

Draft EPP Congress document: 'Europe secures our Future'

1. Our Union of success and hope

Europe has gone through a series of crises in recent years. And although the European project has seen setbacks and stagnation in the past, the current situation seems particularly serious. We find ourselves on the verge of a decisive moment: we can head towards a more fragmented Europe, or we can decide to turn the tide, (re)shape Europe to make it fit for the 21st century and deliver results that address the concerns of our citizens. The EPP is determined to choose the second option!

We should also not forget that choosing this path represents a challenge to rediscover our true identity. Seen from a wider perspective, European integration has been a success story. In these times of accumulating crises, it is important to be aware of this. The European Union has guaranteed peace, democracy and prosperity for its citizens and Member States for almost 70 years. It is still the greatest political achievement in history to serve the people of our continent. The European Union and Europeans themselves have turned the page of a tragic history by freeing ourselves from fascist and communist dictatorships. We have created a new image of Europe in the world, far removed from imperialism and colonialism. We aspire to become a regional and global actor, driven by our Judeo-Christian and humanist values and our Hellenic-Roman heritage, as well as by the values of the Enlightenment. We have improved the Single Market and enabled the free movement of people, goods, services and capital among Member States; we have created a monetary union and defended it amidst the challenges of a global economic and financial crisis. We have found our way back to economic growth and fiscal consolidation in most Member States. Furthermore, we have managed to attract many more Member States.

We should be proud of these achievements and point them out more often. But we cannot take them for granted, and we should draw lessons from our mistakes. The Union is going through a difficult time at present, as are our Member States and their respective democracies. All the ideas which make up liberal democracy and secure social cohesion are being challenged in a new world full of all kinds of uncertainties.

New challenges

Europeans must address new challenges. Some challenges have external origins: terrorist attacks, climate change, uncontrolled migration, wars in the Middle East, an aggressive Russia violating freedom and peace, economic and social opportunities and challenges arising from globalisation. Others originate within the Union: a changing demography, political extremism, right-wing and left-wing populism, high unemployment and growing inequalities. The EU needs to concentrate on policies with a true European added value, which Member States alone cannot provide. The challenges go beyond the economy, although unemployment and economic

46 uncertainty remain, in certain Member States, at an unacceptable level. These challenges
47 concern security, global warming, the fair distribution of wealth, the functioning of democracy
48 at all levels of power, the rule of law and a free and responsible society with independent media.

49 Our open societies, open democracies and open economies within the EU are under threat from
50 those longing for a nostalgic nationalism which would be harmful for our prosperity and which
51 would undermine our values.

52 Europeans are concerned about their jobs, income and pensions, their identity, communal life
53 and personal security. This concern is exploited by extremists from both left and right. The EPP,
54 however, seeks to transform this fear into hope. There is still significant potential for positive
55 change within our societies; but time is running out. In the short term, Europeans want to see
56 results in the areas that concern them most. But political leaders will also have to keep the long-
57 term future in mind.

58
59 In this globalised world, democratic sovereignty has been weakened; it is only by nations' pooling
60 together that true and effective sovereignty can be restored. Europe can only act forcefully and
61 independently as a community.

62

63 **Thinking ahead**

64

65 In the past, too little attention has been given to building solid foundations and continued public
66 support for the major projects that have transformed our continent: e.g. a common currency,
67 the free movement of people, the unification of our continent. We must analyse the problems
68 and adapt our priorities accordingly, where necessary, so they become more sustainable and
69 more readily accepted. We must find solutions for the consequences of the demographic changes
70 already underway and for the digital and energy-related revolutions taking place before our very
71 eyes; for the global competition that will have an ever-growing impact; for the struggle for the
72 survival of our planet and for the new dangers of war and instability, both in our neighbourhood
73 and elsewhere. The European Union has an important role to play at regional and global level.
74 We must not shirk our responsibilities in these difficult times. On the contrary, we must set the
75 bar high and 'think big'!

76

77 Over the next ten years, we will need ambition, vision, courage and much stronger cooperation
78 as well as cohesion at all levels of power. The European Union is not the only solution, but it is
79 an essential one. A more fractured Europe will be a less secure Europe. Divided we fall; but by
80 acting together, we must succeed. This collective effort must reassure our fellow citizens and
81 protect them. The Union must not fail, since the cost of 'non-Europe', not only economically,
82 would be enormous. We cannot limit ourselves to creating a 'space' for free movement; we must
83 also create a 'place', a home, which protects us. The EPP must seek a new synthesis between
84 openness and protection; it must display an identity that can be open to the world in national
85 and European terms precisely because this identity is ingrained and self-assured. This tension
86 between openness and protection is not limited to the EU level. It exists in each of our countries,
87 in the USA and elsewhere. A balance must be found.

