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A social Europe?

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Ladies and Gentlemen,

I. The historical framework in 2014

The Australian historian Christopher Clark gave the keynote address at this year's Salzburg Festival opening on 27 July, one day before the 100th anniversary of the declaration of war on Serbia by Austro-Hungary, and consequently the start of the First World War. Clark, who has addressed the issue of who was responsible for the War in his celebrated book "The Sleepwalkers", used this keynote address in Salzburg as an opportunity to point to the topicality of the crisis of the summer of 2014 and to draw parallels to today's political conflicts and crisis regions. Although overall he expresses concern that a worldwide military conflict could repeat itself, he nonetheless gives a positive prognosis for Europe at the end of his speech:

"It is not yet clear whether we are able to get out of this trap today. We are not necessarily any more clever or wiser than those who came before us. But we do have better structures, at least in Europe. This is where an economic and peaceable system has been built on the ruins left by two horrendous World Wars which is unique anywhere in the world. It is not only that the EU



has rendered war between the states of Europe inconceivable, but that this transnational structure offers a model for the whole world to resolve conflicts of interest peacefully. The EU is getting a bad press at the moment, particularly within Europe. The EU and its values are also being questioned by populist movements within the Union. But anyone looking at the EU [...] from outside [...] sees it as an act of transnational political will which is one of the greatest achievements of the history of humankind.”

This year, people all over Europe are commemorating the outbreak of the First World War 100 years ago, grieving for the dead and reflecting on the lessons which we must learn from history. Although the Second World War caused an even greater number of casualties in Europe, many nations continue to recall the First World War, once referred to by the US diplomat and historian George Kennan as “the great seminal catastrophe of this century”, as the Great War, “La Grande Guerre”. Pope Francis also remembered the dead of the First World War last weekend when visiting Fogliano. The bishops of ComECE will meet together with the President of the CCEE in Verdun on 11 November to commemorate the dead and pray for peace.

The sheer density of European history is however also shown by this year’s other historical commemorations. Two weeks ago, we recalled the 75th anniversary of the outbreak of the Second World War. It is distressing that only 25 years passed between the outbreaks of the two World Wars. I held Holy Mass on 1 September together with the Archbishop of Gliwice in order to emphasise the role of the Church as a builder of bridges, conciliator and peace-maker. This is a role which She has unfortunately not always lived up to in the past century.

It is now 25 years, too, since Communism collapsed in Central and Eastern Europe and it was possible to overcome the division of Europe in revolutions in the various states that were largely peaceful. It took another fifteen years, until 2004, ten years ago, for these states to become members of the European Union. The ComECE bishops came to Spain back then too for that reason, in 2004, to undertake a pilgrimage to Santiago.

II. Europe is at a crossroads

Looking at the world in a year such as this, with such significant historical commemorations, we once more see major challenges and geopolitical developments. We look with concern at the conflict in Ukraine and at the relationship between Europe and Russia. Insecurity has become common

with regard to relations between Europe and the United States. And the bloody conflicts in the Middle East – in Gaza, in Syria and in Iraq – give rise to new questions as to the future faced by the region and by world peace and – in view of the cruel, inhuman atrocities – also with regard to our responsibility for the world. Globalisation has brought political and economic developments in the different parts of the world even closer to home for us. These developments also repeatedly pose the question for us as to who we as Europeans actually are, how we wish to live and what our understanding of our position in the world is to be.

This means that the crisis situation arising in recent years in terms of security policy and economic circumstances poses a major challenge also to the European Union and to us as Europeans. The European Council set the course in July and August by appointing new incumbents to the offices of the President of the Commission (Jean-Claude Juncker), the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy (Federica Mogherini) and the President of the European Council (Donald Tusk). The European Parliament will start in the next few days the hearings of the members of the new European Commission. The EU is therefore about to embark on a new beginning for the next few years in terms of its staff, and hence its policy. I am also convinced that we will experience decisive years in which we will have to answer the question of where the EU, and hence to a certain degree Europe, is going to develop. This applies to all dimensions of European unification: to the constitution, to Europe's responsibilities in the world, and in terms of the relationship between the economy and social equalisation in the EU.

