

Global Future Council on Europe: A New Manifesto for Europe

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Introduction

The world is at a crossroads; Europe is at a crossroads. As the European Union recently held elections to the European Parliament to choose its leaders and as it moves towards defining the agenda for the coming years, the time is ripe to engage in conversations about Europe's future direction.

In this manifesto, we, the members of the World Economic Forum Global Future Council on Europe, put forward our shared vision of a Europe of the future. Not only does this manifesto reflect our ongoing discussions but, more importantly, it offers concrete suggestions that European leaders can take into account and adopt as their own in the next Strategic Agenda and in the formation of the new European Commission. While the main ideas and suggestions outlined in this document are directed at the European Commission and at EU Member States, some recommendations go beyond and are aimed at stimulating multistakeholder action by governments, business and civil society from the broader European family.

Underlying principles

While politicians, policy-makers, academics and others have responded to the recent rise in Euroscepticism by attempting to define and design a *new* Europe, which addresses popular concerns and presents itself as an attractive way forward, we should first and foremost ask ourselves whether we have even completed the *initial* idea of Europe. Our honest answer is that we have not yet even delivered on the original promise of Europe: to guarantee security and stability, facilitate economic prosperity, and safeguard the rights and freedoms of its citizens. **The first underlying principle of our manifesto is therefore to deliver on the original promises.**

Europe cannot be everything to everyone. It cannot be the leader of every effort, the champion of every issue, at the forefront of every initiative. In fact, most political competencies and financial resources are in the hands of national governments, whereas the mandate and budget of the European Commission are limited. This is by design, of course. Thus, **the second underlying principle is that Europe needs to prioritize its attention and focus on its three core areas: peace and stability, economic prosperity, and social and economic equality.**

Europe is its institutions; Europe is its national governments; Europe is its common values and a way of life. But most of all, Europe is its people. Despite a growing loss of public faith in institutions, Europeans trust the European Union more than they trust their national governments.¹ However, there are also very deep divisions among publics in several countries, and political movements with Euroscepticism as their central platform have strengthened across the continent. Europe needs to address the sources of this discontent clearly, coherently and boldly, and then the institutions and governments of Europe need to determine how to realize these priorities for the people. **People-centricism is the third underlying principle.**

The “what” and the “how” of Europe

In line with these principles, we recommend that Europe at large and the European Union in particular build on the following three pillars. These should constitute the *highest priorities* of the next Commission. They represent the three most important and most crucial deliveries on which the Europe of the immediate and long-term future should focus. Policy suggestions and legislative proposals should be introduced, adapted and implemented expeditiously to strengthen one or more of the pillars. We present concrete suggestions as to what constitutes a fulfilment of each pillar.

1. Europe of peace and stability – because people want to live in peace and safety

Since the earliest steps towards integration were taken in the aftermath of world war, peace and stability on the continent have been the central promises of Europe. Guaranteeing security to the people from both long-existing, traditional threats and new, emerging and even unknown ones is the key responsibility of a continuously successful Europe. In response to the dramatically changing geostrategic environment, European leaders need to take decisive steps towards strengthening Europe’s security and defence. To this end, Europe needs to:

- **Ensure that it executes a foreign policy and security policy with the primary goal of securing peace on the European continent**
European foreign policy should therefore first and foremost concentrate on the immediate neighbourhood, on the forging of strategic partnerships with like-minded partners, and on global conflict prevention to avoid negative spillover effects into the European area.
- Gradually move towards even **more increased collaboration and the pooling of resources and burden-sharing in defence**
This would both reduce redundant costs and increase the common European strategic advantage. It includes moving forward on smart and flexible funding tools, such as the **European Peace Facility**, ensuring it receives adequate financial and political resources to carry out its mandate.
- Take further steps to unite Europe’s decision-making powers by **establishing a task force exploring the creation of a European Security Council**
The task force should investigate how such a new institutional mechanism could contribute to increasing joint strategic analysis and to reasserting Europe’s role globally in preventing and responding to crises and conflicts.
- Continue actively advocating for and supporting (both politically and financially) a **rules-based, multilateral world order**
This world order would be grounded on regional and national ownership of responsibility and risk.
- **Fully restore Schengen**
At the same time, Europe needs to implement technical and legislative measures to guarantee the protection of all European external borders.

¹ See Eurobarometer, “Public Opinion Monitoring at a glance: The European Parliament and the expectations of European citizens”, March 2019, available at <https://www.europarl.europa.eu/at-your-service/files/be-heard/eurobarometer/2019/plenary-march-ii-2019/en-plenary-insights-march-ii-2019.pdf> (accessed 25 June 2019).

- **Define sustainable, realistic and fair migration and refugee policies**
They must address the demographic needs of the European continent, not undermine the national sovereignty of Member States, and respect all international commitments.
- Establish and strengthen joint instruments to **protect citizens from the physical threat of terrorism and cross-border crime**
- Invest financially as well as politically **support new resources and instruments to fight against cyberthreats, cybercrime and other emerging dangers** associated with technological progress
This support must also apply to fighting the spread of disinformation and election manipulation, while respecting human rights and individual liberties.

