



Believe in *People*

EPP Group **Position Paper**

Making Europe fit for the 21st century



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Five points for a better Europe



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1. Why do we **need Europe?** **We wish to secure** our **European way of life**

Europeans are afraid of losing control and a say in their daily lives because they are facing unprecedented challenges. Some of these challenges have technological or economical roots: digitalisation, a globalised economy, climate change. Others are created by external powers: wars in the Middle East, uncontrolled migration and terrorism, an aggressive Russia threatening freedom and peace, as well as a more inward-looking United States of America. Others are commonly faced within the Union: structural unemployment, an ageing population, the rise of political nationalism and a lack of cohesion.

Some challenges require a community response while others need a coordinated approach between Member States. Bearing in mind all those challenges, Europe is our life insurance policy in a dramatically-changing world. Without the EU, the Member States would appear weakened and at the mercy of world events. Whoever is a true patriot must also be a convinced European.



2. What **drives** our **group**? We **stand for** a **united** **Europe!**

We adhere to the European idea because we believe in the people of Europe. By working together over the last 70 years, Europeans have achieved peace, freedom and economic as well as social prosperity never before experienced by the continent. We are well aware of Europeans' concerns about their jobs, income and pensions, their identity, the future for their beloved families, their wish for common achievements and individual security. We do not believe in fear but in solutions. We stand for the European way of life; this means freedom instead of oppression, democracy instead of dictatorship, cooperation instead of egoism, security instead of hate and hope instead of anger. That differentiates us from the populists on both the right and the left.

We are inspired by our shared historical experiences, Judeo-Christian values and humanist thinking. Therefore we unconditionally stand up for human dignity, democracy, personal freedom, equality, justice and solidarity. As a group composed of Christian-Democrats and those who stand on

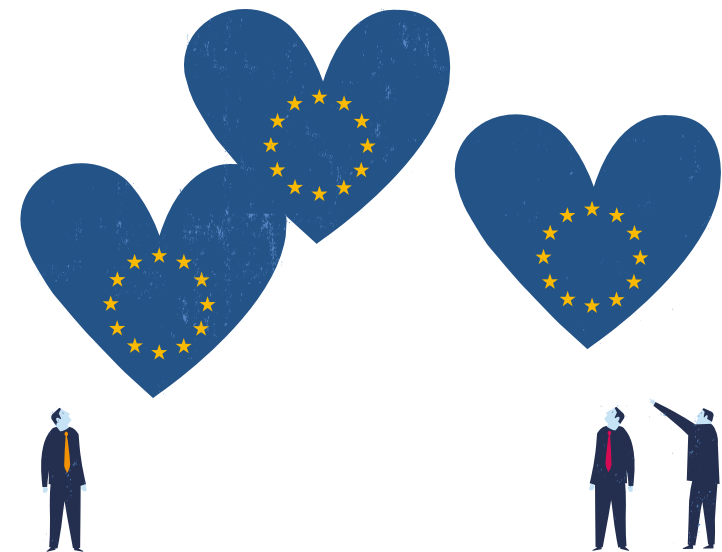
the centre-right of the political spectrum, we want a better future for all Europeans. We stand for a society that leaves no one behind, where solidarity is the driving force for social cohesion and common goals. We believe in people's individual potential to create the life they want. Instead of attempting to take control of people's lives or simply opting for a complete laissez-faire attitude, we are pro-entrepreneurship, pro-trade, pro-education, pro-research, pro-innovation, pro-market economy and pro-social responsibility with high-quality standards. As a result, we strive towards a stronger, a better European Union.

At the same time, we are convinced that both the EU and its Member States must strictly comply with the rule of law and European democratic principles. Ethical conduct and the fight against corruption are the prerequisites to regaining citizens' trust. Our values require the clear conditions laid down in the Copenhagen Criteria and the Treaty of Lisbon to be respected, not only during the accession process, but also as



fully-fledged Member States. Member States have to fulfil the conditions set, including the integration capacity of the EU as part of the Copenhagen Criteria. Only countries which mainly belong geographically to Europe can get EU membership. Turkey cannot receive full EU membership because that would be sensitive for the European Union as well as for Turkey itself. We therefore want Turkey to be part of a ring of partners around the EU of countries which cannot yet or will not join the Union.

