

Activities of the EBU Liaison Office to the EU May 2025 – April 2026

A. The Article 17 EU-Dialogue with churches, and religious, non-confessional and philosophical organizations

As a reminder: the EU institutions engage in regular structured dialogue with representatives of churches, and religious, non-confessional and philosophical organizations, on the basis of Article 17 of the Lisbon Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU). This dialogue takes the form of high-level meetings or working-level discussions, is focused on policy issues on the European agenda, and traces its origins to earlier initiatives, such as that launched in 1994 by Jacques Delors – 'A Soul for Europe' – which aimed to find ways to build an ethical, moral and spiritual dimension into European integration and policy shaping.

The Lisbon Treaty was adopted in 2007 and in force since December 2009.

1. Article 17 dialogue with the European Parliament

The EBU has always maintained close contact with the presidency and with the coordinator of the Article 17 dialogue at the European Parliament. These exchanges became even closer, since we managed to have, on 17 May 2021, a one-hour virtual meeting with the First Vice-President of the EP in charge of Article 17 **Roberta Metsola**, together with EBU President Ron Eichhorn, EBU Vice-President Stefano Bettera and myself during which she asked many questions and was very positive. When she was elected President of the European Parliament on 18 January 2022, **Othmar Karas**, a Christian Democrat MEP from Austria, became the new First Vice-President of the Parliament in charge of the Article 17 dialogue. The former coordinator Martina Prpic was replaced by **Nicola Censini**, which we already knew at the time he was a councillor at the cabinet of **former EP President David Sassoli**, who died on 11 January 2022. Since that time, our relations with the Article 17 dialogue Department have become such that the EBU became a full partner of the dialogue and is now invited to name a speaker for each of the public seminars organized by the European Parliament, generally twice a year.

As mentioned in the former activity report, after the European elections of June 2024, **Roberta Metsola** was reelected president of the European Parliament. The responsibility for the Article 17 dialogue was then given to **Vice-President Antonella Sberna, with whom the EBU has excellent relations.**

On 4 June 2025, EBU President **Stefano Bettera** was invited as a speaker of the Article 17 seminar "*Housing in the EU : strategies for a Europe that supports people, families and younger generations*". About 200 people attended the event. **To watch the event, [click here](#).** Since the whole seminar lasts 3 hours, to listen to Stefano's speech, go to **17:30:58.**



On 2 December 2025, the EBU was again invited to participate in the Article 17 dialogue seminar on the topic *"Beyond the numbers: the contribution of Article 17 TFEU to an EU Multiannual Financial Framework grounded in ethics, solidarity and inclusion"*. EBU President Stefano Bettera was invited to take the floor on the topic *"How the EU Multiannual Financial Framework can promote a more equitable, competitive and sustainable social model"*. About 200 people attended the event. **The seminar can be viewed by [clicking here](#). To listen to Stefano's speech, please go to 17:12:02.**



On **3rd February 2026**, Stefano came to Brussels to visit the Townhall of Saint-Gilles in view of holding the EBU AGM 2026 there, but also and most importantly for a meeting with Vice-President **Antonella Sberna**, together with her Head of Office **Andrea Leonardelli** and Article 17 dialogue coordinator **Nicola Censini**. We had a long meeting, also together with the Representative of H.H. the Dalai Lama, **Rigzin Ghenkang**. The idea was to organize an event in the European Parliament around the Year of Compassion and a possible visit to Dharamsala by Antonella Sberna.

On **25th February 2026**, from 9.30 to 11.15, EBU President Stefano Bettera and I were invited by EP Vice President **Antonella Sberna** to an **informal consultation** exclusively reserved for representatives of Brussels-based churches and religious organizations. The focus was on an exchange of views on key priorities and activities related to the implementation of Article 17 TFEU, as well as on the objectives to be pursued in the course of 2026.

