

ECUMENICAL FORUM OF EUROPEAN CHRISTIAN WOMEN
FORUM OECUMÉNIQUE DE FEMMES CHRÉTIENNES D'EUROPE
OEKUMENISCHES FORUM CHRISTLICHER FRAUEN IN EUROPA



Annual Reports
2006 & 2007

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Annual Report 2006

Introduction

In 2006 we shared

- The 7th General Assembly in August 2006
- In learning to take over responsibility in our churches, societies, states
- In learning, praying and celebrating together
- Being aware of social injustice
- In strengthening our mutual respect and understanding
- In witnessing the values of our Christian heritage
- In searching for our common European heritage
- Opening up to interfaith dialogue
- Ecumenical learning
- Reconciliation
- Ecological issues
- Political learning
- Project management
- Women in Church and Society.

In the General Assembly new Co-Presidents were elected: Elena Timofticiuc, Orthodox, Romania; Martina Heinrichs, Roman Catholic, Netherlands; Dorothy Knights, Anglican, Great Britain. The new CC Members elected were: Johanna Friedlein, Lutheran, Germany; Sylvia Nercessian, Armenian Evangelical, Greece; Nata Hovorkova, Baptist, Slovakia; Anne Lagerstedt, Lutheran, Finland; Marina Treima, Orthodox, Estonia.

Catherine Gyarmathy, Katarina Karkala-Zorba, and Inge Schintlmeister are three very special people who, as Co-Presidents 1998–2006, have steered the Forum through eight years of change. We thank them, on behalf of the whole Forum, for their commitment and dedication to developing the various tasks. Their different experiences and gifts have solidified the European network and its organisation. Their knowledge of languages and their different ethnic and theological backgrounds have opened a deeper understanding amongst women from East and West, from Catholic, Orthodox and Protestant churches. They have brought their own very special gifts to affect the lives of women from at least thirty different European countries.

Inge, together with Dr. Brigitte Gutknecht you have especially served the Forum by preparing the new constitution which was accepted at the General Assembly. Catherine you have shared those Fund Raising skills developed over the years. Katerina you have been a bridge builder. All the skills we particularly appreciate now as our new team starts work together. We know that the three of you were well supported by a further six dedicated members of the Coordinating Committee. Of course all of this is possible through our founder Ruth Epting, who still is fully active participant in our meetings.

EFECW Activities 2006

The 4th International Seminar

“Christian work against trafficking – New challenges, new partnerships”
Bucharest/ Romania, March 26th to 29th

Since the International Consultation on Trafficking in Women, organized by Conference of European Churches (CEC) in 1999 in Driebergen/NL the Ecumenical Forum of European Christian Women developed an international network SENSE, focused on the fight against trafficking in human beings [THB]. The members of the network are branches of EFECW in different countries.

The year 2006 has been an important year in the fight against trafficking in women, especially because of the International football competition that took place in Germany, in the period June to July.

The programme started with the launch of the National Agency for Preventing and Monitoring the Victims of THB. The Minister of Justice spoke of the fight against criminality. The Churches Commission for Migrants in Europe [CCME] represented the international bodies in the fight against THB. The launch of the project Christian Action and Networking against trafficking in human beings CAT III was presented by a member of CARITAS and a representative of the minister of Interior from Czech Republic/ EU expert group.

New challenges in non-governmental organizations' [NGO] work, in the prevention work and reintegration of the victims of trafficking were discussed. A plethora of information, of ideas, and of networking, all contributed to an improved picture of the situation.



Overcoming the Culture of Violence,

Prejudice and Discrimination – Towards a Culture of Peace and Justice. "Theological aspects in preventing Trafficking in Human Beings"

Soroca, Moldova, June 18th

The aim of the seminar was preventing trafficking in human beings by the Church influence; to solve the problem from the theological point of view; to inform the people about the trafficking process and trafficking business; to learn the strategy against the phenomenon of trafficking; and to understand the definition of human being traffic.

The participants were members of Churches and of non-governmental organizations near the Church; and members of the Ecumenical Forum of Christian Women from Moldova.

The seminar's theoretical part was presented by the coordinator of the seminary, Mrs. Timofticiuc. It included a movie about the traffic victims. The definition of human traffic was discussed and learned out. The balance of demand and supply, the process of human traffic, the physical and psychological portraits of traffickers and victims were discussed. The strategy and the concrete actions of Church against the human traffic were talked about and the phenomenon of human being traffic was analysed by the seminary participants.



EFECW VII General Assembly

Löwenberg/Murten, Switzerland, Aug.21th to 27th

Planning and realising the VII General Assembly was the main task of the year 2006. Many meetings preceded the Assembly like meetings with the Swiss host group and joint meetings of the CC. The Nominations Committee to elect the future co-presidents and the co-ordinating committee met in Hanover, Germany in April. Prior to the Assembly the Finance Committee met in Löwenberg/Murten.

More than 150 Christian women from 27 countries in Europe, from different national, ethnic, cultural and confessional backgrounds were present at the Assembly.

Bible studies in three languages on the theme "You will go out with joy" from Isaiah 22:12 were given by Dr. Evanthia Adamtziloglou (Greek Orthodox), Hélène Küng (Reformed), Dr Regula Grünenfelder (Roman Catholic) and Rev. Anne-Marie Kaufmann-Konrad (Old Catholic). Ms Kathy Galloway from Iona Community compared the two Biblical stories about Ruth (The Book of Ruth) and the Canaanite woman (Matthew 15).

