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TOPICS COVERED:

Climate change; Ireland and the Lisbon Treaty; Election of the new President of the European Commission; economic and financial crises; Swedish EU Presidency; Czech EU Presidency; European Elections; European integration and EU enlargement; education; post-Lisbon Strategy; globalisation; prayer breakfast; resettlement.

Climate Change

Climate change: Challenge for lifestyles, solidarity and global justice

Six months ahead of the UN Climate Change Conference in Copenhagen, churches and church organisations discussed the ethical dimension of the fight against climate change with EU representatives. The Dialogue Seminar of 17 June looked at climate change “as a challenge for lifestyles, solidarity and global justice”. The event was organised by the Church and Society Commission of the Conference of European Churches (CSC/CEC), the Commission of the Bishops’ Conferences in the European Communities (COMECE), and the Bureau of European Policy Advisers of the European Commission (BEPA).

The Vice-Chair of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, Prof. Jean-Pascal van Ypersele opened the day presenting the latest scientific evidence on climate change. It proves that the EU’s emissions’ reduction target of a maximum of 30% by 2020 compared to 1990 levels is not sufficient to ensure keeping global warming below 2°C. Prof. Helga Kromp-Kolb, meteorologist and winner of several scientific awards emphasised: “30% is not enough, 2°C is already too high and 2020 is too late”.

Both EU and church representatives agreed on the urgency of the situation. Climate change has become a question of survival, especially for the poor and vulnerable who will be the first to suffer. Karl Falkenberg, Director General for DG Environment at the European Commission stated, “We, the European Union, have not only to assume our responsibility but also to be the leader for the rest of the world. The outcome of Copenhagen will be positive only if we manage to convince other large emitters like China, India or Russia to join our commitment to significantly reduce greenhouse gas emissions”.

Rev. Henrik Grape from the Church of Sweden proposed to symbolically add three empty chairs at all climate negotiations - representing the poor, future generations and creation itself. Participants stressed that it was a special responsibility of the churches to speak in favour of those three non-participants.

Bernd Nilles, Secretary General of CIDSE and Marlene Grundström from APRODEV reminded on behalf of the Christian development aid organisations that the fight against climate change was strongly linked to development policy and warned against the lack of solidarity towards developing countries in the final stage of the Copenhagen negotiations. "In Copenhagen, we need answers, not deals" Nilles said.

On the basis of numerous expert and reflection papers issued by churches and church organisations over recent years, participants stressed that the necessary lifestyle changes could be best conveyed by education at all levels and by encouraging more responsible consumer habits. In this respect, Klaus Kögler, Head of Unit for Sustainable Production and Consumption in DG Environment, and Prof. Andreas Lienkamp emphasised the need for an "infrastructure" favouring eco-responsible choices and behaviour.

Concluding the seminar, the representatives of churches shared in a willingness to address a message of Hope to all EU citizens and encourage them to implement the necessary lifestyle changes. Representatives of the Commission and of the European Parliament regarded the support of churches in the fight against climate change valuable in convincing citizens to adopt climate-friendly behaviour in their daily lives.

Read the full Press Release at:

<http://www.cec-kek.org/content/pr-cq0934e.shtml>

European Council

The EU Heads of States and Governments held their regular summit on 18-19 June in Brussels. The main topics of this meeting were the financial and economic crises, the guarantees to Ireland concerning the Lisbon Treaty, the election of the new head of the European Commission and climate change.

Ireland and the Treaty of Lisbon

As expected, the Summit agreed on legal guarantees designed to respond to concerns raised by Ireland, with a view of paving the way for the second referendum and for the eventual entry into force of the Treaty this year. Irish people are expected pronounce their view on the matter on 2 October.

The Summit affirmed that the Treaty of Lisbon would not affect the Irish law on the protection of the right to life, the protection of the family and the rights in the field of education. The Summit affirmed that the Lisbon Treaty did not change the EU's competences in relation to taxation. In addition, at the request of Ireland, the Summit confirmed "the high importance the Union attaches to" social progress. Without any further elaboration, the annex to the Council Conclusions quoted the social elements of the Treaty: values, objectives, the social clause, protocol on services of general interest and promotion of fundamental rights.

