



Gemeinschaft Evangelischer Kirchen in Europa (GEKE)
Community of Protestant Churches in Europe (CPCE)
Communion d'Eglises Protestantes en Europe (CEPE)

Meeting the Crisis

(1) At present in Europe and beyond scarcely a day passes without showing new signs and symptoms of a deep-seated crisis in the shaping of our economic life. Meanwhile many people are directly affected. And the decisions so far reached and the means employed seem to dissipate with little effect.

The crisis has also become one of confidence in the action of institutions. Many people are deeply uneasy. In the past months young people in particular have taken to the streets to express their despair and their concern for the political and economic situation in their lands and societies. They are drawing attention to the social dimensions of the crisis. No institution has a complete and exclusive answer to it. This lost confidence can only be recovered if the search for solutions takes place in dialogue and is shaped as a vital democratic and participatory process.

We understand people's profound unease as a challenge to recover the political primacy of democracy and the social market economy over against the faceless markets. The demonstrations are an appeal to strive for a resolution of the crisis that is fair to the different generations. The problems that have piled up must not be left to the coming generations.

(2) It is above all the horrifying debts of our states and societies that have provoked this crisis. It thus also puts our life-style in the Western nations in question. Our national and social living on (apparently) unlimited credit has lost credibility and patently reached its limit. It is a profound Christian conviction that a crisis is also a call to a change of course and new reflection. Protestant churches in Europe are participating intensively in the necessary discussions and impulses to a changed, responsible life-style. These discussions must be conducted more intensively and decisively in our churches, societies and countries in order to find and apply the necessary changes.

(3) The debt crisis is forcing very far-reaching economy programmes on many European societies. The social systems must be adjusted anew. This seems to be unavoidable. It is, however, already leading even more people to slide into poverty and unemployment. It is all the more important to be reminded that Europe substantially involves the European social model, uniting solidarity and subsidiarity. This connexion should be respected in all coming reform measures: the strong can carry more burdens than the weak – this holds good within societies, but also between the nations of Europe.

In 2010 the European Union set its member states the goal of raising 20 million people in the EU out of poverty by 2020. That must not be given up.

(4) Behind the crisis of debts and budgets, preceded as it was by a financial and banking crisis, a massive injustice comes to light. Gains are privatized but losses and risks socialized. The financial sector must make its contribution to solving the debt crisis and to the meeting of debts. The proposal of the European Commission for the institution of a tax on financial transactions should be speedily approved and put into force. Beyond the EU efforts should also be made for this to be made valid within G20 as well.

(5) In this crisis the European Union is experiencing its toughest stress-test so far. Just because of this, however, it must be emphasized that in the history of Europe the political process of European unification is a rare opportunity, which must be protected and supported with courage and a sense of proportion. Already at its beginning the European Coal and Steel Community came into being by a courageous decision in the face of a dramatic economic crisis in the coal and steel sectors. From that grew the model, to this day successful, of “an ever closer union of the peoples of Europe” (Treaty of Lisbon). The decisions of the last European summits indicate that closer cooperation is being aimed for in financial and economic policies. This so-called economic governance should be anchored in the community’s procedures with the participation of the Commission and the European Parliament. We are convinced that the process of European unification, which has ensured peace and prosperity in Europe through the last decades, must not be wrecked by the current crisis.

The Praesidium of CPCE

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