

**JORNADA INTERNACIONAL  
HACIA UNA CIUDADANÍA EUROPEA PARTICIPATIVA**  
celebrada el 23 de abril de 2024 en la Fundación Pablo VI



Actas

**INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE  
TOWARDS A PARTICIPATORY EUROPEAN CITIZENSHIP**  
held on 23 April 2024 at the Paul VI Foundation



Proceedings

**CONVEGNO INTERNAZIONALE  
VERSO UNA CITTADINANZA EUROPEA PARTECIPATIVA**  
tenutasi il 23 aprile 2024 presso la Fondazione Pablo VI



Atti

Nation-building and internationalism  
in Christian social thought

# TOWARDS A PARTICIPATORY EUROPEAN CITIZENSHIP

Proceedings of the International Conference  
held on April 23, 2024, as part of the ongoing seminar  
*How Does Europe Respond?*  
*Digital Revolution and Transformation of Work*

# Table of contents

## Summary of the Conference

Domingo Sugranyes Bickel ..... 110

## Interventions

### Greetings

Mons. Ginés García Beltrán, President of Fundación Pablo VI ..... 124

Professor Angelo Maffei, President of the Istituto Paolo VI ..... 125

### Introduction

Jesús Avezuela, General Director of Fundación Pablo VI ..... 126

Domingo Sugranyes Bickel, Director of the ongoing Seminar ..... 128

## First Session: Paul VI, Europe and Spain

### The Pope Paul VI and Europe

Simona Negruzzo, Professor at Università degli Studi di Pavia..... 132

### Paul VI and Spain

Juan María Laboa, Emeritus Professor at the Pontifical University of Comillas..... 139

## Second Session: Citizen participation

### The division of powers between the EU and member States: how does it affect citizen participation?

Leopoldo Calvo-Sotelo, Chief Counsel of the *Consejo de Estado* of the Kingdom of Spain ..... 148

### Towards greater citizen participation?

Markus Schlagnitweit, Director of the Katholische Akademie Österreichs ..... 152

### The challenge of participation: the knot of political parties

Carlo Muzzi, Journalist, *Il Giornale di Brescia*..... 154

## Third session: Foundational principles and values, yesterday and today

### Introduction

Pierpaolo Camadini, President of the *Opera per l'Educazione Cristiana*..... 160

### For a solidarity citizenship: foundational values yesterday and today

Francesco Bestagno, Legal Adviser at the Permanent Representation of Italy to the European Union..... 162

### A values-driven approach to the EU: intercultural dialogue and active citizenship

Léonce Bekemans, Jean Monnet Professor *ad personam*, Bruges, Belgium..... 163

## Fourth session: Christian churches and European integration

### Christian churches in European integration: Response to secularization?

Mariano Crociata, Bishop of Latina, President of COMECE..... 188

### Reflections on secularization

Tomas Halik, Professor at Charles University in Prague..... 194

### The dialogue of churches with European institutions

Manuel Barrios, Secretary General of COMECE ..... 196

### What do the churches contribute?

Alfredo Abad, Pastor, President of the Spanish Evangelical Church ..... 199

## Fifth session: Towards a consciousness of European citizenship?

### Messages

Herman van Rompuy, former President of the European Council ..... 204

Romano Prodi, former President of the European Commission..... 206

# Summary of the Conference



The Pablo VI Foundation, in collaboration with the Paolo VI Institute in Brescia, Italy, held an international event on April 23rd. This event served as a pause for reflection, within the program of the multidisciplinary seminar “How does Europe respond?”, about the founding values of European construction, its current application, and citizen participation in its processes.

When confronted with the digital revolution and the transformation of work, phenomena that transcend national borders, **Jesús Avezuela**, Director General of the Pablo VI Foundation, and **Domingo Sugranyes**, Director of the socio-economic ethics seminar, emphasized in their opening remarks that the 2023-2025 seminar aims to understand to what extent and in what way European institutions can generate an effective institutional framework that protects individuals, while at the same time promoting European competitiveness. How can these different objectives be made compatible within a group of twenty-seven countries characterized from the outset by “unity in diversity”?

In line with this question, and with the upcoming European Parliament elections in mind, the event brought together prominent figures to reflect on participatory European citizenship.

## Paul VI, Europe y Spain

The roots of European construction are deeply intertwined with Christian social thought, as evidenced by figures like Robert Schuman and Alcide de Gasperi, both recognized for their religious convictions and currently undergoing the process of beatification by the Catholic Church. Pope Montini, now Saint Paul VI, was a staunch Europeanist. In many of his speeches and writings, he expressed his commitment to the European process—a work in progress, a “Europe on the move”—oriented towards serving its citizens while remaining open and engaged with the world’s needs.

The two organizing institutions of the event, both named after Paul VI, decided to initiate a reflection on *participatory European citizenship* based on the example of the pontiff. Paul VI had served from 1922 to 1954 in the Secretariat of State of the Holy See before being appointed Archbishop of Milan by Pius XII and elected successor to John XXIII in 1963.

The Paolo VI Institute, as recalled by its president **An-**

*For this event, the Foundation worked closely with the Italian center that houses the library and museum of Pope Montini, which dedicates itself to international historical research on the pontiff who led a profound renewal of the Catholic Church during the Second Vatican Council and throughout his pontificate. Thanks to this collaboration and that of COMECE (Commission of the Bishops’ Conferences of the European Union), the event acquired a distinctly international character.*

*The debate served to recall the founding values of the European Union, its current application, the real possibilities for citizen participation in institutions, and the role played by Christian Churches in this context. It concluded with an extensive dialogue on the main challenges facing Europe, the perception of common institutions among the population, and their ability to confront the challenges of a rapidly changing world. The debate on values and principles risks remaining at a rhetorical level if not accompanied by concrete policies addressing today’s challenges, and if a common project mobilizing participation around goals of justice and the common good is not defined.*

**gelo Maffeis**, primarily focuses on the historical study of the pontiff from his youth during the interwar period until his death in 1978. The Pablo VI Foundation, the host and promoter of the gathering in Madrid, also makes reference to Pope Montini, but focuses more on the dialogue of Christian social thought with technology and culture, in an effort of permanent updating of the Catholic message. Its president, Bishop **Ginés García Beltrán** of Getafe, welcoming participants from different European countries, also wanted to recall the European commitment of Paul VI and the enduring validity of his calls for a united, dialoguing, and generous Europe.

Continuing the historical evocation in the session moderated by **Belén Becerril**, a professor of EU law at the CEU San Pablo University, **Simona Negruzzo**, a professor at the University of Pavia, presented numerous pieces of evidence of Paul VI’s support for the European idea. She showed how, during his pontificate,

he translated this support into concrete measures of high symbolic and political value, such as the creation of a special diplomatic representation of the Holy See before European institutions and the participation of his “foreign minister,” Agostino Casaroli, in the Helsinki Conference (1973-1975). With these actions, Pope Montini indicated the Church’s decision to formally recognize European institutions and to promote a dialogue that extended beyond Western Europe to include the entire Eastern bloc, then dominated by Soviet power. His vision was based on the desire for a genuinely citizen-driven construction: “it should not be an artificial creation imposed from outside, but an expression that arises from within the various peoples; it should be generated as a fruit of persuasion and love, not as a technical and perhaps fatal result of political and economic forces.”<sup>1</sup> Paul VI often emphasized the need for Europe, while building its common institutions, to continue looking at the world as a

whole and, especially, at the less developed countries to which it owed solidarity. For him, it was about building a Europe with, and not over or against, anyone. With a profound sense of historical timing and the patience necessary for any significant reform, the Pope summarized his advice in a happy formula: *unity must be lived before it is defined*<sup>2</sup>.

In his commentary, **Juan María Laboa**, emeritus professor at the Pontifical University Comillas, documented how the writings and words of Paul VI, far from remaining in abstract recommendations, played a performative role in Spain’s political transition. His interventions with the government of General Franco in 1962 (while still Archbishop of Milan), the appointment of the nuncio Dadaglio in 1967, and the careful selection of bishops during his pontificate, including Enrique Tarancón as head of the diocese of Madrid, clearly demonstrate his commitment against the Church’s fundamentalist temptation and his contribution to re-

<sup>1</sup> Speech to the National Congress of the Center ‘Young Europe’, September 8, 1965

<sup>2</sup> Message of Pope Paul VI to the Council of Europe, January 26, 1977



moving obstacles and preparing for the establishment of the democratic regime that would allow, among other transformations, Spain's accession to European institutions in 1986. Paul VI's conciliar Church was seen

as a danger by the dictatorship government, and it is only fair to recognize that the Pope contributed decisively to the democratic transition.

## The division of Powers between the EU and member States: how does it affect Citizen Participation?

Moderator **Michele Bonetti**, President of the Tovini Foundation, introduced the following session, shifting to current affairs and pondering to what extent the current European Union reflects the principles of subsidiarity and proportionality, which are foundational. **Leopoldo Calvo-Sotelo**, Senior Legal Adviser to the Spanish *Consejo de Estado*, begins with an unprecedented historical fact: European citizenship, defined as complementary and compatible or accumulative with national citizenship. Current debates, rather than focusing solely on competencies, revolve around the concretization of a European po-

litical space and reforms aimed at increasing the distinctly European dimension of European Parliament elections, for example, through direct election, in a single European constituency, of a portion of European parliamentarians. The speaker also discusses the possibilities of citizen initiative, which can be exercised both in attempting to "reclaim" national competencies or in requesting the Commission to present proposals on issues requiring a European-level legal act for the application of the Treaties. Against nationalist drifts, the speaker recalls the Belgian (French-speaking Flemish) poet Émile Verhaeren, in

the midst of World War I, with his motto: "Europeans, admire each other."

In his commentary, **Markus Schlagnitweit**, Director of the Katholische Akademie of Austria, explains first and foremost that the principle of subsidiarity enshrined in the European Treaties does not fully correspond with the concept developed in Catholic social teaching, where it takes on a much broader social sense, linked to that of solidarity. Regarding Europe and the debates about populist nationalism, a greater self-critical effort by European authorities would be necessary and, probably, more radical reform proposals: a greater number of MEPs elected on pan-European lists, direct election to the presidency and the entire European Commission, and a more determined orientation towards federal structures. **Carlo Muzzi**, an Italian journalist, notes that campaigns for European elections are used by national parties as a sort of mid-term election to gauge their strength for the next national electoral appointment. The political map of party alliances and coalitions in the European Parliament is complex and opaque, even in its nomenclature. The idea that each group presents a candidate for the Commission presidency (*Spitzenkandidat*) does not work well, as demonstrated in the election of President von der Leyen, a result of a

compromise imposed by the European Council, representing national governments.

In the subsequent dialogue, with reference to federalist aspirations, the speaker emphasized the caution that has been applied throughout recent European history, in an evolution that gradually recognizes national sovereignty "as a lesser evil"; careful avoidance of using the concept of supranationality to describe



The political map of party alliances and coalitions in the European Parliament is complex and opaque, even in its nomenclature..

European construction has been maintained, always respecting a distinct and deeply hybrid reality. In the current phase of this evolution, which could be described as an "oligarchic phase," it is necessary to recognize the importance of the Council, composed of the governments of the member countries, and to respect the delicate balance between the Council, Commission, and Parliament.

## Towards a Solidary Citizenship: the fundamental values of the European Union

Moderator **Piepaolo Camadini**, President of the *Opera per l'Educazione Cristiana*, proposes a critical reflection on a "soulless Europe," contrary to what Jacques Delors called for in 1992, in a current context where the privatization of rights and the difficulties of understanding typical of a multicultural society prevail. **Francesco Bestagno**, Legal Advisor of the Permanent Representation of Italy to the EU, recalls the fundamental insight of European construction: it is necessary to cede sovereign competencies to ensure and guarantee peace, security, and above all, economic integration. However, for the Eastern European countries that joined in 2004 and 2007, accession has been seen, conversely, as a way to guarantee their sovereignty after decades in the Soviet

orbit. This historical difference explains some of the current debates. In the preamble of the Treaty of the Union, the historical - including religious - lineage of the principles on which it is based is recognized, centered on the human person (not the individual) and inclusion. The principles enshrined in Article 2 of the Treaty remain in force - respect for human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, the rule of law, and respect for human rights, including the rights of persons belonging to minorities. In the last decade, the EU has had to develop more instruments to try to reaffirm and defend these values within the Member States, going beyond the measures provided for in the Treaties. In this perspective, new forms of suspension of EU funding to individual Member





States have been initiated in some cases (particularly Hungary and, to a lesser extent, Poland), in order to prevent these funds from being used in a context where fundamental principles such as the separation of State powers were not respected. Reaffirming the importance of foundational and identity values within the EU is also necessary for it to credibly promote them in its relations with third countries. This is usually done with reference to compliance with international norms, especially those developed within the United Nations: the EU's approach does not seek to "impose" unilateral norms, but is based on the promotion of agreed norms and values at a global and multilateral level.

**Léonce Bekemans**, titular professor of the Jean Monnet Chair at the University of Padua, referring to the inspiration of personalist humanism - from Mounier and Maritain to Baumann and Habermas - starts from the fact of a profound coincidence between this

inspiration and the founding principles of European construction. The process has moved from functional agreements, essentially economic, towards a political project whose main stages include the Leo Tindemans report "Europe of the Citizens" (1976), the proposals of Altiero Spinelli and the Single European Act of 1986, the Maastricht (1992) and Lisbon (2007) Treaties. Bekemans proposes three basic concepts of the European approach centered on the human person: the paradigm of human rights; a "cosmopolitan perspective of multi-level governance"; and the application of transnational democratic control of "global public goods." The analysis of the concept of citizenship and its application in the European context - the speaker provides in his full text a comprehensive description of the avenues open to the exercise of this citizenship - leads to a conception built from the bottom up, to renew the concept of sovereignty from the local level, and beyond the national structure, necessary to build de-

mocracies, but insufficient to respond to global transnational realities. Bekemans concludes by describing in detail the initiatives of citizen dialogue within the EU and, in particular, the avenues of intercultural dialogue, which are necessarily based on the paradigm of human rights and education oriented towards the full development of the individual. In all of this, Christian social teaching remains an essential source of inspiration and discernment.



**Christian social teaching remains an essential source of inspiration and discernment.**

## Christian Churches in European Construction: Response to Secularization?

In the session moderated by **Rafael Vázquez**, Director of the Secretariat for Interconfessional Relations of the Spanish Episcopal Conference, the speaker was Bishop **Mariano Crociata**, president of COMECE. His reflection begins with the European integration process as an unprecedented work in progress. Integration today faces an effective opposition against certain aspects of current culture, marked by the assertion of rights without corresponding duties, consumerism, and social media. Indeed, the European process finds itself caught between two fires: on one hand, the growing Eurosceptic criticisms within the Union countries and, on the other hand, the need to strengthen its structure to maintain a capacity to compete and defend itself against potential aggressions and conflicts. The population easily forgets the successes achieved in integration, and public opinion is often hijacked by national issues. On their part, Christian churches face a radical change marked, in a secular evolution, by the autonomy of politics, science, and economics against a religious space relegated to elective - sometimes arbitrary - decisions in a strictly personal sphere. Churches encounter difficulties in communicating with new cultures, often remaining confined to traditional expressions of faith. In the Catholic Church, the Second Vatican Council marked a significant turning point by proposing a positive Christian view of the contemporary world. Nonetheless, a certain parallelism can be observed - on different levels - between European institutions and churches: in both cases, a broad

and mobilizing project is needed to move forward. The ecclesial resonances of certain *sovereignist* and populist movements cannot be ignored, and the temptation of dangerous alliances with extremist forces threatens religious groups in various ways. Faced with this, the Catholic Church sees the need to reaffirm the construction of open communities and the elaboration of constructive proposals that - although coming from minority religious forces in current Europe - can be beneficial for all, in line with the common good.

In his commentary, **Tomas Halik**, a professor at the Charles University in Prague, wonders whether secularization is an unintended effect of Christianity, or perhaps a "prodigal son" to be welcomed with affection and generosity. One of the characteristics of Western Catholic Christianity, unlike other traditions, is the separation of Church and State. There is no lack of statements from the Popes, from Paul VI, through Benedict XVI to Francis, recognizing the legitimate autonomy of politics and science, conditions of human freedom desired by the Creator. Hence an important difference between secularism, a fact, and secularism, an ideology. The current situation, in Europe as in other regions, offers an opportunity to reformulate Christianity towards a renewed understanding of catholicity, genuine fraternity, and a truly universal message. **Manuel Barrios**, Secretary-General of COMECE, speaks of "practical solidarity" as the framework for institutional dialogue and, beyond the formalities, expresses the desire for a more real dialogue with

European institutions. In this sense, Catholic bishops have wanted to publish an urgent reflection on the perspective of future enlargement of the Union, in a statement recently approved at the 2024 spring assembly of COMECE<sup>3</sup>, which constitutes “a strong message of hope for citizens seeking peace and justice.” In this text, the bishops decisively support enlargement; and describe the necessary steps for genuine dialogue and the necessary reforms on both sides, both in the Union and in candidate

countries for accession. Pastor **Alfredo Abad**, president of the Spanish Evangelical Church, observes the strange situation in which, on one hand, there is talk of secularization and a decline in religious practice, and on the other, we are surrounded by war conflicts laden with resentment and references rooted in religion. He makes a strong appeal to the Churches to assume the duty of spreading the values of dialogue and a “Europe with a heart” in their respective communities.

## Towards a European Citizenship Consciousness?

The final debate, moderated by **Paloma García Ovejero**, journalist and COPE correspondent in Brussels, started with statements by two moral authorities of recent European history.

**Herman van Rompuy**, former President of the Eu-

ropean Council, observed that we live in a different world compared to “before,” marked by a disintegration of traditional societies in all aspects. Differences are everywhere: the feeling of alienation towards Europe is not greater than that towards the national

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.comece.eu/comece-bishops-in-lomza-support-eu-future-enlargements-a-strong-message-of-hope-for-citizens-seeking-peace-and-justice/>

state. Reforming European democracy is not enough; the overall social approach must change. The answer requires greater participation of people in decision-making at all levels, starting from local communities. Charity begins at home but must immediately and simultaneously open up to others, whether they are immigrants or third countries. In our hyper-competitive environment, new dependencies, technological or economic, are created, contradicting the aspiration for individual freedom. New injustices and quests for responsibility emerge: who is responsible for climate policies? Who resolves conflicts around migrations? Overall, “social engineering” becomes more difficult and almost impossible to master, rendering some traditional Christian social doctrine approaches obsolete, based on a hierarchy of social spheres that no longer exist. But nostalgia is useless. Democracy is conversation: new communication groups, local or transnational, need to be developed to discover the paths of social reconstruction. And the EU remains attractive: just look at the countries wishing to join a system they see as freer and more responsive than other global geopolitical centers.

**Romano Prodi**, former President of the European Commission, noted that from a values perspective, the founders had it somewhat easier because they shared convictions and vision. Today, claiming the inspiration of Christian thought is challenging when the real influence of Christianity has visibly diminished. What can genuinely create a sense of citizenship lies in a simple idea: we need to do something together. We must generate proposals, develop a common project that directly addresses the problems of new inequalities. We are in an unfinished system; negotiations and compromises alone are not enough to complete it. We need a project. It is more difficult in today’s Europe due to its growing diversity after successive enlargements. But we must remember: we have exported democracy! Or rather: we have responded to the demand of those who wanted to import democracy. We have not imposed anything. But we must admit: we are in a difficult moment, where everyone is blackmailing each other. Permanent compromises do not lead us in the right direction. A grand project needs to be reformulated. Experience shows: for example, when the euro was established as a single currency, despite criticisms, Europe positioned itself – despite its relative

weakness – as a global monetary force, like the US dollar, against, for example, China. Europe can be respected when it is united.

In the subsequent debate, the moderator first asked: how to understand the term “community”? **Victoria Martín de la Torre**, journalist and member of the European Parliament documentation team, author of historical studies on the founders of European integration, recalled that the name *European Community* (used before the term *Union*) corresponded to Robert Schuman’s vision, who saw the construction of community as the way forward towards the long-term goal, which could be a federation. In line with Herman van Rompuy’s suggestion, building community is rooted in a vision of the person, who is born and develops in communities, a concept that differs from that of a social contract.

**Julio Martínez**, professor of moral theology at the Pontifical University of Comillas, expanded on this



**A grand project needs to be reformulated (...) Europe can be respected when it is united.**

vision of the person as a being in relationship, who creates community bonds, not in a sectarian manner, but opening up in the same movement towards other fully dignified people, beyond every border. For **Adrian Pabst**, deputy director of the National Institute of Economic and Social Research in the UK, Christian inspiration translates perfectly into the idea of a person in relationship and community. But today’s Europe appears to citizens as essentially directed towards national states and the market. How to put the nation-state and the market at the service of the person? From this depends whether a European citizen consciousness can be born and develop. Hasn’t too much power been concentrated at the level of European institutions, dominated by technocratic power, distancing decisions from local levels? The Christian vision is universalist, but with a bottom-up perspective, which would require radical reforms in the European structure.

Paloma García Ovejero asked if indeed the current





situation of relative citizen disengagement is not caused by a succession of crises. **Íñigo Méndez de Vigo**, former Spanish minister and former European parliamentarian, held the opposite view: Europe precisely distinguishes itself by responding to crises. Just ask: how would we be without Europe? Many citizens, born after 1985, are Europeans without knowing it; they have known nothing else. The freedom of movement seems natural to them. Only a cataclysm could make us see what we have gained... Disengagement can only be overcome with more education about Europe.

**Julio Martínez** expands his point of view: national crises and global challenges – such as the digital revolution and the transformation of work – would require responses inspired by the fundamental principles of dignity, subsidiarity, solidarity, and the common good. However, often the approach taken is contrary to these principles: personal rights are turned into subjective weapons that do not bind but rather allow for an autonomous, self-sufficient, and exclusive individuality. He cites the example of debates on the “right to abortion.” **Íñigo Méndez de Vigo** clarifies that abortion cannot be recognized as a right at the European level, as this would require amending the treaties. The family domain is not a European competence, and despite votes in the Parliament on non-binding motions, there is no possibility of European intervention in this matter.

In response to a new question about citizen participation, **Victoria Martín de la Torre** answers that European construction has always been nourished, at each stage, by different visions. The future is open: it is up to citizens who identify as Christians to act constructively, for example, by developing cross-border initiatives that create new community ties. Schuman already spoke of European construction as a “peaceful revolution.” **Adrian Pabst** believes that elections to the European Parliament are not enough to create the conditions for participatory citizenship. In his opinion, in addition to the important role of intermediate associations, reforms are needed that concretely signify closeness, reconciliation of conflicting interests, and respect for smaller coun-



tries. To explain the growing populism – and also Brexit – Pabst blames the lack of structural reforms and the excessive weight of European technocracy. Why not establish more direct relations between the European Parliament and national parliaments? Why maintain the monopoly of legislative initiative in the Commission? A question from the audience expresses a similar sentiment: are the institutions (Commission, Court of Justice) not overstepping by taking on competences not in the Treaties? **Íñigo Méndez de Vigo** disagrees: the competences of European institutions are proper and pertain to areas where there is a conviction that common action is better than that of the States. National and European legislative processes are different and should remain so. The European Court in Luxembourg is rigorous in respecting defined competences (even though it advances community law through its rulings, as is logical). The

European Commission, far from being a mere technical secretariat, plays a *sui generis* political role and is accountable to both the Council and the Parliament. It cannot be called pure technocracy. In fact, the Early Warning System, which allows national parliaments to halt Commission initiatives for invading national competences, has hardly ever been used. The moderator raises the issue of new enlargement, with about nine candidate countries awaiting their turn: will the Union be strengthened? **Julio Martínez** believes it is good to open a horizon of hope, for example, in the case of Ukraine, both for the candidate country and for current members: it is an expectation that can be inscribed in a vision of the common good. The real concern about the Union’s future does not lie in its enlargement but in the tendency of institutions to dissolve values that are more indispensable than ever for the present and future. Resisting this

destructive trend, religions – Christian, Jewish, Muslim – as long as they are not instrumentalized and manipulated, can be a useful pre-political foundation for reconstruction.

To several questions from the audience, **Romano Prodi** responds that multiple differences of opinion are inherent in the democratic system, which the European Union is inseparable from. Progress is irregular: suffice to remember that the citizens of France and the Netherlands voted in referendums against the European constitution project. But institutional development has continued despite the apparent setback. Closing the session, **Herman van Rompuy** answers a question that opposed the interests of politicians with those of the citizenry: it is very difficult to define the opinion of “the citizenry” when there is more diversity of opinions than ever. Just cite the situation in the Netherlands, with 29 parties represented in its national parliament. In recent years, with numerous coalition governments and political weakness in nearly half of the member countries, Europe has nonetheless achieved extraordinary results and demonstrated that agreements can be reached, difficult as it may seem, on issues such as post-pandemic economic recovery, support for Ukraine, or the immigration and asylum pact. There is no other path than dialogue, the basis of all democracy, at all levels, national and European, in search of ways for social reconstruction.

At the end of the day, with thanks to all speakers and participants, **Domingo Sugranyes** and **Jesús Avezuela** note the richness of the exchanges and the need to continue increasing knowledge and fostering debate on Europe, taking the opportunity to participate in an innovative political work that rises to global challenges and is inspired by its origins in the basic principles of human dignity. Within the framework of the Pablo VI Foundation, efforts will continue to contribute to the updating of these principles, in an exercise of the duty of European citizenship.

