

ANNUALREPORT2012

COMMISSION OF THE BISHOPS' CONFERENCES
OF THE EUROPEAN COMMUNITY



"When the dove returned to him in the evening, there in its beak was a freshly plucked olive leaf! Then Noah knew that the water had receded from the earth."

Genesis 8:11



COMECE ANNUAL REPORT 2012

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1 | FOREWORD



Reinhard Cardinal Marx

Brussels, October 2013

Dear Readers,

Quite some time has passed since COMECE last paid any attention to “itself” and examined its own goals and tasks in more detail. Over the course of time, our role, our goals, our mission and our way of working have become self-evident, tested and proven. At the same time, over the years, the environment in which we work has changed, and this is something that we as Bishops have not consciously reflected on and discussed in our previous Plenary Assemblies. For various reasons, now seems to me the right time to take a look at ourselves and think about how we can do justice to the tasks and demands entrusted to us.

COMECE would like to be the voice of the Catholic Church in the context of the European Union. This can only be done with critical constructive monitoring, but also always bearing in mind that this “European community” is seen by us as a positive opportunity for the peace and sustainable development of our European nations. We know that without the contribution of Christianity, Europe cannot be understood and Europe will not find its identity in the future. As COMECE, we have a difficult task here, but it is more urgently needed and more indispensable than ever.

Changed horizons

When COMECE was founded on 3 March 1980 in the Apostolic Nunciature to the EC in Brussels, 23 years had passed since the entry into force of the Treaty of Rome on 1 January 1958. The European Economic Community had nine Member States. In 2013, Croatia became the 28th Member State of the European Union. In just over 30 years, the number of Member States has more than tripled!

This geographic expansion also made it necessary to discuss the deepening of the Union. From the Single European Act of 1986 to the Lisbon Treaty in 2009, the treaty framework, as we currently know it, is provisionally completed. The financial and economic crisis which has arisen since then raises the question of whether these treaties still match the needs and provide the institutions with the instruments they need to meet the new challenges and still adequately accomplish the new tasks – or whether it is not, in fact, a further deepening of the Union that is required. It is important to bear all of these changes in mind when we turn to the question of

the role and task of COMECE as a commission of Bishops’ Conferences in the European context.

Thus, the objectives and tasks of COMECE can be summarised as follows:

COMECE enables the Bishops’ Conferences in the EU to engage with the institutions of the European Union jointly and in a coordinated manner. Through a positive relationship with the various EU institutions, it analyses and processes information about the policies of the European Union, in order to enable the Bishops’ Conferences to take active part in the European integration process. Finally, COMECE deals with the current issues of the EU and takes positions in relation to them. It is concerned with the social and ethical challenges resulting from European political integration and, on the basis of Catholic social teaching, tries to develop practical ideas and solutions in response to these challenges in cooperation with ecclesiastical and other experts.

As delegated bishops of COMECE, we are always experiencing a double tension. We are both the delegates of our respective episcopal conferences, each with its own unique perspective, and members of a European ensemble which together provides information, formulates opinions and makes decisions. As such, we represent together – however inadequately – a body that has become detached from the national frame of reference. I want to work in the coming years with my brothers in Christ to deepen our European identity even further and, in a change of perspective, to consistently develop a European view.

+ Reinhard Cardinal Marx
Archbishop of Munich and Freising
President of COMECE

2 | REPORT OF PERMANENT COMMITTEE MEETINGS

The Permanent Committee of COMECE consists of the President, Bishop Adrianus van Luyn, two Vice-Presidents, Cardinal Reinhard Marx (Archbishop of Munich-Freising) and Bishop Piotr Jarecki (Auxiliary Bishop of Warsaw) and the General Secretary, Mgr Piotr Mazurkiewicz.

During the Spring Plenary Assembly, the COMECE delegates elected a new Presidium under the rules of the new COMECE Statutes which were adopted in 2011. The Executive Committee is renamed as the “Permanent Committee” and is composed of the President of the Commission and four Bishops elected by the Assembly from among its members, with care taken to ensure that they are representative of the geographical distribution of the Episcopates of the European Union. On 22 March, Cardinal Marx was elected by the COMECE delegates for a 3-year term of office as the COMECE Chair.

The four Vice-Presidents are: Mgr Gianni Ambrosio (Bishop of Piacenza-Bobbio, Italy), Mgr Virgil Bercea (Bishop of Oradea Mare, Romania), Mgr Piotr Jarecki (Auxiliary Bishop of Warsaw, Poland) and Mgr Jean Kockerols (Auxiliary Bishop of Brussels-

Malines, Belgium). Their mandate lasts for a period of three years and is renewable only once. Mgr Jean Kockerols is designated by the Standing Committee as First Vice-President, with the task of chairing meetings of the Assembly and of the Standing Committee, when the President is legitimately impeded.

The Executive Committee of COMECE met on 5 occasions in 2012: 12 January, 21 March, 19 September and 21 November in Brussels; on 21-22 June in Rome.

The Apostolic Nuncio to the European Communities H.E Mgr Dupuy was replaced in June 2012 by Mgr Alain Lepeaupin.

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

3 | COMECE PLENARY ASSEMBLIES

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

3.1 | Spring Plenary Assembly 21-23 March 2012

Cardinal Reinhard Marx, the Archbishop of Munich and Freising was elected by the Bishop Members on 22 March 2012 for a 3-year term of office as the COMECE President. Cardinal Marx has been a member of COMECE since 2006, Chair of its Social Affairs Commission and Vice President of COMECE since 2009. On the occasion of his election, he stated: “Regarding the economic and financial crisis, which is striking our continent, I strongly believe that the European Union has the powers and the potential to overcome this situation. A global crisis requires a common response. We need to rediscover the sense of responsibility and togetherness. This is a prerequisite for being able to solve our common problems. We are at a decisive moment for the future of Europe”.

Besides the election of the Presidium, the 23 Bishops who participated in the Spring Plenary Assembly also discussed the main topic of the session, “Active ageing and intergenerational solidarity” with several experts from the European Commission, from the academic field and from the Catholic

lay community Sant’Egidio.

The COMECE Bishops reaffirmed that ageing should not be considered simply as a burden but as a benefit for society: elderly people are gifted with professional and life experience which has to be passed on to the younger generations. The willingness of elderly people to engage in volunteering activities, in civic movements and especially in pastoral work within parishes and church communities, is crucial for the common good of our societies. Generations cannot live only for themselves but they have to rely on each other. The Dialogue and Solidarity between older and younger generations is the basis of the human development of our societies: it brings hope and personal fulfilment.

The key role of the family in looking after elderly people requires the support of the State and other public bodies. This can, for example, take the form of paid time-off for care workers. It is also important to recognise the value, including the economic value, of family care in the home for elderly members. This must be reinforced by financial and other types of support. Furthermore, the time spent at home for family care commitments should be taken into account in assessing the terms for retirement and pensions.

Because the evidence suggests that people in Europe aspire to have more children than they in fact have, there is a need for policies which can turn these unfulfilled desires into reality. But the appropriate conditions have first to be put in place: for example, family-friendly fiscal policies, child-care facilities and other measures for a better balance between work and family life.

3.2 | Extraordinary Plenary assembly

Rome, 21 June 2012

During the Spring Plenary Assembly held in March in Brussels, the Bishops of COMECE decided to start the procedure for the election of a General Secretary, following the end of the mandate of Mgr Piotr Mazurkiewicz as General Secretary.

The Presidents of the Bishops' Conferences and the bishop delegates to COMECE were invited to consult the members or the Permanent Council of their Episcopal conference in order to identify candidates. Moreover, the President of COMECE, H.E. Reinhard Cardinal Marx (Germany) and the Vice-Presidents also facilitated this search as members of the Standing Committee.

