



A Retrospective

by Dick Derksen

European Educators' Christian Association (EurECA)

Dick Derksen, with help from many EurECA Board Members

The framework

God's Kingdom is often all about doing the right thing at the right time. His plan continues to unfold, and His saints are called to their tasks accordingly. Believing teachers are no exception.

Jesus had a passion for teaching, both to his disciples as well as to the general public. Education was at the heart of the mandate Christ declared to his disciples in Matthew chapter 28. Throughout history the church has stressed education as an integral part of its ministry within society and many outstanding Christian leaders have left a legacy of informal as well as formal and institutional programs. The following "story" is a brief chapter of this history, describing a movement of Christian Education in Europe during three decades beginning in the 1980's.

Following the destructions of WW2 much of Europe was in the mode of restructuring and renewal. After a political and economic restructuring, people were open to a spiritual renewal as well. Christians in evangelical churches rallied to the opportunity of countering the humanistic trends in the state churches by providing a biblical alternative for the youth in the formation of private schools. This initiated the movement to form Christian schools in Germany, and from there to the other West-European countries.

The beginnings at BFA

The latter half of the 1980s saw a conference for Christian educators taking place at Black Forest Academy (BFA), Kandern, Germany, a school for missionary children run by Janz Team Ministries and a number of other mission agencies. Henry Toews, the Director, and his staff at BFA invited educators from other similar schools in Europe, notably Evangelical Christian Academy in Madrid and International Christian Academy near Brussels, as well as those from national Christian schools in nearby countries. Christian educators working in secular schools were also invited, as together, the group heard speakers supplied by the Association of Christian Schools International expounding the value of Christian education in the contemporary world. These educators, representing all forms and levels of education, explored ways of integrating their Christian faith into their teaching. Because the European Conference for Christian Educators (ECCE) conferences were held during the summertime, educators brought their families along, and a varied program of activities was provided for them by BFA staff. Mealtimes and evening fellowship times brought the group together as a whole to grow in their faith together. The setting made this experience affordable for this dedicated lot, often living by faith on the donations of other believers.

Some key people

Some of the key educators in this group were Henry Toews, George Durance, Harold Klasen, Trevor Craigen, Dave Horsey and Dick Derksen, all from BFA, representing Canada, South Africa and the USA, with George also carrying a passport from Ireland.

Rosemarie Stüchelberger, married to Alfred Stüchelberger, a key figure in Christian education in Switzerland and Europe a generation before, and an educator herself, though German by birth, represented Christian teachers in Switzerland.

Robert Mewton, an Englishman married to a French woman and heading a Christian school in Aix-en-Provence, France, brought Luc Bussière, head of Collège Daniel and the voice of Christian education in France, to the table.

Walter Rudolph, head of the Freie Evangelische Schule in Lörrach, Germany, which had just begun its services to the community south of Kandern brought the concerns of the 20 plus new Christian schools in Germany.

Dieter Velten, Chair of the education committee of the Gnadauer Verband, a pietistic Lutheran society in Germany, worked tirelessly in the committee to advance Christian education among Christian teachers in the state schools of Germany.

Dr. Jürgen Butzkamm, head of a training center and social services center within the Gnadauer Verband, was helpful in steering the legal aspects of an organization in Germany.

Dr. Robert Matzken, teaching in a Christian college in The Netherlands, had a vision for Christian education that countered the incipient godlessness of the Dutch school systems, including the old Christian schools, which he believed had fallen into New Age philosophies.

Ruth Deakin headed an experimental venture in England, seeking to gain public funding for a private Christian school in Bristol. In addition to pursuing her PhD studies, she provided energetic leadership to the young organization for many years. With the completion of her doctorate, she added her maiden name, making her name from that point on Dr. Ruth Deakin-Crick.

A vision takes shape

This group, representing Christian educators from several European countries, sought to reach out to their colleagues in their own countries and to draft possible approaches to assist and encourage them in other countries, as well. Strong wills accompany such farsighted leaders, so discussions often revolved around personal viewpoints that were being stretched to see the viewpoints of people from a totally different culture and tradition of Christian education, and to see local and national problems in a Europe-wide context.

In 1989 the Iron Curtain fell unexpectedly, and what had been impossible before was suddenly thrust upon the group. Contact could be made openly with Christian teachers in formerly forbidden countries. When Henry Toews went on a fact-finding trip with Dr. Philip Renicks, Director of Missions for ACSI, to Hungary, Romania and Ukraine in winter 1990, they found many beleaguered Christian educators who had weathered the tough years of repressive regimes and were ready to drink in the teaching of these experienced men and their Christian fellowship. A group of these attended the summer ECCE conference in Kandern in 1990.

Planning meetings for the formation of the European Association for Christians in Education (EurACE) were held 11-12 February 1990, with further meetings planned for 7-8 July 1990, before the European Conference for Christian Educators, at BFA.

It was probably during this time that the first concept paper was drafted by someone.

These meetings were held to explore ways of incorporating Christian educators from both Central and Western Europe into a common organization to promote Christian education in their schools and to encourage those whose battle was too much for their tired souls. Sev-

eral key decisions were made during that time, affecting Christian education in Europe dramatically in the years to come:

1. The ECCE conference would move to Timisoara, Romania, in the summer of 1991.
2. An organization representing Christian educators and organizations dealing in Christian education throughout Europe would be formed. Because ACSI's mission was to minister to Christian schools, it was felt that an organization that included Christian educators working in secular schools was the greater need. A major conference was planned for spring of 1992 in Guebwiller, France, to promote this new organization and to further assist in framing the organization.
3. Four new Christian high schools sprang up in Romania that autumn, in Timisoara, Bucharest, Arad and Oradea. Some had to operate with teachers coming to them in the afternoons from secular teaching jobs in the mornings. Many European schools do not have classes in the afternoons, so this was a unique twist on Christian education. The new government saw a possibility for such schools within their policies governing schools to prepare men for the Orthodox ministry.

