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# **ICCS**

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Inter-European Commission  
on Church and School

## **“Giving Europe a Heart and Soul”** A Christian vision for education in Europe’s schools

**A Discussion Report of a Working Group of the Commission**

**2003**



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Intereuropean Commission on Church and School

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## Introduction

This publication will focus on education as an important sphere of life in a democratic society. We will argue that religion has its legitimate place in education on several levels. Our starting point is from within the Christian faith community but we suggest that other religions or worldviews might argue in a similar way. Through examples and reflections we illustrate how churches and Christians can support and inspire an approach to education, that contributes to the quality of living together in Europe, sometimes referred to as a “Europe with a heart and soul”.

The preparation of this publication was well advanced when the terrible terrorist attacks on New York and Washington took place on 11 September 2001, which shocked people all over the world. It is clear that these events will have deep and long-lasting consequences. One of these consequences will be that those responsible for education will need to review the ways in which religion and education relate. This publication can be seen as a contribution to this necessary process.

Labelling the terrorists “Muslim fundamentalists” raises the question of religious identity. Muslim fundamentalists attribute a Christian identity to the western or American/European societies, which is not perceived as such in the self-understanding of those societies. Where the Enlightenment has shaped societies and politics in Europe a main tendency has been to ban religion from the public life and define it as a purely private matter (see Miedema, 2000, pp. 287-290).

Politicians in Europe try to build up good relationships with the Muslims in their own country, to prevent tensions with the non-Muslims, but their behaviour makes clear that they have little expertise in this matter. They seem to have difficulty in handling religion in social and public life.

It is our conviction that this situation illustrates the failure of a secular and privatising policy in Europe which has not taken religion into account. In other parts of the world such as the U.S.A (although the separation of Church and State is there a fact as well this interestingly enough did not result in the privatisation of religion) and in many Muslim countries religion is an influential factor in political and cultural life. When politicians are looking for a heart and soul for Europe, they must realise that religions and other worldviews can not be ignored. For many religious people life is not separated into a private sphere where religion has its integrated place, and a social and public sphere that is completely secular and without any connection with their religion. Therefore, for them, active citizenship must incorporate and reflect their religious identity.

In our own lifetimes we have seen evidence of the good that can come about as a result of people living lives of faith and dedication to the service of others. During the same period, however, we have become used to the distortion of religious belief for political ends and the evil deeds done in the name of religion. This has happened in every continent of the world. Europe has not been immune from this.

It is clear, that religion not only has a positive, but also a negative side. But the negative side is not solved by defining it away into the private sector. Where religion is given an appropriate place in public life it can be a positive factor in personal lives, in culture and in society. This creates opportunities for open and critical discussion and for religions and religious people to participate in and take up their responsibilities in all the structures of a democratic society.

## About this publication

This publication is the outcome of discussions within a working group of the Intereuropean Commission on Church and School, charged with the task to develop ideas about a vision for education in Europe, perceived from a Christian point of view. The group, consisting of eight people from five countries (see Appendix 1), had four meetings of several days, with intervals between the meetings of half a year.

The first session was dedicated to the comparison of the different national education systems, the way Christian churches and other religions are involved in general education and the position of religious education. It made clear that such an international exchange can be interesting and stimulating, but it is not always easy to understand each other's systems and concepts. The German word 'Bildung' is (still) difficult to translate in another language and insight in the position and role of religions, churches or denominations in a certain society, including its educational system, requires a lot of historical and sociological knowledge.

The subject covers a broad area, which demanded a limitation in the items that could be covered in the discussions and in this publication. After developing a general outline the individual group members were asked to write a first draft about one aspect of the theme. In later sessions the results were discussed, changed or rewritten.

The group agreed about two ways of presenting the results: an Internet site and a printed version. An Internet presentation makes a dynamic report possible: new information and results can be added and people can react on a discussion page. In this way we hope to continue and enlarge the discussion.

The starting point of the work is found in examples of good practice, which we collected from different situations. In many situations good initiatives are already been taken to promote a responsible and peaceful living together of the generations in the context of school, region, country and Europe. By describing these examples and reflecting on them, we hope to inspire more initiatives and to convince politicians, opinion leaders and policy makers in church and school organisations of the need and interest of the involvement of churches and Christians in the items at stake.

The addressees of this publication are:

- **Schools:** we hope that the reflection on the examples encourage all people in education, students, teachers, directors and governors, to analyse their own context and see how they can contribute to the well being of individuals and society, taking into account the European and global perspective.
- **Churches:** for Christians, Christian Churches and Organisations a vision is developed why and how responsibility for and involvement in education in a European perspective from a Christian point of view can and should be realised.
- **European institutions:** the publication tries to make clear to politicians and civil servants in the European institutions that from a Christian per-

spective, through education, a positive contribution can be made to a social, just and peaceful Europe. For the realisation of these ideals it is necessary to acknowledge the positive role Christianity and religions in general can play in the European project.

The structure of this publication is directly related to the starting point and the intended addresses.

The first chapter deals with the concept of European Citizenship in relation with education. After the presentation of a governmental and an ecclesial report on these matters it is concluded that churches and educational authorities can become partners. This leads to challenges on the levels of school, local community, national level and European institutions.

Chapters two and three are dedicated to the school: what are the implications for schools and the commitment of the teachers?

Chapter four describes the involvement of churches in education within different national contexts. In chapter five the positions of churches in relation to Europe is discussed, followed in the next chapter by a conclusion about what a Christian vision on education and Europe can be. In the next chapter the implications for the institutions at the European level are formulated.

The last chapter gives a summary and recommendations.

We hope that the reader of this publication will also visit the web site about this subject and react or contribute to it.

## Chapter 1: A Vision for European Citizenship in the Future

### Introduction

One of the most important challenges facing Europe as it enters the third millennium is how citizens of the many countries within Europe can develop a sense of their own identity which incorporates elements of regional, national, European and global citizenship and includes, for many, a religious identity. For such a concept of identity to be coherent and functional it must be possible for the individual to combine their citizenship with their religious beliefs where these are important to them. Article A of the Amsterdam Treaty commits members of the European Union to develop active citizenship. This commitment goes beyond bringing the European ideal closer to its citizens. It also seeks to encourage peoples' practical involvement in the democratic process at all levels. Such an active involvement is only possible for people, whose religious faith is important to them, if the regional, national, European and world-wide institutions acknowledge the value of such beliefs to the individual and, potentially, to society.

In discussing the issue of education for citizenship we have drawn heavily on the example of the Scottish experience as the debate is well advanced in their education system.

*By creating a citizenship of the Union through the provisions of the Treaty of Maastricht, the member states have undertaken a first step to link citizens directly with the European Union (Article 17 Treaty of the European Community [TEC]) beyond the aim of "an even closer union among the peoples of Europe" (Art. 1 Treaty of European Union [TEU]). The programmes on education and training proposed by the European Commission for the period 2000 to 2006 relate to this citizenship through their intention of achieving a common European educational space. The creation of this space should enlarge the concept of citizenship of the Union in order to share common values and to strengthen the awareness of belonging to a common social and cultural area."*

(EECCS: Towards a Europe of Knowledge – A Challenge for the Churches too)

### The contribution of education to the development of citizenship

We take the word "citizenship" in this context to include elements of active membership, participation and responsibility for political bodies, institutions as well as organisations of the civil society. Developing such a concept in the hearts and minds of residents of the countries that are already members of the European Union is a significant challenge. While developments and reforms in the democratic structures, communication systems and legal frameworks will meet some aspects of the challenge, education will have a key role to play. The web site, developed by the European Commission, clearly shows that the extent of this challenge is understood, when it makes clear that the theme of learning for active citizenship concerns all three DG XXII action programme domains: education, training and youth. It also claims that the theme is relevant for both young people and adults in both formal and non-formal learning contexts (see literature).

The same approach was reflected in the document from the European Ecumenical Commission on Church and Society *Towards a Europe of Knowledge – A Challenge for the Churches too* (1998) in which the authors of the report

welcomed the intention of the European Commission to support educational activity in this field particularly through the design of the next generation of European Union programmes on education. The authors of the document believed that one important element of this concept was that citizenship and culture were both key parts of the structure of Europe. This understanding, the authors claimed, could be likened to a mosaic in which ‘Europe’ as a whole was owned, but diversity within Europe was accepted.

This issue has been developed in the European Union Commission’s publication *Towards a Europe of Knowledge* (1995) which stated that lifelong learning is at the centre of an integrated approach to future policy action. This was based on the conviction that, in a rapidly changing world, society must offer all of its citizens opportunities for acceding to the knowledge which enables them to progress throughout their lives. This, the authors claimed, includes encouraging a process of construction and enrichment of citizenship in a society of openness and solidarity for each and every one of us. Writing from the point of view of those with religious beliefs we would wish to suggest that such openness and solidarity would only be achieved if the value of those beliefs to us and, potentially, to society were recognised.

For the aim of active citizenship within Europe to be achieved, on the basis of the principle of subsidiarity, each of the nation states of the European Union and the Council of Europe areas must find ways of reflecting these ideals within their own provision for education.

### **The contribution of the Christian churches to the development of citizenship**

Christian churches are involved in and committed to the concept of lifelong learning for their own membership and many of the churches open the opportunities for learning that they provide to the wider community beyond their own membership. In some respects the churches face many of the same challenges as the nation states in developing, amongst their adherents, the basic concepts of active membership, participation and responsibility.

The Christian churches are also committed to formal and informal learning contexts with young people and adults outside their own structures. In most European countries the churches, or some of them, are deeply involved with the provision of schooling either through sponsoring their own schools, or through various forms of partnership with or service to the state system of education. Even in those countries where the religiously affiliated schools do not have a formal institutional relationship with the churches or where there is no formal connection between state schools and churches, schools need to take account of the religious commitments of the pupils and their parents.

The *Evangelische Kirche* in Germany argues this point strongly in their publication *Religion in der Grundschule*. In it the authors assert that religion is a dimension of learning and living and that Religious Education should

foster the ability of pupils to form their identity and to develop and deepen their own life stances in a plural world. They further argue that Religious Education can stimulate the integration of school and world. They claim that it achieves this by addressing human relationships and social codes within the school as well as between the school and the world. Such relationships and codes will, they argued, include religious traditions in terms of practices, celebrations and rituals.

### **Developing a common understanding – views from actual reports**

In the context of developing an education for active citizenship within the new Europe it seems to be necessary for us that the churches, the schools and the civil authorities should seek ways of working in partnership, or at least of identifying the contribution that each makes to achieving the other's objectives.

It is important that, in developing an educational concept about active citizenship, and in seeking to find ways of working together the local authorities, the churches and the schools themselves do not limit their understanding of citizenship to an agenda, which reflects only the needs of their local community. They should encompass the regional, national, European and global dimensions.

It is also important that all parties bear in mind the nature of education, so that in seeking to improve learning about citizenship and the concepts that underlie it, they do not limit this to the cognitive or intellectual processes only. Wardekker and Miedema (BJRE 2001) present a way of understanding the nature of education for identity formation. They argue that it is a learning process in which pupils develop the competence to participate in culturally structured practices. They suggest that from the definition of learning as participation and transformation, it follows, that learning is seen neither as exclusively cognitive nor as an individualistic act, but that the school should take all domains of human ability and potentiality into account. They point out that this definition includes the cognitive, creative, moral, religious and expressive aspects of education and thus encompass the development of the whole person. They emphasise that transformation is an active process on the part of the pupil, because in the process of transformation the subject matter, being the starting point, becomes the personal property of the pupil. Therefore the transformation is an activity authored by the pupil himself or herself. They further claim that it is necessary that pupils take this step in order to acquire their own personal identity.

This argument is also developed in detail in the statement from the Scottish Consultative Council on the Curriculum in a publication called *The Heart of the Matter* (1995). The authors of this statement were writing in the context of education reforms that had created a climate of dramatic change in British schools in the previous ten years.

Therefore their report includes the following statement, which was clearly of great importance to their basic beliefs about education.

*Education is not a commodity, a collection of qualifications acquired as a means to a future end. (Heart of the Matter)*

The authors go on to argue that education is an important end in itself, and that it is concerned primarily with the development of individual's talents and capacities and with the fulfilment of personal goals in a complex and changing society. The very process of being educated, they believe, develops in young people ways of understanding and behaving which help to structure the inner self and to promote the recognition that personal motives and actions must be mediated by the need for social responsibility. They believe that it is imperative to provide young people with a sound foundation on which to base moral and ethical decisions and behaviour. This must be achieved in a way, which enables young people to develop respect for their own dignity and that of others and understand the nature of the interdependent world in which we live. According to the authors of the report this is the heart of education.

*For us education is never just about knowing, important though that may be, but also fundamentally about doing and being. The educated person is one who has most nearly attained the potential which he or she has it within them to become, morally, culturally and spiritually as well as intellectually and physically. (Par 1.8)*

*Education is not ultimately about training people to be clever or successful, but about discovering what it is to be the full human beings God intended us to be. (Par 2.7)*

*Education is to do with the whole life of individuals and communities seen from the vantage point of learning to live that life. It involves not only anticipating what life may be like for those now in their infancy and childhood years but also in helping to create that world which they will inherit. It is this which, in our opinion, makes the task of teaching a sacred duty. (Par. 8.1)*

(The Essence of Education, 1999)

These ideas are also reflected in the report (The Essence of Education) to the British Methodist Conference four years later. In this report the authors state that for them education was never just about knowing, important though that may be, but is also fundamentally about doing and being. They define the educated person as someone who has most nearly attained the potential which he or she has within them to become, morally, culturally and spiritually as well as intellectually and physically. Further on in the report the authors state that education is not ultimately about training people to be clever or successful, but is about discovering what it is to be the full human beings God intended us to be. For the authors of this church report education is to do with the whole life of individuals and communities seen from the vantage point of learning to live that life. It involves, not only anticipating what life may be like for those now in their infancy and childhood years, but also in helping to create that world which they will inherit. It is this that, in their opinion, makes the task of teaching a sacred duty.

It will be clear from the brief summaries of some of the key passages of these reports, one governmental the other ecclesiastical, that it should be possible to generate a considerable agreement between them on the fundamental purposes of education, even if they use different words to express their beliefs.

## **The task of the school**

Education is not only received in schools. It is a much broader experience to which the home, the local community and for some the churches will all make a contribution. Therefore it is important to establish what tasks are expected of the school. In the previous section we made use of the work of the authors of the Scottish report *The Heart of the Matter*. We do now return to their work again. In their report the authors address this issue. They argue that schools have an obligation to provide an education for all pupils that allows them to acquire the knowledge, skills and qualifications required for a personally rewarding life, productive employment and effective citizenship. Equally, they believe, schools must set that in a context that encourages learners to develop into fair-minded, considered and caring human beings. School based education must aim to provide a framework on which young people can base critical thinking and judgements. This will enable them to participate as active and responsible citizens in the personal and social dimensions of society and will encourage them to be explicit about the values of a just and caring society.

A further consultative paper from the Scottish experience has suggested that responsible citizenship should mean among other things that young people would:

- Be sensitive to other people's needs and views
- Be able and willing to act for the benefit of others
- Develop an openness which would reject prejudice and discrimination
- Be aware of the complexity of economic, ethical and social issues that confront people
- Understand and value cultural and community diversity
- Understand how ethics and values influence people's decisions and actions
- Understand and value social justice.

The paper emphasises that education for citizenship is something that should take place in the community and in out-of-school activities, as well as within the school curriculum, thus making the achieving of these aims a shared one.

