

Future of Europe



Common Ground and Complementary Strengths for Recalibrating EU–US Relations

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This study examines the current state and future prospects of EU–US relations through a values-based lens. It focuses on the attitudes and priorities of citizens rather than on political leadership or intergovernmental relations. It is grounded in comparative survey data from across the US and nine European countries and seeks to identify both the commonalities and the differences that shape transatlantic cooperation. A central finding is that there is still a deep and resilient core of shared societal values. Citizens on both sides of the Atlantic consistently prioritise issues such as healthcare, safety, education, immigration and democratic freedoms. These priorities are underpinned by broader cultural orientations towards fairness, empathy, adaptability, and strong family and community bonds. These shared values provide a stable foundation for cooperation, even in periods of political tension.

At the same time, the study also highlights meaningful differences. In the US, public concern tends to focus strongly on security, law enforcement, economic performance and national sovereignty. In contrast, European citizens place greater emphasis on social equity, environmental sustainability and collective welfare. Rather than representing fundamental divisions, these differences could be seen as complementary strengths that could enhance transatlantic cooperation when effectively combined. The analysis also shows that there exists internal diversity within both Europe and the US. Value orientations differ across regions, generations, education levels and urban–rural contexts. Notably, Central and Eastern European countries take an intermediate position, combining elements of both the European and American value systems. They could potentially act as bridges in transatlantic relations. Another key insight concerns patterns of trust. While trust in national political institutions, such as political parties, is relatively low on both sides of the Atlantic, citizens continue to express high confidence in science, education and international alliances.

Based on these findings, we argue that the transatlantic partnership should be recalibrated rather than redefined. European policymakers, in particular, should frame strategic autonomy as reinforcing—not weakening—the partnership. Policies have to deliver tangible benefits for citizens, communicate shared values more effectively and balance security with openness. In an increasingly complex geopolitical environment, a durable EU–US relationship will depend on the ability of both politicians and citizens to translate shared societal values into practical outcomes. By aligning policies with citizens’ priorities, the transatlantic partnership can remain a cornerstone of global stability, prosperity and democratic resilience.

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Executive summary

This report provides a values based analysis of the current state and future prospects of EU–US relations, grounded in comparative and longitudinal survey data from across the EU and the US. It starts from a simple but strategically important insight: while political leaderships, policy doctrines and public discourse can shift rapidly, underlying citizen values change slowly and continue to shape the forms of cooperation that are perceived as legitimate and credible over time.

Neither Europe nor the US is monolithic. Both are internally diverse, shaped by regional, social and historical differences that influence concerns, trust, aspirations and policy priorities. Yet the data show that beneath this diversity lies a substantial and resilient core of shared values. On both sides of the Atlantic, citizens consistently prioritise healthcare, immigration, safety, education and democratic freedoms, underpinned by deeper orientations towards fairness, empathy, adaptability, environmental responsibility, and strong family and community bonds.

Crucially, this common ground is not superficial and not short term. It rests on moral and social orientations that shape how people evaluate fairness, relate to others and navigate change. These shared values help explain why periods of political tension or strategic divergence do not automatically translate into a rupture at the societal level. At the same time, they are not the dominant framing for current US political discourse. While some actors in the US recognise this underlying alignment, public debate is more often shaped by sovereignty-focused, transactional and zero-sum narratives. For European policymakers, this creates a strategic challenge: common ground exists, but it must be activated, translated and made visible, not assumed.

Alongside this shared foundation, the research highlights important differences in emphasis that matter for policy design and messaging. In the US, concerns about crime and safety, controlled migration, corruption and law enforcement are especially pronounced, pointing to the importance of credible action on law enforcement, governance integrity and border management. In Europe, particularly in the north and west, citizens place stronger emphasis on climate change, environmental protection, social equity and democratic resilience, demanding ambitious sustainability transitions and inclusive economic strategies.

Rather than constituting obstacles, these differences reveal deep complementarities. Without Europe's sustainability leadership and regulatory credibility, Western competitiveness in emerging industries will fall behind global benchmarks. Without America's industrial scale, innovation capacity and enforcement strength, ambitions around resilience and security cannot be delivered at speed or scale. When Europe's economic power, environmental and regulatory leadership, and democratic resilience are deliberately combined with US industrial competitiveness and operational security, both sides amplify their strategic capacity and broaden the public appeal of cooperation.

Patterns of trust indicate where such a recalibration could anchor itself. Across both societies, trust in science and education is high, providing a stable foundation for innovation, evidence-based policymaking and research cooperation. Trust in NATO and allied frameworks is stronger than trust in national political institutions, underscoring the formers' role as legitimacy anchors. By contrast, confidence in national governments, parliaments, the media and large economic actors is low, highlighting the urgency of linking EU–US cooperation to transparency, democratic renewal and tangible results for citizens.

The internal diversity within each partner further reinforces the need for pluralistic framing. North-Western Europe is consistently more freedom-oriented, while parts of Southern and Eastern Europe remain more control-oriented, with gradual movement towards openness among younger and more urban populations. The US shows a similar spectrum, ranging from highly freedom-oriented metropolitan areas to strongly tradition and order-oriented rural regions. Several Central and Eastern European countries emerge as a bridging zone: combining the social cohesion and institutional trust associated with Western Europe with a stronger emphasis on achievement, tradition and income progression that resonates with US value patterns. This positioning makes these countries potential connectors rather than outliers in EU–US cooperation.

Taken together, the findings point to clear strategic anchors for recalibrating EU–US relations:

- *Build cooperation on shared democratic and social values*, which act as legitimacy anchors, while recognising that these values are not always reflected in the dominant political discourse, particularly in the US.
- *Integrate complementary strengths*: Europe's economic power and regulatory and sustainability leadership with US industrial and innovation capacity; US enforcement and operational power with European civic and diplomatic capabilities.
- *Adopt pluralistic messaging*, speaking simultaneously to freedom-oriented and control-oriented constituencies, and avoiding one-size-fits-all or polarising narratives.
- *Tie flagship initiatives to visible mutual gains* in prosperity, competitiveness, security and resilience, ensuring that cooperation delivers tangible benefits in citizens' daily lives.

In an era marked by geopolitical competition, technological transformation and climate pressure, the most durable transatlantic partnership will be the one that translates values alignment into practical outcomes, while adapting to a more sovereignty-driven and transactional US strategic posture. Recalibration, in this sense, is not Europe adapting to 'America first', but learning to cooperate with a US whose geopolitical doctrine has changed while its societal value foundations remain largely compatible. A partnership built on the basis of strong public legitimacy can defend democracy and prosperity, sustain the rules-based international order, and remain resilient across political cycles. This will happen through making deliberate, reciprocal choices rather than out of habit or necessity.

Keywords EU–US relations – Shared values – Societal legitimacy – Transatlantic cooperation – Control–freedom values – Complementary strengths – Democratic resilience – Sustainability – Security – Trust in institutions – Pluralistic policy framing

Introduction

The transatlantic relationship has long been a central pillar of Europe's political, economic and security architecture. For decades, close cooperation between Europe and the US has underpinned peace, prosperity and the rules-based international order. Within this context, the European People's Party and the Wilfried Martens Centre for European Studies have consistently been engaged as key political anchors of the transatlantic partnership, promoting cooperation grounded in democracy, open societies and a strong commitment to shared global responsibility.

Today, however, this partnership operates in a more complex environment and is steering in troubled waters. Both Europe and the US face heightened geopolitical pressure, growing security concerns, economic uncertainty, rapid technological change, and the far-reaching implications of the climate and energy transitions. The 'America first' strategy of the current US government has created significant tensions in transatlantic cooperation and can be seen as a *Zeitenwende*, challenging long-held assumptions and undermining mutual trust.

More importantly, however, shifts at the level of political leadership must not be conflated with a fundamental rupture in societal values. Our findings indicate that, despite political tensions, a broad and stable base of shared democratic values persists across both societies. Distinguishing between the US as a geopolitical actor and as a society is not merely a conceptual nuance, but a necessary analytical correction for recalibrating and maintaining a stable and realistic transatlantic relationship.

At the same time, trust in political institutions has weakened on both sides of the Atlantic. Political polarisation has increased. Citizens across societies express growing concern about social fairness, economic resilience and cultural change. These dynamics shape not only domestic politics, but also how citizens perceive international cooperation—including the transatlantic relationship itself.

The assumption that there is public support for close EU–US cooperation can therefore no longer be taken for granted. Strategic necessity alone, based on historical experience, is no longer sufficient to secure or restore broader societal support. Policymakers need to better understand the foundations of the EU–US relationship, within both the American and European societies, as well as its demands and limitations, as it is on these elements that transatlantic cooperation ultimately depends.

The present study addresses this challenge by placing societal values at the centre of the analysis. Following an earlier publication by the Wilfried Martens Centre for European Studies on how value sets have changed, this work draws on extensive survey data from the US and nine EU member states. It explores how citizens' values shape attitudes in core political domains, including security, economic cooperation, social change and governance. Rather than following short-term opinion trends, the study maps deeper value orientations, such as the balance between control and freedom, or differing expectations regarding markets, solidarity and the responsibility of the state.

Two value patterns matter most. The first is the shared democratic value base among the American and European publics—visible in support for democracy, alliances, education and scientific progress. This provides a stable basis for cooperation despite political volatility. The second is the examination of the dimensions of control and freedom, which helps to explain where resistance may emerge, how polarisation manifests within and across societies, and how these differences can be navigated and addressed constructively rather than deepened.

For the Wilfried Martens Centre and the European People’s Party, this values-based perspective serves a clear political purpose. It provides policymakers and policy freedom, which helps with a more robust foundation for understanding where transatlantic cooperation is broadly supported, where and why tensions have emerged, and how political and communication strategies should be framed to resonate more effectively with both societies.

It is worth noting that we do not suggest convergence between Europe and the US as a prerequisite for successful cooperation. We would like to highlight complementarity as a guiding principle: Europe’s strengths in sustainability, regulatory credibility and social legitimacy should be paired with the US’s strengths in innovation capacity, industrial scale and enforcement capability. Policymakers should communicate this complementarity as mutually beneficial to citizens on both sides of the Atlantic.

However, there remain different societal priorities. Europeans tend to emphasise sustainability, fairness and social responsibility more strongly, while the American public places relatively greater weight on security, performance and economic dynamism. Only by openly acknowledging these differences as complementary strengths can a more realistic and operational policy design be achieved. Within Europe itself, internal diversity—particularly the bridging role of Central and Eastern European member states—should not be seen as an obstacle. Rather, it should be considered an unused strategic asset that connects different value orientations and strengthens Europe’s capacity to engage credibly with a diverse US.

We consider our study a timely and necessary contribution to stabilising and rebuilding EU–US relations. Only when it is anchored in shared democratic values, attentive to differences in the societal models and capable of delivering tangible benefits to citizens on both sides of the Atlantic can we more confidently achieve a durable partnership, built not only on institutions and interests, but on enduring societal legitimacy and public confidence.

Nine recommendations for European policymakers

1. Treat and communicate shared societal values as a strategic asset

The transatlantic policies of the EU and its member states should systematically integrate values-based analysis, values-based communications and the search for shared values into their policy design. Public legitimacy is a hard political constraint. Policies that ignore dominant societal values risk the erosion of support even when they are strategically sound. This means identifying and anticipating values-based restraints early on, rather than managing a backlash later.

At the same time, policymakers and citizens alike should explicitly communicate the enduring shared base of democratic values between European and American societies to prevent short-term political tensions from being misinterpreted as structural societal divergence.

2. Reframe EU–US relations around citizen legitimacy, not elite discourse

Perceiving EU–US cooperation solely through the lenses of the political elite and media discourse does not reflect the complexity of the relationship and systematically underestimates the depth of the citizen-level alignment identified in this study as a societal resource for durable transatlantic cooperation. Policymakers on both sides of the Atlantic must demonstrate and deliver tangible benefits for citizens: security, economic resilience, fairness and predictability. This framing is essential for sustaining political support across diverse national contexts. Furthermore, this requires distinguishing between leadership-level tensions and underlying societal attitudes, which are more stable and alliance-oriented than is often assumed. Policymakers should acknowledge how the control–freedom dimension shapes support, resistance and polarisation across regions and socio-economic groups and how important this is for effectively navigating differences instead of coping with a backlash afterwards.

3. Use values analysis as an early warning system for political risk

Continuous values-based insights offer a practical tool for identifying where transatlantic policies may face domestic resistance. Identifying emerging fault lines, be they on trade, security, climate or technology, is key, before they translate into political crises. In particular, the control–freedom dimension provides a structured lens for understanding where policy proposals may mobilise support or opposition within different societal segments.

4. Frame European strategic autonomy as reinforcement, not detachment

Contrary to the common narrative, the EU should present its pursuit of strategic autonomy as strengthening Europe's contribution to the transatlantic partnership, not weakening it. This framing could build upon the still-existing belief in the value of alliances on both sides of the Atlantic and should be used as a strong counter-narrative to isolationism, protectionism or bloc politics. Strategic autonomy should therefore be better understood and communicated as enhancing Europe's capacity to act as a credible, complementary partner within a shared security and economic framework.

5. Balance security and openness to better resonate with the majority of citizens in the US and Europe

An effective and widely accepted policy position must, therefore, combine the need for order, safety and stability with openness, exchange and innovation, especially when it comes to defence, immigration and digital transformation. One-sided positioning could lead to further polarisation within and between the societies. The values data show that one-sided framings—either purely security-driven or purely openness-driven—risk alienating large segments of the population.

6. Defend the European social market model as a political asset

Despite being confronted with different socio-economic models, both European and American societies consistently support fairness, sustainability and business ethics. European policymakers should stop treating the social market economy model as a constraint on competitiveness. Defending this model and framing it as a source of public legitimacy and long-term competitiveness is not contradictory to deepening transatlantic cooperation. Europe should confidently articulate its Rhineland–Continental tradition as a complementary strength within the transatlantic framework.

7. Anchor EU–US cooperation in trusted institutions and domains

Despite low trust in governments on both sides of the Atlantic, a wide range of fields of cooperation, such as science, education and even traditional alliances such as NATO, can still rely on high levels of trust. Transatlantic initiatives should broaden and more effectively communicate these levels of cooperation to the population. Being anchored in those trusted institutions would make transatlantic relations more resilient to political volatility, misinformation and populist contestation, and align cooperation within shared frameworks that citizens value and perceive as legitimate.

8. Avoid coercive framings in trade and security policy

The study's results clearly suggest that unilateral coercive or zero-sum approaches undermine legitimacy on both sides of the Atlantic. European and American policymakers should refrain from unilateral actions and consistently frame EU–US cooperation as reciprocal and mutually beneficial, especially in industrial, trade and security policy.

9. Make social cushioning integral to strategic transitions

Both societies are facing revolutionary transformations in the fields of climate change, digitalisation and security. Citizens must experience these as fair and manageable to prevent the further rise of unilateralism, protectionism and polarisation. European and transatlantic initiatives should therefore visibly meet fundamental demands for integrating social protection, workforce adaptation, ethical technology frameworks and support for regional integration.

1. Towards a new phase in the transatlantic partnership

1.1 From historical alliance to a more complex partnership

The transatlantic relationship between the EU and the US has been shaped by decades of shared history, mutual security commitments, economic cooperation and democratic principles. From the reconstruction period after the Second World War and the creation of NATO to joint leadership in promoting open markets and defending global governance, this partnership has been a cornerstone of stability, prosperity and resilience on both sides of the Atlantic.

