

EUROPEAN NETWORK - RÉSEAU EUROPÉEN

Églises et Libertés – Church on the Move – Kirche im Aufbruch – Iglesia por la Libertad – Chiesa e Libertà

Association de droit français (loi 1901) Dôtée du status participatif auprès le Conseil de l'Europe
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The hopes and proposals of the European Network Church on the Move

There is a general feeling of crisis of the idea of Europe and the European Union. From the beginning, the third millenium started on a descending slope and seems to show no sign of stopping. The overwhelming power of economics, finance and social and political elites continues and intensifies. The disorder on the geopolitical scenario sees, on one side, “the world war in pieces” and, on the other, an order based very often on arbitrariness and violence on peoples. No doubt, there is much to correct and improve in Europe but we should not forget what has been achieved. The whole long period of peace in most of the European countries has led to economic growth and cultural interchange. Our network of organizations from all over Europe – founded more than 25 years ago – is one example.

Europe in difficulties

We are now faced with these important elections for the Parliament of the European Union. European participatory and responsible democracy clashes with difficult situations: the guidelines for the voters seem to be almost everywhere related to facts about domestic policy, the EU's role in its working mechanisms is little known, simplified slogans dominate complex realities, unity in diversity is not understood, the economic crisis, which is now ten years old, generates fear and insecurity and leads on one hand to a rough and simplified protest and on the other to a wave of sympathies for simplistic nationalist solutions. There appears to be always the need for enemies to blame for our problems: First of all, Europe and the Euro and then the Immigrants who are used as scape goats to implement policies that are not only cynical and immoral (walls, banning rescue in the sea, closing welcome centers) but also harmful in perspective for our economic and social development. The European Union, after a long period of open policies and a certain consolidation of its initiatives is now faced with a setback, of which Brexit and the actions of the countries of Eastern Europe that question the EU's democratic principles, are contributing factors.

Some Aspects of the crisis

It is taking too long to end the crisis. Globalization, with the overwhelming power of the multinationals and the financial sector weighs heavily on the weaker sectors, greatly increasing inequality, stabilising the unemployment that affects mainly young people whilst the previously acceptable welfare now lacks funds to operate correctly. Other problems are aggravated, like the falling birth rate and the lack of environmental protection, whilst the criminal powers retain their strength. In some countries illegality is widespread. Digitalization is a new serious problem with regard to its control. The family loses its cohesive nature and public authorities in many countries neglect it. Human Rights are insufficiently protected. Many problems are the consequence of cultural, moral and social factors, but certainly the role of public institutions is of great importance.

Europe and the world

Europe, which boasted of having eliminated war within its territory, had to recognise its mistake, when it intervened in the former Yugoslavia and then in the Middle East, even outside the UN framework. In the global geostrategic scenario, the European Union could have an extraordinary function for mediation and responsibility faced with the polarity of many current situations by strengthening the UN, encouraging multilateralism for a new North-South relationship that would eliminate the systemic exploitation, in Africa and elsewhere, of resources and environmental destruction, by means of its interposition in existing wars. This absence of the European Union seems determined both by the different foreign policies of its member States that prevent almost always a common line, whilst most States adhere to the logic of NATO which is always a direct emanation of US policy.

As a result, the UN Treaty on nuclear disarmament cannot be signed, the line of a strong Eastward displacement of NATO's armed frontier has been accepted, creating the conditions for a new cold war. The participation in nuclear rearmament increases. There is no neutral position on the situation in the Ukraine. It is impossible to stop the export of weapons used in Yemen by Saudi Arabia. Five EU States keep US nuclear weapons on their territory (and two States have their own nuclear weapons). After the fall of the Berlin Wall, the dream of a new time founded on peace and justice has not seen the EU as a protagonist. History will judge .

Our Church

Our Church has always declared itself in favour of cooperating in the unity of European countries. This is quite inherent in the universalist function and vision of a Church which, by definition, is defined as universal (the meaning of "catholic") and which, in its general line, should counter any kind of nationalism. But this position has been and can be contradicted by Churches and bishops' conferences that have asked their believers to pray to God for their soldiers against the "enemy" soldiers, even when they are Catholics. Having said that, there is a new situation in Europe, with a fundamentalism that calls on the christian religion to support policies that contradict the gospels by talking about "a Christian state", "Christian values", or "Christian roots" and so on. The exponents of this orientation, arrogantly, appeal to the Catholic base, to its concerns, to its superstitions and traditions. Catholic institutions have a task that appears to be more challenging than before to counter these positions. There are bishops and parish priests who perhaps share this view and prefer not to criticise it since they see in it a religious tradition of which they are a part.

We are on the side of those who do not tolerate this "prudence" and we know Pope Francis agrees with us. The Church has a great task at this time of European problems. There is a need to propose a common European history that young people can learn. There is a need to intensify our relationships with other Christian denominations (let us think of the countries where the majority of christians are Orthodox). There is the duty to strongly oppose the resurgent forms of anti-semitism and to continue in interreligious dialogue and even interconviction. The relationship between the believers and bearers of other convictions has been the subject of research and proposal in our circuit of basic believers. The G3i group enriches the content of secularism (without adjectives) that we strive to propose for our institutions and for our community life.

Our expectations, our commitment

In this situation, our expectations are rooted in the gospels. We want to look ahead. We must be patient but we cannot be passive as we must participate in the facts of history especially on the occasion of the imminent European elections. As in the past, we think and propose for the revival of the idea of Europe and of European Union, the following objectives:

- a greater social cohesion based on democratic policies and an economy for human beings and not for finance that contrast with the excessive power of the market economy and the hegemony of international finance;
- the improvement of welfare, social justice and employment with a reduction of inequalities;

- resistance to fundamentalism, nationalism and populism;
- European international policies, independent of the United States, in order to defend peace and humanitarian interventions in the world, in particular in the Middle East, in the framework of UN actions;
- A direct commitment to not only nuclear disarmament but especially for the signing of the UN Treaty for the generalized prohibition of nuclear weapons; support for peace initiatives based on non-violent actions; we are worried about the new major investments in the military sector because military interventions are mostly not a solution;
- Policies for welcoming and integrating migrants, reactivating the policies for sea rescues, thus generalising a “humanitarian way” and the co-responsibility for these objectives by all the countries of the Union;
- The suppression of the Dublin Process to strengthen solidarity among all countries
- In contrast to neocolonialism in Africa and elsewhere, the support of the economic development of the Third World and that will reduce the need for the emigration of the inhabitants;
- A rigorous application of the commitments made at the COP21 in Paris on the climate;

Finally, the European Network Church on the Move commits itself and invites the Churches:

- to a cohabitation that respects freedom of thought, conscience and religion, including the freedom to have or not to have a religion and to change one’s religion ;
- to equal rights and non-discrimination between all people, whatever their ethnic gender or sexual orientation ;
- to mutual independence between public and religious institutions and the neutrality of the State towards religions and any other current of thought .
- to a relationship with the European Union and the Council of Europe based on the richness of its own solidarity and universalistic sensitivity, far from interventions that do not respect the secular nature of these institutions.

The European Network Church on the Move participates in the common sentiment of grassroots catholics for another possible Europe, like the good wishes of the Manifesto of Pax Christi International “The Europe We Want”. The May 26th vote is a due fulfillment and must be part of the general and permanent commitment of every Christian for a Church more based on the Gospel and for a more just society.

May 19, 2019

European Network Church on the Move