

COMECE

ANNUAL REPORT 2017



COMECE
COMMISSION OF THE BISHOPS' CONFERENCES
OF THE EUROPEAN UNION

14

Migration
& Asylum

17

Ethics, health & research

20

Ecology &
Sustainability

22

Legal affairs
& Fundamental rights

25

Intercultural
Dialogue & Education

27

Social &
Economic Policies

30

External Action

33

Freedom of Religion



FOREWORD

Dear Readers,

On 25 March 2017, the heads of state and government of the 27 member states of the European Union came together in Rome to remember the 60th anniversary of the signing of the Treaty of Rome. The highlight of this meeting was an audience with Pope Francis on the previous evening in the Vatican's Sala Regia. After the Pope's speech, in which he spoke above all of the hope that can once again inspire the European Union and Europe, the doors were opened for the official photo, in which the heads of state and government stood, with the Pope in the middle, in front of the fresco of the Last Judgement by Michelangelo in the Sistine Chapel.

The significance of this image is overwhelming to me – the heads of state and government of the European Union and the Pope gathered together, and above them this painting that reminds us that we are ultimately answerable to God for everything we do. It is both a clarion call and a warning, and it makes clear the role of the Church in the dealings between politics and the Church, between worldly and spiritual power: to express clearly and unequivocally our complete responsibility to God and humanity,



Pope Francis and Cardinal Marx

to give hope, to indicate forcefully the possible consequences of political actions and failures to act, and to use the means at the disposal of the Church and of Christians to contribute to the peaceful coexistence of all people. Because we will be answerable for these things – to each other, to future generations, and to God! The presence of the Church in today's Europe, as a witness of the Gospel, should open up the possibilities of hope and commitment.

For it is the task of the present younger generation to make sure that Europe is capable of commanding a sustainable and substantial majority, not only from the point of view of all the 500 million EU citizens, but also in each individual member state. The task is immense and therefore implies that modesty is needed. Bold dreams of a European superstate are not appropriate here, but rather specific improvements for the good of those who currently feel forgotten by the EU. We need a European Union whose social character is recognizable; a Europe with solidarity and subsidiarity as its guiding principles.

It is the often unspoken feelings and developments threatening the European project which have moved COMECE to closely examine the Treaty of Rome on this, its 60th anniversary.

Politics and the Church each have their tasks and their roles, and yet we need to enter into dialogue about how we can work together towards the "new European humanism" that Pope Francis urged us to embrace in his speech of 24 March.

To work on the "new European humanism" is a task which we must address together – not as an end in itself, but as the start of a process that affects not only ourselves, but also the future of Europe and its people. With its "(Re)thinking Europe" dialogue last October in Rome, COMECE took an important step in a direction we want to keep following.

Cardinal Reinhard Marx
President of COMECE

Munich, Brussels, February 2018

(RE)THINKING EUROPE: A FRANK AND OPEN DISCUSSION

Organised by the Holy See and COMECE, (Re)thinking Europe took place on 27-29 October 2017 to mark the 60th anniversary of the signature of the Treaties of Rome. The colloquium, which gathered 350 participants, was a deep wish of Pope Francis and of the COMECE bishops led by Cardinal Reinhard Marx. Hundreds of high-level Church and EU political representatives, together with other grassroots actors, met in the Vatican to contribute to a constructive reflection on the fundamental challenges facing the European project.

The event was thought and organised in the form of a dialogue, with workshops and debates, in order to facilitate a frank and open discussion between stakeholders of different geographic, cultural, religious and linguistic backgrounds. The participants looked for new ways to involve all actors of the society in their respective religious or political responsibilities.

“ The first time

‘It’s the first time that I attend a dialogue of this kind and on this scale and I found it extremely interesting, especially the opportunity of listening to the reports of the many workshops that took place.

It was surprising to acknowledge the similarities of the themes brought to the fore, despite the different backgrounds and outlooks, in geographic terms and with regard to the confessions and languages of the participants: the role of active citizenship, citizens as the embodiment of spiritual and civil values; the role of values such as solidarity and subsidiarity in the definition of European policies; the efficient use of these terms in advancing prospects on climate and development, as in *Laudato si’*. All of these elements in my opinion exemplify a joint progress.’

**Pat Cox, former President
of the EU Parliament**



(Re)thinking Europe
#eu60dialogue





“ A source of inspiration

‘It was a new experience and a new concept of a meeting: 360 degrees on a European scale between political and religious leaders but also a systematic one, with a delegation from each country. It was an opportunity for us, as men of the Church, to meet, in a more informal setting, political leaders that are connected with the Catholic Church.’ ‘Christian teachings are a source of inspiration and of new ideas for the European project, for a more stable, stronger Europe that gives people more hope. Because religion is not an obstacle to European progress.’

*Bishop Philippe Jourdan,
Apostolic Administrator of Estonia*

“ Time to realize the founding fathers’ dream

“Entrenchment in one’s own positions only leads to failure. Now is not the time, then, to dig trenches, but instead to work courageously to realize the founding fathers’ dream of a united and harmonious Europe, a community of peoples desirous of sharing a future of development and peace.”

Pope Francis address to the participants



“ A diversity of opinions

‘It was a great pleasure to take part in such high-level debates. Greater emphasis was placed on establishing links between Europe and its citizens than on the operation of its institutions. The diversity of opinions represented also allowed for a comparison of ideas within working groups which particularly highlighted the diversity of perception between West and East.’

*Ophélie Omnes, Vice-president
of Young European Federalists*





“ The dialogue should go on ”

‘Every diocese, every parish, must now try to launch and animate this kind of reflections and meetings between people who elaborate ideas, in the search for an anthropology for today’s humanity, an anthropology that has a great need to be enriched by the doctrine of the Church ’ ”

*Bishop Noel Treanor,
Bishop of Down and Connor, Ireland*

“ Christians have a realistic perspective

‘In the face of today’s numerous challenges, I think that deeply-committed Christians are more important than ever, thanks to their contribution to the development of the European project, because Churches and religious communities are reflecting on what is the right option for communities as a whole and because they have a realistic perspective on what is feasible.

Manfred Weber, President of the EPP Group at the European Parliament



“ Europe should rediscover itself

‘I firmly believe that the European project can and must be relaunched. And we must not be discouraged, in fact we should enhance it as an opportunity to look behind, see how much progress we have made so far, identify the elements that could have diverted us from our journey, and restart with greater motivation, headed towards our goal that is not a point of arrival but a journey that must be undertaken together.

I believe that Europe should rediscover itself as a community of persons and peoples, and that each member Country should extend its gaze to see the greater good that benefits everyone.’ ”

Bishop Ioan Robu, Archbishop of Bucharest, President of the Romanian Bishops’ Conference



“ Start of a process

“(Re)thinking Europe will be the start of a process of dialogue between the Churches representatives (both bishops and seculars) and the politicians who have political responsibility and take decisions.”
“The main message of the Church is to put the human person back at the heart of the European public policy and the Dialogue of Rome is a milestone of this process.” ”

Cardinal Reinhard Marx, COMECE President





“ Church as a proactive force in Europe

“This meeting is above all a dialogue among people with different responsibilities who share the joint commitment to work for this humanity living in Europe. Thus, on the initiative of Pope Francis, it consists in engaging in a positive and constructive dialogue to show Europe that the Church is a proactive force in today’s Europe.”

Fr Olivier Poquillon OP, COMECE General Secretary



(Re)thinking Europe
#eu60dialogue



DIALOGUE WITH THE EU INSTITUTIONS

Dialogue between the EU institutions and Churches and religious associations or communities is based on Article 17(3) of the Treaty on the Functioning of the EU. It foresees that the EU 'shall maintain an open, transparent and regular dialogue with these churches and organisations.'

In January 2017 the European Parliament entrusted new First Vice-President Mairead McGuinness with the responsibility of the implementation of this dialogue. In September, the European Commission appointed a new Coordinator for the Dialogue, Mr Vincent Depaigne. Following up to a joint COMECE-CEC letter to the President of the European Council, Donald Tusk, a contact point on this Dialogue has also been established at the EU Council in July (Ms Assia Stantcheva).

During 2017, COMECE established regular contacts with the above-said officials, as well as with the advisors on Article 17 TFEU Dialogue within the Cabinets of President Juncker and of First Vice-President Timmermans, in view of strengthening the implementation of Article 17 TFEU.

COMECE organised regular occasions of dialogue with the EU officials to promote the vision of the Catholic Church on policies and legislations falling under EU competence. COMECE highlighted that, according to art. 17 TFEU, dialogue between the Church and the EU institutions is specific and shouldn't be confused with interreligious dialogue or with the dialogue with civil society.

