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Catholics for a Free Choice (CFFC) is a nongovernmental organisation with special consultative status with the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) of the United Nations. It shapes and advances sexual and reproductive ethics that are based on justice, reflect a commitment to women's well-being, and respect and affirm the moral capacity of women and men to make sound decisions about their lives. Through discourse, education and advocacy, CFFC works in the United States and internationally to infuse these values into public policy, community life, feminist analysis, and Catholic social thinking and teaching.

Catholics for a Free Choice  
1436 U Street NW Suite 301  
Washington DC 20009-3997 USA  
Tel. +1 (202) 986-6093  
Fax +1 (202) 332-7995

Catholics for a Free Choice Europe  
Galaxy 189  
6, rue de la Paroisse  
F-78000 Versailles FRANCE  
Tel./Fax +33 1 39 02 7890

Email: [ffc@catholicsforchoice.org](mailto:ffc@catholicsforchoice.org)  
Web: [www.catholicsforchoice.org](http://www.catholicsforchoice.org)

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PRESERVING  
POWER AND  
PRIVILEGE

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## Foreword

The conflict and polarisation that have characterised the public debate about reproductive health issues in the United States is well known worldwide. Whether the subject is sexuality education for adolescents, access to safe and legal abortion services, international family planning assistance to developing countries, or emergency contraception for women who have been raped, a small but vocal minority of Americans opposed to these services on moral grounds has led a persistent and at times violent effort to limit or ban such services. Sadly, the leadership of most of these efforts rests with the country's Catholic bishops, who have disproportionately invested both their moral and financial capital in lobbying and media efforts against reproductive health services and rights. The bishops' efforts have been peaceful and legal, focused primarily on lobbying and media campaigns. Others in both the Catholic community and among fundamentalist Christians, though, have engaged in trespass, destruction of property (including bombing family planning and abortion clinics), verbal and physical assault of women seeking abortions, and even the murder of health care personnel who provide abortion services. Some of these violent actors have even been Christian clergy. For example, Michael Bray was imprisoned from 1985 to 1989 for bombing seven abortion clinics in Maryland, Washington, DC, and Virginia. He is co-founder and co-pastor of the Reformation Lutheran Church in Maryland. Paul Hill, a Presbyterian minister in both the Presbyterian Church of America (PCA) and the Orthodox Presbyterian Church (OPC), was executed for the murders of a clinic doctor and his escort in Florida.

Europe has watched the debate in the US, believing that such religious fanaticism is part and parcel of what has come to be termed American exceptionalism. It could not, most observers believed, ever happen in Europe, where matters of sexual and reproductive health have been approached rationally and within the larger framework of public health policy. Sensible health policy has included sexuality education and access to contraceptives for young people—and has resulted in abortion rates far lower in most European countries than in the US. Sporadic attempts by US anti-abortion activists to export their efforts to France, Ireland, and Great Britain were met with prompt legal action and the most extreme activists have been detained or deported. Europe's Catholic bishops have made little effort to influence reproductive health policy in most countries, with notable exceptions in Ireland, Malta, Poland, and Slovakia.

But things have changed. Beginning in 1994, a series of United Nations' conferences, including one on population and development and another on women's rights, reflected an international consensus on the importance of reproductive health and rights in the context of human rights. The consensus was sweeping; the only opposition came from the Roman Catholic church, which has a special status as a non-member state permanent observer in the UN, from a few Islamic states, and a very few Latin American countries. The United States, led by President Clinton, and the European Union played strong public roles in support of a new paradigm that placed women at the center of reproductive health policy.

The stinging defeat experienced by the Vatican in these conferences galvanised conservative Catholics in the United States and Europe to work for a reversal of what has come to be known as the Cairo consensus. In the US, the transition to George W. Bush's presidency and a conservative Congress made their task easier. US policy now excludes funding for the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), which provides international

family planning assistance, while other UN agencies such as UNICEF and WHO are under pressure from the US government to limit their involvement in reproductive health services. The United States Agency for International Development (USAID) denies family planning funding to agencies in developing countries if they use their own funds for any abortion-related activities from education to research as well as counselling or medical services. Europe is the last hope for the world's poor women, 535,000 of whom die each year from pregnancy-related causes—about 80,000 from unsafe abortions.

And make no mistake; Europe and the European Union are the next targets of anti-family planning advocates from the Vatican and its conservative Catholic allies. Statements made by the European Union delegates at UN conferences have been roundly criticised and mischaracterised by Vatican spokesman Joaquin Navarro-Valls in an effort to discredit the Union.

Conservative Catholic Members of the European Parliament (MEPs), such as Ireland's Dana Scallon, have attacked a recent European Parliament report on sexual and reproductive health claiming that it will lead to forced abortions. These claims were rejected by Proinsias DeRossa, Irish MEP, who had the courage to take to the floor of Parliament and demand that Scallon “apologise to the House for the scurrilous lies that she told the Irish media about this report.” Other MEPs have sponsored lobbying visits of US anti-abortionists to the Parliament in an attempt to deny EU funding to UNFPA. These lobbyists have claimed that UNFPA is involved in coercive practices in China, claims that have been soundly rejected by several independent investigative missions undertaken by a respected British delegation and the former Dutch ambassador to the UN, Nicolaas Biegman. Poul Nielson, the EU's development minister, was attacked by anti-family planning activists who deliberately misinterpreted his efforts to ensure that the European Commission fulfils its obligations to agreements reached at the International Conference on Population and Development in Cairo in 1994.

The information contained in this report is critical to an understanding of the profound differences in worldview and values that divide most of Europe from conservative Roman Catholic thought. What is at stake is no less than the lives and well-being of the world's women—which for the present are very much in the hands of the European people.

Frances Kissling  
President, Catholics for a Free Choice

## Introduction

The European Union (EU) is a unique political phenomenon of the modern world in which sovereign states have embarked on a voluntary process of closer economic and political cooperation. The original impetus for this cooperation was the bloodshed of World War II, which cost 40 million lives, predominantly in Europe. After the war, peace emerged as a paramount value for Europeans and efforts were made to weave together the sectors of each nation's economy that could precipitate a new war, laying the foundation for the EU. In 1949, ten western European countries formed an intergovernmental organisation called the Council of Europe, located in Strasbourg, France. The council supported the creation of the European Coal and Steel Community in 1951 to oversee production and prices of these important commodities, the first major step toward European integration. In 1957, two more cooperative agreements were signed to create the European Atomic Energy Community and the European Economic Community. The EU was established in Brussels in 1993 by the 12 nations of the European Community. Today membership stands at 15 nations, and in May 2004, ten more nations will join the EU.

### EU member nations:

- Austria
- Belgium
- Denmark
- Finland
- France
- Germany
- Greece
- Ireland
- Italy
- Luxembourg
- The Netherlands
- Portugal
- Spain
- Sweden
- United Kingdom

The Catholic church, by which we mean the hierarchy, has been involved with the EU since its beginnings. The “founding fathers” of the European Community were Christian Democrats and practicing Catholics. The initial involvement of the church with the EU began with a small group of lay Catholics in Strasbourg under the spiritual direction of the Jesuits. On November 4, 1950, the Council of Europe adopted the European Convention on Human Rights. Human rights were of central concern to the Vatican, and from that point on it closely monitored the work of the Council of Europe. The Holy See, the governing and diplomatic body of the Roman Catholic church, was granted special observer status at the Council of Europe, allowing it to follow the work of the council without being a regular member.

It was not until 1970, however, that the Holy See charged its nuncio in Brussels with representing its interests in the European Community. The European bishops arrived in Brussels only in 1980 and formed the Commission of the Bishops' Conferences of the European Community.

Today, the relationship between the Roman Catholic church and the EU takes place in the context of a modern, secular Europe and after the fall of communism. With the threat of communism eliminated, the institutional church has come to perceive social liberalism and individual rights as the greatest threats to its beliefs about family, gender, sexuality, and reproduction. In Europe, the Vatican and its conservative allies link social liberalism with “Eurosecularism”—a growing indifference to institutional religion—as markers of hostility toward the institutional authority of the church.

A key element of the challenge to the Catholic church in Europe lies in the European consensus on reproductive health and sexual rights. The EU and its member nations par-

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ticipated enthusiastically in global efforts such as the 1994 International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) in Cairo and the 1995 Fourth International Women's Conference in Beijing to promote human and reproductive rights for women and responsible development. The EU was a driving force in defining development, gender relations, and, especially, health, sexuality, and reproduction in terms of individual human rights. In particular, the ICPD explicitly recognised the role of reproductive health in sustainable development and called for the empowerment of women, both as a matter of social justice and as a vital element in improving the quality of life for all people. It was an historic turning point in the way population policies and programmes are perceived and in how reproductive health services are conceptualised and delivered. All European countries adopted the principles of these key UN conferences and all endorsed the ICPD Programme of Action.

**The EU supports a broad range of sexual and reproductive health initiatives in six key areas:**

- Increasing access to family planning services;
- Ensuring safe pregnancy and childbirth;
- Promoting the sexual and reproductive health of young people;
- Limiting the spread of HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted infections;
- Tackling gender-based violence and sexual abuse;
- Building partnerships with civil society.

The Vatican participated in these conferences due to the special status it holds at the UN as a non-member state permanent observer—a privilege granted it despite the fact that it is a religious authority. In Cairo and Beijing, its delegates decried the efforts to grant women these fundamental human rights and formed a coalition with several non-European countries, including Iran, Sudan, and Libya, to oppose the European consensus.

The EU's policies in the areas of sexual and reproductive health and development and women's issues have since been based on the principles adopted at the Cairo and Beijing conferences. It has acted on this progressive agenda by committing more than €780 million to actions consistent with the ICPD Programme of Action and has broadened the range of sexual and reproductive health interventions that it supports.

While the Vatican supports European efforts to become a region marked by peace and security, its conception of the correct moral order and its agenda on issues of sexual and reproductive rights are increasingly marginalised in Europe. As a result, the Vatican has taken steps to reassert and codify its cultural authority.

This report examines the Catholic church's efforts to assert its policies in the EU, particularly its interaction with European institutions on official, semi-official, and informal levels. The first section provides a brief overview of how the EU works and where its institutions allow for attempts to exert influence. The second section examines the institutional mechanisms the church has at its disposal to influence public policy on the international level. Part three looks at church attempts to secure and extend its power in the EU. Finally, part four deals with the means the church employs to oppose sexual and reproductive health rights. A directory of the key Catholic players in the EU is presented in the annex.

## I. The European Union

From their beginnings in an intergovernmental administration designed to handle technical economic matters, the institutions of the EU have evolved toward political legitimacy and participatory democracy. The EU's principal institutions are the Council of the European Union, the European Parliament, and the European Commission.

### The Council of the European Union

The Council of the European Union is the EU's main decision-making body. It is composed of ministerial-level representatives of the governments of the 15 member states. It exercises part of the EU's legislative power, enacting binding legislation and the budget jointly with or after consultation with the European Parliament. The Council also adopts general acts concerning common foreign and security policy, as well as justice and home affairs. On behalf of the EU, it enacts international agreements with other states and international organisations. The presidency of the Council is held for six months on a rotating basis by each of the member states.

### The European Parliament

The European Parliament is a directly elected institution that expresses the democratic will of 375 million European citizens and is the EU's public forum. Its 626 members are elected every five years, according to procedures set by each member country for selecting its parliamentarians. The number of representatives allotted to each member country is dependent upon that country's percentage of the total European population. The Parliament has limited legislative power, adopting legislation jointly with the Council and being consulted on other legislative proposals. It shares budgetary authority with the Council and has the final word on the adoption of the budget. It approves the appointment of the Members of the European Commission and can pass a motion of censure against them. The Council and the Commission are both politically accountable to Parliament. The Parliament sits in Brussels and Strasbourg.

### The European Commission

The European Commission is the EU's executive body. It consists of 20 commissioners who are appointed every five years by common agreement among the EU member states and approved by the Parliament. Currently, there are two commissioners each from France, Germany, Italy, Spain, and the United Kingdom, and one each from the remaining member states. This composition will change under the Treaty of Nice, when the five largest states lose their rights to name a second commissioner, and each new state will name one commissioner until the total membership reaches 27. Commissioners act in the interest of the EU independent of their member states. The Commission initiates legislation and is responsible for the implementation of legislation, the budget, and programs adopted by Parliament and the Council. It is also the guardian of treaties, ensuring that European law is properly enforced by the member states, and it represents the EU at the international level.

The *Court of Justice* ensures that EU law is uniformly interpreted and effectively applied. The *Court of Auditors* controls the financial management of the EU budget. The *Economic and Social Committee* is composed of 222 members representing civil society,

including workers, employers, and other groups. It can deliver opinions and must be consulted before the adoption of many decisions. The *Committee of the Regions* is composed of 222 members representing local and regional authorities. It has to be consulted on matters related to regional policy, the environment, and education. Other EU institutions are the *European Central Bank*, the *European Investment Bank*, the *European Ombudsman*, the *European Environment Agency*, and 15 agencies that have technical functions, such as the *European Centre on Monitoring Racism and Xenophobia*.

