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CSC Update on European Affairs

TOPICS COVERED:

Treaty reform & Lisbon Summit, CSC secretaries meeting, intercultural dialogue, EU Peace-building Partnership, EU mandate for Bali Climate Change Conference, churches action against climate change, services of general interests and social services, creationism, migration.

European Integration

EU Member States strike a deal on the Reform Treaty

After several years of institutional discussion, the Reform Treaty “Treaty of Lisbon” was, to all EU Member States’ satisfaction, approved at the Lisbon Summit on 19 October. It will be signed on 13 December in Lisbon and it is hoped to enter into force on 1 January 2009.

The package called Reform Treaty incorporates most of the innovations of the Constitutional Treaty into the two existing treaties: Treaty on the European Union (TEU) and the Treaty establishing the European Community (TEC). Of these the latter is renamed the Treaty on the Functioning of the Union.

The Lisbon Summit found acceptable solutions to all outstanding problems tabled:

- Italy won back one seat at the European Parliament. The new total number of the seats increased by one from 750 to 751.
- Poland was satisfied by making the Ioannina compromise a formal decision of the Council, which can be modified unanimously. However, as it did not become

part of the core treaty it has more of a political value. Ioannina compromise allows a group of countries, which have almost enough votes to block a decision, to have that decision re-examined.

- Euro will be called Evro in Bulgaria.
- European Commission will take “appropriate contacts” with the European Parliament in the process of the nomination of the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy.
- The number of advocates-general at the European Court of Justice will increase from 8 to 11. One of the new posts will be given to Poland.
- Austria was allowed to maintain quotas for foreign students, with the Commission agreeing to suspend for five years its legal action over the country’s quota.
- The request of the Czech Republic concerning the determination of competences was met by annexing to the treaty a statement stipulating that the European Commission must pay “particular attention” to any requests made by the Council aiming to repeal a Community legislative act.

The last minute negotiations only dealt with and brought changes to the burning political issues mentioned here above. Except for these modifications, the text remains the same as the draft of 5 October. In other words, no changes were introduced on issues the Church and Society Commission (CSC) considered priorities (Article 15b on dialogue with churches, social clause, values & objectives, democratic principles, human rights). More detailed comparison and evaluation between the original CSC objectives and the Reform Treaty was made in the last Update N° 11. It is also included in the revised CSC Report on the Treaty Reform, attached to this Update.

Talks have already begun concerning the first President of the European Council. French President Nicolas Sarkozy has spoken in favour of Luxembourg Prime Minister Jean-Claude Juncker, whereas according to British Prime Minister Gordon Brown, his predecessor Tony Blair is a great candidate for any significant international job, this one included.

Reform Treaty:

<http://www.consilium.europa.eu/showPage.asp?id=1317&lang=en&mode=g>

Portuguese EU Presidency website on the Lisbon Summit:

http://www.eu2007.pt/UE/vEN/Reunioes_Eventos/ChefesEstado/IMHSG.htm

.. and begin a debate on the future challenges of Europe

Satisfied after an agreement on the Reform Treaty, the Lisbon Summit turned its attention to the future of Europe. On the second day of the Summit, initial discussions were held based on the Commission Communication "European interest: Meeting the Challenge of Globalisation".

The Heads of State and Government also gave preliminary approval to the idea of French President Nicolas Sarkozy of creating a "group of the wise" to reflect the future of Europe between now and 2020-2030. The Portuguese EU Presidency will make a proposal on the mandate of this group at the December Summit.

Communication "European interest: Meeting the Challenge of Globalisation":

http://ec.europa.eu/commission_barroso/president/pdf/COM2007_581_en.pdf

CSC Secretaries Meeting

The Annual Meeting of Church and Society Secretaries of European Churches held in Leuven on 10-12 October 2007

Around 50 participants from all over Europe gathered in Leuven for the CSC Secretaries meeting in the middle of October. It was the 5th time that people working with European issues within CEC member churches were brought together to discuss current European affairs.

