

Compact for Europe



*Promoting solidarity
Strengthening cohesion
Shaping the future*

socioMovens 
.....
giving europe a soul

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Editors

Jakob Ohm
Konrad J. Haase
Sandra Knoblich
Dr. Peter Klasvogt

Editorial address

socioMovens e.V.
Brackeler Hellweg 144
44309 Dortmund - Germany
Fon +49 (0)231 - 20605-0
Fax +49 (0)231 - 20605-80
E-Mail: info@sociomovens.net
Website: www.sociomovens.net

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Giving Europe a soul – vision and mission

The year 1989 will probably go down in history as a "stroke of luck" for Europe., with the fall of the Berlin Wall marking the end of the division of the European continent. Just for a moment, the message in the strains of the European anthem of Beethoven's Ninth Symphony came true: "All men shall become brothers," (still resonating when the European Union is awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 2012 on the grounds that it represents a "brotherhood between nations"). That spirit of optimism that began with German reunification also acted as a narrative uniting nations at the European level. In the words of then-Pope John Paul II: " In the process of transformation which it is now undergoing, Europe is called above all to rediscover its true identity. Even though it has developed into a highly diversified reality, it needs to build a new model of unity in diversity, as a community of reconciled nations open to the other continents and engaged in the present process of globalization." ¹ Behind this was the conviction that the construction of a humane society has to be based on the ethical principle of social justice, while maintaining the balance between unity and freedom.

But what began so hopefully with the opening of the "Iron Curtain" and the overcoming of the division of Europe, would soon present the European Union with new challenges, especially when seen against the background of the Balkan War. The "European engine" began to sputter, and the European integration project seemed to be losing the support of its citizens. In this situation, the French Socialist and then Commission President Jacques Delors addressed the Conference of European Churches (CEC) with an urgent appeal: "We are now entering a fascinating time - perhaps especially for the young generation [...] - If in the next ten years we haven't managed to give a soul to Europe, to give it spirituality and meaning, the game will be up ." ² With this, Delors made it clear that Europe is more than a technocratic entity, more than just market and competition. For European identity stems from a common culture and shared values. Its spiritual roots have been shaped above all by Greco-Roman antiquity, Judeo-Christian tradition, Islamic influences and the Enlightenment.

This is also recalled in the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union, which makes specific reference to its spiritual, religious and moral heritage in its preamble: "The peoples of Europe, in creating an ever closer union among them, are resolved to share a peaceful future based on common values. Conscious of its spiritual and moral heritage, the Union is founded on the indivisible, universal values of human dignity, freedom, equality and solidarity; it is based on the principles of democracy and the rule of law. It places the individual at the heart of its activities, by establishing the citizenship of the Union and by creating an area of freedom, security and justice."³ The European Union's understanding of itself is as a community of values, as reflected in its Charter of Fundamental Rights, which makes explicit mention of the obligation for solidarity between people and states as well as the defense of a European social model with high social standards.⁴ If it was the concern of Jacques Delors to "create a place of exchange, a space for discussion that is open to spiritually minded men and women, believers and non-believers, scientists and artists," then it is precisely also a mandate for the young generation to commit itself to this cultural dialogue and to morally authenticate its own ethical claim in a consciously practiced commitment to values.

The still young socioMovens movement, which has been conducting socio-ethical youth project weeks in the countries of Central and Eastern Europe since 2013, with the aim of contributing to a humane society based on solidarity, is committed to precisely this claim. If the President of the Commission complained at the time that "We lack true inspiration and therefore have no vision of the future"⁵, this youth initiative with its "universal concept of fraternity and globalization of solidarity" (Cardinal Peter Turkson) proves that young people are very much ready to work for the "common house" and the ideal of a humane and socially just society, for values on which Europe can also build in the future.

1. European values

During his 2014 visit to Strasbourg, Pope Francis diagnosed a "future fatigue" in Europe. He questioned what had become of the great religious, humanistic and political ideals that once made up Europe's greatness. Regardless of whether one recognizes Pope Francis as a religious leader, this diagnosis challenges one to consider what potential for hope for this "ancient" European continent offers, one which has always seen itself as a fruitful symbiosis of "Athens, Rome and Jerusalem", as the heir to the philosophical concept of the person, the Roman rule of law and the conception of transcendence in the Judeo-Christian tradition that elevates man. How can Europe today build on its original power to shape coexistence? This recourse to those values that once made Europe strong and great is not a nostalgic look back at supposedly better times, but is called for in particular in times of crisis marked by political, social and cultural upheaval. Political extremists and conspiracy theorists who invoke nationalist or identitarian rallying movements, just like religious fundamentalists and nostalgics who long for the former "Christian West," consider "their truth" absolute, and marginalize all those who do not share their ideas. The trench warfare being waged in the field of family policy and gender identity also testifies to this. This makes it all the more important to reflect on the stock of common values, which not infrequently demands a change of perspective. Rather than conjuring up the ghosts of the past, it is important to look out for "beacons" of promise on the horizon of the future. The decisive factor here is likely to be the value set with which, above all, young people in Europe will shape the future. The former President of the European Commission, Jacques Delors, appealed to the "soul of Europe," the set of common values to which the religious communities in particular are committed, and called for it to be given new radiance. Where it leads, when the basic values of human dignity and the common good are disregarded, the human community was forced to experience painfully in the past under the influence of totalitarian regimes, like an unleashed materialism. But what is conceptually described here as the "soul of Europe" goes beyond purely geopolitical consideration and touches on quite fundamental ideas of what it means to be human and to live together in a society. This is associated with a concept of justice that should apply everywhere - not only in Europe. It is perhaps the privilege of young people that they in

particular are addressed by these ideals, that they act as admonishers pushing for social change and that they stand up for these values both in their personal surroundings and in civil society. But for a "culture of fraternity" to emerge in the perspective of a "worldwide common good," a departure is needed in which the diversity of the European canon of values must come into renewed focus, particularly in view of the fragility of a coexistence that is oriented toward the common good, such that a "new way of thinking" also corresponds to a new, value- and future-oriented way of acting.

Europe - a continent between crisis and hope

The process of European unification rapidly gained momentum after the fall of the "Berlin Wall" and the demise of the communist systems in Central and Eastern Europe. However, it did not take long before the Balkan wars of the 1990s revealed that the conflicts of the 20th century had left lasting scars. Religious communities, too, have not been free of grudges, until recent times still failing to live up to their potential as peacemakers and bridge-builders and even contributing to the escalation of geopolitical and ethnic conflicts. The Hungarian sociologist and theologian András Maté-Tóth speaks of "wounded collective identities" in relation to the upheavals in Central and Eastern Europe in particular, and calls for a high degree of sensitivity in the European integration process. In the interest of intellectual and human integrity, the experiences that have burrowed deep into the layers of individual and collective consciousness must always resonate when addressing the potential for hope for the future of the continent. In their novels and poems, writers such as Imre Kertész (Hungary), Hertha Müller (Romania), and Svetlana Alexievich (Belarus) have reflected on and given expression to decades of painful experience. Upheavals in history, such as the redrawing of borders after the world wars, the division of Europe into East and West, each with its own social system, and all the other political, social and economic crises have left deep scars in the souls of broad sections of the population, which often stand in the way of the development of sustainable civil societies.

