



# INTERCULTURAL & RELIGIOUS DIALOGUE

ANNUAL REPORT 2023

## INTRODUCTION

Over the past year, the EPP Working Group on Intercultural and Religious Dialogue has actively led initiatives dedicated to cultivating a cohesive and inclusive European society. Confronted with geopolitical intricacies, socio-cultural shifts, global uncertainties and religious implications, our endeavours have concentrated on advancing dialogue as a catalyst for unity and the promotion of shared values.

The 2023 Annual Report captures the diverse initiatives of the Working Group, spanning intercultural exchanges, religious dialogues, and efforts fostering mutual understanding. It mirrors the collaborative ethos defining our interactions with diverse communities, faith groups, and cultural entities within the European Union.

In an era where diversity presents both challenges and opportunities, this report articulates our strategies for embracing the diversity of our distinctions, utilizing them to fortify a more robust and resilient Europe. It delves into the array of programs, events, and dialogues that have shaped our approach, spotlighting voices and perspectives contributing to the vibrant mosaic of European culture and religious heritage.

This is an invitation to explore the contents of this report, which not only takes stock of our accomplishments but also charts the course for an ongoing journey toward a more intercultural and interreligious European landscape. The Working Group remains unwavering in its commitment to nurturing dialogue, understanding, and collaboration, echoing the fundamental values that underlie the European project.




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EPP WORKING GROUP 'INTERCULTURAL AND RELIGIOUS DIALOGUE'




**How Religions can Coexist in Peace**

Interpretation: DE, EN, FR, IT

Book presentation by:  
**Marek Halter**  
La Juive de Shanghai  
**Imam Chalghoumi**  
Libérons l'Islam de l'Islamisme

Jan Olbrycht MEP and György Hölvényi MEP,  
Co-Chairmen of the WG on Intercultural and Religious Dialogue  
Moderated by: **Rabbi Avi Tawil**, Director,  
European Jewish Community Centre  
Wednesday 8 February 2023, 16.00 - 18.00 hrs  
European Parliament, Room Antall 601

Registration is compulsory by email to [EPP-Interreligious@europarl.europa.eu](mailto:EPP-Interreligious@europarl.europa.eu)



EPP WORKING GROUP 'INTERCULTURAL AND RELIGIOUS DIALOGUE'  
"HOW RELIGIONS CAN COEXIST IN PEACE"

WEDNESDAY, 8 FEBRUARY 2023

16.00 - 18.00 HRS.

ROOM JAN 6Q1

PROGRAMME

16.00 - 16.05

WELCOME

**Jan Olbrycht** MEP, Co-Chairman of the WG on Intercultural and Religious Dialogue

16.05 - 16.15

INTRODUCTION

**François-Xavier Bellamy** MEP, Head of the French Delegation of the EPP Group

16.15 - 16.45

BOOK PRESENTATIONS

**MODERATOR: Rabbi Avi Tawil**, Director, European Jewish Community Centre

- **Imam Hassen Chalghoumi**, President of the French Imams Conference and Author of the book "Libérons l'Islam de l'Islamisme"

- **Marek Halter**, French writer and activist Author of the book "La Juive de Shanghai"

16.45 - 17.45

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

17.45 - 18.00

CLOSING

**Jan Olbrycht** MEP and **György Hölvényi** MEP, Co-Chairmen of the WG on Intercultural and Religious Dialogue





*François-Xavier BELLAMY MEP, Imam CHALGHOUMI, Jan OLBRYCHT MEP, Rabbi Avi TAWIL, Marek HALTER*

#### SUMMARY

The aim of the event was the presentation of two books by their French authors: Marek Halter presented his latest opus "La Juive de Shanghai" and Imam Hassen Chalghoumi presented "Libérons l'Islam de l'Islamisme".

The presentation aimed to discuss the crucial role of religion in society and how different religions are able to live in peace and learn from each other. Both authors talked over the process of connecting to the core message of religion, while letting go of the extremists.



*François-Xavier BELLAMY MEP*



*Imam Hassen CHALGHOUMI*

#### EPP WORKING GROUP INTERCULTURAL AND RELIGIOUS DIALOGUE

**WEDNESDAY, 15 MARCH 2023**

12.30 - 14.00 HRS.

LOW MEP SALON STRASBOURG

#### AGENDA

1. Opening by the Co-Chairmen of the Working Group **Mr Jan Olbrycht** MEP and **Mr György Hölvényi** MEP
2. Introductory remarks: **Mr Karlo Ressler** MEP
3. Exchange of views on "Aging Europe and demographic changes" with:
  - **Mr Vladimir Gyorchev**, former Member of Parliament (Democratic Party for Macedonian National Unity VMRO-DPMNE), Assembly of the Republic of North Macedonia, Skopje
  - **Mr Nicola Speranza**, Secretary General, Federation of Catholic Family Associations in Europe (FAFCE)
4. Questions & Answers



### SUMMARY

Vladimir Gjorchev, former Member of the Assembly of the Republic of North Macedonia, Skopje and Nicola Speranza, Secretary General of the Federation of Catholic Family Associations in Europe (FAFCE) discussed with EPP Group Members about demographic challenges in Europe.

Demography, the question of aging Europe and adequate family policies concern the future of the EU's social and economic sustainability. Demographic issues are paramount although they should not be neglected in public discourse.



*Karlo RESSLER MEP*



*Vladimir GJORCHEV, György HÖLVÉNYI MEP, Jan OLBRYCHT MEP*

### **EPP WORKING GROUP INTERCULTURAL AND RELIGIOUS DIALOGUE**

#### **MEETING ON THE OCCASION OF THE VISIT OF HIS ALL HOLINESS ECUMENICAL PATRIARCH BARTHOLOMEW**

**PARLIAMENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF LITHUANIA, VILNIUS**  
**CONFERENCE ROOM "KONSTITUCIJOS SALĖ" GEDIMINO PR. 53, 01109 VILNIUS**  
**22 MARCH 2023**

#### PROGRAMME

##### **10:00 - 10:15 HRS WELCOME**

- **Jan OLBRYCHT** MEP, Vice-Chair of the EPP Group in the EP and Co-Chair of the EPP Working Group on Intercultural Relations and Interreligious Dialogue
- **Viktorija ČMILYTE-NIELSEN**, Speaker of the Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania
- **Ingrida ŠIMONYTĖ**, Lithuanian Prime Minister

##### **10:15 - 10:45 HRS SPECIAL INTERVENTION**

- **His All Holiness Ecumenical Patriarch BARTHOLOMEW**
- **H.E Gintaras GRUŠAS**, President of the Council of the Bishops' Conferences of Europe (CCEE) and Metropolitan Archbishop of Vilnius

##### **10:45 - 11:00 HRS COFFEE BREAK**

##### **11:00- 12:45 HRS SESSION "Reaction of Churches and religious communities to war and conflict"** **CHAIR: Rasa JUKNEVIČIENĖ** MEP, Vice-Chair of the EPP Group in the EP

- **H.E Elder Metropolitan EMMANUEL OF CHALCEDON**, Ecumenical Patriarchate
- **Reverend Bishop Stepan SUS**, Auxiliary Bishop of Curia of Major Archbishop of Kyiv-Halych and Head of the Pastoral Migration Department of the UGCC
- **Reverend Dr. Darius PETKŪNAS**, Lutheran pastor and member of the presidium in the consistory of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Lithuania
- **Dr. Jørgen Skov SØRENSEN**, General Secretary at Conference of European Churches (CEC)
- **Prof. Antoine ARJAKOVSKY**, Historian, Co-directeur, Department of Research "Politique et Religions", Collège des Bernardins, Paris

##### **12:45 - 13:00 HRS CLOSING**



### SUMMARY

The Vilnius meeting focused on the importance of dialogue in addressing current global challenges, particularly in the context of the war in Ukraine. The role of churches is crucial in order to guide common sense in a moral way. The meeting featured the spiritual leader of all orthodox believers worldwide, patriarch Bartholomew I of Constantinople, and Lithuanian prime minister Ingrida Šimonytė. The Ecumenical Patriarch stressed the importance of advancing the intercultural and religious dialogue to promote peace and understanding.



