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# NEWSLETTER

European Committee for Catholic Education

## EDITORIAL

LOUIS-MARIE PIRON, SECRETARY GENERAL

Dear friends,

This end-of-year issue of our newsletter offers me the opportunity to thank you all for your commitment to the CEEC.

We were delighted to meet up again with our Danish and Polish colleagues at our last meeting in Vilnius. This assembly marked the end of the work on the CEEC's legal status and launched a debate on the issue of trans-identity. In the course of our work, we agreed to develop our working methods. The Executive Board will be pursuing its work on this point so as to make proposals to the Assembly in Madrid.

We are coming to the end of our research into the specific training of teachers and headteachers in Catholic education in our countries. Your contributions will enable us to produce an overall summary which will be published digitally. It will then be time to launch a new work theme which will certainly have to take a new form, taking into account the evolution of our working methods.

I would like to thank Théo Van der Zee for sending us some material related to his presentation given in Vienna over a year ago. You will find his article in the body of this Newsletter. I would also like to invite you to read the call for partners sent out by our Ukrainian member association as part of our solidarity campaign with Ukrainian schools affected by the war.

Finally, as we begin to look ahead to the summer period, which is a good time to rest, I wish you all a good holiday and look forward to seeing you in Madrid in October.

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## CEEC ACTIVITIES

### OUR MEETINGS

The 100th meeting of the CEEC General Assembly was held in Vilnius on 21 and 22 April. Our Lithuanian friends organised this meeting and the surrounding activities brilliantly. During their stay, the members of the CEEC were received by the Archbishop of Vilnius and President of the CCEE, Mgr Gintaras GRUŠAS. He also presided over the Friday morning Mass at the beginning of the meeting.



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This 100th meeting was marked by a rich programme of interventions, particularly during the tour de table, but also during the contributions of our partner members such as the OIDEL and the OIEC, and during the presentation of the training system in Italy. The latter is part of the CEEC's work on the initial and continuing training of teachers and headteachers of Catholic schools in Europe, which will come to an end in 2024. A new theme will then be launched.

In parallel with this work, the members of the General Assembly discussed the issue of trans-identity (see the "Our work" section) and the situation of schools in Ukraine (see the "Catholic education in Europe" section).

Finally, financial and legal issues were discussed, including approval of the amended statutes in accordance with the new Belgian legislation on the Companies and Associations Act (Code des Sociétés et des Associations). In addition to these items, the General Assembly meeting was a real opportunity for members to meet, share information and exchange views on the situation of Catholic schools in their countries.



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## OUR WORK

### SUMMARY OF THE DISCUSSIONS HELD AT THE GA OF THE EUROPEAN COMMITTEE FOR CATHOLIC EDUCATION ON GENDER ISSUES

« « If we wish to take an approach to the question of gender theory that is based on the path of dialogue, it is vital to bear in mind the distinction between the ideology of gender on the one hand, and the whole field of research on gender that the human sciences have undertaken, on the other. While the ideologies of gender claim to respond, as Pope Francis has indicated, “to what are at times understandable aspirations”, they also seek “to assert themselves as absolute and unquestionable, even dictating how children should be raised”, and thus preclude dialogue. However, other work on gender has been carried out which tries instead to achieve a deeper understanding of the ways in which sexual difference between men and women is lived out in a variety of cultures. It is in relation to this type of research than we should be open to listen, to reason and to propose.”

*Source : 'Male and Female he created them': Towards a path of dialogue on the question of gender theory in Education" - Congregation for Catholic Education - 2 February 2019*

Some pupils, sometimes very young, express their dismay over what they feel is a disjunction between their body and their "gender identity". These issues have a particular resonance in schools, which are obviously not "above ground". Schools are also affected by certain ideological struggles on these issues, which have a far-reaching impact.

Alongside the family, the school, as a place where knowledge is passed on, has an essential role to play in terms of human and spiritual awakening and self-appropriation, in its uniqueness. The conception of the human person based on the Gospel and the conviction of the importance of educating the whole person, body, soul and spirit,

commit Catholic Education to addressing questions related to gender identity with the greatest respect for individuals, while ensuring that they are raised within the educational community and form part of an integral educational project.

Bearing in mind its educational responsibility, the Catholic school is fundamentally concerned about the dignity of each person it welcomes and vigilant in the way it considers the full development of the person (body, mind and soul) and the search for the common good as the unified aims of education.

