

# 40 years of history

## 1980-2020

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

Discussions between 1978-1979 involving the Secretariat of State, Archbishop Igino Eugenio Cardinale, Apostolic Nuncio in Brussels, Dr Ivo Fürer (CCEE) and others, led to the decision to establish the Commission

of the Episcopates of the European Communities (COMECE).

The COMECE secretariat would continue the information service (SIPECA) established in 1976 under the aegis of the Apostolic Nunciature in Brussels.

The inaugural COMECE plenary meeting took place on 3 March 1980. Bishop Hengsbach (Essen), later Cardinal, was elected President. Monsignor Paul Huot-Pleuroux, second secretary at CCEE, was appointed Secretary General.



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

The initial membership, which included delegate bishops from the then nine member states of the EEC, would grow with each subsequent enlargement of the EU. Observer status was also provided for *ab initio*.

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

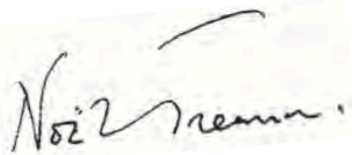


COMECE Standing Committee in April 1983. From left to right: Fr. Paul Huot-Pleuroux (General Secretary), H.E. Mgr. Cahal Brendan Daly (Vice President), H.E. Mgr. Franz Hengsbach (President), H.E. Mgr. Jean Hengen (Vicepresident).

They also strengthen the link between COMECE and their episcopal conferences. Since its inception, COMECE has accompanied four major phases in the evolution of the Euro-pean project:

- the completion of the Single Market;
- the Fall of the Berlin Wall and the Euro-peanisation of the EU;
- the process of political integration;
- the post 2008 financial crisis and the re-thinking of the EU's identity in the current global context.

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



**H. E. Mgr. Noel Treanor**

Vice President of COMECE

Bishop of Down and Connor (Ireland)



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