

13th Assembly of the Conference of European Churches



Information

**from the Intereuropean Commission on
Church and School (ICCS) and
the International Association for
Christian Education (IV)**

**for the Delegates and Guests at the
13th CEC Assembly
Called to One Hope in Christ
in Lyon, France, 15-21 July 2009**



ICCS

Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ

We are taking advantage of the opportunity provided by our presence at the 13th CEC Assembly to introduce our two organisations, together with their aims and activities as well as their perception of CEC and the theme of the Assembly. We would very much like to initiate and develop partnerships with those who are interested in

- Religion in education
- Cooperation between Church and School
- The contribution of the Churches' formal and non formal education to living together in Europe.

In the field of **Education and Europe** we aim to work on two interconnected perspectives:

- The promotion of active commitment by the Churches and Ecumenical associations to the European agenda and the European Institutions – especially with regard to values and to religion in education.
- The promotion of dialogue about values and about educational policy between politicians and experts from religious communities as well as among other representatives and delegates in Europe.

As a consequence, ecumenical encounter and dialogue are highly important for us.

We hope that this brief document will encourage you actively to respond to our offer of contact and dialogue.

With fraternal greetings



Peter Schreiner
Delegate of ICCS



Swier Frouws
Delegate of IV



The **International Association for Christian Education IV** is an organisation that brings together associations and institutions from different countries in Europe. The aim is to support Christian Education in private schools as well as in schools controlled by public authorities. IV seeks to preserve the human values of Christian Education.

The chief issues covered in seminars, working groups and projects are:

- Quality of initial and continuing teacher education
- School development and Christian values
- Human values of Christian education
- The Christian contributions to Citizenship Education

The International Association for Christian Education seeks to give a face and a voice to Christian education in Europe, its political institutions and the churches and to coordinate the interests of Christian schools and Christian teachers at a European level. (IV President Swier Frouws)

The **Intereuropean Commission on Church and School ICCS** is a clearing house

ICCS

for dialogue about education, churches and religion in Europe. It is an international non-governmental organisation (INGO) with participative status at the Council of Europe, as well as a forum for exchange and a platform for initiatives related to current issues like religious education or intercultural learning. It brings together officers from churches in Europe together with experts from institutions and universities that engage with issues of religion, education, teacher trainers and educators. **The main issues covered by conferences, working groups and publications are:**

- Europe, democratic citizenship and education
- Religious Education and Christian Theologies
- Intercultural education and the religious dimension
- Europeanisation of education and the role of religion

The Europeanisation of the churches' activities in education should be directed at two issues: (1) enabling church educational institutions and related activity to take greater account of European developments and (2) the promotion of dialogue and critical involvement with the European institutions and their agendas.

(ICCS President Peter Schreiner)

Both organisations are associated members of **CEC / CSC**, promoting the relevance of education in Europe as a central issue for the CEC member churches and associated members.

Both organisations are members of the **Coordinating Group for Religion in Education in Europe**, where they collaborate with four other organisations on common issues. (see: www.cogree.com).

As members of CoGREE we share the following common principles

1. Education which takes no account of the religious explanation of human and spiritual experience of humanity is *ipso facto* incomplete.
2. Concepts and ideas aimed at the development of the education systems of Europe must take account of religious education. This implies the existence of a dialogue with the religious communities in this field.
3. Religious education is relevant to the educational system in general. Its form varies in relation to specific national and regional contexts and history.
4. Religious education is an essential factor in any education that is designed to produce autonomous and active citizens. It should be part of general education and vocational training.
5. Religious education, as an ordinary school subject in most countries of Europe, offers a substantive contribution to education for democratic citizenship. Education for tolerance and peace is incomplete without religious education.
6. Religious education in all schools respects the basic right of freedom of religion which includes freedom to have religion and freedom to have no religion.

On the basis of these principles IV and ICCS emphasise the importance of education for ecumenical collaboration in Europe.

The text of the **Charta Oecumenica** is an excellent reference point for further activities, for example it says:

2. Proclaiming the Gospel together (...)

*This witness will require increased dedication to **Christian education** (e.g. catechism classes) and pastoral care in local congregations, with a **sharing of experiences in these fields**. It is equally important for the whole people of God together to communicate the Gospel in the public domain, which also means responsible **commitments to social and political issues**.*

3. Moving towards one another (...)

*For the ecumenical movement to flourish it is particularly necessary to **integrate the experiences and expectations of young people** and actively encourage their participation.*

We commit ourselves:

- to overcome the feeling of self-sufficiency within each church, and to eliminate prejudices; to seek mutual encounters and to be available to help one another;
- **to promote ecumenical openness and co-operation in Christian education, and in theological training, continuing education and research.**

8. Reconciling peoples and cultures (...)

As churches we intend to join forces in promoting the process of democratisation in Europe. We commit ourselves to work for structures of peace, based on the non-violent resolution of conflict. We condemn any form of violence against the human person, particularly against women and children.

Reconciliation involves promoting social justice within and among all peoples; above all, this means closing the gap between rich and poor and overcoming unemployment. Together we will do our part towards the decent and proper reception of migrants, refugees and asylum-seekers in Europe.



**Our message for the 13th
Assembly in Lyon**

The 13th Assembly of CEC in Lyon **Called to one Hope in Christ** will have carefully to evaluate the work of CEC and its commissions and to agree on guiding principles for the work programme of the coming years.

The draft work programme for the Church and Society Commission (CSC) includes a chapter on Education: Promoting shared values.

