

Oikosnet Europe

General Assembly 2022

Lux Mundi Ecumenical Centre, Malaga

October 8



Annual Report 2022

Working for Peace and Reconciliation

Foreword by the President, Rev. Walter Lüssi

The history of Oikosnet Europe dates back to 1955 when Olov Hartman, the director of the Sigtuna Foundation, Sweden and Eberhard Müller, the director of Bad Boll, Germany came up with the idea to establish a European association of Christian academies and laity centres, then called EAALCE (The Ecumenical Association of Academies and Laity Centres). It happened in the midst of a post-war movement in which members of churches began to work for peace and reconciliation with deep conviction, joining together across cultural, social and denominational boundaries and seeking new ways to take on social responsibility. Looking back on the devastating time of war, it was clear: something like this must never happen again anywhere in the world and especially in Europe!

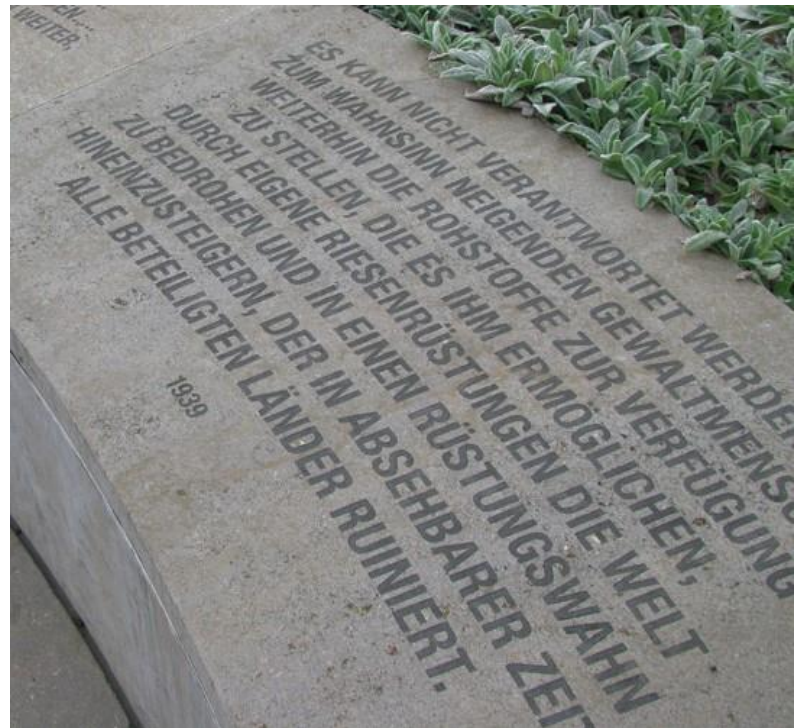
As different as our centres and academies might be today, they are all joined in their belief that as a faith-based organisation there is a need to act out responsibility for society and living together peacefully and that real and deep exchanges and education in different ways is important to achieve this. There are good reasons for re-emphasising this today:

There are signs that in the past years and decades, tried and tested networks that had been working across the board for peace, justice and the integrity of creation have been weakened and, in some cases, have allowed themselves to be divided for national and individual interests. But peace and reconciliation need active and continuously cultivated solidarity.

Es kann nicht verantwortet werden, einem zum Wahnsinn neigenden Gewaltmenschen weiterhin die Rohstoffe zur Verfügung zu stellen, die es ihm ermöglichen, durch eigene Riesenrüstungen die Welt zu bedrohen und in einen Rüstungswahn hineinzusteigern, der in absehbarer Zeit alle beteiligten Länder ruiniert.

It cannot be justified to continue to provide a violent man prone to madness with the raw materials that enable him to threaten the world with his own giant armaments and to escalate into an armament mania that will ruin all the countries involved in the foreseeable future.

Carl Friedrich Goerdeler, 1939



When we met for the General Assembly in Sigtuna last year, none of us thought that only a few months later a barbaric war and the associated power games with people and resources would shake Europe and divide the world. And perhaps we were even more shocked that even a religious leader of the Orthodox Church of Russia found justifying words for a war of aggression and against the democratic values of the Western world. Looking back, it seems as if Putin's war against Ukraine and Europe had been announced and developed in slow motion, as it were. For me personally, the large, long table at which Putin received the heads of state and government struggling to maintain peace has become the symbol of a ruler who rejects all diplomatic efforts and leads them ad absurdum with all harshness and cruelty.

