

Dear praying Friends

We have now had several Canopy of Prayer bulletins and we want to thank you for your support. These first issues have been a starting point in the process of seeing the canopy develop. As we wait for the Website and other aspects of the Canopy to be ready, which should be during the autumn, we want to give you the opportunity to get to know a little more about the institutions that make up the EU and how we can pray for them.

This issue of the bulletin is a longer special edition, which should be able to be printed on two sides of A4 and is intended to cover the period of the summer. For most of us the summer has a different rhythm and so too with the EU institutions, the parliament will be in recess, a time to step back to rest, refocus and prepare for the next phase. This is something that the Lord taught us by example, that we need times of being away from our everyday demands and taking time to rest and pray.

I hope that you find this bulletin helpful and we look forward to the unique threads which each of you represent coming together afresh at the end of the summer to firmly establish our Canopy of Prayer over Europe.

So what are the main institutions of the EU and how can we pray?

I recognise that even as Christians we don't all agree on many things but God calls us to keep our eyes fixed on Him. That way we are able to find Him in every situation, and understanding that can help us as we look at those authorities that God has established, whether that be our local or national authorities or international organisations like the European Union. In Romans 13 Paul shows us that God is in control and He is working His purposes out and so we have nothing to fear from those temporal authorities because our eyes should be fixed on His Kingdom and so we can live our lives accordingly.

Throughout history God has always had 'His' people in places of temporal authority, Daniel and Esther to name just two. They are people who God is able to direct so that His purposes are fulfilled. This is still true today in the institutions of the EU. Do we need to like all that the EU does? No; but we need to understand that God is still in control and working His plans out. We may not know who today's Esthers and Daniels are but we can be sure that they are there.

So as we look at each institution that makes up the EU let us pray for those who are able to be directed by God for His purposes.

From the very start, men and women of faith have been involved in the EU, in the forming of the various agreements that have been made, and working in the institutions that now make up the EU. We need to understand the structure of the EU today to help us pray for it, so here is a broad outline as it stands today.

There are many institutions that go to make up the EU but for the moment I am going to restrict myself to the three main ones. I will try to explain them and how we can pray for them and some key figures in them. They are the **Council of the European Union**, **The European Parliament** and **the European Commission**.

Let us start with the **Council of the European Union**. This is the forum for the member states' governments and is made up of Government ministers from each EU country, depending on the policy area to be discussed. Each EU country holds the presidency on a 6-month rotating basis and it's the responsibility of the presidency country to represent the nations' views to the other institutions. Three presidency countries group together to cover an 18 month period in what is known as the trio. This provides continuity in the policy areas under discussion during that period.

What does the Council do?

- negotiates and adopts EU laws, together with the European Parliament, based on proposals from the European Commission.
- coordinates EU countries' policies
- develops the EU's foreign & security policy, based on European Council guidelines
- concludes agreements between the EU and other countries or international organisations
- adopts the annual EU budget - jointly with the European Parliament.

Together with the European Parliament, the Council is the main decision-making body of the EU.

So how can we pray for the Council? Firstly **we can pray for the Presidency country**, which at the moment is **Slovakia**. Pray that there is good co-ordination of the 6 month agenda. Pray also for the ministers of your nation who will be travelling to the various meetings in Brussels or Bratislava and representing your nation.

I just want to mention here that although the Council of the European Union is made up of the ministers from the national governments, the Heads of State (Presidents, Chancellors and Prime Ministers) form a separate group called the European Council. We need to keep them and their President, Donald Tusk, in our prayers and we do know that Mr Tusk is open to Godly council.

Next we have **The European Parliament**.

The Parliament is directly elected and acts as a co-legislator, sharing with the Council the power to adopt and amend legislative proposals and to decide on the EU budget. It also supervises the work of the Commission and other EU bodies and cooperates with the national parliaments of EU countries to get their input.

Please find out who your local members are and **commit to pray for them during this summer**, that the Lord would protect them and their families. **Pray that they would be restored** ready for the next year's parliamentary sessions. Pray too for the **monthly Members' Prayer Breakfast in Strasbourg**, which is the oldest inter-group of the parliament where members can meet around the Word of God and pray together.

These two institutions make up the democratically elected arm of the European Union and it is through these institutions that we have our democratic voice. This is either through our National parliaments and Governments or through our directly elected MEPs who are elected by us to represent our local constituencies or through national lists.

Finally we have the **European Commission**.

The European Commission is the EU's executive body. It represents the interests of the European Union as a whole (not the interests of individual countries).

The Commission's role is to:

- propose legislation which is then discussed, amended and adopted by the co-legislators, the European Parliament and the Council of Ministers
- enforce European law (where necessary with the help of the Court of Justice of the EU)
- set objectives and priorities for action, outlined yearly in the Commission Work Programme and work towards delivering them
- manage and implement EU policies and the budget
- represent the Union outside Europe (negotiating trade agreements between the EU and other countries, for example.).

In recent years as international events have unfolded, the Commission has become increasingly aware of the need for dialogue with many groups and in particular, faith groups. To this end the Commission has put in place people responsible for these discussions. Give thanks also for the growing number of prayer groups in the Commission itself.

I hope you have found this useful and we look forward to restarting the regular Bulletins at the end of the summer. We trust that you have a time of refreshment during this time but please do keep up the prayer cover.

Every blessing
Ian Jeal

For further information:-

Council of the European Union <http://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/council-eu/>

The European Parliament <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/portal/en>

European Commission http://ec.europa.eu/index_en.htm