

From Trondheim to Lyon
CEC Activity Report to the 13th Assembly

Chapter III: Church and Society Commission Report

1. The Mandate and the Work Programme of the Church and Society Commission

The Mandate of the Church and Society Commission (CSC) of CEC resulting from the integration of EECCS and CEC in 1999 (cf. Art 7(4) of the Byelaws to the CEC Constitution) reads:

- (a) “Study and examination of Church and Society questions in a socio-ethical perspective such as EECCS and CEC have undertaken up to now (for example: peace, justice and the integrity of creation, reconciliation and governments);
- (b) Monitoring the European Institutions: European Union, Council of Europe, Organisation for Cooperation and Security in Europe, in relation to themes such as the European integration process, democratisation, establishment of the rule of law, human rights and minority questions, European security, economic and social questions, the environment;
- (c) Dealing with the specific responsibility of the churches in the member states of the European Union for the internal politics of the EU,”

In taking up this mandate, the CEC Assembly in Trondheim established a framework for the work of the Commission for the years 2003 - 2009. The **report of the Policy Reference Committee** (PRC), Recommendation 9, highlighted the task of the Church and Society Commission as:

- Keeping its membership informed about developments on the European level,
- To present a common voice to the European institutions (cf. also Charta Oecumenica, chapter 7);
- To develop an active and stable framework for dialogue with the European institutions;
- The PRC also recommended that working methods (throughout CEC) be improved in line with the recommendations set out in the CSC papers on work programme and methods. (Recommendation 35);
- And finally, the PRC highlighted a number of specific themes to be taken up by the Commission. (cf. the respective sections of the recommendations 9-18 and 19-28).

In line with the mandate of the Church and Society Commission, the framework given by the Trondheim Assembly was translated by the Commission into a 5-year work programme, which was “warmly welcomed and endorsed” by the CEC Central Committee in December 2003.

In the time covered by this report, the **Church and Society Commission** met every year, reviewing and adopting an annual work programme. In addition to this the **CSC Executive Committee** met twice to three times a year in order to review concrete projects, developments on the European level and submissions of the Commission to the institutions. Reports of this work were received by every meeting of the **CEC Central Committee and Presidium**.

Besides reviewing the annual work programmes, the Commissions at each of its meetings addressed the following particular themes:

- 2004 Wavre (Belgium): Enlargement of the EU and the “open, transparent and regular dialogue” with the EU
- 2005 Dunblane (Scotland): Europe’s global responsibility in light of the 2008 G8 Summit and Vision for Europe
- 2006 Sigtuna (Sweden): Peace, Security and Reconciliation
- 2007 Etchmiadzin (Armenia): Inter-Cultural Dialogue
- 2008 Prague (Czech Republic): Inter-Cultural Dialogue

In March 2009, the Church and Society Commission will meet in the birthplace of CEC, in Nyborg (Denmark) to celebrate CEC’s 50th anniversary and to address the theme of “Religion in the Public Sphere”.

The following report gives account on how the work programme given to the Church and Society Commission has been implemented.

2. Relating To Member Churches and Partner Organisations

The close relation with member churches and partner organisations is a constitutive element in the work of the Commission. In the period since the last CEC assembly member churches were actively involved in CSC activities by the participation of representatives in the **Commission, its Working Groups, Task Forces and Project Groups**. Equally important was the involvement of member churches in the development of **public statements** and policy documents. The process that led to a CSC statement on the beginning of accession negotiations of the EU with Turkey might serve as an example. In February 2004, the Church and Society Commission issued a draft policy document on the accession to all member churches and asked them for comments and feed back. On the basis of the responses from member churches, a public statement was issued in October, just prior to the European Commission publishing its assessment.

Networking became an increasingly important element within the different working areas. The European Christian Environmental Network (ECEN) is the most prominent example. ECEN is administered and organised by the CSC Secretariat. A network on employment, economic and social issues is in the process of being established.

Relations between the Commission and its constituency have always been understood as a **two-way process**. In order to increase the information flow from member churches, to share

European developments and to build a network among those within the member churches, who are working on issues related to church and society, since 2003 the Commission has invited **Church & Society and Europe Secretaries** of member churches to an annual meeting in or near Brussels.

A special moment in the life of the Commission during 2003-2009 was the **Church Leaders' Meeting** in December 2006. The meeting, under the title "Values, Religion and Identity", brought together more than 60 church leaders from 28 countries, taking up one of the recommendations from Trondheim (cf. Rec. 15 and 16). For many church leaders it was their first visit to Brussels and the first direct engagement with the European institutions.

It is the aim of the CSC to engage with member churches and partners as early as possible on emerging European trends, projects and developments. Besides communicating with member churches through the CEC Communication office in Geneva and its tools, such as the CEC **website** and regular **press releases**, several mechanisms were established as regular features in the CSC in order to foster communication with member churches and partner organisations. Since the end of 2006, CSC has been publishing a monthly **CSC Update on European Affairs**. The Europe Updates serve as a channel to provide timely information ("early warning") on European affairs and the related CSC activities and, at the same time, seek to engage members in them. Member churches have an open invitation to use the Europe Updates to pass information about their own Europe-related initiatives (statements, conferences etc.) and to share their best practises. The regular updates are completed by occasional **briefing papers** on particular topics (e.g. Treaty reform process, intercultural dialogue, EU social policies) and on CSC's involvement in the respective matters.

Since 2005 the CSC has reported its work not only to member churches but to a broader public through its "**Annual Reports**", which have attracted considerable attention.

More strategically, the CSC uses the visits of member churches to Brussels and Strasbourg to communicate with member churches. To this effect, the CSC invites in particular **delegations from member churches**, whose countries assume the EU Presidency in order to bring them in touch with the institutions.

Of high importance is also the cooperation, which emerged with churches and church organisations, such as the Community of Protestant Churches in Europe (CPCE), which support the work of the CSC with seconded or associate staff. Equally important is the cooperation with churches represented with their own **offices in Brussels**. The CSC enjoys a special relation with the EKD office in Brussels, whose Director is also associated staff of the CSC and accompanies the Working Group on EU Legislation.

Associated members are invited to the CSC Plenaries and several associated members (especially the youth organisations) are represented in Working Groups and Task Forces of the CSC. In addition, for most of the period covered by this report, the ecumenical organisations represented in Brussels met bi-monthly to discuss and coordinate their work. An especially close cooperation exists with the Churches Commission for Migrants in Europe (CCME), the Association of WCC-related Development Organisations (APRODEV), Eurodiaconia, the Ecumenical Association of Laity and Academy Centres (Oikos Europe) and the Commission of [Catholic] Bishops' Conferences in the European Communities (COMECE). COMECE and the CSC established a Liaison Committee, which meets annually in order to review and to agree upon common initiatives.

The cooperation with **CCME** and the prospect of CCME becoming a commission of CEC resulted in many joint initiatives on issues related to trafficking in human beings, anti-discrimination, and inter-cultural dialogue.

Until 2007, **Eurodiaconia** and the CSC worked together on social issues in a joint Working Group.

Oikos Europe and the CSC cooperated on issues such as religion in the public sphere and they were represented at each other's annual plenaries.

All of these organisations joined forces in organising a four-day event during the German Kirchentag in 2006 on "Europe in the World" which was attended by some ten thousand participants.

These are just some examples of cooperation with partner organisations. Many other partner organisations (church-related and non-church-related) and many other forms of cooperation could be mentioned. Bringing the different actors together facilitates speaking with one voice, as far as possible. The CSC believes that this is an important pre-condition for a successful advocacy work vis-à-vis the European institutions.

3. Relating to the European Institutions

The relations with the European institutions are guided by two aims. The first aim is to **share information** about developments in the institutions with member churches in order to facilitate active engagement in European issues. The second aim is to present the "**common voice**" of CEC member churches to the institutions. Though the third element of the CSC mandate highlights the special responsibility of churches in the European Union, it is important to stress that CEC and its CSC, as a pan-European organisation, does not only relate to the institutions of the European Union (27 member states), but also to the Council of Europe (47 member states) and the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE; all European states); at times even to global organisations such as the UN and NATO. In bringing a common voice to the European Union, the CSC is very conscious to not only bring the voice of churches in member states, but of the whole of the constituency of CEC.

