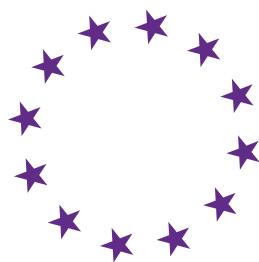


# Supporting Document of the Amsterdam Declaration

Volt's programme for  
the European Parliament  
2019 - 2024



## *Foreword*

In a time of great political tensions, a group of Europeans from all walks of life decided it was time to stand up for what they believe in. It was time to act; Volt was born. We came together to fight for a better society, to express our commitment towards cooperation, and to outline our belief in a shared future. Ours is a message of hope, of courage, and of solidarity. A message for all to see that divisions will not tear down what our parents have built. Volt was created to re-energise Europe and to solve the issues we all have in common. Volt offers Europeans a new vision for Europe, one that embraces the EU's common aspirations and that faces its shortcomings head-on.

Today, Volt is running for the European Parliament, to bring new energy to politics and to shape the Europe we all need.

A Europe based on a strong political Union, where risks are shared, where benefits reach all Europeans, and where every person has a voice. A Union that shall be fixed. A Europe with a robust economy that provides opportunities for all, now and for generations to come. A Union that is an economic powerhouse. A Europe that takes care of its people, where children enjoy a cleaner environment, where migration flows are managed together, and where rights are guaranteed and responsibilities shared. A truly progressive Union.

Unprecedented in European history, Volt will campaign for the European elections on a single, common platform: the *Amsterdam Declaration*. A platform which is both visionary and realistic. Volt wants to ensure that it delivers on its promises, while settling for nothing less than a new and improved Europe.

*This document represents the supporting document of [the Amsterdam Declaration](#) and sets out in greater detail how we plan to achieve our commitments and what the financial implications are. This document will continue to be improved in the foreseeable future. For any feedback or input, please contact [policy@volteuropa.org](mailto:policy@volteuropa.org).*

*A vote for Volt will be a vote to:*

## **Fix the EU**

**by**

- **creating a strong political union**
- **empowering its citizens**
- **increasing security and accountability**

## **Make Europe an economic powerhouse**

**by**

- **boosting growth and standards of living**
- **investing in the future**
- **putting education first**

## **Build a just and sustainable society**

**by**

- **seizing green opportunities**
- **managing migration humanely and responsibly**
- **pushing for fairness and equality**

# 1. Fix the EU

## by creating a strong political Union

Over the past sixty years, the EU has grown from a guardian of peace into something much more meaningful. Today, the EU works to secure rights, enhance trade, increase shared prosperity, and to protect the environment. However, crises have shown that our institutions are unable to meet their goals in their current form. The EU needs to be reformed to become a federal and truly democratic Europe, led by and built by and for its citizens.

### Proposals:

#### **Governance**

***Establish a Federal Europe with a European Government, headed by a Prime Minister elected by the Parliament, and with a President elected by the people. This will create a strong, open and transparent European parliamentary democracy.***

**Why?** Despite integration and the proven benefits of acting as one, Member States continue to place their own national interest first and fail to account for the general interest of European citizens. Beyond new policies, we therefore need new and improved institutions. This change starts with a European Constitution to replace the current treaties and give strong foundations to a new and democratic Europe. We call for a true parliamentary democracy, where a Prime Minister, elected by and from the European Parliament, leads a federal Cabinet of Ministers and guides the day-to-day policy work of the Union. A directly-elected and ceremonial European President will sit above parties and ensure the unity of the EU. This federal Europe, based on subsidiarity, will ensure a true democracy working for all European citizens. This is admittedly a very bold commitment, as it needs broad support from EU citizens, but it is a paramount requirement in order to achieve real democracy in Europe.

**How?** Article 48 TEU gives the European Parliament the right to propose amendments to the treaties. According to Article 48.2, under ordinary revision procedure, these proposals are submitted to the Council of the European Union which submits them to the European Council. Article 48.3 states that, following a simple majority vote from the European Council, its President will convene a Convention to examine the amendments and prepare a recommendation for Member States. In 2001, the Laeken Declaration, adopted by the European Council, established a European Convention to draft the Treaty establishing a Constitution for Europe. We will propose amendments for submission by the Parliament to the Council to

establish a new convention tasked with preparing a European Constitution for a federal Europe. For increased democracy, we will propose a preliminary revision of Article 48 to allow for the popular election of the Convention's members and a provision reserving at least half the seats for citizens who are not MEPs, members of national parliaments, or government representatives. We will ensure that the European Parliament, and European citizens at large, seize themselves of this topic, including through broad public consultations.

**Funding?** Transforming the EU into a federal Europe will not, in and of itself, incur major costs, although the newly-created position of President will create staff and other expenditure, as will most likely the increased powers of the Commission. Beyond its increased powers, the European Parliament will remain largely the same. The Council of the European Union will have a different structure and trade a slightly increased membership for a stable one (compared to the rotation of Ministers according to the meetings' configuration). The European Council will be abolished. Overall, policies and programmes of EU institutions will increase, along with the EU's budget, but be matched with a similar decrease in Member State policies, programmes and budget; for many budget points – defence in particular –, a federal structure will lead to economies of scale and rationalisation of expenses.

***Enable the creation of real EU political parties. Current EU parties are loose coalitions of national parties, often with conflicting interests; a real EU democracy needs strong parties defending their vision of the future of Europe.***

**Why?** In order to promote the general interest of all European citizens and strengthen the European political space, we need full-fledged, pan-European political parties, instead of alliances of national parties as we see today. We therefore propose a reform of the Regulations on European political parties, including the possibility for European parties to set up official national branches, with joint financing, as well as the obligation, for the parties benefiting from this financing, to use it under the name of their European party. Campaign material for European elections should be made only under the name of European parties.

**How?** According to Regulation 1141/2014 of the European Parliament and Council, a "European political party" is an alliance of national political parties and registered with the Authority for European political parties and foundations. We will amend this Regulation, under ordinary legislative procedure, to create a new legal status for European political parties, recognising them as one single entity and allowing joint financing.

**Funding?** Not applicable: this proposal bears no cost for the EU budget.

***Ensure the EU's ability to act by deciding by majority on all issues in the Councils. Currently, States still decide on many issues by unanimity or consensus, making it far easier to block than to act.***

**Why?** Crisis after crisis, EU governance has shown its limits, always acting too little and too late. In particular, the use of consensus by the European Council and, often, by the Council of the European Union means that it is much easier to block than to act. But democracy is not about everyone agreeing; it is about managing our disagreements. This is why national parliaments decide by majority. It is therefore essential to abolish the use of unanimity and make it possible for our institutions to act when necessary. In doing so, we move from a Europe of States to a Europe of people.

**How?** Article 15.4 TEU provides that "except where the Treaties provide otherwise, decisions of the European Council shall be taken by consensus." By contrast, Article 16.3 TEU states that "The Council [of the European Union] shall act by a qualified majority except where the Treaties provide otherwise." However, many crucial areas still require unanimity, including foreign and security policy, harmonisation of national legislation on indirect taxation. In practice, the Council also tends to seek unanimity even when it is not required to do so and transfers contentious legislative fields to the European Council, which decides by consensus. We will work to amend the TEU to make the European Council decide by simple and qualified majority and remove exceptions to the Council's default decision-making process. In the meantime, we support the use of the various passerelle clauses to abandon unanimity in the Council wherever possible.

**Funding?** Not applicable: this proposal bears no cost for the EU budget.

## **Economy and Finance**

***Make our economy stronger and sustainable through a Eurozone+ budget, a Banking Union, and a full Economic and Monetary Union under a European Finance Minister who will represent the EU.***

**Why?** The Euro crisis and slow recovery and growth since the 2007 financial crisis have shown the limits of our economy, which is as fragile as its weakest link. Our level of economic integration, including the free flow of goods and capital, means that fragilities in one Member State are almost guaranteed to spread. A Eurozone+ budget – covering the Eurozone, but also open to other interested countries – will finance economic policies to develop the participating Member States as a single and sustainable economy, including through investment in common infrastructure. Furthermore, we need to match our level of integration with the right governance tools, including through the completion of the Economic and Monetary Union – complete

with Banking Union and a truly sustainable Capital Markets Union – under the leadership of a European Finance Minister ensuring that our economic policies truly work for all Europeans.

**How?** In order to strengthen the democratic governance of the Eurozone and the accountability of the Eurogroup, we will support the appointment of a dedicated Economic and Finance Commissioner. First as a strengthened role of the Eurogroup President, and then as an individual political position detached from the Member States' role and dedicated to ensuring the economic balance and stability of the Eurozone. The Minister will oversee a dedicated Eurozone+ budget. The budget is to be made up of the revenues created by common European taxes including a minimum effective corporate tax rate for all multinational companies. To further stabilise and strengthen the economy, we will fully complete the EU Banking Union with the completion of EDIS, and establishing common macro-economic stabilisers as part of the current EMU reform package. Furthermore, we will push for the creation of a Sustainable Capital Markets Union to make our capital markets not only fully integrated but also more durable. Current Commission efforts around determining taxonomy and disclosure standards are a good start, but more ambitious proposals need to be put forward so as to implement sustainability across the financial sector.

**Funding?** The appointment of a European Finance Minister will not, in and of itself, incur extra costs. The creation of a Eurozone+ budget is not aimed at drastically increasing expenses related to economic policies and the development of infrastructure but at placing a part of this cost at the European level. Revenue and expenditure linked to this budget can be offset by a decrease in revenue and expenditure in Member States.

***Give the European Central Bank the power to support employment and growth, as well as prevent and solve financial crises. Besides limiting inflation, the European Central Bank's mandate must be expanded to promote employment, sustainable growth, and crisis prevention and mitigation.***

**Why?** The primary objective of the European Central Bank (ECB) – its “single mandate” – is to maintain price stability, meaning limiting inflation. While this is an important requirement, monetary policy should also be used by the ECB to further other goals, including promoting employment, sustainable growth, and crisis prevention and mitigation – all without prejudice to the ECB's independence. This is essential to provide more flexibility to the ECB's

work and to ensure its policies are able to respond to the citizens' concerns. The ECB itself has increasingly sought to go beyond its single mandate;<sup>1</sup> it is time we officially allow it to.

**How?** The ECB's mandate is detailed in Article 2 "Objectives" of the Bank's Statute, in annex to the treaties. Its revision falls under ordinary revision procedure. When in the European Parliament, Volt will submit an amendment to the Council to expand the ECB's mandate. According to Article 48.3 TFEU, the ECB must be consulted in this process. In practice, the ECB has already worked to go beyond its narrow mandate.

**Funding?** Not applicable: this proposal bears no cost for the EU budget. Amending the ECB's mandate will not directly lead to increased costs, as it is simply allowing the ECB to act according to a wider range of priorities.

***Ensure multinationals pay their fair share by collecting a minimum European corporate tax of 15% and harmonising corporate taxation across Member States. Tax avoidance by multinationals has undermined the financing of public services for decades.***

**Why?** In 2013, the European Commission estimated that governments in the EU lose around €1 trillion each year to tax evasion and avoidance,<sup>2</sup> while several countries have had to implement severe austerity measures for lack of public funds. The 2016 Panama Papers, the 2017 Paradise Papers, and others have highlighted the widespread use of offshore accounts and shell companies to hide wealth by European and foreign companies and individuals in European countries and jurisdictions or abroad.<sup>3</sup> In order to ensure that all pay their fair share, EU countries must harmonise tax practices, increase fiscal transparency, strengthen tax governance at the EU level, and continue to push for global transparency standards. Among others, we aim for the adoption of a minimum effective corporate tax rate for all multinational companies, so that healthy differences in national economies do not turn into harmful competition and a fiscal race to the bottom.

<sup>1</sup> LSE, The Future of the European Central Bank, available at <http://www.lse.ac.uk/ideas/Assets/Documents/reports/LSE-IDEAS-The-Future-of-the-European-Central-Bank.pdf>, Reuters, European shares recover after US tech rout, available at <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-global-markets/european-shares-recover-after-u-s-tech-rout-dollar-falls-idUSKCN1N100Y>

<sup>2</sup> "The European Commission has cited previous estimates according to which the annual revenue losses due to tax evasion and tax fraud amount to at least EUR 1 trillion. [A report by the Tax Justice Network] estimated the annual revenue loss due to tax evasion at EUR 956 billion for the EU28", European Parliament, The Impact of Schemes revealed by the Panama Papers on the Economy and Finances of a Sample of Member States, available at [http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2017/572717/IPOL\\_STU\(2017\)572717\\_EN.pdf](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2017/572717/IPOL_STU(2017)572717_EN.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> The Guardian, What you need to know about the Panama papers, available at <https://www.theguardian.com/news/2016/apr/03/what-you-need-to-know-about-the-panama-papers>, Irish Times, Lux Leaks, available at <https://www.irishtimes.com/business/lux-leaks>



**How?** According to Article 311 TFEU, “the Council, acting in accordance with a special legislative procedure, shall unanimously and after consulting the European Parliament [lay] down the provisions relating to the system of own resources of the Union.” The EU’s own resources are currently detailed in Council Decision 2014/335. When in the European Parliament, Volt will call on the Commission to prepare an amendment to the Council Decision and any other relevant documents (such as Council Regulation 2016/804 on the methods and procedure for making available [the EU’s own resources]). We will also support, through the Parliament, ongoing harmonising efforts in the area of corporate taxation.

**Funding?** Not applicable: this proposal bears no cost for the EU budget. This proposal is not, in itself, a way to increase the EU’s own resources but to change their provenance: revenue from this taxation can be offset by a decrease in revenue from Member States. The increase in staff necessary to handle the extra revenue and ensure its collection will be negligible compared to the gains made from previously uncollected corporate taxes, which are counted in the hundreds of billions of Euros.

