



Conference of European Churches
Conférence des Églises Européennes
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CSC Update on European Affairs

TOPICS COVERED:

CSC Conference on Social Affairs; religious leaders meet the EU leaders; European elections 2009; EU Fundamental Rights Agency; human rights of military staff; Treaty of Lisbon; world free of nuclear weapons; education; Sunday protection; refugee settlement; upcoming events.

Social and Economic Affairs

Economic crisis not solved by “business as usual” – CSC Conference calls for a fundamental change

On 28-30 April 2009 representatives of European churches met in Brussels and Mechelen at a conference on “Shaping European economic and social policies in times of uncertainty”. The event, organised by the Church and Society Commission of the Conference of European Churches (CSC/CEC) provided a platform for dialogue with Members of the European Parliament, representatives of the Czech EU Presidency and the European Commission.

The meeting resulted in an Open letter which calls upon decision-makers to come to significant changes in the economic and social policies of the European Union and its Member States. “The crisis calls into question a number of assumptions which have underpinned the EU’s economic policies over the last decades, such as deregulation, the primacy of economic criteria in all areas of life as well as an overemphasis on profit and growth”, the letter reads. According to the conference, “the measures taken by the EU and its Member States so far may not solve the problem, but may simply deal with its symptoms.” “To stimulate consumption would only increase already existing imbalances, plundering natural resources, causing irreversible changes of the earth’s climate and destroying natural biodiversity. Producing extensive public debts is unsustainable, unethical and unacceptable and will only postpone the crisis, but not contribute to its solution.” The churches invite the European Union to carry out a social and ecological assessment of all measures taken in order to ensure their sustainability.

Read the full letter at:

http://assembly.ceceurope.org/uploads/media/Open_letter_to_the_Presidents_of_the_EU_insti.pdf

Read more about the debate at the conference:

<http://www.cec-kek.org/content/pr-cq0921e.shtml>

Religious leaders meet the EU leaders

Religious leaders met with Presidents Barroso and Pöttering to discuss ethical aspects of global economic governance.

The annual meeting of religious leaders with the Presidents of the EU institutions provided an opportunity for the Conference of European Churches (CEC) to convey the message of the Social Conference (see above). "The present crisis calls for a substantial change", said Rev. Jean-Arnold de Clermont, President of CEC, at the Brussels meeting of 11 May 2009. "People have lost confidence in a system which is mainly based on individual profit. The present crisis is an ethical crisis in which churches and religious communities need to highlight values such as human dignity, freedom with responsibility, solidarity and sustainability."

The view was broadly echoed by the other religious leaders as well as by the representatives of the European Institutions. The meeting, entitled "Economic and financial crisis: ethical contribution for European and global economic governance", was hosted by the President of the European Commission, José Manuel Barroso and Hans-Gert Pöttering, President of the European Parliament. Also present were the EU Commissioner for Economic and Monetary Affairs, Joaquín Almunia, and Ján Figel, EU Commissioner for Education and Culture.

Bishop Nifon from the Romanian Orthodox Church pleaded that "any response to the present crisis should go beyond individualism and nationalism." He reminded the participants about the spiritual dimension: "My daily bread is a material concern; the daily bread of my neighbour is a spiritual concern."

Bishop Wolfgang Huber from the Evangelical Church in Germany stressed that "any action in response to the crisis needs to be measured with the yardstick of solidarity; but not only by solidarity among the present population of the world, but also by solidarity with future generations. This might not always lead to popular political decisions."

Professor Rev. Jaana Hallamaa from the Evangelical-Lutheran Church of Finland said the trust, now missing and needed, is not a material good which can be produced industrially but a spiritual good. "It is the prerequisite of human interaction without which the market cannot function either", she added.

Besides the speakers quoted above, CEC constituency was represented by the following participants: Bishop Stephen Lowe (Church of England), Rev. Dr. Pavel Černý (Chairman of the Czech Ecumenical Council), Metropolitan Emmanuel of France (Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople), Bishop Hilarion of Vienna and Austria (Russian Orthodox Church) and Metropolitan Athanasios of Achaia (Church of Greece).

CEC Press Release: <http://www.cec-kek.org/content/pr-cq0925e.shtml>

Press Release of the European Commission:

<http://europa.eu/rapid/pressReleasesAction.do?reference=IP/09/730&format=HTML&aged=0&language=EN&guiLanguage=en>

Talking points of President Barroso:

http://ec.europa.eu/commission_barroso/president/pdf/statement_20090511_en.pdf

Speech of the President Pöttering:

<http://www.europarl.europa.eu/president/defaulten.htm?speeches>

European Elections 2009

Go and vote!