Europe must ensure in this situation what conclusions it intends to draw from the economic crises of recent years. This quickly leads to calls for a "social Europe". Having said that, as popular as this motto is, it is also completely open as to what we are to understand by a social Europe.

The European state debt and economic crisis has led to considerable social turbulence in many European states. The economic situation is admittedly already improving. There are indications of an economic recovery here in Spain; Greece is already able to borrow on the capital market again to some degree, even though the question of a renewed debt cancellation will be an issue to be dealt with in the European political arena once again. However, improvements in the social situation always lag behind economic developments, so that we continue to be confronted by a multiplicity of social problems. Even though the situation on the labour market has improved in the last six months and the number of unemployed has fallen, one-quarter of the population in Spain still has no

work. The same applies to Greece.

On the part of the Church, Caritas is doing good work in the various countries when it comes to helping people in need. In “Evangelii Gaudium“, Pope Francis recalls Jesus’ appeal to his disciples: “Give them some food yourselves!” (Mk 6:37), and points out that: “it means working to eliminate the structural causes of poverty and to promote the integral development of the poor, as well as small daily acts of solidarity in meeting the real needs which we encounter” (EG 188). It is therefore not enough to alleviate acute need. It is rather also a matter of improving the structural framework. This calls on the Church with Her political and social commitment to seek to establish a just world, and in this case this means: a social Europe.

III. The shape which social Europe should take

What, however, are the contours which such a social Europe should take on? The European Union only has limited responsibilities in the social field. The division of responsibilities within the EU leaves social policy very largely at the responsibility of the Member States. It is certainly possible to engage in long discussions on the expediency of such a division of competences. There is naturally also much to be said in favour of retaining social policy in the responsibility of the nation-states: The established national traditions are too diverse, and the cultural and economic differences are too pronounced to permit us to aim for pan-European solutions in the social field. However, this division of competences should in my view not lead to the European Union being responsible for the competitive framework and the Member States needing to ensure social equalisation. Such an understanding will always subject the policy and decisions of the EU to the calculations of market freedoms, competition and liberalisation. This will lead to Europe being exclusively associated with an image of a cold-hearted economic project whilst the nation-states are the ones doing the good deeds.

We can already see today how people regard the state framework as the stronghold of social security. Whilst social security is therefore associated with the nation-state, Europe is perceived as triggering the loss of the social dimension. This will certainly not encourage people to identify themselves more closely as citizens of the European Union. Finally, it is social cohesion in particular which makes a major contribution towards identification with a political structure. This is indeed why the Member States insist on retaining responsibility for social policy. It therefore comes as no surprise that no progress is being made in terms of shaping a

European identity if Europe is understood across the board as only constituting a social threat.

Europe's economic orientation is all too frequently regarded as worsening the negative social impact of globalisation in the industrialised countries. Many European countries have been forced to enact profound reforms in their economic and social systems in recent years, and the social security systems are under pressure. The European Union is often blamed for this situation, and as the engine of globalisation is said to promote competition and hence destroy jobs or contribute towards their being relocated abroad. With regard to the social impact of globalisation, I am however convinced that European unification is not the problem, but the solution. Only a strong, unified Europe can make its voice heard in a globalised world. The national social welfare states can hardly face this challenge alone.

It is however not so easy to separate economic and social issues within European policy. This particularly applies with regard to economic and monetary union with its wide-ranging interconnections the degree of which many did not notice until the crisis. European legislation, and many political measures at European level, therefore also affect aspects of social, fiscal and budgetary policy. They also have a major impact on the latitude available to national social policy. And not lastly, the EU also influences developments in social policy with the Method of Open Coordination. We therefore need to have an idea how the social dimension of the European Union can be shaped and along what principles it is to be orientated. Over and above this, the question also certainly emerges of the degree to which a re-distribution of responsibilities between the Union and the Member States is needed and would be desirable. It might make sense to establish a European Convention on social issues and not only on the institutional structure of the EU. It is absolutely essential for the EU to gain assurance with regard to its competences in the field of social policy.

