

# CATHOLIC TOOLKIT FOR YOUNG EUROPEANS

A COMPASS FOR YOUNG PEOPLE IN VIEW OF THE 2024  
EUROPEAN ELECTIONS



WRITTEN BY THE COMECE YOUTH PLATFORM



# Introduction

The **COMECE Youth Platform** gathers Catholic youth organisations active at EU level, which engage in dialogue with the European institutions in accordance with Article 17 TFEU.

The following toolkit originated from the organisations' desire to help their members - as well as all young Catholics from across Europe - to navigate the sometimes unclear **context of the upcoming European elections in June 2024**.

The toolkit intends to be a concrete instrument with **content** and **resources** that member organisations can, in turn, re-use and adapt to the communication and advocacy they will run for the 2024 elections.

This document aims **to encourage young people to vote**, reminding them of their responsibility to take part in political life as citizens and Christians, highlighting important dimensions of Catholic Social Teaching and providing useful and practical information on the election process - both for young people voting for the first time and others who want to rediscover the reasons of their political engagement.

We hope that this tool will be of use to young people and will motivate them **to take active part in political life**, reflect on the importance of their vote and take others with them to the polls in June.



# Structure of the toolkit

1

At the beginning of each section, you will find a quote relevant to the topic to accompany you.

In the middle of the page, a content section will follow, with some thoughts on why we, as Christians and through the lens of Catholic Social Teaching, should **be involved in democratic processes and actively engage in politics and society**

2



3

Throughout the toolkit, you will find questions at the end of each section inviting you to take a moment for personal reflection. The questions are there to guide you. Feel free to take your time to answer them for yourself and to take notes, if necessary. In a second step, feel free to share these questions with your friends to spur dialogue and exchange

4



In the last two pages of this toolkit, you will find the sources quoted above, as well as more information on how to vote for the EU elections. We invite you to look up this information and remain updated on the EU elections developments!

# 1 - Politics



*“Politics, though often denigrated, remains a noble vocation and one of the highest forms of charity, inasmuch as it seeks the common good. We need to be convinced that charity “is the principle not only of micro-relationships (with friends, with family members or within small groups) but also of macro-relationships (social, economic and political ones)”.*

*Pope Francis, Evangelii Gaudium, 2013*

At the heart of Christian identity is Jesus’ call to love God and love one another. If we want to answer that call, Pope Francis reminds us that love is not only found at a personal, private level but also in **interactions with society as a whole**. Without being naïve, we cannot only see politics as the place of conflicts, ambitions or even corruption. We should rather see politics as the space where we try to collectively express God’s love for everyone, not just for those closest to us.

At this level of action and engagement, direct feelings of charity cede the way to the search for justice, and personal acts of charity are reflected in **just policies, upholding the dignity of every member of society**. In the end, it is the same call that drives us: **“love your neighbour as yourself”**.



- How do I look at politics? Does this perspective surprise or challenge me?
- If I look at the society of my country, especially at its most fragile members, can I see how political decisions impact them, for the better or the worse ?

## 2 - Citizenship



*"As citizens of the State, [faithful] cannot relinquish their participation "in the many different economic, social, legislative, administrative and cultural areas, which are intended to promote organically and institutionally the Common Good."*

*Pope Benedict XVI, Deus caritas est, 2005*

Among the many rights and duties of citizens, participating in democratic life is one of them. Doing so by taking part in elections is one of the ways to express such right and duty, which the Catholic Church reminds us (cf. *Gaudium et Spes*).

In accordance with our ability, personal involvement in political and social life should be considered as an **opportunity to take up responsibility and contribute to the Common Good** in an exemplary way.

Decreasing election turnout trends in Europe and globally show how citizens – especially young people – might feel disempowered and disconnected from political life. In creative ways, **we as Christians are called to participate in society** and also encourage others to do so, **finding new ways to engage with politics and challenges** within our communities and regions in the European Union.



- To which extent am I involved in social and political life in my community?
- Why do I go vote, why is it important and what other engaging ways could stimulate participation in European elections in my (youth) community?

### 3 - Common Good and common home



*"It is not enough to think only of balances of power but also of the need to provide a response to new problems and to react with global mechanisms to the environmental, public health, cultural and social challenges, especially in order to consolidate respect for the most elementary human rights, social rights and the protection of our common home."*

*Pope Francis, Laudate Deum, 2023*

The European elections are crucial for shaping policies that have a direct impact on our common home and, more holistically, on the Common Good, "the totality of social conditions allowing persons to achieve their communal and individual fulfilment". In *Laudato Si'*, Pope Francis emphasises the **need for stewardship and an all-encompassing ecology** that includes not only the environment but also the social, economic, and cultural dimensions of human life. Environmental stewardship and climate action are not only contemporary concerns but also **integral to our Christian duty**, especially in the context of the triple planetary crisis, global injustice, overconsumption, and massive extractivism.

