



## Who speaks for Europe?

**Have you ever heard someone speak “on your behalf” but without ever asking you what you think? Or maybe you are in a conversation and you just can’t get a word in edgeways because someone else is dominating the conversation.**

When it comes to conversations about mission in Europe today, the same things can happen. Certain voices dominate whilst others are marginalised. And similarly, if we only talk to people like ourselves, or those who work in the same area, we may only be hearing views that are similar to our own.

This edition of Vista presents the views of 13 representative voices on Europe. We asked nine questions around the theme of “Who speaks for Europe?” and the responses were then analysed and are presented thematically in the following pages.

We invited responses from (1) selected church leaders and church planters, (2) migrant/diaspora

leaders and voices, (3) mission agency leaders, (4) the European Evangelical Alliance, and (5) an ‘outsider’ working in European mission.

Our thanks go to Daniel Costanza, Raphael Anzenberger, Richard Bromley, Mike Betts, Tony Peck, Samuel Cueva, Usha Reifsneider, Harvey Kwiyani, Kent Anderson, John Gilberts, Joke Haaijer, Frank Hinkelmann and Jeff Carter.

We are very much aware that this group is not representative – there are too few women, no voices from Eastern Europe, and of course, the non-English-speakers are effectively silenced. This just illustrates the importance of the issue, and our deafness to certain voices. Our apologies to those we could have invited to participate but failed to reach out to.

Any responses can be sent to us via the Vista blog [Europeanmission.redcliffe.ac.uk](http://Europeanmission.redcliffe.ac.uk) or emailed to us at [Vista@redcliffe.org](mailto:Vista@redcliffe.org)

## EDITORIAL

### Hearing Voices

The results of the May 2019 European Elections prompts the question ‘who speaks for Europe’ politically. Last month’s elections for the European Parliament saw victories for the far right in some countries but also big wins for the Greens. In France, Le Pen’s *Rassemblement National* topped the polls with 23% of the vote whereas in the Netherlands the party of Geert Wilders lost all its seats. ‘Polarisation’ and ‘fragmentation’ are two words being used to describe the political landscape within Europe.

So much for politics - what about the Church and mission in Europe? Are we equally polarised and fragmented in our views? Do we only listen to the voices that we agree with, or are we open to learning from those with whom we may disagree? And do we actively seek out the more unheard voices, those who do not automatically have a seat at the table for whatever reason, but who are just ‘getting on with it’ in their own way?

The question ‘who speaks for Europe’ caused much debate among the editorial team as we planned this issue. We hope that the themed articles may likewise prompt thought and debate among our readers.

We hope that by highlighting voices that are - and are not - being heard, we are encouraging awareness of the breadth of voices passionate about the Church and mission in Europe. May those with ears to hear, hear what the Spirit is saying to us today.

Jo Appleton

## THEME 1: STOP TALKING AND LISTEN FOR A MINUTE

### **Who are the dominant voices speaking for Europe within the churches or mission networks with which you are most familiar?**

Not surprisingly, our respondents' answers depended very much on their own context. Some interpreted "dominant" to mean – as we intended – rather *too* outspoken, powerful or vocal; whilst other respondents interpreted "dominant" to mean simply the *leading* voices or authorities.

So, in terms of dominant voices "speaking for Europe," it is not surprising that respondents mentioned the Evangelical European Alliance (EEA) and the European Evangelical Mission Association (EEMA), as well as the Pentecostal European Fellowship and the Conference of European Churches as well as national evangelical alliances. Other movements mentioned included Hillsongs, Alpha, 3DM and networks of Baptist leaders. A large number of individual leading 'voices' were mentioned, too many to mention here but including Pete Greig, Jeff Fountain, Matthew Skirton, Karl Martin, Rich Robinson, Miriam Swafield, Sara Breuel and the Anglican Bishop in Europe, Robert Innes, alongside Vista's own Jim Memory.

