

Oikosnet Europe
Annual Conference 2019
Agape, 11 to 15 September



Annual Report 2019

Exchanging the right to vote for a washing machine

Foreword by the President, Rev. Walter Lüssi

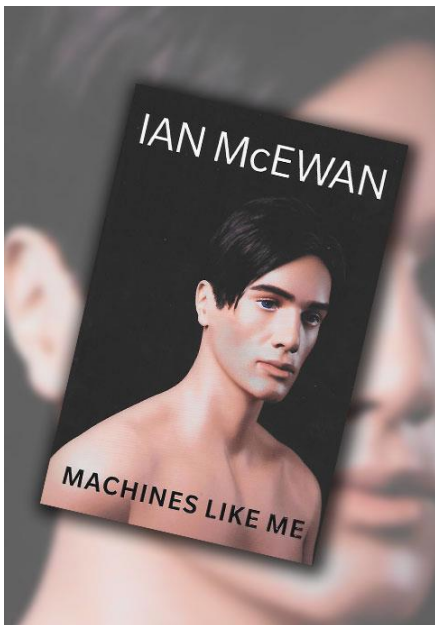
It's all about people. This year, two women in particular have made headlines far beyond Europe. I'm talking about Greta Thunberg the Swedish activist who, at age 15, began in August 2018 protesting about the need for immediate action to combat climate change. And I remember Carola Rackete, the captain of the rescue ship Sey-Watch 3, who was arrested end of this July when she docked after spending two weeks in international waters with dozens of rescued African migrants on-board.

It's all about people – of course also on social media, where more and more people are present as influencers for products and ideas, for trivial and important topics, earn a living and at least in their bubbles get the reputation of stars. And because this works, political parties and some churches have already begun to bring their own influencers to the virtual market. However, it is difficult to control real influencers directly from institutions and organisations. And finally the market, including the market of opinions, decides on their success to the point where we get the impression that money rules the world through switch-on quotes and sponsored posts.

It's all about people. And influencers have always existed. At all times good and famous writers had definitely had what it takes to do it. In the summertime I met two of them. Of course I met them only in the form of one of their books, which I had read completely fascinated. But these influencers do not take away our thinking, but show us the world in a perspective that challenges us to think deeper and further.

One of them is the German writer Juli Zeh, from whom the title for my foreword is inspired. I read the novel *Empty Hearts*, which Juli Zeh wrote in 2017 (and was published in English in 2019). *Empty Hearts* is set in the near-future of 2025 and grounded in the politics and history of recent years. There have been some geopolitical shifts in this Trump-influenced post-Brexit world. Angela Merkel has been

packed off into retirement, and German politics is now dominated by a populist Concerned Citizens' Crusade (CCC) party, which is slowly but very surely undermining democracy and democratic institutions. People are: *doing well, maybe even better than before* – even as they feel they've lost: *politics, religion, a sense of community, the belief in a better world*. The pop tune of the day from which the novel takes its title, by twelve-year-old Molly Richter, has lyrics that sum the general malaise up: *Full Hands Empty Hearts/It's a Suicide World Baby*. The populist Concerned Citizens' Crusade won the election through the ballot box, prompting the protagonist in *Empty Hearts* to make a statement: *People like me are to blame for the current state of affairs, not CCC extremists. They won the election through the ballot box, whereas my best friend decided, at least hypothetically, that she would exchange her right to vote for a washing machine. And I looked down on her decision too, because I thought I had better arguments for standing by and doing nothing.*"



The other one is Ian McEwan with his novelle *Machines Like Me*, which was published this spring. McEwan rewrites the history of technology, and innumerable other things, to make an Artificial Intelligence masterwork like Adam plausible back in the Thatcher era. Charlie is a lifelong robot obsessive and Adam can learn, as well as breathe and make moral judgments. McEwan shows what could happen in the future and what new challenges arise when man creates an artificial, humanoid creature that is ultimately superior to him in every respect and that decides ethically and morally even without human beings.

It's all about people. Always. It's all about people and how they shape their lives, what responsibility they take for a good life for all and how they face the challenges together. With climate change, refugee dramas, digital communication, the weakening of democratic structures and the challenges posed by artificial intelligence, I have just mentioned some of the issues that the members of Oikosnet Europe are dealing with today. We are not doing enough yet. Our expertise often does not go beyond very limited circles of particularly interested people. We are still doing too much on our own without really taking advantage of the opportunities offered by our network. In other words, in the face of the immense challenges of our time that affect Europe and our world as a whole, an organisation such as Oikosnet Europe is getting new plausibility. Do we see the opportunity that this offers us? It is our responsibility to seize this opportunity - in joint cooperations and projects.

