



Contribution of COMECE and CEC to  
Croatia's EU Council Presidency Programme  
*“A strong Europe in a world of challenges”*

January 2020

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## **Introduction: “A strong Europe in a world of challenges”**

**COMECE** (*Commission of the Episcopates of the European Union*) and **CEC** (*Conference of European Churches*) welcome the commitment of the Croatian Presidency of the Council of the European Union, which comes at a crucial time for the future of the European integration project. Holding the EU Council Presidency for the first time, Croatia has a unique **opportunity to bring a fresh perspective** on the persisting challenges facing the EU and its citizens.

European societies are confronted with increasing **external challenges** and also **internally, with polarising and divisive forces**. In facing the situation, it becomes more important than ever to **rebuild community in Europe**. Enhanced connectivity fostering **personal encounters** and taking into consideration the increasing **pluralisation of our societies**, can be one essential vehicle towards this goal.

Following the [December 2019 conclusions of the European Council](#), the Croatian Presidency of the Council of the EU is supposed to carry forward the preparatory work on an inclusive **Conference on the Future of Europe**. **Churches stand ready to contribute** to this endeavour and would be pleased to be involved in this process.

The Croatian Presidency of the Council of the EU comes at a time when not only **decisive actions ought to be taken on the EU’s further enlargement**, but also decisions are to be made on the **EU’s future relationship with the United Kingdom**. **Brexit** continues to be a source of concern for the present and the future of Europe. Brexit is not only a British question. When a part of our body is wounded and going through a difficult moment, the rest of the body suffers with it. While respecting the decision of the British people, we hope that the **common good** will guide the negotiations, and that independent of the outcome of the votes in January, the existing **fraternal relation** between the EU and the UK will remain solid and overcome the present gridlock without causing irreparable damage. Together in our future relationship, we encourage a commitment to stand together and continue to promote a Europe that is guided by our **shared values** and a **human-centric approach** to our **common future** challenges.

Along with that, **digital and technological changes** are creating a range of **new opportunities**. However, combined with **demographic decline** and **environmental degradation**, they are becoming a **source of anxiety and uncertainty** for many citizens, in particular the youth. In light of growing numbers of **persons, families and communities**, especially in the rural and former industrial areas, that feel excluded from technological and societal advancements, the EU has a vital task to shape the **demographic, digital and ecological transition to the benefit of everybody**.

**Forward-looking hope** and a special concern for the **human dignity of all persons** are essential components of the Churches’ message. In continuation of a fruitful and long-standing practice, supported by **Article 17** of the Treaty on the Functioning of the EU (TFEU), according to which the EU shall maintain an open, transparent and regular dialogue with Churches, COMECE and CEC, together with their local member Churches in Croatia, are looking forward to meeting with the Croatian EU Presidency at the beginning of its term.

In this sense, COMECE and CEC wish to share, in an ecumenical spirit, some reflections and proposals that address the Croatian EU Presidency priorities. By becoming a **source of integral development of persons, families and communities**, and a **promise of lasting peace** on our Continent and globally, Europe can indeed aspire to be “*a strong actor in a world of challenges*.”

Church reflections on the **main Presidency themes are presented in the document** below and are complemented by additional considerations on **more specific items in the Annex**.

## Presidency Priority I. “Balanced and sustainable development of the Union and its Member States”

### A) Need for a Just Transition

Cumulative challenges of *climate, environment, economy, demography* confront us not only with a deterioration of climate, environment and biodiversity, but also with significant social imbalances, including those related to distribution of work, income and wealth. They challenge us with the urgent need for a correction of the current economic and social model and an adaptation of a new «way of life», taking into account the limits of our planet: «...*the idea of infinite or unlimited growth (...) is based on the lie that there is an infinite supply of the earth's goods, and this leads to the planet being squeezed dry beyond every limit.* (Pope Francis, *Laudato Si* 106). Expressing the same concerns, the Conference of European Churches in its policy document underlined: *There will be no peace and no prosperity if economic policies continue to be accompanied by growing social inequalities and growing fiscal as well as ecological indebtedness.* (CEC policy document *Beyond Prosperity*, 50).