At the same time, however, an axis of hope, as it were, a second point of orientation is emerging within the European coordinate system. With the fall of the Berlin

Wall and opening of the Iron Curtain, Europe was given the historic opportunity that "what belongs together grows together" (Willy Brandt), that Europe again "breathes with both lungs" (Pope John Paul II) and that we might settle down in the "European house" in a spirit of good neighborly relations (Mikhail Gorbachev). But what began so hopefully in the years of political change has largely given way to a feeling of resignation. The European Union has often displayed a democratic, economic and cultural dominance over new members of the confederation, which lessened the desire to meet on an equal footing and counteracted efforts to establish good neighborly relations. Under the impression of unbridled individualism and libertinism, of primarily Western character, in which everyone is their own person, individually and collectively, the "soul of Europe" has also suffered serious damage. The 2008 financial crisis, the 2015 refugee crisis, and most recently the Corona pandemic have demonstrated that different value traditions, all claiming to bear the "European" label, coexist and sometimes even compete with each other. This tension is further fueled by the constant ecological crisis, economic and cultural globalization, and increasing economization and digitalization of the worlds of work and relationships. It seems that Europe has finally arrived at the stage of a "liquid modernity" (Zygmunt Bauman), in which there are barely any more fixed moral benchmarks for living together. Added to this are the tangible geopolitical shifts and resulting conflicts, such as Russia's annexation of Crimea and its "frozen conflict" with hybrid warfare in the Donbass, as well as the growing political significance of "fake news" and the political effects and destabilizations that go with it.

Against this background, "giving Europe a soul" is a high aspiration, but it is also a challenge for a new generation to reflect on the supporting pillars of coexistence and to creatively breathe new life into the values that have been handed down. This requires them to reflect on the stock of common values for which Europe still stands.

*The community of European values -
an orchestra without a conductor?*

In Europe, there are very different value traditions, which are often in a state of dynamic tension with each

other and sometimes even enter into open competition. The coexistence of these traditions and families of values is a characteristic feature of European thinking; it is like an orchestra with no conductor, in which each member plays its own tune. It is therefore worth making the effort to listen to the individual voices and, in doing so, to ask the fundamental question of how to create an awakening scenario in the service of the common good.

One dominant voice is undoubtedly the legacy of Greco-Roman antiquity, whose notion of the polis was instrumental in shaping modern notions of the rule of law and a reason-based concept of politics. The notion of an objective natural law as a reliable guarantor of decisions at the individual and societal levels also plays a role in this tradition. As for European intellectual history and the concepts of good and evil, right and wrong, however, Christianity was at least as formative (both in the Latin West and the Byzantine East). The idea of a personal and loving God went significantly beyond purely legal notions of good coexistence and was reflected in the ideal of a moral "decentering", i.e. giving due consideration to the "other", not just individually but also politically. The notion of moral equality as a consequence of the Christian faith signifies the birth both of our notion of individuality and of the human person, who must be at the center of all our endeavors. This self-perception of the "continent of Christianity", which was culturally formative in the entire area between Lisbon and St. Petersburg – and in large parts still is – was always a necessary corrective to particularistic national interests and thus promoted the ideal of diversity in unity. The rise of Christianity and its image of man can therefore justifiably be regarded as a "moral revolution" that continues to profoundly shape modern ideas of personhood, responsibility and the value of human life to this day, even though the practiced faith that was once the engine of this movement is in crisis in large parts of Europe.

Also important to mention within this concert of values is the rich Jewish heritage of Europe, which, through the tragic vicissitudes of history, has mostly been perceived only through the eyes of Christianity, and whose impact history has only finally been adequately appreciated in the wake of the Holocaust. It is time to acknowledge the essential contribution of the religion of the "First Testament" to the European stock of values and to recognize the painful wound that was ripped into the

face of Europe in the 20th century by the murder of 6 million Jewish people.

Regarding immigration from Muslim countries, there has been (and still is) a vehement dispute in Germany since the 1950s as to whether Islam belongs "in Germany," yet it is beyond dispute that Europe has for centuries been influenced in many ways by Muslim culture – another voice in the aforementioned orchestra that cannot be ignored: "The encounter of peoples, cultures and religions, not least of Islam with Christianity and Judaism, has stimulated innovation and invention of greatly lasting effect." (Michael Borgolte)⁶ The Muslim-Christian symbiosis in previous centuries is characterized primarily by military conquests, and reciprocal subjugations gave rise to the preconditions for cultural exchange processes from which Europe still draws today. "Once the Arab conquests had destroyed the ancient Mediterranean world, Europe could be discovered and culturally penetrated. Muslims imparted to Christians the achievements of ancient and Oriental scholarship."⁷

By the beginning of the Reformation in Western Europe and at the latest since the Enlightenment and the French Revolution, liberalism and individuality played a decisive role in the orchestra of European values, which manifested themselves politically in the nation-state aspirations of the 19th century and to this day remain highly influential in shaping the lives of individuals. These rather individualistic values exist in tension with more communitarian value traditions, which include family values, for example, and which are and must remain an indispensable and equal component of the European value system.

In view of this complex starting position, there might be a notion that a value-oriented commitment to the common good is bound to come to nothing nowadays and that everyone is playing his or her own song in the "orchestra of values". Nevertheless, in the context of a universal brotherhood, a symphonic togetherness can yet emerge from the undirected juxtaposition of the individual melodies. For there is still a common ground of shared value convictions. This is the basis by which all can use their own strengths to shape the common good.

Universal principles of Christian social ethics

Pope Francis, by title the "supreme bridge builder" (Pontifex Maximus), has made it his task to go to the "peripheries" of the world and take his church there with him. This refers not only to geographically remote locations, but in particular, to places that need more attention from a spiritual, moral, economic or political perspective. You see the world more clearly, he said, if you look at it from its margins. This places Pope Francis within the tradition of Catholic social teachings and fundamental principles.

Even though the expression 'Catholic social teaching' has been seen as a technical term since Pope Leo XIII's encyclical *Rerum Novarum* of 1891, it is more a "system of open propositions," a few fundamental principles, which require individual and often creative appropriation in social and political contexts. They are thought-provoking impulses that invite further thinking and spirited action. This is why the so-called social encyclicals (papal teaching letters on social issues), always consciously address "all people of good will," regardless of their religious confession or worldview. All people are invited to continue thinking and working for the good on the basis of these fundamental principles, which can be shared even by those without religious confession:

Personality

The Latin word "personare" means "to resound through." Something of a deeper dimension of life resounds in a person. Accordingly, being a person also means being more than a mere individual, that is, a single being. Rather, the human being is created to seek community with others and to endeavor to create a good life together with them. One could also say that being a person means being neither totally alone nor completely disappearing in the crowd.

Common good

If being a person constitutively means standing both within oneself and in relation to others, it is only consistent that the good of the individual is always in a creative and constructive state of tension with the good of the community. However, this often leads to a disparity once property and ownership are at stake. Many attempts at resolving this problem in one way or another are known from historical and political practice. Communist and socialist attempts at redistribution have

failed, as has the capitalist social system, where profit for the individual is regarded as being at the expense and detriment of both the community and the environment. In this respect, the common good principle is a protection above all for the weaker and a rejection of excessive materialistic self-interest, but also of collectivist distortions. Other social principles derive from the following two fundamental principles:

Solidarity

Viewed against the backdrop of the fundamental principles of personhood and the common good, it becomes clear that, as social beings, humans do not live for themselves alone, but always within a social fabric, and this is all the more so in a digitalized and globalized world. Solidarity then means using this potential of networking in such a way that a truly sustainable network is created in which the weaker, poorer and disadvantaged are also supported. Solidarity therefore means walking through the world with an alert eye for the needs and concerns of others and, where necessary, being prepared to help. This also implies a concrete attitude and approach to life: the other person is seen first and foremost as an enrichment and a necessity for one's own life, not as a competition or a threat. The Polish philosopher and theologian József Tischner speaks of an "ethic of solidarity", insofar as this principle stands as a guarantee that genuine humanity is even possible and achievable after the experiences of war and genocide.

Subsidiarity

The Latin word "subsidiium" means support, assistance. The principle of subsidiarity strengthens the personal responsibility of the individual or the smaller or weaker group and protects them from being overcome or encroached upon. Solutions to problems should first of all always be found at the lowest possible level. On the other hand, no social entity, including an individual, should be left alone to solve their problems. In this case, it is necessary for the next highest authority to intervene in a protective and supportive manner and, to a certain extent, to help people to help themselves.

