A brief report from the KEK Nordic-Baltic meeting in Reykjavik 16-18 March

The Nordic and Baltic countries and churches were represented, some with a number of people, some with just one person – about 30 in all. A few observers from other countries and churches in Europe, along with a couple of board members were also present – in preparation for the next regional meetings. Meeting no. 2 will be in Edinburgh in April, meeting no. 3 will be in Greece, probably in June, and the last one is likely to be in Prague in the autumn. The idea of these meetings is to share thoughts and comments of the regional churches with the administration of KEK concerning the analysis and future visions contained or broadened in the letter ’What Future for Europe’.

This meeting followed a meeting, also in Reykjavik, of the ecumenical secretaries in the northern region. Comments to the letter ’What Future’ had come in from a number of churches, mainly in western Europe, and can be found in the KEK portfolio, and few, if any, from Eastern European churches, which was felt to be worrying, as the relationship between churches and states (and thus politicians) was found to be weak in those countries.

The two-day meeting consisted of lectures, one from former archbishiop Anders Wejryd of Sweden, in absentia due to illness, but read by a Swedish member, where he stressed the importance of the voices of the churches in the current European debate. An MEP from Denmark, Margrethe Auken, herself a pastor, wanted to see and hear more from the churches and wanted them to be even more courageous in the addresses and comments the churches could make and that would resonate in the corridors of Brussels and Strasbourg.

Some time was spent defining the borders of Europe, but even more time on a discussion on values, Christian as well as human rights values, where a number of people thought it would be impossible to agree on them. It seems to be that if the churches cannot come to a common agreement on values, it would be hard to speak up for on behalf of the churches. It seems to be of even more importance that we all speak up about the values, especially right now in a European context, to engage more people in what the European project is about.

The General Assembly next year in May/June in Novi Sad was also discussed, and the input from our TRG EDC groups would be welcome. I asked Hiekki Huttunen directly how much time he thought we would be given, and his answer was an hour or so. So I think that we must put our thinking hats on and be very creative, constructive and productive. I thus ask you all to do so and let me know what kind of ideas you are nursing.

I brought a number of our ’cards’ along and shared them around. Some knew of them or had had a set, but I think that we can do more with them for Novi Sad.

I am in the States for the next 2 weeks or so, but back home for Easter and will set to work on ideas then. Could you also send Maria or me your ’small’ articles as we stressed in the last meeting. We need all our ideas out to as many as possible, including best practices.

This is just an update for you all along with my Easter wishes.

With spring in both the air and the ground I wish you all Happy Easter.

Yours Hanna