## II. The Roman Catholic Church

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In the nearly 20 centuries of its existence, Christianity has produced an institution that has capitalised on the spiritual, political, and economic resources of the faith community and administered them in a highly centralised way; this institution is the Roman Catholic church and its key player is the pope, currently Pope John Paul II, who is head of the Holy See. The Holy See is the spiritual and temporal government of the Roman Catholic church. It consists of the pope, the Roman Curia—the various departments and institutions that assist the pope in directing the activities of the church—and the College of Cardinals, whose members are appointed by the pope.<sup>1</sup>

The Holy See is located on a territory of less than one square kilometre in Rome known as Vatican City. The Vatican houses the headquarters of the Roman Catholic church, including the pope's palace, St. Peter's Basilica, offices and administrative services, and libraries and archives.<sup>2</sup> Vatican City was created in 1929 by the Lateran Treaty signed by Benito Mussolini and Pietro Cardinal Gasparri, secretary of state to Pope Pius XI. The Treaty was designed to compensate the pope for the 1870 annexation of the Papal States, which comprised nearly 45,000 square kilometres in central Italy, and to guarantee the "indisputable sovereignty" of the Holy See by granting it a physical territory.<sup>3</sup> The Holy See exists and operates within the international community as the juridical personification of the church—a faith community of approximately 1 billion persons in all parts of the globe. The Holy See holds bilateral diplomatic relations with 174 states.<sup>4</sup> It is represented in practically all multilateral international governmental institutions and sends delegations to more than 500 meetings of such groups annually. The Holy See appointed an apostolic nuncio to the European Community in 1970. At present, Archbishop Faustino Sáinz de Muñoz holds this office.

The pope embodies in his person the legislative, judicial, and executive powers of the church. But the role of the pope and the Vatican, first at the UN and now at the EU, raises the question: Is the Catholic church a religion or a state? Many believe that the church should participate at the UN and the EU in the same way that the world's other religions do—as a non-governmental organisation. The institutional church, however, prefers to hold a governmental status which grants it greater access to other states and a larger role in decision-making.

The activities of the Roman Curia, and of the church on the international level, are coordinated by the Vatican's Secretary of State. The current Secretary of State is Cardinal

Angelo Sodano, promoted to this position after having conducted diplomacy for the Holy See in Chile under the dictatorship of General Augusto Pinochet. Cardinal Sodano is the pope's closest adviser and oversees two departments in the Secretary of State: the first section, which deals with more internal and religious matters of the church, and the second section, the Section for Relations with States. The head of the second section is Archbishop Jean-Louis Tauran, who is responsible for diplomatic matters, including dealing with matters of international law, concordats of the Holy See, and is the official representative of the Holy See at international meetings.

The bishops are the authoritative leaders of the communities of believers on a local level. The territory assigned to each of them is a diocese. Approximately 600 Roman Catholic dioceses compose the church's geo-administrative structure in the EU, including the EU candidate countries.

Since the Second Vatican Council (1962–1965), the bishops of each country assemble in national bishops' conferences to exchange views and take positions on a variety of administrative, pastoral, and political issues. In 1980, with the approval of the Holy See, each bishops' conference in the EU member states appointed one of their members as a delegate to a special international body, the Commission of the Bishops' Conferences of the European Community (COMECE). This new commission was designed to be an "instrument of liaison between the Bishops' Conferences and the European Community."<sup>5</sup>

The operational staff of COMECE is made up of a secretariat of nine persons. The Executive Committee is made up of four people: Monsignor Noel Treanor of Ireland, the secretary general; the president, Josef Homeyer, Bishop of Hildesheim; and two vice-presidents, Rotterdam's Bishop Andrianus van Luyn, and Hyppolite Simon, Archbishop of Clermont.

Several permanent and ad hoc commissions deal with specific elements of the bishops' agenda: social affairs, legal affairs, migration, communication and media, Islam, bioethics, European foreign policy, and, at present, the EU enlargement process. They are assisted by Catholic experts from various fields of academia and former senior officials from national governments, EU institutions, and UN bodies, as well as representatives of religious orders—in particular the Jesuits and the Dominicans, who have offices in Brussels and other European capitals to monitor European politics and promote a European awareness within the academic, political, economic, and cultural elites of European Catholicism.

While the European Union has no system of accreditation for civil society organisations, many groups, including COMECE, are active advocates for their causes. They work with officials in the EU institutions and make their expertise known. For example, COMECE has participated in the creation of Migreurope, an informal network on asylum and migration matters linking Christian organisations working on these issues. The European Commission readily and informally relies on the expertise of these groups.

## III. Power and Privilege: The Church and the Future of Europe

With the European integration process and the concomitant surrender of some aspects of national sovereignty to the EU by the incoming member states, the Roman Catholic

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<sup>1</sup> *The Catholic Encyclopedia* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, Inc., 1987).

<sup>2</sup> *2000 Catholic Almanac* (Huntington, IL: Our Sunday Visitor, 1999).

<sup>3</sup> Cardinale, Hyginus Eugene, *The Holy See and the International Order* (Gerrard's Cross, England: Smyth, 1976), pp. 101, 124.

<sup>4</sup> "Bilateral and Multilateral Relations of the Holy See" (www.vatican.va, accessed 18 July 2003).

<sup>5</sup> Commission of the Bishops' Conferences of the European Community (COMECE), "Who we are" (www.comece.org, accessed 18 July 2003).

church has been preoccupied with gaining at the EU level many of the various privileges it has secured over time within the member states. As an example, the main advocate for securing a privileged status for the church within the EU is the German Catholic church. An elaborate and sophisticated legal system, the *Staatskirchenrecht* (the State Law on Churches) defines the German church's relationship to the German state. In addition, the German Fundamental Law grants the church extensive privileges and exemptions, and a series of concordats signed between the Holy See and regional and national authorities codify its prerogatives in terms of international law.

As a result of this accumulation of privilege, the Catholic church in Germany has, for instance, constitutionally guaranteed rights that exempt it from labour laws. Church employees have no right to strike, and their contracts often contain additional discriminatory clauses that have consequences for their private lives, such as a ban on remarrying after divorce. This affects employees of Catholic organisations such as Caritas, which, as the country's largest provider of charity, subjects more than 450,000 employees to these unjust employment practices. Another privilege the church seeks to preserve is the funding it receives through compulsory taxes levied on German Catholics and collected by the German state—an estimated source of more than €4 billion per year. This is a substantial public funding source for the German Catholic church.

This explains the great support the church gives to the basic EU principle of subsidiarity—though they do not seem to give identical respect to the EU principle of equality. Through subsidiarity the EU seeks to ensure that decisions are made as close to the local level as possible and that no actions are taken at the EU level that cannot be made more effectively at the local, regional, or national level.<sup>6</sup> The church lobbies for “vertical subsidiarity,” which means the precedence of national law over local or regional law, and it calls for “horizontal subsidiarity” that would promote and guarantee the existence of non-governmental entities, such as Caritas, which address welfare needs, and private Catholic schools, which address educational needs.

The Catholic church has been somewhat successful in promoting its position and privilege. In 1995, COMECE organized a symposium, co-funded by the European Commission, on “European Integration and Religious Institutions.” The proceedings conclude thus:

On June 17, 1997, in Amsterdam, at the closing of the Intergovernmental Conference, the heads of State of the Fifteen Member States have adopted a “declaration” that will be included in the final Act. This declaration states:

“The European Union respects and does not prejudice the status under national law of churches and religious associations or communities in the member states.”<sup>7</sup>

The consequences of this decision were illustrated in Spain, where in 2001 the church refused to renew a contract with a religion teacher who had married a divorced man.<sup>8</sup> And in Germany, the National Bishops' Conference issued a declaration in June 2002 threatening gay and lesbian employees with dismissal if they made use of their constitutionally granted civil right of registering a “life partnership.”<sup>9</sup>

<sup>6</sup> “Subsidiarity and proportionality” ([www.european-convention.eu.int/glossary](http://www.european-convention.eu.int/glossary), accessed 15 July 2003).

<sup>7</sup> COMECE, *La Construction Européenne et les institutions religieuses* (Louvain-la-Neuve: Bruylant-Academia, 1997), p. 89.

<sup>8</sup> Tito Drago, “Religion–Spain: Vatican Draws Fire for Meddling in Teaching,” *Inter Press Service*, 21 May 2001.

<sup>9</sup> “Schwerwiegender Loyalitätsverstoß” ([www.kna.de](http://www.kna.de), accessed 15 July 2003).

## The European Constitution

With the imminent addition in May 2004 of ten countries to the EU, the EU decided that its institutions needed to be reformed. The Convention on the Future of Europe, known as the European Convention, was charged with drafting a new Constitution that will define the rules for political life in the EU once it includes 25 or more member states. A total of 105 delegates, representing the European Commission, the European Parliament, the governments and parliaments of the 25 countries concerned, and nine observers from civil society, took part in the convention.

### EU Accession Countries:

- Cyprus
- Czech Republic
- Estonia
- Hungary
- Latvia
- Lithuania
- Malta
- Poland
- Slovakia
- Slovenia

For the Vatican this was a key opportunity to gain, secure, or extend its power within the EU. To its great disappointment, however, no church was asked to take part in the convention, even as a representative of civil society. To communicate its interests and lobby delegates, therefore, it had to rely on the fidelity of those delegates who are Catholic. As a result, there was intense lobbying including Vatican audiences with high European officials. John Paul II received in private audiences Valérie Giscard d'Estaing, president of the Convention, Pat Cox, president of the European Parliament, Tony Blair, prime minister of the United Kingdom, Joschka Fischer, German vice-chancellor, and others. He called all the ambassadors of member states who are accredited to the Holy See to a meeting to inform them of his wish to have certain elements included in the European Constitution. The lobbying was strong at the national level, too, where the national bishops' conferences use their many formal and informal structures to pressure their governments and their countries' delegates to advance the church's concerns.

The Vatican's objective was to have five points included in the Constitutional Treaty. The three central ones were:

■ **The recognition of the “institutional dimension” of religious freedom.** The Vatican argued that full religious liberty comprises three dimensions: the individual dimension, namely the right to choose one's system of belief; the collective dimension, or the right to associate with others to live out the precepts of one's faith; and the institutional dimension, meaning the constitutional recognition that religious faith communities are also political actors in their own right, but in a specific form differing from other actors in civil society. Whereas “ordinary” civil society associations are usually interest groups drawn together for the defence of a single issue or a narrow group of issues, the religious dimension embraces the whole range of human preoccupations and lends competence to the church in almost all matters. The main advocate of this point, besides the Vatican, was the German Catholic church, which already enjoys this status at the national level and would like to gain similar status within the EU.

■ **The recognition of the right to self-determination of the church.** This would grant a church the right to organise and administer itself as a faith community according to its own rules. Helmut Kohl, then Christian Democrat chancellor of Germany and an ally of the German bishops, succeeded in overcoming the resistance of the French delegates to have this right recognised and added to the Treaty of Amsterdam, the 1997 agreement between the EU member nations outlining the foundations for an expanded EU in the 21st century. The Vatican's desired language was annexed in

*Although the Second Vatican Council acknowledged religious freedom and pluralism and the separation of church and state, the Vatican administration stresses and cultivates an ultraconservative interpretation of these teachings.*

Declaration No. 11—the first mention of the church in a European legislative document—and it allows for all organisations recognised as a church or a community of faith or conviction to be exempted from Article 13 of the treaty, which prohibits discrimination on the grounds of religion or sexual orientation. Now, the Vatican wished to have this declaration promoted from an annex to an integral part of the new constitution.

■ **The institution of structured dialogue that assigns specific consultative status to the church.** This would have provided for the Catholic church to be consulted in the pre-drafting stage of legislation on a wide range of matters where the church feels it has expertise and for regular consultations at the highest level of the various EU institutions. The Catholic church wished to have a constitutionally-granted voice in state affairs.

The two other points desired by the Vatican concerned the mention of God and of Europe's Christian roots in the Constitution. Although these requests are less important—even treaties signed today between the Holy See and specific countries no longer refer to God—the Vatican does not miss a single opportunity to demand them. A political entity based on a social contract, the basis of political pluralism, is contrary to the idea of the divine foundation of authority. Although the Second Vatican Council acknowledged religious freedom and pluralism and the separation of church and state, the Vatican administration stresses and cultivates an ultraconservative interpretation of these teachings. Only recently, a doctrinal note to Catholic policy makers released in January 2003 by Cardinal Ratzinger, the pope's guardian of the orthodoxy of Catholic faith, declared that the separation of religion and politics did not mean a separation of morals and politics. It asserted that the Catholic church has the divine, ultimate, and legitimate authority to define the truth on morality and what is right in politics. It exhorted Catholics active in politics to defend the church's positions without compromise, in particular on issues related to the family and to sexual and reproductive health and rights.

### Current Catholic Church Access to the EU

Even without the aforementioned requests, the church already has direct influence within EU institutions. Several European Commission officials regularly consult COMECE when drafting legislative documents, as church agencies do have expertise on areas such as migration.<sup>10</sup> In addition, it has become established procedure for COMECE to meet with the representative of the government that holds the rotating European presidency to exchange information and present the church's concerns. In 1992, when Jacques Delors, a French Catholic socialist, became president of the European Commission, he created a shadow cabinet on social, economic, and political issues called the Forward Studies Unit; one of its members was charged specifically with focusing on religious matters. The two subsequent European Commission presidents, Jacques Santer of Luxembourg and Romano Prodi of Italy, also both Catholics, have maintained this think-tank—known today as GOPA, for the Group of Policy Advisors—and its religious adviser. As Prodi put it, “The policy of the Commission as regards the involvement of churches in the development of ever-closer union is to recognise their importance both in their own right, and as conveyors of opinion about it. For these reasons, the Commission maintains a permanent dialogue with them.”<sup>11</sup>

To date, all of the GOPA advisors on religious matters have been Catholic: Jérôme Vignon, Thomas Jansen, and Michael Weninger. Thomas Jansen is a member of the Central Committee of German Catholics (*Zentralkomitee der deutschen Katholiken*, or ZdK), the most powerful organisation of Catholic laity in the world. At present, Jansen heads the cabinet of Göke Friedrichs, the president of the EU's Economic and Social Committee and one of the nine observers at the European Convention. Michael Weninger, the current adviser, is a conservative Austrian diplomat who strongly supports the creation of some form of Directorate General for Religious Issues in the Commission. He considers the Catholic church the ideal religious institution to deal with by reason of its political authority and its dual structure of an apostolic nuncio, who represents the pope and handles general international and diplomatic matters, and an episcopate, whose bishops act as interlocutors on internal and national questions related to individual member states.

