

The European Power Project

An agenda for a sovereign Europe

35 big ideas to make Europe win the geopolitical competition

Wilfried Martens Centre
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The European Power Project: An Agenda for a Sovereign Europe

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Table of abbreviations

DARPA	Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency
EED	Energy Efficiency Directive
EPG	European Public Goods
ESC	European Security Council
ESMA	European Security and Markets Authority
ETS	EU Emissions Trading System
ISO	International Organization for Standardization
ITU	International Telecommunications Union
O-RAN	Open Radio Access Network
PPA	Power Purchase Agreement
QMV	Qualified Majority Voting
RED III	Renewable Energy Directive III
SAFE	Security Action for Europe
SIU	Savings and Investments Union

Introduction

Klaus Welle

A world of predators

Europe is confronted today with a triple geopolitical shock.

First, Russia is going back to a policy of territorial expansion. After the Gorbachev and Yeltsin years of dialogue, Russia has returned to its policy of territorial expansion as practised successfully for more than 500 years. The city-state of Moscow, a tributary of the Mongols and the Golden Horde until 1480, militarily expanded step by step to become the state that now covers the biggest landmass on earth. Expanding north, south, east and west when opportunity arose, it successively forced the submission of its neighbouring people, creating a colonial empire in its immediate vicinity that was kept together by force.

The partial occupation of Georgia in 2008 and the annexation of Crimea and occupation of the Donbas in 2014 had already signalled Russia's willingness to start to restore what it considers its lost territories and to expand again. The fully fledged war against Ukraine that it started on 24 February 2022 has taken that aggression to a completely new level. At the same time, Russia demanded that the US and NATO recognise Central and Eastern Europe as its special zone of interest and that NATO's presence there be drastically reduced. If Russia were to be successful, the security of Europe as a whole would be at stake.

Second, the US has downgraded Europe to priority number four. The Trump administration has concluded that it needs to prioritise among its security commitments to third parties, both in peacetime and wartime. A weakened industrial base, high budget deficits and a public debt at about 120% of GDP; the capacity to only fight one major war at a time; and the identification of China as the only rival for global leadership have all contributed to the reprioritisation of US regional security commitments. The Western Hemisphere (including Venezuela, Cuba, Canada and Greenland) is at the top of the list, with Asia—in particular China—in second place, followed by the Middle East and finally Europe as the fourth priority.

This has serious resource implications. US support for Ukraine in its defence efforts against Russian aggression has been drastically reduced. Weapons are now in principle only delivered against payment. According to a Reuters report, the Pentagon indicated at the end of 2025 that Europe would have to become self-sufficient in key military categories

as soon as 2027, while the average procurement time for European replacements is three years. In spring 2026 the US notified NATO that, in case of war, between half and two-thirds of its previously committed major weapons systems, such as bombers, fighter aircraft, submarines and frigates, could no longer be made available. A serious six-month review to reduce the number of US troops stationed in Europe, conducted by the Pentagon, is underway. Europe has to build up its own defence capabilities in a race against time.

Finally, China is using Europe as a 'dumping ground' for its surplus production. The traditional Chinese growth model is in serious trouble. Very high public debt, especially on the local and regional level; the end of the infrastructure- and construction-led boom years; significant levels of unemployment—particularly among the young, including university graduates; a growth rate estimated by independent observers to be at 2% rather than the announced 5%; a dramatic decay in demographics in the past decades as a consequence of the one-child policy; and the partial closure of the US market to Chinese imports have all put pressure on the regime. As a consequence, exports are redirected towards markets that remain more easily accessible, including Europe.

China now has a trading surplus with more or less all European countries, forcing out local producers, with potentially major consequences for industrial workers in particular, and not just in the car industry. At the same time China is controlling most of the production of rare earth elements, as well as their prices, undercutting all market-based attempts to create viable alternatives abroad. Internationally dependent production chains give it increasing leverage in trade negotiations and make it difficult to remedy that situation.

The global conditions have dramatically worsened for Europe in both geopolitical and geo-economic terms. The post–Second World War political order is rapidly fading and is no longer supported by any of the great powers. It is becoming an orphan. Europe is the place that has depended like no other on that benevolent environment.

We are back in a world of predators.

How to survive in a world of predators

The challenges Europe is confronted with are as much geo-economic as they are geopolitical. But if you cannot defend yourself, you are not sovereign and you can be pressured by others. We will not be able to change the behaviour of major powers, but we can become stronger ourselves. Instead of complaining, we need to get our own house in order.

Our future defence will need to be built on six pillars:

1. *Ukraine*. If Ukraine remains sovereign and integrates gradually into EU structures, we will be safe. Ukraine is the first pillar of European defence against an imperial Russia and can help us to fill some of the gaps created by the US reducing its conventional support for Europe. Ukraine is becoming a net security provider.
2. *The US*. While the US is reinterpreting downwards its commitment under Article 5 of the NATO Treaty and reducing its conventional military support to Europe, it will remain an important ally and security provider, especially concerning nuclear deterrence.
3. *A Europeanised NATO*. The US is Europeanising NATO. Handing over the Southern Command to Italy and the Northern Command to the UK and suggesting that the next Supreme Allied Commander could be a German, it is advancing the so-called *NATO 3.0* concept. It is essential that the new NATO is built symmetrically between a European and an American pillar and that the command structure is separable yet not separated.
4. *The member states*. We are in danger of a divide developing between heavily security exposed and high-investing member states in the north-east and a much more laid-back approach in the south-west. Common financing by the EU in the security and defence area could mitigate this divide.
5. *The EU*. Through its many policies and dedicated budgetary means, the EU could do what NATO cannot. It needs to operationalise its solidarity clause under Article 42(7) of the Treaty on European Union, bring together its foreign policy tools within the European Commission, move to qualified majority voting (QMV) in the area of foreign and security policy, and provide itself with a dynamic leadership organ, bringing together all the decisive actors in a European security council (ESC). It needs to be able to act when NATO cannot or does not want to.
6. *Comprehensive policy reforms*. To succeed in the geopolitical competition, Europe will need a thriving economy, leading technology, self-sustaining defence, enhanced decision-making, a clear common identity, sufficient access to energy and an improved demographic situation. An agenda for game changers in all of these sectors is therefore critical and will be presented in this paper.

