



XXIV ANNUAL EPP GROUP INTERCULTURAL DIALOGUE WITH CHURCHES AND RELIGIOUS INSTITUTIONS

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# “RELIGION AND THE FUTURE OF EUROPE”

9-10 DECEMBER 2022



# XXIV ANNUAL EPP GROUP INTERCULTURAL DIALOGUE WITH CHURCHES AND RELIGIOUS INSTITUTIONS

The XXIV Annual EPP Group Intercultural Dialogue with Churches and Religious Institutions took place in Vienna, Austria on December 9th and 10th, 2020. The title of the event was «Religion and the Future of Europe», with a focus on the “Reaction of Churches and religious communities to war, conflict and their contribution in shaping the evolution of the European Union”.

Alongside Special Interventions, the conference also delved into two main sub-themes:

Theme I: “The Churches and the War in Ukraine”

Theme II: “Influence of Churches / Religions on Social and Political Processes”

These subjects are of paramount importance given the current circumstances, particularly in light of the ongoing war in Ukraine. With the goal of promoting mutual understanding and fostering a sense of active European citizenship for peaceful coexistence, the Annual Dialogue Conference brought together a diverse group of participants - from EPP Group Members, to Church leaders, religious experts, and members of the public. The objective of the meeting was to engage in meaningful reflection on these current problems, particularly, key concerns related to the Churches’ reactions to war and conflict and their impact on shaping the European Union.

The EPP Group is the only political group within the European Parliament that fosters structured annual dialogues with Churches and Religious Institutions. It recognizes that religious issues are ever-present and often at the heart of international conflicts and wars. It remains imperative, then, to engage in dialogue with the aim of avoiding conflicts wherever possible. As Manfred Weber once said, “We have to build up dialogue and not wars”, and this event supported that goal as well as reflecting on the important role that religion plays in shaping the future of Europe.

# XXIV Annual EPP Group Intercultural Dialogue

## Religion and the Future of Europe



## XXIV ANNUAL EPP GROUP INTERCULTURAL DIALOGUE WITH CHURCHES AND RELIGIOUS INSTITUTIONS "RELIGION AND THE FUTURE OF EUROPE"

REACTION OF CHURCHES AND RELIGIOUS COMMUNITIES TO WAR, CONFLICT AND THEIR CONTRIBUTION IN SHAPING THE EVOLUTION OF THE EUROPEAN UNION

9 - 10 DECEMBER 2022 VIENNA, AUSTRIA

FRIDAY, 9 DECEMBER 2022  
11:00 - 12:30 HRS

### PROGRAMME

11:00 HRS  
OPENING SESSIONS AND WELCOME MESSAGES

- **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.
- **Jan OLBRYCHT MEP**, Vice-Chairman and Chief Whip of the EPP Group in the EP and Co-Chairman of the EPP Working Group on Intercultural Relations and Interreligious Dialogue.
- **György HÖLVÉNYI MEP**, Co-Chairman of the EPP Working Group on Intercultural Relations and Interreligious Dialogue.

11:30 HRS  
SPECIAL INTERVENTIONS

- **H.E. Elder Metropolitan Emmanuel of Chalcedon**, Ecumenical Patriarchate (via interactio).
- **Fr. Manuel Enrique Barrios Prieto**, General Secretary, Commission of the Bishops' Conferences of the EU (COMECE).
- **Chief Rabbi Schlomo Hofmeister**, Community Rabbi of Vienna.
- **Imam Yahya Sergio Yahe Pallavicini**, President, European Muslim Leaders Council (EULEMA).

12.30 HRS  
END OF DEBATE

14:30 HRS  
SESSION I: THE CHURCHES AND THE WAR IN UKRAINE

### CHAIR

**Rasa Jukneviene MEP**, Vice-Chair of the EPP Group in the EP.

### INTERVENTIONS

- **Rabbi Lévi Matusof**, Director of the European Jewish Public Affairs and EU Representative of the Federation of Jewish Communities of Ukraine.
- **H.E. Arsenius Kardamakis of Austria**, Metropolitan of the Metropolis of Austria and Exarch of Hungary and Central Europe.
- **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.

### DEBATE

16:30 HRS  
CLOSING SESSION

17:00 HRS  
STUDY VISIT

Welcome by **Probost Maximilian Fürnsinn**  
Guided walking tour (EN/DE) of the Klosterneuburg Abbey

SATURDAY, 10 DECEMBER 2022

10:00 HRS

**SESSION II: INFLUENCE OF CHURCHES/RELIGIONS ON SOCIAL AND POLITICAL PROCESSES?****CHAIR****Pernille Weiss MEP**, Head of the Danish Delegation of the EPP Group.**INTERVENTIONS**

- **Prof. Dr. Christiaan Alting von Geusau**, President of the Vienna-based International Catholic Legislators' Network and Professor of Law and Education at ITI Catholic University.
- **Very Reverend Archimandrite Father Aimilianos Bogiannou**, Committee of Representatives of the Orthodox Churches to the EU (CROCEU).
- **Prof. Dr. Regina Polak**, Associate Professor at the Department of Practical Theology, Faculty of Catholic Theology, University of Vienna.

**DEBATE**

11:50 HRS

**CLOSING SESSION**

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

12:00 HRS

**END OF CONFERENCE**

Interpretation: English, French, German, Italian, Greek

**INTERVENTIONS**  
**WELCOME MESSAGES**

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

I would like to warmly welcome you to our annual conference. As in previous years, we decided to combine two very important events during this edition - the Office Meeting and the Annual Dialogue - emphasizing the special nature and importance of the latter.

Our Dialogue is always reflecting the most important issues and questions around us, so we are not discussing the Dialogue as such, but we make the Dialogue centre on concrete topics, concrete problems. This is the reason why today we are gathering in Vienna, I will even say -in the centre of 'Mitteleuropa' - for our exchange of views.

Today, together with my Co-chair of the Working Group of the EPP Group, we are very grateful for your presence, your time and for the possibility to address problems that are bothering us over the next two days. We sincerely appreciate the possibility to have a very open and frank exchange of views, especially on today's theme, "the Role of Churches and Religious Communities in politics".

We are keenly aware that politics is not the domain of churches and religious communities, but at the same time, both churches and religious communities, are play a significant role in public life. Hence, the position of churches is a matter of utmost importance. It also needed to be clarified that I consider churches not only institutions, but also as our representatives, believers and members of religious communities. Therefore, it is worth noting, that when we are discussing the role of churches and religious communities, we are also discussing about ourselves.

Today's theme automatically leads me to pose some question: "What is our position as Christian, Muslim or Jewish members of the communities on the current situations ongoing around us?", "What is our position towards the war?" Regarding the last one, I would like to even ask more specifically, and not to refer to the concrete war. To continue, let me therefore ask: "What is our position concerning wars?" This is undoubtedly a very important issue for religion, especially when we focus on the distinction between 'the saint war' or 'the just war'.

In closing, I must say that Dialogue requires one thing. To be fully involved in Dialogue, it means that the two sides of it confirm that they do not know everything. This is an

equivalent of admitting to myself 'I need some additional knowledge' and that is why I am looking for the Dialogue with you, because I do not know. If I know everything, the Dialogue is not necessary. The Dialogue is important when I do not know. I can recognise this lack of knowledge in myself and I do believe that you are capable of doing the same. This realisation means that we need each other - and this is the Dialogue.

So let us start our Annual EPP Group Dialogue, and I think the most important opening is now to Othmar Karas, who is not only Austrian, from Vienna, but also our old colleague. Many years ago, he was responsible for the Dialogue in the EPP, and now Mr. Othmar Karas is Vice-President of the Parliament who is responsible for the Dialogue of the Article 17 in the European Parliament. Today - he is the host. Othmar, the floor is yours.



**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

Dear Jan, dear György,  
Dear Excellencies,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,  
Dear friends,

Welcome to the 24th EPP Group Summit for Inter-cultural dialogue with Churches and religious institutions in Vienna.

This number 24 means a great deal. It means continuity. It means that this dialogue is not a flash in the pan. It is not a passing political fancy. Rather, this dialogue is an enduring concern and it therefore takes place every year, and in the intervening period with various individual events and encounters. You have no doubt heard this many times before, but the fact remains that the current global situation and general political environment are increasingly adding further significance to this dialogue, which has always been a matter of great importance.

And while this too has already been said, as First Vice-President of the European Parliament responsible for inter-religious dialogue, it is of particular importance to me that we utilise the essential experience that has been accrued over the years within the European People's Party, the network that has been built up, and the trust that we have created between the various religious communities, on the one hand, and the world of politics, on the other, to strengthen inter-religious dialogue both at the European level and between the institutions.

Only last week I attended three different events – with the Commission, the Parliament and the Group – on inter-religious dialogue. Three different events, four different meetings relating to this dialogue. Thus, this dialogue is not just limited to today.

I am deeply convinced that inter-religious dialogue is crucial for democratic discourse with each other. And in this regard, the keywords are 'democracy' and 'civil society'.

Inter-religious dialogue is essential for peace, social cohesion and the political acceptance of the necessary deepening of the European Union. I am firmly convinced that without inter-religious dialogue, there can be no democratic majorities for the development and deepening of the European Union we require.

Religion, culture, language, origin are all inter-linked. This means that they form part of the successful 'United in Diversity' project, part of unification, part of coming together and part of understanding each other.

I'm sure that each and every one of you can cite real-life examples where people in politics point the finger at one religion or the other in order to boost their own domestic political profile.

And each and every one of you can certainly give me examples of where it is difficult to establish such an inter-religious dialogue because some see themselves not as co-participants but as adversaries.

But how then can social cohesion and a democratic majority for our common values be achieved?

We all – that is both the Church and the world of politics – are responsible for our society and for the future of Europe. And what is more, it is not just about inter-religious dialogue in Europe – it is also about the dialogue between religions and politics.

And in this respect, not all religions are the same. When I consider not just the Catholic Church, but the Orthodox Churches and Islam – their effective global network is stronger than that of political parties.

The question is: do they use this global network, this knowledge of global inter-relations, to inform politics about the real, social, economic and political events in the world and to use politics as a tool for every state visit, for every meeting with other countries — do they use their knowledge as a basis for dialogue and discussion?

We have a common basis for action – that is liberal democracy in Europe and it is the Charter of Fundamental Rights. They protect diversity, pluralism and freedom of religion and belief. They allow for coexistence and social cohesion, and are prerequisites for the shaping of our future.

But let's be honest. Religious communities and politics also share common problems: the loss of trust among our members – i.e. the citizens; the withdrawal of voters, of citizens from our communities and from political discourse; the defiance as regards rights and values. And we are all too preoccupied with ourselves and often forget our mission and our duty to society.

A few months ago, would we have thought it possible that the post-war order – based on multilateralism, the recognition of sovereignty, respect for treaties and freedom – would be extinguished in just one day – that is with the launch of Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine? All the treaties – the UN Charter, the European Convention on Human Rights and the Budapest Memorandum – have been ignored and broken and with that all trust destroyed.

The war of aggression has not only had profound humanitarian, economic and social consequences in our countries through the millions of displaced people, with regard to which the religious communities in particular are doing great work – and I would really like to thank you for that – it has also strengthened our conviction as to who we are, what we stand for, what we will not accept and what we must be prepared to fight against together.

And this war has also shown us how close the link between political misconduct and religious misconduct can be. Kirill is an instrument of Putin. The Russian Orthodox Church is instrumentalising the same policy – that of territorial expansion and hence of expansion of the Church – and is using this to justify the suffering, the war, the war crimes and the terrorist acts.

But this is also a conflict between the Ukrainian and Russian orthodox communities. And we also see this in Serbia and much beyond. There are leaders in Europe who are misusing politics, Churches and believers, i.e. the people, for their political purposes to destabilise our society.

Yes, our liberal democracy is coming under pressure from outside, but also from within the European Union. Society is increasingly divided, not only by war and crises, but also by political actors and, at times, by religious leaders, who prefer polarisation to the search for common solutions.

Laws are broken, values are infringed and religions instrumentalised – as we see in Russia with Patriarch Kirill but also in Member States of the European Union. The Church is interumentalised for political, polarising and emotive effect.

It is therefore crucial that we strengthen inter-cultural and inter-religious dialogue, and that we do not leave it to the extremists, especially now in these current times of crisis. With this in mind, I welcome the fact that the EU Commission has finally, finally, seen fit to again appoint a Special Representative for Religious Freedom.

Similarly, I look forward to the comprehensive Defence of Democracy Package announced by Commission President Von der Leyen. But remember, in order to defend democracy we need the religious communities active in Europe as partners. There can be no defence of democracy – liberal democracy – without the involvement of civil society, which you so admirably represent.

It is with this in mind that I would like to thank the citizens who, at the Conference on the Future of Europe, put a particular emphasis on the democratisation of the European Union and called for the strengthening of the role of civil society in the political process.

To this end, the European Parliament is organising an Article 17 Dialogue Seminar on 'Liberal Democracy and Inter-religious Dialogue' on 24 January. And in this connection, I am pleased that the EPP Group is also conducting and continuing this dialogue in such a committed, consistent and serious manner, and that we are meeting today for this summit in Vienna - the city which I call home.

I hope that the coming days will be fruitful and, above all, that the discussions will be interesting, forward-looking and mutually beneficial.

With this, I bid you welcome and wish you a wonderful day.



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

Your Eminencies,  
Excellencies,  
dear Vice-President,  
dear current and former Colleagues,  
dear Ladies and Gentlemen,

Interreligious Dialogue belongs to the core identity of the EPP Group since two decades. The role of the dialogue has enormously increased in the current period of conflicts and existential instability.

This year's Annual Dialogue conference is taking place under truly extraordinary circumstances. In consideration of the current war in Ukraine, we must focus together on peace creation, security and the role of interreligious dialogue in this process.

In the face of devastation and war crimes in Europe, there exists a mutual responsibility for action, both for the international and European community, and the churches.

Religious leaders are able to inspire actions for rebuilding trust in societies. They also represent the basic ideas of respect for life and human dignity, charity and solidarity. Such a task of religious leaders is especially important in the midst of war and economic downturn in Europe.

Through peace in Eastern Europe we can preserve the stability of the EU as a whole. Peace is a precondition of stopping unbearable human sufferings. It is also a basis of renewing social stability and economic development.

The exact theme of this year's event is "Religion and the Future of Europe - Reaction of Churches and religious communities to war, conflict and their contribution in shaping the evolution of the European Union".

Previously the pandemic and now the war have made people open to new messages and ideas for their future. Supported by thousands of years of experience, churches and religious communities are especially able to promote solutions for peace.

Especially in the current political situation, religious communities must become exclamation marks when we talk about peace in Europe.

We should not speak only about politicians looking for solutions, but very much about you, religious representatives. Your excellencies as spiritual leaders represent millions of people. My sincere thanks therefore to all our high-ranking guests for your participation.

We gathered for this event today to perform a dialogue. This means to demonstrate for everyone that each of us takes responsibility beyond the own political or ecclesial community.

Each of us stand also for the future of the society, country, region and continent where we live. This responsibility should characterise us today. In this spirit we shall perform our work today.

Even if a conference like this cannot create peace in itself, I very much believe that such a dialogue of leaders from various institutions will facilitate the process of rebuilding trust and stability in Europe.

Thank you.

## SPECIAL INTERVENTIONS



**Fr. Manuel Enrique Barrios Prieto**, General Secretary, Commission of the Bishops' Conferences of the EU (COMECE)

Honourable members of the European Parliament,  
Religious and civil authorities,  
Dear friends,

As in previous occasions, it is always an honour and a pleasure to be invited and to participate in the Annual Interreligious and Intercultural Dialogue meeting organized by the EPP Group. This year we have arrived to its XXIV edition. As Secretary General of COMECE, but also on behalf of our President, Cardinal Jean-Claude Hollerich sj. and the European Bishops, I have to say that the presence and work of this unit of the EPP group in the European Parliament is extremely valuable and important for the Catholic Church. We congratulate the EPP group for creating this unit and supporting it and hope that in the future it will continue receiving full support and the necessary resources.

I am going to do today a thing one normally does not do in a panel like ours, and it is to read a speech by the former Nunzio to the European Union, Mgr. Aldo Giordano. I will explain why I do this and I think I will have your understanding and approval. Mons. Aldo Giordano, before being appointed Nunzio to the EU in May 2021, had been Secretary General of the Council of the Bishops' Conference of Europe (CCEE) for many years, and then Apostolic Observer to the Council of Europe in Strasbourg and finally Apostolic Nunzio in Venezuela. He knew very well Europe, and also, due to his stay in Venezuela, was acquainted with South America and geopolitical issues. He was also an expert on the German philosopher Nietzsche. He took office as Nunzio before the European Union in August 2021 and unfortunately was infected by Covid in the Eucharistic Congress in Budapest which we attended together, and died a year ago, the 2 December 2021. I want to remember him today, pay homage to him, in this first anniversary of his sad death, with an important speech he wrote for a gathering organized by the Jesuits in Namur, called "Passion for Europe" which he could not attend due to the illness. This short and beautiful speech, that is considered by many his spiritual testament, justly addresses the issue we are discussing today, Religion and the future of Europe, and does so much better that I could do and with the authority of the last words of a religious person that new well Europe and the world.

I pass, then, to read his speech.

The title he gave to his speech is: The future of Europe, the responsibility of the Church and Christianity. Date: 25 September 2021.

Dear friends, participants in the Passion for Europe session, I would have liked to be with you, but the virus forced me to change my plans. However, I do not want to give up sending you a greeting. I worked on European issues for about

20 years, from 1995 to 2013. Now I have returned to our Europe after more than seven years of service as Apostolic Nunzio to Venezuela and, having arrived in Brussels at the beginning of last August, I am trying to rediscover what our continent looks like today and what the responsibilities of the Church and Christianity are for its future. I am sure that your meeting these days and the topics you are addressing with such highly competent people will be a significant contribution to the Conference on the Future of Europe. In my brief intervention, I propose that we take a step back from the problems of the day to try to think about two fundamental questions that seem to me essential for the future of Europe.

The first fundamental question that is decisive for the future of Europe is that of God. It is presented in a dramatic and lucid way in a famous page by the philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche, entitled *The Fool*, in the book: *Die fröhliche Wissenschaft*, *The gay (joyful) science*, n.125. «Have you not heard of the madman who, in broad daylight, lit a lantern and ran around the public square shouting: «I am looking for God! I am looking for God! - As there were many who did not believe in God, his cry caused great hilarity. Has he been lost?» said one. «Or has he hidden himself?» «Has he emigrated? - so they shouted and laughed in a jumble. The madman jumped into their midst and glared at them. Where has God gone?» he cried, «I want to tell you! We killed him, you and I! We are all his murderers! After this announcement a series of questions: But how did we do this? ... What did we do when we detached this earth from the chain of its sun? Are we not falling all the time? Forward, backward, sideways, all around? Is there still an above and a below? Do we not wander as if through an infinite nothingness? .... Is it not colder? Do you not see the night coming all the time, more night?» ... God is dead! God remains dead! And it is we who have killed him! How shall we, the murderers of murderers, console ourselves? It is said that this madman entered different churches on the same day and sang his Requiem æternam deo. When he was expelled and questioned, he answered

the same thing over and over again: «What are these churches for, if they are not the tombs and monuments of God?»

The madman has a first surprise in store for us: lighting a lantern when there is full morning light. Even the European man today is beginning to feel the need to light a lantern at the very moment when everything seems clear. Even the clarity inherited from the Enlightenment no longer seems sufficient. Man is searching for God, for truth, even if in the «European market» there are people who seem to snub the problem or at least show indifference. The dramatic news of this madman is that of a murder: God himself has been killed and the people responsible are the European men, who have started to live «as if God did not exist». European man decides to «become like God» by walking autonomously, in solitude, with self-sufficiency. If God is dead, the sun, truth, love, beauty, in absolute terms, no longer exist. Everything becomes relative to man and his radical completion. If the sun exists, there is a source, a perspective, an objective, absolute interpretative point of view to look at and draw from; if there is no sun, there remains the anarchic pluralism of perspectives and interpretations. Each person becomes a sun to himself. Instead of one sun, a myriad of «lonely» suns. If the absolute is missing, man always falls into the temptation to absolutize something else: himself, a science, an ideology, a group. If God does not exist, each individual, each science, each group can claim to be God, to have the truth and to be the measure of all things. If there is a Transcendence, all human powers and all claims to exclusive truth are relativised. Only the reference to God can relativise the powers of the earth and prevent them from being proposed as absolute.

