

EM Germany Political Demands 2021/22

Resolution of EM Germany's Federal Assembly on
15 October 2021

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Foreword

Through its involvement in the ongoing task of shaping European politics, Germany will safeguard its capacity to act for the years to come. The issues of our time that concern the future – climate protection, migration and the management of financial and health crises – can only be resolved by working together within a European network and by incorporating political and social forces at all levels into the associated processes.

As societal and economic stakeholders, we are therefore committed to support the principle of European unity in Germany and, as Europäische Bewegung Deutschland e. V. (European Movement Germany – EM Germany), we actively contribute to the mission of shaping European politics with the help of our EM Germany network, which is able to draw upon the strengths of its 256 member organisations. At our Federal Assembly on 15 October 2021, the members of EM Germany agreed on political demands that serve as a foundation for the activities conducted by our network.

The EM Germany's political demands focus on three challenges for European politics that will determine the European Union's (EU's) credibility and ability to act in the coming years and which will be a common thread in our policy:

- **Deepening European democracy:** We are committed to a democratic Europe that defends its values and fundamental rights, a Europe that strengthens its capacity to act by promoting a greater degree of parliamentary authority in the EU, the digitalisation of European democracy, transparent decision-making processes and a future-proof budget. Moreover, the EU that we envision needs to be able to rely on a German government that consistently pursues a modern European policy.
- **Shaping a global Europe:** As a project for peace, unity and freedom, Europe must live up to its responsibilities by promoting stability and sustainable prosperity around the world, by abolishing borders in Europe and by defending democratic values and principles as well as the rule of law.
- **Making Europe fit for the future:** We demand a Europe that looks towards the future and actively shapes the digital and ecological transformation in line with targets with regard to adequate environmental and climate protection, European competitiveness and social justice.

On the basis of the aforementioned EM Germany's political demands, we have agreed on seven priorities that we wish to focus on as a network and we have also defined key working areas that serve as the basis for the structural dialogue between our member organisations. This way we wish to strengthen the effectiveness of policy positions in the EM Germany's political demands over the long term, including positions on controversial issues.

The future political agenda will be dominated by the challenges associated with the implementation of the European Green Deal, the response to the COVID-19 pandemic, European migration policy and issues relating to the democratic development of the EU. In order to ensure that the EM Germany's political demands remain up to date and that our organisation maintains its voice, the board may continuously revise the text in accordance with the positions formulated at the Federal Assembly.

Towards the new German government and the EU we want to underline our desire to see a strong democratic Europe that works on shaping the future on the basis of common values and fundamental rights and in this manner safeguards Germany's capacity to act in a globalised world in the midst of a major transformation.

1 Deepening European democracy

A vibrant European democracy is the foundation for a peaceful future. Particularly during these times in which democracy is increasingly embedded in the digital realm, it is important for all democratic processes to be designed in a manner that ensures effective representation, pluralism and transparency, whereby these processes must also be aligned with and promote European values and fundamental rights.

1.1 Respecting European values and fundamental rights

The EU is a community of values that is built on fundamental and human rights. Of central importance here are the binding values enshrined in the Treaty on European Union (TEU) and the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union. Only if all the principles on which these values are based are observed throughout all Member States can the EU function as a community of values that remains credible to both its own members and the international community.

Promoting the rule of law through instruments of dialogue and sanctions

The rule of law is particularly important as a fundamental prerequisite for guaranteeing and protecting European values. For this reason, we call upon all EU institutions to support and promote the rule of law using all available instruments.

We welcome the fact that the Council has institutionalised a **constructive dialogue on the rule of law** on the basis of the annual Rule of Law Reports published by the European Commission. It is our belief that this dialogue should aim to ensure the compliance with the rule of law in all Member States and in the EU itself and also work to develop a better common understanding of the importance of the rule of law and how it should be defined. To this end, the European institutions must conduct this dialogue in an assertive and confident manner as well as ensure sufficient media attention, in order to make clear to everyone that the objective of the dialogue is to safeguard the foundations of our democratic society.

At the same time, serious and systematic violations of the rule of law within the EU also demonstrate that preventive measures are no longer sufficient and that options for implementing effective sanctions are needed in order to put a stop to the erosion of European values.

We therefore call upon the EU **to make consistent use of the possibilities for implementing sanctions on the basis of Article 7 of the TEU** and to **reform the procedures for the sanctioning mechanism for violations of fundamental rights** over the medium term in a manner that ensures that such procedures can be implemented quickly and effectively when serious breaches of the rule of law occur. Until then, the European Commission should respond to blatant breaches of the rule of law by initiating **infringement procedures**.

We also support the **swift application of the new rule of law conditionality regulation used to address violations of the rule of law**. In particular, the EU must ensure that the instrument, which makes the receipt of EU funds by a Member State dependent on its respect for the rule of law, is applied retroactively since the instrument came into force. We also call upon the EU to **make**

further improvements over the medium term to the rule of law conditionality: In line with the original proposal, a qualified majority should be required for the Council to veto an implementing act by the Commission that would withhold EU funding in the event of a violation of the rule of law. In this event, social interest groups as well as municipalities and regional administrations in the affected country should receive funding directly from the EU.

Strengthening European values and the responsible EU institutions

The EU and its institutions must make a stronger effort to **protect and promote European values and fundamental rights – in Member States, in candidate countries and in partner countries**. This also involves ensuring rapid implementation by the Member States of the EU Anti-Racism Action Plan 2020–2025 and the 2020-2030 EU Roma Strategic Framework.

