

The European Context of Jesuit Mission



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Table of Contents

The European Context of Jesuit Mission – Summary	3
The social, economic & environmental context	3
The political context	3
The cultural context	3
The religious and ecclesial context	4
1 Introduction	5
2 The Social, Economic and Environmental Context	6
2.2 Poverty and Social Exclusion	6
2.3 The international economic and financial crisis	7
2.4 Environment and Climate Change	9
2.5 Demography	10
2.6 Migration & Refugees	10
Challenges and Opportunities for the Society of Jesus	11
3 The Political Context	12
3.1 The growth and development of the EU	12
3.2 Security and Defence	13
3.3 Other issues	14
Challenges and Opportunities for the Society of Jesus	14
4 The Cultural Context	15
4.1 Secularisation and its limits	15
4.2 Ethics & Values	16
4.3 Education	17
4.4 Information and Communications Technology (ICT)	18
4.5 Gender	19
4.6 Marriage & Family	19
Challenges and Opportunities for the Society of Jesus	20
5 The Religious and Ecclesial Context	21
5.1 Marginalisation - and renewed vitality - of the churches	21
5.2 Ecumenism	22
5.3 Interfaith relations and dialogue	22
Challenges and Opportunities for the Society of Jesus	23

The European Context of Jesuit Mission – Summary

The paper contains an introduction and four sections. Each focuses on a few features of the situation of Europe, internally and in the global context, which seem to OCIPE to be important for the Society of Jesus's mission. It is not OCIPE's task to propose apostolic initiatives. However each section ends with suggestions as to the relevance for the Society of the preceding discussion.

Our sacramental ministries, and our pastoral attentiveness to people's spiritual lives and to their hopes and struggles, are not discussed but are everywhere presumed. This pastoral care is itself shaped by our understanding of persons' social and cultural environment.

The social, economic & environmental context

Globalisation is an irreversible process driven by industrial and technical development, by the speed and power of modern communications, and by competing political and commercial ambitions. It has not so far led to any simple hegemony (whether cultural, economic or military) since even the threat of global dominance by a country or a bloc provokes resistance. Supranational systems, such as the United Nations and the World Trade Organisation, have some capacity to regulate global competition and conflict, though this capacity is not adequate to the challenges they face. Many dramas and conflicts of our time seem to emerge from this dialectic between dynamic expansion and the search for its adequate regulation. Globalising forces have enabled several countries to emerge from poverty. Other countries have manifestly suffered from the impact of globalisation, relatively independently of whatever may be their own failings.

The economic and financial crisis has caused severe and widespread hardship and has interrupted or reversed several decades of economic growth: whether growth that is urgently necessary to lift people from imposed poverty, or growth that has reinforced global inequalities. Praiseworthy political initiatives to reduce poverty and social exclusion, including in Europe, have proved difficult to implement, partly because the crisis itself loads a heavy burden on governments and on public finances. In this way, the crisis poses fundamental questions to economic and financial structures taken for granted across the Western world.

Simultaneously, the world faces grave environmental threats, including that to the most basic common goods of the earth such as water, and that of climate change. These two critical situations, economic and environmental, must be faced together: but the policies necessary to respond to each seem to diverge.

Even faced with the difficulties posed by an ageing population, the European Union (henceforth, EU) has not fundamentally brought into question its restrictive policies on refugees in particular or on migration in general, policies marked by the dominance of pragmatic self-interest.

The political context

The continuous growth of the EU and its accompanying institutional development, by accepting the membership of a series of states who positively chose to enter it, has been a remarkable achievement. The process of expansion has not yet overcome a quite sharp division between well-established Western states and newer member states, especially those previously within the Soviet Union's sphere of influence. Likewise, the expansion has been marked by an enduring tension between those who promote and those who resist closer political integration of the member states. The recent crises in some Euro-based economies has shown that a monetary union requires a greater capacity than now exists to coordinate economic policy: but the 'sense of Europe' is currently, and in OCIPE's view regrettably, too fragile to legitimate fuller harmonisation.

The resulting lack of coherence is one reason why global leadership seems to be passing from Europe to other centres of power. The disabling tension between national and the transnational systems inhibits the development of consistent policies towards the EU's neighbouring states, towards its own security capacity, and towards support for international development.

The cultural context

The Church's mission is carried out in a 'secularised' environment. This general term obscures key distinctions between '*secularity*' (the recognition that public and political life rightly have their own logic and autonomy, beyond religious control) and '*secularism*' (the ideology that strives to exclude religious expression and witness from

politics, or even from the entire public realm). The absolute claims of this 'secularist' position have in turn provoked a backlash, often labelled 'post-secularism'. All three tendencies are uneasily juxtaposed in Europe, and explicitly in the life of the EU.

Through the Treaty of Lisbon, for example, the Church is assured a legal right to an 'open, transparent and regular' dialogue with the EU institutions. Nevertheless the Church's interventions in public life often meet strong resistance. Similarly the Church's ethical teaching enjoys no presumption of validity in the broader culture, especially when it demands recognition of its teaching in law: i.e. issues such as abortion, or what it is to be a human person, or teachings regarding marriage and the family. Substantive religious and ethical beliefs tend to be subordinated to a procedural ideal of 'non-discrimination'. Whatever the merits of this ideal, crucial ethical debates are politically sidelined.

The prevailing pluralist ethos both reflects and shapes systems of cultural and ethical formation: that is, of formal and informal education, through which the Church retains significant societal influence in some countries. Conscious and unconscious modes of cultural formation are also being transformed by the ongoing revolution in information and communication technology.

The religious and ecclesial context

European countries differ widely in their perception of the cultural centrality of religion. A vague agnosticism is more common in Europe than convinced atheism. Yet agnosticism, no less than formal atheism, erodes any consensus that religious belief has continued societal relevance. Therefore, despite many encouraging elements of ecclesial renewal, notably through the growth

of new ecclesial lay movements, the churches in Europe experience institutional and numerical decline, with little prospect that this trend will soon be reversed. In certain crucial ethical areas, above all abortion, the evolution of the prevailing ethos has rendered the Church increasingly counter-cultural.

This sense of the Church's decline is reinforced through our painful awareness of such crises as that of clerical child abuse, the related symptomatic failures of ecclesiastical authorities, and the ensuing public condemnation.

The ecumenical movement flourishes, though with little felt progress in overcoming the manifest and enduring obstacles to unity. The Catholic Church experiences some difficulties that flow from its concern to dialogue with Orthodox and the Protestant traditions simultaneously.

The rise to prominence of a politically assertive Islam has highlighted the need to strengthen our commitment to inter-religious encounter and dialogue. In Europe, such dialogue will need in future also to engage with non-confessional and humanist movements.

NB. Footnotes are used throughout the text to provide references and key quotations as well as to offer certain relatively detailed or technical observations.

1 Introduction

The document that follows was commissioned by the President of the Conference of European Jesuit Provincials (CEP). The Society of Jesus has a universal mission: the CEP naturally approaches this universality from the perspective of Europe, a unity in diversity (GC35, Decree 5, §18a). The CEP's task requires a sufficiently accurate and comprehensive sense of the situation of Europe today, both internally and in its relationship to the rest of the world.

In December 1997, a task force appointed by the CEP issued a report entitled *The Mission of the Society in Europe*. It was divided into two parts: 'The Developing Context' and 'The Developing Solutions'. That second part offered nine 'orientations' for the Society's mission in Europe. It is *not* now OCIFE's mandated task to offer such orientations. However our description of the context will highlight certain major challenges and opportunities. These are expressed in very general terms, though, where possible, specifically related to Europe.

Although much has changed in Europe since 1997, we do not discuss changes as such, but describe elements of the *actual* situation of Europe which seem most significant for Europe itself and for the Society's mission. We do this in the light of OCIFE's own core vision, to 'sustain critical reflection from the perspective of Christian faith on European values and responsibilities, and in promoting Europe's solidarity internally and with

the wider world'. At many points, we focus on the EU. In our view, the EU enables its member states to transcend their national identity and interests by exercising political authority together with other states; and by establishing economic arrangements that embody a transnational care for the weaker. The remarkable aspiration is to construct *by consent* a new kind of political entity adequate to the intrinsically transnational dynamics of the modern world. Like all human projects, the EU constantly falls short of its aims. But since it is a project of such significance the Church, and the Society of Jesus in Europe, need to discern its key dynamics, both to witness to the good and to identify that which undermines the good.

Naturally the EU is not the whole of Europe: indeed the very notion of 'Europe' is not simple, since certain member states of the Council of Europe – such as Russia and Turkey – are in part Asian. Engagement with Europe – including that engagement that is Jesuit mission – therefore implies participation in an inter-cultural encounter between 'western' and 'eastern' modes of thinking, acting and evaluating.

We also believe that the EU and its political order cannot genuinely flourish without that commitment to the common good (a good that transcends Europe) that the Church is called to nurture.

