

IV.

The Plenary proposals



"Climate change and the environment"

1. Proposal: agriculture, food production, biodiversity and ecosystems, pollution

Objective: Safe, sustainable, just, climate responsible, and affordable production of food, respecting sustainability principles, the environment, safeguarding biodiversity and ecosystems, while ensuring food security:

Measures:

1. Bring the concept of green and blue economy to the fore, by promoting effective environmentally and climate friendly agriculture and fishery in the EU and worldwide, including organic farming as well as other forms of innovative and sustainable farming, such as vertical farming, that allow to produce more food with less input whilst reducing emissions and environmental impact but still guaranteeing productivity and food security (Panel 3 – recommendation 1, 2 and 10; Panel 2 – recommendation 4)
2. Redirect subsidies and strengthen incentives towards organic farming and sustainable agriculture which comply with clear environmental standards and help achieving the global climate goals (Panel 3 – recommendations 1, 12)
3. Apply circular economy principles in agriculture and promote measures against food waste (WG debate, Multilingual Digital Platform (MDP))
4. Significantly reduce the use chemical pesticides and fertilizers, in line with the existing targets, while still ensuring food security, and support for research to develop more sustainable and natural based alternatives (Panel 3 – recommendation 10, WG debate)
5. Introduce a certification of carbon removals, based on robust, solid and transparent carbon accounting (Plenary discussion)
6. More research and innovations, including in technological solutions for sustainable production, plant resistance, and precision farming, and more communication, advisory systems, and training for and from farmers (Panel 3- recommendation 10, WG debate, Plenary discussion)
7. Eliminate social dumping and enhance a just and green transition to better jobs, with high quality safety, health and working conditions, in the agriculture sector (WG debate)
8. Address aspects such as plastic use in agricultural films and ways to reduce water consumption in agriculture (MDP)
9. Reasoned breeding and meat production with a focus on animal welfare and sustainability, using measures such as clear labelling, high standard and common norms for animal farming and transport, strengthening the link between breeding and feeding (Panel 3- recommendation 16 and 30)

2. Proposal: agriculture, food production, biodiversity and ecosystems, pollution

Objective: Protect and restore biodiversity, the landscape and oceans, and eliminate pollution

Measures:

1. Create, restore, better manage, and extend protected areas – for the conservation of biodiversity (FR recommendation, Panel 3 – recommendation 11)
2. Have in place a coercion and reward system to tackle pollution applying the polluter pays principle, which should also be embedded in taxation measures, combined with increasing awareness and incentives (Panel 3 – recommendation 32, FR recommendation, Plenary discussion)
3. Enhance the role of municipalities in urban planning and construction of new buildings supporting blue-green infrastructure, avoid and stop further sealing of land and obligatory green spaces of new constructions, in order to promote biodiversity and urban forests (Panel 3 - recommendation 5, Panel 1- recommendation 18, FR recommendation)
4. Protect insects, in particular indigenous and pollinating insects, including through protection against invasive species and better enforcement of existing regulation (Panel 1 – recommendation 18)
5. Support reforestation, afforestation, including forests lost by fire, enforcement of responsible forest management, and support better use of wood replacing other materials. Setting binding national targets across the EU Member States for reforestation of native trees and local flora, taking into account different national situations and specificities (Panel 3 – recommendation 14, Panel 1 – recommendation 18)
6. Enforce and extend the ban on single use plastics (MDP)
7. Protect water sources and combat river and ocean pollution, including through researching and fighting microplastic pollution, and promoting of environmentally friendly shipping by using best available technologies and establishing EU research and funding for alternative maritime fuels and technologies (MDP, WG debate)
8. Limit light pollution (WG debate)

3. Proposal: climate change, energy, transport

Objective: Enhance European energy security, and achieve the EU's energy independence while ensuring a just transition, and providing Europeans with sufficient, affordable and sustainable energy. Tackle climate change, with the EU playing a role of global leader in sustainable energy policy, and respecting the global climate goals:

Measures:

1. Accomplish and whenever possible speed up the green transition, in particular through more investments in renewable energy, in order to reduce external energy dependency, recognizing also the role of local and regional authorities in the green transition (WG debate)
2. Consider within energy policies the geopolitical and security implications, including human rights, ecological aspect and good governance and rule of law, of all third country energy suppliers (WG debate)
3. Reduce dependencies from oil and gas imports through energy efficiency projects, support of affordable public transport, high-speed rail and freight network, expansion of clean and renewable energy provision (Panel 4 – recommendation 2, Panel 1 – recommendation 10, FR, DE recommendations)
4. Improve quality and interconnectivity, ensure maintenance, and transform the electrical infrastructure and electrical grids in order to enhance safety and to enable the transition to renewable energy sources (Panel 1 – recommendation 10, WG discussion)
5. Invest in technologies to produce renewable energy, such as efficient production and use of green hydrogen, especially in sectors which are difficult to electrify (Panel 3 – recommendation 31, WG debate)
6. Invest in the exploration of new eco-friendly sources of energy and storage methods and, until tangible solution are found, additional investment into existing optimal solutions of energy production and storage (Panel 3 – recommendations 9 and 31)
7. Make CO2 filters mandatory for fossil fuels power plants, and provide financial aid to Member States that do not have financial resources to implement the CO2 filters. (Panel 3 – recommendation 29)
8. Ensure a just transition, protecting workers and jobs, through adequate funding for the transition and further research, through reform of the tax system with fairer taxation and anti-tax fraud measures, and through ensuring inclusive governance approach in policy making at all levels (e.g. ambitious measures to reskill/upskills, strong social protection, keeping public service in public hands, safeguarding occupational health and safety rules) (Plenary discussion, WG debate, MDP)
9. Introduce an investment package for climate-friendly technologies and innovations, which should be financed through climate-related import tariffs and climate related carbon adjustment levies (DE recommendation)
10. After a transition period, fossil fuels should no longer be subsidized and there should be no funding for traditional gas infrastructure (WG debate)
11. Increase EU's leadership and taking a stronger role and responsibility to promote ambitious climate action, a just transition, and support to address the loss and damages, in the international framework with the United Nations at the centre (NL recommendation, WG debate).

4. Proposal: climate change, energy, transport

Objective: Provide high quality, modern, green, and safe infrastructure, ensuring connectivity, including of rural and island regions, in particular through affordable public transport:

Measures:

1. Support public transport and develop a European public transportation network especially in rural and island regions, which is efficient, reliable and affordable, with extra incentives for public transportation usage (Panel 3 – recommendation 36, Panel 4 – recommendation 2)
2. Invest in high-speed and night trains, and set single standard of railroad eco-friendly technology in Europe, to provide a credible alternative and facilitate the possibility to replace and discourage short distance flights (WG debate, MDP)
3. Promote the purchase, bearing in mind the affordability for households, and promote (shared) use of electric vehicles complying with good standard of battery life, as well as investments in the necessary recharging infrastructure, and investments in the development of other non-polluting technologies for those vehicles whose electrification is difficult to achieve (Panel 3 – recommendation 38).
4. Develop high speed internet and mobile network connectivity in rural and island regions (Panel 3 – recommendation 36)
5. Improve existing transportation infrastructure from an ecological point of view (Panel 3- recommendation 37)
6. Require urban development programs for “greener” cities with lower emissions, with dedicated car-free zones in cities, without harming commercial areas (Panel 3 - recommendation 6)
7. Improve infrastructure for cycling, and give further rights and enhanced legal protection to cyclists and pedestrians including in case of accidents with motorised vehicles, guaranteeing road safety and providing training on road traffic rules (Panel 3 – recommendation 4).
8. Regulate the mining of cryptocurrencies, which are using an enormous amount of electricity (MDP)

5. Proposal: sustainable consumption, packaging and production

Objective: Enhance the use and management of materials within the EU in order to become more circular, more autonomous, and less dependent. Build a circular economy by promoting sustainable EU products and production. Ensure all products placed on the EU market comply with common EU environmental standards:

Measures:

1. Stricter and harmonised production standards within the EU and a transparent labelling system for all products sold on the EU market regarding their sustainability/ environmental footprint, as well as longevity, using a QR-code and eco-score, or the Digital Product Passport (Panel 3 – recommendations 8, 13, 20, 21, P1 - 16, Panel 4 - recommendation 13)
2. Review global supply chains, including in agricultural production, in order to reduce dependency of the EU and shorten the chains (MDP)
3. Further avoid waste by setting prevention and reuse targets and setting quality standards for waste sorting systems (WG debate, FR recommendation)
4. Phase-out non-sustainable form of packaging, regulate environmentally-safe packaging, and avoid wasting of material in packaging, through financial incentives and penalties, and investing in research into alternatives (Panel 3 – recommendations 15, 25, Panel 1 – recommendation 12, Panel 4 – recommendation 16)
5. Introduce EU wide packaging deposit return scheme and advanced standards for containers (Panel 3 – recommendations 22, 23, MDP)
6. Launch an EU knowledge platform on how to ensure long-term and sustainable use and how to “repair” products, including the available information from consumer associations (Panel 3 – recommendation 20)
7. Introduce measures to tackle early, or premature (including planned) obsolescence, ensure longer warranties, promote a right to repair, and ensure availability and accessibility of compatible spare parts (Panel 3 – recommendation 20, FR and DE recommendations, Panel 1 – recommendation 14)
8. Establish a secondary raw materials market, also by considering requirements for percentages of recycled content and encouraging less use of primary materials (WG discussion)
9. Rapid implementation of an ambitious sustainable textile strategy and setting up a mechanism ensuring consumers can be aware the product meets sustainable criteria (Panel 3 - recommendation 28, WG debate)
10. Take EU actions that enable and incentivize consumers to use products longer (Panel 3 - recommendation 20)
11. Increase environmental standards, and enforce compliance, related to export of waste both within the EU and to third countries (Panel 4 - recommendation 15, MDP)
12. Introduce measures to limit advertising of products that are environmentally damaging, introducing a mandatory disclaimer for products that are particularly harmful for the environment (Panel 3 - recommendation 22)
13. Stricter manufacturing standards and fair working conditions throughout the production and entire value chain (Panel 3 - recommendation 21)

6. Proposal: information, awareness, dialogue and life-style

Objective: Foster knowledge, awareness, education, and dialogues on environment, climate change, energy use, and sustainability:

Measures:

1. Create an interactive fact-checked information platform, with regularly updated and diverse scientific environmental information (Panel 3 - recommendation 33)
2. Support information campaigns on eco-awareness, including a long-term EU campaign for sustainable consumption and lifestyle. (DE, NL and FR recommendations, Panel 3 – recommendation 7)
3. Promote and facilitate dialogue and consultations between all levels of decision making, especially with youth and at the local level (DE, NL and FR recommendations, Panel 3 – recommendations 27, 35, Plenary discussion)
4. The development by the EU, with assistance of Member States, of a common European charter targeting environmental issues and fostering environmental awareness among all citizens (Panel 3 - recommendation 7).
5. Provide educational courses and teaching materials for all, in order to increase climate and sustainability literacy and to enable lifelong learning on environmental topics (Panel 1 – recommendations 15, 35, Panel 3 - recommendation 24, WG debate)
6. Include food production and biodiversity protection as part of education, including the advantage of unprocessed over processed food, and promoting school gardens, subsidizing urban gardening projects and vertical farming. Consider making biodiversity a mandatory subject in schools and raise awareness for biodiversity through the use of media campaigns and incentivised ‘competitions’ across the EU (local community scale competitions) (Panel 3 – recommendation 5, Panel 1 – recommendation 18)
7. Strengthen the role and action of the EU in the area of environment and education, by extending the EU’s competence in the area of education in the area of climate change and environment and extending the use of qualified majority decision-making on topics identified as being of ‘European interest’, such as environment (NL, FR recommendations)
8. Promote a plant-based diet on the grounds of climate protection and the preservation of the environment (MDP)



