

# The LEAF

ISSUE 2



## YOUTH AND ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY

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COUNCIL OF EUROPE  
CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE



World Council  
of Churches

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## Dear Reader,

By the time you read this, 2011 will have passed and 2012 is already in its puberty. What has happened in the last year? Was there any noticeable progress made towards a better now? Could you, "if tomorrow Your child asks you" (Dtn 6:20), look back proudly or do you look back in regret? Most people have started to acknowledge or recognize the problem of climate change and injustice – which is good but this can also be a code word for not doing much. Recognizing the problem is the first step but change needs further steps and active contributors. Change does not happen when we rely on others to start; change happens, when we start.

Just by holding this Issue of *The Leaf* in your hands, you are probably one of these people, who has already started or is about to take his first step. Even small things make a difference: the youth group picking up trash, the person turning to vegetarian/vegan diet, or the person, who is raising the topic again and again.

Thank you!

We sincerely hope you will enjoy reading this magazine about people who have tried to contribute. Please do not forget: we are very interested in receiving your comments, contributions and new ideas at:

[campaign@eyce.org](mailto:campaign@eyce.org)

**Philipp Ruess, Campaign Coordination Team (CCT)**

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# EYCE's Campaign to Promote Ecological Justice

by EYCE' Campaign Coordination Team (CCT)

## BACKGROUND

The environment is one of the most, if not THE most, challenging concern for contemporary society. It includes not only the obvious "green thinking", but also issues concerning land use, water, food, pollution and waste, migration and a lot more. Very few young people are aware of the links between environment and issues like social justice, lack of education, poverty and armed conflicts.

Therefore, the *Campaign to Promote Ecological Justice* is based on a broad approach and seeks to explore those links. During the three years, the campaign will focus on the different political and theological perspectives, the promotion of an ecologically responsible way of thinking and living, the links between ecological justice and wealth and poverty, as well as the question of how the lack of natural resources trigger armed conflicts and violence.

## FOCUS

EYCE *Campaign to Promote Ecological Justice* was launched in March 2011 and aims at raising awareness on ecological issues from global and diverse perspectives among young Europeans, as well as at implementing practical changes and ecologically responsible solutions within the work of youth organisations and lives of young people. With the outcomes of the campaign we plan to contribute to the work of other actors in Europe and beyond, who work in the field of ecological justice.

In order to achieve the aim, the following objectives have been identified:

1. to raise awareness of ecological issues in Europe and beyond;
2. to study and analyse the developments from the conferences in Kyoto and Copenhagen;
3. to explore the relation between ecology, economy and politics, including reviewing ecology issues as basis for numerous conflicts;
4. to empower the organisations and/or individuals to tackle issues connected to ecological justice;
5. to enable the organisations and individuals to lobby for a greener Europe;
6. to provide practical advice and tips for ecologically responsible lifestyles;
7. to develop a policy paper on ecological justice to be presented at EYCE's General Meeting in 2013, which would entail implementing results of the Campaign as an integral part of the running of the Council.



**EYCE** campaign to  
**PROMOTE**  
**ECOLOGICAL**  
**JUSTICE**  
Ecumenical Youth Council in Europe

Throughout the three years of the campaign it is planned to focus on three different aspects linked to ecological justice:

- \* 2011: approaching the issue from theological and political perspectives;
- \* 2012: tackling the theme of ecology and justice and exploring the relation between ecology, economy and politics;
- \* 2013: sustainability.

## ELEMENTS

The *Campaign Coordination Team* – a group of young volunteers coming from different social, cultural, denominational and geographical backgrounds – are responsible for planning and implementing the activities of the campaign. The team is supported by a full time volunteer based in EYCE's office in Brussels and two members of EYCE's *Executive Committee*. In order to provide a variety of thematic input and human resources, a *Pool of Interested People* has been created for the campaign, where people from EYCE's network, its member and partner organisations belong to. You want to join that Pool? Write us an e-mail at [campaign@eyce.org](mailto:campaign@eyce.org)!

During the three years of the campaign, an on-line magazine on ecological justice, information leaflets, EYCE's homepage and the Campaign's Facebook page will provide both basic, as well as specific information on the themes addressed.

Are you interested in the campaign? See EYCE's homepage: [www.eyce.org](http://www.eyce.org) or visit and like us on Facebook: **EYCE's Campaign to Promote Ecological Justice**.

You're interested in joining the *Pool of Interested People*? You would like to write articles for the magazine? You have any other idea or project you think we should know about? Or you simply have a question? Write to [campaign@eyce.org](mailto:campaign@eyce.org) or [general.secretary@eyce.org](mailto:general.secretary@eyce.org).

# Youth and environmental sustainability

by Giovanni Circella



*Giovanni Circella is a researcher at the University of California, Davis (USA). His main interests include urban planning, environmental issues and sustainable mobility. In December 2010, he represented the European Youth Forum at the United Nations Conference on Climate Change (COP16) in Cancun, Mexico.*

What can young Europeans do to increase environmental sustainability in the communities where they live? This question is very important because natural ecosystems are increasingly under pressure, and public decision-makers often lack timeliness in providing effective measures to reduce the impact of human activities on the environment.

Young generations dream of a better world and are usually considered the strongest promoters of a better and more sustainable future. However, this does not necessarily mean that they always commit to more environmental friendly behavior in their consumer choices and lifestyles. Young people (as well as any future generations) can be considered the real victims of environmental disruption. And as the living conditions and environmental quality on earth continuously worsen, it will become much harder to re-establish natural equilibria to remedy today's mistakes.

