



The United Methodist Church

Regional Conference of Central and Southern Europe

Rules of Order of the Regional Conference of Central and Southern Europe

based on the *Discipline* of the Regional Conference of Central and Southern Europe
(Version 2009)

Art. 28 – 31 and 540 – 548 on the Regional Conference
respectively

Art. 45 – 54 and 401 – 416 on the Office of the Bishop

as well as the Disciplinary and Arbitration Regulation of the
Regional Conference of Central and Southern Europe (Version 2013)

Paragraph 1 - Foundation

1. The United Methodist Church (Evangelisch-methodistische Kirche) in Central and Southern Europe is part of The United Methodist Church.
2. The United Methodist Church in Central and Southern Europe is issuing for its area a *Discipline* in accordance with *the Book of Discipline* of The United Methodist Church.
3. The United Methodist Church in Central and Southern Europe is made up of all annual and provisional annual conferences as laid out by the General Conference of The United Methodist Church.
4. The United Methodist Church in Central and Southern Europe is organized in accordance with the powers granted by the 1952 General Conference of the former Methodist Conference and in accordance with the *Book of Discipline* of The United Methodist Church as the "Regional Conference of Central and Southern Europe". (See Constitutional Document from October 14, 1954, in the minutes of the Central Conference 1954 in Brussels, pp. 39 - 40.)
5. The "Regional Conference of Central and Southern Europe" has its office in Switzerland, Badenerstrasse 69, 8004 Zürich. In the following it will be referred to in short as "Regional Conference".

Paragraph 2 - The Regional Conference

1. The Regional Conference shall be composed of the Bishop, of voting delegates, delegates with advisory voice as well as guests, who have received an invitation from the conference chair or secretary. Guests may be restricted to public sessions.
2. Regional Conference members with voting rights are the delegates of the annual and provisional annual conferences elected according to the provisions of the *Discipline* and the rules of order. Only regular members have voting rights.
3. Members with advisory voice are:
 - Retired Bishops;
 - Delegates of the associated Churches within the Regional Conference borders;
 - The secretary, treasurer, chairperson of the judicial court, chairpersons of the working groups, if they are not already voting members.

Advisory members may participate at all sessions of the Regional Conference and submit motions to the Regional Conference.

4. The delegates of the annual and the provisional annual conferences shall be elected according to the proportion determined by the executive committee. The provisions of the *Discipline* are to be observed.
5. The Regional Conference shall convene once every four years within the twelve months following the General Conference. The Regional Conference shall be convened by the Bishop in agreement with the executive committee. If the Bishop is prevented from doing this, the secretary may make notice of the conference session. If the Regional Conference has not already decided otherwise, the executive committee shall determine time and venue of the upcoming session. If necessary, a special session of the Regional Conference may be called.
6. The Bishop shall lead the meetings and is chairperson. If he or she is unable to lead the conference, the conference shall elect from the clergy members an interim chairperson.
7. A quorum shall be established when notice of the conference is extended at least one month prior to the conference and at least half of the members with voting rights are present. If there are too few members, the conference shall be postponed from day to day. If on the second day there

are still too few members, on the third day without regard to the number of members in attendance the Regional Conference shall have a quorum.

8. Without prejudice to specific provisions, the Regional Conferences decides with a simple majority of the votes cast. Abstentions are to be ignored.

9. The official languages of the Regional Conference shall be German and English. The Regional Conference minutes shall be published in one of the two languages only.

10. The rights and responsibilities, which the Regional Conference has received from the General Conference, are laid out in the *Discipline*. In the area of the Regional Conference, it shall have the sole legislative power.

11. Further tasks of the Regional Conference shall be:

- To promote the work which has been entrusted to the conference;
- To establish all necessary rules and regulations for administration and supervision;
- To install necessary organs and to elect their representatives;
- To assign the tasks to the organs and to supervise their work;
- To approve the budget for the quadrennium.

12. The Regional Conference, where the laws of the land permit, can organize and incorporate itself and its institutions in order to acquire legal status and apply the appropriate legal provisions.

Paragraph 3 - Agents and Organs of the Regional Conference

1. The agents of the Regional Conference are:

- The Bishop;
- The secretary;
- The treasurer.