Activities of the Management Board

Board meetings between the Annual Conferences have taken place as follows

2018-11-21 Oikosnet Board (Warsaw)

Present board members:

- Walter Lüssi, president
- Karolína Silná, treasurer (present until 12.00)
- Konstantinos Zormpas

Board members not present:

- Julia Gerlach
- Kristin Gunleiksrud, vice president

Others present:

- Malte Dahme, Agape Centro Ecumenico
- Grzegorz Giemza, Poland Ecumenical Council
- Alf Linderman, the Oikosnet Europe Secretariat
- Rüdiger Noll, Executive Secretary of Oikosnet Europe
- Sara Marta Rostagno, Agape Centro Ecumenico
- Karin Sallander, the Oikosnet Europe Secretariat

Main items for board deliberations:

- Evaluation of the Annual Conference on Crete
- General planning of the 2019 Annual Conference
- Oikosnet Vision, Mission, and Values Statement
- Statement of Diversity and Inclusion
- Cooperation among members - what to do with the results of the world café
- Europe as an issue for Oikosnet Europe
- Finances: Accounts 2017 (final decision)
- Future dates and venues for the Annual Conferences and board meetings

2019-02-14 Oikosnet Board (Zurich)

Present board members:

- Walter Lüssi, president
- Karolína Silná, treasurer

Board members not present:

- Julia Gerlach
- Kristin Gunleiksrud, vice president
- Konstantinos Zormpas

Others present:

- Malte Dahme, Agape Centro Ecumenico
- Alf Linderman, the Oikosnet Europe Secretariat
- Rüdiger Noll, Executive Secretary of Oikosnet Europe

- Sara Marta Rostagno, Agape Centro Ecumenico
- Sofia af Geijerstam, the Oikosnet Europe Secretariat

Main items for board deliberations:

- Membership of the Board and Distribution of Tasks
- Preparation of the 2019 Annual Conference
- The dissolution of the German association
- Finances: Accounts 2017/2018, membership fees 2018/2019
- Strategic Plan of the Conference of European Churches 2019-2023
- Overview of ongoing collaborative projects within Oikosnet Europe

2019-06-17 Oikosnet Board (Prali)

Present board members:

- Walter Lüssi, president
- Kristin Gunleiksrud, vice president
- Karolína Silná, treasurer
- Konstantinos Zormpas

Board members not present:

- Julia Gerlach – on parental leave and will leave the board

Others present:

- Malte Dahme, Agape Centro Ecumenico
- Alf Linderman, the Oikosnet Europe Secretariat
- Rüdiger Noll, Executive Secretary of Oikosnet Europe
- Sara Marta Rostagno, Agape Centro Ecumenico
- Karin Sallander, the Oikosnet Europe Secretariat

Main items for board deliberations:

- Detailed preparations for the 2019 Annual Conference
- Finances: Accounts 2018, reallocations 2019, budget 2020, membership fees
- Upcoming elections
- Job Shadowing/Internships etc. among OE members
- Members: members with problems, strategies to attract new members
- Continuation with OE Statements
- Relations to other ecumenical European bodies
- Project reports, planning of future dates and organizational matters

Activities of the President

The Management Board

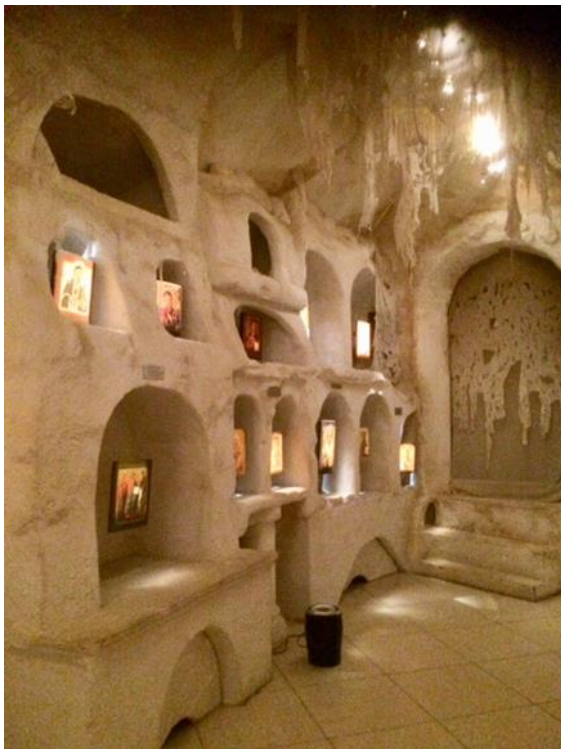
As can be seen from the above compilation, it has not been easy to summon the Management Board of Directors since the last Annual Meeting in 2018. Nevertheless, we

have tried the best. And I am very grateful to my colleagues in the Board, the Executive Secretary and the friends of the Office in Sigtuna for their commitment.

Julia Gerlach had to resign from the Oikosnet Board in the course of 2018 due to her long maternity leave. After she had to renounce her participation in the last annual meeting at short notice, she was not able to attend any board meeting after that. On March 26, 2019, Julia gave birth to her daughter Frida in Meissen.

