

The **7D's**
for Sustainability

Defence
Digitalisation
Debt
Deglobalisation
Demography
Decarbonisation
Democracy

#FocusFuture

Strategic Policy Initiatives
for the European Centre-Right



Wilfried
Martens Centre
for European Studies

The 7Ds for Sustainability

Strategic Policy Initiatives for the European Centre-Right

Proposals from the Wilfried Martens Centre for European Studies

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Introduction

The EPP is built on the beliefs of Christian Democratic and Conservative People's Parties.

Conservatives know that not every reform is progress. They have shared scepticism towards ideologies, and prefer pragmatic solutions. They abhor the violence of revolutions and realise that existing institutions contain the wisdom of generations.

Christian Democrats try to balance and reconcile the seemingly irreconcilable: the social market economy, pluralism, federalism, popular parties and centrism. They aim to be the force of reconciliation and moderation in society.

Both Christian Democrats and Conservatives engage in the defence of the order firmly established in the free part of the European continent after 1945: representative democracy, the rule of law, inviolable human rights and a firm stand against any attempts of illiberal democratic backsliding.

The Conservative intent to preserve and the Christian Democrat willingness to balance converge in the principle of sustainability. If we wish to preserve, we must find a proper balance between present and future necessities and ensure fairness between generations.

Sustainability, therefore, has to be the core guiding principle of Christian Democrat and Conservative action across all policy areas.

Where is sustainability endangered today? These are the 7 areas, the 7D's, that require urgent action:

- **Defence:** How can we as Europeans ensure the defence of our continent, at least conventionally?
- **Debt:** How can we ensure debt sustainability when confronted with permanently increasing private and public debt levels globally? How can we ensure intergenerational justice?
- **Digitalisation:** How can we fully participate and “reap the fruits” in the digital revolution, while preserving our freedom as individuals and societies?
- **Demography:** How can European societies stay dynamic and fairly balance burdens in rapidly ageing societies?

- **Democracy:** How can Europe counter authoritarian attacks on our representative democracy, be they internal or external?
- **De-Carbonisation:** How to go to net-zero emissions while preserving energy security, maintaining a vibrant economy and managing a just transition?
- **De-Globalisation:** How can European economies adapt to a world where the leading paradigm is no longer low-cost by any means, but rather security?

The Wilfried Martens Centre for European Studies (WMCES) would like to contribute to a reflection process to identify options and concrete proposals for political action on the European level for the next legislature 2024-2029 in these 7 key areas: defence, debt, digitalisation, demography, democracy, de-carbonisation and de-globalisation. They also represent policy fields in which the European People's Party identifies its core competencies as a political force.

Until the Autumn of 2023, project ideas elaborated, for now, on an internal basis, will be distributed and submitted to a rigorous debate among external experts and potentially amended.

For all 7D's, 5 programmes with 5 project ideas each are being presented. Until the end of 2023, each project idea will be described in more detail on one project page. The results can then serve policymakers as a background paper:

- For the preparation of the EPP manifesto for the 2024 European Parliament elections programme, on behalf of the WMCES;
- For negotiations between the European Parliament, and more specifically, the EPP parliamentary group, and the new European Commission.
- As a strategic reference for the next working period of the European Parliament, 2024 – 2029;
- And as a reference for the annual planning process of WMCES research and events and the cooperation with its partner foundations.

Klaus Welle

Peter Hefele

Defence

Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine on 24 February 2022 has brought defence policy into the centre of EU policymaking. EU defence cooperation has been in development since the late 1990s. The initial focus of this cooperation was primarily on out-of-area crisis management to boost security and stability in the Union's neighbourhood. However, since the early 2010s, its scope has broadened. Today, it also covers defence-industrial cooperation, hybrid and cyber deterrence, and military mobility. The EU even has its own mutual aid and assistance clause in Article 42(7) TEU, which France activated in 2016 following the Paris terror attacks. Enlargement to Ukraine will raise the question of applying that article to deter territorial aggression by a neighbouring state.