*H.E. Viktorija ČMILYTĖ-NIELSEN, H.E. Ingrida ŠIMONYTĖ, H.A.H. Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew I of Constantinople, H.E. Gintaras GRUŠAS, Rasa JUKNEVIČIENĖ MEP, Jan OLBRYCHT MEP*



*H.E. Gintaras GRUŠAS, H.A.H. Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew I of Constantinople, Rasa JUKNEVIČIENĖ MEP*

### **ADDRESS BY HIS ALL-HOLINESS ECUMENICAL PATRIARCH BARTHOLOMEW AT THE SEMINAR “REACTION OF CHURCHES AND RELIGIOUS COMMUNITIES TO WAR AND CONFLICT”**



Your Excellency Ms Ingrida Šimonytė, Prime Minister of the Republic of Lithuania,  
Your Excellency Ms Viktorija Čmilytė-Nielsen, Speaker of the Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania,  
Honorable Vice-Chair of the EPP Group in the European Parliament and Co-Chair of the EPP Working Group on Intercultural Relations and Interreligious Dialogue,  
Your Excellency Archbishop Gintaras Grušas, President of the Council of the Bishops' Conferences of Europe (CCEE),  
Esteemed Dr. Jørgen Skov Sørensen, General Secretary of the Conference of European Churches (CEC),  
Honorable guests,  
Dear friends,

It is with great pleasure that we participate in this special seminar on the “Reaction of Churches and religious communities to war and conflict,” organized by the European Parliament EPP Group on intercultural and interreligious dialogue in the context of our first visit to Lithuania. At this point, please allow us to highlight the crucial role that the Ecumenical Patriarchate played in the formation of this particular Working Group of the EPP back in 1995, during the first year of operation of the Office of the Orthodox Church in the European Union. We take great paternal pride in seeing the seed sown almost thirty years ago to have grown into a fruitful tree with deep and unshakable roots. You are worthy of our sincerest congratulations!



And now we turn to the topic of our address. As you all know, since the end of the Cold War, borders have fallen, barriers have been abolished, the movement of goods, people and capital has been accelerated. All these are aspects of the phenomenon of Globalization, the movement towards a unified world.

However, this unification has been so far strictly material, dominated by economic criteria and technological factors. At the same time, global problems have appeared or become more acute. The climate crisis, the financial crisis, the health crisis of the pandemic, the energy crisis have all been global challenges asking for global action. However, instead of advancing, the necessary for global action political unification of the World stays more or less stagnant; it even regressed recently, because of the Russian aggression in Ukraine. Finally, it became more than clear that beyond the political and economic unification, there is urgent need for a spiritual one. Nevertheless, in this field, as well, instead of progress, unfortunately, we have experienced constant regression.

During the past decades, the illusion that economic globalization would bring about cultural and spiritual convergence, and ultimately lead to global peace, was widely diffused. This idea was expressed in Francis Fukuyama's famous writings about "The end of History." We are gradually aware of the contrary, going even beyond Samuel Huntington's theory of the "clash of civilizations." Indeed, after more than three decades of globalization, the spiritual distance between the various communities inhabiting our world has increased. This form of divergence leads towards multi-polarity and fragmentation.

Can the economic unification resist to those tendencies? In spite of the elaborate economic and technological networks which bind the world, one can observe the appearance of phenomena of de-globalization and the rise of protectionism. Thus, contrary to the dominant ideas of the previous decades, the spiritual factor conditions the political and the economic sectors. Errors in the spiritual and intellectual spheres are not anodyne. They can lead to disasters, as the Ukrainian tragedy demonstrates. Not only is religion not marginal, but it is a determining factor. This important issue is not entirely understood by the political leaders, in spite of the series of crises in the Western Asia and the Middle East since 1979, in most of which the religious factor was instrumentalized for political and geopolitical agendas; also, in spite of the terrorist attacks, in the name of false religion, in Europe and the United States of America.

Advancing the inter-religious and intercultural dialogue is essential. It can help share perceptions and experiences and contribute to the common search of ideas and solutions, in order to promote peace and understanding. It is therefore with particular interest that we participate to today's meeting.

There are few places in the world where these ideas have more resonance than here, in Vilnius, a few hundred kilometers from the front line where war is raging. As the world is in a process of fragmentation, the areas between two emerging blocks are submitted to strong pressures. The isthmus between the Black Sea and the Baltic Sea is one of them, Ukraine being its central component and Lithuania a part of it. Although Lithuania is protected since 2014 by membership to NATO, the existing anxiety and fear are not unfounded. Lithuania's tragic history has provided its citizens with a

profound and rare geopolitical sensibility and wisdom.

The present Ukrainian crisis, due to the unprovoked Russian aggression, is the epicenter of a geopolitical earthquake. Europe wakes up from a deep illusion, according to which war in its continent was a thing of the past. Materially and intellectually unprepared, Europe, however, adapted rapidly to this unexpected situation, intellectually assisted by its new members, like Lithuania. The outcome of this war will undoubtedly condition the future evolution of both Europe and the world.

The Ukrainian crisis relates at the same time with the most fundamental challenge in the Orthodox Christian world. Will Orthodoxy continue to be spiritually guided by its source and defender, its traditional and historical center, the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople? This is an essential question for the character, identity and existence of Orthodoxy. It is also an issue with serious consequences for the whole of Europe, as well as for Africa, the Middle East and the diaspora Orthodox communities all over the world.

The religious space organized around a Kyiv-Moscow axis is the initial creation of the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople and of the Byzantine Empire. This process started more than a thousand years ago with the baptism of Vladimir, ruler of the Kyivan Rus, an enormous area linking the Baltic with the Black Sea. During the long period since then, the political map of this region has known successive changes, through which painfully emerged Ukraine and the Ukrainian identity. All along those historical tides, Eastern and Western Christianity crossed, leaving behind a mixed religious environment.