In the workshops many topics on human rights from migration and trafficking to bioethics and spirituality were discussed and studied. In the human rights group, led by Ms. Sandra Tückmantel from Amnesty International, violence against women in the family was discussed. In our Christian homes violence and submission are as frequent as in

other cultures. "We must encourage women to have self-confidence and oppose this kind of abuse in their own and in their daughters' lives", she urged. Problems of minorities and immigrants were explored by Dr Ruth-Gaby Vermot-Mangold, MP, President of the Peace Women across the Globe.

On August 25th the 50th Anniversary of The Fellowship of the Least Coin (FLC) was celebrated. The Vice-President of the FLC, Ms Jill King pointed out that EFECW is the European representative of the FLC, and a vital organ of it.

In Plenary session the new Guidelines 2006-2010 were adopted; the GA-message and GA-resolutions were also introduced and adopted.

The new co-presidents elected are: Dorothy Knights, of the Protestant tradition from Great Britain; Elena Timofticiuc, Orthodox from Romania and Martina Heinrichs, Roman Catholic from Netherlands. Johanna Friedlein, Lutheran from Germany, Nata Hovorkova, Baptist from Slovakia; Anne Lagerstedt, Lutheran from Finland; Sylvia Nercessian, Armenia Evangelical from Greece; and Marina Treima, Orthodox from Estonia were elected to the Co-ordinating committee.

Learning Responsible Citizenship

Freedom and democracy, Pirita Monastery Tallinn, Estonia, Nov. 15th to 19th.

The aim of the project was to empower and encourage women to be interested in political structures, for the interplay of individual expectations and collective responsibilities; to show that political structures and Christian values do not exclude one another but are closely linked. The forty-eight participants from Finland, Netherlands, Lithuania, Bulgaria, Switzerland, England, Germany and Estonia heartily thanked the Estonian and Finnish group for the perfect organisation of this meeting under the wings of European EFECW. Keynotes and Bible Studies were of high standard and the speakers well prepared. There was also plenty of time for workshops. Faiths represented were Armenian Orthodox, Greek Orthodox, Rumanian Orthodox, Roman-Catholic, Evangelical, Baptist, Methodist, Salvation Army, Anglican, Reformed, Armenian Evangelical and Lutheran.

The programme aimed to be as interactive as possible. Short keynotes were followed by open floor discussions and by group work to specific questions related to the different keynotes. At the centre were reflections about the obstacles and possibilities women had in modern society, the influence of freedom and democracy on the society.

The participants from the East and the West of Europe realised how much they have in common and yet how the different history and different economical situation still prevail. Much understanding and openness was needed to respect each other.

The organisers felt that the aim of motivating women for more active participation in politics, civil society and church institutions was achieved and hopefully this encouraged the participants to hand over their newly or deepened knowledge in their countries, communities and organisations.

Thanks was also given to the Pirita Monastery for its warm hospitality. Thanks also to our donors including Renovabis, Council of Churches Estonia, and EFECW Finland,



Ecumenical Leadership Training Project

for Greek Women, THEKLA, Phase I
Nov. 27th to Dec.12th.

Ecumenical Leadership Training Project for Greek Women in Nov. 27th to Dec.12th gathered 20 participants to Athens. The main goal of the project was to further develop the women's skills (computer and English language) in order to contribute even more to their churches and the ecumenical movement in Greece and abroad. A secondary goal of the project was to offer a personal experience to each participant to discover the Forum and its potential, so that we can enlarge the scope of activities and our membership.

The project was in many ways successful. Participants gave very positive feedback and they all wished to be involved and take responsibilities in the Greek Forum.

The idea was born at the National Coordinator's meeting in Berlin in 1996. A middle-aged Eastern woman presented the Adelheid Project. Before taking part in the project she had never used a computer and she did not dare to speak or write in English. Having followed that project she prepared her presentation in English and was reading it for all of us to hear.

When the Greek Forum group was officially organized as a Civil Society-NGO in November 2005, the feeling was that there was a need to first build basic capacities in order then to get involved into different programs in Greece and around Europe (trafficking etc). The European Forum's Thekla-project (Greek Forum was a partner), to be sponsored by the EU was not adopted by the EU.

There are plans to repeat the project with new participants. We also promised the women who attended the first project that we will offer them a second, more advanced, phase, with other topics. Another proposal is to teach foreigners the Greek language.



Contacts and networking

CEC and ESWTR contacts

Forum participated in preparatory event for Sibiu by attending meeting in Rome Jan. 24th to 27th 2006.

Co-President Katerina Karkala-Zorba, as a member of the Central Committee of CEC, enables a good link to both the CEC headquarters in Geneva and the Commission of Church and Society [CSC] in Brussels. This year the Central Committee of the Conference of European Churches was held May 24th to 31st in Northern Ireland

Katerina Karkala-Zorba and Anne Lagerstedt participated in a meeting of CSC held in Sigtuna, Sweden, April 29th to May 3rd.

Anne Lagerstedt is the delegate of EFECW in the working group for Human Rights and Religious Freedom of CSC. To this group any women's human rights case can be introduced by the EFECW!

CSC Human Rights Working Group, met in Prague May 19th to 20th with highlight on the Ecumenical Council of Churches in the Czech Republic. EFECW reported about trafficking in women connected with the 2006 Football World Cup in Germany.

Another meeting for the Working Group on Human Rights and Religion Freedom was in Brussels, 8th and 9th December.

Elena Timofciuc is still deeply involved in the problems of trafficking and migration. She is our link person with many European institutions dealing with these issues.

There are also close links with the European Society of Women in Theological Research [ESWTR] which held a conference on International Congress to marking the twentieth anniversary of the Foundation of the ESWTR, Graz, Austria.

WCC IX Assembly

Porto Alegre, Brazil, Febr. 14th to 23th.

