THREE GENERATIONS – WITH ENERGY AND VISION

30 Years Ecumenical Forum of
European Christian Women
1982–2012

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PREFACE

What are women doing for Europe?

Interesting answers, exciting projects, innovative thinking and visions can be found in the chapters of this book! In 1982 a committed group of women founded our Ecumenical Forum of European Christian Women – EFECW. Justice and peace, reconciliation and responsibility for creation were the main themes. With the spiritual riches of all the participating denominations, supported by feminist approaches to theology, Forum women have debated these subjects, prayed about them, and encouraged each other to take responsible action.

Drawing closer to God, and at the same time seeking our Christian identity as European women, was and is one of the aims of our Forum, whilst coming along different paths from our denominational traditions.

We have also begun cautiously to do this in dialogue with other faiths, e.g. with Muslim women. This finds expression in our EPIL project – European Project for Interreligious Learning, or in our contacts with e.g. "Religions for Peace – European Women of Faith Network".

In the course of the first three decades of the Forum came the surprise of the opening up of Europe: neighbours' meetings of women from East and West, North and South – like the Belarusian-German ecological summer school, the Egeria pilgrimage through various European countries – were suddenly possible. The range of our projects suggests that it is the countries where Orthodox Christianity and active Islam live side-by-side (house by house, dome by church tower by minaret) that practise and try to live out everyday ecumenism and interfaith conversation – and with less emphasis on creeds and dogmas (see e.g. the chapter 'Neighbours meet ... European ecumenical conferences since 1995') young women are also venturing on these new paths. We have innovative examples in this book.

In 2012 our Forum is 30 years young. The anniversary prompts us to document in this book a slice of the eventful and moving history of the Forum. It's time also to create an archive of the areas of activity of the Forum, its development and the way it is perceived. A foundation was laid for this in the story of the German Forum entitled "Ökumene weiblich. Frauen überschreiten Grenzen" ("Ecumenical and female. Women crossing borders"), edited by Elisabeth Bücking, Cornelia Göksu, Inge Heiling, Waltraud Liekefett and Katharina Nickel, as representatives of the German branch of the Forum: published by Frank und Timme in the series Religion and Science, vol 9, Berlin 2010). Extracts in English will soon appear on our website www.efecw.net.

For this anniversary publication the

editorial team of writers and translators has brought up to date the timeline first published in 2010. With names and themes the chronology reveals like a treasure the riches, courage and inventiveness of Forum women. In a meticulously researched list a procession of our Founding Mothers passes before us.

How lucky we are still to have the opportunity to put questions to so many contemporary witnesses! In our opening chapter, "Roots and Fruits", Martina Heinrichs interviews 93-year-old pioneer Ruth Epting about her motives for founding the Forum. "We could not be at all pessimistic" is the creed for her peacemaking, unifying work, true to the premise: reconciliation of opposites, using difference as enrichment. The beginnings were intuitive, simple, idealistic and experimental: "we started by getting to know each other. We shared the idea of being interconfessional, which was not easy" recalls the founding mother with a smile.

This book is also an experiment: how do you portray a network which binds together Christian women's groups and individuals, puts them in contact with other ecumenical organisations, and tackles subjects which affect women from all denominations (and beyond)?

Our book describes the Forum's typical ways of working. The member countries and regions initiate projects independently, staying all the while closely linked with the European Forum. Like in a fountain there is a lively circulation and transfer: pouring out, receiving, giving, taking in.

More than 20 writers have been involved in a voluntary capacity with this book. They depict different facets of our living Forum movement, illustrating their intentions and projects with examples. The variety of their brief biographies at the end of the book illustrates the patchwork nature of the Forum.

Then there are all those who have helped with research and thinking. Last but not least - our translators, Sheila Brain and Jill King. Not only have they helped Forum women over many years to put their manuscripts into English; they have also enriched our work with their suggestions.

To all who have helped with the successful creation of this mirror of our history and our future – thanks and blessings!

The Editors

Cornelia Göksu
Martina Heinrichs
Gabriele Kienesberger

BEGINNING AND TIMELINE

The History of the EFECW

I. Pre-history:

The positive experiences and the atmosphere of new beginnings felt during the **Second Vatican Council 1962–1965** motivated women to engage with one another in networking across denominational boundaries. Encouraged by the World Council of Churches (WCC) and by the Secretariat of the Council for Promoting Christian Unity in the Vatican, the first international ecumenical conference for women took place in Taizé in 1967.

The International **Women's Ecumenical Liaison Group (WELG)** founded in 1968, was disbanded in 1972 at the instigation of the Secretariat of the Council for Promoting Christian Unity because a "joint working group" of the Vatican and the WCC had been established with responsibility for working alongside new ecumenical initiatives.

Following the **5th Assembly of the WCC** in **Nairobi 1975** an 8-year programme was established for women's solidarity and for "the creation of unifying and liberating structures in the Church"

Further initiatives towards an ecumenical women's network followed:

1977: WCC Consultation of Church Women Executives (80 delegates from Church women's organisations worldwide – Roman Catholic, Protestant and Orthodox) in Glion, Switzerland, which decided on the formation of an ecumenical association. In an "Open Letter to European Christian Women" drawn up by Denise Peeters from Belgium they called on women to work together in order to find ways of being in communication with one another and exploring possibilities for a common course of action.

1978: Consultation of European Christian Women in Brussels, Belgium was held as a positive response to this letter. 70 participants were able to exchange ideas on topics such as feminism in the context of Christianity, and feminist theology – many of them for the first time. Leading figures in this were e.g. Pilar Bellosillo (RC) from Spain, Madeleine Barot (Reformed) from France, Brigalia Bam (Anglican) WCC Women's Desk Secretary, Catharina Halkes (RC) Dutch theologian.

1978–1982: A committee worked on producing a **"Constitution"**

Jacqueline Stuyt, representative of the European Catholic Women's Organisations, succeeded in getting agreement from the Vatican that the Council of European Bishops' Conferences (CCEE) would approve full membership of Roman Catholic women. This

was agreed on condition that the title "Ecumenical Conference" would be replaced by **"Ecumenical FORUM"**.

10–14.5.1981: First Seminar of Christian Women in Europe in Gwatt, Switzerland
Theme: "Women's Commitment to Justice". 40 participants from 19 countries
2–6.2.1982 Women's Conference of the Churches in the Socialist Countries of Eastern Europe in Debrecen, Hungary
Theme: "Understanding the roles of men and women, legal equality".
Main speaker: Christiane Frühauf, GDR.

Wall Carpet of a silk painting by Doris Hermann, Frankfurt/Main, Germany, created for the Forum after the fall of the "iron curtain" in the year 1990.
Photo: Doris Hermann

II. The Forum up to the present

Foundation of the EFECW in Gwatt on Lake Thun, Switzerland, **15–21 May 1982**
Theme: "Christian Women's Commitment to Justice". 125 women from 25 countries.
The constitution was agreed.
The following were elected:
President: Nicole Fischer, President of the Geneva Council of Churches,
Vice-President: Marianne Maus, Federal Republic of Germany (BRD),
Treasurer: Johanna Hanhart, Belgium,
Members of the Co-ordinating Committee: Nina Bobrova, USSR, Jacqueline Stuyt, GB, Marjolaine Chevallier, F, Fernanda Comba, I, Anezka Ebertová, CSSR, Ruth Epting, CH, Joyce Gray, GB, Tuuliki Koivunen Bylund, S, Dorothée Kraus, BRD, Judith Pasztor, HU, Ghislaine de Waziers, F.
Delegated from the Women's World Day of Prayer: Margaret Williams, GB.
As from 1983 a **Newsletter** was sent out twice a year

10–14.10.1984, Driebergen, Netherlands: **Seminar organised by Anezka Ebertova**, CSSR.
Theme: "Women and Work". Speakers: Bärbel von Wartenberg, Christa Springe, Pirkko Lehtiö.
75 participants. Press release: "Women – not just a reserve army for the jobs market"

30.5–2.6.1985, Boldern, Switzerland: **"Development of a European Feminist Network"**.
Initiated by: Bärbel von Wartenberg, WCC, Programme on Theological Education, Sub-Unit on Women in Church and Society. EFECW members formed a crucial section of the participants.
Final Message: "Seeking Justice, Making Peace, Living in Harmony with Creation"

2–8.6.1986, Järvenpää, Finland: **2nd General Assembly of the EFECW**.
Theme "Sharing Life, Building Hope". Main Speaker: Brigalia Bam, WCC. 150 participants from 27 countries. Subject of speeches: Justice and Peace, Women and Work, Sharing between Women in Europe (East and West). **Elected as President:** Jean Mayland, York,GB; **Vice-President:** Anezka Ebertova, Prague, CSSR. **Two Standing Committees** were established for four years: **Theology and Spirituality** and **Peace and Justice**

5–15.10.1987, **Co-ordinating Committee in Minsk**, USSR at the invitation of Patriarch Pimen of Moscow and the Leader of the External Relations Office of the Russian Orthodox Church, Metropolitan Filaret of Minsk. Theme: **Reconciliation through shared memories**.
Decision: To support the Decade of Churches in Solidarity with Women and the Conciliar Process JPIC (Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation), together with the women of the WCC, including organising their own conferences.

15–21.5.1989, Basel, Switzerland: **First European Ecumenical Assembly "Peace with Justice"**. Women's boat on the Rhine, and also active participation by committed EFECW women in worship and in hearings, as well as bringing the perspectives of women visibly into the workshop on the Future of Europe. **Two Hearings:** "Community of Women and Men in the Church – Reality or Utopia?" and "Genetic Engineering in medicine and agriculture" (with Christine v. Weizsäcker und Regine Kollek). Other speakers included Aruna Gnanadason (India) und Maria de Lourdes Pintasilgo (Prime Minister of Portugal 1979-80).

7–14.10.1989, Vienna, Austria: **1st National Co-ordinators Meeting** (NC Meeting). 65 participants. Jean Mayland, President: This is about the European House, which has to be much more than just the European Community. It is about a Europe that includes "all nations".

13–17.11.1989, Leuenberg, Germany: **Workshop on Feminist Theology**:
"Women are healed – women bring healing – on the way to a holistic humankind".
Leaders: Ruth Epting, Basel, Christa Heuer, Lörrach, Ute Kopf-Zeggert, Lörrach, Elisabeth Miescher, Leuenberg, Marie-Louise Stoll, Basel.

19–22.2.1990, Soest, Germany: **International Conference:** "The labour market in Europe– opportunities and risks for women". Participants from the German Federal Republic (FRG), the German Democratic Republic (GDR), Poland, Hungary and the Netherlands. Letter sent to the President of the European Commission, Jacques Delors.

14–20.7.1990, York, England: **3rd General Assembly** (first General Assembly after the fall of the Berlin Wall, the "Iron Curtain"). Theme: "From Division to Vision". 200 participants from 27 countries.
Decisions: A third Commission was established: Ecology and Bioethics. From now there would be three Co-presidents, in order to ensure the representation of Orthodox women, who came predominantly from the East. **Co-Presidents elected:** Elisabeth Raiser, (Prot.), FRG; Reeta Leskinen, (Orth.), Finland; Maria-José Arana, (RC), Spain.

1992 Appointment of a Europe Secretary, Fiona Hulbert, with an office in Brussels

23–26.10.1992, Soest, Germany: **National Co-ordinators Meeting**. Theme: "The challenge for Christian women in the new Europe". Speaker: Myra Blyth, WCC Europe Secretary. 50 participants from 30 countries.

14–20.4.1993, Santa Severa, Italy: **International Meeting of the Commission for Ecology and Bioethics**. Theme: "Silent Spring, 30 years later" (The theme made reference to the famous book by Rachel Carson, which had appeared 30 years earlier). Speakers: Anne Primavesi, Adriana Cavina, Elisabeth Green and Grace Jantzen. A statement on pre-natal diagnostics was presented, prepared by a Working Group from Basel.

17–19.9.1993, Driebergen, Netherlands: **Seminar** "Women citizens in the new Europe".
Organisers: Martina Heinrichs, Ermina Freytag. Further developed by Martina Heinrichs using the "transcultural work" method.

Neighbours in Europe Meetings:

1995, Germany, Hamburg-Neugraben: "Neighbours in Europe – multicultural encounter".

1996, Poland, Wisla Jawornik: "Women's paths to justice – biblical impulses for our everyday life in Europe".

1998, Lithuania, Nidda: "Women's paths to love – love God, love yourself, love your neighbour, and then you will live (cf Luke 10, 25-28)".

1999, Romania, Ilieni: "Women take responsibility for themselves – for the Church – for society".

19–26.8.1994, Budapest, Hungary: **4th General Assembly**. Theme: "Be not afraid – remember the Future". This meeting was characterised by a sense of fear, powerlessness and helplessness in relation to the war happening in Yugoslavia. The opening up of Eastern Europe overstretched by too many problems. Decision: To strengthen work at the national level.
Co-Presidents elected: Pirrko Siili, (Orthodox), Finland; Ragni Lantz, (Baptist), Sweden; Alexina Murphy, (RC), GB.

27.4–2.5.1995, Ilieni/Brasov, Romania: **National Co-ordinators Meeting**.
Theme: "Pluralism – spiritual diversity / You can't kill the spirit".
33 participants.

23–28.4.1996, Minsk, Belarus: **International Meeting of the Commission on Ecology and Bioethics**. Theme: Women and energy. Invitation issued by: Marguerite Wieser and Irina Gruschevaja. 67 women from 17 countries.

12–16.9.1996, Hirschluch, Germany: **National Co-ordinators Meeting**. Theme: "When the barbed wire bears red roses – on the path to reconciliation".
Advance preparation for Graz 1997. Speaker Sr. Michaela Bank: "Reconciliation is a long path to peace and justice".

19–23.6.1997, Graz, Austria: **2nd European Ecumenical Assembly: "Reconciliation – Gift of God and Source of New Life"**. The Commission for Ecology and Bioethics was responsible for the event "In the light of genetic engineering: new bio-policy and a call for justice and participation in decision-making" (Christine von Weizsäcker, Elisabeth Bücking).

28.8–1.9.1997, Turku, Finland: **National Co-ordinators Meeting**. Theme: Bioethics: "The Chain of Life". Speaker: Elisabeth Bücking.

4–10.6.1998, El Escorial, Spain: **5th General Assembly**. Theme: "Facing the New Millennium with Promise". 200 women from 28 countries. **Co-Presidents elected:** Katerina Karkala-Zorba, (Orthodox), Greece; Catherine Gyarmathy, (RC), Hungary/Switzerland; Inge Schintlmeister, (Protestant), Austria.

13–17.11.1999; Porto, Portugal: **National Co-ordinators Meeting**. Theme: "Living in a Multicultural Society". 60 participants. Organiser: Catherine Gyarmathy.

28. 6–3. 7. 2000, Thessaloniki, Greece: **EFECW European Festival**. Theme: "Searching for the Female Soul of Europe – Myth or Reality?" Speaker: Katerina Karkala-Zorba "Affirming the contribution of women in Europe". 140 participants

26–30.10.2001, Ushaw, England: **National Co-ordinators Meeting**. Theme: "Telling our Stories – Tracing the Multicultural Diversity of Europe". 41 participants

25.8–1.9.2002, Celakovice, Czech Republic: **6th General Assembly**.

Ecological Summer Schools

2000, Sväty Jur, Slovakia: "Living well rather than having plenty".

2003, Sväty Jur, Slovakia: "What should our common future look like?"

2005, Feketic, Serbia: "Our place in God's creation – courage for the future".

2007, Woltersdorf near Berlin, Germany: "Women and energy".

2009, Woltersdorf near Berlin, Germany: "From talk to action".

2011, Tharandt/Dresden, Germany: Preparation and presentation of a workshop in the Women's Centre at the German Protestant Kirchentag, "Holding creation in our hearts – Women from East and West take a stand against climate change".

Neighbours meetings – around the Baltic,
with participants from the countries bordering on the Baltic Sea.

2003 Germany, Berlin-Marzahn: "Paths of money and of work in the Baltic region". 21 participants from 7 countries.

2005 Russia, Cranz near Kaliningrad: "Women's experiences of borders and crossing borders in the European and ecumenical context". 23 participants from five countries.

2007 Estonia, Haapsalu: "Roots and branches". 24 participants from six countries.

2009 Lithuania, Vilnius: "Is your faith a help?! Religion – liberation or oppression for women?" 24 participants from seven countries.

2011 Germany, Tharandt/Dresden: Preparation for (and attendance at) the German Protestant Kirchentag: "There your heart will be also", together with the "Ecological Summerschool ". 30 participants from ten countries.

Theme: "Called to Compassion and Freedom – Christian Women Shaping the Future of Europe".
Speaker: Gret Haller, Switzerland. **Co-Presidents elected:** Catherine Gyarmathy, (RC), Switzerland; Katerina Karkala-Zorba, (Orth.), Greece; Inge Schintlmeister, (Prot.), Austria.
Europe Secretary: Bernadette Doutreligne. 160 participants from 30 countries

29.10–02.11.2003, Strasbourg, France: **National Co-ordinators Meeting**. Theme: "Towards a just and inclusive Europe"

9–14.8.2004, Kehl, Strasbourg, France: A Franco-German Forum group organises the daily meditation in the "Church ship" at the cross-border Garden Festival

13–17.10.2004, Loccum, Germany, **National Co-ordinators Meeting**. Theme: "Christian Values for a Multicultural Europe – Women's Perspective". 67 participants from 26 countries

2005–2015 Egeria-Pilgrimage: An ecumenical pilgrimage for women for a united Europe. An annual event covering a different section of the pilgrimage route across Europe in the footsteps of St Egeria, from Portugal to Jerusalem.