Sustainability

The principle of sustainability places the two preceding ones within an even broader field of vision and stands for concern for the environment, posterity and fellow human beings. It is above all Pope Francis who, in his social encyclical *Laudato si'*, calls for "care for the com-

mon home" in a global perspective and says how "sister earth, along with all the abandoned of our world [have been caused to] cry out" (LS 53). The ecological and social crises are interrelated and demand comprehensive global solutions, with due regard for the poor of the world and as a commitment to future generations. It is about an "integral" development of the world and of man. Thus, the principle of sustainability and the integrity of creation is not a mere environmental principle, but a genuine social principle, which can develop its inspiring effect far beyond the sphere of the Catholic Church.

As it turns out, the principles of Catholic social teaching are interrelated and consciously openly formulated. They are guiding principles into which new life is breathed in specific situations. Only through the creative struggle for their meaning in a concrete context do they unfold their full power. They have an inspiring effect insofar as they have universal significance and are not bound to a specific religious confession. Rather, a rich treasure of human experience is "condensed" in them, so that they might contribute to an increase in humanity and genuine compassion for the good of the individual as well as of (world) society: a source of inspiration for a society, and not only in Europe, which renews itself through the values of its Christian tradition.

Interreligious commitment to the one human family

From the logic of these social principles, it can be understood that Pope Francis, as the "supreme bridge builder," also wanted to send a strong signal against the often invoked "clash of civilizations," when he traveled to Abu Dhabi on the Arabian Peninsula. At a historic meeting on February 4, 2019 with Ahmad al-Tayyib, the Grand Imam of Cairo and one of the highest religious authorities in the Islamic world, the two religious leaders signed a joint declaration of commitment to a fraternal world: a masterpiece of how to overcome the deep rifts between Christianity and Islam, addressing the great questions of humanity and finding a "common ground" on which a joint commitment of "all people of good will" becomes possible. A few references will suffice to make clear how cross-fertilization on the basis of each one's own tradition can succeed and lead to a "deep practice of human dignity" (Clemens Sedmak): as an urgent appeal for the evolution of a fraternal culture:

The culture of mutual respect

Commitment to the dignity common to all human beings, which according to the faith of both religions has its origin in God, is a common thread running through the document. It leads to an inescapable commitment to the protection of this dignity, regardless of religion or nationality. This commitment provides the common ground on which people of different origins can meet as human beings - despite all superficial conflicts. The document thus becomes "for the younger generations a guide to a culture of mutual respect" and a source of inspiration for all people who are "of good and sincere will." Therefore, a culture of mutual respect can be identified as the first milestone of the envisaged culture of fraternity.

The culture of togetherness

The actual content of the document is preceded in impressive manner by an enumeration of those persons and groups to whom this declaration of universal fraternity is especially dedicated. This recalls the "panorama of the periphery," inviting us to take the perspectives of all those who are disadvantaged and marginalized, and thus to gain a clearer view of the necessities of our own actions. Again, the document reminds us of the common vocation of all human beings to live as brothers and sisters, and then enumerates those in whose names the common declaration is being made: the poor, the needy and the marginalized; widows, orphans, refugees and all victims of war and violence; prisoners of war and the tortured; peoples who must live without security and peace....

This list is a direct invitation to us to think and ask ourselves which people and groups from our own immediate environment and in our own social and political context should be included. At the same time, the document also calls on all holders of positions of responsibility, politicians, philosophers, religious authorities and cultural workers to serve this dialogical culture of togetherness. It then becomes clear that the construction of a culture of fraternity can only succeed in the spirit of a genuinely integrative togetherness, in which actions are guided by the perspective from the periphery.

The culture of life

For all their appreciation of the tremendous successes in science and technology, Pope Francis and Grand Imam al-Tayyib bring to mind the profound moral dimension of these developments. Technical feasibility

and economic interests must never be at the expense of the weakest, which would lead to an erosion of ethics. Therefore, they warn against the danger of dependencies and individual and collective self-destruction and condemn all "practices that threaten life," such as all forms of euthanasia, genocide, forced relocation, organ trafficking and abortion. Pope Francis and Grand Imam al-Tayyib give their voice to all those who are directly threatened by a culture of death and destructiveness. Living fraternally, therefore, also means promoting a culture of life and philanthropy and plainly rejecting the valuation of life according to economic considerations or utilitarian criteria.

The culture of responsibility for creation

The culture of life, according to Pope Francis and Grand Imam al-Tayyib, goes hand in hand with a sensitivity to the suffering of non-human creation. Thus, they urge a conscious approach to the environment and natural resources, pointing out that the ecological crisis cannot be viewed in isolation from the social crisis. A culture of responsibility for creation is part of an expanded understanding of the protection of life in the sense of human ecology, which explores the central question of how humans and human societies interact with nature and their environment - a perspective that is very familiar, especially to young people.

The culture of peace

The document attaches particular importance to the understanding of peace, which is not to be understood merely as the absence of war, but in a comprehensive sense, as a way of life based on mutual goodwill. The document unequivocally rejects the obvious forms of war, the arms trade and terrorism, and in particular, all forms of violence based on religion. In addition, Pope Francis and Grand Imam al-Tayyib oppose the predominance of materialistic ideas and point out that a culture of peace must start with the protection of the family as a place of learning for harmonious coexistence, and that minorities must be protected from discrimination. In this way, a comprehensive culture of peace is created between individuals, social, religious and political groups, and also nations.

Universal fraternity - the future of a vision

The Abu Dhabi document on the fraternity of all people demonstrates impressively how today, more than ever,

commitment to the common good calls for an attitude of dialogue. Differences in worldview, politics and religion need not prevent a common commitment to the good. Rather, they should be seen as an enrichment and can be brought to bear for the good of all people. The seemingly uncondensed orchestra of diverse values takes on a harmonious sound, once a common line of vision is adopted. Inspired by the joint achievement of Grand Imam al-Tayyib and Pope Francis, this line of vision takes the perspective of the excluded and the disadvantaged. When this condition is met, there is no longer a need for rigid instructions for action. Rather, the result is the dynamic process of interplay between positive forces.

This interplay, in turn, opens our eyes towards our "natural allies" outside of our own ideological cosmos. In this respect, the Abu Dhabi document is a model and at the same time a best practice example of how religious people take the initiative for a new beginning on the basis of their own tradition and put aside all ideological differences. This bridge-building should also succeed between religious and secular approaches. There are already good approaches towards this goal, such as the "Sustainable Development Goals" (SDGs) of the United Nations or the "Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union". Similar to the document on the fraternity of all people, they set out goals for an integral development of humanity, which focus above all on the disadvantaged and excluded. Despite all the crisis scenarios mentioned, there is already a broad basis for a united commitment of all people of good will towards a more humane future. This already points to the ideals of the younger generations, who appear ready for a dynamic of awakening to make our world more humane. The fact that this is not just an assumption, but is based on empirical research, is evident from the findings of numerous value studies that have been carried out in Europe in recent years.

2. Europe - a union of values?

European Values Study (2008):

*A historically evolved value consensus*⁸

Europe can look back on a long tradition of ideals, to a past rich in values, evolved over centuries, and tested, modified and developed in ever new permutations. Despite all the political and cultural turmoil that we have endured, we can nevertheless assume that there has been a broad consensus on European values. But what about the present? What values are significant now, and which do the people of today consider the most important?

The European Values Study (EVS, 1981-2008) is a long-term survey of value perceptions throughout Europe that attempts to answer these questions. The results are based on a total of four surveys, most recently from 2008, and are of interest not only from a sociological point of view. After all, from the outset, it was important to the founders of the European Union "that intensifying economic integration and political cooperation in Europe would not only prevent wars, but also strengthen loyalty and unity and thus identification with Europe."⁹ Overall, people indicated a broad satisfaction with their lives in both Western and Northern Europe (over 75%) and Eastern and Southern Europe (over 54%). To obtain more detailed findings, the survey also asked about people's attitudes to various aspects of life, as outlined in the following.