"Health"

7. Proposal - Healthy food and healthy lifestyle¹

Objective: Ensure that all Europeans have access to education on healthy food and access to healthy and affordable food, as a building block of a healthy lifestyle, in particular by:

Measures:

1. Setting minimum standards for food quality, as well as food traceability, including by limiting the use of antibiotics and other animal medicinal products to what is absolutely necessary to protect the health and well-being of animals instead of use in a preventive way and by making sure that controls are tightened in that respect. [# 3, #17]
2. Educating people about healthy habits from an early age, and encouraging them to make safe and healthy choices, through taxation of non-healthy processed food and by making information on the health properties of food readily available; for that purpose, establishing a European-wide evaluation system for processed food based upon independent and scientific expertise, and a label covering the use of hormonal substances and endocrine disruptors in the production of food. In this regard, reinforce monitoring and enforcement of existing rules and consider strengthening them. [#18, #19, WG]
3. Encouraging dialogue with the food chain actors from production to sales for corporate social responsibility regarding healthy food. [#19, WG]
4. Supporting at EU level the provision of healthy, varied and affordable food in establishments servicing the public, such as school canteens, hospitals, or nursing homes, including through dedicated funding. [#3, Plenary, WG]
5. Investing in research on the impact of the use of antibiotics and the effects of hormonal substances and endocrine disruptors in human health. [#17, #18] ²

8. Proposal – Reinforce the healthcare system³

Objective: Reinforce the resilience and quality of our healthcare systems, in particular through:

Measures:

1. The creation of a European health data space, which would facilitate exchange of health data; individual medical records could be made available – on a voluntary basis – through an EU individual electronic health passport, in compliance with data protection rules. [#41, WG]
2. Adequate working conditions, in particular through strong collective bargaining, including in terms of wages and working arrangements, and harmonisation of training and certification standards for health professionals; networking and exchange programmes should be developed such as an Erasmus for medical schools, contributing notably to skills development. In order to ensure talent retention, young professionals' knowledge and working experiences, EU exchange programmes need to be established to motivate our best minds in Life Sciences not to be drained by third countries. [#39, WG]
3. Ensuring strategic autonomy at EU level to avoid dependency on third countries [NL2]⁴ for medicines (in particular active ingredients) and medical devices (including raw materials); in particular, a list of essential and priority, but also innovative medicines and treatments (such as biotechnology solutions) should be established at EU level relying on existing European agencies and HERA, to guarantee their availability for citizens. Consider organising coordinated strategic stockpiling throughout the EU. In order to achieve the necessary coordinated, long-term action at Union level, include health and healthcare among the shared competencies between the EU and the EU Member States by amending Article 4 TFUE. [#40, #49, Plenary, WG]
4. Further developing, coordinating and funding existing health research and innovation programmes without undermining other health-related programmes, including for European Reference Networks as they constitute the basis of the development of networks of medical care for highly specialised and complex treatments. [#42, #43, WG]
5. Investing in the health systems, in particular public and non-for profit, infrastructure and digital health and ensuring that healthcare providers respect the principles of full accessibility, affordability and quality of services, hence ensuring that resources are not drained by profit-oriented health operators with little to no regard for the general interest. [#51, WG]
6. Issuing strong recommendations to the Member States to invest in effective, accessible, affordable, high-quality and resilient health systems, notably in the context of the European Semester. The impact of the war in Ukraine on public health demonstrates the need to further develop resilient health systems and solidarity mechanisms. [#51, WG]

9. Proposal – A broader understanding of Health⁵

Objective: Adopt a holistic approach to health, addressing, beyond diseases and cures, health literacy and prevention, and fostering a shared understanding of the challenges faced by those who are ill or disabled, in line with the “One Health Approach”, which should be emphasized as a horizontal and fundamental principle encompassing all EU policies.

Measures:

1. Improve understanding of mental health issues and ways of addressing them, including from early childhood and early diagnostics, building on good practices developed throughout the EU, which should be made readily accessible through the Public Health Best Practice Portal. To raise awareness, EU institutions and relevant stakeholders should organise best practices exchange events and help their members disseminate them in their own constituencies. An EU Action Plan on mental health should be developed, that would provide long term Mental Health Strategy, including on research and also tackle the issue of availability of professionals, including for minors and the setting up in the near future of a dedicated European Year of Mental Health. [#44, #47, WG]
2. Develop at EU level a standard educational programme on healthy lifestyles, covering also sexual education. It should also encompass actions targeting both healthy lifestyle and environmental protection and how they can help prevent many diseases, such as for instance bicycling as a healthy mean for everyday mobility. It would be available free of charge to Member States and schools to use in their curricula, as appropriate. Such a programme would address stereotypes on those who are ill or disabled. [#46, WG]
3. Develop first aid courses – including a practical component – that would be made available to all citizens free of charge and consider regular courses as standard practice for students and in workplaces. There should also be a minimum number of defibrillators available in public places in all Member States. [#50]
4. Expanding the health week initiative, which would take place across the entire EU in the same week, when all health issues would be covered and discussed. Also consider health year initiatives, starting with the year on mental health. [#44, WG]
5. Recognise as regular medical treatment in terms of taxation the hormonal contraception products used for medical reasons, such as in the cases of fibromyalgia and endometriosis, as well as female sanitary products. Ensure access to reproductive treatments for all individuals suffering fertility problems. [#45, WG]

10. Proposal – Equal access to health for all⁶

Objective: Establish a “right to health” by guaranteeing all Europeans have equal and universal access to affordable, preventive, curative and quality health care:

Measures:

1. Establish common minimum healthcare standards at EU level, covering also prevention and accessibility as well as proximity of care, and provide support to achieve these standards. [#39, WG]
2. Recognising the need to take full account of the principle of subsidiarity and the key role of local, regional and national players in health matter [NL3], ensure there is the ability to act at EU level when the right to health is best addressed there. To allow faster and stronger decision-making on key subjects and to improve the effectiveness of European governance towards the development of the European Health Union (such as, for example, in the event of a pandemic or for rare diseases). [#49, FR wish11, Digital Platform]
3. Enhance the European Health Union using the full potential of the current framework and include health and healthcare among the shared competencies between the EU and the EU Member States by amending Article 4 TFUE. [#49, FRwish11, Digital Platform, WG]⁷
4. Make sure anyone can access existing treatments, wherever first available in the EU; to that purpose, facilitate cross-border cooperation, notably on rare diseases, cancer, cardiovascular diseases and highly specialised treatments, such as organ transplants and the treatments of severe burns. A European network for transplants and organ donations should be put in place for the benefit of all European patients in need of a transplant. [Plenary and WG]
5. Ensure affordability of care, through stronger investment in healthcare, in particular of dental care including prophylaxis, and ensure affordable dental care is available to everyone within 15 to 20 years. [#48, WG]
6. Ensure that treatments and medicines across the EU are of equal quality and of fair local cost, including through tackling existing fragmentation of the Internal Market. [#40, NL3, WG, Plenary]
7. Fight health poverty by encouraging free of charge dental care for children, low-income groups and other vulnerable groups, such as for instance the disabled. Also consider the impact of poor-quality housing on health. [#48, WG]
8. Consider the international dimension to health and recognise that medicines should be universally available, including in poorer countries. [NL2]



"A stronger economy, social justice and jobs"

Introduction

We are living in extraordinary times and the EU will be judged on its efforts to emerge from the current crises stronger, with a more sustainable, inclusive, competitive and resilient growth model. The invasion of Ukraine by Russia and the COVID-19 pandemic have changed the face of the EU. The Conference will also need to address the social and economic consequences of this war in an already very demanding post-pandemic context. At the same time, climate change still represents a continuous threat to humanity and will have a dramatic impact on the economy and on our societies. From the recommendations received, it is clear that citizens are calling for stronger EU action. Outstanding transnational challenges, such as inequalities, competitiveness, health, climate change, migration, digitalisation or fair taxation, call for proper European solutions. From the recommendations and discussions, it is also clear that we need a comprehensive strategy to ensure better wellbeing for the European citizens in the different aspect of their lives. Some elements of this strategy can be found in already existing policies and can be achieved by making full use of the existing institutional framework at European and national level; others will require new policies and, in some cases, treaty changes. However, new policies and treaty changes should be seen as means to achieve better wellbeing and not as ends in themselves. It is both possible and necessary to reshape the EU in a way that will guarantee its strategic autonomy, sustainable growth, improvement of living and working conditions and human progress, without depleting and destroying our planet in the framework of a renewed Social Contract. These recommendations are intended to achieve these goals. The proposals below should be read while taking into account that citizens all over Europe have formulated a diversity of views and recommendations. It is this diversity of views that is one of Europe's unique strengths.

11. Proposal: Sustainable Growth and innovation⁸

Objective: We propose that the EU supports the shift to a sustainable and resilient growth model, considering the green and digital transitions with a strong social dimension in the European Semester, and empowering citizens, trade unions and businesses. The conventional macroeconomic indicators and the GDP could be complemented with new indicators in order to address the new European priorities such as the European Green Deal or the European Pillar of Social Rights and to better reflect the ecological and digital transitions and the wellbeing of people. This objective could be achieved by:

Measures:

1. Promoting greener production processes by companies and supporting companies to identify the best solutions and providing positive and negative incentives (ECP 11 & 12), and by increasing local production and consumption; (discussions)
2. Working towards a more sustainable and circular economy by addressing the issue of planned obsolescence and ensuring the right of repair; (ECP14)
3. Reviewing the EU's economic governance and the European Semester in order to ensure that the green and digital transitions, social justice and social progress go hand-in-hand with economic competitiveness, without ignoring the economic and fiscal nature of the European Semester. In addition, there is a need to better involve social partners and the local and regional authorities in the implementation of the European Semester in order to improve its application and accountability; (online platform, discussions)
4. Tackling the use of single use plastic packaging/containers; (ECP 12)
5. Expanding the use of European technology and make it a viable alternative to foreign technology; (discussions)
6. Promoting research into new materials and technologies, as well as the innovative use of existing materials, while ensuring that research efforts are not duplicated; (ECP 9, NL 1)
7. Addressing the sustainability, affordability and accessibility of energy, considering energy poverty and the dependence on non-EU states, by increasing the share of sustainably sourced energy; (ECP 10, LT 3, IT 1.1)
8. Raising awareness among both companies and citizens how to behave in a more sustainable manner, and guarantee just transition, based on social dialogue and quality jobs; (ECP 12 & online platform)
9. Including ambitious social, labour and health standards, including occupational health and safety, in new EU trade agreements; (LT8)

12. Proposal: Enhancing EU's competitiveness and further deepening the Single Market⁹

Objective: We propose strengthening the competitiveness and resilience of the European Union's economy, single market, industry and addressing strategic dependencies. We need to promote an entrepreneurial culture in the EU, where innovative businesses of all sizes, and in particular Micro-, Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (MSMEs) , as well as start-ups are encouraged and can thrive in order to contribute to more resilient and cohesive societies. There is a need for a strong functioning market economy in order to facilitate the vision of a more social Europe. This objective could be achieved by:

Measures:

1. Developing a clear vision for the European economy and playing to Europe's strengths, quality and diversity while taking into account of economic and other differences between Member States, and promoting cooperation and competition between businesses; (NL 1 & 2)
2. Consolidating what has been done in terms of the single currency and the interconnection of payment systems and telecommunications; (IT 4.a.2)
3. Reducing the standardisation of products and recognising local and regional cultural and production peculiarities (respect for production traditions); (IT 2.2)
4. Enhancing upward social and economic convergence in the Single Market, by completing existing initiatives, such as the Banking Union and the Capital Markets Union, and implementing a forward- looking reform of our Economic and Monetary Union; (discussions)
5. Promoting policies for a strong industrial base and innovation in key enabling technologies, and a forward-looking climate policy coupled with industrial competitiveness with a strong social dimension, based on social dialogue and well-functioning industrial relations; (discussions)
6. Giving special attention in all new initiatives to SMEs, the backbone of our economy. The "Think Small First" principle must be respected in all EU's legislative proposals and a SME test should be reinforced in the Commission's impact assessment in accordance with clear principles while fully respecting social and environmental standards and consumer rights; (discussions)
7. Ensuring the participation of SMEs in funding applications, tenders and networks with as little administrative effort as possible. Access to finance for SMEs with high-risk innovation projects should be further developed by entities such as the European Innovation Council and the European Investment Bank; (discussions)
8. Creating a better framework for investments in R&I aimed at a more sustainable and biodiverse business models. (ECP 10, 11 & 14) Focusing on technology and innovation as drivers of growth; (IT 1.3)
9. Promoting collective economic performance through autonomous, competitive industry; (FR3)
10. Identifying and developing strategic sectors, including space, robotics and AI; (FR 3 & 9)
11. Investing in an economy based on tourism and culture, including the many small destinations in Europe; (IT 1.2)
12. Addressing the security of supply by diversifying input sources/raw materials and increasing the manufacture of key goods in Europe, such as health, food, energy, defence and transport; (FR 9, LT 1, IT 1.4)
13. Promoting the digitalisation of European businesses, for instance through a specific scoreboard allowing businesses to compare

- their degree of digitalisation, with the overall aim of increasing competitiveness; (DE 2.1)
14. Promoting digital cohesion to contribute to economic, social and territorial cohesion as defined in the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union; (discussions)
 15. Strengthening cross-border cooperation in order to enhance cohesion and resilience within and beyond regions, by fostering the European Cross Border Mechanism and similar tools; (discussions)
 16. Enhancing and promoting the possibilities for cross-border training in order to upskill the European workforce and increase competitiveness, while at the same time boosting citizens' economic literacy; (DE 2.2, LT7). Promoting exchanges between workers in Europe through a European Job Centre. (IT 6.1) Encouraging young people to study science subjects; (IT 1.5)
 17. Reducing, where non-essential, bureaucracy (permits, certifications); (IT 2.1)
 18. Combating counterfeiting and unfair competition; (IT 2.4)
 19. Ensuring greater participation of start-ups and SMEs in innovation projects as this increases their innovative strength, competitiveness and networking. (online platform, discussions)
 20. Consolidating and protecting the Single Market should remain a priority; measures and initiatives at EU and national level should not be detrimental to the Single Market and should contribute to the free flow of people, goods, services, and capital; (discussions)
 21. New EU policy initiatives should undergo a "competitiveness check" to analyse their impact on companies and their business environment (cost of doing business, capacity to innovate, international competitiveness, level playing field, etc). Such check shall be in accordance with, the Paris Agreement, the Sustainable Development Goals, including gender equality, and shall not undermine the protection of human, social and workers' rights nor environmental and consumer protection standards. To this effect, we also propose the establishment of a European Advisory Competitiveness Body which should monitor how the competitiveness check is performed and in particular assess the cumulative impact of legislation, as well as put forward proposals to improve the right framework conditions for competitiveness of EU companies. Such body should include organised civil society and the social partners in its governance; (discussions)

13. Proposal: Inclusive labour markets¹⁰

Objective: We propose to improve the functioning of labour markets so that they ensure fairer working conditions and promote gender equality, employment, including that of young people and vulnerable groups. The EU, Member States and social partners need to work to end in-work poverty, address the rights of platform workers, ban un-paid internships and ensure fair labour mobility in the EU. We must promote social dialogue and collective bargaining. We need to ensure the full implementation of the European Pillar of Social Rights, including its relevant headline targets for 2030, at EU, national, regional and local level in the areas of “equal opportunities and access to the labour market” and “fair working conditions”, while respecting competences and the principles of subsidiarity and proportionality and to include a Social Progress Protocol in the Treaties. While doing so, there should be a respect of national traditions and the autonomy of social partners and a cooperation with civil society. This objective could be achieved by:

Measures:

1. Ensuring that statutory minimum wages guarantee that each worker can earn a decent and similar quality of living across all Member States. Clear criteria (e.g. living costs, inflation, above the poverty line, the average and median wage at national level) to be taken into account when setting minimum wages level should be set up. The levels of statutory minimum wages should be regularly reviewed in light of these criteria in order to ensure their adequacy. Special attention should be put on effective implementation of these rules and monitoring and tracking improvement in the standard of living. At the same time, collective bargaining should be strengthened and promoted throughout the EU; (ECP1 & 30; DE 4.2; online platform).
2. Taking stock and more strongly enforcing the implementation of the Working Time Directive (Directive 2003/88/EC) and other relevant legislation that ensures healthy work life balance while looking at new national policies in this domain; (ECP2)
3. Introducing or reinforcing existing legislation that regulates so-called 'smart working' and incentivising companies to promote it. (ECP 7) The EU should ensure the right to disconnect, do more to address the digital divide at the workplace and assess the implications of remote work on health, working time and companies performance. There is a need to guarantee fair digitalisation based on human rights, improved working conditions and collective bargaining; (discussions).
4. Having integrated employment policies at an EU level where active labour market policies remain central and increasingly coordinated (IT 6.2) while Member States focus on continuing their reform efforts to create favourable conditions for quality job creation. (discussions)
5. Taking steps to ensure that social rights are fully protected and safeguarded in case of conflict with economic freedoms including via the introduction of a social progress protocol in the Treaties. (online platform, discussions)
6. Ensuring gender equality, in line with 2020-2025 EU Gender Equality Strategy. The EU should continue measuring the gender equality through a gender equality index (i.e. attitudes, salary gap, employment, leadership, etc.), monitor the strategy yearly and be transparent with the achievements; and encourage the sharing of expertise and best practices and set up a possible direct citizen-feedback mechanism (e.g. an Ombudsperson); (ECP28; IT 5.a.1). There is a need to address gender pay gap and introduce quotas in senior positions. There should be more support for women entrepreneurs in the business environment and women in STEM (discussions).
7. Promoting youth employment, for example through financial assistance for companies, but also by giving employers and workers

additional support (NL 4) and support to young entrepreneurs and young self-employed professionals for example through educational tools and courses (discussions);

8. Promoting employment of disadvantaged groups (NL 4), in particular among people with disabilities (online platform);
9. Promoting employment and social mobility and, therefore, to have a full chance of self-realisation and self-determination. (IT 5.a.4 & IT 6.1) There could be a long-term strategy to ensure everyone in our

societies has the right skills to find a job and bring their talents to fruition, in particular the young generation (discussions). It is important to invest in people's skills adapted to the changing labour market needs and promoting life-long learning through among others exchange programme at all stages of life and ensure the right to lifelong learning and the right to training. (FR 6; DE 4.1) To this end, there is a need to strengthen the cooperation between businesses, trade unions and vocational, education and training providers (discussions).

14. Proposal: Inclusive labour markets¹¹

Objective: We propose to reduce inequalities, fight social exclusion and tackle poverty. We need to put in place a comprehensive anti-poverty strategy that could include, among other, a reinforced Child Guarantee and Youth Guarantee, the introduction of minimum wages, a common EU framework for minimum income schemes and decent social housing. We need to ensure the full implementation of the European Pillar of Social Rights, including its relevant headline targets for 2030, at EU, national, regional and local level in the area of "social protection and inclusion" with due regard for respective competences and the principles of subsidiarity and proportionality and to include a Social Progress Protocol in the Treaties. This objective could be achieved by:

Measures:

1. Reinforcing the competences of the EU in social policies and proposing legislation to promote social policies and ensure equality of rights, including health, harmonised for the entire EU, which take into consideration agreed regulations and the minimum requirements throughout the territory. (ECP 19 & 21) The EU could support and complement the policies of Member State by among others proposing a common framework for minimum incomes to ensure that nobody is left behind; These actions should be carried in the framework of the full implementation of the European Pillar of Social Rights and its Action Plan; (discussions)
2. Not compromising on welfare rights (public health, public education, labour policies); (IT 4.a.1)
3. Promoting research in social matters and health in the EU, following priority lines that are considered to be of public interest and agreed on by the member countries, and providing the appropriate funding. This could be achieved in part by reinforcing collaboration across fields of expertise, across countries, centres of studies (universities, etc.); (ECP 20)
4. Granting access to medical services to all persons below 16 years old across the EU in case these services are not available in the national context; (discussions)
5. Ensuring that the EU, together with social partners and national governments, supports targeted access to decent social housing for citizens, according to their specific needs financial effort should be shared among private funders, landlords, housing beneficiaries, Member State governments at central and local levels, and

the European Union. (ECP25)

15. Proposal: Demographic transition¹²

Objective: We propose to address the challenges arising from the demographic transition, as a critical ingredient of Europe's overall resilience, in particular low birth rates and a steadily ageing population, by ensuring support to people throughout the lifecycle. This should involve comprehensive action aimed at all generations, from children and young people, to families, to the working-age population, to older persons who are still prepared to work as well as those in retirement or need of care. This objective could be achieved by:

Measures:

1. Ensuring quality, affordable and accessible childcare across the EU, so that mothers and fathers can confidently reconcile their work and family life. Where appropriate this could include childcare opportunities at or near the workplace. In some Member States also overnight care is available, which should serve as an example. Additionally, this could be flanked by supportive measures such as reduced VAT rates on equipment needed for children. It is essential to prevent poverty and social exclusion of children; (ECP 22 & 26) Reinforcing the Child Guarantee, guaranteeing access of children in need to services such as education and care, healthcare, nutrition and housing, could be an instrument to achieve this (online platform, discussions).
2. Introducing specific support and protection of work for young people. Such measures towards the working-age population should include access to knowledge for mothers and fathers about their return to work. (ECP 22) Reinforcing the Youth Guarantee could be an instrument to improve the access of young people under the age of 30 to good quality offers of employment, continued education, apprenticeships or traineeships; (discussions)
3. Promoting the right to free movement of education within the Union, among others, through mutual recognition of degrees, grades, skills and qualifications; (discussions)
4. Improving legislation and implementation thereof to ensure support of families across all Member States, for instance with regard to parental leave as well as childbirth and childcare allowances. (ECP 26 & IT 5.a.1) Housing plays a crucial role in supporting families and should be addressed (online platform, discussions);
5. Taking action to guarantee that all families enjoy equal family rights in all Member States. This should include the right to marriage and adoption; (ECP 27)
6. Promoting flexible retirement ages by taking account of the specific situation of older persons. When determining the retirement age, there should be a differentiation depending on the profession, and thereby factoring in particularly demanding work, both mentally and physically; (ECP 21 & IT 5.a.1)
7. Preventing old age poverty by introducing minimum pensions. Such minimum levels would need to take account of the living standard, the poverty line and purchase power in the respective Member State; (ECP 21)
8. Guaranteeing appropriate social and health care to older persons. In doing so, it is important to address both community-based as well as residential care. Equally, measures need to take account of both care receivers and care givers; (ECP 23)
9. Ensuring the sustainable development and the demographic resilience of the regions that are lagging behind in order to make them more vibrant and attractive, including through the cohesion policy; (online

platform & discussions)

10. Taking coordinated action at the European level for collecting data disaggregated by factors such as gender and analysing demographic trends, sharing best practices

and knowledge and supporting Member States in shaping and implementing adequate policies including by establishing a specialized EU body in this area. (online platform & discussions)