Neighbours meetings – Mediterranean

2005 Turin, Italy: First meeting of women from Italy, Switzerland and France.

2007 La Baume-les-Aix, France: "Neighbours of the Mediterranean Sea". Fourteen women from Spain, Switzerland, Italy and France. The main discussion was about the current priorities of EFECW and a study of the Charta Oecumenica and its section on "Taking our place in the European Structures". Two questions especially discussed were about the limited role of women in the European church institutions and about how to implement the obligations of the Charta in our churches and societies.

2008 Madrid, Spain: Seven Spanish and six French women decided to recommend the EFECW to reconsider some financial points and also procedures on elections for the Co-ordinating Committee (CC) and National Co-ordinators (NC) and to organise a general study of the Charta Oecumenica as requested by the Ecumenical Assembly in Sibiu.

2009 Velletri, Italy: Participants from Italy, Spain, Switzerland and France. The objectives of this meeting were to discuss justice; to take part in the renaissance of the Italian Forum; and to strengthen our ecumenical links in the middle of our diversities. "The wealth of the Forum is not only in international recognition by official authorities but also in the real power given to European women for working together."

2010 Neighbours Meeting during the 8th General Assembly at Loccum, Germany.

2011 John Knox Centre, Geneva, Switzerland: This was organised by Eva-Maria Fontana, the new National Co-ordinator for Switzerland, helped by several well known members of the Forum. Italy, Spain and France were represented. There were about 24 members, pleased to become friends with new "neighbours". Decision to enlarge the meeting by inviting Greece for the next time.

2012 Strasbourg/France. 26 participants from Italy, Spain, France, Greece, Switzerland, Southern Germany. About the situation of Christians in the Middle East which had been the theme of the Catholic bishops synod and was also based on the actual situation in Iraq and Egypt after the Arab Spring 2011. Heard the story of two Christian refugee women and lectures about the history of religions in the Middle East as well as the actual situation between despair and hope.

19–23.10.2005, Sväty Jur, Slovakia: **National Co-ordinators Meeting**. Theme: "The Challenge of Democracy". 36 participants

21–27.8.2006, Löwenberg near Murten, Switzerland: **7th General Assembly**. Theme: "We are Citizens of Europe! Daring to overcome Frontiers – Respecting Differences". 150 participants from 27 countries. **Co-Presidents elected:** Martina Heinrichs, (RC), NL; Dorothy Knights, (Anglican), GB; Elena Timofticiuc, (Orth.), Romania. **Structural change:** The officially registered address of the EFECW is moved from Switzerland to Austria, which is an EU member country. The official Forum language is English (formerly English, French and German)

3–6.6.2007, Altenberg, Germany: **Neighbours Meeting – West**. Theme: "Critical issues for the comparative integration of women migrants across Europe – communication – violence - health".
Speakers: Christine Huth-Hildebrandt, Germany; Sabine Drebusch, Belgium; Edith Glanzer, Austria; Veronique Isenmann, Switzerland; Agnes von Kirchbach, France; Gisela Stoldt, Irene Diller und Gülgün Teyhani, Germany.

4–9.9.2007, Sibiu, Romania: **3rd European Ecumenical Assembly**. Theme: **"The Light of Christ shines upon all – Hope for Renewal and Unity in Europe"**. Themes of the conference were discussed in the "Café Ruth":
Living in Diversity – Ecumenical Work at Grass Root Level; Gender Stereotypes in Church and Society;
Ecumenical Forum: Christian women in Europe; Women's Vision of the New Europe – Migration Impact and Family.

26–30.09.2007, Huissen, Netherlands: **National Co-ordinators Meeting**. Theme: "Money and Mammon, Finance Capacity Building". 46 participants.

17–21.09.2008, Versailles, France: **National Co-ordinators Meeting**.
Theme: "Women in Dialogue in a multicultural and multifaith Europe". 46 participants.

23–27.09.2009, Sigtuna, Sweden: **National Co-ordinators Meeting**. Theme: "Women, Peace and Security – a roadmap to UN Resolution 1325". 53 participants.

23–29.8.2010, Protestant Academy Loccum, Germany: **8th General Assembly**. Theme: Participation and responsibility – In the path of justice is life. 160 women from 27 countries. Speakers: Brigitte Triems, Berlin/Brussels; Ina Praetorius, Switzerland; Marina Shishova, Russia. **Co-Presidents elected:** Annika Damirjian, (Baptist), Sweden; Martina Heinrichs, (RC), Netherlands; Vasiliki Mavroska, (Orth.) Greece. **Decisions:** Ecological topics, Ecumenical Sharing, Young Women's Strategy.

4–8.5.2011, St. Petersburg, Russia: **Seminar on Creation and Ecology**. Speakers: Prof. Dr. Ellen van Wolde, Netherlands; Dr. Marina Shishova, Russia; Dr. Jansdotter Samuelson, Sweden and others. 28 participants. Final statement on website.

21–25.9.2011, Druskininkai, Lithuania: **National Co-ordinators Meeting**. Theme: "Women are breaking the walls of exclusion". The struggle against trafficking in human beings in Lithuania and Europe. In answer to the CEC campaign 'Against Trafficking in Women' which was launched in 1999, EFECW continues this work. 28 participants. Report on website.

Research: Elisabeth Bücking, Cornelia Göksu, Inge Heiling, Susanne Käser, Inge Schintlmeister.
Editing and Translation: Sheila Brain.

General Assembly Loccum. Morning Prayer with women of three nations (from left to right): Catherine Gyarmathy-Amherd, Switzerland, with Corazon Tabing-Reyes, United Church of Christ and Executive Secretary Fellowship of the Least Coin, Philippines and Jill King, Great Britain.
Photo: Nata Hovorkovà

The "Founding Mothers" and their successors; development of networks meetings and ecumenical projects.

FOUNDATION

"Ecumenical Forum of Christian Women in Europe" 1982 Gwatt, on Lake Thun Switzerland

1982–1986
Co-ordinating Committee
Nicole Fischer, Reformed, Switzerland, President
Ruth Epting, Reformed, Switzerland
Nina Bobrova, Russian-Orthodox, USSR
Anezka Ebertová, Hussite, Czechoslovakia
Fernanda Comba, Waldensian, Italy
Johanna Hanhart, Protestant, Belgium
Tuulikki Koivunen Bylund, Lutheran, Sweden
Marianne Maus, Protestant, Federal Republic of Germany (BRD)
Judith Pasztor, Reformed, Hungary
Jacqueline Stuyt, RC, UK/England
Ghiselaine de Waiziers, Reformed, France

Regional Co-ordinators
Johanna Hanhart, Belgium
French-speaking Western Europe: Benelux, France, Switzerland
Marianne Maus, BRD, German-speaking Central Europe: BRD, Austria, Switzerland,
Joyce Gray, UK/Scotland, UK and Ireland
Tuulikki Koivunen Bylund, Sweden,Scandinavia, Iceland
Judith Pasztor, Hungary, Eastern Europe
Anezka Ebertová, CSSR, Eastern Europe
Nina Bobrova, USSR, Soviet Union
Fernanda Comba, Italy, Southern Europe: Greece, Italy, Malta, Spain, Portugal

Links to international Women's Organisations
Jacqueline Stuyt, RC, UK/England: Contact to WUCWOW
Marjolaine Chevallier, Reformed, France: Contact to CEC

Publications
Aagot Bohn, RC, Denmark

EFECW – NETWORK

Meetings of the National Co-ordinators – NCs
1989, Preparation for 3rd General Assembly (GA) in York, England, Austria, Vienna
1992, Networking, Germany, Soest

Regional Co-ordinators

1986–1990	1990–1994	
Joyce Gray, Congregational, Scotland	Joyce Gray, Congregational, Scotland	English-speaking UK and Ireland, Netherlands, Malta
Claire-Lise Ott, Reformed, France	Marguerite Wieser, Reformed, Switzerland	French-speaking Western Europe Benelux, France, Switzerland
Inge Schintlmeister Lutheran, Austria	Inge Schintlmeister Lutheran, Austria	German-speaking Central Europe BRD, Austria, Switzerland
Fernanda Comba Waldensian, Italy	Emma Cavellaro, RC, Italy	Southern Europe: Greece, Italy, Malta, Spain, Portugal
Reeta Leskinen Lutheran, Finland	Ragni Lantz Baptist, Sweden	Scandinavia
Anezka Ebertová Hussite, CSSR	Annemarie Schönherr Protestant, GDR	Eastern Europe
Nina Bobrova Russian-Orth., Russia	Margarita Neljubova Russian Orth., Russia	Soviet Union (USSR)

From 1994 onwards those with regional responsibilities were replaced by National Co-ordinators.

1995, Europe: you can't kill the spirit Romania, Ilieni / Brasov
1996, When the barbed wire bears red rosesGermany, Hirschluch / Berlin
1997, Preparation for 5th GA in Escorial, Spain, Finland, Turku
1999, Living in a multicultural society Portugal, Porto
2000, Searching for the female soul of Europe – myth or reality? Greece, Thessaloniki / Perea
2001,Telling our stories – Tracing the multicultural diversity of Europe, England, Ushaw
2003, Towards a just and inclusive Europe, France, Strasbourg
2004, Christian values for a multicultural Europe: Women's perspective, Germany, Loccum
2005, The challenge of democracy Slovakia, Sväty Jur / Bratislava
2007, Mammon and money, finance capacity building, Netherlands, Huissen
2008, Women in dialogue in a multicultural and multifaith Europe", France, Versailles
2009, Women, Peace and Security – A roadmap to UN Resolution 1325, Sweden, Sigtuna
2011, Women are breaking the walls of exclusion, Druskininkai, Lithuania
2012, 30th Anniversary of EFECW: Forward Christian Women: three generations – with energy and vision England, Malvern
2013, Let's rock the economy. Economics done differently, Austria, Vienna

EFECW – General Assemblies
1982, Peace and Justice Founding Assembly in Switzerland, Christian Women's commitment to Justice, Gwatt, May 15–21
1986, Sharing Life, Building Hope, 2nd General Assembly, Finland, Jarvenpää, June 2–8
1990, From Division to Vision, 3rd General Assembly, England, York, July, 14–20,
1994, Be not afraid – remember the Future, 4th General Assembly, Hungary, Budapest, August 19–26
1998, Facing the New Millennium with Promise, 5th General Assembly, Spain, El Escorial, June 4–10
2002, Called to Compassion and Freedom – Christian Women Shaping

the Future, Celakovice, Czech Republic, August 25 – September 1
2006, We are Citizens of Europe! Daring to overcome Frontiers – Respecting Differences. 7th General Assembly, Murten, Switzerland, August 21–27
2010, Participation and Responsibility -– in the Path of Justice is Life, 8th General Assembly, Loccum, Germany, August 23–29
2014, 9th General Assembly, Greece, Island of Tinos, August

List of Presidents – Co-Presidents
1982–1986: Nicole Fischer, Reformed, Switzerland
1986: onwards: Ruth Epting has been Honorary President of the Ecumenical Forum
1986–1990: Jean Mayland, Anglican, UK
1990–1994: Marie-José Arana, RC, Spain, Reeta Leskinen, Lutheran, Finland, Elisabeth Raiser, Protestant, Germany
1994–1998: Ragni Lantz, Baptist, Sweden, Alexina Murphy, RC, UK, Piirko Siili, Orthodox, Finland
1998–2006: Catherine Gyarmathy, RC, Switzerland, Katerina Karkala-Zorba, Greek-Orth., Greece, Inge Schintlmeister, Lutheran, Austria
2006–2010: Martina Heinrichs, RC, Netherlands, Dorothy Knights, Anglican, UK, Elena Timofticiuc, Romanian-Orth., Romania
2010–2014: Martina Heinrichs, RC, Netherlands, Vivie Mavroska, Greek-Orth., Greece, Annika Damirjian, Baptist, Sweden

List of Treasurers
1982–1986: Johanna Hanhart, Belgium
1986–1990: Carol Abel, UK
1990–1997: Martha Schädelin, Switzerland
1997–2004: Ruth Baumann, Switzerland
2005–2007: Marjatta Viirto, Finland
Since 2008: Gisela Hoeve, Netherlands

Secretariat in Brussels (closed in January 2008)
1992–1996: Fiona Williams-Hulbert
1998–2007: Bernadette Doutreligne

PROJECTS

The main objects of the EFECW have formed the underlying principles for EFECW projects

From 1982–1998 thematic work was carried out in *commissions*

Commission on Theology and Spirituality
Ruth Epting, Reformed, Switzerland
Evi Krobath, Lutheran, Austria
Anca Manolache, Romanian-Orth., Romania
Beat Aalen, RC, Ireland
Maria-José Arana, RC, Spain
Anezka Ebertová, Hussite, Czechoslovakia

Commission on Justice and Peace
Reinhild Traitler, Protestant, Zürich, Switzerland
Elisabeth Raiser, Lutheran, Soest, BRD
Annemarie Schönherr, Protestant, Berlin, GDR
Christa Springe, Protestant, Frankfurt am Main, BRD

Commission on Ecology and Bioethics
Elisabeth Bücking, Roman Catholic, Freiburg, BRD
Marguerite Wieser, Geneva, Switzerland
Myrta Scholer, Basel, Switzerland

From 1998 onwards the thematically related PROJECT WORK moved to being based in individual countries – you will find a representative selection of projects initiated by the Forum in the chapter on "Projects"

Research: Inge Schintlmeister, Ruth Epting, Cornelia Göksu and many other Forum members

ROOTS AND FRUITS

Rev. Dr Meehyun Chung, Head of the Women and Gender Desk at mission 21, Protestant Mission Basel, Switzerland

What is special about the Forum?

In an interview with a professional "heiress" of the pioneering work of Ruth Epting, Martina Heinrichs, Co-President of the EFECW asked Meehyun Chung for her evaluation of the significance of the Forum and its contribution to European ecumenism: What is special about the Forum? How do you see the Forum and its current emphases? In your view, what are the tasks for the Forum within European ecumenism? What effects could and should the Forum have in the future – including in a world context? For this jubilee publication she answered in the style of a welcoming speech.

Rev. Dr Meehyun Chung.
Photo: Private

The founder of the Forum is an authority on Eastern Europe and on the global South. With her sound knowledge of the other side of the world and her understanding of people, she has shaped the Forum so that it is able to do reconciling work in Europe. I know few international women's movements with such a wide perspective. Practical ecumenism is also a speciality of the Forum which I value.

I think the Forum is still important as it draws attention to socially relevant themes in theology, church and society. I am particularly aware of efforts to build the House of Europe, to minimise ethnic discrimination, and to create mutual understanding. The Forum is a platform for East and West. In addition, its commitment to solidarity with Creation and the integration of ecological issues into everyday life can be highly valued.

First – many congratulations on the Forum's 30th birthday. In North-East Asia Confucius is often quoted on age:

being 30 means that one can have an effect on society from a commanding position. So I wish for you that you are able to give even stronger expression to your authenticity in church and society. I'd like to develop 3 aspects of this:

First: practical ecumenism. Since the major political changes of the nineties the market economy has become dominant in Eastern Europe too. The good values of the former socialist society have also disappeared, as if only in a capitalist society can everything be OK. This is the case not just in the economy but also in the churches. This method of absorption of the East by the West is in my opinion not at all helpful to self-correction. The validity of the different values of the two sides should be recognised, particularly within ecumenism, where reconciled diversity should play a bigger part. It's clear that practical everyday ecumenism is more developed and anchored amongst women. This good example should not lull women or the Forum into self-satisfaction, but should be used to influence work on structural changes in the church.

Second: migration. Because of the still-existing divide between East and West, North and South, many people are still forced to migrate. Among others, this affects women low-earners. The real lives of these people, who work in precarious spheres in the West, could be one of the focuses, if necessary, to help face up to this evil. In other words – the economic question must not be lost sight of in European ecumenism. In addition, interfaith dialogue should be even more strongly emphasised: this is closely linked to migration.

Finally: relationship with nature. Eastern European countries in particular have a deeply rooted orthodox tradition which has high respect for the dimension of the Holy Spirit and the Creation. This theology and practical spirituality of the Orthodox Church could give an impetus both to the theme of 'respectful relationship with nature' and to a healthy debate with the charismatic movement. In this the Forum could function as a bridge builder and an interpreter, who translates not just the language but the content.

I can well imagine that we in Asia can learn a lot from the example of the Forum. Between North and South Asia there exists a similar social phenomenon as between East and West Europe. We should adopt the good aspects, avoid the bad ones, and learn from history, so that we can look clearly into the future.

The Forum could make a connection between the so-called Second and Third World, something its founder has always dreamt of.

The world beyond Europe has not been dealing for so long with the concept of ecumenism. Church history developed differently. While in Europe there were denominational wars and the consequent peace treaties, that did not happen in other parts of the world. Because of this different development, particular conditions arose for ecumenism. So one can't apply the example of the Forum in detail. But the principle could be introduced in other places, adapted and then implemented.

Martina Heinrichs: Biographical background – interview with Rev Dr. hc. Ruth Epting, Founding Mother and Honorary President

Roots and fruits

I was born in 1919 in Basel/Switzerland where my father was working in the house of the Basel mission. I grew up in this compound, went to primary school there, then went to the Gymnasium and matriculated in 1938. My father was German, living in Switzerland and my mother was Swiss, born in India. They had worked together in Ghana, which was where they met.