The tanker starts to turn direction

In 2024 the European People's Party (EPP) won the European Parliament elections for the sixth time in a row, the first time having been in 1999. Unlike the last legislature, there is no majority to the left of the EPP anymore. This has given the EPP much greater bargaining power, both on the Commission's agenda for this legislature, as negotiated with the European Parliament before the election of Ursula von der Leyen as president, and on its concrete

implementation through European Parliament plenary votes. The Commission's top three priorities—competitiveness, security and defence, and migration control—are fully in line with the EPP programme.

The negotiated political guidelines being rolled out during this five-year legislative cycle are gaining more and more steam, with most of the legislation to be adopted in the second half of the legislature. This presents a unique opportunity for policy change.

Important milestones have already been achieved in simplifying European regulation via the omnibus procedures.

Moreover, the Parliament, the Council and the Commission have agreed a roadmap for the adoption of 42 critical measures under the One Europe, One Market programme, which is to be finalised by the end of 2027. The key points are simplification, a more integrated single market, strong trade, the reduction of energy costs, and an accelerated digital and artificial intelligence (AI) transformation.

It is also critical to re-establish a consensus in society on reduced and more targeted migration. Since spring 2024, a complete overhaul of EU migration policy has been undertaken, with the resulting legislation entering into force on 12 June 2026.

Finally, the EU is becoming a decisive complementary security actor. The €90 billion loan to Ukraine agreed by the European Council has kept Ukraine in the fight and in a strong position in case of ceasefire negotiations. The €150 billion SAFE programme facilitates the joint procurement of weapons systems and investments into strategic enablers that had been, until now, largely provided by the US. The 21 sanctions packages adopted against Russia have increased the economic and financial pressure on the aggressor. A European defence commissioner gives direction to all these efforts.

The European Power Project

The future of Europe will be decided by its ability to generate power, speed and scale.

In this paper, you will find 175 projects with which to open the debate on what a geopolitically competitive EU should look like. The economy, technology, energy, defence, decision-making capacity, identity and culture, as well as demography, are the battlefields on which it will be decided whether Europe remains the steward of its own destiny or becomes an object in the hands of other powers.

Our predecessors had the courage to take decisive steps in European integration.
In the 1950s the founding fathers overcame the hatred created by war.
In the 1960s the supremacy of European law was acknowledged.
In the 1970s a breakthrough for European democracy was celebrated with the first direct elections of the European Parliament.
In the 1980s Schengen and the Erasmus programme were born.
In the 1990s the single market and the single currency were fully implemented.
In the 2000s the Lisbon Treaty gave us our de facto constitution.
In the 2010s we put climate change decisively on the global agenda.

We are now living in a Union of 27, from Madeira to the Black Sea and from the Arctic to Cyprus.

We can do it again.

Economy

Eoin Drea

A Europe that cannot generate robust economic growth is a Europe that cannot fund its own strategic objectives nor project power beyond its borders. Yet, many Europeans—squeezed by the rising cost of living—are losing faith in the European project's ability to deliver prosperity. For more and more citizens, the economic challenges feel insurmountable.

Coupled with this increasing sense of economic insecurity is an uncertain global economic outlook. The level of geopolitical instability is reducing growth and raising energy prices globally. The rising costs of government borrowing are another reminder of the unsustainable trajectory of current economic models.

Yet, to generate real growth requires a fundamental reshaping of Europe's socio-economic model. For too long much-needed structural reforms have been postponed, delayed and ignored on the basis of electoral expediency.

This is an approach which can no longer continue.

The economic solutions are well known and require a significant updating of Europe's social economy model. Systems designed in the 1940s and 1950s are no longer suitable for the digital- and AI-infused structures of the post-Covid era. The combination of low growth, high debt and rapid demographic decline is a recipe for political polarisation and extremism.

What is actually required is a level of political focus and commitment that has been lacking over the past decades.

The European Power Project proposes 25 economic projects that will underpin future economic growth across the EU. Four key pillars are proposed:

1. Better utilising Europe's immense wealth to drive investment and improve affordability. This pillar includes implementing a 'big bang' approach to capital market integration, building out a meaningful savings and investment union (SIU), and specifically seeking to facilitate cultural change regarding Europe's occupational and private pension schemes.
2. Driving the development of the internal market for services. The single market is the EU's biggest economic advantage (and attractor of investment). It is the driver of our wealth.

However, it reminds wholly unfinished in the critical (and growing) area of services.

3. It is time to deliver on pan-European investment. Expanding the European financing of essential cross-border investments in areas such as defence, energy and cybersecurity requires a new approach to European public goods (EPG). A sea-change is needed in how the EU finances itself to meet the challenges of the decades ahead.
4. Increasing affordability is essential to restarting social mobility. Many voters now feel that their social mobility is dependent more on family wealth than on hard work and enterprise. The social market economy needs a fundamental restructuring to allow younger generations to save and invest their way to greater affluence.

	Game changer 1	Game changer 2	Game changer 3	Game changer 4	Game changer 5
	Single supervisor for capital markets	**SIU**	**Internal market for services**	**EPG**	**Affordability and mobility**
Recommendation 1	Undertake a 'big bang' approach on supervision by transforming the European Security Markets Agency (ESMA) into a single, independent and authoritative pan-European supervisor.	Support a 'bottom-up' SIU which uses national and regional initiatives to spur market integration and deepening (e.g. a common stock exchange for the Benelux countries).	Implement a 'twenty-eighth regime'—a pan-European legal system that companies can 'opt in' to, allowing them to scale across borders. It should be specifically designed to help small and medium-sized enterprises.	Define defence, energy and cybersecurity as essential EPG. Raise overall EU expenditure on EPG from 0.4% to at least 1.2% of EU gross national income by 2040.	Housing is a symbol of market failure. Housing supply must be increased by both the private and public sectors. A 'multi-market' housing policy must be embraced.
Recommendation 2	Reform the ESMA's internal governance, not just its mandate. Its decision-making needs to be genuinely depoliticised—insulated from the national supervisors who currently sit on its board and protect their own interests.	Make retail and pension investment accounts the centrepieces of the SIU. Introduce simple, tax-advantaged accounts modelled on proven national successes. The SIU will only succeed with broad public participation and cultural change.	Implement the 'once only' principle—a system where citizens and businesses only have to provide data to public administrations once, with that information shared across borders to reduce financial and time costs to a minimum.	Establish a permanent EPG investment fund capitalised at a minimum of €500 billion. This fund should sit within the proposed European treasury, with borrowings and repayments subject to full European Parliament scrutiny.	Incentivise the expansion of occupational (pillar 2) pension schemes following the Australian and Irish models. Utilise mandatory enrolment on an 'opt-out' basis only.
Recommendation 3	Ensure a narrow scope to drive progress—focus only on capital markets, not banking and insurance.	Reduce fragmentation in equity markets and boost initial public offerings—harmonise listing requirements across member states to make it easier for companies to go public in Europe.	Encourage 'coalitions of the willing': for complex sectors, groups of countries should be encouraged to merge national standards independently if full EU-wide agreement stalls.	Make own resources the dominant source of EU budget financing. Increase the share of own resources in the EU budget to at least 85% by 2040.	Widen the tax base across the EU to increase economic resilience. The taxation burden should be more dispersed across all income types, including property.

