



**COMMISSION OF THE
EPISCOPATES OF THE
EUROPEAN COMMUNITY**

COMECE

ANNUAL REPORT

2005



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INTRODUCTION

The year 2005 would see the death of Pope John Paul II on 2 April. The President and the Secretary General represented the COMECE at his funeral. His successor, Benedict XVI, was elected on 19 April; COMECE was represented at the inauguration of his pontificate.

January 2005 dawned in the aftershock of the Tsunami in Sumatra, a disaster to which Europe and the world responded with generosity. In Europe the New Year dawned in the hopeful glow of the Orange Revolution in the Ukraine, as Luxembourg assumed the Presidency of the EU which it passed on to the United Kingdom for the second half of the year. Whilst Spain ratified the constitutional treaty on 20 February, the ratification process received a severe blow with two rejections in referendums by France on 29 May and by the Netherlands on 01 June. The 22-23 March European Council saw the mid-term review of the Lisbon Strategy and the review of the EU Stability and Growth Pact. Barely one week into the UK Presidency, and just as the G8 summit got underway in Gleneagles, Scotland, London was brought to a standstill by a horrendous terrorist attack. Yet again Europe was threatened by global terrorism. In August and September hurricanes hit the Gulf States in the USA with devastating results. Shortly afterwards, in September the bishops of COMECE and a delegation of bishops from the International Policy Committee of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) met in Brussels to discuss aspects of the transatlantic relationship in the light of Catholic Social Teaching. A change of government was brought about in Germany by the September elections which led to Angela Merkel becoming Chancellor of a coalition government. She would play a key role and show promising signs of leadership at the European level in the difficult negotiations on the EU financial perspectives at the December European Council meeting at the end of the British Presidency. September parliamentary elections in Poland returned a majority for the Law and Justice Party with Mr. Kazimierz Marcinkiewicz as Prime Minister. Presidential elections one month later saw the election of Dr. Lech Kaczynski as President. Historic steps were taken on 3 October with the opening of accession negotiations with Turkey and Croatia.

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 2005 COMECE continued to facilitate encounter and dialogue with EU officials through a range of activities: the two annual Plenary meetings, the meetings of the Executive Committee, initiatives undertaken by its Bishop members in their respective countries, through the monthly publication, *Europe Infos*, and by means of a range of activities involving the EU institutions on the one hand and groups and representatives 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 final section of the Annual Report for 2004 indicated a series of areas in which the COMECE secretariat would continue its work in the course of 2005. They were listed as follows:

- (i) 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.
- (ii) 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.
- (iii) 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.
- (iv) visits for exchange and mutual information will be continued to the Plenary meetings of the Bishops' Conferences of the countries which entered the EU on 1 May 2004.
- (v) an information visit to the EU institutions for the President and members of the French Bishops' Conference will be organised in January 2005.
- (vi) 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.
- (vii) 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.
- (viii) 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.
- (ix) 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.
- (x) 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.
- (xi) ethical and bio-ethical issues arising in the field of EU research policy will be monitored closely.
- (xii) 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.
- (xiii) the Global Governance Assessment project will be carried forward, with particular reference to environmental policy.
- (xiv) 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 as *The Evolution of the European Union, the Responsibility of Catholics*.
- (xv) 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.

- (xvi) COMECE will be represented at the co-ordination meeting of Bishops' Conferences regarding the Holy Land, Jerusalem, 10-13 January 2005.

This report for 2005 shows that the aims set out in the above-mentioned points were pursued and achieved. In the course of the year other initiatives were undertaken in response to developments in the EU agenda.

Luxembourg assumed the EU Presidency for the eleventh time on 01 January 2005. Its agenda was headlined by the mid-term review of the Lisbon Strategy. Other core priorities were: the completion of the review of the Stability and Growth Pact, finding a compromise on the EU Financial Perspectives for 2007-2013, advancing the process of ratifying the Constitutional Treaty, the accession negotiations with Romania and Bulgaria and adopting the Hague Programme Action Plan. The Prime Minister Jean-Claude Juncker and his team succeeded in achieving their aims at the European Council meeting in March. However success eluded his best efforts to broker a deal on the amount and structure of the EU budget for 2007-2013. The imbroglio over the budget at the June European Council, the UK's position on its rebate and the antagonism between some of the older Member States set a difficult passage for the UK Presidency, July-December 2005. Its agenda set such priorities as: finalising the EU budget, consultations on the Working Time Directive, advancing the Services Directive, opening accession negotiations with Turkey and Croatia, furthering the Doha Development Round at the WTO, implementing the Hague Programme, exploring and delineating the particularities of the European Social Model, a summit in Barcelona to mark the tenth anniversary of the Euro-Mediterranean partnership. It was a difficult Presidency; in the end, at the December European Council, the Prime Minister Tony Blair and his fellow heads of state and government reached agreement on the budget.

Throughout the year COMECE and its secretariat monitored the work of the two 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 2005. It does not attempt an exhaustive listing of all the initiatives of the Bishop members and the staff of the secretariat. Its aim is 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.

1. COMECE FROM WITHIN

1.1.1. The President

- 1.1.2. The President chaired and guided the deliberations of the Plenary meetings 9-11 March and 16-18 November and three meetings of the Executive Committee, the first in Brussels on 19 January, the second in Rome on 9-10 June and the third in Brussels on 18 October.

- 1.1.3. Among the activities he undertook as President in the course of the year were the following: meeting with His Beatitude Christodoulos, Athens (16-18.01); visits to Church leaders in Serbia, Croatia, Hungary and Romania (24.01-08.02); visits to bishops in Poland (12.03-16.03); attended and addressed Plenary meeting of the Romanian Episcopal Conference and meetings in Bosnia-Herzegovina (15.05-24.05); participation in IV Inter-religious Dialogue seminar organised by the Konrad-Adenauer Foundation, Cadenabbia, Italy, (30.05-01.06); address to Bertelsmann Foundation at its seminar, *South East Europe on the Way to the European Union*,

Zagreb, (03.06-04.06); participation in Europe Forum in Alpbach, Austria (29-30.08); participation and presentations during the VI Gniezno Convention, *The Europe of Dialogue, Being a Christian in a Pluralist Society*, Gniezno (16-18.09); visits to Church leaders, politicians and diplomats in Macedonia, Kosovo, Albania, Serbia/Montenegro (20-31.10); presentation of work of COMECE to the Bishops' Conference of Slovenia (28.11-30.11).

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 on three occasions in the course of the year. The Apostolic Nuncio to the European Communities was represented. Mr. S. Lunte and Dr. M. Meyer also took part.
- 1.2.2. At the January meeting in Brussels the results of the European Council meeting of 16-17 December 2004 were reviewed. Significant consideration was given to the reports given at the November Plenary by the bishops from the new Member States and on the expectations from COMECE. A breakfast meeting took place at the European Parliament with the leader of the Liberal Group in the European Parliament, Mr. Graham Watson, and three other members of that group to present COMECE views on a range of issues on the EU agenda. The meeting also deliberated on forthcoming initiatives such as, the Spring Plenary, the COMECE-UNIAPAC seminar on ethical investment, the COMECE-USCCB. On the evening of 19 January a dinner was held in honour of H. E. Mgr. Faustino Sainz Muñoz, Nuncio to the European Communities, shortly before his departure to assume his post as Nuncio to Great Britain.
- 1.2.3. The meeting of 9-10 June was held in the Villa Mater Dei, Rome. As in former years the Executive Committee was the guest of the house and thus of the German Bishops' Conference. The introductory session dealt with a range of subjects, inter alia: the process of ratification of the European constitution, the COMECE's Evaluation document (i.e. of the Constitution), EU policy regarding Croatia, and the west Balkans. Thereafter extensive consideration was given to the emerging sense of crisis or stagnation in the EU. A further session dwelt on issues of significance on the EU agenda –the Seventh Framework Research Programme, the Green Paper on Demography, the projected European Foreign Service, the tenth anniversary of the Barcelona process and inter-religious dialogue, the meeting between the Churches and the Luxembourg and UK Presidencies. The Presidium also deliberated on initiatives in respect of EU Social and Economic policy, on the issues regarding the dialogue foreseen between the EU and the Churches (Art I.52). Time was also given to planning the then forthcoming COMECE-USCCB (Department of International Affairs) seminar. With "Ecclesia in Europa" as a reference point, the Committee members assessed aspects of COMECE's work and working methods in order to refine its *modus operandi* and to ensure that it responds to its mission. A meeting also took place with H. E. Archbishop Giovanni Lajolo, Secretary for Relations with States at the Secretariat of State. As in previous years the discussions focused on issues of interest to the Church on the agenda of the EU.

