

## 1 **Our Europe, a safe and good home for the people**

2 Europe is our home. As the EPP, we have built a Europe where people's dignity, security and  
3 freedom always come first. We, as Europeans, are more than the sum of our national  
4 identities. Our history, our heritage, our Judeo-Christian roots and our cultural diversity define  
5 us. United in diversity is a unique strength that has made peace and prosperity possible for  
6 most Europeans.

7 Faced with a complex world, some believe that everyone should dream of being a global  
8 citizen without roots. Others want to close all doors and retreat into national egoism. We do  
9 not agree! We are proud of our roots and confident about the future. We do not tell citizens  
10 what to believe or what to fear, but we listen to them, respect them and deliver for them. We  
11 are bridge-builders. The EPP invented our social market economy, which balances economic  
12 freedom with social responsibility. The EPP stands for a strong democracy based on the rule  
13 of law, which means that it is the citizens who really decide. The EPP fights for a strong Europe  
14 that protects its people.

15 **We believe in our European way of life.** Freedom is key, but freedom without security is an  
16 empty word. Our people expect a Europe that makes them feel safe in every facet of their  
17 lives. Our people want secure jobs that ensure a good life and support growing families. Our  
18 people expect Europe to champion a life with freedom, justice and democracy.

19 **We stand for a strong Europe** that speaks with one voice on democracy, the rule of law and  
20 freedom. A Europe that confidently stands up to autocrats and stands by those who fight for  
21 our European way of life, as Ukrainians are doing against Putin's aggression. A Europe that  
22 protects its borders and tackles illegal migration.

23 **We stand for a competitive Europe** that boosts its economy and creates quality jobs while  
24 building a good economic future for everyone. We believe in European leadership in climate  
25 and environmental protection not only to safeguard our planet but also to promote economic  
26 prosperity and food security with less bureaucracy while boosting innovation and a future-  
27 oriented energy union. We want Europe to shape and lead the future by investing in state-of-  
28 the-art infrastructure, innovation and digital technologies. We want an open Europe that also  
29 protects its own interests. We want to provide our citizens and companies with access to  
30 global markets by concluding smart, reciprocity-based trade agreements with like-minded  
31 partners.

32 **We stand for a citizens-oriented Europe** that supports families, creates opportunities for all,  
33 promotes equality between women and men and fosters solidarity between generations. A  
34 Europe that protects and cares for the most vulnerable in our society, online and offline. A  
35 Europe that ensures every technological innovation puts people first. A Europe that turns brain  
36 drain into brain gain. A Europe that invests in health research, guarantees high health and care  
37 standards and fights diseases.

38 **We stand for a democratic Europe** where the people decide, a Europe that upholds its core  
39 values, within and beyond its borders. A Europe that guarantees citizens are equal before the  
40 law and regains the trust of those who feel unheard or left behind.

41 Europe holds all the right cards to shape the future. As the EPP has done over the past decades,  
42 we will keep Europe together, we will defend the European way of life based on freedom,  
43 pluralism, subsidiarity, solidarity, democracy and the rule of law and we will promote

44 sustainable economic growth and development. With the EPP in Europe's driving seat,  
45 Europeans will be stronger and safer.

46

47 *I. **Our Europe protects its citizens***

48 There is no freedom without security. We take citizens' safety concerns very seriously, but  
49 instead of dividing society we focus on solutions. Only our responsible political approach can  
50 truly protect our citizens.

51

52 ***1.1 Our Europe stands with Ukraine***

53 The EPP has demonstrated unwavering support for Ukraine since the very beginning of  
54 Russia's full-scale war of aggression. Ukraine defends not only its own freedom, sovereignty  
55 and territorial integrity but also our shared European values. The EPP will remain a leader in  
56 mobilising much-needed EU support and assistance until Ukraine's decisive victory.

57 It is of paramount importance that the European Union remains committed and united in its  
58 support of Ukraine. Europe must, in cooperation with its allies, find ways to amplify its support  
59 to Ukraine. This includes political, economic, humanitarian and military aid, for as long as it  
60 takes. Europe will stand united with Ukraine against Putin. Ukraine must win the war. This  
61 requires certainty regarding the long-term financing of Ukraine for its economic and social  
62 recovery, modernisation and reconstruction. We have delivered in an unprecedented way  
63 financial support and military capabilities. We have protected millions of Ukrainian refugees.  
64 We have created a lifeline to the Ukrainian economy by supporting its exports to the world.  
65 We have developed a biting EU sanctions regime against Russia and are effectively addressing  
66 sanctions circumvention while further strengthening their scope where and when necessary.  
67 The EU needs to continue and step up its support. The war in Ukraine is directly linked to  
68 European security. Ukraine should become a member of the EU and NATO as soon as it fulfils  
69 all criteria. The EU has to be ready to enlarge.

70

71 ***1.2 Our Europe must protect itself***

72 Russia's illegal war of aggression against Ukraine, the weaponisation of energy and food and  
73 irresponsible nuclear threats, combined with growing tensions in the South China Sea and the  
74 Taiwan Strait, are a wake-up call for Europe. The pace of geopolitical change is dramatic and  
75 the world has become a more dangerous place. In this new environment, Europeans need to  
76 protect Europe. The EPP will always stand with an enlarged NATO and fully support the  
77 strengthening of our alliance, including through Sweden's accession. Every European effort in  
78 the field of defence has to be embedded and coherent with NATO. However, our trans-Atlantic  
79 allies will stand with us only if we are also willing to do our part autonomously. A strong  
80 alliance requires burden sharing. We also must be ready for any changes in our trans-Atlantic  
81 partnership and a scenario in which we do not have the support of the United States to ensure  
82 our European sovereignty for comprehensive security. This also includes close cooperation  
83 with our European partners, such as the United Kingdom and Norway. Our citizens understand  
84 that Europe needs to do more in a world in turmoil. The EPP is the only party that has  
85 consistently shown its willingness to promote a strong defence posture in Europe to ensure

86 both deterrence and defence. We are the political force that stands for a Europe that can  
87 defend itself, in line with the principle of strategic autonomy, and support those who fight for  
88 Europe and its values. This shall not prejudice the specific neutral character of the security  
89 and defence policy of certain Member States.

90

91 We need to establish three steps for European defence. First, we must ramp up our defence  
92 industrial base through more investments. The EPP has already championed initiatives of joint  
93 military procurement, such as the European Defence Industry Reinforcement through  
94 common Procurement Act (EDIRPA) and European Defence Industrial Development  
95 Programme (EDIDP). However, we need to go further. Our focus must be on Defence Tech 2.0,  
96 combining the defence industry and the most advanced computer technologies. We want the  
97 next long term budget (MFF) to provide the resources to innovate and meet our military  
98 needs. Ultimately, we should create a Single Market for Defence. The EU should use the  
99 European Defence Agency (EDA) to provide financial support mainly to defence companies to  
100 standardise the systems they produce and encourage more joint defence procurement  
101 projects in Europe, as well as research of artificial intelligence (AI) for dual purposes (civilian  
102 and military). Member States should consider giving priority to purchases of military  
103 equipment made in Europe to enhance the EU's strategic autonomy and stand up to  
104 aggressors such as Putin. We will develop common European weapons programmes under  
105 the EDA supervision in liaison with the Member States. Moreover, the EU needs common rules  
106 for arms exports.

107

108 Second, we must work better together by utilising all available options in the EU Treaties  
109 including PESCO and its flagship projects, such as the project on military mobility that supports  
110 crucial cross-border military transport. We also need to establish a Commissioner for Security  
111 and Defence, who will better coordinate defence issues within the framework of EU  
112 competences and promote cooperation, as well as a Defence Council with defence ministers  
113 of Member States. We should also envisage the establishment of a dedicated EU defence  
114 budget within the MFF with enough resources to face the challenges of today and tomorrow.

115

116 Finally, our long-term goal is to develop a true European Defence Union with integrated  
117 European forces in the land, sea, cyber and air. These forces should complement national  
118 militaries, aligned with NATO's new force model, with a rapid deployment capacity of a  
119 permanent and immediately available force. We want to create a European Fund for External  
120 Military Intervention enabling Member States that do not wish to mobilise their armed forces  
121 for an EU external military operation to make a financial contribution to the collective  
122 European defence. This European fund would enable the full costs of operations to be taken  
123 into account and shared among Member States. Our collective action should also focus, in  
124 particular, on areas such as cyber defence and security of space. The EU, together with willing  
125 Member States, must tackle future European defence projects in close cooperation with our  
126 trans-Atlantic partners, including a missile defence shield, a European DARPA, a European  
127 Cyber brigade, a European nuclear shield and increased production capacities for defence  
128 goods. We must also strengthen European cooperation of intelligence services.

