

ANNUAL REPORT 2009

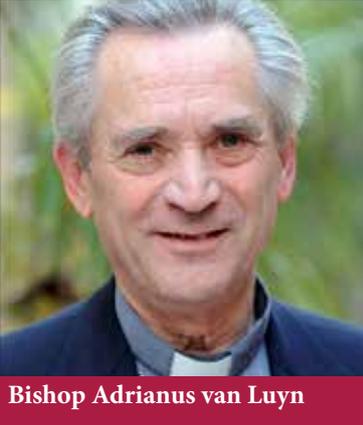
COMMISSION OF THE BISHOPS' CONFERENCES
OF THE EUROPEAN COMMUNITY



COMECE ANNUAL REPORT 2009

1 Foreword	3
2 A new Secretary general for COMECE	4
3 Reports of the Executive Committee	4
4 COMECE Plenary Assemblies	5
4.1 Spring 2009	5
4.2 Autumn 2009	6
5 Working Groups	7
5.1 Bioethics reflection group	7
5.2 Working group on migration	7
5.3 Social Affairs	8
5.4 Legal Affairs	8
5.5 Ad hoc group on a Memorandum on religious freedom	10
5.6 Ad Hoc Group on a Memorandum on non-discrimination	10
5.7 Ad Hoc Group 'Coordination of Churches combating Poverty'	10
6 Initiatives	11
6.1 European Elections 2009: COMECE Bishops Declaration	11
6.2 Meeting Young Citizens debate, 8-10 May	12
6.3 International Summer School Seggauberg	13
6.4 Second series of seminars "Islam, Christianity and Europe"	13
6.5 First Catholic Social days in Gdansk 8-11 October	14
7 Dialogue with the EU	16
7.1 Summit meeting of religious leaders, 11 May	16
7.2 Presidency meeting	17
7.3 Dialogue Seminars	18
8 List of activities 2008	19
8.1 Consultations	19
8.2 Other Contributions	19
8.3 Conferences (co-) organised by COMECE	19
8.4 Visitor groups	20
9 Publications	20
10 Information and publication Policy	21
11 Finances	21
12 Members	22
13 Secretariat	22

1 | FOREWORD



Dear Readers,

The year 2009 marked a number of significant changes for the European Union. Looking back, I would like to make particular mention of a few of them, as they have had a far-reaching impact on our work and will be keeping us busy in the near future.

Between the 4th and 7th June 2009 this year, 375 million citizens of the 27 Member States of the European Union elected a new European Parliament.

More than half of the 736 MEPs were elected to the European Parliament for the first time. This also created a generational change amongst the MEPs. Surely the most important event – after the re-election and renewal of the European Parliament – was the completion of the Lisbon Treaty ratification process. To get to that point several fairly major obstacles had to be overcome. This opened the way for the appointments to the two major posts created by the Lisbon Treaty: On the 19th November, the Heads of State and governments appointed Mr Herman Van Rompuy as the first ‘permanent’ President of the European Council, and Baroness Catherine Ashton as the first EU “High Representative for Foreign Affairs”. Finally, at the end of November, the candidates for the new European Commission were appointed.

This brings to a provisional end a long phase of internal debate and reorganisation of the European Union. In fact, this phase has lasted seventeen years if we include the Maastricht Treaty as the first Treaty of the European Union. During these years the focus was on debating the basics, the goals, the tasks and the structure of the European Union. The European Community of 1991 with 12 Member States has grown into the European Union of 2009 with 27 Member States, fifteen of which have meanwhile introduced the Euro as their common currency. The powers of the European Parliament have been extended, thus improving the democratic component of the Union. The weighting of votes for qualified majority decisions has been simplified and made more transparent. Finally, the Treaties have been reorganised and supplemented by a Charter of Fundamental Rights which forms an integral part of these Treaties.

The years of European self-discovery were also of great significance for the Churches and have brought about significant changes for them also. In October 1995, COMECE and KEK organised a seminar in Brussels on the relationship between Church and State from a European perspective. The seminar revealed that systems for Church-State relationships were organised in very different ways in the different EU Member States. This led to the proposal for a corresponding passage to be incorporated into the Amsterdam Treaty. The result was Declaration No. 11 on the status of Churches and religious

communities: The European Union respects the status which Churches and religious communities have in the respective Member States and will not infringe this.

During the discussions on a constitutional treaty, there was a growing conviction in the Churches that the defensive protective clause of the Amsterdam Treaty should be supplemented with a clause on dialogue with a more positive wording. Through many interim stages, that wording was finally achieved and it is now to be found in the third paragraph of Article 17 of the Lisbon Treaty: the open, transparent and regular dialogue conducted by the EU with the Churches and religious communities on the basis of their specific contributions. And so the Treaty codifies what began, during the years of negotiations, to be established as good practice. This “practical dialogue”, and also the trust between European institutions and Churches, have both increased over the years. This is due in no small part to the work of COMECE. The “*Building of the Instruments*” is complete for the time being. From now on it’s a matter of knowing how to use them, and to what ends.

Apart from the question of knowing “*how we want to conduct this dialogue*”, we should also be asking ourselves the question: “*What topics should we be discussing with the European Union?*” Our mission as members of COMECE is not to be preoccupied with ourselves, nor to be safeguarding our privileges – to paraphrase Pope Benedict XVI – in the European policy area. Instead, it is to try to incorporate productively into the political process the Gospel of Jesus Christ which applies equally to all people. In the Foreword to my book ‘The European Union and the Social Doctrine of the Church’, published last July, I put this idea in the following words: “*COMECE’s task is to observe and monitor the developments in the European Institutions. The basis of this rests on the Catholic Social Doctrine to its full extent and on its two pillars of human dignity and the common good.*” That is why an open Dialogue is needed, which means that listening is as important as speaking. Dialogue is cited in the Encyclical “*Caritas in veritate*” as an important principle for guiding the actions of the Church in the world. Openness is also needed for the current and pressing political issues, and our readiness to grapple with them competently and comprehensively. Where is our contribution expected? Where are our words and expertise needed? Where should we intervene for the common good, for peace, for greater justice?

I am convinced of the importance of the contribution that we as COMECE have been making up till now towards the building of the “*Ecclesia in Europa*”. We should be grateful for this, and also to all those who have also worked towards this end, both inside and outside COMECE. This gives us the courage and the confidence to start on the work which is still ahead of us and which we will tackle with the same courage and the same faith with God’s help.

Bishop Adrianus van Luyn sdb
President of COMECE

2 | A NEW GENERAL SECRETARY FOR COMECE

Father Piotr Mazurkiewicz is the new General Secretary of COMECE. He was elected in 2008 by the member Bishops of COMECE, with the Vatican's agreement, for a three year mandate. He succeeds Noël Treanor who was ordained Bishop of Down & Connor (Northern Ireland) on 29th June this year. Mgr Mazurkiewicz took up his position in Brussels on the 1st October 2008. Bishop Adrianus van Luyn, Bishop of Rotterdam and President of COMECE, welcomed the nomination of Fr Mazurkiewicz, who is Polish, as a sign of hope for the Ecclesia in Europa (Church in Europe).

Fr Mazurkiewicz is a priest from the Archdiocese of Warsaw (Poland). Born in 1960, he was ordained a priest in 1988. He is Professor of Political Science at Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński University in Warsaw (UKSW), where he directed the Institute of Political Science and still holds the Chair of Social and Political Ethics in the Department of Historical and Social Studies. He is also a member of the Research Council of the Institute of Political Studies of the Polish Academy of Sciences and was a member of the Board of the European Society for Research in Ethics "Societas Ethica". Prof. Mazurkiewicz is a specialist in European studies, political philosophy, Catholic social teaching, social and political ethics.

In 1996, Fr Mazurkiewicz presented his doctoral thesis entitled: "The Church in an open society: Dispute about the Church's presence in Polish society during the transformation period" at the Department of Ecclesiastical, Historical and Social Studies of the Academy of Catholic Theology in Warsaw. In 2002, he presented his post-doctoral dissertation entitled: "The Euro-

peanisation of Europe. Europe's cultural identity in the context of integration processes" at the Institute of Political Studies of the Polish Academy of Sciences. In 2009, he was promoted ordinary Professor by the President of Poland.

At the service of the Polish Bishops' Conference, Fr Mazurkiewicz is a member of the Advisors' Group on the European Union and member of the Council for Social Affairs. He collaborated on many occasions with COMECE, in particular, participating in the drafting of the report to the COMECE Bishops entitled "The evolution of the European Union and the responsibility of Catholics" published in 2004.



Fr Piotr Mazurkiewicz

3 | REPORT OF EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETINGS

The Executive Committee consists of the President, two Vice-Presidents and the General Secretary.

In 2009, the Bishops renewed the Presidium of COMECE. Bishop Adrianus van Luyn was reappointed as the President of COMECE for a second mandate. The vice Presidents are Bishop Piotr Jarecki (Auxiliary Bishop of Warsaw) and Bishop Reinhard Marx (Archbishop of Munich-Freising). Bishop Darmuid Martin stepped down from his mandate as vice-President and COMECE Member for Ireland.

