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YEARBOOK
2008
EAST
EUROPE

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YEARBOOK 2008: EAST EUROPE

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“The time has come that we Christians will play an important role in reconciliation and unity”

(Source: Ziarul Lumina, 14 February 2008, front page)

On Valentine's Day, I received a very special surprise: a copy of the daily Christian newspaper issued by the Romanian Orthodox Church with my picture on the front page with the title “The time has come that we Christians will play an important role in reconciliation and unity” with a short description about the vision of the ECPM. The article continued further on in the newspaper with an interview.

I was very touched and impressed not only by the article and interview, but especially by the title. For the editors of the newspaper it was front page news that “the time has come that we Christians will play an important role!” I think that they are not just speaking the truth, but making a prophetic statement: it is up to us to ensure that the Lord's intention becomes reality. Did the Dutch Vice Prime Minister and Minister of Youth and Family, André Rouvoet, not also tell us during the European Prayer Breakfast in the European Parliament in Brussels that he also believes that we are not living in a so-called post-Christian era, but are moving into a post-secular era where Enlightenment prophets who proclaimed the end of religion and the death of God are nowadays silenced by the sight of the growing influence and impact of religion on the political stage? Hasn't rationalist style modernism and secularism not been overruled by its own child, post-modernism? These are some questions he asked during this important event. Further on the “Ziarul Lumina” calls us to be more salt and light in the political arena. Indeed, I think also that the time has come that we Christians will play an important role in reconciliation and unity!



> the online edition of the newspaper

Annual report

You are now reading the annual report of the activities that I (by the grace of God) was involved in during 2008. It was a year with many openings and therefore also quite a busy year. Together with the local partners, I was involved in the organization of 15 activities and conferences, and was present at five conferences as an invited speaker. Conferences and training have been held in Belarus, Bulgaria, Croatia, Macedonia, Moldova, Montenegro, Romania, Serbia and Ukraine; also special regional conferences like the ECPM South East European conference combined with the Romanian National Prayer Breakfast, and the conference about “Christian Democracy in the post Soviet Society: values and perspective” organized by the Christian Democratic Union of Ukraine and the ECPM.

This year the concept of the annual report has been changed to a kind of yearbook. After two years of writing the annual reports myself, I have chosen now to collect the reports from the local key persons who actually were responsible for the major part of the ideas and the organization. First of all, because I believe that they should have the honor of the great work they are doing in their own countries in sometimes very difficult circumstances. Secondly, because they can reflect better the impact it has on the situation in their own countries. Thirdly, because there were so many activities, and it is better to have more authors who will bring different styles and input. The last reason is the most important because we as the European Christian Political Movement are a network where everyone has his or her own role and this report will show more clearly the diversity of our network.

Therefore I would like to thank all the people who wrote contributions for this yearbook: *Petru Andea & Cristi Craciun, Sergei Chernooki & George Volkovinsky, Christine Dupuis, Rita Klapwijk & Esmé Wiegman, Sinisa Nadazdin, Milan Pavlovic, Dusica Petkovic, Vladimir Plamadeala, Yuri Reshetnikov, Viorel Ringhilescu, Anne Marije Staat, Grozdan Stoevski, and Jonathan van Tongeren.* Special thanks also to *Phyllis Harries* who read all the articles and amended the English where necessary and to *Lucian Enasoni* who not only developed the new logo for the ECPM but is responsible for the design of the first yearbook of the ECPM Eastern Europe.

In addition I would like to thank all the partners and organizers¹ of the projects we were involved in: *Advocates Europe & the Rule of Law Institute Bulgaria, the BBI in Serbia, the Belarusian Christian Democracy (BCD), the Berlin Gathering, the Boris Trajkovski Foundation in Macedonia, the Bulgarian Christian Coalition (BCC) the Chrétiens Démocrates Fédéraux –Federale Christen Democraten (CDF) from Belgium, ChristenUnie (CU) from the Netherlands, the Christian Democratic Forum (CDF) from Bulgaria, the Christian Democratic Union Ukraine, the Christian Democratic Popular Party (PPCD) from Moldova, Crown Europe and Crown Bulgaria, the Bulgarian Evangelical Alliance, the Economic Diplomacy Seminar (EDS) and Renewing Our Minds(ROM) in Croatia, the Ecumenical Prayer Group of the Romanian Parliament, the Chamber of Deputies and the Senate from the Romanian Parliament, the European Prayer Breakfast, the European Christian Political Youth Network (ECPYN), the initiative committees of Bulgaria and Moldova, the Metropolitanate of Montenegro and Littoral of the Serbian Orthodox Church, Philia Ministries and the People's Party in Montenegro* and all the speakers and volunteers who helped in the organization of the events.

Special thanks to the ChristenUnie who not only supported this work with financial means via the Matra program, but also with materials, contacts and organization and participation in events; especially to the board and the Party Bureau of the ChristenUnie, as well as to the Parliamentary Party from the Second Chamber of the Dutch Parliament.

Further I would personally like to thank some people who have always supported me in the work and been available when I needed them¹: *Guido van Beusekom, Christine Dupuis, Johannes de Jong, Phyllis Harris, Rita Klapwijk, Reinier Koppelaar, Henk van der Veen and Esmé Wiegman.*

At the end

When I read all the reports of the events that happened in Eastern Europe, I was speechless. It is not only the efforts of all the organizers, speakers, and volunteers that made this work possible: it is clearly the goodness of God that blessed all these activities, gave wisdom and vision to the people involved, means to develop the activities and the love and passion to develop and improve Christian Democratic values in society. As God brought the animals to Adam to see how he would name them, so God gives openings and looks to see how we implement them in our personal and professional lives. To Him be the glory and the power.

What are the plans for 2009? With God's help, we hope that we can confirm what Peeter Vosu, chairman of the ECPM, said during one of our conferences: *"The ECPM is a developing movement, the ECPM is a growing movement and ... we move on"*. I wish you all God's blessings, wisdom and protection for 2009!

Leo van Doesburg



[1] The names of persons or organizations are mentioned in a somehow alphabetical order

Belarusian Christian Democracy

in co-operation with the European Christian Political Movement

December 13-14, 2008

by Sergei A. Chernooki and George Volkovynski, Belarusian Christian Democracy

On December 13th-14th a series of events was organised by the Belarusian Christian Democracy together with ECPM.

The first event was a public conference in Baranovichy (Brest region). The conference was organised by the Belarusian NGO "Christian Business Initiative" and focused on Christian principles in business during a world financial crisis. The event lasted about six hours with some free time at the end for participants to meet and talk.

The preparation was rather overshadowed by the authorities who cancelled the conference three times. They were mostly opposed to the theme of the conference, not to the list of participants. Happily the organizers were persistent enough to meet all the conditions and gather participants and guests in a church hall where there were about 100 guests and 10 speakers. The most significant figures among the speakers were Stanislav Bogdankevich, the former chairman of the Belarus National Bank and Leo van Doesburg the ECPM Representative South East Europe. Those present also enjoyed the performances of a professional musician and a Christian choir.

All the speakers had some common statements focused on Christian relations between people as well as between business partners so all the guests were inspired to be benevolent to each other even in harsh conditions. During the event we had lots of friendly conversations which also left a very positive impression.



On December 14th we had another whole-day-long meeting with a more closed community in which we have shared information and opinions about the history of Christian democracy in Belarus and Russia, community building, campaigning, family values, the history and current state of ECPM and Christen Unie and its role in Dutch and European politics. All participants were people closely involved in the political life of Belarus and Russia so we used the opportunity to develop strategy and tactics for promoting Christian Democracy in Belarus during 2009.

Along with public events we enjoyed many personal meetings and friendly conversations as well as developed some plans for future contacts. Photos and videos are available.

These events had neither media coverage nor resistance from the political police. More information on Belarusian Christian Democracy can be found on http://www.bchd.info/modules.php?name=News&topic_id=10 and Radio Liberty (untranslated) <http://www.svaboda.org/Content/Transcript/1369365.html>

It is worth mentioning the thought-provoking meeting about our possible future co-operation and the strategy of the Christian Democratic parties in Europe. That meeting inspired us to continue our work and support each other in our ministries. We agreed on the preparation of the foundation congress of the Belarus Christian Democratic party to be held on 28 February and 1 March where we would like to gather 1000 Christians from different Christian denominations from all over the country. We hope this will be a start for a Christian democratic revival in Belarus which has suffered in the 20th century both from Nazistic and communistic atheistic totalitarian regimes which destroyed the most active and talented people in our country and which transformed the community into a dictatorial state. Without repentance there will be no way forward. We see the Christian Democratic principles as the basis for a way out of totalitarianism, as we believe that without faith in God there will not be faith in men.

ECPM sponsored International Conference in Sofia, Bulgaria

A Brief Report by Grozdan Stoevski

ECPM, together with a Bulgarian Initiative Committee organized an International Conference at the Radisson SAS Hotel in Sofia “**The Influence of the family institution in society**”. The event was dedicated to the holiday of the Christian family and was coordinated by the Crown Bulgaria team (the local representative of Crown Financial Ministries).

Some of the **key speakers** in the event were Mr. Leo van Doesburg, ECPM representative for Southeastern Europe, Mr. Guido van Beusekom, Secretary of International affairs of the Christian Union in the Netherlands, Mr. Mark Mullins, a barrister from London, UK, Bulgarian politicians, Members of parliament and community leaders.

The day before, on November 18th, the team of international speakers together with the Crown Bulgaria team conducted a **half day event in Plovdiv**, in partnership with the Municipality of the Southern city region, together with the local Police Department. The experts shared experience and discussed the role of the family in child crime prevention.



The European and Bulgarian experts in the area of family policies discussed **the problems and challenges** of the family institution in Bulgaria and in particular the hidden “**traps**” in the **Draft Family Code** which has been suggested for approval in Parliament.

As a direct result of the conference, the participants signed a **Declaration** which has been given to the media and also distributed to each Member of Parliament for consideration. (Please find attached the Declaration itself in English.)