88

89 The nation-states are the masters of the Treaties. The nation stands for historical and cultural
90 identity. The EU and the nations that form it are not in contradiction; rather, they strengthen and
91 complement each other.

92

93 We want also to give to our peoples a better knowledge of the way in which our institutions work
94 and benefit our citizens and support the growth of the consciousness of a common European
95 citizenship.

96 For the next decade, we will have to work within the Union's existing institutional framework,
97 which was fundamentally reformed and strengthened in 2009. We must reflect long and hard on
98 the future changes required in order to make our Union more transparent, more effective and
99 more democratic.

100

101 **A new spirit**

102

103 We must revitalise the spirit of moderation and cooperation, as well as solidarity paired with
104 responsibility, which has always characterised the EPP's political actions. Our values are mainly
105 rooted in the Christian Democratic idea of personalism, in a liberal democracy with checks-and-
106 balances, the rule of law, non-discrimination, equality and dignity for all, the fundamental
107 freedoms, separation of church and state and the social market economy. These principles must
108 first be guaranteed within our own structures. Political and societal cohesion should be based on
109 this set of ideas forming the foundation of our civilisation. We must rally the prime movers of
110 civil society in order to strengthen social cohesion. We must promote the community and family
111 resources which make society a better place and a more moderate environment for the exchange
112 of ideas. We must encourage dialogue between religions and convictions; most importantly,
113 different cultures can and must live together within the same overarching framework of values.

114

115 Political organisations and their members have a major responsibility in how they address the
116 European idea and the issue of living together within a society. We have to do all we can to
117 combat fear, aggressiveness, polarisation and extremism, and to give every opportunity to
118 creativity, generosity, vitality and social justice. In brief, this means hope. We must contribute to
119 this through concrete results and through our European and other messages, and through
120 presenting a positive discourse on Europe. We will not hesitate to defend our common European
121 identity. We must mobilise all available means to explain to our citizens, the younger generation
122 in particular, the added value of being European, of belonging to the EU. The next decade will be
123 decisive.

124

125 **2. A prosperous, sustainable and fair Union**

126

127 Our socio-economic system of entrepreneurship needs growth in order to create jobs, especially
128 for young people, and to provide a financial basis for our social security systems. But this is not
129 enough. The growth required must be more sustainable, fairer and more in tune with
130 globalisation. Long-term stagnation looms and must be avoided.

131

132 The economy of the Eurozone recovered two years ago, and the other members of the Union
133 have achieved better results. Again, this is not enough in itself. We need a strategy for the Union
134 as a whole, one which will often be implemented at national level. The EU is more than the sum
135 of its parts, the Member States.

136

137 Private and public investment must be encouraged. Throughout the Union, there is a deficit of
138 investment and therefore of sustainable-growth potential. We have to enhance the capacity of
139 national and local authorities to stimulate long-term investments. Re-creating an environment
140 favourable for entrepreneurship — especially for SMEs in all economic sectors — a solid banking
141 system, abundant venture capital and adequate internal demand are all necessary in order to

142 encourage private investment. If market forces are lacking, the Union, among other actors, must
143 provide assistance. Public investment may be needed to create opportunities for private
144 investment and for job creation.

145
146 The new EU budget for the period post-2020 will have to be reoriented towards finance policies
147 with true European added value. The post-2020 Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF)
148 proposal can be qualified as a budgetary reflection on the Union's priorities. It is an opportunity
149 to assess and reset political priorities. The Cohesion Policy must protect existing jobs and create
150 new ones through investments in the real economy. The Juncker Plan for strategic investments
151 (i.e. the European Fund for Strategic Investments, or EFSI) is a decisive step in this direction. It
152 should become a permanent financial instrument for our Union, working in synergy with other
153 EU funds. Its capacity for investment should be increased. The EFSI sets an excellent example of
154 the way in which public investment can and should trigger private investment. **[HDZ/HR: add**
155 **“Cohesion Policy post-2020 should remain an EU investment policy covering all Member States**
156 **and EU regions. The share of Cohesion Policy in the total EU budget should be maintained in the**
157 **future.]** The national budgetary policy must give priority to public investment in traditional
158 infrastructure and in future-oriented sectors, such as Research and Development (R&D) as well
159 as education and defence. Europe often lags behind the rest of the world. This trend must be
160 reversed. We need to be more ambitious. The Horizon 2020 programme is an excellent example
161 of how to move forward, and its budget should be secured and increased. Providing more on-site
162 technical assistance is crucial in addressing the investment gap between Member States. The
163 SME instrument is among the most successful in Horizon 2020. Therefore, there should be more
164 targeted and efficient communication at national level in order to encourage the best use of this
165 instrument.