The first WCC Assembly of the 21st century brought together three thousand church leaders and ecumenical representatives from nearly every Christian tradition around the world. Pre-assembly events for youth and for women were held from February 11th to 13th. Katerina Karkala-Zorba participated at the Women's Pre-Assembly with a presentation for a panel discussion on the theme of the Assembly: "God, in your grace, transform the world", presenting the theme from a European context. She was a rapporteur of one of the Ecumenical Conversations "Zero Violence against women and children". She commented afterwards "We trust that some participants made contacts that are useful to the Forum and - who knows - might even result in some new member countries. For a future event we could offer a) a Forum workshop and b) have a Forum booth in the market place. Depending on where the next Assembly is to be held, this might be feasible."

Last year EFECW was approached by the **European Project for Inter-religious Learning [EPIL]** to participate in this project by delegating a person from the Co-ordinating Committee to the EPIL board. This cooperation not only is a good platform to use the synergies of both organisations but also a powerful tool to promote interfaith dialogue.

The **World Day of Prayer** is one of the most important contributions to worldwide ecumenism. Many members of EFECW national organisations are committed to this day and take an active part in preparing and organising the celebrations. For example the Greek Forum prepared the World Day of Prayer in Volos. They used German version translated into Greek.

Conference of **European Women Theologians** took place in Rome, March 30th to 1st April, on the theme "Women Theologians: in what kind of Europe?"

Project EUNIKA XX. In May Czech women organised study visit to Strasbourg.

Egeria Pilgrimage through France

Sept. 26th to Oct. 7th.

More than 1500 years later, women of today follow in the steps of Egeria, a woman who made a pilgrimage from Galicia to Jerusalem. She was a bold crosser of the borders between the Orient and the Occident, and she left to the later generations an immaculate document on the religious life in Jerusalem during the fourth century. The aim of the Egeria project is to revive the pilgrimage tradition for women alongside other religious traditions in Europe.

Sixteen women from Germany participated in the pilgrimage with the help of FrauenWerk Stein e. V. of the Evangelical-Lutheran Church of Bavaria.

The travel diary can be found in the web-site www.egeria-projekt.de.





Campaign Soccer World Cup Germany May and June 2006.

The Football World Cup competition in Germany brought men from all over the world. There was a predicted demand for “entertainment” well supplied by the traffickers. Football makes a lot of men thoughtless. They are in the mood for partying. This includes alcohol, drugs and sex. They see women as sex objects to be used, whether they want to be or not. The Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe [OSCE] had envisaged that countless women from the Baltic and Eastern European countries would be brought to Germany during the Cup. The partners of the European anti-trafficking network decided to organise a large campaign to raise awareness on the danger of trafficking, to prevent it and to assist victims.

The Ecumenical Association of Churches in Romania [AIDrom] is the regional coordinator of the campaign, and many partners have joined this initiative. Some of the materials prepared were leaflets with anti-trafficking information to be disseminated at the borders of sending, transit and receiving countries. Leaflets in different languages, TV, radio programmes, special slogans – e.g. show trafficking the RED card, human beings are not footballs/toys-, posters, t-shirts, beer mats in pubs were distributed.

German Women’s Christian Council’s Conference “Decade to overcome Violence” Würzburg, Germany, Nov. 24th to 25th.

A Conference arranged by the German Women’s Christian Council on the “Decade to overcome Violence”, in Würzburg, with two workshops: “One on integrity of creation”, with Elisabeth Bücking, one on Trafficking in women and forced sex labour, with Elena Timofciuc.

International Day for Voluntary workers,

December 5th

Without voluntary workers neither society nor the churches would function. In 1985 the UN General Assembly named December 5th the International Day for Voluntary workers.

The day wants to point to the invaluable work volunteers offer worldwide and to thank those many men and women who are ready to offer their knowledge and their abilities to assist others without being paid.

The Ecumenical Forum of European Christian Women thankfully remembers all former Presidents and Co-Presidents,; All former Co-ordinating Committee members; All former National Coordinators; All former Finance Committee members; All women (and also husbands, partners) who assisted in the background; The new Co-Presidents and the new Co-ordinating Committee; and The Finance Committee for offering their time, their energy, their knowledge to the cause of the Forum.

Internal Management

The major issue the Co-ordinating Committee dealt with was to prepare and conduct the 7th General Assembly taking place in Murten, Switzerland in August 2006. There was good cooperation with the Swiss Host Group. Keeping a balance between content work and business session was a real challenge. A Nomination Committee was in place to prepare the elections of a new Co-ordinating Committee and the Co-Presidents.

CC-meetings were held in Fribourg, Switzerland, March 14th to 18th; Löwenberg/Murten, Switzerland, August 19th to 21th; and in Tallinn, Estonia, Nov. 15th to 19th.

Second task was to find a new fundraiser after Rossitza Dikova ended her work in 2006. Marjatta Viirto acted as fundraiser. The transition from former treasurer Ruth Bauermann to the new one Marjatta Viirto went smoothly.

Needless to say, how much work and time was again involved by the Committee members, all working on a voluntary basis. Besides the two regular Committee meetings the Co-Presidents met whenever it was necessary.

Bernadette Doutreligne continued to work in the small office at the top of the Ecumenical Centre in Brussels.

This office was a venue with a good opportunity for EFECW to network with ecumenical organisations located in Brussels, and for members to attend EU events to which church related organisations are invited.

Publications and communication

EFECW **Publication Officer** is Anne Lagerstedt. She presented EFECW members with two EFECW NEWS issues (27 and 28), the Annual Report 2005 and four-year report "Walking together towards freedom in Christ". The General Assembly report was presented in the EFECW NEWS issue 28 in full colour.

