



COMECE

ANNUAL REPORT 2019



The Commission of the Bishops' Conferences
of the European Union

08

Migration
& Asylum

10

Ethics, Research & Health

13

Ecology &
Sustainability

15

Legal Affairs
& Fundamental Rights

18

Social &
Economic Policies

21

External Action

24

Freedom of Religion

FOREWORD

Dear readers,

Following the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989, the people of half of the European continent recovered liberty and freedom from oppression. It allowed us to rediscover each other and choose to make joint decisions about our future freely.

Thirty years after that historical event, we ask ourselves: do we still have faith in our capacity to discern, to decide, and to act together for the Common Good?

Despite the rise of populism, xenophobia and the polarising trend within our societies, the high participation of EU citizens in the May 2019 elections of the European Parliament is a strong, encouraging sign regarding the question above.

Fully aware of the tremendous challenges ahead, the people of Europe fulfilled their duty through political engagement before, during and after the elections. Their act of responsibility renovated the European Parliament and the entire structure of the European institutions, rejecting nationalistic instances, highlighting a new will to work together and bringing many women and young people onto the political scene.

This process also gave the input for a new political agenda aiming at democratising Europe by reducing distance with its citizens, shaping eco-friendly and youth-empowerment policies and preparing our societies for the ongoing processes of digitalisation and robotisation.



The COMECE President is created Cardinal by Pope Francis during the Consistory held at St. Peter's Basilica, Rome, on 5 October 2019. (Photo: Vatican Media)

Throughout these developments, the Catholic Church was present at the EU level, at the national level and very close to the people, at the most local level.

We tried to inspire trust, discernment and dialogue, and we made use of this vital tool of peace – dialogue – to call for fraternity among people of different faith and ethnicity. We invited people to build bridges and governments to place the dignity of the human person at the core of public policies.

This year, we witnessed the final act of the Brexit negotiations. We are saddened to see the United Kingdom leaving the European Union, but we know that we are all destined to live and work together in the full respect of everyone's choices and diversities.

It is crucial, therefore, to maintain good relations with each other. We, Bishops from the EU and the UK, are united in making sure that Brexit will not succeed in shattering the fraternal ties between brothers and sisters on both shores of the sea. Despite Brexit, the Bishops' Conferences of the United Kingdom will remain an integral part of the Church in Europe and their Bishop Delegates will continue giving their contribution to COMECE dialogue activity, at the political level as observer members and at the technical level within the framework of our Commissions and Working Groups.

In 2019 we welcomed Fr. Manuel Enrique Barrios Prieto, who succeeded Fr. Olivier Poquillon as General Secretary of the COMECE Secretariat. I would like to thank both of them for their precious enthusiasm in coordinating the staff and making COMECE a more effective actor in helping the people of Europe to recover the sense of belonging to a community.

As Pope Francis stated in the 2017 *(Re)thinking Europe Dialogue*, "Community is the greatest antidote to the forms of individualism typical of our times". We are aware of current trials and of the many difficult challenges yet to come.

Whatever nature these challenges will have, I invite all of you to listen to the other, spread dialogue and work together for policies that better serve human persons, families and communities. In this way, we will give our Christian contribution to a sustainable, integral and democratic Europe, respectful of human dignity and up to its global challenges.

+ Jean-Claude Card. Hollerich SJ
President of COMECE
Archbishop of Luxembourg



Following the May 2019 elections of the European Parliament, the COMECE Standing Committee is received by Pope Francis. Vatican City 6 June 2019 (Photo: L'Osservatore Romano).

40 YEARS OF COMECE

Since the creation of CCEE in 1971, the question of a more interactive engagement with the EEC persisted within the CCEE network. The new *community method* envisioned by the treaties of the European communities and the east-west division of Europe made this a complex question.

Discussions between 1978-1979 involving the Secretariat of State, Archbishop Igino Eugenio Cardinale, Apostolic Nuncio in Brussels, Dr Ivo Fürer (CCEE) and others, led to the decision to establish the Commission of the Episcopates of the European Communities (COMECE). The COMECE secretariat would continue the information service (SIPECA) established in 1976 under the aegis of the Apostolic Nunciature in Brussels.

The inaugural COMECE plenary meeting took place on 3 March 1980. Bishop Hengsbach (Essen), later Cardinal, was elected President. Monsignor Paul Huot-Pleuroux, second secretary at CCEE, was appointed Secretary General. The initial membership, which included delegate bishops from the then nine member states of the EEC, would grow with each subsequent enlargement of the EU. Observer status was also provided for *ab initio*.

Over the years and especially in the aftermath of the Single European Act and the Treaty of Maastricht, the evolving political context in the EU required an aggiornamento of COMECE's *modus operandi*. Commissions and Working Groups were then established with a focus on specific EU policy fields, with competent persons as members, appointed by the member Bishops' conferences. The expert support the secretariat staff

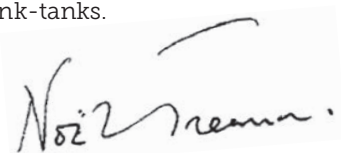


Social Congress "Europe's responsibility for global development", 2000.
From left to right: COMECE President H.E. Mgr. Josef Homeyer (Germany), Commission President Prof. Romano Prodi (Italy), Vice President H.E. Mgr. Adrianus van Luyn (The Netherlands).

in the analysis of draft EU policies. They also strengthen the link between COMECE and their episcopal conferences.

Since its inception, COMECE has accompanied four major phases in the evolution of the European project : (a) the completion of the Single Market ; (b) the Fall of the Berlin Wall and the Europeanisation of the EU ; (c) the process of political integration ; (d) the post 2008 financial crisis and the re-thinking of the EU's identity in the current global context.

Now in 2020, under its seventh President, Cardinal Jean-Claude Hollerich, COMECE continues to pursue its mission on behalf of the Church vis à vis the European institutions in cooperation with the Apostolic Nunciature to the EU, other European Catholic organisations, its ecumenical partners, whilst also linking with academia and European think-tanks.



*H. E. Mgr. Noel Treanor
Vice President of COMECE
Bishop of Down and Connor (Ireland)*



COMECE Standing Committee in April 1983. From left to right: Fr. Paul Huot-Pleuroux (General Secretary), H.E. Mgr. Cahal Brendan Daly (Vice President), H.E. Mgr. Franz Hengsback (President), H.E. Mgr. Jean Hengen (Vice Presidency).



Plenary Assembly 1990, with COMECE President, H.E. Mgr. Jean Hengen (Luxembourg).

