

Protecting the Union and Promoting Our Values

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Today, European values face their greatest challenges since the Cold War. But in contrast to those times, today's challenges to our values come from several directions: from the European Union's Eastern as well as Southern Neighbourhoods; some are global in nature, while others emanate from within our own societies. But if we Europeans, together with our American and other allies, mobilise the political will and develop the right answers to face the current threats, we will not only be able to overcome them. We will, in the process, also become a better and stronger Union. The European People's Party is determined to take the lead in this effort.

Liberal democracy, based on the rule of law and a multiparty system, a strong civil society, the freedom of religion, expression and association and our Judeo-Christian values are being challenged in an unprecedented manner. We believe that our convictions and Christian Democratic values can provide a convincing answer to these challenges. Russian aggression has put international security and the political and legal order in Europe at peril. Crises, wars and waves of refugees in the vicinity of the EU are multiplying. There is also a number of global challenges, threats to open markets and the global economy, and in some regions of the world a spread of authoritarian models of government, as well as an increase in jihadist terrorism, which especially impacts Christian minorities all around the world, bringing them to the verge of extinction in their home countries in the Middle East and Africa. Of another nature are global challenges with disruptive consequences such as climate change, energy supply and food security.

Many of these external developments have direct consequences for, or are intrinsically linked to, the domestic situation in EU Member States, as in the cases of 'home-grown terrorism', jihadi fighters, human trafficking, dangerous populism and Russian influence. More than ever before, the separation between external and internal threats no longer holds true.

In this context, migration stemming from massive flows of people to Europe poses enormous challenges to our values and societies. Migration is a long-term concern and it requires a comprehensive and joint response at EU level.

All the more, it will be vital that we as Europeans are self-confident in promoting universal values externally as well as internally. Foreign policy and security are too often thought of as the sole responsibility of national governments. The economic and financial crisis has caused many to look inward, although in opinion polls, a stronger and more united EU foreign and security policy is still the preferred option of the citizens.

At the same time, and despite all the problems, there are a number of important opportunities for Europe. The prosperity and individual freedom of the vast majority of Europeans have never been so well developed. The European social and economic model continues to be attractive. As the Euromaidan in Ukraine has clearly demonstrated, democrats and societies all over the globe are inspired by Western models of the rule of law, human rights and multiparty democracy. While we have to realistically assess threats and challenges, we have to be conscious of our strengths and bring them to bear in order to come up with the right strategies and develop the proper instruments to make them work.

At the root of the EU's current weakness and inward orientation is the economic and financial crisis, starting in 2008, and a lack of competitiveness in too many Member States, which is only gradually giving way to a broad-based, sustainable social and economic recovery. This is compounded by a lack of economic governance in the EU as a whole and the Eurozone in particular. There cannot be a stronger EU foreign and security policy, or an EU resilient to populist and authoritarian temptations from within, without social stability, a more dynamic, competitive, more prosperous and therefore stronger Union.

For the EPP, a strong and united Union acting together is best suited to face the many challenges and threats to our central values and our way of life. If we do not protect and promote our common values, they could be endangered or lost entirely.

1. Where we come from: Our core values

Europe has always striven to be a place of culture, rationality, progress, faith and knowledge, with the human person at the centre of community life and at the centre of political action. We have learned from history – ours and that of others. We are guided by the European enlightenment, and will defend it against old and new enemies. The EPP's political thinking is based on fundamental, interdependent, equally important and universally applicable Judeo-Christian and democratic values: human dignity, peace, freedom and responsibility, democracy, fundamental equality including equality between men and women, justice and solidarity, the rule of law, checks and balances, the separation between state and religion, tolerance, freedom of speech, truth as well as subsidiarity. Christian Democracy, in addition to other traditions, is at the core of the political ideas that make up our political family. Human dignity is the overarching value which enables us to strike a balance with all these values.

Global respect for the freedom of religion, including the right to change faith or to have none, must be fully implemented around the world. Each person must be able to achieve personal development regardless of his or her origin, sex, race, sexual orientation, nationality, religion, social status or state of health or age. We will not accept ideologies that inspire jihadist or any other kind of terrorism, or lead to parallel societies in which the core values of our constitutions are systematically undermined. Freedom of speech, equal rights between women and men, and respect and dialogue between religious communities are essential elements of our value system. All forms of anti-Semitism, as well as other types of discrimination of ethnic and religious groups, are utterly unacceptable and have no place in our societies. We also encourage all religious, cultural and ethnic communities in Europe to embrace our common European values and to see their responsibility in promoting peace and security by clearly opposing radicalism and all forms of violence.

All legislation must evolve on the basis of universal respect for fundamental and undeniable rights, as defined in the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights, as well as the 1950 European Convention on Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, and the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union, as confirmed in the Lisbon Treaty of 2009. In this Charter, for the first time in the history of mankind, 500 million people said no to capital punishment and expressed their readiness to fight for this in the world. We are deeply committed to an international order based on international law and the UN Charter that supports the peaceful resolution of conflicts and guarantees the inviolability of borders. We are equally committed to the right of nations to determine their political systems and their alliances in a free and sovereign manner, no matter where these nations are situated geographically. We are also determined to support democratic movements and democratic political parties which share our core values, wherever they emerge.

