



Faithfulness to European values

**Statement by Cardinal Jean-Claude Hollerich S.J., President of COMECE
on the occasion of Europe Day 2022**

The 9th of May is Europe Day. The Schuman Declaration, which we celebrate on the 9th of May, cleared the path for a lasting reconciliation between France and Germany and opened the doors to the process of European unification. The fruit of this process is the European Union in its current form, but we are aware that this process is far from being completed. On this 9th of May 2022, we therefore wish to say again that the Catholic Church in Europe will continue to be a faithful and honest companion on this path and in this process.

Faithfulness may mean change

The process of European unification may never be completed because of the ever-changing dynamics of human society. Adapting to changing circumstances and improving the inner workings are therefore nothing to be feared. On the contrary, it should be embraced with courage and determination. Sometimes it is necessary and positive to envisage change in order to preserve a good initial inspiration and its underlying values. Preserving peace and security, achieving sustainable growth and prosperity through exercising parts of national sovereignty together: this was the inspiration of Robert Schuman and others when they started the process and they did this on the foundation of shared values like freedom and respect for the dignity of every person and human rights, democracy and the rule of law, solidarity, and subsidiarity. Today, we may live in a world where faithfulness to this inspiration and these values again means to envisage change for the European Union. Two directions for change have become apparent recently. One is linked to the Conference on the Future of Europe, the other one to the war in Ukraine.

The positive impact of the Conference on the Future of Europe

The 9th of May 2022 is a special anniversary because it is also the occasion for an exceptional ceremony in Strasbourg, in which the proposals of the Conference on the Future of Europe will be handed on to the presidents of the European institutions. Forty-nine proposals, each of them concretised in a number of specific ideas and suggestions have been adopted by consensus on 30 April by the Plenary of the Conference on the Future of Europe. Not each one of them will please everyone but if one takes them all together one can only rejoice about the creativity and freshness that transpires through this catalogue. It is the result of an audacious experiment in citizens' participation across

cultural, linguistic and political borders and we hope that the experiment continues. As Church we are ready to play an even more active role in it. Most of the proposals and ideas of the Conference concern the environment and climate change, the digital transformation, a strong social market economy and the role of the EU in the world. Now that the Conference has handed the baton to the institutions of the European Union, expectations are high that they will be able to deliver on these ideas and proposals. Europeans wish a respectful, responsible, social and sustainable economy.

The membership request of Ukraine

The 9th of May 2022 is a special anniversary also because war is ongoing again in Europe. It has caused already far too many victims and destruction. Since the beginning of the aggression of Ukraine by Russian forces on 24 February we have been praying and hoping for peace. The EU and its Member States have offered humanitarian, financial and military support to Ukraine. As perhaps never before since the signing of the Treaty establishing the European Defense community seventy years ago, the political leadership is thinking and discussing about a significantly closer cooperation in defence and security matters. We note that this has been a priority for a strong majority of citizens for a long time already and we sincerely hope that peace in Europe and the world become less fragile and the use of weapons less frequent through these discussions and subsequent agreements. Furthermore, on 28 February, the Ukrainian government has applied for EU membership. This request deserves a positive and realistic response. Ukraine, but also Moldova, Georgia and all the other European countries, notably in the region of the Western Balkans, which have made the same request in the past, and have undertaken significant reforms, need a credible accession perspective.

The continued support of the Catholic Church to the European Union

The Catholic Church, its successive Popes since Pius XII, the European Bishops, religious orders, and many Christian movements of laity have never stopped to wholeheartedly embrace the process of European unification and its underlying values. Expressing sometimes reservations on isolated policy matters issues cannot change this. On this 9th of May we wish to encourage the political leadership in the institutions and Member States of the European Union to take up the new challenges and opportunities ahead.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading '+ Jean-Claude Hollerich SJ'.

+ Jean-Claude Card. Hollerich SJ

Archbishop of Luxembourg

President of COMECE