

Norske kirkeakademier  
Årsmøte  
Sanner Hotell, Gran  
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NKA 8/17	Internasjonalt arbeid Saksdokumenter.	a Draft Agenda Business Meeting 2016 b President's Report c Report Gender and Justice Network d Some thoughts after the Annual Conference
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Forslag til vedtak: Årsmøtet tar informasjonen til orientering.

**Oikosnet Europe**  
**Annual Conference**  
**Prague, 7 – 11 September 2016**



### **Draft Agenda for the Business Sessions**

- 1. Welcome and Introduction**
- 2. Roll Call and Quorum**
- 3. Election of a Co-signer of the minutes 2016**
- 4. Adoption of the Agenda** (Doc: AC 2016-1)
- 5. Minutes from the Last Annual Conference (Corrymeela, 9-13 September 2015)**  
(Doc: AC 2015-7)
- 6. Presentation and Discussion of the President's report** (Doc: 2016-2)
- 7. Presentation and Discussion of the Annual Report** (Doc: 2015-3)
- 8. Reports**
  - 8.1.1 Gender and Justice Network
  - 8.1.2 Consultation of Central and Eastern European Members and Associates (Strasbourg, Febr. 2016) (Doc: AC 2016-4)
  - 8.1.3 Arab-European Dialogue
- 9. The legal personality of Oikosnet Europe**
  - 9.1 The process (from Germany to Sweden)
  - 9.2 Constitution of OE according to Swedish law (discussion) (Docs: AC 2016-5+5bis)
  - 9.3 The new Board of OE according to Swedish law (discussion)
  - 9.4 Establishment of OE according to Swedish Law (decisions)

## **10. Finances**

- 10.1 Report of the Treasurer
- 10.2 Adoption of the Accounts 2015 (decision) (Doc: AC 2016-6)
- 10.3 Amendment to the Budget 2016 (Doc: AC 2016-6)
- 10.4 Adoption of the Budget 2017 (decision) (Doc: AC 2016-6)

## **11 Cooperation within Oikosnet Europe**

- 11.1 Common Projects within OE (incl. seed financing)
- 11.2 Thematic Interest Groups
- 11.2 Staff Exchange

## **12 Communication**

### **13 Developments at Oikosnet members (common trends)**

### **14 German Kirchentag and Reformation Jubilee 2017**

### **15 Annual Conferences 2017 ff (Doc AC 2016-7)**

### **16 Any Other Business**

## **Please Note:**

**At the appropriate moment during the Annual Conference, OE members who have declared their willingness to join OE according to Swedish law, will constitute themselves as a “Founding Assembly” with the following agenda items:**

- 1. Establishment of Oikosnet Europe as an association according to Swedish law**
- 2. Adoption of a Constitution**
- 3. Election of a Board**

## AC 2016-2

**Oikosnet Europe  
Annual Conference  
Prague, 7-11 Sept 2016**



### Presidents Report

#### Differences as our challenge

The following short observations are offered as part of a President's Report in order to place the work of Oikosnet Europe and its members into context. These are just glimpses of recent developments. Others might see different priorities or might have a different perspective on them. However, Annual Conferences of Oikosnet Europe should also provide a platform to share about the contexts in which we are operating and trying to make a positive contribution. If the following notes help to facilitate a discussion about recent developments and their consequences for the work of Oikosnet members, they have fulfilled their purpose.

#### Turmoil in Europe

Last year was a year of turmoil in Europe. The turmoil will not finish within one year. We live with huge challenges. We have seen, as one example, an increasing flow of refugees, trying to get out of misery and poverty into countries, which probably hold more promises than their home countries. Europe was seen as a more save heaven than for instance Syria, Somalia, Libya – and most of the times rightly so. People joined in a process to leave their hopeless situation and find new ways to increase their chances, to find shelter and safety, to have hope for a better future. However, the number of persons, drawn in the seas around Europe, is enormous. And in the meanwhile the physical and political fences get higher and higher.

The European institutions – lots of work is invested by many civil servants and politician to increase their quality, as other people do in many other places in governments and institutions. Yet the legitimacy of these institutions eroded heavily. Expressions were seen in several popular votes. The outcome of the Brexit-referendum is just one of them. Populist approaches are part of our reality for years – behind us and waiting for us.