We reject the conventional notion about a contrast between values and interests. In fact, in our view, values should be defined as long-term interests. The EPP is the leading force in Europe for the promotion of these around the world.

2. Enhancing stability and preparing for enlargement: The Western Balkans

The countries of the Western Balkans have suffered profoundly from the wars of the 1990s and their consequences. For the last 15 years, each country in the region has faced a challenging social, political and economic environment and has been moving towards the European Union at its own pace.

Bearing in mind that EU enlargement has been one of the most successful European policies and has essentially proven the importance of the European model, it remains an important answer to the double challenge of consolidating the global role and confirming the responsibility of Europe in stabilising the continent. EU enlargement is an effective tool for promoting freedom, democracy, peace, stability, economic and social development, as well as human rights and the rule of law, across Europe. We strive to make the closer association of partner countries a successful tool to promote these goals in the neighbourhood.

Our approach towards candidate countries has to be tailored according to each country's progress in fulfilling the Copenhagen criteria and implementing the necessary reforms, and to the integration capacity of the EU. The date of accession to the EU also depends on each country's commitment to European values and principles. In the meantime, the European Union should not get caught up in enlargement fatigue, but should rather keep a pro-EU spirit in the region of the Western Balkans alive and support the aspirations of those countries to join the EU.

Even so, the future EU members of the Western Balkan region must realise that peace, stability and prosperity in this region will have a long-term positive effect on security and stability throughout the whole European continent. They therefore have to remain committed to the EU's values and fundamental principles. As the EPP, we have to underline that the integration of the region into our Union shall only be possible if the standards of the rule of law, independent and efficient justice systems, the fight against corruption, good neighbourly relations, human rights and respect for international law are met. Genuine efforts for good neighbourly relations should be considered a precondition for progress in the accession process. The EPP therefore supports and encourages regional cooperation in the Western Balkans as a tool for strengthening peace among all ethnicities in the region. The normalisation of relations between all countries, and especially between Pristina and Belgrade, is a key element and must be intensified. The EU should encourage all countries in the region to come to terms with the painful parts of their common recent past. Civil society and its organisations will have to play a particularly important role in this context.

3. Confronting aggression and helping our friends: The Eastern Dimension

We want good, stable, prosperous and mutually beneficial relations with all our eastern neighbours. We are committed to having partners at the EU's eastern border. Therefore, we want a truly democratic, peaceful, strong, free and prosperous Russia as an important and reliable partner of the EU, in particular with regard to tackling common regional and global challenges. We are convinced that the overwhelming majority of Russians want a peaceful future in a stable and free country. We believe that the four common spaces, as set out in 2003 between the EU and Russia, could contribute in the long run to the prosperity, stability and security of this continent. Unfortunately, Russia has developed in a completely different direction in the last 15 years. Many of us have overlooked this development for too long. The illegal annexation of Crimea and Sevastopol by the Russian Federation was an act of external aggression. Today, Russia's external aggression is matched by internal repression. Together, they have become the most eminent threat to our security and our values in the Eastern Neighbourhood. We will not give up in trying to develop cooperation and partnership with Russia, but this will only be possible with a Russia that wants to be our partner and that fulfils its international obligations.

The current Russian leadership is on a collision course with the West. It has centralised power to an unprecedented extent. The Russian state, its police and intelligence services, as well as its large firms, have entered a dangerous symbiosis. It is defining democracy, the rule of law and functioning economies in bordering countries as a threat to its own autocratic rule. It has developed an anti-Western, anti-liberal narrative that blends Great Russian nationalism with nostalgia for the Soviet Union. Thanks to its concept of 'hybrid war', combining political activism, diplomatic and economic pressure, energy blackmail, cyber warfare, propaganda and regular and irregular warfare, Russia is putting out a challenge to which the West still has to find an appropriate answer. At the same time, we are well aware that the Russian people are the first victims of this development.

Through a combination of financial and other support for European right- and left-wing populist parties, bribery and corruption, as well as orchestrated attempts to gain control of Western media, Russia is exerting considerable influence over public opinion and political decision-making in the European Union itself.

In order to achieve stability, democracy and prosperity in its Eastern Partnership countries and counter the multiple threats emanating from Russia under Putin, the European Union and its Member States have to devise a strategy that is centered on developing the Eastern Neighbourhood, containing Russia and deterring Russian aggression. This process will take a long time to bear any fruit. One of the mistakes the EU has made in its past eastern strategies was to expect results too quickly. We must at the same time send a clear message to the Russian people that they are Europeans and an integral part of our common European culture. We do not want to marginalise them in our future Europe. We know they are Europeans and we ask them to behave as Europeans.

- Developing the Eastern neighbourhood

The concepts of the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) and the Eastern Partnership (EaP) have to be fundamentally revised, becoming more proactive, credible, flexible and more political, ensuring long-term EU commitment and enjoying stronger support from the Member States. The EU should aim for a clearer differentiation between target countries and follow the 'more for more' approach, carefully calibrating our offer of cooperation according to the extent to which the target countries are willing to move.

The EU must remain committed to supporting human rights, democracy, the rule of law, good governance and fighting corruption in the entire Eastern neighbourhood. Engaging with civil society and facilitating citizens' contact between the countries of the Eastern Partnership and the EU will be a crucial part of this effort at supporting democracy.

