The new StaR Commission starts its work for RELEM

Following the RELEM MEL Assembly in February 2024, promoter of the project, the Conference of Visitors decided to appoint a team composed of Brother Visitors, members of the RELEM MEL Council and a representation of the General Council, with the task of **defining the steps to create a global model of *governance* that favours collaboration between the parties and sets up the process for RELEM to move towards a new organisational configuration of the Districts**.

This gave rise to the StaR Commission (acronym for Strategic Alliances for RELEM), composed of **Br Joël Palud**, as General Councillor; **Br Paul Cornec** (FEF – France and French-speaking Europe) and **Br Paco Chiva** (Arlep) as Visitors; Ms **Joke Maex** (North Belgium) and Mr **Joseph Gilson** (IGBM) as members of the Regional Council of RELEM and **Br Enrico Muller**, Executive Secretary of RELEM.

The Commission is clear in defining its turning points, responding *first and foremost* to what AIMEL advocates (Axes 1,2,8), the 46th General Chapter (path 3 and 7) and the document: **"Building our Region"** (by the 2022 Visitors' Conference).

It is therefore necessary to **ensure that the Commission's efforts are aligned with the needs and perspectives of each District**; that a more personal and interactive approach is taken with each reality; that everyone is listened to carefully and, in common discernment, steps are defined to create a new model of *governance* that favours collaboration between the different Districts, as well as respecting local sensitivities and supporting the journey to live as a "Lasallian Family with different vocations, leaven for a more fraternal world" (46th General Chapter) united but diverse in RELEM.

Walking together

We ask the entire Region to accompany this "journey together praying to the Spirit to give life and renew our being as a Region, accompanied by St John

Baptist de La Salle," all members of the StaR Commission unanimously affirm.

"Time is greater than space", as Pope Francis states that " this principle enables us to work slowly but surely, without being obsessed with immediate results. It helps us patiently to endure difficult and adverse situations, or inevitable changes in our plans. It invites us to accept the tension between fullness and limitation, and to give a priority to time.… Giving priority to time means being concerned about initiating processes rather than possessing spaces. Time governs spaces, illumines them and makes them links in a constantly expanding chain, with no possibility of return. What we need, then, is to give priority to actions which generate new processes in society and engage other persons and groups who can develop them to the point where they bear fruit in significant historical events. **Without anxiety, but with clear convictions and tenacity'** (Pope Francis, *The Joy of the Gospel, No.l 223*).

Inspired by this statement, and keeping in the same spirit, the StAR Commission then began, and completed, its journey in the Region to meet with all seven Districts and the Delegation of North Belgium and the Sector of South Belgium, in the persons of the District Councillors and MEL Councillors and others involved in District leadership and animation. **The initiative brought together Brothers and Lasallians entrusted with responsibility for the Lasallian Educational Mission in the Region of RELEM**.

The meetings followed a structured process that included listening sessions to highlight strengths, needs and opportunities for collaboration through various initiatives, open discussions and evaluations, starting in March 2025.

The joint discussion was not only an opportunity to discuss *governance* but also **a time to discern together what decisions are needed for the vitality and sustainability of the Lasallian Mission** in RELEM.

This synodal process emphasised listening, mutual respect and a common focus on the Mission, above and beyond different perspectives. Together, the participants explored new horizons – unexpected and unprecedented – guided by a collective vision for a stronger and more united Mission.

Each District contributed by sharing their strengths and vulnerabilities, reflecting on critical areas such as, among many others: opportunities and needs for formation; developing the role of Lay Lasallians in the Mission**; innovations in**

pastoral and vocational efforts to serve those most in need; and strategies for managing assets to better serve the Mission.