- 1.2.4. A third meeting of the Executive Committee took place in Brussels at the COMECE secretariat on 18 October. After an introductory discussion of the significance of current European developments such as, the results of the June summit, the elections in Germany and Poland, the opening of negotiations with Turkey and Croatia, the EU and the international scenario in the aftermath of the UN summit, the meeting received a report on the work and activities of the secretariat for the summer and early autumn. Other issues dealt with were: the discussion of the relationship between CCEE and COMECE at the CCEE Plenary in Rome (30.09-02.10), preparation of the autumn COMECE plenary and a series of planned initiatives as well as matters pertaining to the functioning of the secretariat. The final part of the meeting was reserved for a meeting with a delegation of representatives of the Churches in Romania. Having reported on the preparation for accession by their country and on the outcome of their meetings with EU personnel, issues such as, the restitution of Church property, religious freedom and human rights issues were discussed.

1.3. THE PLENARY MEETINGS

- 1.3.1. The Spring Plenary meeting was held in Brussels, 9-11 March 2005. The EU's Development Policy and Solidarity with poor countries was chosen as the topic for deliberation and study. Contributions were made by M. Louis Michel, the European Commissioner in charge of development policy who addressed the gathering on the millennium objectives as aims of EU policy. His frank, lucid and deft presentation provoked a lively debate with the floor. Mr. Klaus Regling, Director General at the Directorate for Economic and Monetary Affairs of the European Commission explored issues pertaining to the financing of development. M. Pierre Defraigne, honorary Director General at the European Commission and Director of the IFRI Institute, Paris, addressed EU trade policy and its implications for the development of poor countries. On the opening evening M. Enzo Moavero, Deputy Secretary General of the European Commission, appraised the bishops of the strategic objectives of the European Commission for the period 2005-2009 and presented the main lines of the European Commission's Work Programme for 2005. On Thursday morning 10 March the Bishop members and their assistants were received in the Berlaymont building by the President of the European Commission, José Durão Barroso. After an introductory statement by the M. Barroso, the President of COMECE, Cardinal Bozanic and the Vice Presidents set out issues of concern for discussion. An account of the meeting may be found in the minutes of the plenary.

Having received the Annual Report for 2004, the bishops proceeded to reflect on the EU one year after the historic enlargement of 1 May 2004. A series of reports were given by the delegates of the Episcopal Conferences of Latvia, Poland and Lithuania in which they outlined their countries' experiences of membership of the EU to date and the expectations of their respective Episcopal Conferences from the COMECE. Thereafter relations with Ukraine, the Balkans and the countries of the southern Mediterranean were discussed with particular attention to the role of the Churches in this regard. Plans for visits by members of the COMECE Presidium to the Plenary meetings of the Bishops' Conference of some of the new EU Member States were agreed.

An evening event consisting of three presentations and a reception was organised to mark the twenty-fifth anniversary of COMECE. Three speakers, one representing the episcopate, another the monastic and religious life, and the third representing the laity, explored the theme for the evening, *You, Church in Europe, what is your role in public life?* from the perspective of their

respective vocation and life's witness. The speakers were: Cardinal P. Erdő, Archbishop of Eszergom-Budapest, Sr. Gisela Happ osb, secretary general of the Alliance Inter Monastères, Paris and Mr. Stefan Wilkanowicz, Cracow.

On the closing day of the plenary the bishops examined and approved the Evaluation of the Constitutional Treaty prepared by the secretariat. This document was offered as an aid to understanding the treaty. In the course of subsequent months it received acceptance and praise by many and was the object of criticism in quarters which were anti the Constitution. A report was given by Mgr. V. Rallo on the debate on euthanasia in the Council of Europe. Mgr. Aldo Giordano outlined the recent and forthcoming activities on the CCEE calendar. On the basis of this members of the COMECE secretariat informed the bishops on two EU initiatives: the EU Fundamental Rights Agency and the Hague Programme. Eleven written reports on EU policy domains were made available to the bishops for their information and for the attention of the relevant services of their respective Episcopal Conferences.

- 1.3.2. In accordance with the wishes of the Executive Committee, it was decided to open the proceedings with a report by the President on the state of the European Union from the viewpoint of COMECE. The President dwelt on three core issues: the ratification process and its difficulties, the EU financial perspectives and the further enlargement of the EU. He spoke of a crisis of leadership, direction and trust in the EU. He reminded his colleagues of the Hampton Court summit and recalled five important orientations: (i) the promotion of research, (ii) reform of universities, (iii) a common European energy policy, (iv) the fight against illegal immigration, (v) new target to better conjugate family and professional life. He drew particular attention to the plight of the Balkan states, their need of a European perspective and the importance of concrete expressions of support from the Church in the EU Member States. He then went on to comment and explore issues arising in the constitutional debate. Thereafter each bishop member gave a brief comment on the perception of the EU in his member state – a series of interventions providing a rich overview of comments and perceptions. To conclude the proceedings of the first day, two draft statements were presented – one on Demographic Change in Europe: Signs of a Crisis, the other on EU Financing of Research and Ethics. Both texts were discussed intensively in the course of the proceedings, duly adopted and presented at the Press Conference. The first was published with the title *A Plea for a European Strategy in favour of the Families*.

In the aftermath of the two “No” votes on the Constitutional Treaty in France and the Netherlands and the inability to reach agreement on the EU budget at the June European Council, it was decided to work on “*Solidarity – the Exit from the Crisis in the European Union: a Call to You, Church in Europe*” as the principal theme for the meeting. Three guest speakers assisted the plenary in addressing this subject. Taking account that 2005 marked the fortieth anniversary of the conclusion of the Second Vatican Council, Fr. Henri Madelin S.J. considered the current challenges facing the EU in the light of the core message of Vatican II. Mr. Rolf Annerberg, the Chef de Cabinet of Commissioner, Margot Wallström, responsible for Institutional Relations and the European Commission’s Communication policy, presented the Commissions’ Communication Strategy (Plan D). A third and fascinating presentation was given by M. Philippe Herzog, President of the Association Confrontations Europe, on promoting active citizenship in Europe.

In the evening the Bishops travelled to Mechelen for Evening Prayer led by the choir under the direction of P. André Gouzes o.p., (Sylvanes) who had spent the previous days recording the liturgical music sung in the liturgies during the COMECE European pilgrimage to Santiago de

Compostela in April 2004. Evening Prayer was followed by a reception in the Diocesan Pastoral Centre.

The Secretary General of CCEE, Mgr. Aldo Giordano reported on the activities of CCEE, giving particular attention to the preparation of the Third European Ecumenical Assembly, to be held in Sibiu in 2007.

Administrative issues were treated in a meeting of the COMECE member bishops, where they also received a progress report on the preparation of the summer university, scheduled for September 2006, in co-operation with the university of Graz-Sekkau and the diocese of Graz. Thus this much appreciated initiative of COMECE has been taken up and launched in a new and academic format for three years, 2006-2009.

Oral reports were given by staff members on: (i) current issues in migration and asylum policy, (ii) the EU Fundamental Rights Agency, (iii) the COMECE-USCCB (International Affairs Department) held in Brussels in September. Thereafter the assembly discussed issues on the agenda of the Council of Europe – a resolution on surrogate motherhood and a resolution on Education and Religion. Nine written reports were provided for the bishops on a range of issues related to EU policy, by way of information for themselves and the relevant services of their Episcopal Conferences.

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 11 March; the Assemblée Générale was held later on the same day.

