



Der Generalsekretär

21 JAN. 2016

NOTE TO THE MEMBERS OF THE BUREAU

Subject: Annual Report on the European Parliament's implementation of Art. 17 TFEU

SUMMARY

At its meeting on 10 January 2012 the Bureau adopted the principles governing Parliament's implementation of Article 17 TFEU as regards maintaining a regular dialogue with churches, and non-confessional and philosophical organisations, namely:

- the organisation of regular, public seminars with the dialogue partners should continue;
- an annual report on the conducting of the dialogue should be presented to the Bureau;
- Parliament's services should ensure the organisation and management of the dialogue in a regular and well-structured way.

The Bureau is invited to:

- ***take note of the Annual Report on the implementation of Article 17 TFEU;***
- ***request that, in principle, a link be made with ongoing parliamentary work and policy debate, involving and inviting office holders and other Members to participate and attend meetings;***
- ***endorse the use of the provision of the Articles 1 and 4 of the Rules on Public Hearings, last modified by the Bureau on 16 June 2014, as basis for the possibility to invite guests to the events in the framework of the dialogue that can be reimbursed;***
- ***approve the dedication of a section of Parliament's website to the Article 17 TFEU dialogue and associated events, in order to provide a clear and visible interface with the public for Parliament's activities in this area.***

Article 17 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the EU (TFEU) introduced for the first time, a legal basis for an open, transparent and regular dialogue between the EU institutions and churches, religious associations, and philosophical and non-confessional organisations.

Article 17 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union states:

1. *"The Union respects and does not prejudice the status under national law of churches and religious associations or communities in the Member States.*
2. *The Union equally respects the status under national law of philosophical and non-confessional organisations.*
3. *Recognising their identity and their specific contribution, the Union shall maintain an open, transparent and regular dialogue with these churches and organisations."*

While the first two paragraphs of this article provide for the safeguard of the special status under national law of churches and religious associations or communities, as well as of philosophical and non-confessional organisations enjoying a comparable status, paragraph 3 obliges EU institutions to maintain an open, transparent and regular dialogue with these churches and organisations.

Implementation of the Article 17 dialogue by Parliament in 2015

In 2015, under the chairmanship of Vice-President Antonio TAJANI, responsible for Article 17 dialogue, Parliament hosted three high-level events, namely two formal dialogues with the churches and non-confessional organisations and an ad hoc event in December.

- 24 March 2015
- 17 November 2015
- 1 December 2015

Although the themes and speakers were selected by the Parliament, as the host, according to topical relevance, all three events were open to representatives of all participating organisations and were attended by over 100 people in each case. The President of Parliament and the First Vice-President of the Commission were both closely associated with this series of dialogues and actively participated in them.

2015 was marked by the rise of Islamic State (ISIS) and the terror attacks carried out in Paris, both in January and November, which has heightened levels of fear and distrust across Europe and the wider world at the threat now posed to open, free and tolerant societies by such violent and ideological extremists. The worrying rise in religious persecution, especially of Christian communities in the Middle East as a consequence of Islamic radicalism and jihad, was also a determining feature in the discussions. The themes of last year's dialogue thus reflected such concerns and attempted to address the rise of radical fundamentalism and the role of religion in promoting tolerance and respect for human dignity (March) as well as the role of education in tackling it

(November), whilst an ad hoc event in December sought to shed some light specifically on Christian communities in many parts of the world which are under existential threat from extremists and persecuted, tortured or killed on a regular basis solely because of their faith.

Issues for the future of the Article 17 dialogue

Article 17 TFEU is not specific either in the frequency of the Dialogue foreseen or in how they are structured but it could be viewed in the broader context of maintaining an open exchange of views with civil society in general. Article 11 TEU also requires the EU institutions to '*give citizens and representative associations the opportunity to make known and publicly exchange their views in all areas of Union action*'. Furthermore, Article 11(2) adds that the Institutions '*shall maintain an open, transparent and regular dialogue with representative associations and civil society*'. As host of the Article 17 dialogue, the European Parliament should be free to organise events with confessional and non-confessional organisations in such a way as to promote productive discussion with themes selected for their relevance and usefulness in identifying, analysing and addressing underlying challenges in society. This could involve consultation with the organisations themselves on the nature of the topics to be considered.

Efforts have been made, and should continue, to involve both parliamentary committees¹ and the European Parliamentary Research Service (EPRS) in events to provide a link to concrete policy debate as well as in-depth analysis and research which bring added value to the dialogue in terms of political relevance and substance and help to attract the participation of Members.

In view of the Treaty requirement to the European Institutions as a whole to host a regular dialogue, all relevant services of Parliament, as appropriate, should be involved in supporting this dialogue.

In accordance with the Article 1 and 4 of the Rules on Public Hearings, last modified by the Bureau on 16 June 2014, Parliament's governing bodies may organise hearings in the same way as parliamentary committees. In order to clarify and facilitate the smooth organisation of future Article 17 events, it would be appropriate to dispose of the resources for the purpose of the dialogue to invite a maximum of 16 external guests per year that can be reimbursed.

Furthermore, to provide a visible interface and improve the transparency and accessibility of Article 17 events organised by the European Parliament, a section of the Parliament's website could be created for hosting all relevant material on past, present and future events.

¹ The dialogues in 2015 involved the Chairs and Members of the AFET, LIBE and CULT Committees in the discussions.

