



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

COMECE

ANNUAL REPORT

2006



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INTRODUCTION

March 2006 marked the end of Bishop Josef Homeyer's three mandates as President of COMECE. His dedication to the mission of the COMECE in the service of the Church in Europe and his commitment to the development of the European project were celebrated on the occasion the Spring Plenary meeting in Brussels. Throughout the year and particularly in its second half the secretariat worked intensively on the COMECE plans to mark the fiftieth anniversary of the treaties of Rome (March 2007): the organisation of a preparatory seminar in Clermont-Ferrand in October 2006 and the planning of a congress in Rome for 23-25 March 2007.

As in former years its secretariat followed closely the work of the EU in the framework of the Presidencies of the European Council, assured by Austria in the first six months of the year and by Finland as of 1 July. Meetings between the Churches and both Presidencies took place, as reported below. It monitored the Working Programme of the European Commission and the evolution of relevant political and legislative initiatives in the EU institutional process.

From its inception the Commission of the Bishop's Conferences of the European Community (COMECE) has monitored the evolution of European policy-making by the European Communities / European Union institutions. It is also tasked with making input to the European Union institutions in a range of policy areas. It fulfils this mission on behalf of the Bishop's Conferences in the Member States of the European Union.

To this end throughout the year 2006 COMECE continued to provide meeting points with EU officials through a range of activities: the two annual Plenary meetings, the meeting of the Executive Committee, initiatives undertaken by its Bishop members in their respective countries, the monthly publication *Europe Infos* and through of a range of activities involving the EU institutions on the one hand and exchanges and encounters with groups and 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 Bishop's 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 collaborated with the Apostolic Nunciature to the European Union, with Catholic organisations which liaise with the EU and indeed with the offices of the other Churches in Brussels.

The concluding section of the Annual Report for 2005 listed a series of initiatives to be carried forth in the course of 2006, 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) 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.
- (iii) 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.

- (iv) 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.
- (v) 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.
- (vi) 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.
- (vii) 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.
- (viii) COMECE will be represented at the launching of the Third European Ecumenical Assembly in Rome, January 2006.
- (ix) A meeting of the Joint Committee COMECE- Commission for Church and Society will be held on 13 January.
- (x) Ethical and bio-ethical issues arising in the field of EU Research policy will be monitored closely.
- (xi) 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.
- (xii) 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.
- (xiii) 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.
- (xiv) COMECE will be represented at the co-ordination meeting of Bishops' Conferences regarding the Holy Land, Jerusalem, 14-19 January 2006.
- (xv) 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.

This report indicates that the objectives thus set out for 2006 were achieved with the exception of the publication of the Acta of the COMECE-USCCB seminar. In the course of the year further initiatives were undertaken in response to the EU agenda.

Austria assumed the EU Presidency on 1 January and sought to advance the Council's three year strategic programme. Thus its work programme gave priority to the Lisbon Agenda with aspiration to pushing forward the notion of a European 'life model'. It pledged to give particular attention to the Balkans, to re-launch the debate on European values with initiatives such as the conference entitled "The Sound of Europe" held in Salzburg on 27 January. This Presidency would also host the EU-Latin America summit in April. Finland took over from Austria on 1 July. Its work programme focused inter alia

on enlargement (final decision was confirmed during this Presidency on the accession of Romania and Bulgaria on 1 January 2007), the constitutional treaty debate, the Lisbon agenda, environment, energy policy, transparency issues, education, culture and youth policies and justice and internal issues with particular reference to migration policy.

Throughout 2006 both in its plenary sessions and through its secretariat COMECE 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.

As in former years this report sets out the main activities carried out by COMECE in the course of the year. 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 and giving cohesion to the new and enlarged European Union

1. COMECE FROM WITHIN

1.1. The President

- 1.1.1. In the last three months of his Presidency Bishop Josef Homeyer led the COMECE with loyal determination. He encouraged the secretariat to follow the debate on the future of the treaty establishing a constitution for Europe, the enlargement dossier with particular reference to EU policy in regard to the Balkans, the EU neighbourhood policy, EU relations with Russia, energy policy, migrations policy, research policy and attendant ethical issues. He chaired a meeting of the Executive Committee at his residence in Hildesheim on 16 January 2006. On 22-23 March he chaired the plenary session and delivered his final address on the challenges facing the EU and their implications for the Church's mission in European society.
- 1.1.2. Bishop Josef Homeyer was elected to succeed Charles-Amarin Brand, Archbishop of Strasbourg, as the fifth President of COMECE at the COMECE plenary meeting 12-13 November 1993 (cf. Europe Infos, no. 80, March 2006, p. 6-7). In the aftermath of the treaty of Maastricht and in the context of post 1989 Europe he successfully set about strengthening the capacity of COMECE to respond to the process of integration and the reunification of Europe. In his visits to the Presidents of the European Commission and of the European Parliament, European civil servants and members of the European Parliament he was at all times an informed and challenging partner in discussion. In these encounters he both espoused and gave proof of the creative and inspirational contribution of a faith-based analysis to the public debate in the political arena. His espousal of treaty based provisions to provide for an open dialogue between Church and the European institutions over the years of his service as President would eventually see fruit in the treaty establishing a constitution for Europe (art. 1-52), signed in Rome on 29 October 2004.
- 1.1.3. During the plenary meeting, on Friday 24 March 2006, Adrianus van Luyn s.d. b., Bishop of Rotterdam, delegate of the Dutch bishops' conference and Vice President of COMECE for two mandates (since November 1999), was elected President. The bishops of COMECE then proceeded to the election of two Vice Presidents: Archbishop Diarmuid Martin (Dublin) and Bishop Piotr Jarecki, Auxiliary Bishop, Warsaw.

1.2. The Executive Committee

- 1.2.1. The Executive Committee – Bishop Josef Homeyer, Bishop Adrianus van Luyn and Archbishop Hippolyte Simon - held the last meeting of their mandate in Hildesheim on 16 January 2006. The agenda for this meeting included the following: a discussion of the priorities of EU policy at the time, identification of issues among the aforementioned for input from the Church, the relationship between COMECE and CCEE, preparation of the 2006 Spring plenary meeting. Reports were also given on a series of initiatives in which COMECE was involved in late 2005 : a visit by the President and Secretary General to the Slovenian Bishops' conference on 29 November 2005 ; a visit at the behest of Bishop Homeyer by the Serbian Orthodox Church to Brussels including a seminar on 12 December 2005 ; a meeting between the Churches (COMECE, Commission for Church and Society of the CEC) and the Austrian Presidency on 14 December 2005 ; a visit and study programme in Strasbourg (14-15 December) - to meet with members of the European Parliament and thereafter with officials of the Council of Europe - for a group of French bishops.
- 1.2.2. The first meeting of the Executive Committee elected on 24 March 2006 took place at the COMECE secretariat in Brussels on 31 May 2006. The members of Committee recalled the mission of COMECE and on this basis of documentation provided by the secretariat they considered the challenges facing the EU for the coming three years. They reviewed the working methods for the Plenary sessions, the Executive Committee and the secretariat and the Commissions and Working Groups. They considered and approved a statement on the outcome of the Competitiveness Council meeting on the Seventh Framework Research Programme. At the behest of the secretariat they received an outline paper on aspects of the EU energy policy, prepared by Fr. Henri Madelin s.j., as a basis to consider if and how COMECE might address this issue and its numerous social ethical dimensions. An introduction was given to the planned European Year of inter-cultural dialogue as a basis for considering how COMECE might make input to the same. The President and Vice-Presidents were appraised of the preparations for the March 2007 Congress in Rome.
- 1.2.3. A second meeting of the Executive Committee took place at the same venue on 20 September 2006. In the opening session the Committee discussed a series of recent and imminent activities : the COMECE summer university, held in Seggau, Graz in 02-16 September ; then forthcoming evening lectures in the secretariat ; the secretariat and staff requirements. A report was given on the meeting on 30 May 2006 between the President of the European Commission José Manuel Barroso and the President in office of the European Council, Wolfgang Schäuble, and representatives of the Churches and religions. Mr. Barroso had initiated this "summit" meeting in 2005 in the spirit of article I-52 of the treaty establishing a constitution for Europe. It was reported that Mr. Schäuble had indicated that he intended to suggest to Bundeskanzlerin Angela Merkel that a similar meeting might take place during the German Presidency of the EU in the first half of 2007. The matter was discussed by the Executive Committee with Professor Hans-Gert Poettering, leader of the EPP-ED group in the European Parliament. He expressed regret that the President of the European Parliament was not involved. He indicated that if he should be elected President to the Parliament in January 2007, he would offer to take part in any further meeting at that level, thus associating the three core EU institutions with dialogue with Churches and religious communities at this level. The Committee also considered a draft document on issues attendant on an EU energy policy. Other topics on the agenda were: migration and development, follow-up to the COMECE Global Governance initiative, preparations for the seminar in Clermont-Ferrand (October 2006) and for the Congress in Rome (March 2007) and the preparation of the autumn Plenary meeting.

- 1.2.4. A third meeting of the Executive Committee took place on 22 November in Brussels. Scheduled for the morning of the opening day of the Plenary session, its agenda focused on the programme for the Plenary. Having discussed its content and procedure, the President and Vice-Presidents then received an initial report on the seminar held in Clermont Ferrand on 9-11 October on the origins and significance of the treaties of Rome. Thereafter they discussed a range of issues linked to the preparation of the Congress to be held in March 2007 to mark the fiftieth anniversary of the treaties of Rome.

1.3. THE PLENARY MEETINGS

- 1.3.1. The Spring meeting took place in Brussels on 22-24 March 2006. The president delivered an opening address on the state of the EU, focusing on current policy issues, considerations arising from the financial perspective of the EU, issues attendant on EU enlargement policy with particular reference to the Balkans. He concluded by encouraging his colleagues to pursue the work of COMECE on behalf of the Episcopal conferences in the Member States in the years ahead. His presentation was followed by a round table discussion in which the members of COMECE outlined the state of public opinion in their respective countries on range of issues: the constitutional debate, inter-religious relations and dialogue in the context of the caricatures of Mohammed in the Danish daily, *Jyllands Posten*, and issues related to migration and integration.

