

27 November 2018

**Conference**

***“Shaping the future of work – a faith-based contribution to the ILO Centenary Initiative”***

***European Economic and Social Committee -  
Tuesday, 27 November 2018***

**Opening remarks of**

**H. E. Archbishop Jean-Claude Hollerich**  
*- President of the Commission of the Bishops’  
Conferences of the European Union (COMECE) -*

***Check against delivery.***

Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen,

Dear friends,

I’m grateful for the warm welcome of Luca Jahier and the kind words of Mairead McGuinness. I also would like to thank Heinz Koller and Luc Cortebecq from the ILO for their presence today. Let me share with you that we appreciate the excellent cooperation with the ILO in preparing this conference. In this context, I also would like to express my gratitude to our ecumenical partner, the Conference of European Churches, the Christian organisations and our interreligious partners that helped to organise the event.

I’m glad to see that so many members of Christian organisations and representatives of Jewish and Muslim faiths from all over

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Europe have come to Brussels. I'm sure that your experience and your expertise will enrich our debate.

It is my sincere hope that today's event will foster the dialogue among our organisations, strengthen our ties and help us to play our critical role. Because as religions and faith-based organisations, we are called to remind Europe that our society is composed of human persons - not of workforces or mere statistics.<sup>1</sup> The respect for human dignity and solidarity are the cornerstones of the European project, and as Pope Francis reminds us, it is *"by work, that [we] are anointed with dignity"*<sup>2</sup>. It is therefore the more important that in a time of the digital and ecological transformation, we uphold the respect for the dignity of the human person and ensure that women and men remain *"the source, centre, and the purpose of all economic and social life"*<sup>3</sup>.

Based on this fundamental principle, we should take the current transition as an opportunity to shape the changes towards the common good of our society. We have to understand that neither digitalisation, nor artificial intelligence are natural phenomena, but that the development of both trends lies in our hands.

For this we need to create spaces for discussion in our society to debate and agree on a common vision of our economy and the new world of work. I'm therefore grateful for the opportunity that

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. Pope Francis (2017), *Address to the COMECE (Re)thinking Europe Dialogue -*

<sup>2</sup> Pope Francis (2017), *Pastoral visit of the Pope Francis to the Archdiocese of Genoa (27 May 2017) – Meeting with the world of work at the Ilva Factory*: <https://bit.ly/2QSsvPe>.

<sup>3</sup> Second Vatican Council (1965), *Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World Gaudium et Spes*: <https://bit.ly/1lmUu1K>.

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the ILO Centenary Initiative offers us to reflect on the current transformation and the underlying objective of our economy.

I therefore look forward to the outcome of the ILO initiative and hope that today's discussion will provide an important element to this global dialogue.

In preparation of our event, we in COMECE have elaborated a reflection document on the future world of work. In close consultation with Catholic organisations in Europe, our Social Affairs Commission has worked in the past 11 months on this document that promotes a European vision of decent, sustainable and participative work for all and I'm glad that my Brother Bishop Antoine Hérouard will present our publication during the first panel discussion.

We hope that through this reflection and today's event, we can initiate a debate about a Europe that invests in its persons and charts the direction of a common prosperous future.

I wish you a successful event and fruitful discussions!

Many thanks for your attention!