

RELEASE

A prophetic force in the present day: a breath of fresh air for the Steering Committee of “*Together for Europe*” (TfE) in Vienna

Vienna – From 16 to 18 April 2026, the Steering Committee of the “**Together for Europe**” (TfE) met for its annual retreat, this time at the Schoenstatt Centre in Vienna on the Kahlenberg. Twenty-six participants, representing eight of the Christian movements that make up the network, reviewed the past year and set out objectives for future projects.

A generational change in the Steering Committee

A key aspect of this year’s meeting was the change in membership of the Steering Committee. This transition has been prepared over the last two years in an atmosphere of listening to the Spirit, with a view to ensuring both continuity and fresh impetus.

Margaret Karram, President of the Focolare Movement, expressed her heartfelt thanks in a letter to the outgoing members for their tremendous commitment over the past decades in shaping TfE. The following members bid farewell to the group: **Gerhard Pross** (YMCA Esslingen), co-founder of TfE and its long-standing moderator, together with **Thomas Römer** and **Walter Kriechbaum** (both from the YMCA Munich, who have been involved with TfE since its inception).

Diego Goller (IT) and **Ilona Toth** (HU), representatives of the President of the Focolare Movement on the Steering Committee, welcomed their successors: **Liz Taite** (GB), who has extensive experience in ecumenism, and **Alberto Lo Presti** (IT). The role of General Secretary will be taken on by **Maria Wienken** (DE), supported by **Elisabeth Danner** (A), both members of the Focolare Movement. The handover was solemnly celebrated during an evening prayer and sealed by the “Pact of Mutual Love”. Gerhard Pross highlighted the greatness of TfE’s mission and its rich fruits, which have marked important milestones in the history of the Church, as described in the book “*Sternstunden der Einheit*” (Highlights of Unity).

The role of TfE moderator will now be filled by a group comprising three members of the current Committee: **Sister Nicole Grochowina** (Christusbruderschaft Selbitz Community), **Fr Raffael Rieger** (Schönstatt Movement) and **Matthias Bühlmann** (Vineyard). “*This change marks not only the end of an era, but also the beginning of a new phase of collaboration at European level,*” commented one of the participants.

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Another member added: *‘The days spent on the Kahlenberg have shown that our diversity is our strength. With this new team, we are sending a clear signal of continuity and new horizons.’* Another participant emphasised: *‘TfE is writing a story of hope in these seemingly hopeless times. That is why it is more important than ever to walk together today.’*

Agenda and outlook

Another key focus of the discussions was the work of the **National Committees**, which are taking on an increasing responsibility for establishing *TfE* in their respective countries.

The following key upcoming events were also discussed:

- **9-13 May 2026:** To mark Europe Day, 120 young Europeans will visit the **European Parliament**. Inspired by the Christian unity they have experienced at *TfE*, the young people have drawn up an “Intergenerational Pact” which they will present to MEPs.
- **29-31 October 2026:** The next ‘Friends’ Gathering’ will take place at the Vineyard Centre in **Würzburg**.
- **4-6 May 2028 (date to be confirmed):** Major event in **Castel Gandolfo and Rome**.

The 2026 meeting of the Steering Committee thus marked an important milestone for the future direction of the network, which remains committed to unity and fraternity across the continent.

Save the date

- **Meetings of the “Friends of *TfE*”:**
 - 29-31.10.2026 in Würzburg (Germany), Vineyard Centre
 - 21-23.10.2027 a Konstancin near Warsaw (Poland)
 - 25-27.10.2029 ?
- **Major Event:** 4-6 May 2028 in Castel Gandolfo and Roma

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