

# CALL

EUROPEAN CHRISTIAN  
EMPLOYMENT AND  
ECONOMY NETWORK

*Church  
Action on  
Labour  
and  
Life*

## Newsletter Spring 2011

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**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:**

- Campaign on economic and employment issues in Europe
- Network on economic and employment issues in Europe
- Exchange expertise among members
- Empower people on economic and employment issues

#### **Our current projects are:**

1. A European citizens' initiative on Sunday Working
2. A working group on precarious work
3. A working group on religion in the public sphere
4. A working group on concepts for a sustainable economy
5. Ethical reflections on economic and social issues

### Dates for your Diary

11-13 May 2011	CALL Assembly – Empowering People	Bucharest
13-14 May 2011	ECG Assembly	Bucharest
15-17 July 2011	UK Justice and Peace Network Conference “Justice at Work” <a href="http://www.justice-and-peace.org.uk/conference.html">http://www.justice-and-peace.org.uk/conference.html</a>	Hayes Conference Centre, Swanwick, UK

Please let Alison Jackson [call@cec-kek.be](mailto:call@cec-kek.be) know if you would like us to advertise an event here.

### **From the Coordination Team**

Welcome to the Spring 2011 edition of the *CALL* newsletter.

The Coordination Team met last month in Bucharest with our main business as planning for the *CALL* Assembly in Bucharest on 11-13 May; the title will be Empowering People. This promises to be a really interesting event, with an opportunity to learn about the work in Romania and a visit to the Patriarchate in Bucharest as well as some hands on experience of Community Organising. Come and see for yourself how President Obama started – the people who will be demonstrating the training to you were themselves trained by the people who trained Barack Obama in Chicago. Don't miss it.

At the beginning of April, there was a Conference on "Escaping the Growth Trap" in Bad Boll. This built on the presentation by Professor Tim Jackson in the European Parliament at the first *CALL* conference last year. Some really interesting speakers got us all thinking about alternative ways of judging prosperity. The afternoon before the Conference – 31 March also in Bad Boll – the *CALL* Working Group on a Sustainable Economy met to take stock of what work has already been done on measures of well being and start to define what they believe the measures should be. The outcome of their work will be presented at the *CALL* conference in May.

As a result of feedback, we have changed the format of the Newsletter with less text here and more as links to the *CALL* and other websites. Please let us know if you prefer it.

If you would like an event or project to be included in future editions of the Newsletter, please email details to [call@cec-kek.be](mailto:call@cec-kek.be) by the last day of the month before issue – 28 February, 31 May, 31 August and 30 November. The main language of the Newsletter is English but we are happy to receive contributions from *CALL* members in German and French also.

**Please forward this Newsletter to anyone else who might be interested. It is also available on the *CALL* website** <http://csc.ceceurope.org/issues/social-and-economic-issues/call-network/>

### **Community Organising – Community Empowerment**

An afternoon at the *CALL* Conference in May will be devoted to a demonstration of Community Organising according to the principles of Saul Alinsky who was working in Chicago from around 1940 until his death in 1972. A basic principle of his work was that change should start with the community which needs things to be changed. So when people working on his principles start working with a community, whether it is a neighbourhood or a group united in other ways (eg asylum seekers, low paid workers in a particular field) the starting point is to empower those people to run their own campaign. It is the people who define the problem, not the community worker; he or she helps them to define the problem, to work out what needs to be done to solve it and to decide how they will approach those who have the power to make changes. When there is a meeting with the authorities, the worker does not lead the delegation or speak on its behalf; members of the community do that themselves.

This is not an easy option. Most of us who work in this area are used to acting as a bridge between the powerful and the oppressed and it is hard to step back. In working with a community which is used to being marginalised, whose members believe that no one will listen to them, that they have no power to change things, it takes many months – often two or three years – to help a few leaders develop the courage and self esteem to confront public authorities or companies who they believe to be totally indifferent to their problems. But when they do it is very powerful and the results can surprise everyone.

The people we expect to be demonstrating this in Bucharest in May are from a deprived area in the North East of England who believed that they had no future. But they will tell you how they ended up in the UK Houses of

Parliament talking to Members of Parliament and Government Ministers about changing the law to deal with the problem that was concerning them.

For most of us who read this, Community Organising is something **we** do. We consult those on whose behalf we do it; we believe we know what they need; we care desperately about their welfare. But the Alinsky principles challenge us to take a back seat, to accept that we do not know best, that we do not know what the answer is. The true experts on poverty are the poor; the experts on exclusion are the excluded; on discrimination, those suffering discrimination; on deprivation, the deprived. If we empower people, they will do and demand things that we did not think about, possibly that we do not like. But they will change the world in a way that we cannot.

Alison Jackson  
Vice Chair, Church Action on Poverty

### **Working Group on Precarious Work**

From 9<sup>th</sup> to 11<sup>th</sup> of March 2011 ten representatives from eight countries met in the Evangelical Academy in Bad Herrenalb, Germany. It was the first meeting of the *CALL* working group on precarious work after the *CALL* Assembly last year in Brussels. Delegates from the Czech Republic, Finland, France, Germany, Italy, Poland, Romania and Switzerland took part in the meeting. There are some more countries interested in the issue including Austria, Estonia and Latvia which could not send representatives on this occasion.

