
European Union: Comece Assembly in Rome from 22nd to 24th March to elect the new Presidency. Meeting with Pope Francis and dialogue with Minister Tajani

The Bishops of the European Union will gather in Rome from 22nd to 24th March to elect their new Presidency. This has been reported by Comece, the Commission of the Bishops' Conferences of the European Union, in a notice, adding that the election will take place as part of its Spring Assembly, the agenda of which will include an audience with Pope Francis and a dialogue session with the Italian Minister of Foreign Affairs, Antonio Tajani. On Wednesday 22nd March, the Delegates of the Commission of the Bishops' Conferences of the European Union will elect a new President and four Vice-Presidents for a five-year mandate covering the period 2023-2028. The future President will succeed to Cardinal Jean-Claude Hollerich, Archbishop of Luxembourg, who was elected in 2018 and held the reins of COMECE "during a period marked by daunting challenges such as Brexit, the COVID-19 pandemic and the Russian invasion of Ukraine", as Comece writes in its notice. The four Vice-Presidents will be elected respecting the geographical distribution of the EU Bishops' Conferences. The current Vice-Presidents are Mgr. Mariano Crociata (First Vice-President), Mgr. Jan Vokal and Mgr. Franz-Josef Overbeck. Mgr. Noël Treanor, former Vice-President of COMECE, was appointed by Pope Francis as Apostolic Nuncio to the European Union in November 2022. Also on Wednesday, 22nd March, the EU Bishops will meet with Pietro Parolin, Cardinal Secretary of State of His Holiness. On Thursday 23rd March, the new Presidency, as well as all EU Bishop Delegates and the members of the COMECE Secretariat and their families, will be received by Pope Francis. The audience will provide an "opportunity" "to discuss with the Holy Father some of the most crucial topics for Europe, with a particular emphasis on the promotion of peace, on EU migration and asylum policies and on the 2024 elections of the European Parliament". Also on Thursday, the EU Bishops will also have a dialogue meeting with Alexandra Valkenburg, EU Ambassador to the Holy See. In the afternoon, Mgr. Paul Gallagher, Secretary for Relations with States, will address the Bishops of COMECE. In the evening, they will visit the Italian Bishops' Conference (CEI) and celebrate the Holy Mass with Cardinal Matteo Zuppi. On Friday 24th March, the Assembly will elect the Presidents of the COMECE Commissions. Currently, there are three Commissions: Legal Affairs, Social Affairs and EU External Action. Finally, the COMECE Assembly will have a dialogue meeting with Antonio Tajani, Italian Minister of Foreign Affairs, Vice-President of the European Popular Party (EPP) and former President of the European Parliament.

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