17 COMECE Bishops gathered in Rome on the occasion of this special Plenary Assembly to examine the 5 candidatures they received. As requested by the Secretariat of State of the Holy See, and in accordance with the COMECE Statutes, the Bishops established a shortlist of three names (terna). Following this, the Secretariat of State would then indicate one of the candidates, and finally the COMECE bishops would then appoint the General Secretary.

3.3 | Autumn Plenary assembly

21 - 23 November 2012

In this Plenary Assembly, which was mainly dedicated to the economic crisis, the COMECE bishops were aware that the reforms that have been undertaken in many Eurozone States should be considered as a way for Europe to maintain its role in the 21st century. Sacrifices imposed by governments on the population must not however go against social justice. The bishops also called on all citizens to stay united and in solidar-

ity in facing the current crisis.

In order to make their mark, the COMECE bishops wished to send a strong signal of European solidarity, especially towards men and women of the countries which are particularly hit by the current economic crisis. They have therefore decided to reflect in the coming months, in partnership with Caritas Europe, on reinforcing the intra-European aid provided by the Church.

Furthermore, in order to mark these bonds of solidarity at the spiritual level, the Austrian delegate Mgr Egon Kapellari has been asked by his COMECE peers to develop an initiative on Prayer for Europe which could be introduced Europe-wide by involving Christians from all countries as well as the religious communities.

In order to overcome the many national and cultural divergences and in working towards greater unity in their own work as well, the COMECE delegates of the Bishops' Conferences from the EU Member States are committed to promote - by means of their exchanges and collaboration - the conscience of belonging to one Church in Europe: the Ecclesia in Europa to which Pope John-Paul II referred. On the occasion of the 10th anniversary of the Apostolic Exhortation of the same name, COMECE will organise a series of events in Brussels next year.

The Plenary Assembly was also concerned with reforming the internal functioning of COMECE. Through renewed and more efficient working methods, COMECE will become better equipped to address the new challenges which emerge from a Europe in crisis, and will also be better able to be a partner - adding its socio ethical reflections - in the process of European integration.

Finally, the COMECE bishops during their Plenary Assembly nominated a new General Secretary for a 3-year mandate. Fr Patrick H. Daly, 61, a priest from the diocese of Birmingham (UK) will take up his new post in January 2013. On this occasion, a reception will be organised to honour both the outgoing and the new General Secretaries. In this way, the Bishops wish to thank Mgr Piotr Mazurkiewicz for the work he has accomplished during his 4 years. The Austrian Deacon, Dr Michael Kuhn was tasked with heading the Secretariat in the interim period.



Cardinal Marx and Mgr Hollerich



COMECE Autumn Plenary Assembly

4 | WORKING GROUPS

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

4.1 Social Affairs Commission

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

Meeting of the 3- 5 September 2012

The Social Affairs Commission did not meet as such in 2012. Following an agreement between the presidencies of CCEE and COMECE, European bishops with responsibilities in the field of social and economic policies gathered this year in Cyprus on 3-5 September following an invitation of the "Caritas in veritate" Commission. During a meeting with Dimitris Christofias, President of the Republic of Cyprus, they were informed about the priorities of the Cypriot presidency of the European Council of Ministers. Discussing the challenge of social cohesion in Europe the bishops confirmed the conviction that Christians have a special responsibility for the future of Europe, in that education and instruction value the rich European culture, that art and culture might dialogue with religious faith without fundamentalism from either side and, finally, that cultural exchanges - above all between the young people of Europe - may have broad horizons. The meeting was marked by various moments of prayer and numerous opportunities for meetings with the different local Catholic communities. In addition, the bishops visited places of significance for the Christian presence on the island: monasteries, religious and cultural sites. In

particular they went to some Maronite villages in the north of the island, to witness to their solidarity with the Maronite community which, as happens with other Christian communities, too, wants to return to the villages, a fundamental issue for the existence and future of the community.

4.2 Working Group on Migration

The COMECE Working Group on Migration is composed of experts appointed by the interested Bishops' Conferences and discusses EU policies in the field, often in dialogue with representatives of the EU institutions.

Meeting of the 22 February 2012

After a round table discussion on the main developments in the field of migration and asylum in the EU Member States, Mr Adalbert Jahnz (Asylum Unit, DG Home, European Commission) presented the topic entitled Intra-EU solidarity in the field of asylum. Following that intervention, Ms Borbála Szigeti (Unit for Immigration and Integration, DG Home Affairs, European Commission) commented on the main content of the Green Paper on family reunification published on November 2011 by the European Commission, and the key issues that were addressed in that document. Finally, a further discussion amongst the members of the Working Group took place in order to prepare the contribution of the Secretariat of COMECE to the public consultation on family reunification launched by the EU.



Lamedusa/ Order of Malta



Asylum



Photo: Shutterstock



Research

Meeting of the 18 October 2012

Ms Nadia Hirsch (MEP, Liberals & Democrats, Germany), who presented the topic entitled An EU Distribution Key for Asylum Seekers, suggested that practical and fair solidarity should be organised in the EU to receive and host asylum seekers. Ms Katerina Wolfová (Financial Support Unit – Immigration and Asylum, DG Home Affairs, European Commission) provided information on current developments regarding the Reform of the European Funds for Migration and Asylum, and the new more simplified structure of those funds. After an exchange of views on national situations amongst the members, Ms Edit Bauer (MEP, European People's Party/Christian Democrats, Slovakia) provided information about the dimension and diversity of the phenomenon of trafficking in human beings, the first steps to fight against it proposed by the European institutions and the work to be done.

4.3 Bioethics Reflection Group

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

Meeting of the 10 February 2012

The meeting started, as usual, with a round-table updating on bioethics issues in EU Member States. Then the Reflection Group examined the topic of clinical trials, focusing chiefly on the European Commission's concept paper on the revision of the 'Clinical Trials Directive' 2001/20/EC, which previously served as the basis for a public consultation launched by the Commission on the subject. The meeting benefitted from the presence of guest speakers, one of them being Mr. Stefan Fuehring from DG SANCO.

Meeting of the 12 October 2012

After an update on bioethics issues in EU Member States, the Reflection Group discussed, as the main topic of reflection, the proposal of the European Commission for a Regulation on clinical trials on medicinal products for human use, and repealing Directive 2001/20/EC. In order to advance the main topic of the meeting two guest speakers were invited, one being Mr. Stefan Fuehring from DG SANCO. The main conclusions of these debates on clinical trials are to be published in a forthcoming Opinion of the Reflection Group.

4.4 Legal Affairs Commission

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

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

Meeting of the 7 February 2012

At the meeting of the Legal Affairs Commission of 7 February 2012 presentations were firstly devoted to Sunday protection and to the reform of EU legislation on VAT. The presence of a member of Commissioner Reding's Cabinet also allowed the experts to discuss the new proposed Regulation concerning the protection of personal data. A special focus was placed on the specific clause concerning Churches inserted in the text and on the role of Church-related independent supervisory authorities. A second Commission representative attended and presented the new EU package concerning State aid rules for Services of General Economic Interest (SGEI). Reference was made in particular to the broad and favourable new provision concerning State aid in the form of public service compensation granted to undertakings that provide SGEI meeting social needs.

Meeting of the 17 April 2012

The aim of this extraordinary meeting of the COMECE Legal Affairs Commission was to reflect on the proposal for a General Data Protection Regulation. The discussions were fruitful and laid the foundations for the relevant internal position.

Meeting of the 11 June 2012

The members of the Legal Affairs Commission were updated on the so-called 'Brighton Declaration', which envisages changes to the European Convention on Human Rights. The text aims at ensuring better processing and management of the applications on the part of the Court. A reference to the principle of subsidiarity and to the doctrine of the margin of appreciation would also be included in the Preamble of the Convention and this was considered an important step. The members also discussed the progress of the negotiations on the accession of the EU to the European Convention, in a direction that should ensure that the specific nature of the EU is taken into account. Members were also updated about non-profit EU initiatives and on a recent ECtHR decision concerning the termination of the teaching contract of a married priest supporting a movement for optional celibacy (*Fernandez Martinez v. Spain*).