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. 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
- 1.5.3. Don Davide Vicentini, a priest of the diocese of Verona, completed a two year internship with the secretariat and returned to Italy. Alexandra Hebda, a Polish, intern with COMECE, moved to work in the European Parliament.
- 1.5.4. The secretariat was assisted in the course of the year by voluntary interns: Pauline de Castelnau, student, Lyons, 6-21 January 2005; Sophie Müller-Godefroid, pupil, Lübeck, 24-28 January; Ruth Essen, student, Cologne, 14 February–14 March; Wojciech Blaszczy, Priest,

Poland, 25 April – 27 May; Luc Denizot, student, France, 2 May – 1 July; Andreas Lenk, lawyer, (Referendar), Bonn, 1 June – 31 July; Eva Esser, student, Cologne, 8 August – 8 September; Atziber Iciar Barrueta, lawyer, Spain, 20 September – 21 December 2005; Horst Wieshuber, student, Munich, 12 September – 14 October; Franziska Schramm, pupil, Hildesheim, 17 – 28 October.

1.6. COMMISSIONS AND WORKING GROUPS

- 1.6.1. The **Commission for Legal Affairs** met on 17 February and on 13 October 2005. Each meeting included a report on legal issues of current concern to the Church in the Member States represented. During the 17 February meeting the members exchanged views on the forthcoming ratification of the Constitutional Treaty and discussed possibilities of developing new instruments for the dialogue between the Church and the European Union starting from the experiences of the Church at the national level. They also discussed the initiative to establish a European Agency for Fundamental Rights (COM 2004, 693). Thereafter, Dr. Andreas Schwab, Member of the European Parliament, informed the members about the state of play concerning the debate on the Proposal for a Directive on Services in the Internal Market (COM 2004, 2/2004/00001/COD) in the European Parliament. The members took the opportunity to discuss with Dr. Schwab whether the directive will have an impact on the social and health care services provided by the Church or Church organisations. In the last session of the meeting Mr William Sleath, an official from the Secretariat General of the European Commission, presented the working programme of the European Commission for 2005 (COM 2005, 15 final). His presentation was followed by a reflection by the members on the question of future European policy issues that will be of special interest for the Church.

During the meeting of 13 October Mrs Monika Ekström, an official working for the Directorate General Justice, Freedom and Security of the European Commission presented the Green Paper on Applicable Law and Jurisdiction in Divorce Matters (COM 2005, 82). She underlined that the plans of the Commission do not seek to harmonise national divorce law in the European Union but aim to clarify which law applies in cross-border cases. This presentation was followed by a discussion on the Proposal for a Council Regulation establishing a European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (COM 2005, 280) which focussed on the significance of this Agency and the possibilities for participation by the Church. Furthermore the members discussed the current situation regarding human rights in Turkey and analysed the Draft Recommendation for a Code of Conduct for Non Profit Organisations (JLS/D2/DB/NSK D 2005, 8208). The members exchanged views concerning the Proposal for a Directive on Services in the Internal Market (COM 2004, 2/ 2004/0001/COD) and the Commission's State Aid Action Plan: Less and better targeted state aid: a roadmap for state aid reform 2005–2009 (COM 2005, 107). The last session of the meeting was dedicated to the consequences of the negative referenda in France and the Netherlands for the constitutional debate. After a discussion with Mr Mikolaj Dowgielewicz, spokesman for Commissioner M. Wallström, on the Commission's contribution to the period of reflection and beyond: "Plan-D for Democracy, Dialogue and Debate" (COM 2005, 494) which had been released that very day, the members reflected on options to reinforce the dialogue between the Church and the European Union without Art. I-52 of the EU Constitutional Treaty entering into force. Reports on the work of the Commission on Legal Affairs were given to the COMECE Plenary meeting.

- 1.6.2. Following upon the work of the **Social Affairs Commission**, which terminated its mandate in 2004, two main initiatives were undertaken in the course of the year. In accordance with consultations held in the course of 2004, a Dialogue Meeting, the second in recent years, was held between COMECE and UNIAPAC on the subject, *The Ethical Elements of Investment*. The proceedings were opened by Bishop Adrianus Van Luyn who set out some of the pertinent principles of Catholic social doctrine relevant to the deliberations on the subject. The President of UNIAPAC International, M. Etienne Wibaux, CEO Subrenat, France, outlined how UNIAPAC and its members seek to implement such principles, giving telling examples from his own business and entrepreneurial experience. The first session concentrated on the ethics of investment with presentations from Dr. Paolo Saraiva, Management and Economics Department of Beira Interior University, Lisbon, followed by Fr. Jacques Turk, Secretary of the Social Commission of the French Bishops' Conference. The second session, moderated by M. Benoit Bonamy, secretary of UNIAPAC, explored the emergence of ethical investment funds: the opening presentations were made by Dr. Christoph Berndorff, Chairman of the Board of Pax-Bank, Germany and M. Luc Meeschaert, CEO of Financière Meeschaert, founder of what was probably the first ethical fund. Mass was celebrated in the COMECE oratory. After lunch the proceedings of the second session were continued in a session devoted to exchanging and measuring experiences of ethical investment and moderated by Stefan Lunte, Assistant Secretary General of COMECE. A third session moderated by N. Treanor dealt with two issues: (i) how can investment policy respect the principle of universal purpose of goods and (ii) Values and Economy. The first subject was discussed on the basis of a presentation by M. Gilles Brac de la Perrière, France, founder, former CEO and presently ethical adviser of Siparex-Private Equity, former member of the French Commission des Opérations de Bourse, whilst the second was based on a contribution from M. Carlos Tavares, former Minister of the Economy in Portugal and then Director of the Group of Political Advisers (BEPA) at the European Commission. An animated discussion followed upon these presentations and the cumulative input of the day. The proceedings were drawn to a close by Bishop R. Marx, Bishop of Trier, Germany and by M. Etienne Wibaux. Participants recommended that the dialogue seminars between COMECE and UNIAPAC should be pursued. It was also agreed the issue of ethical investment merits further exploration by Church organisations and that the COMECE should continue to pursue the subject. The proceedings of this seminar were duly published in association with UNIAPAC as a special issue of *Europe Infos*, July/August, no.73, 2005.

In accordance with the report to the COMECE Plenary on the work carried out by the Commission for Social Affairs during its mandate, further consideration was given as to how to develop a method of work which would have a more immediate and organic link to the relevant departments of the Episcopal Conferences. To this end a meeting of the secretaries of the Social Affairs Commissions of Bishops' Conferences was held at the COMECE secretariat on 14 June. A first exchange provided for an exchange of information between the participants regarding projects on social, economic and societal issues being undertaken by the Episcopal Conferences represented. This session was found enriching for the ideas shared and identified as an essential element for future meetings. Thereafter a session was devoted to a presentation on the then current social and economic issues on the agenda of the EU. Thereafter the secretaries discussed a proposal for a meeting of the Presidents of the Social Affairs Commissions of the Episcopal Conferences of the Member States. S. Lunte set out core elements of the proposal, underlining the possible mutual benefits of this system for both the Episcopal Conferences and COMECE. It was decided to schedule a preparatory meeting of the secretaries in order to prepare the meeting of the Presidents which might take place in late spring of 2006.

- 1.6.3. The spring session of the **Reflection Group on Bioethics and Research Policy** took place on 15-16 Feb. 2005. All current members of the group participated in the meeting (one member only in part): Prof. A. Autiero (Münster), Prof. M. Dupuis (Brussels) – participation only for the meeting with the EGE, Prof. S. Marcus-Helmons (Brussels), Father P. Verspieren SJ (Paris) as well as Mgr. Noel Treanor and Mrs Katharina Schauer

On 15 February, the group had a meeting with the members of the European Group on Ethics (EGE), one of the first consultations with an external group held by the EGE. The meeting, scheduled for an hour, lasted for some 90 minutes. The meeting was structured as follows: N. Treanor briefly presented COMECE and its work to the members of the EGE and Prof. Marcus-Helmons presented the members of the Bioethics Reflection Group of the COMECE secretariat and gave an overview on the work of the group. Subsequently, Prof. Dupuis presented in detail an opinion which the Bioethics Reflection Group had elaborated on Opinion No. 18 of the EGE (*"Ethical Aspects of genetic testing in the workplace"*). Prof. Verspieren then gave a presentation of an opinion of the Bioethics Reflection Group on *"Discussions on the use of human embryonic stem cells and therapeutic cloning"* and gave a critical review of Opinion No. 15 of the EGE on *"Ethical Aspects of human embryonic stem cell research and use"*. Finally, Prof. Autiero presented reflections on the opinion on which the EGE was then working on: *"Ethical Aspects of ICT implants in the human body"* (ICT = Information and Communication Technologies). The EGE members highly appreciated the input of COMECE to bioethical issues at stake – even if they would not share all positions – and particularly welcomed the exchange with the members of the Bioethics Reflection Group.

