



CALL

EUROPEAN CHRISTIAN
EMPLOYMENT AND
ECONOMY NETWORK

CHURCH
ACTION on
LABOUR and
LIFE



CALL - Church Action on Labour and Life

Churches launch CALL Network for a Just Economy in Europe

1. Report from the 1st CALL Assembly

With a Conference in the European Parliament in Brussels on 28-30 April 2010, some 80 representatives of Churches in Europe launched the new European Christian Employment and Economy Network "CALL": Church Action on Labour and Life.

The CALL Network will address employment and related economic and social issues from the perspective of Christian theology and Christian way of life and promote a Christian perspective in the debates on Europe's economic and social policies. It will provide a platform to exchange views and experiences on economic questions in different parts of Europe and, thereby, to bridge gaps between European societies. It will build the capacity of European churches to act on these issues, for instance by offering educational and information material and training.

2. The CALL Conference on 28-30 April 2010 in Brussels

At the Conference the representatives of the churches discussed EU's new economic, social and ecological framework strategy "EU 2020" with the members of the European Parliament and representatives of the European Commission.

Metropolite Prof. Dr. Nifon of Targoviste (Romanian Patriarchate) described the task of the churches as preserving European values in a predominantly economic context. "Churches have the task to educate people to make solidarity and fraternity the basis of globalisation". **Präses Alfred Buss**, President of the Evangelical Church of Westphalia urged the European Union and its member states to "implement fundamental rights and values in a sustainable social market economy". He asked for new models of social market economy from an ethical standpoint.

In her response, **Anne Degrand-Guillaud**, Coordinator of the European Year 2010 for Combating Poverty and Social Exclusion in the European Commission, stressed the commitment of the European Union to overcoming poverty: "Poverty and social exclusion can be prevented and alleviated by tackling both their structural and individual causes". She challenged the churches to contribute to the fight against poverty: "We count on you to inform and raise awareness within your churches and to take an active

part in this process. We count personally on each and every one of you". **Madeleine Mahovsky**, Member of the Cabinet of EU Commissioner Hahn, presented the cohesion policies of the European Union. She stressed the importance of partnerships with civil society organisations like the churches, especially with regard to cohesion policies in Central and South-Eastern Europe. This is an important element to increase the ownership of European policies among local people.

For the European Parliament, **Jürgen Klute MEP** (Germany) and **László Tökés MEP** (Romania) described the difficult challenges of poverty and social exclusion in the Ruhr Area, an industrial area in Germany in a transition process, and in Romania, still fighting with the heritage of the former communist regime. **Siiri Oviir MEP**, former Minister for social affairs in Estonia, expressed her concern about the ongoing discrimination of women and girls in the European Union, e.g. in the area of equal pay and pension rights.

Tim Jackson, Professor of Sustainable Development in Surrey, UK, described the dilemma of EU's growth strategies. He pleaded for a sustainable economic concept without growth: "Prosperity consists in our ability to flourish as human beings – within the ecological limits of our finite planet". **Egbert Holthuis**, responsible for the new "EU 2020 Strategy" in the Directorate General on Employment, described how the European Union is planning a "just, sustainable and smart European economy". **Sven Giegold MEP** (Germany) and **Sari Essayah MEP** (Finland) supported Jackson's concerns, but were sceptical about the implementation of his programme. **Dr. Guy Liagre**, President of the United Protestant Church in Belgium, raised the question as to whether the churches were radical enough in their commitment to the preservation of the creation – on a global as well as on a local level!

During the Conference, **Jiri Silny**, Director of the Ecumenical Academy in Prague, presented to the European public the "**Yearbook Justice IV**", edited by a group of churches. The publication focuses on justice in Central and Eastern Europe 20 years after the fall of the Iron Curtain.