Meeting of the 9 October 2012

An EU official presented to the members the 2011 Commission's report on the application of the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the EU. The striking evolution of the Charter, originally conceived as a mere declaration on a 'set of values', was highlighted. Misunderstandings related to the Charter's scope of application (especially with regard to the Member States) also received attention, as well as some of the provisions of the text (e.g. on the right to marry and the right to found a family, on the prohibition of slavery and forced labour). A second speaker, a representative of Caritas Germany, also participated, raising the awareness of the members about recent EU initiatives on social entrepreneurship. Information sessions were devoted, inter alia, to the negotiations on the cohesion policy package; to the Regulation on clinical trials; and to recent developments in the field of migration and asylum.



5 | INITIATIVES & EVENTS

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

5.1 COMECE International Summer school Seggau *1-14 July in Seggau (Austria)*

It was for the seventh time when, on 1 July 2012, Prof. Dr. Neuper, Rector of the University of Graz and Bishop Dr. Kapellari officially opened the "International Summer School Seggau (ISSS)".

Primarily intended to foster a dialogue between young students from the old and the new Member States of the EU, the project has throughout these years become a forum where questions concerning the European Union, its policy and its impact on other parts of the world are discussed by an international group of scholars – young and old – coming from countries far beyond the European borders. This year the Summer School welcomed, amongst others, students from Azerbaijan, from other Central-Asian Republics, from Russia, from China and from Southern Africa – the RSA and Namibia - and two lecturers from Canada.

The topic of this year's ISSS – "Leadership and Education. The Future of Europe?" – drew the attention of the participants to the following questions: to what extent could the European crisis be understood as a crisis of political leadership – a crisis that touches the heart of the system of Western democracy? How big is the impact on other parts of the world? What are possible solutions? What role has education – academic education – to play and whether education itself is not under threat due to increasing 'economicsation' of all parts of society? What can young academics do about all this and can religion and one's personal faith and values play a crucial role?

Those questions were discussed extensively during the two weeks of lectures and seminars on – to give a short overview: "Different concepts of leadership and unity in Europe", "European values", "Cosmopolitanism, Nationalism and the Malaise of Modernity", "The spiritual roots of European Leadership" and "How Cameron went to Oxford and Obama went to Harvard – Education, social reproduction and leadership". Following the lectures and seminars there was ample time for debate and discussion and it appears that the above-mentioned questions can not be confined to Europe or the western hemisphere: they are of key-importance for the next generation globally.

In addition to the current topic of the ISSS, the Executive Committee has been busy discussing if and how the continuation of the Summer School would make sense and what kind of conditions need to be met to be able to continue. Both the university and the Diocese of Graz-Seckau stressed their intention to continue this project and to guarantee its material base for the next two years. As important as their commitment is the acceptance of the ISSS by the students.

5.2 Austrian Bishops meet in Brussels in a clear sign of support for Europe

8 November 2012

For the first time ever, a meeting of a national Bishops' Conference took place in Brussels. Under the Chairmanship of Cardinal Schönborn, the Plenary Assembly of the Austrian Bishops gathered together from 5 to 8 November in the COMECE premises to deliver a clear sign of support for Europe. "Europe needs Solidarity from all quarters" explained Cardinal Schönborn.

"As COMECE President, I am glad that such a meeting is taking place in the EU capital," indicated Cardinal Marx. "It shows that the Catholic Church is willing to accompany the project of European integration at all levels: the universal one, through the representation of the Holy See to the EU; the European one, through the activities of the permanent COMECE Secretariat in Brussels; but also at the national level, through the participation of Catholic Bishops' Conferences in the political and ethical debates on the EU. My wish therefore is that this meeting inspires other Bishops from the EU Member States to follow a similar initiative."

Besides their Plenary Assembly, the Austrian Bishops conducted dialogues with several representatives from the EU institutions, among whom were EU Commissioner Johannes Hahn and the Vice President of the European Parliament Othmar Karas. All Dialogue partners from the EU institutions welcomed this positive initiative of the Austrian Bishops. It was considered to be very helpful, as well as unusual, that Church representatives were seeking a dialogue with the EU on the basis of a genuine interest and commitment to the European peace project. The EU representatives emphasised that



Austrian Bishops held their Plenary Assembly at COMECE in Brussels

Churches were an important partner in promoting and communicating European values.

Finally the Austrian Bishops, together with MEPs, inaugurated an exhibition in the European Parliament dedicated to Hildgard Burjan (1883-1933). She lived in Vienna and she is the first parliamentarian in the world to have been beatified by the Catholic Church - in January this year. As a politician, social pioneer and founder of the religious order "Caritas socialis" she has become today "an inspiring example for all those who, in the spirit of 'love thy neighbour', act as an advocate for people in need" emphasised Cardinal Christoph Schönborn, the Archbishop of Vienna and President of the Austrian Bishops' Conference.

5.3 The Nobel Peace Prize : A wake-up call for all citizens ? *21 November*

This was the title of the Public Evening debate organised on 21 November by COMECE on the occasion of the opening of the COMECE Autumn Plenary, and hosted at the Bavarian Representation to the EU in Brussels. In his opening address, COMECE President Cardinal Marx called for the reinvention of the European project: 'We Europeans are united in peace, to pursue happiness and prosperity for ourselves and for the whole world. It is necessary, not only to assert this but to win over the people of Europe to it and to venture and seek a new start.'

The award of the Nobel Peace prize to the EU can be understood as a wake-up call for citizens. The Prize seems to acknowledge that European integration is not simply about the economy but first and foremost about Peace. The current economic and financial crisis offers the opportunity for rethinking the European project. Christians, especially those involved in politics, could play a role in reshaping politics in general and European politics in particular, with different ethical standards.

Cardinal Marx joined the discussion with three panellists. The debate took place among three panellists. Prof. Paul Dembins-

ki, who founded the Observatoire de la Finance (www.obsfin.ch) in Geneva in 1993, explained how he, even at that time, had warned against possible deviations of the capitalist system. His analysis was however not then taken seriously. He underlined that many key players in economics and finance were Christians and had been deeply involved in wrong decisions: they were part of the system. This must pose questions for us and lead us to reflect on our responsibilities as Christians in the current crisis.

Clotilde Nyssens-Traversa, who is a lawyer and a former Member of the Belgian Senate (PSC/Cdh), explained that in the current crisis she witnessed how many politicians were lost in the difficult and technical decisions which had to be taken. Experts were often the only people who were really knowledgeable about complex issues. There is therefore a need for training for elected people. She pointed also to the vulnerability of a growing number of politicians to populist discourse.

Finally, Luca Jahier, President of Group III (Various' Interests) in the European Economic and Social Committee, former President of the ACLI Council (Italy), explained how the participation of citizens through civil society (NGOs Trade Unions) can enrich the political debate.

5.4 Conference on Social Market Economy

13 December 2012

Since January, and the publication of the COMECE Bishops' Declaration entitled "A European Community of Solidarity and Responsibility", the proposals contained in the document were very favourably received in economic and institutional circles. In order to discuss these proposals with economic and political leaders, COMECE organised on 13 December in Brussels a colloquium with UNIAPAC Europe (Union Internationale des Associations Patronales Chrétiennes), ADIC (Association Chrétienne des Dirigeants et Cadre) and the Konrad Adenauer Foundation entitled "Social Market Economy in Europe: Strengthening Competitiveness – Enhancing Social Cohesion" which notably included contributions by Belgian Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance Steven Vanackere and Mgr Ambrosio, Vice President of COMECE.



Evening debate at the Bavarian representation



Cardinal Reinhard Marx

6 | DIALOGUE WITH THE EU

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



Religious leaders-EU Summit

6.1 Summit of religious leaders with the EU

12 July 2012

The European Commission maintains an open, transparent and regular dialogue with churches, religious communities according to the Lisbon Treaty, which enshrined this dialogue into primary law (Art 17 TFEU). One of the expressions of this Dialogue is the annual high-level meeting with religious leaders.

