

# POLICY PAPERS 2015-2017

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# CONTENTS

<b>GENDER POLICY PAPER</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>ADVOCACY AND SOLIDARITY POLICY PAPER</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>ECO-JUSTICE POLICY PAPER</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>THEOLOGY AND SPIRITUALITY POLICY PAPER</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>INTERFAITH POLICY PAPER</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>GLOBAL NETWORKING POLICY PAPER</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>FUNDRAISING POLICY PAPER</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>REGIONAL LINKS POLICY PAPER</b>	<b>14</b>

# Gender Policy Paper

## Genders and sexual identities

Questions about identity are always complex and contentious. As Christians we are acutely aware of the importance of articulating our identities in Christ and the implications of this for our actions in daily life. Perhaps one of the most pressing issues of identity facing the churches is that of genders and sexual identities. These are issues that our denominations and churches are divided on. Consequently, disagreements on these issues can have widespread implications for the progress of the ecumenical movement.

We believe that a safe space needs to be created for honest dialogue and open conversation on these issues. Only when we listen to each other with respect and in humility is it possible for us to agree to disagree agreeably. As such, our proposals in relation to gender and sexuality aim to facilitate conversation and the sharing of perspectives as we grow together on our Christian pilgrimage.

## The Issues

### *The place of sexual minorities in churches and societies*

While many European societies have made substantial progress in the recognition of the rights of sexual minorities, we are mindful that there are many places throughout our region where sexual minorities continue to be persecuted and feel unsafe. In many situations the mental health of sexual minorities is disproportionately at risk compared to sexual majorities. Regardless of our particular divisions on questions of sexual ethics, we are committed to improving the quality of life for sexual minorities.

Pastoral care for sexual minorities should be mindful of the particular struggles of these communities. Can sexual minorities be fully welcome in our churches?

Marriage equality is becoming a reality in many civil jurisdictions. It is important that the churches reflect upon the implications of this for their pastoral strategies and their theologies.

Within the LGBTQ community there is increasingly a recognition that Trans people have faced particular disadvantages beyond those challenges faced by other constituencies of the community. Listening to the experiences of Trans people should be a priority for the churches as we reflect on the complexity of sexual identity. Likewise, the distinctive experience of bisexual people and pansexual people needs to be heard as we consider that gender and sexuality rather than a binary operates on a spectrum.

In all our conversations it is a priority to challenge fundamentalism in all its unwelcome expressions.

## *Heterosexuality in the Context of Christian Belief*

As we consider sexual minorities, it is important not to lose sight of the challenges that face heterosexual people in the context of Christian belief. Commitment in religious marriage is becoming a counter-cultural choice. We should reflect on what it means to structure our relationships in marriage in an increasingly secular world. What are the challenges facing traditional marriage in each of our SCM contexts?

## *Challenging Patriarchy*

There is no doubt that gender inequality is widespread throughout Europe. Despite advances in the place of women in society, there remain numerous obstacles that women face that men do not. Challenging patriarchal structures that sustain inequality should be a key priority of WSCF-E's gender policies. To that end, we propose focusing that challenge on two primary areas: domestic violence and consent. Through Christian theological reflection on domestic violence we will challenge the stereotypes that allow the silencing of victims (of all genders) of domestic violence. The challenging of unequal power dynamics will extend to exploring the issue of consent, and bodily autonomy, as we endeavour to undermine structural expressions of our societies' inherited patriarchy.

## Actions

The gender conference in 2016 will explore these issues from a theological perspective, but beyond that it is important to capitalise on the momentum that the conference will generate. The working group will develop resources to continue the conversation on genders and sexual identities at SCM level. These resources will include:

- A series of short videos serving as guides to the conversation including both conservative, liberal and neutral perspectives, feminist theologies, queer theologies etc.
- Resources that help us to explore the issues of respectful disagreement
- Sharing perspectives and challenging stereotypes through telling stories
- A series of interactive bible studies on gender and sexuality themes
- A section on the website with access to resources
- Appropriate text guides to the conversation

# Advocacy and Solidarity Policy Paper

## Refugees and Displaced People

This committee believes that advocacy and solidarity for displaced people in Europe should be our main focus for the next two years based on the foundation of Jesus Christ's radical love.

The group recommends the formation of a working group with a mandate from WSCF Europe around this issue. This group should form links with WSCF Middle East and Africa to co-ordinate solidarity efforts and create a dialogue to address issues globally.