The EU's ability to act in the field of security and defence continues to suffer from well-known problems: the EU often takes a long time to react; its member states have capability shortfalls in areas such as strategic airlift and intelligence gathering; and the budgets of EU defence initiatives were significantly cut during the previous budgetary negotiations. In addition, the 2021 Afghanistan evacuation operation, Russia's ongoing conventional war against Ukraine, and increasing significant power tensions, all highlight the need to strengthen EU defence cooperation further. To be an influential international actor and a credible partner, Europe needs to have the necessary means and capabilities to act – together or alone, if necessary – to handle a wide range of ever more complex security challenges. Not to mention that European citizens demand deeper EU defence cooperation.

The EU must become a genuine Defence Union, and the centre-right should play a central role in shaping it. Support for a strong defence policy appeals to our constituencies, while the populist-anti-European right is often prevented from responding due to their financial or ideological links to Russia. The centre-left also supports robust defence policy but must contend with pacifist and hard-left activism, uncomfortable with contemporary security realities.

	Program 1	Program 2	Program 3	Program 4	Program 5
	Improving transport capacity and logistics for crises (military mobility)	Sufficient European production capacity for armament products	Creating an Internal Market for Armament Products	Reforming the institutional setup/legal framework of EU defence cooperation	Improving the operational dimension of EU defence cooperation
Project 1	Increasing the budget ceiling for military mobility in the 2021-2027 MFF to €5bn.	Creating financial incentives for joint EU-level defence procurement (in addition to VAT waiver), e.g., a larger EDIRPA fund, EIB loans with low-interest rates.	Creating a Common EU Arms Export Policy to harmonise national arms exportations rules.	Transforming the Military Planning and Conduct Capability (MPCC) into a real OHQ, capable of commanding operations at the highest intensity level.	Creating permanent corps-sized multinational force packages.
Project 2	Creating a pool of shared strategic-enablers RRF style fund – for strategic lift, air defence, C4ISR (Computerized Command, Control, Communications, Intelligence, Surveillance and Reconnaissance)	Guarantee fund to de-risk production expansion to replenish stockpiles operated through EIB.	Creating a European Defence Procurement Agency to create economies of scale and to keep European countries from competing against each other.	Creating the position of a European Commission Vice-President for Defence Cooperation.	Creating a Coordinated Land Presences Concept to enable the EU to contribute to non-EU European crisis management operation flexibly.
Project 3	Creating a database/management system of European defence stocks so that countries using the same capabilities could have quicker access to each other's capabilities in times of crises.	Developing an EU security of supply strategy.	Creating a European Defence Advanced Research Projects Agency (DARPA) to boost research on emerging defence technologies	Turning EP Subcommittee on Security and Defence into a full EP committee.	Creating a Civilian CSDP University to train experts to serve in EU civilian missions.
Project 4	Create a common standard for European rail track gauges.	Creating a European Centre of Excellence for Security of Supply.	Creating a new “Shared Management Fund” to spread defence R&D expenditure more evenly across the EU.	Creating a separate EU Council configuration for defence ministers.	Creating a European Air Defence and Drone Command with integrated logistics, maintenance and training; and a European Cyber Command to boost Europe's offensive cyber capabilities.
Project 5	Organise an annual European military mobility exercise in the framework of CSDP.	Amending the ESG “Taxonomy” to include responsible defence investment.	Having a Defence investment financial instrument, i.e., the ECB, which guarantees the debt of member states for defence investment and procurement purposes but is conditional on some element of common European procurement.	Creating a European Security Council, modelled after the US National Security Council, to support EU leaders.	Enable the EU to conduct CSDP operations within the territories of its member states (i.e., review Article 42(1)) to contribute to their security.

Digital Single Market and Infrastructure

In recent years, the EU has tried to solve some of the most complex challenges when it comes to protecting user privacy, fighting malign disinformation or trying to restrain unlawful digital surveillance. The Old Continent is making an ambitious attempt to pioneer the global golden standard in legislation for the online realm. From a novel approach to Artificial Intelligence governance to a revamped understanding of competition law in the digital domain, the EU's ambitions are high.

However, the best way for Europe to compete globally is by going beyond piecemeal legislation. The EU must tackle inconsistent regulations, close infrastructure gaps, promote investment, and facilitate secure yet speedy data flows. Certain European regions lack the necessary digital infrastructure. Many European tech companies struggle to offer their services outside national borders and expand their reach to a genuinely European customer base. Solving these issues will be integral to helping turn the Digital Single Market into a tech hub for global business. The pressure is growing from the US and China, which have shielded many of their digital giants from international competition and nurtured them with huge direct and indirect subsidies.

