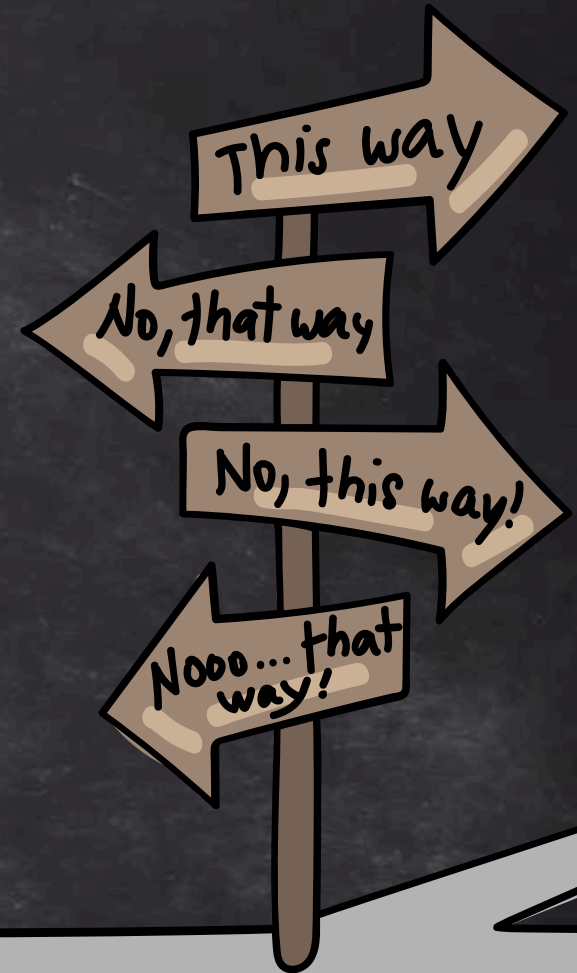


European Parliament
Elections
08/06/2024

EUROPE AT A

CROSSROADS



Introduction



We are now only a few days away from the European Parliament elections. It is a key moment for Europe, one that will shape the EU for many years to come.

Many of the founding fathers of the European Union were committed Catholics who strongly believed in the dignity of every human being. While not perfect, the EU still manages today to unite countries that might otherwise see themselves as competitors, if not enemies. Attempts to loosen the mechanisms which bind European countries together risk tearing us apart, with consequences which are too terrifying to contemplate.

In fact, on many levels, Europe is at a crossroads. Whether it is climate change or the falling trust in institutions, demographic changes or wars on our doorstep, the decisions taken now will either condemn us to a future of fear and violence, or else help us build a continent which rests on the solid foundations of respect for the dignity of all, solidarity, the common good and care for our common home.

In this document, the Justice and Peace Commission presents a few of these crucial issues faced by Europe today. More than ever, we are called to reflect on the kind of Europe we want, with realism but also in light of the principles of Catholic Social Teaching.



IMPORTANT

1. Dignity for all

We call on Europe to preserve and defend life - from beginning to end, and anywhere in between - as well as the dignity and fundamental rights of all.

Fundamental freedoms, such as freedom of religion, speech, and information, form the bedrock of European values. Yet, these rights remain under siege in many parts of Europe and beyond, underscoring the imperative for vigilance and robust defence of these rights.

European politicians should be at the forefront in defending human dignity even beyond our continental borders, by consistently addressing the structural obstacles - related to governance, trade, finance, educational and employment opportunities - which impede people from reaching their full potential.

Respect for the human person entails respect for the rights that flow from his dignity as a creature. These rights are prior to society and must be recognized by it. They are the basis of the moral legitimacy of every authority.
(Catechism of the Catholic Church #1930)



IMPORTANT

2. A welcoming Europe

The plight of refugees and migrants, forced to leave their homes and seek safety and life within Europe, underlines the moral imperative of compassion and solidarity. All migrants, whatever their legal status, must be afforded fair and humane treatment, in line with Europe's commitment towards universal human rights.

