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## CSC Update on European Affairs

### TOPICS COVERED:

December European Council; Future of the Lisbon Treaty; Future of the European Union; Czech EU Presidency; EU deal on climate package, Poznan Climate Change Conference; Interfaith Climate Summit; education; intercultural dialogue; religion and human rights; Sunday protection; migration.

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### European Integration

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#### December European Council

Financial and economic crises, climate change (see the article below), the future of the Lisbon Treaty and the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) were on the agenda of the European Council of 11-12 December.

Reacting to the impact of the financial crises, the heads of states and governments of EU Member States agreed on a European Economic Recovery Plan. On the fringe of the discussion, the leaders also pointed out that “social protection and inclusion have a vital part to play” in the measures taken to avoid a recessionary spiral and sustain economic activity and employment.

In relation to CFSP, the EU reviewed the progress made since the implementation of the European Security Strategy in December 2003. The threat assessment remained largely the same. The proliferation of Weapons of Mass Destruction continues to be considered the greatest threat to the Union. Terrorism and organised crime were highlighted among the old threats (but not regional conflicts and state failure); cyber security, energy security and climate change featured as new key threats. According to earlier information, the European Commission had sought to promote the human security approach which puts the individual person at the centre of security concerns, but was not very successful.

European Council Conclusions:

[http://www.consilium.europa.eu/ueDocs/cms\\_Data/docs/pressData/en/ec/104692.pdf](http://www.consilium.europa.eu/ueDocs/cms_Data/docs/pressData/en/ec/104692.pdf)

Report on the implementation of the European Security Strategy:  
<http://register.consilium.europa.eu/pdf/en/08/st17/st17104.en08.pdf>

Report on the tighter international security:  
<http://register.consilium.europa.eu/pdf/en/08/st16/st16751.en08.pdf>

## **Future of the Lisbon Treaty**

The long and winding journey towards a new legal basis for the European Union, achieved yet another milestone at the December Summit. With assurances that special concerns of the Irish people are taken into account, the Summit set a new target for the entry into force of the treaty at the end of 2009.

The European Council agreed that “provided the Treaty of Lisbon enters into force, a decision will be taken, in accordance with the necessary legal procedures, to the effect that the Commission shall continue to include one national of each Member State.”

In addition, Ireland was given a commitment that the Treaty of Lisbon would not change the Union’s competencies in relation to taxation; that Ireland could maintain its traditional policy of neutrality; and that the Treaty would not change the Irish Constitution in relation to the right of life (read: abortion), education and the family.

In return, the Irish Government is to seek ratification of the Treaty “by the end of the term of the current Commission”. According to rumours, the second referendum is likely to take place in September or October next year.

Consolidated text of the Lisbon Treaty:  
[http://europa.eu/lisbon\\_treaty/full\\_text/index\\_en.htm](http://europa.eu/lisbon_treaty/full_text/index_en.htm).

## **2009: Setting the agenda for the future of the European Union**

While the wheels of the EU legislative machinery will slow down towards the end of the term of the current European Parliament (elections are to be held on 4-7 June), 2009 will be exciting in terms of setting agendas for the future of the European Union.

The new Commission – to take office either late 2009 or early 2010 – will decide on its five-year work plan. However, the reflections on the future are in full motion. In areas such as employment, economy, social issues, environment, culture and education, the year 2010 will mark the end of the grand plan, the Lisbon Strategy. The Spring European Council in March 2009 will look into this. In the field of Justice and Home Affairs, which covers topics such as migration and asylum policy, human rights and counter-terrorism, a new five-year plan entitled “Stockholm programme” is expected to be adopted during the Swedish Presidency in the second half of 2009. In addition to those two areas of work, the strategic initiatives of the Commission for 2009 include, for instance, the budget review and a proposal for an EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region.

The list of priority initiatives for 2009 includes the first steps towards establishing a European Asylum Support Office and a proposal for a framework decision on trafficking in

human beings. On a more general level, the Commission priorities for next year include addressing the financial and economic crises, climate change and the future of the Lisbon Treaty.

