

Die **europäische Union** und ihre **Commissio Episcopatum Communitatis Europensis** (COMECE)

Das PRO SCIENTIA-Leitthema Europa in diesem Förderjahr legt es nahe, einen Vortrag der „The Catholic Church in the European Union – Commission of the Bishops’ Conferences of the European Union¹“ zu widmen. Der offizielle COMECE Name setzt sich aus dem Lateinischen zusammen und kürzt die Commissio Episcopatum Communitatis Europensis ab.

Einrichtungen

Ein **ständiges Sekretariat** vertritt die 24 teilhabenden Bischofskonferenzen. In alphabetischer Reihenfolge sind dies: Belgien, Bulgarien, Deutschland, England und Wales, Frankreich, Irland, Italien, Griechenland, Litauen, Lettland, Luxemburg, Malta, den Niederlanden, Österreich, Polen, Portugal, Rumänien, Schottland, Skandinavien, Slowakei, Slowenien, Spanien, der Tschechischen Republik, Ungarn und die zwei assoziierten Mitglieder Kroatien und Schweiz. Die Bischofskonferenzen sind dabei nicht immer mit den Nationalstaaten deckungsgleich. Stellenweise gibt es in einem Territorium mehrere Bischofskonferenzen.²

Die COMECE ist am 3. März 1980 gegründet worden und besteht aus einem Exekutivorgan (Ausschuss). Dieser wird vom Präsidenten, zwei Vizepräsidenten und dem Generalsekretär gebildet. Das ständige Sekretariat wird vom Generalsekretär geleitet. Sie wird von den teilhabenden europäischen Bischofskonferenzen finanziert.

Der Ausschuss besteht aus Jean-Claude Kardinal Hollerich, dem Erzbischof von Luxemburg und den Vizepräsidenten Bischof Mariano Crociata von Latina (Italien), Bischof Noel Treanor von Down und Connor (Nordirland, Großbritannien), Bischof Jan Vokal von Königgrätz (Tschechien) und Bischof Franz-Josef Overbeck von Essen (Deutschland). Alle präsidierten Mitglieder sind Diözesanbischöfe. Fr. Manuel Enrique Barrios Prieto (Spanien) ist der Generalsekretär seit 2019.

Fünf Abteilungen bilden Arbeitsgruppen und strukturieren die behandelten Themen:

- 1) Abteilung für die Themen Kirche, Religion und Europa:** Katholische Kirche in Europa, Ökumene, Dialog mit anderen Religionen, Kirche und Staat in Europa
- 2) Abteilung für die Themen Die EU in der Welt:** Außen- und Sicherheitspolitik, Handelspolitik und Global Governance, Entwicklungspolitik
- 3) Abteilung für die Themen Das Europäische Gesellschaftsmodell:** Soziale Angelegenheiten, Informationsgesellschaft, Forschung und Bioethik, Bildung und Jugend
- 4) Abteilung für die Themen Recht und Gerechtigkeit:** Menschenrechte, Asyl und Migration, Juristische Fragen, Kirche und Staat in Europa
- 5) Zukunft der EU:** Europäische Integration, Europäisierung der Union.

¹ The Catholic Church in the European Union Commission of the Bishops’ Conferences of the European Union, online unter: <https://www.comece.eu> [28.04.2022].

² Die Teilnehmenden Bischofskonferenzen sind auch unter <http://www.gcatholic.org/dioceses/conference/302.htm> [28.04.2022] zu finden.

Arbeitsweise

Halbjährliche Treffen der Bischöfe mit dem Apostolischen Nuntius bei der Europäischen Union. Grundlage Ihrer Arbeit ist das COMECE Statute³:

Aufgabe / Mission⁴

- “Partnering with the EU political process in the areas of interest to the Episcopates of the European Union;”
- “Monitoring the activities of the European Union and maintaining the COMECE Member Bishops’ Conferences informed of such developments;”
- “Communicating to the EU institutions the opinions and views of the Episcopates of the European Union on the European integration process.”
- Interessenvertretung und Abgleich
- Beobachten
- Interesse für die EU-Politik und ihre Rechtssetzung zu wecken.
- Nationale Bischofskonferenzen
- Katholische Soziallehre
- Vereintes Europa

