



6/ 2010
N° 34

CSC Update on European Affairs

TOPICS COVERED:

Campaign to support the rights of migrants; Meeting with the Belgian EU Presidency; European economy; European Commission Work Programme 2011; Churches and Hungarian EU Presidency; Stocktaking of EU enlargement; EU Strategy for the Implementation of the Charter of Fundamental Rights; Human Rights in the World; Anti-discrimination in Europe; New Blog on Ethics and Foreign Policy; upcoming events.

CAMPAIGN

Support the rights of migrant workers and sign the petition by 18 December!

On the occasion of the 20th anniversary of the UN Migrant Workers Convention, the European Platform for the Ratification of the Migrant Workers Convention, of which the Churches Commission for Migrants in Europe (CCME) is a member, has launched a campaign to urge EU Member States to ratify this Convention, crucial for the human rights of immigrants across the world. The priority of the campaign is to obtain as many signatures as possible in the run-up to the International Migrants Day on 18 December. CCME decided in April to sign the petition and call for signatures. Because the Church and Society Commission (CSC) of the Conference of European Churches (CEC) shares the endeavour to strengthen the international rights framework for migration, it hereby invites all CEC member churches and readers of Europe Update to sign the petition and to spread the invitation further in their networks.

The World Council of Churches and CCME were much involved when the Convention was drawn up and negotiated in the International Labour Organization in the 80s. The International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families was signed on 18 December 1990 and entered into force in 2003. Today, 43 countries have ratified the Convention and further 16 countries have signed it, but in Europe only Albania, Bosnia-Herzegovina, and Turkey have ratified it, and Montenegro and Serbia have signed it.

December 18, a Brussels-based partner organisation of CCME, and the initiator of the International Platform on the Migrant Workers Convention (IPMWC), intends to mark 18 December by holding three simultaneous events in Madrid, Brussels and Budapest, the capitals of the current EU

Presidency 'trio'. December 18 will hand over the signatures in December to the Spanish, Belgian and Hungarian EU Presidencies. The UN Migrant Workers Convention will also be highlighted in the joint CEC-CCME conference "European Churches Responding to Migration 2010 – Achievements, Challenges and Future Perspectives" which will take place in Vienna on 17-19 December.

The link to the petition can be found on the front page of CCME website:

<http://www.ccme.be/index.php?id=14>

BELGIAN EU PRESIDENCY

European Churches meet the Belgian EU Presidency

Following the well-established tradition of dialogue between the churches and the rotating EU Council Presidencies, representatives of the churches in Belgium and in Europe met on 13 October 2010 with the Belgian EU Presidency. The church delegation was received by Prime Minister Yves Leterme and his political and diplomatic advisers for a one-hour breakfast discussion. The meeting was very open and frank and tackled a number of issues of concern to the churches. Responding to the call of CSC Director, Rev. Rüdiger Noll, for the strengthening of the social dimension of the Europe 2020 Strategy, Prime Minister Leterme explained that whereas he and the Belgian Presidency were in favour of that objective, they believed the economic crisis must be tackled first, in the (then upcoming) October European Council, before the EU could turn to decisions for further improvements in the social sphere. This is still to happen during the Belgian term before the end of the year.

The churches' delegation made several suggestions for the development of the EU External Action Service, which becomes operational on 1 December this year. As a response to the churches' aspirations for improved freedom of religion in the world, Prime Minister promised to bring this aspect to the attention of High Representative Baroness Catherine Ashton. The Prime Minister also agreed this to be a matter of priority in the EU's relations with Turkey. In addition, churches appealed to the European Union to maintain a balance between its commercial and political interests in its foreign relations and for the EU to continue to fight climate change in an ambitious way. Also the implementation of Article 17 concerning the dialogue between churches and EU institutions was mentioned over the breakfast talk.

The churches' delegation consisted of H.E. Mgr. Guy Harpigny, Bishop of Tournai; Rev. Dr. Guy Liagre, President of the United Protestant Church of Belgium; H.G. Bishop Athenagoras, Ecumenical Patriarchate; Canon Dr. Robert Innes, Church of England; Mr Jef Felix, President of Justice and Peace Network Flanders; Ms Axelle Fischer, General Secretary of Justice and Peace and Pax Christi Wallonia-Brussels; Rev. Marc Lenders, United Protestant Church of Belgium; Rev. Rüdiger Noll, Director of the Church and Society Commission of CEC and Mgr. Piotr Mazurkiewicz, General Secretary of COMECE.

ECONOMIC AFFAIRS

Towards a smart, sustainable and inclusive growth?