Completing the Digital Single Market is becoming an essential prerequisite for maintaining the EU's global competitiveness in the years to come. Ensuring the production and import of next-generation semiconductors, joint European funding for breakthrough R&D, or access to secure global supply chains should become a reality rather than an aspiration. Not least, this also becomes a question about our European society's collective security and fundamental interests. The resilience of hardware infrastructure and software services throughout the EU is more than a mere technical concern – this touches upon sensitive user data, intellectual property and national security concerns. The EU must boost its internal connectivity and digital excellence and prepare for the ever-expanding global threats coming from hostile actors, malicious digital applications and state-led malign influence online campaigns.

	Program 1	Program 2	Program 3	Program 4	Program 5
	Roll out of next-generation secure digital infrastructure and hardware	Completing the European Digital Single Market	European Data Space	Focusing on the needs of EU citizens	Global leadership through the EU-US enhanced cooperation
Project 1	Deploying 5G through reliable vendors and harmonising European standards	Improving the antitrust framework and robust implementation of the Digital Markets Act	Revamping GDPR and ePrivacy directive	Introducing a Digital Euro	Developing joint technological standards
Project 2	Improving efforts on semiconductor manufacturing/ imports and overall resilience of technological supply chains	Overcoming national boundaries and legal barriers for EU companies and services to operate frictionlessly across the Union	Improving the cybersecurity of data flows	Introducing a “digital identity”	Cooperating on export controls and dual-use items in breakthrough tech with advanced military applications
Project 3	Making joint efforts among the member states on quantum computing	Giving better support for European companies through public funding and improved access to venture capital	Expanding EU competencies to investigate and potentially ban malicious third-country applications	Creating an e-Health and European Health Data Space	Making joint efforts on secure supply chains for advanced technology/ components
Project 4	Anticipating the massive penetration of cheap, insecure Internet of Things (IoT) Devices	Overcoming the fragmentation of the FinTech national landscape, as a vital component towards completing the Capital Markets Union (CMU)	Improving data-sharing regimes with third countries; Securing not only privacy guarantees but also protecting valuable/sensitive European data	Tackling disinformation and malign influence	Improving transatlantic efforts on intelligence cooperation and preventing grave misuse of technology which threatens the joint security of EU/US citizens
Project 5	Improving funding for digital infrastructure as part of the Connecting Europe Facility and reducing digital disparities between European regions	Developing fair taxation policy for the digital economy	Finalising the European Data and AI Acts	Enhancing e-skills	Developing better cooperation on clean technologies and pushing back against Chinese dominance in the renewables sector

Debt

The COVID-19 pandemic resulted in increased government spending as a result of discretionary fiscal support and a decline in economic activity. At the end of 2021, debt levels already stood at 95% of GDP for the Eurozone and 88% for the EU as a whole. These are levels well above the 60% ceiling set out in the Treaty of Maastricht under the Stability and Growth Pact (SGP). Russia's invasion of Ukraine in February 2022 has necessitated further increases in public spending, mainly to fund the cost of living supports introduced to alleviate rising prices. It is now clear that inflation will remain above the ECB's 2% target in the medium term, while growth will slow to under 1% (in both the EU and Eurozone) in 2023. The political pressure to further increase public spending remains high, with the Eurozone budget deficit forecast to reach 3.7% in 2023, notwithstanding the current environment of rising interest rates. Within the Eurozone, six states – Belgium, France, Spain, Portugal, Italy and Greece – are now characterised by debt to GDP ratios of over 100%.

Assuring the debt sustainability of the EU and its member states is a prerequisite for the continued success of the wider European integration process. It is also a vitally important element in maintaining market confidence in the Euro and instilling confidence in the financial markets regarding the ability of individual member states to meet their financial commitments.

For the EPP, it is critical to ensure that debt sustainability is placed at the heart of the revised Eurozone governance framework. Politically, the objectives should be to balance a credible, effective and consistent fiscal framework with a longer-term sense of ownership in national capitals. The EPP must also draw clear lessons from the decade of economic crises. Most notably, increasing/restoring economic growth is a key pathway to reducing debt levels over the medium term. Efficiency in public sector spending and governance is vital as well as the regulation of the financial sector to underpin wider economic stability.