It is our firm belief that, with the active support of the people, we will be able to create the Europe we wish to see – a united, competitive, fair, and active Europe with proud nation states. This is why we are thoroughly committed to the four freedoms of Europe: the free movement of goods, capital, services and people. Those freedoms are not negotiable. They are the prerequisite for holding Europe together and for shaping a better future. We do not need a Europe with walls and hate. We do not accept cherry picking by one country at the expense of others. On the contrary, we need a united, strong Europe that will allow us to meet the challenges we will be confronted with in the upcoming years, both locally and globally.





3. What kind of Europe is needed?

We want a **Europe for and by our citizens!**

The response to the Brexit vote cannot be more or less Europe; the response involves better cooperation between the European Union and its Member States. The EU and the nations that form it are not contradictory; on the contrary, they belong together. The European Union can only act successfully if all its Member States are successful and if both levels are constructively working together. This smarter cooperation must also involve citizens. Our citizens' say about the future of Europe has to be strengthened. The EU has to become a **true citizens' union**.

We want to enhance parliamentary democracy within the EU, with the European Parliament and the Council of Ministers as the two Chambers. The Council's statute should be adjusted accordingly. The specialised council configurations should become committees of the Council, meeting in public as an

ordinary legislator. The European Commission, as the executive arm, should act more proactively as the guardian of the treaties and of the correct implementation of EU rules. We want the European Parliament (EP) to be the guardian of democracy. For that, it has to reinforce its capacity to compel the Commission to take legislative initiatives and to control it. The legal options for EP investigative committees have to become stronger where citizens' interests are at stake. In order to enhance the results of the European elections and to strengthen the will of the voters we have to establish the "Spitzenkandidatenprozess" as a strengthened permanent practice. We support a single institutional framework for the EU. That means that the parliamentary dimension of the Eurozone has to remain within the European Parliament.

The EU must concentrate on its major tasks. The EU must learn to stand back

and to act only when it is relevant. EU citizens do not want a Europe that gets lost in details but one that acts where it can make a difference. This is why we need a clarification of the delimitation between the competences of the EU and those of the Member States at national level, providing for better application of the principles of subsidiarity and proportionality. Europe has to be big on big things and small on small things.

Those who decide must be accountable. Citizens must be able to better recognise which institution is responsible for which decision in EU policy-making. They have to be offered clear political alternatives in a more deeply politicised process. The Community method is the most effective and transparent decision-making process, with qualified majority voting in the Council and with the European Parliament fully playing its role as representative of the people. The Internal Market is proof of this. The frequent gridlocks within the Council and European Council, where individual Member States prevent fundamental decisions and frequently pressure other Member States with particular demands in other fields, must come to an end. Furthermore, the unanimity requirement must become the exception. The Council should use qualified majority voting as foreseen

in the Treaties. The intergovernmental approach may be needed sometimes to start projects, but it has to remain an exception. Effective governance at the European-level is also a precondition for securing prompt decisions without undue delay. The number of Commissioners should be reduced, as was initially foreseen in the Lisbon Treaty, to allow for a more focused and efficient college of Commissioners with truly relevant portfolios.

EU decisions are binding. What has been decided at European-level must be implemented by every Member State. The EU has to have the competences and capacity to ensure the implementation of laws that have been passed. The implementation capacities of the European Commission have to be enhanced, with the consent and control of the European Parliament and of the Council. The European Parliament has to concentrate more on scrutiny and implementation. For carrying out those tasks, we are convinced that the Union and the Member States must work in full mutual respect and in accordance with the principle of sincere and loyal cooperation.