Family

The family has by far the highest priority for people in Europe (85.83%). Families are the nuclei of society. The community of responsibility formed by marriage and family is firmly rooted in society in all European countries. The study thus confirms the fundamental statement of the UN Human Rights Charter: "The family is the natural and fundamental group unit of society and is entitled to the protection and special care of the State and society." Families perform fundamental functions for society and by doing so they relieve the community to an inconceivable degree. As the focal point of upbringing and socialization, the family represents the first social network for adolescents and familiarizes them with societal and social norms. According to the Values Study, upbringing places particular emphasis on assuming responsibility and showing tolerance and

respect for others. In addition, the family ensures the protection of weaker individuals, such as children as well as sick and elderly family members, by providing care and satisfying material needs.

Work

Work is another central aspect of life; it has the second highest priority (58.20%), ahead of friends (46.72%) and leisure (39.54%). This shows that work is and remains an existential component of people's lives in Europe. Satisfactory work provides people with an income and is a means of financing their social security. But by serving human self-fulfillment, work is also a value in itself. Working gives meaning, defines one's place in society, structures one's life and strengthens one's self-esteem.

Religion

Among the central aspects of life, religion assumes a subordinate position, with a priority of 25.93%. However, surveys show that since 1981, over 60% of people in Europe have described themselves as religious – with a growing trend (over 70% in 2008); in contrast, only just under 30% describe themselves as non-religious (with a declining trend from 1990). The proportion of confirmed atheists in Europe continues to be very low (about 5%). Overall, over 77% of people in Southern Europe describe themselves as religious, with a smaller number in Eastern and Western Europe (over 65%) and an even smaller one in Northern Europe (under 60%). When asked what problems and needs people look to the churches for answers to, spiritual needs are cited as a priority (about 67%), as are moral problems (about 51%) and problems in family life (about 43%). Churches are least expected to provide answers to social problems (approx. 31%).

Community and social involvement

This takes place primarily in sports clubs (13.42 %), trade unions (11.11 %) and churches (10.09 %), as well as in social services (5.21 %), but it has been in constant decline in all respects since 1981. In social terms, people in Europe are particularly concerned about the living conditions of the elderly (30.50%) and child poverty (29.71%). Their solidarity also extends to a high degree to people with illness and disability (25.53%), as well as the unemployed (18.40%). Since 1999, the value attached to showing solidarity and sympathy with disadvantaged groups has increased appreciably (by about 3% each), especially in Eastern and Southern Europe (in countries with often inadequate social systems).

Ecology and politics

The ecological crisis is causing many people great concern. On average, around 82% of people in Europe agree with the statement that the world will soon be heading for a major ecological catastrophe if nothing changes; the willingness to donate is correspondingly high.

However, these figures are likely to have risen significantly since the last survey in 2008. This is because it was only in October 2008 that the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) created the scientific basis for assessing the risk associated with global warming of 1.5 °C. The IPCC's findings are based on the latest scientific findings. It was in the aftermath of the UN Climate Change Conference in Paris (COP 21) in 2015 that the full extent of the consequences of global warming and the risks of climate change for humans and nature were first documented. Protests organized worldwide by young people in the Fridays for Future movement have been taking place since 2019.

In contrast, relatively little relevance is attributed to politics. Interest in politics is most pronounced in Eastern Europe (51.80 %), but less in Western, Northern and Southern Europe (43.33 % and 45.06 % respectively). However, democracy as a political system is held in high esteem (88%). This is also reflected by the extremely high approval rating of around 90% accorded the statement: "Democracy may have problems, but it is better than any other form of government." The European Union as an institution also enjoys high trust in the surveys.

Notwithstanding the great differences between East and West, North and South, and the great heterogeneity of the respective cultures, languages and contexts shaped by historical trajectories, it is evident that there is a common set of values that unites the people of Europe. In this respect, the broad-based European Values Study provides a good overview of the attitudes, goals and concerns of people in Europe.

However, in order to capture the particular situation of the young generation in Europe more precisely, it needs to be complemented by current youth studies. After all, today's young people are tomorrow's decision-makers in society, politics and business. In this respect, the value concepts of young people in Europe are of particular interest. Over the years, the Shell Youth Study

has drawn a very differentiated profile of young people in Germany. Along with the Sinus Youth Study (2020), it is recommended as a frame of reference for the results of the Youth in Europe 2021 study (commissioned by the European Parliament) and the Youth Study Southeast Europe (2018/ 2019).

*Shell Youth Study 2019:
The Generation Europe speaks out*¹⁰

A representative survey of young people between the ages of 12 and 25 is conducted every four years (and has been since 1953!), in which participants are asked to provide information about their life situations, attitudes and orientations. Entitled "Youth 2019 - A generation speaks out," the 18th Shell Youth Study paints a picture of the social and political conditions under which young people in Germany grow up. According to the study's director, Professor Mathias Albert, the conclusion of the latest study is that "in 2015, many young people had already shown greater commitment to political and social matters. They are now reinforcing this commitment with an increasing awareness of environmental and climate issues. Although young people view their personal future and that of society with optimism, they also see that it's time to act." The message of youth to the older generations is, "We remain confident, but listen to us, and pay attention to our future now!" More than half of young people are more positive about society's future. Their satisfaction with democracy is increasing. The majority of young people are tolerant and socially liberal. What scares young people most is environmental destruction. The following presents a selection of the results of the survey:

Family

For the overwhelming majority of young people, good friends, a trusting partnership and a good family life continue to be the most important values. Family is highly valued by most young people. They get along well with their parents (92%) and cite them as role models (78%). They also express an increasing desire to start a family of their own later on (68%).

Tolerance

59% of young people think that all in all, things are fair in Germany. Tolerance of diverse lifestyles is high overall. The study shows that a very large majority of girls and boys have a positive attitude toward different

social groups and minorities. Rejection ratings are consistently below 20%.

Orientation toward meaningful values

Overall, idealistic, more meaningful value orientations are once again more popular among young people. The trend is in the opposite direction for materialistic orientations, which aim to increase personal power and assertiveness. A high standard of living and asserting one's own needs are becoming comparatively less important than in previous surveys.

Religion

The vast majority of young people are members of a religious community. However, the proportion of young people for whom belief in God is actually important is significantly – almost one-third – lower. While Christian denominations have steadily lost youth members since 2002, Islam and other non-Christian religions have gained in importance.

Politics

Young people want to be heard. Many describe themselves as politically interested (41%) and attach great importance to political commitment (34%). More than three-quarters of young people are satisfied with democracy (77 %). At the same time, more than two-thirds criticize politicians for not looking after their interests; this can be seen as one of the causes of disenchantment with politics. The young generation is particularly afraid of environmental pollution (71%), terrorist attacks (66%) and climate change (65%). More than 90% of young people appreciate the advantages of the European Union - whether for traveling, studying or working; only 8% have a negative view of the EU.

Sinus Youth Study (2020):

Generation problem awareness¹¹

The study, which has been conducted by the Heidelberg Sinus Institute every four years since 2008, does not claim to be statistically representative, unlike the Shell Study, for example. However, the qualitative study is characteristic "in psychological terms" in that it seeks to determine the mindset of "youth".

The life worlds of young people continue to be highly nuanced. For example, the Sinus study identifies three basic normative orientations among current 14-17 year-olds, these being "security," "affirmation/benefits" and

"charisma". As in previous generations, there is a wide range of lifestyles and value systems. And yet, beyond all the differences, the study identifies a number of common features that significantly shape the young generation¹²:

Seriousness and problem awareness

Overall, the hedonistic mentality commonly attributed to "youth" is in decline: lifestyle and partying are losing importance. "Achievement" and "personal responsibility" are high on the agenda of young people today. At the same time, however, "skepticism toward the neoliberal competitive paradigm" has continued to grow. The general mood of youth is described as "mutedly optimistic." "Many young people are aware that the survival of the planet is at risk." Most favored cultural diversity, which they often take for granted, but are nonetheless often concerned about continuing immigration. Ultimately, young people view the world and its problems seriously and realistically. "It almost seems as if young people have lost their sense of fun," the authors conclude in astonishment.