Attacks by radicalised person on civilians, all over Europe, continued to take place. They have a strong effect on the way people feel safe in their own streets, villages and towns, countries. Reactions by several governments are re-actions, interventions in already escalated situations. The almost ever lasting chain of cause and effect doesn't bring lasting solutions. Turmoil will continue for a while.

### **The heart and soul of Europe?**

The crisis in refugee-camps is to a certain extent a physical and moral disaster for the European Union since this union was initially started as a project for peace and reconciliation. Some decades ago there was the plea of Jacques Delors to actively look for the "heart and soul" for Europe – since it had to be more than 'just' a common market. Quite some members of Oikosnet Europe responded to that challenge in the nineties of last century and organised discussions about this subject in many countries. Now it more and more appears to be a rather empty soul, filled with quite some capital and not much more. The situation in Greece, indebted through different processes throughout the years, was a sign of despair from many sides. The welcoming policy towards refugees of Mrs. Merkel on behalf of the German government didn't last very long, also due to resistance within the country. Many other countries in Europe weren't able to support this open policy. On the contrary, many of these countries blamed Merkel for being naive and not practical. It became the self-fulfilling prophecy. The consequence seemed to be the agreement between the European Union and the government of Turkey, where the access for refugees to Europe was traded off against horrible human rights situations.

And talking about Turkey doesn't make us feel us well, especially after the attempt of some persons to overthrow the government of Mr. Erdogan. The mere fact of the attempt turned out to be a starting point for a fierceful process of blaming and scape-goating.

### **Is democracy guided by the rule of law ?**

What is the soul of Europe, 25 years after the call of Delors for the 'heart and soul for Europe'? Do we see the bankruptcy of democracy? To which extend is the discussion about the quality of democracy, democratic institutions, changed from a discussion about the values and their effect on real decisions into a discussion about counting the numbers? If this tendency is real, than morality changes more and more into the moral high ground of the winner of the popular vote. Then the question arises to which extend democracy, which in many countries is still guided by the rule of law (an approach where the constitution of a country determines the general approach towards 'law and order') or are we more ruled by just some laws which are issued to cover a short sighted policy line of the ruling majority of that specific moment? As it appears now the situation in Turkey is in danger when popular votes, the majority, are dominating every discussion where at the same time minorities don't seem to be protected anymore. Even the stage of emergency, in place in some countries, should not be used as an argument to not respect and apply constitutions.

### **We see quite different opinions within our association**

These urgent questions are questions on the agenda of our members too. We as Oikosnet Europe are not able to discuss these matters during our annual conferences. Yet the issues are important since we see quite different opinions within our association. In Hungary and Poland and Austria – just to name a few countries - the view of the majority of the people is rather negative regarding the question of welcoming refugees. In many other countries, like France and the Netherlands, there is a growing resistance against people moving in. They are sometimes characterised as 'luck-seekers' – where this term is appropriate for almost everyone all over the world. Now it turns into a negative term for newly entering persons. The legitimacy of for instance the European Union is heavily debated in many countries – with Greece and the United Kingdom as examples from last year. The challenges deal with the sharing of opportunities in an overcrowded world. It appears that in many European

countries the ethical considerations are moving towards the so called life-boat ethics, stating 'full is full'. As an association we have to deal with it - not as a fact which is taken for granted, but as a starting point. During our Annual Conference at Corrymeela in 2015, we discussed the role of those who don't represent the extreme positions in societies. It was called the 'radical centre', indicating that these groups (which most of the time are not very outspoken) can really make a difference when they present themselves in the public debates.

### **Sharing different views – the ideal speech situation**

It also includes the challenge that different views from our members are heard at our conferences - even when others don't consider these views to be good. The fact that we are members of the same association also includes the opportunity - and probably also the obligation - to share different views among each other. Talking about civil society makes only sense if we are ready to be open for a "ideal speech situation " as Habermas called it. This means that every sort of argument has to be considered and every participant has the right to speak freely. But it means as well that we have to listen to each other – even when we are totally disagreeing with the point of the view of the other.

