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CSC Update on European Affairs

TOPICS COVERED:

Employment seminar, Reform Treaty, Charter of Fundamental Rights, December European Council, political priorities for 2008, CSC position paper on ageing, CSC report on agriculture, initiatives on the future of the single market, Bali climate change conference, intercultural dialogue.

Seminar on Employment and the Churches in Europe

Seminar on Employment and the Churches in Europe, with EU Commissioners Figel and Spidla, 27-29 February 2008 Brussels

Please, let us know if you are interested in participating

On 27-29 February 2008, the Church and Society Commission (CSC) together with the Churches' Commission for Migrants in Europe (CCME) and the European Contact Group (ECG) will hold a consultation on employment and the churches in Europe. The consultation will include a Dialogue Seminar on 28 February with the European Commission, which will be co-organised with COMECE and the Bureau of European Policy Advisors. The main speakers of the Dialogue Seminar are Mr Vladimir Spidla, the Commissioner for Employment and Social Affairs, and Mr Jan Figel, the Commissioner for Education and Culture.

The idea of this consultation is to discuss the value aspects of the European employment strategy ("flexicurity") and the role of churches in relation to employment policies in Europe. It will also provide an opportunity to coordinate the activities of churches and church-related organisations in this area. Please, indicate your interest in participating at the event by writing to lhs@cec-kek.be. Further information on the event will follow in early January.

European Integration

EU Member States sign the Reform Treaty

On 13 December 2007, EU Member States signed the Reform Treaty now known as the 'Treaty of Lisbon'. The Lisbon Treaty settles years of debate over EU institutional reform and will hopefully enter into force after national ratification processes on 1 January 2009. Hungary as the first EU country ratified the new Treaty in a parliamentary vote on 17 December.

The final text of the Treaty of Lisbon is available at:

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

In its final version, Article concerning dialogue with churches and religious organisations got once again a new number. It is now 16 C (see page 69).

CSC took stock of the new Treaty in a briefing published in November 2007.

<http://www.cec-kek.org/pdf/Update12Briefing4.pdf>

Speech by José Sócrates, President of the European Council, at the signing ceremony:

http://www.eu2007.pt/UE/vEN/Noticias_Documentos/20071213DiscursoPMTratado.htm

The Charter of Fundamental Rights is officially proclaimed

The EU Charter of Fundamental Rights forms an integral part of the new Treaty and will become legally binding. In order to mark this and compensate the decrease of its visibility in the Treaty - the reference to the Charter appears in one Article only - a formal proclamation by the Presidents of the three European institutions was held in Strasbourg on 12 December. In addition, the entire text is published in the EU Official Journal.

In comparison to the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR) and the European Social Charter, which are the Council of Europe human rights treaties, the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights brings together in a single text a whole range of civil, political, economic and social rights. It also introduces modern rights such as the right for a good environment, right of consumer protection, right to have a good public administration, right to data protection and the prohibition on cloning of human beings. The EU Charter only applies to acts and legislation of the European Union. Together with ECHR, which (unlike the Social Charter) also carries legal weight, the Charter is to provide a double protection for EU citizens.

Charter of Fundamental Rights:

http://www.europarl.europa.eu/charter/default_en.htm

European Convention on Human Rights:

<http://conventions.coe.int/Treaty/Commun/ListeTraites.asp?MA=3&CM=7&CL=EN>
[G](#)

European Social Charter: http://www.coe.int/T/E/Human_Rights/Esc/

European Council

The signing of the Treaty of Lisbon and of the Charter of Fundamental Rights were followed by the meeting of the European Council which took place in Brussels on 14 December. The main themes of discussions were migration, preparation of the next three-year cycle of the Lisbon Strategy, climate and energy policy, maritime policy and Kosovo status process. The summit also adopted a Declaration on Globalisation.

European Council Conclusions including the Declaration on Globalisation:

http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms_Data/docs/pressdata/en/ec/97669.pdf

Short reports on other issues tackled:

Flexicurity

The Summit endorsed the agreement of the Employment and Social Affairs Council of 5/6 December on the common principles on flexicurity. CSC gave its comments on the flexicurity approach in its response to the Green Paper on Labour Law in February 2007. CSC also made a short assessment on the Commission Communication “Towards Common Principles of Flexicurity” which prepared the December decisions (see Update N° 10).

