
Coronavirus Covid-19: the European Bishops to the EU and to the member states, “available, inexpensive and accessible vaccines”

“The future Covid-19 vaccines should be available, inexpensive and accessible, especially for older people, sick people and healthcare professionals”. This has been asked of the European Union and its member states by the workgroup on ethics of Comece, the Commission of the Bishops’ Conferences of the European Union, at the end of a meeting about the “Ethical challenges for Europe in the time of the Covid-19 pandemic” that took place in the last few days on conference call. The experts of the workgroup on ethics are appointed by the Bishops’ Conferences of the European Union. At their meeting – as stated in a release relayed by Comece today –, they looked into the current state of the public health policy and its potential future developments, and emphasised the importance of “strengthening cooperation between the EU and its member states in the area of healthcare”. So, as far as the European Vaccines Strategy and especially the development of new potential vaccines against Covid-19 are concerned, the Comece experts pointed out that vaccines should be “ethically made, available, inexpensive and accessible, especially for older people, sick people and healthcare professionals”. And they insisted: “Vulnerable people and healthcare professionals should come first”. “The current situation is affecting every dimension of our life, mentally, physically and spiritually”, the experts of the European Bishops’ Conferences write, and they think that “the pandemic has undoubtedly affected us all, taking its toll on every area of society and economy”. That’s one of the reasons the workgroup emphasised the importance of the “right to spiritual care for patients and healthcare professionals”. The Comece experts spoke at length of the situation of elderly people in the European Union, who “are seriously affected by the current circumstances, mainly due to the lack of sustainable policies”. In this regard, a document will be published – partly with the help of such workgroup – with Comece’s reflections about the care for elderly people, called “Care for elderly people”. As to “universal” accessibility to vaccines, Pope Francis has taken position on several occasions too. On 19th August, at the general audience – focussed on the pandemic – Pope Francis had mentioned a preferential option for the poor of the Gospel and had asked that, in looking for a treatment for Coronavirus, the needier groups of the population should be kept in mind too. “It would be sad – he said – if, in the Covid-19 vaccine, priority were given to the wealthier ones”. A concept that he repeated one month later, on 19th February, when he met the members of Fondazione “Banco farmaceutico”. “I insist that it would be sad if, in providing the vaccine, priority were given to the wealthier ones or if such vaccine became the property of this or that country, and were no longer for everyone. It shall be universal, for everyone”.

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