

**Oikosnet Europe
Annual Assembly 2017
Flehing, 6 to 10 September**



Annual Report 2017

Introduction

What used to be known as the Annual Report to the Annual Conference (AC) in this year, for the second consecutive time, is split into two parts: the report of the President and the Annual Report of the Board. While the President's Report focuses on the context, in which Oikosnet Europe tries to operate, and the challenges ahead, the Annual Report tries to give account of the work done between the last Annual Assembly (Prague September 2016) and July 2016, the moment that this report is compiled. In some cases, the report also draws on lessons from the work in the past and offers perspectives for the future.



The report is based on contributions of different Board members and from staff. Some sections of it had to be drafted even before July 2017. Further up-dates, especially on activities just prior to the Annual Conference will be given at the meeting itself.

The main purpose of this Report is to facilitate discussion at the Annual Conference on how Oikosnet Europe develops after several years

of reflections about its future vision and mission. It is issued earlier than in previous years in order to allow for sharing and discussion within Oikosnet Members and within the movement as whole.

Meeting in Flehing

The Protestant Academy of Baden (www.ev-akademie-baden.de), located in the south of Germany near France and Switzerland, was founded in 1947. Our Annual Conference will take place in the year of its 70th anniversary. The Academy is an integral part of the Evangelical Church of Badenia (EKD) offering inter-disciplinary conferences, seminars and workshops in fields such as society, politics and law, work and economy, science and culture, diversity, spirituality and rural development. Conferences of the Academy take place in the church's conference center in Bad Herrenalb, but also in many other places, depending on the theme and/or the invited participants. Among the 17 Protestant Academies, which are member of the German umbrella organization EAD, the Protestant Academy of Baden is one of the smaller ones.

"Digitalisation" is one of the themes, on which the Academy has a long-standing expertise. Digitalisation has changed the entire life on our planet within a few decades. And by far the end of these developments are not in sight. In 2017, many churches celebrate the 500th anniversary of the Reformation and one of the insights is that the reformation would not have been that successful without

employing the new media of the time. In the 16th century, this meant employing arts (Cranach and Dürer) as well as the just invented printing press (Gutenberg). The potential of the digitalisation seems to go much beyond the power of what the new media in the age of the reformation meant for their time: what are today's chances and dangers of collecting big data? To which extend can the internet be used to bring people from across the world closer together and to develop positive alternatives to present trends and powers? Who controls the net? What is the role of humankind and of ethical approaches to developments, such as the "Internet of things"? How will the new media affect the work of Academies, very practically and as a platform of face-to-face exchange?

The study day and the excursion (to the Center for Arts and Media in Karlsruhe) of the Annual Conference will review challenges and opportunities, not at least under an ethical perspective. The programme will also include a practical workshop on internet security.

Beyond that there is more than the usual business agenda waiting for us in Flehingen. After Oikosnet Europe according to Swedish law is fully functioning now, the Board will table the proposal to dissolve OE as an association according to German law. We will also say "farewell" to our President Jaap van der Sar and to our Vice-President Marielisa von Thadden in these capacities. Both have served Oikosnet Europe for such a long time and with such commitment, inspiration and friendliness that we hopefully will find an appropriate way to express our thanks. We will also have to elect their successors.



Being member of the Board for a rather shorter time, Kirsten Beuth resigned from the Board. She also put her wisdom, expertise and network at the disposal of the Board and OE a whole. As we are not sure that she will be with us in Flehingen, we have to seek ways to keep in touch with her. But other than Jaap and Marielisa, Kirsten will remain member of Oikosnet as representative of her center. And finally we will give thanks to Hermann Düringer, who after so many years as Director of the Academy Arnoldshain/Frankfurt, helped out in the Board, wherever necessary. With the AC in Flehingen, he will retire as assistant to the Board.

Developments within Oikosnet Members

Last year's report started with what might become a tradition, i.e. to give a few examples of developments within Oikosnet members in order to start a much broader debate about trends and developments, which affect more than one member. The Board is also clear, that there should be much more sharing among Oikosnet members. Therefore, it also wants to develop the Annual Conferences even more into platforms of mutual exchange and in expressing solidarity with developments in other centers.