## **The role of the local community**

This last comment is important as it makes clear that the concepts and experiences that lead to active citizenship are not confined to the school. However there is a danger in adopting statements like these uncritically. This danger lies in what is not made explicit within them. In preparing young people for active citizenship the local community may provide them with too narrow a view of the world, thus limiting their citizenship to that of the local community in which they are being nurtured. In the Scottish context, from which the text is drawn, it could be possible to interpret the statement solely to the Highlands and not relate the concept of citizenship to the Lowlands of Scotland let alone the United Kingdom or Europe. It must

be clear that active citizenship is to be understood beyond the context of the community in which the child or young person is growing. It may be implied within the statements made above, but it is not explicitly stated. It is very important that in supporting and applauding these statements of aims and intentions, the national, European and global dimensions of them are clear and explicitly understood.

For those concerned with the civil structures of society this will imply that the context has its setting on the national or European level, on the institutional level this might be the regional, national governments or the Council of Europe and organisations like the United Nations. It will also take account of the global effects of multi-national companies, the entertainment and communications industries and international terrorism. For those concerned with the churches, account will also be taken of the individual churches links with the national church structures and with their own church's international organisation or links. It will also be concerned with international Christian organisations for the care of the poor and the relief of the victims of war or natural disaster.

### **Characteristics of active citizenship**

The challenge to those involved in the development of the state education service is to provide a framework for education practice and the delivery of the curriculum that allows a broad concept of education for active citizenship to be developed by every pupil.

The challenge to the school is to include activities within its policies and practices that will lead to the development of active citizens who understand their citizenship as membership of society at the level of the local community, the nation, and at least of Europe and on a global level. This will not happen unless pupils can understand the objectives of citizenship education, such as those listed above, in a European Context and can relate to open and accessible European structures that are relevant to their lives. This will be dependent on all pupils developing:

- a sense of identity which reflects local cultural traditions while valuing the diversity of the traditions within Europe and beyond
- an ability to communicate with fellow citizens within Europe
- a sense of national identity which is not defined by taking sides in old conflicts or making common cause against old enemies
- a sense of their own religious identity, where this is appropriate to their background or personal beliefs
- a personal experience of travel within Europe, preferably beyond that gained on a standard “package tour.”

The challenge to the churches is to provide a vision and experience for their members as a whole and particularly for their young members that

- provides an experience of the church beyond the region and the nation
- emphasises that ecumenism is not limited by national boundaries
- has an international vision e.g. in action on issues of relief and fair trade
- values the diversity of ways in which Christ is worshipped within Europe and beyond.

The state and the church have many common interests in these areas and should be seeking to develop dialogue and partnership wherever possible. Schools should be looking to both the state and the churches for help and support in their work. This publication is intended to provide an encouragement and a resource for that dialogue.

*The imperative is to provide young people with a sound foundation on which to base moral and ethical decisions and behaviour which respect the dignity of themselves and others and the nature of the inter-dependent world in which we live. This is the heart of the matter.*

(The Heart of the Matter, 1995)

## **The role of the European Institutions**

The role of the European institutions in this work can be identified in four main areas.

1. The stimulus for the development of this publication and the related web site was provided by a speech from Jacques Delors the former president of the European Commission (see chapter 7). This provides one example of the role that political organisations at European level should be playing; that of stimulus to new work and new thinking.
2. Within this paper it is argued that it is the role of schools to provide experiences of encounter with peer groups from other European Countries, as part of the educational process. If this is important for students at school, and by extension at University, it is also important for those who are developing approaches to teaching about European citizenship. The European organisations have a clear role in stimulating and enabling such work.
3. It is clear that developments in this area need to happen in all countries within the European Union and those who are aspirants to join the Union. Yet within the principle of subsidiarity the European organisations cannot instruct member states on these principles. They could, however, set standards by their own example and by the way in which they disseminate good practice.
4. The European organisations appear to accept without question the principle of separation of church and state, even when this attitude is dysfunctional. While the principle of separation of church and state can be accepted this should not, of itself, prevent dialogue and partnership in work which is of mutual benefit. European organisations should, therefore review their practices and attitudes in order to become more open for partnerships with Christian churches and other bodies in this area.

## Chapter 2: The Implications for schools

*The ‘knowledge-driven economy’ has promoted the idea that our education should be driven by competition, by measured outcomes, and ever-more efficient and effective managerial systems. We regret that society as a whole and parents in particular are encouraged to judge schools and teachers in terms of results.*

Action of Churches Together in Scotland:  
A Christian Vision for Scottish  
Education, 2000, p. 2

The question of what makes a school a good school is not easy to answer especially bearing in mind the very different circumstances and presuppositions in the different countries of Europe. Debate about criteria takes place also on the background of comparative studies and assessment programmes like PISA, TIMSS etc. In the preceding chapter we have argued that the task of education is much broader than just preparing children and young people for employment. This chapter provides examples from five areas of school life, which contribute to this breadth of education. After each group of examples there are illustrations of the ways in which the churches and/or Christians can make a valuable contribution to supporting the work of the schools in this area.

A school ethos, which promotes good relationships, pupil and staff responsibilities, parental, and community involvement and a time for reflection and for spiritual development underpins each of these examples.

*“Respect and caring for others is important because our well-being as individuals and as a society depend on our living interdependently. The good relationships which young people forge with each other are essential to the development of qualities such as co-operation, interdependence and respect for a diversity of people and cultures which will allow them to live and work in the realities of the world of today and of the future.*

*A sense of social responsibility is important because human beings are social animals, who either prefer or are required by circumstances to live and work together. A society geared to the general well being of all is strong on social coherence. Young people, therefore, need to develop an awareness of the social mores - the pro-social attitudes, principles and skills, which will make them competent to operate in society. This sense of social responsibility should also entail a commitment to living in an environment, which is held in trust for future generations.”* (The Heart of the Matter, p. 2)

As well as their commitment to worship and mission, service to the community is a significant Christian activity and includes a concern for public education. Christians and the churches can enrich practical work, discussions or decision-making in the curriculum, ethos statements and reward systems through their particular knowledge and experience. The Christian Church’s commitment to work towards the promotion of compassion, generosity, forgiveness and reconciliation are also fundamental to the well being of the state.

### Social education and education for citizenship

Education for citizenship searches on the one hand to identify the things, which make a community coherent, and on the other hand to help pupils to become citizens within their community/society with a sense of responsibility and ownership. It could therefore be regarded as social education or as it is termed in some countries “community education”.

For social education to be effective schools must be able to create an environment in which every member of the community has their place and is cared for and respected. Here are policy statements from two Secondary schools one in Scotland and one in England that illustrate such an approach.

### **Example 1: Craigie High School, Scotland**

*“The General aim of Craigie High School is to provide each of its pupils with courses which are challenging, enjoyable and useful and to ensure that pupils are happy and secure in the school environment.”*

Values:

- Helpfulness, good manners, honesty and respect for others.
- Willingness to listen and work, which matches and extends abilities.
- Self-worth, self-confidence and responsible behaviour.
- Consideration and tolerance of views held by others.
- Determination to achieve success.
- Positive contributions to the life of our school and wider community.
- Punctuality and regular attendance.

See more: <http://www.sol.co.uk/c/craigie-high/index.htm>

*It is a learning process in which pupils develop the growing competency to participate in culturally structured practices. From the definition of learning as participation and transformation, it follows that learning is seen neither as exclusively cognitive nor as an individualistic act, but that all domains of human ability and potentiality ... i.e. the development of the whole person, should be taken into account by the school. ... In the process of transformation the subject-matter, being the starting point, becomes the personal property of the pupil. So, the transformation is an activity authored by the pupil himself or herself.*

(Wardekker, Miedema 2001)

### **Example 2: Townsend School, Church of England (Aided) School, Hertfordshire, England**

(This school policy document is unusual in that it was actually drawn up by the pupils themselves):

*“We particularly reject the way that some people abuse others*

- *Because they are richer or poorer, older or younger*
- *Because they are small or tall, thin or fat*
- *Because of the colour of their skin*
- *Because they are male or because they are female*
- *Because they are a teacher or a pupil*
- *Because of their religion*
- *Because of handicap or personal problems*
- *Because of their looks or what they wear*
- *Because of their likes or dislikes*
- *Because they are popular or unpopular*
- *Because of their ability or lack of ability*
- *Because of nationality or accent*

*We are individuals with differences, but we are all members of Townsend and can learn from each other.”* (Griffiths and Lankshear, 1996)

But for effective education for citizenship the school must reach beyond its own walls into the local community. This project from The Netherlands illustrates this principle.

**Example 3: De Binnenloper (The Walk In) a school shop,  
The Netherlands**

The concept behind De Binnenloper is very simple: *students do something for the neighbourhood*. De Binnenloper offers services and products, which the participating schools already offer in their range of courses for their students, and which are interesting for third parties. These services and products overlap education, labour market and the communication about it. The professionalism present in the colleges is partly used to stimulate the quality of life in the neighbourhood. Moreover, local residents have the use of the facilities, which are under the control of the colleges of the regional training centre.

For example the use of Internet and E-mail by local residents has strongly increased. Every day, including Saturdays, local residents can use a computer in De Binnenloper to chat, mail or to surf on the Internet, for the modest charge of three Euro an hour. Several courses are given by or with the assistance of students, such as a Dutch language course for Turkish and Moroccan women, and an Internet course for seniors.

In the months of March and April students of the Accountancy course, led by the tax law teacher, help local residents to complete their tax forms. The interest in this service is amazing!

During the afternoons the computer rooms are available to pupils of several primary schools and as part of the Extended School Day Project students of the ASA regional training centre give cookery classes and computer classes to primary school pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds. The technical colleges run bicycle maintenance and repair projects, and network maintenance projects in primary schools.

Everyday local residents can walk in to ask for help to complete a variety of forms. Foreign local residents use this service especially. A health insurance company holds a weekly help desk in De Binnenloper (with the aid of students), and an employment agency called “Start” helps students and local residents to find work or a holiday job.

The training centre has a Christian identity, which provides the main motivation for the project. De Binnenloper is both a service to the neighbourhood and a practical project for the schools. It is a work experience place for students, and some of the projects are part of the examination syllabuses of certain courses. Students participating in the several neighbourhood-focused projects are often so moved by the significance of their work to the local residents, that they invest a lot of leisure time in the project. The project coordinator Arie Vijfvinkel says: “It is so good to see our students explaining to older people how to use a computer programme, or how to complete their tax forms. Sometimes the student who seems to be troublesome in the classroom, suddenly turns out to be very helpful and friendly in the project.”

Web site: <http://www.rocasa.nl/Binnenloper/Blutrecht.htm>

## What Christians and the Churches can offer

These examples show that Christians will respond warmly to the extent to which the schools in Scotland and England clearly show that they value each individual and that they are attempting to provide a caring and supportive community. Christians will also identify closely with the service to and care for the wider community by students, who are already demonstrating that they are active citizens, illustrated in the example from The Netherlands.

The development of education for citizenship increasingly reflects the value for society as a whole of ideas that have a long religious tradition. Convincing and lively examples of a commitment to act for the benefit of others and a sensitivity to other people's needs and views can be offered as well as practical experience of engagement with issues of social justice and discrimination.

Education cannot be value-free. Townsend school is a Church of England school and De Binnenloper was created by a Christian organisation. Both examples show that Christians can be in a position to demonstrate effectively a relationship between belief and action. Both these examples demonstrate the potential contribution that Christians can make in this area.

Through education one can learn to cope with national, religious, ethical and cultural differences and develop skills to handle complex structures and plurality. Both school policy statements show that these schools are concerned to take positive action in this area. All pupils have experience of family, school and interest-group communities. As they reach adulthood they will need to understand their place in the regional, national, European and global community. Schools must provide opportunities, which help pupils move from their day to day experience of community to these wider conceptions. Christianity can present a range of experiences of local, regional, national and global communities. By working with or within Christian groups pupils may sample the benefits of first hand experience of community life. Gradually pupils should become conscious of a responsibility for whichever community they find themselves in and ultimately they will take the opportunity to contribute to community development.

*Having as a basic tenet of faith that every individual is made in the image of God, the Christian Church must at all times demonstrate a concern for the development of each child and young person as a sacred charge. The Church will be a partner in ensuring the development of each to its full potential, and be particularly aware of the need to provide equality of opportunity and access to education.*

(Wood: Christian Responsibility)

## Spiritual Education

There is much debate and controversy about the nature of spiritual education in school. In the English context publications from The National Society (a Church of England Institute for the promotion of Christian and religious education) have sought to help to explore the nature of spiritual education and how teachers and schools can be helped to undertake work in this area. We begin our exploration of this area with three quotations from these publications.

*“Spirituality is like a bird: if you hold it too tightly, it chokes; if you hold it too loosely, it flies away. Fundamental to spirituality is the absence of force.”*

Brown and Furlong, 1996

*“A shared understanding of spiritual development by all staff in the school and an awareness of the ways in which the spiritual dimension can be nurtured, ensured that the spiritual dimension underpinned all aspects of school life rather than just being an added extra.”*

Brown and Seaman, 2001

*“It is important to emphasise here that any discussion of the spiritual explores areas of human experience that are personal, can be painful and often require a recognition of one’s vulnerability as well as one’s strengths.”*

Brown and Seaman, 2001

In the European context Hans Spinder said in his address to the ICCS conference in Strasbourg, 1997:

*“The word ‘spiritual’ I use as a broader concept than ‘religious’. Spirituality can be religious, but not necessarily. It also has to do with morality, with ideals, with a sense of beauty, with sensibility and devotion, with creativity and self-knowledge. Spirituality is an attitude as well: we can say of a person that she or he is very spiritual. This is all about spirituality on a personal level; and that is right. Spirituality starts with and is rooted in the person. That is also the level on which you work in education: with the individual persons and the small group.*

*But we can also speak about spirituality on a political level, which refers to a policy which is not exclusively based on economic and materialistic interests, which respects the human need for meaning and religion, which refers to moral standards, and so on. I think that the word ‘commitment’ links the personal and the political spirituality. In general one can say that spirituality enriches individuals in their understanding of, and ability to relate to, themselves, others and society as a whole.”*

Spirituality, as used in this broad sense, can and should be an important dimension in school life. Not only for the individual religious and moral development of the pupil, but also for a creative and stimulating school

culture and a school ethos that supports moral and political commitment to the society as a whole.

Also in countries where spirituality is not explicitly mentioned as a dimension of the education process spiritual aspects play a role in certain activities and projects related to the moral and religious development of students. The following examples illustrate this point.

### **Example 1: Reflection and its contribution to developing a sense of spiritual direction (Orientierung), Germany**

In the context of everyday life in school it can be difficult to find time for reflection as an individual or as part of a group. It is even more difficult to use such time constructively, so that it contributes to the development of the individual students' sense of spiritual direction or spiritual development.

With this problem in mind several schools in Germany take groups of pupils on "Days of Religious Orientation" (*Tage der Orientierung*) in order to provide them with an opportunity for reflection and discovery of religiosity or spirituality. During these days there is a focus on:

- Thinking about special themes,
- Experiential approaches to learning
- Discovering "spirituality"
- "shared learning" – with no fixed "teacher" and "pupil" roles

*Respect and caring for self is important because without a sense of self-worth, the well-being, either of the individual or of the wider community, is unlikely to flourish. An understanding of what caring for self physically, mentally, emotionally and spiritually means, in terms of responsibility for personal well-being, is an essential pre-requisite for an understanding of how to care for others. Respecting and caring for oneself also brings both the capacity for autonomy and self-motivation, and the potential for inner peace in a world of rapid change.*

(Stevenson, *The Heart of the Matter*, p. 2)

These days usually involve a visit to or being part of a religious community. The inter-action between the students and the life of the religious community provides the context for the reflection and the spiritual experience, which is offered to the students.