The Executive Committee of COMECE met on 4 occasions in 2009: 16 February and 18 March in Brussels, on 24 June in Rome, 7 October in Gdansk (Poland) and 18 November again in Brussels. The Apostolic Nuncio to the European Commu-

nities H.E Mgr Dupuy also attended these meetings.

At each meeting, the President and the Vice Presidents received a report on the current activities and initiatives of the COMECE Secretariat as well as an information report on current EU issues. The Executive Committee prepared the material for submission to the Assembly for examination, took care of the implementation phase of the Assembly's decisions and gave its approval of the administrative system and agreed the proper balance between operating expenses and available resources.

4 | COMECE PLENARY ASSEMBLIES

COMECE holds two plenary meetings each year, which set out the main lines of its work. The Apostolic Nuncio to the European Communities participates in these meetings. A seminal issue of the European integration process provides the core theme of each meeting.

4.1 | Spring Plenary Assembly 18-20 March 2009

On Wednesday 18th March, the COMECE Bishops inaugurated the new COMECE premises at 19 square de Meeûs in Brussels by blessing the Chapel which is located at the entrance of the building - dedicated to the patron saints of Europe, Saint Benedict and Saint Theresa Benedict of the Cross (Edith Stein) - and the offices of the COMECE Secretariat. The Inauguration Mass was conducted by Cardinal Godfried Danneels, Archbishop of Malines-Brussels.

During the Inauguration reception, Bishop van Luyn, the President of COMECE expressed the wish that this new home will serve the soul and unity of Europe. The European Commissioner Vladimir Spidla said *"I think it is important that we bring forward our exchanges on issues which are, I believe, at the heart of the construction of a social Europe (...) Churches can shine a light on the whole range of these questions."* For the European Parliament, the German MEP Ingo Friedrich remarked that *"Churches have always been and remain important and reliable partners for policy makers"*.

This Plenary Assembly concentrated on the conflicts in the Middle East and in southern Asia. On this topic, the main keynote speakers were Fr. Klaus Krämer and Mr. Othmar Öhring (Missio Aachen), the NATO Secretary General Mr.

Jaap de Hoop Scheffer and Mr. Christian Jouret, from the EU Council General Secretariat.

The Bishop Members of COMECE also adopted a declaration in respect of the European elections of 4th-7th June 2009. In the text they called on EU citizens, and in particular Christians, to exercise their responsibility as voters in order to contribute to a European Union where *"all Europeans will feel at home"*.

During this Plenary Assembly, the Bishops also renewed the Presidium of COMECE. Bishop Adrianus van Luyn was reappointed as the President of COMECE for a second mandate. The vice Presidents are Bishop Piotr Jarecki (Auxiliary Bishop of Warsaw) and Bishop Reinhard Marx (Archbishop of Munich-Freising). Bishop Darmuid Martin stepped down from his mandate as Vice-President and COMECE Member for Ireland. His replacement was Noël Treanor, the Bishop of Down & Connor. Gianni Ambrosio, Bishop of Piacenza-Bobbio, is the new delegate of the Italian Bishops' Conference to COMECE. The Bishops also nominated Mr Michael Kuhn as Deputy General Secretary of COMECE.

Concluding this Plenary Assembly, the Bishops of COMECE were given a presentation on the outcome of the European Council of 19-20 March by Mr Alexandr Vondra, Deputy Prime Minister of the Czech Republic, in charge of European affairs.



Mr Jaap de Hoop Scheffer, NATO Secretary general



Spring Plenary Assembly

4.2 | Autumn Plenary Assembly 18-20 November 2009

Gathered together for their Plenary Assembly, the Bishops of COMECE congratulated Mr Herman Van Rompuy on his appointment as the first ‘*permanent*’ President of the European Council on 19th November, as well as Baroness Catherine Ashton on her appointment as High Representative for Foreign Policy of the EU. The Bishops expressed the wish that these two personalities would promote a European Union which is conscious of its historical vocation for Peace and Justice in the entire world and which is determined to represent a communion in diversity. They invited the two new political leaders to found their political action at the head of the EU on care for the common good and for human dignity.

With the election of a new European Parliament in June, the creation of the new European executive and the entry into force of the Treaty of Lisbon on the 1st of December, the COMECE Bishops saw the European Union finally equipped to face the urgent challenges of the next decade. More than ever, COMECE intends to work alongside the EU in this task on the basis of an “open, transparent and regular dialogue” which the EU Institutions will from now on conduct with the Churches on the basis of Article 17 of the Treaty.

Mgr Adrianus van Luyn, President of COMECE, welcomed the entry into force of the Lisbon Treaty. By means of Article 17, the EU recognises the identity and the specific contribution of the Churches and will conduct a dialogue with them on this basis. COMECE takes comfort from the already fruitful practice of Dialogue with the EU institutions, which from now on can be intensified.

Among the urgent challenges awaiting the EU at the end of 2009, the Bishops of COMECE examined the issue of the Copenhagen summit. They called on European leaders to keep to their responsibilities in the negotiations. Climate change represents a threat to the future of Creation. Faced with this historical challenge, the EU must commit to clear and ambitious goals for the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions. Moreover, the EU must support the developing countries which are gravely affected by this phenomenon.

Finally, the Bishops examined the initiative of the International Catholic Movement for Peace « *Pax Christi* » concerning the renegotiation of the Treaty on non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons. They tasked the COMECE Secretariat with the drafting of a contribution to be addressed to the EU aimed at accompanying the political process for the purpose of achieving a total ban of nuclear weapons.



Prof. Piotr Nowina Konopka



Autumn Plenary Assembly



5 | WORKING GROUPS

In order to monitor the political processes of the European Union in all areas of interest to the Church, the COMECE Secretariat set up a number of commissions, working groups and other bodies. These consist of specialists from the national Bishops' Conferences and lay people from the Member States providing the necessary expertise on the relevant fields.

5.1 | Bioethics reflection group

The Bioethics Reflection Group of COMECE is composed of experts from different EU Member States, who were chosen so as to provide for a multi- and inter-disciplinary exchange of views. They combine theological, philosophical, ethical, legal, medical and other disciplines in the natural sciences. On a number of the subjects, specialists are invited to provide the Group with more specific knowledge. Since its establishment in 1996, the Group has produced 16 Opinions on a wide range of bioethical issues such as euthanasia, cloning, stem cell research, nanomedicine, patenting issues and organ donation.

Meeting of the Bioethics Reflection Group, 25 May 2009

The central theme under discussion at this meeting was the ethical implications of “*enhancement*” technologies. “*Enhancement*” stands for new technologies of different types that aim to improve the body, the mind, the mood or life expectancy of normal healthy people: that is, that pursue goals that lie beyond the mere treatment or prevention of diseases. The Reflection Group concluded that each technology should be ethically evaluated taking into consideration criteria and principles such as the harmonious development of the integral person; equality, solidarity and international justice; intergenerational justice; and risk-benefit analysis and the precautionary principle. It was underlined that one should recognise that these technologies cannot in fact solve the main problems faced by mankind, which are imposed by the human condition itself: suffering, lack of love, etc. For the EU, the Group recommended: first, a special transparency when dealing with research projects with a dimension of «*enhancement*»; and, secondly, to incentive researchers to dialogue with society and to consider the long-term effects of their research.

Meeting of the Bioethics Reflection Group, 26 October 2009

At their autumn meeting, the Bioethics Group held an exchange of views about the bioethical issues in the Member States.

They had a brainstorming session on “*synthetic biology*” in order to identify the ethical issues raised by this emerging field of research; the issue is currently on the agenda of the work of the European Group on Ethics, advisory body to the Euro-

pean Commission.

The main topic for the meeting was the preparation of an Opinion on the ethical implications of the principle of non-commercialisation of the human body and its parts. After the previous Opinion of the Group had treated the issue of organ donation, the Group had felt that the issue of non-commercialisation needed to be broadened with regard not only to organs, but also to tissues and cells. An introduction to the topic was given by Mr Peteris Zilgalvis, Head of Unit in the European Commission (DG Research) on the main legal and ethical implications.

The main theme that the meeting addressed was suspension of nutrition and hydration in the case of persistent vegetative state (PVS). PVS (which the Group preferred to call «*post-coma unresponsiveness*») is a state of total unconsciousness with wake and sleep periods, after a coma. Of course, patients in this situation need basic care that includes nutrition and hydration, normally artificial. Dr. Dominique Poisson, the guest speaker, helped the Group discuss the main ethical issue which was whether it is licit, in any situation, to suspend nutrition and hydration. «*In principle*», answered Pope John Paul II in his Address to the participants at the International Congress on ‘*Life-sustaining treatments and vegetative state*’ of 2004, maintaining this care «*is proportionate, and as such obligatory, insofar as and until it is seen to have attained its proper finalities*», which include «*alleviation of his (the patient’s) suffering*». The Group then discussed the situations in which this life-sustaining care produces complications (respiratory, infections...) greater than the suffering caused by its withdrawal, concluding that in such situations, exceptionally, its suspension could be considered.