At last year's Annual Conference, we celebrated that Roman Juriga, after having been deprived of the building in **Vilemov**, managed to acquire a new building in Javornik in order to continue the work of the academy with an emphasis on ecological issues. A few weeks after our Annual Conference, however, Roman died suddenly and unexpectedly, leaving a wife and two children behind. Our thoughts and prayers are with him, his family and friends. The Academy is now winded up and OE will loose what used to be an important and committed member.



In the last couple of years, there is a new development in Switzerland. In July 2013, educational organisations and institutions established a new nation-wide ecumenical network called “**Plusbildung**”. Several Swiss institutions which are connected to Oikosnet Europe became members of Plusbildung, whose aim is to be a platform of mutual learning and exchange as well as to strengthen the role of education within the country. Walter Lüssi, the former Director of Boldern (now something like the General Secretary of the Reformed Church in Zürich) and former Oikosnet Treasurer is the President of Plusbildung. We are looking forward to welcoming Plusbildung as a new member of Oikosnet Europe and thereby strengthening relations to many Swiss church-related educational organisations. First talks with Plusbildung suggested that the newly established organisation will send about three representatives to future Annual Conferences from Switzerland.

Like the Evangelical Academy in Baden, several German Academies celebrate their 70th anniversary in 2017. This reminds us of their establishment just after the Second World War, when a new society was to be developed and the churches were approached for their contribution in this process. We tend to think that German academies are the oldest, but this year the **Sigtuna Foundation** already celebrated its 100th anniversary. It is, indeed, the oldest member of Oikosnet Europe. During the Second World War, for instance, the Sigtuna Foundation already served as an important meeting place between Bishop Bell, Dietrich Bonhoeffer and Adam von Trott, between the German church-related resistance and the ecumenical movement. But the Sigtuna Foundation used its anniversary mainly to look forward instead of only looking back. We are looking forward for friends from Sigtuna to share with us about their plans.



From Prague to Beuggen

Meetings of the Board

Before the AC in Flehingen, the OE Board will have met three times since the last Annual Conference: from 8 to 11 December 2016 in Budapest and from 9-12 March 2017 in Beuggen/Germany. It will also meet just prior to the Annual Conference 2017.

The meeting in Budapest included meetings with church representatives and, most important, with (potential) Oikosnet members. This helped the Board to understand better the situation in a country, which seems to play an ever more special role in Europe and within the European Union. Five church-related centers and several other organisations were represented at the meeting devoted to discussing relationships with Oikosnet Europe. All of them were interested in the work of OE and expressed their wish for closer relationships. However, rather few of them have an elaborated programmes or study conferences. Most of them serve as guest houses with just occasional programmes. Another obstacle turned out to be the language issue. Most of the participants in the meeting spoke neither German nor English. This should also be an issue for OE, which had decided years back to only operate in English due to financial constraints. And at about the same time the English courses offered by members of the Ecumenical movement have been substantially reduced and/or cancelled. The meeting in Budapest also suggested a closer relationship and cooperation between these centers and e.g. academic institutions, which could provide for some contents. In any case, the Board is committed to maintain relations

and to hold meetings as appropriate in different countries in order to invite and to support further members.

In line with this, Board members have distributed among themselves to contact all present members of OE as well as potential new members. Quite some potential new members have contacted OE by now asking for a closer relationship or even membership.

At its meeting in Beuggen, the board adopted and issues for the second time in recent years a “public statement”. The celebrations of the 60th anniversary of the Rome Treaty provided the occasion to make OE’s perception of Europe known under the title “A Europe of and for the people – just and participatory”. The Board called for a Europe in “conviviality” as a potential narrative and for the participation of the people in the decision-making as a main feature. There was rather little feed-back on the statement, but those responses which reached the OE offices were rather positive. In order to have a bigger impact, statements like these would need to be distributed much further by OE members. Sören Lenz, or instance, translated the text in French and circulated it.

Besides this, the meetings of the Board were packed with many practical issues related to the fine-tuning between the different OE focal points (Secretariat, Treasurer, President and Executive Secretary) as well as with the preparations of the Annual Assembly. Among further issues, which deserved special attention, were questions about the future composition of the Board (succession plan) and the establishment of OE according to Swedish law.