#### European Parliament

***Empower Members of the European Parliament to fully represent citizens’ interests by being able to propose bills. As the only directly-elected EU institution, the European Parliament must be given the right to initiate legislation – just like national parliaments.***

**Why?** An essential part of democracy is the ability of the people’s representatives in the legislature to draft and adopt laws. Despite an increase in the European Parliament’s powers, the Treaty of Lisbon does not grant the Parliament the right to legislative initiative – meaning the power to propose its own laws. Instead, the monopoly of the proposal of laws is given to the EU’s executive, the European Commission. No democratic country would accept this limitation and deny law-making powers to the citizens’ representatives. Giving our representatives the power to draft laws is, therefore, an essential step for European democracy.

**How?** Currently, Article 225 TFEU provides that “the European Parliament may, [...] request the Commission to submit any appropriate proposal [...] for the purpose of implementing the Treaties.” This gives the European Parliament an indirect right to legislative initiative. Through ordinary revision procedure, we will amend this Article to provide the Parliament with a direct right to legislative initiative by any MEP or with a low threshold.

**Funding?** Not applicable: this proposal bears no cost for the EU budget.

***Ensure that the work of the Parliament is fully transparent and prevent last-minute rewrites and back-room deals. Record and publish all votes***

**of Members of the European Parliament, and ensure a fixed time span for public review of bills before they are voted upon.**

**Why?** While a number of votes are carried out electronically, many are still held by a show of hands and therefore are not recorded – with electronic voting only resorted to in case of doubt on the outcome. This is sufficient to get the result of the vote, but not for record-keeping. The due accountability of Parliament and of individual MEPs requires public records on their votes on all laws and amendments, in plenaries and committee sessions, even at the cost of more voting time. Likewise, in order to ensure public scrutiny of all laws and amendments, and to avoid last-minute political arrangements at the expense of transparency, we propose a mandatory 72-hour period between the moment any bill or amendment is made public and a vote on it.

**How?** Article 232 TFEU states that the European Parliament shall adopt Rules of Procedure. In these Rules of Procedure, Title VII “Sessions”, Chapter 5 “Quorum, Amendments and Voting”, Rule 178.1 states that “as a general rule, Parliament shall vote by show of hands.” When voting electronically, Rule 181.2 states that “unless it concerns a roll call vote, only the numerical result of the vote shall be recorded.” Therefore, only in cases of votes by “roll call” (Rule 180) are MEPs’ votes recorded individually. In the interest of transparency, we will amend these rules to ensure that all votes are carried out electronically, recorded nominally, and made public. MEPs must be accountable to the people and their decisions in Parliament must be known to citizens.

In the same Title VII of the European Parliament’s Rules of Procedure, Chapter 2 “Order of Business of Parliament” Rule 149, on a session’s draft agenda, states that “the draft agenda may indicate voting times for certain items down for consideration.” In Chapter V, on amendments, Rule 169.3 on the “Tabling and presenting [of] amendments” states that “the President [sets] a deadline for the tabling of amendments.” In both cases, we will amend the Rules of Procedure to insert a mandatory 72-hour delay between the official online publication of all items submitted to a vote and the effective date and time of the vote. This amendment shall include necessary exceptions (such as the vote on a request to treat a debate as “urgent”) and may lead to other amendments in order to allow sufficient time for the filing of amendments.

**Funding?** Not applicable: this proposal bears no significant cost for the EU budget. Generalising the use of electronic voting and recording the votes of MEPs will not incur substantial costs. The electronic voting mechanism many

need to be updated, but this would remain negligible compared to the European Parliament's operational costs.<sup>4</sup>

***Ensure fair representation of all EU citizens and strengthen the link between citizens and their representatives. This can be ensured by implementing the same voting rules for the European Parliament elections across the EU and by having citizens locally elect their Members of the European Parliament, whilst ensuring proportionality.***

**Why?** European Parliamentary elections are the one occasion when all Europeans vote together for a common Parliament. Yet, the way we elect our parliamentary representatives differs widely between Member States. However, the European Parliament is mandated to propose a uniform voting mechanism for adoption by the Council. The European Parliament should therefore propose measures to harmonise voting systems across the EU, including voting age, election date, applicable thresholds, campaign rules, and voting mechanisms. Mindful of the importance of promoting gender equality in political representation, we also propose that all party lists for list-based elections be gender-alternate in their ranking of candidates, meaning the list would not have two consecutive candidates of the same gender. For the voting mechanism, we support a dual vote whereby local constituencies each directly elect a single representative and a second "party" vote with national lists ensures a degree of proportionality. These EU electoral districts should, as much as possible, follow existing administrative borders.

**How?** According to Article 223.1 TFEU, the European Parliament can propose "the election of its Members by direct universal suffrage" through "a uniform procedure in all Member States" for adoption by the European Council. Failing to agree on a uniform procedure, the European Council has settled for "common principles", and elections must be based on proportional representation, either through lists or "single transferable vote". In line with the principles above, we will submit a proposal for adoption by the Parliament, and later by the European Council.

**Funding?** Not applicable: this proposal bears no cost for the EU budget. Should the harmonisation of voting rules require the European-wide adoption of the single ballot (whereby voters choose candidate(s) indicate their choice on one ballot rather picking a ballot among many), the financial and environmental cost of voting would decrease.

<sup>4</sup> The European Parliament's draft budget for 2019 stands at €1.83 billion, of which €139m are appropriated for "computing and telecommunications". European Parliament, General budget of the European Union for the financial year 2019, available at <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/budget/data/DB/2019/en/SEC01.pdf>

# 1. Fixing the European Union

## By empowering its citizens

Europeans often feel unable to have their voice heard and to participate in decision-making processes. They often feel left out of politics. By empowering citizens, democracy will be strengthened. Firstly, barriers to inclusion need to be removed. Secondly, Europeans need to be given the opportunity to participate in decision-making processes beyond elections. Thirdly, conditions for public deliberation and reasonable debate need to be improved, to enable Europeans and policy-makers to take informed decisions.

### Proposals:

#### **Inclusion**

***Remove barriers to voting for the European Parliament by enabling electronic voting, offering better accessibility of elections to voters, including those with reduced mobility, such as the elderly, people with disabilities, expatriates.***

**Why?** Turnout in European elections has decreased to an average of only 43% across all EU Member States.<sup>5</sup> Part of increasing the voter turnout, is making elections more accessible to all, including to voters with reduced mobility. That is why e-voting is a measure to be further explored and, if security concerns are tackled, also implemented. E-voting makes it possible for people to vote from anywhere, taking away the hurdle of going to the polling station. This will not only increase voting among those with reduced mobility, but also and specifically among young voters.<sup>6</sup> Doing financial transactions on our smartphones is already a daily business, now let us make casting a vote just as easy and secure.

**How?** While in the European Parliament, we will draw up a proposal for the election of the members of the European Parliament in a uniform procedure, therefore relying on Article 223.1 TFEU. The proposal will amend the 1976

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<sup>5</sup> European Parliament, Turnout in the 2014 elections of the European Parliament, available at <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/elections2014-results/en/turnout.html>

<sup>6</sup> European Parliament, Report on e-public, e-participation and e-voting in Europe, available at [http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/etudes/join/2011/471584/IPOL-JOIN\\_ET\(2011\)471584\\_EN.pdf](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/etudes/join/2011/471584/IPOL-JOIN_ET(2011)471584_EN.pdf). For the basic argument on e-voting, also see WebRoots Democracy, Viral voting, available at <https://webrootsdemocracy.files.wordpress.com/2014/05/webroots-democracy-viral-voting.pdf>

Electoral Act,<sup>7</sup> and will respect the recommendations on e-voting adopted by the Council of Europe<sup>8</sup> and shall implement its comprehensive guidelines on e-voting.<sup>9</sup>

As the first step, we will target only people with reduced mobility: the elderly, people with a disability and expatriates. Targeting at first only this group of people accommodates the primary goal which Volt sees for e-voting: increasing participation and turnout. This will also provide for a test phase to address security concerns, which are our primary concern. As the second step, when security, verifiability and anonymity concerns have been remedied, e-voting can be expanded to all voters, in addition to electronic voting in public polling stations.

**Funding?** The Rights, Equality and Citizenship Programme and the Europe for Citizens Programme can be used. For research in, and development of, e-voting, the Horizon 2020 Programme provides funding. To ensure security of the IT systems behind e-voting, the IT systems Programme provides additional funding. In the next Multiannual Financial Framework (2021-2027), the Digital Europe Programme can also be used.

***Grant better access to public services and facilitate interactions with public administrations by introducing an e-ID and creating digital administrations in the EU.***

**Why?** Volt aims for inclusive administrations and an open government. Administrations are faced on all levels with more complex and rapidly changing challenges due to a interconnected society and globalised world. Often, they are not equipped to follow the pace of these societal changes. Moreover, administrations are still too often procedure-focused and too little citizen-centred. Creativity in civil society is inexhaustible, we should use it to tackle these challenges. It means moving from top-down implementing to bottom-up co-designing, and choosing for an experimental, inclusive, and multidisciplinary approach. Besides changing its own administrations, the EU can play an important role as facilitator for administrations on other (national and regional) levels.

<sup>7</sup> Council, Act of 8 October 1976 concerning the election of the representatives of the Assembly by direct universal suffrage, available at: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=OJ:L:1976:278:FULL&from=EN>. The Electoral Act has been amended by Council Decision 9425/18 but has yet to enter into force. Council, Decision 9425/18 of 14 June 2018 amending the Act concerning the election of the members of the European Parliament by direct universal suffrage, available at <http://data.consilium.europa.eu/doc/document/ST-9425-2018-INIT/en/pdf>

<sup>8</sup> Council of Europe, Recommendation CM/Rec(2017)5[1] of 17 June 2017 of the Committee of Ministers to member States on standards for e-voting, available at [https://search.coe.int/cm/Pages/result\\_details.aspx?ObjectId=0900001680726f6f](https://search.coe.int/cm/Pages/result_details.aspx?ObjectId=0900001680726f6f)

<sup>9</sup> Council of Europe, Guidelines on the implementation of the provisions of Recommendation CM/Rec(2017)5 on standards for e-voting, available at <https://rm.coe.int/1680726c0b>

**How?** To ensure a quick and secure identification of everyone accessing online and digital public services, we will review and expand eIDAS Regulation 910/2014 to facilitate and push Member States to introduce an eID, replacing paper IDs with a chip card, and also developing easily accessible but secure eID software (eg an app).<sup>10</sup> Second, Volt wants to give people a means to interact with public administrations and to communicate their ideas and worries.

In the European Parliament, and focusing on best practices across Europe and the world, Volt will draft recommendations, in accordance with Article 288 TFEU, for national governments to implement two measures.

(1) Make public services more intuitive to use and user-centred, and to introduce open digital platforms in their administrations through which citizens can actively participate, and discuss their ideas for better public services and policies.<sup>11</sup>

(2) Make room for public policy innovation labs and innovation teams.<sup>12</sup> This means that public administrations allow users and stakeholders to co-design policies and improve public services (a), and allow 'teams' to develop digital solutions to tackle the most pressing issues in a constituency (b). This approach draws on capabilities and skills-sets not usually available in the public sector.

At the European level, we will use the European Parliament's scrutinising powers of Article 14.1 TEU and 230 et sequentes TFEU to pursue these approaches in EU administrations. Additionally, and to foster exchange of best practices, Volt will push to organise a yearly competition on innovation in the public sector, open to both public administrations (best practices) as well as citizens (ideas).

**Funding?** The Commission budget and respective budgets for decentralised agencies can be used to implement these proposals at EU level. To ensure the security of ID systems, the IT Systems Programme provides adequate funding. Additional funding can be provided by the Connecting Europe Facility. In the next Multiannual Financial Framework (2021-2027), the Digital Europe Programme can be addressed for these aspects. Funding for research

<sup>10</sup> Best practices can be found, among others, in Belgium, where 'Itsme' software is used, available at <https://www.itsme.be/en/>

<sup>11</sup> The digital participation platform in Berlin, Germany can serve as an excellent example, see City of Berlin, Mein Berlin participation platform, available at <https://mein.berlin.be>

<sup>12</sup> Best practices can be found, among many others, in the UK (Gov.uk, Policy Lab, available at <https://openpolicy.blog.gov.uk/>; the Behavioural Insights Team, about us, available at <https://www.behaviouralinsights.co.uk/>) and Denmark (Mindlab, Platforme, available at <http://mind-lab.dk/>), and the private sector (for instance, Nesta, about, available at <https://www.nesta.org.uk/>). Many other examples can be found through the OECD Observatory of Public Sector Innovation, Our work, available at <https://www.oecd-opsi.org/>

and development within this area is present in the Horizon 2020 Programme. The regulatory proposals do not bear any costs for the EU budget.

## Participation

***Enable Europeans to participate in policy-making through the creation of digital platforms and citizen assemblies, starting in the EU. This gives people the possibility to give feedback on legislative proposals, take part in political decision-making and eventually shape the fate of their society.***

**Why?** Letting people participate in policy-making not only brings citizens closer to the European Union, but also strengthens civic engagement by making democratic deliberation a fact of the lives of every European citizen. The third aim of the participatory schemes introduced below is to add the element of proper deliberation into European policy-making. Including ordinary citizens – people who have no stake in the institutional setting except that they are a citizen – will increase transparency of the policy-making process and makes political deliberation focus on the better arguments, instead of serving private interests. Participatory mechanisms do not have the aim of replacing representative democracy, but rather to strengthen it, by making deliberation argument-based instead of interest-based.