	Program 1	Program 2	Program 3	Program 4	Program 5
	Eurozone Governance Framework	European Financial Stability	Growth	Own Resources	Public Sector Reform
Project 1	Implementing Credible and Enforceable Fiscal Rules that underpin the Euro's Stability (SGP)	Completing the Banking Union	Widening the Potential of the Single Market to Create Jobs and Growth (implementation, new sectors)	Expediting, at the EU and National Level, the Agreed Own Resources to Pay for Existing Commitments (NGEU, Ukraine)	Committing to Reducing the Administrative Burden for Citizens and Businesses at all Levels of Public Service Provision
Project 2	Placing Public Debt Sustainability at the Heart of Public Policy (no joint borrowing)	Deepening the Capital Markets Union	Modernising the Social Market Economy Model to Support Investment in Critical Public Services (health, education)	Conducting Regular Reviews of the Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) to Reflect Emerging Priorities	Optimising Service Delivery through the introduction of e-government measures
Project 3	Empowering Good Fiscal Governance at National Level (Fiscal Boards)	Regulating Crypto Assets and Central Bank Digital Currencies	Improving Access to Capital and Support for Start-Ups and SMEs	Fully Using Existing Resources (including 2014-20 Unused Funds)	Strengthening evidence-based policymaking and better regulation
Project 4	Supporting an Independent European Central Bank (ECB) Focused on Price Stability	Managing and Reduce Corporate Debt Levels	Making Work Pay by Removing Obstacles to Employment (Taxation, Social Services, Work Life Balance)	Increasing the ability of member states to reallocate unused EU funds for other designated investment programmes (if they so wish)	Supporting Open Government Reforms by strengthening external transparency (open data, procurement reforms, establishing anticorruption authorities)
Project 5	Reforming and Strengthening the European Stability Mechanism (ESM)	Embedding Financial Inclusion and Literacy in the Financial System	Showing Global Leadership in Implementing a Taxation System which Ensures Everyone Contributes their Fair Share	Increasing the Capabilities of those bodies dealing with the Oversight of EU and member state spending	Strengthening Coordination Capacity by Merging and Reducing Public Agencies/Bodies Where Possible

Deglobalisation

The European Parliament defines deglobalisation as the movement “towards a less connected world, characterised by powerful nation states, local solutions, and border controls, rather than global institutions, treaties, and free movement”. For the EU, this trend poses significant structural challenges given the bloc’s traditional reliance on multilateralism and global cooperation.

Even before the Russian aggression against Ukraine, the COVID-19 pandemic and rising geopolitical tensions have shown the vulnerability of global supply-chain systems. In key areas such as digitalisation or green technologies, the USA and China are subsidising their industries, disadvantaging European companies while simultaneously restricting access to their home markets. Programmes 1 (Security of Supply Chains) and 5 (EU-China Relations) specifically focus on these areas.

Europe has also always been a herald for open markets and globalisation. Yet, even as Europe is undergoing a massive transformation towards a low-emission economy, it should not build “green walls” and engage in a subsidy race that may damage its long-term competitiveness. Rather, the priority should be to create alliances of the willing and to promote the EU as a regulatory leader and reliable partner for third countries. A strengthening of the Transatlantic trading relationship will continue to be a key element of this strategy.

Our recommendations across interlinked Programmes 2 (A Competitive Industrial Policy), 3 (Competition and Subsidies) and 4 (Shaping the Global Trade Order) provide a range of proposals designed to reinforce the competitiveness of European businesses and protect the Single Market, particularly with regard to key net-zero industries.

