



A Strong Europe for Peace, Freedom, Security, and Prosperity

Our Principles for a European Policy

Position Paper of the
CDU/CSU Parliamentary Group in the German Bundestag

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Contents

A Strong Europe for Peace, Freedom, Security, and Prosperity	3
1. Strengthening Europe as a Geopolitical Player and Pursuing an Ambitious Trade Policy	4
2. Securing Europe’s Competitiveness and Fitness for the Future and Deepening the Internal Market by Strengthening Businesses, Research, Innovation, and Digitisation.....	7
3. Promoting Climate and Environmental Protection as an Economic Success Factor for Growth and Employment; Making the European Energy Market Fit for the Future	10
4. Strengthening Europe as a Union of Stability.....	13
5. Strengthening Europe as an Area of Freedom, Internal Security, and the Rule of the Law.....	14
6. For Competitiveness, Sustainability, Food Security, and Consumer Protection in the EU’s Agricultural Policy	17
7. Strengthening Democracy, Social Cohesion, and Health in Europe; Developing the European Area of Culture and Education	18
8. Continuing to Develop Europe’s Institutions, Realigning our Enlargement Policy, Giving New Momentum to the Franco-German Friendship, and Deepening Cooperation with Central and Eastern Europe, the Baltic States, and the United Kingdom.....	19

A Strong Europe for Peace, Freedom, Security, and Prosperity

In order to promote peace, freedom, security, and prosperity, we need a European Union that serves all of us, creates actual added value for citizens and businesses alike, and maintains its agency as a geopolitical player. Today, this is more important than ever. It is the only way for us to master the colossal challenges such as the Russian war of aggression against Ukraine and its consequences, the global competition of political systems, an uncertain economic situation with high inflation rates, the need to secure our energy supply and cope with climate change as it progresses, a tense situation regarding migration, and the new EU enlargement dynamics.

We need an EU that strengthens our international competitiveness, puts a focus on technological sovereignty and resilience, secures our prosperity, opens up opportunities, and resolutely protects our European values and freedoms, our stability and our security – both on the inside and on the outside. Above all, Europe must play a leading role in digital and climate politics. This also means that we must promote competition and innovation, not hamper them.

We need an EU that takes the principle of subsidiarity seriously and recognises that not every problem in Europe needs to be solved at the European level. We need an EU that focuses on those tasks that can be better accomplished at the European level than at the level of the nation states with its regions and municipalities.

Lastly, we need an EU that faces the challenges of its increased geopolitical responsibility and the prospects of another round of enlargements with the inclusion of new member states by consolidating and reforming its structure and becoming more agile – according to the motto: “Bigger on big things and smaller on small things.”

We therefore must continue to develop the EU in order to safeguard its enormous accomplishments while strengthening its agency. We neither view the EU as a federal state nor as a mere loose economic alliance, but as a strong community with supranational characteristics, and as an anchor of stability in a world in transition. Regional as well as national identities and a European sense of togetherness are two faces of the same coin that complement and require each other.

Central EU policies often have immediate effects on the lives of our citizens, our businesses, and our communities.

This paper outlines our principles for a European policy. It states the fundamental positions regarding the major issues on the European agenda that we as the CDU/CSU parliamentary group – a committed pro-European force in the German Bundestag – have agreed on.

For a Europe that can do better!

1. Strengthening Europe as a Geopolitical Player and Pursuing an Ambitious Trade Policy

- **Europe needs to redouble its efforts as a geopolitical player.** The EU currently fails to leverage its full potential to influence developments at the international level. European institutions and member states still do not sufficiently coordinate their work. We therefore call for a better pooling of resources and more coherence. To this end, we should adapt the Global Strategy for the European Union's Foreign and Security Policy (2016) and promote the implementation of the EU's Strategic Compass of 2022. This also includes a much-needed, substantial increase in our military capabilities and capacities, for example by setting up the planned EU Rapid Reaction Capacity.
- **We need an EU that stands for a common security and defence and that is able to act as a more independent player in foreign and security policy, as well as to ensure security in its own neighbourhood.** A close transatlantic relationship and our cooperation with the United States in the framework of NATO remain indispensable and form the basis of our security policy. At the same time, it is high time for a strategic repositioning of the EU in matters of foreign and security policy, and for military capabilities and civilian conflict prevention to be coordinated according to the principles of a networked approach. It is up to the EU to prove that it can defend its values and bring its own geopolitical interests to bear. A modern notion of security policy must include military security as much as security in the fields of business, energy, food supply, health, cyberspace, climate, and the environment. Especially in the framework of our Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP), the principle of unanimity often leads to delays. In times of crisis, this is a luxury we cannot afford. We therefore need to expand the qualified majority rule to certain questions and fundamental decisions under the CFSP. This may include the issue of sanctions. A more effective CFSP will strengthen the EU as a geopolitical player and make Europe a safer place. At the same time, it will strengthen the European pillar within NATO and ensure a fairer burden-sharing within the Alliance.
- **We call for a closer alignment of the armed forces of Europe, with a view to creating an "Army of Europeans", but without duplicating the structures of NATO.** Our priorities must be the highest possible degree of standardisation of equipment, joint procurement projects, a more intensive exchange at the command level, joint exercises, and, above all, an increasing integration of individual military formations. Examples of this exist already, such as the German-Dutch Corps, the Franco-German Brigade, or the beginning cooperation projects between the Bundeswehr and other armed forces. The goal is to achieve a better return on investments and build up more effective capabilities. Fragmented procurement by the individual armed forces, which has been the rule so far, leads to redundancies and has significant technical and financial downsides. A targeted expansion of European armaments cooperation can help save costs while ensuring more effectiveness in

equipping our armed forces. Regarding the deployment of armed forces of the European states, the EU must be able to make quick decisions while adhering to member state policies such as the German requirement of parliamentary approval.

