



Justice and Peace Europe has a new co-presidency

50 Delegates from 20 countries met for four days in Malta

The General Assembly of Justice and Peace Europe elected for the first time in its history a co-presidency on Monday, 13 November in Malta. Archbishop Antoine Hérouard of Dijon and Maria Hammershoy from Copenhagen were elected for a period of three years by the approximately 50 delegates representing 20 European Justice and Peace commissions. On 10 November Sr. Alessandra Smerilli, secretary of the Vatican Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development was the key-note speaker in the opening ceremony of an International Workshop on “the changing world of work” which preceded the General Assembly.

Nearly fifty delegates from European Justice and Peace commissions and several invited guests from all over Europe gathered from 10 to 13 November for the annual International Workshop and General Assembly in Valletta/Malta. At the opening ceremony in the presence of H.E. Charles Scicluna, the Archbishop of Malta, Sr. Alessandra Smerilli, the secretary of the Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development delivered a key-note speech, in which she addressed the meaning of work, the relationship between work and care and the myth of meritocracy. In her concluding remarks she called for a change in the angle of observation and to restart by “focussing on the discarded workers”.

The changing world of work – a transversal justice issue

On Saturday morning, 11 November, Dr. Marthese Portelli from the Malta Chamber of Commerce and Mr. Lorenzo Vella, the head of the European Commission office in Malta, took part in a round table discussion on potential threats to workers’ rights. In the second part of the morning, participants split up in four workshops, which addressed the topics of the platform economy, accidents and deaths on construction sites, the culture of permanent availability and the changing relationship of young people to work.

The second part of the day was dedicated to a visit of Fort Saint Angelo and a prayer for peace in the Saint Anne Chapel on the top of the fortification. Together with the Ukrainian delegate, the delegates of Justice and Peace Europe later held an in-depth reflection on the situation in Ukraine after the brutal invasion of Russia in February 2022 and the consequences for the Ukrainian and European societies. This session was organised in the Convent of Saint Augustine in Valletta

On Sunday, 12 November, all participants had lunch in the Soup kitchen of Valletta. During a symbolic action in the underground of the city, the delegates meditated and expressed their

personal reasons for hope in a tormented Europe and world. They also prayed for all innocent victims of the conflict in Israel and Gaza. Sunday Mass was celebrated in St. John's Co-Cathedral.

The annual Justice and Peace Lecture 2023

The Oratory of Saint John's Co-Cathedral was the venue for the annual Justice and Peace Lecture. Standing in front of Caravaggio's painting of the beheading of Saint John, Jenny Sinclair, the founder and director of the English Christian charity "Together for the Common Good" delivered an inspiring and thought-provoking speech under the title "Written in blood". Meditating the painting, she evoked several modern-day martyrs. In her critique of liberalism, she denounced the "liberal captivity of humanity", the "financialisation of everything" and the "dictatorship of relativism". Considering the relational nature of the human person, she called for a "relational, transformational and not only useful Church".

A Co-Presidency for Justice and Peace Europe

At the General Assembly on Monday, 13 November, delegates listened to activity reports from national commissions and invited guests. They also adopted a substantial revision of statutes, which allowed among others for the first election of a Co-Presidency. Archbishop Antoine Hérouard of Dijon, who is also first vice-president of COMECE, and Maria Hammershoy, the Secretary General of Caritas Denmark, were subsequently elected. In their first reaction, the new Co-Presidents thanked Cécile Dubernet, who had assumed an interim presidency after the appointment of the former president Archbishop Noel Treanor as Nuncio to the European Union, for her excellent work and availability. They also thanked the Maltese Justice and Peace Commission and its president Daniel Darmanin for the imaginative and exceptional organisation of the event. Finally, Gertrud Casel, member of the Luxembourg Justice and Peace Commission, was elected member of the Executive Committee.

The next International Workshop and General Assembly of Justice and Peace Europe will be held in September 2024 in Prague.

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Justice and Peace Europe is the network of thirty European Justice and Peace Commissions. Justice and Peace Commissions are set up by Catholic Bishops' Conferences to promote the Catholic Social Teaching in civil society and public life.