5.2 | Working Group on Migration

The COMECE Working Group on Migration is composed of experts appointed by the interested Bishops' Conferences and discusses EU policies in the field, often in dialogue with representatives of the EU institutions. During the course of 2009 the Working Group met twice (February and October).

Meeting of the Working Group on Migration, 25 February 2009

In February the main focus was placed on the first part of the so-called Asylum package, with an in depth analysis and discussion concerning the proposed changes to the Dublin II

Regulation and to the Directive on reception conditions for persons in need of international protection. An exchange of views was devoted to the main points of concern currently raised by the Directive on family reunification. Finally, a representative of the forthcoming Swedish Presidency presented its priorities in the field of migration and asylum.

Meeting of the Working Group on Migration, 1st October 2009

In October the main theme was linked with new proposals concerning the revision of the EU funding system for resettlement initiatives and the plan for a joint EU resettlement programme. A representative of the European Commission presented the texts and exchanged views with the Members. A first draft paper devoted to family reunification was presented to the Members as a follow-up to the discussion held in February. Two representatives of the forthcoming Spanish Presidency presented its priorities in the field of migration and asylum.

5.3 | Social Affairs

The COMECE Commission on Social Affairs is composed of Bishops and/or Secretaries of the Social Commissions of Bishops' Conferences and is chaired by Archbishop Reinhard Marx of Munich & Freising, Member of COMECE. It discusses socio-ethical questions raised by the process of European integration in the field of Social & Economical Policy and prepares statements for the Bishops of COMECE.

Meeting of the Social Affairs Commission of COMECE 8 October 2009

The COMECE Social Affairs Commission met for its annual conference, in the run-up to the first Catholic Social Days in Gdansk. Alongside the usual fruitful exchanges on the socio-ethical initiatives by the Bishops' Conferences, the opportunity arose, despite a shortened agenda, for analysing economic and social policy in a Europe beset by a financial crisis. The insights of the new encyclical letter "*Caritas in Veritate*" by Pope Benedict XVI were very helpful. The considerations set out below aim to summarise the discussions in Gdansk.

The Commission stated that there is no lack of warning signs indicating that the economic crisis had still not been overcome in Europe, despite much encouraging evidence. The danger of serious social crises, which always also entail the risk of political disruptions, has not gone away. For this reason, it was appropriate for the COMECE bishops to focus on this issue collectively and from a European perspective. Three proposed initiatives were given for this purpose:

- COMECE and the Bishops' Conferences should support an "*exit strategy*" agreed on throughout Europe, not least to guard against the temptation to reduce the accumulated mountain of debt ultimately by monetary depreciation. A solution of this type would be inevitably borne by the most vulnerable, those on modest pensions and the unemployed,

provoking serious tensions in the efforts to achieve monetary union.

- The COMECE Secretariat should closely follow the work of the Special Committee on the Financial, Economic and Social Crisis in the European Parliament and inform the COMECE bishops about this work. The COMECE Social Affairs Commission also proposed the creation of an ecclesiastical structure of systematic guidance to the G20 process.

- the COMECE Secretariat should organise a dialogue with representatives of the Parliament and the Commission on the image of humanity and society underlying this new strategy. It would also be desirable for the Bishops' Conferences to seek such contact in the Member States in the run-up to the Madrid Summit.

5.4 | Legal Affairs Commission

The Legal Affairs Commission is a forum for discussion and exchange of information on legal and political matters pertaining to the institutional setting of the European Union, fundamental rights issues and equal treatment, dialogue between the EU and Churches, employment law, civil justice, and other legal matters. It is composed of legal experts delegated by the Bishops' Conferences of EU Member States. Currently it consists of 12 members meeting three times a year at the COMECE offices in Brussels. Officials of the European institutions are usually invited as external experts. These encounters contribute to maintaining an open, transparent and regular dialogue between Churches and the EU.

Each meeting starts with a roundtable discussion allowing members of the Legal Affairs Commission to present recent developments of importance for the Church in their respective countries. A considerable part of the meetings is devoted to discussions on the institutional framework of the Union and relations between Churches and the EU.

Meeting of the 18 February 2009

The first session was dedicated to an exchange of information concerning legal issues of importance for the Church in the EU Member States. Members of the Legal Affairs Commission were updated on the state of play of various initiatives such as cross-border divorce matters, future legislation on cross border inheritance claims, VAT reduced rates for the repair and maintenance of places of worship, reconciliation between work and family life.

In the second session Mr Alain Bruin head of the data protection unit at the European Commission presented an overview of the EU legislative framework concerning data protection. He outlined the scope of Directive 95/46/EC on the protection of individuals with regard to the processing of personal data, which is a benchmark for data protection in the EU. Mr Bruin focused particularly on the definition of data, rules of data processing, and on responsibilities related to data protection. He announced that the European Commission plans

to launch a public consultation in May 2009 aimed at possible revision of this Directive. Mr Bruin indicated that it is up to national legislation to take into consideration the specificity of Church-State relations in the case of data protection.

In the third part the Commission members discussed the draft Directive on cross-border healthcare. With more than 600 amendments tabled to the draft report the proposal of the Commission would certainly undergo some considerable modifications. In addition, a report on Sunday Initiative, aimed at including Sunday as a weekly rest day in the EU Working Time Directive, was presented. Later on, members were briefed about the draft Council Directive on implementing the principle of equal treatment between persons irrespective of religion or belief, disability, age or sexual orientation. These reservations concern the area of State-Church relations, access to confessional education, marital and family law but also freedom of opinion and religion. Finally, the Commission dealt with issues such as the Legislative Programme 2009 of the European Commission, the European Parliament Resolution concerning the situation of fundamental rights in the EU for the period 2004-2008, and the Work Programme 2010 of the Fundamental Rights Agency.

Meeting of the 24 June 2009

The main topic of the meeting concerned an analysis of the outcome of the European Elections and the consequences of the Irish guarantees to the Lisbon Treaty agreed at the European Council Summit held in June. The presentation was made by Mr Antonio Missiroli, Director of Studies from the European Policy Centre. Mr Missiroli also referred to the future composition of the European Commission, the future of the ratification of the Lisbon Treaty and the prospective accession of Turkey to the EU.

In the area of employment and social policy, members received information on the future of the revision of the Working Time Directive. The subject of family and work was further continued by Mr. Felix Barckhausen from the Permanent Representation of Germany to the EU who outlined the main aspects of the proposals for directives on maternity leave, on equal treatment of self-employed and on parental leave.

In the area of non-discrimination members were updated on the state of play concerning the proposal for a Council Directive of 2 July 2008 on implementing the principle of equal treatment between persons irrespective of religion or belief, disability, age or sexual orientation. The Resolution of the European Parliament of 1 April 2009 pertaining to that proposal was discussed. Members focused their discussions on the potential impact of the Directive, if it is adopted, on educational systems and the teaching of religion. Finally, the Secretariat gave information on the European Transparency Initiative and the register of Interest Representatives, possible accreditation of the COMECE Secretariat at the Copenhagen Climate Change Conference, dialogue between the EU and Churches and the Fundamental Rights Platform of the Fundamental Rights Agency – Advisory Panel.



Thomas Pickartz, Legal Affairs Commission

Meeting of the 28 October 2009

Members were reminded about an open public consultation from the European Commission concerning the review of data protection legislation in the EU. Later on, information was given on a future public consultation by the European Commission on the indirect taxation of bodies undertaking activities for the public benefit, such as charities. According to indications from the Commission's Directorate General on Taxation (DG TAXUD) the consultation was to be launched in the second half of 2010. Currently the 2006 VAT Directive, which provides the legal framework for applying VAT in the EU Member States, does not make reference to foundations and other public-benefit organisations. These public benefit foundations must therefore pay input VAT whenever they purchase goods and services, but they can not pass on the tax costs to their "consumers", either because the services they provide are exempted under the VAT Directive or because the services are provided free of charge and therefore are outside the scope of VAT. As the consultation might provide an opportunity to introduce amendments to the VAT system which affects charities, members were encouraged to verify the fiscal situation of the charities in their respective national legislation and prepare for making an input in 2010 before the official consultation is launched.

The main topic of the meeting concerned institutional matters. Dr. Sebastian Kurpas from the Secretariat General of the European Commission, presented an overview of the Treaty of Lisbon in view of its implementation following the expected ratification by the Czech Republic. Mr Kurpas outlined the most innovative elements of the Treaty such as enhancement of the democratic legitimacy of the Union, greater efficiency in the decision making process, more transparency and a more coherent and united position of the Union on the world stage. He also briefly explained the procedural aspects of dealing with the ongoing legislative proceedings which had been proposed earlier but which will be adopted when the Lisbon Treaty has entered into force.

In the area of social policy, members were updated on the state of play as regards protection of a work-free Sunday, i.e. letters of Free Sunday Alliances sent to EU Commissioner Vladimir Spidla. Additionally, attention was drawn to the document outlining priorities of the EMPL Committee of the

European Parliament 2009 – 2014 in the area of social policy. Members also held a discussion on the recent state of play concerning the European Transparency Initiative and the Register of Interest Representatives.