One of the first priorities for the working group should be to write an open letter representing our concerns and signed, if possible, by WSCF Europe, Middle East and Africa and for this to be distributed amongst national SCMs to be published where possible. The working group should liaise with WSCF Europe Communications to ensure the work on this issue is well publicised.

We recommend a capacity building training session to be held in the next nine months specific to this issue and for the main theme of the 2017 conference to be around solidarity and advocacy for displaced people.

### **We recommend the priorities for this working group to be as follows:**

- Advocate for peace and for ways to address the reasons for forced migrations.
- Advocate for a fair, compassionate and permanent policy to provide homes for refugees within Europe. Advocate to national and international governments to create legal safe passage for refugees into and across Europe.
- Provide solidarity for refugees currently incarcerated or detained in detention centres across Europe and working with charities advocating for their rights and fair treatment.
- Build capacity in member SCMs through training and networking to co-ordinate and share best practice for the response to the refugee crisis.
- Advocate for and support refugees in access to higher education across Europe, work within our institutions and churches to find the best way to support refugees.
- Advocate for our churches to build capacity and have solidarity with refugees affected by the crisis across Europe.
- Seek to create a multifaith dialogue with other student religious organisations to coordinate advocacy and solidarity campaigns.

## Economic Justice

This committee believes that the way in which corporations avoid their moral and economic obligations across the world is an issue which should be at the heart of WSCF's advocacy and solidarity work. We believe our faith compels us to act on issues of economic injustice and that it should inform our economic choices.

- Examples of economic injustice raised by the group: Immigrants and refugees in Russia being exploited by companies and neglected by the government.
- Exploitation of developing countries by transnational corporations, the removal of natural resources with no reciprocal economic benefit.
- Violation of labor rights by transnational corporations across the developing world.
- Corporations removing profits from the countries in which they were made and not paying the taxes which they owe and the government structures which are permissive of this.

**We recommend the following areas of work for the Advocacy and Solidarity Committee of WSCF Europe:**

- Work to raise awareness of issues of economic justice across Europe and globally and build capacity to share issues across WSCF Europe.
- Advocate for the implementation of just tax policies by our churches and universities in their procurements procedures. Provide capacity building training on tax justice issues to WSCF Europe member SCMs (in connection with SCM Great Britain's tax justice campaign)
- Build a network of SCMs across Europe campaigning on issues of economic justice and sharing best practice and successes amongst them.

# Eco-Justice Policy Paper

## Working definition \*

*“Eco-spirituality, as a spiritual practice, moves us to recognize that, although humans have a special mission in the natural world, so does each creature, in ways that no human can duplicate. As we care for the earth, she ministers to us, and in this relationship we discover the Good News she has been waiting for: We are made of the earth. She is our home and our partner in ministry.”*

*“Eco-spirituality teaches us that the Spirit of God is immanent in all creation. Critics of this theology say, among other things, that the particulars of the “Christian” faith and Jesus message are lost in these teachings. But defendants of this theology, like Christian eco-theologian Ivone Gebara, say that Christ is present where there is community, where there is solidarity, where there is any moment of compassion and tenderness. If creation is capable of healing and teaching, it is because Christ is there.”*

-- Excerpts from [an article “Eco-Justice is Creation Care: Shifting the Foundations of Eco-Theology to Include Stewardship, Justice, and Spirituality”](#) – Rev. Neddy Astudillo

\* The working definition was used as the starting point for conversation at the ERA 2015. This definition of Eco-Spirituality is to be developed by the Working Group and its Coordinator at a later stage.

## Main message

### **CHRISTIANS CARE FOR CREATION!**

- there was a misinterpretation of the Genesis, formed historically
- we need to change it - to emphasise that Christians and care for Creation is the same theme
- 1983 WCC “Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation”

## Promoted values

- Striving towards eco-spirituality in our work
  - Question to ourselves: how are we (WSCF-Europe) are involved? (office, events to show our credibility)
- There are enough papers produced, we need action!
  - This is a way of empowering people on the grassroots - our SCMs - to bring their ideas to the agenda, in order
    - to get concretely involved in the doings of WSCF-Europe and the global movement

- to let them express their Christian compassion and responsibility for compassion through concrete deeds which help the Creation
  - The Working Group should research, how could we use raising awareness of problems as a tool of encouraging people to action and not “getting them depressed”
- Promoting the idea that “every little thing counts”

## Themes for a conference

Conference / Lingua Franca “Eco spirituality: How do you care for Creation?” / “What is our gift to the world to save the world as Christians?”