Europe's **common values and fundamental rights** are an essential foundation of our democracy and social cohesion, which is why the EU and its Member States must also ensure compliance with these values and rights **in the digital realm** by prosecuting those who violate corresponding laws. In particular, the protection of privacy and personal data must also be guaranteed on the internet in order to safeguard our liberal democracy.

We also believe it is important that EU institutions set an example here, among other ways by quickly bringing the negotiations on the **EU accession to the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR)** to a successful conclusion.

In addition, **the EU and its Member States should strengthen the European institutions that are responsible** for the protection of fundamental rights in Europe. In particular, we call upon the Member States to quickly reach an agreement regarding an enhanced mandate for the EU Agency for Fundamental Rights. More specifically, the EU should give the agency the authority to work with social interest groups in order to monitor compliance with fundamental European rights in the Member States.

We also call upon those EU Member States who have not yet joined the **European Public Prosecutor's Office** to do so now in order to fight the corruption and fraud that affects the EU's budget and funding. The German Federal Government should simultaneously take steps to promote cooperation between the EU and the Council of Europe's Venice Commission.

Finally, **9 May should be made a public holiday throughout the EU** as a day of celebration of European values and the liberal democratic order.

1.2 Strengthening parliamentarianism and pluralistic democracy

Trust in the political system and thus in democracy is declining in numerous EU Member States. It is therefore all the more urgent that political and state actors win back trust at all levels. Strong parliamentarianism and pluralism are necessary to ensure a vibrant democracy that instils trust in its citizens.

Establishing a courageous dialogue on the future that focuses on reforms

The **Conference on the Future of Europe** can only strengthen parliamentarianism in the EU and help increase its capacity to act if all participants in the Conference show courage for a result-oriented dialogue. We therefore support the implementation of a transparent process in which representative groups play a major role and we call upon the EU institutions to transform all recommendations into tangible reforms. In this context, the EU and its Member States should not consider treaty amendments to the TEU as a taboo subject.

Given the time pressure involved, we call upon those responsible for the Conference on the Future of Europe to extend the Conference period to two years, to at least 2023, as was originally planned. This should be done because we believe that the EU should use the opportunity the Conference offers to intensify discussions and define key issues for the European elections in 2024. This also includes making it possible to call for a Convention in accordance with Article 48 TEU that would transform the results of the conference into specific political reforms.

Strengthening the European Parliament and expanding the majority principle in the Council

One of the things the Conference should focus on is examining ways to strengthen the European Parliament and further develop democratic decision-making processes in the EU. We therefore demand that the only EU institution directly legitimised by the citizens of the EU **should be authorised to exercise the right of legislative initiative**, be it via an inter-institutional agreement or through treaty amendments.

In view of the upcoming European elections in 2024, we call upon all political groups that will take part in the elections to nominate **candidates (“Spitzenkandidatinnen und -kandidaten”)** from their ranks for the office of President of the European Commission, who they should then support throughout the entire process – in particular in the European Council nominating process and in the European Parliament election campaign. Here, the Member States should act in line with the corresponding declaration regarding the Treaty of Lisbon. The EU should transform the European Parliament’s right to table a motion of censure against the European Commission into a right to hold a constructive vote of no confidence.

In order to support the introduction of a system in which the political parties in Europe associate their campaigns with specific candidates for the office of President of the Commission, serious progress must be made with efforts to establish a **coherent European electoral law**. The introduction of transnational party lists and cross-border electoral districts within the framework of such a coherent system are both considered sensible and we also encourage efforts to introduce a pan-European legal voting age of 16 in the EU.

Finally, if the EU is to function properly as a democratic community capable of effective action, it is important that **decisions are made in an ordinary legislative procedure** – i.e. adoption by a majority vote in the European Parliament and the Council. Under such a system, any instances in which unanimity is required in the Council would therefore have to be well justified and treated as an exception to the rule.

Promoting European pluralistic democracy

Pluralistic democracy must be promoted and supported at all levels, starting with the municipalities. It is not only citizens but also institutional decision-making bodies and interest groups that need to be offered **better opportunities for democratic participation in the EU**. This includes **participation rights for national parliaments**. Democratic decision-making processes, such as those that take place in representative associations, clubs and societies, strengthen people's faith in and their understanding of politics at all levels. We therefore demand this type of "small-scale democracy" to be strengthened through the **introduction of a European law on associations**.

In order to facilitate understanding and agreement throughout the EU as well as to increase citizens' identification with European democracy, the **linguistic diversity in Europe must be taken into account** both in external communication activities and in the external visual depiction of EU institutions. Opportunities for political participation should not be obstructed by language barriers and documents pertaining to institutional decisions must be published in all official EU languages.

1.3 Promoting a digital culture of dialogue and media pluralism

Measures must be taken to strengthen the culture of dialogue and media pluralism in Europe. Democracy thrives when there is an exchange of different ideas and opinions, which is increasingly taking place in the digital realm. Digitalisation offers opportunities to strengthen the European culture of dialogue because it leads to the establishment of new possibilities for citizens to participate and network, whereby these new forms of participation and networking should be actively supported and promoted.

