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EUROPEAN COMMUNITY**

COMECE

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INTRODUCTION

2004 was an historic year for the Europe Union and for COMECE. The Constitutional Treaty establishing a treaty for Europe was adopted and duly signed in Rome. The historic enlargement of the Union to 25 Member States with the admission of ten new Member States was celebrated in Dublin under the Irish Presidency of the EU and throughout Europe. In respect of both processes COMECE saw the fulfilment of much of its work in preceding years and the enlargement of its membership to include the Bishop delegates of the new Member States. High-points in the COMECE's calendar of events were the European pilgrimage to Santiago de Compostela and the European congress held afterwards to mark the spiritual and religious significance of this historic moment in the reunification of Europe. By the end of the year a new property had been acquired (in December) for the future seat of the secretariat, this being necessary due to shortage of office space in the present premises.

The Commission of the Bishops' Conferences of the European Community (COMECE) monitors the evolution of policy-making as carried out by the European Union institutions. It is also tasked with making input on the basis of Catholic Social Teaching to the European Union institutions in respect of a range of policy areas. It fulfils this mission on behalf of the twenty-two Bishops' Conferences in the present Member States of the European Union and also on behalf of the episcopal conferences of the acceding countries. To this end and throughout the year 2004 COMECE continued to provide for encounter and dialogue with EU officials through a range of activities: the two annual Plenary meetings, three meetings of the Executive Committee, initiatives undertaken by its Bishop members in their respective countries, the monthly publication, *Europe Infos*, and through a range of activities involving the EU institutions on the one hand and groups and representative of organisations from the local Churches in the Member States on the other.

This report is a record of the contribution made by COMECE to the European project on behalf of its member Bishops' Conferences and the local Church in the Member States. It indicates some of the initiatives undertaken to assist the local Churches and their episcopates in keeping abreast of developments in European policy-making. In carrying out its mission the COMECE secretariat maintained contact and worked closely with the Apostolic Nuncio to the European Union, with numerous Catholic organisations which liaise with the EU, with the secretariats of the Bishops' Conferences and with the offices of the other Churches in Brussels.

The hallmarks of the EU's political calendar for 2004, the final negotiation of the Constitutional Treaty and the enlargement, necessarily determined the priorities of COMECE's work in the first half of the year. Other significant events of the EU's life which were followed closely were the elections in the twenty five Member States to the European Parliament, the formation of the new European Commission under President Barroso, and the Hague programme adopted under the Dutch Presidency. In pursuing these issues the COMECE maintained regular contact with the Apostolic Nuncio to the European Communities and received support from the then Nuncio H. E. Faustino Sainz Muñoz and the Secretariat of State. COMECE records its gratitude to Archbishop Sainz for his constant interest and fraternal support and wishes him God's blessing for his mission as Apostolic Nuncio in Great Britain.

The final section of the Annual Report for 2003 indicated a series of areas in which the COMECE secretariat would continue its work in the course of 2004. They were delineated as follows:

- (i) The COMECE and its secretariat will continue to monitor European Union policy-making on behalf of the Bishops' Conferences of the Member States and of the candidate countries.

- (ii) Every effort will be made to follow the progress in consultations to be undertaken by the Irish Presidency regarding the European Constitution; as soon as the Intergovernmental Conference is recalled, the preparations will be followed closely and the necessary initiatives will be taken.
- (iii) The preparations of the pilgrimage to Santiago de Compostela (17-21 April) will be continued with further visits by members of the secretariat to the ecclesiastical and civil authorities in Santiago and in the cities to be visited en route. The organisation of the Congress, *European Union: Hope and Responsibility, Theological Readings of the evolution of a United Europe* (22-23 April) will be completed. The Plenary meeting of the COMECE in Santiago (23-24 April) will also be organised.
- (iv) COMECE looks forward to the enlargement of the European Union on 1 May 2004. Particular efforts will be undertaken to engage the Bishops' Conferences of the new Member States in the work of COMECE.
- (v) The secretariat will pay particular attention to EU Human Rights policy and seek to explore possibilities for input in this field.
- (vi) The secretariat will continue its close monitoring of EU research policy and particularly the ethical and bio-ethical issues in this field.
- (vii) The Global Governance Assessment project will be carried forward.
- (viii) The statement "*Solidarity, The Soul of Europe*" should be published in the Spring of 2004.
- (ix) A statement will be published in view of the European elections in June 2004.
- (x) The document *Let Us Open Our Hearts*, revised in the light of comments received and the deliberations of the Congress in Santiago will be published toward the end of the year.
- (xi) COMECE will be represented at the co-ordination meeting of Bishops' Conferences regarding the Holy Land, Jerusalem, 12-15 January, 2004.
- (xii) The COMECE secretariat will be represented at a meeting of the Presidents of the Bishops' Conferences of South-East Europe, Belgrade, 20-22 February.
- (xiii) Programmes for information visits to the EU institutions will be organised for groups and for participants in an internship programme of the Bishops' Conference of England and Wales at the House of Commons, Westminster.
- (xiv) Every effort will be made to organise a sixth Summer University in Bratislava, Slovakia.

This report for 2004 indicates that the objectives in the aforementioned areas were pursued and achieved, with the exception of objective (x) that was considered to require further work to be carried into 2005. Other initiatives were also undertaken throughout the year in response to the EU agenda.

Ireland held the Presidency of the European Union from January until June 2004. Its work was trained on (i) the work of the continuing Intergovernmental Conference on the Constitutional Treaty, (ii) carrying forward the Lisbon process, (iii) the conclusion of the Tampere process, (iv) successful summits with Latin America, Russia, Canada and Japan, (v) continuation of the "wider Europe" strategy and of (v) the

European Security Strategy. The agenda of the Dutch Presidency (July to December) set out to (i) consolidate the enlarged EU of 25, (ii) to prepare the mid-term review of the Lisbon strategy, (iii) to develop a new programme for the area of freedom, security and justice (now known as, the Hague programme), (iv) to address issues regarding the Stability and Growth Pact, (v) pursue negotiations on the financial perspectives for 2007-2013 and (vi) to foster deliberation on European values through a series of events.

COMECE and its secretariat monitored the work of the Irish and Dutch Presidencies, the unfolding of the Work Programme of the European Commission and the relevant initiatives of the European Parliament.

This report sets out the main activities carried out by COMECE in the course of 2004. It does not attempt an exhaustive listing of all the initiatives of the Bishop members and the staff of the secretariat. It seeks rather to give an overview of the principal activities undertaken in the service of the Bishops' Conferences and of the building of the new and enlarged European Union.

COMECE FROM WITHIN

1.1. The President

1.1.1. The President chaired and guided the deliberations of the Plenary meetings 22-23 April and 18-19 November and two meetings of the Executive Committee, the first in Rome on 22-23 June, the second in Brussels on 16-17 September.

1.1.2. Among the activities he undertook as President in the course of the year were the following: a lecture to the Adalbertus Forum in Gniezno, 13-14 March; addresses during the European pilgrimage and congress, Santiago, 17-23 April; lecture to the Central European Catholic days, 20 May; an address to Europe4Family, Braunschweig, 31 August; lecture to the International Symposium on European Integration, Cracow, 10 September; address to the Semaines Sociales, Lille, 24-26 September; a lecture on Church and Civil Society in the European Constitution, Caritas Europe, Brussels, 6 October; lecture, Christians and the shaping of Europe, 7 October; lecture, Shaping Europe through Reconciliation and Cupertino, Thessaloniki, 21 October; address to the Bishops' Conference of Slovakia, 26-28 October; participation and address to CCEE-SECAM symposium, Rome, 10-13 November; meetings and discussion on the Balkans with Dr. Buzek, Stability Pact for S. E. Europe and other policy-makers in Brussels.

1.2. THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

1.2.1 The Executive Committee – the President Bishop J. Homeyer, the two Vice-Presidents, Bishop A. van Luyn and Archbishop H. Simon and the Secretary General – met twice in the course of the year. The Apostolic Nuncio to the European Communities, H. E. Archbishop F. Sainz Muñoz attended. Mr. S. Lunte and Dr. M. Meyer also took part.

