective cantonal council, but are closely affiliated with them.

At present 14 New Apostolic congregations are members of 7 regional or local councils.

Ecumenical Council of Churches in Austria (Ökumenischer Rat der Kirchen in Österreich, ÖRKÖ) – national

www.oekumene.at/

The Ecumenical Council of Christian Churches in Austria was founded in 1958. Its work takes shape in a variety of ways, in particular in divine services, scientific meetings, sociopolitical activities, and the publishing of statements. The ÖRKÖ supports the churches in their relations with the state. In addition, it maintains contacts with the Jewish religious community as well as with other world religions.

The New Apostolic Church in Austria has been a member of the ÖRKÖ in an advisory capacity since April 2021. Since June 2014, the New Apostolic Church has been a full member of the Ecumenical Youth Council (Ökumenischen Jugendrat), an organisation affiliated with the ÖRKÖ.

Ecumenical Council of Churches in Austria – regional

There are ten regional ecumenical organisations in Austria which are independent of the national council, the ÖRKÖ, but are closely affiliated with it. These are (month/year marking the beginning of the guest membership of the New Apostolic Church):

Ecumenical forum Styria (Ökumenisches Forum Steiermark – January 2019) – www.oekumenischesforum.at

Ecumenical council Tyrol (Ökumenischer Arbeitskreis Tirol, guest since 2010, member as of May 2022) – www.dibk.at/Meldungen/Gegrundet-Oekumenischer-Arbeitskreis-in-Tirol

Ecumenical Council of Churches in Austria – local

There are many regional and local ecumenical bodies in Austria which are independent from the national council (ÖRKÖ) and the respective regional council, but are closely affiliated with them.

At present, two New Apostolic congregations are members of two of these forums and have guest status.



CCCG | CTEC | ÖRKÖ – Memberships

The requirements for membership in a CCCG, a CTEC, or the ÖRKÖ at the national, regional, or local level are essentially the same.

In the case of a guest membership, there are sometimes different rules regarding formal requirements and designations.

Clause of the CCCG

www.ack-bw.de/media/download/integration/22622/_merkblatt_mit_anhang_als_pdf_datei.pdf

In Germany, the churches and recognised religious communities have the right, according to Art. 140 of the German Basic Law (GG) in conjunction with Art. 137, para. 3, of the Weimar Constitution, to regulate their own affairs within the framework of the generally applicable law (the right of self-determination of churches).

This implies the right of church employers to employ only their own members. For years, the member churches of the Council of Christian Churches in Germany (CCCG) have agreed to also employ believers of a CCCG member church for certain activities that are not gospel related, provided that the applicants have the necessary qualifications and personal skills (CCCG Clause). The decision in this matter rests with the ecclesiastical body that employs the believer, not with the CCCG. There is no legal claim to the application of the CCCG clause. In many cases, church employers do not consider a CCCG guest membership to be sufficient for the CCCG clause to be applied. In recent years, however, New Apostolic applicants have increasingly been granted permanent employment under the CCCG clause by means of derogation. In the meantime, this legal issue has also been changed by European legislation and case law in favour of the employees. A further relaxation is on the horizon.

PG Ecumenism (PGE) | WG Contacts with Denominations and Religions (WG CDR)

(Designation of the Regional Churches in their current form; designation of functions as at the time of membership in the group)

Year	PG Ecumenism (up to 2010)	WG CDR (as of 2011)
1999–2021	Apostle Volker Kühnle (NAC Southern Germany, chairman)	Apostle Volker Kühnle (chairman until 2021)
Since 1999	District Evangelist Peter Johanning (NAC International, Church spokesman, project manager)	Bishop Peter Johanning
1999–2002	Bishop Hans-Detlef Marwede (NAC Northern and Eastern Germany)	
1999–2006	Apostle Wolfgang Nadolny (NAC Berlin- Brandenburg; as of 2005 District Apostle)	
2002–2008	Bishop Hanspeter Nydegger (NAC Switzerland)	
2007–2019	Apostle Rolf Wosnitzka (NAC Northern and Eastern Germany)	Apostle Rolf Wosnitzka



