

COMECE

ANNUAL REPORT 2016



COMECE
COMMISSION OF THE BISHOP'S CONFERENCES
OF THE EUROPEAN COMMUNITY



COMECE ANNUAL REPORT 2016

05

Migration
& Asylum

08

Health,
Research & Bioethics

10

Ecology &
Sustainability

12

Justice &
Fundamental rights

14

Intercultural
Dialogue & Education

16

Social &
Economic Policies

20

External Action

24

Freedom of Religion

FOREWORD

FOREWORD

Dear Readers,

Crisis situations are usually good moments to ponder some probing questions and Europe is definitely facing an existential crisis, or, maybe even a mutation.

What is our vision of society in Europe today?

What do we want to achieve together on this continent?

Which doors to the future are we willing to open for coming generations? Deeply embedded in this historical and human reality, these are the questions the Church is asking today's Europeans.

The last migration crisis revealed that we do not live in divided closed compartments. Whether we like it or not, we are impacted and bound together by a common destiny.

Whatever our ethnic, cultural or religious background, our level of education or lifestyles, we all share the same anxieties, the same suffering and, last but not least, the same hopes. The Earth is round. A crisis in one nation will sooner or later have an impact on other nations.

Recent crises have helped us to realize that solidarity is a fact before being a commitment.

Today, public institutions in general, and the European institutions in particular, are facing a crisis of confidence. Founded on faith, the Church tries to rebuild confidence and trust among people and institutions of good will, in order to enable everyone to overcome their fears and renew their choice to live together for the common good.

Aware that Peace may currently be at risk, the Church is more than ever committed to assist public policymakers in their search for the best way to serve their fellow citizens. The credibility of our institutions rests upon their capacity to be regarded as genuinely at the service of people in their daily lives. The sustainability of our political structures also lies in their capacity of empowering citizens in order to merge particular interest in the common good with the participation of all.

Today, all Europeans are invited to debate major questions: "What do we have in common?" "What is our common reference?" but above all, "What do we want to achieve together? What should be our common projects?"

Through creating social ties, through sharing field experience, through stressing new options and through building bridges between people of good will, the Church is willing to put the human being back at the heart of public policies for the common good. This is the mission that COMECE is trying to fulfil in raising a Catholic voice in the dialogue between the Churches of the 28 Member States and the institutions of the European Union.

*Fr Olivier Poquillon OP
COMECE General Secretary*



Cardinal Reinhard Marx & Fr Olivier Poquillon OP

MIGRATION & ASYLUM

The COMECE Secretariat works for the rights of migrants, refugees and hosting societies to be harmonised and respected in the EU for the sake of the common good in the Christian spirit of welcoming the stranger as a person. In 2016, COMECE's activities in this domain were the following:

Events

15-16 FEBRUARY 2016

**COMECE international Conference
Refugee Crisis: Bishops discuss plan of joint action for Europe**

"Facing a crisis with many faces": this was the title given to a meeting organised by COMECE in Heiligenkreuz (Austria). It brought together bishops from the Middle East, southern, central and Western Europe, with Catholic experts from the field in order to discuss migration.

The encounter offered to the present bishops a platform to engage in a free and frank exchange of experiences and opinions, some of which were open to diverse interpretations. The information shared by participants from countries of origin of migrants, countries of transit and final destination mirrored a rich variety of political and social realities prevailing in the individual countries. The Bishop of Eisenstadt emphasised how the Church's aim is to accompany migrants into the future.

It was the Bishop of Eisenstadt, Mgr. Agidius Zsifkovics, in his capacity as COMECE co-ordinator on Refugees, Migration and Integration, who invited the participants to the international conference.

The conference gathered cardinals, bishops and other Church representatives from Syria, Iraq, Greece, Hungary, Croatia, Bulgaria, Macedonia, Serbia, Croatia, Germany, Austria and Scandinavia. Among those who participated in the meeting were the Hungarian Cardinal Peter Erdő, the Chaldean-Catholic Patriarch Louis Sako and the Chaldean-Catholic Bishop of Aleppo, Antoine Audo SJ.

MIGRATION
& ASYLUM

21-22 SEPTEMBER 2016, Kraków (Poland)

Catholic Church and the European Solidarity

The sixteenth edition of the conference on the role of the Catholic Church in the process of European integration co-organised by COMECE together with partners in Kraków, focused this time on four specific issues imperatively necessitating solidarity in the EU, namely the solidarity in security and defence policy, solidarity towards the challenges of migrations and asylum, solidarity in reference to the energy and climate policy and finally the role of Churches and religious communities in strengthening solidarity in Europe.

Fr. Olivier Poquillon OP, Comece Secretary General highlighted the need for a more participative approach in order to combat the perception of the European Union as a centralized, disembodied administration detached from the people's reality. He also mentioned the importance to promote EU good practices that led to the achievement of decades of peace and prosperity in the old continent. Finally, he stressed the need for a better involvement of the citizen across a constructive articulation of solidarity and subsidiarity.

9 NOVEMBER 2016

Comments on the EU Commission's Proposal on Dublin IV

COMECE and other members of the Christian Group on Migration and Asylum call upon the EU Commission to further develop an asylum system which should be designed and implemented matching and integrating the applicant's and the Member States' preferences, needs and potentials in the allocation process.

22 DECEMBER 2016

Comments on the proposed Reform of the Common European Asylum System

The reform of the Common European Asylum System (CEAS) proposed by the EU Commission, despite some positive developments, does not implement the expected higher protection standards in what should be a fair asylum system. This is the assessment formulated by COMECE together with Christian Churches and organisations working in the area of migration & asylum in a response submitted to the EU Commission and the EU Parliament on 21 December.

Publications

18 APRIL 2016

Comments on the European Commission's Proposal for a European Border and Coast Guard

The mission and tasks of the new European Border and Coast Guard is affecting the fundamental rights of individuals. Therefore COMECE and other members of the Christian Group ask for defining responsibilities and accountability, safeguarding fundamental rights of migrants and refugees and encouraging EU authorities to address the migration and refugee crisis in a holistic view.

Working Group on Migration and Asylum

Presided by COMECE General Secretary, the Working Group on Migration and Asylum is composed of experts appointed by the Bishops' Conferences together with some representatives of competent Catholic NGOs. It discusses EU policies in the migration and asylum fields, in dialogue with representatives of EU institutions. Its Secretary is José Luis Bazán.

Meeting of 16 March 2016

The COMECE Working Group on Migration and Asylum exchanged views on national situations and dealt with three main issues: integration of third country nationals (by an official of the European Commission); the situation on the Balkan migration route (by a representative of the Mission of Serbia to the EU); the question of borders' control and their impact in the Schengen area (with the contribution of the Martens Centre for European Studies).

Meeting of 17 November 2016

After the usual exchange of information on the situation in their respective countries, two major topics were discussed among the members: best practice examples of integration of third country nationals in EU Member States, and the recast of the Dublin III Regulation which was introduced by a policy advisor on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs (European Parliament).