Intergenerational Solidarity was at the heart of this year's annual summit meeting of European Faith leaders with the Presidents of the EU Institutions. This was the eighth such high-level meeting which took place at the invitation of President José Manuel Barroso and was co-chaired by Herman Van Rompuy, President of the European Council and László Surján, Vice-President of the European Parliament.

This year the EU Commission dedicated the high level meeting to 'Intergenerational Solidarity: Setting the Parameters for Tomorrow's Society in Europe', as 2012 marks the 'European year for active ageing and solidarity between generations'. The COMECE Bishops also dedicated their Spring Plenary Assembly this year to this topic and underlined that generations cannot live only for themselves but they have to rely on each other. The Dialogue and Solidarity between older and younger generations is the basis for the human development of our societies: it brings hope and personal fulfilment.

To face the critical demographic crisis in Europe, Mgr André-Joseph Leonard, Archbishop of Malines-Bruxelles, suggested in the meeting that among the different options - besides the reform of pension schemes and immigration - the reinforcement of families, especially stable families, is the only sustainable way out of the crisis. This implies courageous steps in the



EU Religious Leaders Summit

field of fiscal policy, financial support for the third or fourth child, social measures fostering work-family life balance.

In this context, Mgr Gianni Ambrosio (Italy), COMECE Vice-President, emphasised the necessity for Europe and its Member States to preserve the Sunday as a common weekly day of rest. "Especially for the family, for the spiritual life of its members and for human relations, both inside the family and with relatives and friends, the common Sunday rest is of fundamental importance". He recalled that Churches together with major trade unions and civil society organisations have joined forces to protect a work-free Sunday in EU and in Member States' legislation.

Referring to the dramatic situation of unemployment in Spain, Mgr Adolfo Gonzales-Montes (Spain, COMECE delegate) denounced "irresponsible and immoral political practices in Spain that led to sacrificing the younger generation" which is now hit by a 50% unemployment rate. He called on the EU to foster sound and truly effective measures to fight youth unemployment, and stressed the supporting role of EU funds, including the contribution of the EU in the area of youth policies.

In Romania, as in many Eastern European countries, families are challenged by the fact that one or both parents have to travel to work in Western Europe in order to support their families back home, explained Mgr Virgil Bercea (COMECE Vice-President). "This is causing many families to fall apart and children to grow up without one or both parents, which will create other problems for European society in the long run." He called on the EU institutions to create specific mechanisms for countries such as Romania that will help them develop faster economically so they can provide opportunities for their own citizens. "These mechanisms should include transparency in how the public money is spent, guarantees for an independent justice system, eradication of corruption, protection of human rights and religious freedom."

6.2 Meeting with the Cyprus EU Presidency

6 October 2012

The delegation of Cypriot and European Church representatives were received by the Cypriot Deputy Minister for European Affairs Andreas D. Mavroyiannis on 6 October in the Presidential Palace in Nicosia as part of the series of regular encounters between Churches and EU Presidencies. They had an exchange of views concerning a series of topics related to the agenda of the Cyprus Presidency of the Council of the EU.

The discussion between church representatives and H.E. Mr Mavroyiannis addressed several human rights issues, in particular on the implementation of freedom of religion or belief in the whole of Cyprus. The church representatives stressed the need for the protection and full accessibility to places of worship and holy sites in the occupied part of the country.

Concerning the European External Action Service (EEAS) "Guidelines" on the freedom of religion or belief, the Churches underlined the importance for the EU to also collect reliable data on the implementation of freedom of religion or belief outside the Union and to ask the EU to establish appropriate mechanisms and capacities in the Union to quickly react to the violation of freedom of religion in other parts of the world. Once the EEAS guidelines are adopted, the Churches suggest that an evaluation should be conducted every 3 years. In the further development of the EU guidelines, as well as in monitoring their implementation, CEC of CSC and COMECE are ready to put their expertise and worldwide presence at the disposal of the EEAS. The Church representatives reminded the Cypriot EU Presidency that double standards on human rights issues inside and outside of the EU are to be avoided. Mr Mavroyiannis responded that the Cyprus Presidency will follow closely the work on the EU Guidelines on freedom of religion or belief and that the Member States are already deeply involved in the process. The Presidency expressed appreciation for the support of the Churches in the process.

With regard to the financial and economic crisis, the Churches asked the EU to work on the outcome of the crisis, while paying constant attention to the most vulnerable in society. The Churches underlined that the costs of the crisis cannot be primarily paid for by the middle and lower income sectors of society and especially by the youth not finding decent employment. According to the Church representatives, solidarity within states and among EU Member States must be a key value to be implemented particularly in times of crisis. The Cypriot Minister for European Affairs confirmed that a better quality of life and standards of living for all people are at the heart of the Cyprus EU Presidency as well as of the European integration process as a whole.

Concerning Horizon 2020, the research programme of the EU from 2014 to 2020, several Churches consider it as an ethical and legal problem that the proposal of the European Commission does not exclude funding of research in human embryonic stem cells (hESC), whose procurement entails the destruction



Deputy Minister for European Affairs, Ambassador Andreas D. Mavroyiannis

of human embryos. Any funding of research which implies the procurement or the use of hESC should be explicitly excluded. The proposals do not take into consideration the recent ruling of the European Court of Justice in the case *Greenpeace v. Brüstle*. The Court clearly defines the human embryo as a human ovum, as soon as fertilized, or as the product of cloning, and confirms that biotechnological inventions using hESC cannot be patented.

The representatives of the Churches also referred to the field of data protection. They expressed the hope and expectation that the implications for church activities deriving from the proposal presented by the European Commission this year can be taken into full account. The specificities of Churches and of the relevant national approaches were identified as an important element. Mr Mavroyiannis responded that it is important to protect the confidentiality of data and that a discussion on the matter of ethical committees is in order.

Churches in Europe encouraged the Cyprus Presidency to promote discussions on intra-EU solidarity in asylum matters as an integral part of the Common European Asylum System, in particular at the next JHA Council, as well as to continue discussions on protection of refugees fleeing Syria and to promote the adoption of Council conclusions on the recent Commission "Strategy towards the Eradication of Trafficking in Human Beings". The EU institutions should take into consideration the full implications of the recent ECJ case *Germany v. Y and Z* and protect through the asylum system religious minority members seeking asylum in the EU. Mr Mavroyiannis welcomed the Churches involvement in the process and encouraged Churches to be active in their work on the promotion and protection of human rights and all the other issues discussed.

6.3 Dialogue Seminars

6.3.1 Dialogue Seminar on Freedom of Religion

30 March 2012

In every country where the people's rights of freedom of religion have been violated - and even threatened - the society itself is at risk. Freedom of Religion is actually an important indicator for assessing the implementation of Fundamental Rights as a whole. The EU should therefore more clearly monitor violations of Freedom of Religion both within the EU and throughout the world. This was the main request put forward by the Church and Society Commission of CEC and COMECE to the European Commission and the European External Action Service on the occasion of the Dialogue Seminar held in Brussels on 30 March.

During a day-long session, the Churches presented their assessment of the recent violations of Religious Freedom. Mgr Coutts, the Archbishop of Karachi and Paul Bhatti, the brother of the assassinated Minister, presented a vibrant report on the situation of Christians and other minorities in Pakistan. Like in a number of other countries, although Religious Freedom is officially granted in Pakistan, the facts show that religious minorities suffer from violence and the exercise of pressure. Christians and other religious minorities do not claim a special status or protection, but simply access to 'common citizenship', the Bishop emphasized: "they are full citizens of their countries and should simply be granted their legitimate rights as citizens".