The theme chosen for the meeting – “*Le dialogue interculturel et interreligieux après les caricatures de Mohammed et les réactions à leur publication*” - arose from the Europe-wide discussion and reaction to the aforementioned caricatures. Deliberations on this theme were initiated by a discussion among the bishops themselves. Thereafter contributions were made by two EU officials: firstly by M. Julian Vassallo, a specialist in the Mediterranean area and in Middle Eastern affairs and a member of the political planning unit assisting the EU High Representative Mr. Javier Solana and subsequently by M. Richard Kuehnel, a member of the cabinet of Commissioner Benita Ferrero-Waldner, responsible for External policy and EU Neighbourhood policy. A third presentation on the subject was made by Joachim Fritz-Vannahme, a journalist with “Die Zeit”. On the evening on Thursday 23 March the Austrian Secretary of State of External Affairs, Hans Winkler, addressed the plenary on the Austrian Presidency and on its initiatives in the sphere of intercultural dialogue. He stressed the specific contribution of inter-religious dialogue to the former. The President outlined a series of initiative which COMECE aimed to carry out in the context of 2008 the European year of inter-cultural dialogue.

The meeting dealt with a draft statement for Europe Day, 9 May, with preparations for the COMECE summer university in September 2006 and with the planning of the Congress to mark the fiftieth anniversary of the treaties of Rome, scheduled for 23-25 March 2007. The Plenary was appraised of the secretariat’s work in regard to a range of issues on the agenda of the European Commission, the European Parliament and Council.

The Annual Report of COMECE’s activities in 2005 was presented. It also included a list of activities to be pursued in the course of 2006.

The President of CCEE, Bishop Amédée Grab, and Mons. Aldo Giordano, general secretary of CCEE outlined the chief activities of CCEE for the forthcoming year and informed the assembly

of preparations for the Third European Ecumenical Assembly, to take place in Sibiu, Romania, 04-09 September 2007.

To celebrate Bishop Josef Homeyer's service to COMECE and to mark the end of his Presidency a soirée and reception was organised in the Representation of Baden-Wurtemberg. The subject chosen for the event, *Religion and Politics in Europe*, was designed to celebrate Bishop Homeyer's interest and engagement with the issue and to link with the main theme of the plenary meeting. The evening was opened by Commissioner Jacques Barrot, Vice-President of the European Commission. Addresses were given by two further guest speakers. Tadeusz Mazowiecki, President of the Polish Robert Schuman Foundation, former Prime Minister of Poland and a long-time friend of Bishop Homeyer spoke on : *Europe and its nations – the significance of Churches for European identity*. Archbishop Michael Fitzgerald, Apostolic Nuncio in Egypt, former President of the Pontifical Council for Inter-Religious Dialogue, spoke on the subject of *Europe, Politics and Inter-Religious Dialogue*.

Drawing this part of the programme to a close Bishop Adrianus Van Luyn, Vice President, recapitulated Bishop Homeyer's work within COMECE, his boundless energy in pursuit of its mission, his commitment to ecumenical cooperation with the Orthodox Churches and the Churches of the Reform. He thanked Bishop Homeyer on behalf of all the COMECE bishops and presented Bishop Homeyer with a travel voucher for a pilgrimage to Jerusalem on behalf of COMECE. Archbishop Hippolyte Simon then spoke of his work as Vice President with Bishop Homeyer. He recalled some of the major EU dossiers followed in recent years. He then presented a gift of a chasuble to Bishop Homeyer and invited its creator, the Dominican artist, Fr. Kim En Joong, o.p., who presented a similar chasuble to Pope John Paul II on the occasion of the twenty fifth anniversary of his pontificate, to offer comments.

- 1.3.2. The autumn Plenary meeting was held in Brussels on 22-24 November 2006. By way of preparation for the March 2007 Congress, the meeting took as its principal theme, *De Messine en 1955 à Berlin en 2007*. In his opening address the President, Bishop Adrianus Van Luyn, focused on the constitutional debate and the need for a European core treaty, the borders of the EU and its relations with its neighbours, the EU as a community of values with its internal and external policy domains in harmony with those values. He ended his address by elucidating how COMECE through its various activities attempts to act as a partner in furthering the European and world wide common good.

M. Philippe de Schoutheete, former Permanent Representative of Belgium to the EU, outlined the work of the Comité des Sages on a report to the Bishops of COMECE on the Ethical Dimension of European integration for the occasion of the fiftieth anniversary of the treaties of Rome. He reported on the composition of the group, recalled that due to illness former Commissioner Loyola de Palacio was not able to chair the group, that another former Commissioner Marcelino Oreja had accepted, that he P. de Schoutheete and Sir Stephen Wall, former Permanent Representative of the UK to the EU were co-secretaries. He outlined the structure of the document and pointed to some of the areas of debate among the members. He indicated that the text should be completed by mid-January to leave time for translation and printing.

An evening lecture and reception was organised on 22 November. Professor Dr. Wil Arts of Tilburg University presented the Atlas of European Values, based on the EVS. The evening was attended by numerous guests including a group of officers from the Collège interarmées de France, taking part in an information visit to the EU institutions in Brussels. As in 2005 their

programme offered a visit to the secretariat of COMECE as an example of one interest group liaising with the EU.

The second day of the proceedings included three presentations: Professor Jan-Willem Brouwer, university of Nijmegen, spoke on the Dutch Minister and banker Johan Willem Beyen – the father of the Common Market. Professor V. Dujardin, UCL, spoke on the figure and role of Paul-Henri Spaak as a founding father of the EC. Professor Dr. Hans-Gert Poettering, President of the EPP-ED group in the European Parliament addressed the bishops on the challenges of and objectives of the Berlin Declaration planned for the March summit during the German Presidency of the EU.

With these presentations in mind the bishops considered a draft for a COMECE statement in view of the Berlin declaration and identified points for amendment. The text was duly adopted in the course of the meeting.

Reports were given by Archbishop Hippolyte Simon on the seminar in Clermont-Ferrand (09-11 October 2006) and by the secretariat on the plans for the Congress to take place in Rome in March 2007.

On Friday 24 November the meeting worked on a series of EU policy issues being followed by COMECE and its secretariat : an EU energy policy, EU research policy, 2008 the year of inter-cultural dialogue, fundamental rights in the EU, the forthcoming stock-taking of social realities initiative, demography and family friendly policy, migration and development issues, enlargement policy. In the afternoon session the secretary General presented a series of eleven reports on COMECE work in a range of policy fields, giving essential information and answering any questions raised.

The Vice-President of CCEE, Cardinal Josip Bozanić and Mons. Aldo Giordano, secretary general of CCEE presented a report of CCEE activities and updated the COMECE bishops on the preparation of the programme for the Third Ecumenical Assembly in Sibiu, September 2007.

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

- 1.4.1. The Bishop members of COMECE, each a delegate of his episcopal conference, are ex officio members of the *Association des Episcopats de la Communauté Européenne, Association sans but lucrative*, AISBL, under Belgian law, the legal figure of COMECE.
- 1.4.2. The *Conseil d'Administration* held meetings, as did the *Assemblée Générale*, in accordance with the statutes of the AISBL. These meeting were held in the months of March and November.

1.5. ADMINISTRATION

- 1.5.1. The administrative dimensions of the COMECE and its secretariat were assured by the Secretary General, who was duly assisted in this respect as indicated in section 1.6.6. of this report.

- 1.5.2. Significant time was devoted to the advancement of the dossier regarding the property and new seat of the secretariat at Sq. de Meeûs, held as ADJUVA s.a., established on 05.12.2006. The Inter-diocesan Centre (of the Belgian Bishops' conference) assisted the General Secretary in co-ordinating this dossier, thus assuring a vital linking of the project with the local Church.

1.6. THE SECRETARIAT

- 1.6.1. All members of the staff were involved in preparing and achieving the activities and events described in this report.
- 1.6.2. 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.
- 1.6.3. Clare Coffey, who had taken up the position of Press officer for an interim period, was offered a position in the UK in January 2006. She left the services of COMECE in early April, kindly agreed to continue producing the review *Europe Infos* until a successor was found. Several interviews were conducted. Mlle. Johanna Touzel took up the position in June 2006.
- 1.6.4. Dr. Johanna Lopatowska, a Polish lawyer, joined the staff in May. Inter alia she monitors Human Rights issues, non-discrimination and equal opportunity measure. Monique Baujard, a Dutch lawyer, joined the staff in October. She will act as the secretariat's European Parliament officer and will follow issues related to migration policy.
- 1.6.5. The secretariat was assisted in the course of the year by voluntary interns : Marina Febo (ITL / 09.01- 10.02) ; Frederike Naujokat (D/ pupil/ 23.02 – 27.02) ; Dr. iur. Joanna Łopatowska-Rynkowska (PL/ 13.02 -) ; Sr. Christine Pousset (F/ 30.01. – 26.05) ; Louise Hill (IRL/ 02.05 – 30.06) ; Daniel Hissnauer (D / 01.08 – 31. 10).

1.7 COMMISSIONS AND WORKING GROUPS

- 1.7.1 The **Commission for Legal Affairs** held meetings on 24 February and on 26 October. Both meetings began with reports by the members on legal policy issues of current concern to the Church in the Member States represented.

The meeting of 24 February was given an update on the evolution of the period of reflection and the European Commission's so-called Plan D in respect of the constitutional debate. The lack of a real debate in most member states was noted. Members were informed that COMECE would prepare a statement for Europe Day, 9 May 2006. Thereafter information was provided on a series of current policy fields: the legislative proposal for the creation of the Fundamental Rights Agency (COM 2005, 280) ; a proposal for a regulation on the creation a European Institute for equality between men and women (COM 2005, 81) ; a proposal for a directive to modify the directive 77/388/CEE concerning the reduction of VAT tax (COM 2003, 397) ; a directive relative to services in the internal market, (COM 2004, 2). Members were informed on the state of play in respect of these dossiers and of the work carried out by the secretariat in regard to each. At the invitation of the secretariat Mr. Marcel Haag, an official of the General Secretariat of the European Commission, gave a presentation on the state of play regarding the preparation of a Communication by the European Commission on services of general interest. A dossier followed closely long since by the COMECE secretariat, the members engaged Mr.