Today, neither Europe nor the US is a single, uniform entity. The EU brings together sovereign states with diverse political traditions, value profiles, cultures and social priorities. The US is equally varied, comprising regions with distinct histories, economic structures and cultural orientations. This diversity is not only a source of complexity for transatlantic cooperation; it is also a potential source of strength. An effective recalibration of EU–US relations must work with these internal differences—designing initiatives that are credible, legitimate and resonant in each context—while drawing on the combined weight of both partners’ respective assets.

The current global environment sharpens the need for such a recalibration. Russia’s war in Ukraine, renewed competition for global influence, the race for technological leadership, the climate crisis and shifting energy markets have all coincided with domestic pressures: economic insecurity, societal fragmentation and declining trust in institutions. These factors affect the daily lives, expectations and opportunities of citizens on both continents. Generational patterns in values are a particularly important element in anticipating where future alignments or tensions may develop. To defend prosperity, democracy and the rules-based order, policies must align with the values, priorities and strengths of both sides.

1.2 Diversity, values and complementarity across the Atlantic

Long-standing societal models help to illuminate this landscape. The Anglo-American emphasis on entrepreneurship, market-driven solutions, and economic freedom and individual autonomy in the

market sphere, which is strongly embedded in US economic and political culture, contrasts with the Rhineland–Continental model present in much of Western Europe, which values social solidarity, consensus-oriented governance and coordinated economic frameworks. In practice, both societies blend elements of these models to varying degrees, and each contains groups within society that are closer to the other’s approach. Understanding these orientations is not a purely academic exercise but a practical lens for identifying common ground and complementary strengths.

The purpose of this study is to map and compare the core values and priorities of citizens in the EU and the US, identifying convergences that can serve as legitimacy anchors for cooperation and divergences that can be harnessed as mutually reinforcing strengths. It also examines the internal diversity within each partner across regions, generations, education levels and urban/rural contexts to show how pluralistic, adaptive policy design can mitigate polarisation and fragmentation. The findings inform recommendations across key policy areas, including European integration, security and defence, economic growth and jobs, and the environment and energy. Taken together, they provide policymakers with the empirical foundation needed to recalibrate the transatlantic relationship in ways that deliver visible benefits to citizens on both sides.

Prepared by Glocalities in close cooperation with the Wilfried Martens Centre for European Studies, the report draws on one of the largest global survey databases on values and motivations, covering 65 countries and more than 400,000 respondents, including nationally representative surveys in the US and all 27 EU member states. The analysis applies robust value analysis models, including the Glocalities values segmentation and the control–freedom dimension, and examines differences linked to the Anglo-American and Rhineland–Continental traditions. It is enriched by segmentation by region, generation, educational level and degree of urbanisation, ensuring that the recalibration framework presented here is grounded in a representative and nuanced understanding of both partners’ societies.

Throughout, the focus is on helping policymakers and stakeholders design EU–US initiatives that

- are based on widely shared priorities such as fairness, empathy, environmental responsibility, adaptability, family and community bonds, healthcare and education;
- integrate Europe’s and America’s complementary advantages—from climate and regulatory leadership to industrial scale, innovation capacity and operational security;
- frame cooperation in ways that resonate with more freedom-oriented and more control-oriented audiences alike; and
- deliver tangible, mutually reinforcing gains in prosperity, competitiveness, security and resilience.

Approached in this way, the transatlantic partnership can adapt to the pressures of the present while building legitimacy and resilience for the future—not as a relationship of habit or necessity, but as a deliberate, reciprocal that is choice in the shared interests of the peoples of Europe and the US.

1.3 Recalibration in a changed strategic environment

Recent transatlantic tensions underline that the EU–US relationship has entered a qualitatively new phase. The US has articulated a more sovereignty-driven and interest-focused approach to alliances, emphasising industrial resilience, energy security and clearer burden-sharing expectations. This marks a departure from the assumptions of automatic alignment that shaped earlier phases of transatlantic cooperation.

At the same time, the evidence presented in this study shows that citizen values on both sides of the Atlantic are more aligned than recent political and strategic developments might suggest. High trust in science and education, support for democracy, concern for fairness, and a shared focus on healthcare, security and opportunity form a resilient societal foundation. This creates a paradoxical situation: leadership-level strategies diverge, while public values remain substantially aligned.

This report, therefore, treats recalibration not as a normative aspiration, but as a strategic necessity: designing EU–US cooperation that is compatible with a more sovereignty-driven US posture while remaining anchored in values that continue to command broad public legitimacy.

2. Theoretical foundations: societal models and values across the Atlantic

2.1 The Rhineland–Continental and Anglo-American models¹

The transatlantic relationship is rooted in rich and diverse cultural traditions that continue to shape how societies organise themselves, make policy choices and respond to change. Two long-standing traditions from political science, comparative sociology and political economy offer a useful interpretive lens: the Anglo-American and Rhineland–Continental models. While these are not rigid categorisations, they help illuminate the historical and institutional contexts that influence public priorities and policy designs on both sides of the Atlantic and highlight ways in which the different traditions can enrich and complicate cooperation.

In the *Anglo-American tradition*, which developed from English liberal thought and is strongly embedded in the US and other Anglophone contexts, emphasis is placed on individual autonomy in the economic sphere, entrepreneurship and market-driven solutions. Open competition and

¹ In the next section, we set out how the control–freedom spectrum is operationalised in our data by using indicators such as acceptance of gender role equality, support for diverse family structures and openness to social change. We then use this, along with other Glocalities indicators, to map where the EU and US publics converge, where they differ, and how these patterns can inform a balanced, resilient and mutually beneficial transatlantic partnership.

limited government intervention are seen as drivers of prosperity, underpinned by a high tolerance for income inequality, which is viewed as an incentive for innovation and risk-taking. Socially, this tradition prizes self-reliance, property rights and personal responsibility. This orientation can foster flexibility, innovation and competitiveness as well as greater acceptance of wide variations in economic and social outcomes.

The *Rhineland–Continental model*, prominent in much of Western Europe and inspired by concepts such as the German *Soziale Marktwirtschaft* (social market economy), seeks to balance market mechanisms with social solidarity and coordinated governance. It emphasises strong social safety nets, regulated labour markets, income redistribution and inclusive long-term policymaking. Public institutions, trade unions and civil society actors play major roles in governance, reflecting a commitment to consensus-oriented decision-making. Sustainability, environmental stewardship and social equity are often prominent considerations, reflecting a belief that shared prosperity and stability strengthen societies over time.

In practice, both Europe and the US incorporate elements of both traditions, as we explain later. The models are best regarded as theoretical reference points, with individual countries—and even regions within them—adopting blended approaches that shift over time. Recognising these blends is important for identifying common ground and spotting complementary strengths. For example, the US tradition of rapid innovation and competitive drive could be paired with Europe’s regulatory credibility, sustainability leadership and consensus-building capacity to set high-impact global benchmarks.

It is important to note, however, that these economic/governance traditions are conceptually distinct from the control–freedom spectrum used in our empirical analysis. The Anglo-American versus Rhineland–Continental lens describes prevailing approaches to market regulation, economic organisation, and the balance between competition and solidarity. By contrast, the control–freedom axis, which is introduced and defined in the next section, measures social and cultural value orientations at the individual level, ranging from a preference for stable, traditional hierarchies (‘control’) to support for diversity, autonomy and emancipative personal freedoms (‘freedom’). While aspects of the two dimensions can intersect in real-world attitudes, in this study, they are analytically independent.

2.2 Interplay between models and values

While these models offer distinctive theoretical endpoints, actual societies reflect blended features and evolving orientations. Understanding both dimensions matters for the pluralistic design of cooperation narratives. Economic/governance traditions can shape preferences on regulation, social protection and market incentives, while control–freedom orientations influence how publics respond to issues of identity, diversity and social change. Initiatives that address each dimension and build bridges between them, where possible, are more likely to gain legitimacy across the full spectrum of EU and US publics.

- The US exhibits strong Anglo-American traits in economic autonomy and individualism, but also retains high levels of community engagement in certain cultural contexts (e.g. faith-based networks and family influence).
- Many European countries display dominant Rhineland–Continental traits, but with varying intensity; for instance, the UK leans more towards Anglo-American economics, while Germany and the Netherlands maintain robust continental frameworks. Below, we describe the findings that apply to this EU–US study in more detail.

2.3 Eastern Europe as a potential bridging zone between Rhineland–Continental and Anglo-American orientations

The comparison between the Anglo-American and Rhineland–Continental models also reveals an important differentiation within the EU itself. While much of Western and Northern Europe aligns strongly with the Rhineland–Continental tradition—emphasising social equity, business ethics, coordinated governance and environmental sustainability—several Central and Eastern European member states display a more mixed orientation. These societies combine elements traditionally associated with both models, positioning them between Western Europe and the US in values terms.

Values indicators from the Glocalities dataset underline this intermediate profile. Compared to Western Europe, populations in Central and Eastern Europe place relatively stronger emphasis on achievement, income progression and growth-oriented development pathways, which resonates with core Anglo-American themes such as performance, competitiveness and upward mobility. At the same time, these countries continue to show meaningful support for Rhineland–Continental values, including social cohesion, fairness, transparency and an active role for the state in safeguarding collective welfare. This combination results in neither a purely Anglo-American nor a fully Rhineland–Continental orientation, but a blended values profile.

Rather than constituting a deviation from the European project, this mixed alignment can be understood as a structural asset in the context of EU–US relations. Central and Eastern European countries often resonate more readily with US narratives on economic growth, sovereignty and competitiveness, while remaining institutionally and normatively embedded in the European frameworks of regulation, solidarity and consensus-based governance. As such, they form a natural connective zone between the predominantly Rhineland-oriented core of Western Europe and the more consistently Anglo-American-leaning value profile of the US. This overlap and complementarity can be considered a European strength and asset that could be deliberately leveraged to recalibrate EU–US relations.

In a recalibrated transatlantic partnership, this bridging position has strategic relevance. It helps explain why certain EU member states could act as translators between differing policy logics, reducing cultural friction in cooperation with the US and supporting coalition-building across the Atlantic.

Recognising this internal European diversity—seen as the strengths, complementarities and assets that the European model has to offer and represents—at the theoretical level prepares the ground

for the empirical analysis in sections three and four, where these mixed orientations become visible in the control–freedom dimension and the country-level values profiles, and in the later sections where complementarity and pluralism are translated into concrete policy design.

2.4 From societal models to measurable values in EU–US relations

The Anglo-American and Rhineland–Continental traditions form a valuable lens for interpreting the diversity of values across Europe and the US. Understanding these cultural foundations is essential for identifying both the shared ground and the points of divergence that shape the partnership. The next step is to connect these enduring orientations to measurable comparative data to inform policy across *four major domains*: European integration, security and defence, economic growth and jobs, and the environment and energy. These policy areas are deeply influenced by value systems that have evolved over decades and are embedded in political traditions, institutional frameworks and public attitudes.

This study makes that connection by linking the societal models to a systematic comparative analysis of values using the Glocalities control–freedom dimension and other Glocalities survey data. This approach anchors present-day attitudes within their historical and cultural context, ensuring the analysis remains consistent and coherent.

By embedding our empirical work in this theoretical foundation, we create a bridge between abstract concepts and policy-relevant interpretation. The values data presented in the following sections are treated as expressions of underlying socio-cultural patterns that influence cooperation, policy alignment and mutual understanding in the transatlantic context.

In the context of recalibrating EU–US relations, this dual-lens perspective helps policymakers to

- understand diversity within and across societies, seeing how the different orientations influence both economic and social preferences;
- design pluralistic framing that resonates with more traditional, security-focused constituencies as well as with openness- and diversity-oriented ones; and
- leverage complementarity: pairing the speed and scale of US innovation with Europe’s strengths in innovation, sustainability, social cohesion and long-term policy coordination; and combining Europe’s institutional, industrial and environmental capacities with US industrial and entrepreneurial scale.

The next section begins this process by positioning both the US and selected EU countries on the control–freedom dimension. This provides the empirical baseline for identifying the convergences and divergences that matter for policy design and for anticipating potential areas of alignment or friction in EU–US relations.

3. Mapping and comparing EU and US citizens on the control–freedom dimension

3.1 Purpose and scope

This section sets out to provide a clear, data-driven baseline for our transatlantic values comparison. It maps how citizens in nine² EU member states and the US are positioned along the Glocalities control–freedom axis, allowing us to visualise and compare orientations across societies. It examines differences and similarities between EU and US value profiles over time, capturing both enduring patterns and emerging shifts.

To deepen our understanding, the analysis is segmented by key demographic variables:

- age group: whole sample of 18–70 years and subgroups of 18–24, 25–34, 35–44, 45–54 and 55–70 years;
- educational attainment: low, medium, high level of education;
- degree of urbanisation: urban and suburban versus rural; and
- regional context: distinguishing between Western and Eastern Europe, as well as regions within the US.

By establishing this baseline, we create a robust empirical foundation for guiding the deeper cultural and thematic analyses presented in sections four and five.

3.2 The control–freedom dimension

The control–freedom dimension describes a core, validated, values-based continuum that captures a fundamental and universal polarity in human societies between patriarchal, hierarchical control and personal, emancipative freedom. It reflects how people understand authority, social order, autonomy and equality, and how they respond to social and cultural change.

On the *control* side, the axis represents worldviews that emphasise hierarchy, tradition, authority, obedience and patriarchal norms, grounded in the belief that clear rules, stable structures and defined social roles are necessary to maintain cohesion and order.

² Belgium, France, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Poland, Romania, Spain and Sweden. These are countries where the full Glocalities database is available, making specialised analyses possible. These countries cover more than 80% of the EU population, spread across distinct cultural European regions.

On the *freedom* side, the axis represents emancipative orientations and worldviews that prioritise personal autonomy, equality, gender role flexibility, diversity and openness, where freedom of choice and inclusion are seen as strengths rather than threats to society.

In essence, this dimension, which emerged from an extensive factor analysis of a global set of values statements, captures a fundamental sociological distinction: the extent to which people prefer patriarchal/hierarchical control to personal/emancipatory freedom. It expresses a cultural orientation that remains relatively stable over people's lifetimes.

In this EU–US values study, this dimension allows us to compare diverse cultures through a single, standardised lens, without conflating economic and governance models with social and emancipative freedom orientations. The dimension also explains value polarisation within and across societies. Polarities are a fact of life; the ability to engage with and manage them constructively within and between Europe and the US is a crucial capability for transatlantic cooperation.

In the context of this EU–US values study, the control–freedom dimension matters in several ways:

- *Transatlantic comparability.* It provides a single, standardised framework through which to position both the US and the EU member states on the same values map, allowing a direct comparison across cultures with very different histories, institutions and political systems.
- *Clarifying cultural orientations.* It specifically measures personal and social values related to the balance between patriarchal/hierarchical control and personal/emancipative freedom. In this study, this is operationalised through four key indicators: support for same-sex marriage, support for patriarchal hierarchies (inverted), acceptance of unmarried cohabitation and flexibility in gender roles. As discussed earlier, it is not a measure of economic models or market traditions.
- *Demographic and regional insight.* By segmenting scores by age, education, urbanisation level and region within the US and Europe, the study reveals how values vary within societies. These insights are critical for understanding internal dynamics and cross-national relationships.
- *Policy relevance.* Knowing where the publics lie on the continuum helps policymakers anticipate reactions to initiatives and design cooperation strategies that resonate culturally. Freedom-oriented audiences are often engaged by narratives about opportunity, social innovation and diversity, while control-oriented audiences may respond more to messaging built on security, stability and social order.