Finally, the Summit gave assurance that the new Treaty would not prevent Ireland from maintaining its traditional policy of military neutrality. It affirmed that Member States decided on the nature of aid or assistance to a Member State which was the object of a terrorist attack or an armed aggression. In other words, such aid can but does not need to be of a military nature. It reaffirmed that any decision to move towards a common defence – a possibility available since the Maastricht Treaty of 1992 – would require a unanimous decision. Here, Ireland indicated that it would hold a referendum. Furthermore, the Summit reminded that the Treaty of Lisbon did not provide for the creation of a European army, did not affect the Member States' right to determine their defence and security expenditure and did not oblige them to participate in any military operation. From its side Ireland reiterated its commitment to the principle of peaceful resolution of international disputes and that its involvement in the overseas operations remained subject to the green light by the UN Security Council or the General Assembly.

See the CSC Report on the Treaty of Lisbon at:
<http://www.cec-kek.org/pdf/EuropeUpdate23TreatyofLisbon.pdf>

Re-nomination of President Barroso

The European Council gave its blessing for the re-nomination of José Manuel Barroso as the President of the European Commission. The Member States hope that the European Parliament will approve this proposal at its first plenary session in mid-July but by now (early July) the liberal, socialist and green groups have expressed some reluctance and only the conservative group is fully behind Barroso.

Economic and financial crises

The Summit assessed that the measures taken in line with the European Economic Recovery Plan, agreed in the last December Summit, had been successful and had limited the negative effects of the downturn. However, the Summit noted that future developments remained uncertain. At this stage already, the Summit envisaged a coordinated exit strategy. The same positive evaluation was given to the EU level strategy to stabilise financial markets even if the overall situation was considered challenging. The Summit observed that credit flows continue to be constrained. The Summit took a stand for the improved regulation and supervision of financial institutions, both in Europe and globally. The European Commission was asked to bring forward a proposal on EU-level supervision in early autumn 2009, at the latest. The Commission and the Presidency were invited “to take up the issue of global regulation and supervision systematically in their contacts with international partners, including at the highest level.” The European Council invited the Council and the Commission to ensure that the EU has a well-prepared and coordinated position for the G20 Summit of 24-25 September.

Finally, reference was made to the need to strengthen efforts to support employment. It was reiterated that the informal Employment Summit of early May suggested that efforts to counter the crisis should aim at (1) maintaining employment, creating new jobs and promoting mobility; (2) upgrading skills and matching labour market needs, and (3) increasing access to employment. The European Council stated that it saw “flexicurity” as an important means to modernise and foster the adaptability of labour markets.

Climate change

Unfortunately, climate change was, in the end, lower on the agenda of this European Council. The Swedish EU Presidency now plays a crucial role in ensuring that the EU is ambitious in this matter and that the fight against climate change – especially in the run-up to the crucial Copenhagen Climate Conference – is not overshadowed by the economic and financial crises. The European Council stated that “the European Unions stands ready to play a leading role in this process”. One cannot help but hope that the European Union will quickly get on the move.

Conclusions of the European Council of 18-19 June 2009:

http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms_data/docs/pressdata/en/ec/108622.pdf

EU Presidencies

Sweden takes on a new, more proactive role within the EU...

On 1 July, Sweden took the lead of the European Union. Under the motto “Taking on the challenge”, the Swedes are determined, using Prime Minister Fredrik Reinfeldt’s words “to take on a new, more proactive and positive role within the EU” and to tackle climate change, economy and employment as top priorities. Sweden will also work towards the adoption of a new five-year work programme on justice and home affairs called “the Stockholm Programme” and a EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region. The country seeks to foster the EU enlargement process and the EU’s foreign relations, especially vis-à-vis the United States, South-Africa, Brazil, Ukraine, India, China and Russia. In addition, it will lead the planning of the concrete implementation of the Lisbon Treaty. It will also play a role in building the relations with the new European Parliament and in setting up the new European Commission.

Read the Work Programme of the Swedish EU Presidency at:

http://www.se2009.eu/en/the_presidency/work_programme/work_programme_for_the_swedish_presidency_of_the_eu

... and churches’ join the mission

The churches in Sweden joined their government’s endeavour to make the European Union more relevant for the Swedish population and to take an active and positive role in EU affairs. Acting jointly under the auspices of the Ecumenical Council of Sweden, the churches concentrate on five topics: climate change, migration and human trafficking, EU enlargement and arms trade. The vision of the Swedish churches is a society where human dignity is in focus. What the churches want is to contribute to lasting peace, to work for an inclusive society, to speak for the vulnerable, to promote the justice aspect of the climate issue, to ensure that the rights of refugees and migrants are respected, to eliminate human trafficking - and to show that churches have a place in the public sphere.

