

NEWSLETTER

European Committee for Catholic Education

EDITORIAL

LOUIS-MARIE PIRON, SECRETARY GENERAL

Dear friends,

A few years ago, during a European programme (Comenius at the time) that brought together young students from different countries, the suggested activities revolved around the need to work towards building peace. I remember the reaction of a teacher who said that peace was now established in Europe and that we had to move on to something else... Current events, to the east and south of our borders, show us that this is not the case and that we must not relax our efforts, particularly our educational efforts in this area.

Catholic education, in Europe and beyond, has a role to play in peace-building, among other things by promoting its project and strengthening its network. The assemblies we hold, the actions we take and the experiences we share are good ways of doing this.

The recent meeting of the heads of Catholic education in the Mediterranean basin and the meeting with the Holy Father at the " Mediterranean Encounters " were good ways of joining forces and encouraging each other to hold our course.

In this Newsletter, you will find news from some of our members and a review of our recent meeting in Madrid. You will also find a report on the OIEC Congress in Marseille in December 2022, including a link to the texts of the contributions.

Enjoy your reading...

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CEEC ACTIVITIES

OUR MEETINGS

On 20 and 21 October, the CEEC held its 101st General Meeting in Madrid. Pedro José HUERTA and Javier POVEDA, our Spanish hosts, warmly welcomed our group despite the rainy weather. During their stay, the members of the CEEC were received by Mgr Alfonso CARRASCO and Mgr José COBO, who celebrated Mass on Friday and Saturday morning..



During the round-table discussion of the meeting, the members had the opportunity to share information and discuss the latest developments in their countries, with a particular focus on the situation of Catholic schools in Ukraine. The floor was also given to Hervé LECOMTE, Secretary General of the International Office of Catholic Education (OIEC), Michel BERTET, member of the permanent representatives of the OIEC in international bodies such as the Council of Europe, and Pascal LEROY, head of the OIEC's 'Planet Fraternity' project.

A special guest was Father Youssef NASR, Secretary General of Catholic Schools in Lebanon and Regional Secretary of the OIEC Middle East North Africa (MENA) region. He spoke at length about the "Mediterranean Encounters", which were marked by the presence of Pope Francis in Marseille last September.

The training system of Austrian Catholic schools was presented as part of the CEEC's work on the initial and in-service training of teachers and heads of Catholic schools in Europe. This work is currently coming to a close and a document summarising the results of the survey and the presentations organised since 2019 will be published in April 2024 at the General Assembly in Bergen (Norway). On this occasion, a new theme will be launched.





OUR MEETINGS - CONTINUED

At the same time, the General Assembly meeting saw the election of the Executive Board for a 4-year term. The associations elected are as follows

- The General Secretariat for Catholic Education in French and German-speaking Belgium (SeGEC) represented on the Executive Board by Étienne MICHEL.
- The Katholieke Onderwijs Vlaanderen represented on the Executive Board by Marc VAN DEN BRANDE.
- The Nederlandse Katholieke Schoolraad (NCSR) represented on the Executive Board by Titus FRANKEMÖLLE.
- The Association of Management of Catholic Secondary Schools (AMCSS) & Joint Managerial Body (JMB) (AMCSS) represented on the Executive Board by Paul MEANY.
- Escuelas Católicas represented on the Executive Board by Pedro José HUERTA NUÑO.
- The Commission for Education of the Slovenian Bishops' Conference represented on the Executive Board by Marko WEILGUNY.
- The General Secretariat for Catholic Education in France (SGEC) represented on the Executive Board by Marie-Caroline HAMON-VINET.
- The Austrian Interdiocesan Office for Catholic Education, represented on the Executive Board by Marie-Theres IGREC.

Secondly, the members elected Paul MEANY, from Catholic Education in Ireland, as President of the association.

Finally, the General Assembly applauded these members for their appointments and warmly congratulated José Maria ALVIRA on his departure. He was thanked for his excellent work as President and for having represented Spanish Catholic schools within the CEEC for 10 years. Thank you for the many years of collaboration!



OUR ACTIONS, PROJECTS AND NEWS

THE EXECUTIVE BOARD IS GROWING: TWO NEW REPRESENTATIVES

Marie-Theres IGREC is interdiocesan delegate for Catholic schools and theological consultant at the Austrian office for Catholic Education. She studied law and theology at the University of Vienna and the University of Zagreb and holds a doctoral degree in fundamental theology. She worked as teacher of religion and lecturer at the department for Systematic Theology and professor at the Teacher Training University in Vienna.

Marie-Caroline HAMONT-VINET holds a double master's degree in law and human resources. During a 3-year expatriation to the United States, she worked as a HR manager for an association offering French language courses to young expatriates. When she returned to France in 2016, she naturally joined the French Catholic Education Association in Nantes as General Delegate. Since 2021, she has been working with the General Secretariat of Catholic Education (SGEC) to support the implementation of the 'International Openness' label throughout France, in addition to her work in Nantes.



OUR ACTIONS, PROJECTS AND NEWS - CONTINUED

AN INTERVIEW WITH THE NEW PRESIDENT OF THE CEEC, PAUL MEANY

Hi Paul, congratulations on your new position. How are you feeling? Are you happy, anxious, confident? What is your state of mind?

I am honoured to have been elected as President of the CEEC for the next four years, and I look forward to working with my CEEC colleagues, as well as with the leaders of our partner organisations, to further the project of Catholic education in an increasingly secularised Europe.

Can you tell us more about your background and experience in Catholic education?