The Euronest Parliamentary Assembly, non-governmental organisations as well as political foundations, think tanks, and the European Endowment for Democracy, should play a crucial role in this process. The exchange of good practices and the Ombudsman Summits of the Eastern Partnership should also be supported.

Ukraine is the key country in this context: it will require more support for its political, administrative and economic reforms. In order to allow it to reform successfully, it will need more than financial assistance and political encouragement. It will require effective local and regional governance, functional decentralisation and public administration reforms as well as continued guarantee of minority rights. It will need a clearer outlook for substantive cooperation and partnership with the EU and should never be treated as a 'buffer zone' between the West and Russia; the same is true for Moldova and Georgia. Ukraine must be enabled to protect its sovereignty and to improve its defences against further Russian aggression. Ukraine's citizens have made a clear choice for life in a modern country with a functioning economy under the rule of law, and they have suffered enormously for that. They need and deserve our help.

Successful reforms and growing prosperity are the best possible answers to Russian propaganda in the Eastern neighbourhood. With countries like Moldova, Georgia and Ukraine, which have signed association agreements, we should constantly deepen our relations. However, we note with concern the deterioration of the rule of law and the human rights situation in Georgia.

In Armenia, it will be important to find ways to cooperate despite and outside of its membership in the Eurasian Economic Union. Likewise, in Azerbaijan's case, the EU should balance a strategic energy partnership with addressing the deteriorating situation concerning human rights and civil liberties. In Belarus, the EU has used policies of critical engagement. The EU should support independence from Russia as well as economic and democratic improvements in the country, focusing on civil society and people-to-people contact.

- **Establishing a more united and assertive European position towards Russia**

Containment begins at home. Russia's new techniques to influence public opinion and political decision-making inside the European Union must be countered on all levels. It is imperative to counter Russian propaganda and work out a relevant and honest communication strategy directed at the Russian-speaking citizens of both EU Member States and the countries of the Eastern Partnership.

The dependence of many Member States on Russian energy supplies, which has been a dangerous instrument for political blackmail, must be reduced as soon as possible. That entails building a true energy union, thereby increasing energy efficiency, diversifying energy sources and transit routes, enhancing solidarity among Member States as well as developing interconnectors among Member States and partner countries. The EU and NATO must stand united and firm in their response to and condemnation of a Russian threat, be it hybrid, conventional or nuclear.

Russian intelligence activities in EU Member States must be fought more effectively. The EU and the Member States also have to apply the full force of the law against Russian organised crime and the corruption emanating from Russian business activities in the European Union.

As long as Russian aggression continues in Ukraine, sanctions should not be lifted or weakened. The European Union, in close cooperation with its American partners, must be ready to further increase the political and economic price tag for Russian aggression through political isolation and economic sanctions.

- **Deterring aggression**

Russian aggression against members of the EU and NATO must be deterred much more decisively and effectively. This presupposes, first of all, a NATO which is militarily stronger thanks to more and smarter defence spending by the member states. It also presupposes significantly higher levels of pooling and the sharing of military infrastructure, materiel and personnel between Member States of the EU and NATO.

Second, and equally importantly, both NATO and the EU will have to develop answers to Russia's hybrid wars. This is no easy task for countries based on the rule of law, but at the moment, both organisations are painfully unprepared for Russia's new type of political-military threat. A credible deterrence against hybrid wars is urgently needed.

4. Special relations with a strategic partner: Turkey

Turkey is a pivotal country in the southeastern neighbourhood of the EU, at the crossroads of Europe and Asia. It is of strategic importance to the EU – economically, demographically, militarily, and not least, thanks to the millions of EU citizens with Turkish roots. Turkey can and should play an eminent role as a bridge to Europe's neighbourhood in the east and southeast.

Turkey has been a candidate country for EU membership for more than a decade. We are convinced that it is in our interest to have a modern, democratic, European Turkey as a close partner – a Turkey which adheres to the principles of liberal democracy and defines itself as a part of the West, which respects the EU's *acquis communautaire* and seeks to normalise relations with all Member States. Between 2000 and 2005, Turkey took important steps towards strengthening the rule of law, improving civic rights and converging with EU legislation. But in recent years, much of that progress has been reversed. The EU should urge Turkey to get back on the track of democratic reform.

At the same time, Turkey needs to take all necessary constructive steps, as was expressed by previous EPP positions, in order to find a comprehensive settlement to the Cyprus question based on UN Security Council resolutions and on the principles on which the European Union was founded.

Turkey remains a strategic partner and a member of NATO. The EU should increase incentives for Turkish foreign policy to be better coordinated with EU policies and to foster our cooperation in the field of security, especially in the fight against terrorism. We should intensify our efforts to promote our values not only with the Turkish government, but also with civil society.

As the EPP has repeatedly stated in the past, a privileged partnership with Turkey remains a full-fledged alternative for membership in the EU.

