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## CSC Update on European Affairs

### TOPICS COVERED:

First meeting of the new CSC Plenary; Implementation of Article 17; Churches and Human Rights; Freedom of Religion in Cyprus; Church Action on Labour and Life launched; CSC statement on the EU Danube Strategy; Nuclear disarmament; Current and future priorities of the European Union; Results of the Reflection Group on the long-term future of the Union; 60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Schuman Declaration; NEW WEBSITE for CSC; upcoming events.

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## CHURCH AND SOCIETY COMMISSION

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### Human rights and social commitment at the heart of the churches calling

Human rights and social commitment are at the heart of the churches calling. This became evident in the first Plenary Meeting of the new Church and Society Commission of the Conference of European Churches (CSC) in Hagenau near Strasbourg from 28 May to 1 June 2010.

As its main theme the meeting reflected on the role of religious symbols in the public sphere. Recently, for instance, the Swiss minaret initiative and Italian crucifix case have raised controversy and shown the thin line between freedom from and freedom for religion. It was noted that many conflicts over religious matters derive from a lack of communication but also from an inability to effectively address concerns emanating from increased diversity in our societies. The meeting concluded that there is a need for more and better inter-religious and intercultural dialogue, and religious education both formal and informal.

Besides its internal debate, the Plenary had the opportunity to visit the Council of Europe and discuss religious and human rights with several of its high-level officials. Mr Juris Rudevskis from the Court of Human Rights provided a briefing on the Court's case law in relation to Article 9 which stipulates the freedom of religion. He explained that whereas the right to believe is an absolute right, the external manifestation of religious belief can be limited in the name of public safety, public order, health and morals or the rights and freedoms of others, but only as prescribed by law and as necessary in democratic societies. These limitations are applied with a margin of appreciation for Member States in order to accommodate specificities of national contexts. Mr Alfonso de Salas from the Directorate of Human Rights described the Council of Europe Secretariat as a watchdog monitoring the compliance of the Member States' commitments.

According to Director General of Education, Culture and Heritage, Youth and Sport, Mrs G. Battaini-Dragoni, the Council of Europe has, over last years, developed a new policy towards religious communities. More than before, the organisation is now open for dialogue with religious communities as recognition of their importance in promoting human rights, rule of law and democracy. Mrs Battaini-Dragoni called the Conference of European Churches “a key organisation in making our societies more open, democratic and respectful of human dignity.” The Church and Society Commission is committed to this end. Serge Fornerod, newly elected Moderator of the Church and Society Commission, stated: “the Gospel calls us to defend the whole range of human rights and not only the right on religious freedom.”

In addition to the topic of human rights, the Commission was received by one its own members, Dr. Verena Taylor. Dr. Taylor, the Head of Protocol of the Council of Europe and former director of the Council of Europe Liaison Office with the European Union, offered the meeting an overview of the history of relations between the Council of Europe and the European Union.

The Plenary also heard the report on the Commission’s work since the CEC Lyon Assembly in July 2009 and discussed its work programme for 2010 and 2011. The Plenary agreed the priorities for the year 2011 and took notice of this year’s priorities, already approved by the CEC Presidium in its meeting in late April. In the next period of time, CSC will, for instance, continue deepening its dialogue on globalisation with the Latin American Council of Churches, developing the Churches’ Human Rights Reader – already partly ready and online – and contributing to the European Year on Combating Poverty and Social Exclusion. Furthermore, CSC will, for example, implement the Education Strategy, adopted by the Plenary, promote nuclear disarmament and debate on human enhancement.

The Church and Society Commission elected Pasteur Serge Fornerod (Federation of Swiss Protestant Churches) as the Moderator, and Mag. Katerina Karkala-Zorba (Orthodox Church of Greece) and Rev. Jan Dus (Evangelical Church of Czech Brethren) as the Vice-Moderators of the new Executive Committee. In addition, Bishop Porfyrios Papastylianou (Orthodox Church of Cyprus), Dr. Charles Reed (Church of England) and Dr. Verena Taylor (Evangelical Church AB and HB in Austria) will serve in the Executive Committee.

The Sunday worship service was held at the Church of St. Thomas in Strasbourg. On Monday evening the Commission held a reception with representatives of local churches representing Anglican, Orthodox, Protestant and Roman Catholic churches.

In her closing reflection, Mag. Karkala-Zorba recalled the words of Jesus Christ and said the mandate of the Church and Society Commission is what Jesus asked us to do: “to be there for the people in need.”