ARTICLE 17 TFEU: CHURCHES IN DIALOGUE WITH THE EU INSTITUTIONS

The Catholic Church supported the European construction since an early stage, bringing its specific contribution and identity to the project. For a long time now COMECE has accompanied the developments that led in 2009 to the establishment of Article 17 TFEU as the legal basis for dialogue between the Church and EU public authorities.

To this day, COMECE prioritises the enhancement of dialogue structures to ensure a productive and effective process.

Following the European elections of May 2019, MEP Mairead McGuinness was confirmed in her responsibility for the implementation of Article 17 TFEU. New European Commissioner Margaritis Schinas is now responsible for the Dialogue on the side of the Commission.

During 2019 COMECE contributed to consultations carried out by the Parliament (January-February) and the Commission (May) to take stock of the dialogue process and propose ways forward in view of the next legislature. In this context, COMECE particularly welcomed the proposal of MEP McGuinness to better involve Churches in EP Committees work.



EU Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker speaking at the COMECE Spring Assembly. Brussels, 14 March 2019. (Photo: Di Maio/COMECE)

In 2019 COMECE also advocated for the explicit inclusion of Churches and religious communities in the Conference on the Future of Europe, as partners distinct from civil society organisations.

Meeting with the Romanian EU Presidency

On 28 January 2019, COMECE and its ecumenical partners met in Bucharest with Teodor-Viorel Meleşcanu, Foreign Affairs Minister of Romania, to exchange on the priorities of the Romanian EU Council Presidency.

COMECE encouraged the EU Presidency to put the human person back at the centre of all political processes and technological developments to give young people and families the opportunity to fully express their talents and aspirations in their local communities.

On the occasion of the 10th anniversary of the Eastern Partnership, COMECE proposed to launch a reflection on the future priorities for a fair, responsible and people-centred cooperation between the EU and its neighbors, while maintaining the momentum for a credible EU Enlargement perspective for the Western Balkan countries.

Meeting with the Finnish EU Presidency

An ecumenical delegation composed of representatives from COMECE and CEC met in Helsinki on 12 July 2019 with Mr. Pekka Haavisto, Finnish Minister of Foreign Affairs, to share their perspectives on four of the Finnish EU Presidency's priorities: a) common values and the rule of law; b) a competitive and socially inclusive EU; c) climate action: serving integral human development; d) comprehensive security and migration.



COMECE-CEC delegation meets with Pekka Haavisto, Finnish Minister of Foreign Affairs, in the context of Finland's EU Council Presidency. Helsinki, 12 July 2019.



COMECE President H.E. Mgr. Hollerich meets with Antonio Tajani, President of the European Parliament. Brussels, 30 January 2019.



CEC and COMECE Presidents together with David Sassoli, President of the European Parliament. Brussels, 28 November 2019

Meetings with high-level EU representatives

In its contribution to the EU-Churches dialogue, the COMECE Presidency met with:

- Antonio Tajani, President of the European Parliament, on 19 January 2019;
- Mairead McGuinness, Vice President of the European Parliament, on the occasion of the Holocaust Remembrance on 30 January 2019.
- Jean-Claude Juncker, President of the European Commission, at the COMECE Assembly on 14 March 2019;
- David-Maria Sassoli, President of the European Parliament, on 19 November 2019;

Dialogue Seminar at the European Parliament

In March 2019 COMECE attended the Article 17 TFEU Dialogue Seminar on “An Ethical Framework for Artificial Intelligence” held at the European Parliament. H.E. Bishop Paul Tighe, Secretary of the Pontifical Council of Culture, called the EU to put the human person at the center of AI policies, and Dominique Lambert, professor at the University of Namur, also stated that AI should be at the service of our societies also in the context of new defence technologies.



H.E. Mgr. Paul Tighe, Secretary of the Pontifical Council for Culture, with Mairead McGuinness, Vice President of the European Parliament, during an Article 17 EP Dialogue Seminar on Artificial intelligence and ethical concerns. Brussels, 19 March 2019.



EU Churches meet with Teodor Melescanu, Romanian Minister of Foreign Affairs, in the context of the Romanian EU Presidency. Bucharest, 28 January 2019.



COMECE General Secretary Fr. Manuel Barrios Prieto with Mairead McGuinness, Vice President of the European Parliament, during the debate “Role of the Church in Central Europe: 30 years ago and now”. Strasbourg, 26 November 2019.



EU Bishops in dialogue with Jean-Claude Juncker, President of the European Commission. Brussels, 14 March 2019.

MIGRATION & ASYLUM

“It is not just about migrants: it is a question of seeing that no one is excluded”

(Pope Francis, 2019 Message for the World Day of Migrants and Refugees)

Migration remains one of the main concerns of EU citizens, as well as a highly debated topic in societies and among EU Member States. The President of the European Commission proposed a new Pact on Migration and Asylum, leading to a Common European Asylum System with burden sharing among Member States. This initiative also aims at reinforcing borders and return policies, fighting against human trafficking and smuggling, attracting high skill migrants and working more intensively in partnerships with countries of origin and transit. In this context, the Church is concerned about the vulnerability of migrants and refugees as persons in need and the protection of their human rights and dignity at any stage and under any circumstance.

Tackling Human Trafficking

Five years after the joint Declaration of religious leaders against modern slavery, COMECE and Don Bosco International organised a conference on “Trafficking in Human Beings” at the European Parliament with the sponsorship of MEP Javier Zarzalejos and the participation of MEP Pietro Bartolo.

During the event COMECE expressed the common concern among different religious denominations to work together in spiritual and practical action to eradicate trafficking in human beings, restoring dignity and freedom to the victims.



The President of COMECE was part of a Vatican delegation visiting refugees in the island of Lesbos, Greece. 8-10 October 2019.

Working Group on Migration & Asylum

The COMECE Working Group on Migration & Asylum is composed of experts appointed by the Bishops' Conferences. In dialogue with representatives of EU institutions, it discusses EU policies in the migration and asylum fields.

COMECE and Don Bosco International also organised an event at the European Parliament, in which, Fr. Michael Czerny sj, Under-Secretary of the Migrants and Refugees Section of the Holy See, presented the "Pastoral Orientations on Human Trafficking" describing and analysing the phenomenon in order to better tackle this crime.

European Platform for Roma Inclusion

Being part of the European Platform for Roma Inclusion, COMECE regularly participates in the European Commission's consultative meetings, emphasising the need to overcome stereotypes against Roma people and to work for their full inclusion in EU societies.

In the context of the recently published EU Commission's report on the implementation of national Roma integration, and in view of the upcoming «Post-2020 EU Framework on Roma Equality and Inclusion Strategies», COMECE called the EU and its Member States to implement more ambitious initiatives paving the way for facilitating Roma people's active citizenship and the full enjoyment of their rights.