16. Proposal: Fiscal and tax policies¹³

Objective: We propose that the EU promotes future-oriented investments focused on the green and digital transitions with a strong social and gender dimension, taking also into account the examples of the Next Generation EU and the SURE instrument. The EU needs to take into account the social and economic impact of the war against Ukraine and the link between the EU economic governance with the new geopolitical context and by strengthening its own budget through new own resources. Citizens want to move away taxation from people and SMEs and target tax evaders, big polluters and by taxing the digital giants while at the same time they want to see the EU supporting Member States' and local authorities' ability to finance themselves and as well as in using EU funds. This objective should be achieved by:

Measures:

1. Harmonizing and coordinating tax policies within the Member States of the EU in order to prevent tax evasion and avoidance, avoiding tax havens within the EU and targeting offshoring within Europe, including by ensuring that decisions on tax matters can be taken by qualified majority in the Council of the EU. On the other hand, there are recommendations from citizens' panels that state that taxation is a matter for individual countries, which have their own objectives and circumstances; (ECP 13 & 31, IT 4.b.3, NL2.3)
2. Promoting cooperation between EU Member States to ensure that all companies in the EU pay their fair share of taxes; Introducing a common corporate tax base or a minimum effective rate (NL3)
3. Ensuring that companies pay taxes where profits are made; (ECP 13)
4. Ensuring that tax policy support European industry and prevents job losses in Europe; (ECP 13 & 31)
5. Give further consideration to common borrowing at EU level, with a view to creating more favourable borrowing conditions, while maintaining responsible fiscal policies at Member State level; (LT 9)
6. Strengthening oversight of the absorption and use of EU funds, including at local and municipal level. (LT 10)



"EU in the world"

17. Proposal: Reducing dependency of EU from foreign actors in economically strategic sectors

Objective: We propose that the EU take measures to strengthen its autonomy in key strategic sectors such as agricultural products, strategic economic goods, semiconductors, medical products, innovative digital and environmental technologies and energy, through:

Measures:

1. boosting research, development and innovation activities and collaboration on that between public and private partners
2. maintaining an ambitious trade negotiation agenda that can contribute to building resilience and diversification of supply chains, in particular for raw materials, while also sharing the benefits of trade more equally and with more partners, thereby limiting our exposure and dependency on a small number of potentially risky suppliers¹⁴.
3. increasing the resilience of EU supply chains through fostering investment in strategic sectors in the EU, stockpiling critical productions and devices and diversifying the supply sources of critical raw materials;
4. investing further in the completion of the internal market, creating a level-playing field to make it more attractive to produce and buy these items in the European Union.
5. support to keep such products available and affordable to European consumers and reduce dependencies from outside, for example through the use of structural and regional policies, tax breaks, subsidies, infrastructure and research investments, boosting the competitiveness of SMEs as well as education programmes to keep related qualifications and jobs in Europe that are relevant to secure basic needs¹⁵.
6. European-wide programme to support small local producers from strategic sectors across all Member States¹⁶, making greater use of the EU programmes and financial instruments, such as InvestEU.
7. better cooperation between Member States to handle the management of supply chain risks¹⁷

18. Proposal: Reducing dependency of EU from foreign actors in energy

Objective: We propose that the EU reach more autonomy in the field of energy production and supply, in the context of the ongoing green transition by:

Measures:

1. adopting a strategy to be more autonomous in its energy production. A European body should integrate the existing European energy agencies and should coordinate the development of renewable energies and promote knowledge sharing¹⁸
2. actively supporting public transport and energy efficiency projects, a pan-European high-speed rail and freight network, the expansion of clean and renewable energy provision (in particular in solar and wind) and alternative technologies (such as hydrogen or waste-to-energy), as well as cultural change in urban settings from the individual car towards public transport, e-car sharing and biking¹⁹.
3. ensuring a just and fair transition, supporting in particular vulnerable citizens, who face the greatest challenges in transitioning towards climate neutrality and who are already suffering from increasing energy prices because of energy dependency and the recent tripling of energy prices.
4. increased collaboration around the assessment of the use of nuclear energy in the ongoing green transition to renewable energy in Europe, examining the collective issues that it could solve or create, given that it is still being used by many member states²⁰.
5. engaging with international partners, committing them in attaining more ambitious goals to address climate change at different international fora, including G7 and G20.
6. Linking foreign trade with climate policy measures (e.g. by launching an investment package for climate-friendly technologies and innovations, including funding programmes)²¹
7. pursuing common purchases of imported energy and sustainable energy partnerships in order to reduce European energy import dependencies, specifically in the area of gas and oil and developing EU domestic sources of energy.

19. Proposal: Defining standards within and outside the EU in trade and investment relations

Objective: We propose that the EU strengthen the ethical dimension of its trade and investment relations through:

Measures:

1. preserving and reforming our multilateral rules-based international trade architecture, and partnership with like-minded democracies
2. effective and proportionate EU legislation to ensure that decent work standards are fully applied along the global value chains, including EU production and supply processes and that goods which are imported comply with qualitative ethical standards, sustainable development, and human rights standards including workers' and trade union rights, offering certification for products abiding by this EU legislation²² and engage in an EU wide dialogue process that seeks to inform and educate on the environmental and ethical effects of policy changes in international trade
3. restrictions on the import and sale of products from countries that allow forced and child labour, a periodically updated blacklist of companies, and promoting consumer awareness on child labour through information made by official EU channels²³.
4. following up and enforcing Trade Sustainable Development chapters (TSD) in EU Free Trade Agreements (FTA) including the possibility of a sanctions-based mechanism as a last resort.
5. reforming the EU's Generalised Scheme of Preferences (GSP) to include strong conditionality provisions and effective and appropriate monitoring, reporting and dialogue processes in order to improve the impact GSP can have on trade, human rights and development in partner countries with trade preferences to be withdrawn in case of non-compliance.

20. Proposal: Defining standards within and outside the EU in environmental policies

Objective: We propose that the EU strengthen the environmental dimension of its trade relations through:

Measures:

1. harmonising and strengthening eco-labelling and introducing a mandatory eco-score to be displayed on all products that can be bought by the consumer. The eco-score would be calculated according to emissions from production and transportation, as well as harmful content, based on a list of hazardous products. The eco-score should be managed and monitored by an EU authority²⁴.
2. strengthen environmental standards for the export of waste and more stringent controls and sanctions to stop illegal exports. The EU should incentivise the Member States to recycle their own waste and use it for energy production²⁵.
3. setting a goal of eliminating polluting packaging by promoting less packaging or more environmentally-friendly packaging²⁶.
4. rewarding countries that apply high sustainability standards by offering them further access to the EU market for their sustainable goods and services, either unilaterally through the General System of Preferences GSP+, bilaterally through negotiated trade agreements, or multilaterally through initiatives in the World Trade Organisation

21. Proposal: Decision making and cohesion within the Union

Objective: We propose that the EU improve its capacity to take speedy and effective decisions, notably in Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP), speaking with one voice and acting as a truly global player, projecting a positive role in the world and making a difference in response to any crisis, notably through:

Measures:

1. in particular in the area of the CFSP, issues that are currently decided by way of unanimity to be changed, normally to be decided by way of a qualified majority²⁸.
2. basing cooperation in security and defense policy on the recently endorsed Strategic Compass and making use of the European Peace Facility²⁹
3. strengthening the role of the High Representative to ensure that the EU speaks with one voice³⁰.
4. agreeing on a strong vision and a common strategy to consolidate the unity and decision taking capacity of the EU in order to prepare the EU for further enlargement³¹.
5. ratifying recently concluded trade agreements more promptly without precluding proper examination and discussion.

22. Proposal: Transparency of the EU and its relations with the citizens

Objective: We propose that the EU, in particular in its actions at the international level, including trade negotiations, improve its accessibility for citizens through better information, education, citizen participation, and transparency of its action, notably by:

Measures:

1. strengthening links with citizens and local institutions to improve transparency, reach the citizens and communicate and consult better with them about concrete EU initiatives and at the international level³².
2. stronger citizen participation in the EU's international politics and direct citizens' involvement events, similar to the Conference on the Future of Europe, organised on a national, local and European level³³ and with the active participation of organised civil society³⁴.
3. full support by all relevant stakeholders to citizens who choose to get involved in organised civil society organisations, as they did with COVID-19 and Ukraine.
4. Allocating a specific budget to develop educational programmes on the functioning of the EU and its values that it could propose to the Member States that wish, so that they can integrate them into their curricula (primary, secondary schools, and universities). In addition, a specific course on the EU and its functioning could be offered to students wishing to study in another European country through the Erasmus programme. Students choosing this course would be given priority in the allocation of said Erasmus programmes.
5. improving its media strategy by strengthening its visibility on social media and actively promote its content and encouraging innovation by promoting an accessible European social media³⁵.

23. Proposal: The EU as a strong actor on the world scene in peace and security

Objective: We propose that the EU continue to act to promote dialogue and guarantee peace and a rules-based international order³⁶, strengthening multilateralism and building on long standing EU peace initiatives which contributed to its award of the Nobel Prize in 2012, while strengthening its common security through³⁷:

Measures:

1. Its joint armed forces that shall be used for self-defence purposes and preclude aggressive military action of any kind, with a capacity to provide support in times of crises including natural catastrophes. Outside European borders it could be deployed in exceptional circumstances preferably under a legal mandate from the UN Security Council and thus in compliance with international law³⁸, and without competing with or duplicating NATO and respecting different national relationships with NATO and undertaking an assessment of EU relations with NATO in the context of the debate on the EU's strategic autonomy.
2. Playing a leading role in building the world security order after the war in Ukraine building on the recently adopted EU

strategic compass.

3. Protecting its strategic research and its capacity in priority sectors such as the space sector, cybersecurity, the medical sector and the environment³⁹.
4. Strengthening the operational capabilities necessary to ensure the effectiveness of

the mutual assistance clause of Art. 42.7 of the Treaty on European Union, providing adequate EU protection to any member state under attack by a third country.

5. Reflect on how to counter disinformation and propaganda in an objective and factual way

24. Proposal: The EU as a strong actor on the world scene in relationship building

Objective: We propose that the EU should, in its relations with third countries:

Measures:

1. make greater use of its collective political and economic weight, speaking with one voice and acting in a unified way, without individual Member States dividing the Union through inappropriate bilateral responses⁴⁰.
2. strengthen its ability to sanction States, governments, entities, groups or organisations as well as individuals that do not comply with its fundamental principles, agreements and laws and ensuring that sanctions that already exist are quickly implemented and enforced. Sanctions against third countries should be proportional to the action that triggered them and be effective and applied in due time⁴¹.
3. promote sustainable and rules-based trade while opening new trade and investment opportunities for European companies. While bilateral trade and investment agreements are key to promote European competitiveness, standards and rules are needed to ensure a level playing field. The EU needs to remain an active and reliable partner by negotiating, concluding and implementing trade agreements that also set high sustainability standards
4. conclude major international cooperation agreements as the EU rather than as individual countries⁴².
5. reform EU trade and investment policy to relaunch global multilateralism with as objectives the creation of decent jobs and the protection of fundamental human rights, including workers' and trade union rights; the preservation of the environment and biodiversity and the conformity with the Paris Agreement on climate change; the safeguarding of high-quality public services; and the strengthening of Europe's industrial basis. The EU should contribute to a relaunch of global multilateralism, through a profound reform based on democracy and peace, solidarity and respect for human, social and environmental rights and a reinforced role for the ILO.
6. include in cooperation and investment agreement with third countries the fight against human trafficking and illegal immigration and cooperation with reference to any appropriate repatriations.
7. establish partnerships with developing countries, supporting their infrastructure and with mutually favourable trade deals to aid them in the transition towards green energy sources⁴³.
8. develop a more effective and unified policy towards autocratic and hybrid regimes and develop partnerships with civil society organisations in such countries.

9. increase the resources of EU electoral observation missions.
10. offer a credible accession perspective for candidate and potential candidate countries to foster peace and stability in Europe and bring prosperity to millions of Europeans⁴⁴.

