



**Ecumenical Association of
Academies and Laity Centres**

Annual Report 2016

Oikosnet Europe

Board Meeting

Prague, 7 -11.Sept 2016



Annual Report of the Board (Draft)

Transition Accomplished or Mission Impossible

Oikosnet Europe between Consolidation and Outreach

1. Introduction

What used to be known as the Annual Report to the Annual Conference (AC) in this year is split into two parts: the report of the President and the Annual Report of the Board. While the President's Report focusses on the context, in which Oikosnet Europe tries to operate, the Annual Report tries to give account of the work done between the last Annual Assembly (Corrymeela, 9 to 13 September 2015) and September 2016. In some cases, it also draws lessons from the work in the past and gives perspectives for the future.

The report is based on contributions of different Board members. Some sections of it had to be drafted much before September 2016. Further up-dates, especially on activities just prior to the Annual Conference will be given at the meeting.

The main purpose of this Report is to facilitate discussion at the Annual Conference on how Oikosnet Europe develops after several years of reflection its future vision and mission.

The Annual Report at this stage is a draft, potentially still to be altered by the Board Meeting just prior to the Annual Conference. In its final version it is to be discussed and to be „received“ by the AC, except for concrete recommendations (in bold). These have to be formally voted upon, either as part of the discussion of the Annual Report or as part of separate items on the agenda of the AC.

2. Meeting in Prague

The AC 2015 gladly welcomed the invitation of the Ecumenical Academy (www.ekumakad.cz) in Prague to hold the AC 2016 in the „Golden City“.

The Ecumenical Academy in Prague (there also exists a roman-catholic lead Czech Christian Academy in Prague) was founded in 1995 and registered as an independent non-governmental organisation in the Czech Republic in 1996. It offers a platform for public debates (about 40 conferences and events per year) in the Czech context and plays an important role in the Czech society, in particular on issues related to the economy and social justice, sustainable development, culture, politics as well as to church and society. Besides offering a platform for public debate, the Academy finds itself also involved in campaigns and direct lobbying.

The Academy is well rooted in the Czech civil society As well as in international networks. It is, inter alia, member of the Czech Forum for Development Cooperation, the Czech Anti-Poverty Campaign, the Economy and Society Trust, the Network on “Development et Civilisation”.

For quite some time, the Ecumenical Academy in Prague tried to follow the model of German Academies, but found out rather soon that this approach would not work in the Czech context. Not at least therefore, the Academy engaged together with other civil society actors directly in civil society. Funding of the Academy’s work is often an issue. Many projects depend on EU funding. Therefore (and of course in order to foster the common good) the Academy also engaged in fair trade and opened a coffee roastery plant. It became the first Czech member of the World Fair Trade Organisation and is member of the Czech Association for Fair Trade.

The Ecumenical Academy of Prague has no guest house or ensuite accommodation. Therefore, the 2016 AC of Oikosnet Europe will take place in a hotel. But through the study day and the excursions as well as through the staff presence in the meeting, participants in the AC will have ample possibilities to learn about the mission and vision of the Ecumenical Academy and its implementation.

Due to the Academy’s programmatic emphasis on economic, social and environmental issues and its strong involvement in civil society, no wonder that these issues are also at the center of the study day and the suggested excursions. The general theme of the AC **“Transition Accomplished or Mission Impossible - Economic Developments and Civil Society. The Example of the Czech Republic”** is well chosen in order to relate critically to Czech realities and to relate these developments through the eyes of Oikosnet Europe members to the broader European context. Transition is another key word in the title of the conference. Since the „velvet revolution“, the Czech Republic has gone through different phases. Many of them were declared as a transition process. Do we find ourselves, in the Czech Republic as well as in Europe, still in transition processes or are there only „nominal transition processes“, while behind the curtains (or openly) political and economic agendas are clearly set and political measures are supposedly more and more without alternatives („alternativlos“)?

Meeting in Prague under the auspices of the Ecumenical Academy in Prague offers an excellent opportunity to study economic and social realities, to get an introduction to the

engagement of civil society and to relate the experiences in one country to European developments.

3. From Corrymeela to Prague

3.1 Meeting as a new Board of Oikosnet Europe

In the period covered by this report, the Board met three times: in Friedberg near Frankfurt, (9-11 Nov 2015) and twice in Prague (21-23 March 2014 and just prior to the AC). Priorities on the agenda were the preparations for the AC, considerations on OE membership (serving the existing members well and winning new members) as well as the preparations for establishing OE as a legal entity under Swedish law.