Despite these avenues for regular, though informal consultation, the Catholic church's position is that it is not enough to be informally consulted, because non-codified rights are too volatile and depend on the goodwill of the individuals in office. “It seems important now to move on to a formal modus, obligatory for the European Commission, and no longer dependent on its goodwill,” explains Rev. Pierre de Charentenay, former head of the Jesuits' Catholic European Study and Information Centre in Brussels.<sup>12</sup> The church wishes to have “special status” within the EU. However, Catholicism is pluralistic and this pluralism cannot be appropriately represented if the church hierarchy expresses a monolithic “Catholic” opinion on any matter, particularly on issues related to family life and sexual and reproductive rights. For instance, there is no “Catholic party” in Europe. Catholic policy makers belong to all parties and Catholic citizens vote for parliamentary candidates from all parties.

For the church, a consultative status that grants it the right to comment on all European Commission proposals and on the work of the European Parliament is in fact a substantial advantage, because it makes it easier to monitor the EU. The activities of the institutions of the EU are complex, and the church “need[s] to have personal contacts to be informed about initiatives that are being taken,” de Charentenay explains. He adds, “It might happen that, because of a lack of information, we miss something. The work on the issue ‘Women and fundamentalism’ ... is a good example. The final document was very critical of Catholicism. Concerning the issue of non-discrimination in the workplace [on the other hand], the religious organisations were very attentive. They have obtained for themselves an exemption....”<sup>13</sup>

### Whose Religious Freedom?

What is at stake in the Catholic church's desire to have special status within EU? First, it is important to recognise that religious freedom is one of the basic human rights already granted in the documents that established the core principles of the EU: the European Convention on Human Rights, the Treaty of the European Union, and the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union. To grant an institutional religion, and in particular the Catholic church, special status with special rights, distinct from any other civil society organisation, means that many people in the EU will face discrimination. Although the majority of people living in Europe say they belong to a religious commu-

*Despite avenues for informal consultation at the EU, the Catholic church's position is that it is not enough to be informally consulted, because non-codified rights are too volatile and depend on the goodwill of the individuals in office.*

<sup>10</sup> Marie-Françoise Masson, “Les Églises font du lobbying européen,” *La Croix*, 28 June 2002.

<sup>11</sup> European Parliament, Parliamentary Questions, Written Question E-0291/01 ([www.europarl.eu.int](http://www.europarl.eu.int), accessed 11 July 2003).

<sup>12</sup> Pierre de Charentenay, “Cinq points sur les relations de la Convention avec les religions,” 3 February 2003 ([www.ocipe.org](http://www.ocipe.org), accessed 15 July 2003).

<sup>13</sup> See note 10.

*To grant an institutional religion, and in particular the Catholic church, special status with special rights, distinct from any other civil society organisation, means that many people in the EU will face discrimination.*

nity, many studies show that most Europeans do not practice their religion and are generally indifferent to religion. Moreover, studies show that only a dwindling minority of Catholics agree with the positions of the Catholic church on the topics highest on the Vatican's agenda: the family and sexual and reproductive health and rights. Hence, the church hierarchy's views on these issues are not illustrative of the opinions of the majority of Catholics, who would be misrepresented if the bishops' positions were taken as the expression of mainstream Catholic opinion.

A second problem is that the Catholic hierarchy is not democratically elected. As a result, the Catholic faithful have no voice in the appointment of those who claim to speak for them.

A third major problem is that many European citizens are religiously indifferent agnostics or atheists who do not wish to be considered members of a particular religious community or do not organise themselves based on religious beliefs. How can these individuals be involved in a consultation process from a faith perspective? How can their voices be heard on matters such as the family and sexual and reproductive health and rights? In politics, it is those who speak and are listened to who make the rules and define how public resources are allocated. It is they who ultimately weigh in on decisions about whether development aid is to be funded and under what conditions, whether the budget for sexual and reproductive health in developing countries is to be increased, and who is entitled to receive such funds and under what conditions. Again, the voices of many Europeans would not be heard or—worse—they would be misrepresented by religious leaders who claim to speak for them, based on a nominal affiliation to a religious community.

Legislative power is at stake, but so is money. At present, the EU is not a religious polity. Religious organisations, like other civil society organisations, may apply for EU funds for projects that promote reflection on the idea of Europe in the context of religion, spirituality, and values. A specific budget line (A-3024) was created in late 1990 under the name “A Soul for Europe.” COMECE and other Catholic organisations have applied for and received grants to organise conferences and other educational projects.

The EU funds that represent a more substantial interest for the church, however, are those for humanitarian aid, foreign development, poverty eradication, and combating social exclusion. These are areas where Catholic charities represent a significant proportion of service providers and therefore receive a large share of the funding. For example, according to the Catholic church, 25 percent of all AIDS patients are taken care of by Catholic health care providers<sup>14</sup> and the EU funds AIDS prevention and care. The International Cooperation for Development and Solidarity (CIDSE), a consortium of Catholic development agencies with offices in Brussels, has created a position of development policy officer to facilitate the access of its member agencies to EU funding and to monitor and influence EU decision-making on development policy.<sup>15</sup>

In addition, the social and political capital garnered by the Vatican from the charitable activities of Catholic service providers in developing countries and in countries where the state does not meet the welfare needs of its population is considerable, both in Europe and on other continents.

## IV. Fighting the European Consensus: Church Opposition to Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights

In no area is the Roman Catholic church more diametrically opposed to the stated values of the EU than in the areas of sexual and reproductive health and rights. In general, European positions on the issues of family, homosexual rights, family planning, and abortion have been marked by increasing progressivity. European nations have led efforts to recognise the right to plan family size, choose homosexual or non-married partnerships, seek abortion, or form non-traditional families as basic human rights.

The Catholic church opposes this European consensus and, as the centrepiece of the pope's battle with the “culture of death,” seeks to restore traditionalist policies that limit access to abortion and family planning and discourage and discriminate against non-traditional unions and families. As with other issues of central importance to the EU, the stakes include both official policy and budget allocations.

The EU deals with sexual and reproductive health and rights issues primarily within the context of the foreign aid budget. Following the principles laid out in the ICPD Programme of Action, it supports numerous programmes and projects in developing countries to improve reproductive health. The EU and its member nations are among the world's largest funders of international development. Including the contributions made by individual member states, the EU is the largest international donor to the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria. As of October 2002, \$1,162 million out of a total of \$2,142 million in contributions to the fund have been pledged by the European Commission and the EU Member States.<sup>16</sup> The region also spent an estimated \$42.8 million on reproductive health supplies in 2001. The consolidated official development aid of the European Commission and the EU member states amounted to \$31,917 million in 2001, while EU member states spent \$710 million for population initiatives in 2000.<sup>17</sup>

In 2002, the European Parliament began consultations concerning a new regulation on “aid for policies and actions on sexual and reproductive health and rights in developing countries” to reauthorise an expiring regulation. A total amount of €20 million was proposed for the period of 2003–2006. But 160 Members of the European Parliament voted against the measure and slashed the budget by €6 million. The vote was a signal, soon to be followed by others, that the European Parliament's days of consensus on sexual and reproductive rights might be over, and that the Vatican's lobbying was indeed having an impact on policy making.

Other issues related to reproductive and sexual rights are also increasingly becoming a focus of public debate. These issues are related to family structure, homosexual rights, abortion, and ethical concerns about new advances in reproductive health technologies. What follows are examples of positions taken and legislation adopted by the EU promoting its sexual and reproductive rights agenda and the Roman Catholic church's opposition to it.

*In no area is the Roman Catholic church more diametrically opposed to the stated values of the EU than in the areas of sexual and reproductive health and rights.*

<sup>14</sup> “Address of Archbishop Javier Lozano Barragan, Head of the Holy See Delegation to the 26th Special Session of the General Assembly [of the United Nations],” 27 June 2001 (www.vatican.va, accessed 29 July 2003).

<sup>15</sup> Coopération Internationale pour le Développement et la Solidarité (CIDSE), “CIDSE Annual Report 2001” (Brussels: 2002).

<sup>16</sup> “Contributions Pledged to the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria” (www.eurongos.org, accessed 15 July 2003).

<sup>17</sup> “ODA of Top 10 Donors in 2000 and 2001” and “Spending on population assistance in 1999 and 2000” (www.eurongos.org, accessed 15 July 2003).

*For the Catholic church, the only legitimate form of family is one based on the union of a heterosexual man and woman bound in a sacramental monogamous marriage for life.*

## Defining the Family

Within EU institutions, family is understood broadly, including cohabitation in multiple forms without prejudice towards single parents, gay and lesbian couples, or divorced and remarried persons. Relevant documents include the “Directive of the European Parliament and of the Council on the right of citizens of the Union and their family members to move and reside freely within the territory of the Member States” which defines as family members a “spouse,” a “partner linked by registered partnership,” or a “duly attested durable relationship” for an unmarried couple and any descendants or ascendants of either.<sup>18</sup>

For the Catholic church, the only legitimate form of family is one based on the union of a heterosexual man and woman bound in a sacramental monogamous marriage for life. All other types of families are seen as unacceptable deviations.

The Second Vatican Council articulated the teaching of the church on the family by declaring that,

...while not making the other purposes of matrimony of less account, the true practice of conjugal love, and the whole meaning of the family life which results from it, have this aim: that the couple be ready with stout hearts to cooperate with the love of the Creator and the Saviour, who through them will enlarge and enrich His own family day by day. Parents should regard as their proper mission the task of transmitting human life and educating those to whom it has been transmitted.<sup>19</sup>

The encyclical *Humanae Vitae*, issued in 1968 by Pope Paul VI, outlined the foundations of this policy and reaffirmed the church’s ban on “artificial contraception” as contrary to the stated purpose of marriage. In 1980, Pope John Paul II, a determined defender of the traditional family and of his vision of a restored “moral order,” convened the Bishop’s Synod on the Family, and in 1981, he created the Pontifical Council for the Family as a headquarters for his crusade to restore these traditional values and moral order.

Beginning in the 1970s, family law was reformed in many countries throughout western Europe to bring it into greater harmony with the profound changes taking place in popular attitudes toward gender relationships, sexuality, and cohabitation. Most European countries also reformed legislation to give children born out of wedlock the same status, rights, and responsibilities as children born to a married couple. Divorce was legalised in even the most recalcitrant countries by the last decade of the 20th century, and more and more countries adopted legislation recognising patrimonial rights such as inheritance in de facto unions, regardless of whether they were heterosexual or homosexual. Non-married and non-traditional families have become commonplace and for the most part accepted throughout Europe.

In the EU, the Catholic church pushes for policies based solely on its concept of the traditional family, and systematically opposes the European consensus view through statements from the pope, senior Vatican officials, and European bishops or a variety of lay allies. Whenever the family is mentioned, Catholic representatives propose to limit the

concept to the definition set by the church. They succeed less and less, although the EU has had to deal with the issue in a series of decisions related to migration and free movement of the workforce. For instance, while it might be agreed that migrants should have the right to reunification with their families, who is defined as part of a migrant’s “family?” If a couple divorces and one ex-spouse moves to another country, what is the status of their children and who has parental authority? An informal working group on family issues has been created in the European Parliament, with an ultraconservative Catholic MEP from France, Marie Thérèse Hermange, as one of its leading members.<sup>20</sup>

The UN proclaimed 1994 the International Year of the Family, and it turned out to be the year in which the international community reached a landmark agreement on sexual and reproductive health at the ICPD. That same year, the Vatican launched a global crusade to combat what Cardinal Alfonso López Trujillo, Vatican spokesman on family issues, called a “social sin”—namely, the refusal to limit the concept of family to the church’s definition. Cardinal López Trujillo is a frequent guest of honour at conferences and events held by extremist, anti-choice Catholic constituencies such as Human Life International.

Joel-Benoît d’Onorio, president of the Confederation of Catholic Lawyers of France and of the International Union of Catholic Lawyers, is another committed advocate for the Vatican’s position. The latter organisation, which enjoys high status at the Vatican and was promoted in November 2002 to a “private international association of the faithful in pontifical law,” affirms that all non-traditional forms of intimate human cohabitation have to be considered as “non-family.” Its former president, Sergio Cotta, described the “non-family” as “the Frankenstein’s monster of the family,” a “monster which has been desired and coveted for oneself in the name of personal freedom and the primacy of love over rules.”<sup>21</sup>

At the ICPD and the Fourth International Women’s Conference, the Holy See’s delegation aggressively and constantly opposed the European point of view on the issues at stake, building alliances with fundamentalist Islamic governments and substantially obstructing the negotiations. Holy See spokesperson Joaquin Navarro-Valls adamantly criticised European efforts to replace the phrase “the family” with “families” because, in his view, such a change would recognize same-sex unions, polygamy, and other forms of shared life, undeservedly promoting them to family status. Meanwhile, Pope John Paul II conducted a relentless diplomatic campaign against what he called “the culture of death” in an attempt to demonise the opponents of the Vatican’s positions.

