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**Emmaus Europe welcomes with interest the decision to award this year's Nobel Prize to the European Union.**

The work accomplished over the past fifty years has succeeded in reducing tensions between the different countries within the Union, by ensuring greater economic cooperation.

However, Emmaus Europe wishes to reiterate that in the spirit of the EU's founders, economic union based around coal and steel represented only one stage towards peace, and that we need to go further in order to guarantee peace both in Europe and throughout the world, in particular in the social domain, something that has been pointed out with every ensuing treaty.

At the moment everything seems to be designed as if the sole aim of the European Commission were a drive for greater economic openness that increasingly unleashes capitalism from its constraints to the detriment of this social objective, for example the need to reduce poverty and social exclusion. In 2010, the European Commission set its sights on putting "an end to poverty". The President of the Commission made clear that the fight against poverty and social exclusion was to form part of the strategy for escaping from the crisis with which the EU will be engaged in the coming months.

Where do we stand today? This theme is no longer fashionable, and the sole concern preoccupying Europe today is the deficit being experienced by Member States. This deficit is indeed being reduced but the burden of adjustment falls on social transfers which are the first to be hit and reduced. The poor and excluded are precisely those who have not benefited from government or EU investments and aid, and it is these people whose needs are being disregarded and who are suffering the consequences. At the same time the bankers continue to "take from the poor to give to the rich" and are supported in their actions by governments whose indebtedness leaves them no other option.

The Union continues to spend 1,000 billion euros to protect its borders and to allow Frontex to spend more than 24 million euros to keep out 57,000 illegal immigrants. The struggle to combat poverty and exclusion is not a struggle against immigrants and their exclusion! The fight for peace will not be won by funding wars such as those being waged in Afghanistan or Libya, at any rate the money spent would have been better used in reducing poverty and exclusion.

Emmaus Europe denounces these attitudes which increase social tensions in an alarming manner and reiterates that wars begin not only as a result of economic problems between countries but also due to intolerable social tensions for the poorest and most excluded. Emmaus Europe calls upon the European Union (Commission, Parliament and Council) to work effectively and efficiently on measures to improve social protection.

The symbolic value of the Nobel Prize should be to encourage the European Union to differentiate itself from rampant capitalism and work towards the establishment of a fairer and more peaceful European society thanks to tangible joint initiatives that place restraints on individual greed. Citizens continue to call for this, and if the Union fails to hear or to act on their demands, we run the risk of social war breaking out.

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