

## The European Union - an integrating force in the World

*A contribution of Justice and Peace Europe*

*to the Conference on the Future of Europe<sup>1</sup>*

*In one generation, from 1989 to 2021, the EU has changed in many ways and the world has changed dramatically too. It is therefore no surprise that the role the EU plays in other parts of the world and on the global stage has changed as well. However, looking back at the last thirty years, these changes appear to be more an adaptation to external factors in order to defend short-term interests. They seem to us much less driven by a value-based vision on the part of European citizens and their political leadership.*

The EU has changed, especially because of :

- more member states (30 years ago nearly all member states had a colonial and/or imperial past, today they are in minority and the generation of politicians with direct experiences has gone)... and one less (Brexit);
- more integrated policies especially through the euro and the common monetary policy...and the reaffirmation of the member states.

The world has changed because of

- the acceleration of climate change;
- the social and economic consequences of the Covid-19 pandemic and especially with regard to an acceleration of inequality among people and nations;
- the unfolding of a new arms race and the reluctance to engage in new disarmament treaties;
- the growing number of people on the move
- the simultaneous weakening of the nation state and the reinforcement of the nationalistic sentiment

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<sup>1</sup> In order to prepare this contribution to the *Conference on the Future of Europe* Justice and Peace Europe organized a special webinar on the theme of the Role of the EU in the world on 14 September 2021. The presidency of Justice and Peace Europe wishes to thank all participants and contributors present in this online event.

In reaction to these changes and compared to their origins the external policies of the EU seem to us

- to have become more flexible in order to respond to more and more crisis situations (humanitarian and natural disasters), but are now less long-term oriented,
- more bureaucratic, with a separation of policies and the management of (development) projects, and therefore they have become less integrated,
- more member-state driven and less « European” in motivation.

For the future of Europe, we, the members/executive committee/presidency of the Catholic network Justice and Peace Europe, therefore wish to express our hope that the European Union reveals itself :

- as a peace-loving and a peace-promoting power with a strong commitment to arms control and (nuclear) disarmament,
- as a defender of climate justice, an actor of systemic change and for the rights of future generations,
- as a game changer in the fight against poverty and inequality worldwide and for the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals,
- as a strong promoter of human rights of all, including migrants and refugees,
- as a global advocate of the freedom of expression and religion, of the rule of law and respect for human dignity and cultural diversity,
- as a trendsetter for new coherent human rights standards for business activities and corporate sustainable governance,
- as a good and reliable neighbour and partner, promoting integral human development and human security in its neighbourhood,
- as an integrating force when a new strategic dichotomy between China and the US is looming on the global horizon.

Leuven, 4 October 2021

The General Assembly of Justice and Peace Europe

*The Conference of European Justice and Peace Commissions (Justice and Peace Europe) is a European network of 31 national Justice and Peace Commissions, working for the promotion of justice, peace, respect for human dignity and the care of creation. It contributes to raising awareness of the Catholic social doctrine in the European societies and the European institutions. Its President is Mgr. Noel Treanor, Bishop of Down and Connor (Belfast)*