“Economy, economy and economy”, these are, according to the Finnish EU Ambassador, Jan Store, the top priorities of the European Union right now. And he is not exaggerating. If last year, the Brussels’ mainstream and top level discussions centred around the economic and financial crisis, the treaty reform in its various aspects and the climate change, this year, economics outweigh any topic. The European Commission work programme 2011, alone, (see below) promises that the priority will not change.

The deepest financial crisis moment arose in May when during a couple days the faith in the Euro – and, some argued, the faith in the European Union - was at stake. The Euro was rescued with a major emergency package. Guidelines for future financial and economic crisis prevention were defined at the June European Council (see Europe Update N° 32). With the decisions of the October European Council, the parameters, developed over the last months, have been set out. These include the European Semester which will allow the Member States from January onwards to monitor each other’s economic and budgetary policies in order to track potential macroeconomic imbalances. The semester will begin with the Annual Growth Survey given by the European Commission. The March European Council will define the biggest economic challenges ahead and give guidance to Member States. In April Member States will provide the Commission at the same time with a medium-term strategy for their public economy and their National Reform Programmes. The Member States will exchange views on the plans at the June European Council and approve the country-specific recommendations of the European Commission in July. The Member States are expected to take the recommendations into consideration when adopting their national budgets for the following year.

The purpose of the new system – here described in very broad terms - is to ensure economic and financial stability. It is also meant to pave the way for the successful realisation of the Europe 2020 Strategy which aims at producing a “smart, sustainable and inclusive growth” over the next decade. Given that the Heads of state and government as well as top decision-makers in charge of economic and financial affairs only talk about “growth”, Ministers of employment and social affairs have been right in demanding to be heard at all stages of the European semester. CSC earlier issued a statement on Europe 2020 Strategy, in which it raised concern about the weakness of the social dimension. Churches will judge the success of the strategy in terms of whether or not the growth really meets the qualities of being smart, sustainable or inclusive.

Conclusions of the October European Council:

http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms_data/docs/pressdata/en/ec/117496.pdf

Report of the Task Force “Strengthening Economic Governance in the EU”:

http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms_data/docs/pressdata/en/ec/117236.pdf

Europe 2020 Strategy:

<http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=COM:2010:2020:FIN:EN:PDF>

CSC Statement on Europe 2020 Strategy:

http://csc.ceceurope.org/fileadmin/filer/csc/Social_Economic_Issues/CSCContributionEU2020Consultation.pdf

EU AGENDA 2011

European Commission will focus on economy in 2011

On 27 October, the European Commission unveiled its plans and priorities for the year 2011. The focus is clearly on economic and financial policy. To illustrate the degree of this prioritisation, among the seven pages of the work programme which explain the priorities more than four deal with economic and financial matters. The Commission works on 27 overall policy areas of which six are directly related to economics. Under "Restoring growth for jobs" priority, the Commission plans to strengthen economic governance, to complete the reform of financial regulation, to foster smart, sustainable and inclusive growth and to tap the potential of the Single Market for growth. In addition, as a separate priority area, the Commission will work towards a modern budget for Europe's future. The Commission issued its first ideas for the next multi-annual financial framework on 19 October. It is expected to deliver its actual proposal by 1 July 2011. Besides the allocation of money (the future of Common Agricultural Policy etc.), there are already ongoing debates on whether the framework should be for ten years or five, or seven as is the case currently. The other priorities for the Commission's work next year deal with furthering the area of freedom, security and justice, promoting a more comprehensive trade policy, steering the enlargement process, increasing the effectiveness of development assistance and promoting smart regulation.

The foreseen initiatives, listed in the annex to the Work Programme, which are potentially of relevance to the work on church and society issues include, for example: an EU framework for national strategies on Roma integration, a consultation of the European partners on reconciliation between work, family and private life, a proposal for a legal instrument on the enforcement of rights of EU migrant workers and a communication on a quality framework for services of general interest.

Work Programme 2011 and its annex:

http://ec.europa.eu/atwork/programmes/docs/cwp2011_en.pdf

http://ec.europa.eu/atwork/programmes/docs/cwp2011_annex_en.pdf

See also the "Roadmaps" which is a good tool to monitor upcoming Commission initiatives:

http://ec.europa.eu/governance/impact/planned_ia/roadmaps_2011_en.htm

European Commission's first ideas on the future multi-annual financial framework (The EU Budget Review):

http://ec.europa.eu/budget/reform/library/communication/com_2010_700_en.pdf

Hungarian churches get ready for their EU Presidency

Hungarian churches are getting ready for the Hungarian EU Presidency in the first half of 2011, and CSC wants to do its utmost to support their effort. In early October, CSC and Eurodiaconia together with a representative of the Hungarian churches held a working meeting with staff of the Permanent Representation of Hungary to the EU. In mid-October, CSC Director, Rev. Rüdiger Noll, visited Hungary to further plan the presidency activities. According to preliminary plans, the Hungarian churches will focus, at least, on volunteering, poverty and family issues. On 8-10 December 2010, a delegation of Hungarian churches will visit Brussels. Also Polish churches are preparing to contribute to their EU Presidency in the second half of 2011.