- **We need a reinforced European Cooperation in matters of armament policy.** Above all, we need joint European development and procurement, in order to save costs and close existing capabilities gaps in the EU member states, particularly in the field of strategic enablers such as air transport, reconnaissance, surveillance, and cyber and space technologies. To this end, our joint European defence projects in the framework of the Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO) must be subjected to a results-oriented review. At the same time, we need to bundle necessary investments and research capacities in the field of cutting-edge technologies such as quantum computing, AI, and satellite internet, as well as in our ballistic missile defence capabilities. We also want to strive for common and binding arms export rules. In the light of a changed geopolitical situation, the European armaments sector must be exempted from any social taxonomy that may be envisaged.
- **We support an effective European defence industry.** It is vital for our independence in development and production, our resilience, and our ability to act as a sovereign force in matters of foreign and security policy. We need adequate development and production capacities for armaments in Europe, as well as safe and secure supply chains for raw materials and unfinished goods. In this context, the ESG criteria should undergo a sector-specific adaptation.
- **The EU must expand its partnerships with third countries outside the EU, NATO, and the G7. Given the global competition of systems, we must intensify our cooperation with these key partners outside Europe.** The Indo-Pacific Strategy of the EU can serve as a model and a basis. We need more coherent, operative, and ready-to-implement regional strategies for our partners in Asia, Africa, Latin America, and the Caribbean. Europe must position itself as an attractive partner, make offers for partnerships at eye's level, and distinguish itself positively from its systemic competitors.
- **The EU should pay particular attention to the economic and social development of Africa.** Over the next 25 years, Africa's population is likely to increase from 1.4 to 2.5 billion people. This entails both opportunities (e.g., new production sites and markets) and risks (e.g., conflicts, food crises, illegal migration). The EU must therefore use its power to support a sustainable and peaceful development. Using its economic and development cooperation instruments, the EU must offer more support for private investment from Europe as well as Africa, for knowledge transfer, and for new technologies as a pillar for self-sustaining economic development. For example, African countries offer great potential for cooperation in the fields of regenerative power and hydrocarbon production, which could benefit all sides.

- **We want the EU as a democratic community of values to do more to live up to its global responsibility in development cooperation.** The Global Gateway Initiative will play a key role in this regard. We must finally equip it with the necessary resources, as well as fast, flexible, and effective governance structures, in order to enable the EU to make timely, targeted, and sustainable offers (also as a reaction to the competition of systems) and to find and retain partners at eye's level. Global Gateway must be understood as a holistic strategic concept. Its foreign, economic, and development pillars must be coordinated. In accordance with its political and economic significance, the EU must make effective contributions to implementing the United Nations' SDGs in developing countries. If "Team Europe" is to appear as a united, visible force, the EU Commission and the member states must strive for better coordination and division of responsibilities.
- **The EU must do more to promote freedom, human rights, and humanitarian aid across the globe.** Promoting and defending universal human rights is one of the key values of the EU. The EU Global Human Rights Sanctions Regime (EUGHRSR or "EU Magnitsky Act") is to be used in an even more targeted and comprehensive manner, so that those who commit human rights violations can be sanctioned directly. Furthermore, the EU needs to take a stronger stance for freedom of religion. This includes equipping the Special Envoy for the Promotion of Freedom of Religion or Belief Outside the EU permanently with adequate human and financial resources. It also means expanding the EU's role as the most important donor of humanitarian aid. To this end, we must improve the coordination of humanitarian aid with development and preventative measures, thus becoming more efficient and proactive. We must also strengthen the Council of Europe as an important advocate for human rights, the rule of the law, and democracy.
- **We support a trade policy that promotes mutual access to open markets, ensures security of supply, and reduces European dependencies in areas of strategic importance.** In the light of developments such as the global competition of systems and in order to ensure our future prosperity, the EU and Germany must deepen existing foreign trade relations and pave the way for new economic and trade partnerships. Free trade agreements play a key role in this respect. The European trade policy needs to reorient itself more strongly towards the EU's strategic interests. It must also become more ambitious and dynamic. This means that negotiation processes must become faster, and trade policy must not be overburdened with issues that are external to it. Provisions that unilaterally place European and German farmers at a competitive disadvantage have to be avoided. Future free trade agreements should be "EU only" agreements.
- **At the same time, if we want to strengthen the EU's relevance as a geopolitical player, we need a new industrial policy initiative, including a strategy to secure the supply of raw materials.** We want to prevent the relocation of macroeconomically significant industries and reduce dependencies

in key strategic areas. The attractiveness of the EU as a place for investment and innovation must be strengthened. The EU Commission's proposals for a Net Zero Industry Act and a Critical Raw Materials Act are important cornerstones in this regard and will, among other things, help promote domestic production and processing as well as recycling of critical raw materials within the EU, which will in turn reduce unilateral dependencies. Above all, Europe's sovereignty in matters of industrial policy will benefit from improved framework conditions for competitiveness and fitness for the future. To this end, we need to take a holistic look at our industries, involving all players and the entire value chain – from the raw material to the finished product.

