

## **Interreligious dialogue, the motor, driving new synergies to Harmony**

**Description:** The WIHW 2014 celebration in Brussels took a didactic approach: 1. Testifying to the force of interreligious dialogue through actors from various religions, acting on different levels.

2. Presenting the play: «Pierre & Mohamed» as a launch pad, a true illustration and a vibrant appeal for dialogue. It goes beyond cultural, social, religious and philosophical divides and firmly takes a stand on the humanist path. *“Dialogue is a never-ending work: only dialogue enables us to disarm fanaticism, both within ourselves and in others”*

3. Offering participants spaces for exchanges where they can pledge for harmonious societies through interfaith dialogue and common action.

To reach the widest possible audience, WIHW Brussels 2014 was targeting various audiences with different types of mobilisation, using symbolic venues:

**A. La Cambre Church, Cambre Abbey (9-2-2014 at 15.00):** focussing on political, religious, diplomatic, academic decision-makers. With the contribution of political authorities: Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Home Affairs and Equal Opportunities, Joëlle Milquet as Keynote speaker. Olivier de Clippele, Senator, Member of the Parliament for the Brussels Capital Region, Member of the Parliament of the French-speaking Community and Commune Councillor for Ixelles as moderator.

This event was supported by and in the presence of National religious authorities Mgr. Johan Bonny, Bishop of Antwerp, Chief Rabbi Albert Guigui, Rev. Pra Suddhinanavides, Mr. Semsettin Ugurlu, President of Muslim Executive of Belgium. Diplomatic authorities: HE. Mr. Stefan Tinca,

Ambassador of Romania, H.E. Ms. Victoria Sisante Bataclan, Ambassador of the Philippines, Mr. Mohsen Fazi, Advisor to the Embassy of Iran, Ms. Zohra Aisaoui, in charge of the House of Algeria, the Former ambassador for Croatia. In the presence of leading personalities in Belgian society and supported by UNric in Brussels, Ms. Caroline Petit, Deputy Director and different European religious communities: Dominicans, Jesuits, White Fathers.

**B. At the European School of Brussels in Woluwe (10-2-2014 at 14.30)** young people aged 17-18, coming from different language sections and courses, and open to other schools. Teaching material with information about religions was compiled and handed out to teachers.

**C. At the Maritime Community Centre in Molenbeek St Jean (10-2-2014 at 18.30)** focusing on the educational field: professors, headmasters, inspectors, teachers of religion and others, trainers; open to all. The event was launched by Ms. Marie-Martine Schyngs, Minister for Education and Lifelong learning.

With the agreement and support of national representatives of the different religious communities: (Mgr Athenagoras, for the Orthodox Church; Mgr. Leonard for the Catholic Church, Chief Rabbi Albert Guigui for the Jewish community, Pasteur Steven Fuite for the Protestant Church, Mr. Semsettin Ugurlu, President of the Muslim Executive of Belgium, Deacon Robert Innes, for the Anglican Church in Belgium), the Minister made a particularly valuable contribution by sending the information on 10 February event out to the religious leaders and the Inspector General, requesting them to forward it to the Inspectors of Philosophy classes (ethics and religion) and teachers.

**The programme comprised the following:**

1. Promotion of WIHW Brussels 2014 by the President of Religions for

Peace Europe, Ms. Yolande Iliano (9-2-2014 at 15.00) (10-2-2014 at 14.30) (10-2-2014 at 18.30)

2. The voice of youth: **Hispanik**, the rapper, singing « La salve du silence » an appeal for inner peace and peace in the world. (10-2-2014 at 18.30).