The Conference discussed the implementation of the social dimension of the Lisbon Treaty. **Marcel Haag** from the General Secretariat of the European Commission expects changes especially in the area of social services. **Heather Roy**, Secretary General of Eurodiaconia, stressed the important role of churches and diaconal institutions as service providers and their contribution to high-quality services, which are accessible and affordable for everyone. **Philippe Lamberts MEP** (Belgium) and **Antigoni Papadopoulou MEP** (Cyprus) referred to the Treaty's recognition of the Charter of Fundamental Rights as another key point.

"With the Lisbon Treaty coming into force, we are entering into a new era in EU global political influence and development - one in which Member states are called to coordinate their policies more closely. The Treaty of Lisbon elevates economic and social objectives on an equal footing, stating that: 'The Union shall work for the sustainable development of Europe, based on balanced economic growth and price stability and a highly competitive social market economy, aiming at full employment and social progress'. (A. Papadopoulou MEP).

3. The 1st CALL Assembly

The Assembly defined four key tasks for the network:

- Campaigning on economic and employment issues
- Networking on economic and employment issues
- Exchange of expertise among members
- Empowering people on economic and employment issues.

The Assembly initiates 5 working areas:

- **To launch a citizens' initiative on the work-life balance: "A time to work, a time to live"**

The campaign for a citizens' initiative should focus on issues like Sunday protection, reconciliation between work and family life and working times. A proposal for the name of the campaign: "A time to work, a time to live".

- **Working Group on Precarious Work**

The Assembly initiated a working group on precarious work. The working group shall focus on common European standards for decent work, labour migration, "living wages" and related issues. A first project could be to collect information from different countries in order to prepare a documentation.

- **Working Group on Religion in the Public Sphere**

The working group shall focus on the different church-state relations and how they have an impact on the presence of the church in the society. A first project could be a brochure with "best practice examples" of the presence of the churches in "new places" where people meet, such as shopping malls.

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

The Working Group shall focus on macro-economic concepts for EU policies such as the EU 2020 strategy. It shall contribute to develop sustainable, socially responsible economic strategies. The working group will monitor EU policies, raise awareness and understanding for these questions and support the churches to contribute to more coherent policies in this area.

- **Ethics-Newsletter**

The working group is planning to share regular information on specific issues related to economic ethics. The newsletter is open for all members of the network and their contributions.

4. The CALL Coordination Team

The Assembly elected a coordination team. Its members are:

- Northern Europe:

Ms Daiva Ziuramskaite (ECG - European Contact Group)

Rev. Peeter Kaldur (Estonian Evangelical-Lutheran Church)

Proxy:

Ms Marja Kantanen (Evangelical-Lutheran Church of Finland)

- Western Europe:

Ms Alison Jackson (Methodist Church in Britain)

Rev. Dr. Jean-Pierre Thévenaz (Swiss Reformed Church)

Rev. Dr. Dieter Heidtmann (CSC of CEC/CPCE)

Mr Klaus-Peter Spohn-Logé (Association of Church and Work in the Evangelical Church in Germany)

Proxy:

Dr. Trinus Hoekstra (Kerkinactie)

- Southern Europe:

Ms Laura Casorio (Federation of Protestant Churches in Italy)

Ms Lamprini Ninetta Zoi (Church of Greece)

- Central and Eastern Europe

Mr Szabolcs Lörincz (Reformed Church in Hungary)

Ms Elena Timofticiuc (AIDROM)

Proxy:

Mr Vladimir Gerka

Representative from OCIPE:

Fr. Hervé-Pierre Guillot (Belgium)

5. CALL Moderators

The Coordination Team elected Alison Jackson and Rev. Dr. Dieter Heidtmann to be the Co-Moderators of the CALL Network.

6. CALL Contact

If you are interested to participate in the work of the CALL Network or in one of its working groups, please contact the Church and Society Commission of the Conference of European Churches.

**CALL Network
Church & Society Commission
of the Conference of European Churches
Rue Josph II, 174
B-1000 Brussels
Tel: +32 (2) 230.17.32
Fax: +32 (2) 2311413
E-mail: csc@cec-kek.be**

More about the CALL Network at:

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