The second question I would like to ask is related to geopolitics and is the urgent need to have a horizon. Being in Venezuela, I confirmed the question of Europe's global role. Often, when faced with a problem, we have this attitude: we study the problem, we discuss the problem, we attack the

problem, we want to solve the problem... and in this way the problem comes closer and closer to our eyes and becomes more and more amplified, until it covers the entire horizon of our gaze. The problem becomes the only thing that exists. The horizon closes and the light disappears. On the other hand, if we know how to move the problem away from our eyes and place it within the horizon, the problem first shrinks and becomes relativised, becoming part of the network to which it belongs. In this way, our gaze is not exclusively blocked by the problem and remains free to see where the roots of the problem really are and where the possible solutions are. Often, the roots of the problem are not within the problem, but are elsewhere in the network, and there is where we must act. Above all, we can still see the faces of other people who can contribute to solving the problem, by getting us out of the solitude. «He who has no horizon overestimates and exaggerates what is closest to him», said the philosopher Hans Georg Gadamer. The horizon of the problems we face is the whole world. We cannot isolate our countries from the whole world. In the face of globalisation and the universality of problems, there is an urgent need for people who are able to consider the universal brotherhood of the human family. We must also remember that the horizon is above all the point where the earth meets the sky. This is the horizon that draws the light for historical action. Pope Francis, especially with the encyclicals «Laudato si» and «Fratelli tutti», invites us to keep the horizon open. In order to have light on the future of Europe, we must always keep in mind the complexity of the problems. The theme of the environment is not only scientific and technical, but also economic, social, political, cultural and religious, which is why it belongs to the Church's social doctrine. Today, the demand for a Europe of defence is becoming strong, but the horizon of defence is peace. When we talk about defence, I would always expect an explicit reference to peace, to Europe's responsibility not only to defend itself and its values, but to promote peace in the world, in the face of the tragic and too many «pieces of

war» that hurt the peoples of the planet. I am convinced that Europe could play a fundamental and unique role in building peace. At all levels, Europe has the strength to mediate between small and large powers to find ways of reconciliation in the face of violence. I am thinking of Venezuela, for example. It is clear that in Venezuela a global geopolitical game is being played, especially for the country's wealth, with politically opposed fronts. Who could have the strength to bring nations like Russia and the United States to the table for the sake of the suffering Venezuelan people? Would it not be the European Union? Wouldn't the greater autonomy that the European Union is seeking to gain be devoted to this task? Wouldn't this be the best defence strategy, even in the face of destabilisation attempts? If Europe aimed to be a peacemaker in the world, it would recover the vocation inscribed in its roots and the soul and ideal of which the venerable Robert Schuman spoke. Together, it would arouse a special interest in the world of young people, who today are all seeking to recover the cause of the Union. In short, it seems to me that Europe must rediscover the talent of Christianity, which has been tempted to bury.

These then, dear friends, the words of Mons. Aldo Giordano. Religion forms part of the identity of Europe and can and should contribute to its future, especially, in the two ways Mons. Giordano has indicated in its speech: making present the reality of God that frees us from the dictatorship of relativism, and contributing to making Europe an agent of peace in the world, by keeping the horizon open, through the message and witness of human fraternity and, when the times are right, offering ways of reconciliation through peacebuilding initiatives with local communities, even through ecumenical and interreligious dialogue.

Thank you very much for your kind attention.



**Chief Rabbi Schlomo Hofmeister**, Community Rabbi of Vienna

Ladies and gentleman,

First of all I want to thank you very much for this forum. For recognizing the importance of this dialogue, which is essential when we are talking about creating a platform, creating the possibility, the opportunity to shape our society. And I think especially for lawmakers, for politicians at the European level - even more so than on the national level -, it is crucial to have a wider view of the various values, the various cultures. Intercultural dialogue is always inseparable from what religious dialogue and interreligious dialogue are on the European level coming from, in order to be able to form our Europe in the right way together.

As we all know, it is only the other who allows us to grow. If we do not have our view, our point of view, in the eyes of the other; if you don't feel empathy; if you don't try to understand the other; it makes it very hard not only to grow, but it's

fostering extremist ideas, blind ideas, two-dimensional world of views, which we cannot afford in our diverse world to have.

Dialogue is something very very important as mentioned before, and it has become more important maybe in our generation than it has ever been before, as vice president Karas has mentioned before in his intervention, in his introductory speech. I would also want to add, it has never been as difficult.

Interreligious dialogue, obviously, when we talk about religion, everyone has his own background in mind, and we also have different associations of what interreligious dialogue might mean. We as Europeans, we all know for the last 2000 years, the history of religions, all the religions in Europe, was not a happy one. The history of religions in Europe has been written in tears and blood for almost 2000 years. In the 20th and the 21st centuries, religions have started to approach one another, following by 50 years of Dialogue. This was a phase of dialogue, which we can describe as the dialogue eye-to-eye, face to face. Getting to know each other, starting to appreciate one another, in order to get rid of prejudice, in order to learn where the other one really comes from. Not to read the other one from one's own theology, one's own world of view, which might not be representing the true other. Getting to know the other face to face. This was an important phase, but this was not very productive when it comes to taking responsibility for our common Europe.

We have entered the phase of a new sort of dialogue between religions, amongst religions, and not only in Austrians, I see it all over Europe and internationally, all over the world really, that religions have started this new phase of dialogue no longer face to face, but side to side. The dialogue side by side is so important in our world, which has been increasingly hijacked by militant secularism dividing our world, our societies, from those very values, those very religious values our

western world, our western societies, our European Union, is based on. Our religious values, which we all share amongst Christian, Jews, as well as Muslims - those values are the core of our western world.

Our market economy at its core follows religious values, but once in a completely secularized world, it has become a jungle. The void of religious values is destructive. You can call it creative destruction, when selfishness and the lack of trust, which is responsible for what we experience also in the political area, we have seen years of divisive elections and divided societies, because trust and confidence have been lost. Religious values at the core, in the heart of those who are guiding us, in the core, in the heart of those who are making our laws, who are leading us in our European Union, have been lost. And it is the religions and their Dialogue side-by-side together with those, in the political realm, who do appreciate the fact that there are religious values at the base of our society, of our civilization, which has to be fostered.

Right wing politicians often use the absurd phrase of the Judaeo-Christian heritage. No, there is no Judaeo-Christian heritage in Europe. There has been divisiveness; there has been persecution amongst those religions. Jews have been persecuted for 2000 years because they were Jewish, by the Christian majority. And when this term, the "Judaeo-Christian heritage", is being used nowadays by right wing politicians, it's only being used to exclude Islam. Divisiveness, hatred, racism, exclusion of the other, is as anti-religious as anything.

There is however, a Judaeo-Christian set of values, and we do share these values with all the other religions. We share these values also with Islam, and other minority religions in Europe, and it is crucial that religions get together. And we do get together, to work together side by side, to tackle current political issues. But also, for the dialogue to be productive and fruitful, we need the counterpart. We need you. We need

the politicians, the policymakers, on the national and on European on the European level, in order to be able to implement those values, which we as religious leaders can contribute. Religion is not the problem. Religion is being made the problem by those who do not represent us.

There have been discussions about political influence in religions, about the influence of religion in politics. Religious values belong to politic. Politics does not belong to religion. This is a very fine line, but it is very important to grasp. As a minority, as a representative of minority religion in Europe, it is sometimes very strange to see how right wing parties, extremist parties, nationalistic parties, are claiming for themselves to represent, or defend religion, in that case majority Christianity. Which when you look at those people individually as well as in a group, have nothing to do with religion whatsoever.

This is the political abuse of religion. And I think it's very important that any politician in Europe who appreciates, based on his own background, his own tradition, his own religion, the value of religion, he's speaking out against that. This is abuse of religion, which is intolerable in any religion. Religion and nationalism are incompatible concepts. They are an oxymoron. They cannot go together. And it is extremely important that all politicians, especially on the conservative spectrum of politics, realize that an abuse of religion - which is being committed by far right parties all over Europe defending the Occident, defending values which they claim are based on religion, when in fact they aren't - are only populist moves in order to gain support from those not looking too deeply into it. Politicians are responsible for our future, but politicians in our democratic system are a mirror of our society, and it is crucial that our society feels represented by their politicians.

At the same time, politicians have a responsibility beyond the grasp of the society. Not always does society realise the complexity of what it requires to make laws, to form policies. I'm sure you're aware of that yourself. The discrepancy and the lack of appreciation which politicians experience from the wider society, even from their own constituency, is sometimes responsible for politicians not being able to really do what they have to do. But politicians have to realize they're not doing it to please or to be popular. They're doing it to fulfil a responsibility.

Our European values, , our market economy, our European Union, is based on responsibility. The responsibility of the individual and the responsibility of the society, of the collective. If we do not hold social responsibility and social justice at the centre of our goals, our European Union will fail. Europe will have only a future if all of us, society and representatives on the political level, appreciate that and respect that.

If Europe loses its religious values, Europe will have no future. Europe must regain its religious values in order to have a future.

Thank you very much.



**Imam Yahya Sergio Yahe Pallavicini**, President, European Muslim Leaders Council (EULEMA)

Thank you so much for this invitation, it's a great pleasure to share this moment together, also for a Europeans Muslim's second generation preacher as myself, you have a great danger today, because today it is Friday, so you all took the risk that I will do my preach at the EPP meeting! No, I am joking!

I am honoured to represent the newly established coordination of the Council of the European Muslim Leaders EULEMA, that has been registered in Brussels, from 22 Member States Muslim representatives. So we are trying to face, and somehow follow the example of Jews and Christians - Catholics and Protestants - to fill the gap, also for the European Muslim community, on Dialogue and Policies with a European vision, and with the respect of authentic spiritual and religious dimensions.

My first point will be, something that was actually connected to my previous meeting with Vice-President Karas, in Brussels, during the article 17 meeting on Ukraine. This allows me to explain what is the correct narrative for Dialogue and what

is rather against dialogue. You might recognize this narrative when a person, on behalf of a nation or on behalf of a religion, pretends to invade a country, murder persons, families, elders and youth, and neglects citizenship as a right.

Now, for us in Europe this has happened recently in Ukraine. Because the narrative behind this invasion was called a "Holy War". Now you are familiar that this same narrative was something that some pretended Muslim used to invade Syria and Iraq, create a so called "Califate", and pretend to change the world.

So you see, what I want to show is that there is a similar narrative. On one side, there is the ideology of a symbol that could be Nation, or could be Land or could be Religion. And, on the other side, there is a demonization process of any kind of pluralistic diverse interpretation, within one religious identity and within one country, land and about European context and values. And that's why we have to, as Pope Francis mentions, settle or share the common responsibility of "being in the same boat". And avoid that Europe and Humanity be, somehow, either boycotted or brainwashed, or hostages of some ideology that has nothing to do with citizenship, land, politics, religion and dialogue.

And that's where I think we need to be aware of this common destruction agenda, or propaganda, that abuses of religion, nation, culture, and are actually trying to destroy the true roots of any culture, any religion, or any vision of a common Humanity, citizenship and brotherhood.

So that is, I think, my first point, the reason why we need to join, share, cooperate, implement our brotherhood, because there is, unfortunately, a very negative, provocative and destructive agenda, that is trying to monopolize and abuse of politics and religion. And that's why, as religious leaders, we want to share dialogue with European Institutions and political Advisors, and EPP Members, for Humanity, for the au-

thenticity of Religion, and for the management of citizenship with an open and inclusive vision.

"What vision of Europe?". As a second generation Muslim, educated in Europe, travelling also in the Muslim world to connect and compare my doctrinal training, the vision of Europe is the root that EPP represents with great responsibility, it is the vision of Schuman, De Gasperi, Adenauer, that are politicians with a vision, but also directly linked with faith, in the transcendental and immanent dimension of responsibility. I think this is something very important, even for a Muslim minority, a Jewish minority, together with the Christian denominations, the Orthodox, the Catholic, the Protestant, to engage together, because these roots of a vision of Europe need to be defended and implemented and developed together.

Now, Jan Olbrycht mentioned a very important methodological approach, which is: Dialogue needs to start with the humble knowledge and awareness, that we do not know everything about the other, otherwise it is a monologue, it is very easy. So in order to implement Dialogue, we need to have this humble attitude to discover the other and to discover ourselves together with the other. So it is not something that is forgetting our identity, it is discovering our identity with the other. No confusion, but something which is quite important.

Now, I feel we have some challenges of what I would call "non-authentic Dialogue" or rather obstacles to Dialogue. I will give some examples, to be concrete. The first is the ghettoization process. It happens when you have persons who, in Europe, want to live in ghettos. They want to be closed, narrow-minded, and be in Europe but not part of Europe. Now this Dialogue is a difficult Dialogue.

The second obstacle is the supremacy theory. When one pretends to Dialogue, but with a double-standard agenda. It is something that leads to tolerance and indifference. But never to the discovering of the roots, the fruits, the grammar of the other. Never trying to recognize the presence of God in every human being in his differences. Rather pretending that our interlocutor is a child of a lesser God, without religion, without a soul, a heart, a brain.

Another obstacle to Dialogue is the assimilation process. And the assimilation process, as it was mentioned by my former colleagues, is linking citizenship with a very aggressive secularization agenda. So, the assimilation process is to brainwash all citizens of any reference to traditional, moral, ethical, religious, spiritual, sacred, doctrinal, symbolical, ritual reference. So to be citizens turns to be just a existential and consumerist right, with no spiritual identity. It is like a furniture that is part of a museum, a new house, or a city, or a nation, but with no intelligence, no wisdom, no cultural legacy. Following you have the disintegration process, which happens when individuals want to change the world, either through radical agendas, or through terrorism. So it is a violent hatred agenda, always through polarization, "I am the good, and all the others are the evil". This disintegration process, which is unfortunately known in Europe, by the extreme left, by the extreme right, and by the fanatics and extremist of some religious ideologies.

Then we can find another aspect, which is the victimization process. Those who cry, they only cry, they only advocate for Human Rights, but they do not want to share, their knowledge, the Dialogue, the responsibility and the awareness, of the complexities of a root, and of a civilization, as in the West, as in the East. They only complain and often take advantage of their vulnerability without having any intention to be part of a social development of Europe.



Then you have the weaponization of democracy. The abuse of democracy to change democracy through a hidden revolution. This is a very delicate issue. You have some political movements, trying to infiltrate, if I may say, within the democratic process, in order to pretend to be democratic, but they are anti-democratic.

And the last two have been already mentioned by Rev Barrios, which is the problem of relativism, which is very close to the secular agenda of assimilation - they cannot care less of variety, difference, richness, heritage, legacy, families, gender, men, women, - it's just "whoever welcome", and no interest of the complexities of mankind, Humanity.

And the last one is syncretism, which is a confusion of "everyone is everything, anybody is anything", which is completely an artificial identity.

We have to be aware of these narrow-minded negative approaches, and try to Dialogue, but understand that there are two orientations in Dialogue. There is a honest intellectual Dialogue for policies and for social cohesion and inclusion, where we are truly honest to discover ourselves and the other, to build together a common society, with a civilization and a European vision. And there are others, who are manipulating or pretending to do that Dialogue, but are actually against this Dialogue.

I am very happy that among the papers that were prepared for this meeting, you have prepared also this one - the "Human Fraternity" document.

I am part of this initiative, I was in Abu Dhabi as a witness of the signatory of this document with Pope Francis and Sheikh Ahmed el-Tayeb. This is not only a interreligious document; it is also a spiritual and social inspiration. And it can be, thanks to you, to the EPP, a political implementation of values. But of course it has to be inspired by a vision of Europe, which according to me can only be the development of what Schuman, Adenauer, De Gasperi, started, linking with the contribution of religious interpretation of Humanity. And that is very important because the responsibility of politicians in Europe is directly connected with the responsibility and awareness of citizens, of course!

But citizens are part of Humanity. They are part of families, are part of men and women that can freely be believers or non-believers. But for us, as citizens and believers sharing a common responsibility, we are trying to manage the intellectual, spiritual development of believers as citizens of Europe, respecting the framework of a context that has a juridical, historical and even religious root and culture. I think this is the way and the priority to try to engage together, and that's how you get to fraternity. Because we share the vision of Humanity, as human fraternity, that can be translated into European citizenship.

But those who do not see and recognize, and acknowledge and respect this identity of Humanity, of fraternity, how can they implement their interpretation of citizenship?

I just arrived yesterday late because I was in Rome for the celebration of another last point I want to leave you with. Which is the Abraham Accords.

This is very interesting. They are making reference to a prophet that is common to Jews, Christians and Muslims, to create a peace process, that can change the criteria of international cooperation in terms of policies and trade, between East and West. And give the new generations a new paradigm of what is Middle East, East, West, North, South. This is quite interesting. I am not getting into the political analyses of the Abraham Accords, but this can provide an example, as human fraternity, of how the link without any confusion between spiritual reference, can inspire again a process of development.

Otherwise, the crisis and the decadence of society in Europe risks to be exactly what some invaders in the West as well as in the East, pretended to attribute to, the propaganda for the invasion of Ukraine is "because Europe is decadent and has forgotten any reference to sacred values". I wrote to the Metropolitan of the Russian Orthodox Church saying "This is not true".

European society is a society based on intellectual, juridical and cultural debates where each citizen and believer is responsible for the shared freedom to knowledge and communication and for the dignity of his legacy and religious education and practice. Inter-institutional dialogue and cooperation between politicians and religious scholars is active in Europe and it is part of the added value of European social development.



OPENING AND SPECIAL INTERVENTIONS SPEAKERS

From left to right, Andrea Laskava, Yalya Sergio Yabe Pallavicini, MEP Jan Olbrycht, FVP Orhmar Karas MEP, MEP György Hölvényi, Fr. Manuel Enrique Prieto and Chief Rabbi Schlomo Hofmeister

## SESSION I: THE CHURCHES AND THE WAR IN UKRAINE

CHAIR BY RASA JUKNEVICIENE MEP



Rasa Juknevičienė MEP, Vice-Chair of the EPP Group in the EP

Dear colleagues, we are about to begin. Please take your seats. In war times, we need the military order to be on time, not to be late. I will wait for just one minute, to give you time to take your seats.

OK, let's start then. I was asked to chair the panel with the, I would say, that important and actual title, but I would like to say that this war is more than a war in Ukraine, as written in the title of our panel. This is the war on the European continent. But it is not just a geographical war dimension. The war that uses deadly weapons to destroy bodies, the man-made matter of living.

But also it is a war for the souls and minds of people. Russia, the State where the Churches of all faiths were destroyed by the methods of red terror 100 years ago, where the Churches of all faiths suffered a lot, today managed to employ the Russian Orthodox Church for its terrorist crimes. Not only that, the values close to many Churches, like family values, have been turned into a tool of hybrid war against democracies, against the EU. And it is not only in Ukraine, the same methods to use Orthodox Church we see in Moldova, in Georgia, in the countries where people don't want to live in Russki Mir.

In my country, many people ask an even more existential question, maybe it's the wrong question, but they are asking where is God, especially when Bucha, Irpin and other atrocities happened. So, this panel I think will be something about that, about very important and maybe the most important challenges we have as generation. And especially the people who are close to the Church or part of the Churches, for us it's very painful, sensitive and very important to believe that God will win this war as well together with us.

Therefore I would like to, without any delay, introduce our first panelist, who by the way can't stay longer than approximately half an hour. But after his presentation he will leave. I would like also to give the chance to some of you to ask questions after the presentation, and I speak about Rabbi Lévi Matusov. And, if you will ask us to give you the floor for short questions, he will be ready to answer, and then we will go forward with our other distinguished panelists.