**How?** First, Volt will create a European citizens' jury supporting the European Parliament. This jury will give feedback on, and make suggestions for, new laws before the parliament approves them in its first reading under the ordinary legislative procedure of Article 294 TFEU. To this extent, Rule 59 of the Rules of Procedure of the European Parliament will be modified in accordance with Article 232 TFEU to include the Jury. The purpose is not to replace representative democracy, but to make it more deliberative; more reason-centred and less interest-centred, by including actors who do not have a personal stake in the outcome. The jury members will be drawn by lot and will be supported both by experts on the subject dealt with as by experts in democratic deliberation.

Next, Volt will introduce online deliberation platforms, where citizens can get into contact with fellow citizens and relevant stakeholders to address their problems. This will tackle the challenge that citizens are faced with similar challenges, but these are discussed mainly in a national context. Volt will adopt a regulation contributing to completing the Digital Single Market, and, in accordance with Article 114 TFEU, to provide mutual recognition of national online platforms and to develop an EU-wide democratic standard for such platforms.

Third, Volt will strengthen the European Citizens' Initiative. It is the only existing tool for citizen participation at EU level, but is not working



effectively. Reasons for this are the strict admissibility requirements as applied by the Commission, little awareness about its existence, lack of legal, logistical, and financial support by the EU, and an overall attitude not to take initiatives seriously. Volt will improve the ECI on these points by further reviewing the ECI Regulation 211/2011 of 16 February 2011, and make it into an effective means of citizen participation.<sup>13</sup> Additionally, we will support the European Parliament debating and voting on every successful ECI. This will foster a stronger connection between representative and participatory democracy.

Finally, Volt will establish a European citizens' summit to engage citizens' fresh views and ideas. This cannot only reenergise daily decision-making in the EU, but can also foster more rationality in long-term strategies. Volt will adopt an opinion to push the European Council to establish a yearly Summit, and conclude an interinstitutional agreement with the European Parliament to this end. The Summit will consist of 1000 randomly selected European citizens across all Member States, representative of the EU demographic outlook. They will debate on a long-term topic, such as migration, international trade, social policy, the future of the Union, etc. The summit will take place before European Council summits, after which the results – taking the form of recommendations – will be part of the agenda. The European Parliament will afterwards also discuss the results of the summit and provide a reasoned answer.

**Funding?** The Citizens' Jury must be integrated as an expense in the general budget of the European Parliament. For the other proposals, the Rights, Citizenship and Equality Programme and the Europe for Citizens Programme are available. The regulatory proposals do not bear any costs for the EU budget.

***Give Europeans a say in how the budget is allocated by implementing participatory budgeting in the EU. EU citizens should be able to decide how a specific portion of EU funds is spent.***

**Why?** We want to reconnect Europe with its citizens by giving them a say in how the EU budget is spent. Being one of the most successful participatory instruments in the world, it is time to formally integrate participatory budgeting in EU policy. Letting citizens deliberate directly on the budget not only increases transparency, but also serves as a tool for educating them on

<sup>13</sup> European Parliament and Council, Regulation No 211/2011 of 16 February 2011 on the Citizens Initiative, available at <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:L:2011:065:0001:0022:en:PDF>. Our proposal will take into account the current revision of the Regulation, see Commission, Proposal COM (2017) 482 of 13 June 2017, available at <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A52017PC0482>; and the current negotiations between the European Parliament and the Council of the EU, see Council, Proposal 9783/18 of 19 June 2018, available at <http://data.consilium.europa.eu/doc/document/ST-9783-2018-INIT/en/pdf>



government operations, and strengthens the demand for good governance. By integrating participatory budgeting into the EU regional policy, we make sure that it is practiced on a local level. The projects in the regional policy are already local, let us take them one more step down from the local authorities to the people themselves, and both make citizens actually aware of how the EU supports them, as well as putting trust in citizens to decide on public resources.

**How?** In the European Parliament, Volt will use the Parliament's budgetary powers laid down in Article 14.1 TEU and its competences in the special legislative procedure of the Multiannual Financial Framework, laid down in Article 314 TFEU, to include tolls of participatory budgeting in the EU's regional policy, and specifically in the Cohesion Fund and European Regional Development Fund. We will integrate participatory budgeting into the partnership agreements with EU Member States on these funds, reserving at least one percent of these funds for participatory projects. Projects applying should meet the specific criteria of the fund, and, additionally, projects must show how they integrate the key principles of participatory budgeting: repeated public deliberation with both citizens and local authorities, inclusion of the relevant population, and accountability and feedback on the output to the participants. We will make sure that the EU provides for training and support in the actual process by serving as a platform of exchange for both expertise and best practices from other projects. A track record of the used processes will be kept.

**Funding?** The European Strategic and Investment Funds will be used, and more specifically the Cohesion and the European Regional Development Funds.

## Deliberation

***Strengthen tomorrow's democracy with today's education by teaching life skills and competences, which include media literacy and citizenship education. Apart from knowledge of EU institutions, they will bolster EU citizens' active engagement in public life.***

**Why?** Social and economic inclusion are necessary conditions for a vibrant and dynamic democracy. To foster civic engagement and social cohesion, our education system needs to provide more opportunities for personal development: especially in secondary schools, we need an increased emphasis on learning life skills and competences, particularly media literacy and citizenship education. Citizenship education should stress values such as democracy, human rights, freedom, tolerance, and peace, and foster skills such as empathy and critical thinking. We need to increasingly reflect on life skills and competences from an international and EU perspective.

**How?** In the European Parliament, we will work under the ordinary legislative procedure to adopt incentive measures, compliant with Article 165.4 TFEU, first indent, taking the form of decisions and regulations, to encourage national governments to provide citizenship education programmes in national curricula, while respecting Member States' responsibility to adopt the specific content. Volt will improve and extend the 2013 'Learn EU at school' Initiative.<sup>14</sup>

Establishing the European dimension in education includes: 1) establishing key civic competences and skills for students; 2) trainings provided to primary and secondary school teachers to foster critical thinking, media literacy, and knowledge of the complex current European democratic and political landscape, e.g. through summits and frequent exchanges between teachers of different EU Member States in order for current practices, problems, and solutions in Europe to be shared.

Furthermore, media literacy programmes that would involve theory, a 'learning by doing' element and best practices must be provided in primary and secondary schools across EU Member States to foster students' critical thinking. Lifelong learning beyond school is equally important: depending on the professional area, workshop-style sessions will be provided, providing citizens with knowledge on how current EU regulations might affect their professional area and how they themselves as EU citizens can have impact on these regulations.

Finally, a European monitoring body should be established that would involve a test equivalent to PISA that assesses life skills and competences of EU citizens in primary, secondary, and higher education.

**Funding?** The Europe for Citizens and Erasmus+ Programmes provide adequate funding. The regulatory proposals do not bear any cost for the EU budget.

**Create real, trustworthy European news, by introducing a common European Public Broadcasting Platform. This will supply EU citizens with an effective means of receiving information.**

**Why?** Dissemination of information is not only a matter of economic importance to markets and consumers. Rather, spreading information through public media is a matter of cultural and democratic importance to citizens. Citizens must be able to assess information on the level and from the perspective they participate in. That means not only the local, regional

<sup>14</sup> See Commission, Call for proposals EACEA/18/11 on Information and research activities for 'Learning EU at school', available at <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:C:2011:174:0008:0010:EN:PDF>; and Commission, Final report on 'Learning EU at school', available at <https://publications.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/83be95a3-b77f-4195-bd08-ad92c24c3a3c>

and national level, but also the European level. Information and news are not limited to geographical spheres, and so neither should their dissemination. Therefore, supplementary to national public media, there must be a European platform to facilitate dissemination and sharing of information. This will not only facilitate a European public sphere, but also offer another perspective to citizens to assess their information from different perspectives.

**How?** To serve the goals in both Article 165 (education) and 167 (culture) TFEU, and within the Creative Europe Programme, the EU must adopt incentive measures to facilitate exchanges of information between national news agencies and outlets, by, among other things, translating national content (1), and to supplement national public media platforms by establishing a European Broadcasting Platform gathering and disseminating news and information from across Europe to the various national media outlets (2a), and spreading information through its own media platforms (both television, radio and internet) (2b). The platform will give special attention to improving knowledge of European culture, history, and the diversity of it, and to serve as a platform for artistic and literary creation and exchange across Europe (3).

**Funding?** The Creative Europe Programme, Europe for Citizens Programme and the Connecting Europe Facility can be used for funding.

# 1. Fix the EU

## by increasing security and accountability

Security, transparency and anti-corruption measures are essential for generating trust in governments. The EU can and must do more on each of these fields. While Member States invest a lot in security, many resources are wasted due to duplication of investments and inefficiencies. The EU is in a better position to deal with cross-border threats. The fight against corruption and efforts towards better transparency need to be significantly improved.

### Proposals:

#### **Security**

***Boost European defence capabilities, by establishing a European army of committed Member States, while working towards the creation of EU-wide permanent forces with a unified EU military command under civilian control.***

**Why?** Security is a prerequisite for lasting democracy and prosperity. Despite durable peace in the Member States, border States are under renewed tension and neighbouring countries face continued crises. The EU struggles to respond to these new threats and has only had limited success. Individual Member States are unable to face these challenges alone because of budgetary restraints and lack of personnel. The creation of a single European army, under a European Ministry of Defence and with a unified approach, will allow for the necessary pooling of resources and upscaling needed to ensure our continued security. This would mean that Europe's defence capabilities would be significantly boosted while also generating cost savings compared to the current, inefficient situation where national armies in the EU buy and own different weapons and defence systems separately.

**How?** Article 42.2 TEU states that the EU's "common security and defence policy [...] will lead to a common defence" following a decision of the European Council. In the European Parliament, via the Security and Defence Committee, Volt will call on the European Council to act. Likewise, we will call on the Council of the European Union and the Commission to amend existing provisions for European defence institutions – such as the European Defence Agency (Council Decision 2015/1835) or the European Intelligence and Situation Centre (part of the European External Action Service) – and place them under a European Ministry of Defence. This European Ministry of Defence will ensure an integrated civilian command over a unified European military. We will call on willing Member States – in particular long-standing regional partners like the Benelux countries and the Baltic States – to unify

their military capabilities. As the benefits of their common defence is showcased, other Member States will be encouraged to join in. Finally, we will support the establishment of additional defence structures to aid this unification, including operational headquarters to streamline ongoing military and civilian EU missions, and a EU military academy to form the next generation of European officers. The European Defence Fund adopted in 2017 is a first step in the right direction.

**Funding?** This proposal does not, in and of itself, create extra military expenditure but will progressively move them from the Member State level to the European level; military expenditure from Member States' defence budgets will be shouldered by the European Union. Furthermore, the unification of national militaries will lead to major economies of scale and rationalisation of expenses. In 2017, the EU28 (not including defence expenditure by EU institutions) collectively spent close to \$243 billion and the larger integrated military – that of France – comprised a total of 378,000 men and women; the same year, the US spent \$610 billion but yielded a military of 2.2 million men and women.<sup>15</sup>

***Strengthen European internal security, by turning the EU's current law enforcement agency (Europol) into a true federal-level police force and granting it authority to fight crossborder crime, terrorism and cybersecurity threats.***

**Why?** Since the 1985 Schengen Agreement, Member States have progressively lifted border controls. While this was a crucial step forward for the EU and remains a cornerstone of the European project, it also removed obstacles to transborder crime. In the interest of addressing this security concern, and in order to better ensure the safety of our citizens, these open internal borders must be supplemented with a law enforcement agency able to act on cross-border matters across the EU without Member States' prior approval. Likewise, the EU needs a single Intelligence Agency to enhance our intelligence and counterintelligence capabilities.

**How?** Article 88 TFEU states that “any operational action must be carried out in liaison and in agreement with the [national] authorities whose territory is concerned” and that “coercive measures [remain] the exclusive responsibility of the competent national authorities”. In the European Parliament, Volt will propose to amend these provisions and review Europol's mandate (Regulation 2016/794), to grant Europol executive and coercive powers and allow it to operate, investigate, and make arrests in cross-border cases. We

<sup>15</sup> SIPRI, Military Expenditure Database, available at <https://www.sipri.org/databases/milex>

will also press the Council of the European Union, in particular its Justice and Home Affairs configuration, for the creation of an EU Intelligence Agency.

**Funding?** The transformation of Europol into a true federal-level and autonomous police force will drastically expand its operations and budget. The necessary expenditure can be partially offset by a decrease in national security budgets, as cross-border threats are increasingly handled at the European level. Meanwhile, the EU already plans on investing €2 billion into safeguarding the EU's digital economy, society and democracies through boosting cyber defence and the EU's cybersecurity industry, financing state-of-the-art cybersecurity equipment and infrastructure as well as supporting the development of the necessary skills and knowledge. The proposal builds on the wide range of cybersecurity measures presented in September 2017, and on the first EU-wide legislation on cybersecurity that came into force in May 2018.

***Ensure the safety of the EU's digital infrastructures, by making all EU software open source. This will reduce the dependency on monopolistic companies and will make our institutions cheaper, more transparent, and more resilient to data breaches.***

**Why?** As administrative processes are moved to the digital sphere, the importance of being in control of not only the digital infrastructure but also the source code being run is becoming more and more important. Dependence on proprietary or monopolistic software vendors translates into security vulnerabilities and limited access or control over what is happening with citizens' data. It also prevents nurturing a competitive ecosystem of open source government solution providers eventually translating into less innovation and understanding of the technologies being used.

**How?** We will actively lobby the Commission to introduce a new EU directive that will mandate EU departments and institutions to migrate to FLOSS software (Free/Libre and Open Source Software), unless the continued use of proprietary software can be justified. To this end, we will also lead by example, introducing best practices for usage of open-source software wherever possible, and engage other political parties to follow suit. We will also recommend the adoption on national levels and raise awareness on the advantages of FLOSS software vis-a-vis proprietary solutions permitting an ecosystem of vendors specialised on open government IT to develop. Furthermore, we will push for a bottom-up approach in parallel by empowering public administration employees through basic software development training and beginning their transition from sole software users to understanding how tools actually work, and use freed budgets

previously allocated for licenses to tailor solutions to specific and evolving administrative needs.