Finally, two judgements of the European Court of Human Rights were presented and discussed: one concerning the case *Kimlya and Others v. Russia* of 1 October 2009 on the recognition of Scientology as a religious organisation (applications nos. 76836/01 and 32782/03); and other one concerning the case *Lombardi Vallauri v.* of 20 October 2009 concerning the Catholic University of Milan which had dismissed a lecturer who had not been approved by the Ecclesiastical authorities (application No 39128/05).

5.5 | Ad hoc Group of experts on a Memorandum on religious freedom

Religious freedom is a fundamental right that COMECE has been promoting for many years. The Council of the EU adopted on 16 November 2008 a Resolution which restates the intention of the Union “*to continue to give priority to the issues (of freedom of religion or belief) as part of the European Union’s human rights Policy*” especially at bilateral and multilateral levels. On the occasion of their Autumn Plenary Assembly, the COMECE Bishops had welcomed this priority given to religious freedom by the EU and tasked the COMECE Secretariat to continue the drafting (initiated earlier in 2009 with the setting-up of an ad hoc group of experts working on this issue) of a contribution concerning the promotion of religious freedom in EU policies in order to clarify this concept and its implications and to produce recommendations.

Meeting of the 9 February 2009

The group, which met together on 9 February, consists of 6 experts in law, theology, human rights, Catholic Social Teaching, Christian-Muslim dialogue, international relations and EU affairs working under the direction of the General Secretary of COMECE and assisted by COMECE’s adviser on interreligious affairs. The Memorandum to be published in 2010.

5.6 | Ad hoc Group on a Memorandum on non-discrimination

Meeting of the 3 September 2009

In view of recent trends and developments in equality legislation within the EU, the Secretariat of COMECE organised an expert meeting to discuss the principle of non-discrimination, the equality legislation and the need for a better balance. The main aim of the expert meeting was to reflect on the evolving concept of the principle of equality and non-discrimination and to identify the benefits and the challenges of the equality legislation for religious freedom and the Church.

Other important aspects were to highlight the positive input of the Church in protecting human dignity and combating discrimination.

It was intended that the meeting of experts would draft a reflection booklet with guidelines concerning how to assess the political and legal initiatives in the area of non-discrimination in the light of the Social Teaching of the Church.

The Seminar was held on 3 September 2009 and involved 10 experts dealing with the issue of non-discrimination in fields such as law, political and social science and theology and representing research centres, universities and Catholic Bishops’ conferences. The Memorandum was to be discussed at the COMECE Spring Plenary Assembly 2010.



Joanna Lopatowska, COMECE Legal adviser

5.7 | Ad hoc Group ‘Coordination of Churches combating Poverty’

Meetings of the 7 and 14 December 2009

The year 2010 had been declared by the European Council as the year for combating poverty in Europe. The COMECE Secretariat formed an alliance with Caritas Europa, CEC-KEK and Eurodiaconia to contribute to that year. An Ecumenical Group on Poverty asked to draft a joint declaration/paper of the Churches on poverty. A first draft for a joint declaration was to be ready by the beginning of February 2010 and the aim was to present the document for final approval in early summer 2010.

The document was to be no longer than 10 pages and present a common understanding of poverty and the fight against it. It was also to come up with some proposals for EU policy.

6 | INITIATIVES

COMECE organises conferences on major issues of current interest, information sessions and seminars to promote contacts between Church bodies and people from the European Institutions.

6.1 | European Elections 2009: COMECE Bishops Declaration

On the occasion of their Spring Plenary Assembly, the Bishop Members of COMECE adopted a declaration in respect of the European elections of 4th-7th June 2009. In the text they called on EU citizens, and in particular Christians, to exercise their responsibility as voters in order to contribute to a European Union where “*all Europeans will feel at home*”. The text was taken up and relayed by many Catholic Bishops Conferences throughout the EU Member States, before the elections.

‘Building a better European Home’

Declaration of the COMECE Bishops, European Elections 4-7 June 2009

1-European Elections: an opportunity to build a better Europe

After 64 years of peaceful development and 20 years since the fall of the Iron Curtain, which ended the division of the continent, the process of European integration deserves to be appreciated, in spite of some shortcomings. For this reason we, the Bishops of COMECE, support and promote the European Union as a project of hope for all of its citizens.

Even in this unsettled time of financial and economic crisis, the European Union has proved to be a dependable home that strives to safeguard stability and solidarity among its members. Today, in 2009, the European Union has the capacity and the means to respond to the most urgent and pressing challenges of our age.

By participating in the European Parliament elections, all citizens have the opportunity to contribute to the development and improvement of the European Union.

2-Participating in the elections: a right and a responsibility

The Catholic Church has supported the project of European integration since the very beginning and continues to do so. Every Christian not only has the right but also the responsibility to be actively engaged in this project by exercising his or her vote.

The participation of Christians is essential in order to rediscover the ‘soul of Europe’, which is vital to fulfil the fundamental needs of the human person and the service of the common good.

The European Parliament, through its powers and competences (which would be further enhanced by the final ratification of the Lisbon Treaty), must contribute to these aspirations and goals.



European Parliament Plenary Assembly in Strasbourg

3-What Christians expect from the European Parliament:

The basic principles of any society are Human Dignity and the promotion of the Common Good. Therefore these principles must be at the very heart of all European Union policies.

Given the important role of the European Parliament, we expect the Members of the European Parliament actively to participate and contribute towards the following:

- to respect human life from conception to natural death as integral to all European Union legislation, programmes and policies;
- to support the family founded on marriage – as understood between one man and one woman - as the basic unit of society;
- to advance the social rights of workers providing them with working conditions which respect their health, safety and dignity;
- to endorse economic governance based on ethical values in order to achieve sustainable human development within the European Union and at global level;
- to promote justice in relationships of the European Union with developing countries through financial assistance and innovative partnerships;
- to demonstrate solidarity by shaping policies that help the weakest and poorest in our societies (in particular people with disabilities, asylum-seekers, migrants);
- to protect creation by fighting climate change and encouraging a moderate lifestyle;
- to promote peace in the world through coordinated and coherent external EU-policy.

Enlightened and guided by Christ’s teaching, Christians are ready and willing to help fulfil these aspirations, mindful of His Holiness Pope John Paul II’s assertion: “*Christian inspiration is capable of transforming political, cultural and economic groupings into a form of coexistence in which all Europeans will feel at home*” (Ecclesia in Europa, 121).

6.2 | Meeting Young Citizens debate, 8-10 May 2009



In the European Parliament

The COMECE Secretariat provided its support to the organisation of a meeting of 130 young Christians before the European Elections. The aim of the meeting was to make young European Catholics aware of the challenges raised by the EP elections and to debate specific issues with MEPs.

In recent years, the number of non-voters in European elections has been beating all records in most European countries. The younger generation, although open-minded and mobile as far as their studies are concerned, seem paradoxically to be even less Euro-enthusiastic than their elders. This does not look at all good for the future of the idea of Europe.

In the face of this general ignorance and lack of interest, which harbours the potential for a massive abstention, the French association "*La politique, une bonne nouvelle*" therefore decided to organise this three-day session to raise awareness among young Christians about European election issues. The project received support from COMECE and from the European Commission. The European Parliament and the European Economic and Social Committee sponsored this project by opening up their buildings to meetings of the young delegates.

This was the theme of the first day of the meeting which was held at the European Parliament. The opening speech was given by Paul Collowald, former Director of Information at the Commission and later at the Parliament and a contemporary of Robert Schuman. Giving his personal account of the political context and of the drafting of the Schuman Declaration of 9 May 1950, he reminded the young delegates of the bold political vision which was the inspiration for the idea of Europe. After an introduction to the institutional triangle: Council – Commission – Parliament, the delegates were invited to move on to practical exercises. A bold role-playing game was organised to simulate the adoption of the climate-energy package, which had in reality been adopted by the EU at the end of 2008. Split into two groups to form a "Council of Ministers",

and a "European Parliament" sub-divided into five political party groupings, the delegates spent an hour and a half debating the European Commission's proposals which consisted of three Articles. Following a number of amendments and a hotly disputed negotiation between the mock "presidents" of the Council and Parliament, the game ended with the adoption of a text which turned out to be quite close to the one adopted in real life at the end of 2008.

Recent polls had confirmed our worst fears : in most Member States 50% of the electorate were preparing to go and vote on the basis of national agenda issues.

In order to place the European ballot in its true context, it was suggested to the delegates at the meeting that on their second day they should explore four European themes in greater depth: "Migration", "Climate and energy", "Good governance in post-crisis Europe" and "Europe's role in the world".

After dividing up into these four workshops, the delegates were first of all invited to deepen their knowledge of the subject by reading a number of relevant articles. Following that, they were able to discuss each of these subjects with well-known experts. These experts included Pierre Morel, special EU envoy to Georgia, and Jean-Pascal van Ypersele, Vice President of IPCC (the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change). After absorbing this information and the in-depth briefings on their subjects, the delegates then went on to hold a debate in plenary session together with Members of the European Parliament representing the PPE, the PSE and the European Greens on proposals that these parties were putting forward at the European elections.

