

INTRODUCING ‘EVANGELICAL FOCUS’

“In Europe there is no evangelical publication quite like ‘Evangelical Focus’. It is very important that evangelical leaders can see and commit themselves to this project as something that belongs to them, as something close to their hearts”.

Dr. Pablo Martinez Vila, international author and conference speaker.

‘Evangelical Focus’ is a **new online magazine for Europe** in which important issues and current affairs are viewed through the prism of Biblical thinking. Articles and comments by evangelical Christians will aim to facilitate dialogue among believers and churches and between Christians and Society. Plans for this new enterprise have been in the making for almost two years now and the result is a **website of news and opinion** reflecting on events in Europe (and the rest of the world) from an evangelical Christian perspective.

The Spanish Evangelical Alliance, on the basis of the experience of the team of professionals responsible for the online magazine **ProtestanteDigital.com**, felt that the time was right to launch a new project which would involve the collaboration of people from all over Europe to tackle social, cultural and political issues from a Biblical perspective, and at the same time show the nature and the extent of the impact that national evangelical churches have in the societies in which they are located.

The website has been designed by a team of professionals. Several people working in a range of communication-related fields are currently setting up a network of contributors and have started **presenting the idea to evangelical leaders** in different countries. An initial team of editors has already been created to produce contents for the first updates, and the creation of a web-platform, along with the visual design, is in its final stages.

‘Evangelical Focus’ will be launched onto the public domain in **January 2015**.

1. The aims of ‘Evangelical Focus’

The vision behind the project is to **build bridges between the church and society**, and thus to give presence and influence to Christian thought. On the one hand, we want to “explain the church to society”, by making it visible and drawing attention to the good that it does in the cultures in which it is present. On the other hand, we want to “explain society to the church”, by informing Christians in Europe in such a way that they will be better able to understand what is happening in the societies of which they form part.

To be precise, ‘Evangelical Focus’ will pursue the following aims:

- A. To give **relevant Christian voices** in the church in different parts of Europe an opportunity to be heard. This will include, for example, Christians involved in the political arena, the leaders of new types of churches, young evangelists, Christian professionals whose work is particularly influential, artists ...

- B. To tell the **stories of individuals** or groups of Christians who, out of their passion for living out the kingdom of God in their daily lives, are making an impact in their communities.
- C. To draw attention to the **realities faced by evangelicals** in countries where they are in the minority (especially in eastern and southern Europe).
- D. To offer a **biblical perspective** on current affairs.
- E. To be a strong voice in favour of **freedom of conscience and of speech** in a continent that is becoming more and more militantly secularist. And to denounce the marginalization or restriction of their freedoms to which evangelical minorities are being subjected.
- F. To **publicise initiatives within Europe**: youth congresses, social action campaigns, political propositions, professional networks ...
- G. To give a voice to **evangelicals engaged in politics** who wish to promote biblical values in the European Union and other supranational institutions.
- H. To **foment cooperation among evangelicals in different regions**, explaining the impact that they have in their respective countries, with a view to our being an inspiration to each other.
- I. To provide a **space for young people** where they can share their ideas, their projects and debates.

2. How will it work?

The content of 'Evangelical Focus' will be as follows:

- **News** concerning current events and topics of general interest.
- **In-depth reports** on issues that tend not to be reported in other mass media.
- **Opinion articles** by people from different European countries.
- **Contributions from readers**: comments on news items, a section where readers can send articles, debates on social media.
- **A calendar** of interesting events, with direct contributions from readers.
- **A Multimedia section**, with images, videos and audio.
- **Subscription to a newsletter** containing the most recent items published on the webpage.

3. Who is behind the project?

The project is the initiative of the team responsible for the **ProtestanteDigital.com** news website in Spain. Born in 2003, this web project has been evolving steadily to the point where it has become the leading evangelical communication platform in Spain, with information relating to national and international affairs, Culture, Science, the family and young people. There are some 30 evangelical leaders, from a wide range of denominations, who write articles for the opinion column of the webpage.

After 11 years of fine-tuning to keep improving the quality of the service, ProtestanteDigital.com was receiving no fewer than **895,000 visits in July 2014**, with 5,520,000 pages viewed that month. At present, international interest has grown to such an extent that 3 out of every 4 of the readers are from other Spanish-speaking countries, including Mexico, Argentina, Colombia, Chile and the USA. To a lesser extent, there are also readers from other European countries.

Visitors to the page interact with each other in the comments space associated with each article, and can send their own articles to “TuBlog” (“Your Blog”), or take part in the social media networks linked to the website.

In recent years, ProtestanteDigital.com has sought to be a dynamic and accessible platform which engages with contemporary society. With this aim in mind, one initiative, among many others, was the creation of the “Unamuno Prize. Friends of Evangelicals”, which was awarded this year to the Spanish Justice Minister at the time, Alberto Gallardón, who attended the event in person to receive the award.

It was on this basis that the Spanish Evangelical Alliance and Protestante Digital, saw the opportunity and the need to create a new communication platform whereby a similar model, tried and tested in Spain, could be applied in Europe, in the continent’s main lingua franca: **English**. What we have in mind is not a mere translation of Protestante Digital into English, but an evangelical e-zine developed from within Europe, for both Europe and the whole English-speaking world. Our initial conversations with evangelical leaders in different countries have shown that there is considerable interest in having such a project in Europe.

