



Conference of European Churches  
Conférence des Églises Européennes  
Konferenz Europäischer Kirchen

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## CSC Update on European Affairs

### TOPICS COVERED:

Berlin Declaration, constitutional debate, churches committed to human rights, energy and climate change, social dimension of the Lisbon Strategy, stock-taking in social realities, intercultural dialogue in the Council of Europe and the EU, migration.

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### European Integration

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#### Berlin Declaration

On 25 March 2007 in Berlin, the EU celebrated the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Treaties of Rome. To reaffirm their commitment to the European project, the German EU Presidency representing the Member States together with the Presidents of the European Commission and the European Parliament signed a joint declaration.

This Berlin Declaration pays tribute to the positive outcomes of the integration - peace, prosperity and the end of the division of the continent. It also reminds Europeans about common ideals including inviolability of human dignity, equality between men and women, peace and freedom, democracy and rule of law, mutual respect and shared responsibility, prosperity and security, tolerance and participation, and justice and solidarity.

Furthermore, the declaration depicts the shared challenges such as terrorism, organised crime and illegal migration, racism and xenophobia. It states the EU's endeavour to promote freedom and development in the world and to lead the way in energy policy and climate protection. It also states that it is only by acting together that the EU

countries will be able to preserve the European ideal of society, which combines economic success and social responsibility.

The content as well as the preparatory process (the “Sherpa method”) of the Declaration was subject to a highly controversial debate. The German Government compromised the most contentious question of whether or not there should be a reference to the constitutional debate, by calling for a “renewed common basis” before the European Parliament elections in 2009.

Berlin Declaration (text available in all official EU languages):

[http://eu2007.de/en/About\\_the\\_EU/Constitutional\\_Treaty/BerlinerErklaerung.html](http://eu2007.de/en/About_the_EU/Constitutional_Treaty/BerlinerErklaerung.html)

Birthday speech of Angela Merkel:

[http://eu2007.de/en/News/Speeches\\_Interviews/March/0325BKBerliner.html](http://eu2007.de/en/News/Speeches_Interviews/March/0325BKBerliner.html)

## **Involvement of the Churches in the celebrations**

The churches were involved in the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebrations in a variety of ways. The Church and Society Commission of the Conference of European Churches (CSC-CEC) issued a press release, which bore witness “to the common efforts of European churches to bring their contribution to the European project”. CSC welcomed initiatives to face new challenges such as the globalisation process, the environmental threats, and the enduring high levels of poverty and unemployment within the European Union and in the world. It also referred to the Open Letter to political leaders in Europe, which was approved on the occasion of the church leaders’ meeting in Brussels in December and which expressed the churches’ conviction that the European integration process must be based on values such as freedom and solidarity, peace and reconciliation, social justice and human rights, democracy and people’s participation in the political decision-making process.

The Community of Protestant Churches in Europe (CPCE) also took part in the debate on the Berlin Declaration by publishing its “Five good wishes for the future of Europe”. The document calls for more growing together, democracy, openness, justice and viable cultural identity. The Evangelical Church in Germany (EKD) together with the German Bishops’ Conference invited the Heads of State and Government meeting in Berlin to an ecumenical worship.

CEC Press Release:

<http://www.cec-kek.org/content/pr-cq0716e.shtml>

Open Letter: <http://www.cec-kek.org/content/openletter13.shtml>

CPCE letter: [http://lkg.jalb.de/lkg/documents/lkg\\_doc\\_en\\_2196.pdf](http://lkg.jalb.de/lkg/documents/lkg_doc_en_2196.pdf)

## **Constitutional debate**

Although the Berlin Declaration gathered most of the attention prior to the Berlin meeting, the debate around the Constitutional Treaty has also been in full swing. The EU Member States and politicians are divided among those who either wish to safeguard the current text or even expand it, those who would like to see the Treaty drastically reduced and those who declare it dead. Besides France and the Netherlands, the most fundamental objections on the substance of the Treaty have been expressed by the United Kingdom and Poland. Chancellor Angela Merkel's visit to Poland in mid-March nevertheless succeeded in getting the country to accept the existing text as a basis for further negotiations.

In addition to the substance of the Treaty, the other important question in the air concerns the process. Some countries consider a two-step approach as the way to solve the crisis. This would mean that the EU countries would first try to push through the most important institutional changes and only after that renegotiate the rest of the package. Some voices are calling for an EU-wide consultative referendum that could be held at the same time as the 2009 European elections. The German EU Presidency is not in favour of such a referendum and wishes the Member States to come to a final agreement at the latest under the French Presidency in the second half of 2008.

The next major step in the process will be the proposal on the Constitutional Treaty that Germany expects to provide in early June.

For more detailed information on the Constitutional debate, please read the attached CSC report.

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## **Human Rights**

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### **Churches remain committed to human rights**

On 20-21 March, delegations of the Russian Orthodox Church and the Church and Society Commission of CEC met in Moscow to discuss human rights.

