



AGM Declaration: Trusting in a Social Europe

**EURODIACONIA
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On the occasion of its Annual General Meeting, Eurodiaconia members wish to respond to the political, social and economic uncertainties in Europe and address the question of trust in our societies. Our joint response is based on our common hope and our willingness to act together. We also believe, that one of the key components of the Christian faith is that all humans are of equal value, created in the image of God and should not be defined by their social, economic or religious status.

Therefore, we have agreed:

- Trust is at the heart of our identity as Christian organizations. Trust means having and fostering faith in people, their actions and in the future. Trust is the basis of hope and the opposite of fear, without being naïve or uncritical.
- The rise of modern social protection systems more than a century ago was based on the willingness to protect vulnerable groups against collective risks and redistribute resources accordingly. Trust and mutuality, therefore, constitute the founding of European social systems. For this reason, lack of trust threatens the heart of social protection systems, compromises their future and puts the idea of Social Europe at stake.
- The impact of the financial, economic and democratic crisis is still evident in weakened confidence in political processes and media in times of “fake news”. This generates an erosion of trust and is escalating polarization in societies across Europe. As organizations based in the Christian faith, we believe we have Good News, not fake news, and we believe in the responsibility and solidarity of all in sharing the burdens of our societies.
- There is a strong correlation between people’s socioeconomic situation and the amount of trust they have in their government. We believe it is in the best interests for states economically and with a long-term perspective to invest in and care about the people who are disenfranchised.
- A lack of a clear vision for Europe can lead to uncertainty. The European Pillar of Social Rights and the Sustainable Development Goals, when considered together, have the potential to form a coherent and comprehensive post-2020 strategy for the EU and can become a silver lining of hope.





- Through our direct connection with people, we are in a privileged position to bring to life many of the social initiatives coming from the EU and national levels, with the potential to bring positive change to people's lives. In this regard, we act as messengers of trust through our praxis and advocacy action.
- Social services and the fight for social justice are cornerstones of trust. Trust is often best built on a personal level, for example while caring for people who have been entrusted to our services by their relatives or by public authorities. Building trust is a cornerstone of the quality of our work.
- Trust has to be built through dialogue, and this includes political decision makers having a broad responsibility to work for the common good. This also includes ensuring that any social system is trusted by those who may use the system.
- Policy developments at European level must also be underpinned by trust – trust that there will be political, financial and legislative actions to meet the ambition of instruments such as the European Pillar of Social Rights and the Sustainable Development Goals.

Therefore, we declare that:

- Eurodiaconia members remain committed to continue acting as enablers of trust.
- We are challenged daily to pursue increased quality and transparency to be trustworthy.
- Inspired by the hope of the Gospel and as advocates for social justice we are clearly working for the common good and for a stronger social Europe.
- Eurodiaconia members will work to strengthen the rights, voice, and democratic power of society's least privileged groups and thereby contribute to the social cohesion in our societies.
- We oppose all forms of populism and extremism that encourage xenophobia, racism, othering and exclusion.
- We call upon politicians to safeguard trust levels in our societies instead of fueling feelings against it.
- We ask public authorities to trust in our capacity to bring trust our users and our societies.