

Newsletter June 2013

CALL is a Europe wide network which seeks to address employment and related economic and social issues from the perspective of Christian theology and a Christian way of life and to promote a Christian perspective in the debates on Europe's economic and social policies. Our aims are to:

- support Church action on economic and employment issues;
- network on these issues in Europe;
- empower people on them;
- exchange expertise among members

Our current projects are:

1. A new working group on Employment for Young people.
2. A European Church action "*No future without Good work!*".
3. A working group developing material on precarious work.
4. A working group on a sustainable economy.

CALL Coordination Team meets in Rome, Italy

At the beginning of June the Coordination Team of the **CALL** Network met for their first meeting of 2013 in Italy, hosted by Baptist Church in Rome. The members reviewed and evaluated the work done by the network since their last meeting in December 2012.

They also discussed the activities, structure and identity of the **CALL** network. The agenda of the meeting included a variety of issues, starting with reviewing the results and outcomes of the working groups, discussing the possibilities of increasing ownership and expanding the network, defining the role and future of **CALL** after the reorganisation of the Conference of European Churches, as well as possible cooperation with ecumenical and diaconal organisations working on similar issues as **CALL**.

One of the most important points was the identity and function of the **CALL** Network.

What are its functions in the environment of European Churches? What are the main tasks and issues to be addressed? What is the added value of such a network? Being convinced that Church is a socially active entity with a call to be involved in various socio-political challenges that society is facing today, the Coordination Team developed three main work principles: Exchange of information and positions – Sharing and mapping of good practices in the area – Providing opportunities to find partners.

To be more effective in its work and to be able to reach out to more Churches and Church related organisations, the Coordination Team will draw a map of the existing members in Europe and of potential new members among Churches and Church related organisations.



The preliminary dates for the next CALL Assembly in 2014 were set: it is planned to take place from 6th to 8th of October 2014.

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• Please forward this Newsletter to anyone else who is interested. It is also available on the **CALL** website:

<http://csc.ceceurope.org/issues/social-and-economic-issues/call-network/>

• If you would like an event or project to be included in future editions of the Newsletter, please send details to call@cec-kek.be.

• Any donations for the work of **CALL** should be sent to CSC, but clearly marked as intended for **CALL**.

Youth employment in Europe - a challenge for Churches?

Youth unemployment levels in Europe are reaching new heights: in the European Union more than 5.7 million (23.6%) young people (under 25) were without a job in January 2013, and the trend indicates that things are not getting better. Doubtless measures are taken on both EU and national levels to ensure more secure future for young people. But is this enough? Often the remedies offered are addressing the consequences rather than causes of the desperate situation young people (and not only they) are facing today.

We might ask: Is this really a challenge for Churches?

Yet it is not enough to focus on the consequences of the current situation without addressing and discussing the basic principles upon which the EU was founded and concepts of democracy itself.

As Churches and Church related organisations we need to seek to enhance solidarity among Europeans of all ages, assuming that solidarity is one of the main components of democracy. We need to attempt to find answers to the current social crisis and the crisis in underlying values.

What are causes and consequences of the situation our society is facing today? What are the roots of this crisis and whom does it affect most? Who is making decisions that can bring a change to the precarious situations in many countries? What is the role that Churches and

Church related organisations can play to overcome the dramatic situation of young people today?

What needs to be done for a better inter-generational dialogue and cooperation within society? Are there ways in which Churches, Church organisations and young people can cooperate that will help to find a solution?

To address all these questions, the working group on Youth Unemployment of the **CALL** Network, will organise a conference to bring together several players who might be able to make a change in the situation we face in Europe today.

This event will be designed to bring together young people and representatives from various European Churches and Church related organisations, which are already engaged in projects and programmes for youth employment. The conference will aim to understand the expectations and needs of young people and to identify possible ways of cooperation in addressing the issues around youth employment in Europe.

The participants will discuss the challenge of youth unemployment from various aspects, to show different perspectives and discover good practice already in place in Churches and diaconal organisations to improve the situation, and will share ideas and experiences.

The conference will take place 28-30 November 2013 in the Evang. Tagungsstaette in Loewenstein, Germany.