Visit to the Białystok/Supraśl, Braşov and Sibiu

Board meetings give us the opportunity to get in touch with individual members of our network. After a few visits that I was able to make last year, I am strengthened in my conviction that face to face encounters are hugely important for strengthening our network.



After the meeting of the board in Warsaw I travelled to Białystok and Supraśl to our friends from the Akademia Supraska, which was established at the place of the old monastery in Supraśl. In the Centrum Kultury Prawosławnej from the Orthodox Church in Białystok I had an encounter with Magdalena Źdanuk, the foundation's chairwoman in which the Academy of Supraśl belongs to, and Jaroslaw Jozwik, the director of the Academy. A main topic of our conversation was their interest in cooperating with other Members of Oikosnet Europe. In the future, so I was told, they want to find out what Akademis Supraska could invest into these relations and elaborate in a bit more specify way which topics for cooperations would be interesting.

Jaroslaw Jozwik showed me his impressive Academy and guided me through the exhibition in the Museum in Supraśl with contemporary and historical icons.

Just after my encounters in Poland I went on to Romania. On the one hand, I wanted to visit Katalin Zoltáni of Home of Hope, the former Member of Oikosnet Europe, after the unexpected death of Miklós Ménessy, the director of AIDRom, in May 2018. On the other hand, I was interested in a direct contact with the Evangelische Akademie Siebenbürgen in Sibiu.

Katalin Zoltáni, she was once the Treasurer in the Management Board of Oikosnet Europe, has now become a board Member of the Federation of Social NGOs in Transylvania (<https://socialngonetwork.ro/de/netzwerk>). Let me quote directly what Katalin was summarizing about what happened with Home of Hope and about the current performance of the organisation:

"Home of Hope has gone through a rather complicated time during the summer and fall, until the new minister, László Szegedi, acting also as bishop vicar in the bishops' office in Cluj, was elected. All social programs will continue under the umbrella of the Casa Spero Association, based on a bilateral free use contract. We have had many and endless discussions so far about our future as association, approached from many points of view, but especially financially. There were many questions raised among us, how to go on, how to plan everything properly to be efficient and feasible and so on. Our association will need some time until our "re-branding" or "re-shaping" will be acknowledged on the social market. But reflecting back to the past years of work, reviewing our achievements which stand in our valuable and trained background, having a devoted, good and professional team, we decided to give us a chance for the future."

My final part of my travel took part in the Evangelischen Akademie in Sibiu. There I met Roger Pârvu, the Director of the Academia Evanghelică Transilvania, and Dietrich Galter, President of the Board. We had a long discussion about what Oikosnet Europe stands for and how the Academy in Sibiu could contribute to our network and even could become a member of Oikosnet Europe again.



On the periphery of our encounter we also talked about the Civil Society Project and how they want to get involved in the whole process.

Evangelical Academy in Vienna

At the beginning of December 2018, Rüdiger Noll and I were invited as speakers to the event on "Ecclesia Semper Reformanda Est" of the Evangelical Academy in Vienna. On this occasion, of course, I met Kirsten Beuth, the outgoing director of the Academy. She introduced me to her successor Georg Winkler. Michael Chalupka also took part in the event in his former function for diaconry and education (he was elected as the new bishop of the Evangelical Lutheran Christians in Austria in May 2020). He made the commitment that it would be essential to continue the European exchange and networking opportunities for which Oikosnet stands. I am in contact with Georg Winkler. In the current upheaval that the academy has to cope with at the moment, he told me, he is very sorry that this year no one from his team will be able to participate in the AC.

European Protestant and Anglican Network for life-long Learning (EAEE)

Since the Assembly of the Conference of European Churches (CEC) in Novi Sad in 2018 I'm in contact with a Board Member of EAEE. Since EAEE wanted to know more about Plusbildung, our network for formation in Switzerland, and also showed interest in the activities of Oikosnet Europe, I was invited to a board meeting in Berlin on February 25, 2020.

A first concrete result of this meeting is that Plusbildung will host the EAEE Study Tour in June 2020 in Switzerland. As the activities and programmes of some members of the EAEE

and some members of Oikosnet show many overlaps, we will continue the discussion on cooperation and joint actions.

Informal Meeting with Rüdiger Sachau from the German Academies (EAD)

Since I have been to Berlin before, I took the opportunity to visit Rüdiger Sachau, the outgoing chairman of the German Academies. Rüdiger and I had a very open-minded discussion about the EAD and its commitment to and in Oikosnet Europe. He promised me that he would work that his successor in the chair would invite me to the next EAD Assembly in autumn 2019 so that I shall be able to directly represent Oikosnet's concerns.

Churches and Civil Society

Plusbildung, the Swiss umbrella association of Church Academies and Church related Educational Organizations as well as education departments of the reformed Churches and Roman Catholic Church in Switzerland hosted the pre-conference "Churches and Civil Society" in Zurich at the end of April 2019. One of the aims of this conference was to obtain information about the civil society commitment in Switzerland, to critically question what was heard and to make comparisons with the participants' own contexts. I was able to welcome the participants both in my capacity as President of Plusbildung and as President of Oikosnet Europe.

