

IFES EUROPE

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Lewis, Job and Attila – the European delegation at the Bible Study Consultation

IFES 
students reaching students
with the *gospel* worldwide

June 2011

We want to serve the national movements through:

People – members of the regional team building a relationship with each national movement and providing advice and training to general secretaries, staff and student leaders.

Equipping – training and equipping staff, board members, student leaders and graduates through a range of regional networks and training programs.

Partnership – supporting the work of national movements through InterAction which places experienced staff, volunteers and teams into specific contexts at the request of national movements or in pioneering situations.

Dear friends, prayer partners and supporters of the work of IFES in Europe!

Thank you very much for your interest and support for what is going on in Europe. Once again we would like to update you on what is happening in the IFES student ministry here.

Reports from recent events

The **Seekers Bible Study** network continues to equip staff, students and volunteers in IFES movements to open the bible with non-Christians, and we are seeing fruit from these endeavors across the continent. In Hungary graduates involved in the network have been running training on Seekers Bible Studies at national conferences, have launched a website and printed resources, and continue to hear of new groups starting in universities. Attila writes: *I just heard that a new group has started in Szeged – a Christian professor is leading it together with two students, and they had four non-Christians come to the first meeting. They are all biologists, so decided to use Genesis in their studies!*

Charlie Hadjiev (Bulgaria, member of the IFES Europe Regional Team) has established a new **Consultation on Eastern Orthodoxy** to help IFES staff working in Orthodox contexts. The group of 18 theologians and practitioners from Europe and Eurasia met in Bulgaria in January for presentations and discussions on Evangelical and Eastern Orthodox theology. They intend to compile the material into a written resource as an apologetic, and also engage with the popular theology in Orthodox countries, in order to best communicate the gospel into this cultural context. The group will meet again in November.

In February representatives from all regions of the IFES world met in Singapore for a **Consultation on Bible Study**. Lewis Green (UCCF Britain), Job Thomas (Ichtus Belgium) and Attila Nyari (MEKDSZ Hungary) gave a report on the state of bible study amongst students in Europe. The consultation continued with presentations on different methods of engaging with scripture, and small groups on a variety of topics including the bible and evangelism, training methods, and the use of new media. All participants have returned home with a renewed vision and practical steps to apply what they have been discussing in their own contexts. Job writes: *It is said that you cannot fully be human unless you engage with people from other cultures – I had that privilege in February at the Bible Study Consultation. And what topic could be more relevant than that! This week of sharing and planning was not only a true blessing for all participants, it will also support IFES in developing a more thorough and broad scripture engagement that will help all students in the Fellowship.*

In IFES Europe we want to see every national movement equipped with a small group evangelism tool. **Christianity Explored** is one way to help students get to know Jesus, and we have run two "Explore weekends" to allow staff, students and volunteers to experience Christianity Explored, to hear how it is used in IFES groups and to be trained in how to run the course, with representatives from Israel, Bulgaria, Estonia, Czech Republic, Slovakia, Russia, Poland, Lithuania, Latvia and Italy – and most of these movements intend to start using this as their main small group

[www.
ifeseurope.
org](http://www.ifeseurope.org)

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evangelism tool. In Lithuania the IFES movement intends to promote Christianity Explored as a follow-up course for a national outreach event in 2011 with Franklin Graham, son of Billy Graham.

The **Mark Drama** also continues to flourish across Europe. A number of national movements have begun organizing enactments of the gospel account, including having students and staff trained in how to direct the drama. This is in addition to movements like SMD Germany, GBU France, GBU Spain, LKSB Latvia who have been running the Mark Drama for a few years now. Thousands of students in Europe have encountered Jesus through this powerful tool.

The **Cross-Current** project has started with two meetings - one for emerging Bible teachers with John Lennox, the other for graduates' ministry. We hope to have groups starting in the autumn on journalism, economics, education, justice and media engagement. Each meeting takes a lot of organizing and expense, including scholarships for some who would otherwise not be able to attend, but it is an exciting start! Please pray with us that if it is His will, then we may really be able to use this programme to help inspire a new generation of Christian thinkers across Europe and Eurasia. For more info see www.cross-current.org or email Tim Vickers at tim@ifeseurope.org

Partnering

InterAction, our cross-cultural teams, continues to facilitate partnership between national movements. This year we have around 50 workers in 12 locations doing pioneer work, supporting the local national movement, reaching out to international students, and more. In the last semester there have been many challenges for individuals and families, with many feeling the heat of battle. Please pray for perseverance in difficult and sometimes discouraging situations, and give thanks for God's faithfulness in keeping and growing his children, and in drawing unbelievers to faith through these teams.