1.2.2. The meeting of 22-23 June took place in the renovated Villa Mater Dei, Rome. As in former years, the committee was the guest of the house and thus of the German Bishops' Conference. Having taken stock of the political context, the Committee considered the outcome of the Intergovernmental Conference and the further steps to be taken in regard to Constitutional Treaty. As this was the first meeting of the Executive Committee since the enlargement of the

EU, the President and Vice-Presidents gave significant time to considering the tasks and responsibilities of the enlarged COMECE. In particular they sought ways to intensify bonds with the Episcopal Conferences of the new Member States. Likewise they considered how to conjugate the memories and experience of Church in society in both east and west within the enlarged COMECE. Particular attention was given to examining the *modus operandi* of the Plenary meetings and to considering ways to ensure participation on the part of the bishop delegates in the proceedings of an enlarged meeting and concrete outcome to the deliberations of the plenaries. An evaluation of the European pilgrimage to Santiago de Compostela and the ensuing congress, "*Union Européenne : Espérance et Responsabilité, Lectures théologiques du devenir de l'Europe unie*" was also undertaken with the assistance of reactions and responses received from participants. In the light of the aforementioned congress, thought was given to the further development of the document, "*Ouvrons nos cœurs*". At this meeting time was taken to review the financial situation of COMECE, to examine the performance of the annual budget and to update the members on the matter of a new property to house the secretariat. Significant time was also given to considering the draft of revised statutes for COMECE and to establishing a procedure for the necessary consultations and their adoption in due course. In accordance with established practice the Executive Committee met with the Secretary for Relations with States at the Secretariat of State, H. E. Archbishop Giovanni Lajolo. The first encounter with Archbishop Lajolo in this, his recently assumed capacity, the President outlined the mission and work of COMECE in his introductory comments. Thereafter discussions dwelt on the outcome of the IGC, the efforts undertaken in view of an explicit reference to the Christian heritage in the preamble of the Constitutional Treaty and the grounds for the opposition encountered, the recent initiatives of the COMECE, issues arising in respect of relations with Islam, the situation in the Middle East.

- 1.2.3. The Executive Committee met again at the COMECE secretariat in Brussels on 16 September. Having reviewed the activities of the secretariat and the developments in EU policy since the previous meeting, an extensive discussion ensued on the much awaited European Commission report on Turkey and the prospect of negotiations being opened with Turkey. The Committee recalled the predicament of minorities in regard to the exercise of human rights, the declared and undeclared difficulties of Christian communities especially, though not exclusively, in the matter of juridical personality for the Church. They considered the report on *Human Rights – Turkey on the Road to Europe – Religious Freedom* (Missio, 2004) and assessed the need to impress further on the Commission and governments the importance of religious freedom in assessing Turkey's response to the Copenhagen criteria. At this meeting further work was invested in the document "*Ouvrons nos Cœurs*". Further thought was given to the organisation of the enlarged Plenary meetings, to inviting candidate states to nominate observer bishops to the Commissions and Working Groups. A report was received on Article I-52 of the Constitutional Treaty (still to be signed and then ratified) and on a range of issues attendant upon its implementation. The Committee members met and had an extensive exchange with M. Jacques Barrot, member of the European Commission.

1.3. THE PLENARY MEETINGS

- 1.3.1. The spring Plenary meeting took place in the Casa de los Ejercicios, Santiago de Compostela on 22-23 April. The COMECE European Congress, *European Union: Hope and Responsibility, Theological Readings of the evolution of a united Europe* (21-23 April) constituted the first part of the proceedings. The congress was opened on Wednesday evening 21 April by His Grace Julián Barrio Barrio, Archbishop of Santiago de Compostela and by the President Bishop Dr.

Josef Homeyer. There followed a reception in the Ayuntamiento, offered by the city Mayor Mr. Xosé A. Sanchez Bugallo, during which participants met with city authorities. On the morning of Thursday 22 April Archbishop H. Simon introduced the participants to the genesis and purpose of the document *“Let us open our hearts”*, drafted by a group of theologians under his chairmanship. In his address he outlined and assessed the responses received by COMECE to this document as a result of a wide consultation process. Since the document aimed to offer a theological reading of the process of European construction, it seemed desirable to the congress organisers to invite a member of the European Convention, tasked with preparing the Constitutional Treaty, to contribute to the proceedings. Thus Reverend Professor Peter Serracino Inglott, representative of the government of Malta to the European Convention and former rector of the University of Malta, was invited to deliver an address on *Faith and Politics in Europe*. Before participants divided into a series of workshops, starting from Ecclesia in Europa no. 119, Professor D. Loose, Tilburg, addressed the congress on the challenges for Christians and the Churches in Europe. Thereafter participants discussed in workshops a range of subjects, many of which emerged from the reactions received in the consultation process on *“Let us open our hearts”*. The themes were as follows: (i) pursuing the common good in a situation of interdependence: Reflections on the nature of the European Union and on the relinquishments of national sovereignty it demands; (ii) pursuing the common good in a situation of interdependence: Promoting the family, creating jobs and helping the poorest in the European Union; (iii) the European responsibility of the Church: Requirements for itself and for its relations with the other Christian confessions; (iv) Living citizenship in the European Union: The relations of the Church with Jews, Muslims and other spiritual beliefs; (v) The responsibility of the European Union for serving the universal Common Good: The challenge of good relations with its neighbours; (vi) the responsibility of the European Union for serving the universal Common Good: contributing to global governance to maintain peace and reduce inequalities; (vii) the contribution of Catholics to promoting a European consciousness: what spiritual education for citizens? Reports were received from the workshops during a plenary session. Mr. Michel Camdessus, former managing Director of the International Monetary Fund and chairman of the ad hoc Group established by COMECE to produce a report of Global Governance, delivered an address on *Europe’s global responsibility*. On Friday morning Cardinal Antonio M. Ruoco Varela, Archbishop of Madrid and President of the Spanish Bishops’ Conference spoke on the theme, *Hope and Responsibility of Catholics in Europe – theological meditations based on the post –synodal Apostolic Exhortation Ecclesia in Europa*. Afterwards Fr. Notker Wolf O.S.B., Abbot Primate of the Benedictines delivered a paper entitled *Saint Benedict – Patron and Prophet for an open and united Europe*. The proceedings were drawn to a close by Archbishop H. Simon who, reflecting on the reports from the workshops and the lectures, suggested lines along which the document *“Let us open our hearts”* might be further developed. He also indicated that the proceedings of the congress would be published in due course.

- 1.3.2. The second part of the Plenary meeting was held on the evening of 22 April and on Friday 23 April. In the introductory session the Annual Report for 2003 was received. Archbishop Elias Yanes gave an extensive report on the situation in Spain in the aftermath of the Madrid bombings (11 March) and the elections that brought about a change of government. Thereafter a first evaluation of the pilgrimage and the congress was undertaken: the Bishop members expressed their appreciation for both events. The assembly discussed at length the draft statement *“Solidarity the soul of the European Union”*, designed as a statement to comment and underline social-ethical issues at stake in the forthcoming revision of the EU financial perspectives. Members proposed several comments and amendments. These were duly included in the text which, it was decided, should be published forthwith and duly made

available in booklet form. The Archbishop of Santiago in the Seminario Mayor hosted a festive dinner on the evening of April 23. In his address Bishop Homeyer thanked Archbishop Barrio Barrio and the local Church for the support given to COMECE throughout the long preparation of the pilgrimage and congress. Bishop Duffy, attending the plenary for the last time as delegate of the Irish Bishops' Conference, outlined his recollections of the evolution of COMECE over almost two decades. On Saturday 24 April the assembly received a report on a meeting co-organised by COMECE and the Commission for Church and Society with the Irish Presidency (i.e. with the Taoiseach B. Ahern and advisers), which took place in Dublin on 11 March. On the basis of this report and with input from the secretariat a discussion took place with a view to orientating further monitoring of the Intergovernmental Conference and particularly with regard to a formulation evoking explicitly the Christian heritage in the preamble. Thereafter a draft statement in view of the forthcoming elections to the European Parliament in June was presented. The meeting deliberated on the draft, discussed the ordering of the contents, developed proposals for amendments. The secretariat was requested to amend the text in the light of the discussion, to then submit it for approval to the members of the Executive Committee before its publication, scheduled for 10 May. A reception was offered to celebrate the membership of the Bishops' Conferences of the new Member States in the COMECE. In a short address the President recalled how the imminent enlargement on 1 May had been awaited and prepared for by COMECE and the Episcopal Conferences of the ten countries.

- 1.3.3. The autumn plenary was held in Brussels on 18-19 November 2004. Taking the particularity of the various events into account – the enlargement, the elections to the European Parliament, the new Commission (despite the difficulties surrounding R. Buttiglione and other members designate), the signature of the Constitutional Treaty in Rome on 29 October – it seemed opportune that for the first plenary after the historic enlargement, an effort should be made to take the measure of the present political state of the EU and also to consider two of the priorities for the near future. To this end M. R. Leray, of the Directorate General for External Relations of the European Commission was invited to present and analyse the Michalski report, prepared at the request of President Prodi, on the Spiritual and Cultural dimension of Europe. Considering the imminent mid-term review of the Lisbon strategy in 2005, and the recently published report on the subject by Wim Kok, the meeting dwelt on the challenges facing the EU and the Member States in this regard. The discussion was facilitated by Mr. David White, Director, European Commission Directorate Enterprise and Industry, who traced the origins of the strategy, its economic and social import and set out some of the central issues to be addressed. A lively discussion followed which duly confirmed the meeting in requesting the secretariat and the Commission for Social Affairs to explore the possibility of a suitable statement to be issued at an appropriate time. With an input from Mr. John Bruton, former Taoiseach of Ireland, former member of the European Convention and Ambassador Designate of the EU to the US, the meeting considered core political challenges for the coming years and in particular the renewal of the transatlantic relationship. Thereafter Archbishop H. Simon gave a report on the work carried out on the document, *“Let us open our hearts”* since April, presented a revised version and, on the basis of the discussion, offered to prepare a final draft for the forthcoming plenary. In order to take account of the ecclesial experience of the church in the new Member States and in accordance with the wishes of the Executive Committee the plenary received reports from the delegates of the Episcopal Conferences of the new Member States. They were requested to outline hallmarks of the life of the Church under the Communist regime, to indicate their expectations and/or concerns regarding the membership of their country in the EU and also to state their expectations from COMECE. The contributions were available in written form (and attached as annexes to the minutes of the plenary). They provided an important source for reflecting on how to develop COMECE's mission vis-à-vis the EU on