Whether the present mechanisms of relating to the European institutions has led to an "active and stable framework of dialogue", as recommended by the Trondheim Assembly, is difficult to judge. **The Lisbon Treaty** (superseding the non-ratified Constitutional Treaty) of the European Union, which in Article 17 commits the European Union to an "**open, transparent and regular**" **dialogue** with the churches and religious associations or communities has itself not yet been ratified. However, all present leaders of the European institutions have committed themselves to the dialogue. The President of the European Commission, Jose Manuel Barroso, stated at the Third European Ecumenical Assembly (EEA3) in Sibiu (Romania) in 2007: "*The European Commission has always been attentive to the engagement of the Christian churches, and in particular to the Conference of European Churches, which since the beginning have accompanied and encouraged the big adventure of the European construction. ... My participation in this gathering, upon invitation of the Conference of European Churches and the Council of European Bishops' Conferences is part of a long process of listening and mutual respect between the Commission and the main religions in Europe.*" Similar sentiments were expressed in Sibiu by the President of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, Mr Rene van der Linden.

The following patterns for the relations with the **EU institutions** have emerged over the years and can be regarded as fairly stable.

Since 2005, the President of the European Commission has invited leaders of the three monotheistic religions for an annual “**Summit**”. By the time of the Lyon Assembly, there will have been summit meetings in five consecutive years. In recent years, the President of the European Commission has been joined by the President of the European Parliament and by the President of the EU Presidency in expressing the invitation. CEC is represented at these meetings by its President and by several representatives of member churches, who are invited in their own capacity. The CSC, as well as COMECE, has tried to help facilitate the participation of church representatives, for instance, by hosting pre-meetings. Themes addressed in these summits were, *inter alia*, fostering tolerance and mutual respect, inter-cultural dialogue and climate change.

The CSC and COMECE also seek meetings with every incoming **EU Presidency** either prior to or as early as possible after a government has assumed the six-month Presidency. These meetings are important in raising the churches’ concerns and in preparing contacts on the working level of the churches with an EU Presidency throughout the presidency. Meetings with EU Presidencies are usually attended (from the CSC side) by the CSC Director and church representatives of the respective country. The churches’ delegation is mostly received either by the Prime Minister, the Foreign Minister or the Minister in charge of EU affairs, or in some cases by a Secretary of State. In the period covered by this report meetings have taken place with the Prime Ministers of Italy, Ireland, the Netherlands, Luxembourg and Slovenia, with the Foreign Ministers of Austria, Finland and Germany and the Secretary of State of France. As an important result, these meetings have facilitated more intensive contacts between the churches in the respective countries, but also of CSC and COMECE to the EU Presidencies.

In order to make the contact with EU Presidencies more effective and in order to develop long-term aims and strategies, in 2007, the CSC together with the Church of Sweden and the Evangelical-Lutheran Church of Finland convened for the first time a consultation which brought together those churches whose countries will assume the EU Presidency in the near future. This consultation helped substantially in bringing member churches from different countries into contact with one another and in developing a common agenda. The results of the meeting were shared with wider CSC constituency in a CSC guide for EU Presidencies.

Another stable feature in the relations with the EU institutions are the **Dialogue Seminars**, which are jointly organised by the CSC, COMECE and the European Commission around themes of common interest. The usual pattern is that these dialogue seminars are organised twice a year and they bring together representatives of member churches with a special expertise on the theme and responsible staff and politicians from the European Institutions. In the period from 2003 to 2009, seven such dialogue meetings have taken place, covering issues such as EU enlargement, “fortress Europe”, religious education, the European social model(s), “flexicurity” in the labour market, inter-cultural dialogue and climate change. A certain suspension of the dialogue seminars in the years 2005 and 2006 can be attributed to the extensive work of the Convention on the Future of Europe and a reorganisation in the Bureau of European Policy Advisers, the partner on the side of the European Commission in organising the dialogue seminars.

The Strasbourg office very closely monitors the sessions of the **European Parliament** and shares relevant information electronically to an ever-growing list of church-related recipients. Through all the years, the CSC has enjoyed a close relationship with members and bodies of the European Parliament, who mostly prove to be very accessible for cooperation in many ways. Upon invitation of European deputies several CSC events, such as seminars and book presentations took place in the European Parliament.

In addition to these “structural” elements in the relations with the institutions, however, are the many contacts between church representatives and staff with MEPs and civil servants on the **working level**. The CSC participated in many consultation processes of the European Commissions and the European Parliament and enjoys frequent formal and informal contacts with representatives of the institutions. With the help of additional staff in the CSC (in both Brussels and Strasbourg) contacts with representatives have also increased considerably. The CSC has become better known and more visible within the institutions; this has also made it easier to invite representatives to CSC consultations and working groups and to make relevant appointments for church-related visiting groups. It is particularly through these contacts that information is shared, which in turn can be passed on to the CEC constituency.

Besides the contact point of the European Commission, the present Presidium of the European Parliament has also charged one of its Vice-Presidents and a member of the President’s Cabinet with relations to religious communities. When the CEC Presidium met in Brussels in 2007, it met with the representatives of the European institutions in charge of relating to religions.

The discussions on how to implement Article 17 of the Lisbon Treaty (if ratified) have not ended. In the European institutions there are still sectors that want to prevent too close a relationship between the institutions and religions. However, in preparation of further debates on an “open, transparent and regular dialogue” between communities of faith and conviction and the European institutions, the CSC has commissioned a study on the development of the relations up to the present day. The study will be available prior to the Lyon Assembly.

With regard to the **Council of Europe** (CoE) it is also true to say that contacts have considerably increased over the years, not at least due to support of seconded and associated staff. In relation to the Council of Europe, CEC enjoys the status of a “participating” organisation, which signifies a boost compared to the earlier terminology of an organisation in “in consultative status”. If CEC and its CSC do not relate to the Council of Europe in their own right, they often bring the voice of the churches to the Council of Europe through the community of non-governmental organisations.

In addition, CEC through its CSC enjoys a special relationship as observer in the Council of Europe’s Steering Committee on Bioethics. This has allowed for many direct and ongoing contributions at an early stage of the Council’s work. The contributions of the CSC in this field are facilitated by the CSC Working Group on Bioethics.

In 2004, the CSC of CEC was encouraged to apply also for an observer status in the Council’s Steering Group on Human Rights. Though the CoE Council of Ministers in the end saw it as difficult to grant such a status to a religious organisation, relations and cooperation in the field of human rights have intensified. The CSC was invited to participate in and to contribute to CoE Working Groups on themes such as “human rights of members of the armed forces”, “hate speech”, “the wearing of religious symbols in the public sphere” and human rights in a multi-cultural society.

Two particular developments deserve particular attention in this section of the report. Since 2000, the **CoE Commissioner for Human Rights** has invited religious representatives to annual meetings on themes related to armed conflicts, church-state relations, human rights, culture and religion, religion, education and dialogue. All of these meetings were attended, and partly facilitated, by the CSC.

Secondly, after a long and participatory process, the Council of Europe's Committee of Ministers published in 2008 a **White Paper on Inter-Cultural Dialogue**. The White Paper, for the first time on this level, recognised the importance of religious communities and the need for cooperation and exchange. On 8 April 2008 the Council of Ministers organised for the first time an encounter with religious communities and other NGOs. The meeting was preceded by the CSC inviting ambassadors to the Council of Europe for an exchange. Following this meeting, ambassadors from eight Nordic and Baltic countries sought contact with the CSC on issues related to inter-cultural dialogue.

Relations with the **Organisation for Security and Cooperation (OSCE)** have focused –as recommended by the Trondheim Assembly – on the human dimension and religious freedom. The CSC Director is *ad personam* a member of the Advisory Council on Freedom of Religion and Belief of the OSCE Office on Democratic Institutions and Human Rights Human Rights (ODIHR). Many church representatives are members of the Advisory Panel, a resource body around the Council. Through the Council and the ODIHR, the CSC has the possibility to address concerns of member churches with regard to religious freedom. One of the main projects of the Council in recent years was the development of the Toledo Guidelines on Teaching about Religion and Beliefs in Public Schools, which attracted a substantial amount of attention.

For the broader human rights agenda the annual OSCE Human Dimension Implementation Meetings and the Supplementary Human Rights Seminar are important as they allow direct engagement with delegations of participatory states into dialogue on specific human rights topics and their implementation.