5. A region in turmoil: Building ties to North Africa and the Middle East

Most of the countries in this region still suffer from instability and insecurity, chronic underdevelopment, massive income disparities, sectarian strife, widespread discrimination towards women and violations of women's rights, and a lack of democracy, human and civil rights, good governance, the rule of law and the participation of citizens. The hopes raised by the 'Arab Spring' of 2011 have, so far, hardly materialised. We should not fail to notice the positive developments in some countries (above all in Tunisia), but in others we have seen voters turning to radical Islamist political forces, and in yet other cases we have been confronted with outright civil war. The lack of prospects and social integration must also be considered as serious challenges. In many cases, the problem is deeply rooted in societies and nurtured by a fundamentalist, anti-Western interpretation of Islam. Christians and other religious or ethnic minorities in the Middle East and Africa have particularly suffered from persecution and sectarian violence by jihadist actors. Cultural world heritage sights have been ruined and Christian monuments are endangered by jihadist terror. Moreover, terrorism has spread from the region through the Sahel to Sub-Saharan Africa. The EU needs to develop a comprehensive approach to these challenges. Successful reforms and growing prosperity are the best possible long-term answers to terrorism. Interreligious and intercultural dialogue as well as support for democratic forces are of particular importance in this context, and where minorities need urgent protection, the EU must act by making its solidarity concrete and effective.

- **Confronting terrorism and promoting peace**

The civil wars of the region, notably in Syria, Iraq, Libya and Yemen, have already caused unprecedented casualties and waves of refugees. The rise of the so-called 'Islamic State' ('IS') and other terrorist groups in Northern Syria and Iraq is threatening to destabilise the entire region. It is important to recognise that the rise of jihadist terrorism through movements like Al Qaida or 'IS' is not first and foremost caused by a lack of economic and social development, although the lack of prospects and the widespread corruption of many regimes create the conditions in which fundamentalist movements can hope to win support. The rise of jihadist terrorism is the result of a violent ideology built on a particular interpretation of Islam. It is therefore not only a military, but also a political challenge to the West's efforts to support universal values in the region. Particular emphasis must be given to inter-religious dialogue between Christians and Muslims as well as to the project of an area of common development and prosperity in the Mediterranean and, first of all, in the Maghreb.

A major diplomatic initiative is needed, driven by Europe, to end the proxy-wars in the region.

The terrorist attacks of 2015 in Paris and Copenhagen have proven that there is a straight and clear connection between our countries and the war by the 'Islamic State' and other terrorist organisations in a sizeable part of the Middle East, which is being exported to Europe by 'foreign fighters', along with potential currents of jihadist movements on European soil. Preventing acts of terrorism in the future will require a comprehensive approach that involves all aspects of the problem, mainly in classical foreign and security policy and in justice and home affairs. At the same time, the EU must face the spread of the influence of 'IS' throughout the Sahel region, and that of like-minded terrorist organisations such as Boko Haram further south on the African continent.

Libya has already been degraded to a failed state in the region, with dangers ranging from waves of refugees to becoming a new hotbed for 'IS'. To stabilise Libya and prevent it from further collapsing into a complex civil war will be a major challenge for the UN, EU and NATO in the years to come. The Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action agreed between Iran and the E3/EU+3 in July 2015 is a remarkable success in curbing Iran's nuclear programme, diminishing the tensions between Iran and the West and potentially opening up Iranian society to the world. But the implementation of the agreement has to be effectively verified. Any Iranian violations must lead to the swift renewal of massive sanctions. Iran must never be allowed to possess nuclear weapons. A regional arms race must be prevented. Any opening up of Iranian society must be used to support Iran's democrats.

The conflict between Israel and several non-state actors such as Hamas, Hezbollah and increasingly 'IS', continues to pose a high risk of recurrent warfare which may yet develop into a larger regional conflict. We are determined to help the Israelis and Palestinians to find a two-state solution to their conflict, embedded in regional agreements to overcome decades of enmity. Together with the US and other world powers, the EU should play a more active role in encouraging such a solution and in creating the incentives to bring it about. But at the same time, we are under no illusion that peace between the Israelis and Palestinians would solve any of the deep structural problems from which the entire region is suffering.

- Responding to migration challenges

The flow of refugees and economic migrants arriving in the EU, mostly from Syria, Libya, Yemen, Iraq, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Nigeria, Eritrea, Somalia and the Horn of Africa, who are seeking asylum in EU Member States has reached an unprecedented scale, challenging our capacity to cope. Considerable flows of migrants, among which some are refugees and asylum seekers, trying to reach the EU via the three main roads (the Mediterranean Sea, across the EU-Turkey border and through the Western Balkans), are seriously affecting our stability on the southern flank and lead to disproportionate burdens for several Member States within the EU. This instability is now spreading in southeastern Europe. We have to ensure control of our external borders, maintain societal stability, honour our values and live up to binding international commitments to help refugees.

The continuously high level of pressure due to migration that threatens to overwhelm several Member States proves that the existing system is not sufficient. The EPP therefore calls for a true system of responsibility sharing to the benefit of all Member States confronted with a disproportionate share of applicants for international protection.