Christian group on Migration & Asylum

COMECE participated in the regular meetings of this ecumenical forum of exchange aiming at contributing to EU migration and asylum policies in order to better welcome, protect, promote and integrate newcomers.

Contributions

Migrants in distress at sea

COMECE published a statement calling the EU and its Member States to take their responsibilities towards migrants in distress at sea (9 January 2019) and gave its contribution during the KAS Workshop on «Europe's policy on border security» (Athens, 18 November 2019) and the CCEE meeting of national directors for migration (Athens, 28 November 2019).

Tackling human trafficking

In order to share experiences and propose ways to enhance the fight against human trafficking, COMECE gave its contribution at the conference on Trafficking in Human Beings organized by the Migrants and Refugees Section of the Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development (8-11 April 2019).



Event on countering Trafficking in Human Beings held at the European Parliament by COMECE and Don Bosco International with the participation of MEPs from various political groups. The event was organised five years after the joint Declaration of religious leaders against modern slavery. Brussels, 2 December 2019. (Photos: EPP/Stavros Tzovaras).

ETHICS, RESEARCH AND HEALTH

“A better world is possible thanks to technological progress, if this is accompanied by an ethic inspired by a vision of the common good [...]”.

(Pope Francis)

In these last decades we are witnessing fast technological innovations, together with a developing health sector and a strong focus on digitalisation. These rapid changes are already impacting our everyday lives and societies and will probably continue to do so, even more in the future. It is thus necessary to analyse the ethical implications of these time-changing processes through the lenses of Christian anthropology.

Digital Ethics

(Photo of the Working Group on Ethics)

In the context of the ongoing discussion on Artificial Intelligence (AI) systems, fast technological innovations lead to a radical questioning of the true identity and reality of the human person, making it necessary to draw clear and evident boundaries between AI systems and human beings.

For the Catholic Church, these boundaries should be reviewed and defined on the basis of the Christian concept of the human person. Ethical principles (e.g. human dignity, autonomy, responsibility, solidarity, accountability, privacy and sustainability) are key concepts on which the ethical discussion should be based.

Since December 2019 Digital Ethics is one of the main working fields of the European Commission and, exactly because technological innovation and its mega trend permeates nearly all aspects of human life, COMECE contributes to it by presenting the Catholic perspective on this matter, recalling the unlimited value of each human person and underlining the need for a rights-based and person-centered approach.

In January 2019 COMECE published the reflection paper “Robotisation of Life”.

Ethical implications of new Defence Technologies



Participant of the meeting of the COMECE Working Group on Ethics. Brussels, 7 October 2019.
(Photo: Di Maio/COMECE)

Due to the recent increased attention for security and defence policies in the EU and its Member States, an ethical framework for new defence technologies is needed.

Closely following the negotiation process on the European Defence Fund, COMECE underlined the importance to focus on a long-standing human security and sustainable peace and called the international community to avoid the development and use of defence technologies contrary to International Law.

In July 2019 COMECE published the reflection paper *"Technology in the service of peace – How to address the (mis)use of force through uncrewed armed systems"*, elaborated by an *ad-hoc* working group on the ethical implications of the use of armed drones. The *ad-hoc* working group was chaired by Prof. Dominique Lambert.

Genome editing

(Photo of MEP Dr. Liese - Working Group on Ethics on 2.10.2019 or photo from the Autumn Assembly of the Bishops)

Recent discoveries related to plant and human genome opened the door to new opportunities and unprecedented ethical concerns. Following the recent development of the genome editing tool *CRISPR-Cas9*, which makes DNA-editing faster, cheaper and more accurate, questions concerning the existing legal framework are emerging together with calls for a new EU regulation on the matter.

COMECE stressed the importance of the existing European compromise, which forbids EU funding to any activity aiming at human cloning for reproductive purposes, genetic heritage modification, and creating human embryos for the purpose of research.

During the Autumn 2019 COMECE Assembly, EU Bishops discussed the use of new genetic technologies and highlighted the urgency for clear regulation of the legal and ethical frameworks in all EU Member States, and also called on the EU to join an international moratorium against research intervening into the human germline, which would be heritable.



The COMECE Assembly of the Working group on Ethics gathered to exchange on national developments in the field of ethics and on the recently published reflections on *"Robotisation of Life"* and *"Uncrewed armed systems"*. Brussels, 7 October 2019.
(Photo: Di Maio/COMECE)

Promoting safety and responsibility on the road

Each year around 130,000 people lose their life or are seriously injured on European roads.

These numbers affect not only the victims, but also their families, communities and society as a whole.

In May 2019, Violeta Bulc, EU Commissioner for Transport, visited COMECE to exchange on the possibility for a closer collaboration between the Church and the EU on transport, sustainability and road safety.

A few months later, COMECE supported for the second consecutive time the *"European Day Without a Road Death"* and promoted a general reflection on people's behavior and attitude on roads – among public shared spaces of our modern society.

In November 2019, COMECE sustained the *"World Day of Remembrance for Road Traffic Victims"*, expressing EU Bishops' closeness to all road traffic victims and calling the EU to implement policies reducing the number of road accidents.



Fr. Manuel Barrios Prieto, General Secretary of COMECE, supporting the #VisionZero campaign by FEVR, for no more road victims in urban areas by 2030. Brussels, 21 September 2019. (Photo: Di Maio/COMECE)

Following the campaign launched by EU Bishops to promote responsibility on the road, Violeta Bulc, EU Commissioner for Transportation, visited COMECE to exchange on road safety policies. Brussels, 28 May 2019. (Photo: Di Maio/COMECE)

Publications

January 2019

COMECE published the reflection paper *"Robotisation of Life"*.

July 2019

COMECE published the reflection paper *"Technology in the service of peace – How to address the (mis)use of force through uncrewed armed systems"*.

Contributions

January 2019

Stakeholders consultation on Draft AI Ethics Guidelines

Events

January 2019

Meeting of the *ad-hoc* working group related to the ethical implications of the use of armed drones.

March 2019

EP Article 17 Dialogue Seminar on Artificial Intelligence with the participation of H.E. Bishop Paul Tighe, Secretary of the Pontifical Council of Culture, and Dominique Lambert, professor of the University of Namur.

May 2019

Visit of the former Commissioner for Transport Violeta Bulc to COMECE for an exchange on a closer collaboration on transport, sustainability and road safety.

November 2019

World Day of Remembrance for Road Traffic Victims.