At the end of this 9th May afternoon, they went on to take part in the institutions' "Open Day" and to visit the buildings of the Council of Ministers, the Parliament and the European Commission.

As on the previous day, the third meeting day was hosted in a building of the European Economic and Social Committee. It was devoted to the presentation of two Church organisations close to the EU: COMECE and the CEC (Conference of European Churches): their work programmes, their ways of working with the EU institutions in the form of a dialogue which is "open, transparent and regular". Finally, to close the session, two major speakers told the delegates about what had motivated them to become involved in the European project. Father Jean-Arnold de Clermont, CEC President, recounted how closely linked were his faith in Europe and his Christian faith. Pavel Fischer, the Czech Republic Ambassador to France, explained how much his faith was helping him to remain steady in the face of the political and diplomatic crises.

The session ended with ecumenical prayers in the Chapel of the Resurrection, a place of worship for Christians who work in the European institutions.

6.5 | International Summer school Seggau 2009

July 2009

From June 27th to July 11th, 2009 the Fourth «International Summer School Seggau» was held at Seggau Castle, close to the Slovenian border in the southern part of Styria, Austria.

“State -Society—Religions: Levels of European Identity”

On the last day of the International Summer School Seggauberg 2006 I brought one of the young students from Estonia to the airport of Graz-Thalerhof for her flight back to Tallin. Talking about her impressions of the two weeks of the summer-school she suddenly said: *«Among all these different impressions of the summer school one is very dear to me: In Estonia we have a very small community of Turks. They live in a very closed community, we never see them. In my entire life I have never met a Turkish person. The discussion on the accession of Turkey to the European Union had always seemed something very artificial. Now I have met five young students from Turkey. We discussed a lot and together we had great fun. In the future the discussions on Turkey will always be connected with particular faces – their faces.»*

In 2004 – when the European Union was about to receive ten new Member States including eight from the former «Communist countries» it became very obvious that it would no longer be sufficient to simply talk about those new members and the challenges of the enlargement of the EU but that it was more than necessary to meet people from this part of Europe and to get to know their customs and their cultures. Our first approach to bring together young students from both parts of Europe – new and old Member States, east and west – may have failed if we look into the statistics and have to realise that 80% of our participants came from these new Member States and even from further away – from south-eastern Europe, from the Newly Independent States (Post soviet States) and even further: Armenia, Azerbaijan and Uzbekistan.

Nevertheless, the leading idea behind this all remains the same: to offer the young generation, the European leaders of tomorrow, the opportunity to sharpen their ideas and their thoughts about a peaceful and prosperous future for this

continent – their dreams, their ideas, their ideals and realising their desires will be decisive for the future of Europe.

To bring this about it will be necessary to improve our knowledge about this Europe and its history, to acknowledge the diversity and the similarities of its cultures and to establish networks of all those who share the same ideas and desires. To put it differently: it will be up to you, the participants, to make it become true.

These desires, which can be a strong force able to change the path of history, will be remembered this year in particular: the dreams of freedom and the desire to change the political system turned into concrete political actions, into tearing down the Iron Curtain and into the Velvet Revolution. It is just twenty years ago – but if I look around me it seems that we who experienced these events are a minority here at the ISSS 2009: who remembers to look over the Berlin Wall or through the barbed-wired no-mans-land at the Austrian Eastern and Southern borders and the question: are they to stay forever? Will we ever see them disappear? The reflections during the two weeks of the ISSS 2009 have touched these memories, this decisive year for Europe, this turning point of 1989.

Michael Kuhn

6.6 | Second series of seminars 'Islam, Christianity and Europe'

2009-2010

The European Year of Intercultural Dialogue (EYID 2008) gave a major impulse to highlighting the importance of the intercultural dimension of EU policies, both at the internal and external levels. In order to continue raising awareness among EU political decision-makers and civil servants of the importance of the challenges to be faced in these areas (in particular the (inter)religious dimension of intercultural dialogue), COMECE, the Brussels Office of the Protestant Church in Germany (Evangelische Kirche in Deutschland-EKD), and, as a major political foundation, the European Office of the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung (KAS) decided to continue the dialogue that had been started in 2008 with a first series of seminars entitled “Islam, Christianity and Europe”. The second series, planned for 2009-2010, focuses on the role of religious actors in building peace and democracy in Europe and the European neighbourhood.

4 seminars were to be held in the course of 2009-2010:

- Seminar n°1 – “The role of religious actors in peace-building”
- Seminar n°2 – “The role of religious actors in strengthening civil society”
- Seminar n°3 – “Migration, integration and the fight against discrimination and defamation on religious grounds”
- Seminar n°4 – “Freedom of Religion in the European Neighbourhood: What role for religious actors and EU external action?”



Summerschool 2009 in Seggau (Austria)

6.3 | First Catholic Social days in Gdansk

8-11 October 2009

Solidarity: from inspiration to action

The first Catholic Social Days for Europe organised by COMECE attracted around 500 participants from 29 countries to Gdansk (Poland) on 8-11 October.

Organising a conference to debate 'Solidarity' presented a special challenge: how could we envisage three days of debate, involving experts, decision-makers and lay people coming from all walks of life, without falling into the trap of holding discussions that would be theoretical, abstract and disconnected from reality?

As it turned out, the choice of the city of Gdansk proved to be a decisive factor for the success of this meeting, contributing both solemnity and inspiration to it. There was the solemnity of remembrance, with participants gathering in prayer on Saturday 10 October before the Westerplatte Memorial. This monument commemorates the Nazi invasion which sparked off World War Two and came up against the unexpected and heroic resistance of a handful of Polish soldiers. Next came the inspiration of Solidarność: the protest of the naval shipyard workers which led to the first free elections in Eastern Europe in 1989, followed by the fall of the Iron Curtain. For that event also, the Congress participants gathered together in prayer on 11 October before the Three Crosses Memorial which stands at the entrance to the naval shipyard and commemorates the workers who died during the 1970 demonstrations. In his address, Mgr Diarmuid Martin, Archbishop of Dublin, recalled this event: "Gdansk became for my generation not just a city on a map but a shrine, an icon, a model and an indication of the way in which our world could change and could be changed and must be changed."

In this context, the discussions took on a highly practical

dimension. Guided by the Church's Social Teaching, the principle of Solidarity was examined from several different angles in five round table sessions in which the European institutions were represented by a number of MEPs and also by Commissioner Jacques Barrot, Vice-President of the European Commission. In his videoed message to the participants, European Commission President José Manuel Barroso welcomed the initiative of this meeting, declaring: "European integration is only possible as a joint endeavour; it needs therefore its citizens' involvement, your active involvement and participation."

Moving from discussions on to commitment and action – this was the clarion call issued by Cardinal Dionigi Tettamanzi, Archbishop of Milan, at the opening Mass of the meeting in St Bridget's Church: (English translation from the original Italian) "True solidarity is not at all an abstract, emotive, consolatory ideal but a personal and inescapable call to 'make a stand' oneself, to take charge of the needs of others (...); (this) pledges everyone to an active and responsible protagonism towards others in the interests of integral human development. Solidarity, understood in this way, is the best cure for the economic and financial crises which Europe and the world are experiencing, it is the antidote to every future crisis."

In the same vein, Mgr Martin, whose country, Ireland, had just ratified the Treaty of Lisbon by means of a referendum after a great deal of debate, remarked: "There is no point in blaming a European Union for attempting to impose alien values on one's culture if one is not active within the European community in fostering those values and in building up a consensus around the significance and importance of those values. (...). The biggest challenge to our values comes from resignation, indifference, apathy or simply giving in on our part."

To flesh out this idea of Solidarity, the participants were invited to take part in two specific initiatives. First, during the conference collections were organised to fund a Solidarity project in Moldavia that rescues street children, managed

by Caritas. Second, an editing committee drafted a message, amended by the participants, which will be sent to the leaders of the European institutions.

The meeting ended on a unanimous note: the intention to repeat these "First Catholic Social Days for Europe" in two or three years time, but next time with an ecumenical dimension. They would thus become Christian Days for Europe, and – who knows? – possibly held in another European city with a naval shipyard, so significant is the symbol of the building of a ship.



The Baltic Philharmonia hosted the First Catholic Social days for Europe

Final message : «Solidarity is the future of Europe»

«Your sons and your daughters will prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions» (Joel, 3:1)

1. On 1 September 1939, gunshots on the Westerplatte signalled the start of the most bloody conflict in world history, culminating in the loss of more than 60 million lives. From the quest for reconciliation that followed this tragedy grew the project of freedom, peace and progress we now know as the European Union.

Seventy years later, the first Catholic Social Days for Europe have brought delegations from 29 European countries to Gdansk; a city where the struggle waged by workers and intellectuals to restore the human and social dimensions of work paved the way towards the fall of the Iron Curtain and European reunification.

Here in Gdansk, in what we hope will be the first of many gatherings of this kind, we have reflected on the meaning of solidarity and its future in Europe. Drawing inspiration from the Gospel and the Social Teaching of the Catholic Church, we offer proposals for the promotion of the Common Good in Europe.