Oikosnet Europe has seen better times. We know this and have been lamenting it for years. Some faith-based organisations are struggling to survive in a more pluralistic society. Traditional churches increasingly recognise themselves as minorities and have not yet found their new role. Social and economic differences are tearing European societies apart. Talks between East and West have become more complicated again. But this is precisely why it is now time again for us to commit ourselves to peace and reconciliation with renewed

strength and again and still with deep conviction. This is precisely why it is important that we do not shy away from difficult disputes among ourselves in the knowledge of a common responsibility and with the hope for a common future.

Activities of the Management Board

2021-10-06 Oikosnet Board (Sigtunastiftelsen)

Present Board Members:

Walter Lüssi, President
Karolína Sílna, Treasurer
Kristin Gudleiksrud Raaum

Board Members not present:

Jörg Hübner
Katerina Zormpas

Ex officio present:

Rüdiger Noll, Executive Secretary
Alf Linderman, Secretariat
Karin Sallander, Secretariat

Main themes of the meeting:

The main theme of this meeting was, for obvious reasons given that the meeting was held just before the 2021 General Assembly, the finetuning of this meeting. This was the first on-site meeting since the pandemic started in 2020, and thus very important for the whole association. The General Assembly was held at the Sigtuna Foundation, Sweden, and it was very positive that quite a number of members were present despite the remaining shadow of the pandemic.

Beyond this finetuning, finances, future priorities, potential new members was discussed at this meeting, and plans were made for the 2022 General Assembly. I was decided that this should be held in Malaga.

2022-01-26 Oikosnet Board (Zoom Conference)

Present Board Members:

Walter Lüssi, President

Katerina Karkala-Zormpas, Vice President

Kjell Rise

Board Members not present

Jörg Hübner

Ex Officio present:

Sofia af Geijerstam, Office, Head of Information

Alf Linderman, Head of the OE Office

Rüdiger Noll, Executive Secretary

Gloria Uribe, Director, Lux Mundi

Main themes of the meeting:

The main theme of this meeting was to discuss the reality that Oikosnet member academies have had to face during the time of the Corona Crisis. Different board members, together with those other present, shared experiences and insights from their own academy and other institutions of which they had significant knowledge. It became very obvious that the Corona Crisis had made life very difficult for most members of the association.

Furthermore, the planning started for the next General Assembly, and it was very helpful to have the upcoming host, Gloria Uribe, present in the meeting. In addition to this, one application for seed money was dealt with, and the discussion on some potential new members and the priority themes of Oikosnet Europe continued.

Some more formal matters were also discussed in this meeting, like mandates within the board and Oikosnet relations to CEC.

2022-04-05 Oikosnet Board (Zoom Conference)

Present Board Members:

Walter Lüssi, President

Kjell Rise

Jörg Hübner

Board Members not present

Katerina Karkala-Zormpas, Vice President

Ex officio present:

Rüdiger Noll, Executive Secretary

Alf Linderman, Secretariat

Gloria Uribe, Director, Lux Mundi

Main themes of the meeting:

The main item on the agenda was the continued planning of the next General Assembly to take place in Malaga this year. It was decided that the next board meeting should be an on-site meeting in Malaga to be able to finalize the plans for the General Assembly.

At this meeting, some items from previous meeting still were the subject for discussion. The previous discussion on priority themes now started to be more concrete with focus and actual projects with the prioritized areas. The board also discussed the response from CEC on that which was sent from Oikosnet to CEC after the alst meeting.

To additional things became prominent in this meeting. The Dialogue for Peace project was discussed since it had to be explored how this project could continue. But, for obvious reason, one new and very important and complex theme became a prominent topic for discussion: the situation in Ukraine in general after the February 24 Russian military attack, and more specific the situation for institutions with links to Oikosnet Europe and/or with members of our association. This discussion is relevant not least given that many of the member institutions in part are the result of peace-related efforts in the Post World War Two Europe. Unfortunately, this is a matter that will have to be discussed further at later occasions.