Beata, from Poland, was a senior staff worker in ChSA before moving to Slovakia to support the work there. She writes: *Slovak students are very similar to Polish students, and I can use my ten years' experience to support and encourage the students here. I love getting to know them by spending time with them, eating together, inviting them into my home, and reading the bible together. Food is very important and I usually bake cakes for our meetings!*

We are also delighted to announce that Susanne Koch will be joining the Regional Team in July as the InterAction Coordinator, based in Oxford, UK.

For more information about the work of these teams and how you can join in, see the recently redesigned InterAction website www.ifesinteraction.org

Thank you for your persistence in prayer for the work of IFES in Europe. Instead of the Praise&Prayer booklet, we have been producing prayer updates for the national movements, which are available to download at: www.ifeseurope.org/prayer/pray-for-national-movements.html

If you would like to receive an email when a new update is published, please email helen@ifeseurope.org

Most of the national student movements produce their own prayer letters, many of them in English version of their prayer letter. If you would like to receive information from a particular national movement, please let us know.

For more information on how to get involved with student ministry in Europe, please see

www.ifeseurope.org

Sabbath in the Bible starts in Genesis 2:2-3, in which God rested after creating the universe, and it is also applied to people. Rest is an important part of our life. I thank God for the privilege he gave me to take a sabbatical mainly to rest and move back to Spain, my home country.

8 words to summarize my sabbatical time: sun, family, reading, church, food, walking, Barcelona and a new flat.



8 ideas to summarize some key reminders during sabbatical:

- I am a child of God. There is nothing I have to do win or widen his love.
- He ought to be at the centre of my life. Then I am home.
- He is trustworthy. I can rest.
- Pain is neither to be avoided nor to be absorbed. Jesus is here.
- I belong to the body of Christ. The community is important.
- I can love others deeply because of his love. And I can give unconditionally.
- I am sent in God's name. I have a mission in God, hard but fruitful.
- I ought to live for the glory of God.

I came back from sabbatical encouraged by the words in Psalm 121 and the truth that God is my Helper (v.1,2); my Carer (v.3,4,5,8); my Protector (v.5,7). My feet won't slip (v.3), internal circumstances like my weakness cannot defeat me; and the sun and the moon, external circumstances like Satan or other people, will not hurt me (v.6).

Edith Vilamajó Sanchis (Associate Regional Secretary) returned from her 5-month sabbatical in February 2011.

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Reports from the national movements

*I did not know where to start. We spent the first year like nomads, moving from one place to another to meet because the university did not recognize us as an official student group, says Daniele, who founded a new GBU group in Pavia, **Italy**, with a friend Vincenzo, two years ago. They faced cold-shoulders from students and rejection from the university authorities, but persevered in prayer and in meeting to encourage one another to share Jesus with their friends. Their perseverance paid off when they won a university competition giving financial help and access to university buildings to run a series of conferences on the bible and science. They needed 20 signatures from students for this – not easy in a hostile and apathetic context! *Looking back at me and Vince, sitting alone on a bench at the university, wondering how to share what Jesus had put in our hearts, I can only say that God was faithful.**

We are thanking God for the growth in the work in former Central Europe – recently demonstrated at the national conference in **Hungary** where Lindsay Brown (former IFES General Secretary) was speaking, his first engagement there for 20 years. In the 1980s the movement was underground, with a handful of students meeting in tents in the woods. This year, 500 students gathered together. Lindsay writes: *We thank God for the pioneering ministry of Christine Davies who made many 'under the radar' visits in the 1980s. She died at the early age of 44, but this gifted pioneer has left a great legacy for the Hungarian church. It is often like that in the history of the church: many of the best pioneers do not see the fruit of their work in their own lifetime, but we are called to press on, trusting that God will bring forth fruit.* Therefore, my dear brothers, stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourself fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labour in the Lord is not in vain. 1 Cor 15:58

In **Belgium** the two movements work together, demonstrating their unity in Christ across the language barrier. An encouraging development there is the reemergence of a Flemish-speaking student group in Brussels, where for many years there has only been French-speaking groups. This new group has been meeting since November, but is still fragile. Please pray too that this new group will help the two Belgian movements to work ever closer together.



enjoying Polish specialties at the North-Central Staff Consultation, January 2011

Within Europe there are a number of sub-regions, with the movements often organizing events together and sharing resources. These include the staff consultations for all staff in the **North-Central and Balkan** regions, which both took place in January. These are times of great encouragement for the often-small national movements, and a time to think strategically and specifically about ministry in the local contexts. The consultations build strong IFES identity in these movements across whole staff teams.