The main conclusion of the participants is that the introduction of non-marital cohabitation will bring chaos into the lives of the families and the children. When the government puts its legal stamp of approval to non-marital cohabitation, it gives a clear indication to society that the institution of marriage is useless and unnecessary. There are thousands of authoritative research papers proving that non-marital cohabitation is short-lived, that domestic violence among the cohabitants is present in a much higher degree than with married couples and in reality these couples do not resemble a real family in any way.

Croatia: Economic Diplomacy Seminar 2008 (EDS)

by Milan Pavlović: Economic Diplomacy Seminar (EDS) Director

Economic Diplomacy Seminar this year gathered 30 young people from 8 countries and lasted from August 10 through August 24. The participants arrived on August 10, starting the adventurous and challenging two weeks of learning, discussing and exchanging knowledge, skills and experience in the fields of economics, diplomacy, business, politics and life in general. The smaller number of participants this year brought additional value and benefit for the participants themselves and the seminar, because it enabled greater cohesion relations between the people to develop over the period of 2 weeks, what brought their readiness to open up and speak frankly about all the issues that arises out of lectures, small group discussions, round-tables, thematic movies with a good message.



We noticed the participants' willingness to share and to express their sincere opinions toward themes that were set up officially during sessions, what brought to the fore new related themes and put participants into situation to think, connect, understand and conclude, together with valuating and revising their conclusion in the group of people, comparing their thoughts, attitudes and conclusions with the thoughts and attitudes of the other people and passing through the process of learning from other's experiences as well.

The seminar challenged participants to go out from their usual mode of thinking, challenging their mindsets and perception, offering new approaches and aspects of analysis of themes and subjects offered, taken from the reality and complexity of life situations that everyone can find themselves in. That allowed the participants to get the sense of how conclusions on discussed topics, cases and situations would work in the real life and how they can apply in the real life what they learnt, after they go back to their environments and communities, to their countries or anywhere in the world. Therefore the whole set of offered discussed material was put in the intercultural frame and impacted participants to accept the atmosphere of intercultural diversity and open mind as one of the basic pre-conditions and tools for successful communication and learning over those two weeks.

I personally ensured through my first lecture at the start of the Seminar about "Intercultural communication as a tool for life and work" to become clear and understandable for participants that accepting the fruits of offered intercultural setting and frame in which seminar was happening would bring great benefits and great added value to them and excellent possibility for unique experience in their lives, in terms of learning and acquiring additional quality of excellence, for the future and for the whole life, where ever they go after. They were encouraged to be brave and to accept the challenge that was offered to them and I was glad to conclude that they were following this challenge through the whole seminar, until the very end of it. I was also glad to see that many of leadership team members noticed the same.

The speakers at the Seminar were Dražen Glavaš, Leo Van Doesburg, Jack Fallow, Željko Puja, Nate Ussery, Tihomir Kukulja and Milan Pavlović.

Following themes were delivered by speakers during speaking sessions:

1. Global Terrorism and Economic Diplomacy – speaker Dražen Glavaš
2. Global Injustice and Economic Diplomacy – speaker Dražen Glavaš
3. Is there an Answer – Surprised by Hope – speaker Dražen Glavaš
4. Following Jesus in Business and Politics – speaker Leo Van Doesburg

5. Business Ethics – speaker Leo Van Doesburg
6. Challenge for Life – speaker Leo Van Doesburg
7. Trinity Forum (Entrepreneur for Life) – speaker Jack Fallow
8. Trinity Forum (Doing Well and Doing Good) – speaker Jack Fallow
9. Natural Hierarchy , Faith in Institutions – speaker Jack Fallow
- 10 . Economy and Efficiency – speaker Jack Fallow
11. Breaking Fear and Having Hope – speaker Željko Puja
12. Development of Communication and Diplomacy – speaker Željko Puja
13. Finance and Friendship – speaker Nate Ussery
14. From ROM to EDS and Jesus – speaker Tihomir Kukulja
15. Intercultural Communication as a Tool for Work and Life – speaker Milan Pavlović
16. Swimming with Sharks – speaker Milan Pavlović



Participants, leadership team members and speakers were from the following countries: Croatia, Bosnia Herzegovina, Serbia, Kosovo, Romania, Bulgaria, UK and Netherlands.

Participants were organized in small groups where international and intercultural diversity was ensured within the groups as a fruitful frame for discussions that were following lectures. Each speaker defined few questions out from the lectures that participants were discussing during their time in the small groups.

Also, various workshops were offered, presenting and discussing practical application of concrete methods and techniques in work. Two sets of workshops were delivered, with following topics:

1. Career Planning, Profession and Life (Dražen Glavaš)
2. Communication and Conflict Management (Leo Van Doesburg)
3. Women Power (Željko Puja)
4. Budgeting and Investing (Nate Ussery)
5. Business Planning and Leadership (Leo Van Doesburg)
6. Fun at Work (Jack Fallow)
7. Crisis Management (Željko Puja)



Each participant had the possibility to choose four out of seven workshops offered.

Participants also used the possibility to spend more time with person from the leadership team during “friendship and meet the team” time when meetings with relaxing time were made with chat, walk or coffee.

EDS organized also different activities for team building and creating of friendships that enabled participants and leadership team to enjoy games, sport and nature together. They were practicing and enjoying rowing on the beautiful lake in Fužine, followed with team games where they were organized in groups training the team building. They also spent the day tour on the Croatian islands of Krk, Košljun and Punat, visiting the museum on the island of Košljun and enjoying the natural beauties of Croatian sea coast, spending the swimming afternoon at the beach in Punat.

Excursion in Skrad, beautiful mountain area in Gorski Kotar gave them opportunity for a nice hiking experience end enjoyment walking through the mountain pine forests and seeing the beautiful waterfall.

Community Service was organized once again in Red Cross in Rijeka, enabling participants and leadership team to do community work which included cleaning and painting together with some carpenter work. It was the great feeling to do such a work and to find out more about Red Cross and its activities in Croatia. After community work participants spent the afternoon on the coast in Crikvenica, enjoying the fun at the beach and swimming in the Adriatic Sea.

Besides speaking sessions, small group's discussions, workshops and different team activities, participants and leadership team had two Dialogue Cafes, moderated by Tihomir Kukulja, where certain questions were analysed and discussed within groups. Conclusions were drawn from the summaries of the expressed thoughts and ideas during their exchanging in the groups. Groups were composed in the way to include different people in the group around the table for each of those questions.

Each of the evenings at the Seminar brought interesting events like thematic movies (Bordertown, Amazing Grace), Evening of Sharing and Presentations of projects and organizations that are making positive changes in the region, Talent Night with skits, music and entertaining, Food Experiment followed by discussion and reflections, Fun Night (Karaoke Party), Evening with spiritual Emphasis.

Two Summaries of the Week were given by Milan Pavlović, Seminar Director, reminding participants on activities that they passed through, learning outcomes, virtues of the whole event and benefits they were gaining from being at the Seminar. Seminar ended with the Banquet followed with acknowledgments and Evening of Sharing and Inspiration. At the end of that evening participants had the nice time with bonfire and music.

Before the departure, each of the participants and leadership team members got the CD with the audio and video materials and photos from the speaking sessions, workshops and other activities during the Seminar.



Economic Diplomacy Seminar was conducted and managed by Milan Pavlović, EDS director and international leadership team that involved leaders from five countries: Croatia, Serbia, Romania, UK and Netherlands.

Some of the participants' reflections from evaluation forms:

- "I liked meeting people and discussing real problems. "*
- „Small groups helped me to build self-esteem. "*
- „I met special and interesting people. "*
- „I heard many useful things. Everything was very interesting to me. "*
- „Surprisingly this seminar changed some things in my life“.*

Written by: Milan Pavlović: Economic Diplomacy Seminar (EDS) Director

Report on the Youth Leadership Forum and International Leadership Forum

“Euro-Atlantic Integration – Economic costs and Benefits”
(Macedonia, 22-25 February 2008)

In 2008, on February 22nd - 25th, the Boris Trajkovski International Foundation organized in collaboration with the ECPM the Youth Leadership Forum and the International Leadership Forum. These forums were organized to continue the principles of the former President of Macedonia, Boris Trajkovski, to act out of his personal faith in Jesus and to use His principles in the political domain. The theme of these forums was Euro-Atlantic integration. A prayer dinner was also held.

On the first evening the youth leadership forum opened during dinner with speeches by *Vilma Trajkovska*, Founder and honorary president of the Boris Trajkovski International Foundation, *Besim Dogani*, vice-president of the Parliament, and *Andreas Jahn*, from the prayer group in the German Bundestag. The purpose was to discuss “Leadership in an integrated society – opportunities and threats”. The next day the forum started with a discussion about the benefits of joining the European Union by Mrs. *Joan Pearce*, first councillor in the office of the European Union and *Predag Trpeski*, Deputy Minister of Finance. This theme was later discussed in small groups. From the conclusions presented, it became clear that the EU offers many opportunities for Macedonia: the economy of Macedonia and the living standard of Macedonia will grow and the possibility of unhindered travel to other countries will also give an identity to the Macedonian people by belonging to Europe. On the other hand, there were also challenges like stricter rules that have to be followed and increasing competition for Small and Medium Enterprises in Macedonia that might not be prepared for this. Besides this some areas remain a responsibility for the national governments, such as health care.



The second day was focused on accession into NATO. *Vladimir Gjorchev*, member of the Macedonian Parliament and *Aleksandar Genchov* discussed the opportunities that integration into the North Atlantic Alliance will give to Macedonia regarding the security of the borders and the safety of the country. Freedom is priceless and we must not trade freedom. Jesus is the one who gave us the freedom. We should strive according to His example for freedom with the people and the countries around us. We should not trade our core values. Also accession into NATO will mean investments in economy and equipment and an improvement of democracy by the reform of institutions. However, some critical questions were asked, such as the way in which these investments are related also to the costs Macedonia has to pay for integration. Furthermore, during the small group discussions there were questions about how integration into NATO could cause more difficulties in the relationship with other countries around Macedonia, countries that are not joining the alliance, such as Serbia and Russia. After the small group discussions, a visit to the Macedonian parliament was made where Mr. *Ljubisha Georgievski*, President of the Parliament, led a discussion about the theme of the conference: “Euro-Atlantic integration.” Leo van Doesburg, ECPM representative for South East Europe, brought the Youth Leadership Forum to a close.