Domingo Sugranyes.  
Director of the ongoing Seminar

## Congress Programme

09:00h	Welcome
09:10h	Opening: <b>Greeting by the Presidents of the Paul VI Foundation, Bishop Ginés García, and of the Istituto Paolo VI, Prof. Angelo Maffei</b> Introduction: <b>Jesús Avezuela</b> . General Director of the Paul VI Foundation Presentation of the conference: <b>Domingo Sugranyes</b> . Director of the seminar
09:30h	Paper: <b>The post-war construction of Europe in the thought of Pope Paul VI</b> <b>Simona Negruzzo</b> . Professor, Università degli Studi di Pavia Comment: <b>Juan María Laboa</b> . Professor Emeritus, Universidad Pontificia Comillas Moderator: <b>Belén Becerril</b> . Full Professor of European Union Law at CEU San Pablo University
10:30h	Paper: <b>The Division of Powers between the EU and Member States: How does it affect Citizen Participation?</b> <b>Leopoldo Calvo-Sotelo</b> . Chief Counsel of the Council of State of the Kingdom of Spain Comments: <b>Markus Schlagnitweit</b> . Director, Katholische Sozialakademie Österreich <b>Carlo Muzzi</b> . Journalist, Il Giornale di Brescia Moderator: <b>Michele Bonetti</b> . President, Fondazione Tovini
11:40h	Break
12:15h	Paper: <b>Towards European Citizenship: The Fundamental Values of the European Union</b> <b>Francesco Bestagno</b> . Legal Adviser at the Permanent Representation of Italy to the European Union and professor at the Catholic University of Milan <b>A Values-driven Approach to the EU: Intercultural Dialogue and Active Citizenship</b> <b>Léonce Bekemans</b> , Jean Monnet Professor <i>ad personam</i> , Bruges, Belgium Moderator: <b>Pierpaolo Camadini</b> . President of Opera per l'Educazione Cristiana
13:30h	Lunch

15:00h	Paper: <b>Christian Churches in European Integration: A Response to Secularisation?</b> <b>Mons. Mariano Crociata</b> . President of COMECE Comments: <b>Tomas Halik</b> . Professor, Charles University, Prague <b>Manuel Barrios</b> . Secretary General of COMECE <b>Alfredo Abad</b> . President of the Spanish Evangelical Church Moderator: <b>Rafael Vázquez</b> . Secretary for Interconfessional Relations of the Spanish Bishops' Conference
16:30h	<b>Final debate: Towards a European Citizenship Consciousness?</b> <b>Herman van Rompuy</b> . Former President of the European Council <b>Romano Prodi</b> . Former President of the European Commission <b>Adrian Pabst</b> . Deputy Director at National Institute of Economic and Social Research, United Kingdom <b>Victoria Martín de la Torre</b> . European Parliament <b>Julio Martínez Martínez SJ</b> . Professor of Moral Theology, Universidad Pontificia Comillas <b>Íñigo Méndez de Vigo</b> . Former Minister of Education, Culture and Sports of Spain Moderator: <b>Paloma García Ovejero</b> . Journalist, COPE correspondent in Brussels
18:00h	<b>Closing of the conference</b> by <b>Jesús Avezuela</b> , general director of the Paul VI Foundation and <b>Domingo Sugranyes</b> , director of the seminar
18:15h	End of the day

Simultaneous translation Spanish - English - Italian



# Interventions

Here we present the full lectures delivered during the day, except for the final debate, which is included in the “Summary of the Conference” (page 108).

# Greetings

## Mons. Ginés García Beltrán, President of Fundación Pablo VI

Good morning everyone.

I greet you and welcome you on behalf of the Pablo VI Foundation of Madrid, which today hosts this International Conference on national construction and internationalism in Christian social thought, under the title “TOWARDS A PARTICIPATORY EUROPEAN CITIZENSHIP,” within the framework of the Ongoing Seminar, “How does Europe respond? Digital revolution and transformation of work.”

I greet His Excellency Archbishop Bernardito Auza, Apostolic Nuncio, who always honors us with his presence. I greet Professor Angelo Maffei, President of the Paolo VI Institute of Brescia, while expressing our joy for the honor that this cooperation between our two institutions, both named after the great Pope Paul VI, represents for our Foundation. It is a personal satisfaction for me to welcome you all here today.

I also greet all the speakers and participants in this Conference, to whom I thank for their presence and the contributions that will undoubtedly enrich our discussions.

Allow me a special greeting to His Excellency Bishop Mariano Crociata, President of COMECE, who today visits Spain for the first time since assuming the presidency of this European episcopal body.

Finally, I thank the family of the Pablo VI Foundation, its Director General, Mr. Jesús Avezuela, Mr. Domingo Sugranyes, Director of this Seminar, and all those who have made this Conference possible.

Paul VI “was a Europeanist,” wrote our regretted Eugenio Nasarre in “The views of Pope Montini” pub-



lished by this Foundation. “Profound reasons - of a biographical, doctrinal, and spiritual nature - led him to closely follow the process of European integration and to encourage its protagonists to strengthen and continue it without forgetting the roots of its origin” (Ibid).

“You dedicate your efforts to achieving a united and peaceful Europe. This ideal, to a very high degree beautiful and important, truly worthy of a new generation that has drawn useful lessons from the tragic experiences of the last wars; this responds to a vision - in Our opinion - modern and wise, of the current historical moment in which peoples live in a close mutual interdependence of interests; it is also fully in line with the Christian conception of human coexistence that tends to make the world one family of brotherly peoples. For this reason, dear sons and daughters, the Church gladly encourages you in your work. It is a very arduous goal, certainly, but one whose necessity appears vital for the Europe of tomorrow, and perhaps also for the entire world”: with these words full of relevance, Saint Paul VI addressed the participants of the National Congress of the “Young Europe” Center, in the midst of the celebration of the Second Vatican Council. The process of European unification is on the horizon.

The Pontiff, as he himself acknowledges, is not unaware of the difficulties he clearly describes, after praising the progress made to achieve a united Europe: “In reality, different conceptions and conflict-

ing interests, whose foundations we are far from ignoring, can sometimes attenuate the sense of solidarity, the primacy of the common good over particular interests, and the awareness of constituting a single political, cultural, economic entity in the process of formation.” To overcome these obstacles, “magnanimity, firmness, and coherence are required; sacrifices and renunciations are necessary from everyone.”

Many years have passed since Paul VI uttered these words; many of his wishes have been fulfilled in a united Europe. However, the challenges that the Pope pointed out remain extremely relevant. Our purpose with this conference is to continue reflecting on the old and new challenges of Europe.

Looking at the construction of Europe in the recent past, let us think of this new Europe as a space for participation for all of us, based on unity and diver-

## Professor Angelo Maffei, President of the Istituto Paolo VI

I am pleased to convey the greetings of the Pablo VI Institute of Brescia to all participants in this day of study dedicated to the theme Towards a Participatory European Citizenship. I cordially thank the Pablo VI Foundation of Madrid, which has graciously shared with us the conception and organization of this important gathering for in-depth exploration. The caliber of the

sity, dialogue and solidarity. We are all Europe, and we are all called to continue building it in this new context.

In this task, the Christian churches, together with other faiths, continue to feel called to give soul to Europe. Pope Paul VI himself said to European bishops in 1975: “to awaken the Christian soul of Europe, where its unity has its roots. This is the task of evangelization.”

I conclude with other words of Saint Paul VI in the same speech to the youth of Europe: “Working for the birth of a Europe finally peacefully united means contributing to bringing Europe back to the course of its ancient and glorious traditions of civilization, and at the same time means opening up broader horizons for the Christian faith, so that it can again ferment, with evangelical yeast, the structures of this old continent, to which the other Continents still have much to request.”

I wish you all a good and happy conference. Thank you.



individuals who accepted the invitation and agreed to contribute here underscores the significance of the chosen theme for the future of our countries and the entire European continent.

In the personal conversations that have taken place in recent years between the Pablo VI Foundation and the Paolo VI Institute, we have noted that, alongside a common inspiration linked to the name of the pope of Vatican II, our institutions have pursued different paths in their activities. The Paolo VI Institute has primarily focused on historical research, dedicating itself to the compilation of documents, the editing of sources related to the life and activities of Giovanni Battista Montini - Paul VI, and the study of his teachings and pastoral actions. The Pablo VI Foundation has primarily been devoted to updating the Church’s social doctrine in relation to the new problems posed by culture and society. These are different yet complementary paths of inquiry. And perhaps the challenge facing our cultural institutions - and many others - is precisely this: a creative fidelity, capable of preserving the legacy of the past and demonstrating its fertility for the present and the future.

# Introduction

## Jesús Avezuela, General Director of Fundación Pablo VI

Nuncio of the Holy See, President of the Pablo VI Foundation, authorities, professors, ladies and gentlemen, good afternoon and welcome to this international session of the Pablo VI Foundation, within the permanent seminar on Europe's response to the many issues arising around the digital revolution and the transformation that work is undergoing because of it.

Allow me to make a special mention of the Istituto Paolo VI. I must apologize because my Italian is not perfect. So, I thank its members and all the other speakers who have come here from other places. Thank you very much for coming.

I also send greetings to all those who are following us digitally, through the Fundación Pablo VI website.

First of all, I want to thank Domingo Sugranyes. He is the main organizer of this event, and therefore, I wish to convey my heartfelt congratulations to him.

As you all know, the Fundación Pablo VI, created by Cardinal Herrera Oria in 1968, is a cultural and higher education institution that manages residential and sociocultural works of various kinds and promotes educational projects in its various areas of action such as bioethics and science, dialogue with politics, culture and society, social economy, artificial intelligence, integral ecology or humanist leadership, among others.

Since the 1970s, the Foundation, through its Faculty of Social Sciences - later renamed the Faculty of Political Science and Sociology León XIII - has endeavored, with special emphasis, to disseminate Christian social thought applied to the then-called "New Technologies." In the 1990s, the Faculty and the Uni-

versity School of Information Technology and the Center for Technological and Social Studies were established. And currently, it promotes initiatives in the field of technology and artificial intelligence, to discuss the good governance of technological development and the economy and exploitation of digital data from the double perspective of the objectives pursued by the agents and their effects on society and with the cross-cutting of humanist and Christian thought.



**The digital revolution is one of the major projects that society is incorporating and, at the same time, one of the most difficult challenges that humanity faces today**

The permanent seminars that have been organized so far aim, with the intervention of experts from many public and private universities, institutions and the business sector, to reflect on the servitude or service represented by the digital footprint and the impact that the digital revolution is having on the transformation of work. This third seminar started in December 2023, studies whether and in what terms Europe intends to respond to all this. And it is within this third seminar (trilogy) that this international session, which we organized in collaboration with the Istituto Paolo VI I, is located.

The digital revolution is one of the major projects that society is incorporating and, at the same time, one of the most difficult challenges that humanity faces today. It opens up a whole world of opportunities, but at the same time presents many risks and dilemmas. As Jeremy Rifkin said in the late 1990s, the technological revolution influences all aspects of our lives: what we eat, who we go out and marry with; how we educate our children; what we work on; who we vote for; what economic models we want for our societies; how we express our faith; how we perceive the world around us and the place we occupy in it, ... In summary, artificial intelligence, as the design and development of technologies capable of emulating human intelligence and its mul-

multiple applications in the field of business and consumption, health, security, law or human mobility, among many others, opens the door to numerous challenges, doubts, and concerns. And all this becomes particularly complex to address when we see it on a global scale, with different social and cultural standards among the major geopolitical blocs such as the United States, the European Union or China. Where is Europe? What remains of its Christian thought, its values, and principles, when it comes to applying them to these new projects that present themselves to us?

To give us a detailed view of all this, I give the floor to the director of these seminars, Domingo Sugranyes. Thank you very much.



## Domingo Sugranyes Bickel, Director of the ongoing Seminar

This conference has been prepared in collaboration with the Istituto Paolo VI of Concesio, in Brescia. I would like to join in the thanks already expressed: we feel very grateful and honored to be able to present this truly joint initiative, which was born a year and a half ago in the beautiful premises of the museum, near the birthplace of Pope Paul VI. And, especially, thanks to Professor Simona Negruzzo, who has been a very effective correspondent throughout these months of joint work. Thanks to her and her colleagues at the Istituto Paolo VI, today's program has become an authentically European and international program.

The day is part of the seminar on socio-economic ethics of this Foundation: an effort of understanding and

reflection on the ongoing technological revolution and the future of human work, which we wanted to carry out with multidisciplinary contributions and with sufficient time for a real dialogue to take place. Always, of course, in line with Christian social thought, but with an intention to address the most current issues.

Our work program from 2023 to 2025 is ambitious: from the geopolitical - trying to place Europe within the complicated game of global powers - through demography, migrations, cultural wars, to return to the economy, the future of work and income distribution. We want to try to find out what future the "social market economy" model has, how we will position ourselves in a context dominated by the pow-

erful oligopolies of the digital sphere. These are phenomena that transcend national borders. To what extent are European institutions able to respond to channeling this evolution, to provide a framework that protects freedoms and the common good and, at the same time, promotes European competitiveness?

In this context, we wanted to take a break today and reflect on European citizenship. It is a debated topic: here as in other countries, not everyone looks favorably on European integration. We will not enter this debate: all today's speakers are "Europeanists". But what does it mean to be a Europeanist? How do we relate to this constantly evolving supranational reality? Is it compatible with the national political horizon (not to mention nationalist)? We are called to vote in a few weeks, but what exactly do European parliamentarians represent us for?

It is fair to remember that Christian social thought inspired, among other traditions, the founders of European construction. But, being in this house, we cannot help but wonder about the Christian contribution in today's secularized world, where the voice of the Church - our voice - is minority and often not understood. The heritage of social ethics of the Christian Churches must be updated, so that it continues to provide something necessary - perhaps more necessary than ever - in today's Europe. To achieve this, probably, first: rediscover for ourselves what the central points of the Christian message about society are, without nostalgia for the music of the past.

- To begin, we will listen to Prof. Negruzzo evoking the thoughts of Pope Paul VI on Europe in the 1960s, and Prof. Laboa's response on the influence of Pope Montini in the Spain of that time, still distant from democratic consensus.
- In the second session, we will leap into the present with a distinguished Spanish constitutionalist, Leopoldo Calvo-Sotelo, who will be commented upon by an Austrian professor of Christian social teachings, Dr. Schlagnitweit, and an Italian journalist, Dr. Carlo Muzzi, to inquire how the participation of citizens is affected by the fact that a significant part of sovereignty now effectively resides in European institutions, which remain distant.
- The third session will provide us with reflections

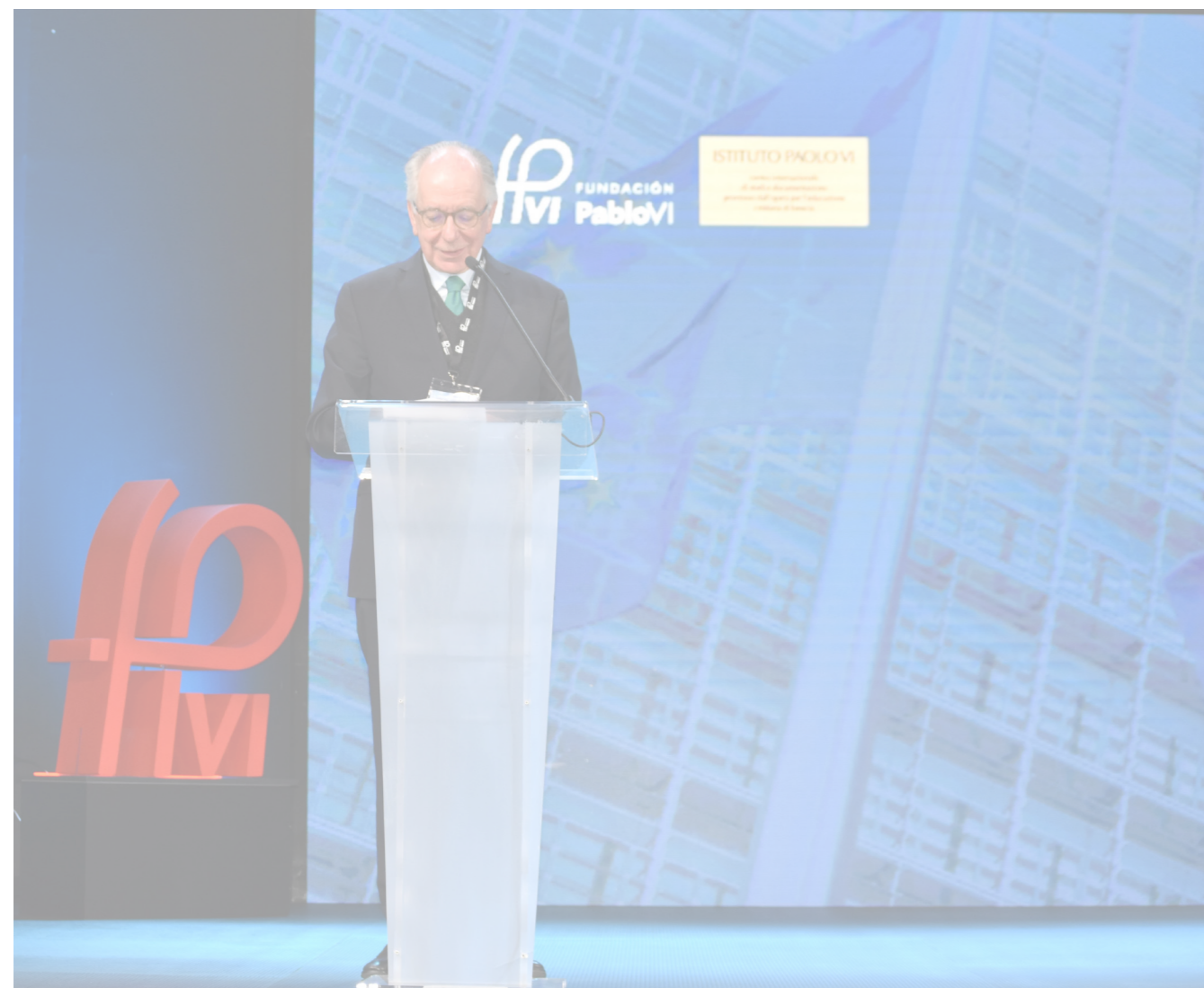
from two highly distinguished specialists, Prof. Bestagno and Prof. Bekemans, to understand to what extent European construction continues to be based on values and how these foundations are understood within the multicultural reality that is ours.

- After lunch, we will hear from the president of the Committee of European Episcopal Conferences, Bishop Crociata, about the role of Christian churches in the context of a secularized Europe, with responses from qualified voices from various sectors of European Christianity.
- And, to conclude, we will open a multiple dialogue after hearing from two frontline leaders, Presidents van Rompuy and Prodi, who will be answered by former Spanish minister Íñigo Méndez de Vigo, English researcher Adrian Pabst, a prominent figure from the European Parliament, Victoria Martín de la Torre, and a distinguished Spanish professor of moral theology, Julio Martínez.

All to nourish our own reflection and help us fully embrace that indeed: we are citizens of the European Union, we have corresponding rights, and we must exercise our duty of citizenship.



**But what does it mean to be a Europeanist? How do we relate to this constantly evolving supranational reality? Is it compatible with the national political horizon (not to mention nationalist)? We are called to vote in a few weeks, but what exactly do European parliamentarians represent us for?**





# First Session: Paul VI, Europe and Spain

# The Pope Paul VI and Europe

Simona Negruzzo,

Professor at Università degli Studi di Pavia

*This study day, which is the result of the collaboration of two institutions named after Paul VI, could not fail to open with a broad outline of Giovanni Battista Montini's thinking on the construction of Europe. We owe to him a profound reflection on the roots of our continent and the conviction that an extraordinary cultural, moral and spiritual heritage binds us together. Becoming aware of Europe as a 'teacher of true progress' can be a stimulus to face the challenges of our present.*

On Monday 11 September 1978 at the opening of Parliament's session, President Emilio Colombo paid tribute to Paul VI who died at Castelgandolfo on the evening of 6 August. It was not a formal eulogy, but rather a participatory and moving speech, intended to retrace the main lines of a pontificate animated by a "message of reconciliation in a world torn by conflicts"<sup>1</sup>. The entire magisterium of Pope Montini had been inspired, according to Colombo, by a high ideal in defence of man and especially in favour of the poor and oppressed, and sustained by a deep yearning for justice and peace.

A mission, that of Paul VI, which although universal had always retained a particular focus on the Old Continent, calling for genuine reconciliation, exhorting the exercise of responsibility for building a united and pacified Europe, and asserting its Christian identity in the spiritual, moral and religious fields and as the main, though not sole, source of Western culture and thought.

In the course of his pontificate, Paul VI spoke on these themes on several occasions, entrusting to speeches, messages and letters his thoughts, matured through his previous experiences, that con-

tributed to nourishing his European vocation (from the family and Oratorian environment in Brescia, to that of ecclesiastical assistant to the Federation of Italian Catholic University Students, from his diplomatic service in the Vatican Secretariat of State, to that of pastor of the Milanese diocese), a voice that was always lucid, direct and participatory, oriented towards promoting dialogue and solidarity. The fundamental guidelines of his thought go back to a large extent to the Europeanist and globalist intuitions of the pre-pontifical period and his relationship with authors such as Hilaire Belloc, Antonio Rosmini or Romano Guardini, but always brought up to date and confronted with the problems and expectations of European peoples in the war and post-war years, revitalised by the assiduous exchange with his brother Lodovico, tireless advocate of the European Union and long-time Italian representative to the Strasbourg Parliament, and comforted by the teachings of Pius XII and John XXIII, two 'European' popes, i.e., contemporaries of the birth of the Community institutions, which were warmly encouraged and welcomed with deep sympathy by the Catholic Church.

Scrolling through the speeches, Montini's approach to European issues appears in all its evidence. Meeting the participants at the congress of the associations belonging to the Young Europe Centre on 8 September 1965, he presented the ideal of a united and pacified Europe in this way:

"You dedicate your efforts to the achievement of a united and peaceful Europe. This is an extremely beautiful and important ideal, worthy indeed of a new generation that has learnt useful lessons from

the tragic experiences of recent wars; it responds to a vision, which We consider modern and wise, of the present moment in history, in which peoples live in a close interdependence of interests among themselves; it is fully in conformity with the Christian conception of human coexistence, which tends to make the world a single family of fraternal peoples. Therefore, beloved Sons, the Church willingly encourages you in your work. It is a very arduous goal, it is true, but one whose necessity appears vital for the Europe of tomorrow, and even perhaps for the whole world"<sup>2</sup>.

These concepts are reiterated in the message sent to the Council of Europe on 26 January 1977, a sort of spiritual testament on the European unification process in which the echo of *Populorum progressio* resounds. Europe according to Paul VI, linking itself to the worldwide perspective of the encyclical, is, first and foremost, a continent of peace and solidarity, it must help the progress of the poorest peoples and cannot be perceived only as a trade alliance. According to Montini, the goal of true peace was to be achieved not only by breaking off hostilities, but also

by overcoming the mutual hatreds and resentments arising from the wars that had marked Europe in the first half of the 20th century.

Reconciliation must be implemented at all levels and among all men, committing to solidarity between nations and peoples. In the wake of *Pacem in Terris*, Montini manifested his resolute commitment to the equality of peoples and men in *Populorum Progressio*. The profound imbalance between the wealth of the industrialised countries and the starving world led him to take sides in favour of the most disadvantaged, while stating that:

"our gaze goes more willingly beyond Europe, towards developing countries; however, Europe remains at the centre of our concerns, our esteem and our trust".

Paul VI was confident that Europeans were aware that the European Union was called by history and vocation to also take on the problems of the world:

"We have the firm hope that Europe, finally unified, will not disappoint the expectation of mankind".

<sup>2</sup> Speech by Paul VI to the participants at the National Congress of the 'Young Europe' Centre, Wednesday 8 September 1965.



<sup>1</sup> Archives historiques du Parlement européen, *Débats de la Session 1978-1979, Éloge funèbre*, EU.HAEU/PEO.AP.DE.1978//DE19780911-02 In Pietro Conte, *I Papi e l'Europa. Documents. Pius XII, John XXIII, Paul VI*, 1978, p. 351.





The process of European integration, which Montini has lived and known since its inception, is considered by him to be a peaceful revolution carried out between nations in order to implement the common ideal that binds them, namely the construction of a more humane, fairer Europe without discrimination. This is the model invoked for future generations:

“We believe that the youth of Europe aspire to this rapprochement by repudiating those barriers whose meaning they no longer understand”.

Paul VI was aware how much it was incumbent on the younger generations to understand the value of this unifying construction that must harmonise particular riches and intermediate responsibilities in view of a higher common good:

“We are firmly convinced that the cause of European unification will eventually triumph over all obstacles. The latter may perhaps hinder and even slow down, but not definitively halt the march towards unity of those peoples whose history and geography lead them to understand each other and not to live in an unstable equilibrium or in a situation of continuous antagonisms”.

Likewise, as universal pastor, he takes upon himself the task of instilling trust and hope:

“This ministry imposes upon us the duty to promote and encourage everything that may help to lower the barriers between men and nations, and lead them to a fraternal understanding. And although this duty is universal in scope, it applies first and foremost to the group of nations which a historical community of destiny has brought together and which an affinity of traditions invites to fraternise in a more special way. This is the case with Europe and it is for this reason that anything that can accelerate its unification seems to us to be an important contribution to the building of world peace that all men of good will so ardently desire”<sup>3</sup>.

European identity is central in Montini’s lexicon, that of the soul of the continent. The Pontiff is fully aware that “Catholicism unfortunately covers only part of the European area”, but he is equally convinced of the importance of the Christian tradition, “an undeniable fact” and “an integral part of Europe”.

Meeting with different groups, Paul VI was able to describe how the unification process was able to materialise by responding to the profoundly dynamic vision

of a ‘Europe on the move’, a perspective that helped to interpret and discern the historical events of the Old Continent. From the texts we can see how much he was pleased over the progress made and trembled before the difficulties, the moments of stagnation and regression, while lucidly recognising the significance and value of the different European institutions, albeit aware of their limitations and of the incomplete realisation of their potential.

Hence the willingness, at times the courage, to take concrete initiatives such as the permanent accreditation of representatives of the Holy See to European institutions or to send its own representatives to international meetings, such as the Helsinki Conferences



**Paul VI was aware how much it was incumbent on the younger generations to understand the value of this unifying construction that must harmonise particular riches and intermediate responsibilities in view of a higher common good**

of 1973 and 1975 mentioned in the letter sent to Agostino Casaroli, secretary of the then Council for Public Church Affairs:

“We wanted to give our encouragement to an initiative that, presenting itself as aimed at promoting the much desired and priceless good of peace, was of great importance, not only for the peoples of Europe, but for the entire family of nations”<sup>4</sup>.

What Europe has, what the course of history has given it, must according to Paul VI contribute to the benefit of all humanity:

“At the arrival stage of this long and often tormented history, by virtue of the variety of contributions that each people of this continent with its own

genius has bestowed upon it, Europe has an ideal heritage that represents a common heritage: this patrimony is essentially based on the Christian message, proclaimed to all its peoples who have accepted it and made it their own; it includes, in addition to the sacred values of faith in God and the inviolability of consciences, the values of equality and human fraternity, the dignity of thought dedicated to the search for truth, individual and social justice, and law understood as a criterion of behaviour in relations between citizens, institutions and States”.

Alongside the Europe of solidarity and peace, that of dialogue, addressed to the entire continent. Not only, therefore, to the countries of Western Europe, whose importance in the construction of community institutions is recognised, but also open to lay people and non-believers, and therefore also to Central and Eastern Europe dominated by Communist regimes. The Holy See’s participation in the conferences was very important both because it represented a moment of union of all European countries under the banner of security and cooperation, and because the principle of religious freedom was introduced in the Final Act, not only for believers, but for all men, in the spirit of the conciliar declaration *Dignitatis humanae*: “Within this framework the participating States will recognize and respect the freedom of the individual to profess and practice, alone or in community with others, religion or belief acting in accordance with the dictates of his own conscience” (Art. 7).