In February 2000, when the Charter of Fundamental Rights for the European Union was being drafted, COMECE submitted a request to the convention asking that “the rights of the family” be inscribed in the charter, specifically a family limited to the marriage contract between a man and women. COMECE said “the family is the natural and fundamental element of society. It must be protected by society and the State. The right to contract marriage, as the union between a man and a woman, and the right to found a family is acknowledged.”<sup>22</sup>

COMECE’s memorandum explaining this formulation notes that while non-traditional forms of the family have been evolving in society:

<sup>20</sup> See, for example, Marie-Thérèse Hermange, “La notion de famille au Parlement Européen,” *La Croix*, 30 December 1994.

<sup>21</sup> Sergio Cotta, “Principes anthropologiques et éthico-juridiques de la famille,” pp. 179-95, in *Les Droits de la Famille*, ed. Pierre Téqui, (Paris: 1996).

<sup>22</sup> COMECE, *Projet de Charte des Droits Fondamentaux de l’Union Européenne, Contribution de la COMECE* (Brussels: 11 February 2000), p. 4 (www.europarl.eu.int, accessed 30 July 2003).

<sup>18</sup> “Directive of the European Parliament and of the Council on the right of the citizens of the Union and their family members to move and reside freely within the territory of the Member States,” 15 April 2003, COM (2003) 199 final (www.europa.eu.int, accessed 30 July 2003).

<sup>19</sup> Vatican Council II, *Gaudium et Spes*, 7 December 1965, No. 50 (www.vatican.va, accessed 15 July 2003).

*The “non-family” is “the Frankenstein’s monster of the family.”*

— SERGIO COTTA,

FORMER PRESIDENT, INTERNATIONAL

UNION OF CATHOLIC LAWYERS

...this evolution must not penalise the traditional family, which still deserves the protection of the state and society. Therefore, no fiscal system should be adopted by the Union which would discourage a spouse from remaining in the family home and bringing up the children. In this same spirit, if new forms of living together appear, it is appropriate to reserve the main characteristics of marriage for this single traditional institution.<sup>23</sup>

But to the Vatican's great disappointment, the charter adopted in Nice in December 2000 did not include these suggestions.

### Sexual Orientation and Same-Sex Unions

With the recognition of a broad concept of the family fairly well codified within the EU, the focus shifted towards recognition of same-sex unions, which the Vatican also vehemently opposes. On February 8, 1994, by a vote of 159 to 96, the European Parliament adopted the *Report on Equal Rights for Homosexuals and Lesbians in the European Union*, recommending the decriminalisation of sexual relationships between persons of the same sex.<sup>24</sup> Pope John Paul II severely denounced the “juridical approval of homosexuality” by the European Parliament, calling it an act “legitimising a moral disorder” and according “an institutional value to behaviours that are contrary to God’s plan and thereby favouring men’s weaknesses.” The pope said the European Parliament should have limited itself to simply defending persons with a homosexual orientation against discrimination. “The church agrees with this point,” he stated, adding that it is “morally inadmissible to confer juridical approval to homosexual praxis.”<sup>25</sup>

The report had a significant impact on legislation in EU member states because it broke a long-standing taboo and encouraged those combating discrimination against sexual minorities. Since then, several countries have reformed their legislation concerning same-sex partnerships. The Netherlands instituted civil marriage for same-sex couples, while Denmark, Finland, Germany, and Sweden now provide for registered partnerships. Belgium, France, and six provinces in Spain have introduced the Civil Pact of Solidarity (PACS) as an option for de facto unions—heterosexual or homosexual—or even for a community of brothers and sisters living together. In the Netherlands, Sweden and the UK, same-sex couples can now adopt children, and in Denmark and Germany, a person may adopt the child of a same-sex partner.

In January 2003, the European Parliament adopted a report recommending that the EU “recognise unmarried partnerships—between both couples of different sexes and same-sex couples—and...to link them to the same rights as apply to marriage.” It recommends that member states “open up marriage to same-sex couples,” and urges the EU “to put the mutual recognition of unmarried partnerships and the issue of marriage between persons of the same sex on the political agenda and to draft specific proposals on the subject.”<sup>26</sup>

<sup>23</sup> Ibid, p. 8.

<sup>24</sup> EP, Claudia Roth, rapporteur, “Report on equal rights for homosexuals and lesbians in the European Union (A3-0028/94),” *Official Journal of the European Communities* C 61 (1994): 41-43.

<sup>25</sup> “Jean Paul II dénonce ‘l’approbation juridique’ de l’homosexualité par le Parlement Européen,” *Le Monde*, 22 February 1994.

<sup>26</sup> EP, Committee on Citizens’ Freedoms and Rights, Justice and Home Affairs, Joke Swiebel, rapporteur, “Report on the situation concerning human rights in the European Union,” A5-0451/2002 (www.europarl.eu.int, accessed 30 July 2003).

A previous EU report in March 2000 made similar recommendations and said “rapid progress should be made with mutual recognition of the different legally recognised non-marital modes of cohabitation and legal marriages between persons of the same sex in the EU.”<sup>27</sup> A declaration from the Pontifical Council for the Family called the resolution “a grave and repeated attack on the family based on marriage.” It added,

Every society is solidly based on this marital union because it is a necessary value. To deny this fundamental and elementary anthropological truth would lead to the destruction of the fabric of society. Doesn’t making ‘de facto’ unions, and all the more homosexual unions, equivalent to marriage, and inviting Parliaments to adjust their laws in this sense, represent a refusal to recognise the deep aspirations of peoples in their innermost identity? Catholic members of parliament should not favour this type of legislation with their vote because it is contrary to the common good and the truth about man and is thus truly unjust.<sup>28</sup>

### Contraception

When the church established its position on contraception in *Humanae Vitae* in 1968, a wave of outrage swept through Europe’s Catholic community, and several European bishops’ conferences immediately downplayed the importance of the encyclical by stressing the supremacy of an individual’s conscience. The vast majority of European women, regardless of religion, use contraceptives and will continue to do so no matter what the Vatican preaches and teaches. Although the church’s position has not changed, it has not yet sought to influence the European Union directly on this issue—except when the topic is emergency contraception.

The Vatican wrongly equates emergency contraception with chemical abortion, and therefore opposes its provision under the same arguments it uses against abortion. The Vatican makes every effort to promote its position despite the fact that it is at odds with medical definitions of contraception and abortion, and has even demanded that women who have been raped in situations of armed conflict be denied access to emergency contraception.<sup>29</sup>

### Abortion

While the plurality of family models is a largely accepted cultural norm in Europe, policies on abortion differ a great deal in the member states. Abortion is legal in all member states, but some permit it quite broadly, while others limit access significantly. The popular European consensus on abortion is that abortion services should be safe and legal, and should be accessible to all European women. Furthermore, Europeans believe that governments should deal with the public health consequences of unsafe abortions.

The situation is different in the countries that are going to become the new members of the EU. In the former communist countries, abortion was legal and easy to obtain,

*The European Parliament urged member states to implement health and social policies that would lead to a lower incidence of abortion, while simultaneously ensuring that abortion be legal, safe and accessible.*

<sup>27</sup> EP, Committee on Citizens’ Freedoms and Rights, Justice and Home Affairs, Bertel Haarder, rapporteur, “Annual Report on respect for human rights in the European Union (1998-1999),” A5-0050/2000 (www.europarl.eu.int, accessed 30 July 2003).

<sup>28</sup> Pontifical Council for the Family, “Declaration of the Pontifical Council for the Family regarding the Resolution of the European Parliament dated March 16, 2000, making de facto unions, including same sex unions, equal to the family,” 17 March 2000 (www.vatican.va, accessed 15 July 2003).

<sup>29</sup> Farhan Haq, “Population-Kosovo: UNFPA and Vatican tussle over contraceptives,” *Inter Press Service*, 15 April 1999.

*“It is morally inadmissible to confer juridical approval to homosexual praxis.”*

— POPE JOHN PAUL II

*The Catholic church actively opposes any attempt to recognise abortion as anything other than a crime.*

although not always safe. The availability of abortion has come under scrutiny in virtually all these countries since the fall of communism, often at the initiation of the Catholic church, which in these countries retains much of the moral legitimacy it gained in its fight against communism. In some cases, such as in Poland, the Catholic church has embarked on an effort to roll back sexual and reproductive choices, beginning with efforts to make abortion illegal and moving toward making contraceptives both expensive and difficult to obtain.

Abortion within the EU, as part of reproductive health, falls within the member states' sphere of competence, and the principle of subsidiarity—or responsibility at the lowest appropriate level—applies. Officially, the EU has dealt with the issue only as part of foreign development aid. But on 3 July 2002, the European Parliament adopted the Van Lancker report, which addressed family planning, contraception, education, abortion, and pregnancy. It recommended that each member state develop a sound national policy on sexual and reproductive health, in cooperation with civil society organisations, to ensure equal access to effective contraceptive methods, fertility education, and emergency contraception. The European Parliament also urged member states and candidate countries to implement health and social policies that would lead to a lower incidence of abortion, while simultaneously ensuring that abortion be legal, safe, and accessible. Lastly, it called upon these countries to improve sexual and reproductive education for adolescents, and to provide access to health services without discrimination on grounds of sexual orientation, gender, or marital status.

For the Vatican, abortion is never morally justifiable. In Europe, only a very small minority of the population shares this attitude. The Catholic church actively opposes any attempt to recognise abortion as anything other than a crime. This opposition takes several forms. First, the Vatican issues declarations and statements condemning any initiative to liberalise legislation on abortion. Second, it encourages Catholic policy makers to oppose such liberalisation. On this point the Vatican has gone so far as to issue a directive forbidding Catholic policy makers from promoting or voting for laws that do not agree with the hierarchy's perspective on abortion.<sup>30</sup> Third, it encourages Catholic voters to lobby against liberalisation, and, finally, it builds alliances with other social forces opposing abortion.

### The Van Lancker Report

The process leading to the European Parliament's adoption of the Van Lancker report on sexual and reproductive health illustrates how the Vatican's anti-choice strategy is implemented. The Van Lancker report is so-called soft legislation, meaning that it contains recommendations but is not binding. The report seeks to establish a European standard on sexual and reproductive health issues based on the existing consensus, thereby creating, before the impending EU enlargement, a sort of social *acquis* on these issues. The report is based on the ICPD Programme of Action, translating it to the European context.

Despite heated debate and intensive lobbying by the anti-choice coalition, the European Parliament adopted the report in July 2002 by a vote of 280 to 240 with 28 abstentions. The report recommended that “in order to safeguard women's reproductive health and rights, abortion should be made legal, safe and accessible to all,” and called

upon “the governments of the Member States and the Accession Countries to refrain in any case from prosecuting women who have undergone illegal abortions.”<sup>31</sup>

Belgian MEP Anne Van Lancker, who prepared the report, said it was not an “abortion report,” despite the accusations of its detractors. She said, “The report is looking for ways to enable women to choose whether they want children, when they want them and how many they want, and to experience their sexuality in a healthy way. This means that the report aims to prevent unwanted pregnancies and therefore also abortion.”

The Vatican and other opponents of the report used three main strategies as detailed below to combat the report. These strategies illustrate typical opposition tactics employed by the Vatican and its allies in reproductive rights debates in the EU.

■ **Disinformation** The Van Lancker report was routinely and falsely accused by the Vatican and its allies of promoting abortion and imposing liberal abortion laws on member states and EU candidate countries. The constituencies of anti-choice organisations in several countries, including France, Germany, Poland, Canada, and the United States, organized an email and fax smear campaign asking MEPs to vote against the report and branding it as an effort to “impose abortion” on EU candidate countries. Letters arrived from Slovakia, Scotland, Poland, England, Portugal, Wales, Italy, Slovenia, and Hungary. At least one organisation, the French group La Trêve de Dieu, alleged that abortion causes breast cancer, a claim that has been thoroughly discredited by respected medical authorities, including the American Cancer Society.

This disinformation campaign was supported by statements from some European parliamentarians. For instance, Elisabeth Montfort, MEP from France (Non-attached), said of the Van Lancker Report that “it is irresponsible to teach very young children a policy of sex without discernment. The educational choices which have to be made on this subject are the responsibility of parents and the family. Moreover, one cannot reduce sex education to mere contraception, nor regard abortion as a method of family planning.”<sup>32</sup>

Bastian Belder, MEP from the Netherlands (Europe of Democracies and Diversities Party–EDD), said the report provides an “outlook on life in which individual sexual and reproductive self-determination are praised as the ideal, while nothing is being said about the downsides: Rightless, unborn children, damaged lives of women as well as men, and distorted views of love and sex.”<sup>33</sup> While José Ribeiro e Castro, MEP from Portugal (Union of the Nations Group–UEN), said, “The report takes the side of the stronger against the weaker.”<sup>34</sup>

■ **Procedural formalism** Procedural formalism was used in the debate by anti-choice MEPs who did not want to base their rejection solely on the abortion argument. They argued that the European Parliament was not authorised to legislate on reproductive health issues because of the EU principle of subsidiarity, and that as a consequence the

<sup>30</sup> Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, “Doctrinal Note on some questions regarding the participation of Catholics in political life,” 24 November 2002 (www.vatican.va, accessed 5 August 2003).

<sup>31</sup> EP, Committee on Women's Rights and Equal Opportunities, Anne E.M. Van Lancker, rapporteur, “Report on sexual and reproductive health and rights,” A5-0223/2002 (www.europarl.eu.int, accessed 30 July 2003).