Significantly, representatives of migrant churches and movements offered a different perspective, and

were more likely to identify *dominant* or *dominating* voices: Peruvian missiologist and London-based pastor Samuel Cueva noted that "dominant voices are still the western church" and that any movement towards polycentrism and reciprocity in European mission is "a very slow process." Similarly, Usha Reifsnider of OCMS and the Centre for Missionaries from the Majority World notes Western dominance and, specifically, that greater "financial resources give the American Evangelical voice the most prominence" within Europe. A third perspective from within migrant or diaspora communities comes from Dr Harvey Kwiyani, who says that dominant voices are "mainly white Europeans" who, damningly, "more often than not, seem to have no real understanding of what current mission in Europe needs to do."

A note of optimism, however, comes from Jeff Carter, who as a North American Baptist provides an outsider's perspective on European mission. Jeff observes that "churches in the former Soviet-occupied territories have started to raise their voices and are being more respected in conversations" about evangelism and mission. So whilst it may be fair to

say, as Raphael Anzenberger does, that dominant voices typically come from "English-speaking nations and Scandinavia," the positive news is that other perspectives and other voices may increasingly be being heard.

### **Whose voices are marginalised and ignored in discussions about the health of the Church and mission in Europe?**

This second question follows naturally from the first: since some voices dominate, we asked specifically about

**"There are several examples of young female leaders having an incredible impact in their communities but whose voices are not currently being heard"**

which voices are marginalised and/or ignored. Of course, we must acknowledge the paradox of asking about who we are unaware of – by definition it is difficult (if not impossible) to

identify who's in our blind spots! But some groups of people were identified as being marginalised, including women, migrants, young people and specific denominations or churches.

As the list of participants in this research itself demonstrates, female voices are outnumbered by male ones. As Tony Peck, General Secretary of the European Baptist Federation notes, "in some parts of Europe, women's voices are marginalised and ignored, and their leadership gifts are suppressed." Leaders of mission agencies shared this view: women's

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voices are effectively marginalised because most church and mission leaders are male, points out Kent Anderson, British Director of ECM. And Greater Europe Mission's John Gilberts mentioned several examples of young female leaders having an incredible impact in their communities but whose voices are not being heard in any discussions about mission in Europe.

The most common response to this question, however, was that migrants – those from outside of Europe – were being systematically ignored and marginalised. This was mentioned by all types of respondent, with the most enlightening responses coming, not surprisingly, from representatives of migrant and diaspora churches. Samuel Cueva suggests that diaspora mission leaders are not being heard – but one of the reasons for that is a lack of “involvement in critical reflection by [for example] Latin American leaders working in Europe.” Harvey Kwiyani argued that conversations are happening around diaspora missiology but that, regrettably, these are “taking place among diaspora people but draw little interest from local mission leaders.”

Some of the most insightful comments came from Usha Reifsnider, who noted that majority world voices have more influence today than ever before – but still operate within a western paradigm and “continue to view their identity through the lens created by the West and reinforced through colonialism, postcolonialism and neocolonialism.” Usha concludes that non-Western voices not dependent on “the approval, resources and influence of Western theology” are ignored both by the West and the majority world.

**“There needs to be a concerted effort to allow new migrant churches to the table for conversations around evangelism and mission”**

Others thought to be marginalised within European mission include Pentecostals, Orthodox and Catholics, especially the youth movements and those involved in the revitalization of the Catholic Church, according to John Gilberts and others. Similarly, Cueva indicates that missionaries from independent churches and non-conventional missionaries, who may not be connected to a sending agency, are excluded from conversations about European mission. The final type of marginalisation mentioned was that based on ethnicity or another identity, including people from Eastern or South-Eastern Europe, and Roma.



Photo: Creative Commons/RamYoga

**Which of these marginalised voices do you think most urgently deserve to be heard?**

Of course, all marginalised groups and voices deserve to be included and listened to. However, it may be that some voices need to be heard more urgently.

Amongst our respondents, there was widespread recognition of the fact that Christian migrants with a ministry in Europe deserve to be heard urgently. This is the argument of Frank Hinkelmann, writing on behalf of the EEA, who notes a collective failure to “invite and to include the migrant church to our national and European floor.” Jeff Carter concurs that “there needs to be a concerted effort to allow new migrant churches to the table for conversations” around evangelism and mission. Encouragingly, he reports “bright pinpoints of light in

some countries that have deliberately invited them to the table and work side by side for the sake of the Gospel.”