So Rabbi Lévi Matusov, director of the European Jewish public affairs, and EU representative of the federation of Jewish communities of Ukraine. The floor is yours.



Rabbi Lévi Matusov, Director of the European Jewish Public Affairs and EU Representative of the Federation of Jewish Communities of Ukraine

Thank you Madame Chair, Mr. Vice-President, Co-chairs, dear Mr. Olbrycht, our friend Mr. Hölvényi, it's always a pleasure to take part, and thank you for this invitation to the 24th Annual Dialogue of the EPP Group.

There is a psalm, King David says in a psalm - I will say in Hebrew and then translate it "תבשל זילעו הפי הז המכ" - "How beautiful and cheerful it is, to seat amongst brothers and sisters". And this is how I feel every time you welcome me, so kindly, at the EPP Group for the Interreligious Dialogue.

With regard to this topic, the war in Ukraine, I want to pick up, Madame Chair, on what you have just said. The question that is asked - "In your country where is God?". And as a man of God, I want to put the question "Where is men?". And this is perhaps the question we should be asking ourselves these days.

As a European Jewish French national, in just over 24 hours, I'll be cheering for my country friends' who is in the semi-final of football, and this is the theme of actuality. Now, we all know that in a football game there are 22 players, there are those that sit on the bench, there is the coach, the doctors, the professionals of the teams, and then there are the spectators, the 80 or so thousand people who find themselves in Qatar, and the millions that will be watching all over the world. And when we sit in this room, we should be asking ourselves a questions, "Are we spectators, or are we actors? Are we just uploading and watching or crying over a situation that is happening, or can we actually make a difference?".

Let me share with you, some of the work that the Federation of the Jewish Communities has been doing since the beginning of the war in February, last year in Ukraine. We have the privilege of coordinating the work of 180 Communities, and during the time of COVID, we have already established coordinators in every city, in every Community, that have located the people that are in need. So immediately, we are volunteers, reached out, and the first thing that we tried to do of course when the war erupted, was to save lives. Saving lives without any discrimination, not making a difference whether people are Jewish, non-Jewish, whether their religion, faith, race, just to help the people to escape.

Moreover, in the largest Jewish Community Center of Europe, which some of you have visited in Dnipro - the Menorah Center - which is also telling, I believe twice, the European Parliament delegation for relations with Ukraine stayed there. That

Center has turned into an operation Center, which was working 24/7. In fact, and I am sure you mentioned, that I have to leave soon because of the Shabbat, and one of the things as you all know, in Shabbat is, we don't speak on the phone, we don't speak on the mic, we don't cook, we don't carry.

But when it comes to work, we don't transgress Shabbat. We keep Shabbat, by saving lives. And all the Rabbis of Ukraine, families, Jewish leaders, Jewish Community Centers, Synagogues - were active, open, driving cars, answering phones in order to save lives. An operation Center, has turned into Dnipro, 500 volunteers that were answering the phones and helping people to just locate where there will be buses - actually that was also with some help that we got from the European Union - to help people to leave, to escape. Agreements with some gas stations, in order to have access to gas more quickly, as we know people were waiting in very long on lines, in order to be evacuated. And immediately, when people are leaving, to welcome them in the cities, so we have our network also, of course, in Europe, so in Moldova, and here in Vienna, where thousands of people were welcomed immediately and accommodated.

In fact, this coming Shabbat, in a few hours, I will be joining a Community of refugees of Ukrainians which are here in Vienna and I will be spend Shabbat with them. I will be sharing some thoughts and ideas and hearing about how they are adapting and offering help to those who would wish to return when the time comes.

Every week 30 000 packages of basic food and necessities, such as shampoo, , flour, are distributed all over Ukraine, despatched in Bucha, in Irpin, in the furthest places, - thankfully today access is much easier.

I would like to come back to my initial question on how religions answers to war is where is man. How do we act? We

cannot just afford to be spectators, and commentators and analysts, but immediately, to play the role, which is the one needed, to save lives. No matter at what price, what it takes.

That brings me to what is taking place these days. As I mentioned to some colleagues in Kyiv, that I would be speaking this afternoon, I was invited, I originally asked them, that they should be joining - there is no electricity today in Ukraine. No water in households. It is difficult for them even to join a link. I mean, we had problems from Dubai and Abu-Dhabi earlier, imagine what the situation would be on links, if we need permanent equipment, the contacts, people would have to save the phone batteries in order to have [battery]. So we also had to help with organizing from the European Union, from Europe to have Humanitarian aid, even right now generators, tanks of water to help the people, just to have their basic needs met. In life, sometimes we find ourselves in situations, or perhaps as one Rabbi has once said, "A person doesn't find himself in a situation, a person puts himself in the situation.". But in war we don't put ourselves in the situation, we face the situation. And when we face the situation there are two attitudes: whether we are victims of the situations and just waiting; or we are acting and trying to change the situation immediately for ourselves and for others.

When a fire erupts in a building, God forbid, so some people will be standing outside and saying, "But who left the fire on? Was it from a candle, or was it from gas?". And I believe that most people in the room, their attitude will be: "Oh there are some people inside, how do we save the lives? Let's try to find some water to extinguish that fire." This is the situation that we could have, that we could expect.

We are approaching, in just a week's time, the Jewish Holiday of Hanukkah. Hanukkah - which is being celebrated in the European Parliament, it will be next Wednesday, I don't know if many of you have received the invitation for that - the symbol

of Hanukah, is a symbol of light, but light unity in diversity. The menorah, the candelabra, with its' seven branches, go in different directions, and each light is important. Each night, in fact, over eight days, we light one candle in increase, the first night we light one, the second night we light two, we light three, until we reach the entire candelabra. But we know that we have one objective - is to shine and be bright.

In these moments, all the religions, and there is the Council of religions taking place in Ukraine, working closely with the Presidential Administration, working to see not in terms of what our differences are, but where we could join forces. Joining forces in, as first Humanitarian, saving lives, and praying together. In all Synagogues still today, prayers for the armed forces are being recited.

I received the unfortunate notification, on Wednesday, that a Jewish soldier - yes there are many Jewish soldiers in the army - was killed by the Russian army. Actually a boy from Dnipro who was praying on a regular basis at the Synagogues, being part of it, went to the front because he was dedicated to his country, as many people, and died on the front. And, in fact, we pray for all the soldiers, for the safety and the security of all. And this is, yes, as I mentioned, cheering the light, bringing the light. And fire could do two things: it could be extinguished, it could burn, it could eliminate, and [or] light fire, could illuminate, could brighten. The path that we chose, and the path that is chosen, is the one that is cheering the light. Many candles that were distributed, even people that told us, I received notifications through colleagues, that they have kept their candles from Hanukah last year, because they haven't used them all - it is 48 candles all together, if you light one each and every night -, and they were using these in the beginning of the war. We have pictures that in order to cook, in order to make a fire to keep something warm, to burn hot water, in order to keep heat. So yes, keep the religious traditions, but in order, again when it comes to this situation, the most important - for the

sanctification of life, for Humanity. So I thank you for this opportunity to share these ideas, especially shared by a lady, women, which are the ones that bring joy and light in our lives, which is very important. And remember that, when the first evacuations, and still today, men have to remain, men from 20 to 60 have to remain in Ukraine, and could not travel, because they have to serve, being called in the army, but the women, and the children are the ones that are caring.

So let's do everything that we could to support those people in Ukraine, outside of Ukraine, and I wanted also the opportunity to thank the different Governments from around Europe, that immediately have welcomed. We have a Refugee Center in Poland, we have one in Moldova, a Refugee Center in Slovakia, a very big Center in Hungary, which is still very active... And this did not stop just in March, last year, but it is still continuing today, for rehabilitation and giving all these people, of course, many of them went to Israel, but the final destination is not Israel. It is actually what they all are waiting for - is to go back home.

Let us do everything possible, to help these people, to go back to their home, to continue a life, and this will show you how to contribute to the construction of the European Union,

Thank you very much.



**H.E. Arsenius Kardamakis of Austria**, Metropolitan of the Metropolis of Austria and Exarch of Hungary and Central Europe

I thank you for your invitation to participate in this dialogue between your political group and religious representatives, which has a decades-old tradition. It takes place against the backdrop of not only democratic freedom of expression but also good will and openness to constructive proposals for peace, social cohesion and political acceptance by citizens of the need for deeper European Union bonding, as reflected in the dialogue of the religious communities specifically regarding the war in Ukraine in the presence of two distinguished speakers.

Othmar Karas, first Vice-President of the European Parliament, has quite rightly pointed out that we in the Church and in political circles are jointly responsible for European society and the future of Europe and for the body and soul of the individual taken as a whole.

As we all know, when practically the entire continent was left devastated at many levels after the Second World War, European politicians, who were willing to engage in dialogue, most of them inspired by the principles and ideals of Christianity, came together as pioneers in the creation of a peaceful Europe based on the values of human rights, democracy and the rule of law.

On the basis of the plan drawn up by Robert Schuman, a number of treaties were progressively signed, resulting in the present-day European Union, the benefits of which all citizens enjoy today and which you serve as their elected representatives particularly as members of the European People's Party Group, who are not ashamed to place the words Christian Democrats in brackets after its name, reflecting your true identity.

To turn away from God in favour of selfish interests, even where justified on national or geopolitical grounds, and refuse to engage in dialogue is to undermine peace and provoke disputes, violence and war. This applies in particular to the religious map of Ukraine.

I will be talking to you about the initiative of the Ecumenical Patriarchate in Ukraine for possible religious reconciliation in that country and will be adding a number of reflections on the future of Europe. The division of Orthodox believers into three religious entities has proved to be a problem for Ukrainians and a deep wound in the body of the Orthodox Church as a whole. The Ecumenical Patriarchate, concerned for religious peace, exercised its rights under the canonical tradition of the Orthodox Church in a bid to restore unity according to the creed of 'one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all'. (Eph. 4, 5-6): On 5 January 2019, the Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew signed the degree officially granting autocephaly to the Orthodox Church

of Ukraine, in bid to provide spiritual healing for a spiritual wound while transcending personal and national interests.

Acceptance by all Orthodox believers of a return to communion with the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church could be a way of avoiding any further divisions in Ukraine.

As Metropolitan John of Pergamum writes: 'The Ecumenical Patriarchate has proved that it can transform the past into the present, the present into the future, yesterday and today into tomorrow. This is because, beyond its institutional role, it advocates an open mind, a universal approach and sensitivity to human beings of every epoch. This is the guarantee for the future of humankind' (Redemption of the World, p. 283). In other words, he subscribes to the historically proven view that 'Orthodoxy without the Ecumenical Patriarchate will be swept away by the tides of nationalism, past vainglory, self-satisfied introversion and present-day contempt for its values'.

Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew misses no opportunity to stress that the Ecumenical Patriarchate 'has always transcended national borders and continues to do so. It has never served the interests of nationalism, which it has always regarded as running counter to the catholic ideals of the Church.

Constantinople is the Mother Church of Russia. The Ecumenical Patriarch is the older brother who shows others the path they have trodden. Ukraine was a territory of the Ecumenical Patriarchate that was handed over to Russian administration on condition that the Ecumenical Patriarch be acknowledged. Failure by the bishops of the Moscow Patriarchate to acknowledge the Ecumenical Patriarch in the Divine Liturgy, accordingly led to charges of apostasy. The Ecumenical Patriarch's insistence on recognition of the independence of the Church of Ukraine was borne out by the facts. On 24 February 2022, Russia invaded Ukraine and

illegally annexed parts of its territory. The war between predominantly Orthodox Christian brothers has already claimed the lives of tens of thousands of Ukrainians and Russians. Cities have been flattened, infrastructures destroyed and millions forced to become refugees. It has also led to a global food crisis with disastrous consequences, in particularly for poorer countries, and an energy crisis affecting everyone, especially the most vulnerable.

The EU has stated an obvious truth: 'The use of force and coercion to alter borders has no place in the 21st century. Tensions and conflicts should be resolved exclusively through dialogue and diplomacy.'

The Orthodox Church cannot condone war under any circumstances, since to do so would simply be to deny itself. Peace is the first gift the Lord gave to His disciples after the Resurrection.

Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew condemned the war from the outset. The Russian invasion of Ukraine has effectively demolished the arguments of those who supported the Moscow Patriarchate and vindicated recognition of an autocephalous Orthodox Church of Ukraine, which will finally help to resolve the issue of Ukrainian unity.

Under Metropolitan Epiphanius, it has applied for membership in the World Council of Churches at its recent Assembly in Germany. Once the application has been approved, the Autocephalous Church of Ukraine will become a member and acquire international status.

Many argue that the European Union has for many years been content to leave Ukraine to its own devices, showing no interest in strengthening it or allowing it to join, and that 'the time to make significant progress towards enlargement of the European Union' has come too late in the day. However, it at

least this gives rise to some hope that the war will not become a reason to question the future of Europe. The effort to broaden and deepen the unity of Europe is a promising development, provided that its principles and values, as expressed by the founders of the EU, are respected and not contaminated by the imposition of standards alien to European traditions in any area, including the Church, ensuring that Europe remains a place of justice, peace and freedom.

We hope that, with the help of EU peace efforts, to which you are also contributing, all sides will shun the use of arms and violence. Let us all work towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals in line with the UN 2030 Agenda. In recent months our Orthodox Metropolis has witnessed the heart-wrenching suffering of the Ukrainian refugees arriving in Austria and we are still doing all we can to meet their material and spiritual needs. All Orthodox Metropolises function as places of peaceful communion with God and with fellow beings. We hope that the conflict will end as soon as possible and we will be up on the ramparts, working for reconciliation of the warring parties and the healing of wounds.

The long-term aim of the Church is to transform hatred and long-standing hostility into love and cooperation, in both Ukraine and the entire world, in accordance with the message contained in the Gospel of Christ, our only weapons being words/reason and a willingness to engage in dialogue. As Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew recently said, 'In authentic dialogue there are no losers. The danger lies not in dialogue and openness, but in the rejection thereof, in barren introspection and in fearful isolation.'

Thank you.



**Dr. Jørgen Skov Sørensen**, General Secretary at Conference of European Churches (CEC)

Excellencies and eminencies, dear friends and colleagues.

I am pleased to address you as General Secretary of the Conference of European Churches, a Brussels based organisation comprising 114 European churches of Orthodox, Anglican and Protestant descent.

During the next 10-12 minutes, I would like share with you examples relating to the response of churches to the war in Ukraine.

I will also share my thoughts on the role of Churches with regard to a politically sustainable, future Europe.

Finally I am already now looking forward to reflecting on your questions and comments – should such emerge – during our subsequent panel discussion.

Firstly, however, I would like to extend my gratitude to the

EPP Group of Intercultural Dialogue for allocating me time and efforts at your annual European gathering.

To substantially address the ongoing war in Ukraine and the future of Europe concerns us all. Thank you very much.

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Ukraine... Due to our recent European past, war on European soil brings connotations that transcend their actual time and place in history.

It evokes long gone memories. And it challenges a strong European trust that this part of the world had finally developed into a post-war continent of lasting peace.

Since the day of the Russian invasion, February 24, I hear genuinely concerned voices asking "How can this happen in Europe in 2022...?".

This is a question mirroring a belief that we as Europeans live in what we refer to as "the developed part of the world". To many European citizens, what we have finally achieved is "a secular world". A continent, where religion plays little or no role.

We see ourselves as rational, civilised human beings. Consequently, all wars – thus goes the argument - all wars will have to come to an end, based as they are on "irrational, out-dated human behaviour", AKA religion in the eyes of many European citizens.

As Europeans, we find comfort in believing in human progress. Hence, that question occurs: "How can this happen in Europe in 2022...?".

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The Christian, theological response is simple and straight forward: because we are fallen human beings. We always have been. We always will be.

As Christians we realise and accept that we live exclusively by and from the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ.

For that reason, St Paul's words in his letter to the Romans on our human nature are still appropriate - deeply relevant, and deeply disturbing:

"For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out. For I do not do the good I want to do, but the evil I do not want to do—this I keep on doing".

St Paul reminds us - as he reminded the early Roman congregations – what our human nature is like.

Taking as starting point his own life experience of deficiency and failure, St Paul teaches us why war is still a reality in 2022. Why we have failed.

However, at the same time, we are reminded what the Church is. This is the paradox of Christian being.

The Church is not a fellowship of particularly good people. Neither is it a fellowship of particularly bad people.

The Church is a fellowship of human beings who recognise their fundamental need to be "moved by the love of Christ" as it was eloquently expressed at the recent World Council of Churches Assembly in Karlsruhe.

The Church is a fellowship centred around Christ, because we recognise our need for his grace, for his love and for his forgiveness.

One of my most loved definitions of the Church goes like this: "The Church is a world-wide fellowship of mutual encouragement".

This definition was fundamental, when The Conference of European Churches organised a Virtual European gathering in February this year.

It was long planned for February 25 – 26. Which turned out to be a matter of hours after the Russian invasion of Ukraine.

Still, we managed to rephrase our programme - literally overnight – into one that accommodated the fears, the uncertainty and chock that characterised Europe at the time. We listened to Ukrainian voices. We analysed. We prayed together. We cried together. We activated our European fellowship of mutual encouragement.

If the Church should not gather in times of war when should it gather? The history of The Conference of European Churches, born in 1959 out of the midst of the Cold War, witness to this.

Gather to focus on Christ. Gather to cry out our vulnerability together. Gather to be silent together. Pray together. Sing together. Gather to hope together.

Since the break of the war and through some of the contacts established during our virtual gathering in February, The Conference of European Churches has kept a close link to churches in Ukraine.

By conducting solidarity visits, organising prayers on-line and highlighting among decision makers and civil servants in Brussels the role and position of Churches in the war. Most recently, our Governing Board has decided to focus on projects relating to Justice, peace and reconciliation.

Meanwhile, just about every member church of the Conference of European Churches has shared in receiving and accommodating refugees, fleeing from death and destruction. A massive task undertaken by primarily local churches and individual congregations.

Churches work on the grass root level as well as on the highest political level in Europe.

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However, the headline of this meeting goes beyond our immediate reactions to the war in Ukraine. It goes beyond the reaction of Churches and religious communities to war and conflict as such.

Our programme asks for churches' contribution in shaping the evolution of Europe and the European Union.

As you will all know, churches are keen to play their role in the shaping of European identity and politics – particularly via Art. 17 of the Lisbon Treaty: a tool box of opportunities.

Not only do our political institutions have an obligation to maintain an «open, transparent and regular dialogue», as Art. 17 puts it.

I would turn it around and say that churches have an equal obligation to contribute to our societies the concerns that are close to our hearts.

Churches offer very concrete proposals on policies. A joint delegation from The Conference of European Churches and Comece are - as we speak - visiting the government of the Czech Republic, currently holding the EU Presidency. This happens within the framework of Art. 17.

However, churches also offer more fundamental anthropological and existential insights as building blocks to a sustainable European future.

It is generally recognised that politics and political opinions do not materialise out of nowhere. This is absolutely right.

Every political choice is framed in a system of beliefs: That, which the individual holds to be good and true. Political disagreements bear witness precisely to the fact that there are different beliefs around.

Different backgrounds and contexts – be they religious, social, cultural – result in different political opinions.

Similarly, not all churches in Europe can agree on all kinds of political positions.

We are centred on the unity of Christ, but churches and Christians will always reflect people's differences in general.

However, with the trust granted by election and leadership comes the obligation to navigate our common boat even when the waters get rough.

In the Conference of European Churches we must always dialogue our way to an understanding that represents the voices of churches in the broadest possible way.

Our experience tells us that it is not always easy to find common ground between church families.

But at times we are rewarded with success. Through dialogue. Through listening.

Through willingness to understand the other's convictions — and through the other's willingness to understand our convictions. And by the grace of God.

Not disregarding our doctrine but setting aside our dogmatism and the occasional human urge for uniformity – in political terms also known as totalitarianism.