behalf of an enlarged and more diversified membership. After evening prayer and dinner a public debate was held on the theme – *The European Union and Turkey*. Presentations were made by Mme. Sylvie Goulard, author of “*Le Grand Turc et la République de Venise*”, H. E. Marek Grela, Permanent Representative of Poland to the EU and Dr. Otmar Oehring, Director of the Human Rights section of Missio, Aachen. The debate was introduced and chaired by the President, Bishop Homeyer; a lively debate followed on the presentations. The discussion was continued among the Bishop members on the second day of the meeting, the secretariat being asked to monitor developments as the European Council meeting in December approached and with the Executive Committee to undertake appropriate steps to underline issues of human rights and religious freedom. Thereafter the plenary turned its attention to the Constitutional Treaty. A draft (in English only) of an evaluation of the Constitution, prepared by three members of the ad hoc Working Group established in view of the European Convention, was presented. The secretariat was mandated to provide translations into French, German and Italian and asked to investigate possibilities of translations in other languages. A discussion ensued on the Article I-52, especially the dialogue foreseen by I-52.3. In a further session in camera the Bishop members received a report on financial and administrative matters. A draft of the revised statutes together with a commentary was presented with a view to a discussion in the forthcoming plenary in spring 2005. Mrs. Charlotte Kreuter-Kirchoff presented the Global Assessment report for 2004. The secretariat was mandated to print the report and to investigate the possibility of presenting it to the UK government in view of the G8 meeting at Gleneagles in July 2005. Thereafter the meeting received an extensive report on ethical and bio-ethical issues arising in the field of EU research policy; the need to create a Europe-wide multi-disciplinary network of specialist advisors who might assist the Episcopal Conferences and the COMECE was raised by the secretariat once again. In a series of further reports on the work of the secretariat staff members reported inter alia on: the COMECE summer university, Smolenice, Slovakia ; the Marty report (Euthanasia) at the Council of Europe.

1.4. AISBL: Association des Episcopats de la C.E.

- 1.4.1. The Bishop members of COMECE, each a delegate of his episcopate, are ex officio members of the Association des Episcopats de la Communauté Européenne, Association internationale sans but lucrative, (AISBL), under Belgian law, the legal figure of COMECE.
- 1.4.2. In accordance with the Statutes and as in former years, a meeting of the Conseil d'Administration took place on 18 November; the Assemblée Générale was held on 19 November 2004.

1.5. THE SECRETARIAT

- 1.5.1. All members of the staff were involved in preparing and achieving the activities and events described in this report.
- 1.5.2. 1.5.2. Staff meetings were held regularly in order to execute the decisions of the Plenary meetings, to prepare the forthcoming Plenary meetings, to plan the ongoing work of the secretariat, particularly in regard to the European pilgrimage, the Santiago congress and to provide for exchange of information between staff members.
- 1.5.3. John Coughlan moved to work at the Academy of European Law, Trier in October. He married Isabel da Costa in Lisbon on Saturday 4 September. Wishing to establish their home in

Luxembourg, the offer of a job in Trier was irresistible. John had worked at the COMECE secretariat since August 2000 as public relations officer with particular responsibility for developing relations with the media. During his years of outstanding service he edited the monthly review, *Europe Infos*, directed the Working Group on Media Policy and the Information Society and co-ordinated an ad hoc Working Group on Security and Defence issues. He played a key role in the organisation of many of the COMECE initiatives during his years of service. COMECE records its appreciation and gratitude to him for his creativity, his dedication to the mission of COMECE, and for his outstanding professional service.

- 1.5.4. The secretariat was assisted throughout the year by voluntary interns: Aleksandra Hebda, Poland, October 03 - September 04; Johannes Bollmann, Lübeck, Germany, 26 - 30 January; Anna Echterhoff, Münster, Germany, 8 March - 2 April; Hans-Peter Ruedl, Italy, South Tirol, 5 May - 25 June; Loup Bommier, Paris, France, 5-16 March; Katharina Ludwig, Mainz, Germany, 30 August – 6 October; Philipp Wehler, Passau, Germany, 30 August – 24 September; Manuel Meyer, Kiel, Germany, 27 September – 22 October; Marc de Geyer, Rennes, France, 25 October – 23 December.

1.6. COMMISSIONS AND WORKING GROUPS

- 1.6.1. The **Commission for Legal Affairs** met on 18 March and on 28 October. Each meeting included a report on legal issues of current concern to the Church in the Member States represented. Mr. N. White of the Permanent Representation of Ireland to the EU gave an update on the work of the Intergovernmental Conference to advance the Constitutional Treaty to the March meeting. Mr. K. Soukup, a member of the cabinet of Commissioner Mario Monti, addressed the meeting on developments regarding services of general social interest. The members of the Commission appraised him of the specific nature of services provided by the Churches and their agencies, pointing out the need to take this into consideration in any future EU policy developments. Other issues addressed at this sitting were: the Commission proposal for a revision of the directive on VAT (2004/15/EC), the state of play at the Council of Ministers; the Commission communication on to the organisation of working time – the review of Directive 93/104/EC – and the Commission Consultation operative until March 31; the Directive on free movement of citizens and their families (2001/111/(COD)); a Commission proposal for a Directive on equality of treatment for men and women in access to goods and services (COM 2003/657 – C5-0654/2003 – 2003/265(CNS)); a Commission consultation to be launched in April 2004 in view of a strategy against discrimination – planning Church input. The meeting of 28 October began with reports of legal issues of interest in the Member States represented. Thereafter M. R. Maes, European Commission, Directorate General, Employment and Social Affairs, addressed the group on the preparation of a Communication on social services, on a questionnaire sent by the Commission to the member state governments. After an informative and useful exchange with M. Maes on this subject, the meeting focused on a series of issues then being monitored by the COMECE secretariat. Chief among them were: “The Hague Programme”, the new multi-annual programme strengthening freedom, security and justice in the EU (JAI 370, 13302/04); the Communication on maintenance obligations (COM (2004) 254 final) and its consequences for the protection of the family; green paper on non-discrimination (COM (2004) 379 final); a legislative proposal on equal access for men and women to goods and services (COM(2003) 657). Thereafter on the basis of input made by M. Clemens Ladenburger, Legal Service, European Commission the members of the Commission evaluated the result of the IGC (CIG 87/1/04REV1) and explored with him modalities for the realisation of the dialogue between the EU and the Churches as foreseen by Art.I-52. Reports on the work of the Commission were given to the Plenary meetings.

- 1.6.2. The **Commission for Social Affairs**, chaired by Bishop Adrianus van Luyn, met on 26-27 March. The subject for this meeting was: *Role and Responsibility of Companies in Europe, Reflecting on the ethics of companies in the light of recent scandals new challenges for European society*. The proceedings were opened with two thought-provoking presentations: the first by Prof. Feruccio Marzano (University of Rome) on the Parmalat scandal, the second by drs. Huib Klamer, secretary of the NCW, The Hague, who gave an analysis of the Ahold scandal. The presentations provoked a rich discussion among the members. Thereafter Mr. J. Richter, cabinet of Commissioner Fritz Bolkestein, responsible for the single market, spoke on European Commission initiatives to promote improved corporate governance. On the second day Mr. D. White, Director, European Commission Directorate for Enterprise Policy, spoke on EU measures to promote small and medium-sized enterprises. Further inputs were received from Mr. Alain Heilbrunn, Total-Elf offices, Brussels, and from Mrs. Linse, Daimler-Chrysler offices, Brussels on the social responsibility of companies and from M. Michel Tissier (Vigeo) on social notation for companies. Thereafter Commission members presented recently published documents: *das Soziale neu Denken*, a discussion paper of the German Bishops' Conference; *Taxation for the Common Good*, a statement of the Episcopal Conference of England and Wales; *A European Family strategy* – a COMECE proposal to complement the Lisbon strategy. The secretary of the Social Affairs Commission elaborated on a detailed programme for a seminar on the theme: *Enabling Change in solidarity and justice – church contributions to the partnerships for change in the Lisbon strategy* with representatives of the Dutch Presidency and other interested parties. Through lectures and a number of workshops it would have explored such issues as the renewal of the European social and economic model, social policy reform, issues in finance, taxation and governance. Unfortunately factors beyond the control of the COMECE secretariat prevented its realisation. The Commission was also associated with the preparation of the document, *Solidarity is the Soul of the European Union*. That document underlines (i) that solidarity is a constitutive element of the EU and its treaties, (ii) the need to expand and deepen solidarity in the EU through an open but limited number of Member States, (iii) to extend solidarity to countries and regions of the world not part of the EU, (iv) the need to give concrete form to solidarity in the negotiations on the EU financial perspectives 2007-2013.
- 1.6.3. The **Reflection Group on Bio-ethical Research** met on 27 February. The meeting opened with an exchange on current issues at stake in the field on national and EU levels. It concentrated on the *"Ethical and cultural aspects of genetic testing"* and prepared an opinion on the subject. The group has chosen this topic after having elaborated comments on an opinion of the European Group on Ethics (EGE) of the European Commission on *"Ethical aspects of genetic testing in the workplace"* (EGE, opinion no. 18). Since this opinion only dealt with ethical issues of genetic testing in the context of employment, the Reflection Group considered it useful to produce a broader-based commentary on the ethical issues involved in genetic testing. Whilst a second meeting scheduled for October was cancelled at the last moment, intensive work was carried out by the secretariat throughout the year in respect of ethical issues arising in the field of European research policy. Apart from initiatives outlined elsewhere in this report, the secretariat was represented at various conferences, inter alia: *"Modern Biology and Visions of Humanity"*, 22-23 March in Genoa; a European stakeholders' and citizens' conference on Ethical, legal and social aspects of genetic testing – *"Human genetic testing: what implications?"*, 6-7 May in Brussels; *"Converging technologies for a Diverse Europe"*, organised by DG Research of the European Commission, 14-15 September in Brussels; *"Images of Science"*, organised by the Dutch Presidency, 6-7 December, Amsterdam. Reports on work carried out in this field were given to the Plenary meetings. The secretariats of the Bishops' Conferences in the Member States were kept abreast of developments via circular letters.