2 The Social, Economic and Environmental Context

Key Trends

2.1 Globalisation

Waves of globalisation have recurred for centuries, such as the great age of exploration in the 16th century, supported by the military dominance of European empires; and the period following the industrial revolution of the 19th century. During both those epochs Europe dominated the globe, for better and for worse. In recent decades globalisation has taken the form of the vastly enhanced mobility of persons and of production, as well as the 'third industrial revolution' of information and communications technology (henceforth, ICT). The explosion of world-wide interdependence has inescapably brought diverse cultures and religions to confront each other. The phenomenon offers opportunities for the 'globalisation of solidarity' but risks the creation of unprecedented global divisions and inequalities.

The globalisation of *economic* power accelerates. It has not led, as some forecast, to the global hegemony of the USA, because of the rapid rise of a countervailing force, the 'BRICS' countries (Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa), so that the 'G7' bloc of the world's major economies has given way to the 'G20'. Throughout the 1990s, for example, the Russian economy struggled from the collapse of the centralised Soviet system and the cheap sale of state assets to a tiny oligarchy. Even though its politics remains oligarchic, Russia has rebuilt its global influence, sometimes using its economic strength directly for political leverage over other post-Soviet republics and beyond, as in the case of energy. Meanwhile, India has become a world leader in ICT, and China's economic growth – built on a unique combination of low wages, advanced technology and state

control of the economy – has turned it into an economic giant to which even the USA is heavily indebted.

The fall of the Soviet Union signalled the collapse of the main alternative to the 'free market', the 'command economy', in which prices, wages and acceptable profits were fixed by central administrative decision. The apparent triumph of the free market, though, brings its own dangers.¹

The dynamism and rapid economic growth of these major developing countries is helping shape a multipolar global system. Other countries, particularly in sub-Saharan Africa, have not shared in this dynamism or this access to markets, and have been even left further behind. In the words of GC35, 'from the perspective of those living at the margins, globalisation appears to be a massive force that excludes and exploits the weak and poor, which intensifies exclusion on the basis of religion, race, caste, and gender'.²

Globalisation has a double character. It is an impersonal, perhaps irreversible, trend: but it is also *willed* – impelled by specific governmental and corporate decisions. Participation in the global economy has enabled several countries to emerge from poverty, and opting for isolation offers no such hope. Yet globalisation also has a ruthless aspect, since national and international systems of economic governance often seem so weak in the face of corporate power.³

2.2 Poverty and Social Exclusion

People experiencing poverty have been at the centre of the Church's consciousness, and that of the Society of Jesus, for decades.⁴ Freely chosen poverty – a simple, modest way of life, liber-

¹ See Centesimus Annus (1991), §. 35: 'It is unacceptable to say that the defeat of so-called "Real Socialism" leaves capitalism as the only model of economic organisation.' Pope John Paul II goes on in §. 42 to reject 'capitalism' – where that term is understood as 'a system in which freedom in the economic sector is not circumscribed within a strong juridical framework which places it at the service of human freedom in its totality'.

² GC 35, Decree 3, 'Challenges to our Mission Today' (2009), §. 25.

³ To offer one illustration, through the phenomenon of 'resource curse', developing countries rich in natural resources enjoy few of their profits but suffer their costs: human rights abuses, gross pollution, armed struggle, corruption. Even faced with such grave evils, and the clear evidence that transnational corporations are implicated, international codes of 'corporate social responsibility' remain voluntary, therefore unenforceable.

⁴ E.g. Second Vatican Council, *Gaudium et Spes* (1965), §. 1, the documents of Medellín and Puebla with their notion of the 'Option for the Poor', and of successive General Congregations of the Society. N.B. In this document the phrase 'the Church' will normally refer to the Roman Catholic Church: when referring to the entire body of Christians we speak of 'the churches'.

ated from the compulsive struggle for monetary gain – is an evangelical virtue, and Jesuits profess it. That virtue is also intended to draw us into solidarity with those who suffer *imposed* poverty. The deprivation that seems almost normal in the world's poorest countries, the relationship between rich and poor countries even within Europe, and the increasing gap between the wealthy and the poor in almost every country, remain a scandal and a reproach. At worst, poverty brings with it – not least in Europe – atrocious forms of injustice and exploitation, including even modern forms of slavery, such as the trafficking of women.

In the EU, as at 2008, 84 million people, or 17%, were considered to be 'at risk of poverty' or actually living in poverty, taking the threshold of such risk as 60% of any given country's median income. There are stark differences also *between* member states: in two of the poorest, Bulgaria and Romania, poverty has increased since their 2007 entry into the EU. Beyond the EU, in such countries as Moldova, Albania, and Belarus, one may speak of absolute rather than relative poverty (teachers may earn just the equivalent of \$40 per month) and a subsistence economy.⁵

In terms of the EU's commitment to global solidarity, the targets for poverty eradication represented by the Millennium Development Goals, solemnly accepted by the international community, will be missed, in some cases dramatically.⁶ In this instance, there is no *economic* problem, since we could assure sufficient food, water, basic health care for everyone. Instead there is a moral problem, in that our competence is directed to other political, economic and military, goals. Distorted 'development', economic exploitation, climate change, armed conflict, all create new poor.

There are signs of hope. The NGO sector (for example, the global Catholic network *Caritas*)

has raised public consciousness of domestic and international poverty. Many governments are impressively generous when faced with humanitarian emergencies elsewhere. The politics of development aid has been purged of some of its anomalies, such as those 'conditionalities' and 'structural adjustment programmes' administered by the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund in the 1980s and 1990s, which plunged the beneficiary countries even further into poverty. The EU's humanitarian agency, ECHO, with an annual budget of €500 million, is the world's largest aid donor. Internally, the EU manages extensive 'structural funds' to assist the development of its poorest regions.⁷ The EU made 2010 the year of 'combat against poverty and social exclusion', a phrase that draws attention to both economic and social dimensions of poverty.

2.3 The international economic and financial crisis⁸

The 'crisis' consists of three main interrelated elements:

1) the plight of certain banks and financial houses; 2) a more general global economic recession; 3) the danger that certain countries (even within the EU, such as Greece) might default on national debts.

1. In autumn 2008, a slump in the USA housing market triggered the collapse or rescue of major financial and banking corporations. Many of their assets were too late realised to be 'toxic' – that is, they comprised the debts of a multitude of ordinary American families. It was feared that the collapse of such corporations would create chaos in the entire economy. The institutions concerned were 'too large to fail', too deeply embedded in the whole economic life of their countries.

⁵ 'Absolute poverty' refers to the lack of the basic necessities for survival. 'Relative poverty' - which is not 'unreal' - denotes a level below that 'considered as acceptable in the given society' (European Commission, *Joint Report on Social Inclusion, 2004*). The statistical threshold entails a subjective, though collective, judgement.

⁶ See the *United Nations MDG Report, 2008*: <http://www.un.org/millenniumgoals/pdf/The%20Millennium%20Development%20Goals%20Report%202008.pdf>

⁷ Just one of these funds, the European Social Fund, which aims to improve job opportunities in the EU, will disburse €75 billion between 2007 and 2013, 10% of the EU budget.

⁸ This subject has been considered at length, including by Jesuits. For a specialist discussion, see *20 Propositions pour réformer le capitalisme* (Gaël Giraud & Cécile Renouard, Editions Flammarion, Paris, 2009). More general treatments include those of Gerry O'Hanlon, *The Recession and God*, Jesuit Centre for Faith and Justice, Dublin, 2009; the entire edition 'A New Economic Paradigm' of the Irish Jesuit journal *Working Notes* (March 2010), and Frank Turner, 'The Crisis and Poverty', in the *2010 Sozialalmanach* of Caritas Luxembourg (reprinted on OCIFE's website).

2. Virtually every major economy on the planet has experienced either a slowing of growth or an actual fall in GDP. In 2009, GDP fell by 4.2% over the EU as a whole and (in the most dramatic example) by 18% in Latvia. To take one commercial instance, Spanish savings banks have in recent years financed a construction boom. Over five years, about 2.8 million homes were built – but only 1.5 million have been sold.⁹
3. Greece has admitted to a budget deficit of 12.7 % of GDP. Its public debt as a ratio of GDP is 113%.¹⁰ After entering the Eurozone, the Greek government borrowed heavily as public spending soared; public sector wages practically doubled during that time, the cost of retirement provisions soared, etc.¹¹ Even though rescue attempts have been made, it remains unclear to what extent the crisis is one of *liquidity* (so that the debt needs to be restructured) or one of *insolvency* (so that the country cannot pay its debts at all).

These elements are mutually reinforcing. In some countries, such as Hungary, the governmental crisis was caused largely through borrowing heavily on the international markets precisely to rescue the banks. The Hungarian Government paid for this measure by steep cuts in the public sector: in jobs, in public salaries, in pensions. The potentially crippling indebtedness of certain governments, incurred by the bail-outs, will impair their ability to sustain adequate social security systems, health services, etc.¹² In ways such as this, the initial financial crisis could mutate into a comprehensive economic and social crisis. Large-scale unemployment – a grave social evil that readily leads to other evils – is spreading. In Latvia, in the twelve

months from December 2008 to December 2009 it rose from 7% to 22.8%, whilst in the first *quarter* of 2010, wages fell by 8.3%. In May, 2010, the unemployment rate among young adults in Spain rose above 44%.¹³ Such an unemployment rate increases the demand for state benefits precisely when governmental tax revenue falls.