The AC in Corrymeela elected a new Board and had to vote on all positions. At the same time it agreed to raise the number of members of the Board from five to six. Four people were re-elected – some with new responsibilities – and two are now members of the Board for the first time. The Nominations Committee, the Board and the AC will have to think about the elections in the coming year because neither the President nor the Vice-President will be eligible for re-election and the Nomination Committee is requested already now to look for persons that are appropriate candidates.

When the new Board met for the first time in November 2015 it had to find its focus, its working style as well as its working plan.

Focus: It discussed, if there is a mandate for Oikosnet Europe to act in this phase of European transformation adding to what the members are already doing. Following a decision we send a message to all members regarding the huge challenges like the flow of refugees, the building of fences or through the bad financial situation in some European countries.

The main focus of the Board, however, will remain the service of the Association and its members as well as the implementation of decisions and directions of the AC.

Working style: Since there is no longer a General Secretary the President, the members of the Board, the office in Sigtuna and the Executive Secretary have to share the workload and delegate different responsibilities among themselves. To do this in a good way, we have to trust each other and it calls for an increase of transparency. Part of this is that in the future there will be a summary of each Board meeting in the Newsletter to keep members informed.

Working plan: The board will take more initiatives (like the conference in Liebfrauenberg for the East European members), look for common projects, become a recognized voice in the European church lay movement (for instance by becoming a founding member for the first European Christian Convention) by sharpening its profile and being engaged in church and civil society projects. This will help as well to become more attractive for new members.

3.2 Oikosnet Membership

3.2.1 Developments within Oikosnet members

This section is not meant to give a full account about developments related to members of Oikosnet members. That would be an impossible task and asked too much. However, the

three examples below can certainly be regarded as highlights and they may animate other Oikosnet members to share their experiences. One question involved is also the (potential) role of Oikosnet Europe in such developments.

Mission Accomplished!

Kirstin Gunleiksrud Raaum, known to us as the General Secretary of the Norwegian Academy Movement, found herself in the last year at the forefront of a campaign within the Church of Norway in promoting same-sex-marriages in the church. In a personal account of this campaign and her personal experiences within it, which she gave in the Academy of Bad Boll, it became evident how difficult this campaign was trying to take into account different perspectives as well as in relating to sometimes personal attacks. Finally, the campaign succeeded and at the same meeting of the Synod of the Church of Norway in which same-sex marriages in church were adopted, Kristen was elected as Moderator of the Synod.

Mission Accomplished?

The Orthodox Academy of Crete certainly made it into the books of history in hosting the Holy and Great Council of the Orthodox Church, the first after 1300 years and after more than 50 years of preparation. The Orthodox Academy found itself in somewhat of a curfew situation for about a good week with 10 out of 14 orthodox church leaders attending, almost each of them accompanied by a delegation of 24 and additional advisors. In addition, there were ecumenical observers, staff and an armada of press – all meeting under severe security restrictions.

The Holy and Great Council adopted an Enzyclica and a Message as well as six texts on issues such as ... Besides the written results of the Council, which still have to pass the test of being recited by the different orthodox churches (therefore the question mark after: mission accomplished), participants praised the open and good atmosphere of the deliberations, to which the Orthodox Academy contributed substantially through its hospitality and its facilities.

Prior to the Council, in the midst of sometimes not easy preparations, the Oikosnet President sent a message to the Director of the Academy on behalf of all Oikosnet members. Dr. Konstantinos Zormpas will certainly share with us his experiences throughout the Prague meeting.

A new mission begun!

It comes as good news to us that the Orthodox Academy of Vilemov, after having lost its building in Vilemov and after some years of uncertainty, could now obtain a new building for the Academy's work in Javornik. Javornik, however, is based even more south within the Czech Republic, close to the Slovak border. Oikosnet Europe could be of some help in finding the missing funds for the Academy to finally buy the building and get registered as the official owner. Although this was already a time and energy consuming process, hard work will continue for the re-established academy to secure the infrastructure for the building and in developing a programme. Roman Juriga has invited Oikosnet Europe members to visit the new premises and to discuss with him future perspectives. Congratulations – A new beginning!

3.2.2 Developments with regard to the Membership of Oikosnet Europe

Discussions within Oikosnet about how to best serve the present membership and how to attract new members already started at the AC 2015. However, this issue should remain on the agenda and should be discussed also at future ACs and in particular in Prague. Different contexts and perspectives among members in OE make the network more attractive.

Oikosnet should therefore make an effort to be as representative in terms of regions and confessions in Europe without losing its vision, mission and *raison d'être*.

At the time of the AC, Oikosnet Europe has 42 members from 19 European countries, out of which 15 are from Germany. In 2016, following the invoicing form the membership fee, the Evangelische Akademie Siebenbürgen declared its resignation from the Association.