ECOLOGY & SUSTAINABILITY

“Our inspiration in supporting EU initiatives on Climate change is the proposal for “integral ecology”

(as described by Pope Francis in ‘Laudato Si’)

In light of the new settlement of the EU institutions, a greener economy and more sustainable lifestyle became central topics of future EU policy-making. Despite this desirable development, it is necessary to stay alert: the temptation to «green-wash» existing policies is enormous and realistic. Much time has been invested in the search of real possibilities of cooperation amongst those who advocate for the development of a truly integrated ecology and an ecological conversion.

Given the complexity of this transition, the various phenomena to be tackled and the expertise needed to do so, COMECE has adopted an «integral approach» and launched a cooperation initiative between different actors, Church-based and not.

Towards a Change of Life-Style

The transition to a sustainable Europe cannot be achieved by a systemic change only, it also needs a change of individual life-styles. Under the heading «Politics and Praxis of Ecological Conversion», the 2nd European Laudato-Si Reflection Day, held at COMECE on 12 June 2019, discussed «a good life for all» and presented a number of successful projects of transition - partly public and partly Church-driven. Special attention was paid to a report of the European Policy Strategy Center for a «Sustainable Europe 2030», which addresses a number of shortcomings under current EU-policy that hinder the goals towards a just and sustainable transition in 2030.

The 2019 autumn meeting of the COMECE Social Affairs Commission emphasized on the need for an integral approach towards a just transition and also on «Pro Rure 2», a project carried out by Catholic Rural Organisations which could soon see the active support of COMECE. The participants to the meeting had the possibility to reflect on how to finance a just transition towards sustainability, not only for the transformation and development of rural areas but also for those regions which remain to be highly dependent on coal-mining.

Cooperation with education

The ecological transition towards a sustainable Europe depends on both primary and higher education to a high extent. COMECE was invited by the Catholic University of Eichstätt, Germany, to contribute to a discussion on how Catholic universities could raise their profile in the light of *Laudato Si'*, internally foster an interdisciplinary and integral ecological approach and seek collaboration between Catholic universities at the European level.

Towards a European Laudato Si' Alliance

Following the two Laudato Si' Reflection Days held in Brussels in 2018 and in 2019, COMECE, together with CCEE, CIDSE, the Global Catholic Climate Movement, the Jesuit European Social Centre and Justice and Peace Europe, has engaged in an open process on the establishment of a European Laudato Si' Alliance (ELSi'A). This Alliance will allow us all to adapt the comprehensive approach of Pope Francis' Encyclical Letter *Laudato Si'* to a European context, with special focus on the institutions of the European Union.

The concrete aims of this alliance are:

- to advocate the message of the Catholic Church on integral ecology, in relation to both environmental policy and social justice issues;
- to promote a European-wide exchange of best practises for a more eco-responsible and sustainable lifestyle;
- to further theological reflection on the issue of ecological conversion and to encourage the creation of corresponding spiritual works (prayer, hymns etc.);
- and to develop a broad network of Catholic actors in Europe to contribute developing EU climate, development, and environmental policies.



Fr. Olivier Poquillon op, General Secretary of COMECE, meets with Stefania Proietti, Mayor of the city of Assisi, during the 2019 European Laudato Si' Reflection Day. Brussels, 12 June 2019. (Photo: Di Maio/COMECE).



The second European Laudato Si' Reflection Day, organised by COMECE and its partners, was a call on Catholics and all people of good will to carry out a lifestyle conversation. Brussels, 12 June 2019. (Photo: Di Maio/COMECE).

LEGAL AFFAIRS

Promoting and protecting Fundamental Rights as rooted in human dignity

On the 10th anniversary of the entry into force of the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the EU, COMECE further developed its activities in the area of Legal Affairs, advocating for a Catholic perspective in this domain.

As foreseen, work on Data Protection remained intense and included the introduction of additional tools of exchange and action.

COMECE adopts a forward-looking approach to the area of Legal Affairs and, therefore, is constantly searching for new challenges: during 2019, reflections on the phenomenon of fake news have been deepened and the question of better protecting places of worship became a key point.

Data Protection & Privacy

In the context of the implementation of the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), in May 2019 COMECE organised an *ad hoc* meeting of Data Protection experts from Bishops' Conferences'.

The meeting featured internal exchanges on practical experiences and legal solutions, as well as a dialogue with the European Commission.

The success of the initiative has led to its annualisation.

During the year, COMECE established fruitful and constructive relations with the European Data Protection Board, which is the key EU advisory body in this field.



H.E. Mgr. Hoogenboom and Fr. Poquillon OP, respectively President of the COMECE Legal Affairs Commission and COMECE General Secretary, discussing with Vincent Depaigne, European Commission's Article 17 Dialogue Coordinator. Brussels, 7 February 2019. (Photo: Di Maio/COMECE).

Negotiations on the proposed “ePrivacy Regulation” were also followed attentively, with particular regard to its impact on non-profit organisations, as well as on the fight against child pornography.

Fundamental Rights

COMECE devoted its attention to current and future challenges concerning fundamental rights, especially with regard to the risks of disconnection between the Court of Justice of the EU and the European Court of Human Rights.

The potential side effects of certain case law on the fundamental rights of the most vulnerable (e.g. freedom of expression, freedom of religion, right to education) was also assessed.

Following last year’s efforts, countering fake news and disinformation continued to be a key focus for COMECE, who established a dialogue on this dossier with the European Commission.

In July 2019, COMECE co-organised a dialogue meeting on “Human Rights & Religion” with the EU Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA) and the participation of Churches and religious communities (Article 17 TFEU), as well as of faith-based organisations (Article 11 TEU).

COMECE also focused its contribution on overcoming the minorities vs. majorities logic, promoting full citizenship for all, in fighting discrimination on grounds of religion; child protection and safeguarding minors’ moral development in line with international standards.

Protection of Places of Worship in the EU

Recently integrated in the working area of COMECE, this dossier has been at the centre of effective exchanges with the European Commission, which started addressing this topic in the broader context of safeguarding public spaces.

In this regard, COMECE provided concrete examples of good practices coming from EU Member states (e.g. specific funds and Church/law enforcement cooperation). The Commission was also encouraged to address this matter through a cross-cutting approach, going beyond an exclusive focus on fight against terrorism.



First EU-Church expert meeting on the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR). Brussels, 21 May 2019. (Photo: Di Maio/COMECE)



The COMECE Legal Affairs Commission. Brussels, 29 October 2019. (Photo: Di Maio/COMECE).

Legal Affairs Commission

The COMECE Legal Affairs Commission carries out a Dialogue with the European Institutions on EU policies, especially in fields impacting on Church activities.