- 1.6.4. The **Working Group on the Information Society, Communications and Media Policy** met on 4 March and on 3 November. The March meeting opened with an update on the following: (i) the World Summit on the Information Society, (ii) recent developments in EU policy, (iii) recent developments at the Council of Europe, (iv) information on the work and interrelationship of Catholic organisations dealing with media issues – PCSC, CEEM, Signis-Europe. Thereafter work was continued on the Directive, Television without frontiers: (i) the results of the European Commission’s public consultation were reviewed and assessed, (ii) the European Commission’s Communication (Dec. 2003) was analysed. Thereafter the members of the Working Group addressed the mid-term review of the e-Europe 2005 initiative and prepared discussion points for a meeting with Mr. K. Ducatel, European Commission, DG Information Society. The second meeting of this Working Group was held on 3 November. The meeting continued the work of the March meeting on the review of e-Europe and then proceeded to an examination of Commissioner Reding’s priorities for a European Audiovisual Policy. It also worked on issues related to the protection of minors in the information society. As in recent years, between the meetings members of the Working Group have closely monitored developments in regard to public broadcasting, making contributions and contacting EU personnel on this subject, when necessary.
- 1.6.5. The **COMECE Platform on Migration issues** brings together specialists from the Bishops’ Conferences and representatives of the Brussels-based Catholic organisations working on migration, asylum and refugee issues. An ecumenical dimension has also been given to this platform through the presence of a representative of the Churches Commission for Migration in Europe (CCME). A meeting was held on 19 January, beginning with an exchange of information on current work pursued by the members and their respective organisations. M. Joaquim Nunes de Almeida, a member of the cabinet of Commissioner Vitorino (JAI), gave presentations on the following: (i) Communication on the final Tampere scoreboard and future orientations (Working Programme 2004/JAI/011); (ii) a study on how legal immigration policy instruments can contribute to developing the fight against illegal immigration (Working Programme 2004/JAI/044); (iii) the European refugee fund. Thereafter Mr. W. O’Dwyer, Permanent Representation of Ireland, outlined the priorities of the Irish Presidency in the JAI sector and in respect of migration policy in particular. In the light of these presentations the meeting then worked on commentaries and evaluations developed and submitted by the Churches and Christian organisations on a series of European Commission Communications: (i) Communication towards more accessible, equitable and managed asylum systems (COM(2003) 315 final); Communication on illegal immigration, smuggling and trafficking of human beings, external borders and the return of illegal residents (COM (2003) 323 final); Communication on immigration, integration and employment (COM(2003) 336 final).
- 1.6.6 The **Group Foi Chrétienne et Construction Européenne** met in Paris, 08-10 January, to receive, analyse and assess the comments submitted as a result of the consultation process – carried out in 2003 - on the first version of the document “*Let us open our hearts*”, produced by the group under the chairmanship of the COMECE Vice-President, Archbishop H.Simon. This meeting sought to identify the core issues raised in the comments received, to order them thematically and to determine broad lines for the further development of the document, taking into account that it would constitute the point of departure for the European congress, *European Union: Hope and Responsibility, Theological Readings of the evolution of a united Europe*, to be held in Salamanca on 21-23 April. Themes for the workshops to engage participants at this congress were identified from the comments received.

The members of the group are : Archbishop Hippolyte Simon, Vice-President of COMECE, Dr. L. Diotallevi, Professor at the University of Rome III; Fr. Th. Eggenesperger, o.p., Director of the

Dominican Network, ESPACES; Dr. O. Gonzalez de Cardedal, Professor of Theology, Salamanca; Dr. M. Kranitz, Professor of Theology at the Catholic University of Budapest; Dr. M-H. Lavianne, Director of the Institute of Theology, Catholic University of Lille; Professor Dr. D.A.A. Loose; Rev. Dr. P. Marzukiewicz, Professor of Political Science, Warsaw; Dr. T. O'Connor, Professor of Modern History, Maynooth; Dr. U. Sander, St. Georgen/ Herder Korrespondenz; Dr. J. Soskice, Professor of Theology, Jesus College, Cambridge; drs. S. J. M. Waanders, Radboud Foundation, Netherlands, and S. Lunte and N. Treanor from the COMECE secretariat.

In the second half of the year Archbishop Simon invested significant time and work in elaborating the document. To this end a meeting of some members of the Working Group took place at the COMECE secretariat on 8 September in order to prepare a developed version for the COMECE autumn plenary. In the Christmas period Archbishop Simon re-worked the document further, inserting a new section taking account of ecclesial experience in central and eastern Europe and developing the third section of the original document.

- 1.6.7 A number of working sessions with the two **Financial Advisers** assisted the Secretary General in managing the annual budget and preparing the accounts for the Plenary meeting. As in the second half of 2003, the Secretary General continued the search for a more spacious office building for the secretariat, in consultation with the President and the Executive Committee.
- 1.6.6. In preparing and carrying forward the agendas of the Working Groups, the secretaries and staff members of the secretariat maintained contact with other Church-linked offices in Brussels, especially with CARITAS, CIDSE, ESPACES, OCIPE, Justice and Peace, Pax Christi International. They kept close contact with offices of the other Churches working in the same policy areas. They also exchanged information with the officials of the EU institutions and with relevant policy centres and think-tanks.

2. COMECE AND THE EUROPEAN UNION

2.1. Encounter and Witness

- 2.1.1. The autumn Plenary meeting involved direct exchange between the Bishops members of COMECE and officials of the EU institutions. In the course of the year further contacts with European civil servants were made by the President, by members of the secretariat and on occasion by members of the Working Groups. The COMECE secretariat was contacted on occasion by officials of the institutions and by Members of the European Parliament in search of a Church viewpoint or input on EU policy matters.
- 2.1.2. The COMECE European pilgrimage to Santiago de Compostela, 17-21 April, marked the high-point of COMECE's activities in 2004. At the invitation of COMECE, almost three hundred Europeans from - Albania, Austria, Belgium, Croatia, Czech Republic, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Sweden, Slovak Republic, Spain, the United Kingdom (England, Wales, Scotland, and Northern Ireland), Switzerland, and the Holy See - joined this pilgrimage. They took part in this event, itself an extraordinary initiative in COMECE's twenty four year history, in order to give thanks to God for the imminent and single greatest enlargement in the history of the EU so far, and to pray for the future of Europe as the IGC moved towards completing the Constitutional Treaty.

The *Appeal* issued by COMECE to announce the event, was signed by the Bishop members of COMECE. It was also co-signed by Romano Prodi, then President of the European Commission, by Pat Cox, then President of the European Parliament, and by Bertie Ahern, Taoiseach/Prime Minister of Ireland and President-in-office of the European Council (January - June 2004).

Ensuring a representative group of pilgrims, to reflect the rich diversity of the membership Christ's Church, was a priority that was happily achieved. The Episcopal Conferences were invited to nominate a national delegation. The size of each delegation varied according to criteria that sought to reflect the mosaic of the ecclesial community in each country. Religious orders and congregations, Catholic organisations, laity groups and new movements were also invited to nominate representatives. Politicians and civil servants at both national and European level were invited to participate. In response to the invitation issued by COMECE to the Conference of European Churches (CEC), which sought to ensure an ecumenical quality for this pilgrimage, the CEC nominated participant pilgrims representing the Anglican, Reformed and Orthodox traditions.