In the evening, a prayer dinner was held. The opening prayer was led by *Mr. George Vojnovic*, after which Mrs. Vilma Trajkovska, Founder and honorary president of the Boris Trajkovski International Foundation, spoke. She focused on the fact that the time we are given in this life is short, we never know when it will end. She could never know that when her husband, former President of Macedonia, Boris Trajkovski, walked out of the door on that morning when he died because of the flight accident, that it would be the last time she would see him alive. This was also demonstrated by the fact that a famous Macedonian singer who joined the prayer dinner last year died

shortly afterwards in an accident. Life is short and we should focus on this and to follow Jesus in our personal life, to look for eternal perspective, and to act according to His Will. This thought was also shared by the Prime Minister of Macedonia **H.E. Nikola Gruevski**. Further there was a greeting from Dr. **Gottfried Claussen**, writer of a book about the life of Boris Trajkovski. An impressive musical performance was given by Ana and Oleg and the Chamber choir "Mois Hason" of the Jewish community in Macedonia. The evening ended with singing the song: "Amazing Grace" together.



On the last day the International Leadership Forum: "Adriatic Charter Countries – HIGH TIME TO JOIN NATO" started. **Vilma Trajkovska** opened the event, mentioning that Boris Trajkovski always strove for the unity of Macedonia and peace, regional collaboration and friendship with the neighbouring countries. His legacy should be continued in the ongoing discussions about accession into NATO. The prime minister, **H.E. Nikola Gruevski**, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, **H.E. Antonio Miloshoski**, and Minister of Defence, **H.E. Lazar Elenovski**, mentioned the already long-lasting collaboration with NATO in establishing a stable region: first of all by being a fully functioning democracy; and secondly by contributing their military capacity to peacekeeping missions around the world. For example, 3% of the Macedonian armed forces participate in missions in Iraq, Afghanistan, Bosnia and Lebanon. Also the striving for Euro-Atlantic integration is reflected in the Adriatic Charter signed between Macedonia, Albania and Croatia in order to sustain each other on their path towards NATO. The belief in stability, partnership and integration is also reflected in the relationship with neighbouring countries that are not joining NATO. Macedonia strives to continue and develop good collaboration with other countries in the region that share the interest in building trust and understanding in the region. In this spirit, Macedonia will support Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro and Serbia in their Euro-Atlantic aspirations.



No future EU enlargement without reconciliation

by Jonathan van Tongeren,

General Secretary of the European Christian Political Youth Network (ECPYN)

The last week of August young people involved in Christian politics gathered in Chisinau, Moldova, for the 5th International Summer School since the establishment of the European Christian Political Youth Network in 2004. The theme of the conference was „*The Future of EU Enlargement*“. An important conclusion was that future EU enlargement is unlikely to be either possible or successful without real reconciliation among peoples.

After most of the participants had arrived at the hotel on August 24, the group was addressed by Mr Valeriu Ghiletschi, former MP and Bishop of the Baptist Union. The next day we visited the parliament building, where we met with Iurie Rosca, Deputy Speaker of the Parliament, who gave us an introduction to Moldovan politics and the role of the Christian Democrats. We learned for example that Moldova has a unicameral parliament. After this we left parliament for a short sight seeing tour.

In the afternoon Veaceslav Ionita, leading Moldovan economist, gave a short analysis of Moldova and its East-European neighbours' economic compatibility with the EU standards, and Russia's energy policy and its impact on the region's European perspective. Some quick adjustments to the programme were then made to allow for more discussion of the issue of unilateral secession and territorial integrity in light of the recent developments in Georgia. Vladimir Plamadela, graduate student of International Law and International Policy Advisor to the Moldovan Christian Democrats, gave a presentation on the issue of ethnic minorities, unilateral secession and territorial integrity and Leo van Doesburg, ECPM Representative in South Eastern-Europe, led a discussion about international relationships and the situation in (South) East Europe. Some Georgians of the Youth Christian Democratic Movement (CDM) were also supposed to be present at the summer school, but because of the war they were not able to attend. There were some Russians present though and this made the discussion even more interesting.



In the evening Vlad Cubreacov MP, former director of the Department of religious affairs, spoke about the relationship between Christianity and politics in Moldova and Eastern-Europe in general, followed by a question and answer session, after which we had a very nice dinner and enjoyed the sauna.

On Tuesday we had an excursion to Orheiul Vechi, to see the Roman remains and the cliff monastery, where monks lived as hermits in caves. We also went to Saharna, an ancient historic site on the Nistru river with caves and waterfalls and a Greek monastery. Those who were up to it climbed to the highest point of the mountains, where we prayed together for reconciliation between peoples in conflict, be they Bosnians, Serbs, Albanians, Moldovans, Russians, Georgians et cetera and together we prayed the Lord's prayer in our own language. In the evening we had a barbecue on the bank of the river Nistru, with a view of Transnistria, by the romantic light of our cell phones.

After a day of getting to know each other better through this informal excursion we had a full day of workshops again on Wednesday. Dick van Dijk, board member of ECPM and auditor for the Directorate General for Regional Policy of the European Commission, spoke about the aftermath of Romania and Bulgaria joining the EU, and the problems and lessons to be drawn. In his presentation he also reminded us of all the different kinds of association that can precede EU accession or be offered instead of EU membership. At the end of his workshop Van Dijk put us to work, by giving us a list of all the countries that are in UEFA (Union of European Football Associations) and challenging us to give arguments why certain countries as different as Serbia and Kazakhstan should or should not join the EU, whether we expect them to

Razvan Burleanu, who works for the Senate of the Parliament of Romania, spoke after the coffee break about young professionals and EU integration. After another very nice lunch Jonathan van Tongeren, Secretary General of ECPYN, spoke about „The kind of EU Moldova should not join”, in which he spoke about humanist and ultraliberal tendencies in European politics and how to counter these as Christians, and „Making Christian Democracy relevant”, in which he argued for the ideological strengthening of Christian Democracy in which the ECPM can be instrumental. At the end of the afternoon the conclusions of the different sessions were summarized by Leo and some points of action were agreed upon.



After dinner there was free time and the group went to the city centre to join the Independence Day festivities around the Triumph Arch.

After the summer school the participants of the summer school will keep in touch by means of Facebook, a [blogspot](#) and a mailing group.

During the summer school the Youth Movement of BPF < Young Revival > and the Christian Democratic Youth Council (including BCD Youth and Young Front), both from Belarus, were admitted as full member organisations after respectively having been observer member organisations for one year and half a year and the Youth Christian Democratic Movement of Georgia was admitted as an observer member organisation.



Preserving Christian values in the context of European Integration

Chisinau, Moldova

21-22 November 2008

12 by Vladimir Plamadeala

ECPM supported an international gathering on the topic "Preserving Christian values in the context of European integration." The event took place under the auspices of Moldova's Christian Political Initiative Group – an initiative for the implication of local Christians in public and political life.

The event was opened by Mr. Valeriu Ghiletschi, Bishop of the Baptist Union of Moldova, Chairman of the Christian Initiative Group, who presented the Group and its goals. Guido van Beusekom, ECPM Secretary General and Leo van Doesburg, ECPM Coordinator for South-Eastern Europe then welcomed the participants and introduced ECPM.

The day of November 21 was full of presentations, discussions and debates. The speakers from Moldova and from abroad shared their experience and elaborated strategies on how to assure successful European integration without losing Christian roots, taking into account the sad experience of certain European countries, members of EU.



Moldovan speaker Veaceslav Ionita (a leading Moldovan economist) spoke on the economic dimension of European integration and energy issues; another speaker from Moldova, Vasile Filat, President of the Institute of Inductive Bible Study and an active missionary to the Muslim world, spoke about the pro-homosexual lobby in Moldova and its attempts to influence values and impact public life, as well as counter-efforts of the local Christian community. The discussions revolved around the topic of European integration and how Christians could impact this process.

In the follow-up, Guido van Beusekom, ECPM Secretary General, highlighted some aspects of the policy of the Youth and Family Ministry of the Netherlands. He also presented a video message from the Vice-Prime-Minister of the Netherlands (who is also the Minister of Youth and Family), Andre Rouvoet.

Matthew Skirton, the leader of the Moldovan branch of "Operation Mobilization" Foundation, who has lived for almost 11 years in Moldova, made a comparative analysis of challenges for British and Moldovan churches facing the secularizing world.

Another guest from the UK, attorney Alex Spak, who is also public policy analyst at the Christian Legal Centre, London, spoke about family versus secular agenda in Britain. He shared experience of some of his court cases, where Christians were harassed for their faith.

In the afternoon, Yuri Reshetnikov, Vice-Chairman of the Christian-Democratic Union of Ukraine, presented a message from his Party and spoke about family values in Ukraine. He was followed by Eugen Simonov, youth ministry leader from Moldova, whose topic was

modern youngsters and secularization. Leo van Doesburg, ECPM Coordinator for South-Eastern Europe then gave a comprehensive presentation of Christian and family values, which are presently under attack in South-Eastern Europe. He also drew the conclusions from the day and moderated the discussions and the question and answer session.

On the following day, 22 November, participants departed to Gura Cainarului, home of the most renowned Moldovan sparkling-water, where they had a meeting with the local Mayor. On the way back to Chisinau, participants paid a brief visit to the city of Balti – capital of Northern Moldova.



On November 23rd, the ECPM delegation was invited to attend the 11th Congress of the Christian Democratic People's Party of Moldova, where Guido van Beusekom, Leo van Doesburg and Yuri Reshetnikov presented warmly received speeches. In the afternoon, the ECPM delegation had an informal meeting with CDDP leadership and MPs. The presence of ECPM at the Congress was noted in the local press.

The Christian Political Initiative Group of Moldova expresses its gratitude to ECPM for fruitful partnership and organization of this event.



Montenegro moving forward: Series of meetings in the People's Party of Montenegro

by Sinisa Nadazdin, Executive Director Philia Ministries

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Since 2006, Philia Ministries in collaboration with the ECPM has initiated the "Servant Leadership" program in order to develop the democracy of the young country of Montenegro. The program has as its main target to reach out to those political structures that appear to welcome and cherish the principles and values of the ECPM. Different meetings and discussions took place in 2007, which resulted in the full ECPM membership of the People's Party of Montenegro. In 2008 the project continued with two new important meetings, in January and March respectively.