The representatives from the European External Action Service shared their intention to enhance the monitoring of Religious Freedom violations through a more systematic and coordinated strategy at the EU level. The Churches fully supported the increase of the EEAS potential in this regard and encouraged the EEAS to develop a 'Toolkit' containing measures and instruments to counter Religious Freedom violations in the world and offered their expertise in the field.

To this effect, Canon Dr Gary Wilton from the Church of England offered several best practices ranging from human rights education inside and outside the Churches to common seminars with police, judiciary and religious representatives from specific conflict zones. He also added that in trade agreements concluded by the EU with third-countries, the insertion of conditionality clauses relating to respect for human rights are a good tool but that these clauses need to be made more effective, especially with regard to religious freedom.

Concerning countries which intend to join the EU, the European Commission should scrutinise with particular attention the respect for the fundamental right to freedom of religion and its related aspects (property rights, implementation of the rule of law). Clear and unequivocal steps towards the implementation of freedom of religion shall be present before a country is allowed to join the EU.

When it comes to the internal dimension, the main reference point for EU policies on human rights is Article 2 TEU. The right to religious freedom within the EU is based on Article 10 of the Charter of Fundamental Rights. The EU institutions should ensure that it is not simply an individualistic interpretation of this fundamental right which is promoted but that this is also broadened out so as to fully include its social and institutional dimensions. Dr Peter Krömer, from the Protestant Church AB in Austria, and the Rev Anthony Peck, Secretary General of the European Baptist Federation, emphasized in their presentations the need to pay special attention to the implementation of the rights of minority Churches and religious communities under the anti-discrimination provisions.

The Churches asked the Fundamental Rights Agency to produce a survey on discrimination based on the grounds of freedom of religion in EU Member States and in applicant countries. To this end, the EU should also encourage the Member States to collect this kind of data at national level and provide the FRA with the relevant information on a yearly basis.

Recent attacks based on religious hatred make it clear that respect for freedom of religion is at the very heart of our living together in Europe and allows the promotion of 'Unity in Diversity'. The role of religion in the public square must be



Religious leaders-EU Summit



Katharina von Schnurbein, BEPA



Dialogue Seminar on Social Market Economy

protected from attacks, which constitute a violation of religious freedom. It is important, in this regard, to acknowledge the positive role that religion plays in public life and in society.

6.3.2 Dialogue Seminar on a European Model of the Social Market Economy

14 December 2012

This was the topic of the Dialogue seminar organised by CEC and COMECE together with the Bureau of Policy Advisers of the European Commission, on 14 December 2012 in Brussels.

The term 'social market economy' entered the EU treaties, along with other objectives, via the Treaty of Lisbon. The model of the social market economy thus became one of the major objectives of the Union. The comprehensive realisation of this objective, however, is still to be achieved. But what are the foundations of this economic model? How can we Europeanise it? The current crisis in the Eurozone, and the structural weaknesses and imbalances in the European Union as a whole, underline the urgent need for this debate.

Opening the Session, Bishop Ambrosio, COMECE Vice-President, emphasised that the notion of a social market economy is a key to getting citizens to find trust again in the European project. 'It is also necessary to value more the meaning of free and gratuitous action not only in the context of economic activities but also in social and political life' he added.

Prof. Dr. Heinrich Bedford-Strohm, Bishop of the Evangelical-Lutheran Church in Bavaria emphasised that "the success of the social market economy is especially due to the fact that social responsibility is an integrated element of the economic process and does not come simply as a next step after economic prosperity. The critical challenge of a social market economy today is to address climate change, which affects especially the poor countries in the South."



Mgr Gianni Ambrosio

In a second session, church experts from different Member States were invited to assess the convergence of social market economy ideas in Europe.

From Poland, Dr. Sarnacki SJ suggested that the social market economy demands a rationally-orientated economy, rooted in social trust reinforced by a social contract. The ideal is to balance economic productivity with social responsibility. 'This implies transparency, a fair and satisfactory legal system, as well as the implementation of the rules of solidarity and participation. This model is not being realized in the actual situation' he concluded.

Prof. Dr. Heikki Hiilamo reported the experience of Finland which was affected by a crucial economic depression in the 1990's. Since this experience the Churches are contributing to the public efforts to address poverty and social exclusion, complementing the social services of the State. He therefore called on the European Commission "to open the European funding programmes more than it does today to church actors."

The third session was dedicated to Youth Unemployment as an imminent challenge across the EU. Different Church organisations presented their successful projects to fight youth unemployment: The Inclusion of Young Workers by Cáritas Diocesana Segorbe Castellón (Spain), the 'One in a million campaign' launched by the Youth Trust in Birmingham (UK), the QuiK-Service, a qualification initiative launched by the Kolping Akademie in Ingolstadt, (Germany).

Finally, it is not enough that the concept of a 'European social market economy' has been enshrined in the EU Treaties since 2009. The Churches and Church organisations recall the need to spread this concept across Europe, so that the EU Member States may survive the challenge of global competition, and in order to be able to continue offering the most vulnerable in our midst effective social protection; as well as to be sustainable, given the requirements of environmental and climatic protection.

6.4 Seminars with the European Parliament

6.4.1 Seminar on Christians in the Arab World: One year after the Arab Spring

9 May 2012

To what extent is the 'Arab Spring' meeting the demands for more liberal values such as democracy and human rights? Will the diverse communities and cultures be respected? These were some of the questions raised during a half-day seminar on Wednesday 9 May, which was co-organised by the EPP and ECR political groups together with COMECE. Witnesses hailing from different parts of the Middle East as well as representatives of organisations such as Aid to the Church in Need, Open Doors International, and Pew Forum on Religion & Public Life submitted their respective reports and analysis.

«The European Union, when cooperating with and supporting the democratic movements, shall condition its involvement upon the respect for democratic rules, such as religious freedom», underlined Jan Olbrycht MEP, EPP Group Vice-Chairman responsible for intercultural relations.

«Democratisation of the Middle East does not bring relief to the people who live there; it is a very bitter truth a year after the Arab Spring. The EU, if it wishes to remain credible as a defender of human rights, about which it is widely teaching the world, has to take a clear stance in defence of Christians in the Middle East. We demand reaction to every single act of discrimination and also expect that this problem is always present in political or trade talks between the EU and the Arab World», said Konrad Szymański MEP of the ECR Group.

Dr Joe Vella Gauci, from COMECE, said: «The Eastern Churches have coexisted with Islam for fourteen centuries and this notwithstanding the difficulties and challenges which have evolved over the centuries. Today, as in the past, difficulties and challenges are often linked to political problems and to the East-West conflict. The so-called 'Arab Spring' in the Maghreb and Mashreq countries in early 2011 must be considered as one of the most crucial historical turnarounds and paradigm shifts of the 21st Century. The events that the region has been witnessing are very significant and indicative. In the context of these Arab Revolutions, young people have cried out for freedom, equality, the right to work, citi-

zens' rights and the dignity of the human person. They wish to explore how to live in dignity in their respective countries, searching for how to live in peace and prosperity»

He continued: «However, the aforesaid events are occasionally (and unfortunately) overshadowed by barbarous incidents committed by several individuals associated with different political and religious beliefs. As a consequence, the road that leads to the attainment of true democracy becomes unclear. The fundamental objective should be: respect for all citizens; the elimination of parallel societies; respect for diverse communities and cultures; and the creation of socio-political systems worthy of safeguarding human rights and democratic values.»

The basis for a new political and social order should be the universal values that endorse respect for people and their legitimate rights. Furthermore, within the socio-religious context, one must take into account the religious dimension that is crucial for social regulation at the social moral level and for certain behaviours that are based not only on human values, but also on spiritual ones "where the temporal remains charged with religious values" and to be seen to "participate in the same humanity".