Meeting with the Maltese EU Presidency

On Friday 6 January, a joint delegation from COMECE and the Conference of European Churches (CEC) met with the Prime Minister of Malta, Dr Joseph Muscat, together with the Foreign affairs and Interior Ministers at the start of their six months Presidency of the Council of the European Union. "Malta's Presidency of the Council of the European Union offers our nation the opportunity to give a strong impetus to revitalizing faith in the European project" said the Archbishop of Malta, Mgr Charles J. Scicluna. The meeting was convened to discuss common concerns, especially relating to the priorities of the Maltese presidency including migration, neighbourhood policy, and social inclusion.



Malta Presidency meeting

Meeting with the Estonian EU Presidency

A delegation from COMECE met in Tallinn on August 18 with the Estonian Prime Minister, Jüri Ratas, and the Minister of Internal Affairs, Andres Anvelt, in order to discuss common concerns as well as the most urgent priorities of the Estonian presidency of the Council of the European Union. COMECE was represented by Mgr. Philippe Jourdan, Apostolic Administrator of Estonia and General Secretary fr. Olivier Poquillon OP. Together they shared the concerns of Pope Francis for two of the most current topics, such

as the effects of digitalization of the economy on employment, and chosen migration. COMECE discussed also one of Tallinn's major priorities for its EU Presidency, the EU Eastern Partnership. COMECE acknowledged the need for a stronger cooperation and solidarity in the field of Security and Defence at the Eastern EU border.

Dialogue with the EU Presidency on Securitisation of freedom of religion

On 27 November, COMECE sponsored in Tallinn the conference "Securitisation of Religious Freedom - Religion and Scope of State Control" on the role of religion and Churches in the European Union".

Bishop Philippe Jourdan, Apostolic Administrator of Tallinn and delegate to COMECE, identified Church autonomy and the protection of State-Church relations within the Member States on the basis of Article 17(1) TFEU as two priorities of the Catholic Church.

COMECE appreciated the involvement of the Estonian Presidency in co-organising this type of event and also expressed the hope that this positive experience will lead to the reintegration of the institution of the EU Presidency as one of the actors of the annual high-level gathering between EU and religious leaders.



Meeting with the Estonian EU Presidency

Annual High-Level meeting: Christians working for the common good

"We are not an interest group speaking in favor of religions, we are European citizens committed to the construction of Europe", said Archbishop Jean-Claude Hollerich during a high-level meeting between the EU institutions and religious leaders which took place on 7th November. European Commission First Vice-President Frans Timmermans, together with European Parliament Vice-President Mairead McGuinness, hosted the 13th Annual High-Level meeting between the EU institutions and leaders from Churches and religious communities in Europe.

This annual gathering provided an occasion to discuss the future of the European project from a human dimension perspective, encompassing the principles of solidarity, social justice and sustainability.

In the context of identifying new forms of leadership strengthening the dialogue between religious and political actors, Bishop Noel Treanor, Delegate to COMECE from Ireland, stated that "leadership should be participative, shared and multilevel", while highlighting the importance of the leadership on the ground. Mr. Timmermans underscored the ever-increasing importance of the Art. 17 TFEU dialogue, referring to some concrete follow ups on the topics discussed during the gathering.

COMECE met with President Juncker to discuss challenges facing the EU

On 31st March, Cardinal Reinhard Marx, President of COMECE, and Rt Rev. Christopher Hill KCVO, DD, President of the CEC were received by Mr Jean-Claude Juncker, President of the European Commission, as part of the open, transparent, and regular Dialogue between the European Union and Churches enshrined in Article 17 TFEU.

EP Dialogue Seminar on "The future of Europe – Reflections for the EU by 2025"

On 27 June, the European Parliament, under the patronage of President Antonio Tajani, convened a dialogue with representatives of Jewish, Muslim, and Christian communities on the future of Europe. The high-level dialogue was inspired in part by recent European Parliament resolutions on improving its various treaties and on the 2017 European Commission White Paper on the future of Europe. Churches are equally invested in these conversations, notably through the COMECE's Vatican gathering (Re)thinking Europe. Archbishop Jean-Claude Hollerich SJ, Primate of Luxembourg, advocated for a fresh vision for Europe, and that the full potential of the treaties could help develop this new European dream.



Fr Olivier Poquillon OP meeting EP Vice President McGuinness

EP Dialogue Seminar on the external policies of the EU

On December 6th, COMECE participated to an event on EU external policies co-organised with the European Parliament. The event focused on the positive contribution that Churches and Church actors can bring to the development of a more coherent EU external policy based on the

rule of law and on the respect of human dignity. H.E. Youssef Soueif, Archbishop of the Maronites and representative of Cyprus at COMECE, invited the EU institutions to reflect on the concept of citizenship in neighbouring countries and in the MENA region. He also insisted on the importance of education and dialogue as keys to have peace and stability and to get beyond hatred.

COMECE participated to expert meeting on religion and human rights

The EU Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA) organized an event, held in Vienna on 12-13 September 2017, which highlighted the past and present, paramount contribution of Churches and religious communities in the area of fundamental rights. COMECE was invited to actively participate and to express the view of the Catholic Church in the



Cardinal Marx, President Juncker, Bishop Hill

discussions. This new initiative is a positive step in the implementation of Article 17 TFEU Dialogue on the part of the EU Agency for Fundamental Rights.

Visit to the EU institutions of Cardinal Bagnasco

From 9 to 13 January, H.Em. Cardinal Angelo Bagnasco (President of CCEE) visited COMECE with a group of 30 young priests from his

Archdiocese of Genoa, Italy. This visit gave him the opportunity to deepen knowledge of the policies of the EU and the mission of COMECE. The visit included meetings with the President of the European Parliament, with representatives of the European Commission and with the Italian Permanent Representation to the EU.

Dutch Bishops mark their support to European project

«We came to Brussels to express our commitment with the European Union» said H.E Mgr Hoogenboom on the occasion of the visit of the Dutch Bishop's Conference to the European Institutions and to COMECE in Brussels, on 20-21 February. The delegation was led by His Excellency Mgr Van den Hende, Bishop of Rotterdam and President of the Dutch Bishops' Conference. The Bishops met at the European Parliament with Mr. Wim van der Camp MEP, who introduced them to the work of the Parliament. At the European External Action Service they discussed with Ms Merete Bilde, a senior official of the service, the importance of a good understanding of religion for EU's foreign policy.

Bishops from England and Wales conveyed issues of concern at a key time in negotiations for the UK's exit

Bishop Nicholas Hudson led a delegation from the department of international affairs of the Bishops' Conference of England and Wales, made up of Bishop Tom Burns, Bishop Paul McAleenan and Bishop William Kenney to Brussels. As well as meeting with officials and representatives of the various institutions, the delegation heard about the extensive advocacy work undertaken by COMECE on behalf of the Bishops' Conferences of the EU. The issues raised by the bishops centred on: The importance of upholding human rights in all trade deals; Prisoner transfer rights; Northern Ireland and border issues with the Republic of Ireland; Rights of EU nationals in the UK and UK citizens in European countries.

MIGRATION & ASYLUM

'Welcome, protect, promote and integrate' Pope Francis

MIGRATION & ASYLUM

'Welcome, protect, promote

and integrate'

Pope Francis

More than 14,500 migrants died at the Mediterranean Sea since 2014, and Pope Francis called for not allowing it to become "a vast cemetery". On the basis of the European Agenda on Migration (May 2015), a wide reform of the EU asylum, migration and borders control systems was proposed by the European Commission to control borders and re-establish trust. EU measures on relocation of refugees were highly contested by some Member States- and provoked mutual legal complaints before the EU Court of Justice. The integration of migrants is becoming a key dimension of prevention of social problems, making them part of the social fabric as contributors. COMECE has highlighted the importance of the integration of migrants and the need to create a favourable social environment for that.

European Agenda on Migration

COMECE largely contributed to the reform process through public consultations' contributions, statements and contacts with EU representatives.

Within the Christian Group on Migration and Asylum, COMECE commented on the EU Action Plan on the Integration of Third Country Nationals (February 2017) and contributed to the Consultation on Legal Migration (September 2017).



Event: 'Migration and integral human development' March 2017

Working Group on Migration and Asylum

The COMECE Working Group on Migration and Asylum is composed of experts appointed by the Bishops' Conferences and discusses EU policies in the migration and asylum fields, in dialogue with representatives of EU institutions. Its President is Fr Olivier Poquillon (COMECE General Secretary) and its Secretary is Mr. José Luis Bazán

In March 2017, the COMECE Working Group on Migration and Asylum discussed the pilot project of humanitarian corridors with a representative of Sant' Egidio. In December, the Working Group addressed the root causes of migration in North and Sub-Saharan Africa with a representative of DG DEVCO and an expert of the European Parliament Research Service.