“Succession plan”

The Board spoke more than once about the succession plan within our association. It is important to have in view which positions have to be filled within an organisation like ours – and which replacements are to be expected over the years. In the transformation from the German to the Swedish entity we were able to have double roles: members of

the Board of the German association were at the same time also member of the Board of the Swedish association. Meetings of the Board were, as a consequence, both meetings according to German and to Swedish law. The same applies for those who support OE through the Nomination Committee (NC) as well as in the function of Auditors. For all these tasks it is good to have in sight when new members have to be appointed. Planning the foreseen is not the same as planning what is happening. Personal circumstances can lead to a withdrawal from positions at unexpected times.

While looking at all the implications, the Board found out that there was one omission in the work we have done during the AC 2016. According to the German constitution, Kostas Zompas had to be re-elected as a member of the Board. This hasn’t been done. Therefore it is good to repair this omission for the German association Oikosnet.

Given these considerations regarding the succession, the Board announced to the NC already in Prague (AC 2016) that at least two members of the Board would leave their places by September 2017: the president Jaap van der Sar as well as the Vice-President Marielisa von Thadden. The Board developed considerations regarding the size of the Board, having in mind that an organisation of about 40 members doesn’t need a huge number of Board members. There are no general rules for this, our constitution indicates 5 Board member. The Board noted that the constitution doesn’t give a maximum. General practice in many organisations indicates that in our case five board members can be considered as a maximum. The Board also considered it as a moral requirement that at least one member of the Board has to come from among the German members, having in mind that German members form about 40 – 50% of our members. So the advice to the NC was to take these considerations in mind as much as possible.

At the beginning of June 2017 it became clear that another member of the Board would leave: Kirsten Beuth from the Protestant

Academy of Vienna has withdrawn from her position as a member of the Board. This information was passed to the NC as well, so this new fact is taken into consideration.

Beyond this, the Board also gave some additional thoughts for a general kind of job description. Important, and a bit dependant on the position in the Board, is the availability of time to fulfil the task. We considered the change towards the Swedish entity almost done and we also thought that the dissolution of the German Association requires careful time – especially from those who will be appointed to become the responsible persons for the dissolution. The dissolution is, after the AC 2017, mainly a technical question. Also depending on the position in the Board, general knowledge about OE is important. Representing the organisation requires an overview about the characteristics of the members and the situation and country they are working in. Passion for OE is even more important; having a seat in the Board and thus building a good CV is not a good argument for being elected. Board members think about the way the organisation can improve the work, for the benefit of the members, the ecumenical movement and the European society as a whole.

Writing these aspects down, as the Board did, is far more easy than realising them. It is up to the AC to take decisions, based on the considerations and the report of the NC to the AC.

Accounts 2016

The accounts are reported with an income and expenditure of 146.713,62€ and contrary to budget, have closed the year with a surplus of 11.847,40€. This surplus has increased the reserves to 119.828,26€ and includes the capital transfer of funds as agreed to the new Swedish entity of 100.000,00€ and a balance remaining in the German bank account of 19.828.26€.

The key income stream for Oikosnet Europe remains to be membership fees and in addition this year there has been success in receiving a grant from EKD of 10.000€ to support the Arab- European Dialogue project. This project although underway with some

costs being incurred during 2016 was not completed until 2017 and for this reason the costs were committed but not yet incurred and are sitting as a liability on the balance sheet. Expenditure continued to be monitored and controlled alongside the agreed budget but came in under budget mainly due to minimal projects put forward for investment requests.

Recommendation

After review of the accounts by the internal auditors, the Board recommends to the Annual conference to adopt the accounts 2016 with the income and expenditure of 146.713,62€ and to discharge the Board.

The Board recommends to the Annual Conference to adopt the closing balance sheet of 119.828,26€.

The Board recommends to the Annual Conference to add the 2016 surplus of 11.847,40€ to the amount transferred to Oikosnet Europe *ideell förening* earmarked for purposes in line with the Oikosnet Europe Constitution.