The same day, in the evening, **Imam Yahya Pallavicini**, President of Eulema, who also attended the Article 17 dialogue consultation, invited the EBU to participate in the **IFTAR** he organized in the European Parliament. Since Stefano had his flight back to Italy in the afternoon, I represented the EBU to this breaking the fast during Ramadan. The event was considered very auspicious because it was also the beginning of the Christian Lent, and was attended by several MEPs, among whom **Antonella Sberna** and **Miriam Lexman**, Chair of the Intergroup on Freedom of Religion or Belief, and European Commissioner **Magnus Brunner**.



To see a short video on the IFTAR in the European Parliament,
please [click here](#).

On the **9th of June 2026**, a new Article 17 dialogue seminar will take place in the European Parliament, where Stefano Bettera is again invited to take the floor. The topic of the seminar will be *“Health and well-being in the age of artificial intelligence: communities tackling isolation and digital risks.”*

2. Article 17 Dialogue within the European Commission

Until the end of the former Commission, Vice-President Margaritis Schinas was responsible for the dialogue between the European Commission and churches, religious associations or communities as well as philosophical and non-confessional organizations. In the new Commission, the responsibility for the Article 17 dialogue is **Commissioner Magnus Brunner**, also in charge of Internal affairs and Migration.

Since 2017 Mr Vincent Depaigne has been appointed as coordinator. Recently, Mr. Depaigne informed us that in the organigram of the Commission, the secretariat of the Article 17 dialogue, which was based on the Directorat General Justice, has moved to the General Secretariat of the Commission.

While the Article 17 activities of the European Parliament consist mainly of public conferences with speakers on specific topics, those of the European Commission mainly concern high-level meetings restricted to between 15 and 30 people representing the Article 17 partner associations in the presence of one or more Vice-Presidents of the Commission or other Commissioners. M. Vincent Depaigne also regularly organizes consultations with the partner associations and keeps them informed about policies connected to the interests of faith-based and philosophical associations.

On 17th September 2025, I represented the EBU at a briefing session organized by M. Vincent Depaigne on the **proposal for a European Democracy Shield**, which is part of the Commission's work programme 2025. The aim of the Democracy Shield is to counter foreign information manipulation and interference online, by detecting, analysing and proactively countering disinformation and information manipulation as well as hybrid threats.

https://commission.europa.eu/priorities-2024-2029/democracy-and-our-values_e

The briefing session, which took place in the Berlaymont building, was an occasion to hear from Harry Panagopoulos, Policy Officer in the Secretariat General (unit SG.E.1 - Citizens, Equality, Democracy and Rule of Law), on the Democracy Shield. After his presentation, the floor was open for questions and comments. We were about 25 people. My questions concerned the information manipulation and interference from the Russian side facilitated by some Member States, such as the Hungarian government of Victor Orban.

On 17th November 2025, EBU President Stefano Bettera was invited by Commissioner **Magnus Brunner** for a **high-level meeting** dedicated to *"Responding to the polarization of our societies"*. The Commissioner received religious leaders of Christian, Jewish, Muslim, and Buddhist faiths to discuss the role religious organizations can play in countering polarization in societies. He invited participants to exchange on the experiences of their communities on these issues. In particular, they discussed the role that new technologies, such as social media and artificial intelligence, can play in shaping the general discourse. Unfortunately, the plane of Stefano was cancelled at the last minute and so I was invited to represent the EBU.

To see the beginning of the high-level meeting, with an introduction by Magnus Brunner and a video message by EP Vice-President Antonella Sberna, [click here](#).



B. Presence at other events in the European Parliament

1. Exhibition: “His Holiness the 14th Dalai Lama of Tibet: Celebrating 90 Years of Wisdom and Compassion”- 18th November 2025

Organized at the initiative of the Office of Tibet, this exhibition pays tribute to a life devoted to peace, dialogue and the promotion of universal values. Through images, it celebrates his profound influence as a leader and a tireless advocate for compassion, non-violence and mutual understanding. The inauguration of the exhibition in the European Parliament took place on 18th November 2025, from 13:00 to 14:00, in the presence of the President of the Tibet Support Group of the European Parliament and several of the MEPs members of this group. I was invited to represent the EBU.