Russia also emerged from this initial creation. In 1589, its Church obtained from the Ecumenical Patriarchate its elevation to the Patriarchal dignity. However, already after the fall of Constantinople to the Ottomans in 1453, the unfounded ideology that Moscow could succeed Constantinople as spiritual leader of the Orthodox world started to make its way. According to its proponents, Moscow would become the "Third Rome," after the "fallen Second," Constantinople. We have said it many times in the past and we take the opportunity to repeat it once again: there has never been a "First" and a "Second Rome;" therefore, it can never exist a "Third Rome." There is only the Elder Rome and the New Rome-Constantinople.

The religious tradition transmitted by Constantinople to Moscow was soon confronted with the Russian political power. Successive Tsars imposed their will on the Church, transforming it into a mere instrument for their strategic objectives. Of course, the Church of Russia did not always or wholly comply. Monasteries have served as refuges for the authentic religious faith. However, numerous are the instances of religion's instrumentalization in this vast region. Putin's Russia simply renewed and accentuated this "tradition."

Of special importance in this respect is Pan Slavism, the ideology according to which all Slavs should be united under Moscow's leadership. This 19th-century deeply racist ideology found its religious expression in ethnophyletism, condemned as a heresy by the Great Council of Constantinople in



1872. According to this ethnophyletism, autocephalous (namely self-governed) churches should not be founded on the basis of locality, but of ethnicity. This heresy was used to legitimize the institution of a Bulgarian Exarchate inside the Ottoman Empire, as a first step for the creation of a Bulgarian state. It contributed to the division of the Christians in the Balkans and initiated fratricide conflicts and wars. The present incarnation of ethnophyletism is the fundamentalist ideology of Russkii mir, the “Russian World.” This expression describes a supposed sphere of civilization including Russia, Ukraine, Belarus as well as ethnic Russians all around the world, politically and religiously led and directed by the Moscow center. The “Russian World” is presented as the answer to the “corrupt West.” This ideology is the main instrument for a “spiritual” legitimization of the invasion in Ukraine.

It is a fact that Moscow’s antagonism towards Constantinople subsided during the communist period, as religion was persecuted by the soviet regime. On its part, the Ecumenical Patriarchate protected the Russian emigrés and hosted their religious communities inside its diaspora Metropolises. However, from time to time and especially since the election of Kirill as Patriarch of Moscow in 2009, the antagonism was resumed. In the minds of the Russian political and religious leadership, religion became too important as a political and geostrategic tool to be left in the hands of the Ecumenical Patriarchate. In its effort to obtain a leading role, Moscow used a quantitative argument. Claiming then that the Church of Russia has under its influence the majority of Eastern Orthodox believers, it tried to obtain the primacy within the Orthodox Church. This argument was strongly employed when the Holy and Great Council of the Orthodox Church was convened in Crete in June 2016. The rejection of this argument was the main reason for Moscow’s refusal to participate in this historic conciliar event for Orthodoxy. Recently, the divisive role of Moscow took also the form of uncanonical infiltration in Africa, challenging thus the exclusive jurisdiction of the Orthodox Patriarchate of Alexandria in this continent.

Meanwhile, numerous times the Ecumenical Patriarchate had received clear expressions of the wish of both the clergy and the political leadership in Ukraine for ecclesiastical independence from Moscow. On the 5th of January of 2019, the Tomos granting autocephaly to the Orthodox Church of Ukraine was signed at the Phanar. The departure of the significant Ukrainian Orthodox population from the tutelage of Moscow deprived the Church of Russia of much of the substance of its anti-ecclesiological claim about its attempted leading role in Orthodoxy.

With the end of the Soviet Union and the bankruptcy of the communist ideology, pseudo-religion emerged. The old imperial strategies were then combined with the cynical techniques and mechanisms developed and inherited from the Soviet Union. The Church and the State leadership in Russia cooperated in the crime of aggression, and share the responsibility for the resulting crimes, like the shocking abduction of Ukrainian children. They have provoked enormous suffering not only to the Ukrainian people, but also to the Russians, who count more than a hundred thousand casualties and the responsibility for terrible atrocities.

There is a serious ongoing discussion about the reconstruction of Ukraine, after the end of the War. However, next to the issue of the material reconstruction there is also the question of the “spiritual regeneration” not only in Ukraine, but equally in Russia. What is needed is a return to the springs of

Orthodox faith. The Mother Church of Constantinople is ready to assist its children in Ukraine and Russia once again, as it has done it on multiple occasions in the past. The love of a mother is endless; it does not know limits. This is precisely the kind of love that the Ecumenical Patriarchate represents and expresses.

Similarly, our inter-religious dialogue has to focus not only on ways to resist to and neutralize the capacity of the leadership of the Moscow Patriarchate to undermine unity and to theologically legitimize criminal behavior. It is our common Christian duty to use our forces of dialogue to bring back our Russian brothers and sisters to our community of shared values.

Esteemed audience,

The Ukrainian crisis has to be overcome with determination, justice and solidarity. Its outcome will play an important role in other challenges during these hard times. We are particularly grateful to the organizers for giving us the opportunity to present the position of the Ecumenical Patriarchate on this complex and delicate issue of global importance. We wish you all fruitful deliberations and productive outcomes from the discussion during this seminar. May the God of love and peace bless you all in your ministries and personal lives! Thank you for your kind attention.





**EPP WORKING GROUP 'INTERCULTURAL AND RELIGIOUS DIALOGUE'  
"THE ROLE OF RELIGION IN THE SOCIAL ECONOMIC CRISIS IN LEBANON  
AND THE MIDDLE EAST"**

**WEDNESDAY, 29 MARCH 2023**

16.30 - 18.00 HRS.

ANTALL 6Q1

PROGRAMME

16:30 - 16:35

**WELCOME**

- **Jan Olbrycht** MEP, Vice-Chair of the EPP Group in the EP and Co-Chair of the EPP Working Group on Intercultural Relations and Interreligious Dialogue
- **György Hölvényi** MEP, Co-Chairmen of the WG on Intercultural and Religious Dialogue and EU Chief Observer to the 2022 parliamentary elections in Lebanon

16:35-16:45

**INTRODUCTORY REMARKS**

**Andrey Kovatchev** MEP, Head of the Bulgarian Delegation in the EPP Group in the European Parliament

16:45 - 17:30

**INTERVENTIONS**

- **Mansour Bteish**, Member of the Patriarchal Economic Committee, Patriarchate of Antiochia
- **Justyna Petsch**, Responsible for Lebanon in the Cabinet of the Commissioner for Neighbourhood and Enlargement
- **Imad Salamey**, Associate Professor of Political Science and International Affairs, School of Arts and Science, Lebanese American University

17:30 - 17:55

**QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS**

17:55 - 18:00

**CONCLUDING REMARKS**

**György Hölvényi** MEP, Co-Chairmen of the WG on Intercultural and Religious Dialogue and EU Chief Observer to the 2022 parliamentary elections in Lebanon



### SUMMARY

Religious communities have a particular role in Lebanon and they are inevitable part of the highly necessary mediation and conflict resolution in the country. They are also important agent to deliver humanitarian aid and provide social services. The event was an opportunity to better understand the ongoing situation in Lebanon and look for the ways out of the crisis.