On the 11th January, Mr. Leo van Doesburg, regional representative of the ECPM, visited the headquarters of the People's Party where he gave two seminars: "The Reformed Concept of State" where the basic principles of Christian-democracy were explained. The question and answer session afterwards was focused on implementation in the context of Montenegrin society. After the break he taught about strategic leadership. He analyzed Nehemia as a political leader who had as his main task the rebuilding of the fortress of Jerusalem. Using this example, Leo led the participants through the list of issues relevant for the life of every leader. He gave special attention to the role of strengths, calling, concrete steps, attacks/threats and so on. However, his conclusion was that perhaps the most important thing in the life of a leader is knowing the importance of preserving his/her identity and vision in spite of all the hardships and temptations. The session ended with more questions and answers.



Later a visit was made to the center where Leo van Doesburg on behalf of the ECPM signed a petition for forming a Parliamentary Commission to investigate the murder of the chief editor of the daily newspaper "Dan", Mr. Dusko Jovanovic. He signed the petition as a symbolic support to the efforts of the People's Party to contribute to positive changes in Montenegrin society. The reporters from "Dan" were there, so the report on this (together with a photo) was also published together with the report from the seminar. This has had a significant echo in Montenegrin society and was an important support to the People's Party's efforts.

The visit ended with a visit to a Serbian New Year cocktail reception organized by the Serbian People's Party. This reception has been organized for the last few years and it is becoming a traditional gathering for the leaders and officials of the Serbian People's Party (SPP), their sympathizers and other distinguished guests.

Between March 14th and 16th, Kris Vleugels visited the People's Party as a representative of the board of ECPM. This was done also within the follow-up of the "Servant Leadership" project, implemented by the ECPM and Philia Ministries from Montenegro, with the support of the People's Party of Montenegro.

The visit of Mr. Vleugels took place between March 14th - 16th. During this period, Mr. Vleugels was a guest in the People's Party head office in Podgorica where he, on Saturday March 15th, gave two presentations – one on "5 Characteristics of a Christian Politician" and the second on "Political Campaigning as a Christian Politician".

¹ Mr. Dusko Jovanovic was murdered in May 2004. Until now, neither the perpetrators nor those who ordered the murder have been discovered. The daily newspaper "Dan" was and still is involved in investigative journalism and very vocal about the corruption and organized crime scandals that were shaking the government.

During the second part of the day, Mr. Vleugels visited the local board of the People's Party in the Municipality of Herceg Novi, which was facing local elections on April 6th. There he met with the President of the Municipal Board, Mr. Danilo Ilic, who introduced him to the needs and challenges the town of Herceg Novi is facing, as well as those related to the activities of the People's Party in this municipality.



Mr. Vleugels expressed his interest and hopes that the People's Party would succeed in winning three more seats which would, with the existing three, altogether make six councillors' seats for this party in the local Parliament. He also said that the ECPM is committed to providing support to the People's Party in exchange of experiences and staff, and various kinds of training, which will all help the People's Party to achieve the best possible results in the future.

After these conferences, the representatives of the People's Party joined the conference in Serbia, held on April 10th, where they not only explained the impact of the ECPM on their party and the society of Montenegro, but also the need to continue the program in the years to come, especially focused on working out each of the seven principles of the ECPM with practical discussions about how to implement this in the Montenegrin context.



Participation in the Convention on the Legal Status of Churches and Religious Communities in Montenegro today

by Sinisa Nadazdin, executive director Philia Ministries

May 23 - 25 2008

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The international convention held under the name "Legal Status of the Churches and Religious Communities in Montenegro today", on May 23-25 2008, was the first of its kind in Montenegro since the fall of Communism. The organizer of the event, the Orthodox Metropolitanate of Montenegro and Littoral of the Serbian Orthodox Church, made it clear in the invitation letters, as well as in the opening part of the conference, that the Orthodox Church and other churches and religious communities in Montenegro have suffered under the Communist regime. During that time, church life suffered systematic repression, including the attempts of the authorities to manipulate the church and influence its internal structure. The legacy of Communism, however, is still present and is still reflected in the life of the religious communities in Montenegro. The ECPM was invited to participate actively in this important event.

After the break-up of former Yugoslavia, new countries had to redefine the role of the religious communities in public life. In order to achieve this, it was necessary to enact new laws that would define their new (old) legal status, among other reasons as a means to redeem the injustices done by the Communist regime to the churches and religious communities. The spectrum of issues to be regulated was significant. Still, among other things, the issue of restitution of the property of churches and religious communities nationalized by the Communist regimes appeared to be one of the most difficult in Montenegro, unlike the other ex-Communist countries.

According to some of the conference participants, Montenegro is lagging behind other ex-Communist countries in enacting and adopting laws dealing with this and other issues of importance for the churches and religious communities.

The majority of speakers agreed that the churches and religious communities have to work together because the citizens of the state are at the same time members of the religious communities, so in this respect the two sides have a common interest. Furthermore, most of the participants agreed that there are numerous fields and opportunities where religious communities and churches can and should work together for the benefit of both sides. These could be, for example, enabling churches to establish ministries in the army, prisons, hospitals, religious education in public schools, etc. In this field, the experiences of different countries and societies are very valuable.



The speakers from the Metropolitanate stressed that churches and religious communities have always had an important role in the history of every state and nation. However, in Montenegro, this role might be even more important, bearing in mind that originally Montenegro was formed as a theocratic state. It is of crucial importance for church and state to be in harmony in order for Montenegro to stay faithful to its state tradition.

The participants agreed that the relationship between the church and state should be built around the following five principles:

- (1) Freedom of religion
- (2) Neutrality of the state
- (3) Equal status and position of all religious communities
- (4) Right of churches and religious communities of self-determination
- (5) Cooperation of church and state

Among these five principles, most of the discussions were raised over the issues of restitution of the property of churches and religious communities that had been taken away by the Communist regimes and the issue of cooperation of church and state.

¹ I am afraid that in all the reports on this conference, the reporters have continued to use the word "neutrality" instead of "impartiality" what you have mentioned.

Restitution

The restitution of the property that belonged to churches and religious communities in Montenegro before WWII is one of the most complex and sensitive topics in Montenegro. Before WWII, religious communities owned a significant number of properties. The largest part of them belonged to the Metropolitanate of Montenegro and Littoral of the Serbian Orthodox Church, the Islamic Community and the Roman Catholic Church.

Today, all of them share the same problems. Their property is not being restored to them. On the contrary, in many cases their land, although it has not been used for any purpose, is being privatized. The existing law, which was amended soon after it was enacted, has not been implemented properly and the religious communities were left out of the process of restitution. Some of the participants said that there is a lack of political will to enact fair laws that would regulate the area of restitution and other aspects of relationship between the religious communities and state.

Other issues

Another issue that was raised and has to do with the property of religious communities, is what the representatives of the Metropolitanate shared with the participants of the conference: that they do not consider the state of Montenegro is doing enough for the protection of its property from the attacks of what they called "pseudo-church organization". One of the participants said he thinks the authorities should have done much more following the threats of the leaders of this group to usurp the property of the Metropolitanate.

Besides this one, the participants also expressed concerns and desires for religious communities and the state to work more closely on other issues that are more of a social character. Among other things participants mentioned that religious communities should be given the right to perform their activities and spiritual help in state institutions, such as the army, hospitals, prisons, schools, university, etc. Also, the state has to respect the right of conscientious objection, recognize church registries of birth and marriages, as well as to define and recognize educational institutions of the religious communities and humanitarian organizations. Some of the participants expressed the wish that religious communities should be given the right to establish their own media.

The conference "Legal Status of Churches and Religious Communities in Montenegro today" has had a significant impact in Montenegrin society, indicated by the number of reactions of the unrecognized Montenegrin Orthodox Church and some secular NGOs. The participants of the conference among others were:

- Representatives of the Municipality of Bar, the town where the conference was held
- Representatives of the Ministry of Justice of Montenegro
- Mr. Leopold Maurer, the Head of the European Commission in Montenegro
- His Excellence, Mr. Kiril, the Bishop of the Bulgarian Orthodox Church
- Mr. Andrija Kopilovic, the representative of the Roman Catholic Church in Serbia
- Mr. Dzenan Redzmatovic, the representative of the Islamic Community of Montenegro
- Mr. Valerij Alexeev, Foundation of Unity of Orthodox Nations
- Ambassadors of Serbia, Russia, Romania, Germany, etc.



Also present were several representatives of the ECPM. Among them there were members of the People's Party of Montenegro (**Mr. Dragan Soc** – former Minister of Justice in the Government of Montenegro, former MP and a member of the Presidency of the People's Party; **Mr. Milan Radovic** – the President of the Executive Board; **Mr. Emil Krijestorac** – the vice-President of the Executive Board); **Mr. Leo van Doesburg** (the ECPM representative for EE and SEE) and **Mr. Sinisa Nadazdin** (the executive director of Philia Ministries and the representative of the ECPM for Montenegro).

The ECPM had a noticeable role and impact on the gathering, since Mr. Leo van Doesburg gave a speech at the opening ceremony and made a significant contribution to establishing the final text of the final statement. The final statement was published in the form of a joint Declaration, which outlined the five principles and other issues mentioned in this report.

² Montenegrin Orthodox Church which is not recognized by other Orthodox Churches as legitimate and authentic Orthodox Church.

“Get Connected” Conference in Serbia

10-11 April 2008, Belgrade

by Dusica Petkovic, president of the BBI

After the first ECPM Balkan conference “Unity through diversity” that was held last year in Belgrade the Belgrade Business Initiative and ECPM with the aim of networking and equipping Balkan political leaders who hold and promote Christian values, it is now time for the “Get Connected” conference. This was the theme of the conference held on 10-11 April 2008 as the beginning of a three year program that will be focused on encouraging, networking and equipping young professionals and creators of much-needed political and social change in Serbia. This event comprised three parts: an official opening cocktail reception, lectures, training and interactive group discussions. Around 60 young professionals and (potential) political leaders from all over Serbia (Belgrade, Novi Sad, Kragujevac, Backi Petrovac, Nis and Leskovac), Bosnia and Montenegro, from different denominations and ethnic backgrounds, participated actively in this conference and “got connected” based on the universal truth of the principles of Jesus.