NOTE: Several members of the WG considered that Proposals “Reducing dependency of EU from foreign actors in energy” and “Transparency of the EU and its relations with the citizens” in particular were matters for other WGs. Some members wished to draw attention to other alternatives to unanimity in the Council besides QMV, such as variable geometry, opt-outs and enhanced cooperation. Some WG members advocated using the term “sustainable” instead of “ethical” in Proposal “Defining standards within and outside the EU in trade and investment relations”. There was a difference of views as to whether accession of new Member States should continue to require the unanimous agreement of all current Member States. There was a range of views as to the extent to which there should be joint armed forces. Two members mentioned the prospect of Irish unity in the event of Northern Ireland voting for it in accordance with the provisions of the Good Friday Agreement, and for the EU to be prepared for such an eventuality.



"Values and rights, rule of law, security"

25. Proposal: Rule of Law, Democratic values and European identity⁴⁵

Objective: Systematically uphold the rule of Law across all Member States, in particular by:

Measures:

1. Ensuring that the values and principles enshrined in the EU Treaties and in the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights are non-negotiable, irreversible and sine qua non conditions for EU membership and accession. EU values must be fully upheld in all Member States also so they can act as an international standard and pole of attraction through diplomacy and dialogue. Enlargement of the EU should not undermine the EU *acquis* with relation to fundamental values and citizens' rights;⁴⁶
2. Making European values tangible for EU citizens, especially through more interactive and direct involvement. To this end, the European citizenship should be strengthened for instance through a European citizenship statute providing citizen-specific rights and freedoms, as well as a statute for European cross-border associations and non-profit organisations. European values should also be promoted through an "onboarding package" providing didactic elements and information material to citizens. Finally, a European public sphere including audiovisual and online media outlets should be developed by further EU investment, existing EU media hubs improved, and the over 500 local European liaison offices further supported;⁴⁷
3. The EU Charter of Fundamental Rights should be made universally applicable and enforceable. In addition, annual conferences on the rule of law (following the Commission' Rule of law Report) with delegations from all Member States involving randomly selected and diverse citizens, civil servants, parliamentarians, local authorities, social partners and civil society should be organised. Organisations, including civil society, which promote the rule of law on the ground should also be further supported;⁴⁸
4. Effectively applying and evaluating the scope of the 'Conditionality Regulation' and other rule of law instruments, and considering extensions to new areas regardless of their relevance for the EU budget. Any necessary legal avenues, including Treaty changes, should be considered to punish breaches of the rule of law;⁴⁹
5. Fostering educational and media programmes that make EU values part of migrants' integration process and encourage interactions between migrants and EU citizens, with a view to ensuring their successful integration within EU societies and to create awareness among EU citizens about migration-related issues.⁵⁰

26. Proposal: Data Protection⁵¹

Objective: Guarantee a more protective and citizen-oriented data treatment policy, in particular by:

Measures:

1. Implementing in full the existing data privacy legislation and reviewing it to evaluate, if necessary, the establishment of stronger enforcement mechanisms for entities processing personal data, currently under competence of independent national data protection authorities respecting the principle of subsidiarity. Such entities should be sanctioned in a stricter way than in the current implementation of the regulation, in proportion to their annual turnover (up to 4%), also possibly through a ban on their activities, and be subject to annual independent audit;^{52 53}
2. Giving more effect to the principle of privacy by design and default, e.g. by evaluating and introducing easily understandable, concise and user-friendly harmonised data processing consent forms that clearly indicate what is necessary and what not. Users must be able to give or withdraw their consent to data processing in an easy, fast and permanent manner;^{54 55}
3. Evaluating and introducing clearer and more protective rules about the processing of minors' data, possibly in the EU GDPR, including through the creation of a special category for sensitive minors' data and the harmonization of age consent threshold within the EU Member States. While the bulk of privacy rules implementation and awareness raising should remain within Member States' remit, including through higher investment and further resources at national level, the EU should also have stronger role e.g. by creating EU competences on civic education concerning data protection;⁵⁶
4. Better enforcing eligibility criteria for the European and national Data Protection Authorities, in terms of qualifications and suitability, to ensure the highest level of independence of their members.^{57 58}

27. Proposal: Media, Fake news, Disinformation, Fact-checking, Cybersecurity⁵⁹

Objective: Tackle disinformation by further promoting media independence and pluralism as well as media literacy, in particular by:

Measures:

1. Introducing a legislation addressing threats to media independence through EU-wide minimum standards, including a review of the media business model to ensure the integrity and independence of the EU media market;⁶⁰
2. Strictly enforcing EU competition rules in the media sector, in order to prevent large media monopolies and ensure media pluralism and independence from undue political, corporate and/or foreign interference. Quality journalism, with established high ethical and self-regulatory standards, should also be promoted;⁶¹
3. Setting up an EU body in charge of addressing and tackling targeted disinformation and interference, increasing situational awareness and strengthening fact-checking organisations as well as independent media. 'Hotlines' and websites, such as Europe Direct, where citizens as well as national media can request and be provided with fact-checked information on European politics and policies, should also be further supported and promoted more actively;^{62 63}
4. Promoting citizens' media literacy and awareness about disinformation and unintentional dissemination of fake news, including through mandatory school trainings. Member States should also be encouraged to provide adequate human and financial resources to this end;⁶⁴
5. Building on existing initiatives, such as the Code of Practice on Disinformation and the European Digital Media Observatory (EDMO), to require online platforms to issue clear statements about the algorithms they use (leaving users to decide whether they consent to be subjected to them) and the disinformation risks users are exposed to, while safeguarding the right for legal free speech and right to privacy.^{65 66}

28. Proposal: Media, Fake news, Disinformation, Fact-checking, Cybersecurity (bis)

Objective: A stronger role for the EU in countering cybersecurity threats, in particular by:

Measures:

1. Reinforcing the EU agency for cybersecurity (ENISA) in order to further protect individuals, organisations and institutions against cybersecurity breaches and the use of artificial intelligence for criminal purposes. Data privacy and protection of personal data should, at the same time, be safeguarded;^{67 68}
2. Enhancing the coordination of national cybersecurity authorities and making additional efforts in ensuring that EU-level rules are well implemented at national level.^{69 70}

29. Proposal: Anti-discrimination, Equality and Quality of life⁷¹

Objective: Take action to harmonize living conditions across the EU and improve EU citizens' socio-economic quality of life, in particular by:

Measures:

1. In consultation with experts and social partners, developing transparent quality of life indicators including economic, social and rule of law criteria, in order to establish a clear and realistic timeline for raising social standards and achieving a common EU socio-economic structure, including through implementation of the European Pillar of Social Rights. These should be integrated in the economic governance framework and the European semester process;^{72 73}
2. Increasing and facilitating direct public investment in education, health, housing, physical infrastructures, care for the elderly and people with disabilities. Additional investment should also aim to guarantee appropriate work/life balance for citizens. Such investment should be carried out in a fully transparent manner, allowing to track the entire process;⁷⁴
3. Encouraging taxing large corporations, fighting access to tax havens and eliminating their existence in the EU with a view to increasing public investment in priority areas such as education (scholarships, Erasmus) and research. EU-wide fight against tax evasion should be also a way to raise funds for publically financed initiatives;^{75 76}
4. Providing EU-wide criteria on anti-discrimination in the labour market and incentivizing the hiring by private companies of people that are usually most subject to discrimination (e.g. youth, elders, women, minorities), including through subsidies, and, as a second step, temporary quotas. Social partners should be closely associated in this regard. Discrimination outside the labour market should also be prevented by law, and equality promoted;⁷⁷
5. Ensuring the creation and facilitation of affordable kindergartens, both public and in the private sector, and free childcare for those in need of it.⁷⁸

30. Proposal: Animal rights, Agriculture⁷⁹

Objective: Take decisive measures to promote and guarantee a more ecological and climate-oriented agriculture, in particular by:

Measures:

1. Setting detailed, measurable and time-bound minimum criteria for the protection of farming animals, with a view to ensuring higher animal wellbeing standards in line with the introduction of sustainability objectives and on the basis of an integrated food system approach;^{80 81}
2. Introducing financial penalties for negative externalities of agricultural activity (e.g. greenhouse gas emissions, use of pesticides, water overuse, long-haul transport, etc.) based on their environmental impact. Agricultural goods imported into the EU should also be gauged on that basis, including through custom duties, as a way to iron out any competitive advantage arising from lower environmental standards;⁸²
3. Reducing subsidies for agricultural mass production where it does not contribute to a sustainable transition and redirect those resources to support an environmentally sustainable agriculture, whilst ensuring affordable food products.^{83 84}



"Digital Transformation"

Europe must become a world leader and standard setter in digital transformation and charter a European way to build an ethical, human-centred, transparent and safe digital society. Europe needs to be ambitious in its approach and fully use the opportunities digitalisation offers, while at the same time managing the risks and challenges brought about by digitalisation. Digitalisation touches on and must be given consideration in all areas of our society. Reference was made in this context to the European Declaration on Digital Rights and Principles for the Digital Decade and suggestions were made to consider a possible future Charter of Digital Rights.

The Russian aggression in Ukraine has only reinforced many of the points addressed in the proposals, such as the need for digital sovereignty, an increased focus on cyber defence and protection against disinformation. It has also made it evident that conflicts nowadays have consequences in the digital sphere, raising new issues like the long-term consequences of the seizure of personal information and the illegitimate use of that data in the future.

31. Proposal: Access to digital infrastructure⁸⁵

Objective: Equal access to the internet is a fundamental right of every European citizen. We propose that everyone in Europe should in practice have access to the internet and to digital services, and that the sovereignty of the EU's digital infrastructure is enhanced through:

Measures:

1. Investing in high-quality and innovative European digital infrastructures (including 5G and 6G being developed in Europe); (ECP1 recommendation number 40 and 47, Dutch NCP 1)
2. Ensuring fast, affordable, secure and stable internet access everywhere in the EU, including for roaming, with a priority to bring internet connection to 'white zones/dead zones', rural areas and remote and peripheral regions in order to address the digital divide between and within Member States and make sure that no one gets left behind; (ECP1 recommendation number 17, 47 and Dutch NCP 1)
3. Advance the deployment of digital and electrical infrastructure both in public and private spaces to enable use of electric and autonomous vehicles; (WG debate)⁸⁶
4. Taking measures to ensure there is fair and open competition and prevent monopolies, vendor lock-in, data concentration and dependence on third countries in relation to infrastructure and services, improving markets from the perspective of consumers; (ECP1 recommendation number 17)
5. Making children, families, elder people as well as vulnerable groups, a priority when it comes to access to internet and hardware, particularly in view of access to education, public services, and health; (ECP1 recommendation number 17 and WG debate)
6. Improving digital access to and accessibility of essential public and private services for citizens and businesses, for example when it comes to administrative procedures, and ensure inclusive access and support such as through help desks in relation to these services; (WG debate, Multilingual Digital Platform)

7. Harmonising high quality digital standards and improving secure mobility of data to facilitate cross-border interoperability; (WG debate, Multilingual Digital Platform)
8. Considering environmental impacts of

digital infrastructure and digitalisation in order to make digital transformation sustainable and strive for a green digital society. (WG debate, Multilingual Digital Platform).