Churches are convinced that the necessary ecological and digital transition has to be a **just transition** with the core principle: **economy has to serve** the needs of the people **respecting the restrictions** given by the limited resources and the resistibility of our planet. The EU and its Member States need to lead this just transition and shape the transformation to the benefit of all on the basis of a new common and holistic **European sustainable development strategy for 2030**.

#### POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS:

- The « **European Green Deal** » proposed by the new European Commission needs to be a **real chance** to find a **balance** between the **ecological urgency to change our way of production and consumption**, and the **need to alleviate** the social consequences. Such a change will inevitably have an impact on the lives of many people. Economic, social justice and ecological justice need to be integral parts of any strategy for sustainable development. Ambitions presented in the European Green Deal need to be further strengthened, translated into real policies and implemented.
- We welcome the idea of creating a **Just Transition Fund** and encourage the EU and its Member States to equip this new fund with **adequate resources** that will allow all citizens and regions in the EU to manage the transition.
- In a globalised economy that allows us to outsource our pollution and consume products that sometimes have been manufactured under poor working conditions, we call on the EU to work on a **holistic approach**, and a **binding European and UN Business & Human Rights legislation** that upholds decent work conditions, human rights and environmental standards throughout the entire supply chain, and to be consistent in its implementation.
- **Fair taxation** can help to raise resources for financing the just transition and is the **key foundation of our social market economy**. In past years, however, we have witnessed the shocking extent of systematic tax avoidance of transnational companies and wealthy EU citizens that exploit the legal loopholes between our national tax systems and shift profits in order to reduce their financial contribution to the well-being of our society. Based on the **commonly agreed standards at G20 and OECD levels**, we encourage the EU to tackle tax avoidance and advance the proposal for a **Common Consolidated Corporate Tax Base (CCCTB)** in order to provide an EU-wide standard on taxation that closes the legal loopholes. We also encourage the EU and its Member States to increase transparency about the information where large transnational companies pay their tax and call on the Council to find a compromise on the Commission proposal for a **Public Country-by-Country Reporting (CBCR)** for business with multinational reach.
- In view of an **increasing disparity** between growing **urban and metropolitan areas** and **depleting rural areas**, the reform of the **Common Agricultural Policy** as well as **Regional Policy** might be a chance to re-think the current approach towards rural development: Regional Policy is responsible for an **equal and just development** of urban as well as rural areas.

## Presidency priority II. “Europe that Connects”

### A) Rebuilding Community in Europe

In a time when polarising voices are trying to divide European societies, **community-building and fostering of personal encounters** is gaining importance. Establishing **cross-border and cross-sectoral platforms for dialogue and cooperation** can play a significant role in this regard. Churches welcome that the Croatian EU Presidency intends to **bring European citizens closer together**, primarily through education, culture and sports. **Increasing plurality** in European societies, however, also raises the **importance of inter-cultural and inter-religious dialogue**. Religious belonging continues to be one of the key determinants of societal structures and personal bonds. As worldwide networks deeply rooted in local realities, Churches and religious communities can thus provide an important contribution to **fostering social harmony** and a **spirit of encounter** in Europe and beyond. The respect, preservation and promotion of **religious and cultural heritage** can be another significant element in fostering community-building and enhancing mutual knowledge and understanding.

#### POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Even though the EU has no legal competence in organising **inter-religious dialogue**, which is primarily a responsibility of Churches and religious communities, it can **build a positive environment and facilitate it**, e.g. through funding, support and participation in conferences and events.
- The EU Presidency is encouraged to contribute in this regard, while holding firm the **distinction between inter-religious dialogue** (i.e. dialogue among religious representatives and institutions) **and Article 17 TFEU Dialogue** (i.e. interaction between EU institutions on one side and Churches and religious associations or communities on the other).
- While promoting European cultural heritage, we encourage the EU Presidency to better recognise the spiritual, historical, artistic, economic as well as social contribution of **religious heritage** within the cultural heritage framework, and reinforce policies aiming at its protection and promotion.