See also the experiences of young people from Azmoos-Trübbach (CH) living for some time in a monastery: <http://www.ref-azmoos.ch/> (Teens / Konfirmanden / Wahlkurs Kloster)

### **Example 2: Designing in provision for Spiritual Development, The Netherlands**

That it is also possible to provide for the spiritual development of the students shows a place called Ede in The Netherlands, where provision for spiritual development has been planned into the design of a new school building called the Meander school.

Externally the schoolyard is surrounded by small hills, a pond, fencing with hanging plants such as hop, birds' nests, many butterfly attracting shrubs, breeding-cages, a mysterious winding path. In the yard there are a sunken

sitting area in the shape of a ship, play houses and an old tree-trunk with side branches.

*“Spirituality is like a bird: if you hold it too tightly, it chokes; if you hold it too loosely, it flies away. Fundamental to spirituality is the absence of force.”  
(Brown/Furlong)*

*This is all about spirituality on a personal level; and that is right. Spirituality starts with and is rooted in the person. That is also the level on which you work in education: with the individual persons and the small group.*

*But we can also speak about spirituality on a political level, which refers to a policy which is not exclusively based on economic and materialistic interests, which respects the human need for meaning and religion, which refers to moral standards, and so on. I think that the word ‘commitment’ links the personal and the political spirituality. In general one can say that spirituality enriches individuals in their understanding of, and ability to relate to, themselves, others and society as a whole.*

(Spinder, Strassburg-lecture, p. 1f)

Internally there is a meditation centre, where children can go by themselves if they want, with soft carpeting, they can sit on, with light and calming colours and a vase with flowers. The school is proud of this space. Some classes like to frequent this place to sit and talk. But other teachers only want to use this space for special moments, above all for moments of joy and sadness. Thanks to an open sliding wall the space is the centre of religious celebrations. The school is still searching for a satisfactory name for this space as ‘Meditation centre’ sounds so silent, ‘not saying enough’; the school wants to offer more than tranquillity and silence.

The Meander is a high-tech school committed to providing education using all the modern means of communication including email, the Internet and videoconferencing with students from schools in other countries, but this commitment is not made at the expense of the spiritual dimension of education.

### **What Christians and the churches can offer**

The National Society in England and Wales is a Christian organisation as is the ICCS, therefore the thinking that lies behind the quotations used before the examples in this section have been generated through the Christian churches contribution and commitment to the educational process. Most of the religious groups offering resources and facilities for the "Tage der Orientierung" will have been Christian. In both cases the education of pupils is benefiting from the involvement of the churches.

It would be reasonable to expect local Christian churches to support the work that is being done at the Meander school with enthusiasm.

The Christian churches have a commitment to the development of the spiritual lives of their own members and a consider experience of providing opportunities for spiritual growth and for times of reflection. Given this background they have a great deal to offer schools and pupils as they seek to explore this important area of education.

## Education on Global Issues

All pupils need to have experience of education about some of the key issues that affect “the global village.” Recognising that the future of humanity and the natural world is being threatened at both global and national levels the quest for justice, peace and integrity of creation becomes an essential challenge for all schools to consider. Schools which are microcosms of our world community deal with justice and peace issues daily in the way they have to handle violence, bullying and racism, and in the way they encourage pupil meditation and parental consultations. Schools need also to provide examples of how people should exercise their responsibility for each within the context of the whole of creation.

### Example 1: Play Peace, Scotland

Initiated by the Dundee based charity Fair Play Training this project involves an “all fronts” approach to reducing aggressive play and behaviour in a primary school playground. The project is based on the formation of a Play Council to involve pupils, staff, parents and outside agencies in an assessment of play conditions. A grant was received to allow the project to do preparatory work with a target school and set up a partnership of agencies to be involved. The grant also enabled a target school in the local community to be identified. This school was committed to the principle of overcoming violent behaviour in the playground and in the school in general with clear implications for the school ethos, and the extent to which teaching staff can make links to other similar Personal and Social Development programmes to be identified. This exploration phase proved successful and Play Peace have started work at Mossegil Primary school, setting up the play council and a parents’ group and liaising with other agencies.

### Example 2: Going Global Exchange Project, The Netherlands

#### The student as a reporter on the road

Every year more than twenty students, age range 15 to 18, representing twenty different schools go as reporters to a country in Africa or Asia for a week. It seems like vacation, but it isn’t. The students are introduced to projects for the improvement of the living conditions of the very poor as part of *Going Global* – the exchange project of the Union for Protestant Education. Moreover, they get to know the culture and religion of the respective countries through their Indian or Ugandan peers. The students are going to make interviews, take photographs and make video recordings as real reporters of the life of the young people over there. They will also attend classes at schools in the visiting countries, work in a ghetto or in the countryside. An unforgettable journey!

The campaign of the Union for Protestant Education consists of three stages: the formative stage and entry selection, the actual exchange, and a fund-raising stage. The participating schools were given instructional materials

about the concerning country and at the same time students were given the chance to apply for the job of reporter abroad.

The students themselves have arranged sponsors to finance their journey. The school collects money for the projects the students have visited. The ‘National Committee for international co-operation and lasting development’ doubles the proceeds Euro 15,000 per posted reporter.

### **Out on the streets again**

*Once more, a cloudy morning in Addis. We board a bus on our way to an orphanage which we are going to paint. On our arrival I think: again a poor neighbourhood. Without further thinking I walk next to stinking small streams of waste water and Ethiopian children looking at me anxiously. We arrive at the orphanage and the leader gives us a short introduction about how things are going here. She tells us that girls between 10 and 14 years are allowed to spend the night and have breakfast in order to guard them against prostitution. After such an overnight stay they are sent into the streets again and they have to see for themselves how to get along until the evening ...*

(extract from a report by a student, Maarten)

The group of students prepare themselves for the journey during a preparatory weekend, where they are instructed in culture, religion, customs, but also in writing reports, photography and making films.

### **The student/reporter returns**

Back in the Netherlands the students will report ‘like ambassadors’ on their experience to fellow students, parents and the whole community surrounding of the school. The students report extensively about their journey from their own experiences and with material of their own. Regional newspapers, radio and TV, who are always interested in local news, often give significant coverage to these reports.

The Union supports the presentations and financial actions by making a lot of materials available. In this way, every participating school gets a series of photographs and a video tape about the concerning country at the beginning of the school year and a travel journal, a series of photographs and a video tape after the journey. Moreover, each school can borrow a teaching package, flags or banners.

More : <http://www.uco.nl/> under going global

### **Example 3: “Global Ethics Project” Germany**

A theoretical framework for this work in schools is provided by the “Global Ethics project” which is presented by the Global Ethical Foundation for Inter-cultural and Inter-religious Research Education and Encounter (<http://www.weltethos.org>).

The question of a Global Ethic stems from Professor Hans Küng's book "Global Responsibility" (1990), which was first published in English in 1991. This book developed programmatically the idea that the religions of the world can make a contribution to the peace of humankind only if they reflect on those elements of an ethic which they already have in common: on a fundamental consensus on binding values, irrevocable standards and personal attitudes.

Underlying the Global Ethics project is the basic conviction that there can be:

- No peace among the nations without peace among the religions.
- No peace among the religions without dialogue between the religions.
- No dialogue between the religions without investigation of the foundations of the religions.

One of the aims is to stimulate and implement inter-cultural and inter-religious education:

This aim will be achieved in particular through

- teaching and lecturing to disseminate the results of the research sponsored by the Foundation, especially the ideas relating to a fundamental ethic common to all men and women, a global ethic. This will be done in churches, colleges, academies, schools, universities, associations and interested groups of every kind, both national and international;
- further education of those interested, through conferences, lectures, seminars or workshops aimed at deepening the themes of a global ethic;
- publicity to promote a global ethic through the media (newspaper articles, interviews, radio and television programmes).

More: <http://www.uni-tuebingen.de/stiftung-weltethos>

Resources from a range of other providers are also available on the Internet. For example:

<http://www.al.lu/projects/weltethos/> is very text-orientated, but you will find many additional texts to the “Declaration of Global Ethics” from religious, humanist, political or economical background. Classroom activities are “Under construction” but one can find many interesting links, e.g. the UNESCO - Associated Schools Project Network (<http://www.unesco.org/education/asp/>) or “The Earth Charter” (<http://www.earthcharter.org/>) or Earth Magna Charta (<http://www.earthsite.org/charta.htm>) or Charta der Weltethik” (<http://www.charta-der-weltethik.de/>).

Some examples how projects in school could work and what can result can be found at:

<http://www.ksluzern.ch/weltethos/>

<http://www.dbg.rt.bw.schule.de/lehrer/klein2/ag/wethos/wths1.htm>

<http://www.zum.de/Faecher/evR/Vorrath/projekt.htm>

## What Christians and the Churches can offer

Education for “justice, peace and integrity of creation” is a Christian commitment, which has been formulated mainly through the “Conciliar Process”,

### ***The “Four Irrevocable directives”***

(1) *Commitment to a culture of non-violence and respect for life, recalling the ancient directive „You shall not kill! – Have respect for life!“*

(2) *Commitment to a culture of solidarity and a just economic order: „You shall not steal! – Deal honestly and fair!“*

(3) *Commitment to a culture of tolerance and a life of truthfulness: „You shall not lie! – Speak and act truthfully!“*

(4) *Commitment to a culture of equal rights and partnership between men and women: „You shall not commit sexual immorality! – Respect and love one another!“*

a project initiated by the World Council of Churches. Similar intentions are found in other religious traditions and increasingly in combinations of religious and non-religious organisations such as peace movements or environmental groups. Many local churches are involved in projects and initiatives in this area, and can provide concrete examples, which could introduce pupils to some of the ideas in this field.

*This lack of the human dimension of education can also be observed in recent documents of the European Commission on Education and vocational training. Human beings, in these documents, are seen only as a factor for improving economy (human recourses). This turns back the recognised and achieved standards of education in all European countries. Where certain topics in humanities, including religion, are not taught education must remain deficient, if not ineffective.*

(European Perspectives of Education, Loccum Statement 1990, RPI Loccum/ICCS)

In the context of the vision for Europe several Protestant churches have produced reports about Europe. Two examples of these are the reports of the General Synod of the Netherlands Reformed Church, ‘Hart en ziel voor Europa?’ and that of the Evangelical Church in Germany, called: ‘Europa fordert die Christen’. Both reports underline and support the original intentions of the integration process: peace, reconciliation and justice, and they argue that these motives now apply to Europe as a whole.

The reports argue that the social dimension in Europe should be supported, especially in relation to unemployment, inequality in life conditions, migration, asylum and development policy. The aim should be a Europe as a community of solidarity.

What is proposed is not a return to a Christian Europe, but a political culture, based on human dignity and freedom and in which a balance is sought between self-determination and co-operation, and between individuality and plurality. The best model for that aim is a **federal** Europe that takes the principle of **subsidiarity** seriously.

## Inter-Cultural education

The cultural heritage of Europe has benefited from a wide range of religious and non-religious influences. This cultural heritage includes art, music, literature, philosophy and history. It also embraces the dominant culture of Europe as a whole and also the local cultures of regions, areas and groups within populations. Several religious traditions have made and continue to make significant contributions to this diverse cultural landscape.

Christian art, music and architecture are commonly appreciated across the countries of Europe bringing a shared cultural identity to set alongside national or regional characteristics.

An essential element of cultural education in the European context is the history of Europe as a Christian society and that this heritage continues to influence our concept of Europe. This Christian heritage has been used to legitimise ideas that are currently relinquished or rejected such as crusades, colonialism, racism and war. The same heritage can also act as a starting point in developing shared values such as peace, reconciliation and service to others.

Europe's „new“ culture has to accommodate a variety of religious, ideological and political life stances. It must also reflect the diversity of life experiences of people living within its borders and take account of the experience of those human beings living in other parts of the world.

Schools and faith communities have an important role in all of this. Faith communities have the task of preserving and passing on their own cultures and their unique contributions to European culture. At the same time school education must have an international dimension, which not only teaches young people to appreciate the value of different cultures and what it means to be citizens of Europe, but also, through exchanges and visits to different countries, exposes them to a variety of customs and lifestyles. The task is to acknowledge that now there can be a “history of Europe” as opposed to the histories of different European countries, where history may be interpreted by individual nations to suite their own social and political ends. The Council of Europe has undertaken an important project on this topic in their work on the Teaching of History in Europe.

### Example 1: Towering The Hague, The Netherlands

The Hague is rich in cultures, worldviews and ways of life, which have partly been introduced by migrants over the centuries. This does not mean that tolerance is a matter of fact in this multicultural city or that respect for each other's view of life is automatic.

‘Towering The Hague’ is an intercultural course programme which offers students the opportunity to make investigations by themselves on historical locations, where the influence of migrants is visible in the buildings. The programme is studied with more depth in the classroom with texts about rituals in Hinduism, Judaism, Christianity, Islam and humanism. The texts focus on four important moments in life: birth, growing up, marriage and death.

The project has been developed by Anjo Arlman-Rupp, connected to the HCO school advisory service in The Hague. The project aims at children in the upper years of primary education and on the lower secondary level.

The target is to:

- acquire knowledge and insight in the similarities and differences among rituals in Hinduism, Judaism, Christianity, Islam and humanism at four important moments in life: birth, growing up, marriage and death;
- respect each other's worldviews;
- develop knowledge and insight in the history of fifteen historical, religious buildings in relation to their users.

The basic material consists of fifteen puzzle pieces, with which a tower can be build. On the front of each puzzle piece there is a photograph and the address of a building with background information and an anecdote. Furthermore, the project comprises route maps, a survey of religious buildings in The Hague, student texts with questions and utilisation assignments about rituals, towers and (non) figurative art and answers to the questions arising from watching, as well as instructions to put the tower together as an art object. A manual is included. The approach is being replicated in other cities.

This project has been jointly achieved thanks to the (financial) support of ideological/ religious organisations.

For this intercultural course programme video films about the rituals have been made by NOT/TELEAC (an educational broadcasting organisation) for the implementation at a national level. The title is ‘Bruggen bouwen’ (Building bridges).

see [http://www.teleacnot.nl/sites/bruggen\\_bouwen/index.htm](http://www.teleacnot.nl/sites/bruggen_bouwen/index.htm)

### **What Christians and the Churches can offer**

It is on the ecumenical front that churches can relate to cultural education. As has been pointed out religion has had a significant influence on culture. This is perhaps less so today in those places where the church has had less influence on the arts and on the social and moral attitudes of the population. It is important for the Christian churches to continue to acknowledge that goodness and beauty are major concerns of both faith and art and to promote and encourage their membership to use the expressive arts in communicating their beliefs. The churches must always value the arts as one of the central expressions of human creativity in the image of God. Churches should recognise what the artistic work of the non-religious is trying to tell and teach them about our shared culture and about our shared world. Moreover it is essential for the culture of Europe that the contribution of other world faiths is likewise welcomed and encouraged.

At the local level individual churches have much to offer as places in which aspects of local or European culture are practised or given expression. Many churches and schools are mutually supportive in these areas, for example in facilitating young people's musical education, even if this mutual support is not always overtly acknowledged.

## Education for encounter & dialogue

Education for encounter and dialogue with people from different religious or cultural backgrounds is not only of interest to people of religious conviction who feel enriched by the encounter with diversity, but also of those who want to avoid prejudices, “anti-ideologies”, fundamentalism and violence. This education needs to be within communities and countries as well as across national borders. It can be facilitated by email and video conferencing (see the example of the Meander school above) as well as by visits and exchange programmes. An essential element of the development of young people and the idea of inclusiveness is to recognise that developing a religious identity can be an integral part of education in school.