129

### 130 ***1.3 Our Europe speaks with one voice in the world***

131 In the new geopolitical environment, Europe can represent its interests in the world only if it  
132 speaks with one voice. Europe is strong when it is able to respond quickly and work with like-

133 minded countries. Our ability to react to global events will determine our success. Europe has  
134 to become ready to act in foreign policy. We therefore advocate moving away from the  
135 unanimity principle in the field of EU sanctions against totalitarian regimes around the world  
136 and towards the Single Market for Defence. We will develop a stronger European diplomatic  
137 corps through the European External Action Service (EEAS). But Europe also needs qualified  
138 personnel. The EPP calls for the replacement of the High Representative with an EU foreign  
139 minister, as Vice-President of the European Commission, and for the appointment of a  
140 European Security Council comprised of the leaders of EU Member States and other European  
141 countries (including at least the UK, Norway and Iceland). This Minister will closely cooperate  
142 with all national EU colleagues on our common interests as well as intensively coordinate with  
143 the other European countries, in particular the UK, Norway and Iceland. The EU has to react  
144 quickly to international crises and coherently follow through on its foreign-policy decisions,  
145 for example making sure that sanctions are truly and consistently implemented. In the coming  
146 years, the EU will continue to face enormous challenges on the global stage, as Russia's war  
147 of aggression in Ukraine, conflicts in the Middle East and the recent instability caused by the  
148 Iranian regime have already shown. The EU also needs a long-term strategy towards other key,  
149 strategic areas including China and Taiwan, Russia and Belarus, Africa, Latin America, the  
150 Mediterranean region and the Middle East. In short, we need to determine the interests of  
151 Europe in order to have a coherent foreign policy in which all Member States must be  
152 considered and their interests protected. Moreover, we need to engage with the new regional  
153 powers that are becoming increasingly important players on the global stage.

154

155 The EPP remains fully committed to supporting the negotiation process for a just, sustainable  
156 and viable solution to the benefit of all the people of Cyprus, without the presence of foreign  
157 troops and the anachronistic system of guarantees and intervention rights of any foreign state.  
158 The EU should send a strong message of solidarity to Cyprus by assuming a more active role  
159 in trying to overcome the deadlock and resume the negotiations to end the 50-year-long  
160 occupation of Cyprus by Turkey and reunify the island on the basis of a bizonal bicomunal  
161 federation, with political equality, in line with the relevant UN Security Council resolutions, EU  
162 principles and the *acquis*. The unacceptable partitionist rhetoric of Turkey for a two-state  
163 solution will never be accepted by Europe and the international community.

164

#### 165 ***1.4 Our Europe protects its borders against illegal migration***

166 As the EPP, we are determined to guarantee control over migration and we do so in  
167 accordance with international law and in respect of fundamental rights. The guiding principles  
168 of our migration policy are humanity and order. We seek a halt to uncontrolled migration so  
169 that Europe's capacity to integrate is not overwhelmed. European Member States, not  
170 smugglers, must decide who enters Europe. Important first steps have been taken by the  
171 expansion of Frontex to 10,000 staff in recent years, the financing of an electronic and physical  
172 infrastructure to protect the EU's external borders, the new Migration and Asylum Pact at the  
173 end of 2023 and the closer cooperation with third countries, as is the case with Tunisia.

174 Despite a complete refusal by the extreme right to engage constructively in reducing migration  
175 and the reluctance of the left to reduce illegal migration, our priorities are clear. To begin with,  
176 we must ensure stronger external borders, with better and more rigorous screening of  
177 irregular arrivals. Entry at the EU's external borders must be electronically monitored in a

178 comprehensive way. This includes structural and technical border protection wherever  
179 necessary. We need as soon as possible an effective external border protection in place;  
180 otherwise we cannot exclude controls at internal borders. It is crucial to reinforce every  
181 measure against human smugglers and traffickers, break their business model and end their  
182 impunity. We need increased burden sharing in times of crisis, better-shared responsibilities  
183 and strong protection of human rights, with special attention to vulnerable people.

184 We want to transform Frontex into a real European border and coast guard. We will triple  
185 Frontex staff to 30,000, equip it with implementing powers as well as a higher budget to  
186 purchase modern equipment and enhance its capabilities. We want to guarantee that Frontex  
187 officers, together with their national counterparts, have the means to better protect the EU's  
188 external borders.

189 The mandate of Frontex should focus on three priorities: preventing illegal immigration into  
190 the EU, helping Member States to secure the EU's external borders and increasing the return  
191 of illegal migrants to their countries. We will actively pursue an agreement on common  
192 standards for monitoring our external borders and the funding that is necessary for the  
193 implementation of these standards.

194 We also advocate a fundamental change in European asylum law. We are committed to the  
195 fundamental right to asylum, but the EU, together with its Member States, must have the right  
196 to decide to whom and where it is granted. We will conclude agreements with third countries  
197 to ensure that asylum seekers can also be granted protection in a civilised and safe way. We  
198 want to implement the concept of safe third countries. Anyone applying for asylum in the EU  
199 could also be transferred to a safe third country and undergo the asylum process there. In the  
200 case of a positive outcome, the safe third country will grant protection to the applicant on-  
201 site. A comprehensive contractual agreement will be established with the safe third country.  
202 The criteria for safe third countries shall be in line with the core obligations of the Geneva  
203 Refugee Convention and the European Convention on Human Rights. Both conventions do not  
204 include the right to freely choose the country of protection. Following the successful  
205 implementation of the third country concept, we propose to admit into the EU a quota of  
206 people in need of protection through annual humanitarian quotas of vulnerable individuals.  
207 This allows us to address both security and integration requirements in the selection process  
208 and effectively refuse entry to irregular migrants at our external borders.

209 We are committed to upholding the fundamental right to asylum while fighting the abuse of  
210 national asylum procedures. Therefore, all relevant EU policies, instruments and tools,  
211 including new trade agreements, development aid and visa policies, should depend on the  
212 cooperation of third countries in the field of migration, more specifically on returns and  
213 readmission of their nationals. Nevertheless, we would like to stress that, considering the  
214 current situation in Ukraine, we want to refrain from returning refugees to Ukraine at this  
215 point. Tackling the migration problem at its core requires a new pact with African countries,  
216 supported by a European investment plan for Africa, to address more effectively the root  
217 causes of migration, foster economic prosperity and social development and prevent the brain  
218 drain of the younger generation for the benefit of all African people.

219 Labour migration has a significant territorial impact and brings both opportunities and  
220 challenges to ageing and demographically declining societies. It is up to the Member States to

221 deal with legal migration, determine how it best fits their national interests and facilitate legal  
222 migrants' inclusion and integration into society.

223 We need full Schengen admission for Bulgaria and Romania, lifting not just air and sea controls  
224 but also land border controls as soon as possible. We need to repair the currently  
225 dysfunctional Schengen Area, particularly by further strengthening the EU's external border  
226 protection and by preventing illegal migration to Europe in order to realise a secure and  
227 completed Schengen Area without internal border controls.

228 The instrumentalisation of illegal migration is a hybrid war strategy that must be stopped and  
229 identified as a threat to national and European security. Member States must have the option  
230 to temporarily suspend processing asylum applications in the case of instrumentalised  
231 migration. We will not allow anyone to blackmail Europe.

232

### 233 ***1.5 Our Europe is determined to fight terrorism and organised crime***

234 We will leave no room for terrorism and organised crime in Europe. However, national  
235 solutions alone cannot end international crime; we need European solutions and enhanced  
236 information exchange between Member States. In Europe alone, international criminal  
237 organisations earn some €139 billion a year while Europol estimates that, within the EU, only  
238 about 2% of criminal proceeds are frozen and 1% are confiscated. Human trafficking increased  
239 by 10% between 2020 and 2021, with over 7,155 victims recorded while the number of  
240 suspected traffickers rose by 12.5%. Drug trafficking is a major security threat to the EU as,  
241 according to the European Commission, nearly 70% of drug seizures are carried out by  
242 customs authorities at EU ports. Terrorism continues to pose a serious threat to our citizens.  
243 Between 2018 and 2022, there were 332 completed, failed or foiled attacks in the EU. As the  
244 main goal of organised crime groups is financial gain, the most effective way to fight them is  
245 to stop their financial flows through strengthened anti-money laundering and counter-  
246 terrorism financing rules. We will establish a reinforced illegal assets recovery system, with  
247 improved means of confiscation capabilities, strengthened cross-border cooperation and  
248 information-sharing among relevant national, regional, local and EU bodies. Terrorism  
249 continues to pose a serious threat to our citizens.