2022-06-01-03 Oikosnet Board (Malaga)**Present Board Members:**

Walter Lüssi, President

Katerina Karkala-Zormpas, Vice President

Kjell Riise

Board Members not present:

Jörg Hübner

Ex officio present:

Rüdiger Noll, Executive Secretary
Alf Linderman, Secretariat
Sofia af Geijerstam, Secretariat
Gloria Uribe, Lux Mundi

Main elements of the agenda were the preparations of the General Assembly 2022.

2022-09-05 Oikosnet Board (Zoom)**Present Board Members**

Walter Lüssi, President
Katerina Karkala-Zormpas, Vice President
Kjell Riise

Board Members not present

Jörg Hübner

Ex officio present

Alf Linderman
Sofia af Geijerstam
Rüdiger Noll
Gloria Uribe

Main elements of the agenda were again the preparations for the 2022 General Assembly.

Activities of the President

Walter Lüssi

After I had placed a word by the former general secretary of the World Council of Churches, Philip Potter, above my foreword to the Annual Report last year, I quote a different one at the beginning of my own report. Peter Bichsel is a Swiss writer. In his collection *"Über Gott und die Welt"* (Suhrkamp 2009) he writes:

"Denn Christentum ist kein Erfolgsrezept. Es meint nicht, reich gescheit und gesund zu werden. Es taugt weder gegen Grippe noch gegen Schlaflosigkeit, weder gegen Alkoholismus noch gegen

Drogensucht. Es ist nur eine Lehre vom Zusammenleben, eine Lehre davon, dass alle dazugehören, niemand ausgegrenzt wird."

"For Christianity is not a recipe for success. It does not mean getting rich and healthy: It is good neither against flu nor against insomnia, neither against alcoholism nor against drug addiction. It is only a doctrine of living together, a doctrine that everyone belongs, no one is excluded."

Bichsel is not a theologian, but he formulates an indispensable claim for "Christianity" on a social level. In 2021 I attended an online webinar from EU about *"Europe: Green and digital. Also social?"* Our strategic themes always concern the social dimension and questions of justice in and between our societies.

Workshop "Nobody should be left behind. The Social and Economic Presuppositions for Social-Ecological Transformation"

Thanks to our Seed Money budget, the Board of Oikosnet Europe was able to support a joint project of Centro Ecumenico Agape, Evangelische Akademie zu Berlin and Ekumenická Akademie in Prague.

The three academies are located in different European regions (West, East, South) and brought their specific experiences and backgrounds to the discussion on the socio-ecological transformation (SET) at the meeting from 5 to 12 June 2022 at Centro Agape.

EAAE (the network for the Protestant and Anglican Adult Education in Europe and Plusbildung Switzerland

After we were unable to invite the EAAE Study Tour to Switzerland for the second time due to the pandemic, Plusbildung organised a webinar with the EAAE in June 2021 on "Education - Theology - Digitization: What do we gain, what do we lose?"

In June 2022, the time had come. Members of EAAE and Plusbildung met in the monastery of Kappel near Zurich. Besides getting to know each other and a study day on "Hope in times of climate change, pandemic and war", a delegation from the Working Group on Education of Oikosnet Europe was also invited. Rüdiger Noll, Sören Lenz and Bianca Kappelhoff from the Comenius Institute organised a workshop on education. One of the questions was to what extent EAAE and Oikosnet deal with comparable topics and find a "common language". Our Executive Secretary will report more on this and also on a meeting of European church related education organisations that is being planned.

Federation Européenne pour l'Education Catholique des Adultes (FEECA)

In April 2022, I had the opportunity to attend a FEECA symposium at the Cusanus Academy in Brixen, South Tyrol. The theme was "*Multilingualism as Conflict Prevention*" and was intended as a contribution of Catholic adult education to the management of ethnic and intercultural conflicts. The participation from Eastern European countries, namely Romania, Hungary and the Czech Republic, was impressive.

The ecumenical association Plusbildung will also become a member of FEECA as the successor organisation of the Catholic Association for Adult Education in Switzerland (KAGEB). At the same time, efforts are also being made in Austria to merge the denominational adult education associations. As President of Plusbildung, I have been invited by the Austrian member of FEECA to a meeting in Salzburg this October, immediately after the General Assembly of Oikosnet, to present the model of the Swiss Plusbildung Association.