**Funding?** The sections on cybersecurity and trust, on ensuring a wide use of digital technologies across the economy and society, and on digital skills, from the Digital Europe Programme introduced in the 2019 Multiannual Financial Framework can be used for funding.

## Transpare- ncy

***Increase the transparency of the EU, by requiring all EU elected officials to disclose their office expenses and spending.***

**Why?** The European Union is often criticised for being an administrative behemoth working from a distance. Opaque processes and incomprehensible decisions lead to a loss of confidence in institutions – the further away, the more pronounced. Volt believes that trust starts with transparency and therefore wants to define new standards of accountability, accessibility and openness in EU institutions.

**How?** Volt will push for increased accountability in EU politics by means of publication of the inflow of funds allocated to EU elected officials, and their use broken down by project/beneficiaries without paywalls and in a concise and understandable manner. The same standard will also apply for the EU budget in general including accessible tenders and providing information to citizens what budget was given to which supplier for what service. We intend to empower the European Union Anti-Fraud Office (OLAF) to have investigative powers on these issues. Another important point that must be addressed is the lack of transparency regarding the income of EU elected officials. We want to make it mandatory to for EU elected officials to publish a financial oversight that includes the wealth of said officials when taking office and when leaving office. Finally, we will establish a mechanism that allows constant review and improves the enforcement of the existing Codes of Conduct and self-regulatory agreements to which parliamentarians and lobbyists are held to minimise the grey zone of political influencing.

**Funding?** Not applicable: this proposal bears no cost for the EU budget. The EU Anti-Fraud Programme can be used for funding for OLAF and the proposed mechanism.

***Protect the press and whistleblowers, by introducing strict guidelines limiting government punishment for the publication of confidential information in the public interest.***

**Why?** Freedom of press is an instrument that helps facilitate an open public debate in search of the truth in the European political systems. However, this instrument has constraints put on this when it comes to whistleblowing. Our purpose is to realise a common juridical framework on handling

whistle-blowing by means of analogical and digital press. Within this framework, we support legislation that allows for an approach that promotes whistleblowing when it is in the public interest, rather than obstruct it.

**How?** Volt will urge full rapid transposition and implementation of the EU Whistleblower Protection Directive by all Member States. We will also endorse the transposition of Transparency International's 30 Principles of Whistleblower Protection in legislation, and work to strengthen European legislation accordingly. Finally, we will introduce a requirement for Member States to ensure that every public, private or third sector organisation has a dedicated mechanism for reporting corrupt malpractice internally, or where appropriate, externally, to enforcement authorities without fear of reprisal.

**Funding?** Not applicable: this proposal bears no cost for the EU budget. The EU Anti-Fraud Programme and the Digital Europe Programme can be used for funding for the dedicated mechanisms.

***Make all lobbying in the European Institutions transparent and monitored. The registration of all lobbying activities in the public transparency register will be made mandatory, and a strict code of conduct will be introduced.***

**Why?** European citizens have the right to know what external factors contribute to the decision-making process of the European Union. Transparency enhances accountability, provides security to the necessary dialogue with lobbyists or interests representatives when in policy-making, and ensures all parties behave in the correct manner. In its current form, the voluntary European Transparency Register does not accommodate an actual state of transparency when it comes to lobbyists influencing the legislative and executive processes that take place in the EU. We intend to reinvigorate the discussion on this and dig deeper in the transparency measures to increase citizens' trust in EU institutions. Finally, we acknowledge the importance of spreading a healthy transparency culture among member States.

**How?** Volt will work to reform the European Transparency Register to include all EU institutions, specifically the Council, making it mandatory for all lobbyist and advocacy organisations and individuals. We will also require mandatory, factual and motivated entries for lobbyists and advocacy organisations. As a means of enforcement, we will include clear sanctions for MEPs or EU officials at all institutions and agencies for meeting with unregistered lobbyists. To this end, we will lobby the Commission to introduce a binding code of conduct for all officials elected to positions in EU institutions including at least the following duties: 1. Publish openly all



contacts with lobby or pressure groups. 2. Report any offered gift, favour, special treatment or invitation. 3. Refuse any gift with a value over [€50]. 4. Emphasise that "Quid pro Quo" scenarios or a personal "Indebtedness" has to be strictly avoided when dealing with gifts, favours or special treatment on the individual level. We also acknowledge that a significant portion of lobbying takes place on the national level. This is why we will actively lobby for inclusion of the implementation of lobbying rules at the national level. Moreover, Volt will push for the the establishment of a European Parliamentary Ethics Committee as an AFCO Subcommittee, with a strict binding Code of Conduct for MEPs, and former MEPs, to prevent conflicts of interest, undue influence, and consistent movement between regulator and legislator roles, more commonly referred to as the 'revolving door'. The Subcommittee must be able to recommend cases to AFCO or referral to law enforcement authorities. Finally, we will push for reinforcement of the Joint Transparency Register Secretariat with adequate funding

**Funding?** Not applicable: this proposal bears no cost for the EU budget. The Budget of the European Parliament can be addressed for funding the subcommittee.

## Corruption

***Make EU project funding dependent on national efforts to fight corruption. Member States combating corruption will see their efforts rewarded; those failing to do so will be sanctioned.***

**Why?** Corruption takes different forms in different countries, but whether it's affecting unobtrusive access to public services or fair representation of citizens' interest in politics, corruption always places a burden on a functioning society and democracy in as a whole. While many EU nations rank high on the Transparency International list of lowest perceived corruption (per 2017)<sup>16</sup> or have improved significantly (eg Greece), several EU Member States have ongoing or increasing issues with corruption and are ranking as low as 69th.

**How?** We will work to ensure that EU project funding that is allocated to national institutions to be managed should, to some degree, depend on national efforts to fight corruption. To this end, Volt will amend the methods currently used for allocating EU funds. Countries with high or improving rankings should see their fight against corruption rewarded in the form of additional funding or more benevolent conditions while funds for projects prone to corruption should receive a malus-reduction when distributed to lower ranking countries. We also work towards a system where fund awarding processes for Member States in which corruption is more prevalent

<sup>16</sup> Transparency International, Corruption Perceptions Index 2017, available at [https://www.transparency.org/news/feature/corruption\\_perceptions\\_index\\_2017](https://www.transparency.org/news/feature/corruption_perceptions_index_2017)

are to be subject to strict expenditure supervision, to avoid misappropriation and ensure that the funds deliver best value for money. This will create an incentive on a project-to-project basis to abstain from corruption as it decreases the overall funding available. Finally, we will extend the role of the EU Consumer Centres Network pertaining to consumer protection, and provide the means for citizens to point out day-to-day corruptions in an effort to visualise the problem and create pressure to change.

**Funding?** The EU Anti-Fraud Programme can be used for funding.

***Stop corruption by granting new investigative powers to the European Anti-Fraud and Public Prosecutor's Offices, and increase the competences of the European Ombudsman to include examining suspicious handling of public funds.***

**Why?** Right now, the majority of anti-corruption initiatives are handled on the national level. In an ever closer Union it is of great importance that money from European citizens is not squandered due to corrupt practices. To accommodate this, we need anti-corruption institutions capable of operating at a European level.

**How?** We will push to strengthen the EU institutional involvement through the following following three measures:

First, we will expand the scope within which the European Anti-Fraud Office operates to include a focus on lobbying and illegal influencing of public actors by pushing for the replacement of Regulation No 883/2013 with an updated regulation that includes these focuses.

Second, we will increase the European Ombudsman's competences so that it can bring corruption-related cases occurring in any of the European Member States to the attention of the European Prosecutor's Office by amending Article 228 TFEU and the Statute of the European Ombudsman to include oversight not only over EU institutions, organs and bodies, but also those of the respective Member States. We will push for a new system where European Ombudsman's Office leads the office of the National Ombudsman and standardise the rules and regulations surrounding them.

Third, we will adapt the core focus of the European Public Prosecutor's Office to include fighting corruption in all its forms. To accomplish this, we will work to extend the scope of the European Public Prosecutor's Office by making participation in it obligatory for all Member States, and adding misappropriation of EU funds to its core tenets, as well as increasing its budget and extending its staff to cope with the heightened workload.

**Funding?** The EU Anti-Fraud Programme and the Budget of the European Parliament can be used for funding.



## 2. Make Europe an Economic Powerhouse

### by boosting growth and standards of living

The lack of quality jobs in many European countries is increasingly harmful, particularly to the European youth. Without enough jobs, room for entrepreneurship and equal chances for everyone, the continent will not thrive. Entrepreneurship needs to be promoted and access to opportunities made easier. Unemployment should be tackled by investing in education and empowering citizens in their job search, and those in need have to be supported.

#### Proposals:

##### Create Jobs

***Channel EU funds into challenged regions to create jobs, by sponsoring smart and environmentally friendly investments, such as high-speed railway connections, improved accessibility and connectivity to rural areas and clean, local energy production sites.***

**How?** We commit to ensuring investments in a coherent EU-wide infrastructure system that connects regions, including rural areas, through available funding opportunities and prioritise projects that promote sustainability and higher added value for the whole region.

We will incentivise private investments in challenged regions and rural areas, supporting big and small companies that invest in environmentally friendly projects. It is important to make available adequate economic resources and human capital to deliver on those projects.

We support capacity-building in less favoured Member States or regions to enable a more effective public and private participation in funding programmes that promote eco-innovation, sustainable transport, and energy systems.

**Funding?** The resources to finance our proposal are available under several EU programmes such as Connecting Europe Facility, LIFE, Horizon Europe and InvestEU.

***Increase public spending on professional and vocational education to increase lifelong employability and the international competitiveness of apprentices. A special focus will be placed on areas with high long-term unemployment.***

**How?** We will work to increase EU funding for the Youth Guarantee, which commits Member States to ensure that young people receive a quality offer of employment, education, apprenticeship, or training within 4 months of becoming unemployed or leaving education. We will review the implementation of the Youth Guarantee in tandem with national stakeholders to eliminate inefficiencies and improve the effectiveness of the initiative. We will focus on areas experiencing high youth unemployment and ensure a significant increase of EU budget allocation in the next budget period (2021-27), assessing the synergies with other programmes to optimise allocation of resources.

We will offer learning experiences for non-academic careers by expanding ErasmusPRO, an action within the Erasmus+ Programme to support long-duration placement of apprentices abroad. A scaled-up ErasmusPRO will fight unemployment through high-quality internships, traineeships, and apprenticeships, offering further employment opportunities. Moreover, it will encourage social inclusion by facilitating access to participants with disadvantaged backgrounds and promote multilingualism. To make it a new EU flagship programme, expanding the scope of Erasmus+, it is important to improve the coordination with other programmes, such as Youth Guarantee, and increase its adaptability to the specific situation of each Member State.

Furthermore, we will promote the improvement of visibility and participation in the European Solidarity Corps, which creates opportunities for young people to volunteer or work in projects in their own country or abroad in a wide range of sectors engaged in solidarity-related activities. Participation in the Corps will serve the dual goal of improving employability and bringing together young people to build a more inclusive society, to support vulnerable people, to and respond to societal challenges through an inspiring and empowering experience.

**Funding?** The resources to finance our proposal are available under several EU programmes such as Youth Guarantee, ErasmusPRO, ESF+, European Solidarity Corps, InvestEU, Erasmus+, and Horizon Europe.

***Make it easier to find a job across Europe, by setting up a real European Labour Platform to match the unemployed and employers across Europe. Expand the European Employment Services (EURES) and foster better cooperation with the private sector in order to move towards a truly united labour market.***

**How?** We want to make sure that the effectiveness and visibility of the European Employment Service (EURES) are improved by engaging with national employment agencies, employers' organisations, and companies to place relevant vacancies in a uniform and revised EURES format. This

harmonisation will increase the number of job offers at the European level, make job seeking easier, and placements more effective. Member States will also use EURES to provide information on labour shortage and surplus per sector.

We propose to use algorithms to match supply and demand driven by data analytics, aiming to forecast and react to future job shortages on a geographic and sectoral level. The use of these algorithms enables preventive measures to be tailored before job losses occur.

We advocate for the improvement of the capacity of the European Social Fund and for the Employment and Social Innovation Programme to act as inclusive instruments and facilitate labour mobility by paying attention to the successful placements of the most vulnerable groups, such as unemployed youth, and to the regions most affected by unemployment. Adequate EU resources and know-how should be provided to modernise national employment services and help make them more effective, focusing on countries whose services are lagging, to enable them to carry out their activities.

**Funding?** The resources to finance our proposal are available under several EU programmes, such as ESF +, Erasmus +, Digital Europe, Horizon Europe, and InvestEU.

***Invest in programmes supporting decentralised digital labour, by providing devices and digital skills training at low costs. Investments will be focused on regions with high unemployment rates and with low level of digital skills or access to technology.***

**How?** We encourage the development of digital skills by providing financial support through EU resources to encourage ownership of technological devices for low income and unemployed individuals. For this, we will rely on national employment services in the selection of those needing such support, given that they have a better overview of the local situation and are able to provide trainings and offer tailored solutions to people looking for employment.

We encourage the use of online training platforms and developing new educational tools by working in tandem with universities, training providers, and other social partners to equip unemployed people with the skill-sets necessary to re-enter the labour market.

We promote the establishment of a dialogue with the Public Employment Services to create programmes that make use of new tools, such as massive online courses, to educate job-seekers on how to search for jobs, or on earning a living via distance work through specialised coaches. These

programmes would be equally accessible digitally across Europe, making it easier to target specifically those not in education, employment, or training.

