



# ODESSA DECLARATION - STRATEGY OF ECPYOUTH

ECPYouth – Working Group Politics

19 JUNE 2017 – DRAFT VERSION FOR GA ODESSA



# ODESSA DECLARATION – Strategy ECPYouth

## 1. Introduction

*May the God who gives endurance and encouragement give you the same attitude of mind toward each other that Christ Jesus had, so that with one mind and one voice you may glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. (Romans 15 v 5-6)*

10 The Odessa Declaration contains a strategy for ECPYouth based upon three core values for Europe: Dignity, Catholicity and Collaboration, which can be seen in *figure 1*. The Declaration starts with an executive summary, followed by an outline of some of the challenges that Europe is facing today. The main part of the document presents and explains the core values of ECPYouth and the corresponding political values. Ideas for exposing our goals and ways to implement the core values are added as an appendix.

The Odessa Declaration has been written by the Working Group Politics, which consists of Natalie Tsirmpa, Alina Koval, Jan Henric van Vliet, and Rick van de Ven, in close collaboration with Lizzie Francis, ECPYouth Secretary.

## 2. Executive summary

### Mission of ECPYouth:

20 To build together on Christian politics in Europe by collaboration, exchange of experiences, and through active participation.

### Challenges:

Europe is facing several challenges these days, such as polarization, the refugee crisis, the Euro-debt crisis and many others. In order to deal with these challenges, ECPYouth is presenting a response. This document provides strategic and effective direction for members of Christian political youth organizations to utilize the tools and resources available in the political sphere, whilst aiming to honor God.

### Core values:

1. Catholicity: *Christians all over Europe have different perspectives and opinions, but we are united since we serve the same God.*
2. Dignity: *Human beings are created in the image and likeness of God, and as such they have intrinsic value and have the right to be respected.*
3. Collaboration: *As Christians we can connect and collaborate with different organizations and under privileged groups in society, in which we can create a mutually beneficial situation for both parties*

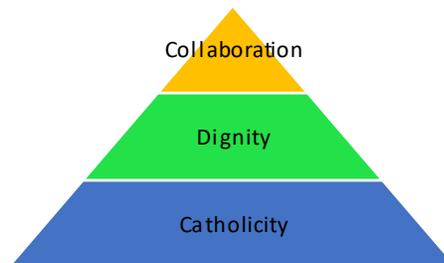


Figure 1: Core values

### Political values

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Table 1: Political values

Core Value	Political values
Catholicity	- Equality - Freedom - Honoring everyone
Dignity	- Mercy and Justice - Balanced life and families - Inviolability
Collaboration	- Responsibility - Sustainability - Subsidiarity

### 3. Challenges

Our society is facing an increasing number of challenges which are changing the European landscape. Europe is still dealing with a financial crisis, which can be observed in different countries, social circles, age groups, and professions, making it increasingly difficult to find work. A crisis of a different kind has to do with the big influx of people coming to Europe from regions torn apart by war (especially from Syria). These factors have given rise to uncertainty and fear, which in turn has given rise to intolerance towards people of different races, origins, beliefs, etc. As a result, we are currently observing a political polarization, a tendency to favor ideological extremes, to abandon mainstream policies and the European ideals and European project altogether. An example of this is Brexit, in which the British people voted that it would be better to leave formal membership with the EU rather than to stay. On another note, immoral behavior and policies that contradict the Bible are continuously encouraged. As Christians, experiencing biblical truths, and as young Europeans, able to impact the society around us, we need to use the values that the Bible teaches us as foundations and as guiding principles in order to sway the course Europe has taken.

### 4. Values

There are three core values which represent the foundation of the ECPYouth, which are explained in this section. Based upon the core values, political values are defined which are further explained.

