

## CSC Update on European Affairs

### TOPICS COVERED:

Churches' statement on poverty; Implementation of Article 17; Religious leaders' meeting; Churches' views on NATO's nuclear policy; European economic governance; European Year of Volunteering 2011; Ecumenical Forum of European Christian Women Assembly; Prayer at the European Parliament; Migration; upcoming events.

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### SOCIAL AFFAIRS

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#### Do not deny justice to your poor people

"Do not deny justice to your poor people" is the title of a report which the Church and Society Commission (CSC) of the Conference of European Churches (CEC), together with Eurodiaconia, the Commission of the Bishops' Conferences of the European Union (COMECE) and Caritas Europa, addressed to the European Union (EU) in a conference held in the European Parliament on 30 September. The report and the conference are part of the four organizations' joint contributions to the European Year for Combating Poverty and Social Exclusion.

The text, which contains 14 political recommendations which when implemented, would ensure poverty in Europe would be drastically reduced, was received positively by Professor Jerzy Buzek, President of the European Parliament. He also welcomed the timing of its publication making a reference to the preparations for the next multi-annual financial framework (2014-2020). The key policy recommendations include an appeal for the European Union to implement the innovations of the Treaty of Lisbon starting with the new social clause and the Charter of Fundamental Rights. The organisations suggest the EU to dedicate 10% of the annual EU budget to combating poverty. Besides the policy recommendations, the text analyses the various aspects, causes and effects of poverty.

Members of the European Parliament (MEPs) from the four main political groups, as well as representatives of the EU Commission and of the Belgian EU presidency, also reacted positively to the proposals. MEP Niccolo Rinaldi (IT-ALDE) wanted to see this debate reach the national level.

Secretary of State for Social Integration and Combating Poverty, Mr Philippe Courard representing the Belgian EU Presidency, explained that the Presidency joins the churches in advocating for the adoption of a minimum income in all EU Member States. To his regret, however, at this stage only

very few Member States agree with this objective. On the contrary, the Member States do share the churches' view on the need to combat child poverty. The Belgian Presidency together with the two other Member States forming the current Presidency Trio (Spain and Hungary) have already acted upon this objective. In early September the trio presented a joint political declaration on this topic, which will be presented to the annual Round Table on Poverty and Social Exclusion on 18 October and, were the Belgians to decide, will be adopted in the Council in November. The Belgian Presidency also looks at the issues of homelessness and Roma as priorities.

Reacting to the debate about minimum income, which she supports, MEP Jean Lambert (UK-Greens) made even a more radical proposal suggesting the adoption of a maximum income. Her anxiety about the widening gap between poor and rich was fully shared by the Director Ninni Smedberg from Det Norske Diakonhjem who said that studies prove that people are happier living in societies with little income difference. Ms Smedberg's appeal for "enoughness" as a new paradigm to replace that of growth was taken up in several interventions.

This short article only gives a taste of the discussions. A more detailed description of the event will soon be available and will be shared with the readers of Europe Update.

The electronic version of the statement is available here:

[http://www.ceceurope.org/fileadmin/filer/csc/Social\\_Economic\\_Issues/Poverty\\_Report\\_Final.pdf](http://www.ceceurope.org/fileadmin/filer/csc/Social_Economic_Issues/Poverty_Report_Final.pdf)

A limited number of hard copies are also available. To order, please, contact [csc@cec-kek.be](mailto:csc@cec-kek.be).

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## ARTICLE 17

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### The Dialogue about the Dialogue is Entering a New Phase

In Article 17 c of the Treaty of Lisbon, which entered into force on 1 December last year, the European Union committed itself to maintain an "open, transparent and regular dialogue" with churches, religious associations or communities as well as with philosophical and non-confessional organisations. Given that there was little evidence that the EU institutions were giving a thought on the implementation of Article 17 c, and that they rather seemed to be waiting for the churches to take the lead, CSC of CEC and COMECE developed a document which offers general considerations on how to develop the dialogue more concretely (see the attachment to this Europe Update).

