



Centesimus Annus Pro Pontifice Foundation (FCAPP)

“Peace Building in Europe: What Role for Catholic Social Thought and Universal Values?”

European Conference

Co-organized by the **FCAPP Luxembourg Chapter**, the **Luxembourg School of Religion & Society (LSRS)** and the **Conference of EU Bishops (COMECE)**

Luxembourg, at LSRS, 23 January 2026

The Background: A New Approach to Peacebuilding Based on Catholic Social Teaching (CST)

The Conference places universal values at the centre of peacebuilding in Europe. Today, at both the European and global levels, we are living through a moral crisis marked by the denial of the importance, the role, and even the very existence of universal values. Shared values are the foundation of any community, because they make possible the peaceful coexistence of diverse individual and collective interests, cultures and allegiances. After the Second World War, and after centuries of “European civil wars” with millions of victims, humanitarian tragedies, genocides, deportations, displacements, and countless human rights abuses, universal values — embodied in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the UN Charter, international law, and rules-based economic, financial, and political systems — provided the foundation for conflict resolution through dialogue, diplomacy, and integration.

It is a historical fact that the Catholic world and Catholic Social Teaching played a leading role in shaping a European and international order aimed at ensuring peace and development. That order has since been shaken and undermined by profound transformations (*Rerum novarum*) of many kinds: technological, demographic, economic, financial, and environmental. Yet it is not these changes in themselves that explain the current “*polycrisis*” and the return and spread of war. When leaders — and even entire nations — come to believe that the interests and values underpinning their communities are under threat, and when these are understood as an exclusive identity to be defended against others rather than as universal values, conflict becomes inescapable and irreconcilable. Survival is then sought through power and force, rather than through the building of peace.



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At the heart of the current crisis lies a loss of spiritual and moral discernment, which blurs the distinction between the common good and particular interests. Power tends to replace meaning as the organizing principle of economic, social, and political life. Peacebuilding therefore requires the recovery of a shared capacity for discernment and dialogue, grounded in mutual respect and in the pursuit of human dignity for all. CST and the Catholic world are thus called to play a fundamental role in providing the value infrastructures necessary for peace and stability in Europe.

The relationship between the principles of CST and universality is complex and multidirectional. CST principles are universal and applicable across cultures and communities, while universal values themselves ultimately find their deep roots in CST. This perspective has gained particular strength since the Second Vatican Council and through the rich Magisterium of the postwar Popes.

The task of Catholicism has therefore become far more demanding — and far more stimulating — than simply disseminating CST. Evangelization implies the inculturation of the Gospel within diverse social contexts and throughout successive stages of social development (*Rerum novarum*). Pope Francis often said: “*Proselytism* is not Christian”. Pope Leo, in his address to the diplomatic corps on 9 January 2026, expressed this insight clearly: “In every sincere religious quest, there is a reflection of the one divine Mystery that embraces all creation.”

Peacebuilding thus becomes “a process of spiritual synodality,” involving renewed investment in CST, engagement in ecumenical and interreligious dialogue, and the development of ethical reflection and practice in economic, social, and environmental integration. This is the approach that will guide the Conference.

The Event: The First FCAPP European Conference

The Conference takes place in a context of unprecedented and escalating conflicts in Europe and its surrounding regions. Both old and new multilateral mechanisms of dialogue and cooperation are increasingly struggling to fulfil their mission of fostering peace, security, and development. At the beginning of the pontificate of Leo XIV, who has placed strong emphasis on peace and Catholic Social Thought, FCAPP wishes to mobilize its intellectual and relational resources to examine the social, economic, and policy dimensions of peacebuilding through a holistic discussion.

While current efforts understandably focus on diplomacy, negotiations, and the compromises needed to halt violence, peace cannot be reduced to the cessation of hostilities. It also requires addressing the root causes of conflict, challenging polarizations and injustices, and investing in essential infrastructures — not only physical, financial, and human capital, but also, above all, social and ethical capital: the universal values that sustain peaceful communities. Ultimately, peacebuilding involves a transformation of mentalities and hearts. For this reason, the Conference will foster multidisciplinary exchange among intellectuals, business leaders, and policymakers.



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The Objectives: Promoting an Active Role for Faith Communities and the Unity and Commitment of All Catholics

The Conference will begin with an assessment of the state of the economy, society, and governing institutions, guided by the moral compass of CST and its core principles (e.g., human rights, social justice, education, democracy, religious freedom). Particular attention will be given to the poor, the homeless, refugees, and to communities most exposed to the devastation of war. The aim is to clarify the role that CST and Catholics can play in strengthening the ethical norms and universal values that underpin peaceful coexistence and inclusive societies.