Before meeting in Bad Herrenalb the participants had done a lot of homework by filling out a questionnaire with a number of questions concerning precarious work and the national situation in their home countries. During the workshop a first draft of a European survey on the basis of the answers to the questionnaire was discussed. Comparing the situation in the different countries there were some similarities as well as differences. The participants agreed that there is a lot of pressure in moment on working conditions and that one goal is to define a common understanding of minimum standards all over Europe.

A representative of the German Constructions Workers gave some information about the situation of migrant workers. He encouraged us to go on with our work and offered cooperation. Concrete ideas for projects were discussed with the background of a report which was given by Elena Timofticiuc from Romania. Together with the Diakonische Werk an international cooperation was started to improve the situation of women working in home care.

As next steps the working group will prepare some documents for the *CALL* Assembly in Bucharest: a revised version of the survey will be published as well as a report of what has been done and discussed in the working group. An open letter to EU Commission will raise the question of freedom of movement and the Posting of Workers Directive from a Christian perspective. The working group will also present a proposal how to take the work forward next year.

There will be a next meeting of the working group on precarious work during the *CALL* Assembly in May in Bucharest allowing new people who are interested to join the group. A follow up workshop to Bad Herrenalb is planned for autumn this year.

If you have questions or are interest in participating in the working group, please contact the moderator Klaus-Peter Spohn-Logé at [call@cec-kek.be](mailto:call@cec-kek.be)

### **Working Group on Concepts for a Sustainable Economy**

This Working Group aims to devise a list of indicators which can be measured and which can be presented to Governments as alternatives to economic growth in determining whether a country is prosperous.

Work on this in the UK has mostly been outside the churches.

There is strong evidence that the wider the income gap between rich and poor in a country, the worse the quality of life.

It is strongly argued that as economic, natural and social resources are finite; it is simply impossible for growth to continue for ever.

The UK Government has asked the Office for National Statistics to work out different ways of measuring well being and there is an online consultation.

Work has also been done by the French Government on measurement of well being.

Work in the churches has mainly sprung from ecological concerns; this working group is widening that to the economic and social fields.

In Bad Boll on 31 March, the Working Group spent some time discussing how to understand happiness or wellbeing or human flourishing in a Christian context. They then went on to consider what indicators they thought could be used to determine whether a society is providing for what they agreed to call wellbeing. During their discussion they were reminded that for the countries of Eastern Europe, economic growth remains necessary; there was discussion as to whether those countries should seek the life-style of Western Europe or whether we ought all to be moving towards something different.

Members of the Working Group also attended the conference on Escaping the Growth Trap and will incorporate those ideas into what they present at the *CALL* Conference in May.

If you are interested in joining in this discussion, please get in touch with Alison Jackson at [call@cec-kek.be](mailto:call@cec-kek.be)

### **Information from ECG (European Contact Group on Ecumenical Social Action)**

ECG draw our attention to their Annual Report 2010 which can be found on the *CALL* website [insert link]. It includes a report on their seminar held in Vilnius in October and the minutes of their Annual General Meeting along with some supporting documents.

ECG also invite us to attend their seminar in Bucharest after the *CALL* Conference. It is entitled "Empowerment – Methods and Visions" and will compare the methods used on projects visited in Romania with those used by the participants in the seminar. It runs from 17:00 on Friday 13 May with departure after breakfast on Sunday 15 May.

*Contact – Jean Pierre Thévenaz*

## Ethical reflection

In our last Newsletter, we introduced some reflections on how to define human well-being, an issue at the heart of the working group on a sustainable economy. Robin Morrison of the Church In Wales writes:

The biblical basis for challenging wealth and materialism as a definition of human flourishing is clear. However the constant challenge to us in the Churches of Europe is to find a way of upholding Christian values, but avoiding a simplistic view of how the economy actually works and the importance of employment and wealth creation for social goods in a functioning stable society. We know our societies are very fragile from recent global and local economic and political crises. I know some . . . believe these are symptoms of a massive global apocalyptic transition. That may or may not be the case, but I am concerned that Christians don't discredit the very values they wish to uphold by statements that are perceived to be naive when it comes to the political economy and its impact on human flourishing.

This is part of a more detailed discussion; read the whole of it on the *CALL* website  
<http://csc.ceceurope.org/issues/social-and-economic-issues/call-network/>

*CALL* is also participating in preparations for a European Citizens' Initiative on Sunday Working. This year, 1 May is on a Sunday and KDA (Kirchlicher Dienst in der Arbeitswelt) have published a leaflet "Es bleibt dabei – der Sonntag ist frei" (Sunday must stay free). This contains a piece by Herbert Lucan "Was kostet uns der Verlust des Sonntags?" (What does the loss of Sunday cost us?). Read it in German here  
<http://www.kda-ekd.de/arbeitsmaterial/2011/9864.php>

Contact – Jean Pierre Thévenaz

## Contact *CALL*

Please get in touch if you are interested in taking part either electronically or directly in any of the activities of *CALL*.

**Website** - <http://csc.ceceurope.org/index.php?id=924>

**Email address for all contacts:** [call@cec-kek.be](mailto:call@cec-kek.be) **Please note that this is a change from last time.** Please put the name of the person to whom your email is addressed in the email subject box

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