Through nomination the Bishop can petition that a voting member of the executive committee be elected vice-chair of the executive committee.

2. The Organs of the Regional Conference are:

- The Executive Committee;
- The Office;
- The Council on Finances and Administration;
- The Judicial Court;
- The Committee on Investigation;
- The Committee on Appeals;
- The Working Group on Episcopacy;
- Other Working Groups.

Paragraph 4 - The Bishop

1. The Bishop embodies the unity of the Regional Conference with the entire United Methodist Church. He or she is supervisor (proctor) of the entire work within the Regional Conference (geographical) boundaries. He or she shall represent the Regional Conference outside of the conference and determines, if he or she is prevented and deems it to be prudent, a deputy. The Bishop may *ex officio* participate in all meetings of the Regional Conference.

2. The Bishop shall be elected through secret ballot with a three-fifths majority of the voting delegates present who take part in that ballot and cast valid votes. Empty ballots shall also count among valid votes. The Executive Committee may establish a preparatory process for the election

of a bishop. All ordained elders in full connection, who belong to an annual or provisional annual conference of the Regional Conference, may be elected.

3. The newly elected Bishop has a term of four years. When the Bishop's first term of office is closing, the executive committee shall determine whether a re-election for life or an election of a new Bishop shall take place and makes the appropriate motion to the Regional Conference. For a re-election for life a three-fifth majority is required.

4. If the office of Bishop becomes vacant (due to death, retirement or resignation) the executive committee in accordance with the *Discipline* shall determine the necessary steps. The executive committee shall decide whether an extraordinary session of the Regional Conference shall be announced and makes the motion to elect a new Bishop.

5. A retired Bishop shall be an advisory member of the Regional Conference and the executive committee. He or she shall remain member as long as his or her residency is within the Regional Conference borders. He or she is to be invited to all meetings of these organs.

Paragraph 5 - The Secretary

1. Based upon the nomination of the executive committee the Regional Conference shall elect a secretary for a four-year term. The candidate does not need to be a voting member of the Regional Conference. Re-election is possible.

2. The term of office shall begin with the adjournment of the session during which the election occurred and continues until the closing of the next regular session of the Regional Conference. The secretary shall *ex officio* be member and secretary of the executive committee and the office.

3. The secretary shall write the minutes of the Regional Conference, the executive committee, and the office and shall publish and mail these as required through their by-laws. In consultation with the Bishop, he or she shall manage as need dictates the correspondence for these organs and shall administer to the tasks which the *Discipline* places on him or her. The Regional Conference, the executive committee, and the office may name additional tasks.

4. If the office of secretary becomes vacant during the quadrennium, an interim secretary may be appointed by the executive committee or by the Bishop.

Paragraph 6 - The Treasurer

1. The Regional Conference shall elect following nomination by the executive committee a treasurer for a four-year term. The candidate does not need to be a voting member of the Regional Conference. Re-election is possible.

2. The term of office of the treasurer shall begin with the adjournment of the Regional Conference session, during which the election took place, and continues until the conclusion of the next regular Regional Conference session. He or she shall be *ex officio* a member of the executive committee.

3. The treasurer shall manage the finances following the framework of the approved budget. He or she shall annually prepare a fiscal report of all transactions, which is given to the executive committee for review. He or she shall submit motions regarding the budget of the current year as needed. He or she shall write and in consultation with the executive committee submit a budget proposal for the quadrennium to the Regional Conference for approval.

4. If the office of treasurer becomes vacant during the quadrennium, an interim treasurer shall be appointed by the executive committee or by the Bishop.

Paragraph 7 - The Executive Committee

1. The executive committee shall be composed of the following members with voting rights: the Bishop, the secretary and the treasurer, as well as one superintendent and one lay delegate from each annual and provisional annual conference, as well as the chairperson of the working group on episcopacy. Lay representatives must be elected members of the Regional Conference.

Retired Bishops are members with advisory voice. If a conference consists of more than one country, then beyond the two voting delegates the superintendent of each additional country shall be a member of the executive committee with advisory voice.

Through invitation the Bishop may also invite the chairpersons of the working groups.