"dir"

Let me briefly mention a Plusbildung project that could also be interesting for Oikosnet as a whole: The digital transformation is changing our lives. As a bundle of ever new technological possibilities, it shapes religions and education, and thus also (inter)religious learning - in public as well as in private life. A project team consisting of representatives of members of Plusbildung (educational institutions, specialised offices of the churches) and the University of Zurich is specifically looking for consequences of the digital transformation for (inter)religious and spiritual education. Thanks to his great and exceptional expertise, Gernot Meier, Protestant Academy in Baden, was invited as a guest to join the project team.

"dir" emerged from this starting point. *"dir"* stands for "digital.inter.religiös" (digital.inter.religious) as a sub-project of the university research focus (UFSP) "Digital Religion(s)" as well as the Swiss-wide umbrella organisation Plusbildung. The aim is to build a platform with different focuses on digitalisation in the field of (inter)religious education. *"dir"* initially offers the (inter-)religious education houses, seminar houses and Plusbildung centres the opportunity to gain insight into the research results of the *"dir"* project team. In a broader sense, a website is to be developed under the direction of the research project "Interreligious Learning in a Digital Society" and made available to all interested parties in order to exchange their own findings, experiences, further training, workshops, links and to make them mutually usable.

Jaap van der Sar: Let us keep him in good memory!

It is with great sadness that we have had to say goodbye to Jaap van der Sar. Although many people knew of his serious illness and his limited life span, the news of his death on 11 March 2022 at home in Wageningen/The Netherlands was shocking and saddening. For many years, Jaap was a good and loyal friend to me.

In many sophisticated conversations we did not reinvent the world, but we questioned it and looked at it from different perspectives. That was central for Jaap. And many a time we gained new insights for ourselves or for the benefit of our association. We know how connected he was to the "Dialogue for Peaceful Change", which he developed together with others. The project brought together thousands of participants and trainers from all over the world for trainings in non-violent conflict management. Continuous, sincere communication was important to him. I experienced Jaap as a person who knew how to put the matter at hand in the foreground and yet not disappear behind it. In such a way he took responsibility, open to the opinions and arguments of others.

Work of the Executive Secretary

Rüdiger Noll

As listed above, in the period covered by this report, 5 (including the meeting just prior to the GA 2022) 6 meetings of the Board took place, for which the Executive Secretary in consultation with the President established the agendas and provides the respective documentation.

Important in this period of time was again to maintain contacts with Oikosnet members and partner organisations. Due to the war in Ukraine, it was especially important to maintain contacts in Ukraine, Russia and Belarus (often with the help of the good services of Alexei Bodrov). The Executive Secretary was also involved in the first plannings of the project between the Academy of Berlin, Prague and the Agape Ecumenical Center. The Executive Secretary was also invited to the 75th anniversary of the Academy of Hofgeismar (word of greetings) and the Europe Day of the Westphalian Church in the Academy of Villigst (presentation). He was present at the installation of the new Director (Dr Verena Grütter) of the Academy of Loccum.

One of the main tasks of the Executive Secretary is and remains to be to maintain to be the contacts with the German academies via the umbrella organisation EAD. He reported about Oikosnet at each of its Board meetings and Membership meetings. He EAD is at present working on a new publication on the role of protestant academies in Germany, for which the Executive Secretary is the coordinator.

The Executive Secretary represented Oikosnet at what was announced as the Assembly of the European Christian Convention (ECC, European Kirchentag). However, due to a lack of participants this turned out to be “only” a meeting. Also present at this meeting were Katerina Karkala-Zormpas and Alexei Bodrov, who were members of the ECC Board. The then newly called members Assembly was attended by Katerina Karkala-Zormpas and Alexei Bodrov. Plans are now to call, together with CEC, for a next European Ecumenical Assembly, in which ECC is to organise the programme for non-CEC members, the church-related civil society.

On a private capacity, as the Oikosnet President was meant to be the official representative, the Executive Secretary attended the WCC Assembly in Karlsruhe for three days. Besides adopting the main lines of the future WCC work programme, the Assembly discussed the role of Israel in the Middle East and the war in Ukraine and the role of the Russian Orthodox Church.

The main contents work of the Executive Secretary related to the work on one of the priority themes of Oikosnet on education (cf. below)

The Executive Secretary also drafted the response of Oikosnet to CEC restructuring process.

He was heavily involved in the preparation of the Arab-European Citizens’ Dialogue and was part of organising a planning meeting in Crete as well as in a meeting of the Acting Committee in Berlin.