The dialogue between churches, ecumenism, is a necessary exercise of giving and taking, listening and talking. This rests on our belief that there is something bigger than you and me. Churches of the ecumenical movement may with this exercise have a fundamental, unified message for our national and European decision-makers: The path of giving and taking, listening and talking is a spike in the bulwark against European political uniformity and dogmatism.

At the end of the day, it is a spike in the bulwark against totalitarianism.

Dear friends in the EPP, thank you for walking the path of giving and taking, listening and talking - as parliamentarians and politicians.

Thank you for being a spike in the bulwark against European political uniformity and dogmatism.

Thank you for your attention.



**Prof. Antoine Arjakovsky**, Historian, Co-directeur, Department of Research «Politique et Religions», Collège des Bernardins

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I would like to start by thanking the EPP Group for the honour of this invitation. I am particularly happy to be talking about the role of the Churches in the war that Russia is waging against Ukraine and the democratic world having witnessed this war first hand over the more than 17 years I spent in Russia and Ukraine, both as Cultural Attaché of the French Embassy in Moscow and Kyiv and as a lecturer at the Ukrainian Catholic University and founder of the Institute of Ecumenical Studies in Lviv. Upon returning to Paris, I set up a 'dialogue, truth, justice and reconciliation committee' at the Collège des Bernardins, which, over the course of two years, brought together over 200 intellectuals, academics, diplomats and members of the clergy from Ukraine and Russia to find possible solutions to the Russia-Ukraine conflict. In December 2019<sup>1</sup>, we published a report which, in hindsight, has proven to be extremely

Note 1. <https://media.collegedesbernardins.fr/content/pdf/Recherche/Note-Commission-VJR-FR-28.11.pdf>

pertinent, although French politicians paid it no attention at the time, despite the extensive press coverage it received. Today, with the conflict dragging on, media and public interest in our proposals has grown, but still only a handful of ecclesiastical and political representatives are taking us seriously. Since I don't have much time, I would simply like to talk you through my three main research findings.

Firstly, the Russia-Ukraine war is a war of civilisations that pitches two political theologies and, therefore, two worldviews against each other, thereby calling into question the entire world order. In that respect, we can draw a parallel with the Franco-German wars, which also saw two political theologies and two visions for Europe clash. On the one hand, we had those nostalgic for the Carolingian Empire, for whom sovereignty depended on the coercive capacity of a single political force to exert the power of the emperor over peoples united by a common ideology. On the other hand, were the founders of the European Union, who proposed a new model of sovereignty to the nation states, based primarily on the notion of moral conscience and the personalist principles of the rule of law. The same is true of the Russia-Ukraine war. Therefore, we need to tackle the problem at its root by immediately launching the series of projects we set out in our proposals, which include reforms to: the teaching of history in Russia; the teaching of moral and political science in Russia and Ukraine alike (which, crucially, would involve an appraisal of the crimes of communism and Putinism); and the right to veto on the UN Security Council.

Second, we need to acknowledge that the Russia-Ukraine war is also linked to the clash between two ecclesiological systems. For its part, Moscow believes that the Patriarchate of Constantinople has only an honorific authority, that the Russian Church holds a canonical power over what it terms the 'Russian world', and that the political power of the Kremlin has an absolute legitimacy and should therefore be supported, including by blessing the Russian army's war against Ukraine.

The Patriarchate of Constantinople, conversely, believes it has a real and legitimate authority as a result of its conciliar role with respect to the entire communion of Eastern Orthodox Churches, that the organisation of the Church cannot be rooted in an ethical base, but only a baptismal, Eucharistic, pastoral or nuptial one, and finally that the concept of the Byzantine symphony assigning all power to the State regardless of its politics is not consistent with the gospel. That is why, back in 2017, our committee recommended that the Orthodox Church of Ukraine be recognised as an autocephalous church, and we were delighted when this occurred in January 2019. What is more, along with several hundred Orthodox Christian intellectuals, on 14 March 2022, I signed a declaration<sup>2</sup>, inspired by the 1934 Barmen Declaration of the Confessing Church, condemning the theory of the Russian world promulgated by the Moscow Patriarchate. In my view, only an ecumenical metaphysics could forge common ground for dialogue. That is why, bearing in mind the decisive role that the ecumenical institutions in Western Europe played in peace-building post 1945, I am calling on the European Parliament to promote training courses in Russia and Ukraine in both ethical and religious culture and ecumenical dialogue. At the Collège des Bernardins, I, together with a number of catholic, orthodox and protestant colleagues, developed a training course in ecumenism, which is deserving of support.

Given the severity of the ongoing war – which certain European parliaments believe should, purely and simply, be referred to as a genocide wrought by Russia against Ukraine with the backing of the Moscow Patriarchate – I believe that the Russian Church and Patriarch Kirill in particular should be tried before a civil and an ecclesiastical court.

My third finding relates to the decision of 1 December 2022 of President Zelensky and the Ukrainian Security Council to ban religious organisations affiliated with centres of influence in Russia, to sanction laypersons and religious figures carrying

out subversive activities on behalf of Russian special services and, finally, to grant the Orthodox Church of Ukraine a place of worship on the site of the Kyiv Lavra. To my mind, these decisions are, in view of Russia's war in Ukraine, perfectly understandable, fair and in line with international law. Unfortunately, while the Ukrainian Orthodox Church cut visible ties with the Moscow Patriarchate at its synod in Kyiv on 27 May 2022, in practice, it continues to spread the imperialist and colonialist theories of the Russian world in Ukraine with the support of high-profile figures such as politician Vadym Novinski and Metropolitan Pavel Lebed. What is more, in the Russian-occupied territories in Ukraine, in the Donbass region and Crimea, the Ukrainian Orthodox Church has pledged allegiance to the Moscow Patriarchate.

The Ukrainian Government's decision is also without prejudice to the freedom of conscience as, in Ukraine, unlike in Russia, each parish is free to choose whether to adhere to the Ukrainian Orthodox Church, which is nothing more than a voluntary association of parishes. That is why any outlawing of this church would not necessarily lead to the closure of the parishes to be vetted by the Ukrainian authorities. I should point out that in France the 2021 act seeking to strengthen the principles of the Republic also stipulates that religious communities may not depend on external bodies recognised as promoting terrorism.

To conclude, allow me to recommend, once again, that you consider the work of civil society, whether it be the work I coordinated at the Collège des Bernardins or the incredible work of the Platform of European Memory and Conscience, particularly its activities seeking justice for communist crimes. Such efforts deserve far more funding than they currently receive. More funding would – and I'm choosing my words carefully – save the EU institutions money in the long term as this work, with its focus on justice and the truth, is the only way to prevent wars or, where it is already too late for that, to restore peace.

Note 2. <https://publicorthodoxy.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/LOrthodoxie-la-Russie-et-lUkraine-De%CC%81claration-sur-le-Monde-russe-13-mars-2022-Rev2.pdf>



SESSION I - SPEAKERS

From left to right, Prof. Antoine Arjakovski, MEP Rasa Juknevičienė, Rabbi Lévi Matusof, H.E. Metropolitan Kardamakis, Dr. Jørgen Skov Sørensen

## SESSION II: INFLUENCE OF CHURCHES/RELIGIONS ON SOCIAL AND POLITICAL PROCESSES?

CHAIR BY PERNILLE WEISS MEP



**Pernille WEISS MEP**, Head of the Danish Delegation of the EPP Group

Dear ladies and gentleman, I think we should start.

Let me begin by saying something about the fact that it is always the right people who are present. Let's remember that when we might send not a sinful, but at least maybe a little disappointed thought to the colleagues who are not with us this morning for this very important topic on the Annual Interreligious and Intercultural and Religious talks.

I am member of the Parliament since 2019, so I am a newcomer. But I told Jan Olbrycht yesterday that I echo what he also experienced namely, that that is one of the things I do as

a member of the Parliament, being together with this Group once every Strasbourg week, to talk about Intercultural issues, and Christianity, and religion, and spirituality. And from there on our society, and our Europe, and how we will continue to hopefully live in a peaceful prosperous part of the world, but also in a way where we create ripple effects throughout the boundaries of Europe. That is my hope, and that is my joy, to get ideas, energy, and inspiration, trust, when I meet with this group of colleagues and all of you who attend to the meetings such as right now, this Saturday in the middle of December.

Now not more from me because now I saw that I succeeded at least not talking you to sleep, but talking you to seats, so therefore we will then start the discussion on what is the impact from religions and Church on the societal and the political processes. A very timely topic, but also a topic that needs to be reiterated and turned against the light so that we can see all the different prisms, and perspectives, and possibilities, and obstacles, and work with them from there on. And it is a pleasure for me to sit amongst the very talented, experienced, high-level panel, and I will then start by giving the floor to the first speaker the professor doctor Christian van Geausau.

INTERVENTIONS OF GUESTS



**Prof. Dr. Christiaan Alting von Geausau**, President of the Vienna-based International Catholic Legislators' Network and Professor of Law and Education at ITI Catholic University

Thank you very much. It is a great pleasure for me to be here today, especially for seeing a lot of friends of mine, old friends and new friends, with whom I had the pleasure to work with over many years. I will not say too much about myself because the most interesting is probably the words that I have prepared to contribute to this discussion, but let me say two things.

I preside over the International Catholic Legislators Network, which is an independent non-partisan organization I founded in 2010, to bring Christians in elected and appointed

office from around the world together, and this Network has been growing and flourishing all over the world since then. I am also the President and Rector of ITI Catholic University, a small private University here in Austria where I teach as a professor of Law and Education.

Most important however, having passed these formalities, and that I consider as my first identity, is that I am a Christian, and it is from this perspective that I would like to share some insights with you today.

So the title is a very broad title, “The influence of Churches and Religions on social and political processes”. As I was preparing these remarks, I was thinking what would be a good approach to come to this topic in a very concrete way, and avoid the danger of just remaining in the area of theorizing. So for that I would like to take you back to the 2nd of June, 1979. The Polish amongst us will know immediately what I am referring to. I am taking you to a Victory Square, in Warsaw, Poland, where a great statesman, and now saint, Pope John Paul II, showed the Polish people - millions assembled there and elsewhere throughout the country, and their totalitarian communist rulers, and I would say also the rest of the world - how vital can be the influence of faith on social and political processes.

In fact, it was so vital that both the Soviet leadership and Leonid Brezhnev, as well as the Polish Communist Party, tried all they could, and actually failed, to stop the Polish Pope from visiting his country, as it was his first foreign trip after being elected Pontifex in October 1978. Again, our Polish friends will know the many stories that are around the Soviets trying to stop this, and how miserably they failed at that. In fact, there is one anecdote where I think the Polish leader of the Communist Party talks with the Soviet leader, and when finally the visit was confirmed, that John Paul II was coming, apparently they or others said, “Well this is the beginning of

the end.”, and I think it is true, because history shows that.

In fact, and here I would like to come to one of the core messages I would like to leave you with today, there is a reason why totalitarian regimes and ideologies are so afraid of religion and people of faith - we see this, for example, currently playing out under the rule of the Chinese Communist Party in China. They are so afraid of people of faith, because people of faith have their ultimate identity and loyalty to God, their Creator. The State or the Party or the Ideology, come after that. And this is always a source of concern for those who want complete power over the people.

So it was 10 years later, in 1989, that Communism fell in Europe. We all remember the images of the Berlin Wall falling, and many other images. This fall of Communism was aided by an American President, Reagan; a UK Prime minister, Thatcher; a Soviet leader who restrained himself, Gorbachov; but above all, a Polish Pope, who gave those living under the yoke of Marxism-Leninism a new sense of freedom, rooted in the rallying cry of his papacy that was human dignity and that cannot be understood fully without a reference to God the Creator. The words of John Paul II on the Victory Square reverberated throughout the massive crowd of hundreds of thousands of Polish and led to the longest applause ever. As he said, “For men cannot be fully understood without Christ, or rather men is incapable of understanding himself fully without Christ. He cannot understand who he is, nor what his true dignity is, nor what his vocation is, nor what his final end is.”.

Now many of you might wonder why these strongly religious words are quoted in this panel today. We are dealing here with secular politics. I would like to explain that to you, because what John Paul II did as a statesman, and a religious leader at the same time, is that he brought back to the suppressed people a sense of individual dignity, through once

more allowing them to recognize the transcendent. To overcome the purely materialistic worldview of the entirely self-made man at the centre of the Universe. He liberated them from the prison of totalitarianism, a political social system of total control that does not recognize the worth and freedom of the individual human being.

People of faith, through their active participation in society and political life can bring this vitally important dimension in order to humanize our dealings with each other as human beings. Without the transcendent dimension, as we saw under Communism, and as we see under many ideologies today, we feel no longer accountable to a higher authority, to higher reality. We so often see humanity falling into this - we pretend to be that higher reality ourselves, easily falling into the injustice and barbarism that 20th Century Europe is so full of. These are the lessons on which the European Union we see today was built. So we have to be careful that we do not make the same errors again, and there are many indicators that we are.

So the role of churches and religions, not so much mind you as Institutions, but as the individual faithful that are part of them, is to help the political process remain humane and focused on social justice and cohesion and the never ending search for peace.

And so this brings me to the war in Ukraine and our approach to it. As people of faith we can only shed tears, as some of you might have seen that Pope Francis did in Rome on Thursday. This video went viral, where he was praying at one of the Marian churches for peace in Ukraine. He actually started crying, and it was not some kind of political stunt; it was real. So we, people of faith, can only shed tears at the injustice being done to the people of Ukraine. The death and destruction that is once again visiting our beloved European continent. A scorch done by a people that should know bet-

ter, many of them claiming to be Christians. But we, ourselves, have to remain vigilant as well. Are we doing all we can to bring peace?

In its June 2022 Statement, the World Council of Churches says the following: “This tragic development of the invasion of the Ukraine represents a terrible failure of diplomacy and responsibility and accountability to International Law.”. And it also says that “the conflict is accompanied by massive proliferation of weapons in the region, but weapons cannot provide the solution to this crisis. The only real solution is to seek peace and pursue it.”.

So the question we have, as people of faith, as churches and religions “have we done enough, apart from our governments providing the necessary military and political aid? Have we done enough to find peace?” And here in conclusion, I would like to plead for a much more coordinated and outspoken role of churches and people of faith, especially the people of faith in politics, in a truly ecumenical effort. I would like to make two proposals for you to reflect upon. As we have seen throughout history, there is something that we call “peaceful resistance”, and I would like to divide that in two areas.

First, there is a need for a global prayer offensive, for peace in Ukraine, together with all the Christian churches, also our Russian Orthodox brethren. A global prayer offensive that would be a good start, where all the Christian churches and any other religious communities that would like to join, have this one effort, to pray for peace.

Second, and here I am making a historical reference, peaceful resistance against Putinism in Russia should be supported. Like John Paul II did through Solidarność, in Poland, under Communism. And work should be done with dissidents, especially again in the Russian Orthodox Church. Do not forget that this also happened after the Helsinki Conference, the

Helsinki act of 1975 and it happened in the open and should happen again. People of good will in all of these countries should be joined together to peacefully bring down totalitarianism, as was done by Pope John Paul II and so many very brave people in Poland, Czechoslovakia, in Hungary, in all of the countries of the former Eastern Block. It was their peaceful rising up, their peaceful reclaiming their human dignity, that led to a fall of the Communism and a peaceful transfer to democracy.

So here Churches and people of faith can have a major impact on the political process as they had in the past and contribute to peace and justice, free as they are in their first loyalty to their Creator.

Thank you.



**Very Reverend Archimandrite Father Aimilianos Bogiannou**, Committee of Representatives of the Orthodox Churches to the EU (CROCEU)

Thank you very much. Dear Mr. Othmar Karas Vice-President of the European Parliament, Members of the European Parliament, beloved friends, ladies and gentlemen.

I would like to start by saying that it warmed my heart to hear the call for prayer from the academician. It is usually something that we do not hear, and it is very encouraging. We are facing a very tough period, one would say, and the question we are here to debate and comment on is whether Churches have influence or not, Churches, or religions, or religious groups, have influence or not on social and political processes, and if it should be that way or not.

Please allow me to transfer also the greetings of the members of the Committee of the Representatives of the Orthodox Churches in the European Union that I represent here today,

and it is with that in mind that I would like to quote certain opinions that are going around these days.

“Churches should not become active in the political process, support for candidates or discussion of issues from the pulpit is activism. Encouraging everyone to get out and vote is not activism. Voting is basic to citizenship. The first and most important thing that all Christians should do is pray. We should also strive to use God’s Word to set the standards of living, and then be willing to share the truth with everyone around us, that is, we need to gently instruct those around us, in the truth of God’s Words, and how it can enhance and improve our lives. We should vote with our faith as a guide on important issues.”

Whether you like it or not to be a citizen with the freedoms we have, also means we have a certain responsibility that goes with those freedoms. If we disagree with something, we need to vote to make our view. Therefore, Christians should play a role in the political process. If God does have authority over the ones who are elected, then his will needs to be recognised as a part of the process.

These are just some of the views on this matter, and we see that the word that describes these views is diversity. However, for me, it is important is to remember the words of Christ “render to Caesar what is Caesar’s, and to God what is God’s”.

There is no doubt that the Churches have an impact on political processes. However, the Orthodox Church in particular is not a lobby, and is therefore not trying to impose its’ agenda or blur the lines between State and religion. We promote one thing, and one thing only - that is our right, as is the right of each and every citizen. We are here to add the spiritual dimension to this part of our social life, and we do that by dialogue.

The Logos, the Word of God, the power of creation through his word, God created the world, is, and should be, the basis of our existence in the process of peaceful co-existence. Dialogue is an act of solidarity, dear friends. The Orthodox Church has dedicated itself all these years to the development, and continuation, and cultivation of the strengthening of the unity, the promotion of peaceful co-existence, the inter-Christian, interreligious and intercultural dialogue, as well as a dialogue with the contemporary world.

We have not ceased our efforts of fighting against religious fundamentalism. All Orthodox Churches underline the fact that it is rather provocative to see that the faith in God, this primal power of the soul that opens the gate to paradise and orients us towards our eternal destiny, being used as a vehicle of relentless and blind violence.

During the Holy and Great Synod of the Orthodox Church in Crete in June 2016, it had been pointed out that fundamentalism constitutes an expression of morbid religiosity. The future of Europe, of our great family, has to be based on Human Rights. A preference for Human Rights means choosing human dignity and the protection of freedom and justice, as well as an open society and international peace.

Human Rights are a central expression of humanism in our world. They function as a universal humanitarian criterion. Let us not forget that Human Rights as a model of the enlightenment was not a rational project, but an expression of belief in human dignity, and the supreme values of liberty, equality, and fraternity - “Liberté, Egalité, Fraternité, cette concept française”. Religious support for Human Rights, since Human Rights reflect human dignity, these are given. They do not pose a threat to pluralism, but ensure the necessary conditions for free cultural expression, respect for the difference. Furthermore globality does not mean necessarily uniformity, in the sense, religious freedom, which always

concerns us personally, belongs to the basic values of the European Union, and it is the fundamental Human Right for the free formation of each persons’ special identity.

Europe’s secularized presence cannot be separated from its past, which is inspired and shaped by Christian culture, Judeo-Christian traditions. In Europe, and throughout the world, the Christian Churches will forever remain a place where true freedom is experienced and witnessed. And they’re open for everybody with no distinction.

It was in 1996, 27 and 28 of April, in Fener Istanbul, at the sede of the Ecumenical Patriarchate in Turkey, that this dialogue began. Almost a quarter of a century has passed since then. The topic of the first dialogue between the Orthodox Church and the EPP Group of the European Parliament was dialogue on moral values of concern to humanity in the spiritual dimension of Europe. Discussing about human values, Human Rights legislation, environmental policy and social policy. You see, even a quarter of a century ago, social policy in the process was part of our concerns. And the Churches and religions at large participate actively, but again I underline, not in the format of a lobby.

The role of the Orthodox Church has always been a contemplative one, respecting diversity, and never sanctioning the use of force, even though in our time, we do hear words that come out of the mouths of people who should not, and I make reference to what was said yesterday.