(About the project „Strengthening Civil Society and Deliberate Democracy in Central Europe“ see below)

Personnel

Just as I am working on this annual report, I get a message from our former Secretary-General Wolfgang Lenz. He greets the annual meeting warmly. Wolfgang Lenz informed that Knut Rydjord died on 21 August. He has been suffering from cancer for some time. For many years, Knut was the General Secretary of the Norwegian Association of Academies as well as for the European Association. Many of us remember Knut as a highly respected, warm-hearted and reliable colleague, who gave inspiration to the work of church-related academies and associations.

At about the same time, we also received the sad news that Hans May had passed away at the age of 88. Hans May belonged to the veterans of the movement of German protestant Academies. He was Director of the Protestant Academy in Loccum from 1978 to 1994. In this capacity he attended many Annual Conference of what is now Oikosnet Europe. In remembering him, the Academy in Loccum writes: "He reached people with ease when his powerful voice presented great intellectual lines and his own courageously conceived ideas."

On September 7, 2019, the former director and director of studies for theology and politics at the Evangelical Academy of Saxony-Anhalt, Friedrich Kramer will be introduced as Bishop of the Evangelical Church in Central Germany in a divine service in Magdeburg Cathedral. As we all know, Friedrich Kramer was engaged for Oikosnet Europe for many years and was most recently a member of the nomination committee.

Activities of the Executive Secretary

The mandate and the role of the Executive Secretary, given by the Board and the President, has not changed compared to the last year.

One of the main tasks remains to be to develop the business agendas for the Board meetings (Warsaw, Zurich and Agape) as well for the Annual Conference (Agape). This also includes the development and distribution of the necessary documents, although not all documents are developed and distributed by the Executive Secretary. Also Board members, which have assumed certain responsibilities, develop documents and share them directly. Equally, the Board has assumed as a common task to prepare the Annual Conferences (AC) and to coordinate with the local hosts Board meetings. The fine-tuning is then left to the Executive Secretary. Some time ago, the Board decided to organise the autumn Board meeting in a setting, which could be strategically important for OE to be present and visible. Therefore, the Executive Secretary, using his ecumenical contacts, organised the Board meeting in autumn 2018 in Warsaw/Poland. The Bishop of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Poland, who is at the same time President of the Ecumenical Council in Poland, joint the meeting for a dinner, while the Director of the Ecumenical Council in Poland attended the whole meeting.

In terms of contents, the Executive Secretary suggested to the Board to include in the agenda of future Annual Conferences a session on a European issue. The aim of such sessions is to discuss and share among Oikosnet members on one specific issue of European relevance in order to see, whether common activities arise out of this discussion. In addition, these discussions may also stimulate the Europe debate within Oikosnet members. The first of such debates is now scheduled for the AC in Agape around the issue: „Europe after the Elections“. It will be interesting to see at the AC, how many OE members held events around the European elections and to which themes. How are Europe and the European Institutions now perceived in the various countries, which are represented in the AC?

Two further OE members have left OE by the end of 2018 and one further member has declared its resignation from the organisation in the course of 2019. Therefore, the Executive Secretary has suggested to consider again, which kind of organisations OE wants as members and to start a campaign to encourage new members to join. This initiative was, however, not met with great enthusiasm in the Board.

Another task of the Executive Secretary is and was to keep a line of communication with OE members. In this regard, he got in touch with members, who did not register for the Annual Conference and he facilitated the process with a potential new member in Belarus.

One of the Executive Secretary's tasks is also to maintain especially the communication between OE and its German members through EAD, the German umbrella organisation of Protestant Academies. At each of EAD's Board Meetings and Assemblies, there is a report about Oikosnet Europe. Although the report to the EAD Assembly after the Annual Assembly in Crete was rather positive, a number of critical comments were made by Academies, who

were present in Crete. It is now arranged for the Oikosnet President to attend the next EAD Assembly in autumn 2019.

After Julia Gerlach left the Management Board, the Board asked the Executive Secretary to support the work of the Nominations Committee in finding a successor for her from Germany. More than 1/3 of Oikosnet members are today from Germany. Therefore, it seems important to have a member from Germany also included in the Board.

Communication, however, does not only happen internally, but also externally. In 2018, the Executive Secretary gave presentations at one of the EU Hearings in Poland and at the annual meeting of the Superiors of European Orders, in which the role of Christian Academies were highlighted. This was equally the case in articles around the European elections (e.g. in a publication of the Church in Westphalia) and in the Jubilee publication of the Orthodox Academy of Crete). Some academies also responded to the latest Editorial in the OE Newsletter on Europe and the Brexit. Especially welcome was a response by Corrymeela, which shared its own reflections and educational material on the issue.

Upon request of Alf Linderman and upon decision of the Board, the Executive Secretary joined again the Arab-European Citizens Dialogue as an anchor person for the European side and he is since involved again in the preparations of the next Dialogue Conference in Cairo, October 2019. The Oikosnet Secretariat remains to be the main European entry point for the Dialogue.