The event was opened by Dusica Petkovic and Samuilo Petrovski who briefly explained the aim of the event and introduced the speakers for the evening. Important honest testimonies were shared by Doug Coe (founder of the USA Prayer Breakfast in Washington), and Lars Rise (member of the Norwegian Parliament) how the principles of Jesus guided their personal lives, played an important role in making their decisions and helped them in reconciliation and relations with others. Vljako Senic, State Secretary of Youth and Sport from the Serbian Government and Vladimir Bozovic, lawyer, explained the importance of the conference. Leo van Doesburg, South Eastern European Representative of the ECPM welcomed guests as well and briefly explained his view of the conference. It was very impressive to hear personal testimonies of politicians and the openness with which they shared them. After the official opening, there was a time to share ideas and experiences with each other over cocktails.



The next day started with lectures and training. The first session was given by Mike Harvey, director of USAID. He spoke about his vision on how Christian values should be and can be presented and implemented in politics. Participants also followed with close attention the session of Professor Misa Djurkovic, Ph.D. from the Centre for Advanced European Studies and advisor of the candidate for presidential elections in Montenegro. He spoke about business ethics and principles as most important anti corruption tools. He also mentioned Corporate Social Responsibility as an important tool for a right, just and social society. This was followed by Leo van Doesburg who gave a larger picture of the ECPM vision, discussing Christian democratic values. The lecturing phase was warmly appreciated by the audience.

This was followed by the panel discussion called „The examples of young leaders' initiatives” when the participants were: Milan Radovic, who shared about the work of the People's Party in Montenegro, their prayer group and their collaboration with the ECPM.; Jovana Tavcar, member of the leadership team of the Serbian Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) who explained about the importance of young people to be involved in politics and shared her experience with LDP; Dusan Vukanovic, director of the Center for Parliamentarian debate development discussed about how young people started this center and how they could support the process of democratization of the society. He gave some real stories and examples which motivated young people to think seriously about being more involved in politics.

The way people were touched by the personal testimonies, lectures and practical examples was also seen in the workshops. Participants discussed in small groups the possibility of implementing this program in Serbia and what the next steps are that need to be taken. It was impressive that people showed a high level of motivation to be more involved in politics and that Christian values could play an important role in the development of Serbian society. In one of the evaluations, however, it was mentioned that a danger exists in using the name “Christianity” which might be misused in a Serbian context or in general and that it would be good to discuss the naming next time.

Some reactions of the students summarized from the evaluations:

“The conference was an amazing experience for me. From personal experience that was shared by some speakers on one side, and from professional experience shared on the other side, we heard a lot about the unchangable foundation of Christian values and principles in the political field of influence. It was also useful and interesting to hear about the conection between Christianity and politics and where Christian ideals and pragmatic politics are coming together today”

„The conference made me think what concretely we can do in our country in order to improve the political situation and life standard in Serbia. We are those who must take responsibility to make things function better. The key is in real and true values, but not just to know them, but to make them work.”



This is the reason why Belgrade Business Initiative will continue discussions and has already planned a new meeting on 15 May in order to continue the process of forming a network of responsible, enthusiastic and motivated group of young political leaders and professionals of Serbia, capable of leading Serbian society with full integrity despite all the difficult obstacles the current political system offers.



“Ethics in Practice”

Belgrade, 4th October 2008

by Dusica Petkovic, president of the Belgrade Business Initiative (BBI)

Within the three year program “Get Connected” for young political leaders and professionals that will be focused on encouraging, networking and equipping young professionals and creators of future and necessary political and social changes in Serbia, it was our honor and responsibility to organize the event “Ethics in Practice”. The event was held on 4th October 2008, as a working day with the Belgrade Business Initiative and its speakers.

The event was opened by Dusica Petkovic, president of Belgrade Business Initiative, who emphasized the need for ethical values in both personal and professional responsibility to be framed as a code of ethics approved and applied in different fields of economy and politics.

The speakers of the event were:

- > Michael Harvey, director of USAID Serbia
- > Ognjen Cubalevski, director of Optimal Energy Solutions – Fair Services d.o.o.
- > Leo van Doesburg, Southeastern European representative of ECPM
- > Milos Andjic, student of law and young politician of Serbian Renewal Movement

As the speakers came from different spheres of influence – politics, business, social work, youth group, it was a great opportunity to hear different examples of ethics and different views of our political, economic and social reality, but all from a Christian perspective! We all agreed that there cannot be ethical behavior in society if there are no personal ethics and personal integrity. Our speakers were mainly talking about the standards on which our personal ethics should be built.



As an experienced politician, Michael Harvey, director of USAID, emphasized Christian values as a good foundation, noted the importance of prayer support that politicians especially need, the importance of Christian groups and the high level of influence they can reach and the importance of making a difference between being religious and being a follower of Jesus.

Ognjen Cubalevski led an interactive session with lots of questions and answers that motivated our guests to give their opinion or even suggestion on some specific ethical challenges - such as the appearance of good conduct and avoidance of conflicts of interest, the acceptance of gifts, outside activities, and whether politicians should have big salaries in order to decrease the level of corruption, and whether it is possible to measure their achievement.

Leo van Doesburg gave a lecture about integrity, bribery and corruption, making a parallel between EU and non EU society, such as Dutch and Serbian society, and what the price can be of such a high democracy that crosses the line of Christian principles and gives the freedom for every kind of behavior – drugs, abortion, euthanasia etc.

Milos Andjic, as young politician and Christian, emphasized the importance of personal principles and priorities that not only politicians but all professionals should adhere to in order to avoid compromise and keep their integrity.

After this event we can say that our program is finding a very good response among our members, friends and professionals, especially after the Belgrade Business Initiative got an invitation to organize the same kind of event in Novi Sad, and that Samuil Petrovski, chairman of BBI is leading very successfully a bible study group with a few young politicians/leaders.

Romanian Conference: „Christian values in Romanian politics”

About the vision and the practical steps in creating the „Initiative for Christian Values in Politics”

In the surroundings of Codlea, at the center of the Foundation East Europe, took place the National Conference of the „Initiative for Christian Values in Politics” (in Romanian abbreviated as IVCP). A group existing of members of the Romanian Senate, Chamber of Deputies, European Parliament, representatives of different church denominations like the Romanian Orthodox, Greek and Roman Catholic, Messianic, Reformed, Baptist and Pentecostal churches and the representatives of the civil society came together to discuss about the basics of Christian values in the Romanian politics which forms the basis of the „Initiative for Christian Values in Politics”. The meeting was concluded with a first meeting where concept statutes, a first executive board also the legal steps to form the new federation were discussed.

The conference was opened by an attractive musical program where Romanian musical professors played beautiful masterpieces varying from the Mattheus Passion from Johannes Bastian Bach, Vivaldi and Mozart, to Frank Sinatra’s New York, New York. The musical intermezzos were followed by speeches. Leo van Doesburg, representative South East Europe of the ECPM explained about the need for developing Christian-democratic values in Europe. „The fact that in the concept of the European Constitution not was mentioned about the Christian heritage of Europe was not to be blamed to Europe, but to us. It is time that we as Christian should think more clearly about how we could be salt and light also on the political field. The ECPM (although a young organization) is growing quickly and tries to motivate politicians and political parties to implement Christian-social values in the society based on the Holy Scriptures.” After this he explained about the history of the „Initiative for Christian Values in Politics”, that after the „Initiative of Rasnov” continued and deepened in Moeciu towards important steps to be made in Codlea to implement the vision of „developing a framework within which the Christians can grow spiritually, personally and professionally, where they can be encouraged and supported to become involved at each level in the political and administrative field.” During the opening MP Petru Andea (also president of the Romanian Ecumenical Prayer Group and Vice president of the Parliamentary Commission of “Education, Science and Sport”) explained about the importance of this Initiative for the Romanian Deputies and Senators, specifically and especially for the Romanian Ecumenical Prayer group that is made of more than 50 members of the Romanian Chambers of Parliament.



After this Vlad Popa, Romanian Member of the European Parliament expressed as well the importance of the development of Christian values in the European Parliament and he hoped that also the European Popular Party where he is part of can play a more significant role in this ambitious undertake. Professor Boari mentioned that *“it is time for new politics that offers a new perspective. The fundamental teaching of our Saviour could be an answer to this”*. Also Dario Gonzales explained about the importance of the conference from his experience in South America. After the short speech given by the mayor of Codlea Alexandru Popa, our host and chairman of the event, Marius Moldoveanu, from the foundation East Europe and independent candidate as counselor closed the first evening and we were invited for the dinner.

During the second day, Professor Vasile Boari challenged the participants in a debate about the question of why did God put the tree of knowledge of good and evil in the paradise and what was God’s Plan for mankind. After this he discussed about the basics of the Christian vision on the society and in politics based on Romans 12 and 13 with the key verses from Rom 12:17-21. After this Dario Gonzales gave a deep analysis about the development from the modern to a post-modern society and how we as Christians should

find and define our role in the societal developments. He finished his lecture with eight practical points how the IVCP could develop. In the second half of the day, Professor Boari guided a basic debate about the principles and values the Initiative should pursue. All the principles should be grown from the basic Biblical value: "Love". Practical discussions led by the Members of Parliament, Viorel Duca, Valentin Bosneac and Petru Andea gave insight about the challenges they have in putting these values into practice. The second day was finished with a practical discussion about what activities should the Initiative develop. The evening was concluded by a dinner and a beautiful concert of German musicians.

The last day was focused on practical discussions; an ecumenical prayer meeting took place and a message for the participants was given by senator Viorel Duca. During the meeting was agreed to also establish the "Initiative for Christian Values in Politics (IVCP) also legally by creating a federation. In this way, the IVCP will represent the organizations based on the clear principles as written in "the initiative of Rasnov." A draft statute was presented with targets and objectives and an interdenominational executive board was proposed. Also the draft website and house style of the IVCP was presented. The next meeting was already planned in the Romanian Parliament on 8 April where the first General Meeting of the IVCP will take place and the representatives of the organizations will be invited to join the official foundation of the federation that will be officially established.