The Russian Orthodox Church is currently working on a document on human rights. Some statements that were made during the preparations gave rise to concerns as to whether there still is a common basis for human rights-related issues among member churches of CEC.

The Moscow meeting was successful in reconfirming that common basis. The Joint Communiqué of the meeting reads: "The two delegations agreed that the present debate on human rights within the Russian Orthodox Church and among European churches will lead to a strengthening of the churches' commitment to human rights as laid down, for instance, in the United Nations' Bill of Human Rights, the European Convention on

Human Rights and the Council of Europe's Social Charter as well as in documents of the Follow-Up Conferences of the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe."

For more information, read the CEC Press Release:

<http://www.cec-kek.org/content/pr-cq0715e.shtml>

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## Spring Summit

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### **An Integrated Climate and Energy Policy**

The Spring European Council on 8-9 March approved the EU's integrated energy & environment strategy which sets as its objective to limit the rise of global temperature to 2°C compared to the pre-industrial era. Underlining the leading role of the EU in international climate protection, the Member States endorsed the goal of a 30% reduction in greenhouse gas emissions by 2020 provided the EU decision would be followed by an international agreement, and also approved a 20% unilateral commitment. Furthermore, at the end of tough negotiations, the Member States managed to commit themselves to a target of a 20% EU average for renewable energies by 2020, half of which should come from bio-fuels.

Although widely welcomed as a major breakthrough in safeguarding the future of the planet, environmental NGOs and the Greens are concerned about the EU's commitment to bio-fuels. They believe that the production of bio-fuels can lead to destruction of forests to make way for crops and stress that both the process itself and the transportation of the end-product consume energy. Rather than indiscriminately supporting all bio-fuels, they would very much prefer to see some bio-fuels favoured according to their environmental performance. Furthermore, environmentalists and a number of churches call for more focus on energy efficiency and truly sustainable renewable sources of energy, such as wind and solar energy.

For churches' care for the environment is part of a broader concern. The European Christian Environmental Network underlines that, in the light of Christian mission and concern for justice, churches are also called to act. Technological efficiency can constitute a huge contribution but it is becoming increasingly apparent that possible solutions for the environmental crisis have to go beyond technology. They must build on a compatible value set-up and new options in our way of life. Individual members of society must organise their personal lifestyle in a way that is consistent with the requirements of sustainability. Without a change of mind and heart, technological solutions or political negotiations to protect the climate will not achieve their goals.

### **Boosting employment and reinforcing the European Social Model**

After some quiet years, the EU seems to devote more attention to social questions. The Spring Summit stated that the common social objectives of Member States should be

better taken into account in the Lisbon Strategy as a way “to ensure the continuing support for European integration by the Union’s citizens”. In addition to the necessity of replying to citizens’ wishes, the promotion of the social dimension (including a family-friendly organisation of work, workers’ rights, equal opportunities, safety and health protection at work, fight against poverty and social exclusion, adequate levels of minimum resources) was justified in the light of the positive developments on Member States’ labour markets.

The Summit also resulted in the establishment of an “Alliance for Families” to serve as a platform for the exchange of views and knowledge on family-friendly policies as well as on good practices between Member States.

Conclusions of the Brussels European Council 8-9 March 2007:

[http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms\\_Data/docs/pressdata/en/ec/93135.pdf](http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms_Data/docs/pressdata/en/ec/93135.pdf)

## **Churches and diaconal organisations propose a “Plan D” to combat poverty and social exclusion**

On the eve of the European Spring Council meeting, the Church and Society Commission of CEC and Eurodiaconia jointly addressed the German President of the Council, Angela Merkel, on the lack of results following the EU Member States’ commitment to combat poverty and social exclusion. European churches and diaconal organisations proposed a “Plan D” for the EU’s Lisbon strategy: Delivery, Democracy, re-Distribution and Dignity.

The joint letter called for Delivery in relation to fight against poverty and social exclusion and better involvement of the national parliaments and civil society in the Lisbon process (Democracy). It expressed concern about the growing gap between the rich and the poor in European societies and reminded that solidarity was a precondition for a socially cohesive society and an important pillar of the European Social Model (re-Distribution). Furthermore, it welcomed the EU’s willingness to strengthen people’s capacities but stated that the understanding of “human capital” is much too narrow if people are regarded only as productive factors (Dignity).

Read the full letter at:

<http://www.cec-kek.org/pdf/letterGermanPresidency0307.pdf>

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## **Social and Employment Policies**

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### **EU wants to take stock of social realities**

In its decision to pay more attention to the social dimension of the Lisbon Strategy, the Spring Summit conclusions refer to the Commission’s social reality stocktaking report as a source for further ideas. This report was published in March 2007 in order to animate a

respective consultation on social realities across Europe. The Commission wants to 'listen', not to test policy options. The role of European policies is therefore left entirely open. The consultation, which runs till the end of 2007, seeks views on current social trends and on what contributes to today's "well-being". It invites to share views on access to education and employment as well as on the implications of changing social relationships.

