

## **PRIORITIZATION EXERCISE: A progress report on the very first steps**

### **I. Process**

After the executive committee meeting (September 2007) the general secretary initiated a structured process to follow up the executive committee recommendation to review the 2009 plans and to propose at least two scenarios with a balanced budget. The process brought together the programme directors to reconsider the plans and recommend appropriate changes. It has taken into account the learnings from the internal evaluation of all the projects that was also completed in this period.

Three consecutive phases constituted this common exercise:

- The 15 achievements were reassessed, their content unpacked and commonly owned. Proposals for changes are being worked on and will be ready in time for the central committee.
- The planned activities were reviewed with a pair of directors reading with critical eyes the plans of another two programmes. This was a critical assessment from “within”, an effort to reflect together on each activity proposed.
- The process led to a preliminary listing of projects and activities as “essential”, “desirable” (dependent on funding) and that which can be postponed or even suspended.

### **II. Preliminary Results:**

The collegial process for prioritizing the activities confirmed that the income gap of CHF 2.9 million (highlighted in the Framework discussed at the September Executive Committee meeting) could and should be addressed in a number of ways.

For the moment the very first reflections and efforts have resulted in the following estimates:

- a. *Direct Costs.* Direct costs in the 2009 Framework can be trimmed by approximately CHF 1 million. This trimming is would be the result of reviewing planned cost growth as well as a rigorous review of plans to save expenditure through the reorganisation of activities.
- b. *Staff Costs.* Staff costs in 2009 could be reduced by approximately CHF 0.55 million. This would be achieved by profiting from opportunities presented by staff departures to reorganise staff time allocation and does not rely upon redundancy planning.
- c. *FSA costs.* The net cost of FSA to programmes could be reduced by approximately CHF 0.3 million. This saving would come from increased rental income which is planned already for 2008 and also from some reduced staff costs.
- d. *Income.* Reasonably firm indications that additional funding partner income of about CHF 0.45 million are being studied.

These four items would contribute **a total CHF 2.3 million**. Some other more variable items

are also being considered and can be listed as follows.

- a. *Exchange rates.* The EUR:CHF exchange rate has been conservatively budgeted at 1.59 for 2008. Latest indications are that the currently higher rates of exchange will persist into 2008 and even on into 2009. This is supported by forecasts that the US economy will go through a difficult time and weaken further towards the end of 2008. A EUR:CHF rate of 1.62 would add CHF 0.25 million to expected income.
- b. The combination of meetings to save on air travel is to be thoroughly reviewed in the preparation of scenarios for 2009.

### **III. Preliminary learnings and new ways of working:**

- a. To develop a *Council-wide strategy on visits to the churches* to include the Decade to Overcome Violence Living Letters Team visits and the more relational component of all the work. This will be developed closely with the Programme 1 which takes the responsibility for coordination of church and ecumenical relationships and P4 on regional relationships.
- b. *Building programmatic convergences* more intentionally and structurally for eg. the Global Theological Platform to not stand as a project separately but to be integrated more fully both into P502 on Ecumenical Formation and to the specific programme area it is to cover each year. For example, in 2008 it will focus on “The use of the Bible in the context of crisis and catastrophe” (Middle East, Climate Change and HIV and AIDS)” and in 2009 on “Advocacy”. This will also make savings both in terms of direct programme costs and staff time.
- c. To build a *new Council-wide strategy on relationships with member churches and ecumenical regional partners.* Building more synergy between the work in P104 and P401 to develop a more strategic, more realistic, more functional alignment of both human and financial resources.
- d. To move *World Youth Programmes into the Ecumenical Solidarity Fund* with savings both of financial and staff resources.
- e. To *merge the work of P404 and P405* under the heading of Emerging challenges: Climate Change and Science and Technology making savings on financial and human resources.
- f. Learning how to *avoid competition* between programmes and activities and to avoid duplication with negative results on both the impact of these activities and their “cost” in terms of human and material resources.
- g. Strengthening the assembly priorities by *developing a comprehensive council wide programmatic strategy* on DOV and the Middle East to draw on the present programmatic and staff resources.

### **IV. The imperative of becoming more “strategic”**

Bringing to the executive and central committees for discussion, guidance and final approval new and workable strategies on:

- a. Communication, and
- b. Fund Raising.

### **V. Working on a process for long term proposals on:**

- a. *Governing Bodies:* their overall architecture might be assessed, particularly with a critical eye on their size and frequency of meetings. Such a step could bring

results in clarifying and strengthening the roles of the governing bodies, but also result into possible cost savings

- b. ***The role and specific identity of the WCC***, particularly given the latest developments within the ecumenical landscape after the first meeting of the Global Christian Forum and the formation of “ACT Alliance”.

#### **VI. What next?**

This process will be continued through December and January and the results will be shared with the executive and central committees, February 2008 with recommendations for possible changes in the programme plans 2009-2011. Any follow-up will be worked out and presented to the Officers in May 2008 and the actual budget will come to the executive committee in September 2008, for final approval.