

## Minutes of the General Assembly in Bratislava, Slovakia from 14<sup>th</sup> until 16<sup>th</sup> of October 2005

The General Assembly was hosted by the Slovakian friends of USKI in the Salesian seminar-centre in:

SALEZ / Salesiánské Centrum, Plachého 42, Dubravka in Bratislava-

Josef Habovstiak, our president/animateur, opened the session by the welcome evening and he said that we are working for our church and he encouraged the participants to give their best in this intention.

Wolfgang explained that at the meeting there were five countries represented by 27 participants (for details see the list of participants). Additionally he told about some friends, who hadn't been able to come to the meeting: some of them have sent written statements (see below), others have sent greetings: Herman Dikmans (B), Dr. Diane Gössing (D), Dora Szentirmai (SK), Dr. Bedrich Vymetalik (CZ), Gregor Petrovcic (SLO), Luis Petit (F), Reinhard Weiss (AT).

### **The programme had two main topics:**

- A.** The **study session** on the subject "Economy – Family – Europe" on Saturday with specific contributions by representatives of Young Professionals and
- B.** The **statutory session** on Sunday morning

### **A. The study session:**

As to the mentioned subject 4 presentations (3 Slovaks and 1 Austrian experts) had been held. For the concrete themes look at the programme and summaries enclosed. Written contributions prepared by Madeleine Baron, Andre Michel, Andre Marelle from MCC France; short version in English see enclosed documentation. Bernard Sorich distributed a text in German (an English translation of the actual part is in preparation).

### **Discussion, comments by the participants:**

*(By reading the report you have to keep in mind: the short statements represent mostly spontaneously expressed ideas by participants, who have to speak in foreign language – and additionally reported under similar conditions. By these circumstances the reader should not be very strictly if the report is clumsy!)*

#### **Terézia Lenczová (SK):**

At first she stated the thesis: "prosperity originates in the family!"

By this reason an important base for good democratic society conditions are the relation among the triangle: family – state – and the social network (a specific field of the Church parish and/or Christian activities; see also the statement by Anna Andrejiová, a Young Professional of Slovakia).

#### **Bernard Sorich (PL):**

By a review at the situation under the former communist regime he stated that the regime tried to get more influence in the families and at the youth. He reported many of the failures by the transition process in Poland in the last fifteen years, which have also negative effects for the families and the young people. In his eyes many of the politicians are not honest in their job and have double standards.

After some critical comments he summarised, that politics has to establish better framework for economics, which supports the creativity in research and development and will promote the efficiency

of investments. In a second part he mentioned the pro and contra of the globalisation process and in general also the bad conditions for the future development in Europe (EU, NATO, etc.) particularly by the demographic problems, the growing unemployment and poverty – and this not only in Poland; the growing omnipresent of anxiety about the family life and the absence of an optimism for a better future.

**Josef Habovstiak (SK):**

He means one of the most important problems is the high degree of divorce.

The possibilities of divorcing are very easy.

His meaning is that the payment for divorce should be higher.

According to the family legal system in Slovakia the husband is under obligation, to pay for the wife as well as for the children after separation.

**Bernard Sorich (PL):**

In Poland the politicians had made politics against the families. One of the consequences is, that they have been voted out of office.

**Pavol Kováč (SK):**

At least the economical lessons of a larger family are mostly positive. My personal experience as a head of a ten-person-family is, that in some level poorness can even be a “good teacher” for life. It is a good training for more solidarity –and this not only among the family members -, for a deeper understanding in social life and for a more assistance in study and work.

From this point of view we have to take also into account the ethical aspects. Nevertheless the value standards are being affected by the public policy too. For example: About 20 % of parents are not interested in having children.

What are the relevant reasons for these facts? The younger parents decide more spontaneously to have children, elder parents, nowadays the majority have less children.

**Mária Glasová (SK):**

Organisation is important for the feeling.

Poverty is suffering. We have to fight against poverty:

**Helmuth Schattovits (AT):**

Golden time of marriage was the 50s and 60s. In former times much fewer people have had the possibility to marry and having children. Nowadays many people don't want to marry, but still many of them want to have a child or children.

Moreover he presented an example of solidarity residential arrangements initiated and lived by himself since/for 15 years.

**Terézia Lenczová (SK):**

Mrs. Lenczová addressed a question to the auditorium: Is it the society or the family, which is in crisis?

If the society is in crisis, we have to look forward for a new start.

If the family is in crisis, what is the way to make family getting well?