32. Proposal: Digital literacy and skills that empower people⁸⁷

Objective: We propose that the EU ensures that all European citizens can benefit from digitalisation, by empowering them with the necessary digital skills and opportunities, through:

Measures:

1. Ensuring access to formal and non-formal digital literacy and skills training and education, including in school curricula, during all stages of life by building on existing initiatives at European level, with special focus on the inclusion of vulnerable groups and elderly, enhancing digital skills of children in a manner that is compatible with their healthy development and tackling digital inequalities, including the digital gender gap; (ECP1 recommendation number 8, Italian NCP 5.2, WG debate)
2. Ensuring a healthy use of the internet by encouraging Member States to implement digital skills training for all age-groups with standard programmes and curricula set at European level concerning e.g. the risks and opportunities of the internet, online rights of users and the netiquette; (ECP1 recommendation number 47, WG debate)
3. Taking all the necessary measures to ensure that the digitalisation of society does not leave out older people and that technology is accessible to them by fostering programs and initiatives, for instance in the form of classes tailored to their needs. At the same time it should be ensured that essential services can also be accessed in person and by non-digital means; (ECP1 recommendation number 34 and 47)
4. The introduction of an EU certification relating to digital skills in schools that will prepare young people for the future job market; (ECP1 recommendation number 8)
5. Develop training initiatives coordinated at EU level to retrain and upskill workers to remain competitive in the job market, taking especially account of competences and skills needed in small and medium sized enterprises and to train digital experts; (ECP1 recommendation number 8 and WG debate)
6. Awareness raising about existing digital platforms that connect people to employers and help in finding jobs in the EU, such as EURES; (ECP1 recommendation number 8)
7. Increasing investments and efforts to boost digitalisation of education, including higher education. (WG debate, Multilingual Digital Platform)

33. Proposal: Safe and trustworthy digital society – cyber security and disinformation⁸⁸

Objective: We propose that in order to have a safe, resilient and trustworthy digital society the EU should ensure effective and swift implementation of existing legislation and have more powers to enhance cyber security, deal with illegal content and cyber criminality, counter and recover from cyber threats from non-state actors and authoritarian states, and address disinformation through:

Measures:

1. Strengthening capacities of Europol/ European Cybercrime Center in terms of financial and human resources, allowing for a more proactive approach in combatting cybercrime and building up joint European cyber defense capabilities against large scale attacks, including through better cooperation; (ECP1 recommendation number 39, Lithuanian NCP 2.6, Dutch NCP 1, WG debate)
2. Taking necessary measures to be prepared for and to recover swiftly from any large scale attacks and black-outs, by for example ensuring the existence of resilient infrastructure and alternative communication channels; (WG debate)
3. Ensuring similar sanctions and quick and effective enforcement in Member States in case of cybercrime through better coordination of local, regional and national cybersecurity centres and authorities; (ECP1 recommendation number 39)
4. Enhancing digital literacy and critical thinking as a way to counter disinformation, online threats and hate speech, as well as dark patterns and preferential pricing; (WG debate)
5. Countering disinformation by legislation and guidelines for online platforms and social media companies to address disinformation vulnerabilities and implementing transparency measures, including for example AI based algorithms that can highlight the trustworthiness of information on social media and new media, providing the user with sources of fact-checked information. When using algorithms, human beings should remain in ultimate control of decision making processes; (ECP1 recommendation number 46 and WG debate)
6. Supporting digital platforms that provide for media pluralism and provide resources and initiatives to assess the trustworthiness and impartiality of information from traditional media (e.g. television, printed press, radio) and other media in full respect of the principle of media freedom and provide citizens with information about the quality of the news. (ECP1 recommendation number 46)

34. Proposal: Safe and trustworthy digital society – data protection⁸⁹

Objective: We promote data sovereignty of individuals, better awareness and more efficient implementation and enforcement of existing data protection rules (GDPR) to enhance personal control of own data and limit misuse of data through:

Measures:

1. Better explaining data protection rules (GDPR), increasing transparency and improving communication by creating guidance on informed consent texts that use simple and clear language understandable by everyone, including more visual ways to provide consent to data use, accompanied by an information campaign and ensuring needed skills for those processing data and advising those who need assistance; (ECP1 recommendation number 42, 45 and Dutch NCP 2)
2. Ensuring that the existing prohibition of default consent on re-use or reselling of data is applied; (ECP1 recommendation number 42)
3. Ensuring that requests of users for permanent data deletion are followed up on in a specific timeframe; (ECP1 recommendation number 42)
4. Providing clear and as short as possible information to users on how and by whom data will be used; (ECP1 recommendation number 42)
5. Ensuring compliance of non-European companies with European data protection rules; (ECP1 recommendation number 42 and 43)
6. Encouraging a certification system at EU level that reflects compliance with GDPR in an accessible, clear and simple way, and visible on websites and platforms and should be issued by an independent certifier at European level. It should not create disproportionate burdens for small and medium sized companies; (ECP1 recommendation number 44, WG debate)
7. Ensure that citizens are efficiently and swiftly helped when encountering issues with opt outs or revoking consent. To this end intrusive behavior needs to be better defined and guidelines and mechanisms for opt out and revoking data and to identify and sanction fraudsters should be developed at European level; (ECP1 recommendation number 43, and WG debate)
8. Providing for sanctions including a fine proportional to the companies' turnover and limitations of companies' operations, such as imposing temporary or definitive bans on unwanted data processing and supporting its enforcement by the European Data Protection Supervisor and national agencies. (ECP1 recommendation number 42, 43, and WG debate)

35. Proposal: Digital innovation to strengthen the social and sustainable economy⁹⁰

Objective: We propose that the EU promotes digitalisation measures which strengthen the economy and the single market in a fair and sustainable way, increase European competitiveness in technology and innovation, enhance the digital single market for companies of all sizes and make Europe a world leader in digital transformation and in human centric digitalisation, through:

Measures:

1. The introduction or reinforcement of legislation that regulates (human-centric) 'smart working', taking into account the impact on workers' physical and mental health for example by ensuring a right to disconnect. A 'human centric' approach should incorporate the 'human in control' principle; (ECP1 recommendation number 7 and WG debate)⁹¹
2. EU legislation that incentivises companies to be socially responsible and to keep high quality 'smart working' jobs within Europe and thus avoiding the relocation of such jobs to lower cost countries. Incentives may be financial and/or reputational and should take into account internationally recognised environmental, social and governance (ESG) criteria. To this end, the EU should set up a working group composed of experts from all relevant stakeholders to examine and strengthen this legislation; (ECP1 recommendation number 7)
3. Ensuring human oversight of decision-making processes involving artificial intelligence in the work place and transparency of algorithms used; giving consideration to negative impacts of illimited digital surveillance in the workplace; informing and consulting workers prior to the introduction of digital technologies that impact working conditions; ensuring that new forms of work, such as platform work, respect worker rights and provide appropriate working conditions; (WG debate)
4. Taking initiatives to help support remote working, such as office spaces with access to a reliable, fast internet connection and digital training and providing resources for ergonomic equipment for home offices; (ECP1 recommendation number 17 and WG debate)
5. Introducing a publicly accessible digital score board, creating a ranking system that indicates and compares the current level of digitalisation of EU businesses; (German NCP)
6. Achieving a strong and competitive digital economy and spread the benefits of digital transformation equitably across Europe by focusing on technology and innovation as drivers of growth, by driving world class transformative research and making room for innovation ecosystems throughout all regions by improving the operating environment of SMEs and start-ups and fair access to funding and by doing away with legal or other burdens hindering cross boarder activities. (Italian NCP 1.3, WG debate and Multilingual Digital Platform)
7. Building a data infrastructure based on European values; implement the 'digital first' and 'once only' principle and facilitate digital and secure access to data for innovation and business; encouraging the digitalisation of public services. (WG debate and Multilingual Digital Platform)
8. Fully utilize the potential of trustworthy and responsible use of artificial intelligence, use the potential of blockchain technology and cloud services, setting safeguards and standards that ensure transparency, interoperability, generate trust, enhance ease of use and avoiding any discriminatory or biased algorithms; (WG debate and Multilingual Digital Platform)

9. Promoting open source software and its use in education and training and free access to publicly funded research and software; (WG debate and Multilingual Digital Platform)
10. Introducing a European common digital identity to facilitate cross-border digital transactions and services, with a framework of European standards and guidelines providing the necessary safeguards; (WG debate and Multilingual Digital Platform)
11. Assess the feasibility of digitalisation of product information for consumption and nutrition products through a standardised European app which would allow for more user-friendly access and would provide additional information on products and production chain. (ECP1 recommendation number 16)



"European democracy"

36. Proposal: Citizens information, participation and youth

Objective: Increase citizens' participation and youth involvement in the democracy at the European Union level to develop a 'full civic experience' for Europeans, ensure that their voice is heard also in between elections, and that the participation is effective. That is why the most appropriate form of participation should be considered for each topic, for example by:

1. Improving the effectiveness of existing and developing new citizens' participation mechanisms, in line with EU acquis, by better informing on them. Ideally, all the information about the participatory spaces should be summarized⁹² in an integrated official website with different features.⁹³ A mechanism should be devised to monitor policy and legislative initiatives, which have emerged from participatory democracy processes;⁹⁴ Participatory mechanisms should be inclusive and their communication able to reach a diverse public. Attention should be paid to content material, topics and moderators' skills. They should include an analysis on the impact of the policies discussed on, inter alia, women and vulnerable persons.⁹⁵
2. Increasing the frequency of online and offline interactions between EU institutions and its citizens through different means of interaction in order to ensure that citizens can participate in the EU policy-making process to voice their opinions and to get feedback, and creating a charter for EU officials on citizens' participation;⁹⁶
3. Offering a user-friendly digital platform where citizens can share ideas, put forward questions to the representatives of EU institutions and express their views on important EU matters and legislative proposals, in particular youth. The platform should also allow for online polls;⁹⁷
4. Improving and streamlining existing mechanisms at the European, national, and local level, to make them more secure, accessible, visible and inclusive;⁹⁸
5. Include organised civil society and regional and local authorities and existing structures such as the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC) and the Committee of the Regions (CoR)⁹⁹ in the citizens' participation process;¹⁰⁰
6. Create a system of local EU Councillors, as a way to reduce the distance between the EU institutions and European citizens;¹⁰¹
7. Holding Citizens' assemblies periodically, on the basis of legally binding EU law. Participants must be selected randomly, with representativeness criteria, and participation should be incentivized. If needed, there will be support of experts so that assembly members have enough information for deliberation. If the outcomes are not taken on board by the institutions, this should be duly justified;¹⁰² Participation and prior involvement of citizens and civil society is an important basis for political decisions to be taken by elected representatives. The EU is founded on representative democracy: with European elections, citizens give a clear mandate to their representatives and indirectly express themselves on EU policies;¹⁰³
8. Provide enhanced structural support, financial and otherwise, for civil society, especially for youth civil society and support local authorities in setting up local youth councils;¹⁰⁴ this could be achieved through a specific pillar in the European Democracy Action Plan for involvement of civil society and social partners, and a dedicated civil society strategy;¹⁰⁵
9. Introduce a "Youth-check" of legislation, including both an impact assessment and a consultation mechanism with

representatives of young people, when legislation is deemed to have an impact on young people;¹⁰⁶

10. Strengthening cooperation between EU legislators and civil society organisations to utilise the link between decision-makers and

citizens which civil society organisations constitute;¹⁰⁷

11. Summarize elements of citizens' participation in an EU Charter for the involvement of citizens in EU-affairs.

37. Proposal: Citizens information, participation and youth (bis)

Objective : Make the European Union more understandable and accessible and strengthen¹⁰⁸ a common European identity, in particular by:

1. Guaranteeing a minimum level of education on the EU and especially its democratic processes, including the history of European integration and European citizenship. People of all ages should be able to benefit from such programmes, which should be designed in an engaging and age appropriate manner, for instance through the development of specific programmes and educational material for children and schools;¹⁰⁹ and civil society organisations active in the field of non-formal education;¹¹⁰
2. Making reliable information on the EU easily accessible in an inclusive manner to all citizens. EU institutions should use more accessible language and avoid using bureaucratic terms in their communication, while at the same time maintaining the quality and expertise of the given information and adapting the information to different communication channels and audience profiles.¹¹¹ It should consider, for instance, creating a mobile application where information concerning EU policies is presented in a clear language.¹¹² A special effort should be made to reach out to young people through digital media, youth movements and various 'ambassadors' (organisations and individuals) explaining¹¹³ the EU project;¹¹⁴
3. Making a greater use of artificial intelligence and translation technologies to circumvent¹¹⁵ language barriers,¹¹⁶ ensuring the accessibility and usability of all the digital tools for people with disabilities;¹¹⁷
4. Defending and supporting free, pluralistic and independent media, and encouraging media outlets, including public broadcasters and public news agencies and European media, to cover European affairs more regularly while respecting their freedom and independence, to ensure regular and comprehensive coverage across the EU Member States;¹¹⁸ stepping up the fight against disinformation and foreign interferences, and ensure the protection of journalists;¹¹⁹
5. Bringing Europe closer to citizens by improving¹²⁰ contact points and dedicated hubs, or "Houses of Europe", at local level to provide resources, information and advice to citizens on EU matters, as well as listen to their concerns and engage in debates with associations to help spread citizens' views at European level;¹²¹
6. Taking further steps to strengthen common identity among Europeans, for instance through an EU fund for supporting online and offline interactions (i.e. exchanges programmes, panels, meetings) of both short and longer duration between EU citizens, creating common sports events and teams, or making Europe Day (9 May) an additional¹²² European public holiday for all EU citizens.¹²³

38. Proposal: Democracy and elections

Objective: Strengthen European democracy by bolstering its foundations, boosting participation in European Parliament elections, fostering transnational debate on European issues and ensuring a strong link between citizens and their elected representatives, in particular by:

1. Ensuring the protection of EU values laid down in the treaties, including the rule of law and a strong social model,¹²⁴ which are at the core of the European democracy. In its relationship with external countries, the European Union should firstly strengthen common democratic values in its borders. Only after achieving this, the European Union can be an ambassador of our democratic model in the countries that are ready and willing to implement it, through diplomacy and dialogue,¹²⁵
2. Conceiving a EU wide referendum, to be triggered by the European Parliament, in exceptional cases on matters particularly important to all European citizens,¹²⁶
3. Amending EU electoral law to harmonise electoral conditions (voting age, election date, requirements for electoral districts, candidates, political parties and their financing) for the European Parliament elections, as well as moving towards voting for Union-wide lists, or 'transnational lists',^x with candidates from multiple Member States, having taken¹²⁷ into account the views expressed among citizens across the EU Member States on this issue.¹²⁸
 - Some of the Members of the European Parliament should be elected through a European Union-wide list, the rest being elected within the Members' States;¹²⁹
4. Strengthening links between citizens and their elected representatives, taking into account national specificities and citizens' desire to be closer to them and have a feeling that their concerns lead to specific action by elected representatives in the European Parliament and national parliaments.¹³² This is a universal issue and people of all ages should be engaged;¹³³
 - This reform should also aim at facilitating digital voting possibilities¹³⁰ and guaranteeing effective voting rights for persons with disabilities,¹³¹
 - European citizens should have a greater say on who is elected as President of the Commission. This could be achieved either by the direct election of the Commission President¹³⁴ or a lead candidate system;^{x1}
 - The European Parliament should have the right of legislative initiative, in order to propose¹³⁵ the topics to be discussed and, subsequently, adopt the necessary texts to follow up on the recommendations that emerge from deliberations;¹³⁶
 - European Parliament should decide on the budget of the EU as it is the right of parliaments at the national level,^{x11137}
 - Political parties, civil society organisations, trade unions should be more lively and accessible in order for citizens to be

^x European Commission representatives explained it should be implemented after a transition period, not to rush things through.

^{x1} EP position: the lead candidate of the European political party that has obtained the highest share of votes at European elections, who is able to be supported by a majority of European Parliament's Members, shall be elected President of the European Commission. In case a coalition majority cannot be reached, the task should be assigned to the next lead candidate. To this end, European political parties may nominate candidates to run for the Commission President's post. Mr Paulo Rangel: in order to reinforce the lead candidate process the positions of the European Parliament and the European Council should be reversed and this implies a treaty change: the Parliament would propose and the Council would approve the President of the Commission. MDP (Final Kantar Report: "Group of contributions discusses the election of the Commission President and appointment of commissioners, including the Spitzenkandidaten system). EYE, pag. 23: "The candidates for the President of the Commission should not be elected in backroom negotiations among winning parties. We should enforce the so-called "Spitzenkandidaten" system, where each party announces their candidate for the President of the Commission before the election campaign in the case that this party gains a majority. Through active participation in the campaign and direct interaction with the citizens, the future President could become more closely connected to the European population.", and discussion WG.

^{x11} The Council does not consider that this proposal is based on a recommendation from the citizens. It is therefore not in line with the agreed methodology. See also Citizen component's position expressed on page 40.

more involved and engaged in European democracy.¹³⁸ This would also contribute to stimulate the inclusion of EU topics in public debates via political parties, organised civil society and social partners, not only during European elections but ahead of national,

- regional and local elections as well;¹³⁹
5. Democracy is embodied in the institutions and in society at large, including in the workplace through the role of social partners.¹⁴⁰

39. Proposal: EU decision making process

Objective: Improve the EU's decision-making process in order to ensure the EU's capability to act, while taking into account the interests of all Member States and guaranteeing a transparent and understandable process for the citizens, in particular by

1. Reassessing decision-making and voting rules in the EU institutions, focusing on the issue of unanimous voting, which makes it very difficult to reach agreement, while ensuring a fair calculation of voting 'weights' so that small countries' interests are protected;¹⁴¹
 - All issues decided by way of unanimity should be decided by way of a qualified majority. The only exceptions should be the admission of new membership to the EU and changes to the fundamental principles of the EU as stated in Art. 2 TEU and the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union.¹⁴²
2. Ensuring transparency of decision-making by allowing independent citizens' observers to closely follow the decision-making process, guaranteeing broader¹⁴³ right of access to documents, and develop on this basis stronger links and an enhanced dialogue between citizens and the EU institutions;¹⁴⁴
 - The EU needs to improve the transparency of its decision-making process and institutions. For instance, the meetings of the Council and the European Parliament, including its votes, should be broadcasted online in the same way. This would allow interested citizens to follow EU policy-making, and hold politicians and policy-makers accountable;¹⁴⁵ the European Parliament's right of inquiry should be strengthened;¹⁴⁶
 - EU decision-making process should be further developed so that national, regional, local representatives, social partners and organised civil society are more involved.¹⁴⁷ Inter-parliamentary cooperation and dialogue should be strengthened. National parliaments should also be closer involved in the legislative procedure by the European Parliament, e.g. by way of participation in hearings.¹⁴⁸ In addition, a better involvement of the subnational level and of the Committee of the Regions helps to take better into account the experiences gained with the implementation of EU law.¹⁴⁹
3. Considering changing the names of EU institutions to clarify their functions and respective role in the EU decision-making process for citizens;¹⁵⁰
 - The EU decision making process should be based on a clearer and more understandable structure, resembling national systems,¹⁵¹ explicitly reflecting the division of competences between the European institutions and the Member States;¹⁵²
 - For example, the Council of the EU could be called the Senate of the EU and the European Commission could be called the Executive Commission of the EU.¹⁵³
4. Enhance the European Union's delivery capacities in key important areas;¹⁵⁴
5. Ensure proper civil and social dialogue mechanisms and processes at every step of the EU decision-making process, from impact assessment to policy design and implementation.¹⁵⁵
6. Reform the way the European Union works by better involving social partners and organised civil society. Strengthening the existing structures in order to better reflect the needs and expectations of EU citizens in the decision-making process, given their importance in the European democratic life. Within this framework, enhance the institutional role of the EESC and empower it as facilitator and guarantor of participatory democracy activities like structured dialogue with civil society organisations and Citizens' panels. A lively civil society is crucial for the democratic life of the European Union.¹⁵⁶
7. Reopening the discussion about the

constitution, where applicable, to help us align better on our values. A constitution may help to be more precise as well as

involve citizens and agree on the rules of the decision-making process;¹⁵⁷

40. Proposal: Subsidiarity

1. Active subsidiarity and multilevel governance are key principles and fundamental features for the EU functioning and democratic accountability;¹⁵⁸
2. The EU should review the mechanism allowing national Parliaments to assess whether new legislative proposals at the European level do not intrude on their legal competences and to be granted the possibility to suggest a legislative initiative to the European level. Such mechanisms should also be enlarged to all regional parliaments within the EU that have legislative power;¹⁵⁹
3. Reform the Committee of Regions to encompass adequate channels of dialogue for regions as well as cities and municipalities, giving it an enhanced role¹⁶⁰ in the institutional architecture, if matters with a territorial impact are concerned;¹⁶¹
4. Systematic use of a subsidiarity definition commonly agreed by all EU institutions could help to clarify whether decisions have to be taken at European, national or regional level.¹⁶²
5. Social partners and organised civil society should be better included in the decision-making process, given their importance in the European democratic life. A lively society is crucial for the democratic life of the European Union.¹⁶³
6. We call on European Union institutions to make the conclusions of this working group a reality and effectively implement them. This could be realised through the possibilities the Lisbon Treaty already provides and, when necessary, by triggering the request of launching a European Convention.¹⁶⁴



"Migration"

41. Proposal: Legal Migration¹⁶⁵

Objective: Strengthen the EU's role on legal migration:

Measures:

1. Launching a communication campaign at a cross European level in order for EURES (European Employment Services), the EU Immigration Portal and the EU Skills Profile Tool for Third Country Nationals to be better known by European citizens and more frequently accessed and used by EU companies when recruiting (recommendation 6).
2. Creating a European entity for migrants' access to the EU labour market or alternatively widening the powers of the European Cooperation Network of Employment Services (EURES) for example improving the Talent Partnership projects (recommendation 7 and WG debate), with the possibility of online matching of supply and demand of skills, in the country of departure, on the basis of assessment criteria (recommendation 9 and WG debate). The EU should encourage Member States to simplify the process of reception and integration of legal migrants and their access to the EU labour market through a better interoperability amongst the different relevant administrations (WG debate).
3. Improving the functioning and implementation of the "blue card" directive to attract relevant qualifications that the EU economy needs (recommendation 7 and WG debate), taking into consideration the risk of brain drain (as in measure 1 proposal 42).
4. Promoting upwards convergence on working conditions harmoniously throughout the Union to combat inequalities of working conditions and to ensure an efficient EU labour migration policy and workers' rights. In this context, reinforce the role of trade unions at national and transnational level (recommendation 28 and WG debate), in cooperation with employers' organisations (Plenary discussion).
5. Increasing efforts to inform and educate citizens of the Member States about the topics related to migration and integration (recommendation 30 and LT recommendation 9 and WG debate).

42. Proposal: Irregular migration¹⁶⁶

Objective: Strengthen the EU's role in tackling all forms of irregular migration and strengthen the protection of the European Union's external borders, while respecting human rights:

Measures:

1. Participating actively, for example through Partnership Agreements, in the economic and social development of countries outside the European Union and from where there is a high outflux of migrants to tackle migration at its root causes, including climate change. These actions should be transparent and have tangible results with measurable effects, which should be clearly communicated to EU citizens (recommendation 27 and NL recommendation 3 and WG debate).
2. Ensuring the protection of all external borders, by improving transparency and accountability of Frontex and by strengthening its role (recommendation 8 and WG debate) and adapting EU legislation to further address the present challenges of irregular migration, such as human smuggling, human trafficking, sexual exploitation, hybrid attacks by countries instrumentalising migrants and violation of human rights (LT recommendation 10 and WG debate).