In this way, social protection is threatened even in relatively prosperous countries.¹⁴ The marginalised – individuals and even whole societies – are pushed still further into poverty. Systematic material hardship and vulnerability has been extended far beyond the boundaries of those social groups in Europe who are at risk even in prosperous times.

The EU proclaims an ideal of *solidarity* between states, a social model.¹⁵ Yet the primary competence in social protection belongs to the EU's member states and not to the EU itself. The Greek crisis has revealed the difficulties in sustaining a single currency without the shared economic and political governance which the Euro was intended to promote: in particular, without close fiscal coordination and without reliable mechanisms for crisis management. Every step to respond to the plight of Greece has had to be slowly, laboriously negotiated with every member state.

Taken together the three elements described above constitute a crisis of our overall economic and financial systems, putting into question the systems themselves, our established conceptions of economics and politics, even our ways of life. The crisis has prompted a series of fundamental and fierce debates which may shape our politics for the next few years, concerning:

1. The relation of the financial sector to the 'real economy', and therefore about the nature

⁹ Estimate of Morgan Stanley, reported in the *New York Times*, May 23, 2010 .

¹⁰ The official limits for Eurozone countries under the 'Stability and Growth Pact' are respectively 3% and 60%.

¹¹ According to an OECD Report of May, 2010: In Germany, a typical retired person receives a public pension equivalent to 40.5 per cent of average earnings. In the UK, the figure is 28.9 per cent. In Greece, it is 93.6 per cent. (This comparison, however, is no compliment to the UK, any more than to Greece.)

¹² It was reported in early 2010 that the accident and emergency units of hospitals in Latvia were so starved of public funds that they functioned only every second day. Health service reforms proposed in Poland will privatise hospitals and are almost certain to exclude the poorest from decent health care.

¹³ *Le Monde*, 24 May, 2010.

¹⁴ The case of Hungary suggests that for some European countries, this crisis deepens a longer-term problem. Average wages in real terms are about the same in 2010 as in the 1970s, whereas the profits of multinational companies there have increased by some 20% per annum.

¹⁵ There is no single EU 'social model'. It is common to distinguish four models: the Nordic, the Continental, the Anglo-Saxon and the Mediterranean, characterised by different methods of social provision: taxation, pensions, etc. But this classification applies almost exclusively to the longer-established member states. The EU has power only to propose good practice, through the 'open method of coordination'.

and function of money: not least because the initial collapse was precisely in the previously booming finance sector, where money is itself the 'product';¹⁶

2. The relationship of the market economy to political responsibility. Profits are privatised, in the name of the free market, whereas heavy losses are borne by the public sector in the same of the state's responsibility for the common good;¹⁷
3. The relationship of even the 'real economy' (the world of producers and consumers supposedly determined by economic rationality and the imperative of growth) to broader social and civic purposes;¹⁸
4. The balance between stimulating the economy to recover from recession and controlling spiralling government debt so as to avoid further crises in public finance.

There are no ready solutions for such debates. It is at least crucial in reviewing public policies to be as clear as possible about who gains, who suffers, and who influences the key decisions.

2.4 Environment and Climate Change

The 1997 document for the CEP mentioned neither the environment nor the problem of climate change, a fact which indicates how profound are the changes of the last decade. The issue is not new, whether to scientists or to the Church:¹⁹ what is new is its inescapable prominence. Within the social justice movement in the Church environmental factors have been foregrounded as it was seen that gross pollution, for example, affects mainly the poor who inhabit the most vulnerable locations, so that environmental destruction and social injustice tend to go together.

The corresponding politics – of environmental responsibility in general, and the urgent need to limit climate change in particular – has stimulated a relatively new set of criteria: sustainable growth, protecting biodiversity etc. To mitigate the effects of climate change, and to cope with its impact, will be so expensive as to compound the immediate financial crisis, and will demand such radical change in our collective lifestyles and mentalities as to require a new human vision, in which humanity is seen more modestly in relationship to the whole creation. As was shown in the Copenhagen Summit in December 2009, however, the political community still seems to evade the underlying challenges.

Whether one considers globalisation, the economic and financial crisis, or environmental protection, a disproportionate reliance on 'growth' threatens both solidarity and sustainability.²⁰

The 'common goods' of the earth lie at the heart of some of the most pressing political and economic issues of the day:

1. *Water*: its scarcity underlies many intractable political and even military conflicts; between Israel and Palestine, between the various countries drawing water from the Nile, etc;
2. *Energy politics*: the difficulty (for example) of achieving a common EU position towards Russia because of concern about the EU's dependence on Russia's energy exports;
3. *Disaster management*: the massive environmental and economic devastating caused by the sinking on April 22nd of just one of the hundreds of oil rigs in the Gulf of Mexico, shows how complex are the trade-offs between growth (in this case the need for oil) and other economic and social goods;

¹⁶ In 'derivatives' for example, the 'product' is not, say, oil, but the present and future *price* of oil.

¹⁷ The current crisis has 'shown the error of the assumption that the market is capable of regulating itself, apart from public intervention and the support of internalized moral standards' (Pope Benedict XVI to the Pontifical Academy of Social Sciences, April 30, 2010). In one current case, in April 2010, the USA's Securities and Exchange Commission announced it was suing the leading bank Goldman Sachs, for recommending securities to its clients while *Goldman Sachs itself* was betting on those securities' failure. In July 2010 Goldman Sachs paid \$550 million to settle this SEC claim out of court - though other lawsuits remain outstanding.

¹⁸ According to the economic historian Karl Polanyi, only over the last 200 years have Western societies have been 'economic' in a new and distinctive sense, basing themselves on a motive never before raised to the level of an ultimate justification of everyday behaviour, namely, *financial gain*.

¹⁹ e.g. *Octogesima Adveniens* (1971), §. 21.

²⁰ The 2000 'Lisbon Agenda' aimed to make the EU 'the most dynamic and competitive knowledge-based economy in the world by 2010' - albeit with 'sustainable economic growth', 'social cohesion' and 'respect for the environment'. There was no serious enquiry how far these goals were compatible with each other.

4. *'Biofuels' or 'agrofuels'*: reliance on these especially as a response to the rise of oil prices. Many careful distinctions need to be drawn in this debate: but in a hungry world it is at least problematic to burn food on a massive scale for automotive fuel.²¹

As the environmental crisis continues to challenge us, continuous discernment will be essential. One radical form of 'deep ecology' regards the well-being of the human race as almost incidental to the survival of the earth and of other species. Certain absolutist environmental movements disregard the common good, for example by demanding the instant elimination of all industries in poorer countries that cannot be 'greened', regardless of the social consequences. Just as disturbing, however, is the prevailing assumption is that the environmental crisis can be controlled by technological development and political action, leaving intact our collective lifestyles – for example, by aiming to redirect economic growth into 'green jobs' that will assure our continuing prosperity. 'Green jobs, however desirable, cannot be created on the scale necessary to meet present needs: their rhetorical prominence is an illusion.'²²

2.5 Demography

In most European countries, fertility rates have declined to the extent that the population is growing older, and (in the absence of large-scale immigration) will gradually become smaller. The economic impact could in the long term be dramatic, as a growing number of elderly non-tax-payers who require more intensive health care and social services must be supported by a shrinking number of younger, employed adults. The *human* reality of this shift will depend partly on how far Europeans retain a sense of respect for and connection with those older persons who are economically 'non-productive'.

2.6 Migration & Refugees

Two issues need to be distinguished: the *general* phenomenon of migration; and the specific issue

of refugees and asylum-seekers, those fleeing catastrophe or political persecution.

In a world of multi-directional migratory flows, the absence of any global migration authority means that migration cannot be managed coherently, including that which affects the EU. During the period of rapid economic growth in Western Europe in the 1950s and 1960s, the need for labour led many governments to encourage large-scale immigration, to fill vacant jobs in industry and in public services. The intensifying globalisation described above should logically entail the increased free movement of peoples. But in the words of Jef Van Gerwen sj, 'the free circulation of goods and services seems to meet fewer social and cultural barriers than the free circulation of employees, lawyers or physicians. Human capital is much more rooted in cultural and social environments'.²³

Even intra-EU migration meets these social and cultural barriers, though they apply more strongly to migration to Europe from other continents, especially Africa. The integration of migrants from these continents has been marked by severe tensions, especially where minority communities are concentrated in decaying urban and industrial areas. Cultural difficulties, such as that of an exaggerated nationalism, are exacerbated in periods of recession. Public opinion tends to be hostile to migrants themselves and to the prospect of further migration. Over the last three decades immigration regulations (gradually harmonised within the EU, as is in principle appropriate) have become increasingly restrictive, except in the case of those skilled migrants who seem most useful *to the EU's own member states*, but whose skills are also most vital to their own countries.