2. Securing Europe's Competitiveness and Fitness for the Future and Deepening the Internal Market by Strengthening Businesses, Research, Innovation, and Digitisation

- **We resolutely support better framework conditions that will secure Europe's – and, by extension, Germany's – competitiveness and fitness for the future.** In particular, each EU member state needs an internationally competitive system of taxes and levies. Other key requirements are more flexible labour markets, initiatives to train and attract skilled workers, more digitisation, better incentives for private investment, a more innovation-friendly climate in Europe, and regulations that promote innovation.
- **We finally need to put a stop to excessive bureaucracy at the European level.** Rules to promote further harmonisation on the internal market should only be adopted if they simplify the application of laws, lower costs for compliance with bureaucratic requirements, and open up possibilities for cooperation, especially in research and development. The "one in, one out" principle, adopted by the EU Commission itself, must be filled with life and ideally be developed into a "one in, two out" rule. In this context, it is also important **not to further tighten taxonomies**, which already place considerable burdens on businesses, but rather to fundamentally review the approach itself – especially with the aim of making their implementation less bureaucratic. In addition, the reduction of reporting obligations for companies, announced by the EU Commission, must be implemented in a timely manner.
- **We call for a central contact person for SMEs at the EU Commission.** This contact person should have the right to veto regulations that burden small and medium-sized businesses and their limited resources. In Germany as well as in other member states, the economy relies on its SMEs as guarantors for a functioning, secure, and stable Europe. To protect them and to take their particular needs into account when European laws are made must be a priority.
- **A competitive and stable financial sector in the EU is a prerequisite for the success of Europe's digital and green transformation.** Reliable financing is the backbone of our economy. This applies especially to our SMEs. This is why we need to make sure that European credit institutions are not unduly

burdened, and that they can remain internationally competitive. This requires a timely deepening of the capital markets union and strengthening the internal market for financial services.

- **When implementing EU law, Germany must not adopt rules that go beyond the European standard.** Generally, Germany should not go beyond a direct transposition of EU directives. All legally possible measures to interpret EU legislation in an SME-friendly way should be used to their full extent. Unnecessary red tape caused by parallel national and European rules is to be avoided.
- **We must safeguard the integrity of the internal market as a cornerstone for long-term economic success.** If we want to strengthen the internal market, we need to take measures such as improving the free movement of workers and services. This also means urgently reforming the social insurance and labour law rules concerning posted workers, especially regarding the handling of the so-called A1 certificates. Business travel and cross-border working (including work from home) within the EU must be made easier.
- **In order to deepen the internal market, we must also ensure better links between national transport networks.** A speedy and ambitious implementation of the Trans-European Transport Network (TEN-T) will be required to strengthen cross-border transport of passengers and goods.
- **We want the EU to be a guarantor for academic freedom in Europe and world-wide.** We need to strengthen trust in scientific findings and academic freedom if we want to meet societal and global challenges such as climate change with strategies based on scientific excellence and innovation. For us, the freedom of research and its excellence are inextricably linked. In this spirit, Germany must do everything in its power to strive for concerted action against any attempt by authoritarian regimes to influence the freedom of science and teaching, both in the framework of the EU and in cooperation with like-minded third countries.
- **We want an EU that prioritises the promotion of knowledge, research, and innovation, and that creates an innovation-friendly environment.** Knowledge, research, and innovation are the basis of our competitiveness and sources of our future prosperity. Research and innovation play a key role in helping us cope with global challenges such as health and climate change. The EU must strive for – and achieve – world-wide technological leadership in key areas. This is why we need to strengthen Europe-wide research cooperation as well as research centres and their programmes. Internationally, the EU must do more to attract eminent scientists from around the world. The EU must both produce and attract knowledge and information. Furthermore, German experts from academia and business need to play an important role in developing the EU Framework Programme for Research and Innovation. European and national research and innovation policies must be intelligently

coordinated. We trust that a better coordination between national and European programmes and projects will generate considerable added value in terms of more sovereignty in the field of science and technology. In addition, bureaucratic obstacles need to be removed if we want to leverage the potential of the European Research Area in a better way.