Discussing membership developments makes it possible to point at important trends for our members as well as for Oikosnet Europe as a whole. Through contacting all OE members at least by phone it became clear that quite some of our members face important challenges regarding the continuation of their work (priorities of the churches, financial constraints). Causes for this are seen on many levels; they differ from country to country and have different consequences.

On the other side of the spectrum especially Board members as well as Rüdiger Noll have been in contact with potential new members in different countries. Quite some signals show a growing interest in different forms of European cooperation. The successful consultation for (also potential) members from Central and Eastern Europe, which took place in February 2016 in Liebfrauenberg, France, indicates this. In the Board a discussion took place regarding the question to which extend we should actively invite e.g. so-called 'Stadt-Akademien' (Academies mainly working in an urban context). They have quite some similarities with many of our members. It is good to have some first ideas about this opportunity from our present members.

After the Boldern center was closed as an academy and resignation of the Paulus Akademie Zürich from OE in 2015, new developments have emerged in Switzerland. Most, if not all OE members in Switzerland are now members of a newly founded ecumenical association called "plusBILDUNG" (www.plusbildung.ch). Our former Treasurer, Walter Lüssi, is member of its Board. Discussions are now under way as to whether plusBILDUNG becomes an Oikosnet member instead of the remaining individual members in Switzerland. We are glad, that Elisabeth Reichen Amsler will represent plusBILDUNG as well her former center EREN at the AC 2016.

In 2015 and 2016, the Board, the Secretariat and the Executive Secretary took several initiatives with regard to the membership in OE:

- All OE members were contacted through visits, telephone or email contacts
- The Board established a list of potential new members and divided among Board members the task of contacting them
- The Board started a discussion on membership criteria
- The consultation for (potential) members in central and eastern Europe (cf. below) discussed the needs and thematic priorities in the region
- The Board decided to use Board meetings more strategically to also get in touch with OE members in specific countries and/or regions. Therefore, the next Board meeting is suggested to take place in Hungary in December 2016

- In Nov 2016, in the framework of the Annual Assembly of the EAD (Evangelische Akademien in Deutschland), there will be an evaluation of the renewed cooperation between the German academies and OE after two years of practice.

3.3 Work of the Secretariat and the Executive Secretary

The Oikosnet Secretariat in Sigtuna is now working in full swing. It serves as the first post in the chain when someone wants to contact OE. It also assumed the responsibilities for accounting, making bank transfers, communication, archiving, mailings and registrations for ACs. Since September 2015 Ms Lovisa Degreef Beselin is employed by Sigtunastiftelsen as Administrative Assistant, partly working for Oikosnet Europe. In the first months of her employment she was in contact with all members - mostly by phone. As a consequence the contact-list is up to date again.

The main task of the Executive Secretary was to prepare Board meetings as well as the Annual Conference. He also kept in touch with OE members supporting some of their projects. In the framework of the Board he prepared the relevant documents and oversaw the implementation of decisions. He represented OE in the Board of the Initiative for a European Kirchentag (European Christian Convention) and, together with Alf Linderman, Sigtuna, in the Acting Committee and the Steering Committee of the Arab-European Citizen's Dialogue. (cf. below)

3.4 Finances

The accounts 2015 are reported in Doc: AC 2016-6 with an income and expenditure of 58.596,59€ and contrary to budget, have closed the year with a surplus of 6.736,75€. This result has been achieved by both an increase on the budgeted income and also keeping costs controlled.

The key income stream for Oikosnet Europe is from membership fees and in this year we have managed to recover some overdue fees for the years 2014 and 2015. This has been due to the support from Lovisa in Sigtuna following up with members to address the overdue debts and we are very grateful for her diligent work in this area.

The Crete Solar project was completed successfully and the amount held in reserves has been released to the project expenditure.

Expenses have come in under budget again with the generosity of Sigtuna supporting accommodation and hospitality costs for a board meeting and also the reduction in administrative fees as Alf felt that Sigtuna were not providing support for the full year. I would like to acknowledge the support this gives to the Oikosnet finances. The annual conference costs, although partly offset by the 8.337€ income collected by Sigtuna, are higher than expected as the conference was held in Northern Ireland and conference support and travel costs were higher than expected.

This surplus has increased the reserves to 113.480,86€, with 83.493,81 held in a savings account and 29.987,05 in a working account. The Eastern European conference although underway in planning in 2015 did not actually take place until February 2016, for this reason the costs were committed but not yet incurred and are sitting as a liability on the balance sheet.

Recommendations

After review of the accounts by the internal auditors, the Board recommends to the Annual conference to adopt the accounts 2015 with the income and expenditure of 58.596,59€ (Doc: AC 2016-6) and to discharge the Board.