After my matriculation I would have liked to become a nurse or a teacher and to go to the mission field, but this was impossible. With my German nationality I could not take any state examination in Switzerland. My three brothers were already living in Germany. Two were theologians and lived during the time of National Socialism as members of the Confessing Church. My father did not want me to study, as his view was that women should

Ruth Epting 2009. Photo: Meehyun Chung

marry. A German refugee gave me the address of the Burckhardthaus/centre of the Young Women´s Christian Association (YWCA) in Berlin. There I could study minor theology and I came into the heart of the Confessing Church of which Rev. Martin Niemöller was a prominent advocate. Our teachers were pastors who did not accept the official German church set up by the National Socialists and had been expelled by their own congregations. Later, after the war, those pastors became bishops.

We were living Christianity in a very difficult time. You had to decide which values were important for you. The questions permeated Bible study, church history, even prayer, for those who were in the concentration camps. We learnt to trust in God, and not only get an education. It could mean that your life was in danger. The SS occasionally infiltrated the group, as a spy. Some pastors were imprisoned. There were also some women pastors teaching us. So I realised that this was not an impossibility. One of them was Anna Paulsen, one of the first woman theologians in Germany. She provided an example and gave me the assurance that I was not on the wrong path. After the outbreak of the war I could not go back to Switzerland, though we were allowed to get a visa to see my family for Christmas in 1940. In 1941, after my examination, I managed to go back to Switzerland.

I studied Greek at home, in the hope I could study theology later. My youngest brother, a pastor, was taken into the German army, though he did not swear the oath of allegiance to Hitler. He died in Russia in 1941. After this my father said: maybe you have to study theology in his place.

I started theology in 1942 in Basel, which was very well known at the time, since Karl Barth was there, having been expelled from Germany because of his opposition to National Socialism. I could not speak of my past in Berlin, as my Swiss colleagues would not understand. I finished in 1946, as the only woman in my year throughout the course. I had no problems with my male colleagues, just that I could not speak about Berlin. This had an impact on my life: to be a theologian with heart and personality, not only with my head. I had known life or death situations and so was aware of the essential things in life. In 1946 I finished my studies.

During my ordination training my mother was very ill. I could not go to another city to take up a charge as I had to look after her. I cared for her and had the responsibility for a household of six persons with a little help beside my practical work in a congregation of Basel.

Father said, 'I will never come under your preaching'. But then he did come to hear me preach, the first time and every time after that. He did not stand in my way any more.

During the war I had been the contact person for the YWCA in Geneva and the centre in Berlin. After the death of my mother, the director of the German YWCA wrote: Now you have time to help us. I could have worked in Basel in community work (not fully accepted, as this was not possible for women). My president said: When you are called you should go. So I was the only travelling secretary of the Burckhardthaus from 1948/49 till 1953. My job was to build up a central house in the Western part of Germany, for youth work in the three occupied sections of Germany. In 1947 I gained Swiss nationality, so I could go from one section to the other with my Swiss visa (valid for 4 months). I could visit and reanimate groups, youth secretaries and bishops to ask them for help. In 1952/53 I worked in the camps for foreign refugees in Germany, mainly from Eastern Europe. After a year I had to go back because my father was dying. I did not know what work I should do. In 1953 when I came back home I was not allowed to be elected by a public vote in a congregation because I was a woman (this was changed in 1957). So I had no work. The very moment when I clearly said that I was not going back to Germany, I got a call from the psychiatric clinic in Basel to be a pastor until they could find a man. As I had had to face so many difficult situations in Germany, I came home exhausted. I needed clarification, and I started to study psychology. C.G. Jung was very little known in those days. I studied psychology in the C.G.Jung

institute. This included practical work in the University hospital. There I took part in the doctors' meetings at which they talked about their patients. I could see how they did it, and knew that what I had done during my six years in Germany was not so wrong. My attitude in working was that I had an understanding of the situation of the people I worked with, an empathy, through listening. This was rather new in theology of that time.

Dorothy Knights, Great Britain, Ruth Epting, Switzerland, Katerina Karkala-Zorba, Greece, and Elisabeth Raiser, Germany at the celebration of the 25th anniversary of the Forum, Magdeburg 2007.
Photo: Cornelia Schlarb

In 1953 I became president of the YWCA in Switzerland. After only eighteen months I was called to a pastorate in a congregation without my having sought the appointment. So I went. It was wonderful! They wanted me to stay even though I could not yet be elected, until there was a change of constitution in Basel. I worked for this with other women theologians and with the Board of the Church in Basel. We women had to push it. We had to be celibate, said the churches. For the next generation this was impossible. In 1957 the new constitution of the Church, which allowed celibate women to be elected, was accepted by a vote of the men. There was as yet no women's suffrage in state elections. Women were allowed to vote and be elected in the Church long before women's suffrage in the canton. It was only in 1971 that women got the right to vote throughout Switzerland.

In 1959 one of my male colleagues went to Bern, and my congregation pushed for me to be elected. However, there was a woman colleague who had been working as assistant for more than twenty years in another congregation. Her congregation was very patriarchal. I said I do not accept election if she is not elected as well. By 1960, a third congregation had followed suit, so by October 1960 there were all together three congregations in the Swiss Reformed Church in Basel that had elected women pastors for the first time. After five years it was possible in each Reformed Church except Bern and Zürich, which were state Churches and had to wait until women's suffrage came through in 1972. In the Basel Church women had been allowed to vote since 1918. Those first women had held meetings and supported each other, and therefore it was easier to go forward in Basel. In the following years I asked the Church, why the idea of women in leadership was so strange. I was encouraged to study the question with many groups in the whole Church and I noticed that this was not only a theological but also a psychological and social question. I realised that I had to write a book and to study our position thoroughly. I carried out the studies between 1966-1969 and the book "Für die Freiheit frei – Der Weg der Frau in Kirche und Gesellschaft" (Free for Free-

dom – the Way of a Woman in Church and Society), was published in Zurich 1972.

I was seventeen years in this congregation, including 2 years as a stop gap in Cameroon training pastors for the Presbyterian church of Cameroon. There the same questions arose: how can the Basel church send a woman? The Cameroon men did not accept me: Paul says women have to be silent in Church, they said (I Cor. 14.24), and wanted to know what I thought about it. After three weeks I encountered no more problems, through discussion and argument. After me they accepted a Cameroon woman who was trained in Paris, and now they have women studying theology and working in their churches.

In 1974, I got a full time job in the Basel Mission House where I had been a member of the executive committee since 1961. I was secretary for women's work in three continents: Asia, Latin America and Africa. I trained candidates for mission, and had the task of changing the institute for missionaries, which had been empty for some years. Since 1950, missionaries had had to study at Universities in order to help in the teaching of indigenous poeple in the Theological Colleges. My task was to develop a centre for encounter between people of third and first worlds. This was only among protestant churches.

Our director was linked to the WCC as an executive member. The WCC was in financial difficulties. He said, if you need our help I can give you my people. Therefore I was immediately asked to help in preparing women for the meeting in Nairobi. This was the first time that women could speak in a WCC conference. I was not in Nairobi because our director had already been elected. At that time Brigalia Bam, a refugee from South Africa, held the post of secretary for the cooperation of men and women in the WCC.

After Nairobi Brigalia Bam asked me whether I could moderate the consultation of European women to be held in 1978 in Brussels. Following Vatican II Catholic women (Catharina Halkes among them) had invited Madeleine Barot and other women from the WCC, from all parts of Europe to the Women's Ecumenical Liaison Group (WELG). They had meetings together during and after the Vaticanum. WELG was disbanded by Rome in 1972. The argument was that women could join in lay groups and that they did not need a special network.

Catharina Halkes pushed within the WCC that they should take the initiative to form a network for women from all confessions. The women's desk was already there, but there were no Catholic women yet. She also pushed for a gathering of European women. At the Consultation in Brussels in 1978, we elected women from all over Europe: from German speaking and Benelux countries, Central and Eastern, Northern and Southern Europe and Great Britain, plus one Catholic woman, Jacqui Stuyt. The aim was to find out

how to form a movement for women in Europe. Jacqui went to Rome. Rome said that a women's council would be impossible and dangerous. So Rome proposed to call it a Forum.

It took us some four years to draw up a constitution according to Swiss law, under which I was elected convenor. We held a pre-conference in 1981, and in 1982 we proposed the founding of the Ecumenical Forum of European Christian Women (EFECW). By 1986 I was already drawing my pension, so I wanted to give up the responsibility. Instead, they made me an honorary president which meant that I should help in the continuation of the work as long as I was able!

Looking back, where are we now?

We started by getting to know each other. We shared the idea of being interconfessional, which was not easy. Europe had been torn into pieces by all the wounds of the war and by the Iron Curtain. At first we worked in the geographical regions, but the crucial moment for the Forum came in 1990 in York, following the opening of the former Soviet borders. The Eastern women felt that they were not taken seriously. They wanted to have a president from each confession, and this was agreed at the York assembly.

The next assembly was in Hungary, which was difficult for the Russian women as nobody wanted to speak Russian. This problem has now been resolved by making English the official language of the Forum. The animosity against Russian has decreased. There has been good co-operation in recent years.

Ruth gave this interview during a CC meeting in March 2008 in Chisinau/ Moldova to Martina Heinrichs. Translation by Janet Wootton. Also published in FIER, Dutch feminist-theological journal, summer 2008.

WOMEN SHARING THEIR FAITH

Preparatory team of the closing Worship at the General Assembly Loccum 2010. They are wearing silk sashes featuring the Forum logo, embroidered and sewn by Grete Schaer, Hannover, who presented these to them for this occasion.
Photo: Nata Hovorkovà

Roswitha Golder, Reformed, Switzerland

Ecumenical Women sharing their faith – Creative expressions in ecumenical celebrations

Originally a "Forum" denotes a space where people gather to exchange ideas, goods, and services. It suits our organisation well and describes its many qualities, its vast scope, but also its inherent limitations. Thirty years ago Christian women came together from the four corners of the then deeply divided European continent, representing the three main branches of Christianity – Catholic, Orthodox, and Protestant – as well as diverse commitments to the causes of women in general and feminist thought and theology in particular. Leading figures among us guided by the Holy Spirit started to approach subjects concerning women, until then largely ignored by the churches. Thus e.g. an important study involved women's health, notably the taboo surrounding menstruation and blood. Experiments

Roswitha Golder.
Photo: Nata Hovorkovà

with various forms of ecumenical worship were part of this careful, critical look at the role women played in their respective churches and in society.

As we learned to praise God together, to examine the Scriptures and to hold each other up in prayer, we drew on existing resources developed by other organisations such as the World Day of Prayer (WDP), originally called the Women's World Day of Prayer. In some countries organisers of this event initiated national branches of the EFECW. In places where the WDP had not yet been celebrated, members of the EFECW were instrumental in starting it. The two-fold thrust "Informed Prayer and Prayerful Action" of the WDP as well as the participatory style of its celebrations, prepared each year by an ecumenical group of women from a different country, provided powerful models. A similar synergy developed with the "Fellowship of the Least Coin" (FLC). Many Forum women followed the FLC's call to prayer coupled with setting aside an offering; some of our prayers incorporated suggestions for devotions from this ecumenical women's movement. We also discovered and used other liturgical materials created by women for international ecumenical assemblies, camps, fund-raising campaigns, prayer vigils and fasts, as we embarked upon the creation of our own celebrations. Musicians and poets among the members of the EFECW led workshops, composing hymns and prayers for our services and devotions. Inclusive language was an important concern in selecting materials from our different traditions. "Thuma Mina" and booklets edited by Taizé were among the sources offering various languages.

One of the thornier questions concerned the presence - if not the leadership - of male clergy at EFECW assemblies. In places where there were few or no ordained women, it was often considered a must, even if Forum women carried most of the responsibility for the preparation of our times of prayer. Special care was taken to involve a number of worship leaders as well as the participants to avoid a traditional "performance" by an individual celebrant. We learned to substitute lengthy messages or sermons with other ways to proclaim the Gospel, such as dialogues, drama, appropriation in small "whisper" groups, or through mime and liturgical dance. Our larger meetings usually took place in auditoriums equipped with booths for simultaneous interpretation. These settings proved ill suited to a participative style of worship. We needed venues that also offered a chapel or a hall without fixed seating. Where these were unavailable, we moved to a nearby church or celebrated outdoors. Wherever possible, we sat in a circle, so all faced each other. Instead of traditional rows of seats used in lecture halls, the "Re-Imagining" conferences taught us the use of round tables favouring small group discussions. The World Council of Churches has since then adopted this practice for many of its meetings.

In a location without simultaneous translations we used written orders of service in the three Forum languages. Coupled with whispered explanations they facilitate active participation. If speakers and preachers provide their texts in advance, written translations can be made available. Some elements of worship services, such as spontaneous or poetic prayers do not lend themselves to translation and are best offered in various original languages, with participants using their own. Hymns from different traditions in the many languages represented by the members of the EFECW became part of our common heritage. Symbols also play an important role: at most of our services each participant receives a tangible reminder to take home; this may be a small pebble, a picture, a piece of paper or cloth, a colored pencil or a candle.

Our most memorable services included a ritual. Unfortunately, the rules and regulations of our different churches do not allow us to celebrate the sacrament of the Eucharist together. On some occasions, ordained women pastors celebrated the Lord's Supper inviting everyone to take part. Many members of the EFECW welcome such opportunities for intercommunion. Others reject them on doctrinal grounds. Creative solutions to overcome this problem have included the distribution of blessed

bread at the end of the service; using milk and honey instead of bread and wine; or to offer a foot washing ceremony, the ritual that Jesus performs in the Gospel of John during the last supper he ate with his disciples. Although these experimental "substitutes for communion" were carefully prepared and introduced so that no one should feel uncomfortable or under pressure, they were unable to overcome the hurt and sorrow caused by the official prohibition of our churches.

The most promising impulses for innovative liturgical experiences came from Biblical texts, some well-known ones receiving new attention, but also from others who had been forgotten or left aside. The story of the daughters of Zelophehad was such a discovery for many of us, since it provided a powerful echo to the claims Forum women had been addressing to the leaders of their respective churches: Give us our part of the heritage! The event is reported in Numbers 27,1-11 as well as in Numbers 36,2-12; with the second, later, account restricting the women's right to their fair share. A similar phenomenon can be observed in the Second Testament when we compare the liberating statement of Galatians 3,28 to limitations imposed on women in the Pastoral Epistles (e.g. 1 Timothy 2,13-15) and current equivalents abound in the backlash regularly following advances of feminist causes.

Thus contextual readings of Biblical texts enable us to interpret our own experiences and draw lessons for our lives. In Tallinn during the Seminar on "Women and Democracy" at the Pirita Monastery in 2006, we assembled for one of the morning prayers around glass containers with oil and flour symbolizing the resources of the widow of Zarepath. After listening to a dramatized version of the story (1 Kings 17,8-16), participants were invited to share their own experiences of famine, lack of food, and their willingness or inability to offer hospitality. Several of us related how their "oil and flour" did not run out and how – often in miraculous ways – God's promises became reality in their lives, since they were able to feed their families as well as the stranger.

Other unforgettable moments involved services of blessing and anointing with oil. This practice, described in both parts of the Bible on different occasions and for various purposes, responds to a need felt by many women to be touched, healed and empowered for their service to God and the community. When I offered this gesture – with native olive oil at our General Assembly in Spain in 1998 – as a possibility for those who felt they wanted to receive it, I was overwhelmed by the response: All participated in what turned out to be a very moving moment of "communion".

The parable of the sourdough that a woman mixed into a huge amount of flour to make it rise inspired us - in Varna, Bulgaria during a seminar on Project Development organised by Ruth Clark, Surpy Satchlian, Cath Moss and myself in 2005 - to produce and share our own bread with the very efficient help of our Moldovan sisters. Their every-day experience of homemade bread assured us of an excellent result that I, who buy this product at the bakery, could never have achieved!

On another occasion, as we studied Luke 13,10-17, we were all asked to walk around with our backs bent. I had never realised how much this handicap limited my vision and how much wider my horizon became after Jesus touched me and made me whole! I probably was not the only one to realise that this could be true not only in a literal but also in a figurative sense.

As we became bolder in our communitarian reading and actualisation of parables, we learned to treat them as open-ended with possibilities for different outcomes: At the First Ecumenical Women's Synod in Gmunden, Austria in 1996, as part of a workshop led by members of the EFECW on Luke 18,1–8, hundreds of us went up in a procession to the judge sitting on a throne in the centre of an ancient garden. Most of us followed the script, went to see him, pleaded with him, knelt or prostrated ourselves in front of him, only to be sent away empty-handed or having at best received a reluctant answer. Not content with this outcome, one of the women finally dared a more radical approach and

– with the help of others around her - deposed the unjust magistrate!

One of our Catholic sisters invented a similar new version of the Good Samaritan, presenting a woman helping the female traveller who had been robbed as well as raped on her journey. Yet she not only took her to a safe place where she paid for her care, a temporary relief limited to one victim, but she went on to create a women's movement dedicated to promote the safety of the road between Jerusalem and Jericho as well as all the other dangerous routes in the region.

Biblical stories still hold enormous potential for the EFECW and our ecumenical worship life as we learn to address the challenges of an increasingly globalised, intercultural and interreligious Europe. It is my hope and prayer that we continue to dedicate time and effort to this crucial task focusing our attention on God's Word and anchoring our activities in Christ, the Word who became flesh and lived among us, who leads us on the way to justice and offers an abundant life for all.