- **We must become better at translating research into products, procedures, and services.** In particular, this requires a stronger focus on disruption and start-ups. To this end, public funds for research and innovation must be complemented by private funds to produce more leverage, spin-offs from academic research need to be better structured, milestone competitions should facilitate development, pre-commercial procurement should be used as a strategic instrument, approval procedures must be simplified, and the commercial exploitation of patents must be accelerated by means of more standardised procedures.
- **We want to strengthen Europe's position in space.** This means that the German and European space sector need to improve their use of technological and economic leverage potentials. Maintaining a sovereign European access to space plays a crucial role in this respect. This requires competitive European carrier systems, as well as legal certainty for the German and European space industries – with a special focus on New Space players.
- **The innovative power of digitisation ensures our future prosperity.** We want to position Germany as a leading location for venture capital and start-ups, and we want to strengthen the European digital economy as a whole. This includes more funding for digital start-ups and young tech businesses, especially during their growth periods.
- **Europe must redouble its efforts to invest in key technologies, promote its own digital ecosystems, and increase its digital leverage.** The digital internal market must be strengthened. We can achieve this by means of a harmonised implementation of the Digital Markets Act and the Digital Services Act. Furthermore, Europe must enable digital business models. Digital innovation and data-based value creation shape societies and global market structures. They create new business models and possibilities for networking, but also new dependencies from foreign tech companies and global supply chains.
- **Our goal is a sovereign, competitive European digital economy that is able to set technological and legal standards that are globally recognised, in consultation with our international partners.** Digital markets and technological developments need as much freedom as possible and only as much regulation as necessary. Important initiatives such as the European Chips Act must be developed with more strategic thinking and implemented faster. When it comes to digital technologies such as robotics or quantum technology, the EU must not become dependent on individual third countries.

- **We want to strengthen the global competitiveness and innovative power of European companies in the field of artificial intelligence (AI) while creating a high degree of legal certainty for suppliers and users alike.**

Digital innovation in the field of AI offers considerable opportunities for coping with global challenges such as climate protection and healthcare. We support the adoption of an EU Artificial Intelligence Act, insofar as it leaves sufficient room for innovation.

- **The European data economy must be able to compete with the world's leading digital locations (EU Data Act).** In order to ensure this, we need data sovereignty and data availability. In this context, we also support the EU Commission's plans to negotiate a new data protection agreement with the United States. This will ensure more legal certainty and more equivalent data protection levels on both sides of the Atlantic.

- **We consider Europe-wide digital IDs for everyday use (eIDAS Regulation) to be a real booster for digitisation in Europe.**

- **We call for more speed as we create and expand safe and fast internet connections across Europe, especially in the shape of fibre optic lines and 5G networks.** This is the basis of any successful digitisation. When expanding our telecommunications infrastructure and 5G (or, in the future, 6G) technologies, the EU must not become dependent on individual third countries. At the European level, we should strive for an integrated internal market for telecommunications services, in order to promote the development of a European gigabit infrastructure. We welcome the EU's efforts to develop a satellite system for safe internet (IRIS2) because we need resilient and safe infrastructures in situations of crisis and emergency. We also welcome the possibility to eventually open the system for commercial use.

- **Europe must actively accompany and react to new developments like the Metaverse, including the opportunities and challenges these developments pose for our societies, governments, and businesses.** Here as well, the EU must make it its objective to become a leader in technological, economic, and legal developments.

3. Promoting Climate and Environmental Protection as an Economic Success Factor for Growth and Employment; Making the European Energy Market Fit for the Future

- **The European Green Deal sets the goal to make Europe the first climate-neutral continent by 2050. When it comes to implementation, we count on market-based instruments and targeted incentives for investment – not on bans. EU emissions trading must become the key instrument.** We reject charging twice or even multiple times for the same CO₂ emissions. Wherever double or multiple burdens cannot be avoided, the EU must provide for compensatory measures. In the field of agriculture, the Green Deal must

prioritise food security and security of supply, as well as resilience of our food supply systems.

- **We need to redouble our efforts in research and development in order to develop new, climate- and environment-friendly technologies. Climate-friendly technologies that are marketable but have not yet been launched on a larger scale must be integrated into the markets in a timely fashion. Climate protection and competitiveness are two faces of the same coin.** The transformation of our economy can only be achieved together with our industrial sector, not against it. Our EU climate policy will be a success if we create and increase prosperity using climate-friendly technologies. If we achieve this, other economic regions in the world will follow our example. To this end, we need rules that do not lead to more red tape but strengthen businesses and innovation.
- **If we want to avoid high costs and save countless lives, we need more climate protection and climate change adaptation.** Climate change threatens our prosperity and our health – even now. We are already experiencing ever stronger and more frequent weather extremes with ever more serious consequences, even here in Europe. In order to limit these developments, it is of paramount importance that we increase investment into climate protection and climate change adaptation.
- **International climate protection efforts are our top priority. Climate Protection is achieved globally or not at all.** In order to achieve successful climate protection at the international level, the gap between Europe and other regions of the world when it comes to ambitions must not become larger, for this would simply lead to industries relocating their production to less ambitious countries, which in the end would lead to less climate protection, not more. We support establishing an effective CO₂ pricing scheme at least at the level of the G20.
- **In order to speed up the development of a sustainable hydrogen economy, it should be possible, during a transition period, to complement green hydrogen by low-carbon solutions such as blue hydrogen (produced by means of carbon capture and storage) or turquoise hydrogen (produced by means of methane pyrolysis).** We want to promote hydrogen imports into the EU and in the production countries, and we want to set up a cross-border hydrogen network within the EU.
- **We are resolutely against favouring particular technologies and in favour of climate and environmental protection measures at the European level that promote innovation.** The principle of technological neutrality must apply across all sectors if we want to achieve our goals in terms of protecting the climate and the environment. All climate and environmental measures also need to strengthen Europe as a location for business and ensure fair global and European competition.