As far as CEC and its CSC are concerned, a draft version of this paper was circulated to all member churches for comments. The document, revised on the basis of these comments, was adopted by the CEC Presidium in April as well as by the Plenary of Bishops of COMECE. The adopted text refers to the Treaty of Lisbon as a legal basis, draws on the existing dialogue between the churches and the European Union and explains what "open", "transparent" and "regular" mean in the churches' understanding. The CEC/COMECE document was sent to the Presidents of the European Parliament, the European Commission and the European Council with a request for a joint discussion on the implementation of the Article. A section with more concrete proposals as to how to implement the dialogue, originally part of the document, was adopted by the CEC Presidium as a point of entry for these further discussions.

By now, all of EU institutions have reacted positively to the text and a meeting with the President of the European Parliament, Professor Jerzy Buzek Art 17c has been scheduled for 17 November. Other meetings are to follow. In the meantime, the dialogue continues through its usual mechanisms: Summit Meetings of Religious Leaders and the Presidents of the European Union (see the article

below), Dialogue Seminars on specific issues, meetings with EU Presidencies and, perhaps most importantly, frequent working level meetings. Recent months have also seen a number of public events of churches and church-related organisations in the European Parliament.

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## CHURCH LEADERS MEETING

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### Religious leaders meet the Presidents of the European Union

“Combating Poverty and Social Exclusion” was the theme for the fifth annual meeting of religious leaders with the Presidents of the European Parliament, Professor Jerzy Buzek, the European Commission, Mr. José Manuel Barroso, and the European Council, Mr. Herman van Rompuy. In the meeting, which took place on 19 July, the religious leaders emphasised the need to work together for more just social and economic policies. “The present crisis cannot be reduced to a financial and economic crisis” Metropolitan Emmanuel stated. The religious leaders stressed the values and spiritual dimension of the crisis, as well as education as an important factor for future development. The Presidents of the European Institutions valued the importance and the contribution of the religious communities in combating poverty and social exclusion. All three Presidents of the European Institutions referred to Article 17 of the Lisbon Treaty as the legal basis for the dialogue, and affirmed the need to further develop it in the future. President Buzek in his opening remarks explicitly referred to the CEC/COMECE submission (see the article above).

For the first time, it was not the rotating EU Presidency but the new permanent President which represented the Council. For the first time, the delegation of 25 religious leaders did not only include representatives of the three monotheistic religions but also representatives of the Sikh and of the Hindu communities. The Conference of European Churches was represented by its President, H. E. Metropolitan Emmanuel of France. CEC member churches were also represented by Bishop Christopher Hill (Church of England), Bishop Skov-Jakobsen (Church of Denmark), Bishop Klatic (Evangelical Church A.B. in Slovakia), President Guy Liagre (United Protestant Church of Belgium), H. B. Ieronymos II (Church of Greece), Metropolitan Simeon (Bulgarian Orthodox Church), Metropolitan Josip (Rumanian Orthodox Church) and Bishop Porfyrios (Church of Cyprus).

For further information on the meeting, see the CEC Press Release of 20 July 2010 as well as the CSC section of the CEC website.

[http://www.ceceurope.org/news-and-media/news/?tx\\_ttnews%5Bpointer%5D=1&tx\\_ttnews%5Btt\\_news%5D=215&tx\\_ttnews%5BbackPid%5D=22&cHash=dc1f191b20](http://www.ceceurope.org/news-and-media/news/?tx_ttnews%5Bpointer%5D=1&tx_ttnews%5Btt_news%5D=215&tx_ttnews%5BbackPid%5D=22&cHash=dc1f191b20)

The opening speeches of the EU Presidents and a video of the press conference, can be found on the website of the Bureau of European Policy Advisers (BEPA): [http://ec.europa.eu/bepa/activities/outreach-team/dialogue/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/bepa/activities/outreach-team/dialogue/index_en.htm)