166 The world stands on the verge of entering a Digital Age, following the Industrial Age that has
167 shaped the past few centuries. Whether our Europe will thrive and prosper also in this coming
168 Digital Age will be decided by the policies we decide upon. We see how global digital value chains
169 are starting to transform our industries, how entrepreneurship and innovation are reshaping our
170 economic landscapes and how education, skills and talent are becoming keys to success.
171 However, we have to be aware that not everybody will benefit from digitalisation; we need to be
172 ready for this and to prepare our societies. We must reassure our citizens that nobody will be left
173 behind. Europe rose to greatness in the Industrial Age, and we are determined that it must
174 succeed also in the Digital Age. We have to pursue forward-looking policies to preserve an open,
175 digital world. Other regimes are determined to secure state control and domination. But our
176 societies have always been built mainly on freedom, democracy, the rule of law, openness and
177 innovation.

178 By achieving our climate objectives, we will support economic growth and protect our food
179 security. The new climate goals for 2030 can be achieved, which will make us a global leader in
180 renewable energy and energy savings.

181 The European Union is facing unprecedented demographic changes (an ageing population, low
182 birth rates, changing family structures and migration). In light of these challenges, it is important,
183 both at EU and at national level, to review and adapt existing policies. We recognise that strong
184 families are a precondition for positive demographic developments, and we advocate pro-family
185 values and policies. We need a more creative and coordinated response from the EU and its
186 Member States, and we call for a European strategy on demographic change and for more family-
187 and child-friendly environments. This strategy should aim to integrate the economic, social and
188 scientific challenges and increase the potential of the working-age population. It should also
189 stimulate active and healthy ageing and create new opportunities for intergenerational solidarity.

190 Moreover, it should take into account the major disparities between and within Member States,
191 both in terms of life expectancy as well as in living and working conditions.

192 Our Union must continue to integrate with the world market. We must remain an open and
193 competitive continent. The advantages for citizens, consumers and for the economy in general
194 outweigh the negative effects. Those who, due to technological change or changing trade
195 patterns, lose their livelihood should be given full support enabling them to learn new skills and
196 re-enter the labour market. Free trade agreements must be compatible with our European social
197 model and with environmental and consumer protection standards. Commercial dumping and
198 monopolies must be tackled systematically and without hesitation; therefore, we must make
199 sure that we have policies that can intervene forcefully and swiftly in case abuse of free trade
200 occurs. Free trade agreements make us more competitive and efficient through better
201 specialisation and should create more jobs and foster prosperity all over Europe.
202

203 The creation of the Single Market in Europe has been a source of prosperity for all. Yet the job is
204 not finished. We must now move beyond the ‘free movement’ stage and work together in order
205 to create an energy and a digital union to unleash hidden growth potential. We are in the process
206 of creating a border-free Single Market for energy, decreasing our dependence on third
207 countries, such as Russia, among others. In the digital field, we need to halt and reverse the
208 existing fragmentation preventing the European economy from becoming more competitive. The
209 universal guiding principle should be to create a true EU Single Market — also for services.

210 The results of prosperity must be shared equitably. Fair competition in the products and services
211 markets must be maintained or restored. Combatting fraud and tax evasion at national, European
212 and international levels has thankfully become a priority, but there must be no let-up in these
213 efforts. Multinational companies must pay taxes whenever and wherever they make their profits.
214 This holds true particularly in the case of value created online and via e-commerce. Here we must
215 continue with our efforts to produce adequate regulations. Therefore, there is a need for more
216 European fiscal harmonisation.

217 In order to promote fiscal justice, there can be no discrimination between income from work and
218 income from assets. In some Member States, the fall in real salaries in a climate of economic
219 growth poses a genuine problem for social justice and for societal support for our social market
220 economy. It is also an obstacle to economic growth. It is one of the causes of political populism.
221 Unemployment is, of course, the principal basis for inequality. Full employment remains a major
222 objective. It is perfectly possible to achieve this while also avoiding a two-tier labour market: we
223 do not want stable, full-time employment for some and very flexible, but poorly paid, jobs for
224 others, often young people. The increasing flexibility of labour markets in certain sectors,
225 however, is an inevitable response to consumer demands, and thus we must make our social
226 security systems more flexible and adept at addressing new kinds of concerns: ultimately, they
227 should always encourage people to seek employment. The EU should encourage and support the
228 cross-border mobility of young people. Here, too, the European Union as a whole, and the
229 Member States individually, must work together, each partner playing its own role but
230 cooperating in a collective and converging effort.
231

232 In the case of insufficient growth, or growth which does not generate enough jobs, a special
233 policy must be implemented based on training and additional support in order to get young
234 people into jobs. Education and skills remain the best guarantees for employment. It is
235 unacceptable to have labour shortages in future-oriented sectors, such as the digital market.
236 Economic immigration will be inevitable in many countries, but this must be legal and organised.