All Orthodox Churches, and I speak to you again as representing CROCEU - the Committee of the Representatives of the Orthodox Churches in the European Union - do not act or function as lobbyists. Rather try to encourage the faithful to exercise their rights as citizens, to express their views and beliefs in the formation and development of our society.

So yes, indeed, the Orthodox Churches do not try to act as lobbyists to promote certain agendas, but voice their concerns in the processes of social and political debates, since we are without doubt, part and parcel of the European identity, promoting social justice and peaceful co-existence, within the great family of the European Union. We do not measure success the same way, I suppose.

In the words of His Holiness Ecumenical Patrick Bartholomew regarding dialogue, in an authentic dialogue there are no losers. The danger, does not lie in the dialogue itself and in the openness, with which one is supposed to approach it, but the denial of openness and of dialogue itself, the bad in introversion and phobic close mindedness. We are here to encourage, support, strengthen and continue this dialogue to enhance and strengthen democracy, so we can leave it as a legacy to our future generations.

Thank you so much for your attention.



**Prof. Dr. Regina Polak**, Associate Professor at the Department of Practical Theology, Faculty of Catholic Theology, University of Vienna

### Introductory remark

(Let me make something clear from the outset: religion is double-edged. Since it deals with existential experiences of the sacred and is thus thereby connected with convictions of truth, it is dangerous. At the same time, religion never exists in the abstract, but is inextricably linked with and embedded in socio-cultural and political realities. Equally, a religious self-perception may also be reduced to an exclusively cultural identity, i.e. without an intrinsic religious experience. Last but not least, religious communities are always political actors, i.e. they have political influence even if they withdraw from politics because their teachings can serve to legitimise, reinforce or undermine values in society. Therefore, churches and religious communities may be part of the problem or part of the solution to social problems. It is this which I shall now seek to illustrate).

The influence that churches and religious communities have on social and political processes is immense – and double-edged. To quote Bishop Emeritus Michael Bünker: religion is both part of the solution and part of the problem of the crises we are currently facing.

I shall seek to substantiate this below with research findings from the Research Network for Interdisciplinary Values Research at the University of Vienna, of which I am a member. This includes research as part of the European Values Study. I have selected some illustrative examples, particularly relevant to the crisis of liberal democracy, fuelled by the consequences of the pandemic and the war against Ukraine, but which had already been emerging for a long time in the European Union. In doing so, I am not speaking as a Catholic theologian, but rather from a social science perspective.

### 1. Micro level of society

The European Values Study shows that subjective religiosity has a significant impact on political attitudes across Europe. This influence has been proven above all for people who see themselves as Christian (unfortunately, data for Muslims only exists in individual countries participating in the EVS; but here too, similar phenomena can be seen time and again). For example, the 2017 data show a significant correlation between a traditional religious self-perception and anti-democratic attitudes: People who define themselves as religious score higher on authoritarianism, significantly higher on rejection of migrants and Muslims, tend to be more homophobic, and prefer culturally homogeneous societies. Religiosity thus serves as a cultural identity marker for differentiation. This correlation, however, changes when subjective religiosity is linked to an active participatory affiliation and social practice. Here, a religious self-perception significantly strengthens pro-democracy attitudes. Religiosity thus promotes democracy when it is embedded in an active religious life – on the



other hand, it becomes a problem if it is not embedded in a religious community and has no practical consequences. In such cases, it lends itself to being instrumentalised for political purposes.

That said, religiosity only exerts a problematic effect in combination with other socio-demographic factors: age, place of residence, salary bracket, specific religious affiliation, and – in certain countries such as Austria – gender. This means: Older people, people living in rural regions and those with low incomes tend to be more prone to anti-democratic attitudes than younger, urban and wealthier people – and sometimes women. In addition, this link is most pronounced among those of the Orthodox faiths, then Catholics, and least pronounced among Protestants. Moreover, in Eastern European countries, a nationalist attitude further strengthens anti-democratic religiosity, since the churches play a much stronger political role in many of these countries than in Western Europe. There is also a close link with political discourse: thus, the EVS shows that in countries, in which mainstream parties have adopted the anti-migrant discourse of right-wing populist parties, xenophobia is on the rise, whereby religiosity can constitute an aggravating factor. Conversely, targeted policies promoting tolerance and diversity in Western Europe help to reduce xenophobia and serve to strengthen the pro-democracy effect of an active religiosity.

## 2. Meso level of society

At this level, the influence of religious leaders, as well as the practice of religious communities and groups, is particularly relevant.

Religious leaders play a central role both within and outside their communities. Based on their religious traditions and teachings, they can, for example, promote, contradict or even boycott the values of the European Union, such as human dignity, freedom, equality, human rights, protection

of minorities, recognition of plurality, equity, solidarity and gender equality. They can serve to remind politicians and governments of these values, or they can undermine the commitment to these values or even legitimise opposing policies. They can promote virtues such as reconciliation between enemies, or they can inflame enmities. They can advocate peace or legitimise war. They can tackle the spiritual roots of fear and hatred and thus provide hope, but they can equally fuel fear and hatred. They can strengthen social cohesion by establishing inter-cultural and inter-religious dialogue and meeting spaces where ethnically, socially, culturally or religiously diverse people can learn from each other, or they can encourage segregation and self-isolation. They can support or ignore solidarity projects. Religious leaders thus play a key role in determining the social and political contribution their communities make to society. These communities, in turn, do not only have a religious function but also play a key role in society: they can have an integrative effect in their social environment, constitute platforms for solidarity, provide places where one learns or practices values, attitudes and living together in equity, peace and appreciation of diversity – or they can be segregated, marginalised and self-referential groupings.

Research shows that all these phenomena are now found across all religious communities in Europe. Religious communities and churches face a dual challenge. On the one hand, they are struggling to redefine their place and responsibilities in society in the context of religious pluralism and increasing secularisation. On the other, all religious communities are also struggling internally to determine the religious basis on which this should be done. Churches and religious communities are also having to contend with manifold internal conflicts as to what their social and political contribution to Europe should be.

Research also shows which factors promote engagement aligned with EU values. Thus, external influencing factors comprise the legal framework (legislation on religion), incentives that encourage social and political engagement (such as state subsidies, participation in organisations and committees), public discourse about the respective religion or culture (Islamophobic discourse, for example, weakens the willingness to work together). Internally, the socio-demographic composition of communities plays an important role, i.e. younger, better educated, wealthier communities are more socially and politically engaged, other factors being the role of religious authorities, the recognition of women and young people, the training of religious leaders and, last but not least, the theological and religious education of religious leaders and community members.

## 3. Macro level of society

At this level, a certain paradox can be observed. While, according to the EVS, individual religiosity has been in decline throughout Europe for decades, it has gained in political importance since 9/11 at the latest. Research refers to the ‘politicisation of religion’ (i.e. a political instrumentalisation of religion) and ‘religionisation of political conflicts’ (i.e. religious motives are used to enforce political recognition and concerns, e.g. the fight against ‘Western values’). This leads to highly contradictory developments.

Here are three examples:

Churches and religious communities are becoming important partners for individual States and international organisations, such as the OSCE or the UN, in advocating human rights, democracy, or European values. In particular, inter-religious dialogue is seen as an important tool. The liberal wings of the respective religious communities are committed and actively involved in this regard.

The conservative wings of religious communities and churches, on the other hand, are fighting for recognition of their positions in the name of ‘religious freedom’, this being especially apparent in the area of gender issues, debates on LBTQI or the fight against ‘Western values’.

At the same time, the issue of religion is being ‘hijacked’, especially in the context of migration and asylum policy, with ‘Christian values and their incompatibility with Islamic values’ being brandished, so that religion plays a key role, without religious communities necessarily being involved. Here again, the internal conflicts within churches are particularly apparent – while parts of churches, in particular in Western Europe, are committed to liberal and humane refugee policies, there is at the same time a transnational Christian network promoting a clear anti-Islamic agenda, thus combating plurality and liberal democracy.

At the same time, churches in the EU are losing influence in many other areas, in particular with regard to bioethical issues, abortion or assisted suicide. While most EU countries value and promote the social engagement of churches and religious communities, their influence on political and legal decision-making is waning. In this context, one can speak of a ‘secular matrix’ which, while recognising the value of churches and religious communities as social and political partners, defines which form of religion is accepted and which is rejected. This in turn reinforces resistance and internal conflicts within religious communities. It should also be mentioned in this context that, in addition to anti-Semitism and Islamophobia, there is also a growing intolerance towards Christians.

## Final considerations

Let me end with three practical-theological conclusions.

1. Churches and religious communities will in future have to focus more on their social and political role and provide a theological justification for this. The three monotheistic religions at least, i.e. Judaism, Christianity and Islam, also have a ‘political’ mission and corresponding theological traditions. The latter must be reinterpreted to bring them up to date, since it is the interpretation of tradition that determines the social and political contribution of religious communities. Those in positions of leadership in particular need appropriate training to do so.

2. There is an urgent need for public spaces and dialogue between religious communities and secular society. The issues up for discussion comprise values and rights but also, and above all, the question as to how to weather the crises faced by a reeling world together.

3. ‘Religious Literacy’ must be a public and political concern in order for the dialogue between churches and religious communities, on the one hand, and secular society, on the other, to succeed and to allow them to make their positive contributions.



SESSION II - SPEAKERS

From left to right, Prof. Regina Polak, MEP Pernille Weiss, Prof. Dr. Christiaan Alting von Geusau, Fr. Aimilianos Bogiannou

## CONCLUDING REMARKS



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

When we are looking at the title of our two-day Conference, it seems that we have focused on, or even limited ourselves to, the description of the situation. We took the “value free” approach as it is defined in the social sciences.

We were trying to find the answer to the question “Do Churches and Religion influence social and political processes?”

The answer was YES, but that this simple ‘YES’ was not enough. It was still devoid of evaluation; it was one more time “value free”.

The logical consequence was to ask other questions: ‘How important is this influence? What is its origin? and finally, what can be the possible consequences of this impact?’

However, the answer we received were constantly ‘value free’. This kind of description can and should be done by university researches, and we have a chance to listen some of them presenting the highest level of competence.

We as politicians should start with these analysis, but at the end of the day our responsibility is to make decisions, to draw the conclusions, to declare what is good in these processes and what is bad, what should be supported and what should be avoided.

Therefore the real question for us politicians with a Christian background discussed in our political family is whether we are able to find and define different kinds of ‘influence’ around us. Is it possible that the Churches and religious communities can affect negatively social and political processes? We have to be very clear and honest in this kind of evaluations.

When Professor Polak described the possible dangers, leading e.g. to reinforce autocracy, we as politicians have to react, we have to say it is bad for society, we have to stop it.

It reminds me of when I visited the Vatican and talked to the experts, I asked openly the question “What is the official position of my Church if in my country, it happens that a priest is organizing the holy mass for fascists?” I expected the clear answer condemning the priest’s behaviour. And what was the reaction? We are conducting consultations with church authorities since it is a very complex situation. However, in my opinion - it is not.

Yesterday, we were discussing the behaviour of Moscow’s Orthodox Church vis a vis aggression in Ukraine. The conclusion was very clear - the situation is tragic. This is the result of the involvement of a church in Russian imperial thinking. This behaviour is against Christian values.

My final remark and the final question at the same time would be:

Are we brave enough to say, that some of the influences of Churches can be negative, destructive?

We can underestimated the very positive examples of these influences, but we are obliged to be part of it and to support the positive actions.

Before evaluating different activities, we as Christian Democrats have a duty to reflect and sometimes ask the difficult questions when it comes to our Churches, our faith, our values and be ready to act in order to protect them. Do we have the necessary capabilities to make change possible? We as politicians, as individuals are also part of our Churches and we are responsible for the way they influence social and political processes.



From left to right, Yabya Sergio Yabe Pallavicini, Fr. Manuel Enrique Prieto, Chief Rabbi Schlomo Hofmeister

# VADEMECUM OF THE SPEAKERS BIOGRAPHIES



## Othmar Karas MEP

Vice-Chair of the Group of the European People's Party (Christian Democrats) and Co-Chairman of the Working Group on Intercultural and Religious Dialogue of the EPP Group



PhD in Sociology. Lecturer, expert, politician. Former mayor and president of one of the Polish regions, active in many European local and regional government organisations. Regional policy and urban development expert. Speaker at international conferences on interreligious related issues. Member of the European Parliament since 2004. Vice-president of

the European Peoples Party Group at the European Parliament and Chief Whip in charge of the Parliamentary work of the EPP Group. Currently Member of the Parliamentary Committees on Budgetary Control and substitute member of the Committee of Budgets and of the Regional Development Committee. Standing rapporteur on the Multiannual Financial Framework 2021-2027. Member of the Delegation for relations with Canada. Similarly, to last terms, co-chair of the European People's Party in the EP working group on intercultural and religious dialogue and president of the European Parliament's URBAN Intergroup.

## Jan Olbrycht MEP

Vice-Chair of the Group of the European People's Party (Christian Democrats) and Co-Chairman of the Working Group on Intercultural and Religious Dialogue of the EPP Group



PhD in Sociology. Lecturer, expert, politician. Former mayor and president of one of the Polish regions, active in many European local and regional government organisations. Regional policy and urban development expert. Speaker at international conferences on interreligious related issues. Member of the European Parliament since 2004. Vice-president of

the European Peoples Party Group at the European Parliament and Chief Whip in charge of the Parliamentary work of the EPP Group. Currently Member of the Parliamentary Committees on Budgetary Control and substitute member of the Committee of Budgets and of the Regional Development Committee. Standing rapporteur on the Multiannual Financial Framework 2021-2027. Member of the Delegation for relations with Canada. Similarly, to last terms, co-chair of the European People's Party in the EP working group on intercultural and religious dialogue and president of the European Parliament's URBAN Intergroup.

## György Hölvényi MEP

Co-Chairman of the Working Group on Intercultural and Religious Dialogue of the EPP Group



György Hölvényi is a Member of the European Parliament, Co-Chair of the Working Group for Interreligious Dialogue of the European People's Party Group at the European Parliament. Since 2014, he has been serving as Member of the Committees on Development and further on Human Rights, among others. Currently he acts as Coordinator for the EPP

Group for international development, supervising his political group's line for this policy area. Since 2019, Mr Hölvényi has been Goodwill Ambassador of the Hungary Helps Programme. Between 2012 and 2014, Mr Hölvényi has been active as the Secretary of State for the Relations with Churches, Civil Society and National Minorities of the Ministry of Human Capacities of Hungary. From the late 1990s, Mr. Hölvényi acted as deputy state secretary at the Hungarian Ministry for Youth and Sports. Currently, he also serves as Vice-President for International Affairs of the Christian Democrat People's Party of Hungary.

### H.E. Elder Metropolitan Emmanuel of Chalcedon Ecumenical Patriarchate



His Eminence Elder Metropolitan Emmanuel of Chalcedon (Adamakis) was born December 19, 1958, in Crete. He received his secondary education in France, attending the Sorbonne in Paris, before continuing his studies at the Catholic University of Paris and at the Saint Serge Orthodox Theological Institute. He was ordained a deacon and priest in 1985.

He later enrolled in Holy Cross Greek Orthodox School of Theology in Boston, Massachusetts and received his Masters in 1987. Upon completion of his studies, he was appointed chancellor of the Greek Orthodox Diocese of Benelux, while serving as Dean of the parish of the Archangels in Brussels and teaching Orthodox Religion in European Schools. In 1995, he was appointed by His All-Holiness Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew director of the Liaison Office of the Orthodox Church to the European Union in Brussels, Belgium. On November 11, 1996, he was consecrated as auxiliary bishop of the Benelux diocese. On January 20, 2003, he was unanimously elected Metropolitan of France by the Holy Synod of the Ecumenical Patriarchate. On February 16, 2021, he was unanimously elected Elder Metropolitan of Chalcedon. Metropolitan Emmanuel is Vice President of the Conference of European Churches (CEC). He was President of the CEC from 2009 until 2013. In addition, His Eminence was appointed by His All Holiness Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew to the Orthodox and Ancient Oriental Churches dialogue, as well as to diverse inter-religious and ecumenical meetings and ministries. Additionally, his Eminence represents the Ecumenical Patriarchate at the academic dialogues with Judaism and Islam. He is Co-President of the World

Conference of Religions for Peace (WCRP). He has also been honored to serve as a member of the Board of Directors of the King Abdullah Bin Abdulaziz International Centre for Interreligious and Intercultural Dialogue. Metropolitan Emmanuel has been named “Chevalier de la Légion d’Honneur” in France and granted the “Order of Honor” in Greece.

### Fr. Manuel Barrios Prieto

**General Secretary at the Commission of the Bishops’ Conferences of the EU (COMECE)**



Fr Manuel was born in Madrid (Spain) in November 1962 and was ordained priest in Rome in 1988. He studied philosophy and theology at the Pontifical Gregorian University obtaining the degree of Doctor in Theology with a thesis on theological anthropology based on the works of the Anglican theologian John Macquarrie. He also has a degree in Clinical

Psychology from a Spanish civil university and an official European recognition as a psychotherapist. Fr Manuel has been parish priest for 20 years in the Archdiocese of Madrid and Episcopal delegate for the Pastoral Care of the Family for 10 years. He was also responsible for the Secretariat of the Spanish Bishops’ Conference for Ecumenism and Interreligious Dialogue for 9 years. He was elected by the Bishops of COMECE as General Secretary in the Plenary Assembly celebrated in March 2019 and took office on 1st September 2019. Fr. Manuel speaks Spanish, Italian, English and French.

### Chief Rabbi Schlomo Hofmeister Community Rabbi of Vienna



Schlomo Hofmeister studied history, politics and social sciences and completed his university studies with a Master of Science from the London School of Economics and Political Science (LSE). After many years of study in Yerushalayim, including at the «Miret Yeshiva» as well as in the Beit Hora’a of Rav Moshe Halberstam רצ”ל, he received several semichot after

the relevant examinations in various areas of the Shulchan Aruch. He was taught by various rabbies including Rav Moshe Sternbuch שליט”א, the Av Beit Din of Jerusalem and was ordained by Rav Avrohom Kopshitz רצ”ל as a full rabbi. As part of his traditional rabbinic training, he learned safrut and received official certifications as a mohel, shochet and bodek. After his nomination by Dayan Chanoch Ehrentreu שליט”א and the European Beit Din (EBD), he was appointed as a permanent member of the Board of the European Rabbinical Conference in 2012. Among other positions, he has been the President of the European Mohalim Association since 2013, inspector for Jewish religious education in Austria since 2014, the Provincial Rabbi of Lower Austria, Burgenland, Styria and Carinthia since 2016, the official Rabbi of the Austrian Armed Forces since 2017, and the special representative of the European Rabbinical Conference against Right-Wing Extremism in Europe since 2019. Rabbi Hofmeister has been the community rabbi of Vienna since 2008 and, in addition to his numerous tasks in the rabbinate, is independently responsible for all rabbinic contacts and official representations to Austrian and European authorities and political institutions, all interreligious contacts, as well as being the contact person for socio-political issues in the media and the Austrian public.

### Imam Yahya Sergio Yahe Pallavicini

**President of the European Muslim Leaders Council (EULEMA) and Vice President of the Italian Islamic Religious Community (COREIS)**



Imam Yahya Pallavicini is Vice President of the Italian Islamic Religious Community (COREIS), one of the main organizations of institutional representation of the Islamic religion in Italy, with a vocation for theological training, ecumenism, and intercultural education. In his capacity as President of COREIS, Imam Yahya Pallavicini served as an advisor to the

Ministry of the Interior and as a member of the Italian Government Council for Italian Islam. Moreover, he partnered with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation in cultural exchange initiatives between Italy and the Muslim world. Among his international assignments, Imam Yahya Pallavicini is Ambassador for Dialogue between Civilizations of the Islamic World Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (ICESCO), headquartered in Rabat, Kingdom of Morocco; Member of the Executive Board of the World Muslim Communities Council (WMCC) in Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates; Vice President of the Muslim Jewish Leaders Council (MJLC). Imam Yahya Pallavicini has been among the 50 Muslim scholars who participated in the first conference on Wasatiyyah, the doctrine of Islamic moderation, held under the auspices of the Presidency of the Republic of Indonesia, and among the 138 Muslim scholars to endorse the initiative “A Common Word”, launched by the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan. Moreover, he was engaged in the drafting of the “Plan of Action for Religious Leaders and Actors to Prevent and Counter Incitement to Violence”, promoted by the United Nations and KAICIID. Imam Yahya

Pallavicini has lectured on Islamic studies, interreligious dialogue, and the prevention of radicalism, at Italian and international universities, think tanks, and research institutes, including the NATO Defense College (NDC). He addressed as speaker the G20 Interfaith Forum 2020 in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and in 2021 in Italy and in the R20 in Indonesia in 2022.