Other respondents also added specific examples from within ethnic minorities and migrant churches. Mike Betts of NewFrontiers suggests we need to heed “those who have converted from Islamic nations... as we face increased

multiculturalism in most European nations.” And Raphael Anzenberger argues we should be listening to voices from countries where there are significant evangelistic and missionary breakthroughs, such as Spain, France, Czechia and North Macedonia. Those

working there evidently have much experience worth sharing.

Amongst the migrant church respondents, Samuel Cueva advocated for urgently listening to independent church leaders, specifically those who have emerged from non-conventional missions activity or diaspora mission; many of these will be Pentecostals or Charismatics. Usha Reifsnider stressed the importance of listening to those leading African, Latino and Asian mission initiatives in Europe that are pioneering outreach beyond their own ethnicities.

Other respondents argued that we should be most urgently listening to those leading youth movements across Europe; those working amongst disaffected Catholics; female leaders and missionaries; and, with great biblical precedent, listening to the voices of “widows and orphans,” and those working with and alongside them.

## THEME 2: OPENING THE FLOOR

**How can we make sure that these voices are heard? What kinds of platform can we provide for them to speak from?**

Given our tentative identification of some of the voices being marginalised or ignored within European mission today, the next step is obvious: how can we do more to help these voices be heard?

This was widely acknowledged to be a “tricky question,” though a range of options were hopefully suggested. In terms of practical barriers preventing some from participating, Raphael Anzenberger noted that “the issue of English as a language is a huge one... unless there are strong mechanisms to ensure translation, no matter what the platform is, their voice won’t be heard.” Other church leaders emphasized the role of regional forums, and the importance of raising indigenous leaders from amongst the different nations and ethnicities.

A first step towards including marginalised voices will need to be positively affirming them, says Tony Peck of the European Baptist Federation, and deliberately ensuring that in any organised events, different voices (e.g. men’s and women’s) “are equally featured in the discussion of issues that concern us.” Other respondents also spoke of steps that need to be taken to create “intentional relationships” and to invite members of emerging mission movements into reciprocal collaborations. Interestingly, several respondents used the metaphor of inviting others to the/God’s table, and this is indeed a rich metaphor with powerful connotations.

The EEA’s Frank Hinkelmann rightly stressed the importance of *two-directional* openness, requiring “a changed mindset by the ‘old’

European churches as well as a willingness to interact with them by the ‘new’ (migrant) European churches.”

However, there were also two words of warnings, from different perspectives. Kent Anderson of ECM cautioned that discernment remains necessary when selecting or listening to alternative voices: “Not every young or ethnic voice has something important to say.” Those who have, however, should be quoted and promoted whenever possible by more mainstream leaders. The second word of warning comes from Usha Reifsnider of the Centre for Missionaries from the Majority World. Current leaders and influencers should try to be involved in the world of others, and “allow them to create platforms that are beyond your ability to imagine.” The very act of giving power or voice to another can, at times, remain an exercise in control if we remain the ones determining the platform or the terms of the debate.

**What can be done to ensure the widest possible range of voices continue to be heard by the global evangelical community that supports mission in Europe?**

Again, there was a wide range of suggestions and an acknowledgement that there may be no easy solutions. Perhaps the most popular suggestion was more gatherings where different voices can be heard, and dialogue entered into. For Daniel Costanza of the Pentecostal European Fellowship, something like a three-yearly consultation involving key movements would be desirable. Similarly, Jeff Carter called for “more

opportunities to provide venues and conferences to invite dialogue,” and Harvey Kwiyani identified the importance of having platforms where “we all engage one another as equals, helping one another see God in a new light and learning from one another.” In a similar vein, there were also pleas for mission gatherings to be characterised by even more sharing, openness and togetherness – for example, John Gilberts urged the formation of “new, non-denominational or cross-denominational gatherings” and that agencies and churches share European ‘superstars’ with high profile within their domain.

**“The very act of giving voice to another can, at times, remain an exercise in control if we are the ones determining the platform or the terms of the debate”**

Tony Peck argued that the best way to ensure that the widest range of voices is heard, is by our having “a Gospel generosity that embraces healthy diversity as a gift and

not a problem, and ensuring that all parts of the diverse evangelical family are included.”