Romania welcomes the West

By February, 1991, plans for all three were well underway. The new Christian school in Timisoara, headed by George Catana, became the planning site for the conference, to be held in the local music high school auditorium 22-25 July 1991, under the title of "New Beginnings: a Revolution in Education," with meal catering at the university cafeteria across the street and housing in private homes, churches and hotels. Invitations went out to Christian teachers in all European countries, from Ireland to Russia, and about 450 teachers responded, including someone from the Ministry of Education in Moscow. Choirs from the new Romanian Christian schools were featured, and students from the school in Timisoara were conference assistants in many ways. Dr. Josef Tson, President of the Romanian Christian Educators Association gave the opening address, and ACSI provided other keynote speakers, such as Dr. Phil Renicks, Dr. Trevor Craigen, Margaret Bridges and Dr. James Braley, and valuable assistance in staging the conference. Priscilla Pop, a Romanian educator studying for her PhD, translated from Romanian to English and English to Romanian.

A vanload of BFA personnel was filled to the top with a photocopier and paper, plus other needed supplies for such a venture, things that were currently unavailable in the revolutionary new republic of Romania. During the conference, Dr. Matzken, then Chairman of the EurECA planning committee, made a passionate plea for teachers to join the new organization that was to unite them across European borders and announced the coming conference in the spring of 1992 in France. The representative from Moscow invited ACSI personnel to stage teaching sessions in his country, where Christian values had not been allowed since the Communist Revolution of 1917. A new missionary venture combining ACSI, Campus Crusade for Christ and Walk Thru the Bible, called the Co-Mission, resulted out of this invitation.

An international venture

From its very inception, EurECA sought to find representation from many European countries, both Eastern and Western, in order to give it as wide a base as possible among evangelicals living in Europe. That caused some creative use of internationals living in particular countries that were under-represented within this special interest group to represent the areas in which they were living. In that way, Henry Toews, Director of BFA and very largely the instigator of EurECA, could claim that his parents had immigrated to Canada from a European country and he had been raised in that European tradition, so could effectively

represent a European viewpoint. Dr. Trevor Craigen, whose passports included South African as well as British, could "represent" a European viewpoint. George Durance, an international person working at BFA in Germany, but carrying Canadian, American and Irish passports due to parental allegiances, could "represent" Ireland. Another Canadian representing a European country not otherwise represented originally on the committee was about to become a very recognized figure in EurECA.

In the summer of 1991, Dick Derksen, a former BFA teacher and founding Principal of Vienna Christian School, "representing" Austria in the EurECA startup committee, returned to Germany and BFA, where he assumed the role of Administrative Officer of EurECA as part of his BFA assignment. Plans for the 1992 EurECA conference, to be held 13-15 April, were now in high gear. The conference held in Timisoara in 1991 was to be held in another Romanian city in 1992. Now, instead of only one conference for Christian educators in Europe, there were going to be two. Dr. John Shortt, at that time Director of Stapleford House, a training centre of the ACT, in Nottingham, became interested in EurECA through Dr. Ruth Deakin Crick, and soon became a vital part of the EurECA planning committee. Priscilla became a part of the EurECA committee, often by mail instead of in person, due to distance and lack of finances in her country. At other times generous donations from the West provided for her transportation to meetings of the committee.

Laying the foundations

The EurECA planning committee, comprised of Dr. Robert Matzken, Rosemarie Stüchelberger, Henry Toews, Dieter Velten, Dr. Trevor Craigen and Dick Derksen, met at Haus Palmgarten in Kandern, Germany, on 27 September 1991, and the following decisions were reached:

1. Responsibilities of members of European Educators' Christian Association (EurECA) – The original name, EurACE, was not suitable, as it seemed to identify the organization with the ACE program of Christian curriculum and schools, so a new name was chosen.
2. EurECA and ACSI would not be in competition. Each had its own mandate, and although each was involved in Christian education, each would pursue its own path in regards to the approach being used.
3. EurECA would be a forum for exchange of ideas about Christian education in Europe. It would function as an Arbeitsgemeinschaft (a working fellowship), rather than a heavy top-down organization.
4. It would be interdenominational, bringing together Christians in education from many evangelical bodies, some of whom had difficulty having fellowship with one another.
5. Dieter Velten was asked to write up a plan for nominating officers to EurECA, to be voted on in a General Assembly to be held during the 1993 General Conference. He would also present a concept paper on what EurECA proposed to be.
6. The organizational conference was planned around the dates of 5-7 April 1993.

By 1992, the growth in the number of new Christian schools in Central and Eastern Europe commanded the attention of ACSI, and Henry Toews followed the call to leave BFA to become the Central European Director of ACSI. He remained part of the EurECA committee as he moved from Kandern, Germany, to Budapest, Hungary, to set up the Gene Garrick Center for Christian Education, the new ACSI headquarters for Central and Western Europe. Many of the new schools, and the ACSI European office itself, became active EurECA members, even though ACSI also provided conferences and seminars to aid the struggling new schools and teachers, as well as interested Christian teachers from state schools, in integrating their faith and their curriculum.

The first EurECA conference

The EurECA conference was held in the facilities of *le Rimlishof*, in Buhl, France, 13-15 April, 1992, when about 50 educators discussed the theme "Challenges for Christian Education in Europe." Dr. Kuehn, Director of Emmaus Bible Institute, Vevey, Switzerland, brought the biblical challenges, and other addresses were given by Dieter Velten – "Challenges for Christian Education in Europe," Dr. John Hallett – "Religious Education in Public Schools," Dr. Trevor Cooling – "Teacher Training: How to Equip Christian Teachers," Dr. Phil Renicks – "Helping the East," and Henry Toews – "Founding Christian Schools." Various educators acted as translators from one language to another. Discussion sessions followed, with questions flowing from every quarter and in every accent. One can only imagine the hubbub, as people from about 15 countries expressed their comments and questions in their own language, to be translated and re-translated as needed, or to try their school-learned English, French or German language skills in the group setting.



Provisional Board at introduction of draft EurECA Constitution at 1992 Conference (Henry Toews, Robert Mewton, Dick Derksen, Ruth Deakin, Dieter Velten, Rosemarie Stueckelberger and Priscilla Pop)

The main focus of the conference, however, was to get to know those who lived across borders of politics and language, and who shared a common faith and a common mandate for Christian education. A special thrill was having seven participants from Poland, Czech Republic, Slovakia, and Romania present. The basic framework of EurECA was laid out, with the plan that next year's conference would also host the first General Assembly of EurECA, in which the organization would become incorporated. During the conference, the following members were added to the EurECA board: Ann Holt, representing CARE TRUST, England, Dr. John Shortt, representing ACT England, and someone from Switzerland, to be chosen by the board.

