

## SECIS ASSEMBLY 2017: PARIS June 29 –July 1

Present: Pierre Devos (Belgium), Hermann Weber (Germany), Raquel Perez Sanjuan(Spain), Edith Weber-Sinner (Luxembourg) and Roberta Canning (England and Wales).  
Apologies: Marco Cattaneo (Switzerland), Astrid Schmid (Austria), Eduardo Duarte (Portugal), Jean-Charles van Caloen (Belgium). There is no member for Holland as Avin Kunnekadan has not found a replacement.

### June 29

Pierre Devos welcomed the group at the end of the afternoon and sketched the plans for the next two days.

National reports:

Edith Weber-Sinner presented the work of LISEL in Luxembourg and described the houses for inter-generational living.

Roberta Canning presented the present situation for international students in England and Wales. In England the PREVENT counter extremism strategy has meant universities now must have “adequate pastoral and chaplaincy provision” and monitor it.

### June 30

We were joined by Antonio Silveira from the CIEDEL (Centre International d’Etudes pour le Développement Local) in Lyon where there are 200 volunteers helping 700 students. **Together we visited CISED** (Centre d’Initiative et de Service des Etudiants de Saint-Denis) where Fr Christian Mellon SJ welcomed us and described the work of CISED for international students and its intercultural and interreligious dimensions. CISED has more than 60 volunteers who assist between 300 and 350 international students from the Université de Saint-Denis every year. Many of the students are Muslims. CISED offers assistance with CVs and letters of application, with writing in French and also psychological counselling and accompaniment. Julien, who is a Jesuit scholastic from Switzerland described his experience of inter-faith dialogue at CISED.

We visited the chaplaincy, which is below the CISED Centre. The services are separate to enable CISED to be recognised by the university without breaking the rules of “ Laïcité”.

In the afternoon there was the **formal session of the SECIS Assembly**.

Pierre Devos spoke of the death of Fr Charles de Hemptinne one of the founders of SECIS and of Charles’ ministry to international students over many years.

The minutes of the Assembly in Rome in November 2014 were approved.

Pierre Devos circulated the statutes of SECIS and explained that he must resign as under the statutes he has to resign from the board at 75. His resignation was accepted.

The assembly voted unanimously to alter the statutes as follows:

Article 5.3 –the provision for retirement at 75 is to be removed.

Article 3.4 Full members of SECIS will be proposed by the Board of Management to the General assembly and admitted by two thirds of the votes. There can be more than one full member per country. Membership fee will be no more than 200 euros but could be less.

Pierre Devos was then re-elected as President of SECIS

Jean-Charles van Caloen was co-opted onto the Board to serve as treasurer.

Edith Weber-Sinner joined the Board.

Hermann Weber will continue to serve.

This is an important period of transition towards a different way of networking. The board will serve for the transition period.

Pierre Devos presented the financial report for the year 2016 and the budget for 2017. The total of expenses in 2016 accounted for 909 euros and the total of incomes for 1,941 euros. At the end of 2016, the capital of SECIS represented 50,086.46 euros.

**SECIS Assembly 2018:** Raquel Perez Sanjuan invited us to visit Madrid. The aim will be to try to find people involved in different ministries for international students – student hostels, Catholic universities, funding programmes to attend and to consider membership. This will be an opportunity to develop partnerships. A tentative programme shall be prepared by Raquel. The dates were chosen: **7-8-9 June 2018.**

**Guidelines in Pastoral Care for International Students:** Pierre Devos explained that Monsignor Robinson Wijesinghe had said he would attend the assembly but was unable to come. He sent a message saying he hopes to convene a small group to finalise the guidelines!

After the Board meeting in Namur in February 2017, Pierre sent **our response** to the project of Guidelines which had been presented at the Vatican Congress of December 2016 (see this Project in attachment):

“Draft Response of SECIS to the proposed Guidelines on the Pastoral Care of International Students”

The Board thinks that the guidelines proposed at the 2016 Congress are a very useful document and a good basis for discussion. The material is excellent and we would suggest the following structure to organise the valuable material in accordance with the vision of Pope Francis of the Church reaching out to the margins.