Subsequently, the Reflection Group had an exchange on developments in bioethics at national and at EU level. (Belgium: Debate on adoption of children by homosexual couples; France: Adoption of a Law on Bioethics (Provisional – for five years – authorisation of research with human embryonic stem cells, prohibition of therapeutic cloning), debate on the interruption of treatment at the end of life or for people in severe conditions; Italy: Debate on the referendum due on 3/4 April on artificial procreation; Germany: Debate on living wills, debate of the National Ethics Council on pre-implantation diagnosis; EU: Forthcoming debate on 7th Research Framework Programme, future of the EGE).

Then the group discussed Opinion No. 15 of the EGE on *"Ethical Aspects of human embryonic stem cell research and use"* dated 14 November 2000. This debate took place in view of issuing a contribution to the debates on research with human embryos and human embryonic stem cells (in particular the forthcoming discussions in the EU about EU research funding in this area and the adoption of the 7th Research Framework Programme). The group issued an opinion on *"Contribution to the debates on research on human embryos and human stem cells"*.

The autumn session of the Bioethics Reflection Group took place on 21 October 2005. All current members of the group participated in the meeting. Firstly, the group had an exchange about developments in bioethics at national and at EU level. (Belgium: Debate on adoption of children by homosexual couples; Germany: Debate on Living Wills; Italy: Outcome of the referendum on artificial reproduction; EU: Debate in the Parliament on patents on biotechnological inventions (adoption of a resolution), Commission proposal for a regulation on Advanced Therapies, Debate on the 7th Research Framework Programme, new mandate of the EGE and its new composition). Thereafter the Group had a debate in view of the elaboration of an opinion on *"Living Wills"*. The debate was based on several contributions from Prof. Marcus-Helmons on the legal status of Advanced Directives, Prof. Verspieren on the ethical aspects of Advanced Directives and also on the situation in France, proposals for formulations of living wills, scientific research and on the Encyclical *"Evangelium Vitae"*. The group issued an opinion on *"Arrangements for the end of life"*.

- 1.6.4. In 2005 the **Working Group on Information Society, Communications and Media Policy** met on 3 May and 7 September. It is comprised of eight members: Dr Jim McDonnell (Chair/UK), Drs. Michael Kuhn (COMECE/Austria), Père Gabriel Nissim OP (Council of Europe/France), Mgr Noël Treanor (COMECE), Dr. Peter Hasenberg (Germany), Gianna Cappello (Italy), Hermineke van Bockxmeer (The Netherlands), and Clare Coffey (COMECE). The main focus of the years work was the review of the 1989/1997 **Television Without Frontiers Directive**. The Working Group made a full and constructive submission to the European Commission's consultation on the TWF review in September 2005. The revised Directive was subsequently published on 13 December 2005.

At the meeting in May, the group met with Mrs Ruth Hieronymi (MEP/EPP-ED, Germany) a member of the European Parliament's Committee for Culture and Education. With her the group discussed her colleague's, (Mrs Marielle de Sarnez M.E.P.) report on *The Protection of minors and human dignity and the right of reply in relation to the competitiveness of the European audiovisual and information services industry*. Subsequently, the group sent a letter of support to Mrs de Sarnez M.E.P., with particular reference to her proposals for increased communications education for parents, teachers and children, the introduction of a ".kid" high-level domain, self-regulation alongside controlled regulation and a clear distinction between harmful and illegal content. As rapporteur for the Culture and Education Committee on the **Services Directive**, Mrs Hieronymi outlined her position concerning the exemption of audio-visual services from the scope of the directive. During this meeting the group also explored the **i2010 – European Information Society** initiative and **eAccessibility**.

The 7th September meeting included two meetings with representatives from the European Commission: Mr Christophe Forax, member of Commissioner Reding's cabinet, and Mr Tretteinbrein, Head of Sector for Implementation of Regulatory Policy in the Audio-visual Policy Unit of DG Information Society and Media. Both discussions explored the potential provisions in the revised TWF Directive, with particular reference to linear and non-linear services, time frames, the impact of further new technologies, self-regulation vs. controlled regulation, Commissioner Reding's audio-visual priorities and work programme.

- 1.6.5. The **COMECE Platform on Migration** brought together specialists from the Bishops' Conferences and representatives from Brussels-based Catholic organisations working on migration and asylum. An ecumenical dimension has also been given to this platform through the presence of an observer of the Churches' Commission for Migrants in Europe (CCME) and also through joint sessions with the CCME Executive Committee. The Platform met on 22 April and on 17 October 2005. Each meeting began with an exchange of information on issues of concern for the members and their respective organisations. During the meeting on 22 April Mrs Madeline Garlick from the representation of the UNHCR in Brussels gave an overview of the discussion concerning the joint processing of asylum applications outside EU territories. This presentation was followed by a discussion with the Nadia Pohlmann, the Assistant to Mr Kreissl-Doerfler, Member of the European Parliament, and Torsten Moritz, CCME concerning the EP Report on the Asylum Procedure Directive (COM 2000, 578 final). The objective of the discussion was to develop strategies for improvements to the controversial proposal. Peter Verhaeghe from Caritas Europa presented the Green Paper on Economic Migration and set out the general lines for a commentary to be produced by the Churches and Church organisations working on migration and asylum. After a brief discussion on the position paper *Integrating migrants – integrating societies. Essential elements for EU migration policy*, the Platform was

joined by the CCME Executive Committee. The members of this joint group were briefed on *The Hague Programme "Strengthening Freedom, Security and Justice in the European Union": an Action Plan* by Jean-Louis de Brouwer, Directorate General Justice, Freedom and Security of the European Commission. After a lively discussion with Mr de Brouwer on the future priorities of the European Commission on migration and asylum policy, the joint group of COMECE and CCME exchanged views on the future activities of the Churches in the field of migration and asylum in Europe.

At the meeting on 17 October 2005 Torsten Moritz (CCME) presented an initiative launched by several NGOs in view of the publication of a Draft Directive on Common Standards and Procedures in Member States for Returning Illegally Staying Third-Country Nationals (COM 2005, 391). Mrs Angela Martini from Directorate General Justice, Freedom and Security of the European Commission, presented the better Communication on Regional Protection Programmes (COM 2005, 388 final) in view of protection for refugees near their home countries and the threat of processing asylum claims outside the European Union. After a short report on the latest EU activities in migration and asylum policies and in particular on the "Communication on a Common Agenda for Integration" (COM 2005, 389 final), Mr Andreas Fellner from the Permanent Representation of the Republic of Austria presented the priorities of the incoming Austrian Presidency in the field of migration and asylum.

- 1.6.6. A number of working sessions with the two **Financial Advisers** took place to assist the Secretary General in managing the annual budget and preparing the accounts for the Plenary meeting. The Secretary General worked with the Administrative Services of the Centre Interdiocesan, Rue Guimard, regarding the administration of the property recently acquired as the future seat for COMECE. Several working sessions took place during the year to determine the appropriate status and statutes for the latter.
- 1.6.7. 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 two Plenary meetings were moments of direct exchange between the Bishops members of COMECE and officials of the EU institutions. In the course of the year further contacts were made with European civil servants 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-USCCB consultation took place on 21-23 September in Brussels. Its aim was to initiate a discussion on aspects of the transatlantic relationship from the view of Catholic Social doctrine. In the course of the ten years since the New Transatlantic partnership was signed in

1995, the world has had to face new and complex challenges. Adequate responses to these challenges require a strong partnership between the US and the EU. This meeting provided the bishops from both sides of the Atlantic an opportunity to make a constructive contribution to the transatlantic dialogue at the EU.