Both functions, the close cooperation with member churches and partner organisations as well as the monitoring of and advocacy work towards the European institutions, are a priority for the CSC. Only if the relations with member churches are functioning, can the CSC really represent the common voice of its members. Only if the member churches are well and timely informed about forthcoming developments and projects, an involvement of the CEC constituency can be ensured.

4. Working Mechanisms and Methods

The CSC policy paper on “Working Mechanisms and Methods”, recommended by the Trondheim Assembly, offers a number of values undergirding the work of the CSC and its relations with member churches and partner organisations. Based on these values, various working mechanisms and methods have been developed and implemented.

Permanent Working Groups on Bioethics, EU Legislation, Social Issues, Human Rights and Religious Freedom, Peace, Security and Reconciliation, and European Integration have been established. They helped to structure and to accompany the work of the CSC in crucial areas of work. They have also ensured the involvement of member churches. Members of the

Working Groups were selected upon recommendation of member churches and associated members. Networks, as mentioned above, served the same purposes.

The limited timeframe in dealing with the European Institutions, however, made it necessary to also establish more flexible and **project-oriented mechanisms**. Task forces dealt, for example, with issues related to globalisation and employment. Brainstorming groups helped to address new and emerging challenges. One-off consultations in Brussels, Strasbourg and in European countries helped to address specific issues relevant for the churches and the institutions. The close cooperation with member churches and partner organisations also led to some issues being addressed by one or several member churches or partner organisation for the whole of the CEC fellowship. The policy paper on agriculture as well as the study on the relations of the CSC with the European institutions are good examples of out-sourced projects.

A still under-developed mechanism is **team visits to member churches** or regions with specific concerns. The CSC, however, participated in the South Eastern European Partnership Programme and team visits organised by the CEC General Secretariat. In addition, the plenary meetings in different parts of Europe (which always included encounters with member churches in these countries) also provided good opportunities for learning about various situations and concerns of churches in Europe. Venues for Commission Plenaries were selected not least according to these criteria.

The Church and Society Commission want to express its thanks to all member churches and partner organisations, which were involved in implementing its work programme and helped to resource its work.

5. Thematic Work Areas

5.1 European Integration

The period since the last CEC Assembly saw a major development in European politics. Twelve countries, mostly situated in Central and Eastern Europe, became full Member States of the European Union. The enlargement of the EU in 2004 and 2007 was, therefore, often referred to as the ultimate end of the Cold War and of decades of an artificial division of the continent by an Iron Curtain.

Churches were intensively involved in the process of European integration. European integration became the headline for many of the activities of the CSC. The Working Group on European Integration monitored specific aspects of the accession process and the CSC as a whole raised on many occasions the common voice of the churches in direct contact with the European political institutions.

In dealing with European integration, the CSC underlined specific basic principles from a church perspective: EU integration is more than EU enlargement. Therefore, to speak about integration means for the churches to go beyond the limitations of the economic and political aspects, reminding the institutions of the need to address with the same vigour the **human, social, spiritual and religious dimensions of the process**. From the CEC perspective, Europe is broader than the EU and to speak about integration also means to speak about the impact of the process on the whole continent and even on a global scale.

In particular, the CSC raised the following concerns:

- The hopes and anxieties of the people linked to the integration process in Europe;
- The EU Constitutional Treaty (now Lisbon Treaty) – and the role of the churches in the ratification and implementation process;
- Identity, values and diversity in Europe;
- The EU's relations with Turkey.

The consequences of the EU enlargement and the response of the churches were at the focus of attention of a conference in Budapest organised by the CSC in cooperation with the Reformed Church in Hungary in April 2004. **Church leaders from the new EU Member States and candidate countries** underlined that economic prosperity and economic growth must not be the only aims of the integration. The process of European integration needs to be a process with a human face, taking into account the social consequences of the economic processes. Solidarity between people, countries and regions needs to play a shaping role in the future of the Union.

The study of some concrete results of the EU enlargement was the aim of a project launched in 2004 by the CSC, CCME and **Theobalt**, a network of churches around the Baltic Sea. The core of the project was an effort to raise awareness for specific aspects of the European integration process, in particular for the question of free movement of persons as a challenge and opportunity in Baltic Sea region. The cooperation with Theobalt allowed for an involvement on the regional and local level. The specific characteristics of the Baltic Sea region allowed at the same time to focus on the relationship of the old and new EU Member States and Russia. It also contributed to addressing various aspects of free and forced migration like, for instance, issues such as the trafficking in human beings in the region.

In 2006 and 2007 the CSC developed a project under the title '**Values, Religion, Identity.**' The project resulted in two conferences, in Brussels (2006) and in London (2007). An extraordinary event was the church leaders' conference in Brussels in December 2006. The meeting was an important opportunity for church leaders of the CEC member churches as well as an opportunity for the direct contact of the church leaders with the European political institutions. The project underlined a need for a more intensive communication between church leaders and the European political leadership. This was, in particular, important for a number of churches for which, due to various reasons, the debate on European issues as well as the link between churches and politics did not previously feature very prominently on their respective agendas.

The church leaders adopted '*An Open Letter from Church Leaders to Political Leaders in Europe: For a Europe Based on Shared Values and a Common Hope.*' This letter formed the basis for CSC interventions during the EU debate on the future of Europe and during the search for overcoming the deadlock with regard to the EU Constitutional Treaty in 2006 and 2007.

The CSC was intensively involved in the preparation of the Europe Day and, in particular, the Europe Forum during the **Third European Ecumenical Assembly (EEA3) in Sibiu in September 2007**. The Assembly proved to be a unique opportunity to discuss and share in a broad ecumenical setting the different experiences and views on the future of the continent. The EEA3 renewed the commitment of churches to be a visible and active part in European societies. Several political leaders of Europe contributed to this discussion in Sibiu. The President of the European Commission, Jose Manuel Barroso, as well as the Commissioners Figel and Orban and the President of the Council of Europe's Parliamentary Assembly, René

van der Linden, underlined in their presentations the importance of the dialogue between religions and politics. They stressed the “vital and vibrant role” of religion and religious organisations in the society. Rene van der Linden pointed out that: “Through their profound respect for individual human dignity, they [religions] are indispensable to advancing peace and justice in the world ... politicians must recognise this and strengthen the role of churches and religious organisations in society.”

The relationship of the EU to **Turkey** remains to be one of the debated points of the integration process. The CSC issued a discussion paper at the beginning of 2004 and asked all member churches for comments. On the basis of this wide consultation process, the CSC was able to issue a statement on the eve of the European Commission’s decision as to whether or not start negotiations with Turkey, underlining that for the CEC the fact that Turkey is a predominantly Muslim country is not an issue that would, in principle, hinder future Turkish membership of the EU. The statement highlighted, however, other concerns, such as the implementation of human rights record in Turkey as well as a number of EU internal matters, which need to be solved. The paper stated that at the given stage neither Turkey nor the EU is ready for the accession.

The CSC contributed significantly to the debate on the future of the EU and participated actively in the work leading to the draft text of the **EU Constitutional Treaty** and to the later EU Lisbon Treaty. In all submissions and interventions, the CSC underlined the importance of commonly shared values as the basis in the process of shaping the future of the EU. The CSC emphasised values such as the protection of human dignity, reconciliation, freedom, justice and solidarity as cornerstones of the European project. The churches have an important role to play in reminding the political institutions that these are fundamental values which are not only valid as guiding principles for the past, but also for the present and the future of Europe.

5. 2 Globalisation

The work on globalisation resulted, *inter alia*, in a publication titled “**European churches living their faith in the context of globalisation.**” The document tries to highlight different aspects of the churches’ debate in Europe. It was developed as a contribution to the global debate in the framework of the World Council of Churches’ AGAPE process. It served as a basis when the CSC brought together European delegates in preparation for the WCC Assembly in Porto Alegre in February 2006. The CSC will continue its involvement with the WCC (process on Wealth, Poverty and the Ecology) and with churches of other continents on issues related to globalisation.

From a CEC perspective, globalisation is understood as a process including both **opportunities and challenges**. Although elements have been identified which lead churches to a rejection of economic globalisation, the European experience shows that neither total rejection nor uncritical endorsement seems entirely appropriate. Churches, being aware of the positive elements of globalisation, recognise that globalisation also increases vulnerabilities, particularly for certain groups in society, for example trafficked women, migrants, minorities, the socially excluded and others. Special attention needs to be paid to the situation in the developing countries. The CEC position clearly opposes a globalisation process which does not take into account these vulnerabilities, the limits to growth, and threats to a sustainable development. CEC rejects that the market becomes an idol. In the current form of globalisation, the market is overemphasised with harmful consequences for human relationships and cultural identity.

