



Sharing God's earth and its riches justly

A reflection document of the Thematic Reference Group
Economic and Ecological Justice



Conference of European Churches
Economic and Ecological Justice

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1. Introduction

The open letter on the Future of Europe issued by the Conference of European Churches in June 2016 launched an intensive and wide spread discussion. Many churches, ecumenical councils of churches and CEC partner organisations contributed to the conversation. The letter and associated regional consultations, as well as discussions in a number of countries across the continent have created an open and participative consultative process. This has encouraged churches and Christians from different parts of the continent to share their experiences, concerns and hopes for the future.

The Thematic Reference Group on Economic and Ecological Justice of the Conference of European Churches presents to the CEC General Assembly 2018 its contribution on our concerns about economic and ecological justice. We believe that to live justly on earth, to share its riches among all people more equitably and to care for all of creation we need to transform our way of life and build an economy that offers life for all. These concerns are closely related to the Assembly's biblical themes: *witness, justice and hospitality*.

With this document we wish to:

- underline the importance of justice in creating a fair and sustainable economy;
- outline our vision and highlight a Christian approach to the relationship between economic and ecological justice;
- offer examples of good practice from churches, stimulate action in churches and invite others to participate and learn from each other.

We acknowledge that many churches across the continent embrace this vision. But we also believe that there is a need to share experiences to deepen our knowledge and to strengthen our common wish to live in a future which is just, fair and sustainable.

2. Why should churches and Christians speak out on these concerns?

Christians are called:

- *to be witnesses*

Rapid economic development in recent years has brought many improvements in our lives. The majority of Europeans have enjoyed peace and growing economic prosperity. Open borders within much of the EU, freedom to travel and to live in different countries, exchange programmes for studies, as well as new technologies and new ways of communication, including social media are some of the changes much of the continent has experienced in recent decades.

These changes have contributed to improved living standards in many parts of the continent. But there have been other less welcome developments: continuing economic hardship in some regions, ecological degradation, scandals in the finance sector, widening social gaps and regional disparities that raise concerns and call for attention. They challenge the very ideal of a peaceful Europe, in which economic success is linked to social justice and peace with nature.

Concerns about social and economic justice and care for the natural environment are challenges to which churches must be ready to respond. If churches and their members do not address these concerns they risk making themselves irrelevant. In working for economic and ecological justice Christians are bearing witness to the *relevance* and *credibility* of their faith. Christians are called to be witness of truth

and to point to injustice whenever and wherever it is found. Christians are reminded as well that witness has to go hand in hand with action. If words are not matched with deeds, faith lacks its integrity. As the Bible reminds us: “*Dear children, let us not love with words or speech but with actions and in truth*” (1. John 3:18).

- *to confession*

We have pursued the vision of economic growth without considering the consequences. We have treated nature simply as a source of raw materials and a sink for our wastes; we have claimed that our affluence is a just reward for our industry and effort and not a gift from God to be shared justly between people and nations. We have lost sight of the commandment to love others and we have forgotten how to responsibly care for creation.

- *to serve justice*

We live in the midst of God’s great gifts. However, we have become blind to injustice and this has led us to be indifferent to our impact on nature and on each other. In acquiring economic wealth, we have caused damage to creation that sustains us. Both climate change and loss of natural biodiversity risk bringing chaos to life on earth. And we have not shared the wealth we have acquired equally. Within countries, across Europe and around the world there are great and systematic inequalities of wealth. Poverty exists alongside affluence within communities at every geographical scale. The European Union admits that almost every fourth person in the EU still experiences living in poverty or social exclusion.¹ We are called to witness to our faith in the Creator by working to transform these injustices

Justice and compassion towards other people and creatures are fundamental to the Judeo-Christian faith. In the early church, diaconia was part of the life of the congregation. And in recent years Christians have started to realise the importance of caring responsibly for all God’s creatures. Our search for justice has a missiological dimension. In this quest we are not alone and should seek to build strong alliances with others pursuing the same goal.

- *to offer hospitality*

Working for justice includes extending hospitality to those who suffer from injustice, conflicts and wars and who are seeking refuge. The challenges of increased migration and of welcoming refugees are connected with environmental issues: climate change is one of the factors which cause people to leave their homes. We must practice hospitality both towards our fellow human beings and towards other creatures. If humans have caused the destruction of the habitats of other species, are we not called to restore and repair the damage we have done?

- *to practice stewardship*

The biblical concept of stewardship is rooted in the understanding of the world as creation. Human beings are not owners of the world. We are following the task given to us by God of being managers and carers. We are all stewards and God has entrusted us with the resources, abilities and opportunities to care, and each of us will be called to give account for how we have managed what God has given us. Accountability and responsibility are inherent parts of stewardship. As Christians in the 21st century we need to embrace a broad view of stewardship which links us with world around us and with all what God is doing in the world.