237 Labour mobility helps to address unemployment and the mismatch of skills and jobs. The free
238 movement of people is key for Europe's economic success.

239
240 At corporate and administrative level — in fact, at all levels — there must be a new focus on the
241 human factor, so that employees are happier in their jobs and can improve their work/life
242 balance. A good deal of progress can be made by giving everyone a more participatory and
243 responsible role at different levels of an organisation. Today's social malaise is also evident in the
244 workplace. It contributes to a rise in society's ills and also often prevents long-term
245 improvements in productivity.

246
247 All of these elements must give new, more comprehensive, more inclusive, meaning to the
248 concept of economic growth and to European social model. We have to become, simultaneously,
249 more competitive, more sustainable and more humane. We must also understand that our
250 systems must continuously evolve, since technology challenges rigid and statist models now
251 more than ever before.

252
253 This policy can only be implemented in an environment of monetary and budgetary stability. The
254 Eurozone has already been strengthened by previous reforms, but the Economic and Monetary
255 Union must be further strengthened and deepened so that, over time, it becomes a true banking,
256 economic and budgetary union. Public finances must be structurally balanced over the next few
257 years, as required by the Stability and Growth Pact, to regain margins to fight future shocks.
258 Macro-economic balances are also necessary. We need both fiscal stability and competitiveness
259 on the basis of structural reforms. An approach for the Eurozone as a whole is needed, in a spirit
260 of responsibility and solidarity.

261
262 In order to safeguard a prosperous and sustainable future, we have to do the following:

- 263 • Stress the necessity for a step-wise approach to complete the Economic and Monetary
264 Union (EMU);
- 265 • Further encourage private and public investment in order to close the investment gap;
- 266 • Continue negotiating with our economic partners balanced free trade deals which respect
267 the norms and standards of the Union, in order to boost competitiveness and prosperity;
- 268 • Make every market part of the European Single Market and end fragmentation in order
269 to boost productivity;
- 270 • Continue working on closing international tax loopholes to ensure that all companies,
271 regardless of their size, pay their fair share of taxes;
- 272 • Improve social convergence within the European Union in order to raise living standards
273 all over the Union;
- 274 • Invest in youth and skills training as part of our efforts to bring down unemployment
275 levels throughout the Union;
- 276 • Encourage Member States to support those in poverty and, wherever possible, to
277 support their reinsertion into the labour market;
- 278 • Make the workplace safe and healthy, such that people feel valued and respected,
279 regardless of age, gender or ethnicity;
- 280 • Insist that the fiscal policies of Member States respect the rules of the Stability and
281 Growth Pact, which has the necessary flexibility to support structural reforms and
282 investment;
- 283 • Further strengthen the Economic and Monetary Union to ensure it is flexible and resilient
284 and supports economic convergence within the Eurozone;

- 285 • Create a genuine Digital Single Market;
286 • Facilitate cooperation between more-developed and less-developed regions, and
287 between urban and rural areas, and facilitate EU integration.

288
289 **3. Our secure Union**
290
291 Security has become our citizens’ main concern. The European Union is facing a series of
292 extraordinary threats from the east and from the south, both globally and from within. We will
293 only be able to counter them if we fundamentally change our foreign, security and defence
294 policy, becoming a strong and responsible actor in the international arena and adding hard power
295 to the soft power the European Union is known for.

296
297 **Fighting terrorism and Islamic extremism**

298
299 Terrorism must be fought and eradicated. Much stronger European cooperation and integration
300 is required in terms of exchange of information by intelligence services and exchanges of best
301 practice and in terms of action to both prevent and counter radicalisation and terrorism. We
302 need a harmonisation of anti-terrorism legislation. Better cooperation on the level of police and
303 intelligence within the EU-framework is needed, but the problem needs to be tackled at the
304 roots: upbringing and education are the places to start. The fight must be stepped up against the
305 ideologies inspiring jihadist terrorism and creating within our countries parallel systems in which
306 the basic values of the human person and of our liberal democracies do not apply.

307
308 **Boosting cyber security**
309

310 Cyber security is yet another area of strategic importance and strong concern. In order to achieve
311 a true pan-European approach in ensuring cyber security, a common European cyber security
312 strategy should be drafted and implemented. As is already the case in a number of EU Member
313 States, this should also entail regular exchange at a high political level between EU bodies and
314 Member States. In that spirit, it is essential to establish a common governance framework, based
315 on harmonised cyber security standards, priorities, requirements and objectives across EU
316 Member States. Effective monitoring and law enforcement is required to ensure that citizens’
317 privacy is not threatened. Moreover, the continuous battle against cybercrime depends upon
318 enhanced cooperation between public authorities and the private sector. For this reason, we
319 need to invest in technological innovation in a global context in order to strengthen our collective
320 efforts for tackling cyber security threats.