	Program 1	Program 2	Program 3	Program 4	Program 5
	Security of Supply Chains	A Competitive Industrial Policy	Competition and Subsidies	Shaping the Global Trade Order	EU-China Relations
Project 1	Creating an EU mechanism for monitoring the supply chains of critical sectors	Delivering a “business case” green industrial plan which focuses on the needs of European businesses	Simplifying state aid and competition rules to allow (temporary) flexibility in strategic sectors	Supporting a global EU trade policy that is assertive and continuing to finalise strategic agreements	Assessing critical vulnerabilities for medicines, raw materials, industrial/tech components
Project 2	Developing contingency planning and coordination on European stockpiles of key components/ technologies/medicine	Utilising existing EU resources – not additional borrowings – to drive industrial transformation	Untangling the regulatory environment facing businesses with a focus on increasing competitiveness	Working with like-minded states to revitalise multilateralism and shape global rules (e.g., the WTO)	De-risking economic relations with China where possible, de-coupling where necessary
Project 3	Prioritising shorter supply chains in key areas (food, technology, medicine)	Making the EU the global leader in industrial standardisation in partnership with other global economies (Brand Europe)	Developing supports to expand European manufacturing capacity in key net-zero technologies	Strengthening the Transatlantic economic relationship as a key element of the EU’s trade strategy	Developing an effective anti-coercion trade tool under the auspices of the EC
Project 4	“Friend-shoring” of key supply chains	Fast tracking, broadening and simplifying investment into the industrial sectors of the future (linked-up funding)	Protecting against unfair competition through better enforcement of existing agreements and stronger use of trade defence instruments	Taking the lead in ensuring climate and sustainability are embedded in the global trade order.	Making better use of collective anti-dumping tools and measures to respond to China’s massive state subsidies
Project 5	Expanding domestic supply/industry	Further expanding the European skills agenda to up-skill and re-skill Europe’s workforce	Developing a tax strategy based on competitiveness, not subsidies	Positioning the EU as the global leader in regulatory impact (goods, services, digital)	Enforcing measures against IP theft and exploitation of EU data

Demography

European societies are ageing due to decreasing fertility rates and rising life expectancy. The trend of population ageing persists despite positive net migration and continuous attempts to raise domestic fertility. Ratios of workers to non-workers are declining across the EU. In many countries, social security systems lack sustainable funding models. The sizeable cohort of people born up to 1964 will retire within the next ten years, aggravating the lack of a qualified workforce. In addition, some countries in Southern and Eastern Europe have witnessed sharp population declines due to emigration to Western Europe.

Neither higher fertility nor more immigration will stop population ageing, because past trends have determined our current demographic situation. The most effective policy response to negative consequences of population ageing is a higher labour force participation, i.e., the percentage of population 16 years and older that is working or actively looking for work. Increasing the state pension age becomes a mathematical necessity. An enhanced labour force participation of women, older people, young people, immigrants and members of diasporas would halt the worsening dependency ratios of workers to non-workers.

Migration levels have a limited effect on changing the EU's age structure, in part because immigrants tend to age just as the native population does. In addition, the type of immigration that the EU has been receiving has not improved the dependency ratios. Family reunification, the most prevalent method of immigration into the EU, has resulted in young immigrant brides and grooms often staying out of work. Also, irregular migration tends to bring people who are more difficult to integrate than those coming for employment purposes. Many of the millions of Ukrainians receiving temporary protection are highly qualified but their insufficient knowledge of the national language in the country welcoming them prevents them from working at their appropriate qualification levels.

To address depopulation in some countries and areas and the growing regional imbalances within the EU, innovative solutions must be devised.

	Program 1	Program 2	Program 3	Program 4	Program 5
	Increased labour market participation of women	Increased labour market participation of older people and strategies for an ageing population	Increased labour market participation of ethnic groups and diasporas	An improved structure of immigration flows	Retention strategies to reduce emigration and encouraging the return of citizens
Project 1	Developing policies to increase formal labour force participation of women	Increasing the state pension age	Improving mechanisms for the recognition of non-EU qualifications, including for Ukrainian war refugees	Implementing proactive and selective immigration and recruitment policies, based on job offers from domestic employers	Creating regional innovation clusters of universities and SMEs to attract and retain young people outside metropolitan areas
Project 2	Reducing the share of women working part-time by providing flexible contracts	Developing flexible retirement schemes	Encouraging female immigrants from Africa and Asia to take up work	Financing education for non-EU talent abroad, allowing flexible work in the EU and the countries of migration	Creating re-integration strategies for the return of own citizens
Project 3	Universal territorial coverage of childcare facilities through public and private services	New services for older people to increase total employment rates	Increasing the portability of pensions between the EU and non-EU countries	Mapping skill shortages in domestic labour markets, to better target labour immigration policies	Developing targeted policies to attract non-EU migrants to fill positions in depopulating areas
Project 4	Increasing the opening hours of schools and facilitating assisted learning in the afternoon	Preparing for a higher demand in professional or semi-professional caregiving	Opening public sector employment as far as possible to non-EU citizens	Limiting overly generous family reunification policies	Improving spatial planning and promoting municipal cooperation to retain people in rural areas
Project 5	Creating legal conditions allowing men to parent, and encouraging them to share domestic work	Reducing the share of young people who leave school without basic skills	Integrating irregular migrants who cannot be deported and would qualify for certain jobs	Limiting irregular immigration (people who tend to be more difficult to integrate)	Accelerating depopulation in selected locations and focusing infrastructure elsewhere in the country

