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NEWSLETTER

European Committee for Catholic Education (CEEC)

EDITORIAL

GUY SELDERSLAGH, SECRETARY GENERAL

Dear friends of Catholic Education in Europe,

This has been a strange year. Almost a million people have died as a result of Covid 19 in the countries that constitute the CEEC. Many of our schools had to close for part of the school year. Like all educators, we were prevented from doing our work, and at the same time forced to reinvent it.

The second "pandemic survey" we have just launched will allow us to assess how our schools have coped with the pandemic. We will make the results available in September. Thank you all for taking the time to complete this survey.

With sufficient vaccination of our countries' populations, we may be able to avoid further waves of infection and death. As we have already started to do so this year, this will be the time to catch up on the learning lag of our students where it could not be avoided. It will also be a time to assess the innovations that have been implemented and to test those that will remain in our schools.

Let us keep in mind to maintain solidarity with our partners in other continents, who have not, until now, been able to vaccinate as much as we have been able to do. My thoughts are with our friends in Catholic education in Lebanon, who are in a very difficult situation.

Looking forward to a new school year that will allow us to meet again in real life, I wish you an inspiring and revitalising summer holiday.

CONTENT

EDITORIAL

PAGE 01

CEEC ACTIVITIES

Our meetings
Our actions

PAGE 02

NEWS

From our members
On Catholic
education in the
world

PAGES 03 TO 04

CALLS AND INFORMATION

Call for solidarity
Appointments and
Departures
Invitation to
Summer University

PAGE 05

CALENDAR

PAGE 06



CEEC ACTIVITIES

OUR MEETINGS

Given the health situation, the Executive Board meeting in February and the General Assembly meeting on 16 April were held virtually.

Furthermore, although our countries are affected by the pandemic, our members and our association are involved in several projects in order to continue keeping alive and representing Catholic education in Europe, but also to respond to the missions of the CEEC. To this end, various initiatives have been undertaken in recent months.



OUR ACTIONS

" REMAINING CLOSE AT A DISTANCE "

Together with its Slovenian, Belgian, Irish and Dutch members, the CEEC has applied for the launch of a European Erasmus+ project entitled " Remaining close at a distance ". This project aims to enable teachers and students to think prospectively about e-learning pedagogies that facilitate community learning. Indeed, hit hard by the health crisis, Catholic schools in Europe have had to adapt and implement new digital approaches and tools that, in addition to ensuring continuity of learning, help maintain group cohesion, but more importantly a real sense of community. We will be informed about the possible selection of our project for the next school year.

CATHOLIC SCHOOLS IN EUROPE AND THE CORONAVIRUS EPIDEMIC

In June 2020, the CEEC launched a survey among its members in order to understand and analyse the way in which Catholic schools had reacted to the pandemic. Two webinars (in French and English) were organised to present and discuss these results. All this information was then published (still available from the CEEC [secretariat](#)).

One year later, the CEEC is launching a second survey to assess the situation and to examine the approaches put in place this school year to ensure continuity of learning while respecting the measures taken in their respective countries. This survey is part of the research work on teacher and headteacher training, and also echoes the writing of the project " Remaining close at a distance ".

WORLD CATHOLIC EDUCATION DAY

Thursday 13 May was Ascension Day and was chosen to celebrate World Catholic Education Day. This initiative was decided by the 2002 Congress of the International Office of Catholic Education ([OIEC](#)). Its aim is to promote the initiatives undertaken by Catholic education worldwide. In order to support and encourage its member associations to promote and celebrate this day, the European Committee for Catholic Education has joined in the publication of a series of documents written by [Global Catholic Education](#). This initiative brings together OIEC, OMAEC, UMEC and FIUC, and provides resources for those involved in Catholic education contributing to integral human development worldwide.



NEWS FROM OUR MEMBERS

The first observation is clear: the coronavirus epidemic has affected the school year of Catholic schools in Europe. First of all, sufficient health materials and computer equipment were provided to schools, both through financial and material support from the government (as in Germany and Belgium) and through the support of associations representing the schools themselves (e.g. in Albania). The course offering for teachers and hadteachers has also been adapted to correspond as closely as possible to the reality of the schools. Similarly, the organisation of the school calendar and the evaluation of students have been impacted, as our Ukrainian and Belgian members point out. It is clear that the pandemic has accentuated the socio-economic differences between students, both in terms of equipment, digital skills and parental support. However, the crisis has also provided an opportunity to develop new models of learning, and has given rise to positive, creative and meaningful initiatives.

In addition to the health crisis, several CEEC member associations opposed government decisions that threatened Catholic education in their country. One example is the new law on Education (LOMLOE) which was approved in December 2020 by the Spanish Parliament and which endangers the freedom of education and the freedom of parents to choose a school for their child(ren). Supported by Escuelas Católicas and the International Organisation for the Right to Education and Freedom of Education ([OIDEI](#)), a petition has been sent to the European Parliament to raise awareness and challenge the law.

