

# Commission brings together religious leaders to discuss “The Future of Europe: addressing challenges through concrete actions”

The participants debated “The Future of Europe: addressing challenges through concrete actions”.

First Vice-President Frans **Timmermans** said: *“Europe is home to people of many faiths, and every European has the right to practice his or her faith in peace and security. Ahead of next year’s European elections, I reassured the participants in today’s meeting that the European Commission will continue to stand up and speak up against any discrimination or attacks that their communities might face. Every European citizen will have a chance to shape our common future at the ballot box next year, and I invited the participants in today’s meeting to engage actively in the political process and to encourage their communities to do so as well. While we may worship in different ways, our values are universal, including our commitment to democracy and equality.”*

Today’s meeting builds on the high-level meeting with religious leaders of 7 November 2017 dedicated to the future of Europe and how to develop a values-based and effective Union. Today’s meeting focused on the main policy challenges Europe faces in the next year, as well as the perspectives for the future, beyond the European Parliament elections. Participants discussed in particular how the EU is addressing migration, social integration and the sustainability of our way of life.

## **Background**

Today’s meeting is the 14<sup>th</sup> annual high-level meeting with religious leaders organised by the Commission. Since 2009, the dialogue with churches, religions, philosophical and non-confessional organisations is enshrined in the Lisbon Treaty (Article 17 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union). President Juncker has entrusted the dialogue to First Vice-President Timmermans.

In previous meetings, participants looked into the future of Europe through a number of challenges facing the European Union, in particular migration, terrorism and integration. This is also where they stressed the need to define common values to underpin the foundations of our Union, and find concrete ways of putting those values into good use.

## **More information**

More information on the future of Europe on the Europa website:

[https://ec.europa.eu/commission/white-paper-future-europe-reflections-and-scenarios-eu27\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/commission/white-paper-future-europe-reflections-and-scenarios-eu27_en)

European Commission dialogue with churches, religious communities and philosophical and non-confessional organisations on DG Justice home page on fundamental rights:

[http://ec.europa.eu/justice/fundamental-rights/dialogue/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/justice/fundamental-rights/dialogue/index_en.htm)

### **List of Meeting Participants**

- Metropolitan ATHANASIOS of Achaia, Permanent Representative of the Church of Greece to the European Union
- Imam Khalid BENHADDOU, El Fath mosque, Gent, Belgium
- Bishop Mariano CROCIATA, Bishop of Latina, First Vice-President of the Bishops' Conferences of the European Union (COMECE)
- Rabbi Albert GUIGUI, Chief Rabbi of Brussels and Permanent Representative at Conference of European Rabbis
- Bishop Antoine HEROUARD, Auxiliary Bishop of Lille, President of the Commission on Social Affairs of the Bishops' Conferences of the European Union (COMECE)
- Bishop Robert INNES, Anglican Bishop in Europe
- Dr. Frank JULY, President Bishop of Wuerttemberg, Evangelische Kirche in Deutschland (EKD), President of the EKD Commission on Europe
- Rev. Christian KRIEGER, President of the Reformed Protestant Church of Alsace and Lorraine, President of the Conference of European Churches (CEC)