250 We will significantly expand Europol, equipping it with all legally available competences in the  
251 fight against terrorism and international crime and more than doubling its staff from 1,400 to  
252 3,000. We will ensure national databases are connected with those of international security  
253 authorities to facilitate information sharing between law enforcement agencies and  
254 intelligence services of EU Member States. The work of the Joint Investigation Teams in  
255 carrying out cross-border criminal investigations will be strengthened and facilitated. It is  
256 essential to deepen cooperation with the US and Latin American countries in the fight against  
257 drug trafficking. We must update and develop EU strategies on cyber security and enhance  
258 the EU Agency for Cybersecurity (ENISA) to ensure our systems, data and infrastructure are  
259 safe from cyber-attacks. We will expand the scope of the European arrest warrant and push  
260 for its successful application. We will improve the information exchange between counter  
261 terrorism authorities and Asylum and Migration Services. The EPP is equally committed to  
262 combatting the spread of ideologies running counter to EU values such as human rights,  
263 freedom and democracy. Hate speech, disinformation, Putin's authoritarian terrorist

264 propaganda, anti-Semitism and radical Islamism spread division and intolerance in our  
265 societies. We reject and combat such extremism and violent radicalism in all forms.

266 The EPP is committed to preserving a peaceful coexistence in European countries and  
267 societies. It is therefore not acceptable, by any means, not the least personal or electoral, to  
268 shield terrorism against the judiciary. Civil peace in Europe is based on compliance with the  
269 law and respect for the rights of everyone. We have a bitter memory of the deep sorrow  
270 caused by nationalism, radicalism and populism.

271

### 272 ***1.6 Our Europe stops violence against women***

273 We want women to live without fear of any form of violence. The fight against organised crime  
274 is also a fight for the rights of oppressed women. Human trafficking affects between 70,000  
275 and 140,000 people every year in Europe, 84% of whom are forced into prostitution. We want  
276 1,000 officers to be deployed in a Europol special unit to combat prostitution and trafficking  
277 of women and girls. Forced marriage, female genital mutilation and any other form of violence  
278 against women under religious or cultural pretext must not be tolerated. Figures on violence  
279 against women in daily life are alarming: one in two women has experienced a form of sexual  
280 harassment. Domestic violence is too often a daily reality. On average, two women in the EU  
281 are killed by a partner or family member every day. Only a third of cases of physical or sexual  
282 abuse within families is reported to the police. The EU is taking decisive steps towards ending  
283 violence against women. We led negotiations to criminalise violence against women  
284 everywhere in Europe. This means that EU Member States are compelled to punish  
285 perpetrators of violence against women, including cyber violence. The Istanbul Convention on  
286 preventing and combatting violence against women and domestic violence must be fully  
287 implemented throughout the EU. Violence against women in the digital space must be  
288 combatted vigorously and the issue must be raised at all political levels to swiftly act to  
289 support victims, their needs and their security. Enabling and empowering women is crucial  
290 and, to do so, education is key. No woman should be afraid of walking freely on the streets or  
291 fear retaliation from a partner or endure any form of abuse in her private or professional life.

292

### 293 ***1.7 Our Europe protects its citizens online and offline***

294 The COVID-19 pandemic taught us some important lessons about Europe's ability to manage  
295 unexpected crises and clearly demonstrated that, when we are united, we are stronger. It also  
296 taught us that we need a comprehensive EU-level approach to preparedness and crisis  
297 response. We want to create a Preparedness Union through increased cooperation, peer  
298 learning and coordination, ensuring the EU and its Member States will be better prepared for  
299 increasingly complex, cross-border and multi-faceted crises that often occur simultaneously.  
300 We want to create a Civil Protection Union force linked to strategic reserves of food, water,  
301 medicines and medical equipment, in a spirit of solidarity, to support our Member States in  
302 times of crisis. Fires that destroy our forests and threaten our citizens are ever more intense.  
303 We also want to create an operational European Firefighters' force to be swiftly activated  
304 whenever Member State are in need.

305 Online threats are on the rise. We must fight misinformation and disinformation that aim to  
306 manipulate Europeans. We will not look the other way as our enemies increasingly try to

307 weaken our resilience. The share of cyber-attacks targeting EU countries has risen significantly  
308 during the last year. Cybercrime is no longer a footnote in crime statistics. The economic  
309 impact of cybercrime has doubled worldwide. Only an integrated European approach will  
310 make us safer again. We need a European cyber brigade with clear responsibilities for external  
311 and internal security.

312 Children, among the most vulnerable groups in our society, are targets of criminals, both in  
313 the physical and in the digital world. Globally, one in three children indicates being bullied  
314 online. In 2020, 33% of girls and 20% of boys in Europe reported having experienced disturbing  
315 content online at least once a month. Over 60% of child abuse material worldwide is based in  
316 EU servers and much is produced. This is unacceptable. We need an action plan against child  
317 abuse, sexual exploitation, cyberbullying and cyber threats that may lead to kidnapping and  
318 other forms of violence. We need permanent and binding EU rules to prevent and combat  
319 child sexual abuse. We want to use all necessary instruments to protect children and to further  
320 strengthen the EU's actions on the Rights of Children. We advocate the storage of IP addresses  
321 for the most serious criminal offences, especially in the fight against child abuse, in accordance  
322 with the requirements of the European Court of Justice and in respect of the fundamental  
323 right to data protection. Traces must also be secured at the digital crime scene. We also want  
324 to better protect our children from cyberbullying online. To this end, cyberbullying should be  
325 considered a criminal offence throughout Europe.

326 We support the updated proposed Directive that will harmonise criminal offenses of child  
327 abuse across the EU. Investing in awareness raising is key. It must include children and young  
328 people, parents and caregivers, teachers, policymakers and the industry. We must all work  
329 together to prevent these heinous crimes.

330

331 *II. **Our Europe believes in a social market economy***

332 The social market economy is our invention. The EPP's economic model has brought  
333 prosperity, jobs and social peace to Europe over the past 75 years. In a changing economic  
334 world, Europe is coming under increasing pressure: Europe's share of world GDP has fallen  
335 from 20% to 15% while China's has risen from 7% to 19% over the last half century. In addition,  
336 out of the top 50 global firms, only 6 are European while 20 are from the US and 13 from  
337 China.

338 We must make our economy fit for new challenges. In response to the COVID pandemic, we  
339 launched the NextGenerationEU, the largest stimulus package ever financed in Europe. Now  
340 the war in Ukraine, the heinous terrorist attacks of Hamas and the growing instability in the  
341 Red Sea put new strains on our growth perspectives. High inflation, energy prices and interest  
342 rates are important concerns for our citizens and the EPP will tackle them decisively. To do  
343 this, we need a policy that is not clouded by misguided ideology but rather rests on solid  
344 factual grounds and social responsibility. We must balance different interests in our economy,  
345 society and environment, recognising the challenges of the global economy, climate change  
346 and the changing demographic realities on our continent. This is possible only if we work with  
347 creative researchers, responsible entrepreneurs and hard-working employees. It requires  
348 uncomplicated access to the labour market. It requires civic participation and a thriving civil  
349 society. We are creating the right conditions for this without ideological lenses, but close to  
350 the people and for them. We want to deliver a tax-friendly and business-supportive Europe

351 where our productive sectors can compete and thrive, where our workers can obtain a good  
352 income and where everyone contributes fairly to society. This is the core of our economic  
353 policy.

354

## 355 ***2.1 Our Europe boosts its economic performance and creates good jobs***

356 The EPP remains fully committed to the euro, for it deepens the single market and enhances  
357 unity. Economic prosperity, ambitious environmental protection and social peace can succeed  
358 in Europe only if our economy is also successful worldwide. This is why competitiveness is so  
359 crucial. It requires sustained economic performance, economic, social and political stability  
360 and sufficient freedom for entrepreneurs encouraged by a clear vision and long-term targets.  
361 It also requires fair and good working conditions, a skilled workforce, excellent innovative  
362 drive, an efficient, effective and accountable public administration at the service of its citizens  
363 and companies and fiscal policies that don't impose additional burdens on them. At the same  
364 time, economic growth, competitiveness and the wish to create an attractive market need to  
365 also be reflected in European legislation and in concrete means and actions to fight tax evasion  
366 and corruption. We have to refrain from tendencies towards over-regulation without  
367 considering all three dimensions of sustainability – economic, ecologic and societal.

