
EUROPEAN PUBLIC INFORMATION BULLETIN

Issue 108

June 2003

Published by the Bahá'í International Community, Office of Public Information — Paris

Successful exhibition at the European Parliament in Brussels

From the 10th to the 13th of June of 2003, the Bahá'í International Community hosted an exhibition at the European Parliament Building's main foyer. The display was officially opened by Ms. Jean Lambert, member of the European Parliament, who sponsored the exhibition.

More than 200 people, including a number of parliamentarians and prominent people, as well as Ms. Ana Palacio, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Spain, attended the reception.

Representatives from all EU National Spiritual Assemblies, Turkey, Romania and Switzerland actively participated at the four day event.

A more detailed report will be provided in a special edition of the European Public Information Bulletin.

(For further information please contact BIC-OPI Paris)

Urgent reminder: Budapest 4-6 July

The 10th European Public Information Management Seminar organised by BIC-OPI Paris will take place in Budapest from 4th to 6th July 2003.

The main focus of this year's seminar will be the role of youth, particularly those engaged in university studies in the field of public information. The seminar will be preceded by a one day intensive training for those friends who wish to become acquainted with the basis of the external affairs work.

Representatives of BIC-OPI Haifa and several experts will be among the guest speakers of the seminar.

Most European National and Regional Spiritual Assemblies have already registered for this event. The Office of Public Information invites those countries who have not yet registered to consider proceeding to the registration rapidly.

(For further information please contact BIC-OPI Paris)

Virtues project takes off in Turkey

A Bahá'í virtues project has been presented to Turkish organisations responsible for education.

Dr. Violet Bağcıvan met with the governor of the Adana region, Turkey as well as the police administration, NGOs, the director of curricula, government officers and social services to talk about a successful adaptation of the Virtues Guide in the country.

Since its introduction by the European Women's Task Force as part of a campaign for Women and Peace several years ago, the Virtues project has been televised and a training session given to 115 education workers.

One television programme, "Peace Fruits of the Virtue Tree," was aired for four months after sponsorship was provided by a Bahá'í. The show featured teachers, pupils and parents from a school coming together to focus on a virtue by acting or singing and making decisions. This

focusing on a virtue was also practised with the elderly.

Other women's NGOs developed a new pilot project based on the Guide to be brought into schools, teaching pupils how to live in peace by obtaining virtues. After guidance from the National Spiritual Assembly, it was decided to take the project to the Ministry for Education.

The Winpeace organisation also wants to use the method to improve Turkish-Greek relations.

(For further information please contact the National Spiritual Assembly of Turkey)

10th International Book Fair in Hungary

A book fair was a good opportunity for Bahá'ís to network. During the fair in Budapest, from the 24th to the 27th of April 2003, the Bahá'ís met with the Minister of National Cultural Heritage, Mr. Gábor Görgey, who had opened the event. The Mayor of Budapest, Dr. Gábor Demszky, was presented with a copy of the book, *Bahá'í Terraces on Mount Carmel*. Dr. Demszky invited the friends to an official meeting in Budapest's main city hall the next month.

The Faith was also introduced to the fair's guest of honour, well-known Peruvian writer Mario Vargas Llosa.

Bahá'ís had an attractive stand at the fair, with books and posters from the Bahá'í World Centre. Visitors were given pamphlets and invitations to devotional meetings and study circles.

On the last day of the fair, nearly 90 people watched a performance by the Hungarian Dance Workshop, Puzzle. The show was connected to *The Promise of World Peace*, with segments read between dances.

The Mayor of Budapest's 12th district, Dr. György Mitnyan, met the Bahá'ís during a presentation of the prizes for the Publishing House of the Year and Bookseller of the Year. He received books as gifts and invited the friends to a meeting in the district's city hall.

The Faith was also presented, for the first time, to the Mexican Ambassador in Budapest, Mr. José Luis Martínez. (For further information please contact the National Spiritual Assembly of Hungary)

Naw-Rúz reception in Bulgaria

A Naw-Rúz celebration at the National Bahá'í Centre, on 23 March 2003, attracted more than 40 prominent guests and friends of the Faith.

The reception, organised by the National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of Bulgaria, included a programme with Bahá'í and religious choral music, prayers, a short presentation on the Bahá'í teachings, and ideas on sustainable development.

Bahá'ís reported the reception had a friendly atmosphere. (For further information please contact the National Spiritual Assembly of Bulgaria)

Bahá'í on BBC regional radio

A Bahá'í was interviewed about the topic of marriage on regional radio in England. On 18 May 2003, "The Melting Pot" programme on BBC Three Counties Radio included a Hindu and an Anglican speaker.

During the 35-minute show, Mrs. Wendy Momen, spoke for 10 minutes about the Bahá'í teachings on marriage, recited the marriage vows and talked about consultation as a way of solving problems. She then answered questions.

Before the show went on air, the radio presenter asked listeners the question: "What faith is celebrating the Birth of the Báb on 23 May? The Báb was a descendant of the Prophet Muhammad but founded His own religion and told of the coming of one greater than He, Bahá'u'lláh."

The question was repeated three times before a listener called in with the right answer.

(For further information please contact the National Spiritual Assembly of the United Kingdom)

Women's council returns to Paris Centre

The Office of the International Council of Women (ICW) had its meeting at the National Bahá'í Centre in Paris for the sixth year running.