If you are still wondering why you should vote, here are just a few reasons:

Climate change and the financial and economic crisis are examples of major challenges facing Europeans which cannot be adequately addressed at national level. Issues impacting your life are (also) decided at the European level.

The European Parliament has power and you have the right to choose who takes the decisions. Already now the Parliament has an equal say with the EU Member States (Council) in many areas including environment, internal market, employment, health and consumer protection. The Treaty of Lisbon would considerably strengthen the powers of the Parliament, making co-decision the ordinary legislative procedure. In other words, with some exceptions, decisions would require the approval of both the Council and the Parliament.

A hard-working, well-informed and well-connected Member of the European Parliament (MEP) can have major impact on EU policies. According to the current rules, 736 MEPs are elected. Provided the Treaty of Lisbon enters into force, that number will increase to 754.

For more reasons to vote, read the European Elections' leaflet prepared by CSC, Aprodev, Churches' Commission for Migrants in Europe and Eurodiaconia (www.ecumenicalvoices2009.eu). The leaflet also sets questions against which to evaluate the candidates.

To have an indication of the political parties matching your political views in your own country and in any other EU country, try a service offered at: <http://www.euprofiler.eu/> Note that instead of national party groups, MEPs sit in pan-European political groups. The party groups during the last five-year period were, in order of size, the European People's Party - European Democrats (EPP-ED), the Party of European Socialists (PES), Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe (ALDE), Union for the Europe of the Nations (UEN), European Greens - European Free Alliance (Greens-EFA), European United Left - Nordic Green Left (GUE-NGL), Independence / Democracy (I/D) and Non-attached Members (NI).

The website of the European Parliament provides information about the functioning of the parliament, about political parties and the election procedures: <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/elections2009/default.htm?language=EN>

Church action

At CSC, we are gathering information on church action related to the elections. To find out who did what, visit the campaign website www.ecumenicalvoices2009.eu. If your own event or action is not listed there, please contact Ms Elina Eloranta (elo@cec-kek.be).

Human Rights

CSC elected on the Advisory Panel of the EU Human Rights Agency

The second annual meeting of the Fundamental Rights Platform of the EU Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA) took place in Vienna on 5-6 May. This gathering, which links FRA with civil society, established an independent Advisory Panel in order to facilitate exchange on a more frequent basis between the Platform and the director of the FRA. One of the nine members elected amongst the 22 candidates, is Ms Elizabeta Kitanovic, Human Rights Secretary of CSC.

The themes of the annual meeting were the impact of the economic crisis on human rights and the under-reporting by victims of human rights violations. In addition, the meeting discussed the FRA Work Programme for 2010 and 2011. The meeting recalled the obligation of the states to realize human rights, to provide access to justice and effective remedies in cases of human rights violations. It was highlighted that the most vulnerable groups such as undocumented migrants, children and minorities need encouragement to report about the violations they face. Human rights education, and to begin with, access to such education was seen as crucial in order to stimulate reporting. The meeting also stressed the need to provide human rights training for the media and police officers. For its part, CSC seeks to raise awareness in human rights matters among the CEC constituency with its new human rights manual, of which the first part will soon be available for distribution.

With regard to the future work, the meeting suggested that the human rights impact of the current economic crisis would be reviewed in 2011. Production of a study on discrimination on grounds of religion or belief was also recommended as a priority for that year.

FRA Work Programme 2009: http://fra.europa.eu/fraWebsite/attachments/wp09_en.pdf

CSC Contribution to the FRA Work Programme 2010:
<http://www.cec-kek.org/pdf/CSCHRWorkprogramme2010.pdf>

CSC advocates for the human rights of members of the armed forces

CSC is actively involved in several working groups of the Council of Europe (CoE). One of them is the Working Group on Human Rights of Members of the Armed Forces, which

currently works on a draft recommendation on human rights and fundamental freedoms of the members of the armed forces in the context of their work and service life.