Dialogue Seminar "Migration Fear: the role of education"

HEALTH, RESEARCH & BIOETHICS

Although the main competences with regard to these matters remain largely at the Member States' level, COMECE chiefly covered the bioethical issues that arise at the EU level in the ambits of health and of research. In 2016, COMECE's activities in this domain were the following:

Events

22 FEBRUARY 2016

Luncheon debate : Palliative Care in the EU

The event was organised jointly by COMECE and Hospitality Europe to present the new Opinion on palliative care, which was drafted by the COMECE Working Group on Ethics in Research and Healthcare has produced. The report reflects on how medical competence is best combined with the most humane techniques adopted by health professionals to guarantee an optimum level of care for a vulnerable and dependent population group. Main speakers were Fr Patrick Daly, General Secretary of COMECE, Dr Carlo Filippo Galasso, Secretary General of Hospitality Europe and Fr Patrick Verspieren SJ, Centre Sevres (Paris). They encouraged a public debate on palliative care across the EU.

Publications

19 JANUARY 2016

Opinion on Synthetic Biology.

Synthetic Biology could soon have multiple industrial applications in the domains of health, energy, materials, environment and agriculture. Synthetic Biology involves the engineering of biological components and systems that do not exist in nature and the re-engineering of existing biological elements. The COMECE Opinion calls for an accurate evaluation of the real benefits as well as its possible consequences in terms of risks. The Opinion also discusses the ethical implications of this technique of "creating life", the benefits and risks involved, the question of responsibility as well as the need for dialogue between science and society in this regard.

Working Group on Ethics in Research and Medicine

The Working Group on Ethics in Research and Medicine monitored and prepared opinions, reports and contributions to the EU debate and on EU-policy in the areas of research, innovation and healthcare. It also followed the work of the European Group on Ethics (EGE).

Its President is the COMECE General Secretary and its Secretary José Ramos-Ascensão (COMECE legal adviser). The members of this Working group are experts in the field of ethics, law and science appointed by the EU Bishops' Conferences.

Meeting of 22 February

The WG on Ethics in Research and Healthcare met to discuss as main topic the „Ethics of neurosciences and mental health“. Mental health is a matter of increasing concern in an aging Europe, with strong economic and social impact. Guest speakers were an official from the EU Commission (DG Santé) as well as a Professor of Psychiatry at KU Leuven. The Working Group is to publish an Opinion on Mental health.

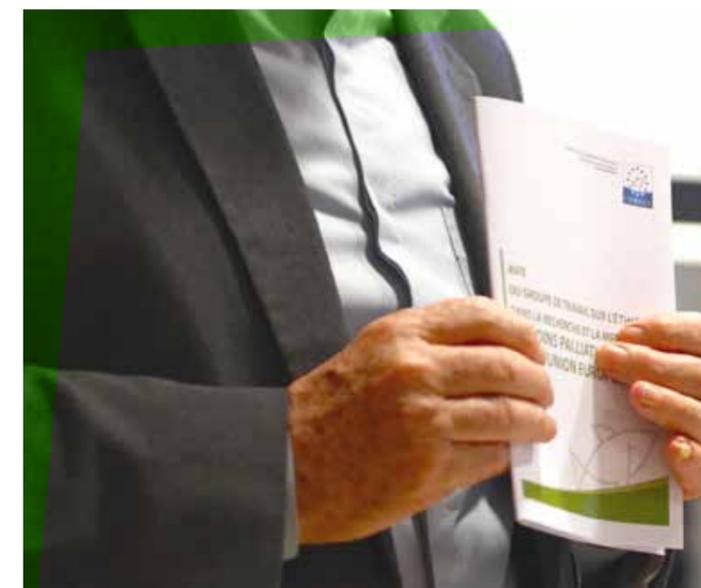
Meeting of 3 October

The Working Group met to discuss as main topic the "The Ethics of neurosciences research in the EU". Officials from the European Commission, DG Research and Innovation and DG Connect, were invited to the meeting as guest speakers. The participants also tackled the topic of ethics of neurosciences from a Christian perspective. The publication of an Opinion on the topic is planned in the aftermath of the meeting.

22 FEBRUARY 2016

Opinion on palliative care in the European Union

As European society gets older, an increasing number of elderly people require palliative care. The European Commission is currently working on a European framework on Palliative Care. In order to contribute to the discussion around this new Framework, the COMECE Working Group on Ethics in Research and Healthcare has produced an Opinion on the subject of palliative care. Set in the context of on-going discussion at EU level, both within the EU institutions and in wider society, the report reflects on how medical competence is best combined with the most humane techniques adopted by health professionals to guarantee an optimum level of care for a vulnerable and dependent population group.



Presentation of the Opinion on palliative care

ECOLOGY & SUSTAINABILITY

Since 2008 COMECE has been engaged with the topic of climate change and has regularly stressed the necessity of an ecological conversion and a different and more sober way of life. In 2016, COMECE's activities in this domain were the following:

Events

16 JUNE 2016

Living Laudato Si' - One year later. An evening of words & music

On the occasion of the 1st Anniversary of Pope Francis' Encyclical «LaudatoSi'» COMECE and its partners presented different approaches to its message: several passages of the text of the Encyclical were combined with testimonies of political decision-makers on how Laudato si' impacts their thinking and with the inspiring Vivaldi Concerto «The Four Seasons ». Speakers were Karl Friedrich Falkenberg, Senior Adviser for Sustainable Development at the European Political Strategy Centre, former Director-General for Environment at the European Commission; Jean-Pascal van Ypersele, Professor of Climatology and Environmental Sciences at the Université Catholique de Louvain, former Vice-Chair of the IPCC (Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change) and Philippe Lamberts, Belgian MEP for the Group of the Greens/European Free Alliance



Laudato Si' ... one year later

Event: Laudato Si' - on year later 16/06/2016

Contributions

11-14 APRIL 2016

Aquinas-Lecture and visit to the University of Malta

The University of Malta invited Michael Kuhn to reflect on the impact of the Encyclical «Laudato si'» on a country like Malta and to give the 2016 Aquinas Lecture under the title: «Laudato si' – beyond ecology. On shoemakers, climate protection and the need to change our lives... ». This event was accompanied by a lecture and a debate with scholars from different faculties of the University of Malta. They discussed the practical implications of Pope Francis' ideas in various disciplines such as philosophy, sociology, education, economics, transport and city-planning.



Sustainability



Protest supporting the Paris Agreement.

Statement

7 OCTOBER 2016

Paris Agreement on Climate Change: the practical implementation begins

COMECE welcomed the ratification by the European Union of the climate agreement signed last year in Paris and that entered into force. This raises hopes that the international community will be able to act quickly and responsibly in the fight against climate change. Now that the framework is set at the global level, COMECE considers it essential for national and local authorities to mobilise and coordinate themselves. The effects of climate change transcend national borders and are felt also at the local level.

Dialogue and participation will be key to successfully involve all stakeholders concerned by the measures that will now have to be taken. The economic viability and the technical feasibility should not be the only criteria taken into account in the search for solutions. The backbone of the implementation measures should be the search for common good in the long term.



Signing of the Paris Climate Accord.

JUSTICE & FUNDAMENTAL RIGHTS

COMECE considers that fundamental rights are based on a clear and objective concept of human dignity. The focus has been placed on the ethical implications of EU policies and legislation on Churches concerns. In 2016, COMECE's main activities in this domain were the following:

Dialogue with the EU

17-18 NOVEMBER 2016

Second Annual Colloquium on Fundamental rights organised by European Commission

COMECE participated to the second edition of the "Fundamental Rights Colloquium", organised on a yearly basis by the European Commission. The topic was "Media Pluralism and Democracy". The COMECE Secretariat contributed to the relevant consultation with a detailed submission.