The Board recommends to the Annual Conference to add the 2015 surplus of 6.736,75€ to the reserves and to adopt the closing balance sheet of 113.480,86€.

The Board recommends to the Annual Assembly (as an amendment to the 2016 budget), after Oikosnet Europe has been established as a legal entity under Swedish law, to immediately transfer the amount of 100.000,00€ to the new entity, earmarked for activities in line with the vision, mission and aims of OE as decided by the AC and the Board. (cf. revised Budget for 2016 in Doc: AC 2016-6)

The Budget of OE (established under German law) for 2017 is presented to the Annual Assembly in Doc: AC 2016-8 with an income and expenditure of 47.200,00€.

The Board recommends to the Annual Assembly to adopt the Budget 2017 for OE with an income and expenditure of 47.200,00€ as presented in Doc: AC 2016-7.

3.5 Relocating OE as a legal entity from Germany to Sweden

At the Annual Conference in Corrymeela, we decided to take all required steps to prepare for the start of a new Swedish legal entity and also for the dissolution of the German entity of our association. The Board has worked on this. We have checked several steps, which have to be taken in Germany, where the present legal entity is situated. We considered the logical order of all steps. We faced the following challenges in this process:

- Change the whole constitution or just change what is already agreed upon and leave all other options over for discussions after the change. The Board decided to present a new constitution with mainly changes to increase the clarity of our organisations and to diminish the number of required formalities. As an example: we now propose to have a term in office of 3 years with max. two terms. This leads to the same maximum time in office for a Board member and also to less elections. The proposed changes are presented in one document, including explanations. The new constitution is presented in another document.
- The Board discussed the required steps when transferring the membership of the German Association towards the new Swedish one. The proposed changes are not intended to have a changed association – just to have more adequate procedures in place, fitting with the new situation where Sigtuna Foundation serves Oikosnet Europe in its administrative work. Therefore the Board proposes that we will have a very short special founding meeting for the new entity during our presence in Prague. During the founding meeting all represented members will be requested to announce their renewed membership in person and to do so on paper during that meeting. Special prepared draft letters for each participant will be distributed there. As a consequence of this we will have as many as possible members which continue their membership immediately in the new association. The proposal is that the same Board will be in place for both entities from that moment. The same applies for all other organs of the new entity. The other proposal is that the same membership fee

will be in place as well. And the proposal is that the membership fees will be paid on the new account by all members when they pay their next membership fee; this will be for the year 2017.

- When transfer the money of the Association according to German law to the accounts of the Association according to Swedish law? The Board considered it important to have access to the financial reserves in both entities. This requires that the reserves have to be transferred to the new Swedish account as soon as this account is available, which is just after the foundation of our Swedish entity. This entity can be established just after the Annual Conference, which enables us to have a new bank account in about October. This leads to the possibility to transfer the money from the German accounts to the Swedish account before the end of the year 2016. This however requires that we will accept a revised budget 2016. The changed budget 2016 is presented in a new document.
- We propose to formally decide about the dissolution of the association according to German law at the Annual Conference in 2017. The consequence is that we have for a couple of years two entities at the same time. This requires some formal steps to be taken double. As quick as possible we propose to handle all running business within the Swedish entity, to start with by 1 January 2017.
- Formal steps in Sweden can be done by our Swedish member on behalf of our new association. When required or wished for, someone from the Board can also be part of that process, thus legally also representing Oikosnet Europe in the German association.

The expectation is that all required formal steps in Germany will take some time. It is better to think about years than about months. However, the Board is glad that this process is now in a final stadium regarding decisions. Processes take some time. We are now in the process that we fully trust the outcomes. It is just a matter of time.

3.6 Communication

The communication among members and friends of OE is operated by the Secretariat of Oikosnet Europe in Sigtuna. One main tool of communication is the Oikosnet Newsletter. In the period since the last AC in Villigst, five newsletters were issued with information about Oikosnet as well as of its members. It is worth mentioning that the newsletter is not meant as a one-way-communication from the Board to OE members. Members are equally invited to share the news which could be of interest to other members through the newsletter. Looking in to the content of the newsletters the last year, there has been a progress in this matter. Information about the Arab-Europe dialogue in Crete, the Eastern Europe Consultation in Liebfrauenberg, the project State Society and in religion in pluralist Europe in Villigst, are just some examples of information from members presented in the newsletter. The number of subscribers are today 190 and the activity (the ones opening the letters) have increased from 21,7 % - 37,8%.

The new website of Oikosnet Europe was presented at the AC in Corrymeela and is still under development. It contains basic information about Oikosnet Europe, contact information to the board and the secretariat, an updated list of our members, a blog post for news and an archive of all published newsletters. To have a more detailed information about our members presented in digital map is still work in progress.

