



EFECW

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



Annual Report 2011:1

INTRODUCTION

In 2011 we shared a number of amazing experiences in all over Europe, either being organised by the European Coordinating Committee, either by the National Fora.

It is always significant to know that your partners are professional and they manage to complete in a skilled way our events.

The Co-Presidents and the Coordinating Committee would like to report you about our actions and simultaneously to send to the people involved a great "Thank you" for your support!

Extra thankfulness to the National Forum of Lithuania, where the National Coordinating Meeting took place! The cooperation between the local and the European team had as a result a very professional and also moving gathering. Please be informed about our action in our website www.efecw.net

EFECW Activities 2011

National Coordinators Meeting of EFECW

**"Women are breaking the walls
of exclusion"**

**Druskininkai (Lithuania)
21-25 september 2011**

The issue of trafficking in human beings is a vast problem with a great number of perspectives and solutions. Many countries of Europe are facing it not only as an academic topic, but, more or less, as an everyday difficulty. In answer to

the CEC campaign Against Trafficking in Women which was launched in 1999 EFECW, years ago, responded on European and on National level, to the struggle of those people being trafficked as well as the possible ways of working it out, especially as far as the women's matters are concerned.



Our last General Assembly in Loccum/ Germany, August 2010, dealt with the subjects of "*Justice and Equality*" and the fact of "*Taking responsibility*" in our everyday life and our members were engaged on working on specific fields for the next four years; two of those fields are the *Community building, networking and dialogue* and *Gender equality in church and society*. Within the particular path, we organise a Conference dealing with the people's right of being equal members of their society and church and having the opportunity of building their own personal networking through the dialogue with their fellow citizens.

In particular, the Conference of the Forum in Druskininkai, an adorable town of Lithuania on the 21st until the 25th of September 2011, was dedicated to women, who are willing to break the social or religious or educational walls of their exclusion. 51 women, representing 23 official countries - members of the EFECW, and 1 man

(speaker), who attended the meeting, were being given a variety of perspectives of the topic, in order to reflect on them. The Vice Mayor of Druskininkai greeted our meeting, offering useful information about her town and also thoughts about women in Lithuania and their problems.

Firstly, on the 22nd of September we had the pleasure of attending the lecture of Mrs. Julija Staskauske, a young woman working in the Ministry of Interior of the Republic of Lithuania. She gave us a concrete briefing of the situation of Lithuania and the ways that the state tries to prevent it or solve it. Unemployment, poverty, inequality, change of values (into money mostly), and migration, these are some of the various inside and outside factors that lead to THB (Trafficking of Human Beings). The presentation moved on to the specific field of prostitution, starting from the society and the public opinion on the problem and how a possible legalization would be the actual answer to the problem. Lithuania, since 2002, runs programmes for the Prevention and Control of THB, including prostitution, in order to take care of the victims, provide them complex measures of assistance and ensure the function of witness protection. Those goals of the programmes are ensured by the cooperation of international bodies, foreign countries and non-governmental organizations.

An extraordinary situation for the Forum was to welcome on the 23rd of September, a male keynote speaker, Rev. Sven-Gunnar Lidén, from Stockholm, Sweden, who is a Baptist Pastor and a Chairman of the European Baptist Federations anti-trafficking working

group. He introduced us to the topic beginning with a unique point; the cause of the situation is already explained in the New Testament! Apostle Paul has written that *the love of money is the root to all evil* (Tim 6. 10). The fact that trafficking is actually slavery brought us to the action of the Church, as it was initiated in Sweden, aiming on prevention or rehabilitation. Finally, this is not a story of a tragedy, but how God transforms victims of tragedy into people with hope through others.

The third lecture concerning our topic was introduced by Dr. Solveiga Daugirdaite, from the Gender Study Centre at Vilnius University. She focused on the Autobiography and its importance especially for women, by explaining how the crucial existential questions can find answers through sharing experience by autobiographies. After dealing with the history of the autobiography, we had the opportunity to hear about women who wrote their autobiographies as a certificate of their unique existence and the fact that lots of women, who were being trafficked, have written their story. Thus breaking the silence and overcoming the shame: breaking the walls of exclusion, as the title of our conference indicates.



The time for our reflection was enough for entering into the problem and for

sharing the experiences of each of the participants being carried by our cultures and countries.

The workshops and the discussion on the Ecumenical Sharing and the Young Women's Strategy involved us more into the topic and offered us challenges for the future of the Forum. We were very happy to organise the first meeting of our internal group of the Young Women, trying to develop our strategy and our next steps, in order to have more young members in our ecumenical female family.

The excursion to Gruto Park, a testimony of the Lenin and Stalin era and its impact on the Lithuanian people, and the closing evening with an authentic Lithuanian celebration brought us in the spirit of the country and assisted us to feel the rhythm of the people and their historical and cultural background, significant fields for those who participate in the ecumenical movement.



Seminar “Creation and Ecology”

St.Petersburg (Russian Federation)

4-8 May 2011

Message from the EFECW

Don't waste - share!

