

Towards a Peaceable and Solidarity-Based Europe

The 2024 European Elections – Key Questions for Candidates



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FOREWORD

At the European elections on 9 June, you have the right and the opportunity, as EU citizens, to influence the composition of the European Parliament and therefore also the policies pursued by the EU.

In the context of Europe, it is, first and foremost, Russia's war against Ukraine and the support provided to Ukraine by the EU and its Member States that have been in the foreground since February 2022. However, we wish to turn attention to other topics that are overshadowed by the war and therefore go largely unnoticed, even though they are of fundamental significance for further European and global development.

The key questions that follow are intended to encourage critical engagement with the candidates on the party lists and help ascertain where they would focus their energies if elected to the European Parliament. They will determine whether the EU's policies will contribute to safeguarding the survival of humankind – or pose an ever-greater threat to our conditions of existence.

The global challenges against which European policy must prove its worth include the development of credible climate and environmental policies, advocacy for a sustainable economy and fair trade, and a foreign and security policy which actively counters a new global arms race and defines security in terms of human as well as military

security. Security policy must be shaped in such a way that isolationism and seclusion are avoided. And security in Europe should not be achieved at the expense of security and human rights elsewhere.

It is therefore important to provide reliable support for the establishment of institutions for peaceful dispute resolution and mechanisms for civil conflict management – at European and global level. Here, governmental and civil society actors must work together. This can only succeed through the sharing of their skills and experience. At the same time, European policy can claim credibility in the world only if it puts relations with the countries of the Global South on a new and fairer footing, addresses the causes of violent conflicts and critically examines its own contributions to the absence of peace. Countless weapons that are used to commit grievous human rights abuses and war crimes worldwide are manufactured in Europe – and that needs to change.

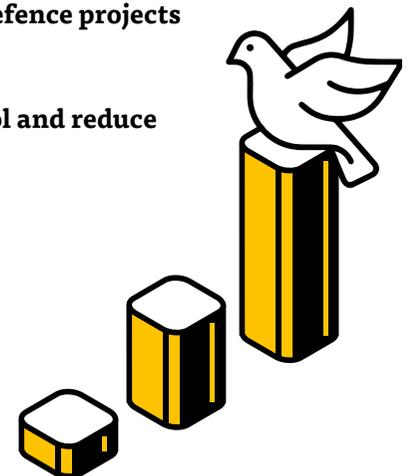
The European Union first emerged as a peace project. It motivated formerly hostile nations that had clashed on world war battlefields to engage in peaceful cooperation; after the end of the Cold War, it helped to overcome the East-West division of Europe. It rightly requires its members to commit to democratic standards, peaceful conflict resolution and human rights. We want the EU to evolve as a peace project in its external relations as well. Right now, new arms control and disarmament initiatives are urgently needed once more, not only in Europe but also at the global level.

Your questions for the European election candidates should aim to establish which policy course they would pursue in relation to strengthening civil conflict management and peacebuilding, disarmament and arms export control. Europe's peaceability will also be determined in part by how the EU Member States deal with refugees and migrants and are willing to protect these people's rights.

The party manifestos for the European elections are available online, along with the lists of candidates.

This paper covers the following topics:

- 1 Expand peacebuilding and civil peace missions**
- 2 Towards a human rights-based asylum and migration policy**
- 3 More justice in relations with countries of the Global South**
- 4 Restrict and control defence projects and arms exports**
- 5 Revitalise arms control and reduce nuclear weapons**



Expand peacebuilding and civil peace missions

The European Union (EU), in the Treaty of Lisbon (2007), has undertaken to base its external action on shared values. Article III-262, Paragraph 1 states: “The Union’s action on the international scene shall be guided by the principles which have inspired its own creation, development and enlargement, and which it seeks to advance in the wider world: democracy, the rule of law, the universality and indivisibility of human rights and fundamental freedoms, respect for human dignity, the principles of equality and solidarity, and respect for the principles of the United Nations Charter and international law.” The EU also pledges to develop relations and build partnerships with third countries and international, regional or global organisations which share its values, and to promote multilateral solutions to common problems in the framework of the United Nations.