#### a) Catholicity

Catholicity implies broad-mindedness, inclusiveness and respect for the differences between Christians, their cultures, their intelligence and ways of thinking which provides a broader spectrum of knowledge, and as such differences between people can be celebrated. This ultimately leads to a united, stronger and more focused Christian community. ECPYouth's main vision is that God is the unifying force, that brings all His people, in all their differences and diversity together, ultimately unified for His glory. The Bible tells us to love one another with brotherly affection" (Romans 12:10), to have "purified souls by [our] obedience to the truth for a sincere brotherly love, [to] love one another earnestly from a pure heart" (1 Peter 1:22), to have "sympathy, brotherly love, a tender heart, and a humble mind" (1 Peter 3:8). This common faith is expressed in the Twelve Articles of Catholic Faith.

We are increasingly seeing a lack of tolerance of mind which leads people to view diversity with apprehension. As young Europeans it is important to be aware of this challenge since we are inevitably surrounded by diversity every day. As Christians, we are first called to be united as the body of Christ, developing a humble attitude geared towards serving others, and in the context of our society we are called to be the salt of the earth and the light of the world. When we live with a Christian attitude, we cannot stay silent in the face of ideologies promoting fear and hate, and we need to become examples of Christian love and respect in our universities, workplaces, churches, and circles. This starts with our minds honoring other Christians of different expressions of the faith, and in turn, a wider spectrum of people.

**Equality:** All human beings are created equal and therefore have equal rights. We are all created in the image of God, who is good, magnificent and beautiful. This equality is the underlying foundation serving as a constant harmonizing force in a pluriform and diverse Europe. Our goal is to promote this pluriformity while at the same time accentuating the equality of rights which makes multiculturalism work.

**Freedom:** Individuals have the right to be free; this freedom comes directly from God our creator and is inherent to human nature. Furthermore, as Christians, we have been set free in Christ Jesus, and this

freedom brings us closer to being the people God created us to be, by loving and serving Him and one another in our daily lives. Freedom is not contingent on circumstances. Not all governments, religions, or philosophies inspire freedom, which is why it is important to preserve it, underline its importance, and not tolerate any ideological currents undermining our right to freedom. This freedom includes, amongst others, the freedom of religion and worship, the freedom of expression, the freedom of education, the freedom of association, the freedom to dispose freely of our property and possessions, freedoms which should not be taken away or limited by any laws.

90 **Honoring Others:** By enjoying and exercising our freedoms fully, we should also use them actively to serve those around us. This can be done by being active servants of God and others and by participating in politics to change society. ECPYouth can be the means to work in politics as a young Christian and participate in the building of a European Union rooted in Christianity. An attitude of honour for other people should be the main characteristic of any Christian politician, like Jesus Himself was called to serve, rather than to be served (Mark 10:45).

### b) Human Dignity

100 Human beings are created in the image and likeness of God, and as such they have intrinsic value and have the right to be respected. This idea is expressed by the concept of human dignity. "In the image of God, [God] created them" (Genesis 1v 27). The importance of human dignity is mirrored in various legal texts including article 1 of the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union where it is stated, "human dignity is inviolable. It must be respected and protected." Human dignity is at the same time a fundamental human right, and the basis and source of deriving rights and freedoms. Therefore, European governments should effectively promote and protect human dignity in society. Human dignity encompasses the importance and inviolability of human life from the moment of conception to natural death. It also includes the quality of that life, a quality which can be namely seen by the freedom and the rights that each individual deserves to enjoy.

110 As young Europeans, we have had the privilege to live in a continent that is striving to protect and promote dignity. Unfortunately, today, ideas having gained more popularity lately, and tend to ignore a human being's rights to a certain standard of life or even a human being's right to life itself. As Christians we are called to love God with all our heart, soul, strength, and mind, and to love our neighbors as ourselves. This ability to truly love our neighbors comes from God, and means that as Christians we can truly care about the lives of those around us and should show it in practical and real ways. Human life is sacred, it should be respected, and as Christians we can use our voice to speak and protect those who do not have one. We need to live out a practical demonstration of our mutual respect and honor for each other towards treating people with the dignity that God has created them to have.