Haag in a lively debate underlining the specific nature of services provided by the Churches, charities and religious organisations in the Member States. Particular attention was given to health and social services in the discussions. In the afternoon members worked on the proposal for a regulation on jurisdiction, applicable law, recognition and enforcement of decisions and co-operation in matters relating to maintenance obligations (COM 2005, 0649). In the final session M. Jorge Bento Silva, an official at the European Commission's Directorate General JAI presented the Commission's Communication on recruitment of terrorists (COM 2005, 313). Legal issues were raised and a discussion took place on the contribution of inter-religious dialogue to integration and to working against some of the sources of terrorism. A written report of the proceedings was submitted to the March Plenary meeting.

The opening session of the meeting held on 26 October 2006 was dedicated to an exchange of information concerning legal issues of importance for the local Churches. The members from Poland and Austria reported on problems concerning the implementation of the Council Framework Decision (13 June 2002) on the European arrest warrant. It was underlined that this issue is important as it shows that changes in the domestic constitutional law can be imposed by the EC law. In the Netherlands the second chamber of the Parliament has voted for granting wages for religion teachers in state schools. In Belgium the Bishops are concerned about the financial consequences of territorial reorganisation of the parishes. Italy is engaged in legal debates on euthanasia and de facto unions (cohabitation). The UK struggles with the discussions concerning faith schools, employment law within Churches and recent cases concerning faith symbols in public (Muslim headscarf, cross). In France the Bishops published a text in view of the forthcoming presidential elections in which they emphasise their concerns about the lack of 'fraternité' in society.

In view of the future German Presidency and its task of pursuing the constitutional debate, the 50th anniversary of the Treaty of Rome was discussed. On that occasion, in March 2007, the Heads of State and Government plan to adopt a declaration on the values and ambitions of the EU. It was noted that COMECE would monitor its preparation and submit a contribution.

Members were updated on the debate concerning the *European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights* [COM (2005)280] and the *European Institute for Gender Equality* [COM (2005)81]. As regards the European Institute for Gender Equality it was emphasised that since the EC legislation does not provide a definition of "gender" it may lead to complications as this notion is often confused with the concept "sex". Special attention should be given to avoid duplication of work between those two institutions.

The members were also updated on the *Directive on services in the internal market* [COM (2004)2], on recent developments in the LIBE Committee (European Parliament) and on the forthcoming vote in plenary scheduled for November 2006. Despite presenting a draft Recommendation for the Second Reading, the rapporteur Mrs E. Gehardt, MEP, withdrew her amendments in order to avoid any threat to the existing compromise. The Commission also discussed the wording of a first, unofficial proposal for a formulation in the declaration of Commissioner McCreevy on the exemption of social services provided by churches. The Commission members proposed a modification on this formulation in order to ensure that the exclusion covers also social services which the Churches provide autonomously and in their own right. The members agreed that the fact that churches are explicitly mentioned in the declaration to the Directive is already a good starting point, giving some hope for future legislative effect. It was noted that the declaration will not be legally binding but may be useful for the interpretation of the Directive.

Mr Raymond Maes (DG Employment, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities) presented the *Communication implementing the Community Lisbon programme: Social services of general interest in the European Union* [COM (2006)177]. Mr Maes stressed that the Commission does not intend to liberalise the market of social services, although he acknowledged that the distinction between economic and non-economic services has an important impact on the ongoing discussion. The Commission devotes its special attention to modernisation of the social services, not just in financial terms, but in a broader sense. The Commission members underlined the need to take account of the specificities of social services when discussing their modernisation through effectiveness, liberalisation or privatization. Mr Maes also presented the *Questionnaire on Social Services of General Interest* which was published by the European Commission in order to launch the consultation process announced in the Communication. The members of the COMECE Legal Affairs Commission agreed to send their responses to the questionnaire to the COMECE Secretariat by 12 December 2006.

The European Commission's *Communication on Consultation regarding Community action on health services* [SEC (2006)1195/4] was presented by the secretariat. A public consultation was launched on 26 September 2006 and aims to promote cross-border access to healthcare services. The European Court of Justice has handed down decisions on several cases concerning health services during the last years. The Commission plans to develop a more systematic approach on the basis of this jurisprudence. In order to prepare for a legislative proposal the Commission set out 10 questions which were presented to the group. It was agreed that contributions to the consultation should be sent to the COMECE Secretariat by 10 January 2007.

The Commission Members were informed about the unpublished *Green Paper on Adapting labour law to ensure flexibility and security for all* which has been prepared by the DG Employment, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities. Its official publication has been postponed to November 2006. Its content will be discussed in the course of the next meeting in January.

The Commission Members were also informed about the Green Paper on conflict of laws in matters concerning matrimonial property regimes, including the question of jurisdiction and mutual recognition [COM (2006) 400], published in July 2006. Members were reminded that the deadline for the submission of contributions to the consultation will expire on 30 November 2006.

Mr. Meyer-Cabri van Amelrode (German Permanent Representation to the EU) presented the priorities of the forthcoming German Presidency in the field of judicial cooperation concerning family matters. In particular he emphasised two legislative initiatives: the proposal for a *Regulation amending Regulation (EC) No 2201/2003 as regards jurisdiction and introducing rules concerning applicable law in matrimonial matters* [COM (2006) 0399] and the proposal for a *Regulation on jurisdiction, applicable law, recognition and enforcement of decisions and co-operation in matters relating to maintenance obligations* [COM (2005) 0649]. Mr. Meyer-Cabri underlined that issues concerning family law were chosen as one of the future Presidency priorities because family matters are of great importance for EU citizens. Facilitating their lives in different practical aspects may bring the idea of European integration closer to EU citizens. It was emphasised that the legislation does not aim to harmonise the substantive family law of the member states and that no member state will be forced to change its divorce legislation. Nevertheless since the application of foreign law in domestic courts remains a controversial issue, the introduction of procedural rules concerning family matters will certainly stimulate an EU wide debate. A report of the proceedings on the above lines was submitted to the autumn plenary meeting.

1.7.2 Issues in EU **Social Policy** were the focus for two meetings during the course of the year. On 17 January 2006 a meeting took place at the COMECE secretariat of the secretaries of the Social Affairs Commissions of Bishops' conferences in the member states of the EU. The meeting opened with an exchange on the recent activities and current initiatives of the episcopal conferences present. This was deemed a particularly enriching part of the meeting. Participants registered a wish that future meetings should include adequate provision for this type of exchange and sharing of information. Mr. Paolo Giusta, an official of the strategic programme and planning unit of the General Secretariat of the European Commission, presented the European Commission's Work Programme for 2006. He focused especially on the sections dealing with social, economic and environmental policies. This served as a basis for discussing the initiatives the COMECE secretariat might take in response to the Work Programme and provided the background for planning the meeting for Bishops responsible for social affairs in the national bishops' conferences. Sr. Laurence Loubières, Financière Meeschaert, joined the meeting to make a presentation on ethical investment.

On 30 May a meeting of Bishops responsible for Social Affairs issues in the bishops' conferences took place at the COMECE secretariat. The President of COMECE, Bishop Adrianus van Luyn, chaired the meeting. The theme chosen for the meeting was: *The Lisbon Strategy and Social Europe*. Representatives of twelve episcopates discussed priorities of the social ethical agendas of the EU episcopal conferences. In the course of the day, the bishops met with the EU commissioner for social and employment policy, Dr. Vladimir Spidla, as well as Prof José Manuel Garcia-Margallo y Marfil a member of the European Parliament from Spain and Josef Szajer, Member of the European Parliament, from Hungary.

The bishops had the occasion to exchange on current projects in their bishops' conferences in the area of social policy. A wide variety of issues were raised in the course of the discussion, indicating areas of common concern and matters of particular national interest. The recent publication of the Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church was considered by the bishops a good starting point for their own work.

Taking into account the challenges of a changing demography in Europe and the effects of globalisation, the final discussion addressed the question as to how the European Union might contribute to achieve efficient and financially sustainable social protection for those in need as an element of the European social model.

Whilst respecting the importance of the principle of subsidiarity, it was considered that every effort should be made at the European level to strengthen marriage and family. Specific attention should be paid to the question of what incentives could be given to businesses to accept social responsibility globally. Unemployment and the integration of migrants remain a major problem in most of the EU-member-states.

The participants' proposal that a further Study Day on Social Policy issues be organised in 2007 was discussed by the members of the COMECE Executive Committee on 31 May 2006. After reflection the Executive Committee decided that the bishops in charge of social ethical issues for the episcopal conferences in the member states should be invited to become members of the COMECE Social Affairs Commission. They also decided to invite Bishop Reinhard Marx, Bishop of Trier and delegate of the German Bishops' conference to COMECE, to become its President. The Social Affairs Commission will meet once each year. Furthermore a meeting of the secretaries of the Social Affairs Commissions of the episcopal conferences in the member states will be held.

- 1.7.3. The Spring session of the **Bioethics Reflection Group** took place on 4-5 May 2006. The following members of the group participated in the meeting: Prof. A. Autiero (Münster), Prof. S. Marcus-Helmons (Brussels), Father P. Verspieren SJ (Paris) as well as Mgr. Noel Treanor and Mrs Katharina Schauer. Prof. M. Dupuis (Brussels) was excused. In view of the central topic of the meeting Dr Aliko Nichogiannopoulou from the European Patent Office in Munich and Dr. Matthias Beck (Vienna), assistant to Prof. Virt, Member of the EGE, were invited.