Not surprisingly, many youth organisations are increasingly advocating for stringent measures and agreements that would reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions and contribute to stop global warming. But apart from asking for more environmental-friendly legislation and responsiveness from public authorities, what else could young generations actually do that would contribute to achieving targets of environmental sustainability and limit the disruptive effects of global warming and climate change? Is there a real commitment to change behaviours, besides expressing strong ideals and innovative positions through internet documents and street protests that are shaping everyday life in most large cities of the developed world?

*Image 1: A young representative of a South American community appeals for stronger policies to ensure sustainability at the COP 16 in Cancun, Mexico.*

Human history is full of examples of young idealists who become more conservative later in life. Just a few decades ago, the youth of the world supported liberal movements that claimed they would have changed the world. Young activists stated that they were building a new society based on peace, respect for the environment, equality and social justice. They did indeed change society in many ways, in its lifestyles, musical tastes and cultural trends.

However, when it comes to public choices and the administration of public and private businesses, most young revolutionaries from the '60s and '70s have later converted to more conventional ideas (the political path of Ronald Reagan in the USA and of many other leaders in Europe are good examples of the evolution of ideas in those years). Some of the current generation of world leaders consists of those young innovators and revolutionaries: after innovations and transgression had finished, they suddenly appeared as the representatives of the old conservative system for the new young generation from today.

Today's youth has instead taken the role of victims of the decisions made by the leaders. Intergenerational justice is a very important topic when



Image 1 - photo by Giovanni Circella

addressing issues related to climate change and environmental sustainability. The younger generation is often left out of important decision-making processes and more generally from political life.

*Image 2: Members of the European Youth Forum appeal for immediate action to reduce climate change at the COP 16 in Cancun, Mexico.*

Economists would argue that human attitudes towards the future are perfectly rational: we discount the future (i.e. a benefit today is better than a benefit tomorrow, as well as we under-evaluate environmental disruption if it happens in the future rather than today). Older generations, for obvious reasons, tend to discount the future even more than younger generations do: their subconscious informs them that they have less to lose from such a deal. All this increases the feeling of being silent victims of a tragedy that somebody else has not prevented from happening.

The question is: to what extent can the

world leaders, generally policy-makers in the adult stage of their life, compromise the future life of today's youth, making short-sighted decisions about environmental issues? But we should also ask ourselves, are the young of today ready to catch the challenge, and seriously commit to a consistent path of actions that can contribute to establish more sustainable living conditions? To answer this question, an online survey was carried out among members of AEGEE-Europe, the European Students' Forum – a network of students with more than 15,000 members from 41 countries in Europe. The survey was administered among members who were travelling to the annual meeting of the youth association that was held in Alicante (Spain) in the spring of 2011. In the survey, participants were asked to share their environmental attitudes and opinions on various topics related to their commitment to actions aimed at increasing environmental quality in the communities they belong to.

Out of 173 respondents to the survey, 141 (86.5%) reported that they were "concerned" or "very concerned" with

environmental issues, ranging from air and water pollution to the consumption of natural resources and the reduction of biodiversity, and 64 (39.3%) stated that they have already changed their behaviour in several ways in order to adhere to a more sustainable lifestyle. An additional 16.5% of the respondents reported that even if they had not changed their behavior yet, they might do so in the future, to improve their ecological footprint with regard to several indicators (Respondents were presented with a list of choices, like recycling waste, driving less often, drinking tap water, buying products made of recycled materials, etc.; results are here referred to the average values, across categories).

Thus, it can be inferred that these students not only see themselves as concerned or even very concerned about environmental problems, but also reported that they were actively engaged in contributing to the solution to those problems.

Despite respondents' self-reported engagement in environmentally driven choices, when asked about the



Image 2- photo by Giovanni Circella

choices they had actually made to reach the location of the meeting in Alicante, Spain, only 15 respondents (8.7%) said that their commitment to environmental sustainability was one of the factors that impacted their travel behavior choices during their trip. Most participants reached their destination by plane, using either a low-cost air carrier (125 responses, 72.3%) or a major airline (18 responses, 10.4%). When asked about the most important factors for choosing their travel mode to reach the final destination, total travel time and cost were the most prevalent factors. The mode of transportation chosen by the majority of participants for this trip was perhaps not surprising given the long distance many participants had to travel to reach Alicante (the average distance travelled by participants was 1995 km, one way). However, travel time and cost were also considered the main drivers for the decisions relating to the eventual secondary travel mode (the one chosen by the travellers for a shorter part of the trip). Although in this case the use of public transportation, bus or train, was more common.

The percentages reported in this study are affected by the socio-economic status of respondents and at the same time provide a picture of the causal relation existing between motivations and actual behavior: 55 of the respondents (32.4%) were students who did not work at all, and only 26 (15.3%) were full-time workers. Furthermore,

68 respondents (41.2%) depended on their family as their main source of income, and 34 (20.6%) respondents depended on some source of scholarship/student aid. Only 11 respondents (6.7%) could rely on a net salary larger than 15,000 Euros per year, thus depicting a population of interest in this study that is price-sensitive, and therefore particularly attracted by the low fares applied by low-cost carriers, and sensitive to the need of minimizing their travel cost more than anything else.

Similar results were obtained in a project that was developed during the summer of 2011. It involved 35 young Europeans who gathered in Bari, Italy, to brainstorm on the role of youth in increasing environmental sustainability in their local communities. All participants acknowledged the need to undertake real actions to reduce the environmental impact of human activities, and the great potential that the role of youth can have in spreading environmental consciousness and increase sustainability in contemporary society. However, barriers to the development of youth-promoted projects, and lack of involvement in the political agenda were identified as the most common obstacles to turn these ideals into reality.