### B) Innovation, Artificial intelligence and its Ethical Implications

Innovation in **research and education** will be **key to the European competitiveness** and the ability to **lead in the transition** to a climate-neutral economy and an **ethically responsible digital age**. It is a necessary investment in the future to **equip people with the knowledge** and the **ethical responsibility** they need to shape the necessary transition processes for a more sustainable community life. Artificial Intelligence **centered on persons, families and communities** brings many benefits to our society and economy. It can support the healthcare sector, a more sustainable transport system and the necessary transition to a more sustainable community life. Churches support the development of an artificial intelligence **rooted in strong legal and ethical principles** by establishing rules for it to **protect and to serve the human person**. While creating a strong digital connectivity to AI systems may provide a positive contribution to community-building, it is also important to include the possibility and the **right to be disconnected**.

#### POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Promote the approach of Horizon Europe to support European partnerships with EU countries for modernisation through **concerted research and innovation effort**.
- **Monitor the implementation** process of the Communication on Artificial Intelligence for Europe in order to ensure that an appropriate **ethical and legal framework** is promoted within the principle of the centrality of the human person. In this sense the rights of transparency and privacy have to also include the possibility to be **disconnected** from the digital connectivity.
- **Monitor the expected evaluation report** of the pilot phase of the published AI ethics guidelines.
- The benefits of an **extensive digitalisation** of all aspects of daily life need to be **set off against the social and environmental consequences**. The EU has to address the **anxiety and**

**discomfort of a growing part of the population** that fear being excluded from the ever-faster digital changes in the future. Politics needs to listen to their concerns and build a world of work that is guided by the building blocks of human dignity, sustainable working conditions, social dialogue and full employment. Churches encourage the EU to translate the **principles of the European Pillar of Social Rights** into concrete policy initiatives, focusing in particular on child and in-work poverty by means of common European approaches.

## Presidency priority III. “A safer Union and its citizens”

### A) Migration and Asylum

“Migration – the movement of people – is an inherent feature of the human condition. It belongs to the whole history of humanity – past, present and future – and the entire biblical narrative. We are all migrants and sojourners, and we are all members of the one human family.”<sup>1</sup> **Responsible policies** should **protect persons in need of international protection**, and establish a generous legal system for migrants looking for a better life, which should also take into account the **reality of each hosting society. Particular attention** should be paid to **those persons and families that are in a situation of highest vulnerability**, in particular those who could be subject to human trafficking, outside and inside the EU.

#### POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Endorse **more dedicated resources** to adequately shelter and protect persons on the move as closely as possible to their home region.
- **Reinvigorate the implementation of EU anti-trafficking legislation** and political instruments to combat trafficking in human beings, including **new forms of human trafficking such as reproductive exploitation (as condemned by the European Parliament)**.
- Relaunch the debate on the **reform of the Common European Asylum System** (including Dublin<sup>2</sup>) as a political and practical framework for processing asylum claims also the ground of persecution, including religious persecution.
- **Ensure the unity of migrant families**, in particular of children and their respective parents.
- Pursue a **humane return policy**, respecting the dignity and rights of every person, and assisting them to return and reintegrate into their home society.<sup>3</sup>
- Find a **balanced approach** between **solidarity** among all EU Member States, **responsibility** towards their citizens and EU citizens in their respective jurisdictions, and the **needs of newcomers, migrants and asylum seekers**.
- Assure **predictable mechanisms for search and rescue** of persons in danger in the Mediterranean and their **fair distribution** across the EU.
- Ensure that **the humanitarian and charitable support** of churches and other actors to migrants irrespective of residence status is **not criminalised**.
- Endorse a more robust framework and dedicated resources to **fight against root causes of migration**, making real the **primary right** of persons and families to **remain in their home country** in safety and dignity. **Direct assistance** to communities in countries of origin, in particular vulnerable minorities such as religious minorities, should be reinforced as a more effective way to help them. **EU-Churches partnerships** could be instrumental in this aim as they are reliable partners strongly rooted in local communities.
- Put in place a **“toolbox”** of legal and practical instruments for **safe and legal acces** to the EU.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> MESSAGE FROM THE CONFERENCE “XENOPHOBIA, RACISM, AND POPULIST NATIONALISM IN THE CONTEXT OF GLOBAL MIGRATION” ORGANIZED JOINTLY BY THE DICASTERY FOR PROMOTING INTEGRAL HUMAN DEVELOPMENT (Vatican City) AND THE WORLD COUNCIL OF CHURCHES (Geneva) IN COLLABORATION WITH THE PONTIFICAL COUNCIL FOR PROMOTING CHRISTIAN UNITY (Vatican City)

<sup>2</sup> [https://ccme.eu/wp-content/uploads/2018/12/2016-11-03\\_Chrg\\_comments\\_Dublin\\_IV\\_final.pdf](https://ccme.eu/wp-content/uploads/2018/12/2016-11-03_Chrg_comments_Dublin_IV_final.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> [https://ccme.eu/wp-content/uploads/2018/12/2018-05-30\\_position\\_paper\\_return\\_FINAL.pdf](https://ccme.eu/wp-content/uploads/2018/12/2018-05-30_position_paper_return_FINAL.pdf)

<sup>4</sup> [https://ccme.eu/wp-content/uploads/2018/12/2014-11-20-Christian\\_Group\\_Recomm\\_for\\_safe\\_legal\\_paths\\_to\\_protection\\_final-1.pdf](https://ccme.eu/wp-content/uploads/2018/12/2014-11-20-Christian_Group_Recomm_for_safe_legal_paths_to_protection_final-1.pdf)

## B) Protection of Personal Data

Churches are giving high priority to the issue of data protection, both to ensure the rights of EU citizens and for the conciliation of this with other fundamental rights, including the one to freedom of religion in its institutional dimension. They will **contribute to the process of review of the application of the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR)** foreseen for 2020. On the ePrivacy Regulation, the EU Presidency will be called upon to find the right balance during inter-institutional negotiations.

### POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS:

- **Involve Churches at the national and EU level** in the process of review of the GDPR; the EU Presidency may support, if necessary, **sectorial legislative integrations** at the EU level in the area of data protection.
- In the context of future inter-institutional negotiations on the **ePrivacy Regulation**, promote strong provisions on **countering child pornography** in electronic communications, as well as **ensure that the text does not have undue negative effects on the non-profit sector**, in particular with regard to fund-raising.

## C) Cybersecurity & Cyberdefence

By responding to the legitimate concerns of European citizens and companies, the reinforcement of cybersecurity at the EU level should **primarily focus on human-centric cyberresilience and cybersecurity**. This implies that beyond **criminal law principles**, cyber security measures should be intrinsically bound with respect for the **rule of law** and **citizens' fundamental rights and freedoms**. Since cyber-attacks and threats do not know territorial boundaries, an **intensified multi-stakeholder and multi-sectoral cooperation** would be required not only at European but also at the global level.

### POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS:

- On the basis of a broad **multi-stakeholder consultation**, **develop a comprehensive EU Cyberdefence Strategy**, guided by the strategic objective of human security and providing a clear instrumentarium for effectively addressing cyberthreats originating in the EU as well as outside.
- Prioritise within the European Defence Fund **research into and the development of capabilities addressing cyberthreats**, while fully respecting the rule of law and ethical principles, including the principles of proportionality, adequacy and necessity.
- **Review arms control regimes** at national and EU levels in view of **addressing specific challenges posed by cyberweapons**.
- Encourage and lead international efforts towards a **global Digital Convention** providing a comprehensive legal framework for addressing cyber-attacks and foreseeing accountability mechanisms, while reinforcing the link to international human rights standards.