Website www.efecw.net is the new address. The page underwent a face lift, and is under constant updating by PC specialist, Nata Hovorkova, who has taken responsibility for the website.

A **Power-Point** presentation on about EFECW was shown at the General Assembly.

Nata Hovorkova gave an interview to the **Slovak Radio** about EFECW. It was part of a weekly programme called Oikoumene in the Word.

One **message** from the Co-Presidents was sent out during the year. This was on the war in Lebanon. EFECW is pleased to have a ghost writer: Dr. Reinhild Traitler.

National Forums

A new National Forum was born, this time in **Finland**.

German Forum meeting, Hannover Jan 13th .
Forum Day, Hildesheim, Nov. 3rd and 4th.
Study tour to Geneva, led by Barbara Maubach. Learning the roots of Protestantism, Sept. 2nd to 9th.

Women contributed to the Katholikentag in Saarbrücken, Germany May 24th to 28th. They took part in an Ecumenical Women's Service and also events under the headings Ecumenical Activities at the Grassroots and Striving for more Justice in Middle and Eastern Europe.

Swiss Forum Day, March 11th .

Four Nations [**England, Ireland, Scotland, Wales**] met at Minsteracres Northumberland, UK, April 24th to 25th .

Outlook

It has again been an active year for EFECW. The reactions to all workshops were very positive which is an encouragement for the future planning. Unfortunately the financial situation has not improved and will continue to be a concern.

Conclusions

The challenges for Christians are manifold. The secularisation of our contemporary world; the commitment to the agenda of the Charta Oecumenica; and breaking down the frontiers to meet and network beyond national limits. To go forward on this pilgrimage three virtues are needed: courage – hope – patience.

Last but not least a great thank you to the Co-Presidents, the members of the Coordinating Committee, to the treasurer, the fundraiser/project coordinator, to the secretary in Brussels and the Finance Committee for keeping an eye on the finances. They all carried a considerable load of work and offered their time and energy to EFECW. Here too all those women should be remembered who work in the background to make projects happen.

Thanks also to all the donors who believe in our commitment and supported our work. Many women throughout the year have by private donations helped EFECW to continue its work.



Introduction

EFECW has tried during the past decades to give its members in thirty countries throughout Europe opportunities to reflect about the tasks women have in a growing uniting Europe and in facing the challenge of the Ecumenical movement. We have considered both obstacles to overcome and possibilities of common sharing.

In 2007 we shared

- in learning, praying and celebrating together
- in strengthening our mutual respect and understanding
- in witnessing the values of our Christian heritage
- in searching for our common European heritage
- in learning to take over responsibility in our churches, societies, states
- being aware of social injustice
- opening up to interfaith dialogue
- preparing for the 8th General Assembly, August 2010

EFECW Activities 2007

Trafficking in Human Beings, “Challenge of Social Justice: Looking for Equal Opportunities for Women in an Enlarged Europe” March 2007 to December 2007

Preparatory group, Bucharest, Romania
March 28th to April 1st

Training session, Iasi, Romania,
June 27th to 28th

Third European Ecumenical Assembly in Sibiu,
Sept. 4th to 9th

Implementing organisation: EFECW with Partner Organisations. These were: The United Nations Development Programme [UNDP] in Romania; the National Agency against Trafficking in Human Beings; Ecumenical Association of Churches in Romania [AIDRom]; and the Ecumenical Forum of Romanian Christian Women. In Eastern European countries, the role of the women in society is not very well defined. In the last 10 years,

women around Europe managed to improve their social status, to gain key positions in important companies, to earn good wages; but in some countries society does not allow them to prove their skills and knowledge. This is the case in the East European countries, Republic of Moldova, Ukraine, Serbia and Macedonia, where women are seen just as housewives or workers in the garment industry or in agriculture. They still have to struggle for emancipation and for equality in rights and in opportunities. The gender equality concept is not well known.

Women living in high risk regions do not have access to vital information. When they choose to work abroad, they don't use legal means of finding a job. Most often say they are “helped” to cross the border by an acquaintance and in this way they get trafficked for labour, or for sexual purposes, or they find out that the labour contract is not valid.

In this respect, the main objectives of this project were to inform and educate women regarding their rights, focusing on the labour market, and to promote the concept of equal opportunities in their communities. Women should be trained to develop life skills adapted to the new social and economic context in their regions; they should be supported and counselled by specialists on labour aspects; they should exchange opinions and information on subjects of major interest, such as: working conditions for women, women empowerment, labour migration and EU legislation, trafficking in women, women's role in urban and rural community, education and job opportunities, globalisation and EU integration and their impact on women, etc.

In March the round table organised, at the AIDRom Conference Centre, a preparatory meeting aimed to establish the schedule and methods for implementing the project. Ten members of the EFECW participated in this preparatory meeting. Information was gathered from all local and regional partners. All the questions raised by regional coordinators were taken into consideration. Problems that occurred in the different selected regions – such as mass migration for labour purposes, unequal access to the labour market for women, or the role of women in small communities - were discussed with the experts. The solutions given by the experts were found in the training with the representatives from Republic of Moldova, Ukraine, Serbia and Macedonia.

The EFECW working group decided the content of the educational and informational materials.

Most of the materials were focused on labour migration, underlying the danger of trafficking in human beings and the lack of knowledge on labour rights of the European labour market. This led to exploitation, discrimination and unequal treatment. A thousand brochures were published in Romanian and in English.

During the meeting it was stressed that the easy, legal movement of persons within the new EU borders leads to the increase of different hidden forms of exploitation and trafficking, targeting young people from Eastern European countries.