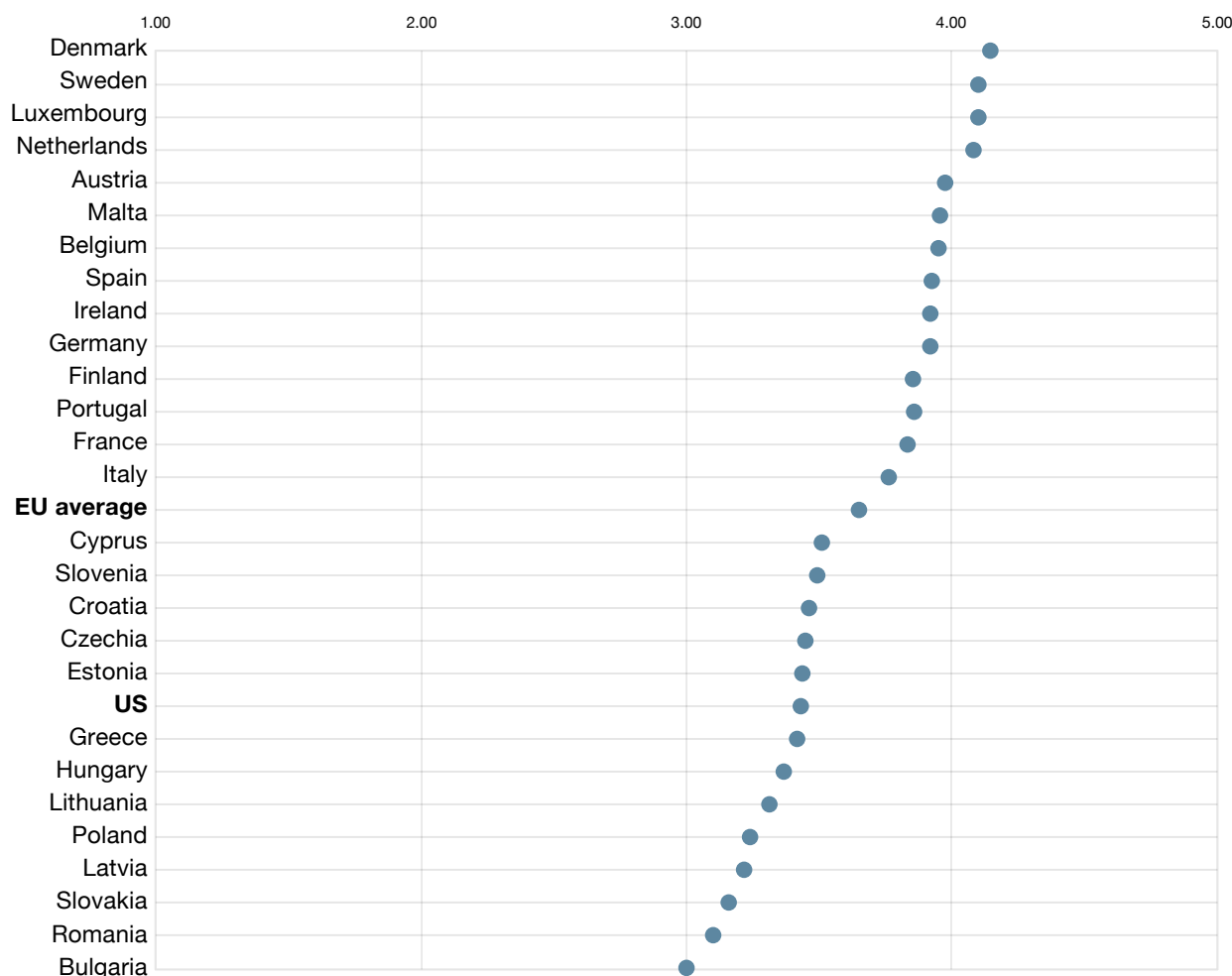
3.3 Control–freedom in the US and the EU

When examining the dimension scores, the US, despite its reputation for individualism, scores higher on control-oriented traits than most Western European nations. This reflects the fact that the Glocalities control–freedom axis concerns personal/emancipatory freedom versus patriarchal/hierarchical control, rather than economic orientation. Economically, the US leans more towards market freedom, but socially, it maintains more traditional structures in terms of family and gender norms.

Most European countries, particularly in the north and west, show more freedom-oriented profiles, while Eastern European countries tend to align more closely with the average US position. The variation within Europe is even greater than within the US, suggesting that consensus on issues related to family and gender roles is unlikely to be reached, either within the US or across the EU. As stated above, polarisation within and across societies on this dimension is a fact of life, and dealing with these differences constructively is a crucial capability to master, including in the context of recalibrating EU and US relations.

The following figure³ shows the average score on the control–freedom continuum on the country level, whereby the value of one represents total control, and the value of five represents a totally freedom-oriented mindset.

Figure 1 Control–freedom averages in the EU and the US



Sources: Data from the Glocalities databases from 2023, 2024 and 2025.

Note: A comparison of averages on the country level on the five-point scale of control–freedom, where control = 1 and freedom = 5.

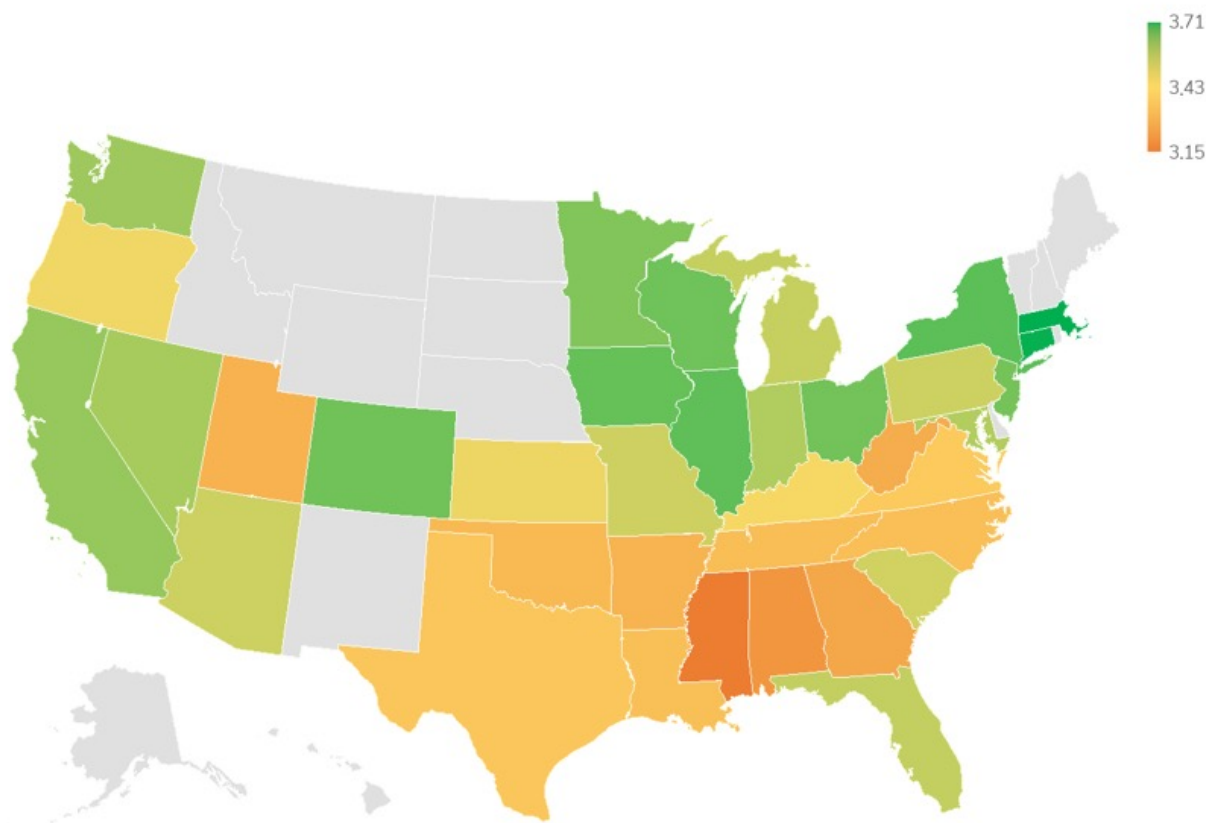
³ The control–freedom scale is available for all EU member states, making comparisons possible. For analyses that include other variables, we focus on the nine previously mentioned EU member states.

Within Europe, there is substantial variation on the control–freedom dimension: Nordic and North-Western European countries, such as Denmark (4.14), Sweden (4.10), Luxembourg (4.09) and the Netherlands (4.08), are the most freedom-oriented, scoring above the EU average. Southern and Eastern European member states, including Romania (3.10), Poland (3.24) and Bulgaria (3.00), are more control-oriented, reflecting preferences for stability, authority and traditional norms.

In the US (as shown on the following pages), state-level variation is very significant, but few states approach the high levels of freedom found in northern Europe. Vermont (3.91) tops the US list, closely aligning with freedom-oriented European countries such as Germany and Spain (both 3.92). Conversely, states such as Mississippi (3.01) and Alabama (3.15) score similarly to the most control-oriented EU members, showing a strong inclination for order and tradition. Several liberal-leaning coastal states, such as California (3.48) and New York (3.58), remain below the EU average, underscoring that the US baseline for the freedom orientation is lower overall.

The following maps and figures illustrate the control–freedom average for each US state and EU member state.

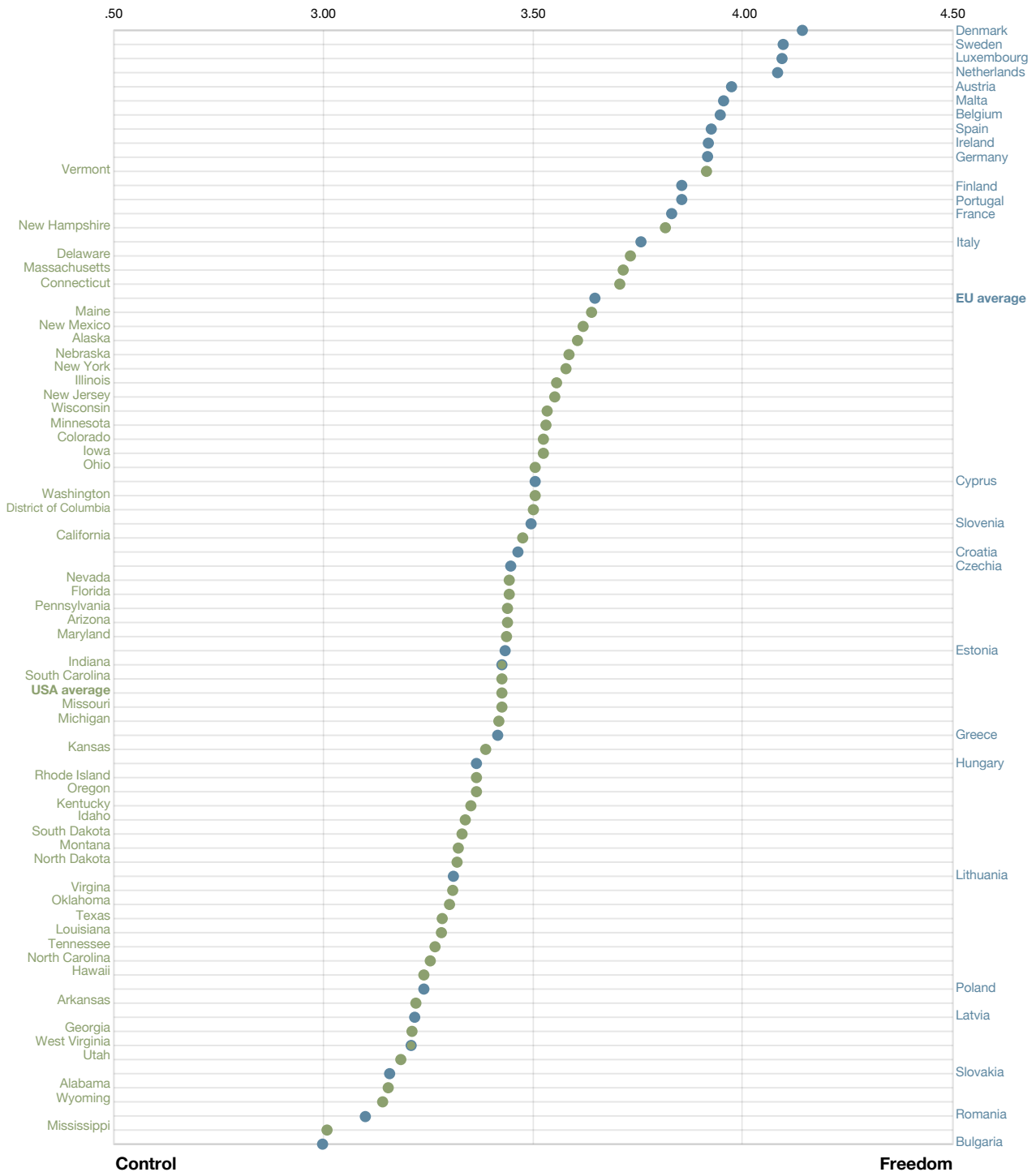
Figure 2 Control–freedom averages in US states



Source: Data from the Glocalities database 2014–25.

Note: The map shows the averages on the US state level on the 5-point control–freedom scale, where control = 1 and freedom = 5. Only states with 100 or more respondents have a colour; those with fewer than 100 respondents are greyed out.

Figure 4 Control–freedom averages in US states and EU member states



Source: Data from the 2023, 2024 and 2025 Glocalities measurements were combined to calculate averages for Belgium, France, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Poland, Romania, Spain and Sweden. For the remaining member states, we used data from Lampert, Papadongonas and Reho, *Middle-Class Concerns and European Challenges*. For the US states, we combined data from all Glocalities measurements between 2014 and 2025.

Note: The graph shows averages at the EU member and US state levels on the 5-point control–freedom scale, where control = 1 and freedom = 5. The control–freedom average of the following US states with less than 100 respondents is indicative: District of Columbia, Delaware, Hawaii, Idaho, Maine, Montana, North Dakota, Nebraska, New Hampshire, Rhode Island, New Mexico, South Dakota, Vermont and Wyoming.

3.4 Control–freedom by demographics

3.4.1 Younger generations embrace freedom more

Age plays an important but nuanced role in how people position themselves on the control–freedom spectrum. Across Europe and the US, younger adults are generally more freedom-oriented than older generations. This difference is most pronounced in more traditional societies, where older people tend to value stability, hierarchy and clear rules, while younger people lean towards openness and autonomy.