321
322 **Controlling migration**
323

324 The flow of refugees and economic migrants arriving in Europe has challenged our capacity to
325 cope at European, national and local levels. Therefore, we need a common European approach
326 to manage large-scale migration. Assistance and protection should primarily be granted by the
327 EU in crisis countries themselves and in their neighbouring areas in order to mitigate irregular
328 migration. It should be the European Union which, in accordance with international law, decides
329 how many, and who, will qualify for protection within Europe through a common asylum policy.
330 At a time when the European Union is trying to defend its universal values, sharing the burden
331 of asylum seekers and their costs will be a strong proof of solidarity in practice. This is why we
332 need to promote legal access into Europe by means of resettlement programmes. Integration in
333 our societies will be of key importance in maintaining social cohesion. Further, it is necessary

334 to swiftly implement the EU-Turkey agreement and its provisions regarding the return and
335 readmission of irregular migrants.

336 We need a common return policy for irregular immigrants. We must make agreements with
337 migrants' countries of origin, encouraging them to cooperate in the identification and return
338 process.

339 Africa's share of the global population is expected to grow from 16.4 % in 2015 to 25 % in 2050,
340 and to 39 % by 2100. The continent is therefore projected to be the largest contributor to future
341 global population growth. These facts and figures must be taken into account when dealing with
342 the complex subject of migration, including both its challenges and opportunities. We need to
343 tackle more seriously the root causes of migration, help to bring peace to the EU's Southern
344 Neighbourhood and foster economic development by investing in jobs, vocational training and
345 entrepreneurship for African youth and women, especially in the agro-sector. We also need to
346 invest in good governance and democracy-building in Africa and to develop plans with African
347 countries to reduce unsustainable population growth and to prevent conflict. This implies a
348 strong partnership with Africa and a serious review of our traditional development policy.
349 Financing concrete investments, as well as attracting private capital where possible, needs to
350 become a priority.

351
352 The Schengen system must be preserved, deepened and enlarged. The Schengen Area must be
353 able to guard and protect its external borders. Exclusively European surveillance instruments are
354 needed, together with a common asylum and migration policy aiming to strike a better balance
355 between humanitarian obligations, on the one hand, and, on the other, the capacity of EU
356 Member States to integrate migrants. At the same time, border countries of the Schengen area
357 should receive further support and assistance.

358
359 **Common defence**
360

361 The EU has to radically shape up on defence and security, in coordination with NATO and in close
362 cooperation with our North American allies. The Atlantic alliance remains the cornerstone of the
363 collective territorial defence of Europe, in parallel with the mutual solidarity commitments
364 between EU Member States. We will work towards greater efforts by all Member States to meet
365 the new defence and security challenges, honouring budgetary commitments made and working
366 in closer coordination and cooperation. We welcome NATO members' commitments to spend
367 2% of their GDP on defence, and we encourage EU Member States to increase their future
368 defence spending for our common security.

369 The Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) should be based on convincing diplomacy, a
370 sound economic base and adequate armed forces. In time, we wish to see the emergence of a
371 European Defence and Security Union worthy of the name, in order to guarantee our own
372 protection, security and defence. We are convinced that the Union's security and defence will
373 only be strong enough to defeat the current threats if we stand united. In the coming years, the
374 EU and its Member States must, as a whole, increase defence spending and pool and share
375 defence capabilities. This will also help increase stability in our Mediterranean neighbourhood,
376 currently a source of terrorism and uncontrolled migration. The Union cannot become a truly
377 regional and global actor without a relevant military dimension. We believe that more
378 commitment by Member States to the provisions of the CSDP is needed, in order to assure
379 smooth, progress in achieving the CSDP and the European Defence Union. Far greater synergies
380 in the research, development and procurement of military tools are needed. Therefore, we

381 welcome the establishment of the EU Defence Fund. Battlegroups must finally become
382 operational. We support the proposals for a civilian and military headquarters and for the
383 instrument of Permanent Structural Cooperation for countries wanting to go forward, as a
384 coalition of the willing, with a view toward sustaining and improving their military capabilities
385 with regard to leadership, personnel and material development, within the framework of the
386 Treaties. The current work in the area of security and defence should lead to the eventual
387 establishment of a European Armed Forces.

