



COMECE
ANNUAL REPORT
2000

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INTRODUCTION

The Commission of the Bishops' Conferences of the European Community (COMECE) is tasked with monitoring the evolution of European policy-making by the European Union institutions. It is also charged with making input to the European Union institutions in a range of policy areas. It fulfils this mission on behalf of the fourteen Bishops' Conferences in the Member States of the European Union. To this end throughout 2000 COMECE continued to provide meeting points with EU officials through a range of activities: the two annual plenary meetings, two meetings of the Executive Committee, initiatives undertaken by its Bishop members in their respective countries, the monthly publication and through of a range of activities involving the EU institutions on the one hand and exchanges and encounters with groups and organisations from the local Churches in the Member States on the other. This report is therefore a record of the contribution made by COMECE to the European project on behalf of its member Bishops' Conferences and the local Church in the Member States. It indicates some of the initiatives undertaken to assist the local Churches and their episcopates in keeping abreast of developments in European policy-making. In carrying out its mission the COMECE secretariat maintained contact and collaborated with the Apostolic Nuncio the European Union, with Catholic Organisations which liaise with the EU and with the offices of the other Churches in Brussels.

The final section of the Annual Report for 1999 outlined a series of areas in which the COMECE would concentrate its work throughout the year 2000: (i) monitoring and making input to EU policy-making, (ii) input, in co-operation with the Apostolic Nuncio to the EU, to the work of the Convention charged with preparing the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the EU (iii) a Social Congress and two seminars involving EU officials and Church representatives, one on the Common and Foreign Security Policy (May), the other on Ethically Responsible Research in Bio-medicine (December), (v) maintaining contacts with the Bishops' Conferences of the Member States and candidate countries, (vi) further efforts to promote the COMECE-OCIPE monthly publication, *Europe-Infos*, (vii) continuing the series of thematic evening lectures, (viii) preparing a website. Recalling the main activities of the year, this report shows that in these and other areas significant work was carried out during the course of the year.

In 2000 the Presidency of the European Union was held by Portugal for the first half of the year and by France from July to December. The inter-governmental conference process, to be concluded at the Council of Nice, was launched in February 2000. The sixty-two member Convention drafted the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the EU and presented it to the informal Council at Biarritz . It was signed at the Council of Nice. 9 May, 2000 marked the fiftieth anniversary of the Schuman Declaration and Mr. J. Fischer and other political figures re-opened the debate on the finality of European

construction. Through its secretariat COMECE monitored the work programme of the Presidencies and made representations in regard to policy-making in the aforementioned and other areas.

The year 2000 also marked twenty years of service on the part of COMECE and its secretariat to the Episcopal Conferences of the Member States and also to those of the candidate countries. Under the direction of its Presidents, Cardinal Franz Hengsbach, Essen, (1980-1983), Archbishop Jean Hengen, Luxembourg, (1983-1990), Archbishop Charles Amarin Brand, Strasbourg, (1990-1993), and Bishop Josef Homeyer, Hildesheim, (1993 -), its secretariat responded to the major issues on the agenda of the European Communities institutions and interacted with them on behalf of the local churches. In the aftermath of the Single European Act (1986) and the Treaty of Maastricht (1992) its secretariat was strengthened in order to better engage with the a more politically integrated European Union. In the course of the year the Plenary meeting and the Executive Committee deliberated on how to increase the effectiveness of COMECE's work vis-à-vis the EU and the Bishops' Conferences.

Whilst this report sets out the main activities carried out by COMECE throughout 2000, it does not attempt to provide an exhaustive listing of all the initiatives undertaken by the staff of the secretariat. It seeks simply to give an overview of the main activities undertaken in the service of the Bishops' Conferences and of the European project.

1. COMECE FROM WITHIN

1.1. The President

- 1.1.1. The President directed the two Plenary meetings (30-31 March and 23-24 November) and the three meetings of the Executive Committee. He addressed, participated in and formally concluded the COMECE Social Congress on 31 March-01 April.
- 1.1.2. He continued the annual visits to the Orthodox Churches to discuss the mission and role of the Churches in regard to European integration: visiting his Beatitude Christodoulos, Archbishop of Athens and All Greece on 26-27 January and His Beatitude Teoctist, Patriarch of the Orthodox Church of Romania (28-30 January). From 13-17 July he also led a delegation of COMECE Bishops and members of the secretariat to Belgrade for discussions with members of the Synod of Serbian Orthodox Church.
- 1.1.3. During these visits (27.01, 30.01, 15.07, 06.12) the President and the Secretary General had occasion to discuss and plan forthcoming activities of the secretariat.
- 1.1.4. The President visited the EU institutions on 6 December and on that occasion launched the COMECE statement, *A Stable Monetary Union, Hope for a Europe of Solidarity*.

1.2. THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

- 1.2.1. The Executive Committee – the President, the Vice-Presidents, Bishop A. Nicora and Bishop A. van Luyn and the General Secretary – met on three occasions in the course of the year. The meetings were also attended by the Apostolic Nuncio to the European Communities.
- 1.2.2. The first meeting was held in the Villa Mater Dei, Rome on May 30. Having reviewed the then current issues on the agenda of the EU, the meeting concentrated on identifying priorities for the mandate of the Executive Committee (November 1999-November 2002) in line with the reflection process launched at the Spring Plenary meeting. It also considered the work of COMECE in regard to the Charter of Fundamental Rights and deliberated on relations with the Orthodox Churches in respect of European integration. The members of the committee met with Mgr. Celestino Migliore, Secretariat of State to discuss matters of common interest on the EU agenda. Cardinal Jan Pieter Schotte received the committee for a discussion and evaluation of the second Special Synod on Europe (October 1999).
- 1.2.3. The second meeting of the Executive Committee was also held in the Villa Mater Dei, Rome on 07-08 September. This meeting dwelt particularly on the how COMECE might strengthen the profile of its mission and render the secretariat and its Working Groups more effective vis-à-vis an ever more politically integrated EU. To this end the possibility of creating Commissions was explored. The committee also deliberated on the need to increase awareness of the European dimension of their responsibilities on the part of the national Episcopal Conferences and they sought to identify ways of giving assistance in this respect. COMECE's efforts to introduce amendments to the draft Charter of Fundamental Rights were reviewed and reports were received on contacts with members of the Convention. The secretariat's work on the proposal for a council Directive on equal treatment in employment and work was discussed and it was decided to organise a meeting for representatives of national Bishops' Conferences at the secretariat on 29 September to prepare a submission for gaining a more comprehensive derogation for the Churches in Article 4 of the draft proposal. A report was also received on the visit of the COMECE delegation to Belgrade, 13-17 July 2000.
- 1.2.4. The third meeting of the Executive Committee was held at the secretariat on the eve of the November Plenary meeting. A report was given by the Apostolic Nuncio and the Secretary General on a meeting convoked in November by Cardinal Angelo Sodano, Secretary of State, Holy See, to discuss the presence of the Church in the European institutions. The Vice-Presidents reported on their participation at the Plenary meeting of CCEE in Leuven, 20-22 October. The committee continued to reflect on strengthening the profile of COMECE and on the proposed Commissions.