3.4.2 A higher degree of education fosters openness

Education is one of the strongest and most consistent drivers of a freedom-oriented outlook. People with a higher level of education are typically more open to change, more supportive of diversity and more willing to question traditional authority. This pattern is visible in both Europe and the US. University graduates, for example, tend to be more in favour of same-sex marriage, living together when not married and non-traditional gender roles. Education seems to expand people’s exposure to different perspectives and ways of thinking, which, in turn, encourages greater acceptance of change and complexity in society.

3.4.3 Cities as catalysts for progressive values

Where people live is also a powerful influence. Urban residents are generally more freedom-oriented than those living in suburban or rural areas. Cities, with their diversity of cultures, lifestyles and ideas, tend to encourage openness, flexibility and tolerance. Rural areas, by contrast, tend to place greater importance on tradition, stability and clear social frameworks. This pattern holds in both Europe and the US, although the contrast between urban and rural values is more striking in the US. Living in a more diverse environment appears to increase comfort with cultural difference, making cities natural centres for more freedom-oriented worldviews.

3.5 Control–freedom over time

Over the past decade, patterns on the control–freedom continuum in the US and the selected EU countries have remained broadly stable, with gradual movements that reveal distinctive regional contrasts.

- In the US, value orientations have been consistent, leaning more towards structured order and tradition, with only minor fluctuations over time.
- In North-Western Europe (the Netherlands, Sweden, Germany and Belgium), openness, diversity and individual autonomy have been firmly established and largely sustained.
- Southern European societies such as Italy and Spain show a moderate but steady shift towards a greater freedom orientation, increasingly blending traditional social frameworks with progressive norms.

- Central and Eastern EU member states (represented by Poland and Romania) remain more control-oriented, although there are slow signs of change, especially among younger and urban populations.

Overall, the European average has edged gradually towards greater freedom, yet the continent's internal diversity continues to shape, and sometimes challenge, consensus-building in policy and diplomacy.

4. Understanding the convergences and divergences shaping transatlantic relations

In this analysis, we used over 80 Glocalities value indicators to map the value profiles of the US and Europe. This comprehensive approach allowed us to identify key convergences and divergences, offering insights into cultural orientations and potential areas for collaboration and understanding between the US and the EU.

This section's conclusions should be interpreted in the light of a crucial analytical distinction that has grown in importance in transatlantic relations: the difference between the US as a geopolitical actor and the US as a society. The 2025 US National Security Strategy articulates a state-level logic centred on sovereignty, power, industrial strength and transactional alliances. By contrast, the values data analysed here capture societal orientations that are more stable and, in many respects, closely aligned with those of European publics. Distinguishing between these two levels is essential to avoid drawing potentially counterproductive conclusions about 'value divergence' and to design cooperation strategies that remain legitimate even in periods of political tension.

4.1 Shared values: enduring relationships, national pride, optimism, ethics

4.1.1 Enduring relationships and cultural identity

The US and the nine European countries share a strong commitment to lifelong relationships, underscoring the deep importance of enduring personal connections in both cultures. Family time, cherished traditions and even keeping heirlooms within the family are seen as ways to maintain continuity across generations. This is balanced by a notable openness to modern relationship forms such as unmarried cohabitation and flexible gender roles, demonstrating that both regions can adapt traditional frameworks to contemporary realities. National pride emerges as a common sentiment, reflecting a collective loyalty to one's country and a shared sense of belonging. Together, these values reveal that personal bonds and cultural identity remain cornerstones of life on both sides of the Atlantic.

4.1.2 Balancing progress with tradition

Another shared feature is the ability to combine optimism about change with an appreciation for the past. In both the US and Europe, there is a forward-looking attitude that embraces personal growth, innovation and transformation, alongside a clear nostalgia that keeps historical and cultural roots alive. This duality—openness to progress while preserving heritage—creates societies that can move forward without losing sight of the traditions that define their identity. Values related to etiquette, personal achievement and financial security reflect this balance, signalling the importance of both maintaining social conduct and striving for success in a stable environment. Business ethics and a willingness to share resources further point to a mutual desire for integrity and mutual support in economic and community life.

4.1.3 Adaptability, fairness and communal responsibility

A shared emphasis on adaptability connects both regions in their approaches to everyday life. Exploring new things, learning new skills and navigating change with flexibility are seen as essential for thriving in a dynamic world. Social responsibility is another strong overlap, with both regions placing importance on helping others, ensuring equal treatment, and opposing war or violence. These values speak to a broad commitment to fairness, empathy and peace, indicating that beyond politics or economics, the US and Europe share deep cultural foundations rooted in cooperative relationships, ethical behaviour and respect for human dignity. Regarding opposing war or violence, it is important to note that, even though it is a widely shared value, its presence is more pronounced in Europe.

4.1.4 Finding common ground across the Atlantic

Even though polarising and populist forces in Europe and the US often promote agendas that deepen divides, the values analysis presented in this section shows that there is a substantial core of common ground among citizens on both sides of the Atlantic. This common ground does not rest on superficial agreement, but on deeper moral and social orientations that shape how people relate to others, evaluate fairness and envisage a good society.

These shared orientations help explain why periods of political tension or strategic divergence do not automatically translate into a rupture in societal values. Commitments to fairness, empathy, responsible behaviour, adaptability and strong social bonds provide a stabilising backdrop against which political conflict unfolds. They act as cultural reference points that many citizens continue to recognise, even when trust in institutions or leaders is low.

Importantly, this common ground does not imply uniformity or the absence of difference. Rather, it offers a shared ethical baseline from which diverse societies interpret change, negotiate priorities and respond to challenges. When activated constructively, these shared values have the potential to cut through political noise and ideological confrontation, providing legitimacy and resilience for cooperation in a fragmented and polarised environment.

4.2 The US leans more towards tradition, spirituality, individualism and family influence

The (average) US has its own unique cultural values that make it different from (the average) Europe. There is a noticeably stronger focus on patriarchal structures and hierarchy, showing a tendency for traditional social order. Religiosity plays a big role in American life, with individual belief systems being quite important. Americans also place greater emphasis on hierarchy and the pursuit of pleasure, showing greater respect for authority and a stronger focus on enjoyment.

Adventurous hobbies and family influence are particularly cherished, pointing to a love for individual pursuits and the significant role of family in shaping personal growth. These values highlight the US's distinct cultural identity, which blends traditionalism, individualism and strong family connections. It should be noted that such values are also present to a certain extent in parts of Eastern Europe. As we saw earlier, various countries in Eastern Europe also share lower scores on the control–freedom scale, which explains these similarities.

4.3 Europe leans more towards social equity, environmental sustainability and peaceful coexistence

European countries, especially those in the West, have cultural values that set them apart from the US, with a strong focus on social progress and environmental awareness. There is a notable emphasis on discussing societal issues and working towards social improvement,⁴ showing a collective effort to embrace progressive norms. Western Europeans are generally more accepting of same-sex marriage and support smaller income gaps, reflecting a dedication to equality and social justice.

Western Europeans also show a greater concern for the environment, highlighting a keen awareness of ecological issues. These values highlight Europe's unique cultural identity, which is marked by a more pronounced commitment to social equity, environmental sustainability and peaceful coexistence.

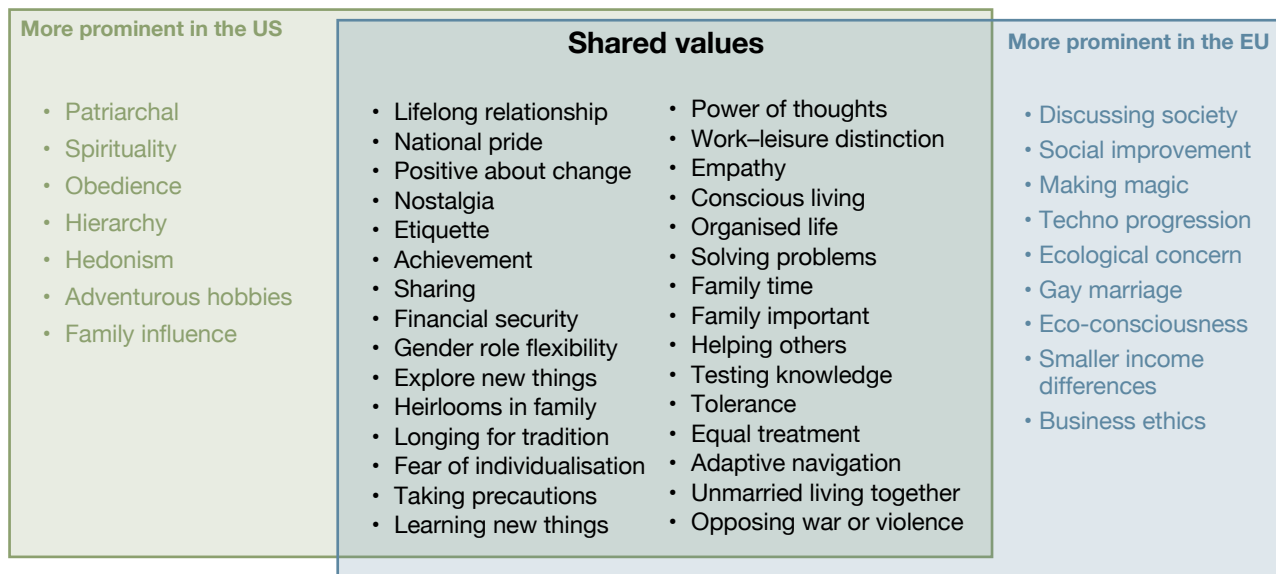
Figure 5 visualises the distinct and shared values.⁵

⁴ Measured through the values indicator in terms of wanting to work for organisations that are committed to social improvement.

⁵ See the appendix for a detailed explanation of each value indicator. We have used standard scores to identify distinct values. Standard scores help to eliminate answering bias (i.e. some people tend to agree/disagree with statements in general). The selection of the values in the graph is based on the following principles:

- All values with a positive standard score have been considered, which means that people are at least somewhat open to them.
- Shared values represent values with a standard score of above 0.20 in both the US and Europe.
- Each region's distinct values have a positive standard score in that region, and also a significant standard score difference from the other region (a standard deviation of more than 0.10).

Figure 5 Venn diagram of popular values overlap between the US and 9 EU countries



Source: Data from the Glocalities database 2023–5.

Note: The Venn diagram only shows values with a positive standard score that are distinct to each region (i.e. values that citizens cherish relatively more than citizens in the other region). When a value is shown only under the US or the EU, it means that the standard-score difference for that value between the US and the 9 EU countries had a standard deviation of more than 0.10.

The overlapping area of the Venn diagram highlights a substantial set of core values that are positively endorsed by both the American and the European publics. These shared values centre first on relational stability and social cohesion: a strong emphasis is placed on enduring personal relationships, family life and maintaining close bonds within communities on both sides of the Atlantic. Alongside this, citizens in both regions share clear moral orientations towards fairness, equal treatment, empathy and a willingness to help others, reflecting broadly aligned ethical expectations about how people should treat one another.

The overlap further includes a shared orientation towards adaptability and constructive engagement with change. Americans and Europeans alike value openness to learning, exploring new ideas and developing new skills, while simultaneously appreciating continuity, tradition and a sense of cultural rootedness. This combination reflects a common desire to balance progress with stability rather than choosing one at the expense of the other.

Finally, the shared space also captures widely held commitments to responsible behaviour beyond the immediate self, including environmental responsibility and concern for the well-being of future generations. Taken together, the values in the overlapping area represent a deep and multifaceted common ground: they do not indicate identical cultures, but a shared ethical and social foundation that cuts across national and regional differences.

4.4 Regional nuances in Europe

While Western Europe generally leans towards progressive values, there are notable differences within the region. For instance, Sweden and the Netherlands score high on acceptance of same-sex marriage and gender role flexibility, reflecting their strong commitment to social equality. Countries such as Italy and Spain, while also progressive, show a slightly higher attachment to tradition and family influence, indicating a blend of modern and traditional values.

Eastern European countries such as Poland and Romania, while increasingly embracing social equity, still exhibit some traditional values similar to those in the US, such as a focus on family and spirituality. These regional nuances highlight the diverse cultural landscape within Europe, offering a rich tapestry of values that contribute to its distinct identity. Such nuances are well expressed through the Glocalities values segmentation, which we explain in detail in the appendix.

Beyond cultural description, these regional nuances also carry strategic relevance for EU–US relations. Several Central and Eastern European countries combine values that are relatively more prominent in the US—such as stronger attachment to tradition, higher emphasis on achievement and income progression, and a more visible role for religion—with continued commitment to the core European principles of EU membership, including regulatory alignment, social cohesion and collective governance. This blended profile mirrors these countries' intermediate position between the predominantly Rhineland–Continental value orientation of Western Europe and the more consistently Anglo-American-leaning profile of the US.

As a result, Central and Eastern Europe, alongside Western Europe's complementarity and strengths, could function as a hinge region in transatlantic diplomacy. The societal values in this region of Europe resonate with US policy narratives on competitiveness, sovereignty and growth while remaining embedded in European frameworks of solidarity, institutional coordination and democratic norms. In a recalibrated EU–US partnership, this positioning could, in sync with Western Europe's strengths, be strategically leveraged to translate policy logics, reduce cultural friction and support coalition-building across diverse value orientations on both sides of the Atlantic. The European model, which is more focused on leveraging pluralism, diversity, integration and well-being in the light of its shared European values, has a lot to offer.

4.5 Zooming in on relevant values for transatlantic policies

4.5.1 Attitudes towards social change

The US and European countries exhibit varying attitudes towards social change, with both regions generally positive but differing in emphasis. Americans show slightly higher optimism about change, reflecting a cultural inclination to embrace progress. However, Europeans demonstrate a stronger focus on societal improvement, indicating a collective engagement with progressive social norms. The European tendency to discuss societal issues more actively suggests a deeper involvement in

social discourse and transformation. These insights highlight a shared openness to change, with Europeans placing greater emphasis on social progress.

4.5.2 Gender equality

Gender equality is a significant value in both the US and Europe, though there are notable differences in emphasis. Both regions show adaptability in gender roles, but Europeans, especially those in the West, place a stronger emphasis on equal treatment and acceptance of same-sex marriage. The preference for smaller income differences in Europe further underscores a commitment to social equity and justice. While the US is also generally open to gender role flexibility, the European focus on equality is more pronounced, reflecting a cultural priority for inclusivity and fairness. These insights reveal a shared commitment to gender equality, with Europeans leading in progressive social norms.

4.5.3 Political involvement

Interest in political involvement varies between the US and European countries, with both regions showing relatively low interest but differing levels of community involvement. Europeans exhibit slightly higher engagement in political matters and community activities, suggesting a stronger collective involvement in civic life. The even more pronounced European opposition to war and violence highlights a cultural preference for peace and conflict resolution. While Americans show slightly less interest in politics, the shared value of opposing violence indicates a common desire for peaceful coexistence. Overall, the data point to a shared orientation towards civic norms and peaceful coexistence, with variations primarily in how civic engagement is organised and expressed across the European and American contexts.

4.6 Policy implications: from shared values to strategic leverage

The policy relevance of this values analysis lies not in smoothing over differences, but in translating shared and divergent orientations into practical leverage for EU–US cooperation. In a context where US foreign policy has become more explicitly sovereignty- and interest-driven, values-based diplomacy is not an alternative to realism but a way of anchoring cooperation in societal legitimacy. The implications below therefore focus on how European policymakers can align initiatives with shared public values while accommodating a more transactional US strategic posture.