<sup>32</sup> Elisabeth Montfort, “Debates of the European Parliament—Sitting of Tuesday, 2 July 2002, Sexual and reproductive health and rights” (www.europarl.eu.int, accessed 21 July 2003).

<sup>33</sup> Bastian Belder, “Debates of the European Parliament—Sitting of Tuesday, 2 July 2002, Sexual and reproductive health and rights” (www.europarl.eu.int, accessed 22 July 2003).

<sup>34</sup> José Ribeiro e Castro, “Debates of the European Parliament—Sitting of Tuesday, 2 July 2002, Sexual and reproductive health and rights” (www.europarl.eu.int, accessed 21 July 2003).

Parliament was committing a procedural error. Among the MEPs who used this argument were Belder, Montfort, Ribeiro e Castro, Roberta Angelilli (UEN, Italy), Emilia Franziska Muller (European People's Party and European Democrats Party–PPE-DE, Germany), and Frank Vanhecke (Non-attached, Belgium).

- **Raison d'état** MEPs who wanted to vote against the report, but who realized that it was disingenuous to do so based on the previous two arguments, argued that the moment was politically inopportune for bringing such a sensitive matter to a vote. They claimed it would scare off Ireland (at that time debating ratification of the Treaty of Nice), as well as candidate countries. To oppose the establishment of a European standard on sexual and reproductive rights, the argument was phrased as cultural diversity versus western imperialism; this despite the fact that cultural diversity claims cannot be applied to limit or deny a person's fundamental rights. Regina Bastos (PPE-DE, Portugal), Avril Doyle (PPE-DE, Ireland), Rodi Kratsa-Tsagaropoulou (PPE-DE, Greece), Maria Martens (PPE-DE, Netherlands), and Marie-Thérèse Hermange (PPE-DE, France) used this argument in one form or another.

The Vatican protested the report immediately after it was adopted. In an article published in the official Vatican newspaper *L'Osservatore Romano* on July 6th, 2002. Cardinal López Trujillo summed up the Vatican's objection to making "abortion safe, legal and accessible" and then declared: "It is a dark and sad moment for this great Europe, which in other times is so deeply anchored in the most solid traditions, conscientious of its Christian roots, open to the rights of God and human beings, open to the family, to the gift of life, to children; the Europe that suffers today from a demographic winter, sick in spirit in certain sectors of the Parliaments, the Europe that should follow like a star the primacy of the human in view of the common good and out of respect for human rights, beginning with those of the weakest ones."<sup>35</sup>

COMECE also protested the acceptance of the report, invoking the spectre of an epidemic of liberalising legislation on reproductive health and rights in Europe and beyond, insisting on the argument of subsidiarity and disqualifying the work of Parliament:<sup>36</sup>

This report will not change the legislation or policy of the European Union, its Member States or the Accession Countries. However, we fear that this report will send two messages that can only serve to discredit the Parliament. Either it will give the impression that the Parliament wishes to impose on Member States and Accession Countries policies on which they have the exclusive, democratic right to decide. Or it will promote the suspicion that the Parliament has no more urgent business than to produce reports on issues for which it has no competence. We hope that neither of these is true, but the adoption of this report does little to promote confidence among citizens in the democratic decision-making process of the European Union.<sup>37</sup>

*To oppose the establishment of a European standard on sexual and reproductive rights, the argument was phrased as cultural diversity versus western imperialism.*

While German MEP Lissy Groener, a spokesperson for women's issues for the Social Democrats, called the adoption of the report a "victory for all women in Europe, who can now exercise the right to self-determination over their own body," German Christian Democrats said the vote was an "attempt to force upon European States an intolerant abortion ideology hostile to life."<sup>38</sup>

## V. All the World's a Stage: Key Catholic Players at the EU

The key Catholic players at the EU can be broken down into two categories: the Vatican bureaucracy and the Catholic laity, including lay organisations and Catholic MEPs.

### The Vatican Bureaucracy

Several departments of the Vatican bureaucracy are key to its efforts to influence the EU: the Pontifical Council for the Family, the Pontifical Council for the Laity, the Pontifical Council for Pastoral Assistance to Health Care Workers and the Pontifical Academy for Life, a think-tank on issues related to human reproduction. Other departments also play a significant role, including the Pontifical Council Cor Unum, the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity and the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace. What are these entities, who are their key players, and how do they operate?

#### *The Pontifical Council for the Family*

The Pontifical Council for the Family was created by Pope John Paul II in 1981 and entrusted to Cardinal Alfonso López Trujillo. López Trujillo is a colleague of the pope's who attended Opus Dei meetings with him in Rome in 1974 to discuss strategies to

*Cardinal López Trujillo, the head of the Pontifical Council for the Family, is a colleague of the pope's who attended Opus Dei meetings with him in Rome in 1974 to discuss strategies to combat communism and liberation theology.*

#### The Pontifical Council for the Family includes the following European members

- Cardinal Salvatore De Giorgi, Italy
- Cardinal Cormac Murphy-O'Connor, United Kingdom
- Archbishop Vicente Agustin Garcia-Gasco, Spain
- Archbishop Carlo Caffarra, Italy
- Bishop Stanisław Stefanek, Poland
- Bishop Elio Sgreccia, Italy
- Bishop Stanisław Ryłko, Poland
- José Luis and Montserrat Gutiérrez Garcia, Spain
- Norbert and Renate Martin, Germany
- Jean Marie and Anouk Meyer, France
- Giovanni and Annamaria Stirati, Italy
- Andrzej and Wanda Póltawska, Poland
- Danilo and Annamaria Zanzucchi, Spain

<sup>35</sup> Alfonso Trujillo, "Intervention du Cardinal Trujillo à propos de la 'Nouvelle Résolution' du Parlement Européen en faveur de l'avortement" (www.vatican.va, accessed 7 May 2003). Originally published in Italian in *L'Osservatore Romano*, 6 July 2002.

<sup>36</sup> Statement by the COMECE Secretariat on the adoption by the European Parliament of a Report on Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights, 3 July 2002. The complete document can be found in the Zenit Daily Dispatch of 3 July 2002, www.zenit.org.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid.

<sup>38</sup> "Straßburg fordert legale Abtreibungen," *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, 4 July 2002.

combat communism and liberation theology. The pope appreciated López Trujillo's conservative attitudes and the actions he took against the new, liberal theological phenomenon in Latin America.

The central task of the Pontifical Council for the Family is “to ensure that the rights of the family be acknowledged and defended even in the social and political realm. It also supports and coordinates initiatives to protect human life from the first moment of conception and to encourage responsible procreation.”<sup>39</sup> Its mandate is to supervise and coordinate all political action related to the rights of the family and of marriage, sex education, demographics, contraception and abortion, sterilization, genetic engineering, prenatal diagnosis, homosexuality, ethical questions related to AIDS, bioethics, pornography, prostitution, and drugs.<sup>40</sup>

Cardinal López Trujillo, a Colombian, holds a PhD in philosophy and was formerly the Archbishop of Medellín as well as secretary general and then president of the Latin American Bishops' Council (CELAM). Bishop Karl Josef Romer is secretary and Msgr. Francesco Di Felice is under-secretary of the council. The president is assisted by an advisory board, or “presidential committee,” composed of 14 cardinals and 14 bishops; the membership of the council includes an additional 20 married couples, all committed “defenders of moral order” and anti-choice activists. Anouk Meyer, a member of the council, is the daughter of the late French geneticist Jérôme Lejeune, first president of the Pontifical Academy for Life; she is often a public speaker together with her husband, also a member, about the church's opposition to contraception and about the necessity of the traditional family—a married couple and their children—to protect society.

Other members include persons who belong to the conservative National Association of Catholic Families and to Focolare, and others who work with Opus Dei, whether by participating in Opus Dei events or writing for Opus Dei publications, and who have long been confidantes of the current pope. Illustrating the select group of people who are chosen to assist the Vatican through these consultative bodies, Norbert and Renate Martin are directors of the German Federation of Families; Giovanni and Annamaria Stirati are active in the Neocatechumenate movement in Italy; Danilo and Annamaria Zanzucchi are leaders in the Focolare movement in Spain; and Wanda Poltawska, a professor of “pastoral medicine” at a Catholic university in Poland, friend of the pope and close to Opus Dei, is also a member of the Pontifical Academy for Life and writes frequently on topics such as promotion of natural family planning and the potential harm of sexuality education for children.

The presidential committee of the Council for the Family, and its counterpart in the Council for the Laity, discussed below, “appear to be safety measures to ensure clerical control. The committees can deal with governance questions and other questions that the president would rather not take to the laity.”<sup>41</sup> In addition, 39 consultants contribute on specific issues according to the needs of the council and seven officials serve as staff. It is impossible to become a member of this institution without demonstrating an absolute commitment to the pope's views on the family.

The council is assisted in its work by a network of pro-moral order and anti-choice organisations, including the European Federation of Catholic Family Associations and the

European Federation of Family Life Education and various national associations of Catholic lawyers. The network issues relevant information in their periodical *Vinculum* and online at [www.vinculum-news.com](http://www.vinculum-news.com).

The statements and publications of this council demonstrate not only a general disagreement between it and the consensus of the European people, but at times, outright hostility toward the work of the European Union in recognising the rights of citizens. For example, at a 1996 meeting, the council characterised as “threatening” the programme and policies of the EU, claiming they were introducing “spurious ‘rights’ with regard to ‘reproductive health,’ homosexuality and abortion; the redefinition of the family; the ‘gender’ ideology, etc.”<sup>42</sup> More recently, it published a “lexicon” on terms related to family, life, and ethical questions.<sup>43</sup> Prepared under the guidance of Cardinal López Trujillo, it was presented to counter what it calls “deceptive and ambiguous language,” claiming, for example, that the term “reproductive health” is commonly equated with contraception, and should therefore be regarded as suspect in official documents. The lexicon was roundly criticized for its insensitivity to basic human rights and its lack of scholarship.

### *The Pontifical Council for the Laity*

The Pontifical Council for the Laity was instituted in 1967 by Pope Paul VI to coordinate the activities of the lay faithful. This organisation is important to the Vatican because lay Catholics now play such key roles as policy makers, professionals, and activists in democratic states.

#### **The Pontifical Council for the Laity includes the following European members**

- Cardinal Salvatore De Giorgi, Italy
- Cardinal Desmond Connell, Ireland
- Cardinal Francisco Alvarez Martinez, Spain
- Cardinal José da Cruz Policarpo, Portugal
- Bishop Francisco Javier Martínez Fernández, Spain
- Bishop Francesco Lambiasi, Italy
- Marcello Bedeschi, Italy
- Vladimir Durikovic, Slovakia
- Christiana Habsburg-Lothringen, Austria
- Manfred Lütz, Germany
- Nicoletta Pisa, Great Britain
- José Riera I Mas, Spain
- Michał Sewerński, Poland
- Catherine Soublin, France

<sup>39</sup> John Paul II, “Pastor Bonus” (1998), art. 141. English translation by F.C.C.F. Kelly, J.H. Provost and M. Thériault ([www.vatican.va](http://www.vatican.va), accessed 8 May 2003).

<sup>40</sup> “Pontifical Council for the Family” ([www.vatican.va](http://www.vatican.va), accessed 24 July 2003).

<sup>41</sup> Thomas J. Reese, *Inside the Vatican: The Politics and Organization of the Catholic Church* (Cambridge, MA and London: Harvard University Press, 1996), pp. 118-19.

<sup>42</sup> Recommendations adopted at the “Family and Demography in Europe” meeting, held by the Pontifical Council for the Family, *L'Ossevatore Romano*, 26 October 1996 (6 November 1996 in the English language edition). The council's third meeting on family and demography was the first to focus on Europe.

<sup>43</sup> Pontifical Council for the Family, *Lexicon Termini abigui e discussi su famiglia, vita e questioni etiche* (Bologna: EDB, 2003).

The current president of the council is the conservative Cardinal James Francis Stafford, formerly the archbishop of Denver, Colorado, in the US. The secretary is Polish Bishop Stanislaw Rylko and the under-secretary is Uruguayan Professor Guzmán Carriquiry. A presidential committee composed of cardinals and bishops meets periodically to discuss questions of major importance—without the participation of the laity in these meetings. The laity is understood to be the arms and the hands of the church, but the Vatican is still the brain and the heart.

Thirty-two individuals, bishops, priests, and lay people, make up the membership of this council. Once a year, the entire membership of the council meets in a plenary assembly to deal with matters that the Vatican considers urgent. Most of these issues relate to the agenda of traditional family rights and the restoration of the church's concept of moral order. This council, too, is assisted by a cadre of consultants, called in on an ad hoc basis to form working groups, or sought out individually for their opinions and advice.

Among the European membership of this council, one finds Mario Bedeschi, administrator of the World Youth Day movement; Vladimir Durikovic, a leader in the conservative International Christian Family Movement; Christiana Habsburg-Lothringen, a descendent of Austrian royalty whose son is a seminarian in the Legion of Christ; Nicoletta Pisa, president of the International Coordination of Young Christian Workers, an organisation associated with Catholic Action; and Catherine Soublin, a teacher at the Catholic Institute of Paris, and the mother of a child with cystic fibrosis, Soublin speaks frequently on the topic of transplants. The council also has members and consultants who are members of several powerful conservative Catholic organisations, including Opus Dei, the Knights of Malta, the Knights of Columbus, and the presidents of Focolare and International Catholic Action, but there is no evidence of a balance of representation by more liberal Catholic groups representing much of the Catholic laity.

