

PRESS RELEASE

LAUNCH OF THE SECOND EUROPEAN SEMESTER: TOWARD A STRONGER INVOLVEMENT OF CHURCHES AND DIACONAL STAKEHOLDERS.

From the 21st to 23rd November, Eurodiaconia and the Church & Society Commission of CEC, held a conference in Brussels on “strengthening the social dimension in European and National policies, exploring the Europe 2020 strategy”. This meeting, attended by 21 delegates representing 13 European countries, aimed to equip churches and diaconal stakeholders for stronger engagement in the European semester process, particularly through the National Reform Programs.

Speakers from the European Commission, the European Parliament and national permanent representation presented their perspective of the Europe 2020 strategy in the context of the crisis. Representatives from churches and diaconal organisations discussed their role in the process, particularly regarding the need to find ways in which social policy could be integrated with economic policy.

MEP Jean Lambert encouraged representatives from churches and diaconal organisations to engage actively in the European Semester, stating that: "In Member States work on the National Reform Programmes, the voice of civil society must be heard. The policies being put forward have a direct impact on people's lives and need to be tested in that context. In the current crisis, events are moving very quickly and decisions are being made fast which can lead to people feel left behind. Meaningful and formal consultation are of absolute importance so that we do not risk leaving crucial elements out".

The conference ended with delegates agreeing to work together in order to monitor the social impact of the implementation of the Europe 2020 strategy in their national policies. An action document and timetable for continued advocacy and work were agreed on by participants, making this conference a starting point for strong cooperation for action between churches and diaconal actors in Europe.

[Eurodiaconia](#) is a dynamic, Europe wide community of organisations founded in the Christian faith and working in the tradition of Diaconia, who are committed to a Europe of solidarity, equality and justice. Eurodiaconia is based in Brussels and currently has 36 members in 23 countries. Eurodiaconia is supported by the European Programme for Employment and Social Solidarity (2007 – 2013).

The [Conference of European Churches \(CEC\)](#) is a fellowship of some 120 Orthodox, Protestant, Anglican and Old Catholic Churches from all countries of Europe, plus 40 associated organisations. CEC was founded in 1959. It has offices in Geneva, Brussels and Strasbourg. The [Church and Society Commission of CEC](#) links member churches and associated organisations of CEC with the European Union's institutions, the Council of Europe, the OSCE, NATO and the UN (on European matters). Its task is to help the churches study church and society questions from a theological and social-ethical perspective, especially those with a European dimension, and to represent common positions of the member churches in their relations with political institutions working in Europe.

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