

World Student Christian Federation Europe
2013-2015 Policy Paper
12-13 October 2013

This working document is WSCF Europe's thematic base for the programs, activities and work for 2013-2015. These recommendations will be thoughtfully implemented by the European Regional Committee elected at the European Regional Assembly in St.Gilgen, Austria in October 2013.

Culture and Higher Education Interest Group:

The Culture and Higher Education interest group has the following recommendations for thematic focus of WSCF Europe for the next two years:

Culture

- culture of purchasing only imported food which has impact on environment- what we could do? What are the consequences?
- discussing vegetarian diet and the general debate of global population limiting its own resources

Higher Education

- Values behind the subjects which are taught; the ethics of the way subjects are taught (people are choosing subjects that bring them wealth, rather than what they would really like to study);
- Christianity having influence on the ethics which was behind establishment of various study disciplines.

The Christian presence at universities could be a point of consideration. These are comments made by the CHE Interest Group on the matter:

- Chaplaincies should be more welcoming to students and care for students as students need that and have a need for exploring Christianity with others
- The students of our generation prefer other activities than an exploration of faith; it seems that the West of Europe is not that interested in Christian matters - it seems more interesting for students from the East as it is new for them.
- Problem with universities in some countries not promoting Christian chaplaincies
- Some chaplaincies should focus on international students when they struggle to attract people
- Fees - question of paying fees for education
- Chaplaincies in many countries are self-satisfied with their own work and

feel no need to invite others

General suggestions and comments:

We should link to other organisations that work within Higher Education field. Other ecumenical organizations should be mentioned at the website of WSCF Europe.

CHE interest group affirms the Policy Papers from 2011-2013.

Gender Interest Group

The title for the upcoming Gender Conference in 2014 is "Life choices – Relationship commitment, identity and sexuality among young people in Europe today".

For the Gender Conference 2014 we suggest that the conference will look at the following points:

- Awareness of denominational differences and an emphasis on inviting speakers from the different denominations
- The economical interest of society in people organising themselves in couples/families
- The role of the church and state in regards to marriages and relationships
- Poly-amourosity, celibacy, asexuality, "white marriages" (marriages without consummation) and the nature of love
- Looking at relationships in matriarchal societies (for example the Mosuo people at the border between China and Tibet, see the documentary made by Sunny Bergman from the Netherlands)
- Look at liturgies for marriages of homosexuals

We ask that the preparatory committee of the conference will make sure that LGBT relationships and identities are remembered and reflected upon in every aspect of the conference.

Proposed topics for the Gender Conference in 2016:

For the funding application for the Gender Conference in 2016 we ask that the following topics are considered:

- Culture of Sex;
 - looking at sex in the public sphere and how that is affecting our personal, intimate, sexual space.
 - Growing up to be a sexual being – phenomena, challenges and good practices for protecting sexual identity in the process of growing up.
 - Choosing your own sexuality not in terms of hetero or homosexual, but in terms of how, when and with whom you choose to have a

- sexual relationship.
- Winning (back) your sexual Autonomy
- The relationship between body and mind; how body affects mind.
- Sexual Violence, physical and mental

We ask that in writing this funding application, the staff and Gender Coordinator will work in cooperation with SCMerS interested in the topic and that the working process will be started well in advance of the deadline for submitting the grant application.

General recommendations

When publishing statements, attention should be put to the wording. It should be considered how the statement will be received in different SCMerS. A statement should be followed by explanatory blogs and emails to SCMerS.

The ERC should reconsider the communication channels to SCMerS: SCMerS particularly interested in Gender/Solidarity/Theology/CHE can get emails concerning these specific issues; SCM offices should be CC'ed.

Theology Interest Group

Recommendations for the thematic focus in Theology working area for the next two years:

- Interdenominational diversity
- What forms of ecumenism exists in different countries
- Inter-Christian and interreligious reconciliation
- Ecumenism, not only as dialogue, but also as a way of thinking, awareness raising and knowledge
- Ecumenism; a tool for reconciliation?