Saturday morning 17 April saw pilgrims arrive in Madrid from all corners of Europe and converge on the offices of the secretariat of the Spanish Bishops' Conference which graciously offered its premises as a venue for gathering, registration and distribution of documentation. With luggage, banners, documents, texts in various languages and pilgrims safely loaded on board six buses, the convoy set out for the Benedictine abbey of Santo Domingo de Silos, where the choir, established from among the pilgrims, had been rehearsing under the direction of Fr. Gouzes, o.p. for some days. There, in its beautiful cloister, in front of the famous bas relief sculpture of the Emmaus scene, where Jesus is represented as a medieval pilgrim, Bishop Adrianus van Luyn, Vice President of COMECE, launched the pilgrimage. He called the assembled pilgrims to repeat in the next few days the "spiritual adventure of the disciples on the Walk to Emmaus". His closing words,

"May our hearts burn within us so that on leaving Compostela – our Emmaus in these few days – we may turn with new courage towards the Jerusalem of the Christian communities of our dioceses, to testify in our continent to Jesus Christ alive in his Church, source of hope for Europe",

also marked this pilgrimage as a response to the post-synodal Apostolic Exhortation, *Ecclesia in Europa*. After Vespers, presided by the Abbot, the first walk took pilgrims to a venue, a short distance from the abbey, where they watched a video message from R. Prodi, President of the European Commission and were addressed by Mr. Iñigo Mendez de Vigo, member of the European Parliament, who was also a member of the Presidium of the Convention on the future of Europe. Both politicians stressed the contribution of Christianity to Europe and the importance of citizenship inspired by Christian faith for the future of European society.

Then it was onwards to Burgos. The morrow, Sunday, began with concelebrated Mass in the splendid chapel of Santa Tecla in Burgos cathedral presided by Archbishop Manuel Monteiro de Castro, Apostolic Nuncio in Spain who together with Archbishop Faustino Sainz Muñoz, Apostolic Nuncio to the European Communities, participated in the pilgrimage as representatives of His Holiness Pope John Paul II. At the beginning of Mass, transmitted live in several European countries by *le Jour de Seigneur*, the congregation of pilgrims was addressed by the local Archbishop, Francisco Gil Hellin. As at Mass throughout the entire pilgrimage, after Communion an extract was read from the Charta Ecumenica, a gesture underlining the ecumenical quality of the pilgrimage and the importance of Christian ecumenical witness in the

new Europe. After Mass the buses were regained in sweeping rain and they made forthwith for Castrojeriz. Once fortified by a picnic lunch, pilgrims ascended from Castrojeriz on foot to the Meseta plateau and then walked against a strong wind and in heavenly sunshine to Itero del Castillo. There Sr. Madeleine Fredell o.p. from Sweden led us in prayer and reflection. The waiting buses then took us to León for Evening Prayer in the Real Colegiata Basílica de San Isidoro, presided by the Finnish Lutheran Bishop Erik Vikström. Afterwards a memorable address was delivered by Minister of State Mary Hanafin, T. D. on behalf of the Irish Presidency of the European Union.

On Monday morning Bishop Julián López Martín presided concelebrated Mass in the cathedral's ethereal light, filtered by the imposing walls of stained-glass windows. Snow and freezing conditions on the heights of Cruz de Ferro dictated a rapid change of route to Astorga, where Bishop Camilo Lorenzo Iglesias received us in the cathedral for midday prayer led by Baroness Hilde Kieboom, St. Egidio, Belgium. Here too Bishop Antons Justs, of the diocese of Jelgava, Latvia, gave a striking testimony, telling of the trials and suffering under Communism. It reminded us that this era, - with its betrayal of nations by other nations, its crushing of human freedom and its martyrs - remains an indelible part of a common European heritage. After a picnic lunch in the local seminary, pilgrims took again to the *camino*; as always on these days, some praying as they walked, some telling the Rosary beads, others sharing experiences and thoughts, others walking alone in silence. Later in the evening the buses covered the remaining kilometers to Ponferrada, where in the Basilica of Santa Maria de la Encina, the director of the Representation of the Greek Orthodox Church to the European Union, Bishop Athanasios of Achaia, presided Evening Prayer and preached. Pilgrims then walked through the narrow streets, crossed the pleasant plaza mayor to the Bergidum theatre to hear to an address, a testimony, by Mr. Alojz Peterle, then an observer to the European Parliament, former Prime Minister of Slovenia and representative of the acceding countries of central and eastern Europe in the Presidium of the European Convention.

The fourth day, Tuesday, 20 April, followed the same structure: concelebrated Mass, presided by Bishop Amédée Grab (Chur, Switzerland and President of CCEE) in Villafranca del Bierzo, midday prayer led by Sr. Barbara Manasterka, Poland, in the Church at Cebreiro, walking a stretch of the *camino* and then by bus to our destination, Santiago. Once lodged, pilgrims made their way to the Cathedral, where they were led through the Holy Door by Archbishop Barrio Barrio, Bishop Homeyer and Archbishop F. Sainz Muñoz to the strains of the Santiago pilgrim hymn, *Te nostra laetis laudibus*, then to join in Evening Prayer led by a fellow pilgrim Bishop López Lozano, Anglican Bishop of Madrid. As on previous evenings the local authorities offered a reception, in this case by President Manuel Fraga and the Xunta of Galicia. President Fraga addressed the pilgrims in the Hostal de los Reyes Católicos and emphasised how the Christian heritage had shaped Europe. Thanking him, Bishop Homeyer spoke inter alia of how the pilgrim figure fused mobility, a facet of contemporary existence, with quest for meaning. Next morning the pilgrims walked the final paces to the Cathedral for the Eucharist, presided by the local Archbishop, and would celebrate arrival at the Apostle's tomb and dismissal to serve the kingdom of God in Europe, its countries, dioceses and parishes. Having worshipped for a final time together and stood in admiration, if not awe, of the incensing *botafumeiro*, the pilgrims made their way to the Seminario Mayor for a last lunch, before setting their sights for their homelands.

COMECE records its thanks to Archbishop Julián Barrio Barrio and the Church in Santiago de Compostela and all Bishops, the secretariat of the Spanish Bishops' Conference, all diocesan and civil authorities, the Viloría travel agency, and all who helped in both preparing and carrying through the pilgrimage.

- 2.1.3. After the European pilgrimage the European congress, *The European Union: Hope and Responsibility, Theological Readings of the evolution of a united Europe* was held in Santiago de Compostela on 21-23 April (described in no.1.3.1 above). As the opening part of the COMECE Spring Plenary meeting it constituted a theological focal moment when - on the basis of decades of COMECE experience of liaison with the political process of shaping Europe and in the light of the document "*Let us open our hearts*" - the Bishop members of COMECE, theologians, religious, some politicians, civil servants and women and men from various academic disciplines sought to further develop a theological analysis of the European project. The proceedings of this congress were published by the year's end. In due course, most likely in 2005, the final version of "*Let us open our hearts*" will be published. It should serve as a unique tool to promote theological reflection and a sense of Christian citizenship of the new Europe.
- 2.1.4. In accordance with practice since 1994, COMECE together with the Commission for Church and Society (CSC) of the Conference of European Churches (CEC) requested a meeting on their own behalf and on behalf of the Churches with the Presidency of the EU – Ireland (January to June) and the Netherlands (July to December). The meeting with the Irish Presidency took place on 11 March in Dublin. A delegation of Church representatives met the Taoiseach/Prime Minister and civil servants. The representatives of the Churches were: Bishop J. Duffy, Bishop of Clogher and delegate of the Irish Bishops' Conference to COMECE, Rev. Dr. Brian Flynn, Irish Bishops' Conference, Dr. Hugh Connolly, Mr. George McCullough, Presbyterian Church in Ireland, Dr. Kenneth Milne, Church of Ireland, Rev. Peter Pavlovic, Commission for Church and Society CEC, Rev. Matthew Ross, also CSC of CEC, Ms. Sabine von Zanthier, office of the Evangelical Church in Germany, Brussels. Under the first item of the agenda, the Intergovernmental Conference, the Taoiseach Mr. B. Ahern, briefly recalled the IGC of 12-13 December 2003, mentioned that some 22 points were left outstanding, and indicated that in the meantime he had consulted with the governments of the 25. Among the issues outstanding he underlined: (i) the weighting of votes in the Council, (ii) qualified majority voting in certain fields – e.g. taxation, Justice and Home Affairs. (iii) one Commissioner per Member State. Reacting to the interventions of members of the delegation from the Churches elucidating the importance of Article I-51 (later re-numbered I-52) of the draft Constitutional Treaty, the Taoiseach considered that this Article was secure. On the question of a reference to the Christian heritage in the Preamble, he was less optimistic. Leaving the text as it stands was, he said, the compromise mooted in the end by the Italian Presidency. Recalling that there were many formulations proposed which included references to the Christian heritage, he mentioned that some countries were opposed, whilst France insisted that any reference to Christianity in the preamble should be balanced by including the term "*licit*". The unacceptability of the latter term in a European Constitutional Treaty for countries with Church/State relations and constitutional traditions different to that prevailing in France (with the exception of Alsace-Lorraine and some overseas territories) was underlined by representatives of the Churches. In regard to the second point on the agenda, Enlargement and the Future of the EU, the Taoiseach recalled the unprecedented scale and momentous quality of the imminent admission of ten new Member States to the EU on 1 May 2004. Members of the Churches' delegation stressed the importance of political willingness to exercise solidarity in the forthcoming revision of the EU financial perspectives for the period 2007-2013. Reference was made to a forthcoming COMECE paper on this subject. In respect of the third agenda point, the EU and inter-religious dialogue, the Churches' delegation welcomed initiatives taken in recent years by the EU institutions to participate in discussions with the various religious traditions on key issues in European public policy-making: e.g., the Declaration on Inter-Faith Dialogue, adopted