Under EU Law, irregular migrants should be returned to their home countries by Member States. COMECE supported a comprehensive approach and advocates for the respect of the non-refoulement principle and the humane treatment of returnees.

COMECE advocated an intensification of "peer to peer" partnerships with third countries, in particular in Africa, in order to make real the right of individuals and their families to live in their home countries. In May 2017, COMECE organised a conference on "Addressing migration at its root

causes. How can the EU help to improve the prospects of Africa's youth?" and a conference on "Migration and Integral Human Development" in March 2017 to mark the 50th anniversary of the Encyclical 'Populorum Progressio'.

Fighting trafficking of human beings

The phenomenon of trafficking in human beings is of particular concern, as it involves different ways of slaving and degrading people (the European Commission recently published a new Communication with further concrete actions). COMECE has been active in this area since the Dialogue Seminar with the Commission in 2014. Search and rescue ("SAR") operations are perceived as a humanitarian "must", especially in the



Event: 'Migration and integral human development' March 2017

Mediterranean Sea, despite the fact that it might indirectly ease the work of smugglers. Integration of migrants in the EU is seen as a long-term challenge that will last for decades- as the effort is to be made also for the second generation-, in a social environment, which is not always friendly.

Integration of migrants and refugees and their families

COMECE has highlighted the importance of the integration of migrants and refugees and the need to create a favourable social environment for all. It also supports the full respect of the right to family reunification without procedural overburdening or unduly extending the time for the reunification of family members. COMECE is cooperating with the Holy See section on Migration in promoting its 20 action points for the 2018 UN Global Compacts on Migration and Refugees.

COMECE organised a Dialogue with MEPs on the topic 'Integration of refugees' in March 2017 at the EU Parliament.

Contributions

9 february 2017

Comments on the EU Action Plan on the Integration of Third Country Nationals.

15 september 2017

Contribution to the EC Consultation on Legal Migration.



Caritas Athens



Event: 'Migration and integral human development' March 2017



Syrian refugees in Lebanon

ETHICS, HEALTH & RESEARCH

‘Science requires a sense of ethical responsibility’

Pope Francis

During the last 3 years the scope of activities of the European Institutions concerning questions of health and research increased. The complexity of the modern world is bringing up so many new developments that can be seen in the ambits of health and research various activities in the EU.

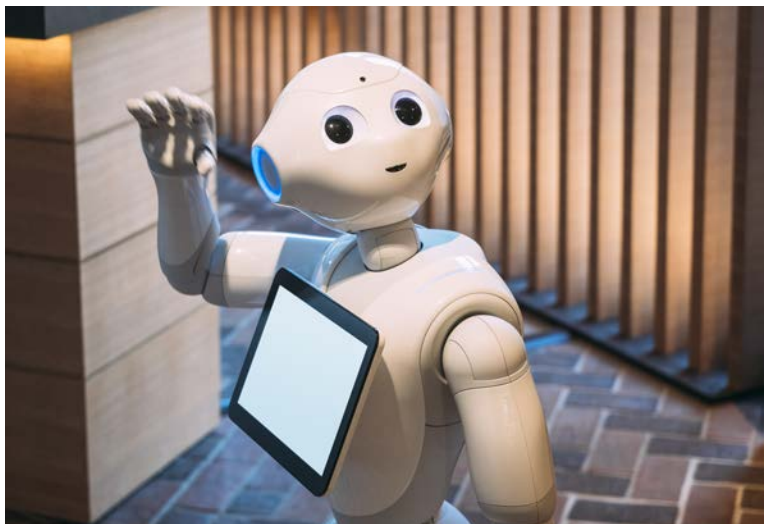
The EU framework Horizon 2020 gives a detailed vision of the paths the EU will follow during the coming years. Fast technological innovations, a fast developing health-sector, various research programs focused on health, digitalization and robotisation – the challenges for the Christian concept of human-kind are numerous.

To allow COMECE to follow the expanding sector of these EU relevant activities, based on EU competences, and to adopt a structure able to address current ethical implications of many topics, the March 2017 Plenary Assembly adopted a new configuration of the Working Group on Ethics.

Robotisation of life

The EU is working on various digitalization and robotisation investment and development programs having strong ethical implications and touching many sectors of the EU policy fields.

Robotisation of life was chosen as a first topic for an ad-hoc working setting under our new organization.



The secretariat of COMECE enhanced the networking process concerning this topic for interdisciplinary exchanges. Informal contacts with the EGE (European Group on Ethics) were established and during the process of looking for experts for the ad-hoc working group contacts within the Church (like the Pontifical Council of Culture) and within the EU based organizations intensified. The ad-hoc working group is in the process of drafting an opinion to be published in March 2018.

Prevention of abortion

In June 2017 in cooperation with other partners, COMECE organized a European seminar on “Preventing Abortion in Europe, legal framework and social policies”. Abortion affects society as a whole as well as its future and it is a matter of public health. The purpose of the seminar was to identify good practices for effective prevention policies; examples were listed on how abortion can be reduced by care for the pregnant women before and after delivery and by education. Speakers recalled that, according to international law, States have the obligation to reduce the recourse to abortion. Most of the European States have committed themselves in policies supporting family, motherhood and children before as well as after birth (Convention on the Rights of the Child).

Monitoring EU institutions approach of women policies

Several EU policies are touching specific life situations of women. Education, health care, legal regulations with regard to antidiscrimination, family, violence against women and poverty, a wide range of policy fields the EU is dealing within those competences.

In November 2017 COMECE attended the Annual Colloquium on Fundamental Rights of the European Commission. The Colloquium focused this year on “Women’s rights in turbulent times”.

COMECE promotes the perspective of the Church into the wide range of the discussion including misogyny in society, the threat for the fundamental rights of women and the economical and political situation of women caused by the disregard of the real parity in dignity and rights between women and men.



Preventing abortion in Europe



Women policies

A new mandate for the COMECE Working Group on Ethics

COMECE enlarged the mandate and the setting of its Working Group on Ethics. Ad-hoc working groups concerning major EU priorities will, now, be possible. Following the relevant EU discussions and focusing on the ethical implications of current topics, a greater flexibility is needed as well as a cross-cutting exchange among experts. An assembly of the Working Group on Ethics will be held every second year and ad-hoc working groups should give the necessary, additional flexibility. Presided by the COMECE Secretary general, it is animated by Prof. Dr. Antonio Autiero with the support of Friederike Ladenburger (Legal adviser at the COMECE secretariat).



Coordinating the Ad-hoc working group on 'robotisation of life'



Working group on ethics

Contribution

January 2017

Opinion of the COMECE Working Group on Ethics in research & Medicine
"Mental health in Europe- Ethical and religious considerations"

ECOLOGY & SUSTAINABILITY

'The urgent challenge to protect our common home' Pope Francis

ECOLOGY & SUSTAINABILITY

'The urgent challenge to protect

our common home'

Pope Francis

In November 2017, the European Commission has published its Communication on «The Future of Food and Farming», a first step towards the Common Agricultural Policy 2020-2028.

In June 2017 the European Commission adopted the new EU One Health Action Plan against AMR. This new plan supports the EU and its Member States in delivering innovative, effective and sustainable responses to AMR. The goal is to preserve the possibility of effective treatments of infections in humans and animals.

The European Commission has placed the question of food waste – still 25-30% of food produced in the EU are thrown away – high on its political agenda. This topic involved producers as well as manufacturers, distributors and consumers. Besides technical solution this topic requires a profound and in-depth debate on a necessary change-of-minds and habits.

AntiMicrobialResistance (AMR)

In June 2017, COMECE had been invited to contribute to a Parliamentary Hearing on AMR prior to the publication of a European One Health Action Plan. In its contribution COMECE concentrated on some ethical key-principles concerning the fight against AMR and underlined the importance of a «combined approach» of regulating the use of antibiotics in human medicine and livestock on the one hand and stronger efforts to educate people's minds with regard to the use of antibiotics.

In the meantime, the initiators of the EP-Hearing have contacted the Holy See to draw his attention to the problem and to invite him to take «moral leadership» in this particular topic which is not only a European but a global challenge.

The secretariat will stay in close contact with the EP, PA International and with the Nunciature to follow the development of the topic closely.