In 2024, the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) will celebrate its 50th anniversary. An initiative under the lead of Katerina Kunter is preparing for a conference, in which the Executive Secretary represents Oikosnet and the German members.

Activities Activities of the Board Members

Katerina Karkala: Meetings with the board of the European Christian Convention/ECC via Zoom and in presence at the Katholikentag in Stuttgart (25.05.2022) and in Bruchsal (29.08.2022) for the Member's Assembly, where a new board has been elected with Katerina as a member. There are plans for an event in 2026, which will be decided in the next months.

Participation at the Katholikentag in Stuttgart and moderation of an event of the ECC on the theme "On the way to a European solidarity - The contribution of Christian men and women" (26.05.22). The participants at the Podium were: Jeannette Behringer, Vice-President of the ECC; Christian Krieger, President of the Conference of European Churches; Vroni Peterhans, OeKu Churches for the Environment; Shannon Pfohman, Director for Politics at Caritas Europe.

Participation at a project on Sustainable Preaching (www.sustainable-preaching.org).

Participation at the ongoing Arab-European Citizen's Dialogue (AECD), see report.

Jörg Hübner: I am no longer available for re-election to the board of Oikosnet because the Protestant Academies in Baden and Bad Boll are facing the challenge of growing together into a joint, merged academy. I will have to devote myself to these tasks in a special way in the coming years.

It is hoped that the peace project Europe will also be an essential part of the work of the Joint Academy. In view of the war in Ukraine, Europe as a peace project is more important than ever. The fact that peace and democracy should cost and be worth something to all of us has been brought home to us every day since 24 February 2022. If we in the academies can contribute to this by working together, then this corresponds precisely to our Christian responsibility.

But Europe is not only a peace project, but more and more also a project for the future: The Green Deal, the Fit for Fifty Five programme as well as the sustainability efforts of the European Commission should oblige us in Oikosnet to participate in this from a church perspective - in a very concrete and practical way. Unfortunately, due to the challenges mentioned above, I have not been able to invest enough time in such a project. I am sorry for this; very much I would have liked to make an effort!

But there were and are also points of contact that point in this direction: For several years, the Orthodox Academy on Crete and the Protestant Academy Bad Boll had pursued the goal of deepening cooperation. Initially, this was done at the level of the leadership, but since this year both teams of the academies have also been involved: together we held a summer retreat. All team members from Crete and Bad Boll came together in Strasbourg, i.e. in one of the heart chambers of Europe. Together we created two project groups: one project group is dedicated to the question of national pasts, another project group deals with the questions of sustainable tourism. Mutual visits of the teams are arranged for the year 2023. The two project groups meet digitally several times a year. In this way, two academies grow together and the understanding for the special situation in Greece and Germany grows. The encounter project is financed by the Erasmus plus programme.

Could such encounters not also point us in Oikosnet towards a common future? Encounters of a direct kind, collaboration on a project and the common conversation connect us. Wouldn't it also be possible for other academies in the Oikosnet network to embark on such a common path and build cooperation with each other, meet each other and initiate projects of a concrete nature?

In my opinion, cooperation agreements of this kind could make the Oikosnet network more lively. I very much wish Oikosnet that the European network continues to grow in this sense and finds efficient structures. We can contribute to the future project of Europe.

Financial Report

Walter Lüssi

Finances and Accounts 2021

The accounts are reported with an income and expenditure of 26'177 € and have closed the year with a surplus of 2'278 €. This surplus has increased the total assets to 148'578 €.

The key income stream for Oikosnet Europe remains to be membership fees. The Covid-19 crisis affected the income, as some of the fees were payed again later respectively in 2022 and therefore will be added to 2021 accounts. Two

members have requested the Board to waive their 2021 membership fee due to payment difficulties. The Executive Board has granted this request. But also the expenditures were again lower, despite the General Assembly could have been held in Sigtuna.

Recommendation

The Board recommends to the General Assembly to adopt the accounts 2021 with the income and expenditure of 26'177 € (Doc. GA 2022-8.1) and to discharge the Board.

The Board recommends to the General Assembly to adopt the closing balance sheet of 148'578 €.

The Board recommends to the General Assembly to add the 2020 surplus of 2'278 € to the reserves of Oikosnet Europe.