Work Programme for 2009:

[http://ec.europa.eu/atwork/programmes/docs/clwp2009\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/atwork/programmes/docs/clwp2009_en.pdf)

Strategic initiatives 2009:

[http://ec.europa.eu/atwork/programmes/docs/clwp2009\\_roadmap\\_strategic\\_initiatives\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/atwork/programmes/docs/clwp2009_roadmap_strategic_initiatives_en.pdf)

Priority initiatives 2009:

[http://ec.europa.eu/atwork/programmes/docs/clwp2009\\_roadmap\\_priority\\_initiatives\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/atwork/programmes/docs/clwp2009_roadmap_priority_initiatives_en.pdf)

## **Czech Republic takes over the EU leadership as of 1 January 2009**

The upcoming Czech Presidency – with at its head President Vaclav Klaus well known to be lukewarm *vis-à-vis* the EU – is awaited and feared to add a new flavour to the usual Brussels debates. The Czech Republic will hold the six-month rotating presidency of the EU as of 1st January 2009 under the motto “A Europe without barriers”. According to Prime Minister Mirek Topolánek, the motto reflects the four basic freedoms: the free movement of goods, capital, workers, and services, which the Czechs intend to uphold to their fullest. The logo of the Czech Presidency (see the Presidency website [www.EU2009.cz](http://www.EU2009.cz)) adds a symbolic fifth freedom: the free movement of information and knowledge. The main priorities of the Czech Presidency are summarised as “the 3 E’s”: Economy, Energy and External Relations.

As is the custom, the final programme of the EU Presidency will be published on the very eve of the Presidency. Information on the main events is already available on the website.

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## **Climate Change**

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### **EU agrees on a climate change and energy package**

The month of December 2008 marked a key point in the development of the European Union climate change policy. First proposed in January 2008 the EU energy and climate change package was co-agreed by the European Parliament on 17 December, after 11 months of extensive negotiation and re-negotiation. It will now return to the European Council for formal endorsement.

The package as agreed retains the original targets for 2020 proposed by the Commission: a 20% reduction in greenhouse gas emissions; a 20% contribution to energy supplies by renewables and a 20% increase in energy efficiency. However, some key features were ‘watered down’ due primarily to widespread governmental concerns about the financial crisis as well as extensive lobbying from industry. The legislative package included six main elements:

- Revision of the EU Emissions Trading Scheme [EU ETS];

- The adoption of CO<sub>2</sub> Capture and Storage Technology [CCS]
- Effort-sharing targets for emissions reductions;
- National targets for increasing the deployment of renewable energy
- Reductions of CO<sub>2</sub> emissions from cars
- Reductions in greenhouse emissions from fuels [fuel quality]

All six elements went through the Parliament with large majorities, with a minimum of 559 Members of the European Parliament (MEPs) voting in favour out of the total of 785. Three of the elements, renewable energy, CO<sub>2</sub> emissions from cars and fuel quality, were largely agreed between the Council and the Parliament during the course of the autumn. This left the Council to come to an agreement on ETS, CCS and Effort-sharing during its meeting of 10-11 December. Significant compromises and derogations were made to meet the concerns of some governments by reducing the compliance costs of their heavy industries and fossil fuel-dependent sectors. These included the ability to "offset" a substantial part of EU Member State carbon reductions by financing climate projects in developing countries and also the allocation of free emissions permits for large sectors of industry creating the potential for substantial windfall profits at the same time.

Avril Doyle (EPP/ED-IE) observed that it was a "very good result and a balanced outcome between preserving the environmental integrity of the proposal and ensuring a level playing field for European Industry". Satu Hassi (Green/EFA-FI) commented: "It is a historical achievement to have emissions targets reductions for EU member states ....However I cannot feel completely happy, because the deal allows outsourcing of over half of EU emission reductions to other countries. I hope the governments behave in a responsible way and make sure that the major part of emission reductions are achieved domestically".