During the still on-going process, CSC has advocated for improved human rights education of military staff and for issues related to, *inter alia*, the freedom of religion (Art 9 of European Convention of Human Rights), the freedom of expression (Art 10) and association (Art 11). With regard to lawful restrictions in human rights of the military staff, CSC pleads for a distinction to be made between those pursuing a military career of their own will and those performing general national military service. CSC recommends that a person performing ordinary military service should not be deprived from the freedom to exit the barracks outside their hours of duty for periods longer than a month. This proposed principle also relates to the possibility to attend religious worship in one's own church. CSC recommends that the freedom of expression of those performing general national service should not be restricted outside duty hours. CSC recommends that the freedom of association of those performing ordinary national service should not be restricted outside duty hours when this right is exercised in civilian dress. This also applies to taking part in demonstrations, provided they are not directed against the armed forces.

Read CSC position paper on human rights in armed forces at:

http://www.cec-kek.org/pdf/CSCDH_DEVGroup.pdf.

The CoE working group will continue the discussion on the draft recommendation and its explanatory memorandum in the autumn 2009. The finalised draft will be submitted to the CoE Committee of Experts for the Development of Human Rights which, after a debate, will transfer it to the Steering Committee on Human Rights, and the Committee of Ministers for decision-making. The recommendations of the Council of Europe are not binding on member states. They only carry moral authority.

Read more on the preparations of the recommendation at:

[http://www.coe.int/t/e/human_rights/cddh/3_committees/07.%20other%20committees%20and%20working%20groups/03.%20Armed%20Forces%20\(DH-DEV-FA\)/Default_en.asp#TopOfPage](http://www.coe.int/t/e/human_rights/cddh/3_committees/07.%20other%20committees%20and%20working%20groups/03.%20Armed%20Forces%20(DH-DEV-FA)/Default_en.asp#TopOfPage)

The Treaty of Lisbon

Waiting to see what the autumn brings

After the approval of the Lisbon Treaty by the Czech Senate on 6 May 2009, the fate of the Treaty now lies in the hands of three Presidents and of the Irish population. In the Czech Republic, the President maintains his veto on the Treaty but says he will sign the Treaty if it is approved in Ireland. In addition to the President Václav Klaus, the Treaty is – again – likely to be challenged in the Constitutional Court with regard to its compatibility with the national constitution. New cases were taken to court by those opposing the Treaty. In Germany, the Treaty is being examined in the Constitutional Court and the President will abstain from signing the document until the Court makes a final ruling on the case. The Polish President is waiting to see what happens elsewhere before giving his final approval.

The popularity of the Treaty is steadily growing in Ireland. The recent polls show 52 to 54% support for the Treaty. Ireland is expected to hold a referendum either in the last week of

September or in the first week of October. At its next meeting in June, the European Council will define and approve the assurances given to Ireland aiming at convincing the population to embrace the Treaty.

The European Parliament has on many occasions expressed its strong support for the Treaty. The plenary session in early May discussed and voted on five reports related to the institutional implementation of the Treaty.

Resolution of 7 May on the impact of the Treaty on the institutional balance of the Union:
<http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?pubRef=-//EP//TEXT+TA+P6-TA-2009-0387+0+DOC+XML+V0//EN&language=EN>

Resolution of 7 May on the relations between the EP and national parliaments:
<http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?pubRef=-//EP//TEXT+TA+P6-TA-2009-0388+0+DOC+XML+V0//EN&language=EN>

Resolution of 7 May on the implementation of the citizens' initiative:
<http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?pubRef=-//EP//TEXT+TA+P6-TA-2009-0389+0+DOC+XML+V0//EN&language=EN>

Resolution of 7 May on EP's new role in the implementation of the Treaty:
<http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?pubRef=-//EP//TEXT+TA+P6-TA-2009-0373+0+DOC+XML+V0//EN&language=EN>

Resolution of 7 May on the financial aspects of the Treaty:
<http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?pubRef=-//EP//TEXT+TA+P6-TA-2009-0374+0+DOC+XML+V0//EN&language=EN>

Peace & Security

Towards a world free of nuclear weapons?

After many quiet years, the discussion about a world free of nuclear weapons has gained new impetus. The starting point was the article by four high-level US security veterans (George Shultz, William Perry, Henry Kissinger and Sam Nunn) published in the Wall Street Journal of 4 January 2007, which instead of 'minimum deterrence' called for 'zero' nuclear weapons as the only solution for today's threats to international security. This 'gang of four' argued the Cold War system of nuclear deterrence cannot be replicated in a world with ever more states acquiring nuclear weapons and the danger of terrorist acquisition of such weapons.