A more efficient border control policy, a more stringent fight against human traffickers and smugglers, as well as a fairer distribution of responsibility among the Member States are indispensable in tackling effectively the challenges of migratory pressures, in full respect of migrants' fundamental rights and by paying particular attention to migrant women and children. Frontex, the EU's agency to protect Schengen borders, meaning European external borders, as well as the European Asylum Support Office (EASO), must be strengthened and better financed. Strengthening cooperation with those countries of origin and transit is also key. We have to offer safety and humanitarian assistance as close as possible to the places of origin by creating safe zones and initial reception centres in third countries where the asylum procedure can already be initiated. This will create a legal way for persons in need of protection to enter Europe and limit their risk of falling into the hands of inhumane people smugglers. European financial aid should also be increased to support local efforts.

We have to encourage the European Commission and Member States to quickly implement "hot spot" facilities at the EU's external borders and in third countries. This should go hand in hand with a revision of the Dublin regulation. A common European list of safe countries of origin and transit should be implemented as soon as possible.

Moreover, strengthening the control of immigration should rest on two principles: to enhance the return of economic migrants who are not entitled to asylum, and to better integrate the immigrants who are allowed to stay in the Union. It must also be taken into account that migratory waves due to the crises in the Middle East and in Africa, mostly in Syria and Libya, affect neighbouring countries of the Mediterranean region which usually constitute relatively stable partners of the EU (Lebanon, Jordan, Algeria, Tunisia and Morocco). The EU's answer to migratory flows must therefore take into account transit countries to prevent any domino effect in countries hosting massive numbers of refugees.

Europe's strength must be to inspire neighbouring regions as a model to follow and to learn from, instead of becoming a magnet for huge migratory flows, putting at risk Europe's role as a stable and stabilising partner in neighbouring regions and in the world. We have to act jointly and share all relevant information and insights at our disposal. In this respect, we need urgent measures to strengthen and protect the external borders of the European Union. We remain committed to open borders within the European Union but the effective protection of the EU's external borders is a precondition. This means deepening the level of trust among each other.

- **Supporting democracy**

The most important EU strategy in the Southern Neighbourhood remains the support for democracy and good governance. Recent history has shown that we need to develop a much more long-term approach, expecting durable improvements over decades rather than years. This will require a bottom-up approach and the involvement of all levels of government: local, regional and national. An essential element of this is to promote and develop civil society, in particular organisations promoting women's societal and political participation. This should be high on the agenda of the EEAS. Political foundations and the European Endowment for Democracy (EED) are an EU instrument particularly well-suited to encourage deep and sustainable democratisation in countries in political transition, thanks to its flexible and demand-driven funding. It should receive the full support of the EPP political family.

- **A new approach to the region**

In the future, the EU will have to bring the principles of long-term consistency and increased credibility in line with short-term flexibility and smart tactics: never losing sight of the goal of a democratic, peaceful and prosperous Middle East. That will also entail a renewed push for more regional cooperation among those who want to do so. The approach that enhanced cooperation is conditioned upon adhesion to values and principles (called 'more for more') should be maintained to reward those countries with more EU engagement that are willing to promote good governance and human and civil rights, and which cooperate with their neighbours. But a separate effort should be made to address the populations of our partner countries, in parallel to the 'more for more' approach that refers to governments. The EU should use its economic diplomacy whenever possible.

Our approach to the region must strike a new balance between differentiation and the promotion of regional cooperation. While our offer of cooperation should be tailored to the individual countries' willingness and abilities to reform, we should promote more and better cooperation among the countries involved in North Africa and the Middle East, without which important issues cannot be addressed. The visibility of the EU's actions in the region should be increased, both inside the EU and among the populations in the Southern Neighbourhood, who should benefit in their regions and be encouraged to improve and modernise their political, economic and social conditions.

6. Promoting our values: dealing with global challenges

With the end of the Iron Curtain, many already declared the victory of parliamentary democracy and the social market economy dominated by the West. Twenty-five years later, we must acknowledge that liberal democracy and the rule of law are challenged both globally and even inside the EU itself by populist movements and authoritarian backslides. China, which is not a democracy, shows that economic prosperity is, at least for a certain amount of time, not necessarily paired with fair societies or democratic political systems. In many other countries in the world, the claim has been made that democracy is possible without the checks and balances that are safeguarded by an independent judiciary, free media and a vibrant civil society. In fact, in many of these so-called 'democracies', state surveillance, restrictions on internet communications and curbs on personal autonomy prevail. Moreover, Russia's move to a confrontational attitude with the West shows that some countries continue to see international relations as a zero-sum game. The idea that smaller countries should be less sovereign than global powers has been gaining ground, and not only in Russia.

• Global democracy support

Acceptance of democracy as the world's dominant form of government, and of an international system built on democratic ideals, is actually becoming weaker. Democracies often seem resigned to waiting for authoritarian misrule to erupt into international catastrophes before they take action. As we have seen throughout history, anti-democratic practices lead to civil wars, violations of human rights and women's rights, the destruction of societal structures and humanitarian crises. They also encourage the growth of terrorist movements, corruption and poor governance, and inequality that fuels political and economic instability which can also have regional or even global consequences.

If we want to be prepared for global challenges, we need a coherent transatlantic approach which should be integrated in a long-term strategy. Our support for democratic movements across the globe that share our view of universal values must be unwavering – we have to remind the world that democracy matters. Governments and NGOs in the EU should cooperate closely with partners in the US, such as those active in Latin America, in reaching out to democracy movements wherever they stand in opposition to authoritarian governments.