COMECE supports the view that media cannot be analysed under the reductive lenses of commercial and market perspectives, being they closely and vitally linked with cultures and democracies. Concerning media literacy, parents and their children deserve particular attention among the targeted actors.

It is essential to fight against incitement to violence or hatred, including with reference to religion. However, the concept of "hate speech" should be harmonised with the right to freedom of expression and information, as it can, sometimes, be misused to silence debate, give rise to self-censorship or curb diversity of opinions. Concerning the EU Code of Conduct adopted for IT companies to fight against illegal hate speech, the idea of having Civil Society Organisations as "trusted reporters" for alerting about such contents should be implemented in accordance with the existing provisions on effective remedy.



Bishop Theodorus C.M. Hoogenboom

COMECE Legal Affairs Commission

The COMECE Legal Affairs Commission monitors ongoing legal work of the EU, especially in those areas with a direct impact on the work/functioning of the Catholic Church in the EU (legislation on work, data protection, State-Church relations, fundamental rights, Article 17 TFEU e.a.) and topics of importance for State-Church relations in the Member States. In contact with the institutions of the EU, the Legal Affairs Commission prepares statements and contributions to the ongoing EU-legislation. It coordinates the course of action of the Bishops' Conferences on the topics it works on. Its President is Bishop Theodorus C.M. Hoogenboom (Auxiliary Bishop of Utrecht, Netherlands) and its Secretary is Alessandro Calcagno.

Meeting 25 February 2016

During the first meeting of 2016, the members had the opportunity to exchange with a representative of the European Commission on the so-called 'Fifth Equal Treatment Directive'. An exchange was also held with a Commission representative on the state of play and future developments concerning Dialogue on the basis of Article 17(3) TFEU. Internal reflections focused on reasonable accommodation and protection of personal data.

Meeting of 15 October 2016

The second meeting of the year featured a fruitful exchange with the European Commission on the impact of the new General Data Protection Regulation on Churches. With the participation of a Commission representative, the members also discussed the proposal for a mandatory Transparency Register, on the basis of the COMECE secretariat's contribution to the relevant public consultation.

Events

20-23 JUNE 2016

Fundamental Rights Forum: The common space between religious traditions and human rights

The European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights convened a Fundamental Rights Forum under the motto "Rights, Respect, Reality: the Europe of Values in Today's World". H.E. Mgr Hoogenboom, Auxiliary Bishop of Utrecht and Dutch Delegate to COMECE participated in the workshop dedicated to "The common space between religious traditions and human rights" and stated inter alia that "Inter-religious dialogue is important for social peace, not only for peace between religions and religious communities."

Contributions

26 MAY 2016

Public Consultation on a proposal for a mandatory Transparency Register

20 JULY 2016

Contribution to the Fundamental Rights Colloquium 2016 on "Media pluralism and democracy"

17 FEBRUARY 2016

Contribution to the consultation on "challenges of work-life balance faced by working parents and caregivers"

INTERCULTURAL DIALOGUE & EDUCATION

In dialogue with the EU, COMECE offers the expertise of the Church while running a wide range of institutions of formal and non-formal education. COMECE also underlines the importance of «intercultural competence», of tolerance, openness and of mutual respect in a context of different cultures and traditions. In 2016, COMECE's activities in this domain were the following:

Event

3 MARCH 2016

Evening debate : Preventing and countering radicalisation

Radicalisation is one of the increasing challenges for contemporary Europe. It often escalates – especially among youth – into various forms of extremism. Radicalisation among Muslims as well as a revival of many European traditional forms of radicalism that relate to nationalism and xenophobia has been observed. The identity crisis is listed among the main causes that serve as a common ground for all of them.

This evening debate was organised during the COMECE Spring pelanry assembly and gathered Dr. Mohammad Ali Shomali, Director of Islamic Centre of England, Rev. Prof. Tomáš Halík, Charles University in Prague and Dr. Christiane Höhn, Adviser to the EU Counter-Terrorism Coordinator in a debate moderated by Dr. Ian Linden, Tony Blair Faith Foundation.

3 – 16 JULY 2016

Graz International Summer School Seggau (GUSEGG) 2016

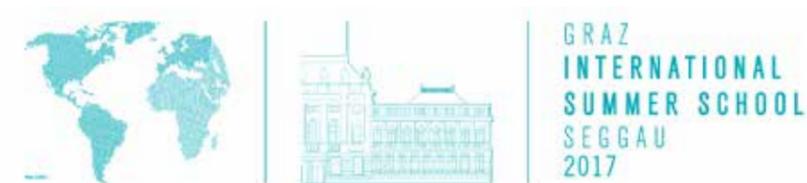
76 students and 22 lecturers met at Seggau Castle for the GUSEGG, this year dealing with «Transformation, Transgressions and Trust in Europe and the Americas». Under this topic scholars from 27 countries discussed the impact of an ever faster changing world on society, politics, law, culture and religion. Since the beginning of the Summer School, COMECE has been sponsoring this project non-materially, spiritually as well as financially. Michael Kuhn is member of the Steering Committee and offers spiritual guidance and morning meditation.

Contribution

25 MAY 2016

Round-table on «Germany's Dual Vocational Training System: A model for other EU countries?»

COMECE participated in a lunch-event in the European Parliament on Vocational training. The round table was organised by the German MEP Sabine Verheyen together with a number of other MEPs as well as the Bertelsmann-Foundation. Its main aim was to discuss different models of vocational training in the EU member-states. Due to a lack of training and experience, many young people often do not have sufficient necessary skills for the jobs offered. At the same time employers sometimes cannot fill open positions. How to bring together both needs and how to offer vocational training of high quality, complemented with a good general education? This could also be of concern for Catholic Schools and Vocational Training Centers.



Christiane Höhn and Mohammad Ali Shomali



Graz international Summer School 2016



SOCIAL & ECONOMIC POLICIES

COMECE follows socio-ethical questions raised by the process of European integration in the field of social and economic policy. In 2016, COMECE's activities in this domain were the following:

Events

26-28 OCTOBER 2016

Plenary Assembly: *The plight of Europe's poor*

The COMECE bishops dialogued with Caritas Europe, the humanitarian arm of the Church, with representatives of the European Commission and local authorities. In particular, they noted of the willingness of the European Commission to move forward and strengthen dialogue on this and on other EU policy matters with the Church.

After deliberation, the COMECE bishops published a position paper, which includes concrete proposals and which places the dignity of the human person at the centre of the political measures to fight against poverty.

The bishops also spent an evening with five Catholic organisations in Brussels, working with the poor (Poverello, La Viale Europe, Nativitas, L'Arche and the Emmaus Community). They exchanged with volunteers and with the people cared for by these organisations.

Analysing the negative perception expressed by the some citizens towards the EU, the COMECE bishops recalled that it is essential for EU institutions to be truly at the service of the people of Europe, particularly of the most vulnerable. According to Archbishop Jean-Claude Hollerich of Luxembourg, "Europe must again embody a community of solidarity: the very survival of the European project depends on it." For Archbishop Jean-Pierre Grallet of Strasbourg, "the Church has a capital to generate solidarity, that must be shared across Europe".