Whilst most MEPs have broadly accepted the package despite their reservations, other observers have been much more critical. The Greenpeace EU Climate and Energy Policy Director Joris den Blanken stated: "Europe promised leadership on climate, but so far it has led us up the garden path. The climate package doesn't even take us half way to where we should be in the fight against climate change". Delia Villagrana, Senior Advisor to the World Wildlife Fund (WWF) declared: "The 20 percent target sounds nice in words, but is void because EU countries are allowed to accomplish approximately three quarters of the effort outside EU borders, which translates into European emissions reduced by only 4-5 percent between now and 2020."

Energy and climate change package – elements of the final compromise:

[http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms\\_Data/docs/pressdata/en/ec/104672.pdf](http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms_Data/docs/pressdata/en/ec/104672.pdf)

## **EU deal too late for UN Poznan Conference**

From 1 to 12 December the United Nations held its 14<sup>th</sup> Climate Change Conference [COP14] in Poznań, Poland. The main purpose of the conference was to take stock of progress made in 2008 and to begin to plan the negotiation process through to the key Copenhagen Conference COP15 of 7-18 December 2009. The Copenhagen Conference is expected to agree on a new global climate change deal to succeed the first phase of the Kyoto Protocol which is due to expire in 2012.

Some 9,000 delegates gathered in Poznań including government officials, representatives of UN bodies and NGOs. There was significant representation from the EU including officials and 36 MEPs as well as a number of observers from the US President-Elect Obama's transition team. A large ecumenical grouping with observers from a range of churches and church agencies was also present (see the article below). Progress was made on a number of key issues for some developing countries, including: adaptation; finance; technology; reducing emissions from deforestation and forest degradation (REDD); and disaster management. The planned work on the Kyoto Protocol's Adaptation Fund was completed with the parties agreeing that the Fund would be a legal entity able to grant direct access to developing countries.

Many observed that the conference was little more than a holding shop and something of a disappointment. The delay in the EU climate change legislative process meant that the Poznań conference lacked the steer that a known or expected EU post-2012 position would have given. During 11-12 December a ministerial round table was held to reflect on a shared vision for long-term cooperative action on climate change. The conference closed with "a clear commitment from governments to shift into full negotiating mode next year in order to shape an ambitious and effective international response to climate change, to be agreed in Copenhagen at the end of 2009". The parties also agreed that the first draft of a negotiating text would be prepared for the UNFCCC gathering in Bonn in June 2009. The next major UNFCCC gathering is planned for Bonn, Germany from 29 March to 8 April 2009.

The website of the UN Climate Change Conference in Poznan 1-12 December 2008:  
[http://unfccc.int/meetings/cop\\_14/items/4481.php](http://unfccc.int/meetings/cop_14/items/4481.php)

The website of the UN Climate Change Conference in Copenhagen 7-18 December 2009:  
<http://www.cop15.dk/en/>

## **Fighting Climate Change is a common challenge for all religions**

On the initiative of Archbishop Anders Wejryd, the Church of Sweden hosted a major international Interfaith Climate Summit in Uppsala on 27-29 November 2008. As this year's meeting between the religious leaders and the presidents of the European Institutions on 5 May (see Europe Update N°17) had already witnessed, climate change is a common challenge for all - including religions. The world religions are a source of empowerment for change in lifestyles and patterns of consumption. The summit adopted the Uppsala Interfaith Climate Manifesto entitled "Hope for the Future!" and it was signed by 29 high-level representatives of different faith traditions.

The manifesto calls on the global political leadership for rapid and large emission cuts in the rich world; the rich world to pay for international cuts in addition to their own domestic initiatives; measurable, verifiable and reportable mitigation actions by developing countries; massive transfers and sharing of important technology; economic incentives for developing countries to foster cleaner development; and adaptation to climate change.

On their side, the signatories committed themselves, amongst others, to inspiring people in their own religions and cultural contexts to take responsibility for and to implement effective measures, and to challenging the political and business leaders in this area. Moreover, the signatories stated their determination to counter the culture of fear with a culture of hope.