Texte / Papers der letzten Zeit (März 2022)

- *24/03/2022 Statement of the Christian Group on Migration on the arrival of refugees from Ukraine (EN)*⁵



J-C Kardinal Hollerich // Metropolitan Hilarion of Volokolamsk, Chairman of the Moscow Patriarchate department for external church relations, der für Moscow Patriarch Kirill geantwortet hat.

a) Auszüge aus dem Schreiben⁶:

Since the first day of the attacks in Kyiv, many of our members have responded to the exodus from Ukraine, setting up both small and large-scale support structures, opening the doors of parishes, private houses, or church institutions across Europe, and transferring large scale support to border countries and, where still possible, into Ukraine. **It is against this background that we would like to share what**

³ Das Statut von 2017 bzw. 2018 kann in Italienischer Sprache unter <https://www.comece.eu/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2022/04/Statuto-della-COMECE-2017-FINAL.pdf> und in Englischer Sprache unter <https://www.comece.eu/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2022/04/EN-Statuto-della-COMECE-2017-FINAL.pdf> [beide 28.04.2022] eingesehen werden.

⁴ Siehe die Präambel des Statuts unter der Fußnote 2 bzw. <https://www.comece.eu/comece/our-mission/> [28.04.2022].

⁵ Online unter <https://www.comece.eu/statement-of-the-christian-group-on-migration-on-the-arrival-of-refugees-from-ukraine-en/> [Abruf 28.04.2022].

⁶ Siehe Anhang 1 bzw. <https://www.comece.eu/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2022/03/CG-Ukraine-Statement-Final.pdf> [Abruf 28.04.2022].

we consider important steps to be taken at policy and practice level to respond to the important and increasing needs of the affected population.

We appeal to state institutions and the EU to further develop and work on the following areas:

- All persons leaving Ukraine in need of protection should be allowed to avail themselves of protection irrespective of their origin, colour of skin, gender, orientation, ability, or residence status. In this respect, we call on EU Member States to implement temporary protection in the widest possible scope and to always take humanitarian considerations into account in their response; in particular we want to reiterate that, as underlined by the operational guidelines of 18 March 2022, the scope of the directive goes beyond the protection of Ukrainian citizens only and that the directive should be applied to all groups covered;
- Capacity should be built up, especially in Member States that have not yet dealt with such a large number of people coming to their country, by swiftly and efficiently putting in place support and (national) coordination structures to allow for access to social benefits, employment, language classes and other rights to avoid the risk of exploitation, (...)
- Volunteer welcoming and private housing initiatives should be supported, while encouraging minimum standard setting, safeguarding and timely state provision of information on accessing rights and legal status and transition to permanent housing;
- While acknowledging the difficulty of ensuring reliable media coverage at the border of Ukraine, the European Union Institutions should ensure that alleged discrimination against people of colour or minority groups such as Roma when trying to enter the EU is investigated and addressed;
- Support systems for the most vulnerable should be activated and strengthened, such as (unaccompanied) minors, victims of trauma, as well as victims of human trafficking. The set-up of robust systems and practises should include the drafting, publication, and dissemination of protection and safeguarding policies and mechanisms, and the establishment of safe recruitment policies and practises for persons and organisations working with refugees;
- Special attention should be given to the needs of women to ensure that they are protected from human traffickers and gender-based violence (...)
- Special attention should be given to the needs of children and unaccompanied minors to grant them access to guardians or equivalent specialised childcare staff, prevent placement in institutions, access to education (...)

Churches and Christian organisations stand ready to further support EU, national and local authorities in these efforts.

b) Auszüge aus der Antwort des russ. Patriarchen⁷:

The relationships between the West and Russia have reached a deadlock, resulting in the loss of mutual trust and capacity to hear each other. In this situation, it is essential to renounce the rhetoric of ultimatum, establish channels of dialogue and organize official and unofficial negotiations that can help achieve a just peace. As Christians, we are called to further this cause by our prayers and work.