When the European Council adopted in March 2000 in Lisbon the so-called "Lisbon Strategy", its goal was to make the EU the most competitive and dynamic knowledge-based economy in the world within ten years. The strategy also encompassed social cohesion and environmental protection, but these were subordinate to the goal of achieving competitiveness. It was not until the "Treaty of Lisbon", which as it happens was also adopted in that city, that the goals of social equalisation and competitiveness were placed on an equal footing. The Treaty of Lisbon, which came into force in 2009, declares a "highly competitive social market economy" to be one of the objectives entrenched in the EU's Treaties. This makes the social market economy the overall concept of the European Union. ComECE

published a statement on the highly competitive social market economy in January 2012 entitled “A European community of solidarity and responsibility” in order to fill this treaty objective with life. A social Europe is closely linked to achieving this goal of a social market economy at European level. Against this background, we as bishops proposed to continue to develop the common market.

The fact that economic and social policy are inseparable also concurs with my understanding of what a social market economy is, the conception of which correlates with the values and goals of Catholic social doctrine: This is an economic and societal model combining freedom on the market with the principle of justice. To this end, it creates, firstly, the framework for fair competition, and hence exploits the advantages offered by the market, whilst secondly ensuring social equalisation. In a politically interlinked system of different levels, these tasks cannot be allocated to different levels separately from one another. Rather, when taking decisions of an economic policy nature, the social aspect must always be taken into account. Policy-makers would not be doing their job if they did not take a universal view, but only considered themselves to be responsible for sub-areas. What is needed instead is holistic, integrated policies. The EU’s economic policy measures therefore always need to be regarded in terms of their social policy consequences. A social impact assessment should therefore be incorporated into European legislative procedure.

A social market economy at European level must naturally also continue to be orientated in line with competitiveness. The market however needs clear rules, and these in turn need to be defined by policy-makers. Regulatory policy therefore needs to form the basis of a social Europe. With regard to the causes of the financial and economic crisis, this also applies to the capital markets in particular. ComECE’s statement therefore emphasises: “A market economy that serves exclusively the interests of capital cannot be called “social”.”

In a social market economy, however, regulatory policy must in fact go hand in hand with social policy. A fair equalisation must be created using the principles of solidarity and subsidiarity. Employees need social protection; young people need education and training, the family as the fundamental social unit needs respect and support. What is more, we may not think today of sustainable economic activity within a social market economy without taking account of the ecological consequences of our actions. Therefore, in addition to social equalisation, we also need to integrate the integrity of Creation and prudent use of natural resources into our economic model.

Climate change has become a focus of ecological problems. It gives rise to questions as to global and intergenerational justice because those who suffer from it most are not the polluters. Climate change thus challenges us to cease our overexploitation of Creation, and to organise our life and our economy in a sustainable manner. This means that the EU's economic policy must be developed advanced not only in its social approaches, but also in its ecological ones. It will not be possible in the long run to achieve economic competitiveness and social justice if we disregard the ecological consequences of our actions.

There is another reason in addition to social equalisation and ecological sustainability for integrating economic policy into an overall policy concept. We must not permit the market to permeate all areas of life and to dominate us. The market cannot satisfy all needs. Against this background, it is good that we are also discussing the question of protecting Sunday at European level. It is important and right to prioritise peace and quiet over economic activities on this day, for both cultural and religious reasons.

