

07 January 2025

Christian peace initiatives and politicians have played a major role in overcoming the division of Europe. European unification had been promoted in order to put the war behind us and stand together. If Europe ceases to be a peace project, it will abandon its roots. War is back and Europe must defend itself. Russia's unprovoked war of aggression against Ukraine has now been going on for 47 months. This year, many diplomatic initiatives were launched. Many attempts have come to nothing. Russian attacks continue and cost lives every day. We appeal to European leaders to swiftly agree the best use of frozen Russian assets to ensure Ukraine's capacity to defend itself. We long for a just and lasting peace and believe that it is possible. From a Christian perspective, we propose measures that can help make Europe safer and more peaceful. For us, it is clear that religion must not be misused as a weapon but must provide guidance in times of war by means of peace ethics.

1. *Europe must react in a comprehensive manner.*

While we are against unrestrained armament, we must neither invite the aggressor to launch further imperialist attacks. Europe must be put in a position to defend itself, its democracy and freedom against this aggressor. Beyond this immediate threat, we are confronted with cyber-attacks by autocratic regimes, terrorism, human rights violations, climate crisis. Living in unstable circumstances, we need long-lasting and targeted solutions. Geostrategic certainties have become concerns. A brutal Russian war and a fundamental policy change in the United States of America reveal that Europe is not strong enough yet. With regard to external relations, the EU needs more strategic autonomy. We appeal to European leaders to show unity. What is needed is a serious awakening to Europe's responsibility to protect democratic values and to jointly build alert, effective, and modern defence capable of ensuring peace and security.

2. *Europe must review its one-sided dependencies and avoid new ones.* Economic interdependence was considered a model for success but has now become a risk. Autocrats are benefiting from this. Supply chains are becoming vulnerable. More sovereignty is of the utmost importance. It is impossible to reduce all problematic dependencies overnight.

3. *Europe must shape a renewed multilateralism and find its role in the 21st century.* A new world order requires new partnerships. When democracy erodes, countries start to act transactionally instead of cooperatively. Friends and enemies become diffuse categories. Values are no longer shared; they become pawns in cultural battles. Europe should not be crushed between geopolitical power blocs. Europe should have its place in the world, standing up for its legitimate interests and values contributing to peace and justice. It is not enough to work on more sovereignty. The EU is called upon to take a leading role by promoting international law and its enforcement in the physical space as well as in cyberspace, the achievement of the sustainability development goals (SDGs).

4. We Europeans must resist the narratives of radical parties promoting isolationism and nationalism.

Our European achievements must not be reversed. If we work together, abide by our own rules and agreements, we can demonstrate that we are resisting the authoritarian trend and polarisation. Schengen is an essential part of European integration. It is not just an option for Europe, but for forty years a pillar of our continent. Traffic jams at the borders, arbitrary checks and people sitting on border bridges, unable to move forwards or backwards – this must not be the European Union. Upholding values must not be just empty words but must be put into practice in defence and security.

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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>