At the General Assembly, a round table discussion was organised and members were invited to give a report on the situation in their country. What was shared during this discussion is summarised below.

Similarly, in Flanders, the Ministry of Education has been working for several months on the development of 'success targets', which threaten the freedom of teaching and the pedagogical freedom of teachers. Katholiek Onderwijs Vlaanderen has challenged this new decree in the constitutional court. Similarly, Catholic schools in Portugal were targeted by exceptional measures taken by the government to manage the health crisis. These policy decisions resulted in a very unfavourable difference in treatment, especially for Catholic schools. The representatives of Portuguese Catholic schools (SNEC & APEC), supported by public opinion and several media, opposed these measures, which were then modified. In Slovenia, too, a compromise was reached on the law concerning primary schools. Non-public schools (including Slovenian Catholic schools) will no longer be disadvantaged in the funding they receive from the state. This compromise is the result of a long process of collaboration between the Ministry and representatives of private schools.



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In addition to these political considerations, several CEEC member associations have begun to reflect on the approach and strategy adopted by their organisation. In Albania, for example, the National Commission for Catholic Education (KKEKSH) has drafted a strategic plan that sets out objectives for the future of its schools. In a similar way, French Catholic education (SGEC) continued this year its prospective process in which it is committed to the future. A seminar was organised in October in Lyon on this subject. The Secretariat of Free Education Institutions in Greece (SIELG) is currently working on important legal issues and more precisely on the creation of a specific statute that would allow lay people to continue to run their Catholic schools.

In parallel to these substantive issues, several member associations are reworking their curriculum and reference texts. This is the case, for example, in Ukraine, where the Commission for Catholic Education (SSMI) is revising its kindergarten curriculum and religion courses. In Norway, collaborative work to develop a common strategy for Catholic schools and to co-ordinate their guidance texts has been initiated. Similarly, new training programmes for beginning teachers are being developed to strengthen coherence and identity within Norwegian Catholic schools.

NEWS ON CATHOLIC EDUCATION IN THE WORLD

On 15 October 2020, Pope Francis launched the "Global Education Pact", which consists of 7 commitments for the stakeholders of Catholic education. In order to show their commitment to this global pact, the OIEC organised a webinar last February. On this occasion, the book "Pacto Educativo Global" was disseminated. This publication contains a series of testimonies on how Catholic education leaders around the world are planning to implement the Pact on the ground. Pope Francis was informed of the commitment of several OIEC members to the Pact. A document containing the various statements is currently being drafted.

In parallel, on 4 May, the European Union of Former Pupils of Catholic Education (UNAEC-Europe) organised a webinar entitled "Family and Education: Seeds of Hope" in response to the Pope's appeal and in the framework of the year 'Family Amoris Laetitia'.

More information on the Global Education Pact here.



For over a year, Catholic schools around the world have been affected by the pandemic. The Global Report on Catholic Education 2021 presents findings on the impact of the health crisis on Catholic education around the world. The publication also addresses pluralism in education, learning poverty and the right to education. Quentin Wodon, who is the main writer of this report, has also written an article for the newsletter of our association. Available here.



CALLS AND MISCELLANEOUS INFORMATION

CALL FOR SOLIDARITY: LEBANON ALLIANCE

Devastated by an economic, political and sanitary crisis, the Lebanese Catholic Education has launched a call for help in order to help its schools, its secretariat, but also all the stakeholders of its schools to overcome this terrible situation they are experiencing. Through its historical fraternal relations with the Lebanese Catholic Education, the French Catholic Education has launched an action of support "Alliance Lebanon". This campaign has three main lines of action: to help the schools, to develop partnerships between French and Lebanese schools, to help the general secretariat of the Catholic schools in Lebanon. The European Committee for Catholic Education shares once again this call for solidarity and invites its members to show their support to our friends in Lebanon. More information about this action is available [here](#).

During its General Assembly in November 2020, the CEEC welcomed Father Boutros Azar, Secretary General of the Catholic Schools in Lebanon and Regional Secretary MENA-OIEC, who spoke about the difficult situation in his country. Several articles were also published, including an interview with Laurent Grégoire, Secretary General of UNAEC-Europe, as well as the testimony of Sister Mirna Farah.

APPOINTMENTS AND DEPARTURES

Petro Maiba succeeded Sister Khrystofora as Director of the Education Commission of the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church (SSMI). He appointed Mrs. Lilia Kuzmiak as his representative in the CEEC. We met her at the previous meeting of the General Assembly in April.

More recently, Mattias Borg, who had succeeded Paddy Maguire in 2019 as the representative of the Catholic schools in Sweden in our association, has ended his mandate. Cardinal Anders Arborelius, Bishop of the Diocese of Stockholm, has informed us of the appointment of Mr Matts Hansén. Mr Hansén is the headmaster of St Eric's School in Stockholm and participated in the previous General Assembly meeting.

Congratulations to Ms Lilia Kuzmiak and Mr Matts Hansén on their appointment. We welcome them as our representatives. We wish Mattias Borg all the best for his future career.



