

IMPACT

In the public arena

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

Issue 7 – April 2008

Trial by media

What should Christians do when the media say ridiculous and unfair things about them?

Julia Doxat-Purser reports an inspiring story from Spain

Pastor Marcos Zapata in Spain found himself famous because of lies printed in the national press. Zapata, who works for Dignidade, a charity that helps children in trouble with the law, had given a public talk on "How to bring up heterosexual children". Two months later, a newspaper printed a largely fictitious account of what he had said, implying he was homophobic. Politicians called for an investigation into Dignidade and a potential withdrawal of public funding.

The Spanish Evangelical Alliance, with encouragement from the EEA, sprang into action. Together with various Evangelical organisations in Spain, a public statement was widely distributed. It pointed out that, because Spanish Evangelicals know what it is to be persecuted, they are strong advocates for tolerance, freedom and equality before the law for all, including homosexuals.

They reminded the press that everybody is free to express and change their opinions and lifestyle. Zapata had not said the things that had been published by the press. But actually, this case is an issue of freedom of opinion and

expression. It would be a worrying development if those with different views were to be punished. The threats continued.

But as soon as politicians were told that the European Evangelical Alliance would be asked to raise this case with the European Union institutions as a worrying human rights violation, the threats against Zapata were withdrawn.

Meanwhile in Sweden, an episode of a television detective series featured the murder of a homosexual. When the police inspector asked for ideas about who might have committed the murder, it was suggested he should look for someone connected with the Swedish Evangelical Alliance!

This is a harder case to respond to because it is a fiction programme, not journalism. But it illustrates a worrying trend. We expect more examples of trial by media. The important thing when they come will be how evangelicals respond. Calm and gracious professionalism are essential. EEA staff are available to advise and provide support.

JDP

EEA contributes to major reflection on 'Europe's social reality'

"Dramatic changes are underway in European societies." The European Commission's initiative for "a new social vision for 21st century Europe" could not leave the Brussels office cold: evangelical Christians have been thinking and writing about 'a new social vision' for more than 20 years now. As part of EEA's activity in Brussels, the office had been monitoring the Commission's "Social Reality Stocktaking" since the spring of 2007. This public consultation aimed to "seek a wide range of views on these social changes": an exciting opportunity which the EEA could not miss. Our 23-pages principled response to the Commission's call, representing the voices of Europe's 15 million evangelical Christians, was submitted—and welcomed—in early March. Let us pray that all the hard work put into the submission will make a real difference to the future of Europe through increased influence and participation in EU decision making for a generation!

CLN



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Anne Dannerolle's photo was courteously given by herself

European Commission decides to fund EEA & IFES event

In January the European Commission granted funding for an EEA and IFES (the International Fellowship of Evangelical Students, a member of EEA) event under the 'Youth in Action' programme, which promotes mobility and non-formal training for young people. The **European Student Forum 2008** will take place in Brussels from June 28th to July 4th with the title: "Our responsibility in Europe's Future".

Student Forums have happened before, but none has had EU support. This year the Forum will gather 60-70 students from over 30 countries, for almost a week of participative learning about the responsibility of young people in the future of Europe, based on Christian values, worldview and faith.

Students will share quality time with professional mentors and get to know the EU both theoretically and in practice. Our objective is to help the students understand how they can make a difference to the future of Europe by getting involved in EU decision making

in civil society at home and internationally, and through the careers they choose.

Christian professionals will teach and inspire, spending time with students and helping them devise active citizenship projects. Speakers will include former EEA Representative in Brussels Tove Videbaek, former senior MEP Terry Wynn, Gordon Showell-Rogers (General Secretary, EEA) and David Fieldsend (Manager, CARE for Europe). Thank God for this grant!

A lot of work is still needed to make this event a success. We encourage you to pray that students would be challenged to come and that lives would truly be impacted by this event.

We would also like to encourage you to prayerfully consider ways of supporting the ministry of EEA financially, and ask God to continue to provide His people with amazing opportunities like this (possible because of the EEA's representative nature).

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Challenging modern slavery



Anne Dannerolle

National Christian Alliance on Prostitution

In February, I was delighted to meet Spanish Evangelicals committed to working together to help trafficked women enslaved by the sex industry. I took Anne Dannerolle with me, chair of trustees of the UK's "National Christian Alliance on Prostitution" (NCAP). She shared how, 12 years ago, she and a few other Christians had wondered what they could do to help prostitutes. They started by simply giving out hot chocolate and a smile. Now, there is a project that has helped many escape prostitution and discover Jesus. NCAP has also been created, spreading best practice and successfully lobbying on legislation and the treatment of prostitutes.

Anne's story and resources inspired the Spanish to create their own plans which already include:

- ★ a campaign to challenge newspapers not to print advertisements for sexual services,
- ★ research into funding possibilities for practical ministry and
- ★ a media launch for the Spanish "Stop the Traffik" campaign, to try to persuade society to care about prostitutes (80% of whom are thought to be trafficked). The campaign will aim to change public policy so that it helps victims and punishes those who exploit them.

JDP

If these issues interest you, please go to www.stopthetraffik.org, www.ncapuk.org or contact Julia Doxat-Purser.

Albanian Evangelical Alliance sets a citizenship example after bomb catastrophe

When a story hits the headlines we don't often hear about churches' reactions. When these stories are terrible catastrophes, we often pray that God's children will truly be salt and light, working at being "at peace with each other" (Mark 9:50). The Albanian Evangelical Alliance is an example of an answer to our prayers: when there was a huge blast in an artillery-dissemble factory on 15th March, killing more than 20 people and injuring more than 255; 316 houses were completely destroyed and more than 1.200 were damaged. The Albanian Alliance immediately decided to help the 10.000 people of the area touched by this tragedy, as General Secretary Ilir Stavro reports on 27 March. As well as collecting donations and buying food and water for the most deprived, and helping kids with activities, games and gifts, the Alliance committed to helping to rebuild some of the destroyed houses and to providing help to traumatised children. Please pray for the Albanian Evangelical Alliance as they collect donations (for more information please contact EEA's central office at EEAoffice@aol.com).

This is a commendable demonstration of love to neighbours; and in a non-Christian culture, the Albanian Alliance has set a wonderful citizenship example, demonstrating an inspiring model of contributing to the well-being of fellow citizens sacrificially and without any personal gain. Many thanks to our Albanian sisters and brothers for this inspiring lesson. For a Christian, being a good citizen is also simply this: being salty!

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