Shaping democracy in the digital realm

At the same time, the EU and its Member States need to address the challenges that result from the political debate shifting to the digital realm. **More specifically, they must strike a good balance between promoting diversity of opinion and combating disinformation** and the effects of digital echo chambers. They must also clearly draw the boundaries of freedom of expression when it turns into hate speech on social media that can lead to hate crimes. The EU and its Member States must also protect elections and referendums against non-transparent attempts to influence their outcomes on social media. We therefore encourage the EU to establish an EU supervisory structure for the digital realm with clear lines of responsibility and to implement measures that ensure transparency with regard to how algorithms are used, in order to ensure that digital platforms do what is necessary to prevent or block hate speech and disinformation.

Strengthening freedom of the press

In view of the increasing anti-media rhetoric as well as the economic and political pressure that is exerted on free media, we call upon the EU to clearly point out instances where freedom of the press is under attack and to take measures that improve the framework conditions for the free press. In order to strengthen media pluralism and the quality of media in Europe, the EU should expand relevant funding programmes and establish a new **fund for independent journalism**. In addition, independent public service media should create **a European platform for the joint**

provision of news, education and documentation programmes as a means to strengthen the European communication landscape. In the context of the European Commission's new Rule of Law Reports the protection of press freedom must continue to play a central role.

1.4 Empowering young people

In particular in these times which are marked by uncertainty and extensive changes, we need to strengthen young people and acknowledge them as equal partners in the European political system.

Supporting youth organisations

Young people are a driving force for social innovation – but they are also the first group to feel the effects of ongoing and future crises. This is a challenge that must be addressed, which is why we believe the EU should consistently **implement its Youth Strategy for the period 2019-2027 in a cross-policy manner** that focuses on the 11 European Youth Goals.

We support greater participation of young people. This process must begin with the improvement of **structural and financial support for democratically organised youth associations and youth councils in Europe**. This is important because such organisations have come under political and financial pressure in many Member States, despite the fact that they teach young people important skills relating to politics and policy-making processes in a democratic system. Youth organisations throughout Europe should therefore be strengthened within the framework of the new European Youth Work Agenda established by the Council of Europe and the EU and through better structural support for the Erasmus+ programme.

Binding youth participation in the EU legislative process

The EU should make a visible effort to increase the political participation of young people and use the Council of Europe's youth co-management structure as a basis for introducing a system for **binding youth participation in the EU legislative process that allows young people to influence this process**. The EU Youth Conference must be used as an important instrument for implementing the European Youth Goals and expanding the EU Youth Dialogue.

1.5 Promoting gender equality

Gender equality is an important EU treaty objective. Although it has been included as a key principle in all EU treaties since 1957, it has still not been fully achieved.

Implementing the European Gender Equality Strategy

We therefore welcome the **European Gender Equality Strategy 2020-2025** and are calling for rapid implementation of the proposed measures. In particular, we call upon the EU and its Member States to fully **ratify the Council of Europe's Istanbul Convention** as quickly as possible in order to consistently combat violence against women and domestic violence. The new German government should also work with the EU on the development of measures to discourage

countries from withdrawing from the Convention. We also support rapid implementation of the **LGBTIQ Equality Strategy**.

Implementing the EU Work-Life Balance Directive and reducing and eliminating pension and pay gaps

We call upon the EU Member States to **rapidly and properly implement the EU Work-Life Balance Directive** and to take measures that will **reduce and ultimately eliminate pension and pay gaps between men and women**. Gender equality must be taken into account more extensively in EU budgets and in the national recovery and resilience plans in the Member States. This can be done by having the European Commission conduct gender-specific analyses of the programmes in order to determine the contribution their proposed measures will make to the treaty objective of gender equality. The special report on Gender Mainstreaming in the EU Budget published by the European Court of Auditors in May 2021 revealed key deficits in this regard. We also plan to initiate an open and constructive discussion within our network on the Commission's proposal for a directive that would implement binding measures to ensure pay transparency in relation to gender.

1.6 Strengthening transparency at EU level

Public and parliamentary debate form just as much part of a pluralistic democracy as lobbying. However, such debates and lobbying activities can only contribute to greater democracy and legitimacy in the EU legislative process if the associated activities are made completely transparent by all those involved. We therefore support measures that enable representative associations to have a transparent and equal influence on the legislative process as well as measures for ensuring that all the decisions taken in that process are comprehensible.

Clear documentation of decision-making processes

The European legislative process works best with the **Community Method, which is comprehensible and transparent in terms of content and language**. EU institutions should publicly document information on the extent to which they take the views of national and European interest groups into account in the EU legislative process. In order to increase transparency, the EU should introduce a publication requirement for all amendment proposals and implement measures that ensure the participation of national and European interest groups in the EU legislative process. The EU should also soon reach an agreement on the revised regulation on public access to EU documents so that it can finally fulfil its obligations in accordance with Article 15 III TFEU after years of blockage in the Council.

Consistently disclosing external influence on acts of law

The transparency that is to be guaranteed in accordance with Article 11 TEU applies to all EU institutions. The European Parliament already publishes drafts produced by reporting bodies in addition to all amendment proposals before votes are taken in the responsible committees. The European Council should do the same in its capacity as the second legislative institution: **All Member States should disclose their respective positions early on in the negotiation stage**

and clearly explain these so that the public knows where each Member State stands on a particular issue.

Similarly, Member States should increasingly publish the information on **lobby meetings according to their actual relevance**. In particular, we would like the German Federal Government to sign the joint non-paper for greater transparency and accountability of the EU, which has already been adopted by several Member States.