It also provides a forum of reflection and coordination among the Bishops' Conferences. The COMECE Legal Affairs Commission is presided by H.E. Mgr. Theodorus C.M. Hoogenboom and is made up of experts mandated by COMECE Member Bishops' Conferences.

Contributions

31 January 2019

Contribution to the consultation on the European Parliament's implementation of Article 17 TFEU

22 May 2019

Contribution to the European Commission consultation on the implementation of Article 17 TFEU

25 November 2019

Contribution to the European Commission consultation on protection of places of worship in the EU

Events

21 May 2019

Meeting of Data Protection Experts of EU Bishops' conferences

3 July 2019

Dialogue event with the EU Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA) on "Human Rights & Religion" organised together with Don Bosco International and Baha'i International Community.



A participant of the COMECE Legal Affairs Commission during the autumn meeting. Brussels, 29 October 2019. (Photo: Di Maio/COMECE).



"Human Rights and Religion", event organised by COMECE, Don Bosco International and the Baha'i International Community with the participation of the EU Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA). Brussels, 3 July 2019. (Photo: Di Maio/COMECE).



"Human Rights and Religion", event organised by COMECE, Don Bosco International and the Baha'i International Community with the participation of the EU Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA). Brussels, 3 July 2019. (Photo: Di Maio/COMECE).

SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC AFFAIRS

Towards a just ecological and digital transition in Europe

Progress and innovations are desirable and necessary for our prosperity. Nevertheless, they can create anxiety among a part of our society that fears to be excluded from the ecological and digital transition

In this context, COMECE encouraged the EU to shape the transition to the benefit of all and promote a digital and ecological agenda that is people-centered, oriented on our common values and directed towards integral human development.

Through out 2019, COMECE deepened its reflection on the future of work and integral ecology with Christian social movements, initiated working on tax justice and set up a youth platform with Catholic youth organisations, strengthening their voice at EU level.

EU-wide debate on the future of work

In several meetings across the EU, COMECE engaged Christian social movements in a discussion on its reflection on the Future of Work, advancing the debate towards a decent, sustainable and participative world of work and proposing ways for more sustainable social and ecological EU policies.

COMECE, together with Catholic business executives and entrepreneurs, organised a conference on the vocation of business leaders in the ecological transition of the world of work, highlighting their key role as drivers of the changes that will shape Europe towards a socially and ecologically just society.

Integral Ecology

In light of the European Green Deal proposed by the President of the EU Commission, Ursula von der Leyen, the COMECE Social Affairs Commission discussed the EU's contributions to an ecological approach that, in the words of Pope Francis, would reconcile "the cry of the earth and the cry of the poor".

Social Affairs Commission

The Commission monitors and prepares statements, contributions and activities related to EU social and economic policies. Under the chairmanship of Mgr. Antoine Hérouard, the Commission met on two occasions (June and November) to analyse social and economic perspectives in the context of the outcome of the May 2019 European elections, and discussed the follow-up of the European Pillar of Social Rights and the Christian contribution towards an integral ecology and a just transition in Europe.

COMECE highlighted the important role the Church plays in fostering dialogue in our societies on climate change policies. It encouraged the EU to shape the ecological transition to the benefit of everybody, in particular persons, families and communities living in rural and former industrial areas, who feel excluded from technological and societal advancements.

Tax Justice

The Church intends to advance the debate on tax justice, stressing the need to rediscover the concept of the common good and understand that we are all better off if we work together towards social justice. COMECE highlights to go beyond the calls for distributive justice and to promote a contributive formula that makes sure that everyone - including multinational companies and wealthy individuals - contribute to the functioning of society.

As the first step towards this direction, COMECE gathered Church and EU representatives, as well as

NGOs and international organisations in a workshop. It emphasised that taxes don't only allow states to raise money, but also help them to steer the economy towards ecological and social justice.

Youth Platform

Following the Synod on Young People, Faith and Vocation Discernment, COMECE and its partners set up a youth platform gathering the European networks representing Christian youth movements across the EU. This process initiated in April 2019 with a panel debate on Pope Francis' Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation "Christus Vivit", concretely discussing the follow up of the youth synod with the European Parliament and Commission.

Through the youth platform, COMECE established a structured and regular dialogue among Christian youth movements. The platform strengthened young people's voice and underpinned COMECE advocacy on EU Youth & Education policies with their experiences, testimonies and expertise.



Group photo of the COMECE Social Affairs Commission. Brussels, 26 June 2019. (Photo: Di Maio/COMECE).

Contributions

29 April

"Economic, Social and Cultural Rights" in the context of the COMECE contribution in view of the renewal of the *"EU action Plan on Human Rights and Democracy (2020-2024)"*.

1 October

COMECE recommendations on the simplification of Erasmus+.

Events

18 February

European Sunday Alliance meeting in the European Parliament with MEPs Evelyn Regner, Thomas Mann, Marijana Petir, as well as Gabriele Biscioff, then-president of the EESC workers' group.

21 March

Panel debate on *"From an economic crisis to a crisis of trust? Challenges and perspectives for the EU"* with the participation of COMECE Vice President H. E. Mgr. Franz-Josef Overbeck.

11 April

Meeting of the COMECE Youth Platform.

11 April

Don Bosco International-COMECE event on *"Youth Synod continues: a socio-political reading"*, with the participation of H.E. Mgr. Jean-Claude Hollerich SJ, President of COMECE, Mgr. Lucas van Looy SDB, President of Caritas Europa, and EU Parliament and Commission's representatives.

24 September

"Dialogue for Democracy – interreligious youth projects", a lunch debate organised with the Bavarian Youth Council on Christian-Muslim youth projects carried out in Bavaria to strengthen democracy and social cohesion.

2-3 December

"Education, work, technological changes and new business models – a noble vocation for business leaders towards integral ecology", organised by UNIAPAC and COMECE at the University of Deusto, Bilbao.

10 December

"Tax justice and poverty", organised with the Conferences of African and European Jesuits Provincials at the EU Representation of Bavaria with MEPs Evelyn Regner, Sven Giegold and Markus Ferber, and representatives of the European Commission, OECD and NGOs.



Participants of the COMECE Social Affairs Commission. Brussels, 26 June 2019. (Photo: Di Maio/COMECE).



Dialogue meeting on "Tax Justice and poverty". Brussels, 11 December 2019. (Photo: Di Maio/COMECE).



Participants and guests of the COMECE Social Affairs Commission. Brussels, 20-21 November 2019. (Photo: Di Maio/COMECE).

EXTERNAL ACTION

The EU as actor for sustainable peace and integral human development in the world

In the context of the erosion of the international legal framework and the loss of trust in multilateral mechanisms and practices, the Church in Europe is called to provide a sense of orientation and promote a multi-stakeholder partnership approach to address the current challenges of EU's External Action.