Martina Heinrichs, Roman Catholic, Netherlands

Ecumenical sharing – a renewed exchange Summary of an e-mail discussion

One of the recommendations of the General Assembly Loccum 2010 was to initiate a working group on the question of common liturgies within our Forum. We want to re-open the exchange of ideas and practices on this matter. In Spring 2011 an e-mail discussion group of 17 Forum women started to talk about vital questions like: How do we want to and how are we able to share our Christian belief in the liturgical settings of our Forum conferences and meetings? What is our understanding of ecumenism? What is our role as ecumenical women? Which forms feel good and appropriate for us? What do we want to share? How creatively can we shape our celebrations?

Our backgrounds were diverse

– as to nationalities: Austrian, Greek, German, Croatian, Swiss, Finnish, English, Dutch

– as to denominations: Lutheran, Orthodox, Roman Catholic, Protestant, Anglican

– as to commitments: involved in interfaith dialogue and EPIL, personal ecumenical background like living in a mixed marriage, involved in work with migrant churches, involved in ecumenical liturgy, involved in European Summer Academies/Boldern, volunteer in the Protestant Church, as a church professional responsible for ecumenical women's work, involved in ecumenical education, active in local church in cooperation with other denominations, involved in the national Catholic academic women's movement, involved in ecumenical movements (Taizé, Iona), involved in ecumenical women's work on national and international level, involved in the European Women's Synods

– and as to relation to the Forum: former NC, former steward and steward leader, Co-President, former Co-President, friend of the Forum, interested guest, mainly active in national Forum, former CC member, moderator of the former EFECW standing committee 'Justice and Peace', participation in Egeria-project, formerly responsible for EFECW liturgy, former FC member, legal adviser to the Forum

The treasures of our Christian faith we want to share

EMPHASIS ON EVERYDAY LIFE

– Daily life like eating, drinking, looking for my neighbours, hospitality, being together around the table, knowing that God's blessing is with us.

– Not only studying but also putting my faith into practice.

– The feminist perspective of my faith:

let us find our own forms of expressing our spirituality which feel good for us. Independently from the official doctrines.
– I believe only Ecumenism can strengthen Christianity after the times of communism, agnosticism etc. Europe without a Christian face loses its ethic and moral force.
– Ecumenical worship in just and inclusive communities.

SOCIAL COMMITMENTS
– Promoting women's participation in Church and Society, to promote the situation of all those in difficult circumstances.
– Christian environmental work.
– Migrant churches to be included.
– Christian/Muslim dialogue has made me a more conscious Christian.
– In my Protestant tradition I value the democratic dimension, the idea that all faithful together constitute the priesthood of all believers.

TRADITION AND RENEWAL
– Traditions are formed by women and men and therefore can be criticised by the norm of the Scripture. (Protestant)
– The bond between generations (continuity) that traditions can create is also very precious and powerful.
– Enrich each other with our own tradition and learn from each other's suffering.
– Share my Orthodox faith and knowledge and to learn about the other denominations through the experience of the women and not only through the books.

Ways of ecumenical sharing which feel good and appropriate

VARIETY OF FORMS TO EXPRESS OUR SHARING
– The 'Word' - very important in the Lutheran Church - together with songs, dances, pictures, rituals, different symbols, visual art, biblical drama, musicals. Let us develop our own forms for our prayers and services!
– Sitting around the table, giving blessings for bread and water, sharing them together with grapes, singing a final song together. In the circle. Set up groups which develop rituals. Speaking openly beforehand is crucial.
– Respect towards the others! New forms as far as they are acceptable for all of us. But do we really have to wait another 100 years until we can celebrate ecumenically?

SPIRITUALITY AND INCLUSIVENESS
– Common spiritual inputs at the beginning or at the end of our meetings.
– Focus on women's issues, female images from the bible or from church history of women who give an encouraging example.
– Be aware of using inclusive language and female images of God as well as female titles for God.

EUCHARIST AND ALTERNATIVES
– Concerning the common Eucharist the Forum should not act against the teaching of any church to which some of our members belong. There are many other ways for liturgical acts that include the simple blessing of bread and wine and eating and drinking it together.
– Traditional liturgies as well as new forms, if they are well prepared and everybody feels included. Example: sharing bread and wine but without saying the official words of the Eucharist. This is a very moving and deep form of sharing hopes and fears.
– Sincere liturgical settings established by the Churches.
– In between our meetings: a yearly prayer calendar including each of the Forum's members or a short personal liturgy from different denominations for the daily practice. This could be picked up in meetings, at the start of the sessions.
– Experimental special events. Example: a service of healing our separations and wounds, with laying on of hands/blessing each one and praying for healing the denominational rifts.
– Go back to our roots of the early liturgy from the undivided church (like the 'Thomas mass', originally from Finland).
– Personal initiatives like a daily Prayer Diary to share by e-mail.
– From the two tendencies today: a) to share a common Holy Eucharist even though we are not united and b) firstly to be united and then to share a common Holy Eucharist, the Ortho-

dox Church (and myself) chooses b).
– Meanwhile, there are a couple of other ways to have a common liturgical act, but not a service of worship.

Why we should keep talking about Ecumenical Sharing

– I want to learn from my sisters, to know what is their Christian tradition.
– To find a way in our different forms of celebration that gives us the feeling, that we are one in Christ, we are sisters in Christ.
– This e-mail discussion group is for me now the only possible way to go on with my earlier Forum involvement, not being able to take part in the events.
– We started this discussion because of some complaints at the General Assembly 2010 in Loccum. It is good to talk about issues that we have burnt our fingers on. We need to go on from our short and sharp dispute in Loccum. It showed that there are tremendous difficulties and differences among us.

Martina Heinrichs.
Photo: Nata Hovorkovà

Proposals for the future

– Share the different traditions to celebrate prayers and services, listen to what is important for the women of the different denominations and, if it is possible, find a frame for our prayers, services.
– Give space for exchange of experiences. Building mutual trust. Sharing stories as personal as possible. Trying to tear down dogmatic walls. Free discussion.
– The focus should be on a profound theological discussion of this issue.
– Why not a written statement?!! - A sort of "Codex" to pass on of "Best Practices", "Things to Avoid", to define our goals and rules as a Forum. To set the guidelines for our celebrations.
– Invite each denomination, each country, each member to list up what they can offer… as a basis for future work.
– Encourage undogmatic and creative forms, oriented to the message and life of Jesus. What would he have done? Let's find our own forms of liturgy and celebrating "Agape".

• Don't provoke and remain sensitive.
• Value women's work in church and society.
• Witness God's justice, love and creative power.
• Encourage more Roman Catholic

and Orthodox women to join the discussion and the process.
• Beware of syncretism (mingling up denominations), listen to women from all churches and all countries.
• Aim: sense of oneness in Christ including our differences.

The follow up in the near future:
• The e-mail group discussion will go on to reflect on the worship and sharing we have experienced during our European meetings, to exchange good practices we have made in our national Forums and in our local contexts, to spread information about interesting publications in this matter.
• We will relate our prayers and worship more than before to the themes and contents of our conferences.
• We encourage our women who prepare the worship and prayers to find creative liturgical forms as we have done in the past (read the article of Roswitha Golder).

YOUNG WOMEN AND THEIR VISIONS

Young Women Strategy: The EFECW had made a special effort to enable young women to participate in the General Assembly in Loccum 2010, thus initiating a generation change, and taking the first steps into a next phase of ecumenical cooperation and community building among women in Europe. The young women seized this opportunity and have taken an active role since then. The following statements/interviews by two young women who were elected to leadership roles as Co-President and as member of the Co-ordinating Committee (CC) show their different approaches to becoming active members of the Forum.

Round table in the open air with stewards at the 8th General Assembly in Loccum, Germany 2010.
Photo: Nata Hovorkovà

Vasiliki (Vivie) Mavroska
Orthodox, Greece, Co-President of EFECW 2010–2014

Three generations – with energy and vision

Personal steps into the Forum

Ecumenism was a personal reality for me from the beginning of my adult life - during my theology studies I was privileged to live and study abroad. My mind started to be more open and I felt able to discuss my theological thoughts with others.

The National Co-ordinators Meeting in Thessaloniki in 2000 found me a member of the local group and a steward. There my ecumenical network was enlarged, but in a unique environment - women of Europe. I realised that my essential questions and thoughts found a proper place to be discussed or answered in a more satisfying way.

The floods in Prague during the General Assembly in Celakovice in 2002 showed me that the Forum

Vasiliki Mavrovska.
Photo: Nata Hovorkovà

women were not only active in our organisation, but also as members of European society, giving practical help.

I am grateful for my next steps, as one of the leaders of the stewards' group in the General Assembly in Murten in 2006 and then in 2010 in the GA in Loccum. We created a programme for young women called "Together", (and "Together Again") in order to focus on the collaboration of each of us, as members of the Forum and as individuals, for stepping into the future.

The stewards are a crucial part of us. They are our assistants and our growing group. We give them the chance to meet the Forum, not through the Internet or by reading our history, but by meeting our living history, all the women and their achievements through the Forum. That part is as important as their training in conference management, which is both theoretical and practical. The stewards help the Co-ordinating Committee and the national host group run our General Assemblies. And in addition to the positive elements for our CVs, the most important point is the growing of friendships with women from all over Europe.

I decided to take advantage of the knowledge that was offered so generously to me in the Forum, and step into another role - a Co-President, representing the Orthodox sisters. The vision is to ensure the continuation of the Forum.

In our General Assembly in Loccum (2010) we had a renaissance, originating from within. New and younger members of the Forum were inspired and encouraged by the seniors and took a step into the future! A young women´s strategy gained lots of support. The wisdom of women got a modern cover.

Now, as a Co-President, I have to make decisions on a variety of factors concerning the policy and needs of the Forum. In my desk, I keep photos of the stewards groups in 2000 and 2010. I try to keep the spirit, energy and simplicity that I see in the faces there. I keep thinking that we are so fortunate because there were women before us, ahead of their own time, who struggled, so that we today have the chance to be a part of this. And it is our duty to preserve what they achieved but also to make the changes we feel necessary.

This regenerative process is important both at European and national level. I was involved for a decade in the European Forum and in other European ecumenical youth organisations, before having contact with my national Forum, which used to work only in the capital, like other national Forums where finance is often a problem. On moving to Athens I got involved with the Greek National Forum and I am grateful for that! It is an educational and a spiritual experience to meet people who work for the same purpose as you, but on a level as significant as the European field, to become friends with women in your country, who fight in their own church, work and social environment for our rights, having Christ as their base and their guide. All those elements are a living path. You can't stay inactive or trapped in narrow ways of working. The spirit of the Forum is that it is open to every woman who feels comfortable in it and ready to take action. So our national Forum has been expanded not only to other towns of Greece, but also to one of our islands, Tinos, after two great training courses for local women. That cooperation offered us not only new members, but also the idea of organising the next EFECW General Assembly in 2014 in Tinos!

It can be difficult to find and get involved in such ecumenical bodies, but it is worth trying. Yes, a steward can move on to work at all levels in the Forum, even becoming a Co-President, with one condition: not to be afraid to live ecumenically and share her thoughts and feelings, always with respect to the others´ different church and cultural backgrounds. Our faith is the starting point of our vision. As a woman I keep in my prayers all those women who are in difficult and complicated situations and do not have the chance to fight for their rights. We have to be there for them, in a practical or a spiritual way. The difficult financial state we have lately in my country is a challenge to the local women of the Forum. We must stay united and calm, in order to help the others around us. My challenge as a Co-President is to work smoothly and

to keep unified the generations of our Forum, together to welcome more and more new members, ideas and projects, in order for our social contribution to be enlarged.

I hope our Forum will continue giving its input and reflections to our society in such a Christian way as our foremothers did. Let us honour our Christian heritage and carry our Christian enthusiasm into the future.

From left to right; Irini Terzaki, Greece; Melitta Tolnai, Romania; Katharina Lindner, Germany; Kristina Mantasivili, Greece; Rachel Knott, England; Ina Antonenko, Germany; Zsuzsi Soos, Romania; Elzbieta Pawlas, Poland.
Photo: Nata Hovorkovà

Carla Maurer, Reformed, Switzerland, interviewed by Gabriele Kienesberger

Hopes and expectations

How did you come into contact with the Forum?
– I came into contact with the Forum when I was a staff member of the Conference of European Churches in Strasbourg. The Forum is an associated member of CEC and sometimes participates in its conferences, gatherings and activities. That's where I met the Forum ladies and felt a lot of support for my not always easy position. Just before I stopped working for CEC, I participated for the first time at a Forum conference – the 2010 Loccum General Assembly. That's where I started realising how much I felt committed to the Forum. It is a very supportive and open-minded atmosphere and an honest interest to get to know each other. Spontaneously I decided to run for the Co-ordinating Committee to bring in my experiences from CEC and help develop the Forum. I'm very glad to be a member of the CC and of the Forum! It always reminds me how relative my own perspective on things is and to consider the situation in other European countries.

Being a new and a young member of the 30 year old Forum: What do you expect from the Forum. What do you think/feel the Forum expects from you?
– I expect from the Forum that it remains as open-minded as it is now and that different opinions can be discussed. At the same time I think we should be braver in some points, for instance when it comes to the debate of co-celebrating the Eucharist. This debate separates us, not because we invented this separation, but because we have had to adapt to it as women for hundreds of years. My wish is to overcome this debate amongst women and not be afraid of the male dominated church. Another point is the ordination of women. I wish that we can stand together and fight for that right because churches discriminate against women in this point. We should stand together and not let the separation come between us.

I feel that the Forum expects from me to be sensitive to different viewpoints and opinions, to listen carefully to what other women experience and to bring in my own perspective. I feel appreciation and respect towards everything that I bring in, but also tolerance when I haven't got so much time to invest. I feel that the three (or even four?) generations in the Forum are willing to work together and share responsibilities despite the cultural and generational differences. Of course we all have our unspoken prejudices sometimes... That's human and I think the Forum deals very well with it!

Carla Maurer.
Photo: Nata Hovorkovà

Is the Young Women's Strategy a good basis to keep the Forum alive – your visions?

– The Young Women's Strategy brought awareness to the National Forums of how important it is to tutor the younger generation and to give them the opportunity to get involved. Many young women found their way to the Forum thanks to that awareness. We have to think further how we want to get more new/young women on board to have the spirit of experience and fresh views amongst us. Projects in the field of interreligious dialogue are of a high importance for our society today and raise interest among young people.

VISIONS FOR THE FUTURE

In recent years several new countries have applied for membership of EFECW. Here representatives share their reasons for wanting to join, in the context of the position of women in their different regions and ecumenical situations.

Asea Railean, Orthodox, Republic of Moldova, interviewed by Martina Heinrichs

Women need self-confidence

What motivated you to become a member of the Forum?
– I was and still am active in the social life of our community, in the political area, and in my Orthodox Church. But I really needed to know the experiences of women from other countries; I felt it my duty as a woman to encourage and to support other women from Moldova to become active in community life, too. I realised that as a member of the Forum I can achieve these dreams.

How did you know about EFECW?
– I met Elena Timofticiuc from Romania, former Co-President, who told me about EFECW; she encouraged and helped me create the Ecumenical Forum of Moldavian Christian Women. I learned from her how to develop our Forum, and with her we realised the Forum's first activities. For this I am very grateful to her.

What expectations did/do you have?
– To know the experience of women from other countries, to motivate women from Moldova to become active, to help change the lives of people in need in our country, to contribute to a better dialogue between women in Europe, for peace and justice in the world.

What is your specific contribution from Moldova?
– I was the person who created the Ecumenical Forum of Moldavian Christian Women which made dialogue possible for Christian women in our country.

What impulses do you want to give to the Forum?
– We should motivate more young women to become members of the Forum; we should also organise more exchange of experiences between Christian women from different countries to value the experience of the first generation - which is our heritage.

What is the situation of the ecumenical women's movement in Moldova?
– 98% of the Moldovan people are Christians, 93% Orthodox. So I think that the work of Christian women should be very strong in Moldova. But because of poverty and very difficult circumstances, they have lost confidence, and also their hope for the future; women are forced to work abroad or to fight for their mere existence in very bad conditions at home. This is one of the reasons that women are not active in their communities.

Are you a group or individuals?
– We are a group of 17 active women from 23 to 49 years old. Last year we provided training for women and taught them how to find job opportunities in Moldova or how to open

a small business at home. During our meetings we talk about how to help other people, we organise some activities together like an exhibition and sale of handicrafts made by women.

In several places or in one place?
– From several places – but most from the north of Moldova.

What are your issues?
– Unfortunately, women in Moldova need to be supported and helped to regain self esteem, to become active in society: many of them still need the basics of life - for themselves and their families. We want to contribute to this, but we cannot solve these problems alone. That is why we need here the support and help of European Christian women.

Is your group growing, shrinking or do you have a stable number of members?
– We have a stable number of members – some members left, others came.

How should the Forum move on in the future from the Moldovan point of view?
– I think we should dialogue more often, to implement joint projects and activities, to learn from each other, to raise the role of women to the highest level in society.

What would be the special contribution of Moldovan women to the Forum work on European scale?
– Women in Moldova could be a good source for the European Forum; we could do many joint activities that would contribute to peace in the world.

Asea Railean.
Photo: Nata Hovorkovà

Why do you want to stay in the Forum?
– In the Forum we find a good growth opportunity, to become active, contributing to peace and justice in the world; and we meet highly educated, trained, honest and courageous women.