### **Difference is a chance**

Real changes take place when people with different views start to engage, to exchange their views and probably to look for opportunities for cooperation. Difference is a chance and not a handicap. The famous story of the Tower of Babel in the Bible (Genesis 11) tells us that God couldn't stand an uniform society. Although difficult and most of the times also challenging, it is worthwhile to invest in overcoming differences - at least by first understanding them properly. Our association has the tools and opportunities for that. We are different in our functioning, in our approach to the Gospel, in our traditions and experiences. If we have houses or not, if we run our own program or not, if we are more academic or more a grass root movement, we are convinced that we have a common task in society in Europe.

## Report: Conference of the „Gender and Justice Network“ 5.-7. September 2016 in Prague

Günter Renz, Bad Boll

We were about 10 participants and the programme of the conference - organized by Nicole Richter from Villigst, the speaker of the “Gender and Justice Network”, and Marielisa von Thadden - was very interesting with important topics around "Escape, Migration, Gender".

So we had four speeches including a visit of amnesty international.

From the University of Prague Dr. Petra Ezzeddine (Department for Anthropology and Gender Studies) reported about a study with 37 refugee women from former Yugoslavia at the age 50+, who live for more than 20 years in Czechia. In total there are still 15000 of 20000 migrants from ex-Yugoslavia in the country.

Petra and their colleagues analysed their situation and life trajectories: How gender, age, ethnicity, migration status and social class formed their lives in the new society. Some results are:

- The still vivid emotional trauma of leaving.
- Some feel of guilt to have left other family members, also because they cannot bring elderly parents to Czechia to care for them, although they themselves have full citizenship.
- They feel a transnational belonging. The Czech society lets them feel, that they are still foreigners in spite of the fact, that they don't look different and they spoke/speak also a Slavic language. (And Petra Ezzeddine asked: What would be when new Migrants come?).
- It is nearly impossible for them to get a sufficient age pension, also because it is very difficult if not impossible to get a pension for the former work in Yugoslavia.

“So it must be stressed:

We see the globalisation of economies and the interconnection of capital markets - on the other hand the national social policies do not reckon with the mobility of citizens and their transnational lives and social rights.”

Another point is, that it was not possible to use the qualification of the migrants in an appropriate way.

In the afternoon Martin Balcar received us at amnesty international.

We learned, that there are 8 Migrants in Czechia in 2015. Churches avoid clear statements in favour of refugees. Politicians and the media tend to identify refugees with terrorists. Catholic priests are upset of the position of the pope. Czechia is a quite homogenous society, except 3% Roma, that are clearly discriminated, till now e.g. by sending them mostly to special schools where also children with slight disabilities are taught. Martin thinks it was the most successful campaign of ai and other NGOs to end in 2016 this praxis especially by appealing to European institutions.

We got the impression of a society that tends to machismo and where gender stereotypes are strong:

- men should earn more, so in fact Women are underpaid
- Czechia has a very low rate of rape complaints and the tendency to give the responsibility to the women is strong. Martin and ai did a study of their own to that topic.
- In the case of a divorce, the mother is responsible for the childcare and so on.
- Arms exports also into the middle east become again attractive (guns and helicopters).

On the positive side:

- there is quite great social security.
- Social support is very good for childcare from 3/4 years, also for the handicapped
- the care for the elderly, is quite good.
- Mothers or fathers can return to their job within 4 years after the birth of a child.

An agenda in Czechia has begun: Equality of man and women 2014-2020.

Challenges from his point of view for ai are especially:

- To take Influence on the Media,

- to strengthen the Advocacy work,
- the cooperation with Whistleblowers.

Now I go back to the second speech in the morning by Dr. Vigdis Vevstad Specialist for International Law and independent consultant for European institutions and e.g. UNHCR.

She drew the bigger picture of migration and reminded us of some figures, only for example:

There are 65 Mio. refugees worldwide. 6% of the refugees are in EU, the others in poorer countries, that we have partly criticised in the past for their insufficient help. It's a global question, now it's our turn to take our part.

Vevstad asked:

How quickly could it happen that Many European politicians no longer confirm the Geneva Convention and the ethics behind it? She stressed that the established rights and conventions are not the problem. And Merkel didn't break Dublin II, for Dublin allows humanitarian consideration, also e.g. family unification. It's not the first rule of Dublin, that the first country must take the refugee, but the last, when no other solution is found.

The agreement with Turkey in March has as its precondition, that Turkey is a safe country.