Worship and Prayer

- Attending WSCF-E Events also means being open to experiencing worships of other denominations. It should be respected if for some reason a participant feels uncomfortable with a new worship environment, but it needs to be also respectfully communicated to people responsible for the particular worship. This is very important to make clear at all events.
- It should be communicated that WSCF Europe is not a space for preaching your own beliefs, but primarily to listen to and learn from others.
- Main principles that all ecumenists can share should be identified. This could result in a description of the environment we want to create at our events that could serve as a guideline/introduction to our worship culture for participants.

- The openness towards other denominations (that we find to be important for our events), should be emphasised in the invitation and call for participants.
- WSCF Europe should have a clear practice in dealing sensitively with people who find it difficult to participate in worships (ecumenical and/or of other denominations). It is important that the importance of celebrating worship together is emphasised and clear to participants.

Prayers, Bible Texts and Bible Studies

- Bible texts should be chosen carefully.
- Awareness should be paid to the fact that texts are bound on time and paradigms
- Prayer resources should be chosen with sensitivity to different denominations.
- Attention should be paid to the fact that not all participants are theologians
- Attention should be paid to the context of the Bible text. When we ask groups to reflect on little pieces of text, a short summary of the context should be given.
- More attention should be given to discuss the different ways of interpretation of the Bible (e.g. historical-critical, symbolic, mythological)
- When reading the Scripture, an introduction to the text should be given before free discussions begin.

Conference Topics

- Ecumenical worships: important, yet problematic - not only the content but also a form is problem (for example, for Orthodox icons are important); how music is used in different denominations?
- What is prayer?
- *A need for knowing (all) different liturgies* – To set a conference in a big city where a lot of different denominations and churches are present. Possibility to visit and witness as many different services as possible.
- Ecumenism; a tool for reconciliation?
- Diversity of spirituality in different Christian denominations

General Recommendations

- Clarify what WSCF stands for in regards to issues of life and the surrounding world;
- ERC should consider why are there so few catholic SCMs involved with

WSCF-E and how an active outreach to these can be done.

- To pay attention to the different denominational perceptions on topics which are discussed;
- To create an Online questioner where SCMs can share wishes for the content of conferences in order to find a common ground;
- A general outlook to theologies from other continents/non-European backgrounds is encouraged, as well as a recognition of our legacy from other religions and cultures
- At all events there should be presented a theological background on the issue of the conference from at least Orthodox, Catholic and Protestant point of view
- *More reflection on Jesus; Who is this person?*

Solidarity Interest Group

The solidarity interest group stressed that solidarity within WSCF-E itself, with the SCMs, is of the utmost importance. In order for SCMs to have solidarity with people in the wider community, they need to feel solidarity amongst themselves and have a sense of being a valuable part of WSCF as a transformative and progressive student Christian movement. This solidarity can then be projected onto the wider community. Communication and contact with SCMs is therefore the key. We encourage WSCF-E to work on inclusion and equality within the solidarity framework. The following are ideas and recommendations.

Sharing experiences and best practices

- Reaffirm the work of the previous ERA to provide a space for sharing, presenting and giving visibility to the local actions (website, newsletter, Facebook, resource material, translation and sharing)
- Structure part of the conference where there are messages from Senior Friends, presentation about WSCF, history of WSCF
- Invite Senior Friends to conferences to enable them to see what is happening in the federation at the moment and potentially offer support and fundraising

Ecological justice

- Reaffirm the recommendations of ecological justice from the last ERA
- Recognise the flexibility of the food policy guidelines for food intolerant diets
- The principles of ecological justice and the sustainable guidelines shown in the GreenToolBox publication are to be upheld

Recommendations for next solidarity conference (2015)

- Socio-economic inclusion, e.g. economic justice, social welfare,

sustainability, poverty

- Money and access to education
- Participants should be able to engage deeper with an analysed case etc. More time during the conference experiencing firsthand testimonies (Visiting locals and NGOs –equip people during the conferences to take back to local communities)
- Include campaigns and action within the conference, for example campaigns to experience what it is like to live on the poverty line (Live on 1EUR a day)
- Try and support the local community where the conference is held