We welcome the fact that the Council is now participating in the **Transparency Register**, although at the same time we must point out that the new rules only cover a small number of meetings with lobbyists. Analogous to European Commission and the European Parliament, the requirement for entry into the Transparency Register should apply to all meetings held with decision makers from the Council, including the heads of all the Permanent Representations of the EU Member States.

We also support the proposal made by the European Parliament to establish a **joint independent ethics body** to monitor the EU institutions' compliance with rules of conduct. We call upon the Commission to draw up an inter-institutional agreement as quickly as possible on the basis of this proposal and appeal to all three major EU institutions, and in particular to the Council, to commit themselves to this agreement. At the same time, the German Federal Government should explore possibilities for stepping up its involvement with the European Network of Ombudsmen.

Making the informal triologue an exception

Although the informal triologue mechanism for shortening the legislative process in the EU does speed up the process for adopting new laws, it does not ensure the required degree of transparency. The provisions contained in the 2018 ruling of the European Court of Justice on the disclosure requirement for documents associated with informal dialogues must be implemented in their entirety. **The circumstances under which dialogues may be conducted (i.e. when and how) must be made clear from a legal point of view.** The principle here is that dialogues should only be conducted when necessary and the procedure should be as transparent as possible.

1.7 Modernising Germany's European policy

The German Presidency of the Council of the EU illustrated just how high expectations are regarding Germany's European policy. Germany's position as the EU's largest Member State and strongest economy thus necessitates a modern and forward-looking European policy.

Strengthening the coherence of European coordination

European politics is domestic politics. Domestic German politicians should therefore not focus exclusively on short-term national interests, as national interests and national policies within EU Member States always need to take into account European aspects as well.

The new German government needs to modernise its European coordination activities in a manner that will lead to the establishment of an integrated German European policy. Departmentalised thinking and party-political egoism must not be allowed to interfere with the formulation of such a policy. We therefore call for the creation of a **position for a Federal Minister for Special Affairs**,

who is to be responsible for European policy coordination within the framework of a governance unit. This minister should also consolidate expertise from various German government departments and be placed on an equal footing with other cabinet members with regard to participation in the democratic discourse on both the European and national level.

Grounding Germany's European policy in parliamentary and social institutions

German European policy must be extensively grounded in parliamentary and social institutions in order to ensure that Germany can continuously maintain its capacity to act in a united Europe. The Bundestag should be incorporated into Council meeting by means of preparations and follow-up in its relevant parliamentary committees. Representatives from democratic associations as well as experts in relevant fields also need to be more extensively incorporated into the procedures for shaping Germany's European policy. Strategy, efficiency and democratic participation are not mutually exclusive and together they ensure broad social acceptance.

Modern German diplomacy should contribute its knowledge about all European partner countries to the domestic internal debate on German European policy. The new German government should attempt to revitalise the French-Polish-German **Weimar Triangle** discussion forum. It should also seek to intensify its relations with the government in Prague, especially given the fact that the Czech Republic will be assuming the Presidency of the Council of the EU in the second half of 2022.

In order to ensure the success of such efforts, we need a **European public diplomacy** with a focus beyond government officials and promoting the establishment of a structured pan-European dialogue.

1.8 Ensuring a future-proof and democratic European budget

The agreement on a financially solid multi-annual financial framework (MFF) for the period 2021-2027 and the *NextGenerationEU* recovery instrument have solidified the EU. In order to ensure that Germany can remain effective over the long term, a greater amount of investment needs to be made for the future – investments that generate added value for Europe and which are accompanied by measures to make EU budget policy more democratic.

Expanding investments that generate added value for Europe and ensure sustainability

Pan-European tasks and projects like the European Green Deal are set to become more and more important. The EU budget should therefore be **aligned more strongly with European priorities** and its volume should be increased beyond the payment period of *NextGenerationEU* to **considerably more than 1% of the gross national income**.

The EU also needs to ensure that it will be able to meet the **quota for climate-related expenditure** of at least 30% starting with this budget period as well as **the target quota for biodiversity expenditure of 10%** in the MFF by 2026 at the latest. It must also ensure that the remaining funds are used in line with the "Do No Significant Harm" principle. This will require the use of an adequate monitoring system. The EU also needs to make sure that all Member States meet the 37% climate quota and the 20% digital quota in the national recovery and resilience plans and comply with the "Do No Significant Harm" principle. Within the framework of the reform of the EU fiscal regulations that has been announced, the further development of the **Stability and**

Growth Pact should be considered and discussed in close coordination with representative associations.

We also support measures to increase the income that can be made available for the EU budget. The joint bonds issued for *NextGenerationEU* should not be repaid solely via Member State contributions but also with the **EU's own resources**. The question as to which resources are to be used here should be a focus of the political debate. If Member States are to participate equally in MFF payments, then **correction budget instruments ("rebates") must be eliminated**. Communication on the EU budget **must be made more transparent and fact-based** and should not be influenced by national interests and arguments regarding net contributors and net beneficiaries.

Designing a more democratic EU budget

Given the importance of the MFF for the EU's capacity to act, the **European Parliament (EP), the German Bundestag and representative associations** must be extensively incorporated into negotiations and implementation processes for the budget and the recovery instrument. We expressly criticise the lack of options for EP participation in the decisions relating to the national recovery and resilience plans and we call upon the Commission to fully comply with its obligation to provide the EP with relevant information in this regard. We also would have liked to see greater participation on the part of representative associations, and in particular the social partners, in developing the German recovery and resilience plan.