During the conference, the following speakers delivered their presentations: Berthold Pelster (Aid to the Church in Need), Esther Kattenberg (Open Doors International), Dr Brian J Grim (Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life), Dr Cornelius Hulsman (Editor of the Arab-West Report), Mgr Pierbattista Pizzaballa (Custody of the Holy Land), Dr Dimyanos Kattar (Former Ministry of Financial Affairs, Lebanon), Mgr Prof Piotr Mazurkiewicz (COMECE), and Mgr Youssef Soueif (The Maronite Archbishop of Cyprus).

There was also the chance to listen to the testimonies given by witnesses concerning the practice of religious freedom in the Arab World and to become familiar with the content of the Lebanon Conference Report and other reports on Christians in the Arab World.



Conference on Christians in the Arab World



Conference on Christians in the Arab World

6.4.2 Seminar on Discrimination of Christians in Europe

3 October 2012

On 2 October, with the participation of several high-level speakers from various countries, the EPP Group, COMECE, and the ECR Group organised a half-day seminar in the European Parliament dedicated to assessing the current situation of Christians and freedom of religion in Europe. Speakers agreed that significant efforts are required to eliminate discriminatory actions against Christians and that freedom of religion has to be ensured not only for minorities, but for Christians as well. Public attention must be raised to issues which are not covered by the media and a permanent dialogue should be established on major issues. Likewise, cross-party initiatives must also play a stronger role in this process.

In his speech, Jan Olbrycht MEP, Vice-Chairman of the EPP Group responsible for Inter-cultural Relations, said: «Any kind of discrimination is unacceptable. Discriminatory actions go against the very foundations of the European Union. There are several worrying discriminatory developments against Christians throughout Europe, against which we shall step up jointly and decisively. Furthermore, we should examine how these cases could help us, as some of these major violations could help increase public awareness and intensify efforts against discrimination of Christians who are feeling more and more like a minority in Europe.»

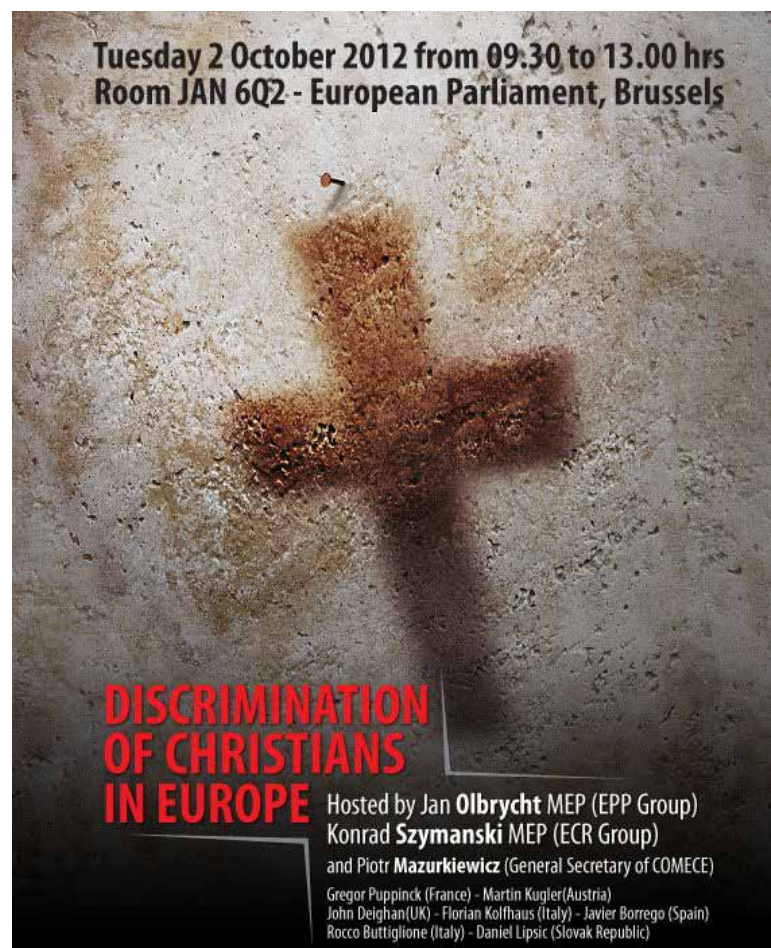
In his speech, Konrad Szymanski MEP (ECR Group) said: «In Europe, we eagerly speak about human rights, equality of rights, non-discrimination principles towards the entire world. It is good that we feel this kind of a call for the protection of human dignity. However it does not mean that our own liberal democracy cannot evolve into a discriminative system or a system which tolerates discrimination. More and more Christians feel discriminated against. The presence of the Cross and Christianity itself are being undermined. In certain countries, the protection of sexual minorities' rights causes limitations of criticism and freedom of speech. Freedom of conscience, particularly within the medical professions, is being undermined as well.»

Session one saw interventions by John Deighan who emphasised the specific situation in the UK, mainly discrimination against Catholic adoption agencies, wearing Christian religious symbols in public (e.g. in the workplace) and an attempt to re-define marriage. Daniel Lipsic referred to the need for a more balanced and consistent approach by the European Court of Human Rights concerning the incitement of hate speech.

In session two, leading speeches were given by Francisco Javier Borrego who outlined the ideological interpretation of the European Convention of Human Rights in certain cases by the Strasbourg Court. Professor Rocco Buttiglione highlighted the gap between the active minorities who influence the decision-making process and the silent majority of Christians who are afraid to take centre stage in the making of the political agenda. Other experts on the panel recalled the Resolution of the Parliamentary Assembly of the OSCE which identifies very speci-

fic areas in which the basic rights and civil rights of Christians must be protected. "A key issue is the protection of religiously motivated decisions of conscience" explained Mgr. Kolthaus (Secretariat of State, Holy See). "Needless to say, the Church is against discrimination. But not all discrimination is discrimination: there is also a right to be different".

In his remarks, Mgr Piotr Mazurkiewicz, General Secretary of COMECE, mentioned the recent positive outcomes in protecting equality and religious freedom in the Council of Europe and the Luxembourg Court. Throughout the seminar, there was a shared consensus that the European Parliament and the other European Institutions should take heed of the aforesaid issues and show the required political will in order to come up with practical solutions in this regard.



7 | LIST OF ACTIVITIES 2012

7.1 | Consultations

The European Commission has a long tradition of consulting interested parties from outside when formulating its policies. It incorporates external consultation into the development of almost all its policy areas. Depending on the issues at stake, consultation is intended to provide opportunities for input from representatives of regional and local authorities, civil society organisations, the individual citizens concerned, academics and technical experts. In this context, the COMECE Secretariat itself participates or encourages the COMECE Member Bishops' Conferences to participate in the Consultations on issues which are of interest to Churches and Church-organisations. In 2012, COMECE took part in following consultations:

- Contribution to the public consultation on **the right to family reunification of third- country nationals living in the European Union** (Directive 2003/86/EC)
15/01 European Commission
- Contribution to the public consultation on **the right to family reunification of third- country nationals living in the European Union** (Directive 2003/86/EC)
01/03 European Commission
- Contribution to the public consultation on **the European Tourism Label for Quality Systems Initiative**
13/07 European Commission
- Contribution to the public consultation on **the future rules on the entry and residence of non-EU national researchers, students, school pupils, unremunerated trainees and volunteers in the EU**
23/08 European Commission
- Contribution to the public consultation **«Towards post-2015 development Framework»**
15/09 European Commission
- Comment on the Commission Staff Working Document on **the European Code of Conduct on Partnership** (the Joint Position on the role of Church actors in the European Cohesion Policy was sent to the Commission)
12/10 European Commission
- COMECE Secretariat Position Paper on **Guidelines for the Promotion of Religious Freedom.**
19/10 European External Action Service (EEAS)

7.2 | Other contributions

-20 June 2012 :

Statement of the President of COMECE to the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (UNCSD) Rio +20 «Our common responsibility for tomorrow's world»

Twenty years after the first «Earth Summit» in Rio de Janeiro in 1992, the Heads of State and Government met in June

2012 again in Rio for the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (UNCSD). For this meeting, countless people were expecting that concrete measures would be taken on the path to a more equitable and sustainable development. Cardinal Marx listed 5 milestone-principles which should guide the negotiators.