Today His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia does much to restore peace and trust, in the Ukrainian land in particular, working hard every day to make this happen. The most important thing in this situation is to do everything in our power to make sure that the direct negotiations continue, producing a result in the shortest possible time, and that the relationships between the West and Russia still have a potential for dialogue.

We believe that the COMECE could play an important role in building up such dialogue by working with representatives of the European Union in order to prevent further escalation of the current situation and to help overcome it on the basis of the Christian values which unite us all.

Oder zur eigenen Lektüre alternativ:

- Statement of COMECE, CCEE and KBS Presidents on Ukraine (EN, IT, SK)⁸

Anhang 1: Text zu a)

Anhang 2: Text zu b)

⁷ Siehe Anhang 2 bzw. <https://www.comece.eu/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2022/03/Ukraine-response-letter-from-Hilarion.pdf> [Abruf 28.04.2022].

⁸ Online unter <https://www.comece.eu/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2022/04/Statement-19032022-ECSD-joint-statement-peace-in-Ukraine.pdf> [Abruf 28.04.2022].



Statement on the arrival of refugees from Ukraine and the application of the Temporary Protection Directive

With a rapidly rising number of refugees fleeing Ukraine due to the war inflicted by the Russian regime's aggression, Europe is facing the greatest refugee movement since World War II.

Our organisations represent Churches throughout Europe – Anglican, Orthodox, Protestant and Catholic – as well as Christian agencies particularly concerned with migrants, refugees, and asylum seekers. As Christian organisations, we are deeply committed to the inviolable dignity of the human person created in the image of God, as well as to the concepts of the common good, global solidarity and the promotion of a society that welcomes strangers and values freedom, security and justice in policy and practice.

Since the first day of the attacks in Kyiv, many of our members have responded to the exodus from Ukraine, setting up both small and large-scale support structures, opening the doors of parishes, private houses, or church institutions across Europe, and transferring large scale support to border countries and, where still possible, into Ukraine. **It is against this background that we would like to share what we consider important steps to be taken at policy and practice level to respond to the important and increasing needs of the affected population.**

We are moved and touched by the immediate generous support and solidarity rendered to Ukrainians by the overwhelming majority of Europeans, including our members, and EU Member States. However, we are concerned that the activities of volunteers and civil society organisations might be considered a replacement for the much needed support and coordination, which is and must remain a state responsibility.

We are also in strong support of the Council decision to activate the Temporary Protection Directive (TPD) and to introduce operational guidelines for external border management to facilitate border crossings at the EU-Ukraine borders. We also welcome the mobilisation and flexibility of EU funding to be allocated towards the needs of Ukrainian refugees. It is also encouraging that EU Member States have taken a pragmatic approach to help the people concerned, for example, by allowing people to choose which EU Member State to go to. These practices and policies show that Europe can be a champion of refugee protection if it wants to.

We appeal to state institutions and the EU to further develop and work on the following areas:

- All persons leaving Ukraine in need of protection should be allowed to avail themselves of protection – irrespective of their origin, colour of skin, gender, orientation, ability, or residence status. In this respect, we call on EU Member States to implement temporary protection in the widest possible scope and to always take humanitarian considerations into account in their response; in particular we want to reiterate that, as underlined by the operational guidelines of 18 March 2022, the scope of the directive goes beyond the protection of Ukrainian citizens only and that the directive should be applied to all groups covered;
- The TPD should be implemented in a harmonised way and provide a secure residence status with all the rights and entitlements foreseen in the Directive for all those covered by its scope. The EU should provide financial and coordinative support to fulfil the rights that can be enjoyed under the TPD (employment, recognition of qualifications, healthcare, education, housing, etc);
- The TPD should be applied to all Ukrainians who were on EU territory before 24th February 2022 with a pending legal status application, and returns should be stopped in line with [UNHCR position on returns to Ukraine](#);