We support an **alignment of the MFF budget periods with the legislative period of the European Parliament** and we would also like the European Court of Auditors to work more closely with national auditor courts and to be given more extensive authority. In the future, the EU budget should include a **democracy bonus** that would enable projects conducted by democratically structured organisations to receive greater support when funds are distributed.

New decision-making processes for the MFF will also be needed over the medium term, whereby these should be based on the majority principle in the Council and allow for equal participation by the European Parliament. This issue should be discussed during the Conference on the Future of Europe.

2 Shaping a global Europe

The success of the EU is closely linked to the maintenance of its rules-based multilateral order. As a project for peace, unity and freedom, Europe has a responsibility to promote stability and sustainable prosperity worldwide, overcome boundaries and defend democratic values, the principles of the rule of law and human rights, such as the right to asylum, around the world.

2.1 Deepening European foreign and security policy

The international order is undergoing a major transformation marked by upheaval in many places and the EU is in danger of becoming a victim of the strategic competition between global powers. Given this situation, the German Federal Government must make a major credible effort to strengthen the EU as a global player. This will also involve utilising the EU's economic strength more effectively in order to defend European interests and values. Maintaining a rules-based international order and achieving European sovereignty will only be possible if Germany and its European partners make a tremendous joint effort.

Promoting multilateralism and expanding the common defence policy

Wars and civil wars in neighbouring regions, trade disputes, hybrid warfare, cyberattacks and terrorism – threats to the security of EU citizens are increasing noticeably. In view of this situation, the EU must continue to reduce confrontation through **peaceful conflict resolution and multilateral negotiations** and also promote human rights, international law, free trade and climate protection on a global level. The Council's adoption of conclusions on European climate diplomacy as well as the initiative of the German Foreign Office for an Alliance for Multilateralism represent the right approaches in this respect. The German Federal Government should continue on this path with its European partners and call for a permanent **seat for Europe on the United Nations Security Council**, not least because this would initiate a reform process for the United Nations that is long overdue.

Given the changed geopolitical situation, the EU needs to strengthen its capacity to act in the area of security policy **and expand defence policy cooperation via the Strategic Compass. The EU must also move ahead with the ambitious continuation of the Initiative on Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO)**. PESCO should pursue the goal of integrating military contingents from the various Member States in order to establish a coherent EU military force that can be deployed at any time. The social framework conditions for the members of such a force must be harmonised at a high level. The resulting new military structures should be subject to effective parliamentary control by the European Parliament and a parliamentary commissioner for the military.

Speaking with one voice in foreign relations

As an important addition to strategic considerations, the EU must also achieve a coherent and effective foreign policy through institutional change. We therefore support the introduction of a system in which **decisions in the Foreign Affairs Council are made on the basis of a qualified**

majority and call upon the EU to commit itself to a gradual reform through the use of *passerelle* clauses.

The EU must also take steps to ensure it can **speak with one voice** in its relations with third countries **and use its economic power to defend its interests and values**. This is particularly important with regard to its **relations with China**, for which a coherent strategy must be developed. This strategy should have a strong transatlantic component as well as elements that safeguard sovereignty of European policy in addition to economic and technological sovereignty and ensure compliance with internationally recognised minimum occupational safety and social standards. Only on the basis of this strategy should the EU continue to negotiate and ultimately ratify its planned investment agreement with China.

The German government should commit itself to **establishing a close foreign and security policy partnership with all EU neighbouring countries**, and in particular with the United Kingdom, to promote common principles and values.

In order to ensure that the political, diplomatic and operational capacities can be developed, which are needed to maintain and expand Europe's ability to act, the Member States need to make a joint effort to create a broadly accepted **European foreign policy vision and strategy** that goes beyond the elements of the Strategic Compass. Not only politicians and government agencies but also academic institutions, media organisations and representative associations must be involved in the process for creating this vision and strategy.

Promoting open strategic autonomy and fair trade partnerships

The EU must continue to globally promote open markets, free trade and global value chains. Just under half of the EU's total economic output is based on foreign trade, which is why the EU should continue to support fair competition in international trade and the application of internationally valid occupational safety and social standards. We support the Commission's initiative to promote **open strategic autonomy for European companies in the global market** and employ suitable new instruments to counter subsidies in third countries that distort the market and competition. This initiative should be supplemented by a more robust analysis of foreign direct investment as well as by measures to protect the system of free trade.

The EU must **strengthen the multilateral trading system** and continue to support efforts to reform the World Trade Organization in order to improve the enforcement of trade rules and regulations. New free trade agreements need to be designed sustainably and democratically, with extensive participation of representative associations and measures that ensure the greatest transparency possible. European trade policy must be characterised by fairness as opposed to the threat of trade conflicts around the globe.

This **partnership approach in EU trade policy** should be particularly emphasised in political and economic relations with countries in Africa, the Caribbean and the Pacific region. We welcome the fact that the Commission is focusing its foreign policy on expanding and improving EU-Africa relations and we encourage the Commission to initiate a paradigm shift in these mutual relations. Because now it is of importance to keep the promise that has been made to eliminate the donor-recipient structure and establish a true and fair partnership of equals.

