



COMMUNIQUÉ

On Tuesday, 6 March 2018, the Committee of Representatives of Orthodox Churches to the European Union (CROCEU) in cooperation with the Working Group on Interreligious and Intercultural Dialogue of the European People's Party (EPP) held a dialogue Seminar in the European Parliament in Brussels. The main topic of this Seminar was **"The importance for Europe to protect Christian Cultural Heritage"**.

The seminar was attended by representatives of the Ecumenical Patriarchate, the Patriarchate of Moscow, the Patriarchate of Romania, the Patriarchate of Bulgaria, the Church of Cyprus and the Church of Greece as well as by Members of the European Parliament and other officials, academics, diplomats and representatives of religious organizations in Brussels. The general introductory statement was made by Mr György Hölvényi, MEP and Co-Chairman of the Working Group on Interreligious and Intercultural Dialogue of the EPP. On behalf of CROCEU, His Eminence, Metropolitan Athenagoras of Belgium, who underlined the importance of the implementation of Article 17 of the Lisbon Treaty as proof of the benevolent cooperation for the greater good of our European society of Religion and Politics. Meetings such as this reinforce the value of reflections and observations that the Orthodox Church can provide on the topic of Cultural Heritage and thanked the EPP for hosting this event. The Orthodox Church is indeed, a serious and active partner on local, regional, national and European levels for developing both efficient and sustainable solutions in the face of challenges in our ever-changing multicultural European society.

The seminar was held in two sessions. During the first session, with the topic **"The Protection of Monuments as part of the live European Cultural Heritage"** interventions were made by Dr. Christodoulos Hadjichristodoulou, Byzantinologist, Curator of the Bank of Cyprus Cultural Foundation on behalf of the Church of Cyprus, Mr. Svetoslav Hristov Malinov, MEP and Dr. Ionuț Bursuc, Expert-manager in Restoration Projects, on behalf of the Patriarchate of Romania. In the second session, entitled **"The Spiritual dimensions of the Christian heritage via Education"** the speakers were His Grace, Bishop Kyrillos of Abydos, Professor of Historical Dogmatics in the Faculty of Social Theology of the National and Kapodistrian University of Athens on behalf of the Ecumenical Patriarchate, Mrs. Marijana Petir MEP, as well as His Grace, Bishop Victor of Baryshevka, Head of the Representation of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church to the European International Organizations.

The conclusions that were made by the Moderator of CROCEU, Archimandrite Fr Aimilianos Bogiannou focused on the presentations and discussions during this seminar, which illustrated in poignant ways that the issue of Christian Cultural Heritage can be complex and multi-dimensional at the same time. However, raising awareness and promoting the protection of both material and spiritual Cultural Heritage is of great importance.

The Orthodox Church would hereby like to assure and confirm its determination for promoting and protecting Cultural heritage both in Europe and worldwide. By doing so, it confirms once again its status as a reliable partner in the articulation and implementation of social policy on this topic.