

Brussels: EU Bishops call for solidarity in Europe



For the first time ever, a meeting of a national Bishops' Conference took place in Brussels. Under the Chairmanship of Cardinal Schönborn, the Plenary Assembly of the Austrian Bishops gathered together from 5 to 8 November in the COMECE premises to deliver a clear sign of support for Europe. "Europe needs Solidarity from all quarters " explained Cardinal Schönborn.

"As COMECE President, I am glad that such a meeting is taking place in the EU capital," said Cardinal Marx. "It shows the Catholic Church is willing to accompany the project of European integration at all levels: the universal one, through representation of the Holy See to the EU; the European one, through activities of the permanent COMECE Secretariat in Brussels; but also at national level, through the participation of Catholic Bishops' Conferences in the political and ethical debates on the EU. My wish therefore is that this meeting inspires other Bishops from EU Member States to follow a similar initiative."

Besides their Plenary Assembly, the Austrian Bishops conducted dialogues with several representatives from the EU institutions, among whom were EU Commissioner Johannes Hahn and the Vice President of the European Parliament Othmar Karas. All Dialogue partners from the EU institutions welcomed this positive initiative of the Austrian Bishops. It was considered to be very helpful, as well as unusual, that Church representatives were seeking a dialogue with the EU on the basis of a genuine interest and commitment to the European peace project. The EU representatives emphasised that Churches were an important partner in promoting and communicating European values.

Today (Thursday) the Austrian Bishops, together with MEPs, inaugurated an exhibition in the European Parliament dedicated to Hildegard Burjan (1883-1933). She lived in Vienna and she is the first parliamentarian in the world to have been beatified by the Catholic Church - in January this year. As a politician, social pioneer and founder of the religious order "Caritas socialis" she has become today "an inspiring example for all those who, in the spirit of 'love thy neighbour', act as an advocate for people in need" emphasised Cardinal Christoph Schönborn, the Archbishop of Vienna and President of the Austrian Bishops' Conference

