



CBSI Battles Spiritually for European Youth

Ten out of the top 18 least religious countries in the world are in **Europe**.^{*} And in the United Kingdom, a full two-thirds identified as either “not religious” or “atheist.”

The place that was for centuries the center of Christianity is in danger of altogether losing its once rich identity. CBS Europe Regional Director Veronica Alvarez says, “There has never been a time when there has been so much apathy towards the gospel.” **And children are huge casualties in this spiritual battle.**



The doors of this small village church—CBS Europe Regional Director Veronica Alvarez’s own church—have been open for 1,000 years. A king reputed to have Christianized a large part of England is buried there. However, Alvarez says, “There is no doubt that, since the present church has been standing, there has never been a time when there has been so much apathy towards the gospel.”

Although Western European students learn about world religions, including Christianity, teachers are typically unbelievers who present all religions as equally valid—or *invalid*. The claims of Christ are ignored or treated with skepticism.

In Eastern Europe, it’s more likely that schools actively teach atheism to their students. Also, students may passively accept atheism as a worldview passed down from their parents and grandparents—who themselves grew up under atheistic regimes.

In either case, much of Europe now has an entire generation of children growing up without the opportunity to know God or have a relationship with Jesus.

While CBS has a presence in 30 European countries, until last year only 3 of them had Children & Youth (C&Y) ministries. When CBSI leaders from across the continent gathered for the Europe Conference this spring, they determined to end this disparity. They sensed God directing them to passionately pray and prepare in the hope that God would open other fields.

It’s Happening Already!

Already, Veronica reports major results. Most of the country leaders at the conference have begun translating materials. Some have appointed C&Y directors. Others have asked for leadership training

in their own countries. C&Y classes have begun in at least eight new countries—some of them restricted-access countries. And there’s potential for more countries to begin C&Y soon.

Some of the leaders at the conference sensed God calling them especially to train up young leaders—young people like 16-year-old Ruth, a girl in Veronica’s small village church. The Bible story one Sunday was about Daniel. As Ruth helped paint lion faces on the younger children, she opened her heart to Veronica. Ruth said God had been speaking to her about being as bold as Daniel. He didn’t want her to sit back and just let her friends be taken in by the “spirit of the age.” She said that God had given her courage to challenge her peers. When Veronica asked if she would like to be trained as a CBSI leader, she was full of enthusiasm and didn’t hesitate.

Beautiful, isn’t it? CBS Europe is losing no time in leveraging this momentum. At a recent CBS Europe meeting in Switzerland, a 20-something CBSI board member mentioned, almost off handedly, that the next day she would be going to a refugee camp in Sicily. She hadn’t even known that CBSI lessons in Arabic were available. But as soon as she found out, she got busy making photo copies—even staying up all night—so she would have them in time for this new outreach.

Tremendous Opportunity

How many more young people are there like these? Young people who, when trained, could lead others in studying God’s Word for decades to come? And how many opportunities are there to reach not just European nationals, but also the many refugees migrating from all over Africa and the Middle East?

All of this is wonderfully exciting. God has put this vision on the hearts of His people. He has called new leaders, and they are enthusiastic and eager to move forward. The realization of this vision is within reach. But we need your help.

Currently, there are few CBSI materials for children and youth in non-English languages. Translations are costly because C&Y materials come in multiple age levels. Training leaders requires funding for materials and travel. CBS Europe is commissioning these much-needed translations without knowing exactly where the money will come from. Veronica said her team is acting in faith, “just doing it and praying the money will come.”

In addition, expanding C&Y ministry in Europe must have God’s direction in order to flourish. They need many more leaders, especially young ones. They need a C&Y director to accelerate this movement. And they definitely need God’s empowerment and protection.

Yes, there may be general spiritual apathy or even antagonism pervading the European continent, but those are no obstacles to God’s transforming power. So, will you pray about partnering with Him to see that young people across Europe have the opportunity to study His Word and have a relationship with Jesus?



The teacher of this C&Y UK class says that “the children are keen to grow in their faith and love for Jesus.... I realize that we are in a battle for these children’s walk with God.”



With gratitude,

Keith Spartzak
International Director

* According to a 2015 poll by Gallup International



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