**Pavol Kováč (SK):**

Mr. Kováč answered to this question: If the family is in crisis, the society is also in crisis.

Many people are convinced that the influence of media is negative. On the opposite side the media can be very positive.

“Big brother” is a reality: Notice shows like “Taxi Orange” in Austria.

However we have to realise that a well based family is an important aim of politics and of the Churches as well.

**Pavol Kossey (SK):**

We have to keep in mind: What are the positive aspects of the family - and these not only from a moral position?

When we take into account the different social problems in our countries like children prostitution, Aids, homeless and drugs problems, there are very different reactions. Usually the discussion is going in the direction of more severe laws so that all these evils could /should be stopped.

My opinion is very contrary to this position: I mean that the only institution which can mitigate all these problems is <A SOUND FAMILY>. When a man is anchored in a functional family, he/she has much less problems in the individual life. In my opinion the family is a key for solving many social evils in our societies. Additionally I mean: We have to keep in mind or to realise that the life is not only a life of burden. And: Young people are our future and a good education is a central aim for a better future.

**Mária Glasová (SK):**

Important matters: the situation of families and the family life relations between different family members.

Adolescent conflicts

The perception of the ideas is very selective. Young people are reflecting the family life by themselves – have their own ideas.

Usually the discussed ideas are very idealistic – and more or less far from the real situation.

A more realistic and optimistic experience is necessary. In the real life the circumstances are very difficult.

It needs the balance to use the talents, the intelligence and several tools.

**Statements by Young Professionals:**

**Christel Koehler (FR), MCC Young Professional:**

Many of problems: Perhaps the decreasing of the traditional kind of family.

In Paris 50 % of the households are single households.

There are not enough 2-room studios – divorcing is also an economic problem.

It is also a reason for the high rate of depressed people.

At the same time, we have good news:

- higher educated people
- new means of communication
- boom of spontaneous charity actions.

For the more details of the statement see the enclosed paper – “Family, economy, Europe: MCC Young Professional contribution” (!)

**Anna Andrejuvová (SK; single), secretary of the Christian Democratic Party CDP = KHD**

2 Subjects:

- Youth organisations
- Family and influence of media to the families.

To support the life of families:

There are Organisations and activities by young people with a background of the catholic church ()

- movement for children of church community  
usual nice families open for the society
- Collecting money for the 3<sup>rd</sup> World  
particularly in Africa to support schools and medical centres

Christian youth community

There are a number of special organisations for young people with special aims and activities:

For example:

- memorial day about unborn children
- intellectual oriented organisations studying Thomas Aquino and so on
- organisations supporting family life  
preparing for marriage and/or family life
- political oriented groups near KDH  
interested in family law subjects and so on

### Dark side of the problem

Lack of money and time (many burdens on their shoulders: flat, food, a. s. o.)

One of the consequences is: It needs more family friendly environment!

Media: Shows like “taxi orange” influence young people – more activity of Christians using the media is necessary

### Barbara Mayrhofer (AT),

Barbara has presented a short statement which she has prepared together with Markus Olechowski; see documentation.

She presented, what “family” means in the catechism of Catholic Church and in the programs of the two largest parties in Austria. She also said, that still a lot of measures must be done until women and men really have the same rights, duties and possibilities.

Statement of Wolfgang Spitaler was: “In case if I am 30 and not 70 years old”. This statement was a promotion to young professionals – and should provoke them! See the enclosed documentation.

## B. The statutory session:

### SIIAEC programme /statutory session/:

- Presentation and confirmation of the new Secretary Theo Quendler.
- Information of Pax Romana about the new leading team, /update in the PR
- SIIAEC homepage, contribution to PR activities.
- Young professional activities
- Finances
- Subject of the next assembly, preparation by SIIAEC mail

After the morning service we had the statutory session:

1. Wolfgang Spitaler, the former president / animateur started the presentation and confirmation of the new Secretary Theo Quendler, and has given also some explanations concerning the actual executive team (see below).
2. The SIIAEC executive board and the responsibilities (see paper from 14th April 2005):

<b>Function:</b>	<b>Responsibility:</b>	<b>Obligations:</b>
President / Animateur	Josef Habovstiak	External representation of SIIAEC, responsibility for main activities, promoting new ideas and coordinating SIIAEC activities
Secretary General	Theodor Quendler supported by Wolfgang Spitaler (former president)	Preparation of meetings, responsible for the minutes, updating of the address list (post and email addresses), correspondence, contact to Pax Romana ICMICA (reports), communication, documentation about SIIAEC
Spiritual Assistant	Père Christian Rigard-Cerison	Representative of the hierarchy and advisor/consultant in spiritual affairs
Treasurer	Herman Dickmans	Financial responsibility, fundraising
Animateur of young professionals	Christel Koehler (inv), Barbara Mayrhofer (inv)	Activating the YP and representing them at the board of the movement
Specific SIIAEC representatives	Jean Bussac Lelio Bernardi Père Christian Rigard-Cerison	UNESCO, Paris FAO, Rome ILO, Geneva (??)