-5 July 2012:

COMECE joint position Paper on Cohesion Policy

“Churches and their organisations: a substantial contribution to the social infrastructure in Europe”

The Churches and Church related institutions are key actors in the areas of transnational cooperation, education, culture and social inclusion. Across national borders they are involved in social cohesion in Europe. The present Position Paper intends to illustrate this key role with concrete examples and asks the EU institutions to reflect on the key role of Churches in the current drafting of Regulations and provisions on future Cohesion Policy.

-13 September 2012:

COMECE Secretariat Position Paper on Horizon 2020

“The new ethical framework proposed is weaker than the current one”

In Autumn this year the ITRE Committee (Industry, Research and Energy) of the European Parliament was to vote the package of proposals for Horizon 2020, the EU's new programme for research and innovation running from 2014 to 2020 with an €87 billion budget. Some major ethical problems remain and it appears that on many aspects the new framework is even weaker than the current one. In a Position Paper made public, the COMECE Secretariat highlights the main points of concern.

-November 2012:

COMECE Secretariat Compilation Report on Religious Freedom

EU Parliament and EEAS- January 2010-September 2012
The current report, compiled by the COMECE Secretariat, documents the initiatives taken by the European Parliament and the European External Action Service (EEAS) on religious freedom, covering the period 2010 to September 2012. The document lists 49 resolutions and recommendations on Religious Freedom adopted by the EU Parliament; 47 Statements, speeches, remarks and declarations of the EEAS on this issue. Finally, the document presents a chronological table comparing the activities of the aforementioned institutions on Religious Freedom.

7.3 | Visitor Groups

The COMECE Secretariat receives every year a number of delegations and visitor groups from the different EU Member States but also from further afield, in order to inform and raise awareness among the Church community about questions of special common interest dealt with by the different institutions of the EU. The COMECE Secretariat organises visits for Church-linked groups to the EU institutions. These are some of the Groups who visited COMECE in 2011:

- **CEBCEW Parliamentary Interns, United Kingdom**
10-11 January 2012
- **DBK ARBEITSGRUPPE EUROPA, Germany,**
11-12 January 2012
- **Group of secondary school students from Foligno, Italy,**
9 February 2012
- **Master course University of Tilburg, the Netherlands**
20 February 2012
- **AKSB Group with Chistina Gerlach,**
27 March 2012
- **Group of seminarists, la Maison de la Providence**
28 April 2012
- **Aid to the Church in Need delegation, Brussels**
10 May 2012
- **Sophia Institute, Brussels**
10 May 2012
- **World Youth Alliance delegation, Brussels**
11 May 2012
- **Catholic Journalists Institute Munich IFP, Germany**
11 May 2012
- **NGOs representatives, Brussels**
14 May 2012
- **Group of priests with Rev. P. Hartkiewicz, Poland,**
14 May 2012
- **KEK,EKD, KathBüro, Brussels**
26 June 2012
- **Organisation Franco-Egyptienne pour les Droits de l'Homme**
10 July 2012
- **Youth Group from Wspolna droga Foundation, Poland**
13 July 2012
- **Seminarists Group, Eastern Europe**
16 August 2012
- **High school pupils from Versailles, France**
31 August 2012
- **Members of European Group of Ethics**
18 September 2012
- **Arbeitskreis Frauen der KAB im Bezirk Recklinghausen (Diözese Münster)** *24-25 September 2012*
- **Press Officers from dioceses from the Netherlands**
28 September 2012
- **Representatives of citizens initiative “Uno di noi”**
1st October 2012
- **Working Group of Bishops Conference on Ecological Issues, Germany**
10-11 October 2012
- **FAFCE Plenary Session, international,**
15-16 October 2012
- **Jean-Louis Lorrain, French senator with Mr. Mahé & Mr. Papillon**
16 October 2012
- **Group of priests from France**
17 November 2012
- **Visit of Deans from Vienna,Austria,**
22-26 October 2012
- **Vollversammlung Österreichische Bischofskonferenz**
5-8 November 2012
- **Meeting with representatives of the Hospital Order**
26 November 2012
- **Breakfast meeting Ms. Chur, DBK with group**
27 November 2012
- **Associazione Coop Cristiana per l'Europa**
28 November 2012
- **Representatives of the KAS-Office in Amman and in Brussels**
28 November 2012
- **Representative of the John Paul II Catholic University in Lublin**
28 November 2012
- **Apostolic Nonciature to the European Union**
29 November 2012
- **Representative of BEPA**
29 November 2012
- **Students Group from Pontlevoy**
30 November 2012
- **Group of Polish journalists**
5 December 2012
- **Akademie für Evangelisation from Vienna**
7 December 2012
- **Breakfast with Groupe Propriété et Gratuité**
12 December 2012
- **Representatives Aid to the Church in Need International**
17 December 2012

8 | COMMUNICATION AND INFORMATION POLICY

8.1 | Publications

-12 January 2012

Statement of the COMECE Bishops

“Towards a new economic model, based on solidarity and responsibility: The European Social Market Economy”

In response to the economic and financial crisis currently hitting Europe, the COMECE Bishops proposed that the Internal Market evolves towards the concept of a Social Market Economy in order for the EU to become a viable ‘Community of Solidarity and Responsibility’.

By means of this Statement, which was unveiled on 12 January 2012 in Brussels, the COMECE Bishops offered a commentary on the concept of “*a highly competitive social market economy*”, which has become one of the treaty objectives of the European Union since the entry into force of the Lisbon Treaty.

The COMECE Bishops call on the EU to commit to the development in the long term of “*a true world political authority*” which, together with economic ingenuity, should show due regard for the principles of justice and ecological responsibility. They conclude that “*Today, the social market economy needs be spread across Europe, so that it may survive the challenge of global competition, and in order to be able to continue offering the most vulnerable in our midst effective social protection, and in order to be sustainable, given the requirements of environmental and climatic protection. To make the social market economy a reality in the European Union, we need a community of solidarity and responsibility. With solidarity and responsibility, we Europeans will also succeed in mastering the present difficult crisis and walking together on our common path and, in the end, demonstrating peace and justice to all people throughout the world*” p.24.

-June 2012:

Latest COMECE Reflections on Science and Bioethics

In order to offer an insight into the ethical implications of issues like post-coma unresponsiveness, human enhancement or organ trafficking, the COMECE Secretariat has now published volume 2 of ‘Science & Ethics’. The Opinions developed by its Bioethics Reflection Group provide an analysis of these concepts and situations and offer reflections and recommendations directed towards EU decision-makers.

The principal and most recent Report and Opinion in the collection deals with the term ‘sexual and reproductive health’ which is deeply ambiguous since it appears to include abortion as a ‘right’, in contradiction with a strict interpreta-

tion of international law and European legislation. The repeated use of the term – in declarations, resolutions, recommendations– tends to bring the phrase into common use and contributes, through customary law, to the establishment of a ‘right’, despite the reservations made by many countries, the primary actors in international law, and despite the fact that it is not mentioned in any convention or universal international treaty. The COMECE Opinion therefore offers a clarification of this concept as well as some recommendations to EU decision-makers.

The publication contains three other Opinions on ‘the state of post-coma unresponsiveness’, ‘human enhancement’ and the ‘non-commercialisation of parts of the human body’. The publication is available in English and French. It can be viewed and downloaded from the COMECE website.

The COMECE Secretariat monitors and analyses current EU policy and legislation concerning, inter alia, research, health and other matters with relevance to the field of bioethics. To this end, the Secretariat of COMECE has maintained since 1996 a Reflection Group on Bioethics comprising 15 Bioethics experts representing some of the Catholic Bishops’ Conferences. Such experts provide a rich exchange of views facilitated by their multi-disciplinary backgrounds including theological, philosophical, legal, medical and other scientific disciplines. Members meet twice a year to discuss the impact of scientific advances and biotechnological innovations for mankind. This is done normally with contributions from invited external experts, either from the EU institutions or other entities.