**Rasa Juknevičienė MEP**

Vice-Chair of the Group of the European People's Party (Christian Democrats) in the EP



Born on 26 January 1958 in Tiltagaliai, Lithuania, Rasa Juknevičienė was an integral Member of the Lithuanian Reform Movement Sajūdis, and, as such, became a signatory of the Act of Lithuanian Independence, while working as a doctor in the Central Hospital of Pasvalys. She was elected to the Lithuanian Parliament (this Parliament declared the Independence of

Lithuania) in 1990 in the first free elections with Reform Movement Sajūdis, and would be re-elected five times to the seat with the Homeland Union - Lithuanian Christian Democrats Party (which originated from the Sajūdis movement). During her tenure as a Member of Parliament for many years, she worked in the Committee for National Security and Defence and chaired the Commission for NATO Affairs. Rasa Juknevičienė served her country as Vice-President of the Parliament as well as Minister of Defence (2008-2012) and would join the NATO Parliamentary Assembly as Head of the Lithuanian Delegation in 1999, becoming its President nineteen years later, the first woman in history to hold this office. Having been elected as a Member of the European Parliament in its ninth term (2019-2024), Rasa Juknevičienė is a Member of the Committee on Development, and is a Substitute Member of the Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs, as well as the Subcommittee on Security and Defence. She is a Co-Rapporteur on Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument (NDICI). Rasa Juknevičienė is a Member of the Delegation to the Euronest Parliamentary Assembly. She also serves as Vice-Chair of the Delegation to the EU-Armenia Parliamentary Partnership Committee, the EU-Azerbai-

jan Parliamentary Cooperation Committee and the EU-Georgia Parliamentary Association Committee. She is an active Member of both the Advisory Council of the Centre for European Policy Analysis (CEPA) and the European Council on Foreign Relations (ECFR). MEP since 2019.

**Rabbi Lévi Matusof**

Director of the European Jewish Public Affairs and EU Representative of the Federation of Jewish Communities of Ukraine



Rabbi Levi Matusof was born in 1979 in Nancy, France. After studying in Rabbinical schools Brunoy (Paris), London and New York, in 1998 he became assistant Rabbi to his father in Cannes, France. Levi Matusof moved to Brussels in 2000 to serve as Program Director of the newly established Rabbinical Centre of Europe and in 2004 he became Director of

the European Jewish Community Centre and later of the European Jewish Public Affairs. For the past 20 years, he also serves as the focal point and liaison with the European Institutions in Brussels, thereby promoting Jewish interests, tradition and culture in the EU Headquarters. He is consulted and lectures as a leading expert on issues of education, inter-religious dialogue, integration, identity, values, social welfare and issues related to the Middle East. Since 2020 Rabbi Matusof also serves at the EU representative of the Federation of Jewish Communities of Ukraine. Very active on social media, he is followed and influences thousands on Twitter and Facebook. @Eurabbi.

**Metropolitan Arsenios Kardamakis**

Metropolitan of the Metropolis of Austria and Exarch of Hungary and Central Europe



His Eminence, the Metropolitan Arsenios (Greek Αρσένιος) was born on October 31, 1973 in Heraklion, Crete. He graduated from high school and the ecclesiastical academy in Athens. After completing his studies in Orthodox theology in Athens and Thessaloniki, he continued to study Catholic theology at the University of Strasbourg in

France. In 1998 he was ordained a deacon. He then carried out his first pastoral activities in Germany. In 2002 he was ordained a priest. In 2004 Dr. Kardamakis Vicar General of the Greek Orthodox Metropolis of France and one year later, in 2005, Deputy Secretary of the World Council of Churches in France. On November 3, 2011 he was elected Metropolitan of Austria and Exarch of Hungary and Central Europe by the Holy Synod of the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople. He was ordained bishop on November 30th and initiated into office on December 4th, 2011 in Vienna.

**Dr Jørgen Skov Sørensen**

General Secretary at the Conference of European Churches (CEC)



Dr Jørgen Skov Sørensen is the general secretary of CEC since January 2020. Born in Kolding, Denmark, Skov Sørensen comes to CEC with a vast experience in theology, mission, ecumenism, leadership, communication and management. Skov Sørensen has a PhD in Missiology, Ecumenics and Systematic Theology from the University of Birmingham, UK, and

M. Phil in Ecumenical Theology from Aarhus University in Denmark. He has served as general secretary at Danmission and led the department of ecumenical and international affairs of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Denmark (ELCD). He carried out several academic assignments at Aarhus University and United College of the Ascension, UK, and held positions at the Danish Missionary Society and Danish Church Abroad – Hong Kong. Skov Sørensen has served on various Danish and international councils and boards of directors, including Dan Church Aid, the Endowment Fund of the Lutheran World Federation, Centre for the Study of Religion and Society, Aarhus University, Danish Church Abroad, Eksistensen Christian Think Tank, the Amphlett Scholarship Fund, UK, and Areopagos Foundation. Skov Sørensen is an author of various publications on international and ecumenical affairs. He is proficient in Scandinavian languages and English, with good knowledge of German, French and Mandarin Chinese.

**Prof. Antoine Arjakovsky**

Historian, Co-directeur and member of the Department of Research in «Politique et Religions», Collège des Bernardins



Antoine Arjakovsky is a French historian, with a doctorate in history from EHESS, Paris (School of Advanced Studies in the Social Sciences). He worked for the French Ministry for Foreign Affairs between 1989 and 2002 and was the director of the Collège Universitaire Français of Moscow, the deputy director of the French Institute of Ukraine and the founder

of the Institute of Ecumenical Studies of Lviv in 2004. Today, he is Research Director at the Collège des Bernardins in Paris, and leads a research seminar on «Rebuilding Ukraine; rebuilding peace». He is also president of the Association of Christian Philosophers, Administrator of the Platform of European Memory and Conscience based in Prague. He has written several books on the history of Russia and Ukraine, in particular “Russie-Ukraine: de la guerre à la paix? (Parole et Silence, 2014), (English translation: “Russia-Ukraine: from war to peace?”; and “Occident-Russie: Comment sortir du conflit?” (Balland, 2018). He participated also in the collective work: Stéphane Courtois, Galia Ackerman, “Le livre noir de Vladimir Poutine” (Laffont, 2022). He was the initiator of the Truth, Justice and Reconciliation Commission between Russia and Ukraine, that published a peace plan in December 2019: “Quel Plan de Paix entre la Russie et l’Ukraine?”. His latest book “Qu’est-ce que l’œcuménisme ?” (Cerf, 2022) proposes the foundations of a new ecumenical science. His main trilogy on Ecumenical metaphysics has been translated in English: “Towards An Ecumenical Metaphysics”.

**Pernille Weiss MEP****Head of the Danish Delegation of the EPP Group**

Pernille Weiss (born 12 March 1968) is a Danish politician who was elected as a Member of the European Parliament in 2019. She is a nurse, has a cand.scient. in Health Science, and she is also a certified sexologist. In 1992, Pernille Weiss became a nurse from Odense Nursing School and worked as a forensic psychiatric nurse and later as a home nurse, before be-

coming area manager for home care and home nursing in Ejby Municipality. From 1996 to 2004, she was county council member in Funen and then she took a break from politics until 2017 in order to focus on family life and education in health science. In 2004 she completed her Master's degree and became manager for health and client consultant in COWI. In 2005, she became head of Arkitema Health. In 2008, she took a Master's degree in innovation and management from CBS (LAICS) with a thesis on strategic business development in the architectural industry. The same year, Ms Pernille Weiss founded the consulting firm ArchiMed, which is a specialized analysis and consulting company for connections between architecture and health. Since 2017 she is a certified sexologist with a special focus on the sexualized behavior of people with dementia. She has sat on boards for organizations, institutions and companies. Today she is a member of the board of the Theater Museum Hofteateret at Christiansborg. In August 2018, she was elected as the leading candidate for the European Parliament elections for the Conservative People's Party. Pernille Weiss has been married twice and has three adult children and a grandchild. She lives in Christianshavn.

**Prof. Dr. Christiaan W.J.M. Alting von Geusau****President of the Vienna-based International Catholic Legislators' Network (ICLN) and Professor of Law and Education at ITI Catholic University**

Christiaan Alting von Geusau holds law degrees from the University of Leiden (Netherlands) and the University of Heidelberg (Germany) with part of his studies conducted at the University of Steubenville, Ohio and the University of Notre Dame, Indiana (United States). He obtained with distinction his doctorate in philosophy of law from the University of

Vienna (Austria), writing his dissertation on "Human Dignity and the Law in post-War Europe", which was published internationally in 2013. After first practicing civil and European law in Amsterdam and Brussels until 2004, he is now President and Rector of ITI Catholic University in Austria where he also serves as Professor of Philosophy of Law and Education. He holds an honorary professorship at the Universidad San Ignacio de Loyola in Lima, Peru, and is the founding President of the International Catholic Legislators Network (ICLN). In this latter function he mentors political leaders from around the world and leads international educational programs for legislators. Christiaan publishes and lectures extensively on matters of law, education, public policy and freedom of conscience and religion.

**Very Reverend Archimandrite Fr. Aimilianos Bogiannou****Director of the Brussels Office of the Ecumenical Patriarchate (CROCEU - Committee of Representatives of the Orthodox Churches to the EU)**

The Very Reverend Archimandrite, Fr. Aimilianos (Triantafyllos) Bogiannou was born in Germany where he finished his Elementary Education and continued his Secondary Education in Greece. He started teaching English as a Second Language in Private Language Schools in Greece in 1995. In 2001 he was accepted in the Associate's Degree Program of Inter-

national Business in Hesser College, Manchester New Hampshire, USA, where he joined the Phi Theta Kappa Honour Society. In 2002 he continued his education at Hellenic College, Brookline, Massachusetts, where he obtained his Bachelor of Arts in Religious Studies. He was also the Valedictorian of his Graduating Class. In 2004 he started his studies in Holy Cross Greek Orthodox School of Theology, where he graduated from with his Master of Divinity in 2006. In the summer of 2004 he was ordained a Deacon and was sent to work for the Liaison Office of the Orthodox Church to the European Union, in Brussels, Belgium. In November 2009 he was ordained a Priest and was made an Archimandrite. He was the Assistant to the Director of the Liaison Office, His Eminence, Metropolitan Emmanuel of France until 2015 when he was promoted to Director of the aforementioned Office. He has represented the Ecumenical Patriarchate on numerous occasions and Conferences, as well as in the Interreligious Dialogues and many more. He has also represented the European Commission in the Youth Interfaith Forum in Australia in 2007. He is currently a member of the Working Group on Human Rights of the Conference

of European Churches. He has his parish in Lille, France. He lives in Brussels, Belgium, where he also teaches Orthodox Religion in the European Schools. He speaks Greek, German, English and French fluently and teaches English, Political science and Orthodox religion at the European School III in Brussels.

**Prof. Dr. Regina Polak****Associate Professor at the Department of Practical Theology, Faculty of Catholic Theology, University of Vienna**

Regina Polak (\* 1967) is the head of the Institute for Practical Theology at the Catholic Theological Faculty of the University of Vienna. She is Assoc.-Prof. for Practical Theology. She studied philosophy, theology and spiritual theology in the interreligious process at the Universities of Vienna and Salzburg. Her research focuses on the following topics: religion and values;

religion in the context of migration; socio-religious transformation processes in Europe; Christian-Jewish and Christian-Islamic dialogue, and fundamental theological questions of a church in transition. Currently she leads a project on the European Values Study reflecting the relationship between religious and political attitudes from an interdisciplinary perspective. She serves currently also as OSCE-Personal Representative for combating racism, xenophobia and discrimination with a special focus on discrimination against Christians and members of other religions.

# EPP GROUP PRESS RELEASE



## 08.12.2022 10:56 RELIGIOUS LEADERS DEBATE WAR AND EU'S FUTURE WITH EPP GROUP

The EPP Group is meeting high-ranking representatives of Christian Churches and of Muslim and Jewish communities to debate the answer of religious communities to the war in Ukraine and their contribution to shaping the future of the European Union.

On Friday and Saturday in the Austrian capital of Vienna, Metropolitan Emmanuel of Chalcedon (Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople), Father Manuel Enrique Barrios Prieto (General Secretary of the Commission of the Catholic Bishops' Conferences of the EU), Chief Rabbi Schlomo Hofmeister (Community Rabbi of Vienna), Imam Yahya Sergio Yahe Pallavicini (President of the European Muslim Leaders Council) and others will engage in an exchange of views with EPP Group Members.

Othmar Karas MEP, First Vice-President of the European Parliament, emphasised that both politicians and Churches share a responsibility for social cohesion in Europe: "Interreligious dialogue is of crucial significance for a democratic dialogue in the current times of crisis. It is essential for peace, social cohesion and the political acceptance of the necessary deepening of the European Union. We - the Churches and politicians - share a common responsibility for European society and the future of Europe."

Jan Olbrycht MEP, co-Chairman of the EPP Group Working Group on Intercultural and Religious Dialogue, highlighted the role of religions in conflicts: "While discussing the role of churches in the context of the unprovoked Russian aggression in Ukraine, we must also look at the way and the content of their communication addressing the social issues. The Church and religions have an important influence on social and political processes. It is widely known that religion is listed as one of the factors cited among the causes of conflicts in the world, which is a natural consequence of religiosity being an important element of human identity."

György Hölvényi MEP, also co-Chairman of the EPP Group Working Group on Intercultural and Religious Dialogue, concluded:

"This year's Interreligious Dialogue conference is taking place under truly extraordinary circumstances. We must focus together on peace creation, security and the role of interreligious dialogue during the war. Through peace in Eastern Europe, we can preserve the stability of the EU as a whole. Peace is a precondition for stopping unbearable human sufferings. It is also a basis of social stability and economic development in times of existential dangers." The two-day event is the EPP Group's 24th Annual Intercultural Dialogue with Churches and Religious Institutions.

Link: <https://www.eppgroup.eu/newsroom/news/religious-leaders-debate-war-and-eu-s-future-with-epp-group>

### INTERNATIONAL PRESS RELEASES

#### ANNUAL MEETING FOR INTERCULTURAL AND RELIGIOUS DIALOGUE OF THE EUROPEAN PEOPLE'S PARTY IN VIENNA

##### Kathpress

<https://www.vindobona.org/article/annual-meeting-for-intercultural-and-religious-dialogue-of-the-european-peoples-party-in-vienna>

Published: December 11, 2022; 23:47 ◊ (Vindobona)

The annual meeting of the Working Group on Intercultural and Religious Dialogue of the European People's Party (EPP) parliamentary group in the European Parliament took place this weekend in Vienna. Without religions and their contribution to the formation of values, a future for Europe is unimaginable, according to the EPP.

Karas lamented that the Union's foundation of values had been shaken by the Russian war of aggression on Ukraine. Societies were increasingly divided, he said, and religious communities were also regrettably involved in this. The ÖVP politician referred to the inglorious role of Moscow Patriarch Cyril as a representative of a church that allowed itself to be instrumentalized by Putin. This in particular should be an incentive to strengthen interreligious dialogue - as the European People's Party is doing in Vienna for the 24th time.



*Karas affirmed that without interreligious dialogue, no democratic majorities are possible for a prosperous future in Europe. / Picture: © Besseres Europa / Othmar Karas*

Karas, who as Vice-President of the EU Parliament is entrusted with the implementation of Article 17 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU), which provides for a legal obligation for an open, transparent and regular dialogue of the EU with religious communities, acknowledged the importance of interreligious dialogue in his introduction. Without it, he said, there would be no democratic majorities for a prosperous future for Europe. Religion, origin and language are essential elements to implement the EU's claim to be «united in diversity». Karas condemned any policy that seeks to distinguish itself by accusingly pointing the finger at religion.

The representative of the Catholic Church on the podium, COMECE Secretary General Prieto, quoted from a speech by the Apostolic Nuncio to the European Union, Archbishop Aldo Giordano, who died about a year ago, according to which the question of God is a crucial one for the future of the continent. Without transcendence, there is a threat of «anarchic pluralism» in which man sets himself absolute. Faith in God, on the other hand, is in contradiction to authoritarian regimes. And as a common obligation for the religious communities, Prieto named that of acting as «peacemakers» and thus concretizing the «unique mediator role of Europe» in the

conflict of competing world powers. A credible commitment to peace and reconciliation would also inspire young people anew for the Union, the COMECE representative was convinced.

In his statement, Rabbi Hofmeister warned against the tendency of right-wing populist movements and parties to present themselves as defenders of the Judeo-Christian heritage. He said that it should not be forgotten that there has always been persecution of Judaism on the basis of these ideas. Now it is primarily Muslims who are being turned into objects of exclusion. The religious communities in Europe had learned to meet each other face to face after a long history «written in blood and tears,» Hofmeister said. Now, he said, a new phase of dialogue is necessary: it is necessary to stand «side by side» against a politics and economy that acts without a religious value basis, stirs up nationalistic egoism and loses people's trust in the process.

#### Parallel IS-Russian Church

Imam Pallavicini, who works in Brussels as a representative of Muslims in 22 countries, drew a parallel between the alleged «holy war» of the IS terrorists and that justified by Russian Orthodox in Ukraine. Both represent a demonization of tolerance and pluralism, which contradicts the actual value foundation of the religions. The Muslim cleric saw the claim for the religions to follow a vision in the spirit of the EU founding figures Schuman, De Gasperi and Adenauer, which must show itself in cooperation and cohesion. Pallavicini turned against phenomena hostile to dialogue such as ghettoization, the - often hidden - assumption of one's own superiority, relativism and an aggressive secularism. He had contradicted Patriarch Cyril in a letter to the Patriarchate in Moscow, according to which there are no values «in the West» and the Russian East must uphold them.

Greek Orthodox Metropolitan Arsenios (Kardamakis) of Vienna, Metropolitan Emmanuel (Adamakis) of the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople and Jorgen Skov Sorensen, general secretary of the Conference of European Churches (CEC), also spoke. The list of speakers included Vienna pastoral theologian Prof. Regina Polak, the president of the International Catholic Legislators Network (ICLN) and rector of the Catholic University ITI, Chris-

tian Alting of Geusau, and Archimandrite Aimilianos Bogiannou, director of the Brussels Office of the Orthodox Churches at the EU. Saturday will be devoted to the influence of churches and religions on social and political processes.

#### Magyar Nemzet

Loretta Toth

2022. DECEMBER 12.

2022. december 12., hétfő

Magyar Nemzet

KÜLFÖLD 9

## „A béke mindannyiunk küldetése”

Háborús időkben különösen fontos, hogy odafigyeljünk a vallási vezetők hangjára

Az európai szekularizmus egyre radikálisabb, Európa nem vállalja azt a szerepet, hogy a nyugati kereszténység központjaként világ-szerte a keresztények védelmére keljen, a segélykiáltások így közimbis fülekre találnak - fogalmazott a Magyar Nemzetnek Hólvényi György kereszténydemokrata európai parlamenti képviselő az Európai Néppárt vallási közimbis munkacsoportjának éves magas szintű konferenciáján Bécsben. A KDNP-s politikus az ukránai orosz agresszióra utalva hangsúlyozta: a kelet-európai béke révén megőrizhetjük az EU egységének stabilitását.