Good practices on labour conditions and on labour rights were presented by the organisers. In order to give an example and to establish a regional working network, with common activities selected regions were targeted.

EFECW aimed to identify equal opportunities for women in the enlarged EU, by trying to create a framework for open discussions on gender topics, labour migration, living and working conditions and the specific trends in the transition period. EFECW aims to initiate education programmes for women, both in urban and rural environment and to explain the phenomenon of globalisation and EU integration and their impact on societies.

In this respect, a training in Iasi, Romania was organised June 27th to 28th. Almost forty persons, representing NGOs and members of the Ecumenical Forums of Christian Women from Romania, Republic of Moldova, Ukraine and Macedonia participated in this event.

The main themes of discussions were linked to the phenomenon of labour migration: information regarding EU legislation on labour market and labour standards, promoting the concept of equal opportunities and finding methods of making visible the work of women in society, exchange of experience in working with EU bodies or NGOs, developing inter-regional partnerships, etc.

All the participants agreed to develop an action plan for the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine, to have all necessary information about EU enlargement, know-how transfer, to understand EU mechanisms and to empower women NGOs from these countries to take actions and to participate in EU activities. All the participants from Republic of Moldova expressed their wish to have the follow-up meeting in Chisinau, in 2008, and to involve representatives of the local authorities too.

On the last day of the workshop, EFECW members offered their expertise and resources to train representatives of the EFECW in Moldova and in Ukraine and to support them in their future work for information and education on equal opportunities on the labour market. Materials for raising awareness on labour migration and on trafficking were disseminated.

During the Third European Ecumenical Assembly in Sibiu, Sept 4th to 9th the working group of EFECW and the

representatives from countries involved in the project had the evaluation meeting. Two hearings were held, on Gender Stereotypes in Church and Society and on Women's Vision on the new Europe – Migration Impact and Family life. Each group presented its conclusions supported by written and visual materials. Almost three hundred women and men participated in these two hearings.

The importance of this meeting was underlined by the broader context. It was a unique opportunity for Christian women from Europe to present the work they have been carrying out within the Church and in society. The role of women in society, even in Eastern European countries, was restored once and for all.

Women and Energy

Fourth Summer School for European Christian Women: Women and Energy, Woltersdorf Germany, September 16th to 23rd

The Summer School was planned to be held in Minsk, Belarus, but was changed to Woltersdorf near Berlin. Twenty women from five European countries and five Churches, mainly from Belarus, worked on the theme Women and Energy. Nuclear Energy was a special issue for women from Belarus. They shared their experiences.

Attitudes to Nuclear Energy depended on the country they came from: positive (Great-Britain, Romania, Slovakia) and sceptical (Germany) to negative like in Belarus, where the negative consequences from the reactor accident still are felt. They shared their personal experiences. Alternative energy forms were only marginally present in the participants' countries.

The Summer School began with a presentation about the areas of concern. Climate change as a result of the use of fossil fuels is uncontested. The consequences are the rise of temperature, storms and floods. Possibilities of how to reverse this were discussed. They were the saving of energy and investing in alternative energy forms. Nuclear energy is unsafe, expensive and uneconomical because uranium storage is limited and the problem of nuclear waste is not solved.



The group had discussions with members of political parties of the German Bundestag. The policies of the Greens and FDP are very different. The Greens demand a halt to the use of nuclear energy, whereas the FDP is in favour of maintaining existing power stations for up to fifty years. The participants went to see a plant in Prenzlau, where Solar-, Wind- and Biogas-machines produced energy.

Evaluation: the participants felt the summer school was very constructive. The Belarusian women wished that the contacts they made and their experiences with the risks of nuclear energy could be publicised. The participants also wrote a letter to the NC-meeting in Huissen to urge the women of the EFECW to spare energy and become more aware of sustainable developments. We must all change our lifestyles and raise awareness of our politicians to alternative sources of energy.

“Mammon and Money – Finance Capacity Building”

Training Workshop for delegates of member countries “Mammon and Money – Finance Capacity Building”, Dominican Activities Centre Huissen, Netherlands. September 27th to 30th

Some forty six women from EFECW groups from twenty three European countries came to Huissen. The training had been arranged to give the delegates more insight into the principles and purposes of fundraising, and to encourage a positive attitude towards openly discussing financial matters. This was something most of the women were unfamiliar with and felt disinclined to do. The delegates were welcomed by the prior of the Dominican Abbey and the chairman of the Dominican Activities Centre. The evening’s programme was opened by Martina Heinrichs, the host and a Co-president of EFECW. She asked the delegates to share their countries’ proverbs and sayings about money. This made it clear that money is an uncomfortable topic: money might not stink, but it is often associated with corruption, the devil, unhappiness and enmity.

Nevertheless, the participants were pleased about this theme, because every organisation (and certainly EFECW) must have a reliable source of funding. This is possible only by planning and setting up projects with a firm financial basis. European churches are increasingly reluctant donors, and since the money for developing and implementing women’s projects has to come from somewhere, practical considerations and financial expertise are required.

Dr. Anne Marijke Spijkerboer, clergywoman and writer on theology and art, gave an illustrated presentation about paintings of Jesus overturning the money-changers’ tables in the Temple (John 2:13-21). Dr. Spijkerboer gave a detailed look at different versions of this story, from paintings by Rembrandt, Edward Burro and Salvador Dali, and also from mediaeval writings. It is possible that these subjective images are a source of women’s aversion to thinking about money.



Irmgard Busch, an industrial chaplain, told us the basics of ‘Weiberwirtschaft’ and made the participants reflect on money’s function in our current neo-liberal society. Naturally there were comments, since this type of society is not (yet) predominant in all European countries. However, Irmgard sees this as simply a matter of time. She insisted we should be more actively concerned about privatisation and social security, and the questions they raise, since our future depends on them. In her opinion women must become more independent. They should no longer submit financially and morally to the power of others.

