



THE LIGHT OF CHRIST SHINES UPON ALL. HOPE FOR RENEWAL AND UNITY IN EUROPE

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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
3rd Ecumenical European Assembly
in Sibiu 2007**



International Association for Christian Education
Internationaler Verband Evangelischer Erzieher
Fédération Internationale Protestante de l'Enseignement
Internationaal Verband van Organisaties voor
Christelijke Opvoeding en Onderwijs

ICCS

Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ

We are taking advantage of the opportunity presented by this ecumenical gathering to introduce our two organisations, their aims and activities and their view on EEA3 and its theme. We particularly wish to establish, to continue and to renew a partnership with all who are interested in

- Religion in education
- Church and school partnerships
- the contribution to living together in Europe offered by the churches' educational activities.

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

- Promoting the active commitment of churches and ecumenical associations to the European agenda and the European institutions – especially in respect of values and religion in education
- Promoting dialogue about values, education and European education policy between politicians and European representatives, delegates and experts from religious communities.

Against this background ecumenical encounter and dialogue is of high importance 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



Gerhard Pfeiffer
Delegate of IV





The **International Association for Christian Education IV** is an organisation that brings together associations from different countries in Europe. The aim is to support Christian Education in private schools and in schools controlled by the public authorities. IV seeks to preserve the human values of Christian Education. IV is an associated member of the CEC / Church and Society Commission.

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

- Quality of teacher education
- The qualifications of head teachers and school development
- Human values of Christian education
- Christian contributions to Citizenship Education

As we contribute to the debate about the role of religion in education in Europe, it is particularly important to develop a differentiated perception in respect of the variety of models and approaches, while learning from their strength and weaknesses.
(IV Secretary Eckhart Marggraf)

ICCS

The **Intereuropean Commission on Church and School ICCS** is a clearing house for dialogue about education, churches and religion in Europe. It is an international non-governmental organisation with participative status at the Council of Europe, as well as a forum for exchange and a platform for initiatives on current issues like religious education or intercultural learning. It brings together officers from churches in Europe together with experts from institutes 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 (Conference 2006, CD ROM available)
- Religious Education and Christian Theologies (Publication 2006)
- Intercultural education and the religious dimension (involvement in activities of the Council of Europe)
- Europeanisation of education and the role of religion

The Europeanisation of the churches' activities in education should be directed at two issues: (1) making church educational institutions and activities more aware of European developments and (2) promoting dialogue and critical commitment towards the European institutions and their agendas.
(ICCS President Peter Schreiner)

Both organisations are associated members of **CEC / CSC**, where they promote 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 (see: www.cogree.com for more information).

Collaboration with CoGREE is based on 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 from religion and freedom for religion.

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

We would add that the text of the **Charta Oecumenica** is an excellent starting point for further activities when it states:

2. Proclaiming the Gospel together (...)

*To be effective this witness will require increased commitment to **Christian education** (e.g. catechism classes), pastoral care in local congregations, and the **sharing of experience in these fields**. It is equally important for the whole people of God together to communicate the Gospel in the public domain. This also entails responsible **commitment to social and political issues**.*

3. Moving towards one another (...)

For the ecumenical movement to flourish it is essential to **integrate the experience and expectations of young people**. We must also actively encourage their participation.

We commit ourselves:

- to the counteraction feelings of self-sufficiency within individual churches, to the elimination of prejudice; to seeking mutual encounters and to being available to help one another;
- ***to the promotion of ecumenical openness and co-operation in Christian education, in theological training and in 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.

Against this background we should like to share ideas about ways in which the sub-themes of EE3 include an educational dimension.

The light of Christ and Europe

Europe: When we look at the task of building Europe and the churches' role in contributing to the future of Europe, we recognise that the political institutions are becoming increasingly aware of the importance of education. Europe is perceived as a knowledge-based society in which the principle of "lifelong learning" applies to all Europeans. The ambitious aim of the European Council held 2000 in Lisbon "to make Europe the most competitive and dynamic knowledge-based economy in the world" shapes the education policy of the EU. Nevertheless, it is also conducive to a perception of education in relation to the economy that neglects the spiritual and religious dimension and its implications for education.

