



ENHCC London 2010

**European Network of Health Care Chaplaincy  
Anniversary Consultation  
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**Chaplains and Religious Communities  
Experience from Belgium**

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# 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*

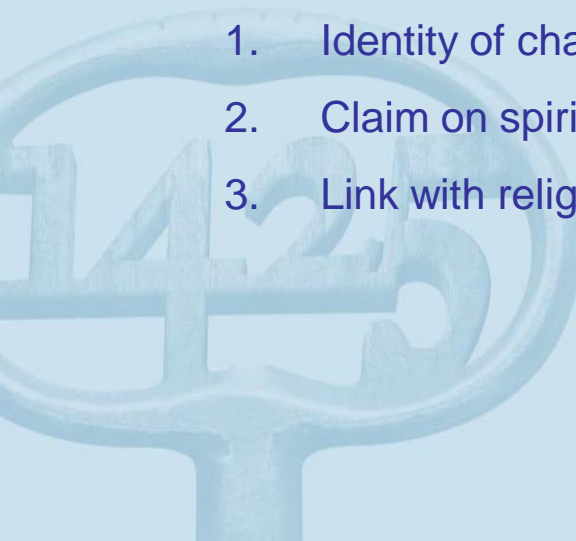
Chaplains employed by care services – sent by religious community

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*

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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!