

IMPACT

In the public arena

Julia Doxat-Purser
Christel Lamère Ngnambi



EEA's Socio-Political Team, working together with EEA's members.

Issue 12 – February 2010

Impacting the city through media

The church's role is to tell the story of Christ. We tell that story by the way we live and in what we say. For six years, I have been involved in communicating the values, worldview and truth of the gospel through the local media in Manchester, UK. In a culture that values authentic voices, the people of God have got the best stories to tell.

Jesus' challenge to raise our light on a stand so that people may see our good works and praise God (Matthew 5:15) motivates us to tell the tales publicly. We have a colourful array of 'good works' to display – so that the Christian voice is heard in multiple public debates (ranging from asylum issues, to gang culture to business ethics, work-life balance, restorative justice and more).

A few examples:

- The life of a former gangster who now leads the team of Street Pastors speaks of the Gospel's transformational power on a personal and community level
- The Christian households who provide accommodation for destitute asylum seekers show our compassion for the persecuted
- The crowds blowing a whistle in our town square reminds the government of its commitment to the Millennium Development Goals

- The businessman who alleviates poverty by creating employment shows the power of compassionate enterprise.

These are just some of the many faces and voices that grace the local airwaves and feature in the local press. The Gospel is good news for the city. Media is vital in the understanding of our mission. By just starting to engage, we have seen remarkable ripple effects. One interview generates the next; a letter to the paper generates an invitation for an article; a local story is picked up by a national paper and television News. So, while our focus is local, several stories have featured in regional and national media. And then various spokespersons have subsequently been invited to significant public platforms, such as speaking at Police Conferences, taking part in Home Office Consultations, meeting with the Prime Minister on a visit to the city.

It demonstrates that there is interest 'out

>>

An update on the EU Equal Treatment Directive

As you know, the EU is proposing to ban discrimination in areas other than employment, with an impact on the way businesses and individuals provide goods or services to clients, patients or students. While most of the ideas are good, this directive presents us with serious challenges for freedom of expression and faith. In the last 18 months we have invested a lot of time and effort on this.

Our work has been widely recognised by many our partners and by EU officials. For good reasons, the prospects of the ETD being adopted can upset many Christians. The approach that the EEA believes to be the right one, however, is that of quiet diplomacy and continuous lobbying of EU officials in Brussels, and refraining from being too alarmist. So far, civil servants and politicians have generally been very willing to meet with us and discuss our concerns, even though some of them are very sensitive.

continued page 3 >>

Julia Doxat-Purser
EEA Socio-Political Representative &
Religious Liberty Coordinator
eea@community-house.co.uk

Christel Lamère Ngnambi
Brussels Representative
christel.ngnambi@europeanea.org

CREDITS [www.flickr.com]
"Newspapers" by Alex Barth
Marijke Hoek's photo was kindly provided by herself
"Open Day at the European Parliament in Brussels, 09 of May 2009" by European Parliament



>>

there' in the Christian message.

Too often the church has been hesitant to engage with media, hiding their light under a bushel. On the basis of 1 day per week, I have created circa 175 media engagements per year. It involves developing relationships with local editors or radio producers, writing press releases and letters to papers, organising interviews and responding to media queries. Also, we have a rolling program of media training for radio and TV interviews, which is a vital part of our equipping to engage confidently and creatively with the media. A growing pool of artists, teachers, entrepreneurs, medics, charity and church leaders are equipped and envisioned to take part in the public debate with grace and flair.

The Forum for Change aims to see more of such local media hubs develop in the UK. One person who acts as a catalyst in the media can serve many Christian organisations and initiatives. It is an effective way of communicating the gospel

and it is a cost-effective way of working. Over the last years, several cities have developed such a media hub. See for example, www.mediahub.org.uk, www.dundeeforchrist.com, www.tellitincolour.com.

If you are interested in developing something in your locality, start chatting to a few people, pray together, explore whether there is a journalist with some time on his/her hands. You'll probably find an open door in the media. You may need to enable a culture shift in the church – moving from suspicion of the media to a sense of mission. But do engage. Make the most of every opportunity, always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks us of the hope that we have. We need a church that is noticed by the wider culture. We have got a good story to tell and we need to tell it with grace. In this way, we can fill the city with the testimony of Christ.

Marijke Hoek

www.eauk.org/forumforchange



Marijke Hoek
Coordinator,
Forum for
Change
EA UK

In his book, Disciples and Citizens, Bishop Cray writes, "Jesus was a story teller... God's power was as much in action in the telling of parables as in the healing of the sick... We need to find similar, imaginative ways to retell, subvert and challenge our nation's stories."

