

Statement of ICCS and IV, associated member organisations of CEC/CSC on the CSC Work Programme 2009-2015

March 2009

The Intereuropean Commission on Church and School ICCS and the International Association of Christian Education IV as associated member organisations of CEC/CSC take the opportunity to comment on the draft of the CSC Work Programme 2009-2015 while focusing on the need to address the dynamics of a Europeanisation of education that is becoming increasingly relevant to the concerns of member churches of CEC.

For the period of work that is currently being completed the following principles seem important to us:

- to focus the work of CEC/CSC,
- to react more flexibly to demands from European politics
- to contribute actively to European politics by taking into account the perspectives of the member churches.

In our view the focus on important working issues has been successful and the instrument of ad hoc working groups has been used effectively.

In addition to that the information service through CSC updates on European affairs with 23 issues so far has been focused in such a way that member churches of CEC were informed effectively and could make their own judgments through this service. This instrument is highly appreciated and it should continue.

The new instrument of a yearly meeting of Europe secretaries of the member churches provides an excellent opportunity to interlink demands and potential from member churches with the work of the staff of CEC/CSC. It seems to us that member churches could use this opportunity more effectively in future.

We would like to mention three issues that should be taken up more carefully during the coming working period of CEC/CSC:

- The composition of permanent working groups should take into account the pressing need for expertise among its members concerning the issues of the working group. Member churches should become more aware of this requirement.
- Member churches should be guided on how to use the information and exchange tools provided by CEC/CSC more effectively.
- A decisive fact in the realisation of this continuing work is that there would be adequate staffing in the CSC office. Taking account of the expanding themes and issues in the European Institutions it appears to be more and more difficult, to monitor events and act appropriately.

Our remarks concerning the draft working programme focus on point 9 Education: Promoting shared values. While we are in broad agreement with the main line of the draft programme, a

general observation about Europe and education seems appropriate in this instance and for the member churches as well:

Although the existing treaties of the EU and the principles of the Council of Europe concerning education are based on the principle of subsidiarity and a strict separation of concerns of the state and the role of religious and convictional communities, a ground breaking change has taken place since 2001.

Churches, religious and other convictional communities are invited to be dialogue partners and collaborators in this field. Expectations and demands from the political institutions often encounter a lack of consciousness and a need for greater capacity to act on the part of member churches of CEC/CSC. So far it is more or less ICCS and IV, as associated member organisations of CEC/CSC, that have taken responsibility, although they do not have the necessary working structure and/or staff capacity to fulfill this task effectively. For the coming working period of CEC/CSC a more active commitment to Europe and education on the part of member churches is required. The necessary change in perspectives might be encouraged if this issue were to be discussed at the General Assembly in Lyon was well as in the plenary session.

We are most grateful for the excellent work that is provided through CSC staff in Brussels and Strasbourg.

Swier Frouws
President of IV

Peter Schreiner
President of ICCS