- **We want to promote the circular economy by reducing the consumption of primary resources through sustainable product design and the use of recycled materials.** This will also reduce our dependency on raw materials imports.
- **The mobility of the future must be environmentally compatible, available, and affordable.** All modes are equally important to us – road, rail, air, and water. Instead of working with bans, we want to contribute to climate protection using market instruments. This is why we welcome the inclusion of the transport sector into the EU emissions trading scheme. This is an important step towards our goal to establish a uniform, cross-sectoral CO₂ price.
- **Construction and housing must be and remain affordable, available, and environmentally compatible.** When it comes to climate protection, we count on market instruments such as emissions trading, not on bans or forced refurbishment. This is why we welcome the inclusion of buildings into the EU emissions trading scheme. However, we reject the adoption of even stricter standards for energy efficiency in buildings than are currently provided for, as this would make construction even more expensive and thus produce deterring effects.
- **We are resolutely in favour of strengthening the security of Europe's energy supply. To this end, we need a sustainable European energy policy with a functioning common energy market that is based on market principles and bundles our purchasing power.** Our goal must be to deepen the European energy infrastructure with a view to more flexibility and resilience within the system. This will ensure more security, independence, and diversity of our energy supply. At the same time, it will contribute to more competitive and affordable energy prices, which will translate into growth and employment and make Europe a competitive industrial location by 2050. This is why we need adequate investments into cross-border energy infrastructures. In parallel, we must expand the supply side in energy production and substantially accelerate approval procedures.
- **We count on partnerships for LNG, hydrogen, and energy storage, as well as on cross-border networks.** A trans-European infrastructure is especially important if we want to create innovative technologies for intelligent avoidance of CO₂ emissions.
- **We want to create the legal framework conditions for carbon capture and storage in Germany and Europe, as well as to build up a Europe-wide CO₂ transport network.** This is inevitable to achieve climate neutrality within the EU by 2050 and develop a circular economy for CO₂, as we need to deal with residual emissions, e. g., from industrial processes. In addition, we support research and development, as well as ambitious pilot projects in the field of negative emissions technologies. This especially concerns direct air carbon capture and storage (DACCS), but also other technologies.

4. Strengthening Europe as a Union of Stability

- **A reliable and stability-oriented fiscal policy in Germany and Europe creates a strong EU.** It is essential for the lasting cohesion of our community of states and a prerequisite for attractive framework conditions for private investment.
- **Setting up a COVID reconstruction fund to mitigate the exceptional consequences of the pandemic was the right thing to do.** However, incurring debt at the EU level must strictly remain the exception. **We resolutely oppose any plans to introduce joint and several liability in any form, which would permanently communitarise debt in the EU.**
- **The disciplining effect of financial market incentives is an important corrective against incurring excessive debt and high fiscal sustainability risks.** Equity backing for government bonds and insolvency regulations for member states would thus be of prime importance, also with a view to the development of interest rates, as this would credibly maintain and strengthen incentive effects.
- **We want to relaunch the Stability and Growth Pact for 2024 and refine it to make it more enforceable.** In this context, the benchmarks of a debt-to-GDP ratio of 60 percent and a government deficit of 3 percent of the GDP, as set out in the European treaties, must remain binding for all EU member states. Any reform of the regulatory framework should reduce exemption clauses. In particular, exempting individual types of expenditures (such as investments) from the determination of the structural balance must remain out of the question.
- **The obligation to reduce the debt-to-GDP ratio to the upper limits prescribed in the Stability and Growth Pact must remain binding and be monitored annually.** However, with a view to better enforceability, any reduction path must be designed in a realistic manner. In particular, smoothing the debt reduction path might remedy the problem of unrealistically high reduction obligations for individual member states within the first years. We reject debt reductions plans that are individually and bilaterally negotiated between the EU Commission and national governments. These carry the risk that rules might be interpreted too flexibly, which would lead to a loss of confidence in them. We want uniform and binding stability rules across Europe.
- **Possibilities to exercise political influence on compliance with the European fiscal rules must be limited.** This requires the automatic initiation of the excessive deficit procedure as soon as the ceiling is exceeded. To this end, monitoring of compliance with the Stability and Growth Pact should be removed from the remit of the EU Commission and transferred to an independent European Fiscal Board. A rule-based procedure should be established for the activation and deactivation of the general escape clause, so that continuous activation can be precluded.

- **We also want to establish binding procedures and clear evaluation criteria for the European Semester process.** Country-specific recommendations should focus on key areas such as structural reforms and budget consolidation. National budget plans should continue to be assessed on a year-by-year basis and not for medium- to long-term periods, as has increasingly been the case.
- **We want to develop the European Stability Mechanism into a European Monetary Fund (EMF).** By following the example of the International Monetary Fund (IMF), we could thus create an even stronger European crisis response instrument. Like the IMF, the EMF should remain independent as regards its work and decision-making processes.
- **We are clearly committed to the independence of the European Central Bank (ECB).** The first and most important goal of the ECB must remain the maintenance of monetary stability. Monetary and fiscal policy must remain separate. It is not and must never be the job of the ECB to provide public finances.