## Presidency priority IV. “Neighbourhood and World Leader”

### A) EU's Neighbourhood

The region of South-East Europe, commonly referred to as the “**Western Balkans**”, is an integral part of the European family through its history and its rich cultural and religious heritage. Churches find it important for the EU to **reaffirm a credible European perspective** for the countries of this region, since this is also crucial for maintaining prosperity and lasting peace on the European continent. Churches are concerned that integration in Europe, especially in the sense of a process that enables connecting people in the continent and fostering fellowship, is facing increasing distrust and fatigue. Relations between the EU and candidate countries in the Western Balkans needs a decisive boost in order to overcome the difficulties. Politics needs to respond with concrete steps to fulfil hopes of the people and avoid their slipping into frustration. In view of possible future EU enlargements, Churches recognise the need for the EU to review its readiness in political, financial and institutional terms. Reforms of EU policies should not, however, lead to candidate countries' discouragement and hinder their progress on the path towards possible future EU membership.

Following the broad consultation on the occasion of the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the EU's partnership with its **six Eastern neighbours**, a **renewed vision** is also required to foster **integral human development and sustainable peace and reconciliation** in this region.

#### **POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS:**

- In view of the **next EU-Western Balkans Summit**, the **EU should deliver on its promises** and reaffirm a **clear European perspective** to the countries of the Western Balkan region, especially those having made significant progress on the reform path.
- While maintaining the **practice of regular Summit meetings**, the Sofia Priority Agenda should be updated with a next set of priorities and actions.
- Both policy frameworks – Enlargement as well as Neighbourhood – should have a **stronger focus on human connectivity** and on local **socio-economic as well as political empowerment**; a stronger emphasis on **reconciliation and peace** should also be included.

### **B) Global Actor for Development and Peace**

At a time when we are witnessing an erosion of the international legal framework and a loss of trust in multilateral mechanisms and practices, it is important that the European Union maintains a credible and value-based global engagement for **people-centred development and sustainable peace**. While becoming **more effective in finding a common approach** among the Member States, the EU should promote **multilateralism** not only in **trade** matters but also play a constructive global role in areas, such as **peace-building, development, climate and human rights**, including in the ongoing UN negotiations on a binding instrument for *Business & Human Rights*. As many of the global challenges are complex, the EU should adopt a **multi-stakeholder partnership approach** by effectively involving in policy-making not only public authorities, but also the private sector, academia & research, civil society, as well as Churches and religious communities with their grassroots experience and advocacy potential.

#### **POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS:**

- Promote in the EU partnerships with other regions, notably within the on-going negotiations with the 79 African, Caribbean and Pacific countries (ACP), the vision of a **fair, people-centred and mutually beneficial partnership**, with a special emphasis on creating **sustainable and decent socio-economic perspectives** for young people, in particular, and their families.
- In line with a recent Resolution of the European Parliament<sup>5</sup>, and followed by an inclusive stakeholder consultation, work on **EU Guidelines on “partnerships with churches and faith-based organisations and religious leaders in cooperation for development, based on the experiences of international organisations and programmes (such as UNICEF, the World Bank, WHO or the UN Development Programme), and good practices in EU Member States and abroad”**
- By **intensifying cooperation** with the United Nations and other key global players and stakeholders, work on a transformation of international relations towards a **global community** based on **mutual trust and cooperation**.