**Mercy and Justice:** The Lord asks us to do justly and love mercy (Micha 6:8). Justice implies that laws should be fair and be subject to impartial application. They should guarantee individual rights and freedoms and respect human dignity and thus be just and merciful. This value of mercy and justice should be diligently ensured for all people, avoiding the marginalization of people who struggle with poverty, who are refugee or are finding difficulties in any form to be part of society.

120 **Balanced life and families:** Human beings have the absolute and inalienable right to life. This right cannot be taken away by any law. We should ensure that laws protect and promote this right for all individuals

from the moment of conception to natural death, and protect every individual. This includes the weakest ones, from practices such as abortions and euthanasia.

Relationships are essential in European societies as they reflect the image of God, who is relational himself – Father, Son, Holy Spirit. Family is the institution which is the cornerstone of every healthy society and should be protected. Marriage between one man and one woman create the necessary foundation for a family. Laws should not obstruct the normal exercise of functions of families, rather they should protect and stimulate the family structure.

130 **Inviolability:** The exploitation of any human being or any part of a human being (exploitation of organs) cannot be tolerated in any form. This includes sexual exploitation, forced labor or services, slavery, servitude, or any other similar practice. Exploitation also includes the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harboring or receipt of people by any means of coercion, threat, deception, or abuse of power. Exploitation can happen in multiple forms, whether payment or benefits are exchanged or not. Any such practices are reprehensible and no human beings should experience this.

### c) Collaboration

140 The Bible is full of stories of helping your neighbor, participating in cross-cultural collaboration, which should also be present in the European Union. The national states of Europe and their cultures are fundamentally unique and equal to each other. At the same time, they share a history that has been greatly influenced by Judeo-Christian values. By revealing the true potential of the other party and creating a win-win situation, in which all parties benefit and are not exploited, the true nature of Christianity can be shown. When we collaborate as young Christian politicians with groups that are underprivileged, we can raise them up and help them to reach their potential. Examples include refugees, disabled persons etc. Second, within the European Union there is the situation that persons can travel without a visa, goods can be transformed without passing customs and ideas can be shared freely over Europe. This allows people in Europe to trade together and to participate in cross boundary trade, which is usually a hindering block for both small and large businesses. This allows a country to be transformed and to break the vicious circle of poverty on both a high and personal level. As young Christians we can stand up for this freedom and use the freedom to build God’s kingdom in every sphere of the European society.

150 Young Christians in Europe should consider that much of the economic and social development over the last 65 years has been caused by collaboration between European nation states. This collaboration is currently under heavy pressure, since people have the opinion that all this freedom is making their individual situation more difficult. As young Christians, we should aim to collaborate with people from all over Europe to build bridges. Instead of creating walls in society and politics, we should encourage collaboration and be bridge builders. This will show the world what it means that Jesus is alive and present. By joining several organizations/events/meeting people that are living, people and ideas can be connected together from different levels and background. Pray, meet, and connect!

160 **Responsibility:** The European Union remains a union, and as individuals our actions impact the society around us. Our freedoms and our rights should be exercised responsibly and with respect to those around us. Freedom is limited by responsibility. We should be good stewards and work with or create faith based organizations and initiatives to ameliorate the society around us. We should touch all elements of society,

since we are responsible for the earth and for everything that is upon it. There is no area of life that Christians feel not responsible for, as the whole earth belongs to God (P salm 24:1).

**Sustainability:** Our responsibility to improve living conditions and society implies also to be respectful of the earth and nature which is God's creation as well. Research and innovation should be encouraged in order to protect the environment and maintain a balance between technological advances and the preservation of nature. Economic stimulus packages and legislation should be available to stimulate sustainable investment and working.