5. Strengthening Europe as an Area of Freedom, Internal Security, and the Rule of the Law.

- **We consider protection against crime and terror to be a central task of both national and European policies. We support compatible data systems for European and national security agencies.** We advocate the facilitation of a comprehensive exchange of data on potential threats and dangerous individuals between security agencies, as well as easier automatic retrieval of such information (for example via the Schengen Information System, the INPOL police information system, the EURODAC fingerprint identification system or the Visa Information System VIS). We support more congruence between national schemes to identify dangerous individuals and are in favour of reliable, Europe-wide tracking of such individuals.
- **We advocate the creation of a Europe-wide regulation concerning the storage and retrieval of telecommunications-related traffic and location data, provided that fundamental rights are respected.** This is necessary to make our investigative capabilities more effective, especially in the fight against terrorism, child abuse, and other serious crimes.
- **We want to substantially advance European security policy through improved coordination and cooperation.** In particular, this includes strengthening European institutions such as Europol and Eurojust. In operational terms, Europol's staff and technical capabilities should be expanded adequately, and the competences of the European Public Prosecutor's Office (Eurojust) should be extended. We are also in favour of more joint training, professional education, and exchange programmes between security agencies.

Closer cooperation and networking between police forces is an important response to cross-border organised crime.

- **We call for sufficient staffing of the judiciaries in the member states.** This is the only way for Europe to succeed as an area of justice, and for European and national laws to be enforced effectively.
- **We also want to strengthen Europe as a digital area of internal security.** To this end, we must, among other things, expand our common cyber defence, continue developing the EU's cyber crisis management, improve cooperation in our fight against hybrid threats, disinformation, and terrorism, and reduce strategic dependencies in the field of cyber security technologies by developing genuinely European counterstrategies. It is also important to exchange information in an atmosphere of trust, to develop compatible security concepts and systems among the EU states, and to facilitate the exchange of personnel among national authorities. The EU Cyber Resilience Act, the NIS2-Directive on measures for a high common level of cybersecurity across the Union, and the EU Cyber Security Act are important milestones in this regard.
- **We call for a coherent EU strategy against smuggling and selling illegal weapons.** For years, the number of illegal weapons in the EU has been on the increase. In order to stop this development, we need the best possible cooperation between Frontex, Europol, and national security agencies. The EU and its member states must draw the right conclusions from the aftermath of the war in Yugoslavia, consistently analyse developments with regard to the Russian war of aggression in Ukraine and the weapons used therein, and take proactive countermeasures. Authorities need to be equipped as best as possible in order to fight the smuggling and selling of illegal weapons via darknet.
- **In order to better face challenges such as the COVID pandemic, increasing forest fires, and extreme weather situations, we want to further develop European disaster control.** We need joint European capacities, especially in major crisis situations and disasters that overtax the capacities of individual nation states. To this end, the European Emergency Response Coordination Centre (ERCC) must be expanded; the procurement of joint emergency reserves and resources such as a larger EU fire-fighting aircraft fleet must be facilitated.
- **We want to resolutely counter radicalisation, misinformation, and violent extremism – also at the European level.** To this end, we must strengthen existing structures and networks such as the Radicalisation Awareness Network (RAN) and the EU Steering Board on Radicalisation, as well as facilitate the exchange between state and non-state entities. In this context, the operators of the large online platforms bear a particular responsibility. We call for reliable Europe-wide monitoring of the spreading of false information on the internet, as well as a systematic exchange of experiences, trends, and best practices in deradicalisation work.

- **For the EU to remain an area of freedom, we need to make joint efforts to effectively secure our external borders and intensify police cooperation.** It is up to member states, not criminal networks, to decide who enters Europe. In the spirit of humanity and order, Europe must manage to permanently combine effective protection of refugees and reliable border protection. To this end, the EU Commission must support the member states at the EU's external borders with sufficient financial resources for effective border protection. In addition, we want to develop Frontex into a genuine border police and coast guard with sovereign powers and strengthen the coordinating and support functions of the EU Agency for Law Enforcement Training (CEPOL), Euro-pol, and the European Union Agency for Asylum (EUAA/EASO) in terms of staffing, organisation, and legal matters. As long as the protection of the EU's external borders is not fully functional, member states must have the right to exercise temporary, situationally adequate internal border controls and to reject asylum seekers who have already been accepted or rejected in other member states.
- **We need a functioning, fair, and crisis-proof Common European Asylum System (CEAS).** This is a key prerequisite if we want the EU member states to continue to fulfil their humanitarian obligations and to preserve the great achievement of a border-free Schengen area. In addition to the effective protection of the external borders, the key issues are: a fair sharing of burdens between the EU member states; external border procedures with identity checks, security checks, registration and asylum border procedures; prevention of secondary migration; harmonisation of social standards for beneficiaries of protection in the EU countries; European strategies concerning the joint enforcement of the obligation to leave (e.g., by moving forward on EU repatriation agreements); a common fight against the causes of flight; strategies to support national integration policies. We need effective safeguards to ensure that in the future, member states will no longer evade their obligations under the CEAS, for example by disregarding registration obligations or falling short of certain minimum social standards. Moreover, the EU must find answers to the political instrumentalisation of migration (e.g., in Belarus).
- **The EU Mass Influx Directive must be further developed.** Applying the Mass Influx Directive for the first time to take in large numbers of war refugees from Ukraine at short notice was the right thing to do. However, we also saw that there is a need for reform: For future cases, we need binding equal distribution among the EU member states just as much as a clarification of the relationship between the Mass Influx Directive and EU visa regulations.
- **We want to establish migration as a cross-cutting issue in all relevant policy areas at the European level.** This is the only way to prevent illegal migration while improving our ability to attract skilled workers. The visa lever, economy and trade, or the provision of over 55 per cent of global official development assistance by EU states are just some of the many instruments

Europe can use to jointly structure, manage, and limit migration. This also and in particular applies to the issue of repatriation into third countries.