<u>National contacts:</u>		
Austria	Wolfgang Spitaler	Representatives / contacts at national level
Belgium	Herman Dikmans	
France	Bernard Hyon	
Germany	??	
Hungary	??	
Italy	Lelio Bernardi	
Netherlands	Edith Brugmans (inv)	
Slovakia	Marián Polak	
Slovenia	Gregor Petrovcic	
???	???	
Indonesia	Djamester Simarmata	
U.S.A.	Joseph Kirchner	
Homepage manager	Markus Olechowski Antoni Winiarski	Installation and updating of the homepage
E-mail Service see also secretary	Wolfgang Spitaler	SIIAEC-mails distribution and feedback-mails, updating of mail address list, animation / organisation mail-contacts for "SIIAEC-studies"

Some of the above mentioned representatives still have to be confirmed (invited!).

In the question of our identity and our specific position in the network of PR ICMICA the discussion has been very short and not deep enough. Anyway there are no doubts that we are Christians and as such members of the worldwide Catholic Church. At the same time the SIIAEC is a specific wing of PR ICMICA, a worldwide network of laic movements. The members of SIIAEC have expertise in various professions as well as the conviction that they have to share the church mission for all of humanity (as it is said in Gaudium et Spes: "An Offer of Service to Humankind"). In this conviction we know that we are a part of the larger Christian community of faith.

The primary source for our spiritual orientation and our action are: besides the Gospel particularly the Vaticanum II and the Catholic Social Teaching CST.

3. W. Spitaler had presented the actual status of the SIIAEC homepage. It is still in progress. Some former paragraphs were changed during the discussion. Because of lack of time we had to stop the discussion and postpone the finalisation of it as well as the proposed SIIAEC Vision. The SIIAEC team in Vienna has prepared a further developed version and we enclose it as documents for feedback.
4. Young Professional activities: The question was: How to go on in the future? Due to the small presence of young friends, it was difficult to decide. At the moment it is not possible, to arrange a special meeting for Y.P. There is no base for this. MCC has been mentioned as an example, which has a long successful tradition. At the moment we have to accept the realities and will meet the next time mixed again!
5. Finances: Our treasurer, Herman Dikmans, has reported that we have a very low budget and we have to ask for contributions by the member federations. All the contributions at this weekend meeting had been voluntary. We have to thank all of them for the contributions – particularly Joseph, the president, who has arranged the programme together with the Slovakian friends. But for the future we have to look for better financial conditions.
6. The next SIIAEC assembly – the place and the subject:
  - The place: as the first choice has been mentioned Ljubljana. In this question we have to contact friend Gregor Petrovcic. Another proposal by friend Bernard Sorich was Krakow.
  - The subject: The proposal was "Agriculture in general" or more specified: "Agriculture in EU and worldwide". Josef, the president, voted for the question of Catholic lobbying for a more human friendly economic system.

Christel Koehler proposed: "New agriculture, providing sustainability and food security"  
Meanwhile Wolfgang has prepared an umbrella-theme, which integrates the different ideas and is not only focussed on a small specified issue. It is: "New Agriculture, sustainable and fair worldwide – providing regional food security and energy support. How to lobby for it?"

Josef, our presidency, has started a very critical review; he is obviously not satisfied with the traditional kind of meetings. In his eyes a useful example could be “Velehrad”, which is organised by Dr. Vymetalik. One of the important questions is: How can we activate the Catholics? - My comment: This is a general problem and not only a problem of SIIAEC (!!!).

7. Any other business (AOB)

Père Christian and Bernard Hyon inform about the large MCC meeting in Marseille from 13<sup>th</sup> to 14<sup>th</sup> of May 2006. The subject is: “Demain serons-nous solitaires ou solidairés?”. They invited SIIAEC to join the conference:

Minutes by:

Theo Quendler (Dec. 2005; supported by Wolfgang (Sp) and Barbara (M.))