The results from these two studies suggest young people seem to be more seriously committed than their older counterparts to promoting healthier and greener lifestyles. Perhaps this

is because they will be the first ones who will bear the consequences of today's choices. However, ample differences exist between their environmental attitudes and beliefs and their real consumer choices and involvement in practices that can reduce the environmental impact of everyday life. Yet, the impact that they are able to make in the current society is, to date, rather limited.

The fact remains, however, today's youth are the leaders of tomorrow, in the same way in which today's leaders are the youth from yesterday: a generation that was dreaming of love and respect for nature, but nonetheless currently procrastinates in their behavior, postponing important decisions that could reduce the environmental emergency. If the current young generation is able to keep its commitment to sustainable development intact during its life, translate it into effective actions and a solid political agenda, the world can still hope for a more sustainable future. "In every deliberation, we must consider the impact on the seventh generation" was the law from the Iroquois Indian Tribe: will we ever be able to enforce a similar ethical rule in the development of the contemporary society?

*Image 3 - Young Europeans participate in the European debate on environmental sustainability at the EU Green Week in May 2011*



Image 3- photo by Giovanni Circella

# Ecumenical Climate Change

WCC and LWF "Youth for Eco-Justice" Programme  
at COP 17 - (26 November – 10 December 2011, Durban, South Africa)

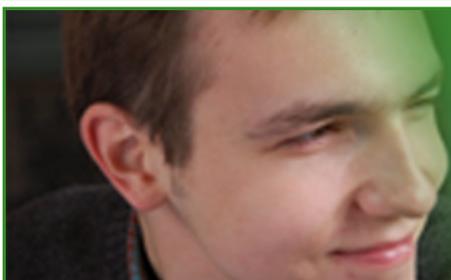
by Stanislau Paulau

## COP 17 AND A "HUGE ENEMY"

At the beginning of the third millennium, humankind is facing a number of global challenges. It isn't necessary anymore to go to the cinema in order to watch a movie about horrible dangers threatening the planet. The global challenges are real and they have become a sign of our time. Simultaneously with the globalization of culture, economics and industry, we can observe a "globalization of problems". The particular feature of such kind of problem is that no political power, no society, no country, no superhero can solve them on its own. Nobel Peace Laureate Archbishop Desmond Tutu said we are facing a "huge, huge enemy, an enemy called global warming, climate change". This "enemy" threatens the common home of humanity, imperiling global north and global south, rich and poor alike.

In order to struggle with this "enemy", in 1995, the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) was established, and since then, annual Conferences of Parties (COP) have been held. In 2011, the 17th Conference of Parties (COP 17) took place. Decision-makers from 194 nations gathered in the city of Durban, South African to negotiate the future of climate change. Around 15,000 registered participants came together with thousands of non-official participants, representatives of civil society, faith communities and NGOs. They gathered to negotiate and to raise their voices to say that leaders should take the urgent and resolute action that is needed to prevent the catastrophic destabilization of global climate, so that the entire world can move as rapidly as possible to a stronger emissions reductions treaty which is both equitable and effective in minimizing the dangerous climate change.

This meeting in Durban was important and attracted much attention because the commitment period of the Kyoto Protocol comes to an end in 2012. As climate change is directly connected with greenhouse gas emissions, it became an issue of big politics.



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Long-industrialized countries, that have emitted most greenhouse gases in the atmosphere, don't want to take responsibility for climate change mitigation by immediately reducing their own emissions, nor investing in a clean energy revolution in the developing world. But at the same time, the poorest communities have to suffer under the effects of climate change.

Climate change is one of the signs of the groaning of creation, suffering the consequences of human mistreatment. It is also a sign of injustice, when the most vulnerable and minorities face the greatest consequences. In order to tackle this problem, a change in the economic system is needed. But also a change in our actions, from the position of dominators to stewards of God's creation; so we see more and more clearly the links between the ecological crisis and socio-economic justice. The only way to overpower a "huge enemy" of climate change is the way towards Eco-justice.

Although Eco-justice is quite a new word, it has a rich history. The "eco" prefix comes from the Greek word

Oikos for "house" and is part of the etymological roots of economy and ecology, but also ecumenism. In linking environmental and social justice issues, the environmental justice approach, "eco-justice", challenges both humanity's destruction of the earth and the abuse of economic and political power which results in poor people having to suffer the effects of environmental damage.

The biblical prophets had long ago deduced this intrinsic connection between ecological crises and socio-economic injustice, railing against the elites of their day for the exploitation of peoples and the destruction of ecosystems: "Judah mourns, her cities languish; they wail for the land, and a cry goes up from Jerusalem. The nobles send their servants for water; they go to the cisterns but find no water. They return with their jars unfilled; dismayed and despairing, they cover their heads. The ground is cracked because there is no rain in the land; the farmers are dismayed and cover their heads. Even the doe in the field deserts her newborn fawn because there is no grass". (Jeremiah 14: 2-5)



Photo by the Lutheran World Federation

## Y4EJ = 'YOUTH FOR ECO-JUSTICE'

Simultaneously with this crucially important meeting of COP 17, the World Council of Churches (WCC) and the Lutheran World Federation (LWF) organized a transformational training program "Youth for Eco-Justice" (Y4EJ) for young change-makers from different churches and faith-based organizations from all around the world. The program started with a two-week training and immersion in the context of the international climate change negotiations in Durban. About 30 young people from different cultural and denominational backgrounds came together to study and unfold the complex links between environmental issues and socio-economic structures and processes.

