

NEWSLETTER

intereuropean commission on church and school

Editorial

One of the objectives of the work of ICCS is to encourage the European Churches to take account of education as a European issue. Some important steps towards this aim were taken during the course of the last few weeks.

Firstly the Church and Society Commission of the Conference of European Churches (CSC/CEC) has established a working group and adopted an education strategy. This document introduces Education for Democratic Citizenship (EDC) and the Structural Framework for Collaboration in Education and Training (ET 2020) as two issues that should be dealt with in the group. A conference in Strasbourg in October on EDC has made some proposals for member churches.

Secondly the Community of Protestant Churches in Europe (CPCE) has organized a consultation in Tutzing/Germany to work out how CPCE can establish a Protestant contribution in a European Education Space. A main challenge in these activities is to convince the churches of the importance of a Europeanization of education and make them ready to act.

The conference in Prague has been a highlight for ICCS in 2011. The close collaboration with the International Association for Christian Education (IV) increased the value of this event. Nearly all contributions are now available on the website. The Prague conference confirmed the need of closer exchange with the national correspondents. This Newsletter is part of this process. Do not hesitate to send us your comments and proposals for future activities.

Best wishes

Peter Schreiner, ICCS President

Annual Board Meeting

The annual board meeting of ICCS was held in Amersfoort/Netherlands in March 2011. The ICCS representative at the Council of Europe, James Barnett, informed the Board about a current debate on the status of INGOs in the framework of the Council and their possible contribution to its work. ICCS will continue to use its expertise, in collaboration with other Christian NGOs, to take part actively in discussions and activities of the Council especially in intercultural dialogue and religion. Barnett is mainly involved in organizing a study day of the G3I (a network of INGO with concern on intercultural, international and interfaith issues) on 25-26 January 2012 and in preparing a document on the religious dimension of intercultural dialogue.

Also linkedIn, a programme of sharing and connecting was promoted to deepen the exchange with the national correspondents. See www.linkedin.com for general information and contact Elza Kuyk (ekuyk@besturenraad.nl) if you like to join the ICCS group there. The next board meeting of ICCS is planned for March 2012 in Italy.

ICCS Correspondents

As part of the programme of the IV & ICCS conference in Prague a meeting of ICCS correspondents was held with more than 25 participants. The network of national correspondents meets regularly at each of the triennial ICCS conferences and receives a report of the board and the president about ICCS activities. The meeting's aim is to develop perspectives for future projects and activities. Proposals on how to strengthen the network of correspondents between the conferences were discussed and alongside perspectives and ideas for the work of ICCS in the future.