### ***The Pontifical Council for Pastoral Assistance to Health Care Workers***

The Pontifical Council for Pastoral Assistance to Health Care Workers was created in 1985 by Pope John Paul II. This council promotes the pope's teachings on human suffering and health. It also monitors scientific developments in the medical field. Its main concern is coordinating, supervising, educating, and mobilizing Catholics working in medical and paramedical professions to strictly observe and promote the official Vatican teaching on health and suffering.

The following organisations of health workers are officially linked to the council:

- International Federation of Catholic Medical Associations: Formed in 1966, this is a global network of some 50 Catholic health organisations that work to promote the anti-choice agenda of the Vatican within the medical profession.
- International Federation of Catholic Pharmacists: Created in 1950 and based in Brussels, this group organises and mobilises pharmacists who follow the anti-choice agenda of the Vatican concerning euthanasia, contraception, and abortion.
- International Committee of Catholic Nurses and Assistant Social and Health Workers: This group of more than 50 associations of nurses and assistant health workers is based in Belgium and works to promote the anti-choice agenda of the Vatican on health-related matters.

### **The Pontifical Council for Pastoral Assistance to Health Care Workers includes the following European members**

- Cardinal Andrzej Maria Deskur, Poland
- Cardinal Michele Giordano, Italy
- Cardinal José Saraiva Martins, Portugal
- Archbishop Tarcisio Bertone, Italy
- Archbishop Guiseppe Pittau, Italy
- Archbishop Tadeusz Kondrusiewicz, Poland
- Archbishop Angelo Scola, Italy
- Archbishop Elio Sgreccia, Italy
- Gian Luigi Gigli, Italy
- Alain Lejeune, Belgium

Also working with the Pontifical Council for Pastoral Assistance to Health Care Workers are organisations of religious orders who work in health care and organisations of the sick, such as *Volontari della sofferenza* (Volunteers of Suffering). Lay anti-choice organisations that cooperate with the council in Europe include medical associations such as *Ärzte für das Leben* (Physicians for Life), European member organisations of the International Christian Dental and Medical Association, an anti-choice medical society, and the German-based Working Group for Biblical Ethics in Medicine. Each national bishops' conference also has a health care committee headed by a bishop.

The president of this council is Mexican Archbishop Javier Lozano Barragán, formerly a close collaborator of Cardinal López Trujillo in CELAM. Lozano Barragán holds a PhD in dogmatic theology from the Gregorian (Jesuit) University in Rome. He is a great advocate for the official recognition of the Catholic church by the Mexican government, which has been officially secular since the Mexican Revolution of 1910. Fr. Jose Luis Redrado Marchite OH is secretary of the council and Fr. Felice Ruffini MI is its under-secretary. A staff of six officials assists the council. A total of 36 members and 50 consultants, appointed by the pope, represent the episcopacy, religious orders, other organisations, and the laity. The presidents of both the International Federation of Catholic Medical Associations, Gian Luigi Gigli, and the International Federation of Catholic Pharmacists, Alain Lejeune, sit on this council, and the late Cardinal John J. O'Connor of New York, USA, was a prominent member. The council produces a quarterly publication entitled *Dolentium Hominum—Church and Health in the World* to promote its agenda.

### ***The Pontifical Academy for Life***

Pope John Paul II created the Pontifical Academy for Life as part of the Vatican's strategy for the International Year of the Family in 1994, shortly before the death of the pope's intimate friend Jérôme Lejeune, a French geneticist who discovered the cause of Down's syndrome. Lejeune, an ardently anti-choice Catholic, became its first president. His entire family is involved in some capacity in the Vatican's strategic pro-moral order and anti-choice departments. After Lejeune's death, Dr. Juan de Dios Vial Correa was appointed

*The Pontifical Academy for Life was created by Pope John Paul II in 1994 because the existing Academy for Science did not respond to the pope's wishes on matters concerning human reproduction.*

president of the Academy. He is assisted by Bishop Elio Sgreccia, Secretary Emeritus of the Pontifical Council for the Family.<sup>44</sup> The pope appoints 70 members to represent the various fields in biomedical science, as well as other fields related to reproductive health, biotechnology, and euthanasia.

The Academy was created because the existing papal Academy for Science did not respond adequately to the pope's wishes on matters concerning human reproduction. One high profile instance in which the Academy of Science showed its independence in areas of science was a 1994 report wherein the Academy acknowledged the need to address population concerns in the world. The Academy's report stated that current conditions "have made it unthinkable to sustain indefinitely a birth rate that notably exceeds the level of two children per couple."<sup>45</sup> Coming shortly before the International Conference on Population and Development in Cairo, the conclusions of this report were at odds with assertions coming from other Vatican bodies. It should be noted that unlike many pontifical commissions and academies, the Pontifical Academy of Science is comprised of scientists of all religions and no religions. It includes Nobel laureates and others who have made significant contributions to medicine and other areas within the sciences. The Vatican's radio station quickly released a commentary on the report, stating that while the Academy's task was to advance science, "One cannot ask the academy to be an expression of church teachings or the pastoral strategies of the Holy See, nor has the academy ever pretended to take on this role."

#### **The Pontifical Academy for Life includes the following European members**

- Archbishop Elio Sgreccia, Italy
- Gonzalo Herranz Rodríguez, Spain
- Corrado Manni, Italy
- Philippe Schepens, Belgium
- Tadeusz Styczeń, Poland
- Wolfgang Waldstein, Austria
- Carla Giuliana Bolis, Switzerland
- Adriano Bompiana, Italy
- Archbishop Carlo Caffarra, Italy
- Anna Cappella, Italy
- Ignacio Carrasco de Paula, Italy
- Carlo Casini, Italy
- Zbigniew Chłap, Poland
- Roberto Colombo, Italy
- Francesco D'Agostino, Italy
- Domenico Di Virgilio, Italy
- Alain Lejuene, Belgium
- Theo Mayer-Maly, Austria
- Marie-Odile Réthoré, France
- Gottfried Roth, Austria
- Michel Schooyans, Belgium
- Joseph Seifert, Lichtenstein
- Daniel Serrão, Portugal
- Robert Spaemann, Germany
- Franco Splendori, Italy
- Andrzej Szostek, Poland
- Włodzimierz Fijałkowski, Poland
- Jean Foyer, France
- Bonifacio Honings, The Netherlands
- Birthe Lejeune, France
- Wanda Póltawska, Poland
- Angelo Serra, Italy

In contrast to the diverse and expert membership of the Academy for Science, the Pontifical Academy for Life is predominantly composed of faculty members from Catholic universities across Europe and around the world. Groups such as associations of Catholic doctors, national natural family planning associations and associations of Catholic pharmacists are all represented. The members are often found to be speaking against access to safe and legal abortion, contraception—even emergency contraception, and any family planning programmes that do not conform with Catholic teaching. The European members of this council include Philippe Schepens, secretary general of the World Federation of Doctors who Respect Human Life; Carlo Casini, president of the Italian Pro-life Movement; Domenico Di Virgilio, president of the National Association of Catholic Doctors (Italy); Alain Lejuene, president of the International Federation of Catholic Pharmacists; Daniel Serrão, president of the Association of Catholic Doctors of Portugal; Franco Splendori, president of the Catholic Doctors of Rome; and Birthe Lejeune, the vice president of the Jérôme Lejeune Foundation.

The Pontifical Academy for Life keeps the Vatican apprised of scientific progress in the areas of biomedicine so that this knowledge can be used in anti-choice campaigns. The Academy is a principal proponent of the mischaracterisation of emergency contraception as abortion, and offers unyielding opposition to embryonic stem cell research. The Academy stands diametrically against the principles agreed upon at the Cairo and Beijing conferences and it speaks against the efforts of important international organisations including the WHO and the UNHCR when they promote reproductive health and access to services.

#### **Other Vatican Departments**

There are other departments and institutes in the Vatican that play a role in promoting the pope's anti-choice agenda. The Pontifical Council Cor Unum is the coordinator of matters related to development aid. The Catholic church plays a significant role as service provider in the key fields of education and health in developing countries. In 2001 alone, this Council distributed over \$6,000,000 in response to emergencies (such as drought, earthquake and refugee crises) and to promote human development throughout the world.<sup>46</sup> These services provide the Vatican with an extraordinary opportunity to promote teachings on its understanding of what is the correct moral order; indeed, it proclaims the necessity of its distribution of funds to Catholic aid providers in order "to avoid the secularisation that lessens the identity of Catholic organisations."<sup>47</sup> This task is not always simple, however.

For instance, in 1993, shortly before ICPD, the Research Group on the Universal Tasks of the Church of the German Bishops' Conference convened a seminar of experts in the field of population and development. In the proceedings of *Reproductive Behaviour in Circumstances of Extreme Poverty*, published in 1997, Fr. Norbert Heckerat, the late director of Misereor, noted the inherent tension between promoting the church's teaching and providing responsible development assistance:

On the whole, it seems that local churches in the countries of the South show a greater tendency than those in the North towards insisting on [natural family planning] as the only permissible method of family planning. A change in the

<sup>44</sup> "Pontifical Academies for Science, Social Sciences, Life" (www.vatican.va, accessed 11 June 2003).

<sup>45</sup> Alan Cowell, "Scientists Linked to the Vatican Call for Population Curbs," *New York Times*, 16 June 1994.

<sup>46</sup> Pontifical Council Cor Unum, Annual Report 2001, "Showing Christ's Love to the Suffering: The Holy Father's Charitable Acts in 2001 Through the Pontifical Council 'Cor Unum'," July 2002 (www.vatican.va, accessed 5 August 2003).

<sup>47</sup> Ibid.

Vatican line could lift a burden of conscience from many dedicated people, clergy and laity alike, who are torn between a feeling of duty towards the teachings of the church, and an obligation to their own conscience which demands that they provide appropriate advice to those married couples for whom natural family planning is impracticable as a result of the very condition in which they live.<sup>48</sup>

### The Laity

To maximise its influence in the EU, the Vatican must rely on another group of people beside its own officials: lay Catholics, often formed into semi-official organisations. Frequently, these lay Catholics associate in organisations with a specific religious purpose tied to the goals of the Vatican. There are also lay associations of Catholics involved in service provision, particularly in the health care, education, and development fields.

#### Traditional Catholic Lay Organisations

Some EU member states have a coordinating body for Catholic lay organisations. The European Forum of National Laity Committees brings all national lay organisations in Europe together. But European politics have not been high on the agenda of the national laity committees; EU involvement in family issues and sexual and reproductive health and rights is too new to have captured the attention of some organisations that are working on other issues. However, since 2000, the Commission of European Bishops has been encouraging transnational cooperation on these issues. The Central Committee of German Catholics, the most powerful organisation of Catholic laity in Europe, and the *Semaines Sociales de France*, an organisation presided over by former International Monetary Fund General Secretary Michel Camdessus, have since organised several meetings and issued statements on European integration.

Lay associations of Catholic health care workers face a delicate balancing act when it comes to reproductive health. The fact that Catholic lay organisations operate as health care providers and social workers in states with pro-choice legislation causes tension and trouble within the Church hierarchy. In Germany, for instance, counselling for women with unplanned pregnancies at Catholic counselling centres had to be discontinued because counsellors would sign the official certificate allowing a woman to have an abortion if she chooses to do so after counselling. These organisations are unlikely to raise a strong voice on sexual and reproductive rights issues.

#### The Pope's Armada

Over the last 50 years, a completely new type of lay Catholic organisation has emerged in Europe. The most significant examples are Neocatechumenal Way, Charismatic Renewal, Opus Dei, Focolare, and *Comunione e Liberazione*. New religious congregations such as the Community of St. John and the Legion of Christ are closely related to these lay organisations in their beliefs and methodologies. What all these movements have in common is a mixture of effective modern communication and lobbying techniques and neoconservative or fundamentalist moral and political beliefs. The result is an extremely traditionalist message being spread by the Internet and pre-Enlightenment moral beliefs being propagated at pop concerts.

These movements also share an outspoken missionary character; they represent a combatant church that knows its enemies and recruits foot soldiers to defend and advance its beliefs. These movements often bypass the traditional church structure, which they see as outdated and inefficient and unfit for the task of “re-Christianising” the world. They are rarely transparent; many of them work under the cover of several different organisations, foundations and companies, and activities are not necessarily planned in a democratic way.

More often than not these lay organisations see themselves as the modern answer to a church that is losing ground. Their answer lies in returning to what they regard as pure, uncorrupted and uncompromising Catholicism in the face of social change. Reproductive health and sexual rights issues are high on their agendas. Central to their beliefs is the concept that the family is based on monogamous heterosexual marriage and that the essential role of women is as bearers of new life. Opus Dei, Focolare, and *Comunione e Liberazione* are exemplars of the many Catholic lay organisations that try to infiltrate existing power structures and to exert pressure on decision-makers and other influential people.

#### Opus Dei

Opus Dei is probably the best known of these organisations and the oldest. Founded in 1928 by a Spanish priest, the recently canonised Josemaria Escrivá de Balaguer, it has some 85,000 members worldwide, mostly drawn from the social, political, and financial elites in Spain, Italy, and Portugal. Membership is secret, so it is difficult to know who belongs to Opus Dei. Opus Dei organises professionals in every scientific and political field. It has members in high ranking Vatican posts, including Joaquin Navarro-Valls, the pope's spokesman, and has access to important resources because of their elite membership. The organisation is believed to benefit from European public money.

