

# HEALING PATIENT EUROPE

## Final Statement

*While possessed of increased resources, [Europe] gives the impression of lacking the energy needed to sustain a common project and to give its citizens new reasons for hope*

Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation  
*Ecclesia In Europa* of His Holiness Pope John Paul II, 28 June 2003

*The basic question [for Europe] is: Who is man? And with it also the question if there is a Creator or if we are all only products of [one's own] making. The following alternative arises: man is either created by God in His image and likeness, and is a gift of God, or he is a 'product' created by himself. When we renounce the idea of Creation, we renounce the greatness of man; we renounce his unavailability and his dignity, which is above all planning.*

Pope Benedict XVI, Introduction, *La vera Europa. Identità e missione*, Siena 2021

*Europe, find yourself! Rediscover your most deeply-rooted ideals. Be yourself! Do not be afraid of your millenary history, which is a window open to the future more than the past.*

Letter of His Holiness Pope Francis on Europe, 22 October 2020

### **I. EUROPE IS FACING A SYNDemic HEALTH, ECONOMIC, ENVIRONMENTAL, POLITICAL AND SPIRITUAL CRISIS**

**Pandemic is a symptom of a syndemic:** an interconnected crisis of public health, inequalities, environmental degradation, loss of legitimacy of the political institutions, **rooted in a profound moral and spiritual crisis.** “Globalization, financialization of the economy, new technologies, multiculturalism, heightened social inequalities, conflicts of identity; environmental issues. Faced with these new challenges, merely updating old ways of thinking or resorting to collective forms of decision making, however refined they may be, will simply not fit the bill. We need to be more daring, to come up with more innovative solutions.” (S. Zamagni)

While many political and economic leaders might feel complacent and want to believe that the crisis has come to an end, **neither the pandemic nor the crisis of trust in the European institutions are over.** Political leaders construct their responses to these crises with an eye on the next election rather than tackling the problems facing future generations. We stand in need of overcoming short-termism. (S. Zamagni)

Sacrifice of the lives of the most vulnerable in the name of false interest of “the economy” still poses a threat of a **“viral genocide”** (Pope Francis). Denial of access to public health and vaccines to less wealthy nations in the name of sacralised property rights is allowing for proliferation of new variants of the virus. There is a lack of provision of care, financial support and labour opportunities to Europeans struggling with the crisis and transition. Migrants are abandoned and the causes of migration are not addressed: climate breakdown, wars, global inequalities. All these

are expressions not only of short-termism but also of false “**economism**” (John Paul II).<sup>1</sup> Such a **reductionist materialistic economism** by putting profits over human life **denies** both the **ethics of the Gospel** and the positivist legacy of Louis Pasteur. Sacrificing human lives on the altar of idolised “economy” is a practical denial of the dignity of a human being as a child of God and a person endowed with inalienable dignity. As Pope Benedict stated in his new book on Europe **the idea of Europe is in the figure of Christ and is a foundation of true humanism. If God has become man, the man acquires entirely new dignity. It is this dignity that is in the centre of Europe.** If human being is only a product of random evolution, then his very humanity is an accident. And so at some point it will be possible to sacrifice men and women for other apparently higher purposes and make him an instrument of other men. (Msgr. Sánchez Sorondo)

This practical denial of human dignity, sacrifice of man in the supposed good of “the economy” corrodes the fabric of ethics, politics and eventually corrodes even the foundations of the very democracy and economic life it was supposed to safeguard.<sup>2</sup> What we let the virus do is a choice. Not solving a crisis is a choice. The response to a pandemic creates norms for the social world, and teaches us responses to other crises. **Without** rebuilding the social and relational **capital of trust, Europe can neither win with the virus nor win social support for transition to a greener economy.** While the Next Generation EU is a step in the right direction as it refers to operationalised goals in terms of quality of life, environment etc., it is not enough if we are to overcome the feeling of political, economic and spiritual alienation<sup>3</sup> of European societies.

At the root of our uncertainties and insufficiencies there is an anthropological bias: we think of man as a fundamentally selfish being who cares just for the maximization of individual gains and advantages. **We need to recover the idea of man as a communitarian being who cannot define his individual good without including in it the good of others** in a system of concentric circles including first his family and then his neighborhood, his fellow citizens, his Nation, Europe and in the last instance the whole of Mankind. (R. Buttiglione)

## **II. WE NEED A COPERNICAN REVOLUTION PUTTING DIGNITY AND HUMAN LIFE AT THE CENTRE OF ECONOMICS, POLITICS AND CULTURE INSTEAD OF PROFIT**

**These crises are** difficult but **solvable. Political leaders** of the EU institutions and nation states have to **take responsibility** for solving them. We need crisis avoidance, not crisis management. We need “a Copernican Revolution in economics: the economy needs to serve people, not people to serve the economy” (Msgr. Gallagher).