The Executive Secretary on behalf of Oikosnet Europe is also keeping in touch with the European Christian Convention (European Kirchentag), of which OE is a member. Its next Assembly will be in October 2019 in Crete. Its dialogue with the Roman-Catholic Church still seems to be very critical. ECC's main preoccupation at this stage is to find a venue for the event and to secure the finances.

In Mid-2019, the Executive Secretary signed a petition of a German NGO called „Respect for Greece“ which tries to come to terms with German war atrocities in Greece, inter alia, forced credits, the destruction of Greek villages by German troops and ransom money for Jewish citizens. Unfortunately, this reconciliation initiative came just prior to the revitalized international debate about German war reparation payments and, therefore, into a political climate other than expected. The Executive Secretary tried to bring the Academies of Bad Boll and Crete together to may be organise common consultations to foster the reconciliation agenda and to address the issues involved.

In August 2019, just prior to the OE Annual Conference, Religion For Peace, will hold its Assembly (taking place about every 5 to 7 years) in Lindau, Germany. Religion for Peace is a New York based organisation, which tries to organise inter-religious councils in countries all over the world. It also engages in crisis situations with a religious dimension. In Lindau, about 1000 religious leaders and politicians are expected to attend. On behalf of Oikosnet Europe, the Executive Secretary is invited to hold workshop at the Assembly under the theme „Religion and Civil Society“ (in line with our project).

OE is an „organisation in partnership“ with the Conference of European Churches (CEC). After CEC's Assembly in Novi Sad, OE was invited to comment on a first draft of its „strategic

plan“ for the years to come. The OE asked the Executive Secretary to reflect on a response, which was sent to CEC after discussion in the Board. In response, OE is now asked to suggest members for the six working groups, which will be established by CEC and which are charged to contribute to implement sections of CEC’s strategic plan.

Besides these activities, most of the time and energy of the Executive Secretary was used for establishing and developing the OE project on „Strengthening Civil Society and Deliberate Democracy in Central Europe“ (cf. below)

Activities of board members

Kristin Gunleiksrud, Vice President

An Agape Experience: The Board of Oikosnet Europe went to Agape Ecumenical Centre to plan the Annual Conference. For me, the fastest and by far cheapest, was to fly to Milan and rent a car. Malte had send out warnings: the steep and narrow mountain roads are not suited for anxious souls. Together with Kostas, I took the chance.

Leaving behind the warm and dry fields of Po, the scenery turned more and more beautiful. And colder. And there it was, these fascinating red-brick buildings, hiding between the trees, beneath the steep and magnificent mountains.

Malte took us out to dinner. One of these typical north-Italian Osterias, with its simple interior and wonderful, astonishing local food. Simple and magic at the same time. The next day, Malte told us about Agape, while showing us around. We had an Agape Experience. The Name. The dream. The Place. The architecture. The project.

“Love never ends” (1 Corinthians 13:4-8)

No, Indeed! Malte told us about this dream, an ambitious project launched soon after the second World War, from the ideas of a Waldensian pastor, Tullio Vinay. They were in desperate need of reconciliation and togetherness, and thus a meeting place. And dialogue between former foes. The founding values of Agape are reconciliation and reconstruction. The Centre was built by volunteer work. Agape’s history sprung from the desire for peace and rebuilding relations.



Agape is very modern, all though it is built shortly after WW2. The buildings bring together structures and spaces. Walking surrounded by the walls of Agape, you are also enclosed by

the words of Paul in the first letter to the Corinthians, that “love will never ends”. It was felt. The idea was alive. Like it is in several of the member Centers In Europe. The Architecture and Spirituality met together and the idea, the dream is vivid.

The accomodations are simple, but in a way, this is part of the Agape Experience. We take a step away from our everyday turmoil, into a simpler, and yet full reality. It is a more sustainable life. The wifi is poor, so the cell phone is left on its own. That is also part of it all. It is an Agape experience. And we will all be sharing it in September.

Karolína Silná, Treasurer

Information about the activities of our Treasurer on the Management Board you will get in the Financial Report.

Kostantinos Zormpas

Evaluation of the Annual Conference on Crete (2018) :From the OAC’s point of view, we tried to give a different perspective of the financial crisis: this crisis can be a challenge and it can, also, be converted into an invitation to all those young people, who want to stay in Crete and Greece and start materializing new and innovative ideas. The key for the success of these visionary new starters is the cooperation with other inspired youngsters from States-members of the European Union, who is interested in pioneering, too.

Perhaps, the keynote speeches, which took place at the OAC, have not been successful enough to fully deliver their purpose, but, certainly, all the attendees had the chance to have a clear idea about the strategic position of Greece in Europe and to point out that the solidarity between the member countries of the European Union is absolutely necessary to be empowered.