A new facebook page started up after the AC in Corrymeela. It is an integrated part of the website and the number of members (47) are higher than for the old one. The activity and sharing among members however needs to be improved.

There has been a request for a printed brochure with a compendious information about Oikosnet Europe. The purpose of this is to have a relevant and concise information for events like Kirchentag etc. This project is still work in progress and needs to be discussed further.

3.7 Projects and Activities of/within Oikosnet Europe

3.7.1 Projects and seed funding

Regarding common projects the Board had a discussion about the successes. So far we haven't received successful applications for the budget-line, which is available. And yet there have been two projects so far. First was the DPC-training, supported through Oikosnet Europe. This training took place just before our AC in Corrymeela. Second was the Consultation in Liebfrauenberg. These projects however were not initially intended when we started this opportunity. What is the reason for this? The question is important also to have exchanges among members. One theory so far is that a common project usually requires far more resources than Oikosnet can make available. When they are realised, the seed-money from Oikosnet isn't such a rich source for a project. Probably the tendency is more that projects of our members, when cooperating with others, can be enriched through the input from members, coming with different perspectives and views. By consequence the input through this budget line can be that more than usually possible views from different angles can be presented. To a certain extend this is visible through the three conferences, which Sigtunastiftelsen organised in three consecutive years in May. At the last conference, May 2016, the conference with the theme "Fighting Empires with Umbrellas" took place. For this conference Oikosnet members were invited too. Four participants came from our members, together with about 40 other people. It would have been worthwhile when more persons could participate since the theme was interesting and inspiring. The context was the situation in Hong Kong where different political spheres (Inland China and Hong Kong) clashed in 2012. What was the role of social media? How did churches reacted? Through the participation of people from different countries, perspectives and experiences were exchanged in an intense way. That is the experience which also came from previous May-conferences in Sigtuna. Would this be the way forward for common projects?

However, the budget line for seed funding for projects, which involve more than one OE member (from different countries) should be and is maintained for the 2017 budget. A project on "Strengthening Civil Society in Central Europe", involving several OE members, is expected to be tabled by the "Nordakademie"/Germany for the November Board meeting. Other requests for seed funding are welcome!

3.7.2 Central and Eastern Europe Initiative

In order to involve (potential) members of OE in central and eastern Europe more in the work of OE and in order to ensure that their needs are listened to, Sören Lenz and the Liebfrauenberg Center invited to a consultation for central and eastern European participants, 23-25 February 2016. A separate report (Doc AC 2016-4), to which Sören Lenz will speak at the AC 2016, gives a fuller picture of what happened at the consultation and which conclusions might be drawn. Some priority issues were identified and ideas for the future were developed. An issue to be discussed is how the implementation of the ideas can be secured. Who can take the lead. We had hoped that more of the non-members, who had attended the conference would have been present at the AC in Prague. However, long-standing members from central and eastern Europe might want to join the debate offering their insights.

3.7.3 Dialogue for a Peaceful Change (DPC)

Just prior to the Annual Conference 2015 in Corrymeela, a DPC-training took place there. Participants from different countries showed up. The invitation from Oikosnet Europe has brought several participants, where Corrymeela also raised quite some interested people. Only 16 of them could participate for the full training. In February and in March 2016 another training took place in Corrymeela plus a small workshop for participants from Sudan. In April 2016 a training took place in the Netherlands for one of the peace-organisations in the country. In June a training took place in Tatamagouche, Nova Scotia, Canada, with 10 participants. Early June a next training took place in Kumasi, Ghana. There 20 people were trained and at the same time four associate trainers had their first experiences as a trainer.

The project in Ghana was the third in a row (2013, 2014, 2016) and probably the initial group of far more to come. Together with especially Mrs. Afia Darkwa – Amanor, General Secretary of Oikosnet Africa, we were able to support both the National Peace Council – with 10 regional branches – and the Presbyterian Church of Ghana in their wish to have a three year’s programme on DPC. It appeared that the outstanding aspect of the training dealt with two issues: the way indirect involved people are addresses in the training and also the focus was not on knowledge but on application in real life situations. This was the overwhelming feedback after the training. As a consequence of this we are now developing a three year’s programme, which includes the development of a Daily Practitioner’s Training (a training for one day with essentials regarding prevention of conflicts from escalation). This training should be given by Ghanaian trainers only after the full development of the concept. In addition to this the normal five-days training will also be delivered during the upcoming years. As a result there will be several certified DPC-trainers in Ghana as well as one or two DPC coaches by the end of the project. Funding is not guaranteed yet; however the National Peace Council wants to use their good relations with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), which supported them for quite some activities in the recent years.

