

EUROPEAN NETWORK - RÉSEAU EUROPÉEN



Kirche im Aufbruch
Eglises et Libertés
Church on the Move
Iglesia por la Libertad



Member of the Conference of INGOs at the Council of Europe

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Mr. Martin Schulz, President du Parlement européen
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cc Carsten Lietz, responsable Année des citoyens européens
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Hermann van Rompuy, Président du Conseil européen

12 May 2013, Madrid

To view realistically the difficulties of today means we have to campaign for a Europe of Justice and Peace to rehumanise and inspire its male and female citizens

The very serious economic crisis which began five years ago and which shows no signs of abating, raises the question about certain aspects of the specific role of Europe and its institutions in the way it has been formed and organised over the last fifty years. In this situation, the extent of suffering, uncertainty and all kinds of difficulties which relate to the spiritual dimensions of existence, go from bad to worse.

As male and female Catholic European citizens, we reconfirm our confidence in the process of working together of the people of our continent, which began after the second world war but we have to mention and denounce the neo-liberal policies and the dictatorship of the financial structures which, especially since the crisis began, have become an obstacle to achieving the original objectives, namely: to safeguard and promote the rights of Man, and especially the equality/parity between men and women; the internal stability and inter-cultural and inter-beliefs dialogue in all our countries; the lessening of inequality within each country and between different countries; our contribution to peace in the world based on justice; the strengthening of democracy in all countries and especially in those which have only recently joined the European Union.

These policies which seek to combine growth with debt reduction only lead to an austerity which is seriously harmful to the weakest sectors of the population, especially young people and women, profoundly compromising achievements of the 'welfare state' that we thought had become permanent and both favouring the strong countries and dramatically increasing the social and economic differences between the rich and poor areas of the continent, sometimes with dramatic consequences.

It is above all due to the crisis that the positions relating to national, local and corporate interests gain a growing influence in sectors of European public opinion and amongst the poorest social classes and risk causing a serious disruptive situation in the elections to the European Parliament next year. We have to get to know and understand these opinions which are clearly opposed to fair and cooperative development but we have to combat them with effective arguments.

These campaigns are especially centred against both European and non-European immigrants, who are people subject to all kinds of difficulties, especially wherever they look for work and dignity, both in Europe and in their countries of origin. Against all these pressures of isolation, the democratic social and political

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Pour un Autre Visage d'Eglise et de Société [BELGIUM], Collectiu de Dones en l'Església, Església Plural [CATALONIA], Femmes et Hommes Égalité Droits et Libertés dans les Eglises et la Société, Nous sommes aussi Eglise, Fédération des Réseaux du Parvis, Partenia 2000 [FRANCE], Initiative Kirche von Unten, Initiative Christenrechte in der Kirche, Wir sind Kirche [GERMANY], Bokor [HUNGARY], Noi Siamo Chiesa [ITALY], Kerk Hardop, Mariëburgvereniging, WRK (Study Group on the Culture of Law in the Churches) [NETHERLANDS] We Are Church [PORTUGAL], Catolicas por el Derecho a Decidir de España, Cristianas y Cristianos de Base de Madrid, Corriente Somos Iglesia, Redes Cristianas [SPAIN], Catholics for a Changing Church, Women Word Spirit, St Joan's International Alliance (GB section), Catholic Women's Ordination, The Living Word Trust, We Are Church (UK) [UNITED KINGDOM], and Catholics for Choice Europe – also affiliated with Association for the Rights of Catholics in the Church, Call to Action, Catholic Organisations for Renewal, Catholics for a Choice [USA], The European Federation of Married Catholic Priests and the International Federation for a Renewed Catholic Ministry

forces and the institutions, especially those of the European Union, must actively intervene with a policy of welcome and integration.

In order to achieve a new situation in Europe a completely different economic policy must be established to today's existing one which is solely based on the maintenance of the vested interests of powerful lobbies.

We also want to express our concern that for a new Europe:

1. The foreign policy of our continent is practically non-existent and where it does exist is very weak especially with respect to the countries of the Mediterranean and the South of the world and it is likewise incapable of working for peace with justice in the crisis areas of the Middle East.
2. Since the fall of the Berlin wall, the armed forces maintain and even increase their power, due to the silent complicity of public opinion, and, in this way, there is a continuation of an enormous waste of resources which could be used to benefit society, instead of which the arms trade intensifies. Europe is still full of nuclear weapons and atomic disarmament is blocked.
3. Due the characteristics of globalization, Mafia forces expand and strengthen.
4. Political activity favouring education, culture and the environment has lost priority.

Enlightened by the Gospel of Jesus, we consider it is our duty at this moment to speak out and act both individually and collectively since the current situation mocks ethical values of solidarity and engagement for peace with justice, founded on the dignity of men and women, on the respect due to them, on their rights and on justice, values which base their roots and their source in our faith.

We have to express ourselves in this way because unfortunately the senior leaders of our Church, both national and European (COMECE & CCEE), do not react with the passion, openness, collegiality and effectiveness which should be theirs in their relationship with civil society and the institutions so that they reflect the image of the Church. But there are many male and female catholic citizens who work constructively in the existing social reality even if, sometimes, their viewpoint is limited to assistance, albeit most necessary at present, but which should be surpassed by more complete political insight and action to render assistance unnecessary.

Furthermore, we are convinced that the empowered leaders of the Catholic Church must in no way defend their privileges or play in society and in both national and European institutions roles which contradict the evangelical message of Jesus, by transforming service by power (especially by means of Article 17 of the new European Constitution), as in the former regime of Christianity that has disappeared and for which we must not be nostalgic.

We, as male and female European citizens and grass-roots Christians, many of whom consider themselves to be members of the Catholic Church to which they belong whilst refusing any kind of veto or obstacles from the hierarchy, must promote such actions to ensure that all believers of different religions work together on common objectives for our continent, in this beginning of the twenty-first century, to change its direction beyond its former aspirations and its policies of opposing West to East and North to South and work together with the great emerging countries.

It is by these efforts that dignity, mutual trust, Justice and Peace will have a greater chance to guide humanity.



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