

Information on and application for partnership with the Austrian Evangelical Alliance (ÖEA)



A. What are the aims of the Austrian Evangelical Alliance? Excerpt from the 2004 association statutes:

The association bearing the name “Österreichische Evangelische Allianz” (“Austrian Evangelical Alliance”, abbreviated “ÖEA”) regards itself as part of the worldwide “World Evangelical Alliance”. Itself neither a church nor a religious denomination, it wishes to support and serve existing Christian churches and denominations in Austria with its activities, in accordance with its declared purpose. It is an alliance of Christ-believing persons from various Christian churches and denominations who live their faith in personal fellowship with Jesus Christ. The members of the ÖEA profess the Evangelical Alliance’s “Shared Basis of Faith”.

The purpose of the ÖEA is to seek and to foster fellowship with active Christians from churches and denominations that neither claim exclusivity for themselves, nor contradict the testimony of the Bible as a whole by overemphasising certain insights, nor compromise unity in the Spirit by conduct of an unspiritual nature. The ÖEA promotes the visible, spiritual unity of all who whole-heartedly believe in Jesus Christ, calling them to join in prayer and encouraging them to jointly engage in evangelistic, pastoral and charitable activities.

The ÖEA’s declared purpose is to be attained by idealistic means, among them the promotion of partnership-based collaboration and mutual understanding between officially recognised Christian churches and denominations as well as unaffiliated Christian fellowships, church-based associations, and independent ministries and missionary societies.

Partners of the Austrian Evangelical Alliance (ÖEA)

The status of “Partner of the Austrian Evangelical Alliance (ÖEA)” is only open to legal entities which recognise the Evangelical Alliance’s “Shared Basis of Faith” and the code of conduct of the Austrian Evangelical Alliance (ÖEA).

Partner status is conferred by the Executive Committee, upon written application, and is valid for a period of four years. Such Partner status may be extended for a further four years by a resolution of the Executive Committee. Repeated extensions are possible.

ÖEA Partners are entitled to draw attention to the fact, on their stationery and published materials, that they are “Partners of the Austrian Evangelical Alliance (ÖEA)”. ÖEA Partners may attend the General Assemblies in the person of a duly authorised representative, but without the right to table resolutions or to vote. ÖEA Partners are to make an annual contribution amounting to three times the membership fee for an individual member.

B. The Evangelical Alliance’s “Shared Basis of Faith”

The members of the Evangelical Alliance accept the revelation of the triune God given in the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments and confess the historic faith of the Gospels therein set forth. They assert the following doctrines which they regard as crucial to the understanding of the faith, and which should issue in mutual love, practical Christian service and evangelistic concern:

1. We profess the sovereignty and grace of God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit in creation, redemption, final judgement and the fulfilment of all things.
2. We profess the divine inspiration of Holy Scripture and its consequent entire trustworthiness and supreme authority in all matters of faith and conduct.
3. We profess the universal sinfulness and guilt of fallen man, making him subject to God’s wrath and condemnation.
4. We profess the substitutionary sacrifice of the incarnate Son of God as the sole all-sufficient ground of redemption from the guilt and power of sin, and from its eternal consequences.
5. We profess the justification of the sinner solely by the grace of God through faith in Jesus Christ crucified and risen from the dead.
6. We profess the illuminating, regenerating, indwelling and sanctifying work of God the Holy Spirit.
7. We profess the priesthood of all believers who form the universal Church, the Body of which Christ is the Head and which is committed by His command to the proclamation of the Gospel throughout the world.
8. We profess our expectation of the personal, visible return of the Lord Jesus Christ in power and glory; the continued existence of a person’s God-given personality; the resurrection of the body for judgement, and eternal life in glory for the redeemed.

C. The Code of Conduct of the Austrian Evangelical Alliance (ÖEA)

In order to foster fraternal mutual dealings, the Austrian Evangelical Alliance (ÖEA) wishes to offer its services to one and all and so lays down the framework governing mutual conduct and public relations work in the following Code of Conduct.

The churches and missionary and/or charitable ministries signing this Code of Conduct shall be recorded by the ÖEA in a list and are thus entitled to cite the ÖEA and to draw attention to it in their publications.

1. Basic principles for promoting trust in our mutual dealings

Ever since the Evangelical Alliance (EA) was founded in London in 1846, its “Shared Basis of Faith”, which also constitutes the basis for the relationships between us, has been found to be a good means of permitting spiritual unity among Christians from different denominational backgrounds, throughout the world. On this basis, it has been possible for effective collaboration to evolve and be upheld in mission, charitable endeavour and - in some places - even in the field of education. In Austria, ever more Lutheran parishes, free churches and missionary groups wish to evangelise together (Lausanne Covenant). The Basic Principles, which were originally substantially agreed in readiness for the “1984 Missionary Year”, are intended to help prevent tensions and friction, and to ensure that co-operation can take place in a spirit of mutual confidence.

1.1. Let each of us be sure of our particular insights into the Faith, and of where we have our spiritual home!

Although the ÖEA stresses spiritual unity in Christ and confines itself, with regard to its basis of faith, to the salvational teachings of Holy Scripture, it has no wish to deny believers' differing denominational backgrounds and convictions. The ministry in which we jointly engage will be all the more fruitful the more that all involved work together in the certainty of their Faith. Firm convictions and loyalty to one's own denomination need not mean intolerance.