The Future Common Agricultural Policy

In spring 2017 the European Commission invited to participate in a public consultation on « Modernising and simplifying the common agricultural policy (CAP)». In this consultation COMECE advocated a simplification of the CAP, taking into account the global aspects of agriculture and a necessary recalibration of the aims of agricultural policy meeting the challenges of climate change and the protection of the planet. A mayor emphasis needs to be put on the change-of-mind of producers as well as consumers; education will be a key element.

The Communication on «The Future of Food and Farming», published in November 2017, keeps the existing structure of the CAP - the so-called «two pillar structure» of market measures and rural development. At the same time it tries to give responsibility back to the member states: it will be up to them with which measures the agreed aims of CAP (food security, quality of products, protection of the environment, sustainability, measures against climate change) will be achieved. This could mean a certain «re-nationalisation» of the CAP under the denominator of «subsidiarity» that needs to be further examined. Another idea to be discussed is to what extent certain parts of the second pillar could be integrated into EU Regional Development Policy.



Food Waste

During the past year the secretariat has studied different elements of food waste and followed the discussion in the European Parliament as well as the public debate between stakeholders. In contact with the European Commission the secretariat is developing the idea of a small stakeholder round-table that could enable a discussion about the profound need to change «mindset and habits» of the different stakeholders: at the moment the credo seems to be: as long as there is a market or a demand we will produce...». This round-table is planned for the first semester of 2018.

Contributions

April 2017

Contribution to «Consultation on modernising and simplifying the common agricultural policy (CAP)».

September 2017

“Antibacterial Resistance: Time to act” published in The Parliament magazine,



LEGAL AFFAIRS & FUNDAMENTAL RIGHTS

‘EU policies and their roots in human dignity’

LEGAL AFFAIRS & FUNDAMENTAL RIGHTS

‘EU policies and their roots

in human dignity’

Since several years, COMECE follows with great attention the elaboration and adoption of the new EU General Data Protection Regulation (May 2016). Transparency has been a key topic since around ten years at the EU. COMECE closely monitored the way EU transparency policies can affect Church activities; and advocated for a more correct balance of the burden placed on one hand on public officials and on the other on citizens and organisations. In 2016, the EU presented a proposal for the revision of the Audiovisual Media Services Directive. The renewed Directive is to ensure that citizens will be sufficiently protected in the on-demand and Internet world. The Church fully supports the key goal of protection of minors.

Data protection: a guidance for the Bishops’ Conferences

In consultation with the Holy See, during 2017, an internal Guidance document was drafted by the COMECE Secretariat and addressed to the Bishops’ Conferences of the EU. The text was aimed at supporting them in revising, where possible, their internal data protection rules; or to better tackle the issues deriving from the eventual direct application of the EU Regulation to them. The Guidance document was presented at the COMECE “Autumn 2017” Plenary Assembly. Various Bishops’ Conferences have since taken steps towards updating their internal rules on data protection.



Meeting of the Legal Affairs Commission



Legal Affairs Commission

The COMECE Legal Affairs Commission monitors and prepares statements and contributions to the legal work of the EU, especially in those areas with a direct impact on the work/functioning of the Catholic Church in the EU and on topics of importance for the State–Church relationship in the Member States.

Its President is Bishop Theodorus C.M. Hoogenboom (Auxiliary Bishop of Utrecht, The Netherlands) and its Secretary is Mr Alessandro Calcagno.

Transparency: safeguarding access to EU institutions

The COMECE Secretariat has been registered since 2011 under Section V (Organisations representing churches and religious communities) of the EU Transparency Register.

In 2016, the European Commission launched a consultation on the revision of this instrument to which COMECE participated. Its Secretariat also took part in two EU Parliament hearings devoted to the process in 2017. During this year, priority was given to the work of the European Parliament and of the EU Council in view of inter-institutional negotiations.

The main consideration put forward in these contexts, in contact with EU officials, concerned the preservation of the current arrangement (exemption for Churches, while their representations to the EU are expected to register). A call was also made so that transparency does not jeopardize the fundamental right to freedom of religion, especially in its collective and institutional dimensions.

The COMECE Secretariat also expressed concerns about placing the weight of transparency obligations on citizens and organisations, rather than on public authorities. It questioned whether this is the most cost-effective solution; and whether this system allows all citizens to have access to the EU institutions or rather limits such access. Transparency policies should not isolate EU officials in a “closed box”, disconnected from reality, but rather better facilitate their connections with all actors.

Media: Online and offline protection of children

During 2017, COMECE was particularly active in regards to the EP negotiations on the proposed reform of the Audiovisual Media Services Directive. It especially supported efforts to preserve the expression “moral development” (with regard to minors) in a number of provisions in the European Parliament’s mandate. The formulation became part of the European Parliament’s mandate. Focus was also placed on a strong wording for the key provision on protection from pornography and gratuitous violence.

COMECE also highlighted the importance of protecting religious programmes and services and their specificity in the context of audiovisual media services.

More generally, awareness was successfully raised with EU officials on the possible risks of decreased protection deriving from current efforts to replace the expression “child pornography” with “child sexual abuse materials”.

Contributions

25 APRIL 2017

Contribution to the European Commission consultation on “Rules on liability caused by a defective product”

26 APRIL 2017

Contribution to European Parliament’s JURI Committee consultation on “Civil law rules on robotics”

7 JUNE 2017

"Reasonable accommodation on the grounds of religion? A Catholic perspective" (internal reflection paper)

16 JUNE 2017

Contribution to the Fundamental Rights Forum 2018 on "Belonging"

26 SEPTEMBER 2017

"Regulation (EU) 2016/679 on the protection of natural persons with regard to the processing of personal data and on the free movement of such data, and repealing Directive 95/46/EC (General Data Protection Regulation) - Elements for guidance to the Bishops' Conferences of the EU" (internal)



Meeting of the Legal Affairs Commission



Bishop Hogenboom and Alessandro Calcagno



Meeting of the Legal Affairs Commission

INTERCULTURAL DIALOGUE & EDUCATION

In May 2017, the European Commission issued its communication on the future of school-education: «School development and excellent teaching for a great start in life» and of higher education «A renewed agenda for Higher Education».

On the occasion of the Gothenburg Summit in November, the European Commission presented its communication «Laying the foundations of the European Education Area: for an innovative, inclusive and values-based education» as a contribution to this summit.

Religious actors discuss with policy-makers how to implement resilience

On 12 July, COMECE hosted a roundtable debate on the concept of resilience and the respective roles of policy-makers and faith-based actors in this process. The meeting gathered 30 stakeholders from European External Action Service, European Commission, European Parliament as well as UN and faith-based actors from the field.

In view of the current geopolitical challenges and of EU's strategic priority to foster resilience of countries and their citizens, COMECE invited policy-makers and field actors to jointly reflect on ways of putting the concept of resilience into practice. From COMECE's perspective, resilience should be understood and implemented as a people-centered approach focusing on the



Graz summer school 2017

human being, family and local community. By strengthening their resilience, the EU can make a significant contribution to integral human development and sustainable peace.

Churches and religious organisations as long-standing grassroots actors can play an important role in fostering human resilience. In this regard, the participants reflected on ways of tapping into the social and moral resources contained within religious networks and of effectively engaging them in resilience policies.

Participation of COMECE in the “Summer School” renewed until 2020

Since 2006, students from all over the world attend the Graz-Seggau International Graz University (Austria), organized by COMECE, the University of Graz and the Diocese of Graz-Seggau. Students and teachers work in an interdisciplinary manner on topical subjects, particularly those related to the European Union and its relations with “the Americas” (Canada, USA, Caribbean and Latin America). The Seggau International Summer School is an interdisciplinary innovation laboratory for science and research, which also allows the Church to promote the search for a humanist and lively

society. Since its launch, the Graz-Seggau Summer University has been supported by COMECE thanks to the commitment of Michael Kuhn, who participates in the organization and spiritual accompaniment of the participants.

Young Catholics discovering EU institutions

COMECE hosted a 4-days-visit of 20 young people from the UK to the EU institutions and to Church organisations. Meeting EU Officials from the European Commission, the European Council and its UK Task Force as well as from the EU Parliament. They got the opportunity to deepen their knowledge about the EU and its policies, about burning issues like Brexit and about EU-topics that are of importance and concern for the Church.

This Internship programme, which is supported by COMECE, began in 2003 and provides up to nine recently graduated Catholics with intensive experience of political and social action in a spiritual context. Each year these interns are invited for a week of visit to discover the EU institutions and the advocacy work of Brussels based Church organisations. This part of the programme is organised by Michael Kuhn from COMECE.