Establishment of OE according to Swedish Law

At the AC 2016 in Prague we agreed about the constitution for OE according to Swedish law. And we agreed to establish this association. The first meeting of this association took place in Prague, where we were able to welcome already quite a number of members of this association (OES when we distinguish it from OEG). After this inaugural meeting it became clear why the Swedish laws are more easy to handle than the German one for us. Alf Linderman and Karin Sallander have worked on the formal registration process of the new association. This process was completed by 17 November 2016. The registered name is: *Oikosnet Europe ideell förening* (the last two words: nonprofit association), and we agreed that in all our general communication we only use the first part of the registered name. Our registration number given by the Swedish tax authorities is 802505-2674. We have a new account as well: IBAN: SE80 9500 0099 6042 0824 8221, SWIFT: NDEASESS.

After the AC in Prague all members of OEG were invited to become a member of OES. Many of them already signed in as a member during the AC in Prague, others followed after being invited through the secretariat in Sigtuna, early October. Board members also approached all members, whether they already signed in or not, about the new situation regarding our legal status. As a consequence of the communication, we had 28 member when we checked at the Board meeting in March. And more to come – see also the chapter about developments with our members.

By now the process of establishing a well-functioning secretariat for our association according to Swedish law is successfully realised. We would like to thank our colleagues at Sigtuna Foundation – to name them in person: Alf Linderman, Karin Sallander, Lovisa Degreef Beselin, Maria-Pia Anderloni and last but not least Sofia Af Geijerstam – for their dedicated and continued efforts to support Oikosnet Europe and its members.

Dissolution of Oikosnet Europe according to German Law

As a consequence of OE now being fully established under Swedish law and the Secretariat in Sigtuna being in full swing, the Board proposes to dissolve the Oikosnet Europe according to German law. After applying for dissolution with the German authorities (in Göppingen near Bad Boll) immediately after the Assembly in Flehingen, the process might take a year's time. The dissolution application will be published in the public legal magazine in order to test as to whether anyone has a legal claim against the organisation. The activities stop at the moment of application and the Board's role will be reduced to responding to any inquiries. Instead at least two "Dissolvers" have to be nominated, who will serve as contacts for the legal authorities in Göppingen. Hermann Düringer and Günter Renz have kindly accepted to be available for that task.

Recommendation:

Upon recommendation of the Board, the Annual Assembly decides to

- **dissolve Oikosnet Europe as an Association according to German law,**
- **ask the Oikosnet Board to launch the necessary steps and to apply for the dissolution at the Amtsgericht Göppingen as soon as possible,**
- **elect Hermann Düringer and Günter Renz to act as Dissolvers on behalf of the Association.**

Work of the Secretariat

The Secretariat in Sigtuna is placed at the Sigtuna Foundation (Sigtunastiftelsen). Together with the Director of the Evangelical Academy of Bad Boll, Eberhard Müller, the person who held the same position at the Sigtuna Foundation, Olov Hartman, in the mid-1950s took the initiative to create what is now Oikosnet Europe. The Sigtuna Foundation has continuously been a member of OE since the start of this organization, and is now glad to serve as the place where the Secretariat is located.

The process of establishing a new formal association in Sweden, and the process of developing functions and routines for the Secretariat, has been an important objective for the Secretariat as well as for the board in the previous year. Most things are now up and running, but there will most certainly arise new questions to be addressed. Here is a short description of the work of the Secretariat as it has been developed during 2016.

To start with, it is important to note that the Secretariat in Sigtuna is a mere service institution to OE. Over the last couple of years, a model for decision making has been established in the context of a dialogue between the board and the Secretariat. The point is that no decisions are taken by the Secretariat itself. It only works to support the board and to support the OE in general. The work of the Secretariat can be divided into seven areas. First, the Secretariat is the *formal address* of the non-profit association of Oikosnet Europe – which is now an association

under Swedish law (cf. a separate section). All communication with the formal association of OE will thus go through the Sigtuna Secretariat.

Secondly, we have the area of *information and communication*. This is dealt with under a separate rubric, and thus is left outside this general description of the Secretariat's work. A third responsibility of the Secretariat is to maintain an up to date *list of members*, and a list of addresses and contact persons for these members. This is not always easy due to changes taking place in member institutions, but the Secretariat continuously work on this in close collaboration with the board. The board takes all decisions as to membership issues.