Europe must be governed 'smartly' to get rid of excessive bureaucracy. Our policy is to decisively reduce red tape and the regulatory burden, especially to relieve



SMEs from complying with unnecessary rules. We are convinced that citizens will only accept the European idea if the EU avoids over-regulating and respects the competences of Member States and of the regions. We are therefore in favour of a more independent evaluation of impact assessments and of compliance with the subsidiarity principle. We seek to establish an independent regulatory control council to assess red tape and legislative competency. Moreover, we consider mandatory SME



and start-up tests to be an essential tool in the legislative process to ensure that the concerns of smaller companies are taken into account.



4. What **priority fields** should **Europe address?**

Security in freedom and prosperity in a Social Market Economy with a social dimension were, are and remain the two cornerstones of European integration. In this spirit, facing the major challenges of their time, the European founding fathers developed Europe into a Union of peace and freedom, while the following generation deepened economic and monetary union. Today's Europe must revitalise this spirit of joint action to give the continent security, stability and prosperity.

The European peace project must be complemented by a security union.

Today peace and freedom in Europe are not threatened by wars between Member States. Today's threats emerge rather from regional conflicts, hybrid warfare, asymmetric conflicts and international terrorism. Europe must become an anchor of stability in an increasingly insecure world. The EU must therefore be further developed into a security union.

We want an ambitious Common Foreign and Security Policy.

For the EU to have a say in the international arena, it has to speak out with one voice. This is why better coordination of EU and Member State representation in all international organisations is needed, and, where possible and suitable, joint representation considered. Enhancing the Common Foreign and Security Policy is a must for the EU to defeat terrorism, bring peace, stability and order to its neighbourhood and set limits on autocracies. Even the establishment of a European Border and Coast Guard and a European Civil Protection Body implies the development of military capacities. The EPP Group advocates establishing a European Defence Union with the EU as guarantor of its own defence and as a security provider. We want a true European Defence Policy which entails the creation of permanent operational headquarters, structured cooperation and exchange of information, and an EU Battle Group, prepared to act at all times. We call for the use of the full potential of the provisions

of the Lisbon Treaty on Common Security. The Defence Union needs to strengthen our external action and engagements, be it within the UN, NATO or through coalitions of willing states. Very close cooperation with the USA is essential for the security of the whole of Europe. We have to swiftly build this security union and allow Member States under particular threat from international terrorism to go ahead jointly. We are thus ready to accept a Europe of different speeds in this field in the framework of the Treaties. Our long-term goal is European armed forces.

We firmly believe fighting terrorism is also the EU's duty.

The European response to the recent terrorist attacks in France, Belgium, Germany and anywhere else is straightforward: Europe must stand together. The terrorists' aim to see a frightened and paralysed Europe is failing. The EPP Group is, and will be, the political force standing up for Europe's security. For us, Europe's security comes first: much better and stronger European cooperation and integration is required, in terms of exchange of information by intelligence and law enforcement services and exchange of best practice on preventive and repressive action against radicalisation and terrorism. It is essential to us that victims

of terrorism are given particular attention, that we guarantee and safeguard the appropriate rights, support and protection for them and that justice preserves their dignity and memory, now more than ever. All relevant European databases must be made interoperable and accessible to the competent European agencies and to national law enforcement authorities on the ground to ensure the best protection of EU citizens and EU borders. In parallel, we have to invest in much smarter security technology for protecting people, e.g. by developing face scanners and by improving profiling systems. Furthermore, Europe needs a legal framework fit to cope with the various terrorist threats. Europe is our guarantee for both security and freedom. The principle of the rule of law must always be respected in our fight against terrorism.

We must put all our efforts in better controlling our borders.

The flow of refugees and economic migrants arriving in Europe has challenged our capacity to cope at the European, national and local levels. We have always supported a common European approach to protecting our external borders. The newly-created European Border and Coast Guard has to be fully set up and sufficiently equipped. But we also have to control and regulate the number

of migrants entering into the European Union. After the last years of crises, we must develop a flexible and sustainable "fairness mechanism" that would allow a fairer sharing of responsibility and solidarity among Member States. Assistance and protection should primarily be granted by the EU to refugees in third countries in crisis and in their neighbouring areas. It should be the European Union that decides who will qualify for protection within Europe. The Schengen system must be preserved and deepened. The EU must update its common policy on asylum to effectively protect those refugees and persecuted people who qualify for protection in accordance with our Christian



and humanitarian values and swiftly return those who do not. Furthermore, we need to tackle more seriously the root causes of migration and help to bring peace to the EU's Southern Neighbourhood, foster economic development in Africa and develop plans to reduce instability in those regions.