Activities of the Office of Oikosnet Europe

Alf Linderman, Sofia Af Geijerstam

The secretariat of Oikosnet Europe is located at the Sigtuna Foundation in Sweden. The secretariat provides an interface for Oikosnet Europe with e-mail, post box, telephone, newsletters and website. Alf Linderman is head of the secretariat, Maria-Pia Anderloni financial officer, and Sofia af Geijerstam information officer. Karin Sallander, who has been the administrative secretary for Oikosnet Europe for several years, left her position at the Sigtuna Foundation in March 2022. Her administrative duties for Oikosnet Europe have ever since been a shared responsibility for the secretariat.

The main tasks throughout the year are 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 significantly involved in the 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.

In March 2021, the secretariat also supported with the registration process to the Oikosnet Europe digital event “The role of education in today’s Europe” (33 Participants.)

Communication issues

The secretariat is responsible for the communication between the organization and its members, mainly by the official newsletter of Oikosnet Europe, the website www.oikosnet.eu and the Facebook page of Oikosnet Europe. The Facebook of Oikosnet Europe have 116 followers, about the same number as earlier years.

The newsletters of Oikosnet are generally read by a third of the 147 subscribers, sometimes just below. During 2021 the newsletter was published at four occasions: February 24, May 5, June 3 and October 28. In 2022 the newsletter has so far been published once, in April 2022. Recurrent content 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 and the Arab Europe Citizens Dialogue are also represented in these newsletters. Members are in every newsletter encouraged to share events, news and activities to members through the newsletter.

Further development of projects

Arab-European Citizens Dialogue (Katerina Karkala-Zorba)

The AECD is continuing with a new three year’s period. The Acting Committee of the AECD has met in Berlin on May 27th, to discuss the next steps of the Dialogue. In the last meeting in Crete, in October 2021, which was meant to be a working group to discuss the future of the Dialogue, was decided to work in this new period on the theme of “Religion and Civil Society”. The next

Consultations of the AECD will be in Cairo (6-10 November 2022) and in Sigtuna (June 2023).



The participants at the meeting of the AECD at the Orthodox Academy of Crete, in October 2021

The relation between Religion and Civil Society will be the focus for the 8th Consultation of the AECD in Cairo 6th to 9th November 2022, exploring also the possibilities of cooperation for justice and peace in our societies. The different aspects and approaches in the Middle East and in Europe will be presented and exchanged in a fruitful and honest dialogue. We do not start this process from zero, since Oikosnet and CEOSS have a long-standing good cooperation. For this three year's period we want to start this process from the perspective and the experience of the participants, the relation between religious organizations and faith-based communities and civil society. On the program are also discussions and field visits on local projects and human right organizations in Egypt.

Based on this first conference in the three-years cycle, we will look in the next conferences on cooperation of religion and civil society on issues, such as peaceful coexistence, role of the media, human rights, etc.

Oikosnet Europe, as well as the Coptic Evangelical Organisation for Social Services/CEOSS in Egypt are looking forward to a process of outcomes on the theme of Religion and Civil Society.

Working Group on Education (Rüdiger Noll)

Education was selected as one of the Oikosnet main priorities for the years to come. Together with Bianca Kapelhoff from the Comenius Institute, the Executive Secretary organized a workshop at the Oikosnet GA in Sigtuna. The Working Group met twice via Zoom. Both, Bianca Kappelhoff and Rüdiger Noll also organized a workshop at the encounter with EAEE (Protestant and Anglican Education in Europe), which took place in Zurich upon invitation of Plusbildung Schweiz. All these meetings developed priorities under the theme of education and started preparations for a European meeting of stakeholders.

Dialog for peaceful change (Colin Craig)

Current and future developments

As Walter Lüssi's report has already shared with you, it is impossible for me to begin this report without sharing the impact, huge loss and sadness that the passing of Jaap van der Sar has been for all of us connected with the Dialogue for Peaceful Change [DPC]. Although I had been personally involved in directly shaping the content and conceptual evolution of the DPC methodology, none of this would have happened without the initial inspiration and ongoing support from Jaap and Oikosnet over the last 28 years.