- **We are committed to improving child protection across Europe.** To achieve this, we need, among other things, the establishment of an EU centre for combating sexual abuse of children and young people as well as child pornography, with the involvement of survivors' boards in the member states, as well as Europe-wide education and prevention campaigns in all languages, including plain language, and ideally in cooperation with platform providers.
- **Germany must no longer be the brothel of Europe.** We support the concerted protection of women and men in prostitution and the consistent fight against human trafficking and sexual exploitation in a united Europe – so that Germany will no longer be a hotspot for prostitution and human trafficking compared to its European neighbours and partners.

6. For Competitiveness, Sustainability, Food Security, and Consumer Protection in the EU's Agricultural Policy

- **A high-performing agricultural sector and environmental protection and nature conservation are two faces of the same coin.** We therefore advocate meaningful action to pave the way into the future. This includes measures to protect biodiversity that are embedded into the production process, rather than resorting to the practices of setting aside land and issuing prohibitions. The principle of sustainability is our guideline. Smallholder agriculture is of particular importance, as small farms often work according to more environmentally friendly and sustainable principles. At the same time, we must avoid playing off different forms of agriculture against each other. Furthermore, we need a comprehensive and sustainable forestry sector that strengthens our rural areas and protects the environment and the climate. Our sustainable agriculture and forestry must follow the principle of resource efficiency. Here as well, setting aside land should not be our goal.
- **We reject blanket reduction targets, for example regarding the use of fertilisers or pesticides.** Reduction targets must always be defined on a scientific basis, keeping the principle of subsidiarity in mind. They always need to be accompanied by comprehensive impact assessments in terms of food security and security of supply. This applies in particular to the EU Nature Protection Package. The requirements and scope of the EU Industrial Emissions Directive must not be extended.
- **We are committed to strengthening production in Europe, supporting a resilient agriculture in vibrant rural areas, and preserving our cultural landscapes across Europe.** The central goal of any agricultural policy must be to secure food supply and improve our food sovereignty. In addition, our farmers should continue to be able to supply food for the world. Whenever

new measures are designed to maintain biodiversity and protect species, the interests of crop and livestock farmers must be considered.

- **Agriculture needs innovation. We therefore resolutely support environmental protection measures at the EU level that promote innovation without favouring any particular technology.** We will work towards a timely amendment of the European genetic engineering law. In this context, we also need to create a more innovation-friendly European legal framework for new breeding methods.
- **Agriculture needs fair chances in competition. Instruments must therefore be designed in such a way that production is not simply relocated to non-EU countries.** This is why we need uniform animal husbandry labels and designations of origin across the EU. The income-supporting effects of direct payments in the framework of our Common Agricultural Policy must be preserved. EU requirements must not be further tightened. Documentation obligations are to be reduced to a meaningful level.
- **Agriculture needs the acceptance of consumers. For us, the way forward lies in the ability to make free decisions.** We need EU-wide mandatory, comprehensive husbandry labels and designations of origin for animal products. In addition, we need meaningful, science-based, EU-wide mandatory labels indicating nutritional values. These labels must be consumer-friendly and avoid burdening producers with unnecessary red tape. We also advocate an EU-wide reform of the best-before date. More accurate knowledge about the shelf-life of foods will contribute significantly towards reducing food waste.

7. Strengthening Democracy, Social Cohesion, and Health in Europe; Developing the European Area of Culture and Education

- **We want to defend the values and democratic fundamental rights of the EU against their enemies.** We want an EU with strong internal cohesion and equal rights across all age groups.
- **Also with a view to the fundamental importance of the principle of subsidiarity, we want to incorporate the principle of local self-government more strongly into EU decision-making processes, including at the early stages.** Many European projects have direct effects on local self-government and are, to a large extent, implemented locally.
- **We want to promote intercultural and social competences in Europe. To do this, we want to strengthen the European Voluntary Service.** Volunteer programmes should become more visible and reach all population groups.
- **We support the idea of a Social Europe.** This especially includes the setting of minimum social standards, taking into account the principle of

subsidiarity. A “Social Union”, after all, is first of all developed by and in the member states, with European minimum standards complementing national initiatives. Decent and healthy working conditions in all member states as well as fair wages and sound collective partnerships are indispensable accomplishments that need to be protected and preserved. We reject the idea of a European unemployment insurance.