Opus Dei has several universities and it sometimes becomes visible in intellectual circles when it organises campaigns on topics like the “European culture of death” and articles and lectures suddenly appear all across Europe. Several MEPs are believed to be at least very sympathetic with Opus Dei, including José Ignacio Salafranca Sánchez Neyra of Spain, vice chairman of the European People's Party (EPP), Adriana Poli Bortone (UEN, Italy), and Francesco Rutelli (ELDR, Italy).<sup>49</sup>

#### Comunione e Liberazione and Focolare

Two more recent members of what Gordon Urquhart, the British writer who has used his knowledge as a former member of Focolare to expose the inner working of these new sects, calls “the pope's armada” originated in Italy: *Comunione e Liberazione* (CL) and Focolare. CL deliberately attempts to gain political influence. It created a political group in the 1980s, the *Movimento Popolare*, that managed to gain control of the Christian Democratic Party of Italy. Its founder, Roberto Formigoni, was elected to the European Parliament in 1984 and became vice president in 1987. Rocco Butiglione, another CL member and outspoken anti-abortion spokesperson, is Italy's Minister of European Affairs. CL has also managed to obtain access to considerable economic resources through its *Compagnia delle Opere*, a consortium of welfare institutions and CL-owned companies. Its annual August meeting in Rimini brings together some 600,000 persons. It is considered the greatest kermes (country fair) in the world. CL subsequently expanded to Spain, where its EU focus took shape. As “Christians for Europe,” CL members closely

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*Over the last 50 years, a completely new type of lay Catholic organisation has emerged in Europe that combines effective modern communication and lobbying techniques with neoconservative or fundamentalist moral and political beliefs.*

<sup>48</sup> German Bishop's Conference Research Group on the Universal Tasks of the Church, Günther Freundl and Peter Frank-Herrmann, eds., *Reproductive Behaviour in Circumstances of Extreme Poverty* (Bonn: 1997), p. 60.

<sup>49</sup> See, for example, Peter Hertel, *Schleichende Übernahme, Josemaría Escrivá, sein Opus Dei und die Macht im Vatikan* (Publik-Forum, 2002).

monitor the work of EU institutions, especially the European Convention. CL also hosts conferences on “Catholics in Public Life,” at which senior EU politicians always play a key role. Speakers have included Nicole Fontaine, ex-president of the European Parliament and current minister for industry in France, and António Guterres, Portuguese ex-prime minister and leader of the Socialist International.

Focolare was founded in 1943 by Chiara Lubich and linked to politics from the beginning. Focolare has approximately 100,000 members worldwide, with some 800 bishops as members or supporters. The Council of Europe honoured Lubich in September 1998 for “her work on human rights.” Her candidacy was supported by Romano Prodi, then-prime minister of Italy and president of the European Commission, Jacques Santer, former president of the European Commission, who is said to be sympathetic to Opus Dei, and M. Oreja Aguirre, European commissioner for energy and former Secretary General of the Council of Europe, ex-foreign minister of Spain and alleged Opus Dei member.<sup>50</sup>

#### *The Legion of Christ*

The Legion of Christ is a new Catholic religious order. It recruits its members among the conservative Catholic elite and promotes an ultraconservative brand of Catholicism, including fundamentalist beliefs on sexuality and reproduction. The Legion of Christ was founded under the auspices of the Spanish dictator Francisco Franco by the Mexican priest Marcial Maciel—a personal friend of the pope who has recently been accused of sexual abuse by a number of his former students. The Legionaries specifically aim to educate the elites. Since November 2001, their Rome-based university, Pontifical Athenaeum Regina Apostolorum, has offered a complete undergraduate and graduate curriculum in bioethics to prepare a cadre of anti-choice specialists for the coming ethical and scientific debates in these fields.

#### *Euro-fam, HazteOir and Fondation de Service Politique*

The latest major players to arrive on the field in Europe are three hard-core lobbying organisations: Euro-fam, HazteOir, and Fondation de Service Politique. Euro-fam, like the Catholic Family and Human Rights Institute in the United States, focuses on efforts to limit public policies that favour contraception and abortion, to define the family in traditionalist terms, and to limit homosexual rights. It is unknown who is behind Euro-fam, and while they do not advertise a Catholic identity, Catholic anti-choice groups and websites promote their message and assist them in their calls for individuals to lobby their governments to oppose reproductive health and rights legislation in the EU. They monitor the voting of the European Parliament on issues related to family and sexual and reproductive rights. On their website (www.euro-fam.org), they rate MEPs according to their voting behaviour and call for letter-writing campaigns and other lobbying activity.

HazteOir.org is a Spanish website that was created in 2003 to promote citizens' active participation in the political arena from a conservative Catholic perspective, including, but not limited to the anti-choice agenda. It claims a Catholic identity and proclaims its loyalty to “Catholic social doctrine.” It sends action alerts asking citizens to fill out a form and send an electronic message to 120 Spanish media outlets or to all Spanish MEPs. Several anti-choice organisations are actively promoting the site.

Finally, the Fondation de Service Politique in France is an offshoot of the monarchist Catholic right, created with the aim of restoring the political influence of the Catholic laity who are faithful to Pope John Paul II and the idea of re-Catholicising France and Europe and imposing the Vatican's moral order. It became involved in EU affairs by networking with Comunione e Liberazione.

#### *Catholic Members of the European Parliament*

Catholic MEPs are an important element of the Catholic laity, but they are by no means an established group with an established policy on sexual and reproductive rights. A significant number of the members of the Group of the European Popular Party (EPP-ED), a grouping of Christian Democrats and other conservative parties, are Catholics, but Catholics are also members of other parties. It is safe to say that their views on sexual and reproductive rights are as diverse as are the views of non-Catholic politicians. It is often membership in a specific political party rather than in a specific religious community that determines the reproductive health position of a policy maker. At the same time, substantial lobbying activity goes on in the offices of the EU to make sure that Catholic MEPs who are sympathetic to the positions of the church take positions in accordance with church doctrine. Some very devout Catholic MEPs, such as Dana Scallon of Ireland, have their staff focus on this task.

Some conservative MEPs have even imported debates from the United States, where the Bush administration has cut off all funding to aid organisations that advocate abortion or provide abortion services in developing countries. Their invitation to Congressman Chris Smith, an anti-choice US Republican who is a proponent of this measure, to speak to a group of European politicians was a real jaw dropper for anti-abortion and pro-choice Europeans alike. Poul Nielson, the EU Commissioner for Development and Humanitarian Aid, said in a letter to the chairman of the Parliament's Committee on Development and Cooperation, “You may have observed that US lobby groups are trying to force the EU, including the European Parliament, to take a position on abortion. I would find it sad if this issue became divisive here in Europe based on faulty information.”<sup>51</sup>

Nielson himself has been subject to a lobbying campaign. In November 2002, he received a letter from 46 MEPs expressing concern about abortion issues and falsely stating that EU financial support for the International Planned Parenthood Federation was in conflict with EU treaties. In addition, the letter falsely described EuroNGOs, a network of European NGOs working on sexual and reproductive health and rights, as a group of organisations “who strive to promote and provide abortion” and who therefore should not receive EU funding because the European Council had said that national abortion legislation does not fall under its competence. Nielson replied: “As the Commission has stressed repeatedly, we aim, through our support for reproductive health programmes, to prevent the need for abortion.”<sup>52</sup>

Of the 46 signatories to the letter at least 11 are Catholic. They presented themselves as such when they recently sponsored a seminar at the European Parliament to lobby for the Vatican's demands concerning the European Constitution. The 11 members are Dana Scallon (Ireland), Jose Ribeiro e Castro (Portugal), Concepció Ferrer (Spain), Maria

*The Catholic hierarchy is systematically seeking to expand and consolidate its means of exerting direct influence on EU policy making on sexual and reproductive health and rights, in order to bring it in line with the teachings of the church*

*The Legion of Christ is a new Catholic religious order that promotes an ultraconservative brand of Catholicism, including fundamentalist beliefs on sexuality and reproduction.*

<sup>50</sup> “Quand Chiara Lubich fascine les parlementaires européens,” *Golias* (March/April 1999): pp. 42-3.

<sup>51</sup> Letter from Poul Nielson, Member of the European Commission, to Joaquim Miranda, Chairman of the Committee on Development and Cooperation, European Parliament, 14 January 2003.

<sup>52</sup> Letter from Poul Nielson, Member of the European Commission, to 46 parliamentarians, 13 January 2003.

*The strategy of the Vatican has changed from silent prayer for change to aggressive efforts to put reproductive and sexual choice at the forefront of the political debate.*

Martens (The Netherlands), Elisabeth Montfort (France), Marie-Thérèse Hermange (France), Francesco Fiori (Italy), Paolo Bartolozzi (Italy), Adriana Polo Bortone (Italy), and Mario Mauro (Italy).

The Catholic hierarchy is systematically seeking to expand and consolidate its means of exerting direct influence on EU policy making on sexual and reproductive health rights in order to bring it in line with the teachings of the church. More than ever before, politicians are being urged to demand limitations on contraceptives and abortion availability whenever development aid including reproductive health is on the agenda. Politicians are often reluctant to do so, but the pressure has increased, especially in the form of the endless letters, publications, and emails pouring in from the Vatican, its subsidiaries, and allies. This glut of material includes much misleading and false information, such as the assertion that promoting “reproductive rights” means favouring forced abortions, or claims that people who support the right to abortion believe it is a good way to decrease the population in developing countries. Neither claim is close to the truth, but the endless repetition of these and other sound-bites seem to be having at least some effect on parliamentarians who otherwise would remain neutral on the issue.

Although there is no reason to believe that public opinion in Europe is shifting towards anti-choice positions, anti-choice voices are growing stronger in policy making circles at the EU level. The majority of the people in the member states of the enlarged EU, including the countries that consider themselves Catholic, are pro-choice. But the strategy of anti-choice groups, including the Vatican, has changed from silent prayer for change to aggressive efforts to put sexual and reproductive choice at the forefront of the political debate.

## V. Conclusion: The Responsibilities of Parliamentarians

Those who question the influence and status the Vatican is attempting to gain in the EU do not begrudge the Vatican a role on this international stage. It is appropriate that religious voices—and not just that of the Catholic church—be heard in policy debates. Yet, as a result, one of the most complex questions facing policy makers relates to determining the proper role of religious institutions in the formulation of public policy and law.

Without question, religion can be—indeed it has been—at the service of human rights, social justice, and the common good. At the same time, religion has been cited as the impetus by some for resistance to advances in legal protections for women, especially women’s reproductive rights. The Roman Catholic church, in particular, is a political player on issues of both international and national political significance, working to preserve a largely rejected, religiously-based views of gender, sexuality, family, and reproduction. The church is working to impose its views on these issues onto the developing legal system of the European Union, and, as a result, onto the lives of all European citizens, regardless of their faith.

Parliamentarians and other policy makers have a responsibility to evaluate the public policy positions put forward by the church in the same way that they would evaluate public policy positions put forward by other non-governmental organisations, such as child welfare agencies, women’s rights groups, and environmental groups. Although this principle is difficult for some church leaders to accept—believing they occupy a sacred place in the policy process—it is unacceptable when political leaders grant them that space and treat them as privileged players.

In evaluating public policy positions—whether the policy is suggested by a religious group or any other group—parliamentarians are urged to consider the following four criteria:

1. Who does this group claim to represent, and does that constituency agree with the group’s position?
2. Does this group present accurate and valid facts?
3. Do the policy suggestions of this group respect the rights of all within society and serve the common good? Are the policy suggestions respectful of other religions, of pluralism and of tolerance?
4. Will the policy position work?

If parliamentarians apply these criteria to the policies and positions on family, sexual orientation and discrimination, contraception, abortion, and international development advanced by the Vatican and its allies, those policies and positions must be rejected.

As illustrated in this report, Europeans—even European Catholics—are not well represented by the Catholic hierarchy, especially on issues surrounding sexuality. The positions advanced by the Vatican are often unsupported by facts, or are buttressed by misinformation. The Vatican’s statements and positions do not allow for respectful disagreement and dialogue, even from other religious groups, and they would seek to impose a specific, and restrictive, religious view of morality on people of all faiths. And finally, there is just no evidence that these positions will foster a Europe where human rights, including sexual and reproductive rights, will flourish.

Europe’s modernity is profoundly pluralistic and tolerant, and it is these qualities that make possible the religious liberty that is so characteristic of the continent. Different faith communities can coexist and engage in a respectful dialogue with one another, trying to explain and argue for their own moral principles, so long as they respect the freedom of every citizen to decide which principles he or she will abide by. The contributions of faith communities to the ethical discourse on many issues within the EU are important. But Europe’s political system is founded on the people’s sovereignty, which determines the rules by which they organise political life; its society is based on the rule of law. European laws are underpinned by universal values such as freedom, equality, solidarity, and the inviolable dignity of the human person. It is secularism that renders possible a balance between the tensions and possible contradictions among these different values, and makes real democracy possible. To ensure Europe’s democracy, peace, and religious liberty, it is vital to protect its secularism.