2. The representatives of the annual and the provisional annual conferences shall be nominated for election for the executive committee by the Bishop after consultation with the elected delegates of those annual and provisional annual conferences. Vacancies in the interim shall be filled by election of the executive committee upon nomination of the Bishop. If needed, an Annual Conference may elect additional alternate delegates.

3. The term of office for the executive committee shall be four years. It shall begin with the adjournment of the Regional Conference session, during which the election took place and continues until the conclusion of the next regular session of the Regional Conference.

4. Chairperson of the executive committee shall *ex officio* be the Bishop.

5. The executive committee shall meet at least once a year. The meetings shall be announced by the Bishop, if he or she is prevented in doing this, by the secretary. There is a quorum if half of the voting members are present. The executive committee shall decide through majority vote of the voting members present.

6. The executive committee shall manage the business of the Regional Conference between sessions. Most particularly:

- To attend to the completion of its resolutions and decisions and to do what is necessary to further the standing and development of the work;
- To receive the financial statement of the treasurer and to discharge him or her on the basis of the audit report;
- To make the necessary adjustments and extensions to the Regional Conference financial budget;
- To attend to the preparation of the Regional Conference sessions.

7. The executive committee elects through the nomination of the office the persons who shall represent the Regional Conference in the worldwide church bodies, as long as no other voting regulations exist.

8. The executive committee shall report to the Regional Conference on its work and make the necessary motions.

Paragraph 8 - The Office

1. The office shall be composed of the Bishop, the secretary, and the treasurer. Chairperson shall be the Bishop.

2. The office can through a motion of the Bishop include a fourth person, who is elected by the executive committee from among its members.

3. The office shall have the following responsibilities:

- Preparation of the executive committee meetings and supervision or administration of its decisions;
 - The determination of the language, in which the minutes of the Regional Conference shall be written;
 - Administration of all financial and personnel matters for the office of Bishop and the secretariat of the Bishop, which are not otherwise supervised;
 - Nomination of members to the Council on Finances and Administration passed on to the executive committee, which confirms the nominations;
4. In pressing situations, for which the Regional Conference or the executive committee have not made any provisions, the office can act for the interim on behalf of the executive committee.

Paragraph 9 - The Council on Finance and Administration

1. The Council on Finance and Administration shall be composed of three persons to be nominated by the office and confirmed by the executive committee.
2. The council shall annually examine the disbursement of funds of the Regional Conference and shall submit the written report of the review to the executive committee.
3. The council shall resolve the budget issues of the Bishop and his or her office with the appropriate bodies of the General Conference. The accounting is done through the association "Hilfe im Sprengel". The council supports the Bishop and the Bishop's office in advisory capacity.
4. The members of the council are also members of the pension board of the Regional Conference. The executive committee can elect further members to the pension board.

Paragraph 10 – The Committee on Investigation

1. The Regional Conference shall elect a committee on investigation in accordance with the disciplinary and arbitration regulation of the Regional Conference, consisting of seven clergy members in full connection (if possible not more than one pastor per annual or provisional annual conference), two laity with advisory voice, and six substitutes (five clergy members in full connection and one layperson). The election takes place upon nomination by the Bishop, after consultation with the working group on episcopacy.
2. The committee on investigation is responsible for any complaint against the Bishop.
3. The committee on investigation constitutes itself and gives itself rules of procedure and by-laws. Seven clergy members in full connection respectively their substitutes build the quorum. Members of the committee on investigation, who might be party to the dispute, are to be replaced by substitutes.

Paragraph 11 - The Committee on Appeals

1. The Regional Conference shall vote for a committee on appeals in accordance with the disciplinary and arbitration regulation of the Regional Conference, made up of five pastoral members (four in full connection and a full-time local pastor) as well as four laity, who have at least six continuous years as a professing member of The United Methodist Church, also as many substitutes. The election takes place based on the recommendation of the Bishop.
2. The committee on appeals of the Regional Conference is responsible for appeals in disciplinary proceedings against pastoral members.

3. The committee on appeals shall constitute itself and choose its rules of order and bylaws. Committee members, who might be party to a dispute or feel biased, shall be replaced by a substitute.