New steps are made. Let's pray that this will be the beginning of "new politics with perspective, based on the foundation of the teaching of Jesus"



MESSAGE FROM CODLEA

In the days of 28th - 30th of March, took place in Codlea - Brașov the works of the National Conference of "Initiative for Christian Values in Politics" (I.V.C.P.). Reuniting more associations and foundations, among which the Ecumenical Prayer Group in the Romanian Parliament, the "Filocalia" Orthodox Center Bucharest, "Foundation East Europe - Codlea" and others. The National Conference established as mission to bring to their senses the public opinion and the political forces in Romanian, with the declared purpose of promoting the Christian message into the political arena.

The "Initiative for Christian Values in Politics" does not propose to constitute its own parties or political representation structures, but to join the efforts of those religious cults and segments of the civil society who wish to make heard the voice of the Gospels, thus the voice of God in the political environment, in "Caesar's kingdom".

Accepting the thesis according to which politics is part of God's Plan regarding the mankind, the "Initiative for Christian Values in Politics", according to generic Christian vision stating that "economic order is inseparable from the moral order" and "man is older than the state", wishes to select, to promote and to sustain within the political environment, ideas and persons defined by Christian values such as: faith, hope, righteousness.

The "Initiative for Christian Values in Politics" strongly sustains that the Christian values are fundamental values of the Romanian people and of Europe and that their appliance in the conflict dominated political present times can lead to obtaining the ethical balance that is no necessary to us nowadays.

Romanian Prayerbreakfast & ECPM South East European Conference:

„Faith and Challenges in the 21st Century: Unity through Diversity“

From 17-20 September 2008, the European Christian Political Movement (ECPM) organized, together with the Ecumenical Prayer Group from the Romanian Parliament under the patronage of Mr. Bogdan Olteanu, President of the Chamber of Deputies, the National Romanian Prayer Breakfast and the ECPM South East European Conference: „Faith and Challenges in the 21st Century: Unity through Diversity“.

Prominent politicians were among around 200 participants, mainly from South East Europe, who discussed together how Christian principles can be a basis for peace and reconciliation and enable us to find answers together based on our faith for the challenges in the 21st century, while at the same time appreciating everyone's diversity. This event changed from a conference into an historic event both for the development of the region and for the development of the European Christian Political Movement

The Breakfast was opened in prayer by *HE Teodosie Petrescu*, Archbishop of Tomis, from the Romanian Orthodox Church. He was followed by the contributions of *Nicolae Văcăroiu*, President of the Senate of Romania; *Bogdan Olteanu*, President of the Chamber of Deputies; *Petar Stoyanov*, President of Bulgaria from 1997-2002; *Nicodim Bulzesc*, Romanian Member of the European Parliament and *Peter Voosu*, Chairman of the ECPM.



Robert Milcev, Executive Director of the Boris Trajkovski Foundation, brought a special message from *Vilma Trajkovska*, wife of the former President of Macedonia, who unfortunately could not come because of unexpected family circumstances. „...*Some of you know that Boris was also a lay minister in the Methodist Church and he once told a reporter: “To be President and to be a minister is the very same work. You have to bring together people of different backgrounds and different opinions... You not only have to preach to them but also to serve them, to show leadership and to suffer with them..” Because of these beliefs, he was able to bring unity to Macedonia, despite our great diversity in the ethnic make-up of our country. And this is the lesson that we all must learn and it is appropriate that you are discussing Unity through Diversity these days. If we could all adopt this attitude of what is good and of what the Lord requires of us by acting justly, loving mercy and walking humbly with our God, then we could overcome the problems that face our countries, our region and our world.*“

During the Prayer Breakfast and the cocktail dinner organized the evening before, the participants had the opportunity to pray, to eat together and to discuss and have fellowship with each other accompanied by the music offered by choirs and musicians from different religious denominations and from different countries. *His Excellency Francisco Javier Lozano*, Nuncio Apostolic and Archbishop for Romania from the Roman Catholic Church closed the Romanian Prayer Breakfast with a prayer that „*every human being, and every race and culture may encounter and accept Jesus: the true Light of the world Who came down to earth to show us the path of brotherhood, dialogue, fraternity and love.*“

The plenary debate on the theme: „Faith and Challenges in the 21st Century: Unity through Diversity“ which took place after the Prayer Breakfast was moderated by *Leo van Doesburg*, Regional Representative South East Europe for the ECPM. The meeting was opened by *Bogdan Olteanu*, President of the Chamber of Deputies and host of the event. He was followed by the former President of Bulgaria *Petar Stoyanov* explaining the importance of not looking to history but to the future and that power does not lie in territorial aspirations, but in developing friendships with neighbouring countries.

That the theme was considered of vital importance was also demonstrated by the official messages that were shared on behalf of the *European Commissioner HE Leonard Orban*; the *Prayer Gathering from the German Bundestag*; the *government of Ukraine* (by

Unguryan Pavlo, People's deputy), and the parliament of Serbia (by Baranislav Popovic, Adviser to the president of the National Assembly of the republic of Serbia). These were followed by contributions from the Volodymyr Stretovych, MP, Head of the Christian-Democratic Union, Ukraine and from Aliaksej Shein, co-chairman of the Belarusian Christian Democracy party, Romanian Europarliamentarian Nicodim Bulzesc, Paul Petrie on behalf of the members of the European Prayer Breakfast group from the European Parliament and Rabi Shlomo Rosen, from the Romanian Jewish community. Petru Andea, President of the Ecumenical Prayer Group from the Romanian Parliament gave a remarkable talk on how the Creation tried to make a link between the Biblical and scientific theories. The plenary debate was followed by three workshops. Representatives of different churches, amongst others the Orthodox, Roman Catholic, Protestant, Baptist, Pentecostal, Brethren and Evangelical Churches, discussed „The role the church should have in society”. The second workshop, about „Euro-Atlantic integration between identity and sovereignty” was moderated by Paul Petrie, coordinator of the European Prayer Breakfast. During the third workshop about „The identity of South East Europe” representatives of Albania, Croatia, Macedonia, Romania and Serbia discussed the way in which cross border collaboration amongst the countries in this region could be improved.

The conference ended with a presentation of the conclusions by the leader of each workshop and a contribution from the Albanian delegation. The evening was taken up with a program highlighting the cultural richness of the different countries in South East Europe.

Amongst the participants, who were from Albania, Austria, Belarus, Belgium, Croatia, Estonia, Hungary, Macedonia, Moldova, Norway, the Netherlands, Serbia, Ukraine and of course Romania were (European) parliamentarians, state secretaries, ambassadors, politicians, journalists, writers, academics, business people and representatives of different religious denominations and from civil society. Amongst the latter was Mr. Friedrich Koenig, Vice President of the European Association of Former MPs and Valerie Ghiletchi, former MP and president of the Baptist Union of the Republic of Moldova.

The last day was reserved for fellowship during an excursion through Transylvania. This was organized by the organization CRESC (Rural European centre for Studies and Cooperation) First we visited the royal castle of Peles in Sinaia, where we were welcomed afterwards with an extensive traditional lunch in „Trei Brazi”. After lunch the group went to Bran Castle (also known as the Dracula castle) where we were greeted by a number of medieval knights and dancers. As we arrived, the knights were sword-fighting with each other in front of the castle; climbing secret stairs going around the castle we were accompanied by medieval dancers and music that brought us back to the Middle Ages. After the visit to this historical castle, an excellent dinner with traditional music and dance organized in collaboration with the mayor of Moeieciu was ended by a camp fire where our medieval dancers taught us how to dance around the fire while the knights continued their battle..



The South East European Conference organized in collaboration with the Ecumenical Prayer Group had such an impact and there were so many important contributions given, that the ECPM decided to issue soon a special DVD with all the contributions of the Romanian Prayer Breakfast and plenary sessions of the conference. Also the contributions will be collected, redacted and published at the beginning of next year. Many participants talked about „a unique event for the region” or even „an historic event” and about „the special atmosphere of unity where difficult topics were discussed in a unique fellowship.” Let us hope and pray that this is the beginning of a closer network between and amongst the countries of South East Europe based on the true unity and peace which is found through love of and personal faith in Jesus Christ.

Christian democrats of Eastern Europe consolidated in Kyiv

by Yuri Reshetnikov, Christian Democratic Union of Ukraine

On October 25, 2008 the Christian Democrats of the post-Soviet countries established Eastern Europe's Christian Democratic Bureau with headquarters in Kyiv. The capital of Ukraine became the centre where the Christian democrats of the former Soviet Union are going to coordinate their common actions.

This decision was taken during the international conference «Christian democracy in post-Soviet society: Values and Perspective» held on the initiative of the Christian Democratic Union of Ukraine on October 24-25 in Salute hotel in Kyiv. The participants were the representatives of prominent Christian democratic parties of eight Eastern European countries.

The aim of the newly formed union is to consolidate and enhance cooperation between Christian Democratic Parties of Eastern Europe. The Memorandum on Bureau establishment has been signed by:

Volodymyr STRETOVYCH (Christian Democratic Union of Ukraine)

Khosrov ARUTIUNIAN (Christian Democratic Union of Armenia)

Mara ZILGALVE (Christian Democratic Union of Latvia)

Magda ANIKASHVILI (Christian Democratic Movement of Georgia)

Ion VARTA (Christian Democratic People's Party of Moldova)

Aleksei SHEIN (the Party of Belarusian Christian Democracy)

Peeter VOSU (the Party of Estonian Christian Democrats)



The chairman of the European Christian Political Movement Peeter Vosu was actively involved in this conference and became one of the founders of the Bureau. The Representative of ECPM in South Eastern Europe. Leo van Doesburg, played an important role in the coordination of the conference.

During the two day conference the delegates discussed the condition of Christian democracy in the post-Soviet society and the achievements of representatives of this movement and also problems that hinder spreading Christian values in countries with a communistic past. The execution of an agreement on the establishment of the Bureau was the logical outcome of a positive two-day dialogue.

