

FINAL DECLARATION
of the International Workshop of Justice & Peace Europe 2025
‘Hope for Peace in Europe’



We, delegates from the European Justice and Peace Commissions, gathered in Vilnius, Lithuania, from 3 to 6 October 2025, in a time of heightened tension for our Continent, particularly felt in this part of Europe. The ongoing Russian war of aggression against Ukraine, intensifying violations of the airspace of EU Member States, the instrumentalisation of migration and the weakening of democratic institutions in Europe and across the globe are pressing concerns, posing a serious challenge to freedom, security and peace.

Welcomed by the Church and people of Lithuania, we reflected on the testimony of a country, once occupied by the Soviet Union, that has successfully transitioned from Communist rule to democracy, freedom and independence. At the Lithuanian–Belarusian border, we learned about the tragedy of coercive engineered migration that instrumentalises refugees and migrants. We were impressed by the solidarity of the Lithuanian people with Ukraine, which became very much visible during our visit. We call for taking these expressions of solidarity as a role model for increasing the support for the Ukrainian people suffering from the war and for those who had to flee from the war. We prayed at the Medininkai Memorial for all the people who had sacrificed their lives in the struggle for freedom. We celebrated the Eucharist at the Sanctuary of Divine Mercy and prayed at Our Lady’s Shrine at the Gate of Dawn. In these places of memory and faith, we experienced Lithuania’s societal and spiritual resilience.

The challenge of peace in Europe

Today, Europe is confronted with war at its heart and with new forms of hybrid threats. We heard about violations of international law, manipulation of migration flows, disinformation and threats of military escalation. These risks have to be taken seriously, and adequate measures are needed to counter them at national as well as European levels. Security and defence, however, while aiming at protecting human dignity and human lives, must never become an end in itself: it must remain oriented towards achieving a just peace.

In this Jubilee Year, we are invited to walk as ‘pilgrims of hope’. We are encouraged by Pope Leo XIV. to work towards an “*unarmed and disarming peace*”, a peace that is “*an*

enterprise of justice” (Pastoral Constitution *Gaudium et Spes*). We are convinced that security detached from justice and human dignity cannot bring a lasting peace. Europe thus needs a forward-looking Peace Strategy that strengthens unity and reinforces its capacities for conflict prevention. Furthermore, it should support integral human development, promote care for Creation and foster a culture of dialogue and reconciliation. Justice & Peace Europe will further any efforts towards such a European Peace Strategy.

Our workshops in Vilnius reminded us that work for peace is multidimensional. It entails:

- confronting the past with truth and remembrance;
- strengthening democratic institutions;
- providing pastoral and human care to soldiers and border guards;
- respecting the dignity of migrants;
- integrating the hope and creativity of youth.

Our appeals

- **To European decision-makers:** to develop a coherent European Peace Strategy, combining adequate defence with strong diplomatic, humanitarian and development instruments; to uphold the dignity of every person even in complex security situations; and to resist polarising attitudes and de-humanising actions.
- **To the Churches in Europe:** to bear witness to the Gospel of justice and peace, to be places of reconciliation and mercy, and to accompany victims of war, oppression and displacement.
- **To Justice and Peace Commissions:** to continue to foster dialogue across borders, to build bridges between peoples, to confront false narratives and to support education for peace rooted in Catholic Social Teaching.
- **To all citizens of Europe:** to resist fear and to take responsibility for building communities of solidarity and resilience, and to work for peace every day in the spirit of fraternity.

War confronts us with negative impacts on all aspects of life, but it can never destroy our capacity to love nor our sense of justice.

Vilnius, 6 October 2025

The Conference of European Justice and Peace Commissions