



2 March 2024

Having a real choice is one of the benefits of democracy. This year, voters in the EU will decide on the composition of the European Parliament, indirectly also on the lead candidates for heading the Commission nominated by political families, and thus mark the political landscape for the next five years. As a Christian network, IXE – Initiative of Christians for Europe – is campaigning to go to the polls on June 6-9, 2024 and make a responsible decision in the interests of peace and human dignity.

Overall, there have been many crucial and unprecedented achievements in the past legislative period: the European Union has procured and distributed vaccines to all member states irrespective of wealth and has overcome the pandemic, also in economic terms. The Green Deal legislation has been delivered, marking a new departure in climate policy. The EU has provided massive support to Ukraine following the Russian war of aggression. Migration policy solutions were the subject of debates, but a common ground has been worked out with the final version of the Pact on asylum and migration. However, the challenges remain immense. Dialogue with citizens has to continue.

That is why the elections should not be reduced to an act of protest: they are about political choices. The election result is the prerequisite for a continued European integration for the next five years. After the elections, we need parliamentary majorities that recognize the dignity of the human being and solidarity, sustainability and subsidiarity as fundamental principles, defend the rule of law and oppose nationalism, discrimination and isolationism. The EU has a major influence on several policy areas - the voters decide in which direction the continent will develop. A key question is how Europe will master the challenging geopolitical conditions.

The protection of people who are persecuted and fear for their lives is required by fundamental and international law and must not be up for discussion. From a Christian perspective, we promote solidarity with all persons forced to leave their country and especially refugees. Human rights violations at the EU's external borders are intolerable. Pushbacks must stop. We need to open new legal access routes to Europe. The new Common European Asylum System has yet to prove itself. A certain expansion of the solidarity-based distribution of refugees has been achieved in order to jointly assume responsibility for those seeking protection and not to overburden any state.

In climate policy, the window of opportunity is closing to meet the Paris climate targets and contain a further worsening of the climate crisis. We are therefore urging swift agreement on the target of reducing greenhouse gas emissions to 90% below 1990 levels by 2040. With a consistent climate policy, the EU must set and maintain strong incentives for socio-ecological transformation in all sectors in order to not only achieve the 55% interim target for 2030, but to exceed it if possible. It must ensure viable supply chains for key raw materials such as lithium, and strive to making them fair and resilient. We call for the failed Due Diligence Directive, to be relaunched and made a success.¹ Climate policy and poverty reduction must go hand in hand: The EU and Member States have to provide social support so that no region or person is left behind during decarbonisation. Good climate policy creates social balance, protects human lives, promotes independence from fossil fuels and thus increases security while taking into account Europe's international competitiveness.

¹ "People over profit: Including the financial sector as a lever in the Sustainability Due Diligence Directive";
URL: <https://christiansforeurope.com.files.wordpress.com/2023/09/230925-ixe-statement-csddd.pdf>.

Especially in this decade, in which autocracies are emerging, solidifying and shaking the democratic principles in Europe and in the world, Europe must remain steadfast. For the common good, democracy in Europe must be protected - against attacks and disinformation from outside in the run-up to the EP elections, including the abuse of artificial intelligence. In future, new technologies should be regulated in a way that is compatible with democracy and fundamental rights. The AI act is a good example. The EU has become a forerunner in digital protection and must drive forward the digital transformation and enable digital participation and rights for all.

As Christians, we are familiar with the unity in diversity that the governments of the EU member states have to laboriously practice time and again. We are aware that modern societies are less and less able to justify the values on which they are based and we are ready to engage in a dialogue about common European values and identity.

As believers, we want to play an active role in tackling the tasks that lie ahead of us. This is expressed not only in a Christian election decision, but also in the everyday commitment of the church. In European societies, we are committed to repeatedly placing the common good at the center of political action. We counter centrifugal forces and social alienation, live subsidiarity and solidarity and resist a globalization of indifference and resignation. For us, one thing is certain: electoral success for right-wing extremists and other nationalistic populists would endanger the future of Europe. We therefore recall the goal of the European Union, which Pope Francis also quoted from the Treaty of Lisbon during his visit to Lisbon: "The Union's aim is to promote peace, its values and the well-being of its peoples. In its relations with the wider world it shall contribute to peace, security, the sustainable development of the Earth, solidarity and mutual respect among peoples, free and fair trade, eradication of poverty and the protection of human rights."².

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The Initiative of Christians for Europe (IXE) is an association of lay organizations and committed Christians from different European countries. General concern of IXE is to incorporate a more vivid awareness of a united Europe in the national debates. The initiative aims at fostering the encounter of Christians in Europe and to promote the Social Doctrine of the Church in order to achieve a better mutual knowledge and understanding of historical and cultural differences. Read more on <https://christiansforeurope.com/>.

² "MEETING WITH THE AUTHORITIES, CIVIL SOCIETY AND THE DIPLOMATIC CORPS. ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS"; URL: <https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2023/august/documents/20230802-portogallo-autorita.html>.