- The notion of close and dependent relatives in the TPD must be generously interpreted;
- In case neighbouring countries' capacities are stretched and they request support in the form of relocation, Member States should come forward in offering relocation placements and the European Commission should take a coordinating role in this process. Individual preferences and consent on the location should be taken into account (e.g. special ties, family unity);
- Self-distribution of refugees within EU Member States must be underpinned by support in order to protect vulnerable groups who face difficulty travelling (for example, people with disabilities). For those who have no networks in EU countries and are unaware of their rights or where to go, assistance in accessing transportation and services must be provided;
- The Solidarity Platform should be utilised to make relocation possible and implement responsibility sharing, as well as to coordinate disbursement of EU funds to where it is most needed;
- Capacity should be built up, especially in Member States that have not yet dealt with such a large number of people coming to their country, by swiftly and efficiently putting in place support and (national) coordination structures to allow for access to social benefits, employment, language classes and other rights to avoid the risk of exploitation, as stated in the TPD;
- Volunteer welcoming and private housing initiatives should be supported, while encouraging minimum standard setting, safeguarding and timely state provision of information on accessing rights and legal status and transition to permanent housing;
- While acknowledging the difficulty of ensuring reliable media coverage at the border of Ukraine, the European Union Institutions should ensure that alleged discrimination against people of colour or minority groups such as Roma when trying to enter the EU is investigated and addressed;
- Support systems for the most vulnerable should be activated and strengthened, such as (unaccompanied) minors, victims of trauma, as well as victims of human trafficking. The set-up of robust systems and practises should include the drafting, publication, and dissemination of protection and safeguarding policies and mechanisms, and the establishment of safe recruitment policies and practises for persons and organisations working with refugees;
- Special attention should be given to the needs of women to ensure that they are protected from human traffickers and gender-based violence during their journey and upon reception. Access to the labour market, gender-sensitive reception facilities, and financial assistance should be provided to prevent trafficking, exploitation, and recruitment into irregular work;
- Special attention should be given to the needs of children and unaccompanied minors to grant them access to guardians or equivalent specialised childcare staff, prevent placement in institutions, access to education, and ensure that safeguarding concerns are taken into consideration during the reception phase, including when done through private individuals;
- Funds that have been made available should be flexible in scope of utilisation, easily accessible for civil society and Member States, and should be prioritised to sustain pre-existing activities. Funding should also be allocated to support the Republic of Moldova to assist refugees;
- Scapegoating and hate speech against Russian and Russian speaking citizens in the EU should be acknowledged and denounced, whilst the Russian regime should be recognised and condemned as aggressors and instigators of the war;
- An ongoing commitment of protection to other groups of refugees and asylum seekers should be maintained by not neglecting, discriminating against, or diverting resources from them, particularly those stuck on the EU's border, and ambitious commitments to step up resettlement should be maintained.

Churches and Christian organisations stand ready to further support EU, national and local authorities in these efforts.

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17.03. 2022 г.

**Его Высокопреосвященству,
Высокопреосвященнейшему Жан-Клоду кардиналу ХОЛЛЕРИШУ,
Архиепископу Люксембургскому,
президенту Комиссии епископских конференций Европейского Союза**

Ваше Высокопреосвященство!

Благодарю Вас за направленное в адрес Святейшего Патриарха Московского и всея Руси Кирилла письмо от 8 марта 2022 года.

Сейчас молитвы и мысли миллионов христиан во всем мире связаны с драматическими событиями на многострадальной земле Украины. Совершенно очевидно, что текущий конфликт не может быть разрешен путем все новых публичных заявлений, которых уже было сделано большое количество.

Отношения между Западом и Россией зашли в тупик, следствием чего является взаимная утрата доверия и способности слышать друг друга. В этом контексте ключевое значение имеет отказ от языка ультиматумов, налаживание каналов диалога, организация формальных и неформальных переговоров, способных приблизить достижение справедливого мира. Как христиане мы призваны содействовать этому нашими молитвами и трудом.