- *to promote a Christian way of life: from witness through justice to diaconia*

If the churches wish to faithfully witness to the faith proclaimed by Jesus Christ, they must not just be limited to preaching to the poor, the hungry, the foreigner, and the marginalized, but must be identified

¹ See: http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Europe_2020_indicators_-_poverty_and_social_exclusion

with Him and His cross, difficult as that might be (Mark 10:45: *For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many*). For Christians, solidarity, social and environmental justice, suffering and struggling together with the wicked, is not simply another duty among others, but a way of life demonstrated for us by Christ Himself. From its early stages the church condemned in its teaching the concentration of wealth in the hands of the few, as well as social injustice, as going against the will of God (St. John the Chrysostom, *On Wealth and Poverty*). The church cannot close its eyes to injustice or provide theological justification for social exploitation and unequal distribution of wealth. On the contrary, it must, in both word and deed, give *witness* to the new life of love and justice, a new model of human life, that Jesus Christ inaugurated, and which we are all called to follow.

This calls for a shift from a dominant individualist, egocentric, and utilitarian way of life that glorifies consumption, greed, and speculation, without acknowledging natural limits or even raising the question ‘What is enough?’; to a sacrificial mode of existence, which values voluntary restraint (asceticism), sharing, and solidarity (Luke 22:27: *I am among you as the one who serves.*). This way of life, based on the Gospel, cannot become reality if the churches do not face responsibly the real challenges of the contemporary world.

People around us and the earth itself are suffering due to the dominant economic model of development; a model that is self-centred and does not take account of our deep relationship with nature and fellow human beings. This can lead to despair and people are looking for refuge and help. The church must respond to the best of its ability to these urgent needs.

3. What does this mean in practice?

Uncontrolled economic growth is blind to the economic inequality and ecological damage it creates and cannot be sustained; we must question the purpose and direction of the kind of economic system we have created.

- We can design an alternative economy that will share wealth more equally within countries, across Europe and in the wider world.
- We can share economic power more justly between men, women, people of different ages and abilities or disabilities, and minority groups.
- We can design an economy that will not put at risk the rights of future generations; an economy that does not degrade or impoverish creation but enriches it. We can create a caring economy.
- We can live without wanting more and more. We can be more assertive about the Christian virtue of self-restraint and accept natural limits to make this part of our life in the 21st century.
- We can distinguish between what we really need for life and what is not necessary. Sufficiency and the question ‘What is enough?’, not maximization of profit and pleasure should drive our consideration. We can be more vocal in making these virtues a part of Christian vocabulary and relate them to spirituality, *metanoia* and repentance.
- Consumerism leads to overproduction of materials, products and waste. Too much food is wasted while in other parts of the world food is lacking and thousands die from hunger or malnutrition every day. Should we not develop a *culture of caring* rather than a *culture of consuming*?

4. Is this possible? We firmly believe it is!

There are encouraging positive examples. The Paris climate conference (2015) and the UN Sustainable Development Goals² together create a framework that *could* deliver better protection of the climate, and promote fair, long-term development worldwide. In Europe an increasing number of people call for

² 1. Adopted by the member countries of the UN on 25 September 2015 as an expression of commitment to end poverty, protect the planet and ensure prosperity for all as part of a [new sustainable development agenda](http://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/sustainable-development-goals/). Each goal has specific targets to be achieved over the next 15 years.

<http://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/sustainable-development-goals/>

a more 'inclusive society' as an alternative to the current economic model which 'generates too much greenhouse gas, uses too much raw materials and results in a rapid loss of biodiversity' and argue that the current 'global financial system is not sustainable'... and therefore 'growing income disparities and unemployment' arise.³ The European Economic and Social Committee suggests: 'the 'planet requires a different form of growth...one that no more relies on fossil-fuel based energy, one that is circular and places great value on renewables, is socially inclusive and de-links growth and emissions.'

Much more needs to be done. As Christians, we highlight in particular the perspective of justice. Justice is a term with many facets. Next to its legal meaning, justice is a term with a deep-seated biblical background and an existential dimension. Justice insures order and balance whereas injustice at the end brings about chaos. With injustice, all the foundation of the earth is shaken, reminds Psalm 82:5. The ecological dimension of justice and relationship between ecological and economic justice is fundamental for a sustainable future of creation

Economic Justice means a fair and equal distribution of the wealth of nature both between peoples living on different continents and between the citizens of Europe. We recognize that we as members of churches are in part responsible for economic injustice and must now raise critical questions about the dominance of financial markets, their lack of transparency and unfair privileges

Ecological Justice means that we do not take more from the earth than we need; that we consume no more than we should, than is healthy and than is sufficient; that we recognise our wasteful greed as one of the major causes of climate change and the massive loss of species and natural habitats; that we confess that as members of churches and communities, we are responsible for an ecological footprint that is far too large.

Pursuing economic and ecological justice is not just a burden: it is a task which leads to a life of more empowerment and happiness. This task of a steward – not a master! – is grounded in a Christian belief in the goodness and dignity of the earth itself. The Earth is a gift, not a possession. Living and sharing the gift with all living things increases the joy of life, joy which cannot be measured by monetary means only.

