



**For a responsible vote promoting Christian values
and the European project**

Statement of the bishops of the Commission of the Bishops' Conferences of the European Union (COMECE) in view of the coming elections to the European Parliament

We, bishops representing the Bishops' Conferences of the European Union, call on all citizens, especially Catholics, to prepare for and vote in the coming European elections of June 2024. The European project of a Europe united in diversity, strong, democratic, free, peaceful, prosperous and just is a project we share and for which we feel ownership. We are all called to express this also by casting our votes and choosing responsibly the Members of the European Parliament who will represent our values and work for the common good in the next European Parliament.

The European integration project was born from the ashes of the terrible wars that devastated our continent in the last century causing great pain, deaths and destruction. It was conceived with the intention of guaranteeing peace, freedom and prosperity. It was brought about due to the courage and foresight of persons who were able to overcome historical enmities and create something new that would make war practically impossible in our continent in the future. At first, this project was an economic project, but it entailed also a social and political dimension and shared values. Many of the founding fathers of the European Union were committed Catholics who maintained a strong belief in the dignity of every human being and the importance of community. We believe that this project, that started more than 70 years ago, must be supported and carried forward.

Today Europe and the European Union are going through challenging and uncertain times with a series of crises in the last years and difficult issues to face in the near future, like wars in Europe and in the neighbourhood, migration and asylum, climate change, growing digitalization and use of artificial intelligence, Europe's new role in the world, enlargement of the European Union and change in the Treaties, etc. To address these crucial issues in the light of the foundational values of the European Union and to construct a better future for us and the next generations, not only in Europe but also in the world, we need courageous, competent and value driven policymakers who honestly pursue the common good. It is our responsibility to make the best possible choice in the coming elections.

As Christians we must try to discern well for whom and for which party to vote in this important moment for the future of the European Union. Thus we have to consider factors that also may differ from one country to another - for example, the possibility of choosing candidates or only parties, the electoral programmes of the different parties, the candidates themselves who present themselves... In regard to such matters, the Bishops' Conferences in each member state can also offer useful orientations. Moreover, what is important is that we vote for persons and parties who clearly support the European project and who, we reasonably think, will promote our values and our idea of Europe, such as respect and promotion of the dignity of every human person, solidarity, equality, family and the sanctity of life, democracy, freedom, subsidiarity, care for our "common home" We know that the European Union is not perfect and that many of its policy and legal proposals are not in line with Christian values and with the expectations of many of its people, but we believe that we are called to contribute and improve it with the tools democracy offers us.

Many young people will vote for the first time in the coming elections, some of them as of the age of 16. We encourage strongly young people to exercise their vote in the coming European elections and so construct a Europe that assures their future and does justice to their genuine aspirations. We also encourage young European Catholics who feel the call to engage in politics to follow this call, preparing themselves well, both intellectually and morally, to contribute to the common good in a spirit of service to the community. In a frequently quoted speech delivered by Jacques Delors in Bruges the 17th October 1989 in the College of Europe, the then President of the European Commission addressed the young students with the following words: "For you are being invited to play your part in a unique venture, one which brings peoples and nations together for the better, not for the worse".

As European bishops, we make this call to the young students our own and address it to all European citizens. Let us engage in the European project, which is our future, also voting conscientiously in the coming elections!

Approved by the delegate Bishops of COMECE:

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