170 **Subsidiarity:** Collaboration works better if it starts at the local level. It can be more effective and touch the needs of each place by accomplishing the things that can be done locally. In the same way, citizens of European countries should participate in public life at all levels. Subsidiarity also encourages the empowerment of individuals and families, (historically formed) local associations and communities, and ensures the separation of power to avoid its concentration. This is an old notion in Christian thinking about politics and power. By keeping principle of subsidiarity in mind, the European Union with all its institutions can work better by doing the things that cannot be done more locally.

## Appendix

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### Implementation

The following figure shows how the strategy can be implemented. For each of the four areas, ideas are explained for inspiration.

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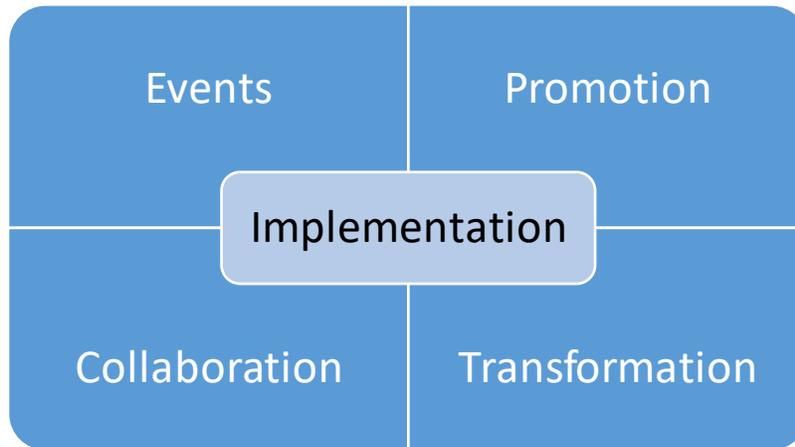


Figure 2: Implementation scheme

#### 1. Ideas for Events (to strengthen the overall position through reports and discussions):

##### -Conference themes:

- Political leaders of the Bible: an analysis of various leadership examples and of how these men or women lived lives of faith. Ex: David, Daniel...

##### -Various events:

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- University events:
  - Set up stands where students could donate certain items (food, clothing, etc...), items which will be distributed to people in need by local churches. (Advertise on social media)
  - Organize debate sessions with other youth organizations

##### -Miscellaneous:

- a. When participants join a conference, they can have a challenge on which they can work on.
- b. Participants can win a prize when they work on their challenge and see that they can make a difference. This is to motivate them to make a change in Europe.
- c. During a conference, people can gather in groups and pray together. After the conference, people can stay in touch (and pray together).

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**II. Ideas for promotion** *(to raise the awareness of the ECPYouth):*

- a. Raise the awareness of the aforementioned challenges by publishing blogposts, by incorporating a short version of the blog in the newsletter, by writing short essays on the Facebook page, by tweeting about events and situations that are linked to the challenges.
- b. Make a group in Facebook called “Talented Christians Together”, under the ECPYouth organization. In this group, the core values can be promoted among the youth and people from different associations can get in contact in order to collaborate on future Christian projects.
- c. Share stories from the Bible and from personal experience in which people find the meaning of the core values in their life, explaining how this affects their life.

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**III. Ideas for transformation** *(to change Europe into a society who knows Jesus):*

- a. Present certain challenges that are being addressed by NGOs or other organizations and give the incentive for participants to volunteer in these organizations.
- b. Find challenges that are not being addressed by organizations and train participants to become a point of reference for the youth in their countries and churches, and to organize events through their churches (even in collaboration with other churches in other countries).

**IV. Ideas for collaboration with other organizations** *(to combine resources and efforts):*

- a. Several organizations in Europe are involved in the challenges that are listed. Based upon the core values that the ECPYouth has in common with them, a selection of organizations can be made to work together. This can involve political organizations, but also Christian mission organizations, economic organizations.
- b. Make an analysis of the organizations that ECPYouth members are involved in. This can enable the board to select a number of organizations and will improve the communication with these organizations.
- c. Cooperate with organizations in educational environment, such as Evangelistic Academies, political departments in Universities, Catholic Universities etc.

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