2. We believe that our generation is called on to take up again the challenge of creating a strategy for the Common Good, based on the principle: «Serve one another in love» (Gal 5:13). This requires that the social institutions respect spaces for autonomous action, enabling every person to reach his or her full potential. This can only be achieved if our institutions are infused with the principles of solidarity and subsidiarity.

This strategy presupposes a just democracy, which can only work with the responsible contribution of everyone. Selfish behaviour, utilitarianism and materialism need to give way to sharing, as has been clearly demonstrated by the current economic crisis. Solidarity must be the guiding principle for economic activity. The inalienable dignity of human life from the moment of conception to natural death must be respected. This includes the stranger who knocks at our doors and the generations to come.

We live in societies which have developed a considerable awareness of individual rights, even going so far as to claim no responsibility other than towards oneself. We stress that solidarity is a duty inherent to each one of us and that, only under this condition, do we prevent rights becoming merely arbitrary.

We should not be afraid: solidarity is our common future. The unity of Europe has been the dream of some. It has become a hope for many. Today it is our duty to ensure that it continues to serve the objective of global solidarity.

We should avoid the danger of falling into apathy or a new nihilism. We need to place more trust in the creativity of human beings in order to shape a Europe based on values.

3. For us, solidarity means a personal and collective engagement in three main directions:

Solidarity between generations:

► promote and protect the family, based on the marriage of a man and a woman and create the conditions to enable parents to raise children and to harmonise family life and professional life;



► implement a common European policy on immigration and asylum, recognising the human dignity of every migrant with consequent rights and responsibilities, as the bases for their integration;

► re-orientate our personal way of living and the economic growth to reduce our ecological footprint and the consumption of non-renewable natural resources in general, in order to pass on a habitable planet to future generations.

Solidarity within Europe:

► place the economy at the service of all, recognising the value of human work, in all its forms: paid and unpaid, charitable and voluntary work; adapt the European social market economy to new challenges;

► protect the most vulnerable among us, enhance social justice and equality of opportunities for all in our societies, taking more effective measures to reduce poverty and social exclusion;

► promote a policy of financial regulation at EU level and support efficient international governing structures.

Solidarity between Europe and the rest of the world

► keep our promises to developing countries and promote co-development with the poorest countries of the world, particularly those of the African continent;

► further develop fair trade practices, on both a national and European level;

► promote peace and justice, based on respect for human dignity, human rights and especially freedom of religion.

To fully implement these objectives, public finances, on both a national and EU level, should be set up accordingly.

All European citizens who share these views will have to personally commit themselves to their realisation and to take political responsibilities at all relevant levels.

4. The call to promote the integral development of people and peoples is a vocation that makes us who we are. As Christians we are open to transcendence. It is our vocation to welcome the gift of fraternity and trust in the Providence of God, becoming his instruments, even if this demands personal sacrifice. Europe needs men and women, formed in the faith, ready to receive others, in the name of Jesus Christ, with outstretched arms and committed to building together relationships and institutions of solidarity, in the service of the people of our time and mindful of the generations to come. We wish also to continue to dialogue and work with men and women of different beliefs in pursuit of the Common Good.

7 | DIALOGUE WITH THE EU

The dialogue between the European Union and the Churches has developed in an informal way over the past years on the initiative of EU officials and Church organisations based in Brussels, but without enjoying a legal basis. The entry into force of the Lisbon Treaty has created legally binding grounds for the first time in the history of the EU, for the dialogue between the EU and the Churches and religious communities..

7.1 | Summit meeting of religious leaders with the Presidents of the European Institutions

11 May 2009



“The current economic and financial crisis reveals a spiritual crisis and a distorted hierarchy of values.” This is the analysis that Bishop van Luyn, President of COMECE, shared with the Presidents of the European Commission and the European Parliament on the occasion of the annual meeting of the leaders of the monotheistic religions with the heads of the EU institutions.

At the invitation of the President of the European Commission, José Manuel Barroso, around twenty senior figures from the Christian, Jewish and Muslim religions from twelve Member States as well as from Russia met in the Berlaymont in Brussels to discuss the economic and financial crisis and making an ethical contribution towards European and global economic governance.

Bishop Adrianus Van Luyn emphasised that the lack of responsibility which had led to the economic crisis was attributable not only to bankers and brokers, but also to those political leaders who promised more than they really wanted to deliver over recent years; one example of this lack of commitment concerns the Millennium development goals.

Bishop Reinhard Marx, Archbishop of Munich and COMECE Vice President, pointed out the risk of loss of confidence in the free market economy, especially from the Member States in central and eastern Europe where there were many who placed a great deal of hope in this model over the past 20 years.

Bishop Diarmuid Martin, Archbishop of Dublin, called for an appropriate ethical and juridical framework for the effective operation of the economy and the realisation of its function in society. A focus on the weakest in society is an essential dimension in planning for renewed growth. The Bishop warned that *“Without targeting policies at enhancing the talents of the vulnerable, the marginalised will emerge at the end of a recession even more marginalised and society will be all the more fragile.”*

Cardinal Miloslav Vlk, Archbishop of Prague, called for responsible education aiming at the common good, which should be directed at every level: financial operators, families, companies, public authorities, civil society. This education in responsibility should be based on the solid principles of Catholic social teaching: the universality of the common good, the universal destination of goods and the priority of labour over capital.

Both the President of the European Commission, Mr Barroso, and the President of the European Parliament, Mr Pötte- ring, welcomed this meeting and the wide-ranging exchange of thoughts. They recognised that the European Union is not based on a capitalist model, which implies a materialistic basis, but rather on the model of the social market economy, which puts the human being at its heart. They also acknowledged the vital importance of the dialogue of the EU with Religions, which had depended on the personal goodwill of the EU leaders over the last 5 years but which would become legally binding under Article 17 when the Lisbon Treaty comes into force.

7.2 | Meeting with the Swedish EU Council Presidency

30 September 2009

Following the now well-established tradition of Dialogue between the Churches and the rotating EU Council Presidencies, representatives of the Churches in Sweden and in Europe met with the Swedish EU-Presidency in Stockholm. The Swedish Minister for European Union Affairs, Ms Cecilia Malmström, received the Church representatives in the Foreign Affairs Ministry.

The representatives of COMECE, the Church and Society Commission of CEC and Swedish Churches expressed to the Swedish EU-Presidency their deep concern as regards the impact of climate change on the future of Mankind and Creation. Taking particularly into consideration the heavy burden that climate change represents for developing countries and for future generations, they encouraged the EU to take on all its responsibilities in the forthcoming negotiations in Copenhagen, in order to achieve an ambitious worldwide agreement and to promote environmental justice.

The discussions also focused on the topic of Migration. As it was envisaged that a future EU Commissioner should be in charge of both Migration and Security, Church representatives emphasised the need to make a distinction between the question of Migration and that of Security issues. Migrants should have their dignity respected and not be considered as a threat to the Security of the Union but as a “*blessing and a grace*” as for every human being. In view of the forthcoming High Level Ministerial Conference “*Towards Global EU Action Against Trafficking in Human Beings*” the Churches also encouraged the Union to intensify its fight against all forms of human trafficking and its efforts to protect victims of trafficking.

The Church representatives, in view of the negotiations on Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons within the UN framework, expressed their hope in the Swedish EU Presidency to broker a common and positive European response to the “*option zero*” proposed by US President Obama.

Referring to the draft Equality Directive being discussed at the Council of the EU, the Churches recalled their firm commitment against any form of discrimination. However, they expressed concern at the lack of sufficient legal clarity as regards the scope of the Directive in the areas which remain outside of EU competence, such as education. The Churches also emphasised that any legislation ensuring equal treatment should guarantee respect for other rights and freedoms such as freedom of religion or belief and freedom of expression. Therefore, all the consequences of the proposal should be duly taken into account before it is adopted.

Finally, the representatives also discussed the issue of the Dialogue between Churches and EU institutions. This Dialogue, which has been a tradition for many years, would be strengthened when the Treaty of Lisbon and Article 17 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the EU enter into force. Both the Swedish EU Presidency and the Church representatives insisted on the necessity for this Dialogue being open to a wide range of discussion topics. It should be strengthened at the European as well as at the national level. The meeting with the Swedish Presidency was a good illustration of the Dialogue’s openness. It created a climate of confidence and is a good sign for the future of this Dialogue.



The Churches' Delegation with Ms Cecilia Malmström

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7.3 | Dialogue Seminar with the European Commission

Dialogue Seminars have a longstanding tradition in the cooperation between the European Commission and the Churches in Europe. Since they started in the early 1990s they have proved to be a significant discussion forum for matters of common concern. They represent an important element in the regular and transparent dialogue between the European institutions and the Churches in Europe.