1.3. THE PLENARY MEETINGS

- 1.3.1. Since the Convention, tasked with drafting the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the EU, had begun its work at the beginning of the year, the Spring Plenary, held in Brussels on 30-31 March, took the Charter of Fundamental Rights as its central theme. M. I. Mendez de Vigo, Member of the European Parliament and Vice-President of the Convention, outlined the origins of the proposal for the Charter, the working method of the Convention itself and the *status quaestionis* in regard to some of the proposals contained in the February submission of the COMECE secretariat. Referring to the precision and quality of that submission and to the frequent references to it in the meetings of the Convention, he encouraged the Bishops to contact the members of the Convention. In his presentation Mr. Siegbert Alber, Advocate General of the European Court of Justice, Luxembourg, explored the sources for the rights which should feature in the Charter, discussed the possibilities for its future legal status, considered questions attendant on the relationship between the competence of the European Court of Justice in Luxembourg and the European Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg. A further contribution to the proceedings was made by M. Miguel Mesquita da Cunha who considered the significance of the Charter in the process of European integration. He also offered some reflections on the involvement of civil society with the work of the Convention and reflected with the Bishops on how the Churches might further engage in the preparatory process. In the light of these contributions the Plenary noted the secretariat's submission to the Convention in February 2000 with the approval of the Presidium and requested the secretariat continue its monitoring of the work of the Convention. Since this Plenary meeting marked the completion of twenty years of service to the Church and to European integration, a process of reflection was initiated on how COMECE's profile, in regard to both the EU and the Bishops' Conferences, might be strengthened. Reports were taken on work in hand. A draft statement on monetary union was presented, discussed and commended for further work. This Plenary was followed by the COMECE Social Congress, *Europe's Responsibility for Global Development: Markets and Institutions after Seattle*, 31 March-01 April. A report of the main activities of CCEE was given by its Secretary General, A. Giordano.
- 1.3.2. The Autumn Plenary took place in Brussels on 23-24 November. During the preceding months, several political figures had addressed the issue of the ultimate significance of European integration and thus re-opened the public debate on the purpose of European construction. Hence it was decided to take "*Le débat sur la finalité de L'Union Européenne*" as the theme of the meeting. An introductory discussion was led by members of COMECE on reactions to issues on the EU agenda in the Member States – the Charter of Fundamental Rights, by Mgr. H. Simon; enlargement by Mgr. V. Maly; the sanctions on Austria, Mgr.E. Kapellari; the referendum on the Euro in Denmark by Mgr. W. Kenney. The meeting then considered three significant elements – the IGC, enlargement and monetary union - in the shaping of the European process with the assistance of three speakers. Mr. Michel Petite, chef de cabinet of President Prodi, set out the terms of reference of the inter-governmental conference and explored the challenges facing the heads of state and government at the

forthcoming Council of Nice. Mr. Jan Figel, secretary of state at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Slovakia, spoke from the viewpoint of a candidate country of central Europe on the challenges of enlargement. M. Giovanni Ravasio, director general of the Directorate General for Economic and Financial Affairs of the European Commission, spoke on the significance of economic and monetary union for European construction and encouraged the Bishops to promote reflection on this project within the Church. A soirée débat was organised to coincide with the presence of the COMECE members in Brussels. The theme, *Comment relancer la construction européenne? Quelle contribution de l'Eglise?* was chosen in conjunction with the main theme of the Plenary. The speakers, Karl Lamers co-author of the famous Lamers-Schäuble paper, spokesman of the German CDU on foreign affairs and Jérôme Vignon, principal counsellor at the European Commission with particular responsibility for the preparation of the forthcoming White Paper on Governance, addressed a large audience of guests. Reports were given by members of the secretariat on work in hand from the Working Groups. It was decided to make further representations to the Presidency and to the President and members of the Convention on the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union. The Plenary approved the statement *A Stable Monetary Union, Hope for a Europe of Solidarity* and agreed that it be published on 6 December 2000. The meeting noted a series of projects in hand, inter alia: a colloquium, *Responsible bio-medical Research: A Challenge for Europe*, planned for 7 December; a meeting of the Presidents of the Bishops' Conferences of South-East Europe to consider the role of the Church in the region, to be co-organised with CCEE in Spring 2001; an encounter in late Spring 2002 between European Bishops and Latin American Bishops shortly before the EU-Latin American summit during the Spanish Presidency. It was also agreed that a series of initiatives would be undertaken regarding the European strategy on sustainable development. The Plenary approved the nomination Mr. Stefan Lunte as assistant secretary general for an interim period of one year during which the necessary amendments to the statutes should be prepared.

1.4. THE SECRETARIAT: STAFF

- 1.4.1. All members of the secretariat staff contributed to preparing and carrying out the activities and events referred to in this report.
- 1.4.2. Staff meetings were held in order to execute the decisions of the Plenary meetings, to prepare the forthcoming Plenary meetings and to plan the work of the secretariat and to provide for exchange of information among staff members.
- 1.4.3. With a view to the enlargement of the European Union and the consequent need to establish ever closer contacts with the Episcopal Conferences of the countries of central and eastern Europe, Mgr. Marian Subocz joined the staff of the secretariat in May 2000. A vacant secretarial post was filled in due course and Mme. Isabelle Gilles commenced work in July 2000.

- 1.4.4. For short periods the members of the secretariat were assisted by two voluntary *stagaires*. A young German student, Mr. Robert Olma, provided significant assistance in preparations for the Social Congress, held on 31 March-01 April.
- 1.4.5. The end of the year marked the retirement of Professor Silvio Marcus-Helmons who offered his services on a voluntary basis to COMECE especially in regard to the Reflection Group on Bio-Ethics.