The Economic and Monetary Union must be complemented by an innovation union.

We will need a fairer Social Market Economy, creating jobs, wealth and social fairness. In an economic world that is increasingly interconnected and dependent on innovation, we will not durably achieve this goal by amassing debt and pushing for isolationism. Digitalisation and globalisation would sooner or later simply sweep away much of what is dear to us in Europe. The best incentives for growth are favourable economic framework conditions. This is why we advocate structural reforms and targeted investment, fair taxation, fair trade agreements, a regain of leadership in innovation and the completion of the Single Market. We are also convinced that the EU Budget needs a system of genuine own resources, following the recommendations of the Monti report on the future financing of the EU.



**We believe in solid finances,
full employment and prosperity.**

Only with a competitive economy will tomorrow's wealth be able to develop. It is yesterday's mismanagement, not today's stability pact, that has been at the origin of youth unemployment in large parts of Europe. We stand for fiscal stability and competitiveness on the basis of structural reforms. Solid finances, full employment and prosperity are not a contradiction, but can only be achieved together in the long run. In the same way, a Social Market Economy cannot accept tax havens and tax fraud. We need fair standards for taxation within the European Union and beyond its borders. The Euro is the currency of the whole European Union. Only with a stable Euro will people gain trust in our economic order. Furthermore, we want to complete the Economic and Monetary Union by strengthening economic governance in the European Union and especially in the Eurozone. National debt limits should be considered, as well as the creation of a framework for an orderly sovereign default procedure. A solid currency needs a consistent structure within the EU framework and an effective mechanism for its own stability. This is why we are committed to the stability pact, complemented with an ambitious

investment pact in order to achieve full employment throughout Europe in the long run. The Juncker Plan for strategic investments can only be a starting point, in synergy with the Cohesion Funds and the Common Agricultural Policy. We have to support more similar projects. We need further investments that are fuelled not with debts but with ideas. Europe does not need untargeted stimulus packages but long-term investment incentives and adequate capital market conditions.

**We put the social dimension at the
core of our Social Market Economy.**

While Europe has emerged from the economic and financial crisis, too many people are still struggling with unemployment. We are therefore convinced that building a strong European social agenda has to be part of our economic model and at the core of the EPP Group's principles of solidarity, dignity and social justice in order to tackle the roots of social and territorial inequalities in Europe.

**We believe in free trade as a motor
for prosperity and jobs.**

The best incentives for investment are favourable economic framework conditions. We advocate fair free trade agreements to

make globalisation work for our citizens. Free trade is not just about abolishing tariffs but about enhancing social standards, consumer protection and a Social Market Economy. Only with fair free trade we will be able to maintain our social, environmental and technological standards globally, and at the same time improve living conditions in our partner countries, by opposing child labour for example. Excluding free trade categorically and from the outset is economically unsound and deeply unsocial. Europe and its Member States must rather concentrate on how they can create new jobs and protect our companies from selling out. For both, free trade is inevitable. The European Union and its institutions have sole competence on the common commercial policy of the Union as guaranteed by the treaties. Member States have their full say through their democratically-elected governments in the Council. They should refrain from the short-sighted temptation of bringing in new veto players for purely political reasons, which would render the conclusion of any new trade agreement virtually impossible.

We want to foster innovation.

For the past 500 years, Europe has been the creativity hub of the world. Major global innovations have been made in Europe. The



Googles and Facebooks of today show us a different picture. Europe must become more ambitious again. We need new, high-flying projects, such as Airbus when it was first conceived. This way people can see that Europe is not an agency for regulation, but a well of ideas for a better life. We want to foster innovation and transpose Europe's economic power into innovative power. Europe must retain its leadership in the bio-based and circular economy and regain technological and digital leadership by creating a common research, innovation and open science area, by transforming our scientific results into innovations in the real economy and by digitising the industry.

