

STEP INTO THE



SUMMER UNIVERSITY



A CARITAS EUROPA STUDY AND TRAINING COURSE
SUPPORTED BY THE



PROGRESS COMMUNITY PROGRAMME
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The seven-year Programme targets all stakeholders who can help shape the development of appropriate and effective employment and social legislation and policies, across the EU-27, EFTA and EU candidate and pre-candidate countries.

To that effect, PROGRESS purports at: providing analysis and policy advice on employment, social solidarity and gender equality policy areas; monitoring and reporting on the implementation of EU legislation and policies in employment, social solidarity and gender equality policy areas; promoting policy transfer, learning and support among Member States on EU objectives and priorities; and relaying the views of the stakeholders and society at large.

For more information see: http://ec.europa.eu/employment_social/progress/index_en.html

FOREWORD

In the frame of its INCLUSION (Integrating and Nourishing Caritas Learning and Understanding of Social Inclusion through Optimal Networking) programme, Caritas Europa held its first edition of the Summer University. The event took place in Leuven (Belgium) on 14-18 July 2008.

The objective of this course was to promote reflection and increase knowledge about relevant EU processes among participants from the Caritas Europa network at both national and local level.

Twenty-three participants attended the event, which was made possible thanks to the collaboration of several persons and institutions.

Robert Urbé (President of the Caritas Europa Social Policy Commission) and Patrick De Bucquois (Social Policy Consultant) were much appreciated trainers.

Caritas Vlaanderen was a precious partner in organising the event and the Katholieke Universiteit Leuven provided the necessary academic expertise.

Participants enjoyed the visit to COMECE (Commission of the Bishop's Conferences of the European Community), the European Commission and the European Parliament.

A special thank goes to the Social Policy team of Caritas Europa who invested considerable time and energy in preparing this meeting.

The Summer University 2008 has given an important contribution to the Caritas Europa network in terms of strengthening its advocacy capacity and skills. We trust that this will benefit the overall Caritas contribution to the implementation of the EU objectives in the area of social protection and social inclusion.

As the Summer University was a pilot project, we will be happy, on the basis of the results of this year, to consider making it to a standard activity of Caritas Europa in the future.

In the meantime, we invite you to have a look at the next pages of this brochure, which was produced by our Advocacy and Communication team and illustrates significant happenings and testimonies from this interesting experience.

Marius Wanders

Secretary General

PART I: EVENT DEVELOPMENT

The Summer University was composed of three main parts.

1. Study session on EU policies and methodologies

During the first two days, all the elements were presented in order for the attendees to acquire the necessary theoretical background for the preparation, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the National Strategic Reports on Social Protection and Social Inclusion.

The Lisbon Strategy and the Open Method of Co-ordination; the Integrated Guidelines for Growth and Jobs and the National Reform Programmes related to the European policies against poverty and social exclusion were among the illustrated topics.

The trainers, Robert Urbé and Patrick De Bucquois, explained the links between the Lisbon Strategy and the European Social Agenda and the concepts of Active Inclusion and Flexicurity. A lively debate followed the presentations on the renewed Social Agenda and the Social Services of General Interest.

Three working groups were created in order to discuss the implementation of the Lisbon Strategy at national level and identify strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats of this process.

According to participants there is a limited knowledge of EU processes and strategies in their countries. Possible reasons for this situation are the hermetic language ('euro jargon') used in EU documents and the fact that at national level European affairs are in general dealt with by a 'close circle' of experts. They insisted on the importance to ensure adequate dissemination of information also at regional and local level.

Training elements included an exercise related to the use of the EC MISSOC data base on social protection. The presentation of the Caritas Europa "Toolbox for Monitoring the National Strategies for Social Protection and Social Inclusion" emphasised some 'entry points' for future activities.



2. Visit to COMECE & EU Institutions

At COMECE, legal adviser Joanna Lopatowska gave an overview of mission, structure and activities of the organisation.

Participants also had the chance to listen to an excellent presentation on the Social Teaching of the Catholic Church. This was held by Frank Turner SJ, Director of OCIPE - Jesuit European Office. The role of different actors and institutions was highlighted while linking to fundamental Caritas values and principles.

The visit to the European Commission included an introduction to the European Social Fund intervention in the context of the National Strategic Reports given by Arthur Benedyktowicz from the DG Employment, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities. The European Social Fund was featured as an important mean to implement the national objectives with regard to employment and social cohesion.

