



EUROPEAN COMMISSION

PRESS RELEASE

Brussels, 30 May 2013

Commission, Parliament and European Council bring together religious leaders to discuss European citizenship

Brussels, 30 May 2013 – Around twenty senior representatives from Christian, Muslim and Jewish religions and from the Hindu community from all over Europe met today in the European Commission's headquarters in Brussels, under the motto 'Putting citizens at the heart of the European project in times of change'. The high-level meeting, taking place in the context of the European Year of Citizens 2013, was called by José Manuel Barroso, President of the European Commission, and co-chaired by President of the European Council Herman Van Rompuy and László Surján, Vice-President of the European Parliament. The participants engaged in an open discussion on how to bring Europe closer to its citizens.

José Manuel Barroso, President of the European Commission, invited religious organisations to actively contribute to the public debate currently on-going within the European Year of Citizens 2013 as well as the recently launched initiative on a new narrative for Europe and said: "As we are taking action to move Europe out of the economic crisis, it is clear that we also have to weather another crisis: a crisis of trust, a crisis of values. We have to bring citizens back at the heart of our common project of European integration, by debating why it makes sense to act together as a Union. I strongly believe that the active involvement of religious communities is essential in this undertaking. The religious leaders I have invited today have an important contribution to make to this EU-wide debate on the future of Europe."

Herman Van Rompuy, President of the European Council, stated: "It is in responding to the effects of the crisis and reaffirming our values, that one finds the urgency of the European citizen. An urgency that involves economic and social issues, as it, involves culture too and therefore training and education. Let us reinvigorate this citizenship by emphasising what makes our citizens belong to this collective space known as the European Union. As European citizens what makes us belong, individually and collectively? It is essential for political and religious authorities to reflect upon this. For it is together, in a debate which is sometimes contradictory but always fruitful, fruitful but sometimes contradictory, that we, each of us in accordance with our duties and responsibilities, contribute in the construction of the European project."

László Surján, Vice-President of the European Parliament, said: "We strongly encourage European citizens, including religious citizens, for active involvement in the election campaign and then participating in the elections, so that their opinions, ideas and values would be represented by Parliamentarians."

Background

Today's high-level meeting of religious leaders is the ninth in the series of meetings launched by President Barroso in 2005. The Lisbon Treaty enshrines since 2009 the open, transparent and regular dialogue with churches, religious communities as well as philosophical and non-confessional organisations into primary law (Art 17 TFEU). Beyond regular seminars with the different interlocutors, there is one annual high-level meeting with religious leaders (in spring) and one with philosophical and non-confessional representatives (in autumn).

The topic of this year's meeting was the question how to intensify the dialogue with citizens and societal organisations on the future of Europe and about the fundamental, individual and collective rights that are guaranteed by European citizenship. The contribution of the representatives of churches and religious communities directly fed into the broader, on-going Europe-wide debate amongst citizens, businesses, civil society and government organisations, in the context of the European Year of Citizens 2013.

The meeting took place in the Commission's Berlaymont building in Brussels. European Commission Vice-President Viviane Reding and Commissioner Dacian Cioloş also participated.

For a full list of participants: see [MEMO/13/473](#)

Information on the European Year of Citizens 2013: <http://europa.eu/citizens-2013>

Information on the European Commission's dialogue with churches, religious communities and philosophical and non-confessional organisations:

http://ec.europa.eu/bepa/activities/outreach-team/dialogue/index_en.htm

Website of José Manuel Barroso, President of the European Commission:

http://ec.europa.eu/commission_2010-2014/president/index_en.htm

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