The initiative, a COMECE proposal, was in the pipeline for a number of years and had been the subject of several conversations with the USCCB. The participant bishops on the USCCB delegation were Cardinal Theodore McCarrick, Archbishop of Washington; Bishop Nicholas DiMarzio, Bishop of Brooklyn; Bishop William Murphy, Rockville Centre, New York; Archbishop John Myers, Archbishop of Newark; Bishop John Ricard, Bishop of Pensacola Tallahassee, Chairman of the International Policy Committee. The COMECE Bishops who took part were: Bishop Josef Homeyer, President; Bishop Adrianus Van Luyn, Rotterdam, Vice President; Archbishop Hippolyte Simon, Clermont, Vice President; Archbishop Fernand Franck, Luxembourg; Archbishop Diarmuid Martin, Dublin; Bishop Piotr Jarecki, Auxiliary Bishop of Warsaw; Bishop William Kenney, Auxiliary Bishop of Stockholm; Bishop Giuseppe Merisi, Auxiliary Bishop Milan; Bishop Peter Moran, Aberdeen; Bishop Leo Schwarz, Auxiliary Bishop Trier and President of the European Justice and Peace Commission.

A preliminary programme was prepared for the American delegation for 20-21 September. Beginning with a visit to the UK Permanent Representation to the EU, they were briefed on the priorities of the UK Presidency of the EU and had an opportunity to explore the British perspective on the current state of EU. Thereafter they were received at the US Mission to the EU, where Mr. Michael McKinley, Chargé d'Affaires, assisted by Mr. Todd Huizinga and three Minister-Counsellors briefed them on the work of the Mission. Thereafter they were received at the Konrad-Adenauer Foundation where the Director, Dr. Peter Weilemann, hosted a dinner in their honour with the participation of Members of the European Parliament. On the morning of 21 September the Bishops were the guests of Cardinal Godfried Danneels at his residence in Mechelen, where they celebrated Mass. On returning to Brussels they visited the European Parliament where they were briefed on the Parliament by Mr. Niall O'Neill, Deputy Head of Protocol. Thereafter they were hosted to a lunch by Mr. Elmar Brok, Chairman of the Committee on Foreign Affairs.

The seminar opened with the participation of a selected public from the EU and other institutions in the Representation of the Land of Baden-Württemberg. This first session entitled *The Challenges of Global Security and Governance: The Ethics of War and Peace and the Role of International Law and International Institutions* was introduced and chaired by Archbishop D. Martin. Presentations were made by Bishop John H. Ricard, Pensacola Tallahassee, Chairman of the Committee on International Policy (USCCB) and by Bishop Giuseppe Merisi, then Auxiliary Bishop in Milan. Thereafter the American and European participants travelled to Leuven, where the newly elected President of the KUL, Professor Marc Vervenne hosted a reception in their honour; this was followed by dinner with members of the faculty of theology. Over the following day and a half the participants worked on the following issues: (ii) Religious Freedom and the Search for Human Security: source of Conflict or Reconciliation between Islam and Christianity?; (iii) The Balkans – A Common Responsibility; (iv) Migration, Refugees and Asylum; (v) Peace in the Holy Land: Fulfilling the Hope; (vi) Africa and the Challenge of Alleviating Poverty: The Role of Debt, Aid and Trade; (vii) Religion and Public Life in Europe and the US – the role of the Church in the Public Square. Each session was introduced by a moderator and two presentations, one from COMECE, the other from the USCCB. The discussions were extensive, lively and thorough. It is hoped that the initiative will have a follow-up within the coming two years.

- 2.1.3. Following a practice initiated with the German Presidency in 1994, a delegation representing the Church and Society Commission of the Conference of European Churches (CEC) and the Commission of the Bishops' Conferences of the European Community (COMECE) met the Prime Minister of Luxemburg, Jean-Claude Juncker, and President-in-office of the European Council in Brussels on Friday 20 May 2005. The discussion focused on a series of themes: the Lisbon strategy, EU migration policies, enlargement and the ratification process of the Constitutional Treaty and the Balkans.

The draft Constitutional Treaty with its definition of European values and the inclusion of the Charter of Fundamental Rights would allow the European Union to become, over time, a community of values. Referring to Article I-52 of the Constitutional Treaty the representatives of Europe's Churches welcomed the regular opportunity for the EU institutions to discuss issues of mutual concern with religious communities.

The delegation welcomed the re-launch of the Lisbon strategy during the EU spring summit and suggested that more attention be paid to the social pillar. Their contributions emphasised that the economy should strengthen its capacity to serve society. Creating a new dynamic for the European society as a whole should include more support for families at all levels. The strong emphasis of the European Council on reconciling professional and family life was regarded as an encouraging sign. With regard to the environmental pillar of the strategy, they stressed that the conservation of biodiversity should be considered as a value in itself, and not just in terms of its relevance for the economy.

The Churches' delegation also expressed their general concern on the issue of migration. Europe should maintain a culture of hospitality. However, a lack of coherence in this policy field might pose a risk for democracy in Europe. Particular attention should be paid to the integration of migrants and a special request was made with regard to common standards for the repatriation of asylum seekers.

On the issue of enlargement, the delegation of the Churches addressed the question of the accession of Turkey. They noted recent positive steps by the Turkish government that should lead in the end to the full recognition by all EU Member States of Turkey. They renewed their concern of the human rights record and the respect for religious freedom in Turkey, where further reforms have to be undertaken. With regard to the opening of negotiations with Croatia they asked that an open and positive attitude towards Croatia's membership in the EU be maintained. This would be of major importance for the whole region of South Eastern Europe. Remembering the outbreak of the First World War the representatives of the Churches also suggested a deadline of 2014 to work out a timetable with a clear perspective for membership of the whole region in the EU.

In a final round the delegation encouraged the EU in its efforts to build up strong relations with China, which would include among others an effective dialogue on human rights including religious freedom.

Despite best efforts on the part of the Church offices in Brussels channelled through the secretariat of the Bishops' conference of England and Wales, Church House, and the CTBI, it was not possible to achieve a meeting with the British Presidency. However the practice was continued with the Austrian government which offered a meeting with representatives of the Churches on 14 December 2005, some weeks before assuming the Presidency.

At this meeting with Foreign Minister Dr. Ursula Plassnik in Vienna the members of the Churches' delegation were: Cardinal C. Schönborn, Professor F. Eckert and S. Lunte for the Catholic Church; Bishop Herwig Sturm, Frau H. Reiner and His Eminence Metropolitan Michael

Staikos for the CEC. In their presentations the Church representatives commented on the priorities of the Presidency and emphasised the contribution of the Churches and Christian communities to addressing the lack of trust among citizens in the EU. The ratification of the Constitutional Treaty, the Balkans and the EU-Latin America summit May 2006, were among the subjects discussed at length with the Minister, Dr. Johannes Kyrle, the Secretary General of the Ministry and his Assistant, Dr. Oberreiter. Thanking the participants for their contributions and the contribution of the Churches to the public debate on Europe, the Minister proposed that contact be maintained with her Ministry on a regular basis throughout the Presidency. To this end, she indicated that Dr. Kyrle would be available and that a monthly meeting between him and two contact persons for the Churches (Prof. Dr. F. Eckert and Dr. R. Kneucker) would provide for useful exchange. This initiative marked a new development in this practice of contact with the Presidency. It remains to be seen if it can become an abiding characteristic of future Presidencies.

- 2.1.4. In pursuing the daily work of the secretariat and in the course of preparing 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.
- 2.1.5. Close working relations were maintained with the Group of Political Advisers (BEPA) to the President of the European Commission.
- 2.1.6. Staff members took part in the Briefing sessions organised by the Bureau of Political Advisers (BEPA) for the Church-linked offices in Brussels after the meetings of the European Council.
- 2.1.7. 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.
- 2.1.8. 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. At the request of the Executive Committee and of the Plenary Assembly the secretariat co-ordinated and contributed to the preparation of the document *A Treaty Establishing a Constitution for Europe, Elements for an Evaluation*. Intended as a aid to understanding the Constitution, it was prepared with input from Prof. Dr. S. Van Bijsterveld, (Tilburg, NL), Prof. Dr. G. Robbers,(Trier, D), Dr. F. Ronge, (DBK, Bonn, D), H. Lesaar and N. Treanor. It was presented to the March Plenary meeting and was adopted after debate and discussion. The document sets out (i) the parameters of the constitutional debate, (ii) provides an appreciative overview of its contents, particularly in regard to the values and objectives of the EU, the

inclusion of the European Charter of Fundamental Rights in part II, economic and social issues, asylum and migration issues, and the CSFP. A further section sets out and assesses the provisions on religion in the Constitution. This is followed by a section which attempts a social ethical evaluation of the text. Offering some remarks on the ratification process, the document notes the achievement of the Convention and IGC in finalising the text, whilst admitting shortcomings which can be overcome through debate and appropriate initiatives in the future.