Social Affairs Commission

The Commission on Social Affairs monitors and prepares statements, contributions and activities related to EU social policy and public debate on the wider EU social issues: labour and employment, youth policy, education and training, working conditions, freedom of movement of people, capital, goods and services. Its President is Bishop Gianni Ambrosio (COMECE Vice-President, Bishop of Piacenza-Bobbio, Italy) and its Secretary is Markus Vennewald. Its Members are experts on social policy nominated by the EU Bishops' Conferences.

Meeting of 2 May 2016

The COMECE Social Affairs Commission met in its new setting. Members were presented the upcoming work programme of the EU in the field of social and economic policies. Together they decided to focus on the European Pillar of Social Rights and to prepare a contribution to the EU consultation on this topic.

Meeting of 12-13 October 2016

Under the chairmanship of H.E. Mgr. Ambrosio, the COMECE Social Commission exchanged on the EU initiative of the European Pillar of Social Rights. Among the guest speakers were an Irish MEP and a deputy head of the Cabinet of the Commissioner for Social Affairs Marianne Thyssen.

3 MAY 2016

From Rerum Novarum (1891) to Laudato si' (2015)

Catholic social teaching as a reference to social and ecological welfare?

The one-day Seminar was organised by COMECE and the European Christian Workers Movement to discuss the tenets and the development of Catholic social teaching on the occasion of the 125th anniversary of Rerum Novarum.

The introduction was given by Mgr. Gianni Ambrosio, Bishop of Piacenza-Bobbio, Vice-President of COMECE and President of the COMECE Social Affairs Commission. Keynote speakers were Prof. Friedhelm Hengsbach sj, former Director of the Oswald von Nell-Breuning Institute for Economic and Social Ethical Studies (Germany) and Dr. Elena Lasida, researcher in social economy, sustainable development and the relations between economy and theology at the Catholic Institute of Paris (France).

The evening debate was opened by two Members of the European Parliament, Elmar Brok (EPP) and Patrizia Toia (S&D). The keynote speech was given by Prof. Ingeborg Gabriel, Head of the Department for Social Ethics at the University of Vienna and Vice-President of Justice and Peace Europe



Mgr. Ambrosio at the Social Affairs Commission



Autumn Plenary on Poverty: Michel Servoz and Cardinal Marx

15 NOVEMBER 2016

Work-Life-Balance 4.0

Challenges in a Time of Digitalisation

To address the issue of digitalisation, COMECE, with its partners from the European Sunday Alliance (ESA), the Members of the European Parliament Evelyn Regner (S&D) and Thomas Mann (EPP), as well as the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC) organised a one-day conference on "Work-Life-Balance 4.0 - Challenges in a Time of Digitalisation". The keynote speaker was Günther Oettinger, the then-Commissioner for Digital Society & Economy. Mgr. Bruno Feillet, Auxiliary bishop of Reims, spoke on behalf of COMECE.

Participants had the opportunity to discuss in two panel debates with representatives of the EU institutions, experts and high-ranking members of the European Sunday Alliance about the flexibilisation of working hours and their impact on private life and social engagement. The event took place in the premises of the European Economic and Social Committee.

6 DECEMBER 2016

Evening debate: Tackling Youth Unemployment in Europe - a Catholic Church's Perspective

40 participants took part in a COMECE-Don Bosco international event. Bishop Adrianus van Luyn SDB (NL), representatives from EU institutions

and the European Youth Forum discussed with Iván Toscano, expert on Vocational Education and Training at Don Bosco (Italy), the effectiveness of the EU instruments to tackle youth unemployment.

Panellists encouraged the EU to strengthen the involvement of Church actors. MEP Brando Benifei (S&D), co-chair of the Youth Intergroup in the European Parliament, confirmed that the Church plays a vital role in education because of its long-standing local work with young people. Helen Hoffmann from the European Commission announced that besides the Solidarity Corps, the Commission will also launch in 2017 a Quality Framework Apprenticeship to improve school-work transition and ensure proper working conditions among the youth.

Publications

15 NOVEMBER 2016

Resolution for a better work-life-balance and synchronized free time in the age of digitalisation.

COMECE participated in the launch of a Resolution for a better work-life-balance and synchronized free time in the age of digitalisation. The Resolution is aimed at activating civil society and politicians to use the opportunities for a better

work-life-balance and to limit the risks created by digitalisation for the benefit of all European families and citizens. The pledge was launched by the European Sunday Alliance on the occasion of the conference Work-Life-Balance 4.0 – Challenges in a time of digitalisation.

12 DECEMBER 2016

COMECE Declaration on Poverty

As the European Commission develops a European Pillar of Social Rights, COMECE Bishops published a Statement on Poverty and Social Exclusion in Europe. In line with the social market economy promoted by Pope Francis, the Bishops presented 6 policy recommendations addressed to the EU and its Member States.

In order to eliminate the structural causes of poverty, COMECE recommends that the EU puts the fight against poverty and social exclusion at the core of its policies "especially within the framework of the European Semester and with regard to fair taxation". COMECE calls on the EU and its Member States to move towards a greater convergence by adopting common adequate social standards: ensure decent wage conditions for workers, improve access to education for disadvantaged children and support single parents.

The statement was addressed, in particular, to the President of the European Commission, Jean-Claude Juncker, to the EU Commissioner for Employment and Social Affairs, Marianne Thyssen, to the Members of the European Parliament and to the incoming Maltese Presidency of the EU Council.

Contribution

18 NOVEMBER 2016

COMECE contribution to a European Pillar of Social Rights

COMECE supports the EU Commissions' initiative of the European Pillar of Social Rights and submitted its contribution to the EU consultation. The document that was elaborated by the COMECE Social Affairs Commission together with the COMECE Secretariat focuses on rising inequality and digitalisation as a challenge for the single market project, on European Social Market Economy and offers a series of proposals.



European Sunday Alliance Conference on Work-Life Balance, 15/11/2016



COMECE Bishops visit the association Poverello in Brussels

EXTERNAL ACTION

COMECE together with Justice and Peace Europe aimed to assist the EU in its vocation to promote global peace and assume its responsibility for supporting sustainable development and social justice across the world. In 2016, COMECE's activities in this domain were the following:

Events

2-4 MARCH 2016

Plenary Assembly: the EU as a peace project

At their Spring Plenary Assembly, the COMECE Bishops dedicated a day to the theme of EU as a peace project. They used this opportunity to discuss peace and security politics and to emphasise the vocation of the EU to build peace in the world. In this context, the Bishops drafted a report on the role of Europe in promoting peace in the world.

At the opening of the Assembly, Cardinal Reinhard Marx, President of COMECE, stated, in the context of armed conflict in the neighbouring countries of Europe and the resulting flow of refugees: "The question of peace is more important than ever. We need [...] to reflect on how [...] Europe is a constructive actor for peace in the world, particularly in its immediate neighbourhood in the Middle East and in North Africa but also in Ukraine."



Federica Mogherini, EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy

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 the External Action of the EU. This Commission is at the same time an ad-hoc working group of Justice and Peace Europe. Its President is Archbishop Jean-Claude Hollerich (Archbishop of Luxembourg and President of Justice & Peace Europe) and its Secretary is Stefan Lunte (General Secretary of Justice & Peace Europe and COMECE Adviser) assisted by Marek Misak.