*György HÖLVÉNYI MEP, Mansour BTEISH, Member of the Patriarchal Economic Committee, Patriarchate of Antiochia, Jan OLBRYCHT MEP*



*Mansour BTEISH, Jan OLBRYCHT MEP, György HÖLVÉNYI MEP, Andrey KOVATCHEV MEP, Imad Salamey*

### **EPP WORKING GROUP INTERCULTURAL AND RELIGIOUS DIALOGUE**

**WEDNESDAY, 19 APRIL 2023**

**AFTER THE VOTES**

**12.30 - 14.00 HRS.**

**LOW MEP SALON  
STRASBOURG**

### AGENDA

1. Opening by the Co-Chairmen of the Working Group **Mr. Jan Olbrycht** MEP and **Mr. György Hölvényi** MEP
2. Round table discussion on “**Sustainable future - reflections from Churches and religious communities**” - with the Council of Europe’s Committee on the Interreligious and inter-convictional dialogue:
  - **Gabriela Frey**, European Buddhist Union
  - **Sören Lenz**, General Secretary of the Conference of Rhine Churches (Communion of protestant Churches in Europe)
  - **Johannes Moravitz**, Adviser on Ecology, Energy and Agriculture, Seconded by the Austrian Bishops’ Conference to COMECE
3. Questions & Answers



### SUMMARY

Catholic, Protestant and Buddhist representatives reflected together with the Members on the theme of sustainable future. They discussed about ecological problems that are among the core concerns of Churches and religious communities. The catholic social doctrine, the relevant teachings of the protestant Churches as well as Buddhist endeavours related to ecology can bring particular orientation to respond to the ecological crisis.



*Jan OLBRYCHT MEP, György HÖLVÉNYI MEP, Gabriela FREY, European Buddhist Union, Johannes MORAVITZ, Adviser on Ecology, Energy and Agriculture, Seconded by the Austrian Bishops' Conference to COMECE, Karlo RESSLER MEP, Sören LENZ, General Secretary of the Conference of Rhine Churches (Communion of protestant Churches in Europe)*

### **EPP WORKING GROUP INTERCULTURAL AND RELIGIOUS DIALOGUE**

**WEDNESDAY, 10 MAY 2023**

**AFTER THE VOTES**

**12.30 - 14.00 HRS.**

**LOW MEP SALON  
STRASBOURG**

### AGENDA

1. Opening by the Co-Chairmen of the Working Group **Mr. Jan Olbrycht** MEP and **Mr. György Hólvényi** MEP
2. Round table discussion with experts on **human trafficking and modern slavery** with the Santa Marta Group and COMECE:
  - **H.E. Bishop William Kenney CP**, Auxiliary Bishop Emeritus of Birmingham, and member of the International Affairs Group of his Bishops' Conference. Member of the Santa Marta Group
  - **Mr. Alexander DesForges**, Communications Director, Santa Marta Group
  - **Mr. José Luis Bazán**, Adviser for Migration, Asylum and International Religious Freedom, Commission of the Bishops' Conferences of the EU (COMECE)
3. Questions & Answers



## SUMMARY

Representatives of the Santa Marta Group and the Commission of the Bishops' Conferences of the EU (COMECE) discussed about human trafficking and modern slavery. The Santa Marta Group is an alliance of police chiefs and bishops from around the world working together with leaders from civil society, business and faith communities to eradicate human trafficking and modern day slavery. Members and the guests exchanged their views about the role of churches in the fight against human trafficking and discussed about possible actions that might be taken in a policy-making perspective.



*Fr. Manuel Enrique BARRIOS PRIETO (SG of COMECE), Karlo RESSLER MEP, Jan OLBRUCHT MEP,  
Bishop William KENNEY, György HÖLVÉNYI MEP, Alexander Des FORGES, Lukas MANDL MEP*

## VISIT TO THE COLLÈGE DES BERNARDINS IN PARIS OF THE EPP GROUP WORKING GROUP INTERCULTURAL AND RELIGIOUS DIALOGUE

1 - 2 JUNE 2023

### PARTICIPANTS

- **François-Xavier BELLAMY** MEP, Head of the French Delegation of the EPP Group in the EP
- **Jan OLBRUCHT** MEP, Vice-Chair and Chief Whip of the EPP Group in the EP and Co-Chair of the EPP Working Group on Intercultural Relations and Interreligious Dialogue
- **Željana ZOVKO** MEP, Vice-Chair of the EPP Group in the European Parliament
- **Leopoldo LÓPEZ GIL** MEP, Vice-Chair of the Delegation to the EU-Chile Joint Parliamentary Committee, Coordinator of the Delegation to the Euro-Latin American Parliamentary Assembly and Vice-Coordinator of the DROI Committee - accompanied by his spouse
- **Gábor TÖRÖK**, Policy Advisor, Intercultural and Religious Dialogue Unit, Directorate Outreach

### PROGRAMME

#### THURSDAY, 1 JUNE

- 16.00** Arrival in Paris and transfer to the Collège des Bernardins
- 17.00 - 19.00** Meeting with **Prof. Antoine Arjakovsky** and a group of managers and experts
- **Laurent Landete**, Director at the Collège des Bernardins
  - **Olric de Gélis**, Research Director at the Collège des Bernardins,
  - **Jean-Baptiste Arnaud**, Research co-Director at the Collège des Bernardins
  - **Valentine Tessier**, Research Fellow at the Collège des Bernardins
  - **Antoine Fleyfel**, Institut chrétiens d'Orient
- 20.00 - 22.00** Dinner meeting at the French Senate
- **Senator Dominique de Legge**
  - **Rev. Ft. Pierre-Hervé Grosjean**, Special Advisor to the French Episcopal Conference and Parish Priest in Montigny-Voisins, Diocese of Versailles

#### FRIDAY, 2 JUNE

- 09:45 - 11.00** Visit of the Museum and Information Center on the reconstruction works of the Cathedral Notre Dame de Paris
- 11.00** Departures to the train station or the airport



SUMMARY

The aim was to meet with representatives of the Collège des Bernardins, the French Senate and the Catholic Church to discuss about the influence of religions on social and political processes. During the different meetings, Members were briefed on the key features of the relevant multidisciplinary researches, which are conducted within research seminars for periods ranging from one to three years. In the French Senate, Members exchanged views among others on the specificities of the relationship between Church and Politics in France. The delegation also visited the Museum and Information Center which was established to inform the public about the reconstruction works of the Cathedral 'Notre Dame de Paris'.