Representatives of the Russian Federation, Oleksandr Ogorodnikov and Sergiy Mezentsev, also participated in the conference. Although today in Russia such an example of practical policy as a Christian democratic movement is effectively destroyed by the totalitarian regime the concept of this leading European ideology is still alive and well: Christian political thought has been actively developing in science and journalism. Thus having no opportunity to involve Russian parties to work officially as part of the Bureau (since the Putin regime has forbidden even registration of parties with "Christian" names), Eastern Europe's Christian democrats have invited the Russian representatives to act as advisers.

The participants of the Conference received a letter of greeting from the Prime Minister of Ukraine Yulia Tymoshenko who emphasised the importance of such an event and her conviction of the significance and high perspective of Christian democratic ideas for all of Eastern Europe.

Volodymyr Stretovych, the Chairman of Christian Democratic Union of Ukraine and Member of Parliament, was elected as the Chairman of the Bureau for a year and Yuri Reshetnikov, the deputy chairman, as the Executive Secretary.

The delegates also decided the place and approximate date of the next conference of the Bureau. It is to be held in September 2009 in Yerevan, Armenia.

Visit to Romania and Bulgaria

by Rita Klapwijk and Esme Wiegman - October 2008

In October 2008 Esmé Wiegman, MP for the ChristenUnie (the Netherlands), and Rita Klapwijk (policy assistant), together with Leo van Doesburg, travelled to Romania and Bulgaria. The purpose of this visit was to learn more about them as new member states of the European Union, but also as member states that fall under the Cooperation and Verification Mechanism. In the period before this journey the European Commission decided to withhold part of the structural funds for Bulgaria, because of insufficient development of the most relevant fields of the public sector. The Commission also criticised the development in crucial fields in Romania: more needed to be done. Esmé Wiegman agreed with this assessment, but also stressed the responsibility of the Commission and other member states to give help to Romania and Bulgaria in order to reach the goals. Therefore in order to find out more about the specific problems and ways the Dutch government and the ChristenUnie as a political party could be of help, Esmé and Rita visited these countries



In Spring 2008 Esmé had travelled to Bulgaria and Romania as a member of a delegation of the Dutch parliament which mainly focused on official governmental policy. Therefore during the journey in October we paid more attention to the non-governmental point of view and how policy is put into practice. We focused especially on trafficking and care for victims, civil society and the role and position of NGOs, and the development and integration of Roma. The reason for this choice was the negative judgment of the Commission about developments in these fields, and because we think the Netherlands also bears some responsibility, especially for the trafficking of human beings, and has something to offer in developing civil society.

Both in Romania and Bulgaria we had several meetings with NGOs of all kinds: NGOs that took care of victims of human trafficking and provided psychological help and assistance during the trial; NGOs that promoted medical care by Roma women in Roma communities; a school that teaches Roma mothers the relevance of education for their children and ways to persuade other mothers to bring their children to school; NGOs that were dedicated to improve the situation of orphanages. All these meetings, conversations and visits gave us lots of information about the problems that were highlighted by the Commission and by the governments of Bulgaria and Romania: it made it possible for us to see through the official statements and policy and know what was really happening. We were impressed by the efforts of all the persons involved in these projects, and what they could achieve, even when support of their governments was lacking. We saw the results of the work that was undertaken and the blessings that it could bring, to children, to Roma families, to victims of trafficking. We saw the frustration when the value of the work that was done was recognized but financial support was lacking, the frustration of not being sure of the future of your work. These meetings and visits gave us lots of inspiration for our work back in the Netherlands.

Not that we in the Netherlands can solve problems. The 'job' has to be done in the countries themselves, by the government and society together. But we can urge the Dutch government to help and assist where possible the governments of Romania and Bulgaria. We can ask the Dutch ministers to persuade other EU-colleagues to do more in order to help fellow EU-member states. And we can also speak with Dutch NGOs, share our experiences, and together develop strategies to be of help for the people of Romania and Bulgaria that need our help.

In addition to these visits and meetings we spoke with fellow Christian politicians. Both in Romania and Bulgaria Leo van Doesburg arranged meetings with members of the parliamentary prayer groups and it encouraged us all to meet each other as Christians in different countries, with different backgrounds. We had a lot to share and to tell.

Last but not least we enjoyed the beautiful nature, colours, architecture and food both in Romania and Bulgaria: the enormous buildings of Ceausescu, the traffic in Sofia and Budapest, the trip through the hills to some projects, the dinners with delicious national food and wine and the season that coloured the trees in the most beautiful colours.



The traditional “Prayer Breakfast” of the European Parliament in Brussels (Belgium), followed by an official visit to the Netherlands

DECEMBER 2008

by Petru Andea, Cristi Craciun and Viorel Ringhilescu

Two special events took place in Belgium and The Netherlands between 2 – 5 December, to which, by courtesy of the ECPM, delegates from Romania were invited. Together with highly honoured guests from all over the world, political and cultural figures and significant representatives of different denominations, guests from the EU and Eastern Europe, some of the most important personalities of the European political world were present at the “Prayer Breakfast” held in Brussels, such as the President of the European Parliament, Mr. Hans-Gert Pöttering, Princess of Belgium, Clotilde de Merode and the Vice Prime-Minister of the Netherlands and Minister for Youth and Family, Mr. André Rouvoet.

Taking place annually in the capital of Belgium, Brussels, the “Prayer Breakfast” drew more than 250 guests. The host of the Romanian delegation was Mr. Leo van Doesburg, the ECPM representative for Central and Eastern Europe.



The evening of December 2nd was a wonderful occasion for the delegations usually present to rebuild former contacts and also to establish new friendships with delegates from all corners of the world. As expected, the evening opened with prayer and then the hosts gave a small welcoming speech. The dinner that followed, accompanied by an excellent French wine, freed the tongues and cheered up everyone.

The morning after, the “Prayer Breakfast” took place, where the President of the European Parliament, Mr. Hans-Gert Pöttering emphasized the support that the European Parliament gives to its members, but also to the countries in the process of EU accession. The Princess of Belgium, Clotilde de Merode, was also one of the important speakers. But the most interesting contribution was that of the Vice Prime-Minister of the Netherlands, Mr. André Rouvoet, who said that: “21st century politics will follow in the footsteps of Jesus: it is a perspective full of hope and based on faith; the relevance of Christian politics is related to trust and obedience to God”. Furthermore, Mr. André Rouvoet stated that “the priority is to care for the weak and poor, especially now, when because of the credit and food crisis, they are the ones mostly forgotten by the world. The climatic changes, environmental transformation and other threats and hazards that endanger the creation and quality of life – these are also priorities”. The program was completed by the performance of some artists, who charmed the audience with their talent; among these, a guest from Romania. At the end, the guests exchanged opinions and impressions, and also discussed individual topics.

Lunch in a more intimate background in the Parliament building was followed by a visit to the Belgian Parliament. The building, erected in 1831, when the Netherlands and Belgium were still part of the same state, is exquisitely elegant, as is its history, full of transformations that led to the present democracy. It is educational to know that the Senate seats were once exclusively destined for those who could buy them!

The interior simplicity of the Parliament is completely opposite to the greatness and richness radiating from the Senate, which has a golden roof and walls filled with symbolic frescos or representations of different personalities holding key positions in society. We found out all these facts from the President of the Belgian Senate himself, who was kind enough to personally welcome the Eastern Europe delegations.

We all spent the evening of this delightful day in the warm atmosphere of a well-known bistro in the Central Galleries. In the morning we left for the Dutch Parliament in The Hague, where the delegations from Eastern Europe were invited by the head of the Christian Union Party in the Netherlands. After visiting the building of the Dutch Parliament, there was a meeting with Mr. André Rouvoet, who stated the importance of religion in a youngster's life. Also participating in these discussions was Mr. Peter van Dalen, no. 1 on the Christian Union's list for the European elections in 2009. Afterwards, various Christian-politically oriented activities took place: among the participants were the deputy from the Dutch Parliament, Mrs. Esmé Wiegman, and the general secretary of the Christian Union, Mr. Guido van Beusekom. The activities continued well into the evening, when we were invited to a wonderful dinner in a historic location of the city. We fully felt the welcoming warmth and had time to see international friendships becoming more solid: the fact that we are part of a big Christian European family helped us to toast in more than one language, and to congratulate each other. It was a blissful evening, when the souls of the faithful ones found peace after a busy day.



During the third day we visited the Prefecture Palace in The Hague, where we participated in a debate concerning the ECPM strategy regarding the European Union and Eastern and Central Europe. Among the speakers were Mr. Peeter Vosu (ECPM President), Mr. Johannes de Jong (ECPM political adviser), Mr. Guido van Beusekom (ECPM general secretary and also Christian Union international secretary) and Mr. Leo van Doesburg (ECPM representative for Central and Eastern Europe). The Parliament members from the invited countries also participated in these debates, and presented opinions on Christian politics and its importance to society. Mr. Robert Nijhof presented a scientific thesis on the history of Christian politics. The day ended in visiting the beautiful city of The Hague.

In conclusion, the meetings, the conferences, the discussions, the lessons, the debates, the highly interesting topics, and also the way in which all of these were approached and dealt with, the exquisite quality revealed by the participating personalities – all this contributed to the total success of the 2-5 December 2008 journey between Brussels and The Hague. The future of Europe may crucially depend on the way that Christians will get involved in cultivating Christian values within politics, and obeying God's word.

Of course, one must not forget the tremendous contribution brought by Mr. Leo van Doesburg, the ECPM representative for Central and Eastern Europe, to the success and smooth running of these events. He was the one taking care that all the delegations participating in the reunion were treated with hospitality, and also watching over and taking responsibility for the remarkable quality and intensity of the program.

Visit to the Belgian Federal Parliament

by Christine Dupuis, Federal Christian Democrat Party

After the lunch and informal meetings being held on the occasion of the European Prayer Breakfast, the ECPM delegation went to the Palace of the Nation, for a very exclusive visit to the Federal Parliament that Christine Dupuis, one of the founders of the Belgian CDF - Federal Christian Democrat party - had organised for them in the afternoon.

