

CALL

EUROPEAN CHRISTIAN
EMPLOYMENT AND
ECONOMY NETWORK

*Church
Action on
Labour
and
Life*

Newsletter Winter 2010

Index

- p 1 Dates for your diary
- p 2 From the Coordination team
European Sunday Alliance;
- p 3 Religion in the Public Sphere;
Precarious Work
- P 4 Sustainable Economy
ECG Report
- p 5 Ethical Reflection
- p 6 Contact *CALL*

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 work-life balance
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

9-11 March 2011	Working Group on Precarious Work	Evangelical Academy, Bad Herrenalb, Germany
31 March – 2 April 2011	Conference "Overcoming the Trap of Economic Growth" preceded by Working Group on a Sustainable Economy	Bad Boll, Germany
11-13 May 2011	CALL Assembly	Bucharest
13-14 May 2011	ECG Assembly	Bucharest

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

From the Coordination Team

Welcome to the first edition of the *CALL* newsletter. It is intended to be a way of informing *CALL* members of what is being done throughout the Network so that they can link with other members to campaign more effectively together and to share in conferences and working groups. It will be issued in March, June, September and December. There is fuller information about some of the items in this Newsletter on the *CALL* website.

If you would like an event or project to be included in future editions of the Newsletter, please email details to csc@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.

The Coordination Team has met twice since the initial *CALL* Assembly. The first meeting was mainly concerned with the practicalities of organising the Network and defining its structure and relationship with the Church and Society Commission (CSC) of the Conference of European Churches (CEC). As CEC itself is in a state of transition, this proved more time consuming than expected; the team is grateful for the strong support it has received from CSC at a time when their own resources are stretched. *CALL* is closely linked with CSC/CEC, receiving administrative support from CSC but managing its own affairs through the Coordination Team.

The second meeting concentrated on plans for 2011. Considerable preparatory work has been done on the Working Groups agreed at the Assembly and meetings are planned in the New Year. Planning is also underway for the next *CALL* Assembly on 11-13 May 2011 in Bucharest. There is more information later in this Newsletter.

We hope that you will find this Newsletter helpful; please forward it to anyone else who might be interested.

A European Citizens' initiative on work-life balance: Launching a European Sunday Alliance: "Together for decent working hours!"

CALL is engaging with the European churches, trade unions and other groups of civil society to launch a "European Sunday Alliance" for decent working hours.

A small working group has met several times since spring to draft a founding statement for such a European Alliance. The intention of the group is to initiate a European citizen's initiative for decent working hours that, as a matter of principle, excludes working late evenings, nights and Sundays. As the legislation in place at EU and national levels is not sufficiently protective or restrictive and that therefore the health, safety, dignity and the reconciliation of professional and family life of workers are not effectively guaranteed, the European citizens' initiative will initiate a better legal protection of the health of the workers and of social cohesion in the EU. The launch of the initiative depends on the agreement of the EU institutions on the legal regulation of such initiatives. We are planning a conference in spring to mobilise for a European Sunday Alliance, but a date has not yet been fixed. If you are interested in participating in the Alliance, please send your contact details to csc@cec-kek.be and we will keep you updated.

Contact - Rev. Dr. Dieter Heidtmann

Working Group on Religion in the Public Sphere

At the *CALL* Assembly, there was interest in the whole area covered by this topic. As it is so wide, it has been agreed to concentrate initially on Religion in the Workplace. Papers giving initial thoughts are on the *CALL* website; these have a strong focus on Workplace Chaplaincy.

A workplace chaplain, clergy or lay, is trained and commissioned by the Church to minister in an organisation in the public square. He or she is most likely to be acting ecumenically and sometimes today in a multi-faith capacity and may be voluntary or paid – full or part time. Chaplaincy has five characteristics (the five P's):

- Prophetic - A theological and biblical understanding of work motivating chaplaincy.
- Presence - Engaging Jesus-like with people where they spend most of their day.
- Pastoral - Promoting personal well-being, just relationships and vocation in work, and responding to accidents and bereavement in the workplace.
- Professional - On-going training for those engaging in workplace chaplaincy.
- Practical – The process negotiating and organising a chaplaincy service.