50 year Anniversary of the Orthodox Academy of Crete (OAC): After the Annual Conference of Oikosnet Europe, the OAC has celebrated its 50 year anniversary After the Annual Conference of Oikosnet Europe, the OAC has celebrated its 50 year anniversary with the personal presence of His All Holiness the Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomaios I and His Eminence the Metropolitan Amphilochios of Kissamos and Selinon, President of the Academy. On October 3rd, all participants attended the Divine Liturgy celebrated at the nearest Monastery of Gonia (Corner).

At the end of the Divine Lirutgy Konstaninos Zormpas was bestowed the title of ‘Archon Ieromimon’ of the Ecumenical Patriarchate.

Activities of the secretariat

The secretariat of Oikosnet Europe is located at the Sigtuna Foundation in Sweden. Alf Linderman is head of the secretariat, Maria-Pia Anderloni financial officer, Karin Sallander

administrative secretary and Sofia af Geijerstam information officer. The secretariat provides an interface for Oikosnet Europe with e-mail, post box, telephone and website.

The main tasks throughout the year is to keep an updated list of the member organizations and administer the payment procedure of membership fees. The secretariat also supports the board with figures for the final accounts and budget process and administer all economical transactions within the Organization such as financial support for projects, conference fees and travelling costs. In addition to this, the secretariat also handles the archive of Oikosnet Europe saving all official documents of the organisation for the future.

The Annual Conference is the main event of the organisation and the Secretariat is largely involved in planning process. The secretariat takes care of the registration, the payment of the conference fees and the transfer of practical information to the arranging academy. The secretariat also supports the board in sending out invitations and documents to participants of the annual conference and the representatives of the member organizations. Recent years, saw the dissolution of Oikosnet International as a formal structure. Ties with other regional Oikosnet structures (perhaps with the exception of Africa) have weakened, if they are still at all existent. On the other hand, individual academies from other continents show interest in cooperating with European partners. The Executive Secretary held talks with the Director of an Academy from Lome (Togo), which is very much modelled according to the German raw model. The Academy is seeking reliable partners in Europe, including individual Academies and Oikosnet Europe. Rüdiger Sachau, Director of the Protestant Academy in Berlin together with the Executive Secretary held talks with the Director of a Korean Christian Academy, which is engaged in supporting the Korean re-unification process by learning from German and European experiences. From the European side, we emphasized that the German re-unification was to be seen in a regional (European) context and that there was expertise to be found from several countries within Oikosnet Europe when it comes to re-conciliation processes. The experience and expertise of the Corrymeela center and community was mentioned in particular.

Communication issues

Moreover, the secretariat is responsible for the communication between the organisation and its members, mainly by the official newsletter of Oikosnet Europe, the website www.oikosnet.eu and the Facebook page of Oikosnet Europe.

The newsletters of Oikosnet Europe have 156 subscribers and is in general read by approximately 38 %. During 2018 the newsletter was published at five occasions; February 26, April 27, May 5 and September 19. In the first half of 2019 the newsletter was published in April 17 and June 20. Recurrent information is an editorial written by the President Walter Lüssi or the Executive Secretary Rüdiger Noll. The newsletter also gives updates from the Board meetings and information on the Annual Conferences. Cooperation projects like *Civil Society and Democracy in Central Europe*, the *Arab Europe Citizens Dialogue* has for example been communicated through the newsletter. In the beginning of 2019, the secretariat were happy to see that more and more of our member has taken the opportunity to share information about upcoming events in the newsletter. Plusbildung and Paulusakademie, Zürich announced their consultation on *Religion and Society* in April, Agape Italy announced

Summer camp of 2019, St Andrews Biblical Theological Institute, Russia announced two conferences; *Theology of freedom* In Italy October 2019 and *Religion and liberalism* in Moscow December 2019. The Sigtuna Foundation Sweden also announced the upcoming event *Receptive Ecumenism in June 2020*.

In the beginning of 2019 the Facebook page of Oikosnet finally reached more than 100 members (102). To stimulate the communication between members an open group *Oikosnet Europe Forum* was connected to the page in August 2019. The secretariat has taken on a responsibility to invite members to the Forum, but the general purpose of the group is to give an open space for all members and academics to share information with one another.

New privacy policy for Oikosnet Europe since May 2018

Due to the new Data Protection Act, General Data Protection Regulation (European Parliament and Council Regulation (EC) no 2016/679, GDPR), Oikosnet Europe implemented a new privacy policy on how to handle personal data In May 2018. The new policy means inter alia that you will be asked to accept the privacy policy of OE when you register to events or conferences on-line. It also means that participants to our events can request to see all the personal data OE have registered. The information about the new policy was sent out to all members and subscribers of the newsletter in May. The privacy policy is published on the website of Oikosnet Europe and all requests according to the new regulation onwards will be dealt with by the secretariat of Oiksonet Europe.