Therefore, in European elections, it is essential to **prioritise solidarity**, the needs and rights of future generations, marginalised groups, and the most vulnerable. By participating in the democratic process, **young Christians can play a vital role in making policies** fairer and more equitable, to prioritise the Common Good, sustainable development, the protection of the environment, our common home, and the well-being of future generations.



- Is politics doing enough to protect the Common Good, our common home and the rights of future generations?
- What do the words "creation" and "common home" mean to me? How can I contribute to preserve their diversity and beauty?

## 4 - The EU: community and belonging



*“Europe has a future if it is truly a union and not a reduction of the countries with their respective characteristics. The challenge is precisely this: unity in diversity. And it is possible if there is strong inspiration.”*

*Pope Francis, 23 March 2023*

“The European Union is not an accident of history”, but a community project built by farsighted founding fathers who chose to pursue the dream of unity and peace. A unity that is not sterile uniformity, but **capable of respecting and enhancing the particularities of each people and culture**, responding to the long-lasting challenge of unity in diversity. In this project, we can all still make a difference, **“inspired by the dream of a Europe united in the service of peace”**. A community Europe is able to offer an antidote to the individualisms of our time, which drive us to live in loneliness and cultivate self-centrism.

As young Christians, we can contribute to this project by **rediscovering the sense of belonging to a European community of solidarity**, which offers a place for sincere, respectful and constructive dialogue, where authority and power are lived as a service to promote a culture of peace. This is the Europe that allows us young people to travel, to study, to work and to meet without borders.



- What does the EU mean to me?
- Do I feel like a European citizen? If not, why? What should be changed?
- How can I concretely contribute to the European project?

## 5 - Critical thinking



*“Men and women are capable of coming up with shared goals that transcend their differences and can thus engage in a common endeavour.”*

*Pope Francis, Fratelli Tutti, 2022*

In the framework of Catholic Social Teaching, critical thinking and reflection when taking part in democratic life are essential **to direct political action to the Common Good**. However, political exploitation and degenerative tendencies in politics can cause great harm. **Populism** - with its simplistic responses for complex phenomena - poses challenges to the notion of people and resigns citizens to a passive role in society. “Popular” leaders, on the contrary, strive for longlasting unity rather than political short-term advantages that benefit the few. **Individualistic liberal approaches**, on the other end, serve the economic interests of the powerful, **damaging the social fabric and disregarding the needs of people affected by poverty** and their dignity.

The rise of misinformation and fake news calls for a renewed attention to our use of social media and digital tools of communication, to combat divisive narratives and allow for reconciliation and peace in our societies. In a growing Europe of secularism, polarisation and ideology, as Christians, we are called to be aware of such tendencies and work together: through spiritual growth, we can transcend immediate concerns, **rediscover universal values** and defend the truth of the human person.



- How do I discern my political choices?
- How are certain political tendencies affecting my social and political community?
- What does it mean concretely to work for the Common Good and to uphold the dignity of each person?