A fourth responsibility of the Secretariat is to administer and *manage the funds* of OE. This is done within the context of the financial department of the Sigtuna Foundation. This department is not only managing the funds of OE, but also for several other foundations and non-profit organizations. For obvious reasons, there are strict rules for the separation of the funds of all institutions that the Sigtuna Foundation assist in financial matters.

Closely related to the management of funds for OE, the Secretariat also has the responsibility to *collect membership fees*. All such matters are taken care of by the Secretariat, but as for everything else, all decisions related to membership fees are the responsibility of the board.

The Secretariat is also responsible for *the registration and payment system for the Annual Conference*. All participants register through a digital system used by the Sigtuna Foundation, but here applied and adapted to the needs of OE.

Finally, the Secretariat is *maintaining the Archive* of OE, something that is also mentioned in the section about the establishment of OE according to Swedish law. The Board had a short exchange with our colleagues from the secretariat regarding the process of archiving. Already in 2013 the

Sigtuna Foundation made a friendly offer to care for all former documents, booklets, forms of communication of Oikosnet Europe. This was and is a huge number of boxes and files, fitting into one of the specialisms of Sigtuna Foundation: having a perfect archive. From then on all Board-files, all AC-files and all financial files were stored in Sigtuna. This process will be continued now. It is clear that quite some files are not meant for being kept to eternity. Normal procedures will be applied regarding the time to keep files in the archives. As an example: financial files, also for internal auditors as well as for accountants, will be kept as long as legally required.

Several staff at the Sigtuna Foundation have specific responsibilities with regard to OE. As the Executive Director of the Sigtuna Foundation, *Alf Linderman* has the principal responsibility for all functions performed by the Secretariat. As the head of finances, *Maria-Pia Anderloni* has the main responsibility for all financial matters. *Sofia af Geijerstam* is responsible for information and communication. Finally, there is one staff member who is "the secretary of the Secretariat". For the first and major part of the previous year, this staff member was *Lovisa Degreef Beselin*. Since she was in touch by most members by mail and by phone, many of you have been talking to or communicating with Lovisa. In the mid-fall of 2016, Lovisa wanted to change career, and she was replaced by *Karin Sallander*.

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 Prague, five newsletters were issued with information about Oikosnet Europe as well as of its members. Members are invited to share through the newsletter local news which they thought could be of interest to other members.

Since we know that English for some members is a barrier for understanding all content of the newsletter, we have taken the decision that articles written in other languages will be accepted if a written summary of the content also is presented in English. The number of subscribers are today 171 and on average, 34,6 percent open the newsletters (but newsletters can also be read without this being registered by our server).

The website of Oikosnet Europe 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.

A new Facebook page started up after the AC in Corrymeela. It is an integrated part of the website, and the number of members have increased from 47 to 65.

At the last AC in Prague there was a request for a printed flyer with information about Oikosnet Europe. The purpose of this was to have a relevant and concise information for a specific church-event in Germany, but also for events like the German Kirchentag etc. Karin Sallander and Sofia af Geijerstam produced a brochure in German and English for these events. Since the information about members is constantly changing, the office in Sigtuna will make sure to keep an updated version of the flyer as a PDF-file at the website. This will allow for members to print this flyer for local purposes.

A roll-up was also produced for the upcoming German Kirchentag and this roll-up can now be used at other events as well when there is a need to present Oikosnet Europe.

Gender and Justice Network

A lot of work, help and thoughts were invested in last year`s preconference of the Gender and Justice Network. 2015 in Corrymeela it was decided that the topic should be Migration. In March 2016 during the Board Meeting in Prague a draft was presented and appreciated. The title to be of the program was: "Gender and Justice in the field of migration and refugees". It was

prepared by the speaker Nicole Richter (Villigst), Kerstin Beuth (Vienna), Kirstin Gunleiksrud Raaum (Oslo), Karolina Silná (Prague) and Marielisa v. Thadden (Bad Boll). Together they managed to make an interesting program with excellent speakers. Special Thanks go to the Norwegian Association who covered the expenses of a Norwegian speaker!

