

Faith and Politics
Regional collaboration
Path towards European future

It cannot be denied that there is a connection between faith and politics. As it is presently, regardless of which religion a politician subscribes to or is dismissive of, there is a relationship between the two in that there is a continuous dialogue between the two. Moreover the politician often is asked to answer to his/her constituents based on an affinity or a rejection of a certain faith. Yet faith at its very root is an individual's relationship with his/her maker, creator, life force or higher power. Faith is such a personal issue that it truly should not play a major role in politics, meaning, that politicians should not be criticized for their faith nor should they use their faith as a strong fist to rule. Yet often faith gets directly translated as an individual's values or principles. While I can concede that many faith-based values overlap with cultural or societal values, they are not one in the same. A politician may share many or all of the values with the community he or she is representing yet be of another faith. What this demonstrates to us is the major difference between faith and politics; the former is personal and the latter is collective. This distinction is vital in today's world because of the increasing diversity of communities. Nowadays, it is nearly impossible to find a geographic location in which there is a homogenous faith in a population. Politicians should be mindful of their own faiths but so too should they be respectful of those of others.

If we take this idea of mutual respect and cooperation concerning faith and politics, it is not a far stretch to see how important both are for regional collaboration in the EU. As I mentioned regional homogeneity is a thing of the past, communities in Europe are experiencing social, cultural and economic changes on levels never before seen. As a result, both communities, the existing one as well as the new one, need to be flexible in their understanding and acceptance. Compromises on both sides will allow for a more collaborative spirit to develop. The regions of Europe are quite diverse but all need to solidify the existing bonds so as to ensure cooperation across regions. Having a community such as the EU, in which there are smaller cooperative groups among the larger collective group that work in harmony is the essence of the European Union Project. If we reflect back on the origins of the EU, we can see that they were quite ambitious for the time and over the years have steadily asked individual member states to give up more and more sovereignty in return for an "ever closer union among the peoples of Europe, resolved to ensure the economic and social progress." The original tenets of the EU, even when it was simply the European Coal and Steel Community, demonstrate this cooperative spirit. Many individuals mentioned at the time that Europe was not ready for a collaborative or collective union yet over the years we have seen the need and advantages of it. As the larger bonds between nations have been established, now is the time to emphasize the importance of the collaboration between the smaller groups within the Union.

Moving forward with a collective Europe has not and certainly will not be easy. Yet through our present channels that include respect for all individuals, cultures and faiths, we can further improve regional collaboration and set a clear path for a collective European future.