Legal and doctrinal issues

Although the wish was expressed within the planning group that this should be an internationally-registered society, that was not possible. No avenue for registration of societies or charities internationally existed in the European Union. It would have to be registered in one of the countries of Europe and come under the society laws of that country. A number of possibilities were explored, such as Guernsey, in the English Channel, but finally Germany became the country of choice. Although it would be registered in Germany, it could include membership from anyone in any European country. Since there was already interest from people outside of Europe, these, too would be invited to attend the conferences and to share their burdens for Christian education.

The annual financial statement as of 31 July 1992 shows as follows:

Income	
Balance forward	DM 4589.50
Memberships and gifts	556.87
Conference registrations	<u>2101.23</u>
Total Income	DM 7247.60
Expenditures	
Postage and Faxes	DM 796.09
Printing and copying	215.78
Phone	400.00
Envelopes, miscellaneous	41.43
Conference expenses	5960.19
Total Expenses	DM 7413.49
For a total year-end deficit of	DM -165.89

One can deduce from this that everything that could be gathered into the coffers was used for promotion of the organization and the conference, with nothing left over for further work. The work that had started in the offices of Black Forest Academy continued to be sponsored by that organization, until it could carry itself financially.

One issue that divided the evangelical world in Europe during the 1990s was the question of Charismatics or non-Charismatics. Churches and schools were polarized on this issue, so there was much discussion among Christian educators, as to whether they could participate in an organization that did not stand as they did on this question. EurECA board members found themselves on both sides of this fence, as well. For the first time for many, Christians of both persuasions discussed the many areas of common interest and concern, especially as they related to the education of their children and young people. EurECA was bringing together Christians of East and West, of North and South, and of theological poles around a common cause.

The decision reached was that EurECA was to function as the educational arm of the European Evangelical Alliance (EEA). As such it became an associate member of that organization, taking as its statement of faith the one espoused by the EEA. Again, the question came up in some minds, whether this organization reflected the narrower views of their church or educational organization. Because the statement of faith honored Jesus Christ as the only Saviour, and the Bible was seen as the inspired and authoritative Word of God, it did reflect a broad spectrum of evangelical belief. More groups and individuals became interested in the new organization. The constitution of EurECA was taking shape under the practiced eyes of Dieter Velten and other board members, in preparation for its presentation at the inaugural conference 18-21 March 1993, where EurECA would go through the official steps to become a registered society. Ann Holt (CARE) and Dr. John Shortt would prepare the conference.

The board met over the weekend 25-27 September 1992, at Schloss Beuggen and at Haus Palmgarten in Kandern, to pray for the individuals that board members had come to know, representing various agencies of Christian education in France, Czech Republic, Romania, Eastern Germany, Poland, Holland, Switzerland and Germany. A clause-by-clause review of the emerging EurECA constitution resulted in final changes and additions, to be ratified in the General Assembly at Schloss Beuggen on 20 March 1993. Membership issues were then discussed by the board, with possible memberships to include educators having fulfilled one or more of the following conditions, at least in part or in whole:

- Filled out application forms for membership
- Paid dues
- Attended conferences or start-up meetings
- Gave gifts

These were to be considered as the inner circle to receive invitations to the conference, along with a copy of the new constitution. Others in our mailing list would receive an invitation to the conference and an offer to have the constitution sent. The board meetings concluded with Rosemarie sharing about her participation in the EEA meetings in Barcelona.

March 1993, Schloss Beuggen: the official birth

Schloss Beuggen, a medieval castle on the banks of the Rhine River, a vacation and meeting centre of the Lutheran Church of Baden, was chosen as the site for the 1993 conference. Rosemarie Stückelbergerer, Robert Mewton, Dr. John Shortt and Dick Derksen met at the castle to determine its suitability for EurECA. The conference had all the flavour of a regular conference for educators, with speakers, workshops and times of sharing of ideas and problems.



Plenary Session at Conference 1993 in Schloss Beuggen

The Theme of the Conference was, "If a Child Should Ask ...," and the dates were 18-21 March 1993. Dr. Pierre Berthoud, Academic Dean of the Reformed Theological Seminary, Aix-en-Provence, brought the Bible studies on "How Can We Know: General and Specific Revelation," followed by Dr. John Shortt on "What Do We Know: Towards a Christian View of Knowledge." Dieter Velten presented the third plenary address, with the title, "How Can We Tell Them? – a practical application of the Christian view of knowledge. Working groups discussed, "What Difference Will It Make to Me? with groups working in the following areas and disciplines:

- Early childhood education
- Christian education in the home
- Christian education in the church
- Religious education in the school
- Moral education
- Sciences and Maths
- Humanities
- Language, literature and the arts

These discussions were summarized in a further plenary session, under the title, "What Have We Decided?" Pierre Berthoud then closed with a message entitled, "What If We Fail?" – the effects of sin on knowledge, grace, forgiveness, and new life in Christ.

In the antique halls and rooms of the ancient castle the framework of EurECA was discussed and debated. At the General Assembly, which was held in three major European languages – English, French and German – with further translation into Romanian, Polish, etc. On Friday afternoon, the committee, in the person of Dr. Jürgen Butzkamm, presented the finished constitution for ratification, and the first official board was elected. Papers were signed to be handed in for registration of EurECA in the court offices of Lörrach, Germany, and with Black Forest Academy, Kandern, Germany, as its official address. The official recognition of EurECA as an organization was received in October 1993.

Board members elected were Dr. John Shortt, Henry Toews, Dieter Velten, Rosemarie Stükelberger, Marek Kaniewski, Dr. Priscilla Pop, Dr. Ruth Deakin. John, Dieter, Marek and Ruth would serve for four years, and Henry, Rosemarie and Priscilla for two years, to establish a pattern of four-year rotations in which only half of the board would need to be elected at each General Assembly. Appointed were Dick Derksen (Administrative Officer and Treasurer), Heike Schwarz (Secretary), Dr. Robert Matzken and Luc Bussiere, all for four-year terms. Organizations that voted at the beginning of EurECA were:

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|--|---------------------------|
| • La Nouvelle Alliance | Aix-en-Provence, France |
| • Kruh Prátel Bratrských Skol | Prague, Czech Republic |
| • ACSI, Eastern Europe | Budapest, Hungary |
| • Generálny biskupský úrad Evanjelickej cirkvi a.v. na Slovensku | Bratislava, Slovakia |
| • Continental Theological Seminary | Brussels, Belgium |
| • Bybel & Onderwys | Amersfoort, Netherlands |
| • Christian Schools Trust | Romford, Great Britain |
| • Christians in Education | London, Great Britain |
| • Evangelical Alliance, Great Britain | Bristol, Great Britain |
| • Association of Christian Teachers, England | Nottingham, Great Britain |
| • Black Forest Academy | Kandern, Germany |

EurECA members, particularly board members, were saddened at the death of Dr. Alfred-Emanuel Stükelberger-Spielmann at age 94. He had been a lighthouse for Christian education in his country of Switzerland and throughout Europe in his generation, starting two Christian schools and writing several books that were still quite applicable. Rosemarie, his wife, continued her work with the EurECA board wholeheartedly, honoring her late husband's legacy with her enduring dedication.