### **C) Religious Freedom**

The exercise of the **fundamental and inalienable right to freedom of religion** may be « *subject only to such limitations as are prescribed by law and are necessary to protect public safety, order, health, or morals or the fundamental rights and freedoms of others* » (Art 18(3) ICCPR). As it is **grounded in the inherent dignity of the human person**, **all dimensions** of this right - *individual and collective; private and public*; as well as *institutional* - should be properly and fully protected.

Churches in Europe note that the issue of freedom of religion has become an increasing concern in a number of EU Member States. This is related to the current sensitivity to presence of religion in the

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<sup>5</sup> [http://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/TA-8-2017-0365\\_EN.html](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/TA-8-2017-0365_EN.html)

public space, as well as to a growing number of attacks on faith communities in recent years, many of them targeting Christian communities.<sup>6</sup> The EU holds a unique role in ensuring the implementation of its legal framework in this area. In January 2019, the European Parliament adopted the resolution supporting the strategic relevance of the function and calls on the Council and the European Commission to adequately support the “mandate, capacity and duties of the Special Envoy.”<sup>7</sup>

#### **POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS:**

- Adopt targeted measures to **protect highly vulnerable religious minorities** in countries and regions where they are at risk of disappearing (e.g. Christians in the Middle East), **collect evidence** in case of international crimes committed against them, and promote and endorse national or international **mechanisms to prosecute** the perpetrators.
- Grant full political, social and financial support to make **effective the right of Christians and other persecuted minorities**, in particular in the Middle East, **to remain in their home countries, and to return to them in dignity and safety** as soon as possible; establish an **international targeted fund** to implement both basic rights.
- Ensure that the portfolio of **the EU Special Envoy for the promotion of freedom of religion or belief** outside the EU is **continued and strengthened** in its resources.
- Monitor the implementation of the **EU action plan on public spaces, include religious communities** in the dialogue with the Member States and provide the EU funding for the training of religious communities on the matter of public safety.

*Brussels, January 2020*

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<sup>6</sup> E.g. murder of Fr. Jacques Hamel in Normandy in July 2016, the bombing of churches on Easter Sunday March 2016 in Lahore, the narrowly-averted church massacre in October 2018 in Louisville Kentucky, terrorist attacks against churches in Sri Lanka during the April 2019 Easter Sunday Mass, periodic attacks on Koptic churches in Egypt etc.

<sup>7</sup> [http://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/A-8-2018-0449\\_EN.html#title1](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/A-8-2018-0449_EN.html#title1)).

## ANNEX

*In addition to the reflections above, Churches would also wish to make the following remarks on some more specific elements in the Programme of the Croatian EU Presidency:*

### Presidency priority II. “Europe that Connects”

#### a) Promoting a healthy digital environment

Churches are prioritising actions on **child protection** online and offline and **parents’ rights and responsibilities**. Safeguarding **minors’ moral development** has been a focus of Churches’ activities (e.g. with regard to the Audiovisual Media Services Directive) and will continue to be in the future.

#### POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Work towards **stronger rules on liability for digital platforms**, especially when it comes to incitement to hatred/violence, cyber-bullying, harmful contents and **child pornography**.
- **Promote digital literacy** for parents and their children.

### Presidency priority III. “A safer Union and its citizens”

#### a) Disinformation and ‘Fake News’

Disinformation is an aspect of particular relevance and urgency for the digital environment. This is indeed an area where an **EU-level approach can be more fruitful** and incisive than one left to the Member States.

#### POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS:

- A **rights-based approach** should be promoted in any EU initiative to counter disinformation, with an appropriate legal basis and respect for the **principles of proportionality and transparency**. **Definitions** must be sharp and prevent unwanted effects on free expression and democratic debates. **Education** should help build a critical spirit in each human being and foster a culture of dialogue. **Self-regulation** can be effective only as a complementary element. **Trusted reporters** should be used with care, providing independence, unbiased approaches and avoiding censorship: the key role must remain with the justice systems.