In the CEC perspective on globalisation, different experiences were reflected within the European continent, in particular in Western and Eastern Europe. The role of the social market economy in Western Europe is a different experience compared with the legacy of the eastern part of the continent, which led to an artificial division of the continent by an Iron Curtain. For Europe's churches, the Eastern European experience of scarcity and of the suffering of people must be a vital factor in the analysis of the globalisation process. This experience needs also to be taken into account in responding to current challenges. The CSC publication stated that **economic policies cannot create values on their own**; solidarity cannot be created by the market alone. The concept of the European social market systems, with all their weaknesses, contains elements which could be of help in transforming the global economic system. While confirming the potential positive role of the market, there are recognised limitations: "It is not the market *per se* but rather what can be called *market society* that we are opposing. Economy based on belief in the invisible and universally present almighty hand of the market is a form of idolatry."

The European integration process is a part of a European response to globalisation. The active role of the churches in the process is, therefore, to be seen as a part of contribution to the challenge of globalisation. The CSC view on globalisation takes into account those facets of globalisations that go beyond a limited focus on the economy, for instance, the lack of governance. The publication provided a **theological and ethical orientation** and explored underlying values and principles.

Globalisation and in particular issues related to global justice were also at the centre of the EEA3. The Justice Forum was an opportunity for a broader European discussion on the impacts of globalisation and on the commitments of the churches in Europe to make an active contribution to the debate. The Forum pointed out that the "discussion was a precious moment in our ecumenical journey and underlined that the European Churches have to continue to develop adequate answers to the cries of affected people in their midst as well as from other continents."

The CSC supported many churches in Europe in strengthening contacts between European churches and partner churches from other continents. In June 2008, delegations of the CEC and the All Africa Conference of Churches met in Paris and discussed possibilities for further contacts and cooperation between churches and ecumenical bodies from the two continents. The CSC also launched a process of dialogue between European and Latin American churches on the impact of globalisation, which aims at assessing globalisation on the basis of different experiences made in the two continents and at **raising mutual awareness** for the effects of globalisation in different contexts.

These initiatives are a part of the CSC response to the call of the EEA3 '*to organise a consultation process stressing out European responsibility for the just shaping of globalisation.*' Recognising the responsibility of the churches to contribute to shaping the globalisation process from a perspective of justice was a driving force for the CSC involvement. In this spirit, the CEC Central Committee underlined in its statement from November 2007 the basis of the CEC position on globalisation: "the economy should be at the service of people, and not the other way around." The promotion of a life in human dignity and the integrity of God's creation as well as enhancing livelihoods, especially of those who are in need, are to be the guiding **criteria for shaping the globalisation** process from the churches' perspective.

5.3 Environment

The environment and in particular **climate change** have become prominent topics on the European political agenda in recent years. The European Union has made a substantial effort to shape its profile as a leading global force in effectively addressing the challenges of climate change. **EU activities** aim at reducing greenhouse gas emissions by 20% compared with 1990. In case of a follow up of other major global polluters, the EU is committed to a reduction by 30% by 2020. It aims to increase the share of renewable energy resources by up to 20 % in the total energy mix and to increase the energy efficiency by 20% in the same year. The EU plays a prominent role in the UN process aiming at achieving a reasonable arrangement for greenhouse gas emissions at the global level after 2012, when present arrangement negotiated in the framework of the Kyoto Protocol expire.

Churches have been active partners in the process, with increasing vigour to challenge climate change. Climate change featured as a major topic in the meeting of churches and religious leaders with the Presidents of the European institutions (European Council, European Parliament and European Commission) in May 2008. Specific activities and efforts of many churches in Europe have been noted as an important contribution of churches in raising awareness for the challenges of climate change in society. Churches in Europe are increasingly aware of the need of being responsible stewards for God's creation, as well as of the necessity of a dialogue of the churches with the political decision makers on matters related to climate change. In 2008, the capacity of the CSC to address the challenges of climate change at the political level was substantially increased through cooperation with the Church of England and its representative in Brussels and in the CSC. European churches, the CSC and the **European Christian Environmental Network** ECEN also contribute significantly to the WCC efforts to address climate change at the global level.

A major instrument of the CSC in addressing environmental issues is the ECEN. It is an open network of church delegates bearing responsibility for environment issues as well as for all those who as members of the European churches want to contribute to Care for Creation. ECEN's major task is to raise awareness among churches and Christians in Europe and to provide a platform for the sharing of experiences and good practices. ECEN celebrated its 10th anniversary in 2008; it continues to prove itself to be an important ecumenical instrument. The core activities of ECEN include the active promotion of a "Creation time", a time in which the care for creation should be included in the churches' liturgical calendar. This initiative has also been taken up by the EEA3, which in its final message recommended "*that the period from 1st September to 4th October be dedicated to prayer for the protection of Creation and the promotion of sustainable lifestyles that reverse our contribution to climate change.*"

Since the last CEC Assembly, ECEN organised three **Assemblies** for church representatives in Basel (Switzerland) in 2005, Flämslätt (Sweden) in 2006 and Milano (Italy) in 2008. Activities of the network are focused on eight thematic areas: theology, worship, climate change, eco-management, environmental education, water, transport and mobility, and nature protection. ECEN appeals are contributing to stepping up initiatives of churches to respond to environmental challenges. Every year, ECEN issues liturgical material, thus assisting the churches in organising prayers and worship services on care for creation. ECEN offers a broad platform for **sharing and for mutual support** for many Christians in churches across the continent.

ECEN has produced several documents, some of which have been widely circulated. The message to every church and congregation in Europe' from the Assembly in Basel (2005) was translated into 16 languages. Other widely circulated documents included: 'Living in a new energy era' a call from the ECEN Assembly in Flämslätt in 2006, as well as the publications on 'Environmental Management in European Churches' and on 'Time for God's Creation.'

Long before 2007, the EEA3 became a focal point of ECEN. For the network the process of preparation was equally important as the event itself. The preparatory process contributed significantly to deepening the cooperation between ECEN and the environmental commission of the CCEE. The Creation Forum at the EEA3 stressed that the churches should give priority to and advocate for responsible and sustainable life styles. The link between the care for the **environment and Christian theology** is of utmost importance. The specific contribution of the churches to the environmental movement can be seen in emphasizing the interconnectedness of humankind with all of creation. Today a responsible lifestyle is an important Christian witness. ECEN also played a role in other areas of the Assembly, such as the eco-management of the event. For the first time an Assembly (co-)organised by CEC applied a climate change compensation scheme, which resulted in the planting of 15000 trees in Sibiu.

The last ECEN Assembly under the title "Real challenge of climate change" in September 2008 in Milano brought together more than 100 delegates from 25 countries. The Assembly demonstrated the capacity of churches in raising awareness for and in playing an active role in the care for creation. It also made clear that there is an important role for churches to play in addressing the issue of climate change: in motivating concrete actions in the churches' communities, as well as in engaging in a dialogue with the political institutions.

5.4 Social and Economic Issues

In 2000 in Lisbon, the EU Heads of State and Government committed themselves to make the EU "*the most competitive and dynamic knowledge-based economy in the world, capable of sustainable economic growth with more and better jobs and greater social cohesion.*" Several years later, following a mid-term evaluation, the EU had to state the failure of its "**Lisbon strategy**": "Europe's citizens are concerned about jobs, growth, the environment and a proper social net. The existing lack of economic growth affects all of us, our pensions, salaries and our standard of living." (Mid-term review of the Lisbon strategy)

Twenty years after the fall of the Iron Curtain, Europe still faces a huge difference of living standards between West and East, North and South. Unemployment rates persist on a high level in many European countries, contributing to increasing poverty for those who remain excluded from economic growth, education and social security systems. Families are in particular affected by the risk of social exclusion. In some European countries poverty affects more than every fifth child. This has led to considerable uncertainty as to how to further develop the European social model(s).

