



## **HIGH-LEVEL MEETING WITH PHILOSOPHICAL AND NON-CONFESSSIONAL ORGANISATIONS**

**5 February 2021**

***"The European way of life"***

### **REPORT**

The 10<sup>th</sup> High-Level meeting with philosophical and non-confessional organisations was held on 5 February 2021, gathering seven representatives from philosophical and non-confessional organisations around Vice-President Schinas. Roberta Metsola, First Vice-President of the European Parliament in charge of the Article 17 dialogue was also present. The theme of this year's meeting was ***"The European way of life"***.

In his introductory remarks, Vice-President Margaritis Schinas underlined how the Covid crisis is testing European solidarity and shows the importance of European strategic autonomy and closer European cooperation on health. The notion of "European way of life" can be a contentious issue for some but it should first of all remind us of the core values we should be attached to. We should not be complacent but on the contrary explore how the EU can contribute to improve the situation in areas such as migration, public health, youth, as well as inclusion and integration. The role of philosophical and non-confessional organisations is essential to support and explain the EU to their respective constituencies.

Roberta Metsola, underlined that the European way of life is about values, it is about love, knowledge, care for the sick and elders, all elements which constitute the foundations of our lives. She reminded the core EU values of dignity and human rights (written in Article 2 of the Treaty on European Union), as well as tolerance and solidarity. As regards migration, it is important to understand that integration is unavoidable: migrants are here to stay. At the same time, some Member States have a migration tradition and not others and this diversity must be taken into account.

Participants in the meeting underlined a number of points, in particular:

-Participants welcomed the EU solidarity during the Covid crisis but also expressed worries about the impact of the crisis in particular on the youth, women and children, as well as restrictions to freedoms in the name of health. Some participants expressed worries on the situation of the rule of law in Europe and the rise of populism.

-The European way of life must be based on values of dignity, solidarity, freedom and equality. EU citizens must be reminded their fundamental rights but also their duties. The crisis has shown the importance, but also questioned some European core values, such as human dignity, right to health, freedom of thought and freedom of speech and the rule of law. The crisis has also shown that it is essential to put a strong emphasis on education, rational knowledge and science.

-On the Migration Pact, participants underlined the need for solidarity between Member States to address the issue of migration. It is important to distinguish between migrants who are opposed to EU values and migrants who have a genuine wish to integrate and who should be welcomed. Newcomers should be encouraged to participate in society. A particular concern was expressed about the situation of humanists and atheists seeking asylum in the EU as well as LGBTI asylum seekers.