SOCIAL & ECONOMIC POLICIES

'Promoting a Europe that is an inclusive community' Pope Francis to Comece

SOCIAL & ECONOMIC POLICIES

'Promoting a Europe that is an inclusive community' Pope Francis to Comece

Against the backdrop of rising inequalities accentuated by the crisis and new emerging forms of work, the EU agreed in 2017 on a joint proclamation on EU social policy, the 'European Pillar of Social Rights'. At a Social Summit, the presidents of the EU institutions signed the document and together with EU heads of state and government promised to translate the 20 principles of the Pillar into concrete actions. Together with its ecumenical partners, COMECE welcomed the initiative as a vital step towards a European social market economy and encouraged EU leaders to flank the initiatives with concrete proposals.

Social Pillar: a vital step towards a European social market economy

COMECE contributed to the process from the very beginning. The Social Affairs Commission took part in the consultation and discussed the proposed Pillar at its Spring meeting with the European Parliament and the EU Commission.

In a joint ecumenical letter to the president of the three EU institutions, the General Secretaries of COMECE and the Conference of European Churches (CEC) recalled their support for the general idea of the Pillar of Social Rights. The initiative responds both to Pope Francis' call "for moving from a liquid to a social economy"



Mgr Ambrosio at the Social Affairs Commission

as well as to the COMECE statement 'A European Community of Solidarity and Responsibility' (2011). Yet, they also stressed the importance of translating the high-level declaration into concrete actions using all EU instrument, in particular the European funds.

COMECE also welcome that the initiative was flanked already with a concrete proposal on Work-life Balance protecting family life, and contributed already with its suggestions to the legislative process.

Focus on volunteering

COMECE welcomed the general approach of the European Solidarity Corps as it enables young people to strengthen their role in society and – with the word of Pope Francis – "become protagonists for change and transformation". Together with the Social Affairs Commission, the Secretariat took part in the consultation of the European Commission and promoted its views at the Stakeholder Forum in April 2017. The Social Affairs Commission discussed the programme also with the EU Commission at its Spring meeting.

It its exchange with the European institutions and in close cooperation with faith-based youth organisations in Europe, COMECE formulated suggestions on how to ensure the success and the sustainability of the programme. It encouraged the EU to build the Corps on clear objectives, provide additional funding and to keep a clear separation between the voluntary activities and internships/entry-level jobs.

Future of work

At its Spring meeting, the Social Affairs Commission agreed to elaborate a working document on the future of work, which shall contribute both, to the centenary debate of the International Labour Organisation (ILO) and the forthcoming EU election campaigns.

In a first step, the Social Affairs Commission together with Catholic-inspired organisations met in November 2017 to examine the various implications of the changing world of work. In this enlarged group meeting, they discussed with Members of the European Parliament, the European Commission, the EU agency Eurofound as well as with representatives of social partners and youth organisations the consequences of the changing world of work.



Mgr Ambrosio at the Social Affairs commission





Social Affairs Commission

The Commission on Social Affairs monitors and prepares statements, contributions and activities related to EU social policy and public debate on the wider EU social issues. In 2017, its President was Bishop Gianni Ambrosio (COMECE Vice-President, Bishop of Piacenza-Bobbio, Italy) and its Secretary is Mr. Markus Vennewald. Its Members are experts on social policy nominated by the EU Bishops' Conferences.

Work-life balance: promoting the unique value of the Sunday

Together with national Sunday Alliances, trade unions, ecumenical partners as well as family and youth organisations, COMECE hold a breakfast meeting in the European Parliament highlighting best practices on Work life balance in a digitalised economy. Moreover, the Alliance launched a social media campaign on the unique value of Sunday and a survey on adequate working hours in Europe.

Contributions

March 2017

COMECE contribution to the EU consultation on the reform of Value-Added Tax (VAT) rates

April 2017

COMECE contribution to the EU consultation on the European Solidarity Corps

November 2017

Ecumenical statement of the Secretary Generals of CEC and COMECE on the proclamation of the European Pillar of Social Rights

December 2017

Survey and outcome report of the European Sunday Alliance on adequate working hours and Sunday rest in Europe

EXTERNAL ACTION

Towards people-, family- and community- centered partnerships

EXTERNAL ACTION

Towards people-, family- and

community- centered partnerships

Security is one of the growing concerns for European citizens today. The public perception of increased security threats has pushed the EU and its Member States to review the Common Security and Defence Policy.

In reaction to the arc of instability surrounding Europe, the EU has reviewed its Neighbourhood Policy and adopted a more tailor-made approach with its Eastern and Southern neighbours, with an increased focus on areas of mutual interest.

In the field of Development policy, there seems to be a gradual shift in recent years from a donor-recipient relationship towards a development cooperation based on fair and mutually beneficial partnership. The EU has adopted a new European Consensus on Development (May 2017), a guiding framework for EU institutions and Member States, which reinforces links between development and other policy areas, notably migration, economy, human rights and security.

Whose Security, Whose Defence ?

COMECE promotes the understanding that security & defence actions should primarily focus on enhancing the security of persons, families and communities to achieve sustainable peace. Following the report adopted in 2016 by the Bishops of COMECE on "Europe's Vocation to Promote Peace in the World", the Secretariat of COMECE presented a contribution to the ongoing debate entitled "Whose Security? Whose Defence?" (June 2017).

In this context, COMECE hosted – often in inter-religious cooperation – several meetings with stakeholders from the EU, NATO, United Nations as well as field actors on questions, such as enhancing the coherence of civil-military interaction and putting into practice the concept of resilience.

In view of the planned EU Strategy for Iraq, the COMECE Secretariat elaborated a contribution in consultation with Iraqi Bishops. It recommends the EU to focus on an inclusive rebuilding of the country by fostering economic growth and supporting education, while promoting fundamental rights, good governance and the rule of law. The COMECE contribution also encourages to involve religious actors as key stakeholders in dialogue, reconstruction and reconciliation processes

Commission on the External Relations of the EU

The Commission monitors and prepares statements, contributions and activities to the EU-policy and public debate on areas of EU's External Action, such as Security&Defence, Development, Neighbourhood, Human Rights and Trade. Its President is Archbishop Jean-Claude Hollerich (Archbishop of Luxembourg and President of Justice & Peace Europe) and its Secretary is Mr. Marek Misak (COMECE Policy Advisor for EU External Relations). The Commission met on 26-27 January 2017 and exchanged with EU officials inter alia on trade defence instruments, Eastern partnership and EU-Africa relations.

Trade & Development: from Aid to Partnership

Following the formulation of key principles of a fair use of the capital to the benefit of the people and a debate on the subject with policy-makers and field actors organised with Caritas Europa (Sept 2017), the Secretariat of COMECE elaborated a reflection on "Private Investment & Development" (dec. 2017). As a contribution to the EU debate, COMECE underlined the need to promote fair and inclusive economic processes based on production instead of predation; allowing effective access to the market for all; and ensuring compliance with accountability standards by all stakeholders. In this regard, COMECE hosted a panel debate with representatives of indigenous communities in Latin America defending their rights in the context of extractive industrial activities of transnational companies.



Visit of Klaus Rudischhauser, Deputy Dir Gen DG DEVCO



The Symposium of Episcopal Conferences of Africa and Madagascar (SECAM) visit COMECE

People-centered Sustainable Development

Following the visit of the Presidency of the Pan-African Bishops' Conference (SECAM) to COMECE in early 2017, both parties intensified contacts and elaborated a joint Statement in view of the 5th Summit between the African Union and the EU encouraging policies empowering young people to take an active part at all levels of economic, social and political life. In December 2017, COMECE General Secretary debated with representatives of different faith communities and EU policy-makers on the role of religious organisations - as universally networked and locally rooted actors - in promoting sustainable development focusing on people, families and local communities.

A religious perspective on the EU External Action was the main theme of the recent "Art.17 TFEU Dialogue Seminar" organised by the European Parliament in December 2017. Speaking on behalf of COMECE, H.E. Archbishop Youssef Soueif, invited the EU institutions to reflect more on the concept of citizenship and the importance of education and dialogue in order to foster integral human development. COMECE regularly receives visits of Church representatives from other continents, such as the Syriac-Catholic Patriarch of Aleppo, representatives of the Bishops' Conferences of Bangladesh and of the DR Congo as well as members of the National Council of Churches in Kenya.

Contributions

3 April 2017

"Fostering resilience for sustainable peace"

19 June 2017

"Whose Security, Whose Defence?"