368 Above all, Europe's economic performance depends on a successful single market. Since the  
369 creation of the single market, the gross domestic product per capita of France, Italy and  
370 Germany has doubled while those of Poland and Lithuania have tripled since they joined. We  
371 want to lead our single market into a new era by deepening it further and, especially, by  
372 creating a genuine digital single market. At the same time, we want to launch a  
373 Competitiveness Strategy for Europe that will relaunch the spirit of entrepreneurship. Our  
374 small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) are the backbone of our economic success and  
375 create over 100 million jobs. They need a level playing field across the EU to flourish. We want  
376 to establish an EU Competitiveness Check on every new EU policy initiative and a European  
377 Advisory Competitiveness Body for our SMEs in particular.

378

379 We also need to streamline the existing regulations: we cannot afford to force people to  
380 respect over 20 different legal acts on the same topic, such as in the case of the EU's nature  
381 restoration law. We must always consider the real concerns of our citizens and businesses, not  
382 overwhelm them. Legislation needs to be user-friendly, easy to understand and  
383 implementable. Proposed laws that are not adopted by the end of a legislative period expire  
384 and may need to be reintroduced if necessary. We will reduce old bureaucracy by introducing  
385 a "one in, two out" principle with an overall objective of reducing the regulatory burden by a  
386 third through a specific action plan. To this end, there will be a dedicated European  
387 Commissioner solely responsible for SME issues and cutting red tape. To facilitate a more  
388 efficient use of EU money for projects run by public authorities, the European Commission  
389 will promote joint European public procurement for common large-scale purchase of services  
390 or goods, when relevant, and with full respect for subsidiarity. To facilitate our businesses, we  
391 want to make sure our legislative framework is always up to date. That is why we will introduce  
392 a "sunset clause" in EU legislation, where appropriate, so that a law ceases to exist unless  
393 further action is required. The European Commission should also periodically check that  
394 existing pieces of legislation are not in contradiction with each other and are bringing a real  
395 European added value, also taking into account legislation adopted across several policy

396 domains. Cross-sectoral impacts should be duly assessed, including impacts on European  
397 security.

398 We welcome the appointment of the special SME Envoy and support the Envoy's work to  
399 monitor and accompany this process. In parallel, we will pursue a forward-looking European  
400 industrial and competition policy that will allow the creation of European champions to  
401 compete at global level. We want to challenge our economic competitors, such as China and  
402 the US, while defending strategically important European sectors against unfair practices. EU  
403 state aid policy must serve strategic sectors of the economy, based on the concept of major  
404 projects that are of common European interest. We also want to define a "Made in Europe  
405 2030" strategic plan following the example of the US. The EU has to set up an ambitious  
406 common industrial policy. During the past legislature, the EPP has been calling for an economic  
407 security strategy – which aims to minimise risks arising from certain economic flows in the  
408 context of increased geopolitical tensions and accelerate technological shifts. The EPP has also  
409 been at the forefront of urging the creation of new regulations aimed at safeguarding critical  
410 infrastructure. We want to further strengthen rules to make sure that strategic infrastructure  
411 such as ports, telecommunication and energy facilities as well as our most innovative  
412 companies are shielded from takeovers by third countries, notably China. Our general  
413 approach towards China is to de-risk, not decouple.

414

415 In parallel, we must also increase the innovative drive of our economy by launching an  
416 investment plan for European quality jobs, through which we want to invest in research and  
417 development, calling on Member States and the EU to reach a combined investment of 4% of  
418 GDP with a focus on scientific excellence bringing European added value. Public resources are  
419 not sufficient to meet investment needs within the EU. We need to succeed in mobilising more  
420 private savings. We will also launch a funding programme to significantly increase the number  
421 of women-led start-ups in areas of technological innovation such as AI. To promote a vibrant  
422 business environment and competitiveness, we want to improve the supply of fresh capital so  
423 that our companies, including SMEs, can continue to invest in the future by having access to  
424 deep and liquid capital markets. This requires the completion of a Capital Markets Union and  
425 a Banking union, the strengthening of the internal market for financial services as well as a  
426 sound and predictable fiscal policy that respects the Maastricht criteria. In addition, growth  
427 will be sustainable for us and future generations only through price stability. A sustainable  
428 economy also means that young people have a chance to effectively start their lives and build  
429 their careers. We will continue to combat youth unemployment, expand Erasmus+, especially  
430 to young people living in rural areas, and strengthen Discover EU in order to offer every young  
431 European a chance to travel across Europe and to discover our European and national  
432 cultures. We believe all workers should benefit from Europe. That is why we want to ensure  
433 fair working conditions throughout the EU, including providing a safe and healthy workplace.  
434 We need to introduce more limit values for hazardous substances to establish a level playing  
435 field for businesses. We need to promote labour mobility with a European Social Security Pass  
436 by strengthening the European Labour Authority (ELA) and by addressing challenges  
437 concerning the posting of third-country nationals. The ELA has to take the next step to make  
438 a real impact for workers and businesses.

439

440

441 **2.2 Our Europe creates prosperity with and in the world**

442 We are the party of free and fair trade. While European interests have always to be at the core  
443 of our trade policy, exports are a crucial drive for our economy. More than 30 million jobs in  
444 the EU depend on external trade and 90% of global economic growth is expected to be  
445 generated outside Europe in the coming years. The EU's trade deficit with China doubled in  
446 two years to a record €390 billion in 2022. We need a boost in trade policy, yet we often have  
447 to overcome the blockade of left-wing and right-wing populists. Our trade is about securing  
448 and expanding our own prosperity as well as safeguarding our strategic sectors and, at the  
449 same time, strengthening important economic-partners. A value-led economic policy relies on  
450 trade. We need a new smart trade policy in line with our European interests, values and  
451 standards based on the principle of reciprocity, especially to safeguard the interests of our  
452 farmers and fishers. Our economy will never prosper in a fortress. We want to trade with the  
453 entire world but also want to foster a special cooperation with like-minded partners in a Union  
454 of Democracies to remain competitive vis-à-vis dominant competitors such as China. The  
455 western world must stand together politically and economically. No room should be left to  
456 dumping practices of third countries that undermine our efforts to reach strategic autonomy  
457 and higher social, environmental, safety or health standards. At the same time, we should  
458 intensify our trade relations with Latin America and the Indo-Pacific region with new smart  
459 and fair trade agreements. We also need to open a new, more intensive trade partnership  
460 with Africa based on public interests, skills development, strengthened prosperity, well-being,  
461 self-sufficiency and democracy as well as global dependencies on raw materials and energy.  
462 Our de-risking strategy must advance further.

463

464 **2.3 Our Europe needs energy**

465 It is not without reason that coal and steel were the foundations of European integration. Our  
466 Europe has always relied on shared energy. Today, with the consequences of the Russian war  
467 of aggression in Ukraine and the systemic competition with China, this is all the more  
468 important. We will invest more in the development of electricity and gas network  
469 interconnections between EU Member States in order to create a more united and efficient  
470 Energy Union. We will encourage investments to integrate further the European electricity  
471 and gas market to ensure lower prices for European citizens and our businesses. We want a  
472 European Energy Union that will lead us into a carbon-neutral and environmentally-friendly  
473 future. Member States decide on their specific energy mix. An open and neutral technology  
474 approach as guiding principle is a driver for innovation. We do not need a prohibitive Europe  
475 but instead an innovative Europe that places the economic, financial and social needs of its  
476 citizens at the centre of the future energy supply. We also need to better align our energy  
477 transition with local conditions. For example, in the area of energy-efficient home  
478 renovations, we will better align investments to help households cope with rising prices and  
479 renovation requirements in the next years. We need a strong EU financial arm to back up our  
480 net-zero industrial and green ambitions for Europe to be able to compete globally, and to make  
481 sure this economic transformation leaves no one behind. At the same time, Europe needs  
482 more drive and energy when it comes to its future resources. For example, Europe will need  
483 60 times more lithium for a sustainable battery supply in 2050 than it does today. This  
484 necessitates further efforts to advance battery technology and battery recycling as well as  
485 efforts to reduce the overall consumption of energy. Resources are increasingly pivotal in

486 economic competition since, without them, innovation is impossible. Global technological  
487 leadership in the field of e-mobility will not succeed without rare earth elements from Africa,  
488 Latin America and Asia. We will promote a common European resource strategy for future  
489 innovations, identifying the existing resources worldwide and using them in Europe while  
490 promoting diversification to avoid dependencies from third countries. We will not allow  
491 Europe to be heavily reliant on Putin's or any other autocrat's resources in the future.

