

## **2013 - European Year of Citizens**

### **The current crisis - an opportunity to increase in wisdom\***

First of all, we would like to thank His Excellency, José Manuel Barroso, for the invitation to take part in the annual meeting of the European religious leaders with high representatives of the European institutions. The topic debated this year - a year that celebrates 20 years since the concept of *European citizenship* was introduced, in the Maastricht Treaty, in 1992 - is of outmost importance nowadays, as the multiple crises affecting Europe reduce citizens' trust in the United Europe project.

#### **Prosperity is under a question mark**

The European Union is a unique, ongoing experiment, based on a synthesis of values: freedom, rule of law, democracy, human rights, solidarity, among others. The initial European ideal or the initial European project was upheld by two main reasons, by two wings that allowed it to rise very high. These two reasons were *peace* and *solidarity* among European countries. The engine that gave impetus to the European project was the *material prosperity*, based on a sustained economic growth. However, the recent years have shown that Europe's prosperity grows dimmer because of several crises: the economic and financial crisis, the social crisis and the credibility crisis of institutions. At any rate, when the motivation of immediate material prosperity weakens, a sound spiritual or moral motivation is needed to promote fairness and equity, to stop corruption, fraud and tax evasion in the society.

#### **The current crisis - a call for wisdom and solidarity**

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\* Address of His Beatitude Patriarch Daniel, Patriarch of the Romanian Orthodox Church, on the occasion of the *Annual meeting of European religious leaders with high representatives of the European institutions*, Brussels, May 30, 2013.

The current economic crisis asks member states and all European citizens to spend money moderately and vigilantly, and calls the European Union to *advance on the path of wisdom and solidarity*, that is to give an answer to the new problems that emerged as *major tensions between the economic crisis and the political credibility, between the policy of austerity and the need for economic growth, between personal freedom and social solidarity, between national identity and global unity, between tradition and secularization, between the family crisis and the decline in birth rate, between the spiritual crisis and the degradation of social life*. Faced with these tensions, that often generate confusion and uncertainty among European citizens, *in order to support the European project* we should promote with increased intensity *the shared responsibility and the cooperation between EU member states, while strengthening the dialogue between the Union and the European citizens that are insufficiently informed or insufficiently motivated*. On the other hand, the European Union is not appreciated when giving recommendations that have a negative impact on the traditional cultural and religious identity of the European citizens or when it does not succeed in boosting European citizens' trust in the programs EU develops.

That is why we believe it is necessary that *the citizens be more actively involved in EU initiatives*. In this respect, the Romanian Patriarchate actively supports a European citizens initiative (a tool introduced by the Treaty of Lisbon, namely article 11 (4) of the Treaty of the European Union), named „One of us” that aims at *increasing the level of legal protection of human dignity, of the right to life and of the integrity of each human being from the moment of conception*.

**Romania is the EU member state with the largest number of Christian Orthodox believers, and the Romanian Orthodox Church fosters European cooperation and solidarity.**

In the context of the current crisis, Churches in Europe already contribute to the development of social solidarity, especially in countries that are strongly affected by the crisis, such as Greece or Cyprus. In Romania, the Church develops European financed projects in the field of **social inclusion, of children's and young people's education**, of

religious, civil and **historical monuments' restoration**, and even in the field of **agriculture**. A cooperation protocol has been recently signed between the Romanian Patriarchate and the Romanian Ministry for Agriculture and Rural Development, aimed at fostering the use of European funds for agricultural development through various programmes. We hope that the EU will consider the necessity for these funds for agricultural development in Romania to be increased in the near future.

### **A major community project asks for strong beliefs**

*As a conclusion, the current crisis calls on all EU member states and on all European citizens to share more responsibilities, to cooperate more and to increase solidarity. In fact, this is a call for more unity.* Religious leaders in Europe can also contribute to overcoming the current crisis by calling for shared responsibility and solidarity, by praying and by taking action, by nurturing the hope and trust in the common effort meant to change the current situation for better.

However, in a rapidly globalizing world, when everything in society changes too rapidly from a technical, economical and political point of view, many people see religion as a major reference point for the continuation and the preservation of spiritual and cultural, ethnical or national identity. Europe's spiritual and cultural diversity represents its very wealth that has to be preserved, even though such wealth cannot be measured in economic or financial terms. In this respect, the dialogue between the European Union and the Churches, the religious and philosophical communities is, at the same time, a democratic act, a proof of respect for the European citizens, for their faith and culture, irrespective of the level of their material prosperity.

Thank you for your attention!

† DANIEL

Patriarch of the Romanian Orthodox Church