

# NEWS

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## Women Empowerment in Moldova

The role of women in raising gender consciousness within local communities in the Republic of Moldova was studied at a six day workshop including a round table on *Women Empowerment* from 11th to 16th March 2008 in cooperation with the Moldavian branch of EFECW. It was followed up by a coaching and monitoring process for the Moldavian working group who will implement the outcome of the workshop. Exchange of experience with Forum women of Romania on the good practices was organised to strengthen women's positions in the community.

The target Groups were women; members of the Moldavian Ecumenical Forum and young people from three regions of the republic: Cahul, Balti and Chisinau. These women are responsible in the community life at different levels like teachers; women in business; public life; and churches.



## Women in Dialogue in Versailles

In September 2008 sixty-four Forum National Coordinators met in Versailles to learn how to deal with a rapidly changing world. The seminar was called *Women in Dialogue in a Multicultural and Multifaith Europe*.

Mrs **Florence Rochefort** from the *Groupe Société Religions Laïcités du CNRS* described how women in the past were mostly seen in relation to men. Women today want to be seen as whole individuals. "In the EU stands a certain demand that less feministic countries should follow the lead of more equal countries. On the other hand, fundamentalist fronts are very much against any liberties as a threat to society's cohesion."

Mrs **Bérengrère Massignon** from the same organisation reminded, that tensions exist between humanistic and religious spheres. "That's why pan-European, ecumenical church related NGO's, like CEC, are more appreciated in Brussels. Church related organisations are able to combine information, vision, and ethics. This ecumenism is pragmatic instead of doctrinal. Co-operation happens on the level of working groups."

Women are being turned against each other and organisations keep women out. Women's issues are not regarded as important."

Bible and Koran study about Hagar was held by pastor **Agnès v. Kirchbach** and Mrs **Mehrezia Maïza**, member of the *World Conference of Religions for Peace*.

**Marie-Louise van Wijk** told about *Andante* and warned that "dialogue" is a dangerous word. It creates an illusion of concordance and common values. "It is better to understand that we are just different."

**Martine Levy**, vice president of the *European Women's Lobby* would not let us forget our goals. "Women's fight for human rights is not a completed work. Our mission is to work together to eliminate all kinds of discrimination. We must be careful that when we strive for solidarity with other groups we do not forget our own. Some may be worse off than we are, but we should not ignore our own problems."

We thank the French Forum for all arrangements and successful prayer for the sunshine!

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## Theology from a Gender Perspective in a Protestant Country

Scottish Churches House in Dunblane in April welcomed the 'Ecumenical Forum of European Christian Women' to their Seminar on "Theology from a Gender Perspective in a Protestant Country". Women who had travelled from twelve countries across Europe, from Russia to Wales, were welcomed to the House by the Warden, **Alastair Hulbert**, and by the Chair of the Methodist Synod in Scotland, the Rev. **Lily Twist**. The week was to be one of study, reflection, laughter and worship. Their time together however was to be a journey of discoveries, in which new things were learned, and friendships both renewed and forged. Previous Seminars in the series have been held in Spain [Catholic Theology] and Russia [Orthodox Theology] – both from a Gender Perspective.

The subjects tackled at the Dunblane Seminar were ever informative, and on occasion daunting; "The Protestant Churches & Society in Scotland", "The Way Power Works – Why Women are Equal but still Excluded!", "Orthodox & Protestant Dialogue", and "A View from the Inside", being amongst them.

The speakers were diverse: **Elizabeth Templeton**, controversial freelance

Theologian; **Heather Walton**, Senior Lecturer in Practical Theology at Glasgow University; **Marina Shishova**, of the Russian Orthodox Church; **Johanna Friedlein**, Protestant Pastor from Germany; Rev. **Marjorie McLean**, Depute Principal Clerk of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland; and from the Roman Catholic Church, **Margaret Long** of the *Focolare*. The Seminar was also visited by a group of the Friends of the Forum in Scotland, who shared in conversation. The event itself was facilitated by **Constance Robertson** of the Church of Scotland, and **Beryl Cowling** of the Methodist Church.

Mid-week however brought a complete change of scene when the party visited the Scottish Parliament in Edinburgh, where they were met by **Hazel MacIver** of the 'Scottish Churches Parliamentary Office', and taken around the Parliament by **Hugh O'Donnell** MSP. From lunch at the Parliament they then travelled through Fife to the ancient Royal Burgh of St. Andrews, where they were greeted by the Very Rev. **Alan Mc Donald**, former Moderator of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland.

Beryl Cowling

## Financial Capacity Building

'Financial Capacity Building, Money and Mammon' Training form women in Huissen, the Netherlands, 26–30 September 2007 gathered some 46 delegates from 23 European countries. The training was arranged to give more insight into the principles and purposes of fundraising, and to encourage a positive attitude towards openly discussing financial matters – something most of the women were unfamiliar with and felt disinclined to do.

Nevertheless, we are pleased that we took up this theme, because every organisation 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.

**Irmgard Busch**, pastor for labour affairs made us reflect on money's func-





## Cafe Ruth in Sibiu a Great Success

During the Third European Ecumenical Assembly in Sibiu September 2007 Cafe Ruth offered an oasis for participants.

**Waltraud Liekefett, Ruth Barmet** and **Ilse Philippi** joined local Christian women's organisations, to offer coffee and conversation about women's issues. They gave out leaflets „The Light of Christ shines upon all“.

**Elisabeth Bücking** and **Dorothy Knights**, the Forum delegates, addressed the visitors and **Elena Timofticiuc** spoke about ecumenical work, women's integration into social and church life, about migration and trafficking in human beings.



