



ODESSA DECLARATION

ADOPTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY, 15 JULY 2017

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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)

The Odessa Declaration contains a strategy for ECPYouth based upon three core values for Europe: **Dignity**, **Catholicity** and **Cooperation**, which can be seen in figure 1. The Declaration starts with an executive summary, but 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.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

MISSION OF ECPYOUTH

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

CORE VALUES AND CORRESPONDING POLITICAL VALUES

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

Core value I - Catholicity

Christians all over Europe have different perspectives and opinions, but we are united since we serve the same God.

Political values: Equality, Freedom, Honoring Everyone

Core value II - 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.

Political values: Mercy and Justice, Balanced Life and Families, Inviolability

Core value III - Cooperation

As Christians we can connect and cooperate with different organizations and under privileged groups in society, in which we can create a mutually beneficial situation for both parties.

Political values: Social Responsibility, Sustainability, Subsidiarity

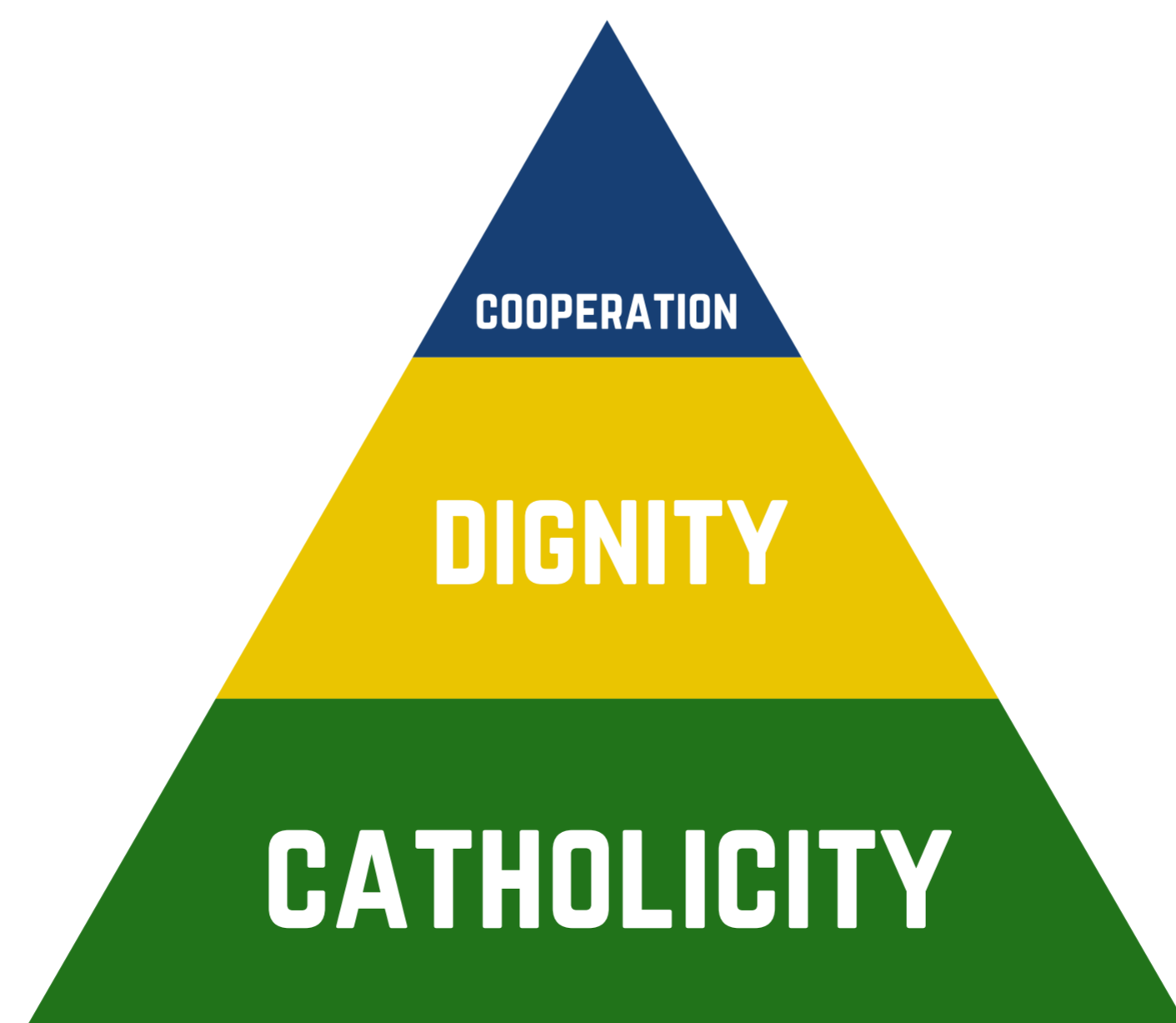


Figure 1

CORE VALUE I - CATHOLICITY

Introduction

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 honored. This ultimately leads to a united, stronger and more focused Christian community. ECPYouth' 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.



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.

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.



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.

Honoring everyone

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 honor 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).

CORE VALUE II - HUMAN DIGNITY

Introduction

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 1 v 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.



THE 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.

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. It is important to maintain the respect of the rule of law, and to ensure the equality of access, treatment and protection before the law, which is enforced by an independent judiciary branch. 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.



HUMAN BEINGS HAVE THE ABSOLUTE AND INALIENABLE RIGHT TO LIFE. THIS RIGHT CANNOT BE TAKEN AWAY BY ANY LAW.

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.

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 either active or passive, 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. Therefore, we encourage the adoption of Nordic Model in criminalizing the clients.

CORE VALUE III - COOPERATION

Introduction

The Bible is full of stories of helping your neighbor, participating in cross-cultural cooperation, 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 cooperate 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 help build God's kingdom in every sphere of the European society.



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VALUES.

Young Christians in Europe should consider that much of the economic and social development over the last 65 years has been caused by cooperation between European nation states. This cooperation 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 cooperate with people from all over Europe to build bridges. However, building bridges should only be done as long as it is in line with the Bible. We should never compromise on our core Christian principles, even if it means we come to stand alone in the face of adversity. Instead of creating walls in society and politics, we should encourage cooperation 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!

Social 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 Social responsibility. We should be good stewards by cooperating, creating, and highlighting role of faith based organizations and initiatives in order to ameliorate the lives of the most vulnerable ones and 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 (Psalm 24:1).

Sustainability

Our Social 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.

Subsidiarity

Cooperation 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. We believe that through the principle of subsidiarity and more competence to the Member States, the European Union will have a better future.



WE SHOULD BE GOOD STEWARDS
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