The digital empowerment of citizens and enterprises must be a European priority and unjustified barriers to the cross-border development of e-commerce and access to



culture have to be dismantled. Tangible and quick results depend also on new business models and on broader consumer choice in a fully-functioning and integrated Single Market. The rules of the Single Market must be translated into the digital world.

The Digital Single Market, with its 510 million consumers, can bring us to our full potential, make Europe a first mover and increase its global competitiveness. The EPP Group believes that connectivity, and consequently the development of infrastructure, boosting Industry 4.0, eliminating e-commerce barriers and the digital empowerment of single citizens and enterprises, especially SMEs and start-ups, must be a European priority. To this end, the EU must create a friendly environment for investment, increase coordination of spectrum management, develop digital skills and literacy and build trust among all partners of the data world to forge a competitive data-driven economy. The EU must set the legislative framework for the new economy to avoid further fragmentation across Member States. The implementation of the Digital Single Market and the Energy Union are crucial to achieve these goals.

Furthermore, we want to launch concrete projects, like voice recognition, robotics

and artificial intelligence, supercomputers, 5G mobile and smart cities and villages, to help Europe unfold its innovative potential. Europe should combine its innovation capacities with creativity. In the digital age, advanced technology alone does not make the difference. What makes the difference in an ever more competitive IT sector, is companies' capacity to turn tech into lifestyle. Europe can become a unique place in the world for innovation and creativity.

At the same time, Europe must better address the big research questions of our times, such as fighting cancer or technical solutions to climate change, by developing lead projects. The EU Budget must be better targeted and reorganised accordingly. Europe must better invest in its future and allocate fewer resources to old structures. Europe must increasingly offer solutions to the urgent problems of humanity.

Finally we are convinced that Europe must play a leading role in inventing a new growth model based on a sustainable and circular economy to protect our natural resources. Most of our environmental problems can only be addressed at European-level because pollutants don't respect borders. We therefore defend a market-based approach where European environmental policy is meant to help industry to innovate and address consumers concerns while staying competitive.



5. We want to **promote** a **Europe** of the **Youth** and **deliver a bright** **future** for our **societies** and **European families**

Europe has to become a driving force for justice and solidarity between generations. We are fighting for a brighter future for families in cross policy areas. Ensuring a sustainable and fair socio-economic policy lies at the core of a better life for all families. Furthermore, we want a fruitful exchange of ideas on tackling the demographic challenges between the various European regions. As economic, fiscal and political integration will evolve, our EU Budget will also have to adapt, while retaining its core fundamentals: investment in competitiveness, jobs for young people and more cohesion among its Member States.

At the same time, we have to support a European identity for future generations. As many young people as possible should experience "Europe" on their own. We want

to introduce fresh and meaningful interactive projects that will engage young people in Europe, such as an InterRail ticket for their 18th birthday. This will not only enable young Europeans to discover the beauty and diversity of the continent, it would also create a whole new range of possibilities for European regions and cities to link their projects to the European concept. Furthermore, we want to enhance the Erasmus programme, for university studies and for professional training alike. We want to establish the principle that Erasmus is possible for all youth, regardless of their background. We want to promote young entrepreneurs by encouraging their start-ups and innovative SME businesses to apply for EU funding.

Europeans will only be able to act together if they are able to understand each other.



Erasmus



We therefore want a part of the EU Budget to be dedicated to fostering skills for success in the 21st century across all Member States. Every child must have access to quality education and the possibility, under the responsibility of the Member States, to acquire foreign-language, digital, creativity, analytical or critical skills more thoroughly than is possible today. Europe's biggest asset is its human capacity. By fully developing our skills, we provide young Europeans with the best guarantee for a secure and brighter future.

The European Union is at a crossroads. It is therefore our collective challenge and individual responsibility today to reach out to and engage with every single one of our citizens to give Europeans confidence and make them proud again of this unique project they have built over the last decades, for their children's peace and prosperity.





Published by: EPP Group in the European Parliament
Press and Communications Service
Publications Team

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