The building of Europe for Montini is rooted and guaranteed in the profound cultural and spiritual dimension that cannot be reduced to technical or economic issues. There is a need for “a soul supplement” for Europe<sup>5</sup> that goes beyond, informs and fills with meaning the same economic, social, political and institutional achievements. In his view, a high ethical-political ideal is at stake:

“For if a united Europe is to be created, it must not be an artificial creation, imposed from outside, but must arise as an expression from within the individual peoples; it must be generated as the fruit of

<sup>3</sup> Discours du Pape Paul VI aux membres de la Section agricole du Comité économique et social de la Communauté économique européenne, Samedi 3 avril 1965.

<sup>4</sup> Lettre du pape Paul VI à Mgr Agostino Casaroli à l’occasion de la Conférence à Helsinki, 25 juillet 1975.

<sup>5</sup> Quotation taken from Holy Father Paul VI’s Speech: ‘En accueillant’, 28 November 1968.

persuasion and love, not as a technical and perhaps fatal result of political and economic forces”<sup>6</sup>.

European unity is not a solitary or exclusive endeavour, but is built together, thanks to the commitment of each, through the service that all are called upon to perform:

“Your noble endeavour eloquently illustrates what men can do, when they unite with one another, for one another, and renounce being above or against one another. Persevere in this peaceful endeavour, and let it serve the common good of Europe and the world: this is Our dearest wish”<sup>7</sup>.



**The building of Europe for Montini is rooted and guaranteed in the profound cultural and spiritual dimension that cannot be reduced to technical or economic issues.**

The pre-eminence given to ideal values, the formation and dissemination of a humanitarian mentality and a common culture is evident in the belief that

“the Catholic faith can be a coefficient of incomparable value to infuse spiritual vitality into that fundamental unitary culture, which should be the animation of a socially and politically unified Europe”<sup>8</sup>.

Following in the footsteps of Pope Pacelli, Paul VI considered the Christian faith to be the soul of Europe,

<sup>6</sup> Speech by Paul VI to the participants at the National Congress of the ‘Young Europe’ Centre, Wednesday 8 September 1965.

<sup>7</sup> Discours du Pape Paul VI aux membres de la Haute Autorité de la Communauté européenne du charbon et de l’acier, Vendredi 8 octobre 1965.

<sup>8</sup> Speech by Pope Paul VI to the Italian Catholic University Federation, Monday 2 September 1963.

<sup>9</sup> Discours du Pape Paul VI aux participants au symposium des évêques d’Europe, Samedi, 18 octobre 1975.

<sup>10</sup> Discours du Pape Paul VI au Groupe Démocrate Chrétien du Parlement européen, Mercredi 14 octobre 1964.

Christianity to be the heritage and inheritance of European history and its criterion for unification:

“Paraphrasing the famous *Epistle* to Diognetus, we could say: what the soul is in the body, Christians are in the world, in this world of Europe. Oh! Certainly, as in the time of Diognetus, they must bear witness in poverty, in misunderstanding, in contradiction, even in persecution. But if their challenge has the humility of the Gospel, it also has its vigour, it brings salvation to all”<sup>9</sup>.

It should be noted, however, that this reference to the Christian soul of Europe excluded for Paul VI any nostalgia for the Middle Ages and its Christianity and focused rather on the contents, ultimately traceable to the rights of the human person which constitute that

“human, moral and religious heritage, largely inspired by the Gospel, which has ensured and continues to ensure this continent a unique influence in the history of civilisation”<sup>10</sup>.

If in 1947 Pius XII had proclaimed St. Benedict the spiritual father of Europe, Paul VI not only proclaimed him the patron saint of Europe, but in 1977 he also called the European Convention on Human Rights a ‘milestone on the path to the union of peoples’.



Montini’s Europe, where the East appears to be “one of the fundamental points for the definitive organisation of European society”, is not and cannot be closed in on itself, but must open up to the perspectives of the world. Against any resurgent Eurocentric temptation, with a view to the redemption of the whole of humanity, European unity appears as one of the most important steps towards the unification of the world.

Hence the consideration of Europe’s historical mission, which consists first and foremost in being a ‘teacher of true progress’, helping developing peoples (Africa above all) not to repeat the same mistakes experienced in their own history, that is, to achieve technical and material progress, but animated and sustained by that necessary ‘soul supplement’ brought by moral and spiritual progress.

For Paul VI, this mission also includes the work of peace-building, in the knowledge that “a united Europe would be a great step towards world peace”<sup>11</sup>. This unity, starting from the Western portion, is a strategically indispensable instrument for achieving peace, both for overcoming the nationalistic division of mankind and for the exemplary formation of continental aggregations that reduce persistent international antagonisms.

The perspective with which Montini looks at Europe is a purely pastoral one. Since “nothing that concerns the

true good of mankind is foreign to the Church”<sup>12</sup>. And if the Church is interested in the problems of Europe, it does so by exercising a formative commitment to its citizens:

“a considerable task has been accomplished on the road to a united Europe both at the summit and at the level of local authorities, and everyone can see the happy consequences of these initiatives. Let this be an encouragement to persevere with energy and constancy. [...] The roads may be different to reach this Europe of tomorrow. You all know from experience how the advent of a united Europe raises delicate political, economic, social and psychological problems. Better than anyone else, you are aware of this complexity and strive, according to the means you consider most effective, to gradually resolve its various aspects”<sup>13</sup>.

In this sense, speaking at the European Movement conference:

“Indeed, we also have the great and onerous responsibility to preach the Gospel and to make all men heirs and sisters of the pastoral mission that, over the centuries, has regarded Europe as a united Christianity, albeit clearly differentiated into distinct groups, whose mission was to educate according to their own genius. We too are for a United Europe! We cannot but hope that the process from which Europe is to emerge more united, freer from interests more closely bound to mutual aid systems, is progressing and achieving concrete and definitive results”<sup>14</sup>.

Hence the emergence in Paul VI of the importance of greater cooperation and communion between the European Bishops’ Conferences and the underlining of the tasks of Christians called to draw from their faith

<sup>11</sup> Discours du Pape Paul VI à l’ambassadeur de Belgique près le Saint-Siège, Jeudi 19 décembre 1968.

<sup>12</sup> Discours du Pape Paul VI aux représentants des différentes organisations européennes, Vendredi, 17 avril 1964.

<sup>13</sup> Discours du Pape Paul VI aux participants aux VII<sup>es</sup> États généraux des communs et des autres pouvoirs locaux européens, Dimanche, 17 octobre 1964.

<sup>14</sup> Discours du Pape Paul VI aux participants à la Conférence du Mouvement Européen, Samedi 9 novembre 1963.

the inspiration for a commitment that knows how to emphasise and realise the equality and dignity of the human person, the overcoming of an individualistic ethic and the sense of solidarity in the conviction that working for European unification is a responsible moral choice and a duty proper to the moment in history. Montini adhered to the idea of an institutional construction of Europe, very open to all solutions in favour of peace, but at the same time firm on positions of principle, especially in the face of the Soviet Union and the alliance of the countries of the West with the United States. He was convinced that only political and military union could protect peace and that this would be guaranteed by building a reconciled and united Europe<sup>15</sup>. In short, the Europe dreamed of by Paul VI must become ever more united to better serve the progress of the less fortunate peoples, working also to prepare together with the countries of the East, - provisionally separated, a common and fraternal future, European unity from the Atlantic to the Urals. On 26 January 1977 for the inauguration of the 'Palace of Europe' in Strasbourg (today the seat of the Council of Europe, but from 1977 to 1999 of the European Parliament) he wrote:

“While respecting the different currents of civilisation and the competences of civil society, the Church offers its help to affirm and develop the common heritage that is particularly rich in Europe. Unity must be lived before it is defined”<sup>16</sup>.

His words calling for a Europe in solidarity and with a strong and coherent soul shine a new light for us today. Words that not only form the background to Pope Francis' pastoral action, but are now widely shared: just think of the calls for 'European solidarity' and the need for 'community' launched by Jürgen Habermas and Zygmunt Bauman. Words that, therefore, need a new, concrete translation. That is, of a political solution that goes beyond so-called functionalist European integration in favour of an integration of peoples in which that deep soul of Europe to which Paul VI referred is recognised.

For us too, then, in view of the day ahead, Paul VI's wish can still resound:

“God bless your efforts, [...] and your labours in the service of the cause of Europe”<sup>17</sup>.

<sup>15</sup> Carlo Maria Martini, *Un impegno rinnovato che nasce dalla memoria*, in *Montini e l'Europa*, edited by Ferdinando Citterio, Luciano Vaccaro, Brescia, Morcelliana, 2000, pp. 19-32.

<sup>16</sup> Message du Pape Paul VI au Conseil de l'Europe, 26 janvier 1977.

<sup>17</sup> Discours du Pape Paul VI aux membres de la Section agricole du Comité économique et social de la Communauté économique européenne, Samedi 3 avril 1965.



## Paul VI and Spain

### Juan María Laboa, Emeritus Professor at the Pontifical University of Comillas

Simona Negruzzo has offered us a focused and comprehensive view of Pope Paul VI's support for the construction of a united Europe, with faithful approaches to its history. I would like to outline, as a complement to what Professor Negruzzo has expressed, the decisive support of this Pope for the democratization of Spanish society, through a Church faithful to conciliar principles and free from political options inherited from the cruelty of the civil war and a past of extremism.

Let us briefly recall the youthful support of Father Bevilacqua for Christian Democracy and the involvement of Giorgio Montini in the early stages of Luigi Sturzo's People's Party. Giovanni Battista Montini experienced Mussolini's dictatorship, closely followed his father's career, and maintained an intense relationship with young people who later became important Christian democrats. All of them shared the idea of the importance of a cohesive Europe based on common culture and ideals, and by the interaction of its countries. It could be argued that Montini's Europeanist option emerged in this conducive family environment and developed in his culture, readings, dealings with intellectuals, especially French, and with important European politicians.

I want to highlight that his concern and dedication to the Christian and social formation of university students had similarities in our country with the attempt and dedication of Herrera Oria to the organization and training of young people in Catholic Action and the subsequent structuring of the Catholic Action of Propagandists. Many years later, Paul VI will create Cardinal Ángel Herrera Oria.

On the other hand, let us remember the important conciliar document *Gaudium et Spes*, which influenced the formation and actions of many young Spaniards, affirming that a political-legal order based on democratic freedoms is more in line with human dignity. Also, remember that this document legitimized the political pluralism of Catholics, while rejecting all political repression. There is no doubt that the documents *Dignitatis humanae*, *Gaudium et Spes*, and *Christus Dominus* provided arguments and convictions to apostolic groups and Spanish priests in their struggle for the restoration of democracy in our country.

“His words calling for a Europe in solidarity and with a strong and coherent soul shine a new light for us today. Words that not only form the background to Pope Francis' pastoral action, but are now widely shared”

Having made these preliminary notes, I want to point out, as a complement to Professor Negruzzo's intervention, the proven personal conviction that Paul VI, with his words and decisions, effectively helped Spain to become part of the united Europe, a reality from which the Franco regime and the pre-conciliar Church were far removed<sup>18</sup>.

### An early suspicion

The reservations that Montini provoked from the beginning in the Francoist political world have been stud-

ied and are known, both due to his French education and his suspected closeness to Italian Christian De-

<sup>18</sup> Juan María Laboa, *Pablo VI, España y el Concilio Vaticano Segundo*. Madrid 2017



mocracy. Since the early years of the Franco regime, Montini's figure began to be judged with severity and suspicion.

The repeated accusation by some Spanish ambassadors against him consisted of the close relations that members of the Secretariat of State, and especially Monsignor Montini, maintained with Italian Christian Democracy, a genuine bogeyman for many. Montini's French culture was also, in their eyes, a reason explaining his supposed aversion to Franco's political regime. On the occasion of Maritain's death

(1973), Jacques Nobécourt recalled the influence that the philosopher had exerted on his friend Montini. Nobécourt described Maritain as the inspirer of "montinianism"<sup>19</sup>.

On the other hand, in the reports sent by the English representative to his ministry in 1947, they expressed the opinion expressed by Substitute Montini on the convenience of restoring a moderate monarchy in Spain<sup>20</sup>. This is one of the few opinions expressed by Montini on the subject that has come down to us. Furthermore, we cannot forget that being considered a Maritainian Montini already constituted a stigma and a danger for the Francoist world, because of the philosopher's opinions on Franco's uprising and the ensuing civil war.

The "Montini case" exploded in Spain on October 9, 1962, on the occasion of the telegram that the Archbishop of Milan sent to Franco at the request of Milanese university students, motivated by the news of a death sentence pronounced by a military court against university student Jorge Conill. The Cardinal's telegram read: "In the name of Milanese Catholic students and my own, I beg Your Excellency for clemency for students and workers sentenced so that human lives may be spared, and so that public order in a Catholic nation can be defended differently than in countries without faith and Christian customs."

This telegram constituted an attack on the Francoist confessional regime's very foundation, making some ministers<sup>21</sup> and quite a few bishops very nervous. It served to launch an emotional campaign against the Cardinal of Milan in Spain and, at the same time, to alert with illusion and hope to many Spaniards who desired a more European Spain. Both the incident and the reactions of some bishops and priests demonstrated to Montini that for many Spanish bishops, their alignment with government policy was of great importance in their episcopal approach.

The whole history of Paul VI's disagreement with the Spanish regime is foreseen in this event, not because this telegram was the cause, but rather because it manifested what Montini thought of the Spanish regime, and the impossible understanding and accept-

ance of it from his democratic upbringing and his historical rejection of Italian fascism, as it appeared in his

family environment and in his years dedicated to the formation of FUCI youth.

## Pope Paul VI's project for Spain

The pontificate of Paul VI coincided with a profound change in the Spanish Church, in line with the conciliar model, and with the modernization and democratization of its society. Both phenomena had relevant concomitances and mutual interferences. Our thesis and conviction are that the Pope, for pastoral and personal reasons, clearly opted for a Church not enslaved to the political regime and acted decisively accordingly.

In the implementation of this project and decision of Pope Montini, the following trusted men were essential: Benelli, a very close man to the pontiff, who

had worked in the Spanish Nunciature and knew the country very well, whom Paul VI appointed Substitute of the Secretariat of State; the Nuncio in Venezuela Dadaglio, whom he sent as nuncio to Madrid with very specific instructions, and Tarancón, whom he appointed Archbishop of Madrid and appointed as President of the Episcopal conference to deeply renew the Spanish episcopate, which was deeply anchored in the past. Also to be taken into account is Nuncio Riberi, an archbishop close to the pope, and Cardinal Villot, Secretary of State.

## A speech signaling his concern

On June 24, 1969, in his response speech to Cardinal Tisserant, on the occasion of the sixth anniversary of his election, Paul VI departed from the theme of the meeting and stated: "Allow me to address a thought of paternal affection, not without a certain concern, to Spain, to our venerated brothers in the Episcopal Order; to the especially dear children, to whom the priesthood has made equally our brothers and collaborators in the Ministry of Salvation; to the working world, to the youth, and to all the citizens of that nation.

Certain situations sometimes do not leave our children indifferent and provoke reactions in them that, of course, cannot find sufficient justification in the ardor of youth, but which, nevertheless, can at least suggest a lenient understanding.

We truly wish for this noble country an orderly and peaceful progress, and for this, we hope that there will not be a lack of intelligent courage in the promotion of social justice, whose principles the Church

has clearly outlined. The active presence of pastors among the people—and we ardently desire that this presence can also be given in the vacant dioceses—, their action, always unmistakable as men of the Church, will succeed in preventing the repetition of painful episodes and will lead the good aspirations of the clergy, and above all, of the young priests, in the right direction."

This was probably the most serious and direct reflection pronounced by a Pope addressing a country in a public act<sup>22</sup>. We cannot forget that these words are included in the context of a speech in defense of human rights. Indeed, it was a committed call for attention both to the Spanish public authorities and to the ecclesiastics.

In an audience granted to the Spanish ambassador Garrigues, Paul VI expressed that the hierarchy should show understanding towards Catholic laypeople. "Think, Mr. Ambassador, about the state of Spanish seminaries, the very serious crisis in which the

<sup>19</sup> Le Monde, 25 January 1973

<sup>20</sup> Public Record Office. Foreign Office 371-89498

<sup>21</sup> Manuel Fraga, Memoria breve de una vida pública, Barcelona 1980, p.99

<sup>22</sup> Cardinal Villot informed Ambassador Garrigues that the words spoken by the Pope "had been of his own inspiration; that he knew it because the Pontiff had told him so, that before taking that step, he had prayed and asked much so that what he might say would have only a positive sense and would be interpreted by the Spaniards in the spirit of love for Spain in which they were inspired. That until the last moment, he was correcting this text." AMAEC, R-37.498

Society of Jesus finds itself, the situation of Catholic Action, where the most prominent leaders and those most traditionally attached to this organization have been eliminated, and, through it, to the Church. It has been a massive separation that has occurred, with incalculable consequences for the very life and future of Catholic Action in Spain.” Garrigues, as a conclusion of the audience, wrote to Franco: “The non-elevation to the cardinalate in the last Consistory of the Archbishop of Madrid undoubtedly had to do with this matter.”<sup>23</sup>

In his determined attempt to renew the Spanish Church, striving for the Council to be better known and followed, the Pope supported the attempt of Spanish Catholic Action, in its various branches, to reflect, organize, and act in accordance with the conciliar documents, without subordinating themselves to the political spirit of the prevailing political regime and to many bishops.

It was, therefore, a call to the public authorities, a painful reminder of the situation of Spanish Catholic Action, and a decided rejection of the attack by some bishops that effectively ended it. It was also a very serious call for a more sensitive vigilance towards the concerns and aspirations of young people.

## Coordinated Action

The pope, who had dealt with the Spanish bishops in the council sessions and was aware of their division and the identification of a significant portion of them with Franco’s politics, showed willingness to favor and support the conciliar option of a good number of Spanish Catholics and bishops.

In February 1973, Pope Paul VI received the credentials from Ambassador Lojendio. In his speech, he expressed this support: “The Church, faithful to its mission of selfless service, could not remain indifferent to the just aspirations that bubble up with increasing vivacity in the human spirit every day, nor remain neutral in the processes of change taking place in the world, in which fundamental spiritual and moral values are at stake, such as fraternal love, justice, civic



and religious freedom.” It was not a matter of navigating between two waters, but rather of opting for a shore that was not traditional, and defending values that necessarily clashed with those defended by the dominant political regime.

That Paul VI had a plan for Spain was demonstrated when he personally chose Tarancón as the Archbishop of Madrid: “This is my affair,” he indicated. When entrusting him with the archdiocese, he said, “This is a very difficult moment for the Spanish Church. You are going to be elected president of the Episcopal Conference (...) Also, normally, there will soon be significant changes in Spain, and for that moment of

transition, I need a man of full trust in Madrid.”<sup>24</sup> “It can be truthfully affirmed,” commented the cardinal, “that this appointment was the full confirmation that the Holy See deemed a change of direction in the attitude of the Spanish hierarchy indispensable.”<sup>25</sup> “I had personal help from Paul VI to discern and to apply it afterward. When problems arose, I requested an audience and it was granted to me immediately.” “Indeed, I speak with the Pope, a problem arises, and sometimes there are things a little difficult, and I ask for his guidance. I remember that on one occasion I told him that I had to make a decision, and Paul VI re-

plied to me, ‘Go ahead. I am here.’ So, in addition to discernment, there was all the moral strength that the Pope gave me.”<sup>26</sup>

When Tarancón and Tabera were created cardinals (March 28, 1969), they visited the Pope in an audience that lasted an hour. After being informed by them about the Spanish political reality, the Church-politics relations, the Episcopal Conference, and the changes noticeable within it, Paul VI entrusted them with his concerns and projects. Tarancón writes: “He spoke to us about the priests, especially the young priests, asking us bishops to pay special attention to them and to gather, as much as possible, their concerns. He strongly insisted on priestly spirituality and on the need for us to overcome the division that was beginning among the clergy.

He alluded to the course of politics. On the one hand, he praised the sincerely Christian spirit of the rulers, although he acknowledged that justice was not being served and that certain rights of the individual and social groups were not adequately recognized and empowered. He was deeply concerned because the Regime was hardening with the weakness of the leader and because he did not see a clear solution to a personal regime. He implied that it was already indispensable for some steps to be taken to make the transition possible and peaceful.

He also spoke to us about the position that the episcopate should maintain regarding the Regime: regarding authority, sincere collaboration in everything that was for the good of the people, but real independence from politics. He then hinted that the Holy See had proposed a line regarding the appointment of bishops, to renew the Conference, lamenting that Franco’s presentation privilege restricted its freedom for these appointments; he commented that he did not quite understand how a Catholic government did not accept the suggestion made by the council on this point.

He made it very clear that he had absolute confidence in both of us and that he had not made us cardinals to share more intimately his responsibility and concerns for the Church of Spain.”<sup>27</sup>

<sup>23</sup> Archive Francisco Franco, leg.230, fol.48. MAE, pp.770-772.

<sup>24</sup> J. L. Martín Descalzo, Tarancón, el Cardenal del cambio Barcelona 1982, p.99.

<sup>25</sup> “Confessions”, Madrid 1996, pp.399-401.

<sup>26</sup> Pablo VI y España. Brescia 1996.

<sup>27</sup> Vicente Enrique Tarancón, “Confesiones”. Madrid 1996, pp.394-395

The nunciature of Paul VI in Madrid also supported the interesting and committed social action of the JOC and the HOAC<sup>28</sup>, which, in some sense, participated in the renewal of *Comisiones Obreras* and UGT, the traditional Spanish unions with a strong anti-clerical tradition.

Tarancón, for his part, summarizes some of the principles of his actions: “I set two objectives for myself: to apply to Spain the teachings of the Second Vatican Council regarding the independence of the Church from all political and economic power, and to ensure that the Christian community became an effective instrument of reconciliation to overcome the confrontation between the Spaniards that had culminated in

the civil war. In short, trying to make the Church lose political power and gain religious credibility.

I acted in this way because I considered that attitude indispensable, which necessarily had to be constructive, to purify the community of believers. And so that the Church could claim in the new political situation the evangelizing freedom that was indispensable to it.”<sup>29</sup>

To few episcopates did Paul VI address such concrete words, so closely tailored to the situation their Churches were experiencing at each moment. He was aware of the awakening of the nation and the Spanish Christian community. And of the need to listen to them and guide them. In the audience mentioned

<sup>28</sup> Enrique Berzal de la Rosa, “Del Nacional Catolicismo a la lucha antifranquista: las HOAC de Castilla y León 1946-1975. Valladolid 2000.

<sup>29</sup> María Luisa Brey, “Conversaciones con el cardenal Tarancón”, pp.17-18. Bilbao 1994.



with Ambassador Garrigues, he emphasized his concern: “All these were urgent, alarming problems, of true apostasy that admitted no delay. And the most immediate and important remedy was the restoration of the prestige and authority of the Spanish Episcopate. That the bishops be bishops, bishops in the best harmony with civil power, but without a shadow of politicization.”<sup>30</sup> In other words, Paul VI desired bishops free from all political ties, respected by their people, close to the youth, capable of leading the new Spanish era.

When Paul VI declared 1975 as the year of reconciliation, he took into account a torn and disoriented Church and, in the specific case presented, a divided Spain with an uncertain immediate future. Reconciliation among the various factions and approaches was



**Paul VI desired bishops free from all political ties, respected by their people, close to the youth, capable of leading the new Spanish era.**

urgent in the Church, and in Spain, a divided and unreconciled Spain, despite the forty years since the civil war, at a time when the regime could collapse at any moment, reconciliation was the aspiration of both the Church and the citizens. This was the direction of the famous Proposition 34 of the Joint Assembly, approved by the majority and misunderstood by others: “We humbly acknowledge and ask forgiveness because we did not always know how to be true ministers of reconciliation within our people divided by a war among brothers.” Many considered that these conclusions eroded the civic-ecclesial system that had emerged

from the war, and for this reason, they disqualified the spirit of the Assembly.

In the speech Tarancón delivered at the opening of the XIX Plenary Assembly of the bishops, he insisted that “the reconciling mission of the Church must also extend to social coexistence in order to achieve the unity, love, and peace of all.”

It must be considered that this decisive and effective support from Paul VI for a less politicized Church, more free, in line with the decisions and climate of the Second Vatican Council, had to do with the conciliar spirit of so many Spanish Catholics and priests who sought to reconcile the Church with modernity, and this included, on their part, a new political and cultural attitude, the acceptance of democracy and freedoms, and a greater harmony with the spirit, culture, and theology present in Europe.

Let us not forget that many priests had studied in Italy, France, and Germany and taught in Spanish theological faculties and seminaries what they had heard and read from Rhaner, De Lubac, Danielou, Congar, and many other professors of theirs. The old rejections of the theology of French, German, Belgian authors disappeared, and their thinking was embraced and taught in our universities. The desire to be part of a United Europe turned out to be that of the majority of Spaniards.

I conclude with the words of Bevilacqua, who knew Montini so well:

Montini will not be an easy pope, he is destined to reign amid great contrasts, perhaps to arouse the misunderstanding of his contemporaries. But when an assessment of the pontificate is made, it will be noted that he was one of the most sensitive popes to the demands of his own time because he lived intensely the critical condition of his era and made exemplary efforts to interpret what Pope John called “the signs of the times.”

<sup>30</sup> Archivo Francisco Franco leg. 230, fol 51.MAE 3606/1

The background features a close-up of a woman's face on the right side, looking upwards with a slight smile. The entire image is overlaid with a semi-transparent blue filter. In the foreground, numerous white hand silhouettes are raised, creating a sense of collective participation. The overall aesthetic is vibrant and community-oriented.

# **Second Session: Citizen participation**

# The division of powers between the EU and member States: how does it affect citizen participation?

Leopoldo Calvo-Sotelo, Chief Counsel of the *Consejo de Estado* of the Kingdom of Spain

## I. Introduction: citizenship of the Union and nationality of the Member States.

Article 20(1) TFEU, which provides for the creation of a citizenship of the Union, adds that “every person holding the nationality of a Member State shall be a citizen of the Union”; and that “citizenship of the Union shall be additional to national citizenship without replacing it”. As the Spanish professor Araceli Mangas has written, EU citizenship is a complement to citizenship of the Member States. Thus, nationals of a state are entitled to their “own” rights in the State sphere and, on the other hand, they enjoy the rights of citizenship of the Union “both within the State of which they are nationals and in the territory of other Member States” (Araceli Mangas).