Common principles of flexicurity. The draft conclusions have been adopted.

<http://register.consilium.europa.eu/pdf/en/07/st15/st15497.en07.pdf>

CSC-CCME-ECG response to the Green Paper on Labour Law.

<http://www.cec-kek.org/pdf/002507answertogreenpaperlabourlaw.pdf>

Reflection Group

At the previous Summit in October, the Heads of State and Government gave preliminary approval to the idea of French President Nicolas Sarkozy to create a “group of the wise” to reflect on the future of Europe between now and 2020-2030. According to the final agreement, an independent Reflection Group is invited to identify key issues and developments which the Union is likely to face and to analyse how these might be addressed. The topics covered will include, inter alia, strengthening and modernizing the European model of economic success and social responsibility, enhancing the

competitiveness of the European Union, the rule of law, sustainable development, global stability, migration, energy and climate protection, fight against global insecurity, international crime and terrorism. The Group will be chaired by the former Spanish Prime Minister Mr Felipe González Márquez, assisted by two vice-chairs: the former Latvian President Mrs Vaira Vīķe-Freiberga and the former CEO of Nokia Mr Jorma Ollila from Finland. The chair and the vice-chairs were invited to submit a list of names of possible members to be considered during the French Presidency. The Group of up to nine members will present its report to the European Council meeting of June 2010.

Enlargement

European Council endorsed the December General Affairs and External Relations Council conclusions on enlargement. The conclusions state that “the renewed consensus on enlargement, which is based on consolidation of commitments, fair and rigorous conditionality and better communication, together with the capacity to integrate new members, continues to form the basis of EU’s enlargement strategy.”

Council Conclusions on enlargement:

http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms_Data/docs/pressdata/en/gena/97519.pdf

Annual Enlargement Strategy 2007:

http://ec.europa.eu/enlargement/key_documents/reports_nov_2007_en.htm

Priorities for the year 2008

Priorities set for the Slovenian EU Presidency

The priorities of the Slovenian EU Presidency include the implementation of the Treaty of Lisbon, growth & jobs and energy & climate policies, Western Balkans and intercultural dialogue.

Slovenia will show the way for the ratification process of the Lisbon Treaty by ratifying the Treaty in an early stage. Slovenia also begins the preparations for its implementation. There are many elements which are only shortly described in the text but require detailed planning to be achieved.

No radical policy changes are planned for the Lisbon Strategy. As a part of the Strategy, Slovenia promises to maintain the focus on social and demographic issues.

January should see the publication of a major energy and climate package containing legislative proposals to fulfil the EU’s target of a 20 % reduction in greenhouse gas emissions by 2020 (or 30% provided that there is an international agreement). The

Slovenian EU Presidency, in cooperation with the future French and Czech presidencies, seeks to find an agreement on the package at first reading in early 2009 at the latest.

Slovenia sees the future of the Balkans within the EU. To promote this vision, the next EU Presidency will hold substantive discussions with Western Balkan countries. Slovenia considers EU unity concerning Kosovo essential for a sustainable solution.

Slovenia regards intercultural dialogue as important beyond the mere fact that the year 2008 has been declared European Year of Intercultural Dialogue. During its EU Presidency Slovenia intends to strengthen the cultural relations between the EU and third countries, to improve EU citizens' competences to practice intercultural dialogue and to increase possibilities for cultural tourism. CSC will take part in the inauguration of the European Year of Intercultural Dialogue in Ljubljana on 7-8 January.

More information soon available on the official website of the Slovenian Presidency:
<http://www.eu2008.si>

Initial plans for the French, Czech and Swedish EU Presidencies

France will prepare a joint EU Presidency programme for July 2008-December 2009 in cooperation with the Czech Republic and Sweden. According to preliminary information, those countries have agreed to put the entry into force of the Treaty of Lisbon in 2009, the launch of the debate on the EU budget reform and EU policies for post-2013 at the heart of their joint programme. Security, energy, climate change and immigration will also feature prominently in the programme expected to be presented in June 2008.

The French President Nicolas Sarkozy has earlier stated that energy, environment and immigration will be the main issues for the French EU Presidency. According to the French Secretary of State for European Affairs Jean-Pierre Jouyet, French priorities include highlighting the importance of the Lisbon Agenda with a focus on growth, competition and employment; developing closer relationships with Russia, the Balkan countries and Africa, as well as the Mediterranean countries; working on "the Europe of the future" and fostering the protection of citizens.