We see that at the moment there are three so called ‘hubs’ of DPC are active – in Tatamagouche, Corrymeela and Oikos (Netherlands). They are all members of the Oikosnet-family. The application of DPC however goes far beyond Oikosnet. A South Sudan training is meant as a starting point for a group, which supports peaceful changes in the area, especially with child-soldiers. In Northern Ireland the police is very much interested in applying the training in their work. One of the Dutch trainers is applying the experiences in his work regarding the police works with polarisation in society as well as within their own ranks. He is invited for quite some inputs for policemen throughout Europe. His intention is to write a book about his experiences, which should be released before the end of 2016.

The application in businesses (how to use effectively the so called ‘sweet spot of conflict’) is seen in several places, the application in Antioch (California – USA) is still the most impressive one, the application in daily life (‘in normal situations’) is by far the most frequent reported application.

Finally - a DPC-training will be organised at Corrymeela by the end of November, beginning December 2016. This one is - again - open to all interested people. More information will be available during the AC in Prague.

3.7.4 Arab-European Citizens' Dialogue (AECD)

Since March 2015, and after the retirement of Fritz-Erich Anhelm as the driving force of the Dialogue from the European side, Oikosnet Europe assumed the responsibility as the European focal point and as facilitator of the process. Alf Linderman and Rüdiger Noll were the Oikosnet representatives in the Acting Committee as well as in the Steering Committee of the Dialogue. Katerina Karkala from the Orthodox Academy of Crete also joined both bodies in her capacity as host for the next conference in the AECD.

In August 2015, the Acting Committee met in Cairo in order to develop a concept for the future of the AECD and in order to start the preparations for the next conference. The immediate result was a „concept note“, which is available upon request.

The next conference of the AECD took place in Crete, 9-12 March 2016 under the title: „Societies in Transition – Active Citizenship“. Preparations for the meeting were not that easy. Invitations were issued rather late and some funding could only be guaranteed at the last moment. Oikosnet Europe contributed with 1588,38 Euros (Board and Lodging for two participants) and could raise 10.000,00 Euros from EKD in the last minute. Sigtuna Stiftelsen contributed with 1215,69 Euros. Due to the financial constraints, there were „only“ about 20 participants from the European side, while there was a rather strong participation from the Arab side of the AECD.

The conference looked on concepts of citizenship, case-studies and issues such as the refugee-crisis, the role of religion and the media. The conference identified several issues in these areas, which merit further work in the framework of such a dialogue. It also revealed a number of stereotypes from either side, which need to be addressed by the AECD. Overall, there was a huge commitment and the expressed need for this dialogue to continue. From the European Oikosnet scene, St. Andrew's Biblical Institute, the Orthodox Academy of Crete, Sigtunastiftelsen, the Ecumenical Academy of Prague, and the Loccum Academy were represented among the participants.

Equally important as the conference itself were the two meetings of the Steering Committee prior and after the conference. A number of issues were raised with regard to the future of the dialogue: e.g. How to involve more participants, especially Muslim participants and representatives from more country? How to make the Dialogue more visible in public? How to guarantee a more stable funding? What should be the thematic priorities and how can progress on these be ensured? What are additional strategic partners and target groups?

These and other issues were then addressed at a meeting of an enlarged Acting Committee in Alexandria, Egypt, 23 to 24 August 2016. The Acting Committee was enlarged by Fritz-Erich Anhelm, Katerina Karkalla-Zormpas and Konrad von Bonin (Bread for the World). This meeting discussed and settled on the framework for another „strategic paper for the future of the dialogue“, which is based on a draft by Fritz-Erich Anhelm. The meeting suggested the following priority themes:

- A) Understanding, implementation and practice of human rights
- B) Interaction between religions, civil society and politics
- C) Integration and participation of refugees in Arab and European countries
- D) Media and the production of images
- E) Understanding and implementing democracy/peoples' participation.

The paper also addresses some methodological (didactical) issues for the preparation of future conferences. It wants to base conferences primarily on case studies and suggests a conference didactics: analysis of the issue, developing options, prioritising these and suggesting ways forward. Important remains also the „citizens’ approach in term of participation and didactics.

The Sigtuna Foundation has invited for the next conference in the framework of the ARCD for 9-11 August 2017. The theme will be selected together with the Steering Committee from among the five priority themes mentioned above.

The meeting also invited Katerina Karkalla-Zormpas to also join the newly established Core Group as well as the Acting Committee on a permanent basis.