# #EUElections2024

## useful links and information

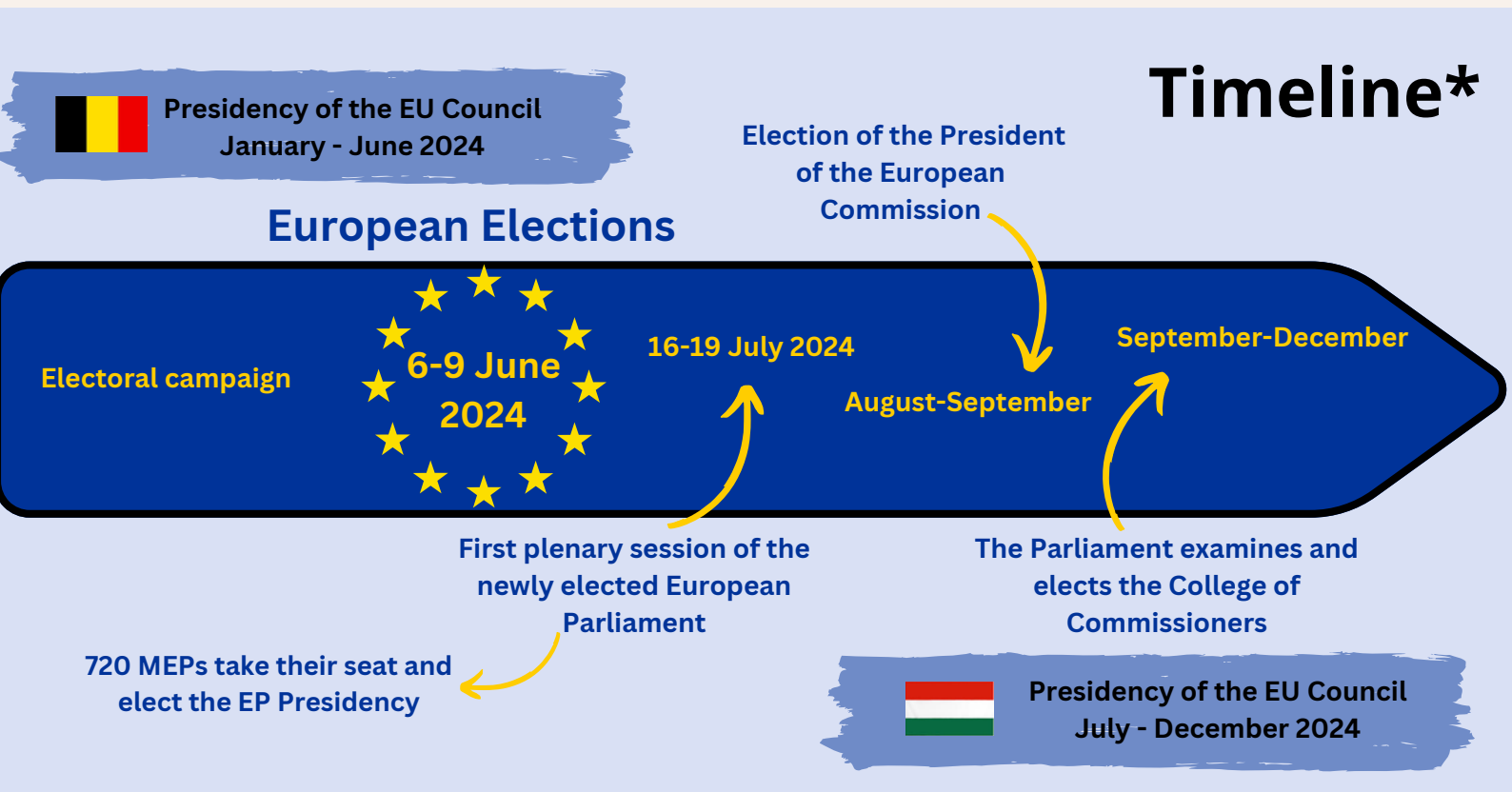
### How do I vote?

check info for your country: [elections.europa.eu](https://elections.europa.eu)



### What are electoral rules for the European elections?

European Parliament's infographic



**What does the EU do for me** in my country and region?  
[what-europe-does-for-me.eu](https://what-europe-does-for-me.eu)

Would you like to **encourage people to vote** in the European elections?  
[together.eu](https://together.eu)

**#useyourvote**  
**#EE2024 #EU2024**

Eager to **know more** about the European Parliament?  
[digital-journey.europarl.europa.eu](https://digital-journey.europarl.europa.eu) and [europarl.europa.eu](https://europarl.europa.eu)

- Political groups**
- Group of the European People's Party (Christian Democrats)
  - Group of the Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats in the European Parliament
  - Renew Europe Group
  - Group of the Greens/European Free Alliance
  - European Conservatives and Reformists Group
  - Identity and Democracy Group
  - The Left Group in the European Parliament - GUE/NGL

\*Timing after the elections can be subject to change

# Sources



## Encyclical letters, Exhortations & Co.

*Fratelli Tutti*

*Christus vivit*

*Laudato Si'*

*Deus Caritas Est*

*Evangelii Gaudium*

*Laudate Deum*

*Compendium of the Social*

*Doctrine of the Church*

## Pope Francis' speeches and messages

*Address of His Holiness Pope Francis to the participants in the Plenary Assembly of the Commission of the Bishops of the European Union (COMECE) 2023*

*Address of His Holiness Pope Francis to the Commission of the Bishops' Conferences of the European Community (COMECE) 2017*

*Message of His Holiness Pope Francis to the participants in the EU Youth Conference 2022*

## European and international institutions

*European parliament Resolution on the European Elections 2024*

*European Commission Communication on the European Year of Youth 2022*

*UNICEF Report on the European parliament elections 2024*

## Civil society

*Eurochild: 2024 European elections manifesto for better civic space and civil dialogue*

*European Youth Forum: 2024 Elections, How to engage with young people*  
*OBESSU survey on youth views on the vote at the European Elections 2024*

*Caritas Europe memorandum on European Elections 2024*

*YES forum 'Explain EU' campaign*

### We would like to thank

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# Notes

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**#useyourvote**  
**#EE2024 #EU2024**  
**#catholictoolkit**



**Use your voice and your power  
from 6 to 9 June 2024!**

For more information on how to vote in your country,  
go to [elections.europa.eu](https://elections.europa.eu)

Need more information on the COMECE Youth Platform?  
Visit [www.comece.eu](https://www.comece.eu)

Questions regarding the toolkit?  
Write to [youth@comece.eu](mailto:youth@comece.eu)