*Željana ZOVKO MEP, spouse of Leopoldo LÓPEZ GIL MEP, François-Xavier BELLAMY MEP, Leopoldo LÓPEZ GIL MEP, Jan OLBRYCHT MEP in front of the Cathedral Notre Dame de Paris*



*Leopoldo LÓPEZ GIL MEP with spouse, François-Xavier BELLAMY MEP, Jan OLBRYCHT MEP, Željana ZOVKO MEP with Members with the Leaders of the Collège des Bernardins Jan OLBRYCHT MEP in front of the Cathedral Notre Dame de Paris*



*Jan OLBRYCHT MEP, Željana ZOVKO MEP, Leopoldo LÓPEZ GIL MEP with spouse, François-Xavier BELLAMY MEP, Gábor TÖRÖK, Policy Advisor at the Museum and Information Center on the reconstruction works of the Cathedral*



**EPP WORKING GROUP  
INTERCULTURAL AND RELIGIOUS DIALOGUE**

**WEDNESDAY, 13 JUNE 2023**  
09.00 - 10.00 HRS.

**ROOM M04096  
(WINSTON CHURCHILL BUILDING)  
STRASBOURG**

AGENDA

1. Opening by the Co-Chairman of the Working Group **Mr. György Hölvényi** MEP
2. Introduction by: **Mr. Lukas Mandl** MEP
3. Exchange of views on “**The Church in healthcare services: challenges faced in Hospices and non-profit organizations**” with:
  - **Sr. Karin Weiler CS** (Mag.), Head of Department Social Pastoral Services, Values, Volunteering, Caritas Socialis, Austria
  - **Mr. Robert Oberndorfer** (Mag. MBA), Executive Director, Caritas Socialis, Austria
4. Questions & Answers

SUMMARY

Experts highlighted during the meeting that human dignity needs to be fully respected until the very end of the human life. Healthcare professionals deserve and need support in this context and proper funding is required in order to reduce patients’ sufferance for the palliative care, and support new ways for treating dementia. In a European Union, that faces demographic challenges, elder people often feel discriminated. Members agreed that there is an urgent need for reflection and for promoting the benefits that can derive from elders’ wisdom and experiences. A comprehensive strategy and long-term action to make European society fit for ageing is needed.



*Robert OBERNDORFER, Lukas MANDL MEP, György HÖLVÉNYI MEP, Sr. Karin WEILER*



**EPP WORKING GROUP  
INTERCULTURAL AND RELIGIOUS DIALOGUE**

**WEDNESDAY, 13 SEPTEMBER 2023**

**AFTER THE VOTES**

**LOW MEP SALON  
STRASBOURG**

**AGENDA**

1. Opening by the Co-Chairman of the Working Group **Mr Jan OLBRYCHT MEP** and **Mr György HÖLVÉNYI MEP**
3. Exchange of views with **Fr. Manuel Enrique BARRIOS PRIETO**, General Secretary, Commission of the Bishops' Conferences of the EU (COMECE) about **the State of the Union address**
3. Questions & Answers

**SUMMARY**


Members emphasized the importance of competitiveness and prosperity in shaping social situations and quality of life in each country. Addressing the transition towards carbon neutrality, supporting small businesses and farmers, and countering unfair competition, particularly from China, were identified as key priorities. Members highlighted the importance of Europe's youth as its future and the significance of educating them about the continent's founding principles. Concerns were raised about Europe's declining birth rates and the influx of illegal immigrants, prompting discussions on preserving European culture. The group stressed the need for extensive discussions on the morality and regulations concerning Artificial Intelligence, considering it a pressing question of our times.




*Jan OLBRYCHT MEP, Ivan. ŠTEFANEK MEP, Lukas MANDL MEP, Fr. Manuel Enrique BARRIOS PRIETO, György HÖLVÉNYI MEP, Tomislav SOKOL MEP, Dolores MONTSERRAT MEP, Leopoldo LÓPEZ GIL MEP*



Fundacja im. bp. Tadeusza Pieronka  
Tadeusz Pieronek Foundation  
fundacjapieronka@gmail.com



XXIII International Conference  
**Role of the Christians in the Process of European Integration**



**CONSEQUENCES OF THE WAR –  
WHAT EUROPE WILL BE LIKE?  
WHAT POLAND WILL BE LIKE?**

Krakow, September 29-30, 2023  
Holiday Inn Hotel, conference room Renoir  
ul. Wielopole 4, 31-072 Kraków

[www.fundacjapieronka.eu](http://www.fundacjapieronka.eu)


**Organizer:**  
Tadeusz Pieronek Foundation

**Co-organizers:**  
Robert Schuman Foundation in Luxembourg  
European People's Party Group in the European Parliament  
Polish Delegation in the EPP in the EP  
Commission of the Bishops' Conferences of the European Union (COMECE)  
Konrad Adenauer Foundation in Poland

Simultaneous translation:  
English, German, Polish

Honorary Patronage  
Prof. Jacek Maciejowski  
Mayor of Kraków

XXIII International Conference  
**Role of the Christians in the Process of European Integration**



**FRIDAY, 29 SEPTEMBER 2023**

10.00 – 11.30

**REGISTRATION**

11.30 – 12.00

**WELCOME AND OPENING:**

**Rafał Budnik**, President of the Tadeusz Pieronek Foundation  
**Andrzej Halicki**, Co-chairman of the Polish Delegation in the EPP in the European Parliament  
**Adam Jarubas PhD**, Co-chairman of the Polish Delegation in the EPP in the European Parliament  
Fr. **Manuel Barrios Prieto PhD**, Secretary General of the COMECE

12.00 – 12.30

**INTRODUCTORY SPEECH:**

**Card. Grzegorz Rys**, Archbishop Metropolitan of Łódź

12.30 – 14.30

**I SESSION:**

**HOW DOES THE WAR CHANGE THE EUROPEAN UNION?**

**INTRODUCTION:**

**Jan Olbrycht PhD**, Vice-president of the EPP Group in the European Parliament Dialogue:

**Prof. Rocco Buttiglione**, Lecturer at the Institute of Philosophy of Edit Stein in Granada

**Prof. Marek Safjan**, former President of the Constitutional Tribunal, judge at the Court of Justice of the European Union

**MODERATOR: Maciej Zakrocki**, journalist, Radio TOK FM

14.30 – 15.30

**LUNCH**

15.30 – 17.30

**II SESSION:**

**CONSEQUENCES OF THE WAR FOR THE CHURCHES**

**PANELISTS:**

**Prof. Antoine Arjakovsky**, Research Director at the Collège des Bernardins in Paris, President of the French Association of Christian Philosophers

Fr. **Manuel Barrios Prieto PhD**, Secretary General of the COMECE

**Massimiliano Signifredi PhD**, Coordinator for homeless outreach in the Community of Sant'Egidio

**Nedim Useinow**, Chairman of the Coordination Council of the World Congress of Crimean Tatars in Poland

**MODERATOR: Jan Tombiński**, former Ambassador of the Republic of Poland, former EU Ambassador

18.00

Holy Mass, Saints Peter and Paul Church, 54 Grodzka street



- 19.30** Bp Tadeusz Pieronek's IN VERITATE Award Ceremony – “for outstanding achievements in combining Christian and European values”, Gallery of the 19th-Century Polish Art – The Sukiennice (the Cloth Hall), Main Square  
**Laureates A.D. 2023:**  
**Ms. Roberta METSOLA – President of the European Parliament**  
(laudation by Andrzej Halicki – Co-chairman of the Polish Delegation in the EPP Group in the European Parliament)  
**Rev. Andrzej BONIECKI MIC – Honorary editor-in-chief of the “Tygodnik Powszechny” weekly**  
(laudation by Zbigniew Nosowski – Editor-in-chief of the “WIEŹ” quarterly)