The document was published on 11 March in English, French, Italian and German and distributed to the Bishops conferences and their services, to EU think-tanks and to the relevant EU institutions and personnel. It received much positive reaction and also provoked critical responses, particularly in France during the debate leading to the referendum.

2.2.2. The Vice Presidents contributed to the ratification debates in their respective countries, France and the Netherlands, where negative results were returned in referendums. In France, S. Lunte contributed to several public debates, discussion for and via interviews. Likewise members of the secretariat published articles and gave interviews to the media on the subject.

2.2.3. On 25 January a delegation of fourteen members of the French Bishops' conference, led by its President Archbishop J-P. Ricard, visited the EU institutions. The preparation of the programme was co-ordinated by the COMECE secretariat. The programme began with an exchange with the Permanent Representative of France to the EU, M. Pierre Sellal. There followed a visit to the European Parliament, where the discussions and debate concentrated on three issues: migration and asylum, the constitutional debate, and European external relations. In the afternoon sessions the bishops discussed issues on social policy (with M. J. Vignon, European Commission, DG Employment and Social Affairs) and the Lisbon strategy (with Mr. D. White, European Commission, DG Enterprise). The programme offered the bishops an opportunity to raise issues of concern for their fellow citizens with the Members of the European Parliament and with the civil servants of the European Commission. The useful nature of the discussions, as assessed by the participants and the Cellule Europe of the CEF, led to the decision to organise a second programme of exchange with French members of the European Parliament in the course of the year. This was realised on 14 December 2005 in Strasbourg. The programme included meetings with M. Joseph Daul MPE on the CAP, with M. J-M Cavada on asylum and immigration issues, with Mme Anna Zaborska, M. J. Kulakowski and M. Michel Rocard. The future of the constitutional debate was explored with M. Jo Leinen, President of the Constitutional Affairs Committee. The second day of this programme 15 December concentrated on the Council of Europe.

2.2.4. Throughout the year, in the field of research policy and bioethics, numerous individual meetings took place with MEPs dealing with these issues, particularly with Members of the relevant EP committees, in particular from the Committee for Industry, Research and Energy, the Committee on Environment, Public Health and Food Safety and the Legal Affairs Committee. Meetings were also held with officials of the European Parliament. Furthermore, several meetings took place with members of cabinets of Commissioners, among these the cabinet of the President of the Commission M. Barroso, Commissioner Potocnik, Commissioner Figel, Commissioner Barrot and Commissioner Ferrero-Waldner. Frequent meetings were held with members of the BEPA and members of the European Group on Ethics.

Members of the COMECE secretariat (Katharina Schauer and other members of staff as required) participated in a number of conferences and seminars organised by the European Commission, the European Parliament or MEPs. Chief among these were: 9-11 March 2006: a Conference organised by the European Commission "*Science in Society Forum 2005*"; Oral Contribution to the Workshop "*Science, Society and the Lisbon Strategy*": Presentation of the

COMECE document *"Strengthening the European social model - Ideas for a renewed Lisbon Strategy of the European Union"*; 6 June 2006: *"European Citizens Deliberation on Brain Science – European Stakeholder Workshop"*, organised by the King Baudouin Foundation, financed by the European Commission under the 6th Research Framework Programme; Oral Contribution; Written contribution to a questionnaire as follow-up to the stakeholder meeting (17 October 2005); 14 June 2006: Participation at a Symposium at the Hanns Seidel Stiftung together with MEPs: *"Reproductive Medicine and Stem Cell Research in Germany – Progress for patients within a strict ethical framework"* (Residence Palace); 15 June 2005: Informal meeting on bioethics in the European Parliament (organised by MEP Peter Liese and Hiltrud Breyer) on the Public Consultation organised by the European Commission, DG Enterprise: *"Tissue Engineering and beyond: Consultation on a proposal for a Regulation on advanced therapies"* (here a *Written Contribution of the COMECE secretariat to this Consultation*); 30 June 2005: Seminar in the European Parliament, organised by CORE (Comment on Reproductive Ethics) under the patronage of MEPs from different political groups (Adamou (GUE), Breyer (Greens), Blokland (ID), Martens (EPP), Svensson (GUE), Toia (ALDE), Zaborska (EPP): *"Human Egg Trading and the Exploitation of Women"*; 13 July 2005: Informal meeting on bioethics in the European Parliament on the 7th Research Framework Programme; 5 September 2005: meeting with Enzo Moavero-Milanesi, Deputy Secretary General of the European Commission in view of the forthcoming nominations of the new European Group on Ethics (EGE); 15-16 September 2005: *"Knowledge-based Bio-Economy Conference"*, organised by the European Commission; 9-10 November 2005: European Parliament conference: *"Forum on Freedom of Scientific Research in the EU"*, organised by MEPs (Emma Bonino inter alia); 12-13 December 2005: Conference *"Social sciences and humanities in Europe: New challenges, new opportunities"*, organised by the European Commission; 15-16 December 2005: *"Stem Cell Research – The Patients' Perspective"*, organised by the European Federation of Neurological Associations (EFNA) in association with the 6th Research Framework Programme with participation by Dr Matthias Beck (Assistant Professor University of Vienna) on panel on behalf of COMECE.

- 2.2.5. On Tuesday 12 July the President and the Secretary General took part in the meeting of Church and religious leaders with President José Manuel Barroso in the headquarters of the European Commission. This meeting, which took place in the aftermath of the London terrorist attack, was the first such meeting for President Barroso. He indicated his intention to pursue the spirit of dialogue set out in Art. I-52 of the Constitutional Treaty and to repeat the meeting on an annual basis. Numerous issues were discussed on the basis of the brief presentations made by the participants: the future of Europe debate, European citizenship, conjugating competitiveness and social cohesion in pursuing the aims of the Lisbon strategy, EU policy vis-à-vis the Balkans, migration and asylum policy. Members of M. Barroso's staff noted the speakers' contributions. A press statement was also prepared and presented at the daily press conference by President Barroso, standing together with the religious leaders.
- 2.2.6. In the field of **Legal Affairs**, the Secretariat of COMECE submitted contributions concerning the following issues: (i) letter 14 July 2005 to the European Commission, DG Employment, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities, concerning the forthcoming Communication on social and healthcare services (Com 2004, 374); letter on 17 August 2005 to the European Commission, DG Enlargement, and the Council of Ministers, High Representative for CFSP, concerning the unjustified detention of Metropolit Jovan in Macedonia (iii) letter on 5 December 2005 to the Council of Ministers concerning reduced VAT rates for work on historic places of worship (COM 2003, 397; A5/2003/410); (iv) Common view regarding the first reading of the Proposal for a

Directive on Services in the Internal Market in the plenary session of the European Parliament (COM 2004, 2; A6/2005/409)