Safety instead of escape

Safety and security are the central concerns for most of those surveyed. The "social megatrend toward regrounding" - the longing for solid ground and orientation reinforces the lack of clarity in the world situation and a crisis that is set to last. The Corona crisis has also had an unsettling effect. The youth zeitgeist is "green" and seeks to preserve. The attributes of loyalty, helpfulness and tolerance are valued in all life worlds of young people, in addition to the action-oriented values of achievement and self-determination. Thus, the "renaissance of classic virtues" already observed in the previous study has been perpetuated. "Values such as decency, loyalty, diligence, order and modesty are once again valid in the younger generation." Family plays a major role for many. Unlike in the past, young people are less likely to name rock stars or athletes as role models, preferring people from their own families.

Individualization is viewed critically

The sociocultural trend toward self-optimization and "self-centeredness," toward dominance and rivalry, has weakened considerably among the younger generation. In many cases, young people complain of an "every man for himself" mentality and a lack of social cohesion. Particularly in view of the Corona crisis, many of them emphasized the relevance of a caring attitude

and social togetherness. Neoliberal competition and efficiency thinking is viewed extremely critically by 14-17 year-olds; performance and competition fears are widespread. "In the majority of young people's lives today, good, secure living conditions are more important than status, success and advancement," the authors write. It's less about "doing one's own thing" and being successful at all costs than about "well-being, health, balance and social inclusion." Last but not least, more or less explicit criticism of the capitalist axiom of limitless growth with simultaneously limited resources, of the unconditional economic compulsion to increase and the economization of many areas of life, is being voiced more and more frequently by young people.

Young people do not feel heard

The climate crisis, according to the widespread opinion of young people, is not being taken seriously by those responsible, and solutions to problems are being delayed or prevented. A consequence of this perception are a sense of powerlessness and sullenness. "Many young people have the feeling of powerlessness or a lack of influence and the conviction that as minors they can do nothing," the study concludes. Their growing outrage is channeled primarily in contemporary climate demonstrations. "The criticism of the cynicism of the elders," can be found in all life worlds of young people. "What is new is that the topic of sustainability is linked to the aspect of intergenerational justice" (Thomas Krüger, BpB). Politicians must prepare themselves for the fact that young people will look after their own concerns in the future.

"Youth in Europe" 2021:

*Socially and sociopolitically committed*¹³

Whether the moods of the young generation in Germany correlate with the attitudes and values of young people in other European countries is a question about which the field study "Youth in Europe 2021" commissioned by the European Parliament provides an insight. However, the survey focuses primarily on political participation, and less on the values of young people, which means that the results can only be compared with value studies conducted in Germany to a limited extent. By and large, however, it can already be revealed that they confirm previous findings.

Socio-political values

About three out of five respondents (62%) are generally positive about the European Union. The political issues to which young respondents in Europe accord the highest priority include combating poverty and social inequality (43%), followed by combating climate change and protecting the environment (39%), and combating unemployment (37%). More than a third of respondents would also like to see priority given to improving the health and well-being of the population. More than a quarter want to improve access to education and training (28%) and fight corruption (27%). Combating cyber and online threats (15%), addressing immigration challenges (13%), and countering rising extremism (13%) are cited as lower-ranking issues.¹⁴

Social values

In addition to the enquiry as to what the highest priority issues are, respondents were presented with a list of values and asked which of these they considered most important. Protection of human rights and democracy ranked first (56%), followed by freedom of speech, which was chosen by nearly half of respondents (48%). Further down, gender equality and solidarity between people are each cited by more than a third of respondents (38% and 36%, respectively). Comparatively lower values are accorded the abolition of the death penalty throughout the world (13%), solidarity between EU member states (15%) and solidarity between the EU and the world's poor countries (16%).¹⁵

Social and political commitment

Lack of time is the most frequently cited barrier to volunteering (23%), followed by lack of interest (17%). Lack of understanding and awareness is also an issue (14%). An equal number say they are unaware of charitable organizations or campaigns that match their interests. However, 17% of respondents reported being socially involved in a charity (e.g., Amnesty, Greenpeace, Oxfam).

*Youth studies in Central, Eastern and Southeastern Europe: Solidarity for a fairer society*¹⁶

The prioritization of issues and values varies from country to country among young people in Europe, which should come as no surprise. Particularly in the 20th century, societies in East and West developed differently, which is still reflected today in the value consciousness of the young generations. According to András Máté-

Tóth, the post-socialist societies are still in the process of a "radical transformation," especially in contrast to the "liberal" West.

With the help of further representative studies, it is possible to highlight which values are relevant for young people in Central, Eastern and Southeastern Europe. According to these current studies, values and related value concepts can be divided on the one hand into social and on the other into sociopolitical values.

Social values

"Values such as autonomy, responsibility, as well as family values and values of personal success (health, education, professional success) were cited as particularly important and attained extremely high results".¹⁷ Values of political and civic engagement are not considered quite as important by young people. On the other hand, the greatest concerns expressed by youth relate directly to issues in the public sphere, such as corruption, social injustice and poverty. "Thus, youth are most concerned about public concerns, but generally do not view civic or political engagement as promising means of addressing them."¹⁸

Religious Attitudes

Religion is an important issue for young people in Central, Eastern and Southeastern Europe. In comparison to older generations, young people are somewhat less religious, as can be seen, for example, in Ukraine, Poland and Romania. Nevertheless, religiousness and religion as a whole are considered a significant social factor among a large proportion of young people in Central, Eastern and Southeastern Europe.¹⁹

Socio-political values

Values such as "employment, economic prosperity, human rights and security [are] paramount for young people".²⁰ Thus, it can also be understood that a large majority of young people long for a strong welfare state. Overall, it appears that the values of youth in Central, Eastern and Southeastern Europe – compared to youth in Western Europe – relate more strongly "to the desire for secure conditions for a decent life."²¹ "Most young people want to live in a country that offers them, first and foremost, basic human rights and realistic conditions for a long-term secure economic existence."²²

Looking at contexts and challenges of the reality of young people's lives in Europe, it must be emphasized that they are co-exposed to socio-political and

economic transformations and play a major role in the transformation of countries. A major challenge in this context is the "brain drain", as numerous Eastern, Central and Southeastern European countries are losing many highly qualified professionals as a result of it. Even if the "brain drain" seems to be declining somewhat, it remains the task of countries and societies to give young people prospects. This requires programs to be created by politicians, as in Serbia and Croatia, but also civil society groups that strengthen cohesion and restore trust in society.

The young generation in Central, Eastern and South-eastern Europe attaches particularly great importance to personal and family matters. But public concerns in connection with existential issues are also given high priority by young people. However, "civic or political engagement is [so far] generally not seen as a promising means of addressing these concerns" ²³. However, as soon as young people develop an interest in issues, combined with experience in the respective subject areas, they seem to develop a greater willingness to act.

Particularly in recent years, some countries (in South-eastern Europe) have shown a growing interest in – and in turn commitment to – democracy. This also explains the high level of trust young people in Central, Eastern and Southeastern Europe have in the European Union, even if their own country has not yet joined the EU. In some cases, trust in the EU is even greater than in their own governments. This enormous trust should be taken seriously and given due consideration by both governments and the EU. It should go hand in hand with improving young peoples' social and political skills. Ultimately, it is important to motivate young people and involve them in processes so that they too can become actors in the cause of a more just society.

3. Giving Europe a soul: Value orientation taking the socioMovens movement as an example

Europe sees itself as a union of values in which – unlike in many other social systems – human dignity and the common good have top priority. This is reflected in the formation of political will as well as in joint declarations, even if individual or group interests repeatedly call into question or thwart what is the principal concern of a solidarity-based value community. Whether Europe is able to regain its "soul" this way, whether it commits itself to its values in the form of concrete actions, depends greatly on the active agreement of the people in Europe and their actual commitment to the declared values. Young people play a decisive role in this regard, because they are the ones to decide whether Europe will continue to show the world a charitable face in the future. For it is the prerogative of youth to stand up for its ideals with greater commitment and determination than the older generations and to press for the practical implementation of generally declared values. But it has yet to show where it will draw its strength and perspective to conduct meaningful measures, and it has yet to be seen what actual goals young people are committed to. In the end, they will only attain common goals if they are able to find majorities for their concerns and join forces with them in a mutual commitment. An "Alliance for Europe" – Compact for Europe – is what is needed so that Europe can find its soul.