On 20 August, the Secrétariat général de l'Enseignement Catholique (SeGEC) will hold its 16th Summer University. The theme of this year's day of reflection, training and exchange will be "The school at the heart of transitions? Knowledge, questioning and commitment". This event will take place at the Aula Magna in Louvain-la-Neuve (Belgium). For the first time, this event will also be broadcasted virtually on the SeGEC YouTube channel. For more information on the detailed programme and the registration procedure, please follow [this link](#).

CALENDRIER



15 September 2021: CEEC Executive Board meeting in Brussels.

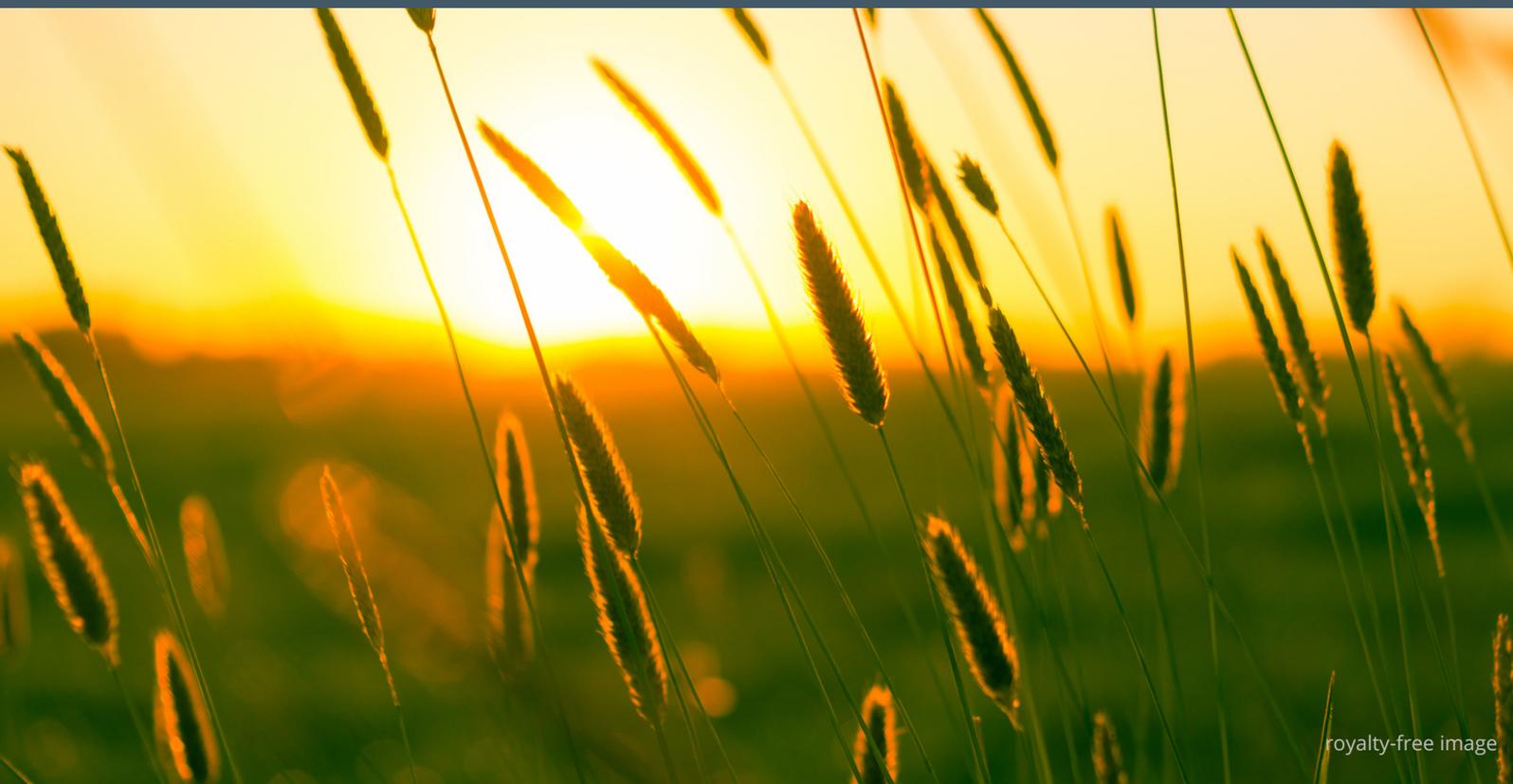
22-23 October 2021: CEEC General Assembly meeting in Athens.

29-30 April 2022: Meeting of the CEEC General Assembly. This meeting will be preceded by an international conference on the current challenges of Catholic education.

November 2022: CEEC General Assembly meeting in Marseille. Dates to be determined

1-3 December 2022: OIEC Congress in Marseille around the Mare Nostrum, cradle of humanity, crossroads of civilisations and symbol of the world's dysfunctions.

The CEEC secretariat wishes you an excellent holiday



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