Life and liberty are not threatened, a refugee must have the possibility to make a refugee claim, but Turkey is the only country, that signed the Geneva Convention only for European countries, that means not for Syrians. Syrians are therefore not refugees for Turkey in the sense of Geneva Convention.

Finally we discussed that it should be possible to get humanitarian visa from abroad in special cases.

In the evening Michael Blume talked about a humanitarian project of the Landesregierung of Baden-Württemberg. It demonstrates, what is possible. The Ministerpräsident of Baden-Württemberg Winfried Kretschmann, who belongs to the green party and who is a roman catholic Christian, decided to bring 1000 women and children from North Irak to Baden-Württemberg, women and children who belong to the Yazidi and which were raped by the IS and traumatised. Michael Blume was responsible for the project, which was supported by all parties of the Landtag. The whole project lasted one year, the federal government didn't believe, that it would work and didn't support the project. It was dangerous and risky to organise the whole including around ten flights from Erbil to Stuttgart. Now the women are in different towns and they are free to return after recovering or stay here. One young woman, Nadia Murad, will report to the UN in New York next week. Other countries are interested to learn from this humanitarian initiative.

We drew some conclusions:

- We should support our churches to speak with a clear voice.
- It is necessary to give precise information, e.g. concerning the figures, also to make clear the historical dimensions to give the big picture.
- We should try to bring to the media – also to the new social media – stories and narratives that show what is possible and we should try to give a voice to "the other".
- We should support volunteers, who work with refugees We should reflect, how to deal with populism.
- We should support especially the double marginalised people, e.g. homosexual migrants.

To the next Oikosnet-Meeting we propose the topic "The Other and Othering" for one day in the middle of the Oikosnet-Meeting, prepared by the "Gender and Justice Network" (among others Nicole Richter und Kristin Gunleiksrud).

## How to respond? Some thoughts after the Annual conference 2016



*Transition accomplished or mission impossible? – Economic developments and civil society.* This was the subject of the study day during the 61st Annual Conference of Oikosnet Europe, held in Prague.

In itself such a subject is always too broad. The fact that we had very powerful introductions from different angles made it even broader. The role of civil society was the central issue – as it appears to me when looking back now.

We heard from the situation in some Eastern countries in Europe where meetings of activists are monitored by secret services – just by locating all the mobile phones in a very narrow defined area. Or even at a square where more than 50.000 protesters are gathered. Blocking the providers for mobile phone during the protest hours made communication impossible. And afterwards all owner of mobile phones – spotted at the square – were visited at home: Why were you there? And yet, even knowing this, people protested, appeared at the square.

Another example: in the Czech Republic the strength of civil society has been weakened throughout the decades after World War II. 1948 with the new communist regime, 1956 with the troubles in Hungary which affected also the Czech Republic, the Prague Spring 1968, Charta 77 in 1977 and also the short revival after 1989 resulted each time in a wave of emigration, especially from potential leaders, from quite a substantial part of intelligentsia. What about the strength and history of civil society in such a society?

We are not driven by examples – we are more dedicated by the results which can be obtained. During the meeting of the Gender & Justice Network we were informed about a successful activity by the regional government of Baden Württemberg, Germany. Through a committed minister president and through the support of churches it appeared to be possible to find, transport and welcome more than 1.000 battered women with their children from Yazidi groups in Iraq. They were welcomed, housed and supported in their different ways to start a new life. Civil society was active around them.

During the Annual Conference we had an input from Mr. Daniel Stech, civil servant at the Foreign Office of the Czech Republic. He mentioned some helping ideas for civil society groups. Among them:

- Civil society will always be a minority. Accept that as a fact.

- Create places where you stimulate the imagination
- Create places where you enable face to face meetings
- Apply an open door policy. This enables enrichment from unexpected angles.
- When looking for opportunities to meet with others, take away some of the obvious barriers in places – like cars.
- Organise careful counter attacks against simplified narratives.

In my view this list is encouraging. It is a list which contains realistic options. And also, it is a list which to a high degree characterises the work the members of Oikosnet Europe at the moment. And as a last remark: this was what happened at – again – this Annual Conference.

Besides that we were also productive in other ways. See other input in this newsletter.

All in all it was worth getting to this Annual Conference. Next year we meet in Beugen, Germany, from 6 to 10 September.

*Jaap van der Sar, president of Oikosnet Europe*