Since Barrack Obama took over the leadership of the United States with a commitment to pursue this objective, the aspiration for a world free of nuclear weapons has become a serious option. On 1 April 2009 in London, Obama and his Russian colleague, Medvedev, gave a joint statement affirming they shared the goal. Five days later, in a speech in Prague, Obama outlined the steps to be taken.

Although 'gangs of four' by elder statesmen have also formed in Europe, the response within NATO and in the EU has been meagre. This is really unfortunate since both Russia and the

United States are now at a crossroads with their nuclear policy. They have not carried out nuclear tests since 1992 and they have not modernised their nuclear arsenal for over 20 years.

Laurens Hogebrink, a former member of the Church and Society Commission, has closely followed these developments. He believes that this year and in 2010 the debate will not revolve around the 'radicals' (zero) on the one hand and the 'conservatives' (indefinite reliance on nuclear weapons) on the other, but rather between the 'radicals' and the 'moderates' (drastic reductions while keeping a credible minimum deterrence without ruling out the complete abolishment in a distant future). Major issues at stake are the modernisation of the existing stockpiles, the ratification by the US Senate of the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty, and the withdrawal of tactical nuclear weapons in Europe.

The political agenda in 2009 and 2010 will be affected by the expiration in December 2009 of the current START Treaty, the Non-Proliferation Treaty review conference in the spring 2010 (the EU will need to adopt a new Common Position) and the 2010 NATO Summit in Lisbon which will adopt the new Strategic Concept for the organisation.

Hogebrink's update on recent statements and developments will soon be available at:
http://www.ikvpaxchristi.nl/UK/below_thematic_security_and_disarmament_no_nukes_home.htm

The original article by Kissinger: <http://online.wsj.com/article/SB116787515251566636.html>

The Obama-Medvedev statement of 1 April:
http://www.whitehouse.gov/the_press_office/Joint-Statement-by-Dmitriy-A-Medvedev-and-Barack-Obama/

The Speech of President Obama of 5 April:
http://www.whitehouse.gov/the_press_office/Remarks-By-President-Barack-Obama-In-Prague-As-Delivered/

The issue of a world free of nuclear weapons will be discussed in a hearing at the CEC 13th Assembly in Lyon. For more information on the hearings see Upcoming events.

Education

EU Education Ministers set goals for co-operation until 2020

The education council of 12 May 2009 adopted a new strategic framework for European co-operation in education and training until 2020. The new framework builds on four goals: lifelong learning and mobility; quality and efficiency; equal access and active citizenship; and creativity, innovations and entrepreneurship.

Read the new strategy paper at:
http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms_data/docs/pressdata/en/educ/107622.pdf

Religious dimension of intercultural education

In December 2008, the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe (CoE) adopted a recommendation CM Rec(2008)12 on the dimension of religions and of non-religious convictions within intercultural education. The document underlines the “fundamental importance of taking into account the religious dimension of intercultural education in order to promote mutual understanding, tolerance and as culture of ‘living together’”. Besides recommendations of action for the 47 Member States of CoE, the document and its appendix contain a good overview on CoE work in this field.

Read the document at:

<https://wcd.coe.int/ViewDoc.jsp?id=1386911&Site=COE&BackColorInternet=DBDCF2&BackColorIntranet=FDC864&BackColorLogged=FDC864>

Sunday Protection

No agreement reached on the Working Time Directive

The five-year-long negotiations for a revised Working Time Directive failed at the end of April. The European Parliament and the Council did not manage to find a compromise on three crucial points: on-call time, multiple contracts and the opt-out, which means an exception from the maximum working time limit. This was the first time in 10 years that no agreement could be reached at the conciliation procedure. Conciliation is the final phase of the co-decision procedure (decision-making by the European Parliament and the Council). It applies if the Council does not approve all the amendments proposed by the European Parliament at its second round of talks. Since there is no agreement, the current directive remains in force. The European Commission may decide later whether it wishes to table a new proposal.

For more information on the process and on church involvement in the matter (Sunday protection) see the previous Europe Updates N° 24, 21 and 20.

Migration

Refugee Resettlement to Europe: CCME promotes additional form of refugee protection

The Churches' Commission for Migrants in Europe (CCME) is intensifying its efforts to promote refugee resettlement as an additional tool of refugee protection in the EU. Refugee resettlement is the process by which refugees, who have to flee their home country and find initial, but insufficient or temporary protection in another country, are resettled into a third country and find permanent protection and a durable, sustainable protection there.