**Funding?** the resources to finance our proposal are available under several EU programmes such as ESF+, Erasmus+, Digital Europe, Horizon Europe, and InvestEU.

## Entrepreneurship

***Make it easy to set up a businesses by creating a European Digital One Stop Shop. This will enable to set up a business in 3 working days at minimum administrative cost. To complement this, registration fees and processes will be harmonised and reporting, tax filing, and other government interactions will be streamlined across the EU.***

**How?** We propose to enhance the role of the European Investment Advisory Hubs (EIAH) under the European Fund for Strategic Investment (EFSI) to, in addition to its role in helping investment-seeking SMEs, act as a one stop shop, helping companies register within each Member State and the EU as a whole. Once their role is institutionalised, EIAHs across Europe will streamline registration procedures and set up the European Digital One Stop Shop.

We advocate to amend European company law to harmonise Member State companies' acts. Insolvency laws, currently under negotiation in the EU, need to be more ambitious and aligned with each other to allow for greater cross-border operations and business certainty for companies. We need to create a regulatory framework to improve the business environment for investors, stakeholders, and companies. This will strengthen the Single Market by modernising and harmonising consumer, contract, and company laws, as well as by implementing stronger non-discrimination and gender equality laws.

We encourage companies to register, in accordance with EU corporate law, as *societates Europaeae* (SEs) by increasing awareness and brand of SE. This would enable companies to easily transfer to – or merge with – companies in other Member States. 3000 companies have already registered as SEs, but most registrations come from a limited number of Member States. To create a fair and inclusive Single Market, it is important to promote SEs across the whole EU, together with a set of common EU rules on SE and further harmonisation of European company and employment law.

We will invest in inclusive entrepreneurship education to ensure access by those less represented in the field, including women and girls, and those facing social exclusion and marginalisation, including ethnic minorities, migrants, and refugees. We believe that the way to overcome obstacles faced by these groups is through the support of peer-to-peer connections, networks, and best practice sharing platforms.

**Funding?** The resources to finance our proposal are available under several EU programmes such as Erasmus for Young Entrepreneur, Single Market Programme, and ESF+.

***Boost entrepreneurship and the creation of jobs, by scaling up investments in technologies such as blockchain, big data, artificial intelligence and cloud technologies to help Europe's strategic sectors to compete globally.***

**How?** First we want to strengthen the European Fund for Strategic Investments by enabling it to be used to fund innovation through direct investment, as well as by adopting more risk-friendly rules for its capital.

In addition, Volt proposes to contribute to the competitiveness and sustainability of enterprises by providing funds in less favoured regions and those of common interest to several Member States for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) that reinvest surplus capital in expanding their businesses, research and development, training programmes for their workers, or creating new jobs.

Furthermore, we will make access to financing easier for innovative SMEs – those contributing to the transition to a low-carbon and climate-resilient economy and society – during creation, expansion, and business transfer stages. This access to financing should be in the form of loan guarantees and equity facilities, improved access to markets, and improved conditions for business creation and growth by improving the visibility of financing instruments such as the Competitiveness of Enterprises and Small and Medium-sized Enterprises Programme, and Innovation in SMEs Programmes.

Lastly, we promote social enterprises, including alternative business models such as cooperatives and mutuals, and we want to ensure improved access to financing for under-represented groups in the field of entrepreneurship. We will combat harmful practices such as loan-sharking towards vulnerable groups, particularly in the field of micro-finance.

**Funding?** The resources to finance our proposal are available under several EU programmes such as Erasmus for Young Entrepreneur, Single Market Programme, ESF+, InvestEU, Digital Europe, Horizon Europe, and LIFE.



## No One Left Behind

***Ensure decent living standards, by adopting a minimum income above poverty level in all Member States.***

**How?** In order to truly implement the principle of the European Pillar of Social Rights, which affirms that “everyone lacking sufficient resources has the right to adequate minimum income benefits ensuring a life in dignity at all stages of life, and effective access to enabling goods and services,” it is necessary that social rights become a core element of the employment policy guidelines determined through the European Semester, a yearly cycle of policy coordination. We will ensure that the every principle of the Pillar is adopted and put in place in all Member States.

We propose to optimise the economic resources to ensure that the appropriate funds focus on social inclusion in all countries. This will enable Member States to fund projects, in accordance with their needs, to provide minimum income, bringing people and families out of poverty, and providing them with adequate living conditions.

To face the radical changes happening in society and on the labour market, we need to be bold while offering solutions. For this reason, we propose to test new models of social protection, such as Universal Basic Income (UBI). To understand the impact of UBI as a policy instrument, we need well-designed large-scale pilot programmes run by local or national institutions under the overall guidance of the EU, which will be essential to design the pilot projects, monitor them, and evaluate the results. Therefore, we commit to create an High Level Group of experts, composed of government representatives from the Member States, EU Parliament and Commission representatives, as well as representatives from the Committee of the Regions, academics, social partners and other relevant stakeholders to conduct an in-depth analysis on UBI to design and provide a solid action plan to implement. To start with, the UBI should be tested in 5 diverse localities in Europe with at least 10,000 participants, for a period of at least 5 years.

**Funding?** The resources to finance our proposal are available under several EU programmes such as ESF+, European Regional Development Fund.

***Support people who lost their jobs in sectors or regions affected by economic crises, by doubling the funding of the European Globalisation Adjustment Fund and making it more flexible. These mechanisms will make the transition toward new jobs easier when a company ceases operations due to economic difficulties or moves outside the EU.***

**How?** We want to simplify and make more comprehensive the European Globalisation Adjustment Fund, enabling it to support workers who lost their jobs and provide them with the means to re-join the labour market.

We will explore the Fund's synergies with already available resources to provide financial support and training in time of crisis, while assessing the single requests. To achieve this objective, it is fundamental to involve EU institutions, Member States, and local authorities in the process, as well as representatives of both workers and employers.

**Funding?** Resources will come from the European Globalisation Adjustment Fund, activated together with the European Social Fund Plus, and the European Regional Development Fund, to optimise the synergies offered by these funds.

## 2. Make Europe an Economic Powerhouse

### by investing in the future

The world economy is undergoing major transformations, resulting in both opportunities and challenges for the continent. Europe needs to lead by example when it comes to the future of work, sustainability, competitiveness, and wellbeing. To this end, it is crucial for Europe to develop its research and innovation capacities. Amongst all technological developments to come, artificial intelligence is expected to be the most disruptive; Europe needs to be at the forefront of exploring its future potential.

#### Proposals:

##### **Innovation**

***Ensure European excellence in the future by doubling expenditure on Research and Development to 4% of EU GDP by 2025. Urge countries to invest in innovation to master the environmental and social challenges of tomorrow.***

**Why?** Research and technological progress is the foundation of our high standard of living. To guarantee our future wellbeing and remain competitive with traditional powers such as the USA and Japan, and rising powers such as China and India, our European and national research programmes need to be intensified, and spending must be increased substantially.

**How?** Centralised EU level R&I funding, through the Research Framework Programmes in the Multiannual Financial Framework, fosters international collaboration and competition, pushing research quality beyond levels that individual Member States can attain and reducing duplication of efforts. Therefore, we advocate to increase spending on research and innovation to reach 160 bn for the next Research Framework Programme, named Horizon Europe.<sup>17</sup> We also need to increase R&I funding outside the Multiannual Financial Framework through public-private partnerships by ramping up investments on fit-for-purpose initiatives, such as the Joint Undertakings or the Flagship Initiatives, to more flexibly address urgent research topics and objectives. We aim to better align EU and national R&I investments to

<sup>17</sup> In line with recommendations made in the Report of the Independent High Level Group on maximising the impact of EU Research & Innovation Programmes. See European Commission, Investing in the European Future we want, available at [http://ec.europa.eu/research/evaluations/pdf/archive/other\\_reports\\_studies\\_and\\_documents/hlg\\_2017\\_report.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/research/evaluations/pdf/archive/other_reports_studies_and_documents/hlg_2017_report.pdf)

effectively concentrate research efforts and increase efficiency. This includes simplifying the EU funding landscape, developing a common strategic R&I agenda for the European Research Area, especially focused on topics with EU added value, increasing the role of the Joint Research Centres, and encouraging Member States to develop multiannual national R&I strategies that complement the common agenda. Moreover, we believe it is possible to better capitalise on ideas and translate more research into innovation by improving the entrepreneurial ecosystems in national and regional tech parks through (regulatory) policy experimentation and funding of Operational Programmes dealing with competitiveness and innovation. Finally, we want to incentivise private R&I investments and industry investments that translate university/public research into innovation by encouraging Member States to put in place R&D tax credits for university-industry collaboration and co-funding. Incentives should be targeted towards startups and companies not affiliated with large corporations, and investments which rely on EU funding should also be eligible for such tax credits. Eventually, we aim to develop a comprehensive EU fiscal policy on R&I that still allows Member States and regions to address local need.

**Funding?** The resources to finance our proposal are mainly available under Horizon Europe.

***Become smart in Artificial Intelligence, by creating the EU High Level Artificial Intelligence Coordination Office to gather the best minds and businesses in the field, set up a European AI Initiative, and establish high ethical standards for AI.***

**How?** Artificial Intelligence development calls for a European AI Initiative: i) to gain critical mass to compete globally, as no individual national initiative by itself can keep up with the competition from other key player, such as the US or China, ii) to ensure AI technology is built in Europe and based on EU's Human Values, and iii) to prepare for undesirable effects of AI, such as involuntary unemployment.

To achieve this, we will work to ensure adequate funding for the European AI Initiative, including for the High Level AI Office, and support the European Commission in its announced AI Research and Development Initiative. This includes a budget target of €20 billion per year by 2020 for supporting multi-national efforts.

**Funding?** The resources to finance our proposal are available under several EU programmes such as Digital Europe, InvestEU and Horizon Europe

***Make Artificial Intelligence available and accessible for everyone, by increasing the European Investment Bank's support for AI investments to at least €1 billion a year by 2020, and by setting up a centralised "AI-on-demand-platform" to provide a single access point to key AI resources in the EU.***

**How?** We want to make AI available and accessible by creating an "AI-on-demand-platform" to provide a publicly funded European access point for AI developers and businesses to knowledge, data, and computing power needed to compete with global actors. To implement the platform, the European Commission can build on the existing network of more than 400 Digital Innovation Hubs.

We will work to attract private investments in AI, including by increasing the European Investment Bank's support for AI investments to at least €1 billion a year after 2020, and by rolling out the Pan-European Venture Capital Fund-of-Funds Programme – Venture EU – a €2.1 billion fund to boost investment in innovative start-up and scale-up companies across Europe.

**Funding?** The resources to finance our proposal are available under several EU programmes such as Digital Europe, InvestEU and Horizon Europe

## **Future of Work**

***Protect the dignity and safety of workers, especially in new sectors. Provide workers with non-traditional long-term contracts (e.g. gig, platform, freelance) with standards of protection comparable to those applicable to traditional forms of work.***

**How?** A growing number of workers in flexible or unstable work arrangements are not adequately covered by social security, and face a higher risk of poverty. Massive changes in labour markets compounded by the emergence of new models of work make it imperative to adjust mechanisms of social protection built around shrinking traditional forms of employment. We will support Member States to reform its social security schemes to close formal coverage gaps, so that non-standard workers and the self-employed across Europe enjoy guaranteed minimum protection standards for unemployment, sickness and healthcare, maternity or paternity, accidents at work and occupational diseases, disability, and old age. We will do so through the results of the social scoreboard and a punctual implementation of the Employment Guidelines, which provide the basis for country-specific recommendations arising from the European Semester, the yearly cycle of policy coordination.

To avoid unfair competition, especially between online and offline jobs, we will put in place EU-wide schemes, defined with the support of European social partners, to create a level playing field to ensure that countries

respect the same obligations regarding workers' access to social protection, regardless of their status as employees or self-employed.

**Funding?** Due to the fact that we call for the cooperation of the Social Partner, budget lines for the European Social Dialogue can be used to conduct studies and share best practices.

***Create flexible workplaces via an EU-wide Working Time Choice Act, enabling workers and employers to negotiate flexible forms of work that reflect the needs of the individual, the team, and the business.***

**How?** We will encourage social dialogue in the form of consultation and negotiation between social partners. Collective agreements at a sectoral level are generally the best way to strengthen the negotiation position of workers, and they support micro-businesses as well as SMEs, which rely on such agreements when they lack internal capacity, personnel, or know-how to conduct negotiations at company level.

We will create a supportive environment for company-level agreements, making flexible workplaces and times possible in accordance with the needs of all involved. This will be achieved by drafting a European Working Time Choice Act through a multi-sector consultation involving all social partners (workers, employers, governments, and civic organisations) who have a specific focus, such as on family and health, at the national and EU level.

Given the variety of worker preferences, company needs, and national circumstances, it is becoming difficult to develop uniform regulations for all possible situations. Instead, Working Time Choice policies aim at 'Regulated Self-regulation', providing the legal boundaries and basic protections, but empowering social partners in their search for balanced solutions to specific situations.

**Funding?** Not applicable: this proposal bears no cost for the EU budget.

***Prepare the European labour force for the challenges of tomorrow, by reforming and adapting the European Sector Skills Council to research the skills needed in the future. This will enhance synergies between private and public sector.***

**How?** We will promote the reformation and the adaptation of the existing European Sector Skills Councils to acquire and understand skills required in each sector, attempting to anticipate the impact of the unfolding Fourth Industrial Revolution. Cross-country cooperation at present is rare and EU level Sector Councils will boost the effectiveness of national councils and have a positive impact on the responsiveness of education systems to future labour market needs. To make sure this common strategy is effective, the

Councils should consist of representatives of national and European social partners, guaranteeing that the results reach workers and employers across Europe.

