

For action

WCC COMMUNICATION STRATEGY 2018-2021
A Living and Loving Fellowship to Walk, Pray and Work Together

The executive committee is asked to approve the communication strategy and its direction until the next WCC assembly.

□ **Background**

The WCC executive committee decided at its meeting in June 2017 to prioritize resources for communication for 2018-2021 to strengthen relations with member churches, international partners and ecumenical partners. A first draft of the new Communication Strategy 2018-2021 with a special focus on the Living Fellowship was presented to the executive committee in June 2018, and two additional foci – prophetic communication and organizational accountability – were added.

The goal of WCC communications is to raise the profile and impact of the work of the WCC. This is done through a variety of means which reflect the core Christian and ecumenical values of the WCC. Communication is an important strategic tool for the WCC and its member churches and ecumenical partners to sustain influence, gain visibility and promote good causes. Ensuring relevant, credible, transparent and well-coordinated communication in a timely manner is a pivotal task for WCC Communication. The WCC audience is international, including the WCC membership, and its committees, commissions and the churches and the public at large.

To quote the WCC General Secretary's Report, 7 June 2017:

Unity has a lot to do with information and communication. The work we do for unity is not only something we should share information about, it is also something we pursue through means of communication.... I am more and more convinced that ecumenism increasingly will be about communication, building relations through all the media available for us today. The access to electronic means of communication is almost the same all over the world, and plays an enormous role in developing the world relationships in the future – for good and for worse. We can use our potential based on our legacy of values, our relations, our possibilities to meet and to learn, as a great contribution to building relations in the time ahead of us.

Introduction

The WCC must be a catalyst for change – for a world with unity, justice and peace at its heart. Its communication reflects this.

The WCC is to inspire and invite its member churches to work together, actively lending weight to the churches' common voice. The member churches are the heart of the council.

Communications from the WCC must be inclusive and have participation and hope at their core. Our task is to ignite hope for a better world where human dignity prevails. Human dignity and equality must permeate all communications.

Communication Strategy

The strategy is articulated around the WCC Strategic Objective 5: Inspiring and innovative communication:

- The communication strategy is the overarching framework for internal and external communications, having fellowship as a key component.
- Communication must be integrated, coordinated and spiritual, as well as inspirational and innovative.
- The WCC plays a leading role and lays solid foundations for professional communication within the fellowship.
- The WCC should not only focus on strategies to communicate the Pilgrimage of Justice and Peace and the WCC but also reflect and promote reflection on the role of communication in building just and peaceful communities.
- All communications produced by the WCC should be seen as emanating from the WCC. The WCC's visual identity, including the WCC logo, shall be applied consistently.
- The WCC uses a personal form of address and comprehensible and inclusive language.
- The communication strategy and the communication framework will be supplemented by plans and detailed strategies that support day-to-day work throughout 2018-2021.

Fellowship Communication

- Communication is crucial to the fellowship and its credibility. Communication comes from the Latin word *communicare*, meaning to share. Communication in the WCC expects participation and transparency in order to build fellowship – to walk, pray and work together. Professional communication plays a vital role in that.
- The WCC shall maintain high accessibility and welcome people warmly and respectfully. The WCC must be perceived as relevant and credible.

- Communications must effectively support the fellowship, the organization and the WCC management. This includes:
 - further developing regional collaborations;
 - gathering and sharing the stories of the “living fellowship” through the web, news media, social media, publications such as books and journals and other channels;
 - offering resources for nurturing the spiritual life of the fellowship with prayers and Bible study.
 - developing joint communication activities with member churches and ecumenical partners.

Prophetic Communication

- WCC Communications is committed to prophetic communication, that is, to telling the truth (Gen. 20:6, 7), even when it is inconvenient or unwelcome or from voices previously silenced, ignored, powerless or marginalized.
- The WCC seeks to lift up and convey the authentic experiences, stories, insights, and values of people and communities within the churches that might otherwise not be heard, even if they are critical of our habitual or accepted practices or challenge principalities and powers.
- The WCC is committed to empowering people and groups to speak for themselves and to enabling communication by those who might otherwise not have access to the public sphere.

Advocacy Communication

- The WCC is to inspire and invite its member churches to work together, actively lending weight to the churches’ common voice.
- For the WCC to be a catalyst for change – fostering a world with unity, justice and peace at its heart—its communication must reflect the most pressing concerns and deepest aspirations of people in the churches and beyond.
- Communications from the WCC must be inclusive and have participation and hope at their core. Our task is to ignite hope for a better world where human dignity prevails. Human dignity and equality must permeate all communications. That includes:
 - engaging in advocacy and communication campaigns;
 - actively reaching out to journalists and public media;
 - fostering capacity-building with member churches and ecumenical partners.

Capacity-Building

- As a fellowship working with and for the churches, the WCC believes in the ability of all member churches and ecumenical partners to participate, exert influence and communicate.

- Through capacity-building, such as training, inspiration and networking, members' ability to communicate can be strengthened.
- The WCC will seek ways to ensure that its communication resources and memory are shared within the fellowship, allowing the greatest possible access to information. This includes:
 - training leadership, staff and member churches to become better communicators;
 - utilizing publications such as books and journals to further spiritual reflection and ecumenical formation;
 - translating WCC content.

Accountable Communication

- The WCC is committed to accountability in its communications, intent on being a credible instrument of Christian communication and a trustworthy witness to the truth.
- WCC communications must not only convey truth but also counter falsehood, lies, and misconceptions that threaten understanding and dialogue among Christians and churches, as well as with people of other faiths or no faith
- WCC Communications aspires to transparency in its work methods and accountability to the organization, its member churches and partners, as well as its readerships and the public.

WCC Communications: An Ecumenical Window

WCC Communications employ a variety of media and channels to communicate with the fellowship and the wider world:

- These include interactive social media; news and information releases on the WCC website and distributed to media and the public; posted documentation from the WCC, its fellowship of churches and ecumenical partners; book and journal publications that offer in-depth analysis and stimulate theological reflection, and a variety of printed introductory materials about the WCC and the ecumenical movement for distribution at the Ecumenical Centre and meetings and exhibits.
- WCC communications must employ the appropriate and effective channels to meet its specific objectives and remain open to new, innovative means of communication in its work.

Of special significance is the current renewal of the WCC website. The website is a digital communication hub for the WCC's multilingual fellowship. It inspires and encourages the member churches to work together and showcases what the churches are doing together on national, regional and global levels. The WCC website serves also as a "hotline" for media, increasing the fellowship's exposure in media across the world. The overall strategic goal of the WCC website is to be an "ecumenical window" providing insight, as well as the latest news and developments in the ecumenical movement. The WCC website also offers resources for ecumenical engagement, and facilitates access to the vast documentation about the ecumenical movement and its involvement in a variety of topics.