The report and further information on the process is available at:  
[http://ec.europa.eu/citizens\\_agenda/social\\_reality\\_stocktaking/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/citizens_agenda/social_reality_stocktaking/index_en.htm)

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## **Intercultural Dialogue**

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### **Council of Europe is consulting churches on intercultural dialogue**

As announced in CSC Update Nr 4, the Council of Europe is preparing a White Paper on Intercultural Dialogue, due to be published in November 2007. Besides involving, of course, the governments of the Council's Member States and the Council's various bodies, among them the Conference of International NGOs in which CEC is represented, the Council decided to also involve other actors of civil society. In this context, the Council's coordinator for intercultural dialogue, Director General Gabriella Battaini-Dragnoni, addressed the religious communities in early March with a questionnaire aiming especially at their participation in the consultation process.

The Church and Society Commission will soon contact all member churches in order to collect their views on the questions raised by the Council. They include the role of religious communities in promoting intercultural dialogue as well as the very basic question of whether and how the Council could support the religious communities' activities in areas of interest shared by both entities. Furthermore, the Council is interested in examples of good practice in the area of intercultural dialogue. In order to provide the public with examples of and impulses for practical initiatives, those best practices will be published along with the White Paper. The questionnaire as well as the template for handing in examples of best practice is available from CSC Strasbourg office: [csc@cec-kek.fr](mailto:csc@cec-kek.fr).

### **European Year of Intercultural Dialogue 2008 - call for proposals coming soon**

As mentioned in our Update Nr 4, the EU has decided to dedicate the year 2008 to being the European Year of Intercultural Dialogue. The European Commission will publish the call for proposals in early April with late June or early July as deadline for project applications.

The Commission is also finalising a related communication on the new European cultural policy, which is due to be issued in late April. On the level of terminology and

thinking, the Commission is moving from the notion of multicultural society to that of intercultural society.

The decision concerning the European Year of Intercultural Dialogue (2008):

<http://eur-lex.europa.eu/JOHtml.do?uri=OJ:L:2006:412:SOM:EN:HTML>

Commission website for intercultural dialogue:

[http://ec.europa.eu/culture/eac/dialogue/dialogue\\_en.html](http://ec.europa.eu/culture/eac/dialogue/dialogue_en.html)

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## Migration

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### **Archbishop of Athens and All Greece affirms: care for strangers central to Christian commitment**

On 8 March, members of the Executive Committee of the Churches' Commission for Migrants in Europe (CCME) met with His Beatitude Christodoulos, Archbishop of Athens and All Greece. Archbishop Christodoulos affirmed the essential role of the Church in extending hospitality to strangers and shared information on services which the Church of Greece provides to migrants. He also assured his support in advancing CCME's work on "Uniting in Diversity", which focuses on the changing situation of churches and ecumenical challenges in Europe as a result of migration. The meeting highlighted the unique experience of the Church of Greece, which has witnessed a large Diaspora due to migration in past decades, and which, since the early 90ies sees itself encountering migrants in Greece, many of whom are members of Orthodox sister churches or Christian churches of other traditions. CCME seized the occasion to congratulate the Church of Greece for the setting-up of a specific committee on migration by the Holy Synod.

In addition to meeting with representatives of the Church of Greece, the CCME ExCom deliberated on CCME's work for the coming months. The priorities include advocacy on EU policies on removals, the global forum on migration and development as well as the visibility of migrant and minority ethnic Christians at the 3<sup>rd</sup> European Ecumenical Assembly in Sibiu.

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## Publications

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### **Volume III of action-oriented guide against trafficking**

The Churches' Commission for Migrants in Europe (CCME) has published a new "action-oriented guide for awareness-raising and social assistance" against trafficking in human beings. The booklet, which is volume number 3 of CCME's guides on Christian action and networking against trafficking, bears the name "trafficking in human beings - new challenges, new partnerships". It contains reflections on new challenges in the fight

against human trafficking and shares ideas on how to act against newly visible forms of trafficking such as labour exploitation. The booklet presents the results of the project "trafficking in human beings - new challenges, new partnerships" which CCME has coordinated since November 2005. Copies are available at: [www.ccme.be/secretary/NEWS/index.html](http://www.ccme.be/secretary/NEWS/index.html). Hardcopies can be requested at [info@ccme.be](mailto:info@ccme.be)

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## Upcoming events

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A Dutch University UCSIA organizes a research summer school on "Religion, Culture and Society" on 2-7 September 2007 in Antwerp, Belgium. Applications can be submitted until 15 April. Further information is available at: [www.ucsia.org/summerschool](http://www.ucsia.org/summerschool).



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