EU citizens perceive increased threats to their security, which are amplified not only by violent crisis in Europe's neighbourhood, but also by the expanding digital technologies opening up new conflict environments, as well as socio-economic inequalities and environmental degradation.

In view of these challenges, COMECE encourages the EU to assume its key role as actor for sustainable peace and integral human development in the world.

Military Bishops in dialogue with the EU on human security

In the context of an increased attention to security concerns of European citizens, COMECE gathered Military Bishops from across the European Union and facilitated their dialogue with EU military officials to enhance the cooperation towards a shared strategic culture. Witnessing a loss of trust in multilateral



Major dialogue event between Military Bishops from across the European Union and EU military officials, including General Claudio Graziano, Chairman of the EU Military Committee. Brussels, 8 April 2019. (Photo: Di Maio/COMECE).

mechanisms and an expansion of conflict environments, accompanied by an omnipresence of digital technologies, Church representatives encouraged the EU to strategically focus its policies on longstanding human security and sustainable peace.

Considering the current geopolitical and security challenges, the COMECE Standing Committee proposed to convene the meeting of EU Military Bishops on an annual basis, allowing them to exchange on their respective military realities.



Fr. Olivier Poquillon OP, General Secretary of COMECE, welcomes Adriano Karipuna, indigenous leader from the Brazilian Amazon region to discuss the challenges faced by local communities and to gather views ahead of the Bishops' Synod for the Pan-Amazon Region. Brussels, 5 July 2019. (Photo: Di Maio/COMECE)

Promoting a fair and people-centered Eastern Partnership

On the occasion of the 10th anniversary of the Eastern Partnership, COMECE elaborated a contribution on the future EU policy objectives for its relations with Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine.

In dialogue with local Church authorities from the region, and with inputs from the experts of the COMECE Commission on the EU External Relations, the document encouraged the EU to prioritise a people-centered partnership with its Eastern neighbours, empowering the youth and people with less opportunities in the social, economic and political spheres of life.

COMECE proposed to set up participatory platforms of dialogue and cooperation, involving people of different sectors in cross-border exchanges, so as to favour an enabling democratic

environment, and create conditions for justice and respect for the rule of law.

The COMECE recommendations also stressed the need for the future Eastern Partnership to have a stronger focus on peace and reconciliation, in view of the protracted and frozen conflicts harmfully affecting persons, families and communities across the region.

A renewed EU-ACP partnership: How to support development through investments?

In the context of the on-going negotiations on the new partnership between the EU and the African, Caribbean and Pacific countries (ACP), COMECE hosted a dialogue meeting between policy-makers and faith-based actors, including entrepreneurs and youth representatives. They discussed how fair trade and sustainable investment practices could better serve integral human development in the EU and the ACP regions.

Besides promoting inclusive economic processes based on production instead of predation, COMECE stressed that respective EU mechanisms need to empower the youth, women and families in their local communities. COMECE highlighted that local capacity-building through education and formation can play a key role in building a fair and just business environment.



A map of the Eastern Partnership showing key challenges in EU's cooperation with its six neighbours.

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, Neighborhood, Human Rights and Trade.

Under the chairmanship of H.E. Mgr. Rimantas Norvila (Lithuania), the Commission met on 30 September and 1 October 2019 to exchange with EU officials on perspectives for the EU-Eastern Partnership, the EU-Africa relations and on the control of arms exports.

Supporting Human Rights defenders in the Amazon

In preparation for the October 2019 Synod of Bishops for the Pan-Amazon Region, COMECE received several delegations of indigenous representatives and facilitated their dialogue with EU policymakers.

Indigenous representatives pointed out the need to address human rights, socio-economic and ecological challenges by protecting the land rights of local communities and preserving their traditional practices.

These meetings allowed COMECE to strengthen its partnership with Church-based organisations from the Amazon region, including the Brazilian Bishops' Comissão Pastoral da Terra (CPT), the Indigenous Missionary Council of Brazil (CIMI) and the Red Eclesial Panamazónica (REPAM).

Contributions

29 April 2019

A contribution in view of the renewal of the *"EU Action Plan on Human Rights and Democracy (2020-2024)"*.

1 July 2019

"Technology at the service of peace – A reflection on 'uncrewed armed systems'".

28 October 2019

A contribution to the EU public consultation on the Eastern partnership.

Events

4 February 2019

COMECE organised a dialogue meeting between faith-based actors and EU policymakers in the context of the negotiations on the new partnership between the EU and the ACP countries.

29-30 April 2019

COMECE hosted a civil society workshop organised with its partners on the EU Regulation on responsible mineral sourcing and its accompanying measures.

8 April 2019

COMECE organised the first meeting between Military Bishops from across the European Union and EU military officials, to exchange on their respective military realities and the EU's response to the most prominent geopolitical and security challenges.

19 June 2019

COMECE and its partners held a dialogue meeting with the participation of EU policymakers and Church and civil society representatives. Focus of the meeting was the role of Churches and the EU to support human rights defenders in the Amazon region, in preparation for the October 2019 Synod of Bishops for the Pan-Amazon region.

23 September 2019

COMECE hosted a workshop organised by Justice and Peace Belgium and Centre Avec on the topic of international transitional justice, addressing its contribution to reconciliation processes in conflict areas.

FREEDOM OF RELIGION

“We are not just another group, nor an NGO, but the family of God gathered around the same Lord”.

(Pope Francis)

Significant religious freedom violations took place in 38 out of 196 countries analysed in the “Religious Freedom in the World Report”, published in 2019 by the Pontifical Foundation ACN.

While the EU institutions, especially the Parliament, regularly denounced violations of this fundamental right, the EU Guidelines on Freedom of Religion remain generally unapplied by EEAS delegations.

Despite the important role represented by the EU Special Envoy on Freedom of Religion, his mandate finished on October 2019. In a January 2019 resolution, the European Parliament called for a renewal and a multi-year term of the post.

COMECE encouraged the EU to give centrality to the protection and promotion of this cornerstone freedom in its external policies, involving partnerships in the development field with Churches, religious communities and faith-based organisations.

Religious freedom in third countries

COMECE denounced the persecution and attack to the Church and faithful in various parts of the world. In regular dialogue with local Catholic communities, COMECE followed the situation of Christians and the development of freedom of religion in Burkina Faso, Eritrea, Nigeria, Central African Republic, Syria, Iraq, Indonesia and Chile.



H.E. Mgr. John Darwish, Melkite Greek Catholic Archbishop (Lebanon) participated in the conference on “The next day in Syria: a path towards the resilience of Syrian people” organised at the European Parliament together with CEC, CROCEU and the EPP Service for Interreligious dialogue. Brussels, 3 April 2019. (Photo: EP)

Syria

In the context of the ongoing Syrian conflict, COMECE urged the EU to support Syrian people in overcoming their immediate humanitarian needs and promoting their long term resilience. This call was conveyed during the conference on "The next day in Syria: A path towards the resilience of Syrian people", co-organised with ecumenical partners at the European Parliament on 3 April 2019.

Iraq

A highly fragile situation affects Iraq and its citizens, whose daily life is impacted by enormous challenges. In this regard, on 8 May 2019 COMECE hosted a working breakfast with His Beatitude Louis Raphaël Cardinal Sako I, Patriarch of the Chaldean Catholic Church, who engaged in a dialogue with EU policy makers and Church-based organisations on the future of Christian communities in the country.

Chile

A number of Churches and temples have been recently burned down or vandalized in Santiago, Valparaíso and Rancagua. This clear violation of the fundamental right to religious freedom has been reported by COMECE to the EU competent authorities.

Nigeria

An estimated 1,000 Nigerian Christians were murdered in 2019 alone for their faith and some 6,000 of them have been killed since 2015. The Catholic Bishops Conference of Nigeria denounced the failure of public authorities in its primary duty to protect the lives of Nigerian citizens. COMECE has called the EU and its Member States to address it with all their means, in order to prevent future attacks and to prosecute the criminals.

Contributions

25-27 November

2nd International Conference on Christian Persecution, organised in Budapest.

11-12 December

EPP Conference on "Human Fraternity for World Peace and Living Together" held in Brussels.

28 March

Pan-European Working Group on Freedom of Religion or Belief, organised by the EPP Group in the European Parliament.

Events

7 May

COMECE facilitated a dialogue meeting between Cardinal Luis Sako (Iraq) and Christos Stylianides, EU Commissioner for Humanitarian and Aid Emergency Management.

18 June

In the context of the "European Development Days", COMECE contributed to the discussion on equality in the development field.

11 December

Visit of H. Em. Cardinal Miguel Ayuso Guixot, President of the Pontifical Council for Interreligious dialogue.

Mgr. Youhanna Jihad Battah, Bishop of the Catholic Syriac archbishopric of Beirut, 3 April 2019



His Beatitude Louis Raphaël Cardinal Sako I, Patriarch of the Chaldean Catholic Church, and Fr. Olivier Poquillon OP, during a working breakfast with EU authorities and representatives of Churches and Church-based organisations. Brussels, 8 May 2019. (Photo: Di Maio/COMECE)

JANUARY	FEBRUARY	MARCH	APRIL	MAY
8 Stersingern	4>6 Visit of the Westminster parliamentary interns of England & Wales	4 COMECE Ad-Hoc Working Group on uncrewed armed systems	2>3 12th European Forum on the rights of the child	2 Visit of the Bishop of the Diocese Islamabad
9 COMECE Standing Committee meeting	5 Justice & Peace France Plenary	7>9 Holy See International Conference on "Religions and the Sustainable Development Goals"	3 COMECE-CROCEU-CEC-EPP Seminar "The next day in Syria"	6>9 Participation to the Middle East Council Of Churches
14 European Sunday Alliance Steering Committee	7 COMECE Legal Affairs Commission	13 COMECE Standing Committee and Commissions Presidents meeting	8 Meeting of EU military Bishops and Ordinaries	8>9 Visit of Cardinal Louis Sako
17 Meeting of the General Secretaries of the Bishops' Conferences of the EU	18 European Sunday Alliance Event at the European Parliament	13>15 COMECE Spring Assembly	9 Exchanges on nuclear deterrence and nuclear disarmament	8>10 President visit to the refugees Camps in Lesbos (Greece)
28 Meeting with the Romanian Presidency of the Council of the EU	19 Visitor Group from the Diocese of Linz	19 EP Article 17 dialogue seminar on Artificial Intelligence	10 Visitor Group from Don Bosco International	21 Data protection experts meeting
30 COMECE-CEC Presidencies meeting	19 Event on the Catholic Action against Trafficking in Human Beings	25>26 Meeting of the Presidencies of the Bishops' Conferences of Germany, Switzerland and France	11 Coordination meeting of Catholic Youth International NGOs	22 Visit of a group of Students from the University of Navarra (Spain)
	19 European Parliament's Art. 17 TFEU Consultation Meeting		16 Encounter with Priests and Deacons of the Diocese of St Brieuc (France)	22 European Commission's Art. 17 TFEU Consultation Meeting
			25 Visitor Group from French Social Week	27 Visit of EU Commissioner Violetta Bulc
				29 Visitor Group of the University of Erfurt (Germany)

JUNE	SEPTEMBER	OCTOBER	NOVEMBER	DECEMBER
4>6 Standing Committee meeting in Rome 11 Conference of Air Force Military Chaplain 12 Laudato Si' Reflection Day 17>19 Participation to the CCEE Press Officers meeting 26 COMECE Social Affairs Commission 27 Meeting with the Permanent Representation of Finland	3 Meeting with Hospitality Europe Meeting with the Head of the Delegation of the European Commission to the Holy See 5 Meeting with the President of Caritas Germany Visitor Group of Caritas Hildesheim 10>12 Participation to the Peace Conference of the Conference of European Churches (CEC) 16 >17 Standing Committee meeting 23 Event of Justice et Paix Belgique and Centre Avec on Transitional Justice 24 Luncheon event with the Bavarian Youth Council 25 Meeting with the Executive Board of Caritas Europe 30 COMECE EU External Affairs Commission	1 COMECE EU External Affairs Commission 2 Visitor Group Katholische Erwachsenenbildung Baden-Württemberg 3>6 Participation to the CCEE Plenary Assembly 7 Assembly of the COMECE Working Group on Ethics 8 Meeting with the Board of the European Federation of Catholic Family Associations 11 >12 19th International Conference on the Role of the Catholic Church in the European Integration Process 14 Visitor Group from the University of Radboud (NL) 23 Standing Committee meeting 23>25 COMECE Autumn Assembly 28 Visit of Bishops from Sri Lanka 29 COMECE Legal Affairs Commission	14 Meeting with the Great Rabbi of Brussels Visitor Group from the Catholic School of Journalism in Munich 15 Visitor Group from the Collegio Astori di Mogliani Venice 19 CCEE-COMECE Presidencies meeting 20>21 COMECE Social Affairs Commission 26 Participation to the Public Debate 'Role of the Church in Central Europe: 30 years ago and now'	2 Conference on Trafficking in Human Beings 5>7 Participation to the Forum of Catholic Inspired NGOs 9 Visitor Group from Lumen Vitae 10 Closed Door Event on Tax Justice 12 EPP XXII. Annual Interreligious Dialogue on "Human Fraternity for World Peace and Living Together" 18 Meeting with the Union of the European Conferences of Major Superiors (UCESM)
JULY/AUGUST 2>4 Participation to the CCEE General Secretaries meeting 5 Visit of a group from the Service of European Churches for International Students 10 Meeting with the Committee of Representatives of the Orthodox Churches to the European Union 12 Meeting with the Finnish Presidency of the Council of the EU 15 Steering Committee of the European Sunday Alliance				

COMECE PRESIDENCY

The President and the four Vice Presidents compose the Presidency of COMECE. They are elected by the Assembly from among its members. They are representative of the geographical distribution of the Episcopates of the European Union. Their mandate lasts for a period of five years and is renewable only once.