Paragraph 12 - The Judicial Court

1. The judicial court shall be composed of five persons of which at least two must be clergy members in full connection. At the same time four substitutes shall be elected, two of which shall be clergy members in full connection and two lay members. The candidates shall be persons of integrity and qualified for this task. They must not for the same period of time be members of the Regional Conference, the executive committee, the working groups or the organs of the disciplinary and arbitration regulation. Their election follows the nomination prepared by the executive committee.

2. The judicial court shall constitute itself and shall provide its own procedural and working rules. A quorum shall be established by the presence of three members. A tie decision shall be decided by the vote of the chairperson. A member shall be excluded from a judicial process if he or she is a member of a church body, which is party to the case.

3. The judicial court shall meet as necessity calls at a place, which the chairperson shall name. The chairperson or a substitute shall be invited to the meeting of the Regional Conference.

4. The judicial court shall make all judicial decisions in accordance with the constitution, excluding the jurisdiction of the Judicial Council of the General Conference.

5. The Regional Conference may charge the judicial court with additional tasks.

6. The decisions of the judicial court shall have immediate effect. The option to invoke the judicial council of the General Conference in accordance with the constitution is hereby not affected.

7. The decisions of the judicial court shall briefly outline the facts and points of controversy as well as the rationale for the decision. All parties shall receive this document as well as the secretary of the Regional Conference. It shall be published in the minutes of the following Regional Conference session.

8. Petitions to the judicial court may be made by:

- The Bishop of the Regional Conference;
- At least one-third of the voting members of the executive committee;
- At least one-fifth of the delegates with voting rights present at the Regional Conference;
- At least one-fifth of the voting members present at the annual or provisional annual conference; in provisional annual conferences, which have fewer than 25 members, half of the voting members present.

Paragraph 13 - The Working Group on Episcopacy

1. The Regional Conference shall elect a working group on episcopacy, which consists of one executive committee member from each annual and provisional annual conference. The nomination shall be suggested by the office. The Bishop shall choose one fifth of the members.

2. The working group meets at least once a year. It fulfills the tasks in accordance with the *Discipline* and reports directly to the Regional Conference and the executive committee.

Paragraph 14 - Other Working Groups

1. The Regional Conference can elect further working groups and authorize them to undertake specific tasks. The members of the working groups need not be members of the Regional Conference.
2. In general, the working groups shall be comprised of three members. Vacancies shall be filled by the executive committee.
3. The chairperson of the working group shall be determined by the Regional Conference. Otherwise, the working group shall constitute itself.
4. The chairperson shall report annually to the executive committee on the activities of the working group. The reporting has to take place in writing and in the official languages of the Regional Conference.

Paragraph 15 - The Session of the Regional Conference

1. The session committee of the Regional Conference consists of the chairperson, the secretary, the treasurer, the chairperson of the ushers (counters of votes), and the conference host. This committee shall make all decisions in all procedural or organizational questions, which are not disciplinary questions, or which are not otherwise regulated in these rules of order. All members of the Regional Conference have the right to appeal a decision made by this committee.
2. The approved program prepared by the preparations committee of the Regional Conference is the official program of the session.
3. At the beginning of the first meeting the executive committee shall place a motion for election of the following persons:
 - 6 ushers (vote counters) (3 clergy delegates and three lay delegates) and a chairperson;
 - Two auditors of the conference minutes;
 - The reporters.
4. The office lays the agenda before the conference for acceptance.

Paragraph 16 - The Business Meetings

1. No member of the Regional Conference may be absent from the business meetings without permission, unless it is due to illness or other legitimate reason. In this case a written note indicating the reasons shall be given to the secretary in a timely manner.
2. The chairperson shall announce the presence of a quorum. The times of opening the meetings, recess, and conclusion of the day's deliberations shall be the decision of the chairperson. He or she shall preside over the deliberations.
3. The meetings of the Regional Conference shall generally be public. Visitors shall sit in the area designated to them.
4. The chairperson may for selected business call for a closed meeting. He or she must announce a closed session when at least one-fifth of the members require it. Before the closed meeting begins all guests shall leave the conference room. The business of the closed meeting shall be confidential. The decisions of the closed session shall be recorded in writing.