This incredible rich program included studies (theological and environmental), workshops, meetings with experts, and of course lots of discussions. Because people came from so many different contexts, each could bring a fresh vision on the problem and share key studies from his/her home country. The main focus of the program was the current debate about climate change, sustainable development and

green economy and the practical steps which can be made in order to promote environmental and social justice in the face of the ecological crisis.

One of the most important parts of the program was community building, which happened throughout all the steps of the program, but especially during bible studies, sharing time and cultural exchange. But the strongest expression this community found in the common prayers, which were everyday held by the participants.

Apart from the training itself, the Y4EJ group also got a chance to participate in the ecumenical and civil society activities of COP 17 and got to know the local context in Durban

## INTERFAITH RALLY

At the very beginning of the program, the day before COP 17 opening on 27 November, Y4EJ joined the interfaith rally, the first event for faith communities in Durban, who have been preparing for a year for COP 17. "We have faith!" was the main slogan of this event. Believers came together from different faith traditions to voice the

moral and spiritual call for a paradigm shift and climate justice. Christian, Jewish, Muslim and Hindu leaders expressed the common concern of caring from a religious perspective. During the rally Desmond Tutu delivered the petition with 200,000 signatures of support titled "We have faith" to both the incoming President of COP 17, Maite Nkoana-Mashabane, South African minister of International Relations and Cooperation, and to Christiana Figueres, executive secretary of the UNFCCC Secretariat.

It is particularly joyful to see that many Christian communities are increasingly concerned about the ecological crisis and the way humanity is treating God's Earth. It is significant that Christians all around the world began to more actively understand that climate change is our responsibility. Even if many of the Church leaders couldn't come personally to Durban, they sent messages to COP 17. Among others such letters, Pope Benedict XVI, Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew I, Archbishop of Canterbury Rowan Williams and the WCC General Secretary Rev. Dr Olav Fykse Tveit were found as senders.



Photo by the Lutheran World Federation

## **SOUTH AFRICAN CONTRASTS**

South Africa is a country of contrasts: extremely beautiful nature and rich biodiversity goes along with huge ecological problems, chic “western” parts of the city and near areas which are facing extreme poverty and unemployment. And probably the biggest challenge for the country is HIV/AIDS.

During the training program Y4EJ could also learn more about the local context and meet some people who are involved in projects in areas surrounding Durban. One such place was the village Inanda, in rural Kwazulu Natal, where local women started support groups for the community, and later, youth support groups also formed. This project was initiated by the Diakonia Council of Churches (a local ecumenical council). Now there are approximately 5 support groups of 100 people each.

Even though rural communities have to struggle with huge challenges in terms of social, medical and ecological problems almost by themselves, the people still radiate joy and hope. I think one of the biggest lessons we can learn, both as individuals and as a society, from the South African people, is that we should try to help to each other and not lose joy and hope even when everything seems hopeless. The Church plays a special role in that. We could see the liberation power of faith and true joy, brought to the people during a Sunday service when we were able to celebrate with a small community near Durban.

## **GLOBAL DAY OF ACTION**

The civil society demonstration has become a tradition at COPs. This year’s Global Day of Action gathered about 20,000 people in Durban. The non-violent march involved the international and national community, religious and environmental organizations, civil society, and the active participation of the young people from Y4EJ training. Y4EJ held banners and joined the call urging international leaders to take concrete action towards addressing climate change, in addition to an urgent legally binding and just agreement. Thousands of people from across the globe marched through downtown Durban to express that they wanted a just and sustainable future for the sake of all people and creation. What was really interesting about this march was that it was a celebration rather than a protest. People celebrated their faith in the future and solidarity with each other.

## **‘TO BE CONTINUED’: FROM THE GLOBAL PERSPECTIVES TO THE LOCAL ACTIONS**

The whole program Y4EJ was aimed to equip young people with the tools which would help them become “multipliers” of eco-justice. That is why, during the program, participants had training sessions on communication, campaigning, and project management. These were aimed at helping them initiate and implement projects in their home context in the months following the seminar. The hope is that in 2012, participants will develop initiatives that promote the new understandings they have acquired during their stay in Durban.

Y4EJ did not finished in Durban, but will continue all around the world and hopefully active involvement of young people in those projects will draw more and more attention and therefore the movement for just and sustainable future will grow.

## **CLIMATE CHANGE AND HOPE FOR THE FUTURE**

Even though COP 17 didn’t manage to produce a decision which would be able to stop global warming in the near future, all that happened in Durban gives a sign of hope. It gave hope that the ecumenical climate change will take place, that global warming will allow Christian churches to come together and end the seemingly endless winter that has existed for several decades within the ecumenical movement.

When global politics is more concerned with economical growth and its own prosperity, people of faith have to remind them of the true values of justice and peace. This message will only be heard if it is made in one voice. In Durban we were the witnesses of the spring in the ecumenical movement, when Christians from different denominations and contexts, and representatives of other religions, raised their voices together to advocate for climate justice.

Will the challenge of global warming help to overcome the global cooling of the ecumenical movement? And vice versa, will the ecumenical movement help to overcome global challenges? It depends very much on young people and on each of us. Can we facilitate ecumenical climate change and justice and peace on the earth?

# School of Ecological Activists 2011

by Katrin Gonchar & Nadin Kuleshova



*Alumnae of the School of Ecological Activists 2011*

*Volunteers of Green Alliance, Belarus*

*Katrin Gonchar*

*Nadin Kuleshova*

Last summer, the biggest Belarusian ecological non-governmental association, Green Alliance, once again organised the summer programme 'The School of Ecological Activists'. This was the fifth time when this outstanding series of workshops takes place. The school consists of two levels. The first level is for everyone interested. It lasts for just two days and covers common ecological issues of wide concern. Every spring there are several rounds of first level workshops and only those who go through it have access to the more advanced second level.