The field of the family is also among those issues which we may not subject to economic considerations. The family has a value in itself which commands respect. It makes it possible to affirm life, and is hence the foundation for our living together and for the future of society. The family must not be subjected to other societal processes such as the economy. We must therefore not increasingly adapt the family to economic life, but we must structure the areas of work and the economy in a way that is family friendly. Families also do fundamental work for society in our modern communities. This is why policy-makers at all levels must ensure that they support families. Even if the European Union is not responsible for family policy issues, family-friendly policies are part and parcel of a European social market economy.

The examples of Sunday and of the family indicate that the economy and the state are based on a cultural framework. They are a prerequisite for our societal and economic system. This is why the economy and the State must respect and protect these foundations. The German constitutional law expert Ernst-Wolfgang Böckenförde coined a phrase in the sixties which has caught on over the last few decades in societal debates in Germany, but which is also quoted in other countries: "The liberal secular state lives on premises that it cannot itself guarantee." This applies all the more so to our economic system! It too lives on cultural premises, and would be well advised to respect these premises and not to eliminate them with the logic of competition.

With regard to a social Europe, we note today that it is above all the countries of the Eurozone which have shouldered a considerable amount of mutual responsibility. They have formed a community based on solidarity, and we are realising more and more that this solidarity also implies a community of responsibility. For this reason, the ComECE statement is entitled “A European community of solidarity and responsibility” and demands that “In the future of the European Union, solidarity and responsibility must become increasingly more closely linked.” A social Europe must therefore be obliged to commit itself to the model of the social market economy.

IV. Social challenges in the EU

On the basis of these fundamental reflections on a social Europe, I would like to discuss five social challenges which we in Europe need to address even more urgently, and these are youth unemployment, the current European crisis, demographic change, migration and human trafficking.

1. With regard to the labour markets, I am still shocked most of all by the high level of youth unemployment in the countries of Southern Europe. We must leave no stone unturned when it comes to offering young people in particular a perspective and giving them opportunities to take their lives into their own hands and shape them. We have been speaking for a long time of a lost generation with regard to unemployed young people. We must not accept this situation, either with regard to the young people themselves, or indeed in terms of the long-term political consequences of this situation. Education and employment are therefore the topics on which we need to work. The Christian perception also focuses on the responsibility and the willingness of the individual to achieve. Education aiming not at economic success, but which also forms part of personality formation, takes on central importance in this context.

Pope Benedict put it like this in his inaugural sermon on 24 April 2005: “Each of us is willed, each of us is loved, each of us is necessary.” This must be the general orientation of our society. This is why we may not simply give up on today’s unemployed, even in a situation which is economically as insecure like today’s, but we must repeatedly open up opportunities for them. Losing one’s job means not only losing one’s income, but also entails fewer opportunities for societal participation and restricted life prospects. Pope Francis also says no to an economy of exclusion in “*Evangelii gaudium*” in which he states: “It is no longer simply about exploitation and oppression, but something new. Exclusion ultimately has to do with what it means to be a part of the society in which we live; those excluded are no

longer society's underside or its fringes or its disenfranchised – they are no longer even a part of it. The excluded are not the 'exploited' but the outcast, the 'leftovers'". (EG 53). As Christians, all our thinking must start from the concept of human dignity, and we must enable everyone to partake of work and of societal processes. Particularly in view of mass unemployment, social policy must not be restricted to simply providing for the livelihood of those affected. Assistance provided by the social welfare state must, rather, aim to enable people to take part in the life of society once more.

2. Europe has not yet overcome its economic and social crisis. Spain is able to achieve economic successes today once more as a result of really impressive reforms. Other countries, however, such as France and Italy remain in difficult situations. They are pushing for more money to be invested in order to boost the economy. Other countries, by contrast – particularly my home country Germany is one of these – insist that the crisis states should become financially consolidated and implement structural reforms. There will certainly be a need to set impulses for growth. The Stability and Growth Pact on which our common currency the Euro is based also affords possibilities for this. We however also need to be aware that it cannot be fair to solve our problems today at the expense of the generations to come. Sustainability and striking a sound balance are indispensable criteria for economic activity. In the interest of the common good, as the ComECE bishops stressed in their statement on the social market economy, Europe must therefore engage in monetary, financial and economic policy which is orientated towards stability.