Further development of projects

The Arab-European Citizens' Dialogue

The Arab-European Citizens' Dialogue was established in 2010 as an expansion of a previous Egyptian-German dialogue. The main counterparts are the Coptic Evangelical Organization for Social Services (CEOSS) in Cairo, Egypt, and Oikosnet Europe. From the start there has been a series of consultations in Europe and in the Arab region. The last consultation, the 6th from the initiation of this dialogue project, was held in Sigtuna, Sweden in May 1 – 4 2018 and organized jointly by the Coptic Evangelical Organization for Social Services (CEOSS), Oikosnet Europe, Church of Sweden and the Sigtuna Foundation. The general theme of the Arab-European Citizens' Dialogue is Religion and Society, and the consultation at the Sigtuna Foundation had a specific focus on gender – media – democracy.

In the event organized in Sigtuna, the participants represented Politics, faith-based Organisations and Civil Society Institutions from both the Arab and European region and among the speakers were for instance Azza Karam, PhD, Senior Advisor, UN Population Fund (UNFPA), and Coordinator, UN Inter-Agency Task Force on Religion and Development, Egypt/USA; Anders Wejryd, President for Europe World Council of Churches, Archbishop,

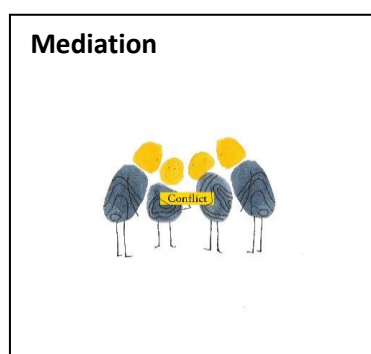
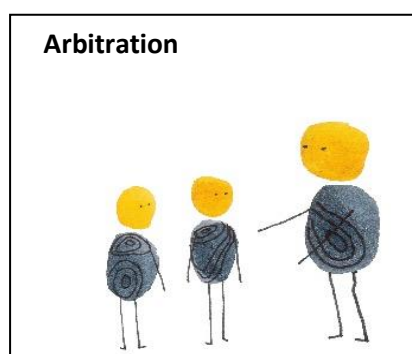
Andrea Zaki, PhD, President, Coptic Evangelical Organization for Social Services (CEOSS), Egypt; Karin Wiborn, General Secretary, Christian Council of Sweden, Walter Lüssi, President, Oikosnet Europe, Rüdiger Noll, Executive Secretary, Oikosnet Europe, Germany, Usamah Al Abed, PhD, Prof., President of the Religious Affairs Committee of the House of Representatives, Former President of Al-Azhar Univ., Egypt, Alf Linderman, PhD, Executive Director, Assoc. Prof. Uppsala Univ., Sweden Mohamed Alorabi, Ambassador, Former Foreign Minister, Egypt, Mia Lövheim, PhD, Prof. Sociology of Religion, Uppsala Univ., Sweden. The Arab-European Citizens' Dialogue 2018 had all together 60 participants and was the 6th consultation since 2010.

The next consultation will take place in Cairo October 14 – 17, 2019 and will be hosted by CEOSS headquarter. The general scope of the conference is *Peaceful Coexistence – How can people with different faiths live peacefully together?* Another consultation is also planned to take place at The Orthodox Academy of Crete in 2020.

Dialogue for Peaceful Change

Dialogue for Peaceful Change (DPC) was developed under the umbrella of the global Oikosnet-network in 2004. Where it started with an international conference, followed by a pilot training (a five-day training) for 16 participants the next year, it has now reached over 1.325 persons with this training. The majority of participants are women. Oikosnet Europe was important for DPC, especially since it provided the umbrella and the 'loudspeaker' about the training for two of its members at that time: Oikos (Netherlands) and Corrymeela (No. Ireland). For a long time it stands on its own feet – remembering with gratitude Oikosnet-members all over the world, which invested time and money.

Between the AC-2018 and the AC-2019 of Oikosnet Europe, 8 trainings were organised. Among them a Training of Trainers, (Connemara, Ireland) where we connected with 8 new associate trainers. We have now 7 coaches (among them 3 women) coming from No. Ireland, Sweden, Canada, USA and the Netherlands. For more information: see www.dialogueforpeacefulchange.com. In 2019 we started with activities of the DPC-hub in Sweden. This is based in the organisation Fryshuset (see <https://fryshuset.se/verksamhet/tillsammans-for-sverige/in-english>), which support endangered youth (mainly from different ethnic and national backgrounds) to meet with them in several cities and positively work on a better future. We also started the formation of two DPC-hubs within the Lutheran World Federation, since also church-organisations have to deal with conflicts, especially when changes are proposed or enforced. These hubs are planned in Latin America and Africa. We train new trainers within that structure.



We also managed to publish the updated and extended manual for our basis training – "Navigating Conflict and Change – DPC Handbook part 1". At the moment translations are prepared in Arabic, Spanish, Portuguese as well as Korean. The handbook (the small drawings are taken from the handbook) provides basic information, in use by DPC-practitioners and trainers all over the world. The book can be ordered through the website (Euro 25 plus postage).