8 November 2017

"Africa and Europe shall work as one for the future of our continents"

(Joint Statement of the Bishops of COMECE and SECAM in view of the AU-EU Summit)

23 November 2017

Contribution in view of the planned EU Strategy on Iraq

7 December 2017

"Private Investment & Development"



Dialogue seminar with H.E. Archbishop Youssef Soueif



French soldiers and local civilians in Mali. (Photo: Shutterstock)

FREEDOM OF RELIGION

“We place ourselves on the side of the men and women who fight to avoid renouncing their religious identity.” Pope Francis

FREEDOM OF RELIGION

“We place ourselves on the side of the men and women who fight to avoid renouncing their religious identity.”

Pope Francis

Freedom of religion is part of the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights and is a competence of the EU institutions in its external relations. Between 2015 and 2017 the European Parliament adopted 130 resolutions on religious freedom (or where the religious factor was mentioned). The persecution and intolerance against Christians have also been addressed in 30 resolutions, with a declining interest over the past year, despite reports that highlight the current intensity of the persecution.

Persecution of Christians

The European Parliament made two major statements during these years: naming “genocide” the persecution of Christians and other religious minorities by ISIS (that led other countries to do similar assessments) in 2016; and considering Christians as the most persecuted religious group in the world (2015). Since then, the European Parliament addressed freedom of religion in the context of the following issues: blasphemy legislation, persecution of religious minorities, forced conversion, anti-conversion laws, harassment of members of particular religious groups, destruction of religious heritage and patrimony, etc. These issues



Religious Freedom meeting at the EU Parliament

were raised by several bishops from the field who visited COMECE and the EU institutions. In November 2017, a delegation presided by His Beatitude Ignatius Joseph III Younan, Syriac-Catholic Patriarch of Antioch, visited COMECE together with Mgr. Antoine Chahda, Archbishop of Aleppo. Back in March, COMECE received a delegation of religious leaders from Azerbaijan. COMECE co-organised also the Conference on “Christmas after Daesh: Hope reborn for Christians in the Middle East” (European Parliament, 05/12).

Implementation of the EU Guidelines

The Council of the EU adopted the EU Guidelines on the Promotion and Protection of Freedom of Religion or Belief on 24 June 2013, a positive step welcomed by COMECE. Since then, the problem of lack or poor implementation of these EU Guidelines remain, in part due to the lack of awareness by the staff in EU Representations. In April 2017, COMECE co-organised a Conference on “EU Guidelines on Freedom of Religion or Belief. What’s next?” in the European Parliament to address this issue.



Jan Figel at the Religious Freedom meeting at the EU Parliament



Ms McGuinness and Fr Poquillon OP



Syriac-Catholic Patriarch at COMECE



Jan Figel

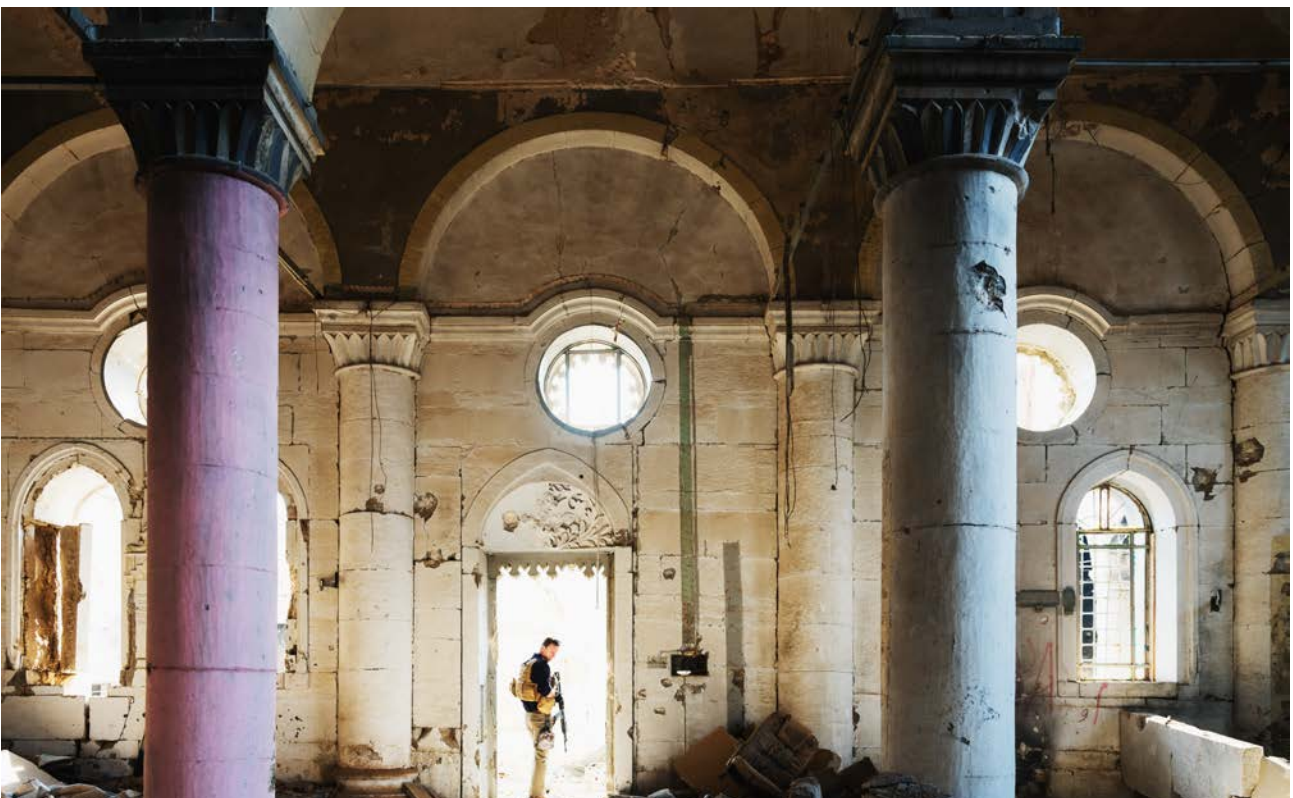
Special EU Envoy for the promotion of freedom of religion

COMECE recognised as a step forward the creation by the President of the European Commission of the Special Envoy for the promotion of freedom of religion or belief outside the EU. Ján Figel' was appointed in May 2016 for this position. A joint letter of the General Secretaries of COMECE and CEC was sent to President Juncker to strengthen religious freedom instruments in March 2017.

A challenge exists in the areas of development and cooperation aid, humanitarian action and neighbourhood & enlargement policies, related to the

inaccurate understanding that EU funds should be provided only to "impartial and neutral" organisations, therefore, excluding frequently those considered as "non impartial" or "non neutral", such as Churches and religious communities. This view is conflicting with the EU legal principle of non-discrimination based on religious grounds. COMECE participated in June 2017 in a Conference on "Churches and religious organisations' accessibility to EU funding for cooperation projects".

Other events and conferences where COMECE has participated are: EPP Group Conference "The role of the religion in the European Integration: Ukraine and EU perspectives" (Kiev, 18-19/10); Diwali meeting (Hindu Forum of Europe), (European Parliament, 11/10)



Destroyed church in Mosul, Iraq.

| JANUARY | FEBRUARY | MARCH | APRIL | MAY |
|---|---|---|--|---|
| 6 Meeting with the Maltese Presidency of the Council of the European Union | 2 Meeting of Christian Group on Migration & Asylum | 1 Group of DBIDBI Italian Youth Delegation | 3>4 Participation to the conference for the 50th anniversary of Populorum Progressio in the Vatican | 15 Meeting between the Praesidium of COMECE and the EU Ambassadors to the Holy See in Rome |
| 9>11 Visit of Cardinal Bagnasco, President of CCEE, with a group of priests from the Diocese of Genova | 6>8 Visit of the Westminster parliamentary interns of the CBEW and students of Heythrop College (HC) | 2 COMECE Legal Affairs Commission | 12 Visit of a group of young people from Serbia and Croatia | 16 Meeting between the Praesidium of COMECE and Cardinal Parolin, Secretary of State of the Holy See |
| 10 Visit of the Sternsinger | 9 Meeting of EU Catholic Organizations organized by COMECE | 9 COMECE Working Group on Migration and Asylum | 18 Meeting of the Christian Group on Migration and Asylum | Meeting between the Praesidium of COMECE and Mgr Paul Gallagher, Secretary for Relations with the States of the Holy See |
| 10>11 CCEE Dialogue between the Orthodox and Catholic Churches in Paris | 14 Meeting of CCEE and COMECE Presidencies | 21 Roundtable on Civil-Military cooperation | 27 Visit of Representatives of RENOVABIS | Audience by his Holiness Pope Francis to the Praesidium of COMECE |
| 26>27 Meeting of the External Affairs Commission of COMECE | 20>21 Visit of a delegation of the Dutch Bishops' Conference | 29 COMECE Standing Committee meeting | MAY | 18>19 COMECE/KSZ and migrants seminar on integration of refugees in Mönchengladbach |
| 31 COMECE Standing Committee meeting | Visit of a delegation of the Dutch Bishops' Conference | 29>31 COMECE Spring Plenary Assembly | 2 MEP György Hölvényi's high level visitor group | 18 Meeting on resilience, an inter-faith approach organised by COMECE |
| | Meeting between the Presidents of COMECE and CEC with the President of the EC, Jean-Claude Juncker | 31 Meeting between the Presidents of COMECE and CEC | 3 Visit of a group of Caritas Hildesheim | 29 Meeting of the Christian Group on Migration and Asylum |
| | Meeting between the Presidents of COMECE and CEC | | 11 Meeting with the General Secretary of the National Council of Churches of Kenya, Rev. Canon Peter Karanja | 29>30 Visit of Archbishop François-Xavier Maroy Rusengo from Bukavu |
| | | | 12 Meeting with Mgr Robert Vitillo, ICMC Secretary General | 30 Debate on root causes of migration organized by Missio, Bertelsmann Foundation, Kolping - with COMECE co-sponsorship |
| | | | 15>16 COMECE Standing Committee meeting in Rome | Visit of a group of students from the ifp – Die katholische Journalistenschule, Munich |