In practice, this means that the next European Parliament should work towards saving lives at sea, ending unnecessary migrant detention, stop policies which outsource the responsibility to protect asylum-seekers, expand safe and legal ways to reach Europe, whilst strengthening solidarity mechanisms between EU country states in the area of migration.

A welcoming Europe should also put migrant workers' rights and the fight against exploitation and discrimination at its centre and promote the social inclusion and full participation of migrants in society.

*We are a society which has forgotten how to weep, how to experience compassion.
(Pope Francis)*



IMPORTANT

3. A social Europe

The EU is the world's second largest economy, but not everyone shares in this wealth: In the EU, one in four children is at risk of poverty and social exclusion.

In order to ensure decent living conditions for all, the provision of adequate social protection and a living income, enforcement of workers' rights and access to affordable housing are essential. Moreover, ageing populations underscore the urgent need for comprehensive healthcare and pension systems that cater to the needs of all residents and workers within the European Union.

In the context of the remarkable advances in new information technologies such as Artificial Intelligence, we also call on policymakers to come up with proactive measures that ensure that technological progress benefits all, and does not end up benefitting the few at the price of the impoverishment of many.

*There is no true peace whenever people are cast aside or forced to live in dire poverty. There is no peace without employment and the prospect of earning a dignified wage. There is no peace in the peripheries of our cities, with their rampant drug abuse and violence.
(Pope Francis)*



IMPORTANT

4. Our common home

In view of the integral ecology promoted by recent Popes, voters should consider how seriously the various political parties take the care of our common home.

The European Union, endowed with significant regulatory authority and diplomatic leverage, carries a serious responsibility in addressing existential threats such as the climate crises.

In view of the seriousness of the situation, it is not enough for politicians to continue prioritising economic growth at the expense of our common home. EU policymakers must heed the impassioned and increasingly desperate pleas of the younger generation, who rightfully demand decisive action that safeguards the planet and the rights of future generations.

Finally, the green transition should also be embraced as an opportunity to question our production and consumption models. However, the costs associated with this necessary transition should be shouldered by those who are in a position to do so and not by those already struggling to survive.

A broad change in the irresponsible lifestyle connected with the Western model would have a significant long-term impact.
(Pope Francis).



IMPORTANT

5. Peace

With Ukraine still suffering from a brutal war of aggression and the Holy Land in the midst of a terrible spiral of violence, there is an urgent need for MEPs to build peace on the solid foundations of truth and justice.

Europe must continue standing in solidarity with nations grappling with conflict and instability all over the world, offering support and humanitarian aid to alleviate human suffering and restore hope amidst despair.

Whilst recognising the right of all nations to defend themselves against unjust and unlawful attacks, a concerted effort is required to address the long-ignored root causes of conflict.

Moreover, dehumanising political rhetoric which justifies the killing, mistreatment and exclusion of fellow human beings needs to be urgently replaced with the language of respect and honest dialogue. Finally, religions should stop being instrumentalized for political and military purposes, to become credible and prophetic bulwarks against all those forms of violence, injustice, and hatred that are tearing us apart.

Those who choose war instead of politics are reaping the curse of death.
(Archbishop Scicluna)



Final message

To address the crucial and complex issues outlined in this document, we need politicians of integrity who are ready to pursue the common good with courage and competence.

However, if voters are looking for the perfect party or candidate, completely in line with their values, they will probably remain frustrated and disappointed.

A choice, nonetheless, must be made. Pope Francis warns us not to “forget that responsible citizenship is a virtue, and participation in political life is a moral obligation” (Evangelii Gaudium, 220). We cannot and should not abdicate our duty and responsibility in the democratic process.

That is why, when all is said and done, on the 8th of June, it is up to everyone to make, in **conscience**, an **informed decision** and choose candidates, who, we **reasonably think**, can **best** promote values such as the respect and promotion of the dignity of human beings, the common good, just peace and care for our common home.