What are the hot items which we need to tackle?
– The problems faced by women in Europe are: violence, gender inequality, human trafficking, lack of social responsibility, and lack of jobs, discrimination, lack of social and political rights of women. Women still struggle with damaging mindsets, marginalisation, women are still waiting for equal rights in politics and business, in the press, where men have the better positions. Men make the law, employers are men, the wealthy are men ... I think we together, members of the Forum, can make a change in the world.

In the European Forum I grew as a person; it has developed the Forum of Moldova; we showed the women of Moldova another life – a world where women are important, appreciated and valued. Thank you! Also I want to wish prosperity for EFECW, many achievements and many years!

Aneta Jovkovska, Orthodox, Former Yugoslavian Republic of Macedonia FYROM

Women need support from the churches

Women theologians are the core of their faith communities but not necessarily seen as religious leaders. So working together on promoting ecumenical and interfaith dialogue between believers is very important in order to get the necessary support by such organisations as the Ecumenical Forum of European Christian Women.

I met Martina Heinrichs at a conference organised by Religions for Peace – European Women of Faith Network (EWFN). She introduced me to the work of EFECW and invited me to a National Co-ordinators meeting in Sigtuna/Sweden 2009. We also agreed on a cooperation project for an interreligious students exchange programme for young Macedonian theologians in the Netherlands. This project was successfully conducted in October 2009. In May 2012 we hosted a Dutch women's group for an exposure programme of Byzantine arts and music.

We hoped to form a branch of EFECW in Macedonia, and to receive support from EFECW for that. After the conference in Sigtuna, we asked for financial support from the churches in Macedonia to establish an EFECW branch. They were not interested, although Macedonia has no other organisation which works on ecumenical dialogue between women from different churches. Without support from the churches we were not able to apply for membership of EFECW. We have only been able to organise some smaller projects as volunteers in our church communities, e.g. marking the World Day of Prayer.

Our objectives will include: to expand the Ecumenical Network of Women in Macedonia, to encourage women from Macedonia in concerted action at local and international level and to help Christian women of Macedonia to find a common European identity. Also women from Macedonia can contribute to volunteering at EFECW, to the organising of conferences and seminars.

We are an informal organisation and do not have a permanent membership. So we cannot yet organise a formal group, such as an ecumenical women's forum, but our cooperation is at the individual level among women of faith from the Macedonian Orthodox Church, the Catholic and the United Methodist Church. We have however applied for financial support

Aneta Jovkovska.
Photo: Oliver Jovkovski

for several projects, as an organisation which works on an informal level. While this is very difficult, we have implemented several projects: we applied to the organisation 'Ecumenical Women's Initiatives in Croatia' with the project: 'Women theologians' action for building confidence between religions in Macedonia' and got financial support for it: five visits of religious objects and services led by women theologians were organised, also visits to the main objects of the religious communities. These visits were open to anyone interested; dates of the visits were published, including religious services.

Our greatest need is to get financial support from churches to establish a formal ecumenical organisation of women in Macedonia. Then we will be able to apply for multiple projects and our cooperation will take place at a significant level in the ecumenical field.

Our goal is to show that ecumenical cooperation between women in Macedonia is very important. There are many areas where we want to work together, such as the protection of women and children from family violence, actions to help poor people, and to increase believers' awareness of interfaith dialogue and cooperation.

As churches in Macedonia still will not support our initiatives, we hope that EFECW can help us create a formal ecumenical organisation of women here. The experience of an organisation that works in the field of ecumenical dialogue for many years will be of a great help to us. EFECW could help us to realise some of our planned projects. We hope that if these are successfully organised, our church communities will see our work as important and will support us in the future.

Michaela Pavlou, Cyprus, Greek Orthodox, interviewed by Gabriele Kienesberger

Women need to co-operate closely

How did you come in contact with the Forum?

– I came in contact with the Forum three years ago, thanks to one lady who used to be a member of the committee here in Cyprus. At that time, I was working on my masters at Geneva and after my return to Cyprus I got acquainted with the Forum closely. Other members of the Forum explained to me the Forum's goals. When I participated for the first time at a committee meeting, I felt a lovely atmosphere in it, and decided to become a member of the Forum and later I was chosen to be a second National Co-ordinator. From the first moment I met women of the Cyprus branch of the Forum, they embraced me with love and acceptance. So I am very glad that I am a member of the Forum and I am looking forward to increase my involvement in it.

Being a new and young member of the 30 year-old Forum: what do you expect from the Forum? What do you think or feel the Forum expects from you?

– As a new and young member, I would like to state that I am expecting from the Forum more intensive connection and cooperation between Christian women from all over Europe. In our days it is especially crucial to promote the idea that different Christian denominations have more in common than they have differences, and that there is a way to solve a lot of common issues by working together. In today's Europe, where moral values are in crisis and where morally related problems are continuously multiplying, while the women suffer, our Forum, since it exists, is obliged not only to try to solve already existing problems, but also to prevent future ones, by finding new ways, new solutions. I expect our Forum to continue the cultivation and the demonstration of the Christian spirit of unity, love and respect. This means of course that the Forum is always obliged not only to accept the differences between Christian traditions but also to continue the cultivation of a balanced coexistence and cooperation between them.

On the other side, I guess that the Forum is expecting from me to be an active member in my Church and in the local committee, in order to encourage more women to participate in the Forum. I am supposed to

Martina Heinrichs and Michaela Pavlou.
Photo: Nata Hovorkovà

remain open-minded (like the spirit of the Forum) and to remain responsive to opinions or experiences of the other members of the Forum.

Is the young women's strategy a good basis to keep the Forum alive – your visions?

– I have no doubt that "the young women's strategy" is a good basis to keep our Forum alive, because it means new energy, new views, new ideas and of course new solutions for the problems that our Forum is dealing with. My vision is to keep young women involved not only because the new generation is well educated and active, but also because they are the future of the Forum. However, there is a need to find some new ways of involving young women in the activities of the Forum and to motivate them properly, in order to obtain really active participants in a dialogue. And again, I believe that "the young women's strategy" is intended to bring a new power in the Forum, and new perspectives of course…

MODEL PROJECTS OF THE FORUM

Some examples of significant ecumenical projects initiated by the Forum, showing the role played by women in developing better understanding between the churches and encouraging active involvement in civil society; personal encounters help us to learn from one another, leading to the breakdown of misunderstanding and prejudice.

Reinhild Traitler, Protestant, Switzerland

Learning to live in multifaith Europe – EFECW and the challenge of interreligious dialogue (EPIL)

Historic memories and present day realities

In its self-understanding Europe is still "the Christian occident". This perception, however, is not quite correct. Europe has a long history of relationships with people of other faiths and a very selective memory when it comes to remembering it. That Muslims ruled for half a millennium in Al-Andalus, and managed to live together with Jews and Christians in creative partnership, is largely forgotten. But we remember vividly the Christian victory that ended the second siege of Vienna by the Ottoman armies.

Throughout the centuries Jews and Muslims formed large minorities in many parts of the continent: they were part of Europe's cultural and social fabric and made numerous and significant contributions to its development. Still, they remained foreigners who were segregated, expelled, fought against and even brutally killed and exterminated. Historic memories continue to highlight the Christian perspective and to shape present day relationships in the light of old resentments.

At the same time the labour movements of the past decades have created sizeable Muslim communities in many European countries. People have come to stay, together with their families, practising their faith and also bringing along cultural habits and religious expressions, many of them foreign to Europe's secular societies. Relationships have not been easy on both sides. Islamophobia is a new phenomenon, based on old prejudice and fears. It has become a feature of right-wing politics in Europe, furthering fundamentalist positions. It is often framed around "women's issues", (the scarf, veiling, forced marriages, real and presumed lack of women's rights), which in fact illustrate both existing prejudice and the continuing influence of patriarchal cultures. This situation concerns both Christian and Muslim women in a special way.

EPIL – women developing new perspectives

The European Project for Interreligious Learning (EPIL) aims to provide an alternative approach to such developments. It is an intensive study course, at the moment focussing on Christian and Muslim women. It works to build trust, to identify areas of cooperation

Dancing in multifaith Europe.
Photo: Barbara Krobath

in everyday life, and to strengthen women's voices in largely male-dominated interreligious dialogues. EPIL came into existence in 2000, originally as a joint project of the World Council of Churches and the Protestant Academy Boldern/Switzerland, and under the special patronage of EFECW. It developed a pedagogy of diversity, with some special features:

- **Knowledge of the roots**
  Even in the secularised countries of Europe religion is still an important part of people's identity. It influences ethical choices and instils a sense of transcendence in people's lives. While there are similarities between the religions around these basic convictions, there are also great differences about how they are expressed and lived. It is therefore important to know more about religious traditions and theological approaches.
- **Learning in context: The concept of the "Roaming College"**
  EPIL is unique in the sense that it has tied the learning process to certain places. Five one-week modules take the international group of participants to several cities, namely to Zürich, Vienna, Sarajevo, Amsterdam/Cologne and Beirut. Problems and issues are studied in the location where they play a role and where there are people who work on possible solutions. Themes

range from the history of Christian-Muslim relationships in Europe, to the use and misuse of religion for non-religious purposes, to issues around migration, to models of living together in multireligious contexts. Throughout all, the challenge of re-defining identity as women in the new multireligious and pluricultural situation of Europe is kept in focus.

- **Learning in community**
  The group of students and team gradually grows into a learning community that generates its own themes and questions and identifies its own resources to find answers. Learning is always practice oriented. It means travelling and living together, studying and praying together, always trying to communicate across the differences of language, religion and life situations and to reflect the experience.

The challenge of interreligious dialogue

In a globalised world it is impossible to close borders and to live within the confines of "one's own" tradition. Today every society is a mirror of the whole globe with its diversity of cultures, religions and ways of life.

Different faith traditions will continue to shape people's lives, providing enrichment and sources of conflict. They will strive for visibility in the public sphere and make contributions to popular culture. The future of Europe will be both secular and multireligious. To make it peaceful is a challenge to all of us. EFECW should be involved for various reasons.

To be involved in interreligious dialogue as Christian women is an expression of our solidarity with women of other faiths who often struggle against popular resentment to make their points of view heard.

It also begs us to develop a pluralist view of religion: this requires humility and the difficult effort to change perspective and take a different look at our own faith tradition. It should not be exclusive. There are other perceptions and expressions of the Truth, other authentic ways to "the Highest Good". We need to respect them in their otherness. We need not be afraid that we shall lose our "own" in this process. On the contrary - every encounter tells us something about ourselves, gives us a deeper insight into all we cherish and invites us to look humbly at the errors of our own tradition.

Reinhild Traitler.
Photo: Nata Hovorkovà

Finally, interreligious dialogue is about finding ways to shape the future together. It is about "convivencia", good life together. For this we look to some of the great visions in Europe's history, to the promises of the biblical tradition and to experiences such as EPIL, which demonstrate that life-enhancing relationships between women of different faiths are possible!

Carola Ritter and Doris Riffelmann, Protestant, Germany

In the footsteps of an inquisitive woman The Egeria Pilgrimage 2005–2015

Stage 4, September 2008, through Slovenia and Croatia: the pilgrims walk in silence through the lovely valley of Planina on the way to Logatec in south-west Slovenia. Photo: Egeria project Doris Riffelmann

In the beginning there was curiosity about a book whose author is the only woman in the library of the Church Fathers (!), the 'Fontes Christiani'. Despite being a source text of Church history, the book reads like an adventure story. It is the account of a journey (itinerarium) to Jerusalem, to Egypt, to Sinai and to Haran in Mesopotamia.

Who was this woman who, over a number of years in the 4th century, covered a distance of over 9,000km? Where did she come from? Egeria evidently belonged to a community of Christian women in the western part of the Roman Empire. To them she writes of 'The life of the saints in the Holy Land' and of their practice of the faith in the eastern part of the world. Egeria's testimony is that of a courageous theological explorer and an ecumenical bridge builder of early Christianity.

The book found us at the right moment. It was after the Schengen Agreement, maybe 1997. The Iron Curtain had long been scrapped. Europe was getting rid of its internal political borders and might be seen as a whole, as one common cultural region.

Sensitised and encouraged by EFECW to think European, the idea arose of following Egeria's route and of discovering it anew. Fortunately many women and Forum friends were infected by curiosity about Egeria's pilgrimage and the madness of the idea. We followed in Egeria's footsteps one country per year on pilgrimage from Northern Spain to Jerusalem. From

At Ludbreg in north-west Croatia is the Centrum Mundi, the central point from which geographical measurements between major European cities were taken in the Middle Ages. Photo: Egeria project Doris Riffelmann

the beginning the visits to 'local sympathisers' were part of the concept, along with the basic idea of a spiritual companionship of the way for women, and the plan to re-write Egeria's travel diary – from the perspective and with the experiences of today's women pilgrims. And of course it was to be an ecumenical project.

Egeria Weg

At the national border the group unroll the Egeria banner and take a group photo.

The pilgrimage passed through vineyards to Jeruzalem, situated in this case near the Slovenia-Croatia border.

The border between Slovenia and Croatia is now also an EU border.
Photos: Egeria project Doris Riffelmann

By 2001 the Egeria Project was developed enough to be accepted by EFECW Germany. It was four years before the first handful of pilgrims began the Egeria Way at Cape Finisterre. For the first two stages, through Spain in 2005 and France in 2006, we pilgrimaged safely on the beaten tracks of St James, but in the opposite direction – eastwards, to Jerusalem.

In Italy in 2007 we met the Waldensians: the visit to the 'Women's Book Shop' in Milan and the conversations with the philosophers there, or the meal and worship with the women's group of the Lutheran congregation in Venice gave us valuable momentum.

The fourth stage of the Egeria Way took us in 2008 through two countries – Slovenia and Croatia. For the first time women from both countries accompanied us through their country. In Slovenia we had in Corinna Harbig a renowned ecumenist from the World Day of Prayer. In Croatia we found in the National Co-ordinators Liljana Beric (†) and Bozena Vintic two competent partners and planners for our meetings in that country. With this line-up of representatives from three EU countries we were eligible for support under EU guidelines, and made a successful bid for finance for this stage and for the creation of a new homepage for an online pilgrim's diary: www.egeria-project.eu

The next stages led us in 2009 through Serbia, 2010 through Romania and 2011 through Bulgaria. The varied Orthodox traditions in these countries were new to us, as were the still existent and formative experiences of the former 'Eastern Bloc'.

In Belgrade the Serbian National Co-ordinator, Marijana Ajzenkol, accompanied us, and arranged a visit to the Serbian Patriarchate and a meeting with the Catholic Nuncio. In Romania we met Elfriede Dörr and Ilse Philippi, women involved with the 7th Ecumenical Assembly in Sibiu. The stage through Bulgaria was substantially prepared by Surpy Satchlian, National Co-ordinator. Friend of the Forum Zoya Krutilin escorted us the whole way through Bulgaria.

In 2012 the Egeria Way goes through Turkey – for us the first time through a predominantly Muslim country. The creation of ecumenical and, from 2012, interfaith meetings along the way; the women's spiritual companionship of the way; the walking in silence; our daily devotions and the commissioning services; the subtly diversified perception and shared structuring of the unification process in Europe from the point of view of women – all these are fundamental elements of the Egeria Project.

Elisabeth Bücking, Roman Catholic, and Beate Junker, Protestant, Germany

The Ecological Summer Schools and links with the initiative "Children of Chernobyl"

Today there is a general understanding that "ecological problems and climate change have a connection with our lifestyle". It has taken at least a decade to recognise this – including in the Forum.

Elisabeth Bücking
Photo: Nata Hovorkovà

It all began with "Living well rather than having plenty" - the challenge presented in the book "Sustainable Germany" published in 1998. This was certainly valid for those of us in the "West", but was it also true for the "East"? That was the question. Beate Junker, at that time a member of the Environment Committee of the Protestant Church in Württemberg, felt that it was important to discuss these issues in the Forum and invited people to a workshop at the General Assembly in Madrid in 1998. Women from the East reacted quite strongly to this and Daniela Horinkova from Slovakia invited us to spend a week living together and talking about it. That led to the first Summer School in Sväty Jur in Slovakia.

It turned out that the women who were there had three different burning ecological issues, which we could talk about from direct experience. This was the case for Irina Gruschevaja from Belarus: she gave us a dramatic account of her dreadful history of dealing with the after-effects of the Chernobyl disaster, which are by no means finished with. But she also spoke about new initiatives filled with hope. It was also the case for Ella Payer, who described to us how in her home country of Romania a toxic brew of potassium cyanide released following a dam burst resulted in the deaths of large numbers of fish. The fact that many people, especially children, were also affected was never mentioned in the newspaper reports. Vijera Suhanek from Novi Sad gave an eye-witness account of the bombardments during the Balkan War, and the fact that their sufferings are by no means over, due to long-term effects such as contami-

Group of participants on the 3rd Ecological Summer School with the theme "Our place in God's creation – courage for the future", September 2005 in Feketic, Serbia-Montenegro. Photo: Elisabeth Bücking

nated water supplies that had still not been dealt with. It became clear to all of us that it was a great help to be able to share our needs and our sufferings with one another, but that it was also up to us to take action and work for an improvement in living conditions.

For the organising of the following Summer Schools there emerged a core planning group. This consisted of Elisabeth Bücking, National Co-ordinator in Germany since 2006, Irina Gruschevaja, National Co-ordinator in Belarus, Beate Junker and Erika Stöffler, at that time members of the EFECW Finance Committee, who took responsibility for the finances.