The Swedish churches recently produced two booklets. The shorter one (bi-lingual Swedish-English) entitled “Take responsibility in Europe - for diversity, justice and peace” sets out the

churches' vision on their five priority areas. It is more particularly addressed to the decision-makers and the media. The other one, entitled "Take part in Europe" and only available in Swedish, provides an extensive reading on the European Union and on churches' activities and is designed to serve as an educational tool. To order the documents, write to material@skr.org or call +46 8 453 68 00.

The Swedish churches are planning to organize a number of events and activities during the second half of this year. Just to name a few, the events to be held in Sweden include an event on climate change in Åre during the informal Environmental Council meeting on 24-25 July, a conference on refugee protection in Sigtuna in late August (see below the article on migration) and a seminar on arms trade at the Swedish Parliament in Stockholm in mid-September. The churches will also organize some events in Brussels in co-operation with CSC and COMECE. In addition, they will pray for Europe and Sweden and, in the spirit of the Charta Oecumenica, devote the period between 1 September and 4 October to a Prayer for the Preservation of Creation.

More information on the Swedish churches' activities is available, in Swedish, at: <http://www.skr.org/kyrkornaocheu2009>

Whereas the churches' engagement in European affairs appears to have come as a surprise to Prime Minister Reinfeldt, this is not the case for the Swedish Foreign Minister Carl Bildt. Talking to the press in Brussels on 22 June, Minister Bildt said: "Article 17 of the Lisbon Treaty is very important. A similar dialogue is under way in Sweden. This is an additional reason why we are anxiously waiting for the ratification of the Treaty by Ireland. I believe in open debate and in the coexistence of peoples to the avail of our European society."

Czech churches: our involvement in Europe only began now

Whereas the official Czech EU Presidency went through hard times as a result of national political forces working both to promote and to dismantle EU co-operation, the churches' commitment to Europe was strong. In addition to various activities (see Europe Update N° 22), the eleven churches working through the Czech Ecumenical Council, issued a publication entitled "Contribution of Churches to an open civil society". It was sent to all members of the Czech Government and Parliament and also widely shared within the churches. The document received a positive feedback from the Ministers of Environment, Health, Finance and Social Affairs.

Encouraged by this positive first experience in taking part in the public debate on European affairs, the churches are already busy making future plans. Environmental protection, reconciliation, flexicurity and the post-Lisbon Strategy have been thrown out as possible issues in the Czech efforts to bridge the gap between the Brussels-based EU institutions and the European civil society.

A shortened English version of the churches' publication is available at: <http://www.cec-kek.org/pdf/EuropeUpdate22CzechEUPresidency.pdf>

European Elections 2009

Who won?

The new European Parliament was elected on 4-7 June. As was the case five years ago, the Group of the European People's Party (EPP) emerged from the elections as the biggest political group. According to the official information available on 8 July, EPP will have 264 seats. The socialist group was weakened on this round but remained the second largest group with 184 members. It is now called the Group of the Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats in the European Parliament (S&D). The Group of the Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe (ALDE) maintained its third place with 84 deputies. Together with the socialists the other left-wing parties faced a setback. In the end, the Confederal Group of the European United Left - Nordic Green Left (GUE/NGL) got 32 seats. "Eurosceptics" and Green parties were the winners of these elections. The Group of the Greens/European Free Alliance (GREENS/EFA) now amounts to 53 members. After the elections the former "eurosceptic" groups of Independence/Democracy and the Union for a Europe of Nations were replaced by Europe of Freedom and Democracy Group (EFD) with 30 members and European Conservatives and Reformists Group (ECR) with 30 members. 28 deputies remain non-attached. On the whole the total amount of Members of the European Parliament (MEPs) dropped from 785 to 736 as was foreseen by the Treaty of Nice, the founding treaty currently in force.

Consult the results at: <http://www.elections2009-results.eu/>. The European Parliament website is not yet up-to-date.

18 more seats if the Lisbon Treaty enters into force

The European Council (see more above) of 18-19 June agreed that - provided the Treaty of Lisbon entered into force - the number of MEPs would increase from 736 to 751. In that case, Bulgaria, Italy, Latvia, Malta, the Netherlands, Poland, Slovenia and the United Kingdom would get one more seat each, France, Austria and Sweden two, and Spain 4 more seats. The respective Member States can decide whether to fill the places by an ad-hoc election, with reference to the results of the 2009 European elections or by members of the national parliament.

