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## **Press Statement of the Federation of Catholic Family Associations in Europe Relating to the Enlargement to the European Union**

The accession of the ten new member countries as of May 1<sup>st</sup> 2004 makes the European Union grow by 75 million people. This expansion will result in new economic, social, and ideological challenges to be faced by EU. In order to master them the European Council decided, in Laeken on 14/14 December 2003, to convene a " Federation of Catholic Family Associations in Europe.

The Federation of Catholic Family Associations in Europe highlights to the common Christian legacy of Europe that can become a fundamental contribution to the integration. Recalling the common Christian tradition as a sort of historical link can be an orientation guide in all sorts of ethic and social issues of the whole European society.

One of the major challenges of the EU enlargement concerns the social coherence of the European society. The family as the nucleus of every society is the first and most substantial space where solidarity and societal coherence should be learnt and appropriated. The family is the place where the respectful approach to commencing life, to its natural end, to handling the handicapped, the old and the ill as well as managing difficult economic situations, gets concretely implemented.

For being able to fulfil its societal task, the family needs certain appropriate framework conditions. The enlarged Union should recognize that bringing up and educating children is an elementary investment in the future that should be anchored as such in the public and political awareness. The achievements of the family should be reflected in social and old-age insurance systems of every state, in order to do justice in compensating for the familial burden.

Johannes Fenz, president of FAFCE: "I wish to put across that in the EU consisting of 25 states the comprehensive protection of life, starting with an unborn child and ending with natural death of a person, should continue to be maintained as the expression of the Christian system of values."