



European political program of the ECPM

A Christian-democrat voice in the European Union

Preface

This program intends to voice the most basic notions of the ECPM concerning the European Union as we see it and how it should develop in the future. The ECPM has developed to a broad and pan-European organisation, active in and beyond the EU. This development calls us to present a general vision on the European Union and how its christian roots can have a meaning for the EU in the 21st century.

This program does not intend to cover many details in a wide range of policy fields. From our basic view at the EU some of the most important issues will be generally touched. This will also reflect what, in our view, the priorities of the EU should be in the years to come. This program is also 'under construction' and open for review and further elaboration in the following years as the EU and the ECPM will continue to develop.

We as ECPM hope that this vision at the EU will inspire parties and politicians around the EU to continue their efforts for Christian-inspired politics and policies.

The identity of the European Union

Christianity entered Europe nearly 2000 years ago and has since then had a profound influence in our continent. Even though Europe is rich in its cultural diversity, the christian faith runs as a red thread through all European nations and cultures. In all these cultures Christianity has had a deep impact on ethics, religion, view at humanity and freedom. The very notions of individuality that are present in today's Europe are directly linked to Christianity. Even later developments in thought like the enlightenment and secular philosophies stem from very basic Christian notions.

It is therefore not an accident that modern democracy developed in those parts of the world that have been under influence of Christianity. Democracy as it developed in the Western world embodies these values of individuality and freedom held together in a community. The need to protect democracy and maintain freedom and individuality in a peaceful Europe were driving forces behind the creation of the European Union. The EU is in its core a Christian-democrat answer at the totalitarian systems that brought so much devastation and oppressed millions of people in 20th century Europe.

The leaders who founded the European Union envisioned a union of nations that would preserve, protect and spread the values that are the foundation of our freedom and democracy. These are the Judeo-Christian values that determined the very fabric of our European societies; respect for the individual, respect for diversity and solidarity.

The history and values of Europe cannot be separated from the person of Jesus Christ and the Christian movement. They determined the soul and dynamics of Europe and the development of the ideas that shaped our continent and the history of the European nations.

We as ECPM are convinced that there can be no future for a free and democratic EU and a Europe of solidarity without the recognition of the source of these values. We are also convinced that more is needed than just a recognition of the past. The Christian faith and values are also a needed source for the European Union of the 21st century.

These values are needed resource in a time of new challenges in our ecology, economy and the social cohesion of our societies. As ECPM we are determined to bring these values in the political discourse of the European Union in order to contribute to the wellbeing of our European society.

The European Union as a democratic union of nations

For us a free and democratic Europe implies a European Union that is a union of member states and subject to the peoples of these member states. We wish for a European Union that respects the independency of the member states. The EU is necessary as co-operation of European nations in facing the problems of the today's global village. However, the nations are the institutional foundation of the union. They lend tasks and authority to the Union and decide the direction of the Union. The EU institutions have to respect this democratic order.

This does not lead to a mere technocratic and economical co-operation since the EU is more than a mere sum of its parts. The EU has an own role as union of these nations, representing their peoples and the values of the EU. This acquires a democratic and transparent process that is accessible by all those who live in the EU. This ensures a free and democratic Europe that respects its peoples and their values.

The new Lisbon treaty is meant to provide a growing EU a framework that allowed the institutions to work after the enlargement. In some ways this treaty has been an improvement of the former so-called 'constitution'. We expect that in the future the treaty will undergo amendments. This amendments should again emphasize the role of the member states and reduce the number of policy fields the European Union is involved in, especially those fields that can also be directed by the member states. These changes would also give the EU more decisiveness on many major issues where the EU should take the lead, especially those issues that cannot be solved by individual member states. On these fields the member states should not pursue their national interests but find common solutions for our common problems. Future amendments to the Lisbon treaty should also make the decision-making process of the European governing bodies more transparent.

The ultimate goal of the Union should not be to become a new economical or military 'global power block'. The ultimate goal of the union should be

to apply the values where this unique co-operation of nations is found upon. These are key values as respect for life, freedom, solidarity, respect for diversity, democracy and peace. They should be applied in a way that will lift up the peoples of this continent and beyond.

Respect for life

No democracy can function without respect for life. Respect for life is the very cornerstone of respect for the individual and individuality is the cornerstone of democracy. It is a christian value that shaped Europe's legal system and is one of the key values of the international human rights declarations. However at the same time this value needs to be emphasised again. There is a growing pressure to put absolute autonomous freedom before the value of life. But freedom of choice depends on the value of the individual. The EU institutions should uphold respect for life and not promote abortion or euthanasia in or outside Europe. The EU should also take a stand against the utilisation of human life. Utilisation of human life for economical or scientific reasons is opposite to respect for life and therefore also not acceptable in a free and democratic society.

Respect for life also includes respect for the creation. It is clear that we live in a growing ecological crisis. The EU has an important role to play to find answers to this most important challenge of our time. The EU should promote green technologies, green energies, conservation and care for environment in the union and globally. Care for creation is not an isolated issue, it needs to be integrated as a principle in all policy fields. In those policy fields that are in the hands of the member states, the EU can assist in sharing and promoting 'green solutions'. European and national political parties can play their role in bringing scientists and national, regional and local politicians together. This ecological crisis also requires a fundamental turn in economical policies. Continuity and the role of all stakeholders has to become more important than the profits of the shareholders. These can be foundations for a sustainable economy in its ecological and economical meaning.