Find the full list of members of the new Church and Society Commission at:

<http://csc.ceceurope.org/who-we-are/csc-plenary>

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## LISBON TREATY

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### CSC and COMECE adopt guidelines for the Article 17 dialogue

After years of negotiations and adoption process, the European Union got, on 1 December 2009, a new legal basis in the form of the Treaty of Lisbon. Already some months before, the new round of

negotiations was set in train to seek agreement on the implementation of that Treaty. The attention of the Member States has been, above all, on the setting up of the new foreign service (the External Action Service). Away from the limelight other elements of the Treaty have been looked upon, like for instance, the EU accession to the European Convention on Human Rights and the implementation of the citizen's initiative. For the churches, the entering into force of the Treaty means that it is time to make a proposal on the implementation of the dialogue between "us" and the EU institutions (Article 17).

The Church and Society Commission of the Conference of European Churches (CSC of CEC) and the Commission of Bishops' Conferences in the European Community (COMECE) have been working on a joint document since last autumn. The draft text was circulated to the CEC constituency for consultation in late December and received some 20 responses. The revised text was adopted with some amendments by the COMECE Plenary in mid-April and later by CEC Presidium at its meeting in Warsaw on 25-27 April. The document will serve as the basis for discussions on Article 17 with the EU institutions.

The churches' document acknowledges the similarity between the value basis of the European Union (Article 2) and the value basis of European integration as expressed in Charta Oecumenica. It considers Article 17 as a welcome legal reference reflecting the years of dialogue between the European institutions and churches and religious communities. The paper explains the specific contribution the churches make to European integration and it offers content to the notions of "openness, transparency and regularity" which are to define the dialogue. Unlike the consultation paper, the final paper does not include the concrete proposals on the forms of the future dialogue. These proposals were approved by the CEC Presidium as a reserve of ideas to be drawn on during the discussions with the institutions.

For more information contact: [csc@cec-kek.be](mailto:csc@cec-kek.be)

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## HUMAN RIGHTS

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### European Churches meet to discuss Human Rights

The work has been under way already for some time in order to develop a Human Rights Manual for the use of CEC Member Churches. On 3-5 May, CSC brought together human rights focal points from 25 Member Churches to further debates on those topics on which the texts are ready. These include, for instance, "The Bible and Human Rights", "Interpretation of Human Rights in the Light of Church Fathers" and "Universality and Different Cultures and Traditions". In general, the meeting sought ways to translate human rights questions such as freedom of religion and human dignity into theological and ethical terms in a manner that allows them to be brought to the "parishioners in the pews", as one participant called it. The infrastructure and hospitality for the meeting was graciously provided by the Church and Society Commission of the Diocese for Central Europe of the Serbian Orthodox Church in Hildesheim, Germany.

As the next step of the process the manual will be complemented by additional articles on human rights and security and on social justice, and then distributed as a reader. This reader will comprise a series of short booklets covering individual human rights subjects from a legal and practical perspective accompanied by theological reflections to underpin them, as well as discussion guides for parishioners and local congregations. The reader will be produced in the course of 2010 and 2011 and be made widely available to all Member Churches.

Download the Human Rights Manual in its current volume at:

[http://csc.ceceurope.org/fileadmin/filer/csc/Human\\_Rights/HumanRightsManualWorkinProgress.pdf](http://csc.ceceurope.org/fileadmin/filer/csc/Human_Rights/HumanRightsManualWorkinProgress.pdf)

As a parallel process to the development of the Human Rights Manual, CSC is developing an on-line Human Rights Library consisting of churches' statements and reports.

Visit the CSC Human Rights Library at: <http://csc.ceceurope.org/issues/human-rights-library/>

## Churches urge the EU to help protect cultural heritage in the Republic of Cyprus

Protection of the cultural heritage in the Northern part of Cyprus was a topic for a seminar organised at the European Parliament on 14 April. The event was hosted by MEP Dr. Eleni Theocharous, enjoyed the high patronage of His Excellency Dr. Hans-Gert Pöttering and was organised by the Representation of the Church of Cyprus to the EU in co-operation with CSC.

The seminar was opened by the Archbishop of Cyprus, His Beatitude Chrysostomos II, who called upon "the European Union to support our demand strongly and powerfully and to work systematically and effectively in order to restore and ensure respect for religious freedoms in the occupied part of our island; to put an end to the looting and plundering of our sacred sites and monuments and to protect our religious sites." Besides calling for the respect of religious freedom of Christians, the seminar stressed the need to ensure the respect of human rights in general and for all religious denominations.