- **A deeper European cooperation makes an important contribution to optimal healthcare, including in Germany.** We therefore support the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC) and the European Health Union for better health security and crisis preparedness. We welcome a cross-border exchange of health data within the framework of a European Health Data Space to improve healthcare for citizens and for research purposes, given that data sovereignty is respected.
 - **We support the freedom of culture and the media in Europe.** We want to strengthen our common cultural identity, protect intellectual property across borders, and expand cultural programmes. As we relaunch the cultural and creative industries after the COVID pandemic, it is particularly important to us to closely cooperate with our European partners. Cultural sovereignty lies with the Member States (and, in Germany, the Federal States); thus, the principle of subsidiarity is to be respected in each endeavour to regulate.
 - **We want the successful Erasmus+ Programme for Education, Training, Youth and Sports to continue offering opportunities to millions of young people.** To this end, we must improve access to Erasmus+ and make available more funds for the programme.
 - **We need a high-quality vocational training system in the EU.** Member states must continue to simplify, digitise, and better harmonise recognition procedures and transparency instruments for vocational training. Strengthening vocational training systems across Europe also contributes significantly to reducing youth unemployment.
- 8. Continuing to Develop Europe’s Institutions, Realigning our Enlargement Policy, Giving New Momentum to the Franco-German Friendship, and Deepening Cooperation with Central and Eastern Europe, the Baltic States, and the United Kingdom.**
- **We must make Europe fit for the challenges of a world in transition by continuing to develop its institutions both on the inside and in its external relationships.** An internal consolidation and reform of the EU in order to strengthen its ability to act is also a prerequisite for its capacity to accept new member states in a time in which current geopolitical changes have led to a new enlargement dynamic. At the same time, it is clear that even in the future, member states must be able to decide what competences will be transferred to

the European level and what will be regulated nationally. We need a new focus on the principle of subsidiarity and a lean institutional set-up.

- **Only a strong Europe that offers actual added value will be able to convince citizens, companies, and municipalities alike.** Such added value lies, for example, in a functioning internal market, more global competitiveness, an ambitious foreign trade policy, a reliable security and defence policy, and joint efforts to protect the climate and design a coherent migration policy. The motto must be: “Bigger on big things and smaller on small things.”
- **We advocate an extension of qualified majority voting in the EU Council in order to substantially boost the EU's capacity to act.** This applies in particular to certain issues and strategic decisions in the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP), for example in the field of sanctions. In this area, the EU must be able to reach common positions faster and implement them consistently. This is the only way in which the EU can live up to its increased geopolitical responsibility.
- **Wherever we need “more Europe”, we also support gradual steps towards integration and flexible coalitions, according to the principle of enhanced cooperation.** In this way, member states that are willing to go forward in specific areas can cooperate more closely with each other and boldly lead the way in selected projects (e.g., in cutting-edge research) – in the spirit of a “Europe of pioneers”. However, in order to protect cohesion within the EU, enhanced cooperation must always remain open for other member states.
- **As is customary in nation states, legislative proposals that have not been passed by the end of a legislative period of the European Parliament should have to be reintroduced in the following one (discontinuity principle).** This makes it possible to examine whether bills from previous legislative periods are still of factual relevance or need to be adapted. It also helps prevent overregulation.
- **We want to increase the influence of national parliaments in the context of EU legislation.** For this purpose, the system of reprimands in cases of violation of the principles of subsidiarity and proportionality must be further developed.
- **With a view to the prospective admission of new members, we need a smaller and more effective EU Commission.** The formula of the Lisbon Treaty on the number of Commissioners must be implemented at the latest before the next EU enlargement.
- **We want to make the promise of European integration for accession candidates realistic, goal-oriented and performance-based by reorienting our EU enlargement policy without compromising on the accession criteria.** To this end, the EU enlargement policy should pursue a stepwise

integration approach. Below full membership, there is a need for an attractive intermediate stage for candidate countries that do not yet fulfil all accession requirements. In particular, they should be allowed to participate in joint programmes in different areas – from foreign and security policy to research, energy, transport or climate protection. This way, candidate countries will see actual, tangible progress on their way towards the EU earlier on – knowing that accession negotiations for full membership may take many years. Accession candidates need a more realistic perspective so that they do not lose trust in the EU or, given the global competition of systems, may even turn to other alliances. At the same time, countries must be assessed based on their individual progress. What counts is the effort each individual country makes to meet the strict legal, economic, financial, and political criteria. In parallel, we need to **fully tap the potential of the European Political Community** to be an attractive partner for other, like-minded countries. This is in our own strategic interest. We also support adding a parliamentary dimension to this format.

- **We are committed to giving new impetus to our Franco-German friendship, 60 years after the signing of the landmark Élysée Treaty.** The Franco-German friendship, which was once again underpinned by the Treaty of Aachen in 2019, remains of paramount importance – not only for our two peoples, but also for Europe as a whole. Our partners inside and outside Europe also know how important it is for Germany and France to act together as we provide impetus and guidance – without excluding others.
- **At the same time, also in view of the new security situation caused by the threat posed by Russia, we are making a strong case for deepening cooperation with our Central and Eastern European and Baltic EU partner countries.** We need more intensive cooperation with Central and Eastern European as well as Baltic states as an important contribution to the strategic reorientation of the EU – among other things, by reviving formats such as the “Weimar Triangle”.
- **Our political, economic, scientific, and cultural relations with the United Kingdom should be deepened.** We must underline the strategic importance that our partnership with the United Kingdom has both for Germany and the EU, and we must cooperate closely, especially in matters of foreign and security policy.