The central topic was : Patents on human embryonic stem cells. This topic was of high interest on the EU agenda, being an area of EU competence due to the impact of patent law on the common market. Furthermore, the European Commission had explicitly identified in summer 2005 the issue as not having been resolved by Directive 98/44/EC on the legal protection of biotechnological inventions. In addition, several patent applications relating to human embryonic stem cells were pending before the European Patent Office or had been challenged on ethical grounds.

The first day of the two-day-meeting was dedicated to a presentation of the legal context of patents in the field of genetic engineering and of biotechnology by Mrs Schauer as well as to a presentation of Dr. Nichogiannopoulou regarding the difficulties of the application of Directive 98/44/CE. The presentation was followed by an in depth debate and analysis of the ethical implications of patents in this field.

On the second day a draft opinion --- was outlined by the members of the Group which was finalised electronically in the following weeks. Also, the members had an exchange about the developments in the bioethical debate on national and EU level.

The opinion of the Bioethics Reflection Group was presented to the COMECE-bishops and is available on the website of COMECE. It was sent to the European Patent Office as part of an Amicus Curie Letter drafted by the COMECE secretariat in October 2006.

The autumn session of the Bioethics Reflection Group took place on 17 October 2005. The following members of the group participated in the meeting: Prof. A. Autiero (Münster), Prof. M. Dupuis (Brussels), Prof. S. Marcus-Helmons (Brussels), as well as Mgr. Noel Treanor and Mrs Katharina Schauer. Father P. Verspieren SJ (Paris) was excused. Dr. Matthias Beck (Vienna) was invited to participate.

The central topic chosen for the meeting was: *the Ethical implications of nanomedicine*, an issue which was discussed in parallel by the European Group on Ethics (EGE). The COMECE secretariat considered it important to provide a contribution from a Church body to this emerging and innovative field of medicine which raises high hopes for many. At the same time it raises the question of safety (regarding unexpected damage to the human race and/or to the environment) as well as the issue of how to draw the line between therapy and enhancement. In general, it reveals the need for debate about the concrete application of the precautionary principle.

In the course of the meeting the group had an exchange about developments in bioethics at national and at EU level. (Belgium: Commercialisation of the human body and its parts, organ trafficking, neuro-ethics) Germany: new Ethics Council; Austria: living wills, EU: Debate on patents on biotechnological inventions, Commission proposal for a regulation on Advanced Therapies, Debate on the 7th Research Framework Programme). Thereafter Dr. Beck outlined the reflections of the European Group on Ethics in view of ethical issues of nanomedicine. The group produced a first draft of an opinion on Ethical aspects of nanomedicine. This was

finalised in the following weeks. The opinion was given to members of the European Group on Ethics and it was presented to the COMECE bishops. It is available on the COMECE website and it was made available at the "Nanoforum", a pan-European nanotechnology network funded by the European Union to provide information on European nanotechnology efforts and support to the European nanotechnology community.

- 1.7.4. The **Working Group on Information Society, Communications and Media Policy** continued to monitor policy in its fields of responsibility. Its core members - Johanna Touzel, Michel Kuhn, Jim Mc Donnell and P. Gabriel Nissim o.p.) met twice – in March and in October 2006. Its work concentrated on two issues : the report of the European Parliament on the European Directive on Television Broadcasting Services (COM 2005 646) by Mrs. Ruth Hieronymi (COD/2005/260) and the decision taken on the issue by the Council of Ministers. The EP report was voted on Dec 12th, 2006 in first reading. Members of the working group monitored the evolution of the report and maintained regular contact with the rapporteur. Via the COMECE secretariat, the legal service of the Italian Bishops' Conference (CEI) and Mons. Claudio Giuladori, at that time press officer of the CEI, contributed to this process with a number of written suggestions for amendments, submitted to Italian and other MEP's, in order to improve the report.

In Nov. 2006 the Working Group prepared a contribution to the European Commission's Consultation on Media Literacy. The aim of this consultation was to foster and improve media literacy in the digital age. The results will be used for a Communication of the European Commission on this topic in 2007. In November 2006 Jim Mc Donnell participated on behalf of the Working Group in a seminar on civil society participation organised by the European Commission in Bergamo, Italy. Finally the Working Group initiated the preparation of a seminar on *The New Broadcasting Environment: - A Challenge for the Church in Europe*, to be held in Brussels on Feb 6th-7th, 2007.

- 1.7.5. 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 partial presence of an observer of the Churches' Commission for Migrants in Europe (CCME). The Platform met on 10 February and 22 April and on 4 October 2006. Each meeting began with an exchange of information on issues of concern for the members and their respective organisations. During the meeting on 10 February Dr George Joseph, Caritas Sweden, presented the participants with the report *Migration in an interconnected world: New directions for action of the Global Commission on International Migration* which was published on 5 October 2005. In the following session Mr Peter Bosch, DG Justice, Freedom and Security, presented the Communication on Priority actions for responding to the challenges of migration: First follow-up to Hampton Court (COM 2005, 621) and the Global Approach to Migration adopted by the European Council on 15/16 December 2005. He reported that the Commission's Communication was well received by the European Council where it led to the first real discussion on migration issues. He called upon the Churches to remind the politicians of migrant's human rights, of demographic realities and of the economic consequences for the EU if they do not develop an adequate migration policy. The Working Group was also informed about the Communication on A Common Agenda for Integration - Framework for the Integration of Third-Country Nationals in the European Union (COM 2005, 398) as well as the Communication on Migration and Development: Some concrete orientations (COM 2005, 390). The Group agreed to contribute to comments of Churches and Church organisations on both communications which should be submitted the EU Institutions. During the last session Mrs Annikki Vanamo-Alho, Permanent Representation of Finland, informed the participants about the priorities of the Finnish Presidency. Apart from decisions on the funding of refugee

protection, return and integration as well as measures for a better co-operation between the member states Mrs Vanamo-Alho announced that the Finnish presidency will undertake an assessment of the Hague Programme. With the end of the mandate of the COMECE Presidium in March 2006 the mandate of the members of the COMECE Platform on Migration came to an end. On behalf of COMECE the Secretary General expressed his gratitude to the members for their valuable contribution during the past years.

In June 2006 the Executive Committee of COMECE decided to renew the mandate of the Platform on Migration. Thereafter the next meeting was convened on 4 October 2005. During this meeting the members of the Working Group discussed with Bishop Nicholas DiMarzio (Brooklyn, NY, USA), Member of the Global Commission on International Migration, the impact of the international debate on migration and development on EU policies. Bishop DiMarzio reported on the UN High-level Dialogue on Migration and Development on 14 and 15 September 2006 in New York in which he had participated as head of Delegation of the Holy See. During the debate the Working Group members agreed with Bishop DiMarzio that an innovative policy approach would create more coherence in migration, development and trade policies. It was highlighted that development aid should be particularly promoted as a tool to reduce forced migration. In the following session, Markus Beckmann, Deputy Head of Unit at the Permanent Representation of Germany, presented the priorities of the forthcoming German Presidency in the Council of Ministers. He pointed out that the harmonisation in the field of asylum represents an important priority of the German Presidency which comprises inter alia the implementation of legislation adopted under the Tampere Programme. Concerning EU migration policy he emphasised the so called "fight against illegal migration". The Group received information on the European Commission's mid-term review of the Hague Programme (COM 2006, 331 and COM 2006, 332) and Communication on policy priorities in the fight against illegal immigration of third-country nationals (COM 2006, 402). During the last session, Mrs Jean Lambert, MEP and Vice-Chairwoman of the Group of the Greens/European Free Alliance, reported on the discussion on the Draft Directive on common standards and procedures in Member States for returning illegally staying third-country nationals (COM 2005, 391; COD/2005/0167) which is currently taking place in the European Parliament in preparation of the first reading. In view of the parallel debate in the Council of Ministers she explained to the group that the Parliament does not want a return directive at any cost. Issues requiring continued attention in this field by the platform are: the protection of migrants in the countries they are returned to, the exclusion of transit zones from the scope of the directive and the re-entry ban for returned migrants still need to be tackled.

- 1.7.6. The **Administrative and Financial infrastructure** of the COMECE were cared for through regular meetings took place throughout the year with Dr. Hans Wendtner (D) and M. Pierre Polak (B) to discuss budgetary issues, to monitor the financial situation of the secretariat and to prepare the meeting of the Financial Advisers. The latter meeting was held on 27 September. The accounts were examined by the advisers, nominated by bishops' conferences. The Secretary General and Madame A. Paillard worked with the Administrative Services of the Interdiocesan Centre, Brussels, on the administration of the new seat for the secretariat. Several meetings took place with the share holders and in the second part of the year with the authorities of Ixelles and of the Brussels region with a view to seeking the necessary permission for alterations to the property.
- 1.7.7. In preparing and carrying forward the agendas of the Working Groups, the secretaries and staff 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 Plenary meetings 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, the Executive committee and 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, by Members of the European Parliament and by persons working for European agencies and organisations to discuss the Church's view or input on EU policy matters.
- 2.1.2. In view of the imminent fiftieth anniversary of the treaties of Rome and by way of preparation for the COMECE March 2007 Congress to mark that occasion, COMECE planned and conducted a seminar in the Pastoral Centre of the diocese of Clermont Ferrand on 09-11 October 2006. The theme chosen for the event was : *Le Traité de Rome 50 ans après – Quelles valeurs pour l'Union Européenne*. With the support and patronage of the Archbishop of Clermont-Ferrand Hippolyte Simon and the assistance of the local team of the *Semaines Sociales de France*, a large number of young second level students also attended and took part in the proceedings. The seminar explored the origins of the treaties of Rome with contributions by some witnesses and European officials of the time. It considered the reception of the treaties by the countries which joined over the years and the values upon which the treaties were based. The programme was conceived around four key actors and four key dates.

The four actors:

Jean Monnet, at the time President of the High Authority of the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC), was an active driving force after the negative vote on the EDC by the French National Assembly. He believed that he could re-launch the process through an extension of the powers of the High Authority to the transport and energy sectors. The High Authority, which was the forerunner of the European Commission, was at the time a very rich source of ideas. It drew up fifty plans between December 1954 and April 1955 for a new departure after the failure of the EDC.