2.2 Dismantling borders in Europe

The elimination of borders, the freedom of movement in the Schengen Area and diverse cross-border cooperation are visible symbols of European unity. At the same time, the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic showed how fragile this borderless cooperation is and how easily national reflexes resurrect. It is not only actual borders that play a role here but also the mental borders that continue to exist in many people's minds.

Putting a stop to measures that undermine Schengen

Temporary border checks were being conducted on an increasingly frequent basis even before the pandemic. Such actions challenge the basic freedoms of Europe and endanger economic growth, cross-border trade, employment and prosperity. We call upon the Member States to **cease the continuous undermining of Schengen and to discontinue border checks in the Schengen Area**. The Member States must coordinate closely with one another and utilise measures that are applied uniformly throughout the EU to combat the COVID-19 pandemic in line with their given health situations. In order to effectively deal with virus variants, we also call upon the EU to undertake additional efforts to supply vaccines to third countries and especially EU neighbouring countries.

The Member States must also work in a coordinated manner with regard to protecting the external borders of the Schengen Area and gradually opening up to third countries. In particular, the European Commission and the German Federal Government must ensure that EU citizens are not differentiated into EU expatriates and nationals, regardless of their current place of residence or place of work in the EU.

The competencies of the European law enforcement agency (**Europol**) need to be **further developed** and the European Border and Coast Guard Agency (**Frontex**) must be **expanded** into a border police force under the control of the European Parliament and the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights. The latter aspect is important for ensuring that the EU acts transparently and in line with fundamental rights in all areas.

We also believe that **Romania, Bulgaria and Croatia should join the Schengen Area** as soon as they fulfil all the associated criteria.

Moving ahead with the accession process for the Western Balkan countries

The EU must offer the **Western Balkan countries credible prospects for EU accession** and must also **stand behind those EU resolutions and policies that promote stability in the region and halt the spread of authoritarian nationalist movements**. The EU and its Member States must move ahead more rapidly with the accession process for countries in South Eastern Europe and insist that all candidate countries act in line with democratic values and the rule of law. Wherever the latter is shown not to be the case, the EU should suspend negotiations on accession and discontinue pre-accession assistance.

At the same time, and in order to ensure successful negotiations, all stakeholders should be incorporated into the accession negotiation process. More specifically, as part of a process of true European public diplomacy, any accession process must be **critically discussed by all social**

forces, political actors and institutions and subsequently **given wide support**. For this reason, the EU should also provide more support to independent and pro-European organisations in candidate countries.

2.3 Aligning migration and asylum policy with European values

The EU must develop with a European solution for migration and asylum policy and ensure that such a policy is aligned with the common values and fundamental rights that are enshrined in the EU treaties. Among other things, the EU needs to combat the root causes of flight by employing a coherent approach and must also reform the Common European Asylum System in order to safeguard its credibility and capacity to act.

Combating the root causes of flight and implementing safe legal forms of immigration

Development policy alone is not enough to combat the various causes of flight. What is needed instead is an **inter-institutional approach** that focuses on development opportunities, the promotion of good governance, climate protection and conflict prevention and resolution. The EU should also coordinate **sea rescue operations** and support the development of **safe legal forms of immigration**.

Fundamentally reforming European asylum policy

Asylum seekers need to be able to **enter Europe safely and be offered protection** once they arrive. The Common European Asylum System (CEAS) in its current state does not respect this principle. Protecting people must be given priority over protecting borders and the catastrophic situation in the reception facilities at the EU's external borders needs to end.

We therefore call for a fundamental CEAS reform in a process that is driven not by ideological discussions but instead by the development of long-term solutions that are aligned with human rights principles. The reform process should begin with a dialogue and efforts to establish a better understanding of the importance of European solidarity in the area of asylum policy. Within this framework, the German Federal Government should commit itself to clear interpretation and application of Article 80 TFEU in asylum and migration policy and promote the establishment of **incentives in the system for distributing refugees** among the Member States – for example the provision of funding to municipalities and regions that are willing to accept refugees.

All persons seeking protection must be assured of a **fair, legally sound and transparent asylum procedure** that focuses on human dignity as its guiding principle. This especially applies to the proposed accelerated procedures. We thus need to establish a European Asylum Agency that is empowered to take action. In addition, we need to set up a human rights monitoring system at the EU's external borders under the direction of the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, in order to guarantee consistent standards for refugee recognition and accommodation. We also emphatically call upon the Member States to expand activities related to humanitarian admission and the resettlement operations of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees.

Integration into society must be made easier by rapid access to apprenticeships and the labour market, educational programmes, integration courses and programmes that teach European

values. The EU should also introduce fair and unbureaucratic procedures for recognising professional qualifications and degrees. Language education must be made available to all migrants – regardless of their gender, the composition of their families, their prospects for being able to remain in Europe or their residency status. This also includes the enhanced expansion of mother and child integration centres.

Procedures for returning people who likely will not be granted asylum or refugee status need to be clearly defined. The system of readmission agreements and nationally defined safe countries of origin needs to be reformed because common European rules and regulations have to be employed in order to guarantee the protection of the human rights of returnees.

Shaping immigration policy

The Member States must also manage labour migration in a fair and responsible manner.

The EU can support such migration by establishing assistance centres in the countries of origin and by expanding legal pathways to immigration, including the use of the Blue Card system. Institutions that are involved in migration and integration policies must also be strengthened and unnecessary bureaucracy must be eliminated here.

