

# *Declaration of the European Academy of Yuste*



*“Europe: A Culture for  
Solidarity”*

*(3<sup>RD</sup> JUNE 2002. ROYAL MONASTERY OF YUSTE)*



*With the support of the European Community budget line "Support to organisations who promote European culture"*



## FUNDACIÓN ACADEMIA EUROPEA DE YUSTE

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### **Preamble**

The organisation of this meeting is inspired by the European Academy of Yuste's objectives. Our Academy wishes, through its cultural programme, to make its contribution to the European endeavour, to strengthen our common cultural identity and to defend the importance of the multiplicity of European values. Our Europe integrates a wide diversity of perspectives and numerous contributions made throughout our history. It is precisely that rich diversity which has helped to define our continent as a cradle of civilisations. A continent which should invite us to build a space for tolerance and for peaceful coexistence among its peoples.

In so doing, we intend to achieve a space where respect for and promotion of human rights and diversity would be the key elements of a set of common values from all European cultures, based upon human dignity and solidarity. This space would be a meeting point which, building upon diversity, would be capable of reaching new horizons. In this context, we should not forget that the legacy of such values to future generations is as important as our duty to pass on to them an environmentally sound world which is free of fear and threats.

### **Europe: A Culture for Solidarity**

Solidarity, like Europe itself, is not just one but manifold. Solidarity works separately or simultaneously at different levels: political, economic, social, legal or cultural. More than any other international organization, the European Communities and the Council of Europe have been built on the principles of solidarity.

Robert Schuman's declaration of 9 May 1950 grants the culture of solidarity a special status. It invites the European countries to begin by creating «une solidarité de fait», thus suggesting a pragmatic approach and advocating “solidarity in production” as a way to make any war between Europeans “not merely unthinkable, but materially impossible”.

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The declaration also insists on social solidarity between countries and classes. At the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, this applies to all the working people in Europe, without distinction of country or social condition. It also appeals to the solidarity of all the European countries by referring to “an organization open to the participation of the other countries of Europe.” This is extremely relevant at a time when the European Union is about to accept twelve new Member countries, and when other European countries are applying for membership.

The appeal of 9 May 1950 also considers the development of the African continent, thus reminding Europe of its responsibilities towards non-European countries, especially its former colonies. Today this solidarity is universal, although with different modalities of cooperation.

Although based on economic solidarity, Schuman’s declaration is also a plea for political and cultural solidarity, embodied in the institutions of a full-scale Community.

*Politically*, Europe can only survive as a whole. Each attack on one country is ipso facto an attack on the whole of Europe. European leaders can no longer look away, when people are oppressed somewhere in Europe, and public opinion, would not allow it.

*Socially*, increased solidarity becomes necessary at all levels: between regions, between European nations and also between all the inhabitants of Europe, without distinction.

Solidarity should be especially aimed at disadvantaged groups through a broader social harmonization. In the face of the uncertainties of current globalization, Europeans feel their cherished social model, painstakingly developed during the 20<sup>th</sup> century, may be threatened. This model, often called the Rhenish model, is based on solidarity between social

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classes. It guarantees the cohesion of our societies. It is European in its origin but should be universally applicable.

*Legally* speaking, solidarity implies the observance of human rights, another European concept (1789) which has become universal in its application. One of the Council of Europe's great merits is to remind European States of their obligation to observe human rights, if necessary by imposing sanctions. This is solidarity in tolerance and justice, the only ground on which a pluralistic democracy can survive.

The Council of Europe has set the rule of law as the framework which guarantees the observance of individual human rights and fundamental freedoms. This framework proved invaluable when the Central and Eastern European States regained their national sovereignty. With their accession to the Council they have made precise and binding commitments on their road to democratization. A Europe showing more solidarity will be more efficient in its fight against racism, xenophobia and anti-Semitism.

During the last fifty years Europe has become more aware of collective rights, whether owed to minorities or simply to future generations who should inherit a sound environment, thanks to nature preservation, and whose lives should not be mortgaged by a legacy of an excessive financial burden. Because of current demographic trends, solidarity between generations will be a major challenge for Europe in the coming years.

European identity is mainly to be found at *the cultural level*. Europe is an idea more than a geographical or economic reality. It is the cultural dimension that makes Europe be simultaneously one and manifold, single and pluralist. The resulting tensions are a source of wealth and creativity. Any measure which reduces cultural diversity of Europe will only be harmful. In general, national identities are clearly defined and firmly established. As such, they do not necessarily imply more solidarity. All shared manifestations of a European culture should be encouraged. It is essential to have a good knowledge of one's mother tongue, but it

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is also important to stimulate the understanding of other languages. Only if we have a good command of another language can we understand other mentalities. In this context, minority languages should be protected, because they are an integral part of the European cultural diversity.

There is no civilization without a *historical dimension*. The identity of Europe is impregnated with history. A rich, diversified and contrasting past casts its shadow on the present. A basic, even rudimentary, knowledge of this past is a prerequisite of a European collective memory. This past should be approached according to the critical historical methods, as opposed to propaganda work. European history is full of a long series of wars, fanaticisms and cruelties, also in Charles V's times. Political, religious, national and ideological confrontations have marked it more than surges of solidarity that nevertheless were not lacking. Future solidarities can only be built on the basis of historical truth.

Historical research has listed what the European civilization owes to Antiquity – according to a famous expression (Athens, Rome and Jerusalem) – thus at a pre-European age. Europe owes much to other civilizations, particularly to Islam, with which relations were not always strained.

Following considerable migration movements, Europe over the centuries exported its culture and thus enriched – sometimes also endangered – other civilizations. From the second half of the 20th century, it has absorbed numerous non-Europeans and has thus progressively become an ever more multicultural society. This evolution will only take place in a climate of social peace when we will be able to show a minimum of solidarity with each other.

Royal Monastery of Yuste, June 3<sup>rd</sup> 2002