Joanna Mizgala (Evangelical Reformed Church in Poland), Slavisa Sanjic (Serbian Orthodox Church) and Pröhle Gergely (Lutheran Church in Hungary) facilitated the discussions on the main theme of the meeting, "the role of religion in public life", with a short analysis about the public discourse in their home countries and churches. In working groups, all participants had the chance to exchange their views and national experiences on issues such as the separation of church and state, the relationship between minority and majority rights or the partnership between church and state. The working groups were also the place to discuss the Council of European Parliamentary Assembly recommendations 1804 ("State, religion, secularity and human rights") and 1805 ("Blasphemy, religious insults and hate speech against persons on ground of their religion"), which had been published in June 2007.

Additionally, CSC staff informed the meeting about the recent developments within the European institutions and the respective work carried out by CSC. Updates were shared on issues such as the EU Reform Treaty, European integration, employment, globalisation, science and technology, intercultural and interreligious dialogue and human rights.

One of the highlights of this CSC Secretaries meeting was the seminar on "Religion and the EU Institutions", which was hosted by the European Commission in Brussels. The

seminar was opened by former member of the EECCS (European Ecumenical Commission for Church and Society) and CSC, Laurens Hogebrink, who introduced the findings of his "Survey of dialogue and other meetings between churches and EU" in the presence of Petro Cymbron, Member of the Cabinet of the President of the European Commission, and Jorge César das Neves, who succeeds Michael Weninger as the Commission official in charge of dialogue with religions. The survey, which is to be finalised in the near future, is based on 85 documented meetings, which have taken place ever since the former Commission President Jacques Delors' famous remark 17 years ago encouraged churches to take a more active part in the European dialogue. The survey was highly appreciated by the EU representatives, who expect religion as a political theme to be on the rise. In the discussion that followed Hogebrink's presentation, both of them stressed the readiness of the European Commission to cooperate with the churches. They also challenged the church representatives to actively take part in setting the agenda for negotiations between the churches and the EU in the future. They also stressed the importance of timing, if and when churches wish to convey their messages to political leaders.

Intercultural Dialogue

New CEC website on intercultural dialogue

This spring the Council of Europe (CoE) held a consultation on intercultural dialogue in order to prepare a White Paper on this subject. The White Paper, due to be published early 2008, shall formulate a long term policy for the promotion of intercultural dialogue and serve as a reference document for policy makers.

CSC and the Churches' Commission for Migrants in Europe (CCME) submitted a joint response. In addition, CoE received the individual responses of CSC and CCME members and associate organizations as well as their examples of best practice.

Now all the related documents are available on the new CEC website on intercultural dialogue. In addition, the website provides further information on CoE and EU activities regarding intercultural dialogue and, of course, on CSC involvement in these processes.

Please, also note the two new CSC briefings, which are attached to this Update. The first one informs on the CoE White Paper process. The second explores current EU work on intercultural dialogue. It, for example, offers more detailed analysis on the discussions held at the first Cultural Forum in Lisbon on 26-27 September (cf. Update N° 11).

CEC website on intercultural dialogue:

<http://www.cec-kek.org/content/intercultural.shtml>

Members' and associate organisations' responses to the CoE consultation are available here: <http://www.cec-kek.org/content/interculturalresponses.shtml>

Peace, Security and Reconciliation

Launch of the EU Peace-building Partnership

On 12 November 2007, the European Commission's Directorate General for External Relations will launch the "EU Peace-building Partnership". This partnership aims at mobilising and consolidating civilian expertise for peace-building by enhancing co-operation with civil society, NGOs, think tanks and national authorities. The peace-building partnership will address policy development, identification of needs and best practices.

The main elements of the Partnership include:

- Preparation of an Annual Action Programme (AAP)
- Policy dialogue with civil society
- Preparation of the Peace-building Partnership's web based facility.

