

FROM CRISIS IN EUROPE TO RENEWED EUROPEAN HOPE
TIME FOR REBUILDING

Manifesto of the European Democratic Party

The idea of Europe, of which we are the defenders and champions, is weakened in the eyes of citizens and attacked by powerful political forces.

And yet as countries, nations, regions and citizens, the union of Europe is the only path forward to authentic freedom and genuine sovereignty. Without a structured, voluntary and democratized Europe, we would face changes in the world over which we would have no control.

So we must defend the European Union. But, to defend it, we need to change it.

We are conscious of the reasons for the current public dissatisfaction we are in a position to address them and overcome them. Since 2008, the economic and financial crisis which has affected countries of the European Union to varying degrees has given European citizens the impression that the European Union does not have any sustainable response. The succession of ineffective European Councils has destroyed the already shaky view of the people of a Europe that takes appropriate decisions.

Conversely, Europe must speak with one voice in order to face the challenges ahead. Solidarity is not only necessary in today's society, it is also essential for the European Union of tomorrow to bring prosperity to future generations.

Together, we can act; divided, we are totally powerless. And if we are powerless, we are weak and crushed.

We see a refounded European Union as a decisive asset for the peoples of Europe. Refounded, the EU will refocus on the essentials. Refounded, it will allow citizens to be actively engaged within its institutions.

The European choice is a choice of sovereignty

Europe was first created in order to put an end to two centuries of atrocious wars between close and neighbouring countries. It is on behalf of the millions who died in the twentieth century that the founders of Europe acted. And war has disappeared from our continent.

The founders set themselves the goal of prosperity and economic development of the continent by opening up borders. Three decades of growth have been the result of their action.

Thanks to Europe, the free movement of people and goods on the same continent and between countries with similar values was clearly a powerful development factor.

The fall of the Soviet system was largely caused by the contrast of the levels of development of the communist model and the free European model.

At the turn of the century, however, the turmoil of globalization gradually affected all Europe.

All our countries, small or medium-sized on the continental power scale, were faced with power imbalances: the economical power of multinational industrial networks, out of control growth of often invisible and hardly localisable financial powers, the emergence of political powers with populations in the hundreds of millions or billions of people, huge population mobility, the clash of cultural or politico-religious models; all this raised the question of sovereignty in the hearts of the people.

The question of sovereignty is the ultimate political issue: it is the right of people to be in charge of their own destiny, to improve their future through their own free choice, to change what appears to be a fatality of History.

We maintain that it is misleading the peoples of Europe to make them believe that they can exercise this sovereignty in this new world order in individual countries on their own.

In order to have some influence in the changing world it is necessary to pool resources and share decisions so as to create a common sovereignty.

None of the crucial issues of the future could otherwise be effectively addressed. No fair and appropriate regulation of financial markets, no insurance against speculative storms, no credible management of energy, environmental or climate change challenges, no resistance to product, monetary, social, or environmental dumping, no management of problematic demographic trends, migration or integration: nothing in our future can be addressed or resolved by individual countries, let alone historical regions, not even by middle powers, in a world where it seems inevitable that, in twenty years' time, there is not one European state that will not belong to the group of the world's eight largest economies.

The European crisis is a crisis of democracy

Yet, and this is a worrying European paradox, for a large number of citizens and people, instead of seeing the European Union as their main asset in order to exercise their sovereignty, on the contrary they believe it to be a constraint which deprives them of their rights.

In this era of mass information, there cannot be sovereignty without democracy.

A power which is not open to citizens, which makes decisions they do not relate to and which they feel they cannot influence, is inevitably challenged and rejected.

The European institutions are so complex and sophisticated that they are incomprehensible to citizens, sometimes even for those who are personally involved. The powerful challenges to which they are subjected lead to a challenge of the very idea of Europe itself.

Technocracy is thus a powerful source of ammunition for populism.