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## NUCLEAR DISARMAMENT

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### In a meeting with NATO, Churches advocate ending the role of tactical nuclear weapons in NATO’s new Strategic Concept

On 24 September, a delegation of CSC of CEC met with NATO Assistant Secretary General for Defence Policy and Planning, Dr. Jiří Šedivý, who was accompanied by Mr. Guy B. Roberts, Deputy Assistant Secretary for WMD Policy, and Mr. Robert F. Simmons, Deputy Assistant Secretary General for Security Cooperation and Partnership. The CSC delegation included representatives of the World Council of Churches (WCC) and the Dutch ecumenical peace organisation IKV Pax Christi.

The meeting resulted from a public statement addressed to NATO by the CSC in July, in which NATO was asked to reconsider its nuclear policy in its new Strategic Concept, to be adopted at a NATO summit in Lisbon on 19-20 November. In its statement, which stresses the churches' support for President Obama's policy goal of a world without nuclear weapons and contains specific proposals for NATO, the CSC in particular urges the withdrawal of the last remaining ca. 200 U.S. tactical nuclear weapons from five non-nuclear NATO countries in Europe. According to CSC, keeping these former 'battlefield nuclear weapons' reflects a Cold War logic. Instead, NATO should rethink its deterrence concept and security cooperation in Europe and decrease reliance on nuclear weapons as a contribution to their eventual elimination.

In the meeting, Assistant Secretary General Šedivý called the CSC statement "refreshing" and welcomed the opportunity for the two sides to discuss the role of nuclear weapons in NATO's future strategy. He also affirmed the new commitment of NATO to arms control and disarmament. (In a declaration adopted by NATO at its 60th anniversary in April last year, NATO committed itself to reinforcing arms control and promoting both nuclear and conventional disarmament). However, whereas NATO does not see a paradigm change in world affairs which would require the Alliance to radically revisit its nuclear policy (with few changes since 1991), the churches hold a different view. They believe that two decades after the Cold War a new policy is required as the world faces new nuclear threats, while at the same time a new political momentum has been provided by the U.S. policy towards zero. The removal of the U.S. tactical nuclear weapons from Europe would reduce the number of countries in the world with nuclear weapons on their territory from the current 14 to 9 and thereby send a strong signal in the support of the Non-Proliferation Treaty regime.

The discussion was appreciated by both sides and is likely to be continued later this year. In July, the same CSC delegation met with Mr Jamie Shea, NATO's Director for Policy Planning.

CSC has this year engaged in an in-depth reflection on the European responsibility with regard to nuclear disarmament. In March, CSC issued a statement setting out proposals for EU policy toward the Review Conference of the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) (see Europe Updates N°2-3). Both the NPT statement and the NATO statement have been informed by a distinguished group of church and church-mandated experts which CSC has brought together in co-operation with WCC and IKV Pax Christi. The expert meeting concerning NATO's nuclear policy took place in Brussels on 8-9 June and gathered 15 participants from 10 countries across Europe.

There is a broad agreement among the churches, grounded in the events of August 1945, that nuclear arms must never be used again. It is contradictory to the deepest beliefs and convictions of Christians that security should rely on a readiness to destroy the world which God has entrusted to humankind.

CSC Statement on NATO's Nuclear Policy:

[http://csc.ceceurope.org/fileadmin/filer/csc/Nuclear\\_Disarmament/Final\\_CSC\\_Statement\\_on\\_NATO's\\_Strategic\\_Concept\\_2010.pdf](http://csc.ceceurope.org/fileadmin/filer/csc/Nuclear_Disarmament/Final_CSC_Statement_on_NATO's_Strategic_Concept_2010.pdf)

CSC Press Release on the NATO meeting:

[http://www.ceceurope.org/news-and-media/news/?tx\\_ttnews%5Btt\\_news%5D=219&tx\\_ttnews%5BbackPid%5D=17&cHash=a165427581](http://www.ceceurope.org/news-and-media/news/?tx_ttnews%5Btt_news%5D=219&tx_ttnews%5BbackPid%5D=17&cHash=a165427581)

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## EUROPEAN INTEGRATION

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### Plans for European economic governance begin to take shape

In order to tackle the current economic and financial crisis and to prevent a future crisis from occurring, the Member States of the European Union agreed in their June Summit (see Europe Update N° 4) on the need to reinforce EU economic governance and gave the first orientations for that development. Since June the process has moved on swiftly. Finance ministers, together with the Commissioner for Economic and Monetary Affairs, the President of the European Central Bank and the President of the Eurogroup did the brainstorming over the summer and the meetings of ministers of finance and the heads of states and governments (European Council of 17 September) in September further defined the plans.

On 29 September, following the decisions of principle by the Member States, the European Commission presented a package of six regulatory legislative proposals aimed at strengthening the Stability and Growth Pact (SGP). The Commission suggests incentives for the countries to use budgetary surpluses to cut their public debt and new "quasi-automatic" sanctions for those euro zone countries which fail to keep their deficits below 3% and their debt below 60% of the national GDP and of which progress in debt reduction is not considered satisfactory. Out of the big Member States, Germany strongly supports the proposal, France is critical of it and the United Kingdom, as a non party to the European Monetary Union, is less concerned.

Read more about the Commission's proposal at:

[http://ec.europa.eu/economy\\_finance/articles/eu\\_economic\\_situation/2010-09-eu\\_economic\\_governance\\_proposals\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/economy_finance/articles/eu_economic_situation/2010-09-eu_economic_governance_proposals_en.htm)

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## VOLUNTEERING

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### Take part in the European Year of Volunteering 2011!

This year the European Union has highlighted the issue of poverty. The next year the spotlight is directed at volunteering. With a budget of 8 million Euros, the European Union wants to promote volunteering, to empower volunteer organisations and to improve the quality of volunteering; to reward volunteering activities; and to raise awareness on the value and importance of volunteering.

Activities and events are to take place at all levels and are meant to gather volunteers, policy makers and civil society. Most importantly, the year is meant to be the year of volunteers.

Read more about the year, including how to take part in it, in the attached CSC Briefing on the European Year on Volunteering.

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## ECUMENICAL WOMEN'S FORUM

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### Christian women stand for justice, equality and peace

Around 170 women from 30 European countries came together in Loccum/Germany for the 8<sup>th</sup> General Assembly of the Ecumenical Forum of European Christian Women (EFECW), an associated organisation of CEC. As its main theme, this assembly discussed responsible economics. One of the (main) speakers, Brigitte Triems, President of the Brussels-based European Women's Lobby, highlighted increasing violence against women and women's greater risk of poverty as the two key problems for women in Europe. She stressed the importance of economic independence as the way to protect women from poverty. Theologian Ina Praetorius offered a new ethical perspective on economy in which the fulfilment of basic human needs for all is put in the centre of economic activity.

The Forum was founded in 1982 in order to provide a platform for women from both sides of the Iron Curtain to meet. At the heart of the Forum's work was and still is the search for a common European Christian identity, justice, peace and solidarity, empowering women and giving them a voice in the European ecumenical movement. The dialogue with women of other religions has become increasingly crucial too.

The participation of young women was much higher than in previous years and it was also appreciated in the final message which speaks about the initiation of a generation change. Two of the younger participants were elected to the leading bodies of EFECW. One of them is CSC Executive Secretary, Carla Maurer. As one of the many first time participants, Ms. Maurer was pleased to see that this ecumenical women's organisation is very much alive, dynamic and truly committed to, as the final message states: "*working for a Europe that stands for justice, equality and peaceful living together of all its citizens.*"

The newly-elected Coordinating Committee of the EFECW met in Celàkovice/Prague from 30 September to 3 October in order to discuss and prepare the implementation of the Assembly message. A seminar is now being planned on the theology of creation and ecology. It is expected to be held in St.Petersburg (Russia) in May 2011.

