



Church and Peace

Church and Peace is an ecumenical Peace Church network made up of communities, training centres, peace organisations and peace-service agencies in Europe.

A “stronger Europe”: security through non-military conflict prevention and resolution

Church and Peace network on the new European Foreign and Security Policy

Schoeffengrund, 1 July 2016 - The European Church and Peace network has affirmed that it sees the path to a stronger Europe in security through civil conflict management rather than military deterrence.

The European Union's new foreign and security policy, unveiled on Tuesday in Brussels by Federica Mogherini, EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, calls for a “stronger Europe” in the face of current crises. “As Europeans we must take greater responsibility for our security. We must be ready and able to deter, respond to, and protect ourselves against external threats,” the document¹ states.

The Church and Peace network - comprising churches, organisations and communities in 14 European countries with decades of experience in civilian conflict resolution and nonviolent action - takes a different view.

“For us, a stronger Europe must take the form of security through social justice, respect for human rights, sustainable development, welcome and protection for threatened persons, fair relationships with all of the regions of the world - and comprehensive and deliberate efforts to strengthen civilian conflict resolution,” underlines Church and Peace chair Antje Heider-Rottwilm.

According to Heider-Rottwilm, the EU's new global strategy claims that a credible Union needs to invest more in defence in particular. Church and Peace is calling instead for a deliberate paradigm shift to non-military prevention and intervention strategies.

“We cannot continue to invest money and expertise to develop weapons systems in order to stem refugee flows or other tasks that are not even intended to be the responsibility of the military according to the Lisbon Treaty,” she says.

Rather than acting to stimulate growth and jobs as the new EU global strategy claimed, arms development, production and trade tied up resources, violated human rights and created the conditions for illegal executions - such as killings by drones - and internal conflict and terrorism, the Church and Peace chair adds.

Further, the network was concerned about the lack of clarity regarding the relationship between a coherent EU security policy and NATO's questionable politics, she notes.

“The European Union must invest, at long last, its expertise and financial resources in comprehensive development of mechanisms to de-escalate conflict and resolve conflict through civilian means,” says Heider-Rottwilm.

She says that Church and Peace welcomed certain parts of the EU's strategy for a coherent foreign, development, climate and human rights policy, such as the focus on “pre-emptive peace” and the approach outlined to take action at all stages of a conflict, both in section 3.3 “An Integrated Approach to Conflicts and Crises”.

However, the heavy emphasis on military options, with a corresponding investment in human and financial resources, is a missed opportunity to develop a “relevant strategy for a strong Europe of the future,” according to the network's chair.

“Europe must neither drift further apart nor seek to deter, neither contribute to the causes of flight nor wall ourselves off. We must contribute to building trust and common security through our domestic and foreign policy by investing in stable living conditions for all people in Europe and worldwide, regardless of gender, age or origin.”

Contact: Rev. Antje Heider-Rottwilm: +49 172 5162 799

1 *Shared Vision, Common Action: A Stronger Europe - A Global Strategy for the European Union's Foreign And Security Policy.* www.iss.europa.eu/uploads/media/EUGS.pdf