### Example 1: Sharing Stories - An Exchange project between Dutch and Palestinian Students, The Netherlands

At a conference held in Cairo in 1999 about the European-Arab dialogue a plan was made to give an impetus to an ideological dialogue among Dutch secondary schools and Palestine schools. The plan was for mutual exchange visits to take place. In the event this was not possible as during the first visit made by the Palestinian students the Intifada began. The only way for the contact to be sustained became the Internet. Since that time young people from The Netherlands have shared the daily reality of their Palestine peers from a distance. The Dutch community became aware of much useless violence, which the young people of Palestine experienced at first hand. Mutual exchange of personal stories about social violence through the Internet increased the insight in the cultural and ideological background of it and had a positive influence on the personal education of the participants. Five secondary schools in The Netherlands are participating in this project.

The ultimate goal of Sharing Stories was to mix precious elements from the other’s life story in your own life story in a constructive way. The possibilities of ICT (Information & Communication Technology) became of great importance when the original intention was rudely disturbed by the violent conflicts in the region, the so-called Intifada. Meanwhile a lot of personal contacts had been established. The young people of Palestine feel the need to tell their story and in that respect some of them carry on a lively e-mail correspondence. Moreover, recent developments (arrest and conviction of young people by Israelis) have not caused the contact with the class to be broken. The question: what can we learn from each other, has also become quite another question. Dutch students have especially taken the role of listeners. Since the Intifada, the goal of Sharing Stories is that students can make a sensible judgement of the personal circumstances many of their Palestine peers live in, with the concept of human dignity as criterion.

*The Beginning of Sad Days.  
The Intifada began in October 2000, because it was provoked by Sharon’s visit to the Al-Aqsa Mosque. There were many martyrs and injured people. From that time on, our suffering began.*

*Last year I used to go with my friends to many places like Balloons to eat pizza and hang out, or to Checkers for Burgers, but now I’m not allowed to stay out of the house after 5:00 p.m. because it’s too dangerous especially where we live near Rachel’s Tomb. Before I used to be happy, but now, I’ve forgotten how to laugh. Even if I laugh, I don’t do it deep in my heart.*

(extract from an email received from Hiba, 10th grade/March 2nd, 2001)

The Sharing Stories module is in essence a splendid example of developing a worldview through narrative. The starting point is every student's life story. Each of the students is completely free in the dialogue with the other. However, it is not at all without obligations. The obligations come mainly from the unconditional demand made on every student to take the other's life story completely serious. He or she is able to react to the other (who possibly has a completely different ideological background), but must be able to accept the other as he or she is. Every reaction or each judgement should be the result of a respectful responding attitude.

### **Example 2: Peace Education and World Religions, Germany**

The Peace Education Standing Commission (PESC) is a branch of “Religions for Peace” (WCRP: World Conference on Religion and Peace) and is working on a world-wide level.

It consists of a multi-national team under the leadership of Professor Dr. Johannes Lähnemann, educationalist in protestant religious education and internationally acknowledged specialist in inter-religious dialogue.

Much important work is already being carried out today in the field of Peace Education. The PESC has taken upon itself the job of bringing this practical work closer together with the messages and forces of peace inherent in the various religious traditions.

Its aim is the scientific support and world-wide networking of Peace Education projects of an inter-confessional and inter-religious nature:

- to analyse projects from various world regions and provide information for Religion, Politics, Science and Economy (e.g.: “The village and peace-school of Neve Shalom/ Wahat as-Salam” [Case Study 2.1]).
- to set up contacts between the various parties: active participants, media, sponsors, leading religious and political representatives, religious educationalists.
- to present important contact addresses, model projects and significant results on the Internet (<http://www.wcrp.de/pescmove.html>).
- to organise courses on the subject "Religions and Peace Education".
- to examine and support (inter-)religious Peace Education initiatives in three main areas:
  - ◆ Religious and Inter-religious Education
  - ◆ Education towards violence-free communication and conflict solution (e.g. Yugoslavia: Does spirituality help in conflict? Two documents from Kosovo, in: Peace Education from Faith Traditions)
  - ◆ Environmental education and education towards socio-economical development

Teachers will find a huge range of factual information and lively examples of inter-religious encounter and work from all over the world.

More: <http://www.evrel.ewf.uni-erlangen.de/pesc/>

## **What Christians and the Churches can offer**

There is great concern among church members about events in Israel and Palestine and therefore there will be a warm response to the first of the examples that we have cited. This type of dialogue reflects the churches own commitment to listen to those who are living in challenging and difficult situations or under the threat of violence. The second example derives directly from initiatives taken in the name of religions.

Many Christians are committed to participation in dialogue with others and to positive action to help and support those in less fortunate circumstances and should be able to assist schools in learning more about these areas and possible setting up their own links and initiatives. The churches have many links, through their organisations with communities in other countries and other circumstances. These can provide schools with opportunities and examples of mutual support and dialogue.

## **Summary**

Throughout this chapter examples have been presented of the way in which schools have tackled some important issues and attention has been drawn to the help that they may be able to obtain from the churches in achieving these aims. Part of the reason for the schools in our examples undertaking these projects was to promote the idea of inclusiveness and to recognise that the developing of a religious identity is an important part of a student's education. Another important reason for looking at the religious dimension in the whole context and setting of a school with a community ethos, is the understanding that religion in all its different manifestations will have an impact on the social and political relationships of modern Europe. There is an expectation that religious diversity will not become a barrier to a united Europe, but religion will make a positive contribution to the creation of a stable, humanitarian and peaceful society. One aspect of this is that religious convictions will lead to a critical assessment of the development of the community, with a consequent attention to the welfare of all its citizens and to justice, peace and integrity of creation.

In our time it is very important for young people to have the opportunity to discuss issues of religious diversity, which are common across Europe.

Typically, all schools give attention to the cultural significance of religion but the school with a true community ethos will also recognise the influence that religion has on social and political life, on the personal development of each individual student and on the stability of a diverse community.

### Chapter 3: The Commitment of the Teachers

In the previous section the concept of the school as a community with an ethos and a commitment to the world beyond the school gates was explored. It will be clear that such schools require teachers who share that commitment.

*„Teachers would be delighted to awaken young minds, but the system within which they must work fundamentally frustrates that desire by insisting that all minds must be opened in the same order, using the same tools, and at the same place, on a certain schedule.“*

(Daniel Quinn: My Ishmael)

Many teachers experience a gap or even a contradiction between their ideals and expectations concerning their role as a committed teacher and the harsh reality of school life. We want to support and encourage teachers not to give up their ideals, even when reality demands many adaptations. This section explores the ideals of a good teacher, serving a school with a community ethos. The second part pleads for support for the committed teachers, in the first place from the side of the churches and from Christians, through affirmation, support, information and accompanying.

The role of a teacher in a school with a community ethos is complicated. For those who wish to focus on the needs of children or students as whole people, the demands of society and the limitations of the classroom can be obstacles to doing it well. Some teachers respond to this by protecting themselves from such high expectations and by limiting their interest in the personal and social needs of their pupils or students.

Schools with an ethos as a community implies that the teachers are interested in the well-being of the young people.

*“Teachers choose to interact with young people as whole persons, with feelings and passions as well as intellects, and care that they grow as rounded human beings. To describe teaching without reference to its central role in personal and social development, would fail to capture its essential meaning. The processes of all teaching and learning are intimately bound up in personal and social development. Teaching is an enterprise central to intellectual and personal and social growth. Teaching is a role, not an act or performance, rather a series of ‘conversations’ in which the language, whatever the subject matter, is inevitably moral in its impact on learners.”*

(Stevenson, 1995)

Pupils, parents and teachers have a clear idea about what makes a school a good school. Such a school fosters personal development, understood in a holistic way, taking into account the various ways in which this is understood by the different members of the school community. In such a holistic view the religious and spiritual dimension should not be forgotten.

*“An education system should exist to promote the development of the person and the community of which they form a part. Spiritual development will depend very much on the quality of the relationships that are built up among staff and pupils within the school community. ... Schools are communities of learning, part of that learning is the spiritual dimension of the people and of the community itself. ... The values of each person are formed and*

*demonstrated in relationships. Teachers have to recognise the values they inspire or develop in those whom they teach. In the act of teaching teachers are witnesses to the values they themselves hold and are passing on to pupils.”*

Personal development is not only a process, which involves pupils but also affects teachers. Teachers must be open to new learning experiences and take responsibility with others for the maturation of young people.

*“Personality development includes revulsion and resistance in face of in-humanity; perception of happiness; the capacity and the will to understand oneself; a consciousness of historicity of individual existence; vigilance with regard to these final questions; and – a double criteria – the acceptance of self responsibility and responsibility with regard to public affairs.”*

(H. von Hentig, quoted in EECCS paper, p.6)

This means that teachers need, on the one hand, a clear and inspiring personality, that shows a knowledge of what is right and wrong, and on the other hand, an openness to new experiences and a willingness to be critical of their own ideas. The identity of the teacher is not static but is open to learning from others.

From a Christian point of view it can be said that one of the most essential aspects of a religious life-stance is the recognition that nobody is the exclusive owner of the truth. Thus the nature of the Church is that it is not only a teaching but also a learning organisation, because in Christian belief there is a consciousness of human limitations. A religious person can possess a strong belief, but in essence he or she knows that people can make mistakes.

Schools with a community ethos recognise the importance of sharing their common ideas together. Teachers discuss the pedagogical and the spiritual aims of the school. They share insights about the commitment to teaching and the opportunities for the school to be a life-enhancing community.

*Teachers have at heart the well-being of the young people with whom they live and work. Teachers choose to interact with young people as whole persons, with feelings and passions as well as intellects, and care that they grow as rounded human beings. To describe teaching without reference to its central role in personal and social development, would fail to capture its essential meaning. The processes of all teaching and learning are intimately bound up in personal and social development. Teaching is an enterprise central to intellectual and personal and social growth. Teaching is a role, not an act or performance, rather a series of 'conversations' in which the language, whatever the subject matter, is inevitably moral in its impact on learners.*

(Stevenson, *The Heart of the Matter*, p. 1)

## **Support for teachers from Christians and the Churches**

Teachers share with local church leaders and many members of local Christian churches a common commitment to the education, care and well being of the children and young people in the community. Teachers can expect therefore to receive the courtesy, attention and support from these groups that is accorded to people who share such common interests. This can take many forms but will include elements of affirmation, support, information and accompanying.

## **Affirmation**

Teachers change the lives of their pupils. This is a huge responsibility and a professional challenge. Teachers should be able to look for affirmation in this work to Church leaders, both at national and local level. A recent example of this affirmation at national level is in the report produced for the Church of England called *The Way ahead* which clearly identifies the crucial role of teachers in the education of children and young people.

Teachers do not work with children and young people because they will earn high salaries by doing so. Most teachers choose to do the work out of a commitment to the pupils and to their education. When this commitment derives from a teacher's Christian faith it would be identified as a Christian vocation to teach. A Christian understanding of vocation, developed across many centuries, should lead naturally to an affirmation of this quality in teachers' professionalism. Teachers should expect Christians more than others to understand the nature of their commitment to the task, and appreciate both the joys and the tensions that such commitment brings.

Teachers are educating children, some of whom are being nurtured in Christian homes. The experience of these children in school, particularly, but not only through Religious Education is very important to parents and to the churches. The teacher's role in developing the skills with which individuals will access scripture and theological ideas serves the needs of the churches, but Christians will also value teachers for their crucial contribution to the development of the just and the caring society which is their ideal.

Teachers make mistakes. Christians may also bring to the teaching and learning debate the concept of forgiveness, which is sadly lacking in our utilitarian society. Teachers need room to experiment and sometimes will make mistakes, and should be able to look to Christians to affirm this entitlement and its significance for the growth and development of both teacher and pupil.

## **Support**

Teachers have the further right of support both from individual Christians and church institutions beyond the affirmation of the importance of their role. Where the churches have good relationships to the government at local, national and European levels they may be expected to look for opportunities of promoting the teaching profession, focusing attention on teachers' conditions of service, their training needs and their centrality to society, as well as challenging prejudice and misinformation.

Teachers who face the greatest challenges may expect to receive the greatest support from Christians. Recognition of the special demands made on the teachers of the most disadvantaged of society's children, should lead Christians to champion calls for teachers to be accountable for the value added to children's achievements and performance, rather than a sole reliance on the measurement of raw scores.

Teachers should be able to look to Christians also as their supporters in developing an understanding of parental responsibilities related to their children's learning. The churches have traditionally contributed significantly to the theory and practice of parenting skills, and teachers should have confidence that the needs of children as scholars are included in this debate.

## **Information**

Teachers have the responsibility for inculcating elements of good citizenship and moral values in every well-developed educational system. Increasingly, too, schools are expected to give attention to the spiritual development of their pupils. As well as providing basic information about Christianity, and other faiths, the churches in many countries are able to articulate for teachers and pupils:

- what it is to be a person of faith;
- how, for many, religious beliefs underpin moral values, and
- Christianity's particular contribution to an understanding of global citizenship, inclusiveness and respect for creation.

Often this work of providing information is focused through the funding that the Christian churches provide for Centres for Religious Education or Institutes whose main work is the training and support of teachers in this area.

Teachers should feel able to ask for the churches' support and help when their pupils are undertaking studies that would be enhanced by a visit to a local church building or if the life of the school would be enhanced by attending a service in a local church. Most churches are willing to extend hospitality in this way, as part of their support for teachers and teaching.

## **Accompaniment**

Teachers have a right, above all else mentioned, to expect Christians to listen to what they are saying, and to ensure that it is reported fully and accurately. At a time when the speed and volume of communication strategies demand sound bites only, Christians can be keepers and tellers of the whole story; in a society which distrusts the professional, and is often anti-intellectual, Christians are in a position to challenge scepticism and to acknowledge truth.

Teachers have the same right as other members of the community to call on the pastoral care and support of local clergy.

Teachers may expect local Christians to have one more significant gift to offer. That is regular, sensitive and informed prayer. This is, perhaps, the most beneficial aspect of the accompanying role - and it is one that should be universally available from every individual in the church.

## **Conclusion**

This short chapter has taken a high view of teachers’ professional commitment to their task. Reasons for that can be found in the view that so much is already being done by teachers in the areas of concern of this paper. Two points follow from this understanding of the work of teachers.

1. In Initial Teacher Education and in Continuing Professional Development both professionalism and spirituality have their appropriate place in order to demonstrate that these are not mutually exclusive concepts, but are mutually supportive and enhancing.
2. Those speaking on behalf of the churches or national or regional bodies responsible for teacher employment should ensure that their public statements consistently acknowledge the value of the work that teachers do for the individual pupil and for the health of society as a whole.

## Chapter 4: Churches and Education

Why and how should churches and Christian organisations be involved in education? And what does the European context mean for this involvement? These are the questions at stake in the following chapters.

First we look at some examples concerning religious education - mainly Protestant - within the national contexts of Germany, Britain and The Netherlands. In chapter 5 the relation between churches and Europe is explored and finally we develop some ideas about the responsibility of the churches for education in Europe and the opportunities that could develop if Christians take this seriously.

### Different models and concepts

The education system and the way Religious Education is organised within that system differ from country to country. This has consequences for the involvement of churches in education. This point is illustrated by the following descriptions of some different national contexts. They have been selected to indicate the range of different circumstances that surround the subject, although the range is much broader in total. A much wider range of examples can be found on the web site related to this publication.

In Germany Religious Education is a regular subject for all state schools and has, by law, a confessional character. This confessional model is common to many European countries. In confessional Religious Education the churches are directly involved in several aspects, such as affirming the calling of the Religious Education teacher, the development of curricula and school resources and in teacher training. Historically, confessional Religious Education was meant to reinforce children's confessional identity. Nowadays a balance is sought between identity formation and understanding others, between strengthening group identification and living together with different cultures and religions.