This hardening attitude towards migrants in general has influenced the EU's policies on refugees and asylum seekers. It is a political cliché that politicians do not win votes by their defence of the rights of refugees. European citizens seem scarcely to recognise that the vast majority of the world's refugees are sheltered in very poor countries such as Chad (from Darfur) and in Iran (from

²¹ In 2007, the 81 million tons of the USA's corn harvest used to produce ethanol for car fuel represented 20% of its *entire* grain harvest but just 4% of its automotive fuel. Since the USA's corn exports comprised two-thirds of world exports, this shift helped push corn prices sharply upwards, with serious harm to countries such as Mexico, where corn is a staple food. (See Lester Brown, *Plan B 3.0*, W. H. Norton, New York and London, 2008.) There are hopes for 'second-generation' biofuels that will use crops not used, directly or indirectly, for food.

²² At the time of writing there are some 4 million unemployed in Spain alone.

²³ Sweeney, John & van Gerwen. Jef (eds), *More Europe? A Critical Christian Enquiry into the Process of European Integration*, Pharos, Netherlands, 1997, p. 273.

Afghanistan) – countries for which Europeans often manifest scant respect.

In recent years a surge of asylum seekers arrived in the Canary Islands, Malta and Italy (Lampedusa), straining the capacity of small communities to accept them humanely. Larger EU states were slow to help effectively, except by supporting the attempt to repel such migrants before their arrival. Objectively, the numbers were small, but

their political and media impact has been substantial. For Europeans often fear being besieged by migrants, for example through a new class of ‘environmental refugees’, while the strains of past migration are still far from resolved. As a result, even faced with the urgent humanitarian claims of refugees and asylum-seekers, Europe is becoming a closed continent.

Challenges and Opportunities for the Society of Jesus

Church Social Teaching, reflected in the Society’s own documents, have called for the ‘globalisation of solidarity’ to match the globalisation of trade, finance, etc.²⁴ The Society of Jesus itself has a global outreach, a presence among and a commitment to the poorest people and populations. Provinces with more ample financial resources share them generously. Through an expanding international network, the ‘Red Xavier’, some province mission offices and development organisations now collaborate, renewing their structures in order better to serve this global solidarity.

1. The financial and economic crisis entails a *social* crisis – of need, of hope, of vision. Many people will continue to suffer: but could this crisis be fruitful of a new and fuller evaluation of social and economic life? Communicating a sense of human flourishing beyond material prosperity is now a primary field of evangelisation.
2. Jesuit apostolates remain focused on issues of justice and poverty: in pastoral work (e.g. with the Roma and Travellers), in academic work and in advocacy. In this respect, there has been some cause for concern at the diminution of Jesuit ‘insertion’ communities, applicable in Europe no less than elsewhere.²⁵
3. In the long term, the economic crisis might possibly lead to recasting the relationship be-

tween states, global regulatory systems, commerce and industry, and civil society, in such a way that the economy better reflects broader human purposes. Recent Church Social Teaching has consistently addressed this issue, and the Society of Jesus has promoted a series of encounters to reflect on the situation and its challenges.

4. Issues of environment and climate change will challenge our societies in multiple ways, from the search for new forms of global governance to a commitment to personal simplicity. We may think of an individual and collective *metanoia*, for which faith is a crucial resource. In Rome, the mandate of the Social Justice Secretariat has been expanded to embrace ecological issues. Elsewhere, Jesuit institutions such as the ‘Institut für Gesellschaftspolitik’ in Munich work alongside specialist environmental institutes. A transcontinental Jesuit Ecology Network has been established.
5. JRS is respected throughout Europe, and Jesuits and Jesuit-related institutions study the wider phenomenon of migration. The need for JRS’s work seems certain to increase, in its broad dimensions of education, advocacy and pastoral accompaniment.

²⁴ GC34 (1995) notes the ‘growing consciousness of the interdependence of all peoples’ therefore vowing ‘to collaborate with other national and international groups . . . for a more just international order’. (Decree 3, No 23)

²⁵ See for example the discussion in *Promotio Iustitiae*, October, 2009, p. 7, starting from an observation of Fr General. ‘The starting point is that there are now fewer Jesuits in all apostolates, not just in the social apostolate. This overall scarcity is one reason why Insertion Communities, which represent the closest way of “being with” the poor and marginalised and are often small, are sometimes the first ones to be closed when a province decides to consolidate its communities; and the closure of an Insertion Community means a story that will go untold to the next generation of Jesuits.’

3 The Political Context

Key Trends

3.1 The growth and development of the EU

From 1995 the EU consisted of fifteen member states. Ten countries gained accession in 2004 and two more in 2007, giving the EU a population of some 500 million. Of these twelve countries, all but Cyprus and Malta had lived through varying degrees of Soviet domination. Croatia is likely to accede about 2012, with other Balkan countries pursuing their candidacy. Turkey has been a candidate country since 1999. Its candidacy is controversial for a range of reasons, evaluated very differently among the existing EU member states.²⁶ This expansion has been far from straightforward, and member states remain sharply unequal in wealth and diverse in political culture. Yet the achievement of respectful and free unification (such as the Single Market, the abolition of border controls with the Schengen Area and the single currency) should be saluted: it was in no way inevitable.

The expansion has been accompanied by a series of treaties embodying limited institutional reform, rather than redefining the EU's fundamental nature and objectives: the *Treaty of Amsterdam* (signed in 1997, entered into force in 1999); the *Treaty of Nice* (signed in 2001, entered into force in 2003), the *Treaty of Lisbon* (signed in December 2007, entered into force December 2009).²⁷

The expansion has exaggerated a tension (as old as the EU itself) between the two contrasting dynamics of *shared sovereignty* and *coordinated national sovereignty* (respectively known as 'the community method' and 'inter-governmentalism'). Institutionally, the European Commission expresses the common life of the EU: in principle, its officials serve the EU itself, not their

own country. Those attending the European Council (heads of state and of government) and the Council of Ministers (government ministers with thematic responsibility) represent *their own states*, relating to each other as competitors no less than as colleagues. The third principal structure, the European Parliament, is directly elected by citizens and formally accountable to them.

There has so far been little success in fostering 'participative democracy', the active contribution by citizens and associations of ideas and proposals on public policy. (This is different from 'direct democracy', in which *decisions* are made - for example by referendum.) Without such active citizenship, representative democracy is fragile. But the difficulties of engaging 'ordinary people' in the political process are formidable: effective participation presupposes a clear sense of where and how political decisions are made, whereas in the case of the EU, both policy discussions and governance procedures are too complex and too remote from citizens to be readily comprehensible, especially since news media remain overwhelmingly national.²⁸

This 'European construction' supposes a certain sense of non-exclusive European identity. As former Czech President Vaclav Havel said in the European Parliament, in 2009: 'At each level of our identities we have a certain measure of sovereignty, but at none of them do we have absolute sovereignty, nor can we have. The only thing that matters is that these sovereignties ... should not contradict each other ... I tend to say somewhat poetically that Europe is the "homeland of our homelands".' This vision of harmonious complementarity, in which national sovereignties can be fully respected and yet relativised, is not universally shared within the EU. There is

²⁶ It is a key NATO member, a 'bridge' country between Europe and Asia, an overwhelmingly Muslim nation yet a secular state, it has a grim recent record on human rights including religious rights. In addition, it would immediately become the second largest state in the EU. so straining the EU's own 'integration capacity'.

²⁷ A *Treaty Establishing a Constitution for Europe* was signed by all twenty-five member states in October 2004, and was ratified by eighteen: it was rejected by France and the Netherlands in 2005. This treaty would have replaced the Treaty of Rome whereas *The Treaty of Lisbon* consists instead of an immense series of *amendments* to earlier treaties. As such it is almost unreadable. These amendments are sometimes substantial, such as the Parliament's power of co-decision with the Council of the EU on most subjects, and the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the EU.

²⁸ The Treaty of Lisbon enshrines one attempt to stimulate participation, a 'Citizens' Initiative'. Any proposal backed by one million signatures, coming from at least nine countries (with qualifications related to the size of country, etc) must, if it falls within the European Commission's competence, be studied and re-presented by the Commission to the Parliament and the Council.

little popular enthusiasm for further steps of the 'European construction'. Regrettably in our view, one sustaining narrative of the EU - that it would continue to grow within limits, and that the governance of its member states would converge - now looks less plausible. Its implicit assurance of shared and increased prosperity has been undermined by its difficulties in meeting the present financial and economic crisis.

Two other significant innovations have marked the period:

1. *Economic and Monetary Union*: a single currency, the Euro, was introduced in two stages: for international transactions in 1999, and in citizens' pockets in 2002. In 2009, sixteen countries belong to the Eurozone. Amidst the economic crisis of Eurozone members, the Euro itself suddenly seems vulnerable, yet remains a key factor in maintaining economic stability;
2. *The Charter of Fundamental Rights of the EU*: this was formally adopted at the Nice Summit of 2000, and included in the Treaty of Lisbon so that the specified rights have full legal force: Poland and the United Kingdom negotiated opt-outs.