Corine Aartman, from Bloom Consultancy, gave an inspirational and comprehensive PowerPoint presentation on fundraising – how to do it, what to do, and what not to do. She made the key point that you have to believe in what you are doing and communicate this to others. The outstanding part of her presentation was a specially prepared website for the delegates to read and study at home. The presentation provided many points of recognition for those already involved in fundraising. It also gave them new perspectives; and it was an eye-opener for those unfamiliar with fundraising. A notably practical aspect was the website’s inclusion of donor agency addresses in several European countries. This information will be most useful for women who decide to begin fundraising in their own countries.

‘Project Market’ involved selecting a number of projects for financial evaluation. The Project Market was introduced by the three Co-presidents, who also gave a crash course



on budgeting and interpreting cost estimates. Several projects were worked out by groups of delegates from different countries. Of course this wasn't easy, but good ideas came out of it.

On Friday afternoon about twenty five Dutch women came to Huissen to meet their foreign sisters. Prof. Dr. Lieve Troch, feminist theologian in Nijmegen and Sao Paulo (Brazil), gave an authoritative lecture on the effects of the current economy on women all over the world. A point of major concern to her is that nation-states appear to be subordinate to worldwide capitalism, which has little or no regard for universal human rights and values. During the general discussion this point was contested by observations that the United Nations tries to uphold human rights and the Social Forum strives for world peace. The general discussion was enlivened by the EVA Housemaids' Choir, singing tear-jerkers about living on Social Security. The afternoon ended with an informal get-together.

The morning of Saturday 29th September was devoted to further work on the projects, and the changes needed for EFECW to become an effective project-oriented organisation. The office in Brussels will have to be closed owing to funding problems. This follows the decision to make the general secretary redundant. Although drastic, this change can be coped with because all delegates have access to electronic communication, unlike the situation a few years ago. There is also a volunteer for the most urgent tasks.

On Saturday evening there was a service of worship led by Jasja Nottelman, university chaplain in Utrecht. The

service included appropriate reflections upon the past three days' activities.

Evaluation: The training programme's lectures, Bible studies and training workshops appear to have succeeded in their objective of creating a positive attitude towards fundraising. The National Coordinators worked hard to achieve this objective. The Project Market resulted in interested parties finding each other and agreeing on several projects for the next few years. These are:.. These are:

- Women's self-confidence (Croatia, Ukraine, Serbia, Slovakia)
- Theology from a gender perspective, seminar in Scotland, April 2008
- Neighbourhood meeting of the Baltic Sea region in 2009, in Sweden or Lithuania,
- Women and work (Romania, France, Greece),
- Migrant women and labour, at the next NC conference, autumn 2008, in France or,
- Peace and reconciliation, in Sweden
- Mediterranean countries' meeting, 2008, probably in Spain

The training was made possible thanks to successful fundraising from several congregations and the Kerk en Wereld foundation, the Skanfonds, Stichting Rotterdam, the Remonstrantse Broederschap, the Dominicaans Prioriteitenfonds and the Haella foundation.



Coffee Corner – Café Ruth

Third European Ecumenical Assembly, Sibiu, Romania, September 4th to 9th.

The Third European Ecumenical Assembly in Sibiu was a unique opportunity for the Christian women from Romania and from the rest of Europe to present to the representatives of the Churches the work they have been carrying out within Church and in society.

It is already a tradition that women give presentations at Ecumenical Assemblies (Graz, Trondheim, etc). They are based on their position in Society and express women's involvement within the Church. EFECW, AIDROM and four Romanian church-related women's organisations invited Church delegates to meet for a cup of coffee, during the breaks of the Assembly, and to participate in discussions on selected themes.

For five days during the Assembly Café Ruth hosted presentations of programmes run by the Ecumenical Forum of Romanian Christian Women and by the Ecumenical Forum of European Christian Women. There were also examples of the activities carried out by Christian Romanian women through the years, as well as discussions based on the main themes of the Assembly:

- The Light of Christ Shines upon all – Living in Diversity – Ecumenical Work at Grass Root Level
- The Light of Christ and the World – Gender Stereotypes in Church and Society
- The Light of Christ and Europe – Women's Vision on the New Europe – Migration Impact and Family Life.

The coffee corner was organised at Casa Teusch and was called "Café Ruth". Its name was based on the biblical example of Ruth, the image of the strong woman, who never leaves her path, who always keeps her faith and dignity in spite of harsh circumstances. Ruth Epting, honorary president of the Ecumenical Forum of European Christian Women is one example. Through her determination and unshakeable faith in times of need, through her pioneer's work in the women's ecumenical movement, she helped the development of the ecumenical movement.



Regional Cross-Border Projects

"Mediterranean Neighbours" La Baume-les-Aix, France, February 2nd to 4th

Fourteen women from Spain, Portugal, France, Italy and Switzerland attended a dialogue on EFECW life and women's associations in our countries. The participants detailed their specific commitments in EFECW and mentioned what kind of organisations they were connected with, either in their own country or in Europe.

The French group first met in Turin (Torino) in October 2005 to discuss ecumenical practices and cultural exchanges between Swiss, Italian and French women. They decided it was a good way to improve relationships and to share new ideas.