5. We are not alone in this quest! Examples of the new economy envisioned

The call for economic and ecological justice is growing stronger around us. We acknowledge many good examples from churches and church related organisations in Europe, as well as in other continents, examples that are promoting economic and ecological justice We join the World Council of Churches in arguing for an alternative and sustainable economy.⁴

Churches and other faith groups are important stakeholders in this process. Many churches across the world are concerned about these challenges. They are addressing these through practical and theological work and are entering into dialogue with political leaders, partners in academia, NGO's and others on the need for a sustainable model of the economy, which is socially just and operates within ecological limits. Raising these concerns is a witness of our faith to society, in our respective countries, and in our communities.

³ A document 'Sustainability Now- a European vision for sustainability' published by the European Political Strategy Centre (EPSC): http://ec.europa.eu/epsc/publications/strategic-notes/sustainability-now_en

⁴ See the outcomes of the 10th WCC Assembly in Busan 2013 <https://www.oikoumene.org/.../wcc.../economy-of-life.../EconomyOfLifeAnInvitation...>,

the document Towards an Economy of Life for All: <https://www.oikoumene.org/.../economy-of-life-for-all-now...economic.../Ecumenical...> and other similar efforts of the World Council of Churches and its partner organisations under the heading Economy of Life for All: <https://www.oikoumene.org/en/resources/documents/wcc-programmes/diakonia/economy-of-life>

In some policy fields and in some countries churches and NGO's are already involved in promising projects and there are examples of best practice developing new economic models, mostly at a regional or local scale. The Reference Group on Economic and Ecological Justice set out to collect some of these examples.

These examples include three major areas of concern:

- Food
(alternative/ecological food production and local marketing e.g. by cooperatives)
- Energy
(local small scale alternative energy-generation, and new ways to combat fuel-poverty)
- Finance
(small scale, local currency projects, divestment from fossil fuels/energy, experiments with basic income, alternative sustainable investments, ethical banks)

This collection of good practices is presented as a source of inspiration to strengthen the development of similar work on economic and ecological justice in churches across the continent. As it is work in progress we invite the member churches and partner organisations of CEC to enlarge upon this survey after the Assembly so that it can become a source of inspiration for us to develop new ways of life.

We invite churches in Europe and individual Christians across the continent to focus their attention on sharing God's earth and its riches justly and taking new steps along this path.

SURVEY OF BEST PRACTICE EXAMPLES ACROSS EUROPE

Summarizing table

This collection is aimed to provide an overview of good practices and examples under the form of projects offering alternatives in terms of economic and ecological justice.

These projects are centered around four major areas of concern:

- *Food*: alternative/ecological food production and local marketing e.g. by cooperatives
- *Energy*: local small scale alternative energy-generation, but also ways to combat fuel-poverty
- *Finance*: small scale, local currency projects, divestment from fossil fuels/energy, experiments with basic income, alternative sustainable investments, banks
- *Others*: medical help, education, children's protection, language barriers, employment...

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Disclaimer:

The list of projects is for illustration only and has been selected to give an impression of the wide range of activity underway across Europe. The list is not in any way authoritative and inclusion of an organization in the list does not mean that the Conference of European Churches or its member churches necessarily support the aims or objectives of the organization.

Food

	Name	Brief description	Further comments	Ownership/ Location	NGO/ Church	link
1	Dos imin simeron	Charity association	'Dos imin simeron' functions in the basement of the Cathedral of Volos, St Nikolaos, and in Almyros city. A free lunch is offered to whoever needs it everyday	Holy Metropolis of Demetrias and Almyros, Volos, Greece	Local Diocese of Demetrias	
2	Federation of City Farms and Community Gardens	The leading UK charity dedicated to supporting city farms, community gardens & other green spaces	Projects and partnerships listed at www.farmgarden.org.uk/our-work/projects-partners	A registered company and registered charity/ UK Bristol, but with a set of regional offices		www.farmgarden.org.uk/
3	The Organic Centre	A centre for the promotion of organic growing, biodiversity (especially food crops), training (including preparation of food for healthy living)		Founded in 1995 by local organic growers and their supporters. / Republic of Ireland Rossinver, Co Leitrim		www.theorganiccentre.ie/
4	Community Supported Agriculture	Umbrella organisation, promotes four ways in which communities and farmers can work together: briefly, producer led, community led, producer/community partnerships, community owned farms		Not clear! / UK , 'virtual existence' by electronic means		communitysupportedagriculture.org.uk/
5	Belfast Food Network	Promote the importance of healthy and sustainable food – public, policy-makers and institutions	Part of the Sustainable Food Cities Network	An offshoot of an NGO – Sustainable NI/ UK Belfast, Northern Ireland		www.belfastfoodnetwork.org
6	The Soil Association	An organisation promoting responsible farming, healthy eating, living in balance with the environment	Campaigns for organic agriculture, against pesticides and for animal welfare	A registered charity in English law/ UK wide	The Soil Association	www.soilassociation.org
7	Sustain	An alliance for better food and farming. Advocacy and research on food and agriculture policies and practices	Publications on food: environmental aspects, food poverty, food and health, ...	A registered charity with a board of trustees/ UK , London		www.sustainweb.org/
8	Matsentralen Norge (The food-central in Norway)	Umbrella organisation for food banks in Norway and helps them to collect and redistribute food, member of FEBA – Fédération Européenne des Banques ALIMENTAIRES/ Federation of European Food Banks	More than 500.000 people in Norway live below EUs definition of poverty. At the same time, there are more than 350 000 tons of food waste. Food banks work on both problems at simultaneously. There are now Food banks in Oslo, Bergen, Tromsø, Bodø.	Local cooperation between churches and organisations Norway	Matsentralen Norge Church related	http://www.matsentralen.no/