Paul-Henri Spaak, at the time Belgian Minister of Foreign Affairs, a Socialist and convinced European, immediately went to Jean Monnet after the negative vote in France in order to discuss with him possible outcomes to this crisis. With Jean Monnet, he was afterwards to take on the role of Robert Schuman as a courageous and determined politician, introducing proposals into the discussion at the highest level. Thus on 2 April 1955, Spaak sent a letter to his ECSC colleagues inviting them to decide on the proposal for an extension of the powers of the High Authority.

This letter became the occasion for Johan Willem Beyen, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands since 1952, to present his idea of replacing the partial and incremental method by a horizontal integration of the European economy: a common market with, at its heart, a customs union aimed at the abolition of internal taxes and at harmonized external tariffs. According to him, a political community could not come into being without an economic

foundation. He wrote to Spaak: "It is essential that the idea of the shared responsibility of the European States for the common good should be introduced in an organization, the executive body of which will answer to a supranational Parliament and not to national governments."

This counter-proposal was to enable a fourth actor to arrive on the scene: in the spring of 1955: the German government was moving towards a resolution of the conflict between "institutionalists" (around Konrad Adenauer, who recommended the primacy of the integration of Germany into the West up to the stage of political union) and "functionalists" (around Ludwig Erhard who envisaged the opening up of international trade with as little regionalism as possible). It was Adenauer who prevailed and gave decisive support to the Beyen proposal.

The four key dates:

The Messina conference of 1-3 June 1955 brought together the Ministers for Foreign Affairs to debate a Benelux Memorandum which introduced the two proposals as a subject of discussion. The Messina declaration provided for the progressive merging of national economies, the creation of a common market and the progressive coordination of social policies. Under the chairmanship of Paul-Henri Spaak, an intergovernmental committee began its work one month later in Val Duchesse/Brussels and in April 1956 published the Spaak Report which gave up the idea of an extension of the ECSC to the transport and energy sectors.

After the conference of Ministers for Foreign Affairs in Venice on 29 and 30 May 1956, an intergovernmental conference was convened to negotiate two treaties in parallel: one relating to the creation of a European Atomic Energy Community and the other concerning the creation of a European Economic Community. Despite support from an Action Committee which was created by Monnet at this time and which played a major role in interesting trade unions and socialist partners in the European project, negotiations at first made progress only with great difficulty.

The situation changed suddenly when Konrad Adenauer met Guy Mollet, President of the French Council of Ministers, on 6 November 1956 in Paris. In the midst of the Suez crisis and under the impact of the events in Budapest a few weeks earlier, the two men gave a political impetus from the highest level to the negotiations in Brussels.

From then on, the negotiations made rapid progress and on 25 March 1957 the Treaties were signed in Rome. On that day, the Ministers for Foreign Affairs met there to attend a Mass in memory of Alcide de Gasperi in the Basilica of "San Lorenzo fuori le Mura". On this occasion, Vatican Radio commented: "Catholics hoped and prayed that these Treaties, which have been signed on the day of the Annunciation, should mark the announcement of a new era".

During the period prior to the signature of the Rome Treaty, a small number of politicians shared the same ambition and the same values, including in the first place a rejection of vengeance. These men took initiatives under difficult circumstances (the Budapest uprising and the Suez crisis) which finally made possible a breakthrough in the difficult negotiations. Already at that time, a certain fear on the part of the public in regard to European affairs could be observed among politicians. Fear would also play a role among the factors which contributed to the results of the referendums in 2005.

The opening session of the seminar, which was introduced by Archbishop Simon and chaired by M. Bernard Lecomte, journalist and writer, explored the geo-political context in which the treaty of Rome was negotiated. The panellist included Professor Alfred Grosser (Paris), Mons.

Mihaly Kranitz, (Budapest). A second session presented key elements and considerations in the elaboration of the treaty. Presentations in the course of the afternoon elucidated the reception of the treaties in various member states : M. L. Zeches (Luxemburger Wort) , M. G. Angley (Embassy of Ireland, Paris), Fr. F. Turner s.j. (director OCIPE, United Kingdom), Dr. P. Benavides, (former director general, Energy, European Commission, for Spain), Jan P. Paul (European Commission, for Finland), Professor H. Woźniakowski (Znak for Poland), D. Neven Simac, (for Croatia). On Tuesday morning 10 October Professor Hanns Jürgen Küsters, Bonn, lectured on the common market, the policies and institutions and their significance as set in place by the treaty. This remarkable lecture set the background for a memorable presentation by Professor Bino Olivi, author (*L'Europe difficile*, Gallimard, 1998) and former spokesman of the European Commission, who outlined key developments after 1957 and their significance. Professor Ph. Herzog, former Member of the European Parliament and President of Confrontation Europe, set out key challenges for Europe's future and set the scene for deliberation in four working groups. The Wednesday morning session provided for reports from the groups and included a final session when Archbishop H. Simon, Michel Camdessus, President of the Semaines Sociales de France and Philippe de Schoutheete, former Permanent Representative of Belgium to the EU, drew conclusions from the proceedings and signalled issues which might be further explored in the Rome Congress.

- 2.1.3. Austria and Finland held the Presidency of the EU in 2006. As indicated in the Annual Report 2005 a meeting took place on 14 December 2005 in Vienna with the Austrian Foreign Minister Dr. Ursula Plassnik. On that occasion the members of the delegation representing the Churches 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. The Minister was accompanied by Dr. Johannes Kyrle, Secretary General of the Ministry and his assistant Dr. Oberreiter. Among the issues discussed with them were the following : the ratification of the treaty establishing a constitution for Europe, the Balkans and the EU perspective for the countries in that region, the EU-Latin America summit planned for May 2006. At the end of the meeting the Minister proposed that contact be maintained on a regular basis throughout the Presidency. On a monthly basis Dr. Eckert and Dr. Kneucker made contact to review matters of interest for the Churches.

Finland assumed the Presidency on 1 July. The Minister of Foreign Affairs Erkki Tuomioja met with a delegation representing the Churches on Friday 30 June in Helsinki. The members of the delegation were : Archbishop Jukka Paarma (Helsinki, Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland), Archbishop Leo (Helsinki, Orthodox Church of Finland), Jan Edström (secretary General of the Finnish Ecumenical Council), Rev. Risto Cantell and Archdeacon Gunnar Grönblom (both from the Church Council). Lena Kumlin, Legal Advisor, Church Council of the Evangelical-Lutheran Church of Finland. Archbishop Jukka Paarma presented the target paper, *Churches and the Finnish EU Presidency*, produced by the member Churches of the Finnish Ecumenical Council. The document outlined the Churches' priorities for the Presidency under the following headings : (i) meeting other religions, European identity and tolerance, (ii) the value dimension of the EU and the future constitutional treaty, (iii) social policy issues (iv) combating trafficking, (v) immigration and refugee policy, (vi) environmental policy, (vii) cooperation partners, meetings and events. Thereafter a range of issues were discussed with the Minister and the officials from the government ministries : (i) European identity and values and European political policy, (ii) the forthcoming European Year of intercultural dialogue 2008, (iii) social policy issue, (iv) research and ethics, (v) issues in migration and asylum policy, (vi) external relations, the EU-Russia relationship. A short exchange on the ratification process (of the treaty establishing a constitution for Europe) took place and on its provision for dialogue between Churches, faith communities and the EU (art. 1-52).

- 2.1.4. The staff of the secretariat maintained and developed contacts with the EU institutions as they carried out the mission assigned to COMECE. In particular they were in constant 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 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 and in particular with Dr. Michale Weninger, the official responsible for relations with the Churches.
- 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. The negative results in the referenda in France (29 May 2005) and in the Netherlands (1 June 2005) caused a crisis in the EU constitutional debate. On 18 June 2005 the European Council agreed to launch a “period of reflection”. At the European Council meeting on 15-16 June 2006 it was decided to continue the “period of reflection” until the German Presidency – the first semester of 2007. The EU leaders also undertook to prepare a *Political Declaration on Europe’s Values and Ambitions* for the March 2007 European Council meeting (to take place in Berlin). The COMECE and its secretariat monitored these developments and made input in their regard.
- 2.2.2. On the basis of a draft prepared by the secretariat and discussed during the March plenary meeting, the Executive Committee issued a statement on 5 May entitled, *Creating a Framework for a Just Society in Europe*. Issued to mark Europe Day (May 9) and distributed to the EU institutions, it took the European Commission’s Plan D for Democracy, Dialogue and Debate (October 2005) as its backdrop and underlined a series of desiderata for the success of the debate : (i) the debate on the future of Europe must have the human being and his/her inalienable dignity as its centre-point, (ii) strengthening the citizens’ sense of identification with the European project requires greater and more central attention to Europe’s heritage and Christianity’s place therein, (iii) strengthening subsidiarity and participation by citizens, (iv) the Lisbon strategy and EU economic policy must develop a more family friendly and supportive focus, (v) take up the challenge of developing a more coherent and ethically inspired EU foreign, security and development policy palette.

- 2.2.3. The November plenary meeting deliberated on a draft statement in view of the Berlin Declaration. After deliberation and amendment the Assembly adopted the statement entitled, *Common Values – the living source of the European Project*. It was duly sent by the President Bishop Adrianus van Luyn to Mr Vanhanen, the Finnish Prime Minister and then President in office of the European Council, to Mr. Barroso, President of the European Commission and to Mr. Borrell, President of the European Parliament. It was also sent to the Presidents of the political groups in the European Parliament and to think-tanks liaising with the EU.

The text emphasised the following points inter alia: (i) gratitude for the achievement of the European project over fifty years, (ii) the need to further consolidate Europe as a community of rights rooted in a system of values, (iii) a suggestion that the Berlin Declaration should reiterate that the European project serves the human person, the protection of life and its integral development. The statement also underlined threats menacing the European project's development: a tendency in some Member States to re-nationalise some important policy fields, a misreading of the urgency of institutional reform, taking peace in Europe for granted.

