

# RELEM 2026 Conference in Istanbul: towards a new dynamic

The Regional Conference of RELEM (Lasallian Region of Europe and the Mediterranean), held at St Joseph's High School in Istanbul from 9 to 13 March, marked a historic turning point for our region. The decisions taken at this Conference set out an ambitious roadmap for the period 2026-2028, with the aim of strengthening the Institute's educational and fraternal mission, whilst adapting to current demographic and structural challenges.

## **A bold restructuring: the challenge of a single District**

One of the most significant decisions of the Conference was the creation of a single District for the entire RELEM region. This choice aims to centralise governance whilst decentralising implementation in order to preserve local specificities.



Although this model is not easy to implement, it has received the unreserved support of Brother Armin Luistro, Superior General, confirming its alignment with the Institute's strategic directions. This choice of a single District would therefore render the need for grouping into Regions obsolete: it is a significant change. Why a single District?

- To ensure greater coherence by harmonising actions and resources for a more effective mission.
- To put our necessary solidarity into practice. We wish to establish mechanisms for transferring resources — financial, human, etc. — to the most vulnerable sectors or to works deemed a priority, particularly with regard to the presence of the Brothers or the formation of lay partners.
- The single District will also, in the long term, bring about administrative simplification by reducing fragmentation and optimising governance.

This transition will take effect from June 2028, a date chosen to align with the schedule for appointing representatives to the future General Chapter of 2029.

## Governance and participation: a collaborative approach



The Conference marked the end of the StaR Commission (acronym for Strategic Alliances for RELEM), which had hitherto supported the phase of studying and establishing initial collaborations.

Several speakers highlighted the excellence of the work it had carried out, but it is now time for the current Districts to become more involved in the process. It will be replaced by two new, more operational commissions:

- A commission to support the convergence process, tasked with driving the momentum for change and ensuring follow-up, particularly regarding the stages of consulting the brothers on the new Visitor, etc...
- A technical working committee on the statutes of the current Districts, responsible for drafting the *ad experimentum* statutes of the future District. The complexity of our Region requires us to take into account countless legal and canonical factors. This group will be able to count on the collaboration of Brother Peter Ryan, Procurator General.

These two commissions should include members from the current Districts and be swiftly established by the Council of Visitors.

## Three interconnected educational networks

The Conference also approved the model of three educational networks within the District, based on cultures and languages, to facilitate exchanges between the works. Naturally, existing collaborations are set to be strengthened and to extend beyond the boundaries of these networks to create a missionary dynamic driven by the single District.

The relaunch of the “*Leavening project*” should also enable the current Districts — and the future District — to be on a trajectory in line with the latest General Chapter.

The Conference addressed a number of other matters of concern, such as the presentation of the work carried out by the various Commissions operating in the Region. We were able to spend an afternoon visiting Istanbul and appreciate the exceptional welcome from the Community of the Lycée Saint Joseph in Kadiköy:

this certainly helped to ensure the serenity of our discussions and the successful conclusion of our work.

Ultimately, this Conference laid the foundations for a profound reform, combining structural boldness with missionary commitment. The challenge now will be to bring this vision to fruition, ensuring that every participant — Brothers, lay people, young people — finds their place within this new dynamic. As Brother Armin emphasised, the aim is to “become a more fraternal Institute on the peripheries”, an objective that resonates with the spirit of the founder, and which also resonates with the spirit of prophetic boldness that has often inspired our Region.

*\* Article written by Br. Joël Palud, General Councilor. Photos: Br. Joël Palud.*