3 Making Europe fit for the future

The EU faces the challenge of guiding Europe through the digital and green transformation. We therefore support the implementation of a European policy that can reconcile the objective of ensuring a competitive and resilient economy with the ambition to achieve ecological sustainability and maintain and increase social justice.

3.1 Shaping a modern and inclusive education policy

One of the fundamental prerequisites for a competitive, sustainable and fair European society is the establishment of an innovative and inclusive education policy that is pursued by all educational institutions and supported by broad segments of society. The EU should promote the establishment of such a policy within the framework of its limited ability to coordinate, supplement and support the education policies of its Member States.

Promoting education policy with an integrated approach

We support the expansion of the **European Education Area** in terms of broadening the horizons of both teachers and students and improving their development opportunities. However, when implementing measures, the EU needs to respect the different traditions in Europe, especially the different ways education is viewed in the various Member States. For this reason, the EU should focus on **a broadly defined concept of education** that also takes into account the fact that education is a life-long process that goes far beyond formal education in schools and universities and whose goals should not be limited to preparation for working life. In addition to addressing the comparability and recognition of formal education and professional qualifications and degrees, the EU should take steps to increase the recognition of non-formal and informal education and it should also support programmes that are carried out by social stakeholders.

Political education, and in particular education programmes that focus on Europe, strengthen European democracy. We therefore need to develop an integrated approach that imparts knowledge about the countries of Europe and European political institutions at an early stage of the education process and in all education formats. Such an approach should also emphasise the importance of values and basic freedoms, promote the establishment of a European identity and teach skills that facilitate democratic participation.

Improving access to education and Erasmus+

We are committed to **strengthening digital education** and integrating new concepts into curricula, such as education components that focus on sustainable development and economics. In particular, the EU has a lot of catching up to do in terms of access to digital education programmes, the teaching of digital skills and measures that familiarise citizens with how to use digital media. Here, the EU needs to provide targeted funding via its various education-related programmes. The EU should also take steps to improve **continuing education and vocational education programmes** in order to optimise the quality of professional and vocational education throughout Europe and improve its reputation. Among other things, this would serve to ease the skilled labour shortages in Europe. A legal right to continuing education should be discussed in this connection.

We also believe it is important to ensure **inclusiveness in the European Education Area**. This means that learning success should not depend on one's socio-economic background and that members of all social classes should be able to participate in educational exchange programmes. Access to the relevant programmes will therefore need to be simplified and expanded. EU citizens who do not attend universities are still not participating in Erasmus+ in sufficient numbers, which is why we support the institutionalisation of a pan-European educational exchange and greater support as well as funding for foreign language instruction within the framework of professional and vocational education programmes. It is crucial here that educational institutions be financially strengthened and extensively incorporated into the implementation of the new Erasmus+ programme.

3.2 Shaping the ecological transformation

The COVID-19 pandemic has revealed just how important decisive preventive action is. We therefore welcome the fact that the EU views the recovery plans as an opportunity to shape the sustainable transformation. Based on the international obligations it has committed to and in view of the irreversible consequences of environmental and climate crises, the EU and its Member States should continue with their efforts to achieve the Paris Agreement targets while at the same time maintaining European competitiveness and instruments of social justice.

Firmly establishing climate neutrality and sustainability as fundamental policy objectives

The goal of the EU's **European Green Deal** is to achieve climate neutrality in Europe by 2050, whereby legally binding targets have been set via the European Climate Law, which among others calls for a net reduction of greenhouse gas emissions of at least 55% by 2030 as compared to 1990 levels. In order to ensure the associated necessary transformation can be successful, the EU **should maintain an extensive dialogue with the social partners and representative associations**. It should also initiate a broad exchange of ideas in European society across the entire political spectrum that can be used as a basis for implementing the transformation with the help of suitable instruments and funding programmes.

We also call upon the European Commission to present a framework strategy that shows how the EU **plans to comprehensively implement the UN's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)** in all policy areas in line with the principle of even distribution of burdens between generations.

Ambitious design and rapid implementation of "Fit for 55"

In order to achieve the goals of the "Fit for 55" package with regard to climate neutrality and to limit the increase of global temperature to 1.5°C, the EU needs to initiate an ambitious social dialogue on the **"Fit for 55" package programme that is to be rapidly implemented**. To this end, the EU must bring together innovative stakeholders in business and industry and society at large in order to achieve decarbonisation in all areas on the basis of the exclusive use of energy from renewable sources.

We further call upon the EU to develop and utilise a mix of **climate-optimised and socially balanced instruments** for the implementation of the "Fit for 55" package. This should include

measures to strengthen relevant market instruments and regulatory laws and standards as well as policies for maintaining and increasing the responsibilities of the Member States in the areas covered by the Climate Action Regulation. This is the only way to ensure the achievement of the legally binding targets of the first European Climate Law in accordance with the recommendations of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change.

Maintaining biodiversity and combating environmental pollution

In addition to addressing the climate crisis, we urgently need to take measures to **counteract the increasing loss of biodiversity on our continent and around the globe**. Biodiversity is the central foundation of our lives and livelihood and our health and well-being. The Member States must **implement the EU Biodiversity Strategy 2030** by introducing specific measures and must also commit itself to an associated globally binding and ambitious framework in order to stop or at least slow down the extinction of species around the world as quickly as possible. Within the framework of its **EU Action Plan: "Towards Zero Pollution for Air, Water and Soil"**, the EU should commit itself to a toxic-free environment for people and the planet.

