



Council 50

Towards a Church-Inspired by the Gospel-for the world
Por uma Igreja inspirada no Evangelho - para o mundo
Rumbo a una Iglesia-inspirada en el Evangelio-para el mundo
Vers une Eglise-inspirée par l'Évangile-pour le monde
Verso una Chiesa ispirata dal Vangelo per il mondo

Europe – Diversity in Unity?

Issues, experiences, expectations and proposals for the renewal of our Church and its implication in the world of today from Europe

Raquel Mallavibarrena Redes Cristianas, Spain
Christian Weisner Wir sind Kirche, Germany
François Becker, Fédération des réseaux du Parvis, France
Massimiliano Tosato, Christian Base Community, Italy

Europe in the world

Population : 750 million, spread within 49 countries, 47 of them being members of the Council of Europe and 28, members of the European Union. It represents 10 % of the world's population, but it is decreasing.

Christians : 550 million, representing 25 % of the Christians in the world, but 74% of the European population. Their number is decreasing, Belonging to Christian religion, there are Catholics, Orthodoxies, members of various Protestant denominations, Anglicans, Methodists and Baptists. Some of them are the largest religious group in different countries.

Other religions: Islam: 7% of the European population. It is increasing.
Judaism: less than 0.2% of the European population.

Without religion: 19% of the population.

These proportions are strongly varying from one country to one another¹.

Is Europe a “Christian continent”?

There are certainly strong Christian heritages, but also important Jewish, Islamic contributions, heritages from Roman and Celtic cultures and important contributions from philosophers, particularly the so-called “Lumières”.

¹ See for instance : Bérange Massignon, Virginie Riva « L'Europe, avec ou sans Dieu ? Héritages et nouveaux défis » Edition de l'Atelier, 286 pages, 2010

There were strong inter-religious conflicts, but also conflicts between religious driven powers and the building up of democracy and also between religions and atheistic driven powers.

There were also countries fighting or suppressing Jewish population.

Pope Francis said in the European Parliament on 25.11.2014²: *“In many quarters we encounter a general impression of weariness and aging, of a **Europe which is now a “grandmother”, no longer fertile and vibrant.** As a result, the great ideas which once inspired Europe seem to have lost their attraction, only to be replaced by the bureaucratic technicalities of its institutions”* Is it a reaction about the development of secularism in Europe?

Catholic reform movements in Europe

There are many reform movements³ in Europe, either at the national level in the different countries of Europe, several movements being constituting networks such as “Fédération réseaux du Parvis⁴” in France, “Redes Cristianas⁵” in Spain, “Initiative Kirche von Unten⁶” in Germany, “Pour un autre visage d’Eglise et de Société (PAVES)⁷” in Belgium, and the networks of base communities, or at the European level such as Women Ordination worldwide⁸, European Forum of LGBT Christian Groups⁹, the Priest initiatives (founded in Austria).

Most of these movements were born from the big expectation generated by the Council Vatican II and the length, if not the refusal of implementation of its proposals and the particular experiences in each country. They are focussed on Church issues, celebration and liturgy, as well as on concrete societal issues on the light of the Gospel, with strong political commitment for some of them. There was a large influence from Liberation Theology and Ecclesial Base Communities in Latin America.

In order to have a larger influence in Europe, to have a common voice either about the Church or political or societal issues, showing sometime the public opinion that there exists pluralism inside the Church, in order to share experiences and initiative, and to propose joint actions, a large number of these associations and networks decided to create three European networks, still maintaining contacts and dialogue within the Church:

- the European network Church on the move
- the European component of IMWAC (International Movement We Are Church),
- the European coordination of Christian Base Communities

These networks are strongly connected, sometimes embedded in each other, each one focussing on different aspects of the life of disciples of Jesus: the European component of IMWAC is focussing more on the reform of Catholic Church, while the European

² http://en.radiovaticana.va/news/2014/11/25/pope_francis_address_to_european_parliament/1112318

³ See for instance: Susanne Preglau-Hammerle (Hg) “Katolische Reformbewegungen Weltweit” Tyrolia-Verlag 2012 and Mauro Castagnaro “Movimenti Europei Per La Riforma Della Chiesa: Una Panoramica”

⁴ <http://www.reseaux-parvis.fr/>

⁵ <http://www.redescristianas.net/>

⁶ <http://www.ikvu.de/>

⁷ <http://www.paves-reseau.be/>

⁸ <http://womensordinationworldwide.org/>

⁹ <http://www.euroforumlgbtchristians.eu/index.php/en/>

Network Church on the Move is focussing more on the political and societal issues and the Base communities are experimenting and living new ways of being Church.

The European Network Church on the Move (EN-RE) (<http://www.en-re.eu/index.php>)

It is an International Association under French law (Act of 1901) that was awarded the participatory status at the Council of Europe in 2008. It is therefore a member of the Conference of INGO of the Council of Europe (<http://www.coe.int/en/web/ingo/home>).

Composition

Established in 1991, the European Network Church on the Move is a spontaneous convergence of organizations - associations, communities, groups and informal networks – both Christian, and predominantly Catholic, European Christians sharing:

- (1) the vision of a loving united prophetic ecumenical Church, that neither excludes nor discriminates and which walks in the path of Jesus the Liberator,
- (2) the desire to work in the respect for cultural and religious diversity, for peace, justice, freedom, human rights and democracy, including within the Catholic Church.

Direction of work

Aware of the role and impact of religions, traditions and cultures, on the relationships between men and women and their way of being in society and in the Church, the EN / RE focuses its activities on the events, situations and problems that interest society, religions and churches. These activities are organized around two interrelated objectives:

- To contribute to bringing the Church in line with the Gospels, both in its manner, its pronouncements, its organization, as well as in its relationships with civil society,
- To contribute to the well-being of individuals and society, both in Europe and in the world, to peaceful, just and constructive relationships between men and women of different religions, between religious communities and society, in the respect for human rights, including the rights of women and children, in respect for gender equality, and the respect for their convictions and beliefs.

