



Conference of European Churches
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Electronic Bulletin

Church and Society Commission of the

Conference of European Churches

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1. 2008 European Year of Intercultural Dialogue – building together a European society respecting its diversity

The Directorate General Education and Culture of the European Commission has declared 2008 the International Year of Intercultural Dialogue. A Call for ideas has been published with the aim of receiving input from civil society on projects with a strong European dimension. The call for projects will be published in 2007.

The 2008 year is aimed at awareness raising, promotion of openness and dialogue against radicalisation and mutual understanding with the objective of building a Europe where diversity is valued and values are shared. The Commission will emphasise the aspect of intercultural dialogue in all Community Programmes.

DG Education and culture is in the process of consulting with civil society organisations in general and with organisations of faith and belief in particular in order to explore the different perspectives on intercultural dialogue and examples of best practices.

Upon invitation of the DG Education and Culture, the Church and Society Commission of CEC and the Churches Commission for Migrants in Europe (CCME) have met Mr Xavier Troussard to discuss the involvement of European churches in the preparation of the 2008 year. The wish of the Commission is to investigate on how the diversity of religion and beliefs can be used as a tool for a positive attitude towards dialogue, respect and building a European society together.

The strength of the churches is their grass root level communities with their commitment to community work and to the transmission of faith education and values. Good practices have to be used as a multiplier effect to ensure that this approach is promoted in each community.

CSC and CCME will have the responsibility to reflect on the Churches' participation and contribution to the Year.

In order for a better dialogue to happen people will have to experience diversity as a richness and efforts will need to be made to integrate societies; the system of multiple identities will need to be accepted to create a more cohesive society and a more proactive attitude towards building the European society. These are all aspects on which the 2008 year for intercultural dialogue will focus.

Further information

<http://www.>

2. Bulgaria and Romania ready for EU Membership on 1st January 2007

In 2002 the European Council announced its objective to welcome Bulgaria and Romania in the European Union in 2007, provided they made sufficient progress in fulfilling the membership criteria. Accession negotiations were completed in December 2004 and the Accession Treaty was signed in April 2005. In May 2006 the Commission report stated that both countries should be prepared for membership by 1 January 2007, provided that they progresses in a number of issues.

The next steps

In its latest report on 26 September, the Commission confirms that Bulgaria and Romania have made progress toward the preparation to their accession. There are, however, a number of areas where concern is raised and further work will need to be done. For Bulgaria these are the justice system, the fight against corruption, police cooperation and the fight against organised crime, money-laundering, integrated administrative control system for agriculture (IACS), transmissible spongiform encephalopathies (TSE), and financial control. For Romania the areas of concern are the justice system and the fight against corruption and IACS, Paying Agencies, TSE and interconnectivity of tax systems. Furthermore, the Commission will take remedial measures to ensure the functioning of EU policies in both countries. Measures have been established for each of the areas in which progress needs to be made and benchmarks have been established, therefore the control mechanism will continues until the benchmarks have been met.

The report states that as a result of the progresses made, Bulgaria and Romania “will be in a position to take on the rights and obligations of EU membership on 1 January 2007”.

For more information:

http://ec.europa.eu/commission_barroso/president/focus/bulgaria_romania_en.htm#key

3. Calendar of Major CSC events

- ◆ Conference on "The role of religion in conflict situations" 13-17 October, Corrymeela, Northern Ireland
- ◆ Consultation on "European Churches facing the challenges of unemployment" 22-24 November, Bonn-Bad Godesberg, Germany
- ◆ Church Leaders Consultation on "Values, religion, identity" 12-13 December, Brussels, Belgium

4. Information and subscription

We are pleased to send you the first electronic bulletin of the Church and Society Commission. We will send this occasionally in the future whenever there is relevant information from the European Institutions that will be important to share with you.

This electronic bulletin is an internal tool of communication with people in CEC member churches and associated organisations dealing with issues relating to the European institutions. Please help us to spread this electronic bulletin by sending it to people who might be interested.

Recommendations for action are addressed to CEC members and associated organisations.

The content is not designed for publication in other media.

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