**Europe needs to say “I can do it”.** (Msgr. Sánchez Sorondo) Europe has the economic, political and spiritual resources to effectively eliminate the virus. Europe can provide for the needs of all its citizens in the form of direct additional income, care and decent work. Europe can become a world leader in ambitious and transformative policies fighting climate change while

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<sup>1</sup> John Paul II, *Laborem exercens*, paragraph 7: *A Threat to the Right Order of Values*.

<sup>2</sup> In contrast, as research now shows, the countries that have put the lives of their citizens in the centre of their policies are now better off not only in terms of human costs, but also in terms of civil liberties, and even the GDP rates. M. Oliu-Barton, B. S R Pradelski, Ph. Aghion, P. Artus, I. Kickbusch, J. V Lazarus, D. Sridhar, S. Vanderslott, *SARS-CoV-2 elimination, not mitigation, creates best outcomes for health, the economy, and civil liberties*, The Lancet 2021, [https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736\(21\)00978-8/fulltext?fbclid=IwAR0U-WQLzyjt4YxtPP-pYEbnvGoj4Dth8nLqU0mTsF73DGryIOBpCc0SJc#.YIp9xjyvIRc.twitter](https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736(21)00978-8/fulltext?fbclid=IwAR0U-WQLzyjt4YxtPP-pYEbnvGoj4Dth8nLqU0mTsF73DGryIOBpCc0SJc#.YIp9xjyvIRc.twitter)

<sup>3</sup> See: John Paul II, *Laborem exercens*.

simultaneously changing the existing concentration of power and wealth in favour of workers and lower income citizens. Europe can rebuild a common narrative rooted in shared values recognising the dignity of every human life.

Europe needs to restore the confidence of the people in the authority of truth. This has been shaken and many people do not believe in their political leaderships or even to the word of scientists when they demand the observance of the social discipline needed to enforce profilaxis measures. It is easy to condemn these outpours of irrationalism, of fanatical denial of evidence, of uncontrolled passions. We should however be conscious of the fact that the real reason is that many people feel, alienated, defenceless, abandoned to fend for themselves not just in front of the pandemic but more in general in front of social and economic changes that threaten their living conditions and the environment in which they used to feel at home. Many turn against the EU and demagogues can easily instrumentalise their uneasiness and their despair.

They are wrong. But not completely. They are not wrong when they accuse the Union of not delivering on the political goods it has promised and whose offering is the real reason for its existence. The European Project can recover their confidence if the European leaders will make it clear that no man in the Union can be treated just as an object of administration or as an instrument to acquire power or make money. **Only if we put the human person in the centre of our endeavours Europe will recover its credibility and its soul.** (R. Buttiglione)

This has to be translated into concrete decisions and policies:

1. **We cannot rely solely on vaccines in the hope that this technical measure will spare us the effort to deal with the root causes of the present crisis and to restructure our economies and politics.** Thus, the EU **has to implement COVID elimination strategies** based on a broad set of preventative measures throughout society as proposed by experts, **to make Europe and the World COVID free. No one is safe until all are safe.** (R. Buttiglione).
2. An **Intergovernmental Panel on COVID and on the prevention of new pandemics** has to be created as there is an Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change.
3. The EU has to effectively support global vaccine equity, including the European Commission **supporting lifting the patents on the COVID-19 vaccines** via the WTO TRIPS, if it is to survive as human-rights based soft power.
4. **Long COVID, with 143 mln victims worldwide**, has to be recognised as a threat to Europe's resilience, economy and wellbeing of its citizens.
5. Due to the disastrous effects which approaches based on "living with COVID" have on public health, economy and public trust – a virus elimination strategy needs to be implemented with a **supplementary temporary income** to get populations on-board in implementing elimination strategies.<sup>4</sup>
6. Just as the pandemic cannot be fought if citizens and communities are not empowered, the **EU has to take strong action in social policies if the Green Deal is to win social legitimacy and be implemented in accordance with the principle of social justice.**
7. **The European Green Deal has to be ambitious and transformative in both environmental and socio-economic terms.** It is necessary to stop all new fossil fuel

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<sup>4</sup> Compare: Proposal for Zero-COVID Instrument <https://europe-patient.web.app/zero-covid-instrument-proposal>

infrastructure, especially national projects that are in direct contravention to the EU Green Deal and the Paris Agreement, and to update near term national targets on climate action to reflect their fair national share in the effort to limit global warming to 1.5 degree Celsius. Simultaneously, without a fully funded Just Transition, the European Green Deal will be stopped on the level of implementation in member states by widespread popular discontent. **Full funding of Just Transition means that the poorer member states and poorer social strata should not bear the burden of the cost of green transition. Thus, citizens of lower income have to be supported in the face of the rising energy prices and the financial basis of Just Transition Fund has to be seriously widened.**