As important as the ethos of helpful action is, it is first necessary to conduct a careful analysis of the situation and then define the goals and devise a strategy tailored to them. The prerequisite for effective action is therefore first of all an unbiased perception of reality. However, this needs to be interpreted in order to be able to (re)act appropriately without falling into blind actionism or being guided by (unacknowledged) preconceived intentions.

In the context of value-oriented and experience-based social-ethical action, the triad of "see - judge - act" is an approach that has proven itself²⁴. Perceiving what is: from a value-oriented perspective, this does not denote an uninvolved, analytical-abstract acknowledgement of social conditions or individual human fates, but means taking a closer, well-meaning and interested look, thus creating a momentum that stimulates optimization.

Because what is perceived requires interpretation. It is important to understand backgrounds and causes, to illuminate development possibilities and to examine perspectives for action. In doing so, it is important to be guided neither by prejudgments nor by impulses to condemn. Rather, what is called for is an attitude of attentiveness and, to use a term from Ignatian spirituality, "loving attention". The decisive factor, however, is whether the impulse to act matures out of attentive perception. The example of the "Good Samaritan" (cf. Lk 10:25-37), who allows himself to address the plight of the needy, is stylistic of Christian spirituality and a standard of compassion and fellow humanity par excellence. The empathetic behavior of the Samaritan, to stop at the sight of the needy while on his way, to bend down to another and help him up, to give first aid and to care for him in the long term, distinguishes him radically from the behavior of his "predecessors", of whom it was said tersely in each case: "he saw him - and passed by" (10,31f).

Ultimately, the mindset and attitude of someone walking on his way is apparent in his actions. Whether an action or behavior is appropriate depends above all on how the situation is assessed. In this respect, the methodological triad of "see - judge - act" is recommended: first perceive the human and social reality, then interpret it in the light of your own value concept, and finally draw consequences for - your own and joint - actions. Against this background, the concept of the socioMovers movement can be put forward - not only for young people - as a best-practice example of social-ethical commitment in its core elements of spirituality - solidarity - fellowship.

Spirituality: The question of meaning

"At some point, everyone has asked themselves the question: What is the meaning of life? Religions, philosophy and even political ideologies have been trying to find answers to this question for centuries. The answer - from a philosophical point of view - is surprisingly simple: to love and to be loved." (Ulrich Walter) ²⁵ The question of what makes a successful, humanly satisfying and fulfilling life is not only asked by young people. It is not just about feeling good for a while, experiencing a snapshot of inner satisfaction, or making rational considerations of what to do or what not to do in a

situation. It is about a basic human attitude, a way of life that shapes (or should shape) all behavior. Some people speak in this context of "spirituality", a concept of life that has grown over the years, coagulated from various religious, intellectual and spiritual ideas, life worlds and concepts. Spirituality (from the Latin word spiritus: breath of air, breath of life, but also: soul, spirit, courage, sense of mind, enthusiasm) means an attitude of mind, animated by an idea of what is worth living for, what gives meaning to one's own life and actions.

Whoever gets to the bottom of the question of the meaning of life will discover that the answer cannot be given by others or from outside, nor can it be found in encyclopedias, or on the life counseling market. The answer to the question of who I am, how I want to be, how I should be, can only be given to me by me myself. One of the first and perhaps most important experiences that accompanies this is the discovery and admission that I do not owe myself to myself. Rather, the truth is that I live from the love of my parents, and many would add: I am loved by God. Each and every one of us is fundamentally worthy of love and possesses a dignity that no one can take away from us. To live out of love is a basic experience that continues from birth to old age: life is experienced as meaningful and valuable wherever it enjoys human attention and appreciation – from people who mean well with me, who encourage me and show me that it is good that I am as I am. Whoever is loved, who experiences himself as loved, can also give an answer to the love experienced, can love himself – and should do so when the meaning of life is being enquired after. According to one of the value studies, "regrounding" is very much in the foreground of young people's attention today: "the longing for solid ground and orientation." And for the overwhelming majority of young people everywhere in Europe, "good friends, a trusting partnership and a good family life continue to be the most important values." After all, human beings are relational creatures: We live from and in relationships.

If the meaning of life is: "to love and to be loved", then it also extends to the core of the "spirituality" of the socioMovens movement. For from the basic assumption and mutual assurance of being worthy of love also arises the insight of being capable of love: of being able to love, indeed of being expected to love. In this, as it is also a basic Christian conviction, is revealed the most

mature form of spiritedness, of being a successful human being. "We know that we have passed from death to life because we love our brothers and sisters. Those who do not love remain in death" (1 John 3:14).

Young people who come into contact with the socio-Movens Movement are often attracted by this unconditional esteem, this unprejudiced goodwill that is shown to them. In their gatherings, whether in local communities or in supra-regional or even online meetings, there is always at the beginning a reflection on the fact that they have every reason to value each other and to express this appreciation to each other. In a way, this is the basic rule in everything we do - according to the words of St. Augustine: "Love - and do what you want!" From this basic mutual assumption arises the need to express it to others, especially to all those who are often held in low esteem, disadvantaged or disregarded in society. Thus, young people in the socioMovens movement feel encouraged to be connected to one another in this spirit of appreciation, which they also show to all others they encounter.

Solidarity: The question of doing right

Whoever is loved can - and should - also love themselves, and not only in principle and in general, but concretely, with their arms and muscles, with their own intelligence, with empathy and creativity, using their own strength and time resources: "We do not want to love with word and tongue, but in deed and truth" (1 John 3:18). As the various value studies suggest, young people in Europe certainly have a sense of where things are unfair and unloving in society, where there is a lack of appreciation, and where the value of life is subordinated to economic or political interests. "Overall, idealistic, more meaningful value orientations are once again more in favor among young people," as the Sinus-Milieu study, for example, points out, and European youth studies attest to the fact that the young generation "gives the highest priority to combating poverty and social inequality" (especially in Eastern Europe) and is passionate about "protecting human rights."

This is precisely where the socioMovens movement comes in. It is first and foremost a school of perception

that seeks to instruct people not to look away, but to look more closely wherever people are disadvantaged, excluded or marginalized. Precisely because it is a matter of the dignity and well-being of every human being, the young members concern themselves specifically with the "social questions" in their own cities and countries, but united in their concern to make friends with those who are disadvantaged (in whatever way) and to take their side. This often results in a tangible personal and joint commitment: a movement of appreciation, where you do not complain about grievances but stand up with heart and hand for the homeless and orphaned, for the disabled and for lonely old people, for disadvantaged ethnic groups and people forced to flee Thus, the socioMovens movement can also be described as a "school of concrete love", that stands together in many different places for a Europe in solidarity – across and beyond borders. And if, as youth studies inform us, young people in Europe "often complain about an 'every man for himself' mentality and a lack of social cohesion," then it is up to the young generation to work "towards building just structures, towards the humanization of coexistence, and towards friendships beyond all national borders," as has been attested to the socioMovens movement (such as at the presentation of the 2021 Salzburg Vavrovsky Dialogue Prize). Even if one sometimes has the impression that there are always (too) few who get involved, and that any commitment, no matter how spirited, is only a drop in the ocean, the old Jewish wisdom may bring comfort: "Whoever saves one life saves the whole world."

Fellowship: the search for a sustainable community

"Alone you are small, but together we can be advocates of the living," according to the words of a song. That could be the "cantus firmus" of this young movement, which experiences mutual enrichment and confirmation of its ideals precisely in this togetherness. Aware, often against the backdrop of painful experience, that one cannot do much against social grievances as an individual, young people join together in local groups and (supra)regional networks to create a joint mark of solidarity by taking the side of the socially disadvantaged, the marginalized and the weaker members of society.