According to the Gospel, it is an integral part of the **calling of the Church** to care for the well-being of all people, that they all may enjoy life in its fullness. At a conference on "A common vision for a social Europe" organised by the CSC and Eurodiaconia in November 2005 in Brussels, representatives of Europe's churches confirmed their commitment to a "social Europe": "*The Christian vision of a social Europe is a radical one (in the literal sense of the word), seeking the roots of our social activity. Spirituality and solidarity belong*

together: In the Christian understanding, human dignity does not depend on productivity or economic contribution, but resides in people created in the image of God to live in relationship. (Genesis 1:27) ... There cannot be a full community without participation of vulnerable people. ... Churches and Diaconia have an advocacy task, i.e. to strengthen the voice of the marginalized, and to point out deficits in the social systems. An economy is only fully understood if it is looked at from the viewpoint of the vulnerable and disadvantaged.”

In recent years, the CSC has become very actively involved in the **debate on the future of the European social model(s)**. On many occasions the CSC addressed the EU and the member states to care for a better balance between the economy, social cohesion and a sustainable environment. The joint CSC-CCME-Eurodiaconia response to the EU's consultation on “Europe's Social Reality” provides an overview of the churches' perspectives on the manifold social situation in Europe. The CSC has also participated in similar consultations on social inclusion policies and in the debate on the renewal of the EU's social agenda. Furthermore, the CSC is involved in the preparation of the 2010 European Year of Combating Poverty and Social Exclusion.

Churches and their diaconal ministries are today the biggest providers of **social and healthcare services** in Europe. They are rooted at grassroots levels, closest to the people, and very often the last places of support for those who fall through the safety nets of the social protection systems. Therefore the liberalisation of services in the internal market (the Bolkestein Directive), which was introduced by the EU in 2004-2006, was a key concern of the CSC's work. Over the years, the CSC participated actively in this debate. The week before the decision in the European Parliament, CSC together with COMECE brought all relevant stakeholders together in a dialogue seminar on social services. These activities resulted in an exemption of social and healthcare services from the scope of the Services Directive, an exemption that explicitly covered services provided by churches and diaconal organisations, which was an important step to protect the quality and accessibility of social services of European churches. In addition, the CSC together with its partners contributed to a number of consultations on social and healthcare services.

The **demographic developments** of European societies constitute another important challenge for a social Europe. Ageing societies and decreasing birth rates put pressure on social protection systems and lead to profound changes in European societies. Together with CCME, the Ecumenical Youth Council in Europe (EYCE) and Eurodiaconia, the CSC contributed to the development of the EU's Green Paper on Demographic Change, stressing the need for a new quality of relations in European societies. This will require a profound reconsideration of principles and values in European politics.

In March 2008, the CSC started a mapping process of Member Churches' views on **family policies** in order to prepare future work on this theme. CEC member churches and associated organisations were invited to send their respective position papers to the CSC to prepare a joint position paper on family policies.

In 2005, the CSC Plenary in Dunblane asked the CSC to intensify the cooperation among CEC member churches and associated organisations on issues relating to employment. In the following years this led to an intensive involvement in **employment policies** on European level and to the development of a new European network on employment and economic issues, coordinated by CSC. In February 2008, CSC together with CCME and ECG organised a Conference on “Employment and the Churches”, which included a Dialogue Seminar with the European Commission. On the eve of the meeting of the Council of the European Union

on Employment, Social Policy, Health and Consumer Affairs, representatives and experts from the churches in Europe expressed their concern about the increasing segmentation of the labour market, with more and more precarious employment situations and the growing marginalisation of specific groups, such as long-term unemployed, less-skilled people or people with a migration background. Keynote speakers at the Dialogue Seminar were Ján Figel and Vladimír Špidla, members of the European Commission. The consultation was an important step to intensify networking among CEC member churches on economic and social issues.

5.5 Agriculture and Rural Communities

The last six years have seen numerous upheavals for European agriculture. The European Union has considerable influence through its Common Agricultural Policy (CAP); the CAP continues to account for nearly half of the EU's entire expenditure. Enlargements of the EU in 2004 and 2007 have placed new pressures on the CAP, given the comparatively high percentage of agricultural workers in the accession states compared with Western Europe.

The **EU's Common Agricultural Policy** is under pressure from various quarters. Agriculture is a major issue in international trade negotiations, including pressure from some countries and corporations to allow greater use of genetically modified organisms (GMOs) and meat imports (including those with substances currently permitted in the USA but not in the EU). The CAP is heavily criticised by many developing nations for destroying local agriculture (through food "dumping" of imports from Europe, making locally-grown products uncompetitive) and excluding products from European markets. Finally, the CAP is resented by some European farmers as being highly bureaucratic.

The growth in the world's population has placed additional pressure to increase crop yields. The question of the ethics of growing crops for fuel has thus called into question the sustainability of such biofuels, as well as massive fluctuations in the wholesale prices of cereals in recent years. The CSC took part in the EU's Roundtable on "Ethical Aspects of Modern Developments in Agriculture Technologies" in June 2008.

The current EU budget runs from 2007 until 2012; a long-term issue will be the implications for rural communities of any changes to the Common Agricultural Policy after 2013. There may be considerable political pressures during negotiations for the post-2013 budget, including for reductions (or increases) in expenditure in various EU countries.

Notwithstanding the legitimate demands of developing nations, the impact of reforming the CAP could have major consequences for Europe's rural communities, many of which are economically vulnerable. The pastoral concern for people living in Europe's rural areas must continue to be a major consideration for the churches. New technology (such as home working using the internet or small-scale generation of electricity using agricultural waste) may help to preserve the viability of the rural economy.

The CSC has worked with the **Churches European Rural Network (CERN)** on addressing questions of agriculture, rural communities and food. A member of the CSC staff has also served on CERN's steering committee. CERN has organised several meetings, at which the CSC has been represented, notably in Strasbourg (2004 and 2005), Čelákovice, Czech Republic (2006) and Altenkirchen, Germany (2008). These meetings have underlined that churches have a special role to play in the development of rural regions in Europe. It is notable that often village churches remain as a focus for rural communities long after other

focal points (such as shops, banks and schools) have been closed. Churches do not only fulfil diaconal and pastoral tasks in services they provide in rural regions; they have a particular role to play in protecting and preserving the values and identities of their respective regions and are able to raise the concerns of the communities and people living in rural regions.

The CSC commissioned the Utrecht-based research institute Oikos Nederland to prepare a major **strategy paper for the churches** on agriculture, food and rural communities in Europe. The production of this paper has been assisted by consultations, including with member churches and with representatives of the European institutions. The future task is to draw on the findings of the strategy paper in discussions among churches and of churches with the European institutions. Cooperation with the CERN will be crucial to this effect.

5.6 Human Rights and Religious Freedom

The promotion and implementation of human rights has for long been a priority for CEC. The establishment of a desk for Justice, Peace and Human Rights in CEC dates back to 1988. Earlier, CEC cooperated with the National Councils in the USA and in Canada in the Churches' Human Rights Programme. As churches believe that every person is created in the image of God, no human being can be deprived of her/his dignity. Therefore the CSC, in close cooperation with its member churches, promotes policies and standards which respect every person's God-given dignity and which strive for a life in all its fullness for all. This understanding is reflected in recommendation 13 of the Report from the Policy Reference Committee of the Trondheim Assembly.

Since 2003, several **new challenges** arose with regard to human rights and religious freedom. The terrorist attacks in New York, Washington DC, Madrid and London have opened a new debate on the relationship between human rights and security, with some governments wanting to limit existing rights in the search for more security and some wanting to push religion to the private sphere. The globalisation process gave rise to a new debate on the relationship between tradition, identity and universal rights, at times questioning the universality and indivisibility of human rights. The growing gap between rich and poor within societies, as well as between the countries of the northern and southern hemispheres, made the debate re-emerge on the relationship between civil and political rights on one side and economic, social and cultural rights on the other.

In the period since the Trondheim Assembly, the CSC Working Group on Human Rights and Religious Freedom monitored these developments, involved member churches in debates and made the common voice of the member churches heard vis-à-vis the European institutions and in a broader public. As the name of the Working Group suggests, a certain emphasis was put on religious freedom (individually as well as for communities) as a human right. The work on human rights and religious freedom suffered, however, from two staff vacancies (July to December 2004 and January to October 2007).

In response to **requests of individual member churches**, the CSC dealt with several cases of human rights infringements in European countries, especially with regard to freedom of religion or belief. In many cases, CEC and its CSC informed the European institutions and added its own voice in submission to governments about alleged violations. CEC and the CSC also supported member churches in dealing with human rights violations.