The EU’s action on the international stage is coordinated in the context of the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) and the Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) and is supplemented by diplomacy, humanitarian assistance, development cooperation and measures to protect the climate and human rights. Economic and trade cooperation also has an international impact. Alongside military cooperation, missions focusing on crisis prevention, peacekeeping, stabilisation, disarmament, humanitarian aid and post-war recovery in other countries are coordinated within the CSDP framework.

In shaping its foreign, security and development policy, the EU should focus on addressing the causes of violent conflicts and bring influence to bear at an early stage to prevent their escalation. A further challenge is to ensure that funding for development cooperation and civil crisis prevention is not misused for the purpose of migration control or security policy measures. In the previous decade, the EU was the

third-largest provider of financial support for civil crisis prevention and peacebuilding worldwide.¹ However, in the current multiannual financial framework (2021-2027), funding for this area was reduced by one-third (i.e. by € 1 billion). A revision of the financial framework was then agreed in February 2024: in order to invest an additional € 7.6 billion in migration control, € 2.6 billion was diverted from the budget for the EU’s Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument (NDICI), despite massive protests from NGOs.

The Members of the European Parliament will be involved in decision-making on the next EU budget and will thus determine whether the EU’s status as a key supporter of peacebuilding is restored. This is more important than ever, for other countries are already reducing their financial commitments here – not least due to their high level of expenditure on military upgrading.

In recent years, efforts were focused mainly on strengthening the military dimension of EU policy (e.g. with Permanent Structured Cooperation, the European Defence Fund and a new financial mechanism for arms transfers to third countries) and this trend seems to be continuing as a result of the war in Ukraine. The task now is to ensure that the civil prevention and peacebuilding mechanisms that are needed to contain wars in Europe and other regions of the world are not neglected. The civilian dimension of EU policy should be enhanced, with additional, suitably trained personnel for the EU’s civilian missions.



¹ According to information from the OECD. See https://s42831.pcdn.co/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/international_peacebuilding_financing_and_changing_politics_in_europe-2022.pdf

Expand peacebuilding and civil peace missions

We wish to put the following questions to the European parliamentary candidates:

1 Will you work to ensure that the EU's existing strengths in the field of diplomacy, mediation and institution-building for crisis prevention and human rights protection are expanded and receive more financial and human resources?

2 Will you advocate for an increase in resources for the European Development Fund and more funding for civil crisis prevention and peacebuilding and for democracy and human rights in the Global South?

3 Will you work to ensure that the EU steadily increases its funding for civil crisis prevention and peacebuilding, democracy and human rights in the framework of the Neighbourhood Policy (i.e. in Eastern Europe, the Western Balkans and North Africa)?

4 How would you propose expanding the civilian dimension of the Common Security and Defence Policy, and will you advocate for it to be better resourced in terms of both personnel and funding?



Towards a human rights-based asylum and migration policy

The Member States of the European Union have agreed a reform of the Common European Asylum System (CEAS). The compromise reached in this context has entrenched the “walls-up” policy already practised by the EU and has drastically worsened the situation of refugees seeking protection in Europe. This compromise runs counter to the demands from numerous peace and human rights organisations for a human rights-based asylum and migration policy.

The planned border procedures, conducted under detention conditions, will start with an »admissibility assessment«. Asylum applications by persons seeking protection who have entered via supposedly »safe third countries« will no longer be assessed on their merits. To allow these persons to be deported, the criteria determining when a country is deemed to be sufficiently »safe« will be eased considerably; it will then be sufficient for sub-areas of these countries to be deemed safe. The Geneva Refugee Convention can be ignored. Even families with children will not be exempt from the mandatory border procedures and detention.

The entrenchment of Europe’s “walls-up” policy resulting from the CEAS reform will also lead to the further reinforcement of Europe’s external borders and the construction of border installations. This is unlikely to reduce the numbers of refugees coming to Europe – it merely increases the risk that more people will die along the way as a result of taking more hazardous routes to circumvent the walls and fences. For people seeking protection from persecution, hardship and death, border obstacles are not a lasting deterrent.

Instead of official sea rescue programmes being established, civilian sea rescue continues to be criminalised while FRONTEX cooperates with the Libyan coastguard. There are numerous reports of pushbacks at the EU’s external border between Turkey and Greece, with refugee boats being forcibly turned away by the Greek coastguard.