They were welcomed by the Chairman of the Belgian Senate himself, Mr Armand de Decker. Belgium's Federal Parliament is made up of both the Senate and the House of Representatives. The parliament reflects the wide range of views held by the Belgian people. The Federal Parliament makes legislation that regulates the social relationships in the country. It also monitors the activities of the Federal Government

As the guide explained the functioning of the two Chambers, they visited the neoclassical Palace with its balanced and symmetrical style dating back to the second half of the eighteenth century and that aptly represents the ideas which were prominent during the Age of Enlightenment.

The House of Representatives and the Senate have held their sessions in this building since 1831. It has been called the «Palace of the Nation» since then.

Starting from the central welcoming and meeting hall famous for its two monumental staircases leading to both Chambers' rooms, they were taken through a succession of magnificent rooms, splendidly decorated with paintings, tapestries from Malines' traditional workshop Bracquenié, from the XIXth century, designed by W.Geets, an impressive collection of busts adorning the hallways, representing each prime minister sculpted by a renowned Belgian artist. Rather than showing a physical resemblance, the artists have attempted to render an expression of the Prime Ministers' personalities, like R. Poot for PM Leo Tindemans, of J. Vermeersch for Wilfried Martens, W Peeters for Mark Eyskens.



The Federal Parliament is divided into two chambers: the House of Representatives and the Senate. The House and the Senate are different in terms of their composition and competences. 150 representatives elected by direct universal suffrage sit in the House of Representatives. The Senate is composed of 71 senators as well as Prince Philip, Princess Astrid and Prince Laurent who are senators by right. Most of the parliamentary activity takes place at the committee level. The House of Representatives is the political Chamber of Parliament «par excellence»: the federal government must answer to the House of Representatives for its policy. The Senate is a «reflection» assembly on legislation and major society issues. It is also the meeting place for the communities. The House of Representatives has the last word.

The visit was closed in the prestigious plenary session room by the Chairman Mr De Decker himself, who then offered a reception to the ECPM delegation in the beautiful salons of the Palace

It was the occasion for informal talks with him, and with Pierre-Alexandre de Maere d'Aertrijke, President of the CDF, with the Princess de Merode, with the Brussels Deputee Mr Olivier de Clippele. The evening and informal sharing went on while Christine Dupuis took us downtown for dinner, in a typical restaurant of the ancient "Queen's Gallery" near the Grand' Place.

East European politicians visiting the ChristenUnie

by Anne Marije Staat, ChristenUnie

On 4th and 5th of December 2008 a group of 25 people within the ECPM network from Eastern Europe visited the ChristenUnie in the Netherlands. Amongst them were ECPM chairman Peeter Vosu; the representative for Eastern Europe, Leo van Doesburg; Volodymyr Stretovych (Ukraine); Alexander Ogorodnikov (Russia); and many others from Bulgaria, Romania, Estonia and Montenegro. They had a full program with many meetings, discussions, and lunches with politicians and members of the ChristenUnie.

In the early morning, the participants were picked up at their hotels in Brussels and brought by bus to The Hague, to the House of Representatives of the Netherlands.

During the previous two days they had spent time having meetings with MEPs, taking part in the European Prayer Breakfast, visiting the Belgian parliament and enjoying a reception organized by the president of the Belgian senate. The activities in the Belgian Parliament were organized and coordinated by the ECPM member party, *Chrétien Démocrates Fédéraux (CDF)*.

When we entered the House of Representatives, someone from the ChristenUnie guided us to a meeting room at the top of the old building. In this meeting room, the participants met with Ms Esmé Wiegman (MP for the Christian Union, spokesperson for Health, Welfare and Sport, Housing, Spatial Planning and the Environment, European Affairs) and Ms Rita Klapwijk (Policy officer Agriculture, Nature and Food Quality, Development Co-operation, European Affairs, Christian Union parliamentary party). Ms Wiegman first introduced herself, and gave our international guests the opportunity to ask questions. It was very interesting to hear that the same problems were current in all the different countries, and that every country has its own way to handle these problems. This led to warm discussions now and then, but we were able to treat each other with respect, accepting each others' opinions, and moving on



There was also a meeting with the Vice Prime-Minister of the Netherlands, André Rouvoet (Youth and Family) and his political assistant, Mr Reinier Koppelaar. The people already knew him, because he was the main speaker at the Prayer Breakfast in Brussels. Again, it was good to hear him talking about youth policies, and about the recently published Family Note. After a while, Mr Rouvoet had to leave, and he gave the floor to Mr Koppelaar, with whom we also had some interesting discussions.

The number one candidate of the ChristenUnie for the European elections, Mr Peter van Dalen, prepared a presentation for our guests, which was related to the European Union and Christian politics. We agreed to exchange information and Christian, European political programmes, also anything which can be used in the campaign for the European elections and to learn from each other.

During the dinner, the Chairman of the national board of the ChristenUnie, Mr Peter Blokhuis, joined the guests. We had a wonderful dinner in the city centre of The Hague. After that all the international guests were exhausted and could not wait to go to their hotel rooms in Scheveningen.

The next day, the people were again picked up by the bus, and brought to the Provincial Government Building of the Dutch province, South-Holland. This province is one of the 12 provinces of the Netherlands: the most densely populated, it has 4,3 million inhabitants and is the most economic and service-providing province.

The program for the second day was somewhat shorter. Some internal ECPM presentations were held by Mr Johannes de Jong and Mr Leo van Doesburg. A member of the Scientific Institute of the ChristenUnie, Mr Rob Nijhoff, prepared a presentation about the development of Christian political policy. There were also some discussions with the local politicians of the Dutch province South-Holland who welcomed us in the provincial house of South-Holland in the Hague.



During these few days, there was enough time to exchange knowledge and experiences about politics in all the different countries of origin. We realized that in many (East-)European countries, Christian political parties are very much opposed and attacked by other non-Christian, secular parties and politicians. The Christian politicians are personally hindered from practising their beliefs in the real world. The only thing we can do is to support each other as Christians, making each other stronger in the tough world of politics. We can advise each other, and exchange our experiences through conferences, meetings and discussions. Once again, the importance of the European Christian Political Movement has become clear. We have the responsibility both to challenge and to affirm the social and political order within Europe.



The ECPM North East European conference

by Guido van Beusekom

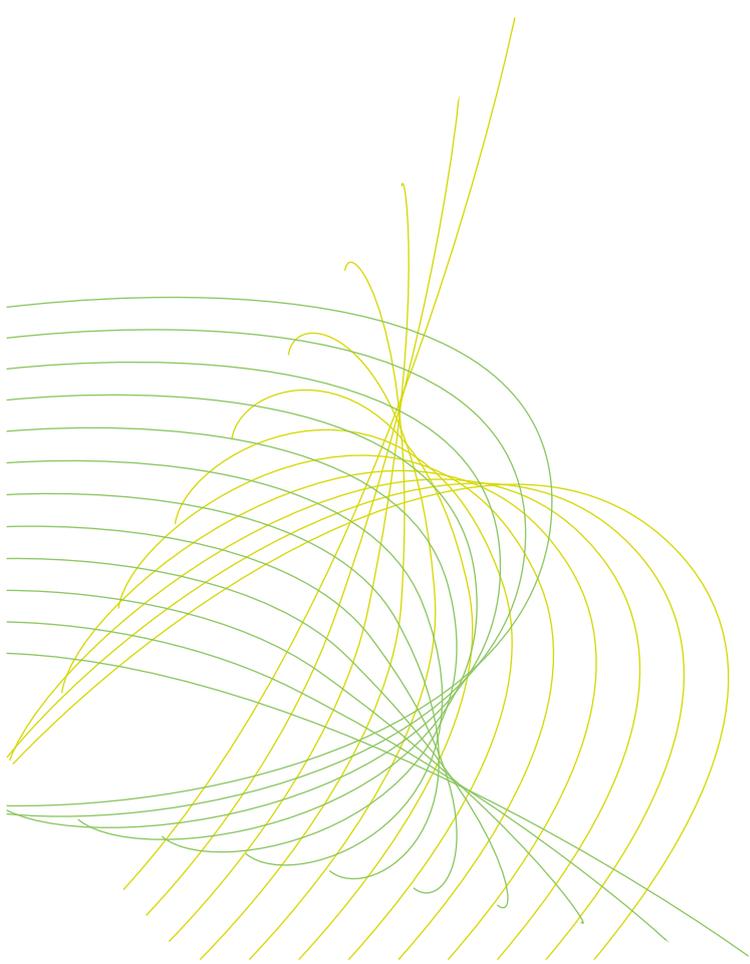
At the end of April the ECPM and the Finnish Christian Democrats (FKD) organized a conference for the North-Eastern countries of Europe . The theme was "Faith and Christian-democracy". Participants from Belarus , Belgium , Bulgaria , Estonia , Latvia , Finland and the Netherlands participated in this conference.

We were welcomed in Helsinki by Peter Östman (Vice-Chairman) and Sari Essayah (Secretary-General) of the FKD on Friday night, and had some diverse lectures.

The first lecture was given by Peter Östman himself about the development of Christian-democracy in the Scandinavian countries. After his lecture, a delegate of the Belarusian Christian-democrats, Alex Shein, spoke about the opportunities and struggles in the politics and society of Belarus. Saara Ruokonen from the women's movement of the FKD then spoke about the achievements and also the challenges ahead for the women's movement. During the first conference day we were also joined by Mrs Päivi Räsänen, party leader of the FKD.

The second day started early in the morning. A delegate of the ChristenUnie and member of the Dutch senate, Roel Kuiper, spoke about how faith and religion can go together with politics. In his lecture, Kuiper discussed the ideas of Abraham Kuyper and especially the idea of "sphere sovereignty". After this interesting lecture we had a discussion and proceeded with the workshop session. The youth had a workshop about the alcohol problem among the youth of various countries and specifically in Finland. . This workshop was organized by Jonathan van Tongeren , the Secretary-General of the youth movement of the ECPM, ECPYN. They discussed the possibility of campaigning against alcohol and brainstormed about other opportunities.

The other participants of the conference had a workshop given by Peter Östman and Roel Kuiper. During this workshop, both speakers mainly elaborated about issues they had already mentioned in their speeches. Many questions were about how to implement these ideas in different contexts, for example the situation in Belarus is of course very different from the one in Finland . After this workshop the conference ended and we were invited to join the members of the FKD in order to celebrate their 50th anniversary.



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