• One World and the post-2015 Development Agenda

In responding to global challenges such as climate change, natural disasters and contagious diseases, but also regarding energy security, cyber security, the use of natural resources, food security and development aid, no country is able to act alone. Cooperation inside the EU must be accompanied by global outreach in the framework of the United Nations and other international organisations. Despite serious and stubborn difficulties, the EU should pursue a worthwhile Doha Round agreement in the framework of the World Trade Organization (WTO).

The EPP emphasises that we live in an increasingly interdependent world, where challenges require collective action and global engagement. Therefore the post-2015 framework should be global in aspiration, coverage and universally applicable, while accounting for different national contexts and respecting national policies and priorities. Mutual accountability covering public, private, domestic and international financing should be at the core of the new international framework.

In order for a new global development framework to be truly transformative, the root causes of poverty must be addressed through the application of a rights-based approach and a strong focus on the development of capacities, a standalone goal of equality between women and men, and women's empowerment. This includes good governance, well-functioning democracy and the rule of law. Climate change is a major challenge closely related to the global development framework. Climate change may cause not only environmental problems, but could also lead to devastating impacts on poor and vulnerable communities, resulting in forced migration, economic decline and conflicts over natural resources.

Together with the Member States as the largest donors of development aid, the EU should lead the process in shaping a new global partnership with all countries, including emerging economies, as well as with all relevant stakeholders including the private sector, social partners, civil society organisations, local and regional authorities and national parliaments. Where civil society and social dialogue is weak, civil society building should be promoted.

We must work to promote a better coordination of economic, environmental and human rights policies at the level of the G7 and G20 in order to give the appropriate governance to the ongoing globalization.

- **Persecution of religious and ethnic communities**

Today we face the extremely worrying fact that intolerance and violence against religious and ethnic communities, especially those that are Christian, is growing in many parts of the world.

Persecution of the members of a religious group can be defined as any hostility directed at someone because of his or her identification with that group. Christians are the most persecuted group in the contemporary world.

The European Union and Member States should do more to stop the violence and killing of innocent people because of their religion.

We need a coherent strategy against the persecution of Christians in the world. This concerns not only countries where persecution is evident and violent, but also countries where persecution is silent and hidden behind laws and constitutions. Europe should put pressure on these countries to stop any persecution on religious grounds.

The EPP is committed to dealing with this issue more comprehensively and more efficiently, as a priority, including through the action of the Council of Europe in its role as an actor for human rights and democracy.

7. Securing our home: Confronting internal challenges

Threats to our values and challenges to our freedom and security in the EU are no longer confined to the outside. They often come from within. Our societies must remain free and our democratic values must be protected. Civic rights must be safeguarded, but there is no room for complacency. And threats to life, liberty and social cohesion, emanating from our midst, must be countered with the full force of the law and the full determination of free citizens. We are facing, moreover, a demographic winter that threatens the long-term sustainability of our pensions system and of our whole way of life and seems to show the lack of confidence of Europeans in their values and in their future.

- **Sustainable growth is key**

Without a return to sustainable economic growth leading to the creation of more and better jobs, and tangible prospects for our youth in particular, there will be no chance of the EU responding to its external and internal challenges. Europe must invest in skills and training and deliver good and decent jobs. To this aim, the real economy, and in particular SMEs, should be the priority. Policies should aim to put employment and growth back at the centre of European politics. In this regard, special attention should be given to the digital agenda by recognising the internet as a public space as well as a market place. The EPP must fight for the simultaneous promotion and protection of digital freedoms and free trade by taking into account voluntary corporate social responsibility principles. Strengthening the European Social Market Economy through stronger Eurozone governance, the completion and full realisation of the Single Market, Energy Union, and the digital single market, as well as successful and well-balanced international trade and investment partnerships, above all the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP) with the US, are a precondition for improving our security and better promoting our values. It is important that the EU and its Member States do their utmost to get the TTIP signed and ratified as soon as possible. In this context, Member States have to continue working on structural reforms to create a favourable environment for businesses in order to create jobs.

We want to promote and protect the Social Market Economy, which provides the framework in which competitiveness contributes to social justice, and in which social justice stimulates competitiveness. Social dialogue is thereby key to balancing competitiveness and fairness.

- **Democratic self-confidence**

We will have to tackle fundamental doubts about the future of the West and liberal democracy in the European Union itself. 'Illiberal democracy' cannot be a goal for a Western nation. We will also have to continue to confront populist parties from the left as well as from the right and fight nationalist tendencies and political fatigue. This is clearly a task to be addressed by civil society: political parties, think tanks and NGOs.

- Fighting terrorism at home

We must counter jihadist terrorism and extremism first of all through stringent law enforcement and security tools, but also by preventing the radicalisation of young, disaffected people and by strengthening the counter-radicalisation and de-radicalisation of immigrants through civil society outreach and social media. In this context, education should play a key role. Education should not be limited to developing knowledge, skills and competences for the labour market, but it should also help students become active and open-minded members of society. Internet and social media companies must be engaged more effectively in their responsibility to refer and remove extremist content and jihadist propaganda online. An action plan to counter radicalisation in prisons is also particularly pressing in order to combat jihadist ideology more efficiently. This kind of terrorism has its spiritual roots in Wahhabi- and Salafist-oriented and violent interpretations of Islam, and therefore, EU Member States must not only improve their capacities in intelligence and information gathering and sharing, but must also encourage Muslim communities [and their clerics] to be more involved in the fight against extremism by drawing sharper lines between the moderate faith and fundamentalist ideologies. Interreligious dialogue may be helpful in this context. It is equally important to promote stronger social inclusion, especially for the second and third generations of immigrant youths who are native-born Europeans. Improved access to labour markets is key. The fight against terrorism will only be effective if it is subject to a more intensive exchange of best practices among the Member States and regions of the EU. This exchange should also be extended to countries neighbouring the EU which have longstanding experience in fighting terrorism.