8.2 | Europeinfos

Europeinfos, a monthly review edited by COMECE and the Jesuit European Social Centre (JESC), is published in English, French and German. Europeinfos aims to make the meaning and purpose of the European project better known to citizens, and especially to the local churches. www.europe-infos.eu

8.3 | Press releases

In 2012, COMECE issued 16 press releases, on the following issues:

- Towards a new economic model (12/01/2012)
- We are at a decisive moment for the future of Europe (23/03/2012)
- Freedom of Religion: the EU should set the standard on this central Human Right (02/04/2012)
- Christians in the Arab World: One year after the Arab Spring (09/05/2012)
- Our common responsibility for tomorrow's world (20/06/2012)
- Latest Reflections on Science and Bioethics (22/06/2012)
- Churches and their organisations: a substantial contribution to the social infrastructure in Europe (05/07/2012)
- Intergenerational Solidarity deserves full support by the EU (12/07/2012)
- Horizon 2020: The new ethical framework proposed is weaker than the current one (13/09/2012)
- Discrimination of Christians in Europe (03/10/2012)
- COMECE welcomes the announcement of the Nobel Prize for Medicine (08/10/2012)
- Meeting with the Cyprus EU Presidency (09/10/2012)
- Nobel Peace Prize awarded to the EU (12/10/2012)
- Austrian Bishops meet in Brussels in a clear sign of support for Europe (08/11/2012)
- Catholic Bishops of the EU call for Unity (23/11/2012)
- How to build a European Model of the Social Market Economy? (14/12/2012)

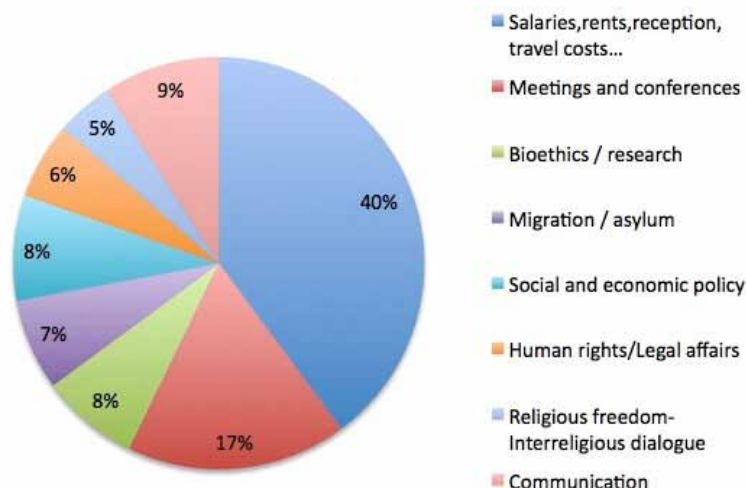


8.4 | Website

The COMECE Website (www.comece.eu) is a major tool of the communication and transparency policy of the organisation. It is available in English, French and German. It presents the History, Structure and Mission of COMECE, the Policy working areas of the Secretariat, the Structure of the EU-Church Dialogue, links to the Member Bishops' Conferences. For each Event organised or co-organised by COMECE, a report, photos, videos and text of the contributions are available on the website.

9 | FINANCES

2012 Expenses related to work areas



Total expenditure:

1 130 000 €

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

10 | GENERAL INFORMATION

10.1 | Members list for the end of the year 2012

H.Em. Cardinal Reinhard Marx

Archbishop of Munich-Freising
(Germany) President of COMECE

H.E. Mgr. Jean Kockerols

Auxiliary Bishop of Brussels
(Belgium)
Vice-President of COMECE

H.E. Mgr. Gianni Ambrosio

Bishop of Piacenza-Bobbio (Italy)
Vice-President of COMECE

H.E. Mgr. Virgil Bercea

Bishop of Oradea Mare/Gran
Varadino (Romania)
Vice-President of COMECE

H.E. Mgr Youssef Soueif

Archbishop of the Maronites
(Cyprus)

H.E. Mgr. Mario Grech

Bishop of Gozo (Malta)

H.E. Mgr. William Kenney

Auxiliary Bishop of Birmin-
gham (England and Wales)

H.E. Mgr. Christo Proykov

Apostolic Exarch of Sofia (Bulgaria)

H.E. Mgr Philippe Jourdan

Bishop of Tallinn (Estonia)

H.E. Mgr. Ferenc Cserhádi

Auxiliary Bishop Esztergom-
Budapest (Hungary)

H.E. Mgr. Czesław Kozon

Bishop of Copenhagen
(Scandinavia)

H.E. Mgr. Jozef Halko

Auxiliary Bishop of Bratislava
(Slovakia)

H.E. Mgr Janusz Stepnowski

Bishop of Lomza (Poland)

H.E. Mgr Nikólaos Fóscolos

Archbishop of Athens (Greece)

H.E. Mgr. Christian Kratz

Auxiliary Bishop of Strasburg
(France)

H.E. Mgr. Marjan Turnšek

Archbishop coadjutor of Maribor
(Slovenia)

Associated members:

- H.E. Mgr Markus Büchel
Bishop of St Gall (Switzerland)
- H.Em. Cardinal Josip Bozanic
Archbishop of Zagreb (Croatia)

H.E. Mgr. Jean-Claude Hollerich

Archbishop of the Grand
Duchy of Luxemburg

H.E. Mgr. Jan Baxant

Bishop of Litomerice (Czech
Republic)

H.E. Mgr. António Augusto

dos Santos Marto
Bishop of Leiria - Fatima
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H.E. Mgr Adolfo Gonzalez Montes

Bishop of Almeria (Spain)

H.E. Mgr. Peter A. Moran

Bishop of Aberdeen (Scotland)

H.E. Mgr Noël Treanor

Bishop of Down & Connor (Ireland)

H.E. Mgr. Zbignevs Stankevics

Archbishop Metropolitan of
Riga (Latvia)

H.E. Mgr. Rimantas Norvila

Bishop of Vilnius (Lithuania)

H.E. Mgr Theodorus Hoogenboom

Auxiliary Bishop of Utrecht
(Netherlands)

H.E. Mgr. Egon Kapellari

Bishop of Graz-Seckau (Austria)

*COMECE would like to thank for their committed work over the years as delegates of their countries,
the Bishops who left COMECE in the course of 2012:*

Mgr Piotr Jarecki (Poland), Mgr Vaclav Maly (Czech Republic) and Mgr Robert Bezak (Slovakia)



COMECE Secretariat

10.2 | COMECE Secretariat

Mgr Piotr Mazurkiewicz

General Secretary
(until 23/11/2012)

Drs. Michael Kuhn

Seconded by the Austrian Bishops' Conference
Advisor for Education, Culture and Youth policy

Anna Echterhoff

Legal advisor for Institutional and Social Affairs

Alessandro Calcagno

Seconded by the Italian Bishops' Conference
Legal advisor for Fundamental Rights

Mgr Joe Vella Gauci

Advisor for International Relations
Intercultural/ Interreligious Dialogue

Dr José-Luis Bazan

Legal advisor for Migration and Asylum

Stefan Lunte

Advisor for Economic and Social Affairs
Institutional issues

José Ramos-Ascensão

Legal advisor for Research and Bioethics

Johanna Touzel

Spokesperson & Press officer

Leen Den Blauwen

Assistant to the General Secretary

Irmina Nockiewicz

Junior Secretary

Aimery de Vêrac

Administration



The COMECE Bishops and the Secretariat wish to thank Mgr Piotr Mazurkiewicz for the work he has accomplished during his 4 years as General Secretary of COMECE.



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