by the EU Justice and Home Affairs Ministers on 28 November 2003 (under the Italian Presidency); the seminar *Europe against Anti-Semitism for a Union of Diversity*, organised by the European Commission, Brussels, 19 February 2004. The Taoiseach noted the petition that the Churches' European agencies be informed of such initiatives in advance and involved in identifying representative participants in such events. In the discussion on the fourth subject on the agenda, the EU's Lisbon Strategy (which aims to make the EU the most competitive region in the world by 2010), the representatives of the Churches emphasised the need to address poverty in Europe and the social dimension in the mid-term review of the process. A brief presentation was given of the content and proposals of COMECE's *A Family Strategy for the European Union: An Encouragement to make the family an EU priority* (published a few days later in Brussels). The Taoiseach expressed interest in the document's content and methodology, indicating he would pass it on to Ministries concerned.

A meeting with the Dutch presidency took place in The Hague on 11 October. The Prime Minister Mr. Balkenende had agreed to meet the Churches but was hospitalised at the time. The deputy-Prime Minister and Minister for Finance, Mr. Gerrit Zalm received the delegation. The Churches were represented by Bishop A. van Luyn, Bishop of Rotterdam and Vice-President of COMECE, Rev. Ineke Bakker, General Secretary of the Council of churches in the Netherlands, Fr. E.J.J. Kimmann, s.j., General Secretary of the Dutch Bishops' Conference, the General Secretaries of Dutch Churches' contact group with the government, Dr. S. van Bijsterveld and Mr. J.L.W. Zuijdwijk, Rev. R. Noll, Director of the Commission for Church and Society of the CEC and the Secretary General of COMECE. An extensive discussion took place on the first item on the agenda, the debate on norms and values and its import for Europe. This was linked by an input from COMECE which linked this debate to the mid-term review of the Lisbon strategy. Mr. Zalm engaged in a lively discussion on this linkage and encouraged the Churches to explore this subject further in view of a specific contribution they could make to an EU priority issue. A long discussion took place on the issue of Turkey and the decision to be taken at the forthcoming Council meeting in December. The Church delegation presented their position on human rights and religious freedom and various studies and documentation detailing unresolved issues, showing that Turkey had not met the Copenhagen criteria. Other issues discussed were: under enlargement of the EU, the progress of Bulgaria and Romania and particular problems in both countries; developments in the Justice, internal affairs and security domain; the nature and role of inter-religious dialogue and its relationship to the pursuit of policy favouring security. Migration and asylum issues constituted a further point on the agenda. Issues related to the integration of migrants, the Draft Directive on Asylum Procedures, the co-operation of some EU governments on returning refugees via Euro Charter flights were addressed. A document containing 12 recommendations, developed jointly by Church and Christian organisations (COMECE, CCME, ICMC, JRS, QCEA) was given to the Minister and the six civil servants from different Ministries who attended.

- 2.1.5. In the context of their daily work and in the course of preparing for the meetings of the Commissions and Working Groups, staff members were in regular contact with the European Commission, its cabinets and Directorates General, with staff and members of the European Parliament and with services of the Council of Ministers. The COMECE press officer and journalist followed the daily Press Conferences at the European Commission. COMECE documents were submitted to appropriate officials and services. Throughout the year numerous officials of the EU institutions visited the secretariat for discussions, briefing sessions and to address visiting groups as well as COMECE Commissions and Working Groups.
- 2.1.6. Close working relations were maintained with the Group of Political Advisers (GOPA) to the President of the European Commission.

- 2.1.7. Staff members took part in the Briefing sessions organised by the Group of Political Advisers (GOPA) for the Church-linked offices in Brussels after the meetings of the European Council.
- 2.1.8. Rev. J. Raber (Metz) followed the Plenary sessions of the European Parliament in Strasbourg. The proceedings of the EP committees pertinent to the COMECE Working Groups were monitored by staff members. There were several meetings with Members of the European Parliament and with officials both in the COMECE secretariat and in the European Parliament.
- 2.1.9. The staff of the secretariat liaised with officials of the Permanent Representations of the Member States and the Missions of the candidate countries. Officials of various Representations addressed meetings of the COMECE Working Groups and attended other meetings at the secretariat.
- 2.1.10. Contacts were maintained with offices representing the regions of the Member States. Staff members participated in breakfast meetings, seminars and consultations organised by policy centres, in particular by the European Policy Centre (EPC) and by the Centre for European Policy Studies (CEPS).

2.2. INPUT TO THE EUROPEAN UNION

- 2.2.1. On 21 June COMECE together with the Commission for Church and Society (CSC) of the CEC and the Group of Political Advisers to the President of the European Commission (GOPA), organised a dialogue seminar entitled, *From a "Fortress Europe" to a comprehensive EU asylum and migration policy*. After an introduction by Mr. Ricardo Levi, then Director of the GOPA, the first session dealt with global migration developments. Dr. Maria Papantoniou, Orthodox Church of Greece, Sr. Joan Roddy, Refugee Project, Columba Centre, Ireland, and Mr. Peter Bosch, European Commission, DG Justice and Home Affairs provided valuable input. The second session dealt with the socio-economic and demographic factors affecting migration within the 25 Member States of the EU. Commissioner Jan Figel opened this session. Responses from the Churches were made by Fr. Wojciech Lazewski, Caritas Poland, and by Fr. Christian Popescu, Orthodox Church in the Czech lands and Slovakia. A further session examined the workings of the EU decision-making processes in matters of migration and asylum policy. Ms. Natacha Scriban, advisor to the EPP group in the European Parliament (EP) and Mr. Jean Luc Robert, a policy adviser of the Group of the Greens in the EP opened this working session. Comments and responses on the basis of the experience of the Churches' work in this arena were given by Mr. George Joseph, Caritas Sweden and by Dr. Annemarie Dupré, CCME. A final session addressed future challenges and perspectives for EU migration policy. The discussion was opened by Ms. Elena Saraceno, (GOPA) and by Mr. Joel van Andel for the then forthcoming Dutch Presidency of the EU. Responses were given by Ms. Doris Peschke, General Secretary CCME and by Mr. Peter Verhaeghe, Caritas Europe.
- 2.2.2. A seminar, *Religious Education – a Contribution to European Citizenship* was co-organised with the European Commission Directorate General, Education and Culture (EAC) on 24 September 2004. This event, prepared by the COMECE secretariat with officials of the Directorate General, was also a co-operative venture with the CSC of CEC. The proceedings were opened by the Commissioner for Education and Culture, Viviane Reding. Mrs. Cécile le Clercq, DG EAC, gave a presentation on initiatives launched by the DG to promote an Active European Citizenship. This was followed by a debate on the basis of further contributions from Profs. Biesinger and

Schweitzer, Tübingen. Thereafter Mr. A. Kosmopoulos, DG EAC, explored ethical and religious dimensions to the programme on Active European Citizenship. In the second part of the seminar Mr. Adam Pokorny, DG EAC outlined the objectives and content of new programmes in education and Mr. Simon Jones, DG EAC presented current initiatives and plans in the sector of education and life-long learning. Almost thirty specialists from the Churches from several Member States took part in this seminar. As a follow-up to this event COMECE will maintain close contact with officials of DG EAC and make input to the preparation of the forthcoming programme on Active European Citizenship, 2007-2013.