In the English context there are two models within the state system. In both Religious Education is a general subject for all pupils in all schools, in which pupils are acquainted with all the main religions and traditions of their local community. In schools that have a strong religious affiliation the faith group or denomination that provides for the school determines the syllabus. In all other schools the syllabus is created by a conference in which not only Christian churches but also other faith groups are involved in the development of the curriculum and resources.

The Dutch situation is unique in the world because the vast majority of the schools have a confessional background. School autonomy is very high and there is no direct role for churches neither in school life nor in Religious Education. The confessional schools have their own confessional Religious Education, aimed at personal identity building and the development of a religious worldview of their own. Institutional religion is hardly present in

these schools or Religious Education lessons. Integration and coping with differences in ideas, cultures and religions is becoming more and more important.

A comparison of different school systems makes clear that translation of terms in different languages is not easy; the risk of losing connotations from the context is obvious. One might wonder if the English term “Religious Education” could be equated with the German “Religionsunterricht” and vice versa.

Nevertheless we try to give insights through the description and analysis of living examples.

### **Example 1: Confessional RE: Identity and understanding - A German perspective**

The Evangelische Kirche in Deutschland (EKD) has a long tradition of involvement in education in church and school and in discussing its educational responsibilities, reflected in statements and recommendations from the EKD synod and the churches. In July 1998, at a consultation in Hofgeismar, the fact was celebrated that 40 years before an important statement about school (Schulwort) was produced: "A free service to a free school" (Freier Dienst an einer freien Schule; epd-Dok. Nr. 30, 1998). This was the starting point of a fruitful co-operation between church and state in the area of religious education.

*The underlying principles of a Christian interpretation of human dignity and freedom are:*

- *man is God's creation and fellow worker and this world is created by God;*
- *people are entrusted to each other as fellow human beings and helpers as Jesus showed it, and all depend on this help, in particular children and young people;*
- *God's creation is entrusted to all creatures to use, to form and to preserve it.*

The document was based on a vision of Christian or churches' responsibility for education going back to the time of the Reformation. Two principles are formulated that are still valid:

1. There should be no school or education without religion.
2. School and education should serve the common good, or, in the words of Martin Luther, a life in peace and justice. This means a school accessible for all and open to a rational based pedagogy.

Furthermore, the concept of freedom is very central in the document: free service to a free school. (Schweitzer, 1998, 13)

In 1990 the synod accepted a statement on education policy from a Christian perspective. (EKD-Texte, Nr. 34, 1990) In order to develop an adequate education policy it analyses current trends in school and society and formulates some principle theological starting points for a Christian vision on nurture and education.

Education is based on a relation between the generations. A human being is born as a child needing protection, attention and guidance to become an independent and responsible adult. The centre of this process is the question

of what a meaningful, successful and good life is. The Christian faith has no specific source of knowledge of its own about teaching and learning, education and nurturing or the process of formation and self-formation, but remains for educational praxis and reflection dependent on experience and reason. But the question about a meaningful, successful and good life cannot be answered scientifically, but has to be formulated again and again on the basis of convictions and traditions. In the light of the gospel and the Christian-biblical tradition a vision of human beings and education can be developed.

The underlying principles of a Christian interpretation of human dignity and freedom are:

- this world is created by God and man is God's creation and fellow worker ;
- people are entrusted to each other as fellow human beings and helpers as Jesus showed, and all depend on this help, in particular children and young people;
- God's creation is entrusted to all creatures to use, to form and to preserve it.

*The nature of the Church is that it is a teaching and learning organisation. Only thus can it discern the truth of God's love and live in that truth as revealed through searching the scriptures and through the gift of the Holy Spirit. Education is a means of learning about God and the created world, and a process that is life-long.*

(Wood: Christian Responsibility)

The community with God is broken up through the guilt of people but God loves the world and the people, so through his son Jesus Christ there is reconciliation and redemption and the promise for a new creation.

This faith also determines the image of people and influences nurture and education.

This is the basis for Christian responsibility in all kinds and forms of educational institutions and activities.

The document differentiates between church or Christian institutions, where the educational vision and activities can be developed directly from a Christian point of view, and general institutions such as state schools, where churches can contribute to the general tasks, developed in society on a basis of consensus. (EKD-Texte 1990, p. 20f.)

The concrete ways in which the churches and Christian organisations are involved in education depend on the socio-political situation and on the position of churches and religions in a certain society. In Germany the churches are strongly involved in school education through religious education, which has a confessional character, in schools and in contributing to general education, is based on a close co-operation between state and church.

The general responsibility is worked out in two directions: central for the church is its own education in disclosing the tradition of the Christian faith and handing it down, especially to the younger generations; this is the full responsibility of the church. In the general area of society, such as education in state schools, the church only has a shared responsibility and has to contribute, with others, to the quality of life. It is important, according to K.E. Nipkow, to develop an 'integrated theory of Christian responsibility for education'. (Nipkow 1990, 15-21) The common basis is that education should be an introduction into humanity and he refers then to Jer. 29,7:

*"And seek the peace of the city whither I have caused you to be carried away captives, and pray unto the LORD for it: for in the peace thereof shall ye have peace."*

Nipkow strongly advocates the churches' involvement in the confessional religious education in state schools in Germany. He argues for a third way between a traditional confessional religious education, which *"looks for identity at the cost of openness and freedom"* and a general non-confessional and non-religious type of religious education, which *"strives for understanding at the costs of abandoning identifiable religious positions."* (Nipkow, 1996, 38-43) In his approach, in line with a document of the EKD (Identität und Verständigung), there is a dialectic tension between identity and understanding. The only purpose of religious education in the German state school should be, according to the EKD, *"providing an opportunity for pupils to realise their rights of religious freedom and orientation."* (Nipkow, 46) That means that the *"most competent, authentic and transparent way to learn about religion should be chosen."* The best way in his opinion is a form of confessional religious education given by *"theologically trained teachers who are members of the living religious tradition in question."*

A second way of involvement of the churches in school education is through the church schools. There is a limited number of protestant church schools in Germany in which the churches have a more direct responsibility. Instead of the concept of a school with a closed character, solely aiming at the development of clearly defined Christian identity, Nipkow pleads for a dialogical and pluralistic approach, in which identity and understanding are in balance. (Nipkow, 1999) Those schools should develop their own school concept within the local situation and in dialogue with teachers and parents and without tutelage of the church.

For the near future the German protestant churches have to continue their reflection on their involvement in education with special attention to:

- The concept of a free school; what does that mean in a democracy and how much does a school need the state?
- The role and position of religion in the whole school; in the curriculum and in other subjects.
- The dialogical and ecumenical character of religious education.
- More attention should be given to the role of protestant schools.

(Schweitzer, 1998, p. 30f.)

Especially in the area of religious education there are some developments and debates about innovative approaches, which take into account the changes in society, especially concerning the growing cultural and religious plurality and the more and more individualistic shape of religion and religiosity. This background demands new approaches. The already mentioned EKD statement "Identität und Verständigung" (identity and mutual understanding) promotes a new co-operation between religious education, ethics and philosophy in the framework of a "cluster of subjects" in school. According to existing differences in regions of Germany some interesting developments can be recognised.

The Protestant church in Hamburg strongly supports the existing dialogue based RE, also called "Religious education for all". This approach in Hamburg, like the concept of LER (Lebensgestaltung – Ethik – Religionskunde) in Brandenburg, has a focus on interreligious learning and religious literacy and takes place in religiously heterogeneous classes. It was developed in a specific situation where the Catholic Church has decided to give space to this approach and to refrain from catholic RE in public schools.

The churches in Brandenburg were deeply involved in the debate about the introduction of a new compulsory school subject in the federal state of Brandenburg, Lebensgestaltung – Ethik – Religionskunde, LER (Life orientation – Ethics – Religious Knowledge). The specific school law stated that LER should be taught "without confession, neutral in terms of religion and worldviews." The churches argued strongly against the nearly exclusive character of this new subject and for their right to offer confessional RE on the same legal basis, according to the basic constitution. The case went to court and in 2002 the specific school law was changed in a way to support also confessional RE and give it a better status than before.

These examples and discussions illustrate the church and school seem to be in the same transition process in which the relation with the state is changing and in which they have to find their place in the civil society.

### **Example 2: Non-confessional RE: An English perspective**

The Anglican and Protestant churches in England have a long tradition of involvement with education; before Religious Education became compulsory in 1870 all schools were either church schools or had a strong foundation in the belief that spiritual and secular education were indissolubly intertwined. If education was about forming a "good" or "useful" citizen, as most would have accepted, it was, by definition, about forming a Christian (Protestant) citizen.

With the introduction of free, compulsory, maintained (i.e. by the state) education, most non-conformist churches (*Protestant churches outside the Anglican State-Church*) gave up running their own schools and concentrated on supporting the maintained system. They aimed to ensure that "a Christian education" became the entitlement of every child. Religious instruction and a daily act of worship were universal and it was assumed that all teachers would be willing and able to provide the one and lead the other.

*In some states the provision of church schools is a major feature of the contribution of the Church to national life. In England, for example, approximately a third of children are educated in church schools, though many of the pupils in these schools are of other faiths or of none.*

(Wood: Christian Responsibility)

The Education Act of 1944 was the major determining legislation to affect the role of the churches in the English school system. Subsequently, church schools have been of two kinds. Voluntary Controlled (VC) schools are church schools with a historic, Christian foundation, but which are now entirely maintained by the local education authority. The founding denomination retains its right to appoint a small number of governors, and the daily

act of worship should be confessional. Voluntary Aided (VA) schools are owned by the founding denomination, which continues to provide a proportion of the capital and maintenance costs. In return, the foundation appoints the majority of the governors, who determine the confessional worship and the Religious Education and appoint their own staff.

Catholic voluntary schools have traditionally been fully confessional VA schools, providing a Catholic education for the children of Catholic parents.

*We believe that religious education can play a central role in preparing all pupils for life in today's multi-racial Britain, and can also lead them to a greater understanding of the diversity of the global community.*

(Swann-Report: Education for All, 1985, p. 518)

Anglican and non-conformist schools, particularly in small, rural communities, are more likely to operate as schools for the whole community. In urban areas, and particularly at secondary level, they may to be more exclusively confessional; in a climate of competition between schools it sometimes helps to be distinctive. In recent years, English church schools have become increasingly popular with parents, with the result that many can, and do, demand proof of baptism or church attendance before admitting a child. Local education authorities and central government publicly affirm the contribution that church schools make, and encourage the establishment of new ones. The same encouragement is given to the small, but growing, number of schools founded by other faith groups, and all these schools are now officially referred to as schools “having a religious character.”

However, it remains the case that a daily act of worship is compulsory for all pupils in all maintained schools in England, and all pupils follow a curriculum of Religious Education, unless their parents withdraw them from these activities. The Religious Education syllabus is determined in each local authority by a Conference of four partners with equal rights, one drawn from locally elected councillors, one from teacher representatives, one from the Church of England, and one representing those of other Christian denominations and other faiths. It must offer teaching about the major world faiths represented amongst the members of the local community, and, in every local authority, must teach about at least one faith other than Christianity; but teaching about, and from, a Christian perspective predominates everywhere. Though there are occasional calls from organisations such as the British Humanist Association for this Christian influence to be diminished or eradicated, and many non-Christian head teachers find the leading of worship an unacceptably difficult challenge, it is obvious that all the main political parties and the majority of the population at large are content for the present system to be preserved. The current rigorous school inspection regime has ensured that both time devoted to religious education and Collective Worship, and the quality of what is presented to pupils, have improved significantly.

### **The relationship between Church and State**

The position of the Church of England as the ‘established’ church means that it enjoys particular rights in law in a range of public activities. Not the

least of these is in education, reflecting the historic legacy of Anglican involvement in schooling, and the 4,700 Church of England schools currently operating. During the nineteenth century legislation discriminatory to Roman Catholics was gradually repealed and as its position became more stable the Catholic Church, too, began to set up schools. By 2,000 approximately a third of all pupils in England were being educated in church schools. Some of the rights to which the established church has an historic entitlement, particularly in terms of consultation and representation, are now routinely paralleled for the Catholic Church.

The Catholic Church and the Church of England are entitled by statute to be represented in the decision-making processes of each local authority, and all the Christian denominations and other faith groups are routinely consulted about all educational issues at local and national level. The churches may have something to say, for example, about provision for children with special educational needs, about discipline policies, about teachers' pay and conditions, about curriculum development and about the rights of parents and local communities to influence education policy. The 1944 legislation, and all subsequent legislation, has ensured that the voice(s) of the religious minority continues to exercise considerable influence, far in excess of the proportion of the population that its worshipping membership represents, although consistent with the fact that one-third of all pupils in England are educated in church schools, and that some 70% of the population continues to express a belief in God.

### **Challenges and Further developments**

The recent report for the Church of England, *The Way ahead*, has raised the issue of the further development of Church schools. This proposal has won qualified support from the government and it seems likely that the number of schools with a faith background will increase in the next few years. These proposals are not without their critics and the debate about the role of the churches in the education system has achieved a higher public profile than it has had for many years.

Another issue for work in the English context is the extent to which Religious Education is perceived as a secular subject. There are some professionals who wish to assert the distance between the academic subject and the faith communities. They do this partly to ensure that all pupils are able to take part in the subject without any fear that they will be subject to proselytism or indoctrination. Others take the view that the faith communities should be closely linked to the work. They point out that what is taught about the faith communities in the classroom should be recognisable to those communities and should support the learning about their faith of those pupils who are being brought up within the faith community. This debate is further sharpened by the extent to which the faith communities, particularly the Christian community, fund the support for the subject.

### **Example 3: The dual system in The Netherlands**

In the Netherlands the involvement of churches in education is strongly influenced by the dominant position of free, confessional schools within the educational system. The catholic and protestant schools are not church schools and are fully financed by the state, which makes them rather independent of the churches. The number of primary and secondary schools can roughly be divided into three parts: one third is catholic, one third protestant and one third consists of state schools.

The relationship between church and school is interpreted differently in the catholic and the protestant tradition and even within the protestant tradition positions differ.

#### **Catholic schools and the Roman-Catholic Church**

The relationship between the Roman-Catholic Church and the catholic schools has changed under the influence of Vatican II. Until the 1960's the catholic school was understood as a school to serve the interests of the catholic part of the Dutch population, to support "its social and cultural emancipation, its religious resilience and its commitment to the church." (Katholiek onderwijs, nr. 21) Now the school is not centred anymore on the catholic population, but is based on an educational vision. This school concept is developed from a catholic worldview and concept of human kind. (nr. 22)

Since that time all the competencies and responsibilities relating to catholic school education are delegated to an umbrella organisation (NKSR), in which all the different levels are represented. The catholic bishops have three seats in this organisation. All aspects of school policy and school life are regulated in this organisation, with the exception of religious education and pastoral work in the school. The bishops are responsible in their own diocese for the content of religious education and for the nomination of the religious education teachers. (Deen, 1999, p. 52)

The catholic school is now a school in which aim, content and way of working are inspired by the gospel and the catholic tradition. "The presence of a certain school population (catholic pupils, parents, teachers and school governors) is not a sufficient condition to be a catholic school. One can speak of catholic education when there is a vision on education, coloured by gospel and tradition, which influences the identity of the school." (Hermans, 1993, p. 261)

In the catholic vision the catholic school has become now a service to the whole of society. "The catholic school as a social institution bears a shared responsibility for nurture and education of children, together with parents, the government and other individuals and institutions." (Deen, 1999, p. 55)

#### **Reformed traditions concerning school**

The protestant schools, as the catholic schools, are not church schools and they have even more distance from the church than the catholic schools.