It aims at bringing a vision, enlighten by the Gospel and the spirit of Jesus.

- The EN / RE is interested in all aspects of interreligious and interconvictional dialogue and in an impartial regulation by the institutions of Europe of the coexistence of religious, philosophical and cultural differences.

The work of EN-RE is conducted in direction of national and international institutions, both civil and ecclesial, and of management of groups, organizations and individuals involved in these problems.

This is particularly the case in its work,

- within the Council of Europe, as a member of the INGO Conference of the Council of Europe,
- with the European Parliament, as a member of the advisory board of the European Parliament Platform for Secularism in Politics.

Examples of themes for action and work:

- Religions and human rights in society and the churches;
- Europe, citizenship and social cohesion: interreligious and interconvictionnal dialogues;
- The role and impact of religion in social and political life;
- Poverty, social justice, North / South solidarity and dialogue, integration of migrants;
- Gender equality and parity woman / man, the role and impact of religion in this respect.

European Component of International Movement We Are Church (IMWAC)
[\(http://www.we-are-church.org/413/\)](http://www.we-are-church.org/413/)

From Church Referendum to 'We are Church' (IMWAC)

In 1995 Cardinal Groer in Vienna/Austria is accused of sexual violence – that was the last straw that broke the camel's back: a movement for church reforms starts with 2.5 million signatures in Austria, Germany, and Southern Tyrol of a petition for renewal of the RC Church according to the Second Vatican Council. It asked for:

- A Church of brothers and sisters,
- Full participation of women in all aspects of Church life,
- Optional celibacy for the priests,
- Positive attitude towards sexuality / recognition of the primacy of conscience,
- Message of joy and not threat or discrimination.

In 1996: the International Movement We are Church (IMWAC) is founded in Rome : www.we-are-church.org

These networks develop also common actions such as:

- Shadow Synods (Rome is in Europe!),
- Conclave Project in Rome,
- Appeal to the Synod Fathers in Rome: 'Follow Pope Francis' way of dialogue and reform!'
- Networking worldwide,
- Press releases in favor of a reformed Church",

European Coordination of Christian Base communities

Characteristics of Christian Base Communities (CBC):

Christians

- * Fraternity that lives within our communities would be good news for today, in line with that of the early Christian communities "See how they love one another."
- * Jesus made community memory by sharing bread and wine.

Base

- * Community strives to be a place of democratic decision.
- * Each of its members, according to its possibilities, to where he lives, sharing what he has and what it is for men and women live beyond any exclusion.
- * This is from the basis that our communities are developing a theology for today in the equality of all the baptized.

Community

- * We can talk without being judged.
- * We share our daily lives and together we seek how to resist oppression.
- * We help each other and learn to live in brotherhood.
- * The community is open to anyone in search.

"Recognizing and any other first in abroad a brother or sister and work to make it live ... So think fraternity leads us probably at the top of the humanization ...Utopia, some might say. On the contrary, I believe, the supreme achievement of freedom. "

Yves Burdelot (member of a community, author of the book: « Devenir Humain. La Proposition Chrétienne Aujourd'Hui ». Ed. du Cerf, 2002

There are base communities in the following countries:

Austria: <http://www.basisgemeinden-oesterreich.at/> , Basque country,

North Belgium: <http://www.abelweb.be/>

South of Belgium: <https://sites.google.com/site/ccbwabru/>

Czech Republic, France, Italy: <http://www.cdbitalia.it/> ,

Netherland, <http://www.ondersteuningkleinegeloofsgemeenschappen.nl/links/>

Spain: <http://www.ccp.org.es/>

Switzerland (french-speaking): <http://www.ccb.geneve-environs.ch/#ACCUEIL.Y>

Switzerland (german-speaking): <http://www.basisgruppen.ch/2001.html>

A short history of European relations between grassroots communities (CBC)

The first contacts between European CBC. date back to 1983 during the Congress of the Amsterdam Dutch Communities on the theme: "Faith in liberating Europe". These contacts continued in 1985 during the congress of the Italian base communities in Turin with the theme: European CWB in the liberation struggles.

But it was during the congress held on 8-11 October 1987 in Bilbao with the theme : "Evangelization and new mechanisms of oppression and marginalization in Europe" that has been constituted an "European group" whose task was to prepare the first "truly European" congress. It took place on 26-29 July 1991 in Paris with the theme: "Social justice in Europe 1992 ". More than 600 delegate (s) from 28 nationalities participated.

This was followed by a series of three more modest "European Seminars":

- in Innsbruck on 5-7 November 1993 with the theme : "What Directions for the Churches in a pluralistic Society ?"

- in Geneva on 30 November-2 December 1995 with the theme "Which Alternatives for CBC in today's Europe?": (still with 130 participants representing 14 countries and 18 regions, with the entire arsenal secretarial and translation that entails an extremely rich content).

- in Edinburgh, Scotland on 24-27 October 2003. This was the last seminar.

In May 2009, the European Christian Base Communities of countries and regions members of the Coordination: Austria, Basque country, Belgium Flemish and Walloon, Czech Republic, Germany, Italy, Spain, Switzerland German and Romance

organized a big meeting in Vienna, Akkonplatz, with the theme: “Living the faith today. “ This meeting was attended by 130 people including a representative of the European Network Church on the Move

The last meeting of European CBC. took place in Buizingen (Belgium), from September 19 to 21 2014, with the theme: “The Gospel will set us free. “ It was attended by 140 people.