The Ecumenical Forum of European Christian Women (EFECW) is an ecumenical body where women from 29 European countries come together, sharing experiences and ideas, develop new ways of thinking, aiming to establish a church of justice and of shared responsibility between women and men, young and old. The Forum brings together women from East and West, North and South, from Catholic, Orthodox and Protestant denominations, enabling them to gain confidence and raise their voice in the churches and in the world. Despite theological and cultural differences, there is a strong commitment to build bridges of mutual understanding between women in different parts of Europe.

At the General Assembly in 2010 in Loccum, Germany, the Forum decided to establish a working group on ecology. Consequently “Creation and Ecology” was chosen as theme for the EFECW seminar 2011 in St. Petersburg. Twenty-five women participated representing nine countries. The Biblical stories of the creation of the world, its interpretation throughout church history and its consequences for the relationships between God and creation, humankind and creation were discussed from different denominational

perspectives and disciplines. The participants also exchanged information about projects in their countries.

The Hebrew word 'bara' in Gen 1:1 was textually and theologically analysed to mean "opening space", meaning separating, rather than "creating". Caring for the creation is a clear task given to humankind by God. If we allow the destruction of our environment, we destruct our way to God and will never attend harmony within the whole of the creation. The world has been created by opening space for new developments, relations and thoughts. Considering this, creation is not a single action but a continuing act.

Every day we are called to open and leave space to continue the creation by changing our behaviour through practical, educational and political initiatives. It is a matter of mutual Christian responsibility to work together towards a creative relationship between earth and humankind. The "Theology of Enough" is an expression of this and stands in opposition to the anthropology of the consumption-oriented person ("persona consumans").

Through examples of contemporary Swedish hymns, it became visible that even theologies that integrate symbols traditionally attributed to women (nature, chaos, darkness) often remain stuck in the androcentric tendency of prioritising the symbols attributed to man (culture, cosmos, light). Female attributes are considered as part of the evil where God is absent. How can the results of creation be good if chaos as a condition of every creational process is not considered as being good?



Therefore, ***we commit ourselves and invite others:***

... to open and leave spaces for new ideas and developments;

... to think and act creatively: Wasting resources instead of sharing them is a major problem of our time;

... to change our daily behaviour to protect the environment: Making steps, big or small, and being honest in what we can really do, even if this means less comfort;

... to push for democracy and remind our governments and Churches of their responsibilities for the environment and support initiatives growing from civil society, taking into account different cultural and political contexts;

... to influence public opinion in favour of the responsible use of renewable energies and support the reduction and long-term abolition of nuclear energy;

... to value and give priority to local resources and products if possible and support local initiatives;

... to raise awareness by sharing best practices in education aiming to develop ecological consciousness.

"Take your sandals off your feet, for the place on which you are standing is holy ground." (Ex 3:5)

Written guidelines will help the newcomers to adjust themselves in the actions of the Forum and they are going to be the outline for our steps in organising events, projects and meetings.

The tasks list was formed and we are all asked to be dedicated to our assignments. The theological seminar about "*Creation and Ecology*" in St. Petersburg, which was already organised by the former board and Dr. Marina Shishova, is the first challenge!

2. Brussels, Ecumenical Centre, 04-05 of July 2011

Enabling Team

The Co Presidents and our Treasurer have met for putting into financial frames our future actions.

1. Brussels, Ecumenical Centre, 05-06 of December 2011

Meetings of the Board

CC meetings

1. St. Petersburg, Russia, 2- 4 of May 2011



2. Druskininkai, Lithuania, 20- 21 of September 2011



CoPs meetings

The Co Presidents have met, in order to organise the next steps and the meetings:

1. Brussels. Ecumenical Centre, 01-02 of April 2011

PROGRAMMES OF THE JACKIE STUYT LEGACY

During the year of 2011 three projects of the National Fora of Croatia, Cyprus and Romania took place through the JSL.

Particularly, the programme in **Croatia** was entitled „Women in the labor market“

The project was signed on 17th November 2010 with the Association for Peace and Human Rights “Baranja“. Partners of the project are: EFEK-Croatia, Diakonia Evangelical Church in Osijek, State Administration for Employment Agency Branch Beli Manastir, and 3 more (local government) partners – municipalities Popovac, Draz and Petlovac. The project should be completed after 12 month on the 16th November 2011.

The overall objective is to increase employment of women in rural areas and provide them assistance in entering labor market. The target group of beneficiaries are unemployed women from the county with the highest unemployment rate, which is in Croatia our Osijecko-Baranjska county.



The newcomer **Cypriot Forum** organised the “Training young women who deal with children and teenagers in church” in three phases:



Phase A: Initial training through a three day seminar-workshop

Phase B: Peer review on work plans and application of activities in the parishes

Phase C: Collection of finalized material. Reflection on the process and on the material. Preparation of a handbook

The Ecumenical Forum of the **Romanian** Christian Women organized this project for the second time this year with the purpose of building and deepening reconciliation between the

denominations, concentrating on the importance of intercultural and inter-religious communication between Romanians, Hungarians and Roma.