MEP Jacek Protasiewicz addressed social policy responsibilities at the level of the European Union, national governments and local authorities. An introduction to parliamentary activities and a guided tour in the building integrated the visit to the European Parliament.



3. Academic lectures and related workshops

Within the academic part of the Summer University, Prof. Jozef Pacolet from the Higher Institute of Labour Studies (HIVA), Katholieke Universiteit Leuven, lectured participants on “Sustainability of the Social Welfare in Europe” and “Health Care and Long Term Care”.

The deep analyses presented by Prof. Pacolet resulted in a good basis for a discussion on different models of social protection in Europe. In particular, the long term consequences of the ‘Bismarck’ versus the ‘Beveridge’ model were subject of debate.

Robert Urbé presented a model for analysis of social security systems elaborated by Carlo Knöpfel from Caritas Switzerland with references to the Caritas Europa Basic Principles for a Sustainable Social System. This lead participants to share their experiences with regard to the application of the ‘Basic Principles’ in the Caritas practice related to employment, education and health.

Toward the end of the study course, relevant information was collected for submission to the European Commission concerning the state of play in preparation of the National Strategic Reports in different countries and the participation of civil society organisations in this process.

Finally, the organisers presented the concept of the INCLUSION ‘thematic groups’. Participants had the opportunity to tentatively join the groups on The Future of the Welfare State, Child Poverty and Learning and Working Europe and to express their interest for future attendance of one of those groups.



PART II: EVALUATION AND TESTIMONIES

In general, participants were satisfied with content and organisation of the Summer University. For the next editions, they suggested that several modules should be offered in order to facilitate the participation of attendees with different levels of knowledge. They also asked for a more clear separation between the 'training' and 'academic' components as well as for sessions specifically dealing with EU structure and legislative process.

1. Chiara Lucchin (Italy)

My feelings before going to Leuven were various as it was a long time that I hadn't been away on my own for a whole week due to the birth of my little Lalla. Then I tried to imagine the people that I would have met. Reading the programme of the Summer University, I thought I might not be ready enough on some subjects, but it turned out to be fine.

The presentations of the first day were very interesting. The styles of the trainers were different, but complementary and therefore very helpful: Robert rather didactic, Patrick more narrative. The visits to COMECE and the European Institutions were enjoyable and the possibility to ask direct questions to a MEP was a unique chance.

I also appreciated the lectures of Prof. Pacolet. Listening to him I realised that comparative studies can be very challenging, as they need to take into account many specifications and exceptions.

All together, these inputs gave me inspiration and tools to study new topics in the next years. Being part of such an international group made me feel that we do live in an enlarged Europe and that we have much in common also with candidate countries.

2. Hanna-Liisa Ennet (Estonia)

The idea of a Caritas Europa Summer University in a historical university town in Belgium was interesting and promising, especially when I found out the many similarities between Leuven, and my hometown Tartu.

This type of event seems to me an excellent way to welcome new participants in a programme and foster team-building. The agenda of the Summer University was full from Monday to Friday, but everything had been planned at the right moment and place.

The trainings on the National Strategic Reports facilitated by Robert and Patrick were greatly combined with the academic lectures of Prof. Pacolet. The EC MISSOC data base on social protection was perceived by participants as a useful tool to research and compare different social realities.

I would like to thank all those who contributed to the planning and organisation of this event. The Summer University has a great potential to become a successful fixture in the annual calendar of Caritas Europa.

3. Judit Marte-Huainigg (Austria)

Sitting in the lounge of the Brussels airport I found a newspaper that a passenger had obviously forgotten. I started to read an article about St Birgitta of Sweden, who lived in the 14th century. She had 8 children and was respected because of her piety and concern for poor people. In 1999, St Birgitta, Caterina of Siena and Edith Stein were appointed by John Paul II to patron saints of Europe.

The story of St Birgitta brought me closer to the spirit of the Summer University. Seven-hundred years ago this woman dedicated her life to the fight against poverty and later was appointed to patron saint of Europe.

It is also our responsibility to contribute to this cause and work for combating poverty and social exclusion in the Europe of today. If we want to do so, we inevitably have to deal with questions related to social inclusion, social security, the social welfare state or how to build a sustainable social system.

These questions were brightly presented during the Summer University. The high quality of the lectures and the exchange of experiences from the Caritas daily work in different European countries were helpful elements in this meeting.





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