	Game changer 1	Game changer 2	Game changer 3	Game changer 4	Game changer 5
Recommendation 4	Adopt a transitional 'opt-in' mechanism for both member states and companies, which can choose to be supervised at the EU level in the short term.	Introduce a digital euro. The European Central Bank and national central banks should work together to embed it into the capital markets ecosystem.	Enforce the rules member states are already breaking. Gold-plating and the misapplication of EU law by member states are chronic fragmentation drivers. The Commission should take a significantly tougher line on enforcement rather than endlessly producing new legislation.	Fund defence/ dual-use research and development through a dedicated Horizon Europe budget line. This should have a minimum of €50 billion in grants to 2034, with cross-border interoperability required as a condition of all funding.	Incentivise European pension funds to increase investments in venture capital and early-stage investment funds from 0.2% to at least 2.5%.
Recommendation 5	Recognise the current distribution and political importance of financial centres in smaller EU states. A transformed ESMA does not mean centralising all financial activity in one city.	Complete the banking union as it is essential to achieving a meaningful SIU: cross-border banks are vital to supporting deeper and more efficient capital markets.	Stop regulating for political theatre; regulate for market integration. EU legislation should focus on cutting internal barriers rather than positioning itself as a global first mover on emerging technologies.	Introduce a binding performance framework for all EPG spending, with independent annual assessments against cross-border impact metrics.	Abolish mandatory retirement ages and implement a Belgian-style portal (see mypension.be) at the European level to allow every citizen to plan for their retirement.

Technology

Dimitar Lilkov

The road to European strategic autonomy is paved with good intentions. There is near consensus among the pro-European political mainstream on the need to undo the unwilling surrender of our digital sovereignty to foreign providers and adversarial state actors. Three US hyperscale firms alone now control the majority of the European cloud market, while the EU relies on third countries for 80% of its digital hardware and services. At the same time, the EU is still struggling to truly upgrade its digital market and provide the necessary environment for scaling home-grown companies. These vulnerabilities limit collective prosperity and threaten European national security.

The EU's institutional response has so far suffered from an over-emphasis on aspirational goals and prescriptive digital legislation. Regrettably, the digital rulebook has not even been effectively implemented due to rigorous pushback from the US administration and the Silicon Valley tech lobby. European tech sovereignty fails when it is regulatory or advisory and can only succeed when it is structural and strategically supranational.

The current proposal aims to focus on three strategic priorities backed up by several actionable projects. First, the internal culture of the EU institutional operating system needs to be reassessed. From changing the inherently risk-averse mindset of financial grant systems to re-evaluating how we audit high-risk tech investment, there needs to be a better framework for encouraging EU tech enterprises. Improved civilian–military fusion in key sectors should be enhanced and given access to EU research grants. Certain aspects of EU digital legislation should be streamlined. At the same time, the process of simplification should not equal deregulation in favour of the US/Chinese hyperscale firms and state-backed digital cartels.

Second, EU policymakers should place more emphasis on the matter of tech scaling and proper financing. The strategic design of the European Competitiveness Fund is essential given its future budget. Europe does not have a capital scarcity problem, but a capital allocation problem, especially given the trillions of sleeping household savings and pension assets. Strategic public procurement has been too long neglected as a viable tool. Additionally, the diffusion of technology and application of industrial AI across the EU should be a further long-term priority in order to deliver efficiency gains for businesses and essential services for citizens.

Finally, a true European tech stack needs to be pursued on all fronts including cloud, semiconductors, batteries, quantum and advanced AI. This primarily implies providing sufficient computational power and the energy input to sustain it. Europe today hosts under 5% of global AI compute and lacks the necessary baseload power and grid connectivity to sustain its expansion. These structural disadvantages are already diverting data-centre and AI investment elsewhere. At the same time, digital independence does not mean digital autarky and full self-reliance. A whole network of strategic tech partnerships needs to be developed internationally to achieve mutual interests, tap into global markets, and secure the full silicon supply chain essential for the energy and digital infrastructure of the present and future.

	Game changer 6	Game changer 7	Game changer 8	Game changer 9	Game changer 10
	From precaution to innovation culture	**Tech scaling and empowering EU AI**	**Financing**	**European sovereign tech and compute stack**	**Strategic tech partnerships**
Recommendation 1	Introduce tailored simplification of EU legislation in the digital and energy domains. Reduce regulatory overreach and business uncertainty in over-prescriptive EU legislation. Maintain fundamental EU digital rights and active enforcement of digital rules on anti-trust, privacy, and the interoperability of digital platforms and services.	Improve the absorption capacity of small and medium-sized enterprises. Improve data readiness, investment capital and trusted EU-built tools. Support companies' ability to implement, operate and iterate on AI tools. Tech diffusion is the only viable strategy to secure productivity gains.	Channel sleeping investment (through the SIU). Use the Scaleup Europe Fund to crowd in institutional investors; pave the way for institutional investors to support European startups and scale-ups.	Map out all major software/ hardware dependencies. Build the whole Eurostack through diversification and homegrown tech leadership. Secure sovereign compute capacity through AI gigafactories and InvestAI; cut dependence on non-EU advanced chips. Treat large AI clusters as critical energy infrastructure.	Secure the full silicon supply chain (semiconductors, critical minerals, essential AI infrastructure), with an additional focus on the battery supply chain in an effort to build a homegrown battery industry.
Recommendation 2	Harmonise insolvency proceedings across the EU. Introduce EU company status (EU Inc.) to simplify cross-border operations and streamline market entry.	Address the lack of industrial data and AI platform layers as a sovereign asset. Support EU-developed industrial foundation models. Europe's comparative advantage lies in sector-specific models fine-tuned on proprietary industrial and scientific data.	Facilitate strategic public procurement, local content requirements and national sovereign tech funds. The aim is to convert public funds into bankable private investment with high leverage potential.	Build scalable products in open-source software. Develop secure, interoperable alternatives to non-European technologies.	Engage international standard-setting bodies (ISO, ITU) to promote EU technology standards. Build democratic tech standards coalitions internationally.