| JUNE | | JULY | | AUGUSTUS | | SEPTEMBER | | OCTOBER | | NOVEMBER | | DECEMBER | |
|-----------------|---|------------------|--|------------------|--|-----------------|--|-----------------|--|-----------------|--|-----------------|---|
| 1 | Visitor group of Karl-Arnold-Stiftung | 12 | Closed meeting with policy-makers on resilience | 12 | Participation to the CCEE Spokesperson meeting in Sofia | 21>22 | Participation to the CCEE meeting of National Directors of Pastoral Care of Migrants in Europe in Rome | 21 | Participation to the CCEE Standing Committee meeting in Munich | 7 | High Level Religious Leaders Meeting | 5 | COMECE hosts the book launch " Faire l'Europe dans un monde de brute " by Enrico Letta and Sebastien Maillard |
| 2 | COMECE Social Affairs Commission | 13 | Visit of a group of Students from the Sophie Barat Schule from Harnburg | 13 | Participation to the CCEE Working Group on Migration and Asylum | 25>26 | Visit of Bishops from the CBCEW | 26 | COMECE Standing Committee meeting in Rome | 16>17 | Intervention at the International Conference " Religion, Society, State " organised by the Estonian Presidency of the EU Council | 6 | COMECE Working Group on Migration and Asylum |
| 7>9 | Participation to the CCEE Spokesperson meeting in Sofia | 20 | Visit of interns from the CEC | 20 | Visit of interns from the CEC | 27 | Visit of an inter-religious delegation from Azerbaijan | 27 | COMECE Standing Committee meeting in Rome | 22 | Visit of a group of students from the Institut Catholique de Paris | 7>8 | Intervention at the EP Art. 17 TFEU Dialogue conference on " The External Policies of the EU " |
| 12>13 | Participation to a seminar of the Migrants & Refugees Section of the Dicastery for Integral Development of the Holy See in Rome | 18 | Meeting of representatives of Churches with the Estonian Presidency | 18 | Meeting of representatives of Churches with the Estonian Presidency | 28>30 | Participation to the CCEE Plenary Assembly in Minsk (28 Sept. > 1 Oct. t) | 28 | COMECE Standing Committee meeting in Rome | 23 | COMECE Legal Affairs Commission | 11>12 | Participation to the CCEE - 3rd Meeting of the legal advisors of the Bishops' Conferences of Europe in Luxembourg |
| 22 | COMECE hosts the European Centre for Law and Justice event on preventing abortion in Europe | SEPTEMBER | | SEPTEMBER | | OCTOBER | | OCTOBER | | 24 | Visit of Syro-Catholic representatives | | |
| 27 | Article 17 Dialogue Seminar on " The Future of Europe " at the EP Visit of a group from BDKJ Bavaria | 7>9 | COMECE contributes to Renovabis-congres, Munich | 7>9 | COMECE contributes to Renovabis-congres, Munich | 26 | COMECE Standing Committee meeting in Rome | 26 | COMECE Standing Committee meeting in Rome | 24 | Visit of a group of the Archdiocese of Vienna and St. Pölten Diocese | | |
| JULY | | 7 | Meeting between faith-based actors and a delegation from Pakistan on shrinking civic space | 7 | Meeting between faith-based actors and a delegation from Pakistan on shrinking civic space | 27>29 | COMECE-Holy See [Re]Thinking Europe Dialogue in the Vatican | 27>29 | COMECE-Holy See [Re]Thinking Europe Dialogue in the Vatican | 28 | COMECE ad-hoc expert group on ethics | | |
| 1 > 3 | Participation to the CCEE General Secretaries meeting in Bucarest [30 June > 3 July] | 15 | COMECE Standing Committee meeting in Munich | 15 | COMECE Standing Committee meeting in Munich | 31 | Public event on extractives in Latin America co-organised by Pax Christi International, CIDSE and COMECE | 31 | Public event on extractives in Latin America co-organised by Pax Christi International, CIDSE and COMECE | 28>29 | COMECE Social Affairs Commission | | |
| 2>15 | Graz International Summer School Seggau sponsored by COMECE | 19 | COMECE event " Preparing the AU-EU Summit: a dialogue between faith-based actors and policy-makers " | 19 | COMECE event " Preparing the AU-EU Summit: a dialogue between faith-based actors and policy-makers " | | | | | | | | |

STANDING COMMITTEE

The Standing Committee of COMECE consists of the President, Cardinal Reinhard Marx, and four Vice-Presidents: Mgr Jean Kockerols (Auxiliary Bishop of Brussels-Malines, Belgium), Mgr Gianni Ambrosio (Bishop of Piacenza-Bobbio, Italy), Mgr. Czeslaw Kozon, (Bishop of Copenhagen, Scandinavia) as well as Mgr. Rimantas Norvila (Bishop of Vilkaiviškis, Lithuania) and Fr Olivier Poquillon OP, General Secretary. The Standing Committee met on five occasions in 2017:

- 31 January 2017 | Brussels
- 29 March 2017 | Brussels
- 15-16 May 2017 | Rome
- 15 September 2017 | Munich
- 26 October 2017 | Rome



Cardinal Reinhard MARX



Bishop Jean KOCKEROLS



Bishop Gianni AMBROSIO



Bishop Czeslaw KOZON



Bishop Rimantas NORVILA

BISHOPS DELEGATED TO COMECE in alphabetical order

COMECE is made up of Bishops delegated by the Catholic Bishops' Conferences of the 28 Member States of the European Union. A single Bishop represents Denmark, Sweden, and Finland; while the Bishops' Conference of the United Kingdom is represented by a Bishop of the Bishops' Conference of England and Wales, and by a Bishop of the Scottish Bishops' Conference.

H.E. Mgr. Virgil BERCEA



Bishop of Oradea Mare/Gran Varadino (Romania)



H.Em. Card. Josip BOZANIC



Archbishop of Zagreb (Croatia)



H.E. Mgr. Mariano CROCIATA



Bishop of Latina-Terracina-Sezze-Priverno (Italy)
(Delegate since October 2017)



H.E. Mgr Gianni AMBROSIO

Bishop of Piacenza-Bobbio



H.E. Mgr Ferenc CSERHÁTI



Auxiliary Bishop of Esztergom-Budapest (Hungary)



H.E. Mgr. Jorge Ferreira DA COSTA ORTIGA



Archbishop of Braga Portugal)



H.E. Mgr. Hugh (Edward) GILBERT, O.S.B.



Bishop of Aberdeen (Scotland)



H.E. Mgr. Adolfo GONZALEZ MONTES



Bishop of Almeria (Spain)



H.E. Mgr. Mario GRECH



Bishop of Gozo (Malta)



H.E. Mgr. Jozef HAL'KO



Auxiliary Bishop of Bratislava (Slovakia)



H.E. Mgr. Antoine HÉROUARD



Auxiliary Bishop of Lille (France)



H.E. Mgr. Jean-Claude HOLLERICH



Archbishop of Luxembourg (Luxembourg)



H.E. Mgr. Theodorus C.M. HOOGENBOOM



Auxiliary Bishop of Utrecht (Netherlands)



H.E. Mgr. Nicholas HUDSON



Auxiliary Bishop of Westminster (England & Wales)



H.E. Mgr. Philippe JOURDAN



Apostolic Administrator of Estonia



H.E. Mgr. Jean KOCKEROLS



Auxiliary Bishop of the Archdiocese of Malines-Brussels (Belgium)



H.E. Mgr. Youssef SOUEIF



Archbishop of the Maronites (Cyprus)



H.E. Mgr. Czesław KOZON



Bishop of Copenhagen (Nordic Bishops' Conference)



H.E. Mgr. Zbignęvs STANKEVIČS



Metropolitan Archbishop of Riga (Latvia)



H.E. Mgr. Janusz STEPNOWSKI



Bishop of Łomża (Poland)



H.Em. Reinhard Card. MARX



Archbishop of Munich and Freising (Germany)



H.E. Mgr. Franc ŠUŠTAR



Auxiliary Bishop of Ljubljana (Slovenia)



H.E. Mgr. Manuel NIN, O.S.B.