## Building

tion in our current neo-liberal society. She insisted we should be more actively concerned about privatisation and social security, since our future depends on them. In her opinion women must become more independent, especially financially and morally. **Corine Aartman**, from *Bloom Consultancy* made the key point on fundraising that you have to believe in what you are doing and communicate this to others.

Prof. Dr. **Lieve Troch** 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.

The changes needed for Efecw to become an effective project-oriented organisation require that 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.

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.

## Ecological Summerschool on Energy

The Fourth Ecological Summer School in September 2007 planned for Minsk was transferred to Woltersdorf near Berlin. Twenty women from five European countries, mainly from Belarus, studied the theme Women and Energy.

There was special concern about nuclear energy. The women from Eastern Europe knew in theory about alternative sources of energy but not the practical possibilities.

Questions were asked about climate change and energy choices. Answers were to save energy and search for alternative, less polluting sources of energy.

The participants visited the German Parliament and met members of different political parties.



## Growing Wings and Roots in Estonia

Wings and Roots was the theme for the Forum Baltic Neighbours, who met in Haapsalu, Estonia in August 2007.

The Northern German group and the Estonian women's group prepared the meeting. Women came from six countries and the atmosphere was very open with personal sharing, especially in small groups. The wish from the meeting was for all Baltic countries to participate.



**Ecumenical Forum  
of European  
Christian Women**

**Forum Oecuménique  
de Femmes  
Chrésiennes d'Europe**

**Oekumenisches  
Forum Christlicher  
Frauen in Europa**



## In Memoriam

**Jacqueline Stuyt-Simpson MBE DSG died on  
Tuesday 6<sup>th</sup> May, 2008, aged 88.**



Jacque, wie wir sie nannten, war von allem Anfang an das starke Band zur Katholischen Frauenbewegung WUCWO. Sie hat seit der Konsultation in Brüssel zur Vorbereitungsgruppe gehört und war nach der Gründung des

Forums gewähltes Glied des Koordinationskomitees des Oekumenischen Forums Europäischer Christlicher Frauen. Sie hat in der Vorbereitungsphase Gespräche in Rom geführt, um zu klären in welcher Art von Gemeinschaft die katholischen Frauen in der Oekumene mitarbeiten können. Sie hat herausgefunden, dass wir uns deshalb "Forum" nennen sollten.

Während der 12 Jahre des Anfangs war sie eine tragende und treibende Kraft. Sie war die Protokollführerin und war sehr besorgt, dass wir uns an die Ordnungen eines Vereins halten. Sie war früher in der Leitung der Weltbewegung WUCWO und hat die Oekumenische Zusammenarbeit nach dem Vaticanum II in der «WELG» miterlebt. Seit 1990 hat sie immer am Leben des Forums teilgenommen und uns unterstützt.

Sie sprach und verstand viele Sprachen und hatte internationale Erfahrung. Das Forum hätte ohne ihren Beitrag nicht gelernt auf gesunden Füßen zu stehen.

Wir danken ihr für ihre grosse Hilfe!

## EFECW Programme 2008

**Jan 11–13<sup>th</sup>** Mediterranean Neighbours Meeting, Madrid, Spain

**Jan 26<sup>th</sup>** Ecumenics and Women – follow-up from EEA3 in Sibiu, Bern, Switzerland

**Feb 11–12<sup>th</sup>** CEC Gender Desk meetings, Geneva, Switzerland

**March 7<sup>th</sup>** Women's World Day of Prayer

**March 11–16<sup>th</sup>** Women empowerment - the role of women in raising gender consciousness within local communities in the Republic of Moldova, Chisinau, Moldova

**March 12–16<sup>th</sup>** CC meeting, Chisinau, Moldova

**April 21–25<sup>th</sup>** Theology from a Gender Perspective in a Protestant Country, Dunblane, Scotland

**May 18–21<sup>th</sup>** CEC-CSC Human Rights Working Group, Vienna, Austria

**June 30<sup>th</sup> to July 1<sup>st</sup>** CEC Gender Desk meetings, Strasbourg, France.

**Sept. 15–17<sup>th</sup>** FC & CC meeting Versailles, France

**Sept. 17–21<sup>th</sup>** NC seminar: Women in Dialogue in a Multicultural and Multifaith Europe, Versailles, France

**Oct. 16–18<sup>th</sup>** CEC-CSC Human Rights Working Group, Brussels, Belgium

**Oct 6–11<sup>th</sup>** CEC Central Committee, Cyprus

**Oct 20–22<sup>nd</sup>** CSC Europe Officers meeting

**Nov. 10–11<sup>th</sup>** CEC Gender Desk meetings, Geneva

**Nov. 15<sup>th</sup>** Liverpool Forum Day, England

## And Finally

In October 2008 Elena and I were in Cyprus attending meetings of Conference of European Churches [CEC] and Churches Commission for Migrants in Europe [CCME]. Women from Greece had introduced us [via email] to their friends in Cyprus. "Please come to tea and tell us about the Forum." So I learnt of their everyday life in Nicosia, of concern for their relatives in Lebanon, and for children of migrants with low paid jobs. The women were curious about ecumenical worship and the values of our global society. I told them about the Conference on Anti Trafficking held the previous day. I briefly described some of the

projects and people in Moldova, Scotland, France, Netherlands and Romania that you can read about in this News .

We three Co Presidents work with others to enable projects and encourage women. There are so many different ways we can serve one another. Often the focus can only be where others are willing to fund us. However even in times of financial difficulty we know God will give us strength to help one another. May we all be blessed in our endeavours.

Love from Dorothy with  
Elena and Martina

Co Presidents Dorothy Knights, Elena Timofticiuc, Martina Heinrichs