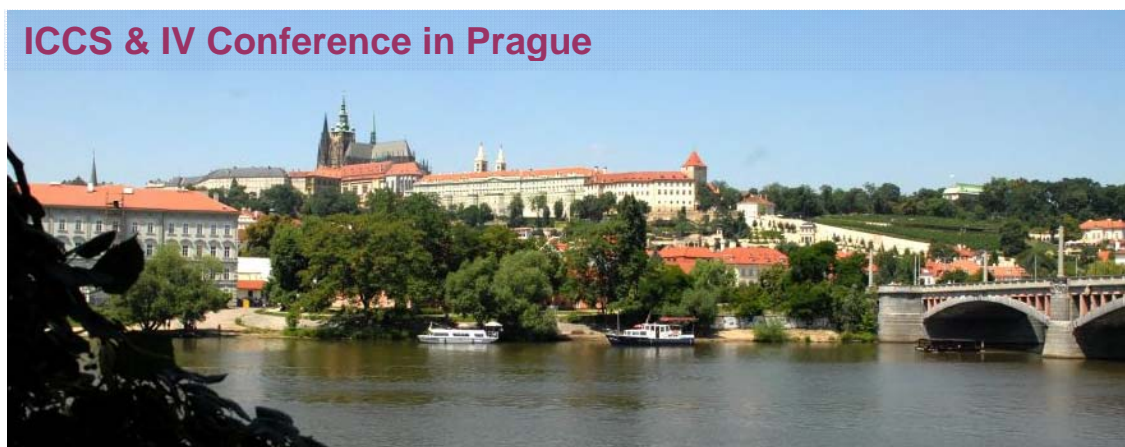
Education for Religion and Democracy

ICCS has organised its 4th Klingenthal Colloquy in collaboration with CoGREE in October 2010. The program included presentations on activities of the Council of Europe in the dialogue with religious organisations as well as Recommendation of the Committee of Ministers to member states on the Council of Europe Charter on Education for Democratic Citizenship and Human Rights Education. The colloquy was enriched by presentations and exchange with representatives of Judaism, Buddhism and Islam who presented concepts of education and the involvement of organizations in the work of the nongovernmental organisations with a religious background at the Council of Europe. The introduction of the strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training ("ET 2020") raised awareness about an increasing Europeanization of education using soft methods like the open method of coordination or peer reviews to encourage more quality on the education and training systems of Europe. The participants identified the challenge to critically investigate a dominant concept of education that values employability and flexibility more than personal fulfilment as an objective of education. Nurtured by a religious perspective a comprehensive concept of education is needed that takes into account all aspects of the human being.

The programme for the next Klingenthal colloquy is already in draft form. It will take place from 8th to 12th of October 2012 and the main focus of the programme will be social cohesion, religion and education.



Château Klingenthal,
Alsace



ICCS & IV Conference in Prague

More than 50 participants from 17 European states gathered in Prague for the first ICCS & IV Conference from 29th of June to 3rd of July.

The program included plenary presentations about several aspects of the theme Employability – Mobility – Flexibility. Peter Schreiner introduced developments in the framework of the European Union and underlined the need to take account of the European Education Space that increasingly influences national concerns in education.

Dr. Berend Kamphuis dealt with the so called “management philosophy” shaped by an objectivistic concept of knowledge that is apparent in European education policy and argued for a revival of the concept of practical wisdom. Prof. Schott from Dresden University introduced issues of “measuring the outcome of education”. He argued for appropriate procedures and presented the pro and cons of the current debate. Prof. Wolfram Weiße, the director of the REDCo Project from Hamburg



From left: Prof. Wolfram Weiße, Peter Schreiner

(see www.redco.uni-hamburg.de) presented results and policy recommendations of the project.

Workshops and a round table introducing the current situation of RE in Georgia, Latvia, Russia and Bulgaria, Hungary and Romania were also part of the programme.



Photo above: Panel on the current situation of RE in Georgia, Latvia, Russia and Bulgaria, Hungary and Romania

Photo below: Workshop / Language Group



Lectures and presentations from the conference can be downloaded from the conference page at www.iccsweb.org or http://iccsweb.org/english/praha_2011/index.html

New secretariat of ICCS

At their meeting in 2011 the board thanked Heid Leganger-Krogstad for her term as ICCS secretary. Heid has been an inspiring source of ICCS activities and not least the project grant supported by the Norwegian Ministry of Education for six years enabled many activities of ICCS during that period. In autumn 2010 Dr. David Lankshear took over the secretariat for an interim period up to 2012. Tania ap Siôn who works as director of the St Mary’s Centre in Gwynedd was welcomed as secretary designate. She will take over from David in 2012. If you want to contact the ICCS secretary please use dandclankscol@hotmail.com

CoGREE and Member Organisations

CoGREE steering group discusses perspectives of future work

The steering group of CoGREE has started a discussion about future priorities for the collaboration among the five member organisations. At its meeting in November 2010 in Muenster/ Germany the group identified six issues that should guide the work in the coming years:



(1) The right of the child to religion and religious education, (2) The right of the child to have a religion or not, (3) Respect of the other, (4) A comprehensive concept of education, (5) Religion as a factor of social cohesion and (6) Taking religion seriously.