Year	PG Ecumenism (up to 2010)	WG CDR (as of 2011)
2009–2014	Bishop Paul Imhof (NAC Switzerland)	Bishop Paul Imhof
2015–2020		Apostle Clément Haeck (NAC Western Germany)
Since 2021		Bishop Jürgen Kramer (NAC Western Germany, chairman as of 2022)
Since 2021		Apostle Matthias Pfützner (NAC Austria)
Since 2022		Bishop Arne Herrmann (NAC Southern Germany)
Since 2022		District Evangelist Karsten Hühn (NAC Berlin-Brandenburg)

Dialogue Commissions

With the CCCG Southern Germany (2001–2008)

CCCG delegates	NAC delegates
Dr Jan Badewien (Protestant Church in Baden)	Apostle Volker Kühnle (NAC Southern Germany, chairman)
Dr Johannes Ehmann (CCCG BW, chairman)	Bishop Herbert Bansbach (NAC Southern Germany)
Dr Hansjörg Hemminger (Protestant Church in Württemberg, until 11/2001)	District Elder Manfred Fröhlich (NAC Southern Germany)
Prelate Hubert Bour (Diözese Rottenburg-Stuttgart)	District Evangelist Peter Johanning (NAC International)
Dr Dorothee Kaes (Diocese Rottenburg-Stuttgart)	
Reverend Armin Besserer (Protestant-Method Church, CCCG chairman, 11/2001–06/2004)	
Reverend Annette Kick (Protestant Church Württemberg, starting 11/2001)	
Prelate Dr Helmut Barrié (Protestant Church, CCCG chairman, starting 06/2004)	



With the CCCG in Germany

First dialogue 13 December 2010

CCCG delegates	NAC delegates
Dr Elisabeth Dieckmann (CCCG, Roman Catholic Church)	Apostle Volker Kühnle (NAC Southern Germany)
Archpriest Radu Constantin Miron (Orthodox Bishops Conference in Germany)	Apostle Rolf Wosnitzka (NAC Northern and Eastern Germany)
Bishop Hans-Jörg Voigt (Independent Evangelical Lutheran Church, Germany, SELK)	District Evangelist Peter Johanning (NAC International)
Regional Bishop Professor Dr Friedrich Weber (Protestant Church Brunswick, CCCG chairman)	

Six group discussions 2011–2012

CCCG/EZW delegates	NAC delegates
Prelate Hubert Bour (German Bishops' Conference)	District Apostle Wilfried Klingler
Prof Dr Johannes Ehmann (EKD, chairman until 04/2012)	District Apostle Bernd Koberstein
Dr Burkhard Neumann (German Ecumenical Committee, DÖSTA, chairman as of 09/2012)	Apostle Volker Kühnle (chairman)
Reverend Karl-Martin Unrath (Ecumenical Centre, ÖC)	Apostle Gert Opdenplatz
Dr Konstantinos Vliagkoffis (Orthodox Bishops Conference in Germany, OBKiD, as of 01/2012)	Bishop Peter Johanning
Dr Reinhard Hempelmann (EKD Institute for Research on Religious and Ideological Issues in Berlin, EZW)	Priest Dr Reinhard Kiefer (Theological advisor of the Chief Apostle)
Dr Michael Utsch (EZW, until 12/2011)	
Dr Kai Funkschmidt (EZW, as of 01/2012)	
Reverend Jörg Bickelhaupt (Protestant Church in Germany, as of 09/2012)	

**Editorial group that developed the guideline CCCG****Five meetings between 2014–2015**

CCCG	NAC
Reverend Bernd Densky (Ecumenical Centre, ÖC)	Apostle Volker Kühnle
Dr Albrecht Haizmann (CCCG BW)	Bishop Peter Johanning
Dr Burkhard Neumann (German Ecumenical Committee, DÖSTA/Johann-Adam-Möhler Institute for Ecumenism, JAMI)	