In other words, citizens of EU Member States have two different “status activae civitatis”, i.e. two different sets of active citizenship rights, which they can exercise separately or cumulatively, as the case may be.

For the purpose of this presentation, the most relevant European active citizenship rights are the following:

- The right to vote and to stand as a candidate in elections to the European Parliament (Article 20(2)(b) of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union).
- The right to petition the European Parliament (Article 20(2)(d) TFEU).
- The right to promote the initiative to invite the European Commission, within the framework of its powers, to submit an appropriate proposal on matters where the citizen promoters consider that a legal act of the Union is required for the purpose of implementing the Treaties (Article 11(4) of the Treaty on European Union).

Moreover, although it would be natural for European rights of civic participation to be exercised on matters falling within the competence of the European Union, this is often not the case. In fact, just as important as the question of competence is the question of whether a right of civic participation is exercised with a view to the “European political space” or to the national political space. We will come back to this later.

<sup>1</sup> I take the expression from the European Parliament’s legislative resolution of 3 May 2022 on the proposal for a Council Regulation concerning the election of the Members of the European Parliament by direct universal suffrage, which is quoted at some length below.



## II. Citizen participation rights in the European Union today.

After this brief conceptual introduction to European Union citizenship, I would like to give an equally brief introduction to European current affairs in the field of citizens’ participation rights. This is reflected in a number of documents adopted in the last five years, which are, in chronological order, mainly the following:

- European Parliament resolution of 12 February 2019 on the application of the Treaty provisions relating to citizenship of the Union (P8\_TA(2019)0076). The resolution, among other things, “recalls the need to promote the European dimension of the European Parliamentary elections” and “stresses the need to inform citizens of the recent reform of the electoral law and the process of designating the heads of list (“Spitzenkandidaten”), insisting on the political importance and symbolism of this figure in order to strengthen citizenship of the Union”.

- The draft European Citizenship Statute approved in March 2022 by the European Parliament’s Renew-Europe Group, to which Professor Teresa Freixes has recently devoted a study in Spain. Among its proposals on citizen participation, it highlights a right to promote a European citizens’ initiative that will guarantee the fulfilment of the will of its promoters, which could only be accepted through the amendment of the Treaties. The final report of the Conference on the Future of Europe, May 2022, which in its proposal 38 (democracy and elections) contains elements whose adoption would also require the reform of the Treaties, such as the introduction of an EU-wide referendum, exceptionally called by the European Parliament on matters of particular importance for all EU citizens; or the possible election of the Commission President by universal suffrage of the citizens of the Union.
- The European Parliament legislative resolution of 3 May 2022 on the proposal for a Council Regula-



tion concerning the election of the members of the European Parliament by direct universal suffrage (P9\_TA (2022)0129).

Two recitals of this resolution are particularly eloquent for the purposes of the present case. They are, respectively, those designated by the letters U and Z:

“whereas European political parties contribute “to forming European political awareness” and should therefore play a more prominent role in European Parliament election campaigns, so as to enhance their visibility and make clear the link between the vote for a particular national party and its impact on the size of the European political group in the European Parliament and on the appointment of the President of the Commission. (...)

Whereas the establishment of a Union-wide constituency (hereinafter referred to as Union constituency), the lists of which would be headed by the candidate of each political family for President of the Commission, would strengthen European democracy and enhance the legitimacy of the election of the President of the Commission and his or her accountability; whereas this could contribute to the construction of a European political area and to making elections to the European Parliament genuinely based on European issues and not on issues of mere national interest’. (...)

Later, in its operative part, the same resolution (point 18) considers that ‘the introduction of a Union constituency in which 28 Members of the European Parliament are elected, without affecting the number of representatives elected by each Member State, and in which the lists are headed by the candidate of each



political family for President of the Commission is an opportunity to strengthen the democratic and transnational dimension of the European elections’ (...). Parliament is careful to point out that the creation of such a constituency is “compatible with the Treaties” (point 19).

European rights of active citizenship and (albeit more rarely) the exercise of national rights of the same nature can be projected beyond their institutional scope.

The less frequent scenario (that of national rights) can be illustrated with a hypothetical example: the right of petition recognised in Article 29.1 of the Spanish Constitution can be exercised to request the Cortes Generales to ensure respect for the principle of subsidiarity in accordance with the Protocol on the application of the principles of subsidiarity and proportionality, all of this under Article 5.3 of the Treaty on European Union. In other words, a right which belongs to the national “*ius activae civitatis*” is exercised with the ultimate aim of having effect in European Union law.

The reverse scenario, which is much better known, is also a cause for concern. This concerns those rights of citizen participation which, having been recognised in the Treaties and designed to be exercised in the “Euro-

pean political space”, are nevertheless exercised with an eye to the national political space.

The explanatory part of the European Parliament’s recent resolution of 12 December 2023 on the 2024 European elections (P9\_TA(2022)0129) states very clearly: ‘whereas all too often the political campaigns for the European elections in the Member States are not sufficiently “European”, but are dominated by political debates of a purely national, regional and local nature’ (...).

Faced with this problem, the aforementioned European Parliament Resolution of 3 May 2022 points to some possible remedies: the promotion of political parties at European level, which contribute “to forming a European political awareness and to expressing the will of the citizens of the Union” (article 10.4 TEU); and the introduction of a Union constituency in which twenty-eight MEPs would be elected, with lists headed by the candidate of each political family for the presidency of the Commission.

As seen above, the Conference on the Future of Europe also considered ways of strengthening the European political space, stimulating citizens’ participation in elections to the European Parliament and, above all, channelling this participation towards genuinely European ends. These are much more radical means, which would require the amendment of the Treaties: the introduction of a Europe-wide referendum and the possible election of the President of the Commission by universal suffrage of the citizens of the Union.

Finally, it should be pointed out that there is a European right of citizen participation which, by virtue of its configuration in the Treaty on European Union (Article 11.4), appears to be protected from any distortion resulting from an exercise that is merely oriented towards a national political space. This is the case of the European citizens’ initiative, which must necessarily be aimed at inviting the European Commission, within the framework of its powers, to submit an appropriate proposal on matters which the citizen promoters consider require a legal act of the Union for the purpose of implementing the Treaties.

Leopoldo Calvo-Sotelo  
27 March 2024

# Towards greater citizen participation?

Markus Schlagnitweit,  
Director of the Katholische Akademie Österreichs

In the issue of the distribution of competences between the EU and its Member States, Catholic social doctrine is primarily addressed in its fundamental principles of subsidiarity and orientation towards a pan-European common good, respectively universal. These principles are not placed side by side but are conditioned, complemented, and, if necessary, corrected by each other. In a society where centrifugal forces tend to dominate, the orientation towards the common good should carry greater weight than, for example, concerns for individual responsibilities and interests. This seems necessary to me in the current situation of the EU. Just a few days ago, a group of Catholic bishops from various border dioceses in Western Europe, called “Euregio,” published a pastoral letter entitled “Fresh Air for Europe” on the occasion of the upcoming European elections. In this document, the bishops acknowledge the great achievements of European integration in areas such as democratic development, social policy, international solidarity, and technological and social cooperation. At the same time, however, the bishops consider European integration to be compromised and facing major challenges. They speak of a “crisis of European consciousness” and identify populist nationalism, arising from economic, geopolitical, and migratory distortions, as the main driving force.

This populist nationalism is not only directly aimed against the creation of a “European consciousness” but also indirectly contradicts it, especially in the context of European election campaigns, which are still predominantly organized and fought at the national level: on the one hand, we have the more pro-European parties wanting to promote

European integration, and on the other hand, the Eurosceptic and right-wing populist parties prioritizing national interests and threatening to leave the EU. In election campaigns, this often leads to superficial and emotional debates where the most urgent pan-European political issues are neglected. Instead of discussing issues such as European environmental and climate policy, foreign and security policy, research, or social policy, the discourse in election campaigns mainly focuses on “for” or “against” or “more” or “less” Europe. We are experiencing the absurd situation of election campaigns in which political candidates question the legitimacy, meaning, or competencies of the same political institution and its positions they are running for. And this background debate certainly does not provide fertile ground for increased participation of EU citizens in terms of a pan-European consciousness, on the contrary.

However, it is probably too short-sighted to attribute this situation solely to the anti-European right-wing populist parties. Rather, it is also necessary to consider possible design flaws within the EU’s political bodies, especially at the level of the Parliament, but also of the Commission. In this context, it may be useful to examine some of the key requirements for the functioning of democracies at the national level. I would like to emphasize one point in particular, inspired by the principle of dialogue from the social doctrine of the Church: democracies need political diversity for vibrant political discourse and for their own development, and in this sense, they also need a functional opposition in addition to stable governments and parliamentary majorities. However, this aspect is often lacking at the European level.

European politics and its institutional structures are strongly marked by commitment and consensus (which is not inherently bad). However, elections in a democracy serve to express political (dis)satisfaction, i.e., to confirm or reject political parties and their programs, and this is not sufficiently possible at the European level: although we have several political groups at the European Parliament level, these are in turn composed only of the elected delegates of national parties. EU election campaigns in the Member States mainly focus on dynamics between the national government and its opposition, but not on truly European issues and programs. And these are discussed, if at all, only under the auspices of national interests or only in the form of the well-known background debate “for” or “against” or “more” or “less” Europe. Therefore, I fully agree with Mr. Calvo-Sotelo that truly pan-European parties should play a more decisive role in European elections. If European citizens are to be called to participate more decisively, they need to be confronted with political visions and concrete programs for the further development of the EU as a whole and not with individual national interests. However, this is not enough: European

elections should also offer citizens the opportunity to vote between various pan-European programs or to express their (dis)political satisfaction. However, the lack of a true policy of government and opposition at the European level hinders this process and



**EU election campaigns in the Member States mainly focus on dynamics between the national government and its opposition, but not on truly European issues and programs**

can therefore be considered a democratic deficit. In my opinion, broader reforms are needed than those proposed by Mr. Calvo-Sotelo. Therefore, I would like to raise the following questions for discussion:

Why should the number of MEPs be only 28 for the new Union constituency? Doesn’t the European Par-



liament need stronger pan-European legitimization and weight in the long run? In my modest opinion, the national-federal element within the EU is already sufficiently rooted in the European Council.

Why should only the presidency of the Commission be determined by the electoral lists of pan-European parties, while the rest of the Commission in turn represents only the national diversity of the Member States (as long as the principle of “one Commission portfolio for each Member State” is respected)? Why couldn’t the entire Commission be constituted on the basis of the respective electoral results in the Union constituency, to have a European “governing” party (or a coalition of government) and the corresponding opposition parties?

Finally, on a more fundamental level: In my opinion, true development of a genuine pan-European politi-

cal consciousness and participation cannot ultimately succeed without further development of the EU’s constitution, moving from a “European confederation of states” to a “European federal state.” At this point, of course, the current balance of powers and competences between the individual European bodies would also have to be discussed in general. But here one might be going too far.

In addition to the problem of the lack of a pan-European language, do the media also not have a key role to play as a “fourth democratic power,” not always focusing on European affairs in relation to their national significance or impact, but rather in relation to their significance for the “European common home”? But this should be a topic for my next speaker, journalist Carlo Muzzi. Thank you for your attention!

## The challenge of participation: the knot of political parties

Carlo Muzzi, Journalist, *Il Giornale di Brescia*

Dear colleagues, honorable guests, allow me first to express my gratitude to the Spanish Foundation Pablo VI for inviting us to this meeting, which will allow us to reflect deeply on what may be one of the most pressing challenges for the European Union. A challenge that becomes even more relevant with the approaching European elections scheduled between June 6th and 9th. I have been inspired by the excellent intervention of Dr. Leopoldo Calvo-Sotelo, who has offered us a timely, but above all, insightful and stimulating analysis of the relationship between European competencies and citizen participation in the Union. His words were complemented by those of Dr. Markus Schlangnitweit, which further provoked my thoughts.

In my intervention, I will focus specifically on two aspects to highlight the difficulties that the European Union faces. The first aspect is related to the need to create greater European awareness through the action of European parties, and the other, again related to citizen involvement, focuses more on the instrument of the *Spitzenkandidat* and pan-European lists.

According to a recent survey published by Eurobarometer, over 70% of European voters claim they will vote in the upcoming continental electoral round. A step forward considering that five years ago the figure was around 60%. However, the Union arrives at the new electoral appointment with a fragmented debate: 27 different electoral campaigns, all tending to

focus on national issues, with the European perspective being nothing more than an indirect topic. Therefore, it is no coincidence that European elections have been considered by political analysts as second-tier consultations, unable to capture the real preferences of the electorate. Rather, we could speak of a kind of midterm elections, in which governing parties seek confirmation almost as if it were a validation of their own actions, while opposition parties ask voters for an indication to build consensus for the upcoming general elections. In summary, the risk is that participation is linked to a mainly national logic and devoid of a genuinely pro-European perspective. To be more precise, we are witnessing the prevalence of a public debate very much centered on the national political space versus the European one.

If we then look at the initiatives of the main European parties, they are reduced to conventions where a programmatic manifesto is presented that barely finds space among the most debated news in the various countries.

European parties are, by their very nature, an aggregate of political forces that subscribe to a very vague charter of values that citizens ignore; but they are also political aggregates characterized by a great mobility of parties that move quite easily between one parliamentary group and another.

There are quite evident cases that show how European parties have such broad perimeters that there is a risk of distorting their ideal objectives; all to the detriment of citizens. Two rather striking cases: the Hungarian party *Fidesz*, which has Prime Minister Viktor Orban as its maximum exponent, in 2000 moved from the Liberal International to the European People’s Party, but fifteen years later, it was like the elephant in the room. The Hungarian government initiated initiatives contrary to the Rule of Law, one of the pillars of the Union, and Orban theorized about the strength of illiberal democracy. These were political options contrary to the values of the EPP. The deadly embrace between *Fidesz* and the EPP lasted until 2021 when the party left the EPP just before being expelled from it. Today, *Fidesz* could land in the European Conservatives and Reformists Group, which hosts sovereigntist forces that clearly have more affinities with the Hungarian party. It is legitimate to wonder how it is possible to create great-

er European awareness if the pan-European parties themselves have such a broad perimeter that they have to mediate between positions that risk being irreconcilable.

A similar case occurred in the field of the Socialists and Democrats, who suspended the two reference Slovak parties that now participate in the majority supporting Fico’s government. The decision was made in light of pro-Russian positions and opposition to Ukraine’s military aid demands. But at the Slovak national level, do the voters of *Smer* and *Hlas* (the smaller government partner whose leader, Peter Pellegrini, won the presidential elections) really feel part of the European socialist family? Or was that membership simply the result of a treaty between political forces at the European level, without considering the opinion of voters?

Returning to parties and their relationship with pan-European groupings, the challenge is therefore twofold: at the national level, political forces must become undisguised interpreters of their European positioning, and likewise, at the European level, large political families must try to promote clear politi-





cal campaigns with a continental dimension. Not to underestimate the difficulty of the large European political families (first and foremost, the People's, Socialists, and Liberals) to communicate their political positions and the consensus system that is structured in European institutions with different declinations than national ones. The model is that of broad consensus and variable geometry, not simply that of the majority. Let's think, for example, about the objective difficulties even in the media to explain to citizens the significance of the so-called Ursula majority. Otherwise, the positions of populist and Eurosceptic forces, whose message is clear and very direct, will increasingly gain ground in public debate. With a fact that should not be underestimated: while after the 2009 elections scholars like Cas Mudde spoke of these parties as minority but very noisy (and therefore capable of influencing the agenda of public debate), in the last 15 years these movements have opposed the EU project. Paradoxically and in light of the topic we are discussing today, participation, they are capable of mobilizing a growing number of Europe-

ans in continental consultations. That said, the predominantly dirigiste nature of these political forces only provides the voter with the illusion of participation at the time of voting.

The effort must consist of knowing how to communicate complexity, knowing that democracy has costs. And this must be understood first and foremost by pro-European forces if they do not want to lose the challenge against those who want to break the Union.

This long examination of the first point makes the analysis of the second aspect I would like to focus on much easier and faster. We could call it the tools available to European parties to improve and make the participation of European citizens more convincing. First of all, the *Spitzenkandidat*, a model, a process that European political parties have been invited to use since 2014 by indicating their candidate for the leadership of the European Commission, and therefore the main candidate during the electoral campaign. In essence, citizens when voting for a party indirectly indicate their preference

for a Commission president. In reality, the procedure is more complex because, after the elections, the European Council examines the name of the president in pectore and submits it to a vote in the European Parliament. The *Spitzenkandidat* process only worked in 2014 with the candidacy of Luxembourg's Jean-Claude Juncker. In 2019 Ursula von der Leyen emerged as a rallying figure for the People's, Socialists, and Liberals only in the European Council, since the EPP's candidate was Manfred Weber. The *Spitzenkandidat* system as it is conceived is not credible and cannot work: in this electoral round only the EPP, the Socialists, and the European Left used it; the liberal-democrats proposed three figures (in 2019 there were even seven), the Greens have two co-candidates. The sovereigntists of the

**“ The effort must consist of knowing how to communicate complexity, knowing that democracy has costs. ”**

ECR do not have their own candidate, nor does the far-right Identity and Democracy. The system must be considered a failure unless there is a treaty reform for the direct election of the Commission president in the future, but this is still a dangerous

crest: a narrow path between the need to promote citizen participation and the fears of the States to cede more sovereignty and power than is exercised today in the Council of the EU.

Even more complicated is the fate of pan-European lists, which today clash with the national claims of each party and, ultimately, with the constant tension between nation-states and the Union.

The European Union finds itself in a kind of halfway point on its path of affirmation and construction, and with it the citizens of the Old Continent. The Conference on the Future of Europe was a first attempt to orient itself and increase participation. But I fully agree with those who have preceded me: the only way to make Europe more participatory is through a revision of the treaties and a path of greater integration in confederal terms, knowing that this perspective must count on those who would like to return instead to the European Community, understood obviously as a mere organization that brings together States that in the fullness of their sovereignty agree on individual issues and policies. A Community therefore misunderstood as a container of States and not as a Community of destiny as the united Europe born from the ashes of World War II should be and which today remains the only true beacon of human and civil rights in a global scenario of despair, suffering, and injustice.

A photograph showing the backs of several people hugging each other. The central figure is a woman wearing a pink hijab and a grey long-sleeved shirt. To her left, a person in a blue denim jacket has their arm around her. To her right, a person with long blonde hair is hugging her. Another person's hand is visible at the bottom, resting on the central figure's back. The image has a blue tint and a semi-transparent white text overlay on the right side.

**Third session:  
Foundational  
principles  
and values,  
yesterday  
and today**

# Introduction

## Pierpaolo Camadini, President of the *Opera per l'Educazione Cristiana*

Allow me, in turn, to thank the Pablo VI Foundation and its representatives for the attention they have given, including with our personal involvement, to the Opera per l'Educazione Cristiana and the Paolo VI Institute of Brescia, and my sincerest congratulations to the Foundation for all the activities it promotes and for organizing this International Conference, so rich in contributions, to try to investigate, at such a dramatic moment, what Europe's responses are to the political, social, cultural, and economic challenges of the peoples that compose it and of the entire international community. In the debate we are about to hear, we will focus on two issues of vital importance and extraordinary relevance:

- I - The founding values of the European Union for a solidarity-based citizenship,
- II - Intercultural dialogue as a value of citizenship.

Our distinguished speakers, whom we warmly thank, will help us understand how, through Law, values become codified norms, potentially identifiable for a large plurality of subjects.

This has long been a key issue in the European debate: what values do the norms of the Union express? What values still today keep the European identity alive and what do they imply in the decline of internal confrontation and global challenges?

How can Pluralism and Identity be reconciled without abandoning the value roots that have distinguished the history of Europe and European thought, also considering the assertion of violent secularization and prevailing relativism that our culture has suffered, es-

pecially in the last century? These are questions deeply related to the progressive privatist subjectivization of rights to which our culture seems to want to give primacy, but which clash with the need felt by many to recognize "a soul" for our Europe, without which it no longer seems to have much to say in the face of global challenges.

This is a problem that had already been highlighted - to quote a distinguished and convinced representative of European institutions, French, Catholic and socialist, recently deceased - Jacques Delors in 1992, when an attempt was made, in vain, to fully define the European Constitution within an identity and also "spiritual" framework: Delors himself clearly indicated, in fact, the need to "give a soul to Europe".

Another path was taken and today we have to evaluate the results.

In this regard, allow me to refer to an interesting recent debate on the subject cultivated by two Italian philosophers, Dario Antiseri and Marcello Pera, who, in a small and thin volume recently published by a publishing house that also had Giovanni Battista Montini (Pablo VI) among its founders, Editrice Morcelliana of Brescia, have addressed the issue: "Europe without a soul? Politics, Christianity, science", where they conclude that, without recognizing the value of Christian culture as the foundation of Europe, we are abandoning the cornerstones of civil coexistence based on tolerance and social cohesion, values that constitute the foundations of the very model of liberal democracy that generated the concept of the "Rule of Law" that today inspires the legal systems of the Union.

The path taken by European institutions over the last decades has led us to believe in the idea of building full European citizenship, an idea that seemed close to realization with the celebration of the first direct election of the European Parliament in 1979, an idea that, however, then had to face the complexity of reducing national sovereignty and today must still confront the nationalist revivals that animate the political and social context of some Member States and that risk weakening the role of Europe in the new global context we are experiencing.

The challenge facing Europe is vital and very urgent not to marginalize the values that we believe Europe has maintained until today and to understand if the time has come to move from a Europe of Peoples to a People of Europe and to equip it with the most appropriate tools to be able to decide its own future. This is essential to rekindle the hearts of Europeans and provide unified and effective responses to the global challenges that affect - among others - foreign policy, defense, environmental transition, social sustainability, immigration, demographic decline, and investment in development.

Now, turning to the role that has been more properly assigned to me, I would like to express my sincere grat-

itude to the two distinguished speakers who accepted the invitation to debate these issues:

Prof. FRANCESCO BESTAGNO, jurist, Italian, Professor of European Union Law at the Faculty of Law of the UCSC in Milan, currently also Legal Advisor and Head of the Legal Office of the Italian Representation to the EU in Brussels on behalf of the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Author of an extensive list of studies and publications on EU Law and member of numerous international commissions and committees; and Prof. LEONCE BEKEMANS, economist and philosopher, Belgian, passionate about European studies with a special sensitivity and attention to the correlations between politics, economy, culture, and society. He was a professor at the College of Europe in Bruges and holds the Jean Monnet Chair dedicated to studies on "Globalization, Europeanization, and Human Development" at the University of Padua, in addition to being a visiting professor at numerous academic institutions and, in turn, author of numerous publications and expert of the Council of Europe and the European Commission on issues of education and intercultural dialogue.

Very significant voices that will undoubtedly enrich today's conference debate.



# For a solidarity citizenship: foundational values yesterday and today

Francesco Bestagno, Legal Adviser at the Permanent Representation of Italy to the European Union

The fundamental intuition behind European integration can be summarized as follows: the founding States realized that, to ensure peace, security, and economic progress, it was necessary to “cede” some of their sovereignty. The perception was different for some of the Eastern European countries that joined

the EU in 2004 and 2007, coming out of decades where their sovereignty had been compressed by being in the Soviet orbit: EU membership was then a guarantee and reaffirmation of their sovereignty. This historical difference explains some of the current debates and the need to reaffirm the importance of the primacy of EU law, the powers conferred to EU institutions, and the founding values of the EU.

These are unifying and identity-forming values, within the respect for the linguistic, cultural, and religious diversities that represent an asset for the peoples of Europe, and with regard to which the EU has an approach of tolerance and inclusion. Regarding the founding values, the Preamble of the Treaties makes it clear from the outset that they “have developed from the cultural, religious, and humanistic heritages of Europe.” The reference to religious heritage is also important, as is the fact that the Treaties speak at various points about the protection of dignity and fundamental rights using the term “person” rather than “individual.”

In the last decade, the EU has had to develop more instruments to try to reaffirm and defend these values within the Member States, going beyond the measures provided for in the Treaties, such as judgments of the Court of Justice or the procedure of Article 7 of the TEU, which can lead to the extreme measure of suspending the voting rights of a Member State in the EU Council. In this perspective, new forms of suspending EU funding to individual Member States were initiated in some cases (particularly to Hungary and, to a lesser extent, Poland), in order to prevent these funds from being used in a context where fundamental principles

such as the separation of State powers were not respected.

Reaffirming the importance of founding and identity-forming values within the EU is also necessary for it to be able to credibly promote them in its relations with third countries. From this point of view, there are many instruments with which the EU encourages third countries, especially developing countries, to respect fundamental rights, environmental protection norms, and labor rights standards. This is often done with reference to compliance with interna-

tional norms, especially those developed within the United Nations: the EU’s approach does not seek to “impose” unilateral norms, but is based on the promotion of globally and multilaterally agreed norms and values. Underlying this approach is the idea that development is not only of an economic and commercial nature, but that intangible values such as human dignity, fundamental rights, the rule of law, and democracy are also of crucial importance to ensure the comprehensive development of peoples and the human person.

## A values-driven approach to the EU: intercultural dialogue and active citizenship

Léonce Bekemans, Jean Monnet Professor *ad personam*,  
Bruges, Belgium

### Premise

The underlying dimension of my contribution is the personalist approach to society, much embodied by the ‘Founding Fathers’ of the European integration process and translated in the values set in the Treaties. It is clear that the values on which the European integration process is based much respond to the founding principles of the social doctrine of the Church (Leo XIII, in particular the encyclicals ‘*Aeterni Patris*’ (1879) and ‘*Rerum Novarum*’ (1891); Pius XI’s encyclical ‘*Quadragesimo anno*’ (1931). They are also clearly in line with the values of community-driven personalism in Europe, expressed in different interpretations (Thomas d’Aquino, Jacques Maritain, Emanuel Mounier, Robert Schuman, pope Paul VI, Jacques Delors, Zygmunt Bau-

man, Jürgen Habermas). These values can be summarised as follows:

- Human dignity: each person is unique, individually important and to be respected. Consequently, everyone is equal, regardless of race, class, religion and nationality. Furthermore, people are ends in themselves, not means and acquire their value only in relation to others, in community, implying full respect of human rights and recognition of universal human dignity;
- The common good: this refers to values which are shared by and beneficial to all or most members of a given community (substantive conception) or to



the result that is achieved through collective participation in the formation of a shared will. This occurs when dignity and rights are respected mutually (procedural conception);

- Freedom as a space of belonging: the principles of human dignity and common good also relate to the concept of freedom expressed in terms of rights and duties;
- Solidarity: this broad concept includes both internal and external solidarity, implying a respect of the other;
- Priorities: it means a priority concern for the vulnerable and the poor;
- Participation: this is conceived as a right and lever against exclusion;
- Justice: this includes distributive and contributory justice;
- Subsidiarity: this is related to the different levels in governing society: the government, the individual and civil society. In this context, liability should ideally be as low as possible. A broad civil society is therefore indispensable: society should not be reduced to the individual and the state, but people should be able to assume responsibility through associations and groups.