Some additional remarks on the Food tabulation

[Item 2] Federation of City Farms and Community Gardens: inspiration for what communities can do to grow food – even in urban environments – to ensure a measure of food security.

[Item 3] The Organic Centre: an initiative which supplies advice, training and education, seeds and other requisites (tools, seeds, etc.) to small growers. Because of its position on the Irish border, the Organic Centre also plays a part in promoting cross community harmony

[Item 4] Community Supported Agriculture: a means by which urban dwellers can support farmers and growers, particularly with financial issues.

[Item 5] Belfast Food Network: Promotes better understanding of the relationship between food and health; an advocacy body against food poverty. One of many food network organisations across cities in Britain.

[Item 6] The Soil Association and [Item 6] Sustain: Organisations working nationally to assist the more local initiatives – with research, publication, political advocacy. The Soil Association's work has a particular emphasis on organic farming methods.

Energy

	Name	Brief description	Further comments	Ownership/ Location	NGO/ Church	link
9	Drumlin Wind Energy Cooperative	Community owned wind turbines	It illustrates how community action can turn into community benefit and behind these achievements there is also a great deal of community determination.	No/ Registered cooperative society / UK, Belfast, Northern Ireland		www.drumlin.coop/
10	Halton Lune Hydro	An example of community owned hydro scheme		No/ Limited company/ UK		haltonlunehydro.org/
11	Energy 4 ALL	A “cooperative of cooperatives”, founded in 2002 to expand the number of renewable energy co-operatives in the UK as an integral part of our transition to a low carbon economy	Offers advice on: developing community owned energy initiatives (wind, hydro, biomass), finance, site monitoring and management services, maximisation of community benefits	No/ Limited company and registered cooperative under English law/ UK		energy4all.co.uk/
12	Centre for Alternative Technology	Education centre based on the principle of appropriate technology, demonstrating practical solutions for sustainability and covering all aspects of green living including environmental building, renewable energy, and energy efficiency	Runs a graduate school with a range of postgraduate degrees in environmental architecture and renewable energy. Also, short courses for builders, engineers, electricians and plumbers engaged in energy sparing new build and renovation.	No/ Limited company and registered charity under English law/ UK		www.cat.org.uk/
13	Dulas	A company advising on planning and consent for prospective renewable energy projects – wind, solar, hydro (some global experience)	Services include: site finding, feasibility studies, public consultation, planning compliance, appeals, public inquiries and expert witness services	No/ Limited company & workers cooperative/ UK		www.dulas.org.uk
14	Passivhaus	Passivhaus buildings provide a high level of occupant comfort while using very little energy for heating and cooling	Included as a proposal that all new build – wherever situated – should meet Passivhaus standard.	No/ A registered research institute under German law/ Germany		http://passiv.de/en/
15	Plant native fruit trees in church gardens	The aim of the project is promoting to plant more native trees in church gardens and lands Currently more than 100 church gardens joined (goal is to continue to increase the number of participants)	Plant native and resistant trees that can live for several years, create a plantation for producing oxygen and preserving natural genes, reduce the greenhouse effects, protect our natural heritage and conserve/increase our natural values as our moral duties	State and Church representatives Hungary	Church related	http://okogyulekezet.hu/csatlakozz/gyumolcsfak-a-papkertben
16	Grønne menigheter (Green congregations)	Focus on what congregations can do for creation, sustainability and justice locally as well as globally. A congregation chooses at least 25 out of a list of 50 suggested actions (at least 2 from each of the 6 different thematic groups)	Approx. 340 congregations, a majority within the Lutheran church, in cooperation with the association “Environmental lighthouse” to provide a certified official credibility, increases environmental awareness within the church and provides with a tool for transforming discipleship in their local and global context	The Church of Norway (majority)		https://kirken.no/nb-NO/gronkirke/gronnmenighet/var-gronne-menighet/ https://www.miljofortn.no/

Some additional remarks on the Energy tabulation

Preliminary remarks: Renewable energy projects require (i) a large range of skills – engineering, environmental impact, land use planning, community leadership and commitment, regulatory compliance, finance, and (ii) national level encouragement by means of access to the national grid, a legal framework, and a suitable feed-in tariff. These initiatives offer opportunities to develop other community based projects, such as local food growing.