CSC Briefing on European Year on Volunteering 2011:

http://csc.ceceurope.org/fileadmin/filer/csc/Europe_Updates/EuropeUpdate33attachmentVolunteering.pdf

Eurodiaconia Policy Paper on Volunteering:

http://www.eurodiaconia.org/images/stories/Our_work/Volunteering_Policy_Paper.pdf

Poverty Statement "Do not deny justice to your poor people":

http://csc.ceceurope.org/fileadmin/filer/csc/Social_Economic_Issues/Poverty_Report_Final.pdf

ENLARGEMENT

EU annual Enlargement Strategy

As every year in November, the European Commission has issued its new annual Enlargement Strategy together with Progress Reports or Opinions about the candidate countries and potential applicants. This year the Strategy highlights five key challenges for the entire region: overcoming the economic crisis which has been particularly severe on Croatia, Iceland, Montenegro and Serbia, fostering social inclusion, strengthening the rule of law and the fight against corruption, improving freedom of expression and regional reconciliation. It maintains that the EU enlargement is of mutual interest to the Union and the candidate countries because it first and foremost contributes to stability in Europe and to the security and well-being of its citizens. Secondly, it gives the EU greater weight and voice in international fora "in a world where emerging powers are playing an increasing role". Thirdly, it helps the EU to achieve its objectives in areas such as energy, transport and the protection of environment. The Enlargement Strategy makes a specific reference to Iceland which would bring in its expertise in renewable energy. With regard to Turkey, the Strategy states that "By acting together, the EU and Turkey can strengthen energy security, address regional conflicts, and prevent cleavages developing along ethnic and religious lines".

The first country on EU's doorstep is Croatia. The efforts on the "last 100 meters" relate to the fields of judicial and administrative reforms, minority rights, refugee return and war crimes, in particular. Out of 33 negotiation chapters, 25 have been provisionally closed. Negotiations with Iceland began in July and are expected to proceed swiftly, with fisheries and agriculture as the key challenges. With regard to Turkey, the constitutional reforms in September paved the way for further progress in a number of areas including judiciary and fundamental rights and public administration. Turkey is asked to improve freedom of expression and freedom of religion and rights of the Kurdish minority as a first priority. Since last year, two chapters were opened: environment and food security. In total, 13 chapters have been opened and one provisionally closed. The European Commission is concerned that Turkey's accession process is losing its momentum. The name dispute between the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (FYROM) and Greece remains an obstacle for the launch of the accession negotiations with FYROM which was granted candidate status in 2005. Serbia has applied for EU membership and the Commission has launched the process with a view of delivering its Opinion on the Serbian membership next year. The Progress Report on Serbia highlights public administration reform, the fight against organised crime and corruption and the restructuring of Serbian economy as next priorities.

In addition, this year the Commission delivered the Opinions concerning the EU memberships of Montenegro and Albania. The Commission considers Montenegro ready to become a candidate country but requires further reforms before the country is ready to start accession negotiations. Montenegro has a good track record in the implementation of economic reforms and in adopting legislation in order to meet EU standards but there is a significant gap in the implementation of that legislation in all fields. Albania has been making progress but still has a way to go before it has met the requirements for the launch of the EU accession talks. Albania is especially congratulated for its economic reform and is asked to improve the effectiveness and stability of its democratic institutions, the enforcement of rule of law and human rights. On Bosnia-Herzegovina, the European Commission concluded that the lack of shared vision by political leaders on the direction

of the country continues to block key reforms and further progress towards the EU. Acting in accordance with the UN Security Council Resolution 1244/99, the European Commission also issued a Progress Report on Kosovo which is meant to provide a useful roadmap for Kosovo's European perspective.

The Enlargement Strategy, the Progress Reports and Opinions are being discussed by the European Parliament and by the Council before the European Council pronounces itself on the topic at its Summit on 16-17 December 2010.

CSC supports the enlargement process. Its 2005 statement concerning the EU membership of Turkey which was based on a large consultation among the CEC constituency remains valid.