The event should be held at an area in Europe which needs attention (environmentally)

Some ideas for the concrete actions at the conference:

- tree planting
- community building project which promotes Eco Justice and taking action for the Creation
- taking [UN Sustainable Development Goals 2030](#) as the starting point, and developing them to make them an working agenda for WSCF-Europe

## Campaigning ideas and proposals

- We should use in our campaign the existing materials on Eco Justice that the LAC and AP regions have already created
- We should use the existing materials which we have on WSCF-E Website - the Green Toolbox and one Mozaik on Climate Change - promote ideas and materials that arise from these documents in our blog and social media
- Make a campaign - challenge our SCMs to become greener, and share their progress or accomplishments with everyone
- Begin celebrating annually the International Earth Day (April 22) as WSCF-E day of prayer and action for Creation. This day is to be an equivalent of UDPS, but emphasising the special relationship Christians have with the God’s Creation. Emphasise the activity part! Activities such as:
  - tree planting
  - waste collection
  - workshops on Reduce, Reuse, Recycle in the SCMs or for the community
  - flash-mobs
  - marathons / festivals / fairs for Creation - with a Christian message
- Do a workshop at Staff and Officers’ Meeting 2016 on Eco Spirituality

- UDPS themed Eco-Spirituality in 2017
- Promote the campaign "[Fasting for the Climate](#)" - fasting on the 1st day of each month as a statement. Proposal to bind the environmental benefits of vegetarianism to the promotional material.

### A few practical suggestions

- The WSCF-E website should have working groups progress, including Eco Justice, on the front page. Maybe, a countdown to 2030?
- Requesting blog posts from SCMs which have vegetarian policy or thematic days on climate, and promote their stories of success

# Theology and Spirituality Policy Paper

## Prayer

- awareness of differences in prayer forms present in WSCF-E, trying new forms of prayer
- keeping in mind personality types- extroverts and introverts in worship preparation and prayer type preferences
- dedicate efforts to reflect on different forms of prayer and understand roots
- Explore understanding of prayer and effects of prayer from scientific point of view. This is to explore possible same experience we all may have when we pray even in different ways
- Evagrius Ponticus- *prayer makes us Christian*

## Theology events topics

- death, understanding of death in our life
- who is Christ? go deep into that understanding of Christ as a uniting centre of us all, Christians.
- go back to *old questions and* re-discover our roots
- awareness of how the society influences the Church and change it. How our Churches changed due to society impact? Positive/negative?

## Theological dimension underpinning all topics

- keep theological understanding of all topics through Bible studies and readings of theological teachings
- keep reflecting on what Church is - gathering of people around Christ

## Prayer time at events

- prayers to be more present at our events
- visit local churches at places where we hold our events

## Pentecostal Church involvement in WSCF-E

- invite Pentecostal young people to our events

[Link 1](#)

[Link 2](#)

# Interfaith Policy Paper

The Interfaith Working Group has following recommendations for the thematic work of WSCF-E for the next two years:

## Conference

The overall topic of the conference is prayers / meditation in different religions as this is one of the main similarities.

### *Topic1. Inter Christian Dialogue*

- Panel discussion with representatives from the different denominations, topic: What does it mean to be Christian?
- Before and afterwards: working groups with just students etc (without people who studied their religion) talking about Christian faith

### *Topic 2. Prayers/meditations in the different religions*

- special focus on: what are the differences? Not just: what are the similarities
- first day: topic 1, then topic 2 starts
- everyday: religious education session (30 minutes space for the individual religion like e.g. bible study for Christians, study of the Tora...)
- together with European Interfaith Youth Network?, EUJS

## Campaigning ideas and proposals

Religious Freedom: Praying the way we want to pray

Tool:

- Slogan: Living faith together
- Creating a Logo for it, everyone can use (and also for the conference)
  - pictures of people praying in different positions 'typical' for their religion in one line
  - stickers or postcards.
    - ideas for the postcards: Logo on top and underneath slogan OR whole postcard with the logo in the background and the slogan in the front

## Further recommendations

- be more open: not focusing only on the monotheistic religions, but including every kind of religion there is

## Working group for 2015-2017

- facebook group and passing on the information to people who don't have facebook
- discussing the logo maybe also on our WSCF-Europe website?