Ecumenical campaign

The campaign of CSC, Aprodev, Churches' Commission for Migrants in Europe (CCME) and Eurodiaconia managed to stimulate debates on climate change, migration, poverty and development. The Church of Greece joined forces with the European Parliament office in Athens, published the election leaflet in Greek and organised a number of events as well as radio and newspaper interviews. Statements were made and debates held in many parts of Germany, Austria, Belgium, the Czech Republic, France, Ireland and Wales. According to the information we have, the interest of church-related press was particularly high in France, Italy and Sweden. With the support of our members the election leaflet has been translated from English into Czech, Greek, French and Italian. The document is also available in German. For more details, take a look at www.ecumenicalvoices2009.eu. If your own event

or action is not listed there, please contact Ms Elina Eloranta (elo@cec-kek.be). We are aware that our current list of 20 entries only covers a fraction of all activities.

Unfortunately, our campaign failed in its objective to encourage people to exert their voting rights. The turnout at the European Elections continued its steady decrease. In comparison to the turnout of 61.99% at the first elections in 1979, the result at the seventh elections reached a miserable 43%.

European Integration and EU Enlargement

CSC issues two documents related to European integration

At the invitation of the CSC Executive Committee, the CSC Working Group on European Integration produced a substantial document which considers, from a theological perspective, the challenges with which the churches are presented in the process of European integration. The booklet entitled "European integration - a way forward?" addresses, *inter alia*, the values and motives behind the integration and EU enlargement process; it explores the experiences of the integration process in Europe and the churches' vision of Europe's future. The booklet will soon be available on the CEC website: <http://www.cec-kek.org/>. For hard copies, contact Rev. Dr. Peter Pavlovic (ppt@cec-kek.be). The document will be widely distributed at the CEC Lyon Assembly.

CSC also prepared a briefing on EU enlargement. This paper outlines the main arguments in the overall debate on enlargement as well as with regard to Turkey's EU membership. This is done both in general terms and from the point of view of CEC. Secondly, it describes where we are in the enlargement process - which are the candidate countries, which are potential candidates and what is at stake in their talks with the European Union. You will find the CSC Briefing on EU enlargement attached to this Europe Update.

Education

CSC holds a brainstorming meeting on education

On 8-9 June 2009 the first meeting of the education brainstorming group was held in Brussels. The event was jointly organised with the Intereuropean Commission on Church and School (ICCS). The group met as a result of the decision by the CSC Plenary meeting in Prague in 2008 that representatives of member churches and educational organisations be called together to reflect "on the precise issues and the CSC mechanisms and methodologies in the field of education." The decision was taken against the backdrop of the increased importance of educational issues within the European Institutions and the churches. The brainstorming group concluded that CSC should:

- draft a statement on the nature and common standards of religious education and its impact on social cohesion.
- work out a briefing paper with a critique on education ("knowledge society", "economisation of education"...) from a Christian perspective.
- define the churches' contribution to peace, tolerance and integrity of creation.

- make visible the churches' contribution to citizenship and social cohesion, share experiences and good practices and intensify the network among churches, including partner organisations.

A task force of four people will continue to plan the work for the next brainstorming meeting to be held on 27-28 June 2010 in Strasbourg.

Council of Europe holds second annual dialogue on religious dimension of intercultural dialogue

On 29-30 June, the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe (CoE) gathered representatives and experts from religious and non-religious communities and organisations for the second annual exchange on the religious dimension of intercultural dialogue. The topic of this year's meeting was "teaching of religious and convictional facts" and its contribution to education for democratic citizenship, human rights and intercultural dialogue. As previously (see Europe Update N° 16) CSC was involved in the preparatory process and brought in a large group of experts from CEC member churches.

The discussion clearly showed that the exchange between an institution like the CoE, which considers itself as impartial and neutral, and religious and non-religious believers is a question of balance. Both sides have to accept the limits of the other. The CoE cannot and should not go beyond its mandate which is to listen to the different communities and take them into consideration as impartially as possible. On the other hand, for religious and non-religious communities religion and teaching of religious facts is much more than an issue of mere "facts". It has a spiritual dimension which cannot and should not be put aside. The exchange makes it possible to approach these sensitive points and to find a middle way for developing common activities while recognising the limits of the participants.