The second level workshops are an exciting one-week intensive practical course held in a beautiful, almost wild place far from cities. It consists of different sessions: theoretical and practical tasks devoted to advocacy, public campaigning, project management and fundraising. The global aim of the school is to increase civil activeness in the ecological sphere.

A wide range of topics and issues are covered in both levels of workshops:

- The history of ecological movement from extremism to bureaucratic communication and correspondence.
- Deep ecology: reintegration with nature.
- Bioregionalism.
- Right for environment: survival ability.
- Climate change: awkward truth.
- Sustainable development: think global, act local.
- Our common future: what can I do and what groups can I join? The main tools of the ecological activist.

Here in Belarus, in the civil sector, there is always a sharp question of human resources. The School of Ecological Activists solves this problem

brilliantly turning a group of ordinary people into highly motivated (thanks to deep ecology) inspired (thanks to positive examples of the invited experts) and equipped (thanks to project work) active citizens.

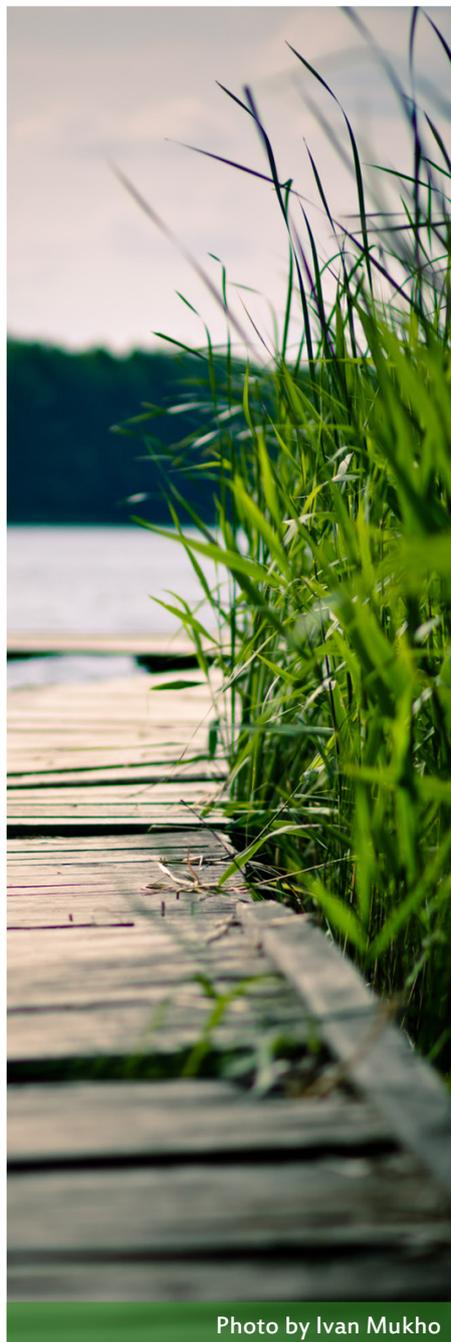


Photo by Ivan Mukho

The crucial moment of the workshops is an "Idea Market". In this exercise all the participants set up their ideas for future pieces of activism. This becomes the first stage for participants' mini-projects which are then supported by Green Alliance.

Coming back home after the week workshop is not the end. There are small and specific follow-up workshops, group and individual consultations for bringing the mini-projects to life and of course, emotional meetings of the participants, who come from different corners of the country.

The mini-projects supported are now in stage of realisation. They are not only a practice in ecological activism for the alumni of the school, they are trying to solve some local issues, such as education for sustainable development, alternative energy resources, workshops with children and grown-ups, eco-friendly packaging, preserving biodiversity, water reclamation, cycling development and information space development.

These workshops are an efficient eco-study instrument and a welcomed resource because of the educational school programme, the high level of involved experts and the post-school supervisory support. School administration stays open for cooperation, making it more flexible and always having an up-to-day actual program.

Here are some links connected to the School of Ecological Activists. They are in Russian and are very good. If you speak Russian they are really worth reading.

*Eco-school web-portal 1. Web-portal of Ecological Association Green Alliance  
Беларуский Зелёный Портал*

*A report on Summer School*

*Competition essay of one of the participants named "I know what you did last summer"*

*Blog of one the mini-projects EcoGroups*

*Videos made during the "Media Day" of School's programme*

# Campaign Dissemination Visit - Belarus and Ukraine

by Phillip Ruess

Most people in the world know the board game *Monopoly*. The aim is simple: You have to purchase streets and houses and try to financially ruin your opponents. A simple game with simple rules. It is so popular that nearly every city in the world has its own version of *Monopoly*. Yet, it can cause mistrust in families. A fun fact about *Monopoly* is that it was originally invented by Quakers under the name of The Landlord's Game to show the negative consequences of property trade. And negative they are. The aim of the game is, to become the monopolist. Own everything. Every street, every house, and every dollar in the game.

During the dissemination visit of the Campaign Coordination Team, several aspects reminded me of *Monopoly*. Not only were the city layouts of Minsk and Kiev to some degree similar to the board layout: identical looking houses and long, straight streets which formed a pattern of squares. But most of the people passing by on the street looked like they have either won or lost a game of *Monopoly*. Even the attitude expressed by some seemed like a direct copy from the *Monopoly* rule book: to make tons of money, without consideration for anyone or anything.