Read the final message of the Assembly at:

<http://www.efecw.net/message-of-the-efecw-eighth-general-assembly-loccum-2010-participation-and-responsibility.html>

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## PRAYER

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### The European Parliament at prayer

One of the lesser known facts about the life of the European Parliament is that a group of deputies meet every month during the Strasbourg session for a prayer breakfast. The group is fully ecumenical and international, not to mention that it crosses the party lines of politics. On 22 September 2010, a very special breakfast was held to celebrate the 30th anniversary of this Christian group. Present and former Members of the European Parliament (MEPs) testified to the value they attached to these prayer meetings, described by many as the one oasis of calm and peace in the hectic life of a Strasbourg session. One former President of the Parliament recalled how amazed his staff had been when he insisted on starting the very first day of his presidency by going to the prayer breakfast.

MEP's have "ownership" of the prayer breakfasts, but they nonetheless welcome and encourage local clergy working with the Parliament to take part. For Rev. Richard Fischer, one of the Executive

Secretaries in Strasbourg, his regular participation in the prayer breakfast is also one important dimension of his representative role on behalf of CSC.

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## MIGRATION

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### CCME highlights trafficking for forced labour prior to EU anti-trafficking day

On 12-14 October 2010, in cooperation with Anti Slavery International and the International Trade Union Confederation, CCME will hold an international conference "Combating Trafficking for forced labour in Europe – the first steps" in Brussels. The conference which is held in the week prior to EU Anti-trafficking Day will bring together some 70 participants from churches, NGOs, trade unions, EU institutions and Member States. It will review the progress made in strengthening the capacity of civil society organisations to combat trafficking for forced labour in Europe.

### Publication – MIRACLES happening ?

A new publication by CCME features the results of the MIRACLE project "Models of Integration through Religion, Activation, Cultural Learning and Exchange". The guide which contains "Recommendations for Active Participation of Migrants in Churches" includes theoretical reflections on the participation of migrants in churches as well as practical exercises and recommendations. It is available in English, German, French, Italian, Dutch and Swedish. The publications can be downloaded together with an interview-based summary of "Migrants' Experiences in Active Participation in Churches in Europe" and a brochure on "WinAct-MIRACLE Modules for Training Workshops" (both in English only) at [www.ccme.be](http://www.ccme.be).

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## UPCOMING EVENTS

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### Planned CSC events in 2010

Preparations for the consultation, *Poverty, Wealth and Ecology in Europe* to be held in Budapest (Hungary) on 8-19 November, are well under way. The consultation, which is a joint effort of CSC, WCC and the churches in Hungary, will offer the delegates a possibility to examine the impacts of the economic and financial crises and exchange on churches' responses to these crises, and to combine this discussion with the broader debates about global wealth creation, its distribution, poverty and environmental degradation. Not any less importantly, the consultation will provide an exciting opportunity for a direct exchange between delegates from Europe and ecumenical partner organisations from other continents. The European partner organisations to this event include, for example, CCME, Eurodiaconia, EYCE, WSCF, Syndesmos. The event is part of the established dialogue between CEC and the Latin American Council of Churches (CLAI).

Speakers to the conference include Lena Sommestad, former Director of Swedish Institute for Future Studies and former Minister of Environmental Affairs; Heinrich Bedford-Strom, Professor of Systematic Theology and Contemporary Issues, as well as Gergely Proehle, Deputy State Secretary of the Hungarian Foreign Ministry. The outcomes of the consultation will feed the process towards the next WCC Assembly in 2013.

For further information contact Rev. Dr. Peter Pavlovic; ppt@cec-kek.be.

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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://csc.ceceurope.org/news/europe-updates/>*

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