A core finding of this study is the presence of a deep but often latent layer of shared values across European and American societies. Commitments to fairness, empathy, family and community bonds, adaptability, democratic freedoms, healthcare and education remain widely shared. However, these commonalities do not dominate the current US political discourse, which is more strongly shaped by sovereignty, enforcement and zero-sum narratives. This means shared values cannot be assumed as a starting point. They must be actively translated into visible outcomes that matter to citizens, such as safety, opportunity, competitiveness and resilience.

The analysis also points to strong complementarity. The US brings industrial scale, innovation capacity, entrepreneurial dynamism and enforcement strength. Europe contributes sustainability leadership, institutional credibility, social cohesion and the ability to build durable policy frameworks with broad public support. Strategic leverage emerges when these assets are deliberately combined, rather than framed as competing models or reduced to regulation alone.

Finally, the internal diversity within both partners should be treated as an asset. Variations across regions and value orientations, including the bridging role of Central and Eastern Europe, provide the opportunity to frame matters in a pluralistic way and to build coalitions across different policy logics. These insights prepare the ground for translating these values into concrete policy agendas in section five.

5. From citizen values and priorities to a transatlantic diplomacy agenda

In the context of recalibrating and strengthening EU–US relations, this section delves into how cultural values intersect with the key policy areas that shape societies on both sides of the Atlantic. By examining life aspirations, we uncover the individual and collective goals that drive personal fulfilment and societal progress, offering insights into shared ambitions that could foster mutual understanding.

5.1 Country-related issues of concern for citizens: mapping the groundwork for transatlantic policy

Citizens' concerns about issues in their own country provide a direct picture of what people see as most pressing in their daily lives. By asking respondents which issues in their country they are most concerned about, this study identifies the topics that currently dominate public attention across Europe and the US. These concerns form a practical starting point for transatlantic cooperation, as they highlight areas where joint action is likely to resonate with citizens on both sides of the Atlantic. Many of these domestic concerns are closely linked to broader global challenges, which are discussed further in section 5.2.

5.1.1 Shared top concerns: healthcare, immigration, safety, climate and education

Healthcare, immigration, safety, corruption, climate, inequality and education together form a shared core agenda across the Atlantic, but the data show that these priorities resonate with different intensities and emphases in Europe and the US. This distinction matters for interpretation and for policy design.

Healthcare is the single most consistent concern on both sides of the Atlantic. At the aggregate level, 44% of citizens in both the US and Europe identify healthcare as a major issue. Within Europe,

however, there is considerable variation. Concern is relatively moderate in countries such as Germany (31%) and Belgium (32%), while it is much higher in Poland (62%) and Romania (49%), clearly exceeding the US level. This spread indicates that while healthcare is universally salient, it reflects the different national contexts and debates across Europe. In the US, concern is closely tied to enduring discussions around cost, access and affordability. The priority is shared, but its intensity and framing vary.

The matter of crime and safety illustrates a shared concern with markedly different intensities. A majority of Americans (52%) identify crime and safety as a major issue, compared to a lower share across Europe overall (42%). Country-level differences sharpen this contrast. Belgium (49%) and Sweden (67%) approach or exceed US levels of concern, while concern in Romania (19%) and Poland (30%) is far lower. This helps explain why security, enforcement, and law-and-order narratives resonate more strongly in the US public discourse than in most European contexts, even when the issue appears to be a shared priority.

Corruption also ranks high in absolute terms as a concern in both regions, reflecting a common sensitivity to transparency, accountability and institutional integrity. This concern, which is especially pronounced in the US and also in Central/Eastern Europe, aligns with broader patterns of low trust in national political institutions and reinforces the importance of governance credibility for policy delivery on both sides of the Atlantic.

A subtler but policy-relevant distinction emerges around climate and the environment. Concern about climate change itself is broadly comparable (30% in the US and 33% in Europe), but concern about environmental degradation is notably higher in Europe (26%) than in the US (16%). This suggests that Europeans are more likely to frame climate as part of the wider environmental system, while Americans tend to approach it more narrowly. For transatlantic cooperation, this implies that environmental initiatives gain broader European support when framed systemically, and broader US support when linked to concrete risks, resilience, jobs and economic impact.

Immigration is another area of clear alignment, with 26% of citizens in both regions listing it among their top concerns. The broader pattern suggests that this concern is not limited to border control alone. Public opinion tends to cluster around a balanced position that combines humanitarian openness with a stronger preference for controlled migration, pointing to issues of integration capacity, community cohesion and perceived fairness, rather than outright rejection of migration.

Finally, education, mentioned by around a quarter of respondents in both regions, completes this shared agenda. Together with the high levels of trust placed in science and education, this underscores a common recognition that long-term prosperity, competitiveness and social stability depend on preparing the next generation.

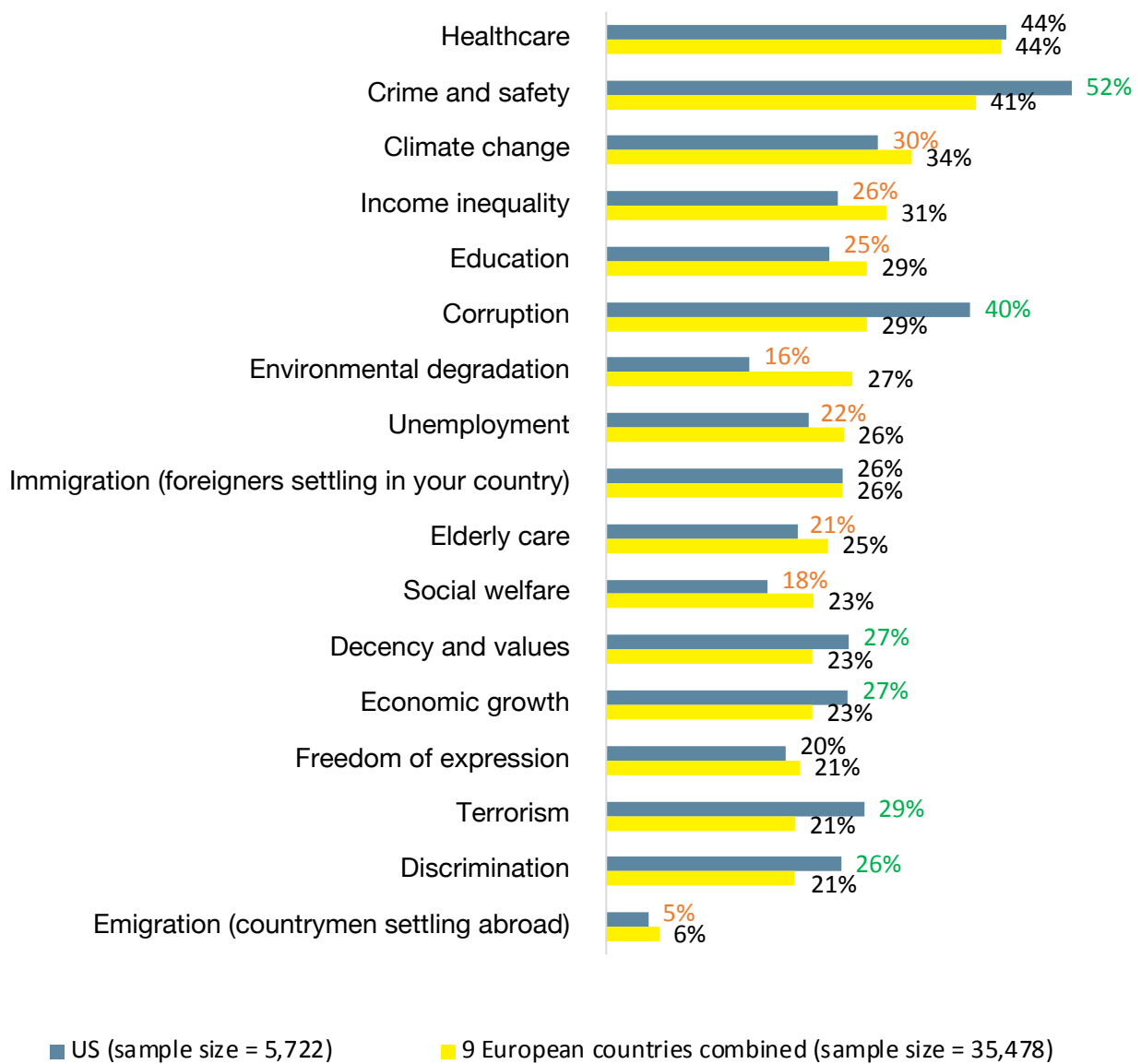
Taken together, these priorities do not point to identical societies, but they do establish a credible shared starting point for EU–US cooperation—one in which differences in intensity and framing should guide policy design and communication, rather than be misread as fundamental divergences.

5.1.2 Nuances in regional priorities

While the overlaps form a solid base for cooperation, there are differences in emphasis. In the US, fear of crime and safety-related issues stand out much more strongly, which may be linked to national debates around policing, gun violence and public safety. Europeans show stronger concern about environmental degradation, with 27% citing it as a concern compared to 16% in the US, with climate change also scoring slightly higher in Europe overall.

Social welfare is more often mentioned in Europe, along with elderly care and unemployment, reflecting ongoing discussions about inclusive social safety nets and economic stability. In contrast, topics such as terrorism register higher in the US than in Europe, adding a security dimension to American political priorities.

Figure 6 Country-related issues of concern for citizens



Source: Data from the Glocalities database 2023–5.

Note: The question posed was, ‘Which of the following topics in your country makes you feel most concerned?’ The figure shows the percentage of citizens who selected each issue. The colour indicates whether the US percentage is statistically higher (green) or lower (orange) than the European averages (with 95% confidence).

5.1.3 Policy implications

The clear overlap in the core domestic priorities of healthcare, immigration, crime and safety, corruption, climate change, income inequality and education provides a ready-made foundation for EU–US policy cooperation that citizens on both sides are likely to support. These are not abstract issues; they affect daily life, from the cost and quality of medical care to the integrity of public institutions and the resilience of communities.

Joint action in these areas could focus on tangible benefits. For healthcare, this might mean co-investing in innovation, sharing best practices on accessible care and preparing health systems for future crises. On immigration, collaboration could focus on balanced migration and integration strategies that foster social cohesion while respecting democratic values. Public trust could be strengthened through anti-corruption cooperation that the formulation of includes transparent governance principles and the sharing of investigative tools. Coordination of climate change solutions could be achieved through collaborative sustainability and technological innovation initiatives that boost local economies and generate jobs. Through student exchanges, skills alliances and common curricula in emerging areas, education programmes could be expanded.

At the same time, differences in the intensity of public concern point to the need for a ‘dual focus’ approach that tailors cooperation to each region’s priorities. In the US, heightened anxiety over crime and safety presents opportunities to reinforce law-enforcement cooperation, develop cross-border strategies against organised crime and invest in community resilience. In Europe, stronger calls for environmental action, social equity and education point to climate-focused innovation, fair economic policies and inclusive education systems as areas for deeper collaboration.

Rather than treating these differences as barriers, policymakers could turn them into opportunities to broaden and enrich the transatlantic agenda. Some projects might directly address the primary concern of one partner while delivering secondary benefits to the other. For example, sustainability technologies aimed at meeting European environmental goals could also contribute to US job creation and economic opportunity. Similarly, security cooperation that addresses US crime concerns could help to protect European communities from cross-border threats.

Transparent communication of these mutual gains and visible delivery of real results in citizens’ lives will be essential. Done well, this approach could strengthen legitimacy, build trust and ensure that transatlantic cooperation is rooted not just in diplomacy, but in the everyday priorities of ordinary people.

5.1.4 Preferred development pathways for the next five years

Beyond today’s pressing concerns, citizens in the US and across the nine selected European countries were asked how they would like their country to develop over the next five years. The exact question posed was ‘How would you like to see your country develop in the next 5 years?’

Each item was presented as a trade-off between two opposing policy directions, and respondents indicated their position on a continuous scale from 0 (fully supporting the first option) to 100 (fully supporting the second; numbers were not visible to the respondents). Scores close to 50 indicate a balanced view between the two, while higher or lower scores indicate a stronger orientation towards one side of the trade-off.

The results reveal several notable points of alignment and divergence:

- *Democracy over oligarchy: a clear consensus.* Respondents were asked to choose between a system where ultra-rich and powerful individuals are in charge of the country (0) and a system where citizens govern through elected representatives (100). In all countries where this question was included,⁶ average scores lie well towards the democratic option: Germany, 83; the Netherlands, 72; Poland, 77; Spain, 76; and the US, 75. This indicates a strong and consistent preference for citizen-based democratic governance over concentrated power.
- *Migration: leaning towards openness.* On a more open-border policy for migrants and refugees (0) versus stricter border protection (100), most countries cluster in the mid-60s (e.g. Belgium, 68; the Netherlands, 66; Poland, 67; the US, 65). Given the scale definition, scores above 50 here mean a tilt towards the second option, in this case, stricter border protection. This indicates that while citizens value humanitarian openness, there is a stronger public lean towards controlled migration across much of the sample.
- *International relations: a balanced tilt towards cooperation.* On maintaining good relations with other countries, even if compromises are necessary (0) versus protecting national interests (100), most scores fall just above or below 50 (Belgium, 56; France, 55; the US, 58). This suggests mildly stronger support for a 'national-interest-first' approach, but with substantial openness to cooperative diplomacy.
- *Economic growth versus sustainability: divided priorities.* On whether state investments should focus on economic growth (0) or sustainability (100), Italy scores 50 (an even split), while the US (45), Poland (42) and Romania (39) lean towards economic growth, and Sweden (51) and the Netherlands (52) slightly towards sustainability. This aligns with the broader finding that Europeans, especially in North-Western Europe, place somewhat greater emphasis on sustainability priorities than Americans.
- *Social norms: mixed views between tradition and change.* On accepting alternative gender and sexuality norms (0) versus emphasising traditional values (100), Romania (59) and the US (54) lean towards the traditional end, with Poland in the middle (49) and Sweden (34) heavily leaning towards acceptance. The spread here closely matches the control-freedom differences noted

⁶ The question about democracy vs. oligarchy was not shown in Belgium, France, Italy, Romania and Sweden because these countries did not participate in the 2025 Glocalities measurement, when the item was added to the list.

in section three: North-Western Europe tilts more strongly towards progressive norms, while Eastern Europe and the US mix progressiveness with the retention of tradition.

- *Technology and jobs: a cautious balance.* On protecting jobs from automation, even if efficiency is lower (0) versus adopting artificial intelligence (AI) even if some jobs are lost (100), scores are tightly grouped in the upper 30s to low 40s (Belgium, 39; Sweden, 44; the US, 38). Given the scale, most countries lean moderately towards job protection.
- *Secularism versus religiosity: national contrasts.* In terms of a more secular society (0) versus a more religious society (100), Sweden (23) is strongly secular, the US (48) is nearly in balance and Romania (51) leans towards more religiosity. This mirrors earlier report findings: the pull of spirituality is stronger in Eastern Europe and parts of the US, while secularism is more prominent in North-Western Europe.
- *Geopolitical alignment: a notable Western lean.* On closer integration with the West (the US, Europe) (0) versus closer ties with non-Western countries (China, Russia) (100),⁷ all countries score near or below 42 (the Netherlands, 34; the US, 37). These lower scores indicate a modest but consistent preference for deeper Western alignment.
- *Press freedom versus media control: moderate pluralism.* On total freedom of the press (0) versus stricter government media control (100), the overall direction is towards greater press freedom across all countries.