The working group leader: Kristine Jansone, General Secretary of the European Youth Council in Europe

Working group on Precarious Work

Labour Exploitation in Europe – Do we close our eyes?

European Hearing – 7-9.06.2013 – Evang. Akademie Bad Boll, Germany

The European Hearing gathered 60 participants from all over Europe. The hearing was organised by [Verein für Internationale Jugendarbeit Stuttgart \(VIJ\)](#) in cooperation with AIDRom - Ecumenical Association of Churches in Romania and *Diakonisches Werk Bremen*, partners in the **European project “An informed person is a protected one”**.

The aim of the hearing was to come to a common understanding regarding precarious work, labour exploitation, which leads to forced labour and also to identify new forms of forced labour.

The hearing highlighted existing best practice, explored transferability to other countries and will feed into EU debates on the issue of “precarious work”.

The profound content of speeches and presentations given by representatives of the International Labour

Organisation, EU Commission and experts of the field led to deep exchange and discussions.

There was consensus among all participants that several elements are indispensable for combating forced labour:

- national coordination in each country,
- interdisciplinary networks on all levels,
- international awareness raising in society and politics,
- better protection for victims, especially through the financing of counselling centres,
- and an effort of governments to give victims of forced labour better access to legal ways of claiming their rights.

I presented best practice networking as coordinator of the EU project and co-moderator of **CALL**. After a short presentation of the **CALL** activity I invited the participants to join it. →

The **CALL** network was also represented by the coordinator of the Working group on Precarious Work, Klaus-Peter Spohn-Logé from Germany.

As consequence of the EU project, the participants decided to continue working together to fight against labour exploitation and to improve networking.

An alliance has been founded in Germany in the federal state of Baden-Württemberg with different partners: trade unions, NGOs, Church organisations, politicians. This alliance was also presented at the conference, and this encouraged others to follow this good example of best practice in networking.

We presented a handbook promoting best practice in prevention, identification and assisting victims of labour exploitation. It was appreciated by the participants; they

CALL members are invited to contribute to the extension of the brochure by bringing information regarding labour rights in their own country.

Please do it now, i.e. by end of July 2013!

The information will be used by the Working group on Precarious Work.

will use it in their daily work. A good example is the German-Romanian brochure explaining working conditions and labour rights in Germany.

Download English handbook and brochures in German, English or Romanian from: www.diakonie-bremen.de.

Elena Timofticiuc, AIDRom - Ecumenical Association of Churches in Romania, and co-moderator of **CALL**

Working group on Economic Sustainability

The working group on Sustainable Economy met on the 30 April - 1 May in the margins of the German *Kirchentag* in Hamburg with the task of deciding on which topic to focus our attention.

Starting from the common ground of European Social Policy, to which we were magnificently introduced by **Dr. Jürgen Born** (see next page), we noticed how more and more of our Churches are harshly exposed to the economic crises. Not only does there seem to be less financial means at the Churches disposal, but also they have to respond to the social emergencies in their countries.

We therefore decided first to conduct a survey on how the different Churches are reacting to the crises.

To participate in the survey on Church answers to the crisis, please download the questionnaire from [the CALL website](http://www.call-network.org),

complete it with information from your own Church and send it back.

Please do it now, i.e. by end of July

We sent out a questionnaire on that issue to our members, which will enable the Working group on Economic Sustainability to come up with some conclusions this Autumn. – Please complete the questionnaire and send it back this month!

The working group leader: Herbert Anders, Baptist pastor and member of the Commission on Globalisation and Environment of the Italian Protestant Federation

Please take part in CALL: answer the requests above!

Contribute as a member by giving **your national information**, local stories, legal experiences, etc. to the **CALL** working groups. → One e-mail address for communication: call@cec-kek.be.

> Please put in the *email subject box* the name of the *working group leader* addressed by you.

Cardijn
VEREIN

Announcement and attachment – please circulate this! – Invitation to register now for September! – The new 'Cardijn Vereini' invites to an **International Ecumenical Seminar** ([click for attachments](#)) all those engaged with the destructive consequences of the economic crisis and a new way forward to reflect on a **"Liberating Faith for Action..." – 19th-22nd September 2013 – Linz, Austria.**

Contact CALL!