These values are legally inserted and clearly expressed in Article 2 of the EU Treaty: *“The Union is founded on the values of respect for human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, the rule of law and respect for human rights, including the rights of persons belonging to minorities. These values are common to the Member States in a society in which pluralism, non-discrimination, tolerance, justice, solidarity and equality between women and men prevail.”*

My comments are structured in 4 parts. In a first part I

## I. The human-centric approach of European community building

### 1. Europe in today’s changing world: contextual and forward-looking analysis

Europe as a global actor moves prudently in the midst of complex transformations of the international sys-



summarise the basic fundamentals of a human-centric approach to European community building. A second part deals with European citizenship building from the changing concept to EU initiatives. The third comment concerns the citizens’ related dialogue in the EU, mainly focusing on the importance of participatory democracy and its EU practices. My final comments are related to intercultural dialogue, crucial for the values-riven framework of the EU.

tem, more interdependent and more fragmented, with diverse actors at all levels. The EU plays a global role, mainly in trade, development, environment and social issues, more recently also in security strategy. With the Lisbon Treaty, it made an important step towards strengthening its global aspirations. Yet,

although the EU is still the world’s leading exporter of goods, the largest trader of services and the biggest provider of development and humanitarian aid, the second largest foreign investor and a main destination for migrants, chaos, fear and uncertainty reign. We may speak of a certain European malaise, a decline of its economic, political and moral power and a weakened position of the EU as a Global Actor.

This weakening is related to external factors, such as the increasing competition at the global level and the management of complexity as well as to internal factors, such as demographic developments, migration issues, climate crisis, secularisation, democratic deficits and populist movements. Still, in recent years the EU seems to slowly taking up measures for better and more efficient governance, amid many doubts and differences.

New human challenges oblige to reconsider international law, such as the realisation of the “universal common good”. An interesting reference can be made to the Papal Encyclical *‘Pacem in Terris’* by Pope John XXIII (11/4/1963). The Pope called for a world public authority to promote this universal common good which was identified with the *“recognition, respect, safeguarding, and promotion of the rights of the human person.”*

The Charter of Fundamental Rights of the EU has been given the same legal value as the treaties. Its binding value commits the EU to building a political community within which human rights have the utmost importance as the ultimate reference. It illustrates a relevant qualitative shift in European integration, leading towards an inclusive community where the citizens can be the real protagonists.

## 2. Basic fundamentals of a human-centric approach to the EU

The mutually reinforcing conceptual building blocks of a human-centric approach are the (1) universality and indivisibility of the human rights, (2) the cosmopolitan perspective of multi-level governance in relation to its local relevance and (3) the importance of global public goods in relation to transnational democratic practices.

### 1) Human rights paradigm

The universality of human rights rests on the recognition of the equal importance and interdependence of civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights. Within the current globalisation debate this implies localising human rights as much as developing a common responsibility across borders of states. The human rights paradigm is conceived as a powerful and universal transcultural and transnational facilitator for human-centric governance and sustainable statehood. This recognition should favour a move from the (increasingly) conflicting stage of multiculturalism to the dialogic stage of inter-culturalism in globalising societies.



**New human challenges oblige to reconsider international law, such as the realisation of the “universal common good”.**

Anchored to the paradigm of human rights are issues such as human security and human development. Both hold the human being as their primary subject. In broad terms, human security shifts the focus from traditional territorial security to that of the person.

### 2) Cosmopolitan perspective of multi-level governance in Europe

The globalising world is characterised by some asymmetry between the growing extra-territorial nature of power and the continuing territoriality of the ways in which people live their everyday lives. This seemingly contradictory nature opens new opportunities for institutional structures along with new forms of management of politics and dialogue at various levels of the globalising landscape. Points of departure are the weakening of the spatial paradigm of territoriality and the process of uncertain identity-building by globalisation forces.

The process of European integration has developed into a much more complex and mixed political pro-



ject, implying to some extent common citizenship and transnational democracy. It is based on a mixture of intergovernmental and supranational forms of cooperation, in which civil society is becoming a shaping factor and a meeting place of social and political aggregations.

### 3) *Global public goods and transnational democracy*

A global public goods approach takes into account the core systemic features of globalisation, (i.e. spatial extension and compression, increasing interconnectedness, temporal acceleration and growing awareness). It recognises multiple locations of governance, multiple dimensions of integration, multiple modes of interaction and an increasing institutionalisation of the process of globalisation. Such an approach may contribute to a better analysis/management of global policy challenges (such as health, development, security, peace, etc.). It may also recommend strategies for true global policy-making, implying enhanced networked governance among states, regions and civil society actors.

This public goods perspective departs from the need of international democracy for internal democra-



cy in a deterritorialised (global) space: principle of responsible sovereignty. This implies a remodelling of the role of the state that encompasses collective self-interest.

rights as an individual and some duties (taxes, military service, loyalty, etc.) in relation to a political community, as well as the ability of intervening in the collective life of a state. It is a notion characterised by the pre-eminence of the state-nation as the political community that comprises the individuals. It was through this national status that they acquired their citizen's rights. The dominant political paradigm was the so-called Westphalian system which originated in the seventeenth century.

## 2. Challenges to the State-nation and the citizenship equivalent to nationality

The concept of citizenship has evolved from the classic ages to the present. In the 21st century, we witness a quite different kind of citizenship, in par-

ticular in the European context. Although the Nation-state continues to be the key element of the world political map, changes are taking place that illustrate an evident challenge to this kind of political organisation.

Two major transformations are questioning the role of the contemporary State-nation and the concept of citizenship that it embraces: 1) the process of globalisation implies that the central and strategic economic activities are integrated on a world scale: the single nation state is less and less able to cope with the challenges of globalisation; 2) the existence of more multicultural societies that breaks up the theoretical homogeneity of States-nation. Regional or national diversity in many European countries as well as multiculturalism and multi-ethnicity brought about by growing immigration are key aspects of the new European society European citizenship departs from this new European society.

## 3. Road towards a European Citizenship

The history of the European integration process shows a development from a (neo) functional, utilitarian and largely economic project to a more

complex and mixed political undertaking. It is set in a globalising context and today based on the institutional structure of the Treaty of Lisbon, characterised by the emergence of an emerging European citizenship and the development of a transnational democracy. The first decades of the European integration process functioned on the political paradigm of the Westphalian international system. A democratic approach to international life outside of the national borders was not at all required. There was equality between nationality, identity and citizenship. The Treaty of Maastricht (1992) breaks down that linear perspective and establishes a political framework for a broader and deeper integration of European States and regions, build on a European dimension of citizenship. Different steps were taken throughout the years:

- The right of free movement of persons inside the Community was introduced in the constituent Treaty of the EEC, signed in Rome in 1957. This freedom did not appear bound to any citizenship concept but was closely linked to the conduct of an economic activity.
- In 1976 the Tindemans Report addressed for the first time the European integration process beyond a common market by proposing a community of citizens. In a chapter, titled '*Europe of the Citizens*', Tindemans proposed the enactment of different measures that made perceptible, by means of outward signs, the rise of a European awareness: unification of passports, the vanishing of border controls, the common use of the benefits of social security systems, the accreditation of academic courses and degrees.
- Also, in 1976 a second step took place when elections to the European Parliament by universal suffrage were conducted. Although Parliament's competences were limited, for the first time, democratic participation, a key element of citizenship, appeared.
- In 1984, a Committee of Europe of the Citizens, presided by the Italian Euro MP Adonnino, was established. This committee approved a series of unambitious proposals leading to the constitution of a European citizenship.

## II. European citizenship-building: a gradual process

### Introduction

The notion of citizenship, according to me, refers to an active and responsible participation of individuals in the society in which they live. The concept has been changing, mainly due to great economic, social and political changes. In short, citizenship refers to attitudes, awareness, behaviour based on civil, political, social and cultural rights in a geographical space within a socio-political framework (i.e. city, region, country, Europe and the world).

### 1. The classical concept of Citizenship

The classical concept of citizenship relates to a legal and political status which allows the citizen to acquire some (civil, political, economic, social and cultural)

- More audacious was the Project of Treaty of European Union. It was presented by Alterio Spinelli and accepted by the European Parliament in February 1984.
- The Single European Act (1986) hardly included any of the Spinelli's project proposals, although it adopted the objective of a political European Union.
- A few years later, two Intergovernmental Conferences were convened to reform the Treaties. One of them focused on the Economic and Monetary Union, the other one, solely on the political Union.
- The Maastricht Treaty finally institutionalised the concept of European citizenship. It introduced the idea that it is no longer necessary to establish an interdependence of the three notions nationality, identity and citizenship. A common citizenship is applied to many nationalities.

Implications:

- The Treaty of Maastricht represents a first step towards the end of the necessary interdependence of these notions.

- It also means that an active citizenship can only develop within a new framework, not that of a closed State on a limited territory, but open beyond the borders of nations. Europe is indeed involved in favouring the development of a transnational democracy. The scope and role of civil society between market and government adds a new dimension to the democratic process.
- Further, a similar consequence will apply to the notion of identity. If one imagines that the idea of citizenship can relate to a multiplicity of nationalities, it is also feasible that a multiplicity of identities can be envisaged under the traditional notion of nationality. Therefore, the unity of a nation is not necessarily contradictory to the idea of a multiplicity of identities within it.

In short, Europe is therefore evolving towards a social and political body in which a distinction is made between a common European citizenship, multiple State citizenships and political systems, within which multiple cultural identities can be recognised. Of course, this path of destiny is interpreted differently by the EU Member states.

## 4. European Citizenship: content

### 1) Universal basis

Universal citizenship is the grant provided by the 'new' International Law which is rooted in the UN Charter and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. In virtue of this 'Ius Novum Universale', all human beings are endowed the same legal statute in the world constitutional space. The rationale of universal citizenship is to include all, i.e. 'ad omnes includendos'.

### 2) European dimension of citizenship

With this approach, the universal human rights paradigm is the fundamental point of departure for conceiving a European citizenship 'ad omnes includendos'. It is therefore worthwhile to focus both on the set of values adopted in the Treaties as constitutive of European identity and on the process of codification of human rights.

The European integration process is aiming at the building of an ever-closer Union between the peoples of Europe. The idea and institution of European citizenship should therefore be the framework in which the European peoples identify themselves as the European *demos*, living in a broad cultural space and belonging to a large and differentiated polity. A new European citizenship, combining the post-national and multicultural form, appears as a model for democratic community where all citizens are treated equally, exhibiting universal rights as well as rights relevant to their group differences. This implies a harmonisation of the ever-closer 'EU Citizenship' rationale with the correct citizenship rationale that stems from the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights.

European citizenship also means plural and active citizenship. Its immediate implication is that all residents in a given territory, as human beings having the same legal status internationally recognised, should enjoy the same fundamental political, civil, economic, social, cultural rights and liberties. In this perspective, plural and active European citizenship is strictly linked to democracy in its political, economic and social dimensions, in its various representative, participatory and

deliberative forms and in its local, national and international expressions.

The immediate implication is the building of a new model of European citizenship which includes universal and multi-cultural rights. European citizenship is based not only on nationality, but also on legal residence. It means that legal long-term third country nationals should be recognised as Union citizens. It also implies that economically non-active citizens of



**The European integration process is aiming at the building of an ever-closer Union between the peoples of Europe.**

the EU member states should enjoy free movement and residence right, which should not be conditioned by possession of sufficient means for subsistence and health insurance. It should also result in the abolishment of all transitional periods concerning free movement of workers for citizens of new member states of the EU.

European citizenship not only includes a set of rights and responsibilities, but also contains an important symbolic value. Even if the concept remains linked to national belongingness, the existence of a common citizenship applying to many nationalities and covering multiple identities establishes a fundamental shift in the relation between identity, nationality and citizenship. This innovative legal status produces political implications as it favours trans-national democracy and the development of a European public sphere.

Moreover, the recognition of a multiplicity of identities can be simultaneously envisaged under the traditional notion of nationality as well as under the notion of European citizenship. Amartya Sen's argument on the multiplicity of identities finds in this context a possibility of implementation, even if European citizenship is only addressed to the Member States' nationals. Sharing projects and participating to the decision-making process is therefore the only way for Europeans to be inspired, motivated and committed to Europe. The Citizens, Equality Rights



and Values (CERV) Programme of the EU is financing projects that promote democratic participation and citizens engagement

In the cosmopolitan view, European citizenship is a step towards a global citizenship. Europe is conceived as a political laboratory for a new supranational and transcendental democracy. However, the outcome of this process cannot be a mere translation of functions from the national to the European level. The horizon for active citizenship should be the European and world space of internationally recognised human rights. The EU provides the evolutionary context and spatial horizon in which plural citizenship and inclusion practices can be implemented. Citizenship rights therefore must be exercised in a broader constitutional space, expressing both legitimisation of decision-making and citizen's participation in the formation of a global civil society.

### 3) *Legal statute of the Citizenship of the Union: Citizens' rights*

The Treaty of Maastricht established the Citizenship of the Union. The foremost purpose of the institutionalisation of this new legal status was, according to Community institutions, to strengthen and enhance the European identity and enable European citizens to participate in the Community integration process in a more intense way.

European citizen's condition was reserved to every person that had the nationality of a member state. The European citizenship does not substitute but rather supplements the citizenship of each State: "*Citizenship of the Union is hereby established. Every person holding the nationality of a Member State shall be a citizen of the Union. Citizenship of the Union shall complement and not replace national citizenship.*" (Treaty of Amsterdam, 1997)

Member States citizens already enjoyed a series of rights on account of the application of the laws that

**“ The EU provides the evolutionary context and spatial horizon in which plural citizenship and inclusion practices can be implemented**

regulate the European common market (free movement of goods and services, consumer protection, public health, equal opportunities...). The Citizenship of the Union adds some rights that are summarised in the following articles:

- The right to free movement of persons in the member States territory. Article 18 "*Every citizen of the Union shall have the right to move and reside freely within the territory of the Member States, ...*" (Treaty of Nice, 2001)
- The right to vote and stand in local government and European Parliament elections in the country of residence (Article 19, Treaty of Amsterdam, 1997)
- The right to have diplomatic and consular protection from the authorities of any Member State where the country of which a person is a national is not represented in a non-Union country (Article 20, Treaty of Amsterdam, 1997)
- The right of petition to the European Parliament and appeal to the European Ombudsman (Article 21, Treaty of Amsterdam, 1997)
- The right of writing to the European institutions in one of the official languages
- The right of accessing to Parliament, Commission and Council's documents, except in the cases legally agreed.

Next to the new legal statute of the Citizenship of the Union, the Treaty of Amsterdam introduced some advances with regard to human rights:

- (i) Equality of all citizens to access to the civil service in the institutions of the EU;
- (ii) The non-discrimination principle by reason of nationality (Article 12);
- (iii) The non-discrimination principle by reason of sex, race or ethnic origin, religion or belief, disability, age or sexual orientation (Article 13).

### 4) *Citizen-centric initiatives/practices: Citizens as co-owners and protagonists of the European project*

The new social and communicational framework also affects the way politics is conducted. Traditional representative democracy (i.e. parliamentary



government) is now challenged by other practices of democratic expression, namely participatory and deliberative democracy. There is no question of replacing one with the other, but they should complement each other. Some recent developments can be detected.

- Social media platforms facilitate civic participation in the policy-making process. New methods of public governance are being implemented by different public authorities that attempt to integrate citizen know-how into the decision-making process. Therefore, this can provide more democratic legitimacy of decision-making processes.
- In addition to their representation by an elected politician, citizens now also want to have real, personal ownership of and involvement in the different public spheres. The best way to regain citizens' trust is to make them protagonists in policy-making and not mere passive receivers. This implies political involvement and presence

at each level of decision-making, from the local to the European level.

The gradual building of European citizenship is supported by various EU programmes, activities and initiatives.

- **The European Citizens' Initiative (ECI)** is a participatory democratic instrument of the European Union, introduced with the Treaty of Lisbon in 2007, aimed at increasing direct democracy by "*empowering EU citizens directly to participate in the development of EU policies.*" Citizens can thus propose concrete legislative changes in any area in which the European Commission has competence, such as the environment, agriculture, energy, transport or trade. citizens' initiative must be supported by at least one million EU citizens, coming from at least 7 of the 27 Member States. A minimum number of signatories is required in each of those 7 Member States. Since its inception, 76

initiatives have been registered by the ECI. Only a few have been successful: the ban on glyphosate and the protection of people and the environment against toxic pesticides (25/01/2017); stop vivisection (22/06/2012); the One of us initiative (11/05/2012) aimed at protection of human life; Right2Water: water and sanitation are a human right! Water is a public good, not a commodity! (10/5/2012). The most recent successful outcome is the revised Drinking Water Directive that entered into force on January 12, 2021. The Member States have two years to incorporate it into national legislation.

- The **EU Europe for Citizens program** (2004-2020) was a relatively small, but symbolically important and successful European subsidy program. Citizens got to know the EU, its history and diversity better. The program also contributed to encouraging citizens' democratic participation at EU level. It supported activities that promote European citizenship, mainly by financing projects with partners from different participating countries: partner cities, networks of cities, projects with civil society organisations. The program is now continued in the new Multiannual Financial Framework Program (2021-2027) as part of the **EU Rights and Values programme**. The funding - a budget of no less than €689.5 million - serves to protect the rights and values of the EU treaties. Due to increasing extremism, radicalism and division in societies, the program pays more attention to protecting and promoting European values to promote open, democratic and inclusive societies.
- Illustrative of the growing importance given to European citizenship was **the European Year of Citizens** in 2013, which was mainly devoted to the rights associated with EU citizenship. It aimed to encourage dialogue between all levels of government, civil society and business, to discuss EU rights and build a vision of the European future
- Every three years since 1993, **EU citizenship reports** have documented progress towards effective EU citizenship, highlighting new priorities in the field of EU citizenship rights. The 4th EU Citizenship Report Empowering Citizens and Protecting their Rights, published on December 15, 2020, set new

priorities and actions to empower EU citizens, taking into account the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic.

- **'Outreach to citizens. Not about us without us'** was a report by the Committee of the Regions published in November 2007. It proposes concrete measures to strengthen citizen-driven outreach and communication.
- In her **Political Agenda for Europe** (2019) Ursula von der Leyen advocated a more leading and active role for citizens in the future of the EU: *"I want Europeans to build the future of our Union. They must play a leading and active role in determining our priorities and level of ambition. I want citizens to have their say at a conference on the future of Europe."*
- **The Conference on the Future of Europe** was a citizen-led series of debates and discussions that ran from April 2021 to May 2022 and ena-

bled people from across Europe to share their ideas and help shape Europe's common future. The Conference Report was presented in a Plenary meeting in April 2022. It contains proposals which are based on recommendations made by citizens who met within the European and National Citizens' Panels. They contributed their ideas to the Multilingual Digital Platform. The recommendations cover 49 proposals and more than 300 measures containing a wide range of issues in which EU citizens are calling for major reforms that can provide concrete answers to the many challenges they face. The actual follow-up is structured along nine topics: climate change and the environment; health; a stronger economy, social justice and jobs; EU in the world; values and rights, rule of law, security; digital transformation; European democracy; migration; education, culture, youth and sport.

Other instruments supporting EU citizenship are:

- Standard and specific Eurobarometer surveys examine people's attitudes towards EU citizenship. The July 2020 Eurobarometer survey on EU citizenship and democracy shows that a large majority of Europeans (91%) are familiar with the term 'citizen of the European Union'. This is the highest level of awareness to date since 2007 and a steady increase from 87% in 2015. It appears that most Europeans are well informed about their voting rights at national and European level.
- The EU Citizenship Portal provides information on issues related to EU citizenship, in particular on citizens' rights, dialogues and participation in European issues.
- A very interesting citizens' initiative is **the European Citizen Action Service** (ECAS), founded in 1991. ECAS is an international non-profit organisation, independent of political parties, commercial interests and EU institutions. It is a cross-sectoral European association that brings together members from different areas of work: civil liberties, culture, development, health and social welfare. The aim is to connect citizens and civil society with the European Union, to enable NGOs and individuals to make their voices heard in the EU by providing advice on lobbying, fundraising and defending European citizenship rights
- Finally, it is necessary to highlight that the Commission emphasised the importance of education as the key element for building the European citizenship. The rights introduced in Maastricht and included in the Treaty of Amsterdam constitute the beginning of a process of European citizenship-building.
  - o Cresson Report *'Building Europe by means of Education and Training'* prepared by a Group of Reflection on Education and Formation (1996);
  - o in December of 1998, the Commission approved a document titled *'Learning for active citizenship'*: *"The fostering of competencies and convictions capable of enhancing the quality of social relations rests on the natural alliance of education and training with equality and social justice."*



The future of the Citizenship of the Union much depends on the evolution of the public opinion of its Members States regarding national and European citizenship. For many, the rights included in the citizenship statute are limited. The most significant is, with no doubt, the free movement and residence of persons. Although there has been remarkable progress from the Treaty of Rome, where free movement was strictly bound to labour activity, there are still serious limitations that should be eliminated. Despite the different agreements reached, any country can re-establish controls on border whenever its security is considered to be threatened and residence freedom continues having different sort of restrictions.

In short, the European citizenship lays still midway between the more theoretical or soft conception of citizenship (exhibiting a sense of belonging to a community with shared common goals and values) and the practical or strong citizenship with real rights that can be claimed from juridical institutions to protect the exercise of these rights.

## Assessment

### 1) Renewing citizenship

The European citizenship building impacts sovereignty, citizenship and democracy. The fact that States have borders, implies an exclusive territorial rationale of sovereignty and domestic jurisdiction. Conversely, local governments run territories that are not surrounded by borders, but they deal with people within territories. As such, local governments are closer to the source of sovereignty, being the people, than the state. Sovereignty belongs therefore to the people, because each member has inherent rights, and fundamental rights should be respected and protected where people live.

National citizenship, based on the principle of exclusion, is consistent with the philosophy of states, whereas universal citizenship, based on the principle of inclusion, is consistent with the natural identity of local government. The conceptual implication is that the international legal recognition of human rights would require to re-construct citizenship, starting not from state institutions (i.e. traditional top-down citi-

zenship), but from its original holder, the human being, with his/her inherent rights internationally recognised (i.e. bottom-up citizenship).

### 2) Citizenship from below

A useful way of addressing this situation is to reconceptualise citizenship from below, starting from the roots of the political community up to the institutions of governance. Such a bottom-up view is even more urgent if we consider the conflicts in many territories (regions, cities, streets) where different ethnic, religious and cultural groups live, where xenophobia and discrimination is growing, and where migrant people of different cultures rightly advocate the same citizenship rights as nationals.

**“ The European citizenship building impacts sovereignty, citizenship and democracy. The fact that States have borders, implies an exclusive territorial rationale of sovereignty and domestic jurisdiction**

Sovereignty based on the nation-state has proven to be insufficient in protecting the true elements of democracy. Nation-states have been the favourable environment of democracy, but they do not suffice today when faced with worldwide interdependence and globalisation. The practice of democracy, in its twofold articulation of representative and participatory democracy, should be extended and deepened: upward to international and cosmopolitan democracy and downward to local direct democracy. By outreaching democratic practice beyond its historical territorial space, the local territory becomes a new frontier. Being so close to and involved with democracy, local governments should be considered primary stakeholders in global multi-level governance.

A relatively recent and promising perspective regarding the legal development of the role of local governments in international politics is the European Grouping of Territorial Cooperation (EGTC). The EGTC,



established in 2006 by the EU, allows public entities of different Member States to come together under a new entity with full legal personality. It is unique in the sense that it enables public authorities of various Member States to team up and deliver joint services, without requiring a prior international agreement to be signed and ratified by national parliaments. Late 2023 88 EGTCs are registered by the Committee of the Regions. This policy tool can be considered not only an advanced achievement but also a good starting point for formal and substantive progress in recognising the international role of local governments.

### 3) International-transnational democracy

Today's creative reality of civil society organisations and social movements, and of local governments, act-

ing across and beyond state borders, demonstrate that civic and political roles, are no longer limited to the intra-state space. The geometry of democracy is extending and growing in the global space.

The traditional inter-state system has always been an exclusive club of 'rulers for rulers. Now it is citizens, especially through their transnational organisations and movements, who are claiming a legitimate role, and showing their visibility in the world's constitutional space. Democratising international institutions and politics by both introducing more direct legitimacy of the relevant multilateral bodies and more effective political participation in their functioning, has become an important perspective for any significant human-centric and peaceful development of governance. Advocating an international-transnational democracy is already proposing new citizenship building into practice.

## III. Citizens' related dialogue in the EU

### 1. Global context

Growing complexity and interconnection between and within societies have become intrinsic characteristics of European societies. They are having an impact on

the dialogue with citizens. While power is increasingly globalised, the State is no longer an exclusive actor in the system, despite attempts to return to national solutions, as the migration, refugee, health and energy issues illustrate.

This globalising context may lead to multiple identities, different duties and rights, diverse tasks and roles for citizens. It has also resulted in a widening gap and mistrust between citizens and their institutions. This societal fragmentation brings many people to confusion and uncertainty. The role of education in responding to the challenges of globalisation and increasing societal complexity is therefore fundamental. Indeed, learning to live together positively with differences and diversity is becoming the central dimension of active citizenship.

## 2. Main legal basis of civil dialogue: Implementing participatory democracy

The Lisbon Treaty's Preamble calls for enhancing the legitimacy of the Union, underscored by Art. 10 on representative democracy and Art. 11 on participatory democracy. The legal reference for participatory democracy in the EU is presented by following dimensions:

- The implementation of the Horizontal Civil Dialogue (Art 11(1) TEU), very relevant as young people prefer more activity-related, issue-related politics;
- The strengthening and widening of the Vertical Civil Dialogue (Art 11 (2) TEU)

- The EU Citizens' Initiative (ECI) is legally embedded in Art 11 (4) TEU: *"Not less than one million citizens who are nationals of a significant number of Member States may take the initiative of inviting the European Commission, within the framework of its powers, to submit any appropriate proposal on matters where citizens consider that a legal act of the Union is required for the purpose of implementing the Treaties."* The EGTC represents a good practice of territorial cooperation (i.e. cross-border, transnational and interregional cooperation), involving regional and local authorities, in view of strengthening the economic and social cohesion of the European Union.

