



CANOPY OF PRAYER

May #130-2022

Author

Sören Lenz

Executive Secretary of
Conference of European
Churches CEC



Dear prayer friends in Europe,

Europe is in the making - but where are the churches?

What is Europe?

Defining Europe geographically is as much a failure as defining it in terms of cultural and linguistic boundaries. Of course, Roman law, Greek philosophy, Christianity and the Enlightenment, among others, have left a lasting mark on Europe. But Europe is not a static entity and Europe is more than the EU.

Sven Giegold, a former Green MEP, speaks of Europe as a concept of civilisation. This implies that, firstly, Europe must be brought back to a fundamental commonality and, secondly, it represents a project with a future to build. When French President Emmanuel Macron spoke to the European Parliament about three promises of Europe - the rule of law, shared progress and peace - these are nothing more than a concrete deployment of the civilisational concept 'Europe', based on commonly defined values. Europe is thus in the making.

In his novel *Die Hauptstadt* (The Capital), the Austrian writer Robert Menasse ironically argues that Europe is in fact built on the ruins of Auschwitz! A provocative thesis, and yet: the shock of the still hot ovens of the extermination camps of Auschwitz, Treblinka, Dachau, etc. has brought the nations of Europe closer together. The European Convention on Human Rights of 1950 and the European Court of Justice established in 1957 are clear signals from the Council of Europe that there must never again be crimes against humanity in Europe.

The EU then brought about greater interdependence, especially in economic terms. After the fall of the Berlin Wall, the European civilisation project gained new momentum and the churches were drawn into it. The Charta Oecumenica and its guidelines for increasing co-operation between the Churches in Europe, signed by the Conference of European Churches and the Council of European (Catholic) Bishops' Conferences, reflects this dynamic. Please note that the Charta Oecumenica speaks about the European continent and not about the EU when the churches speak out in favour of a unified Europe.

Europe is in the process of being built and the enthusiasm of the 90s has now given way to a disillusioned realism. Admittedly, the EU treaties guarantee churches, religious communities and

communities of belief in the EU "an open, transparent and regular dialogue", but leave the question of constitutional regulation to the Member States. A clear application of the principle of subsidiarity and a clear commitment to the ideological plurality of Europe.

Even if some church representatives (church 'diversity' in Europe is still dominated by men!) do not want to admit it: the churches appear only marginally in the political world of Brussels, and the guiding idea of unity in diversity is becoming more and more of a challenge, both in the EU and in the processes of ecumenical dialogue.

The strength of the churches lies on another level. They are called upon precisely when it comes to fundamental human issues. The

recognition of the dignity of every human being is the essence of the Gospel and the foundation of human rights, the rule of law and democracy, the three pillars of the Council of Europe.

The Council of Europe in Strasbourg sets standards which are then integrated into national and European policies. The CEC is a participating member and has a certain say in bioethics and education issues. The German constitutional scholar Ernst-Wolfgang Böckenförde once said that the liberal democratic state lives on conditions that it cannot justify itself. It is precisely the churches that can create these preconditions, in that, as participants in civil society, they understand politically their mission of proclaiming the Gospel, as long as it gives the highest priority to freedom and human dignity.

Prayer points

1. Europe is in the **making** - The concept of civilisation that is Europe is not synonymous with the kingdom of God. Pray that the Churches can contribute together in various ways to the emergence of a more just and social Europe.
2. Pray that churches will learn not to defend national interests, but to take the Gospel of Jesus Christ seriously, so that the commitment to human dignity and rights, i.e. the protection of minorities and religious freedom, will be a priority.
3. Pray that religious communities can be an integrating element in a pluralistic society; that together and in dialogue they can contribute to the European project for a just and social civilisation.



Update on the continuing process of Brexit

Pray for Northern Ireland after an election of the N Irish Assembly that saw Sinn Féin nationalists become the largest party, so claiming the right to appoint the First Minister for the first time. The DUP unionist party, who held this position until now, has said it will not nominate a Deputy First minister because they are unhappy with the provisions of the N Ireland protocol. This was negotiated as part of the Brexit agreement to keep the border between N.Ireland and the Republic of Ireland open, a requirement of the Good Friday peace agreement, as is the power-sharing agreement. The DUP wants the protocol withdrawn or significantly changed. But after months of renegotiations, the UK and EU have failed to come to a satisfactory agreement for all sides. The UK is threatening to take unilateral action which could lead to the EU starting legal action against the UK or even a trade war between the UK and the EU. (See Canopy #74-2019 for more information)

Additional Prayer Points:-

1. Let us pray for Finland and Sweden and their decision over joining NATO. This could have a significant effect on both the war in Ukraine and wider stability in the rest of Europe depending on Russia's reaction.
2. Let us continue to pray for an end to the conflict in Ukraine and that there would not be an escalation by Russian troops, whose advances seem to have stalled under the strength of the Ukrainians' resistance.

TO DONATE: Hebron Europe e.V.,
IBAN DE53 6129 0120 0488 0210 06
BIC GENODES1NUE

giving your name and address. Thank you!

Donate