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**Arkivsak:** 18/02226-31

**Saksdokumenter:**  
Ingen

## **Nytt fra den verdensvide kirke – Konferansen av europeiske kirker (KEK)**

### **Sammendrag**

Konferansen av europeiske kirker (KEK) er en økumenisk organisasjon for protestantiske, ortodokse og anglikanske kirker i Europa. Den norske kirke er medlem i KEK. Organisasjonen driver med økumenisk dialogarbeid og samfunnsengasjement, særlig rettet inn mot EU-institusjonene og Europarådet.

KEK har også en temagruppe som jobber med vitenskap, ny teknologi og etikk. Denne gruppen jobber tett opp mot Europarådet, hvor KEK har deltakerstatus og er observatør i styringsgruppen for bioteknologi. KEKs temagruppe har utarbeidet en spørreundersøkelse til medlemskirkene, i den hensikt å kartlegge medlemskirkenes arbeid knyttet til vitenskap, ny teknologi og etikk. Undersøkelsen krever ikke rådsbehandling, ettersom den er en kartlegging. Det er likevel ønskelig med tverrfaglig samarbeid og koordinering med Norges Kristne Råd.

Den norske kirke bidro i mars 2021 med svar til en studieprosess om hvordan anerkjennelse av dåp i andre kirker blir praktisert i forskjellige kirker i Europa, med særlig henblikk på blandede ekteskap og barn som vokser opp med foreldre fra to forskjellige kirkesamfunn. (Se saksorientering).

Ecumenical Youth Council in Europe (EYCE) er en selvstendig organisasjon med nære bånd til KEK. I september 2021 er Norges Kristne Råd og Den norske kirke vertskap for EYCEs generalmøte i Norge. Mellomkirkelig råd, Den norske kirkes ungdomsutvalg og Norge Kristne Råd bidrar med ressurser til generalmøtet. I tillegg planlegges det et økumenisk ungdomstreff i forbindelse med generalmøtet, som involverer kristne ungdomsorganisasjoner i Norge.

### **Forslag til vedtak**

Mellomkirkelig råd tar saken til orientering.

## Saksorientering

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Her er Den norske kirkes svar på undersøkelsen:

### **The mutual recognition of baptism in Europe A survey of the Conference of European Churches**

Please provide answers to the following questions:

#### 1. Receiving Christians from other churches into communion

##### **a. What is the practice of receiving Christians, baptised in other churches, in your own church?**

Church of Norway generally welcomes Christians who baptised in other churches into our own. In Church of Norway baptism normally constitutes membership in the church. Persons baptised in other churches are welcome to register as members with Church of Norway without a new baptism.

##### **b. Does your church follow a theological tradition of rebaptism of Christians baptised in other churches? If so, in which circumstances? Please describe this theological tradition.**

Church of Norway does not rebaptise Christians who are baptised in other churches on the basis that they are baptised in a trinitarian tradition and with water.

##### **c. Please indicate what would be the key documents for your church's approach to recognition of baptism in other churches (e.g. church legislation, canon law, or pastoral guidelines concerning the policy and practice), and if possible, provide URLs for them or attach the documents with your response.**

Church of Norway is an Evangelical-Lutheran church, and has five confessional documents as basis for its theology in addition to the Bible. These are the Apostolic, Nicene and Athanasian creeds, Luther's small catechism (1529) and the Augsburg Confession (Confessio Augustana) of 1530. <https://kirken.no/nb-NO/church-of-norway/about/an-evangelical-lutheran-church/> Other lutheran explanations to the Confession are regarded as interpretations, but are not constitutionally binding. In the lutheran tradition baptism is understood as a sacrament. The WCC Faith and Order document "Baptism, Eucharist, Ministry" (1982) forms a basis for Church of Norway's ecumenical understanding of baptism, and its continuing ecumenical dialogue on baptism.