The EU's growth and development has not been matched by an increase in its global influence. Though it remains the largest economy in the world, political and economic leadership may be passing from it - for example, to China and India. If it be thought that Europe was once *too* dominant in the world, this rebalancing of power need not be regretted. But its causes (including poorly coordinated governance) are regrettable, and its effects will be uncomfortable. *Fear*, however, can be corrosive if policies (such as those governing international relations and trade) are shaped by a certain desperation to prevent the erosion of European competitive advantage.

The EU, of course, is by no means the whole of Europe. The Church and the Society of Jesus are also present to the Council of Europe, which comprises forty-seven European states (all those deemed to be democratic and respectful of human rights: in practice, all European states except Belarus). It defines its mission as 'to create a

common democratic and legal area throughout the whole of the continent, ensuring respect for its fundamental values: human rights, democracy and the rule of law'. It is an important forum for deepening the relationship between its member states. Linked with it is the European Court of Human Rights, which rules on individual or state applications alleging violations of the civil and political rights set out in the European Convention of Human Rights, itself adopted by the Council of Europe.

3.2 Security and Defence

Military and security issues have been tragically foregrounded in the last decade, especially since the events of '9/11' (2001) in the USA, followed by other grievously destructive terrorist attacks on European cities such as Madrid and London, as well as on other cities in several continents. These events have led to a heightened security regime affecting many activities of daily life.

One result has been the 'war against terrorism', the implications of which have been dismaying, not least to the Christian churches. Repressive and otherwise unconstitutional measures are often implemented in times of war. If the human enemies are defined as open-endedly as 'terrorists', they may benefit from none of the acknowledged 'rules of war', such as the Geneva Conventions: indeed there can be no clear end to such a war. Victims in the West are rightly remembered solemnly: however the West's apparent disregard of some of its own victims is a grave moral problem. Although the USA has led the alliance engaged in this war, European, including EU, states have been active partners, sometimes co-responsible for serious abuse.²⁹ Such sharp divisions became evident that the US administration of George W. Bush spoke of 'old' and 'new' Europe.³⁰

Although some member states remain formidable military powers, the EU itself depends on NATO and the USA for defence against threats to its security. Even in security matters, therefore the EU may not act so as to override national sovereignty, although from 2004 a European Defence Agency has allowed some structured co-

²⁹ a) 'Disregard': little attention was paid in Western political discussion or in Western media, to the immense number of Iraqi civilian victims of the war of 2003. b) 'Abuses': see the practice of 'extraordinary rendition'. Under President Bush the USA transferred prisoners secretly to third countries for interrogation, allowing the presumption that prisoners would be tortured there. Several European Governments permitted the existence of secret detention centres, or agreed not to intervene when unscheduled and unmarked flights used their airports en route to them.

³⁰ The phrase referred to those countries which respectively criticised and supported the 2003 invasion of Iraq.

operation. The EU's own military power (for example, its 'Rapid Reaction Force') has been used only for peacekeeping, in countries such as the Democratic Republic of Congo and Sudan (Darfur), Indonesia (Aceh), the Palestinian Territories (Gaza) and Lebanon. There have been serious failures to protect vulnerable populations, even within Europe, as in the terrible case of Bosnia-Herzegovina.³¹ Nevertheless, between 1950 and 2000 fewer than one million people died through wars and political violence in Europe, as against sixty million between 1900 and 1950. Even the 1990s war in the Balkans, never threatened to set the whole continent alight as in 1914: the political identity of Europe now makes that outcome unthinkable.

3.3 Other issues

1. The EU's attitude to its neighbours: former Soviet countries need to find a new path that allows convergence with the EU without

necessarily rejecting all Russian influence. For example, Ukraine looks both eastwards to Russia and westwards to the EU, the appropriate balance being a matter of heated political debate.

2. EU foreign policy: the member states do not delegate foreign policy to the EU. However, under the Treaty of Lisbon the EU is currently developing its own diplomatic service, the European External Action Service. The EU has various forms of relationship with states to the East and the South (the European Neighbourhood Policy, including the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership), as also with Russia, the UN and the USA. The EU is a member of the 'Quartet' that assumes a special responsibility for supporting the Middle East peace process.

Challenges and Opportunities for the Society of Jesus

1. The significance of the EU as a transnational body will not diminish. As Europeans grope towards an enriched sense of identity, the Society of Jesus explores its own transnational identity more deeply (see GC 35, Decree 2). This process will affect the CEP as the governance structures of Jesuit Conferences are reviewed. It is this transnational character that potentially enables the Society of Jesus to engage, constructively and where necessarily critically, with EU institutions and officials;
2. The churches are significant civil society movements (though of course not only that). They have the capacity to stimulate participative democracy by encouraging active citizenship and public service, collective responsibility to the common good;
3. The Church continues to witness to peace amidst global threats to security. 'Reconciliation' is a unifying theme of GC35w. One specific challenge of our era is to ensure that political rhetoric does not render armed conflict a zone beyond ethical responsibility. More broadly the Society's mission of reconciliation could serve new civil society initiatives for dialogue between political and social movements whose positions seem irreconcilable.

³¹ In response to such atrocities as the Rwandan genocide (1994) the massacre at Srebrenica (1995) and contemporary events in Darfur, etc., urgent debates have been held, including at the UN General Assembly (2009) about the 'responsibility to protect' – by force, if necessary – populations at special risk, even where such intervention would collide with the framework of 'national sovereignty'.

4 The Cultural Context

Key Trends

4.1 Secularisation and its limits

As the 1997 CEP document argued, the dominant cultural, intellectual and media currents of our societies scarcely acknowledge the vision of the Gospel, still less admit its relevance to policy discussions in the public sphere. Even if profound human values appear to Christians to have transcendent or evangelical roots, those roots are publicly ignored or obscured. Three distinct terms apply here: 'secularisation', 'secularity' and 'secularism'.

Secularisation is a long-term cultural process by which almost every field of study and action is recognised to have an inherent logic and autonomy, and is not to be governed by extrinsic religious considerations. From the Christian standpoint, this respect for earthly reality may be seen as a *fruit of faith itself*, faith in the divine gift of human reason. In fact such faith has inspired many scientific and cultural achievements.

In the political arena, *secularity* entails the procedural impartiality of the state and civic institutions between religions and between religious and non-religious groups. Public debate may occur freely between conflicting world-views, but none may claim state sponsorship or favour. Europe is 'secular', therefore, in that there is a clear distinction between the realms of church and state.³² Such a 'distinction' should never be seen as *separation*, since we have one indivisible human life. Historically speaking, at least in Western Europe, this secular status was hard-won: in the wake of terrible wars waged in the name of religion, and over against the perceived domination of the medieval Catholic Church. Even today the Catholic Church seems specially targeted in such discussions, despite its acceptance of the 'autonomy of the secular sphere'.³³

Some social movements, and some pressure groups within political institutions, aspire to be 'secularist'. *Secularism*, stronger and more assertive in Europe than elsewhere, proposes the *exclusion* of religious belief and expression from public life. In aspiring to be the legitimate judge

of the religious sphere, secularism claims not only separation from the religious realm but control over it. It becomes an ideology to be imposed on societies regardless of their prevalent beliefs.³⁴ In some post-Soviet but predominantly Christian countries, such as Bulgaria and Romania, secularist movements linked to former Communist groups are by no means a spent force, and are fiercely militant, especially during election campaigns.

Finally, or dialectically, there has emerged *post-secularism*: the sense that it is futile and unjust to dismiss religious expression from the public sphere. This trend rejects the claims of some secularists to represent, even *exclusively* to represent, rationality, objectivity, 'scientific consciousness'. Such claims are exaggerated and unverifiable, resting on a 'faith', that only what can be measured is objectively true or important. Other influences on post-secularism have been:

1. The acknowledgement that religious consciousness, far from being a danger to society, is a civic asset, forming in believers a strong sense of community, moral seriousness, personal integrity and civic responsibility;
2. The recognition that to eject religious belief from the public forum – disqualifying from the public realm many people's deepest beliefs about human life – injects public debates with a sense of unreality, and denies the very pluralism that one claims to safeguard;
3. The awareness that this so-called 'private realm' to which religion is *ex hypothesi* confined is in no way removed from politics but is itself politicised: thus, for example, the nature of the family is now a key and contested issue of *public policy*;

From the perspective of post-secularism – as well as from that of religious believers – it is unjust and irrational that religious people are asked, in the name of tolerance and cultural pluralism, to keep their beliefs and norms 'private' in order to avoid disturbing the public project of secularism.

³² The distinction may be less clear in some countries where the Orthodox Church has recovered national status.

³³ See *Deus Caritas Est*, (2009), §. 28. The Indian Jesuits, for example, strongly support the secularity of the state: a religious Indian state would probably discriminate against both Christians and Muslims.

³⁴ Inevitably, the precise boundaries between 'secularity' and 'secularism' are hard to define and disputed.

