



GROUPE EUROPEEN DE PASTORALE OUVRIERE  
GRUPO EUROPEO DE PASTORAL OBRERA (OPERATA)  
GRUPPO EUROPEO DI PASTORALE DEL LAVORO  
GRUPP EWROPEW TAL-PASTORALI MAL-HADDIEMA  
EUROPAISCHE GRUPPE FÜR ARBEITER PASTORAL  
EUROPEAN GROUP FOR WORKER PASTORAL  
EUROPEANSE GROEP VOOR ARBEIDSTER PASTORAAL

## THE EUROPEAN GROUP FOR WORKER PASTORAL

The European Group for Worker Pastoral (GEPO) is a coordination group for worker pastorals in different European countries. It is presently composed of members from Germany, French-speaking Belgium, Spain, France, Luxembourg, Italy, Malta, the Netherlands, Portugal and French-speaking Switzerland. The European coordinations of the International YCW (IYCW), the International Coordination of YCWs (ICYCW) and the World Movement of Christian Workers (WMCW-ECWM) are also affiliated.

### Some background

The GEPO was founded in the wake of Vatican II at the initiative of European bishops sensitive to workers' problems. It was started up by Guy Deroubaix - later to become bishop of St. Denis in France - when he was the Secretary of the French Worker Mission. A meeting in 1972 in Rome between bishops, priests and members of the laity engaged in the worker pastoral laid the foundations for the GEPO. The theme of this meeting was, "*Workers' aspirations in today's Europe and the Christian faith.*"

The GEPO holds a symposium approximately every four years.

1983: *Workers' situation in this time of crisis. Church action. Challenges and ways forward for a revitalised worker pastoral*, in Chevilly-Larue (France).

1987: *The challenges workers face. The workers' movement and faith in Jesus Christ in the Church*, in El Escorial (Spain), May 1987.

1991: *A worker pastoral in Europe. Choices for action, proposals for the Church*, in Rome (Italy).

1995: *Facing the challenges of new instabilities in the world of work. Choosing hope, choosing solidarity*, in Wegscheid (Germany).

1999: *The Worker Pastoral at the dawn of the 21<sup>st</sup> century*, in Porto, Portugal.

2004: *An alternative to neo-liberalism - a dream, a utopia or a reality? The Industrial Pastoral and Contemporary Challenges*. Pétange (Grand Duchy of Luxembourg).

A number of seminars have been held in preparation for every symposium.

2000: Brussels. *Equal opportunities for men and women in the world of work*.

2001: Brussels. *Young people, work and employment in Europe*.

2002: Pétange (Luxembourg), in conjunction with the ISF (Luxembourg), the CEFOC (Belgium) and the Oswald-von-Nell-Breuning-Haus (Germany), *Immigration and civil society in Europe*.

2004 : Madrid (Spain). *For a Europe socially enlarged. Social Welfare for everybody. Positions and actions of the society civil and the Christian Churches*.

The preparations for these symposia and seminars are made by the Continuity Group, made up of representatives of each of the national worker pastorals and each of the European coordinations. The Continuity Group meets annually.

The Board meets approximately twice a year to finalise the decisions.

***The seminars and symposia are granted by the European Commission in co-operation and with the support of EZA (Europäisches Zentrum für Arbeitnehmerfragen)***

## **Aims of the GEPO**

The aim of the GEPO is to intensify solidarity, the struggle for justice and liberating through words and deeds inspired by the Gospel and Christian social teachings, in the world of work in Europe, in solidarity with the workers of all continents.

It wishes to foster ever more effective participation in the labour movement, in the struggle against exclusion, against insecure living and working conditions and for a fairer society. It wishes to help strengthen and support the worker pastorals in the different countries of Europe. It also wishes to have an impact on different Church fora to ensure that greater attention is paid, in reflection and pastoral action, to the situations and questions of Europe's workers, both the employed and the unemployed, grappling with ever greater insecurity.

The GEPO is particularly keen to foster discussion and study based on the pooling of the experiences and analyses of the participants from each of the

countries. Experts, drawing on all the different contributions, help the group to move forward in its decision-making process.

### **Decisions, contacts, representations**

Each symposium ends with decisions of relevance to all the participants, the different worker pastorals, and the GEPO, helping to foster an ever more active engagement in the world of work. The conclusions are sent to Church leaders in the different countries, various worker pastoral bodies and the European institutions.

The GEPO also attends a number of European gatherings such as the second ecumenical meeting in Graz (Austria), organised jointly by the Council of European Bishops' Conferences and the Conference of European Churches, an ecumenical body composed of 123 Christian churches. It also attended the meeting organised by the Office of the Council of European Bishops' Conferences on social and worker pastoral in Frascati (Rome) in 1998.