Furthermore, in recent years, the outsourcing of migration control to non-EU states has become embedded as a central pillar of the EU’s asylum and migration policy. The EU works closely with the security forces of authoritarian regimes in countries such as Tunisia and Egypt, which utilise this cooperation to boost their own power at internal level through the use of force.

A Europe that deprives the weakest of their rights, pushes them back by force in violation of international law and supplies arms and equipment to other countries in order to seal off the borders is part of the problem, not part of the solution. The EU is investing considerable financial and human resources in tackling displacement and migration rather than making intensive efforts to prevent human rights abuses, address the causes of violent conflict and curb the climate crisis, which is a major factor contributing to the destruction of livelihoods and to forced displacement.



Towards a human rights-based asylum and migration policy

The following questions should be put to candidates:



1 How will you work for a cosmopolitan, democratic and humane society in which the right to asylum is respected and the reception of asylum seekers in accordance with international commitments is guaranteed? Will you work to ensure that the plans to outsource asylum procedures and the responsibility to protect to non-EU countries are not pursued? What action will you take to effect an immediate halt to the illegal practice of pushbacks at Europe's external borders?

2 Will you advocate for the EU's border agency FRONTEX to uphold the principles of human rights and international law?

3 Will you vote against all plans to make collaboration on taking back refugees and controlling migration a precondition for European development cooperation with partner countries and to use the EU's financial resources to fund Europe's "walls-up" policy and the takeback of refugees by third countries?

4 Will you work to ensure that refugees at EU borders are treated in accordance with human rights standards, that these refugees are able to enter safely and lodge asylum applications on EU territory, and that they have no need to fear pushbacks or deportation to unsafe third countries?

5 Will you work to ensure that in the cooperation with non-European countries in the field of migration control, human rights are respected and that any strengthening of authoritarian, anti-democratic structures in the partner countries is avoided?

6 Will you work to ensure that migrants' rights under international law are respected, that the United Nations Global Compact for Migration is implemented and that, in this framework, more legal immigration routes are opened up, including to Germany?

More justice in relations with countries of the Global South

The EU faces major challenges at the global level and must redefine its role in international affairs. From a military perspective, the US continues to be the world's most powerful state, but the unipolar system in which this Western superpower set the tone after the end of the Cold War and the dissolution of the Soviet Union from 1989 onwards appears to be disintegrating, not least because China has made up considerable economic ground. Self-confident countries such as Brazil and India have also come to the fore and are demanding to have a say in global decision-making. And recently, Russia's war against Ukraine and the reactions to the war in Israel/Gaza have demonstrated that many countries of the Global South only share the Western countries' positions to a limited extent. Some are pursuing a pragmatic approach that protects their own economic and trade interests, and are forging alliances on a flexible basis for that purpose.

The time has come for the countries of the Global South to be more fully involved in international decision-making, not only within the UN framework, but also in the international trade and economic institutions, thus increasing global justice here. Europe's credibility in the world is measured in part against the coherence of EU policy, which should in all cases strive to avoid contributing to the emergence of violent conflicts. In many regions, conflicts are worsened by growing inequality, insecurity and climate change, which in turn are affected by (poor) economic and policy decisions at the European level. The transition to peaceable and fairer politics is therefore conditional on the EU being willing to shape credible climate policies of its own and radically reform its agricultural, trade, financial, economic and resource policies.



More justice in relations with countries of the Global South

We ask the candidates:

1 Will you engage actively to ensure that the EU completes its exit from all fossil fuels by 2035 and introduces measures to drastically reduce European energy demand?

2 Will you work to ensure that the EU honours its commitments to provide additional climate finance, doubles the funding for climate change adaptation measures by 2025 against the 2019 baseline and pledges billions of euros for the new Loss and Damage Fund?

3 Will you advocate for subsidies under the Common Agricultural Policy to be coupled to progress on climate change mitigation and the green transition, in order to mitigate any negative impacts on countries of the Global South?

4 Will you engage actively to ensure that the EU aligns its trade policy with the goal of social-ecological transformation, supports decolonisation of international trade rules and promotes the expansion of regional value chains in the Global South?

5 Will you advocate for the EU to couple extractive projects to strict human rights and environmental due diligence criteria?

6 Will you push to ensure that the EU participates constructively in negotiations on a global UN agreement on business and human rights and equips the European Commission with a robust mandate in this context?