While around 100.000 refugees are annually resettled to the US, Canada and Australia, resettlement is scarcely used in Europe. However, there is an increasing dynamic towards more refugee resettlement. While currently only eight EU Member States carry out resettlement on a permanent basis, resettling around 4000 refugees annually, many EU

countries have recently engaged in ad hoc resettlement, for instance, of Iraqi refugees. The European Commission is expected to present a proposal for an EU resettlement scheme in July.

Against this background, CCME is carrying out the “ASPIRE” project (Assessing and Strengthening Participation In refugee Resettlement to Europe), which is co-financed by the European Refugee Fund - Centralised Actions 2007. The project includes a series of public debates in EU Member States with an interest to engage in resettlement.

A debate in Bucharest on 30 April discussed the preparation of the government and civil society with a view of receiving the first 40 refugees for resettlement in Romania later this year. An expert debate in Riga on 11-12 May identified the next steps towards a possible involvement of any of the three Baltic States in resettlement. A round table in Brussels on 18 May looked at the role of local actors in receiving the 50 Iraqi refugees in Belgium in August this year.

Further debates in France, Germany, Hungary and Portugal will take place over the next months in the context of the project. On 25-28 August, a European conference in Stockholm-Sigtuna will discuss perspectives of the EU resettlement scheme. European Commission Vice-President Jacques Barrot and Swedish Immigration Minister Tobias Billström are expected at the conference and will discuss how the EU resettlement scheme can be part of the EU’s future programme on Justice and Home affairs for 2010-2015. This “Stockholm programme” is to be adopted under the Swedish EU presidency (July-December 2009).

For more information visit: <http://www.ccme.be/secretary/NEWS/index.html>

Upcoming CSC events

Dialogue Seminar on Climate Change

« *I believe this is a moral issue.* » Al Gore, *An Inconvenient Truth* 2006.

CSC - together with the Commission of the Bishops’ Conferences of the European Community (COMECE) and the European Commission - is organising a Dialogue Seminar on climate change on 17 June 2009 in Brussels. The seminar entitled “Towards an Ethical Debate - Climate Change as a Challenge for Lifestyles, Solidarity and Global Justice” will consist of four sessions. The first one assesses the validity and importance of ethical arguments in the fight against climate change. The second session tackles the issue of lifestyle changes and the role of education in the fight against climate change. The third one examines climate change mitigation and adaptation as a question of global solidarity and justice, and the last one challenges EU climate change policy as a whole: Is the EU’s negotiating position for the UN Climate Change Conference in Copenhagen ambitious enough? For further information, please contact Rev. Dr. Peter Pavlovic (ppt@cec-kek.be).

CEC 13th Assembly, Lyon, 15-21 July 2009

The CEC 13th Assembly shall take place in Lyon (France) on 15-21 July. The Initial Policy Reference Committee has invited CSC to organise the following workshops:

- Dialogue with the European Institutions
- A Social Justice in Europe
- Human Rights and Religious Freedom
- Globalisation

The workshops are held on Saturday 18 July. Besides CSC workshops, the programme of the Assembly also includes other workshops. In addition to workshops, a number of early afternoon hearings will take place on 16-18 July. The hearings are organised by CSC, a CEC member church or an associated organisation. The following hearings are related to themes addressed by CSC:

- Arms Trade – Fair Trade?
- Minimum Standards of Human Rights for Churches and Communities of Faith and Conviction
- Human Enhancement and New Technologies
- Globalisation and Financial Crises – Europe in relation to other continents
- Gender Stereotypes in Church and Society
- The Churches and their relations to the European Institutions
- Globalisation and Financial Crises – A Challenge for the Churches?
- Churches and Climate Change
- A World Free of Nuclear Weapons
- Globalisation and Financial Crises – Socially Responsible Investments

For more information on the CEC Assembly visit: <http://assembly.ceceurope.org/>

Other events

The CSC Europe Secretaries meeting is scheduled to take place in Brussels on 17-19 November 2009.

Interesting reading

Read about the Danish news

The Council on International Relations of the Evangelical-Lutheran Church of Denmark publishes a bi-monthly newsletter in English. If you are interested in following the Church News, write to interchurch@interchurch.dk.



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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 associated organisations 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>

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