Educated in Dublin by the Marist Brothers, I became a teacher in 1973 in Marian College after I finished my Science degree. I became the first lay-Principal of the school in 1988 and soon became actively involved the Association of Management of Catholic Secondary Schools (AMCSS) becoming President from 2004 to 2006. At that time I became the Irish representative on the CEEC, joining the Executive Board and for the last eight years I have been Treasurer of the CEEC. In Ireland, I am currently the Chairperson of the Association of Patrons and Trustees of Catholic Schools (APTCS), a Director of the Catholic Education Partnership (CEP) and a Director of the Le Chéile Education Trust.

In your opinion, what are the most important challenges that Catholic education is facing at the present time?

In my view, Catholic education occupies a vital position in the Europe of today. Our emphasis on the search for meaning, and our position between the family, the State and the market, means that the education provided in our schools will never be simply to further the ends of the State, nor sim-

ply to meet the needs of the market, but will continue to be an informed examination of the place of the individual within his or her community and society. We face the challenge of maintaining our Catholic identity whilst being open and welcoming to people of all faiths and none. To achieve this we rely on our teachers and one of our greatest challenges is to identify future teachers and leaders who are committed to the message of the Gospel.

As President of CEEC, how will your position and/or the Association help to address these challenges?

During my Presidency, CEEC will continue to explain the value, rationale and legal basis for Catholic education, support our member organisations in their relationships with their Governments, and form an active collaborative network sharing the best of Catholic education.



Thank you for your time. I wish you every success in your new position.

NEWS FROM OUR MEMBERS

TIME FOR A BREAK, SEGEC RELEASES ITS PODCAST

Last September, SeGEC launched its new podcast "L'heure de fourche". Available on Spotify, Apple Podcasts and Amazon Music, the podcast is published twice a month. It covers a wide range of educational topics. These interviews are interspersed with a "culture/good tips" sequence. Available in French only [by following this link](#).



WAR IN UKRAINE: BACK TO SCHOOL AND STATEMENT TO HCHR

At the beginning of the school year, Father Petro MAIBA, representative of Ukrainian Catholic schools at the CEEC and Head of the Education Department of the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church, gave an interview to VaticanNews. It was an opportunity to find out more about the situation in Ukrainian schools and to put it into perspective with other schools in Europe. The article is available in several languages, including [English](#), [Italian](#), [Spanish](#) and [French](#).

On 25 September, Philippe RICHARD, Permanent Representative of the OIEC, delivered an oral statement on Ukraine at the 54th session of the High Council on Human Rights in Geneva. The text of this statement was written by Father Petro MAYBA and made available in our newsletter.

Dear Mr President

Ukrainian schoolchildren have completed their second school year in the context of a large-scale invasion by Russia. The education system is adapting: schools are building shelters and buying generators, parents are preparing "evacuation bags" for children in case of an air raid during lessons, and extra lessons on mine safety are being introduced into the curriculum.

At present, the Ukrainian education sector still needs 3,000 shelters, at a total cost of over a billion dollars.

This means that some children will not be able to return to full-time offline education this year. At the same time, three out of four Ukrainian schoolchildren do not have a personal laptop to learn online. This means that these children will not be able to study at all, or will have very limited access to educational opportunities. As a result of the war, three quarters of Ukrainian children (75%) now show symptoms of psychological trauma. This means an increased demand for inclusive education.

The destruction of schools and critical infrastructure, and the death and emigration of teachers and pupils, are just the tip of the iceberg when it comes to violations of international and humanitarian law in Ukraine. Every teacher who has been forced to flee abroad represents one less mentor for a pupil. Every air raid siren increases a child's risk of developing anxiety and mental disorders. Every bomb that falls on a Ukrainian school doesn't only damage the building, it also damages the quality of Ukrainian education.

We must understand that all this represents one of the most important indirect crimes of this war: Russia is stealing Ukrainian children's right to education. And with it, the right to a full and quality future.

Thank you very much.



SCHOOL FUNDING : A NEW PUBLICATION

Marc VAN DEN BRANDE, representative on the Executive Board of the Katholieke Onderwijs Vlaanderen, has recently published a new collaborative work on school funding. This publication examines the process of financing education in Flanders and the resources devoted to it. The book provides insights and gives the floor to authors who have taken a close look at funding policy in Flanders. Available in Dutch only [by following this link](#).

NEWS FROM OUR MEMBERS

THE PUBLICATIONS OF OIEC

The magazine *Educatio* recently published the proceedings of the Congress of the International Office of Catholic Education (OIEC) which took place in Marseille last December. To read the speeches, conferences and testimonies, [follow this link](#).

At the same time, several OIEC resources are still available online:

- The OIEC presentation booklet, available in [French](#) and [English](#).
- The OIEC Representation in International Bodies booklet, available in [French](#) and [English](#).
- Two educational projects with "Planet Fraternity", available in [French](#) and [English](#).

CALLS, INVITATIONS AND OTHER INFORMATION

CONFERENCE ON PLURALISM

On 6 December 2023 in Tirana, Catholic Education and the Bishops' Conference are preparing a conference entitled "Pluralism as a European value and its importance as a guarantee for quality and inclusive education". The aim of this conference is to examine and promote the inclusion and quality of education in Albania, based on the principle of plurality. The event aims to influence educational and cultural policies in Albania and create a solid network between the various stakeholders. Further information from [the Albanian secretariat](#).

CALENDAR

- 28 February 2024:** Executive Board meeting in Brussels.
- 25 and 26 April 2024:** Seminar in Bergen (Norway) "What is a human being? The importance of a Christian humanism for education".
- 26 and 27 April 2024:** 102nd meeting of the General Assembly in Bergen.
- 15 and 16 November 2024:** 103rd General Assembly meeting in Strasbourg, preceded by a celebration of the 50th anniversary of the CEEC.

**THE CEEC SECRETARIAT WISHES YOU A
HAPPY ALL SAINTS' DAY AND A PLEASANT
HOLIDAY**



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