Meeting of 25-26 January 2016

The members of the Commission discussed with invited EU officials the recent developments in the main areas of EU's External Action: financing of terrorism, the way forward in the climate change policy after COP21, the evaluation of the implementation of the EU Guidelines on the Promotion and Protection of Freedom of Religion or Belief and the new EU Trade strategy. The meeting concluded with the adoption of a work programme for 2016 envisaging initiatives in the above-mentioned policy areas.



General Heinz Krieb and Stefan Lunte

Ms Federica Mogherini, EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, guest of the Plenary Assembly, insisted on dialogue and reconciliation as indispensable at national and regional level if peace building is to be successful. She was of the view that religions can play a crucial role in preventing radicalisation.

The Bishops received and adopted a report on Europe's Vocation to Promote Peace in the World, prepared by a joint COMECE/Justice & Peace Europe commission. The report published in March 2016, is a contribution to the reflection process of the European External Action Service and makes a series of specific recommendations on that topic.

14 JUNE 2016 Presentation of the COMECE Peace Report

The Report was launched on the occasion of a Lunch debate presided by Bishop Jean Kockerols, Vice-President of COMECE and Auxiliary bishop of the Archdiocese of Malines-Brussels, and Brigadier General Heinz Krieb, Director of Concepts & Capability Directorate of the European Union Military Staff (EUMS) of the European Union External Action Service (EEAS).

'It is our hope that the present report will be of assistance to the policy makers' said Bishop Kockerols, who presented the report. He thanked the drafting experts from the joint COMECE/Justice & Peace Europe Commission and expressed his hope that the 28 EU Heads of State and Government will endorse 'a robust and ambitious Global Strategy providing a good basis for an authentic European Peace Policy'.

25 NOVEMBER 2016 Sudan: Visit of Bishop Gassis to the EU

Fr. Olivier Poquillon OP, General Secretary of COMECE, received H.E. Macram Max Gassis, Bishop emeritus of the Diocese El Obeid in Sudan. Bishop Gassis came to Brussels to draw attention to the suffering of the Nuba people. Mgr Gassis presented an advocacy paper which outlines the situation in Sudan and formulates policy recommendations. He demanded the cessation of aerial bombings, the opening of relief corridors and that mediation efforts between all stakeholders be undertaken, calling on the EU to contribute to a peaceful and just settlement of the ongoing conflict.



COMECE Peace report

Publications

14 JUNE 2016 COMECE report on "Europe's vocation to promote peace in the world"

Ahead of the upcoming European Council, COMECE presented its report on "Europe's vocation to promote peace in the world" which the COMECE Bishops adopted at their spring Plenary Assembly as their contribution to the preparation of the EU Global Strategy.

The report has been submitted to High Representative Mogherini. She welcomed the proposals and highlighted the specific contribution which the Catholic Church with its worldwide networks and a broad societal outreach can make to EU's peace-building mission.

16 JUNE 2016 US - EU Bishops common position on the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP) prior to the 14th round of negotiations.

For the first time in their history, COMECE and the United States' Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) published a common position on a political theme, which is of primary importance for citizens on both sides of the Atlantic: The project of a "Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership".

Given the highly polarised debate on the TTIP, the Bishops offer a "toolbox" for the evaluation of the agreement. They hold to the fact that free trade can be truly beneficial and potentially contribute to a better future for all, provided that it promotes equitable access for all to the goods of this world and that it is structured in a way that helps to reduce inequality or injustice.

To evaluate this agreement – with a thorough social and environmental cost/benefit analysis – the Bishops present 9 ethical principles based on the Catholic Social Teaching. The President of USCCB, Most Rev. Joseph E. Kurtz, and the President of COMECE, Reinhard Cardinal Marx, jointly signed the common position.



Contributions to consultations

DECEMBER 2016

A COMECE expert participated in an oral consultation of the civil society, organised by the European Peace Building Liaison Office on the 2017 programming of the EU financial Instrument contributing to Stability and Peace.

FREEDOM OF RELIGION

COMECE expresses the vision that the fundamental right to freedom of religion is at the heart of all human rights.

It supports the view that EU decision-makers and officers should pay special attention to this fundamental right, in particular in its external relations.

In 2016, COMECE's activities in this domain were the following:

Dialogue with the EU

4 FEBRUARY 2016

European Parliament's resolution on genocide against Christians and other minorities

COMECE welcomed European Parliament's resolution as a significant step forward in facilitating measures to prevent the on-going incipient genocide against Christians and other minorities.

This resolution, adopted on a cross-party consensus, represents a growing appreciation among MEP's of the gravity of what persecuted minorities, including Christians, are enduring in the Middle East and a greater sense of urgency about addressing their fate.

COMECE appreciated the serious attention the European Parliament has given, in this regard, to the wider issues of respect for diversity and freedom of religion in troubled parts of the world.



Dr Ján Figel, Special Envoy for the promotion of freedom of religion or belief outside the EU

Events

24 MAY 2016

Visit of Cardinal Charles Maung Bo, Archbishop of Rangoon, to Brussels

Cardinal Charles Maung Bo, Archbishop of Yangon (Rangoon) made a two-days visit to the EU Capital this 24 May. COMECE, Christian Solidarity Worldwide, Aid to the Church in Need and Missio - Pontifical Mission Societies - hosted an internal meeting on 24 May between the Cardinal and MEPs from different political parties.

In his intervention at COMECE, he highlighted the current challenges in Myanmar such as the need to reinforce democracy, protecting and promoting human rights for all, but also justice, dialogue and reconciliation. He stressed the need to fight poverty by developing education and health care systems and to prevent ethnical and religious conflicts. His Eminence made a call to the EU and to the international community to support those new positive steps in the democratization process of the country.

He also mentioned the Catholic Church's role, as a major actor in the defence of human rights in Myanmar, as well as in the promotion of peace and reconciliation through interreligious dialogue and advocating for equal citizenship and equal rights for all.



Cardinal Bo at COMECE

13 OCTOBER 2016

Syria: Visit of Syrian Patriarchs to the EU

Fr. Olivier Poquillon OP, COMECE General Secretary, received Patriarch Gregorios III, the head of the Melkite Greek Catholic church, together with Metropolitan George Abou Zakhem of Homs and Bishop Selvanos Boutros Al Nemeah of Homs of the Syrian Orthodox Patriarchate. The Bishop's delegation came to Brussels to draw attention of EU high-ranking officials on children's situation in Syria.

23-25 NOVEMBER 2016

United Nations Global Summit on "Religion, Peace and Security"

A COMECE advisor participated in this meeting. He underlined that, in the Middle East, many members of religious minorities, in particular Christians, are expelled from their homeland, with no right to return to their homes. Dr. José Luis Bazán, underlined that the minorities are untitled to see their properties protected or rebuilt, to enjoy security and equal civil rights. In order to get a dignified personal and family life, they should have access to a viable and sustainable social, economic and political environment.