Enlargement Strategy 2010-2011 and the other related documents are available at:

http://ec.europa.eu/enlargement/press_corner/key-documents/reports_nov_2010_en.htm

See CSC statement and discussion paper about Turkey at:

http://csc.ceceurope.org/fileadmin/filer/csc/European_Integration/RelationshipofEUtoTurkey.pdf

http://csc.ceceurope.org/fileadmin/filer/csc/European_Integration/EUandTurkey.pdf

HUMAN RIGHTS

European Commission issues a Strategy for the implementation of the EU Fundamental Rights Charter

For CSC, the enhancement of EU's commitment to human rights was, together with social elements, participatory democracy – including the dialogue between churches and the EU institutions - and EU's value dimension, a priority in the EU treaty reform process. CSC advocated for the EU's accession to the European Convention on Human Rights (of the Council of Europe), and for the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights – the most progressive general human rights convention in the world – to become legally binding. This happened. With the entry into force of the Lisbon Treaty on 1 December 2009, the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights gained full legal force. On 19 October 2010, the European Commission adopted a Strategy aimed at ensuring the Charter's effective implementation. The Commission promises to make sure that all EU legislations are in compliance with the Charter and to apply that scrutiny at each stage of the legislative process – from the early preparatory work in the Commission and the adoption of draft laws by the European Parliament and the Council, to their final implementation by EU Member States. The Commission also commits itself to provide citizens with information so as to enable their involvement in fundamental rights issues, and to publish an Annual Report on the Charter's application in order to enable monitoring the progress achieved. If implemented successfully, this would be a major improvement even if the scope of the application only relates to EU legislation and not to all EU activities.

The strategy is available on:

<http://europa.eu/rapid/pressReleasesAction.do?reference=IP/10/1348&format=HTML&aged=0&language=EN&guiLanguage=en>

European Parliament Report on Human Rights in the World 2009

The Foreign Affairs Committee of the European Parliament has given its proposal for the Annual Report on human rights in the world in 2009. The draft EP report is a response to the EU Report on Human Rights and Democracy in the World presented by the High Representative Catherine Ashton at the June Plenary in Strasbourg. The members of the Foreign Affairs Committee want the newly established External Action Service and its leader High Representative Ashton to mainstream human rights throughout the EU's external action, including defence, development and trade policy. The EP draft report raises issues such as the global moratorium on death penalty, an effective system of international justice, violence against women and children's rights, protection of human rights defenders, Guantánamo prisoners etc. The report is expected to be adopted by the Parliament's Plenary in mid- December.

The EP draft report:

http://www.europarl.europa.eu/meetdocs/2009_2014/documents/afet/pr/830/830294/830294en.pdf

The Report by Baroness Catherine Ashton:

http://ec.europa.eu/external_relations/human_rights/docs/hr_report_2010_en.pdf.

"Europe for Citizens"

The European Commission has launched an online consultation on the next generation of the "Europe for Citizens" Programme. The consultation is open until 5 January 2011.

http://ec.europa.eu/yourvoice/consultations/index_en.htm

EU advocates for equality

The European Commission has issued a report presenting the activities carried out in 2009 by the Commission in order to fight discrimination on the grounds of racial or ethnic origin, religion or belief, disability, age or sexual orientation with regard to employment and occupation.

Commission Report on anti-discrimination in 2009:

http://bookshop.europa.eu/is-bin/INTERSHOP.enfinity/WFS/EU-Bookshop-Site/en_GB/-/EUR/ViewPublication-Start?PublicationKey=KEAX10001

NEW READING

New blog on ethics and foreign policy

Dr. Charles Reed, the Church of England's foreign policy adviser and a member of the Executive Committee of CSC opened a blog on ethics and foreign policy. It is not an official Church of England blog but it sometimes explores some policies of the Church of England.

<http://ethicalcomment.wordpress.com/>

To read Dr. Reed's article related to the 4th Gothenburg Conference on Arms Trade by Swedish churches, click on the link below:

<http://ethicalcomment.wordpress.com/2010/10/29/how-do-you-legislate-for-the-jesus-nut/>

UPCOMING EVENTS

First plans for the year 2011

CSC's plans for next year's events are still at a preliminary stage. There are initial plans for a consultation on human enhancement to be held in Brussels late in 2011 and for a Human Rights training in the Balkans also late in 2011. In addition, CSC is supporting a dialogue meeting on human rights to be held under the auspices of the Serbian Orthodox Church and in cooperation with the Community of Protestant Churches in Europe and the Russian Orthodox Church in Germany in May.

Recent events

The consultation Poverty, Wealth and Ecology in Europe has just taken place in Hungary (on 8-12 November). More information about the results of that event and the dialogue meeting between CEC and the Latin American Council of Churches, which preceded the consultation, in the next Europe Update.

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 • <http://csc.ceceurope.org/>

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

Edited by Elina Eloranta
Issued 18.11.2010