The CoE proposed an agenda of activities which shall be discussed and decided upon by the Committee of Ministers this year. It suggests:

- Developing a tool-kit for teacher training (in cooperation with the Wergeland Centre).
- Organising a campaign on the role of religion in education.
- Setting up a small advisory group amongst the participants of the annual exchange to advise on the work of the CoE Steering Committee for Education.
- Reinforcing the inter-religious dimension of the CoE project "Intercultural Cities", for instance by promoting school pilot projects on teaching religious and convictional facts.

For further information on the Annual Exchange including documentation, please contact Executive Secretary Carla Maurer (carla.maurer@cec-kek.fr).

The Council of Europe publishes a manual on hate speech

The Council of Europe will publish a manual on hate speech this July. It takes on the very difficult task of identifying what constitutes a hate speech.

The book (19€) will be available in English and French and can be ordered at:
http://book.coe.int/EN/ficheouvrage.php?PAGEID=39&lang=EN&theme_catalogue=120181

Social Affairs

Debate on the post-Lisbon Strategy will soon be at full speed

At the Spring Council in 2000, the EU launched its ambitious “Lisbon Strategy” in order to become “the world’s most dynamic knowledge-based economy by 2010”. After five years of very limited results, EU leaders re-launched the strategy with a focus on “growth and jobs”. Now, 5 years later, the Union finds itself in the midst of the economic crisis, and the long-term “Lisbon Strategy” only plays a rhetoric role in short-running crisis intervention plans.

In 2005, CSC together with Eurodiaconia addressed the Spring European Council and asked for “a balanced and mutually supportive interaction between the economic, social and environmental policies of the Lisbon Strategy”. In 2007, the European churches again urged the European Council to take the common social objectives of the EU Member States more seriously into account and to “make a decisive impact on social exclusion and poverty”. In their contribution to the 2010 European Year for combating poverty and social exclusion, CSC and Eurodiaconia suggested “to use the preparatory process of the European Year for Combating Poverty and Social Exclusion as an opportunity to prepare the follow-up of the EU’s policy framework in the fight against poverty and social exclusion.”

The revision of the Lisbon Strategy in the spring 2010 opens an opportunity to significantly revise the EU’s economic framework and its underlining principles. The Swedish EU Presidency will this autumn lead the review process with the intention to make the Strategy more relevant for European citizens. The Swedish Prime Minister Fredrik Reinfeldt recently pointed to the strategy’s “failure” and said that “a review and new start to EU’s Lisbon Strategy is necessary”. A broad public on-line consultation will be launched in the autumn. An agreement on the revised Strategy is expected under the Spanish EU Presidency at the Spring Summit in March 2010.

The European Commission has already indicated that the new text is likely to include a reference to “a greener economy” and the need for investment in “a smarter economy” based on education, knowledge and innovation. According to Gerard De Graaf, the European Commission official in charge, the goals of the process are clear: “The sustainable and the smart is something people now agree on.” However, De Graaf regards the implementation of these objectives as a challenge: “The problem in Europe is not that we do not know where we need to go, but it is that we don’t always manage to implement the measures that will get us there.” According to Brussels rumours, Commission President Barroso intends to bring witness of his social considerations and to propose a “European Social Market Strategy” in his speech at the opening session of the European Parliament.

CSC is involved in the debate. The Social Conference held at the European Parliament in April discussed the post-Lisbon Strategy with the relevant Commission officials. The new CALL Network – Church Action on Labour and Life will continue addressing this issue. CSC will contribute to the European Year for combating poverty and social exclusion, and is already involved in the preparatory process. Moreover, CSC will of course coordinate the

churches' response to the planned Commission consultation. For further information, please, contact Rev. Dr. Dieter Heidtmann (dht@cec-kek.be).

Globalisation

Threats and challenges of globalisation: comparing realities of Europe and Latin America

CEC and the Latin American Council of Churches (CLAI) have embarked on a joint project on globalisation. The planning began already after the Assembly of the World Council of Churches in Porto Alegre in 2006 but was delayed due to internal difficulties of CLAI. At the end of 2008, the new leadership of CLAI expressed full support for the project, which enabled us to jointly organize a first encounter in Buenos Aires on 26-28 May 2009.

That first meeting examined six topics: the relevance of the current economic and financial crises for the churches' approach to globalisation, the values that are at stake in discussing globalisation, the relationship between the state and the economy, the experience and impact of globalisation in Europe and Latin America, regional integration and climate justice.