4. Opinions by the people behind the initiative



Dr. Pablo Martinez, psychiatrist, author and conference speaker: “There are two reasons why there is a need for something like ‘Evangelical Focus’: in the first place, digital media play a very relevant role in today’s world, to the point where they are among the most influential means of communication available. In our digitalized society, the written press and other traditional media have given way to a new communication model which reaches millions of people, and which serves not only to inform, but also to shape opinions. In Europe there is no evangelical media of the kind that EF aspires to be.

This leads to the second, very obvious, reason: the lack of evangelical digital journalism in Europe. We cannot and we must not miss the opportunity to be a significant voice in a secularized society like Europe, which has rejected God, but which at the same time thirsts for God, or, to quote George Steiner, the lucid non-Christian contemporary philosopher, suffers from “nostalgia for the absolute”. We are called to be light, and “shine like bright lights in the world” (Philippians 2 v 15).

The Christian message embodies a worldview that brings meaning, purpose and hope to life, while its rich reservoir of ethical values, to which Europe is historically so deeply indebted, remains as relevant today as it was 6 or 7 centuries ago.

In the European Leadership Forum I have been asked no fewer than three times to present the Spanish version of EF, Protestante Digital (P+D). On each of these occasions I have been able to witness the enormous interest there has been in the development of P+D. It is also true that we become enthusiastic about something as we become more and more familiar with it, and, especially, as we are able to participate in it. For this reason it is crucial that European evangelical leaders are able to see and feel this initiative as something that belongs to them, something that is close to their hearts.”



Jaume Llenas, general secretary of the Spanish Evangelical Alliance:

“The complexity and diversity of theological views in Europe continues to grow apace. During the 19th century our continent saw the birth and growth of a theological system of thought that gave rise to the emergence of different forms of theological liberalism, which in turn led to the ecumenical movement. The upshot of all this has been that today, due to a sea-change in the concept of what a “missionary” is, a plethora of theological currents are crisscrossing the globe, exposing us to many influences (some positive, some negative) from the southern hemisphere.

That is why it is so vitally important to provide news and comment on contemporary events from within a biblical worldview, from the point of view of historical evangelicalism. It is a biblical perspective, more than anything else, that equips us to analyze and understand reality.

In the Evangelical Alliance we believe that churches must remain focused on Mission. A Media project like EF can provide believers, and by extension local churches, with resources that will help them examine issues and provide biblical answers in the course of their engagement with society. Equipping the saints for the work of ministry is a vitally important responsibility of the church, and helping people to maintain a biblical worldview with regard to the world they live in is the contribution that we feel we can make to this task. We should also bear in mind that a significant number of the readers of EF will be people whose relationship with their Creator has not yet been restored. The calling of this publication will therefore be both to equip the church and to offer a biblical perspective on the world to those who are not members of it.

Evangelical leaders are very conscious of the strategic role that mass communication plays in our world. Both the Evangelical Alliance and the Lausanne Movement have spelt out this priority in their publications. We are conscious of the present lack of a pluri-national text-based medium, with a pan-European scope and a calling to reach out to people throughout the continent. Evangelical Focus will have to earn its place, but I am convinced that many people are going to be delighted to have this resource, the success of which will depend on all of us contributing to it”.



Pedro Tarquis, Director of Protestante Digital. “The excitement we feel in launching EF arises out of the Protestante Digital model and vision. P+D was a communication platform created by a team of evangelicals in Spain 11 years ago, and since then it has had a much greater impact than we could ever have imagined. Protestante Digital has enjoyed the support and counsel of no lesser an entity than the Spanish Evangelical Alliance, to which we owe our identity and defining structure.

The Spanish Evangelical Alliance has thus lent its support to a medium created and run by a team of evangelical professionals drawn from the fields of journalism, image and communication. It is a communication medium that is fully embedded in contemporary culture and society, in the modern idiom and style of presentation, and far removed from mere “propaganda” (which not even the Evangelical Alliance is interested in in the slightest). What is more, in the area of contemporary social and political opinion, we have engaged with issues, with due circumspection, which thitherto would have been considered “taboo”.

EF will not be a translation into English of Protestante Digital. We see it rather as an independent European platform, from Europe and for Europe, while bearing in mind the fact that it will be accessible to the whole English-speaking world.

One of the aims is make visible all the good that Christians are doing in each country, at local and national levels, out of their commitment to Gospel-values, and their faith in Jesus; in other words, to give a voice and a face to European evangelicals, above and beyond their institutions, their organisations and their denominations, even though these will undoubtedly have a part to play. While it will be an independent medium in terms of its content, EF will endeavor to inform the public at large concerning the gospel-inspired initiatives, projects and stories which often go unnoticed. Nothing that is human is alien to us. That said, we will be focusing our attention mainly on initiatives undertaken from within a biblical worldview which are both creative and closely related to the circumstances and problems of our time.

One very important aspect of this is culture, both as it relates to young people and at an institutional level. The Areopagus of our day has more to do with art than with the word. We also want to expose the hidden face of contemporary reality. In that regard, we are particularly interested in how Christians are coping amid the great upheavals of our age (the Russia/Ukraine conflict, the Arab spring, freedom of worship and conscience, etc.)”

5. How can I be involved?

The “Evangelical Focus” team is particularly interested in **hearing the opinions**, the proposals and the ideas of everyone who would like to contribute.

One of the needs that we have at this initial stage is to find **collaborators willing to contribute** news stories on a regular basis from within their own national context. We are also looking for translators into English from languages such as Italian, Polish, Swedish, Romanian, etc.

‘Evangelical Focus’ also envisages having **advertising space** available.

Anyone wishing to contact us with questions or suggestions should write to:
joelforster@evangelicalfocus.com

The ‘Evangelical Focus’ team