3.3 Shaping a digital and resilient future

The common internal market is the EU's monumental achievement and the foundation that guarantees economic stability and security of supply in the EU. Still, some 30 years after the conditions for the internal market were established, the project still has not been completed and the market also needs to be prepared for the digital future.

Expanding digital sovereignty and strengthening the internal market

We call upon the EU to maintain the integrity of the internal market and simultaneously take steps to strengthen the **digital and technological sovereignty of the EU**.

First and foremost, this means ensuring **effective protection of European infrastructures against hostile attacks and maintaining total control** over European data. The EU should also take measures to counter socio-economic divergence and improve the conditions for growth and entrepreneurship. This process must begin with the establishment of the digital internal market and the development of an **effective and resilient pan-European digital infrastructure**. This should also include the establishment of a comprehensive, pan-European, user-friendly digital public service system that covers all areas and which can be used by all citizens and companies in all Member States. This digital public administration system must be designed for use throughout Europe from the very beginning – i.e. it must take into account the various requirements in different Member States.

The EU must also promote and support innovations relating to **research and development in the area of European digital services and key technologies** and improve the cross-border transfer of technology between scientific institutions and business and industry. Solid approaches already exist here within the framework of the strategic transnational IPCEI (Important Project of Common European Interest) funding projects that address issues such as hydrogen, the proposed legal framework for artificial intelligence and the European Data Strategy. All of these projects use Europe's fundamental values as a basis for attaining digital technology leadership and all of them

need to be strengthened. A reliable legal framework is needed in any case in order to establish legal certainty with regard to the commercial and economic use of data in particular. In addition, a **law on digital markets** should be created in order to ensure fair access to digital interfaces. In order to supplement EU laws on competition, the EU should qualify important online platforms as gatekeepers to which special requirements apply.

The EU must also **continue to remove barriers to the free movement of goods and services** and promote the competitiveness of European companies, and especially small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), by implementing a modern and horizontal industrial and economic policy. The Commission should pursue the goal of establishing a lean, efficient and SME-friendly regulatory framework and should also review competition rules in order to strengthen European companies that have to compete with state-subsidised rivals from third countries.

Completing the banking and capital markets union

Europe's ability to withstand crises must be strengthened by **permanently stabilising the Economic and Monetary Union on the basis of the social market economy**. To this end, the EU must complete the banking and capital markets union in the near future in order to strengthen the financial system's resilience and fully exploit the potential offered by a European capital market. The structure of the banking union must be compatible with existing well-functioning structures and should not lead to excessive regulation of small and medium-sized banks.

Strengthening the resilience of strategic medical supply systems

We need to strengthen the **security of supply** of protective medical equipment, drugs and medicines as well as medical technology and we also need to support medical and health research in addition to making cooperation on health policies a permanent feature in the EU.

3.4 Shaping social justice

Europe's future must be a just future if cohesion and well-being are to be guaranteed. Only a Europe that can reconcile the freedom of the internal market with the principle of solidarity and the need in society for a certain amount of social security will be able to regain the trust of its citizens.

Promoting social progress throughout Europe

The EU treaties all seek to facilitate the establishment and maintenance of a social market economy in one way or another and the EU should continue focusing on this on the basis of the **European Pillar of Social Rights**. Economic and social progress need to go hand in hand, especially in times of crisis.

In accordance with the principle of subsidiarity and in a close dialogue with the social partners and representative associations the EU and its Member States should, in line with the European Pillar of Social Rights Action Plan, quickly implement the principles and rights presented in the Pillar **as specific policy and legislative measures**. This is the only way the EU can meet its obligation to achieve by 2030 the core objectives of the Porto Declaration with regard to combating poverty, reducing unemployment and expanding education opportunities. However, as is explained in the

preamble to the European Pillar of Social Rights, the implementation of its principles and rights should be undertaken within the limits of the EU's socio-political powers as conferred by the treaties and should not entail an extension of those powers.

Shaping the future of work through a social dialogue

The EU should **combat unemployment**, and in particular youth unemployment, which remains high throughout Europe, by making targeted European investments, rapidly implementing the SURE instrument, reinforcing the EU Youth Guarantee and introducing additional complementary European measures. The focus here should be on addressing the causes of unemployment by means of national labour market and education reforms. The proposed reinforcement of the Youth Guarantee marks a step in the right direction. However, what is missing is a quality framework for ensuring that good jobs can be created.

This is important because regardless of the type of employment in question, **new jobs created in the digital and ecological transformation** must be able to offer economic and social security and good working conditions in line with European minimum standards. This especially applies to new forms of employment, to which EU minimum standards (e.g. for occupational safety and the prevention of certain forms of labour) must be applied in all cases.

In addition, the EU should utilise its cohesion policy, the Just Transition Fund and the new Social Climate Fund to ensure that the ecological transformation proceeds in a socially acceptable manner for low-income households and regions marked by a high level of CO₂ emissions due to intensive industrial and mining activities. The EU also needs to determine the actual financial requirements for the Social Climate Fund and then top up the fund as needed.

Efforts to establish proper conditions for decent work must always be coordinated with the social partners. We are committed to the application of the principle of co-determination in labour relations, which enables employers and employees to structure work and employment conditions together and also engage in a dialogue with the government on industrial and labour policy. We support all efforts to strengthen and further institutionalise the social dialogue and social partnership with all relevant stakeholders (and also in the context of trade unions) – at all levels and throughout the entire European Union.