Paragraph 17 - Deliberations

1. Business may reach the Regional Conference:
 - By motion of the chairperson
 - Through the reports of the organs of the Regional Conference named under paragraph 3;
 - By motion of the annual and provisional annual conferences;
 - By motion of members of the Regional Conference.
2. For the business meetings the following rules shall apply:
 - All motions and amendments shall be submitted by a member of the Regional Conference and be supported by another member;
 - All motions and amendments shall be written in one of the official languages of the Regional Conference and given to the secretary;
 - When an amendment is proposed and has been supported, the chairperson may limit debate to the proposed amendment. The same shall apply to amendments to the amendment. The discussion shall follow the reverse order of the submitted amendments;
 - A motion for reconsideration after the concluding vote on a petition may be made by a member of the majority vote fraction only.
 - The following motions must be voted on immediately after consideration of the list of speakers: close of debate and motion to vote, motion to recess and postpone the meeting, point of order, matter regarding the agenda, motion to refer the matter in deliberation for submission of a new motion to a Regional Conference organ.

Paragraph 18 - Voting Procedure and Elections

1. Unless otherwise designated, voting is public. Elections may be public or by ballot.
2. Prior to the vote the chairperson shall offer a brief review of the amendments, which are on the table. Amendments to the amendment shall be voted on prior to the vote on the amendment and the vote on the motion itself, which is voted on a last.
3. Voting shall generally be a showing of hands. Only the votes of the delegates present at the time of the vote shall be counted. Abstentions shall be ignored. When there is a tie vote the motion is defeated.
4. When elections are open, the candidates shall be voted on in the order of their nominations.
5. Ballots shall be used for secret elections. Empty and invalid ballots shall not be considered in determining the majority. The ushers shall see that each voting ballot has a different color, format or print. They shall also count the number of voting ballots passed out. If the number of voting ballots turned in to be counted is higher than the number passed out, the vote is invalid and must be repeated. The ushers shall record the result of the election as follows: number of voting members, number of invalid voting ballots, and number of empty voting ballots and breakdown of valid ballots.
6. If the election is to take place without nominations, the first two votes shall be open. After the second vote no further candidates must be included. As of the third vote the Regional Conference may, following a motion of a member, declare in an open vote that the candidate with the highest number of votes below the absolute majority is elected. For the election of a Bishop paragraph 4 applies.

Paragraph 19 - Thematic Events

1. In regard to the tasks of the Regional Conference as defined in the *Discipline*, thematic events can be organized in connection with the meetings of the executive committee. The theme is selected by either the Regional Conference or the executive committee.
2. Further persons who in their country work in this area or may offer further impulses to the annual and provisional annual conferences may be invited to the thematic events taking place in connection with the meeting of the executive committee. Generally, not more than one person per country may be invited in addition to the executive committee members. The additional persons will be invited by the Bishop after consultation with the respective superintendent.
3. At the Regional Conference the themes may be taken up again for consolidation and continuation or new themes can be initiated.

Paragraph 20 - The Conference Journal

1. All Regional Conference accepted reports, petitions, and decisions shall be integral parts of the conference journal and shall be included in full.
2. After the revision through both of the auditors of the minutes and the chairperson, the minutes are valid and will be published.

Paragraph 21 - Final Provisions

1. Petitions to change these Rules of Order of the Regional Conference require a two-thirds majority to pass.
2. These Rules of Order were adopted by the 2013 Central Conference and replace the previous Organizational Structure and Rules of Order from 2009. They shall take effect on March 16, 2013.
3. On March 10, 2017, the Central Conference amended the second sentence of Paragraph 4, point 2. The amendment takes effect immediately.
4. On March 8, 2019, the Executive Committee approved the deletion of the invalid postal address of Paragraph 1, point 5. The amendment takes effect immediately.
5. On November 17, 2022, the Central Conference replaced the first sentence in Article 4, point 2. The amendment takes effect immediately.
6. On November 17, 2022, the Central Conference added a sentence to the end of Article 7, point 2. The amendment takes effect immediately.
7. On March 13, 2025, the Central Conference amended Articles 7 point 5, 8 point 1 and 2 concerning the duties of the Vice Chair. The amendment takes effect immediately.
8. In accordance with the ratified resolutions of the 2024 General Conference regarding regionalization, the term "Central Conference" was informally replaced by "Regional Conference" effective January 1, 2026.