388

389 **Responding to the Russian threat**

390 Although it is not our desire, our tensions with Russia under President Putin may last for a long
391 time. We reaffirm our determination to support Member States in the face of any aggression.
392 Information warfare is an integral part of Russia's assault on Europe, an assault which targets
393 liberal democracies, trans-Atlantic cooperation and our European project itself. The EU must put
394 in place an effective and detailed strategy to counteract Russian propaganda and disinformation
395 campaigns, to allocate the necessary resources and to provide a coordinated European response.
396 While NATO will take care of strengthening defence and deterrence, the EU will have to focus on
397 strengthening resilience against Russia's methods of hybrid warfare. This ranges from improving
398 defences against Russia's use of weaponised information to strengthening social cohesion, to
399 enhancing capacities for cyber defence. For all of this, a close cooperation with NATO is essential.
400 Above all, the EU must, along with NATO, continue its steadfast defence of fundamental
401 principles, such as the inviolability of borders and the rights of nations to choose their own
402 political and economic systems and their membership in international organisations. This
403 firmness must be paired with the continued offer of dialogue and cooperation with Russia,
404 according to the values of our common European culture.

405

406 **Securing stability and peace in the Mediterranean**

407

408 The Mediterranean is the southern border of the Union; to guarantee stability, peace and civil
409 and economic development in this area is of primary concern for the Union.

410

411 We want to facilitate the peace process in Libya, encouraging the dialogue of all those willing to
412 resist ISIS/Daesh and the forging of a coalition around the legitimate government. With this
413 legitimate government, we must cooperate in order to reconstruct the Libyan state and to
414 control the illegal human trafficking taking place in the Mediterranean, bringing would-be
415 irregular immigrants back to their ports of departure, in accordance with international law. Libya
416 should sign the Geneva Conventions and offer migrants full protection of their human rights. The
417 Union should cooperate in achieving effective reconstruction and development policies.

418

419 **Strengthening cooperation with countries in the whole area**

420

421 In order to improve the security situation within and beyond our Union in the coming years, we
422 have to do the following:

- 423 • Respond to the recent influx of refugees and migrants with coherent, strategic action;
- 424 • Tackle Schengen's current fragmentation and better protect our external borders;
- 425 • Counter political and religious extremism in Europe;
- 426 • Strengthen resilience to cyber war and prepare an EU response to hybrid warfare and
427 cyber war;

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- Further enhance and widen the operational capabilities of the newly created European Border and Coast Guard;
 - End the grave situation in Syria and stabilise the surrounding countries;
 - Strengthen EU cooperation on external security and defence;
 - Support the restoration of Lybian statehood and strive towards respect for human rights in Libya.

434 **4. Our Union as a regional and global leader**

435

436 We have to improve and to strengthen the EU's image on the world stage. We must improve our
437 capacity to act, deepen our partnership with the United States, pay particular attention to the
438 Eastern and Southern Neighbourhoods and reach out to partners worldwide. The alliance,
439 especially, between Europe and the United States, and including the Atlantic Community, needs
440 to be strengthened and redefined on equal terms. We need a real European foreign policy in
441 which Member States speak with one voice, delivering the same message. On strategic matters,
442 Member States must enhance their cooperation and act together.

443

444 The European Union is a Union based on values and committed to peace all around the world.
445 This is why the EU remains at the forefront of the struggle against global warming, through its
446 own achieved results and through its role in global climate change conferences; this is why it is
447 the largest donor worldwide in terms of development and humanitarian aid; why it is a shelter
448 for those legally seeking international protection; why it remains opposed to commercial
449 protectionism and in favour of free, fair, and rules-based trade; why it defends human rights,
450 democracy and freedom; and why it remains the key partner of the UN and its organisations.

451

452 The Union and its Member States are part of the Western world, but open to dialogue and
453 cooperation with the rest. We are unyielding in the protection of our values, yet always ready to
454 seek a negotiated solution. We must remain a strong voice for human rights and for open
455 societies and open economies all over the world.

456

457 **Stabilising our Southern Neighbourhood**

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459 The EU and its Member States must continue to develop capacities to enhance stability, increase
460 prosperity and support the rule of law in the Southern Neighbourhood. This includes a renewed
461 effort to reach out to our neighbours across the Mediterranean in the form of trade and
462 cooperation; but it also involves readmission agreements and cooperation with transit countries.
463 Furthermore, the Union must strengthen its Africa policy, in close cooperation with the African
464 Union, in order to combat terrorism and instability, promote socio-economic development, the
465 rule of law and good governance and strengthen civil society. This approach will also help to
466 prevent a new migration crisis. Moreover, Europe must seek a long-term partnership with the
467 rapidly developing countries of Africa.

468 Special attention should be paid to the increasing persecution of Christians and other religious
469 minorities in the world, especially in the Middle East and North Africa. Protecting freedom of
470 religion will require, moving forward, a more sophisticated and effective approach in the foreign
471 and security policy of the EU and its Member States.

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473

474

475 **The future of enlargement and the Eastern Neighbourhood**

476 The enlargement of the EU has made Europe as a whole more stable, more democratic and more
477 prosperous. It remains one of the signature achievements of European integration. It has also
478 given our Union much greater weight and importance in global affairs.