Dialogue Seminar on 'Climate change: Challenge for lifestyles, solidarity and global justice'

17 June 2009



Dialogue Seminar

Copenhagen, Churches and church organisations discussed with EU representatives the ethical dimension of the fight against climate change. The Dialogue Seminar which took place on June 17 and organised by the CSC of CEC, COMECE, and the Bureau of European Policy Advisers of the European Commission was dedicated to the issue of *"climate change as a challenge for lifestyles, solidarity and global justice"*. For a whole day, representatives from the European Commission, the European Parliament and Member States exchanged views with representatives of the Churches on the basis of the latest scientific evidence on climate change.

The Vice-Chair of the IPCC, Prof. Jean-Pascal van Ypersele presented the latest figures concerning climate change according to which the EU's emissions' reduction target of a maximum of 30% by 2020 compared to 1990 levels would not be sufficient to ensure that global warming was maintained below 2°C. Prof. Helga Kromp-Kolb, meteorologist and winner of several scientific awards, emphasised, with regard to the EU's negotiating position at the forthcoming Copenhagen Conference, that: *"30% is not enough, 2°C is already too high and 2020 is too late"*.

Both EU and Church representatives agreed on the urgency of the situation that climate change has become a question of survival, especially for the poor and vulnerable who will be the first to suffer. Karl Falkenberg, Director General for DG Environment at the European Commission stated, *"We, the European Union, have not only to assume our responsibility but also to be the leader for the rest of the world. The outcome of Copenhagen will be positive only if we manage to convince other large emitters like China, India or Russia to join our commitment to significantly reduce greenhouse gas emissions"*.

The Rev. Henrik Grape from the Church of Sweden proposed to add symbolically three empty chairs at all climate negotia-

tions - representing the poor, future generations and creation itself. Participants emphasised that it is a special responsibility of the Churches to speak in favour of those three non-participants.

Bernd Nilles, Secretary General of CIDSE and Marlene Grundström from APRODEV recalled on behalf of the Christian development aid organisations that the fight against climate change is strongly linked to development policy and warned against the lack of solidarity towards developing countries in the final stage of the Copenhagen negotiations. *"In Copenhagen, we need answers, not deals"* Nilles said.

HE Metropolitan Athanasios of Achaia stated that *"Our overwhelming problems, such as environmental pollution, pollution of seas, contaminated food supplies, the squandering of energy resources and climate change (...) are issues that concern*



Mr Karl Falkenberg, Director General for DG Environment

the human rights of future generations".

The Rev. Rüdiger Noll, Director and Associate General Secretary of the Church and Society Commission of the Conference of European Churches (CEC) put an emphasis on the principle of justice and on the responsibility for developed countries *"to save the harmony of creation"*.

Many Church representatives spread the message of hope and showed their commitment to ambitious mitigation targets and lifestyle changes. The General Secretary of COMECE, Fr Piotr Mazurkiewicz held that *"an effective response to climate change requires both political leadership and ethical reflection and debate. These are essential in order to win over not only the minds but also the hearts of citizens and to make change effective"* and he posed the question *"What is a good and happy life about?"*. On the basis of numerous expert and reflection papers issued by Churches and Church organisations over recent years, participants stressed that the necessary lifestyle changes can be conveyed best by education at all levels and by encouraging more responsible consumer habits. In this respect, Klaus Kögler, Head of Unit for Sustainable Production and Consumption in DG Environment, and Prof. theol. Andreas Lienkamp emphasised the need for an *"infrastructure"* favouring eco-responsible choices and behaviour.

Concluding the Seminar, the representatives of Churches shared in a willingness to address a message of Hope to all EU citizens and encourage them to implement the necessary lifestyle changes. In return, representatives of the Commission and of the European Parliament agreed that the support of Churches in the fight against climate change is crucial in convincing citizens to adopt climate friendly behaviour in their daily lives.

8 | LIST OF ACTIVITIES 2009

8.1 | Consultations

The European Commission has a long tradition of consulting interested parties from outside when formulating its policies. It incorporates external consultation into the development of almost all its policy areas. Depending on the issues at stake, consultation is intended to provide opportunities for input from representatives of regional and local authorities, civil society organisations, the individual citizens concerned, academics and technical experts. In this context, the COMECE Secretariat itself participates or encourages the COMECE Member Bishops' Conferences to participate in the Consultations on issues which are of interest to Churches and Church-organisations. In 2009, COMECE took part in following consultations:

- Contribution of the COMECE Secretariat to the Consultation launched by the European Commission on **“Migration and mobility: challenges and opportunities for EU education systems”**

30 January 2009, European Commission

- Contribution of the COMECE Secretariat to the Consultation launched by the European Commission on **a code of conduct for interest representatives**

19 June 2009, European Commission

- Contribution of the COMECE Secretariat to the Consultation launched by the European Commission in view of a possible designation of **2010 as European Year for Active Ageing and Intergenerational Solidarity**

3 August 2009, European Commission

8.2 | Other contributions

Letter to the Board of Governors of the European schools concerning the teaching of Religion

13 January

COMECE, Representatives of Protestant and Orthodox Churches, Islam, Judaism

Letter to the President of the European Council and to Permanent Representatives of the EU Member States concerning the position of the EU in the UN Climate Change Negotiation

5 March, COMECE, CEC

Letter to the Bishops of Dioceses which host a European school, concerning the Teaching of Religion in the European schools and the drafting of a syllabus

7 September 2009, COMECE

8.3 | Conferences co-organised by COMECE

Initiative « **Young citizens debate** » : La politique une bonne nouvelle

*8-10 May, European Parliament/
Economic and Social Committee*

L'origine des valeurs de l'Europe d'aujourd'hui : l'expérience Tchèque

11 May, Chapel of the Resurrection

Séminaire « **Principe de la non-discrimination dans l'UE** »

28 May, COMECE, Brussels

Dialogue Seminar « **Towards an ethical debate – climate change as a challenge for lifestyles, solidarity and global justice** » - BEPA, COMECE, CES/CEC

17 June, European Commission

Sommer university Seggau 2009

27 June– 11 July, Seggau, Austria

Meeting on the Green book on Youth and Mobility

8 September, COMECE, Brussels

9ème Conférence internationale de Cracovie « **Le rôle de l'Eglise Catholique dans le processus de l'intégration européenne** » - « **La responsabilité chrétienne face à la crise économique** » sous le patronage de la COMECE

11-12 September, Krakaw, Poland

Evening reception of some Polish MEPs

29 September, COMECE, Brussels

First Catholic Social Days for Europe

8-11 October, Gdansk, Poland

Conférence « **De la Révélation à l'Interprétation Une lecture du Coran : pont entre tradition et modernité** » par le Prof. Nasr Abu Zaïd organisée par la COMECE, El Kalima et Kerkwerk Multicultureel Samenleven

26 November, COMECE, Brussels

Second series of seminars COMECE – KAS – EKD on Islam, Christianity and Europe, « **The Role of Religious Actors in Peace building** »

2 December, COMECE, Brussels

8.4 | Visitor Groups

The COMECE Secretariat receives every year a number of delegations and visitor groups from the different EU Members States but also from further afield, in order to inform and raise awareness among the Church community about questions of special common interest dealt with by the different institutions of the EU. The COMECE Secretariat organises visits for Church-linked groups to the EU institutions.

University of Augsburg (Germany) 19 january

Working Group on Europe of the German Bishops' Conference, 28-29 january

Lithuanian Delegation organised by the association « Entraide d'Eglises », 17 february

Group on « Faith in Europe – The Churches' European Relation Network » (UK), 24 february

Diocese of Gap (France), 3 march

TV Crew « TV Noe », Czech Catholic TV, 5 march

Chaplains to the Bishops of the Church of England, 12 march

Kolpingjugend, 17 march

Young Christian democrats for life (Germany) 1-6 april

RENOVABIS delegation (Germany), 2 april

Katholische Landvolk Bewegung (Germany), 15 april

Young Dominicans (Belgium), 17 april

Delegation of the Katholische Arbeitnehmer Bewegung (Germany), 12 may

Bildungswerk Graz-Seckau (Austria), 15 may

Delegation of Salvatorians (from all over Europe) 26 may

German pupils, 30 june

Seminarians from Eastern Europe- Kommende Dortmund 24 august

Interns of the EPP Groupe in the European Parliament 4 september & 5 october

Catholic University Louvain (KUL), 8 september

Interns at CSC-CEC, l'EKD and Caritas Europa, 24 september

Council of the Diocese Rottenburg-Stuttgart (Germany) 13 october

Visitors group of MEP Andrzej Grzyb (Poland) 7 november

Visitors group of MEP Ms. Kolarska-Bobinska, MEP (Poland), 2 december

9 | PUBLICATIONS

9.1 | Science / Bioethics

In view of the significance of bioethical issues for EU policies, the Bioethics Reflection Group was founded in 1996 by COMECE. Its aim is to examine bioethical issues in terms of their implications for the EU and its institutions and, at the same time, to inform the COMECE Bishops and their Bishops' Conferences about these issues. Its members represent a range of disciplines in addition to theology, ethics and philosophy: notably law, medicine and pharmacology.