43. Proposal: irregular migration¹⁶⁷ (bis)

Objective: Apply common rules uniformly in all Member States on the first reception of migrants:

Measures:

1. Developing EU-wide measures to guarantee the safety and health of all migrants, in particular pregnant women, children, unaccompanied minors and all vulnerable people (recommendations 10 and 38 and WG debate).
2. Increasing EU financial, logistical and operational support, also for local authorities, regional governments and civil society organisations, for the management of the first reception which would lead to a possible integration of refugees and regular migrants in the EU or repatriation of irregular migrants (recommendation 35 and WG debate).

44. Proposal: Asylum, integration¹⁶⁸

Objective: Strengthen the EU's role and reform the European asylum system based on the principles of solidarity and fair share of responsibility:

Measures:

1. Adopting EU common rules concerning procedures for the examination of claims for international protection in Member States, applied uniformly to all asylum seekers. These procedures will have to be respectful of human dignity and international law (recommendation 29 and IT recommendations 3.8 and 4.4 p.15 and WG debate). As the reception of asylum seekers involves different actors at a national level, the EU should encourage Member States to simplify and speed up this process through a better interoperability amongst the different relevant administrations, and to set up a unique desk (one stop-shop or entry point) for asylum seekers to streamline national administrative procedures (recommendation 37 and WG debate).
2. Revisiting the Dublin system in order to guarantee solidarity and fair sharing of responsibility including the redistribution of migrants among Member States; additional forms of support could also be envisaged (recommendations, 33, 36, 37, 40; LT recommendations 2; IT recommendations 3.8 (p.15) and NL recommendation 2 and WG debate and Plenary discussion).
3. Enhance the minimum standards for the reception of asylum seekers laid down in directive 2013/33/EU through stronger legislative measures to improve reception facilities and accommodation. (ECP recommendation 31 and IT recommendations 5.6 (p.11) and WG debate)
4. Special attention should be given to pregnant women, children, and particularly unaccompanied minors (recommendation 38 and WG debate).
5. Strengthening and increasing financial and human resources as well as management capacities of the EU Agency for Asylum to coordinate and manage the relocation of asylum seekers within the EU Member States to achieve a fair distribution (recommendations 36, 37 and LT recommendation 3 and WG debate).

45. Proposal: Asylum, integration¹⁶⁹ (bis)

Objective: Improve integration policies in all Member States:

Measures:

1. EU ensures, also with the involvement of local and regional authorities and the contribution of civil society organisations, that every asylum seeker and refugee, during the process of the residence procedure, attends language, integration courses, professional training, and activities (recommendation 32 and FR recommendation 13 and WG debate and Plenary discussion).
2. Asylum seekers with relevant qualifications should be given access to the labour market, when possible with the aim to strengthen their self-reliance, all over the EU (recommendation 7 and WG debate).



"Education, culture, youth and sport"

46. Proposal: Education

Objective: The EU and its Member states should seek to establish by 2025 an inclusive European Education Area within which all citizens have equal access to quality education and life-long learning, including those in rural and remote areas. To this aim, the European Union and its Member states should in particular:

Measures:

1. Coordinate the level of all different education programmes in the European Union with acceptance of the national, regional and local contents, and create closer links between the education systems, including via organising equivalence of diplomas.¹⁷⁰ A certified minimum standard of education in core subjects should be adopted commencing in primary school.¹⁷¹ Shared competences in the field of education should be introduced, at a minimum in the field of citizenship education and the exercise of that competence by the EU shall not result in Member States being prevented from exercising theirs. Professional degrees and training should be validated and mutually recognised in all EU Member States.¹⁷² The European Union should also champion the recognition of non-formal and informal learning¹⁷³ and the youth organisations that provide it, as well as learning periods abroad.
 - Digital skills.¹⁷⁶
 - STEAM¹⁷⁷
 - Entrepreneurship and research
 - Improving critical thinking. Media literacy should be enhanced in order to ensure online safety, and empower citizens in every Member State to independently evaluate whether a piece of information is trustworthy or not, and identify fake news, but at the same time to benefit from the opportunities that the Internet offers. This should be implemented in basic education as a specific class and also be offered in other public spaces for citizens of all ages under the guidance of an EU-established dedicated organisation, drawing on best practices across the Member States. The EU should ensure that the dedicated funding is used by the Member States for the intended purposes.¹⁷⁸
 - Integrating soft skills in all the courses in the curricula in schools. By soft skills one means: listening to each other, encouraging dialogue, resilience, understanding, respect and appreciation for others, critical thinking, self-study, remaining curious, result-oriented.¹⁷⁹
 - Enabling everyone to learn about environmental sustainability and its connection to health. Biodiversity should be made as a mandatory subject at school. This education should start at school with specific subjects addressing all ecological issues, and include field trips to show relevant real life examples, that should be
2. Develop future-proof education and life-long learning in Europe -in accordance with the right to free training in the workplace for all-focusing on the following subjects:
 - Civic education about democratic processes, as well as EU values and history of Europe.¹⁷⁴ This should be developed as a common module to be taught in all Member States. Economic literacy should also be improved as an aspect of better understanding the European integration process.¹⁷⁵

- supported by a funding programme.¹⁸⁰
- Combating bullying and racism.
3. Support the training of teachers¹⁸¹, to learn from best practices and use up to date innovative and creative teaching techniques that reflect the evolution of teaching methods, including practical activities, building also on the lessons to be drawn from the COVID-19 pandemic and other kinds of crises, as well as promote opportunities for mobility.¹⁸²
 4. In order to meet the educational needs of all children and families, prioritise access to hardware and efficient broadband connectivity.¹⁸³
 5. Set up an information platform for an EU-wide exchange of knowledge and experiences, pooling information on transnational education and training courses in the EU, showcasing best practice examples and offering citizens the opportunity to present new ideas for cross-border exchange. It should offer teaching material about climate change, sustainability, environmental issues and digitisation and provide information on existing specialised forums on key topics.¹⁸⁴
 - It could be made available together with a funding program to support the usage of, and implementation, of the information on the platform.

47. Proposal: European youth issues

Objective: The EU and its Member States have to focus on the specific needs of young people across all relevant policies, including the European Union's regional policy in order to offer them the best possible conditions for study and work and starting an independent life, while engaging them in the democratic life and decision making processes, including at European level. Youth organisations have a crucial role to play. To achieve this objective, we propose to:

Measures:

1. Offer young people more possibilities and champion existing programmes for participation and representation in the democratic and decision making processes at all levels, including by organising citizens' panels also with children (e.g. 10 to 16 years old) in schools. European representatives could meet schoolchildren in their schools in order to strengthen citizens' closeness to and understanding of Europe from an early age.¹⁸⁵ To ensure that all policy making at EU level is seen through a youth lens, an EU 'Youth Test' should be developed so that all new legislation and policy is subject to a youth focused impact assessment, including a consultation with young people.
2. Voting at European Parliament elections from the age of 16 should be discussed and considered, in parallel to an enhancement of citizenship education and education about the EU. National political parties should ensure that younger candidates are also put on their lists for the elections to the European Parliament.¹⁸⁶
3. To better prepare young people for entering working life, give high school students (from 12 years old on) the opportunity to have high quality observatory visits in profit and non-profit organisations, in close cooperation between schools, local governments and the organisations and companies concerned,¹⁸⁷ These visits should be seen as part of a broader career guidance process in formal education to allow young people to have a first contact with a professional work environment so they can obtain a professional orientation and or consider becoming an entrepreneur.
4. More significant EU financing under NextGenerationEU should also be devoted to the implementation of the reinforced European Youth Guarantee, including more

commitment, better outreach, improvements in the quality of the offer, funding and action by all Member States, and the relevant levels of authorities involved . Given youth organisations expertise in the needs of young people, national governments should collaborate in close dialogue with these organisations to ensure the most effective delivery of the Guarantee.

5. Ensure that young people's internships and jobs adhere to quality standards, including on remuneration, putting an end to youth minimum wages and any other discriminatory labour law provisions specific to young people, as well as banning through a legal instrument unpaid internships on the labour market and outside formal education.¹⁸⁸
6. Ensure reasonable living standards for young people including access to social protection and housing. Young people should have access to social protection, equal to other age groups. Access to affordable housing for young people, including through EU funding, should also be facilitated.¹⁸⁹
7. Specific policies are needed to avoid a brain drain from some regions and countries within the EU due to insufficient opportunities being available for young people, while making Europe more attractive to prevent the drain of European talents and workforce to third countries to prevent the hampering of territorial cohesion particularly as regards those areas which have an acute loss of young talent including through EU funding.¹⁹⁰
8. In case of a serious crisis (e.g. health crisis, war) well prepared plans with detailed scenarios should be ready to deploy in a flexible way to minimise the impact on young people in their studies, vocational training, transition to the labour market and mental wellbeing.¹⁹¹

48. Proposal: Culture and exchanges

Objective: In order to promote a culture of exchange and foster European identity and European diversity across different areas, the Member States, with the support of the European Union, should:¹⁹²

Measures:

1. Promote European exchanges in different fields, both physically and digitally, including educational exchanges, twinning, travel and professional mobility (including for teachers and local elected politicians). Such exchanges should be made accessible across Member States for all, regardless of their age, level of education, background and financial means.¹⁹³ With this overall aim, the EU should inter alia strengthen existing EU level exchange and mobility programmes, such as the European Solidarity Corps, Erasmus+ and DiscoverEU, and ensure more widespread and diverse participation in these programmes and consider adding also new elements, such as an additional objective of civic service fostered through volunteering (for the European Solidarity Corps) and 'cultural passes' (for DiscoverEU). The local and regional authorities, under the auspices of the Committee of the Regions have a key role to play in this matter.
2. Promote multilingualism as a bridge to other cultures from an early age. Minority

and regional languages require additional protection, taking note of the Council of Europe Convention on Minority Languages and the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities. The EU should consider setting up an institution promoting language diversity at the European level. From elementary school onwards, it should be mandatory that children reach competence in an active EU language other than their own to the highest possible level. In order to facilitate the ability of European citizens to communicate with wider groups of their fellow Europeans and as a factor of European cohesion, learning of the language of the immediate neighbouring EU Member States in cross border areas and reaching a certifiable standard in English should be encouraged by Member States.¹⁹⁴

3. Create opportunities to share European cultures, bring people together and move them towards a common European identity,

for instance through events and gatherings involving all target groups and taking place in various locations. Some specific examples include holding World Art days¹⁹⁵ a European Expo including educational events, or making Europe Day (9 May) a European public holiday for all EU citizens.¹⁹⁶

4. Protect European cultural heritage and culture¹⁹⁷, including through recognising local and regional cultural and production peculiarities¹⁹⁸, new initiatives to safeguard and celebrate it, mobility to promote cultural heritage exchange, and the promotion of existing measures such as Creative Europe, the New European Bauhaus, Sister City Programmes and European Capitals of Culture in line with the Sustainable Development Goals.
5. Take steps to ensure that cultural professionals are sufficiently protected at EU level, particularly in any future crises, by adopting a legal statute at European level.

49. Proposal: Sport

Objective: Sport is crucial for our societies - in order to defend our values, ensure healthy lifestyle and ageing, promote a culture of exchanges and also celebrate the diversity of European heritage. For this reason, the Member States, with the support of the European Union, should aim to:

Measures:

1. Put emphasis on values, especially gender equality, fairness and inclusiveness that can be concretely reflected through sport practice throughout education.
2. Raise awareness about health benefits of sport and physical activity.¹⁹⁹
3. Include sport activities among EU level exchange and mobility programmes.²⁰⁰
4. Improve attention given not just to professional and commercial sports but also to local and traditional sport, as an aspect of European Cultural Diversity and cultural heritage promotion, and champion support for sports in a non-professional setting.
5. At the same time, encourage the showcasing of European identity by organising more inter-EU sports events, creating EU sports teams, or displaying EU flags or symbols at European sporting events.
6. Invest more in communication efforts such as the European Week of Sports to ensure that citizens from across the EU can benefit from flagship opportunities together.