

Christian witness in a multi-religious world – comments by Niek Tramper, General Secretary of European Evangelical Alliance (EEA)

I want to react on *two major steps on the edge of mission and ecumenism, in which EA is involved this week*: one global and the other local.

Global: on 28 of June the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue (PCID), the World Council of Churches (WCC) and the World Evangelical Alliance (WEA) published a common declaration on *mission in a multi-religious world*.

- (1) This document understands Christian witness as *'sharing in the witness of Jesus Christ, which takes the form of proclamation of the kingdom, service to neighbour and the total gift of self, even if the act leads to the cross...'* The declaration acknowledges the right and freedom to do mission. It also acknowledges that *'conversion is the work of the Holy Spirit'*. At the same time it advocates for freedom of religion and belief for all, recognizing that in many countries religious institutions and persons are inhibited from exercising their mission. It encourages engaging in interreligious advocacy toward justice and the common good, and asks for prayer for our neighbours and their well-being.
- (2) Some European EAs will welcome this because they already have a history of cooperation with national ecumenical bodies, sometimes also with local Roman Catholic churches. For other EAs this declaration will be hard to understand and to accept, as their history and actuality is to be misunderstood and discriminated by larger institutional churches.
- (3) Personally I welcome this document which supports a Christ-like approach, for further study and action in the local, national context. It is a strong reminder of the need for cooperation a growing multi-ethnic and multi-religious context. At the same time I see this as a reminder to refrain from pride. Evangelicals have to acknowledge something of Gods grace and truth in old, institutional churches, and established churches must accept the reason of existence of smaller evangelical churches and consider them as part of the body of Christ, and not just as sects.

Local: the EA-Netherlands and the Netherlands Council of Churches published a declaration.

- (1) This is to seek mutual cooperation and assistance on different areas: week of prayer, interreligious dialogue, fight against poverty and the contact between established and migrant churches.
- (2) Remarkable point: both organizations acknowledge their unique representative voice in church and society. *'We are connected in the same faith, the confessions of the early church, the work of the Spirit and the call to mission. But we dare to accept each other's differences, and encourage the strategic importance of each partner'*.

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