When the debate about the **concept of and the approach to human rights** in view of the new challenges started to emerge in the churches, the CSC devoted its meeting of Church and

Society Secretaries in 2006 to launch a debate among churches and of churches with representatives of the European institutions.

As the Russian Orthodox Church announced its process towards drafting a fundamental statement on human rights (finally adopted by the Bishops' Council in 2008), the 2006 meeting of Church and Society Secretaries of European churches was followed-up by a delegation of the CSC and of European churches to Moscow in order to discuss commonalities and diverging opinions in the approach to human rights. The final communiqué of the meeting states the common aim of strengthening codified human rights instruments, but it also raises questions on the relation between Christian values and traditions and human rights as well as on the relation between civil and political rights and economic, social and cultural rights.

As another follow-up to the 2006 meeting, the CSC engaged in a **comparative study** of the European churches' approach to human rights.

In order to stimulate further debate among the churches and to take up issues emerging in the debate among churches and in society, the Working Group on Human Rights and Religious Freedom is now in the process of developing a **human rights manual**, in particular addressed to churches. It will address some of the particular issues raised in the churches' debate, it will address specific human rights issues and offer resource material. The aim is for the material to be used in educational settings and in future training courses offered by the CSC.

The most recent of such **training courses** dates back to March 2004. The training course, jointly offered by the CSC and the Lutheran World Federation, on "Human Rights and Religious Freedom", was attended by church representatives from 15 Central and Eastern European countries.

The **60th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights** in 2008 offered another occasion to draw the attention to human rights. The CSC marked the occasion by sending postcards and bookmarks to member churches, partner organisations and friends of CEC.

With regard to the **European institutions**, the CSC very closely monitored developments and made contributions to many consultation processes and debates. One focal point of work was to advocate for the European Charter of Fundamental Rights to become an integral and legally binding part of the European Union's Constitutional Treaty (now the Lisbon Treaty; cf. Article 6 of the Treaty on the European Union). In relation to the EU Charter on Fundamental Rights, 2007 saw the establishment of the European Union's Fundamental Rights Agency (based in Vienna), which aims to monitor and support the EU's efforts in implementing the Charter as well as to undergird the work of the European institutions by scientific research. The CSC is at present one of two religious organisations that have been invited to comment on the Agency's work programme. A visit of the CSC Working Group on Human Rights and Religious Freedom to the Agency in 2007 led to substantive cooperation.

In addition, the CSC contributed (at times together with the Working Group on EU Legislation) to the consultation processes of and debates in the EU institutions, in the Council of Europe and in the OSCE on specific human rights topics. In particular it is worthwhile to mention in this context the consultations of the Commissioner of Human Rights of the Council of Europe and the consultations organised under the auspices of the Council of Europe's Steering Committee on Human Rights.

In 2007, the CSC was invited to participate as an observer in two working groups of the Council of Europe's Steering Committee on Human Rights. These dealt with human rights in a multi-cultural society and with human rights in the armed forces. The CSC Working Group on Human Rights and Religious Freedom developed responses to the reports produced by the Council of Europe's Working Group at their various stages.

In order not to limit the voice of the churches not only to the European institutions, but also to bring it to the attention of a broader public; the CSC closely cooperates on human rights issues with the NGO community in participatory status with the Council of Europe. In Brussels, the CSC joined the "Human Rights and Democracy Network" of non-governmental organisations.

5.7 Bioethics

A major highlight in the work on bioethics after Trondheim was the **conference on "Human Life in our Hands? The Churches and Bioethics"**, organised in Strasbourg in November 2003. The conference took place under the auspices of the General Secretary of the Council of Europe and in co-operation with the Community of Protestant Churches in Europe and the University of Strasbourg. The more than 70 participants represented member churches from all CEC traditions and 22 countries, partner organisations, political decision-makers as well as pharmaceutical industries. The agenda covered a whole range of topics previously addressed by the CSC Working Group on Bioethics and Biotechnology. Discussions revealed diverging opinions among churches. A major achievement of the consultation was therefore that it identified several issues to be addressed in the future and on which the Working Group was asked to develop position papers as a basis for discussion within and among the churches in Europe and as a basis for engagement with the European institutions.

The position paper on **"Genetic Testing and Predictive Medicine"** states as its starting point that "God is the God *par excellence* of non-discrimination. No person or group of persons can be subjected to segregation or discrimination because of their genetic characteristics. This has repercussions both on the conduct of genetic research itself, and on labour law, social protection and insurance programmes. The God of the Bible liberates the future." In consequence, it is important "to respect the autonomy and freedom of the individual by helping them to make their own decisions."

The position paper on **"Ageing and the Care for the Elderly"** took a critical view on "contemporary trends to value people primarily for their youth, attractiveness, health, economic productivity and independence. Every phase of life has its own value. There is a strong need to rediscover the interdependence between generations and to reinforce their links in many ways."

In addition, earlier position papers on "Human and Animal Cloning" and on "Therapeutic Uses of cloning and Embryonic Stem Cells" were up-dated in the light of the recent debate by a discussion paper on **"New Issues in Stem Cells and Regenerative Medicine"**.

At the moment that this report is being written, four further documents are in the process of being finalised before the Lyon Assembly.

The first is on **Prenatal (PND) and Pre-implantation Genetic Diagnosis (PGD)**, which dwells on two indivisible guiding principles:

- Society should not impose on parents a choice which is not their own.
- It is the duty of society to give responsible support to families who choose to have children with special needs. Just and effective inclusion policies for persons with disabilities are crucial in this regard.

The CSC was strongly involved in the ongoing debate on euthanasia in the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe through several written contributions. Therefore it is important for a CSC policy paper to deal with **Euthanasia and End of Life Issues**. The document will maintain the position that euthanasia and physician assisted suicide are morally unacceptable.

A third and fourth paper discuss and reflect upon the issue of **Human Enhancement** and on the **Ethics of Health Care Systems**.

On the basis of the position and discussion papers, adopted by the Executive Committee and presented to the churches, the CSC was engaged in **dialogue with the European institutions**. Besides the CSC's holding an observer seat in the Steering Committee on Bioethics of the Council of Europe, it responded, for instance, to the consultation by the European Commission on human organ transplantations, in which it underlined that organ donation, making organ transplantation possible, is an act of solidarity, in which the human dignity of both the donor and the receiver have to be respected.

Together with COMECE, the CSC took part in the consultation by the European Commission on "the mid-term review of the Life Sciences and Biotechnology Strategy 2002-2010".

The CSC also participated in Brussels in the Roundtable by the European Group on Ethics in Sciences and New Technologies (EGE) in view of their opinion on the ethical aspects of animal cloning for food supply. As a result of the EGE opinion, the European Parliament recently adopted with a very large majority a resolution in line with the CSC position, asking the European Commission to submit proposals prohibiting the whole range of activities related to cloned animals for food supply.

As a result of the 2003 consultation, a **Churches' Network on Bioethics and Biotechnology** has been created. The first members were the participants in the conference. Since then, it is steadily growing as a platform for sharing information, ideas and projects. Equally important is the increasing co-operation with the European Network of European Healthcare Chaplaincies on issues related to biotechnology.

Finally, the newly established **co-operation between the World Council of Churches and the Regional Ecumenical Organisations** in the process called "Global Consultation on Genetics and New Technologies" is important to be highlighted. The aim of an initial global conference in Johannesburg was to identify the most prominent issues currently dealt with in different world contexts, and to promote the networking for mutual information and support. Topics were genetically modified organisms and food and their social and safety consequences and biodiversity, patenting, HIV, human genetics, prenatal and pre-implantation genetic diagnosis, cloning and stem cell research. The vast experience of the CSC and European churches was quite visible. The CSC has been asked to continue to contribute to the process, in particular through co-operating with the Volos Academy (Greece), which is offering a consultancy as part of this programme.

5.8 EU Legislation

The Working Group on EU Legislation met on average two times a year and analysed proposed and adopted European legislation relevant for the churches (church-state relations, thereby implementing recommendation 12 of the Report of the Trondheim Assembly).

The **analysis** of the Working Group, consisting of member church representatives in legal and/or European affairs, was presented to the Executive Committee and the Plenary of the CSC and led either to submission to the European institutions, to information to member churches or to an analysis to be taken into account by other Working Groups.