492 The Russian war of aggression against Ukraine and our former dependency on Russian fossil  
493 fuels have taught us some lessons: clean energy is not only good for the planet but also for  
494 our security. As we are moving away from fossil fuels, by develop a roadmap towards a  
495 resilient energy system with the phasing out of fossil fuels together with Member States,  
496 towards an electrification and automation of our economy, we need enormous amounts of  
497 clean energy and greater energy efficiency. We have fast-tracked the permitting procedures  
498 to really get the scale. We have reformed our electricity market to give priority to renewables  
499 and give long-term contracts and improve investment conditions. We are using EU funds –  
500 REPowerEU - to mobilise close to €300 billion in resources. And we are strengthening the  
501 clean-tech energy basis in Europe. Low-carbon energy has an important role in the transition  
502 to clean energy. We are lowering the marginal cost of energy throughout our economy. We  
503 are developing the home market for our clean-tech industries. We are decarbonising and  
504 revitalising our energy-intensive industries to sell clean products worldwide. Thus, we are  
505 increasing our energy independence and overall sovereignty and resilience.

506 As the backbone that connects European citizens and business, transport matters to us all. We  
507 have no time to lose in preparing it for the future. New technologies have the potential to  
508 revolutionise the way we move, making our mobility smarter, more efficient and more  
509 sustainable. We need more technology – not bans!

510 The EPP advocates a technology-neutral approach to developing alternative fuels, hydrogen  
511 technologies, and new power trains for vehicles, aircraft and vessels. We support new  
512 sustainable liquid fuels since they can be used with the current refuelling infrastructures and  
513 supply chains. At the same time, we will concentrate our efforts on streamlining the  
514 completion and development of the new Trans-European Transport Network (TEN-T)  
515 infrastructures, which are crucial for structuring our European territory and enhancing the  
516 efficiency of the European single market.

517

## 518 ***2.4 Our Europe prospers and protects people and the planet***

519 Europe has a leading role to play in global climate protection. Our hallmark is the European  
520 Green Deal. The European Green Deal was born out of the necessity to protect people and  
521 the planet. But it was also designed as an opportunity to build our future prosperity. In 2022,  
522 for instance, greenhouse gas emissions in Europe decreased by roughly 2.5%, while the  
523 economy increased by 3.5%. We have successfully reduced our emissions while growing our  
524 economy. European businesses are developing new technologies and solutions. What they  
525 need to scale up is, predictability, to plan their investments. And this is what the European  
526 Green Deal is delivering.

527 Four years ago, we set a long-term perspective with the climate law and the 2050 target. We  
528 shifted the climate agenda to being an economic one. This has given a clear sense of direction  
529 for investment and innovation and a clear steer for Europe to become the first climate-neutral  
530 continent by 2050. As we enter the next phase of the European Green Deal, the phase of  
531 implementation, we will keep supporting European industry throughout this transition - from  
532 the Net-Zero Industry Act to the Critical Raw Materials Act. With our Industry Strategy, we are  
533 looking at the risks to and needs of each ecosystem in this transition. The core aim will be to  
534 support every sector in building its business model for the decarbonisation of industry.  
535 Because we believe that this transition is essential for our future competitiveness in Europe.  
536 From wind to steel, from batteries to electric vehicles, our ambition is crystal clear: the future  
537 of our clean tech industry has to be made in Europe.

538 To achieve our ambitious goals, we must make climate policy go hand in hand with our  
539 economy and society. Because we know that, without climate protection, our economy cannot  
540 remain competitive in the long term but that, without a competitive economy, there can be  
541 no sustainable climate protection either. The Green Deal for us is not a new ideology as  
542 advocated by the Greens or the Socialists, it is the hallmark of the more prosperous,  
543 innovative, competitive and sustainable Europe that the EPP envisions. We are clearly  
544 committed to the 55% emissions-reduction target and the goal of climate neutrality by 2050.  
545 Europe must not de-industrialise on this ambitious path but, on the contrary, must show the  
546 world that the carbon-neutral transformation can be achieved successfully through our  
547 businesses. It is important to support our companies - especially SMEs, farmers and fishers -  
548 financially in the transition and to find the best solutions for reducing global emissions. We  
549 will achieve the best solutions only if we use all technological possibilities without any  
550 prejudice or ideology. We defend the principle of technological neutrality as well as a policy  
551 built on creating incentives for businesses and industry. The EU can set targets for reducing  
552 greenhouse gas emissions, but it must leave room for private, local and industrial players to  
553 find appropriate technological solutions. We regard a policy of positive incentives much more  
554 effective. We are in favour of technological openness in the economy, energy and climate  
555 protection. Engineers, not politicians, together with the market should be deciding on the best  
556 technology in order to achieve carbon neutrality. We rely on innovative concepts and market-  
557 based instruments for climate protection such as emissions trading, expansion of renewable  
558 and other low-carbon energies and a circular economy, including circular bio-economy. We  
559 want to further develop the Green Deal. We will always take the interests of our citizens and  
560 our entrepreneurs fully into account. All low-carbon energies are a key factor for successful  
561 climate protection. To make Europe's energy secure and sovereign, we are creating an Energy  
562 Union. We want to strengthen the internal market for energy, build cross-border  
563 infrastructure and strengthen Europe as an energy location with research. For example, we  
564 need a rapid ramp-up of international hydrogen production, creating the conditions to enable  
565 a functioning transport infrastructure, as already provided for in the EU hydrogen strategy. We  
566 want to intensify research in the fields of energy, climate and materials and promote Europe  
567 as a research centre for innovative energy technologies, with a special focus on nuclear fusion.

568 To keep our policies ambitious but also realistic, we intend to give greater consideration to the  
569 needs of cities and regions when preparing environmental, energy and climate strategies and  
570 their funding. At the same time, we will promote a circular economy in order to utilise raw  
571 materials responsibly, establish a CO2 circular economy throughout Europe and promote  
572 sustainable companies, especially SMEs. We also aim to unlock investment in innovation for

573 clean technologies with an investment plan for European jobs. We want strong support for  
574 clean tech and more strategic sovereignty in the field of future technologies. We will  
575 strengthen the European waste reduction strategy and the European plastics strategy,  
576 especially with regard to microplastics. We will implement a strategy for water and air quality  
577 at the European level and tackle the issue of per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS).  
578 Climate protection is a common European challenge. We want the EU to become responsible  
579 for concluding international environmental agreements for the entire EU.

580

## 581 ***2.5 Our Europe boosts living standards in every region***

582 We want to turn brain drain into brain gain. We will create opportunities for young people to  
583 allow families to remain together. Sometimes Europeans have no other option than to leave  
584 their country and their loved ones behind to find good opportunities. In Europe, no family  
585 should be forced to be divided: we must put a stop to brain drain by providing good  
586 opportunities in every region through our cohesion, economic and innovation policies. We  
587 want to set up a “Brain Gain” action plan for the whole of Europe that offers young people  
588 the chance to return to their home country from abroad and within Europe. Europe is our  
589 home and Europe cares about our homes.

590 Europe will be united only if cities and rural areas act as one and their interests are taken into  
591 account equally. And our political family already does so: not only is the EPP the most  
592 represented political force within the European Commission and European Council, it is also  
593 largely represented on the ground, at local and regional level, more than any other party in  
594 Europe. Through structural and cohesion policies, for example, we will focus on closing the  
595 gap between rural and urban areas. There should be no first and second-class citizens. We  
596 want to close economic, social and territorial disparities.