There is however a need here to respect the principle of social justice. And we must keep a particularly close eye on those who are least able to make themselves heard: These include, firstly, the socially vulnerable, and secondly those who have not yet been born today. For this reason, the necessary efforts towards austerity in the European countries must not be at the expense of the weakest in our society. We may also not however impose an immense debt burden on future generations by running up more and more new debts. This would not only be in breach of intergenerational justice, but would also exacerbate the inequalities within the coming generation. A fair equalisation of burdens is therefore the major challenge in the European debt crisis which must be faced by all concerned.

3. Also demographic change has been a challenge for us in Europe for quite some time. The trend is really rather advanced in some countries, whilst in others it has yet to begin. Many believe that it is a purely Western

phenomenon, but no one in Europe should be deceived into believing that this development will pass them by. It is naturally welcome if we all live longer. This also entails considerable societal potential of which we do not yet know how to adequately take advantage because we are too slow at adjusting to developments. On the other hand, demographic change also entails major strains on our social security systems. In this regard, we need to accept this development in a manner which takes greater control of it and establish a fair equalisation between the interests of the various generations. Intergenerational justice means in the final analysis that we may not one-sidedly burden future generations with the burdens of demographic change, and that we must leave them with an intact infrastructure and the possibility of being able to make their mark on the world. This is why it will be indispensable to moderate our lifestyles in favour of the generations that will follow us.

4. Immigration by large numbers of refugees to Europe has been an issue for decades, it is true. More and more people are eager to come to Europe, particularly via Africa, to seek work here and make a living. Immigration pressure has however increased further since the Arab Spring, and the circumstances in which migration takes place are becoming more inhumane and more dramatic. At the same time, we Europeans have still not found an appropriate response to migration, despite extensive political efforts. We have attempted for much too long to simply send back the refugees who come to us over the Mediterranean in cockleshells. The innumerable people who died in recent years on the way to Europe however indicate that the political answers of the past – I dare not refer to them as strategies – have not borne fruit. Europeans' only reactions in the past were to defend and monitor. What I find to be missing in Europe is that we must also consider migration much more as an opportunity.

John Paul II wrote in 2003 in his post-synodal exhortation "Ecclesia in Europe": "Saying "Europe" must be equivalent to saying "openness". [...] Therefore it needs to be an open and welcoming Continent" (EiE 111). This is completely lacking in European migration policy. First of all, we need to treat the refugees who arrive humanely. This applies quite regardless of whether they may subsequently remain here or not. On the occasion of his visit to Lampedusa on 8 July 2013, Pope Francis warned us of a "globalisation of indifference". The time has come for these words to finally be followed by actions. It cannot leave us cold if refugees die at the gates of Europe. This is why Europe must change something, both when it comes to taking in refugees, and with regard to doing more to combat the reasons in the countries of origin why people seek refuge. Europe must however also examine possibilities of legal immigration over and above taking in the

highly-qualified, and hence counter irregular immigration and human trafficking. Also with regard to solidarity within Europe, we still have some catching up to do when it comes both to those EU Member States in which the refugees arrive and to the other EU Member States.

5. The urgency of the topic of human trafficking is still not being realised. Many consider this problem to be far remote from home. They are however neglecting the fact that this topic has arrived in many areas of our society. Human trafficking has many faces: domestic slaves and coerced workers, forced prostitution or organ trafficking. Approximately 880,000 people fall foul of human trafficking in the European Union each year according to ILO estimates. The figure is more than 20 million people worldwide. Not lastly, Pope Francis focussed on this topic and denounced it as a “crime against humanity”. At a conference at the Vatican in April of this year, he said that this conference was a “a gesture of the church and of people of good will who want to scream, ‘Enough!’” True, the European Union has taken initial action against human trafficking in recent years. The political efforts must however go much further in order to counter this global crime.