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Klaus WELLE

Annex: Programmes of the three events in 2015

*The rise of religious radicalism and fundamentalism
and the role of inter-religious dialogue in the
promotion of tolerance and respect for human dignity¹*

**European Parliament,
24 March 2015
15.00 - 18.30
PHS 6B001**

Introductory remarks

- 15.00 **Mr. Antonio Tajani**
Vice-President of the European Parliament
- 15.10 **Ms. Federica Mogherini**
High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy

The rise of religious radicalism and fundamentalism

- 15.20 - 16.15 **Mr. Elmar Brok**
Chairman of the Committee on Foreign Affairs
- His Eminence Metropolitan Emmanuel of France**
Vice President of the Conference of the European Churches (CEC)
Ecumenical Patriarchate
- Dott. Riccardo Di Segni**
Chief Rabbi of Rome
- Imam Hassen Chalghoumi**
President of the Conference of Imams of France
- Father Patrick Daly**
General Secretary of the Commission of the Bishops' Conferences of the
European Community (COMECE)
- 16.15 - 16.45 **Discussion**

¹ A second discussion in the framework of the Article 17 TFEU Dialogue will be held with philosophical and non-confessional organisations on 17 November 2015.

Promoting tolerance and respect for human dignity

16.45 - 17.40

Mr. Claude Moraes

Chairman of the Committee on Civil liberties, Justice and Home Affairs

His Excellency Bishop Theodorus C.M. Hoogenboom

Auxiliary Bishop of Utrecht, Member of COMECE

Right Rev. Robert Innes, Bishop of Europe

Anglican Church

Albert Guigui

Chief Rabbi of Brussels

Permanent representative of the Conference of European Rabbis to the EU.

Ms Hilde Kieboom

Vice-President of the Community of Sant'Egidio

17.40 - 18.10

Discussion

Conclusions

18.10

Mr. Frans Timmermans

First Vice-President of the European Commission

18.20

Mr. Martin Schulz

President of the European Parliament

Reception hosted by **Mr. Antonio Tajani**, Vice-President of the European Parliament

*How can education contribute to tackle
radicalism and fundamentalism in Europe?*

European Parliament

17 November 2015

15.30 - 19.00

PHS 6B001

Introductory remarks

15.30 - 16.00 **Mr. Antonio Tajani**
Vice-President of the European Parliament responsible for interreligious dialogue

Ms. Silvia Costa
Chairwoman of the Committee on Culture and Education

Panel I: The European dimension

(Chair: Ms. Silvia Costa)

16.00 - 16.40 **Ms. Julie Ward**
Rapporteur for the European Parliament initiative report on "the role of intercultural dialogue, cultural diversity and education in promoting EU fundamental values"

Ms. Martine Cerf
Secretary General of Egalité Laïcité Europe

Mr. Pierre Galand
President of the European Humanist Federation

Ms. Yvette Ramon
Grand Master of International Order of Co-freemasonry, "Le Droit Humain"

16.40 - 17.10 **Discussion**

17.10 - 17.20 **Break**

* Organised in cooperation with the European Parliamentary Research Service

Article 17 TFEU dialogue with the Churches, non-confessional and philosophical organisations*

Panel II: National policies and practices in perspective

(Chair: Vice-President Antonio Tajani)

17.20 - 18.00 **Mr. Barend van Driel**
Secretary General of the Association for Intercultural Education

Ms. Nieves Bayo Gallego
Grand Master of the "Gran Logia Simbólica Espanola"

Mr. Henri Sylvestre
Grand Orient de France

Mr. Keith Porteous Wood
Executive Director of the UK National Secular Society

18.00 - 18.30 **Discussion**

Conclusions

18.30 **Mr. Frans Timmermans**
First Vice-President of the European Commission

Reception hosted by **Mr. Antonio Tajani**, Vice-President of the European Parliament

Ad-hoc high-level meeting in the framework of art. 17 TFEU

*The persecution of Christians in the world -
A call for action*

European Parliament

Brussels

1 December 2015

9.15 - 12.30

Room PHS 6B001

09.15 - 09.50 Opening remarks

Mr. Antonio Tajani

Vice-President of the European Parliament responsible for inter-religious dialogue

His Excellency Bishop Jean Kocherols

Auxiliary Bishop of the Archdiocese of Malines-Brussels and Vice-President of COMECE

Rt. Revd Christopher Hill

President of the Conference of European Churches

09.50 - 10.30 *"The condition of Christians in the world"*

- **Prof. Andrea Riccardi**
Founder of the Community of Sant'Egidio
- **Dr. John Newton**
Aid to the Church in Need

"The U.S. perspective"

- **Ambassador Mr. Anthony L. Gardner**
U.S. Ambassador to the European Union

10.30 - 10.40 Break

Ad-hoc high-level meeting in the framework of art. 17 TFEU

10.40 - 11.40 Testimonies by:

Balkans:

His Eminence Cardinal Vinko Puljic
Archbishop of Sarajevo

Pakistan:

Dr. Paul Bhatti
Founder of Shahbaz Bhatti Memorial Trust

Sinai:

Dr. Alganesh Fessaha
President of the NGO Gandhi

Iraq:

Father Musa Yaramis
Ambassador of the Caldean Church in Belgium

Eritrea:

Ms. Helen Berhane
Author of Song of the Nightingale

11.40 - 12.10 Discussion

12.10 - 12.30 Conclusions

Mr. Frans Timmermans
First Vice-President of the European Commission

Mr. Martin Schulz
President of the European Parliament

Gospel sung by **Helen Berhane**

Reception hosted by **Mr. Antonio Tajani**, Vice-President of the European Parliament