During the Annual Conference in Prague Kirstin Gunleikson and Günter Renz gave a report and presented the proposal of the Network that in the future the program should be integrated in the AC and the theme 2017 should be "The Others and the Othering". Since a Board Meeting took place at the same time as the evaluation of the Network we were not part of this discussion. Therefore the Board asked for more information for the Board Meeting in Budapest at the end of last year. We wanted to know how this could be done and unluckily had to decide without further information. As far as we see there is no space for this since the study day is prepared by the hosting member and no other space is to be found during the Annual Conference.

At this point it showed that the communication between the Board and the Speaker did not function well and on both sides information lacked. Nicole Richter resigned. The Board had to realize that it was too late to look for alternatives and a program for a preconference in 2017. Now we have to find out if there is still an interest to go on with this network and who is willing to take the responsibility for the work.

Cooperation among Oikonset Members, Projects, Activities

With one exception (cf. below), the offer of OE to support new projects among OE members, if necessary, with up to 5.000 euros seed funding, has not been used. The offer is still available, but a discussion is needed, why this initiative sparkled that little response. The Board discussed the matter several times, but did not come to a final conclusion. Therefore,

additional thoughts were given on how to foster the level of information and cooperation among members beyond the level of joint projects.

After the Annual Conference in Corrymeela the new Board discussed how members could be encouraged to apply for project support. It was decided that for finding project partners it will be helpful to produce a list with the foci of the members and that we will inform about this idea and start in Prague with a questionnaire. Kirstin Beuth prepared one and we asked the present members to complete it. The results were sended to all Oikosnet members and they were asked to complete, to correct and to send the questionnaire back to the office. The result was disappointing – we received only very few information back.

The Board, therefore, hopes that the AC in Flehingen will provide occasion for a discussion as to how the cooperation among OE members can best be facilitated and which (electronic) tools might be best to be used.

Arab-European Citizens' Dialogue (on Religion and Society)



In recent years, we have seen the rise of many cultural tensions and conflicts, and even violent terror and war, in many parts of the world. This has not least been the case in Europe and in the Arab region. Religion, in the more secularized parts of Europe in the late 20th century merely considered as a private matter, has been at the core in many of these contemporary conflicts. Thus, issues around religion and democratic peaceful development are today burning issues, not least in Europe and the Arab region.

The Arab-European Citizens' Dialogue represents one concrete way to work with the issues mentioned above. From 2010, there has been a series of consultations in both Europe and in the Arab region. The last Consultation, the 5th from the initiation of this dialogue project, was held at the Orthodox Academy of Crete in March 2016. In that Consultation, we set out to explore where active citizenship can make a difference – in the Arab region as well as in Europe. It is difficult to sum up where the consultation ended and the specific outcomes of the conference, but several issues generated heated discussion.

After the Crete conference, the plan was to continue with the next consultation 2017, now in Sigtuna, Sweden. These plans have now changed since the initial dates did not work for most participants. The process will nevertheless most likely continue.

The two formal owners of this dialogue project are an Egyptian NGO on the Arab side, Coptic Evangelical Organisation for Social Services (CEOSS), and Oikosnet Europe on the European side. There have been some difficulties when it comes to the administration of this project. The last meeting for discussion of the future of this project was held in Cairo in august 2016. At this meeting, it became clear that there are different conceptions as to who the members are in different guiding bodies of the project, as well as different conceptions regarding mandates. Next year will most likely show what direction this project will take in the future.

DPC

DPC is, from its start in 2004, a project under the umbrella of Oikosnet (International). The initial group and its successors has realised, on a regular basis, a review of the content of the training, which is basically a conflict management training. The practical application by the more than 1.000 participants of the five-days basic training has yielded quite some reflections about this methodology. In the USA the application was realised regarding communities which had to deal with youth and gang violence. In the UK, especially through the work of DPC-trainer and University professor Peter Craig at the University of Bedfordshire, the application was found around the so called the Beezee Bodies family intervention programme that is seeking to create long-term improvements in children's weight management. In 2011-12 this programme was realised throughout Bedfordshire. After that initial stage the programme was launched nationally. It has become a long year, multi million programme, now independently run. DPC-methods are integrated in this work.

What is BeeZee Bodies?

BeeZee Bodies is an obesity referral programme for overweight and obese children. It is a 16 week programme designed to enhance self-confidence, activity level and increase knowledge and practice of healthy eating.