*Phillip Ruess was born in 1986 and he's been with EYCE for roughly a year. He is currently in the Campaign Coordination Team, studies protestant theology, likes to play games, socialise with friends and to try new vegetarian dishes.*

When we arrived in Minsk our first challenge was to actually get to the city. One point of advice to our readers, if you are planning to travel through Eastern Europe, at least learn the Cyrillic alphabet. Otherwise you won't even be able to find the correct bus stop. The ride was long and to some extent boring. Long, straight streets, followed by even longer and straighter streets. Our next challenge was shopping and here's another piece of advice: try the smoked cheese commonly found in the east of Europe and don't be shocked by the prices. The exchange rate of Euro to Belarusian Rubel is roughly 1€ to 10.000BR.

The aim of the dissemination visit was to get familiar with the country and the people and maybe plant a little seed of hope and environmental-awareness in the projects we saw. On the second day we visited a project called "The Green Cross", a project dedicated to

the task of teaching young children the importance and the beauty of the 'outside' as well as Christianity. When we arrived we were given some food. You can always rely on Eastern European hospitality and, if you are a vegetarian, be prepared to get something like a hearty meat-soup, just without the meat. After our bellies were satisfied, we toured the building, essentially a youth hostel for young children, where they could spend a week or more together, painting, singing and dancing.

Later on, the Project Manager explained that she feels that most children have lost the connection to the environment and their own bodies; they cannot use or control them as kids whereas a couple of years ago they could do. This is not only true in Belarus! She pointed out that most kids were spending more and more time sitting in front of a TV or PC instead of



Photo by Kristine Jansone

exploring the wild. Skills like running and jumping were slowly decreasing. She also mentioned that a lot of young people are leaving the country because they can earn more money elsewhere, instead of using their skills to make their home county better. This is just what a player in *Monopoly* would do: what benefits him. A lot of young people only think about their own income and lifestyle and 'flee' a country which doesn't offer them as much as other country might. Before we left, we were invited to give a little speech and answer some questions. Afterwards, we got the opportunity to learn some Beloarusian folk dances, where the author was the living proof of somebody who has spent too much time in front of electronic devices...

On our last day we visited the Eco Project in another town. After we arrived, we were fed, this time with Turkish coffee, tea, and sweets whose only ingredients seemed to be sugar, but which were still very tasty. The Eco Project and Green Cross are working towards the same goals, but their way to get there is quite different. The Green Cross attempts to change the youth by "learning by doing", whereas the Eco Project tries a more educational approach. The Eco Project aims to provide materials which raise awareness;

increase the level of environmental knowledge; and raise the consciousness and awareness of the local authorities, businesses, the household sector and general public concerning questions and aspects of environmental protection. But also The Green Cross aims to achieve improvements in energy and environmental situation as well as health of the population in Belarus. To do so, they have created a huge network of partners and try to lobby within the authorities of local and national governments.

The next day we travelled even further east and took the night train to Kiev, Ukraine. Taking the night train might not be as comfortable as going by plane, especially for 'soft' western European butts. But taking the train is definitely more exciting, especially crossing the border. Due to the checking of the passports by the Belorussian and Ukrainian authorities it takes roughly 2 hours, which for us was unfortunately between 1.00am and 3.00am. You are allowed to drink during the trip, but not to sleep :)

In Kiev we visited the United Nations Voluntary Office which coordinates a program to activate civic society and engage them in various fields of activity. Most recently the UNV supported

to "Let's do it, Kiev" campaign, a spin-off of the "Let's do it, Estonia" campaign, where 50,000 people picked up over 10,000 tons of garbage from the country's forest in about 5 hours.

The aim of the Kiev action was to raise citizens' feelings of personal responsibility for Kiev's cleanliness. Through this informative and enlightening campaign, and spreading the international experience, every citizen can make a contribution to the cleanliness and beauty of the city. The action "Let's do it Kiev", which has not only ecologic, social and economical effects, is the first step in the realization of a long-term project "Let's do it, Ukraine" which is aimed at harmonizing relations between people and nature, making life in clean, cultural countries fashionable, overcoming consumer attitudes to environment, and sorting and collecting garbage.

All in all it was a very successful visit and the CCT could go on with the preparations of the training course, which was held in Kiev as well. But first we had to regain some energy, by enjoying the local foods and beverages.



Photo by Kristine Jansone

# The Liberation of Creation

by Margriet Westers

## EAGERLY AWAITING THE COMING OF CHRIST

I grew up in a Christian family belonging to a Reformed Church in The Netherlands. When I was a teenager, I regularly attended Christian youth camps organised by an evangelical network. I deeply value all the contributions this organisation has made to my own spiritual journey. Many committed Evangelical teenagers and young adults grow up, or have grown up, in such a context.

We know Hillsong songs; the religious experiences of being moved by a certain song or silence during a time of worship; the strong belief that something great is about to happen. I especially remember one evening when a speaker at one conference walked onto the stage, after we'd been singing for an hour or so. I shivered as silence filled the space, strongly believing that God was there in our midst. "I need to tell you something," the speaker said, "Jesus will return within our lifetimes. I just know it." And I believed. We all did.

I lack space and time to discuss the underlying theology of this eschatology (the study concerned with the "final events" in history). I would therefore like to read a well-known passage from Romans 8 and try to give it meaning and understanding in an evangelical context that does justice to creation. I hope this will be a small contribution to intra-religious dialogue on ecotheology.