3.7.5 Gender and Justice Network

Two years ago in Villigst Nicole Richter from Villigst was elected as the Speaker of the network and therefore in 2015 it was her first time to organize the meeting. Since she has never been in Corrymeela and since the Irish colleague left Corrymeela unexpected during the process of preparation it was not so easy for Nicole. Luckily Corrymeela found in Annette Feldmann a representative full of ideas and interesting connections that helped to prepare an inspiring programme with insiders in the field of Care – Gender and Justice. They prepared an intensive programme with inputs, discussions and meetings in institutions with their managers. An exchange with the participants on the issue of Care-work from different European countries made it colourful and gave the participants from abroad the possibility to learn at the same time a little bit about North Ireland and his political and his welfare system. The group was mixed – meaning there were Irish and people from a number of other European countries and this made it more interesting for all. It was a pity that only one man out of around 15 participants was attending. It seems that “Care” is still thought of as a theme for females alone.

At the end of this network meeting the participants decided about the theme of the coming year and voted for: “Escape, Migration and Gender”.

This decision and a draft of a possible programme were discussed in the board, accepted and the board agreed to spend money on it. In the meantime the Norwegian Academies decided to sponsor the travel costs and an honorary for a Norwegian speaker.

During the board meeting in the spring of this year in Prague it was decided that the Ecumenical Academy will invite guests for the lectures and discussions on Tuesday and help to find local contact persons.

4 Partners, Relations and Resources

4.1 Oikosnet International

Oikosnet International is a foundation under Dutch law, founded in 2007 to receive funding for different Oikosnet branches in several regions (continents). After 2012 the conclusion was that the activities should be concentrated on two aspects. First mutual support through the ‘open ears and eyes’ of people from those regions, when looking at other Oikosnet members. Second was to organise common activities and to meet each other as representatives on a regular basis, though not frequent.

Last year Oikosnet Europe invited two representatives (from Oikosnet Asia as well as from Oikosnet North America) to participate in the Annual Conference in Corrymeela. Personal reasons made it impossible for them to come, so we ended up with no representative. Just after our meeting in Northern Ireland some of our members had the opportunity to meet with Rev. Serop Megerditchian, who visited Belgium and Germany. Serop is president of Oikosnet Middle East. Through the exchanges with him, several colleagues from the European scene as well as some of the member-organisations realised some regular support for the family in their work in Aleppo and Syria. Serop was in Sweden too at a conference, organised by our Oikosnet member Sigtunastiftelsen, in November last year. By half January 2016 Serop was able to travel to Toronto, Canada, where an Armenian parish invited him to be their pastor. In that city he already met with more than 50 persons from his former parish in Aleppo. At the moment he is waiting for a work permit, which will allow his family to come to Canada as well.

Regarding the second task – regular meetings with representatives of all regions – quite some exchanges of options and alternatives have been discussed in the Board of Oikosnet International. This all went through electronic communication, which is legally a valid way to do so for this Board according to their constitution.

Looking at some parameters, the following proposal was developed:

- a) Replace the financial reserve from the account of Oikosnet International to the savings-account of Oikosnet Europe. The amount, about Euro 22.600, creates a very low interest, (about € 100) which is lower than the bank costs on a yearly basis (about € 145). When placed on the accounts of Oikosnet Europe the bank costs are reduced. The Board of Oikosnet Europe decided to agree with this proposal. A Memorandum of Understanding is prepared between Oikosnet Europe and Oikosnet International about the procedure to realise a payment. By September 2016 this is expected to be realised.
- b) Spend the remaining money on common projects. Here the Board of Oikosnet International hasn't taken a decision yet. Some proposals have been made. The European Board proposed to spend the money on projects where at least two regions will be beneficiaries. In addition to this the European Board also announced that they will not include themselves in the first row of beneficiaries – so we don't set the priorities for this. So far proposals from Africa have been made. Other regions are either waiting for new ideas from their own side or reluctant in developing ideas which support themselves and others.

It is to planned to work on conclusions regarding the use of these funds before the end of the year. The speed depends to a certain degree on the full participation of all members of the board of Oikosnet International. This appears to be a challenging issue. Anyhow it is expected that final decisions will be made before the end of 2016. With Oikosnet Africa a proposal is in the process of being presented to all Board members regarding the training of women in peace work with the tools as provide through DPC. Here an interaction with some strong women, already trained in Ghana, seems to be a realistic option.

- c) The proposal is also made to dissolve the Foundation according to Dutch law since fundraising will not be done anymore at the global level. Fundraising can only be successful when done at the regional or national level – and probably even at the level of individual members of Oikosnet branches. Dissolution will take some more time. From Oikosnet Europe both Rüdiger Noll and Jaap van der Sar participate in the Board of the foundation. The last more as the only one who can easily communicate with Dutch authorities than as the one who is president of Oikosnet Europe.