The course (project) took place between 18th - 23rd of July 2011, in Stejeris, led by different lecturers from Romania. The course was attended by 23 young women - representatives of four denominations (Catholic, Lutheran, Reformed and Orthodox) and three nationalities (Romanian, Hungarian, and Roma).

Please read the detailed final reports of the projects in our website www.efecw.net and specifically about the Jacqueline Stuyt Legacy.

PLEASE REMEMBER



Ruth-Epting-Fund

For many years, the financial situation of the Ecumenical Forum prevented in several countries women by lack of money to share activities and experiences in ecumenical work.

The vision of a fund to enable women of all countries to participate in the work of the Forum, regardless of ability to pay, became reality.

Ruth Epting, one of the “mothers” of the Forum, agreed that her name may be used for this fund, so the Ruth-Epting-Fund was launched in 2003.

The idea was and is still, to become a member of this fund by paying a minimum fee of 20 Euro or 30 CHF.

Till today almost all members are friends of Ruth Epting or friends of the Ecumenical Forum and are Swiss women. But it is also possible for a national Forum to become a member of this central fund and pay an annual fee to the REF-Account. Of course you can always make a donation without becoming a member.

If you are unable to spend a donation in cash, there are many other ways to contribute to the fund. Remember the NC-Meeting in Lithuania: Daniela from Slovakia made numerous white cotton snow stars to sell them in favour of the Ruth-Epting-Fund.

If it is possible to organize for every meeting of the European Forum a market place, participants can bring goods from home to present and to sell so all participants will be able to contribute to the fund however they can!!

The income to the accounts in Switzerland 2011: CHF 8'544.00 and the payments to EFECW: CHF 6'636.00.

To the GBP account in England, where Ruth Clarke is responsible, regular payments have been made and the total amount per 31.12.2011 is GBP 8'011.00.

To ensure the future of the Ruth-Epting-Fund and to make sure all women in all countries can be represented adequately, we need the solidarity and the support of all members in all countries.

On behalf of the Ruth-Epting-Fund we thank you in advance for all donations.

Ruth Baumann
Treasurer of the Ruth-Epting-Fund

Bank account in Switzerland:

EURO account: Basler Kantonalbank,
Ruth-Epting-Fonds

IBAN: CH32 0077 0016 5410
2809 5

BIC: BKBBCHBBXXX

SWIFT: BKBBCHBB



The Fellowship of the Least Coin (FLC)

When I think of the Fellowship of the Least Coin then the logo appears before my eyes because the folded hands (in colour they are white, black, red, yellow and brown) forming a circle symbolize so well the global movement of prayer FLC stands for. The other vision I have when thinking of FLC is the smiling face of Shanti Solomon, who in 1956 when hindered in her work for peace had the vision of a movement which under the motto "pray and act" would be an instrument for peace and justice. Her vision of a healing relationship among women from different cultures, Christian denominations and walks of life was not only to pray but in doing so to set aside the smallest coin as a symbol of solidarity and compassion.

Today FLC embraces the globe. In all regions and continents the local ecumenical women's organisations, in Europe EFECW, are the carriers and the promoter of this movement.

Since 1979 the International Committee for the FLC (ICFLC) administers the promotion, and interpretation of the movement. This committee consists of the delegates from all the continents and regions around the world. EFECW is the representative of Europe.

It is really a privilege to participate in this movement because it challenges all delegates not only to meet but also to cooperate with women from completely different spiritual, social and cultural backgrounds.

The roots of this movement are in Asia but it is equally well rooted in Africa, the US, Canada, in the Caribbean, in Latinamerica and Europe. The fact that these little coins, which finally end up in the FLC bank account WCC (World Council of Churches) graciously administers, enable the ICFLC each year to allocate project grants and block grants shows how much solidarity even in the smallest and poorest communities is shown through this small token of love.

Europe, EFECW, has since its existence, been a recipient of FLC project and block grants. Each year 4 project grants are allocated to European women's project and thanks to the block grant of 10000 US\$ each year (provided the collected least coins allow it) is paid not only to EFECW but also to the ecumenical women's organisations around the world.

Apart from these grants, each year a solidarity or emergency fund is set aside for quick help, when anywhere in this world a catastrophe happens. Thus we were able to give a small grant to the Japanese women's organisation for

support in and around Fukushima or after the heavy floods in the Philippines. These are just examples.

A few years ago FLC created the FLC Scholarship Award for Young Women. It offers financial support to young Christian women for their education in the areas of the FLC vision of peace, justice, and reconciliation. For details and guidelines please go the FLC website: www.flc.net.ph click projects.

ICFLC is privileged to be assisted by an executive secretary and her helper who work in their office in the Philippines. Without their valuable support the Committee would not be able to cope with all the tasks.

Remember FLC when you pray, have the little box ready for the least coin. FLC relates us European women to our sisters around the globe!

Find more detailed information on www.flc.net.ph

Catherine Gyarmathy