

Advocacy Factsheet: Nonviolence as a style of politics for peace

Recommendations for Members of the European Parliament - September 2019



“When victims of violence are able to resist the temptation to retaliate, they become the most credible promoters of nonviolent peacemaking. In the most local and ordinary situations and in the international order, may nonviolence become the hallmark of our decisions, our relationships and our actions, and indeed of political life in all its forms.”

—Pope Francis,
[World Day of Peace Message](#),
1 January 2017

WHAT IS THE CONTEXT?

Total world military expenditures rose to \$1822 billion in 2018, representing an increase of 2.6 percent from 2017. Total military expenditures by all 29 NATO members, which includes 22 EU Member States, was \$963 billion in 2018, accounting for 53 percent of global spending. Several countries in Central and Eastern Europe had major increases in their military expenditures in 2018 ([data SIPRI 2019](#)). However, increased investment in weapons and military preparedness by governments has not made the world a safer place. The number of violent conflicts in the world is at an all-time high and hundreds of thousands of people die each year because of them.

Policies promoting nonviolent options for transforming conflict have not been sufficiently prioritised, although in many contexts they have been proven effective and less costly for sustaining peace and security. The EU Global Strategy recognises that the prevention of violent conflict is more efficient and effective than engaging with crises after they break out. However, EU policies and budgets are increasingly focusing on defence, anti-terrorism and border management rather than on stepping up investments in EU strengths such as conflict resolution, peacebuilding activities, diplomacy, mediation, institution-building and civil society support.

WHY SHOULD A FOCUS ON NONVIOLENT APPROACHES BE PROMOTED IN THE EU CONTEXT?

- Too often policymakers overlook nonviolent approaches to sustaining peace and security that have repeatedly been proven to be effective in reducing violence and conflict in contexts around the world.
- Choosing nonviolent strategies as the first option in response to violent or potentially violent societal challenges would align with policy commitments made by the EU and its member states at intergovernmental levels.
- Instead of spending huge amounts on military and defence, the EU and its member states could use its budgets for the billions needed annually to reach the UN sustainable development goals (SDGs), which they have committed to implement by 2030.



EXAMPLE OF PAX CHRISTI INTERNATIONAL'S WORK IN PROMOTING ACTIVE NONVIOLENCE

The Great Lakes Region has been home to some of Africa's most turbulent violent conflicts. Young people are deeply affected by this situation, as they live in precarious conditions and are easily recruited by armed groups. In May 2018, Pax Christi International launched a new programme in the region named 'Empowering new generations on active nonviolence and entrepreneurship'.

Young people, including disadvantaged youth, are educated in active nonviolence and in creating small scale businesses. They can become catalysts for change in their own communities and significantly contribute to the restoration of a culture of peace, reconciliation and tolerance. As one of the results of the project, in Goma in the DR Congo, our member organisation [Africa Reconciled](#) collaborated with the youth parliament to train 200 young people on active nonviolence prior to the December 2018 election; 30 of them were chosen as accredited election observers.



AS A MEP YOU CAN PROMOTE NONVIOLENT APPROACHES IN EU POLICIES!

As a Member of the European Parliament you can play an important role in promoting nonviolent policy options in the EU context:

- **Table a resolution calling for the EU to further tighten the European criteria for arms exports and for more transparency and uniform reporting obligations of states, including through accountability for disputed exports.**
- **Question the EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy and EU Member States about the proposed European Peace Facility, urging it to fund civilian violence prevention and peacebuilding activities instead of providing weapons, ammunition and soldiers' salaries (see this [EPLO 2019 letter](#)).**
- **Push for budgets of the next EU budgetary cycle for the period 2021 to 2027 to invest in activities for peacebuilding and human rights instead of investing billions in a new European Defence Fund and including the defence sector in civilian programmes (see this [2019 ENAAT infographic](#)).**
- **Support EU international cooperation with local communities to identify and build capacity in contextually appropriate approaches for nonviolent resistance activities and make their work known in the European Parliament.**



[Pax Christi International](#) is a Catholic peace movement with 120 member organisations around the world working on peace, respect for human rights, justice and reconciliation. Our [Catholic Nonviolence Initiative](#) project includes the promotion of nonviolent policy options for conflict transformation and reduced militarisation at all levels as one of our advocacy priorities. In 2018, we published a [major position paper](#) for the promotion of nonviolent strategies with the international community. This year, we organised a conference in Rome with the Vatican on nonviolence and just peace.