
Germany: Eva Maria Welskop-Deffaa elected president of the German Caritas Association. First time for a woman

Eva Maria Welskop-Deffaa was elected new president of the German Caritas Association by the Assembly of Delegates. She is the first woman to head this association that employs 693,082 people and has over 500,000 volunteers in the 25,064 bodies linked to Caritas on the federal territory, with about 13 million people reached every year. She succeeds Peter Neher, who has chaired the association for 18 years. Welskop-Deffaa was born in 1959 and is an expert in economics. She worked for the Federal Ministry of Family Affairs and for the Federal Council of the Greens. Since 2017, Welskop-Deffaa has been a member of the Presidential Council of the diocesan Caritas network in Germany, responsible for social policies and the digital agenda. As soon as she was elected, the president, who will take office in mid-November, thanked the delegates for their trust and said she was “very happy to be able to write the next chapter in the history of renewal of the association: to alleviate and prevent difficulties - this is our programme”. Welskop-Deffaa also stated that, since over 80% of Caritas employees are women, “it fits well that the head of the association is now also a woman”. “Paving the way for more women to take on leadership roles in the Church is one of the great themes of its renewal. I would be happy if this could help open the doors of the Church from within”. Welskop-Deffaa’s election was welcomed by many, including the president of the German Bishops, Georg Bätzing, who said: “Caritas is not just a part of the Church, Caritas is the Church”.

Valentina Bombelli