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## **World Student Christian Federation – Europe Region**

Policy Paper for the years 2009–2011

11–13 October 2009, Sibiu, Romania

The following policy document constitutes the basis for the future vision, programmes and activities of WSCF Europe. This policy is to be implemented under the mandate of the European Regional Committee (ERC) elected at the European Regional Assembly (ERA) in Sibiu in 2009.

### **Theology**

The Theology interest group (TIG) has these recommendations for the next 2 years:

The upcoming Theology conference in Berlin in 2010 should include these themes:

- Relations of Church and politics at institutional levels and levels of identity and culture;
- Identity construction policies and power structures;
- Religion and nation, nationalism;
- Roots of fundamentalism;
- Conflicts, wars, violence on religious basis.

When choosing key topics for upcoming events or discussions, the ERC should consider the following topics:

- Christian social ethics and bioethics;
- The history of sin;
- Human sexuality;
- Tolerance and respect;
- Economics and religion;
- Why modern Europeans choose different religions (other than Christianity);
- Developing Christian tolerance in modern Europe especially when facing migration;
- Theology of creation;
- Secularisation and de-secularisation in Europe.

### **General Recommendations**

- At all conferences, WSCF-E should make sure that significant time is given to Bible study related to the theme.
  - WSCF-E should implement best practice guidelines for ecumenical dialogue at conferences and other events. In addition, an introduction to respectful dialogue
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should be given at all conferences and events.

- WSCF-E should continue to study differing and uniting aspects within the different denominations, paying close attention to the diversity of Christian spirituality and praxis.
- WSCF-E should continue to study differing and uniting aspects within the different faiths and religions, paying close attention to the diversity of spirituality and praxis.

## **Culture and Higher Education**

### **1. Culture**

For the next two years the Culture and Higher Education Interest Group (CHEIG) would like to explore the following topic: The changing social and cultural behaviors of young people today – living in a world of technology.

The interest group intends to:

- raise awareness within local SCMs and national student representative bodies of this social change and the challenges it brings;
- support exchange programmes between national SCMs to increase intercultural dialogue and learning;
- encourage the inclusion of reports from these events in local student publications;
- facilitate the inclusion of artistic elements in WSCF-E conferences.

### **2. Higher Education**

As an organisation of students for students, it is important for WSCF-E to consider the status of Higher Education in Europe and continually to address the challenges faced by students.

During the next two years WSCF-E should focus on the changing ways that students are required to use technology (e.g. computers and the Internet). Furthermore, we will concentrate on new methods of communication for students, such as email and social networking sites, etc. We will consider the challenges that these issues present for SCMs.

The CHEIG suggests the following title for a conference “Second Life Today – virtual vs. real interaction”.

Other proposed topics in the area of Higher Education could include:

- Mobility of students (e.g. the EU Green Paper “promoting the learning mobility of young people”, issues around exchange-programmes, the problems of increasing tuition fees);
  - Modern Christian ethics (morality and politics within educational systems, forms of resistance, motivation for participation);
  - Reflection on Bologna process and the pressures on students resulting from streamlined university life.
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## **Solidarity**

The topic of the upcoming Solidarity conference will be “Climate Justice Now!”

- The study session will be organised together with the Ecumenical Youth Council in Europe (EYCE), in co-operation with the European Youth Centre (EYC).
- The aim is to raise awareness of Climate Change and enhance active environmental responsibility among young Christians all over Europe, by deepening their factual knowledge, changing day-to-day ecological habits and providing them with concrete skills and tools to be active promoters of green thinking.

As a framework for all of the solidarity action, we should focus on the immediate situation for students (SCMs) all over the world.

- We wish to facilitate sharing of urgent calls of relief, advocacy and prayers amongst the SCMs in the Federation through the Advocacy and Solidarity Committee (ASC).
- The Europe Region contributes to the work of the ASC by establishing a network for effective sharing and producing of information. This should be built on the existing contacts, participants at solidarity conferences and contact persons in local SCMs. We also recommend using efficient tools of communication: newsletters, mailing-lists, online forums etc.

When choosing key topics for upcoming events or discussions, the ERC should consider the following topics:

- 1) Growing Xenophobia in Europe, Addressing the growing extreme right tendencies;
    - Racism, violence against minorities: ethnic, sexual, indigenous
    - Right-wing parties are becoming a part of the establishment
  - 2) Migration and borders
    - The world without borders – is it possible?
    - The borders are open for trade, money, goods, weapons – but NOT for people.
    - The European fortress and Schengen;
    - The problems at the outer borders, for example in Italy and Greece.
    - Unjust policies for migrants;
    - Asylum seekers - what are our responsibilities when European countries go to war and refugees from the affected areas come in return?
  - 3) Climate Justice
    - Participate and engage at the climate summit in Copenhagen and follow up the decisions of the climate summit in future activities of WSCF-E.
  - 4) The weapon industry
    - Weapon industry and export – what is our responsibility as Christians?
  - 5) Spirituality and solidarity
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- Exploring the spirituality of the Body of Christ: considering that when one limb suffers, the whole Body suffers.
  - Theologically reflecting on the restoration of the Body and the Kingdom.
- 6) Poverty
- Take action against poverty, homelessness and unequal distribution of resources.

