

ECHO ... des familles
of families
der Familien

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Austria take over the presidency of the Federation

On the Presidents´ meeting in Bozen in summer this year the presidency of the **Federation of Catholic Family Associations in Europe (FAFCE)** changed from the Southtyrolian Association Katholischer Familienverband Südtirol to the Catholic Family Association of Austria/Katholischer Familienverband Österreichs. Mr.



Johannes Fenz, President of Catholic Family Association of Austria (here with his predecessor Mrs. Christine von Stefenelli) will be as President at the head of FAFCE till 2006. Mrs. Elisabeth Bußmann from the German Catholic Family Association/Familienbund der Deutschen Katholiken was elected as Vice-president. As the new General Secretary was elected Mrs. Monika Höglinger, who will unfortunately leave this function in December. Her predecessor will be Mr. Thomas Kloiber. The Association in charge will have its seat in Vienna.

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Resolution on health issues in Europe

In its last President´s meeting in Vienna from 23th to 24th October the **FAFCE** passed a resolution on health issues in Europe.

The public debate on health care, is clearly driven by strictly economic arguments. **The Federation of Catholic Family Associations in Europe** points out that future health care reforms have to consider the link between family and health. The Federation also calls upon political decision makers to appreciate the contribution made by families to health maintenance and the care of sick family members. Governments must assist and support families in their tasks. Furthermore, all health measures have to respect the importance of the dignity of human life.

The Federation of Catholic Family Associations in Europe:

- observes that any reform in health care needs to consider the fact that families play a key part in maintaining health. Families – as is demonstrated by the current EU Social Report – contribute significantly to health care because they help prevent illness and accelerate the speed of healing. Being enveloped in a family network reduces the risk of illness, because family and relations make a notable contribution to health care. The family facilitates access to health care and passes on to the next generation information on health issues. The family is also a key source of emotional support in negative or difficult situations. Of similar importance is the influence that the family has on the lifestyles of its individual members, in terms of nutrition, physical activities and abuse of tobacco, alcohol or drugs.
- points out that by their contribution to health care, families also help achieve cost savings in the system. On the one hand, families pass on and monitor behavioural patterns, and on the other hand they assume care and nursing responsibilities. In all EU Member States, it is specifically the family which stands for providing care and support to children, adults and old people alike.
- draws attention to the fact that the health care systems will in the future be confronted with a substantially higher demand for care and nursing. With life expectancy rising, the number of people suffering from physical or mental disabilities and that are affected by social marginalisation will rise as well.
- points out that poverty and social marginalisation are prone to impair the health of the population as a whole. In particular, the risk is great for marginalised social groups.

The Federation of Catholic Family Associations in Europe insists therefore that political decision makers at all political levels foster the prevention through families and involve non-governmental organisations in the reform process of the health care systems. Furthermore, an equal access to the health care system must be ensured for all EU citizens in the future and the quality of health care must be maintained.

President´s visit in Brussels

The President of the Federation, Mr. Johannes Fenz, visited attended by the General Secretary in charge, Mrs. Monika Höglinger, and by her predecessor, Mr. Thomas Kloiber, from 10th to 12th November Brussels considering important issues of the **FAFCE** and establishing various contacts.

On the meeting with the General Secretary of COFACE, William Lay, they discussed questions of cooperation in future.

With the Director of the European Association for Catholic Adult Education

(FEECA), Mr. Georg Düchs, they considered the possibility of a common office in future.

The visits in the offices of MEP Mr. Othmar Karas and Mr. Michael Weninger, Political Adviser to the President of the European Commission, took place in an atmosphere of hospitality and friendly advance. Both of them offered their cooperation for the organisation of the next Presidents´meeting of the **FAFCE** in Brussels next autumn. With Simon Wilson, Director of the Social Platform, they talked about the intention of a membership of the **FAFCE** in the Social Platform. Aim of the meeting with representatives of COMECE was to inform each other about the own tasks and the planing of common projects in future. Ives Roland Gosselin, Vice-president of COFACE, offered his knowledge of the city of Brussels like a guide and accompanied the delegation in this three days .



Press release of the President of the FAFCE to the vote of the European Parliament about the promotion of the research of embryonic stem cells

As a dangerous attack to the protection and the dignity of human life assesses Mr. Johannes Fenz, President of the **FAFCE**, in a press release from 21th November 2003 the vote of the European Parliament to promote from the budget of the European Union the research of embryonic stem cells starting in 2004.

„We can´t accept, that interests of research and industrie are more important in the community of values of Europe than dignity and the right of life of human embryos,“ says Fenz

Human life has human dignity without any restriction wherever it exists.

„The embryo is devolping himself **as** human being, not to **become** a human being“. That causes the unconditional protection of human life from ist begining to its end as an ethic and legal command of a civilized society.

Comment by the FAFCE to the Green Paper on Services of General Interest

Basically pleads the Federation of Catholic Family Associations in Europe in clarification of the question, if social services be affected of the definition of the European Commission „Services of General Interest“.

FAFCE fears that social services, once they are opened to the free market, on the one hand lose the quality. On the other hand this situation leads to a two-class society because poorer people only get access to low-quality social services.

The Federation point out that social facilities are in an other situation than other services of general interest. Their users in the care and social services are often high vulnerable. Rather than being in a position of equality and thus in an ideal competitive position vis-à-vis the provider, users occupy a position of weakness and may well be defenceless to the point of endangering their very existence. Profits must not be invested freely in the capital market, but must be used directly for the social purpose governing the relevant organisation, which also is a difference to the used competitive situation. The question of the subsidising of welfare organisation and the agreement with the Community acquis should be considered in this context.

For this the Federation demands that competition law should not be extended to social services.

The whole document is readable in:

http://europa.eu.int/comm/secretariat_general/services_general_interest/index_en.htm