Churches should take responsibility, through dialogue with the political institutions, to enhance educational concepts based on "measures of humanity"; that is helping people to achieve a self-reflective personal fulfilment.

Religions: We call for the development of relationships with other faiths together with the perception that inter-faith dialogue in the context of coexistence in

Europe can support and promote initiatives for reconciliation where there is conflict and for living together in justice and peace in a pluralistic Europe. The implementation of being a citizen of Europe and a person of faith includes educational challenges that enable us to prepare young people for constructive and participative understanding of what it is to be a European citizen.

Churches should take account of approaches to inter-religious learning inside and outside their constituency so as to encourage young people and adults to confirm their own religious profile while learning to respect other faith traditions. It is increasingly necessary to address common challenges as religious believers and European citizens.

Migration: Today migration is considered as the chief cause of social diversity. Equality and non-discriminatory treatment of migrants is a prerequisite for mutual learning. Europe requires educational approaches that are conducive to “dancing with difference” and to the reconciliation of peoples and cultures in Europe.

The Churches’ commitment to the furtherance of justice in education and equal educational chances should raise awareness of existing discrimination against migrants in Europe. This includes the provision of initiatives aimed at support and solidarity - especially in the education of children and young adults.

The light of Christ and the World

Creation: The theme focuses on the environment together with the churches’ role in safeguarding nature in relation to current styles of living. The active involvement of churches in projects for just, participatory and sustainable societies should include educational activities that encourage awareness about one’s own role and the interconnection between the micro- meso and macro levels.

Education for sustainable development is an area on which churches in Europe should lay more emphasis.

Justice & Peace: Justice is concerned with issues of poverty from the perspective of globalisation. It is enhanced by the Christian understanding of mercy and the churches’ calling to justice. Peace is concerned with issues of peace itself, together with security and reconciliation. It relates to the churches’ role in conflict-situations. Global learning and ecumenical learning as well as peace education are issue-oriented approaches to education in which many churches already have a long tradition.

Churches should (re-)orient their educational activities towards support for justice and peace in Europe.

Current opportunities where churches should be active

- The Council of Europe will publish a **White paper on Intercultural Dialogue** at the end of 2007. This is an invitation to the churches actively to take part in the dialogue about intercultural dialogue and the religious dimension.
More information: http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/intercultural/default_en.asp
- The activities of the Council of Europe in the **field of intercultural education** take account of religious diversity. Existing products and activities can encourage churches further to develop their own view and to take part in regional and local activities.
More information: http://www.coe.int/t/e/cultural_co-operation/education/Intercultural_education/Intro.asp
- The EU has designated 2008 as the **European Year of Intercultural Dialogue**. Churches can organise their own activities on a national or regional level.
More information:
http://ec.europa.eu/culture/portal/events/current/dialogue2008_en.htm
- The EU has started a **new integrated programme on “Lifelong learning”**. It comprises four sectoral programmes for school education (Comenius), higher education (Erasmus), vocational training (Leonardo da Vinci) and adult education (Grundtvig). The churches’ Educational institutions can apply to take part in these programs.
More information:
http://ec.europa.eu/education/programmes/newprog/index_en.html

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

ICCS Colloquy on “Religion, Citizenship and Education” CD ROM Klingenthal 2006, 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

18/19 September 2008: Conference in Berlin, Friedrichstadtkirche:
"Diversity Shapes Europe's Future. The Contribution of Intercultural and
Interreligious Education for Living Together in Europe."

13-17 October 2008: CoGREE Colloquy Klingenthal with representatives of CoGREE
and the Council of Europe: "The Intercultural Dimension of Religious Dialogue
and the Role of Education."

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