Next steps should include a priority list and ways for CoGREE on how to work on these issues in an effective and sustainable way.

A challenge for CoGREE may be to take into account local, regional and European concerns in the triangle of research & policy & practice. Each of the levels and areas has its own dynamic and rules and it is not always easy to work out how documents from the European institutions may and can influence educational practice on other levels.

Swier Frouws has ended his period as CoGREE secretary in November 2010. The steering group thanked him warmly for his commitment and also for the support of the Besturenraad where Swier worked up to end of 2010. Now Elza Kuyk, advisor of the Besturenraad has taken over as secretary of CoGREE. Elza is also a board member of ICCS.

IV Conference on European Citizenship



The International Association for Christian Education has held a teacher conference in April 2011 in collaboration with the Landesakademie for In service training of the Bundesland Baden Wuertemberg. The theme of a Christian contribution to education for democracy was dealt with in lectures and reports about specific projects in Protestant schools in different countries. A general commitment was that values such as empathy, encouragement and participation are important when it comes to education for democratic citizenship. A report about the conference is available at www.int-v.org

Conference of European Churches CEC and Community of Protestant Churches in Europe CPCE



Conference and Working group on Education

The Church and Society Commission of CEC had adopted a CSC strategy on education (see: http://csc.ceceurope.org/fileadmin/filer/csc/Education/EducationStrategy_Final.pdf9).

This strategy is a response to a request by the plenary in 2008 in Prague to make education a CSC priority for the years to come. The strategy will be tuned into practice by a working group on education that has held its first meeting in May 2011 in Strasbourg. Peter Schreiner is a member for the working group nominated by ICCS and by the Evangelical Church in Germany (EKD). The focus of the work is twofold: Firstly it will relate to the "Strategic Framework for European Cooperation in Education and Training" (ET 2020) of the European Union. The working group is asked to develop a tool through which member churches of CEC can monitor,

influence (and be part) of the implementation of ET 2020 on national level. Secondly the issue of “Education for Democratic Citizenship” (EDC) will be an important focus. CSC has organized a conference on this issue on 5th to 7th of October in Strasbourg. The conference brought together delegates of churches, NGOs and academics, to discuss how the church can act as a responsible part of civil society. Further steps are needed to implement Education for Democratic Citizenship as an issue for member churches and CSC.

New CSC Report on European Higher Education

Granted, the future of higher education in Europe is an issue of importance to churches. To feed their own reflection and, at the same time, to serve the entire CEC constituency, the Church of Sweden commissioned a CSC report on this topic. The document describes what the European cooperation in higher education has achieved and not achieved thus far, where it is heading, how it is organised and how churches can join in. The paper also explains the main points of criticism and encourages response from those responsible for this work. It looks at both the EU and the Bologna Process, now called the European Higher Education Area, which are two separate but intertwined processes. Read the report at:

http://csc.ceceurope.org/fileadmin/filer/csc/Education/CSC_Report_on_the_Future_of_Higher_Education_in_Europe_-_September_2011.pdf (Source: CSC Update on European Affairs, 4/2011, p. 3)

Protestant perspectives for a European Education Space



Gemeinschaft Evangelischer Kirchen in Europa (GEKE)
Community of Protestant Churches in Europe (CPCE)
Communauté d'Églises Protestantes en Europe (CPEE)

The Community of Protestant Churches in Europe CPCE has held a consultation about Protestantism’s responsibility for education in Europe. The consultation under the title: Education between Qualification and Orientation. Protestant Perspectives for a European Educational Space took place from 26th to 28th September 2011 in the Evangelical Academy, Tutzing (close to Munich). The consultation started with a panel with Olöf Olafsdottir, director for education at the Council of Europe, and Michael Teutsch, member of the cabinet of EU Commissioner Androulla Vassiliou who is responsible for education. Both speakers underlined the wish of the European institutions to deepen the dialogue with religious communities and encouraged CPCE to take part in existing exchange and action programmes such as Comenius (schools), Erasmus (higher education) and Grundtvig (adult education).