From amongst the respondents for this research came several *cris de coeur* for Western Europeans or those representing traditional and established churches to learn from others: “Be prepared to learn from people who do not look, sound, teach, train and practise the way you always have,” implores Usha Reifsnider, who argues that since “the highest proportion of Christ followers are now from the Majority World and women, then theology and mission should follow suit.” Like Usha, Jeff Carter emphasizes the role of seminaries and mission training colleges across Europe, which he believes should be “teaching inclusive and embracing ministry... it’s a brand-new world, let’s listen to one another!”

A final way to ensure that evangelicals are listening to the widest possible range of voices, is to be a spiritually-aware people. As Richard Bromley of the Intercontinental Church Society notes, we need to be “generous in our listening and see what the Spirit is saying,” a point echoed by Samuel Cueva who calls the Church to recognise that, in Europe, “God is on the move, and He is doing something different.” Listening to God, and listening to marginalised or minority voices, should be twin priorities for the European church.



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## THEME 3: VOX POP

### ***In what ways do you or your agency/church make a distinct contribution in outlining a vision or addressing a challenge for mission in Europe?***

In answering this question, respondents demonstrated a wide range of approaches and contributions to mission in Europe. Some saw one of their key contributions as being an ability to draw people together, such as “a yearly conference gathering leaders from across the continent” (Daniel Costanza of PEF) or “a think tank of national leaders,” as reported by Raphael Anzenberger, whose organization already draws in leaders from 16 European countries who discuss mission strategy together (more information is at [nc2p.org](http://nc2p.org)).

The European Evangelical Alliance's Frank Hinkelmann explained how the EEA's unique contribution was equipping national Evangelical Alliances and helping them “establish networks and special interest groups within their countries to reach out to their fellow countrymen.” Others echoed this emphasis on equipping people to work within their own culture – for example the European Baptist Foundation has empowered some 250 people to plant churches in their own culture, and the EBF's role is to provide support for this

indigenous work. Approximately 15,000 new believers are reported to be the fruit of this initiative.

Others emphasized their role in creating partnerships – and were keen to stress the genuineness of such partnerships. John Gilberts of Greater Europe Mission described how they create church to church partnerships and, with 70 years' experience, “have a unique role in effectively bringing US and Canadian churches together with some of the best on-the-ground ministries in Europe.” Key to this is GEM's ability to “smooth intercultural issues and help both sides avoid the typical ‘bumps in the road’.” Representatives of migrant churches and diaspora movements also stressed the importance of relationships, specifically two-way and equal ones. Samuel Cueva of the “*Misión para el Tercer Milenio*” Movement (MTM) explained their work to “develop two-way mission bridges for the fulfilment of God's mission in all continents, and promotion of a theology of reciprocal mission collaboration.” This reciprocity was seen as essential and it was deemed necessary to be intentional about working towards it, as in the case of Latin American

mission partners working with European mission partners in Europe, according to Cueva's examples. With something of an outsider's perspective on Europe, Jeff Carter also highlighted the importance of “filial respect” and “mutual support.”

### **The importance of relationships is stressed, specifically two-way and equal ones**

Some specific examples were also given: Richard Bromley of ICS saw their distinct contribution as a

“frontier agency” to be “always pushing... challenging the [Anglican] church to adapt and faithfully reach out to what is, not what was.” Dr Harvey Kwiyani, Programme Leader of MA African Christianity at Liverpool Hope University, explained how his focus is on providing cross-cultural training to diaspora Christians in the UK and across Europe. And Joke Haaijer of OneHope saw their distinctive as “activating churches for missions to children and youth.”

Overall, therefore, we see a wide range of contributions towards outlining a vision for mission in Europe, including facilitating, improving communication, equipping, partnering, challenging, training and mobilising.

## THEME 4: THE HEADLINE

***Speaking on behalf of your network, agency or church, what do you think is the most important message to be communicated about mission in Europe today?***

This question elicited some very passionate, interesting and profound reflections. Overall, there was universal acceptance that Europe is a valid mission field,

a point that was stressed by Harvey Kwiyani and also by Kent Anderson, who used the

provocative phrase “the Dark Continent” when describing the spiritual state of Europe today. The fact that several respondents felt it necessary to justify Europe as a mission field is something which will no doubt both concern and motivate those involved in mission here.