1.5. THE SECRETARIAT: WORKING GROUPS

- 1.5.1. **The Legal Affairs Working Group** met on 16.03 and on 09.11. The meetings opened with brief reports on juridical issues of concern to the Church in the Member States. The March meeting addressed a series of issues on the EU agenda: the proposal for a directive on equal treatment in employment and work; the Charter of Fundamental Rights; issues attendant on the extension of Community competence in intellectual property rights. The November meeting considered the final version of the Charter of Fundamental Rights, as established by the Convention on 02.10, to be presented to the Council of Nice. It also examined the Directive on equal treatment in employment and work (based on Article 13 TCE) adopted by the Employment and Social Affairs Council on 17 October 2000 in Luxembourg and examined both paragraphs of Article 4. The members of the group were also briefed by Mr. Henrik Lesaar, Forward Studies Unit (FSU) of the European Commission, on a forthcoming seminar (04.12.2000) for civil servants from the Member States who have particular responsibility for issues relating to Church-State relations. The first such meeting of its kind at EU level, it should provide the participants with an overview of the variety of these relations in the Member States, the provisions for exchange between governments and Churches/religious communities and the significance of the relationship for European society.
- 1.5.2. **The Reflection Group on Bio-ethical issues** held two meetings in the course of the year and also organised a colloquium on 07.03. The meeting held on 07 March received a report by a member of the group who attended a meeting of European Advisory Group on Ethics in Science and New Technologies, presided by Madame Lenoir on 06.03, which dealt with genetics in the workplace. The members of the group also considered ethical issues attendant on the use of stem cells. Thereafter the members of the group finalised the programme for the December colloquium. The second meeting, held on 25.08, produced a reflection paper on the use of human stem cells. This paper was sent to the Lenoir Group in view of a report it was due to prepare on the subject for the European Commission in October 2000. The meeting also reviewed the preparations for the colloquium. A member of the Reflection Group attended a colloquium, *Genetics and the Future of Europe*, organised by the European Commission on 06-07 November 2000 and to which the COMECE secretariat was invited.
- 1.5.3. Having completed its initial mandate of three years, the **Working Group on Social Affairs**, presided by Bishop A. van Luyn, was given a further mandate of the same duration by the Spring Plenary. The Bishops conferences duly re-

confirmed members or nominated new members. For reasons linked to the re-organisation of the group, the meeting foreseen for 3-4 November was deferred to 09-10 February 2001. It had been due to work on the European Social Agenda, due for presentation to the Nice summit and also on the issue of economic services of public interest, subjects which will feature on the agenda of the February meeting. The Group also patronised the COMECE Social Congress, *Europe's Responsibility for Global Development: Markets and Institutions after Seattle*, held on 31 March – 01 April 2000 and described below.

- 1.5.4. **The Working Group on Information Society, Communications and Media Policy** met on 10.04 and on 09.10. The April meeting examined recent developments in EU policy, inter alia: the relevant aspects of the European Commission's Work programme for 2000; the conclusions of the Lisbon EU summit (23-24 March) relevant to the Information society; regulatory principles of audio-visual policy; protection of minors in audio-visual services. An official of the European Commission Directorate General for Culture and Education made an input on the European Commission's initiative to promote education and training in the new media (e-learning). The October session continued work on the subjects of new media education, e-learning and information as a public good. It received a report on the Council of Europe's sixth European Ministerial Conference on mass media policy, held in Cracow, 15-16 June, 2000 and on the European Ethics Network Politeia Conference on *Modern Media and Social Dialogue*, held in the Catholic University, Leuven, 25-27 May, 2000, both of which were attended by members of the group. The group also worked on other issues such as, the discussions during the French Presidency (Lille conference in July) on the financing of public service broadcasting, proposed EU guidelines on competition and media, freedom of expression in the media in the draft Charter of Fundamental Rights. In May the group prepared a letter on behalf of the COMECE secretariat in support of the Angelilli report to the European Parliament on child protection in the media. This letter was sent to the members of the European Parliament's Committee on Culture, Youth, Education, Media and Sport. The group also worked on preparing a reflection paper on thinking underlying EU media policy for the information society. The group will have an exchange with Mrs. Viviane Reding, Commissioner for Education, Culture and Media in January 2001.
- 1.5.5. **The Working Group on Islam in Europe** met on 21-22 February 2000 and on 16-17 October 2000. The February meeting studied relations between Islam and the State in France and Belgium. An official of the Belgian Ministry of Justice assisted the group in this respect. It continued work on a document which aims to provide an overview of the integration of Islam in some Member States. Turkey's candidacy for membership of the EU also figured on the agenda: input was made by Mr. X. Yataganas, an official of the European Commission and by Mr. S. Biller, an official of the European Parliament. The October meeting was organised as a series of exchanges with officials on the Barcelona process: discussions were held with M. J. Thesleff, counsellor for the Middle East and North Africa at the Swedish Permanent Representation to the EU, with M. F. Acosta, an official of Directorate General Relex at the European Commission with responsibility for social, cultural and justice issues

in the context of the Barcelona process. A meeting also took place with Dr. T. Jansen and officials of the Forward Studies Unit (FSU) of the European Commission who provided an update on the FSU's work on Islam in Europe. The group also reflected on preparing a colloquium on Turkey's candidacy to the EU, explored issues and themes and had an extended discussion with M. le Général Ph. Morillon, Member of the European Parliament, author of a report for the European Parliament on the subject.

- 1.5.6. The COMECE **Platform on Migration issues**, which brings together experts from Bishops' Conferences and representatives of Brussels-based Catholic organisations working on migration and refugee issues, held five meetings during the course of the year: 17 March, 29 May, 11 September, 15 November and on 11 December. In view of the European Commission's proposal for a directive on the right of third country nationals to family reunification, together with ICMC, Caritas Europa and the Churches' Commission for Migrants in Europe, the members of the Platform elaborated an ecumenical statement on family reunification. This statement was sent to members of the European Parliament, particularly to member of the European Parliament's Committee on Citizens' Rights, Justice and Home Affairs, to the Council of Ministers, to the Permanent Representations of the Member States and to non-governmental organisations working in the field. The revised European Commission proposal (October 2000) maintained its ambitious objectives and took into account two of the ecumenical statement's proposals. Other issues worked on during the year were: common asylum procedure for the EU; temporary protection of displaced persons; revision of the Dublin Convention (on determining the state responsible for an asylum claim within the EU); irregular immigration and trafficking in human beings. An official of the European Commission's Directorate General for Justice and Home Affairs, Ms. S. Pratt, briefed the December meeting on two Communications of the European Commission on a Community immigration and asylum policy. The Platform will work closely at these Communications in the course of 2001.
- 1.5.7. Members of the secretariat had several meetings with EU officials responsible for the **Foreign and Security Policy of the EU** in the course of the year. Some of these aimed at identifying issues which the secretariat might address. Others served the purpose of preparing a Dialogue Seminar, *The Foreign and Security Policy of the European Union: Past and Future*, held on 11-13 May and co-organised with the Conference of European Justice and Peace Commissions, Pax Christi. A series of briefing meetings were also organised with officials before and after the visit of the COMECE delegation to Belgrade, 11-17 July 2000. Towards the end of the year preparations were made for a meeting of a Reflection Group on EU Foreign and Security Policy in early 2001. It will provide for an exchange with officials and others involved in policy-making on the contribution of the Church's social teaching to such issues as: conflict prevention, intervention and the healing of memories.
- 1.5.8. A series of working sessions with the financial advisers assisted the secretariat in managing the annual budget and in preparing the accounts for the November 2000 Plenary meeting.

