



Herausgegeben  
von der Pressestelle  
der Evangelischen  
Kirche in Deutschland (EKD)  
Herrenhäuser Str. 12  
30419 Hannover  
Tel.: (0511) 2796-264/268  
Fax: (0511) 2796-777

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## ***original text***

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### **Statement by the Council of the EKD on the situation of Europe**

#### ***The Earth is the Lord's (Psalm 24)***

When Europe came together, having overcoming historical hostilities after 1945, the states involved experienced an unprecedented phase of peace and friendship, economic strength and stability, and a build-up of democratic structures based on the rule of law. Now, twenty-five years after the overcoming of dictatorship and division in Europe, the European Union is standing at the crossroads.

The free, social, economic and moral achievements of Europe as a peace project are under threat from populists and extremists, and also from dwindling support in the member states. Likewise, the growth of social inequalities, youth unemployment and the growing gap between rich and poor are spawning disillusion and putting cohesion in Europe at risk.

In this situation, the Evangelical Church in Germany (EKD) speaks out for a stronger, more outward-looking Europe, capable of showing solidarity. Europe must remain clearly recognisable as a community of values; it must sharpen its social profile and give young people better prospects for their future.

In the Preamble to the Treaty on European Union the states confirm their attachment to the "principles of liberty, democracy and respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms and of the rule of law", which have developed "from the cultural, religious and humanist inheritance of Europe". The states express their desire to "deepen the solidarity between their peoples while respecting their history, their culture and their traditions". These values are rooted in the tradition of Christian faith. Only together, in a globalised world, will the EU member states have a future in which these achievements can be preserved. Europe is our common future.

The EKD has confidence in Europe's cultural, ethical and social resources, and in its economic strength. It is in keeping with the European and Christian spirit to be self-assured in opening up across borders. We in the EKD therefore subscribe to a Europe of reconciled diversity that confronts its worldwide responsibility.

Solidarity with refugees is one consequence of Christian faith committed to working towards a just and compassionate society. The EKD calls on the EU member states to press for establishing a common European asylum system with uniformly high standards of protection. That includes a method of distributing refugees that

considers the interests of asylum seekers. The European response to the refugee question must not be reduced to deterrence and minimum standards.

The agreement concluded between the EU and Turkey must not lead to an outsourcing of the EU's own responsibility. Those seeking protection must be able to have their grounds for asylum examined in an EU member state. The EKD rejects the plan to refer them to third states if human rights standards are not guaranteed there.

The ongoing suffering and thousand-fold deaths of refugees on the way to Europe makes it clear: We need safe, legal pathways for refugees and migrant to access the European Union. It does immeasurable harm to the soul of Europe to ward off victims of violence and terror by fire-arms at border fences, or let people drown in the Mediterranean.

In the last few decades, the churches have made an important contribution to peace and justice. The EKD Council is convinced that all religions are called and duty-bound to strive for a situation in which people can live together in peace and with justice. The Evangelical Church in Germany urges its sister churches in Europe, and all those who have Europe's achievements at heart, to stand up against the erosion of trust in the European idea and to advocate for common solutions to current challenges. In order to regain trust in the European idea, the EKD calls for a courageous debate about the future of Europe. Europe needs convinced Europeans!

Brussels, 23. April 2016