The Working Group was accompanied and organised by the head of the EKD Brussels office in her capacity as associated staff of the CSC. In this capacity, OKR' in Katrin Hatzinger succeeded OKR' in Sabine von Zanthier in May 2008. The CSC is very grateful for the close cooperation with the EKD office in Brussels.

A permanent feature on the agenda of the Working Group was the ratification process of the **EU Constitutional Treaty** (since superseded by the Lisbon Treaty) and the implementation of what is now Article 17 on the “open, transparent and regular dialogue” of the European institutions with communities of faith and conviction. The Working Group analysed very thoroughly how the different elements of Article 17 could and should be interpreted. At the early stages of its life, the Working Group also made suggestions for a reference to God in the Preamble of the then Constitutional Treaty.

Another major element on the work programme was the **anti-discrimination legislation** of the European Union. After the adoption of the Directive (2000/78/EC) on equal treatment in employment and occupation, the Working Group monitored its implementation in the different EU member states and the European issues arising out of the process. In July 2008, the European Commission proposed a Directive on Implementing the Principle of Equal Treatment between Persons Irrespective of Religion or Belief, Disability, Age or Sexual Orientation. The Working Group started to discuss this proposed Directive in consultation with the CSC Working Group on Human Rights.

At various stages throughout the period covered by this report, the Working Group had to look on proposals of the European institutions for a **registration process of non-profit organisations** and a code of conduct. The latest discussion started under the title of a “transparency initiative.” A voluntary register is now open for non-profit organisations to register with the European Commission. The CSC, in consultation with member churches and upon analysis of the Working Group, opposed a registration of churches under the heading of “lobbyists”. It remains to be seen, whether and, if yes, which type of registration for churches and church-related organisations is required, if registration becomes obligatory.

Other issues on the agenda of the Working Group included, *inter alia*: the EU Directive on Services in the Internal Market (in consultation with the CSC/Eurodiaconia Joint Working Group on Social Issues), religious freedom in Turkey, a proposal for a reduced rate on value added tax on labour intensive work and the recommendation of the Council of Europe's Parliamentary Assembly on “State, Religion, Secularity and Human Rights” from 2007. Especially in the context of human rights, it has also proved useful to monitor judgements of the European Court for Human Rights and initiatives in the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe.

In November 2008, the EKD and the Working Group supported by CSC staff organised a conference for church lawyers under the title “**Religion in the Public Sphere**”, which starting from a sociological introduction looked on some specific issues in the legal field, including anti-discrimination, implementing the dialogue between the EU institutions and the churches, the relation of majority and minority churches before the law, religious freedom and integration. Besides tackling these issues on a European level, the consultation provided a welcomed opportunity for church representatives working on legal matters to network and to learn from examples in other countries.

5.9 Peace, Security and Reconciliation

Archbishop Hammar of Uppsala in his address to a CSC conference in November 2005 said: “*The contribution of the churches ... must consider this as a starting point, being powerless, being vulnerable, being weak*”. No military power can ensure ultimate security. Thus, from a stance of vulnerability, the challenge of building peace with justice was recognised at the Ecumenical Assemblies in Basel, Graz and Sibiu, as well as at the previous CEC Assemblies. Member churches span the whole of Europe, thus giving churches a major bonus and responsibility to foster dialogue, mutual respect, build reconciliation and prevent the emergence of misunderstandings.

There are still numerous **active or frozen conflicts** within Europe, notably in Kosovo and the Caucasus, as well as the slow process of reconciliation in Northern Ireland and the Balkans. Ominously, perceptions of deterioration in relations between Russia and some Western nations made some features of the Cold War re-emerge on the horizon. Iraq, Darfur, Afghanistan, Israel and Palestine bear the consequences of conflict, asking European countries to respond. Popular, if simplistic, perceptions of a clash of civilisations between an Islamic East and a secular West raise particular challenges for Europe’s churches.

Several **CEC delegations** have visited areas affected by conflict inside and outside of Europe. These visits aim to learn from and express solidarity with CEC member churches, and to meet with representatives of governments and civil society, thus increasing understanding of the underlying issues. A delegation visited Serbia in 2005, including a two-day visit to Kosovo. Lebanon was visited in 2007, expressing support for the Middle East Council of Churches. A delegation visited Armenia and Georgia in August 2008, where it is very much hoped that churches can play a vital role in overcoming recent hostilities.

The CSC, through its Working Group on Peace, Security and Reconciliation, have attempted to address key issues and maintain a **dialogue with the European institutions**. Meetings have been held with representatives from the Council, the Commission (including the Peacebuilding Partnership), the European Parliament, and the Stability Pact for South East Europe, as well as non-EU agencies, such as NATO, the Council of Europe and numerous NGOs. Peace, security and reconciliation were the main themes of the CSC’s annual plenary meeting in 2006, held in Sigtuna, Sweden. Inputs were given by the Life & Peace Institute (Uppsala) and the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI).

The **South East Europe Ecumenical Partnership (SEEEP)** project attempted to address the aftermath of the conflict in former Yugoslavia. Through this initiative, in which CEC was invited to lead efforts on peace and reconciliation, the World Council of Churches sought to help churches and church-related organisations address reconciliation through project work with local partners. Much valuable work has been achieved, notably in education in non-violence conflict resolution, capacity building and sharing of best practices.

Building on the experience of the SEEEP project, the CSC invited participants, mainly from **Northern Ireland and the Western Balkans**, to meet in October 2006 at the Corrymeela Centre in Northern Ireland to discuss how churches can contribute to peacebuilding and reconciliation. Participants were able to compare the respective experiences in Northern Ireland and the Western Balkans. A key issue to arise was perception – particularly perceived associations between religious identity, political identity and cultural identity in both contexts.

The CSC Working Group on Peace, Security and Reconciliation (together with the German branch of *Justicia et Pax*) organised **the Forum on Peace** at the Third European Ecumenical Assembly in Sibiu, September 2007. The Forum deliberately focused on reconciliation, both to reflect on the theme of the 2nd European Ecumenical Assembly (Graz, 1997) *“Reconciliation: gift of God and the source of new life”* and also because of the relationship between reconciliation and peacebuilding.

The European Union’s European Security and Defence Policy (ESDP) is an integral part of the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP), overseen by the EU’s High Representative for CFSP. Marked developments were the agreement of the European Security Strategy in December 2003, followed by the creation of the European Defence Agency in 2004. The EU’s “Operation Althea” replaced NATO’s military command in Bosnia-Herzegovina. The Lisbon Treaty, if ratified, will combine the roles of High Representative and Commissioner for External Relations into a single post, ending the confusion in roles between the EU Council and Commission.

The creation of the European Defence Agency (EDA) led the CSC to call for a **European Peace Agency**, with a reasonable level of resources. The EDA aims to co-ordinate and increase the effectiveness of European defence capacities; a serious cause for concern is the direct implications on increasing the arms trade. A welcome development in late 2007 was the creation of the EU’s Peacebuilding Partnership (within the European Commission’s Directorate General for External Relations); nevertheless the low level of funding of this agency in comparison with military expenditure is a cause for concern.

The reform process of international institutions has been closely monitored. The report of the UN Secretary General’s High-level Panel, *“A more secure world: Our shared responsibility”*, was published in 2004. In December 2003, the EU’s European Council adopted its new “European Security Strategy”. Both attempted to address various root causes of present day conflicts, but both appear to fall short (to a different degree) on emphasizing conflict prevention and the involvement of civil society in non-violent forms of conflict intervention.

5.10 Intercultural and Inter-religious Dialogue

Cultural – and religious – diversity has been inherent in many European societies for centuries. But it is only in recent years that European institutions have become active in the field of intercultural dialogue, perceiving it as an instrument to prevent ethnic, religious, linguistic and cultural divides and as a way to move European integration forward. Christianity, from its very beginning, has crossed borders of countries and cultures. The growing importance of intercultural and inter-religious dialogue on the agenda of the European institutions thus provided new opportunities for the churches to contribute to the shaping of an intercultural and peaceful Europe, but also challenged the churches to find their own position in these processes, based on their longstanding experience in dialogue.