Besides these philosophical considerations, three factors in recent European history have been influential in challenging the secularist model: firstly, the collapse of the great atheistic political movements that forcibly suppressed religion, especially since these movements destroyed more lives than religion has ever done; secondly, the entry into the EU in 2004 and 2007 of states with very different models of church-state relations than that of, say, France; thirdly, the rise of Islam – which everyone realises cannot plausibly be restricted to the so-called private sphere.

Not all 'post-secularism' is authentically religious. Vaguely superstitious belief-forms are on the rise, sometimes even within the churches themselves, as charismatic utterance displaces a 'reasoned' discourse deemed to be cold or worldly.

Article 17 (TFEU) of the *Treaty of Lisbon*, reflects this post-secularist spirit.³⁵ The Treaty acknowledges 'the status under national law of churches and religious associations or communities in the Member States', recognises 'their identity and their specific contribution', and promises 'an open, transparent and regular dialogue' with these churches – as also with philosophical and non-confessional organisations. There has long been a political dialogue with religious groups. Now this dialogue has a firm legal basis. In the European Parliament churches and church institutions are deemed 'interest partners': in other words, not 'lobbyists' or, still less, antagonists.

To summarise, despite various divergent trends within Europe, two statements seem broadly true:

1. The mainstream Christian churches accept the political authority of secular, democratically elected governments, though they may well dissent from government policies;
2. Governments accept the right of religious movements to worship, to advance their values publicly, to govern themselves, and (usually, at least) to sponsor political initiatives,

so long as these movements accept the rule of law and the government's own civic authority.

4.2 Ethics & Values

The pluralism referred to above also feeds ethical thinking. Clearly people of different cultures are led by their experience and convictions to make divergent ethical decisions and judgements. At times there appears to be a 'battle of values'. Pluralism, however – the coexistence and recognition of different principles of belief and action – is not itself relativism. Relativism is not a 'fact' but a theory, or rather a number of variant theories.³⁶

Because ethical arguments are not empirically verifiable, however, it is easily assumed in a pluralist society that ethical statements *only* embody attitudes, feelings of approval or disapproval, or that they merely reflect individual or group interests; equally, that ethics, being 'subjective', is entirely a function of individual judgment, lying beyond the competence of other people and external authorities to judge. On this account, provided that public order is not threatened, 'consenting adults' may do what they wish. (Such philosophical individualism is ironically a *cultural* phenomenon.)

This ideal, asserting the primacy of individual choice and judgement subject to the requirement of maintaining public order, has clear strengths as a defence against totalitarianism or conformism. Yet it undermines any affirmation of a common human destiny, and systematically abandons the search for ethical consensus on fundamental moral questions that bear directly on the law and public policy, as for example the issue of abortion. It is impossible to reconcile the description of abortion as a 'abominable crime' and the fact that it is permitted within defined limits by almost all European legal systems.³⁷ In practice the Church's public witness to the right to life of the unborn child is deemed politically irrelevant.

³⁵ The *Treaty of Lisbon* amends two different treaties: the *Treaty on European Union* (Maastricht Treaty, effective since 1993) and the *Treaty establishing the European Community* (Rome Treaty, effective since 1958, and now re-named the *Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union*). So there is a double numbering of articles 'TEU' and 'TFEU'. TFEU goes into more detail on the role, policies and operations of the EU.

³⁶ Among possible formulations are: 1) 'Truth and goodness are mere matters of opinion.'; 2) 'What is wrong for you may be right for me.'; 3) 'What is right or good is not absolute, but depends on education, culture, circumstances, so that no one can properly judge another's action, and no judgements of cultural norms can be made by outsiders.'; 4) 'The search for "truth" in morality is an illusion.' This last formulation would deny any possible theory of Natural Law, so severing the link between morality and reason.

³⁷ See *Ecclesia in Europa* (2003), §. 95. cf also *Evangelium Vitae* (1995), § 5: 'Today there exists a great multitude of weak and defenceless human beings, unborn children in particular, whose fundamental right to life is being trampled upon'.

In fact, the EU does operate with a guiding set of values. The Preamble to the Treaty of Lisbon, 'drawing inspiration from the cultural, religious and humanist inheritance of Europe, from which have developed the universal values of the inviolable and inalienable rights of the human person' specifies 'freedom, democracy, equality and the rule of law', and later, 'sustainable development . . . reinforced cohesion and environmental protection'. Taken together, these values describe an admirable project. In the form of a treaty, they are proclaimed in the abstract, that is without explaining how they are to be interpreted, how to resolve the inevitable tensions and conflicts of priority among them, or of how any and every value might be rightly or counter-productively pursued.³⁸

Nevertheless, recent legal and political debates have indicated the emergence of certain 'functional absolutes', such as human rights: but human rights conceived in individualistic form, measured above all by 'freedom'. Thus, civil and political rights, the rights of individuals over against the state, are far more consistently affirmed than those social and economic rights which Catholic Social Teaching equally asserts.

A second core value of the EU has been to maintain – amidst many tensions – the reality of a 'social market economy'. It accepts the market economy while rejecting 'economic liberalism' (the underlying belief that commerce and business are an expression of freedom, whereas politics, even democratic politics, implying collective responsibility and regulation – is a *brake* on freedom). It seeks to integrate a market economy with the claims of 'social cohesion' and solidarity – even though measures to express these lie within the formal competence of the member states.³⁹

Thirdly, it seems that a value rightly accorded fundamental status – *equality*, taken to entail non-discrimination – seems virtually to be raised to the status of a 'super-right' beyond critical discussion, afforded almost automatic priority over other rights.⁴⁰

In the formal structures of the EU, the critical reflection on ethical issues has focused on a quite narrow (though crucial) realm. The European Group on Ethics, a specialist advisory body to the European Commission, deals predominantly with questions of individual life as *embodied* – matters such as abortion, euthanasia, conception, the embryo, genetic engineering. At the heart of such debates is the implicit question, 'What constitutes the person?'. If the question is not faced squarely, society can offer no reasoned justification of, or limitation of, for example, any available technology in the field of genetics, biology, pharmacology, the manipulation of consciousness. The existence of such a group is welcome. However, equivalent institutional provisions for ethical reflection are not applied to questions of political ethics, such as the nature and demands of social justice, or development.

4.3 Education

The operative values of a society are reflected in its vision of 'formation': in practical terms, in its education policy. This is partly why education, of many kinds, has always been regarded as central to Jesuit mission.

Education institutions in many European countries, from kindergarten onwards, may be crucibles of intercultural encounter, where openness to others, and critical appreciation of their cultures, experiences and beliefs can be nourished. Yet schools in most countries vary enormously in

³⁸ For example, Article 1 of the *Charter of Fundamental Rights* of the EU reads as follows; 'Human dignity is inviolable. It must be respected and protected.' But does this human dignity disallow euthanasia (as most religious believers will think) or assures the right to it (as many secular humanists will argue)? The value is shared: the ethical debate *begins* there.

³⁹ Such tensions are inherent. For example, in 2010, one topical issue of public ethics concerns *taxation*, an issue that concerns the rightful balance between citizens' and companies' economic self-determination and their responsibility to the state and the common good. It also concerns governments' matching obligation to devise a 'fair' tax system. In Greece, 'tax evasion' (by definition illegal, whereas 'tax avoidance' is legal without necessarily being moral) is estimated at €30 billion per year, and is a key contributing factor of the Greek financial crisis. It is unlikely that Greeks are more corrupt than citizens of other states. But Greek culture has embodied a different ethical assessment than elsewhere of the *legitimacy* of taxation, therefore of tax avoidance and even of tax evasion. Other countries, and the EU itself, ignored this problem when admitting Greece to the Euro-zone.

⁴⁰ To take a topical example: if a Catholic school employing 100 teachers has the right to employ Catholics *only* for one or two reserved posts, the notion of the school's 'ethos' becomes empty. It is difficult to achieve a true balance between the rights of a school to sustain its educational ethos and the genuine principle of non-discrimination. To absolutise non-discrimination in respect of individuals falsely dissolves the *inherent* tension between values.

quality and in available resources. At secondary level, there may be widespread truancy and a drop-out rate of up to 30%, as currently in Spain. Poor schools may prevent social integration or may propagate gross prejudices, so undermining mutual understanding and social harmony. In some countries technical education is well-developed, in others (including prosperous ones, such as the UK) it is seriously inadequate and fails pupils without academic talents or interests.

Education has cognitive, affective and spiritual dimensions. Both humanistic and scientific education can develop *capacities* – for reflection and the weighing of evidence, intellectual rigour and honesty. According to Article 13 of The International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR), a multilateral treaty adopted by the UN General Assembly which entered into force in 1976, education is to be directed towards ‘the full development of the human personality and the sense of its dignity’, enabling all persons to participate effectively in society. It is both a human right and as ‘an indispensable means of realising other human rights’. However, many European countries’ education systems, at all levels, have been re-shaped to reflect an overriding national concern with economic performance. This emphasis has affected both the objects of study (a preference for scientific, legal, and economic subjects rather than for the traditional ‘humanities’) and educational method, matters of pedagogy and assessment.