Jessica has been working in **Bosnia** for two years, in a context where ministry is hard and there is an intense spiritual battle. The majority of the population is Muslim; there are strong family ties; ethnic background determines religious allegiance. There is only a handful of students involved in the movement, but EUS have been patiently working to creatively introduce students to Jesus. Jessica and others have been meeting with a small group of mostly Muslim students to look at principles of leadership from the bible. The students love it and come regularly – a great opportunity to show how important God's word is to every area of life, and to portray Christ beautifully to these unbelieving students.

IFES Europe often invites and works with FCSI, the movement in **Israel**, to enable them to send students and staff to training events and receive European visitors. There is also an IFES movement in the West Bank, however the work there is often disrupted due to the political situation and strikes, and it is difficult for their students to meet together with Israeli students. Nevertheless they persist in declaring Jesus' victory over the powers of the world and cultural divides, and in working for reconciliation. FCSI recently held a conference in the Palestinian territories to enable those students to attend. They write: *It was the first time to meet with the Israeli movement in more than five years. We were only able to be there for half a day, but it was still a great blessing to meet our brothers and sisters.*

Undivided 2012 www.undivided2012.org

The next **Student Evangelism Conference** will take place at Easter 2012 in Győr, Hungary. John Lennox (Professor of Mathematics at Oxford University, also known for his public debates and publications engaging with New Atheism) will be giving bible talks on the topic of worship and idolatry. We expect 2000 students from across Europe for fellowship and encouragement, and new ideas and vision for the call to be salt and light on their campuses. Do join with us in praying for this event and the preparations which are happening already, and that the next generation of students will be powerfully transformed through a fresh encounter with Jesus to live whole-heartedly and undivided for him, and proclaim him to the lost in their universities and beyond.

Student Evangelism Conference

undivided
IFES EUROPE 2012
Győr, Hungary | 5-10 April 2012

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IFES World Assembly – Jesus Christ: Lord of the Universe, Lord of the University



We are very excited about inviting the world to Europe for the upcoming IFES World Assembly in Poland in July. Thank you for your prayers and support for this event – we expect 750 delegates from over 140 countries to gather in Krakow for a time of equipping with resources and training to continue to minister effectively, of celebrating God's growing work among students worldwide, and planning the movement's sustainability and effectiveness into the future. With bible talks from national leaders and international staff, seminars on global

issues, ministry forums and many inspiring and creative elements, we are looking forward to seeing what God will do through this World Assembly and the ongoing impact in the national movements in the months and years to come.

It is a particular joy to be celebrating this World Assembly in Poland, and mark the 20 years since the fall of communism in Eastern Europe. Ewa Pieszka, General Secretary of ChSA Poland writes: *It was an incredible privilege to live through all the changes in Eastern Europe and to witness God's sovereignty. The Communist regime collapsed and another chapter of Acts was opened. God gave new opportunities for proclaiming his gospel amongst students. We knew that we couldn't waste this opportunity for reaching out to the generations of future leaders of our nations. It's hard to imagine more exciting time to live in than the last twenty years, partnering with God in transforming Eastern Europe for his glory!*

Who knows but that you have come to your royal position for such a time as this? Esther 4:14. John Abraham Godson is the Esther in **ChSA Poland's** story this year, as they host the IFES World Assembly in August. John made history in 2010 as the first black Member of Parliament in Poland; he came to Poland in 1993 as a graduate of IFES in Nigeria to join their Polish sister movement. Since then he has become a Polish citizen and joined Parliament, and continues to partner with ChSA in his role there. ChSA approached John to ask for help with the visa application process for World Assembly, and he has responded generously and quickly, arranging meetings with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, who have been advising on the legal matters and communicating with Polish Embassies around the world to facilitate the visa application process.

Please join with us in praying for this event – for the practicalities, especially visa applications, and that this would be a time of inspiration and encouragement as we refresh our vision of Jesus.

Please also **consider making a financial gift** towards World Assembly – for instance to help finance delegates from French-speaking Africa, or the musicians who will be leading us in worship, or for the two-day gathering of the 150 student participants before the whole conference starts. You can give via the website at www.ifesworld.org/give/to/World_Assembly or email helen@ifeseurope.org for more information.



Thank you so much for your partnership in the Gospel!

Your IFES Europe Regional Team

Martin Haizmann, Germany (Regional Secretary); Cassells Morrell, Ireland; Edith Vilamajo, Spain; Tim Vickers, UK; Mirek Pieszka, Poland; Igers Rautmanis, Latvia; Charlie Hadjiev, Bulgaria; Helen Rennie, UK/Germany; Thomas Frovin, Denmark

Thank you for your generous giving to IFES Europe and the national movements in prayer and financial support.

If you would like to make a gift, you can do so via the website at: www.ifesworld.org/give/

or by bank transfer to IFES Trust, NatWest Bank, IBAN: GB92NWBK60101019258119, BIC: NWBKGB2L

Please give as the reference "IFES Europe" or the name of the country to which you would like to donate.