In Spain the main partner of EFECW is the "Foro de Estudios sobre la Mujer" (FEM), which plans training and research publications. In Italy FDEI (Italian Protestant Women Federation) has been the EFECW's agent for years. Rev. Greetje, who has been living in Italy for twenty years, has been allowed to revive EFECW in Italy by setting up two groups. One is in Torino and the other one in Rome. FDEI is mainly concerned in "secularity", which should be an interesting topic to discuss with neighbours. In Switzerland EFECW is a network of associations run by a multi-faith committee which is connecting people and organising meetings on relevant topics. The Swiss group has studied the Charta Oecumenica as Forum women have done in France and has told its Church leaders that this text hasn't yet reached grassroots communities.

An important focus during the General Assembly in Murten had been to improve relationships between neighbours so that being European had a purposeful meaning. What are the main EFECW priorities after the General Assembly? Is there training about ecumenical learning, on important topics concerning everyone? Such topics might be include responsible citizenship or even the sharing regular news upon our ecumenical life at home. What are the main current priorities in the EFECW? Does it still have the means to develop common projects in training or studying or supporting associations already working at the social level? Does EFECW see itself only as a wide network where each national group will share news about its own ecumenical or social commitment, self-financed by each country? If not, wouldn't be EFECW be more efficient producing a plan which would bring the component countries together?

What common plans have been proposed between neighbours? Working on Charta Oecumenica (Ch 3#7) "Taking our place in the European Construction" the participants were asked for some precise details mainly about our commitments and two new points were added. On peace work, women should be more in agreement with men, without giving up their own plans and even feminist groups have to act by themselves.

The "Mediterranean neighbours" group will meet in Spain in 2008. Meanwhile the groups are going to think about

Ch3#8 “How peoples and cultures shall be reconciled”, and look up in Ch 11 “Improving relationships with Islam” on the same time in the same way it was done on #7, that means as a prospect of European Christian women and by using Internet. As preparation for the meeting in 2008, the group will try to identify one problem of European women to study more deeply related to religion or society.

Meeting of Neighbours

Tallinn, Estonia, August 21st to 25th



The women of the German and the Estonian Ecumenical Forum continued the series of conferences of the EFECW project of “Neighbours in Europe”. What is it that sometimes separates us as European women in the north and as the same time connects us? It is the Baltic Sea! The theme of the Conference was Roots and Wings The Northern German and the Estonian women’s group prepared the meeting together. Women came from six countries and the atmosphere was very open and personal, with sharing, especially in small groups. The wish from the meeting was that all countries around the Baltic Sea would participate.

Egeria, Pilgrimage through Italy,

September 21st to October 3rd

Egeria is a Women’s Pilgrimage for a united Europe. From 21st September to 3rd October fifteen women, from different confessions, walked the third phase of the pilgrimage. It was from the French boarder to Venice, in Italy. The aim of the project is to revive the European pilgrimage tradition with the spiritual aspect for the women. Egeria project started in 2005 in Spain and ends in 2015 in Jerusalem.

In the meetings with the Waldensian or Methodist hosts there were discussions about the traditions and everyday situations of the congregations as Diaspora-congregations. Ruth Barmet, the Swiss EFECW National coordinator, spoke about experiences and perspectives of the Third Ecumenical Assembly in Sibiu, A visit to a

women’s bookshop in Milan and a Lutheran congregation in Venice were important highlights of the pilgrimage. The next stretch in 2008 is through Slovenia and Croatia.

National Forums

Twenty fifth Anniversary of the German Forum

Magdeburg, Germany, November 2nd to 3rd

Under the theme “Der Ökumene ein weibliches Gesicht geben”, “Giving a Feminine Face to Ecumenism“ the German Forum ÖFCFE Deutschland celebrated its twenty fifth birthday with guests from Great Britain, Greece, Romania, Bulgaria, and Switzerland. Women described the exciting times when EFECW was founded. The building up of relationships between the women from east and west was sometimes difficult. Now there are women from thirty countries and from different churches wonderfully growing closer through EFECW. Women of a younger generation pondered how to give ecumenism a female face and how to pursue this goal.

Forum Women in Slovakia, August 6th to 7th

The committee of women at the ECCSR organised a small conference on 6th and 7th August in the Eastern part of Slovakia It was the first meeting for a Slovak Forum. They invited Jill King as a special visitor for the event. She came to Bratislava for the European Methodist Festival and she was willing to attend the conference. She talked about the Fellowship of the Least Coin.

Forum Day

Wesley Chapel in London November 17th

Forum England met in the Methodist Chapel opened by John Wesley in 1778. The theme for the day was Conflict and Resolution. In spite of our invited speaker not being able to attend there was a lively discussion in the morning following a talk by Janet Wootton. She spoke about conflict women experienced caused by colonialism in North India and the resolution she had witnessed. The local Anglican and Methodist ministers, Katharine Rumens and Jennifer Potter, spoke of the present cooperation between their churches. Jill Baker, representative for World Federation of Methodists and Uniting Church Women, brought black T shirts and reminded us about the Decade to Overcome Violence. In the afternoon Co President Dorothy Knights returned from observing at the Conference of European Churches Central Committee, in Vienna, to tell us about her involvement with EFECW during the last year.

Contacts and networking

CEC-CSC Human Rights Working Group, Vienna Dec. 6th to 8th

Anne Lagerstedt gave a report on domestic violence against women in Finland. Not only in the Finnish society domestic violence is still regarded a private issue. Only one third of the women who have experienced violence in an intimate relationship seek help from the authorities. Another third seeks help from friends, relatives or work colleagues. Others do not talk about their experiences at all. There is a need to establish a better contact between help desks (as the National Help-line, established in Finland in spring 2002) and the women who experience domestic violence. The working group might take up this issue in the future.