Conferences 1994 and 1995

Planning for the 1994 conference began immediately. With several board members located in the "Dreiländereck" of Germany, Switzerland and France, these were asked to plan the conference. Rosemarie Stüchelberger, Luc Bussiere, Marianne Hämmerle and Dick Derksen met to begin the process, which had been outlined already in the previous board meeting. The conference venue was the seminary at St. Chrischona, Switzerland, with the dates of 8-11 April 1994. Between 80 and 120 educators were present in the various meetings. Pastor Hans-Ulrich Hermann of the Gellert Gemeinde in Basel brought the Bible studies, and Dr. Paul Marshall the keynote addresses, under the theme, "Shaping God's World: The Christian Calling to Culture."

Contacts were cemented with Christian teachers in other countries, resulting in a greater awareness of what was going on in neighboring areas, which in turn resulted in more prayer and in visits to one another's schools. Christian schools were started or extended, and gifts were gathered in Western Europe to send to struggling Christian schools or teacher organizations in Central and Eastern Europe. Those who were discouraged by local and national, as well as religious, persecution were encouraged by those who were formerly unaware of what was going on. Collège Daniel, for instance, became a lighthouse in French Christian education, with a three-month teacher training program, assisting two other Christian schools to start in nearby towns, and a wider range of contacts in Mali and Côte d'Ivoire. On a sad note, EurECA mourned with Henry Toews in the passing of his dear wife, Margaret, after a debilitating illness.

One vital decision reached at this time was that there should only be a General Assembly every second year, combined with a general conference, and that in the intervening years a working conference with participation by invitation only should be scheduled. With that in mind, a working conference was planned for 1995, to be held in the EDI training centre in Toalmaz, near Budapest, Hungary. The prayer guide attached to newsletters provided opportunity for many to lift one another, regardless of country or type of ministry in Christian education, before the Throne.



Tom Sine speaking at 1995 Conference in Toalmaz, Hungary

The conference from 1-5 June 1995 dealt with the theme, "What are the issues facing Christian education in Europe today and in the future?" Tom Sine, a Christian futurologist, helped the participants to look at trends in the world and Christian culture, with the view to helping them sketch what the issues were that Christian education was facing in the present world and what they would be in the future. Participants worked in groups on trying to sort out what they thought the main issues or needs in European Christian education were:

- Defining what Christian education is
- The need for a Christian philosophy of education
- Teacher training for Christians
- A Database of Christian education resources

These issues became the basis for future EurECA conferences, both general and working types.

Conferences: Generating momentum

Conferences became the focal point of EurECA work. The hunger to meet others of like mind was great, as was the thirst for information and impetus that would help in practically implementing Christian education in the personal contexts. In addition to the conferences, however, EurECA published a twice-annual Newsletter in English, German and French that went out to the membership and others that were interested. A Prayer Guide was begun to include detailed requests and praise items from any and all EurECA members; this information was very useful in informing members about the challenges and the blessings being experienced by others in Christian education in Europe. Some examples of concerns from various countries at this time are:

- Students from French Christian schools helped to build a school in Mali.
- A three-month training course for Christian teachers was begun in Collège Daniel, with two teachers from Zaire participating.
- A conference for over 200 Christian teachers was held in France to encourage them.
- A Polish Christian teacher was able to lead a Hungarian engineer to Christ on the train trip back from a EurECA conference, using literature from an American missions group he heard on the streets of Budapest.
- A conference for Polish Christian teachers was held in Katowice.
- Pastor Willi Sartorius, of Switzerland, as head of the European Evangelical Alliance, and Dr. Armin Mauerhofer, of the Evangelical Theological Seminary in Riehen, Switzerland, supported the work of EurECA.
- Christian schools in Germany were interested in supporting schools in Eastern Europe.
- Christians in Zagreb, Croatia, were interested in starting a Christian school for their children.

Issues faced in one country often became issues very quickly in other countries. One such was NLP (Neuro-Linguistic Programming), a strategy for learning languages. Its roots were in a form of mysticism originating in Romania, but it had infiltrated schools in Western European countries. Robert Matzken wrote extensively against its use in schools, especially by Christian teachers, and he encouraged EurECA to take a strong stand against it. An article describing it and showing its non-biblical base by Robert Matzken and Dieter Velten was included in the summer 1995 newsletter.

Membership issues

The subject of membership became critical at this time. In the start-up years, donations had covered the organizational costs of EurECA. Conference costs were covered by conference fees, except where they involved participants from Eastern Europe, who were unable to

cover their own costs. These were generally covered by donations from Western Europe. Now that EurECA was functioning as a registered organization, with a presumed membership, the annual fees were supposed to cover the day-to-day administrative costs. The whole idea of a paid membership, with an application process, however, was foreign to many Christians in Europe. People belonged "in" Christian organizations, not "to" them. Christian organizations were expected to live by the donations of interested "members," who profited from their association, however tenuous, with the organization. The concept of becoming a paid-up member was slow in coming to fruition, and EurECA went through several lean years at this time.

The network grows

From 29-31 March 1996 a general conference was held in Schloss Beuggen on the theme "Education and Evangelism." Keynote speakers were Dr. Michael Dieterich, a psychologist at the University of Hamburg, Germany, and Dr. Paul Negrut, President of Emmanuel Bible College, Oradea, Romania. A quote from EurECA Newsletter No. 5, in May 1996, informs us of what went on at the conference:

Nearly a hundred people attended this general conference in Rheinfelden, coming from as far apart as Norway, Romania, Spain and Scotland. Our speakers were Professor Michael Dieterich, from Germany and Dr. Paul Negrut from Romania. They covered a wide and complementary range of issues which included an analysis of why the church has largely lost its educational vision, how the church is a historical and eschatological entity which needs to engage with history and culture, and also an analysis of the child's spiritual development which integrated psychotherapeutic and educational theory with evangelical Christian theology. English copies of the lectures were distributed at the end of the conference and are available for other members.