There was a divergence of opinion over how to understand and describe Europe today, an important issue

because our understanding of Europe helps frame our missional approaches. Pulling no punches, American Jeff Carter notes that “Europe has drifted from being the foundation of the Christian faith, to a secular wasteland that is a shadow of its former glory... [in which] the young are no longer interested or even aware of their spiritual need.”

**Be prepared to learn and be led by people from places, generations, cultures, languages and ideologies that you never considered.**

But others found signs of vitality and reasons for encouragement: Richard Bromley of ICS says that, whilst organised religion “has taken a battering,” this does not necessarily mean that Europe can be regarded “a post-Christian continent.” Ultimately, he argues, there “is still a background noise of faith and the message of Christ still resonates with people,” and the future will see “small communities that faithfully proclaim Jesus Christ, refreshed and vitalised by brothers and sisters from the rest of the world.” Samuel Cueva struck a

similar chord with his claim that, despite “spiritual fatigue” in the church in Europe, “there is still hope for Europe... because the Gospel always produces hope, peace, justice and freedom.” The current state of Europe should therefore be seen as “a great opportunity for the whole [global] church.”

For others, the key message to be communicated relates to how Christians must work together in this challenging European context. Raphael Anzenberger finds it “really exciting... that European countries [and their churches] are collaborating together.” Similarly, Joke Haaïjer defines the key message as “work together, find each other’s strengths.” Jeff Carter shrewdly observes that Europe’s diversity of cultures and languages could *either* mean “rich collaboration in mission” or “silos of isolation and division,” and therefore encourages “brothers and sisters to work together to show a better way. The only way.” This point is echoed by Usha Reifsnider, who also emphasizes the need for humility and a learning attitude: “Be prepared to learn and be led by people from places, generations, cultures, languages and ideologies that you never considered.”

Our final answer to the question of the most important message comes from John Gilberts of Greater Europe Mission. He conveys a real sense of urgency when he says “the influx of immigrants and refugees into Europe is an unprecedented opportunity. We need to mobilize and seize the day!” If further missionary motivation were needed, he adds: “we are convinced that if Jesus were here today you would find Him among the boats in Lesvos and container homes and refugee camps in all the great cities of Europe.”



“There is still a background noise of faith and the message of Christ still resonates “

## THEME 5: OPTIMISM OR DESPAIR?

*Are you optimistic or pessimistic about the health of Christianity in Europe? And speaking on behalf of your network, agency or church, what makes you optimistic about the church and mission in Europe?*

All the leaders who responded to our questionnaire were optimistic about some aspect of the state of Christianity in Europe, and in some cases markedly so. In short, they all see signs of God working across Europe. A number of common themes emerged from their responses.

### Church Planting

Four of the leaders coincided in highlighting church planting initiatives in many countries. Raphael Anzenberger noted that when they started NC2P ten years ago, only three countries were in a national church planting process, whereas today 16 are formally part of their network and in their 2018 gathering 28 nations were represented. Others observed a general “growth of evangelicalism” and “people open to hear about the gospel”. Two specifically mentioned movements of God in Central and Eastern Europe.

### Intercession and Mobilisation for Mission

Daniel Constanza of the Pentecostal European Fellowship observes a “renewed fervour for intercession and evangelism in all kinds of forms” and this was echoed by Mike Betts of Relational Mission: “we are mobilising many in prayer right now which will fuel mission”. From a mission agency perspective, John Gilberts of GEM observes “interest of new, younger missionaries to come and serve” and the diaspora church leader, Usha Reifsnider, also sees that “more



Pentecost 2019: 500 people are baptised by the Nordkirche in the River Elbe in North Germany

young people and people who are ready for a second career are joining the work of mission”. Harvey Kwiyani of Liverpool Hope University is more cautious because “most Europeans still do not understand that Europe is a mission field and those who do are still unable to figure out how to engage this new mission field of Europe”.