The seminar learned about two already completed programmes to restore cultural and religious monuments (the Agios Nikolaos Church in Bedestan and Emerke Hamam) within the occupied part of Cyprus and about an ongoing programme (of €800.000) concerning the architectural documentation of religious monuments.

Read more about the discussions in the seminar from CSC website at: <http://csc.ceceurope.org/issues/human-rights/>

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## EMPLOYMENT

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### Churches launch CALL network for a just economy in Europe

The new Christian Employment and Economy Network, Church Action on Labour and Life (CALL) was founded in Brussels on 28-30 April. The first and the third day of the meeting set the network in motion. After a more general stocktaking on elements contributing to a just and sustainable economy, CALL organized itself into five permanent working groups. These groups will provide the core arena for the co-operation within the network. The first working group is preparing a citizen's initiative on the balance between working time and family life. The second will focus on precarious working situations. A third group will work on the role of religion in the public sphere. The fourth group will look at concepts for sustainable economic growth. A fifth group committed itself to produce a regular newsletter on economic ethics.

The whole network is to meet in assemblies. The next assembly is planned for spring 2011 in Bucharest. The founding meeting also elected a coordination team, whose co-moderators are Alison Jackson from the Methodist Church in Britain and Rev. Dr. Dieter Heidtmann (CSC).

On 29 April, the CALL held its opening conference at the European Parliament. Besides a number of members of the European Parliament, the speakers included, among others, H.E. Metropolitan Prof. Dr. Nifon of Targoviste, Ms Anne Degrand-Guillaud, Coordinator of the European Year for Combating Poverty and Social Exclusion in the European Commission and Prof. Tim Jackson from the Centre for Environmental Strategy at the University of Surrey.

More about the conference at: <http://csc.ceceurope.org/issues/social-and-economic-issues/>

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## EUROPE OF REGIONS

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### Intercultural understanding key to future of Danube Region

CSC together with the Community of Protestant Churches in Europe (CPCE) and COMECE issued a joint statement to the European Commission consultation on the EU Strategy for the Danube Region (see Europe Update N°30).

The churches' statement recognizes the role religious identities have played in recent conflicts in the Southern and Eastern Danube region. Against this history, the churches regard the strengthening of mutual understanding between cultures and religions a prerequisite for the good future of the area, and already act to that end. Besides supporting the reconciliation work, the future EU Danube Strategy should, the churches argue, foster the integration of minorities, better balance between ecology and transport, and support the education sector. While the economic issues are very important, the EU Strategy should enable to address "soft" issues which create conditions for the development of the region's potential.

The Danube is Europe's second longest river (2778 km) and what is referred to as the Danube Region spreads over 14 countries from Germany to Ukraine. The Commission is expected to table a proposal for the regional development strategy in December 2010 which is likely to be adopted by the EU Member States early in 2011.

Read the CSC-CPCE-COMECE statement at:

[http://csc.ceceurope.org/fileadmin/filer/csc/CSC\\_News/eusdr\\_cec\\_comece\\_cpce.pdf](http://csc.ceceurope.org/fileadmin/filer/csc/CSC_News/eusdr_cec_comece_cpce.pdf)

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## PEACE AND SECURITY

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### Talks intensify about the future of nuclear disarmament

The Non-Proliferation Treaty Review Conference (NPT RevCon) in New York (3-28 May) is now in its last days of arms wrestling over the future of nuclear weapons. The European Union went to the RevCon with a rather good Common Position. Even if France once again held the EU back from adopting a more progressive stance, the final compromise paper offers for the first time a balanced look on both the non-proliferation and disarmament pillars of the NPT. The positive new points include, *inter alia*, the EU's call for irreversibility to guide all measures in the field of nuclear

disarmament, its call for reduction of operational readiness of the nuclear weapons and its recognition of the positive role of civil society in promoting NPT. As in the past, the EU advocated for the strengthening of treaty-based nuclear disarmament and of international bodies such as IAEA. A quite interesting move was the EU's proposal for Russia and the United States to further develop unilateral initiatives for arms reduction alongside bilateral ones. This shows unilateralism is no longer banished.

The CSC statement to the EU on its nuclear disarmament policy led to invitations for a pre-meeting at the Council before the NPT RevCon as well as to a meeting which took place in the framework of the NPT meeting itself.