- 2.2.4. The fourth EU-Latin America-Caribbean Summit took place in Vienna on 13-15 May during the Austrian Presidency. Following on previous initiatives with CELAM (EI Escorial conference 2002; a written submission to the Guadalajara summit in Mexico 2004), COMECE had suggested a CELAM-COMECE input to the preparatory deliberations. Starting with the agenda for the summit, preparatory work was commenced with the exchange of texts between the secretariats in Brussels and Bogota. A preparatory meeting took place in Vienna on the evening of 6 April and the morning of 7 April 2006. Participants were : CELAM : Bishop Andrés Stanovnik, Secretary General, Bishop of Reconquista, Argentina ; Fr. Sydney Fones, Chile, Assistant Secretary General ; Archbishop Balthazar Porras Cardoso, Mérida, Venezuela ; for COMECE : Bishop Adrianus van Luyn, President, Bishop of Rotterdam ; Mgr. Noël Treanor, Secretary General, and Michael Kuhn, Secretariat COMECE. Mr. Heinz Hödl, director of the Central office of the Austrian bishops' Conference for Development Aid, also took part in the preparatory deliberations. These working sessions served to set out the issues to be addressed by the delegation in its meeting with the Secretary General of the Austrian Foreign Ministry.

After a lunch meeting with Cardinal Schönborn and a Press Conference with journalists, a two hour meeting took place with Ambassador Dr. Lennkh at the Foreign Ministry. Subjects covered inter alia in the discussions were: (i) the issues on the proposed agenda, (ii) tendencies in political evolution in Latin America, (iii) the situation in Venezuela, (iv) religious freedom in various countries, (v) the rise of the sects, (v) environmental issues, deforestation and water policy. As agreed with the officials of the Foreign Ministry, two documents were submitted by CELAM and COMECE before the summit took place.

- 2.2.5. On 30 May 2006 José Manuel Barroso, President of the European Commission, together with Mr. Wolfgang Schüssel, Austrian Chancellor and President in office of the European Council, met with fifteen Church and religious leaders, including the Dalai Lama, who was visiting Brussels at the time. This meeting followed on that of 12 July 2005. The discussions centred on the subject of Tolerance and Values. President Barroso was accompanied by Commissioners Jan Figel' (Education and Culture), Franco Frattini (Justice and Internal Affairs), and Vladimír Špidla (Employment, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities). The participants were invited to explore the relationship between freedom of expression, religious freedom and respect for the cultural and religious diversity in Europe's multi-cultural society. The controversy arising from the publication of the Muhammad cartoons on 30 September in the Danish newspaper *Jyllands-Posten* provided the background for the choice of theme. In the presentations a wide range of subjects were raised. Among them : the values debate, the EU constitutional process, the

millennium goals and EU development policy, the possibility of a European Islam, mechanisms and method for the dialogue between the Churches, the faith communities and the EU. The meeting ended with a Press Conference. In this context President Barroso emphasised the importance of dialogue between Churches, religions and the EU, as foreseen in article 1-52 of the treaty establishing a constitution for Europe. The Catholic church was represented by the President of COMECE, Bishop Adrianus van Luyn and by Cardinal José da Cruz Policarpo, Patriarch of Lisbon. Cardinal Christoph Schönborn, who was invited by Chancellor Schüssel, was unable to attend. By way of evaluation of the event, the interest on the part of members of the Commission is noteworthy. A public ground is being established for the exchange as part of the normal consultations on the part of the EU institutions and their hierarchy. In a meeting later that day with the President of the EPP- ED group in the European Parliament, Professor Hans-Gert Pöttering, Prof. Pöttering expressed the wish that the President of the European Parliament should take part in these meetings in the future, thus engaging the three core EU institutions in the dialogue at this level. He undertook for his part to discuss the possibility of such a meeting during the German Presidency (first semester of 2007) with Chancellor A. Merkel, whilst requesting that the Churches also introduce a request.

- 2.2.6. In accordance with long-established practice, on 18 October 2006 the Bureau of European Policy Advisors (BEPA) of the European Commission, the Secretariat of the Commission of the Bishops' Conferences of the European Community (COMECE) and the Church & Society Commission of the Conference of European Churches (CSC/CEC) co-organised a **Dialogue Seminar** on "Social and Healthcare Services: a Contribution of the Churches and Church Organisations to the European Social Model". The meeting, held in the European Commission Berlaymont building in Brussels, gathered some 50 participants representing the European Commission, the European Parliament, European Churches and church-related organisations.

Churches and Church organisations, such as Caritas and Diaconia, are major providers of social and healthcare services in the European Union. In the Dialogue Seminar they discussed the impact of several EU initiatives on their activities to provide social and healthcare services. The discussion focused on the then current debate on the Services Directive in the European Parliament (second reading) as well as the European Commission's Communication on Social Services (COM 2006, 177) and the ongoing Consultation on Healthcare Services (SEC 2006, 1195/4) led by the European Commission. Officials of the Commission (Mr. Marcel Haag, Head of Unit in the General Secretariat and Ms Jacqueline Minor, Director in DG Internal Market) outlined the contents of these initiatives and Mrs. Heide Rühle (MEP) reported on the discussions in the European Parliament

The Church representatives criticised the separation of social services from healthcare services in the context of the continuing discussion of the Commission's initiative. They argued for an integrated approach. Several presentations insisted that Churches expect that these initiatives concentrate as much on the quality of services as on the financial sustainability. They asked the Commission to consider the specificities of social and healthcare services and to take ethical criteria more into account when developing future policies. Churches, Caritas and Diaconia welcomed the invitation of the European Commission to contribute to the ongoing Consultations on the basis of their particular experience and competence.

The Churches and Church organisations emphasised that their activities as social and health care providers represent a crucial part of their identity. They reiterated their support for the exemption of healthcare services from the scope of the Services Directive. They assumed that social services provided by Churches and church-organisations would fall under the exemption clause of Social Services in the Services Directive. In the course of the discussion Mrs.

Jacqueline Minor, DG Internal Market of the European Commission, gave a positive signal in this regard to the Church representatives. This Dialogue Seminar revived the practice after a certain lapse in the practice due mainly to the volume of work and frequency of meetings related to the Convention on the Future of Europe. It also marked the trial of an amended formula: the participation of Church specialists with a keen knowledge of the theme and a concentration of the proceedings into a half day in the hope of assuring the presence of the EU officials for the entire exchange.

- 2.2.7. Members of the secretariat attended **Hearings** at the European Commission and at the European Parliament on subjects pertaining to EU policy. Likewise they attended meetings of EP Committees dealing with draft policy issues being monitored by the secretariat.
- 2.2.8. Bishops conferences were advised of European Commission **consultations** on policy initiatives and encouraged to participate. For its part the COMECE secretariat prepared and submitted responses to consultations, e.g. : the Commission Green paper on transparency (COM 2006, 194 final, 3 May 2006) ; on life sciences and biotechnology (COM 2002, 27).
- 2.2.9. On 1 March the **Global Governance Assessment for 2005** was presented to the public during a event co-organised by COMECE secretariat and the European Policy Centre. The Secretary General and the Assistant Secretary General met with the Director and Chief Policy Analyst of the EPC on number of occasions to propose the idea of an event to launch such a Church initiated document. An agreement was finally reached. The two hour event was chaired by Mr. Antonio Missiroli, Chief Policy analyst. The document was presented by Mr. Stefan Lunte, Assistant Secretary General. A first set of comments and reactions were made by M. Michel Camdessus, Former Director General of the International Monetary Fund, who chaired the group which produced the Global Governance Report in 2001. He was followed by Mr. Michel Hansenne, Former Director General of the International Labour Organisation and by M. Raymond Van Ermen, Executive director of European Partners for the Environment. A discussion ensued with the audience – some 120 persons working in the EU institutions, think-tanks, embassies (including the Chinese embassy), regional offices, interest groups covering civil society, industry, human rights agencies, development groups, and journalist. In a final round the speakers and the COMECE Secretary General recalled the origins of the Global Governance Report received by the COMECE in 2001, its proposals and the rationale for the engagement of the Church's social thinking with this issue which is of immense importance for humanity.
- 2.2.10. Numerous contributions, both oral and written, were made to EU policy debates, as indicated in the sections of this report presenting the Plenary meetings, where the Bishops discussed with EU personnel and in section 1.6. outlining the work carried out by the Commissions and Working Groups.
- 2.2.11. At the request of the Holy See Delegation to the Council of Europe the COMECE secretariat monitored developments in regard to a motion for resolution presented to the Parliamentary Assembly. The first was entitled *Relations between State, Religion and Individuals* (presented by Mr. Plaovet, UEL/NL – Doc 10822, dated 26 January 2006). The second, *Freedom of assembly and expression for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgendered person in member states* (Doc 10832, dated 1 February 2006) was presented by Mr Jurgens (SOC/NL). The secretariat informed the services of the Bishops' conference regarding development in regard to both and encouraged appropriate 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.
- 3.4. As in 2004 and 2005 the secretariat prepared an Information and Visit programme to the EU institutions for the "Westminster Catholic Parliamentary Intern programme". In 2006 they visited Brussels on 26-28 April. After an introductory presentation on the EU and the work of COMECE, they visited the UK Permanent Representation where they were briefed on its work. Further visits to the European Commission and to the European Parliament introduced them to the EU decision-making process and the work of the respective institutions. In the discussions with civil servants and Members of the Parliament they had an opportunity to explore particular policy dossiers. They also visited and met with other Brussels based Church organisations : the Jesuit office OCIPE, the Jesuit Refugee Service, Caritas Europa, and the Evangelical initiative, Care for Europe. The Apostolic Nuncio to the European Communities, H. E. Mons. André Dupuy, received the group and briefed them on the work of the Apostolic Nunciature.
- 3.5. The Evening lectures, discussions and receptions at the secretariat included three events. The first took place on 21 June : Professor José Casanova, (New School for Social Research, New York, and then on research leave at the Institute for Advanced Studies in Berlin, author of several books and articles on the sociology of religion) gave a lecture on *The Divergent religious situation in the United States and in Europe*. Planned for the Spring semester, this event was postponed to accommodate the speaker. It attracted a large audience. The second event took place on 3 October. Bishop Nicholas DiMarzio, (Brooklyn, New York) spoke on *Migration in an interconnected world :What impact on the European Union ?* M. Jean-Louis De Brouwer, European Commission, Directorate B, Immigration, Asylum and Borders, responded from the perspective of EU policy. The audience, which consisted on many working in organisations monitoring migration, asylum and refugee policy, engaged the speakers in an intense debate. The third lecture was delivered on 8 November by Fr. Benoît Vermander s.j., who is based in Taiwan. He spoke on *The Challenge of China*. His fascinating lecture, delivered to a large audience, was the culmination of a visit programme prepared for him by assistant Secretary General during which he met with M. Jean-Christophe Remond, Chef d'unité and Deputy Head of Unit, External Relations, Directorate H, Unit 2 China of the European Commission ; Mr. Tim Boden, administrator at the European Parliament and in charge of the EP delegation with China ; Ms. Susanne von Coester, counsellor at the Permanent Representation of France to the EU and responsible for relations with China. His Beatitude Cardinal Lubomyr Husar, Major Archbishop of Kiev and Halych, Head of the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church,