The ICW is a federation of national councils of women. Participants came from 15 to 17 May 2003, from all over the world as delegates of different agencies to the United Nations, or from other positions of responsibility. The Association of Bahá'í Women in France is a member of the ICW.

(For further information please contact the National Spiritual Assembly of France)

Praise for Bahá'ís at centre opening in United Kingdom

The official opening of the new Bahá'í Centre in the historic city of Derry (Londonderry), Northern Ireland, took place on 1 May 2003. The centre was renovated after consultation in the Spiritual Assembly, the community and with the city authorities. It is located close to the city centre, with a prominent sign.

The Mayor of the city, Councillor Kathleen McCloskey, was a guest of honour at a gathering of Bahá'ís and friends to formally inaugurate the centre. Speaking at the opening she said, "The Bahá'í ethos of unity in diversity is something that has inspired many people from all walks of life within the north-west and on a more regional and national basis too. Important contributions have been made by the local Bahá'í community on the proposed appointment of a Commissioner for Children and the community has also done sterling work in the struggle to overcome racism, discrimination and prejudice within our city. Your community adds to the richness and diversity of life within this city and I look forward to many more years of Bahá'í involvement and good work within the wider community."

(For further information please contact the National Spiritual Assembly of the United Kingdom)

Historic recognition for Faith in Scotland

The Bahá'í Council for Scotland was invited to attend a session of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland, the established church in the region on 18 May 2003.

The annual assembly is a forum in which the Church debates affairs and determines policies, and is attended by a quarter of the clergy and the leading elders of the Church.

For the first time, the General Assembly received representatives of non-Christian faiths of Scotland: the Bahá'ís, Buddhists, Jewish and Sikh faiths (the Muslims and Hindus were invited but did not attend.)

After the Chair of the session reported on the progress of interfaith dialogue in Scotland during the past year, each of the other faiths were asked to stand, and were given a warm, sincere, long and very moving ovation. The incoming Chair, Professor Iain Torrance, then congratulated Dr. MacDonald on his interfaith work and stated that this work was exceptionally important for the Church.

Relations between the Bahá'í community and the Church of Scotland have developed at a much faster pace since the presentation of the message to the world's religious leaders to Right Revd. Dr. Finlay MacDonald in June 2002.

(For further information please contact the National Spiritual Assembly of the United Kingdom)

Portuguese opening study circles

Bahá'ís in Portugal have been successfully opening study circles and children's classes to contacts during the past months. In Covilhã, a Bahá'í tutors a group of 11 non-Bahá'ís. In the Azores Islands, a Bahá'í teacher from a university is holding a class for students.

In southern Portugal, two young girls are teaching moral and spiritual values to 11 non-Bahá'í children. They started their class last Fall and will continue until the end of the school year.

(For further information please contact the National Spiritual Assembly of Portugal)

French newspaper comments on inter-religious prayers at Bahá'í centre

On 13 May 2003 a regional newspaper for the south of France reported on an inter-religious prayer meeting for peace held at the Bahá'í Centre. The article in *Nice-Matin* appeared to mark World Religion Day. It reported that five major religions took part and that there was a large audience. It also commented on the second part, where a Hebrew song was chanted, and a Buddhist group shared a Chinese song, the Choir Patchwork participated, followed by the gospel ensemble Vocal Blues. The deputy Mayor congratulated the organisers for their initiative.

(For further information please contact the National Spiritual Assembly of France)

Bahá'ís invited to the second International Meeting of World Forum of Religions and Cultures in Cyprus

The Bahá'ís in Cyprus were invited to attend the International Meeting of World Forum of Religions and Cultures. The Theme for this year was Universality and Culture in the Globalization Era: The Paths of Peace. A Turkish and a Greek Cypriot were representatives of the Faith, and were the only two female religious representatives. The Bahá'ís met the Bishop of Kykkos Nikiforos, Nicosia Cyprus, who received the message to the world's religious leaders a few months ago. Valuable contacts were made with the Mayor of Nicosia and his wife, and with City Council Cultural Department Head who introduced herself for future collaboration. They were invited to the Mayor's house to exchange special interests.

(For further information please contact the National Spiritual Assembly of Cyprus)

Bahá'í contacts in Turkey used for conference

Bahá'ís helped boost attendance at a conference of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination (CEDAW) in Turkey, from 18 to 20 April 2003.

The conference, sponsored by the British Council, was attended by 400 women from 81 different cities in Turkey. The Turkish community encouraged women from all over the country to attend the non-Bahá'í conference.

Although the number of participants at the event was limited, Bahá'ís from seven different regions took part. Bahá'ís participated in workshops and a Bahá'í, was one of two reporters present from media.

A systematic Bahá'í listing of NGOs (according to area and activity) was shared with the preparatory committee for the conference, who responded with interest at the classification.

(For further information please contact the National Spiritual Assembly of Turkey)

The EPIB reports on recent Public Information activities in Europe. Please send all news concerning Public Information to be published directly to BIC-OPI, Paris no later than the 25th of each month (25 June for the next issue) to the attention of Jessica Dacey. The Office of Public Information may edit articles received, and decide on the publication of all submitted material.

Bahá'í International Community, Office of Public Information – Paris

45 rue Pergolèse, 75116 Paris, France

Tel.: +33 (0)1 45 00 49 32 • Fax: +33 (0)1 45 00 49 35 • Email: opiparis@club-internet.fr