1.2. Let each of us show respect for others' insights into the Faith and others' spiritual homes.

There must be a clear differentiation between a tolerance which proceeds from indifference or relativisation of the truth, and respect for the convictions of a fellow Christian. Partners in shared ministries who sign the Code of Conduct undertake not to present their own convictions as absolutes in a high-handed and overbearing manner, to be on their guard against heretical condemnations, and to refrain from any manipulation of other people's consciences.

1.3. The evangelisation in which we jointly engage should help people who are uncertain and alienated from faith to decide anew for faith and to find a spiritual home.

Secularisation, self-fulfilment and individualisation have led to alienation from congregational life, even among nominal church members. Our shared evangelistic efforts are aimed at helping people like these to make a conscious decision for faith and to find a spiritual home in a Christian church. If this leads to people renewing their relationship with their previous local church, we expressly welcome this outcome, but note that this local church must also take suitable care of those who are added to it for the first time.

1.4. We recognise that persons who are of an age to decide their own religious affiliation have the right to follow their convictions and to choose or to change their church or denomination once they have arrived at certainty in this regard and hold this to be the right course of action.

We undertake not to press any believer to formally transfer to another church or congregation. However, in cases where a person who has become a believer no longer has, or never has had, any personal connection with his or her former church or congregation, the way to a new spiritual home must be left open to him/her without discrimination. A change of denomination should not take place without a clarifying conversation with the previous church aimed at seeking its consent.

2. Basic principles for public relations work

Public relations work (especially information and publicity) is part of a church's overall commission and takes place before God in a spirit of responsibility for mission and charitable endeavour.

2.1. All public relations work is to take place in conformity with the objectives laid down in the statutes of the church concerned.

2.2. All information given about the nature and the activities of the church concerned are to be true, correct and as up-to-date as possible. All parties concerned are to refrain from any manipulation aimed at asserting their own interests.

2.3. The church concerned undertakes not to use any acronyms, names or characters in public which might lead to confusion. All parties concerned are to refrain from invoking individuals, institutions, umbrella organisations etc. without these latter's consent.

- 2.4. The signatories further undertake to seek direct talks in the event of conflict, and in cases where no agreement can be reached, to call in a neutral third party as a mediator. Litigation before a court of law should be avoided at all costs.**

An increasing number of circular letters, newspapers and appeals for donations are being sent out. Because this has to do with stewardship of funds that have merely been entrusted to churches and ministries, we hereby agree on the following basic principles of the Code of Conduct:

- 2.5. Fund-raising advertising shall confine itself to setting forth facts and stating concrete needs, indicating how it will be ensured that the funds raised will be properly employed. The advertising will avoid anything that would run counter to the dignity of people in need.**
- 2.6. The address list of donors and supporters is to be neither bought nor sold, rented or rented out, nor exchanged. Protection of data privacy will be ensured.**

D. Rights and obligations of a Partner of the Austrian Evangelical Alliance (ÖEA)

1. Rights

- a. Conferral of ÖEA Partner status by the Executive Committee of the ÖEA shall be for four years from the date of commencement stated in the application.
- b. Such Partner status may be extended for a further four years by a resolution of the ÖEA Executive Committee. Repeated extensions are possible.
- c. An ÖEA Partner is entitled to draw attention to the fact, on its stationery and published materials, that it is a “Partner of the Austrian Evangelical Alliance (ÖEA)”. A pertinent logo will be provided by the ÖEA.
- d. All ÖEA Partners are recorded in a list which is regularly updated and published.
- e. An ÖEA Partner may attend the General Assemblies in the person of a duly authorised representative, but without the right to table resolutions or to vote. It will be informed in an appropriate manner about the date and venue of a General Assembly.
- f. ÖEA Partners are given the opportunity to announce events etc. free of charge in the Alliance’s newsletter ALLIANZ SPIEGEL.
- g. ÖEA Partners are given the opportunity to get an online-account for using the ÖEA-calender-of-events on the ÖEA-website. With this account ÖEA Partners are able to populate the database themselves.
- h. ÖEA Partners are given preferential treatment in terms of local co-operation on the ground, and in the ÖEA’s publicity work.

2. Obligations

- a. Acceptance of the “Shared Basis of Faith of the Evangelical Alliance”
- b. Acceptance of the “Code of Conduct of the Austrian Evangelical Alliance (ÖEA)”
- c. Payment of the annual partnership dues amounting to three times the membership fee for an individual member. The membership fee is currently 35 euros, and the partnership dues thus 105 euros.

E. Application form (please send to: ÖEA, Vogelsangstr. 15c, A-5111 Bürmoos, Austria)

**We hereby apply for partnership status with the Austrian Evangelical Alliance (ÖEA):
(Copies of the Excerpt from the Register of Associations and of the statutes are to be enclosed with this application.)**

Name of the legal entity

Address of the legal entity

Telephone, telefax, e-mail address

Name of the authorised signatory

Address of the authorised signatory

Telephone, telefax, e-mail address

In my capacity of authorised signatory, I hereby issue the following declaration on behalf of the legal entity stated above:

- We have read the information on partnership with the Austrian Evangelical Alliance (ÖEA).
- We accept the Evangelical Alliance's "Shared Basis of Faith"
- We accept the "Code of Conduct of the Austrian Evangelical Alliance (ÖEA)"
- We undertake to pay the annual partnership dues

Place, date, signature of the authorised signatory

This application was reviewed by the Executive Committee of the Austrian Evangelical Alliance (ÖEA) at its meeting on _____ and the following decision taken:

- ÖEA Partner status has been conferred. The partnership shall commence on _____
- ÖEA Partner status has NOT been conferred. Reason: _____

Place, date, signature of the Chairman and of one further member of the Executive Committee