

Commission brings together non-confessional organisations to discuss “The Future of Europe: a values-based and effective Union”

This eighth annual high-level meeting discussed the topic *“The Future of Europe: a values-based and effective Union”*. The meeting is part of the regular dialogue with churches, religions, philosophical and non-confessional organisations foreseen by Article 17 of the Lisbon Treaty.

First Vice-President Frans **Timmermans** said: *“Europe is at a pivotal moment, and for me the most fundamental thing we must do is listen to organisations that represent our citizens, whatever their faith or convictions. The Commission is seizing this unique moment to discuss the future direction of the European Union. Our common European values must remain the bedrock of our future choices, and we are consulting widely on how to effectively anchor our future policies in our shared values. Talking with religions, churches and non-confessional organisations is an important part of this process.”*

Today’s high-level meeting is an occasion for in-depth discussion, addressing questions around the issues of values and governance. The current discussion around the future of Europe raises a number of questions about how to make Europe more effective, more democratic and more relevant. The participants also addressed the social dimension of Europe, looking in particular at the basic social principles that must be promoted at European level and how best to approach this. The organisations present were invited to work with the Commission throughout the reflection process on the future of Europe, to relay the views of the organisations they represent, and to further encourage debate on the ideas discussed at today’s meeting.

Background

Today’s high level meeting with representatives of philosophical and non-confessional organisation is the eighth in the series of meetings launched by the Commission in 2009 when the dialogue with churches, religions, philosophical and non-confessional organisations was enshrined in the Lisbon Treaty (Art 17 TFEU). The dialogue is under the responsibility of First Vice-President Timmermans.

The Commission will hold its annual meeting with religious leaders on 7 November 2017 on the topic of the Future of Europe.

On 1 March 2017, the European Commission adopted a White Paper on the future of Europe ([IP/17/385](#)). The aim of the White Paper is to encourage debate on how to ensure that the EU can protect, defend and empower all its citizens. It sets out the main challenges and opportunities for Europe in the coming decade: the impact of new technologies, globalisation, security concerns and

the rise of nationalism. It underlines the need to grasp new developments and seize new opportunities. The White Paper presents five possible scenarios for how the Union could evolve by 2025 depending on how Member States choose to respond.

The White Paper marks the beginning of a process for the EU27 to decide on the future of their Union. To encourage this debate, the Commission, together with the European Parliament and interested Member States, will host a series of 'Future of Europe Debates' across Europe's cities and regions. The Commission has also fed the debate with a series of Reflection Papers on five defining issues for the EU by 2025. Four reflection papers have already been adopted: on developing Europe's social dimension (26 April), on harnessing globalisation (10 May), on deepening the Economic and Monetary Union (31 May), and on the future of Europe's defence (7 June). A Reflection Paper will follow on the future of EU finances is due for adoption on 28 June.

President Juncker's State of the Union speech in September 2017 will take these ideas forward and first conclusions could be drawn at the December 2017 European Council. This will allow decisions on a course of action to be rolled out in time for the European Parliament elections in 2019.

For More Information

- [White paper on the future of Europe and the way forward](#)
- [European Commission' dialogue with churches, religious communities and philosophical and non-confessional organisations](#)

List of Meeting Participants

- Ms Marie-Thérèse BESSON, President, Institut Maçonnique Européen, Grand Master of the Women's Grand Lodge of France
- Ms Martine CERF, Secretary General of Egalité Laïcité Europe (EGALE).
- Ms Claudette CLAVEL, Grand Maître Adjoint de l'ordre Maçonnique Mixte International International Order of co-freemasonry "Le Droit Humain".
- Mr Andrezj DOMINICZAK, President, Polish Humanist Association.
- Mr Giulio ERCOLESSI, President of the European Humanist Federation
- Mr Philippe FOUSSIER, Premier Grand Maître Adjoint of the Grand Orient de France
- Mr Manuel LOPEZ ALVAREZ, President of the Spanish Federation of the International Mixed Masonic Order, "El Derecho Humano".
- Ms Lone Ree MILKAER, President of the Danish Humanist Society
- Mr Keith PORTEOUS WOOD, Executive Director of the National Secular Society
- Mr Jean-Michel REYNAUD, President of the Contribution des Obédiences Maçonniques Adogmatiques et Libérales à la Construction Européenne (COMALACE)
- Mr Claude WACHTELAER, President of the European Association for Free Thought (AEPL).
- Mr Oscar de WANDEL, Grand Chancellor of the Grand Lodge of Belgium.
- Mr Frieder Otto WOLF, President, Humanistischen Verbandes Deutschlands (HVD).