	Game changer 6	Game changer 7	Game changer 8	Game changer 9	Game changer 10
Recommendation 3	Create a shift in political culture enforced by statute. EU research funding and high-risk tech investment need to operate in a framework of less risk aversion enshrined in financial regulation.	Enable the necessary digital and energy infrastructure, with a key focus on electronic communications, data centres and semiconductor supply. Cut multi-year grid connection queues and ensure preferential grid access for data centres.	Ensure strategic design and streamlining of the European Competitiveness Fund. Expand the work of the European Innovation Council as a flagship programme to identify and scale breakthrough innovation.	Expand EU quantum and deep tech leadership. Foster the European Innovation Council's quantum portfolio and help it to scale and commercialise by providing conducive regulatory frameworks and financing modalities.	Promote digital dialogues and trade/ tech councils. Expand digital cooperation in the Indo-Pacific with Japan, Korea, India, Australia and Taiwan.
Recommendation 4	Improve civilian–military fusion in key sectors related to defence and critical technologies. Improve the strategic direction of Horizon + projects.	Produce a standardisation strategy for 5G/6G, O-RAN, the cloud and the Internet of Things.	Enable/increase financial support and bank loans for European defence, cybersecurity and dual-use technologies.	Develop an independent structure focused on Advanced Research on European Security, a mission-oriented research and development agency with genuine DARPA DNA.	Attract third-country tech talent and startups.
Recommendation 5	The European Commission should rigorously enforce existing single market provisions to ensure the scalability of European companies.	Improve tech diffusion in order to achieve efficiency gains for businesses and improved public services for citizens.	Deliver an improved economic security agenda for the Union, including the EU foreign investment screening regime, the Foreign Subsidies Regulation and the export controls update.	Ambitiously revamp the EU Cybersecurity Regulation. Phase out untrusted vendor companies from sensitive networks and replace critical infrastructure (telecoms, energy grids, public utilities).	Leverage Global Gateway funding for digital and clean tech. Provide access for European businesses to new international markets.

Energy

Dimitar Lilkov

The EU's energy policy has recently become a policy of managed scarcity. For close to a decade, the implicit doctrine has been that the continent should consume less, pay more and feel virtuous about both. Coupled with a heavy regulatory push for decarbonisation, this strategy has inadvertently produced energy austerity across the EU, with demand reduction pursued as an end in itself, price signals treated as disciplinary instruments and energy abundance regarded with suspicion. Industrial electricity prices at roughly triple US levels are deindustrialising the continent in slow motion, deterring the AI and defence-industrial investment Europe urgently needs, while also eroding the social consent on which the climate transition depends. The quest for sustainability has itself become economically and societally unsustainable.

The European centre–right needs to reinvigorate the debate on energy and sustainability with several key messages. Technological innovation (not targets, bans and mandates) is the master key to long-term decarbonisation. Europe must produce more of its own resources, minerals and molecules if it wants to stay competitive and secure. Most importantly, an energy transition which impoverishes its own citizens will be voted out of existence long before it reaches carbon neutrality.

The current proposal advances five strategic priorities:

1. A consolidated programme on security of supply and safeguarding access to critical minerals which addresses the continent's liquified natural gas portfolio, security partnerships and the future of domestic mining.
2. The elevation of price affordability and stability to an explicit, measured objective—decoupling consumer prices from marginal gas, reforming levies that tax the clean carrier more heavily than the dirty one and ensuring social fairness when it comes to energy poverty.
3. The building of a clean energy backbone: a nuclear renaissance spanning lifetime extensions, standardised new builds and a serially produced small modular reactor fleet, alongside sensible renewable investments supported by the corresponding infrastructure.
4. Modernised grids and interconnectors built ahead of demand. Electrification and enabling a cost-effective clean energy transition should remain notable goals.

5. The project concludes with a series of recommendations on climate realism as an overreaching philosophy. Decarbonisation should remain among the EU's policy priorities given the challenge of climate change and the long-standing need for reducing European dependencies on third countries for energy imports. However, it is high time to recalibrate our policies so they do not jeopardise European competitiveness and become an uncontrollable spending spree with very limited effect on climate-change mitigation. Through climate realism, the European centre–right can offer a sensible path forward between the extremes of climate denialism on the far right and the delusion of over-ambitious environmentalism on the left.

	Game changer 11	Game changer 12	Game changer 13	Game changer 14	Game changer 15
	Security of supply and critical minerals	**Price affordability**	**Strategic clean energy**	**Upgrading European grids**	**Climate realism**
Recommendation 1	Rebalance the EU's liquefied natural gas portfolio towards long-term contracts (with destination flexibility clauses) to ensure security of the gas supply. Reform AggregateEU to include specific provisions for mandatory demand aggregation during severe supply disruptions or when EU gas storage falls below critical levels.	Decouple retail prices from marginal gas. Scale two-way Contracts for Difference and long-term corporate PPAs into a liquid, standardised EU-wide market. Consumers should pay the average cost of the clean system rather than the (volatile) marginal cost of imported gas.	Promote fleet-wide lifetime extensions and a new-build programme based on standardised designs with pooled financing (European Investment Bank mandate, Contracts for Difference) to resolve the cost-overrun issue. End the taxonomy and state-aid discrimination against nuclear across all EU instruments.	Set binding 12-month caps for energy projects of overriding strategic interest (generation, grids, storage), with one-stop shops in every member state. Prohibit duplicate environmental studies and serial litigation loops. Presume overriding public interest for clean firm generation and transmission.	Ensure fiscal predictability by statute. Every climate proposal must carry an approximate total cost and projected impact on national/EU spending. Improve the quality of impact assessments. Align policies with the Court of Auditors' warning that European institutions legislate on net-zero policies with very little financial predictability.
Recommendation 2	Deepen energy corridors with Norway, the US, the Gulf, the Eastern Mediterranean and Africa. With NATO, protect subsea pipelines and cables. Energy diplomacy should go hand in hand with security policy.	Simplify in order to reduce costs for citizens and business. Consolidate the overlapping reporting *acquis* (EED, RED III, taxonomy) into a single energy-reporting rulebook with sunset clauses and a mandatory competitiveness test for all new energy legislation.	Develop a comprehensive small modular reactor strategy. Move from demonstration to serial production: harmonise licensing with a single European design approval valid across member states. Secure the fuel supply chain free of Rosatom.	Promote smart-meter completion and AI-based grid-management demand–response markets. Pair data centres with generation and district-heating waste-heat reuse.	Earmark breakthrough research and development in advanced wind design, carbon capture and storage, electrolysers and next-generation nuclear as sectors where Europe can have true competitive advantage.
Recommendation 3	Accelerate the domestic mining and processing of critical raw materials with streamlined permitting. Ramp up joint natural gas exploration in the Black, North and Mediterranean Seas. Natural gas will continue to have a role as a transitory resource on the path to long-term carbon neutrality.	Complete the Energy Taxation Directive reform: shift policy levies and legacy renewable-support costs away from electricity bills and onto general budgets or fossil fuels; give member states flexibility in value-added tax. Stop taxing the clean carrier more heavily than the dirty one.	Invest in European comparative advantages in clean energy: North Sea offshore wind, and Iberian and south-eastern solar paired with storage. Award auctions based on full system cost (including firming, grid and balancing costs).	Transformers, high-voltage direct current cables and gas turbines are essential for every project. Aggregate European procurement with standardised specifications to give manufacturers multi-year order visibility; expand EU manufacturing capacity under the EU Net Zero Industry Act.	Mandate full-system-cost methodology in all EU and national energy planning; replace renewables-only targets with clean-firm capacity and carbon targets. Ensure that a reformed and cost-optimised ETS remains at the heart of technology-neutral decarbonisation.