Website: <http://csc.ceceurope.org/issues/social-and-economic-issues/call-network/>

Please get in touch with us if you are interested in taking part in any of the activities of **CALL**.

One e-mail address for all contacts: call@cec-kek.be.

> Please put in the *email subject box* the issue or activity of **CALL** you are interested in.

A more social Europe: who is responsible?

Sometimes, the EU can be very helpful. Sometimes, national politicians love to demonise the EU as an undemocratic monster forcing good-willed governments into bad actions against their own people.

The EU blame game

If you fail to tax your citizens or companies efficiently, blame it on the EU internal market. If you embrace national lobby groups in order to regain support after a lost election, blame it on relentless EU deregulation. If you are too corrupt to fight corruption, blame it on the opaque EU decision-making process.

Whenever bad national performance is blamed on the EU, some applaud, sometimes even Churches. But often they are wrong. The EU blame game does not work properly, especially when it comes to social policy. To understand this, take a closer look at the EU treaties.

On the one hand, the treaties claim social progress as an objective of the Union and dedicate an extra chapter to social policy. On the other hand, the catalogue of competences rather turns into a list of incompetence when scrutinised. The EU doesn't have any substantial competence with regard to social policy unless it fits into the logic of the internal market. And even then, each measure implemented has to "take account of the diverse forms of national practices, in particular in the field of contractual relations, and the need to maintain the competitiveness of the Union economy" (Art. 151 TFEU).

Yes, "the Union shall support and complement the activities of the Member states" (Art. 153 TFEU) – but only in a limited number of areas. And the General Directorates of the EU Commission in charge may even be willing: mostly they are weak. *Subsidiarity rules!*

As long as it is so, a truly Social Europe can only be built at the national level. So be careful with playing the EU blame game.

If however you want the EU to assume a higher degree of social responsibility, you have to be ready to give up national social standards and national sovereignty. And you had better hurry, since the sands are running out.

New EU economic policy instruments like the Country specific recommendations are likely to reinforce the unrivalled reign of the internal market, relegating social issues in the EU to the fringe again.

So, who is to blame here?

Dr. Jürgen Born, Institute for Church and Society of the Evangelical Church of Westphalia, and co-moderator of **CALL**

Biblical-theological input

The land shall not be sold for ever: for the land is mine; for ye are strangers and sojourners with me.
(Leviticus 25:23)

Economic trends have always been in conflict with the idea that the land doesn't belong to humans. Actually that was the very reason why the verse was written down, in what, in the form of Leviticus 25, comes to us as the third economic reform anchored in the First Testament's writings.

Neoliberal economics are no exception: already since the 1980s the world has become aware that 80 percent of all goods are consumed by only 20 percent of the population and consequently the remaining 80 percent of the world's population have only 20 percent of the goods at their disposal – figures that, according to the ongoing UN Human Development Reports, still show a worsening trend, so that today 20 percent of the world population take as much as 86 percent of all goods for their consumption.

And the appropriation trends do not just concern goods, but also services like health, education, communication, even charitable giving, which are monopolised and governed according to a profit logic as is knowledge, for example computer know how, medical wisdom, or genetic research which undergo the measures of privatisation through patenting.

Ecumenical trends, however, seem to be a possible antidote to these economic trends.

Ecumenism lives from the idea of sharing. Ecumenical churches meet to partake in their faiths. Ecumenical churches discuss at round tables to exchange information, knowledge, experience and wisdom. Ecumenical churches unite on one Scripture, that therefore doesn't have a proprietor.

To continue in the hard work of ecumenism is not just about a spiritual movement, but is a proclamation of justice and salvation to a world of economic appropriation.

Herbert Anders, Baptist pastor in Italy

CALL therefore looks forward to the upcoming General Assembly of the ecumenically engaged Churches in Europe and prays for their sharing in one common Spirit and for their sharing of the specific blessings inherent to their particular confession with all the others.

Dates for your Diary:

October 26-27 2013	Working Group on Sustainable Economy	Brussels
October 27-29 2013	Coordination Team meeting	Brussels
October 29-30 2013	Working Group on Precarious Work	Brussels
November 28-30 2013	Workshop on Youth Employment	Löwenstein, Germany
October 6-8 2014	CALL Assembly 2014	