Representing the World Council of Churches, Archbishop Wejryd presented the manifesto to the Poznan Climate Conference on 12 December 2008.

Manifesto and further information on the Interfaith Climate Summit at:

<http://www.svenskakyrkan.se/default.aspx?di=143415>

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## Education

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### **Churches and the European Commission discuss benefits and challenges of cultural diversity for educational systems in Europe**

On 15 December 2008, the Church and Society Commission of the Conference of European Churches (CSC/CEC) - together with Commission of the Bishops' Conferences of the European Community (COMECE) and the European Commission -organised a Dialogue Seminar in Brussels on "Quality Education in an Intercultural Environment". The Intereuropean Commission on Church and School (ICCS), an associated organisation of CEC, and the Churches' Commission for Migrants in Europe (CCME) made a pivotal contribution to the contents of the seminar.

The seminar, which brought together experts on education and migration from churches and church-related organisations, EU institutions and the academic world, examined opportunities and challenges of cultural diversity for educational systems in Europe. The seminar contributed to the ongoing public consultation on the European Commission "Green Paper on migration and mobility: challenges and opportunities for EU education systems" issued on 3 July 2008. The Green Paper analyses the challenges faced by migrant pupils with a weak socio-economic position and identifies some good examples of how those children can be integrated in the schools and enabled to perform well. Ms Laura Cassio from the Commission introduced the above-mentioned Green Paper. The seminar opened with an interview of Ján Figel', European Commissioner for Education and Culture (see below.)

The EU plays a significant role in the field of education in supporting good practises and thus influencing education policies in the Member States. The seminar favourably greeted that activity. The seminar also welcomed the plans of the Commission to focus more on the children from a migrant background in the framework of the Open Method of Coordination (OMC) (see the document below). When addressing this question, the value of diversity should be emphasized.

One of the issues raised in the seminar was the phenomenon of 'white flight'. White flight occurs when parents from the indigenous population remove their children from schools where the majority of the pupils come from a migrant background. Educational institutions must counter this phenomenon and evolve towards safe, welcoming and inclusive spaces of learning. The seminar explored the ways in which church and non-church bodies play an active role in promoting such an approach, by means of, for instance, innovative architecture, participation of family and community members in the school life, interactive classrooms and tutored library.

Green Paper on migration and mobility, COM (2008) 423:

[http://ec.europa.eu/education/school21/com423\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/education/school21/com423_en.pdf)

European Commission website on education and training:  
[http://ec.europa.eu/education/lifelong-learning-policy/doc28\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/education/lifelong-learning-policy/doc28_en.htm)

About OMC in education:  
[http://www.eu2007.min-edu.pt/np4/?newsId=72&fileName=THE\\_OPEN\\_METHOD\\_OF\\_COORDINATION\\_IN\\_EDUCATION\\_AND\\_TRAINING.pdf](http://www.eu2007.min-edu.pt/np4/?newsId=72&fileName=THE_OPEN_METHOD_OF_COORDINATION_IN_EDUCATION_AND_TRAINING.pdf)

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## **Intercultural Dialogue**

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### **Commissioner Figel evaluates the Year of Intercultural Dialogue**

The Dialogue Seminar held on 15 December allowed to take stock of the European Year of Intercultural Dialogue (EYID) 2008. European Commissioner for Education and Culture Ján Figel' maintained that, while EYID was about to come to an end, intercultural dialogue must continue. According to him, the main achievements of the year are that it succeeded in raising awareness of the importance of intercultural dialogue and that it led to practical commitments of the Member States in this field. Concretely, the Commissioner mentioned the Council Conclusions on the promotion of cultural diversity and intercultural dialogue in the external relations, and on intercultural competencies. Commissioner Figel also told the seminar participants that the European Commission will maintain an attitude of openness towards the religious dimension of intercultural dialogue. When asked about the European Year of Creativity and Innovation 2009, the Commissioner explained that one of the goals of that year is to encourage people to discover their talent. He also said that the three pillars of an innovative society are talent, technology and tolerance.

