

## Brief presentation of the ecumenical network "Together for Europe"

**Together for Europe** Together for Europe is an international network that extends across Europe and beyond and brings together Christian Movements and Communities – over 300 in number spread across the Continent – belonging to different Churches. While preserving their independence, collectively they form a network to pursue shared goals, each bringing a contribution specific to their own charism. A reality rooted in strong shared experiences; Movements and Communities – just as different from each other as European cultures, languages and regions – establish relationships of communion and fellowship in which full respect of mutual diversity is maintained.

**Together for Europe** wants to respond to a need for a “culture of reciprocity” in which individuals and peoples welcome and get to know each other and reconcile differences with mutual respect and support.

**Together for Europe** held large European events. A true, small-scale model of Europe united and alive; while many of its activities are carried out locally, a broad vision of being part of a globalised world is maintained throughout.

**Together for Europe** seeks to meet the key challenges of the Continent putting the charisms of Movements and Communities at the service of humanity. This gives rise to numerous initiatives which promote reconciliation and peace, the safeguarding of life and creation, a just economy, solidarity with the poor and the marginalized, the family, the good of cities and brotherhood in Europe.

### History

The network was born in **1999**. The "Pact of mutual love" was first sealed in **2001** in Monaco, Bavaria, where 800 representatives of various movements and communities met. In **2004** and **2007**, more than 9,000 people met in Stuttgart to make their contribution to the unity of Europe. In **2009**, in 12 European cities, the Movements and Communities organised several open meetings.

In **2012**, a meeting was held in Brussels, near the headquarters of the European Union. In parallel, local meetings and events take place in 150 cities in 22 European countries. At the end of the day, all of them are linked by streaming for a common conclusion. In **2016**, a meeting was held again in Monaco in Bavaria. In **2017**, the year of the commemoration of 500 years of Luther's reformation, 5,000 people are present in Rome and there are more than 7,000 listening points in Europe and in other continents, thanks to an internet link broadcast in 7 languages. The testimonies of reconciliation are very strong and full of hope, like the fraternal embrace between different authorities of the Catholic, Lutheran and Orthodox churches.

In **2018**, the meeting is taking place in the heart of Europe, in Prague. Every year, 9 May, Europe Day, will be celebrated as Together for Europe Day.

In **2019**, around 170 representatives of numerous Christian communities and movements from Western and Eastern Europe will meet to celebrate 20 years of *Together for Europe*. In the ecumenical centre of Ottmaring, where EpE was born, and in Augsburg, the city of peace where the "Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification" was signed 20 years ago, the participants of the congress offer a retrospective of the journey lived with God in reciprocity, looking forward to a promising future.

In **2020**, the annual meeting was held online, due to the pandemic. Around 300 people from Portugal to Ukraine and Russia, from Northern Ireland to Greece, participated, bringing together a diverse mix of their experiences in Western and Eastern Europe, with films, photos and speeches.

## Recognition

*Together for Europe's* ecumenical commitment has been recognised on several occasions. The latest award received is the St. Ulrich Prize of the city of Dillingen (Germany).

The journey of *Together* is firmly rooted in many cities and regions. We meet to pray together, to exchange and to carry out social projects.

## Contribution in the ecclesial and social field

In all places, the Friends of *Together for Europe* seek to put into practice one or more of the "7 YESes", which they have committed to live responsibly: YES to life at every stage of its development; YES to creation; YES to solidarity with the poor; YES to a just economy; YES to the family and marriage, YES to peace, YES to our responsibility towards the whole of society.

Communities and Movements express their commitment through prayers for peace, political actions, youth projects, networking without confessional barriers, forums for the protection of creation, concrete support for the poor, seminars for couples and many other activities. The movements and communities that are part of this network support each other. The "7 Yes's" and the above-mentioned pact are the common basis of their commitment.

## Christian roots

"United in diversity". This European hope is more relevant today than ever. Europe must not become a "fortress" and erect new borders. **There is no alternative to living together.** A life together in reconciled diversity is possible.

Jesus Christ prayed for unity and gave his life for it, as the Gospel shows us. For 2000 years he has been a creative force for culture in Europe. Jesus Christ teaches us boundless love for all people. He shows us the way of mercy and reconciliation: we can ask for forgiveness and forgive one another. The Gospel is a powerful source from which we can draw hope for the future.

## Europe - a culture of respect and appreciation

The terrible experiences of the world wars have taught us that peace is a precious gift that we must preserve. Our future will be shaped by a culture of respect and esteem for the other, including the foreigner. Unity is possible, it requires overcoming the divisions that have caused suffering, violence, injustice and undermined the credibility of the Gospel. As Christians, we want to live together in reconciliation and full communion.

## Our commitment

We live with the Gospel of Jesus Christ and witness to it in word and deed. We follow the path of reconciliation and help our communities, churches, peoples and cultures to live "united in diversity". We meet people of other faiths and convictions with respect and seek open dialogue with them. We are committed to the growth of caring and peace in the world. We have a vision of living together in Europe, which is stronger than all fear and selfishness. We trust in the Holy Spirit, who constantly renews and enlivens the world.

In these times of pandemic, the international experience of *Together for Europe* is more important than ever. Thanks to the friendship between all the Movements and the work done together for those in need, for the environment and for peace, "Together" is becoming more and more a sign of hope.

Everyone is called upon to be an actor in their daily lives. It is not difficult to start. Let us ask ourselves every morning: to whom can I be close today, concretely and in prayer? Caring for neighbours, colleagues, refugee families, the elderly, the sick and children is a social vocation with global dimensions: act locally - think globally.

In order to build up **Europe Day 2021**, as many people as possible will be mobilised, with the aim that from this day onwards a stronger cohesion will develop in Europe. The technical possibilities of meeting virtually all over Europe are a real opportunity to enrich ourselves through mutual exchange.

For the third consecutive year, a **six-week journey of prayer** has been planned, starting on 28 March 2021 and ending with Europe Day on 9 May. It is an invitation to pray, live and witness together our faith in God and in Christian values. The texts, prepared by several groups from France and Italy, can be downloaded at the bottom of the page on: <https://www.together4europe.org/>.

We invite you to join us on Saturday 8 May 2021, from 4 to 5.30 pm.