Opinion of the Reflection Group on Bioethics concerning the non-commercialisation of the elements of the human body 20 may 2009

Opinion of the Reflection Group on Bioethics concerning the perspectives of human enhancement by technological means 25 may 2009

'An overview report on Bioethics in the European Union'

Document of the COMECE Secretariat on the policy of the European Union concerning bioethical issues

30 october 2009

9.2 | Intercultural Dialogue

'Islam, Christianity and Europe - Religious Dimension of the intercultural dialogue'

Reports of the seminars hosted by the European Parliament in the framework of the European Year of Intercultural Dialogue (EYID 2008) organised by COMECE, CSC-CEC and KAS.

6 november 2009

10 | COMMUNICATION AND INFORMATION POLICY

10.1 | Europe Infos

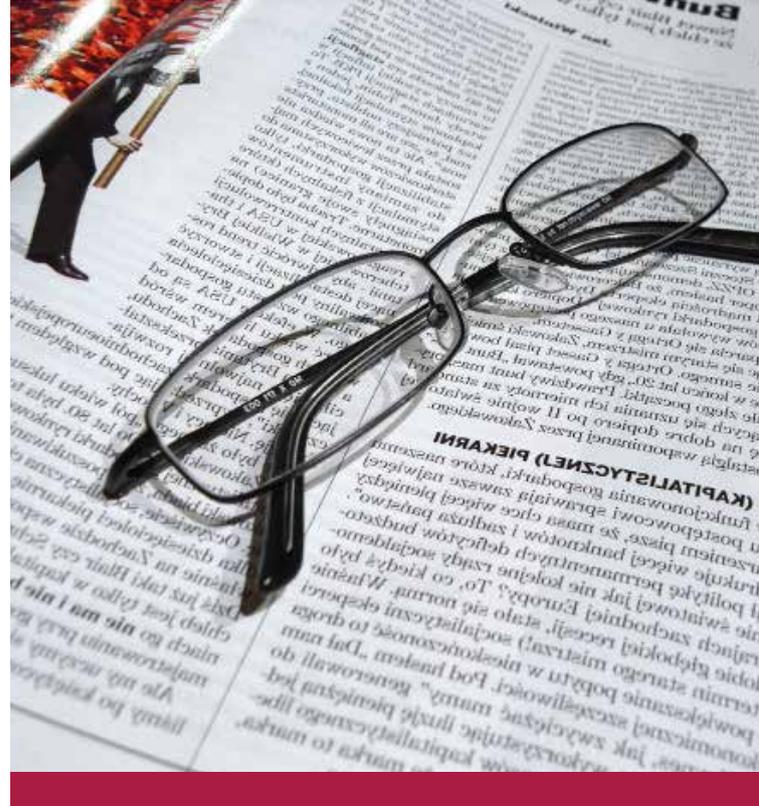
Europe Infos, a monthly review edited by COMECE and OCIPE, is published in English, French and German. Europe Infos aims to make the meaning and purpose of the European project better known to citizens, and especially to the local churches.

10.2 | Press releases

In 2009, COMECE issued 17 press releases, on various issues: Climate Change, Islam, European Elections, EU-Church Dialogue, outcome of the Irish referendum, Protection of a work-free Sunday, Catholic Social Days in Gdansk.

10.3 | New Website and Corporate Design

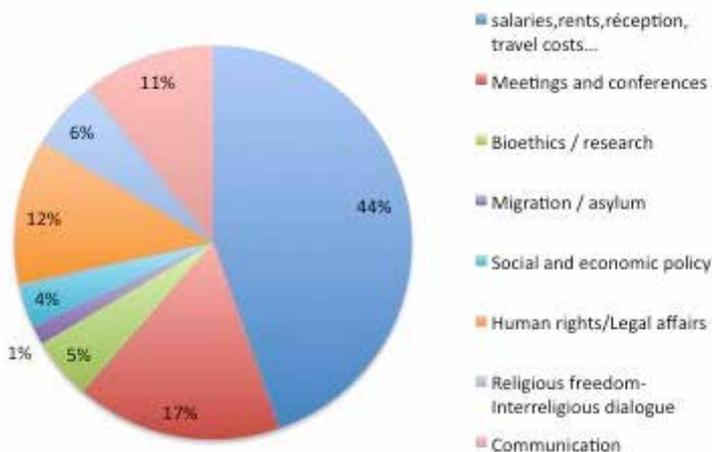
With the entry into force of the Lisbon Treaty in 2009, COMECE became, under Article 17, an official Dialogue partner of the EU institutions. In order to enhance its visibility among the EU Institutions, the media and the public, COMECE has established a new corporate design and launched a new Website in October. The old logo has been refreshed in its shape and colour (lighter blue). The corporate design has integrated a second colour, purple, which is the symbolic colour of the bishops.



The website displays a group of pilgrims, symbolizing that the Church and the people of God are on their way, progressing towards a better society displaying greater solidarity.

10 | FINANCES

2009 Expenses related to work areas



Total expenditure:

1 124 920 €

The COMECE Secretariat and its activities are exclusively financed by the contributions of the Member Bishops Conferences.



10 | GENERAL INFORMATION

10.1 | Members

S.E. Mgr. Adrianus van Luyn Bishop of Rotterdam (Netherlands) President of COMECE	S.E. Mgr. Piotr Jarecki Auxiliary Bishop of Warsaw (Poland) Vice-President of COMECE	S.E. Mgr. Reinhard Marx Archbishop of Munich-Freising (Germany) Vice-President of COMECE
S.E. Mgr. Virgil Bercea Bishop of Oradea Mare/Gran Varadino (Romania)	S.E. Mgr. Adolfo Gonzalez Montes Bishop of Almeria (Spain)	S.E. Mgr. Vaclav Maly Auxiliary Bishop of Prague (Czech Republic)
S.E. Mgr. Mario Grech Bishop of Gozo (Malta)	S.E. Mgr. Anton Justs Bishop of Jēgļava (Latvia)	S.E. Mgr. Antoni Stres Bishop of Celje (Slovenia)
S.E. Mgr. Ferenc Cserhádi Auxiliary Bishop Esztergom- Budapest (Hungary)	S.E. Mgr. Egon Kapellari Bishop of Graz-Seckau (Austria)	S.E. Mgr. José Amândio Tomás Coadjutor bishop of Vila Real (Portugal)
S.E. Mgr. Jozef De Kesel Auxiliary Bishop of Brussels (Belgium)	S.E. Mgr. William Kenney Auxiliary Bishop of Birmin- gham (England and Wales)	S.E. Mgr. Peter A. Moran Bishop of Aberdeen (Scotland)
S.E. Mgr. Nikólaos Fóscolos Archbishop of Athens (Greece)	S.E. Mgr. Czeslaw Kozon Bishop of Copenhagen (Scan- dinavia)	S.E. Mgr. Rimantas Norvila Bishop of Vilkaiviškis (Lithua- nia)
S.E. Mgr. Fernand Franck Archbishop of the Grand Du- chy of Luxemburg	S.E. Mgr. Christian Kratz Auxiliary Bishop of Strasburg (France)	S.E. Mgr. Christo Proykov Apostolic Exarch of Sofia President of the Bishops' Conference (Bulgaria)
	S.E. Mgr. Frantisek Rábek Military Bishop (Slovakia)	S.E. Mgr. Noël Treanor Bishop of Down & Connor (Ireland)

Associated members:

*S.E. Mgr Norbert Brunner
Bishop of Sion (Switzerland)*

*S.E. Cardinal Josip Bozanic Ar-
chbishop of Zagreb
(Croatia)*

10.2 | COMECE Secretariat

Mgr Piotr Mazurkiewicz
General Secretary

Drs. Michael Kuhn
Deputy General Secretary
Seconded by the Austrian Bishops' Confe-
rence
Advisor
Education, Culture and Youth policy

Alessandro Calcagno
Seconded by the Italian Bishops' Confe-
rence
Legal advisor
Migration and Asylum

Vincent Legrand
Advisor
International Relations
Intercultural/ Interreligious Dialogue

Joanna Lopatowska
Legal advisor
Fundamental Rights

Stefan Lunte
Advisor
Economic and social affairs
Institutional issues

Thomas Pickartz
Legal advisor
Institutional affairs
Environmental and social issues

José Ramos Ascensão
Legal advisor
Bio-ethical issues

Johanna Touzel
Spokesperson
Press officer

Maud Oger
Secretariat

Aimery de Véric
Administration

The Secretariat was assisted in the course of the year by voluntary interns:

- **Ms Svenja Mehrgardt**
Pupil from Lübeck, Germany, 26-30 Ja-
nuary
- **Ms Kerstin Kotterba**
Student from Germany, 9 February- 14
April
- **Mr Benedikt Rohrsen**
Student from Germany, 1 March-31st May
- **Mrs Claudia Pflieger**
Student from Germany, 20 April- 8 May
- **Ms Veronika Kreyca**
Student from Austria, 11 May-30 June
- **Ms Mryana Hnyp**
Student from Ukraine - part time, 1 June-
31 July
- **Mr Raphael Strottdrees**
Pupil from Germany, 22 June-3 July
- **Mr Piotr Luczak**
Student from Poland, September-December
- **Mr Clément Binachon**
Student from France, September-December





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