

Education within the work of CEC

Report from the CSC Working Group on Education
(2011-2014)



Framework and main activities

At its plenary meeting in Haguenau/Strasbourg on 28 May – 1 June 2010, CSC adopted an Education Strategy, and education was accepted as one of the CSC work priorities. The two main areas of work in the Strategy are:

- 1. Monitoring the implementation of the EU education strategy (“ET 2020”) on both the European and national level.
- 2. Clarifying the possible contribution of CEC member churches to Education for Democratic Citizenship (EDC).

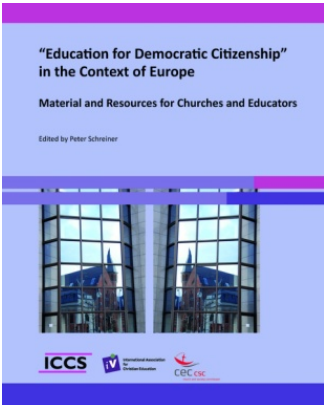
On this basis a working group was established (2011 to 2014; see appendix for list of activities).

The Working Group (WG) consisted of the following mandated members: Hanna Broadbridge, Evangelical-Lutheran Church in Denmark; Vincent Dubois, United Protestant Church of Belgium; Dr Daniel Schmid-Holz, Federation of Swiss Protestant Churches; Dr Peter Schreiner, Evangelical Church in Germany EKD & Intereuropean Commission on Church and School ICCS; Dr Kostas Zormpas, Church of Greece; Maximilian Karrasch, World Student Christian Federation-Europe WSCF, (*attendance only at the first meeting*); Dr Wolfgang Wunsch, Evangelical Church A.C. in Romania, (*never attended*) and assisting and supporting staff of CSC (Richard Fischer, Diane & John Murray, Maria Pomazkova)

The underlying understanding that guided the work is a comprehensive, holistic concept of education that values qualification, socialization and also subjectification as different but connected dimensions of education. From a Christian perspective education is based on the concept of the human being as being created in the image of God, on respecting human dignity, and on providing a safe space for enfolding the human potential as an activity of the self.

The working group has dealt mainly with three areas:

- (1) Education for Democratic Citizenship and European citizenship**
- (2) Identity and Diversity: Challenges for Churches in education in Europe and**
- (3) Concepts of education in European policy and churches.**



In **area (1)** the WG organised a consultation on education for citizenship for those in member churches who are responsible for democratic education (October 2011). Follow-up activities were organized for CEC and the participants. The publication on “Education for Democratic Citizenship in the Context of Europe” was prepared in cooperation with IV and ICCS and with participation of the WG (2013).

In the context of the elections to the European Parliament in 2014 the WG produced a set of postcards with imaginative visions for the future of Europe. Each thought was accompanied by an appropriate Biblical quote.



In **area (2)** the WG participated in CSC activities concerning the European Year of Citizens (2013) mainly in a dialogue seminar with BEPA and COMECE and in the CSC plenary.

In **area (3)** CEC was granted observer status in the newly formed CDPPE of the Council of Europe. The participation enabled many contacts and exchanges with delegates of the 47 member states and other observer organisations. Another concrete initiative led to a briefing paper on the Strategic Framework for European Cooperation in Education and Training (ET 2020), to assist member churches of CEC and associated organisations in understanding this political initiative of the EU and to encourage them to engage with political institutions. This EU document sets a frame for cooperation up to 2020. An education sector was set up on the CSC website. It included information, short texts and comments on current developments and publications in the European Education Space and in the European Education policy.

Evaluation of the impact of the work

We have not succeeded in making education a visible and important issue in the work of CEC and CSC during the three years of our activity of the Working Group on Education, (2011 - 2014). This is obvious as seen by the following:

Neither the annual report of CSC for 2013 nor the Annual Review of CEC for 2013 recognizes the activities that were prepared and launched by the Working Group on Education. The CEC Annual Review 2013 lists nine “major programmes and activities” of CSC (pp.8-10) but does not mention education.

- A single postcard from the set of eight was used in the CEC report (p. 15) to illustrate the work of CCME, without putting this in the context of the work of the WG on education where the project was developed. Education has become just an illustration, but it is not taken as a serious and important issue for the work of CEC.
- In the context of the General Assembly in Budapest education was rarely mentioned.

We have obviously not succeeded in convincing the churches that education has become an extremely important European issue. With the “Strategic Framework for European Cooperation in Education and Training (ET 2020)” the EU underlined the importance of education and training for the future of European integration and the need for the education systems to be efficient and of a high standard. It is stated in the Framework:

Education and training have a crucial role to play in meeting the many socio-economic, demographic, environmental and technological challenges facing Europe and its citizens today and in the years ahead. (P. 2)

There is a European Education Space and there is a European Education Policy. We face an ongoing Europeanisation of education, but the churches and CEC remain voiceless and invisible in the face of all these developments and do not take them into consideration even in their own activities.

