



29 September 2022

Inspired by our shared Christian faith and motivated by a desire for a stable and peaceful Europe, IXE - Initiative of Christians for Europe, at its meeting in Newry, Northern Ireland (23-25th Sept 2022) issued the following statement.

IXE asserts the values expressed in Catholic Social Thought and Practice, and those expressed in Fratelli Tutti (Pope Francis, chapters 6 & 7) on the important principles of Subsidiarity, Solidarity and Human Dignity in the building up of a just society.

- Recognising the long history of conflict in Northern Ireland, and the suffering caused by this conflict to its people, from both communities.
- Recognising the success of the Belfast/Good Friday Agreement Accord in establishing peace for 25 years and allowing the development of the economic potential inhibited by previous conflict.
- Recognising the roles played by the governments of the United Kingdom and the Republic of Ireland, together with the European Union and the United States, in securing the agreements that led to a negotiated settlement.
- Praising the impressive reconciliation efforts by civil society and faith communities, based on the many initiatives that have brought people closer together, built on education, cultural life and sports.
- Acknowledging the results in Northern Ireland in the 2016 referendum on UK's membership of the EU, where the people of Northern Ireland voted to remain within the EU.
- Acknowledging the absolute necessity of avoiding any land border between Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland.

We express our deep concerns about

- The uncertainty that was created when the Protocol on Ireland / Northern Ireland was called into question.¹
- The interruption of discussions on practical implementation of the Protocol.
- The current collapse of power-sharing within the Northern Ireland government and assembly.

In the light of the current cost of living crisis affecting people in Northern Ireland and in view of the upcoming anniversary of the Belfast/Good Friday Agreement on 10 April 2023, it is now urgent to address these issues. Therefore, we urge the UK Government led by the new Prime Minister Elizabeth Truss, and the European Commission

- to resume discussions on practical, long-lasting solutions within the framework of the Protocol.
- to refrain from any action that could lead to a land border on the island of Ireland.
- to listen to the concerns and needs of all the people of Northern Ireland and to involve civil society in the discussions.

Everything must be done to prevent the return of conflict and violence. Our hope is for stable peace and prosperity for the communities of Northern Ireland, the rest of the United Kingdom and The Republic of Ireland. A successful model in these islands might serve as a template for resolution of conflict in other parts of Europe and of the world.

The Initiative of Christians for Europe (IXE) is an association of lay organizations and committed Christians from different European countries. General concern of IXE is to incorporate a more vivid awareness of a united Europe in the national debates. The initiative aims at fostering the encounter of Christians in Europe and to promote the Social Doctrine of the Church in order to achieve a better mutual knowledge and understanding of historical and cultural differences.

¹ This Protocol was agreed between the UK and the EU to ensure an integration of Northern Ireland into the Single Market, by a continued application of EU rules on customs and free movement of goods, and thereby to guarantee the absence of a land border.