Русская Православная Церковь на протяжении вот уже восьми лет за каждой Литургией возносит молитву о прекращении противостояния на украинской земле. В связи с последними событиями в чинопоследование Божественной литургии также включена особая молитва о скорейшем восстановлении мира. Мы призываем всех усиленно молиться о том, чтобы прекратилась всякая военная конфронтация между Россией и Украиной, чтобы Господь силою Своею помог нашим народам вновь обрести мир и благоденствие. В эти трагические дни сердца верующих нашей Церкви, паства которой находится по обе стороны конфликта, исполнены скорби. Как напомнил Святейший Патриарх Кирилл в своей недавней проповеди, «Всякая война между братьями — это дело диавольское, а не Божие».

В нынешних тяжелых условиях ключевое значение имеет оказание помощи беженцам и всем пострадавшим в ходе боевых действий. Такая работа ведется и Московским Патриархатом, и входящей в его состав

Украинской Православной Церковью, и структурами Римско-Католической Церкви. Надеюсь, что осуществляемые на данном направлении труды будут продолжены.

Святейший Патриарх Московский и всея Руси Кирилл сегодня делает многое для восстановления мира и доверия, в том числе на украинской земле. Данные усилия имеют характер кропотливой ежедневной работы. Самое главное в сложившихся условиях – сделать все возможное, чтобы начавшиеся прямые переговоры были продолжены и в кратчайшие сроки привели к результату, а отношения между Западом и Россией сохраняли потенциал диалога.

Мы полагаем, что для выстраивания такого диалога большое значение могла бы иметь и работа СОМЕСЕ с представителями Европейского Союза, направленная на предотвращение дальнейшей эскалации текущей ситуации и содействующая ее преодолению на основе объединяющих всех нас христианских ценностей.

Господь да сохранит народы России, Украины и всей Европы и да дарует нам Свой мир!

С любовью во Христе,

**Председатель
Отдела внешних церковных связей
Московского Патриархата
митрополит Волоколамский**

+ Кирилл

Translated from the Russian

No. 04/281

17th March 2022

His Eminence Jean-Claude Cardinal HOLLERICH
Archbishop of Luxembourg
President
Commission of the Bishops' Conferences of the European Union

Your Eminence,

I thank you for your letter of 8th March 2022, addressed to His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia.

These days, prayers and thoughts of millions of Christians across the world are concerned with the dramatic developments in the longsuffering land of Ukraine. It is completely obvious that the current conflict cannot be resolved through yet another public statements, already made in large numbers.

The relationships between the West and Russia have reached a deadlock, resulting in the loss of mutual trust and capacity to hear each other. In this situation, it is essential to renounce the rhetoric of ultimatum, establish channels of dialogue and organize official and unofficial negotiations that can help achieve a just peace. As Christians, we are called to further this cause by our prayers and work.

For eight years now, during every Liturgy the Russian Orthodox Church has been offering a prayer for the cessation of the conflict in the Ukrainian land. In view of the recent developments, a special prayer for the soonest restoration of peace has been included in the Divine Liturgy. We call upon everyone to pray fervently for the cessation of every military confrontation between Russia and Ukraine, that the Lord by His power may help our peoples find peace and welfare again. In these tragic days the hearts of the faithful of our Church, whose flock is on both sides of the conflict, are overwhelmed with sorrow. As His Holiness Patriarch Kirill reminded in his recent homily, "every war between brothers is devil's work, not God's."

In these trying circumstances, it is of crucial importance to render aid to refugees and all those affected by the hostilities. The Moscow Patriarchate and the Ukrainian

Orthodox Church, which forms its part, as well as various institutions of the Roman Catholic Church engage in these activities. I hope that this work continues.

Today His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia does much to restore peace and trust, in the Ukrainian land in particular, working hard every day to make this happen. The most important thing in this situation is to do everything in our power to make sure that the direct negotiations continue, producing a result in the shortest possible time, and that the relationships between the West and Russia still have a potential for dialogue.

We believe that the COMECE could play an important role in building up such dialogue by working with representatives of the European Union in order to prevent further escalation of the current situation and to help overcome it on the basis of the Christian values which unite us all.

May the Lord preserve the peoples of Russia, Ukraine and the whole Europe, and grant unto us His peace!

With love in Christ,

**/+Hilarion/
Metropolitan of Volokolamsk
Chairman
Department for External Church Relations
Moscow Patriarchate**