### SATURDAY, 30 SEPTEMBER 2023

- 9.30 – 10.00**      **REGISTRATION**
- 10.00 – 11.30**      **III SESSION:**  
**PEOPLE AND WAR – THE IMPACT OF THE WAR ON HUMAN ATTITUDES**  
**PANELISTS:**  
**Hanna Machińska PhD**, deputy of the Polish Ombudsman in 2017-2022  
**Rev. prof. Andrzej Kobyliński**, Philosopher, Head of the Chair of Ethics at the Card. Stefan Wyszyński University in Warsaw  
**Fr. Serhiy Dmytriiev**, Director of the ELEOS-Ukraine, Military Chaplain of the Ukrainian Army  
**Moderator:** Bartosz Bartosik, Journalist and publicist, „WIEŹ” quarterly
- 11.30 – 11.45**      **COFFEE BREAK**
- 11.45 – 13.15**      **IV SESSION:**  
**WORD MATTERS – COMMUNICATION IN THE PUBLIC SPHERE DURING THE WAR**  
**Prof. Ryszard Koziołek**, Rector of the Silesian University  
**Gen. prof. Mieczysław Bieniek**, Former Commander-in-chief of the NATO  
**Bogdan Klich**, chairman of the Senate Commission on the Foreign Affairs and European Union  
**Dominik Héjj PhD**, Political scientist, editor-in-chief of the portal kropka.hu  
**MODERATOR:** Ks. Kazimierz Sowa, Journalist and publicist
- 13.15– 13.30**      **CONCLUSION AND CLOSING:**  
**Rafał Budnik**, President of Tadeusz Pieronek Foundation
- 13.30**              **LUNCH**

### SUMMARY

The conference "The Role of Christians in the Process of European Integration" in Krakow, held on September 29 and 30, 2023, focused on the consequences of the Russian military invasion of Ukraine. Cardinal Grzegorz Ryś, in a speech recorded before his Vatican visit, discussed the concept of a "just war" based on texts by Pope Francis and St. John Paul II. Panel discussions explored how war changes the European Union, the consequences for churches, the impact on human attitudes, and communication during war. The event concluded with the "In Veritate" Award presented to Robert Metsola, President of the European Parliament, and Fr. Adam Boniecki MIC. Over 200 participants attended, and the conference expressed gratitude to supporting institutions and media patrons.



Jan OLBRYCHT MEP



Award presented to Robert METSOLA, President of the European Parliament



**EPP WORKING GROUP  
INTERCULTURAL AND RELIGIOUS DIALOGUE**

**WEDNESDAY, 4 OCTOBER 2023**

**AFTER THE VOTES  
12.30 - 14.00 HRS.**

**LOW MEP SALON  
STRASBOURG**

**AGENDA**

1. Opening by the Co-Chairman of the Working Group **György HÖLVÉNYI MEP** and **Mr Jan OLBRYCHT MEP**
3. Exchange of views with **Fr. Jean-François BOUR O.P.**, Executive Director of Democracy, European Construction & Religions (DECERE) and Director of Relations with Muslims National Office (SNRM) on **“Christian-Muslim encounters and mutual understanding”**
3. Questions & Answers

**SUMMARY**

Fr. Jean-Francois Bour OP of the Dominican community in Strasbourg discussed with Members about Christian-Muslim relations in Europe. The discussion focused on the crucial role that education plays in fostering understanding among faiths, people, and values, emphasizing the need for non-Muslims to learn about Islam and vice versa. Promoting peaceful coexistence and preventing the spread of harmful religious ideologies in Europe is paramount. It was also stressed that diversity is viewed as an opportunity for learning, growth, and building a more inclusive society through open communication and shared values. In this context, interreligious dialogue is essential for securing peace and fraternity, emphasizing the importance of each religion understanding its own identity.



*Leopoldo LOPEZ GIL MEP, Željana ZOVKO MEP, Fr. Jean-Francois BOUR, Miriam LEXMANN MEP,  
György HÖLVÉNYI MEP*



**EPP WORKING GROUP  
INTERCULTURAL AND RELIGIOUS DIALOGUE**

**WEDNESDAY, 25 OCTOBER 2023**

**12.30 TO 14 HRS.**

**SPINELLI MEP SALON  
EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT, BRUSSELS**

AGENDA

1. Opening by the Co-Chairman of the Working Group **Mr Jan OLBRYCHT MEP** and **Mr György HÖLVÉNYI MEP**
3. Exchange of views with **H.E. Bishop Mariano CROCIATA**, President of the Commission of the Bishops' Conferences of the EU (COMECE) on **matters of common interest**
3. Questions & Answers

SUMMARY

Mons. Mariano Crociata, President of the Commission of the Bishops' Conferences of the European Union (COMECE), talked about a variety of topics concerning matters of common interest, like global threats to democratic values and peace. Members also mentioned the need of urgent diplomatic efforts to address conflicts such as the Israeli-Palestinian and Nagorno-Karabakh disputes. The upcoming European elections face challenges like voters disinterest and the risk of polarization, underscoring the need for robust citizen engagement and moderation in political discourse.



*Francois-Xavier BELLAMY MEP, Jan OLBRYCHT MEP, György HÖLVÉNYI MEP, Msgr. CROCIATA, Fr. Manuel BARRIOS PRIETO, Rasa JUKNEVICIENE MEP, Herbert DORFMANN MEP, Tomislav SOKOL MEP, Massimiliano SALINI MEP*



**EPP WORKING GROUP  
INTERCULTURAL AND RELIGIOUS DIALOGUE**

**WEDNESDAY, 8 NOVEMBER 2023  
13.30 TO 14.30 HRS.**

**SPINELLI MEP SALON  
EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT, BRUSSELS**

AGENDA

1. Opening by the Co-Chairman of the Working Group **Mr Jan OLBRYCHT MEP**
3. Exchange of views on **the current situation in Ukraine, the role of the Church and of the European Union** with
  - **His Beatitude Sviatoslav SHEVCHUK**, Major Archbishop of Kyiv-Halych and Head of the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church (UGCC)
  - **Bishop Stepan SUS**, Auxiliary Bishop of Curia of Major Archbishop of Kyiv-Halych and Head of the Pastoral Migration Department of the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church (UGCC)
3. Questions & Answers

SUMMARY

On the historic day in which the European Commission gave the go-ahead for EU accession talks with Ukraine, Members welcomed His Beatitude Sviatoslav Shevchuk, Major Archbishop of Kyiv-Halych and Head of the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church (UGCC), and of Bishop Stepan Sus, Auxiliary Bishop of Curia of Major Archbishop of the Kyiv-Halych and Head of the Pastoral Migration Department of the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church (UGCC). They discuss the current situation in Ukraine and what will come next for it and also reminded Members of the commonalities that bind Ukraine and Europe together.