AAP has three priority areas:

- Peace-building Partnership support (such as capacity building, early warning, exchange of best practices and participation in international networks);
- Co-operation with International Organisations on early warning and early recovery from conflict and natural disasters;
- Training (including consolidation of previous work on training standards and development of policy aspects of crisis management).

AAP is currently subject to consultation within the European Commission. EU Member States will also have a say before the programme is finalised. If the programme is, as foreseen, approved at the European Council Summit in December, it becomes operational in 2008. The initial budget for 2007-2008 is 15 million Euros.

Climate Change

EU is getting ready for the Bali Climate Change Conference

The Spring Summit decisions (see the Update N° 6) in March 2007 paved the way for the ongoing EU preparations for the United Nations Climate Change Conference, which will be held in Bali on 3-14 December. Commitments made under the Kyoto Protocol for reductions in greenhouse gas emissions run to 2012. It is the EU's aim to ensure that the Bali Conference marks the first step in building a post-2012 framework on tackling climate change and that a final agreement could be found in 2009.

The EU mandate for Bali negotiations was adopted by the Environment Council on 30 October. The Council conclusions urge developed countries, as a group, to take the lead by committing to reduce their emissions of greenhouse gases in the order of 30 per cent by 2020. Economically more advanced developing countries are called on to contribute

adequately according to their responsibilities and respective capabilities. The mandate stresses that a global carbon market is fundamental to assist in driving low-carbon investment. It underlines the need for greater international cooperation including on research, development, demonstration, deployment and transfer of new technology and underlines the importance of integrating climate change into development cooperation. The mandate also further reaffirms the need to enhance efforts to address adaptation to climate change and reduce emissions from international aviation and maritime transport as well as deforestation.

For further information on the theme, read the new CSC Briefing on Climate Change attached to this Europe Update.

Conclusions of the Environment Council 30 October 2007, Mandate for Bali negotiations:
<http://register.consilium.europa.eu/pdf/en/07/st14/st14632.en07.pdf>

Churches boost their action on climate change

In addition to the joint work among the churches in the framework of the European Christian Environmental Network (ECEN), several CEC member churches are increasingly building their work in this matter. Archbishop Anders Wejryd of the Church of Sweden will host an Inter-faith Climate Conference in Uppsala in November 2008. The Swedish Vice-President of the European Commission, Margot Wallström, was the first to join this project and the Ecumenical Patriarch, well known for his engagement in this matter, has also shown a great interest. In Finland, the Church Council of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland has appointed a working group to prepare a climate programme. The programme, foreseen to be finalised by the end of March 2008, is to provide recommendations for the church as a whole, for parishes and individual church members on how to protect climate.

The Church of England is offering a strong analytic input to the discussion. In August, the church published a briefing entitled "Climate change – not just a green issue", which argues and proves that securing a stable climate is ever more seen as a global public good that is essential for all human security and development. This month, the Church of England is issuing two further documents. "Through the glass darkly – Europe and the politics of climate change" provides a critical assessment of the EU Emission Trading Scheme. It also examines the EU's response to climate change with respect to development cooperation as well as discusses EU policies regarding adaptation. The third document, "Towards a post Kyoto climate treaty for climate justice", explores the scientific and political challenges facing Bali.

All the Church of England documents will soon be available at:
<http://www.cofe.anglican.org/info/socialpublic/international/climatechange/>

Employment and Social Affairs

Services of general interest and social services

On 20 November 2007, the European Commission is expected to adopt a number of Communications on the single market and on services of general interest, including social services of general interest. The adoption of these Communications has been postponed from 13 to 20 November due to severe conflicts between different departments in the Commission. One point of discussion is the need for a framework directive on services of general interest, which outlines horizontal principles of general interest, as especially requested by the Socialist group and the Green Group in the European Parliament. According to the Secretariat-General, these principles have been laid down in the (new) Article 14 of the Reform Treaty and in its detailed protocol on services of general interest. Concerning social services, the intention of the Commission to gradually open the sector to competition interferes with the concern of a number of EU Member States to preserve public service obligations and the principle of subsidiarity. As for the proposal for a directive on cross-border health services, the Commission is concerned about facing a revival of the discussions on the Services Directive, which was highly debated during the ratification process of the Constitutional Treaty (signed in October 2004 and abandoned in June 2007) and played an important role in the vote against the Treaty in France in the summer 2005.