- 1.5.9. The secretaries of the Working Groups and staff members of the secretariat, maintained contact with the Church-linked offices in Brussels, especially with CARITAS, CIDSE, ESPACES, OCIPE, Justice and Peace, Pax Christi International. They also kept contact with offices of the other Churches working in the same policy fields, and also exchanged information with relevant policy centres.

2. COMECE AND THE EUROPEAN UNION

2.1. Encounter and Exchange

- 2.1.1. The two Plenary meetings and the Social Congress were times of direct encounter between officials of the EU institutions and the Bishop members of COMECE. Further contacts were made with European civil servants by the President, by members of the secretariat and on occasion by members of the Working Groups. The COMECE secretariat was contacted on occasion by Members of the European Parliament and by officials of the institutions in search of a Church viewpoint or input on matters pertaining to EU policy.
- 2.1.2. The Social Congress, *Europe's Responsibility for Global Development: Markets and Institutions after Seattle*, held in Brussels on 31 March and 01 April 2000 offered an opportunity for significant exchange between the Church and personnel from the EU and other international institutions. Prepared by the secretariat in conjunction with the COMECE Social Affairs Working Group, the programme provided for group work and for discussion in Plenary session. Opened by the President, Bishop Homeyer and introduced by Bishop van Luyn, Vice-President and Chairman of the Working Group on Social Affairs, the congress was addressed by President Romano Prodi, President of the European Commission and by M. Michel Camdessus, former Managing Director of the IMF. A series of work groups, each exploring a theme of the WTO agenda, enabled participants to consider the ethical challenges of globalisation from the perspective of the Church's social teaching and ethical thought. The themes were introduced chiefly by EU civil servants who also animated the group discussions. Following upon reports in plenary from the twelve groups, a panel of speakers, presided by Dr. Garret Fitzgerald, former Prime Minister of Ireland, explored the subject of the responsibility of Christian and Europeans for global development. The panel members were: Mr Rubens Ricupero, Secretary General of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, Fr. Yvon Ambroise, Co-ordinator, Caritas Asia, Mr. H. Onno Ruding, Vice Chairman and Director of Citibank, President-elect of UNIAPAC and former Minister of Finance of the Netherlands, Dr. Jorge Arturo Chaves op, Victor Sanabria Chair for Economic and Development, National University of Heredia, Costa Rica and Bishop Diarmuid Martin, Secretary of the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, Rome. Participants included the delegations nominated by the Bishops' Conferences, the Bishops of COMECE, officials of the European Union institutions, economists, bankers, business representatives, academics, diplomats and officials of liaison offices with the EU institutions. Representatives of the Orthodox Churches attended as did staff members of the Commission for Church and Society of

CEC. A follow-up in the form of a paper on global governance is foreseen. The proceedings will be published in the course of 2001.

- 2.1.3. The seminar, *Responsible Biomedical Research: A Way Forward for Europe*, held in Brussels on 7 December marked a further time of exchange between EU officials and Church representatives. Prepared by the COMECE Reflection Group on Bioethics, the programme aimed at exploring a series of issues in contemporary biomedical research in the light of Catholic bio-ethical thought. Cardinal Thomas Winning delivered the opening address. Papers were presented by specialists from universities throughout the Member States: issues in biomedical research by Professor D. von Engelhardt (Lübeck); the genomic and biological revolution by Professor N. Tommerup (Copenhagen); ethical approach to genetic testing by Professor Luis Archer, chairman of the national bio-ethics committee (Portugal); research on the human embryo by Professor J. M. McLean (Manchester) and Professor M. Dupuis (Catholic University of Louvain and university of Liège); science and society by Professor J-F. Mattei (Marseilles). Bishop D. Murray (Limerick, Ireland) summarised the proceedings. The proceedings will be published in 2001.
- 2.1.4. On the occasion of his visit to Brussels on 06.12 the President, Bishop Homeyer, met with Dr. Karl von Wogau, Member of the European Parliament, a member of the EP's Committee on Economic and Monetary affairs. Among the subjects discussed were, the EMU project and the forthcoming COMECE statement, the contribution of Catholic social teaching to identifying core elements for a model for a viable European society, the post-Nice scenario, strengthening relations between COMECE and the European Parliament, especially the EPP group. The President also met with Mrs. Doris Pack, Member of the European Parliament, President of its Delegation for South-East Europe. This exchange focused on an analysis of the recent developments in the region with particular reference to Serbia and Macedonia. Bishop Homeyer reported on his contacts with the Serbian Orthodox Church, on the visit of the COMECE delegation to Belgrade in July 2000 and on the plan to co-organise with CCEE a meeting of the Presidents of the Bishops' Conferences of the region in Spring 2001. The President also visited the Headquarters of the Stability Pact for South-East Europe. He held an extended discussion with three officials, Mr. D. Kursch, Mr. R. Zeldenrust and Mrs. N. Malenica on the objectives, policy, and work of the Stability Pact in the region, on the interest of its first Working Table on projects of an inter-religious kind and on the role of the Churches in the region. As indicated below, the President also launched the COMECE statement, *A Stable Monetary Union: Hope for a Europe of Solidarity* in the course of a press conference, held at the secretariat, on the occasion of this visit.
- 2.1.5. As in previous years COMECE together with the Commission for Church and Society (CCS of KEK), and with the local Churches, requested meetings with the incoming EU Presidencies to discuss the priorities of the Presidency programmes and issues of concern to the Churches. A meeting took place with the French Presidency (January-June) in Paris on 15.05. Inter alia the subjects discussed with M. Muscovici were: the Charter of Fundamental Rights, Mr. J. Fischer's speech on the future of the EU and enlargement, family reunion, the

contribution of the Churches within civil society to security, the Barcelona process and possibilities for inter-religious seminars in that context, the social agenda and measures against social exclusion, Church contributions to education policy in the information society. Various documents were given to M. Muscovici: a statement on the Charter by the commission for Church and Society; COMECE proposals for amendments to the then current draft of the Charter; Bishop Homeyer's comments on the Fischer speech. On 28.11 a meeting took place with Ms. Lena Hjelm-Wallén, Deputy Prime Minister of Sweden who was accompanied by government officials. The discussions focused on issues identified as priorities by the Swedish government for its Presidency (July-December): enlargement, environment and sustainable development, global solidarity. There was a short exchange on European demography and the need for a family friendly social policy. In the course of the exchange recommendations were made to the Deputy Prime Minister in respect of issues in common European migration policy and in regard to support for inter-religious dialogue and projects in the context of both the Stability Pact for South-East Europe and also of the Barcelona Process. A letter from the leaders of the Churches in Sweden regarding the status of Jerusalem was handed over to the Deputy Prime Minister.

- 2.1.6. In the context of their daily work and in the course of preparing the meetings of the Working Groups staff members were in regular contact with the European Commission, its cabinets and Directorates General, with staff and members of the European Parliament and with services of the Council of Ministers. The daily Press Conferences at the European Commission were attended by the COMECE press officer and journalist. COMECE documents were submitted to appropriate officials and services. Throughout the year numerous officials of the EU institutions visited the secretariat for discussions, briefing sessions and to address visiting groups as well as COMECE Working Groups.
- 2.1.7. Close and fruitful working relations were maintained with the Forward Studies Unit (FSU) of the European Commission. Its staff members contributed to a range of COMECE activities, inter alia: information visits to the EU on the part of Church linked groups from the Member States and beyond, such as, a group from the Ostakademie Königstein (12.01); a group of priests from dioceses of Meaux (10-11), a group of historians from Aachen (22.06); a group of press officers from the dioceses in Germany, (27-28.09); the visit of H. E. Metropolitan Filaret of Minsk and Slutsk to Brussels (12-14.09); the director of the Kommissariat of the German Bishops' Conference (05.10). COMECE was invited to take part in the FSU symposium, "*What is the possible role for the Churches in the European Union? Equality and Privileges of Churches,*" held in the European Commission's Breydel building on 16.06.2000.
- 2.1.8. Staff members took part in the Briefing sessions organised by the Forward Studies Unit (FSU) for the Church-linked offices in Brussels on the European Council meetings: for Santa Maria di Feira on 23 June and for Nice on 12 December. They also took part in a consultation organised by the FSU on anti-racism on 13 December 2000.

- 2.1.9. Members of the secretariat and specialists from Catholic organisations and Catholic universities took part in the Dialogue Seminars co-organised by the Forward Studies Unit of the European Commission, COMECE and the Commission for Church and Society of the Conference of European Churches (KEK). *Institutional Reform, Fundamental Rights, Enlargement – Towards a Constitution for the European Union* was the subject of the dialogue seminar held in Brussels on 24-25 February. On 30 November and 01 December a second dialogue seminar focused on the *Finality, Limits and Frontiers of the European Union*. These seminars provided an opportunity for informative exchange between personnel of the EU institutions and the Churches.
- 2.1.10. The Plenary sessions of the European Parliament in Strasbourg were covered and reported. The proceedings of the EP committees pertinent to the COMECE Working Groups were monitored by staff members. There were several meetings with Members of the European Parliament and with officials both in the COMECE secretariat and in the European Parliament.
- 2.1.11. The staff of the secretariat liaised with officials of the Permanent Representations of the Member States and the Missions of the candidate countries. Officials of various Representations addressed and attended meetings of the COMECE Working Groups.
- 2.1.12. Contacts were maintained with offices representing the regions of the Member States. Staff members participated in events organised by policy centres, in particular by the European Policy Centre (EPC) and by the Centre for European Policy Studies (CEPS).

2.2. INPUT

- 2.2.1. Immediately after the Cologne European Council (June 1999) decided that a Charter of Fundamental Rights of the EU should be drafted and presented to the Council of Nice, the COMECE secretariat established a think-tank, in consultation with the secretariats of the Bishops' Conferences, to prepare a submission to the group (convention) to be charged with drafting the Charter. This text was duly submitted to the members of the COMECE Executive Committee for approval and subsequently sent to the members of the Convention. Published on the Convention web-site on 11.02, it was referred to frequently by members of the Convention in the course of their meetings. All Convention meetings, formal and informal, some fifteen in all, were attended and monitored closely by a member of the COMECE staff. In March members of the secretariat carried out a close scrutiny of all documents discussed by the Convention in order to prepare a COMECE contribution to the Hearings to be held in April. COMECE took part in the Hearings. Its submission emphasised five priorities: the right to life, bio-ethical issues particularly in regard to cloning, the rights of the family, freedom of religion in the individual and institutional dimensions, the protection of Sunday, social rights. In May amendments to Convent 28 (civil and political rights) and Convent 34 (social rights, economic rights, horizontal articles) were prepared in co-operation with the Apostolic Nuncio to the European Communities and duly submitted to the

Convention and its members. In late August comments and suggestions in respect of Convent 45 were sent to the President of the Convention, Mr. Herzog, to Mr. Prodi, President of the European Commission and to some members of the Convention. These comments focused on the preamble and on the articles concerning human dignity, bioethics, protection of personal data, family, freedom of religion, freedom of research, fair and equitable conditions of work, the scope of the protected rights in general. The COMECE November Plenary meeting supported the statement made by the CCEE Plenary meeting in October and decided that the President, Bishop Homeyer, should write to Presidents Chirac, Prodi and Herzog, to Commissioner Vittorino and to Mr. I. Friedrich, Member of the European Parliament and a member of the Convention. This letter outlined COMECE's dissatisfaction with the Preamble and with the final wording of particular articles. Many of the member Bishops of COMECE made representations in the Member States on the contents of draft articles. Bishop H. Simon published an article in *Le Monde* (14.10.1999) regarding the French government's veto on the word *religious* in the preamble. Throughout the year the secretariat kept in contact with numerous agencies and organisations which monitored the work of the Convention. Its staff members worked closely at all stages with the Apostolic Nuncio to the European Communities and his assistants.

- 2.2.2. Significant efforts and input were made by COMECE in regard to the proposal for a Council Directive establishing a general framework for Equal Treatment in Employment and Occupation, based on Article 13 TEC. This had been the subject of circular letters to the national Bishops' Conferences to alert their services to the need for representations. A meeting of representatives of seven Bishops' Conferences, chaired by the Vice-President, Bishop A. Nicora, was held at the secretariat on 26.09. Having taken reports from the representatives present, the meeting examined the shortcomings of draft Article 4 and decided that a letter outlining the concerns of Churches should be written by the President of COMECE and addressed to Mrs. M. Aubry, President of the Social Affairs Council and to the European Commissioner for Employment and Social Affairs, Mrs. Anna Diamantopoulou. Duly expedited on 29.09 the letter was also sent to the services of the Bishops' Conferences to assist them in making representations to the appropriate ministry in the Member States. The secretariat liaised closely with some of the Permanent Representations to the EU on this subject. It also assisted the national Bishops' Conferences in their representations. In the days immediately prior to the Council meeting in Luxembourg it assisted the representatives of the Irish Bishops' Conference in their exchanges with the Irish government. In carrying out this work the secretariat was also in regular and close contact with the offices of the other Churches in many Member States. The COMECE secretariat and the Apostolic Nuncio to the European Communities co-operated intensely on this dossier.
- 2.2.3. The secretariat maintained contact with the Stability Pact for South-East Europe throughout the year. As well as paying a visit to its Brussels headquarters, the President had discussions by telephone with the Special Co-ordinator, Mr. B. Hombach. In the autumn the Stability Pact's *Working Table on Democratization and Human Rights*, desirous to include inter-religious and ecumenical projects amongst its activities to promote peace and stability in the

Balkan region, decided to invite the directors of the Church-linked offices in Brussels to its meeting in Bucharest on 26-27 October. This meeting was attended and addressed by the Secretary General.

- 2.2.4. The Working Paper produced by the European Commission in view of a White Paper on governance of the European Union was studied at the secretariat and was also the subject of a discussion with M. J.Vignon (19.10), who is tasked with drafting the White Paper. These initiatives were taken with a view to preparing a submission to Mr. Prodi on behalf of COMECE.
- 2.2.5. The COMECE secretariat was represented at the consultation on genetic testing in the workplace organised by the Lenoir group experts on Ethics in Science and the New Technologies which took place at the European Commission on 06.03. The secretariat was also represented at a discussion platform on *Genetics and the Future of Europe* on 06. 11 organised by the Group of High Level Experts in Life Sciences, (established in April 2000 by Commissioner Busquin). It was also represented at a consultation organised by the European Commission on the legal status of long term residents
- 2.2.6. On 07.04 the secretariat hosted an information seminar for representatives of Catholic youth organisations on the European Commission's project of drafting a White Paper on Youth policy. Participants attended from six of the Member States and a number of international Catholic organisations. An official of the European Commission outlined the Commission's intentions and a Member of the European Parliament also took part. As well as the contributions made by the participants to the representatives of the institutions, the meeting aimed to encourage contributions at the national level.

3. PROMOTING DEBATE BETWEEN CHURCH, OFFICIALS OF THE EUROPEAN UNION AND SOCIETY

- 3.1. Throughout the year the secretariat continued its tradition of inviting officials of the EU institutions, Members of the European Parliament and persons engaged in the process of European integration to working breakfasts and lunches to discuss issues pertinent to COMECE's concerns.
- 3.2. At the request of the Group of the European Peoples' party in the European Parliament, once a month the COMECE secretariat received a group of *stagiaires* from the Christian Democratic movements in central and eastern European countries. During these meetings these future civil servants and politicians are briefed on COMECE's work and on the Church's engagement in the process of European construction.
- 3.3. As part of its efforts to foster debate on issues arising from European integration within the Church and in order to promote Church contributions to the debate on European construction, in 1999 COMECE had engaged the Presidents of the *Semaines Sociales de France* and the Central Committee of German Catholics (ZdK) in discussions to explore the possibility of both organisations undertaking some common initiatives at a European level. A

series of meetings took place at the secretariat on 17 January and 14 March to pursue this objective. The first fruits of this initiative, a common statement, *For A European Consciousness*, was launched at a press conference in the International Press Centre in Brussels on 18 May 2000. The text was published in booklet form immediately thereafter. A further meeting was hosted by the secretariat on 30 November 2000 to consider further steps and to broaden the initiative to similar organisations in other European countries.

- 3.4. A number of young civil servants of the EU institutions met with COMECE staff members on occasion in the evenings at the secretariat to share thoughts on the link between Church, faith and contemporary political and societal issues.
- 3.5. The series of evening lectures, discussions and receptions were continued. The Latin Patriarch of Jerusalem, Michel Sabbah delivered a lecture, *The Status of Jerusalem, Religions, Reconciliation and Peace in the Year 2000*, on 29.09 to an audience of some sixty people. In the context of the autumn Plenary meeting a further soirée, *Comment relancer la construction européenne? Quelle contribution de l'Eglise*, took place on 23.11. As indicated in section 1.3.2. of this report, Mr. Karl Lamers and Jérôme Vignon addressed the subject in the presence of a large audience.

4. INFORMATION SERVICE, PUBLICATIONS, LECTURES

- 4.1. The monthly review, *Europe-Infos*, produced in collaboration with the Jesuit Office OCIPE, was published in French, English, German, Spanish and Polish. An editorial board made up of members of the COMECE and OCIPE secretariats and of EU civil servants met monthly to plan the forthcoming issues. A special issue was devoted to the Foreign and Security Policy of the European Union in May 2000. The review was distributed to all Bishops in the Member States of the European Union, in the candidate countries of central and eastern Europe, to the services of Bishops' Conferences and to subscribers.
- 4.2. The analyses and reports of the COMECE Working Groups were sent to the appropriate services of the Bishops conferences. Circular letters were sent to the Bishop members and to the secretariats of the Bishops' Conferences in regard to draft EU policy.
- 4.3. The COMECE statement, *A Stable Monetary Union, A Hope for a Europe of Solidarity* was launched and published in German, French and English in December 2000. Distributed to a large group of persons including, Commissioners, Members of the European Parliament, high-ranking civil servants of the EU and officials of European financial institutions, members of European policy centres, officials of international financial organisations, it evoked significant positive reaction and appreciation as a document emanating from the Church.

- 4.4. The proceedings of the first COMECE Summer University, *L'Eglise et la culture européenne*, held in Souvigny, France, 09-12 September, were published and distributed.
- 4.5. Articles were written by staff members for the monthly review. Staff members published articles in other publications. Lectures were given on the work of COMECE and on EU policy issues by staff at conferences organised by Bishops' Conferences, universities and academic institutes.
- 4.6. Staff members took part in and addressed several congresses and seminars throughout Europe, inter alia: a seminar on Identity and Tolerance (14-16.01) in Tutzing; a symposium on Christianity and Europe in the Year 2000 organised by the Zentrum für Europäische Integrationsforschung, Bonn (20-22.01); a presentation of the COMECE statement, *Truth, Memory and Solidarity, Keys to Peace and Reconciliation*, at an ecumenical breakfast meeting of Members of the European Parliament (17.01); a study seminar for members of religious orders from numerous countries throughout Europe organised by the UCESM (28.02) at Vaalbeek, Belgium; a colloquium organised by the Fédération de la Fonction Publique Européenne on Europe and Globalisation (03-04 March) at the European Commission, Brussels; a colloquium organised by Evangile et Société, Paris (17-18.03); a lecture on Human Rights and Fundamental Values at the OCIPE centre in Strasbourg (04.04); an inter-orthodox seminar on Co-operation between the Churches in Europe, (04-06.04) Istanbul; the Deuxième Semaines Sociales Européennes on the subject of civil society, (06-09.04) in Bad Honnef; a seminar on migration issues organised by ICMC (10-11.04) in Geneva; a seminar on biopatenting and food security organised by CIDSE on (17.04) in Brussels, a conference organised by the Prime Ministry and Presidency of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Turkey on *Religious Life in Turkey within the European Union Process*, (03-07.05) Istanbul; the second CCEE organised conference on environment (04-07.05), contributions to a study seminar on the Charter of Fundamental Rights and Civil Society, (12.05) Rome; a congress on Civil Society in Turkey and Europe, (13-14.05), Istanbul; a briefing for members of the Irish Bishops' Conference on the Charter of Fundamental Rights (15.05), Maynooth; a meeting of the press officers of the Bishops' Conferences of Europe (18-21.05) Glasgow; an International Workshop on Codes of Ethics and Codes of Conduct (17.05), Paris; a seminar *Reconciliation and Peace in South-East Europe – The Contribution of the Religious Communities towards Multi-Ethnic and Democratic Societies*, organised by the Ecumenical Patriarchate (29-31.05), Thessaloniki; at the Katholikentag, (31.05-04.06) Hamburg; the fourth Dialogue between the Ecumenical Patriarchate and the European Peoples Party (08-09.06), Istanbul; the annual meeting of the General Secretaries of the Bishops' Conferences organised by CCEE (22-25.06), Rome; the meeting of the European General Secretaries of UNIAPAC (30.06), Brussels; the European Laity Forum (30.06-05.07), Alcalá; at a lunchtime lecture by Mr. W. Bartoszewski, Foreign Minister of Poland organised by the Mission of Poland to the EU and CEPS, (25.07), Brussels; at a study day for staff members of the German Bishops' Conference (22.08), Bonn; a study day for staff members of the Legal observatory of the Italian Bishops' Conference (04.09), Rome; a seminar on Enlargement by CEPS (12.09), Brussels; an

international conference on *The Unification of Europe and the Relationship of Society, State and Church*, (12-15.09), Christ Church College, Canterbury; the fourth international Renovabis Congress, *Konfrontation oder Kooperation? Oekumene in Mittel –und Osteuropa*, (14-16.09), Freising; a study day on the Charter of Fundamental Rights for eleven Bishops and staff of the French Bishops' Conference (25.09), Paris; the Conference of European Justice and Peace Commissions' Study Days (30.09-03.10), Barcelona; a meeting of the diocesan press officers, Bishops' Conference of England and Wales, (18.10), Leeds; a seminar for diocesan pilgrimage directors, France (10.10), Brussels; a Hanns Seidel Stiftung conference on Turkey's candidacy for membership of the EU, (19.10); the opening of the European Centre for Communication and Culture, (20.10), Warsaw; the Fondation Jean Rodhain colloquium, *Responsabilité Citoyenne et Charité*, (25-28.10), Lourdes; the meeting of the Working Table on Democracy and Human Rights of the Stability Pact for South-East Europe, (26-27.10), Bucharest; the fourth conference in the series on social ethics between East and West, prepared by Wissenschaftliche Arbeitsgruppe für weltkirchliche Aufgaben of the German Bishops' Conference and the Theology Department of the European Humanities University, Minsk, (02-07.11) Minsk; the Berliner Gespräche (04.11), Berlin; lectures to Clogher diocesan Adult Education Programme for Jubilee Year, Monaghan and Enniskillen (14-15.11); Semaine Sociales de France (17-19.11); a round table discussion organised by the Socialist Group on the Charter of Fundamental Rights in the European Parliament, (28.11), Brussels; the meeting of the CCEE Commission on migration (01-03.12), Luxembourg; a colloquium prepared by the Centre *Droit et Sociétés religieuses*, (06-07.12), Institut Catholique, Paris; an academic seminar, *L'Eglise en tant que institution justiciable* at the KUL (15.12), Leuven; a seminar, *La Charte des Droits Fondamentaux de L'UE, Son Apport à la protection des Droits de l'Homme en Europe*, (15.12), UCL, Louvain-la-Neuve; meeting of the General Secretaries of the Benelux countries, Germany and France, (15-17.12), Berlin.

5. THE TEACHING OF RELIGION IN THE EUROPEAN SCHOOLS

- 5.1. In matters pertaining to the content of the teaching of the Catholic faith in the nine European schools located in various Member States, COMECE is recognised by the *Conseil Supérieur* of European schools as the representative of the interests of the local Bishops.
- 5.2. Apart from the abiding challenge of finding suitable teachers for the various linguistic sections in these schools, the teaching of religion in the nine schools proceeded calmly and efficiently. Serious administrative difficulties were not encountered in the course of the year.
- 5.3. The Secretary General of COMECE monitors developments in respect of the teaching of religion in the European schools through COOPERE. Meetings were held at the secretariat on 07.02, 06.04. and 06.10. This sphere of COMECE's responsibility will require attention in 2001 and in the coming years in the perspective of EU enlargement. The probable increase in pupil numbers will have consequences for the European schools' budget. It will be

necessary to ensure that the provisions for the teaching of religion in these schools are maintained.

- 5.4. Towards the end of the year contact was taken with the Director of the *Conseil Supérieur* with a view to an information meeting in the Spring of 2001.

6. ECUMENICAL CONTACTS AND COLLABORATION

- 6.1. Throughout the year contacts were maintained with the secretariat of the Commission for Church and Society(CSC) of the Conference of European Churches, with the Brussels office of the Orthodox Church and with the office of the Evangelische Kirche in Deutschland (EKD).
- 6.2. The COMECE secretariat invited the staff members of the Commission for Church and Society of the Conference of European Churches, i.e. from the Geneva, Strasbourg and Brussels offices, to a working lunch on 19 September. Among the issues discussed were, the current work priorities of both organisations, the Charter of Fundamental Right of the EU, the Stability Pact and activities of the Churches in South-East Europe, the Charta Ecumenica.
- 6.3. As part of the series of visits to the Orthodox Churches, the President visited Archbishop Christodoulos, Archbishop of Athens and all Greece and the Synod of the Greek Orthodox Church, 26-27 January. He also had discussions with the Secretary and members of the Synod on the responsibility of the Churches in regard to the process of European integration. The President also visited the His Beatitude Teoctist, Patriarch of the Romanian Orthodox Church, 28-30 January. During both visits the president met with the Apostolic Nuncios in Athens and Bucharest as well as with the Catholic hierarchy and members of the local clergy and faithful. A written report on the programme for both visits was given to the Spring Plenary.
- 6.4. Throughout the year staff members received representatives of the Anglican, Reformed and Orthodox Churches for briefings and exchanges at the secretariat.
The secretariat prepared an information visit to the EU institutions for H. E. Filaret, Metropolitan of Minsk and Slutsk, 13-14 September. A contribution was given to an ecumenical group from Mulhouse visiting the EU institutions 08-09 September. The secretariat received an informal visit on the part of a small delegation of Greek Orthodox Bishops on 04 December. In collaboration with Pax Christi International the COMECE secretariat prepared an information visit for a delegation from the Russian Orthodox Church to NATO and the EU institutions on 11 December.
- 6.5. The meeting of the Joint Committee between COMECE and the Commission for Church and Society of the Conference of European Churches took place in Brussels on 19 January. The meeting surveyed current priorities for both organisations, reviewed the difficulties regarding the initiative *Soul for Europe* and commented the draft of a joint paper then being prepared by the General Secretaries for the CCEE-KEK Joint Committee in Prague, 3-6 February.

