

CALL

EUROPEAN CHRISTIAN
EMPLOYMENT AND
ECONOMY NETWORK

*Church
Action on
Labour
and
Life*

Newsletter Spring 2012

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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 workplace
4. A working group on concepts for a sustainable economy
5. Ethical reflections on economic and social issues

For your Diary

8-10 October 2012

Third CALL Assembly

Brussels

Facing the crisis: CALL for good work in Europe

Don't miss this interesting and important event, with keynote speaker Prof. Dr. Torsten Meireis, Bern, Institute for Systematic Theology and sessions in the European Parliament with MEPs, members of the Commission and representatives of trade unions and employers organisations.

Invitations and registration forms are being sent out this month.

Please let Alison Jackson call@cec-kek.be know if you would like us to advertise an event here.

From the Coordination Team

Welcome to the Spring 2012 edition of the *CALL* newsletter.

The main work of *CALL* since the Bucharest Conference has been to continue the work of the working groups; three of these have either completed their work or are reaching a stage where they need to decide what the next step will be. The results will be presented at the third Assembly in October and decisions will then be taken on the work programme for the next three years.

There will be some important changes to the Coordination Team; Dieter Heidtmann and Alison Jackson are stepping down as co-moderators and new ones will be elected. Alison Jackson will retire from *CALL* completely, so we will also need a new coordinator for the working group on the economy. The working group on chaplaincy has completed its work and the Assembly will decide what topic should replace it.

Over the next four months, please think about these issues and let Frank-Dieter Fischbach, Dieter Heidtmann or Alison Jackson know if you are interested in becoming involved in the organisation of *CALL*. Contact details are at the end of this Newsletter.

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. 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/>

Precarious Work

“There is no future without good work” is the headline under which a church campaign against precarious and bad working conditions will be launched on the next *CALL* Assembly in Brussels. This proposal is the outcome of two meetings of the *CALL* working group on precarious work. One meeting took place in Linz/Austria November last year and one in Helsinki / Finland in April this year. After the evaluation of a questionnaire about the economic and social situation in different European countries the group defined its understanding of precarious work and of good work.

The project will have two main lines: on one side it is planned to produce information and education material for church communities which could be used in worship, in seminars or in publicity. The aim is to rise up awareness and consciousness in the churches and in society about precarious work conditions and to strengthen the demand for good work. On the other side concrete help and support will be given to those who are affected by precarious work conditions. The main target group in this counselling project will be mobile workers coming from Eastern Europe to work in western European countries. It is planned to produce leaflets and a booklet with basic information about labour and social rights in Europe in different languages. An application to fund the whole project was submitted to the EU programme ‘Europe for Citizens’ and we hope for a positive response.

If you have questions or are interested in participating in the working group, please contact the moderator Klaus-Peter Spohn-Logé at call@cec-kek.be

Concepts for a Sustainable Economy

This Working Group met in February in Brussels to decide what it would produce at the end of this period of work.

The group has reached a number of conclusions on what governments need to do to promote well being but has had to make some difficult decisions as to what to include and what to omit in presenting this information in a form which can be used by churches as they contribute to policy making in their own countries and in Europe.

At the Assembly, the group will launch a leaflet which sets out a small number of measures against which churches can assess the success of governments in achieving the wellbeing of their people and which can be used to inform advocacy in Europe and within member states. This short leaflet will be supported by a longer paper setting out the discussions which the group has had and the reasons behind the indicators they are suggesting.

An important issue for this group has been the contrast between eastern and western Europe. The idea of prosperity without economic growth, as proposed by Professor Tim Jackson whose address to the first *CALL* Assembly was the inspiration for this work, is much easier for people from western Europe to accept than for those from eastern Europe

If you have any questions or are interested in participating in this working group, please get in touch with the moderator, Alison Jackson at call@cec-kek.be

Sunday protection

The work on Sunday protection has shifted a little bit away from the *CALL* network and its working group over the last year. The reason is that in 2011 a European Sunday Alliance (ESA) was founded, which works specifically in Brussels engaging with the European institutions. *CALL* is a member of the ESA as a network of the Church and Society Commission (CSC). The ESA has established a steering committee, consisting of CSC, Commission of Episcopates of the European Union (COMECE), the Trade Unions, a representative of the national Sunday Alliances and a representative of a European sport association. Indeed the ESA has developed links to a broad network of civil society and is still trying to extend those links.