*Margriet Westers has a bachelor's degree in Theology and is currently studying Arabic Language and Culture in Utrecht, Netherlands. She's interested in religion, politics and how the two interact. She enjoys ecological travelling (hitchhiking), the Middle East and cycling to university in the misty morning.*



## WAITING IN EXPECTATION...

As it is often understood in evangelical theology, creation is corrupted since the Fall of Man. Creation needs salvation, in the same way as humans do. Therefore, it needs to die in order to be saved. This is a gracious gift from God. Just as human works do not contribute to grace or eternal salvation, nothing can be done by creation or humans to save the earth. In this light, the following text of the apostle Paul to the Romans can be understood:

*I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us. For the creation waits in eager expectation for the children of God to be revealed. For the creation was subjected to frustration, not by its own choice, but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the freedom and glory of the children of God. - Romans 8:18-21 (NIV)*

Tsunamis, earthquakes and other effects of climate change are both evidence of this subjection and a sign that

Christ might return soon. This has led to passivity when it comes to concern for creation: after all, creation cannot be restored before Christ comes again. Only when Christ returns, the old earth will die and the new will appear, together with the dying of old humankind and the appearing of the new.

## ... ACTING IN HOPE

Yet, this understanding of the liberation of creation is inconsistent with the theology of liberation of humans often held by the same group of believers; namely, that we already are the children of God. This is also stressed earlier in chapter 8 of Romans:

*The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children. Now if we are children, then we are heirs – heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory. - Romans 8:16-17 (NIV)*

The affirmation of adoption into God's family has already been made; the children of God are already co-heirs with Christ. These beliefs are stressed in almost all the songs sung during worship on Sundays, services at youth camps and other gatherings. The reign of God has already begun. On the Day of Judgment, or the Day of Christ's second coming, this reign will be fulfilled. "Waiting" is therefore not passively waiting; it is actively waiting, because we, being co-heirs with Christ, are part of the fulfilment of the promise. We are already God's children; creation is already being liberated. Therefore we are invited to joyfully participate in the liberation of creation. Old will not be replaced by new; new creation will spring forth from the old, in the very same way as our own new creations are being born and growing in the midst of our broken worlds.



Photo by Kristine Jansone

# What is money?

by Krystsina Charniuk



Krystsina Charniuk is currently pursuing her Bachelor's degree in Theology. She comes from Belarus, enjoys writing poems and working in journalism. As a hobby, she likes travelling and is interested in history and visiting ancient historical sites.

What is money? Is it a blessing or damnation? Many people would answer that money is everything in our life. We can't exist without it. If you have lots of money you can afford to have a comfortable place to live in and to have good quality food to eat. You can have a car, or even a yacht or a plane. It doesn't matter. Money can buy everything... But is that true?

Once upon a time there was a village where all the people lived in justice and peace. They loved and respected each other. They thought that was the same for all the people in the world. There were no rich and poor. The villagers helped each other in everything. In that time it was possible to meet true love and friendship. But one day everything changed. A man came to the village. He seemed nice, but perhaps a little bit strange. Yet, all the people were impressed by him. He had some camels and a lot of unknown goods.

"I'm a merchant" said the man.

Nobody knew what that meant, but the villagers liked the man. He was

well-mannered and very nice. He told the villagers about distant countries which he had visited. It seemed like he had been everywhere. After some time he said that he had to leave the hospitable village. The merchant gave the people a big bag of beautiful bright-yellow coins.

"These are the golden coins" said the man. "You don't have these in your village. People use them to buy different goods. Because I had a good time here with all of you, this shows my gratitude for your hospitality. Take this money and use it when people like me come to your village." And he left.

For a couple of days the bag was staying in the middle of the village on the main square and nobody took a coin. But soon there were less and less coins every day. Some people thought that such things were absolutely useless and decided not to take a coin. But the others took some coins and then some more and some more. Soon the bag became empty.

After some time had passed, another day a man came to the village. He was

dressed the same way as the man who left the coins in the main square. He was a merchant as well. He brought a lot of goods with him: silks, furs, spices, clothes and food. The people who had golden coins bought a lot of wares. But those who didn't take the coins bought nothing. They were sad and disappointed. When the man left the village, they asked their lucky neighbors to give them some money as well. But they wouldn't. Instead, they offered to exchange the coins for goods. Trade in the village was born. The people began to buy and to sell. Very soon rich and the poor were created in the village. Those who didn't have money didn't have friends. Sometimes they didn't have a family or a roof over their head. Those who had money built luxurious houses. They ate the best food and drank the finest drinks. They bought expensive clothing when merchants came. They began to live in their own world in luxury. They didn't help other people any more.

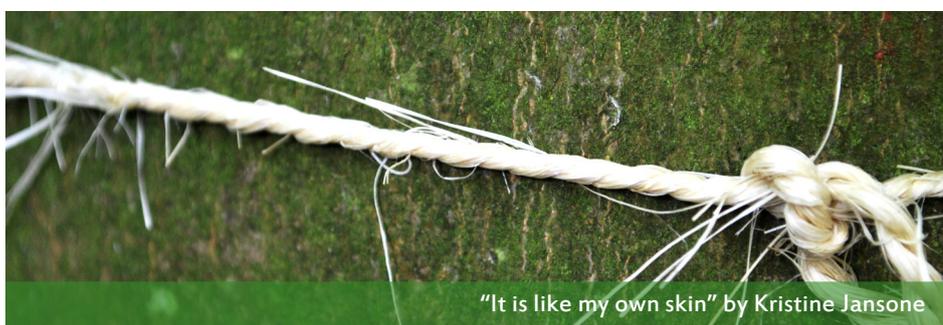
What did the poor do? They begged and tried to live decently. Nobody, who had been in that village before, recognized it now. Greed appeared in the air. There was a border between extremely rich and absolutely poor. And yet, everything was the same; the same sun shone for everyone. But there wasn't true love and friendship between the people any more.