Behavioural change techniques are used to solidify positive changes made and these involve the whole family. There are a range of specialists and experts who deliver sessions throughout the course to the parents and children who help to contextualise the positive changes that are being made.

Sessions are run for 5-8 year olds, 8-11 year olds and 12-15 year olds.

Another application has been presented last year as well. DPC-trainer Bart Brandsma from the Netherlands has built on the models, taught in the DPC-training, new approaches regarding the upcoming polarisation in – among others – the Dutch society. The exchanges with journalist, chiefs of police as well as majors of some cities in the country

brought him to new insights, based on DPC, regarding ways to deal productively with polarisation. He presented his thoughts in lectures and workshops all over Europe. In November 2016 he published a book about this theme. He expects to publish an English translation in 2017.

Polarisation – some characteristics

Us and them-thinking harms. It has a severe impact on the social stability of our continent, our countries, societies, our cities and neighbourhoods, our schools.

Bart distinguishes the following five roles in processes of polarisation:

- Pusher
- Joiner
- Silent
- Bridge builder
- Scapegoat

In his approach he suggests a new approach, which has the following components:

- Change the target group
- Change the subject
- Change the position
- Change the tone of voice

For more information (mainly in Dutch):
<https://www.polarisatie.nl/>

A third application was developed in the years 2016 and 2017. As part of an EU-subsidy under the heading of Erasmus+, the University of Bedfordshire (England, UK), the International Sport Alliance (ISA – Den Bosch, NL), Unify Solutions (Belfast, UK) and Oikos – Utrecht, NL) cooperate in designing a training about possibilities to use sports as an instrument to build communities. 'Sports and conflicts'.

Civil Society in Central Europe

At its meeting in Budapest in December 2016, the Board decided to support one project on "Civil Society in Central Europe" with an amount of up to 5.000 Euros seed funding. The project was tabled by the Evangelical Academy of Rostock (Nordkirche) and will be jointly facilitated by the Academy of the Rostock, the Association of Protestant Academies in Germany (EAD) and OE. Several Academies have already indicated their interest in participating, among them the

Academies in Suprasl, Prague, Sigtuna, Liebfrauenberg. Each Academy is also invited to bring in a non-church-related partner. Some of these have also been identified already.

A more detailed description of the project is available upon request. But in short: the project's starting point is the European crisis. (Insert. BD 2016-25)

The EAD has already entertained talks with German government institutions, including the Foreign Ministry) in order to secure further funding for the project. Due to the fact that there was recently a considerable change of staff in the Foreign Ministry and federal elections are to come soon in Germany, these talks could not be finalised as to yet and put the project a bit on hold. But its foreseen that a meeting of all stakeholders is still to be expected for this year.

Partners/Relations

Oikosnet International

The formal structure "Stichting Oikosnet" was established on 2nd February 2007 and meant to support the regional associations of Oikosnet. At that moment in time these structures were available in North America, Latin America, Africa, Asia, Middle East and Europe. The Stichting was the umbrella for receiving funds for the regions. The funds generally came from different European church-related institutions and - before 2007 – also from the World Council of Churches. The tendency, already tangible in 2007, was that donors wanted to support activities directly, not through an umbrella organisation. In fact Stichting Oikosnet was an umbrella organisation. The reality was that only a relatively small amount was received for especially the work in other regions than Europe and North America. The Stichting had received quite an amount after the WCC didn't consider anymore this work as their priority. By consequence, there were two functions left: sharing experiences and mutual support on the one hand and supplying some money for (generally common) activities.

From 2012, after the meeting of the Board in New York, the mutual support was visible and very much appreciated by our members in Latin America (with among others, the death-threat to one of the Colombian members who also participated in the Board of Stichting Oikosnet), in the Middle East (with the contacts with their president, Rev. Serop Megerditchian from Aleppo, Syria) and to a certain extend also with our Asian colleagues. With our African colleagues the contacts were possible in person as well. In 2014 the Board meeting of Stichting Oikosnet took place in Accra, Ghana. And after this meeting the General Secretary of Oikosnet Africa, Mrs. Afia Darkwa – Amanor, was our guest during our AC 2014 in Villigst, Germany.