A time of hope and renewal

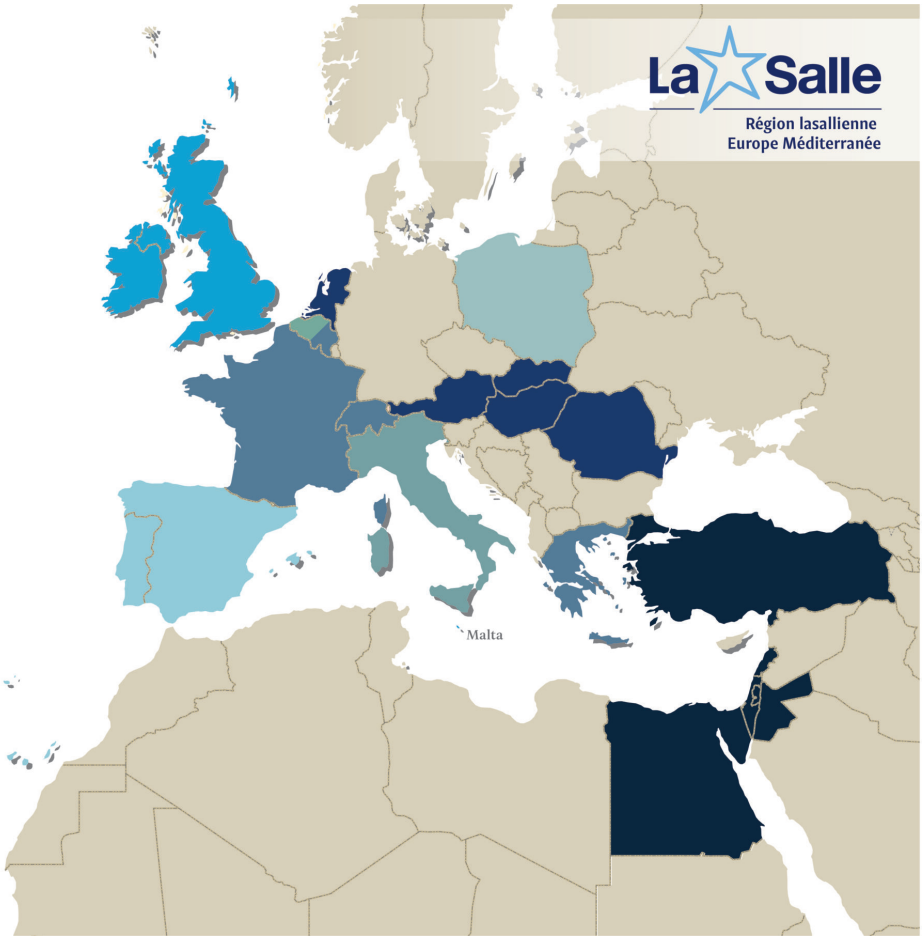
The journey ended during the Advent season. “It was a time of hope and renewal. It was a time to remain open to the ‘eternal newness’ of God, committing ourselves to believe that something transformative is being born,” says Brother Enrico Muller, Executive Secretary of RELEM and member of the StaR Commission.

At the end of January 2025, a new document will be shared with the Districts, the Delegation of North Belgium and the Sector of South Belgium. The text created will harmonise insights from recent visits and propose a roadmap up to 2026. It will be open for revision and further enrichment before being discussed at the Visitors’ Conference in March 2025, where the Visitors and the RELEM MEL Council will determine the next steps.

May the journey of our Region be “marked by the hope that does not fade, our hope in God. May it help us to recover the confident trust that we require, in the Church,” as Pope Francis states (*Spes non confundit*, no. 25), “and in our Mission … and in society, in our interpersonal relationships, in our international relations and in our task of promoting the dignity of all persons and respect for God’s gift of creation”; and in addition to this it is worth recalling the words of our Founder **“we have always considered the work of our salvation and the ‘foundation’ and governance of our Community as the work of God…”** (St John Baptist de La Salle*, Rules that I have imposed on myself*, n. 8).

According to the latest statistical report of the Institute, RELEM is made up of: 21 countries, 7 Districts and 1 Delegation. **1,017 Brothers are part of the 179 Brothers’ communities in the Region**, in addition to 460 Ministries, 327,097 students and 39,907 Lay Partners.

RELEM

Région Lasallienne Europe Méditerranée

- ARLEP
- Belgique-Nord (*Del.*)
- Europe Centrale
- France et Europe francophone
- Great Britain - Ireland - Malta
- Italia
- Pologne
- Proche-Orient