For the first time in EU primary law, the Treaty of Lisbon under Article 17 TFEU explicitly introduces a dialogue between European institutions and churches, religious associations or communities as well as with philosophical and non-confessional organisations. The Treaty provision for the Dialogue of European Values states that: *"(1) The Union respects and does not prejudice the status under national law of churches and religious associations or communities in the Member States; (2) The Union equally respects the status under national law of philosophical and non-confessional organisation; (3) Recognising their identity and their specific contribution, the Union shall maintain an open, transparent and regular dialogue with these churches and organisations."*

## 3. EU civil dialogue initiatives

Actual EU practices of participatory democracy emerged with the Treaty of Lisbon. Only then became the role and impact of civil society organisations legally acknowledged. We briefly refer here to the major recent constructive steps of this formalised awareness and increased institutionalisation of civil society in EU affairs. Some concrete steps have been taken in the last twenty years to stimulate participatory governance in the EU context:

- **The White Paper on European Governance** was adopted by the European Commission in July 2001 with the aim of establishing more democratic forms of governance at all levels – global, European, national, regional and local. It clearly states that *"The Union must renew the Community method by following a less top-down approach."* The content of the White Paper based good governance on the core principles of openness, participation, accountability, effectiveness and coherence. It dealt with four main action themes:
  - o Better involvement and more openness: instituting openness through all stages of decision-making; ensuring consultation with regional and local governments and with civil society networks;
  - o Better policies, regulation and delivery: simplifying EU law and related national rules; promoting different policy tools; establishing guidelines on the use of expert advice; defining criteria for the creation of new regulatory agencies;
  - o Contributing to global governance: reviewing how the EU can speak more often with a single voice in international affairs; improving dialogue with actors in third countries;
  - o Refocusing policies and institutions (Commission, Council of Ministers and Parliament): ensuring policy coherence and long-term objectives; clarifying and reinforcing the powers of the institutions; formulating proposals for the Intergovernmental Conference (IGC) based on the governance policy consultation.
- **Civil Dialogue Platform of European Social NGOs:** *"Civil dialogue is not just about consultation; it is about ensuring all stakeholders are given the op-*

*portunity to influence policy issues where they have expertise [...]."* The Platform conceives the dialogue as an on-going process involving local, national and European levels, within a specific sector as well as on horizontal issues. Focus is on social justice, inclusion, employment, right, civil dialogue, etc.



**Actual EU practices of participatory democracy emerged with the Treaty of Lisbon. Only then became the role and impact of civil society organisations legally acknowledged**

- **The Riga Process on participation**, launched by the NGO Forum. RIGA 2015 offers an Action Roadmap towards dialogue at different levels for the implementation of Article 11.1 and 11.2 of the Lisbon Treaty. The objective of the roadmap is to promote civil society participation in decision-making at both national and EU level, as well as to identify future actions to be taken by people, organisations, communities, states and European Union
- In 2009 the Committee of the Regions (CoR) published a **White Paper on Multi-level Governance**, reflecting its determination to *"build Europe in partnership"*. Multi-level governance was defined as *"coordinated action by the European Union, the Member States and local and regional authorities, according to the principles of subsidiarity and proportionality and in partnership, tasking the form of operational and institutionalised cooperation in the drawing-up and implementation of the EU policies."* The White Paper prioritises two main strategic objectives: encouraging participation in the European process and reinforcing the efficiency of Community action. It proposed Regional Action Plans, tools, territorial pacts, inclusive method of coordination, vertical and horizontal partnerships.
- A new kind of political thinking was accurately expressed in 2014 by the **Charter for Multi-Level Governance** proposed by the Committee of the Regions. It refers to the principles of *"togetherness, partnership, awareness of interdependence, multi-actor*



community, efficiency, subsidiarity, transparency, sharing best practices [...] developing a transparent, open and inclusive policy-making process, promoting participation and partnership, involving relevant public and private stakeholders [...], inclusive through use of appropriate digital tools [...] respecting subsidiarity and proportionality in policy making and ensuring maximum fundamental rights protection at all levels

of governance to strengthen institutional capacity building and investing in policy learning among all levels of governance...” The Charter’s focus was on better law-making, growth in partnership, territorial, economic and social cohesion, European Neighbourhood Policy and decentralised cooperation. It establishes a set of common values and identifies practical processes of good European governance.

## IV. Intercultural dialogue in the EU

### Point of departure

Intercultural dialogue is one way to manage cultural diversity. Cultural diversity is not only a fact and a right to be protected, but also an economic, social and political added value, which needs to be developed and adequately managed. Protection, promotion and maintenance of cultural diversity are factors of human development and a manifestation of human liberty. They are an essential requirement of sustainable development for the benefit of present and future generations. In summary, cultural diversity is a rich asset for individuals and societies, which needs careful and gentle management attention.

On the other hand, increasing cultural diversity brings about new social and political challenges. Cultural diversity often triggers fear and rejection. Negative reactions, ranging from stereotyping, racism, xenophobia and intolerance to discrimination and violence, can threaten peace and the very fabric of local and national communities. International conflicts, the socio-economic vulnerability and marginalisation of entire groups, and widespread cultural ignorance, including the lack of knowledge about one’s own culture and heritage, provide fertile ground for rejection, social exclusion, extremist reaction and conflict. The most fundamental challenge, therefore, is that of combining social cohesion and cultural diversity.

### 1) Intercultural dialogue: content

#### Definition

“Intercultural dialogue is an open and respectful exchange of views between individuals and groups belonging to

different cultures that leads to a deeper understanding of the other’s world perception.” In this definition, ‘open and respectful’ means based on the equal value of the partners; ‘exchange of views’ stands for every type of interaction that reveals cultural characteristics; ‘groups’ stands for every type of collective that can act through its representatives (family, community, associations, peoples); ‘culture’ includes everything relating to ways of life, customs, beliefs and other things that have been passed on to us for generations, as well as the various forms of artistic creation; ‘world perception’ stands for values and ways of thinking.

Dialogue between cultures is the oldest and most fundamental mode of democratic conversation, and is an antidote to rejection and violence. The cost of ‘non-dialogue’ may therefore be high. Continued non-communication, ignorance and mutual cultural isolation may lead to ever more dangerous degrees of misunderstanding, mutual seclusion, fear, marginalisation, and violent conflict.

#### Objective

In a very general sense, the objective of intercultural dialogue is to learn to live together peacefully and constructively in a multicultural world and to develop a sense of community and belonging. Intercultural dialogue can therefore be a tool for the prevention and resolution of conflicts through enhancing the respect for human rights, democracy and the rule of law.

#### Parameters

The promotion of intercultural dialogue is characterised by three basic parameters: its value basis, its



transversal nature and its different geographical dimensions. Intercultural dialogue is neither an expression of, nor leading to cultural relativism. Dialogue should be based on the principles of the universality and indivisibility of human rights, democracy and the rule of law. It implies a rejection of the idea of a clash of civilisations and expresses its conviction that, on the contrary, increased commitment to cultural co-operation and intercultural dialogue will benefit peace and international stability in the long term. It is conceived as an important pillar for sustainable development across the globe.

Secondly, the promotion of intercultural dialogue is not simply another theme, added to the list of other existing policies. Instead, it is conceived as a cross-sectoral and transversal approach, which influences the agenda of virtually all other policy domains and institutions.

Finally, we distinguish three levels that are important for a coherent policy of promoting intercultural dialogue: - intercultural dialogue within European societies, such as dialogue between majority and minority cultures living within the same community

(e.g. with a focus on immigrant communities, various religious beliefs, national minorities); intercultural dialogue between different cultures across national borders, e.g. dialogue activities in international cultural policy programmes, in cross-border exchange schemes, through international media; and intercultural dialogue between Europe and its neighbouring regions.

#### National approaches to intercultural dialogue

Two major policy approaches are used to promote intercultural dialogue at the national level:

- 1) The instrumentally integrative approach  
In many EU member states, the social cohesion approach has gained ground. It aims at a more unified society with political stability, internal security, economic growth, and equal opportunities for all individuals and groups, regardless of their origin, to participate in both the work environment and social spheres. To this end, a common national identity, related values and the use of a main national

language are being promoted and concepts or requirements in immigration/citizenship laws and policies are developed or tightened. On the other hand, some intercultural dialogue-related programmes or events are part of this approach; they often aim at supporting the socio-cultural integration of groups or individuals with a migrant background.

2) The cultural equity-oriented approach

The second important approach focuses on the legal or political recognition of defined minority cultures and identities that coexist within a territorially defined area, be it that of a nation, region or locality. Minorities are provided with specific rights, some of which are accompanied by affirmative action measures in the fields of culture, education and the media. This approach has been traditionally prevalent in most of the Nordic countries and in the United Kingdom;

Sector approaches

National approaches to intercultural dialogue are to be understood in a broader context and as a policy issue in the sectors of education, culture, youth and sport.

1) Education: basis for understanding and respecting diversity

National policy approaches to intercultural dialogue in the education sector range from a focus on civic education (throughout Europe) to intercultural education (in some countries). The development of intercultural competencies and skills as part of an overall political vision or national strategy on life-long learning processes.

Acquiring civic competence through education means equipping individuals to fully participate in civic life based on knowledge of democracy, citizenship, and civil rights. There is no common approach to civic education across Europe or even within one country. One of the main issues of civic education from the point of view of intercultural dialogue is the content of educational materials, whether for social studies or history teaching.

Across Europe, one of the main objectives of educational policy to promote dialogue is by providing

resources for language learning. This takes many forms. Informal intercultural learning activities are also pursued independently of educational institutions through media programmes, exhibitions of culture and heritage institutions, training and employment schemes, etc., which aim at providing multiple perspectives of the past, an understanding of the present and a diversified vision of a common future.



**Acquiring civic competence through education means equipping individuals to fully participate in civic life based on knowledge of democracy, citizenship, and civil rights**

2) Culture

Interculture policies, institutional strategies and artist-led approaches take on many different meanings, ranging from promoting formal cultural relationships across national boundaries (i.e. cultural diplomacy) or artist-led partnerships within Europe or internationally (i.e. cross border cultural cooperation). One of the main cultural policy approaches adopted to promote intercultural dialogue within countries has been to showcase different cultures and cultural expressions through support for one-off projects, events and media programmes. The objective is to give visibility to artists who are not part of the mainstream cultural landscape and as an educative strategy to inform the public about different cultures. On the other hand, there are many artists who reference their own cultural roots in their works, yet want to be recognised for their artistic talents irrespective of their ethnic background.

3) Promoting integration through sports

National approaches to promoting intercultural dialogue in the field of sports are often challenge oriented and/or target group oriented. As reflected in the 2007 EU White Paper on Sports, the major challenges are often identified with social inclusion and empowerment of excluded or marginalised individuals and groups; combating racism and xeno-

phobia; or post war reconciliation. While it is true that sport and its informal settings can provide shared spaces which are more interactive and face fewer barriers than in other parts of society, there is a heavy burden placed on local and voluntary associations to promote the social inclusion of specific target groups such as immigrants, children or women.

4) Youths: a challenging generation to target

New generations of third culture kids (second and third generation immigrants) have been growing, and youths are reported to be the fastest growing group of mixed race in Europe; some of them feel alienated in their present home country and are looking to a return to their cultural roots. Multiple, hybrid identities and complexities are the norm and will determine the process of dialogue and communication in the future.

**2) Intercultural dialogue in the EU**

2.1. EU legal framework for intercultural dialogue: a synthesis

a) Articles 2, 3 and 6 of the current Treaty of the European Union provide the fundamental basis of the legal framework of the EU's activities in the field of intercultural dialogue. For the sake of clarity, they read as follows:

- Article 2 of the Treaty: *“The Union is founded on the values of respect for human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, the rule of law and respect for human rights, including the rights of persons belonging to minorities. These values are common to the Member States in a society in which pluralism, non-discrimination, tolerance, justice, solidarity and equality between women and men prevail.”*
- Article 3, TEU: 1. *The Union’s aim is to promote peace, its values and the well-being of its peoples. [...] 3. The Union shall establish an internal market. It shall work for the sustainable development of Europe based on balanced economic growth and price stability, a highly competitive social market economy, aiming at full employment and social progress, and a*

*high level of protection and improvement of the quality of the environment. It shall promote scientific and technological advance. It shall combat social exclusion and discrimination, and shall promote social justice and protection, equality between women and men, solidarity between generations and protection of the rights of the child. It shall promote economic, social and territorial cohesion, and solidarity among Member States. It shall respect its rich cultural and linguistic diversity, and shall ensure that Europe’s cultural heritage is safeguarded and enhanced.”*

- Article 6, TEU: 1. *The Union recognises the rights, freedoms and principles set out in the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union of 7 December 2000, as adapted at Strasbourg, on 12 December 2007, which shall have the same legal value as the Treaties. 2. The Union shall accede to the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms. [...]”*

b) The Preamble of the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the EU (annex of the Lisbon Treaty, 2009) reads as follows: *“The peoples of Europe, in creating an ever-closer union among them, are resolved to share a peaceful future based on common values. Conscious of its spiritual and moral heritage, the Union is founded on the indivisible, universal values of human dignity, freedom, equality and solidarity; it is based on the principles of democracy and the rule of law. It places the individual at the heart of its activities, by establishing the citizenship of the Union and by creating an area of freedom, security and justice. The Union contributes to the preservation and to the development of these common values while respecting the diversity of the cultures and traditions of the peoples of Europe as well as the national identities of the Member States and the organisation of*



**Multiple, hybrid identities and complexities are the norm and will determine the process of dialogue and communication in the future**



their public authorities at national, regional and local levels; it seeks to promote balanced and sustainable development and ensures free movement of persons, services, goods and capital, and the freedom of establishment. To this end, it is necessary to strengthen the protection of fundamental rights in the light of changes in society, social progress and scientific and technological developments by making those rights more visible in a Charter.”

Articles 10, 11 and 12 of the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights are of particular importance to intercultural dialogue. They address equality (e.g. non-discrimination and cultural, religious and linguistic diversity), freedoms (e.g. freedom of expression, of thought, conscience and religion), and citizen’s rights (e.g. of movement and residence, to vote).

- Article 10: Freedom of thought, conscience and religion: “1. Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion. This right includes freedom to change religion or belief and freedom, either alone or in community with others and in public or in private, to manifest religion or belief, in

worship, teaching, practice and observance. 2. The right to conscientious objection is recognised, in accordance with the national laws governing the exercise of this right.”

- Article 11: Freedom of expression and information: “1. Everyone has the right to freedom of expression. This right shall include freedom to hold opinions and to receive and impart information and ideas without interference by public authority and regardless of frontier. 2. The freedom and pluralism of the media shall be respected.”
- Article 12: Freedom of assembly and of association: “1. Everyone has the right to freedom of peaceful assembly and to freedom of association at all levels, in particular in political, trade union and civic matters, which implies the right of everyone to form and to join trade unions for the protection of his or her interests. 2. Political parties at Union level contribute to expressing the political will of the citizens of the Union”.

## 2.2. EU initiatives

We briefly list a few relevant EU initiatives in the area of intercultural dialogue.

- The March 2002 Jean Monnet conference on ‘Intercultural dialogue’ focused on the centrality of the human rights paradigm and its practical implications as to the place of Europe in the world, the interreligious dialogue, democracy and globalisation.
- Its conclusions have given input to the Euro-Mediterranean conference of the Ministers of Foreign Affairs in Valencia, 22-23 April 22nd-23rd 2002, in order to re-launch the Barcelona Process. An action program resulted from the conference with an important section on the dialogue between cultures/civilisation.
- The European Commission also supported the international conference in Beyrouth in September 2002 on ‘Cultures, Religions and Conflicts’.
- Another Jean Monnet Conference, held in December 2002 dealt with ‘Peace, Security and Stability: an international dialogue and the role of the EU’.
- In 2003, Romano Prodi, the then president of the European Commission, created a high-level advisory group on ‘The Dialogue between peoples and cultures in the Euro-Mediterranean area’. Its final report resulted in the creation of the Anna Lindh Euro-Mediterranean Foundation for the Dialogue between Cultures in Alexandria (Egypt). An Education Handbook on ‘Intercultural Citizenship in the Euro- Mediterranean Region’ was published in 2014.
- The ‘Intercultural Cities’ project is a good example of an institutional cooperation between the Council of Europe and the European Union. It presents a good practice towards a model for intercultural integration
- 2008 was declared the Year of Intercultural Dialogue. It promoted a wide variety of activities at national and EU level.

## 2.3. Assessment

Intercultural dialogue contributes to a number of strategic priorities of the European Union, such as respecting and promoting cultural diversity; favouring the European Union’s commitment to solidarity, social justice and reinforced cohesion; allowing the European Union to make its voice heard and realising new efficient partnerships with neighbouring countries.

Indeed, the European Union has for the last two decades encouraged intercultural dialogue, both –inside and outside of the European Union, - through various programmes and initiatives.

True EU intercultural dialogue calls for a conceptual framework that deals with diversity on a European and global scale; requires a socio-cultural setting that combines globalisation with cultural assertivity and assumes a moral dimension that favours commonly shared values. We identify four policy suggestions in promoting true intercultural dialogue.

### 1) Culture as a driving force for genuine intercultural dialogue

We recognise cultural pluriformity as the main character of European civilisation. It is a source of wealth and strength. Not any culture can be missed out in the European cultural mosaic. Protection of cultural diversity, however, does not imply nationalistic or regionalist isolation or a European fortress, inside or outside the EU.

There is a tension between culture and integration in European developments. Therefore, we have to be careful not to turn Europe into a global cultural area, which resembles a Melting Pot in which all diversity would be lost. Different cultures should not be separated, but should enter into dialogue with, influence each other and transform themselves while remaining diversified.

We favour mutual learning by doing together as an agenda for intercultural dialogue. It would be a grave mistake to save the originality of particular cultures by isolating them from the dialogue with other cultures or to accept a cultural relativist approach on the global scale. A dynamic cultural sector helps to ensure actual participative democracy and activates democratic empowerment, by inspiring citizens to become active, creative and responsible.

Intercultural dialogue is an important way of overcoming some of the negative consequences of globalisation (i.e. minorities, migration, poverty), condition to the recognition of common and moral values (i.e. human dignity, respect for difference and diversity, solidarity, etc.). As such, intercultural dialogue is an important instrument in governance building, creating mutual understanding, trust and confidence. It is a vehicle for a more active, consen-



sus building citizens” participation to create tolerance and respect between different cultures and peoples and to overcome ignorance, arrogance, fear and mistrust. Such a dialogue should be perceived as a path to conviviality and interculturalism in which cultures influence each other without destroying themselves or entering into clashes or conflicts. It is therefore a crucial path for peace and genuine sustainable development and may lead to a conversation among equals with respect for the difference and the diversity of the each other.

2) *Europe’s responsibility to favour a dialogue between diverse cultural discourses*

Europe as a global actor has an important responsibility in intercultural dialogue. It should take up its role as an enabler and facilitator. It should be a communicative bridge builder and a boundaries-breaker in such a dialogue. It has a valid socio-economic foundation that is based on democracy, human rights, solidarity and above all diversity, meaning respect for different cultures, languages, religions, traditions, etc. This implies mutual understanding and learning as well as an open dialogue perspective.

Europe should play a proactive role in defusing the tension between universalism and particularism in a globalising world, combining difference and identity in novel ways of dialogue and cooperation. Europe is called upon to meet the challenge of crossing its boundaries, respecting the right to diversity and difference but preserving fundamental values.

In view of the process of globalisation and its consequences on cultural exchanges and cooperation worldwide, Europe is required to take up its moral responsibility to contribute to a strengthening of an intercultural dialogue among equals in a globalising world, while firmly supporting its commonly shared values at all possible policy levels. The maintenance and promotion of the global common good of economically, socially and culturally sustainable development worldwide (i), the common practice of mutual learning and listening (ii), the centrality of the individual citizen as a person within a community (iii) and a coherent internal and external policy (iv) are to be Europe’s guiding principles in promoting globalisation with a human and cultural face.

3) *Human rights paradigm: the basic point of departure for intercultural dialogue*

Human rights are at the core of any suitable approach to intercultural dialogue. The International law of human rights has extended its constitutional space from inside the nation state to the entire world. The human rights paradigm should be conceived as a powerful trans-cultural facilitator into moving from the (increasingly) conflicting stage of multi-culturality to the dialogic stage of interculturality.

Such a universal human rights approach to intercultural dialogue also requires a European policy interpretation. Public policies are absolutely necessary to pursue the strategic goal of the inclusion of all individuals and groups living in the EU. A major coordination with the other European institutions engaged in this field, in particular with the Council of Europe and the OECD, is desirable; also, a major focus and continuity to partnerships with other regions in the world and a strengthened support to the UN would be welcomed.

4. *From policy to practice*

Sources of good practice projects are multi-fold. Successful intercultural dialogue projects are to be found in ‘shared spaces’; both institutional and non-institutional spaces. Moreover, diversity can be fostered at all stages of cultural/artistic production, distribution and participation. The educational challenges are to develop intercultural competences and skills among all members of society and to stimulate trans-national cooperation activities. Finally, interactive communication processes stimulate empowerment or development of self-confidence in individuals, and a sense of collective responsibility. Guidelines of intercultural practices should be identified for sharing diversity within and between cultures.

**Conclusion**

1) I am convinced that, in spite of failures and imperfections in the integration process, the project of ‘Europe’ remains a valid working place to define the European common good and to develop a unique institutional and operational frame-

work in which citizens are important actors of true participatory governance, based on the rule of law.

There is again a need for an enlarging and mobilising vision which can raise a new élan and a regained connection with the citizen. Furthermore, we should recall the enthusiasm and faith in the European project, as it was embodied by the Founding Fathers of Europe. They wanted to guarantee a sustainable peace within the European borders and combined a long-term vision with a pragmatic policy approach. Economic arguments supported political goodwill. Therefore, Europe needs bridge builders who can concretely complete the rhetoric of the European story, underscore the European ideals of peace, unity in diversity, freedom and solidarity and mobilise the young people for the European model of society. However, this rhetoric still needs to be translated into a workable and forward-looking reality amidst a radically changing world to inspire the European citizens.

Some conditions need to be fulfilled:

- all Member States must accept the rules of the game that keep the complicated system running and fair.
- Member States must adhere to more abstract, principled ground rules such as respect for individual fundamental rights, democracy and the rule of law. These principles, being the European values, are explicitly stated in the Europe-

an treaty. The sanctions for violations are also clearly stated.

- The will to solve problems together requires a positive basic attitude, ‘*the esprit européen*’.

2) The process of European integration demonstrates that the social doctrine of the Church was and can still be a source of inspiration and a transforming force for the European Model.

3) The role of education is fundamental in this. Only through integral human development in education and learning processes true citizens’ dialogue can develop and link EU citizenship to democracy. Indeed, learning to live together with differences and diversity is becoming the central dimension of active citizenship education. Also, new forms and places of dialogue, active citizenship and cooperation emerge outside the existing institutionalised structures of representation. Formal and non-formal civil society plays herein a bigger and more active role.

A values-based EU will only survive if citizen participation and participatory governance at all levels and sectors are based both on the recognition of multiple identities of its citizens and on actual inclusive citizenship-building. Only then can Europe also play its role in the international forum with a values-driven and human rights-based commitment.





**Fourth session:  
Christian  
churches and  
European  
integration**

# Christian churches in European integration: Response to secularization?

Mariano Crociata,  
Bishop of Latina, President of COMECE

I would begin with the consideration of European integration, a concept that expresses the idea of something in progress. This is evident both from historical beginnings and the current reality of the European Union (EU). The way the Union was born explains very well that it was not conceived and initiated as something definitive, and that the need for a process of growth and development was part of the same project. It does not reproduce existing models of international organization. It is a new creation that takes the form of a community of countries that, through collaboration in certain areas - that is, by ceding sovereignty over specific areas, initially only of an economic nature, and agreeing to exercise it jointly - were going to overcome the divisions produced by war and create conditions for conflicts not to reappear on European soil. Seventy years later, it must be said that collaboration has grown, even enormously, but integration is far from complete, even in the areas where different countries have chosen to collaborate, or even more so in the new options that reality, advancing, imposes.

The succession of generations and changing social, economic, and cultural contexts obliges us to continually review what has been achieved and choices need to be made time and again. The contemporary situation is the result of this evolution. We have witnessed an increase in the number of collaborations and issues that the Union must address, but at the same time, especially in recent years, indifference has

also increased, and often even aversion, not without reason, from broad sectors of public opinion towards European institutions. The European Union finds itself caught between two fires: on the one hand, resistance, also politically represented, to the European project, and on the other hand, the need to increase the compactness of its institutional configuration, without which it is unable to assume and fulfill properly the responsibilities that the historical moment requires.

In a pre-electoral phase like the current one, there is a risk of forgetting, alongside so many limitations and criticisms, what the European Union has represented and achieved so far, such as - to give some examples - the single currency, the free movement of people and goods with the abolition of internal borders, interventions during economic crises and pandemics. It has expanded to include more and more countries, up to the group of ten, almost all from Eastern Europe, who joined exactly twenty years ago.

Precisely these days, two reports requested from Mario Draghi and Enrico Letta, respectively by the European Commission and the European Council, highlight the risk of regression and disintegration of the European Union, especially in the current international context marked by bloody conflicts, factors that constitute dangerous threats to all, if certain reforms are not carried out, such as a common defense, a more open and strengthened taxation and market among European countries, and above all a foreign

policy that has the strength that only political unity can provide.

The cultural context intersecting with this historical process has the most adverse characteristics imaginable, as everything - from the culture of individual rights without duties, through consumption (almost a new religion) of both goods and people, to the omnipresence of social networks - seems to discourage any integration process, in social dynamics rather than in politics, both at the local and global levels, where current wars have enormous weight. However, what feeds any integration process is a social, cultural fabric of common values that is appreciated and cultivated. But this is precisely what seems to be increasingly lacking: namely, a shared *ethos*. This is clearly demonstrated by the fact that we are far from capturing the signs of a European public opinion and a European citizenship; public opinions are, so to speak, held hostage by intra-national political issues and view European matters from that perspective, even when they are known and followed.

\*\*\*

Christians have been participants, even protagonists, in the European adventure from the beginning, if we limit ourselves to recalling the figures of the founders. But what then existed as a shared moral and cultural fabric, still relevant - that is, a perceived solidarity and in any case strongly rooted, in which the Christian sense of life played a decisive role - has over time become an increasingly faded memory. The truly impressive change, especially from the 1960s onwards, can be interpreted with the concept of secularization, although it primarily refers to the religious aspect of collective feeling and experience.