⁷ In the 2025 measurement, we changed the label of what the 'West' stands for slightly to: 'Closer integration with the West (e.g. European Union, Canada, Australia)'.

Table 1 How citizens would like their country to develop in the next five years

	Belgium	France	Germany	Italy	Netherlands	Poland	Romania	Spain	Sweden	US
A system where ultra rich and powerful individuals are in charge of the country (oligarchy) (0) versus A system where citizens are in charge of the country through elected representatives (democracy) (100)	n/a	n/a	83	n/a	72	77	n/a	76	n/a	75
A more open-border policy for migrants and refugees (0) versus Stricter protection of our borders (100)	68	64	67	56	66	67	65	56	60	65
Having good relations with other countries even if compromises are necessary (0) versus Protecting our country's interests first and foremost (100)	56	55	51	54	54	50	62	52	48	58
State investments should focus on economic growth (0) versus State investments should focus on sustainability (100)	54	52	49	50	52	42	39	48	51	45
Accepting alternative gender and sexuality norms (e.g. unmarried parents) (0) versus Emphasising traditional values (100)	44	44	43	42	44	49	59	41	34	54
Protect jobs from automation, even if efficiency is less (0) versus Use artificial intelligence, even if some people lose their jobs (100)	39	40	39	36	43	37	39	36	44	38
A more secular society (0) versus A more religious society (100)	35	34	33	39	35	41	51	36	23	48
Closer integration with the West (0) versus Closer integration with non-Western countries (e.g. China, Russia) (100)	38	42	36	41	34	30	35	38	31	37
Total freedom of the press (0) versus Stricter government control over media (100)	40	38	33	35	40	29	34	30	30	38

Source: Data from Glocalities database 2023–5.

Notes: Respondents were asked, ‘How would you like to see your country develop in the next five years?’ Respondents could select their desired position on a 100-point scale (numbers not visible to the respondents). The colour indicates whether the average of the country in question on the 100-point scale is statistically higher (green) or lower (orange) than the other countries’ averages combined (with 95% confidence).

5.2 Shared and differing concerns on global and ecological challenges

5.2.1 Mapping global concerns on both sides of the Atlantic

In pursuit of recalibrating and strengthening EU–US relations, it is essential to address the distinct priorities that shape the environmental, technological and social landscapes of both regions. To understand the nuances, we looked at global issues of concern, as shown in the following table. We ranked them based on how important Americans think they are and compared this with the concern shown by citizens in select EU member states.

Table 2 Global issues of concern

	Belgium	France	Germany	Italy	Netherlands	Poland	Romania	Spain	Sweden	US
Child abuse and neglect	46%	42%	46%	32%	37%	45%	42%	45%	50%	48%
Mental health problems	30%	18%	27%	32%	31%	34%	21%	47%	39%	46%
Climate change	50%	53%	39%	59%	41%	38%	47%	52%	44%	41%
Extreme poverty	46%	44%	37%	50%	31%	41%	43%	53%	37%	41%
Animal cruelty	44%	37%	43%	37%	30%	42%	28%	34%	42%	40%
Domestic violence	32%	38%	32%	41%	25%	35%	38%	41%	36%	40%
Human rights violations	34%	34%	38%	49%	31%	42%	43%	47%	47%	38%
The gap between rich and poor	44%	34%	38%	43%	40%	39%	38%	40%	34%	37%
Water pollution/contamination	36%	40%	27%	40%	26%	32%	41%	36%	28%	37%
Sexual harassment and abuse	41%	49%	39%	45%	28%	33%	32%	51%	45%	34%
Malnutrition and hunger	35%	40%	30%	40%	23%	42%	31%	42%	35%	33%
Natural disasters	42%	42%	33%	50%	33%	39%	47%	43%	32%	33%
Air pollution	33%	36%	20%	49%	22%	38%	49%	31%	24%	32%
Racism and discrimination of ethnic minorities	19%	25%	23%	24%	21%	15%	16%	24%	27%	30%
Extinction of animal and plant species	39%	42%	42%	33%	27%	32%	20%	33%	38%	29%
Chronic diseases	30%	18%	24%	31%	28%	34%	31%	38%	21%	28%
Depletion of natural resources	37%	45%	30%	37%	25%	21%	30%	39%	27%	28%
Loss of (rain)forest and wilderness	37%	31%	35%	33%	33%	29%	40%	34%	38%	26%
Online disinformation	21%	16%	22%	22%	26%	32%	23%	19%	16%	25%
Political polarisation	16%	8%	18%	10%	26%	16%	11%	21%	19%	25%
Victims of war	33%	26%	19%	26%	25%	32%	33%	35%	34%	23%
Increase of (micro)plastics in the environment	29%	26%	24%	34%	26%	28%	23%	28%	26%	21%
Water scarcity and droughts	36%	38%	29%	44%	28%	34%	35%	48%	35%	21%
Child labour	33%	39%	32%	15%	19%	26%	25%	28%	39%	20%
Dealing with waste	20%	27%	23%	28%	11%	21%	20%	22%	15%	20%
Lack of opportunities for children	17%	11%	22%	14%	17%	19%	23%	17%	19%	20%
Use of pesticides and chemicals	21%	26%	18%	31%	19%	24%	26%	22%	18%	20%
Oppression by the state	20%	17%	22%	21%	15%	21%	15%	21%	19%	19%
Discrimination of LGBTQ	20%	20%	14%	16%	19%	10%	6%	20%	19%	18%
Melting of polar ice	27%	32%	20%	34%	25%	19%	20%	22%	28%	18%
Religious persecution	9%	12%	10%	9%	14%	16%	9%	11%	15%	17%
Gender inequality	21%	22%	12%	24%	11%	15%	8%	24%	20%	17%
Genetic modification of crops	10%	11%	6%	19%	9%	20%	20%	14%	10%	13%
Treatment of refugees	14%	12%	16%	9%	11%	8%	5%	15%	15%	10%
Overfishing	12%	12%	13%	6%	9%	5%	4%	7%	16%	9%
Soil degradation	13%	17%	6%	15%	10%	12%	20%	13%	13%	7%
I am not concerned about any of these issues.	2%	4%	4%	1%	6%	2%	2%	1%	1%	4%

Source: Data from Glocalities database 2023–5.

Note: Respondents were asked, ‘Which of the following issues are you most concerned about?’ The colour indicates whether the average of the country in question is statistically higher (green) or lower (orange) than the other countries’ averages combined (with 95% confidence).

On both sides of the Atlantic, citizens express strong concern about a wide set of humanitarian, social and environmental issues, and in many cases, the levels of concern are remarkably similar. Topics such as child abuse and neglect score highly everywhere, with roughly half of the respondents in both the US and leading European countries naming it as a major issue. Mental health problems attract significant attention too, reaching scores of 46% in the US and over 40% in Spain, Sweden and Italy.

Environmental priorities also show strong convergence. Climate change is among the top concerns for the public in most countries, with 41% in the US and over 50% in France, Italy and Spain considering this a major concern. Issues linked to environmental health—such as water pollution, air pollution and natural disasters—each draw concern in the 30%–50% range on both sides of the Atlantic.

There is also overlap in the areas of global justice and basic needs. Extreme poverty, human rights violations and animal cruelty rank highly across both regions. Domestic violence and sexual harassment and abuse are widely recognised as pressing issues, with scores in many countries around or above 40%. Concerns about malnutrition and hunger, the gap between rich and poor, and corruption illustrate that economic fairness and security remain shared themes.

Where differences appear, they are mostly a matter of emphasis. Europeans tend to rate resource depletion, rainforest loss, water scarcity and biodiversity loss somewhat higher than Americans, suggesting a broader environmental agenda. Certain social issues such as racism and discrimination against ethnic minorities score slightly higher in the US, as does concern about political polarisation. Americans also place greater emphasis on domestic safety and preparedness for natural disasters, while Europeans score somewhat higher on air pollution, sexual harassment and social equity issues.

5.2.2 Implications for transatlantic cooperation

The breadth of overlapping concerns creates a powerful basis for EU–US collaboration. Joint action could target the humanitarian issues where alignment is strongest, such as tackling child abuse, combating domestic violence and promoting mental health awareness, alongside environmental and climate initiatives that already enjoy public support in both contexts.

Environmental cooperation has particular potential when linked to concrete benefits: clean water infrastructure, disaster prevention and pollution control can be framed as improving public health and community resilience in addition to preserving ecosystems. Beyond ecology, clean energy cooperation offers a direct bridge between environmental priorities and strategic security concerns on both sides of the Atlantic.

The current geopolitical context—from the war in Ukraine to volatile global energy markets—has reinforced the importance of reducing dependency on external fossil fuel suppliers. Joint investment in renewable energy technologies such as offshore wind, solar photovoltaics, advanced battery storage, hydrogen production and smart grid infrastructure could be framed as both a sustainability measure and a security imperative.

From a European perspective, accelerating the energy transition speaks to prevailing values of environmental stewardship, social equity and long-term resilience. From a US perspective, it aligns with strong narratives around innovation, competitiveness and job creation in emerging industries. Leveraging the high trust in science and technology identified in this study, transatlantic research and development partnerships in clean energy could enhance mutual energy independence, boost economic opportunity and deliver visible benefits to communities. Social justice initiatives, from fighting extreme poverty to addressing human rights violations, could benefit from shared advocacy on the international stage, reinforced by common domestic priorities.

By emphasising where public concerns already align and framing projects so they deliver tangible daily benefits, policymakers can build legitimacy for joint action. This shared agenda could also accommodate differences in emphasis, ensuring that while Europe may lead on biodiversity or resource depletion and the US may focus more on safety and disaster preparedness, each sees its priorities reflected in the cooperation. Done well, these initiatives could strengthen not only environmental and humanitarian outcomes but also the political and cultural ties that underpin the transatlantic relationship.

5.3 Trust, security and economic collaboration

Trust in institutions and cooperation is vital for effective governance and public engagement, serving as a cornerstone for building stronger transatlantic partnerships. The comparative data from the nine European countries and the US present a nuanced, multifaceted picture. The findings reveal strong consensus zones on both sides of the Atlantic, as well as important areas of divergence that policymakers should consider when designing strategies for transatlantic partnership.

The following tables show the percentages of trust and distrust in various institutions and entities in the nine European countries and the US.

Table 3 Trust in institutions and entities

	Has trust in									
	Belgium	France	Germany	Italy	Netherlands	Poland	Romania	Spain	Sweden	US
Government	46%	42%	46%	32%	37%	45%	42%	45%	50%	48%
Parliament	30%	18%	27%	32%	31%	34%	21%	47%	39%	46%
Banks	50%	53%	39%	59%	41%	38%	47%	52%	44%	41%
Media	46%	44%	37%	50%	31%	41%	43%	53%	37%	41%
Education	44%	37%	43%	37%	30%	42%	28%	34%	42%	40%
Legal system	32%	38%	32%	41%	25%	35%	38%	41%	36%	40%
Multinational companies	34%	34%	38%	49%	31%	42%	43%	47%	47%	38%
Science	44%	34%	38%	43%	40%	39%	38%	40%	34%	37%
Ordinary people	36%	40%	27%	40%	26%	32%	41%	36%	28%	37%
The UN	41%	49%	39%	45%	28%	33%	32%	51%	45%	34%
Religion	35%	40%	30%	40%	23%	42%	31%	42%	35%	33%
Non-Governmental Organisations	42%	42%	33%	50%	33%	39%	47%	43%	32%	33%
Democracy	33%	36%	20%	49%	22%	38%	49%	31%	24%	32%
Billionaires	19%	25%	23%	24%	21%	15%	16%	24%	27%	30%
The EU	39%	42%	42%	33%	27%	32%	20%	33%	38%	29%
NATO	30%	18%	24%	31%	28%	34%	31%	38%	21%	28%
The US	37%	45%	30%	37%	25%	21%	30%	39%	27%	28%
China	37%	31%	35%	33%	33%	29%	40%	34%	38%	26%
Russia	21%	16%	22%	22%	26%	32%	23%	19%	16%	25%
Israel	16%	8%	18%	10%	26%	16%	11%	21%	19%	25%

Does not have trust in

	Belgium	France	Germany	Italy	Netherlands	Poland	Romania	Spain	Sweden	US
Government	60%	65%	53%	65%	56%	69%	75%	70%	40%	62%
Parliament	61%	60%	48%	66%	51%	67%	76%	68%	38%	42%
Banks	55%	56%	49%	67%	46%	46%	57%	69%	44%	33%
Media	56%	63%	54%	54%	51%	58%	60%	60%	55%	61%
Education	27%	34%	24%	29%	23%	30%	27%	26%	16%	30%
Legal system	53%	52%	35%	55%	36%	58%	55%	50%	34%	50%
Multinational companies	59%	65%	52%	64%	59%	50%	51%	61%	48%	46%
Science	13%	23%	17%	12%	18%	18%	19%	11%	8%	19%
Ordinary people	26%	26%	26%	39%	20%	29%	28%	29%	24%	31%
The UN	39%	41%	37%	43%	34%	33%	27%	42%	27%	39%
Religion	62%	57%	63%	53%	58%	52%	33%	63%	61%	37%
Non-Governmental Organisations	34%	36%	35%	38%	32%	38%	33%	39%	29%	31%
Democracy	41%	43%	28%	38%	33%	41%	36%	42%	19%	35%
Billionaires	n/a	n/a	76%	n/a	71%	75%	n/a	77%	n/a	68%
The EU	42%	44%	34%	39%	36%	42%	30%	34%	30%	32%
NATO	36%	40%	33%	39%	31%	27%	27%	45%	27%	31%
The US	57%	52%	62%	52%	65%	42%	38%	63%	45%	28%
China	76%	77%	78%	67%	73%	74%	64%	68%	80%	70%
Russia	85%	78%	82%	76%	83%	89%	79%	83%	86%	75%
Israel	74%	63%	65%	70%	69%	72%	n/a	75%	n/a	46%

Does not know

	Belgium	France	Germany	Italy	Netherlands	Poland	Romania	Spain	Sweden	US
Government	12%	12%	15%	11%	16%	12%	9%	9%	15%	12%
Parliament	15%	16%	19%	11%	19%	16%	9%	11%	19%	36%
Banks	14%	15%	17%	13%	18%	16%	14%	10%	16%	14%
Media	15%	14%	17%	14%	19%	17%	13%	11%	15%	13%
Education	14%	16%	14%	10%	15%	15%	8%	8%	9%	13%
Legal system	13%	16%	13%	13%	15%	15%	12%	12%	15%	14%
Multinational companies	21%	20%	28%	18%	22%	25%	18%	14%	27%	29%
Science	11%	14%	12%	8%	14%	13%	15%	7%	10%	13%
Ordinary people	17%	23%	23%	15%	18%	21%	15%	14%	15%	16%
The UN	20%	20%	22%	17%	22%	22%	16%	15%	18%	23%
Religion	14%	19%	16%	13%	19%	13%	11%	11%	16%	13%
Non-Governmental Organisations	24%	20%	29%	19%	33%	25%	18%	14%	34%	32%
Democracy	16%	18%	13%	12%	19%	18%	12%	9%	13%	18%
Billionaires	n/a	n/a	15%	n/a	19%	15%	n/a	13%	n/a	16%
The EU	15%	20%	15%	14%	21%	14%	10%	12%	14%	32%
NATO	20%	27%	20%	21%	26%	17%	15%	19%	27%	32%
The US	17%	22%	18%	18%	18%	17%	13%	12%	20%	15%
China	15%	14%	14%	20%	18%	15%	19%	15%	12%	20%
Russia	8%	13%	11%	14%	10%	5%	11%	9%	8%	17%
Israel	16%	23%	21%	19%	18%	19%	n/a	13%	n/a	29%

Source: Data from Glocalities database 2023–5.