At the national level, the UK churches have pursued their campaign [www.endnuclearweapons.org.uk](http://www.endnuclearweapons.org.uk). The churches' petition has been presented both in New York and to Number 10 Downing Street. In Finland on 15 April, the Evangelical-Lutheran Church held a seminar with key government officials and a CSC representative on the issue of nuclear disarmament. The Evangelical Church in Germany will flag up the issue in a Brussels event on 1 June. At the global level, the World Council of Churches (WCC) is actively engaged in nuclear disarmament.

Alongside the NPT RevCon, the developments affecting the future of nuclear weapons include the publication of the new US strategy on nuclear weapons (Nuclear Posture Review), the signing of new US-Russia strategic arms reduction treaty (new START) and the revision of NATO's Strategic Concept. CSC's stance towards the NATO's Strategic Concept will be informed by an expert meeting to be held in Brussels on 8-9 June in co-operation with IKV Pax Christi and WCC.

For more information on the CSC work on nuclear disarmament and/or to inform the CSC constituency on your national activities on the topic, please contact Ms Elina Eloranta ([elo@cec-kek.be](mailto:elo@cec-kek.be)).

Read the WCC commentary at the opening of the NPT RevCon:

<http://www.oikoumene.org/en/news/news-management/eng/a/browse/2/article/1634/up-close-at-nuclear-treat.html>

Read the WCC commentary on the new START:

<http://www.oikoumene.org/en/news/news-management/eng/a/browse/3/article/1634/russia-and-united-states.html>

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## EUROPEAN INTEGRATION

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### Current and future priorities of the European Union

As reported in the previous Europe Updates, the last year was in many ways a turning point for the European Union. The final negotiations over the Lisbon Treaty occupied the Member States, a new European Parliament took office, and so did, at the beginning of this year, a new European Commission. On the policy side, the focus was on climate change, the adoption of a five-year plan for justice and home affairs (migration, organized crime etc.) and, of course, the economic and financial crisis. This year was supposed to see a major debate on long-term perspectives in the area of economic, financial, social and environmental development (read about the CSC statement on EU 2020 Strategy in Europe Update N° 29), but that debate has been impeded by the need to keep

finding ways out of the financial crisis. Even though the Strategy did not necessarily receive the attention it most surely deserved, it is likely to be adopted at the European Summit on 17-18 June.

In terms of multi-annual planning, the European Commission has adopted a new system. Instead of separate annual work programmes and five-year plans, each year the Commission is from this year on preparing an annual work programme together with an annex providing indication on possible future strategic and priority initiatives. The Commission is expected to present its work programme 2011 in October or November.

See the European Commission work programme 2010 and the annex for the multi-annual bullets: [http://ec.europa.eu/atwork/programmes/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/atwork/programmes/index_en.htm)

Alongside with the permanent President of the European Council who sets the agenda for the European Council meetings, and the new High Representative who steers foreign policy, the EU presidencies continue to have an impact on the Council agenda. The EU Presidency is currently held by Spain, will be taken over by Belgium at the beginning of July and by Hungary at the beginning of next year. The trio programme for these presidencies was published in November 2009 (see link below). The Council secretariat has already been invited to put down in writing its thoughts of what could be included in the programme of Poland, Denmark and Cyprus (June 2011-December 2012).

Presidency programme of Spain, Belgium and Hungary:

[http://www.eutrio.es/export/sites/trio/comun/descarga/PROGRAMA\\_TRxO\\_EN.pdf](http://www.eutrio.es/export/sites/trio/comun/descarga/PROGRAMA_TRxO_EN.pdf)

Two and half years ago (Europe Update N° 13), the European Council appointed a wise men group to reflect on the long-term perspectives of the European Union. On 8 May, its Chair, the former Spanish Prime Minister, Felipe Gonzalez submitted the report to the President of the European Council, Herman Van Rompuy. The report invites the Europeans to update their economic and social models as well as their security models, to foster innovation and to address the challenges of demographic change, immigration, energy security and climate change. In addition, it draws attention to the EU's role in defining new rules of global governance and advocates for the promotion of good governance within Europe.

Read the report at:

<http://www.consilium.europa.eu/showFocus.aspx?id=1&focusid=473&lang=en>

## 60 years after the Schuman Declaration

2010 is the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the declaration made on 9 May 1950 by the French Foreign Minister Robert Schuman, a deeply committed Roman Catholic, calling on France, Germany and other countries to pool their coal and steel production to make war 'materially impossible'. This is recognised as the moment when the European Union was born. Since 1985 the Member States have labelled the anniversary of declaration as 'Europe Day'- an occasion for 'activities and festivities that bring Europe closer to its citizens and peoples of the Union closer to one another'.