- 2.2.7. In the area of **Social Policy** several discussions were held with EU officials in regard to the mid-term review of the Lisbon strategy, the Stability and Growth Pact, the financial perspectives 2006-2013. In respect to the latter issue, attention was also drawn to the COMECE document, *Solidarity is the Soul of the European Union* (24 April 2004). The future of the European social model was explored in numerous discussions with the EU services.
- 2.2.8. The **Global Governance Assessment 2004** (COMECE Documentation, Report No.7) was published in January 2005 and duly distributed to the EU institutions, the European Policy Centre and to Church organisations. Positive comments were received from several EU officials and members of Brussels based think-tanks. Despite the best efforts of the secretariat it did not prove possible to organise an appropriate public launching of the document.
- 2.2.9. In the area of **Human Rights and non-discrimination** the secretariat followed and made input regarding several initiatives: the Commission proposal in view of the Fundamental Rights Agency, COM (2005) 280, and the EP report on the same, (C6-0288/2005-2005/0124CNS); the proposal to establish a institute for Gender Equality (COM (2005) 81) and the relevant EP report, (C6-0083/2005). Information notes were also provided for the COMECE Plenary meetings on these issues.
- 2.2.10. In the field of **European migration and asylum policy** the COMECE Working group on migration together with Caritas Europa, the Church Council for Migrants in Europe (CCME), International Catholic Migration Commission (ICMC), the Jesuit Refugee Services Europe (JRS Europe) and the Quaker Council for European Affairs submitted written comments to the EU institutions concerning official documents and legal proposals: (i) Communication on The Hague Programme: Ten priorities for the next five years – The Partnership for European renewal in the field of Freedom, Security and Justice (COM 2005, 185); (ii) Discussion on the situation in the Spanish autonomous cities of Ceuta and Melilla (Justice and Home Affairs Council on 12 October 2005); (iii) Proposal for a Directive on common standards and procedures in Member States for returning illegally staying third-country nationals (COM 2005, 391).
- 2.2.11. Submissions were made to some of the consultations launched by the European Commission. Chief among these were: Human Tissue Engineering and Beyond, Proposal for a Community Regulatory Framework on Advanced Therapies; Green Paper on Successions and Testaments, (COM (2005) 65 final); Green Paper on Applicable Law and Jurisdiction on Divorce Matters, (COM (2005), 82 final); Green Paper on Demographic Change, (COM (2005) 94 final).
- 2.2.12. 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 debate on euthanasia (the Marty report Doc 10455, 9 February), the draft resolution on *Surrogacy motherhood as an alternative to sterility* (AS/Soc (2005 9 revised, 6 June 2005) and also on the resolution on *Women and Religion in Europe* (resolution 1464 (2005), dated 4 October). In co-operation with the Holy See Delegation the COMECE secretariat sought to assist the Bishops' Conferences of the Member States of the Council of Europe to undertake the necessary contacts. In this regard the COMECE secretariat also provided the Bishops' Conferences with information notes and proposals for action/intervention.

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 with three events. The first took place on 26, April, when Prof. Tomáš Halík, Charles University Prague, gave a lecture on *The Public Role of Religion in a United Europe – a Central European Perspective*. The second was held on 12 May when Archbishop Hippolyte Simon, Vice President of COMECE, introduced the text *The Evolution of the European Union, the Responsibility of Catholics*. Commissioner Jan Figel, responsible for Education, Training, Culture and Multilingualism, responded to the text and to Archbishop Simon's presentation. A lively discussion ensued. A further soirée took place on 01 December. This event was co-organised with the Délégation Catholique pour la Coopération (DCC) on the theme, *Quel volontariat pour quelles solidarités? - Engagement des jeunes chrétiens d'Europe à la rencontre des Eglises du Sud: le Volontariat de Solidarité Internationale*. The panel of speakers included Archbishop H. Simon, Archbishop Francois Garnier, Cambrai, Vice President of DCC, M. Jens Mester, European voluntary Service, European Commission, DG Education and Culture, Maria Errazuriz Coz, Colombia. Testimonies were given by several persons from developing countries. The presentations led to an intense debate with the audience.

4. INFORMATION SERVICE, PUBLICATIONS, LECTURES

- 4.1. The monthly review, *Europe-Infos*, produced in co-operation with the Jesuit Office OCIFE, was published monthly in French, English, German, 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, and 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. The latter referred to (i) the euthanasia debate in the Council of Europe, (ii) the European Commission's Green Paper on Applicable Law and Jurisdiction in Divorce matters, (iii) the Council of Europe resolution on

Surrogate Motherhood, (iv) the Council of Europe draft resolution on Women and Religion, (v) the Council of Europe draft recommendation Education and Religion, (vi) the EU 7th Research Framework Programme and specific projects (ethical issues), and (vii) on the domain name.eu

- 4.3. The document *The Evolution of the European Union, the Responsibility of Catholics*, was published on 9 May. The fruit of work carried out by a group of theologians under the chairmanship of Archbishop Hippolyte Simon and also of a consultation process, this document was translated from the original French into English, German, Hungarian, Italian, Polish and Portuguese. It was the subject of conferences and lectures in Member States.
- 4.4. 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 on the work of COMECE and on issues pertaining to EU policy, at conferences organised by Bishops' Conferences, universities and academic institutes.
- 4.5. In response to invitations and as their responsibilities in Brussels permitted, staff members took part in and addressed congresses seminars and study events in Brussels and throughout Europe. A selective overview of this aspect of the secretariat's work is reflected here: animation of a one day seminar on the Church and EU for Bishops Conference of Scotland, Scots College, Salamanca (10.01); lecture to Entraide d'Eglise, Brussels,(12.01); participation in meeting of socio-economic committee of the Commission for Social Affairs of the French Bishops' Conference Paris, (31.01); intervention IUPAX, Vienna,(20.01); presentation to an international group of students (50) from Lumen Vitae, Brussels, (21.01); presentation of COMECE and its work to a delegation from the Church of Sweden, Brussels, (28.01); participation in meeting of European laity initiative, Barcelona (28-30.01); presentation to a group of the Communauté St. Martin, Brussels, (31.01); presentation to a group (20) from Italy, COMECE secretariat, Brussels, (01.02); presentation to European Commission DG EAC consultation on Active Citizenship, Brussels, (03.02); presentation to KNA group, Brussels, (09.02); presentation to a delegation of the Serbian Orthodox Church, COMECE secretariat, (14.02); participation in study-day, Kirche und Politik, Vienna, (15.02); OSCE panel of experts on Religious Freedom, Warsaw, (21-22.02); presentation to training course at the Kardinal König Academy, Vienna, (22-25.02); presentation to Association Sablaise pour la promotion de la culture, COMECE secretariat, 24.02); participation in the Essener Gespräche, Essen, (27-28.02); presentation to plenary session of the Hungarian Bishops' Conference, Budapest, (01.03); animation of a study day on the Church and the EU for the Capuchin Provincials of Great Britain and Ireland, High Wycombe, UK, (02.03); presentation to Forum Européen des Femmes, Brussels, (04.03); participation in Europakommission of the Austrian Bishops' Conference, Vienna, (14-15.03); presentations to a group (45) from Slovakia, COMECE secretariat, (04.04); presentation to Caritas Europa Working Group on Service Directive, Brussels, (08.04); presentation of COMECE work in view of the European Convention and Constitutional Treaty, Malta, (08.04); presentation to meeting of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of England and Wales, Leeds, (12.04); presentation to a group from Caritas Italiana, COMECE secretariat, (27.04); presentation and participation in ICCS seminar, *Education that takes account of Religion*, Strasbourg, (28.04); animation of study-day for the Conseil Episcopal of the Archdiocese of Brussel-Mechelen, Mechelen, (29.04); presentation to Diaconia of the Lutheran Church of Finland, Brussels, (29.04); lecture on Constitutional Treaty, Rouen, (F), (02.5); lecture on Constitutional Treaty, Dijon, (03.05); lecture on Church and EU Social Policy, Attnang-Puckheim, (A), (04.05); lecture on the Constitutional treaty, Monastère de Chatelle, (F), (06.05); lecture on Responsibility of Christians in public life, Chapelle van Maerlant, Brussels, (06.05); presentation to a delegation of the Churches in Sweden on Values

