



ENHCC London 2010

**European Network of Health Care Chaplaincy
Anniversary Consultation
London, 16-19 September 2010**

**Chaplains and Religious Communities
Experience from Belgium**

Axel Liégeois

Catholic University of Leuven, Belgium

Brothers of Charity, Gent, Belgium





Situation of health care and church in Belgium

Particular connection

Situation health care services – catholic church – chaplaincy

Situation of health care services

General hospitals, mental health services and elderly homes

About 2/3 of services is private - catholic

About 1/3 of services is public

Situation of Roman catholic church

Tradition of nearly homogenous catholic country

Secularisation, de-traditionalisation and de-institutionalisation

About 7/10 baptised in catholic church

About 1/10 practicing in catholic church

About 9/10 roots in christian culture

Recently shocking disclosure of sexual abuse by religious persons





Situation of chaplaincy in Belgium

Situation of chaplaincy

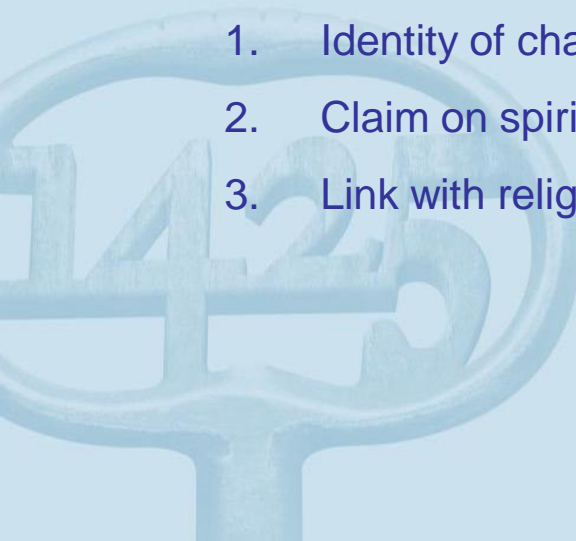
Chaplains employed by care services – sent by religious community

Private - catholic services: free initiative of catholic chaplaincy

Public services: free initiative of catholic and humanist spiritual caregivers

All services: spiritual care by other religions and denominations
upon patient's request

Consequences

- 
1. Identity of chaplaincy
 2. Claim on spiritual care
 3. Link with religious community



Identity of chaplaincy

Challenge

Tension between identity and plurality in pastoral care

Pastoral care: faithful accompaniment of patient by chaplain

Patient: diversity of religious or non-religious convictions,
mostly no link with religious community
mostly roots in christian culture

Chaplain: inspired by christian faith
and representing religious community

Reflection

Identity of pastoral care in world of plurality?

New methods or models for pastoral care in plural context?

How to offer pastoral care to non-believers?

Only presence in name of God, without communication on God?

Need of network of chaplains for thorough reflection!



Claim on spiritual care

Challenge

Tension between identity and plurality in spiritual care

Other spiritual caregivers: 'neutral' approach
without link with religious community

Claim of other spiritual caregivers on spiritual care

Alternative model of spiritual care

Free initiative of spiritual caregivers in plural context

Upon request chaplains of different religious denominations

Reflection

Distinction between spiritual care and pastoral care?

Can spiritual care be 'neutral'?

How adjusting spiritual care by caregivers and pastoral care by chaplains?

Need of consultation among chaplains and spiritual caregivers
on their common and specific tasks!



Link with religious community

Challenge

Tension between profession and ministry in pastoral care

Negative image of faith and religious community in society

Negative image of ministry and pastoral care in care service

Positive image of professionalism and spiritual care in health care

Difficult link of chaplains with faith and religious community

Claim for professional chaplaincy without ministry
and without link with religious community

More openness of patients to spiritual caregivers than to pastors

Reflection

Pastoral or spiritual care possible without chaplain's explicit option for faith?

Pastoral or spiritual care possible without link with religious community?

Change of name from 'pastoral' to 'spiritual' or 'existential' care?

Need of reflection among chaplains on link with religious community!