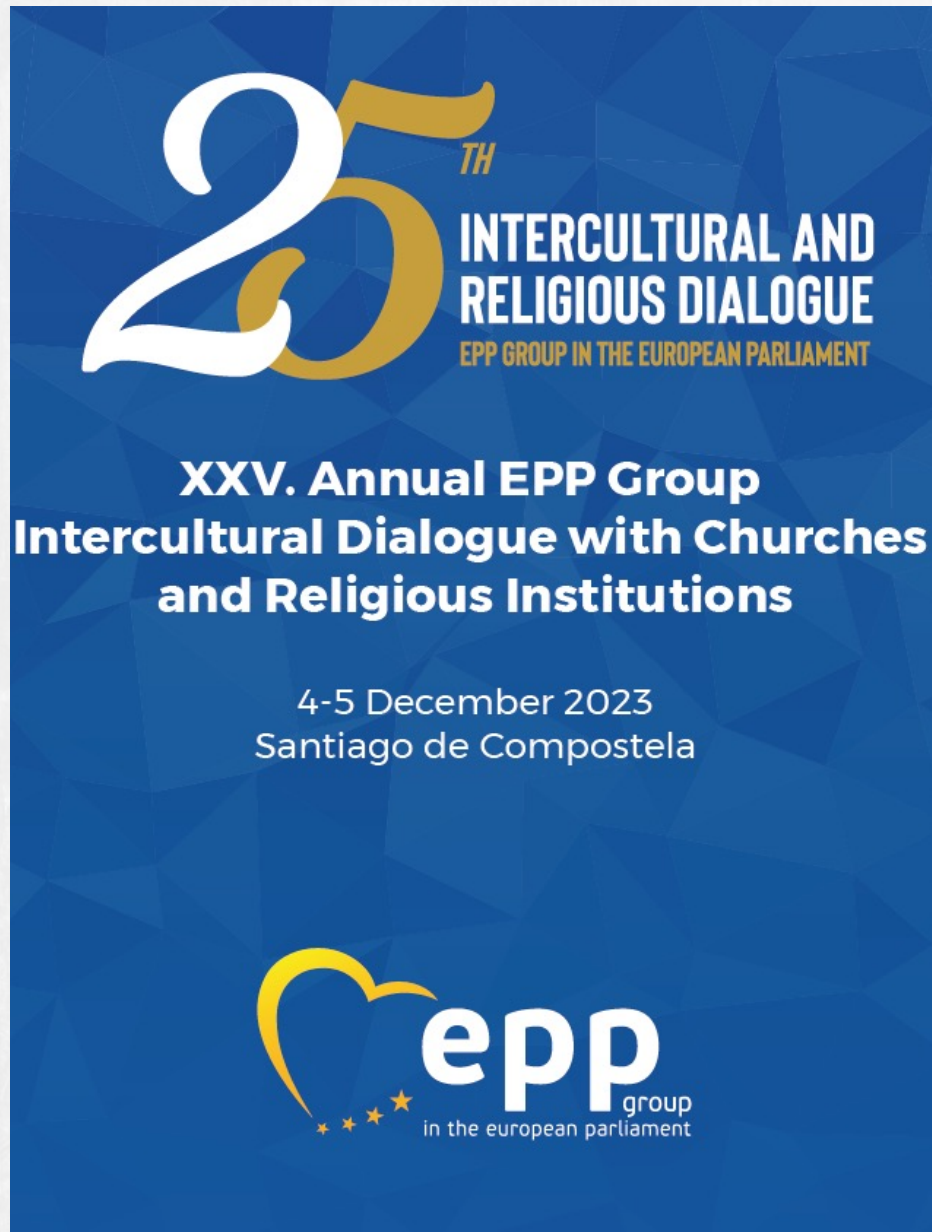


*Michaela ŠOJDROVÁ MEP, H.B. Sviatoslav SHRVCHUK, Rasa JUKNEVICIENE MEP, Bishop Stepan SUS*



*Isabel WISELER-LIMA MEP, H.B. Sviatoslav SHRVCHUK, Jan OLBRYCHT MEP, Bishop Stepan SUS,  
Rev. Fr. Andriy SOLETSKY*






**25<sup>TH</sup> INTERCULTURAL AND RELIGIOUS DIALOGUE**  
EPP GROUP IN THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

**XXV. Annual EPP Group Intercultural Dialogue with Churches and Religious Institutions**

4-5 December 2023  
Santiago de Compostela



**epp** group  
in the european parliament

PROGRAMME

**XXV. ANNUAL EPP GROUP INTERCULTURAL DIALOGUE WITH CHURCHES AND RELIGIOUS INSTITUTIONS**

70 YEARS OF EPP GROUP  
25 YEARS OF DIALOGUE: WHY DIALOGUE MATTERS?  
**4 - 5 DECEMBER 2023**

SANTIAGO DE COMPOSTELA, SPAIN

PARADOR DE SANTIAGO - HOSTAL REIS CATOLICOS  
PRAZA DO OBRADOIRO, 1, SANTIAGO DE COMPOSTELA, 15705, SPAIN

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**SUNDAY, 3 DECEMBER**

20:30 HRS **WELCOME DINNER AT THE PARADOR DE SANTIAGO**

**WELCOME SPEECHES**

- **Dolors MONTSERRAT** MEP, Vice-Chair of the EPP Group in the European Parliament and Head of the Spanish Delegation of the EPP Group in the EP
- **Francisco José MILLÁN MON** MEP, EPP Spanish Delegation Member representing the Region of Galicia and President of the Intergroup on European Cultural Heritage, Ways of Saint James and other European Cultural Routes
- **Diego CALVO POUSO**, First Vice-President of the Regional Government of Galicia

**MONDAY, 4 DECEMBER**

09:30 - 10:00 HRS **OPENING SESSION**

- **Rosa ESTARÀS FERRAGUT** MEP, Vice-Chair of the Intergroup on Disability and Regional President of the Partido Popular in the Balearic Islands
- **Jan OLBRYCHT** MEP, Vice-Chair and Chief Whip of the EPP Group in the EP and Co-Chair of the EPP Working Group on Intercultural Relations and Interreligious Dialogue
- **György HÖLVÉNYI** MEP, Co-Chair of the EPP Working Group on Intercultural Relations and Interreligious Dialogue



10:00 - 11:30 HRS **SESSION I. SPECIAL INTERVENTIONS ON THE ROLE OF DIALOGUE WITH CHURCHES AND RELIGIOUS COMMUNITIES TODAY**

**CHAIR:** Jan **OLBRYCHT** MEP, Vice-Chair and Chief Whip of the EPP Group in the EP and Co-Chair of the EPP Working Group on Intercultural Relations and Interreligious Dialogue

- **Othmar KARAS** MEP, First Vice-President of the European Parliament responsible for implementation of Article 17 TFEU Dialogue with Churches, religious associations or communities, philosophical and non-confessional organisations (via video connection)
- **Elder Metropolitan EMMANUEL OF CHALCEDON**, Ecumenical Patriarchate (via video connection)
- **Mons. Francisco José PRIETO**, Archbishop of Santiago de Compostela
- **Mons. Mariano CROCIATA**, President of the Commission of the Bishops' Conferences of the EU (COMECE)
- **Amb. Ismat JAHAN**, Permanent Observer of the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) to the EU
- **Rabbi Avi TAWIL**, Director, European Jewish Community Centre