Hólvényi György szerint Európa jövője elképzelhetetlen egyházak nélkül

EUROPAI UNIÓ

Toth Loretta (Bécs)

Az Európai Néppárt (EPP) európai parlamenti frakcióján belül működő vallási közimbis munkacsoport évtizedes meggyőződése, hogy az Európai meggyőződések rendszere be kell vonni a vallási vezetők - ezt az emberi méltóság beszédét hivatott elősegíteni a hétfői szűke konferencia, amelyen a néppárti politikusai, illetve a keresztény egyházak, valamint az európai muszlim és zsidó közösségek magas rangú képviselői gyűltek össze, hogy megvitassák hozzájárulásukat az ukránai háború rendezéséhez és az Európai Unió jövőjének alakításához.

Az osztrák fővárosban felszólalt Hólvényi György kereszténydemokrata EPP-képviselő - aki 2015 óta a vallási munkacsoport társelnöke is egyben - hangsúlyozta: a vallási vezetők kötelessége, hogy segítsék a bizalom újraszámítását a háborús konfliktusok időszakában is, a mostani időkben tehát különösen fontos, hogy odafigyeljünk a hangjukra, miközben a vallási közösségek az élet és az emberi méltóság tisztelgetés, a segítségnyújtás és a szolidaritás alapvető gondolatait is képviselik. - A kelet-európai béke révén megőrizhetjük az EU egységének stabilitását - fűzte hozzá.

Az ukránai orosz agresszióra utalva kiemelt arra is: a béke az életmentésért, len emberi szenvedések megállításának előfeltétele, egyértelműen vezetői idején ugyanis egyedül a béke hozhatja el a társadalmi stabilitást és a gazdasági fejlődést. - Együtt kell összpontosítanunk a békefenntartásra, a biztonságra és a vallási közimbis szerepére a háború alatt - fogalmazott Hólvényi György. Legutóbbi kérdésére a KDNP-s politikus elmondta: ilyenkor a vallási közimbis munkacsoportok a társadalmi kérdéseket kommunikációjukban. "Olbyrecht hozzáfűzte: az egyház és a vallások is politikai folyamatokra. Szóles körben ismert, hogy a vallás a világ konfliktusainak okában az élet tényezői között szerepel, ami természetesen következménye annak, hogy a vallásoknak az emberi méltóság fontos eleme.

Christiaan Alting von Geusau, az ICN nemzetközi katolikus közimbis hálózat elnöke a felszólalásában kiemelte: a totalitárius rendszerek és ideológiák nem véletlenül félnek annyira a vallástól és a hívő emberektől, hiszen a hívők számára az Isten iránti hűség a legfontosabb. - Az állam vagy a párt és az ideológia iránti hűség csak ezután következnek - magyarázta a politikus, utalva arra, hogy milyen nagy szerepe volt 1989-ben a kommunizmus közimbis-európai megbuktatásában a bírók csehadóvák, magyar és lengyel emberek hit iránti elkötelezettségének.

A visit of the conference participants to Klosterneuburg Abbey was also on the program, as well as a joint church service in St. Stephen's Cathedral in Vienna, presided over by Bishops' Conference Secretary General Peter Schipka.

#### KARAS: NÁBOŽENSTVO V EURÓPE SA NEMÁ SPÁJÁŤ S POLITIKOU

Teraz

<https://www.teraz.sk/zahranicie/karas-nabozenstvo-v-europe-sa-nema-spajati-s-politikou>



Ilustračné foto. Foto: TASR/AP

Pripomenul, že inštitúcie EÚ majú tradíciu združovať tri hlavné náboženstvá a rôzne odnože kresťanstva okolo okrúhleho stola, aby viedli dialóg.

TASR

10. DECEMBRA 2022 14:07

Viedeň 10. decembra (TASR) - Náboženstvo v Európe 21. storočia nemá byť spájané s politikou ani s posväcovaním vojny. Uviedol to prvý podpredseda Európskeho parlamentu (EP) Othmar Karas, ktorý je zodpovedný za článok 17 Lisabonskej zmluvy, čiže dialóg s náboženskými komunitami a nekonfesionálnymi združeniami, informuje spravodajca TASR.

Rakúsky europoslanec bol hositeľom dvojdnovej konferencie vo Viedni (9.–10. decembra) s názvom «Náboženstvo a budúcnosť Európy - reakcia cirkvi a náboženských komunít na vojnu, konflikty a ich účasť pri budovaní budúcnosti Európy», ktorú pripravila Európska ľudová strana (EPP), konkrétne Skupina EPP pre medzikultúrny dialóg s cirkvami a náboženskými komunitami.

Karas zdôraznil, že politici aj cirkvi zdieľajú zodpovednosť za sociálnu súdržnosť v Európe. «Medzináboženský dialóg má kľúčový význam pre demokratický dialóg v súčasnej kríze. Je nevyhnutný pre mier, sociálnu súdržnosť a politické prijatie prehlbovania EÚ,» uviedol.

Europoslanci z Poľska a Maďarska Jan Olbrycht a György Hólvényi, spolupredsedovia pracovnej skupiny EPP pre medzikultúrny a náboženský dialóg, vyzdvihli úlohu náboženstiev počas konfliktov a spresnili, že pri diskusií o úlohe cirkvi v kontexte ruskej agresie na Ukrajine sa treba pozrieť na spôsob a obsah ich komunikácie pri riešení spoločenských problémov. Podľa ich slov je odkazom konferencie to, že sa treba spoločne zamerať na vytváranie mieru, bezpečnosť a úlohu medzináboženského dialógu počas vojny.

Karas upozornil, že ak by bol ignorovaný náboženský rozmer pri tvorbe politiky, tak spoločnosť zlyhá, lebo jej veľká časť bude mať pocit vylúčenia, čo môže viesť k jej radikalizácii. To sa deje vo Francúzsku, kde je ignorovaná početná moslimská komunita. Vyslovil sa tiež proti «instrumentalizácii» náboženstva, k čomu došlo v Rusku počas agresie voči Ukrajine, keď pravoslávna cirkev «posvätila» túto vojnu.

Pripomenul, že inštitúcie EÚ majú tradíciu združovať tri hlavné náboženstvá a rôzne odnože kresťanstva okolo okrúhleho stola, aby viedli dialóg. «Zaujmal ma však názor, že netreba hovoriť o židovsko-kresťanských koreňoch Európy, aby sme sa tým vymedzovali voči moslimom. Lebo kresťania v Európe počas storočí prenasledovali Židov. To bolo pre mňa poučné a už toto slovné spojenie nebudem používať. Lepšie je hovoriť, že máme spoločné hodnoty,» uzatvoril Karas.

#### LEXMANN A EPP: EÚ OCHRANOU NÁBOŽENSKEJ SLOBODY CHRÁNI ĽUDSKÉ PRÁVA

Teraz

[https://www.teraz.sk/slovensko/lexmann-a-epp-eu-ochranou-nabozenske/680095-clanok.html?utm\\_source=teraz&utm\\_medium=organic&utm\\_campaign=click&utm\\_content=%253Bsearch](https://www.teraz.sk/slovensko/lexmann-a-epp-eu-ochranou-nabozenske/680095-clanok.html?utm_source=teraz&utm_medium=organic&utm_campaign=click&utm_content=%253Bsearch)



Na archívnej snímke europoslankyňa Miriam Lexmann. Foto: TASR - Michal Švitok

Poslankyňa v tejto súvislosti uviedla, že v 21. storočí sú pre vieru alebo presvedčenie prenasledovaní ľudia v 62 krajinách sveta.

TASR

9. DECEMBRA 2022 15:25

Viedeň 9. decembra (TASR) - Vymenovanie belgického diplomata Fransa van Daeleho za osobitného vyslanca pre presadzovanie slobody náboženského vyznania alebo viery mimo EÚ je naplnením cieľov, o ktoré sa snaží Európsky parlament (EP) a Európska ľudová strana (EPP) cez Medzikultúrny dialóg skupiny EPP s cirkvami a náboženskými komunitami.



V piatok vo Viedni to pre TASR uviedli prvý podpredseda EP, rakúsky europoslanec Othmar Karas a slovenská europoslankyňa Miriam Lexmann (KDH), kde sa konalo 24. výročné stretnutie Medzikultúrneho dialógu EPP s cirkvami a náboženskými komunitami pod názvom «Náboženstvo a budúcnosť Európy».

Európska komisia v stredu (7.12) vymenovala Fransa van Daeleho za osobitného vyslanca pre presadzovanie slobody náboženského vyznania alebo viery mimo EÚ. Jej znovuzriadenie v europarlamente dlhodobo žiadala frakcia EPP, v čom bola aktívna aj Miriam Lexmann.

Poslankyňa v tejto súvislosti uviedla, že v 21. storočí sú pre vieru alebo presvedčenie prenasledovaní ľudia v 62 krajinách sveta, že 68 percent obyvateľov planéty žije v krajinách, kde je porušovaná sloboda náboženského vyznania a každý deň je v priemere zabitých 13 kresťanov kvôli svojej viere.

«Náboženská sloboda môže byť považovaná za lakmusový papier ostatných slobôd. Keď vidíme utlačanie náboženskej slobody, je dôležité zakročiť rôznymi diplomatickými procedúrami alebo zahraničnopolitickými riešeniami. Lebo takéto zárodoky konfliktov alebo napätia v spoločnosti môžu viesť ku genocídám a vojenským konfliktom,» opísala situáciu.

Europoslanec Karas pre TASR priznal, že nového osobitného vyslanca pre ochranu náboženskej slobody nepozná osobne, je však presvedčený, že eurokomisia urobila «dobrú voľbu». «Podporujem jeho misiu a dúfam v naše skoré stretnutie, aby som zistil s akými nápadmi prichádza,» povedal na adresu Van Daeleho.

Prvým európskym vyslancom pre náboženskú slobodu mimo EÚ bol od roku 2016 Ján Figel. Tento post potom zostal takmer dva roky neobsadený, pričom bývalý cyperský eurokomisár Chrystos Stylianidis v roku 2021 zastával túto funkciu iba štyri mesiace.

(spravodajca TASR Jaromír Novak)

## DIALÓG EP: CIRKVI BY MALI POMÁHAŤ UKONČOVAŤ A NIE PODPOROVAŤ VOJNY

Teraz

[https://www.teraz.sk/zahranicie/dialog-ep-cirkvi-by-mali-pomahat-uko/680128-clanok.html?utm\\_source=teraz&utm\\_medium=organic&utm\\_campaign=click&utm\\_content=%253Bsearch](https://www.teraz.sk/zahranicie/dialog-ep-cirkvi-by-mali-pomahat-uko/680128-clanok.html?utm_source=teraz&utm_medium=organic&utm_campaign=click&utm_content=%253Bsearch)



Na archívnej snímke z 5. februára 2013 koptský pápež Tawadros II. drží kríž. V Egypte v nedeľu 9. mája 2021 popravili koptského mnicha odsúdeného za vraždu opáta starobylého kláštora koptskej pravoslávnej cirkvi, ku ktorej došlo v roku 2018. Foto: TASR/AP

Viacerí cirkevní hostia situáciu formálne za schizmu nepovažujú, liturgicky však áno a aj preto by Západ alebo EP mali vyvíjať ekumenické snahy na zmierenie oboch táborov.

TASR

9. DECEMBRA 2022 17:05

Viedeň 9. decembra (TASR) - Cirkvi by mali byť vo vojne riešením a nie problémom a mali by pomáhať vojny ukončovať a nie ich podporovať. V piatok to odznelo vo Viedni na konferencii «Náboženstvo a budúcnosť Európy - reakcia cirkvi a náboženských komunít na vojny, konflikty a ich účasť

pri budovaní budúcnosti Európy». Informuje o tom spravodajca TASR. Na 24. výročnom stretnutí Medzikultúrneho dialógu politickej skupiny Európskej ľudovej strany (EPP) s cirkvami a náboženskými komunitami sa hľadali odpovede náboženských komunít na vojnu na Ukrajine a spôsob formovania budúcnosti EÚ.

Hlavnými hosťami boli generálny sekretár Komisie katolíckych biskupských konferencií EÚ (COMECE) Manuel Enrique Barrios Prieto, vrchný rabin židovskej komunity vo Viedni Schlomo Hofmeister a predseda Európskej rady moslimských lídrov imám Yahya Sergio Yahe Pallavicini. Spoločne sa zhodli, že náboženstvo je integrálnou súčasťou európskej identity a kultúry a pomocou otvoreného dialógu by malo pomáhať pri vzájomnom porozumení medzi ľuďmi.

Konferencia odsúdila posväcovanie Putinovej vojny moskovským patriarchom Kirillom, pretože v mene náboženstva nikto nesmie napadnúť inú krajinu. Hovorilo sa aj o schizme v pravoslávnej cirkvi, čo cítiť najmä na Ukrajine. S tým súvisí delenie veriacich medzi Konštantinopol a Moskvu ako náboženské centrá a lobbying v balkánskych krajinách, aby sa tamojší veriaci priklonili na jednu zo strán.

Viacerí cirkevní hostia situáciu formálne za schizmu nepovažujú, liturgicky však áno a aj preto by Západ alebo EP mali vyvíjať ekumenické snahy na zmierenie oboch táborov.

Viacerí hostia zdôraznili, že náboženstvo je jav nadnárodný a nesmie sa spájať s nacionalizmom.

«Náboženstvo a nacionalizmus sa navzájom vylučujú, to je oxymoron,» uviedol rabin Schlomo Hofmeister. Zároveň upozornil, že odkaz mnohých politikov na židovsko-kresťanské korene Európy sa nesmie premeniť na boj proti islamu v Európe. Naopak, všetky cirkvi majú pomáhať pri budovaní sociálnej súdržnosti, ktorá by mala byť stredobodom európskej politiky.

(spravodajca TASR Jaromír Novak)

Croatian Weekly Glas Koncila

Ivan Tasev

18. PROSINCA 2022.

4

u fokusu

Glas Koncila BEOJ 51  
18. prosinca 2022.

## Bez transcendencije prijeti »anarhični pluralizam«, vjera u Boga u suprotnosti je s autoritarnim režimima

Predstavnici triju vjerskih zajednica s političarima o ratu u Ukrajini i oblikovanju budućnosti EU-a

**BEO** • Vjerski predstavnici sposobni su osnažiti povjerenje među ljudima koje nagrizaju sve snažnije podjele u društvu u vrijeme rata na Starom Kontinentu i ekonomskih teškoća. U tom smislu budućnost Europe nezamisliva je bez vjere i njihova doprinosa oblikovanju vrijednosti - neke su od poruka upućenih sa susreta radne skupine za međukulturni i vjerski dijalog zastupnika kršćanskih demokata (EPP) u Europskom parlamentu koji je nakon tri godine ponovno održan uživo. O reakcijama Crkava i vjerskih zajednica na rat, sukobe i njihovo sudjelovanje u izgradnji budućnosti Europe mišljenja su iznijeli teolozi, predstavnici kršćanske, islamske i židovske zajednice, kao i političari na dvodnevnom skupu u Beču u petak i subotu 9. i 10. prosinca, a na predavanjima i panelima sudjelovalo je i dvoje hrvatskih zastupnika u Europskom parlamentu.



O reakcijama Crkava i vjerskih zajednica na rat i sukobe govorili su predstavnici kršćana, islama i židovstva

ni pluralizam« u kojem čovjek sebe čini apsolutnim, a s druge strane vjera u Boga u suprotnosti je s autoritarnim režimima. »Vjera je dio identiteta Europe i

može i treba pridonijeti njezinoj budućnosti, posebice na dva načina: uprisutniti Božju stvarnost koja oslobađa od diktature relativizma te pridonijeti da Europa postane posrednik mira u svijetu porukom i svjedočanstvom ljudskoga bratstva te kada za to dođe vrijeme nudeći načine pomirenja inicijativama za izgradnju mira s lokalnim zajednicama, a i ekumeniskim i međureligijskim dijalogom«, poručio je o. Prieto na skupu na kojem se čulo kako nasilnim pomicanjima granica ne bi trebalo biti mjesta u 21. stoljeću i da Europa mora ostati mjesto pravde i slobode.

»Kao ljudi vjere možemo dijeliti suze jer je nepravda učinjena Ukrajincima, smrt i uništenje još jednom posjećuju naš voljeni europski kontinent, a treba učiniti sve da se uspostavi mir. Trebamo se pitati i mi osobno jesmo li učinili sve da se postigne mir, jesmo li učinili dovoljno osim što su naše vlade pružile potrebnu vojnu i političku pomoć Ukrajini«, upitao se govoreći na predavanju predsjednik Međunarodne mreže katoličkih zakonodavaca (ICLNT) i rektor Katoličkoga sveučilišta ITI dr. Christiaan Alting von Geusau i ponudio dva prijedloga: potreb-

na je »globalna molitvena ofenziva« za mir u Ukrajini zajedno sa svim kršćanskim Crkvama te »miran otpor« ljudi dobre volje koji se trebaju udružiti da se na takav miroljubiv način sruši totalitarizam.

Nova razina dijaloga • Ta susretu je govorilo i više pravoslavnih predstavnika, a posebno je odjeknula poruka u kontekstu rata u Ukrajini kako pravoslavlje ne može opravdati rat u Ukrajini jer je »mir bio prvi Kristov dar nakon njegova uskrsnuća«. Te je riječi izrekao austrijski grčko-pravoslavni mitropolit Arsenios, iznjevši kritike Carigradskoga patrijarha i njegovu podupiranje Putinove politike. »U Ukrajini se odvija rat između braće koji je već odnio živote tisuća ljudi i prouzročio mnogo patnje zbog nedostatka isporuka žitarica i energetske krize«, rekao je mitropolit Arsenios. Predstavnik Židovske zajednice rabin Beča Schlomo Hofmeister iznio je stajalište da su se vjerske zajednice u Europi naučile susretati licem u lice nakon duge povijesti »ispisane krvlju i suzama« te je pozvao na novu razinu dijaloga. »Važno je stati rame uz rame protiv politike i biznisa koji djeluju bez vjerske vrijednosti, počiti nacionalistički egoizam i pritom gube povjerenje ljudi«, poručio je rabin. (H)

## WARTOŚCI RELIGIJNE W POLITYCE JAK NAJBARDZIEJ POŻĄDANE

Więź

<https://wiesz.pl/2023/01/13/wartosci-religijne-w-polityce-pozadane/>

Sebastian Duda 13 stycznia 2023

„Wojujący sekularyzm” z bardziej lub mniej tajoną wrogością odnosi się do wszelkich, istniejących w sferze publicznej, zinstytucjonalizowanych form religii.

W grudniu ub.r., niedługo przed Świątami Bożego Narodzenia, byłem w Wiedniu na dorocznym spotkaniu Europejskiej Partii Ludowej (należą do niej z Polski Platforma Obywatelska i Polskie Stronnictwo Ludowe) z instytucjami religijnymi. Eurodeputowani przyznający się do chadeckich idei, wartości i tradycji zebrał się po raz dwudziesty czwarty.

Przyznają, że jechałem na tę konferencję z nieco mieszanymi uczuciami. Chrześcijaństwo w Europie doświadcza obecnie jednego z największych kryzysów w swojej historii. Sekularyzacja od kilku dekad postępuje w szybkim tempie. Nic dziwnego, że wielu zadaje sobie pytanie, czy w takich okolicznościach chadecja jako nurt polityczny bazujący na chrześcijańskiej narracji, filozofii i moralności ma jeszcze jakkolwiek rację bytu.

Dialog, naprawdę?

Uczestnicy wiedeńskiego spotkania mówili zresztą w kuluarach bez ogródek, że z roku na rok liczba eurodeputowanych EPL uczestniczących aktywnie w pracach specjalnej grupy ds. dialogu międzykulturowego i religijnego się zmniejsza. Wyraźnie zaznacza się brak reprezentacji z krajów tzw. starej Unii. Europejscy posłowie i posłanki z Francji, Belgii, Holandii itd. nie bardzo się już kwapią do dialogu z Kościołami i innymi instytucjami religijnymi za oficjalnym pośrednictwem Parlamentu Europejskiego.