Note: The instruction given to respondents was: 'Please indicate your general trust in the following institutions/entities'. The colour indicates whether the average of the country in question is statistically higher (green) or lower (orange) than the other countries' averages combined (with 95% confidence).

5.3.1 Broad consensus on science and education

Across all surveyed countries, science continues to enjoy high levels of trust, though the size of this majority varies more than is sometimes assumed once uncertainty is taken into account. In most European countries and the US, roughly two-thirds to four-fifths of respondents express trust in the scientific community, with an additional share indicating that they do not know. Sweden and Spain stand out as having particularly high levels of trust in science (above 80%), while countries such as France, the Netherlands, Poland and the US show more moderate but still clearly positive majorities. Even in these cases, outright distrust remains limited relative to trust.

Education also commands broad confidence, though at somewhat lower levels than science. In most countries, around half to two-thirds express trust in the education system, with Sweden again standing out at three-quarters. Importantly, a non-negligible minority in all countries selects 'don't know', suggesting that trust in education is widespread but not always strongly anchored. Overall, these findings indicate that science and education remain among the most trusted societal institutions, making them relatively stable reference points for evidence-based policy, innovation and cross-sector collaboration.

5.3.2 Ordinary people and democracy: a mixed picture

Trust in ordinary people (trust in each other among citizens) is moderately high and remarkably consistent across countries. In most cases, around half of respondents express trust, with relatively small differences between European countries and the US. Levels of distrust are generally lower than for political institutions, although a sizeable minority remains uncertain, reflecting ambivalence rather than strong conviction.

When it comes to democracy, the picture becomes more mixed. Trust levels range from below 40% in countries such as France and Belgium to nearly 70% in Sweden, with Germany also standing out positively. In several countries, trust and distrust in democracy are closely balanced, and 'don't know' responses remain meaningful. This variation points to the importance of national context: political polarisation, institutional performance and recent political debates all appear to shape how democracy is evaluated. The data suggest that strengthening trust in democratic systems remains an important challenge on both sides of the Atlantic.

5.3.3 Transatlantic institutions: the EU, NATO and the UN

Trust in European and transatlantic institutions is present but far from universal. The EU is trusted by 4–6 out of 10 respondents in most EU member states, with higher levels of trust in Romania, Spain, Sweden and Germany, and lower levels in France and Belgium. Across countries, however, trust in the EU often competes closely with distrust, and a notable share of respondents remains undecided.

Trust in NATO shows a similar pattern. In countries such as Poland, Romania and Sweden, trust outweighs distrust, reflecting security concerns and geopolitical proximity. Elsewhere, opinions are more divided, and uncertainty remains relatively high.

The UN enjoys moderate levels of trust, particularly in Northern and Eastern Europe, while trust among Americans and Western Europeans tends to be lower and more contested. Across all countries, scepticism towards the UN remains substantial, underscoring the need for international institutions to continuously demonstrate their relevance and effectiveness in addressing global challenges.

5.3.4 Divergence on government, parliament, legal systems and the media

Trust drops sharply when attention turns to national political and institutional actors. Governments and parliaments are trusted by only around one-fifth to one-third of respondents in most countries, with Sweden and Germany as partial exceptions. In many cases, clear majorities express distrust, while a smaller but consistent group indicates uncertainty. The US reflects this broader pattern, with low trust and high levels of explicit distrust in government and political institutions.

A similar dynamic applies to the media and legal systems. Trust rarely exceeds one-third to one-half of respondents, and in several countries, distrust clearly dominates. These findings point to a structural crisis of confidence in national political, legal and informational institutions across much of the transatlantic space.

Economic actors fare even worse. Banks and multinational companies attract limited trust, typically from between one-quarter and one-third of respondents, with distrust clearly outweighing trust in most countries. Distrust of billionaires and foreign powers, such as China and Russia, is even more pronounced, with overwhelming majorities expressing negative views and very few expressing trust.

Religion remains a strongly polarising domain. In Romania and the US, around half or more express trust, whereas in most Western European countries, religion is met with substantial scepticism. Here too, 'don't know' responses suggest that for some respondents, views are shaped as much by distance and disengagement as by outright rejection.

5.3.5 Implications for the EU-US partnership

The overarching lesson is that in both Europe and the US, societies continue to place relatively high levels of trust in science, education and the basic decency of ordinary people. While this trust is not universal and is accompanied by a degree of uncertainty, these domains remain the most broadly trusted pillars across all the countries studied. As such, they provide essential building blocks for evidence-based policy, resilience in the face of misinformation and sustained international cooperation.

At the same time, trust in political institutions, big business and the media is consistently weak, with distrust often outweighing trust and only a limited share of undecided respondents. This points to a challenge to structural legitimacy, posing risks for democratic stability, effective policy implementation and the communication of public goods. Transatlantic cooperation—whether in addressing climate change, managing migration or regulating technology—will therefore only succeed in the long run if it is rooted in transparency and demonstrably delivers tangible benefits to citizens.

For diplomacy and joint ventures, this implies a dual strategy. On the one hand, policymakers should actively leverage the comparatively high levels of trust in science and education and invest in democratic renewal. On the other hand, the persistent scepticism towards political elites, corporations and the media calls for humility and a renewed emphasis on accountability, performance and openness. Acknowledging both the areas of relative strength and the clear zones of fragility is essential if EU–US relations are to translate shared values into actionable policy and secure enduring public support.

5.4 Security and defence

5.4.1 Perceptions of security and threats

Security and defence remain foundational concerns on both sides of the Atlantic, but the sources of perceived threat and preferred responses display distinct patterns in the US and Europe.

As Figure 6 demonstrated, for the American public, personal security and crime are the prime concern. Over half of Americans consider crime and safety to be one of the country’s most pressing issues, a level that significantly exceeds the concern shown in European nations. This heightened anxiety is reflected in greater support for law enforcement and, in many areas, for more robust personal and household protection. Americans are also especially worried about corruption within their own governance system, which fuels fears of institutional erosion and a loss of governmental credibility.

Europeans, by contrast, are less preoccupied with violent crime or street-level disorder, but are more attuned to broader international and societal risks. The Russian invasion of Ukraine and ongoing hybrid threats have brought classic questions of territorial defence and alliance resilience back into the spotlight. Support for NATO is strong in European public opinion, often exceeding 60% in countries such as Romania and Poland, and is comparable in the US. In addition, concerns about democratic resilience are tangible. European respondents place greater emphasis on safeguarding democratic institutions, countering disinformation and protecting against polarisation.

5.4.2 Democratic resilience and institutional trust

Despite these commonalities, the overall pattern of trust in core defence and governance institutions hints at vulnerabilities. In several European and American contexts, trust in parliament and government is expressed by less than one-third of respondents, with many citizens voicing explicit doubt about the ability of political elites to safeguard democracy and maintain order. Combined with high levels of concern about polarisation and external hybrid threats, these trends point to the need for a broad, shared policy agenda around the renewal of democratic legitimacy, increased transparency and better protection of critical infrastructure, including the electoral process and information channels.

Both regions also recognise the importance of international alliances: trust in NATO exceeds trust in national governments or parliaments, confirming the alliance’s symbolic and practical role in maintaining peace and deterring aggression.

5.4.3 Implications for the EU–US security partnership

Renewing the EU–US security partnership will require a deliberately dual-track approach. For the American public, concerns about personal safety, crime prevention and corruption dominate. This points to the need for transatlantic initiatives that visibly reinforce social cohesion and institutional credibility, combining strong law-enforcement cooperation with measures that address governance integrity. Programmes such as joint police leadership training, cross-border anti-corruption frameworks and community-based crime prevention could be framed in terms of practical protection for citizens.

In Europe, the emphasis lies more on safeguarding democratic norms, countering disinformation and coordinating territorial defence against external threats. Here, the values data support a policy narrative that places alliance solidarity, particularly NATO's role, at the core, alongside investment in resilience to hybrid threats. This could include co-developed cyber-defence capabilities, shared intelligence operations and public-facing campaigns to strengthen trust in democratic institutions.

In this context, energy independence is a critical pillar of resilience for both Europe and the US. Geopolitical shocks and supply disruptions—from the war in Ukraine to instability in the global energy markets—have underscored the vulnerability of societies reliant on external fossil fuel sources. Coordinated transatlantic investment in renewable generation, smart-grid modernisation and diversified supply chains could simultaneously reduce exposure to hostile actors and increase long-term stability. Framing such energy strategies as part of democratic resilience would not only strengthen security but also align with the shared public values of sustainability, prosperity and safeguarding communities.

Although it varies, trust in NATO in Europe and the US is generally higher than trust in national political institutions, making the alliance a potential legitimacy anchor for security coordination. However, with trust in national governments and parliaments low on both sides of the Atlantic, there is an urgent need to couple security policy with democratic renewal. Transparency in defence spending, participatory oversight in security planning and visible civic involvement in resilience exercises could help rebuild confidence.

Ultimately, values-based diplomacy in the security domain should integrate the American demand for tangible local protection with the European call for robust democratic safeguards and a coordinated global posture. A partnership framed around these twin priorities could deter aggression, counter hybrid dangers, and deliver results that are both strategically effective and politically legitimate.

5.5 The economy and jobs

5.5.1 Growth expectations and economic disquiet

Concerns about the economy are widespread in both Europe and the US, but the focus of that anxiety, as well as optimism about the future, diverges. In the US, respondents are somewhat more likely to believe that the economy will improve; about one in four expects growth and increased prosperity

over the coming years. However, this optimism is tempered by deep concerns about corruption, crime and the future of the American middle class.

European citizens are, on the whole, less optimistic about economic progress. In many countries, more than one-third believe that living standards and economic opportunity will stagnate, and a similarly large share anticipates further deterioration. High-priority concerns include unemployment, the persistence of income inequality and the future of the welfare state, particularly as demographic changes are putting strain on pension schemes and social services.

Table 4 Expectations about various aspects of the future

	Things will improve		Things will not change		Things will get worse	
	US	9 EU member states combined	US	9 EU member states combined	US	9 EU member states combined
Your physical health	38%	27%	35%	35%	35%	35%
Your mental health	35%	27%	35%	35%	35%	35%
Your own standard of living	38%	27%	35%	35%	35%	35%
Economic prosperity	38%	27%	35%	35%	35%	35%
The quality of education in my country	38%	27%	35%	35%	35%	35%
Social prosperity	38%	27%	35%	35%	35%	35%
Biodiversity (the preservation of plant and animal species)	38%	27%	35%	35%	35%	35%
People's standard of living	38%	27%	35%	35%	35%	
Climate change	38%	27%	35%	35%	35%	
Common values and norms	38%	27%	35%	35%	35%	35%
Trust in each other	38%	27%	35%	35%	35%	35%
Ensuring that the oldest citizens have enough money to survive	38%	27%	35%	35%	35%	35%
Trust in the state	38%	27%	35%	35%	35%	35%
Income inequality	38%	27%	35%	35%	35%	35%
Tensions between ethnicities in your country	38%	27%	35%	35%	35%	35%
The chance that your country gets involved in a war with other countries	38%	27%	35%	35%	35%	35%
Political tensions in your country	38%	27%	35%	35%	35%	35%

Source: Data from the Glocalities database 2023–5.

Note: Respondents were asked: 'How do you think that the world will evolve in this century regarding the topics below?' The colour indicates whether the US percentage is statistically higher (green) or lower (orange) than the European averages (with 95% confidence).

5.5.2 Middle-class and social mobility concerns

While both societies care deeply about the middle class, their solutions and framing diverge. The roots of Europe's economic anxiety can be found in questions of fairness; income inequality, quality education and accessible healthcare are especially salient in the European context. In the US, the same themes exist but are often cast in terms of personal opportunity, flexibility and entrepreneurship. Americans continue to place a premium on self-determination and meritocracy, while Europeans are more likely to call for collective support structures to maintain mobility and security.

It is also worth noting that both regions are feeling the impact of technological disruption acutely. Widespread concern exists about job security amid automation, with more than a third expressing anxiety about the future of traditional employment. However, Americans are somewhat more likely to advocate for pro-innovation policies even at the cost of jobs. In contrast, Europeans stress the importance of protecting employment, even at the expense of efficiency.

5.5.3 Implications for a joint EU–US economic agenda

A credible and effective joint EU–US economic agenda must balance the drive for innovation and global competitiveness with a strong commitment to inclusion, fairness and upward mobility. The values analysis across both regions shows that while Americans often frame economic opportunity in terms of personal responsibility, flexibility and entrepreneurship, Europeans lean more towards collective support systems, social equity and protections for the welfare state. This divergence should guide how policies are narrated and implemented for each audience.

On the US side, economic cooperation will resonate more if it clearly links growth to individual opportunity; for example, through entrepreneurship funding, flexible career development pathways and merit-based skills programmes. In Europe, initiatives should emphasise reducing income inequality, ensuring universal access to quality education and healthcare, and safeguarding pensions and social services. In both contexts, expanding tailored skills training, especially in response to technological disruption, could address anxieties about job security while boosting workforce adaptability.

Transparency is central to restoring confidence. Policymakers must openly address fears of economic decline and demonstrate through evidence and clear communication that transatlantic economic cooperation generates widely shared benefits. This means ensuring that trade agreements, joint investments and innovation projects are visibly inclusive: delivering results not just for large corporations, but for small businesses, middle-class households and vulnerable communities.

Collaborative initiatives could include transatlantic apprenticeships in emerging industries (green tech, AI applications in manufacturing, sustainable agriculture); joint renewable energy projects, such as offshore wind farms, solar deployments, cross-border hydrogen infrastructure and smart-grid integration; co-investment funds for regions experiencing industrial transition; and shared research into equitable taxation models for digital economies. By visibly aligning economic policy with widely shared values such as opportunity, fairness, sustainability and security, the EU and the US could counter populist scepticism, reinforce social mobility, and build a partnership that is not only globally competitive but also socially legitimate and resilient.

5.6 Technology and innovation

5.6.1 Public attitudes: promise and peril

Technology and innovation are universally recognised as drivers of change, but public attitudes to the direction and risks of that change vary. Americans are particularly attentive to the challenges posed

by new technology, expressing great concern over online disinformation, the misuse of personal data and the risks of AI. More so than their European peers, US respondents highlight the dangers of polarisation in digital spaces and are wary of unchecked technological power.

Europeans, meanwhile, emphasise the relationship between technology and societal good. The European public sees technology principally through the lens of sustainability and ethics. Support for green innovation, digital rights, and ethical guidelines for AI and data use is widespread. Europeans expect technological progress to be regulated in the common interest, not left to market forces.