11:30 - 12:30 HRS **DISCUSSION**

14:00 - 15:30 HRS **SESSION II. "THE IMPORTANCE AND RELEVANCE OF DIALOGUE: "DIALOGUE IN ACTION"**

**CHAIR:** Željana **ZOVKO** MEP, Vice-Chair of the EPP Group in the European Parliament

- **Fr. Manuel Enrique BARRIOS**, General Secretary, Commission of the Bishops' Conferences of the EU (COMECE) and former Director of the Secretariat for Ecumenical and Interreligious Relations at the Spanish Bishops' Conference
- **Fr. Olivier POQUILLON OP**, Director, École biblique of Jerusalem, Former Secretary General of COMECE (via video connection)
- **Dr Jørgen Skov SØRENSEN**, General Secretary of the Conference of European Churches (CEC)
- **Mohamed AJANA EL OUAFI**, Islamic Commission of Spain
- **Frédérique OHAYON**, Director of International Development, Jewish Foundation (Fundación HispanoJudía) and Director of the Friends of Tel Aviv University Association in Spain

15:30 - 16:00 HRS **DISCUSSION**

16:30 - 19:30 HRS **STUDY VISIT**

19:30 HRS **OPTIONAL PROGRAMME: PILGRIM'S MASS IN THE CATHEDRAL**

21:00 HRS **DINNER HOSTED BY THE EPP GROUP AT THE RESTAURANT HOTEL MONUMENTOS SAN FRANCISCO**

**DINNER SPEECHES**

- **Jan OLBRYCHT** MEP, Vice-Chair and Chief Whip of the EPP Group in the EP and Co-Chair of the EPP Working Group on Intercultural Relations and Interreligious Dialogue
- **Jesús GAMALLO ALLER**, Director-General for External Relations and Relations with the European Union, Region of Galicia

**TUESDAY, 5 DECEMBER**

09:00 - 10:30 HRS **SESSION III. "THE INFLUENCE OF RELIGION IN SOCIETY"**

**CHAIR:** György **HÖLVÉNYI** MEP, Co-Chair of the EPP Working Group on Intercultural Relations and Interreligious Dialogue

- **Fr Hyacinthe DESTIVELLE O.P.**, Director of the Institute for Ecumenical Studies of the Pontifical University of St. Thomas Aquinas in Rome
- **Rabbi Levi MATUSOF**, Director of the European Jewish Public Affairs
- **Dr. Timo Aytaç GÜZELMANSUR**, General-director of the Department of the German Bishops' Conference for the dialogue with Muslims and research about Islam in Germany 'CIBEDO'
- **Fr Friedrich BECHINA**, Former Undersecretary of the Congregation for Catholic Education (via video connection)
- **Prof. Dr. Francisco RAMÍREZ FUEYO**, Dean of the Faculty of Theology, Comillas Pontifical University Madrid

10:30 - 11:00 HRS **DISCUSSION**

11:00 - 11:15 HRS **CLOSING REMARKS**



### SUMMARY

Church leaders and religious representatives engaged in debates with EPP Group Members about the importance and significance about Interreligious Dialogue in such a symbolic place as Santiago de Compostela. Participants looked at “Dialogue in Action” and “The influence of religion in society”.

To mark the 25th edition since the first of the EPP Group Intercultural and Religious Dialogue conference, the event presented the attendees with three sessions containing relevant and important topics in our tumultuous times. These included:

- i. The role of dialogue with churches and religious communities today
- ii. The importance and relevance of dialogue: dialogue in action
- iii. The influence of religion in society

There were many arguments that connected the speakers’ discourses, but none more than the crucial role that dialogue between religions and cultures has in securing cohesion across Europe. One of the primary reasons for the importance of religious and cultural dialogue lies in the potential to mitigate misunderstandings and stereotypes. Europe's history has witnessed periods of strife arising from religious differences, and fostering dialogue provides an opportunity to dispel misconceptions, promoting a more nuanced understanding of various faiths and traditions. By engaging in open conversations, individuals can learn about the similarities that bind them, emphasizing shared values and principles that transcend religious and cultural boundaries.

Furthermore, religious and cultural dialogue within Europe is integral to the preservation of social harmony. As the continent grapples with increased globalization and migration, the need for cohesion becomes more pronounced. By encouraging conversations that celebrate diversity rather than fostering division, European societies can cultivate an environment where individuals feel valued and respected irrespective of their religious or cultural background. This, in turn, contributes to the development of inclusive societies that thrive on the richness of their differences.

Religious and cultural dialogue is indispensable for the continued harmonious coexistence of diverse communities within Europe. By fostering understanding, promoting social cohesion, and facilitating mutual enrichment, such dialogue serves as a powerful tool for building a more inclusive and tolerant continent that embraces the richness of its cultural and religious diversity. As Europe navigates the complexities of the 21st century, investing in open and respectful conversations becomes not only a moral imperative but also a strategic necessity for a united and prosperous future.

Decades of dialoguing with churches has served as a sobering reminder that, among the chaos and conflict suffered and inflicted throughout the world, civilised discourse still has a home in Europe, continuing to thrive and prosper amidst a storm of hostility and indifference. The Intercultural and Religious Dialogue Working Group is proud to have hosted such a brilliant display of unity and fraternity between churches, between ideas, between people in Santiago de Compostela. The dialogue fostered by the Intercultural and Religious Dialogue Working Group will always be a priority for the EPP Group because it is the key to peace, social cohesion, common understanding and compassion between the faithful.







*Jan OLBRYCHT MEP, Rabbi Avi TAWIL, György HÖLVÉNYI MEP, Amb. Ismat JAHAN, Mons. Francisco José PRIETO, Mons. Mariano CROCIATA, Francisco José MILLÁN MON MEP*



*Željana ZOVKO MEP, Vice-Chair of the EPP Group in the European Parliament*



*Mons. Francisco José PRIETO, and Mons. Mariano CROCIATA*



*Prof. Dr. Francisco RAMÍREZ FUEYO, Dr. Timo Aytaç GÜZELMANSUR, György HÖLVÉNYI MEP, Fr Hyacinthe DESTIVELLE O.P., Rabbi Levi MATUSOF*



## INTERCULTURAL AND RELIGIOUS DIALOGUE UNIT DIRECTORATE OUTREACH



**Andrea LASKAVA,**  
Director, Outreach Directorate



**Gábor TÖRÖK,**  
Policy Adviser, Intercultural  
and Religious Dialogue Unit



**Nora KRAMER,**  
Assistant, Intercultural  
and Religious Dialogue Unit



**Atilla AGÁRDI,**  
Press Adviser, Intercultural  
and Religious Dialogue Unit



**Josefina PELÁEZ,**  
Assistant, Intercultural  
and Religious Dialogue Unit



**Maria Michela LAERA,**  
Policy Adviser



**Brando ALBRIGHI,**  
Trainee, Intercultural  
and Religious Dialogue Unit





**Published by:** Intercultural and Religious Dialogue, Outreach Directorate

**Responsible:** Andrea LASKAVA, Director  
Outreach Directorate

**Address:** EPP Group in the European Parliament,  
60 Rue Wiertz, B-1047 Brussels, Belgium

**Internet:** [www.eppgroup.eu](http://www.eppgroup.eu)

**E-mail:** [EPP-Interreligious@europarl.europa.eu](mailto:EPP-Interreligious@europarl.europa.eu)

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