delivered a lecture *The European Union its Values and Frontiers : a View from the Ukraine* on Tuesday 28 November. The event was organised in association with the Embassy of the Ukraine which kindly provided the reception and Ukrainian specialities for the participants.

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, to the services of Bishops' Conferences and to subscribers. Editorials and articles are sometimes reproduced in national publications (SIR in Italy) and by Church organisations.
- 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) a follow-up to the Seventh Research Framework Programme (letters of 19 May, 1 June, 22 June and 28 September) ; (ii) patentability of embryonic stem cells – 13 July ; (iii) regarding a proposal for a council regulation amending Regulation (EC) no 2201/2203 as regards jurisdiction and introducing rules concerning applicable law in matrimonial matters (COM 2006 399 final of 17 July 2006) – 1 September ; (iv) regarding the Green Paper on conflict of laws in matters concerning matrimonial property regimes, including the question of jurisdiction and mutual recognition (COM 2006 400 PF 17 July 2006) – 19 September.
- 4.3. In agreement with COMECE and in consultation with Archbishop Hippolyte Simon who authored *Le Devenir de l'Union Européenne et la responsabilité des catholiques* (2005), Bayard Presse published this document with a preface by Cardinal Jean-Marie Lustiger, an introduction to the text by Archbishop Hippolyte Simon, and a postscript by Jacques Delors, former President of the European Commission.
- 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. The following list reflects some of the work in this field of the secretariat's activity: lecture on EU Social policy to the annual meeting of the Antennes Sociales de l'Eglise de France, (Paris, 11-12.01) ; lecture on the current work of COMECE to the Europa-Studentag of the diocese of Linz (Linz, 12.01) ; contribution to a seminar on Stem Cell Research (Brussels, 12.01) ; lecture and animation of Europa Studentag, diocese of Linz (Linz, 25-26.01) ; participation in first stage of the Third European Ecumenical Assembly (*The Light of Christ shines upon all*) process (Rome, 24-27.01) ; participation and response to a lecture given by Ernest-Antoine Seillière, President of UNICE on *Business perspectives on European competitiveness* (EPC, Brussels, 26.01) ; participation in "Sounds of Europe" conference organised by the Austrian Presidency of the EU (Salzburg, 26-28.01) ; participation in study session on *European Energy Security* (EPC, Brussels, 31.01) ; participation in an open debate

on European Commission White Paper on a *European Communication Policy* (Charlemagne building, Brussels, 01.02) ; participation in lecture and discussion on *Serbia and the EU : Challenges and Perspectives* (Konrad Adenauer Foundation, Brussels, 01.02) ; lecture on *Faith, Church and Europe* for Ekumeniskt Institut för Norden, (Brussels, 02.02) ; lecture on Churches, Religion in treaty establishing a constitution for Europe at the Katholische Akademie, Trier (03-04.02) ; a lecture at a seminar in the European Parliament, organised by Mr. R. Czarnecki M.E.P. on Prospective Challenges facing faith communities in the EU (Brussels, 07.02) ; a lecture on the Church and the EU at the Centre théologique Meylan, (Grenoble, 09.02) ; presentation of the COMECE Global Governance Assessment (EPC, Brussels, 01.03) ; lecture on l'Europe, héritage et responsabilité at Institut d'Etudes Théologiques (Brussels, 02.03) ; participation at lecture by Commissioner Reding on the Information Society, Growth and Prosperity (EPC, Brussels, 06.03) ; participation in study session on Global Governance and Human Rights (EPC, Brussels, 06.03) ; lecture on the Impact of European Union policy on Family Life for the Knights of St. Thomas Moore (Brussels, 09.03) ; participation in debriefing at the permanent Representation of the Federal Republic of Germany on the outcome of the European council meeting (Brussels, 14.03) ; participation in a conference, *European Biopolitics – connecting civil society, implementing basic values*, (Heinrich Böll Foundation, Berlin, 18.03) ; organisation of and participation in an informal seminar with European Group on Ethics and New Technologies (EGE) members and a specialist on research on adult stem cells (Brussels, 20.03) ; participation in a round table discussion on Ethical aspects of nanomedicine (European Commission, 21.03) ; participation in inter-group seminar at the European Parliament on *Science or Science Fiction ? The Hwang Clone Scandal in South Korea and its Consequences for European Research Policy* (Brussels, 22.03) ; lecture Clemens August – ein geistlicher Gründvater Europas at the Clemens-August Lycée, (Cloppenburg, 30.03) ; lecture Theology, Church and Europe to post-graduate course, (IET, Brussels, 30.03) ; lecture for Ecclesiastical Law Society at seminar on Same Sex Unions and the Churches – Problems and Responses in the European Perspective, (Vaugahn House, London, 31.03); presentation to the Expertenkommission Europa of the German Bishops' conference, (Berlin, 31.03) ; lecture *Ist Europa noch zu retten ?* to the Gesellschaftspolitischer Stammtisch of the diocese of Feldkirch (Vorarlberg, 03.04) ; presentation to Inter-religious Council, Bosnia-herzegovina, (Konrad Adenauer Foundation, 04.04) ; participation and contributions to COMECE-SECAM meeting, press conference and meeting at Ministry of Foreign Affairs, (Vienna, 5-6.04) ; discussion on bioethics and EU with Professor W. Lesch, Université Catholique LLN, (Brussels, 10.04); discussion with Fr. Meinolf von Spee (Salesian initiative, Brussels) on EU education and training policy and programmes (11.04) ; participation in seminar on issues in Church State relations, Seggau, (19-20.04) ; observation at European Forum for Civil Society (European Parliament, Brussels, 24.04) ; participation at meeting of Nationaler Ethikrat - Forum Bioethick: Globale Forschung – lokale Regeln ? Chancen und Grenzen internationaler Vereinbarungen zur Bioethik (Berlin, 25.04) ; presentation at IUPAX colloquium Religion im Neuen Europa, (Vienna, 26.04) ; lectures during study day on Europe to the plenary meeting of the Bishops' Conference of Croatia (Zagreb, 27.04) ; presentations to 4. Semester des Studiengangs Public Management der Fachhochschule Kärnten in the context of their programme during a visit to EU institutions (Brussels, 28.04) ; participation in opening of Chemins de St. Jacques en Bourbonnais (08.05); participation in *Prier pour la Paix et l'unité* organised by UCESM to mark Europe Day, (Brussels, Cathedral St. Michel et St. Gudule, 09.05) ; sermon in prayer service at European institutions Luxembourg to mark Europe Day, (Luxembourg, 10.05) ; participation at EPC breakfast with H.E. C Boyden Gray, US Ambassador to the EU on *EU-US regulatory cooperation : lessons learned* (Brussels, 11.05) ; lecture at IUPAX KHG University, Vienna on *Die Kirchen und die Europäischen Institutionen : Partikularinteressen oder Auftrag zur demokratischen Mitgestaltung?* (Vienna, 16.05) ; participation in meeting of the Ethikrat –