[Item 9] Drumlin Wind Energy: Six 250kW wind turbines. Community owned cooperative, financed by share issue. Financial surplus from sale of energy paid to shareholder. Turbines sited with concern for visual amenity and goodwill towards the land owner. Cannot be privatised.

[Item 10] Halton Lune Hydro: A hydro scheme, generating 160kW. Financed by share issue. Financial surplus after payment to shareholders donated to a local community trust to finance local improvements.

[Item 11] Energy4All: A cooperative of cooperatives providing practical, legal and financial advice for local initiatives such as Drumlin

[Item 12] Centre for Alternative Technology: A remarkable institution, situated in mid Wales with a long history of research and practical action towards sustainable community living. Now runs accredited courses for professional development in renewable energy.

Finances

	Name	Brief description	Further comments	Ownership/ Location	NGO/ Church	link
17	Ecumenical Council for Corporate Responsibility (ECCR)	Church-based investor coalition, promotes ethical finance at a corporate level, for individuals and for churches through the Ethical Money Church Project	Issues a regular newsletter covering a wide range of questions: climate change, workers' rights, corporate conduct, ...	Yes/ Registered charity/ UK	Church related	www.eccr.org.uk/
18	Your faith your finance	A guide to money, faith and ethics (for people rather than organisations)	Website has themes on <i>Usury and the Theology of Money</i> and <i>Wealth and Poverty in the Bible</i>	Yes/ Ecumenical Council for Corporate Responsibility, Quaker Peace and Social Witness/ UK	Quakers	www.yourfaithyourfinance.org
19	Ethical Money Churches (EMC)	Sharing and learning about ethical use of money and meaning of "Ethical Money Church"	(ECCR : Ecumenical Council for Corporate Responsibility)	Yes/ A project within the work of ECCR/ UK		www.eccr.org.uk/wp/what-we-work-on/ethical-money-churches/
20	Good Money Week	Campaign to help grow and raise awareness of sustainable, responsible and ethical finance, Good Money Week is usually early autumn	A project within UKSIF : UK Sustainable Investment and Finance Association.	Supported by rather than promoted by churches/ As UKSIF/ London, UK		http://goodmoneymoneyweek.com/
21	Ethex	Enable investors to make simply and securely <i>positive investments</i> directly into businesses whose mission / impacts they support, and with financial return	The website shows several local, community owned energy schemes which have raised financial capital through share issues. It also enables investment in Oikocredit and Café Direct (Fairtrade)	No/ Limited company/ UK		www.ethex.org.uk
22	Sustainable Investment and Finance Association (UKSIF)	Membership association for sustainable and responsible financial services	Publisher of reports on responsible finance/ promotor of events including <i>Good Money Week</i>	Churches (of England) and the Lutheran Church/ Ltd. with charitable status/ UK	Church related	www.uksif.org
23	Quaker Social Action	Initiative concerned with the alleviation of poverty and social exclusion in that area	Has an ongoing educational programme in management of personal finance	Yes/ Charitable status under Britain Yearly Meeting of the RsoF/ East London, UK	Quakers	www.quakersocialaction.org.uk
24	Public Banking institute (PBI)	An American campaign to encourage and advocate for banking as a public service	According to the director of the PBI the conventional banking model being a serious cause of the ongoing financial crisis, the sector should be public service, he describes existing and developing public banking models in the USA, the website offers transferable learning material	No/ Educational and advocacy not for profit organisation/ California, USA		www.publicbankinginstitute.org
25	Global Alliance for Banking on Values (GABV)	Independent network of banks, delivers sustainable economic, social and environmental development through finance	Growing global initiative seeking to change the banking system to support economic, social and environmental sustainability, provides educational material on several levels	No/ Not for profit alliance/ The Netherlands		www.gabv.org/
26	Institute for Social Banking (ISB)	Offers education for people working in financial services for socially responsible banking and finance, as well as to improve academic and public discourse	People from 42 countries, across all continents, have participated in ISB training	No/ Registered in Germany		www.socialbanking.org/the-institute/