#### b) Counter-terrorism

Cross-border criminal actions, including terrorism and violent extremism, tend to play on **people’s fears** and might provoke **counter-measures** that pose a **challenge to the rule of law and civil liberties**. True security must go beyond the emotions of public opinions and fully adhere to the rule of law and fundamental human rights and freedoms.

#### c) Transparency Register

The resuming of inter-institutional negotiations on the **EU Register** is essential to provide **Transparency** to the legislative process and to allow full participation from all actors.

#### POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS:

- As Churches, we encourage the EU Presidency to **confirm the balanced approach** contained in the original Commission proposal, which is based on a consolidated framework and reflects concrete practice.

#### d) E-Evidence Regulation

The EU Presidency may deal with inter-institutional negotiations on the Proposal for a regulation of the **European Production and Preservation Orders for electronic evidence in criminal matters**. The text can have a positive impact but should contain safeguards to avoid an intrusive impact on national legal systems.

#### **POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS:**

- The EU Presidency should ensure that **sound clauses** are included in the text to ensure the possibility for national executing authorities to **refuse the recognition or execution** of the relevant Orders in relation to national legal provisions foreseeing **immunities and privileges**<sup>8</sup> (Cf. [Amendment 161 of the European Parliament Draft Report](#) on this proposal).

#### **e) EU Accession to the European Convention on Human Rights**

Article 6.2 of the Treaty on European Union enshrines an **obligation for the EU to accede** to the European Convention on Human Rights. The protection of fundamental rights in the European Union cannot be considered as complete as long as the Union is not a signatory to the Convention.

#### **POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS:**

- Churches encourage the EU Presidency to **support the European Commission in relaunching the relevant accession process**, for the positive opportunities it will offer EU citizens with regard to the compliance and accountability of the EU with fundamental rights' standards.

### **Presidency priority IV. “Neighbourhood and World Leader”**

#### **a) Crisis-response capacity**

In recent months, the European Union has put in place several new mechanisms and funding instruments to reinforce the security and defence cooperation between its Member States. Churches share the conviction that such efforts should be guided by **clearly defined strategic objectives of human security and sustainable peace**. If not focusing on the lasting security of persons, families and communities, purely technical security measures may themselves become a new source of instability. In line with an **integral approach**, security and defence measures should be articulated in **complementarity and adequate proportion to civilian peace-building efforts**, in areas such as diplomacy, humanitarian action, development, trade, energy or climate.

#### **POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS:**

- On the basis of a **broad multi-stakeholder and multi-sectoral consultation**, the EU Presidency should work on the specification of the [2016 EU level of ambition in the area of security and defence](#)<sup>9</sup> by **harmonising the different threat perceptions** and **strategic cultures** across Europe and defining **human security and sustainable peace** as the **long-term objective** of EU's security and defence policies.
- In accordance with this strategic objective, ensure that the **future European Defence Fund** will prioritise research into and development of projects **addressing major threats to human security** and provide funding on the basis of a **legal and ethical assessment** duly conducted by **independent experts** with various backgrounds and fully complying with requirements of **transparency**; in this regard, a **clear anthropological and ethical reference framework** should be elaborated, following a broad and inclusive consultation process.
- In line with the EU Global Strategy and the 2018 Council Conclusions on the Integrated Approach to External Conflicts and Crisis, step up in the next Multiannual Financial Framework **investment and capacity-building** in areas of **pre-emptive peace-building**, such as inclusive local conflict analysis, early warning and early action, resilience, etc.; develop a **political culture of acting sooner** in response to the risk of violent conflict.

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<sup>8</sup> For instance, in some Member States, such immunities/privileges cover **pastoral care** provided electronically and protect data gathered during such activities from access by State authorities.

<sup>9</sup> In its [conclusions of 14 November 2016](#), the EU Council defined a threefold level of ambition in the area of security and defence: “(1) responding to external conflicts and crisis; (2) building the capacities of partners; (3) protecting the Union and its citizens.”

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