Apostolic Exarch to the Greek Byzantine Catholic Church (Greece)



H.E. Mgr. Noel TREANOR



Bishop of Down and Connor (Ireland)



H.E. Mgr. Rimantas NORVILA



Bishop of Vilkaiviškis (Lithuania)



H.E. Mgr. Jan VOKAL



Bishop of Hradec Králové (Czech Republic)



H.E. Mgr. Christo PROYKOV



Apostolic Exarch of Sofia (Bulgaria)



H.E. Mgr. Ägidius Johann ZSIFKOVICS



Bishop of Eisenstadt (Austria)



Observers

H.E. Mgr. Stanislav Hočevar



Archbishop of Belgrade (Serbia)



H.E. Mgr. Felix Gmür



Bishop of Basel (Switzerland)



PLENARIES

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:

Spring Plenary Assembly, 29-31 March 2017

Which Christian contribution to the future of Europe? Dialogue "(Re)Thinking Europe"| Brussels

Autumn Plenary Assembly, 26 October 2017 | Rome

followed by the COMECE-Holy See (Re)Thinking Europe Dialogue in the Vatican, 27-29 October 2017

MEETINGS WITH NATIONAL BISHOPS' CONFERENCES

9-11 January 2017

Visit of Cardinal Bagnasco, President of CCEE,
with a group of priests from the Diocese of Genova | COMECE

20-21 February 2017

Visit of a delegation of the Dutch Bishops' Conference | COMECE

25-26 September 2017

Visit of Bishops from the Catholic Bishops' Conference from England & Wales | COMECE

14 December 2017

Visit to H.E Bishop András Veres, President of the Hungarian Catholic Bishops' Conference (Budapest)



Bishop Nicholas Hudson and a delegation from Bishops from England & Wales

OUR COMECE STAFF

The Secretariat ensures the continuity of COMECE's work. Its headquarters are in Brussels. A small team monitors and analyses developments in EU policies and initiatives and strives to contribute to the relevant processes. The Secretariat reports to the Standing Committee and to the Plenary Assembly.

Fr Olivier Poquillon OP

General Secretary

Michael Kuhn

Assistant General Secretary
Advisor for Ecology & Sustainability
and Education, Culture and Youth policy
[Seconded by the Austrian Bishops' Conference]

Stefan Lunte

Advisor for External Affairs
General Secretary of Justice & Peace Europe

Alessandro Calcagno

Legal Advisor for Fundamental Rights
and Article 17 TFEU issues
Secretary of the COMECE Legal Affairs Commission
[Seconded by the Italian Bishops' Conference]

José-Luis Bazán

Legal Advisor for Migration, Asylum
and Freedom of Religion
Secretary of the COMECE Working Group
on Migration and Asylum

Friederike Ladenburger

Legal Advisor for Ethics, Research and Health
Secretary of the Working Group on Ethics

Markus Vennewald

Policy Advisor for Social & Economic Affairs
Secretary of the COMECE Social Affairs Commission

Marek Misak

Policy Advisor for External Relations
Secretary of the COMECE Commission on the
External Relations of the European Union

Johanna Touzel

Communication Officer in charge of Public Relations
Editor in chief of Europe-infos

Alessandro Di Maio

Communication Officer

Maud Oger

Assistant to the General Secretary

Irmina Nockiewicz (until September 2017)

Administrative Assistant

Monique Jacques (from September 2017)

Office Manager/Administrative Assistant

Albert Arevalo

Support staff

Cynthia Quijano Aquino

Support staff

The COMECE Bishops and the Secretariat wish to thank **Irmina Nockiewicz** for the work she has accomplished within the Secretariat.

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

Lilla Katalin Királyfy (Hungary)

Cyril Couvreur (Belgium)

Anne-Mailinh Vasseux (France)

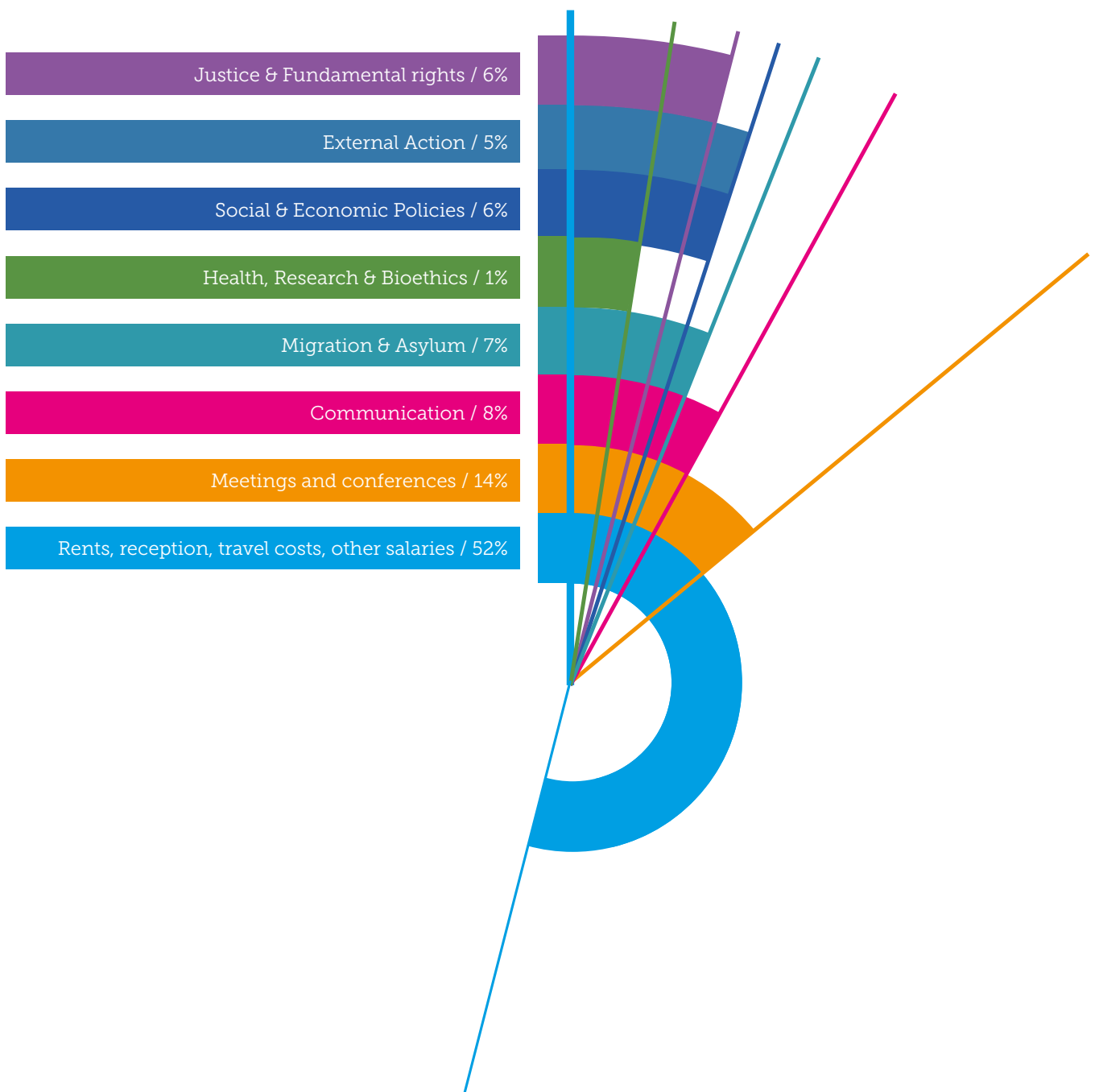
Eva Justenhoven (Germany)

FINANCES

Total expenditure: 1.076.317€

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The Secretariat of COMECE is registered in the EU Transparency register, under the identification number 47350036909-69





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