Decarbonisation and Energy Security

The European Union has been the most influential global actor in advancing the international agenda on decarbonisation and the fight against climate change. The 2019 European Green Deal and the EU's common goal of carbon neutrality have set the gold standard for the international community. Unfortunately, the economic bloc finds itself in a completely different global setting, where the ambitions and aims pledged in the previous decade look ever harder to achieve. The roll-out of renewable infrastructure has suffered from inflationary pressures and time-consuming permitting processes. Moreover, cleantech supply chains have been hit by global disruptions while Europe has realised its dependence on third countries for raw materials and clean energy components.

Interest in solar and wind capacities is increasing, but the demand comes from a limited number of countries who enjoy sufficient fiscal space for the required investments. In parallel, the volatile international energy market has prompted many developing countries to increase their consumption of coal and other fossil fuels to meet their energy needs. Finally, the EU is also challenged for the design and production of innovative clean technology, as most of the progress is happening in North America and Asia. In addition, China's state subsidies have nurtured state-backed champions in renewables, electric vehicles and battery units, while the recent Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) in the USA represents an additional challenge for the competitiveness of European companies.

Energy security remains another pressing concern for European policymakers. In the coming years, the EU might find itself pressured to ensure sufficient quantities of natural gas for the needs of its households and industry. The international liquefied natural gas (LNG) market is saturated with growing competition and limited global supply. The EU overcame the 2022 gas crunch due to extremely expensive emergency shipments and an unusually warm winter. As a result, many European countries had to spend exorbitant sums of public funds to subsidise energy bills and provide the necessary supply. Europe can achieve its long-term decarbonisation goals only if it has access to secure and sufficient energy flows, while also guaranteeing its international competitiveness.

	Program 1	Program 2	Program 3	Program 4	Program 5
	Energy Security	Supporting EU Clean Technologies	Securing Europe's independence on critical materials and technological components	Ensuring global European leadership on a collective decarbonisation effort	Financing the sustainability agenda
Project 1	Improving international partnerships on pipeline gas/LNG/hydrogen imports with reliable third-country counterparts	Increasing capital funding for European innovation and breakthrough R/D in clean technologies from EU budget and mobilising private capital	Auditing supply chain vulnerabilities on key materials (lithium, cobalt, copper, etc.) and reducing import dependencies	Providing international leadership on climate diplomacy: common exchange platforms in the Asia-Pacific; streamlining development cooperation in Africa	Auditing and rethinking how EU funds (EU budget climate main-streaming + RRF) are allocated and how to bring more added value
Project 2	Ensuring nuclear energy remains an important clean energy component of the EU's energy mix	Granting preferential subsidies for European companies	Adjusting regulatory framework in member states to quickly explore and exploit mineral resources on European soil	Expanding the Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism (CBAM) together with US support (Climate Club)	Collecting future own and additional fiscal resources collected through the CBAM
Project 3	Ramping up energy efficiency in households/industrial production	Supporting advanced research in nuclear power capacities/small modular reactors	Enhancing circular economy on a European level by creating industry standards in design, production, consumption, and re-use	Making continuous efforts on mobilising global climate finance for the developing world	Gradual reducing national fossil fuel subsidies; making more space in national budgets for decarbonisation measures
Project 4	Completing the European Energy Union	Improving permitting processes for renewable deployment and faster roll-out of new wind/solar capacities	Strengthening strategic partnerships with supplier and trusted producer countries outside Europe	Shaping global consensus on the overall direction on climate change within international fora (COP, G7...).	Reforming the EU Emissions Trading System + long-term revenue
Project 5	Increasing domestic energy supply	Establishing international standards for clean technologies and the EV industry	Creating a European stockpile of critical raw materials in the long-run	Providing dedicated funding through the EU Global Gateway Platform on clean energy investment in developing countries	Reforming the Energy Taxation Directive

Democracy

Democracy is the beating heart and core of the European Union's identity, next to peace. From its inception in the aftermath of the Second World War, European integration was open only to democratic countries that respected the rule of law and fundamental freedoms. It has also played an essential role in democratising, stabilising and integrating new countries, from Greece, Spain and Portugal in the 1970s and 1980s to the post-communist countries of Central and Eastern Europe in the 1990s and 2000s.