For the moment the ESA is working on three main areas.

- If we want to promote the strengthening of decent work in Europe, with one day of rest in the week, in principle Sunday, we have to be very clear about the legal basis and possibilities under the Lisbon Treaty. Therefore ESA is cooperating with different lawyers to analyse the legal opportunities.
- Secondly ESA is becoming a European network to promote and coordinate engagement on Sunday protection at the national and regional level. The protection of Sunday will not succeed in Europe unless there is a strong advocacy in the member states. Therefore ESA promoted 4th March this year as European Day for a work free Sunday. And many initiatives took place across Europe!
- And of course the European Citizen Initiative (ECI) was established on 1st April, opening the opportunity under the Lisbon Treaty to present citizen's voices directly to the European Union. But any initiative under the ECI must also have a basis in the EU Treaty.

For further information please see:

<http://www.europeansundayalliance.eu/>

<http://ec.europa.eu/citizens-initiative/public/welcome>

Please watch this Newsletter for more details of *CALL*'s participation as events unfold. If you have any questions or would like to be involved, please contact Frank-Dieter Fischbach at call@cec-kek.be

Religion in the Workplace

This group has finished its work and the paper it has produced is on the CALL website.

Ethical Reflection from Dr. Dieter Heidtmann

How much solidarity does Europe need and how much solidarity can Europe afford?

While the heads of states and governments of the European Union are looking for sustainable solutions to the debt crisis, the people in Europe wonder to what extent they will have to pay the bill for the economic and political errors of others. The question is justified indeed whether it is the right decision to make the citizens in all Member States of the Euro-zone liable for the failure of stability policies in some Member States. This question particularly arises in those countries in Central and Eastern Europe which had to overcome far more extensive financial cuts in recent years without receiving similar support from the more prosperous Western European countries. The hesitation of many Slovak, Slovenian or Estonian people to take over responsibility for the debts of Member States of the Euro-zone with a much higher gross national product are easy to understand.

So far, financial accountability of EU Member States to each other has been legally excluded. In this way EU legislation set a clear limit to solidarity within the European Union. The current European Financial Stability Facility (ESFS) and the future permanent European Stability Mechanism (ESM) are avoiding this legal obstacle by being organized as common funds into which all Members of the Euro-Zone have to invest. However, the burning question is not how to bypass legal restrictions which revealed themselves to be unsustainable. The real question is how much economic solidarity the European Union can afford without running into difficulties because the strong European economies cannot bear the problems of the others any more.

Solidarity is a key element of the European Union and all EU Member States profited economically and politically enormously from the Common Market and European integration in the past decades. The EU Treaty therefore emphasizes solidarity as a definitive value, explaining that the European Union "shall promote economic, social and territorial cohesion, and solidarity among Member States" (art. 3,3 EU Treaty). Earlier crises in the European integration process have been used as an opportunity to strengthen and deepen the unity of nations and people in Europe. It is probably not too much to say that the European integration process depends fully on this commitment to solidarity.

How much solidarity does Europe need and how much solidarity can it afford? What is to be done, if a member state, such as Greece, is so highly indebted that it will never be able to recover economically by its own means? European contemporary history provides a precedent, the London Debt Agreement of the year 1953. In this agreement a large part of Germany's pre-war foreign debts were cancelled, altogether about 15.5 billion Deutsche Mark. The remaining debt payments were rescheduled in such a way that interest rates and repayments did not obstruct the economic reconstruction of Germany in the 1950s. This international solidarity was a substantial precondition for the German "economic miracle".. Without this debt write-off post-war Germany would have never been able to relaunch its economy again.

The Bible reports a similar concept of debt cancellation, the Jubilee Year. According to Leviticus 25 the debts of poor people should be cancelled in every 50th year and the original ownership structure be reconstituted. At least in each second generation people suffering from debt slavery should be freed. Whether this Jubilee Year was ever put into the practice, is disputed. The basic idea however is as up to date now as it was 2500 years ago. If someone finds themself caught in the debt trap without any prospect of solving their economic problems, their creditors are well advised to write off the debts to such an extent that the debtor will be enabled to have a fresh economic start. That is the solidarity Europe needs!

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 *Please put the name of the person to whom your email is addressed in the email subject box*

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