



**World Council
of Churches**



conference of european churches

An open letter to the European Union

Greece: a challenge for the EU as peace builder

On December 10 the European Union (EU) will be awarded the Nobel Peace Prize. As this award is bestowed upon the generation who built a sustainable peace within Europe, the economic and emerging humanitarian tragedy today in Greece challenges the EU as a peace builder for the next generation.

While the peace award says much about what Europe has become, the response toward Greece will say what Europe will be in the future. Throughout Europe youth unemployment is increasing rapidly with unprecedented rates in Greece and other countries where more than 50% of youth are unemployed with little hope for their future.

Being in Athens today where we met with the Greek government and church leaders, we, the general secretaries of the World Council of Churches (WCC) and Conference of European Churches (CEC), appeal to the EU to solve the financial crisis in such a way that it gives urgent and proper attention to the emerging humanitarian crisis in Greece. This will be a challenge for the EU as peace builder.

In Greece, basic human services such as health care and even the availability of medicines are at severe risk. Jobs are increasingly scarce and needed for any development. Greece carries an increasing burden of being the gateway to Europe for many migrants from Africa, the Middle East and Asia.

The people of Greece cannot be isolated. It is time for values of understanding and solidarity rather than division and blame. This is an opportunity for the EU to remain true to its founding principles through acts of social and economic justice required for a sustainable peace, so important for Europe and the entire world.

Throughout Europe the people of Greece are being blamed for this crisis. The responsibility for this situation rests with Greece and the EU and both the lenders and the borrowers. We appeal to the EU that it addresses this not just as a Greek crisis but as a European crisis. Each has responsibility for the role they have played and for the response they give.

European history teaches us that financial crises always have a humanitarian and social dimension which can lead to a political crisis. Together with the Church of Greece we also take seriously the political and societal implications of growing racism and extremism in Greece. These are storm clouds on the horizon that cannot be ignored or wished away.

The WCC and CEC stand with the EU and the people of Greece so together they are able to address this crisis at all levels: financial, humanitarian, moral, political and spiritual.

"Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called the children of God." (Matt. 5:9)

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