Restrict and control defence projects and arms exports

As a result of Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine, many EU Member States are planning a massive expansion of arms production. It is feared that if this proceeds in an uncontrolled manner, it will tie up resources that are urgently needed for other purposes, such as social justice and civil crisis prevention. There is also a risk that the additional production capacities in the arms industry will contribute to more European weapons finding their way, sooner or later, into the hands of regimes that violate human rights.

Armaments cooperation in the EU must therefore be managed and controlled in a responsible manner; this is an urgent imperative. The European Parliament can play its part by pushing for the criteria governing arms exports from the EU to be tightened up and applied in a uniform manner.



Restrict and control defence projects and arms exports

Our questions for candidates are as follows:

- 1** If you are elected, will you advocate for a comprehensive tightening of the criteria set forth in the Council Common Position on control of exports of military technology and equipment (2008) and for their uniform application?
- 2** Will you make this tightening of the arms export criteria and their uniform application a binding prerequisite for further Europeanisation of arms export control?
- 3** If you are elected, will you advocate for the withholding of approval for arms exports that may pose a risk to the economic capacity of the recipient country (see Criterion Eight of the Council Common Position on control of exports of military technology and equipment, 2008)?
- 4** Will you advocate for the closing of existing regulatory gaps in the dual-use rules adopted by the EU and its Member States (e.g. for surveillance technology)?

- 5** If you are elected, will you work to ensure that in future, no armaments projects are financed by the European Investment Bank via its Strategic European Security Initiative?

- 6** Will you push for more stringent EU-wide supply chain legislation that covers the arms industry in full, and will you advocate for the EU to participate constructively in the ongoing negotiations on the UN treaty in this context?

- 7** Will you work to ensure that arms companies are not classed as sustainable under the EU taxonomy?

- 8** If you are elected, will you vote against the European Commission's plans to spend € 1.5 billion on increasing the industrial competitiveness of the armaments sector?



Revitalise arms control and reduce nuclear weapons

Nuclear weapons are weapons of mass destruction and pose an existential threat to the entire human habitat. We are in an extremely dangerous situation. There are currently at least 16,000 nuclear warheads around the world and all the nuclear powers continue to build up their stocks, while in some quarters, there are already calls for the EU to acquire nuclear weapons of its own. It is a fallacy that nuclear deterrence guarantees peace and security. On the contrary, the ongoing modernisation and buildup of these arsenals increase the risk of nuclear war – whether unintentional, accidental or as a result of uncontrolled proliferation. In any case, a war of this kind would have catastrophic humanitarian consequences. “Global Zero” – a nuclear weapons-free world – therefore remains the political goal. Given the lack of disarmament and the continued modernisation and proliferation of nuclear weapons, it is apparent that only the condemnation and prohibition of nuclear weapons under international law can generate the necessary pressure for the total elimination of these weapons from the world. This is the purpose of the UN Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, which entered into force in January 2021 and has now been signed by more than 90 countries.

Currently, France is the only member of the EU to possess an independent nuclear arsenal. Belgium, Germany, Italy and the Netherlands host nuclear warheads under NATO’s nuclear sharing arrangements. Although the governments of the EU Member States are responsible for issues relating to nuclear arms and weapons sharing, the European Parliament can, nevertheless, bring influence to bear on the political agenda through its recommendations and appeals. It should clearly advocate for de-escalation, arms control and a nuclear weapons-free world.



Revitalise arms control and reduce nuclear weapons

Our questions for candidates are therefore as follows:

1 Will you work to ensure that EU adopts a clear position in favour of a ban on all nuclear weapons?

2 Will you lobby for negotiations to commence with the Member States of NATO, the EU and the OSCE that aim

- to initiate new efforts for disarmament and arms control
- to effect a global moratorium on the modernisation of nuclear weapons
- to support not only the provision of assistance to individuals who are affected by the use or testing of nuclear weapons, but also environmental remediation, in accordance with Articles 6 and 7 of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons
- to bring forward an initiative on negative security guarantees, to include commitments by all nuclear-weapons states not to use or threaten the use of nuclear weapons against non-nuclear-weapons states
- to rule out unequivocally the first use of nuclear weapons and to condemn the threat thereof.



We wish to thank the team from *Ohne Rüstung Leben* for their key input and suggestions on the topics of arms exports, arms control and disarmament.

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