597 Regional and local budgets play a prominent part in supporting the national contributions to  
598 the EU budget and in co-financing EU projects implemented in regions and cities. Therefore,  
599 we have to elevate the needs of our regions and local communities when discussing the EU  
600 budget. Cohesion policy has a highly positive impact on the single market. It should remain  
601 strongly supported in the EU budget, but with simplified rules and with the direct involvement  
602 of regional and local authorities in the design and implementation of programmes. We want  
603 to improve the subsidiarity check also by assessing the territorial impact of all new EU  
604 legislation. We will promote a European plan for rural areas, including vulnerable areas near  
605 the EU external border that have suffered from the consequences of Russian aggression and  
606 to strengthen the EU strategy for Outermost Regions. At the same time, we need to develop  
607 modern infrastructure so that people can easily connect and data and products are accessible  
608 everywhere in Europe. To this end, we want to accelerate investments in R&D and digital  
609 infrastructure, in line with our industrial policy. We need to speed up funding procedures for  
610 the next generation of innovators, students and civil society all over Europe. We want to  
611 ensure that innovation capacities, access to connectivity, online tools and technologies that  
612 support education, research and business are available to all citizens, including in rural and  
613 remote areas, taking into special consideration the challenges faced by outermost regions. A  
614 good regional policy, especially in economic terms, is the best response to demographic  
615 change. We want a new pact for intergenerational fairness, making sure our choices today do  
616 not burden the generations of tomorrow, including a youth and elderly proof check of all EU

617 legislation. At the same time, labour mobility remains a cornerstone of a functioning internal  
618 market and of a long-term growth that boosts employment and careers for the people.

619

## 620 ***2.6 Our Europe wants to lead in digitalisation and human-centred AI***

621 Innovation improves people's lives. Against the advances of China and the US, Europe has a  
622 globally competitive advantage: our common values, the social market economy and political  
623 stability. As Christian Democrats and the Centre Right, we put the people at the centre. When  
624 we combine values and innovation, we can shape the future of our European way of life and  
625 create jobs. Placing our citizens in the centre of our innovation policy means pooling our  
626 resources to find the best solutions for everyone. AI, biomedicine, robotics and visualisation  
627 can, in combination with the right human know-how and sensible regulation, create a better  
628 world. We want to put these technologies at the service of the people by making seniors more  
629 independent and advancing research to find solutions in sensitive areas, for example novel  
630 prevention strategies and treatments in health, better counter climate change, avoid  
631 environmental disasters, improve mobility and make construction works more efficient and  
632 safer. Non-digital services should remain accessible for people without easy digital access,  
633 especially for the elderly. However, Europe needs to regain its ambition.

634 Today, we are investing only half as much in AI as the US. European companies are allocating  
635 a smaller proportion of their earnings to R&D than their North American counterparts, a  
636 shortfall of around €147 billion between 2017 and 2022. Especially in established economies  
637 such as Europe, economic growth and future prosperity can be achieved only with innovation  
638 and a technological edge. Data, digital infrastructure and technological expertise are the new  
639 gold of an economy. We want to encourage a digital awakening in the coming years and pursue  
640 a five-point plan for this by firstly expanding a European digital network across Europe for 5G  
641 and 6G together with the Member States. Secondly, the EU must be a leading force in AI. We  
642 want to enable, develop and utilise AI, not contain it or hinder it through over-regulation. We  
643 want to support research and the development of applications and provide freedom. We must  
644 readjust our data protection to the requirements of the digital world. Thirdly, we want to  
645 ensure that AI lives up to ethical standards while supporting innovation and new technologies,  
646 harnessing the power of AI to create quality jobs and a better life for our people. Fundamental  
647 rights in the digital world must be respected. We will do so by updating the EU charter of  
648 fundamental rights in light of the digital revolution. Fourthly, we want to establish a real  
649 innovation union for future technologies by backing European pilot line infrastructure for  
650 semiconductor innovations better connecting scientific expertise and creating, for example,  
651 scientific centres of excellence such as a CERN for AI and an EU research-computing centre to  
652 simplify the exchange and data across Europe. Finally, all of this requires sufficient funding.

653

## 654 ***2.7 Our Europe stands by our farmers and fishers to ensure the production of healthy*** 655 ***and affordable food for all***

656 European agriculture and the Common Agricultural Policy meet the high expectations of  
657 society, in particular with regard to food supply, high food quality and safety, protection of  
658 natural resources, animal welfare and, last but not least, fair product prices for consumers.  
659 Food security is not a luxury but a fundamental necessity. The EPP has always stood by farmers

660 and fishers, particularly when living costs are rising for our citizens and food security and  
661 availability are on the line due to the many global challenges. Farming and fisheries are two  
662 strategic sectors for Europe. Farmers and their businesses make the face of our rural Europe  
663 unique. We are proud of them and stand by their side. Rural areas are not the periphery but  
664 the heart of Europe. By 2040, the EU might lose an additional 6.4 million farms, a staggering  
665 decrease of over 60% compared to 2016! We want farmers in Europe to have a future and  
666 stand for dialogue instead of top-down approaches. This is the only way to secure our unique  
667 cultural landscapes and our food supply in the long term. Climate protection, biodiversity and  
668 sustainable landscape conservation can be achieved only with and not against farmers.  
669 Protecting biodiversity and precious resources such as water, air and forests is our insurance  
670 for the future. We want to strengthen Europe's resilience to droughts, which jeopardise our  
671 farmers' jobs and our food security, with a European Resilience Scoreboard to better prevent  
672 natural disasters and make regions, cities and villages more resilient in agriculture and food  
673 production, and with a European plan for water use, reuse and storage. Climate adaptation  
674 and sustainable management are core European tasks. To this end, we want to find examples  
675 of best practices, particularly in coastal and flood protection measures.

676 In recent years, fishers have faced successive crises derived from the impact of Brexit, COVID  
677 and the war in Ukraine, with the rise in fuel prices. They also face important challenges such  
678 as climate change, the decarbonisation of the fleet and the problem of generational renewal.  
679 We are also in favour of a reform to the Common Fisheries Policy (CFP) so that it also takes  
680 into account the need to face these and other challenges. Fisheries and aquaculture are  
681 strategic sectors. The EPP stands for creating a stand-alone portfolio on fisheries in the next  
682 European Commission. If that were not possible, the fishing responsibilities should be  
683 assumed by the Commissioner for Agriculture and Fisheries, as was the case in the past.

684 Our fisheries are crucial to ensuring quality supply and reducing dependency on imports. We  
685 should focus on developing legislation and financing instruments that strongly back the  
686 fisheries sector in its transition towards a more sustainable catch. Monitoring and reporting  
687 of fishing activities may be necessary, but the administrative burden should be reduced and  
688 rationalised.

689 The CAP 2028-2034 must have a stronger economic pillar and direct payments should serve  
690 to secure basic agricultural incomes and offer protection in volatile markets. It must enable a  
691 strong and competitive agricultural sector and provide a genuine reward for the diverse  
692 services provided by agriculture. In addition, we must make sure that the CAP funding is  
693 distributed fairly both among and within Member States. Flexibility should be a key factor for  
694 the new CAP in order to guarantee producers' incomes. European farmers produce the highest  
695 standards in the world and these standards must be designed in a way that maintains the  
696 competitiveness of European agriculture worldwide. We also consider that adequate and  
697 additional funding is necessary to facilitate our farmers' environmental efforts, incentivise  
698 them to operate more sustainable and help them face the consequences of climate  
699 change. We focus on promoting modern and sustainable agricultural practices and high-tech  
700 in agriculture. We want a European moon-shot for precision agriculture, integrated pest  
701 management, closing the nutrients cycle, and the use of robotics. Especially in agriculture and  
702 fisheries, the ambitious goals should be solved with technological innovations, not with bans.  
703 Rural development should continue to serve as a stimulus for agriculture and the population  
704 in rural areas and ensure vital rural areas, including via better rural-urban synergies in terms  
705 of interconnected public services and boosting of local economy and local jobs. Particular

706 attention should be paid to supporting disadvantaged rural areas, public research and  
707 innovation to develop alternatives to plant protection products. We want to accelerate the  
708 take-up of new biotechnologies in agriculture as they can be effective tools against climate-  
709 related risks. For us, agriculture and fisheries are sectors of the future and we want the  
710 younger generation to be passionate about these professions. Together with Member States,  
711 we want to ensure that young people who choose agriculture have access to land. We oppose  
712 excessive requirements and additional burdens for our farmers. And we have to further  
713 develop the European Green Deal by a better consideration of the interests of consumers and  
714 farmers. This applies in particular to issues such as new rules on the sustainable use of plant  
715 protection products (SUR) and unnecessary bureaucracy. Furthermore, a review of Natura  
716 2000 legislation is needed, enabling Member States to more effectively protect nature and  
717 make it more resilient.

