

NEWSLETTER no 6



August 2019

Dear friends,

Our plan to write a newsletter four times a year failed. This is not tragic, because of all the activities UCESM participates in, reports are published on our website. We cannot repeat it enough: VISIT US!

But for those who only want a very short overview, please read this Newsletter number 6!

During the General Assembly held in Snagov in March 2018, the Executive Committee noted that there is an important question about the functioning of UCESM: "How can UCESM promote cooperation between national Conferences and with other institutions?".

It was decided to organize two study days in preparation for the next General Assembly in March 2020 in Roggenburg/Germany.



29 participants, including members of the Executive Committee, the General Secretariat and delegates from 15 national Conferences met from 16 to 18 January 2019 at the Seraphicum in Rome.

Under the leadership of Father Mariano Sedano Sierra cmf, for many years councillor of UCESM, our President Father Zsolt Labancz, and with the help of the Hungarian Management Consultant Janos Matolcsy, they all worked hard.

They were inspired by presentations from Father Mariano (on the history of UCESM), Cardinal Aquilino Bocos Merino cmf from Spain (on religious life in Europe) and Sister Mercedes Casas Sánchez fsp from CIVCSVA, former President of CLAR.

Secrétariat Général:

Rue De Pascale, 4 – B-1040 Bruxelles - ☎ + 32 2 230 86 22 - ✉ ucesm@ucesm.net - 🌐 www.ucesm.net



With the help of two interpreters - Italian and English - working in plenary, but also often in small groups, we found some suggestions for progress. All participants were very satisfied with the work, but certainly also with the warm encounters during these study days. An extensive report can be found on our website. Thanks to the Holy Spirit who led us and to all of us! Let us progress towards a stronger consecrated life in Europe!

On 30 January, on the feast of St. Don Bosco, a group of his "fans" gathered in the European Chapel, not far from our office, for a beautiful and inspiring celebration and reception.

On 19 February, after many preparations, I could call myself the proud owner of the accreditation for the European Parliament. Now I have access to the EP-buildings every day.

I had the opportunity to use it that same day because there was a meeting about human trafficking. This has been "my topic" for 40 years now, and I have worked hard for it: I am a member of Europe's "RENATE" and the worldwide "Talitha Kum" (UISG) networks and have been active in prevention, educational meetings and shelter for victims in the Netherlands, Italy and Latvia.



In Vöcklabruck I took part in a few days' (25-28 February) meeting with the topic "Youth today, how it ticks!". Very interesting and enlightening!

Alexander Hanika, head of the analyses and forecasts department at Statistik Austria, and Beate Großegger, a youth researcher, provided the input and presented facts and figures. What do young people think of when they hear "religion"? "Faith in God, institution church, religious community



or one of the world religions, social togetherness and cohesion, community, obsolete (value) ideas, meaning of life, moral action, social influence, intolerance towards dissenters, freedom of religion, religion is a private matter, to each his own in the sense of an indifferent tolerance and nothing for me". Society is in a state of change, which is also changing the youth. This results in "three readings of religiosity": 1) Faith without belonging to it. 2) Belonging without obeying. 3) Belonging, without obligation. The

important thing is to position oneself. The social rifts are becoming sharper and society is increasingly falling apart into winners and losers. The social ladder has become more slippery. The crash seems possible from everywhere. It is a matter of helping to secure the future of young people and counteracting "social exclusion". Orders have a special role here when the welfare state proves to be more and more fragile.

On 13 March, Mr. Paul Wennekes paid us a visit in the office. He is working on the project "Assessing the potential of monastic pastoral care". The monastic pastoral project includes the Netherlands, Flanders and the German-speaking area and has an ecumenical character. He is currently making an overview of the relevant circumstances. We at UCESM are very interested and Paul will keep us informed.

Under the theme "Catholic school and intercultural and interreligious challenges", the CEEC (European Committee for Catholic Education) organised an international symposium from 14 to 15 March in Brussels. I was present on behalf of UCESM.

The symposium contributed to a better understanding of the diversification of the Catholic school population, in particular through statements by various leading speakers from across Europe (Albania, Sweden, Germany, Netherlands, Belgium, France, Austria, UK, Bosnia-Herzegovina) presenting new practices and approaches. Almost everywhere we are working on a culturally plausible and theologically responsible way of recontextualizing identity into a Catholic dialogue school. Characteristics are among others: attention for the individual child, cooperation with parents, education to free people. It is not the intention to remove catholicity from the school, but it should not be considered as the only sanctifying and equal with other religions. This requires an intelligent and empathetic kind of education. The general opinion was that this form of Catholic teaching is a good one. But also that we are still (far from) there.

On 28 March, two Porticus employees came to our office to talk. We will certainly think about the way we can work together.

Again in the European Chapel we were invited on 10 April to a meeting with two candidates for the European elections. A remarkably large number of young people were present.

And on 12 April we were in the COMECE premises for a breakfast with the Youth Synod as our theme. As always at COMECE, the meeting was a nice gathering with acquaintances.

From 6 to 10 May 2019, about 850 Superiors General met in Rome under the general theme "Sowers of prophetic hope" for the triennial Plenary Assembly of the UISG, which brings



together the leaders of religious communities from about 80 countries, representatives of more than 450,000 religious sisters worldwide. From the UCESM the Vice-President Sr. Danièle FALTZ and I were present.