3. Launch of the event by the Minister in the Prime Minister's Department (9-2-2014) and by the Minister of Compulsory for Education and Social Promotion. (10-2-2014)

3. Testimony (9-2-2014) in dialogue:

- On the inter-faith contribution: Ignace Berten, Dominican, Theologian, President of 'Espaces Europe' with Aïcha Haddou (\*), Co-chair of the Belgian Women of Faith Network, Advisor EWFN.
- On the historical and social background Mohamed Tahar Bensaada (\*), Philosopher, Professor at Haute Ecole Libre de Bruxelles - Ilya Prigogine with Eric Blatt, Belgian White Father and Islamologue, Researcher at P.I.S.A.I., appointed to Kabylia (Algeria) in 1966.  
(\*), restituted due to health reasons.
- Testimony of Nassyma Bentchikou, President of the Federation of the Algerian Community in Belgium.
- Testimony: (10-2-2014 14.30) at the European School: Reginald and Noufissa Bouschif.
- **Testimony of interreligious dialogue through religious teachers** at the Maritime Community in the Centre Molenbeek (10-2-2014 18.30) **Béatrice Manelewitsch**, President of the Consistorial Commission of Belgian Women, co-founder member of BWFN; **Mohamed Jamouchi**, Secr. Gen. WCRP-Be; **Naat Nejmi**, Muslim teacher in Tournai, **Anne-Marie Huyghebaert**, Catholic teacher. Also in the presence of and supported by Prof. Luk Bouckaert, professor emeritus at the K.U.Leuven, President of the

European SPES Forum, which has as overall aim to make spirituality accessible as a public asset to as many people as possible.

- Following the discovery of the bond between two people showcased in the play, Hispanik has created a rap dedicated to dialogue. (9-2-2014/18:30)

4. The Play: “Pierre & Mohamed » written by Adrien Candiard, with Jean-Baptiste Germain in both roles: Bishop Claverie and Mohamed Bouchikri. Francesco Agnello playing a new musical instrument, the hang. This play recounts a tragic happening in Algeria in 1996 when Pierre Claverie, Bishop, and Mohamed Bouchikri, a Muslim driver who accompanied him, were both murdered.

*The play ‘Pierre and Mohamed’ by Francesco Agnello is the result of a concrete human experience, a friendship between two men, far from the coldness of institutional meetings or from the laudable yet simple statements of general intent. This message is still relevant today, as various religious fundamentalisms are getting more and more violent across the world.*

5. Moment for sharing remarks and thoughts between the audience and the speakers and actors.

#### 6. Reception and exchanges

(9-2-2014) the main audience was made up of decision-makers

(9-2-2014/14:30) Between youth coming from various horizons

(10-2-2014 at 18:30) Between leading persons in the educational field from the top to the grassroots level: sharing good practices and establishing contacts for further interfaith dialogue and common actions.

**Buffet, exhibition of teaching materials** for interfaith education from El Kalima and Lumen Vitae.

**Location :** La Cambre Church, Cambre Abbey (9-2-2014); At the European School of Brussels/Woluwe (10-2-2014: 14.30); At the Maritime Community Centre of Molenbeek St Jean (10-2-2014 at 18.30).

**Events:** Various other encounters with different audiences around the theme of dialogue: speeches – testimonies - sharing good practises - theatre - sharing reflexions - informal encounter.

**Wishes:** RfP Belgium is based in Brussels, the heart of Europe and as the current President of RfP/Europe is Belgian, this action can be disseminated through the whole network of RfP/Europe. We all work on a purely voluntary basis, with no subsidies. However, we have received many requests to present this event in other cities and other schools, and to translate it for other countries. Given the high costs involved, it is not at present possible to give a positive answer to such requests however pressing.

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Youtube :

- [http://www.dailymotion.com/video/xym36k\\_interfaith-youth-welcomed-by-the-mayor-of-kasterlee\\_news](http://www.dailymotion.com/video/xym36k_interfaith-youth-welcomed-by-the-mayor-of-kasterlee_news)
- [http://www.dailymotion.com/video/xztb90\\_interreligious-pumpkins-regatta-in-kasterlee-belgium-on-the-27-10-2012\\_news](http://www.dailymotion.com/video/xztb90_interreligious-pumpkins-regatta-in-kasterlee-belgium-on-the-27-10-2012_news)
- [http://www.dailymotion.com/video/xzwp4g\\_exhibition-of-the-water-campaign\\_news](http://www.dailymotion.com/video/xzwp4g_exhibition-of-the-water-campaign_news)