An important platform for intercultural dialogue and the co-operation with other religions was the “**Soul for Europe**” initiative. The former EECCS belonged to the founding organisations and “Soul for Europe” was administered by the CSC staff until 2003, when it became an independent association according to Belgian law. Due to structural and financial difficulties as well as to a lack of commitment on the part of some member organisations, the “Soul for Europe” initiative dissolved itself in February 2005. The end of the initiative was marked by a *finissage*, which underlined the importance of an ongoing inter-religious dialogue in the light of the institutions’ agenda. The CSC continued to work on intercultural and inter-religious dialogue - in close cooperation with the CEC/CCEE Committee for Relations with Muslims in Europe and with COMECE. It remained in close contact with European Jewish and Muslim organisations on issues related to the European institutions. The CSC Director serves as a permanent advisor to the European Council of Religious Leaders (ECRL).

In recent years, the **Council of Europe** has been the leading agency in the area of intercultural dialogue. The Council’s Summit of Heads of States and Governments in Warsaw 2005 adopted an overall strategy for intercultural dialogue. It also highlighted the importance of the inter-religious dimension in this dialogue. Several projects on intercultural dialogue have been developed since then. A main step was the adoption of a “**White Paper on Intercultural Dialogue**”, which contains guidelines for intercultural dialogue in European countries based on the values the Council of Europe stands for: human rights, democracy and the rule of law. To realise the White Paper, the Council of Europe launched a widespread consultation process. The CSC together with CCME involved member churches and associated organisations in the consultation process and submitted a joint response as well as contributions from member churches, in particular examples of good practice, to the Council of Europe. Following the strategy of the White Paper, the Council of Europe launched a **campaign on anti-discrimination and medias** addressing the difficulties of everyday discrimination against specific groups in society.

Another platform for intercultural dialogue and its inter-religious dimension is an **annual meeting**, where the Council of Europe invites representatives from different religious communities, including humanist representatives, to discuss a specific issue. The first meeting of that kind took place in April 2008 on the theme of education. The CSC was involved in the preparation of this meeting and in the evaluation process. The CSC office in Strasbourg will continue to follow the realisation of these activities very closely.

Although the **European Union** does not have any competencies to act in the field of religion, the current EU leadership acknowledged the importance of the religious dimension of intercultural dialogue: “*The peaceful coexistence of cultures and religions --- both in the EU and its relations with peoples in all parts of the world – is of the utmost importance for our shared future.*” (Hans-Gert Pöttering, President of the European Parliament). The EU institutions highlighted this aspect by organising several related activities in the framework of the **European Year of Intercultural Dialogue 2008**. As a part of their contribution, the CSC together with COMECE and the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung, and in association with Muslim partners organised a series of seminars under the overall theme of “**Islam, Christianity and Europe**”. The four seminars, which were hosted by the European Parliament, discussed Christian and Muslim perspectives in intercultural dialogue, the visibility of religion in the public sphere, questions of worship places and religious symbols as well as EU’s relations with Muslim countries and the international responsibility of religious communities.

5.11 Education

The CSC has not dealt with all aspects of education and religion. However, education is becoming an ever more important issue on the agenda of the European institutions, of which the CSC is involved. The CSC has, therefore, taken up issues in the field of education in relation to the European institutions.

Though the EU institutions only have a supportive competence in the field of education, many programmes support the exchange of students and promote an active European citizenship. Both, the exchange programmes as well as the programme to promote an active European citizenship make little, if any, reference to religion and churches as an important stakeholder in the field of education. This is why the CSC has, over the years, invested in establishing closer relations with the EU Directorate on Education and Culture (DGEAC). In September 2004, the CSC together with COMECE organised a one-day dialogue meeting for representatives of member churches and of partner organisations in the field of education with DGEAC. From the side of the European Commission, the respective Commissioner and several Directors attended the meeting and briefed participants on possibilities of cooperation and funding. At the meeting, two theological professors from Tübingen (Germany), Prof. Biesinger and Prof. Schweitzer, presented their discussion paper on “Principle considerations on religion and education on the European level”. In cooperation with the CEC General Secretariat, the CSC later applied successfully (e.g. for the Sibiu Assembly) for funding under the EU budget line for promoting active European citizenship.

In the framework of the Council of Europe, the CSC participated in and supported meetings of the Commissioner for Human Rights, which, *inter alia*, dealt with human rights education and education for inter-cultural dialogue. The first ever meeting of religious representatives and the Council of Ministers of the Council of Europe also had the teaching of religious facts in public schools as its main theme. It is especially, but not exclusively, in relation to the Council of Europe that the CSC closely cooperates with COGREE, the Coordinating Group for religion in Education in Europe, and ICCS, the InterEuropean Commission on Church and School. Former CSC associate staff, Rev James Barnett, is the ICCS representative at the Council of Europe.

The Advisory Council of the OSCE on Freedom of Religion and Belief, with which the CSC is closely linked, published in 2007 the so-called “Toledo Guidelines” on the “Teaching of Religion in Public Schools”.

In the early years covered by this report, the CSC continued its Working Group on Education, which was composed of representatives from associated organisations in the field of education and organised by Rev James Barnett. The last meeting of this Working Group took place in 2006. Due to a too broad agenda and the lack of human resources, meetings of the Working Group were replaced by other forms of cooperation with the associated organisations, such as ICCS and COGREE. Main elements of this cooperation were to promote religious education in public schools, to strengthen the relationship between the political institutions and the churches in the field of education and to involve the churches in promoting education for an active European citizenship.

At the 2008 Plenary meeting of the CSC of CEC, representatives of member churches asked for the CSC to put a renewed emphasis on education in relation to the European institutions and to political developments in European countries. At the time that this report is written, it is expected that before the Lyon Assembly a brain storming meeting, involving member churches and associate organisations, would reflect on an agenda for a re-convened CSC

Working Group on Education. To reflect on the re-establishment of such a Working Group seems timely; there is a renewed interest and need in many member churches to address issues related to education with regard to the European institutions and/or national policies. The projects and programmes of the European institutions trying to provide a framework for debate on religion and education have also multiplied in recent months.

The CSC has a special engagement in the field of education with the European schools in Brussels. The CSC is “officially” in charge of supporting the teachers and parents association for the teaching of Protestant religion in the European schools in Brussels. Special arrangements are also made within the schools in cooperation or in agreement with other churches and religious communities. At present, each student has the right to religious classes in his or her confession and in his or her mother tongue. Due to the organisational and financial framework, the school directors and the Conseil perceive these arrangements as burdensome. It is therefore under discussion. To a certain extent, discussions around the teaching of religion in European schools encompass many of the issues discussed in the various countries in Europe and on the European level as such. Therefore, the engagement with the European schools in Brussels could be viewed as a laboratory for the overall European debate on religious teaching in public schools.

5.12 “Europe and its Regions”

The close cooperation of the CSC with some sub-regional conferences and networks of churches led the CSC towards the end of its mandate to reflect on the possibility to employ a sub-regional approach in order to strengthen the engagement of Christians and churches in European issues. This means, very practically, to increase cooperation with sub-regional councils and their counterparts in the political organisations, as well as to reflect conceptionally on an approach to sub-regional cooperation on European issues. It is hoped that this work can be continue to be strengthened.

Chapter 5.1 of this section of the report already referred to cooperation with the Theobalt network around the Baltic Sea. The most long-standing and the most structured relationship with a regional association of churches that the CSC enjoys is with the Conference of the Churches Along the Rhine. The Conference – parent body of and contributor to what is now the CSC office in Strasbourg – is represented in the CSC Plenary, while the CSC Director joins “ex officio” the meetings of the *Ausschuss* of the Conference, which meets about three times a year. The CSC and the *Ausschuss* are jointly engaged in several projects.

As far as the conceptional work on a sub-regional approach is concerned, this has also been discussed in the *Ausschuss*. Through the Strasbourg office, approaches have been made to the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe and to the EU Committee of the Regions. It is expected that a meeting exploring cooperation possibilities with the EU Committee of the Regions will still take place before the Lyon Assembly.

Other regional cooperation emerged around CSC seconded staff, for instance in the Nordic and Baltic region with the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland and the Church of Sweden at the centre, and in the British Isles.

When a first draft of the CSC Work Programme 2009-2015 was presented for discussion to the meeting of Church and Society Secretaries of European Churches in 2008, it became evident that each region in Europe has its specific issues to address as well as its specific

approaches to the issues. It was therefore emphasized that a sub-regional approach of the CSC around issues related to the European institutions should be strengthened, including sub-regional gatherings of churches as well as bringing the churches of different regions in Europe into dialogue.