



Keep peace on the agenda!

Peacebuilding at a crossroads ahead of the European elections

31. Mai 2024

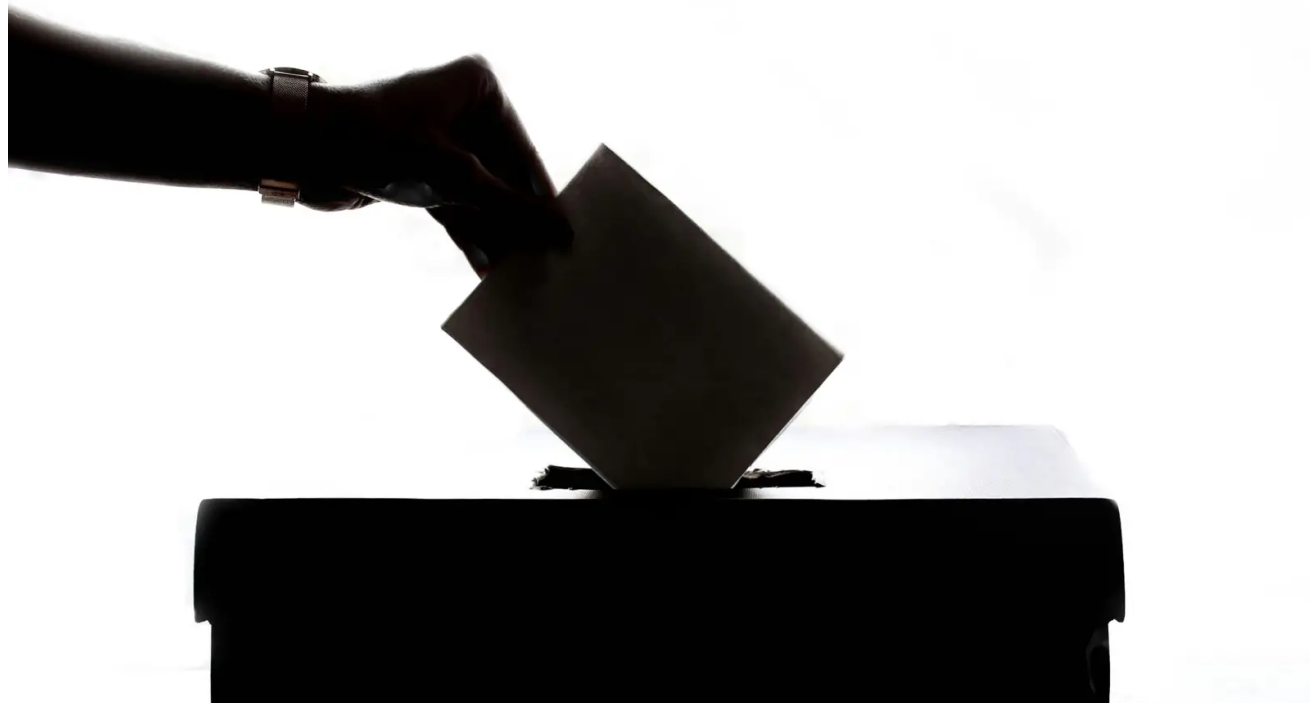
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On 6-9 June, around 400 million EU citizens have the right to vote for their representatives in the European Parliament. However, despite the EU's history as a peace project, peace is out of favour in discussions on political priorities and resource allocation. Peacebuilding and conflict prevention are at risk of becoming increasingly sidelined. Therefore, the EU elections are a significant opportunity for peacebuilders in Germany and Europe to call for stronger approaches towards peace.

What's at stake?

With the upcoming European elections, the stakes are high for what kind of peace actor the European Union (EU) will be. There is a clear trajectory towards higher defence spending and prioritization of hard security at both the European and the national level. However, it would be a mistake for the EU to put all its eggs in one basket regarding this approach at the expense of others. The intensification of conflicts worldwide – coupled with a rise in right-wing extremism, the climate crisis, and the growing gender backlash – will require prioritization of and investment in policies and approaches that go beyond the focus on defence and national security. In the long term, the effectiveness of the EU's investment in security will need to be measured by its ability to strike a balance between domestic priorities and partner countries' priorities. This includes the safety of populations in the countries in which the EU is operating.

In this era of intense geopolitical competition, the EU has a clear added value and opportunity to emerge as a greater global actor for peace. It should do so by sustaining an external action that puts **human security and the protection of civilians** at the forefront of all its external security engagements. The EU has a unique competitive advantage in pursuing and supporting **non-violent forms of conflict resolution** and contributing to long-term, sustainable peace around the world through its peacebuilding and development instruments. It is critical that the EU strengthens its commitments to people-centred approaches to security – while connecting peacebuilding with all EU external instruments and increasing its inter-institutional cooperation for a comprehensive security approach.

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Literaturhinweise

[European Peacebuilding Liaison Office \(EPLO\)](#)

The European Peacebuilding Liaison Office (EPLO) is the independent civil society platform of European NGOs, networks of NGOs, and think tanks that are committed to peacebuilding and the prevention of violent conflict.

How can Germany help to shape peacebuilding and conflict prevention at the European level?

On Sunday, 9 June, German voters will elect 96 out of a total of 720 Members of the European Parliament (MEPs), a significant proportion resulting in important leverage. The German MEPs' support to peacebuilding during the next European legislative term will therefore be crucial. German policymakers and civil society should continue their active engagement with MEPs and push for stronger and diverse peacebuilding efforts.

In a global context of increasing military-oriented narratives, the EU is well-positioned to expand its capacities in **mediation**. The MEPs can call for increasing the EU's strength as a convenor and facilitator. In line with the EU's obligations for **conflict sensitivity**, MEPs should monitor how EU programming is informed by **conflict analysis** and promote **early warning** and **early action**. MEPs should push for more resources, political attention, and strategic communication to pursue the EU's commitments to **gender equality**. They should call for greater efforts towards the **green transition** as well as **climate adaptation and environmental protection** – and connect these efforts to EU peacebuilding activities.

How should the allocation of funds be prioritized?

MEPs will have an important role in shaping the EU's next external budget for the period 2028-2034. As such they will be key actors in securing the **EU's financial support for conflict prevention and peacebuilding**. Ensuring adequate resources in this area would allow the EU to contribute to sustainable peace – through long-term, transformational efforts that address the root causes of conflict.

German and European civil society actors are facing a funding landscape marked by severe budget cuts and a global context characterised by a shrinking civic space. MEPs have a say in reshaping how the next external budget is allocated to civil society actors which are active in the EU as well as in fragile and conflict-affected countries. Providing more **long-term, accessible, and flexible funding to local civil society organisations** and partnering with international NGOs will make a big difference when it comes to maximising the EU's contributions to long-term peace. MEPs should push the EU to systematically **defend and protect an open civic space** in its political dialogue with partner governments. At the same time, they need to ensure that the EU's partnerships safeguard the ability of civil society actors to carry out their work.

Next to engaging with the newly elected parliament, German policymakers and civil society can continue to push for a strong peace agenda through Germany's role in the Council of the EU. Keeping peace on the agenda will only be possible with joint and precise advocacy and efforts both at the national and at the European level.

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A comprehensive questionnaire for European parliamentary candidates was published in English and German by AGDF, Brot für die Welt, church and peace, forumZFD, Mennonitisches Friedenszentrum Berlin, pax christi, and Plattform Zivile Konfliktbearbeitung.

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