Strengthening Civil Society and Deliberative Democracy in Central Europe

The main pre/occupation of the Executive Secretary in the period covered by this report was to develop and coordinate the project under the above mentioned title. Together with the EAD and the Academy of Rostock, Oikosnet is a main partner and applicant in this project. It brings together several OE members in several consultations. At the time that this report is written, the project is handed-in to the German Foreign Ministry for funding in 2019. It is now close to certain that there will be a positive response from the Ministry. The project, scheduled for three years, was presented to the Annual Conference in in Crete. It aims at making a contribution to a cross-border deliberate democracy in Central Europe and thereby fostering civil society participation as an issue of European integration. For 2019, there are three pilot projects foreseen, which are to test cross-border dialogues on burning European issues.

The lead academies and partners for three consultations in 2019 are in the process of selecting the participants, finalising programmes and making organisational provisions. The themes and the lead partners of the three consultations are:

- COP24 one year after (Villigst, Suprasl, Ecumenical Council Poland)
- European and National Narratives of States and Societies (Rostock, Monozlo, Reformed Church in Hungary)
- Energy Change and Civil Participation (Berlin, Prague, Sigtuna).

Participants from other central European countries are also invited.

For 2020, further partners, themes (probably more close related to the conditions of a civil society dialogue (metalevel)) as well as further funding resources have to be identified as from now. Some ideas had already been collected in a meeting of the Steering Committee/Stakeholders. The next meeting of the Steering Committee/Stakeholders) is supposed to take place just after the last of the three consultations in 2019.

On 29-30 April 2019, Plusbildung Switzerland had invited under the title „Churches and Civil Society“ to a pre-consultation of the project. The aim was to look closer on one underlying issue of the project (the role of the churches) and to learn and to sharpen the questions based on one example (Switzerland). Experts were invited to speak on issues such as: „What is civil society?“ „Civil Society in Switzerland“ and „European Civil Society and the churches“. Several examples of civil society initiatives from Switzerland were also introduced. Most important, however, were the discussions among participants following these presentations

and in working groups. Present were participants from Hungary, Poland, Czech Republic, Italy, Germany and, of course, Switzerland. It was the task of the Executive Secretary, in collaboration with the anchor persons in the different countries, to invite the non-Swiss participants.

Discussions were very lively and vibrant. It became very evident, that deliberative democracy models need a certain trust among the participants. Therefore, participants have to be selected very carefully and early in order to be as inclusive as possible, but to avoid participants that block the process. The consultation also showed how different the models and conditions of civil societies are in the different countries. In some countries one could speak of a „culture of civil society“, in others „shrinking spaces“ prevail. Switzerland served as a good model of a country with a „culture of dialogue“ and an organised civil society. However, this model is by no means just to be exported to other countries. It is the result of specific traditions and long historic processes with amendments and adjustments of centuries. In any case, the unmodified adoption of other models for one’s own context is not the starting point of the overall OE project. The overall process could rather be described as mutual sharing and learning as well as dialogue on an equal footing. Therefore, the selection of the right issues of the dialogue, being relevant for all countries and from different perspectives, is of utmost importance.

As Oikoset Europe we give thanks to Plusbildung Schweiz, the Reformed Church of the Canton Zurich and the Pauluskademie Zurich for having provided such a fruitful and hospitable setting for a cross-border dialogue.

Membership development

In terms of membership, Oikosnet Europe is getting smaller. At the time, when the Association was transferred from a legal entity according to German law into a non-profit organisation according to Swedish law, Oikosnet Europe had 43 members. Since then, two or three members had left the Association every year. Some other members were excluded by the Board, because they neither had paid their membership fee nor had they communicated in any way. With the end of last year Huas am Schüberg (Germany) and Casa Cares (Italy) had suspended their membership. At the last Annual Conference (2018), Oikosnet Europe welcomed the Reformed Center in Monoszlo (Hungary) as a new member. For the end of 2019, the House of Reconciliation in Berekfürdő (Hungary) announced the end of its membership, while the orthodox center of the Grodno Diocese (Belarus) applies for membership at the 2018 Annual Conference. At the beginning of the Annual Conference 2018, Oikosnet Europe has 37 members compared to 43 members in 2016.

“Rüdiger Noll made the following comments regarding membership issues. - There should be the aim that a European network should represent as many contexts, regions and confessions as possible. With the present 38 members this is no longer the case, which also hampers a broader pan-European exchange. - There is a likelihood that Oikosnet will lose some more members in the near future (two further have already announced their resignation), not at least due to the fact often a membership is related to a particular person – Any attempts after the discussions at the Board meeting in Friedberg (Nov 2015) did not lead to any new membership, equally the Eastern European Consultation (Liebfrauenberg), nor the invitation of potential new members to ACs – Monoszlo became a new member due to its involvement of the civil society project and due to the Board meeting in Hungary. The discussion on membership led to the strong plea of Georg Wenz and Gernot Meier to discuss again the raison d'être of Oikosnet.”

August 30, 2019/WL