

# ***EUROPEAN CATHOLIC CENTRE***

*Centre for meetings, formation and celebrations*

*To serve the international institutions in Brussel*

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## **THE EUROPEAN CATHOLIC CENTRE**

**The European Catholic Centre is a non-profit-making international Association**, recognised by the Belgian state, set up by officials of the European Institutions in Brussels.

**An Association of lay people – this is what makes its originality, with respect to other initiatives taken in the context of the European civil service** - it is financed entirely by the contributions and the gifts of its members.

The Centre purposes, according to Article 2 of its Statutes, to «... *being a sign of unity among Christians engaged in the process of uniting Europe.* »

*It serves as a centre for meetings, discussions, formation, action and celebrations in the European Catholic pastoral service, in an ecumenical and social spirit, for persons attached to the European Union Institutions and other international bodies in Belgium, as well as their families.*

**The Association is located, physically, in the centre of the European officials' working life.**

It has two chapels, offices, meeting rooms and rooms for convivial conferences and meetings.

The Centre houses without charge the **Secretariat for the teaching of the Catholic religion in the European Schools.**

It also hosts the "**Hermanidad de nuestra Señora del Rocio de Bruselas**". This is a public association the statutes of which were approved by the Archbishop of Malines-Brussels on 8 December 1996. Based in the Centre, the Hermanidad takes part in its European pastoral activities.

The Centre is responsible for and manages jointly with the Ecumenical Association for Church and Society the "**Lieu de Recueillement**" meeting room in the Commission, currently located at 86, rue de la Loi / Wetstraat.

**The European Catholic Centre caters for European and international officials coming from the countries currently seeking accession to the European Union, or having recently joined NATO.**

**The Centre welcomes people** at informal, family meetings, because it is undeniable that coming together, even occasionally, under the same roof, gives a feeling of comfort and conviviality difficult to obtain in other ways.

It offers a place of healthy conviviality which the international officials of Brussels - and their families - need, because they experience some difficulty in integrating into the local social context.

To serve people who experience difficulty in integrating into the local Church for linguistic and cultural reasons, and who are looking for pastoral care in their mother tongue, **the Centre has taken upon itself the responsibility of organising linguistic communities.**

Through its Sunday celebrations of the Eucharist, preparation for the Sacraments of Christian initiation and marriage, training of catechists, **the Centre ensures a cultural pastoral service** and tries to open at the same time the mentalities of each one towards a context and a spiritual dialogue at an international level.

This aspect of the of the Centre's pastoral work is moreover closely connected **with the activity of the Catholic religion teachers in the European Schools and their collaboration.**

The Centre, in an overall vision of its pastoral service, gives these teachers the opportunity to meet among themselves and, when they request it, with the pupils' parents.

It is in the existence of these Communities, living out their faith in their specific culture, that the Centre draws the strength necessary to update **its principal objective: the proclamation of the Gospel in European Institution circles, the reflection and the understanding pertaining to the major challenges facing Europe as it seeks to unite, in the light of the Word of Christ.**

This is carried out by the organisation of discussion groups for officials on topical issues, conferences, retreats and articles in "**Communitas**", the Association's monthly bulletin.

Through these meetings the Christian prospects for European integration are thus uncovered and the Centre seeks to contribute to the training of officials who live out their daily work according to the Gospel of Christ.

**Some of these activities**, and it is probably one of the most important features of the Centre, **are carried out in close cooperation with our brothers from other christian denominations.**

From the beginning our Association has worked in communion with them. According this spirit of ecumenical openness **the Centre was among the promoters of the restoration of the Chapel of the Resurrection**, rue Van Maerlantstraat, as a tangible sign, in the midst of the European Institutions, of the Christians' desire for unity.

**Finally, the Centre encourages, common, direct and indirect actions to help the poor and destitutes.** Each year an important sum is donated for education grants, for the support of the families of political refugees in Belgium, of seriously ill patients without sufficient income to pay their medical expenses, of prisoners and of families in need.

**To carry out of these initiatives, the European Catholic Centre has turned, since its beginning, almost forty years ago, to the Society of Jesus.**

This **not only** because among its founding members there were three Jesuit Fathers and not only because the apostolate in an association composed of nationals from various countries can be carried out only by one of the major religious orders which has the necessary and appropriate personnel, **but especially** because, in line with the mission entrusted by the Archbishop of Malines-Brussels to the Jesuit Fathers, **the Centre**

**considers that Ignatian spirituality corresponds best to the circles to which our Association addresses itself.**

### **The activities of the European Catholic Centre**

They can be divided into two main groups: the "European" activities for the benefit of the various nationalities and the activities aimed at specific linguistic groups.

#### **European activities :**

- Festive celebrations and meetings for the opening and close of the academic year;
- Celebration of the beginning of Lent on Ash Wednesday;
- Festival of Europe, on 9 May;
- Discussion groups: the participants, regular or occasional, deal with topics chosen by mutual agreement. For example: "The "Our Father" and the Beatitudes", "The order and the properties which characterise our Universe", "Reconciliation, gift of God and source of new life", "The European Union, from Dublin to Amsterdam", "Europe of the year 2000 and Christians";
- Young officials' discussion group. Recent work concerned "Communication within the European Institutions" and "The role of the Churches in European integration";
- A Gospel discussion group;
- Retreats and recollections;
- Organisation of a European choir;
- In collaboration with the Ecumenical Association for Church and Society (AOES) and the OCIPE, the Centre organises in the Commission's "Lieu de Recueillement" conferences and ecumenical services, in particular within the framework of the *Week of Prayer for Christian Unity*, of the *Week of Solidarity* and of the *Week of Peace*;

#### **Activities by linguistic groups :**

- Sunday Eucharist celebrations in Italian, Spanish and French;
- Spiritual guidance for persons and families who request it;
- Preparation of children for First Communion;
- Preparation of adolescents for Confirmation;
- Preparation of parents for the celebration of the Baptism, First Communion and Confirmation of their children;
- Training of catechists;
- Preparation of young couples for marriage;
- Retreats and recollections;
- Participation in activities in favour of the poor and deprived;
- Organisation of choirs by linguistic group;
- Festive get-togethers.

### **THE EUROPEAN CATHOLIC CENTRE'S SCOUTS UNIT**

In the 25<sup>th</sup>. *St. Benedict* (The Scouts-Catholic Federation of Baden-Powell Scouts of Belgium), the European Catholic Centre's Scouts *Unit*, the Mohwa *club pack* and the Sherwood *troop* have a great time two Sundays per month.

What's cool? Well, it's the fact that we're scouts from different countries: Belgians, Italians, French, Spanish, Portuguese... it's like a non-stop *Jamboree!*

For more information, surf our Web site at:

**<http://home.tiscalinet.be/esperanto/benedikto>**