We trust that CST can exert a broad and constructive influence, enabling all relevant actors to contribute positively to policymaking, economic life, and social development. Discussions will be organized around four thematic areas, developed through parallel sessions:

1. **The transition to a peacebuilding economy:** reconstruction of infrastructure, SMEs, energy, technology, financial markets, investment.
2. **Labour markets and demographic challenges:** employment, migration, education, families, children and youth, health, equal opportunities.
3. **The construction and reconstruction of social capital:** trust, social inclusion, institution-building, intercultural and interreligious dialogue.
4. **Local and regional disparities:** income gaps, industrial development, social cohesion; EU accession and pan-European integration.

The final session will focus on **European integration as a pathway to peace**. In the postwar period, the Catholic Church and CST profoundly influenced European integration as a response to nationalism and communism and as a foundation for peace. Pope Pius XII articulated prophetic support for supranationalism as a model for peacebuilding and multilateral governance. One may recall the role of Msgr. Giovanni Battista Montini within the European Movement. A similar principle characterizes the organization of the Church itself, with a strong and universal focus at the central level and a decentralized structure.

Europe has since become increasingly integrated, evolving into far more than a “nation,” while offering a model of governance that safeguards human dignity and promotes universal fraternity.

In the present crisis, however, a new question arises: how can Europe play a meaningful global role in rebuilding an effective framework for international dialogue and cooperation? How can it promote universal values, human rights, international law, solidarity with the poor, refugees and migrants, and the protection of the environment?



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Partnerships

Looking ahead, we seek to strengthen and develop partnerships with a wide range of institutions and actors, including:

- the diocese of Luxembourg , Cardinal Jean-Claude Hollerich and Archbishop Luc Terlinden;
- representatives of the European institutions (European Commission, European Parliament, and European financial institutions such as the EBRD, EIB, ESM, and the Council of Europe Development Bank);
- private-sector organizations (BusinessEurope, the European Banking Association, Insurance Europe, European trade unions);
- European and national policymakers;
- think tanks and academic institutions;
- and, where appropriate, other religious communities (Protestant, Jewish, Islamic, etc.).

Luxembourg and the Organization

The Conference will take place over a full day, on January 23, beginning with a morning Mass and concluding with an evening meditation and reception. It will be held at the Luxembourg School of Religion and Society (LSRS), co-organizer of the event together with FCAPP. Luxembourg itself offers a powerful symbol of dialogue and solidarity, with 170 nationalities and a population made up of 47% of people who do not hold Luxembourgish citizenship. As the Grand Duke of Luxembourg emphasized in his Christmas message:

“Luxembourg is a crossroads of cultures, languages, and ways of life, a place of dialogue and exchange (...) This solidarity is our strength. I am fully aware that it cannot be taken for granted.”

The Conference will apply, *mutatis mutandis*, the **synodal method** through breakout sessions and small-group discussions. The format will be hybrid, with approximately 80–100 participants on site and the possibility of remote participation in the plenary sessions. **English and French** will be the working languages, with simultaneous interpretation provided (except for parallel sessions II, III and IV).

Expected Outcomes and Follow-up

The Conference aims to enhance the visibility of, and support for, the work of FCAPP chapters in cities hosting European institutions, notably Brussels and Luxembourg. It also seeks to mobilize members and partners to promote greater awareness of CST and to contribute, from a Catholic



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perspective, to peacebuilding and European integration processes, which historically have drawn strength from Europe's Christian roots and Catholic engagement.

A synthesis of the Conference contributions will be prepared, along with a proposed agenda for future action, including:

- publication of selected papers and articles;
- continuation of the reflection through *ad hoc* working groups;
- organization of thematic meetings and webinars (for example, on the ethical criteria for the use of force in exceptional cases, or on disarmament and nuclear non-proliferation);
- development of continental conferences on peacebuilding and CST for Asia, the Americas, Africa, and the Mediterranean region.

Steering Group

The Conference is being organized by a small operational steering group coordinated by Christophe Déage, FCAPP Luxembourg Chapter Leader, with the participation of Fr. Manuel Barrios Prieto, Secretary General of COMECE, Alessandro Politi, an active member of the FCAPP Luxembourg Chapter, and Oliver Galea, Secretary General of FCAPP in Rome.

Partners