The contact between Irina Gruschevaja and the Forum goes back a long time. After the Chernobyl disaster Irina and her husband founded the initiative "Children of Chernobyl", to enable children from the regions of Belarus affected by radiation to spend holidays abroad in Western Europe. In 1996, she invited the Forum to come to Minsk for the 10th anniversary of the Chernobyl disaster. While there, the women planted fruit trees in the "Garden of Hope", which are now, 15 years later, laden with fruit. Beate Junker in particular nurtured the link and offered support to Irina, not just for the children's holiday programme, but also in the organising of encounters between young people from Belarus and Germany.

In 2003 the Summer School made a request to the leaders of the Ecumenical Forum to be allowed to take on an advocacy role within the Forum for the topic of ecological issues. The Summer School would make proposals for important ecological and bioethical questions to be included in the work programme of the Forum with a view to adopting a position on them. After some consideration, the Co-or-

dinating Committee accepted this proposal. Ruth Conway from Great Britain, a member of the Executive of the European Christian Environmental Network, ECEN, has been and remains committed to enabling networking between Christian environmental initiatives.

In 2005 the Summer School took place at the invitation of Julia Schal of the ecumenical aid organisation EHO (Novi Sad). We were particularly impressed by the great interest of the Serbian women in non-violent communication and we went into this issue at great length. From one Summer School to another there also developed a growing demand by the participants for information on the subject of the application of new types of bio-technology, for example genetic engineering in agriculture and nutrition.

During the 4th Summer School in 2007 the question of the use of nuclear energy led to new controversy: what were we to think about the declaration of the "Christians of Sellafield", which claimed that as a result of the Chernobyl reactor accident there had been fewer than 40 deaths and that the illnesses which followed were mainly psychological in origin? The personal experience of the Belarusian women present told a very different story. We came to the conclusion that nuclear power offered no solution to the question of energy supply but should be treated as a model to be discontinued.

Dorothy Knights from Great Britain, who had attended all the Summer Schools, was elected as Co-President of the EFECW in 2006. She was there again in 2007. And so for the first time the Summer School became a central focus in the European agenda of the Forum – reinforced by the presence of Elisabeth Raiser, Co-President from 1992-1996, as one of the speakers. As a result we drew up a letter to send to the Co-ordinating Committee and the National Co-ordinators, which said:

"As women, we have acknowledged that a move to alternative energy is possible and that we can and must make a contribution to this. We therefore need to take seriously the obligation to change our lifestyle in a way that takes account of the current situation..... the Forum, as a network of Christian women in Europe should..... adopt this issue as a matter of urgency. The 4th Summer School, taking responsibility for the topic "bio-ethics and ecology", therefore makes the following proposal:

The Forum shall adopt as work topics: climate change, energy usage and sustainable action."

The Summer Schools themselves have remained true to this proposal. The participants in 2009 had a translation made of the brochure from the electricity company in Schönau: "100 good reasons against nuclear power" into Russian and Croatian and distributed it to the member countries.

The latest Summer school took place a few weeks after the reactor disaster in Fukushima. This lent particular weight to the workshop which we organised for the Women's Centre at the 2011 German Protestant Kirchentag in Dresden on the topic: "Holding creation in our heart – women from East and West make a stand against climate change". Annika Damirjian, EFECW Co-President, took part and confirmed an intention to pursue this topic further. One thing we have learnt from this project is that it is not confined to ecology alone, but it shows how different aspects of life are all bound up with one another and interdependent.

The Ecological Summer Schools

2000 Sväty Jur, Slovakia: "Living well rather than having plenty".
2003 Sväty Jur, Slovakia: "What should our common future look like?"
2005 Feketic, Serbia: "Our place in God's creation – courage for the future".
2007 Woltersdorf near Berlin, Germany: "Women and energy".
2009 Woltersdorf near Berlin, Germany: "From talk to action".
2011 Tharandt/Dresden, Germany:
Preparation and presentation of a workshop in the Women's Centre at the German Protestant Kirchentag, "Holding creation in our hearts – Women from East and West take a stand against climate change".

Neighbours meet...

European ecumenical conferences held since 1995 for countries bordering on the Baltic Sea

In 1995 the first meeting of the Neighbours in Europe Project took place in the context of the 26th German Protestant Kirchentag in Hamburg, organised by the women of the German Forum and hosted by St Michael's Church in Hamburg-Neugraben. Renate Gresens together with a team of committed women created the climate for this meeting which set a pattern for the future. In 1996 the second conference took place in Poland. At the end of that participants from Lithuania agreed to host a third conference in their country. A tradition of practical ecumenical work for reconciliation was born.

Icon for Europe. The icon was created for the closing service of the National Co-ordinators' meeting of EFECW in Loccum 2004. The artist Mariana Lepadus, born 1961 in Romania, lives in Eisleben/Saxony.
Photo: Mariana Lepadus

Does this "concept in progress" have a future? Renate Lehmann from Hamburg has been a Friend of the Forum since the first meeting in 1995. She has been involved in organising and attending all the Neighbours in Europe conferences. She says this about her experience:

"It was in 1999 in Ilieni, Romania that I experienced true ecumenism for the first time. Back in Hamburg we thought that ecumenism consisted of being acquainted with a Catholic woman. But in a small town like Ilieni you could find Protestants, Catholics, Orthodox, United Churches, Reformed and lots of others as well. So many churches in such a small town – and so many women. At these Neighbours Meetings the most important thing for me has been the real experience of ecumenism. I can see our differences – for example that a Russian-Orthodox woman is more conservative in her outlook on life, that she prays in a different way, that she has a different image of the Virgin Mary – and yet is a thoroughly modern woman! I have learnt to abandon my prejudices. The experience of sharing an inner relationship with a woman from a very different country and a totally different religious background is of great value to me. Perhaps our social and political environment plays an even greater role than religion in laying the foundations for our life-styles and attitudes? However, sometimes the different church denominations may well be closer together than are individual people from within the same local congregations."

(cf. Bücking, Göksu, Heiling, Liekefett, Nickel, Eds.: "Ökumene weiblich", Berlin 2010: p129).

Chronology und Topics of the Neighbours in Europe Meetings

1995 Germany, Hamburg-Neugraben.
Topic: *Neighbours in Europe* – multicultural encounter with 20 women, one half from the former East and West parts of Germany, the other half from countries around the Baltic Sea such as Poland, Romania, Belarus.

1996 Poland, Wisla Jawornik.
Topic: *Women's paths to justice – biblical impulses for our everyday life in Europe*; with 33 women from nine countries.

1998 Lithuania, Nidda.
Topic: *Women's paths to love – love God, love yourself, love your neighbour, and then you will live* (cf Luke 10, 25–28); with more than 40 women from 12 countries.

1999 Romania, Ilieni
Topic: *Women take responsibility – for themselves – for the church – for society*; with 39 participants from 10 countries.

Baltic Sea Neighbours' Meetings: "Women's lives around the Baltic Sea"

2003 Germany, Berlin-Marzahn
Topic: *Money and work in the Baltic Region – what can be a blessing for one can mean trouble for others*; with 21 participants from seven countries.

2005 Russia (Russian Enclave in Poland), Cranz near Kaliningrad
Topic: *Women's experiences of borders and the crossing of borders in the European and ecumenical context*; with 23 participants from five countries.

2007 Estonia, Haapsalu
Topic: *Roots and branches*; with 24 women from six countries.

2009 Lithuania, Vilnius
Topic: *Is your faith helpful? Religion – liberation or oppression for women?*
with 26 women from seven countries.

2011 Germany, Tharandt/Dresden
Topic: *God's Spirit fills us with power, love and presence of mind*; with 19 women from nine countries.

Participants at the 8th General Assembly in Loccum, Germany, August 2010.

The new Co-Presidents with some of the new Co-ordinating Committee elected at the General Assembly in Loccum 2010 (left to right): Kristina Ivanauskiene, Maria Koutatzi, Nata Hovorkovà, Annika Damirjian, Martina Heinrichs, Vasiliki Mavroska. Photos: Nata Hovorkovà

Jirina Kozderovà, Hussite, YWCA, Czech Republic

Lydia/Adelheid project 1995–2004

Since childhood I was engaged in the Czechoslovak Hussite Church: member of school group, youth group, member of presbyterium, etc., some of the women-pastors were my personal friends. One of the pastors, a member of the Womens Group of the Ecumenical Forum of Churches, was a friend of the German theologian Adelheid Reininghaus, who from 1993–1998 was director of the International Department of the Protestant Theology Faculty at the Charles University in Prague. When Adelheid started to prepare her first project for women from Central and Eastern Europe, she was seeking some help and that pastor recommended me. So I came to know Adelheid and so started my close co-operation with EFECW.

The Lydia Project was initiated by the Europe Secretary of EFECW Fiona Hulbert together with the Forum-member Adelheid Reininghaus. They designed a pilot project as a literacy and practical two-stage training for women from churches and Christian organisations in Eastern and Central Europe.

Because of the lack of educational and economic opportunities, human rights in this region included the needs of women to develop their talents, skills and self-confidence. In particular, Lydia aimed to help them to obtain new knowledge in English language, management, project development, finances and fundraising, use of new technologies, evaluation processes and contextual leadership.

After the political changes and the breaking down of walls in 1989/90 it was possible for people from the "Eastern bloc" to travel and to participate in different events offered to them.

EFECW was one of the organisations which undertook the practical steps to help their sisters with the new tasks.

In co-operation with YWCA in the Czech Republic the first stage of the training – under the name "Lydia" – was organised in Prague in 1995, while the second part of it was run in Edinburgh in 1996.

After these two years Fiona Hulbert left the Forum when she moved from Brussels and continued in organising a similar training in different countries for the local communities. Adelheid Reininghaus, representing the Forum, together with Jirina Kozderova from Czech YWCA and with the support of Cath Moss from ENYA, the Ecumenical Network for Youth Action, went on with the international training for women from 15 different countries of Central and Eastern Europe. After the first stage of the second training Adelheid Reininghaus died of cancer, and to commemorate this remarkable German woman, who had been living in Prague and who contributed so much

to the Lydia programme, the training project was named "Adelheid". (Lydia became an independent charitable organisation led by Fiona Hulbert).

After another three Adelheid Trainings in the period 1999–2004 it was time for a final evaluation of the project. During the 6-year period there was ongoing evaluation and follow-up with the participants of the project and it showed that continuation of the project was necessary.

During the whole period of 10 years 95 women from 16 countries in Eastern and Central Europe were trained. Many of them are in leading positions in their churches, local ecumenical forums, in NGOs and Christian organisations; others at the very least improved their self-confidence and got enough skills and knowledge to be able to accomplish many things in their local situation.

LYDIA/ADELHEID Projects were unique training programmes which were very successful also thanks to the efforts of many lecturers, teachers, fundraisers, people of the organising team, supporters and families in the local places where projects happened - not only from EFECW.

We should not forget all donor agencies, foundations and individuals who helped to cover the high costs of these projects.

Brecon, Wales 2004: the local Baptist minister talks with Adelheid course members in the chapel of Christ College. Photo: Sheila Brain

Survey:

years	name	place	number of participants	number of countries
1995/96	Lydia Project	Prague/Edinburgh	18	10
1997/98	Lydia Project	Prague/Birmingham	20	10
1999/00	Adelheid Project	Prague/Dublin,Ireland	22	12
2001/02	Adelheid Project	Prague/Durham	21	16
2003/04	Adelheid Project	Prague/Brecon,Wales	14	11

In the years 2005–2006 there was the last training, called Adelheid Summer School, which was not under the umbrella of the EFECW, but two other organisations – Czech YWCA and ENYA. It continued in a similar way: 20 participants from 12 countries were involved.

Annika Damirjian, Baptist, Sweden, Member of Coordinating Committee EFECW 2010–2014

Nothing happens if women stay silent

As women you have two important lessons to learn: 1) wherever there is a problem in a society you can be sure that women in general suffer most, and 2) if one needs to or wants to do something about it, nothing will happen if the women themselves do not take action. These can be two very hard lessons to learn but history tells us that they are nevertheless true, and this has been an important knowledge and insight in the EFECW from the beginning. Because of that, action has been taken in many ways during the years. Some of the biggest problems in our societies in Europe in the last decades have been, and still are: prostitution and trafficking of women, migration, war conflicts and post-war conflicts. In all these areas women are suffering in different ways. EFECW has felt a responsibility to contribute to the solutions of these problems.

Actions against trafficking

The International Consultation on Trafficking in Women, organised by CEC (Conference of European Churches) in 1999 in Driebergen, Netherlands, was a crucial and decisive moment for the anti-trafficking activities undertaken by Christian organisations in Europe, in cooperation with regional, national and local authorities. From that moment EFECW developed an international network SENSE, focused on the fight against trafficking in human beings. The members of the network are branches of the EFECW from different countries such as: United Kingdom,

Austria, Greece, Germany (receiving countries) and Romania, Bulgaria, Ukraine, Rep. of Moldova (origin countries) as well as other organisations such as AIDRom, Romania, La Strada, the Association of Religious Women Against Trafficking from the Netherlands, etc. The network created in the region started to co-operate and share their experience and plans for the future in international seminars, organised in Bucharest from 2003 up to 2007. The main activities were focused on: continuing information, fostering and enlarging the network, trafficking prevention, assisting victims (safe return and reintegration) and strengthening churches' co-operation on fighting against trafficking.

"Human trafficking is a complex and multi-dimensional problem within Europe and in the world. The majority of the victims are women and children. Therefore our aim is to build awareness among churches about the danger of this new scourge, about another kind of 'Slave Market' of the 21st Century, to set up educational programmes at national and international level and, last but not least, to encourage co-operation between church and other organisations in society", said Elena Timofticiuc, Orthodox, Romania, CC member and Co-President 2002-2010. Elena has been working with these issues during her time on the Co-ordinating Committee of EFECW.

The annual conference for National Co-ordinators 2011 was held in Druskininkai, Lithuania. Theme of the conference was: "Women are breaking the walls of exclusion". The conference was dealing with the problems which come from women's exclusion, trying to give deeper analyses of the problem. The conference raised problems at both state and international level. Experts from Lithuania and Sweden were invited to give expertise on the issues. The conference aim was to look at the attitudes of the churches towards women's issues and to give theological perspectives on the subject.

Annika Damirjian.
Photo: Nata Hovorkovà

Actions concerning migration

At the General Assembly in Murten, Switzerland, August 2006, EFECW said in the final message:

"As Christian women and citizens of Europe we are deeply concerned about the many exhausted, impoverished and endangered people who land at the shores of Europe seeking a future. We see the migration movements from poor to rich countries within Europe in the context of global economic developments, which have led to an ever widening gap between rich and poor countries and also within the rich countries. Because of poverty, women and men leave their homelands – just as Europeans have done throughout the centuries – and move in search of work and livelihood, often ending up in conditions close to slavery. We recognise that women are

particularly vulnerable. We realise that the presence of large numbers of migrants of other cultures and religions in European countries is a source of deep fear among many people. It causes tensions between majority cultures and various minorities, and it is seen as a threat to our European identities. We believe that tougher legislation to deal with this fear – such as is now being put in place in several European countries – is not the answer. Dialogue is the only way! Europeans tend to forget that their values, above all the very idea of human rights, were forged during long historic struggles to acknowledge diversity. Our "we" itself is a fiction. There is no homogenous European culture – in all countries of Europe the "we" has always been a conglomerate of diversity".

Among other actions in EFECW a seminar was held in Greece: "Women refugees and migrants", 2009 in Athens. The content of the sessions was 'New Working Conditions in an Enlarged Europe'. It focused on migrant women and female employment – social dimensions, social security, health and discrimination.

Actions for UN Resolution 1325 – Towards Peace and Justice

On October 31st 2000, the UN Security Council adopted an historic and unique resolution UNSCR 1325 on women, peace and security. The goals of the EFECW conference "Women, Peace and Security – A Roadmap to UN Resolution1325", in September 2009 in Sigtuna, Sweden, were to raise awareness and discuss the role of women in peace building in Europe and internationally. Other goals were to introduce the participants to the UNSCR 1325 at an overall level as well as at the local level, to strengthen women's leadership in church and society, to introduce the Swedish model of training in three steps to be a peace agent, to give training and tools to handle conflict, and to create a network of peace agents within EFECW. Former MEP (Member of European Parliament) Maj-Britt Theorin stressed how essential it is to have many more women in peacekeeping and peace talks at all levels of the male-dominated decision-making bodies. "UN Resolution 1325 is binding on all participants and it is the best weapon in pressurising politicians. But nothing happens if women stay silent".

As we commit ourselves to work on these issues in the coming years, we pray:

God of hope
God of laughter and fun
Send us out with joy
God of compassion
God of reconciliation
Lead us forth with peace
To live and share your new creation

Maria Koutatzi, Roman-Catholic, Greece, Member of Coordinating Committee EFECW 2010–2014

A new team is born!

The relationship between the Greek Forum and EFECW started almost 25 years ago, timidly at first, with the presence of Greek women (involved in ecumenical and international work) at European meetings.

A landmark in the history of the Greek EFECW was the successfully organised NC Meeting in Perea -Thessaloniki in 2000 ("Searching for the Female Soul of Europe; Myth or Reality"). Organising such an event required the involvement of more women and convinced the small core group to further deepen their commitment. In 2005, the Greek branch of EFECW was legally founded.

