



RAAD VAN KERKEN
in nederland

03 JAN. 2016

To the General Secretary
Conference of European Churches
Protopresbyter Heikki Theodoros Huttonen
Joseph II Straat 174
BE 1000 BRUSSEL
BELGIË.

Amersfoort, December 19th, 2016

Dear Sir, dear Brother in Christ,

In your letter dated 14 th June 2016 you invited member churches, partner organisations and national councils of churches to respond to the 'Open Letter' on the future of Europe. During a plenary meeting of the Council of Churches in the Netherlands representatives of the member churches of our council exchanged reactions to the Open Letter. Based upon this dialogue we are sending you this brief response.

Generally speaking members appreciated that the letter starts from the perspective of the shared values which are at the heart of the founding of the European Union. A dialogue between member churches on the content of these values and their role in shaping the future of the European Union/ Europe is considered necessary at this particular moment in time, given the challenges we are facing.

In this context we should also realize that there are those –also in our own society and churches- - losing trust in the European project, fearing loss of control over their own situation and loss of identity, feeling excluded and opting for populist policies. Some members of the Council felt that these forces might even be a great risk for Europe, given the fact that the EU started out as a 'peace project'. Tackling inequality and poverty in Europe is therefore of utmost importance!

During our exchange it was also felt that the one-sided emphasis of European policies, being almost exclusively economic is a problem. If the EU still is a community of shared values, it should broaden its policies e.g. by clearly incorporating social en sustainable development goals.

Members also felt that churches in Europe could well contribute their experience with 'unity in diversity' as well as subsidiarity to the current discourse on European unity and Union policies. Moreover churches –since the 1980's- are well aware of the discussion on the extent of Europe. Europe is larger than the Union. Some of our churches are found in all of Europe, in and outside the Union. Since churches are seeking to serve society across borders they have experience in building bridges between peoples in this larger Europe.

Last, but not least, based on the above, the EU should maintain the dialogue with churches and religions, so as to "give the European project a soul" and CEC - in cooperation with its Roman Catholic Counterpart - is urged to continue to play an important role in this respect.

Yours sincerely,

Dirk Gudde,
President

Klaas van der Kamp,
General Secretary

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