	Name	Brief description	Further comments	Ownership/ Location	NGO/ Church	link
27	Arbeitskreis Kirchlicher Investoren (Group of church investors – Germany)	guideline for Ethically-Sustainable Investment in area of diaconia and in the German Protestant Church	Also available : Guideline for Ethically Sustainable Financial Investment in the German Protestant Church Published by the EKD Office https://www.aki-ekd.de/en/guideline-for-ethically-sustainable-investment/guideline/	Evangelical Church in Germany		https://www.aki-ekd.de/fileadmin/user/Startseite/Guideline_Climate_final.pdf
28	World Council of Churches Central Committee	The finance policy committee is responsible for recommending to central committee the policy on investments.	Many other projects available on the website https://www.oikoumene.org For example: Food and finance - Toward Life-Enhancing Agriculture https://www.oikoumene.org/en/resources/publications/TheFinancializationofFood.pdf	World Council of Churches / World wide	World Council of Churches	(Document available upon request)
29	Church Market Program (Egyháztáji)	Non-profit structured church market program establishing a direct link between the rural farmers and urban consumers of the church without a utilitarian commercial broadcasting organizing regular markets in several city congregations.	Month after month a variety of social groups are troubled. Help program born during the financial crisis in 2008, for farmers of Hungary to sell their fruit products (mainly apples) We tried to help them through church networks and linked the urban citizens and local farmers for direct business. Program based on the responsibility for creation and for our fellow beings: humans, animals and plants	Hungary	The Hungarian Reformed Charity Service	http://www.egyhaztaji.hu
30	Local Currency – Hajdúnánás	One of the most active community of Eco-Congregation Movement in Hungary	Next to being committed to care for creation in their community and school, they work together with the local government on fostering a more sustainable lifestyle in the city. With support of local churches, the local government introduces a local currency to promote the local trade and to help the local farmers.	Reformed Congregation Hungary	Hajdúnánási Holding Zrt.	http://www.bocskaikorona.hu/
31	Church Investors Group	Representation of many Church denominations and organisations, encourages engagement with company managements and sharing of information on ethical matters related to investment, incl. climate change	Four key aims: • to encourage the formulation of investment policies based on Christian ethical principles • to assist each other in putting such policies into practice • to encourage responsible business practices through engagement with company managements • to share information and views on ethical matters related to investment	Predominantly based in Britain and Ireland	Church Investors Group	https://churchinvestorsgroup.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/public/CIG-Annual-Report-2017-Final.pdf
32	The new economy project of Quakers in the UK	The new economy project sets out a vision of how the economy could be transformed so that it operates more in line with Quaker values.	Quakers in Britain were the first church in Britain to divest centrally held money from fossil fuels. Local and area meetings are now exploring the same option.	UK	Quakers	http://www.quaker.org.uk/our-work/economic-justice/new-economy
33	The Central Finance Board (CFB)	Methodists in the UK have their own investment agency, the Central Finance Board (CFB) that actively promotes ethical investing	CFB also promotes scrutiny and debate through the Joint Advisory Committee on the Ethics of Investment (JACEI).	UK	Methodist Church	http://www.methodist.org.uk/jacei

	Name	Brief description	Further comments	Ownership/ Location	NGO/ Church	link
34	A guide to money, faith and ethics	United Reformed Church (URC) website exploring issues of ethical finance		UK	United Reformed Church	http://www.yourfaithyourfinance.org
35	Ethical Investment Advisory Group (EIAG)	Church of England advisory group to give independent advice on ethical investment matters, as well as developing and putting in place a range of ethical investment initiatives.		UK	Church of England	https://www.churchofengland.org
36	Islamic Finance Council UK (UKIFC)	The UKIFC and Church of Scotland have been developing together a pioneering new model of interfaith engagement the initiative aims to move from dialogue to action by creating a fairer, more socially responsible financial system.	UKIFC and COS have been convening a gathering of faith leaders, parliamentarians, and finance practitioners at the house of lords in October 2016 to agree a shared values framework upon which a financial solution, open to all in society, will be developed.	UK	UKIFC and Church of Scotland	http://www.ukifc.com/2016/11/03/archbishop-supports-shared-values-discussion-at-house-of-lords/

Some additional remarks on the Finances tabulation

Preliminary remark: Finance and Money are topics which many people (including politicians) find difficult. This difficulty causes over simplified explanations to become the ‘stories’ by which the issues are interpreted. There is widespread illiteracy in these matters.

[Item 17] ECCR: ECCR has, we believe, the potential to address this illiteracy. It documents and summarises, by means of monthly newsletters, news and events on which money and finance have beneficial or adverse effects on human rights and the planetary systems. These summaries are – or should be – of use to both professionals and the ‘ordinary, citizen.

[Item 18] Your faith, your finance: An internet-based initiative which is more directed to the ordinary citizen.

[Item 19] Ethical Money Churches: An offshoot of ECCR – in principle, a neighbourhood group of churches whose members work together to promote mutual understanding and action with respect to ‘the right use of money’. Still very localised, as far as I can see.

[Item 20] Good money week: A week of ‘events’ – usually in early autumn – to promote ethical use of finance; some events for professional advisers, some for the general public (some for both).

[Item 21] Ethex: A truly remarkable innovation. An agency which handles share (and bond) issues for community initiatives in the areas of renewable energy, ecologically conscious agriculture, housing (especially for people with special needs) and – broadly – community development (reuse of redundant buildings, for example). Handles some aspects of ‘due diligence’ with respect to shares and bonds on offer and provides an internet based showcase for investors with (relatively) small sums of money to invest in a cause related fashion. Can also facilitate the resale of shares/bonds where an investor has need.

[Item 22] UKSIF: A national membership body for the development of knowledge and practice among financial service professionals. Promotes Good Money Week.

[Item 23] Quaker Social Action: One of many bodies in Britain helping households who are in financial difficulties with money management and personal debt. Based in east London but has run courses for individuals wishing to work locally with debt and similar problems.

[Item 24] Public Banking Institute and **[Item 23]** Global Alliance for Banking on Values: Neither of these needs to be copied locally – both are open to national and local action. PBI is based in the USA; GABV in the Netherlands. Both work internationally to raise aspirations (and action) about what banks and banking should be. Both have a range of educational material. GABV’s members are banking institutions; PBI is open to all.