718

719 Large carnivores represent an increasing threat to farmers and livestock breeders and  
720 endanger traditional pastoralism throughout Europe. Therefore, we need new rules for the  
721 management of large carnivore populations, especially wolves and brown bears, including  
722 culling when densities reach unsustainable levels. Forests and the entire forest-based value  
723 chain are a crucial part of rural areas. Forests provide jobs, ensure economic welfare, store  
724 carbon, offer health-benefits and combat desertification. We believe the best know-how for  
725 sustainable forest management lies within the Member States., Therefore, we respect the  
726 Member States' competences on forest-related legislation.

727

### 728 ***III. Our Europe believes in our European way of life***

729 The EPP is the party of the European way of life. We combine tradition and progress and  
730 believe in a united Europe in diversity. Europe is more than an economic project rooted in  
731 cultural richness and diverse traditions, but this does not tie us to the past. On the contrary:  
732 our values show us the way into the future and we commit to promoting democratic values  
733 via education and culture.

734

#### 735 ***3.1 Our Europe defends our European social model***

736 Our quality of life depends on social peace. The future of Europe will be built with and by our  
737 social partners. Social dialogue is a core feature of our European social market economy and  
738 is key to decent working conditions and economic prosperity. We are proud of our European  
739 social model, where everyone enjoys health insurance and high-quality public and social  
740 services, where workers have their rights protected and where there is balance between social  
741 interests and market rules. However, social balance is not achieved effortlessly but must be  
742 sensitively reached to ensure it is balanced and fair. The European Pillar of Social Rights has  
743 been the reference point for building a strong social Europe. While it is in the hands of the  
744 Member States to run the national welfare state, it is Europe that can contribute to the  
745 conditions for economic growth and prosperity to finance them. We are fighting for equal  
746 opportunities for women in the labour market. We want to ensure that men and women  
747 receive equal pay for equal work. We also want to create a European Workers' Guarantee for  
748 the Digital Market to ensure the rights of workers and the self-employed in the digital age, for  
749 instance in the gig economy, while respecting the competences of Member States and

750 empowering social partners. We want to ensure quality jobs and fair wages across Europe and  
751 enhance collective bargaining. The fight against precarious working conditions, both at  
752 national level and across our borders to protect our workers from illegal working practices, is  
753 crucial for a well-functioning single market. Today's work models must allow parents to find  
754 the right balance between their professional careers and family duties through greater use of  
755 teleworking, for example. For us, however, a true social policy is not about setting the highest  
756 social benefits and standards at EU level but about consistently guiding the economic and  
757 financial policy in such a way that there will continue to be efficient social systems that support  
758 people in all our Member States in the future. We reject a sprawling EU social bureaucracy. It  
759 is not without reason that Christian social teaching has enshrined and promoted the principle  
760 of subsidiarity. Especially in times of digital, climate-neutral and demographic  
761 transformations, our social systems are already facing enormous challenges. They do not need  
762 too many regulations from Brussels but rather a flourishing and fair economy. A fair Europe  
763 must take into account lower and middle class households. The cost of living crisis threatening  
764 many households, young and old, has led to an erosion of the middle class and a growing  
765 number of people losing out in the single market. This has a negative impact on our societies  
766 and our economies. The heroes of everyday life must also be rewarded in the tax systems of  
767 the Member States.

768

### 769 ***3.2 Our Europe preserve our democracy, traditions, cultural richness and diversity***

770 We are proud of our European way of life. We want to preserve our regional and national  
771 identities as well as our common European one. In Europe, we know that our differences, but  
772 also what we have in common, make us stronger.

773 We want to preserve our cultural heritage, which our community, civilisation and European  
774 integration processes are based on, the different characteristics as well as what unites us, in  
775 a Digital Museum of European Culture that digitally connects the most important museums.  
776 We will assess the possibility of creating a European Cultural Heritage Fund. We commit to  
777 promoting our rich cultural heritage, which will also contribute to boost tourism in the EU, a  
778 sector that was heavily hit by the COVID pandemic. As a response, the EPP led the key EU  
779 initiatives, notably the EU Digital COVID Certificate. Within the limits of EU competences, the  
780 EPP remains committed to bolstering the tourism sector.

781 Europe is diverse and nuanced but we have a shared Judeo-Christian culture and heritage. We  
782 also share the heritage of Humanism and of the Enlightenment. In the EU, we respect the  
783 freedom of belief and conscience and thus the freedom of religion. We must protect our  
784 European way of life by preserving our Christian values and our fundamental principles.  
785 Democracy, human dignity, fundamental rights, including rights of minorities and of the most  
786 vulnerable, freedom, equality, equal rights for-women and men, solidarity, the rule of law,  
787 justice, pluralism and tolerance towards those who live a different way: these are the  
788 principles at the core of European civilisation.

789 Over the past years, the EPP has been the leading defender of the rule of law in the EU, making  
790 it clear that our community is based on values and that these must be respected, notably EU  
791 fundamental values. Countries that join the EU have voluntarily signed up to these values and  
792 there should therefore be consequences for serious and systemic breaches of the rule of law.  
793 The mechanism provided in the treaty has clearly failed to serve its purpose, whether as a

794 deterrent or as an adequate sanction mechanism. This is why the EPP secured the approval of  
795 a new Rule-of-Law conditionality mechanism that ensures that EU funds would stop flowing  
796 into governments that breach the rule of law. The EU is not a cash-cow and governments that  
797 do not subscribe to our common values cannot expect to benefit from EU funds.

798 The EPP is strongly committed to remaining the leading defender of the rule of law so that all  
799 citizens in all Member States can feel equally protected from those who attack our values,  
800 including their own governments. The EPP will ensure that the Rule-of-Law mechanism is not  
801 only applied in a fair and non-partisan manner but that it is refined to ensure its adequacy  
802 and effectiveness.

803 We will preserve our common traditions and convictions, our cultural richness and our  
804 linguistic diversity represented by traditional national minorities. We continue the fight  
805 against all forms of discrimination, opposing racism, intolerance, violence, hate crime and  
806 anti-Semitism as well as protecting LGBTQ+ rights and those of minorities. We stand for  
807 religious freedom. We will advocate an EU foreign policy that makes it very clear that those  
808 who persecute Christians can neither do good business nor have good relations with Europe.

809 Our national identity is open but not for sale. We invite legal migrants who live with us to  
810 become part of our community by integrating themselves and by learning our languages and  
811 our values, but we fight the sale of EU citizenship. Selling EU citizenship to the highest bidder  
812 is a direct threat to our security as it leaves Europe to the influence of every oligarch and  
813 kleptocrat who can afford it. We will not allow them to undermine the meaning of our  
814 citizenship. We want to protect citizens and our democracy against fake news and foreign  
815 interference, including by strengthening citizens' resilience, particularly in education, as well  
816 as ensure access to quality information. To this end, we want social media platforms to take  
817 more responsibility in the fight against misinformation and, in cooperation with journalists'  
818 organisations, strengthen fact-checking. Not being able to tell what is real and what is fake is  
819 one of the biggest threats to our democracy and to the stability of our communities. Putin's  
820 attempts to rewrite history and to distract from his crimes by spreading lies must be prevented  
821 and unequivocally condemned. We have to ensure a strong resilience of our citizens against  
822 any form of propaganda from the Kremlin or against any other foreign interference.

823

### 824 ***3.3 Our Europe takes care of our families and those most in need in society***

825 We believe in a Europe of solidarity that works together, includes everyone, offers the best  
826 conditions to everyone for starting a family and ensures that older people can enjoy longevity  
827 with dignity. Our Europe does not take care of everything itself but leaves no one behind. Our  
828 families are our roots, our home, and our anchors. They are the pillar of our European way of  
829 life. In times of crisis, young Europeans, parents and grandparents have supported each other.  
830 Family ties are the backbone of our community and we want to preserve them. We will defend  
831 European social standards, raise living standards to strengthen families and fight child poverty.  
832 At the same time, job insecurity, the inability to afford a house and uncertainty about the  
833 future all too often discourage young Europeans from creating a family. In the EU, on average,  
834 only one in four households has children. We want Europe to be a safe home where new  
835 families can grow. We are committed to a Europe-wide parental leave so that young parents  
836 can be with their newborn children and experience the first steps of parenthood together and  
837 later be easily reintroduced into professional life with measures such as accessible house

838 ownership and child-care as well as ensuring better quality of public services. We will protect  
839 family values and respect subsidiarity. Family law must remain in the hands of the Member  
840 States because family life must be supported at a level that is closer to the citizen.

