



THE CATHOLIC CHURCH
IN THE EUROPEAN UNION

XVI International Conference

Role of the Catholic Church in a process of the European integration

EUROPEAN SOLIDARITY

A series of incidents that dismayed Europe and the world in the past couple of years, have revealed an urgent need for a greater solidarity among the member states of the European Union. The war in Syria, political instability in the south-Mediterranean region, Crimea's annexation by Russia, the economic crisis in Greece and other countries, the so-called 'bloody terrorism' of ISIS against Europe and finally crowds of asylum seekers and migrants on their way to the old continent from all over the world, require a thorough discernment of the new situation and a joint action taken in a spirit of solidarity by all the European Union's countries.

The sixteenth edition of the conference on the role of the Catholic Church in the process of European integration co-organised by COMECE together with partners in Cracow, on September 21-22, 2016 focused this time on four specific issues imperatively necessitating solidarity in the EU, namely the solidarity in security and defence policy, solidarity towards the challenges of migrations and asylum, solidarity in reference to the energy and climate policy and finally the role of Churches and religious communities in strengthening solidarity in Europe.

The Catholic Church and other religious communities have their role to play in encouraging European solidarity, not only providing with the best practice examples, but also through the institutional dialogue with the EU. Acknowledging churches' identity as well as their specific contribution in shaping the process of the European integration shows their impact on the EU policy. Fr. Olivier Poquillon OP, Comece Secretary General highlighted the need for a more participative approach in order to combat the perception of the European Union as a centralized, disembodied administration detached from the people's reality. He also mentioned the importance to promote EU good practices that led to the achievement of decades of peace and prosperity in the old continent. Finally, he stressed the need for a better involvement of the citizen across a constructive articulation of solidarity and subsidiarity.

The experts' knowledge, as well as the discussions allowed the participants to better understand European solidarity, which is a value often referred to at the EU level, but not always soundly interpreted or subjected to possible reductions or even withdrawals resulting in undesirable socio-political developments.

First panel focussed on the security and defence issues. The entire European security architecture has trembled as the eastern flank of the continent has been destabilised. The current Russian-Ukrainian conflict has been described as a game changer for European security. In this context, the debaters agreed on considering that the unity of all of the EU Member States was the best safeguard for their security.

Another panel discussed the threats against EU energy policy raising awareness about its geopolitical fragility because of its excessive concentration on short term economical aspects. Strategic EU energy security policy should be at the very heart of the European construction without forgetting its geopolitical and ecological dimension, reminded by pope Francis. The energy solidarity approach can boost prosperity for the people of Europe and enhance EU position in the neighbourhood.

Last panel was dedicated to migration and asylum. The panellists addressed the principles that should guide European societies in this matter, including respect of human dignity, promotion of common good, solidarity and subsidiarity. Jose Luis Bazan, COMECE Legal Advisor on Migration and Asylum, emphasised the importance of a responsible solidarity that takes into account the reality of societies, reminding the "intelligent hospitality" and openness that the Church must promote.

At the invitation of Card. Dziwisz, High representatives of all the Churches present in Ukraine had an chance to dialogue together and to express their commitment to work jointly on rebuilding Peace.

Irmina Nockiewicz

More information : <http://www.kosciol-europa.org.pl>

Series of conferences on the role of the Catholic Church in the process of European integration

This initiative of the **series of conferences on the role of the Catholic Church in the process of European integration** dates back to 2000 and aims at promoting a diversified perspectives on the horizon of European unity, as well as at showing the substantial of the

Catholic Church in the process of European integration. Catholic Church brings its specific contribution into the EU debate on the basis of Article 17(3) of the Treaty on the Functioning of the EU .

Each year the conference is structured around workshops held on topics related with the general theme relevant to the current state of play of EU policies. The event, inspired by H.E. Mgr Tadeusz Pieronek, is organized by the Pontifical University of John Paul II, Konrad Adenauer Foundation in Poland, the Robert Schuman Foundation in Luxembourg in co-operation with the COMECE (Commission of the Episcopates of the European Community), the Group of the European People's Party (Christian Democrats) in the European Parliament, the Polish Delegation in the EPP (Christian Democrats) in the European Parliament, the European People's Party and the publishing house "Around Us" (Gliwice).