- 6.6. COMECE participated in the Fourth Dialogue between the Orthodox churches and the EPP group in the European Parliament, 08-09 June.
- 6.7. Staff members took part in ecumenical prayer breakfasts at the European Parliament in Brussels and Strasbourg. Assistance was given to European Parliament officials to prepare the Ecumenical Prayer Service for the deceased members of the EPP group during the November Plenary meeting. A member of the COMECE staff officiate with clergy of other Christian denominations attended the service.
- 6.8. Numerous meetings were attended in the course of the year in regard to the future of the *Soul of Europe* initiative. These included meetings with the Director General and staff of the Directorate General for Education and Culture of the European Commission, responsible for the administration of the budget line on which projects on ethical and spiritual aspects of European integration may find part financing. By the end of the year it was clear that the Screening Committee made up of representatives of Churches and the Humanist tradition, which had functioned for a number of years, would have no further role to play in regard to the budget line. Discussions were being pursued amongst the former members of that Screening Committee to decide whether it might have another role to play in favouring inter-religious dialogue in respect to European integration. However difficulties were being encountered regarding the financing of any activities it might envisage.

7. COLLABORATION WITH CCEE AND THE BISHOPS' CONFERENCES

- 7.1. Regular contacts and exchange of information were maintained between the secretariats of COMECE and CCEE. The Secretary General attended the annual meeting of the General Secretaries of the Bishops' Conferences in Rome 22-25 June. The Vice-Presidents and General Secretary of COMECE attended and contributed to the CCEE Plenary meeting in Leuven, 19-22 October 2000.
- 7.2. The Secretary General of CCEE attended the Plenary meetings of COMECE and reported on the activities of CCEE.
- 7.3. As a member of the CCEE-KEK Joint Committee the Secretary General of COMECE attended its meeting in Prague, 03-06 February.
- 7.4. Several enquiries from the Bishops' Conferences regarding EU policy issues were dealt with. The secretariat played a vital role in keeping the services of Bishops' Conferences informed of developments in the negotiations on the draft directive on non-discrimination in work and occupation in the final weeks of the negotiations in September and October 2000.
- 7.5. As a contribution to building up a sense of European identity among younger professional assistants and advisors in the secretariats of the Episcopal

Conferences in the Member States and in the candidate countries, the COMECE secretariat organised a second summer university, *Hyper-Links to Europe*, in the Villa Vigoni, Menaggio, Italy. Some forty persons nominated by fifteen Bishops' Conferences participated. On the basis of presentations by the French Senator Denis Badré (the nations and Europe), Archbishop emeritus Maurice Couve de Murville (pilgrimage), Professor F. Margiotta Broglio and Professor Romeo Astorri (Church-State relations), Noirin NI Riain (music), Bishop Michael Fitzgerald, Pontifical Council for Inter-Religious Dialogue (Islam and Christianity) engaged in debate and reflection on common aspects of European cultural identity. As reported to the Autumn 2000 Plenary, the deliberations resulted in a letter addressed to President Prodi. Three recommendations were also made, namely, that the co-ordination of exchange programmes supported by the Bishops conferences in Europe be improved given the need to make greater provision for exchange between East and West, that European integration and information on the EU institutions be given greater attention in Catholic educational and training programmes, that the request for a structural dialogue between the European Commission and the Churches be pursued with conviction and vigour. The proceedings will be published in the course of 2001.

8. LOOKING FORWARD TO 2001

- 8.1. The COMECE and its secretariat will continue to monitor European Union policy-making on behalf of the Bishops' Conferences of the Member States and of the candidate countries.
- 8.2. In the course of the year contributions will be made to the discussions on White Paper on European Governance, on the European Strategy for Sustainable Development and to other policy areas.
- 8.3. The Ad hoc Group established to draft a paper on Ethical Aspects of Global Governance will complete its task.
- 8.4. A further report will be given to the Spring Plenary meeting on the deliberations in the Executive Committee on the creation of Commissions. Should the Plenary meeting agree, preparations will be undertaken to establish three Commissions.
- 8.5. A seminar will be organised in conjunction with CCEE for the Presidents of the Bishops Conferences in South-East Europe to consider ways of strengthening Church activities to promote peace and stability in the region and to identify ways of closer liaison with the Stability Pact for South-East Europe.
- 8.6. A member of the secretariat will establish close links with the Directorate General for Enlargement and with the desk officers at the Commission responsible for the candidate countries. Efforts will be made to organise an information seminar for the General Secretaries and Press officers of the Episcopal Conferences of candidate countries.

- 8.7. Efforts will be made to organise an autumn academy in collaboration with the Catholic university in Lille. The programme will seek to produce a contribution in view of the Laeken summit.
- 8.8. Preparations will begin for a Social Congress, to be held in Madrid in May 2002, in view of the EU –Latin American summit.
- 8.9. The third COMECE summer university, to be held in Germany, will be prepared.
- 8.10. Visits will be made to Bishops conferences and contributions will be made by staff members to seminars to be organised by Episcopal Conferences in the Member States and in the candidate countries.
- 8.11. The secretariat will co-operate with UNIAPAC in preparing and conducting a seminar involving Christian businessmen, Bishops and Church leaders.
- 8.12. The secretariat will continue to support the Semaines Sociales and the Central Committee of German Catholics in preparing a programme for a European seminar.
- 8.13. A special issue of *Europe-Infos* on Sustainable Development will be published.
- 8.14. A meeting will be arranged with the Conseil Supérieur of the European Schools to discuss future provisions for the teaching of religion in the European schools. A meeting of the representatives of the Bishops in whose dioceses European schools are located will also be organised.
- 8.15. Further steps will be taken to prepare the COMECE web-site.

N. Treanor
March 2001.