For example, at tertiary level, the European ‘Bologna Process’, dating from 1999 and reaching well beyond the EU, intends to create a ‘European Higher Education Area’, by seeking to make university degrees and degree standards more consistent and mutually compatible. This valuable initiative has nevertheless drawn criticism that:

1. It has prioritised the promotion of a ‘Europe of knowledge and of capacity for employment’, directly oriented towards economic and industrial productivity, over the ideal of the education of the whole person;
2. It emphasises the instrumental usefulness of acquiring marketable professional skills rather than critical reflection and judgement;
3. It has included ever more detailed ‘targets’, so that administrative requirements become heavier, at the expense of teaching time and of schools’ freedom to plan curricula.

In higher education, student numbers have grown rapidly throughout Europe, as university education was extended to a far higher proportion of the population. Similarly, more young Europeans study abroad, or travel to take some form of ‘gap year’.

The EU’s Erasmus Programme has reinforced this trend, while encouraging more effective collaboration between universities. There remains a fundamental concern: deep inequalities of educational opportunity and achievement underlie many social divisions, besides reinforcing the growing *economic divide*.

In this context, ‘non-formal education’ (those structures of civil society that support personal and cultural development) are a crucial balance to the limited scope of formal education systems. Religious movements contribute notably to this enrichment.

4.4 Information and Communications Technology (ICT)

The last twenty years have seen a revolution in communication technologies. The internet offers sound and video as well as text, and facilitates commerce, social networking, and citizen journalism from almost everywhere on the globe. Mobile phones may serve as cameras and mini-computers. The impact of this ‘virtual revolution’ is already far-reaching, breeding new vocabulary, new forms of writing, new habits of thought, empowering the participation of people previously excluded from many forms of cultural life. The pace of this cultural transformation seems certain to increase.

Certain challenges associated with the rapid change are becoming evident. Those growing up with this technology may be adept at ‘surfing’ and ‘multitasking’, but be less habituated to sustained attention or critical reflection. It is possible to give instant attention to multiple sources of information and entertainment: but multitasking dissipates our finite powers of concentration. Global networks of ‘virtual friends’ may disguise the loss of steadier and deeper personal relationships. Further, the rapid evolution has deepened the so-called ‘digital divide’, offering privileged access to those with the necessary technological and financial means.

At the socio-cultural level, a related set of questions arises. How to avoid new ‘class divisions’ between the ‘information-rich’ and ‘information poor’? How to lessen the growing division between countries and to assure the technology to regions with poor infrastructure? How to evaluate the quality of internet-based educational material? How to create a genuine pluralism of ideas and avoid the danger of cultural hegemony? Will future democratic debate be only virtual?

Identical technologies are subject to abuse in contrary directions. The possibility of acting with anonymity and without obvious supervision may endanger children, and may encourage new forms

of addiction. Conversely, such technologies may be used *against* people: whether by the virtually unlimited surveillance of state agencies or by commercial interests, as data explicitly gathered for one purpose is sold for another. Respect for privacy is no longer a social or commercial norm.

4.5 Gender

Except for the most senior posts, women now comprise over half the professional workforce of the EU. Of the eight million new jobs created in the EU since 2000, six million were filled by women: in both the USA and the EU, women gain 60% of all university degrees. Professional women in their twenties often gain equivalent salaries and financial independence to men. However their salaries tend to fall behind as they begin raising a family.

The pace of corresponding social and cultural change varies widely within Europe. The Nordic countries have achieved very high female employment by promoting strong equality legislation, easily accessible and subsidised child care, and arrangements for parental leave that include mothers and fathers alike. In many countries, however, women are still directed to less remunerative professions or to part-time work. Child-care may be prohibitively expensive for poor families, so that one or other parent must immediately be available after school hours or during school holidays. The extra difficulties for single parents are evident. Some argue that social pressures have merely shifted direction. If motherhood formerly tended to confine women to an exclusively domestic role, there is now almost a social imperative to be employed, as if full worth and dignity were conferred only through a paid job. Economically, most families now need two earners.

Globally, women bear the brunt of the world's poverty and illiteracy, are the first to lose their jobs through redundancy, and assume the main burden of unpaid work, for example as carers of the family's elderly members: since women tend to outlive men, elderly women are at risk of additional isolation and impoverishment.

4.6 Marriage & Family

Over recent decades marriage has ceased to be the social norm. In some European countries it is now less common than formal civil partnerships or informal cohabitation. The *nature* of marriage, too, is heatedly debated. Marriage and family are linked in UN and other declarations, though without defining either term.⁴¹ Does marriage – or ought it to – include those civil partnerships now recognised by several countries' laws in respect of adoption, inheritance, etc? Is it inherently heterosexual? Does it allow polygamy? Does the definition of family include quite extended kinship systems (as, for example, among Roma and Travellers)?

The Catholic Church articulates clearly its own view of marriage.⁴² Even though 'marriage' is not coterminous with 'family', the Church is generally regarded as an absolute opponent of *any* expanded definition of either concept, and (as on other topics already mentioned) is in effect excluded from such public debates.

A second set of issues focuses on family well-being. The increased social mobility of employment has fragmented extended and even nuclear families. Far more people live alone than before: migrant parents in particular may go for months or years without seeing their children. These trends may reflect *either* prosperity or poverty. More young people, while postponing marriage or partnership, can meanwhile afford their own home: more retired people than before can afford to keep their home after their partner dies. Yet the same social trend means that parents may receive little communal support in raising children or supporting their own elderly parents. Single parents are especially vulnerable. Almost regardless of income, the pressure of achieving a healthy balance between employment and private life can be deeply stressful.

The poverty of the elderly – especially that of women – is an acute (though often hidden) social problem, often compounded by isolation from family and dependence on a meagre state pension.

⁴¹ For example, cf the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* (1948), Article 16. 1) Men and women of full age, without any limitation due to race, nationality or religion, have the right to marry and to found a family. They are entitled to equal rights as to marriage, during marriage and at its dissolution. 2) Marriage shall be entered into only with the free and full consent of the intending spouses. 3) The family is the natural and fundamental group unit of society and is entitled to protection by society and the State.

⁴² 'The matrimonial covenant, by which a man and a woman establish between themselves a partnership of the whole of life, is by its nature ordered toward the good of the spouses and the procreation and education of offspring.' (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, Second Edition, No. 1601). The Catechism adds of specifically *Christian* marriage, 'This covenant between baptized persons has been raised by Christ the Lord to the dignity of a sacrament.'

Challenges and Opportunities for the Society of Jesus

1. Perhaps the most fundamental *general* challenge facing the Society of Jesus in Europe is to find new ways to engage with (and so evangelise) a secularised culture that no longer seeks, or even respects, the contribution of the Church, and to sustain Christians who can be marginalised and disoriented by this culture;
2. in the secular public forum, Jesuit organisations typically make two contributions: to participate openly in conversations and debates, with a clear but respectful advocacy perspective: and to support lay Christians with civic and political responsibility;
3. 'Post-secularism', however welcome as a reaction to a rigid secularism, does not deliver new or renewed members of the Church. The phenomenon of 'believing without belonging'⁴³ is a common fruit of modern forms of individualism, and does not necessarily indicate a genuine life-choice. A pastoral challenge (for example to Jesuit communities) is to express an anthropology that stresses the communal character of Christian life, capable of solidarity, while equally affirming the need for personal interiority, contemplation and personal responsibility;
4. The Church brings to ethical questions a positive *vision* of the good human life, rather than a set of norms or prohibitions. The challenge is to articulate the presence of Christ where possible *within* our political and economic cultures, not merely over against them (GC 34, 'Our Mission and Culture' sec 6 seq.). Similarly, the Church's rich vision of the 'common good' enables it to address questions of public ethics and challenge any tendency to narrow 'ethics' to the private sphere;
5. Since faith, to be lasting, must now, even more than before, be personally appropriated, it is not surprising that the Society's ministry of the Spiritual Exercises, attracts growing interest, even far beyond the Catholic Church. This is especially the cases in some Central-Eastern countries where spirituality centres have long waiting lists and know of many people who seek spiritual accompaniment;
6. Jesuit education institutes, at different levels, remain respected and influential. They may now be acquiring still greater importance, as evangelising agencies that can reach people not touched by other pastoral services, and in expressing a vision of high-quality education as *human and intellectual formation*. It was precisely in the context of education that Fr Arrupe spoke of the Jesuit mission to help form 'men and women for others';⁴⁴
7. The concept of 'gender', recently rather controversial in ecclesiastical terms, seems indispensable to reflect on *structural* elements of injustice towards women, sometimes within Church's own institutions. Decree 14 of GC 34, 'Jesuits and the Situation of Women in Church and Civil Society', remains a spur for the Society in promoting reflection on new and more just social models;
8. The rapid revolution in ICT calls the Society to a new form of learning: how to use its networks and institutions to offer high-quality resources to the 'virtual audience', especially those culturally less privileged? Conversely, 'information overload' combines with other elements of the urban, often rushed lifestyle to threaten any inner silence and leisure. The ministry of spirituality is a crucial and opportune Jesuit service to people whose sense of personal uniqueness and of communal belonging must survive an increasingly impersonal 'mass culture'.

