

Financial and Economic Crisis

European concerted action required now – People´s Needs first

The European Union today is facing its most significant and existential crisis since its existence. If the financial and economic crisis cannot be effectively solved by concerted action of the EU Member States, the Union itself is at stake. On the eve of the European Council, the Church and Society Commission of the Conference of European Churches urges European political leaders to finally take effective measures which live up to the magnitude of the issue and to put the needs of the people at the centre of the solution.

The present crisis has several root causes. It may be described as a debt crisis fuelled by speculation on the financial market. In as much as it is clear that states cannot live continuously at the expense of others and of future generations in producing debt, it is also evident that reducing present debt cannot be achieved only by austerity measures which affect the already vulnerable people in our societies – migrant communities, the young and the old, the low paid and the unemployed. The voice of the people protesting on the streets in so many European countries needs to be listened to. The European social model, appreciated on many occasions before, must prove its viability especially in moments of crisis.

In finding solutions to the present crisis, the European political leaders will have to balance values, such as accountability and solidarity, on which European integration is based. While indebted countries have to be accountable, in a crisis situation solidarity must prevail. In the mid-term, no sustainable solution can be found without more coherent economic governance, a closer political oversight over financial markets and a move towards a fully fledged fiscal Union. The Church and Society Commission and many CEC member churches have often demanded the re-establishment of political oversight over economic relations and financial transactions. The proposed global Financial Transaction Tax seems to be just one step in the right direction, in that it aims at limiting financial speculation and at re-directing a small part of the gains from financial transactions towards the needs of the people, especially in the southern hemisphere.

Conférence of European Churches - Conférence des Églises européennes - Konferenz Europäischer Kirchen - Конференция Европейских Церквей

Geneva
(General Secretariat)
P.O. Box 2100, 150 route de Ferney,
CH - 1211 Geneva 2, Switzerland
Tel.: +41 22 791 61 11
Fax: +41 22 791 62 27
E-mail: cec@cec-kek.org

Brussels
(Church & Society Commission)
Rue Joseph II, 174
BE - 1000 Brussels, Belgium
Tel. +32 2 230 17 32
Fax +32 2 231 14 13
E-mail: csc@cec-kek.be

Strasbourg
(Church & Society Commission)
8, rue du Fossé des Treize
FR - 67000 Strasbourg, France
Tel.: +33 3 88 15 27 60
Fax: +33 3 88 15 27 61
E-mail: csc@cec-kek.fr

The present crisis, however, is not only a financial and economic crisis; it is also a political and ethical crisis, in which the European Union must show its ability to act on the basis of its own values and ethical principles. For two years, people have become witness to numerous attempts of European political leaders to address the crisis effectively. None of these attempts have turned out to be sufficient and sustainable. None of them have been able to regain the trust of the people in the European Union and deal with its crisis management and economic governance. On the contrary, every delay fuels the crisis and is costly. Therefore, it is high time to take decisive steps now. The Church and Society Commission of the Conference of European Churches urges the political leaders of the European Union to finally take joint effective action now and to act together in solidarity and in view of the needs of the people.

For more information:

Mag. Elizabeta Kitanovic
Communications Secretary
Church and Society Commission of CEC
Rue Joseph II, 174
B-1000 Bruxelles
Tel. +32 2 230 17 32
Fax +32 2 231 14 13
E-Mail: eki@cec-kek.be

The Conference of European Churches (CEC) is a fellowship of some 125 Anglican, Orthodox, Protestant, and Old Catholic Churches from all countries of Europe, and of 40 associated organisations. CEC was founded in 1959. It has offices in Geneva, Brussels and Strasbourg.

The Church and Society Commission of CEC provides a platform for the CEC membership to reflect on socio-ethical issues ecumenically and to involve them in common action and advocacy in relation to the European Union, the Council of Europe, the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation, the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe and the United Nations (in European matters). CSC operates as a forum for action, dialogue and ecumenical training in European affairs.