In our media engagement we challenge the dominant narrative in our society and offer an alternative based on the Christian worldview.

The European Freedom Network

If you would like to explore what you could do or you would like to join the conversation, please contact Julia Doxat-Purser on eea@community-house.co.uk

A lot has happened since the June edition of Impact (where we focused on the victims of human trafficking and prostitution). EEA has encouraged connections between national Evangelical Alliances and others working in this field – in prevention, outreach to victims, Business as Mission and advocacy. Our goal is to encourage conversation and the spread of best practice and cooperation. Conversations have already led to sharing prayer needs, information and advice and to a joint visit to Ukraine that strengthened connections between Christians with a heart for this work: training needs and opportunities in Ukraine are now being assessed.

All of us (Europe-wide) in this new informal network have chosen the name "European Freedom Network". Please pray that the joint efforts of all of us together will truly deliver and deserve the grand name.

The challenges and opportunities are huge. Just to give one example: many of our countries' governments and police forces are not implementing even the basics of prevention, or of care, investigation and prosecution of cases..

EEA members should try to be at an excellent training and networking opportunity just before the General Assembly in April. We have a 3 hour (all morning) 'Freedom Training' seminar on Tuesday, 20th April.

Although the Swedish Presidency of the EU Council (June to December 2009) was initially very keen to work towards a quick adoption of the ETD, they had to abandon their plans. It became clear that much more in-depth work was needed on the Directive and that some key Member States (e.g. Germany) fiercely oppose the adoption of the Directive. We hear the Spanish Presidency (January to June 2010) has similar hopes, but it is quite likely that they will be similarly disillusioned as there is still some work to do.

It's also still hard to say whether the ratification of the Lisbon Treaty will have a positive or a negative influence. According to senior lobbyists in Brussels it could have both advantages and drawbacks. Please continue praying for this issue so that we will be able to uphold our values boldly, clearly and effectively.

Left ris Kaloter kis, EEA Intern in Brussels

EEA Brussels Office Priorities for 2010

Apart from our efforts with the Equal Treatment Directive, our socio-political work in Brussels this year will focus on four other areas.

Creation Care (environmental issues)

We will continue to stress the need for serious discussion among evangelical Christians about developing a Christian approach to caring for the creation. There is a clear need for a sharper approach. We strongly feel that environmental issues should receive more attention in national Alliances. We as Christians should play a leading role in caring for God's creation and promote the need for responsible stewardship and management of the earth's resources.

Poverty and Precariousness

The EU has designated 2010 as the "European Year against Poverty", with activities throughout Europe focused on the rights and dignity of people living in poverty, and seeking to underline the shared responsibility of society to the poor. The Commission wants to engage civil society on the issue, recognising that long-term cooperative efforts are needed.

The EEA's socio-political team sees this as an opportunity for Evangelicals in Europe. To help with that, the Brussels office is developing thinking about a Christian approach to poverty and precariousness.

We would like to encourage national Alliances to get actively involved in the local programmes organised within the framework of the European Year against poverty (more info at <http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?langId=en&catId=637>). We strongly believe that grassroots churches and ministries have great potential for impact in these areas, as several Evangelical Alliances have shown in recent years. It is a great opportunity to proclaim the good news of Christ and contribute to more cohesion in society.

Migration

We believe that the EU still has a long way to go to ensure a balanced approach to migration that protects human dignity. Seeking to step up EU-level cooperation in judicial matters and home affairs, the European Commission, whilst recognising the need for a "dynamic and fair immigration policy", fosters an approach that is problematic from a Christian perspective. This is a complex issue that demands continuous consultation with experts, theologians and EEA members, in order to find realistic answers that are in line with Biblical teachings—and we aim to actively encourage those conversations in 2010. We do feel that one non-negotiable position for every Christian should be to recognise our obligation to befriend foreigners and facilitate their integration into society. We believe Christians can play a decisive role in changing public perceptions on migration. We will encourage national Alliances to take more effective action and engage in an effective dialogue among Christians.



Trafficking in Human Beings

The EEA will try its best to argue that human trafficking should be addressed alongside prostitution. Not all victims are trafficked into prostitution, but we believe the two issues should nevertheless be addressed together. Positive initiatives in the EU have included a recent Framework Directive arguing that demand for prostitution should be discouraged or even criminalised where the client is aware of the exploitation. This could have a substantial impact on prostitution Europe-wide. But we are not certain that this can happen in reality. So in 2010, we will continue our lobbying efforts for more binding measures.