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EurECA Conference 2002

Education Consultation at Hope 21 Congress

Budapest Convention Centre, Hungary

The Hope 21 Congress took place in Budapest in April 2002. About 1,200 evangelical Christians from many walks of life and 35 different European nations came together from east and west to explore the hope of the gospel for 21st century Europeans.

25 different two-day network consultations were held in different parts of the city. These networks included prayer, evangelism, education, youth ministries, artists, apologetics, city ministries, the family, men's movements, women in leadership, and many more.

In the evenings we travelled to the Budapest Convention Centre by means of the city's highly efficient metro and tram network for the Plenary Sessions where we gathered with the delegates from the other 24 networks. The speakers included Roland and Elke Werner (Germany), Stuart McAllister (Scotland) and Valdir Steuernagel (Brazil).

These plenaries focussed on: the enormous historic impact of Christianity in Europe; the failures of Christendom throughout Europe's history; the abiding relevance of the Gospel in today's world and the challenges facing its effective communication in post-modern Europe.

The final day saw all the networks gathering in national groups, reporting back on the deliberations of the networks and thinking through strategies for implementing their findings.

The Education Consultation

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 questions, 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.

After all this, it is small wonder that many of us went home tired but happy!

John Shortt