Chaplaincy is clearly much more common and better understood in some countries rather than others. The aim of the *CALL* Working Group is to share the experience of the varieties of chaplaincy more widely around Europe and to recommend it as a contemporary way of mission and of being the church. A secondary aim is to consider how religion might be a welcome unifying rather than a divisive force for creating well-being in the working community. For further information, please get in touch at csc@cec-kek.be.

Contact - Ian Winterbottom

Working Group on Precarious Work

More and more people all over Europe are forced to work under precarious or atypical work conditions. The number of so called working poor is growing. For migrant workers in particular, it seems to be normal to work in very bad conditions.

In our discussion on the *CALL* conference there was a special focus on *new* forms of labour migration in the EU. Cheap labour is hired from Eastern Europe as well from outside Europe to work under poor conditions in Western Europe. In construction, farming and domestic work, millions of people are moving from east to west, some for short time as seasonal workers, others for longer. The migrants see an opportunity to earn the same money in a few months as in one year at home; workers in host countries see unfair competitors working for less than a living wage. The move of skilled workers from east to west is causing problems in the home countries of the new migrants: lack of skilled people, families are split and children grow up without their parents.

During our discussion, it became clear that there is a lack of information and common understanding. We want to work on this issue from the background of different points of view and interest.

A questionnaire is being circulated to those people who have expressed an interest in this topic, asking for details of the situation in their countries. These will be evaluated and the results discussed at a conference on 9-11 March 2011 in Bad Herrenalb, Germany, with the aim of coming to a common understanding of the definitions of good and precarious work and developing a proposal for a common declaration by the Churches.

A copy of the questionnaire is on the *CALL* website; if you would like to participate, please send responses to csc@cec-kek.be

Contact – Klaus-Peter Spohn-Logé

Working Group on Concepts for a Sustainable Economy

One of the speakers at the *CALL* Conference session in the European Parliament was Professor Tim Jackson, whose message is that developed countries cannot continue to judge prosperity by economic growth. He comes from a background in environmental studies and argues that the resources of the earth are finite and cannot support continued growth. There is also academic work from social scientists demonstrating that inequality in a country leads to worse outcomes for those at the top of the tree as well as at the bottom. The banking crisis, fuelled by too much personal and national debt, has brought this issue into particularly sharp focus.

Understandably, the academic work so far has concentrated on defining the problem but the solutions proposed are not clearly defined. At the Assembly, we agreed that we would consider how Christian teaching on wealth could contribute to changing the culture in Europe.

The first task is to summarise the work that has been taking place on defining the problem, both in church and in academic circles, and to list the solutions proposed. Summaries will be posted on the *CALL* website as they are available. A meeting of the Working Group will take place immediately before a conference “Overcoming the Trap of Economic Growth” at Bad Boll in Germany on 31 March – 2 April 2011 which shall focus on the different concepts in European countries for more sustainable economies. The conference and the working group meeting will consider the steps needed to share this understanding more widely both within churches and outside them.

For the conference we are still looking for contributions from different European countries, especially from Central and Eastern Europe. If you have suggestions for papers to be presented at the conference (also from outside the churches), please contact Alison Jackson via csc@cec-kek.be.

Contact – Alison Jackson

Report from ECG’s General Meeting (October 2010 in Vilnius)

ECG is the acronym for the Ecumenical Contact Group on Ecumenical Social Action, bringing together practitioners to learn from each other. This autumn, their meeting took the form of a training event, called “Learning from Practice”: participants from a dozen countries were invited to visit places of ecumenical social action in Vilnius, especially with ex-prisoners and with young people, all looking for employment. Exchange of experiences went in both directions, but the Central and Eastern European colleagues had a higher sensitivity for the constantly growing pressure on people – even those with employment – to emigrate to West or North.

Precarious working conditions are everyday life in Vilnius and similar economies – as they are in the most risky working places in West and North. What common fight against precariousness can we then imagine together? This will be the issue of one of ECG’s future working groups in co-operation with *CALL*.