The three board members whose terms had expired were re-elected at the General Assembly, and new members were received into EurECA, bringing the total to 25 organizations and 75 individuals. An English brochure had been developed, outlining what EurECA is and does; this document was to be translated into French and German, and offered to all who were interested in Christian education in Europe.

At this time, Dick Derksen's role at Black Forest Academy was taking more of his time, and he sent a letter to Robert Mewton, asking whether he would pray about taking on a more active role in the administrative work of EurECA. After prayer by both members, it was decided that Robert would remain with his work in Aix-en-Provence, and Dick would trust the Lord to help him balance the many facets of his various roles.

Another topic that became part of EurECA board discussions was that of sending used school furniture to struggling new Christian schools in Central and Eastern Europe. Rosemarie Stückelberger had a passion for these schools in need, and there was plenty of good used furniture available in Switzerland. Ultimately, EurECA could not become involved in this enterprise and rather encouraged the Swiss group to form its own organization, so a Swiss organization, Pro-Schule Ost, was formed to handle this ministry. This organization then became a EurECA member.

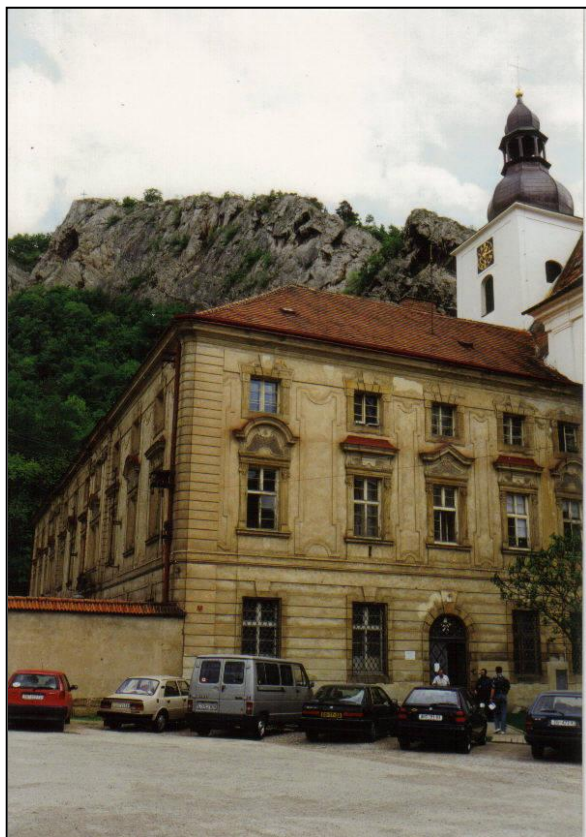
A combined ACSI-EurECA prayer/newsletter No. 2 went out from Rosemarie Stückelberger in October 1996, listing the praise items concerning Christian education from seven countries in Central and Western Europe. God was working marvelously. Some examples included were:

1. A Christian school in Iasi, Romania, helped by a Christian school in England to get started.

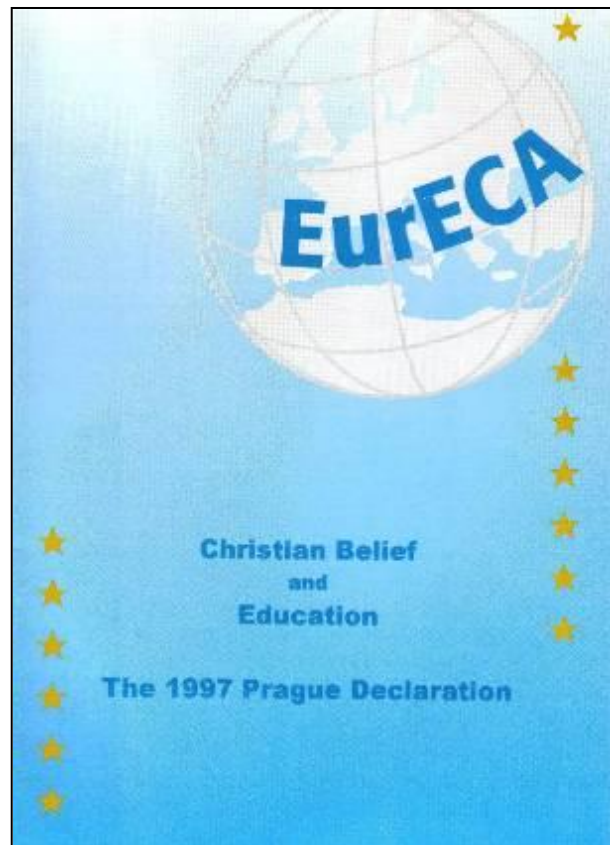
2. Seven high schools and 3 primary schools operating in Romania, as well as more than 30 kindergartens.
3. Seventy teachers participated in a Hungarian-Polish Christian teachers' conference, as well as 40 that took part in an ACSI teacher-training event, and others from Czech Republic, 200 Christian teachers in Slovakia and 110 in Lithuania, that had attended training sessions.
4. School furniture from Switzerland had reached schools in Romania and Hungary.

The Winter 1996/97 EurECA Newsletter reported that two EurECA members, Ruth Deakin-Crick and Marek Kaniewski, attended a conference for Christian educators in Sydney, Australia in July 1996. Christian education had become a global topic. A similar conference was to be held in the Netherlands in 2000, and EurECA explored the possibilities of working together with Dutch organizers in planning this conference. New possibilities for teachers to receive training to the Masters level were reported, and Dick Derksen presented a position paper entitled "Multiculturalism or Internationalization in Education: Are these concepts synonymous? Are they biblical?" Because of Globalization, especially insofar as East-West relationships in Europe were concerned, this and related topics were very moot subjects for discussions and debates at the time. Belgium, France, Germany, Great Britain, The Netherlands, Poland, Romania, Spain, Switzerland and Ukraine reported growth in organized Christian education and requested prayer for further challenges in their contexts. There was even a request from South Africa, for a conference for Christian educators and parents.

