

CONFERENCE

Safeguarding in the Catholic Church in Europe

13-15 NOVEMBER 2024



Declaration of Intent

We, the participants of the Conference on Safeguarding in the Catholic Church in Europe, held in Rome from 13-15 November 2024, come together with a shared commitment to enhance the protection and safety of all individuals within our communities – especially children and vulnerable adults. Recognizing the diverse cultural contexts across Europe, we emphasize the importance of fostering a common language of safeguarding that respects these differences and of working collaboratively to eliminate the many forms of abuse through institutional and community conversion.

KEY COMMITMENTS

1. Promotion of Safeguarding Initiatives

We commit to promoting the work of safeguarding, emphasizing our willingness and commitment to continue efforts in prevention, intervention, and training. We recognize the power of small initiatives and spontaneous networking to drive meaningful change.

2. Safe Environment and Advocacy

We acknowledge the prevalence of abuse is widespread in the Church and in society and commit to advocating for an all-encompassing safe environment, including addressing online abuse and internet-related issues.

3. Integrated Healing and Support

Our intent is to support the integrated healing of victims and survivors and their families, including assisting them in finding reconciliation, inner healing and peace. The Church, purified by penance and renewed in charity, can offer spiritual healing, offering compassion and understanding to those affected.

4. Collaboration and Communication

We will support improvements in communication and collaboration among stakeholders at both the Holy See, national, international and continental levels. This includes fostering better communication among Dicasteries and between different countries and cultures, creating space for conversation and conversion.

5. Vulnerable Adults

We extend our safeguarding efforts to include adults at risk of harm, deepening our understanding of abuse and vulnerability. This involves promoting a culture of safeguarding within the Church's legal frameworks and ensuring that all members of the Church community are protected.

6. Application of VELM and Canonical Procedures

We propose the expectation that the Motu Proprio Vos Estis Lux Mundi (VELM) will be genuinely applied to end the cover-up of perpetrators and that canonical procedures will ensure the victims/survivors the subjectivity of their participation in canonical processes.

7. Complementarity between Legal and Pastoral Response

We emphasize the complementarity between pastoral care and the accountability process, ensuring both that victims/survivors can find healing and that the principles of justice can be fully respected for all concerned. This balance relies on the expertise and commitment of all organizations and actors both within, and external to the Church.

8. Transparency and Accountability

We advocate for transparency and accountability in disciplinary proceedings. This includes addressing difficulties in Canon Law interpretation and ensuring that independent commissions of investigation into delete abuse in countries across Europe are established with clear criteria. We commit to responding generously to the findings of such commissions.

9. Support for Caregivers

Recognizing the psychological and spiritual impact on those who care for the abused, we stress the importance of providing guidance and support to caregivers at all levels of society and the Church, including our safeguarding personnel and Church leaders.

10. Sustainability and Resource Sharing

We emphasize the importance of sustainability of local initiatives and the importance of sharing resources and experiences across Europe to be more effective in our safeguarding efforts.

11. Network and Learn

We commit to working in a network across Europe, learning from each other's experiences, sharing resources, to be more effective both within society and within the Church.



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Recognizing that a wound inflicted on one member is a wound inflicted on the entire ecclesial body, we seek to continue to grow in our knowledge and understanding of good practice in safeguarding among wounded parish and religious communities and the families involved.

We acknowledge the need to address that perpetrators in the Church must not only be subject to due process, and held to account for their actions, but also require support and supervision to reduce the likelihood of recurrence of abuse.

In conclusion, we express our heartfelt gratitude for the sensitivity, dedication, and professionalism with which all participants engage in this vital work. Together, we strive to protect the most vulnerable and foster a culture of care within the Church through conversion, based on truth, justice, reparation and non-recurrence and institutional reform.



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