Relationship with “Church Action on Labour and Life” (*CALL*)

ECG has representatives in *CALL*’s Coordination Team and in most working groups, even taking the lead of two of them. The General Meeting had to confirm this relationship and to redefine its own position. Decision was made to keep ECG “smart” and to co-operate with *CALL*, searching even for meeting places and dates linked with *CALL* meetings. The next general meeting of ECG will follow the assembly of *CALL* in Bucarest Friday-Saturday 13-14 May 2011.

ECG’s own purpose is to remain a network of practitioners, open to any interested member or body, including from the Catholic Church, and based on practical experience in social action, i.e. neither on European institutional issues nor on religious debates. Jean-Pierre Thévenaz was elected as new Secretary of the Executive.

ECG will contribute to the following *CALL* projects:

Precariousness and Migration: some member bodies of ECG will bring their practical experience with foreigners and precarious workers in their country into the discussion of the working group at its meeting in March 2011.

Religion in the Workplace: the chairperson of ECG has himself proposed this working group to the *CALL* assembly from the background of a long experience in chaplaincies to various institutions in Western countries, brought together in ECG's national partner organisations.

Sustainable Economy: some individual participants with a capacity in economics will join the working group at its meeting in Bad Boll 31.03 – 02.04.2011.

ECG will develop a learning method

Community Action Based Learning in Europe had already through the work of Tony Addy held a long series of workshops linking ECG with partners over Central and Eastern Europe. He has been asked to prepare a learning method to be used in meetings of other working groups or in assemblies to learn and act – with *CALL* members or with ECG practitioners.

Part of ECG's experience relies on a long partnership with the World Council of Churches and its "Oikotree" movement, to which a delegation was sent this year.

Ethical reflection

At *CALL* we consider it of first importance that our work is firmly grounded in Christian Ethics and in each newsletter, we will include an ethical reflection.

Alison Jackson writes:

The Working Group on a Sustainable Economy is starting from the basis that the wellbeing of an individual should not be assessed solely by his or her wealth. Before the Last Supper, Jesus taught his disciples both by washing their feet and by his words, that the greatest should be the servant of all. In Galatians, Paul tells us that believers are known by the way they demonstrate the fruit of the Spirit in their lives – that is by their love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self control. Jesus also tells us not to store up treasure on earth but instead to do so in heaven (Matthew 6 19-21). An English hymn written by F Pratt Green for the silver Jubilee of Queen Elizabeth II looks forward to the time "when self-giving is the measure of the greatness of the great".

In Europe at present, most people judge whether they have a good life by what they own, although the economic crisis has led some governments to consider whether the well being of society can be measured in a different way. The previous paragraph shows that the Churches already have an ethical base on which to base a definition of what some academics are calling "human flourishing". Such a definition must include sufficient income to provide food, clothes and a secure home, but once that is secured, human wellbeing does not depend on wealth.

Many people are thinking about these issues – for example in the editorial "Euro-Collapse or Sufficiency Economy?" by Christoph Stückelberger in the May 2010 newsletter of Globethics.net.

http://www.globethics.net/web/guest/newsletter-archive?p_p_id=101_INSTANCE_uK4o&p_p_lifecycle=0&p_p_state=normal&p_p_mode=view&p_p_col_id=column-3&p_p_col_count=1&_101_INSTANCE_uK4o_struts_action=%2Fasset_publisher%2Fview_content&_101_INSTANCE_uK4o_redirect=%2Fweb%2Fguest%2Fnewsletter-archive&_101_INSTANCE_uK4o_assetId=1499584

It is important that these are not seen as isolated voices but deliver a strong, coherent message.

If you would like to comment, please email Jean-Pierre Thévenaz csc@cec-kek.be



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: csc@cec-kek.be *Please put the name of the person to whom your email is addressed in the email subject box*

Coordinators	Dieter Heidtmann Alison Jackson
European Sunday Alliance	Laurence Flachon Dieter Heidtmann
Precarious Work	Klaus-Peter Spohn-Logé
Religion in the Workplace	Ian Winterbottom
Concepts for a Sustainable Economy	Alison Jackson
Comments on or contributions to the Ethical Reflection	Jean-Pierre Thévenaz
Newsletter Editor	Alison Jackson