4.2 European Christian Convention (Europäischer Kirchentag)

Prior to the German Kirchentag in 2015 a consultation in the Evangelical Academy Bad Boll gave the starting signal for the preparations of a European Christian Convention (ECC) or (as often referred in the German-speaking context:) a European Kirchentag. Katerina Karkalla-Zormpas from the Orthodox Academy of Crete, and the OE Executive Secretary were elected to the Coordination Team. Many other OE members were participating in the meeting. In 2015/16 the Coordination Team met twice and gathered in numerous telephone conferences.

On 9-11 June 2016 another meeting with stakeholders in the process took place in Kappel, Switzerland, upon invitation of the Reformed Church of Zurich. This meeting with about 50 participants, in fact, was the founding of the ECC as a legal entity according to Belgium law. OE became one of the founding members. The meeting adopted the statutes and elected a new Interim Board. Besides Katerina and Rüdiger, Alexei Bodrov, from the Saint Andrew's Biblical Institute, is now also member of the Board. Its next meeting is foreseen to take place in Vienna in late October.

Before the ECC manages to establish its own website, information about the ECC, e.g. the Roadmap in different languages, can be visited at a website of the German Kirchentag: https://www.kirchentag.de/ueber_uns/europaeischer_kirchentag.html. Information about the ECC is also shared via a regular newsletter, which can also be subscribed to via this website.

5 Outlook

5.1 Next Annual Conference(s) 2017 ff (cf. Doc: AC 2016-7)

At the Annual Conference 2015 the decision was taken to meet in 2016 in Prague. This was already expected. During that AC it became clear that for the years after 2016 some options were available. Afterwards it became clear that we have the following proposals:

In 2017 we are invited to have our Annual Conference at the Academy in Baden, the last possibility to meet in Schloss Beugen, which has been sold by the Church of Baden to a private investor.. The Board reacted positive on this opportunity, also knowing that the venue is in the process of being sold. This provides us with a last opportunity to visit the 'own' place there. There are already some thoughts about the theme on which we would concentrate during the Annual Conference in 2017. The proposal will be presented at the AC 2016 in Prague. There the formal decision has to be taken regarding this invitation.

A tentative invitation has been received by the Board for the venue of the AC 2018. For that year we are invited to visit the Orthodox Academy in Crete (OAC), the place where after about 1.250 years the Holy Synod of the Orthodox churches in the world took place in June 2016. We don't have such a time-span to bridge. The last time Oikosnet Europe had its AC in Crete was in 1998. Then the OAC celebrated its 30th anniversary. By consequence now the 50th anniversary is anticipated, also with an invitation to Oikosnet Europe. Again a decision which can be prepared at the next AC. For 2019 an invitation is received to be the guest at the venue of our member Agape in the North of Italy.

5.2 Succession plans

The Board has discussed the succession planning in the association. This wasn't an urgent question, more a required issue to be aware of for both the Board and for Oikosnet Europe

as a whole. In our discussion it was clear that the rotation-scheme would apply for the German association as well as the Swedish one, thus having one person in charge for max 6 years in a row, whether serving in the German or Swedish entity. The total time will not exceed this 6 years. At the moment we have the following schedule in place:

- Jaap van der Sar serves his last term, which ends by September 2017. So a new president has to be elected then.
- Marielisa von Thadden also serves her last term until September 2017. So also a new vice president has to be elected then.
- Sören Lenz was first elected as a Board member at the Annual Conference in 2013. With the maximum length of being a Board member, he can be re-elected until September 2019 when his final term ends.
- Kostas Zompras has been elected as Board member in 2014. Re-election is possible until September 2020 when his final term ends.
- Kirstin Beuth and Nicola Murray are both elected at the Annual Conference in 2015. By consequence their last term will end in September 2021.

The dates are not given as a fixed time-table. People can change jobs, can withdraw. The Board just started the discussion. And is very much open for suggestions from our members.

Similar thoughts have to be developed for other places in our structure, like the Nomination's Committee and the Auditors. The earlier thoughts are brought up, the better it is for the Association.

5.3 Concrete steps ahead

At the practical level we have done most of the work regarding the transition of our association from the German to the Swedish legal entity. The speed of the process, especially since there are so many checks and balances from the legal offices in Germany, made the Board aware about the strength of a good bureaucracy. And the Board is also aware about the fact that in our situation the German requirements are a bit beyond the desired effect of efficiency. We are glad that this transformation is ending. And we see that the cultural transition is not finished yet. Coming from an organisation with a formal position of a General Secretary, we are now approaching the culture where members take the lead in many aspects of the work. This is partly done through the Board, partly through the Executive Secretary and more and more through our members. The common good of our association is at its best preserved through the common affords of our members themselves, not by directing important tasks to an official. We are very glad that this continues to change in the good direction.

August 2016