



THE CATHOLIC CHURCH
IN THE EUROPEAN UNION

Statement of the President of COMECE on the EROSION OF FREEDOM OF RELIGION IN THE MEMBER STATES

As COMECE President, I would like to express concern for a legislative proposal soon to be discussed in Denmark, that would demand that all sermons, homilies and other talks given in a religious (liturgical) setting be given in Danish or made accessible in Danish language. De facto, the impact would be of imposing undue hindrance on the fundamental right to freedom of religion.

While COMECE respects national processes in this regard, it takes note with preoccupation of this development. This development is part of a broader, [increasing trend of neglect](#) for the fundamental right to freedom of religion in the EU Member States, and [even at the EU Court's level](#). This fundamental right is protected under both Article 9 of the European Convention on Human Rights and of Art. 10 of the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the EU.

COMECE concerns on the general state of freedom of religion in the EU had already been expressed in reacting to extremely rigid national measures imposed on Churches and religious communities with regard to religious ceremonies, in view of Covid-19.

Eroding specific rights in such a way endangers the whole architecture of fundamental rights, based on the idea of universality and interconnectedness of rights.

While we understand that the goal of the proposal is to prevent radicalization and counter incitement to hatred and terrorism, any negative or discriminatory impact should be avoided with regard to Churches and religious communities that are averse and alien to such actions, acting in a spirit of peace and integration.

Particularly affected will be smaller religious denominations, which not only do not have the financial means to comply but are often formed of immigrant communities. This is worrying, considering that Art. 2 of the Treaty on European Union indicates among European values respect for the rights of persons belonging to minorities, while also referring to non-discrimination.

The recent [EU Counter-terrorism agenda](#) underlines that freedom of religion is among the foundations of the European Union. This should be taken in consideration by Member States when devising anti-radicalization and anti-terrorism policies. The EU Agenda provides a welcome, strong focus on the fight against radicalization and support to the Member States in this sense. We support the EU in its effort to help identifying effective alternatives to invasive and potentially damaging legal solutions.

COMECE stands in solidarity with the [Scandinavian Bishops' Conference](#), and with Catholic and other affected communities in Denmark, encouraging an intense and fruitful dialogue of the relevant national public authorities with the impacted Churches and religious communities.

+ Jean-Claude Card. Hollerich SJ
Archbishop of Luxembourg
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