	Game changer 11	Game changer 12	Game changer 13	Game changer 14	Game changer 15
Recommendation 4	Transform the pilot project for stockpiling critical materials into a true European strategic reserve. Prioritise a shortlist of minerals which are both essential for industrial needs and affordable to store (gallium, germanium, rare earth magnets, tungsten).	Ensure societal sustainability and reduce energy poverty. Recalibrate the measures that push exorbitant costs onto end consumers—ETS2 carbon pricing on heating and transport, obligatory renovation mandates, the pace of the combustion-engine phase-out.	Include nuclear baseload in grid architecture—a stable, low-carbon baseload is what makes grid integration technically viable, removing the need for costly backup gas capacity.	Reform connection queues with first-ready-first-served allocation and the introduction of financial commitments to eliminate speculative queue entries. Designate energy acceleration zones (mirroring data-centre zones) where generation, storage and large flexible loads receive fast-tracked connection.	Continue anti-dumping provisions and restrict Chinese imports that benefit from exorbitant state subsidies. Impose new countervailing duties on Chinese electric vehicles, batteries and other clean tech imports.
Recommendation 5	Ensure social acceptance of new mining projects. Overcome local opposition through Nordic-style statutory community-benefit regimes (mandatory revenue-sharing, local equity stakes, municipal royalties).	Reform network-cost allocation; harmonise state-aid headroom for energy-intensive industry compensation. Promote super-off-peak tariffs that reward system-friendly behaviour for flexible mega-loads (e.g. data centres, electrolysers, storage).	Improve the matching between companies, banks and investors by auditing EU funds and rethinking how they can be allocated to support innovation and decarbonisation.	Increase investment in grid transmission and distribution networks. Consideration should be given to ultra-high-voltage lines and storage.	Subsidiarity and adaptation should be the local backbone. Invest in early-warning systems, flood and wildfire preparedness, and climate-resilient infrastructure.

Defence

Ionela Ciolan

For eight decades, Europe has counted on the American security umbrella. Today, however, it must show that it can provide its own protection. In these perilous times of shifting alliances and growing unpredictability in Washington, Europeans must learn to trust each other more and foster stronger European integration in security and defence. Hence, creating a European defence union is a crucial step towards Europeans shouldering greater strategic responsibility, achieving deeper political integration and demonstrating credible leadership with regard to their own security.

The transatlantic partnership is facing its most vulnerable moment since its foundation. The mutual trust, shared threat assessment, coordinated action and common ideological positioning that once underpinned this relationship are increasingly giving way to anxiety and uncertainty on the European side. Can Europe still depend on the US as a security guarantor, and if necessary, can it defend itself on its own?

The latest US National Security and National Defense strategies suggest a decline in the priority given to European security, and a broader reorientation of American attention towards the Western Hemisphere and the Indo-Pacific. At the same time, NATO is undergoing a transformation to become NATO 3.0, as part of which the US would like its European allies to take primary responsibility for the continent's conventional defence. Meanwhile, the US Department of War is conducting a six-month review of its military capabilities and forces assigned to the continent. These changes require heightened ambition and a willingness to reconsider existing doctrines, strategies and modes of cooperation in the field of European defence.

Thus, European states must prioritise their own security and defence, working together to build a robust European defence union that reinforces NATO's European pillar, in order to fit with this new paradigm of a 'stronger Europe in a stronger NATO'. Despite notable progress since the Lisbon Treaty, especially in the past four years, EU defence efforts remain constrained by political hesitation, industrial fragmentation, the prioritisation of national interests, and persistent concerns about duplicating or weakening NATO. As such, the absence of coordinated procurement and investment is limiting the EU's ability to develop and scale its military output effectively.

This project builds on the *7Ds—Defence Extended* publication by bringing into focus five additional areas that are essential to political discussions on creating a European defence union. Such a union would serve as a strong European pillar within NATO and, in worst-case scenarios, where consensus within the North Atlantic Alliance may be lacking, as a necessary Plan B. It would help ensure the preservation of a credible defence and deterrence posture on the European continent, while also responding to the expectations of the more than 70% of European citizens who are increasingly looking to the EU to 'speak the language of power' in the context of mounting global instability and a shifting world order.