These schools are founded by associations, consisting of parents and other interested people from different protestant, mainly reformed, churches. In the statutes of the association is defined what the religious or confessional background of the school will be and what that means for the admission criteria, for board members and for teachers.

The two largest Reformed Churches are now, with the - very small - Lutheran church, in a merging process, which means, among other things, developing a common view and policy on many issues such as the educational responsibility of the united church. But the traditions of both Reformed Churches concerning school education were rather different in the past.

The Reformed Churches in the Netherlands (GKN), originating from the nineteenth century and with a strong emphasis on the congregation, were part of an emancipation movement for what they called the 'common people' ("kleine luyden") against the establishment of the Netherlands Reformed Church (NHK). The Protestant school was an instrument in the emancipation process and strong emphasis was laid on close collaboration between family, church and school in order to have a homogeneous educational climate in those three institutions. Although the GKN had no official or institutional link with the protestant schools, in fact they always supported and encouraged the choice of the reformed parents for a protestant school and dissuaded them from choosing a state school.

*There is a growing understanding for the idea that church and school could mean something for each other. Although the school world is still suspicious about the church - the church should not moralise about what is going on in the school - there is also the awareness that the church has something to offer to the school. First of all there is the language of the church and the rituals, and on special occasions, in worships and celebrations or in moments of joy and mourning.*

(Boersma, 33-37)

The larger Netherlands Reformed Church, used to different streams or sub-traditions within the church, never wanted to make a choice between state or protestant school, but respected and accepted the actual choice of the parents for one school or the other.

The NHK wanted to be responsible for the whole of education. In the 1950's a new church order was accepted with a clear vision of the missionary dimension of the church in Dutch society and in the world. The church wanted to be the church in the world and to contribute to all aspects of society and public life and to remind all people of "God's rules and promises". At a consultation in 1990, organised by the Council for Church and School of the NHK, this approach was discussed and evaluated. (Spinder, 1991) The missionary pretensions of the church were criticised, because the world is not waiting for the message of the church and the church is just one voice amongst others in the secular society. The school world has become autonomous and now that the emancipation process for Catholics and the Reformed is finished, there is no role for the churches anymore.

But according to the secretary general of the NHK at that time the church does have a role to play in education, not as the central institution in society, but together with other institutions. The church has its own motivation: the gospel of Jesus Christ has implications for its view about human nature. Education is about becoming human and the question is what kind of human

being is aimed at in the school. The churches would renounce their mission if they were not interested in this question. (Blei, 1991, p. 66) Neither Religious Education nor only protestant or confessional schools, but education as a whole should be a concern for the church.

There are no recent official statements from the synods of the three uniting churches or from the common synod, but the item has been discussed recently in the leading magazine for protestant religious education *Voorwerk*. There is a growing understanding for the idea that church and school could mean something for each other. Although the school world is still suspicious about the church - the church should not moralise about what is going on in the school - there is also the awareness that the church has something to offer to the school. First of all there is the language of the church and the rituals, and on special occasions, in worships and celebrations or in moments of joy and mourning. (Boersma, 1999, p. 33-37)

But there is more. Church and school can learn from each other and support each other. The church, as church in the world, has a responsibility towards society and education is an important aspect of it. In education the fundamental process of becoming a human being is at stake and for that reason education should be a concern for the church. (Spinder, 1999)

### **Coming challenges**

The churches begin to realise that under the influence of secularisation and a growing pluralism their influence in all sectors of society is decreasing, and that they have to redefine their position and task in society. They are not more than one voice among many others.

The Catholic Church and the protestant churches recognise that the role of their confessional schools as emancipation instruments is fulfilled. Many confessional schools see it now as their task to offer their comprehensive concept of a Christian school to society as a whole. For the churches there is only an indirect, shared responsibility for school education, related to the pedagogical quality of the school and a comprehensive concept of education.

## Chapter 5: Churches and Europe

The churches' contribution to a vision of Europe will have to do with fundamental values, with spirituality and with justice, peace and integrity of creation. Law, regulation and problem solving are, and remain, the task of the politicians. A good and appropriate starting point for the churches could be the *original motives* for European integration.

After the Second World War many were convinced that nationalism and the disastrous antagonisms in Europe should be overcome in a political way. In 1949 the Council of Europe was founded, but this institution lacked power, because it remained intergovernmental. That was not enough for the founding fathers of the EC, the French politicians Jean Monnet and Robert Schuman. They strove for peace and reconciliation between the old enemies Germany and France, by bringing the pillars of the war industry, steel and coal, under the control of a supra national authority. For that purpose the European Community for Coal and Steel was founded in 1951 with six members: France, Germany, Italy, Luxembourg, Belgium and The Netherlands. The same countries signed, in 1957, the Treaty of Rome, which was the start of the EC and Euratom. Because political integration soon failed, the activities were concentrated on economic co-operation. When Great Britain, Ireland and Denmark joined the EC in 1973, it meant for them mainly the entrance into the common European market.

Only during the last few years has discussion about the ideals of the European integration returned, but now related to a concept of Europe that is larger than just western Europe; this discussion is explicitly related to middle and eastern Europe.

Looking at the participation of churches in this European discussion, it becomes clear that there is a difference between the Roman Catholic Church and the Protestant and Anglican churches. The latter hardly have a clear opinion about Europe, while the former has a well-defined position concerning Europe and its contribution to European integration.

### The Roman Catholic Church and Europe

The commitment of Pope John Paul II to Europe became obvious in 1990, when he convened a special European Bishops Conference to assess the special situation in Europe and to determine the challenge of the church. Two questions were at stake at this conference:

- an historical question: which gifts have the churches east of the iron curtain to offer to the churches in the west and vice versa?
- and for the future: how has this exchange of gifts to be developed in the mission in Europe, which means for the new evangelisation of Europe?

(Lustiger, 1992, p. 155)

This question about a new evangelisation of Europe evoked many critical questions, especially in the Protestant and Orthodox world.

In many publications and speeches it becomes clear how important this theme of European integration is for the RC Church. And it is conspicuous how self-evident it is for the RC Church, that this integration or unification presupposes a Christian foundation.

*Politicians realise that the churches have their own approach, based on their inspiration from the Gospel and their faith in God. A churches contribution on a vision of Europe will have to do with fundamental values, with spirituality and with justice, peace and integrity of creation. Laws, regulations and problem solving is and remains the task of the politicians.*

(Spinder, Strasbourg lecture)

In this vision Europe is a creation of the Gospel:

*“Europe is built up by peoples and nations, who had the privilege to receive the message of the biblical Word, the Gospel.”* and: *“Our civilisation can only be saved by a new evangelisation of the culture”*, so said the archbishop of Paris, Cardinal Jean-Marie Lustiger. That is the motivation of the RC Church in supporting the European integration process. A central item in the Catholic policy, and in the statements of the pope, is a respect for human rights. A second item, and also often underlined by the present pope, is the open character of the EU: middle- and Eastern Europe, as the ‘other lung of Europe’ belong to it.

In the Netherlands the RC bishops recently showed their commitment to Europe in the media. Bishop Muskens - who gained some international fame by his statement that when you are hungry, and there is no other solution, it is morally acceptable to steal a loaf of bread - published a book under the title *Each person has a name. Plea for a social Europe*. (Muskens) For him, the task for Christians is to protect and support a social Europe. He sees too much of calculation and distance and too little of compassion and commitment in European policy. The quest for a European identity is crucial to him.

It is clear that responsibility for Europe belongs amongst the fundamental convictions of the RC Church. (Blei, 1991, p. 40-49)

## **Protestants and Europe**

In general the Protestant churches and organisations are not well represented in the European institutions and also the theme of Europe has been absent in Protestant and ecumenical debates for a long time. According to the Dutch report about Europe and the churches (see below) the most important reasons for this phenomenon are: (Hart en Ziel, 1996, p. 172-175)

- Protestant churches have predominantly a national orientation, which is reflected in their names: Church of Scotland, Netherlands Reformed Church, etc.
- The ecumenical movement, as a correction to this national character, has a global orientation. The WCC has more links with the UN and the Third World, while Europe was rather marginal in the ecumenical policy. The European Ecumenical Assembly of 1989 in Basel was the first large ecumenical meeting that was dedicated to Europe. The assembly in Graz 1999 was the follow up and next step in this process.  
(Link: [http://www.cpti.ws/text/t\\_graz.html](http://www.cpti.ws/text/t_graz.html))
- During the Cold War ecumenical life in Eastern and Western Europe was separated. It is only since 1990 that the whole of Europe is in the picture.

After the fall of communism the three confessional branches of Christianity convened special church meetings, which reflected three different approaches:

1. the Roman Catholic Bishops Synod in Nov./Dec. 1991 in Rome focused on: new evangelism in Europe
2. the Orthodox primates met in March 1992 in Istanbul about Christian unity
3. the Protestant church leaders met in March 1992 in Budapest. The most important aims of this meeting were:
  - To give a higher profile to Protestantism as the third Christian movement in Europe besides Roman Catholicism and Orthodoxy
  - To encourage the Protestant minority churches in south-, middle- and eastern Europe
  - To look for answers from the Protestant tradition at the great questions concerning Europe after the change (Wende) in eastern Europe and at the eve of ongoing economical integration in western Europe.

None of the three conferences, however, showed much progress compared with the pleas already made in Basel for the unity of Europe as a whole. The great dilemmas on the agenda of the European Union were still absent from the churches' agenda.

This does not mean that nothing is done. The problem is that the interest for European questions is limited to individuals and small groups in the church, although the last time some progress is made.

### **National contributions to the debate**

In the late 1990s several Protestant churches produced reports about Europe. As examples, we will take the reports of the General Synod of the Netherlands Reformed Church, 'Hart en ziel voor Europa?' and that of the Evangelische Kirche in Germany, called: 'Europa fordert die Christen'.

In the Dutch report, the (sharp) conclusion about the above-mentioned church meeting runs as follows: "*A real response to Delors' challenge for a contribution of the churches to a reflection on Europe is still not to be found. The Roman-Catholic approach is too triumphalistic, the Orthodox approach too defensive and the Protestant too marginal.*" (p. 190)

The report rejects a restoration of 'Christian Europe' and recognises that old models of connecting 'faith' and 'life' cannot be restored. But new models are not yet available. There are, however, elements available to build up a new approach for a Christian vision about Europe.

Both reports underline and support the original intentions of the integration process: peace, reconciliation and justice, and they argue that these motives now apply to Europe as a whole. The reports still contain criticism of several aspects of European integration (democratic deficit, primacy of market

forces, social exclusion, ineffective foreign policy) but the difference from former statements of the churches is: *“that such criticism is no longer expressed from the sideline, but from a positive assessment of the European integration process as such.”* (Hogebrink)

But the reports are also self-critical. The EKD Document points at the ambivalent relation between religion and nationalism.

The reports argue that the social dimension in Europe should be supported, especially in relation to unemployment, inequality in life conditions, migration, asylum and development policy. The aim should be a Europe as a community of solidarity.

What is wanted is not a return to a Christian Europe, but a political culture, based on human dignity and freedom and in which a balance is sought between self-determination and co-operation, and between individuality and plurality. The best model for that aim is a **federal** Europe that takes the principle of **subsidiarity** seriously.

Both reports see this as a challenge for churches and ecumenical organisations, that has to be worked out in the coming years.

The German report explicitly made a statement about education in Europe. (epd-Dokumentation, Nr. 49, p. 73-75)

The education policy should be based on a comprehensive concept of education. Essential for education is an orientation on and a perspective for, the whole of life, which means that it always has a religious-ethical dimension. In education one must learn to cope with national, religious, ethical and cultural differences and develop skills to handle complex structures and plurality. Only when you do not need to fear for your own identity, can you be open to others and take responsibility. The document warns that the role of religion in education should not be neglected or marginalised.

### **A Swedish reaction**

In a publication of the Christian Council of Sweden the original motives for the start of the European co-operation are stressed and the European Union is qualified as a peace project. (Churches and the EU) That is the motivation for the Swedish Churches to get involved in the European project.

The involvement of the Churches is based on a Christian view on humanity, society and ecology:

1. A Christian view on **humanity** is based on human dignity and the sanctity of human life, resulting in every individual's right to personal integrity.

These values are based on the belief that all people are created in the image and the likeness of God.

Human beings are created with a free will and called to choose the good, but they can also do evil.

This philosophy is the basis for the activity of Christians and Churches in society.

2. For a Christian view of **society** two principles are central: solidarity and subsidiarity. Solidarity is a binding commitment to mutual sharing and help and subsidiarity means that decisions should be taken at a level as close to those affected as possible.

The Church has a calling to be active in society without limitations: her task is universal. The Church is called to stand up for solidarity across all boundaries, a solidarity which includes the poor and powerless all over the world, in the east and in the south.

3. The **ecological and environmental** perspectives unite all people globally. From a Christian perspective creation is God's work and humanity is the centre of it. That gives to human beings a clear responsibility for creation.

Christians feel a responsibility to manage the resources of the earth in such a way that everyone can share them, and so that coming generations may take over a well-preserved inheritance.

Starting with these principle considerations the challenges for the churches in the European context are formulated. In the Swedish perspective democracy, openness and the possibilities for participation in public life are seen as crucial for Christian involvement in Europe. The churches ask for more opportunities for churches and other non-governmental organisations to have a voice in decision-making processes.

It is important for the churches that they co-operate in ecumenical structures and with other religions and other expressions of culture and human values.

*The churches should continue their reflection on a vision of Europe from a Christian perspective. Inherent to such a vision is, in my opinion, that such a vision is developed at the basis of church life, that is in collaboration with the church-members in the parish. The European dimension can come to life in all kind of ecumenical and inter-religious contacts.*

(Spinder, Strasbourg lecture)

*Culture in Europe must be understood as a process of mutual recognition and tolerance towards different mentalities, scales of values and ways of life, which creates just in an intensive interaction a new European cultural reality on a higher level. European culture is the result of a learning process – often painful – of European history. This learning brings together the multiple regional culture of Europe. On the cultural level, Europe is a laboratory of simultaneous intellectual, social and aesthetic experiences. In this diversity, it is not a question of presenting the lowest common denominator as cultural identity but of taking the synergy of this different strengths as a starting point.*

(EECCS, Towards a Europe of Knowledge, 3.3)

## **The Churches in Europe**

Over the last few years the Ecumenical European Commission on Church and Society (now the Church and Society Commission of CEC) has supported and stimulated the European churches to reflect upon Europe and has developed relations with the European institutions on behalf of the churches. In a recent publication, dealing with the question of enlargement of the European Union, the role of the churches is discussed and the conclusion is: The “*..Protestant scepticism regarding European integration is now something of the past, especially as, since the break-up of the Soviet Union and the end of the Cold War, the dividing line constituted by the Elbe has disappeared. Recent reports and declarations by Protestant Churches in Europe have shown a growing recognition of the importance of conscious, sustained and voluntary effort on the part of European states to create permanent institutions and structures the aims of which are to ensure peace, justice and reconciliation between nations.*” (Jenkins, 1997, p. 6)

The ICCS working group has worked out a small research project designed to explore the attitudes of the churches in Europe to their involvement in education. The results of this survey will be available through the ICCS-web site related to this publication coming soon.

## **Churches in public life**

It is important that the vision about churches in Europe, expressed in the reports quoted above, is translated into effective and credible policies and strategies.

To achieve credibility it is necessary that a Christian vision of Europe and education is consistent with its internal operations and educational work.

To be effective the vision must be articulated in the language of public and political affairs and the churches must change their national orientation into a European and global orientation.

Developments in Europe, especially in Eastern Europe, are demonstrating a growing significance of civil society and the power and influence of Non-governmental Organisations (NGOs). The churches can only play a role in civil society if they develop an understanding of themselves as NGOs.

In the multi-faith society, which Europe has become, the Christian church has a responsibility to ensure that minority faiths are enabled to do so too.

## Chapter 6: A Christian Contribution to Education in Europe

It is impossible to speak about the Christian view on education; there always will be a diversity of opinions and approaches, but some elements in the Christian tradition can be seen as fundamental for such a view.

The first thing to say, looking at the European developments, is that from a Christian point of view education cannot be reduced to vocational training or preparation for the labour market. Human beings are not just 'human resources' but persons in their own right. Education should support and stimulate knowledge, but also emotions and attitudes. To become a responsible and active person, in private life as well as in society, one needs knowledge, but also values; without values knowledge becomes worthless. The school should aim at the professional, cultural and personal preparation for life of the pupils/students. From their tradition Christians are motivated to contribute to a comprehensive concept of education.

*Education covers more than just rational and instrumental knowledge. In particular, education cannot be directed exclusively towards the needs of the labour market. A comprehensive concept of education, which takes into account the personality as a whole, implies designation of life and sense, and enables to orientation and communication. Knowledge, skills, understanding of values, responsibility, creativity, judgement and social competence are all equally part of it.*

(EECCS, Towards a Europe ...)

There are general principles in the Christian tradition that can constitute such a comprehensive concept of education.

- From the doctrine of creation we learn that all people, children and adults, are equal before God. Therefore all learning and teaching individuals, irrespective of their descent, intelligence, skills etc., have a right for support, guidance and loving devotion.
- In the Christian tradition there is a consciousness of errors and failure by human beings, but also the promise of forgiveness and reconciliation and so the certainty of a new start.
- In the Christian concept of identity the idea of the other is implied and difference is included. One of the problems in Europe is the exclusion of others, on account of race, religion, sexual inclination, disability or nationality. For that reason it is so important that churches support a comprehensive concept of education oriented towards peace, freedom, reconciliation and justice.

When we work this out for school education, this can mean for example:

- in history teaching the past is not treated in an absolute or ideological way, but is scrutinised critically and former errors such as colonialism and other forms of oppression are critically and honestly presented;
- an active drive against prejudice and discrimination is part of the school policy, as well as a positive preparation for an open, democratic and multicultural society;
- special attention is given to the spiritual dimension of life in the teaching in the classroom and in school life as a whole. The school should try to become a community of learning and living, in which all participants are interested in the others and all are prepared to take responsibility for each other.

### **Where and how can churches operate?**

Churches cannot continue to be involved in education without developing a European perspective as described in the examples above. To achieve this there must be international, ecumenical dialogue underpinned by individual and parish exchange experience.

When we come to a consideration of where and how the churches can operate to put these principles into practice, we have to recognise that the national contexts are so varied that two alternatives are possible. Either we recommend strategies and activities, which would only be acceptable in some countries, or we have to limit ourselves to somewhat innocuous generalisations. We prefer the former option.

The following proposals might point the way forward:

- To encourage a careful and serious study of world faiths within the Religious Education programme and the preparation of pupils for dialogue and encounter.
- To give support to the celebration of cultural and ethnic diversity.
- To contribute to the development of the citizenship education curriculum in order that young people become responsible and participative Europeans.
- To affirm the inclusion of moral and spiritual development, as a sound base for social and political involvement, within school ethos statements.
- To encourage church schools and other religiously affiliated schools to become models of good practice in all aspects of education and grant them financially
- To work in partnership with schools to organise social and charitable projects that support the moral development and global awareness of young people.
- To collaborate in joint European exchange programmes for parishes, pupils and teachers.
- To support schools in engaging with their students in debate about the role of church and religion in public life, both historically and currently.
- To participate in the development of the teaching profession as a vocation.
- To give more attention to the educational dimension of the work of churches in ecumenical and international networks and to develop policies in which the involvement of churches in education throughout Europe is integrated.
- Education structures within the churches should be strengthened in order for the churches to make an effective contribution to the work.

## **Chapter 7: The Implications of the Vision for the European Institutions and Institutions at the European Level**

The debate stimulated by the former president of the European Commission, Jacques Delors, under the general title *Giving a Heart and Soul to Europe*, points to the fact that so far the process of European integration has been focused exclusively on three areas. Integration of economics, technology and the labour market has been identified as the task of the political and administrative institutions of Europe. However, Delors declared that it is not possible to build Europe exclusively on the basis of financial, economic and legal expertise.

He said: *If we do not succeed, in the coming ten years, to give a heart and soul to Europe – spirituality and a sense of meaning – then the whole business will fail. Therefore I want to give a new impulse to the spiritual and intellectual debate on Europe.*

M. Delors particularly invited the churches to participate actively in this debate. His successor, Jacques Santer, also addressed an appeal to religious communities and all currents of thought in which, he claimed, that Europe is so rich. He identified an important role for the churches in overcoming materialism that, in his view, too often characterises our civilisation. He stressed the potential and importance of inter-religious dialogue to include representatives of the Roman Catholic, Protestant and Orthodox churches in Europe with representatives of Judaism, Islam and all the humanisms. What he expected from such a dialogue was not solutions for the problems so much as the contribution of a new vision.

### **Early responses to the call for vision**

It is clear that the politicians realise that the churches would have their own approaches, based on their inspiration from the Gospels and their faith in God. The politicians expected the churches' contributions on the vision of Europe would have to do with fundamental values, with spirituality and with justice, peace and the integrity of creation. The politicians seemed to expect that legislation, regulations and problem solving would remain exclusively their task.

In the event, as the debate has developed, it has begun to become clear that such an arbitrary separation of ideas from their implementation is unworkable. It was based on the nineteenth century principle of separation of church and state. While this principle is accepted the way in which it is interpreted needs to be rethought in the face of globalisation developed by the mass media, economic superstructures, mass transportation and the impact of religion on a global scale. For ideas to be implemented effectively those responsible for the implementation must contribute to the construction of the ideas as well. Equally, those charged with creating the ideas, will want to share the responsibility for their implementation. This implies that

any thesis separating the private and religious from the public and secular must be replaced by a new and effective partnership between institutions representing the governments and the religious organisations.

Therefore, at the European level, politicians are challenged to re-formulate their vision for Europe so that it incorporates the acceptance of religion and spirituality as an absolute prerequisite for the development of European dialogue, co-operation and unification.

If the vision of what Europe could become is separated from the treaties and legislation that seek to embody the vision, the danger is that the Union becomes instrumentalised and loses cohesion and the power to inspire either trust or loyalty.

### **The continuing challenge**

*Democracy and religion need not be incompatible. Quite the opposite. Democracy has proved to be the best framework for freedom of conscience, the exercise of faith and religious pluralism. For its part, religion, through its moral and ethical commitment, the values it upholds, its critical approach and its cultural expression, can be a valid partner of democratic society.*

(Council of Europe:  
Religion and Democracy,  
Recommendation 1396, 1999)

Europe, in common with the rest of the world, faces a range of major challenges in the struggle for peace and reconciliation. These include nationalism, and the use of over-zealous commitment to ideologies or religious dogma and racism, all of which are being exploited by the unscrupulous for their own ends. In the face of such challenges the failure of politicians to engage with religious issues and practice makes no sense. In order to foster the search for peace, justice and reconciliation politicians and church leaders must work together to face the constraints and obstacles at local, national and European levels. Only in such a way can religious and spiritual ideas and practices become fully a part of the European ideal, and contribute to the development of the heart and soul of Europe.

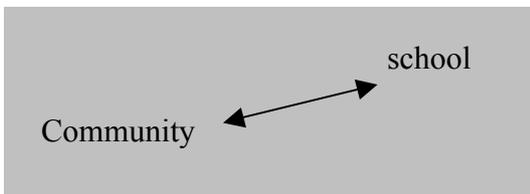
The proposals outlined above argue strongly for an improved and growing partnership between the European institutions and the Christian churches. This is necessary both to develop the vision further and to support the implementation of the measures necessary to make the vision a reality. In so far as this can be achieved by education, the potential for such a partnership can be demonstrated by an exploration of the models developed in the next section.

Within the paragraphs that follow the word “state” is used not to indicate the “nation state” in membership of the European institutions. The word “state” is used to indicate the entity or level within the nation state at which the key decisions on both the provision and organisation of schools and the content of the school curriculum are taken. It is accepted that in some nation states the levels at which curriculum and provision are decided may be different.

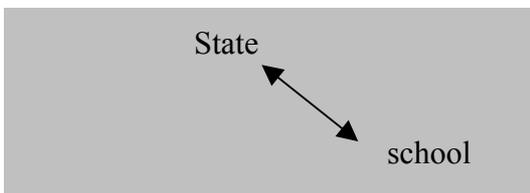
## A developing model for relationships surrounding the school

In the early days of schooling the limited number of schools that were available were, for the most part, provided by religious houses and met the needs of potential scholars and clerks whose tasks would be closely related to the needs of the church as either custodian of knowledge or major land owner. As the renaissance developed the availability of schooling and the access to learning began to spread out from its monastic roots. It was however not until the industrial revolution began to take hold that any serious attempt was made to make even elementary education available to most of the population.

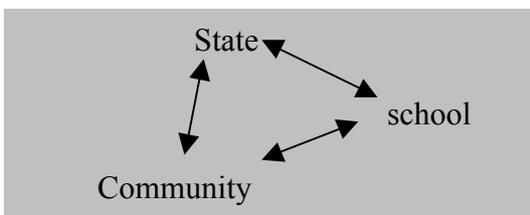
When schooling first began to be offered to the general population of European countries the only relationships external to the school were those that existed between the school and the community that it served. A simple model could express these relationships.



As the state became more involved in the provision of education so the perceived model for external relationships also changed. It could now be represented by the following model.



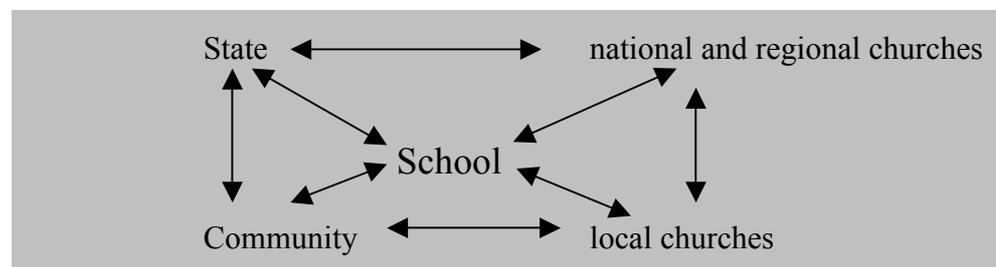
But in reality schools continued to relate to their local communities and local communities also related to the state and therefore the model was probably better represented by the following diagram.



Within these developing models it is accepted that the lines indicating a two-way relationship will cover a variety of practices and models within the same country let alone across the countries that make up the modern Europe. One of the challenges for all those working towards greater European understanding is not only understanding the complexity within their own country,

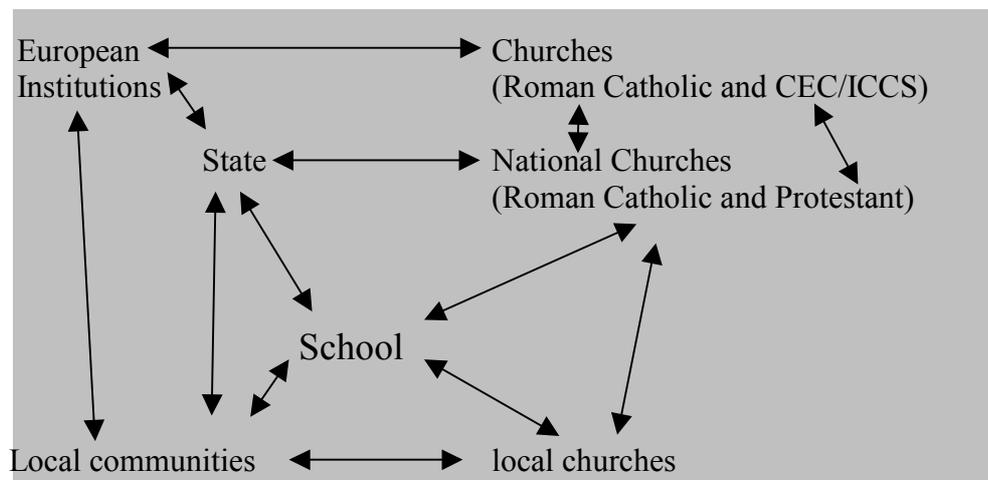
but also beginning to develop an understanding of the complexity in other countries within Europe. There is inevitably a tendency to over-simplify and to accept translations of words as if they accurately translate the concepts behind the words.

A further complexity within the model developed, as a result of the changing role of the church within the local community and within the state. In the eighteenth century, when schooling for all began to develop, in many European countries the local church was synonymous with the local community in a way, which seems only rarely possible today. Similarly, at the level of the state, there has been a significant change in the way in which the relationships between the churches and the state are structured. As a result the model has become increasingly complex and now must be represented by the following diagram.



The demand for the development of a European identity and the increasing contribution of the European Union and the Council of Europe to education, particularly in the areas of European identity and active citizenship has introduced another layer to the model of relationships. This reflects the need for the state to be in relationship with the European institutions. Also it is clear that the European institutions are seeking to be in relationship with the churches at European level. This creates some difficulties for those within the churches whose particular concern is the churches’ relationship with schools. Within the local community there will be one or more Christian congregations who will form the focus for the churches’ relationships at local level. Within the state there will be several churches or groups of churches with organisational presence at national or state level, which can provide a focus for the churches’ network of relationships surrounding schools and schooling. The Roman Catholic Church is also established in ways, which enable it to operate effectively at the European level. The protestant churches and the Anglican Church have only an embryonic structure at the European level. The Conference of European Churches (CEC) has developed a structure that enables it to undertake some consultative work with the European Union and the Council of Europe, but in the context of education it lacks specialist staff in a very complex and important area for the churches. The Inter-European Commission on Church and School (ICCS) is an organisation in relationship with CEC and with NGO status at the Council of Europe. This enables it to undertake some work on behalf of the church in the field of education, but it lacks the organisation and resources to be in effective partnership with the European institutions. Therefore, although ICCS is the main focus for work on education by the churches at the European level the ability to develop effective work by the protestant churches is

limited. Given this limitation the model for relationships surrounding the school incorporating the structures at European level has now become.



Making these structures work effectively is a major challenge for the churches and for the European institutions. Given the lack of resources that exists within the organisation representing the protestant churches at the European level it may be necessary for the European institutions to be more pro-active in their steps to make the partnership work at this level.

### Other potential areas for work and co-operation

So far this section has considered the basic network of relationships that focus on the school. Within the general sphere of education there are many other areas where co-operation between the various partners in the provision and support of schools and schooling should be working together. For example developing and enabling the partnership between the European institutions and the Christian churches should also include work on the common European approach to the teaching of history. The work that has been done on this issue so far has been very important. The more the churches can be involved in this project, the more likely it is that they will be able to support and encourage the implementation of the project in the various countries of Europe. It is clearly inadequate for the work on a common approach to the teaching of History to explore ways that can deal with teaching about conflicts between nation states without also developing ways of teaching e.g. about the Reformation. If the churches are not involved in developing the approaches to teaching about this latter topic it seems unlikely that the approach adopted will find support in the Christian churches in the individual countries where the project should lead to curriculum reform.

The churches will also have much to contribute to the development of other common approaches involving the arts and European cultural heritage.

Both these examples are drawn from the area of the school curriculum. There are other aspects of learning, involving schools that are equally important for the development of European identity and understanding, but which rarely appear on the formal curriculum of schools or in the curriculum policies of states.

One example of such activities is the pattern of “exchange” visits. Within the school context these are often organised for the prime purpose of enabling and developing the learning of a second or third European language. They are often students’ first experience of non-tourist travel, that is travel which involves meeting and engaging with ordinary citizens of another country who are not engaged in employment, directly or indirectly relate to tourism. Such travel is important to the development of European understanding and the creation of a sense of European identity.

Many church groups engage in forms of exchange and/or meeting that serve this same objective often with groups of very mixed ages. Churches should also be encouraged to become even more active in their work contributing to non-tourist visiting and encounter between the peoples of Europe. Programmes organised by the European institutions to promote this type of encounter might explore ways in which they could be in partnership with churches as well as schools.

A further area where churches have a major role to play is that of social justice and the development of programmes designed to reduce exploitation and to enhance the integrity of and concern for creation. Churches are involved at the level of inspiration or practical action and at the level of political debate. Indeed it is possible to argue that this is the area in which many within the churches identify the need for the European institutions to “develop a heart and soul.” It is difficult to exaggerate the disillusion felt by many church members with a Europe that appears to allow the economic theories of the multi-national corporations to dominate the debate about the way in which food and the other necessities of life should be produced and distributed.

These latter examples may appear to be at some distance from the daily work of schools, but all of them have an educational element. In all these areas ideas and initiatives developed by the European institutions in collaboration with the churches are more likely to capture the imagination of the citizens of Europe and attract their active support and involvement than ideas developed in isolation from a religious or spiritual element.

At a very practical level there are aspects of the way in which some European legislation is being implemented in member countries, which is a cause of much concern amongst the churches and other religious groups. In some cases it directly affects the way in which they are able to engage with not only work at the European level but even within their nation or local community. One example of this is in some aspects of Human Rights legislation where supporters of a strict secularisation are exploiting the legislation to undermine the ability of the churches even to employ active members of their own community in leadership roles in the church. This can occur because the separation of church and state and the assumption that the “correct” stance for government is secular drive the basis of so much of the thinking within the European institutions. It has been argued in this paper that such a stance is outmoded. A more appropriate stance for government is active neutrality, which engages actively with both religious and secular organisations and approaches to life.

## Summary and Recommendations

This section of the publication has particularly focussed on what can be done at the level of European institutions. The major problem for the churches, particularly the protestant churches and the Anglican Church, is the difficulties that they have in establishing and maintaining an active presence in education at this level. This is an issue that the churches need to address, but in this they could be assisted and encouraged by the organisations of the European Union and the Council of Europe.

In addition to this chapter we formulate the following recommendations:

- The European organisations should adopt or sustain a positive attitude towards the participation of the churches in the provision of education
- Action should be taken by the European institutions **and** the churches to strengthen and facilitate this partnership
- The programmes for exchange visits by students should be developed and extended
- The European organisations should explore ways in which they can encourage and facilitate “exchange” visits by church groups
- The Council of Europe’s work on the teaching of History and on intercultural education is very important and needs to be widely disseminated in the churches and in schools as well as education for citizenship with its spiritual aspects
- Work to be undertaken on issues about the teaching of European culture and heritage needs to involve the churches at every stage.
- Care needs to be taken during the implementation stages of legislation on Human Rights in employment and in anti- religious discrimination to ensure that the ways in which it is implemented at the national level does not adversely affect the churches’ ability to sustain its support for education.

## Spirituality and education for Europe

*Nowadays the efforts to create a European identity have become more difficult; the velvet revolution in Middle and Eastern Europe and the sudden disappearance of existing political structures raises questions about common European values and aims. These questions must be answered. They are linked with the demand for more participation and more transparency in political decision making. Questions of moral education as well as searching for meaning in life are challenges for schooling and education in all European countries and also a common challenge in establishing a 'European house'. The process of European integration does not take place in a continent without cultural and religious traditions, although one of the important heritages of today's Christian Europe is the separation of politics and religion, resulting in neutrality of the state.*

*Shaping a Europe for the future also means creating a cultural basis in which religious traditions play an important part.*

*Ethical-religious education is a common reality all over Europe. This becomes clear when we look at schools, where in general, confessional religious education, partly non-confessional religious education is offered. It is our responsibility to deal with religious, Christian and ethical issues in Europe.*

(CoGREE, Education and Europe)

We have argued that an active engagement with the churches could bring many benefits in the context of the European dimensions of schools and schooling. This will enhance the development of a European vision and make a significant contribution to the development of a heart and soul for Europe. We conclude the chapter with a quotation from an address given by Hans Spinder, president of ICCS.

*My conclusion is, that working on spirituality in schools and supporting and stimulating the spiritual development of pupils and students can be a contribution to the integration process of Europe. Not a Europe of any kind but a social, just, democratic and peaceful Europe. This means a challenge for schools and for educators, for churches and politicians.*

- *For the schools it means that they should make Europe, or the European dimension, a theme in their education and in other activities. This can be present in several school subjects, including RE. The approach should always be critical, but this is in line with some of the best aspects of the European tradition. This means... that the best way for RE to serve the European dimension is to transcend this dimension and to look at things from a global perspective.*
- *For the pupils it can be important when the school participates in international/European exchange programmes. The meeting of other people in circumstances and conditions different from their own can expand the horizon for pupils and make them aware of the European reality. A condition for the success of these meetings is, of course, a good preparation and a good supervision of the process.*

## Chapter 8: Summary and Recommendations

This paper has argued for a vision of active European citizenship that includes a religious dimension. (see Chapter 1) This vision does not assume that all citizens will or should have a religious dimension within their own life. The argument is based on the fact that for many European citizens a personal commitment to a religious belief and/or the membership of a community of believers is an important reality in their lives and part of their identity. A concept of active citizenship that ignores or denies that dimension alienates and excludes individuals, frustrates communities and impoverishes both the nation state and the European Institutions.

This idea of European citizenship illustrates the general idea, which is in the background of this argumentation that religion is a dimension of education and of European education policy that should not be ignored. The European institutions are invited to acknowledge this dimension and to give room to European churches and other religious communities to play an appropriate role in education.

In an address to the churches it is argued that there are strong arguments in the Christian tradition for a responsibility of churches in general education. This means in the actual European context that churches should understand their responsibility for education within the framework of their vision about Europe, as illustrated with the ideas about European citizenship.

In the second chapter the paper goes on to draw on a range of examples and experiences to illustrate what such a vision of citizenship could mean for the school, church and for national and European Institutions. The examples are intended to describe the existing reality in many schools and only to suggest an approach. Within each nation and region of Europe the concepts and recommendations will need to be translated into action that is appropriate to local needs and circumstances. The following proposals suggest some of the steps that need to be taken to implement these ideas.

### **Setting the Framework (i)**

#### Recommendations to the civil organisations at the European level

The European institutions should adopt or sustain a positive attitude towards the participation of the churches in the provision of education and set out clearly their commitment to working in partnership with the faith communities as well as with the special interest groups in each field of their activities.

The European institutions should demonstrate that they value the contributions that come from the faith communities.

The European Institutions should acknowledge the real cost to all groups of participation in the work of the European Institutions and take steps to reduce this cost particularly where it falls on charities or groups dependent on membership contributions.

The Council of Europe’s work on the teaching of History and on inter-cultural education is very important and needs to be widely disseminated in the churches and in schools as well as education for citizenship with its spiritual aspects. Work to be undertaken on issues about the teaching of European culture and heritage needs to involve the churches at every stage.

### **Setting the framework (ii)**

Recommendations to the national and European organisations within the churches and faith communities

While developing ecumenism at a European level the churches and other faith groups should bear in mind that one of the purposes of ecumenism at this level is to participate fully in the work of building a Europe that is a force for peace, justice and reconciliation in the world. To this end the churches should be prepared to be active partners in the work of the European institutions.

The churches should help their local congregations and members to develop a vision for European co-operation. They should actively encourage links between individual congregations in different European countries and help to set a framework for these encounters with fellow Christians.

It is important to give more attention to the educational dimension of the work of churches in ecumenical and international networks and to develop policies in which the involvement of churches in education throughout Europe is integrated. In order to make an effective contribution to this work the education structures within the national churches should be strengthened.

The churches are asked to involve in school education in supporting new developments in education, which face the challenges of society and of the European process. Aspects to be mentioned are: study of world faiths within the Religious Education programme, the preparation of pupils for dialogue and encounter, to give support to the celebration of cultural and ethnic diversity and the development of the citizenship education curriculum. They should encourage church schools and other religiously affiliated schools to become models of good practice in all aspects of education.

From the chapter about the commitment of the teacher it is concluded that Churches and Christians should appreciate the work of teachers and support them in both their professionalism and their spirituality.

### **Developing the vision - The role of the nations and regions**

National and regional governments should acknowledge and welcome the partnerships, which exist between themselves and the faith communities. They should seek opportunities to develop these partnerships into new areas.

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## **Appendix 2 – The Work of ICCS**

The Intereuropean Commission on Church and School (ICCS) is a working group, created in 1958 as a result of the initiative of individual representatives of various European churches. The aim was to provide a framework for co-operation in monitoring and developing the place of Religious Education in European schools.

In the beginning it was no more than a conference organising committee, that organised a conference every three years. This three year cycle is still the basis of the work, but the range of activities has broadened substantially over the last two decades.

ICCS is now active in the field of church and school and focuses on topics such as religious education, multicultural and multi-religious learning, norms and values education, ecumenical learning, education in Europe and the position of religion in the European education policy.

### **RELATION WITH OTHER ORGANISATIONS**

As ICCS works in the field of Church and School, it is not surprising, that from the outset the importance of links with organisations and other agencies was recognised. These links now exist with ‘secular’ as well as Christian or church organised institutions.

From the beginning ICCS had good connections with the education department of the World Council of Churches and with the Conference of European Churches (CEC).

Consequently, the first two conferences, in 1958 and 1962, were organised in Bossey (Switzerland).

ICCS is an associated member of the Conference of European Churches with special relations to the Church and Society Commission (CSD).

As the work of ICCS touches the whole area of school education and moral education, it goes without saying that links were made with the work of the Council of Europe.

ICCS had personal contacts with people, working at the department of Education, Culture and Sport since 1964. This contact received official status when the participants of the conference of 1979 were received on the 5<sup>th</sup> of July at the headquarters of the Council in Strasbourg.

Since 1990 ICCS has, as a Non-Governmental Organisation (NGO), consultative status at the Council of Europe, and participates in the education group of the NGO Liaison Committee of the Council.

### **MEMBERSHIP**

ICCS is open to churches, organisations and individuals.

1. Churches, in membership of, or having official links with, the World Council of Churches (WCC), the Conference of European Churches (CEC) or their national Council of Churches. In particular those that have links with school education and/or religious education.
2. Agencies, having a national responsibility or concern for religious education in the schools and recognised either by the churches or by the government.
3. Individuals and other organisations, who sympathise with or are interested in the work of ICCS.

## ORGANISATION

In each country one or two representatives from the above mentioned first or second group are elected as *correspondents*. The task of these correspondents is to promote the idea of European co-operation in the area of church/school relationships in their own country. The correspondents are asked to maintain close links with other correspondents and with board members. Promoting the communication and exchange of ideas is a difficult, but very important task of the ICCS correspondents.

Once in three years the correspondents meet at the correspondents-meeting, held after the triennial conference. Then new members of the board can be elected, if necessary. The correspondents are also responsible for the composition of their national delegation to the conference.

The board is elected by the correspondents. Eight seats on the board are related to specific countries or regions: Great Britain and Ireland, Benelux, Scandinavia, France, Germany, Southern, Eastern and Middle Europe. The board has the possibility to co-opt two extra members.

## ICCS CONFERENCES

A central activity of ICCS is organising a conference every third year. The theme is often suggested by the correspondents and worked out by the board. A local committee of the host country is then asked to undertake the organisation. These conferences are aimed at promoting discussion, exchanging ideas and stimulating contacts on a European level. Since 1958 a conference has been organised every third year. The most recent were:

1979 Liebfrauenberg ( France): 'Jesus and the (school) community'

1982 Driebergen (The Netherlands): 'Religious Education in a multi-cultural society'

1985 Loccum (Germany): 'Values and Norms in school education'

1988 Chichester (England): 'Teaching the Bible Creatively in the Contemporary World'

1991 Järvenpää (Finland): 'Private, personal and public religion'

1994 Rome (Italy): Christian minorities in a pluralistic world: is confessional RE the answer?

1997 Strasbourg (France): Spirituality and Europe

2000 Trondheim (Norway): The Pluralistic European Society. Opportunities for Co-operation between Church and School?

2003 Budapest (Hungary): Building Bridges in Europe. The Contribution of Education and Religious Education in Developing Religious and Cultural Understanding.

## OTHER ACTIVITIES

Sometimes, conferences are organised in co-operation with other organisations, e.g. the International Association for Christian Education (IV), the

European Conference on Christian Education (ECCE) or the Council of Europe. In 1990, ICCS adopted a statement on ‘European Perspectives of Education’ after having held a symposium together with the Loccum Institute of Religious Education (RPI).

In 1998, ICCS supported the founding of the Coordinating Group for Religious Education in Europe – CoGREE ([www.cogree.com](http://www.cogree.com)) in which six European wide organisations are co-ordinating their common activities as well as supporting each other. CoGREE includes representatives of IV, ECCE, EFTRE (European Forum for Teachers of RE), RE Network and EAWRE (European Association for World Religions in Education). ICCS introduced the discussion about European education policies of the Council of Europe and the European Union as permanent working issues to CoGREE.

Usually, reports of ICCS conferences are published and available to all who are interested.

Frequently a working group is established to work on a certain theme more in depth. These working groups, composed of 8 - 12 participants from different European countries, prepare a publication or a contribution to a conference.

## **PUBLICATIONS**

### **Newsletter**

Twice a year a Newsletter is produced, containing announcements of conferences and working groups and providing details about publications and relevant developments in the member countries in the area of Church and School.

The reports of conferences and working groups’ publications are available from the secretary, the treasurer or the correspondents.

### **Commitment and Neutrality: a useful opposition? 1989.**

German version: *Engagement und Sachlichkeit im Unterricht* - ein pädagogisches Grundproblem im Kontext europäischer Schulen to order at the Comenius Institut.

### **Education and Europe/ *Bildung und Europa***

Common statement/ Gemeinsame Erklärung, by: Peter Schreiner, Hans Spinder and Frans Vos. A publication (in English and German) of IV, ICCS, EFTRE and ECCE.

### **Ecumenical learning**

Experiences, Systematic Perspectives, Ideas 1991.

### **School / Church Relations in the New Europe**

ICCS working group report which present different models of School/Church relations in Europe, London 1996, 50 pp

### **Identitätsbildung im pluralen Europa**

Perspektiven für Schule und Religionsunterricht, Peter Schreiner, Hans Spinder (Hrsg.), Waxmann Verlag, Münster 1997.

### **Religious Education in Europe**

A collection of basic information about RE in European countries, 182 pp, Münster 2000

## INTERESTED?

One of the consequences of the contacts, made at conferences, is often that a delegation from one country visits another country to get more informed about a certain aspect of their work.

ICCS sees this as an aspect of ecumenical learning, which it considers very important.

If you, your organisation or church, are interested in becoming a member of our organisation, please write to the secretariat.

We are willing to participate with partners in work on topics about School and Church or other related projects.

When you have suggestions and new initiatives we invite you to contact us.

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