9 NOVEMBER 2016

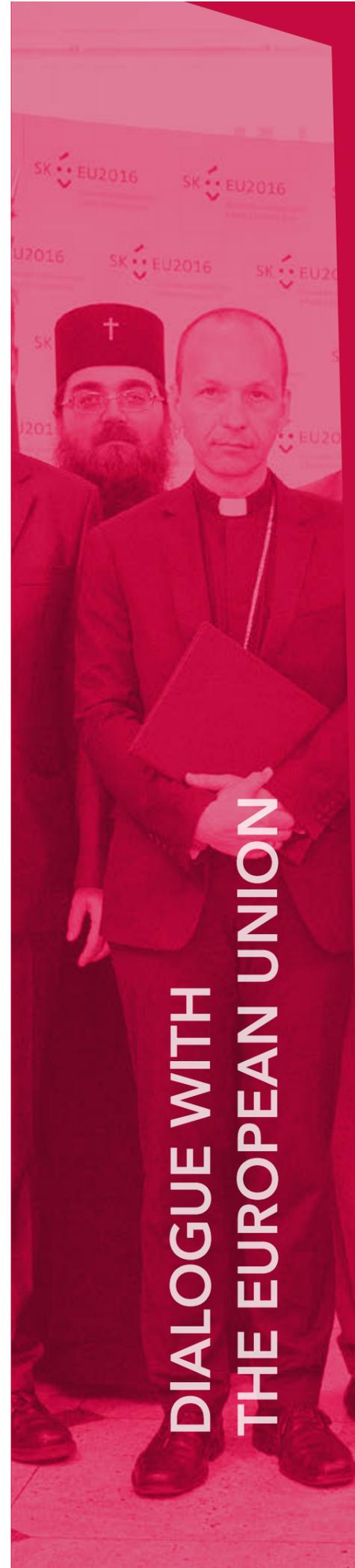
Persecuted Christians: what legal and political actions to curb the phenomenon ?

A COMECE advisor participated in the 2nd European Congress for the Protection of Persecuted Christians in Krakow. The objective of this conference was to pinpoint the directions of legal and political action which should be taken to curb this phenomenon.

The Event under the Patronage of the President of Poland was organised by MEP Ryszard Legutko in cooperation with, among others, Aid to the Church in Need, and took place on 5 November 2016. After the opening remarks by His Eminence Cardinal Stanisław Dziwisz, Metropolitan Bishop of Krakow, the Melkite Greek Catholic H. E. Isaam John Darwish, Archbishop of Zahlé and Furzol in Lebanon emphasized the importance of the presence of Christians in the region and the initiatives of the Catholic Church in Lebanon to have harmonious relations with Islam. Dr. José Luis Bazán intervened in the legal panel, on the "Harassment of Christian asylum seekers in asylum centers in the EU".



European Congress for the Protection of Persecuted Christians (Krakow)



DIALOGUE WITH THE EUROPEAN UNION

- ARTICLE 17

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

27 JANUARY 2016

Cardinal Marx, President of COMECE, met Commission Vice Presidents Timmermans and Mogherini

The President of COMECE met with Mr Frans Timmermans, First Vice President of the European Commission, responsible for Better Regulation, Interinstitutional Relations, the Rule of Law and the Charter of Fundamental Rights. They discussed the implementation of Dialogue between the EU and Churches based on Article 17(3) TFUE, as well as the migration crisis in the EU. Cardinal Marx also met Ms Federica Mogherini, Vice President of the Commission and High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy.



Cardinal Marx and Federica Mogherini

14 JUNE 2016

Cardinal Marx met Jan Figel', Special Envoy for the promotion of freedom of religion or belief outside the European Union

The President of COMECE met with the newly appointed Special Envoy in order to discuss about his mandate as well as about the possibilities to strengthen the Dialogue between Churches and the EU on the basis of Article 17 TFUE.

13 JULY 2016

COMECE and CEC meet with Slovak EU Presidency

A delegation led by Slovakia's State Secretary for European Affairs Ivan Korčok received representatives from the Conference of European Churches (CEC) and Deacon Michael Kuhn, Acting General Secretary of COMECE in Bratislava.

The meeting between the Slovak Presidency of the Council of the European Union and Church representatives focused on the state of the European Union following the so-called Brexit referendum and the ongoing refugee and migration crisis, including the reform of the Dublin regulation. Development and peace policies, as well supporting an effective contribution to family policies on the part of the European Union were also part of the agenda.

State Secretary Korčok applauded the Churches efforts in the public sphere and their search for solutions that affect the whole of European society. He also asked for support in communicating with European citizens, especially in matters directly linked to the very existence of the EU.

In view of the steady flow of refugees and migrants to Europe, Church representatives stressed that human treatment of these vulnerable people should prevail. They underlined that Solidarity among EU Member States was critical to this, including a timely revision of the Dublin regulation, addressing root causes, and coordinated EU response were necessary to avoid further human tragedy.

The Auxiliary Bishop of Bratislava, Mons. Jozef Halko said that he was able to "express our mutual conviction that the care for families should become one of the highest EU priorities".

29 NOVEMBER 2016

High-level religious leaders meeting with the EU Migration and European values

This year meeting was dedicated to the theme "Migration, Integration, European values: from words to action". COMECE welcomed the open and constructive dialogue which took place at the seat of the EU Commission with the Commission's First Vice-President Frans Timmermans.

The First Vice-President of COMECE, Mgr Jean Kockerols, outlined the concerns, facts and convictions of the Catholic Church in the migration issue. "This crisis has undermined unity in Europe, and, admittedly, also within the churches in Europe. The migration crisis is challenging Christian communities to position themselves, as citizens and also as believers."

The auxiliary Bishop of Malines-Bruxelles also underlined the massive efforts accomplished by local churches to welcome refugees and promote a good integration in the long run. Finally, he reaffirmed the conviction of the Church that hospitality is the founding pillar of Christianity.

Speaking from the experience of Nordic countries, COMECE Vice-President Mgr Czeslaw Kozon recalled the importance of family reunification in the context of migration "as a key issue and also one dealing with fundamental rights, as everybody has a right to found a family and all members of such a family the right to live together."

24 OCTOBER 2016

**EC-CEC-COMECE Dialogue Seminar
Migrants: from fear to compassion**

Mass migration prompted by global conflict and ecological crises has stirred up unresolved fears in European societies. Understanding and responding to this was the central theme of the dialogue seminar between churches and the European Commission.

Participants in the seminar identified two widely experienced types of fear. The first is the fear of rejection, violence, and exclusion many migrants and refugees face both on their way to Europe and following their arrival. The other is the fear known by many in Europe who feel their values and way of life is under threat by the arrival of these migrants and refugees. Although non-EU migrants represent only 4% of the total EU population (of which 9% are refugees), a so-called "moral panic" emerges, which is sometimes amplified by media and social media activity.

The unique experience of children in migration formed an important part of the day's discussion. Up to 100,000 unaccompanied children reached the EU in 2015. Participants urged all to see children not only as the future of our societies, but as an integral part of our present reality.

Those gathered advanced a diversity of solutions, but all were rooted in the promotion of education, dialogue, and media education. Through these processes, both migrants and Europeans can come to know their shared vulnerabilities and move from fear toward compassion and solidarity.

This dialogue was organised by the Directorate General Justice and Consumers of the European Commission jointly with COMECE and CEC.