	Game changer 16	Game changer 17	Game changer 18	Game changer 19	Game changer 20
	European security council (ESC)	**European common defence market**	**European intelligence agency**	**European rapid reaction force**	**European nuclear deterrent**
Recommendation 1	Create the legal and governance foundation for an ESC by defining its legal status, membership framework, governance structure and decision-making procedures within the EU institutional system.	Implement the objectives taken in the European Defence Industrial Strategy and the European Defence Industry Programme.	Expand the EU's Intelligence and Situation Centre into a fully operational intelligence agency.	Create a robust, permanent EU-level command-and-control architecture centred on the Military Planning and Conduct Capability.	Support the establishment of a European nuclear deterrent that would cover the whole of the EU and be complementary to the US nuclear umbrella.
Recommendation 2	Establish the governance structure by creating a permanent ESC secretariat within the European Council and by adopting clear rules of procedure to govern meeting frequency, emergency sessions, agenda-setting and documentation flows.	Develop a unified system for the licence-free or simplified intra-EU movement of defence components and subsystems, as requested by the Defence Readiness Omnibus.	Develop a joint European intelligence training academy for training intelligence analysts, cybersecurity specialists, counter-espionage teams and crisis intelligence officers.	Ensure the rapid deployability of a 100,000-strong ready force by maintaining up to 50,000 EU troops in a permanent state of training, equipment and readiness. These troops should be structured in modular, scalable components across the land, air, maritime, space and cyber domains and capable of swift deployment to crisis zones alongside 50,000 Ukrainian troops fully sponsored by the EU.	Conduct a comprehensive intergovernmental feasibility study on establishing a European nuclear deterrent.
Recommendation 3	Define QMV procedures for ESC decisions, including the standard QMV thresholds and the emergency QMV procedures for crisis situations.	Provide increased long-term EU funding for the European defence technological and industrial base in the 2028–34 multiannual financial framework.	Develop a highly secure, EU-wide digital platform for intelligence sharing.	Improve interoperability through regular joint training and exercises. Institutionalise large-scale, multinational live exercises to enhance the interoperability of forces and enablers.	Allocate a specified percentage of the member states' defence budgets to the development and implementation of a credible European nuclear command-and-control, including warheads and delivery system, with annual progress assessments.

	Game changer 16	Game changer 17	Game changer 18	Game changer 19	Game changer 20
Recommendation 4	Create an ESC associate participation protocol to formalise the structured involvement of the UK, Norway and Ukraine in the ESC. Draft associate membership framework agreements that clearly define the associated rights, obligations and modalities of participation.	Eliminate national exemptions in defence procurement, through treaty reform or a common agreement, and advance a 'Buy European' approach that strengthens the defence industrial and technological base and integrates Ukraine as a core part of the EU defence market.	Define a clear legal mandate for EU-level intelligence activities and establish parliamentary and judicial oversight mechanisms.	Streamline the political process required for deployment, while respecting the requirement of unanimous approval by member states.	Establish a credible European nuclear deterrent doctrine (strategy and policy). Outline the specific threats to be deterred, the parameters of the deterrence posture and the conditions under which nuclear weapons would hypothetically be used.
Recommendation 5	Build an operational rapid political response protocol that positions the ESC at the centre of emergency coordination and swift reaction to hybrid threats and security crises. The protocol should establish a 72-hour emergency convening mechanism to ensure immediate political consultation at a leadership level.	Implement the proposed large-scale, jointly developed European Defence Projects of Common Interest—the Drone Defence Initiative, European Air Shield, Eastern Flank Watch and European Space Shield.	Launch joint EU collection capabilities (signals intelligence, open-source intelligence and cyber-intelligence) such as secure satellite signals intelligence platforms, digital forensics laboratories and pan-European cyber monitoring systems.	Guarantee access to critical enablers such as strategic airlift; intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance; cyber capabilities; and medical support through joint EU planning.	Align, if possible, the European nuclear deterrent doctrine with NATO's overall collective defence strategy to ensure it reinforces NATO's deterrence position.

Decision-making capacity

Federico Ottavio Reho

Institutions are the backbone of the EU's capacity to act. They translate political will into collective decisions, reconcile unity and diversity, and provide the procedural legitimacy that sustains European integration over time. From the outset, the EU has relied on a distinctive institutional architecture—combining supranational and intergovernmental elements—which has enabled it to expand its competences, deepen integration and adapt to changing historical circumstances.

Over the past decade and a half, however, successive crises—from the financial and sovereign debt crises to the pandemic, Russia's war against Ukraine and growing systemic rivalry—have exposed both the strengths and the limitations of this framework. While the Union has shown an unprecedented capacity for innovation, it has often resorted to ad hoc instruments and exceptional procedures. These have delivered short-term effectiveness, but at the cost of greater complexity, opacity, and tension between efficiency, legitimacy and accountability.

At the same time, the EU faces a strategic environment that demands faster, more coherent and more credible collective action. Enlargement has returned as a geopolitical necessity, while defence, security, energy, industrial and fiscal policies increasingly require European-level decisions. Yet decision-making remains constrained by unanimity in key areas and burdened by an *acquis* that is rarely reviewed, prioritised or streamlined. Institutional inertia risks turning procedural safeguards into obstacles to effective European power.

Strengthening EU institutions is therefore not an exercise in abstract constitutional engineering, but a necessary condition for the EU to scale up and govern in line with its new ambitions and responsibilities. This requires enhancing decision-making capacity, reinforcing democratic and constitutional legitimacy, and ensuring that institutional reform supports—rather than blocks—both enlargement and policy delivery. It also demands a more rigorous application of subsidiarity and proportionality, coupled with genuine simplification, so that European action focuses on what truly requires collective solutions while respecting national and local prerogatives.

Finally, the EU's growing reliance on common borrowing to fund shared priorities has opened a new phase of integration. Anchoring this development in transparent, accountable and durable institutional arrangements is essential if solidarity is to rest on permanent structures rather than emergency improvisation.

The proposals in this section aim to modernise the EU's institutional system along five complementary axes: stronger decision-making capacity, enhanced legitimacy and accountability, a revitalised approach to enlargement, systematic simplification and a credible European fiscal capacity. Together, they seek to ensure that the Union's institutions are fit for purpose in a more contested world—capable not only of preserving the Union, but of enabling it to act decisively.

	Game changer 21	Game changer 22	Game changer 23	Game changer 24	Game changer 25
	Improved EU decision-making capacity	**Stronger legitimacy**	**Revitalised enlargement**	**Stronger simplification**	**European fiscal capacity**
Recommendation 1	Extend QMV and the ordinary legislative procedure across the remaining areas.	Appoint the president of the European Commission to also be the president of the European Council.	Introduce progressive membership options tied to *acquis* clusters as interim rewards for candidate countries registering progress in the accession process. These should include institutional representation without voting rights.	Introduce periodic reviews to reduce overlapping initiatives and concentrate political and administrative resources on a limited number of strategic priorities.	Establish a European treasury (within or alongside the Commission) to manage common borrowing, safe asset issuance and stabilisation instruments.
Recommendation 2	Create a separate 'Council for Defence', with preparations undertaken by the Political and Security Committee. It should act in alignment with the defence commissioner.	Ensure full legislative transparency in the Council when it acts as a legislative second chamber.	Introduce transitional derogations in candidate countries' accession treaties to decouple enlargement from EU institutional reform.	Require every major EU initiative to include quantified outcome targets, annual public performance reporting and mandatory *ex post* evaluation.	Make EU-level borrowing for investment (as opposed to consumption) permanent and create an EU safe asset, with issuance rules anchored in secondary law and supervised by the treasury and the European Parliament.
Recommendation 3	Streamline EU external relations by fully integrating the European External Action Service and all relevant agencies within the European Commission.	Introduce automatic Council consideration of European Parliament proposals adopted by absolute or super majority within 60 days, with a reasoned outcome.	Make the enlargement methodology reversible in case of democratic backsliding.	Introduce systematic and proportionate assessment of the costs of delegated and implementing acts.	Establish autonomous EU revenues (own resources): broaden and stabilise the base; transparently earmark them for European common goods.