– ethical and spiritual – in the European treaties, Brussels, (09.05); participation in ATTAC public debate on the European Constitutional treaty, (F), (09.05); presentation to EYCE training seminar, Human Rights on the defensive, Brenna, (PL), (16-17.05); animation of study-day on the Church and the EU at Plenary meeting of the Bishops' Conference of Greece, Thessaloniki, (19.05); lecture in Kardinal Hengsbach Haus, Essen (19.05); lecture to a conference on Freedom of Religion and Equal Opportunities in the EU and in Hungary, Catholic University, Budapest, (20.05); presentation to Educational Programme Directors of the dioceses of Austria, COMECE secretariat, (20.05); presentation of COMECE and its work to Bishop Rosa Chavez, Auxiliary Bishop of San Salvador, COMECE secretariat, (27. 05); participation and contribution to Stakeholder conference on Brain Science, Brussels, (06.06); participation in the OSCE meeting on Anti-Semitism and other forms of intolerance, Cordoba, (08-09.06); participation in symposium on Reproductive Medicine and Stem Cell Research in Germany, Hans Seidel Foundation, Brussels, (14.06); presentations to seminar for Diözesanrat of the Archdiocese of Köln, (37), COMECE secretariat, Brussels, (15.06); discussion and input to programme, organised by the Konrad Adenauer Foundation, for members of the political (Christian Democratic) opposition in Venezuela, Brussels, (20.06); presentations to the programme for the Catholic Political interns at Westminster Parliament, COMECE secretariat, Brussels (21-23.06); presentation to Bishops' Conference of Russia, COMECE secretariat, (24.06); lecture to meeting of Dirigeants et entrepreneurs chrétiens, Brussels, (29.06); presentation on the Hague programme, Caritas Europa, Bad Honnef (D), (01-02.07); presentation of COMECE work on asylum policy, Quaker conference, Brussels, ((07.07); participation in European Commission Hearing, Confronting Demographic Change, Brussels, (11.07); participation in EPC study seminar, Governance –Made in Africa, EPC, Brussels, (12.07); presentation to Caritas Europa group, COMECE secretariat, (14.07); participation in work of preparatory group for Katholikentag, Frankfurt, (15.07); presentation and participation in a colloquium Dieu et l'Europe, Puy en Velay, (F), (25.07); presence at the Weltjugendtag, Köln (15-16.08); presentation to Caritas seminar on Trafficking of Human Beings, Rome, (08.09); participation in the annual seminar The Role of the Church in European Integration, Cracow, (09-10.09); presentations to the CEEM seminar, Warsaw, (13-16.09); participation and presentations at the VI Gniezno Convention, Gniezno, (PL), (16-18.09); presentation to International Conference for Deacons, Freising, (22-23.09); presence and participation in the General Assembly and Study Days of the Conference of European Justice and Peace Commissions, on theme of Migrants Searching of Work in a Globalised World, S. domingos de Rana, (P), (23-27.09); presentation to annual seminar of the European Association of Christian Radios, Prague, (29.09-01.10); participation in meeting of European laity initiative, Bratislava, (06-08.10); lecture to seminar on Religious Education in Europe, Ev. Akademie, Berlin (06.10); lecture to study day of the KAAD, Strasbourg, (06.10); presentation of COMECE, its work, the Churches and the EU to a group (25) of priests from Slovakia, COMECE secretariat, (12.10); participation in meeting of Cellule Europe, Paris, (17.10); participation in IX Dialogue between Orthodox Churches and EPP-Ed Group, Istanbul, (20-21.10); presentation CCME meeting of the national directors for migrants, Zagreb, (20-21.10); presentations on Church and EU to a group (50) of trainee officers, Collège Interarmée de défense (F), COMECE secretariat, (20 & 21.10); presentation to the Joint Bioethics Committee of the Episcopal Conferences of England and Wales, Scotland, Ireland, Limerick, (IRL), (02-04.11); meeting with Archbishop of Canterbury, Most Rev. Dr. Rowan Williams, Brussels, (07.11); participation in inter-religious seminar to mark tenth anniversary of the Barcelona process, (03-05.11); lecture to Missionary Orders, Vienna, (21.11); presentations to the Plenary meeting of the Bishops' Conference of Slovenia, Ljubljana, (28-29.11); presentation to Bund Neudeutschland, COMECE secretariat, (02.12); participation in European Commission Hearing on Applicable Law and Jurisdiction in Divorce Matters, Brussels, (06.12.); presentation and participation in seminar on the EU, organised by the Konrad Adenauer

Foundation for a delegation of leaders of Churches in Serbia, Brussels (12-13.12); participation and presentation in meeting of representatives of the Churches with the Austrian Foreign Minister, Frau Dr. Plassnik, in view of the Austrian Presidency of the EU, Vienna, (14.12); participation in EPC breakfast lecture by Austrian Permanent Representative, Dr. G. Woschnagg on the priorities of the Austrian Presidency (19.12).

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. As indicated in the Annual Report 2004 (5.4.) and as reported to the Spring and Autumn Plenary Assemblies of COMECE, further indications of tendencies on the part of the political and school authorities to remove the teaching of religion from the syllabus of these schools were reported. A special Working Group for the review of the primary school syllabus was set up by the Conseil Supérieur; among its recommendations it proposed to place the teaching of religion in periods foreseen for leisure activities.
- 5.3. The Secretary General of COMECE was briefed on these and other developments regarding the teaching of religion in the European schools by the COMECE adviser for this field, Mme. C.Roba. Meetings were held on 13.01; 02.03; on 07.06 immediately before a meeting with Mr. M. Ryan (Conseil Supérieur); 08.09 and 21.12.
- 5.4. Meetings took place on several occasions at the COMECE secretariat to organise contact with the Conseil Supérieur (Mr. M. Ryan), to consult with the representatives of the Protestant and Orthodox Churches as well as with representatives of the Jewish faith and of Islam.

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, with the office of the Evangelische Kirche in Deutschland (EKD) and with offices such as CCME and Eurodiaconia.
- 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. 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.
- 6.4. The Secretary General took part in the IX Dialogue between the EPP-ED Group (European Parliament) and the Orthodox Churches, Istanbul, 20-21 October.

7. CO-OPERATION 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, St. Gallen, (CH), 26-30 May. The Vice-President (Bishop Adrianus Van Luyn) and the Secretary General of COMECE attended and reported on the work of COMECE to the CCEE Plenary meeting in Rome, 29.09 – 02.10.
- 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 Chartres, 03-06.02.
- 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. The Secretary General took part in and addressed the meeting of the Presidents of the Bishops' Conferences of South East Europe, Sarajevo, 24-26.02.
- 7.6. In accordance with decisions of the Executive Committee and Plenary meetings, members of the Presidium visited and made input to the Plenary meetings of the Hungarian and Slovenian Bishops' Conferences on the work of COMECE and on current issues in EU policy-making.
- 7.7. Circular letters were sent to the member bishops and secretariats of the Episcopal Conferences regarding policy issues to (i) provide information, and/or (ii) to suggest that appropriate contact be made with national politicians or (iii) to request input to EU consultation processes.

8. LOOKING FORWARD TO 2006

- 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. In accordance with the decision of the Autumn Plenary 2005 in response to a proposal from the President and 2005 Plenary of CCEE, a meeting will be held with the Presidium of CCEE to consider how best to determine the relationship between CCEE and COMECE in the future.
- 8.3. The COMECE Plenary meetings will be organised in spring and autumn. The 2006 Spring Plenary will mark the end of the three year mandate of the current Presidium. Elections will be held to elect a President and two Vice Presidents.
- 8.4. 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.

- 8.5. Thought will be given to creating a *comité de pilotage* to assist in preparations for the seminar (Clermont) and the Congress (Rome, March 2007) to mark the fiftieth anniversary of the Treaty of Rome. The creation of a *Comité des Sages* will also be considered.
- 8.6. The Global Governance Assessment for 2005 will be prepared, printed and published. Every effort will be made to arrange for a public launching in co-operation with a think-tank, such as, the European Policy Centre in order to bring the original report and the assessment reports of previous years to the attention of a wider public involved in the EU and other political and business circuits.
- 8.7. A meeting of the Presidents of the Social Affairs Commissions of the Bishops' Conferences of the Member States of the EU will be organised in late May to explore and comment on issues in EU social policy on the basis of Catholic Social thought.
- 8.8. COMECE will be represented at the launching of the Third European Ecumenical Assembly in Rome, January 2006.
- 8.9. A meeting of the Joint Committee COMECE- Commission for Church and Society will be held on 13 January.
- 8.10. Ethical and bio-ethical issues arising in the field of EU Research policy will be monitored closely.
- 8.11. 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.
- 8.12. The secretariat will monitor carefully developments in regard to the teaching of religion in the European schools and initiatives will be taken to defend its place on the syllabus. A meeting will be held with the Conseil Supérieur; contacts will be pursued with national authorities.
- 8.13. The COMECE secretariat will be represented at a meeting of the Presidents of the Bishops' Conferences of South-East Europe, Corfou, 02-04 March 2006.
- 8.14. COMECE will be represented at the co-ordination meeting of Bishops' Conferences regarding the Holy Land, Jerusalem, 14-19 January 2006.
- 8.15. The text, *Le Devenir de l'Union Européenne, La Responsabilité des Catholiques*, will be published by Bayard Presse; the acta of the COMECE-USCCB seminar will also be published.

N. Treanor
17.03.2006