CSC will prepare a detailed briefing paper on the Communications as soon as they are published.

Science & Belief

Council of Europe issues a resolution condemning creationism

On 4 October, the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE) adopted a resolution on "the dangers of creationism in education". The resolution 1580 urges the Member States of the Council of Europe to "firmly oppose the teaching of creationism as a scientific discipline on an equal footing with the theory of evolution and in general resist presentation of creationist ideas in any discipline other than religion". The Assembly expresses its worries about the possible ill effects of the spread of creationist ideas and argues that creationism could become a threat to human rights. According to PACE, science and belief must be able to coexist but it is necessary to prevent belief from opposing science.

The resolution also refers to "a much more moderate attitude" (in comparison to the advocates of strict creationism) of all leading representatives of the main monotheistic religions and quotes Pope Benedict XVI statement, which defends the theory of evolution as "more than a hypothesis".

The resolution on creationism follows two related PACE recommendations on “Blasphemy, religious insults and hate speech against persons on grounds of their religion” (1805) and on “State, religion, secularity and human rights” (1804; see the Update N° 10).

Adopted Resolution:

<http://assembly.coe.int/Main.asp?link=/Documents/AdoptedText/ta07/ERES1580.htm>

Full Report:

<http://assembly.coe.int/Mainf.asp?link=/Documents/WorkingDocs/Doc07/EDOC11375.htm>

Verbatim records (discussion on the report is under the point 6):

<http://assembly.coe.int/Main.asp?link=/Documents/Records/2007/E/0710041500E.htm>

Migration

EU countries show growing interest in refugee resettlement

In November, two events took place in the framework of the Churches’ Commission for Migrants in Europe (CCME) coordinated project “Refugee resettlement – broadening the basis in Europe”. In Rome, the participants representing national NGOs, churches, as well as public authorities heard about the plans of the Italian Ministry of Interior to start accepting emergency cases for resettlement. In the meeting in Vienna, the representative of the Ministry of Interior underlined Austria’s willingness to continue discussions on resettlement in the context of an EU approach.

Stronger coherence needed for EU anti-trafficking policies

In addition to resettlement, CCME is heavily involved in a broad range of issues falling under migration and asylum issues. One of them is the fight against trafficking in human beings. On the eve of the first European Union Anti-Trafficking Day held on 18 October, Christian organisations and NGOs issued a joint statement welcoming the initiative for a “European day against Trafficking in Human Beings”. At the same time, the joint statement “Time for Action” called for “a rights-based, holistic approach that includes EU policies on development cooperation, human rights, anti-discrimination, migration and asylum”.

In early October, CCME brought together churches from Armenia, Belarus, Moldova, the Russian Federation and Ukraine in Kiev to discuss the current activities and challenges in churches’ work against trafficking. The meeting concluded that churches in the countries of the former Soviet Union are emerging as key actors in the fight against trafficking in human beings.

Read more on all these initiatives at the CCME website:
<http://www.ccme.be/secretary/NEWS/index.html>

Upcoming events

Future CSC consultations

In the course of 2008, CSC will organise a series of consultations on different themes related to its work programme, which was approved at its Plenary Meeting in Armenia last June. The consultation on church and employment will take place in February. The consultations on socially responsible investment and on globalisation, as well as a meeting with churches from the countries holding the upcoming EU Presidencies are likely to be held during the first half of 2008. A consultation focusing on religion in the public sphere has been scheduled for early June 2008. In the autumn 2008, CSC intends to organise another consultation on the topic of globalisation. The Assembly of the European Christian Environmental Network (ECEN) will be held in September 2008. A brainstorming meeting on bioethics is also planned for the year 2008.



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