On a personal level I continue to feel his loss most days. He was an amazing colleague, courageous ground breaker, support and above all wonderful friend. Even when we were not working directly on something together, we would speak together most weeks reflecting on our lives, friends and family and the challenges we could see facing the world around us. I carry his voice and wisdom with me every day. However, for those of us who knew Jaap personally, you also know that he had little time for too much sentimentality! I had the honour to visit and talk with him in those last months. He was clear that he wanted us to push on with the work. And we will!

As our last report indicated, prior to Covid our work in DPC was focussed on developing a number of potential training proposals. A significant proportion of these conversations were connected to helping some Churches and parishes build up their own internal capacity to use the DPC methodology. These

connections included the Lutheran World Federation, The Dutch Reformed Church, and the Presbyterian Church in Baltimore USA. The stresses and strains that Covid caused has meant that, for now, only the Baltimore programme has currently some momentum.

We have completed the initial pilot Training of Facilitators programme for both a Baltimore and Washington DC group on the 25th – 29th of May 2022. The feedback from this programme was very positive and we are planning further work in late October or early November this year. With the current political, social, and cultural tensions they are facing regionally and nationally, they feel that the Church does not have the skills in place to constructively work on these issues. This recognition has also been at the heart of our other work with various Churches over the years. The building recognition of this skills gap within the Churches may well be something that we can discuss collectively together on in the Annual Oikosnet Conference in October.

Some DPC Evolution and Some Challenges: In recent years the main programmatic development that we have been seeking to evolve with DPC has been to prioritise where possible the building of “DPC Hub Centre’s”. While Jaap and I have been often involved in support and delivering many of the various trainings that have taken place over these years, it was always our expectation and intent that we would build up a cohort of skilled and experienced trainers and DPC coaches. To some degree, at least, we have achieved that goal as there now being 16 Accredited Trainers worldwide.

However, what we did not fully recognise for some time, was that, disappointedly, having a range of Trainers scattered across the world did not often facilitate the further development of DPC programmes at their local levels. Many of our Trainers are either “freelance” position or are already occupied within an organisational setting. This meant that beyond “open programmes”, they were seldom able to establish a capacity to develop their own DPC regional trainings.

In discussion with Jaap, we decided to change our approach somewhat. We drew on the capacity building work we had achieved across the city of Antioch in Northern California. Over a 3 -4-year period we trained over 200 facilitators and built a team of 4 accredited trainers. Then through our partnerships in Antioch, we established a ‘DPC Hub’. Our intention had always been to work at building sufficient local capacity for our local trainers to meet the on-going training needs within their local and regional communities.

Our work with Fryshuset [a youth NGO in Sweden] has also followed the same path from the outset of our initial trainings. I am delighted to say that we have now built a team of 5 Accredited trainers within Fryshuset and a network of over 160 facilitators. As some will be aware, Sweden has been experiencing some significant inter-community tensions and occasional violence across the diverse migrant and indigenous Swedish community. My own role now is as a consultant/coach for the trainer network.

Moving Forward: Firstly, DPC could not have evolved as much as it has without the support and encouragement of Oikosnet. As we know only too well, the challenges that we are facing in the world are intensifying. Alongside the expanding range of social, political and economic problems, the ever-emerging ecological crisis can and will only deepen these tensions.

At the heart of the DPC methodology is a recognition that when, we humans, develop an increasing a sense of scarcity or threat of survival then the potential for rivalry, scapegoating and violence will inevitably build. How we deal with and face into this unfolding situation will be a test of our spiritual values and principles. Relying on old cultural certainties will not be likely to serve us well. Jaap and I discussed the dangers of this existential reality on many occasions. We never saw the DPC methodology as some sort of panacea for this growing crisis. We continued to believe that it nonetheless offers a really useful “toolkit” to help build up our personal and organisational skills for constructively meeting the complexities of these emerging times.

The ongoing work of the Oikosnet membership will, no doubt, be facing into this challenging context as well. I would be very happy to talk together, during the Oikosnet annual conference, on how we might continue to deepen and evolve our ongoing work together.

Membership development

With the beginning of the year 2022, Oikosnet Europe lost the Academy of Oldenburg as a member due to the dissolution of the Academy. Three organisations indicated their interest in joining Oikosnet: the Iona Community, EAEE (The Organisation for Protestant and Anglican Adult Education) and the Arminius Institute of the Remonstrant Brotherhood of the Vrije University of Amsterdam. The all will present themselves at the Okiosnet GA in Malaga.