2. Europe of economic prosperity and high quality of life – because people want to live a good, prosperous life

Securing a stable, sustainable and more prosperous future has been the promise of an integrated Europe from its inception. It has been one of the main drivers of ever-deeper European integration, and often represents the most important aspect in the European Union's appeal to citizens. Only a Europe that continues to provide for environmentally sustainable economic growth and an increase in quality of life can be successful in the eyes of the people. To this end, Europe needs to:

- Fully **complete the single market**, including the single market for services, energy and capital, as well as the **Digital Single Market**, and continue to implement **European competition policy** in the interest of European consumers, protecting them from special interests
- Expand the European entrepreneurial ecosystem by creating a **European Tech Venture Fund** specifically focused on mid-cap companies to not only increase funding and provide patient capital but also to remove policy and regulatory obstacles to reaching scale
- **Strengthen the euro area** through more risk-sharing combined with market discipline, including completing the Banking Union, mitigating the “doom loop” of banking and sovereign crises, and establishing a European Deposit Insurance
- **Equip the Eurozone budget** with meaningful convergence and stabilization functions
- **Create a common safe asset**, which does not require mutualization, but does prevent destabilizing capital flows across the euro area
- Continue to lead the global transformation towards a **green and climate-neutral economy** in line with Paris Agreement objectives, and align climate action in key areas, such as industrial policy, finance and research
- **Adapt education and skills training today to the labour market of tomorrow**, inter alia by regularly sharing best practices in lifelong learning programmes and developing Europe-wide platforms for information sharing on reskilling programmes and labour market adaptation
- Prepare the next generation for the **Fourth Industrial Revolution** by investing heavily in education for youth in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM)
- Work on harmonizing taxation standards, particularly as pertains to the digital area, and continue to lead in

effective regulation, especially around **privacy and the ethical use of new technologies**

- Devise a package of economic, financial and social measures with a well-designed composition, much like the grand bargain that was achieved at the Bretton Woods conference in 1944 as, ultimately, healing the rifts and rebuilding trust in Europe requires such a package
With the current sense of urgency, we call for a **European Bretton Woods** and to initiate a dialogue on how to take this further.

3. Europe of equality – because people want fairness and respect

The idea of belonging and being respected by others lies at the heart of both individual and collective self-worth. Europe's democratic values and insistence on human rights, dignity and tolerance must be felt in people's everyday lives. To this end, Europe needs to:

- **Increase the pace of socio-economic convergence** between Member States by stepping up efforts to reduce differences in key policy areas, such as social protection, living conditions and inequalities
- **Ensure decisions and rules** (including budgetary, procedural and institutional decisions) **apply equally to and are respected by all Member States and all citizens** and, where they occur, remedy violations with available instruments, irrespective of size, wealth, status, geography or political affiliation
- **Lead by example** on the institutional, intergovernmental and political levels, by modelling understanding and mutual respect and working to eliminate the **perception of second-class citizenship** (Europe-wide or nationally), for instance by guaranteeing the equal availability and quality of **food, medicine and other goods** for all Europeans
- Make sure that the **European way of life stands for equal opportunities**, while being mindful that not everyone benefits from European integration equally and in the same way, and elaborate pragmatic ways that reach more segments of societies (e.g. Europe's most tangible benefits, such as the abolition of roaming and open borders, are very visible among people who travel frequently but fail to reach those who do not travel)
- **Move towards a Europe-wide convergence of labour conditions** that include working hours, pension age, maternity and paternity leave, unemployment insurance, etc.
- **Foster civic education and participation in the political process** for all generations, nationalities and segments of society.

Spreading the message

Narrowing down Europe's ambitions might sound limiting or even impossible given the many areas, all of them important, in which Europe has already made a positive impact on the lives of people. But aside from the underlining principles, this approach derives from the following convictions: 1) every policy suggestion or legislative proposal, if broken down to why it should matter to people, can actually be classified within one of these pillars; and 2) many of the goals and aims predefined for Europe can actually be by-products and derivatives of the successful fulfilment of these pillars.

In this way, it follows that creating a common European identity, which has been the goal of the EU for several decades, should not be a goal in itself, but that it will naturally follow and develop in people's minds if they can perceive that Europe delivers for them. Similarly, making Europe a relevant global political player will come as a natural result of internal political and economic strength. The pillars are the drivers that allow us to move forward. And if we manage to drive Europe in this direction, at the end of the road, the things we have been striving for – global influence, projection of values, European identity – are a natural outcome.

If we see change as a process, then identifying **what to do** is step one, identifying **how to do** it is step two. There is another step though, which is **spreading the message**. The vision needs to be delivered to the people. And the main message of this manifesto is simple: these are the three things we want to achieve for you – **peace, prosperity** and **equality**. This is what we are going to work on in Europe.

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