To mark the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary, the Church of England commissioned a pamphlet to examine this declaration afresh together with the Christian values that shaped Robert Schuman's vision for Europe. The pamphlet aims at fostering the development for a renewed vision and mission for Europe. <http://www.cofe.anglican.org/info/socialpublic/europe/schuman.rtf>.

The anniversary was marked by specific 'Europe Day' services at Westminster Abbey in London as well as in the Pro-Cathedral of Holy Trinity and the Chapel of the Resurrection, both in Brussels. In addition, Jeff Fountain, the Director of the ecumenical Schuman Centre for the Study of Europe published *Deeply Rooted – The Forgotten Legacy of Robert Schuman*. <http://www.schumancentre.eu/>

Also the secular Brussels think-tank, the European Policy Centre, of which CSC is a member, took the opportunity to revisit the Schuman Declaration. Read the EPC document at: [http://www.epc.eu/documents/uploads/1091\\_schuman\\_declaration.pdf](http://www.epc.eu/documents/uploads/1091_schuman_declaration.pdf)

## Analogy between the Schuman Declaration and current situation

In his editorial of Agence Europe bulletin, Ferdinand Riccardi compared the situation of today to the situation of Europe 60 years ago. Back then very few people understood the significance of the creation of the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC). Today, most Europeans do not realize that they are actually going through a similar period of transformation. According to Riccardi, the ground-breaking change is brought about by the new institutional structure of common foreign policy, the acceptance of economic governance for the euro zone and, if achieved, the recent proposal by Jacques Delors and Jerzy Buzek to create a European Energy Community. In addition, Europe will be changed by the increased functionality of the European freedom, security and justice area and the project of a single European sky.

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## COMMUNICATION

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### CSC has a new website and outlook!

The new website and logo for the whole of CEC ([www.ceceurope.org](http://www.ceceurope.org)) were launched in January. Due to lack of staff resources, the renewal of the CSC website and outlook was delayed but the new CSC logo is now in use. As the website is also coming close to its intended future look, we invite all readers to visit it and offer us their feedback ([elo@cec-kek.be](mailto:elo@cec-kek.be)). Besides providing the latest news on CSC activities, the website is developing into a major resource on churches' reflections on church and society issues. The CSC Human Rights Library has been on-line since a couple of weeks. The section on Ethics, Science and Technology has recently been fuelled by new contributions from the CEC constituency. Your documents on these and other sections are welcome.

Visit the new CSC website at: <http://csc.ceceurope.org/>

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## UPCOMING EVENTS

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### Planned CSC events in 2010

The CSC brainstorming group on education met in Strasbourg on 26-27 May (contact: Ms Carla Maurer, [carla.maurer@cec-kek.fr](mailto:carla.maurer@cec-kek.fr)). The 8th Assembly of the European Christian Environmental Network (ECEN) will take place in Prague on 9-13 June. For more information, please visit: <http://www.ecen.org/cms/index.php?page=prague10>. You may also contact Rev. Dr. Peter Pavlovic, [ppt@cec-kek.be](mailto:ppt@cec-kek.be).

The CSC expert meeting to devise a churches' contribution to NATO's new Strategic Concept takes place in Brussels on 8-9 June (contact: Ms Elina Eloranta, [elo@cec-kek.be](mailto:elo@cec-kek.be)). A Dialogue Seminar on the social dimension (poverty and social exclusion) of the Europe 2020 Strategy is scheduled for 9 July. As usual, the Dialogue Seminar is a joint endeavour of CSC, COMECE and the European Commission. (For more information, contact Rev. Dr. Dieter Heidtmann, [dht@cec-kek.be](mailto:dht@cec-kek.be)). CSC will also organise a consultation on poverty in Brussels at the end of September. That event is part of the co-operation framework between CSC, Caritas Europa, COMECE and Eurodiaconia during the European Year on Poverty (contact: [dht@cec-kek.be](mailto:dht@cec-kek.be)). Furthermore, CSC is involved in the organisation of the next event of the Wealth, Poverty and Ecology process of the World Council of Churches. This meeting is scheduled to take place in Hungary from 8 to 12 November (contact: [ppt@cec-kek.be](mailto: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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