Prof. Milerski (Poland) introduced the topic of educational justice as a key issue for the churches and Peter Schreiner presented current developments in European Education Policy and introduced examples of Protestant educational activities that can contribute to a European educational discourse. He also introduced the work of ICCS.

At the closing panel an encouraging follow up idea was presented. The Lutheran Church of Bavaria offered to establish a Forum Education at the Academy in Tutzing for CPCE to promote the exchange among member churches and a European based education policy of CPCE. The next issue of GEKE focus will deal with education, contributions from the consultation will be available also at www.leuenberg.eu.

Council of Europe and European Union



Education for Democratic Citizenship and Human Rights Education

Education for democratic citizenship and human rights (EDC/HRE) is recognised by member states of the Council of Europe as an essential element in the education for everyone, particularly young people. Based on these political decisions the Council of Europe has started activities in this field aiming at the establishment of sustainable forms of democracy based on respect for human rights and the rule of law. The work in this field was given impetus at the 2nd Summit of Heads of State and Government of the Council of Europe held in Strasbourg on 10 and 11 October 1997. It was decided to “launch an initiative for education for democratic citizenship with a view to promoting citizens’ awareness of their rights and responsibilities in a democratic society”. (Final Declaration of the 2nd Summit of Heads of State and Government of the CoE)

The main objective of EDC/HRE is to help all people to play an active part in democratic life and exercise their rights and responsibilities in society through exposure to educational practices and activities.

A current key document is the Recommendation CM/REC(2010)7 of the Committee of Ministers to member states on the Council of Europe Charter on Education for Democratic Citizenship and human Rights Education. This document was adopted by the Committee of Ministers on 11 May 2010 at the 120th Session. The text is available at

<http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/education/edc/Source/Pdf/Downloads/6898-6-ID10009-Recommendation%20on%20Charter%20EDC-HRE%20-%20assembl%C3%A9.pdf>

In September 2010 a publication has been delivered providing a framework and additional information how to use this recommendation on a national context: David Kerr & Bruno Losito (2010): Strategic support for decision makers. Policy tool for democratic citizenship and human rights, Strasbourg: Council of Europe.

Order possible through the bookshop at the CoE website.

“Living together”: Council of Europe Eminent Persons' report

In May 2011 the report "Living Together": Combining diversity and freedom in 21st-century Europe, worked out by a Group of Eminent Persons headed by the former German Foreign Minister Joschka Fischer, was represented on the Committee of Ministers session meeting in Istanbul. Taking stock of the challenges arising from the resurgence of intolerance and discrimination in Europe, the report analyses "the threat" and proposes "the response" for "living together" in open European societies.

Referring to the principles of the European Convention on Human Rights, the Group highlights eight specific risks to traditional Council of Europe values: widespread intolerance; growing discrimination (especially against Roma and immigrants); rising support for xenophobic and populist parties; parallel societies; Islamic extremism; loss of democratic freedoms; presence of a population without rights; and potential clash between "religious freedom" and freedom of expression.

The report underlines some of the reasons behind "the threat": insecurity deriving from the Old Continent's financial crisis and sense of relative decline; distorted perceptions of large-scale immigration; detrimental stereotypes of minorities in the media and public opinion; and a clear leadership deficit in shaping Europe's present and future.

"The response" envisages 59 "proposals for action", the first 17 of which are labelled "strategic recommendations" to European Institutions and their Member States. The Group identifies the main actors for change in public attitudes: educators, mass media, employers and trade unions, civil society, churches and religious groups, celebrities and "role models", towns and cities, member states, European and international organisations.

Amongst its 17 guiding principles, the Group insists on the fact that provided they obey the law, immigrants should not be "expected to renounce their faith, culture or identity". The complete text is available through www.coe.int.