Commission priority initiatives 2008

In addition to its work programme for 2008, which was presented in CSC Update N°9, the Commission has issued documents setting its priority and strategic initiatives for the year 2008. http://ec.europa.eu/atwork/programmes/index_en.htm

The EU budget for 2008 sees an important increase of funding for common foreign and security policy, "management of migration flows" and environmental affairs. More information at: http://ec.europa.eu/budget/budget_detail/next_year_en.htm.

Ageing

CSC issues a Position Paper on Ageing and Care for the Elderly

In the context of the 2007 European Year for Equal Opportunity for All, which aims to make people in the European Union more aware of their rights to equal treatment and to a life free of discrimination, the Church and Society Commission has adopted a Position Paper on Ageing and Care for the Elderly, prepared by its Working Group on Bioethics and Biotechnology. The topic is also high on the agenda of the Council of Europe, linked to ethical, social and health considerations, or to demographic, economic and employment issues.

The proportion of people over 65 years old in Europe is growing steadily. A generation ago, it was less than 3%. By 2050 it could be 20%, with only half of the population of working age. Such changes bring new perspectives on humanistic questions such as "How should we view old age? What is the status of the elderly in our societies? How do we care for their needs?"

The position paper touches upon a range of aspects but focuses on an ethical perspective grounded in biblical reflections and Christian traditions. It aims both at contributing to current in-depth discussions and policy making, and offering CEC member churches, associated organisations and the wider public views for their own reflection and action in the field.

In its conclusion, the position paper states *"we have emphasised human dignity, based on the belief that all human beings are created in the image of God. We are therefore critical of contemporary trends to value people primarily for their youth, attractiveness, health, economic productivity and independence. These trends lead to the concerns expressed by the term "ageism".*

"We think that all people and also our societal institutions should work to oppose these trends, and to be active in asserting that every phase of life has its own value. There is a strong need to rediscover the interdependence between generations and to reinforce their links in many ways. Elderly people need the younger as the young need the elderly. Above all, we wish to underline the strength and wisdom given to elderly by their faith, as an encouragement to younger people to face the challenges of life, until the end when the time comes to learn to give up in gratefulness, peace and hope".

Read the full document at: <http://www.cec-kek.org/pdf/AgeingandCareElderly.pdf>

Employment and Social Affairs

How can the value of pastoral care be compensated?

On 20 November 2007, the European Commission adopted a package of initiatives on the future of the single market for the 21st century, including Communications on single market policy instruments, on the future of the social agenda and on services of general interest, including social services of general interest. The Communications intend to give an overview on the future development of the single market. For churches and diaconal organisations, the perception of the service sector in this context is of key interest: The Communication on the single market analyses that services are nowadays the dominant economic force in Europe, accounting for 70% of GDP, 68% of employment and 96% of the new jobs created in the EU. The Commission sees a need to tap further potential of this sector by reducing cross-border barriers and promoting competition.

Along with these Communications, the European Commission published a number of "Commission staff working documents". These documents, which are not binding on the European Commission nor on national public authorities, give technical guidance for the application of EU regulations. The documents on "state aid" and on "public procurement rules" are particularly interesting for churches and diaconal organisations, as they bring answers to frequently asked questions such as "is familiarity with the local context allowed to be introduced as a criterion for the selection of a service provider?" or "is it allowed to limit the selection to non-profit providers?" or "how can the value of pastoral care be compensated?"

CSC is working on a briefing paper on the package of Communications, which will be sent around with the next CSC update.

For further information on the topic please see:

http://ec.europa.eu/citizens_agenda/index_en.htm

http://ec.europa.eu/internal_market/strategy/index_en.htm

http://ec.europa.eu/services_general_interest/index_en.htm

Rural issues

CSC prepares a Report on Agriculture and Rural Communities in Europe

CSC is, in conjunction with the Dutch-based ecumenical organisation Stichting Oikos, drafting a major report on Agriculture and Rural Communities in Europe. This is a topic which requires close scrutiny, particularly given the importance of the European Union's Common Agricultural Policy and the effects of any potential changes to the EU's post-2013 budget. Agriculture is a crucial question for all EU Member States, but especially for several of those countries which joined the EU in 2004 as they have a comparatively

high percentage of their workforce employed in agriculture. Numerous issues will be considered in the CSC paper, including globalisation, biofuels, food security and the pastoral care of rural dwellers. The report will be completed during 2008 and circulated to CEC member churches, with additional follow-up and meetings.