The theme "Sowing hope for the planet" is an example of an initiative launched since the last UISG Assembly in 2016. Through this campaign we have the opportunity to organize the voice of the Sisters

in their efforts at many structural levels so that our contribution to care for our common living space is more effective and perceived. History will judge how we have responded to this crisis. One day, women religious will be either accomplices, prophets or victims.

We have prayed, reflected and discussed specifically on the following topics:

1. a broader commitment to the environment.

The sisters live and work both in countries where the way of life contributes to the rise in temperatures and in areas where climate change has the greatest impact. "Sowing Hope for the Planet", with its website in six languages, brings together the practices of religious communities in relation to the environment and serves as a resource base and platform.

2. abuse and challenges

At this year's conference the UISG celebrates the 10th anniversary of the founding of Talitha Kum, the worldwide network of consecrated life against human trafficking.

3. abuse within the Church: also in religious communities

Against the background of the ongoing scandal regarding abuse within the Church, the UISG-Board has published a statement condemning any abuse of power and advocating the "need to educate the members of our communities so that relationships at all levels are healthy, respectful and mutual".

Secrétariat Général:

Rue De Pascale, 4 – B-1040 Bruxelles - ☎ + 32 2 230 86 22 - ✉ ucesm@ucesm.net - 🌐 www.ucesm.net

4. interculturality and interreligious dialogue

The adoption of a true model of interculturality is urgently needed for the communities and the whole Catholic Church. It provides a theoretical framework for the transition from multiculturalism to interculturality and on practical approaches to how to do this. As religious communities adapt to a more intercultural approach, religious women, for example, can "become one of the seeds of prophetic hope that we as consecrated women want to sow in today's world". The conference ended with an audience with Pope Francis and the celebration of the 10th anniversary of the Talitha Kum anti-trafficking network.



During the audience: Pope Francis at a table with the (former) President of UISG, Sr. Carmen Sammut

In order to prepare the next General Assembly (9-14 March 2020), the Executive Committee and the General Secretariat went to Roggenburg, a beautiful place in Bavaria/DE.



Many arrangements were made and we are very grateful to the DOK and the Fathers that they will host us and meet our needs in many ways. In the meantime everyone has received the invitation and some information.



At the annual meeting (11 June) of the KNR (Netherlands), interesting news were announced, e.g. changes in management (see website).

Nicole attended the 2nd meeting on the consequences of "Laudato Si" at COMECE on 12 June.

After I had taken the first steps for an amendment of our statutes, together with the general secretary of the KNR, Mr. Patrick Chatelion Counet, I could take part in the "Ottmaringer Days" from 1 to 5 July in peace and quiet: a meeting of about 100 religious and members of various spiritual communities from 50 different orders, communities, congregations and institutes. Represented were religious from many European and non-European countries.



On the pictures: 1. Cardinal João Braz de Aviz (right) with DOK Chairman Sr. Dr. Katharina Kluitmann OSF and violin maker and author Martin Schleske; 2. the Cardinal, two Swedish Bridgettine Sisters and Sr. Marjolein and 3. "enjoy pure" but without alcohol: Abbot Hermann Josef Kugler and Sr. Marjolein

The organizing team was the working group "Together of the Orders" of the Focolare Movement; the German Conference of Superiors of Orders and the Austrian Conferences of Superiors ("Ordensgemeinschaften Österreich") supported the event. Cardinal João Braz de Aviz, Prefect of the Vatican Congregation of religious and institutes of apostolic life, also attended the meeting.

During this half-year period I participated in various interesting webinars of UISG (Trafficking in Human Beings, Spiritual Abuse in the Catholic Church), COMECE (Trafficking in Human Beings, Laudato Si, Climate Change); it is wonderful to have the opportunity to participate in this way in several bodies without having to travel more.....

Once again I would like to draw your attention to the "**Marketplace**" initiative where one side can offer things (or suggest persons who have something to offer in the "spiritual field") for church and home and the other side can react to it or even ask for it, especially because during the General Assembly there was an explicit wish for more contacts (also among each other). Please be inspired!

That's it for today!

With warm fraternal greetings from the Secretariat in Brussels.



Sr. Marjolein Bruinen OP
Secretary General

Secrétariat Général:

Rue De Pascale, 4 – B-1040 Bruxelles - ☎ + 32 2 230 86 22 - ✉ ucesm@ucesm.net - 🌐 www.ucesm.net

Changes within the UCESM Member conferences

KORUS from Slovenia – May 2019

Election of a new Vice-President:

Sr. Marija ŠIMENC fma



AMRI from Ireland – May 2019

Election of a new President:

Sr. Kathleen McGARVEY ola



COREB from Belgium – June 2019

Election of a new President:

Brother Robert THUNUS fm



and of a new Vice-President:

Sr. Marie-Renilde d'HAEMER sv



Secrétariat Général:

Rue De Pascale, 4 – B-1040 Bruxelles - ☎ + 32 2 230 86 22 - ✉ ucesm@ucesm.net - 🌐 www.ucesm.net