# Photo Exhibition: Zoomed

EYCE at II Youth Convention on Volunteering

From 7th - 11th September 2011 EYCE participated in the Second Youth Convention on Volunteering (IYCV). EYCE activities during the IYCV focused on the campaign and issues of ecological justice. Among other activities, there was also a photo exhibition titled "Why are ecological issues a matter of justice?"

Young people of various backgrounds from the EYCE network contributed to this exhibition. They displayed thought provoking images, linked to ecological and social justice, which triggered and challenged the thinking of the viewer and raised awareness of the multiple aspects of ecological justice. The authors were trying to answer the questions 'why are ecological matters an issue of justice?', 'what are the links of climate change and ecology with economic justice, social equality, poverty, education?' and 'why is it important to understand those links?'



"It is like my own skin" by Kristine Jansone



Photo by by Olivera Savic



"Little guy in little box" by Valeria Fornerone



Photo by Marie Bohn Olsen

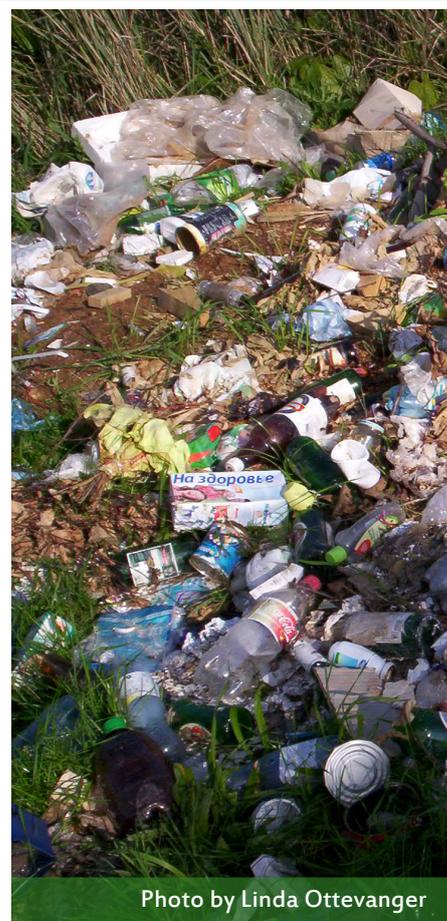


Photo by Linda Ottevanger



"Even trash is some kind of information" by Ondrej Bezdek

# A New Beginning

Game Review by Phillip Ruess

Bent Svensson, one of the two protagonists in "A New Beginning", is a broken man. He spent the best years of his life, his private happiness and fortune into research; research he did not succeed in. His research was into algae which could solve the energy issues of mankind in his century and thereafter. But after the death of his wife and estrangement from his son, he retired and no longer believes in his dream or in himself.

Meanwhile, in the future, the remaining population of earth is faced with a crisis: the imminent destruction of the world, caused by bad decisions and mistakes made by previous generations. So, the second protagonist of the game, Fay, is sent back from the year 2500 to assist Brent in his research and alter the fate of the world.

But in a time in which decisions with global consequences are based on the needs of some countries and politics mainly seems to utilize lobbying and short term thinking, it is not an easy task for Fay to convince the stakeholders to change their course of action. The difficulties start already, when Fay and Brent meet for the first time. To convince Brent, a frustrated do-gooder, that his research is important, seems an almost impossible task.

The game sets up a very captivating setting and the plot quickly draws you in. During the first chapter, Fay talks about previous attempts to change the fate of the world, often interrupted by Brent with ironic comments and references to events and decisions set in his time. The game never really hits you with a moral bat but gives several hints at how to treat the environment and thinking that might help to prevent the "dark future" the game foresees. All in all, the characters, setting and world of the game is very promising and I'm already looking forward to finishing this article so I can get back to it.

The game itself is an old-fashioned point-and-click adventure. If you enjoyed playing games like Broken Sword you will enjoy A New Beginning as well. Voice acting, music and the riddles fit together very nicely. The game is 2D and hand drawn and should even run on fairly old computers.

A New Beginning shows that even video games are capable of contributing to pressing issues, without guilt-trips or thematic extremes. If you fancy a playful introduction to the topic, the game is definitely worth a closer look.

# EYCE Upcoming events

In 2012 EYCE will offer a variety of events, addressing different themes important for young Christians in Europe - discrimination and racism, gender equality, ecological justice and more, giving possibility to meet and discuss, to learn and share and experience true ecumenical spirit.

- \* 18<sup>th</sup> - 22<sup>nd</sup> April 2012, Dissemination visit of EYCE's Campaign to Promote Ecological Justice and Earth Day activities, Portugal.
- \* 24<sup>th</sup> June - 1<sup>st</sup> July 2012, "Taking Steps Towards Ecologically Responsible Society" - links between ecology, economy and politics", Minsk, Belarus.
- \* 3<sup>rd</sup> - 9<sup>th</sup> September 2012, "Acting Together to Overcome Poverty" - young people address social injustice through inter-religious cooperation", Paris, France.
- \* 26<sup>th</sup> November - 2<sup>nd</sup> of December 2012, "Gender: Revised?!" - study session in cooperation with WSCF-E, European Youth Centre Budapest, Hungary.

Join EYCE for HAPPY EARTH DAY on April 22nd!

Follow us on Facebook and [www.eyce.org](http://www.eyce.org)!



**EYCE** campaign to  
**PROMOTE  
ECOLOGICAL  
JUSTICE**  
Ecumenical Youth Council in Europe