As associated members we are very much in favour of policies that enable education to become a key aspect of the activities of the CSC. One of the chief reasons for this is that churches are important stakeholders in the formal and non-formal sectors of education at the national level. The dynamic of European Integration has increasing influence on what is important in the field of education. We see a need to establish effective measures to work, among other issues, on the following objectives:

- To create a platform for churches and church-related organisations to reflect on the role of the churches in promoting education about intercultural dialogue and active European citizenship. This includes active participation in existing programmes of the European Institutions, for example the lifelong learning programme of the EU (http://ec.europa.eu/education/lifelong-learning-programme/doc78_en.htm).
 - To find effective instruments to bring the common voice of churches and church-related organisations to the European Institutions as they reflect
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upon and develop programmes related to education. Churches can actively contribute to consultations such as that on migration and mobility (December 2008) or on Schools for the 21st Century (June 2008) and the new strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training ('ET 2020'), from May 2009 as well as further initiatives of the European Institutions.

- To make the Churches' activities in formal and non-formal education in civil society visible to the European Institutions.
- To establish a rolling agenda for the CSC's involvement in religion in education in Europe that includes issues of qualitative religious education, among them the question of standards and competences, the critique of education and limited concepts of knowledge and qualification from a Christian perspective together with the promotion of a holistic understanding of education including spiritual and religious competence and other concerns of Christian education and theological training.

Current opportunities where churches should be active

The Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe published a **Recommendation CM/Rec(2008)12 on the Dimension of religions and non-religious convictions within intercultural education** in December 2008. This statement encourages the development of competences at the levels of education policies, institutions and professional development of teaching staff.

More information: <https://wcd.coe.int>

In June 2009, the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe organised a second **Exchange with religious communities on the religious dimension of intercultural dialogue**.

A draft of an action plan that also requires active commitment on the part of the churches is under discussion.

On 12 May 2009 the Council of the European Union adopted a **new strategic framework for co-operation between EU Member States to reform their education and training systems ('ET 2020')**. The framework addresses four strategic objectives that are also of importance for churches:

- Making lifelong learning and mobility a reality
- Improving the quality and efficiency of education and training
- Promoting equality, social cohesion and active citizenship
- Enhancing creativity and innovation, including entrepreneurship, at all levels of education and training.

More information:

http://ec.europa.eu/education/news/news1383_en.htm

The European Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning (EQF) is a common European reference framework which links countries' qualifications systems together, acting as a translation device to make qualifications more readable and understandable across different countries. Its two principal aims are to promote citizens' mobility between countries and to facilitate their lifelong learning. Churches should critically discuss the implications of such a European framework, its key issues and possible consequences for their educational activities.

More information:

http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/education_culture/publ/pdf/eqf/broch_en.pdf

The following material can be ordered

Elza Kuyk, Roger Jensen, David Lankshear, Elisabeth Löh, Peter Schreiner (Eds) (2007), *Religious Education in Europe. Situation and current trends in schools*. Oslo: iko & ICCS, 24,50 Euro

Peter Schreiner, Gaynor Pollard, Sturla Sagberg (Eds) (2006), *Religious Education and Christian Theologies*, Münster: Waxmann, 19,90 Euro

"Europe, democratic citizenship and education", CD ROM with contributions of the ICCS Conference 2006 in Estonia, 5,- Euro incl. postage

"Education for Religion and Democracy in the Context of Intercultural Dialogue" CD ROM with contributions and documents of the ICCS/CoGREE colloquy in Klingenthal 2008, 5,- Euro incl. postage

Peter Schreiner, Friedhelm Kraft., Andrew Wright (Eds) (2007), *Good Practice in Religious Education. Examples and perspectives of Primary Schools*, Münster: LIT, 19,90 Euro.

Coming Events

4-8 October 2010: ICCS/CoGREE Colloquy Klingenthal with representatives of CoGREE and the Council of Europe: "The Intercultural Dimension of Religious Dialogue and the Role of Education."

Planned Conference in Prague in summer 2011

Board members of IV

Mr Swier Frouws, president, the Netherlands, e-mail: sfrouws@besturenraad.nl
Dr L'uba Slabonova, vice-president, Slovak Republic,
e-mail: slabonova@googlemail.com
Mr Nanne Sluijs, treasurer, the Netherlands, e-mail: nanne.sluijs@chello.nl
Dr Gerhard Pfeiffer, Germany, Secretary (des.),
e-mail: gerhard.pfeiffer@fen-net.de
Website: <http://www.int-v.com>

Board members of ICCS

Mr Peter Schreiner, president, Germany, e-mail: president@iccsweb.org
Ms Heid Leganger-Krogstad, secretary, Norway, e-mail: secretary@iccsweb.org
Dr David Lankshear, treasurer, Great Britain, e-mail: lankshear@iccsweb.org
Prof Dr Roland Biewald, Germany, e-mail: biewald@iccsweb.org
Prof. Dr. Lajos Szabo, Hungary, e-mail: szabo@iccsweb.org
Ms Kaarina Lyhykäinen, Finland, e-mail: lyhykainen@iccsweb.org
Ms Elisabeth Löh Manna, Italy, e-mail: loeh@iccsweb.org
Ms Elza Kuyk, the Netherlands, e-mail: kuyk@iccsweb.org
Website: <http://www.iccsweb.org>

Revd James Barnett, ICCS representative at the Council of Europe
James.Barnett@wanadoo.fr



Contact addresses

ICCS

Peter Schreiner, President
Schreiberstr. 12
48149 Münster
Germany

phone: +49 (0)251 – 98 10 125
fax: +49 (0)251 – 98 10 150
email: president@iccsweb.org

IV

Swier Frouws, President
Besturenraad
Oosteinde 114, Postbus 907
2270 AX Voorburg
The Netherlands

phone: +31 (0) 70 348 1148
fax: +31 (0) 70 348 1201
email: sfrouws@besturenraad.nl
