

**Allocution of thanks by Rector Jörg Monar on the occasion of the visit of
His All-Holiness the Ecumenical Patriarch of Constantinople
to the College of Europe on 11 November 2019**

Your All-Holiness,

Your Eminences

Dear Vice-President Elect of the European Commission,

Dear President of the Administrative Council,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Dear Students,

This is a day which will have its place in the 70 years of history of the College, not only because of the first ever visit of an Ecumenical Patriarch to the College, but also because of the subject you, Your All-Holiness, have chosen for your address, the role of churches in today's Europe.

The College of Europe is, of course, a laic institution, but Europe – as You are Holiness have rightly and forcefully reminded us - would not be what it is today in terms of its fundamental peace orientation, its values and its social dimension without the influence of the Christian tradition.

I would like to thank you, in particular, for two of the exhortations which you have addressed to our students:

The first is the emphasis you have placed on encounter and dialogue, reminding us that indeed never in history human beings have had the opportunity to bring so many changes to so many people through encounter and dialogue. Sometimes in the middle of one crisis warning after the other we tend sometimes to forget that ours is also a time of unprecedented opportunities,

and those offered by dialogue across borders, be they political, religious, economic or other are indeed probably greater than any time before. Rather than withdrawing behind our own borders (which we all have) it is our responsibility to reach out to the others and transform together challenges into opportunities, problems into solutions. That is also what the College has been trying to prepare its students for ever since 1949. Your exemplary commitment to transnational multi-dimensional responses to the ever more threatening ecological crisis is, as I see it, a shining example of this action oriented reaching out through dialogue and encounter – and I can only tell you, students of the College: take it to heart.

The second exhortation is your strong emphasis on a Europe not reduced to an economic and technocratic construction, but needed to be based essentially on human dignity, freedom, solidarity and justice. While economic stability and prosperity surely ranks amongst the benefits European citizens expect the European Union to deliver on, it would indeed be fatal for the European project if it would be reduced to this economic dimension and lessen its commitment to rights, freedom, solidarity and justice, or compromise on those which constitute the real soul of the European project. The struggle for these fundamental values and rights is one which Europe has to engage in every single day anew, and the recent increase of populist movements has increased the risks in Europe for these very values and rights. At the College we continue to place a major emphasis in our teaching on this fundamental dimension of the European project, and we regard your exhortation, Your All-Holiness, as an encouragement and even mandate to persist.

It is now my honour and my pleasure to ask Your All-Holiness for the favour of signing the Golden Book of the College before our students will have the opportunity for an informal meeting.

Warmest thanks again.