Maria Koutatzi.
Photo: Nata Hovorkovà

The team continued to grow mainly through a series of successful activities; new members were inspired to join EFECW. Women with deep Christian faith, commitment to ecumenism, and deep involvement in their church and diaconal work came together and joined other pioneers in getting "ecumenism" established in Greece. I believe this is only the second legally-registered ecumenical organisation in the country, the Hellenic Bible Society being the first.

The Greek Forum operated for a long time mainly in Athens (most meetings and activities), though with active members in other cities and regions of Greece and Europe. The moment came to move operations out of the capital. Members of the core group with strong links to Tinos

suggested that island, because they want to give women there the chance to experience the same fellowship Forum-members have been blessed with in Athens. The island of Tinos is one of the Greek islands where at least two of the three Christian confessions co-exist.

"Christian Women with Vision, Perspective and Choice"

A community building project was organised in Tinos in October 2010. Approximately 60 women aged from 25–80 years participated in the 3-day program with a variety of motivations: interest, suspicion, curiosity, nothing else to do… By the end, all were excited and thankful for the experience. One could feel that the "soil was fertile"; the ground for ecumenical women's work was ready and the Forum just came to sow the seeds. Here's what a local participant said:

Press Office Bulletin of the Catholic Bishops Conference of Greece:

> *"For those women who attended the educational program at Steni it was something new… The presentations were in a Christian and ecumenical spirit by academically trained women; however the discussions were completely comprehensible by the audience whatever their educational level... Anyone watching could say that women of good will can achieve things that the strong and powerful of this world cannot or do not want to achieve, because these women go for emulation instead of competition, peace instead of war, love instead of hatred. Those of us who lived this experience hope that as the new life incarnates in the body of women, so will their perspectives, their visions, made of solidarity, charity, justice enlightened by the light of Jesus Christ, come true".*

A second phase was soon organised (March 2011) with the aim of consolidating the existing motivation by creating hopefully a Forum branch on the island of Tinos. (Both projects received a grant from Jacqueline Stuyt Legacy Fund.)

Towards the end of the second project it was announced that the Greek Forum had offered the possibility of the 9th General Assembly of EFECW being held in Greece. The newly established Forum-group in Tinos immediately asked: "Why not have the GA in Tinos?" The Forum members left Tinos with a proposal in hand and after serious consideration Tinos was announced as the venue for the next EFECW General Assembly.

As I write, there are more reasons than ever why this venue is a good choice:

a. Why Greece?

- In a growing environment of Euro-scepticism, where solidarity and unity is threatened by increasing phenomena of stereotyping and prejudice, it is important for Christian women to respond with acts of true Christian fellowship.
- There is a very strong core group of committed Christian women in Greece, motivated to organise ecumenical events.

b. Why Tinos? Tinos has two features that have special importance for an organisation like EFECW

- It is a pilgrimage place for the Greek Orthodox Church. Thousands of pilgrims from all over Greece come all year long to venerate the Theotokos (Mother of God) and (especially in August) to pray to miraculous Panagia to intercede for them.
- In Tinos, unlike the rest of the country where 95% of the population belongs to the Greek Orthodox Church, Orthodox (60%) and Catholic (40%) have co-existed harmoniously for centuries.

c. Benefits for the Greek branch of EFECW

- Organising such a big event can empower Forum women in Tinos as they discover each other's gifts and talents, and transform their motivation into establishing a more permanent structure, e.g. a local organisation. A strong team in Tinos can become a multiplier for the Forum in Greece.
- It is important for the life of EFECW in Greece to decentralise activities, as a way of ensuring renewal and new leadership for the Forum.

d. Benefits for European women

- Greece is a country that many would like to visit. Here is a chance for the women of EFECW to go beyond travel guides and package-holidays and get to know from within the reality (at this time extremely turbulent and difficult for most people) that sisters experience in Greece.
- An inspirational environment for an EFECW General Assembly; a sense of peace and serenity; a continuous breeze, sometimes a strong wind, reminding us of the presence of the Holy Spirit in our midst; a strong community of faith; a sense of isolation - being "alone" together on an island.
- A geographical shift of the General Assembly from the centre to the periphery of Europe is a political statement and at the same time a loud message of inclusion.

Preparations have already started and Greek women, despite the current problems of the country and its people, continue to dream and plan for an enriching, spiritual and empowering experience for all participants at the 9th General Assembly in August 2014. You are all very welcome in Tinos and in Greece!

Tinos. Photo: tinos.co

OUR DIFFERENCES ENRICH US!

Katerina Karkala-Zorba, Linguist-Theologian, Former Co-President of the EFECW, Volos/Greece, Brussels/Belgium

An ecumenical journey: from local to European level

Why do you work within our Forum ?

– The Ecumenical Forum of Christian Women is for me at one and the same time a challenge and a balance in my everyday work and in my life in general. It is more than just a private "engagement" or a hobby. It is the same to a certain extent for my engagement in the wider sense within the wider ecumenical context: I perceive this as a challenge with all my senses to work for a common cause towards the opening up of the Churches in their efforts to come closer to one another. The Forum contributes much more to these efforts: it is a feeling of working with many other women for a common purpose and at the same time of being a pioneer in our work and in this way of serving the Church in general, something which is certainly true for my actual engagement in the Greek Forum. In other words, I do not consider the work within the Forum as being outside my work in the Church, but more as an addition and a widening of the perspective and the angle.

What did you learn during your work? How do you perceive differences/similarities?

– I learnt a lot during my work in the Forum. First of all I learnt to be patient, to listen to others, to approach them. But above all I learned that I am not alone. I met women who have achieved many things in the field of women's equality, the rights of women in Church and society, at work, in the family. But despite the experiences that women bring with them, we all have to learn from one another. Sometimes the experience of other women has been instructive, but sometimes it depressed or frustrated me. It is not always easy to admit that there are also other or similar experiences in a woman's life. Sometimes it is not easy to give a place to new, younger and less experienced women and to do this with generosity and an easy heart. I have the chance to know very well two quite different worlds (Western and Southern Europe) with all their differences and similarities. I think that this has contributed a lot to building a bridge between East and West, North and South. I believe that we (Christian or ecumenical women) in Europe do have more similarities than differences. Or one could say that we perceive our differences not as something which is separating us, but something which is enriching us. I do perceive in my non-Greek and non-Orthodox sisters first of all what is uniting us and not what is separating us: the same alliance between sisters, the same concerns for our world, the same commitment to a society with equal opportunities and

rights, the same anxiety for a survival of our values and ideals, brought by Jesus Christ and with Him the Church to humanity. My work within the Forum has brought me forward on this ecumenical journey of Christian men and women in Europe. Despite all our differences women can go on this journey together, be inspired, support and learn from one another.

What influence has the history of the Forum had on your work in the Forum today?

– The Forum has a common "European" history and many individual "national" or "regional" histories. I have to admit that my work within the Forum has happened at the same time as getting familiar with the history of the Forum. It is the same concern that the Forum's Mother Ruth Epting shared with her colleagues and the members of the Executive, the first Presidents of the Forum, which the current members of the Co-ordinating Committee are sharing: how can we women contribute to the construction of our common European society? How can we offer to (all) women in Europe a voice, a platform, in order to give a voice to all their/our wishes, demands, fears and anxieties? I believe that today this concern for exchange and networking all over Europe is equally present as in the beginnings of the Forum in Switzerland and Germany. The European history of the Forum is often reflected in the national histories. We are often instructed by the experiences of other

Katerina Karkala-Zorba.
Photo: Nata Hovorkovà

Forum groups, in a positive, but sometimes also in a negative way. The networking with other regional and European bodies and organisations is also important today and it will certainly be in the future. I am thinking of regional and also of European ecumenical organisations, such as the Conference of European Churches, the World Council of Churches, the World Day of Prayer, etc.. Today and after eight years of intensive work within the Forum as a Co-President on a European level, I am engaged in my national group. We founded the Forum in Greece some years ago, after preparation work by many women on local and European level. Those experiences have certainly affected us and have helped us forward on our common way. I do owe a lot to my sisters who have gone this way before me. Sometimes my everyday work and obligations do not allow me to get more engaged in the work of the Forum. I regret this and try to keep the balance, by thinking of all our fore-mothers and predecessors in the Forum, who have shown us the way. I keep on trying to keep a space open for the causes of the Forum on a national and European level as much as possible.

What should the Forum aim to achieve in the next years?

– The Forum should take care to

find successors in the years to come. Younger women should feel at home in the Forum. In order to achieve this, the concerns of younger women should be paid attention to. What are their worries, their needs, their dreams, and their anxieties for the future? As a teacher and a mother of three children, of which two are daughters, I do know that the present generation of women between 20 and 30 years has a quite different way of thinking than my generation or the generations before, especially in the matter of equality between the sexes. I also believe that the Forum should establish fixed projects, particularly in the field of the ecumenical training of women, leadership training and empowerment of women. We are far away from a society with equal rights for men and women, even today in Europe where "officially" no one is excluded because of gender. Nevertheless, women are still missing in higher positions and are still earning less than men for the same jobs. Also women still have to face the balance between family life and career, since in many European societies family structures still are such that women have most of the care for household and children, even if they are working. Training for mixed groups should also enter in the priorities of the Forum in order to face the existing inequalities. The current financial crisis is affecting more women than men and leads women to marginalisation and psychological problems. This has an impact on their life and the life of their families. I believe that this could be a new challenge for the Forum.

What should it be achieving where? What basic conditions are necessary for this?

– The Forum should have its place in the wider ecumenical field and especially at the Conference of European Churches, as has been the case in the past and especially in the Church and Society Commission of CEC. This is very important since CEC has no women's desk any more and all efforts to create a gender desk unfortunately had no result so far. In the discussions for the gender desk the Forum was present and was regarded as the European women's organization and it would be good to continue the same line in the future. CEC is undertaking a revision process and I have been Co-Moderator of its Revision Working Group. It was decided at the General Assembly of CEC in 2009, that the Forum will have to find its place in the new structures. In the general ecumenical framework the Forum should be present and therefore a work of ecumenical engagement and presence must be put into the Forum's structures. We have to remember that the World Council of Churches helped in the first steps of the Forum.

In the first 30 years the Forum had to face the East-West confrontation; now that these barriers have been abolished, the Forum has to find the new challenges for women within European societies. I believe that the Forum should be present within those structures on a national and on a European level. Maybe the conditions are not the same for the two levels, since it depends on the different structures. I also believe that the Forum has to think seriously about whether it wants to keep or to change its profile. Therefore a new, modern structure should be undertaken, more flexible, with a technical know-how, with a more attractive management, looking into the future. Maybe some national, regional groups have already taken steps in that direction. A stronger co-operation with other women's organisations (like the European Society for Women in Theological Research, the European Women's Lobby and other European and national organisations) or non-governmental organisations is needed. It is important and necessary to promote co-operation in the wider ecumenical movement. We owe this to the founding sisters of the Forum, to the pioneers of the women's network, and should regard this as their legacy to the younger generations.

This interview originally appeared in the German publication "Ökumene weiblich", Elisabeth Bücking/Cornelia Göksu/Inge Heiling/Waltraud Liekefett/ Katharina Nickel (eds.): Ökumene weiblich, Berlin 2010, p. 251-225, where the history of the Forum was recorded for the first time, in celebration of the 25th anniversary of the EFECW in 2007. It has updated by the author for this publication.

Antje Heider-Rottwilm

Experiences with the Conference of European Churches (CEC)

I got to know CEC in 1989 through the 1st European Ecumenical Assembly in Basel. A year before, the World Council of Churches (WCC) had inaugurated the Ecumenical Decade of Churches in Solidarity with Women (1988–1998). Since the 1981 Sheffield report on 'The Community of Women and Men in the Church'[1] it was no longer possible to deny that this subject represented a central challenge for the member churches worldwide. In Basel the number of women was significantly higher than in previous ecumenical gatherings (35% female delegates, more than 40% women in responsible roles as speakers, moderators, collaboration in services of worship, and so on.) On the Rhine was the Women's Boat. And the women of the Ecumenical Forum, together with other groups like 'Women for Peace', were visible and audible.

Antje Heider-Rottwilm.
Photo: Nata Hovorkovà

[1] *Parvey, Constance F. (Ed.): 'The community of women and men in the Church. A report of the consultation of the World Council of Churches'. World Council of Churches 1981.*

I

In 1990 I went with my family for two years to Geneva. The Protestant Church of Westphalia had created a pastor's position for the Decade (the only one from the Federal Republic), and had given me the job of building up the work. But apart from the opening service, Geneva produced hardly any initiatives. So I wanted to do some research there, build up ecumenical contacts and initiate communication on various topics. CEC was preparing for its General Assembly in Prague in 1992, and I was asked by the Forum to agree to be appointed to the preparation team and represent the Forum.

When I think back to that time, certain memories come to mind:

There were important, strong women on the Central Committee of CEC – like Rut Rohrand and Jutta Boysen from Germany. However, the insistence on an appropriate participation by women again and again elicited a politely stifled groan from some men.

We had passed a resolution that in Prague there should be a women's pre-Assembly and a Women's Oasis. The latter was to be run mainly by local women. So I used the long-existing Forum contacts with the Czech women, and then witnessed the mighty rows between those who regarded themselves as long-established guarantors of the ecumenical women's movement – and those who roundly criticised them and accused them of collaboration with rather than resistance to the old regime. For months the women's programme was in question, and patience and sensitivity were needed….

In Prague Rut Rohrandt, a senior church office-holder (Oberkirchenrätin), was elected one of the two Vice-presidents of CEC, an important step for the commitment that women should be made visible within and beyond CEC. For many years she moderated meetings and assemblies with clarity and energy, and made progress with important subjects in CEC.

II

When I think of women within the structures of CEC, then Irja Askola also comes to mind: a Finnish pastor, for many years at the women's desk, and later, as the second part of her job, responsible for 'Churches in Solidarity'. In 2010 she was elected first woman bishop of the Diocese of Helsinki in the Lutheran Church of Finland.

After the upheavals in Europe, it was a question at the beginning of the 90s of gaining a new perception of each other, of listening to each other, of understanding the new challenges – and then of accompanying the churches and finding resources, in order to use the new opportunities for the building up of congregations, of diaconal work, of the perception of the responsibility for civil society. It was plain that in many churches it had been the women who had passed on the faith – courageously, energetically, and undaunted. And it became clear that the men in no time at all now built and occupied structures which pushed the women back into the old roles – even to the point of abolishing the ordination of women. So Irja made sure, for example, that it was mostly women who attended the diaconal leadership training courses, since they were the ones doing the work on the ground – and not the men, whom the churches preferred to nominate for the courses.

And soon the subject of violence against women was on CEC's agenda – violence against women as a weapon of war (the outbreak of war in former Yugoslavia had shocking consequences for women), trafficking in women (a more and more important subject in the following years), violence in families and also in the church. For many of the 120 member churches it was very challenging that the Central Committee of CEC wrote a clear letter to the member churches on the subject, and demanded that they take decisive, concrete steps against every form of violence against women, and report on it. A key sentence was: "It happens everywhere, even in our own communities – violence and abuse of women"

Together with others, and in consultation with the Forum, Irja developed a whole host of programmes to strengthen women – and made sure

that in CEC, feminist-theological work and inclusive liturgies were a matter of course in large and small meetings and assemblies – at least where CEC itself was responsible (and not a denominational family). It is interesting that this was never a matter of conflict with member churches, and therefore a special commission – as at the WCC – was not needed.

III

In 1997 when I took over the leadership of the Europe Department of the EKD (Evangelische Kirche in Deutschland – Protestant Church in Germany), this involved also the responsibility for co-operation of the EKD with CEC. 1997 was the year of the 2nd European Ecumenical Assembly, in Graz. In the Final Document there were clear declarations in favour of reconciliation and solidarity with the marginalised, of equal rights for women, of the setting up of peace ministries and conflict mediation work, of debt cancellation for poorest countries for the year 2000, and against racism and xenophobia.

The most important outcome was surely that the delegates decided to pick up the subject of reconciliation between the churches. A working party produced the "Charta Ecumenica – Guidelines for the growing co-operation of the churches in Europe", which was commended in 2001 to their churches by the leadership of CCEE (European Catholic Bishops' Conference) and CEC.

Among the many commitments, the following statement was not contested: 'we condemn every form of violence against people, particularly against women and children'. But it was different with the next one (which 'we' considered a matter of course): 'we commit ourselves to promote the just community of women and men in church and society'. Now, it was asked, what might a "just" community in the church cover? Even the priesthood maybe? But finally the commitments were agreed – by all the churches of Europe.

In many years in CEC, as in the bilateral relationships with the EKD, I learnt that many Christians of all denominations in Central and Eastern Europe feel themselves at a great distance from us in the western countries in ethical matters. In questions like those of the acceptance of homosexuality in church and society, the role of women in church and society, the legalisation of abortion, relations with people with HIV/AIDS, they had the feeling of confronting a libertarian secularism, a freethinking, dissipated worldliness. So we were challenged again and again, especially in conversations 'on the fringes' (and late into the night), to explain how we came from our understanding of the Bible and our faith to our judgments in ethical questions.

IV

Further comments on women in the leadership of CEC.