At the same time, both regions demonstrate robust trust in science and evidence. As the data above show, in both Europe and the US, nearly four in five have confidence in the scientific community. This is a striking shared value that provides a powerful foundation for joint research, responsible innovation and regulation.

5.6.2 AI, digital security and regulation

Acceptance of AI as a tool for positive change is widespread, but so too is the desire for careful oversight and regulation. The majority believe it is important for AI systems to operate within clear ethical guidelines, with Americans slightly more vocal about the dangers of unchecked AI. Both publics support transatlantic leadership in setting standards for digital governance, cybersecurity and privacy.

Table 5 Views on AI

	US	9 European countries combined
I am concerned about the potential misuse of personal information by AI applications	72%	63%
It is important for AI systems to adhere to a set of ethical guidelines	70%	69%
I am afraid that AI will become the dominant form of intelligence on Earth	49%	47%
I find AI-powered virtual assistants, like Siri or Alexa, helpful in my daily activities	34%	31%
I think AI will improve human productivity	31%	38%
I believe that AI will have a positive impact on society in the long run	28%	35%
I think AI will improve human creativity	25%	33%

Source: Data from the Glocalities database 2023–5.

Note: Respondents were asked, ‘To what extent do you agree with the following statements about artificial intelligence?’ The table shows the percentages responding ‘agree’ and ‘strongly agree’.

5.6.3 Policy implications

For transatlantic cooperation on technology and innovation to succeed, it must explicitly link the shared trust in science and evidence with culturally attuned approaches to regulation, ethics and societal benefit. Both the EU and the US publics support responsible innovation and clear ethical guidelines for technologies such as AI. This consensus provides a firm legitimacy anchor for joint initiatives that set global standards on digital governance, cybersecurity and data privacy. The values data, however, show important nuances: Americans are more vocal about the risks of the misuse of personal information, polarisation and unchecked AI power, while Europeans emphasise the potential benefits in terms of sustainability, the social good and environmental innovation.

Policy design should therefore proceed on two complementary tracks. In US-focused collaboration, initiatives should address concerns about online disinformation, democratic resilience and the misuse of AI by clearly highlighting the presence of safeguards, transparency and the benefits to personal opportunity. In European cooperation, policy narratives should highlight AI's role in achieving societal goals, such as climate action, public health improvement and social equity, while being embedded within strong ethical guardrails.

Joint research programmes could target high-value public concerns. Think, for example, of green tech solutions to microplastic pollution; large-scale clean energy systems, such as offshore wind farms and solar photovoltaic networks; advanced hydrogen production and storage technologies; cross-border smart-grid integration; AI applications in medical diagnostics; or secure platforms to counter misinformation. Developing these systems jointly would allow the EU and the US to connect sustainability goals with energy independence and economic opportunity, addressing both the environmental values prevalent in Europe and the innovation-driven competitiveness valued in the US. Such projects should be visibly co-led by transatlantic teams of scientists and technologists to reinforce mutual trust and ensure that technological leadership also strengthens democratic stability and societal resilience.

Finally, bilateral and multilateral working groups should be tasked with drafting interoperable regulatory frameworks that balance innovation with protection. These should include transparent AI auditing practices, coordinated responses to cyber threats and shared investment in ethical tech incubators, ensuring that technological leadership also serves democratic stability and societal resilience. By aligning technological progress with widely shared values such as trust in science, commitment to ethics and the pursuit of the public good, the EU and the US could position themselves as credible, cooperative leaders in shaping the future of global innovation.

6. Conclusions: navigating complexity through finding common ground

The relationship between the EU and the US combines a great deal of commonality with significant diversity. Both are large and complex societies, shaped by regional, generational and political differences that influence how citizens see the world and what they expect from their leaders. It is very hard to speak of a single, unified ‘EU’ or ‘US’ because each is an intricate collection of different communities, values and priorities.

6.1 A mosaic of values and concerns

The survey results show a rich mosaic of shared beliefs alongside differences in emphasis. Healthcare, immigration and other high-ranking concerns, such as climate change, education, corruption, and crime and safety, are important to people on both sides of the Atlantic. These issues provide a strong foundation for policy cooperation, dialogue and investment because they already command broad public support. This shared ground should be the starting point for renewing transatlantic relations. It offers space for joint action on evidence-based health policies, effective migration management and the protection of democratic norms.

Recent episodes of heightened political and diplomatic tension have reinforced a critical insight from this study: *political escalation does not automatically translate into a rupture in societal values*. Trust in science and education, support for democracy, concern for fairness, and a desire for security and opportunity remain widely shared values across EU and US societies. *While strategic priorities and political rhetoric may harden, the data show that there is solid common ground between the American and European publics when it comes to values, issues and concerns*. Recognising this distinction is essential for avoiding overreaction, misinterpretation and unnecessary escalation in EU–US relations.

The citizen-focused analyses from this study confirm democracy as an undisputed cornerstone of society in both regions, while also revealing a moderate lean towards stricter border protection and a slight preference for putting national interests first in foreign policy. Sustainability continues to resonate more in parts of North-Western Europe, whereas growth-first investment strategies are more common in the US and some Southern or Eastern EU members.

Cultural attitudes towards social norms and religion follow clear regional patterns, and citizens in both regions express caution about technological change that risks jobs. These preferences sit alongside enduring values that unite people even in polarised environments, such as fairness, empathy, environmental responsibility, adaptability, and the bonds of family and community. Recognising this deeper common ground would add resilience to cooperation planning.

This mosaic is not static. Longitudinal analysis of value orientations between 2014 and 2025 shows that, while transatlantic value profiles are largely stable, there are gradual shifts towards greater openness in parts of Southern and Eastern Europe, and there is a sustained high-freedom orientation in North-Western Europe. These trends, alongside a persistent US emphasis on structure and tradition, indicate both continuity and slow-moving change that policymakers should factor into long-term engagement strategies.

6.2 Diversity and the limits of regional models

The enlargement of the EU after 2004 increased diversity within Europe. The new member states brought histories and value orientations that do not always fit the older Rhineland model of consensus-based, socially collaborative governance. Many of these countries experienced rapid social and economic transitions, and their citizens sometimes hold different views on solidarity, trust in institutions, and the balance between collective responsibility and individual freedom. The development pathway results reflect this diversity, with newer member states often showing stronger preferences for traditional norms, religiosity and a national-interest-oriented foreign policy than older members.

The same is true in the US. The differences between the progressive, urbanised coastal areas and the more traditional, rural or southern regions can be as large as those between the US and Europe. Patterns in openness to migration, social norms and secularism vary widely across these contexts.

For both sides, it is important to remember that ‘European’ and ‘American’ positions are composites of a variety of value systems. Any values-based diplomacy should respect this diversity while working to identify and build on common ground.

6.3 Security, resilience and the changing transatlantic agenda

Security concerns are widely shared across Europe and the US, but they are shaped by different local contexts and threat perceptions. Recent shifts in the transatlantic security environment have placed greater emphasis on strategic competition, democratic resilience, and protection against hybrid threats such as disinformation and cyber interference. These priorities closely align with European public concerns about safeguarding democratic institutions, maintaining alliance cohesion and strengthening resilience in the face of external pressure.

Americans tend to prioritise fighting crime and corruption, while Europeans focus more on building social cohesion and safeguarding alliances. The preference data show that the public is leaning towards protecting national interests and regulating migration, adding nuance to security narratives. One lesson from both sides is clear: democracy itself is central to security, and security is needed for democracy. Without trust in institutions, it becomes harder to defend the rules-based order.

A practical way forward would be to take a dual-track approach. Cooperation aimed at the US should focus on public safety and integrity in governance. Cooperation aimed at Europe should

reinforce democratic norms, counter hybrid threats and strengthen alliance coordination. Trust in NATO could help give these efforts legitimacy, especially when security policy is combined with openness and public involvement.

6.4 Economic futures and middle-class opportunity

On both sides of the Atlantic, there is anxiety about economic change, although the focus differs. In the US, shaped by the Anglo-American tradition, discussions centre on opportunity, meritocracy and upward mobility. In Europe, prosperity is more often linked to fairness, strong education systems and a secure social safety net. Europeans are generally more comfortable with the government taking an active role in reducing inequality and protecting jobs.

The preference data reinforce this divide: sustainability is a stronger investment priority in North-Western Europe, while the US and parts of Southern and Eastern Europe lean towards growth-first strategies. The middle class is central to economic vitality in both regions, but the strategies for supporting it vary. Effective policy needs to fit local realities while recognising the shared goals of dignity, stability and opportunity.

Transatlantic economic cooperation could address these priorities by combining innovation and competitiveness with inclusion and social mobility. In the US, this may mean supporting entrepreneurship, flexible careers and skills training. In Europe, the focus could remain on equality, universal access to healthcare and education, and the protection of welfare systems. Joint investments in industrial transition areas and training programmes could serve both sets of needs.

6.5 Technology, innovation and the challenge of governance

Citizens on both continents see technology as both a source of progress and a source of risk. Trust in science is high, yet concerns about AI, privacy and the influence of digital tools on politics are growing. Americans often highlight the dangers of online manipulation and polarisation. Europeans call more strongly for ethical rules and link technology with the goals of sustainability and fairness.

The preference results show a moderate lean towards protecting jobs from automation rather than adopting AI if it means losing employment, signalling that the public wants technological change to be managed alongside safeguards for workers. The shared trust in science and education is a valuable asset. It should be used to build transparent and participatory digital governance, establish common ethical frameworks for AI and invest strongly in cybersecurity. Joint action on global standards, green innovation, medical AI and secure digital platforms could address the priorities of both regions. The more these projects are tied to clear benefits for daily life and involve citizens in oversight, the more trust they will inspire.

6.6 Policy framing: towards a values-based partnership

The most important lesson is that cooperation should start with the values and concerns that are truly shared. Policies should reflect universal commitments to health, dignity, learning and security, while adapting to local differences. Recognising diversity and weaving it into a larger fabric of common values makes partnerships more legitimate and resilient. The forward-looking preferences in this study point to the need for migration policy to be framed as balancing openness with credible control, environmental projects to be presented as enhancing competitiveness and opportunity in more growth-oriented contexts, social equity to be advanced with sensitivity to cultural and religious norms, and technology initiatives to be coupled with job-protection measures and ethical guardrails.

This approach is especially important now, given challenges including climate change, geopolitical competition, AI and internal social pressures. Anchoring cooperation in shared values will help make it stronger in the face of these threats. Joint investment in renewable energy infrastructure and innovation would directly connect the shared values of security, prosperity and sustainability, making energy cooperation a cornerstone of a resilient, values-based transatlantic partnership.

6.7 Putting it all together

The future of the transatlantic relationship will depend on listening to and adapting to the changing mix of beliefs and priorities in both regions. Strategies rooted in shared trust in science, respect for education and ordinary citizens, and a renewed commitment to democratic resilience could help the EU and the US to remain close allies in uncertain times. This report's recommendations are grounded in the deeper values and priorities of citizens on both sides of the Atlantic. Whereas political leaderships and governing coalitions change quickly, these underlying orientations evolve slowly over time. Anchoring EU–US initiatives in the values held dear by the populations of both partners would make it possible to design a partnership that is resilient, legitimate and broadly supported, regardless of shifts in the political moment.

The values-based framework in this study offers a practical and principled guide for building that partnership. In this context, recalibration is not a diplomatic preference but a strategic necessity: the task is to ensure aligned (critical) cooperation with a US whose geopolitical doctrine has changed, without abandoning the shared societal values that continue to underpin transatlantic legitimacy. By combining shared values with tailored responses to differences, and by integrating citizens' aspirations for how their societies should develop in the coming years, the EU and the US could create a relationship that is resilient, adaptable and capable of guiding the rules-based order through the challenges of the next decade.

7. Appendices

7.1 About the data behind this research

In this analysis, we have used three datasets for various purposes:

A combined dataset for the US from nine Glocalities measurements taken between 2014 and 2025. This allowed us to conduct very granular analyses at the US state level, based on respondents' zip codes. This dataset includes 17,189 Americans aged 18–70.

A combined dataset for the US and nine European countries from the 2023, 2024 and 2025 Glocalities measurements. This allowed us to make detailed comparisons between the US and these EU member states on issues relevant to transatlantic relations. This dataset includes 5,722 Americans aged 18–70 and 35,478 Europeans aged 18–70 from Belgium, France, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Poland, Romania, Spain and Sweden.

We also used the dataset from our 2023 study about middle-class concerns⁸ to obtain information about the control–freedom scores of the remaining EU member states not included in the regular Glocalities measurements. These EU member states are Austria, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Czechia, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Portugal, Slovakia and Slovenia. The sample of these additional countries includes 11,912 citizens aged 18–70.

In all measurements, the data were weighted to be nationally representative with respect to age group, gender, education level and region.

7.2 Values indicators explanation

Values indicator	Explanation
Achievement	Setting challenging goals and being performance-driven.
Adaptive navigation	Managing situations flexibly and seizing opportunities easily.
Adventurous hobbies	Looking for adventurous hobbies.
Business ethics	Calling for a greater involvement of the business community in social goals.
Conscious living	Being critical of superficial living and looking for meaning in life.
Discussing society	Discussing social issues.
Eco-consciousness	Trying to live in an eco-conscious way.
Ecological concern	Worrying about environmental issues.
Empathy	Empathising with other people's emotions and views.
Equal treatment	Believing that everyone should be treated equally.

⁸ Lampert, Papadongonas and Reho, *Middle-Class Concerns and European Challenges*.

Etiquette	Considering social etiquette important.
Explore new things	Wanting to experience new things.
Family important	Considering the family the most important thing.
Family influence	Being influenced by one's family.
Family time	Spending a lot of time with one's family.
Fear of individualisation	Being worried about individualism and egocentrism.
Financial security	Striving to achieve financial security.
Gay marriage	Support for gay marriage.
Gender role flexibility	Challenging traditional gender stereotypes and roles.
Hedonism	Considering fun and enjoyment as highly valuable in life.
Heirlooms in the family	Considering it important to keep heirlooms in the family.
Helping others	Being ready to help others.
Hierarchy	Accepting status and respecting authority by default.
Learning new things	Considering it important to learn new things.
Lifelong relationship	Believing in lifelong partnerships.
Longing for tradition	Calling for more emphasis on traditional values.
Making magic	Being strongly motivated by dreams and fantasies.
National pride	Feeling proud of one's national identity.
Nostalgia	Believing that life in the past was easier to manage.
Obedience	Believing that children should obey their parents.
Opposing war or violence	Opposing the use of war or violence to settle disputes.
Organised life	Aiming for an organised and predictable life.
Patriarchal	Believing that the father should lead the household.
Positive about change	Looking at change as something positive.
Power of thoughts	Believing in the potential of influencing reality with one's thoughts and emotions.
Sharing	Preferring to share goods and services with others.
Smaller income differences	Calling for smaller income differences.
Social improvement	Wanting to work for socially responsible organisations.
Solving problems	Wanting to solve problems.
Spirituality	Considering spirituality an important part of one's life.
Taking precautions	Avoiding risk as much as possible and taking precautions.
Techno progression	Believing in progress through technology.
Testing knowledge	Wanting to test knowledge in practice.
Tolerance	Being open and accepting of people with a different philosophy of life.
Unmarried living together	Finding it acceptable for an unmarried couple to cohabit.
Work-leisure distinction	Keeping work and private life separate.

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Future of Europe

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