How to continue the mutual exchange and how to spend the remaining funds of about Euro 22.400? These were the remaining questions after the decision was taken to dissolve the Stichting. It was decided, also with the support of the Board of Oikosnet Europe, that proposals for the use of funds should come only from Southern Oikosnet partners. Our African colleagues have developed a proposal which includes the idea to educate some female colleagues in Africa and Asia to become DPC-trainers. To this end a DPC-training is planned for the end of September – beginning October 2017 in Ghana where the target group is the female staff of Oikosnet members all over the world. Travel support will be provided for participants from Asia and Africa and – if there are potential participants – the Middle East. European colleagues are expected to raise money for their own travel expenses. In addition a small fee is required for each participant. The proposal for this training was made by Mrs. Afia Darkwa – Amanor. Due to the illness of one of the former Board members of Oikosnet International, there was a delay in the process of taking a decision. However, early June the decision was taken and is now in the process to get realised.

Beyond this, the need for continuation of the formal structure Stichting Oikosnet wasn't there anymore. Also after consulting the AC 2016 in Prague, the formal decision was taken

to dissolve the Stichting and to place the remaining funds on the account of Oikosnet Europe according to Swedish law. This money transfer happened in December 2016. After this there were no conditions anymore, so the Stichting was dissolved by 2nd 2017, having served the different Oikosnet regions for exactly ten years. In cooperation with the Board of Oikosnet International a Memorandum of Understanding is made, which regulates the way decisions can be taken and executed.

Now the mutual support is the remaining task. During recent years this concentrated on Oikosnet Africa on the organisational level (DPC-trainings have taken place there) and on Serop Megerditchian on the personal level. Serop has been supported through individuals from OE during several years now. It seems that his future for the next two years is in Toronto, being a pastor of the Evangelical Armenian church. In April 2017 it became clear that Serop and his family were allowed to immigrate to the USA – which they did on the 15th of May. Several aspects of their lives have to be arranged now. So there are challenges left. The good thing however: they can deal with them as a family, close to each other and without life-threatening pressure on them.

Following the story of him and his family makes clear how difficult it is to live in a situation where authorities have the power to decide about procedures, about times, about requirements. The good thing however: they can't decide about the quality of mutual exchanges and support. That is left to people like ourselves.

Association of Protestant Academies in Germany (EAD)

In 2013 OE and the German Association of Protestant Academies in Germany (EAD) had signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU), which clarified further co-operation and established the post of an Executive Secretary in Oikosnet Europe in the person of Rüdiger Noll. The MoU foresaw an evaluation in three year's time, which took place at the EAD members' assembly in November 2013.

The OE President tabled his assessment. In the subsequent discussion, it was highlighted that German Academies are now more engaged in OE. They are stimulated by the European view on common issues and the possibilities of exchange on the European level. At every meeting of the EAD Board and assembly Europe and developments in Oikosnet Europe are now on the agenda. There were common projects like the common presence at the EKD Synod and the starting project on civil society. The role of the OE Executive Secretary and EAD staff member is crucial for this. Altogether, the EAD members welcomed the development of relations and voted unanimously for its continuation.



As critical points were mentioned: in OE, the exchange among members could still be developed into a more effective tool and OE should consider to be more outgoing in, for instance, addressing the European Institutions with its perspectives on European issues.

European Christian Convention (ECC) – European Kirchentag



Some developments took place during the last year on the way to a European Christian Convention (ECC, European Kirchentag). The enterprise was registered as an Association according to Belgium law. OE became one of the founding members. Emphasis was put on reflecting the whole oikoumene within the membership. Therefore, special and successful efforts were made to involve roman-catholic laity organisations. Following this particular phase, it is now time for the ECC to become more clear about themes, time frames and venue. For this purpose a members' assembly took place just prior to the German Kirchentag

in May 2017. The meeting adopted a paper which again describes the aims of the ECC. It is now expected that the event will take place between 2021 and 2023. Next year an open call will be issued for cities and churches that may want to host the event.

The members' assembly in Berlin also elected a new Board. Thus far the OE Executive Secretary was on the Board, but decided to take a break from that function. OE is still represented by Katerina Karkala-Zormpas (Orthodox Academy of Crete) and Alexei Bodrov (St. Andrew's Biblical Institute).