In doing so, young people not only experience the power of joint action, but also make the often gratifying experience of being part of a sustainable network, in which they themselves and their personal concerns and worries, hopes and ideals are not only noticed but also taken seriously. However, this presupposes that people also communicate and discuss with each other what they themselves consider to be worth living and worth striving for: that they learn from each other and know about each other. If socioMovens is a "school of active love", in the concrete service of solidarity with one's neighbor, it is nevertheless first and foremost a "school of mutual love": a community that is committed to common goals, that is above all "united in the middle", as the Jewish philosopher Martin Buber put it. Communities that want to make a difference need such a spiritual core from which to shape their togetherness and their cooperation. Therefore, any community needs its members to live on the foundation of a certain "deep dimension" – be it religious or not. For in order to be able to trust one another, one must also entrust oneself to one another, compassionately and without prejudice. This cannot be done at the drop of a hat and certainly not on command, but will grow in a collaboration: learning to engage with one another, to be inspired by others, and to seek common solutions in the face of differing opinions and ideas. The willingness to join forces in the common cause therefore necessarily includes a "pact of mercy": the willingness and promise to treat the faults and weaknesses of others generously and calmly, which too is always based on reciprocity.

"Together being an advocate of the living ", finally, also points to a third dimension: when people are so connected to each other and united in their common concern, a power often emanates from them that exceeds that of the mere number of people involved. For Christians, this is associated with the idea and living experience of not only being on the move in the name of God, "the Living One," but also of being certain of his presence, as Jesus assured his own: he will be in their midst wherever they are gathered in his name (cf. Mt 18:20). This is what is meant in the biblical context by "one soul": "one heart and one soul" (Acts 4:32). For Paul it is nothing less than the distinguishing mark of Christians that they - despite all differences - are "of one mind" (Phil 2:2), and he connects with this the appeal to "strive to maintain the unity of the spirit through the bond of peace! One body and one spirit, just as you

were called to one hope" (Eph 4:3). In this way, even with all our own limitations and external obstacles, we may succeed in seeking with our small strength that which creates peace and serves unity.

4. Compact for Europe.

For a society with a human face

Young people all over Europe are ready to stand up for their ideals: for human rights and a just society, for the socially disadvantaged and marginalized, for ecology and climate protection, and for many other existential issues, if they are given the space to do so. This is precisely the approach taken by the socioMovens movement when it invites young people to take part in a series of project weeks where they grapple with the social problems and challenges of their own personal environments. The program is aimed primarily at young adults between the ages of 15 and 17. Together with their school, they choose a socio-ethical theme that they wish to concern themselves with over their time together. For the project week, they move into a shared accommodation, where discussions of content and spirituality, encounters and conversations, recreation and leisure time, form a unity.

Committed to a humane city – social-ethical project weeks

At the beginning there is a question: What is the social situation? What are the concerns of the people in our city? Who are the losers in our society? For to ask is to look beyond the norms, the familiar, the routine of everyday life. "Good questioning is more than just a matter of technique, it requires a particular inner attitude and mindset." (Andreas Patrzek) It reflects a willingness not to remain inside oneself, but to turn one's attention to the other: to think from and towards the other's perspective. It is then clear that a socioMovens movement project week is not merely about social work or the like, but far more fundamentally, it is about the attitudes of the young people themselves: "The human being becomes an I through the You" (Martin Buber).²⁶ The questions asked not only at the beginning of a project week, but even already during the conception phase, create a space for a dialogue with others and their life situations and challenge the participants to behave accordingly, both in their personal reflections and in their conversations within the group. More important than (hasty) answers are (further reaching) questions. In this respect, every day of the project week begins with a reflection: How do we want to live today? What is our interest? How can we encounter others appropriately -

and how do we want to shape our togetherness?

In their encounters with children, the disabled, the elderly, the sick and the disadvantaged ... the students are also challenged with respect to themselves as people and in their personal lifestyle, while at the same time gaining a new perspective of their neighbors. In a supporting role, day to day stimuli are assessed each evening to allow the participants to reflect on their impressions from the week gone by and to gain the benefits from them. These two elements form a common thread connecting the days spent together. Using the idea of a "Sports4Peace" cube, members of the Fazenda da Esperança ²⁷, or "Family of Hope", a worldwide rehabilitation project for addicts, create moving life testimonies along with a memorable motto every morning, which will accompany the students through the day. The cube, which was originally developed to facilitate sports played according to the rules of fair play, offers a whole range of "game rules," but the aim is for them to be more than just rules of conduct for young people. They refer to positive basic attitudes and promote "social behavior, intercultural encounters, teamwork and fair play" (Bill Michaelis) ²⁸. Even if the assumption in a youth social project that all words and actions are based on a common set of values, it is still helpful to agree some formal principles and to set rules of conduct - guiding principles defined by the daily roll of the dice over the course of the project week:

1. *Do your best!*
Be fully committed and enjoy your work.
2. *Play fair!*
Be honest with yourself and with others.
3. *Hang in!*
Don't give up, even when things get tough.
4. *Take care of others!*
Treat everyone with respect.
Everyone is important.
5. *Celebrate!*
Rejoice in everyone else's success
as you do in your own.
6. *Make a difference!*
We can only achieve great goals
when we do so together.

The motto agreed upon in the morning reflection becomes the guiding principle for the entire day. Adopting this inner attitude, the participants then turn their attention to the topic at hand. This involves dealing with the social-ethical matter itself: in meetings at the project site as well as in contacts and exchanges with experts and those concerned with the matter. This also forms part of the evening exchange discussion, in which everyone makes reference to the spiritual start of the day and its motto. In the various units, the participants take up a previously selected social or ecological challenge in their living environment. This thematic focus above all promotes their active participation. Every day, the focus is always on exchange and shared experience. This might include a visit to a charitable institution, such as an old people's or children's home, a soup kitchen or a workshop for the disabled, as well as discussions with city officials, the church or an aid organization. The central point is not only to talk about, but also to talk with those affected. The experiential and educational approach to the theme of the project gives the young people an intense sense of community, as they discover that they can make a difference and make the world – even if only on a small scale – that little bit fairer, more peaceful and more in solidarity.

At the same time, the spatial setting – the joint accommodation in a shared apartment for the duration of the week – is also important. For some, it represents a new sphere of social learning. They are called upon to consider the strengths and weaknesses of all the individuals, and the principles of helping, taking responsibility and showing consideration all come into play. Thus, within a few days, the group develops its own dynamic, which is reinforced and guided by team experiences, including the experiential and educational units. The social skills practiced en passant throughout the project week, in both communication and cooperation, as well as in the assumption of responsibility, have a direct impact on their attitudes and behavior regarding the concrete social project. Experiential exercises are thus an integral part of any social-ethical project week. "Together we can do it," is a common reaction of the participants, who not infrequently draw an association between their positive team experience and the day's motto.

The motto of the day is taken up again in the evening reflection session, when it is time to share the impres-

sions and experiences of the day: which encounter had a particular impact? What did they find difficult?; what were they able to learn from other? In this way, mutual understanding and trust grow over time – through personal exchanges, shared experiences, and sharing one's own ideals with others. Beyond all differences, a feeling of solidarity develops along with the desire to remain connected in this spirit, even after the project week has ended. This gives rise to local communities emerging at the various locations, which meet regularly, exchange ideas and engage in volunteer work, for example in a soup kitchen or in specific social actions. Some of the participants later accompany youth social project weeks themselves and motivate other young people to get involved in helping the disadvantaged. Others join together in a socioMovens network while studying or working, and some even go on to choose a socially serving profession.