The members of the European Committee for Catholic Education cannot avoid reflecting and sharing on this question. The CEEC assembly in Vilnius at the end of April 2023 was an opportunity to launch work that will have to continue in the years to come.

#### RESOURCES PROPOSED BY OUR MEMBERS:

- Although transgenderism is not a specific theme of Catholic Education in Flanders, Katholiek Onderwijs Vlaanderen supports schools where this issue arises. More broadly, the Flemish association has adopted a clear vision of diversity as an integral part of the principles of the Catholic School of Dialogue. [Find out more here.](#)
- The Bishops' Conference of Scotland has published [a text](#) entitled "Called to be Children of God A Catholic Understanding of Gender Identity".
- In Ireland, the issue of trans-identity is dealt with locally. However, a [Gender Identity Knowledge Act](#) was passed in 2015.



## NEWS FROM OUR MEMBERS

### COMMUNAL DISCERNMENT IN CATHOLIC SCHOOLS

Dr. Theo Van der Zee, Verus representative on the CEEC and professor at Radboud University in Nijmegen, recently published an article entitled "Reading the signs of the times: Design of a communal discernment practice in Catholic schools". This publication is part of his presentation "What is education at Catholic schools good for?", which he gave at the international symposium "Committed to a vision" in Vienna in April 2022.

Based on an academic study of Christian spirituality, this article aims to contribute to the issue of how Catholic schools act by presenting a generic model for communal discernment practice. The publication includes four clusters of strategies for action and reflective questions to activate these strategies, as well as suggestions for further research. The document is available online [via this link](#).



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### SOLIDARITY FOR UKRAINIAN SCHOOLS: PARTNERSHIP, DONATIONS AND EDUCATIONAL MATERIALS

For the past year and a half, the war has hit the Ukrainian population hard, including schools, young people and school educational teams. Today, as an extension of the solidarity action, the CEEC is joining forces with the Commission for Education of Ukrainian Catholic Schools to launch inter-school partnerships to enable pupils and teachers to learn about and exchange ideas, and also to support and develop lasting international links with the educational teams of Ukrainian Catholic schools. Are you a teacher or headteacher interested in this initiative? Join us in this inspiring educational adventure by [contacting the Ukrainian secretariat](#) (in English only) to be put in touch with a school in the country.

Would you like to discuss the situation in Ukrainian schools with your students or staff? We would like to remind you that educational material is available to schools to provide information and raise awareness of the situation faced by young Ukrainians. To receive these documents, [contact the Ukrainian secretariat](#).

Lastly, donations can still be made to account BE68 2100 4717 9034 (BIC/SWIFT: GEBABEBB), marked "SOLIDARITÉ ÉCOLES CATHOLIQUES UKRAINIENNES 2023". All funds raised will be transferred to the secretariat of the Ukrainian Greek-Catholic schools.



## CALLS AND MISCELLANEOUS INFORMATION

### SeGEC SUMMER UNIVERSITY

On 18 August, the *Secrétariat général de l'Enseignement catholique* is organising another edition of its Summer University in Louvain-la-Neuve (Belgium). The theme of this day of reflection, training and exchange will be: the human being at the heart of change. For more information and to register, [click here](#).

### ST STANISLAV SUMMER SEMINARS

As it does every year, the St Stanislav Institute is organising summer seminars for teachers. These will be held in Ljubljana (Slovenia) from 2 to 8 July. A number of themes will be addressed this year, including the advantages of inclusive education, creativity and early talent development in the Arts, encouraging innovation and digital skills, and vocational guidance in primary schools. For more information, [click here](#).

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## NEWS FROM OUR MEMBERS

### NEW COMMUNICATIONS FROM THE OIEC

The International Office of Catholic Education (OIEC) has recently published a newsletter. It is available in 3 languages by [clicking on this link](#).

In parallel, the OIEC Secretariat has been working on the creation of a booklet presenting the OIEC and its missions. This document is also available online in 3 languages by [following this link](#).

## CALENDAR

20 September 2023: CEEC Executive Board meeting, which will be held exceptionally in Brussels.

20 and 21 October 2023: 101st meeting of the General Assembly in Madrid (Spain).

26 and 27 April 2024: 102nd meeting of the General Assembly in Bergen (Norway).



## THE SECRETARIAT OF THE CEEC WISHES YOU A PLEASANT SUMMER



European Committee for Catholic Education

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@Tom79 (Pixabay)