### Younger Leaders

More broadly, the emergence of a new generation of younger leaders was celebrated by many. “God is raising up some amazing younger leaders whose desire is to be part of a movement of God’s Spirit in our content”, said Tony Peck, General Secretary of the European Baptist Federation. Jeff Carter echoes this: “all the agencies and churches that I work with and for would celebrate the emergence of younger leaders who are standing now on the shoulders of those who waded through the tough times”.

### Diaspora Churches

Another common positive theme was the impact of diaspora churches in Europe with six of the leaders making some reference to this. Kent

Anderson, Director of ECM Britain, sums this up: “The ethnic church has breathed new fervour and vision into the church in many countries. Faith has returned to Europe!” However, different aspects were evident. Some highlighted the challenge and opportunity of reaching out to refugees and asylum seekers. Others observed that churches are emerging as a result of both internal and inward migration (ie. both between European countries and migration into Europe from outside). Harvey Kwiyani, of Liverpool Hope University, noted that “diaspora churches are growing, and as they grow, they are learning what it takes to reach Europeans with the gospel”, whilst Reifsnider observed that diaspora Christians are now being better understood by Europeans.

### Partnership

Several leaders also noted the growing number of partnerships across geographic, cultural, linguistic and denominational borders. “There is a growing willingness to cooperate and join forces among evangelical groups”, said Frank Hinkelmann of the EEA. John Carter takes this even further: “There is a platform for open dialogue

CONTINUED OVERLEAF

## THEME 5: OPTIMISM OR DESPAIR? (CONTINUED)

and a chance to work together...to bring the gospel of Jesus Christ to all generations and cultures for those who call Europe home". Cueva calls this new spirit of misión: "reciprocal collaboration".

### The Church

If there was one theme which elicited both optimistic and pessimistic comments, it was in regard to the church. Several of the leaders pointed to the emergence of more missional forms of church and that many churches have "become places of welcome and grace for people who have been displaced". But others highlighted persistent institutionalism and the need to develop new wineskins for the new wine that God is fermenting in Europe. Frank Hinkelmann, the President of the European Evangelical Alliance, in

particular noted "the erosion of Biblical authority in a number of churches and denominations". This is undoubtedly a result of the secular public domain which is a reason for pessimism for many, though Tony Peck sees "more Christians "getting out there" in the world of politics and society to witness to Gospel values in a secular pluralist society".

### Hope for Europe

Yet the ultimate reason for hope is not to be found in the signs of optimism listed above but in the promise of God, and that came through loud and clear in the responses from this group of leaders: "Christ has made promises over his church that cannot fail"; "God is sovereign and He is in control of everything...God's kingdom will be established sooner or later; "The Church belongs to God and God will

not forget Europe"; "Jesus promised that he WILL build his church".

The missiologist Lesslie Newbigin was once interviewed on the radio. The journalist asked, "Bishop Newbigin, are you an optimist or a pessimist about the future of the church?" His response was categorical: "I am neither an optimist nor a pessimist. Jesus Christ is risen from the dead".

The leaders interviewed for this edition of Vista see many signs of hope in Europe today, but they all agree that the ultimate reason for hope is the gospel itself: Christ has died. Christ is risen. Christ is on the throne and will come again in glory.

**Chris Ducker, Joanne Appleton and Jim Memory**



### The Lausanne Movement in Europe are partnering with Vista as part of the Lausanne Europe 2020 Conversation and Gathering.

Lausanne Europe are planning a gathering with the theme of *Dynamic Gospel: New Europe* in October 2020 for some 800 representative leaders "drawn from national denominations and Evangelical Alliances in every nation of Europe, from mission organisations and those whose professional work is their mission frontier, including diaspora church leaders, local church leaders, women and men, the young and the not-so-young". But the gathering itself is just part of a broader conversation that

will seek to engage 10,000 leaders around the event "so that, for every person who attends, at least twelve others can participate in the thinking, connecting, sharing and implementation of the initiatives that will come out of it".

Vista are partnering with Lausanne Europe 2020 by being one of the key resources to facilitate that broader conversation. The coming issues will pick up on crucial themes that were identified at the Lausanne 2020 Thinktank in January 2019.

For more information see the Lausanne Europe website below

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

# Vista

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