Projekt europejski nie powinien za swoją podstawę obierać aksjologicznej próżni

Oczywiście większość członków tego unijnego zgromadzenia, gdyby zapytać ich o zasadność takiego dialogu, pospieszyłaby z deklaracjami, że jest on niezwykle pożyteczny i potrzebny. Jednak nie przypadkiem w grupie spotkać można przede wszystkim przedstawicieli krajów, której dołączyły do Unii w ostatnich dekadach. Czy wierzą oni bardziej (albo wciąż jeszcze) w siłę tradycyjnych chadeckich ujęć?

Często w Wiedniu słyszałem, że doświadczenie komunizmu w krajach Europy Środkowej i Wschodniej ciągle ma wpływ na wzajemne związki polityki i religii. W naszej części kontynentu dalej np. powszechnie się pamięta o konsekwentnie antykomunistycznym nastawieniu Jana Pawła II. Silne jest przekonanie, że bez niego nie byłyby ostatecznie możliwe upadek czerwonego reżimu ani rozszerzenie Unii o kraje postkomunistyczne.

Taka rewerencja względem papieża z Polski w Europie Zachodniej jest dużo rzadsza. W dobie postępującego kryzysu religijności (przynajmniej w jej tradycyjnych przejawach), gdy jednocześnie ujawniane są raz po raz kolejne skandale w łonie Kościoła rzymskokatolickiego, nie tylko Watykan, ale i inne Kościoły oraz instytucje religijne nie wydają się dla polityków szczególnie atrakcyjnymi partnerami do dialogu.

Niemniej trudno zapomnieć, że potrzeba i konieczność jego prowadzenia zostały wpisane do prawa unijnego. W trzech kolejnych punktach artykułu 17. Traktatu lizbońskiego czytamy przecież, że:

„1. Unia szanuje status przyznany na mocy prawa krajowego kościołom i stowarzyszeniom lub wspólnotom religijnym w Państwach Członkowskich i nie narusza tego statusu.

2. Unia szanuje również status organizacji światopoglądowych i niewyznaniowych przyznany im na mocy prawa krajowego.

3. Uznając tożsamość i szczególny wkład tych kościołów i organizacji, Unia prowadzi z nimi otwarty, przejrzysty i regularny dialog”.

Odnosząc się do tego ostatniego punktu, wielu zadaje sobie jednak dziś pytanie, czy naprawdę otwartość, przejrzystość i regularność tego dialogu jest istotna dla polityki europejskiej w dobie tak prędko postępującej na kontynencie sekularyzacji.

#### Przeciwno „wojującemu sekularyzmowi”

Uczestnicy wiedeńskiego spotkania często wspominali, że nieustannie mają do czynienia (także na forum Parlamentu Europejskiego) z „wojującym sekularyzmem”, który z bardziej lub mniej tajoną wrogością odnosi się do wszelkich, istniejących w sferze publicznej, zinstytucjonalizowanych form religii. W tym ujęciu religijność powinna być konsekwentnie ograniczana do sfery prywatnej. Nietzscheańska „śmierć Boga” dotyczy zatem „śmierci religii” na publicznych forach. Skutki takiego podejścia mogą być bardzo poważne.



Europoslowie (od lewej) Jan Olbrycht, Othmar Karas i György Hólvényi podczas spotkania Europejskiej Partii Ludowej z instytucjami religijnymi. Wiedeń, 9 grudnia 2022. Fot. EPP Group

Na grudniowym spotkaniu w austriackiej stolicy Schlomo Hofmeister, naczelny rabin Wiednia, skonstatował, że – choć polityka nie przynależy do religii – to już wartości religijne jak najbardziej mają w polityce swoje znaczenie. Jeśli postuluje się ich całkowite rugowa-

nie ze sfery politycznej, trzeba również przyjąć, iż rezultatem takiego podejścia może być rozszerzająca się aksjologiczna próżnia, w której nie ma miejsca na uzasadnienie jakiegokolwiek zaufania społecznego. Brak tego ostatniego w gospodarce czyni np. z wszelkich relacji ekonomicznych dżunglę, w której przemoc staje się jedynym kryterium działania.

Z pewnością istnieją również przemocowe formy religii, które należy tropić i demaskować. „Bóg”, z pomocą którego uzasadnia się przemoc, powinien rzeczywiście umrzeć. Nawet jednak Nietzsche, jak przypomniał w Wiedniu ks. Manuel Enrique Barrios Prieto, sekretarz generalny Komisji Episkopatów Unii Europejskiej (COMECE), widział w przewyżniającej martwość zdegradowanego człowieczeństwa „śmierci Boga” także sposobność do otwarcia na powrót boskości przez odniesienie do koncepcji nadczłowieka. Czytamy przecież w „Woli mocy”: „Jedyna możliwa zachowania sensu idei «Boga» byłaby ta: Bóg nie jest siłą poruszającą, lecz stanem maksymalnym, epoką, punktem w rozwoju woli mocy, z którego wyjaśnia się zarówno rozwój dalszy, jak i poprzedzający, i to, co do niego wiodło”.

Nietzscheanizm nie musi służyć zatem tylko jako uzasadnienie do rugowania religii ze sfery publicznej (tak jak w przeszłości był już narzędziem uzasadniającym różne formy przemocy kierowanej przeciw ludzkim zbiorowościom). Można bowiem, idąc za nietzscheańską intuicją, widzieć w powrocie Boga szansę na urzeczywistnienie „stanu maksymalnego”. Ten zaś w polityce można identyfikować choćby jako „większe dobro społeczne”, którego realizację uniemożliwia ostatecznie bezbożna, generująca przemoc, próżnia aksjologiczna.

Konsekwentne przeciwstawianie się „wojującemu sekularyzmowi” powinno być zatem traktowane w polityce europejskiej jako konieczność, gdyż przyczynia się on do niszczenia fundamentu społecznych więzi: ze zbioru pojedynczych prywatnych aksjologii nie da się bowiem stworzyć aksjologicznej wspólnoty. Dlatego obecność wartości religijnych (nie przypadkiem religio po łacinie oznacza „więź” właśnie) w polityce jest jak najbardziej pożądana.

#### Filar „postchadeckości”

Rabin Hofmeister zauważył przy tym, że nie należy wartości tych utożsamiać z „judeochrześcijańskim dziedzictwem Europy”, o którym często słyszymy w wypowiedziach polityków z różnych stron naszego kontynentu. Zbyt długa i bolesna jest historia przemocy chrześcijan względem Żydów, by warto uznawać ją w jakikolwiek sposób za godny strzeżenia depozyt. Tym bardziej, że „judeochrześcijańskie dziedzictwo” służy dziś przede wszystkim różnym prawniczym ekstremistom obecnym w polityce europejskiej za oręż w „cywilizacyjnej walce” z islamem. Niemniej trudno zaprzeczyć, jak skonstatował rabin Hofmeister, że istnieją „judeochrześcijańskie wartości”, które mogą stanowić aksjologiczną podstawę dla prowadzenia w Europie wielu pożądaných i skutecznych form działalności politycznej.

Dotyczy to także dialogu z islamem. Zwracał na to uwagę w Wiedniu imam Yahya Sergio Yahe Pallavicini, prezydent Europejskiej Rady Liderów Muzułmańskich (EULEMA), który zauważył, że obecnie żyjącym w państwach Unii muzułmanom proponuje się zwykle „tożsamość europejską” (potwierdzaną europejskim obywatelstwem i paszportem) bez żadnej aksjologicznej podstawy, umożliwiającej konsekwentne zakorzenienie i budowanie więzi z innymi w europejskiej wspólnocie. Przyjmując zatem „tożsamość europejską”, młodsze pokolenia muzułmanów w Europie często szybko się sekularyzują, ale poczucie wykluczenia nie znika, a nawet wzmacnia się, gdy przyjmowana „tożsamość europejska” odkrywana jest jako właśnie aksjologiczna próżnia.

A przecież to, że projekt europejski nie powinien za swoją podstawę obierać aksjologicznej próżni, pokazuje postawa pragnących wejść do Unii Ukraińców, którzy bohatercko bronią się przeciw rosyjskiej agresji. Trudno nie zauważyć, że Putin dla wojny z Ukrainą przywołuje także uzasadnienia religijne. Chrześcijaństwo po raz kolejny w dziejach Europy jest usprawiedliwieniem dla brutalnej przemocy. Tym bardziej trzeba zwracać uwagę (a czynili to w Wiedniu wywodzący się z różnych europejskich krajów prawosławni hierarchowie), że proputinowskie działania Patriarchatu Moskiewskiego są haniebne.

#### MEDZIKULTURNÝ DIALÓG EP: CIRKVI BY MALI POMÁHAŤ UKONČOVAŤ A NIE PODPOROVAŤ VOJNY

DÁTUM: 09.12.2022 17:05 AUTOR:

#### JNK Priorita: 4 Kategória: Politické udalosti - pol

Medzikultúrny dialóg EP: Cirkvi by mali pomáhať ukončovať a nie podporovať vojny

Viedeň 9. decembra (TASR) - Cirkvi by mali byť vo vojne riešením a nie problémom a mali by pomáhať vojny ukončovať a nie ich podporovať. V piatok to odznelo vo Viedni na konferencii «Náboženstvo a budúcnosť Európy - reakcia cirkví a náboženských komunit na vojnu, konflikty a ich účasť pri budovaní budúcnosti Európy». Informuje o tom spravodajca TASR.

Na 24. výročnom stretnutí Medzikultúrneho dialógu politickej skupiny Európskej ľudovej strany (EPP) s cirkvami a náboženskými komunitami sa hľadali odpovede náboženských komunit na vojnu na Ukrajine a spôsob formovania budúcnosti EÚ.

Hlavnými hosťami boli generálny sekretár Komisie katolíckych biskupských konferencií EÚ (COMECE) Manuel Enrique Barrios Prieto, vrchný rabin židovskej komunity vo Viedni Schlomo Hofmeister a predseda Európskej rady moslimských lídrov imám Yahya Sergio Yahe Pallavicini. Spoločne sa zhodli, že náboženstvo je integrálnou súčasťou európskej identity a kultúry a pomocou otvoreného dialógu by malo pomáhať pri vzájomnom porozumení medzi ľuďmi.

Konferencia odsúdila posväcovanie Putinovej vojny moskovským patriarchom Kirillom, pretože v mene náboženstva nikto nesmie napadnúť inú krajinu. Hovorilo sa aj o schizme v pravoslávnej cirkvi, čo cítiť najmä na Ukrajine. S tým súvisí delenie veriacich medzi Konštantínopol a Moskvu ako náboženské centrá a lobbings v balkánskych krajinách, aby sa tamojší veriaci priklonili na jednu zo strán.

Prof. Antoine Arjakovsky z paryskeho Kolegium Bernardynów, wybitny znawca historii i teologii prawosławia (który przed laty był doradcą zarówno MSZ Rosji, jak i MSZ Ukrainy), na wiedeńskim spotkaniu skonstatował bez najmniejszych wątpliwości, że Rosyjski Kościół Prawosławny znalazł się nie tylko w stanie schizmy kanonicznej z innymi Kościołami prawosławnymi na świecie, ale że powinien zostać oficjalnie przez nie uznany za heretycki. Ekskluzywistyczną „etnofilię” kościelną głoszoną dziś przez Putina i patriarchę Cyryla uznano bowiem w świecie prawosławnym za doktrynalne odstępstwo jeszcze w XIX stuleciu.

Obecne okoliczności – zarówno „wojujący sekularyzm”, jak i agresja Rosji na Ukrainę (uzasadniana fałszywymi odniesieniami do prawosławnej teologii) – sprawiają, że europejcy chadecy coraz mocniej czują, iż mamy do czynienia ze szczególnym momentem dziejowym, w którym chadeckość powinna zostać zdefiniowana na nowo.

Skoro „judeochrześcijańskie wartości” są częścią europejskiej polityki i można z ich pomocą przeciwstawiać się przemocy generowanej spolityzowaną religią i antyreligią promującą aksjologiczną dżunglę bez możliwości stworzenia trwałych więzi i społecznego zaufania, taka świadomość powinna zaznaczyć się również w określonej tożsamości politycznej.

I podobnie jak współczesne chrześcijaństwo potrzebuje, zgodnie z diagnozą ks. Tomáša Halíka, swojej „autotransgresji”, tak samo owe „autoprzekroczenia” potrzebuje też europejska chadecja. Oparcie się na pozytywne, wywodzących się z wiodących w Europie religijnych tradycji wartościach, by skutecznie przeciwstawiać się generującej agresję aksjologicznej próżni, może stać się dla „postchadeckości” głównym filarem.

Viacerí cirkevní hostia situáciu formálne za schizmu nepovažujú, liturgicky však áno a aj preto by Západ alebo EP mali vyvíjať ekumenické snahy na zmierenie oboch táborov. Viacerí hostia zdôraznili, že náboženstvo je jav nadnárodný a nesmie sa spájať s nacionalizmom.

«*Náboženstvo a nacionalizmus sa navzájom vylučujú, to je oxymoron,*» uviedol rabín Schlomo Hofmeister. Zároveň upozornil, že odkaz mnohých politikov na židovsko-kresťanské korene Európy sa nesmie premeniť na boj proti islamu v Európe. Naopak, všetky cirkvi majú pomáhať pri budovaní sociálnej súdržnosti, ktorá by mala byť stredobodom európskej politiky.

(spravodajca TASR Jaromír Novak) bre Klúčové slová: EÚ-EP-EPP-Rakúsko-cirkvi-dialóg-Ukrajina-uarus  
Source: 2022120900000322

### LEXMANN A EPP: EÚ OCHRANOU NÁBOŽENSKEJ SLOBODY CHRÁNI ĽUDSKÉ PRÁVA VO SVETE

**DÁTUM: 09.12.2022 15:14**

**HIM Priorita: 4 Kategória: Politické udalosti - pol**

Lexmann a EPP: EÚ ochranou náboženskej slobody chráni ľudské práva vo svete

Viedeň 9. decembra (TASR) - Vymenovanie belgického diplomata Fransa van Daeleho za osobitného vyslanca pre presadzovanie slobody náboženského vyznania alebo viery mimo EÚ je naplnením cieľov, o ktorých sa snaží Európsky parlament (EP) a Európska ľudová strana (EPP) cez Medzikultúrny dialóg skupiny EPP s cirkvami a náboženskými komunitami.

V piatok vo Viedni to pre TASR uviedli prvý podpredseda EP, rakúsky europoslanec Othmar Karas a slovenská europoslankyňa Miriam Lexmann (KDH), kde sa konalo 24. výročné stretnutie Medzikultúrneho dialógu EPP s cirkvami a náboženskými komunitami pod názvom «Náboženstvo a budúcnosť Európy».

Európska komisia v stredu (7.12) vymenovala Fransa van Daeleho za osobitného vyslanca pre presadzovanie slobody náboženského vyznania alebo viery mimo EÚ. Jej znovuzriadenie v europarlamente dlhodobo žiadala frakcia EPP, v čom bola aktívna aj Miriam Lexmann. Poslankyňa v tejto súvislosti uviedla, že v 21. storočí sú pre vieru alebo presvedčenie prenasledovaní ľudia v 62 krajinách sveta, že 68 percent obyvateľov planéty žije v krajinách, kde je porušovaná sloboda náboženského vyznania a každý deň je v priemere zabitých 13 kresťanov kvôli svojej viere.

«*Náboženská sloboda môže byť považovaná za lakmusový papier ostatných slobôd. Keď vidíme utlačanie náboženskej slobody, je dôležité zakročiť rôznymi diplomatickými procedúrami alebo zahraničnopolitickými riešeniami. Lebo takéto zárodoky konfliktov alebo napätia v spoločnosti môžu viesť ku genocídám a vojenským konfliktom,*» opísala situáciu. Europoslanec Karas pre TASR priznal, že nového osobitného vys-

lanca pre ochranu náboženskej slobody nepozná osobne, je však presvedčený, že eurokomisia urobila «dobrú voľbu». «Podporujem jeho misiu a dúfam v naše skoré stretnutie, aby som zistil s akými nápadmi prichádza,» povedal na adresu Van Daeleho.

Prvým európskym vyslancom pre náboženskú slobodu mimo EÚ bol od roku 2016 Ján Figel. Tento post potom zostal takmer dva roky neobsadený, pričom bývalý cyperský eurokomisár Chrystos Stylianidis v roku 2021 zastával túto funkciu iba štyri mesiace. UPOZORNENIE: TASR vydá k správe zvukový záznam

(spravodajca TASR Jaromír Novak) bre

Kľúčové slová: EÚ-EP-EPP-sloboda-náboženská-vyslanec-Lexmann-Karas  
Source: 2022120900000270

**DÁTUM: 10.12.2022 13:48**

**JNK Priorita: 4 Kategória: Politické udalosti - pol**

Karas: Náboženstvo v Európe sa nemá spájať s politikou ani s posväcovaním vojny Viedeň 10. decembra (TASR) - Náboženstvo v Európe 21. storočia nemá byť spájané s politikou ani s posväcovaním vojny. Uviedol to prvý podpredseda Európskeho parlamentu (EP) Othmar Karas, ktorý je zodpovedný za článok 17 Lisabonskej zmluvy, čiže dialóg s náboženskými komunitami a nekonfesionálnymi združeniami, informuje spravodajca TASR.

Rakúsky europoslanec bol hosťom dvojdňovej konferencie vo Viedni (9.–10. decembra) s názvom «Náboženstvo a budúcnosť Európy - reakcia cirkví a náboženských komunít na vojnu, konflikty a ich účasť pri budovaní budúcnosti Európy», ktorú pripravila Európska ľudová strana (EPP), konkrétne Skupina EPP pre medzikultúrny dialóg s cirkvami a náboženskými komunitami.

Karas zdôraznil, že politici aj cirkvi zdieľajú zodpovednosť za sociálnu súdržnosť v Európe. «Medzináboženský dialóg má kľúčový význam pre demokratický dialóg v súčasnej kríze. Je nevyhnutný pre mier, sociálnu súdržnosť a politické prijatie prehlbovania EÚ,» uviedol.

Europoslanci z Poľska a Maďarska Jan Olbrycht a György Hölvényi, spolupredsedovia pracovnej skupiny EPP pre medzikultúrny a náboženský dialóg, vyzdvihli úlohu náboženstiev počas konfliktov a presnili, že pri diskusi o úlohe cirkví v kontexte ruskej agresie na Ukrajine sa treba pozrieť na spôsob a obsah ich komunikácie pri riešení spoločenských problémov. Podľa ich slov je odkazom konferencie to, že sa treba spoločne zamerať na vytváranie mieru, bezpečnosť a úlohu medzináboženského dialógu počas vojny.

Karas upozornil, že ak by bol ignorovaný náboženský rozmer pri tvorbe politiky, tak spoločnosť zlyhá, lebo jej veľká časť bude mať pocit vylúčenia, čo môže viesť k jej radikalizácii. To sa deje vo Francúzsku, kde je ignorovaná početná moslimská komunita. Výslo-

vil sa tiež proti «inštrumentalizácii» náboženstva, k čomu došlo v Rusku počas agresie voči Ukrajine, keď pravoslávna cirkev «posvätila» túto vojnu.

Pripomenul, že inštitúcie EÚ majú tradíciu združovať tri hlavné náboženstvá a rôzne odnože kresťanstva okolo okrúhleho stola, aby viedli dialóg. «Zaujal ma však názor, že netreba hovoriť o židovsko-kresťanských koreňoch Európy, aby sme sa tým vymedzovali voči moslimom. Lebo kresťania v Európe počas stáročí prenasledovali Židov. To bolo pre mňa poučné a už toto slovné spojenie nebudem používať. Lepšie je hovoriť, že máme spoločné hodnoty,» uzatvoril Karas.

(spravodajca TASR Jaromír Novak) lva Klúčové slová: EÚ-EPP-cirkvi-dialóg-vojna-Karas  
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Podobný text

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