479 Recent history has given us a special responsibility for the Western Balkans region. Only European
480 integration can provide a secure safeguard against the resurgence of forces of nationalist
481 disintegration and conflict. The Union is able to enlarge if its capacity to integrate new members
482 is taken into consideration and if candidate members fully and unequivocally satisfy the required
483 conditions and the political criteria of Copenhagen, such as the rule of law and the respect for
484 and protection of human rights and minorities. The support of the EU through the Instrument for
485 Pre-accession Assistance (IPA) is important.

486
487 Full membership into the Union, however, is not the only means of partnership. Other forms of
488 relationship with the Union will have to be envisaged. In any case, we must begin now building a
489 ring of partners around the Union for those countries which cannot or which do not want to
490 become full members. The European Economic Area's potential should yet be fully utilised.

491
492 Exchange programmes for citizens are starting points for mutual learning and the exploration of
493 European values. They enrich people as individuals, and they create bonds beyond borders. A
494 renewed effort must be made to support democracy, strengthen the rule of law, enhance trade
495 and economic cooperation and fight corruption in Eastern Partnership countries. Some of these
496 countries have a European perspective.

497
498 In order to strengthen our role in the world, we have to do the following:
499

- 500 • Develop different forms of cooperation with neighbouring countries in order to build a
- 501 ring of partners around the Union;
- 502 • Become a global player;
- 503 • Bolster diplomatic clout by means of military capabilities and a willingness to intervene,
- 504 complementary to NATO;
- 505 • Build stronger alliances, both regionally and globally;
- 506 • Invest in effective international institutions and push for an EU seat and an EU vote in
- 507 global bodies

508
509 **5. An efficient and democratic Union closer to its citizens**
510

511 The widespread demands for more democracy in the EU show that many citizens strongly desire
512 to be more involved in EU decision-making.

513 Regarding EU competences, the directly elected European Parliament, the Council of the
514 European Union, with its elected governments, and the European Commission — elected,
515 approved and nominated by the European Parliament and the Member States, through the
516 European Council — are fully and democratically legitimate. We also want to give to our citizens
517 a better knowledge of the way in which our institutions work and benefit them, and we support
518 efforts to enhance the consciousness of a common European citizenship.

519
520

521 This reality has to be strengthened further by greater transparency and more involvement at the
522 level of regions and local communities, which are represented by the European Committee of
523 the Regions. Modern means of communication should be used to a greater extent in broadening
524 the space for interaction.

525

526 **Enhanced subsidiarity and solidarity**

527

528 The institutions must further evolve by means of adaption and a revised mechanism, by making
529 them less bureaucratic and by respecting the balances that govern the functioning of the Union
530 and the principles of subsidiarity and solidarity which function as guardian of the Treaties.
531 National parliaments must now be strengthened, controlling implementation of the principle of
532 subsidiarity and the national governments serving as members of the Council. EU decisions are
533 binding. What has been decided at European level must be implemented by every Member State.
534 At the same time, the Commission should pay more attention to the implementation of EU law
535 in Member States before making new proposals. The Council and the European Parliament must
536 support and control the European Commission in this endeavor, in a transparent way. For
537 carrying out these tasks, we are convinced that the Union and the Member States must work in
538 full mutual respect and in accordance with the principle of sincere and loyal cooperation. The
539 Commission has a political role and must be the respected guardian of the Treaties. The European
540 Council shall define the general political direction and priorities of the Union, and should
541 concentrate its focus here.

542

543 The Union and the Eurozone can continue to develop within the framework of the current
544 Treaties. We need closer cooperation between European and national levels. But more
545 transparency is also needed so that citizens can understand which institution, and which level, is
546 responsible.

547

548 National leaders have a key role to play in reconnecting the EU with the public. Members of the
549 European Commission and of the European Parliament should participate more in national
550 parliamentary debates on EU issues. EU institutions should also systematically reach out to
551 regional and municipal authorities, which on the whole enjoy greater trust from citizens.

552

553 **Institutional reform**

554

555 We consider the community method as the EU's basic working method, as this has proven to be
556 democratic, transparent and efficient.

557

558 We should strengthen the European Parliament and the national parliaments at their respective
559 levels. Moreover, cooperation between the European Parliament and national parliaments
560 should be improved.

561

562 We want the European Parliament to be a guardian of democracy. For that, it has to reinforce its
563 capacity to compel the Commission to take legislative initiatives and to hold the Commission
564 accountable. The legal possibilities of European Parliamentary investigation committees have to
565 become stronger where citizen's interests are at stake. The *Spitzenkandidatenprozess* enhances
566 the results of the elections to the European Parliament and strengthens the will of the voters.
567 We support the EU's single, existing institutional framework. Parliamentary cooperation for the
568 Eurozone should be established within the European Parliament, preparing all decisions related
569 to the Economic and Monetary Union.