### **General recommendations**

- Actively use the material from the Universal Day of Prayer for Students in working with global solidarity and advocacy.
- Use fair trade, organic and local products at all events as far as possible.
- Recycle at all events.
- Seek cooperation with other ecumenical and solidarity organisations that have similar aims, especially on spreading urgent calls from the Advocacy and Solidarity Committee (ASC).

### **Gender**

Gender issues are an integral part of our lives as Christians and human beings. They influence how we relate to one another and how we view ourselves. Exploring gender is important from a social justice perspective, relating to the oppression of women and men around the world. Actively working with gender issues is necessary in order to create an inclusive Christian community.

The Gender Interest Group (GIG) has identified six main areas to prioritise during the next two years.

1. In recognising the importance and relevance of gender, issues of gender shall continue to be integrated into WSCF-E work whenever possible.
  2. Tasks and responsibilities for WSCF-E shall be shared equally amongst participants of all gender identities and sexualities.
  3. WSCF-E should work against all kinds of oppression, discrimination and inequality based on gender and/or sexuality.
  4. Inclusive language should be used in all WSCF-E publications and events wherever possible.
  5. The next Gender conference will explore the relationships between Gender & Language. The priorities of this conference could include:
    - power structures;
    - gender equal worship;
    - gender equality in everyday language use;
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- different Bible interpretations;
  - positive masculinity;
  - stereotypes of gender;
  - explorations of gender in the post-colonial world;
  - feminism in post-communist countries;
  - gender terminology;
  - dialogue between different viewpoints.

The approach will be both theoretical and practical. Workshops will include practical tools and strategies for participants to take home with them. WSCF-E recognises that gender issues are highly sensitive, and particular stress should be given to pastoral care for all participants.

6. WSCF-E is a safe space where all points of view are invited into respectful dialogue.

## **Links**

The Links Coordinator supports communication and networking among and between SCMs and the ERC in order to secure and improve the implementation of WSCF-E activities. The Links Coordinator coordinates the Links Interest Group whose tasks could be the following. The Links Interest Group should discuss this list with the ERC and WSCF-E office to decide on the priorities.

1. Expand the network of WSCF-E contacts through national and local movements, churches and other student organisations.
  2. Recruit participants for WSCF-E events through contact with national and local SCMs.
  3. Encourage SCMs to include dates and details of WSCF-E events in all their publications, newsletters and websites.
  4. Collect, compile and distribute activity reports and news of SCMs; present them to the ERC and coordinate their publication on the website and in print.
  5. Support sub-regional building through coordinating the sub-regional development fund.
  6. Support movement building through cooperation with the Movement building group, comprised of SCM members interested in establishing or rebuilding movements, i.e. by providing SCMs with advice and examples of good practice.
  7. Support networking between SCMs, acting as a resource person for SCMs seeking partners from other countries for exchanges.
  8. Be represented in the WSCF-E regional and subregional gatherings either in person or by proxy, and where possible, make visits to national SCMs.
  9. Ensure the information and contact details for national SCMs on the WSCF-E website is up to date, and advertise the WSCF-E website as a discussion and communication forum.
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10. Create a structure and some guidelines for the Links Interest Group, compiled of SCM members interested in communications and sharing resources.
  11. Make SCMs aware of the help and support that the Links Coordinator can offer through advertising at events, visiting, and email contact.

## **Publications**

The journal of the European Region, *Mozaik*, has been published regularly twice a year since 2001. We are working on increasing our distribution and advertising with partner organisations. As in the past, future issues of *Mozaik* will be connected with the conference topics, and participants will be encouraged to actively contribute to the shape of this ecumenical journal.

We also hope to increase the publications of the office, with a new song book, poster, and perhaps with other promotional materials. We would like to compile an online resource archive of worships, workshops and resources from WSCF-E events and SCMs.

The purpose of the WSCF-E website shall be to inform our members and other interested parties about our events and to provide background information on the organisation. Together, the ERC, staff, and SCMs should develop a common database on the web providing information on activities, campaigns, knowledge and contacts of each local SCM and WSCF, as well as volunteer/internship programmes.

## **Lingua Franca**

The ERA affirms the continuation and expansion of the Lingua Franca programme. The general shift to ecumenical leadership training is needed, but language courses should still be offered. The language courses and leadership trainings should also be available for Western Europe upon request from SCMs and contact movements to host them. This expands the previous focus on Central and Eastern Europe. Increased opportunities for cultural exchange and wider dissemination of programmes and results should be further developed. The search for resources to continue the development of the Lingua Franca programme will continue to be a priority in the coming years.

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