Meeting with the Slovak EU-Presidency (Bratislava)



Mgr Kozon with A. Tajani and F. Timmermans

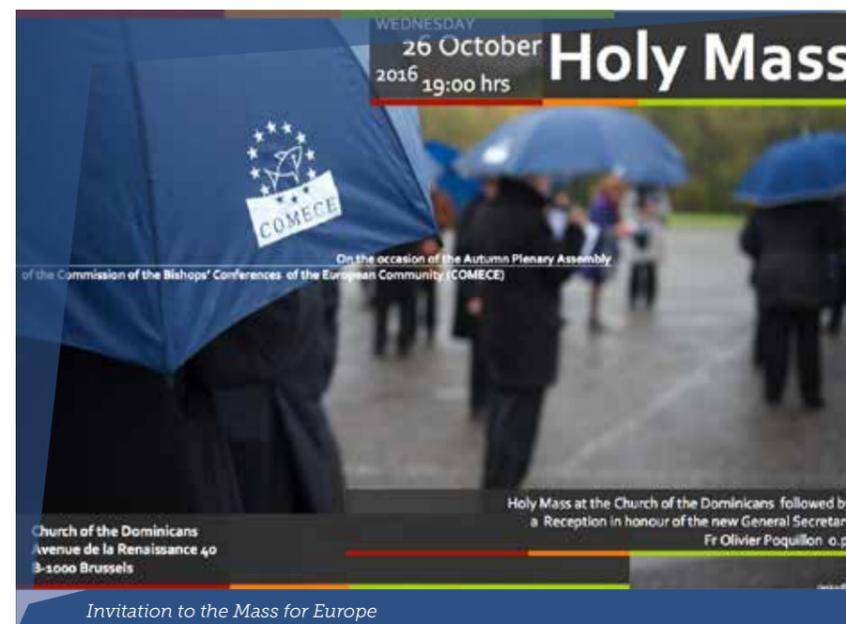
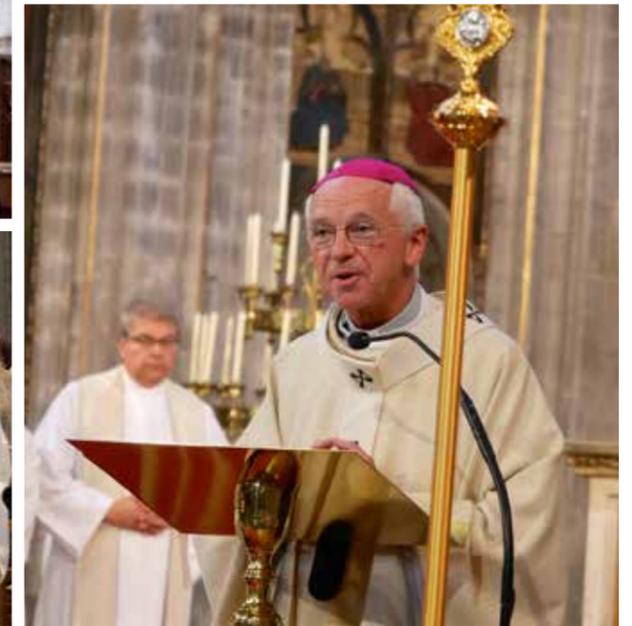
MASS FOR EUROPE

The Mass for Europe is organised by COMECE in partnership with the Diocese of Malines-Brussels and the member Bishop of COMECE of the country holding the Presidency of the Council of the EU, on the occasion of the resumption of work by the European institutions each year in September.

7 SEPTEMBER 2016

On the occasion of the start of the working year of the European Institutions under the Slovak Presidency

About 400 participants took part at the church of Notre-Dame au Sablon, Brussels, in the Mass for Europe which was organised by COMECE on the occasion of the resumption of work by the European institutions. The Mass was presided by Bishop Jozef De Kesel, Archbishop of Mechelen-Brussels and concelebrated by Mgr Jozef Hal'ko, Auxiliary Bishop of the Archdiocese of Bratislava together with Mgr Jean Kockerols, Auxiliary Bishop of the Archdiocese of Mechelen-Brussels, vice-president of COMECE.



PLENARIES

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

- Spring Plenary Assembly | 2-4 March 2016 | **Europe's vocation to promote peace in the world** | Brussels
- Autumn Plenary Assembly | 28-28 October 2016 | **The plight of Europe's poor & EU strategies to eliminate poverty** | Brussels

STANDING COMMITTEE

The Standing Committee of COMECE consists of the President, Cardinal Reinhard Marx, and four Vice-Presidents: Mgr Jean Kockerols (Auxiliary Bishop of Brussels-Malines, Belgium), Mgr Gianni Ambrosio (Bishop of Piacenza-Bobbio, Italy), Mgr. Czeslaw Kozon, (Bishop of Copenhagen, Scandinavia) as well as Mgr. Rimantas Norvila (Bishop of Vilkaviškis, Lithuania) and Fr Olivier Poquillon OP, General Secretary. The Standing Committee met on five occasions in 2016:

- 27 January 2016 | Brussels
- 2 March 2016 | Brussels
- 18-20 May 2016 | Rome
- 1 September 2016 | Munich
- 26 October 2016 | Brussels



Standing Committee of COMECE

JANUARY	FEBRUARY	MARCH	APRIL	MAY
12/01/2016 Sternsinger (Germany)	1-3/02/2016 Group of Catholic Interns of the Westminster Parliament (UK)	02/03/2016 COMECE Standing Committee	25/04/2016 Vistor Group IFP Journalisten Schule (Germany)	02/05/2016 COMECE Social Affairs Commission
25-26/01/2016 Meeting of the Commission on the External relations of the EU	15-16/02/2016 Facing a crisis with many faces - COMECE international Conference of Bishops on Refugees, Migration and Integration (in Heiligenkreuz, Austria)	2-4/03/2016 COMECE Spring Plenary Assembly	28/04/2016 Italian Group - Istituto di Studi Superiori sulla donna, from the Pontifical Athenaeum Regina Apostolorum (PHD)	03/05/2016 COMECE Seminar on the occasion of the 125th anniversary of Rerum Novarum
27/01/2016 COMECE Standing Committee Meeting between High Representative Mogherini and His Eminence Cardinal Marx Meeting between Vice-President Timmermans and His Eminence Cardinal Marx	22/02/2016 COMECE Working Group on Ethics in Research and Health-care. Presentation of the Opinion of the Working Group on Ethics in Research and Health-care on Palliative Care	08/03/2016 Group of Caritas Italiana (Italy)	26/04/2016 Presentation of the Statement of COMECE on Peace to the EU High Representative Mogherini	10/05/2016 COMECE-CEC Meeting with S.E. Mr. Peter Javorcik, Permanent Representative of the Slovak Republic to the EU
	23/02/2016 Group of students from the University of Vienna (Austria)	10/03/2016 Group of the German Parish in Brussels	29/04/2016 Vistor Group IFP Journalisten Schule (Germany)	12-13/05/2016 Social-ethical discussions - Flight, migration and integration - A test for Europe (in Mönchengladbach, Germany)
	25/02/2016 COMECE Legal Affairs Commission	16/03/2016 COMECE Working Group on Migration & Asylum		18-20/05/2016 COMECE Standing Committee (in Rome, Italy)
	26/02/2016 Group from the « Akademie Wien » (Austria)	18/03/2016 Meeting with EU Commissioner Carlos Moedas		

BISHOPS DELEGATED TO COMECE

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

H.E. Mgr Adolfo González Montes

 Bishop of Almería (Spain)

H.E. Mgr Jozef Hal'ko

 Auxiliary Bishop of Bratislava (Slovakia)

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 Philippe Jean-Charles Jourdan

