

Adjust Europe to the Common Good

Common Action 2019 of Justice and Peace Europe in view of the European elections 2019

Short version

*In accordance with its mission **Justice and Peace Europe**¹ offers the following reflection and proposals as its annual concerted action 2019 to all Europeans - be they Christian, of another religion or non-religious - in view of the forthcoming elections to the European Parliament from 23 – 26 May 2019:*

Establishing a Social Market Economy – a key task for the European Parliament

The members of the next European Parliament will co-legislate with the Council of Ministers on proposals emanating from the European Commission. Most of the law-making process and the most relevant rules for European citizens, whether they live in a country belonging to the European Union or in another European country, relate to the functioning of the single market. Based on the principle of free movement of goods, capital, services and people the single market - as established by the European Treaties - lies at the foundation of the largest market economy in the world. It has contributed to an enormous increase in the material well being within Europe over the past decades. However, a free market economy also needs clear rules as well as an infrastructure for its governance in view of the common good of citizens and to be provided by states. Otherwise unwanted consequences multiply. This needs to be addressed through oversight and regulation by the legitimate political authorities. Therefore the Treaty of the European Union calls for the establishment of a social market economy and requests from its institutions to promote social, economic and territorial cohesion. The values promoted in article 2 of the Treaty of the European Union serve as an orientation for the members of the next European Parliament to amend and correct unwanted effects in the Single market

Four issues and four priorities that the next European Parliament should take into account

Justice and Peace Europe has identified four issues where the regulation of the single market is not functioning well from the perspective of the values and principles of the European Union as well as the social teaching of the Church. The next European Parliament should address these issues vigorously. They constitute violations of the principles of

1. Social justice because the current unfair distribution of opportunities and wealth, but also poverty and social exclusion within the territory of the single market and among regions leads to negative and vital demographic, cultural and social consequences.

¹ *Justice and Peace Europe is composed of over thirty national Justice and Peace Commission, which refer to their respective bishops' conferences. It reads the signs of the times in the light of the Catholic Social teaching and puts a focus on European politics and institutions.*

The depopulation of vast parts of the European Union and impoverishment of those who stay behind are negative side effects of the Single market, which must not be tolerated. Instead a social market economy and the principle of territorial cohesion require the design of a new and comprehensive European regional development policy, which builds on and tries to improve existing regional policies instead of undermining them. **Justice and Peace Europe** proposes that the next European Parliament should declare this a matter of priority.

2. Care for the natural environment because an unacceptable high level of food waste, which points to the predominance of a model of production and consumption opposed to the virtue of temperance and harmful to the environment.

In the EU the amount of food waste is estimated at 88 million tons per year, which is more than one fifth of the production. At such levels a drastic change is necessary. It constitutes a complex challenge for the whole food system, including consumer behaviour. **Justice and Peace Europe** wants the next European Parliament to introduce an obligatory food waste reduction target at the EU level on the basis of a unified and agreed methodology to measure food waste

3. Global *peace* because of multiple arms exports to areas of war and armed conflict which are contrary to an existing agreement among member states

In the last years weapons produced in the European single market have been used in many wars and armed conflicts. The EU is the second largest exporter of weapons in the world. In 2017 the EU 28 countries had a share of 24% of total weapon exports. In order to prevent conflict and to strengthen international security the EU set up already in 1998 a Code of Conduct on arms exports. However, in their practices of issuing export licenses to arms exporting companies EU member states frequently violate these rules. **Justice and Peace Europe** expects members of the next European Parliament to fully support the Common Position of the EU on arms exports, and to actively promote an effective system of sanctions in case member states violate the rules.

4. Respect for human rights because some European companies - and especially very big ones based within the territory of the single market - operate all over the world in ways and manners that may constitute human rights violations

Multinational companies in the EU need to become more attentive to the respect for human rights in all their activities. **Justice and Peace Europe** asks the next European Parliament to continue to promote an active engagement of the European Union with the United Nations for the elaboration of an international legally binding instrument to regulate the activities of multinationals in view of the respect for human rights.