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## Annexes

### I. The Holy See's Diplomatic Presence in Europe

The Holy See has bilateral diplomatic relations with the following European states:

- |                           |  |                           |
|---------------------------|--|---------------------------|
| 1. Albania                | 16. Greece                                     | 30. Norway                |
| 2. Andorra                | 17. Hungary                                    | 31. Poland                |
| 3. Austria                | 18. Iceland                                    | 32. Portugal              |
| 4. Belarus                | 19. Ireland                                    | 33. Romania               |
| 5. Belgium                | 20. Italy                                      | 34. San Marino            |
| 6. Bosnia and Herzegovina | 21. Latvia                                     | 35. Serbia and Montenegro |
| 7. Bulgaria               | 22. Liechtenstein                              | 36. Slovakia              |
| 8. Croatia                | 23. Lithuania                                  | 37. Slovenia              |
| 9. Cyprus                 | 24. Luxembourg                                 | 38. Spain                 |
| 10. Czech Republic        | 25. Macedonia, the Former Yugoslav Republic of | 39. Sweden                |
| 11. Denmark               | 26. Malta                                      | 40. Switzerland           |
| 12. Estonia               | 27. Moldova                                    | 41. Turkey                |
| 13. Finland               | 28. Monaco                                     | 42. Ukraine               |
| 14. France                | 29. Netherlands                                | 43. United Kingdom        |

44. and 45. The Holy See also has diplomatic relations with the European Union and the Sovereign Military Order of Malta.

The current apostolic nuncio to the EU is Archbishop Faustino Sainz de Muñoz. The apostolic nunciature is located at Av. Brugmann, 289, B-1180 Brussels, Belgium.

The Holy See participates in the following European intergovernmental organisations and bodies:

- |          |   |
|----------|---|
| CDCC     | Council for Cultural Co-operation of the Council of Europe, Strasbourg, <i>Member</i>   |
| CE       | Council of Europe, Strasbourg, <i>Observer</i>  |
| CEPT     | European Conference of Postal and Telecommunications Administrations, <i>Member also in the name of and on behalf of Vatican City</i> |
| EUTELSAT | European Telecommunications Satellite Organisation, Paris, <i>Member also in the name of and on behalf of Vatican City State</i>      |
| OSCE     | Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe, Vienna, <i>Member</i>   |
| OSCE PA  | Parliamentary Assembly of the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe, <i>Guest of Honour</i>                            |

## II. The Members of the Commission of Bishops' Conferences of the European Communities (COMECE)

**Bishop Josef Homeyer**, Bishop of Hildesheim, Germany, President

President of the Commission for Social Affairs of the German Bishops' Conference, a member of the contact group of the Polish and the German Bishops' Conferences and a member of the Protestant-Catholic discussion forum in Germany.

**Bishop Adrianus van Luyn**, SDB, Bishop of Rotterdam, Netherlands, Vice-president

Member of the Pontifical Council for Culture and Adviser to the Pontifical Commission for the Cultural Heritage of the Church.

**Archbishop Hippolyte Simon**, Archbishop of Clermont, France, Vice-president

**Bishop John Crowley**, Bishop of Middlesbrough, England and Wales, member

From 1988 to 2000, Chairman of CAFOD (the Catholic Fund for Overseas Development).

**Bishop Teodoro de Faria**, Bishop of Funchal, Portugal, member

**Bishop Joseph Duffy**, Bishop of Clogher, Ireland, member

**Archbishop Fernand Franck**, Archbishop of Luxembourg, member

Former National Director of the Pontifical Mission Society and the Holy Childhood Association. In 1977, he became Secretary of the Pontifical Society for the Propagation of the Faith in the Vatican, and in 1988 Secretary of the Society of Saint Peter the Apostle. In 1981, he became ecclesiastical counsellor at the Embassy of the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg to the Holy See.

**Bishop Egon Kapellari**, Bishop of Graz-Seckau, Austria, member

Between 1996 and 1998, he was a member of the Council of European Bishops' Conferences. In June 1997, he became a consultant to the Pontifical Commission for the Cultural Heritage of the Church.

**Bishop William Kenney**, CP, Bishop of Stockholm, Sweden, member

From 1991 to 1999, he was President of Caritas Europa.

**Bishop Giuseppe Merisi**, Auxiliary Bishop of Milan, Italy, member

Named Diocesan assistant for "Azione Cattolica" in 1978. At present he is Diocesan Vice President of the Commission on Justice and Peace. He is delegated bishop of the Lombardy Bishops' Conference for the relations with Lombardy regional authorities, as well as delegated bishop for charity and public health. He is also a member of the Commission of the Italian Bishops' Conference for the Charity and Health Service.

**Bishop John Mone**, Bishop of Paisley, Scotland, member

**Archbishop Antónios Varthalitis**, AA, Archbishop of Corfu, Greece, member

Apostolic Administrator "ad nutum Sanctae Sedis" of Thessaloniki.

**Archbishop Elías Yanez Álvarez**, Archbishop of Zaragoza, Spain, member

President of the Spanish Bishops' Conference between 1993 and 1999.

**Bishop Amédée Grab**, Bishop of Chur, Switzerland, associate member

President of the Swiss Bishops' Conference. In April 2001, he was elected President of the Council of European Bishops' Conferences (CCEE).

**Bishop Vaclav Maly**, Auxiliary Bishop of Prague, Czech Republic, associate member

In 1977, he was one of the signatories of Charter 77. In 1978, he was imprisoned for seven months for intervening on behalf of the unjustly persecuted, and the state withdrew his license to practice the profession of priest. For years, he worked as a heating mechanic in hotels, among other jobs. From 1981, he was spokesman for Charter 77. In the "Velvet Revolution" of November 1989, he was elected spokesman of the Civic Forum.

**Archbishop Joseph Mercieca**, Archbishop of Malta, associate member

Consultant to the Congregation for the Sacraments and to the Congregation for the Doctrine of Faith. Since 1992 he has been a consultant to the Sacred Roman Rota and Judge of the Apostolic Signatura.

**Archbishop Henryk Muszynski**, Archbishop of Gniezno, Poland, associate member

A member of the Vatican Commission for Religious Dialogue with Judaism from 1986 to 1994, he has since been a member of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity.

**Bishop Frantisek Rábek**, Bishop of the Armed Forces, Slovakia, associate member

**Bishop Anton Stres**, CM, Auxiliary Bishop of Maribor, Slovenia, associate member

**Bishop András Veres**, Auxiliary Bishop of Eger, Hungary, associate member

The Secretariat of COMECE:

Msgr. Noel Treanor, Secretary General

Rue Stévin 42

B-1000 Brussels

Belgium

Tel: +32 (2) 235 05 10

Fax: +32 (2) 230 33 34

E-mail: [comece@comece.org](mailto:comece@comece.org)

Website: [www.comece.org](http://www.comece.org)

## III. Other Catholic Organisations at the EU Level

**Kommissariat der deutschen Bischöfe—Katholisches Büro in Berlin**

Rev. Karl Jüsten, Director

Hannoversche Str. 5

D-10115 Berlin, Germany

Tel: +49 (030) 28878 0

Fax: +49 (030) 28878 108

Email: [post@kath-buero.de](mailto:post@kath-buero.de)

Assisted by a staff of 15 persons, this service of the German Bishop Conference deals with the relationships between the German Catholic church and political authorities in Germany and Europe.

**The Catholic European Study and Information Centre (OCIPE)**

Rev. Jan Kerkhofs, SJ, Director  
 Rue du Cornet 51  
 B-1040 Brussels, Belgium  
 Tel: +32 (2) 737 97 29  
 Fax: +32 (2) 737 97 29  
 www.ocipe.org

In addition to this office in Brussels, OCIPE has three other offices (Strasbourg, Warsaw and Budapest) and a staff of some 20 people working on a paid and a volunteer basis. OCIPE is described as the Jesuits' service to "church and society" at the European Union, and it serves as a think tank, an education service for Catholic leadership, and a lobbying unit. It was one of the first Catholic organisations set up to monitor the European Union.

**ESPACES—spiritualités, cultures et société en Europe**

Rev. Thomas Eggenperger, OP, Director General  
 Avenue de la Renaissance 40  
 B-1000 Brussels, Belgium  
 Tel: +32 (2) 743 09 92  
 Fax: +32 (2) 743 09 94  
 Email: th.egg@gmx.net  
 www.espaces-op.org

A think tank set up by the Dominican order, this organisation promotes post-Second Vatican Council Catholic thinking in Europe. It closely co-operates with OCIPE and COMECE and has, besides the Brussels main office, offices in Berlin, Krakow and Budapest, and is planning to expand to Croatia and Spain Europe.

**CIDSE—International Cooperation for Development and Solidarity**

Christiane Overkamp, Secretary General  
 Rue Stévin 16  
 B-1000 Brussels, Belgium  
 Tel: +32 (2) 230 7722  
 Fax: +32 (2) 230 7082  
 Email: overkamp@cidse.org  
 www.cidse.org

A network of 14 Catholic development agencies that do not belong to the Caritas network.

**Caritas Europa**

Denis Viénot, President  
 Rue Pascale 4  
 B-1040 Brussels, Belgium  
 Tel: +32 (2) 280 02 80  
 Fax: +32 (2) 230 16 58  
 Email: postmaster@caritas-europa.be  
 www.caritas-europa.org

A network of some 50 national Caritas organisations in Europe (not only in the EU) that work in the field of humanitarian help and relief in Europe and worldwide, and a member of Caritas Internationalis.

**European Forum of National Laity Committees**

Dr. Stephan Vesper, Secretary General  
 c/o Zentralkomitee der deutschen Katholiken  
 Postfach 240141  
 D-53154 Bonn, Germany  
 Tel: +49 (228) 38297 53  
 Fax: +49 (228) 38297 44  
 Email: europ.forum@zdk.de  
 www.europ-forum.org

A network of national federations of Catholic lay organisations in Europe that are recognised as such by the authorities of the Catholic church. Organisations of reform Catholics do not belong to these federations.

## IV. Organisations Operating Politically at the EU Level to Oppose Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights Policies

**Convention of Christians for Europe**

Josep Miró I. Ardévol, President  
 Bellesguard, 30  
 E-08022 Barcelona, Spain  
 Tel: +34 (93) 254 09 24  
 Fax: +34 (93) 418 93 80  
 Email: info@eurocristians.org  
 www.eurocristians.org

A network of very conservative Catholic organisations (close to Communion and Liberation) and individuals mainly from Spain, France, Italy, Austria, Portugal, Poland, and Hungary which describes itself as a lobby in the European Union for the conservative and anti-choice agenda of the Vatican.

**EPLD—European Pro-Life Doctors**

Dr. Gero Winkelmann, MD, Founder and Coordinator  
 Truderinger Str. 53  
 D-82008 Unterhaching Munich, Germany  
 Tel: +49 (089) 61 50 171 7  
 Fax: +49 (089) 61 50 171 8

EPLD seeks to found pro-life medical associations on the national level in each European country, and to form a network of those associations to influence local, national, and European policy to promote a specifically anti-choice agenda.

**European Youth Alliance**

Gudrun Lang, Regional Director  
 Rue Archimède 55-57  
 B-1000 Brussels, Belgium  
 Tel: +32 (2) 732 76 05  
 Fax: +32 (2) 732 78 89  
 Email: [eya@worldyouthalliance.org](mailto:eya@worldyouthalliance.org)

Founded in 1999, the alliance is a coalition of young people working to promote the church's anti-choice platform by participating in UN conferences and cooperating with like-minded NGOs. They work against what they call the "effects of Western individualism" on young people.

**Fondation de Service Politique**

Francis Jubert, President  
 Vice President and Cofounder, Alliance pour les droits de la vie  
 Rue Saint Dominique 83  
 F-75007 Paris, France  
 Email: [contact@libertepolitique.com](mailto:contact@libertepolitique.com)

A French association of extreme right wing Catholics that has close links to anti-choice organisations in Europe and the USA. It considers itself to be a think tank for right wing political Catholic leaders.

**Human Life International (HLI)—Europa**

Ewa Kowalewska, Regional Director  
 U1. Jaskowa Dolina 47/2  
 80-286 Gdansk—Wrzeszcz, Poland  
 Tel: +48 (58) 341 1911  
 Fax: +48 (58) 346 1002  
 Email: [poczta@hli.org.pl](mailto:poczta@hli.org.pl)  
[www.hli.org.pl](http://www.hli.org.pl)

This regional office is a branch of the umbrella organisation Human Life International (HLI). HLI and its affiliates work on national and international initiatives to promote an ultra-conservative Catholic view of society. They unequivocally reject contraception apart from abstinence or natural family planning, oppose the availability of safe abortion, even in cases of rape or incest, oppose provision of sexuality education outside the home, and reject any family structure that is inconsistent with traditionalist notions.

**Lobbying websites****Euro-fam**

[www.euro-fam.org](http://www.euro-fam.org)

A website constructed for the sole purpose of distributing information on policy making related to sexual and reproductive rights in the European Union. It urges lobbying activities aimed at European policy makers on these issues. All MEPs are listed by voting records on sexual and reproductive rights legislation.

**HazteOir**

[www.hazteoir.org](http://www.hazteoir.org)

This Spanish website clearly affirms its Catholic identity. It seeks to facilitate the political participation of civil society in policy making, in Spain and at the EU, providing technical means for organising online email campaigns. It warns the users that all messages will be filtered to correspond to the website's conservative agenda.

**V. European Union — Group of Policy Advisers**

The Group of Policy Advisers is a part of the European Commission that reports directly to the President. Its task is to provide timely, informed and impartial advice to the President and Commissioners on all aspects of issues relating to the future policy of the European Union. The advisers' role is to concentrate on multidisciplinary issues that tend to involve longer time-scales than those commonly applying to matters dealt with by other Commission departments.

Within GOPA, Michael Weninger heads the unit called Dialogue with Religions, Churches and Humanisms. He is assisted by Catarina de Barros Coelho.

Tel: +32 (2) 2962274  
 Fax: +32 (2) 2992223  
 Email: [michael.weninger@cec.eu.int](mailto:michael.weninger@cec.eu.int)  
[www.europa.eu.int](http://www.europa.eu.int)