- When Rut Rohrandt visited the Ecumenical Patriarchate in Constantinople (now Istanbul), she found that, because of the monastic regulations, she was not allowed to sit at the table with the male dignitaries – a problem of protocol that should have been dealt with in advance.
- From the General Assembly of CEC in Trondheim there were four of us women representatives of the EKD on the Central Committee of CEC (Bishop Margot Kässman, vice-president Cordelia Kopsch, trainee pastor Almut Bretschneider-Felzmann and me) a strong team, whose word carried weight.
- After the General Assembly in Trondheim, the Commission 'Churches in Dialogue' was led for the first time by a woman, Canon Elizabeth Fisher; and the 'Church and Society' commission, at my suggestion, was in 'shared leadership' for 4 years with a representative of the Moscow Patriarchate and myself as co-moderators.
- And I think of the courageous and competent delegate of the Greek Orthodox Church and long-serving EFECW Co-president Katerina Karkala-Zorba, member of the Central Committee of CEC, moderator of the Third European Ecumenical Assembly in Sibiu 2007.

The subject of women in CEC was repeatedly established as a cross-cutting issue of obligation, but after the end of the term of office of Irja Askola's successor, Dr Eva-Sibylle Vogel-Mfato, the women's desk was closed. Various attempts to institutionalise the co-operation with EFECW, which is an associate organisation, and create a joint post, did not work out (I think this would have made sense). So resolutions were formulated – partly in working groups with the Forum – to ensure nevertheless that the subject of gender would be more clearly positioned.

The 13th General Assembly of CEC in Lyon in July 2009 also resolved that "In this spirit CEC should in the coming years seek to make inclusivity a reality, and thereby the full participation of women and men of all age groups at all levels of their life and their work." Whether this decision stays or becomes relevant in the coming years remains to be seen. And it is one of the tasks of the Forum to keep on demanding its fulfilment and also contributing to it.

This article originally appeared in Elisabeth Bücking/Cornelia Göksu/Inge Heiling/Waltraud Liekefett/Katharina Nickel (eds.): Ökumene weiblich, Berlin 2010, p 221–226. Here the history of the Forum was recorded for the first time in celebration of the 25th anniversary of the EFECW in 2007. It has been updated by the author for this publication.

SHORT BIOGRAPHIES OF THE CONTRIBUTORS

Sheila Brain
Born 1943, Reformed; lives near Exeter, England; studied German at London University, taught by distance learning whilst at home bringing up two children. Involvement with the German Protestant Kirchentag brought German into active use – by providing English-language information for non-German speakers. Official representative for Great Britain on the Kirchentag International Committee since 1992 and doing regular translation work for them as a volunteer. From 1987 an active member of the YWCA, including involvement in East-West European Women's seminars and other events - leading to contact with the EFECW, many of whose members were also YWCA women! Contact with EFECW women in the UK through the strong ecumenical women's networks led to becoming a regular participant in meetings, also at European level. She is glad to make use of her language skills for the Forum in translation and communication, including for this publication.

Elisabeth Bücking
Born 1944, Roman Catholic; lives near Freiburg, Germany. PhD in biology; has a large family and the conviction that sustaining a responsible relationship to Creation is one of the core tasks of a Christian. Works freelance in the public debate on questions of bioethics and technology assessment. Works in various capacities for the church on a voluntary basis: since 1983 for more than two decades with the German Protestant Kirchentag on bioethical and environmental subjects; since 1991 on the advisory panel for the environment of the Protestant Church of Baden; 1995-2005 chair of the church council in her own – Catholic – parish; 2007 delegate for the Ecumenical Women's Council to the Third European Ecumenical Assembly in Sibiu; Forum member since 1993, first as advisor to the "Ecology and Bioethics" commission, then as a Friend.

Meehyun Chung
Protestant Mission Basel, Switzerland; is a minister of the Presbyterian Church in the Republic of Korea (PROK). She studied German literature, philosophy and Protestant theology in Seoul. In 1993 she received a doctor's degree in Basel, her thesis being on Karl Barth, Josef Lukl Hromadka and Korea. In 2006 she was awarded the Karl-Barth prize of the Union of Protestant Churches within the EKD for her doctoral thesis and other articles. She served as Vice President of the Ecumenical Association of Third World Theologians (EATWOT). Currently she is the head of the Women and Gender Desk at Mission 21, Protestant Mission Basel, Switzerland

Annika Damirjian
Born 1965, Swedish, Baptist. General Secretary at the Swedish Ecumenical Women's Council since 2006. The Swedish Ecumenical Women's Council is the National Forum of Sweden. She has been one of the two NCs from Sweden since 2006. 2010 she was elected as Co-President of EFECW.

She works very closely with other ecumenical organisations in Sweden: the Christian Council of Sweden, Nordic Ecumenical Women's Committee, the Swedish Mission Council, the Swedish Fellowship of Reconciliation, and other church organisations, women's organisations and peace organisations in Sweden.

Cornelia Göksu
Born 1955 near Hannover, Germany, Lutheran, lives in Hamburg; studied European ethnology, history of art, literature and theatre science. Her doctoral thesis studied one of the most spectacular mass movements after 1945: Heroldsbach in Franconia, Bavaria – a "forbidden" pilgrimage.

After a career as a journalist, PR consultant and curator in museums, archives and commercial companies, she has been freelance since 1999 and now has her own agency in Hamburg: Dr Cornelia Göksu – Kultur Kommunikation; further details at kultur-kommunikation.com

Publication of specialist books and reports, as well as editing. Her subjects are culture and design, social and economic history; she offers seminars, presentations and guides. Her area of specialism is the documentation of (women's) history in biographies.

Her former mentor Renate Gresens invited her to the German Forum. Member as a friend since 2002, six years later she and Elisabeth Bücking started the first documentation about the "her-story" of the European and the German Forum with the publication "Ökumene weiblich – Frauen überschreiten Grenzen", Verlag Frank + Timme, Berlin 2010.

She is co-editor of this publication.

Roswitha Golder

Protestant, Rev. Dr D.Min, Geneva, Switzerland; was not present at the founding of the EFECW 30 years ago, but has been an active member of the Forum, as a National Co-ordinator of the Swiss branch, and as a member of the Co-ordinating Committee on the European level. She has attended all the General Assemblies since Budapest in 1994. A theological student at first, later as an ordained pastor of the Protestant Church in Geneva, Switzerland, she was often asked to organise and lead worship, prayers and celebrations at meetings of the EFECW.

Antje Heider-Rottwilm

Born 1950 in Soest/ Westphalia; Lutheran; ordained minister; lives in Hamburg, Germany; theologian und qualified educationalist. She is a long-standing member of EFECW , and for more than 30 years has been a member, together with her husband, of the ecumenical Laurentius Convent. (The Laurentius Convent was founded in 1959. People of different denominations belong to it. The convent was influenced by the spiritual awakenings after the Second World War, like the ecumenical community of Taizé. Most of the members live together in house communities of families and single people, young and old, members and those interested in communal living). After 10 years as a chaplain to students she spent the years 1990-1997 building up the Westphalian centre for the Ecumenical Decade of Churches in Solidarity with Women. Since 1992 participation in vigils and networking for 'Women in Black'. From 1997 to 2008 she was leader of the Europe department of the EKD (Protestant Church in Germany) and involved in many ways in European ecumenism.

Since then she has been living and working – together with Dörte and Ludwig Massow and her husband – as the representative group for the Laurentius Convent in Hamburg, on behalf of 19 Hamburg churches. Since June 2012 they have been living in the newly-built Ecumenical Forum in the HafenCity area, a house with an ecumenical chapel, a fair-trade organic café and an ecumenical household community linked to the Laurentius Convent. www.oekumenisches-forum-hafencity.de

Martina Heinrichs

Born 1955 in Bonn, Germany, Roman Catholic; studied Catholic theology and French in Bonn und Paris.. 1980 moved to the Netherlands. 1983 to 1985 research assistant to Professor Catharina Halkes in feminist theology at the Catholic Radboud University Nijmegen. Then director of studies for feminist theology and ecumenism at two Protestant academies in the Netherlands. Currently director of studies at the Dominican monastery Huissen near Arnhem. Co-organiser of the 1st European Women's Synod in Gmunden, Austria.

Involved in the Forum since 1986 – when called by Ruth Epting to give bible studies at the 2nd General Assembly in Järvenpää, Finland – since 2006 as Forum Co President. She is co-editor of this publication.

Aneta Jovkovska

Born 1978, Orthodox, lives in Skopje, Former Yugoslavian Republic of Macedonia (FYROM). She has a Master's degree in psychology and is teaching

assistant for Christian Pedagogy and Methodology of Religious Instruction; Associate for Interreligious Projects at the Orthodox Faculty of Theology "St. Clement of Ohrid", Skopje.

Beate Junker

Born 1928, lives in Leonberg, Germany; studied in Tübingen and Kiel to teach biology, chemistry and geography in secondary schools: worked as a teacher. Voluntary work for nature and the environment. Worked in various capacities for BUND (Association for Environmental Conservation/Friends of the Earth Germany); in leadership group of the Ecology Commission of the Church of Württemberg; founder of the Forum's ecological summer school, in the leadership team 2000, 2003, 2005, 2007, 2009; member of the Federal Association 'For the Children of Chernobyl' and an organisation for youth encounters; setting up of Local Agenda 21 in Leonberg; member of various working groups, such as 'Cultural Landscape', 'Encounters with Belarus', 'New Ways of Living'

Katerina Karkala-Zorba

Born 1961 in Volos, Greece, grew up in Germany; Greek Orthodox. She studied languages and theology in Thessaloniki and Paris. Research on feminist theology. Worked as a study and conference leader at the Orthodox Academy of Crete and the Diocese of Dimitrias, Volos. Secondary education teacher and adult education specialist. Co-Moderator of the Revision Working Group of the Conference of European Churches (CEC) and Vice-Moderator of the Church and Society Commission of CEC. Co-President of EFECW from 1998-2006, Co-founder of the Greek national group of EFECW. Freelance consultant on European affairs, interpreter and translator.

Gabriele Kienesberger

Born 1961, Roman Catholic, living in Vienna, Austria; studied Roman Catholic theology and German philology. She works as a co-ordinator of national and European women's projects and conferences (e.g. 1st European Women's Synod in Gmunden, Austria); member of the Austrian Women's Forum of Feminist Theology; in the Catholic Social Academy of Austria co-ordinator of the Interreligious Network of Social Ethics (INES) and of the Austrian Sunday Alliance, an initiative for a work-free Sunday ; founding member of the European Sunday Alliance; member of the Austrian Ecumenical Forum; member of the Coordinating Committee 2010 – 2014 and co-editor of this publication.

Jill King

Born 1946, Methodist, living in Chesterfield, England; has a degree in German and a TEFL qualification (Teaching English as a Foreign Language); was a member of NEWS (Network of Ecumenical Women in Scotland) when she lived in Edinburgh; represented the Methodist Church on the British Committee of the German Kirchentag for some years. Was a member of the Forum's Coordinating Committee 1998 – 2002 and worked on the Adelheid Project 1999 – 2006; represented EFECW on International Committee of FLC (Fellowship of the Least Coin) 2003 to 2008, latterly as chair; helped with stewards' programme at General Assemblies in Murten and Loccum; helps with translating and proof reading for the Forum.

Maria Koutatzi

Born 1969, Roman Catholic, lives in Athens. She is a teacher for religious education and a freelance business consultant and trainer. She has been involved with the Greek Forum as programme manager since 2000. From 1999-2013 member of the WCC (World Council of Churches) Commission on World Mission and Evangelism. 2001 member of the organising committee - Charta Ecumenica – Strasbourg. 1998-1999 as youth consultant she was revising the stewards' pro-

gramme of the WCC. 1997 responsible for the stewards' programme – Member of Youth Committee – 2nd European Ecumenical Assembly – Graz. 1996 responsible for the stewards' programme – 1st European Women's Synod – Gmunden. 1992-1998 during this period in different roles (Council of Europe Youth Directorate Senior Trainer, European Secretary General International Young Catholic Students). She has been initiating and/or coordinating European ecumenical programmes mainly for young people in European youth organisations.

Jirina Kozderovà
Born 1945 in Prague, Czech Republic, Hussite; studied at the School of Economics and Tourism and worked in the biggest Czech travel agency in that time "Cedok" for 5 years. From 1980 she was employed at a student hostel for 11 years. After the political changes in 1989 she helped to re-establish the Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA) in Czechoslovakia as a volunteer. In 1991 she was called to become a staff person as General Secretary, a position she still holds. Since 1995 involved in the Forum through the Adelheid/Lydia projects. Since 1998 member of the Finance Committee.

Carla Maurer
Born 1980 in St.Gallen, Switzerland; Reformed. After her studies of theology in Bern and Heidelberg, she worked for the Church and Society Commission of the Conference of European Churches in Strasbourg for almost 4 years. There for the first time she came into contact with European ecumenism and with the challenges of churches in an ever changing Europe. The many contacts with men and women from different denominations led her to the EFECW, a partner organisation of CEC, where she was elected as a member of the Co-ordinating Committee in Loccum in 2010. Carla works with the young women's strategy to engage more young women in the Forum's life. After her time in Strasbourg, Carla returned to St.Gallen to complete her ministerial training at the Reformed Church of Switzerland. In September 2012 Carla started working for the Joint Property Strategy Group of the United Reformed Church and the Methodist Church in London.

Vasiliki Mavrovska
Born 1973, Greek Orthodox, Athens, Greece., She has two doctorate degrees, in philosophy and theology, i.e. she is both an art historian and a theologian. She works as an Assistant Professor at the Ecclesiastical Academy of Athens. Co-President of the EFECW 2010-2014. Before that she had been a steward and later responsible for the stewards programme together with Jill King at the General Assemblies of 2006 and 2010.

Michaela Pavlou
Born 1984, she is a Cypriot and Greek Orthodox. At Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, Greece, she studied theology and simultaneously paleontology and Byzantine music. She continued her studies at the University of Fribourg, Switzerland and received her Master's degree in Orthodox Dogmatics. Her education gave her the opportunity to get involved in Conference of European Churches initiatives which put her in contact with young people from different churches and cultures. She participated as a young woman delegate of the Church of Cyprus in the 3rd European Ecumenical Assembly (EEA3) in Sibiu, Romania, in September 2007 and in the 13th CEC Assembly in Leon, France in 2009. She joined the EFECW in Cyprus and was appointed as the 2nd National Co-ordinator. In September 2011 she participated at her first National Co-ordinators meeting at Druskininkai, Lithuania.

Asea Railean
Born 1969, Orthodox, EFECW National Co-ordinator for Moldova, president of the Community Association "Soarta" of Soroca, Republic of Moldova. The Community Association "Soarta" is a charitable, nongovernmental, apolitical, non-profit organisation with the mission of "optimising social, institutional and professional relations for a better life through involving citizens and developing civic spirit". Over 10 years it has developed social, educational, cultural, anti-trafficking work and is working for children, young persons, women in situation of risk, elderly, solitary or bedridden people and invalids.

Doris Riffelmann
Born 1953, Protestant; lives in Halle, Saale, Germany. Deaconess, social worker, youth training consultant for the Church of Lippe, lecturer in adult education. Friend of the Forum since 2004; Administrator for the Egeria Pilgrimage.

Carola Ritter
Born 1963, Protestant; lives in Halle, Saale, Germany. Qualified mechanical engineer . Studied theology. She is Superintendent Minister for Protestant women in Central Germany, Friend of the Forum since 1988. Initiator of the Egeria Pilgrimage.

Inge Schintlmeister
Born 1944 in Vienna, Austria, Lutheran; trained for parish education work at the Protestant Women's College for Church and Social Work, Vienna, and as social education worker in Nürnberg, Germany. Professional work: parish work, education, consultant for practical youth work, Austria, public relations work in relation to disabled people, Director of Protestant Women's Work, Austria. Concerns – to maintain contacts with women from neighbouring countries, and after 1990 to furnish the European house in a way that does justice to women. Co-founder of the Central and East European Conference of Women from Minority Churches. Worked in the ecumenical women's centre at the 2nd European Ecumenical Assembly in Graz 1997. Since 1983 she has worked in various capacities in EFECW. Her motto: "Knowledge of and respect for one another is the basis for reconciliation. Those who remember the past form the future together" (cf "Ökumene weiblich – Frauen überschreiten Grenzen" Berlin 2010 p312).

Reinhild Traitler-Espiritu
Protestant, Austrian, lives in Zürich, Switzerland. Doctorate in Modern Philology. From 1986–1994 she was moderator of the EFEWC Commission on Justice and Peace. Together with the Boldern Protestant Academy, Zürich, the commission organised the first European Women's Summer Academy after the transition in the socialist countries of Europe, in 1993, at the height of the Bosnian war (more details in "Ökumene weiblich - Frauen überschreiten Grenzen", Berlin 2010, p91 ff). Involved in projects like European Women's College and EPIL (European Project for Interreligious Learning).

APPENDIX

List of Members in the EFECW 2012

Austria
Belarus
Bulgaria
Croatia
Cyprus
Czech Republic
Denmark
Estonia
Finland
France
F.Y.R.O.M (Former Yugoslavian Republic of Macedonia)
Germany
Greece
Hungary
Italy
Ireland
Lithuania
Malta
Moldova
The Netherlands
Norway
Poland
Romania
Russia
Serbia
Slovakia
Spain
Sweden
Switzerland
Ukraine
United Kingdom

Abbreviations

Abbreviations used in this publication and the websites for information about the organisations

CEC: The Conference of European Churches; ceceurope.org

EKD: Evangelische Kirche in Deutschland. The official Protestant Church in Germany. It is a federation of the regional State churches (Landeskirchen) which are independently organised, ekd.de

FLC: Fellowship of the Least Coin, flc.net.ph

WCC: World Council of Churches, oikoumene.org

WDP: (Women's) World Day of Prayer, worlddayofprayer.net

YWCA: Young Women's Christian Association, worldywca.org