Since the first direct election of the European Parliament in 1979, the EU's democratic system has hugely developed too: by increasing transparency; empowering the European Parliament; making the European Commission more accountable; and even involving citizens in innovative experiments such as the Conference on the Future of Europe. By now, there is a clear dual democratic legitimacy of the EU as a union of states and citizens, each represented in one of the equal co-legislators: the Council and the European Parliament respectively. Moreover, the multilevel nature of EU democracy is recognised through the direct involvement of national parliaments in various capacities, from the ratification of mixed trade agreements to the yellow and orange card procedures which protect subsidiarity.

As a side effect of the last fifteen years of successive crises, EU affairs have also become more politicised. As a result, European issues have become essential to national democratic debates, and a European public sphere has finally begun to emerge. It is important that democratic accountability does not lag behind actual political and institutional developments, as was at times the case over the last decades whenever new rules and bodies were created outside the EU legal framework in order to react to crisis situations.

As the EU acquires new powers and competencies to manage new challenges in the most diverse fields, the quality of EU democracy, the legitimacy of its institutions, and their responsiveness to the needs and preferences of EU member states and citizens must improve. Moreover, democratic values and institutions face new challenges, such as disinformation, polarisation and lack of trust in the political elites – in a world of systemic rivalry.

	Program 1	Program 2	Program 3	Program 4	Program 5
	Stronger EU representative democracy/ institutions	Stronger European Political Parties	More resilient national democratic institutions	Stronger Subsidiarity	More effective EU Foreign Policy action
Project 1	Introducing transnational lists	Harmonising national electoral laws (e.g., common closing of the polls and compulsory display of Europarties on ballots)	Enhancing the EU's capacity to monitor and prevent degradation of democratic standards in member states	Amending Protocol 2 TEU to establish clear guidelines on the application of the principles of subsidiarity and proportionality	Using Article 31/3 to introduce QMV in all aspects of foreign policy for which the EU treaties do not rule it out (e.g., decisions with military implications)
Project 2	Granting a right of legislative initiative to the European Parliament	Reforming party financing and spending rules (e.g., more funding, more leeway to finance weaker members and run campaigns outside EP elections, on non-EU issues and at all levels)	Reinforcing the European Commission's effectiveness in launching infringement proceedings to enforce rule of law and democratic standards in countries where they are violated	Reinforcing national parliaments' ability to hold their government accountable for EU matters (gold standard for the participation of national parliaments)	Streamlining EU foreign policy's institutional infrastructure by merging the major part of the EEAS, including the EU delegations, into the Commission
Project 3	Turning the Council into a genuine federal chamber of states	Widening the possibility of members of national parties to engage with European parties	Better scrutinising the funding of national and European NGOs to prevent abuse by third (domestic or foreign) parties.	Granting longer deadlines for national parliaments to scrutinise subsidiarity under the yellow and orange card procedures and introducing a green card procedure	Enhancing the foreign policy capacity of the European Council by setting up a European Security Council modelled after the US National Security Council
Project 4	Giving citizens a say on who runs the EU executive through the Spitzenkandidaten procedure	Completing the ratification process of the latest proposal amending EU electoral law	Taking measures to protect democratic processes from disinformation	Establishing a new constituent court of the ECJ specialised in actions against alleged violations of the principles of subsidiarity and proportionality	Enhancing the EU's engagement in democracy promotion in its neighbourhood and beyond
Project 5	Developing QMV to enhance output legitimacy by activating the existing passerelle clauses in the Treaties	Simplifying administrative procedures for European Political Parties to enable stronger pluralism, contestation and participation	Enhancing the contribution of European parties to strengthen national party systems	Giving a stronger role of the CoR and the EESC in scrutinising EU legislation when it comes up for revision	Enhancing the role of the European Union in international organisations such as the United Nations



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Strategic Policy Fields
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