The European refoundation must therefore be carried out in such a way that it addresses two democratic questions:

1. What are the actual aims of the European Union?
2. What role do citizens play in the European Union?

What are the actual aims of the European Union?

The European Union acts on behalf of States and peoples who have voluntarily and permanently joined it in order to give them access to resources, authority and influence, which would be out of their reach if they remained isolated.

The principle governing the Union is the principle of subsidiarity, which assumes that everyone can fully exercise their responsibilities, locally, regionally and nationally, in the areas of its competence. This can lead to the surrender of a number of powers to states or regions.

We believe that Europe needs to focus on the fundamentals and to stop to regulate plenty of minor daily matters, embarrassing for citizens and making unstable the field businesses are developing.

1. For those countries and citizens who have made the choice, **the political integration of the euro area** is essential. The existence of a single currency for these nations and for these peoples calls for effective fiscal convergence. Yet there can be no fiscal convergence without shared political authority. The issue of debt, albeit national but whose consequences resound throughout the whole zone, should lead to shared policy decisions. A true area of solidarity, the European Union cannot allow its peoples to tear each other apart and turn their backs on the weakest. Similarly, if we want to avoid imbalances due to the concentration of activities in the more competitive regions and desertification elsewhere, the existence of a single monetary zone calls for planning policies that promote and encourage the harmonious distribution of these activities across the whole territory.
2. It is essential, for peoples and citizens and for a large part of Europe, **to strengthen and restore our production capacity**. This implies **support for research, technological innovation and new production processes, in many areas in response to changing consumer expectations**. However, a significant proportion of these sectors cannot be considered without a European recovery strategy. From digital technology to biotechnology, from nanoscience to future networks, we face competition from powerful organizations with which we cannot compete unless we join forces. For the economy, the priority for the euro zone should be to focus on the creation of value by SMEs, entrepreneurs and artisans. Similar to the American "Small Business Act", specific rules should be re-established for small businesses to promote their access to credit and the public sector market. **Sensible competition**, with a view to promoting growth and thus for everyone's benefit, **should encourage and not hinder the creation of large European groups** capable of establishing themselves in the global economy. This must be preferred to the dogmatic competition rule, that prevents industrial groups from integrating and allying in the EU. Mobilization of savings should contribute to a European fund for industry in order to stimulate economic activity.
3. It is essential to **defend and promote the European social model**, too often destabilized by the imbalance between standards which, justifiably, we impose on our own producers on European soil, and in the name of competition, the acceptance on our soil and in our markets products from regions of the world that do not meet any of these standards. This causes an understandable sense of rebellion and rejection among our citizens. The principle of reciprocity should be the cornerstone of free trade agreements and govern all areas in a true and well-balanced partnership. It is essential to **reduce regional inequalities**. We need to pursue structural funds policies to support the growth of disadvantaged areas, while ensuring efficient and effective use of this aid.
4. A **strategy for self-sufficiency and energy security** is essential, including the integration of networks and full cooperation for supplies. We propose a European energy community based on the following

points: diversification of a common European energy mix and of supply sources, a mutual assistance mechanism in case of energy shortage. A return to fossil fuels is unthinkable, we must therefore focus our research and development policies on effective renewable energy production.