Part of the inauguration has been filmed and can be seen by [clicking here](#). My interview on this occasion can be seen by going to 25:15.

2. “Compassion in Action: A Global Ethic of Care for Life”- 18th March 2026

Organized by the Office of Tibet and by Mind & Life Europe and hosted by Mr. Leoluca Orlando MEP, this event was conceived to honour H.H. the 14th Dalai Lama’s Legacy through Education, Dialogue and Inner Transformation, in the European Parliament on 18th March 2026 from 14:30 to 18:00.

Among the speakers were four Board members of Mind & Life Europe as well as its Managing Director Gábor Karsai and Dr Chiara Mascarello from the Research Centre of the Italian Buddhist Union. Stefano Bettera and I were invited but, since his plane from Milano was cancelled, I was invited to take the floor on behalf of the EBU.

C. Presence at the 20th United Nations Vesak celebration

1. The 20th UN Vesak celebration in Vietnam, from 6th to 8th May 2025

On behalf of the Vietnam Buddhist Sangha and the International Council for Day of Vesak, I was invited as Vice-President of the EBU to be a Keynote Speaker at the Plenary Discussion at the Vietnam Buddhist University in Ho Chi Minh City on May 6th, 2025. I was asked to give a 10-minute presentation on the 2025 UN Vesak main theme: *“Unity and Inclusivity for Human Dignity: Buddhist Insights for World Peace and Sustainable Development”*. There were about 2.000 people present, among whom many monastics. Also, EBU Council member Carlotta Segre was present. (she took the picture).



2. The 20th UN Vesak celebration in Thailand, on 10th of May 2025

The United Nations Vesak celebration in Thailand took place at the UNESCAP Hall, United Nations Conference Centre in Bangkok, seat of the UN in Asia. After a welcome address by Most Ven. Prof. Dr. Phra Brahmapundit, President of the International Council for Day of Vesak and the International Association of Buddhist Universities, UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres gave a video message. A Keynote Speech was given on the topic: *“Harmony and Inclusivity for Human Dignity: Buddhist Insights for World Peace and Sustainable Development.”*

After more messages from Buddhist and political leaders, I was also invited to present a goodwill message as Vice-President of the EBU. Carlotta Segre, EBU Council member, was also present. The representative of His Majesty the King of Thailand then came for the Opening Ceremony of the 20th United Nations Day of Vesak Celebration 2025. After the closing speech by Most Ven. Prof. Dr. Phra Brahmapundit, all the participants left for Buddhamonthon for the Vesak circumambulation of the giant Srisakyadasapalanyana

Buddha Statue. However, at the time the buses arrived there, everybody had to look for shelter when a terrible rainstorm broke out...

D. Presence at the World Buddhist Peace Conference 2026 in Hyderabad, India

I was invited as Vice-President of the EBU and President of the BBU as a Keynote by Most Ven. Dr. Thich Nhat Tu to participate as a Keynote Speaker at the International Academic Conference in the framework of WBPC 2026, which was held on March 27th-29th, 2026, in Hyderabad and Buddhavanam, Nagarjunasagar, India. The theme of the Conference was *"World Peace: Buddhist Approaches to Conflict Resolution, Reconciliation, and Healing"*.

On 27th March in the afternoon, I was part of the panel *"Reconciliation without Erasure: Forgiveness, Justice, and Collective Healing"* and was given the floor for 10 minutes.



To see and listen to my speech, [click here](#) or on the image above (12 minutes). On three occasions the video seems to stop but if you just wait a few seconds, it will restart and go on to the end.

On 28th March, in the morning, there was the visit to the Buddhavanam project and meditation at the Mahastupa, and in the afternoon a visit by boat to the island of Nagarjunakonda, the area where Nagarjuna lived, for a visit to the Nagarjuna Museum.



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