8. The EU needs to ensure that **the position of workers and their communities is strengthened as the result of the Just Transition process.** Thus, wealth creation has to be redirected and the relation between labour and capital restructured.
9. A more **fraternal economy that works for people and places** has to be promoted by diverse measures. This should include: public procurements safeguarding workers' rights and interests of the local communities, supplementing the EU Environmental Taxonomy with a **Social Taxonomy**, institutionally supporting local and cooperative enterprises, funding **job guarantee** and **community wealth building** schemes which by realising communities environmental and social needs simultaneously provide locally available decent jobs.
10. Hardwiring workers participation and **co-determination in the European Green Deal**, is essential. **It is urgent that the democratic principle be extended to the economic sphere too.** Democracy limited to the sphere of political relations is destined not to last very long. In view of this the plurality of corporate structures (capitalist, cooperative, social)<sup>5</sup> and of the banking-financial system (where ethical finance can be found alongside of speculative finance), the variety of property rights, these are all examples of areas of intervention that need to be regulated if Europe wants to make democracy strong and sustainable. (S. Zamagni)
11. **We need the Union to have an active role in social policies. Not only harmonizing state legislations but also complementing them.** (R. Buttiglione) To realise these goals and to rebuild social trust and cohesion a **Social Union** has to supplement the existing monetary union.
12. To avoid overdependence on financial markets and to strengthen the positions of workers, small business and consumers by balancing the excessive power of the financial sector and

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<sup>5</sup> As Pope Paul John II inspired by the experience of the "Solidarity" movement wroteL "From this point of view the position of "rigid" capitalism continues to remain unacceptable, namely the position that defends the exclusive right to private ownership of the means of production as an untouchable "dogma" of economic life. The principle of respect for work demands that this right should undergo a constructive revision, both in theory and in practice.the many proposals put forward by experts in Catholic social teaching and by the highest Magisterium of the Church take on special significance *proposals for joint ownership of the means of work*, sharing by the workers in the management and/or profits of businesses, so-called shareholding by labour, etc. (...) This group in authority may carry out its task satisfactorily from the point of view of the priority of labour; but it may also carry it out badly by claiming for itself *a monopoly of the administration and disposal* of the means of production and not refraining even from offending basic human rights. Thus, merely converting the means of production into State property in the collectivist system is by no means equivalent to "socializing" that property. We can speak of socializing only when the subject character of society is ensured, that is to say, when on the basis of his work each person is fully entitled to consider himself a part-owner of the great workbench at which he is working with everyone else. A way towards that goal could be found by associating labour with the ownership of capital, as far as possible, and by producing a wide range of intermediate bodies with economic, social and cultural purposes; they would be bodies enjoying real autonomy with regard to the public powers, pursuing their specific aims in honest collaboration with each other and in subordination to the demands of the common good, and they would be living communities both in form and in substance, in the sense that the members of each body would be looked upon and treated as persons and encouraged to take an active part in the life of the body," *Laborem exercens*, paragraph 14: *Work and ownership*.

technological monopolies – a **sound fiscal basis** for these new expenses has to be established. This should take the form of **European common tax policies: carbon, wealth and digital taxes, common minimum corporate tax rate and abolition of tax havens.**

13. To answer the public health, environmental and political legitimacy crisis Europe is facing, the institutional architecture of the Union has to be revisited. As the **European Treatises** were not designed to provide resilience in the face of shocks they need to be restructured and if necessary **revised** to allow for effective responses and lay foundations for a new social contract between citizens and their institutions.
14. The model of representative democracy – whose historical pedigree is beyond question – is no longer able to sustain political institutions in such a way as to guarantee an equitable distribution of the fruits of development and offer people more room for positive liberty (S. Zamagni). As real empowerment of **communities** is essential if we are to fight the pandemic and other crises, and as markets and states cannot be the only actors impacting the shape the EU will take – thus a **binding** and not merely consultatory **voice** of civil society groups, faith organisations, trade unions, patients associations and other communities has to be **institutionally hardwired** in the **decision making** process of the UE reform, including the upcoming Conference on the Future of Europe.

Finally, if the relational capital of social trust is to be generated, and real healing brought about Europe has to be based not only on economic interests but on **recognition of common traditions** enabling the creation of a shared identity. Social and environmental sustainability will not become possible without a “spiritual sustainability” (L. Bruni) and Europe’s “New Renaissance” (R. Pozzo) has to also be a spiritual renaissance, revival of its humanist and Christian roots, faith and reason. A more fraternal polity will become possible if it is rooted in a **common narrative and shared values**, which will make the European institutions closer to the life of **persons, families, communities and nations**. Inalienable **dignity of every human life** – especially the dignity of the most vulnerable, and lives of those on the margins whose humanity is often questioned and denied – recognition of which stems from the diverse but complementary sources of **Greek and Roman humanism, Judeo-Christianity and the inheritance of the Enlightenment, purified of the egocentrism of the self-made man** – has to be **practically recognised by contemporary Europe, if it is to survive as a political project and live up to its high calling.**