[Item 26] Institute for Social Banking (ISB): Offers support to people and the institutions of civil society to move to a better financial system.

Others

	Name	Brief description	Further comments	Ownership/ Location	NGO/ Church	link
37	Apostoli/Mission	A Church affiliated nonprofit/not governmental organization The main charity body in Greece closely related to the Church.	It is the most important charity body of the Church of Greece. It supports people in need of food, medicines, accommodation, education etc.; immigrants and provides scholarships	Archdiocese of Athens, Church of Greece	NGO – Church affiliated	http://www.mkoapostoli.com/
38	Doctors of Charity	Association established by the local diocese	Association established by the Holy Diocese of Demetrias in 1999, functioning under the guidance of the Church, with aim to voluntarily help recover from any kind of human pain. Members of the Doctors of Charity are doctors, dentists, pharmacists, nurses and everyone who would like to volunteer	Holy Metropolis of Demetrias and Almyros, Volos, Greece	Local Diocese of Demetrias	
39	Metadrasi	Organization for action for migration and development	METAdrasi – Action for Migration and Development, is a Greek NGO founded in 2010 that focuses on services not covered by the Public Authorities or other NGOs in Greece and is the only organization that retains a permanent front-line presence in all key entry and exit locations. METAdrasi operates mainly in the following two sectors, interpretation services and the protection of unaccompanied children.	Private sector/ Greece	NGO Metadrasi	http://metadrasi.org/en/metadrasi/
40	Caritas Hellas	Organization	It aims at combating poverty and injustice, supporting vulnerable people and vulnerable groups and developing various organized actions	The local department of Caritas Europa and Caritas Internationalis/ Greece	NGO Caritas Hellas	http://www.caritas.gr
41	Praksis	It is an independent Non-Governmental Organization whose main goal is the design, application and implementation of humanitarian programs and medical interventions	Its main goal is the elimination of social and economic exclusion of vulnerable social groups and the defence of their personal and social rights. Its beneficiaries: Greek poor, homeless, uninsured, economic immigrants, asylum seekers/ refugees, unaccompanied minors, trafficking victims, sex workers, children begging in the streets, injection drug users, Roma, HIV seropositive people / PLWA, Hepatitis B and C patients, MSM (Men having Sex with Men), prisoners, people released from prisons, Greek families that face the repercussions of the financial crisis ... any person that faces social or / and financial exclusion and is deprived of basic goods.	Private organization/ Greece	NGO Praksis	https://www.praksis.gr/en/
42	Yhteinen pöytä (A Shared Table)	A new way to organize food aid. Surplus food is collected from vendors and community meals are organized by unemployed people	Community building, self-esteem for the unemployed, and public discussion about food surplus and work / unemployment / vocation.	Founded, funded and owned by the City of Vantaa and Vantaa Parish Union. Finland , Helsinki area (Vantaa)	Lutheran / Ecumenical	http://www.yhteinenpoyta.fi/summary-in-english/

43	The ZUG Guidelines to faith	Consistent investing – Faith in Finances : “What do you do with your wealth to make a better planet?”	Compiled by Martin Palmer and Pippa Moss	The Alliance of Religions and Conservation/ UK	NGO ARC	http://www.arcworld.org/download/s/ZUG_Guidelines_to_FCI_2017.pdf
44	Initiativ for etisk handel (IEH) (Initiative for ethical trade)	IEH is a resource center and an advocate for ethical trade practices, which promotes human rights, workers’ rights, development and environmental standards	IEH – Ethical Trading Initiative Norway is multi-stakeholder initiative, represented by NGOs, Trade Unions, Businesses and the Enterprise Federation of Norway	Norway	Ethical Trading Initiative (IEH)	http://etiskhandel.no/English/About_IEH/index.html
45	Gjenbruks-butikker (Second hand stores)	Three large mission organisations in Norway have started chains of second-hand stores as an integrated part of their mission. Number of shops are increased greatly the last decade, and they are scattered all over the country	The shops integrate care for creation with raising money for international mission work. At the same time creating a new social meeting place with possibilities for meaningful engagement. This is a good opportunity for (voluntary) work for retired people and migrants without yet an official work permit	The Norwegian Mission Society (NMS), Norwegian Lutheran Mission (NLM) and Normisjon Norway		http://www.nlm.no/gjenbruk/ https://nms.no/norge/nms-gjenbruk/ http://www.gallerinormisjon.no/
46	Green Christian: Joy in Enough	Initiative from the Green Christian movement in the UK to build a just economy within the ecological limits of the Earth	They provide a well-informed discussion and resources on their website	UK	Green Christian	http://www.greenchristian.org.uk/joy-in-enough/
47	Centre for the Understanding of Sustainable Prosperity	The Centre based at the University of Surrey explores a range of related themes including <i>The Nature of Prosperity</i>		UK	CUSP	http://www.cusp.ac.uk/nature-of-prosperity/
48	Social Justice Ireland	Grew out of the Conference of Religious in Ireland (CORI), independent think tank and justice advocacy organisation providing independent analysis and policy development on a range of issues including the economy and finance		Ireland	Social Justice Ireland	https://www.socialjustice.ie/

Appendix: Covering Note

Background

This overview was initiated by Tony Weekes, a critical economist from Northern Ireland at the request of the CEC Thematic Reference Group on Economic and Ecological Justice and further developed by the Group. It summarizes a number of examples of ‘best practice’ in terms of eco sufficiency and aimed at practising economic and ecological justice at a number of different levels.