	Game changer 21	Game changer 22	Game changer 23	Game changer 24	Game changer 25
Recommendation 4	Give preference to regulations over directives to avoid gold-plating and speed up implementation.	Reclassify all provisions of a non-constitutional nature present in the EU treaties as ordinary law and formulate a more precise definition of shared competences under Article 4(2) of the Treaty on the Functioning of the EU.	Decide on the opening/closing of accession chapters and interim rewards by QMV.	Carry out a systematic review of the entire *acquis* by sector (with sunset clauses for stale provisions) and quantified burden-reduction targets for the next term (e.g. an EU-wide goal of a 25% cut to compliance costs by 2034).	Strengthen the European Parliament's budgetary role, including by enhancing scrutiny over borrowing and repayment envelopes.
Recommendation 5	Designate a Commission executive vice-president, with a clear mandate and authority, for simplification.	Reject on constitutional grounds initiatives, whether binding or not, of any EU institutions that exceed EU competences and violate a rigorous application of subsidiarity, e.g. concerning controversial moral disagreements.	Increase EU pre-accession financial assistance for candidate countries.	Amend Protocol 2 of the Treaty on European Union to establish clear guidelines on the application of the principles of subsidiarity and proportionality.	Integrate the European Stability Mechanism into EU law and transform it into a fiscal stabilisation and backstop authority, dovetailing with the treasury to support crisis response and completion of the banking union.

Culture and identity

Federico Ottavio Reho

If institutions are the backbone of European power, culture is its connective tissue. A political community capable of acting collectively also requires shared references, narratives and symbolic resources that allow its citizens to recognise themselves as part of a common project. While European integration has excelled at building peace, prosperity and legal order, primarily through economic and functional means, its cultural dimension has long remained underdeveloped—fragmented, cautious and largely indirect.

This imbalance was recognised early on. Jean Monnet is often credited with the remark that, if European integration were to start again, it should begin with culture. Whether apocryphal or not, the intuition remains compelling. Economic integration alone cannot sustain political legitimacy, social cohesion or long-term solidarity. In an age of geopolitical rivalry, digital fragmentation and internal polarisation, the absence of a stronger European cultural dimension increasingly constrains the Union's capacity to act.

European culture is intrinsically plural. It is the product of centuries of interaction between local, regional, national and transnational communities, whose diverse experiences have nonetheless given rise to a recognisable common civilisation. Any European cultural project must therefore be built around unity in diversity, not uniformity. The task of the EU is not to invent a new identity or impose a new set of values from above, but to help Europeans rediscover, strengthen and transmit the cultural foundations they already share.

At present, this cultural framework remains weak. Europe lacks a clear institutional centre of gravity for culture; genuinely European instruments to nurture intellectual and artistic excellence; and sufficiently developed platforms through which Europeans can engage with one another's histories, ideas and cultural productions. The result is a paradox: Europe possesses one of the world's richest civilisational inheritances, yet often lacks the means to communicate, cultivate and reproduce it across generations.

Strengthening Europe's cultural dimension therefore requires action on multiple levels. It requires institutions capable of protecting and promoting Europe's cultural inheritance, centres of excellence that sustain intellectual and artistic achievement, media and public spaces that facilitate exchange across borders, educational and civic institutions that transmit culture to future generations, and policies that support the ways of life through which European

civilisation is lived and experienced in everyday life.

The proposals in this section place culture and identity at the heart of the European Power Project. They are structured around five complementary axes: a European cultural union that provides strategic direction and institutional coordination; European academies that promote excellence in science, the humanities and the arts; a stronger European media and public sphere; the transmission of Europe's cultural inheritance through education, civil society and shared memory; and the protection and promotion of European ways of life. Together, they seek to equip the Union with the cultural foundations necessary for sovereignty, cohesion and resilience in the decades ahead.

	Game changer 26	Game changer 27	Game changer 28	Game changer 29	Game changer 30
	A European cultural union	**European academies**	**European media and public sphere**	**European cultural transmission**	**European ways of life**
Recommendation 1	Consolidate all cultural programmes, heritage funding and cultural diplomacy strands under the political authority of a commissioner for culture, heritage and identity.	Establish European institutes for the sciences, the humanities and the arts, bringing together the continent's leading figures in their fields to advance knowledge, protect European and national heritage, and promote independent thought.	Expand ARTE's mandate and governance to become 'ARTE Europe', a European public broadcaster with full programming in all official EU languages, operationally independent but jointly overseen by participating member states and the EU (via the new cultural union framework).	Ensure European cultural literacy in education through a common framework and funding as well as educational resources on European civilisation, our common heritage and the liberal arts.	Celebrate European culinary heritage: promote regional cuisines, local food traditions and traditional agriculture.
Recommendation 2	Eliminate diversity, equity and inclusion–style ideological conditionalities in all EU funding, replacing them with neutral criteria focused on excellence, innovation and freedom of expression.	Make a programme of exhibitions, lectures, seminars and conferences freely available to European citizens.	Establish a European translation initiative: support the translation and circulation of books, essays, films, documentaries and journalism across European languages.	In the age of AI, support the study and knowledge of the humanities, the liberal arts, classical languages, and Europe's religious and humanist traditions.	Promote European sports and outdoor culture: support European leagues, amateur sport, hiking, cycling, skiing and traditional games across borders.
Recommendation 3	Establish a new European heritage protection instrument to fund the restoration and upgrade of vulnerable heritage sites, as well as the protection of historic towns and cultural landscapes.	Provide support for research and artistic production through sizeable yearly prizes and grants to scientists, researchers and artists.	Incentivise the production of European and Europe-focused but globally connected documentaries, films, TV series and other cultural products, as well as their presence on the main cultural streaming and audiovisual platforms.	Support digitisation and museum modernisation, as well as networks for museums, archives and libraries.	Boost European cultural routes and pilgrimages: expand and promote routes such as the Camino de Santiago, Via Francigena and St Olav Way, together with new historical and literary routes.