1997: The Prague Declaration and financial struggles



St John under the Rock near Prague



The Prague Declaration

The EurECA Working Conference, 16-19 May 1997 in St. John Under the Rock, an impressive old monastery under a great overhanging rock cliff near Prague and an evangelical Christian teacher-training centre, was held with 37 participants. The concept behind a work-

ing conference was to have a limit on both number and the qualifications of the participants, in order to facilitate in-depth discussion of a particular topic. The conference produced the Prague Declaration on Christian Belief and Education, which has since been published by EurECA in a number of languages and has become part of several documents produced by Christian teacher organizations, some even having been submitted to governments as grounds for requested legislative changes. Jerusalem Trust, a sponsoring organization in Great Britain, paid for the translation and printing of the Prague Declaration.

One attempt for EurECA to be useful was made by Dr. Ruth Deakin Crick, who pled for an internet 'Virtual Library' project through the British Bible Society, which would provide a toolkit of resources for Christian teachers. EurECA could have a homepage there. Somehow this never really got off the ground, and EurECA sought to get its own homepage.

EurECA's dependence on Black Forest Academy continued to be of concern, as BFA underwent leadership changes at this time, and the vision was shifting from using education as a missionary tool to the primary focus of educating missionary children. Lack of finances within EurECA made it dependent on the services of BFA for administrative services, especially as they involved the use of BFA resources, including Dick Derksen's time.

EurECA looked for ways of dealing with these situations, but BFA continued to anchor EurECA for some time to come. The production of the newsletter was taken over by Dr. John Shortt. Plans were also announced for the creation of an internet gateway, possible national chapters of EurECA in various countries where this would be helpful, and of cooperation with other Europe-wide Christian initiatives, such as Hope for Europe. Although the idea was widely circulated at this time, there was simply not enough in the EurECA bank account to finance a General Secretary. Dick Derksen, although he had announced his resignation from the job of Administrative Officer, rescinded his resignation and continued his role.

The conferences 1998 - 2000

The 1998 general conference was held at Haus Palmgarten, Kandern, Germany, with Dr. Harro van Brummelen as speaker. He brought practical examples of how biblical truths should govern our teaching style. The venue lent itself superbly to the aims of a EurECA conference, but unfortunately, its use was to change immediately following the conference, and would no longer be available.

In 1999 a working conference was held near Berlin. Dr. Jörg Ohlemacher, Professor in the University of Greifswald, spoke on the theme of "Christian Values in a Multicultural Europe," and the participants discussed aspects of this theme, seeking to produce a paper similar to the Prague Declaration. Unfortunately, this never came to fruition, though the speech was advertised in the internet.

The 2000 working conference was held near London, England, in conjunction with another international gathering of Christian educators. That gathering took place to replace a conference in Holland that had fizzled, but since tickets had been purchased by many from around the world, a location near London was found for them. At this time, most of the board members of EurECA were present. Henry Toews assessed the situation of EurECA as critical and in need of a structural review. The organization could not depend on BFA for its financial and organizational support in the long run and the general membership needed to assume responsibility for its operation. Board members and friends of the organization accepted the challenge and EurECA transitioned into a European entity.

2001: Portrait of a conference

The 2001 General Conference took place at Schloss Beuggen in Germany, where several EurECA conferences had taken place before. Here is Waltraud Gebhardt's account of the conference:

"Seventy Christian educators from nineteen countries gathered together: from Norway to Croatia; Finland to Portugal; Scotland to Romania. Three travelled from the United States of America and two from the even more distant land of Australia. The participants represented a wide range of Christian involvement in education. They came together from newer Christian schools; older church schools; state schools of various kinds; international schools and theological seminaries. There were teachers, head teachers, trainers of teachers, school inspectors, advisers to national governments and some were involved in home education. Some were leaders of national associations of Christian teachers, some worked with organisations supporting Christian work and witness in schools; and others worked to provide classroom equipment for needy schools in eastern Europe. A wide age range was represented: the young and active and those past retirement age, no less energetic.

"The speakers for the plenary sessions were Dr. Lee Hollaar from Canada and Dr. Ian Findlay from Scotland. They led the conference participants in grappling with issues of educational leadership and school improvement. Dr. Findlay spoke of the need to consider a broad view of leadership to include, not only the professionals within and outside our schools, but also parents, pupils and others from the wider community. He referred also to the effect of continuing professional development of staff, which gave Christian teachers the opportunity to influence by example, offering guidance and support to the school community.

"Dr. Hollaar drew our attention to leadership in the context of a changing landscape as the world of education moves from a period dominated by rationalism and individualism into all the unknowns of what has come to be termed post-modernity. A common thread in the talks of both key speakers was that Christian educators need to see leadership more in terms of community building and the development of a shared vision than of old-style hierarchies with their pyramids of authority.

"Workshop sessions sought to apply this thinking to particular educational contexts and issues. The strengths, weaknesses, threats and opportunities of different national and regional situations were analysed by the participants in small groups. Lively plenary sessions shared concerns and challenges which we face in an increasingly secular society. As country representatives reported and gave us items for prayer, we learned also of new openings to share the Christian message.

"The EurECA 2001 General Assembly took place during the conference and no fewer than 15 new organisations and 28 new individuals were accepted into membership. This brings the total membership of this growing association to 48 organisations and 135 individuals."

Mission, vision, values, strategy

With Dr. Ruth Deakin Crick having had to resign her position on the board due to the pressures of her doctoral studies, and Henry Toews having been re-assigned to South Africa to give leadership to the African region of ACSI, Daniel Neuhaus, Acting Chair of EurECA, read the following statement, prepared by Dick Derksen:

"The mission of an organisation is a general statement of the aims of the organisation. The mission of EurECA is to encourage Christian education in all its facets in Europe.

"The vision of an organisation is the statement of what the desired results will be after a specified length of time. The vision of EurECA is the working together and information of inspired educators from all European countries. Controversies concerning Christian education will be dealt with, and EurECA will inform Christian churches about the expectations of Christ and the needs, and to motivate them to engage in appropriate activities.

"The values of an organisation are the foundational principles that guide the organisation in all activities. The values of EurECA are: The Word of God is the final authority in all matters

of knowledge, faith and practice; EurECA attempts to integrate God's Word into all aspects of Christian education.