Councils will have an advisory role for national and European policy makers as well as for companies and workers regarding the labour market, skills development, vocational training, and upskilling. The Councils will formulate recommendations on how to better use resources from existing EU programmes to make financing of the agreed measures easier for workers and companies.

We will initiate a Work 4.0 public consultation process at the European level to explore changing basic values concerning work across Europe, and to inform policy formulation at the EU and Member State level.

**Funding?** The resources to finance our proposal are available under Erasmus+ and for complementary actions ESF+.

## 2. Make Europe an Economic Powerhouse

### by putting education first

For Europe to reach its full potential, the education of its citizens must be a core priority. Education allows for the creation and sharing of knowledge, which enhances both mutual understanding and social cohesion. Volt wants to upgrade education from an early age duty to a lifelong companion, while improving the learning of formal and informal skills and their recognition across Europe. This will ensure citizens stay employed and find better suited jobs.

#### Proposals

##### Education

***Enable more people to experience different European countries, by increasing the budget for EU exchange programmes (Erasmus+), especially for secondary school students, apprentices and disadvantaged students.***

**Why?** The integrative effects of Erasmus needs to be made reproducible on a larger scale, and must be accessible to all children and students in Europe. This way, we will create the roots and fabric of a European society that includes everyone. Mobility under the Erasmus 2021-2027 Programme is projected to increase threefold to reach 12 million people. Until now, the Erasmus programme has mostly benefited university students growing up in an international context, while other groups have found themselves excluded from this experience. New mobility opportunities must therefore especially be targeted at individuals who traditionally have made limited use of mobility opportunities.

**How?** Volt will target financial support for mobility, pushing for an increased focus on secondary schools, disadvantaged students and schools, opportunities for learning-on-the-job in the years beyond formal vocational education and through apprenticeships, as well as on the expansion of the Voluntary European Service. Moreover, we will improve information dissemination on Erasmus opportunities through better collaboration by the DG for Education and Culture with national and regional institutions. This will bolster outreach towards regions, schools, and demographics that have so far been underserved by the Erasmus Programme. Finally, we will extend the Erasmus programme and its budget to connect primary and secondary schools throughout Europe with the aim of facilitating at least one week of cross-border school experience for every student by 2025.



**Funding?** Resources can be found under Erasmus+ and possibly also under ESF+.

***Make sure that everyone can keep up with a rapidly evolving society, by extending lifelong learning to all, throughout their professional and personal lives.***

**Why?** Volt values education as the good that enables personal fulfillment, social inclusion, and employability. Because educated citizens contribute to dynamic, well-functioning societies, the availability of quality education to everyone throughout their lives must be acknowledged as one of the key factors to ensure a vibrant, inclusive and demanding democracy.

**How?** We advocate for ubiquitous and free (online) learning by investing – including within the Erasmus 2021-2027 Framework – in educational capacity and strategic partnerships for digital, personalised learning. This will be facilitated independently of school infrastructures or the number of teachers. We will develop EU-wide standards for accreditation and mutual recognition of online coursework, while providing guidelines for educational institutions in Member States to roll out accredited online courses. Finally, we will expand the Digital Education Action Plan beyond learning in schools and formal education, and push for it to include provisions for citizens of all ages in accordance with the Digital Competence Framework for Citizens. The quick adoption of new technologies has substantial potential to increase general well-being. However, the rapid pace of technological development requires that we enable citizens to follow along this path and continuously update their digital skills and competences in order to reap the benefits of technological progress, and not be left behind.

**Funding?** Resources can be found under Erasmus+, ESF+, InvestEU, and Digital Europe.

***Bring education to the next level, by increasing EU funding for teachers, introducing new teaching methods and facilities. This will adequately address how different students learn best and enhance their educational success.***

**Why?** School environments have a crucial and long-lasting impact on childhood development and the ability to thrive in life. To create the right school environment we require successful schooling systems, which safeguard socio-economic disadvantaged students, implement prevention-practices in (pre-)primary education, and provide schools with the adequate tools and the flexibility to adapt to the diversity of the school's students and the talents of its teachers.

**How?** Volt will assure that enough EU funding that schools and students in weak economic regions/cities can apply for to improve the state of school infrastructure and teaching materials, such as IT equipment, high speed internet connectivity, sports equipment, and libraries. Moreover, our educational systems need to be innovated to deliver the best quality education. To drive innovation, we will work to dedicate EU funding under Horizon Europe for more research into educational innovation that puts larger emphasis on socio-emotional development and skills such as perseverance, conscientiousness, and self-control. Second, we will boost EU-wide innovation in teaching methods by providing guidelines and sharing best practices for increased emphasis on fostering creativity and learning skills and competences in school curricula such as oral communication, public speaking, and written skills. Third, we will formulate new EU standards, as an alternative for PISA, to evaluate educational quality and student ability that better incorporate pedagogical insights on child development and socio-emotional competences.

Moreover, Volt will work create new and adequate tools, such as benchmarks, together with relevant stakeholders, to provide children with healthier diets by defining and enforcing a standard for healthy meals in schools, supporting schools in creating or improving canteens, involving school children in meal preparations and aiming to provide one state-sponsored (warm) lunch per day by 2025 for children growing up in families with an income that lies below the poverty line. Finally, we will push to enable all secondary school students across Europe to achieve English fluency by funding teacher training and English language programmes.

**Funding?** Resources can be found under Horizon Europe, ESF +, InvestEU and Digital Europe.

#### **The Volta Programme**

***Establish the EU “Volta Programme” which will provide comprehensive financial support for all training activities, including the reskilling and upskilling of people.***

**How?** Volt will work to create the new “Volta Programme”, which, in the long term, will regroup and optimise resources, and build on already established good practices. The main aim of the Programme will be to encourage lifelong learning by supporting programmes dedicated to the reskilling and upskilling of workers. To enhance continued employability in a knowledge-based environment, these programmes need to work in an anticipatory manner and be made accessible in particular to workers who are still employed, but in jobs which might become obsolete in the short- and medium-term.

To be able to be up and running in the shortest possible time, before the full programme has been established, this initiative will make innovative use of European initiatives already in place as a jumping-off point, while ensuring that

resources are invested in line with our comprehensive and ambitious training programme.

We will promote lifelong learning programmes which are essential to provide workers those skills which can increase their re-employability by all means available, enhancing their chance of staying employed while jobs and job requirements are undergoing constant changes in a fast developing labour market.

We will work with the European social partners to encourage framework agreement to provide employees with time – a minimum number of days per year – and resources for professional development of skills, strengthening long-term employability.

We will involve research institutions and universities to further develop algorithms and easy-to-use tools to support employment services and career counsellors, using the most accurate available data and information on career paths and skills required through pilot projects proposed by the European Parliament.

We will encourage adult learning by facilitating and creating opportunities to connect colleges with universities, as well as a range of European associations, networks, and labour organisations, in order to develop solutions such as online courses to obtain a degree, improve employability, or simply enrich themselves and boost wellbeing in an innovative way that can meet the needs of all workers and that can fit into their daily schedule.

**Funding?** In the long term, we will propose to adopt a Regulation to establish the new “Volta Programme.” In the short term, the resources that will be used can be found under Erasmus+, Digital Europe, Invest Eu, ESF+.

***Make it easier to study and work anywhere in Europe, by increasing the transparency and recognition of knowledge, skills, and competences.***

**How?** We will ensure that the e-card for professions, a simplified procedure for providers of business and construction services to complete administrative formalities required to provide services abroad, is adopted and fully implemented, making it easier for professionals to have their qualifications recognised in all EU countries, by making sure the Parliament adopts its position and finds an acceptable compromise with the Council.

Furthermore, we will build upon the work done on the validation of informal learning, to ensure that no effort put into enhancing professional skills is wasted. The final objective is to build a shared scheme, recognised in all EU Member States. To facilitate this, we will organize a campaign, asking for the support of the European Commission, to increase awareness on this topic,

involving Member States representatives and the social partners both at European and at national level.

**Funding?** Not applicable: this proposal bears no cost for the EU budget.

***Increase the focus on digital literacy for all ages, by starting online education and coding at an early age, by introducing lifelong learning and vocational trainings, and by emphasising mental health and social wellbeing in digital environments.***

**How?** We commit to include digital literacy in education for all ages. Digital literacy education has to start at an early age and continue in the context of vocational training, in ICT curricula, and in lifelong learning initiatives such as the Volta Programme. Especially for early ages, digital literacy should be accompanied by logical and rational thinking, in order to ensure that they understand all the implication of digital technologies.

Volt promotes behaviours and skills that lead to a healthy and sustainable lifestyle, safeguarding mental health and social well-being in a digital environment, in addition to technical competences such as coding.

We propose to use tech education as a tool for social inclusion. To this end, we will expand on best-practice public and civil society initiatives to empower under-represented or marginalised groups in the digital field, with a special focus on closing the gender gap with initiatives such as the Women in Science and Engineering.

**Funding?** The resources to finance our proposal are available under several EU programmes, such as ESF+ and Digital Europe

# 3. Build a just and sustainable society

## by managing migration humanely and responsibly

The EU is undergoing a political crisis in its management of migration flows. Undoubtedly, the refugee crisis is a political crisis. Europe has a legal and moral responsibility to help, it has the capacity to absorb refugee flows, and Volt will turn this into opportunities for everyone. Accommodating a diverse group of labour migrants into the European labour market can contribute to both the welfare of European countries and that of the migrants' home countries.

### Proposals:

#### Asylum Seekers and Refugees

***Manage refugee flows from outside the EU, by setting up a Unified EU Refugee System. The Dublin System must be reformed and complemented by a settlement scheme which provides for penalties and sanctions against States refusing to fulfil their responsibility.***

**Why?** Over the past years, European countries have shown that, individually, they are not up to the task of managing refugee flows. Left alone, some countries have been disproportionately affected and overwhelmed with the responsibilities related to migration. Consequentially, migrants have suffered. We believe that European countries have a moral and historic responsibility to ensure that asylum seekers and refugees are treated in a humane and fair manner. European countries are well and able to manage refugee influxes when they join their efforts to work together and fully employ the resources available.

**How?** We will push to move the responsibility for the management of refugees to the European level, as far as possible in the absence of exclusive EU competence. We will propose minimum harmonisation on the conditions for the application of asylum that will be applied in each European country. In order to establish those criteria, we will push for an enhancement of the mandate of EASO (the Malta Asylum Office) to develop a standardised asylum process on the basis of data that is centrally available. We will then push for an amendment of Regulation 604/2013, the so-called Dublin Regulation. This amendment will replace the first country of arrival as the country in which an asylum application has to take place. Instead, a principle of preference will be followed: asylum seekers will be granted the right of

passage to apply for asylum in those countries in which they prefer to stay. After the initial commencement of the asylum procedure in the country of preference, asylum-seekers will enter a resettlement system to ensure that European countries manage the refugee flow together. The conditions for resettlement will be based on objective factors such as population density, wealth, age, and growth. The amended system will allow European countries to contribute accommodation capacity or funding. Countries who do not abide by it will be sanctioned in the form of withdrawal of benefits, putting a price on the absence of solidarity.

In addition, we will introduce a proposal for the reformation of the Common European Asylum System to include the possibility of permanent residence for refugees after a certain period if they are still at risk (five to seven years), on the condition that certain criteria are met, such as having a clean track record, acquisition of language skills, and knowledge of key elements of the country.

**Funding?** The Asylum Migration and Integration Fund will be used. The enhancement of the mandate of EASO will be financed according to the EASO Financial Regulation.

***Make the asylum system fair, effective and quick, by issuing EU guidelines that ensure shorter asylum procedures and provide for social, legal and psychological support.***

**Why?** Reformation of the Dublin System and improving the asylum-seeking procedure have to go hand in hand. Leaving asylum seekers in state of "pending" for any extended period while deciding on their legal status is detrimental on an individual level, and also prevents any efforts of meaningful integration. Both the asylum process and opportunities for asylum seekers to try and integrate need to be improved if we want to turn perceived risks into actual chances.

**How?** We will introduce a proposal for the amendment of the Asylum Procedures Directive to include minimum harmonised rules on the legal status of refugees across European countries. This will leave discretion to European countries with respect to accepting or rejecting asylum seekers. But, it will include a common standard for the reception of applications and their treatment during the asylum procedure, guided by standards developed by international expert organisations such as UNHCR. The exceptions to minimum standards will be reviewed and phased out where possible. The amendment will focus specifically on ensuring better decisions on asylum application at first instance, to make the procedure quicker and effective, because there will be less need to resort to appeals. Moreover, the amendment will ensure that the presumption of safe third countries can

be rebutted. Asylum-seekers should be provided the opportunity to argue on an individual basis whether a third country is safe in their particular situation.

We will also introduce a proposal for the amendment of the Reception Conditions Directive to leave less discretion on the interpretation of what an adequate standard of living entails. The proposal will include, in addition to standards related to housing and access to social services, the right to receive psychological support if so needed.

We will also propose the inclusion of a complaint system in case these common procedural requirements are not complied by in European countries. Such a complaint system should be available outside of domestic administrative procedures as to better safeguard the legal protection of asylum seekers.

**Funding?** The Asylum Migration and Integration Fund will be used to facilitate the establishment of a European wide complaint system. The regulatory changes will not impact the EU budget.

***Ensure successful integration and a benefit for the economy. Asylum seekers must be able to enter the job market from day one, and their skills must be more easily recognised. In addition, language training must be offered to all asylum seekers.***

**Why?** Integration starts with enabling. We should support asylum seekers who are motivated to learn and seeking to contribute. By helping to meet basic needs and assisting on the path to employment, we are fulfilling our part of allowing to actually integrate.