General Recommendations

- Working groups at the ERA should be planned in a way to ensure there is a denominational, regional and gender balance to ensure that all opinions are taken into account
- More time at the ERA for working on interest themes
- Renewed approach to gathering information for contact people and Senior Friends (Database)
- All SCMs create a profile for the website - add videos, photos, prayer requests
- Address affiliated movements that are not active anymore within WSCF-E – try to make the link stronger

Fundraising Group

The ERA gives a mandate to the ERC to work to develop a fundraising strategy focusing on the following areas:

- **Senior Friends**
 - Sponsor participants at WSCF-E events
 - Establish mechanisms through which Senior Friends can make regular donations
 - Research paperwork required to accept wills/ask Senior Friends to include us in their wills
- **Individual Giving**
 - Research best practices around Crowd Funding
 - Identifying ecumenically-minded adults (via churches, CEC or WCC etc.) who could support our work

- **Institutions (Governmental and/or European level)**
 - Explore possibility of partnering with other European organisations such as Ecumenical Youth Council of Europe, Religions for Peace, European Union of Jewish Students, Amnesty International, and secular youth organisations etc.
- **Institutions (Non-governmental/local)**
 - Contact national SCMs to identify possible donors for WSCF-E and to start application process in cooperation with the ERC
- **Churches**
 - ERC members can approach local parishes for donations or referrals

Practical Suggestions

- Compile database of Senior Friends
- Hire fundraising intern – [Explore possibilities of national service in each member country]
- Investigate fundraising practices of our peer organisations – what practices can we implement with our limited resources?
- Be mindful of varied cultures of giving
- Explore how we might partner with CEC/WCC to make contact with potential donors

Links Interest Group

The Links Interest Group has the following recommendations for the ERC:

- Improve the WSCF website to make it more user-friendly and more practical according to the needs of SCMs.
- Train the Publications and Office intern for Wordpress CMS and website editing in order to make the WSCF Europe website more coherent, and to concentrate more on it in our visibility efforts (instead of Facebook);
- Give a mandate to the Links Coordinator to
 - Participate in and contribute to Capacity Building Trainings/Networking events preparatory committees and to participate in the entire events;

- Hold monthly Skype meetings with SCM representatives in order to maintain close contact with the SCMs;
 - Be aware of the life and events of the SCMs and share the information about it within WSCF-E (for example through newsletter);
 - Initiate a project to create promotional videos for the WSCF-E (for example use footage from conferences and create interviews with participants) and
 - Provide other visual material on the website;
 - Actively engage building movements and looking into that.
- Escalate the ways of communication (emails, calls, letters etc.) and in an extreme cases reach out to other Student Christian Movements from the same country, if our affiliated movements are inactive and/or do not respond;

Lingua Franca Interest Group

Summer Camp 2014: "Music as a common Lingua Franca"

We recommend that the new Lingua Franca coordinator will develop a format for the event where language training are at the center of attention, and keep the learning aspect in mind when choosing methodologies.

- Choir classes (where attention is paid to understanding lyrics)
- Learning to play instruments

Themes for the Lingua Franca Programme in 2015

- Nature
- Training on basic use of media
- Health
- Intergenerational Dialogue
- Disabilities
- Theater
- Subcultures

Recommendations on the framework of the programme of the future

- We recommend that the Lingua Franca will go back to being Language Training including the aspect of community building.
- Focus should be put on the LF as a stepping stone for participants to feel

ready to attend WSCF Conferences.

- Attention should be paid to the fact that using Russian as a communication language can be an excluding factor for some participants.
- When speakers and teachers are chosen for the training, attention should be put to their didactical skills.
- Attention should be put to have pastoral care persons who can speak the major languages present at the conference.
- We recommend that a "WSCF Glossary of terms" is developed for words like ecumenism, gender, safe space, faith etc.
- The call for applications for LF should be spread in as many languages as possible
- We recommend a closer cooperation between the LF Coordinator, the ERC and the office staff. It should be considered to have an ERC member on the LF preparatory committee.
- The first preparatory committee meeting should happen as soon as possible after the Coordinator have stepped into his or her position and the prep.com has been elected.
- We recommend that it is considered to formulate the call for the coordinator in terms of tasks instead of in hours.
- It is strongly recommended that it is analysed during the term 2013-2015 if it still makes sense to have the LF programme focused on the Central and Eastern Subregion.