 Apostolic Administrator of Estonia

H.E. Mgr William Kenney

 Auxiliary Bishop of Birmingham (England & Wales) (until October 2016)

H.E. Mgr Nicholas Hudson

 Auxiliary Bishop of Westminster (from October 2016)

H.E. Mgr Czeslaw Kozon

 Bishop of Copenhagen (Nordic)

H.E. Mgr Rimantas Norvila

 Bishop of Vilkaiviškis (Lithuania)

H.E. Mgr Christo Proykov

 Bishop of Sofia (Bulgaria)

H.E. Mgr Sevastianos Rossolatos

 Archbishop of Athens (Greece)

H. E. Reinhard Cardinal Marx

 Archbishop of Munich & Freising (Germany), President

H.E. Mgr Jean Kockerols

 Auxiliary Bishop of Malines-Bruxelles (Belgium), Vice-president

H.E. Mgr Gianni Ambrosio

 Bishop of Piacenza-Bobbio (Italy), Vice-president

H.E. Mgr Virgil Bercea

 Bishop de Oradea Mare (Romania)

H.Em. Josip Card. Bozanić

 Archbishop of Zagreb (Croatia)

H.E. Mgr Ferenc Cserháti

 Auxiliary Bishop of Esztergom-Budapest (Hungary)

H.E. Mgr Antonio A. dos Santos Marto

 Bishop of Leiria-Fátima (Portugal)

H.E. Mgr Hugh Gilbert

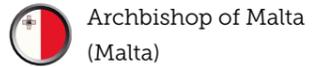
 Bishop of Aberdeen (Scotland)

H.E. Mgr Jean-Pierre Grallet

 Archbishop of Strasbourg (France)

JUNE	SEPTEMBER	OCTOBER	NOVEMBER	DECEMBER
14/06/2016 Presentation of the Statement of COMECE on Peace	01/09/2016 COMECE Standing Committee (in Munich, Germany)	03/10/2016 COMECE Working group in ethics on research and medicine	09/11/2016 Group of Priests from Hungary	05/12/2016 Meeting with the Permanent Representation of Malta to the EU
15/06/2016 Group of Catholic priests from Lille (France)	07/09/2016 Mass for Europe	05/10/2016 COMECE Legal Affairs Commission	14/11/2016 Meeting with Mgr Louis Sako, Patriarch of Babylon of the Chaldean	05/12/2016 Interreligious event at the European Parliament on the occasion of the presentation of the 'Dictionary of religions'
16/06/2016 COMECE Event for the 1st anniversary of Laudato Si'	09/09/2016 Meeting with the Secretary-General of the European Parliament	10/10/2016 Visit of Syrian Patriarchs	15/11/2016 European Sunday Alliance Conference on the "Impact of digitisation on work"	06/12/2016 COMECE/DBI evening debate tackling youth unemployment: a Catholic Church's perspective
30/06/2016 CCEE General Secretaries meeting	13/09/2016 Meeting with the Secretary-General of the Conference of European Churches (CEC)	12-13/10/2016 COMECE Social Affairs Commission	17/11/2016 COMECE Working Group on migration	08/12/2016 Meeting with His Eminence the Metropolitan Athenagoras of Belgium
JULY	21-22/09/2016 Conference on Role of the Catholic Church in a process of the European integration in Kraków (PL)	19-21/10/2016 Group of students from Versailles (France)	25/11/2016 Visit of Bishop (emeritus) Macram Max Gassis from the Diocese of El Obeid in Sudan	13/12/2016 Meeting of the preparatory committee for the COMECE 2017 Congress « (Re)thinking Europe »
11/07/2016 Meeting with the Slovak Presidency of the Council of the EU (in Bratislava, Slovak Republic)	26/09/2016 Delegation from Pakistan and Justice & Peace Netherlands	24/10/2016 19th Annual EPP Group Dialogue with Churches and Religious Institutions	29/11/2016 High-Level Religious Leaders Meeting - "Migration, Integration and European Values: Putting Values into Action"	20/12/2016 Meeting with the General Secretary of the Union of the European Conferences of Major Superiors (UCESM)
14/07/2016 Group "Laboratorio Cittadinanza Attiva dell'Azione Cattolica di Vicenza" (Italy)	27/09/2016 Meeting with a delegation of South Sudan	26/10/2016 COMECE Standing Committee		
		26-28/10/2016 COMECE Autumn Plenary Assembly		

H.E. Mgr Charles Jude Scicluna



Archbishop of Malta
(Malta)

H.E. Mgr Youssef Soueif



Archbishop of the Maronites
(Cyprus)

H.E. Mgr Janusz Bogustaw Stepnowski



Bishop of Łomża
(Poland)

H.E. Mgr Zbignev Stankevics



Archbishop of Riga
(Latvia)

H.E. Mgr Franc Šuštar



Auxiliary Bishop of Ljubljana
(Slovenia)

H.E. Mgr Noël Treanor



Bishop of Down & Connor
(Ireland)

H.E. Mgr Jan Vokál



Bishop of Hradec Králové
(Czech Republic)

H.E. Mgr Āgidius Johann Zsifkovic



Bishop of Eisenstadt
(Austria)

Bishops observers

H.E. Mgr Stanislav Hočevar



Archbishop of Belgrade
(Serbia)

H.E. Mgr Felix Gmür



Bishop of Basel
(Switzerland)



Bishop Jean KOCKEROLS



Bishop Gianni AMBROSIO



Bishop Czeslaw KOZON



Bishop Rimantas NORVILA



Cardinal Reinhard Marx & Fr Olivier Poquillon OP



COMECE autumn Plenary assembly

OUR COMECE STAFF

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

Fr Patrick H. Daly

General Secretary until May 2016

Fr Olivier Poquillon OP

General Secretary from September 2016

Michael Kuhn

Assistant General Secretary [Seconded by the Austrian Bishops' Conference]

Acting General Secretary, may-september 2016

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

Stefan Lunte

Advisor for External Affairs

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

General Secretary of Justice & Peace Europe

Alessandro Calcagno

[Seconded by the Italian Bishops' Conference]

Legal advisor for Fundamental Rights and Article 17 TFEU issues

Secretary of the COMECE Legal Affairs Commission

José-Luis Bazán

Legal advisor for Migration, Asylum and Religious Freedom

Secretary of the COMECE Working Group on Migration and Asylum

José Ramos-Ascensão

Legal advisor for Health, Research and Bioethics

Secretary of the COMECE Working Group on Ethics in Research and Medicine, until october 2016

Markus Vennewald

Policy advisor for Social & Economic affairs

Secretary of the COMECE Social affairs Commission

Marek Misak

Advisor for External Relations; Justice and Peace

Europe

Johanna Touzel

Communication officer

Maud Oger

Assistant to the General Secretary

Irmina Nockiewicz

Secretary

Albert Arevalo

Support staff

Cynthia Quijano Aquino

Support staff

The COMECE Bishops and the Secretariat wish to thank José Ramos-Ascensão, for the work he has accomplished within the Secretariat.

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

Adela and Petr Mucha, Czech Republic

Fr. Felipe Herrera Espaliat, Chile

Keyko Jara, Peru

Jean-Louis Hanff, Luxemburg

Lilla Katalin Királyfy, Hungary

FINANCES

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www.comece.eu



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

 <https://www.facebook.com/comece.eu>

 <https://twitter.com/comeceeu>