CLAI colleagues introduced the realities of Latin America in its different aspects such as the colonial heritage, the tradition of indigenous people, the difficult and complex relationship with the US, the debt of the continent and the poverty of the majority of its population. It was explained that the best way to understand Latin America was to analyse the prevailing fundamental paradoxes:

- Paradox of the electoral victory of the left and the power of the right
- Paradox between the debt obligations versus social programs
- Paradox of development and hunger; and
- the Social Paradox: the more the governments support the poor, the less support they receive from middle class, which is disappearing.

At the meeting we heard that the process towards regional integration in Latin America was now on the way and that there were plans to hold the first inter-parliamentary assembly in a few years time. A representative of the Argentinean Government even explained that his country regarded the regional integration as being central to their post-crisis strategies. He also said that "the core of the integration process has to be the human being and the better quality of life."

In the next stage, the CEC-CLAI project will focus on three areas. Firstly, it will endeavour to deepen the understanding on similarities and differences in perceived impacts of globalisation and to clarify the concepts used. Secondly, it will look at state-market relations, especially through comparing experiences of transitional economies in Latin America and in Europe. Thirdly, it will go further in looking at specific cases related to globalisation: climate justice, illegitimate and ecological debts, and food crisis. The exchange will also continue around the regional integration process on both continents. The next meeting is expected to take place in Europe on 26 - 29 November 2009.

For a full account of the meeting, speeches and meeting documentation, please contact Rev. Dr. Peter Pavlovic (ppt@cec-kek.be).

Prayer

EU politicians pray for the Lyon Assembly

During the last plenary session of the outgoing European Parliament (EP) in Strasbourg in May, a group of Members of the European Parliament (MEP), their assistants and external guests prayed for the success of the CEC Lyon Assembly. The prayer spoke about the important contribution of CEC and its CSC to the European integration process and to European society.

Every Wednesday morning during the monthly EP plenary sessions in Strasbourg, a group of MEPs and other interested people come together for an hour-long Prayer Breakfast. The people attending listen to a verse of the Bible, an intercession and the Lord's Prayer, each person using her or his own language. The participants also exchange about their personal faith and daily political work, and their concerns related to the European agenda and various situations in the world. One of the Strasbourg-based CSC Executive Secretaries is mostly present. For CSC staff, the Prayer Breakfast is a unique opportunity for open sharing and praying with politicians

The Prayer Breakfast, which is also the oldest of EP Intergroups (informal groupings around various themes), brings together MEPs from all Christian confessions and political groups, except for the far-right and far-left, and from roughly ten EU countries.

May 2009 was not the first time the group prayed for the success of an ecumenical encounter. This was happened prior to the European Ecumenical Assembly held in Sibiu in 2007.

Migration

CCME calls for an ambitious EU programme on refugee resettlement

On 29 June 2009, the Churches' Commission for Migrants in Europe (CCME) addressed the European institutions with a call for an ambitious EU refugee resettlement programme. In a letter to Swedish Migration and Asylum Minister Billström, the European Commissioner for Justice, Freedom and Security and Vice-President Jacques Barrot and the European Parliament Committee on Civil Liberties, CCME highlights "twelve arguments and seven proposals for the EU refugee resettlement scheme". Refugee resettlement is the process by which refugees, which have fled their country of origin and found initial, but insufficient protection in another country are settled onwards - "resettled" to a third country, where they find permanent protection.

The CCME letter comes as Sweden, the EU Member State with the most extensive experience in refugee resettlement, takes over the EU Presidency and a few weeks before the presentation of plans for an EU resettlement scheme by the European Commission, currently expected in September.

In its 7-page paper, CCME argues for pooling of EU Member States' competence in the area of resettlement, for partnerships between EU Member States in this field, and for partnerships between governments, civil society and the UN High Commissioner for

Refugees UNHCR. CCME underlines that joint EU resettlement efforts could, if sufficiently extensive, help to resolve refugee crisis situations globally and add credibility to the EU's external affairs agenda. A number of policy proposals detail elements of an EU resettlement programme such as EU funding, EU's stance towards UN bodies, and joint criteria and status for resettled refugees.

Details of the EU resettlement scheme will be discussed at the CCME conference "Towards the common EU Resettlement Scheme - the road ahead" which will take place in Stockholm-Sigtuna on 25-28 August 2009.

For more information on the conference see:

<http://www.ccme.be/secretary/NEWS/RRSwedeninvitation.pdf>



Church and Society Commission

Ecumenical Centre • Rue Joseph II, 174 • BE-1000 Brussels • Belgium
phone +32 2 230 17 32 • fax +32 2 231 14 13 • www.cec-kek.org

Edited by Elina Eloranta

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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