	Game changer 26	Game changer 27	Game changer 28	Game changer 29	Game changer 30
Recommendation 4	Establish a European cultural cooperation framework: strengthen cooperation between national ministries of culture and heritage agencies through structured exchanges and joint initiatives.	Establish an academy press and open heritage library containing critical editions, authoritative translations and digital repositories of Europe's classics and scholarship; provide open access where feasible to maximise reach.	Set up a co-production platform for national broadcasters, creating incentives and shared funding to co-produce European stories and to promote continent-wide knowledge of the EU's national and local cultures.	Enhance European school twinning, youth exchanges and shared commemorations: strengthen links between young Europeans through educational exchanges rooted in local communities, shared historical memory and cultural discovery.	Promote European discovery tourism: encourage Europeans, especially young people, to travel within Europe through heritage, nature and cultural exchange programmes.
Recommendation 5	Enhance European patriotism and cultural confidence through 'European Civilisation Resources', a canon of great European figures and works, and 'European Stories', a fund for public history grants.	Establish a 'European Institute' tasked with enhancing the EU's cultural outreach and soft power worldwide, and coordinating a global network of EU cultural attachés.	Incentivise the production of high-quality content for children and young people, promoting cultural mediation and shared cultural references.	Support civic associations engaged in cultural transmission, including churches, religious communities and other voluntary organisations.	Support European festivals and living traditions by promoting local festivals, folk music, crafts, markets and cultural events that preserve Europe's diverse traditions.

Demography

Peter Hefele

Europe is entering a new demographic era. For decades, birth rates have remained below replacement level, while life expectancy has continued to rise. The result is an ageing society, a shrinking workforce, growing pressure on pensions and health and care systems, and widening regional imbalances. In several Southern and Eastern European countries, including in EU candidate countries, these pressures are reinforced by emigration, brain drain and regional depopulation.

Demography is therefore no longer a narrow social-policy issue, but a structural challenge to the European way of life: its prosperity, competitiveness, welfare models, social cohesion and political stability. The task ahead is twofold: Europe must mitigate demographic change where possible and, even more importantly, adapt to those trends that cannot be reversed. It is not clear if public policy can prevent a further decline in the already low fertility rate among Europeans. Mitigation measures might create better conditions for family formation, childbearing and child-rearing, as well as for stable intergenerational burden sharing. Even if these measures did not halt the decline in fertility, they would be beneficial to society. Adaptation to an ageing society means preparing labour markets, pension systems, education, healthcare, migration policies and regional development for an older, more unevenly distributed population. But it also means lowering entrance barriers to employment and creating more stable jobs for young people.

At the centre of sustainable demographic transition policy stands the idea of a productive and child-friendly society. Young people need earlier access to well-paid work, affordable housing and the option of an independent life. Parents need flexible employment options that allow them to balance family life and work. Women's high educational achievements must translate into equal career opportunities and full labour-market participation to avoid the disadvantages of their life cycle. Older workers should be enabled to remain active for longer through flexible retirement, continuous lifelong learning opportunities and age-appropriate working conditions. Migrants must be integrated much more effectively into labour markets on the basis of employability, and this must be accompanied by sufficient language acquisition and civic integration.

Demographic policy must integrate the territorial dimension, too. Depopulation affects public services, infrastructure, political trust and regional identities. Cohesion policy, housing,

broadband, mobile healthcare, public transport and local economic development must therefore be aligned with demographic goals. Demographic renewal must become a cross-cutting European project: forward-looking, family-friendly, economically realistic and rooted in intergenerational fairness.

If handled well, Europe's demographic changes could lead to the renewal of its prosperity, competitiveness and political stability. They could also stimulate the transformation of the welfare model and social cohesion.

	Game changer 31	Game changer 32	Game changer 33	Game changer 34	Game changer 35
	Family formation and child-friendly societies	**Work, skills and productive longevity**	**Health, care and social infrastructure**	**Territorial cohesion and regional vitality**	**Managed migration and integration**
Recommendation 1	Focus on affordable housing for young families. Create coherent and complementary tax, pension and social security incentives for families with children.	Link retirement pathways to life expectancy. Remove disincentives to working longer and to post-retirement work. Provide advice and support to companies on recruiting and continuing to employ older people.	Introduce a mandatory demography check for major reforms. Create a network of special representatives across the EU.	Align cohesion funds with demographic goals. Invest in basic infrastructure, such as broadband, transport, housing and mobile services.	Focus on demand-driven skills admissions and require robust language skills, civic education and work-integration requirements.
Recommendation 2	Help young adults to start families earlier; combine fertility awareness, counselling, secure jobs and family-start grants.	Introduce portable retraining rights at 40, 50 and 60; include AI and digital upskilling by default.	Introduce fast-track mutual recognition of care qualifications across Europe and with selected partner countries.	Provide grant schemes for returning families and entrepreneurs. Introduce targeted campaigns for diasporas from depopulating regions.	Introduce faster recognition of qualifications obtained in other EU countries and in non-EU countries.
Recommendation 3	Provide affordable and accessible childcare from age one and full-day primary schools with meals, homework support and activities.	Cut the rate of those who are not in education, employment or training through the provision of apprenticeships and a focus on vocational excellence.	Shift the focus of health systems from repair to prevention. Promote lifelong, continuous health checks and active-ageing programmes.	Link universities, small and medium-sized enterprises, and vocational schools in regional clusters. Retain young talents outside metropolitan areas.	Train workers before arrival—work with partner countries to provide language, skills and rights courses.

	Game changer 31	Game changer 32	Game changer 33	Game changer 34	Game changer 35
Recommendation 4	Introduce non-transferable paid leave for fathers; reward employers for family-friendly scheduling.	Enable transitions out of physically draining jobs through the provision of wage insurance and second-career retraining.	Bring healthcare, administration and social services to ageing regions through digitalisation and physical one-stop-shop access.	Introduce tax and housing incentives for remote workers and EU-certified high-connectivity rural locations.	Improve childcare, language learning and vocational pathways for migrant women. Raise awareness and support targeted activation in cooperation with employers.
Recommendation 5	Introduce an EU label for secure flexible work; recognise parenting skills in recruitment and promotion.	Introduce lower marginal tax rates on additional working hours. Make full-time and part-time employment financially worthwhile, in particular for women and elderly people.	Deploy massively assistive technologies and telemedicine to support independent living and relieve staff shortages.	Concentrate on providing services in low-density areas.	Work with partner countries to widen legal pathways for qualified migrants, with the aim of serving EU labour needs and contributing to the development of the country of origin.

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