# Global Networking Policy Paper

## Awareness raising

- create a Facebook page
- create a database of names
- what regions and SCMs do
- translation of articles from Mozaik for other regions to Spanish and French

## Financial support for regional/SCMs activities

- Fund that would collect money for SCMs/regions emergency needs.
- Donation to the fund which would serve all regions for their thematic activities

## Creating connections

- twining of SCMs (write to SCMs who would like to engage in getting in contact with some other SCM)
- inter-regional conferences
- organising annual informal trip of SCMerS in the summer
- regions inviting other regions/SCMerS to their events

# Fundraising Policy Paper

The WSCF-E Litomysl Fundraising group discussed a number of different fundraising activities which WSCF has undertaken in the previous two years and the successes and failures of these.

**Based on this discussion the group has come up with the following recommendations for WSCF Europe's fundraising activities in the following two years:**

- The focus of new streams of fundraising should be shifted toward communications with the alumni of WSCF Europe. We believe that the alumni of WSCF still have a great amount of love for the organisation and fond memories of their time but that we should do more to communicate with them.
- The Fundraising Co-ordinator should form two working groups to assist with this project over the next two years.
- The Fundraising Working Group will seek to create a network of alumni donors who can give to WSCF Europe on an annual basis in exchange for membership of a WSCF Alumni Network. The working group will also assist the fundraising co-ordinator in all elements of fundraising including SCM contributions, organisational donations and individual donations.
- The History Working Group will seek to create an oral history of WSCF Europe in connection with the foundation of the WSCF Alumni Network. This group will work to assist the Fundraising Co-ordinator in finding contact details for WSCF alumni, researching the history of the organisation and collecting the stories and recollections of alumni from across the continent.
- The WSCF website should be updated in line with the work of these two committees to incorporate information on the Alumni Network and the history project.
- With reference to fundraising through church organisations we believe it is worth looking at targeted campaigns rather than general fundraising. For example we may ask a church to give money to support WSCF's work with persecuted Christians in the Middle East or to support campaigns which could be co-ordinated with the Advocacy and Solidarity Committee.

# Regional Links Policy Paper

**We recommend to the ERC that the roles of the Regional Links Coordinator are determined as following:**

- Promote and enhance co-operation across member movements
- Support movement building in WSCF-Europe region, assist SCMs in growing their work by sharing advice and examples of good practice
- Contribute to the development of the WSCF-E website and social media pages as a discussion and communication forum
- Organize and participate in the annual Staff and Officers’ meeting preparatory committee and lead and organise the entire event
- Lead the outreach effort of the WSCF-Europe to new potential member movements.
- Create a culture of SCMs to Links Coordinator cooperation - to emphasise to all movements that this position exists, and that it is a useful tool for their growth, instead of being a burden
- Bring to attention of the ERC communication problems with the SCMs, if such arise during the term
- If our affiliated movements are inactive or do not respond, take an action of reaching out to other Student Christian Movements in the same country

**Our proposal for Regional Links Coordinator’s action in term 2015-2017 is hereby:**

- Coordinate national SCMs by keeping the link to them alive. This involves regular communication, as well as on-request communication, such as e.g. WSCF-E & partner events announcements, calls for staff and volunteers, Facebook groups moderating etc.
- Being aware of the previous active existence of subregions - Western Subregion (WS), Nordic-Baltic Cooperation Council (NBCC), Central and Eastern European Subregion (CESR)
- Write reminders to subregions every 3 months - request to write about their upcoming events
- For example:
  - make a schedule for the whole year, or even 2 years
  - send it out to all SCMs
  - send reminders to SCMs of each subregion on the rolling basis, such as (example)

WS	Reminder 1 Nov, Deadline for data 20 Nov
NBCC	Reminder 1 Dec, Deadline for data 20 Dec
CESR	Reminder 1 Jan, Deadline for data 20 Jan
WS	Reminder 1 Feb, Deadline for data 20 Feb

- Organise, together with prepcom, the annual Staff and Officers meeting - currently the main networking and capacity building platform for European SCMs
- Coordinate the Links working group
- Keep in contact / observe all the other thematic working groups; feeding the updates from the working groups to the WSCF-E newsletter, or notifying the general public in other means
- Create and keep updated databases of working groups as well as of SCM contacts
- Send updates about partner events via email and notify about them also in social media
- Write emails and send to all SCMs about upcoming events - immediately after the date and place have been confirmed; call for applications shall be sent around when such is produced

**The Links Working Group would like to bring to the attention of the ERC the following:**

- WSCF-Europe website needs restructuring, and simplifying the navigation. It should become more user/friendly
- While the website is important for storing information and reaching to WSCF Friends, the region should make sure that *proportionally greater share of effort* is devoted to developing its social media, such as Facebook, Twitter, etc. These media are the channels to reach out to most of our current and potential future members, and should be prioritized