The European institutions are way ahead of the churches, when it comes to the importance of education. This can be demonstrated by a quote from the Charter of the Council of Europe:

The Council of Europe, EDC/HRE charter begins with:

Education plays a central role in the promotion of the core values of the Council of Europe: democracy, human rights and the rule of law, as well as in the prevention of human rights violations. More generally, education is increasingly seen as a defence against the rise of violence, racism, extremism, xenophobia, discrimination and intolerance.” (P. 3)

The European institutions are open to dialogue and exchange with the churches and religious communities (Art. 17, TFEU) in the field of education and training. Dialogue seminars with the European Union, the granting of observer status to CEC at the

CDPPE of the Council of Europe, the involvement of CEC in the annual Exchange Meeting of the Council of Europe with religious communities are important tools and clear signals on the readiness and willingness for dialogue and cooperation with the European institutions. However, as long as the churches do not take education as a very important and essential European issue these openings and invitations cannot be taken seriously and followed up.

Recommendation for CEC

Why should CEC continue to deal with education? Nelson Mandela's stated: "Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world." With reference to this, CEC should recognize the power of education and acknowledge its importance as a crucial issue for European integration. This would encourage those member churches of CEC that still see education as an exclusively national arena with no relevance for the European and wider level. The following reasons also need to be taken into account:

- We have a different Europe today, and we need to educate the old and the young on how to live together in a democratic society.
- Religion is back in the public sphere in a plural way, and churches need to find new ways of using religious education to contribute to identity formation and dialogue in a situation of cultural and religious plurality.
- The contribution of Christian education per se and the contributions of Christian churches to education are valuable in the field of democracy, human rights and the right of law, which are basic European values.

CEC should thus develop instruments and working mechanisms to:

- Monitor a Europeanisation of education by the European institutions
- Advocate initiatives on EDC, justice and inclusiveness in education and human rights education
- Promote church-based education that takes account of the European and global dimension of learning in a reflective and critical perspective
- Promote cooperation among those responsible for education in the member churches of CEC and in those organizations in partnership
- Dialogue with the European institutions about the mainstream concept of education

Dr Peter Schreiner

Moderator of the WG, on behalf of the group, Strasbourg, 4 November 2014

Appendix: List of activities

- Establishing a section on “education” on the CEC website with short reports on current developments in education & Europa and information about activities of the working group
- 6-7 May 2011: First meeting of the Working Group (WG)
- October 2011: CEC/CSC Conference “Education for Democratic Citizenship: A Role for the churches? With representatives of member churches and other experts. The report of the conference contains conclusions and recommendations for the churches and for the CEC. Questionnaires on follow up activities were distributed to the participants.
- 9-10 December 2011: Second Meeting of the WG
- 27-29 March 2012: First meeting of the CoE Steering Committee for Educational Policy and Practice (CDPPE), observer status for CEC (Dr Peter Schreiner, Richard Fischer)
- 19-20 April 2012: Third Meeting of the WG
- May 2012: Briefing paper on the Strategic Framework for European Cooperation in Education and Training (“ET 2020”). The paper was published to “enable member churches of CEC and associated organizations to understand the political initiative and lead them to engage in dialogue with the political institutions about what is needed to provide a complete and (...) generous education.” (Intro to the paper)
- 29-30 November 2012: Participation in the EDC conference of the Council of Europe (Vincent Dubois; Richard Fischer)
- 8-12 October 2012: Participation in the ICCS/CoGREE Colloquy in Klingenthal: “Social Cohesion, Religion and Education – in the Context of Europe” (John Murray; Richard Fischer, Maria Pomazkova, Dr Kostas Zormpas, Dr Peter Schreiner)
- 6-7 December 2012: Fourth Meeting of the WG
- 6-8 February 2013: Participation in the High-level Conference by the CoE Andorra Chairmanship on democracy and intercultural dialogue (Dr Kostas Zormpas)
- 19-21 February 2013: Observer at CoE CDPPE meeting (Hanna Broadbridge)
- 21/22 March 2013: Fifth Meeting of the WG; establishing information reports for CEC website
- 18/20 April 2013: CSC Plenary Meeting: “Churches and the European Year of Citizens 2013” (Hanna Broadbridge, Dr Peter Schreiner)

- 5-7 June 2013: Fundraising Workshop in cooperation with EKD office Brussels on education programmes of the EU with 11 participants from member churches and associated organizations (Hanna Broadbridge, Richard Fischer, Maria Pomazkova, Dr Kostas Zormpas, Dr Peter Schreiner)
- June 2013: Dialogue Seminar BEPA with CEC & COMECE on European Year of Citizens (Hanna Broadbridge, Dr Peter Schreiner)
- 2013: Publication “Education for Democratic Citizenship” in the Context of Europe in cooperation with ICCS, IV and the Comenius-Institut
- 12-13 November 2013: Sixth Meeting of the WG
- 19-20 March 2014: Seventh meeting of the WG: Preparing the “postcard project”, elections to European Parliament
- 25-27 March 2014: Observer at CDPPE, the Council of Europe’s Committee on Higher Education and Education (Dr Peter Schreiner)
- May 2014: Producing a set of postcards “Imagine a Europe ... for awareness building initiatives about the future of European integration, in English, French and German, sent to all participants of the CEC General Assembly and member churches
- 6-10 October 2014: Participation in the ICCS/CoGREE Klingenthal Colloquy on “Intercultural education and the religious dimension” (Dr Kostas Zormpas, Richard Fischer, Maria Pomazkova, Dr Peter Schreiner)
- 3-4 November 2014: Meeting of the Working Group