*Something is on the move:
Network of practiced solidarity*

Over the years, a network, the socioMovens movement, has formed in various places in Europe. The shared experiences lead to an intense sense of community, and the young people often remain connected after the project weeks and continue to work towards a lively civil society based on their value-oriented commitment. Young people from different countries, some of whom have never met before but have had the same experiences, come into contact with each other through social media and the movement's own website, arrange new initiatives or set up ambitious projects. Linked by a monthly motto that is shared regularly, they find a common foundation for their commitment and hold international meetings, in which they can unite in the cause of a Europe in solidarity that is rediscovering its soul, its human face. From the project weeks, the national and international solidarity, the joint commitment for disadvantaged groups and the jointly practiced unity has emerged a youth movement in Europe that is creating ever wider ripples – motivated by the inspiring idea of "giving Europe a soul".

Footnote index

- 1) John Paul II, Post-Synodal Exhortation "Ecclesia in Europe," 109
- 2) Brussels, 14.4.1992, Address of April 14, 1992.
- 3) Published in: Official Journal of the European Union, 2012, C 326/02.
- 4) Cf. Peter Klasvogt: Werte- Wirtschaft. Wohlstand. Gemeinschaft in Europa – Vision, Illusion oder Wirklichkeit? In: Ders. (Ed.): Europa – Wertegemeinschaft oder Wirtschaftsunion, Bonifatius-Verlag Paderborn, 2015, 20-21.
- 5) "We lack true inspiration and therefore have no vision of the future. In this, the churches are also accessories." (Bishop Antje Jackelén, Diocese of Lund, Sermon in Uppsala Cathedral on the opening of the Church of Sweden' General Synod, September 23, 2008).
- 6) Michael Borgolte, Professor of Medieval History at the Humboldt University in Berlin, Institute of Historical Sciences; full member of the Berlin-Brandenburg Academy of Sciences and Humanities. Cf.: <https://www.bpb.de/apuz/33398/der-islam-als-geburtshelfer-europas>
- 7) Ibid.
- 8) The European Values Survey (EVS) was conducted over a period of almost 30 years, from 1981 to 2008, in 48 and 46 countries respectively. The percentages given here are rounded in each case.
- 9) Bréchon, Pierre / Gonthier, Frédéric (2017): European Values. Trends and Divides Over Thirty Years, Volume 17, Leiden - Boston, VII.
- 10) The 18th Shell Youth Study is based on a representative sample of 2,572 young people aged 12 to 25 who were interviewed in person in 2019 on the basis of a standardized questionnaire.
- 11) The SINUS Institute study, "Wie ticken Jugendliche?" ("What makes young people tick?"), conducted on the basis of interviews with 72 young people from all over Germany, was commissioned by the Federal Agency for Civic Education (bpb), the Office for Youth Pastoral Care of the German Bishops' Conference (afj), and the German Children and Youth Foundation (DKJS), among others.

- 12) Cf. the following: <https://www.tagesspiegel.de/wissen/sinus-jugendstudie-2020-generation-problembewusstsein/26030386.html> of 23.07.2020, retrieved on 7.1.2022.
- 13) Flash Eurobarometer, European Parliament Youth Survey, Fieldwork: June 2021, Publication: September 2021.

See: <https://www.europarl.europa.eu/at-your-service/de/be-heard/eurobarometer/youth-survey-2021>. The survey was conducted via computer-assisted web interviewing (CAWI) among EU citizens aged 16 to 30. Number of respondents: 18,156.

- 14) The significance of the various issues is assessed very differently in the individual member states:
- Poverty and inequality are cited as the most important issue in 12 member states. The highest values are in Portugal (56%), Luxembourg (52%), Cyprus (51%) and Bulgaria (50%).
 - Combating climate change and protecting the environment top the list in five countries: Denmark (53%), France (45%), Slovakia (45%), Czech Republic (41%) and the Netherlands (40%). It is mentioned much less frequently in Cyprus (24%), Latvia (25%), Romania (25%), Croatia (25%) and Bulgaria (27%).
 - Combating unemployment or lack of jobs is the most important issue in three member states: Italy (53%), Croatia (52%) and Slovenia (47%), and on a par with Sweden (38%).
 - Improving the health and well-being of the population is the most important issue in Estonia (52%), Latvia (48%) and Poland (48%), and on a par with Hungary (47%), Finland (44%) and Sweden (38%).
 - Combating financial and political corruption ranks first in Cyprus (53%) and Malta (53%). It is also among the top three issues in four other countries: Croatia (48%), Bulgaria (46%), Romania (42%) and Slovenia (39%).
 - Improving access to education and training is the most important issue in only one member state, Romania, where just under half of respondents (49%) cite it.
 - Addressing the challenges posed by immigration is cited by more than two-fifths of respondents (42%), although it plays a minor role at the EU level.
- 15) The overall trend here is that concern about *gender equality* is greater in Western countries. In some countries in Eastern Europe, such as Bulgaria and Slovenia,

the importance of solidarity between EU member states is given greater relevance.

The protection of human rights and democracy tops the list in 22 member states, with the proportion rarely falling below the 50% mark. In five states, it is even cited by two-thirds of respondents or more: Slovakia (70%), Malta (69%), Bulgaria (64%), Cyprus (64%) and Poland (64%).

Freedom of speech ranks highest in four member states: 58% in Slovenia, 55% in Lithuania, 52% in France and 51% in the Netherlands. It ranks second in most other member states. Freedom of speech and the protection of human rights and democracy rank first in the Czech Republic (cited by 64% of respondents)

- 16) Ost-West Europäische Perspektiven OWEP 2(2016): Schwerpunkt: Glaube, Zweifel, Gleichgültigkeit? Jugend in Mittel und Osteuropa, online at: <https://www.owep.de/ausgabe/2016-1> (accessed 28.11.2021). Cf. Lavrič / Tomanović / Jusić: *Youth Study Southeast Europe 2018/ 2019.*, cf. Krawatzek, Félix (2020): *Young Worlds? Political and social views of young people in Russia, Ukraine and Belarus*, Berlin 2020., cf. Institute for Comparative Survey Research Vienna (Austria World Values Survey): *World Values Survey*, online at: <https://www.worldvaluessurvey.org/WVSONline.jsp> (accessed March 22, 2021).
- 17) Lavrič/Tomanović/Jusić, *Youth Study Southeast Europe 2018/ 2019*, 41.
- 18) Ibid. 44.
- 19) Cf. Institute for Comparative Survey Research Vienna (Austria World Values Survey): *World Values Survey*, online at: <https://www.worldvaluessurvey.org/WVSONline.jsp> (accessed 22.03.2021), cf. Lavrič/Tomanović/Jusić: *Youth Study Southeast Europe 2018/ 2019*, 43-45., cf. Krawatzek: *Young Worlds? Political and social views of young people in Russia, Ukraine and Belarus*, 35f.
- 20) Lavrič/Tomanović/Jusić: *Youth Study Southeast Europe 2018/ 2019*, 48.
- 21) Ibid., 48.
- 22) Lavrič/Tomanović/Jusić: *Youth Study Southeast Europe 2018/ 2019*, 48.
- 23) Ibid., 44., cf. Krawatzek: *Young Worlds? Political and social views of young people in Russia, Ukraine and Belarus*, 35-37.

- 24) This approach was developed by the Christian Workers' Youth (CAJ). The CAJ is an association of young people who see and perceive injustices and wish to understand and actively change society from there. Cf. Catholic Church in Upper Austria (2014): [*sehen urteilen handeln feiern*] & *Rundenarbeit*, Linz.
- 25) Prof. Dr. Ulrich Walter, physicist, space expert <https://www.welt.de/wissenschaft/article160310401/Das-ist-der-Sinn-des-Lebens.html>
- 26) Martin Buber, *Ich und Du* (1923), Reclam, Stuttgart 2008, p. 3f.
- 27) The "Family of Hope" has been closely linked to socioMovens from the very beginning. On a "Fazenda" - a "farm of hope" - formerly addicted young adults or people with other life discontinuities find a new purpose in life. Its members support the program of the socioMovens project weeks with their impulses and life testimonies.
- 28) Bill Michaelis, professor at San Francisco State University.

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