##### **d. Please explain the theological foundation of this policy and practice.**

In the Lutheran tradition Baptism is understood as a sacrament, where the relationship between "the Word" and the element/sign water is essential. "The Word", central to Luther's teaching, is referring to the living word of God, meaning the Gospel, also referring to Jesus Christ, as well as the spoken word (biblically based). However, it is possible for Lutherans to accept that there are different theological interpretations, traditions and practices of Baptism. Baptism is still regarded as valid as long as it is biblically based, baptism takes place with water and in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.

## 2. Inter-church marriages 2

### **a. Is it necessary for the baptism of a spouse coming from a different church to be recognised by your church in order for them to have a church wedding?**

No. It is not necessary for any of the spouses to be a member of the Church of Norway in order to have a church wedding. However, the priests may refuse to solemnise a marriage if one of the parties is not a member of the church, or if neither of them belongs to his or her congregation. The church regards a church wedding as a Christian service.

### **b. Would it be expected that an inter-church marriage ceremony be celebrated in your own church, the other church involved, or both?**

In Church of Norway marriage is not considered a sacrament. A legal marriage can only take place once, either in a church wedding or in a civil ceremony. Church of Norway will accept marriage in another church or in a civil ceremony, also for its own members.

Following a civil ceremony, the married couple may choose a church blessing either in Church of Norway or another church. A prayer following a civil marriage normally takes place in only one church. However, it is possible for ministers from two different churches to co-minister in a church blessing, following one church liturgy.

### **c. Please indicate what would be the key documents for your church's approach to policy and practice on inter-church marriages, and if possible, provide URLs for them or attach the documents with your response.**

The Church of Norway's policy on marriage is found in the General Instructions to the Order for a Wedding (2003 and 2017). Church of Norway follows the requirements of the state of Norway's Marriage Act: <https://lovdata.no/dokument/NLE/lov/1991-07-04-47>. As marriage is not considered a sacrament in the church, there are no differences practiced between members and non-members of the church, with the exception that priests may legally refuse to solemnise a marriage if one of the parties is not a member. Church liturgies are, however, official liturgies of the church, and have to be authorised by the Church of Norway General Synod. They can be found here: <https://kirken.no/nb-NO/church-of-norway/worship-and-church-services/wedding/>

### **d. Please explain the theological and pastoral foundations of this policy and practice.**

Church of Norway is a lutheran church. Thus, following the lutheran reformation, marriage was no longer considered a sacrament of the church. However, in a largely lutheran country, it was the only option for marriage for a long time, and ministers of the Church of Norway were considered the only state-approved solemnisers of marriage until 1845, when judges could officiate civil weddings. Later, other officials of registered religious and life-stance communities have been approved for solemnising marriage.

Today, civil marriage is the most common form of marriage. Church wedding or prayers following a civil wedding, is however, still popular.

Church of Norway changed its legislation on marriage and approved a liturgy for use in heterosexual and same-sex marriage in 2017. This came as a result of many years theological debate on topics connected to marriage, co-habitation, divorce etc. The Bishops' conference in Church of Norway appointed a group to investigate the understanding of marriage in light of Christian faith. Their report was presented in 2013, and can be found here (only in Norwegian): <https://kirken.no/nb-NO/om-kirken/slik-styres-kirken/bispemotet/om-oss/dokumenter/bispemotets-rapporter/sammen/3>

**e. Please name any existing ecumenical dialogues and agreements on baptism and/or marriage in which your Church is involved, and if possible, provide URLs for them or attach the documents with your response.**

At the time being, Church of Norway are active in several bilateral talks with other churches. The Catholic-Lutheran bilateral dialogue has particularly worked with the document "Baptism and Growth in Communion" (PCPCU and LWF). Baptism is a central and recurrent theme in many of the multilateral ecumenical dialogues that Church of Norway is involved in, e.g. through WCC Faith and Order, the LWF project Churches/Baptism in times of change, and dialogues within the CPCE. 4