Seminar “Daughters of Sara and Hagar”, Sigtuna, Sweden, February 5 to 6th

Christian, Jewish and Moslem women, mostly from Sweden but also from Norway, Finland and Estonia met in Sigtuna to discuss and learn from each other. Marina Treima represented the Nordic Ecumenical Women Committee (NEKK) for the Forum.

Dutch Women’s Synod, March 10 to 11th

Women’s World Day of Prayer – Quadrennial meeting in Toronto, Canada, May 30th to June 6th

European Project for Interreligious Learning (EPIL): Module I, Zürich, Switzerland, May 26th to June 2nd

European Project for Inter-religious Learning (EPIL): Module II, Vienna, Austria, Oct. 21st to 28th

EPIL European Project for Inter-religious Learning project was held in cooperation with EFECW Ecumenical Forum of European Christian Women a Study Course 2007 – 2008. Please visit the website: www.epil.ch

Evangelischer Kirchentag, Cologne, Germany, June 6th to 10th

The Forum took part in the Kirchentag in Cologne with a stand in the Europe Hall. There was also a Neighbours meeting held prior to the Kirchentag in West-Köln. It was about integrating women migrants and considered communication, violence and health. The twenty three women from France, Belgium, France, Germany and Switzerland also enjoyed a multicultural evening after the seminar. The German Forum organised the seminar with the Women’s table of the Evangelischen Kirche im Rheinland. Other themes were violence against women, forced marriage, honour violence, trafficking in women, language barrier, intercultural difficulties in communication, 14



deficiency in health care for migrant women and forced prostitution.

Woman and Ministries in the Church (Syndesmos), France Aug. 8th to 14th

Twelfth International ESWTR-Conference in Italy, Aug. 29th to Sept. 2nd Martina Heinrichs participated.

CEC meeting in Vienna

Dorothy Knights was observer. Highlight with a practical outcome was the merger of CCME [Churches Commission for Migrant in Europe] and CEC.

Also

Women’s World Day of Prayer, March 2nd; International Women’s Day, March 8th; International Day “No violence against women”, Nov. 25th

Day of Voluntary Workers, Dec. 5th

International Day of Human Rights, Dec 10th were observed in the Forum

Fellowship of the Least Coin

Jill King from the Forum was elected Chair of the International Committee of the Fellowship of the Least Coin when it met in Kuala Lumpur for its 50th Anniversary celebration. The new Executive Secretary, who will take over from Esther in January 2008 is Cora Tabing-Reyes. The Forum represents FLC in Europe.



Publications and Communication

EFECW Publication Officer is Anne Lagerstedt. She resented EFECW members with one NEWS issue (29) and the Annual Report 2006 for the web site, which unfortunately came out very late due to technical difficulties on the writer's side.

Web site www.efecw.net is updated on a regular basis by Nata Horinkova, our Coordinating Committee a PC specialist.

A Power-Point presentation on EFECW-work 2006–2007 was shown at the National coordinator's training course in Huissen.

Internal Management

CC-meeting in Bucharest, Romania, March 28th to April 1st

CC-meeting in Huissen, Netherlands, Sept 23th to 26th

FC-meeting in Huissen, Netherlands, Sept. 22nd

The major issue the Co-ordinating Committee dealt with was to find a new fundraiser and treasurer; and closing the Brussels office. The main task was project planning and realising the projects.

Needless to say, much work and time was again spent by the Committee members who all work on a voluntary basis. Besides the two regular Committee meetings the Co-Presidents met whenever it was necessary.

We were very sorry to have to let our Europe secretary Bernadette Doureligne go because of the changed financial situation (no donations for core costs). We also had to give up our in office in the CEC building in Brussels for the same reason. The tasks of the Europe secretary were divided among the CC and a volunteer worker once a month checks the mail coming to the office address (which we still hold).



Outlook

It has again been an active year for EFECW – the reactions to all workshops were very positive which is an encouragement for the future planning. Unfortunately the financial situation has not improved and will continue to be a concern.

We look forward to the third in the series of theological seminars to be held this time in Scotland. It is Theology from a Gender Perspective in a Protestant Country. Later in the year the theme of the Conference in Versailles is Women in Dialogue in a Multicultural and Multifaith Europe

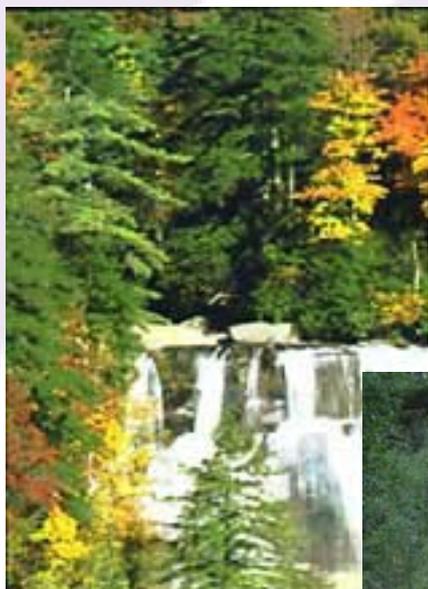
Conclusions

The challenges for Christian women are manifold. The secularisation of our contemporary world; the commitment to the agenda of the Charta Oecumenica; and breaking down the frontiers to meet and network beyond national limits. To go forward on this pilgrimage three virtues are needed: courage – hope – patience.

Last but not least a great thank you to the Co-Presidents, the members of the Coordinating Committee, to the treasurer, the fundraiser/project coordinator, to the secretary in Brussels and the Finance Committee for keeping an eye on the finances. They all carried a considerable load of work and offered their time and energy to EFECW. Here too all those women should be remembered who work in the background to make projects happen.

Thanks also to all the donors who believe in our commitment and supported our work. Many women throughout the year have by private donations helped EFECW to continue its work.

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