Exchange with religious communities about intercultural dialogue and the role of media

The fourth Exchange of the Council of Europe on the religious dimension of intercultural dialogue with representatives from religious communities will take place from 28 to 29 November 2011 in Luxembourg.

The chosen theme is: Media, Beliefs and Religions – The role of the media in fostering intercultural dialogue, tolerance and mutual understanding: freedom of expression of the media and respect towards cultural and religious diversity. This is in line with the meeting last year in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia. ICCS will be represented by Rev James Barnett.

European Commission promotes Early Childhood Education and Care

Following its policy that lifelong learning should be regarded as a fundamental principle underpinning the strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training ("ET 2020") the European Commission has launched a Communication on "Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC): Providing all our children with the best start for the world of tomorrow", available at: http://ec.europa.eu/education/school-education/doc/childhoodcom_en.pdf

The document deals with access to ECEC and the quality of ECEC. The initiative is seen as an integrative element of the wider strategy to improve the quality and effectiveness of education systems across the EU. "ECEC has a crucial role to play in laying the foundations for improved competences of future EU citizens, enabling us to meet the medium- and long-term challenge, and to create a more skilled workforce capable of contributing and adjusting to technological change as set out in the flagship 'Agenda for new skills and jobs'." The document includes also a list of proposed issues for policy cooperation among Member States in this field.

European Commission sets priorities for Europe's higher education systems

On 20 September 2011, the European Commission published a new Communication "Supporting growth and jobs – an agenda for the modernisation of Europe's higher education systems" which sets out priorities for future action in this area for the decade to come.

This new Communication builds on the Europe 2020 Strategy as well as the sector specific Strategic Framework for European Co-operation in Education and Training, 'ET 2020', adopted by the Council in May 2009. According to the Commission, European higher education currently faces the following challenges: untapped potential to contribute to Europe's prosperity; lack of excellence and financial investment in comparison to international rivals; the increasing need for higher education qualifications – it is estimated that 35% of all jobs in the EU by 2020 require this level of knowledge; and mismatch between skills and jobs.

As a response, the Commission suggests that the EU Member States focus on achieving reforms in four key areas:

- 1) to increase the quantity of higher education graduates at all levels (40% of young people should successfully complete higher education or equivalent studies by 2020);
- 2) to enhance the quality and relevance of human capital development in higher education;
- 3) to create effective governance and funding mechanisms in support of excellence;
- 4) to strengthen the “knowledge triangle” between education, research and business.

From its side, the Commission supports these changes with a number of new initiatives and old measures including, for example, launching the U-Multirank, a new performance-based ranking and information tool for profiling higher education institutions and by issuing a Communication on Rethinking Skill in 2012, which provides specific guidance and recommendations on raising basic and transversal skills and overcoming skills mismatches.

The Commission will also continue supporting mobility of learners, teachers and researchers and, as a new tool, proposes a European level student loan guarantee facility. The Commission will promote the knowledge triangle, e.g. by facilitating the creation of knowledge alliances and by disseminating good examples of integrated partnerships, new governance and funding models.

Whereas the Communication acknowledges the role education plays in individual and societal advancement, the emphasis is clearly on its importance with regard to economic delivery. The weight put on the economic side should not be criticised superficially. It is said that it was precisely for its convincing case – “education is a growth enhancing investment par excellence” – that the EC Directorate-General on education convinced the other Commission DGs to allocate it the single biggest increase in the future MFF. The Commission suggests an increase of 73% to the education budget in comparison to the MFF 2007-2013 and 46% increase in research budget.

In the case of education this would mean a jump from 8.8 billion Euros to 15.2 Euros. This proposal is to be supported. At this stage, the use of this amount is not defined in further detail. This said, the churches’ voices are needed to ensure that EU governments will also in the future cherish, besides employability, the other three missions of learning: input for research, input for societal and personal development. (Source: CSC Update on European Affairs, 4/2011, p. 2f.)

Colophon

This Newsletter is edited under responsibility of the board of the Intereuropean Commission on Church and School.

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