- 2.2.3. The COMECE document, *A Family Strategy for the European Union, An Encouragement to make family an EU priority*, was distributed to the EU institutions and to the appropriate political authorities in the Member States, and also to the Irish Presidency of the EU.
- 2.2.4. Several members of the COMECE gave interviews in the course of the year expressing the Church's interest in and support for the work of the IGC, explaining the meaning of Article I-52 and discussing the proposal to include a reference to the Christian heritage in the preamble to the Constitutional Treaty. On this latter subject the President wrote to the Presidents-in-office of the Council, the Prime Ministers of Ireland and of the Netherlands.
- 2.2.5. The work of the Commission for **Legal Affairs** provided a focus for preparing input to the relevant EU institutions and civil servants on a range of draft policy issues (c.f. 1.6.1 above). The staff of the secretariat maintained contact with EU civil servants on pertinent policy issues throughout the year. Among submissions made to the European Commission were: responses and commentaries on the Green Paper on Equality and Non-Discrimination in an enlarged EU, (COM (2004), 379), dated 28 May, submitted on 10 September; response to the European Commission Green Paper on Maintenance Obligations, (COM (2004), 254 final), submitted on 8 October.
- 2.2.6. Significant input was made by the members of the Commission for **Social Affairs** through their exchanges and discussions with EU officials and others involved with the shaping of EU policy. The documents produced on the basis of the work carried out by the Commission (c.f.1.6.2 above) were submitted to the appropriate officials of the EU.
- 2.2.7. The **Global Governance Assessment 2004** (COMECE Documentation, Report No.7) was received by the autumn Plenary meeting. After publication it was distributed to personnel of the EU institutions and to other interested agencies. Positive reactions were received from EU officials, underlining its quality, the unique character of the panorama it provides of developments and advances in international organisations.
- 2.2.8. Throughout the year several submissions were made in respect of **migration and asylum policy**: in January comments on the Communication on the development of a common policy on illegal immigration, smuggling and trafficking of human beings, external borders and return of illegal residents COM (2003) final; in April on the Communication from the European Commission on Immigration, Integration and Employment, COM (2003) 336 final; in August on the Communication from the Commission on creating an area of freedom, security and justice, (COM (2004) 401, final); in September on the Commission Communication the links between legal and illegal migration, (COM (2004) 412 final); in October a position paper, *Towards a Balanced Approach in EU Migration and Asylum Policy* (12 Recommendations) was submitted to the JHA-Council in preparation for the European Council on 5 November; in December comments were submitted on the Commission's Communication, *Improving Access to Durable*

Solutions”, on the managed entry in the EU of persons in need of international protection and the enhancement of the protection capacity of the regions of origin, (COM (2004) 410 final).

- 2.2.9. In the field of **Human Rights** inter alia the following commentaries, accompanied by proposals for amendments to legislative texts, were made by the secretariat in the course of 2004: in view of the EP Report on Population and Development : ten years after Cairo, 2003/2133 (INI) on 28 February; with respect to the Report on Human Rights in the World, (2003) 2003/2005 (INI) on 3 March; in view of the Report on the situation of Fundamental Human Rights in the EU (2003), 2003/2006 (INI) on 31 March.
- 2.2.10. Written and oral contributions were made by staff members to officials of the EU institutions on issues pertaining to inter-religious dialogue, matters pertaining to religious freedom and Human Rights issues.
- 2.2.11. In co-operation with the Delegation of the Holy See to the Council of Europe the COMECE secretariat monitored developments in the Council of Europe regarding the Marty draft resolution on Euthanasia. In November and December amendments were elaborated and submitted to members of the Social Affairs Committee of Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe.

3. PROMOTING DEBATE BETWEEN CHURCH, OFFICIALS OF THE EUROPEAN UNION AND SOCIETY

- 3.1. Throughout the year the secretariat continued its tradition of inviting officials of the EU institutions, Members of the European Parliament and persons engaged in the process of European integration to working breakfasts and lunches to discuss EU policy issues pertinent to COMECE’s concerns.
- 3.2. As in previous years and at the request of the Group of the European Peoples’ Party in the European Parliament, once a month the COMECE secretariat received a group of *stagiaires/interns* from the Christian Democratic movements in central and eastern European countries. During these meetings these young men and women, many of them likely to become future civil servants and politicians in their respective countries, are briefed on COMECE’s work and on the Church’s engagement in the process of European construction.
- 3.3. Staff members maintained and developed contacts with think-tanks, political foundations and offices working on EU issues. They also took part in several seminars organised by think-tanks and foundations, particularly in the two weekend seminars organised by the Konrad Adenauer Foundation, the Hans Seidl Foundation and the European Policy Centre (EPC).
- 3.4. The series of evening lectures, discussions and receptions was continued, even if reduced in number. One took place within the context of the autumn plenary, on 18 November, entitled *The European Union and Turkey* (c.f. 1.3.3. above). Delivered to a diverse audience of c. 120 persons, this soirée gave rise to a lively public debate just some weeks before the Council decision on Turkey. On 29 November the secretariat hosted and co-organised, with the Federation of Catholic Family Associations in Europe, an evening debate entitled *Un Pacte familial pour l’UE – une nécessité*.

4. INFORMATION SERVICE, PUBLICATIONS, LECTURES

- 4.1. The monthly review, *Europe-Infos*, produced in co-operation with the Jesuit Office OCIFE, was published in French, English, German, Spanish and Polish. An editorial board made up of members of the COMECE and OCIFE secretariats and of EU civil servants met monthly to plan the forthcoming issues. The review was distributed to all Bishops in the Member States of the European Union, in the candidate countries of central and eastern Europe, to the services of Bishops' Conferences and to subscribers
- 4.2. The analyses and reports of the COMECE Working Groups were sent to the appropriate services of the Bishops Conferences. Circular letters were sent to the Bishops members and to the secretariats of the Bishops' Conferences in regard to draft EU policy.
- 4.3. Four texts were published in the COMECE series in the course of the year: *A Family Strategy for the European Union, An Encouragement to make the family an EU priority*, in March; *Solidarity is the Soul of the European Union*, in April; the acta of the congress, *Union Européenne: Espérance et Responsabilité, Lectures théologiques de Devenir de l'Europe Unie*, December; the Global Governance Assessment 2004, *Time to Keep our Promises* at the year's end.
- 4.3. Articles were written by staff members for the monthly review. Staff members published articles in reviews, publications and in newspapers in various countries. Lectures were given at conferences organised by Bishops' Conferences, universities and academic institutes on the work of COMECE and on issues pertaining to EU policy.
- 4.4. On invitation and as their responsibilities in Brussels permitted, staff members took part in and addressed congresses, seminars and study events throughout Europe. A selective overview of this aspect of the secretariat's work is reflected by the following: lecture to the Austrian Pastoral Study Day on the Church and the EU, Salzburg, 09.01; address on Issues in Bio-ethics at the European level, KHG, Dortmund, 21.01; address to the meeting of the CCEE-CEC Joint Committee, Opole, 30.01; presentation to study day on Europe for members of the Bishops' Conference of England and Wales, London, 03.02; participation and contribution to the meeting of CAHTEH (Commission ad hoc contre la traite des êtres humains) for Holy See, Strasbourg, 03-05.02; the lecture on Church and the EU: work and impact, Heligenstadt, 09.02; lecture, Social Europe and the Contribution of the Catholic Church, Heinrich-Pesch Haus, Ludwigshafen, 12.02; presentations on various political and legal issues to a group of post-graduate students from university of Münster, 19.02; lecture to clergy conference, Velehrad, 09.03; participation at the Essener Gespräche, issues in relations between Church and State, Essen, 15-16.03; lecture to Deanery (14) meeting, Vienna, 17.03; lecture to members of Austrian Franciscan province, Vienna, 18.03; participation and contribution to the conference, Modern biology and the Visions of Humanity, organised by the European Group on Life Sciences, Genoa, 22-23.03; presentation to Round Table on Religion and European integration, Unionstiftung, Saarbrücken, 26.03; lecture to study day for Social Advisers, diocese of Linz, Puchberg, 28.03; lecture on Priorities and work of COMECE, to branch of Semaines Sociales, Rennes, 02.04; presentation to study day on the Churches and Europe, Chevtogne, 28.04; participation in celebrations to mark the enlargement of the EU, Dublin Castle, 01.05; participation in meeting of Cellule Europe, secretariat of French Bishops' Conference, 03.05; lecture, the European Constitutional Process, a challenge for the Church, Fulda, 04.05; participation and contribution to a European stakeholders' and citizens' conference on the Ethical, legal and social aspects of genetic testing – the implications of human genetic testing, organised by the European Commission, Brussels, 6-7.05; participation and address to CISF

(Centro internazionale Studi Famiglia) conference on Family in European citizenship – a challenge in the enlarged Europe, Milan, 07-09.05; lecture on Turkey and the EU, Die Wolfsburg, Essen, 19.05; lecture on Church-State relations in France, Erfurt, 20.05; participation in Specialised Working session on Genetic testing and predictive medicine, Berlin, 26.05; participation and presentations to the symposium on inter-cultural and inter-religious dialogue, Brussels, 24-25.05; presentation on the Constitutional Treaty to trainee Anglican clergy, COMECE secretariat, Brussels, 23.05; lecture on a Family-friendly strategy for the EU, Dominican Centre, Rixensart, 26.05; presentations to delegation of Churches Together in Britain and Ireland, COMECE secretariat, Brussels, 08-09.06; presentations to study day for a group of Catholic Friends of secretariat of French Bishops' Conference, at COMECE secretariat, Brussels, 18.06; participation and presentations in Churches-EU dialogue seminar, Towards a comprehensive EU asylum and migration policy, Brussels, 21.06; lecture on Churches' Contribution to the Convention and the Constitution, visiting group from Institute of European Studies, Alcide de Gasperi, in COMECE secretariat, Brussels, 23.06; participation and contributions to the international Aspen conference, France, Lyons, 01-03.07; lecture, The role of the Church in the constitutional debate, university of Santander, 05.08; participation in OSCE conference on tolerance and the fight against racism, xenophobia and discrimination, Brussels, 13-14.09; address evaluating the Tampere programme, to CCEE meeting of Catholic national directors on migration, Malines, 18.09; presence and participation of the President, Vice Presidents and some staff members at Semaines Sociales, Lille, 23-26.09; participation in meeting of the Kommissionsübergreifende Arbeitsgruppe on Family Policy of the German Bishops' conference, Berlin, 01.10; lecture on The Church and Europe to Benedictine sisters, Köln, 07.10; lecture on The Relationship of the Church to the EU to meeting of KAAD students, 23.10; organisation and presentations to study day for group of clergy from Malta, 26.10; presentations on COMECE and its work to Bishops' Conference of Slovakia, 26-28.10; participation in the second EPP conference on Economic and Social Policy : The future of the Lisbon Strategy – Committing Europe to Growth, 25.11; participation in Nexus Conference, Europe, A beautiful Idea? organised by the Dutch Presidency, Rotterdam, 04.12; participation in Images of Science conference, organised by Dutch Presidency, Amsterdam, 06-07.12; address to hearing entitled, Laïcité et Religion, in European Parliament, Brussels, 07.12; participation by in commemoration of 60th anniversary of ordination to the priesthood of Karl Leisner in Dachau, Dachau, 19.12; participation and contribution to Round Table on ICT implants, organised by the European Group on Ethics, Amsterdam, 21.12.

