

The Church and Ethical Investments

**Speech Jens Holm, MEP
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Good afternoon, and a very warm welcome to the European Parliament. You are probably wondering why a member of the Swedish Left Party has invited you, representatives of Europe's Christian denominations and congregations to the European Parliament. The reason is really quite simple: I think you are involved in important work, and now, when you are discussing ethical investments, I feel it is very important work indeed. Additionally, I have a personal interest in the relationship between the church and politics: My thesis for my Masters Degree in Sociology from Uppsala University had to do with the relationship between liberation theology and various political tendencies in Latin America.

Ethical investments and fair trade are issues that are even discussed here in the European Parliament, and the invitation to visit us should be seen as an outstretched hand and a challenge to churches and progressive politicians to work together.

I am critical of the economic model that currently holds sway in our world. Money and profit are paramount, and everything else, including relationships among people, takes a back seat. My experience is that Christians have a long tradition of similar views of the economic systems we have lived under. You might say that the constant pursuit of profit and economic growth has become a kind of idol in our society. Here we have an opportunity to build broad alliances to develop other values and construct systems that focus on people, animals and the environment.

Many denominations and congregations have substantial financial resources. Imagine how much good those resources could do if only they were invested in the best possible way. I hope, therefore, that your churches not only adopt investment policies that exclude the negative (e.g. weapons, environmental hazards and pornography), but that you even develop a pro-active investment policy. Here in the European Parliament, we have, after much discussion and procrastination, decided that all tea and coffee purchased for the parliament must be Fair Trade. This is a small step forward and a concrete example of how we can use investment to lead the economy in a better direction.

With the right kind of investments, European churches can be part of a movement for building a better world. This is an opportunity we must not miss. Together with many of my parliamentary colleagues, I hope that you will see us as allies in this struggle. I wish you the best of luck in your deliberations.

Jens Holm

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