"The strategy of an organisation is the way it chooses to fulfill the mission, to reach the vision, and to integrate the values. Strategies change from time to time, when goals have been reached or the situation has changed. Strategies of EurECA are: To encourage membership and gifts, to inform through newsletters, electronic media and general conferences, to stimulate working together through working conferences, committees and national or language-defined activities, to encourage missionary work and Christian education within Europe. This takes place through active support primarily for those who live in disadvantaged regions; to win a stronger voice in European politics, insofar as it concerns Christian education.

"The necessary conditions are those things that would be used to fulfill the strategy. The conditions for EurECA are: a leadership team that is capable of engaging themselves fully in promoting the vision of EurECA, members who are ready to promote the vision of EurECA by working together, finances to make it possible to realize the strategies."

Dr. John Shortt reported on the responsibilities of his new role within EurECA – Travelling Secretary. Changes in his employment had freed him up to become a speaker at conferences and had given him opportunities for more writing, both things he loved. He felt that he could combine these with his representation of EurECA, and he thus also took upon himself the editing of the EurECA Newsletter.

2002: A conference within a conference



The 2002 working conference, held in Budapest in conjunction with the Hope for Europe consultation in April, was reported thus by Dr. John Shortt, who attended on behalf of the board:

"For two days, 30 delegates from 12 different countries thought, discussed, prayed and worshipped together. We applied ourselves to working through the challenges facing us as Christian educators (i) in contemporary secular societies, (ii) who seek to educate for the whole of life, (iii) who seek to see that education has its rightful place in the mission of the church and (iv) who seek to follow biblical models for learning and teaching.

"Unlike our annual EurECA conferences, this congress took place during school term-time. This meant, sadly, that many teachers were unable to accept invitations to attend. But it also meant, happily, that we had with us Christian educators from further and higher education and church education.

"We sought to identify ways in which we should all educate in a more godly manner:

- Seek greater humility about our finite knowledge and a greater emphasis on it as being relational (a Hebrew view rather than a Greek view).
- Value uniqueness and originality rather than force learners into a mould.

- See some positive benefits in secularity but oppose secularism as an idolatry.
- Encourage one another in home, church and school to learn throughout our lives.
- Encourage our homes, churches and schools to be learning communities.
- See both the 'big picture' and the real issues that people face in their daily lives.
- Develop a greater awareness of different learning and teaching styles in home, church and school.
- Seek a biblical balance in a Christian education that (i) orients and provides security, (ii) helps us all to think and question, and (iii) enables us to live wisely together in God's world.
- Work to make Christian education more central to the mission of the whole church."

Death once more claimed one of Christ's saints, as Dieter Velten passed on into eternity in 2002. He had been a mainstay in the EurECA inception committee and board for twelve years, and he had guided the organisation through the shoals of registering EurECA as a charitable society. At the same time, he had taught in a state school in Germany and had been chairman of the educational committee of the Gnadauer Verband, which is the voice of pietism in Germany. His wisdom and dry humour would be missed greatly by all Christian educators in Europe, for he was quite active in all the conferences that EurECA sponsored, until the Lord took him home with Him.

2003: In war-marred Croatia



Some conference participants praying together in a Vučovar church

The 2003 general conference was held in the Evangelical Theological Faculty in Osijek in northeastern Croatia.

At this year's conference, 15 countries were represented with a total of 54 participants, and had as its main theme, 'The Learning Revolution'. The programme included a historical tour of Osijek and a visit to the war-ravaged city of Vučovar on the Serbian border. There, the evidence everywhere of destruction, and, at the same time, the perseverance of hope displayed in the

results of ten years of reconstruction, were especially impressive. The main speaker on the theme of 'The Learning Revolution' was Per Garmannslund from Norway. He is engaged there in several national and local projects dealing with new approaches to learning. The term 'Learning Revolution' refers to a rather broad movement which started in the 1980s.

The common denominator in the various currents might be found in the saying 'It's not How smart am I? but rather How am I smart?'. This indicates a shift from focusing on the teacher to focusing on the learner. It also reminds us of the Christian belief that every human being has gifts which make him or her unique, and which oblige us to discover the unique plan for each human being. Per Garmannslund said that three main streams may be discerned within the broad Learning Revolution movement: a) the Accelerated Learning movement, b) the Learning Styles movement, and c) the Multiple Intelligences movement.

A range of criticisms of some aspects of the Learning Revolution from a Christian perspective and of ideas for practical consequences were discussed in groups. The General Assembly saw new people join EurECA, and it experienced the departure of Dick Derksen as Administrative Officer after 12 years in that role. He continued to mentor his successor, Jeff Benjamin, who took on the limited role of Treasurer. Others picked up the various pieces of what had been Dick's responsibilities.

Conferences 2004 and 2005 – and a proper website

For the EurECA Working Conference 2004, entitled "God's Purposes for Education in Different Contexts," 41 Christian educators from across Europe met together for three days (29 April – 2 May) in the venue of Hotel Szépalma set among rolling wooded hills near Zirc in western Hungary.

Representatives came from 15 different countries: Austria (2), Bulgaria (2), Croatia (1), England (6), France (5), Finland (1), Germany (8), Hungary (4), Norway (3), Poland (2), Portugal (2), Romania (1), Slovakia (1), Switzerland (1) and Ukraine (2), and from a range of different educational contexts: church education, church schools, colleges and universities, home education, independent Christian schools, informal education and state schools. Dr. Pierre Berthoud of Faculté Libre de Théologie Réformée in Aix en Provence, France pre-

presented three lectures on the conference theme. Six context-based groups worked both as separate groups and together in plenary discussions to identify both what they share with Christians working in other educational contexts and what is distinctive to their own contexts.



