Seminar on Ecumenical Student Work in Europe
Gaute Brækken

This summer around 40 SCM members from our nine national movements will gather for a week in the hills of Norway. During this seminar they will explore together how to do ecumenical student work today, and what it means to follow Christ in 2012.

There will be creative workshops on a variety of topics associated with being a follower of Christ today; how we should respond to the climate crisis; how we can include different minorities in our work; and how we should meet students with other beliefs. We’re also expecting visitors from the newly restarted movement in Palestine, and they will share with us their struggle for peace and reconciliation in the Holy Land.

Inter-religious dialogue and non-discrimination based on sexual orientation is especially interesting for us to look at together, exploring what it means to be a Christian today. Throughout the six days that the seminar will last, the participants will contribute in many ways. They will lead us through different European liturgical and cultural traditions. They will share best practices and other experiences from youth and student work, and together discuss and reflect on the special challenges in working with students.

Through lectures and workshops we will explore different social issues together, issues that are relevant to European students today. These issues include the work for global justice, preventing xenophobia through ecumenical and inter-faith dialogue, peace building and reconciliation, participating in the civil society to build open and democratic countries, and the need to strengthen our partnerships.

Of course there will be plenty of time to get to know each other better around the campfire in the white Norwegian nights. Exploring Norwegian nature is an experience in itself.

The seminar is linked together with the annual summer meeting for the Nordic-Baltic region. It’s in cooperation with the movements in Poland, Lithuania, Georgia, Germany, Hungary, Finland, Denmark and Sweden, and is supported financially by the «Youth in Action» programme in the EU. Members of these national movements can contact their national office if they want to participate. Coming together like this and sharing our experiences is a great way of strengthening our student work, we believe.

It’s exciting for the Student Christian Movement in Norway to host such an event, and we hope that it will bring renewed interest for our work in Norway, and that our members will want to engage more in the great international community that we’re a part of. The venue at Haugtun is a very special and traditional place for the movement in Norway, and it’s not far from the capital of Norway, Oslo. The dates for the event are 22-27 June, and we will be celebrating Midsummer’s Eve together.

Hopefully we will get experiences and new knowledge that we can share with the rest of the Europe Region in various ways, building a stronger community of European Christian students.
About the Author

Gaute Brækken (33) is the Secretary General of the Student Christian Movement in Norway since August 2010. He belongs to the Church of Norway (Lutheran) and is politically active in the Norwegian Christian Democratic Party. He is a former head of the Programmes Department within the YWCA-YMCA Guides and Scouts of Norway. Email: post@forbundet.no.