5. The **defence of the planet and the fight against climate imbalances** is essential. The green strategy has been very ambitious in statements but little effective in its results. The new 2030 goals for emission reductions and use of renewable energy must be one of Europe's pillars of innovation policy, employment and sustainable growth, in order to gain global leadership in order to tackle post-Kyoto paralysis and to promote our economical perspectives.
6. **Foreign policy and European security** in this new world order is essential. It is an absolute necessity resulting from new issues such as "cyber-threats" and terrorism. Pooling of operational facilities of Member States armed forces is needed to put an end to waste and inefficiency. Europe has been too absent from recent global turmoil, it must speak with one voice on the world stage if it wishes to be heard. Thus, external action must be the intrinsic factor in promoting European values such as respect for human rights, democracy and equity in economic development. The European Union should collectively strengthen its **partnership policy with the Eastern Neighbourhood countries**. In this respect the association agreements signed with Georgia and Moldova are a positive but insufficient step. We would like a Europe of 'three circles': in addition to the countries of the euro zone and the European Union sensu stricto, a "circle of shared interests" with countries who wish to move closer to European standards in terms of human rights, democracy, social-market economy and the standard of living.
7. **A fair and effective fight against the tragedies resulting from illegal immigration** is essential. Europe must adopt fiscal, operational and legal means to act within the framework of a common policy on asylum and immigration, the principle of which was agreed in 1999. The first priority is to put in place a European coastguard body responsible for monitoring the maritime borders of the EU and to rescue and receive, in the presence of NGOs, ships in distress in the Mediterranean. Europe cannot think of itself as a fortress closed to the world. But it cannot be open to the four winds, vulnerable to human trafficking. Europe needs a **co-development policy with a win-win partnership with our partners**, including Africa: it must accept regulated immigration, in cooperation with and not to the detriment of the country of emigration.
8. It is essential to **strengthen and reform the Common Agriculture Policy**. To maintain the priority given to food self-sufficiency while promoting the emergence of environment-friendly agriculture, concerned with the quality, traceability and food safety of products and the carbon footprint. The CAP must support not only production, but also the territories threatened by desertion and hydrogeological deterioration, the producers themselves, the sustainable family farms that our societies need to maintain the balance. It should ensure that fair prices are paid for agricultural production, so that farmers can make a living without needing outside intervention from public authorities. In any case, a more balanced distribution of this aid should be the rule. Maintaining a strong CAP should not be provided at the expense of the development of the rest of the planet.
9. It is essential to **fight against all forms of discrimination**. Major differences between men and women, for example in salary or access to positions of responsibility, must become a thing of the past. Thus, the European Union must support toward equal remuneration and responsibility in businesses. EU must combat discriminations as well as violence related to sexual orientation and sexual violence of every kind.

10. It is essential to **promote cultural and linguistic diversity**, which forms the wealth of our continent, our history, our cities and our territories. It makes us what we are. EU's actions undertaken in the 1990's must be sustained and amplified. This is contributing to the flowering of the Member states cultures, respecting their national and regional diversity and, at the same time, bringing the common cultural heritage to the fore. Faced to its extra-European competitors economical power, the creative sector must be encouraged; European states must keep their public subvention system to the cinema and the audiovisual sector.

Decisive democratic progress.

The objective is to effectively involve citizens in the European institutional set-up and have them participate in discussions prior to decisions being taken.

The European Parliament is the democratic platform for elected members and the only institution directly nominated by the citizens of the European Union for the citizens of the European Union, and its role should be strengthened. This requires an increase in its legislative powers, starting with the right of initiative of which it is now deprived.

The Commission has the function of coordination and implementation. Its legislative initiative function should be exercised at the request of and within the framework set by the Parliament and by the Council.

The indication of the candidates for the Presidency of the Commission at the European elections could attract the interest of voters. To add clarity, we propose that the positions of President of the Council and President of the Commission be combined. In this way we would, for certain, finally have a leader of Europe who is democratic, representative and effective.

The European Council consists of legitimate and recognized leaders of each European country. It is necessary to make its work more transparent by making the decisive part of its meetings public and accessible to the citizens, in a democratic scenario which would at last be comprehensible and clear. To be able to hear directly the Heads of State and Government of the European Union compare their views and make their commitments would better enable the understanding and support of the citizens.

We want a Europe that is fair, open and dynamic. Admired by the world for its culture and values. Respected for its political action.

We want to wake up the European people because the dream of a united Europe seems to be slipping quietly away and old nightmares are resurfacing.

We want the spirit that blew on the Fathers of the democratic Europe of the twentieth century to be refounded by and for the young generations of the twenty-first century.