I use the category of secularization cautiously because the cultural and religious vicissitudes in which we find ourselves and which it seeks to interpret are too complex, even intricate. The truth is that the relationship between society and religion has changed profoundly in recent decades, especially in terms of mutual distancing and alienation. Various theoretical proposals have endeavored to interpret this change. The categories introduced themselves reveal a hermeneutic difficulty; distinctions are made between secular and post-secular, but also between modern

and postmodern, and finally between Christian and post-Christian, as well as post-religious. In this, we find the sign of fragmentation or, as Zygmunt Bauman would say, of “fluidity”, within which it is difficult to find fixed points to anchor oneself, if only to understand.

Among others, three lines of interpretation of secularization can help navigate this constantly shifting universe. Essentially, a history that has experienced a slow departure from medieval Christianity, through the rupture of the Reformation and the “nationalization” of Christian denominations, to the separation of politics and religion and the delivery of ecclesiastical assets to the State, thus signaling a first sense of secularization.

Niklas Luhmann’s theory notes this separation of religion not only from politics but also from all other human activities, such as the economy, justice, science. Religion no longer exerts any influence on other sec-



tors, each of which acts completely autonomously, somehow finding in itself its own reason for being and its criteria for evaluation and action. In turn, Charles Taylor observes, among other things, the radical change that has occurred from a world in which religion, and therefore having faith, was an evidence taken for granted by all, so that it was natural to believe, to a world in which it is natural not to believe, in which the evident, unthought fact, is not having faith, not having a religion, or having it only as a result of a choice that presents itself as one among other possible choices. There are also those, like Marcel Gauchet and others with him, who consider secularization to be the extreme consequence and ripe fruit of religions, particularly of Christianity.

Beyond this necessarily brief way of dealing with very articulated theories and authors, what must be assumed, and not only from now on, is that secularization, whatever its interpretation, does not mean the end of religion, but its profound change in the context of a world that has also changed profoundly. This, in our Western societies, means that Christianity has become and will increasingly become a minority and elective religion. In them, what matters is not what the religious institutions propose, but what the individual person makes their own of a particular religion or, syncretically, chooses between various religions. This, however, opens up an unimaginable space for conscious, responsible, and mature choice. What must be pointed out is that this individualistic and elective approach, but sometimes simply arbitrary, to religion seeps into the traditional practice of many and into their more or less conscious way of continuing to practice the religion to which they belong in their own vital environment.

However, the individualization of choice and the delegitimization of the institution are aspects that operate in current religious, and also ecclesial, belonging. Thus, a deeply differentiated situation arises. It is possible to encounter practitioners whose view of things is perfectly homologated to the image that the world of consumption and the world of public communication give of religious content, without any critical sense and without any desire to change their habits, sensitivities, preferences, perhaps in response to a request for awareness and training from the Church's pastors. And, on the other hand, many

people who have distanced themselves from institutional religion carry within them a restlessness and spiritual quest that they cultivate and to which they find outlets, when they find them, even if they are disparate.

To this must be added that contemporaneity has a chronologically fictitious character, since in it coexist, unaware, religious visions and practices from different eras. Some people go to church as if they lived fifty or a hundred years ago. And we are not talking about traditionalists and nostalgics, who are a world apart. On the other hand, institutional religion itself perpetuates an organizational and cultural model that, while wanting to transmit the Gospel of Christ, the Christian sense of faith and life, the ritual and sacramental means of the Church, etc., does not always manage to reach today's human persons, inside or outside, because it strives to intercept religious search outside of inherited established schemes and, for the most part, does not penetrate at all the "rubber wall" of many regular practitioners or "faithful" to expressions of popular piety.

\*\*\*

How do Christian churches fit into this context? Fighting against the prevailing secularization would

be unrealistic. The cultural change that has occurred is irreversible and exhibits all the characteristics of a phenomenon resulting from a very complex process in which the Churches are actors, but not the only ones, and probably not the main ones. It would be useful, in any case, to reread the parable of the Catholic Church's attitude towards modernity to realize that all attempts to take the reins and govern the process of departure from religion and Christianity, to use an expression from Marcel Gauchet and Émile Poulat, have failed. It is no coincidence that an Italian historian, Pietro Scoppola, spoke years ago of the "new lost Christianity."

The Second Vatican Council put an end to this "stubbornness," accepting what had inexorably worn out and opening a dialogue, and above all, a positive outlook on this contemporary world. This is not easy due to the speed at which technology advances at all levels in acquiring new unimaginable potentialities, of which Artificial Intelligence is the latest result and the most eloquent emblem. Furthermore, the connotation of society in an increasingly markedly plural sense from a religious point of view distances any residual illusion of being able to direct the games, which will ultimately be decided at all levels of social life in very different forums, in the confrontation between large financial concentrations (increasingly linked to technoscientif-

ic developments, shaping technocracies) and regional geopolitical powers.

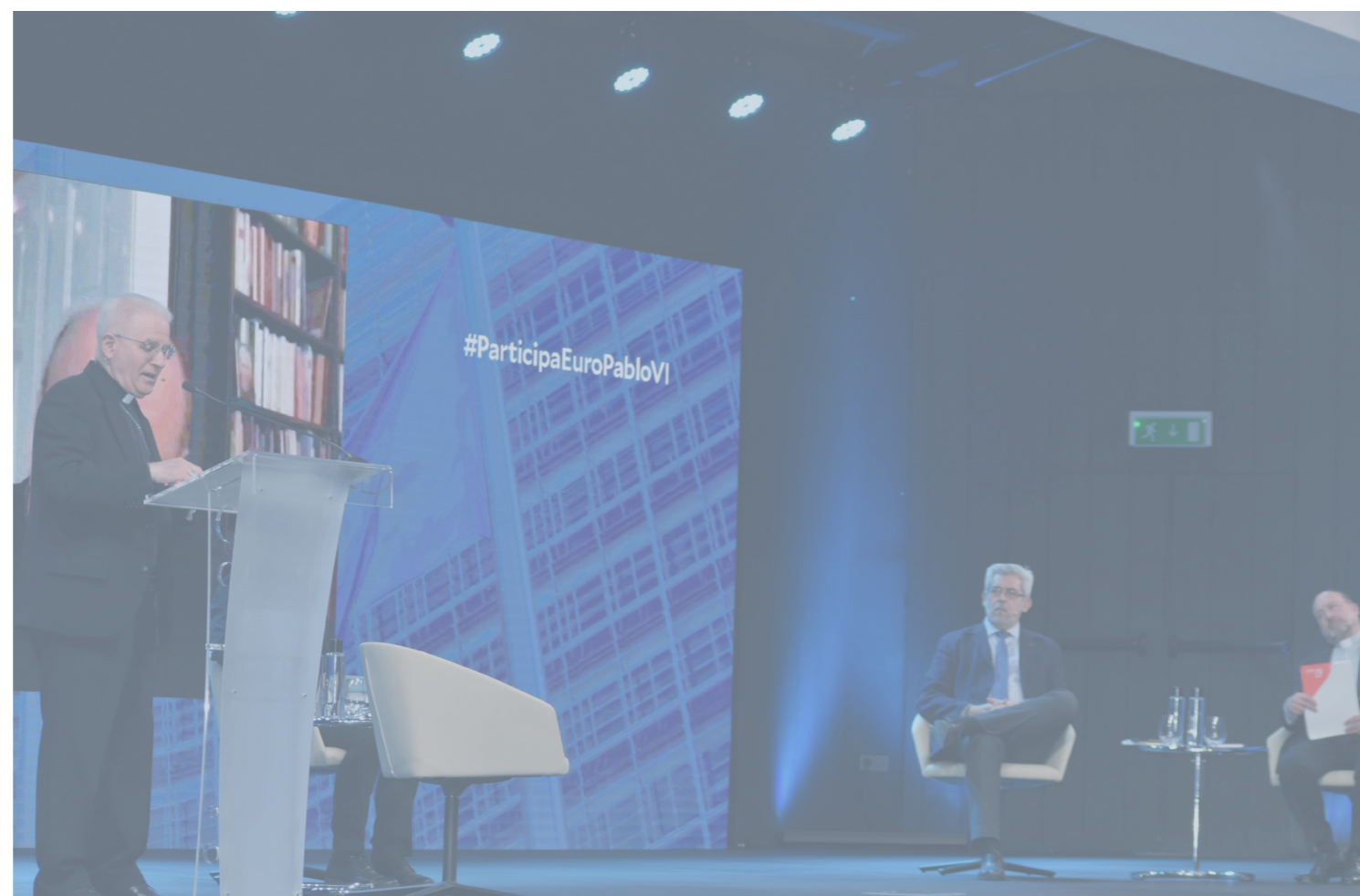
In this sense, there is a curious analogy and simultaneity between the weakness of the European Union and that of the Christian churches, although at different levels. This, not just this alone, should help us understand that the two entities need to recognize each other and choose to help each other with more warmth than has been shown so far. The time for suspicion and mistrust must end on both sides. If there is a delay on the part of the Churches in shedding nostalgic attitudes, oppositions, and mental habits of other times, the cultural delay where the Christian churches are still treated as a danger to freedom is no less a remnant of fears and ghosts of historical epochs past.



**Christians have been participants, even protagonists, in the European adventure from the beginning**

On the contrary, it is necessary to focus on what is most essential and urgent. Without the growth of a sense of European citizenship and belonging, the European Union risks being left with no margin to play to the end. Embracing this broad European project of popular participation is the only way to counter nationalist and sovereigntist impulses that undermine the minimal advances of the Union, with no advantage other than the preservation, for some and only for a time, of a local power perceived as false security against the bogeyman that isolation makes more real and menacing.

For Christian churches, it is about understanding that, although they are different tasks, the historical and institutional task regarding this European moment cannot be separated from the pastoral responsibility and spiritual mission. What responsible ecclesial institutions carry out in dialogue with civil institutions, pastoral responsibility must demand of small and large communities, whose historical and spiritual task is to give social form to those principles of the Church's



social doctrine, starting from the intangible dignity of the person, which constitutes the hermeneutical and operational instrument of the Church's relationship with society as a whole.

Organizations like the Commission of the Bishops' Conferences of the European Union (COMECE), on the Catholic side, and the Conference of European Churches (CEC), on the Protestant and Orthodox side, are expressions of the Churches that have the institutional mandate to engage in and maintain a dialogue that is among the commitments of the institutions of the European Union enshrined in Article 17 of the Treaty on European Union Functioning, and which is also nourished by a stable collaboration between both organizations and, in the case of COMECE, is based on a constant link with the Holy See.

**“ Christianity has never failed in this social openness of faith, in its being for everyone, and in its willingness not to exclude anyone, without renouncing for this reason the seriousness and rigor of a full response to the call to faith.**

Precisely as an expression of the national Episcopates and local Churches, what these organizations carry out in institutional dialogue represents the formal projection of a feeling and experience that constitute the constant commitment of ecclesial communities at all levels. Both aspects - institutional dialogue and explicitly pastoral and spiritual action - are not only closely linked but contribute to the same objective since both are manifestations of a way of thinking and living that takes place within a society of which Christians are also part, and within a civil society that they also contribute to shaping and building according to their own style and corresponding to the original inspiration and underlying structure, as well as the values, from which the European Union proceeds. This also constitutes an explicit responsibility of Christians.

Thus, we touch a raw nerve, so to speak, of the whole ecclesial question. Indeed, there is an intermediate level between the dialogue of the Churches with Eu-

ropean institutions and the life of ecclesial communities, which consists precisely of dialogue between the Churches of and in different countries. It is a dialogue because the interweaving between the ecclesiastical community and civil community makes the ecclesiastical community an inevitable sounding board for the moods of civil society. Thus, we see how the phenomenon called nationalism, sovereigntism, or populism has significant ecclesial resonances.

In this regard, it is worth bearing in mind Olivier Roy's interpretation of the phenomenon. The characteristic of this is the use of symbols and religious references outside any properly ecclesiastical context with an evident instrumental political purpose but with the effect of a substantial further secularization of religion since the evaluative and ethical horizon in which the use of religious symbols is situated is strictly individualistic and consumerist (in this respect, Danièle Hervieu-Léger would speak of "exculturation"). Therefore, the defense of religious symbols ostentatiously displayed in their context and for sovereigntist political purposes is nothing more than an illusion and deception. Unfortunately, many believers do not always understand this in their spasmodic quest for security against a contemporary world perceived as a threat, which they believe they can defend against by taking refuge in an imaginary past world as such devoid of any serious religious commitment.

The challenge posed by the growing European integration is also one for the Christian churches, although their mission is not limited to it, but goes much further, as their own objective is not the form of a socio-political organization, but the coming of the Kingdom of God, and any form of social organization is the contingent and unavoidable place through which that objective finds its fulfillment here and now.

A final point needs to be evoked here, precisely in this regard, to give fullness to the line of thought that the topic activates. It is about resuming a debate that took place some years ago and that referred precisely to the reduction of the Christian faith to a civil religion, that is, to its intramundane function linked to contingent historical circumstances and to social, cultural, and political objectives. That debate has lost none of its relevance, as it is no less valid today than the reduction of religious practice in Christian churches is linked to the persistence in society and culture of a whole

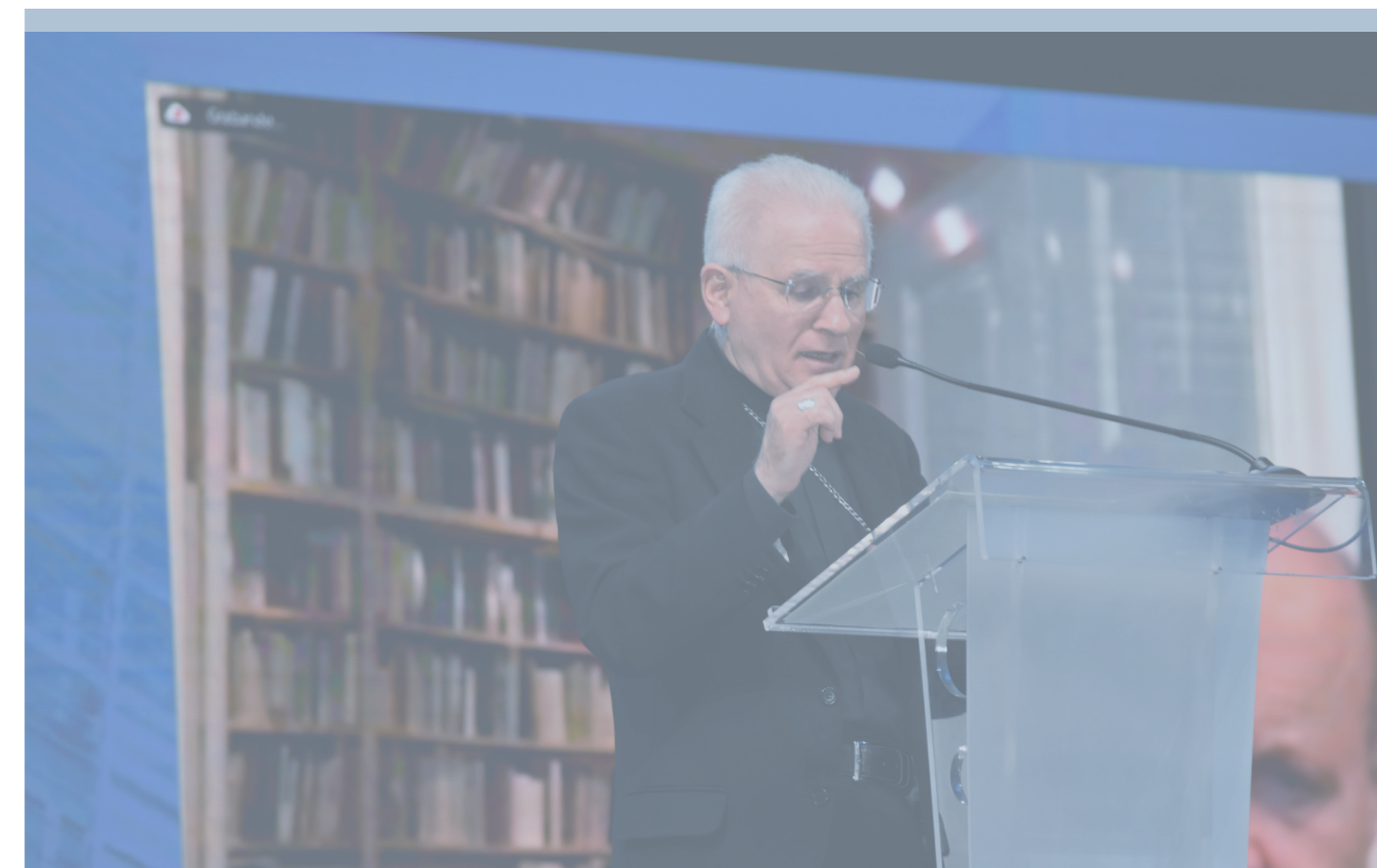
series of values that have Christian origins and form. Furthermore, it cannot be denied that many of the values stated in the EU Treaties and in the EU Charter of Rights have formulations and contents that largely correspond to the Christian tradition.

The term of comparison and contrast is the strictly eschatological purpose recognized in the Christian announcement, especially in its original configuration from the time of Jesus. Needless to say, this becomes particularly seductive at a time when the image of the creative minority is evoked insistently against a quantitative (only?) decline detectable as a constant fact in the Churches of the West. Although Christianity may no longer be dominant in our societies, due to the increasing presence of other religions, it cannot be denied that the Christian heritage still maintains a global consistency that is anything but accessory.

In the opposition between civil religion and eschatology, the Christian tradition has always known a point of balance that has consisted of the systematic rejection of all forms of sectarianism. There are also significant biblical arguments to support that Jesus' action combines attention to the small group of the twelve, the accompaniment of the disciples, and the reception of the multitude, the mass of people who seek him for very human and disparate reasons, without renouncing to give direction, appreciation, and encouragement to all. Christianity has never failed in this social openness of faith, in its being for everyone, and in its will-

ingness not to exclude anyone, without renouncing for this reason the seriousness and rigor of a full response to the call to faith, coherent with its eschatological connotation. Christian churches are not there to supplant -assuming they have the power to do so- the lack of a shared ethos that European societies suffer from, but they can contribute, they are not allowed to refuse or remain indifferent. They possess reserves of meaning, spiritual, and moral resources that everyone should be able to benefit from.

If Christian churches must send a signal, it consists of their ability to shape and animate the consciences of their faithful, to the point of leading them to reflect on the historical options they must take in coherence with their religious and faith motivations, and to constitute living communities as a sign and ferment of a new way of being in society. Their foreseeable minority character would not have a particular impact in this sense, since, in a social context increasingly fragile from the point of view of ideals and values, the force of conviction would be destined to have in any case significant effectiveness. The real problem would lie, rather, in the ability of Christian churches to counteract the weakening effects of ideals and values that the current dominant culture -produces not only externally but also internally and among their faithful. I believe that all of this also has much to do with the presence and responsibility of Christians, and of Christian churches, in the process of European integration.



# Reflections on secularization

## Tomas Halik, Professor at Charles University in Prague

The history of secular culture and its relationship to Christianity - as has been said - is very complicated and full of changes.

Secular culture can be described as a by-product of Christianity. There are still disputes about whether "laicity" is a legitimate heritage of Christianity or whether it is a "Christian heresy", whether it is an "unwanted child" of the Church or a "prodigal son" to be welcomed with open arms.

The distinction between secular power and ecclesiastical authority, which we find already in Pope Gelasius, was sharpened during the disputes between the papacy and the empire over investiture and had far-reaching ecclesiological, but also political and cultural consequences. In this dispute, the "Church" is established as a separate religious institution distinct from the state and nationality and thus as a unique phenomenon in the history of religion, and at the same time a sphere of "laicity", a secular culture, is created. For several centuries - until the Enlightenment - both spheres live in a relationship of mutual dialectic of polarity and compatibility. Their mutual relationship is the basis of the plurality and dynamism of Western civilization and an important chapter in the history of political and spiritual freedom in the West. Such a clear distinction has never been made in Eastern Christianity, and Byzantine Caesaropapism has its heritage in Russia, from the Tsarist rule through Marx-Leninism as the state religion of the Soviet empire to today's unity of throne and altar in the non-holy alliance of Putin's terrorist state with the nationalist ideology of the fundamentalist Russian Orthodox Church.

From the Enlightenment throughout modernity, this child of Western Christianity has undergone a process of emancipation. The Church's anxious and hostile response to this process - especially to the scientific, cul-

tural, social and political revolutions of late modernity - has contributed to mutual alienation and hostility on the European continent.

If the Church was driven by nostalgia for medieval Christianitas in these culture wars in Europe, it was bound to lose. The result was secularization in the form of the ex-culturation of the Christian faith. Christianity lost its form of religion in Europe (religio in the sense of "religare", to reunite), its role as an integrating force for the whole of society, its "common language". Other phenomena gradually aspired to this role - culture (in Romanticism), science (in modernity), political religions (fascism, communism, Nazism), then the media or market economics. Religion became just one sector of the life of individuals and society.

Christianity had a somewhat different development in Britain and especially in the US, where the Church did not go through the trauma of the terror of the French Revolution, where the Enlightenment did not have atheistic features and the Church learned to live in a free, democratic, pluralistic society.

This experience contributed to the turn of the Catholic Church in relation to modernity and secularity at the Second Vatican Council, to the turn from confrontation to dialogue.

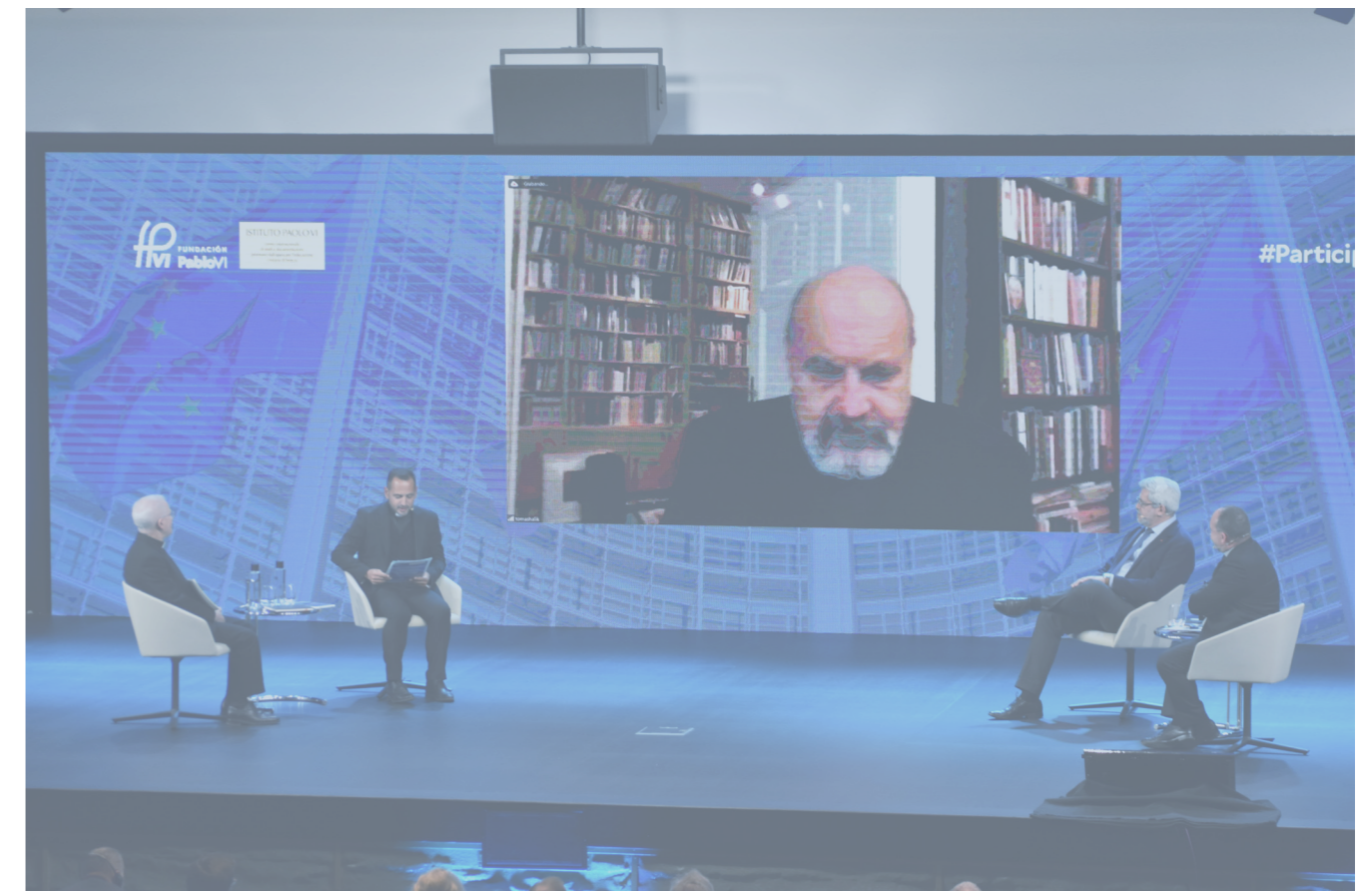
Paul VI, in the Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, declared secularization to be "the effort, in itself just and legitimate and in no way incompatible with faith or religion" to discover the laws governing reality and human life implanted by the Creator. Pope Francis commented on this exhortation of Paul VI in 2022 in an address to priests in Quebec: "God does not want us to be slaves, but sons and daughters; he does not want to make decisions for us, or oppress us with a sacral power, exercised in a world governed by religious laws. No! He created us to be free, and he

asks us to be mature and responsible persons in life and in society." Pope Francis emphasized the difference between "secularization" and "secularism," an ideological interpretation of the phenomenon that leads to various forms of "new atheism" in lifestyle. Pope Francis added: As Church /.../ t is up to us to make these distinctions, to make this discernment. If we yield to the negative view and judge matters superficially, we risk sending the wrong message, as though the criticism of secularization masks on our part the nostalgia for a sacralized world, a bygone society in which the Church and her ministers had greater power and social relevance. And this is a mistaken way of seeing things."

Pope Benedict spoke similarly about the relationship between secularity and faith (I quote from his remarks during a trip to Portugal in 2010): „There were always individuals who sought to *build bridges and create a dialogue*, but unfortunately, the pre-

vailing tendency was one of opposition and mutual exclusion. Today we see that this very dialectic represents an opportunity and that we need to develop a synthesis and a forward-looking and profound dialogue."

I am convinced that the process of synodal renewal of the Church, which is now underway and which subscribes to the concept of the Church as a *common way* (syn hodos), can mark a new stage in the history of Christianity, a journey from confessionally closed "Catholicism" to true *catholicity*, i.e., *universality and ecumenicity*. Some Christians fear that Christianity may lose its identity on the road to universal brotherhood. I, on the other hand, believe that this is a rare opportunity to understand the identity of Christianity in a new and deeper way. This, of course, requires a deepening of Christian theology and spirituality. That, however, is a topic beyond the scope of this paper.