570 Citizens have the right to understand the responsibilities and the competences of EU institutions.
571 Therefore, it must become clearer, within the framework of the Treaty, that the European
572 Parliament and the Council of Ministers constitute a two-chamber system when it comes to
573 legislation. The working methods of the Council of Ministers should be made more transparent
574 and comprehensible to citizens. The specialised Council configurations should become
575 subcommittees of the Council, meeting in public sessions and having an ordinary legislator. The
576 Council's statutes should be adjusted accordingly. The EU should become a full parliamentary
577 democracy.

578
579 Our goal is to reach agreement and deliver a better Union within the next decade.

580 581 **Showing leadership and a clear vision** 582

583 In recent years, we have seen a broad upsurge by extremist parties, on both the left and right,
584 running through the Western world. Populists are using crises and uncertainties to feed suspicion
585 and hostility. The populists' simple answers will not solve the complex questions and problems
586 of today. Populism is at odds with progress, democracy and the social market economy.
587 Populism, nationalism and anti-Europeanism are incompatible with a strong and efficient
588 European Union capable of tackling the challenges of tomorrow. In a globalised world, we can be
589 sovereign only if we pool our sovereignty. Each one of our states, left to itself alone, might rapidly
590 become a puppet in the hands of some foreign political or economic power. We, not the so-called
591 nationalists, are defending the sovereignties, the identity and the culture of our citizens. The
592 challenge is to preserve our open societies while at the same time offering better protections
593 against irregular migration, terrorism and increasing inequality within our societies, as well as
594 against financial and economic instability, tax evasion and international fraud. We need to be the
595 political force that provides answers to our citizens' concerns; only in this way we can combat
596 fear and insecurity. We have to shape a new balance between freedom, security and fairness. As
597 a European political party, we will lead by example for our citizens, including them in the
598 European project and communicating more, and more clearly, with them. Only by means of a
599 process that includes constant exchange, and by obtaining results in our policies, will we be able
600 to explain our vision, goals and actions — and ultimately win broader support.

601
602 In order to bring our Union closer to the citizens, we have to do the following:
603

- 604 • Provide better coordination and dialogue between European and national democratic
605 institutions;
- 606 • Increase political competition and political debates at EU level;
- 607 • Strengthen European political parties and political groups;
- 608 • Further promote the *Spitzenkandidatenprozess* in public discourse;
- 609 • Make European elections less national and more European;
- 610 • Respond to citizens' concerns and lack of trust in the political establishment;
- 611 • Explain and promote the benefits of the European project for citizens;
- 612 • Foster a European identity and sense of belonging;
- 613 • **[CDA/NL: add new bullet point "Cut the large amount of red tape;"]**

614
615

616 **Providing a future for young people**

617 We must mobilise all available means to explain to our citizens, the younger generation in
618 particular, the added value of being European, of belonging to the EU. Young people are the
619 future of our Union. We want young people to look at the future with hope and confidence. We
620 believe in the ability of young Europeans to create, to grow and to prosper. The best-educated,
621 best-trained generation in the world deserves more and can achieve more. With hard work, social
622 commitment and political responsibility, the youth of Europe can strengthen our Union. We are
623 the political force that invites young people to participate in the decision-making process;
624 therefore, we support the proposals of young Europeans from all over Europe. This will entail
625 having a common, internal education system by achieving the following: full recognition of
626 qualifications across Europe; a European framework for education standards; greater
627 cooperation in research and increased mobility of students and lecturers beyond existing
628 mobility programmes; and, finally, a universal graduate diploma allowing students full freedom
629 of movement across the EU. We also promote the launch of an EU Solidarity Corps, which should
630 provide a specific European solidarity framework offering young people high-quality experience
631 in both voluntary and professional fields.

632 Vocational training should contribute to decreasing the gap between formation and education
633 with regards to the skills and competences demanded by the market and by society: through
634 access to mobility, through recognition of qualifications and through higher standards. For all
635 young people, the development of creativity and critical thinking will be crucial. Youth
636 unemployment should be considered as a distinct phenomenon, bearing in mind the importance
637 which the development of digital skills is already acquiring and will continue to acquire in the
638 near future.

639 Our European Union is a union of its citizens, its regions and its nations. It is built on, and it
640 cherishes, the heritage of all of our various nations, cultures, beliefs and convictions. Our Europe
641 is enriched by our nations, and our nations thrive in the community of other European nations.
642 It is a Europe based on subsidiarity and solidarity.

643 Only together can we meet global challenges and win back the sovereignty of our nations and
644 citizens.

645
646 European values and interests need to be defended by all of us together. Unity in diversity — this
647 is our common vision.