Hotel Szépalma, Zirc, Hungary, the venue of the 2004 Conference

The 2005 EurECA conference took the group back to Le Rimlishof in Alsace, France, where the first conference in 1992 had been held. About seventy participants from many countries gathered together: from Britain to Bulgaria; Finland to France; Poland to Portugal; Switzerland to Spain. The key speakers on the central theme "Love in the Context of Education" were Luc Bussi re and Dr. Armin Mauerhofer. They gave challenging addresses on:

- Love in theological and philosophical contexts
- Love in the everyday educational setting
- Love in the school classroom

A good variety of workshop sessions, led by the main speakers and others, sought to apply thinking to particular educational issues within the overall theme. The strengths, weaknesses, threats and opportunities of different national and regional situations were dis-



**Rosemarie Stueckelberger
with Armin Mauerhofer
at Conference 2005**

cussed in small groups. On a lighter note, on the last evening, participants engaged us with songs and stories from their own countries. There were also reports of items for prayer, including new openings to share the Christian message, particularly in countries of the former Eastern Bloc. The General Assembly of EurECA took place during the conference, and as some retired from the profession, the need for fresh younger blood was emphasised, as members were asked to join the board for the first time.

In November 2005, EurECA opened its own website. Thanks to significant donations from Christian teachers in England and Switzerland, this finally became possible. Dr. John Shortt, Travelling Secretary of EurECA and a long-time board member, keeps the website up-to-date. The website is offered in the three official languages of EurECA: English, French, and German. In addition to basic information about EurECA, it provides reports on past conferences, articles relating to Christian education, as well as book reviews and resources.

Conferences 2006 and 2007: A catalogue and an anniversary

70 Christian educators from 17 nations gathered in 2006 for the annual EurECA conference. According to the bi-annual rhythm, this was a working conference; its theme was "Christian Worldview in Teaching." The Convent of the Charitable Sisters in Graz, Austria, turned out to be an ideal facility for this event. Participants presented, viewed, evaluated and amended Christianly-based educational materials. The wide range included assessments of literature, ideas for teaching math and science, courses in teaching about gender and sexuality – all

based on a Christian worldview. The intensive cooperation brought forth, as intended, a catalogue of teaching materials, which went online on the EurECA webpage. Dr. John Shortt as the conference speaker offered four PowerPoint presentations (slides translated in both German and French), presenting four base-line themes of Christian pedagogy:

- Faith in the Curriculum
- Teaching for Wholeness
- Teaching as Story-telling
- Knowing as a Form of Loving



Jazz Concert at Conference 2006

The intensive work was balanced by a Jazz concert one evening, and the traditional 'Evening of the Nations', which included intercessory prayer as well as an impromptu European fashion show, showing above all the humorous creativity of the participants.

The conference of 2007, marking the tenth anniversary of the Prague Declaration, looked back on these ten years to see what had changed, what had remained, and what had disappeared in that time, and set the sails for the next decade of effort through Christian education to bring a measure of God's Kingdom into European culture. Hence, the theme "A Christian Vision for Education in 21st Century Europe" was chosen.

The venue was Emmaus Bible Institute in its beautiful location in Vevey, Switzerland, on a hillside above Lake Geneva. From all across Europe (and even as far away as Singapore!) 70 educators from 16 countries (7 from Austria, 2 from Bulgaria, 1 from Denmark, 10 from England, 2 from Finland, 3 from France, 12 from Germany, 2 from Italy, 3 from Latvia, 3 from Norway, 3 from Poland, 1 from Portugal, 10 from Romania, 2 from Scotland, 1 from Singapore and 8 from Switzerland) came together.

In the plenary sessions, led by Pastor Rudolph Westerheide, Director of Christian Endeavour in Germany, and Gordon Showell-Rogers, General Secretary of the European Evangelical Alliance, and in working groups, worship and prayer times and informal time together, the concern was to look back to what was stated in the Prague Declaration and how it may need restating ten years on, look out at the Europe in which children and young people are growing up today, look forward to the challenges and opportunities facing Christian educators, and look up to the Lord whom these educators seek to serve.

In the first main session, Pastor Westerheide reminded the conference guests of Luther's four 'onlys' - only faith, only scripture, only Christ and only grace - and challenged them to apply these to their discipleship in their work among children and young people. In the second main session, Gordon Showell-Rogers invited them to consider the context in which they live in the 21st century and the impact this has on their work with youngsters.

Conferences 2008 and 2009: Hope for the planet and a record



Dave Bookless speaking at Conference 2008

The 2008 EurECA conference took place once again in the Exerzitionenhaus der Barmherzigen Schwestern in Graz, Austria during Ascension Weekend (1-4 May). The 62 participants gathered from 16 countries: Austria (10), Bulgaria (3), England (10), Finland (3), France (4), Germany (7), Italy (1), Netherlands (2), Norway (2), Poland (4), Portugal (2), Romania (8), Slovak (1), Switzerland (2), Ukraine (2) and one participant even came all the way from Australia!

The conference was a working conference for teachers of all curriculum subjects with the aim of helping them both to learn and to teach their students how to care for God's world. It focused on the very topical theme of our times - on "Hope for the Planet: Christian Education for a Sustainable Future". The main conference speaker was Dave Bookless, a former teacher from England, working at present with the international Christian nature conservation organisation A Rocha. The motto of the conference was Psalm 24 verse 1: "The earth is the Lord's and everything in it".

Emmaus Bible Institute, Vevey, Switzerland, was once more the venue for the 2009 general conference. An unprecedented demand for spaces forced the organizers to find beds in other locations, as well. With the theme, "How Should Christians Teach?" 110 educators of all ages and backgrounds could find something to take home with them. Dr. David Smith, a longtime friend of EurECA and a very creative writer, offered helpful suggestions to all for their tasks in the classrooms of Europe and elsewhere.

EurECA members found other ways to share their knowledge and experience with those whose resources were more meagre. Daniel Neuhaus was able to share about the West African Round Table on Christian Schooling, where he and other Christian educators shared how God had taught them to teach Christianly. Harold Klassen has been able to talk to teachers in various countries in eastern, central and southern Asia about a Christian worldview that drives the educational process. Dr. John Shortt regularly speaks at conferences in Eastern Europe on these themes. Books by various EurECA members are circulating in the libraries of Christian educators around the world. EurECA has proven itself as a fruitful and helpful organisation for Christian educators in every way, and its inspiration is felt not only in Europe, but around the world. If "I have found it" (Eureka!) becomes a part of a Christian educator's life, then that person's world soon hears about it and is encouraged to "find it" for themselves.

The founders of EurECA hope and pray that the movement will take hold within the next generation of believers in European countries and indeed spread to countries of the Middle-East, Asia and ultimately extend globally to fulfill the Great Commission "to make disciples of all nations, teaching the new disciples to obey all the commands given by our Lord."



Working hard in a soft environment: 2009 at the Institute Emmaus in Vevey