# The dialogue of churches with European institutions

Manuel Barrios, Secretary General of COMECE

After having listened to the interesting interventions of Monsignor Mariano Crociata, President of COMECE, and also of Professor Halik, a friend with whom I have had the honor of discussing these topics on various occasions, including his recent book titled “The Afternoon of Christianity”, and who has just participated in our plenary assembly of COMECE last week, I would like to focus on two aspects mentioned in the title of this round table: first, European integration and the work of COMECE as the official representation of the Catholic Church in the member countries before the European institutions; and second, the

process of secularization and the response that we can offer from the Churches - the Catholic Church, but also the other Christian Churches - to this phenomenon.

**1. European integration:** The process of European integration gained significant momentum over 70 years ago. May 9, 1950, is often marked as the starting date, following the famous speech by Robert Schuman, after the terrible wars that ravaged our continent in the past century, causing much destruction, death, and suffering. The bold

initiative of Robert Schuman and others aimed to ensure peace by making war impossible. In the current context of much uncertainty and tension, also on our continent, this project gains even more significance and can serve as an inspiration and model for us. It is a project that first involves an economic aspect to regulate the control of materials necessary for war—a practical solidarity, we might say—but also includes a political aspect and shared values. The European Union, as a union of different countries into an entity that is more than a mere association of independent countries, is something unique that exists only in Europe. This is why COMECE also exists as an ecclesial initiative to accompany and contribute to this process of integration.

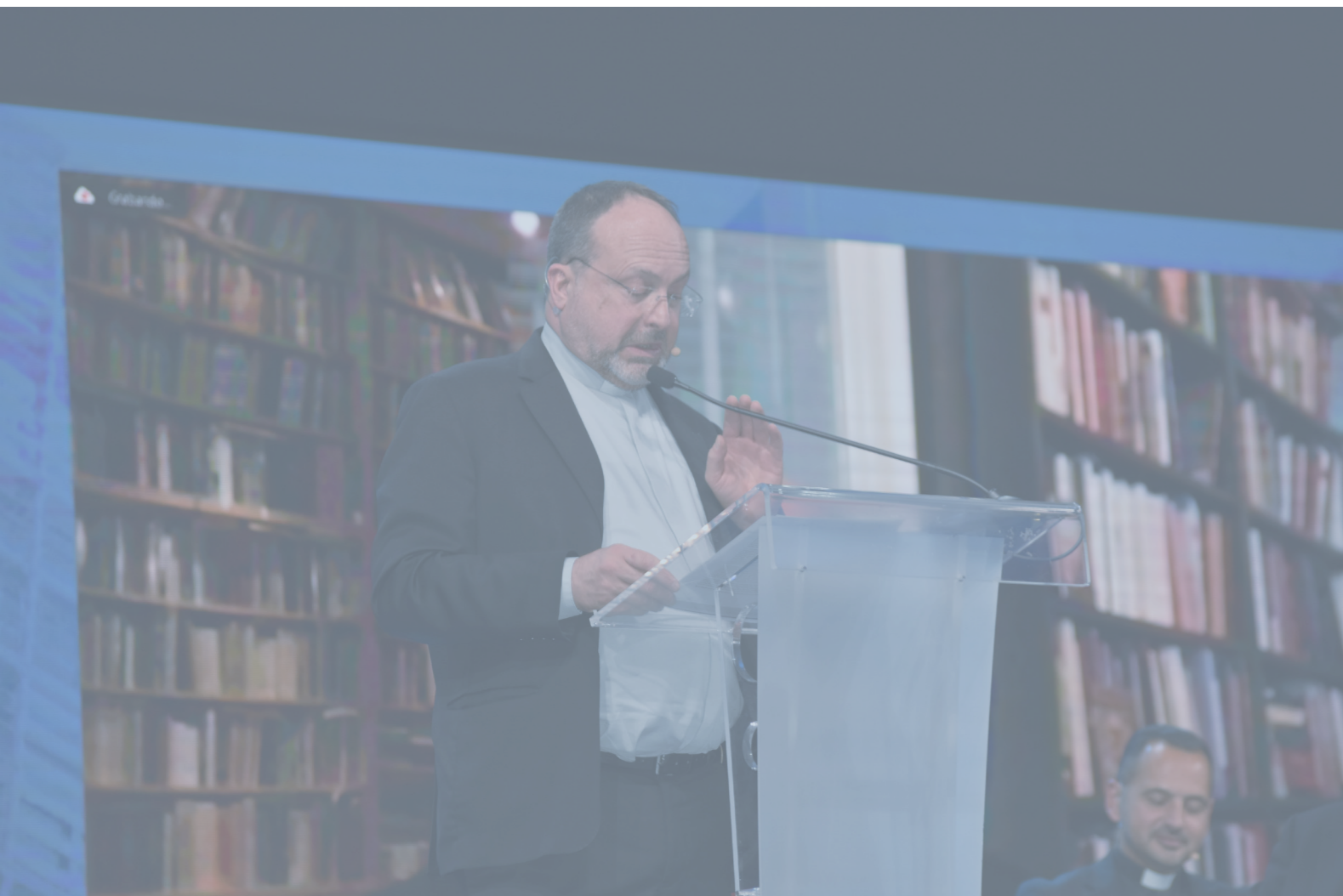
As Christians, we believe that the founding fathers of the European Union were inspired by their Christian culture and the communal personalism of Christian philosophers, as well as by their faith, which led them to take steps toward reconciliation in very critical and difficult times, and to think, as we would say today, ‘outside the box’. The Church has accompanied this process from the beginning. More than 50 years ago, a Nunciature to the European Union was created, distinct from the one already existing to the Kingdom of Belgium, to maintain diplomatic relations between the Holy See and the European Union. More than 40 years ago, COMECE, the Commission of the Bishops’ Conferences of the European Union, was established as the official representation of the Church in the member states before the European Union, with the aim of maintaining a dialogue with the institutions, a dialogue that is also supported by the Union’s own treaties today. In fact, Article 17 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union, which establishes the obligation for the Union to maintain an open, transparent, and regular dialogue with churches, religious associations, and philosophical and non-confessional organizations, can be seen as the final result of all the discussions about including God (*invocatio Dei*) or mentioning the Christian roots in the fundamental texts. This same Article 17 can also be seen as a way to regulate relations between religious

denominations and civil institutions in this post-modern era.

COMECE has its general assembly as its governing body, formed by bishops delegated by the Bishops’ Conferences of the European Union, and a secretariat based in Brussels where we follow various areas of European policies that are of interest to the Church. In view of the upcoming European elections in June, we have published a working document for dialogue with political parties and candidates, in which we review our priorities as a Church, including the rule of law and democracy; fundamental rights; family laws and the defense of life; war and peace; social justice and the fight against poverty; digitalization and artificial intelligence; care for our common home; migration and asylum; and the enlargement of the European Union.

I do not wish to delve into all these topics, but regarding this last issue, the enlargement of the European Union, which has become very relevant now with the wars on our continent and in the Holy Land, I do want to mention the latest declaration by European bishops on this topic, which was made public yesterday, as it is closely related to the theme of this session of our conference. As I mentioned, last week our COMECE plenary assembly took place. Exceptionally, it was held in Łomża (Poland), also with the intention of celebrating the 20th anniversary of the historic enlargement of the European Union in which 10 countries joined at once, on May 1, 2004: Cyprus, Malta, Czechia, Slovakia, Slovenia, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, and Poland. For the sake of brevity, I will read the declaration that the COMECE bishops agreed upon in Łomża last Friday and that was made public yesterday. I believe it gives a good idea of what we, as a Church, understand by European integration and our attitude towards it.

**2. Secularization and the Response of the Churches:** We know that secularization is a complex phenomenon that can be interpreted in various ways. Professor Halik has spoken about it as intrinsically linked to Christianity. On the one hand, we can highlight its positive aspects, such as the necessary relative autonomy of the secular, civil sphere







from the Churches and the religious realm. On the other hand, we can discuss its negative aspects, such as the loss of a sense of transcendence, even in the moral sphere, the eclipse of God in our societies, the weakening of the sense of belonging to the Church, and the decline in religious practice. Relating secularism to the European Union, we can refer to Article 2 of the Treaty on European Union: “The Union is founded on the values of respect for human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, the rule of law, and respect for human rights, including the rights of persons belonging to minorities.” I believe it is not difficult to recognize that these

values have a basis in the Christian tradition. Therefore, even with the process of secularization, these values remain as references. However, many of us think that if the religious, transcendent, spiritual foundation of these values is eliminated, they lose their consistency. Although there may not be an explicit mention of the religious or transcendent aspect of these values, their absoluteness can only be based on their reference to a transcendent dimension. In other words, the foundation of human dignity must be supramundane, above the secular. A sign of the eclipse of God in our society, of God no longer being on the horizon of human existence for many, is a certain despair that characterizes much of our European society. Hence, I believe it is very timely to choose hope as the theme for the upcoming Holy Year of 2025. We are already collaborating with some academic centers as COMECE to delve into the meaning of hope in various areas of life and politics.

3. **The Churches’ Response to the process of secularization** should follow the perspective of Saint Thomas Aquinas: to assume, purify, and elevate. Some view secularism as the culmination of Christian revelation, of the incarnation, of God’s kenosis, and as an expression of the maturity of Christianity (Vattimo). Although this position is very attractive, I believe that the response to secularization should be, rather, in the perspective of a new evangelization of our continent and a new presence of the Church—a more humble, ecumenical, creative presence, one that gives meaning, a religere more than a religare, signifying a new way of proposing the Christian message, with a new language and of inculturating it in a post-Christian society, with all that this entails (it is much more difficult to evangelize the post-Christian than the pre-Christian). This must be done in a synodal manner, which implies an authentic exercise of listening to the other and their reasons, which is the way to overcome the internal polarization in the Church that we experience today and that does us so much harm, frustrating also our evangelizing mission.

## What do the churches contribute?

Alfredo Abad, Pastor,  
President of the Spanish Evangelical Church

Mothers and grandmothers on the Franco-German border after the Second World War, the testimony of reconciliation. (Gerard Merminod)

1. The service of reconciliation.
 

“The dialogue between religions reaches its full meaning when it leads to the recognition of the full value of diversity” (Elisabeth Permentier) Pablo IV, Octogesima Adveniens 35-36, advocates for a real connection with different political movements, but it cannot be unconditional.
2. Giving a soul to Europe.
 

Jacques Delors’ proposal on the need for Europe to have a heart and a soul (November 1990) remains relevant more than 30 years later.
3. A brief overview of ecumenical efforts that offer a model of dialogue and advocacy for human rights.
  - European Ecumenical Assemblies
  - The Charta Oecumenica
4. The common challenge of a post-secular European society.
 

“The thirst for justice is perhaps the only one of the beatitudes that retains meaning in our time and feeds the discourse of ethics.” (Victoria Camps)
5. This is not the promised land.
 

“On the basis of our Christian faith, we work for a humane Europe with social awareness, in which human rights and the basic values of peace, justice,

freedom, tolerance, participation, and solidarity prevail.” Charta Oecumenica 2001.





### Let us continue building Europe together

*We, the bishops delegated by the Bishops' Conferences of the European Union (EU), gathered for the 2024 Spring Plenary Assembly of COMECE in Łomża (Poland), celebrating the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the historic EU enlargement, have adopted the following Statement:*

The Catholic Church has accompanied closely the European integration process since its beginnings, considering it a process of bringing together the peoples and countries of Europe in a community to guarantee peace, freedom, democracy, the rule of law, respect for human rights and prosperity. This process, pushed forward with courage by the founding fathers of the European Union after terrible wars on our continent, was based also on Christian values, like the recognition of the dignity of the human person, subsidiarity, solidarity and the pursuit of the common good. On 1 May 2004, the EU grew by ten new member states and this was a significant step in the realisation of the vision of a united Europe that could 'breathe with its two lungs', as envisioned by Saint Pope John Paul II, bringing together Eastern and Western Europe into a community of peoples, different, and yet, linked by a common history and destiny. This was a milestone in the Europeanisation of the EU, making it closer to what it is called to be, and a powerful witness to our times of how fraternal cooperation, in pursuit of peace and rooted in shared values, can prevail over conflicts and divisions.

A larger but also more diverse Union has, however, also brought along new challenges. Despite a solid political and economic integration of the EU member states, it is questionable to what extent a genuine dialogue of national realities, cultures, historical experiences and identities has taken place across European societies. As long as a true European spirit that includes a sense of belonging to the same community and of a shared responsibility for it, is not fully developed, trust within the European Union may be undermined and the forging of unity may be confronted with attempts to put particular interests and narrow visions above the common good.

After the crises of recent years that have brought a certain 'enlargement fatigue', Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine and the geopolitical developments in EU's neighbourhood have generated a new momentum for future accessions to the Union, especially with regard to countries in the Balkans and in the East of Europe. Beyond being a geopolitical necessity for stability on our continent, we regard the prospect of a future EU membership as a strong message of hope for the citizens of the candidate countries and as an answer to their desire for living in peace and justice. We must not forget that these countries have had often to endure hardships and sacrifices along the way.

Accession to the EU is, however, a two-way process. The countries aspiring to a future EU membership must continue pursuing the necessary structural reforms in crucial

areas, especially the rule of law, strengthening of democratic institutions, fundamental rights, including religious freedom and freedom of the media, as well as fight against corruption, tackling organised crime. At the same time, a citizen-centred, credible and fair EU enlargement process should encourage and adequately respond to these reform efforts, avoiding any double-standards in the treatment of the candidate countries.

The credibility of the EU enlargement process also implies concrete steps on the side of the Union to become ready to welcome new members. The future EU expansion is an opportunity to update the idea of a united Europe rooted in practical solidarity and to rediscover with creative fidelity those great ideals which inspired its very foundation. An enlarged Union will also have to re-think its ways of governance, in order to allow its members and institutions to act in a timely and effective manner. Moreover, any adjustments to budgetary frameworks, policies or areas of cooperation should take into consideration their impact on people, especially the most vulnerable members of the societies of the current and future member states.

In our hope that the process of European integration advances, we also feel the need to call for a deeper reflection on our common value basis and the special bonds that unite us as a European family. As Pope Francis said when addressing the COMECE Assembly in March 2023, "Europe has a future if it is truly a union", cherishing unity in diversity. The principles of subsidiarity, of respect for the different traditions and cultures that all together form Europe, and of following the path of practical solidarity against the one of ideological imposition, are paramount. As Catholic Church, we stand ready to contribute to these efforts.

As the history of the European integration process must, in large part, still be written, we entrust in a particular way the future of our beloved continent to our Lord Jesus Christ, Prince of Peace, through the intercession of Mary, Mother of the Church, and the Patron Saints of Europe, Saint Benedict, Saints Cyril and Methodius, Saint Bridget, Saint Catherine of Siena and Saint Teresa Benedicta of the Cross.

*Approved by the Assembly of COMECE in Łomża (Poland) on 19 April 2024.*

A top-down view of many hands of various skin tones stacked together in a circle, symbolizing unity and teamwork. The hands are positioned in a way that they all point towards the center. Some hands are wearing accessories like a watch, a bracelet, and a ring. The background is a light blue color with a subtle pattern of people's heads and shoulders, suggesting a group setting. The overall image has a soft, slightly desaturated blue tint.

**Fifth session:  
Towards a  
consciousness  
of European  
citizenship?**

# Messages

## Herman van Rompuy, former President of the European Council

European citizenship takes on a different meaning today than it did a few decades ago because the citizens themselves are no longer the same. We live in a different kind of homeland, a different Europe and in a different world, and this in all spheres of personal and societal life. A new type of human being has emerged, as it were. In fact, the world of my grandparents and my parents has little to do with that of today. It is the world of yesterday and the day before. So citizenship is also different. The communities in which life is embedded, ranging from families, neighbourhoods, workplaces, nation-states, etc., are deeply scarred by individualisation. The latter trend is at the root of looser bonds between people. Bonded is sometimes experienced as bound. We belong less to something or someone. We find this trend at all levels of living together, including in the European framework.

Alienation towards the EU is not so much greater than towards the national state. The same applies to the democratic deficit. It exists at all levels of governance. So a renewal of just European democracy makes no sense. In general, we need to increase the input legitimacy of political democracy by involving citizens more directly in decision-making alongside the elected mandates and we need to increase output legitimacy, thereby delivering policy results in the areas that matter to many citizens such as purchasing power, irregular migration, climate, mental well-being and others.

Individualisation and fragmentation also mean that a number of people tend to be less focused on the common good or interest but much is viewed from their own interest. Caring for the common good starts with solidarity and togetherness in the family, in the neighbourhood and above. Charity begins

at home. These layers of belonging are under pressure. In the long run, no macro solidarity is possible without micro solidarity. There remains the hurdle of going from a one small solidarity to people who do not belong to our family, clan, language group, country, etc, solidarity with those who are 'different', who are even 'foreign'. It also means living with people who are different in every way such as in terms of religion or belief, race, sexual orientation and others. That kind of living together in itself is different from the 'earlier' rather homogeneous communities. So that living together also requires a greater effort from us all. A comparison about the nature of societies between 'before' and now, must take this into account.

On top of this, the 'permanent' crisis since the 2008 financial crisis has only exacerbated fear, insecurity, distrust, despair. Individualisation also means that people must and can make their own choices about their lives. One cannot and will not hide behind any authority or tradition. However, in a hyper-competitive volatile economy, new dependencies have grown that are at odds with greater individual freedoms in personal life. In this complicated world, often the schemes of the past are no longer always so relevant.

Official Christian-social views as expressed in papal encyclicals departed from a society based on social organisations and shared values, on social consultation as an organising principle alongside market and government. Organisations in general framed people in concentric circles, from family to the nation, so that individuals became persons, interconnected. Admittedly, this did not prevent these so-called stable societies of the time from ending up in wars



and civil wars in which the other became the enemy. Anyway, today many organisations no longer have the appeal and representativeness they once had. Today, the national 'makeability' of society, the national societal engineering, has greatly diminished given the openness of our economies and their interdependence, given also the globalisation of just about everything like sports, music, culture, science, tourism, fashion, migration, climate change, etc. I wish good luck to those who think they want to take back 'control' of their own national future. Nostalgia to yesterday's world will solve nothing. However, none of this prevents a still strong desire of many people for stability, harmony, happiness, togetherness. The discourse on this is often drowned out by polarisation and distrust especially through social media, which fuel ego-centredness and grouping of like-minded people. There is certainly a continuing need for a message of solidarity, compassion, empathy, loyalty, truth. The pandemic showed this well. 'Most people are good' is the title of a recent bestseller in the Netherlands, Flanders and beyond. There is a need for stronger social and family capital. However, no one can impose it. New forms of associational life and cooperation must be encouraged where online meetings and gatherings can also

play a role. They are building blocks in restoring the sense of the common good, which now includes the European interest. Dialogue and cooperation should be encouraged everywhere. Democracy is conversation. They are exercises in 'other centredness'. At the heart of citizenship is precisely this value. It is about much more than the 'sense of belonging'. The former is the prerequisite to the latter. If one frenetically seeks identity - often a negative identity (I am different and better than others) - one risks falling into the mistakes of the past such as nationalism or other forms of particularism. Nationalism is on the rise in the Western world. Think of the political-cultural divide in the US and the also 50-50 split around Brexit.

European citizenship has an additional handicap compared to other forms of 'belonging'. The EU is just further away from people spatially. After all, despite digitalisation, we remain flesh-and-blood people! The second handicap is that the EU is a relatively young idea compared to nation-states, although some of which are also a rather recent invention (the 19th century).

So all transcendent projects, transcending the Ego, are struggling. It is therefore also explicable that the EU is increasingly becoming a 'Union of necessity'. I ex-

plain. A number of vital problems such as defence and climate can no longer be addressed other than at the European and international level. There is no alternative (TINA). During the covid time also with the restrictions on move, many citizens wondered why there was no European approach to the pandemic instead of the patchwork of national and regional measures. A negative motivation is also a motivation. The strongest pro-European sentiments come from candidate countries such as these days in Georgia and Ukraine although an anti-Russian and anti-autocratic sentiment also plays a big role there, in addition to the 'Union of values' they must lack or risk missing. So the EU is still attractive. Remember also that more than half of the British today are pro-European. No one can predict the future!

## Romano Prodi, former President of the European Commission

It was relatively easier at the time for the founding fathers of European integration: they had a vision and ethical principles in common, it was a homogeneous agenda. Now things are different, not only because there are twenty-seven instead of six: the historical backgrounds and cultures are very diverse. It is not easy to speak about Christian principles at a time



The current crisis is also a moral crisis. Socio-economic factors such as inequalities play a big role in addition. On the latter aspect, there are new forms of injustice such as the question of who bears the burden of climate policies, the treatment of refugees and irregular migrants, the huge concentration of wealth, the new monopolies on money and power that have arisen in the new technologies. A contemporary Christian social thinking integrates these new factors. The social, the social issue is 'back' albeit under new forms. Redressing those injustices may bring less societal unease. But more is needed to restore togetherness. It will be a combination of bottom-up and top-down on the road to societal reconstruction. Who will be the master builder? We should be part of it.

when, as a matter of fact, the influence of Christianity has diminished in Europe.

The key question when dealing with European citizenship in my view depends just on one central idea: we need to do something together. We need to promote a positive reaction and courageous proposals to deal with some of the new inequalities stemming from migrations, wars and climate change. Mediation and compromise will not work miracles: people will not show any support, unless we have a true project to work together on some of the challenges mentioned also by Herman van Rompuy.

Europe is a half-cooked meal, it needs to be completed. The successive enlargement and the large number of players makes it more difficult. But we haven't imposed anything on anyone! We just exported democracy! Or, rather, what we have done is to answer demands of peoples who wanted to import democracy.

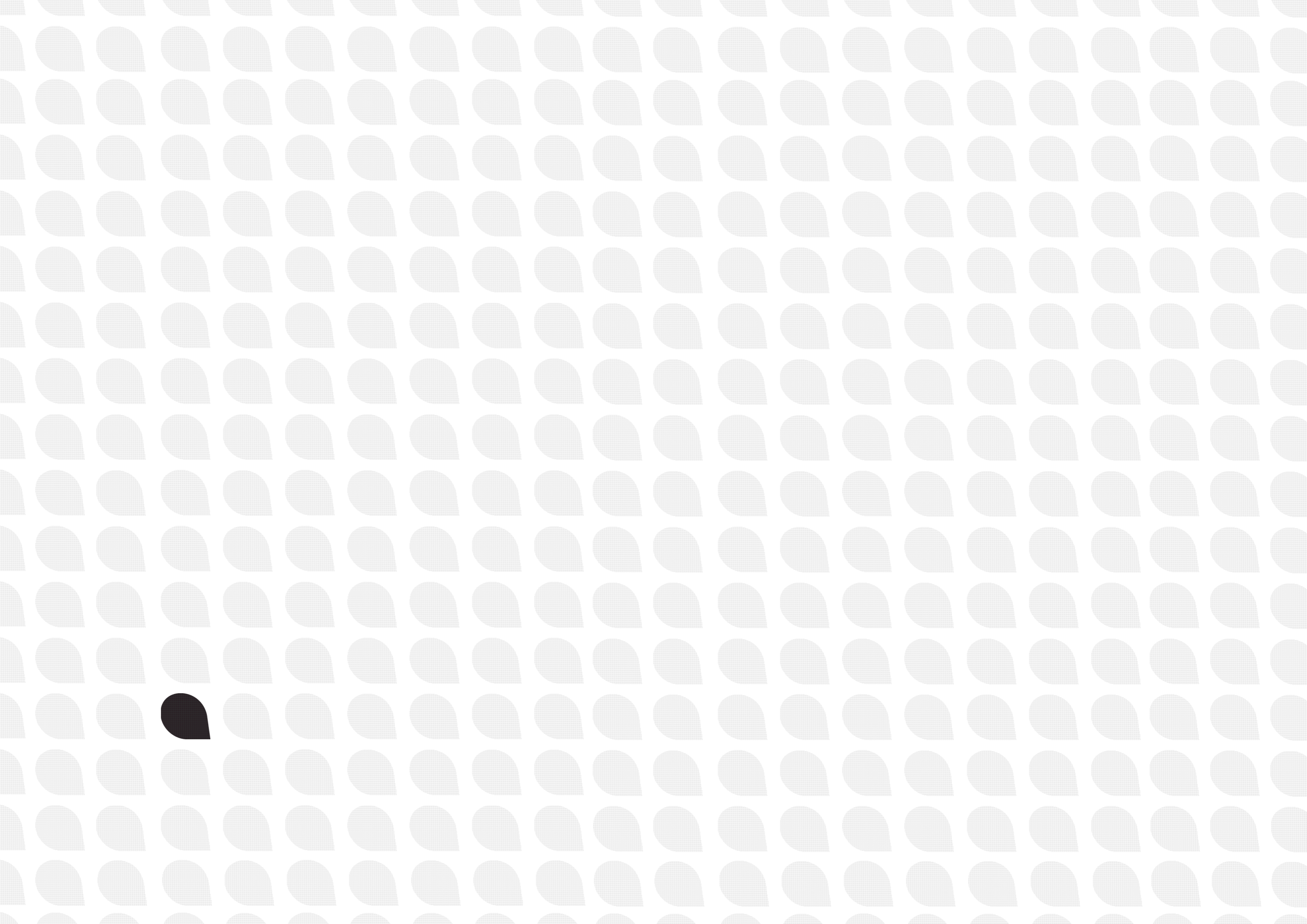
The image given today is negative: everybody is blackmailing some or all of the other parties. This leads in the end to concessions and compromises. But it is not a good way forward. Europe is respected whenever it is united: see the example of the single currency. In spite of criticism, the Euro was soon accepted worldwide as a reserve currency – e.g. by China – as an equiv-

alent to the US Dollar, but when we divided our policies because of the great financial crisis, the interest to buy Euros disappeared.

Differences are intrinsic to all democratic systems, thus differences are inseparable from the European Union. There remain differences, the process has ups and downs. Remember the European draft constitu-

tion? It was rejected in referendums in the Netherlands and France, both founding countries. And still, the institutional process continued in other ways. The European spirit is not in danger of collapsing, provided we can gather around some important, just and generous forward-looking project. When we make progress people love us.





## FUNDACIÓN PABLO VI

Paseo de Juan XXIII, nº. 3  
28040 Madrid  
España

[www.fpablovi.org](http://www.fpablovi.org)



Más información  
More information:

