



Report on the Covenanting for Justice process in several European churches

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Following the **World Alliance of Reformed Churches'** General Council in 2004 European Churches are engaged in many projects und activities.

In the **WARC-Europe** Gathering in 2008 the European Churches were requested to describe their engagement for the **Covenanting for Justice Process**.

We know that many reformed churches in Europe are involved in the **Covenanting for Justice Process**, but sadly only five churches sent their reports to Warc-Europe. We got the reports from Germany, the Church of Scotland, Eglise Protestante Reformee du Luxembourg, Swiss, Netherlands.

Definitely the activities of the European Churches are much more intensive – but at this time, I could only tell something about these and also this reports enforcedly focal points and small clippings. The other Reformed Churches in Europe will be requested to contribute their reports in the next months – we'll hear later about a project of WARC Europe and the Reformed Alliance in Germany.

Germany

In the German context the **Reformed Alliance** is further engaged in the worldwide organized globalization-critical movement ATTAC – with the main points of activity: World Trade, International finance, Milleniumtargets, Just Conditions for employment.

Many local churches and churchmanagements discussed the Accra-Confession in its theological and economic dimensions. Even the greater churches – the **Church of Rhineland** and the **Church of Westphalen** are engaged in intensive discussions and many projects - for example the **“Corporate social responsibility process**

(CSR)”, which builds and supports fair and nondiscriminatory working conditions for people in the producing countries and calls extensive responsibilities for entrepreneurs in the context of globalization. Main issues in the discussion of churches and synods are:

- questions of communication with partners in the South (Common Project of the **German Evangelical Reformed Church** and the **Uniting Church in Southern Africa**, Urcsa in questions of globalization).
- basic topics of globalization,
- the discussion about a theological position in questions of economical globalization
- motivation and support for communities and churchmembers
- how to influence politics on the issues of poverty, trade, environment and development by the values of justice, peace and sustainability.

In Germany the question about **“Empire”** was discussed in synods, academies and churchleader conferences. Often it was a controversial discussion. But – I received the impression, that this discussion was helpful. It constituted a continuing debate on the structures of globalisation, it challenges to the Church to take up position and to sharpen theological categories, for example on the question of confession. And, something that should not be forgotten, it also challenges the Church to fundamentally reflect upon concepts such as “government”, “political structures” and on exactly what is happening in the world. The discussion was and is furthermore important in the critical analysis of the prevalence of particular global coalitions, for example those of economic and security interests, in creating an awareness of the reality of life of many people from the South who find themselves in a state of existential threat and in the self-critical consideration of our own entanglement in power structures. The article **“The concept of Empire as a stone of stumbling”** will be published from URCSA as a contribution from Germany to the bilateral discussions.

Netherlands

The **Protestant Church of Netherlands (PKN)** took in 2005 the decision to support the **“Accra’s Appeal”** as a call to make faith based choices in obedience to Christ in regard to the attitude towards the earth and each other.

The church members are called to take their responsibility as consumers and to follow a Christian lifestyle, in which care for the earth and for each other is central. Further the Netherlands call the international business and financial sector, especially

those which operate from the Netherlands, to develop and sign a global code of conduct, principally oriented on care for the earth and mankind. The PKN set value on the information and support of local congregations and common experiences – for example the 40-days-lent. This program and other materials can be seen at:

www.geloofwaardige-economie.nl

The website offers a newsletter, it gives examples of important and successful activities and other information. You can find material for discussion and a program for the youth. My impression is, that the Accra Confession and its dimensions are deeply embed in the faith and life of people in the Netherlands.

Last month the PKN took, as a sign of active solidarity and aid, the decision to invest 10 Mio Euro of the pension fonds of their pastors in oikocredit – for investment in microfinance.

In the context of the international finance crisis the PKN reminded people to think about their lifestyle. **“Creditcrisis is a question of our lifestyle”** – the General Secretary of the PKN, Arjan Plaisier, said. **“We have to see, that money is every time tended to be mammon.”** Plaisier reminded people to think about the Accra-Confession and its theological conclusions about economy and the biblical vision of life in fullness.

Presbyterian Church in Ireland

The General Assembly of Ireland adopted in 2008 the **“Lifestyle Report”** and decided:

“That the Report on Lifestyle be sent to Presbyteries and Kirk Sessions for discussion and appropriate implementation”

The Lifestyle Report describes several issues of globalization. The PCI is convinced that **“we must also note, that in a selfish, greedy world the flow of money tends to be from the poor to the rich. As the rich become richer, the poor become poorer. How do we respond?”**

The Lifestyle Report searches a theological foundation to give the advice for a radical transformation to reach the joy of life in all its fullness in Jesus Christ.

People in communities are invited to discuss the biblical principles wich should governing their life and lifestyle.

Nevertheless the PCI reminded us against the background of the Accra Declaration to recognize, that there are many questions about the world economy and its structures. PCI describes it as **“a little quick, to lay the blame of all the world’s**

problems at the door of what is commonly describes as “global neoliberal capitalism”. Thus we are invited to look very seriously on these structures.

The responsibilities towards the poor are beyond doubt. The Lifestyle report is on a high level of self-critical sight of view. The lifestyle of people is discovered as **“careless , selfishness, and thoughtlessness”**.

The PCI suggest their communities to reflect about

- **Stewardship of Creation**
- **Worship and Rest**
- **Relationship**
- **Fall and Redemption**
- **Hope**

At least the **“Lifestyle Report”** developed an agenda for Lifechanging - with practical proposals and opportunities for people.

Luxembourg

The Eglise Protestante Reformee du Luxembourg gives an overview about there engagement in the Covenanting of Justice Process.

The points of interest are especially the questions of climate and fair trade. More details could be demanded.

Switzerland

SEK-feps Switzerland is on a very high level engaged and tries to discuss and implement the Accra Confession and the Covenanting Process in all lines of their structures. Thereby excludes the discussion not the critical questions - even as the Church of Ireland it formulated.

The SEK-feps published a lot of papers and developed many projects. Main question at it all is how we can get the **“global balance”** – called in the strategy of Switzerland **“Globalance”**. The Globalance-project is all embracing initiative with many activities.

Even the Church of Switzerland has an agenda to act in the light of the ongoing globalization and describes **7 core projects**:

- **Dealing with investment policies and funds of churches**
- **0,7%-campaign: target percentage for the development aid to be provided by the state**
- **Poverty and wealth as challenges for church action**
- **Project on energy and consumption**
- **Water as a human right and a public good**
- **Globalization as a subject of liturgy and worships**
- **Migration, asylum and globalization**

This description of activities is necessarily like a cut out. It is the challenge to describe it very serious in an other context and publication.

Project of WARC Europe and the Reformed Alliance in Germany

At least – the Reformed Churches in Europe, organized in WARC-Europe, recognized that it would be helpful to bring together descriptions of all the activities in Europe, following the **Covenanting for Justice Process**. This may be helpful to give an overview, but even more to stimulate the **Covenanting for Justice Process** in Europe. It is very good, if we know from each other and are able to see and discuss examples of best practice. The Reformed Alliance in Germany is starting this project to bring together material from European Reformed Churches.

The aims are:

- having reports of – if it is possible – all member churches of WARC-Europe on the issue of their dressing of the Accra-Confession
- bringing together the reports and producing a book on **“Europe’s Covenanting for Justice”**
- bringing that book to all member churches of WARC Europe to share experiences and to encourage one another
- bringing that book to the next General Council of WARC to share our experiences with brothers and sisters from other regions.

Concluding one can say, that the engagement in the **Covenanting for Justice Process** in the European Churches is going on. We see many practical examples and materials for engagement for Justice and Life in fullness. Nevertheless the

discussion in Europe is on the basis of the life in Europe. The discussions are controversial but consensus and commitment exist in many singular questions. It is out of doubt, that People have to reflect their responsibility for the Creation of God, for their lifestyle and their consumption behaviour. We see many projects following the point 41 of the Accra Confession. Churches are working together **“with other communions, the ecumenical community, the community of other faiths, civil movements and people’s movements for a just economy and the integrity of creation and calls upon their member churches to do the same”**. But even in Europe people lose their employment and the poverty especially the child poverty is increasing. It is expected that many people will be victims of the financial crisis. People in Europe - mainly employees in global players mills are worried about the security of employment.

So it is important to discuss the Covenanting of Justice even in reference to **all** people feeling the negative consequences of globalization.