**How?** We will introduce a proposal to adapt Regulation 2013/32 on the granting and withdrawing of international protection of asylum seekers to ensure that the right to work is included from day one. In addition, this proposal will include procedures on the recognition of skills to allow asylum-seekers to continue the vocation they fulfilled in their country of origin, for as far as this is possible.

Next to this, we will lobby for the inclusion of a policy of "enable and expect" in the new Asylum Procedure Regulation. This policy will ensure that the necessary conditions are in place to make effective use of the right to work, such as learning the language of the country of destination. It will also be specified that the right to work includes essential obligations such as respecting the rule of law.

**Funding?** Not applicable, this proposal bears no cost for the EU budget.

***Protect those in need, by classifying famine and climate migrants as refugees under European law and by strengthening the use of humanitarian corridors.***

**Why?** In unstable times, we need to increase European efforts beyond borders. This includes working towards ending conflicts and helping to build up local infrastructures that prevent people from having to become a refugee in the first place. Currently, this concerns a small group of people, and most already qualify as refugees.<sup>18</sup> However, Volt believes that European countries are under an obligation to protect and extend support to the ones most affected and least responsible for climate change.

**How?** As a long-term objective, we will propose an amendment of the 1951 Refugee Convention for the definition of refugee to also include famine and climate migrants. European countries cannot do this alone, but we believe that a joint lobby will send a strong message and positively contribute to realising this goal.

In the short-term, while lobbying for amending the legal definition of a refugee, we support the (re-)introduction of a humanitarian visa for all European countries. In the proposal for the legislative text, we will include famine and climate migrants as included as a collective group in need of protection, in effect guaranteeing this group the same rights as refugees.

The introduction of a humanitarian visa will initially be done by means of a visa waiver for citizens of top refugee producing countries. Visa requirements for nationals from these States will be suspended through an adaptation of the visa lists in Regulation 539/2001. In the long-term, we will propose a legal instrument in the form of a Regulation in which issuing criteria and procedures are included.

We will propose to rely on the systematic establishment of humanitarian corridors throughout European countries so that asylum-seekers will not have to resort to smuggling and human trafficking to enter Europe.

**Funding?** The systemic establishment of humanitarian corridors would be part of the Common European Asylum System for which the Asylum Migration and Integration Fund can be relied upon.

## **Labour migration**

***Protect both domestic and foreign workers against the negative effects of economic migration, by applying minimum harmonisation among all European countries ensuring that access to basic social, legal and medical services is guaranteed***

<sup>18</sup> Horn of Africa, Yemen, Nigeria. See UNCHR, Death risk from starvation in Horn of Africa, Yemen, Nigeria growing, displacement already rising, available at <https://www.unhcr.org/news/briefing/2017/4/58ec9d464/unhcr-says-death-risk-starvation-horn-africa-yemen-nigeria-growing-displacement.html>.



**Why?** A Europe that grants the right of free movement and labour must have at least a minimum set of rules that regulate movement. This means ensuring that basic services are available to everyone, while also limiting national initiatives to circumvent regulations for short term, local benefits.

**How?** We will introduce policies that focus on relocation, building on the efforts of the 2015 Emergency Relocation System. We will advocate the introduction of a directive that specifies the rights of all categories of economic migrants, similar to the amended Directive 2014/36 in which the rights of seasonal workers are clarified. In addition, we will work towards increased diversity among migrants by advocating to end the practice prevalent in European countries to grant residency to affluent foreigners buying local properties or investing into local business.

**Funding?** Not applicable, this proposal bears no cost for the EU budget.

***Increase legal pathways into Europe, by offering a specific visa to temporary foreign workers.***

**Why?** Both EU and non-EU citizens still face obstacles today when trying to find employment in national job markets as well as integrating into societies. We need to avoid wasting higher education by prohibiting market entry and provide a long term perspective to labour migrants who integrate and contribute to local societies, while also not forgetting those who are not yet able to do so.

**How?** We will push for a reform of “Your Europe” to include labour migration and integration for EU and non-EU citizens wanting to live and work in another EU country. In addition, once in Parliament, we will revisit the Single Permit Directive and the Long-Term Resident Directive to ensure that the groups of migrants that qualify for application under these procedures are sufficiently diverse. To ensure that minors are awarded adequate protection, we will support the establishment of a European network on guardianship which includes unaccompanied minors that fall within the category of irregular economic migrants.

**Funding?** Not applicable, this proposal bears no cost for the EU budget.

***Turn Europe into a talent and innovation hub, by making it simpler and more attractive to obtain an expert visa, especially after acquiring a university degree in an EU Member State.***

**Why?** Building sustainable future industries and societies requires the best and brightest. We need to emphasise the values Europe stands for and market them univocally abroad, while setting in place systems that facilitate high-skilled migration and integration at home.

**How?** We will introduce a proposal to amend the Blue Card Directive and the Single Permit Directive to simplify the BlueCard renewal procedure for highly-skilled specialists and their family members. Through this amendment, we will remove parallel applications and other administrative burdens, so making relocation in the EU easier. This will allow BlueCard holders and their family members to move around within the Schengen Area and take up employment elsewhere.

We will amend the Blue Card Directive to include guidelines with respect to salary thresholds, subsequent family migration, visa validity, and social insurances in case of unemployment or disability based on best practices for high-skilled migration within Europe.

In addition, we will lobby for one coherent European strategy of "attracting the best talent" and actively market it in "target countries" through EU delegations and Member State embassies.

**Funding?** Not applicable, this proposal bears no cost for the EU budget.

***Ensure that countries of origin and European countries benefit from temporary economic migration, by aligning the interest of both and by involving all relevant stakeholders (e.g. employers and trade unions) in the policy making process.***

**Why?** Free movement of labour within the EU has been a key element to fostering employability and integration. It is beneficial if driven by demand (available jobs) but has shortcomings on the supply side (available candidates) when not enough qualified staff can be found or new workers enter the system. Both can be addressed by policies.

**How?** Once in Parliament, we will draft a proposal for a new legislative instrument in the form of a location-specific temporary residence and working permit available to non-EU migrants falling within a specific category of labour migrants, such as health workers or builders, of which there exists a shortage on the European labour market. The eligibility criteria for such a residence and working permit will be derived from an exchange of best practices at the national level of European countries and from bringing together relevant stakeholders such as employers and labour unions, specific to European regions. The relevant stakeholders will be brought together in accordance with the 2015 Consultation Guidelines.

**Funding?** Not applicable, this proposal bears no cost for the EU budget.

# 3. Build a just and sustainable society

## Make Europe Green: Sustainability, Climate and Environment

Europe must be at the forefront of a green economic transformation to reap its benefits and lead the fight against climate change. To ensure that the increase of global temperature will not surpass 1,5°C the shift towards sustainability needs to be much faster and bolder than it is today. While the EU cannot address global challenges alone, it can and should lead the way in trying to reduce the immediate and future effects of climate change and set an example for other regions. Only then will it be able to position itself in the green industries of the future.

### Proposals:

#### Minimise climate footprint

***Grow the green economy, by introducing an EU-wide carbon tax and other forms of carbon pricing along the entire production chain and by ending subsidies on fossil-based fuel. The funds gained will be used for relevant climate mitigation and adaptation projects and to create new jobs.***

**Why?** With climate reports stressing that we are not doing enough to prevent unsustainable levels of global warming, EU policies need to move from providing indirect incentives to reduce CO<sub>2</sub>, to actually putting a price on CO<sub>2</sub>. Europe has the resources and technology to take the lead in preventing climate change by curbing CO<sub>2</sub> production without hindering international competitiveness.

**How?** We will introduce a proposal to amend the Energy Taxation Directive to introduce a carbon tax on those sectors not yet covered by the Emissions Trading System, specifically fossil fuels in transportation and heating. This proposal will require European countries to introduce a minimum rate for carbon tax on fossil fuels. In addition, we will propose to adapt the Emissions Trading Directive and the Auctioning Regulation to include a minimum allowance price in the EU Emissions Trading Scheme (50€ in 2025) to create long-term price stability for developing and investing in clean technology. Other steps that will be taken include the introduction of a proposal to reduce free emission allowances and review eligibility criteria as included in the "carbon leakage list" by amending the Emissions Trading Directive. Furthermore, we will introduce a proposal to amend the Energy Taxation Directive to no longer exempt fossil fuels, phasing out subsidies.

**Funding?** Not applicable, this proposal bears no cost for the EU budget.

***Use energy in a smarter way, by introducing smart electricity grids, by setting more ambitious energy-saving targets, and by creating incentives for green and low-energy public transportation.***

**Why?** With climate change implicitly demanding ambitious energy targets, steps need to be undertaken to establish a system capable of handling energy fluctuation and decentralised generation. In the same vein, transportation in general needs to be moving towards low polluting, efficient infrastructures capable of meeting demand while leaving the smallest energy footprint possible.

**How?** We will introduce a proposal to fulfill the commitments of the Paris Agreement by including more ambitious climate and clean energy targets going beyond the 40% emissions reduction laid out in the European-wide Nationally Determined Contribution. Volt will develop a proposal to include more ambitious targets in the Energy Efficiency Directive and the Renewable Energy Directive; we work towards a 55% emission reduction target for the revised NDC, 40% more energy efficiency, 45% renewables by 2030. The proposal will aim at decreasing the emissions of the transport sector by moving cross-country transnational freight off the roads except for the last mile, reducing traffic congestion and pollution. In addition, we will refocus transportation subsidies from non self-sufficient installations such as airports to growing low emission infrastructures. We will further the sharing of alternative energies generated in European countries by introducing a proposal for a new legislative instrument in which minimum harmonised standards are included to facilitate a harmonised EU network of electric LNG/hydrogen fuel stations.

**Funding?** To realise the necessary cooperation among European countries for the purpose of establishing a harmonised network for the distribution of energy, we will rely on the European Regional Development Fund. The Cohesion and the Structural Funds will be used to re-focus transportation subsidies.

## Circular Economy

***Truly kick-start the circular economy, by stimulating the provision of goods and services that are renewable and sustainable. This will be done by harmonising tax incentives, speeding up the regulatory processes and providing funds to rethink the design and digitalisation of organisations, goods and services.***

**Why?** Over the last decades, we have become used to consuming products with no regard to the end of their life cycle. As man-made trash is becoming increasingly visible wherever we go and whatever we eat, Volt believes it is time to move towards a more circular economy and truly speak of products life "cycles".

**How?** Much has been done already to remove regulatory barriers in European countries. However, a fully circular economy is hampered because the regulatory system has not been adjusted accordingly. We will introduce a proposal for new legislation that focuses on the conditions for such a new regulatory system. A new system will operate on the basis of two conditions: 1) That it internalises environmental costs and the value of recuperation of strategic materials, 2) That it stimulates the design for circularity through extended producer responsibility. To ensure that the proposal will truly address current barriers for businesses to comply with the circular economy, a committee will be established to research how the new regulatory system should be designed.

In addition, we will introduce a proposal to amend Directive 94/62 on packaging waste to include minimum harmonisation across European countries to standardise packaging of non-consumer products, beyond shipping containers and euro-pallettes, and introduce reusable packaging on the last mile.

**Funding?** We will fund research into the best ways to adjust the regulatory system relying on the LIFE programme.

***Stop plastic-based pollution and reduce waste in general, by taxing the use of plastic, single-use products and polluted recyclables, and by banning the export of waste into non-EU countries.***

**Why?** As the world is literally drowning in trash, more ambitious efforts should be undertaken to significantly reduce packaging or preserve and recycle a larger share of it. Contamination of recyclables is as much of a problem as the inability to properly sort and reuse mixed material packaging, as non-EU countries are no longer willing to import EU trash. Volt believes it is time to act.

**How?** We will ensure that plastic waste is decreased to a minimum so that the recycling target of 55% is reached by 2030, as outlined in the EU Plastic

Strategy 2018 and the Packaging and Packaging Waste Directive, by focussing on the role of businesses in recycling plastic. We will introduce a proposal to strengthen Extended Producer Responsibility legislation and facilitate the sharing of best practices to support efforts to make recycling profitable. On top of that, we will ensure that European countries work together to set an example with respect to the reduction of waste beyond the border. A programme similar to Horizon 2020 will be established with the aim to support projects such as cleaning up the Great Pacific Garbage Patch.

**Funding?** The LIFE programme will be used to gather best practices with respect to making recycling become profitable for businesses.

***Move towards sustainable consumption and government spending, by introducing a Circular Economy Label, by adopting a green public procurement standard and by supporting resource sharing and product longevity.***

**Why?** Current product regulations set high standards for quality, but more emphasis should be put on the importance of the longevity of a product. From cars and cellphones to clothes, we have become accustomed to replacing products in short intervals, often throwing still perfectly usable items away.

**How?** We will introduce a CCE Label that adds "circularity" to safety, health and environmental protection, in a similar fashion to the introduction of the EU eco-label. In addition, we will push for a system that rewards longevity and right-to-repair over just a two year guarantee by introducing minimum standards applicable in all countries in the EU, requiring manufacturers to make products more easily repairable.

**Funding?** Not applicable, this proposal bears no cost for the EU budget.

## Sustainable Agriculture

***Support sustainable agriculture, by refocusing the Common Agricultural Policy away from larger producers and towards producers that use ecological approaches.***

**Why?** It is well established that livestock agriculture is highly resource intensive, and leads to deforestation and erosion in many parts of the world.<sup>19</sup> While maintaining middle and large producers may increase competition and keep prices down, it increases the risk of developing monocultures which are not sustainable both from an economic as well as from an environmental perspective. To maintain sustainable agriculture, industrial technology needs to be relied on only to increase resource efficiency and when this has no adverse environmental impacts.