V. The contribution of the Church

What contribution can the Church make towards a social Europe? The Church does not have any technical solutions up Her sleeve. She also has no political or economic concepts of Her own which could compete with the political arena. The Church however partakes of the concerns and the needs of the people, as She has been placed in this world. This is why it is not the job of the Church to develop solutions in the technical field to make improvements with regard to individual issues. The Church can however offer guiding principles with Her social doctrine in order to build a just society.

The Saint Pope John Paul II stressed in “Ecclesia in Europe” that Catholic social doctrine “arises from the encounter of the biblical message and human reason on the one hand, and on the other with the problems and situations involving individual and social life. By the body of principles which it sets forth, the Church’s social doctrine helps lay solid foundations for a humane coexistence in justice, peace, freedom and solidarity. Because it is aimed at defending and promoting the dignity of the human person, which is the basis not only of economic and political life, but also of social justice and peace, this doctrine proves capable of upholding the supporting structures of Europe’s future.” (EiE 98).

The social doctrine is therefore a holistic concept focussing on people and their dignity, and not instrumentalising them. Taking its principles of personality, solidarity and subsidiarity as an orientation allows us to establish a societal system which is not one-sidedly orientated towards economic issues, but places the focus on its individual members.

Catholic social doctrine however includes not only the social proclamation of the Pope and of the bishops. The Church's teachings, rather, form only one out of three pillars. A second is constituted by the academic study of social ethics at the theological faculties. The third, in turn, has been for many years the Catholic social movement. It is particularly in this field that I am therefore urgently calling for Catholic lay people to make their voices heard in European policies and to proclaim and stand for the Church's social doctrine in the political arena. The effectiveness of the Church's social doctrine primarily also depends on whether Christians are found who commit to the community of Europe and engage in Christian social political activity. The networking of the Catholic laity in the political arena all over Europe is certainly a field in which we as a Church must become more involved.

VI. Conclusion

When the Presidents of the European Commission and of the European Council, José Manuel Barroso and Herman Van Rompuy, as well as the Vice President of the European Parliament, László Surján, met on 10 June of this year to engage in a dialogue with religious leaders, President Barroso described his initiative to bring European intellectuals together to discuss the new "Narrative for Europe". What this stands for is the idea that the peace-based reasoning of European integration is no longer sufficient, almost seventy years after the end of the Second World War. Many people are of the opinion today that combining the economic, social and political strength of Europe in a globalised world is the new reason why states in Europe should work together.

In the statement which I held at this meeting in Brussels, I pointed out that Robert Schuman already attributed the need for European integration not only to the logic of peace and reconciliation, but also to Europe's self-assertion in the world. I consider both of these reasons to remain equally topical today. If we wish to not only defend the European social model in a world that is coming closer together in economic terms, but also to promote it worldwide, we Europeans have no other option than to work closer and closer together and to uphold our common interests together.

Particularly in this commemorative year 2014 – 100 years after the start of the First World War and 75 years after the beginning of the Second – we should however also not forget the peace-based motivation. Jean-Claude Juncker, the new President of the European Commission, tends to say: “If you have any doubts about Europe, you should visit a military cemetery.” He is fond of telling the story about when he as a minister returned back home from the night-time negotiations in Brussels and complained about the laborious negotiations with the European partners, his father dismissed his moaning by countering that wars would have been waged on such matters in the past.

Let us therefore not forget that the existing European interconnections are also a reason why we in Europe not only live in peace, but that we live together as friends. Europe remains a project of peace, freedom and reconciliation – also and particularly in this year 2014, which is so difficult in terms of foreign policy. Europe’s social dimension is a major contribution towards learning the lessons of history, and reinforcing this project of European unification. As Christopher Clark said in Salzburg, social Europe as one constituent element of an order based on peace is without a doubt “one of the greatest achievements of the history of humankind”.