Freedom

Freedom of speech, conscience and religion are vital for today's Europe. The role of Christianity and Christian-democracy in shaping the liberties that our continent enjoys can hardly be underestimated. Individuals, communities and organisations must have full freedom of religion and expression of thought. This must be a priority within Europe and also in European foreign policy. The EU should promote these values also among the neighbouring states on our continent. Christian-democrat thinking also strongly rejects secularism as a public ideology. We reject any kind of 'obvious' dominance of secularism in government and policies. Neither can be there a role for domination by, or of, any single religious denomination or group in any EU member state. Freedom of religion implies respect for plurality that should be shared by all people of all religions and those who have no religion.

Freedom of speech and conscience are fundamental for our democracies. These freedoms can only be real if there is also a freedom of press. The freedom of press has to be protected throughout Europe. People are free to express their critique on other actions, views, faiths and beliefs without leaving any argument. But democracy means that they need to respect the dignity of those criticized.

Freedom and the right at privacy cannot be separated. Privacy should at least be as important as safety. New safety policies and the used technologies have to be examined thoroughly before they are introduced.

Solidarity

Solidarity is a core Christian principle and has always been a hallmark of the European Union. The EU itself would not exist if there had not been a notion of real solidarity between the free nations on our continent after WW II. Solidarity is an idea and ideal that is shared throughout Europe. Solidarity also means social justice. Social justice is a fundamental Biblical teaching and Christian-democrat notion. Social justice demands an equal

regard for all. That implies a special concern for the needs of the poor, refugees, those who suffer and the powerless. It requires us to oppose exploitation and deprivation. It requires also that appropriate resources and opportunities are available. In this way, we meet the basic requirements of all and each person is able to take part in the life of the community.

That solidarity and social justice are needed in 21st century Europe became clear during the ‘credit crunch’ of 2008 and its consequences in the years after. The EU should continue to emphasise the solidarity between the member-states and apply this principle and social justice in its economical policies. The common market has to rest on these values if we want it to function in the years to come. The EU can also only be a real union of values if it acts in solidarity for our global village, especially in its economical policies.

Respect for diversity

The value of the individual invokes the need for respect for diversity. The European Union is home for many nations, cultures, languages and religions. This diversity is the strength and future of the European Union. This does however not lead to cultural relativism. The reverse is true, namely that the christian values are the source for this openness for a diverse society. This also means that even in a diverse society people can hold beliefs as ‘the truth’ and communicate these with others. This leads to a concept of diversity in which differences on all fields should be open for debate. The law and good manners provide the space within this debate can take place. In this way differences can be discussed in a fruitful way; we see this as the best prevention against discrimination.

Peace

Peace was one of the most important goals of the EU and is one of its most remarkable results. Peace is not just the absence of war. It means an environment where there is no fear between peoples and nations. Mutual understanding is necessary to maintain the peace we enjoy in Europe. The

EU should encourage reconciliation where this is necessary. Humility, repentance, patience and forgiveness are political as well as personal values. They are essential in the process of replacing conflict by common understanding.

As stated we do not wish to see the EU to become a new global ‘power block’. This means that the EU should not develop a military apparatus independent of the military forces of the member states. The NATO remains the military co-operation to keep Europe safe. Through the NATO the EU member states will engage in peace-keeping missions. If necessary EU member states can co-operate militarily. However, this does not require a new EU military command.

Vision and strategy towards EU neighbours in Europe

The ECPM sees the EU enlargement process as an on-going phenomenon that should not, however, be regarded as an indefinite move without clear strategy and limits. We believe in a larger Europe without customs and discrimination and look forward to see all European sovereign nations united in the same institutional framework, for the sake of Europe's peoples well-being and re-establishment of the continent's unity, disrupted by decades of dominance of totalitarian regimes.

The ECPM makes a clear distinction between EU European and non-European neighbours and deems the EU strategy should clearly differentiate between these two groups as to their European vocation and perspective.

At the other hand, we believe the new prospective members should correspond to all accession criteria (Copenhagen criteria), but be allowed to join EU preserving their values. The existing EU members will only have to gain from the influx of new members, as presently the EU undergoes a demographic and ideological crisis.

As the last wave of EU enlargement has proven, the accession of new East-European members did not confirm pessimistic scenarios drawn by adversaries of Eastern countries accession. Therefore, the ECPM believes EU should not halt its expansion once the enlargement process has reached the old “Western civilization frontier.” Each European nation, which bases its perspectives on democratic values and respects human rights and the rule of law should be given real chance to join the EU without discrimination. Otherwise, the new iron curtain will part the continent and the aspiring European nations will be left in despair and disillusion. In the longer term, this would gravely damage the interest of the EU.

The “enlargement fatigue” should not therefore be a reason to stop the enlargement process, but the EU should invest its best practices and efforts to support the EU European neighbours in their accession endeavours. As mentioned, the EU should promote and encourage diversity, without falling into extreme of cultural relativism but basing its strategy on a principial approach for the sake of United Europe, originating from the same roots and developing under the same roof.

Closing statement

In a time of growing distrust in the European political institutions it is time to reconnect the EU with its peoples and the values they recognise as vital for their personal life and their societies. This requires that these values will be in the core of EU policies and it also requires an explicit connection with the source of these values in order to keep them fresh and strong in our Union. With this program we intend to build these connections and by doing so, helping to build the EU.