The current presidency is formed by H.Em. Card. Jean-Claude Hollerich SJ (President), H.E. Mgr. Mariano Crociata (First Vice-President), H.E. Mgr. Noel Treanor (Vice President), H.E. Mgr. Jan Vokál (Vice President), H.E. Mgr. Franz-Josef Overbeck (Vice President).



Card. Hollerich (Luxembourg)



Mgr. Crociata (Italy)



Mgr. Treanor (Ireland)



Mgr. Vokál (Czech Republic)



Mgr. Overbeck (Germany)

COMECE PRESIDENCY

BISHOPS DELEGATED TO COMECE in alphabetical order

COMECE members are the Episcopal Conferences in the EU. Each member Bishops' Conference appoints a delegate Bishop to COMECE.

A single Bishop represents Denmark, Sweden and Finland. The Episcopate of the United Kingdom is represented by a Bishop of the Episcopal Conference of England and Wales, and by a Bishop of the Episcopal Conference of Scotland.

H.E. Mgr. Virgil BERCEA



Bishop of Oradea Mare/Gran Varadino (Romania)



H.E. Mgr. Mariano CROCIATA



Bishop of Latina (Italy)



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 Almería (Spain)



H.E. Mgr. Joseph Galea-Curmi



Auxiliary Bishop of 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 (The Netherlands)



H.E. Mgr. Nicholas HUDSON



Auxiliary Bishop of Westminster (England & Wales)



H.E. Mgr. Vjekoslav HUZZAK



Bishop of Bjelovar-Križevci (Croatia)



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. Czesław KOZON**

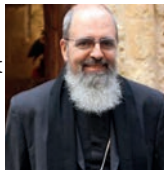
Bishop of Copenhagen (Nordic Bishops' Conference)

**H.E. Mgr. Franz-Josef OVERBECK**

Bishop of Essen and Military Bishop (Germany)

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

Apostolic Exarch to the Greek Byzantine Catholic Church (Greece)

**H.E. Mgr. Rimantas NORVILA**

Bishop of Vilnius (Lithuania)

**H.E. Mgr. Christo PROYKOV**

Apostolic Exarch of Sofia (Bulgaria)

**H.E. Mgr. Youssef SOUEIF**

Archbishop of the Maronites (Cyprus)

**H.E. Mgr. Zbignevs STANKEVIČS**

Metropolitan Archbishop of Riga (Latvia)

**H.E. Mgr. Janusz STEPNOWSKI**

Bishop of Łomża (Poland)

**H.E. Mgr. Franc ŠUŠTAR**

Auxiliary Bishop of Ljubljana (Slovenia)

**H.E. Mgr. Noel TREANOR**

Bishop of Down and Connor (Ireland)

**H.E. Mgr. Jan VOKÁL**

Bishop of Hradec Králové (Czech Republic)

**H.E. Mgr. Ägidius Johann ZSIFKOVICS**

Bishop of Eisenstadt (Austria)



Observers

H.E. Mgr. Stanislav Hočevar

Archbishop of Belgrade (Serbia)

**H.E. Mgr. Markus Büchel**

Bishop of St-Gallen (Switzerland)



COMECE ASSEMBLIES

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

Spring Assembly, 13-15 March 2019

Main topic: Challenges in view of EU elections

Autumn Assembly, 23-25 October 2019

Main topic: EU ecological policies on persons, families and communities



MEETING OF THE GENERAL SECRETARIES OF EU EPISCOPATES

For the third consecutive year, General Secretaries of the Bishops' Conferences of the EU gathered in Brussels to nurture their effective cooperation with COMECE in view of a strong contribution to the dialogue with the EU institutions.



COMECE PRESIDENT IS CREATED CARDINAL BY POPE FRANCIS

Pope Francis elevated Mgr. Jean-Claude Hollerich SJ, Archbishop of Luxembourg and President of COMECE, to the dignity of Cardinal during the Consistory held at St. Peter's Basilica, Rome, on Saturday 5 October 2019.



(Photo: Vatican Media)

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 the Assembly.

Fr. Olivier Poquillon OP

(until 31 August 2019)

Fr. Manuel Enrique Barrios Prieto

(from 1 September 2019)

General Secretary

Alessandro Calcagno

Assistant General Secretary

Legal Advisor for Fundamental Rights and Article 17 TFEU issues

Secretary of the COMECE Legal Affairs Commission
[Seconded by the Italian Bishops' Conference]

Michael Kuhn

Senior Advisor

Advisor for Ecology & Sustainability and Education, Culture and Youth policy

[Seconded by the Austrian Bishops' Conference]

José-Luis Bazán

Legal Advisor for Migration, Asylum and Freedom of Religion

Secretary of the COMECE Working Group on Migration and Asylum

Marek Misak

Policy Advisor for External Relations

Secretary of the COMECE Commission on the External Relations of the European Union

Markus Vennwald

Policy Advisor for Social & Economic Affairs

Secretary of the COMECE Social Affairs Commission

Friederike Ladenburger

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

Stefan Lunte

General Secretary of Justice & Peace Europe

Maud Oger

Assistant to the General Secretary

Alessandro Di Maio

Communication Officer

Carolina Ducoing

Office Manager

Olivier Coevoet

Volunteer

Albert Arevalo

Support Staff

Cynthia Quijano Aquino

Support Staff

The Secretariat thanks the voluntary interns that assisted in the course of the year :

Eleonora Vescovini (Italy)

Claire Marsault (France)

Emilio Dogliani (Italy)

FINANCES

Total expenditure: 1.088.312€

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

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





www.comece.eu

19, Square de Meeûs, B-1050 Brussels

Tel. +32 (2) 235 05 10

Fax +32 (2) 230 33 34

Mail: comece@comece.eu

