



"Europe, be yourself!"¹

European elections 2024

An address to European institutions, MEP candidates and political parties

The signatories of this Declaration observe with concern the consequences of the successive economic, immigration, health and energy crises in Europe and the world, and the devastating wars around us. These challenges are accompanied by a broader crisis of values in the European area, which calls into question democratic principles and institutions. European citizens have also become more aware of the difficulty within European decision-making centres to respond effectively to this reality.

As intellectual, religious and political actors, each of us proponents of the European vision, we feel called to contribute to redefining the framework of priorities for a sustainable future for Europe. The concept of participatory democracy and ensuring the widest possible participation of citizens in the decision-making process and management of European affairs is of vital importance. During the Conference on the Future of Europe, we distinctly noticed that a large proportion of citizens, who confidently look at the European future through the prism of Christian values, now feel marginalised, as they do not have the opportunity to express their positions and opinions in an autonomous and distinct way. We also notice the exclusion of any appropriate reference to Christian values in relevant EU texts. This is a clear indication that the importance of the Christian tradition as the "milieu" in which today's European values were established is being overlooked. Precisely in this pre-election period, we, as Christians, express our willingness to ensure a substantial and in-depth political dialogue that would also be an opportunity to express our firm commitment to European values and the EU acquis.

We note with regret that values, which were formerly taken for granted, such as peace, stability and prosperity, and the rule of law rather than rule by power, have now been torn apart. Insecurity and fear dominate a large part of citizens' views on the future of Europe and the world. Fear motivates some of them to seek solutions and spiritual support in an objectified and instrumentalised version of tradition, sometimes disguised as an appeal to "traditional values". In such cases, the concepts of "homeland" and "religion" are weaponised, and dubious historical figures are turned into heroes. All this takes place in a divided public place, increasingly characterised by polarisation, and influenced by disinformation distributed in digital social networks. This overshadows dialogue and undermines the moderate reception of the opinion of

¹ Speech of Pope John Paul II in Santiago de Compostela (Spain) on the 9th November 1982:
https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/es/speeches/1982/november/documents/hf_jp-ii_spe_19821109_atto-europeistico.html

experts and respectful disagreement, as well as the principles of democratic societies. We frequently notice the reality of parallel monologues, as well as the development of closed community groups in which opinions devoid of critical thinking and counterargument are created and divulged.

In such an environment, and in view of the pre-election period, we think that Europe's leadership and the political factions are being called to reshape their own narratives based on the long-term trends that characterise the European integration process. Christian values, shared by a large part of European citizens, can provide a guarantee of a safe approach to the changes and challenges we face. It is useful – if not essential – for European factions to take into account Christian values in European politics, especially on critical issues and in a labyrinthine political landscape where citizens are particularly concerned about any shifting and unstable norms.

To this end, we express our commitment to working together, in a dynamic and inclusive manner, to promote a positive European agenda that takes its inspiration from Christian values. To do this, we make a call to strengthen and materialise the open and regular dialogue with Churches that is envisaged in the Treaty of Lisbon.

We call the political groups of the European Institutions, the political parties and MEP candidates to:

- a) Recognise Christian values as a main foundation of the European project by implementing to a greater extent Article 17 (3) of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union, concerning an open, transparent and regular dialogue with churches and religious associations.
- b) Fight against the instrumentalisation of Christian values for political interests and in the perspective of ethno-racial narratives.
- c) Promote Christian values in the political programmes and pre-election campaigns.

Commission of Bishops' Conferences of the European Union

Conference of European Churches

Inter-Parliamentary Assembly on Orthodoxy

Together for Europe