



Conference of European Churches
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CALL – Church Action on Labour and Life

European Christian Employment and Economy Network

1. Introduction

The Church and Society Commission 2006 Plenary Meeting in Sigtuna mandated CSC to launch a process to sensitise and mobilise CEC's Member Churches and Associated Organisations on intensifying cooperation on issues linked to employment. This led to a number of activities in recent years. Key elements were a Conference on "Employment and the Churches in Europe" in February 2008, linked to a Dialogue Seminar with the European Commission on "Flexicurity from a value's perspective" and a Conference in the European Parliament on 29 April 2009 on "European Economic and Social Policies in Times of Uncertainty", but also contributions of the churches to the revision of European employment strategies and the Social Agenda. The activities have been coordinated by a CSC working group and ad-hoc task forces.

Employment and related economic and social issues are the main working area of the European Union and its Member States. The economic downturn has made these issues even more pressing. At the moment, the EU is developing its new economic strategy for the period beyond 2010, called "EU 2020" strategy. According to the European Commission "this new strategy should enable the EU to make a full recovery from the crisis, and help speed up the move towards a greener, more sustainable, and more innovative economy".

Based on the results of the Consultation in the European Parliament, CEC in May 2009 addressed an open letter to the Presidents of the European institutions, expressing the concerns of the churches about the impact of the economic crisis: *"We are convinced that the current crisis is much more profound than the analysis of the EU institutions has suggested so far. The crisis calls into question a number of assumptions, which have underpinned the EU's economic policies over the last decades, such as deregulation, the primacy of economic criteria in all areas of life as well as an overemphasis on profit and growth. The current crisis is to a large extent a crisis of trust towards the financial and political institutions and towards the system, which provoked it."*

The letter stresses the value aspects of the current situation: *"The crisis has an important ethical dimension: Our societies are suffering from a lifestyle which is focusing on*

individual profit, consumption and greed rather than taking responsibility for the common good, the well-being and the future for all people and for the world we are living in.”

The churches in Europe have on many occasions expressed their responsibility for the well-being of people in Europe including its economic and social dimensions. Many of them are actively involved in European economic and social policies through the provision of quality social and health services and many other activities.

Therefore CALL shall be established as a European Christian Network to strengthen the work of European churches and faith-based organisations on employment and related questions, following the model of ECEN, the European Christian Environmental Network.

2. The Aim

CALL shall promote a Christian perspective in the debates on Europe’s economic and social policies. As employment issues are closely linked to fundamental questions like human dignity in economic and social life, social rights, business and social ethics, CALL shall focus on European employment policies from a values perspective including issues like precarious work and “working poor”, decent working conditions or the reconciliation between work and family life.

3. Proposed Structure of the Network

Task of the network

The Network is an organisation linked with the Church & Society Commission of the Conference of European Churches to address employment and related economic and social issues from the perspective of Christian theology and Christian way of life.

The Network is a consultative forum facilitating contacts and cooperation among its members. This means:

- A platform for an exchange of information.
- Raise awareness, sensitise and mobilise member churches.
- Promote a better understanding of different European perspectives and thus bridge the gap between European societies.
- Education and training.
- Develop information material, background information, and if possible common position paper.
- Run projects among members.

Membership

The network is made up of **members** nominated by churches and ecumenical organisations, social and economic organisations working closely with churches, and organisations associated with the Conference of European Churches and its Church and Society Commission. Members can vote at Assemblies and be elected to the Coordination Team.

Other individuals concerned with employment and poverty issues and individuals from other organisations than CEC member churches and associated organisations can become **associated members** of the network.

A memorandum of understanding, which has to be adopted by the CALL Coordination Team and the respective board, can define a specific cooperation with **partner organisations**.

Assemblies

Members and associates come together in assemblies at least every two years. Assemblies advance the networking process, reflect on common priorities, take decisions on the future direction and priorities of the network, and to elect a Coordination Team.

Coordination Team

The Coordination Team conducts the work of the Network between Assemblies. It is made up of around 7 members reflecting the diversity of the network. Facilitators of the Network's working groups can be associated to the coordination team as advisors. The responsibilities of the coordination team include sustaining the Network, encouraging new membership, organising Assemblies, encouraging and co-ordinating joint activities and working groups, and supervising communications, the website, and the budget.

Working Groups

Working Groups are thematic sub-networks to help the network to work together on specific issues. Working Groups work on specific themes during and between Assemblies. Each Group has a facilitator who is responsible for co-ordinating the Working Group's activities and reporting to the Coordination Team and Assembly.

Staff

An Executive Secretary of CSC on the Coordination Team supports the Network.

4. Cooperation

In this process CSC is co-operating with other organisations like ECG and CCME, lay academy centres, industrial missions, research institutes, ecumenical associations, diaconal ministries, university institutes, trade unions and employers' associations. The activities of the Network shall be closely linked with existing programmes in CEC's Member churches and Associated Organisations.

5. Activities

The Network shall be launched with a Conference in Spring 2010.

The Conference shall establish the Coordination Team and working groups on specific working areas. The Working Groups shall offer workshops on their specific issues (run by member organisations) Participants in the process have indicated their interest to establish specific working groups on:

- Church and Work
- Sustainability of Economic Growth ("EU 2020" strategy).
- Flexicurity
- Precarious working conditions
- Participatory society
- European minimum standards
- Labour Migration
- Pastoral Care at the work place
- Non-economic factors of poverty (fear, greed, ...)
- Social-ethical dimension of work
- Work and family life
- Sunday protection.
- Gender-related poverty
- Education for solidarity

The Network shall actively involve European churches and faith-based organisations in the activities of the 2010 European Year for Combating Poverty and Social Exclusion and in the revision process of EU's economic strategy ("EU 2020 Strategy").

An Internet platform for an exchange of information shall be developed.

Information material and campaigning instruments shall be developed, based on the existing resources in the Member Churches.

CSC will relate the network to the European institutions.

6. Expected Results 2010-2012

- CALL has had an impact on the development of the EU 2020 Strategy promoting a more social and more sustainable Europe from a Christian perspective.
- CALL has promoted a Christian understanding of work in the society. It has raised awareness on precarious working situations and working poor in the European institutions as well as among CEC's member churches and associated organisations. It has supported CEC's member churches and associated organisations to meet these challenges through the exchange of expertise and best practices.
- CALL has promoted a more holistic understanding of poverty and social exclusion in the European Union and in the Council of Europe with their Member States from a Christian perspective, but also among the churches.
- CALL is established as a network of Christians working on the promotion of Christian values in social and economic questions.
- CALL is operational as an instrument to share and link expertise on social and economic questions among CEC's member churches and associated organisations, based on European, national, regional and local activities.
- CALL has contributed to awareness raising and education on social and economic questions among CEC's member churches and associated organisations.
- CALL has contributed to the dialogue with other groups in civil society, e.g. trade unions and employers' organisations.

In 2012 the activities of the Network shall be evaluated.