841 Our Europe is a society driven by intergenerational connections and fairness. A society where  
842 all ages - young citizens, parents, families, singles and older citizens – can thrive.  
843 Intergenerational solidarity is a cornerstone for our society, which supports exchanges across  
844 generations, including by volunteering.

845

### 846 ***3.4 Our Europe is a Europe for citizens of all ages***

847 Demographic change will be a huge challenge in the coming legislative period. Strategic  
848 questions related to the labour market, innovation, healthcare and regional disparities will  
849 have to be tackled. For this reason, the importance of this issue should also be reflected in the  
850 organisational structure of the future by an important portfolio and sufficient resources. The  
851 impact of demographic change requires collaborative efforts across different levels of  
852 government. The EU can play a supportive and encouraging role here, including by means of  
853 appropriate structures and financial support. The EU has to play a supportive and encouraging  
854 role here. For this reason, a Commission Vice-President will continue to be responsible for this  
855 cross-cutting task and will be supported by appropriate instruments, for example a  
856 coordinating agency within the existing structures.

857 An ageing society presents challenges, but we also see many opportunities. In an ageing  
858 society, we will underpin active and healthy ageing for all generations and further develop the  
859 "silver", longevity economy. Seniors are increasingly shaping our economies and starting  
860 businesses. We want to create the conditions for older people to be able to develop  
861 economically by capitalising on the longevity dividend and on their know-how and experience.  
862 We want to move from an ageing to a longevity society by empowering older citizens. Entire  
863 and equal involvement of older persons who want to stay active on the labour market and in  
864 political activities, access to culture, justice, life-long learning, and digital literacy and financial  
865 must be ensured. Empowering people so that they are confident in managing their personal  
866 finances is key. We want to ensure a focus on financial literacy, in a digital era, to strengthen  
867 our families and our society. In an increasingly digitalised financial landscape, we must also  
868 ensure citizens' choice between the use digital means or cash and the accessibility of financial  
869 services for older people. In addition, we want to invest in age-friendly, innovative and truly  
870 intergenerational cities and regions.

871 A key task will be to strengthen the European Care Strategy and to implement solutions for  
872 affordable long-term care for the elderly and other vulnerable individuals in all communities  
873 and to implement a European Disability Card so that the rights of those affected are recognised  
874 and acknowledged throughout Europe. We are in favour of establishing a European Guarantee  
875 for older citizens to ensure social inclusion and their full participation in society and the  
876 economy. We are all ageing and we care. Europe cares.

877

### 878 ***3.5 Our Europe improves people's lives through innovation in health***

879 As Christian Democrats, we always put the well-being of the person at the centre of our  
880 actions. We are the political force that placed health high on the European political agenda in  
881 past years by delivering a concrete European Beating Cancer Plan that foresees funding of €4  
882 billion. This is because we know that health issues transcend national borders. We want  
883 accessible quality healthcare for all citizens, irrespective of socio-economic status or where  
884 they come from. Reducing health inequalities should be the core mission of the EU. For this  
885 purpose, it is crucial to eliminate the pay gap to stop the drain of health professionals from  
886 some European regions, especially in rural areas.

887 We want to create a true European Health Union to be prepared and equipped to deal with  
888 cross-border threats, improve the resilience of our health systems and their interoperability,  
889 train the best doctors and nurses, diversify our supply chains and create strategic inventories  
890 to prevent medicine and medical devices shortages, making them accessible to every citizen.  
891 We also want to become the world leader in medical research and pharmaceutical innovation  
892 while increasing access to clinical trials, especially to fight rare child diseases such as cancer  
893 that do not get enough funding for research. We want to double the EU's research budget for  
894 the period 2024-2027 while setting a target of 4% of European GDP devoted to research and  
895 innovation by 2030.

896 We want Europe to become the innovation hub of the world in the health sector, harnessing  
897 the potential of big data and AI to make the technological discoveries of the future, just as we  
898 developed the COVID-19 vaccine with the mRNA technology in record time. Europe must once  
899 again become the laboratory of the world where evidence-based politics and regulations  
900 enable the development of the best innovations and medicine. While ensuring the full  
901 implementation of the Beating Cancer Plan, we want to take the next step and develop a  
902 European plan to address Alzheimer's disease, dementia and Parkinson's disease. We will  
903 launch a European Cardiovascular Health Plan, as cardiovascular disease is the biggest killer  
904 in the EU. This plan should include a European Knowledge Centre and promote a Joint  
905 cardiovascular and diabetes health check, as 85% of the people living with diabetes die from  
906 cardiovascular disease. In light of our ageing society, investment in healthy longevity is the  
907 best way to alleviate the burden of ageing on budgets and to make our longer lives also  
908 healthier.

909 We know that physical well-being is not all there is to health. Mental health is equally  
910 important as Europeans increasingly call for affordable and accessible quality psychological  
911 support. That is why we are committed to launching an EU Action Plan for Mental Health to  
912 ensure all Europeans in need have access to the appropriate psychological aid while  
913 eliminating the stigma often associated with mental illness.

914

### 915 ***3.6 Our Europe is fit for new challenges***

916 Our Europe concentrates on the essentials, never loses sight of the big picture and always  
917 fights for what is important. Many Socialists were initially sceptical about European  
918 unification, the Greens even tried to legally prevent the introduction of the single market and  
919 some liberals caused serious damage to a democratic Europe at a decisive moment, not to  
920 mention the right-wing populists who want to destroy our Europe today. We as the EPP stand  
921 for a strong and effective EU that we will successfully lead into the future.

922 In order to tackle the enormous challenges in a world in turmoil, the EU must also improve its  
923 institutions. We want to make the EU more capable of acting, more efficient, stronger and  
924 more democratic. At the same time, the Member States will continue to have the right to  
925 decide which competences the EU should have and which ones could possibly be transferred  
926 back. To this end, we want to have a European convention in the coming years to discuss and  
927 decide on possible improvements to the Treaties. We will also keep developing strategies to  
928 improve the proximity of the EU to its citizens, involving civil society in this process.

929 We stand by the EU's accession promises and a forward-looking enlargement strategy for  
930 Ukraine, the Western Balkans, Moldova and Georgia. Every candidate country must also be  
931 ready for membership. We should take intermediate steps and closer cooperation in the  
932 meantime to put candidates in the best position to join.

933 We consider that all candidate countries shall be bound by the same rules on the way to full  
934 membership. We do not want an endless process, but all accession criteria (Copenhagen  
935 criteria) must be clearly met for the EU to enlarge. Any decision must be based on concrete  
936 results provided by candidate countries. We evaluate each candidate on the basis of merit,  
937 respect of democratic institutions, the rule of law and the protection of human rights as well  
938 as good neighbourly relations with all EU Member States. These are the minimum  
939 prerequisites for every state that has the aspiration of joining the EU.

940 While acknowledging that the current political situation in Turkey rules out the possibility of  
941 Turkey's accession to the EU, we believe that an upgrade of the existing customs union and  
942 visa facilitation could pave the way to its European vocation and serve as a signal to a renewed  
943 and positive EU-Turkey partnership.

944 We have been standing by Belarusians in their fight for democracy and freedom for years and  
945 we will keep supporting the people of Belarus and their democratic leaders in their fight  
946 against Lukashenka's regime. Once the democratic breakthrough happens, Belarus should also  
947 be able to enter the European path of peace and prosperity.

948

#### 949 IV. **Let's build Europe together**

950 Europe is our home. We, Europeans, have a long history of standing together. From the  
951 devastation caused by authoritarian regimes, we rolled up our sleeves, rebuilt our freedom  
952 and united Europe. Together, we have made our incredible success possible. But nothing is  
953 perfect and everything can be improved. And that's what the next European elections are  
954 about - what Europe will look like in 2030. As the EPP, we have a clear vision of what Europe  
955 should look like in 2030. We want more unity, security and prosperity. To get there, we need  
956 values and leadership. This is what the EPP, under the leadership of European Commission  
957 President Ursula von der Leyen, the EPP Commission Vice-Presidents and Commissioners, the  
958 EPP Group in the European Parliament and the EPP members of the Council, has shown over  
959 the past five years. EPP leadership has united Europe by forging a common vaccine, a common  
960 economic recovery and common sanctions against Russia and by giving hope to Ukraine  
961 together. We build bridges where others only create divisions. We have a plan for a Europe  
962 that takes responsibility for all citizens, our economies, our families, our women, our youth  
963 and our elderly. For a Europe that safeguards our planet, competes boldly in the world,

964 protects its citizens and always puts people first. **Let's make Europe a safe and good home for**  
965 **the people!**