**Introduction:** We think that in addition to the previous World Congresses on the Pastoral Care of Foreign Students, the work and conclusions of the Study Meeting on International Students in October 2014 should be referenced in paragraph 3. The study meeting provided much useful evidence and many concrete examples of good practice to illustrate these guidelines.

**Part 1** should state clearly that the majority of international students study in secular universities and so the quality of Catholic chaplaincy for students in secular universities and the human and financial resources given by dioceses to this ministry is of paramount importance. Catholic evangelisation and outreach to the poor and those on the margins belongs in the whole world context of international student experience.

**Part 4 and Part 5** follow logically from Part 1. Since most Catholic students do not study in Catholic universities, the discussion of their role in Part 2 does not follow logically from Part 1. In Part 4, the internationalisation of learning through the internet and online learning courses (MOOCs) should be noted.

**Part 3** brings together statements about the Mission of the Church and the mission of the Catholic University. The excellent discussion of the mission of the Church would provide a good beginning to section 6 on the role of the Church in the life of the International Student. The role of the Catholic university is a good beginning to a single section on the Catholic University which we propose.

**Part 6** – We appreciate the quality and relevance of the material in parts 6 and 7. It would be helpful to begin by naming the diverse contexts – for example, Muslim Majority countries, traditional

Catholic ambience, secular, “post-Christian” societies, India and the Far East. International students study in all these contexts and there are Catholic universities in most contexts. The nature of pastoral care and good practice must relate to the context.

**Part 7** – We suggest that the description of pastoral care for international students be grouped according to the actors that is:

Catholic Chaplaincy in universities

Catholic Universities – and here the full discussion of the mission of the Catholic University belongs National provision for international students.

International networks.

**Part 9** – We think that the evidence provided in the reports from different continents at the Study Workshop of 2014 give excellent examples of good practice in diverse contexts.

SECIS suggest some concrete examples.

**Scholarship programmes: KAAD** - Creation via scholarships and an accompanying formation programme a world Church-oriented network of Catholic professionals and lay leaders.

**Interfaith and cultural dialogue:** Afro-Asian Institutes in Austria enable intercultural and interreligious dialogue by bringing students from different countries together: and expression of the vision of the Second Vatican Council that we can learn from people of other faiths and cultures.

**Independent Student Hubs:** Newman House in London is an example of a university chaplaincy hub which provides accommodation for 60 students, the majority international students and also a Catholic chaplaincy and community open to all Catholic students studying in London. It has regular worship and programmes for faith formation, discussion, evangelisation and social service.

**National Networks:** Germany has a network of university chaplains with a coordinator. This provides opportunities to share expertise and support for best practice in university pastoral care for international students in every sector.

## July 1<sup>st</sup>

National Reports continued:

Hermann Weber presented his report; he described the internationalisation of German Higher Education – Germany is the third largest provider. German universities have moved from a cooperative neutrality about Christian university pastoral care to a neutralisation approach. Only about 5% of students are in touch with chaplaincy. Hermann’s report also presented the KAAD scholarship programme and their enrichment programmes.

Pierre Devos spoke of changes for FENACA which provides hostels for international students. 350 international students live in the hostels. They come mainly from French speaking African countries. Charles de Hemptinne had been the driving force in Fenaca. There is no longer a vicariate for international students. The state subsidy has been reduced so a new platform for all the international student hostels is being created by FENACA which shall disappear.

Raquel Perez Sanjuan explained the university sector in Spain and the challenge to improve provision for international students. Their presence must be seen as an opportunity for all.

We concluded by looking forward to our meeting in 2018.

The assembly can include:

- Learning about the Spanish situation
- Stakeholders – universities, dioceses, donors and housing providers.

Questions may include:

- Catholic university and international students
- Public university and international students
- Housing provider and international students
- Chaplaincy and pastoral care
- Funders.
- Projects where NGOs could work together.

Many thanks to Roberta who wrote this report.

Pierre Devos, chairman