Climate Change

Bali Conference adopted a roadmap for post-Kyoto negotiations

The UN Bali Climate Change Conference, which ended on 14 December, agreed on the launching of the formal negotiations on a new post-2012 climate regime. Emotional conclusion of the meeting and the last minute agreement of the US delegation enabled to begin “a comprehensive process to enable the full, effective and sustained implementation of the Convention [United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change] through long-term cooperative action, now, up to and beyond 2012,” in order to adopt a binding decision on follow up of its Kyoto Protocol before end of 2009. The conference established an Ad Hoc Working Group on Long-Term Cooperative Action to conduct the process.

The Bali Roadmap, later renamed as the Bali Action Plan, contains the key building blocks of a future agreement. These are: enhanced mitigation of climate change by limiting or reducing emissions, adaptation to climate change, action on technology development and transfer, and scaling up of finance and investment to support mitigation and adaptation. The roadmap makes a reference to the findings of the recent scientific assessment by the UN Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) and recognises the target of 25-40% cut in greenhouse gas emissions by 2020.

The representatives of churches and Christian agencies from Europe, Russia, the United States, Latin America and Asia on the 25-strong World Council of Churches (WCC) delegation, together with a few other religious organizations, brought a faith perspective to discussions in Bali. Follow up of the meeting and in particular ethical dimension of the climate change will be discussed at the ECEN (European Christian Environmental Network) Assembly in Italy in September 2008.

Official website of the Bali Conference including the Bali Action Plan:
http://unfccc.int/meetings/cop_13/items/4049.php

Information on the WCC delegation and its statement to the plenary:
<http://www.oikoumene.org/en/news/news-management/eng/a/article/1722/churches-want-to-see-a-ne.html>

Church leaders address political leaders on the eve of the Bali Conference

In a joint letter, sent on the eve of the Bali conference, the Archbishop of Canterbury, the Archbishop of the Church of Sweden and the Chairman of the Council of the EKD (Evangelische Kirche in Deutschland) urged governments and the European Commission to strengthen their efforts in addressing the challenge of climate change. Church leaders warned governments that “substantially reducing global emissions of greenhouse gasses will not avoid the serious impacts of climate change already experienced by many of the world’s most vulnerable communities”. They also reminded political leaders that climate change is not just about addressing environmental degradation; it is also about fighting poverty and providing for human security. It is a question of international justice.

Read the letter at: <http://www.archbishopofcanterbury.org/releases/071130.htm>

Intercultural Dialogue

The official website of the European Year of Intercultural Dialogue is now finalised. It includes information for example on related events and funding opportunities.

<http://www.interculturaldialogue2008.eu/>

Upcoming events

Future CSC consultations

In the course of 2008, CSC will organise a series of consultations on different themes linked to its work programme, which was approved at its Plenary Meeting in Armenia last June. The consultation on church and employment will take place on 27-29 February (see the preannouncement at the beginning of this CSC Update) and a meeting with churches from the countries holding the upcoming EU Presidencies in late May. The consultations on socially responsible investment and on globalisation are also foreseen during the first half of 2008. A consultation focusing on religion in the public sphere has been scheduled for October 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 Italy in September 2008. A brainstorming meeting on bioethics is also planned for the year 2008.



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The Church and Society Commission (CSC) is one of the commissions of the Conference of European Churches (CEC). The CSC links CEC's 125 member churches from all over Europe and its associated organisations with the European Union's institutions, the Council of Europe, the OSCE, NATO and the UN (on European matters). It engages its member churches and associate organizations in studies and projects relevant to church and society and thus supports and strengthens the common witness of European churches vis-à-vis the European Institutions and in the respective European societies.

This publication informs CEC members on European developments and related CSC activities. Members are welcome to use this publication as a channel to inform on their respective work. For comments or further information on the issues as well as to subscribe or unsubscribe, please contact csc@cec-kek.be. CSC Updates on European Affairs are also available on the CEC website at: <http://www.cec-kek.org/content/EuropeUpdates.shtml>