⁴³ The phrase was coined by the sociologist Grace Davie.

⁴⁴ 'Today our prime educational objective must be to form men-and-women-for-others; men and women who will live not for themselves but for God and his Christ ... men and women completely convinced that love of God which does not issue in justice for others is a farce.' *Tenth International Congress of Jesuit Alumni of Europe*, Valencia, Spain, July 31, 1973. This speech so sharply divided the assembly that many delegates walked out.

5 The Religious and Ecclesial Context

Key Trends

5.1 Marginalisation - and renewed vitality - of the churches

A vague agnosticism is probably far more common in Europe than convinced atheism: since religions are plural and their beliefs partly incompatible, and since faith can never count as positive knowledge, the suspension of religious belief may appear to be the only rational human posture. The 'suspension of belief', however, readily shades into the *de facto* rejection of religion and its relevance. Ironically, Western European cultures may share an attitude prevalent in former Communist regimes: that, in our day, it is scarcely possible to be religious.

The spectrum of the prevalence of belief is broad. Whatever the region of Europe, and seemingly regardless of economic and political profile or recent history, some countries manifest very strong religious belief (Greece, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Portugal) whereas in others religion appears statistically marginal (the Czech Republic, Estonia, Sweden).

Religious believers are now less stably bound to ecclesiastical institutions: this is the phenomenon known as 'believing without belonging', already noted. This trend can be understood positively, as it was by Karl Rahner: that today one can hardly be a mature 'passive' Christian, but must freely and personally appropriate faith in a way that did not seem essential when religion was taken for granted as part of the social fabric: and that this is a gain in authenticity. Nevertheless, from the perspective of the Church, one must speak of institutional decline.

Church attendance in most countries continues to fall, in both numbers and frequency. Those who continue to 'practise' can no longer assume wider social support. Clergy and religious are fewer, and as a group are aging rapidly. Many parishes - and indeed Jesuit provinces - merge, churches shut down, religious apostolates close or are handed over to lay people in the hope that their work and ethos can be sustained. Everyone rightly seeks to appreciate the *benefits* of this change (for example, the enhancement of lay

ministry, the opportunity for the Church to purify its conception of 'success', etc.) yet the sense of loss is palpable.

'New ecclesial movements', mainly lay, have flourished and gained influence in the Church. At best they combine a strong commitment to prayer with social engagement, and are often youthful in their age profile, so that they are a sign of hope and renewal. Given the proliferation of these movements, it is inevitable that some sharply divide Catholic opinion in terms of theology and especially of ecclesiology.

The churches can still mobilise public opinion. The force and cogency of Church Social Teaching has made itself felt in the public arena, and has offered crucial intellectual support to Christians active in public life.⁴⁵ In the UK, for example, three development agencies (respectively from the Catholic, Anglican and Protestant traditions) are agreed to be among the largest, most trustworthy and most effective of all NGOs dedicated to social justice and the global common good: they have helped inspire and sustain influential public campaigns, such as that on the Millennium Development Goals.

In other spheres, the Church's teaching has become increasingly counter-cultural. This need not be surprising, since its eschatological dimension challenges *all* expressions of the *status quo*, and therefore all cultures. Often it is the broader secular (or secularist) culture which has shifted position, rather than the Church, as in the case of several key ethical questions: abortion; bioethical issues; the understanding of sexual orientation; the regulation of public education, etc. Sometimes the Church's perceived position (even if it be popularly misunderstood or misrepresented) provokes claims that its position may deny human rights. (To take one example, the Church's position as *the single* largest provider in Africa of care for those suffering from HIV-AIDS may be dismissed from consideration almost with contempt, because of the accusation that its rejection of condom-use is irresponsible, and at worst 'causes AIDS'.)

⁴⁵ To take two clear examples, Pope John Paul II's apostolic letter *Tertio Millenio Adveniente* (1994) was influential in gaining support for the Millennium Development Goals: Pope Benedict's *Caritas in Veritate* (2009) is acknowledged as a serious contribution to discussion of the global economic crisis.

This is not the place to discuss the scandal of the sexual abuse of children by priests and religious. Many dioceses and religious orders, as well as several Jesuit provinces, have been dramatically affected. It can be demoralising to those committed to the Church to encounter the devastating long-term effect on victims and the evidence that ecclesiastical authority has often sought to cover up such crimes, which threatens to discredit authority structures in the Church. The commitment to ensure future 'best practice', however urgent, will not erase this stain.

5.2 Ecumenism

From a Catholic standpoint, we distinguish relations with the Anglican Communion and mainline Protestant churches on the one hand, and with the Orthodox churches on the other.

Ecumenical relations with Anglicans and Protestants have been transformed since the Second Vatican Council, so that the ecumenical movement has become a key 'sign of the times'. It is now evident that what unites the churches is incomparably more important than what divides them.⁴⁶ In many countries the churches' witness in public life is consistently ecumenical. The most distinguished Christian theologians are appreciated far beyond their own communions.

Nevertheless, a shift in mainstream Anglican and Protestant ethical positions (notably in questions of sexual ethics), and the Catholic rejection of such a shift, has led to new difficulties. Hopes for Christian unity have also been disappointed because of disagreements which are important, but which are not located at the fundamental level of Christian faith.⁴⁷ Examples of such questions are the exercise of authority and primacy in the Church, and the presbyteral or episcopal ordination of women.

In the case of Catholic-Orthodox relations, differences over doctrine, ethics, or primacy tend to be less significant than occasionally tense disputes about the relationship between ecclesial community, evangelisation and *territory*, for example where a powerful Orthodox Church enjoys a symbiotic relationship with the secular government. Some Orthodox patriarchates estimate that greater Roman Catholic openness to the Protestant churches is *itself* a new obstacle to ecumenism.

5.3 Interfaith relations and dialogue

Inter-religious dialogue does not bracket the convictions of believers, or entail compromise on their part. Nor does it primarily seek doctrinal agreement. Rather it seeks deeper mutual *understanding*: not least the avoidance of the needless *misunderstanding* that feeds so much societal mistrust or aggression. As such it remains vital. By a sad irony, for example, some governments involved in the war against Iraq in 2003 looked anxiously to the churches to promote Christian-Muslim dialogue, in order to allay any impression that the war was a religious war.

Given the increased presence of Muslims in many European countries, and the rise of a more politically engaged Islam, it is the encounter between Christianity and Islam which attracts most public attention. Leaving aside debates between specialists, there is often a certain asymmetry between the dialogue partners. Many Christians interested in dialogue present themselves as committed above all to an *interior* path, even if this entails questioning their own orthodoxies. The Muslim public, by contrast, is anchored in a religion of 'orthopraxis' stressing the societal dimension of faith and the duties that flow from it.

Notable advances have been achieved in the mutual openness of the mainstream communities of Christians and of Jews. However, questions bearing on the relationship between faith, identity and politics (most topically, those concerning Judaism, Islam, Christianity and the political impasse in the Holy Land) are more tense and difficult to negotiate.

In the context of the EU, Catholics may now find themselves engaged in *three* concentric circles of dialogue: the ecumenical, the interfaith, and the encounter with humanists who reject any religious faith, for which the Brussels jargon is 'inter-convictionnel'.

⁴⁶ For example, there is a Joint Catholic-Lutheran Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification - the very doctrine which provoked their split in the sixteenth century.

⁴⁷ See *Unitatis redintegratio*, Second Vatican Council decree on Ecumenism (1964), n.11 on the 'hierarchy of truths'.

Challenges and Opportunities for the Society of Jesus

1. In Europe, the continued numerical decline of the Society will continue to cause collective unease, as well as practical difficulties in apostolic planning. The challenge is double: to express the Society's universality by encouraging the exchange of gifts between European Jesuits and those from elsewhere: and to resist the marginalisation of the Society from important cultural debates;
2. Church Social Teaching makes universal claims based on reason, yet has an explicitly Catholic anthropology. The methodological challenge of presenting this teaching in a secular setting deserves the Society's continued attention, at the level of theology, ecclesiology, social and cultural studies, and practical advocacy. Respect for the secular milieu requires that we strive to be constructive rather than merely defensive, to discover God's Spirit active there, as well as the 'bad spirit'. The frequent, almost reflex, dismissal of Christian thinking from the standpoint of ideological secularism is a challenge to evangelical courage and imagination;
3. In earlier ages, cultural norms and 'plausibility structures' allowed many people to take religious belief somewhat for granted, with little sense of the need for personal deepening. Nowadays, adherence to a community of faith requires a clear personal decision. Without a conscious faith-vision, and without a strong sense of the *community* of faith, people are likely to drift away. The challenge to catechesis is therefore also a challenge to build community;
4. The Society's centres of spirituality operate ecumenically in many places. Groups such as 'Les Deux Rives', as well as many Jesuit scholars and local pastors, work in the field of inter-religious dialogue. In cases where Islam finds itself in tension with secular norms, the Church could play a valuable mediating function, since it well understands the role of symbolic expression in faith life.



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