**How?** We will support the sustainability reform of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP). Firstly, by introducing a proposal to include in the CAP increased payouts as part of 'green' direct payment to farms of all sizes to move from monoculture to rotating and diverse cultures. Secondly, by providing benefits to stimulate sharing and co-investing in machinery, collaborating on data, and developing solutions for use of manure, water, and food waste.

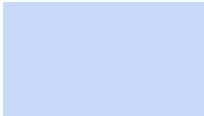
**Funding?** The European Agricultural Guarantee Fund (EAGF) will be used, as well as the European Agricultural Fund for Regional Development.

***Increase product quality and biodiversity, by supporting farms that manage land in accordance with local ecosystems, by focusing on connecting natural habitats, and by banning the use of pesticides and neonicotinoids.***

**Why?** The focus on monocultures and resulting susceptibility of crops and livestock to diseases requires heavy use of pesticides and antibiotics, which, in turn, affects insect populations and can render antibiotics useless for treating human diseases. This is too heavy a price tag to put on our eco- and health systems.

**How?** Once in the European Parliament, we will push for a resolution limiting the use of pesticides that have not been approved by organic farming associations to promote local biodiversity and varieties, and to reduce susceptibility to fungi/diseases. Additionally, by further developing the link between the reception of income support and the protection of animal welfare, we will push for stricter standards on livestock farming with species-appropriate herd sizes, adequate space, and the integration of playthings as part of a general animal welfare legislation.

<sup>19</sup> Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) available at <http://www.fao.org/docrep/010/a0701e/a0701e00.HTM>



**Funding?** The European Agricultural Guarantee Fund (EAGF) will be used, as well as the European Agricultural Fund for Regional Development.



## 3. Build a just and sustainable society by pushing for fairness and equality

People are still subject to discrimination and social exclusion on multiple grounds, including gender, sexuality, race, ethnic origin, or beliefs. The EU needs to adopt a comprehensive approach, seeking to end all forms of discrimination. Everyone has to be guaranteed equal rights and opportunities, and human rights need to be respected, applied, and upheld. Let's make Europe equal by 2025!

### Proposals:

#### Equality & Anti-discrimination

***Break the glass ceiling, by legally enforcing representation of women on publicly-listed corporate boards by 2025 and requiring businesses to report on gender pay and gender balance.***

**Why?** With the gender pay gap in the EU at 16.2%<sup>20</sup>, and average female representation on corporate boards at 23%,<sup>21</sup> we have a long long way to go before achieving gender equality in the workplace. Mandatory quotas and greater transparency will help towards breaking the glass ceiling, i.e. the barriers that stand in the way of women achieving their full potential.

**How?** We will seek to withdraw the current Women on Boards Directive<sup>22</sup> and work towards replacing it with a strengthened proposal to push for an increased representation of women on corporate boards, through means of a temporary gender quota, to be implemented progressively – companies will have to reach 30% representation of women by 2020 and 40% by 2025. Such a timeframe will provide companies sufficient time to adjust their succession planning and hire new female directors. If they don't comply, companies will face delisting from the market and fines. The new directive will also call for mandatory reporting on gender balance and gender pay gaps in both public and private medium- and big-sized companies. In order to prevent the directive from being blocked again, we will put pressure on Member States to take public positions. We will also seek to work towards adapting a directive aimed at guaranteeing workers' participation and voting on the board of directors of publicly-listed companies (by refreshing the

<sup>20</sup> EU publications, Report on equality between women and men in the EU 2018, available at

<https://publications.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/950dce57-6222-11e8-ab9c-01aa75ed71a1>

<sup>21</sup> The European Commission, Justice and Fundamental Rights, available at

[http://ec.europa.eu/justice/gender/C2%ADequality/files/gender\\_balance\\_decision\\_making/1607\\_factsheet\\_final\\_%20wob\\_data\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/justice/gender/C2%ADequality/files/gender_balance_decision_making/1607_factsheet_final_%20wob_data_en.pdf)

<sup>22</sup> Proposal for a directive of the European Parliament and of the Council available at

<https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=celex%3A52012PC0614>

abortive Fifth Company Law Directive), which will also impose a gender clause, whereby men and women have to be equally represented.

**Funding?** Not applicable: this proposal bears no cost for the EU budget.

***Ensure that women's rights are upheld, by legalising and providing access to free abortion until the end of the first trimester, and providing free contraception everywhere across Europe.***

**Why?** Access to reproductive health care services, goods, and facilities is still restricted for women in some European states, where tight abortion and contraception regulations result in an inability for women to take full control over their own bodies.<sup>23</sup> There are five remaining EU countries in which abortion is either banned or restricted, while access to contraception greatly varies across Member States.

**How?** We will propose a recommendation pushing all Member States to set a common abortion practice and to change national legislations so that abortion is legal on request up to at least the twelfth week of pregnancy, and longer in cases when the fetus is not viable or the continued pregnancy would endanger the mother. Each healthcare provider will have to identify and communicate to the Ministry of each Member State the location and total number of doctors that are able to perform abortion – each hospital and clinic will have to have at least one doctor that can perform abortion. This information will have to be publicly accessible. In addition, the recommendation will call for all forms of contraception to be accessible and available for free.

**Funding?** Not applicable: this proposal bears no cost for the EU budget.

***Guarantee equal rights to all, by ensuring access to the same procedures, rights and unions to every individual in society, including marriage for all.***

**Why?** There are several instances throughout the EU where certain members of society are put in disadvantaged positions. A striking example is that same-sex marriage and joint adoption is legal in only 15<sup>24</sup> and 15<sup>25</sup> Member States respectively. Moreover, ethnic and religious minorities often

<sup>23</sup> For example, in Poland, abortion is only lawful to safeguard the life or health of a woman, in situations of severe fetal anomaly, or where the pregnancy results from rape or another criminal act such as incest; and even in those situations in which abortion is legal, multiple barriers combine to limit women's access in practice. See Human Rights Watch, Polish Parliament Must Protect Women's Health and Rights, available at <https://www.hrw.org/news/2018/03/22/polishparliamentmustprotectwomenshealthandrights>

<sup>24</sup> Marriage, Europa, available at [https://europa.eu/youreurope/citizens/family/couple/marriage/index\\_en.htm](https://europa.eu/youreurope/citizens/family/couple/marriage/index_en.htm)

<sup>25</sup> The European Region of the International Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans and Intersex Association, available at <https://rainbow-europe.org/#0/8682/0>

fall victim to marginalisation, and have difficulties in effectively enjoying their civil rights and freedoms.<sup>26</sup> Similarly, people with disabilities, representing 17.6% of Europeans, experience restrictions preventing them from fully participating in society.

**How?** We will make sure that a recommendation for Member States to recognise same-sex marriage as a legal form of civil union and that allows for every couple to have the same opportunities to adopt a child regardless of their sexual orientation is passed in the European Parliament. We will also push for an Enforcement Directive to be adopted that will be aimed at guaranteeing the effective implementation of the non-discrimination Directives 2000/43/EC and 2000/78/EC. Through the Enforcement Directive, we will ask Member States to require the presence of a non-discrimination officer, with monitoring and disciplinary authority, in sensitive contexts such as schools, workplace, tribunals, hospitals, sports, and recreational activities. In addition, we will raise and support a directive (based on the principles of Article 153.1 lett. a and h) that will aim to facilitate people with disabilities to have equal access to the labour market. Such a Directive will aim to remove structural barriers and minimise the impacts of an impairment on an individual's capacity to participate in the workplace. The directive will complement the current European Disability Strategy.

**Funding?** Not applicable: this proposal bears no cost for the EU budget.

## Public Sector

***End police violence and discriminatory treatment of minorities, by providing police training and revising laws, tackling biased persecution and ensuring that the judiciary does not discriminate against minorities.***

**Why?** Despite existing anti-discriminatory laws, minorities across Europe are frequently singled out by the police for checks and questioning without adequate justification other than their ethnicity, skin colour or religion.<sup>27</sup> They are also more likely to face arrest, charging, prosecution and imprisonment. Similarly, along with other vulnerable groups – including women and LGBTIQ+ people –, these individuals are often discriminated against in courts owing to bias practices within the justice system.

**How?** We will lobby for the EU Agency for Law Enforcement Training to develop clear and common guidance and limit officers' discretionary authority. We will also strengthen the fundamental principle of access to justice, already recognised by the EU (Article 47 CFREU; Article 4.3 TEU; Article 19 TEU), by launching an assessment aimed at testing and improving the implementation of those EU measures oriented at ensuring a fair and

<sup>26</sup> Equinet Working Group on Equality Law, Fighting discrimination on the ground of race and ethnic origin, available at [http://www.equineteurope.org/IMG/pdf/equinet\\_discussion\\_paper\\_final\\_-\\_web-2.pdf](http://www.equineteurope.org/IMG/pdf/equinet_discussion_paper_final_-_web-2.pdf)

<sup>27</sup> Human Rights Watch, France: the Human Rights Implications of the Presidential Campaign, available at <https://www.hrw.org/news/2017/03/29/francehumanrightsimplicationspresidentialcampaign>

public hearing before a tribunal, such as Directive 2012/13/EC; Directive 2010/64/EU; and Directive 2013/48/EC. In addition, we will promote an inter-institutional declaration which specifies that the EU recognises all the rights and freedoms defined by the European Convention of Human Rights as general principles of EU law, including but not limited to, the prohibition of torture, the right to a fair trial, and the right to an effective remedy.

**Funding?** Not applicable: this proposal bears no cost for the EU budget.

***Aim for full equality and diversity for underrepresented groups in the public sector in Member States and in EU institutions, by putting in place preferential treatment, reporting on diversity and accommodating special needs.***

**Why?** Key public positions, both at national and European levels, are run by a homogenous group of individuals that do not adequately portray the society they are meant to represent.

**How?** While in the European Parliament, we will craft a directive requiring national, regional and local public administrations to give special consideration, throughout the hiring process, to individuals from an underrepresented minority in case of final candidates being equally qualified. The directive will also call for mandatory reporting on overall diversity and for the establishment of an anti-discrimination officer.

**Funding?** Not applicable: this proposal bears no cost for the EU budget.

***Ensure equal gender representation in EU politics and encourage female participation, by having gender-alternate lists of candidates and by other means, such as mandatory reporting on gender representation.***

**Why?** In the EU, up to 70% of national parliamentarians are men, and women form only 36%<sup>28</sup> of the European Parliament, despite studies showing that more women in politics results in stronger democracies. This discrepancy needs to change, and we have to ensure that gender representation increases within decision-making positions.

**How?** While in the European Parliament, we will work to pass a directive requiring all EU bodies to report on gender balance and to set concrete plans to increase gender representation within. In addition, we will push forward a recommendation calling for political parties to achieve parity on electoral lists. The recommendation will also call on all political parties to submit altering lists of male and female candidates for European election.

<sup>28</sup> European Parliament, Women in the European Parliament, available at [http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/publications/2018/0001/P8\\_PUB%282018%290001\\_EN.pdf](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/publications/2018/0001/P8_PUB%282018%290001_EN.pdf)

	<p><b>Funding?</b> Not applicable: this proposal bears no cost for the EU budget.</p>
Inclusion	<p><b><i>Make housing affordable, by integrating social and shared housing into the EU cohesion policy. Use available funds for social housing to improve the situation of low income groups, including marginalised groups, and urge Member States to subsidise shared social living.</i></b></p> <p><b>Why?</b> Social housing production has decreased across most European states in the past years. Across the EU, approximately 1 out of 20 people suffers from severe housing deprivation, and housing is currently the highest expenditure for Europeans, with overburden rate remaining high.<sup>29</sup> In addition, in most Member States, house prices are growing faster than income, mainly affecting the poor and marginalised groups, including children.</p> <p><b>How?</b> We will support the European Commission in modernising its Cohesion Policy and ensure that the new framework allocates funds to sustainable social and shared housing across the EU. We will do this by lobbying on the principles of the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the EU and of the European Pillar of Social Rights, that access to affordable housing and shelter constitutes a core element of the ‘social inclusion’ objective. We will also call on the European Commission to integrate social housing in the allocation of relevant funds – such as the European Social Fund Plus, European Fund for Strategic Investments and European Regional Development Fund – to support Member States and to increase the transparency and accessibility to those funds. Finally, while in the European Parliament, we will push for a Commission recommendation calling on Member States to invest in social housing and other forms of shared-living, as an essential instrument to alleviating poverty and supporting marginalised groups. We will also use the cycles of policy coordination, namely the European Semester and the Open Method of Coordination, to encourage Member States to adopt initiatives directed at sustainable housing.</p> <p><b>Funding?</b> Various funds will be used, including the European Social Fund Plus, European Fund for Strategic Investments and European Regional Development Fund.</p> <p><b><i>Alleviate child poverty, by implementing a minimum standard for universal child benefits across the EU.</i></b></p>

<sup>29</sup> Eurostat, Housing Statistics, available at [https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Housing\\_statistics](https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Housing_statistics)

**Why?** Up to 25 million children in the EU live in low income households and are at risk of poverty and social exclusion.<sup>30</sup> Child poverty can have long-term consequences, affecting educational attainments, access to equal opportunities, and participation in economic and social life.

**How?** We will work towards ensuring that adequate attention and financial resources are dedicated to implementing minimum standards for universal child benefits in order to ensure the well-being of children until they reach adulthood, and preserve their human dignity. We will initiate a close cooperation and dialogue with EU institutions, such as the Council and the Commission, to make sure that the national operational programmes of the European Social Fund and the European Regional Development Fund allocate adequate resources to finance this proposal. Furthermore, we will monitor the definition of the national operational programmes through the tools available to the European Parliament.

**Funding?** The Regional Development Fund and the European Social Fund Plus will be used.

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<sup>30</sup> European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, Combating Child Poverty: an issue of fundamental rights, available at <http://fra.europa.eu/en/publication/2018/child-poverty>