The foreign fighter phenomenon represents a growing and serious threat to the security of states across Europe. European citizens recruited in the conflict areas impose significant threats to the security and stability of society.

Member States and EU institutions must jointly analyse and remedy deficits of current counter-terrorism tools. Europol should establish a European Counter-terrorism Centre, to be supported by Eurojust in investigations and prosecutions. The mandates of both institutions should be adjusted, bearing in mind that law enforcement and intelligence exchange, especially for counter-terrorism, are often better conducted bilaterally or on an ad hoc basis for efficiency and confidentiality reasons.

It is imperative to find an agreement on a European Passenger Name Record Framework (EU-PNR), with the appropriate checks and balances to prevent abuse. Information exchange must be improved: Common risk indicators, referring to dangerous persons, should be jointly developed by national authorities, the Commission, Europol and Frontex. The Schengen Information System should be put to full use.

8. Strengthening peace: A Union stronger on security and defence

The EU's Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) is the weakest point in its project for peace, integration and development. We need to, given the current geo political situation, step up our defence efforts and strengthen EU structures within the transatlantic security partnership.

Moreover, only a Union stronger on defence will be able to face the growing threats and challenges.

- **Forging a new European Security and Defence consensus**

By the summer of 2016, the European External Action Service (EEAS) needs to work out a new foreign and security policy strategy, meaning a comprehensive and coherent approach to all dimensions of security. This document needs to identify threats, prioritise interests and define the necessary instruments and institutional arrangements of the European Union. The new White Paper on Security and Defence should replace the obsolete document of 2003.

- **Strengthening the transatlantic partnership**

NATO and its principle of collective defence remain the crucial and most enduring basis for Europe's security. A strong and capable transatlantic alliance remains the cornerstone of aggression against its member states. But Europe's North American partners and allies rightly expect us Europeans to do more to guarantee our security. Only a Europe with autonomous and strong capabilities in defence will convince our allies that NATO has a future and that their continued military presence in Europe makes sense. EU-NATO cooperation must therefore deepen their partnership in enhancing defensive capabilities and in jointly responding to regional and global threats. Because of this, we welcome new NATO applications from EU Member States.

- **Investing more in defence and security**

Rising threats must lead to rising investment in capabilities. Defence expenditure has been declining since 1990, even in 2014 when new, increased internal and external threats became abundantly obvious. NATO's target of halting the decline of defence spending and quickly returning to 2% of GDP remains to be met by most European NATO members.

- **Improving our defence capabilities together through pooling and sharing**

But a purely quantitative increase of defence spending will not be enough, and in some cases not possible in the short run. We have to achieve more with less through better spending. We therefore must continue to pool and share military resources across national boundaries. Existing cooperative models, such as the European Air Transport Command (EATC) should be developed further.

That presupposes the better sharing of information on the development of national military capabilities and plans for future procurement.

The European Defence Agency (EDA) must be given a bigger role in this context: It will not only need more resources, but Member States should spend more of their military research expenditure through the EDA. Together with the European Commission, the EDA should provide an in-depth analysis of current duplication and redundancies in national defence spending.

Moreover, capability gaps must be addressed especially in the fields of surveillance, reconnaissance, strategic air and sea transport and the projection of forces over long distances. Existing efforts to improve air-to-air refueling, Remotely Piloted Aircraft Systems (RPAS, also known as drones), cyber defence and satellite communications must be pursued more vigorously.

- **Strengthening Europe's technological and industrial base**

Europe's defence sector must become more integrated, innovative and competitive. This will also help foster growth and jobs. More efficient public-private and industrial partnerships should be encouraged. Small and medium enterprises (SMEs) must be better integrated into the supply chain of the defence markets. The supply of key sensitive technologies must be ensured across the EU and cooperation on the trade and export of defense material in the EU has to be increased.

Recent budget reductions in defence-related Research and Development (R&D) must be reversed: Member States should allocate at least 20% of their defence budgets to R&D. Civilian and military research should be better coordinated. The next Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF, beginning in 2021) should contribute to a qualitative leap in European defence integration. Moreover, the defence component of space policy, in particular referring to high resolution satellite imagery, should be jointly tackled by the EDA, European Commission, Member States and industry.

- **Developing the EU's institutions and rapid response capabilities**

The EU needs an Operational Headquarters (HQ), in order to conduct higher intensity interventions and territorial defence in coordination with NATO, as foreseen in the Lisbon Treaty. Only this will ensure quick and effective planning, command and control, without relying on cumbersome ad hoc structures.

A Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO), as foreseen in the Lisbon Treaty, is the way forward in building the defence capabilities needed for the future. This means that Member States that are able and willing can move forward within an EU framework. A good example of PESCO in practice is the setting up of a European Medical Command. Military/civilian dual-use technologies as well as maritime surveillance ships, planes and drones are further areas for PESCO to be explored in view of the current situation in the Mediterranean. In the long term, PESCO should result in the creation of a common EU army.

A permanent forum for consultation and decision-making should be established, over time, and should lead to a full-fledged Council of Defence Ministers. Equally, the European Parliament should establish a permanent Committee on Security and Defence.

- **Improving Europe's civilian instruments**

The European Emergency Response Capacity (EERC) created in 2013 must be developed further. Designed to respond to earthquakes/tsunamis, fires, floods/landslides, industrial/nuclear accidents, terrorist attacks, disasters at sea and pandemics, it should be complemented by regional civil protection networks to enable the EU to share its best practices and conduct training sessions through regional centres of excellence. The EU should envisage financing civil protection through annual transfers from the EU Solidarity Fund.

- **Reacting to hybrid threats**

The EU must broaden its arsenal to react to hybrid threats which blend military and paramilitary aggression as well as political activism and diplomatic, political, economic and propaganda assets. EU institutions and Member States should cooperate more closely on countering such threats. We have to strengthen our internal resilience through energy security and the screening and control of foreign investments. Cybersecurity, referring to the security of information systems and especially the storage of digital data, is a key element here. We must adopt modern cybersecurity measures such as behavioural detection techniques to succeed in the face of constantly evolving threats. Improved strategic communication, enabling us to analyse, denounce and provide determined counter narratives to aggressive propaganda is another important element.

9. Stopping the transatlantic drift: The Renaissance of the West

In order to be successful in promoting our common values and achieving our common goals, in particular in the Eastern and Southern Neighbourhoods of the EU, the Union and its transatlantic allies will have to reinforce their ties. This refers to defence policy and NATO, law enforcement cooperation and the fight against terrorism. In this context, we need to restore trust among our intelligence services. Today's security challenges are complex and cannot be addressed without an exchange of information between our services, especially in order to dismantle terrorist cells and criminal organisations. We also have to deepen economic cooperation through the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP). TTIP is, above all, a deeply political instrument to strengthen transatlantic ties. It is also an important factor in bringing the EU back to sustainable growth. It is vital that TTIP will be transparent and accountable. We also need better transatlantic coordination in our efforts to support security, human rights, democracy and the rule of law in the EU's neighbourhood. Above all, this refers to a joint approach towards Russian aggression. It is one of the Kremlin's foremost tactical goals to weaken the West by driving a wedge between the US and Europe. We will not allow that to happen. On the contrary, the confrontation with the Russian challenge will reinforce the ties that bind Europe and America together.

A deepened transatlantic economic relationship will have positive effects on the global economy and strengthen the prospects of better global trade and economic cooperation. In parallel to the multilateral trade negotiations within the framework of the World Trade Organization (WTO), the EU has to put in place well-negotiated and well-balanced Free Trade Agreements (FTAs) primarily with key trading partners around the globe, such as Canada, Australia, Japan, China and the Mercosur countries. Besides TTIP, these trade partnerships will be decisive in bringing the EU back to a path of sustainable and qualitative growth.

More than ever, we have to reconfirm the common values upon which the US and EU are built. With all the differences between America and Europe (and, in fact, between the different nations of Europe) when it comes to values, we should emphasise what we have in common, especially in times like these, when the West looks cornered in the eyes of many. Moreover, the transatlantic partnership should become the nucleus of a global community of democracies, designed to seek joint ways to respond to authoritarian challenges.

10. Conclusion

Recognising and naming the new threats to our security and our values is the first step in addressing them. Therefore, we have to be open and realistic about the magnitude of the new challenges from the east as well as the south, globally and from within our own societies. We have to see that the classical boundaries between domestic and foreign policies are often no longer valid. All the more, we reaffirm and promote the values upon which our political family is built, and which have greatly contributed to the development of the European Union. We confirm our intention to make decisive progress towards a Political Union with a common fiscal and economic policy, a common foreign and security policy and a common defense policy. As the next step, we need to address the particular regions of the EU's neighbourhood that contain risks and opportunities: the Western Balkans, where the EU will have to promote enlargement while enhancing regional stability and cooperation; the east, where the EU and NATO must help our friends and react to Russian aggression; Turkey, where we should more actively promote parliamentary democracy in order to come to a more stable partnership; and the Middle East and North Africa, a region in turmoil in which the EU will have to become more active in supporting its values and averting dangers.

On the global level, development and climate policy remain priorities, while the support for all democratic movements, in order to counter authoritarianism and terrorism, should gain new importance; inside the EU and its Member States, we must return to sustainable growth, fight terrorism and combat human trafficking and illegal migration more effectively while defending liberal democracy with new vigour; in defence, we have to become serious about increasing cooperation; and in the transatlantic partnership, we should work towards a renaissance of the West.

In the end, our mission of protecting our Union and promoting our values will depend on the determination of the EPP to take the lead. Based on our values, mindful of successes and failures and aware of our weaknesses as well as our strengths and opportunities, we will lead by example.

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**If you have any question
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