Paxbank (16.05) ; participation in meeting of ad hoc group of the Central Committee of German Catholics (ZdK) on the European Social Model (19.05) ; lecture to European journalists – Mémoire, histoire et valeurs (Scy-Chazelles, 19.05) ; lecture to Austrian group – Religionspädagogische Akademien des Bundes (Brussels, 23.05) ; presentations at the Katholikentag (Saarbrücken, 25-26.05) ; participation in seminar *Patenting of Biotechnological inventions*, (Vienna, 29-30.05) ; lecture on EU Social Policy to post-graduate students at IET (Brussels, 01.06) ; participation and contribution to the meeting of l'Antenne des Semaines Sociales de France (Auvergne, 06.06); participation and contribution to a debate in the European Parliament on Plan D (07.06); participation and contribution to an event organised by the Austrian Presidency of the EU – *Kulturelle Bildung in Europa* (Graz, 8-10.06); participation and contribution to debate in European Parliament on "return Directive" (28.06) ; participation in Academic Advisory Board of Summer university (Graz, 30.06); lecture on European social model (Zdk, Bonn, 07.07); participation in Hearing on the European Transparency initiative at the EESC (Brussels, 11.07); participation in Hearing at the European Commission on Future EU Patent Policy (Brussels, 12.07); presentation on work of COMECE and on Services Directive to the Institute for Comparative Social Research (Berlin, 14-15.07); lecture on the Church and Europe : the work of COMECE to the summer school of European Parliament's interpretation service, (Vienna, 25.07); participation and presentations to the CEEM meeting (Maynooth / Dublin, 21—23.07) ; presentations to the annual meeting of press officers of the bishops' conferences of Europe (Maynooth, 20-23 .07) ; participation in Europäisches Forum, (Alpbach, 25-30.08); participation in opening session and programme of the COMECE-University of Graz Summer School (Seggau, 02-16.09); participation in EPC Dialogue – Can the Constitution be saved? (Brussels, 13.09); lecture and presentations to study programme for priests from the diocese of Trent (Brussels, 14.09); participation in conference organised by the Pontifical Academy for Life on *Stem Cells :What future for therapy?* (Rome, 15-16.09);lecture to EKD Dekanatskonferenz (Bad Marienberg, 20.09); presentation to the meeting of national directors for the Pastoral Care of Migrants, organised by CCEE (Siguneza/Spain, 21-22.09); lecture to V CCEE Symposium of university teachers (Rome 28-30.09); lecture – Friedensprojekt EU : der Beitrag Oesterreichs (Wernberg, 29.09) ; presentations to CCEE Plenary (St. Petersburg, 7.10); presentations at seminar on 50th anniversary of treaty of Rome (Clermont Ferrand, 09-11.09); presentation to students from Europäische Akademie Wien (Brussels, 10.10); lecture during a colloquium, L'administration des cultes dans les pays de l'UE, (Sorbonne, 13.10) ; participation in an seminar to evaluate EU policies on Freedom, security and Justice (European Commission, 19-20.10); meeting and exchange with the Institute for the Family (Madrid) (Brussels, 19.10); participation in a study day on the international transfer of personal data (European Commission, 23-24.10); participation and contributions to the meeting of the Cellule Europe of the French Bishops' Conference (Paris, 24.10) ; presentation to meeting of the Service national de la pastoral des migrants (Nantes, 28.10); participation in forum on Europe's demographic future (30-30.10); participation in Bruxelles Toussaint (01- 05.11) – in this context secretariat also met with Cardinal Schönborn and took part in his programme; participation in Hearing on fundamental rights of homosexual and lesbian people (European Parliament, 08-09.11); participation in the tenth Dialogue seminar between EPP-ED group in the European Parliament and the Orthodox Churches (Bratislava, 09-10.11); lectures to a groups of French and international army officers from Collège Interarmées de défense Paris (Brussels, 21.11); participation in annual meeting of Semaines Sociales de France (Paris la Défense, 25-26.11); presentation to group of Catholic journalists from Poland (Brussels, 29.11); participation in a Hearing on European Commission Green paper on succession and wills (Brussels, 30.11); participation and presentation to a Working Group on Services of General Interest (Berlin, 01.12) ; participation in Hearing on European Commission Communication on Culture (Brussels, 04.12); participation in UNCHR NGO platform on migration (05.12); meeting with P.

Bernard van Welzenes s.d.b., on pastoral care of European inland shipping personnel (Brussels, 06.12) ; lecture – Bildungsprogramme der EU : das Programm “Aktive europäische Bürgerschaft”(Salzburg, 13.12); assistance at European Parliament LIBE Committee meeting (19.12); co-animation of preparatory session for Taizé Day of Prayer with personnel of EU institutions for January 2007 (Brussels 19.12); participation in recording and interview with ARTE TV (COMECE secretariat, 20.12).

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, in various Member States, COMECE is recognised by the *Conseil Supérieur* of European schools as the representative of the interests of the local Bishops in whose dioceses these schools are located. As in previous years, regular contacts have been maintained by the secretariat throughout the year with the *Conseil Supérieur*.
- 5.2. The Secretary General of COMECE and drs. Michael Kuhn were briefed on developments regarding the teaching of religion in the European schools by the COMECE adviser for this field, Mme. Catherine Roba. Meetings were held with her on 19.01; 30.01; 15.02; 11.05 ;19.06 ; 16.10. 13.11.
- 5.3. The Plenary meetings were briefed with memoranda on the issues arising as a result of the efforts by a Working Group, established by the *Conseil Supérieur*, to reorganise the primary school syllabus.
- 5.4. This Working Group did not have a mandate to modify arrangements regarding the teaching of religion. It requested such a mandate from the *Conseil Supérieur* and received a written reply date 01.02.06. This reply extended the Working Group’s mandate – stating that religion was to be treated in the same way as other subjects, that accordingly the Working Group should elaborate proposals for the organisation of the teaching of religion, and requesting that Church, religious and secular organisations should come together as a single interlocutor with the *Conseil Supérieur*.
- 5.5. The secretariat and Mme. C. Roba pursued discussions with the relevant authorities and interested parties regarding the proposal for elaboration of a harmonised programme for the primary level – 2005-D-351. This work was carried out in cooperation with representatives of the Protestant Churches, with the Orthodox authorities and also with representatives of the Jewish and Muslim faiths.

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 of the Churches’ Committee for Migration in Europe (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. On behalf of CCEE the secretariat undertook enquiries and contacts with the EU institutions to publicise the Third European Ecumenical Assembly (Sibiu) and to investigate the possibility of some financial support from the EU.
- 6.4. Throughout the year the staff of the secretariat received ecumenical groups from the Member States and from other 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.
- 6.5. The Secretary General took part in the Tenth Dialogue between the EPP-ED Group in the European Parliament and the Orthodox Churches, in Bratislava, 09-10 November. The theme of the international conference was Breaking New Ground for Europe: Through Solidarity for People – Religion and Politics in Action. It is worth recording that this was the last Dialogue to be organised prior to his retirement by Mr. Stephen Biller, UK adviser to the EPP Group in the European Parliament since 1973, a loyal supporter and friend of COMECE, who organised this annual event since its inception.

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, Ljubljana, 24-28 June.
- 7.2. The President and Secretary General attended and reported on the work of COMECE to the CCEE Plenary meeting in St. Petersburg, 04-08 October.
- 7.3. As a member of the CCEE-KEK Joint Committee the Secretary General of COMECE attended its meeting in 27- 28.01 in Rome.
- 7.4. COMECE participated in the First Stage of the European Ecumenical Assembly in Rome (Bishop A. Justs (Jelgava/Latvia) and Secretary General) on 24-27 January. The Secretary General and a staff member (H. Lesaar) took part in meetings to prepare the Assembly fora. The secretariat facilitated meetings with the European Commission and the European Parliament to publicise the EEA.
- 7.5. 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.
- 7.6. The Secretary General took part in and addressed the meeting of the Presidents of the Bishops' Conferences of South East Europe, Corfou, 03-05 March.
- 7.7. The Secretary General contributed (together with Cardinal Peter Erdö) to a study day on Europe organised by the Bishops' Conference of Croatia (Zagreb, 27.04).

- 7.8 Circular letters were sent to the COMECE 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 suggest input to EU consultation processes.

8. LOOKING FORWARD TO 2007

- 8.1. The COMECE and its secretariat will continue to monitor European Union policy-making in all relevant domains on behalf of the Bishops' Conferences of the Member States and of the candidate countries. To this end the European Commission's work Programme will be scrutinised in order to identify issues to be followed. Particular attention will be given to consultations launched during the course of the year. The work of the Parliament and Council will also be closely monitored.
- 8.2. Close attention will be given to the development of the "constitutional" debate and the initiatives taken to advance reform of the treaties. In this regard particular attention will be given to ensuring that article 1-52 is maintained in any outcome.
- 8.3. Preparation of the COMECE Congress in Rome (23-25 March 2007) will continue. Further contacts will be made with the Holy See, the Italian Bishops' Conference, with various Church organisations, the offices of the European Commission and of the European Parliament, with the Italian government and with the Quirinale in order to prepare the event. The necessary contacts with Member State and EU authorities will be pursued.
- 8.4. The work of the the *Comité de Pilotage*, established to assist the secretariat in preparing the Congress and to associate EU officials, representatives of religious congregations and catholic laity networks with planning the event, will be pursued.
- 8.5. The *Comité des Sages*, tasked with preparing a report on the ethical dimension of the European project will hold its final meeting(s) at the secretariat and deliver its report by the end of January. Close contact will be maintained with the two secretaries, M. le Baron Philippe de Schoutheete de Tervarent (B) and Sir Stephen Wall (UK).
- 8.6. COMECE will take part in the meeting of the Co-ordination for Episcopal Conferences in support of the Church in the Holy Land in Jerusalem, 16-19 January.
- 8.7. COMECE will take part in and make a presentation to the meeting of the Presidents of the Bishops' Conferences of South-East Europe, Oradea, 01-04 March.
- 8.8. Efforts to recruit a staff member with specialisation in Islam and international affairs will be intensified, mindful also that 2008 will be the European Year of Intercultural Dialogue.
- 8.9. The Global Governance Assessment 2006 will be researched and published.
- 8.10. The proceedings of the Summer University 2006 (Graz/Seggau) will be published.
- 8.11. A follow-up to the document *A Family strategy for the European Union, An Encouragement to make the family an EU Priority* (2004), will be prepared by the secretariat. It will seek to set out concrete proposals for support to parents and marriage in numerous EU policy domains, whilst recognising that family policy is not of EU competence. It will be designed as a series of

proposals for consideration by EU policy-makers. It will also serve as a discussion paper for all interested parties in society.

- 8.12. Together with the Department for International Affairs of the University of Graz and the Academic Board the Summer University programme for 2007 will be conceived and planned. The secretariat will again engage in fund-raising with a view to raising some 20 burses for the support of the student participants.
- 8.13. COMECE will take part in the second stage of the Third Ecumenical Assembly in Wittenberg (15-18.02). It will also take part in the Assembly in Sibiu, 04-09 September.
- 8.14. As in recent years a visit programme to the EU institutions will be prepared for the Westminster interns. Efforts will be undertaken to investigate the possibility of extending this programme to include the European Parliament, firstly for British candidates – as an extension of the present programme. Thereafter and in the course of 2007 the possibility of “Europeanising” the initiative will be investigated. Both phases will entail securing the spiritual and academic accompaniment of the candidates, both integral parts of the programme.
- 8.15. The COMECE secretariat together with Mme. C. Roba will give particular attention to developments in regard to the teaching of religion in the European Schools in the course of 2007. It will take all proactive steps to defend its place on the curriculum.

N. Treanor

31.03.2007