Council conclusion of 20 November on the promotion of ICD in external relations:  
[http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms\\_Data/docs/pressdata/en/educ/104189.pdf](http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms_Data/docs/pressdata/en/educ/104189.pdf)

Council conclusion of 21 May on intercultural competencies:  
[http://www.eu2008.si/en/News\\_and\\_Documents/Council\\_Conclusions/May/0521\\_EYC1.pdf](http://www.eu2008.si/en/News_and_Documents/Council_Conclusions/May/0521_EYC1.pdf)

### **Churches are called to take an active part in the implementation of the Council of Europe White Paper on Intercultural Dialogue**

Following the adoption of the Council of Europe (CoE) White Paper on Intercultural Dialogue in May 2008, CEC Member Churches are now invited to take an active part in intercultural dialogue. For further ideas and information, please consult the CSC Briefing on the Council of Europe White Paper on Intercultural Dialogue attached to this Europe Update. CSC and CCME see the White Paper on Intercultural Dialogue as a crucial step towards setting up new frameworks for a tolerant and peaceful society.

Council of Europe website on intercultural dialogue  
<http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/intercultural/>

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## Religion and Human Rights

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### **The Council of Europe publishes two documents related to religion**

In November 2008, the Council of Europe published manuals on “the wearing of religious symbols in public areas” and on “hate speech”. The aim of those manuals is to clarify these concepts and provide guidance to policy makers, experts and others on the criteria used by the European Court of Human Rights in its case law.

Further information on the manuals at:

[http://www.coe.int/t/DC/Files/Source/FS\\_religsymbols\\_en.doc](http://www.coe.int/t/DC/Files/Source/FS_religsymbols_en.doc)

[http://www.coe.int/t/DC/Files/Source/FS\\_hate\\_en.doc](http://www.coe.int/t/DC/Files/Source/FS_hate_en.doc)

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## Social Affairs

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### **No Sunday protection in the EU Working Time Directive**

The European Parliament did not vote on the protection of Sunday as a weekly rest day in the Working Time Directive. The President of the Parliament Hans-Gert Pöttering did not admit a proposed amendment on Sunday protection. The European Parliament voted against national opt-outs to the Working Time Directive and enforced an EU-wide maximum working week of 48 hours. Thus the Parliament places itself against the proposal of the Member States, which intended to enable up to 65 working hours per week.

Read more at:

<http://www.euractiv.com/en/socialeurope/parliament-gives-working-time-opt-outs-red-card/article-178176>

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## Migration

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### **CCME welcomes the EU decision to receive Iraqi refugees**

The Churches' Commission for Migrants in Europe (CCME) issued a statement on 28 November welcoming the decision that same day by the EU Justice and Home Affairs Council to invite the Member States “as a signal of solidarity”.. “to take in Iraqi refugees in a particularly vulnerable situation such as those with particular medical needs, trauma or torture victims, members of religious minorities or women on their own with family responsibilities.”

Doris Peschke, General Secretary of CCME, commented on the decision: “Welcoming Iraqi refugees to the EU is a positive step. We had hoped such a decision could have been taken earlier this year, but we appreciate that the decision is finally taken to resettle Iraqi refugees from Syria and Jordan and to provide protection and durable solutions for particularly vulnerable refugees”. CCME called on the EU Member States to quickly start with resettlement. CCME stressed that the target of 10.000 refugees to be resettled to the EU appeared small compared to the overall refugee population of more than 2 million in the

neighbouring countries of Iraq. Regular resettlement programmes in all EU member states could provide for more protection capacity throughout the EU. CCME hoped that the decision of 28 November could become a signal for the EU's willingness to take on a bigger share in international refugee protection. CCME and its partner organisations have been advocating since 2003 for broader sharing of responsibility for refugee protection through resettlement to EU member states with projects supported by the European Refugee Fund.

## News about resettlement

As of this month, CCME will once again regularly publish its "Resettlement Newsletter":  
<http://www.ccme.be/secretary/NEWS/index.html>



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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](mailto: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>*