5. THE TEACHING OF RELIGION IN THE EUROPEAN SCHOOLS

- 5.1. In matters pertaining to the content of the teaching of the catholic faith in the European schools located in various Member States, COMECE is recognised by the *Conseil Supérieur* of European schools as the representative of the interests of the local Bishops. Regular contacts have been maintained with the Conseil Supérieur for many years.
- 5.2. Apart from the permanent difficulty of finding suitable teachers for the various linguistic sections in these schools, the teaching of religion in the European schools proceeded calmly and efficiently. Serious administrative difficulties were not reported in the course of the year.
- 5.3. The Secretary General of COMECE is informed of developments in respect of the teaching of religion in the European schools by the COMECE adviser, C. Roba.

- 5.4. Towards the end of the year there were some indications that efforts might be made to reduce the time available for religion classes on the programme. This matter may require attention and appropriate action in 2005.

6. ECUMENICAL CONTACTS AND COLLABORATION

- 6.1. Throughout the year contacts were maintained with the secretariat of the Commission for Church and Society(CSC) of the Conference of European Churches, with the Brussels office of the Ecumenical Patriarchate, with the Representation of the Greek Orthodox Church, with the Representation of the Patriarchate of Moscow, and with the office of the Evangelische Kirche in Deutschland (EKD).
- 6.2. In co-operation with the Commission for Church and Society (CSC) of the Conference of European Churches, the COMECE secretariat assisted the relevant services of the EU institutions in preparing information visits for ecumenical groups of church leaders to Brussels.
- 6.3. Throughout the year the staff of the secretariat received ecumenical groups from the Member States and the candidate countries at the secretariat. The staff members invited CEC, EKD and the Orthodox representatives to breakfast and lunch meetings which led to fruitful co-operation in a range of policy areas, especially in the area of common work vis à vis the European Convention
- 6.4. The President addressed the VIII Dialogue between the EPP-ED Group in the European Parliament and the Orthodox Churches in Thessaloniki, 21-22 October.

7. COLLABORATION WITH CCEE AND THE BISHOPS' CONFERENCES

- 7.1. Regular contacts and exchange of information were maintained between the secretariats of COMECE and CCEE. The Secretary General attended the annual meeting of the General Secretaries of the Bishops' Conferences in Belgrade, 10-12 June. The Vice-President (Archbishop H. Simon) and the Secretary General of COMECE attended and reported on the work of COMECE to the CCEE Plenary meeting in Leeds, 30.09 – 03.10.
- 7.2. The President and Secretary General of CCEE attended the Plenary meetings of COMECE and reported on the activities of CCEE.
- 7.3. As a member of the CCEE-KEK Joint Committee the Secretary General of COMECE attended its meeting in Opole, Poland, 29-31.01.
- 7.4. Several enquiries from the Bishops' Conferences regarding EU policy issues were dealt with. The secretariat played a vital role in keeping the services of Bishops' Conferences informed of developments in a range of EU policy areas as indicated throughout this report.
- 7.5. As a contribution to building up a sense of European identity among younger professional assistants and advisors in the secretariats of the Bishops' Conferences in the Member States and in the candidate countries, the COMECE secretariat organised a sixth Summer University entitled, *Europe integrated? Diverse Dimensions of the European integration process*, in the Slovak Academy of Sciences, Smolenice, Slovakia, 11-14 September Bishop F. Tondra, President of the Slovak Bishops' Conference gave the opening address on Saturday evening. After a religious and cultural programme, Commissioner Jan Figel addressed the participants on

current challenges in EU policy. Ms. Flaminia Giovanelli, Pontifical Council, Justice and Peace, Rome, launched a debate on the philosophical and anthropological aspects of the concept of integration. Thereafter Prof. Heinrich Neisser, University of Innsbruck, delivered a lecture on the history of European integration. Two lectures followed on the impact of enlargement for the subject matter: firstly by Dr. Juraj Alner, journalist, Bratislava who spoke on citizenship, and then a lecture by Bishop Frantisek Lobkowicz, contrasting the attitudes of old and new Member States on the question of the objectives/finality of European construction. There followed a debate on minorities in Europe, which many participants found informative. On Tuesday 14 September further presentations were made: Dr. G. von Toggenberg on integration as a politico-cultural concept; by Mag. Hanspeter Ruedl on integration as a concept between “melting pot” and “unity in diversity”; by Dr. Marek Smid, Trnava, on the Holy See and Europe. The conclusion was drawn by Flaminia Giovanelli. COMECE records its thanks to the Bishops’ conference of Slovakia for its help in preparing and co-financing this event. Particular thanks are due to Bishop F. Tondra, to Bishop F. Rabek, delegate of the Slovak Bishops’ Conference to COMECE, to Fr. Cyril Jančíšin, Executive Secretary, and to the staff of the secretariat of the Episcopal Conference. COMECE likewise records its gratitude for financial support for this event from anonymous donors and friends. Without their contributions this event would not have been possible. With this summer university – three held in Member States in western Europe and three held in central/eastern Europe – this initiative of COMECE has come to an end. Efforts are being undertaken to identify an organisation or institution which might continue this type of meeting and exchange for young European Catholics in a new form.

8. LOOKING FORWARD TO 2005

- 8.1. The COMECE and its secretariat will continue to monitor European Union policy-making in all relevant areas on behalf of the Bishops’ Conferences of the Member States and of the candidate countries.
- 8.2. The Executive Committee will consider further how to bond the ecclesial experience of all its member conferences and to render the enlarged Plenary meetings efficient and effective.
- 8.3. A meeting of the Financial Advisers Group will take place to review and plan the budget. The initiatives necessary for the efficient working of the secretariat will be pursued in consultation with the Executive Committee.
- 8.4. Visits for exchange and mutual information will be continued in the Plenary meetings of the Bishops’ Conferences of the countries which entered the EU on 1 May 2004.
- 8.5. An information visit to the EU institutions for the President and members of the French Bishops’ Conference will be organised in January 2005.
- 8.6. A study day on the process of European integration and the work of COMECE will be prepared and facilitated in January for the Bishops’ Conference of Scotland.
- 8.7. Efforts will be made to realise a meeting with Bishops from the United States Catholic Bishops’ Conference to deliberate on issues pertaining to the “transatlantic relationship” with input from Catholic Social Teaching and from political and other analysts.

- 8.8. The review of the Lisbon strategy will be monitored. Input to enrich the debate and link it to value-related issues such as, promoting family life, will be prepared in the form of a document containing theses to promote reflection and public debate.
- 8.9. A seminar on Ethical investment will be co-organised with UNIAPAC (Association of Christian businessmen) in February; thereafter ways will be sought to explore the theme in regard to the European capital market with appropriate services of the European Commission.
- 8.10. An Evaluation of the Constitutional Treaty, prepared at the request of the Executive Committee as an aid to understanding and promoting discussion on the text, will be published.
- 8.11. Ethical and bio-ethical issues arising in the field of EU Research policy will be monitored closely.
- 8.12. The secretariat will monitor developments in regard to the establishment of the European Agency on Fundamental Rights and to issues in EU Human Rights policy.
- 8.13. The Global Governance Assessment project will be carried forward, with particular reference to environmental policy.
- 8.14. The document *Let Us Open Our Hearts*, revised in the light of comments received and the deliberations of the Congress in Santiago and developed by Archbishop H. Simon will be published.
- 8.15. The COMECE secretariat will be represented at a meeting of the Presidents of the Bishops' Conferences of South-East Europe, Belgrade, 25-27 February 2005.
- 8.16. COMECE will be represented at the co-ordination meeting of Bishops' Conferences regarding the Holy Land, Jerusalem, 10-13 January 2005.

N. Treanor
08.03.05