The word ‘best’ needs to be defined. Something could be defined as ‘best’ (or ‘good’) if it sought actively to encourage the use of finance to meet social and ecological needs rather than profit alone. Even conventional economics could find merit in this by recalling the idea of externalities. But financial return has become the unquestioned conventional measure.

A definition of ‘best’ could go further. Ideally, it requires an effective network, not single instances. To provide an example: a few determined citizens may wish to ensure the availability of good food in an urban area. But, to be successful, their work will require effective support at national level which provides the services identified as being ‘national’.

A further attribute of ‘best’ is that it offers the possibility of encouraging synergies and symbioses.

These refinements of the concept of ‘best’ require further work.

For the purposes of this paper we classify ‘best practices’ as follows:

- the local: often small but offering inspiration – something which a group of motivated citizens can do if there is (i) enabling legislation, (ii) access to land, (iii) access to training and (iv) advice and availability (on reasonable terms) to finance (v) empowering (and regulating) legislation.
- the national: an organisation which shares experience, information, provides advice and political action to advocate for enabling legislation;
- the global: an initiative which proposes ethical standards across national boundaries, while also recognising local cultural, political and historical differences.

A point of clarification: Cooperation and cooperatives – use (and misuse) of these terms

The success of many of the local initiatives – some which are summarised here – depends on the principles of cooperation.

These are set out in many places, but the most useful is a paper entitled *European Cooperative Movement – Background and common denominators*.⁵

This paper provides the following definition of a cooperative (page 3):

“... (according to the International Cooperative Alliance – “ICA”) a Cooperative can be defined as a group of people who join together in a common undertaking in accord with the six principles that are as follows:

⁵ Jarka Chloupková: *European Cooperative Movement – Background and common denominators*, <http://uwcc.wisc.edu/info/intl/chloupkova.pdf>. This paper offers a comprehensive survey of cooperation across Europe, but much of the detail is in terms of the agricultural cooperative movement.

- (i) Membership is open and voluntary.
- (ii) There is democratic control, usually on the basis of one man [sic], one vote.
- (iii) Interest on share capital is limited.
- (iv) Distribution of surplus proportionally, according to the level of transactions
- (v) Cooperatives devote some part of their surpluses to education.
- (vi) Cooperatives cooperate among themselves.”

The author continues (pages 8/9) to draw an important distinction between cooperatives (as in this ICA definition) and the use of that term under the communist regime. Briefly (and selectively): “What led to their [cooperatives in the communist sense] malfunctions was a whole range of factors, from which the biggest obstacle was that they operated in command economies with constrained input and output opportunities. ... **these “cooperatives” did not obey the principles set by ICA**”. [Emphasis added]

This is a crucial distinction. Our use of the words “cooperative” and “cooperation” depends on compliance with the ICA principles. What we are citing as “local” (and what we know from observation and from encounters with cooperative activists) suggests that an active national cooperative movement (in broad terms a “cooperative development agency”) is an important component of an economic system which allows “the local” to flourish.

In turn, this suggests – in terms of the ‘message for governments’ – empowering and up to date legislation is required.

A note on the origin of the examples

Because of the origin of this work (as noted above), the overview presented below mainly covers examples from the United Kingdom of Great Britain and the Republic of Ireland. But we are aware that there will be similar examples of projects elsewhere in Europe.

We hope this brief survey may inspire others working for and in churches across Europe to compile their own overviews and to refine the idea of ‘best’ (or ‘good) and send them to CEC to stimulate the sort of mutually fertilizing exchange that we are after!

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Who we are

The Conference of European Churches (CEC) is a fellowship of some 114 Orthodox, Protestant, Anglican, and Old Catholic Churches from all countries of Europe, plus 40 National Council of Churches and Organisations in Partnership. CEC was founded in 1959 and has offices in Brussels and Strasbourg.

In its commitment to Europe as a whole the Conference seeks to help the European churches to renew their spiritual life, to strengthen their common witness and service and to promote the unity of the Church and peace in the world.

CEC works on a number of issues of common concern for European churches. These include dialogue with the European political institutions, ecclesiology and theological dialogue, peacebuilding and reconciliation, human rights, economic and ecological justice, employment and social issues, bioethics, education for democratic citizenship, migration and asylum issues, and EU policy and legislation.

Contact Us

We are very eager to receive your feedback about these examples of practices working towards a fair sharing or any additional ideas you would appreciate us to add to this list.



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